
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

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Schedule

Field Trips are free and open to the public. Trips may be cancelled due to inclement weather or flooding and will be announced on our Facebook page and by email notification to club members. Carpooling is allowed for those vaccinated for COVID. **Meetings** are currently being held via Zoom due to the pandemic. For more information or questions email iowacitybc@gmail.com.

April 21, Thursday, 7 p.m. Zoom Meeting. Brandon Caswell will present “Iowa and Beyond Warbler Photo Big Year.” The Zoom link will be emailed to ICBC members one week in advance, or go to the calendar on our website at <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/events/> and click on the meeting date.

April 23, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Corriell Nature Preserve. Jason Paulios will guide us in exploring this new 200-acre Bur Oak Land Trust property in Muscatine County that includes wetlands, remnant savanna, and sand prairie. Target species include American Bittern and Sandhill Crane, but no promises as this is a previously unexplored property. Special guest will be Jason Taylor, Director of Bur Oak, who will share background information about the new property and restoration progress. Hiking terrain will be a mix of mowed and rough trails. Meet Jason at Fin and Feather parking lot, 125 Hwy. 1 W in Iowa City. Location is about 30 minutes from Iowa City. Directions will be provided for those driving separately. Return time is about 12:30. More: <https://buroaklandtrust.org/bur-oak-finalizes-largest-acquisition-to-date/>.

April 27 - May 27, Weekdays, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m. Hickory Hill Park Warbler Walks. After a two-year hiatus, Warbler Walks are back! Start your weekdays watching warblers with rotating leaders Mark Madsen, Chris Edwards, Jason Paulios, Dan Rose, Elliot Stalter, and Mark Brown. Meet in the park at the parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane, off N. Dodge St.

April 30, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Terry Trueblood Recreation Area and Pechman Creek Delta. Join leader Mark Madsen for this half-day Southside Combo trip. We’ll meet near the boat ramp at Trueblood, 4213 Sand Rd. SE, Iowa City, to check for shorebirds before hiking the woodland dirt trail in search of warblers. From there we’ll drive nine miles south to Pechman Creek Delta, a floodplain property owned by Johnson County Conservation, where we’ll walk through riparian forest in search of migrating warblers, orioles, vireos, flycatchers, and other birds. Paths are mulched or mowed grass, and boots are recommended for crossing a shallow creek. Bring a spotting scope if you have one.

May 7, Saturday. Johnson County Spring Migration Count. This year we’re back to normal protocols after two years of pandemic modifications – we’ll bird in small groups to count as many birds as possible in Johnson County. Species and individual birds are tallied – last year 166 species were recorded. Solo birding is also an option. Gather for an optional noon sack lunch at the North Liberty Community Center. Afternoon birding is encouraged, but optional. To participate, email coordinator Chris Caster in advance of count day at cjcaster@q.com. You will be assigned to a group with a leader who will send details for a meeting time and location. For those doing solo birding, an area will be assigned. For more information visit <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/spring-count/>.

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May 14, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Cedar River Crossing, 5473 Sutliff Rd. NE, Solon. Target species include migrating warblers, sparrows, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Join leaders Mark and Deb Rolfe for a hike through this Johnson County Conservation property that includes wetlands, prairie, and forest. We'll hike farther than on our fall trip in order to cover more of the habitats. Trails are mowed and/or rough paths that can be wet or muddy. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Don't forget bug spray! Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 and we'll finish at noon. For a map and information visit <https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation/public-use-areas>.

May 19, Thursday, 7 p.m. Zoom Meeting. Linda Rudolph will present "Birding, Tigers, and the Taj Mahal: Visiting Magical Northeast India." The Zoom link will be emailed to ICBC members one week in advance, or go to the calendar on our website at <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/events/> and click on the meeting date.

June 11, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Indiangrass Hills in Iowa County for breeding grassland birds. Leader Mark Brown will guide us through this 640-acre restored prairie which is a designated Important Bird Area. Expect to see Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Orchard Oriole, Bobolink, and more. There will be extensive walking on mowed grass paths which may be wet. Don't forget bug spray. Meet at 6:30 at Kohl's parking lot, 2795 Commerce Dr., Coralville, or at 7:15 at Indiangrass Hills parking lot, 4549 I Ave, Williamsburg. Return time is around noon. Area maps: <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/miscellaneous-maps/> or <https://www.indiangrasshills.org/igh.php>.

July 17, Sunday, 4 p.m. Iowa City Bird Club Potluck Picnic at Lake Macbride. Located at Sailboat Shelter #1 at the north end of Sail Boat Road NE, Solon, near the south shore of the north arm of the lake. Restrooms are nearby. Enjoy the company of old and new birding friends with picnic foods and a beautiful park ambience. Bring a dish to share, your own drink, and table service. An optional bird walk will begin about 6:00 p.m.

