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# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

## The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

December 2023 • Volume 43 Number 3

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### Schedule

**Field Trips** are free and open to the public. Trips may be changed or cancelled due to inclement weather or other circumstances. Please check our website calendar for updates: <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/events/>. Updates will also be emailed to club members and posted on our Facebook page. **Meetings** are held on Zoom and/or in-person. A Zoom link will be posted on our website calendar for each meeting. For more information or questions email [icbc-help@googlegroups.com](mailto:icbc-help@googlegroups.com).

**December 17, Sunday, Iowa City Christmas Bird Count.** Join us for a holiday tradition – the world’s longest-running citizen science project! You can participate by joining a group at a local park or preserve, or by counting the birds in your own backyard. To sign up, contact Chris Edwards at [credwards@aol.com](mailto:credwards@aol.com) or (319) 430-4732 as soon as possible, and no later than December 13. For additional details see page 2.

**January 7, Sunday, 9 – 11 a.m. Bird Feeder Watch & Social** at 845 Normandy Drive, Iowa City. Join hosts Judith and Drew Dillman at their beautiful home along the Iowa River. Drop in anytime to chat with fellow birders and watch winter birds at the feeding stations and river’s edge. Coffee and juice are provided, and breakfast eats to share are much appreciated. An optional bird walk will take place at 11:00 along shoveled sidewalks to look for birds in City Park.

**February 15, Thursday, 7 p.m. Zoom Meeting.** Ben Rowold, Iowa City Bird Club member and Master Naturalist, will present “Monitoring Kent Park Bluebirds: Learning the Hard Way.”

**February 18, Sunday, 8 a.m. Quad Cities & Mississippi River** for gulls, waterfowl, and other winter birds with leader Chris Caster. We’ll stop at locks and dams, riverside parks, and other hotspots like Fairmount Cemetery for winter finches. Walking is usually short-distance from frequent stops. We’ll stop for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Return time is late afternoon. Dress for cold and wind, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. Meet Chris at the Hy-Vee parking lot, 1125 N Dodge St., Iowa City.

**March 9, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Burlington Area & Mississippi River** for spring waterfowl migration. Target birds include ducks, geese, pelicans, Winter Wren and many more. Sixty-four species were seen in 2023! This is an all-day trip led by Burlington local expert birder Chuck Fuller, with stops at locks and dams, riverside parks, and other hotspots. Walking is usually short distance from frequent stops. We will stop for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Dress for cold and wind, and bring a scope if you have one. Meet Karen Disbrow at 6:30 a.m. at the Fin & Feather parking lot, 125 Hwy. 1 W, Iowa City; or at 8 a.m. at the Port of Burlington, 400 Front St., Burlington. Carpooling is encouraged.

**March 19, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Introduction to Birding Course: Basics of Birding I** at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. This is the first session of a six-week course. Advanced registration is requested, and is free to club members. See page 5 for full details.

**March 21, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting – Zoom and In-Person** at the Iowa City Environmental Education Center, 2401 Scott Boulevard SE, Iowa City. Erika Billerbeck, Iowa DNR Conservation Officer, will

discuss her book entitled *Wildland Sentinel: Field Notes from an Iowa Conservation Officer*. This narrative nonfiction work weaves stories of Iowa's natural history with a cast of unforgettable characters. Erika will have copies of the book for sale.

**March 23, Saturday, 8 a.m. Cone Marsh** in Louisa County for Snow Geese, Sandhill Cranes, and migrating waterfowl with leader Fawn Bowden. A local favorite not to be missed at this time of year! We'll stop at several points around the marsh and take a walk on the dike, returning by noon. Dress for cold and windy weather and wet or muddy trails, and bring a scope if you have one. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Fareway parking lot, 2765 Commerce Dr., Iowa City; or at 8:30 a.m. at Casey's, 302 N Devoe St., Lone Tree. Carpooling is encouraged. This is a Beginning Birder Trip, but all are welcome. Map. <https://www.iowadnr.gov/idnr/Fishing/Where-to-Fish/Lakes-Ponds-Reservoirs/Lake-Details?lakeCode=CNM58>.

