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# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



## The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

April 2023 • Volume 43 Number 1

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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](mailto:iowacitybc@gmail.com).

**April 8, Saturday, 8 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area** for ducks, geese, pelicans, and other early spring migrants. Meet 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. Beginning Birder Trip, but all are welcome.

**April 15, Saturday, 8 a.m. Waterworks Prairie Park.** Visit this Iowa City park with great trails for prairie and wetland species. We'll look for new arrivals like Tree Swallow, Purple Martin, Sora, and Brown Thrasher. Meet at the parking lot of Waterworks Prairie Park. Walking will be on hard-surface trails. Ending time is noon. Beginning Birder Trip, but all are welcome.

**April 20, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting – In-Person and Zoom** at the Kent Park CEC. Join us for the return of our in-person meetings! Doug Harr, former Iowa DNR State Coordinator of the Wildlife Diversity Program and current President of Iowa Audubon, will present "Once Upon a Time... in Iowa" about the history of wildlife in Iowa.

**April 23, Sunday, 8 a.m. Hickory Hill Park.** This is an eastern Iowa hotspot for spring migrants. We'll look for early migrants such as Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, kinglets, sapsucker, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Meet leader Mark Madsen at Hickory Hill Park, in the parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane, off N Dodge St. Expect to hike on trails that may be muddy. Ending time is noon. Beginning Birder Trip, but all are welcome.

**April 26 – May 26, Weekdays, 6:30-8:00 a.m. Hickory Hill Park Warbler Walks.** Start your weekdays watching warblers and other spring migrants in the park with our rotating crew of expert leaders. Meet in the park at the parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane, off N. Dodge St.

**April 30, Sunday, 8 a.m. Terry Trueblood Recreation Area. Special Event: Supporting Birds Near and Far.** Join the Iowa City Bird Club, The Audubon Center of Riverlands, MO, and the Iowa City Parks & Recreation Department for this event, featuring a guided bird walk with leader Jason Paulios from 8:00 - 10:00, followed by a presentation inside the lodge from 10:00-11:00. Come for one or both activities. Educators from Audubon will describe strategies you can take to support birds near and far, while the Iowa City Bird Club and Iowa City Parks and Recreation will share ways to get involved locally. There is no fee for this event, but space on the bird walk is limited, and pre-registration for the walk is required here: <http://bit.ly/406xFuB>.

**May 13, Saturday. Spring Migration Count.** We will bird in small groups to count as many birds as possible throughout Johnson County. Species and individual birds are tallied – last year 152 species were recorded. Gather for a noon sack lunch at the North Liberty Community Center. Afternoon birding is encouraged, but optional. To participate in a group, email leader Chris Caster in advance of count day at [cjcaster@q.com](mailto:cjcaster@q.com). For species data, forms, photos and more information visit the Special Events page of our website.

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**May 18, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting – In-Person and Zoom** at the Kent Park CEC. Terry VanDeWalle, Senior Ecologist and Senior Principal at Stantec Consulting Services, will present “Wind and Wildlife: An Overview of the Interactions of Wildlife with Wind Turbines.” Terry will have copies of his recent book, *The Natural History of the Snakes and Lizards of Iowa*, available for purchase and signing.

**May 20, Saturday, 7 a.m. Swamp White Oak Preserve** in Muscatine County. Meet at the Fareway Grocery parking lot at 2765 Commerce Drive in SE Iowa City. Carpooling is encouraged due to tight parking at the site. This Nature Conservancy property near Cone Marsh features wetlands, prairies, and floodplain forests. Leader Dean Hester will guide our group in search of warblers including late migrants and nesting Prothonotary Warblers, vireos, flycatchers, Sandhill Cranes, and Red-shouldered Hawks. One of the land managers will join our trip and provide a Q & A at the end. Expect extensive hiking on mowed paths that may be wet. Don’t forget bug spray! We plan to arrive back in Iowa City about 1:00.

**Saturday, June 10, 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. 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.

