
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 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 iowacitybirdclub@gmail.com.

December 14, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Join us for a holiday tradition, the world's longest-running citizen science project! There are two ways to participate: you can join a small group with an experienced leader assigned to a specific territory, which could contain local parks, trails, or wildlife areas; or if you live in the count circle, you can count the birds in your own yard. To sign up, contact Chris Edwards at credwards@aol.com or (319) 430-4732 as soon as possible, and no later than December 10. You can participate for part or all of the day. Groups do a varied mix of walking and driving, and some groups look for owls before dawn. We will have a mid-day compilation at a **new meeting location and time: room CD in the North Liberty Library at 1:00 p.m.** The library is in the same building as the North Liberty Community Center. Bring your own lunch.

January 7, Wednesday, 8-10 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk. Join leader Chris Edwards on the first Wednesday of each month for a bird walk in Kent Park. Meet at the Conservation Education Center. In the winter months we'll spend time in the bird blind and then go for a walk. In the summer months we'll switch to butterfly walks.

January 18, Sunday, 9–11 a.m. Bird Feeder Watch and Social with the Shuttleworth and Trachsel families at 10 Ridgewood Lane (Jane Shuttleworth) and 6 Ridgewood Lane (Amy and Ben Trachsel) in Iowa City. The sisters' side-by-side properties overlook Shimek Ravine, a Bur Oak Land Trust property. This preserve draws five species of woodpeckers and other winter birds. Drop in at both houses to chat with the hosts and fellow birders. It's a roving party! Coffee and juice will be provided; please bring a party snack to share. At 11 a.m., join an optional hike in [Shimek Ravine](#), including a tour of how the neighborhood is removing invasive species. (Note: the trail is steep.) Last year 15 species were spotted despite sub-zero temps. Come help us beat that record in 2026! Please park in either of the hosts' driveways or on the cul-de-sac of Ridgewood Lane.

February 4, Wednesday, 8-10 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk with leader Chris Edwards. Meet at the Conservation Education Center.

February 8, Sunday, 8 a.m. Quad Cities and Mississippi River. With leader Chris Caster, we'll visit locks and dams and riverside parks to see gulls, waterfowl, and other winter birds. We'll also visit Fairmount Cemetery for winter finches. Walking is usually short-distance from frequent car stops. We will stop for lunch and a bathroom break near midday at a fast-food restaurant (probably Hardee's), or feel free to bring your lunch. Return time is late afternoon. Dress for cold and wind, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. Meet Chris at the Highlander Hotel parking lot, 2525 Highlander Place, Iowa City.

Continued on next page

Schedule (continued)

February 19, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting – Zoom Only. Jim Pease will present “Tropical Biodiversity: Why Should We Care?” This talk draws on Jim’s many trips to Central and South America and carries a message of importance for those of us in the temperate zone. Now retired from Iowa State University, Jim is active speaking, writing, consulting, and leading wildlife trips to Central and South America and Africa.

February 28, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Cone Marsh in Louisa County. With leader Fawn Bowden, we’ll look for Snow Geese, Sandhill Cranes, and migrating waterfowl. We’ll stop at several points around the marsh and take a walk on the dike. Dress for cold, wind, and wet or muddy trails. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Return time is around noon. Carpooling is encouraged. To carpool, meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot of Fareway Grocery, 2765 Commerce Dr., Iowa City. Alternatively, meet the group at 8 a.m. at Casey’s in Lone Tree (302 N Devoe St.), where the caravan to Cone Marsh will begin. No bathroom on site; we can use Casey’s. If the weather is bad, backup date is Sunday, March 1.

March 4, Wednesday, 8-10 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk with leader Chris Edwards. Meet at the Conservation Education Center.