July 23, Saturday, Iowa City Butterfly Count. Now in its 24th year, the local count is part of the North American Butterfly Association's Fourth of July Butterfly Count program. We'll visit Kent Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area, Lake Macbride, and other areas to tally as many butterfly species and individuals as we can find. To participate, contact Chris Edwards by July 20 at 319-430-4732 or credwards@aol.com.

August 14, Sunday, 8 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area for shorebirds and other early fall migrants. Meet leader Chris Caster at the HWMA parking lot on Swan Lake Road, across from Swan Lake (GPS coordinates 41.776081, 91.675009). We will carpool our way around Hawkeye, finishing around noon. Expect moderate hiking at some viewing areas. Dress for the weather and wet and muddy trails. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Map: <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/miscellaneous-maps/>.

Other Dates of Note

April 29 – May 1, Friday – Monday, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting at Swan Lake State Park near Carroll. Enjoy speakers, field trips, and dinner with birding friends from across the state. Registration required. For details visit <https://iowabirds.org/IOU/NextMeeting.aspx>.

May 3, Tuesday, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. Warbler Walk at Port Louisa Refuge. For details visit <https://louisacountyconservation.org/event/warbler-walk/>.

June 23, Thursday, 2 – 3 p.m. Hawk Sci Lit Book Club Discussion on *Eye of the Albatross: Visions of Hope and Survival* by Carl Safina, at the Science Library, 120 Iowa Ave., Iowa City. See <https://bit.ly/Alba22>. (Note: although not available at local libraries, inexpensive used copies of this book are available online.)

2021 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards

The 71st annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held Sunday, December 19, 2021. The count area is a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Hwy. 965 and Penn Street in North Liberty, encompassing North Liberty, Coralville, Solon, Tiffin, and portions of Iowa City, as well as Lake Macbride and most of the Coralville Reservoir. Temperatures on count day were slightly below average at 14-28° F, with variably cloudy skies and winds increasing to 10-15 mph in the afternoon. Rivers and streams were partly frozen, still bodies of water were also partly frozen, and there was no snow cover.

Results

After the 2020 “COVID Count” in which participants birded alone, and in which we set records for participants, parties, party-hours, and multiple species high counts, 2021 was a welcome return to normal. Most participants birded in small groups. We found 76 species, well above our ten-year count average of 69 species and the highest total since the record of 81 species in 2012. We tallied a count-record 32,612 individual birds, thanks in part to large flocks of European Starlings, Common Grackles, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Three species which are considered rare on our count were found: a Ruby-crowned Kinglet along Clear Creek Trail in Coralville (sixth all-time record), a Double-crested Cormorant at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area (eighth all-time record), and two Ruddy Ducks at Lake Macbride (ninth all-time record). Other unusual species (seen on four or fewer counts in the last ten years) were American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Short-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, and Rusty Blackbird. It's notable that Merlin is no longer considered unusual – after finding only one in the first 56 years of the count, we have now found this species in 8 of the last 15 years.

Many species were seen in numbers significantly above the ten-year average, including seven that were seen in record numbers: Cackling Goose, Common Goldeneye (ten-year high), Hooded Merganser (ten-year high), Ring-billed Gull (ten-year high), Cooper's Hawk (tied record high), Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker (record high), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (record high), Hairy Woodpecker (record high), Pileated Woodpecker (record high), Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper (record high), Winter Wren (ten-year high), European Starling (record high), Eastern Bluebird, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, House Finch, American Goldfinch (ten-year high), Dark-eyed Junco (ten-year high), White-throated Sparrow, Common Grackle (ten-year high), and Northern Cardinal. It's somewhat remarkable that four woodpecker species were seen in record numbers this year. Perhaps the derecho in 2020 led to better foraging opportunities and higher reproduction in 2021.

Some species were seen in below-average numbers: Wild Turkey, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Cedar Waxwing, Carolina Wren, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. Expected species not found this year were Brown-headed Cowbird and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Red-breasted Merganser was seen during count week, but not on count day.

Count Effort

This year there were 47 field observers (a new record) in 16 field parties. They spent 90.8 total party-hours in the field, well above the 10-year average of 72.1 hours. Field participants were Connie Aldridge, Elizabeth Aubrey, Kyle Belcher, Tom Bootsmiller, Mary Bowler, Fawn Bowden, Brian Broderick, Mark Brown, Russell Brown, Barry Buschelman, Trillian Connorriddle, Gerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Sandy

Eads, Addie Edwards, Bridget Edwards, Chris Edwards, Ellie Edwards, Mary Edwards, Ben Elwood, Linda Fisher, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Rick Hollis, Ken Lowder, Nancy Lynch, Mark Madsen, Jamie McCoy, Ramona McGurk, Hank Miguel, Andrew Miller, Jenny Hollis Miller, JJ Miller, Mary Noble, Jason Paulios, Linda Quinn, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, James Scheib, Janet Seiz, Jane Shuttleworth, Sharon Somers, Maria Story, Ryan Story, Donna Warner, and Eliza Willis.

Two parties spent a total of 3.0 hours owl watching, just below the ten-year average of 3.3 hours.