**March 30, Saturday, 8 a.m. Kent Park.** Explore the trails in Johnson County's premier county park for resident woodland birds and early season migrants including Hermit Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Eastern Phoebe. Meet leaders Mary Bowler and Brian Broderick in the parking lot of the Kent Park Conservation Education Center. Expect hiking on mulched and grassy trails that could be wet. We'll finish by noon. This is a Beginning Birder Trip, but all are welcome. Park map: <http://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/conservation/kent-park>.

## Other Dates of Note

**January 20, Saturday, 9 a.m. – Noon. Coralville WinterFest** with activities at Iowa River Landing, Iowa River Power Pedestrian Bridge, and Riverfront Park.

**March 28, Thursday, 6 – 9 p.m. Prairie Preview** at the Iowa City Senior Center, 28 S Linn Street. This year's program will be on prairies and Paw-paws. Hosted by Bur Oak Land Trust.

### Christmas Bird Count Sunday, December 17

This year's Iowa City Christmas Bird Count will be held Sunday, December 17. As always, we welcome participants in the field as well as feeder watchers who live in the count circle. The circle includes most of the Coralville Reservoir, Lake Macbride, Solon, North Liberty, Tiffin, Coralville, and the northwest portion of Iowa City.

We will try to accommodate both birders who would like to bird in a small group with an experienced leader, and birders who prefer to bird alone or with family members only. If you

bird alone, you will be assigned a small area to cover.

We will have a mid-day compilation at noon at the [Coralville Public Library](#), 1401 5th Street. Attendance is optional. Please park in the lower level and bring your own lunch. Please note the library does not open until noon. We will not have an evening meal or compilation.

To participate, contact Chris Edwards by email at [credwards@aol.com](mailto:credwards@aol.com) or phone at (319) 430-4732 as soon as possible, and no later than Wednesday, December 13. Let Chris know if you want to participate in the field or as a feeder watcher; and if in the field, whether you would like to bird in a small group or bird alone.

## It's Time to Renew!

It's time to renew your membership for 2024. 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 Treasurer Gerry Denning at [geraldlddenning50@gmail.com](mailto:geraldlddenning50@gmail.com) for the year you have paid through. 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.

## Purple Martin Workshop March 2024

The 16th Annual Purple Martin Workshop and Seminar will be held on either the third or fourth Saturday in March 2024 at the CAM Clothing Center, north of Kalona, Iowa. The final date will be announced later. This year's speakers include Bryan Fitzgerald (Griggsville, IL) on "The Purple Martin: From Passion to Obsession," Becky Brown on raising monarch butterflies, Don Lund on monitoring an American Kestrel trail, and Chris Jones on dealing with Iowa's water quality issues. This day-long event includes morning coffee, a nice lunch, vendors, a concluding auction and quite a bit of fun and information exchange. For more information contact Jim Walters at 319-466-1134 or [jcmwalt@infionline.net](mailto:jcmwalt@infionline.net).

## Nest Box Monitors Needed

The Songbird Project is seeking some additional monitors for its Purple Martin colonies and Eastern Bluebird trails in Johnson County. The colonies and trails are usually monitored weekly from mid-April to mid-August. Complete

training and backup (for illness or vacations) is provided. This is a great way to get outside, get some exercise, and help bird species in need of assistance. For more information contact Jim Walters at (319) 466-1134 or [jcmwalt@infionline.net](mailto:jcmwalt@infionline.net).

## Bird Observation Conference Call

Bird Observation Conference Calls are held on the second Monday of each month at 6 p.m. Live dial-in number: (712) 432-8773, ID number: IABIRDS# (4224737#). The topic for December 11 is "Monitoring an American Kestrel Trail." A question-and-answer session will follow the presentation. Past programs can be accessed at (712) 432-8774, ID number IABIRDS# (4224737#), then enter the date followed by # (for example 91222# for the September 12, 2022 program). You can press 6 to advance 2 minutes or press 4 to skip back 2 minutes. For questions, call Evan Gingerich at (319) 359-0997.