**June 17, Saturday, 8 a.m. – Noon. Turkey Vulture Festival** at Coralville Dam East Overlook Picnic Area. Jointly hosted by the Iowa City Bird Club and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, featuring exhibits, games, face painting, and Gonzo the Turkey Vulture.

**July 22, Saturday, Iowa City Butterfly Count.** As part of the North American Butterfly Association’s Fourth of July Butterfly Count program, we’ll visit Kent Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Lake Macbride, and other areas to tally as many butterflies as we can. Contact Chris Edwards by July 19 at 319-430-4732 or [credwards@aol.com](mailto:credwards@aol.com).

**July 30, 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. 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.

**August 6, 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.

**August 27, Sunday, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Pelican Festival at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area,** near the DNR headquarters at 2564 Amana Road NW, Swisher. A family-friendly event to enjoy and learn about our local migrating American White Pelicans. Get close-up looks at pelicans and other birds through our spotting scopes. Attend outdoor presentations on pelicans, raptors, and more. There will be exhibits by many conservation organizations and face painting for the kids.

## Other Dates of Note

**April 29, Saturday. Iowa Ornithologists’ Union 100th Anniversary Kick-off Bird Count.** Get your warbler ID skills sharpened up for spring migration and help celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the IOU with this one-day statewide bird count. Visit [www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org) for more information.

**May 5-7, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists’ Union Spring Meeting in West Des Moines.** A special 100th anniversary celebration. The keynote speaker is the American Birding Association’s Ted Floyd. Field trips will be held Saturday and Sunday mornings, along with presentations Saturday afternoon and a banquet and keynote address Saturday evening. To register, visit [www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org).

**June 12-16, Monday-Friday. Iowa Ornithologists’ Union Michigan Birding Adventure.** Cost: \$875 per person. For more information and registration visit [www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org).

## Bird Club Now a Nonprofit Corporation

Our bird club is now officially a nonprofit corporation under Chapter 504 of the Code of Iowa, as of December 29, 2022. And with that we have a new legal name, Iowa City Bird Club Inc., which you will see reflected on our website. This nonprofit type is one that is “organized primarily or exclusively for social education, recreational or charitable purposes.” An advantage for the club in making this status change is to eliminate any individual risk of liability on club-sponsored field trips. Back in the 1970s when the club first formed, liability was not the concern that it is today. Another advantage is a sales tax-exempt status when making purchases, for example expenses incurred for the Pelican Festival. The legal process to gain nonprofit status has required several steps and forms. One step was to write bylaws, which we strived to keep as simple and within our existing structure as much as possible. Another step was to select a board of directors, which consists of these volunteers: Karen Disbrow, Sandy Eads, Rick Hollis, Larry Mahoney, and Linda Quinn. We are very thankful to Gerry Denning for heading up our efforts to wade through and understand the legalities to the many pieces of this process. Bravo, Gerry!

*– Linda Quinn*

## We Appreciate Our Volunteers!

Our club is run by volunteers, and this year has seen many new faces in new places. The entirety of our worker-bees can be found on the ‘Contact Us’ page of our website. We want to involve anyone who wants to help, so don’t be shy and let us know! Here are the recent changes:

Treasurer: Thank you to Larry Mahoney for managing our bank account and mailing list since

May 2017. And welcome to our new Treasurer Gerry Denning.

Facebook Manager: Thank you to Rick Hollis for starting and maintaining our Facebook page for years. Welcome Phyllis Black, who now joins Karen Disbrow in managing our social media.

Webmail (Google Groups) Manager: Thank you to Pat Kieffer for answering help requests since the website redesign in 2019. Welcome to new Webmail Manager Jane Shuttleworth.

Field Trip Leaders: In a single year, the club averages 41 outings (19 field trips, 20 Warbler Walks, and two bird counts). All of these are led by expert birders, and all are volunteers. We are grateful so many local birders are willing and interested in helping out. We have an amazing group of 19 guides who have led trips in the past two years. Kudos to you all: Mark Brown, Chris Caster, Brandon Caswell, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Dean Hester, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Mark Madsen, Jamie McCoy, Jason McCurdy, Jason Paulios, Diana Pesek, Richard Randell, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes, Dan Rose, Linda Rudolph, and Elliot Stalter.