There were 18 feeder watchers in 14 locations. They spent 43.5 hours watching feeders, far above the ten-year average of 24.9 hours. Feeder watchers were Janice Allen, Cindy Asmussen, Barbara Beaumont, Dena Belcher, Kaci Carolan & Ed Kuhrt, Anne Edwards, Drew Etienne, Janet Hollis, Kate Kostenbader & Ted Lepic, Kathy & Van Martensen, Milana Mitchell, Jim Scheib, James & Terri Stoner, and Ronnye Wieland.

This year we met at the North Liberty Community Center for a noon lunch and compilation. We did not meet for an evening meal. We collected \$121 in donations for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count program.

Nationally, this year marked the 122nd consecutive Christmas Bird Count. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are available at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc. A table showing the results of every Iowa City count from 1951 to the present is available at www.iowacitybirdclub.org.

Thanks to everyone who participated!

SPECIES LIST

Cackling Goose	17	Bald Eagle	148	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Canada Goose	4462	Red-tailed Hawk	82	White-breasted Nuthatch	165
Northern Shoveler	1	Rough-legged Hawk	3	Brown Creeper	15
Gadwall	4	Eastern Screech-Owl	2	Winter Wren	2
American Wigeon	4	Great Horned Owl	7	Carolina Wren	1
Mallard	1055	Barred Owl	6	European Starling	17471
Northern Pintail	1	Short-eared Owl	1	Eastern Bluebird	48
Redhead	3	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	American Robin	5
Ring-necked Duck	15	Belted Kingfisher	3	House Sparrow	755
Lesser Scaup	15	Red-headed Woodpecker	11	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	59
Bufflehead	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	148	House Finch	247
Common Goldeneye	27	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4	Purple Finch	6
Hooded Merganser	15	Downy Woodpecker	170	Pine Siskin	17
Common Merganser	3	Hairy Woodpecker	37	American Goldfinch	257
Ruddy Duck	2	Northern Flicker	35	Fox Sparrow	2
Wild Turkey	3	Pileated Woodpecker	14	American Tree Sparrow	114
Ring-necked Pheasant	4	American Kestrel	21	Dark-eyed Junco	921
Rock Pigeon	195	Merlin	1	White-crowned Sparrow	17
Eurasian Collared-Dove	2	Northern Shrike	1	White-throated Sparrow	49
Mourning Dove	145	Blue Jay	157	Song Sparrow	7
Ring-billed Gull	1304	American Crow	352	Swamp Sparrow	1
Herring Gull	2	Black-capped Chickadee	310	Red-winged Blackbird	1029
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Tufted Titmouse	89	Rusty Blackbird	1
Northern Harrier	5	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	Common Grackle	2002
Cooper's Hawk	8	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	Northern Cardinal	388
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	2	Cedar Waxwing	130		

Remembering Ed Allgood

Rick Hollis

Long-time club member Ed Allgood died on February 6, 2022. Ed was a decent, kind-hearted man.

Ed was the Iowa City Bird Club's second President, serving from 1991 to 1995. I remember one evening when the scheduled speaker was either unable to speak or was not going to take the normal amount of time. Ed was dressed like Non-Birding Ed, with a plaid shirt and jeans. He put a bag up on the desk and we wondered what was going on. He started pulling things out and talking about what he wore while birding, going through binoculars, hat, field guide, etc. Ten minutes later he had transformed himself from Non-Birding Ed to Ed the Birdwatcher. Everyone was smiling.

I always enjoyed running into Ed. After he started working for the University of Iowa, he stumbled across my office, and after that he often stopped by when he was nearby. I never quite knew where our conversations would go. One tends to put people into boxes, and unless you spend time with someone from the club, they are in the Birder box. I don't usually think about other things birders might do outside that box. Ed had a wide variety of interests. When he stopped by, we almost always talked about birds and the bird club. We also talked about our bikes. We talked about mental illness and some of the difficulties people had getting timely proper treatment. One time he came in and I had some early Louis Armstrong playing. We started talking about early jazz and he told me that he liked the St. Louis Stompers. Ed and Jean had stumbled across them and driven to a concert they gave. Ed gave me copies of some of their CDs.

Ed and Jean camped all over the country, going places to ride their bikes and bird. They loved their dogs. Ed sang with a barbershop chorus, and was a member of Bicyclists of Iowa City. He was active in the local chapter of the National

Alliance on Mental Illness, and volunteered at Crowded Closet and Compeer. He was very much an environmentalist.

The last time I spoke to Ed was a few months ago. With COVID, I've become out of touch with a lot of people, but the moment I heard Ed's voice it felt like ten years ago and like we'd just talked, and I knew it would be a fun conversation.

I spoke to Jean this week. She is doing okay. There are a lot of legal issues that take forever to resolve and she is working through them. She is playing tennis, and sometime might show up on a bird trip again.