March 7, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Burlington Area and Mississippi River. This is an all-day trip led by local Burlington expert birder Chuck Fuller. With spring waterfowl migration underway, the target birds include various species of ducks and geese, as well as pelicans. We’ll also look for songbirds like Winter Wren. Seventy-one species were seen on this trip in 2025! Walking is usually short-distance from frequent car stops at locks and dams, riverside parks, and other hotspots. We will stop for lunch and a bathroom break near midday at a fast-food restaurant (probably Burger King), or feel free to bring your lunch. Dress for cold and wind, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. To carpool, meet Karen Disbrow at 6:30 a.m. at the front parking lot of the Johnson County Fairgrounds, 3109 Old Highway 218 South, Iowa City. Alternatively, you can meet the group at 8 a.m. at the Port of Burlington, 400 Front St., Burlington.

March 19, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting – In-Person and Zoom at the Environmental Education Center, 2401 Scott Blvd. SE, Iowa City. Elizabeth Miller of the Iowa Grotto, the Iowa Chapter of the National Speleological Society, will present “Bats in Iowa.”

March 22, Sunday, 8 a.m. Wiese Slough Wildlife Area in Muscatine County. Target species include ducks, geese, Trumpeter Swan, and returning songbirds. We will drive to several viewing locations within the wildlife area and take short hikes to find passerines. Meet leader Linda Quinn at 8 a.m. to carpool from the south side of Iowa City at the parking lot of Fareway Grocery, 2765 Commerce Dr, Iowa City. Or meet on site at 8:30 at the north boat ramp of Wiese Slough, 1398 Mohawk Ave., Atalissa. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. There is no bathroom on site (nearby town of West Liberty has Casey’s). We’ll finish by noon.

March 31, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Introduction to Birding Course with instructor Linda Rudolph at the Iowa City Environmental Education Center. See page 4 for more information and a complete schedule.

April 1, Wednesday, 8-10 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk with leader Chris Edwards. Meet at the Conservation Education Center.

Johnson County and Iowa City Designated Bird Friendly Iowa Communities

Both Johnson County and the City of Iowa City were recently recognized as Bird Friendly Iowa communities! Bird Friendly Iowa is a statewide conservation and outreach program that recognizes Iowa communities for protecting, restoring, and enhancing bird habitat; reducing threats to birds; and educating and engaging people in birding and conservation. It is part of the international Bird City Network, a collaboration of American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas, which now includes over 200 communities across four countries who are working to become healthier for birds and people.

Johnson County's application was prepared and submitted in April by the Johnson County Conservation Department, and the designation was awarded in early May. According to the information release, through the efforts of many dedicated organizations, volunteers, and municipalities all working to support birds and educate our community, Johnson County was the first applicant to receive "High Flyer" status on the initial application! This is the highest-level achievement status a community can attain and is reserved for communities that meet more challenging criteria.

Johnson County Conservation Education Specialist Michelle Wiegand and Conservation Director Brad Freidhof were instrumental in the process. During a presentation to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, Wiegand said bird populations have been declining, and noted that bird conservation is important for ecosystem services such as pollination and seed distribution. She said their application addressed protecting bird habitats and promoting bird conservation within the County. Freidhof added that Johnson County has a history of protecting birds and their habitats, and has always had a strong birding community. Johnson County Conservation held a dedication ceremony and community celebration at the Kent Park Conservation Education Center on November 14.

Also in November, Bird Friendly Iowa announced that the City of Iowa City will be designated as a Bird Friendly Community for its commitment to conservation of birds and habitat. Iowa City's application was assembled by a team comprised of members of the Iowa City Bird Club (Seth Dudley, Brenda Nations, Linda Quinn, and Eliza Willis) and representatives from multiple city departments (Tyler Baird and Juli Seydel Johnson of Parks & Recreation and Sarah Gardner of Climate Action & Outreach). It detailed a variety of past and ongoing initiatives such as programs that promote native habitat and encourage reduced pesticide use on private property; Warbler Walks hosted by the Iowa City Bird Club at Hickory Hill Park, a designated Important Bird Area; the adoption of nature-based solutions and other sustainability features in city buildings; and more.