*– Linda Quinn*

## Renewal Reminder

If you haven’t renewed your dues for 2023, please do so now. Our annual membership dues per household are \$15 for a print subscription or \$10 for a digital subscription. Your dues help support our publications, events, and volunteer activities. Members receive a 10% discount on birdseed and suet at Dodge St. Ace Hardware and Forever Green Garden Center. Check your mailing label or contact Gerry Denning at [geraldlddenning50@gmail.com](mailto:geraldlddenning50@gmail.com) for your membership status. Please complete the membership renewal form on the inside back cover and send it with your check payable to “Eastern Iowa Birdwatch” to Gerry Denning, 1146 Oakes Dr., Iowa City, IA 52245. Or go to our website and use your PayPal account to pay.

## **2022 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count**

### **Chris Edwards**

The 72nd annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held Sunday, December 18, 2022. 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 below average at 8-20° F, with clear skies and W/NW winds of 5-15 mph. Rivers and streams were mostly frozen, still bodies of water were mostly frozen, and there was a trace of snow cover.

#### *Results*

This year we found 75 species, well above the ten-year count average of 68 species, and the third straight year with 72 or more species. A surprisingly high tally of 18 waterfowl species were found. The record high for the count is 81 species found in 2012. This year we tallied 14,669 individual birds, near the ten-year average of 15,054.

The most unexpected find was an Ovenbird, photographed by first-time feeder watchers Jim and Jean Wiese in their yard near City Park in Iowa City. This one-day-wonder was not seen before or after the count. It is the second Ovenbird found on our count; the first was in 2002, also in Iowa City.

Other rare birds this year included an Eastern Towhee in Hickory Hill Park (fifth all-time record and first since 1999), an apparently injured American White Pelican at Lake Macbride (sixth all-time record), two Red-breasted Mergansers at Waterworks Prairie Park (sixth all-time record), a total of three Green-winged Teal above the Coralville Reservoir Dam and at Kent Park (eighth all-time record), and two Harris' Sparrows at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area (ninth all-time record). Other unusual species (seen on four or fewer counts in the last ten years) were Wood Duck (first since 2007), Northern Pintail, Ruddy Duck, Northern Bobwhite (first since 2006), Northern Saw-whet Owl, and Horned Lark.

Six species were found in record numbers this year: Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Cooper's Hawk, Tufted Titmouse, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, and Fox Sparrow. Other species seen in numbers significantly above the ten-year average were Mourning Dove, Rough-legged Hawk, Red-headed Woodpecker (highest count since 1989), Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch (ten-year high), House Sparrow (ten-year high), Purple Finch (ten-year high), American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco (ten-year high), White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Swamp Sparrow.

Some species were seen in significantly below-average numbers: Mallard, Wild Turkey (second straight year in single digits), Rock Pigeon, Ring-billed Gull, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Crow, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Finch, and Pine Siskin. Expected species not found this year were Eurasian Collared-Dove and Northern Shrike.

Golden Eagle and Winter Wren were seen during the week of the count, but not on count day.

#### *Count Effort*

This year there were 45 field observers, including eight first-time participants, in 15 field parties. They spent 82 total party-hours in the field, above the 10-year average of 73 hours. Field participants were Elizabeth Aubrey, Kyle Belcher, Becky Benson, Tom Bootsmiller, Fawn Bowden, Jayden Bowen, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Mark Brown, Russell Brown, Barry Buschelman, Diane Buxton, Leona Buxton, Chris Caster, Edith Dawson, Erica Dawson, Jerry Denning, Sandy Eads, Chris Edwards, Jim Fuller,

Karole Fuller, Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Jim Kettelkamp, Nancy Lynch, Terri Macey, Jamie McCoy, Ramona McGurk, Hank Miguel, Jenny Miller, JJ Miller, Mary Noble, Jason Paulios, Eli Perencevich, Marko Perencevich, Linda Quinn, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, James Scheib, Janet Seiz, Jane Shuttleworth, Sharon Somers, and Eliza Willis.