Identifying Meadowlarks

Karen Disbrow

If you see a meadowlark on a fencepost and it does not vocalize, but you see it fly away, look at the tail feathers. Eastern Meadowlarks have more white outer tail feathers than Western Meadowlarks. In Easterns, the number of white outer tail feathers on each side appear to be the same as the number of dark feathers in the middle. Westerns have more dark feathers in the center of the tail than white on either side.

In breeding plumage, the malar area (between the face and the throat) is also different between the two species, with Western being mostly yellow, and Eastern having white bordering the yellow throat.

So as one who struggles with bird song, I have found these traits to be helpful, especially when the birds aren't vocalizing.

Donald Kroodsma, author of *Birdsong by the Seasons*, states that juvenile Eastern and Western Meadowlarks can learn each other's songs, whereas calls are innate, making them a more reliable indicator of species. Former club member Margrieta Delle once discovered such a meadowlark along Greencastle Avenue, singing Western songs but giving Eastern calls, thus making it an Eastern Meadowlark.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

January 15, Tailwater Riverwalk Trail. Cancelled due to COVID concerns.

February 5, Samuel L. Kirkwood Bald Eagle Watch. Cancelled by the City of Coralville due to a scarcity of Bald Eagles along the Iowa River at the time.

February 13, Mississippi River and Quad Cities. After a two-year COVID hiatus, we returned to the Quad Cities for our annual winter field trip. Although it was a sunny day, the temps never climbed much over 15 degrees and there was just enough wind to make a person long for a warmer place to be. We didn't have many participants, but everyone wished to drive themselves. When the Rolfes vehicle caught up to us in Rapid City we had five vehicles in the caravan, which was occasionally a challenge to keep together as we negotiated the many stoplights through town.

Our first stop was Rapid City, a small village on the Illinois side just north of the I-80 bridge. The river was open and the nearly all the waterfowl were Common Goldeneyes. More variety was found from the boat ramp looking north. A pair of Trumpeter Swans were there, as well as many Canvasbacks, some Ring-necked Ducks, and two female Hooded Mergansers.

Our next stop was at Lock and Dam 14 on the Illinois side. This area was unusually unproductive. There was much ice above the dam, but no gull roost. No gulls were flying below the dam either. We did see a pair of Mute Swans downriver and a pair of female Common Mergansers in the channel below the dam. We could see there were gulls flying about on the Iowa side and so we headed back across the I-80 bridge to get a look at those. There were a small number of gulls flying about the canal near the dam headquarters. All were Herring, but they were close, very active and gave some good comparisons of age-related plumage differences.

By this time, we were ready for a break from the cold and made a much-appreciated pit-stop at the Hardee's in Bettendorf. With our core temps returned to normal, we headed to Lock and Dam 15. There wasn't much there either. A few Herring Gulls were present, but pigeons outnumbered eagles and no waterfowl were present, so we moved on to Credit Island. The backwater slough was completely iced over, but there were no gull roosts there either. However, the motorcyclists were making enthusiastic use of the ice off Concord Street, racing around their oval quite noisily. It was entertaining to observe though, as it had been a number of years since I had seen them do that. We did find some new birds at Credit Island in the form of Ring-billed Gulls and a lone American White Pelican, but that was all, and so it was not long before we were headed for our final stop at Fairmount Cemetery.

The hemlock grove there provided us with a real treat. We noticed a number of small birds in the treetops which turned out to be nearly thirty Common Redpolls. This was the first time we have had redpolls on this field trip. Fortunately, the hill blocked the wind as it was quite some time before we could break away from watching these birds. They literally attacked the hemlock cones and many of the redpolls dropped to feed on the cones knocked to the ground. It was quite the sight. There was also a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches and a goldfinch in the flock giving lengthy looks. Most enjoyable.

There was not a great deal of variety at the feeder stations near the upper cemetery entrance, but the many Eurasian Tree Sparrows were fun as well as the young Cooper's Hawk that bombed a nearby sparrow-filled bush. The hawk did not appear to be successful despite what probably had seemed to be a sure meal. He sat nearby for a while, possibly contemplating in disbelief as to what went wrong. Things went right for us though. Thanks to those who came out and made it a fun trip.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Gerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Sam Howard, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes.

Birds (31 species): Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Mallard, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Rock Pigeon, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, American White Pelican, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, House Finch, Common Redpoll, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal.

– *Chris Caster*

February 17, Meeting. Mark Brown gave a very interesting presentation on “Wildlife of Pawnee National Grassland.” This is a large area in NE Colorado that is home to Thick-billed Longspurs, Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, Ferruginous Hawks, and many other fascinating shortgrass prairie birds. The presentation can be viewed on our club website if you missed it.

Member Ed Allgood passed away in February. Ed was the Iowa City Bird Club's second President, and birding was one of his joys. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made in Ed's memory to NAMI of Johnson County.

Rick Hollis is retiring from Kent Park Bird Walks. We owe Rick many thanks for his years of dedicated teaching and sharing of nature's bounty in Kent Park. You have been an inspiration to many of us!

