



Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 20 Number 2

September 2000

Calendar

Field trips, unless otherwise noted, leave from the **Dodge Street Hy-Vee**; meet in the southeast corner of the parking lot near the recycling bins. Destinations may be changed at the discretion of the leader; please contact the leader in advance if you plan to meet the group at the trip destination.

Meetings are generally held at 7:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month at Lucas Elementary School, 830 Southlawn Drive, near Towncrest in eastern Iowa City.

___ PLEASE NOTE THE NEW FIELD TRIP MEETING LOCATION
ABOVE ___

September 10, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Hickory Hill Park. Brush up on your fall warblers and come join us. Ed Allgood, 338-8090.

September 16, Saturday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve. Come join us on the hill to watch the hawks sail past. Located on Mehaffey Bridge Road just past the entrance to Sugar Bottom Recreation Area. Hourly raptor programs will be held at nearby Macbride Raptor Center. Call Chris Edwards at 626-6362 for more information.

September 22 – 24, Friday – Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory, West Lake Okoboji. The weekend will include morning field trips, afternoon programs, and an evening banquet. Call Karen Disbrow (339-1017) or Rick Hollis (665-3141) for more information.

October 8, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Redbird Farms Wildlife Area southwest of Iowa City. Meet at the Fin & Feather parking lot on S. Riverside Drive in Iowa City. Mary Noble, 338-6790.

October 19, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Edward Wasserman will present "Bird Brains: Not to be Scorned!"

October 22, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Cone Marsh for waterfowl and sparrows. Eric Haley, 338-7341.

November 5, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Lake Red Rock near Pella for gulls, loons, and waterfowl. Lake Red Rock is Iowa's premier gull hotspot. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

November 16, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Jim Fuller will present "A Life Spent Chasing Rare Birds in the State of Iowa."

November 18, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Allamakee County and Pool 9 of the Mississippi River for Tundra Swans, Golden Eagles, and a possible hike to find Ruffed Grouse. Jim Fuller, 338-3561.

December 17, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Details in the next issue.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

April 13, Meeting. James Huntington gave a great talk and slide show about his many trips to Attu Island, Alaska. This was one of the best-attended bird club meetings ever, with over thirty people in attendance.

April 14, Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Williams Prairie. It was a gorgeous Friday evening for a foray to listen to night sounds. Karen Disbrow, Ramona McGurk, Margrieta Delle, Jonni Ellsworth, Jean Sanders, and Vaibhav Garde met at City Park. We drove first to Swan Lake where we met Ray Davenport, Bob Stearns and Joan Meyer. There we heard a Northern Cardinal and saw several birds on the lake. We next ventured to Greencastle Avenue where Connie and Bob Mutel rode up on their motorcycle. There we saw and heard American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, Red-winged Blackbirds, and geese. We heard a Barred Owl in the distance. As we were leaving, the Barred Owl flew down to Greencastle Avenue and landed in the trees alongside the road. It was a memorable sight just before sunset.

Next we went to Williams Prairie, a wet meadow prairie that has been a favorite meeting spot for Common Snipe. This year, however, we heard the American Woodcock's "peent, peent, peent" and then saw it fly upwards and dive toward the earth, making the winnowing sound with its wing feathers. A Leopard Frog was calling from the nearby ditch.

Next we went to the screech-owl woods, where Margrieta Delle used a tape of screech-owl calls to "talk" to the screech-owl for about fifteen minutes or more. It was quite a listening experience. I recommend the tape "A Guide to Night Sounds" by Lang Elliot, Naturesound

Studio, for further study of the many sounds heard in the night.

– *Karen Disbrow*

April 29-30, Mt. Ayr. Our group traveled to Mt. Ayr, in Ringgold County, to view Greater Prairie-Chickens. Eight people met on Saturday evening for the sunset viewing at the new viewing station on land recently purchased by the DNR east of Mt. Ayr. We saw eight prairie-chickens, including two that came in late which were thought to be females. On Sunday morning we saw eleven prairie-chickens and they all seemed to be male. We thought the count may have been down because two Northern Harriers seen in the area may have bothered them in the evening and the morning. We had lovely weather and good viewing.

Participants: Janet Golio, Mike Golio, Kathy Henderson, Joan Meyer, Bob Mutel, Connie Mutel, Darlyne Neff (leader), John Neff, Jean Sanders, Bob Stearns.

Birds (9 species): Canada Goose, Northern Harrier, Ring-necked Pheasant, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Mourning Dove, Eastern Kingbird, Lark Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark.

– *Darlyne Neff*

May 7, Amana. Our enthusiastic group enjoyed a fantastic morning of spring birding in the Amana area. The warm, humid weather and the biting mosquitoes made it feel more like June than early May. We visited woodland, wetland, and grassland habitats and saw a large and diverse selection of birds.