Three parties spent a total of 5 hours owl watching, above the ten-year average of 3.2 hours.

There were 20 feeder watchers in 12 locations. They spent 40 hours watching feeders, far above the ten-year average of 27 hours. Feeder watchers were Cindy Asmussen, Barbara Beaumont, Kyle & Lauren Belcher, Kaci Carolan & Ed Kuhrt, Janet & Rick Hollis, Kathy & Van Martensen, Pauline Obmascher, Sharon Somers, Cindy Spading, Jim & Terri Stoner, Ronnye Wieland, and Jim & Jean Wiese.

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 \$100 in donations for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count program.

Nationally, this year marked the 123rd consecutive Christmas Bird Count. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are available at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://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](http://www.iowacitybirdclub.org).

Thanks to everyone who participated!

### SPECIES LIST

Cackling Goose	2	Cooper's Hawk	9	Eastern Bluebird	14
Canada Goose	7589	Bald Eagle	99	American Robin	10
Trumpeter Swan	37	Red-tailed Hawk	45	European Starling	694
Wood Duck	2	Rough-legged Hawk	6	Cedar Waxwing	54
Northern Shoveler	1	<i>Buteo</i> sp.	2	House Sparrow	981
Gadwall	8	Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	133
Mallard	376	Great Horned Owl	6	House Finch	83
Northern Pintail	3	Barred Owl	4	Purple Finch	18
Green-winged Teal	3	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	Pine Siskin	1
Redhead	4	Belted Kingfisher	3	American Goldfinch	108
Ring-necked Duck	1	Red-headed Woodpecker	53	Fox Sparrow	3
Lesser Scaup	3	Red-bellied Woodpecker	100	American Tree Sparrow	487
Bufflehead	1	Downy Woodpecker	136	Dark-eyed Junco	964
Common Goldeneye	14	Hairy Woodpecker	23	White-crowned Sparrow	22
Hooded Merganser	3	Northern Flicker	24	Harris' Sparrow	2
Common Merganser	10	Pileated Woodpecker	8	White-throated Sparrow	69
Red-breasted Merganser	2	American Kestrel	10	Song Sparrow	21
Ruddy Duck	8	Blue Jay	214	Swamp Sparrow	5
Northern Bobwhite	1	American Crow	206	Eastern Towhee	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	13	Horned Lark	16	Red-winged Blackbird	806
Wild Turkey	7	Black-capped Chickadee	275	Brown-headed Cowbird	14
Rock Pigeon	146	Tufted Titmouse	103	Common Grackle	4
Mourning Dove	215	Red-breasted Nuthatch	11	Ovenbird	1
Ring-billed Gull	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	102	Northern Cardinal	254
American White Pelican	1	Brown Creeper	4		
Northern Harrier	5	Carolina Wren	3		





## Introduction to Birding Course

### March 14 – April 18, 2023

### Conservation Education Center

### F. W. Kent Park, 2048 Hwy. 6 NW, Oxford



The Iowa City Bird Club and the Johnson County Conservation Department are offering a 6-week Introduction to Birding Course at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. There will be six Tuesday evening sessions along with six weekend field trips to area birding hot spots.

**Tuesday evening sessions** are \$5 for adults and free for children accompanied by an adult. Iowa City Bird Club members receive free admission – a one-year membership is \$15 per family or \$10 for students for a print subscription, or \$10 for an email subscription. Participants may attend all sessions or pick one or more to attend. Classes can hold 20, and advanced registration is requested – please call (319) 645-1011 by noon of the Tuesday session. Handouts and refreshments will be provided. Come to class early and bird the loop path near the Conservation Education Center.

**Weekend field trips** are free. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring binoculars to all field trips; if you don't have a pair let us know in advance and loaners can be arranged. If you have a spotting scope, you are welcome to bring it. Club members will have several spotting scopes available to share on those field trips requiring one.