Linda Quinn announced upcoming field trips. Let Linda know if there are field trip locations you would like to visit in the future. Her contact info is 319-330-3328 or quinnhenry@msn.com.

Karen Disbrow announced there will be no spring birding course this year. She is hoping for a return next year!

Terri Macey filled us in on the “Birds Aren't Real” movement, a viral Gen Z faux-conspiracy theory.

Milana shared her new pet starling with the bird club and gave details of his care. Several other members shared details of recent bird sightings, including Common Redpolls during this irruption year.

There were 21 computers tuned in for the meeting.

– *Sandy Eads*

March 6, Cone Marsh Wildlife Management Area. For many birders, an early March field trip to Cone Marsh in Louisa County is a rite of spring, to welcome back the ducks, geese, and swans on their northbound journey. This year's trip was originally scheduled for March 5, with Linda Rudolph as leader. But that day was rainy, and Linda was on her way to Brazil for a birding adventure.

The day was cold and windy, with temperatures in the upper 20s. “Raw” is an apt description, although as the morning wore on, the sun came out and warmed us up just a little. It was nice to be able to carpool again, and we left Fin & Feather in a six-car caravan. On the drive to the marsh, we spotted a few birds including American Kestrel, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Horned Lark.

Just before arriving at the marsh, we stopped along County Road G28 to view a massive flock of Snow Geese in a field to the north. As we watched, most of the flock took flight and headed south towards the marsh, passing just behind us. It was an amazing spectacle and a great start to the day.

We continued on and made two stops along T Avenue, with its wide view of the eastern half of the marsh. There were a lot of waterfowl here and we spent a fair amount of time scoping through them. There were close to 100 Trumpeter Swans scattered around in family

groups, and large flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese. We spotted one Mute Swan along the near shore. There were dozens of Northern Pintails, both in the air and on the marsh, and smaller numbers of many other dabbling ducks including Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, and Green-winged Teal. Three Wood Ducks were seen amongst some willows. A group of diving ducks, primarily Lesser Scaup and at least one Canvasback, were scoped very far out. We saw thousands of Snow Geese flying over, but none settled on the marsh. A trio of surprisingly quiet Sandhill Cranes passed overhead.

By this time, other birders had joined us at the marsh and the size of our group had nearly doubled. And after standing in the wind for a lengthy period, we were all very cold and welcomed a few minutes in our vehicles with the heaters on. As we drove to the south side of the marsh, we started to see enormous flocks of Snow Geese in the air flying south. We stopped along 220th Street to view the SE corner of the marsh, and these large flocks continued to stream over us. We stood on the road, watching in awe. An accurate count was impossible, but I conservatively estimated 25,000 Snow Geese. We then scoped the water from this spot, adding Bufflehead and Ruddy Duck to our list.

We made a brief stop at the boat ramp in the SW corner of the marsh, where we spotted a lone female Common Merganser, before moving on to the dike. Surprisingly, the dike was not as windy as expected, so we walked about halfway across to view the birds on the far side. Against the far shore we spotted several American Wigeons and a group of American Coots. Also seen were a flock of Ring-billed Gulls standing on the ice.

Our last stop was at the boat ramp in the NW corner of the marsh. With the sun shining overhead and the parking lot completely protected from the wind, it felt twenty degrees warmer. And there were birds to see. Straight out from the boat ramp, first one pair and then a second pair of Sandhill Cranes were spotted in the cattails. Three small geese with stubby bills, swimming alongside larger Canada Geese, were

identified as Cackling Geese. Half a dozen male Hooded Mergansers were diving for fish. To the north, the marsh was packed with Greater White-fronted Geese, with one white Snow Goose head sticking up. And we scoped a Bald Eagle sitting on its nest across the marsh to the east. It was a great way to finish the morning.

Participants: Phyllis Black, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Julie Damiano, Gerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Mark Eads, Sandy Eads, Chris Edwards (leader), Steve Elliott, Peter Hansen, Ken Lowder, Mark Madsen, Jan McDonald, Allison Rogers, Jen Rogers, John Rogers, Janet Seiz, Jason Taylor, Nick Timmer, Jill Wenger, Eliza Willis, and several others who joined the group at the marsh and whose names I did not get.

Birds (44 species): Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Kestrel, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Horned Lark, European Starling, American Robin, House Sparrow, House Finch, Song Sparrow, meadowlark sp., Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

– *Chris Edwards*

March 17, Meeting. We were excited to host Karl Jungbluth, retired meteorologist with the National Weather Service, to speak on “Weather, Radar, and Birds.” Karl is a birder and a member of Big Bluestem Audubon in Ames. His presentation included websites that provide insight about weather and bird migration, a list of which can be found on Big Bluestem’s website under Resources, then Birds & Weather:

<https://bigbluestemaudubon.org/Resources/Weather.aspx>.