## Announcements

**Iowa City Bird Club Merchandise** is available online from Corporate Casuals. You can purchase shirts, hats, bags, and much more with our club's name and logo. Link on our website here <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/merchandise/>.

**Videos of Meeting Presentations** are available on our website under the Videos tab here: <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/video/>. There are 21 videos so far, sorted by topic, date, and title. Topics range from birds to travelogues to science and conservation (MOTUS). If you miss a meeting presentation, catch it here!

**Spotting Scope Checkout:** The club has two spotting scopes available for two-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. To request a loaner scope, contact us at [icbc-help@googlegroups.com](mailto:icbc-help@googlegroups.com).

## 2023 Cy-Hawk Birding Challenge

### Chris Edwards

This year's Cy-Hawk Birding Challenge between the Iowa City Bird Club and Big Bluestem Audubon Society of Ames was held on all three days of Labor Day weekend, and it was a close one! But the Hawkeyes prevailed, 131 species to 127. Both teams had an outstanding bird – the Limpkin at Lake Macbride for ICBC, and a Snowy Plover for BBAS. Big Bluestem also found Red Crossbills, a rarity in most years but not unexpected this year, given the many Iowa reports this fall. Our club had the edge in shorebirds (17 species to 11) and warblers (16 species to 14), but we missed a lot of common species that BBAS found – Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great Horned Owl, Wood Thrush, Orchard Oriole, Ovenbird, and both tanagers, among others.

It was a rather tough weekend for birding, with high temperatures in the mid-90s all three days. Our territory this year included Johnson, Linn, Iowa, Muscatine, and Louisa counties. The majority of our participants were in the field Saturday, and we got off to a strong start with 123 species. But we managed to add only 4 more species Sunday, and another 4 species Monday. We had a total of 20 participants in 10 parties. Jim Kettelkamp had the highest one-day total with 84 species at Hawkeye Wildlife Area on Saturday. Thanks to everyone who participated. Go Hawks!

Participants: Tom Bootsmiller, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Mark Brown, Chris Caster, Gerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Jim Kettelkamp, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Diana Pesek, Linda Quinn, Richard Randell, Deb and Mark Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, Janet Seiz, Eliza Willis.

#### **BIRDS FOUND ONLY BY IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB (25 SPECIES)**

Northern Shoveler	Lesser Yellowlegs	Eastern Towhee
Limpkin	Franklin's Gull	Golden-winged Warbler
Black-necked Stilt	Belted Kingfisher	Tennessee Warbler
American Avocet	Peregrine Falcon	Cape May Warbler
Black-bellied Plover	White-eyed Vireo	Northern Parula
American Golden-Plover	Horned Lark	Blackburnian Warbler
Stilt Sandpiper	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Blue Grosbeak
Sanderling	Veery	
Baird's Sandpiper	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	

#### **BIRDS FOUND ONLY BY BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY (21 SPECIES)**

Trumpeter Swan	Upland Sandpiper	Red Crossbill
Northern Pintail	Broad-winged Hawk	Orchard Oriole
Northern Bobwhite	Eastern Screech-Owl	Ovenbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Great Horned Owl	Mourning Warbler
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Purple Martin	Black-throated Green Warbler
Virginia Rail	Marsh Wren	Summer Tanager
Snowy Plover	Wood Thrush	Scarlet Tanager

#### **BIRDS FOUND BY BOTH CLUBS (106 SPECIES – ONLY UNCOMMON SPECIES LISTED)**

Sora	Acadian Flycatcher
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Bell's Vireo
Caspian Tern	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Forster's Tern	Bay-breasted Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Canada Warbler
Olive-sided Flycatcher	



## Introduction to Birding Course March 19 – April 23, 2024 Environmental Education Center 2401 Scott Blvd. SE, Iowa City



The Iowa City Bird Club is offering a 6-week Introduction to Birding Course at the Environmental Education Center. 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 household for a print subscription or \$10 for a digital subscription. Participants may attend all sessions or pick one or more to attend. Classes can hold 20, and advanced registration is requested – please call or text (319) 430-0315 by noon of the Tuesday session. Handouts and refreshments will be provided.