**For more information**, contact Karen Disbrow of the Iowa City Bird Club at (319) 430-0315.

**Tuesday, March 14, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING I.** This will include field identification of birds, field guides, and equipment every birder needs, or might someday need.

**Saturday, March 18, 8 a.m. Field Trip to CONE MARSH.** Located about 25 miles SE of Iowa City, Cone Marsh is an excellent place to view migrating ducks, geese, Sandhill Cranes, and other water birds. Wear boots for walking in wet areas, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. **Meet at the Fin & Feather parking lot.**

**Tuesday, March 21, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II**, including e-Bird, apps, and birdsong ID.

**Saturday, March 25, 8 a.m. Field Trip to KENT PARK.** We will explore the trails in this park looking for migrating songbirds and resident woodland birds. **Meet at the Kent Park Conservation Education Center.**

**Tuesday, March 28, 7 p.m. WHERE TO BIRD IN JOHNSON COUNTY.** Well-known, lesser-known, and secret places to watch birds and study nature in and around Johnson County.

**Saturday, April 1, 8 a.m. Field Trip to LAKE MACBRIDE** for water birds and other early spring migrants. We'll stop at various points around the lake. **Meet at Solon Recreation and Nature Area, at the far west end of the parking lot near the restrooms and splash pad.**

**Tuesday, April 4, 7 p.m. BACKYARD AND FEEDER BIRDS.** This session will cover the common birds found in our backyards during the year, and what types of feeders and food to use to attract them.

**Saturday, April 8, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HAWKEYE WILDLIFE AREA** near North Liberty. We expect to see ducks, geese, American White Pelicans, and other early spring migrants. Wear boots for walking in wet areas, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. **Meet at the Swan Lake parking lot.**

**Tuesday, April 11, 7 p.m. BIRDS OF TERRY TRUEBLOOD AND WATERWORKS PARK IN IOWA CITY.** Learn the variety of birds that are found throughout the year at these nearby parks.

**Saturday, April 15, 8 a.m. Field Trip to WATERWORKS PRAIRIE PARK.** Visit this Iowa City park with great trails for woodland, prairie, and wetland species. **Meet at Waterworks Prairie Park.**

**Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m. WARBLER IDENTIFICATION & REVIEW.** Warblers are among our most colorful birds, but identification can be a challenge. Compare and contrast similar species.

**Sunday, April 23, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HICKORY HILL PARK.** This park is an eastern Iowa hot spot for viewing migrant warblers and other songbirds. **Meet at Hickory Hill Park, at the parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane, off N Dodge St.**

## Field Trip and Meeting Reports

### January 15, Bird Feeder Watch and Social.

Our annual feeder watch social was back this year after a two-year hiatus for the pandemic. The opportunity to socialize in person again is so appreciated, as shown by today's attendance. Hosts Judith and Drew Dillman shared their lovely home that faces the Iowa River adjacent to the west end of City Park. Feeders on their deck afforded close-up looks at a nice array of birds, and the river overlook showed well with birds in the air. Frequent eagle fly-bys were a special treat! Guests included many longtime club members who welcomed a few first-timers.

We ended the morning with a short walk along Drew's "local patch." He pointed out a great variety of tree species, some of which he had planted. Along the walk we added several bird species, saw a Bald Eagle pair soaring in a mating display, and watched a close Red-tailed Hawk who appeared quite tame. Drew explained that this resident hawk is used to people, and seeing it hunting over the newly planted prairie covering the west end of City Park is a common sight. The weather was balmy for January, and the walkers enjoyed sunny skies and above-freezing temps. Drew encouraged us to enjoy the same walk in the spring season to see migrating warblers, breeding Baltimore Orioles, Eastern Bluebirds, and trilling frogs.

Participants: Connie Aldridge, Paul Ballweg, Barbara Beaumont, Chris Brochu, Drew and Judith Dillman (hosts), Karen Disbrow, Sandy Eads, Julie Englander, Therese Guedon, Kurt Hamann, Doina Johnson, Jonathan Lewallen, Terri Macey, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Pauline Obmascher, Linda Quinn, Richard Randell, Jane Shuttleworth, Nick Timmer.