Iowa City also achieved "High Flyer" status on its initial application! "Achieving High Flyer status on their first try is remarkable," said Erica Place of the Bird Friendly Iowa Steering Committee. "Iowa City submitted a robust application and it is clear that the community has a strong awareness that birds are more than beautiful — they are an important part of a healthy ecosystem and critical to our quality of life, as well as a means of connecting residents and visitors with our environment." Iowa City will commemorate this achievement at a community celebration on a date to be determined in early 2026.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone involved at Johnson County Conservation and the City of Iowa City for their commitment to birds!



Introduction to Birding Course March 31 – May 2, 2026 Environmental Education Center 2401 Scott Blvd. SE, Iowa City

The Iowa City Bird Club is offering an **Introduction to Birding Course** consisting of five evening classes and five Saturday morning field trips to local hotspots. Classes are held at the Environmental Education Center at 2401 Scott Blvd. SE, Iowa City. The cost is free for ICBC members or \$5 per class for non-members, or join our membership on the first night of class for \$10 (digital newsletter subscription) or \$15 (printed newsletter subscription). Participants may attend all sessions or pick one or more to attend. No registration is required.

Field trips are for current and past course participants. Loaner binoculars will be provided. Trips may be cancelled due to inclement weather—please check our website at iowacitybirdclub.org/events/ for updates. Updates will also be emailed to club members and posted on our Facebook page.

For more information, contact iowacitybirdclub@gmail.com.

Tuesday, March 31, 7–8 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING I CLASS. This will include field identification of birds, field guides, and equipment every birder needs.

Saturday, April 4, 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Field Trip to KENT PARK. Beginning birder trip for current or past participants in the course. We will explore the trails in this park for migrating songbirds and resident woodland birds. Meet at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park, 2048 Hwy. 6 NW, Oxford.

Tuesday, April 7, 7–8 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II CLASS, including eBird, apps, and birdsong ID.

Saturday, April 11, 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Field Trip to TERRY TRUEBLOOD RECREATION AREA. Beginning birder trip for current or past participants in the course. Visit this popular Iowa City park and nearby Sycamore Greenway. The lake at Terry Trueblood hosts migrating ducks with a surrounding accessible trail where we'll see a variety of returning breeding birds. A short drive away is Sycamore Greenway trail with shrub and prairie habitat that attracts grassland birds such as sparrows, Sandhill Cranes, and Brown Thrasher. Meet outside the lodge at Terry Trueblood, 579 McCollister Blvd., Iowa City.

Tuesday, April 14, 7–8 p.m. BIRDING IN JOHNSON COUNTY CLASS. Covering eBird alerts, hotspots, recent photos and sightings, and Iowa City Bird Club field trips.

Saturday, April 18, 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Field Trip to LAKE MACBRIDE. Beginning birder trip for current or past participants in the course. Targets are water birds and other early spring migrants. We'll stop at various points around the lake. Meet at the North Liberty Community Center, 520 W Cherry St., on the north side of the building, and carpool from there; or meet us at Sailboat Shelter 1 parking lot in Lake Macbride State Park around 8:20 a.m.

Tuesday, April 21, 7–8 p.m. BACKYARD AND FEEDER BIRDS CLASS. 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 25, 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Field Trip to HAWKEYE WILDLIFE AREA. Beginning birder trip for current or past participants in the course. 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. We'll carpool from the North Liberty Community Center, 520 W Cherry St., on the north side of the building.

Tuesday, April 28, 7–8 p.m. BIRDS OF IOWA CLASS. Summer residents that nest here and birds that migrate through Iowa in spring and fall.

Saturday, May 2, 8 a.m.–12 p.m. Field Trip to WATERWORKS PRAIRIE PARK. Beginning birder trip for current or past participants in the course. Visit this Iowa City park with accessible paved trails for woodland, prairie, and wetland species. Meet in the parking lot of Waterworks Prairie Park, 2875 Dubuque St. NE, Iowa City.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

May 24, Redbird Farms Wildlife Area—Correction. The participant list should have read as follows: Laura Harwood, Abner Miller (leader), Robert Peck, Linda Quinn, Mark Reagan.