**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. Trips may be changed or cancelled due to inclement weather or other circumstances. Please check our website calendar for updates: <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/events/>. Updates will also be emailed to club members and posted on our Facebook page. **Exact dates of April field trips will be announced later.**

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

**Tuesday, March 19, 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 23, 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 Fareway parking lot, 2765 Commerce Dr.

**Tuesday, March 26, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II**, including e-Bird, apps, and birdsong ID.

**Saturday, March 30, 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, April 2, 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 or Sunday, April 6 or 7, 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 the Solon Recreation and Nature Area, at the far west end of the parking lot near the restrooms and splash pad.

**Tuesday, April 9, 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 or Sunday, April 13 or 14, 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 16, 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 or Sunday, April 20 or 21, 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 23, 7 p.m. WARBLER IDENTIFICATION & REVIEW.** Warblers are among our most colorful birds, but identification can be a challenge. Compare and contrast similar species.

**Saturday or Sunday, April 27 or 28, 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

**August 6, Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area.** As usual, we met at the parking lot by Swan Lake. The water in the lake was as low as I can ever remember it. On the east end the peeps were hardly getting their feet wet. There were a good number of Great Egrets across the diminishing deeper water, plucking prey like fish in a barrel. A few Great Blue Herons seemed to be secure in their numbers. Many Wood Ducks were loafing about in eclipse plumage. There were a good number of shorebirds present and close enough for us to appreciate the differences in Pectoral, Semipalmated, and Least Sandpipers. A few Semipalmated Plovers were also seen in comparison with the ubiquitous Killdeer. A Snowy Egret was being seen at Swan Lake and it also joined the flock before we finished up.

When we all seemed satisfied with our viewing, the group caravanned to Greencastle Avenue, driving slowly as the gravel road was incredibly dusty. The water was also low there with lots of exposed mud. There were a good number of shorebirds, but not all that different from what had been seen at Swan Lake. Quite a few Lesser Yellowlegs were present and one of us thought they had seen a Greater Yellowlegs. Most interesting though was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Fortunately, there was a border of short grasses around the west side of the water and the Buff was making use of that to forage. Another highlight was a heard Sandhill Crane. A few of us alertly turned to look for the crane and caught sight of a pair in flight before they passed behind the willows. A Purple Martin flyby was also a nice sighting away from town.

But it wasn't too long before we had seen all there was, and we made a long dusty caravan east down Swan Lake Road to Highway 965 and north to the Amana Road. There we parked at the overlook by the DNR sheds. We estimated at least 1500 American White Pelicans to be roosting. Most were well out towards what used

to be Sand Point. This was fortunate because it left some exposed mud closer to our location. There we were able to view at least six Black-necked Stilts. It is thought that there were three pairs nesting in the area this summer and as many as nine stilts had been reported by one local observer. Surprisingly there weren't any other shorebirds. But there were Mallards in eclipse plumage, cormorants roosting, some Ring-billed Gulls and a lone Caspian Tern. A Warbling Vireo and Eastern Wood-Pewee rounded out our Amana Road experience.

Thanks to everyone for coming out. It was fun to introduce everyone to some new birds. The clouds kept us cool and the rain held off until we were headed home.

Participants: Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster (leader), Julie Damiano, Gerry Denning, Drew Dillman, Julie Englander, Jonathan Lewallen, Mark Madsen and dog Buggy, Kathy and Van Martensen, Karen Mason, Linda Quinn, Maria Story, Jean and Jim Wiese.