Birds (16 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch,

House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal.

– Linda Quinn

**February 16, Meeting.** If you want to know about owls, our speaker this month, Dean Hester, is the one to talk to! Dean presented "Owls of the ABA Area." He has seen 18 of the 19 species of owls in the U.S., and is working his way towards seeing more of the 260 species in the world. His photos are fabulous! If you missed it, visit our website for a video of his full presentation, including information on local and U.S. hotspots for owl viewing and ethical owling tips.

Linda Quinn announced two upcoming field trips to the Mississippi River area. Karen Disbrow provided a reminder of the Great Backyard Bird Count February 17-20. She also announced that the Beginning Birder Course is returning this spring, with the first class March 14 at Kent Park's Conservation Education Center.

It was announced that Larry Mahoney is stepping down as Treasurer, and Gerry Denning has agreed to be the new Treasurer. Thanks, Larry – your years of service to the club are appreciated!

There was discussion about recent birding adventures, including Karen Disbrow seeing Greater White-fronted Geese and Trumpeter Swans at Cone Marsh. Sandy Eads unexpectedly saw Great Blue Herons at Hills Access in early February. Linda Rudolph spent much of January in Columbia, and saw over 600 bird species!

There were 19 computers in attendance.

– Sandy Eads

**February 19, Quad Cities and Mississippi River.** We headed over to the Mississippi in two vehicles with a short pitstop at the Walcott exit. Our first birding stop was to visit Lock and Dam 14 from the Illinois side. A Great Black-backed Gull had been reported there, which is an infrequent occurrence, and we wished to find it. Our first birds were a pair of Mute Swans on the river below the dam. Fortunately, there was some ice on the river to the north with a number

of roosting gulls. All proved to be either Ring-billed or Herring. There was one gull that seemed to be possibly larger than the others, but it remained hidden, content to snooze. We were not content to wait on it however as the sun was still pretty low and the wind was blowing about 20 mph. So, we headed north to the village of Rock Rapids. Somehow, we were now out of the wind, which made all the difference. There weren't a great many ducks on the river, mostly Canvasbacks and Common Goldeneye. With patience, we found Common and Hooded Merganser, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, and Lesser Scaup. We even saw a female Common Goldeneye sitting on a log not far offshore. It might be the first time I have ever seen one of those out of the water. There was also a small contingent of Eurasian Tree Sparrows and a singing Red-winged Blackbird.

Next it was over to the Iowa side of Lock and Dam 14. The ponds there were iced and had a good number of roosting gulls. We managed to pick out about a half dozen adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls, but still no Great Black-backed. There was also a Song Sparrow singing. Most interesting was a flock of about thirty Greater White-fronted Geese that flew overhead low enough to make out the speckled bellies and white patches at the base of their bills. Our pace had been leisurely, and it was now pushing noon, so we made a stop at the Hardees in Bettendorf for some burgers.

After lunch we made a quick stop at Lock and Dam 15 in Davenport. That was good for many pigeons, but little else. Credit Island was a better stop. We managed to add Mallard, Northern Pintail, and Green-winged Teal. There was some ice there, but the vast majority of gulls were all Ring-billed, the rest Herring.

The hemlocks at Fairmount Cemetery were quiet, but we did find some American Goldfinches and a Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a Great Horned Owl was in the woods nearby. The residential feeders at the back cemetery entrance were busy, but we were not able to add anything. Many

more Eurasian Tree Sparrows were found as usual.