We began our morning at the nature trail near the Iowa River at Homestead. The leader's job was easy because birds were everywhere we turned. There were so many, in fact, that it took us three hours just to hike a one-mile loop trail

through the woods! American Redstarts, Baltimore Orioles, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were all around us. Several species, such as Yellow-throated Vireo, Indigo Bunting, Tennessee Warbler, and Eastern Towhee, were more elusive but we were eventually treated to nice looks. A few birds were heard in the depths of the forest but never glimpsed. After listening to a Wood Thrush serenade us for several minutes, we finally located the handsome songster in a tree and everyone had a nice view. A pair of Wood Ducks ranged through the forest and we saw them perched in a tree on several occasions.

After a pit stop at Handimart, we headed to the Lily Lake to check out the water birds. The water was very low and there was a nice selection of shorebirds, including a Wilson's Phalarope, Semipalmated Plovers, a Dunlin, and many Short-billed Dowitchers.

From there we proceeded to our final stop, a pasture south of Homestead. As we drove up our target bird, an Upland Sandpiper, was sitting on a fence post in plain view. A short while later we spotted its mate in the long grass nearby. They soon disappeared into the field, but we were treated to wonderful looks at Grasshopper Sparrows and Bobolinks. All in all, it was a very satisfying morning and a good time was had by all.

Participants: Dara Dick, Robert Dick, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards (leader), Vaibhav Garde, Ken Gregory, Mary Ann Gregory, John McLure, Joan Meyer, Mary Noble, Bob Stearns.

Birds (75 species): Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Lesser

Yellowlegs, Upland Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, American Redstart, Kentucky Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Chris Edwards*

June 4, Indiangrass Hills. This proved to be another fruitful trip to Indiangrass Hills southwest of Williamsburg in Iowa County. Although it was pouring rain at 7:30, we felt that it might clear up to the west by the time we had reached our destination. We knew that we were taking a chance, but the group was rarin' to bird.

Even though the rain had let up when we arrived at the Indiangrass Hills the sky remained fairly overcast most of the morning. Things would clear somewhat from time to time, but the air was quite cool. Our first find was a heard Grasshopper Sparrow. Common Yellowthroats,

Yellow Warblers, Baltimore Oriole, Red-headed Woodpecker and an Eastern Phoebe followed. After moving down the road a bit the group found Northern Mockingbird, Bobolinks and an Orchard Oriole. Nice looks at an Eastern Bluebird and Dickcissel, and a calling Bobwhite rounded out the stop. We felt that on the day Dickcissels were the most common bird. We heard them everywhere.

The next roadside stop was to listen for Bell's Vireo. We never did hear one on the day—our only disappointment. But a Willow Flycatcher was calling from the top of a shrub and more Yellow Warblers and a Hairy Woodpecker were interesting.

We then drove to the top of the hill and pulled off to park by the shed. The group then walked the field path. More Bobolinks and Orchard Orioles were found. We listened to a very green first year male Orchard Oriole sing for a bit. Then we were distracted by a singing Sedge Wren. The female wren responded to pishing and we were able to get some pretty good looks at her. Not much farther down the trail we heard a singing Henslow's Sparrow. The grass wasn't very long and this bird was perched in full view. It cooperated for probably fifteen minutes and the group got within 100 feet of the bird getting great looks through the scope at all sides of the bird.

The group then took a round about path back to Williamsburg for a pit stop. After some burgers we headed south five miles to drive Road F-52 back to Redbird Farms in Iowa County. We hiked to where we could hear the Yellow-breasted Chat sing, but we never got the chance to see it. At this point the rain started to really come down and we decided to call it a day.

A couple of interesting records were set. Joan found five ticks on one leg after walking out to

see the Henslow's Sparrow. And the group found themselves boxed in at the Redbird Farms parking lot by nearly twenty Amish horse and buggies. They were all just sitting there waiting for us as we hiked rain-soaked out to our cars. I'm not sure what they were doing there, but they calmly one-at-a-time turned their buggies around and headed east down the road.

Although the following was not officially part of the trip, Mike and I decided to do some additional birding after going to Paul's Discount. Mike needed a raincoat and I needed a pair of knee high rubber boots. The two of us headed out to Sand Point at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area. The water was high enough in the marsh that we were bumping into carp as we waded through. It was kind of weird to not see the fish, but only the plants moving along their path as they speeded away. There we flushed a Least Bittern and got long looks at flocks of White-rumped and Semipalmated Sandpipers and White Pelicans. Also found was a lone Dunlin and an absolutely spectacular Wilson's Phalarope at close range. The field guides don't do it justice.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Bob Dick, Dara Dick, Mike Dooley, Joan Meyer, Bob Stearns.