Key take-aways of Karl's talk were: weather radar shows groups of smaller birds (songbirds) moving at night, but not individual large birds or skeins of geese; south winds are favorable for spring migration, and best conditions for a fallout occur when birds encounter an east/west band of thunderstorms; during autumn, look for migration peaks behind a cold front, especially on north winds.

A good phone app for weather forecast visualization is Windy (also known as Windyty). The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Birdcast site at <https://birdcast.info> provides a great three-day migration prediction for the entire continental U.S. Thank you Karl for a very informative presentation.

Larry Mahoney provided a Treasurer's report. We have 137 active members (excluding 12 complementary subscriptions provided to organizations) and of those, 91 have renewed for 2022. We had 18 new memberships in 2021, and eight so far in 2022. Our current account balance is \$2,615. Expenses for the past year included \$467 for the Pelican Festival, \$372 for the newsletter, and \$31 for a picnic shelter reservation.

Twenty-four computers joined the meeting via Zoom.

– Linda Quinn

March 26, Burlington Area and Mississippi River. The morning was sunny, but cold and windy, and it remained that way all day. We met Chuck Fuller at the Port of Burlington, where several people joined our group. The Peregrine Falcon that is normally seen on the Mississippi River bridge was not found when our day started, nor when it ended at 5 p.m.

We proceeded to Aspen Grove Cemetery, where we found two Red-breasted Nuthatches, but no Fox Sparrow. Then on to Henry's Pond, where we found the first several duck species. We next

went to Dankwardt Park and walked the concrete stormwater drain, where we found Winter Wrens.

We headed to Sullivan Slough south of Burlington, where Pileated Woodpecker was seen. Most of the group caught the Great Blue Heron and Red-headed Woodpecker that flew over the road as the lead car moved forward. Blackhawk Bottoms was the next stop. The sandpit only had a few Ring-billed Gulls, but from the parking lot we saw American Coots and added to our duck species list.

After lunch in Ft. Madison, we stopped beside the dairy in town, but couldn't find any Eurasian Collared-Doves, and two more stops failed to turn up that species anywhere. We then moved on to Trumpeter Marsh, where we saw the resident Trumpeter Swans and added more duck species. At Heron Bend South we saw an early Purple Martin flycatching with three Tree Swallows, and a Rough-winged Swallow was also spotted. Then we headed to Montrose, where we found a Wilson's Snipe in the lagoon area across the road from the cemetery entrance. We stopped next at Riverview Park in Montrose, where Horned Grebe and Red-breasted Merganser were found with a flock of American White Pelicans close to shore.

We finished with 20 waterfowl species. All in all, it was a great day. Many Thanks to Chuck Fuller for leading and finding so many birds.

Participants: Sarah Bissell, Phyllis Black, Gerry Denning, Karen Disbrow (co-leader), Trish Ditsworth, Charlotte Fairlie, Chuck Fuller (co-leader), Doina Johnson, Cheryl Miller, Brooke Overhalce, Sharon Somers, Maria Story, Naomi Vather-Wu.

Birds: (65 species): Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Red-

breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, American Coot, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Purple Martin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, European Starling, American Robin, House Sparrow, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

– *Karen Disbrow*

April 3, Otter Creek Marsh. Approaching the marsh in Tama County, we came upon road construction on Highway 30, which resulted in a confusing new turn onto County Road E-66. But we eventually made it to the parking area and viewing platform at Otter Creek Wildlife Management Area, where we met up with our guide, Eric Ollie, and seven other members from Big Bluestem Audubon of Ames. We quickly discovered an abundance of waterfowl (we tallied 20 species for the day) as well as many calling Sandhill Cranes. We walked the east dike, and then the road to the boat ramp, which was a good way to get close looks at ducks. For our final stop, we drove to the west side of the marsh, where we walked the road through a wooded area for even more species.

Several first-of-year (FOY) birds for many of us were spotted: Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Rusty Blackbird, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Everyone enjoyed working towards the goal of 50 species that Eric set. Eric topped that in his tally of 61, while my tally for the bird club hit it right on the mark. Couldn't keep up with the expertise of our guide! We enjoyed the calm

winds and tolerable temperatures during this cold spring, and the rain held off until later in the day.

ICBC Participants: Phyllis Black, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Barry Buschelman, Gerry Denning, Drew Dillman, Mark Eads, Sandy Eads, Terri Macey, Linda Quinn (leader), Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes, Diane Zumbach.

Birds (50 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, Mourning Dove, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, American Robin, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

– *Linda Quinn*

Renewal Reminder

If you haven't yet renewed for 2022, please do so now. Our annual membership dues per household are \$15 for a print subscription or \$10 for an email subscription. Members also receive a 10% discount on birdseed and suet at Dodge St. Ace Hardware and Forever Green Garden Center. For your current status, check your mailing label or contact Treasurer Larry Mahoney at ltjmahoney@aol.com. Please complete the membership renewal form on the inside back cover and send it with your check payable to "Eastern Iowa Birdwatch" to Larry Mahoney, 2223 Cae Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246. Or go to our website and use your PayPal account to pay.