August 24, Pelican Festival at Hawkeye Wildlife Area. Our annual Pelican Festival near the DNR headquarters on Amana Road was held in fabulous weather, with temperatures reaching the mid-70s, mostly sunny skies, and a stiff breeze that necessitated holding down the tent canopies with big rocks. The day's total attendance was 241. Pelicans were visible from the site for almost the entire day, starting with just a few and building to a feeding flock of more than 200. Many more were visible off in the distance to the southeast. Everyone who stopped by the spotting scopes was treated to great views, and it was fun listening to the "oohs" and "aahs" of those who had never seen the big birds up close before.

The speakers were fabulous and all the presentations were well-attended. Doug Harr gave two talks about American White Pelicans; Raptology brought a live raptor; and Elizabeth Miller presented on bats. Terry VanDeWalle and Neil Bernstein signed copies of their new book, *The Natural History of the Turtles of Iowa*.

Thank you to all those who helped with setup and teardown, staffed the spotting scopes, directed parking, and counted attendees. They included Connie Aldridge, Jessica Alexander, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Barry Buschelman, Gerry Denning, Chris Edwards, Leland Frie, Francis Moore, Mary Noble, Linda Quinn, Ben Rowold, and Wendy VanDeWalle.

Groups or individuals with a presence at the festival included Cedar County Conservation, Friends of Coralville Lake, Honeybee Guy, Iowa Audubon, Iowa City Bird Club, Iowa Master Naturalists, Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Prairie

States Mushroom Club, Sierra Club, Trees Forever, and U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Face painting was provided by Josephine from Funny Face Designs by Lori. She was kept very busy and even painted a pelican or two. Chris Edwards and Doug Harr kept track of the species list below.

Birds (22 species): Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Killdeer, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Warbling Vireo, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Indigo Bunting.

– Karen Disbrow

September 6, Coralville Lake Riverwalk Trail. Twenty-three birders plus leader Linda Rudolph birded the Riverwalk Trail below the Coralville Dam. The weather was near perfect with a starting temperature of 52° and warming to 62°. The sky was mostly clear with some puffy clouds and there was no wind. This was a slower-paced walk, starting at 9 a.m. and traveling the one-fourth mile to the end of the trail and back. Even so, we managed to see 36 species. It was great to have both a family that was camping and a couple visiting from San Diego join us. Many of the birds were cooperative and delighted the group, starting off with American Goldfinches foraging at the start of the trail. We saw immature Red-headed Woodpeckers, a lingering Northern House Wren, and seven species of warblers. Many of the warblers were seen well by most of the group.

Participants: Chris Baker, Kara Beauchamp, Nancy Bowen, Sally Bowen, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, the Dattilo family, Drew Dillman, Sandy Eads, Laura Harwood, Rhonda Hildreth, Dan Liversi, Eli Perencevich, Susan Phillips, Dee Ann Rexroat, Mary Schweitzer, Jane Shuttleworth, Cindy Spading, Eliza Willis.

Birds (36 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Ring-billed Gull, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Barn Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern House Wren, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Golden-winged Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Northern Cardinal.

– Linda Rudolph

September 18, Fall Potluck and Meeting. We combined a fall potluck with our September meeting, and a nice array of food was enjoyed by 15 participants. Our official meeting was started by Karen Disbrow reminding us of the fall Iowa Ornithologists' Union meeting to be held in Clear Lake. Karen then introduced our speakers, Neil Bernstein and Terry VanDeWalle, coauthors of *The Natural History of the Turtles of Iowa*. They gave a fascinating, fact-filled presentation on Iowa's turtles. If you missed it, you'll want to go to the ICBC website and catch that video!

There were 22 in-person attendees and 11 Zoom viewers.

– Sandy Eads

September 21, Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve. The outlook for this year's hawk watch was not promising. The forecast called for temperatures in the upper 70s, cloudy skies, and a continuation of the slight south winds which had predominated for most of the preceding week. But it goes to show that birds can be unpredictable, and when you think you've got their behavior figured out, you're probably wrong! It turned out to be one of our best hawk watches in 35+ years of the event. Unlike most years, this time there was raptor activity from start to finish. And eventually the clouds broke up and we had some blue sky.