Birds (45 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Mourning Dove, Sandhill Crane, Black-necked Stilt, Killdeer, Semipalmated Plover, Least Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Greater Yellowlegs, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Warbling Vireo, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tree Swallow, Purple Martin, Barn Swallow, Cedar Waxwing, House Wren, Gray Catbird, American Robin, House Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel.

— Chris Caster

**August 27, Pelican Festival at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area.** The day was beautiful, with sunny skies and perfect temperatures. The date of this year's festival was



moved up two weeks, and it turned out to be a great move, as we had over 2,000 American White Pelicans and 340 attendees. Each of the presentations had 40-80 people attending. We moved the display tables to the top of the hill, due to corn planted on the strip of land between the meadow and the reservoir, and this gave everyone a great view of the water.

I would like to thank the groups that participated; DNR Wildlife Biologist Steve Woodruff, who managed the parking; the DNR staff at HWMA for preparing the site; and the Iowa City Bird Club members who staffed the scopes and helped with setup and take down. The pelican directional signs were newly painted by Corbin Bailey, with paint provided by Leno & Cilek Ace Hardware.

Next year's festival will be held on Sunday, August 25, 2024. We hope to see you there!

– Karen Disbrow

**September 17, Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve.** Our annual hawk watch was held on a beautiful fall-like day, with a starting temperature of 57° rising to 72°, a steady north breeze, and a clear blue sky eventually filling with scattered cotton-candy cumulus clouds.

A mild cold front had passed through the previous day, following several warm days with southerly winds, so I was hopeful for some early-season raptor movement. But as it turned out, we were a day or two early.

Although there was almost always something to look at, we didn't see significant numbers of migrant raptors. Most of the Turkey Vultures, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, and Red-tailed Hawks were probably local birds. We did see a few accipiters on the move, seven Broad-winged Hawks which were migrating very high up, and a Peregrine Falcon which powered past over the ridge behind us. Two immature Bald Eagles put on a lengthy aerial ballet for us, flying together.

The real stars of the morning were hundreds of American White Pelicans. They were first seen kettling in the distance to the west, but eventually appeared right above and in front of us.

Participants: Elizabeth Aubrey, Miji Delso, Gerry Denning, Sandy Eads, Chris Edwards (leader), Joel and Katherine Elgin, Julie Englander, James Huntington, Jonathan Lewallen, Michele Lewis, Richard Randell, Jane Shuttleworth, Alex Stekis, Aaron Sulander, Jean and Jim Wiese, and several others whose names were illegible.

Raptors (8 species, 69 individuals): Turkey Vulture 45, Osprey 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Cooper's Hawk 2, Bald Eagle 7, Broad-winged Hawk 7, Red-tailed Hawk 4, Peregrine Falcon 1.

Other Birds (17 species): Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Egret, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Cedar Waxwing, Gray Catbird, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal.

– Chris Edwards

**September 21, Meeting.** Our first meeting of the fall season was in-person at the Kent Park Conservation Education Center and live on Zoom. Mark Bowman gave an extremely educational presentation titled "Molt Strategies and Birding by Feather." We learned about the four different molt strategies used by birds and why each strategy suits the birds using it. Eleven people attended the meeting in-person, with another eleven computers logged in remotely.

– Sandy Eads

**September 22-23, Building Better Birders Workshop.** This was the second workshop of the series, offered in 25 counties across Iowa with funding provided by REAP-CEP (Resource Enhancement and Protection, Conservation Education Program). Instructor Kelly McKay made several instructional presentations on

nocturnal and diurnal raptors of Iowa, with photos, videos, sounds, and excellent commentary. Two county locations were utilized: Cangleska Wakan and Kent Park. ICBC partnered by providing promotion and guided bird walks, with Nick Timmer helping on Friday evening and Jason Paulios on Saturday morning. A highlight on Saturday was the live raptor program by Joan Schnabel and volunteers from Raptology. The workshop was well-attended by members of the club and birders from nearby counties. The final workshop in the series is scheduled for May 18, 2024, highlighting warblers and shorebirds of Iowa. Website: <https://buildingbetterbirders.com/>.