This is when the field trip normally ends, but we were still hoping for the Great Black-backed Gull. So all seven of us drove back through Davenport, Bettendorf, and north to I-80 where we crossed over to the Illinois side once more. There were still some gulls on the ice, but none were the bird we were looking for. However, we did manage to add American Black Duck to our list. Jamie, being the best connected of our group, consulted eBird and found that someone had just seen possibly two Great Black-backed Gulls from the Iowa side of the lock and dam, but they had taken off with a group of other gulls to parts unknown. We scanned the skies but did not see any gulls headed our way. Not knowing what else to do, but still hopeful, we headed back over to the Iowa side. To our dismay, the ice on the ponds had now completely disappeared, and the gull roost was gone. Apparently, it was warmer than I had realized. Our last hope was to watch the gulls feeding below the dam. Perhaps we might see it there.

If you haven't been there recently, there is now a really nice observation platform that allows for unobstructed views of the dam and river. On past trips this spot could be a frustrating experience as one scoped through the chain-link fence and around other obstacles. We did manage to spot an adult Iceland Gull of the Kumlien's subspecies flying about. And there were a few sub-adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls. But it was a patient vigil otherwise. It felt a bit like waiting for the Great Pumpkin.

But then Jamie spotted a large gull sitting on the rail atop the dam. We immediately put all available scopes on it. The nearby birds were clearly Herring Gulls, yet this bird was certainly a quarter larger in height and breadth, and the bill looked massive. It happened to be facing us however. Occasionally it would turn slightly and we would have the opinion that the back was dark. It was not an adult bird as there was a good amount of black coloration on both the upper and lower mandibles. We really wanted to see it turn



or fly. So we waited and waited. Eventually the two nearby Herring Gulls had taken off and it was now alone. It would occasionally look about nervously and flex its legs as if it would fly. Finally, after another ten minutes or so it launched into the air with wings spread wide. It headed over the water and circled about mostly over the Illinois side, but we could certainly appreciate its large wingspread and dark mantle. Jamie did manage some nice photos of the sitting bird and with spread wings leaving the rail. The field marks matched that of a second winter Great Black-backed Gull. Congratulations everyone, your patience was rewarded. Thankfully, as it was nearly 6 p.m. when we got back to town.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Gerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Matt Flyntz, Jamie McCoy, Janet Seiz, Eliza Willis.

Birds (44 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Mallard, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, American Goldfinch, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal.

– *Chris Caster*

**March 11, Burlington Area and Mississippi River.** The day started out chilly, with temperatures in the 30s and a slight wind, but sunny. We met Chuck Fuller at the Port of Burlington at 8 a.m. Two Peregrine Falcons were on the Mississippi River Bridge. From there we went to the marina area north of the Port where

we saw the first of many American White Pelicans. From there we travelled to Aspen Grove Cemetery to look for passerines. The Merlin, last seen in October 2022, has not come back this year.

We went on to Sullivan Slough, where a Pileated Woodpecker was heard but not seen. Wood Duck, Northern Pintail, Eastern Phoebe, and Hairy Woodpecker were spotted. A pair of Canada Geese were sitting on the eagle's nest, causing us to look closely. At Spring Lake and Black Hawk Bottoms we had our first variety of waterfowl, including Gadwall, Greater White-fronted Goose, Pied-billed Grebe, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, and Green-winged Teal. There was also a pair of Bald Eagles on a nest.

Green Bay Bottoms Road and the 355th Avenue Marsh gave us several sparrow species including American Tree, Song, White-crowned, and White-throated, plus Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Also Eastern Meadowlark, Horned Lark, and more ducks including Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, and Lesser and Greater Scaup. At the Fort Madison riverfront we spotted one Lesser Black-Backed Gull among the Ring-Billed and Herring Gulls. We stopped for lunch in Fort Madison, and spotted Eurasian Collared-Doves while getting out of the cars.

At the Ortho Mississippi River access in Lee County, we had a few more of the same ducks and a Great Blue Heron. At Heron Bend North there were many more American White Pelicans. We stopped at Trumpeter Marsh for the Trumpeter Swans, and found a lone Ross's Goose 20 feet away on the water. This was a life bird for many participants, and certainly the best view I have ever had. Jamie McCoy spotted a Greater Yellowlegs there, a notable highlight. Heron Bend South had about 200 Trumpeter Swans and a large group of American White Pelicans, as well as Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Shoveler, and other ducks.