During the first half of the count, most of the birds were spotted to our north, and as they approached, they took a course behind us over the ridge to our east. This pattern brought some birds fairly close overhead. At some point the wind must have subtly shifted, because we started seeing more birds to our west, tracking south along the Iowa River course.

As usual, Turkey Vultures were the early risers, and we spotted close to 30 in the first hour. There were at least a few vultures in sight all morning, so it was hard to get a handle on just how many there were. A flyby Osprey was another early sighting and surprisingly it was the only one we saw. Before 10 o'clock we started to see small kettles and single Broad-winged Hawks. Over the next hour their numbers really picked up, and at one point there were 140 Broad-wings visible in several kettles that streamed by towards the southeast. We kept seeing them in smaller numbers through the end of the count. Several individuals went past us fairly low overhead. My final count was 283 Broad-wings, the second-highest total ever on our hawk watch.

One bird that produced some excitement in the 10 o'clock hour was a fast-moving Peregrine Falcon that came powering at us from the north, flying right over the preserve and then turning and disappearing over the top of the hill behind us. Often, Peregrine sightings are so quick and distant that they produce a bit of discussion, but this one was so well-seen that there was no doubt about its identification!

Late in the morning we did have a sighting that spurred a good debate. It was flying north to south, high over the ridge behind us. It had long, tapered wings and a long tail. Peregrine Falcon was considered, but the slower wingbeats and briefly-glimpsed dihedral wing shape suggested a Northern Harrier. Remarkably, Linda Rudolph snapped a few diagnostic photos of the very distant bird that later confirmed this ID. Harriers are always a bit unexpected on our hawk watch.

Around 11 o'clock we started seeing occasional Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks. They were migrating fairly high up, and we identified them by shape and flight style. These sightings prompted a discussion about recent taxonomic changes. I learned that we can no longer refer to unidentified Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks as "*Accipiter* species." Recent DNA studies have shown they are not as closely related as once thought, and they've been moved into separate genera. Sharp-shinned Hawk is still in the genus *Accipiter*, but Cooper's Hawk and American Goshawk are now in the genus *Astur*. So, what we formerly called an unidentified *Accipiter*, we must now call an unidentified Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk. (Or perhaps Carpie? Shoop's Hawk?) At least until the next change. Thanks to Elizabeth Aubrey for bringing me up to speed on this!

We saw a few Bald Eagles, both adults and immatures, during the first half of the count, but their numbers increased after noon, when in addition to singles we saw groups of two, four, or even six. They didn't appear to be migrating so it was hard to get an accurate count, but I settled on 20. It was nice to see so many.

Somewhat remarkably, we did not see any Red-tailed Hawks. It was probably too early in the season for them to be migrating, but typically we see a few that are presumed residents. I've read that many raptor species nationwide are being hit hard by avian influenza, and there are many empty nesting territories that were formerly occupied. I suspect this may be an issue for our local Red-tailed Hawks.

As for the site itself, Stainbrook Preserve, this may be the last year for our hawk watch there. There are no public agencies maintaining the site now, and invasive shrubs and trees have significantly blocked our view. For the last several years we've had to take it upon ourselves to clear the trail up the hill and mow a viewing area – thanks to Chris Caster and Gerry Denning for helping me with that task this year! I've got another potential spot at Lake Macbride in mind for next year. We'll see.

Participants: Elizabeth Aubrey, Brian Broderick, Clarah Buhman, Isaac Caron, Gerry Denning, Sandy Eads, Chris Edwards (leader), Julie Englander, Laura Harwood, Richard Randell, Linda Quinn, Deb and Mark Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, Cindy Spading.

Raptors (8 species, 389 individuals): Turkey Vulture 70, Osprey 1, Bald Eagle 20, Northern Harrier 1, Sharp-shinned Hawk 5, Cooper's Hawk 5, Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk 3, Broad-winged Hawk 283, Peregrine Falcon 1.