Birds (49 species): Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, Killdeer, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, American Crow, Blue Jay, Barn Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper

Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Chris Caster*

June 24, Lake Macbride. Five intrepid birders met at 7:15 a.m. at Terrill Mill Park and decided to head on out to Lake Macbride State Park. The day started overcast at 61 F with a storm front moving in from the west. We met Connie Mutel at the boat dock area. We walked the road to the grass hiking trail. We hiked till the heavens decided to rain in earnest about 9:00 a.m.

Participants: Bob Dick, Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, Ramona McGurk (leader), Connie Mutel, Mary Noble.

Birds (19 species): Great Blue Heron (perched in a tree), Canada Goose (two races; small and large), Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, swallow sp., Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat (very good look), Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Goldfinch.

– *Ramona McGurk*

August 13, Hawkeye Wildlife Area. We met at 7:00 a.m. in a thunderstorm. We went to Hy-Vee, where some had a second breakfast, and waited until about 8:30 at which time the rain stopped.

We first stopped on the north side of the river at the point where the railroad tracks cross Cou

Falls Road. Only Killdeers, Least Sandpipers, and Pectoral Sandpipers were present.

We then headed to the south side of the river, passing the gun club ponds where a kingfisher and numerous Green Herons were seen, to the end of Greencastle Avenue. There was here a nice assortment of shorebirds. We had nice looks at Ruddy Turnstone, Solitary, Spotted, Pectoral, Least, Semipalmated, and Stilt Sandpipers. We also had a close look at a juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher. The sky was still overcast, so the light was good in any direction.

We ended our field trip at the Babcock Access where we added Black-bellied Plover, American Avocet and Willet.

Participants: Chris Caster, John Cordell, Bob Dick, Karen Disbrow, Julie Englander, James Huntington (leader), Bob Stearns, Joan Stearns.

Birds (56 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Great Egret, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Avocet, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, American

Goldfinch, Savannah Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, House Sparrow.

– *James Huntington*

August 24, Picnic. Our bird club picnic in Lower City Park was well attended. The food was great, as was seeing friends and catching up on their summer birding activities and travel. I discussed the fall field trip schedule and asked for ideas for the spring.

Participants: Ed Allgood, Jean Allgood, Chris Caster, Margrieta Delle, Karen Disbrow, Jonni Ellsworth, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Therese Guedon, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Teri Lindquist, Ramona McGurk, Gail McLure, John McLure, Mary Noble, Bob Stearns, Joan Stearns.

– *Karen Disbrow*



2000 Johnson County Spring Migration Count

Chris Caster

The countywide bird count was held on Saturday, May 13th. The weather conditions were overcast most of the morning with some clearing later in the day. Once again it was a cool day for the count with temperatures between 45 and 55 degrees. Last year's mist was replaced by windy conditions with gusts up to 25 mph. The windy conditions continued through most of the day. We had a good turnout and so most of the better birding locations were well covered. Once again our midday lunch was held at the shelter just north of Penn Elementary School in North Liberty.

Despite the windy conditions we produced the highest species count of the last four years. This year's total of 145 species ties the 1997 total. The group produced some pretty good birds to do it too. It is always a great day when the Black Terns in the county outnumber the Rock Doves ten-to-one. Eric Haley led the way with the discovery of a Mississippi Kite at the Frytown Conservation Area. This is the second straight year that we have been able to record this bird. The Common Moorhen discovered by Chris Edwards a week earlier at Redbird Farms also stayed around for the count. Between Swan Lake and the S & G sandpit the group found 14 species of shorebirds, double last year's shorebird count. These included Hudsonian Godwit, White-rumped Sandpiper, and Dunlin. Swan Lake also produced hundreds of Black Terns. Jim Fuller and Tom Kent located a Cattle Egret, Bell's Vireo, and Yellow-breasted Chat. We had 21 species of warblers on the day, which was awfully good considering the windy conditions. Many of these were single birds. Best warblers included Yellow-throated, Cerulean, Mourning, and Prothonotary in two locations.

This year's notable misses included Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, and Great Horned Owl. Each one of these had been noted at some time during the previous two weeks. This was the first year in the last four that Northern Mockingbird wasn't found at the usual location south of County Road F62.

Participants included Chris Caster, Chris Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Jim Fuller, Eric Haley, Rick Hollis, Tom Kent, John McLure, and Jim Scheib. Many of the species recorded were single birds, which would likely have been missed without the diligence of all involved. Great job everyone! Hope we can put together as good a group next year.