At the Montrose cemetery and Jack Creek, we had a nice group of Cedar Waxwings, Red-

headed Woodpecker, and Green-winged Teal. At the Montrose riverfront we saw more waterfowl, including several rafts of Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Redhead, Common Merganser, and a very large group of Snow Geese, plus a small group of American Coots. We finished at Montrose about 3 p.m. and headed back to Iowa City.

Participants: Sarah Bissell, Phyllis Black, Debbie Bryant, Karen Disbrow (co-leader), Trish Ditsworth, Sandy Eads, Chuck Fuller (co-leader), Therese Guedon, Jamie McCoy, Abner Miller, Darrell Ropp, Nick Timmer.

Birds (64 species): Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-headed woodpecker, Red-bellied woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, House Finch, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal.

– Karen Disbrow

**March 16, Meeting.** This month Bob Dolgan showed his film *The Magic Stump*. It was an amazing film about a stump in the middle of an agricultural field, and its importance to raptors. The stump attracted a wide variety of bird life,

including Prairie Falcons, Snowy Owls, and other raptors, as well as a variety of other things! Bob shared a short preview of another film he has coming out soon about “fluddles.” The word fluddle combines the words flood and puddles. Due to copyright issues, we were not able to record this presentation, but you can go to <https://www.turnstoneimpact.com/the-magic-stump.html> to see an excerpt from the film.

Linda Quinn gave an update of upcoming events. There will be a field trip nearly every weekend this spring! Karen Disbrow discussed the return of the Turkey Vulture Festival this June.

Karen has new Iowa bird checklists available from the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.

There was a reminder of the Rowe Sanctuary Crane Cam where you can view Sandhill Cranes from the comfort of home.

Birders discussed recent sightings, including American Woodcocks at Terry Trueblood in the early afternoon, 45 Sandhill Cranes at Cone Marsh, and others.

There were 22 computers in attendance.

– Sandy Eads

**March 19, Cone Marsh.** This trip had been scheduled for March 18, but was postponed one day due to inclement weather. Twelve birders set out from Iowa City, and were joined by three others at the marsh. It was only 13° but the sun was shining and there was very little wind, which made the cold bearable.

The group made the traditional stop at Casey's in Lone Tree and then drove by the Great Horned Owl nest tree. With the cold we really didn't want to upset the bird, and just a little bit of one adult's face and ear tuft were visible.

Then we headed down to the marsh, driving down T Avenue, then to 220th Street, and ending on V Avenue. The marsh was 90% frozen, which concentrated the waterfowl in just a few places. We saw 75 Sandhill Cranes quite well –

most of them were standing as a group in a field not too far from the road. Another highlight was two Northern Harriers which put on quite a show, swooping low and quartering the fields. One of them was a beautiful gray male. We found larger numbers of Mallards and Snow Geese than I expected, and otherwise a pretty normal assortment of waterfowl.

Participants: Lakshmi Balasubramanian, Sarah Bissell, Karen Disbrow, Trish Ditsworth, Matt Flyntz, Sandy Eads, Peter Hansen, Arda Lucas, Linda Quinn, Mark and Deb Rolfes, Nick Timmer, Jean and Jim Wiese.

Birds (43 species): Snow Goose, 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, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Wilson’s Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, European Starling, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal.

– Linda Rudolph

**March 25, Kent Park.** Cancelled due to snow and cold weather.

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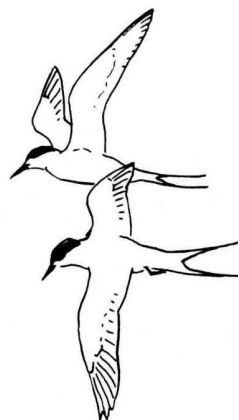
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## ***Eastern Iowa Birdwatch***

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## Iowa City Bird Club

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**To lead or suggest a field trip**, contact Field Trip Coordinator Linda Quinn at 319-330-3328 or [quinnhenry@msn.com](mailto:quinnhenry@msn.com).

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