– Linda Quinn

**September 30, Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area.** It was unseasonably warm as the group assembled at the Swan Lake parking lot for a morning of birding Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area. Temperatures starting in the mid-60s would climb well into the 80s before noon, but sunny skies and light south winds provided good birding conditions. Swan Lake had unfortunately been reduced to a dry, weedy lakebed due to persistent drought, too dry even for shorebirds. The woods just to the north were more active, and migrants including Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue-headed Vireo, Ovenbird, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were seen as they passed through on their way south. Thousands of swallows and hundreds of pelicans soared over the pool to the west of James Avenue, and a large flock of Franklin's Gulls occasionally took to the air. Several species of shorebirds also put in an appearance, including a Piping Plover, which was a nice surprise and a life bird for several in the group. We tallied 54 species for the morning.

Participants: Becky Benson, Gerry Denning, Julie Englander, Bruce Hochstetler, James Huntington, Jonathan Lewallen, Jamie McCoy, Jason McCurdy (leader), Abner Miller, Linda Quinn, Daryl Ropp, Jean and Jim Wiese.

Birds (54 species): Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Mourning Dove,

American Avocet, Killdeer, Piping Plover, Stilt Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cedar Waxwing, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, American Goldfinch, White-throated Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting.

– Jason McCurdy

**October 19, Meeting.** Our October meeting was presented both in-person and on Zoom, with six people attending at Kent Park and 17 people attending online. We had a great presentation, "The Endangered Whooping Crane and So Much More!" by Diane Cookham-Johnson. We learned that Whooping Crane numbers dropped from thousands to just 15 in 1941; and are back to 836 today. We learned where Whooping Cranes can be seen, with two main migratory paths – one from Texas to Canada, and the other from Louisiana and Florida to Wisconsin, the latter from reintroduced populations. We even learned that a small number of Whooping Cranes are non-migratory! Check out the video on the Iowa City Bird Club website to get all the details of this interesting presentation!

– Sandy Eads

**October 22, River Valley Wetland and Althea Sherman Swift Tower Tour.** This Iowa City Bird Club field trip was a little different since it involved two phases in nearby Cedar County at locations that are not on the annual club schedule. Part 1 was a birding outing at a location that was new to many of the group participants, River Valley Wetland. This is a 125-acre wildlife



management area west of Tipton, adjacent to the Cedar River and comprised of wetlands, river bottom timber, and restored prairie. We enjoyed wide and well-maintained trails to go along with the cool and calm morning that started out at around 40 degrees and warmed to the 50s after a couple of hours.

Many of the hoped-for October migrants showed well, starting off with a flock of vocal Rusty Blackbirds near the beginning of the walk. Not long after, we stopped by the bird blind where a nice wetland could be viewed. The only birds using it were a dozen Green-winged Teal, which didn't stay long after an immature Cooper's Hawk flew in and landed nearby. This turned out to be the only raptor of the outing. As we progressed along the trail, we were entertained by constant flocks of migrants that included many Yellow-rumped Warblers and Golden-crowned Kinglets. Sparrows are always a target this time of year. The one that was encountered most often was White-throated, but we did manage to turn up a handful of other species, which included small numbers of Juncos, Swamp, Song, Fox, and Savannah Sparrows. Other highlights were a pair of flyover Sandhill Cranes and a single Hermit Thrush that was moving around the treetops rather than skulking near the ground! Before we knew it, the time had come to return to the parking area and move on to the next phase of the field trip, but not before tallying 35 species, a respectable total for a fall outing that was just over two hours long and under two miles covered.