Iowa Gull Research

Taking advantage of rapid advances in miniaturized avian tracking devices, Dr. Stephen Dinsmore's avian ecology group at Iowa State University is doing fascinating research on the movements of gulls in Iowa. The project's objectives are to understand the daily movements, dispersal, and survival of gulls in central Iowa; and to document the continental movements of gulls tagged in Iowa, including information about breeding, staging, and winter sites.

The group has experimented with a variety of methods to capture gulls, having the most success with five-foot diameter bownets baited with bread, French fries, fish, and other goodies. Researchers then affix a 15-gram solar-powered GPS-GSM tracker to each gull using a Teflon harness. (Previous studies have found no negative effects of this device or harness on gull survival or reproduction.) The tags are expected to last 2-3 years and are programmed to record approximately 50 precise locations per day along with altitude, direction, and speed. Data are downloaded daily via cell towers.

To date, more than 40 gulls have been tagged in Iowa, mostly Ring-billed Gulls but also four Herring Gulls and one Glaucous Gull. Some of these gulls have gone on to cover a lot of ground, with individuals relocated in 18 states and 3 Canadian provinces! Daily movements of greater than 100 miles are common, especially during migration. The four large reservoirs in Iowa (Saylorville, Red Rock, Rathbun, and Coralville) are major gull magnets, and at least two individuals visited three of these reservoirs in a single day! It was initially assumed that most gulls would move along the major river corridors in Iowa, but that has proved to be uncommon – most gulls departing central Iowa move more or less due south. Another unexpected finding was that several Ring-billed Gulls tagged during late summer 2021 subsequently stayed at Saylorville or Red Rock through late December.

For more information, including maps of the movements of many of the tagged birds, visit: <https://faculty.sites.iastate.edu/cootjr/iowa-gull-research>.

Status of Nesting Peregrine Falcons in Iowa

Breeding Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) disappeared from Iowa in the 1950s because of widespread use of the pesticide DDT. Peregrine Falcons historically nested on cliff ledges, but have adapted to nest on human-made structures like tall buildings and bridges. After DDT was banned in the U.S. in 1972, the Iowa DNR began a Peregrine Falcon restoration program in 1989 with 23 birds released in Cedar Rapids, followed by another 19 released in Des Moines in 1991. Between 1989 and 2003, a total of 169 birds were released in Iowa, feeding into a regional restoration effort that saw 875 birds released across the Midwest. In 1999, the first pair of birds nested on their historic nesting grounds along the Mississippi River bluffs. Most of Iowa's current Peregrine Falcon nests occur in the eastern half of the state in three main environments: urban, Mississippi River bluff faces, and energy plant towers.

Each year, monitoring of nest sites is accomplished by a network of volunteer and professional surveyors. Surveyors collect data on the nest's activity and whether the pair are successful in producing fledglings. Several of the nest sites are on power plants which have restricted access so we rely on employees who not only monitor the nest sites but are often wonderful stewards for the birds. The Raptor Resource Project monitors and bands birds at a number of Peregrine nest sites in the northeastern corner of the state.

There were 20 known nest sites in 2021 which had recently been active or were suspected active. Of the 20 sites, all were along the Mississippi River except for two sites in Des Moines (both active), one in Cedar Rapids (inactive), and one in Wapello County (not

monitored.) Reports were received on 17 of the 20 sites. Sixteen of the 17 monitored nests were active, one inactive. Of the 16 active nests, 5 failed to produce young and 11 were successful. A minimum total of 28 young were fledged from the 11 successful nests. An average of 1.75 young were produced at each nest with a known outcome.

Comparing 2021 data to recent years indicates that 2021 was a good year for breeding Peregrines, with more active/recently active nest sites than in 2020 and the second highest percent of successful active nests (69%) since 2016. A minimum of 28 Peregrine Falcons fledged in Iowa in 2021, the second highest number since 2016. Overall, Iowa's nesting population of Peregrine Falcons appears to be stable, with birds generally returning to historic nesting sites each year, but this recovering population continues to warrant annual monitoring.

In future years, the DNR will continue to monitor Peregrine Falcon nest sites with the partnership of volunteers and others who care about falcons in Iowa. Falcon nest sites can be very challenging to monitor because of their location and the territoriality of the birds so any data received is much appreciated. Monitors are needed at nest sites in the Quad Cities and Burlington. Please contact the DNR's Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program coordinator if you'd like to help, at vwmp@dnr.iowa.gov.

Status of Nesting Osprey in Iowa

Osprey are a migratory raptor species that breed in Iowa. They are piscivorous (eat fish) and their populations declined steeply during the 1950s and 60s because of the pesticide DDT. Iowa DNR began its Osprey restoration program in 1997 which involved translocating young birds from Minnesota and Wisconsin to strategic locations across Iowa. Birds were last released in 2016, and the current objective of the program is to monitor Osprey nesting activity. There are three main areas in the state where Osprey have

become well established: the Iowa City to Waterloo corridor, Des Moines and vicinity, and Spirit Lake and vicinity. There are also two nesting pairs on the western border of Iowa south of Sioux City, and a new nest site was found in Marshall County in 2021.