Other Birds (22 species): Canada Goose, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, American Goldfinch, American Redstart, Blackburnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler.

– Chris Edwards

October 4, Amana Nature Trail in Iowa County. It was a beautiful fall morning as our group walked the Amana Nature Trail, a scenic forested area along the Iowa River. We enjoyed long looks at a perched Broad-winged Hawk as we began our hike. Seventeen total species were found, including a rather late-in-season Least Flycatcher. The group also took time to enjoy plant life along the trail, in particular common blue wood aster, Missouri gooseberry, and various fern species.

Participants: Elizabeth Aubrey, Brian Broderick, Mary Bowler, Gerry Denning, Laura Harwood, Mark Madsen (leader), Jane Shuttleworth, Jean and Jim Wiese.

Birds (17 species): Turkey Vulture, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Least Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Cedar Waxwing, White-

breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Eastern Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal.

– *Mark Madsen*

October 5, Wings & Wild Things Festival at Kent Park. The second year of Wings & Wild Things was even bigger and better! Rangers counted an impressive 4,288 attendees at this celebration of Iowa's natural places. The event was packed with hands-on fun and wonder—featuring live raptor meet-and-greets, a native plant sale, educational speakers, fishing and kayaking opportunities, reptile demonstrations, food trucks, and much more.

How did all this come together? Organizer Michelle Wiegand, Johnson County Conservation Education Specialist, orchestrated the event with help from 20 partner organizations. Naturally, the Iowa City Bird Club joined in with three bird-focused activities! We led small-group bird hikes (complete with loaner binoculars and checklists), hosted interactive stations featuring a bird skull matching game and a foraging techniques challenge, and of course, spent plenty of time spotting and talking birds. Despite the stiff winds making bird-finding a bit tricky, everyone enjoyed the experience—and many newcomers got their first real taste of birding.

A big thank-you to our amazing volunteers: Karen Disbrow, Laura Harwood, Ramona McGurk, Linda Quinn, Deb and Mark Rolfes, and Jean and Jim Weise. We couldn't have done it without you!

– *Linda Quinn*

October 16, Meeting. Karen Disbrow began the October in-person and Zoom meeting with a report on the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting, held in Clear Lake the previous weekend; and a quick update on long-time club member Mary Noble.

Karen then introduced Wendy VanDeWalle, who presented an overview of all that went into her Iowa birding Big Year in 2023. Knowing that

300 species is the goal for Iowa birders, you can imagine the efforts and adventures that went into reaching that goal! For all the details and how far Wendy exceeded that 300 species goal, you'll have to check out the video if you missed the presentation!

There were 16 in-person and 11 Zoom attendees.

– *Sandy Eads*

November 8, Pleasant Creek Recreation Area in Linn County. The day started cloudy and near 40 degrees with rain imminent. We gathered at the far end of the main boat ramp and scanned the lake. There was a small group of Bonaparte's Gulls floating on the lake along with a small group of waterfowl which was made up of mostly scaup and a couple mergansers. We located a loon on the west side. Hunters soon came zooming through with their boat and flushed all the ducks off the lake.

We then traveled to Lewis Bottoms marsh and relocated the Ruff, which had been there for a couple days prior. I did not think it would stick around long enough for the field trip! The Ruff is a Eurasian species and is a rare traveler to the United States. We may see one once every other year or so in Iowa. This was a life bird for several people! We scoped out Wilson's Snipe and other marsh waterfowl as well.

We then went back to Pleasant Creek and found two Horned Grebes very close to the shore at the first picnic area. We marveled at the awesome view! A Common Loon soon showed up in the same bay and strayed close to the shore as well. It graced us with a lovely wail call! The lake was calm that morning and looked just like glass. That is a rare occurrence!