Phase two of our morning was just a few minutes away at Bickett-Rate Preserve for a pre-arranged tour of the property's farm and Althea Sherman Swift Tower. The bird club members were greeted by Mike Boyle and Marsha Howe of The Cedar County Historical Society. We first entered the farmhouse to enjoy refreshments and listen to a fascinating history of ornithologist Althea Sherman, her revolutionary observations of Chimney Swifts over nearly two decades, and how the Swift Tower where these observations occurred would eventually arrive at the Bickett-Rate Preserve in 2013. We then moved on to tour

the red barn and see the 28-foot-tall Sherman Swift Tower. Since the Chimney Swifts had departed several weeks ago, we had the opportunity to actually climb to the top of the tower and peek at the nest that was used to successfully fledge five young Swifts during the summer of 2023!

For anyone interested in visiting Bickett-Rate Preserve, Marsha and Mike strongly encourage return visits with family, friends, and groups for enjoyment and education of this special historic site. Birders are welcome to walk the property which includes a mowed lawn with bluebird houses and martin houses, pastureland, fields and extensive woodlands along the Cedar River. Swifts can be observed outside the tower, around the property from arrival mid-May till migration departure early September. This year's pair of swifts and young could be seen entering the tower at dusk for nighttime roosting.

The preserve is open to the public February – late October (off-season for hunting). The gate is open at the driveway during that time. Groups can get permission for free use/tour of the property, the house (kitchen and bathrooms) and interior of the Swift Tower during nonbreeding time. Permission for access during hunting season can be obtained by contacting Cedar County Historical Society through Marsha Howe at [mhowe56@yahoo.com](mailto:mhowe56@yahoo.com) or (319) 383-8761, and/or Mike Boyle, [cchsmus@netins.net](mailto:cchsmus@netins.net).

Here's a link to the Althea R. Sherman Memorial Issue of *Iowa Bird Life*, June 1943:

<https://iowabirds.org/Library/Journals/1940-1949%20Vol.%2010-19/1943-Vol%2013/IBL-13-2.pdf>.

As the group concluded the tour and headed back to our cars, we got a proper send-off with the final good bird of the day. A pair of Pine Siskins flew into some trees along the property's driveway. At first they stayed hidden, but eventually made their way out where most everyone got nice looks. It was great to have so many bird club members participate in this two-part outing, and a very special thanks to Marsha

Howe and Mike Boyle for their outstanding tour of Bickett-Rate Preserve. We will be sure to return!

Participants: Elizabeth Aubrey, Phyllis Black, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Mark Brown (leader), Sandy Eads, Gerry Denning, Jonathan Lewallen, Ramona McGurk, Linda Quinn, Janet Seiz, Maria Story, Jean and Jim Wiese, Eliza Willis.

Birds (35 species): Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Cooper's Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tree Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal.

– Mark Brown

**November 11, Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area.** This was a joint trip of the Iowa City Bird Club and Iowa Ornithologists' Union. The morning was very nice with sunshine and very little wind. It was chilly, but the lake was calm. The highlight of the day was three Black Scoters! These are large sea ducks and they are fairly rare inland. They are also quite rare for Linn County – the last eBird reports were from 2012. This species was a lifer for many of the participants! We also found a Common Loon, three Horned Grebes, and two Bonaparte's Gulls. A Lapland Longspur did a flyover. We hiked a few short trails and found a nice group of Purple Finches. There were 17 total participants, including 12 from the Iowa City Bird Club.

ICBC Participants: Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Barry Buschelman, Drew Dillman, Karen Disbrow, Therese Guedon, Jonathan

Lewallen, Ramona McGurk, Abner Miller, Mary Noble, Janet Seiz, Eliza Willis.

Birds (29 species): Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Black Scoter, Horned Grebe, American Coot, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Cedar Waxwing, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Lapland Longspur, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal.

– Wendy VanDeWalle

**November 16, Meeting.** For this Zoom-only meeting, Maria Story gave a very interesting presentation on her trip to Antarctica in October 2022. Not only did we get to see many birds of the region, including Chinstrap Penguins, Macaroni Penguins, and Grey-headed Albatross, but we also saw animals such as Elephant Seal and Fur Seal. Maria shared some of the history of the area and some of the measures taken to preserve the biodiversity there. Go to the Iowa City Bird Club website to check out the video if you missed this one!