Monitoring of nest sites is accomplished primarily by volunteers. Volunteers are assigned to a particular nest or nests, and new nests are reported opportunistically. Volunteers visit each nest multiple times during the breeding season, and gather information on nest activity at the start of the nesting season and whether the pair is successful in fledging young towards the end of the nesting season.

At the start of 2021, there were 45 Osprey nests that were designated as routinely active (active in recent years especially 2020) or with unknown status (no recent updates on the nest). Three new nests were reported in 2021. A total of 42 nests were reported on during or after the 2021 nesting season. Thirteen of these 42 nests were reported as inactive, with 29 having some osprey activity on or near the nest. Of the active nests, 8 had no reported outcome, 6 failed to produce young, and 15 were successful in producing young.

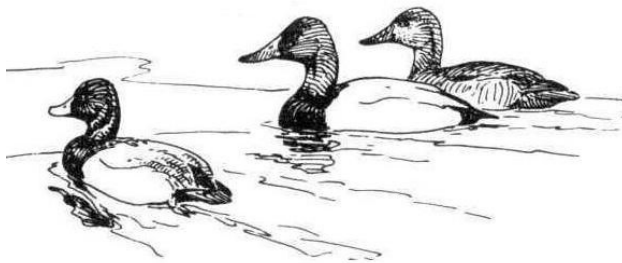
In 2021, 27.6% of monitored nests that were active had an unknown outcome (i.e. we do not know if the nest successfully fledged young or failed). This is the highest rate of unknown nest fate reported in survey history, thus comparison of 2021 values to data from previous years should be done with caution.

Based on the data we do have, 51.7% of monitored active nests were successful. A minimum total of 26 young were fledged in 2021 with an average of 1.24 young produced per known-outcome active nest. In 2018, there were 5 active nests in the Spirit Lake area, but since then the number has decreased, with only two active nests documented in the area in 2021.

Osprey prefer a nest site with a commanding view, and over half of Iowa's Osprey nest on cell phone towers. Osprey don't generally cause

damage to the towers, but conflicts can arise when work must be done on a tower during the nesting season. We will continue to work with partners on managing this potential conflict.

In future years, the DNR will continue to monitor Osprey nest sites with the partnership of volunteers, and may focus extra attention on the Spirit Lake area. We do have a number of nests that need monitors in 2022 so please contact the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program coordinator if you are interested in helping, at vwmp@dnr.iowa.gov.



Club Announcements

Meeting Recordings: Our Zoom meetings are now being recorded for on-demand viewing. If you miss a meeting, you can stream it on our website by going to the meeting calendar, finding the date, and clicking on the meeting link, which will take you to a meeting page containing the Zoom link and passcode.

Spotting Scope Checkout: The club now has two spotting scopes available for one-week checkout by members. Birders new to scope use can practice a new level of birding—scopes are especially helpful for viewing waterfowl and shorebirds. Pickup is available from Linda Quinn’s home on the east side of Iowa City. Arrange your checkout by contacting Linda at quinnhenry@msn.com or (319) 330-3328.

IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Please send this form with your annual membership dues to Larry Mahoney, 2223 Cae Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246. Annual membership dues per household are \$15 for a print subscription, \$10 for an email subscription, or \$10 for students for a print subscription. Make checks payable to “Eastern Iowa Birdwatch”. Members receive a 10% discount on birdseed and suet at Ace Hardware at 600 N. Dodge Street, Iowa City, and Forever Green Garden Center at 125 Forevergreen Rd., Coralville.

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Address _____

Email _____

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Check here for e-mail subscription only (will be emailed via ICBC Google Group).



Iowa City Bird Club

www.iowacitybirdclub.org

Annual membership dues are \$15 per household for a print subscription, \$10 for an email subscription, or \$10 for students for a print subscription, payable by January 1 for the coming year. Check your mailing label or contact Treasurer Larry Mahoney at ltmahoney@aol.com for the year you have paid through. Make checks payable to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch and mail to Larry Mahoney, 2223 Cae Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246, or pay with PayPal on our website.

Visit our web site at www.iowacitybirdclub.org. You may contact Webmaster Mark Graber at markagraber@gmail.com. Also visit Iowa City Bird Club on Facebook.

Join our Google Group to receive email announcements of upcoming meetings, field trips, and other events, and the email version of our newsletter. Email Linda Quinn at quinnhenry@msn.com to sign up.

For general club information, contact Rick Hollis at 319-665-3141 or xiboia@earthlink.net.

To lead or suggest a field trip, contact Field Trip Coordinator Linda Quinn at 319-330-3328 or quinnhenry@msn.com.

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Chris Edwards, Editor
4490 Daniels Cir. NE
Solon, IA 52333