We then traveled to the campground and started a hike just as it started sprinkling. We got in a short hike before the rain really picked up. Canada Geese and a Cackling Goose flew over and we saw some juncos and a Fox Sparrow along the trail. We were glad the rain held off as long as it did, because I found out later that it had rained most of the morning, just a half hour to the

north. You can check out the pictures from the field trip on eBird if you go to Explore Regions and type in Linn County. Scroll down to the bottom to see recent trip reports and check out the Iowa City Bird Club Pleasant Creek field trip report.

Participants: Jess Alexander, Gail Barels, Neil Bernstein, Mary Bowler, Brian Broderick, Janice Chrystal, Kathryn Deetz, Hannah and Pete Leabhart, Andy and Mikayla Scanlon, R.R. Tiki, Wendy VanDeWalle (leader).

Birds (31 species): Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Ring-necked Pheasant, Horned Grebe, American Coot, Killdeer, Ruff, Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Loon, Red-tailed Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, House Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow.

– *Wendy VanDeWalle*

November 20, Meeting. Mark Bowman presented “Tyrannid Flycatchers and Their Exotic Relatives.” Mark is a retired professor who bands passerines and kestrels for the USGS, and assists with monitoring a Purple Martin colony. He reviewed the charming behaviors of flycatchers as experienced when banding birds. Then he discussed the phenomenal evolutionary success of passerines, and the remarkable suboscines, the clade of passerines to which New World flycatchers belong. Suboscines also include broadbills, pittas, manakins, cotingas, antbirds, ovenbirds, tapaculos, and other exotic bird families. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties the meeting was not available on Zoom and there is no recording. Nine people attended in person.

– *Sandy Eads*

Renewal Time

It's time to renew your membership for 2026. 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 geralddenning50@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 “Iowa City Bird Club Inc.” to Gerry Denning, 1146 Oakes Dr., Iowa City, IA 52245. Or go to our website and pay with PayPal at: <https://iowacitybirdclub.org/membership-page/>.

Laysan Island Cyclorama Update

The Laysan Island Cyclorama at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History is a local (and national) treasure that has captivated visitors for more than a century. Now the museum has been awarded a *Save America's Treasures* grant to support preservation of this one-of-a-kind exhibit. Administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Arts, *Save America's Treasures* provides funding to protect nationally significant historic properties and collections. The program will fund \$750,000 toward the museum's ongoing restoration efforts. With this grant, funding for the conservation project is now approximately 80% complete.

Created in 1914, the Laysan Island Cyclorama immerses visitors in the environment of Kauō (or Laysan), an atoll in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands known for its extraordinary bird populations. Combining art, science, and conservation, the exhibition features a 138-foot

painted mural, over 100 mounted birds representing 24 species (including three now extinct species), and a richly detailed foreground of nests, eggs, and native flora. It was one of the first 360-degree immersive exhibits (panorama or cyclorama) dedicated to a singular ecosystem and remains unique in the world today.

Fundraising for the restoration is ongoing—to read more about it or to donate, go to <https://pentacrestmuseums.uiowa.edu/>.

A visit to the Museum of Natural History is always a treat, especially on a cold winter day. If you haven't been there lately, consider a visit!

Climate Watch Bird Survey

Since 2016, National Audubon Society has invited volunteers to count a selection of common bird species (six of which are found in Iowa) once each winter and once each spring at sites of personal choice. The purpose is to monitor for any changes in the numbers and locations of these birds, to help determine if climate change is shifting their ranges. Anyone interested in doing the counts January 15-February 15 and May 15-June 15 each year may get more information at:

www.audubon.org/community-science/climate-watch.

New Books at the Iowa City Public Library

***The Book of Flaco, the World's Most Famous Bird* by David Gessner.** The story of Flaco, the Eurasian Eagle-owl who escaped from Central Park Zoo and captured the hearts and imaginations of millions of followers around the world.

***Nature Guide to Acadia National Park* by Ann and Bob Simpson.** An information-packed field guide dedicated to wildlife of Acadia National

Park, including full-color photos and easy-to-understand descriptions.