Sandy Eads reminded us that the next meeting will be in February 2024; there will be no December or January meetings. There were 17 computers with at least 19 members signed in.

– Sandy Eads

## New Books Available at the Iowa City Public Library

***Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration* by Rebecca Heisman.** The never-before-told story of how a group of migration-obsessed scientists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries engaged nearly every branch of science to understand bird migration – from where and when they take off

to their flightpaths and behaviors, their destinations and the challenges they encounter getting there.

***What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman.** From the New York Times bestselling author of *The Genius of Birds* and *The Bird Way*, a brilliant scientific exploration of owls, the most elusive group of birds, and an investigation into why these remarkable and yet mysterious animals exert such a hold on human imagination.

***A Wing and a Prayer: The Race to Save Our Vanishing Birds* by Anders Gyllenhaal.** Three years ago, headlines delivered shocking news: nearly three billion birds in North America have vanished over the past fifty years. For the past year, veteran journalists Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal traveled more than 25,000 miles across the Americas, chronicling costly experiments, contentious politics, and new technologies to save our beloved birds from the brink of extinction.

***Ten Birds that Changed the World* by Stephen Moss.** The author tells the gripping story of mankind's long and intimate relationship with

birds through ten key species from all seven of the world's continents. From Odin's faithful raven companions to Darwin's finches, and from the Wild Turkey of the Americas to the Emperor Penguin as potent symbol of the climate crisis, this is a fascinating, eye-opening, and endlessly engaging work of natural history.

***The Hidden Company that Trees Keep: Life from Treetops to Root Tips* by James B. Nardi.**

Take a deep dive into the complex and endlessly fascinating relationships between trees and the many organisms that rely on them throughout their entire lifecycles. Some of these stories will be familiar, but others, particularly at the micro-level, will be something of a revelation. Nardi examines every part of the tree to show how the tiniest organisms use micro spaces in leaf scales, twigs, or bark to thrive while larger organisms such as birds and mammals exploit the individual tree's more visible resources and in return help seed dispersal or other types of propagation.

***Find More Birds: 111 Surprising Ways to Spot Birds Wherever You Are* by Heather Wolf.** A photo-filled trove of tips for seeing more birds wherever you look, from crowd favorites (hummingbirds, owls, eagles) to species you've never spotted before.

## IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Please send this form with your annual membership dues to Gerry Denning, 1146 Oakes Dr., Iowa City, IA 52245. Annual membership dues per household are \$15 for a print subscription or \$10 for a digital 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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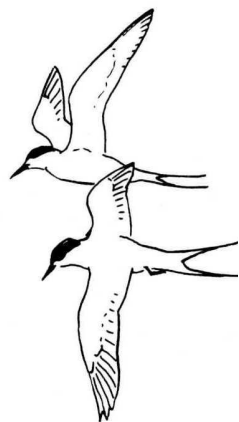
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## ***Eastern Iowa Birdwatch***

**Chris Edwards, Editor**

**4490 Daniels Cir. NE**

**Solon, IA 52333**



## **Iowa City Bird Club**

**[www.iowacitybirdclub.org](http://www.iowacitybirdclub.org)**

**Annual membership dues** per household are \$15 for a print subscription or \$10 for a digital subscription, payable by January 1 for the coming year. To check the status of your membership, check your mailing label or contact Treasurer Gerry Denning at [geraldlddenning50@gmail.com](mailto:geraldlddenning50@gmail.com). Make checks payable to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch and mail to Gerry Denning, 1146 Oakes Dr., Iowa City, IA 52245, or pay with PayPal on our website.

**Visit our web site** at [www.iowacitybirdclub.org](http://www.iowacitybirdclub.org). You may contact Webmaster Mark Graber at [markagraber@gmail.com](mailto: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 [icbc-help@googlegroups.com](mailto:icbc-help@googlegroups.com) to sign up.

**For general club information**, contact us at [icbc-help@googlegroups.com](mailto:icbc-help@googlegroups.com).

**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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