***Bird Talk: Hilariously Accurate Ways to Identify Birds by the Sounds They Make* by Becca Rowland.** An illustrated guide to 101 bird songs that sound surprisingly familiar. Combining illustrations of birds from around the world—from the common to the rare—with fascinating facts and memorable and whimsical descriptions of their calls, this book is full of humor and charm. From space lasers to cheeseburgers, it introduces you to the weird and wonderful world of bird songs.

***Flight of the Godwit: Tracking Epic Shorebird Migrations* by Bruce M. Beehler.** Ornithologist Bruce Beehler set out on an awe-inspiring journey in search of North America's largest and farthest-flying shorebirds. Driving 35,000 miles between 2019 to 2023, Beehler sought birds he dubs the "Magnificent Seven" – Hudsonian Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Bristle-thighed Curlew, and Upland Sandpiper. With authoritative prose and 30 beautiful black-and-white illustrations from artist Alan T. Messer, the book journeys through 37 states and 9 Canadian provinces from Texas to Alaska to Canada's High Arctic.

***The Birding Dictionary* by Rosemary Mosco.** Science communicator and cartoonist Rosemary Mosco offers a "dictionary" filled with hilarious and informative definitions for more than 200 birding terms, plus over 50 witty full-color illustrations. Terms range from bird species, anatomy, and behaviors to the insider jargon that all birders know and speak fluently.

***The Social Lives of Birds: Flocks, Communes, and Families* by Joan Strassmann.** An exploration of all the ways in which birds are social creatures, from breeding to nesting to babysitting. The author is an evolutionary biologist and author of *Slow Birding*. She examines what it means for birds of a feather to flock together. Some birds sleep together. Some join the foraging groups of other species. Some

are only social during breeding season, forming nesting colonies in trees, cliffs, and sandbanks. Some are altruistic, helping to rear young that are not their own. Some males perform mating dances together. Strassmann explains how flocks provide safety in numbers, roosts offer warmth and shelter, and colonies allow for protected breeding. The book explores the different kinds of bird groups and what to look for when watching them.

Bird Notes
Rick Hollis

My Grandfather

I recently read a paper about Yellow Warblers in the Galapagos. Where their territories are crossed by roads, they are more aggressive. Similar studies have shown that Song Sparrows in Virginia, Dark-eyed Juncos, Great Tits, and European Robins are more aggressive in urban environments than they are in rural environments. All of which kind of makes sense. But they are more aggressive towards everything. But not more aggressive to a single kind old man.

My grandfather, Pop Schmidt, was a kind, gentle man. He was tall with a head of white hair. He was not noisy. I never heard him talk about native birds, but he was a city boy. He grew up in neighborhoods of Baltimore’s famous brick row houses. The fronts had marble steps and the back yards were tiny and often included a garage. Not much room for greenery. But Pop loved his parakeets. He was aware enough about birds that he knew when a parakeet flew through his back yard. When that happened, he did what most people would not do—he went outside and tried to catch them. His technique was to hold out his hand and talk to them. He caught at least two using this technique.

We had an evergreen in our front yard, and for many years a Northern Mockingbird nested in the evergreen. Whenever Pop came to visit us, he greatly offended the mockingbirds and they let him know. They screamed at him and flew up and dove at him. Anyone else, everyone else, they ignored. I used to play with a ball in our front yard, and unless my ball bounced into the tree, they ignored me. I have often wondered how Pop offended them so much.

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 “Iowa City Bird Club Inc.” You may also visit our website and pay by PayPal. 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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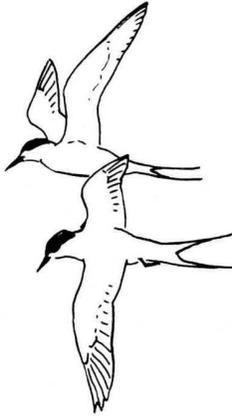
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www.iowacitybirdclub.org

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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 iowacitybirdclub@gmail.com to sign up.

For general club information, contact us at iowacitybirdclub@gmail.com.

To lead or suggest a field trip, contact Field Trip Coordinator Brian Broderick at brian.j.broderick@gmail.com.

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