SPECIES LIST					
Pied-billed Grebe	3	Mallard	54	Wild Turkey	3
American White Pelican	30	Blue-winged Teal	37	Northern Bobwhite	2
Double-crested Cormorant	130	Northern Shoveler	8	Sora	1
Great Blue Heron	60	Canvasback	1	Common Moorhen	1
Great Egret	2	Redhead	1	American Coot	95
Cattle Egret	1	Lesser Scaup	2	Semipalmated Plover	1
Green Heron	3	Hooded Merganser	1	Killdeer	34
Turkey Vulture	30	Bald Eagle	1	Greater Yellowlegs	1
Canada Goose	97	Mississippi Kite	1	Lesser Yellowlegs	5
Wood Duck	28	Cooper's Hawk	2	Spotted Sandpiper	9
Gadwall	10	Red-tailed Hawk	7	Hudsonian Godwit	6
American Widgeon	2	American Kestrel	3	Semipalmated Sandpiper	6
		Ring-necked Pheasant	8	Least Sandpiper	30

White-rumped Sandpiper	1	Red-eyed Vireo	15	Cerulean Warbler	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	20	Blue Jay	32	Black-and-white Warbler	2
Dunlin	3	American Crow	120	American Redstart	47
Stilt Sandpiper	1	Horned Lark	4	Prothonotary Warbler	2
Short-billed Dowitcher	8	Tree Swallow	64	Ovenbird	2
American Woodcock	1	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	27	Northern Waterthrush	2
Franklin's Gull	11	Bank Swallow	25	Mourning Warbler	2
Ring-billed Gull	47	Cliff Swallow	136	Common Yellowthroat	23
Herring Gull	1	Barn Swallow	103	Wilson's Warbler	1
Caspian Tern	6	Black-capped Chickadee	27	Canada Warbler	2
Forster's Tern	1	Tufted Titmouse		Yellow-breasted Chat	1
Black Tern	350	5		Scarlet Tanager	3
Rock Dove	35	White-breasted Nuthatch	8	Eastern Towhee	2
Mourning Dove	64	Carolina Wren	1	Chipping Sparrow	25
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	House Wren	57	Field Sparrow	11
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	3	Ruby-crowned Kinglet		Lark Sparrow	1
Eastern Screech Owl	2	3		Grasshopper Sparrow	1
Barred Owl	3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	6	Song Sparrow	18
Chimney Swift	60	Eastern Bluebird	19	White-throated Sparrow	1
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	11	Swainson's Thrush	2	White-crowned Sparrow	1
Belted Kingfisher	2	Wood Thrush	4	Northern Cardinal	76
Red-headed Woodpecker	26	American Robin	107	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	31
Red-bellied Woodpecker	11	Gray Catbird		Indigo Bunting	41
Downy Woodpecker	15	76		Dickcissel	7
Hairy Woodpecker	2	Brown Thrasher		Bobolink	9
Northern Flicker	12	14		Red-winged Blackbird	500
Pileated Woodpecker	2	European Starling	130	Eastern Meadowlark	3
Eastern Wood Pewee	2	Cedar Waxwing	4	Western Meadowlark	4
Willow Flycatcher	1	Tennessee Warbler	38	Common Grackle	70
Least Flycatcher	3	Nashville Warbler	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	60
Eastern Phoebe	1	Yellow Warbler	16	Orchard Oriole	2
Great-crested Flycatcher	21	Chestnut-sided Warbler	4	Baltimore Oriole	55
Eastern Kingbird	25	Magnolia Warbler	1	House Finch	6
Loggerhead Shrike	2	Black-throated Green Warbler	1	American Goldfinch	82
Bell's Vireo	2	Blackburnian Warbler	1	House Sparrow	150
Blue-headed Vireo	1	Yellow-throated Warbler	1		
Yellow-throated Vireo	5	Palm Warbler	1		
Warbling Vireo	24	Bay-breasted Warbler	1		

From Hudson Bay To Iowa City Mike Dooley

On February 24th, the S & G Materials sandpit just south of Iowa City was still frozen over, but 1,800 migrating Canada Geese were nevertheless present, mostly out on the ice. This was the second-highest total there for the season after 2,100 on January 16th. One hundred or so of the geese were feeding in a muddy pool in the southwest corner of the property, adjacent to the main water, and I noticed that four of them wore yellow leg bands. I was able to obtain close range to try and read these bands through my scope. This proved to

be a bit of a challenge since the geese were wallowing through the shallow muddy water causing the bands to be alternately submerged and exposed with each step. Just before they lifted, though, I was able to discern the characters of three bands: 70-C, 12-J, and 16-J.

As I had done with previous sightings of neck-banded geese, once at the sandpit and once at Cone Marsh, I sent the information to Jeff Peterson, Office of Migratory Bird Management, at the United States Department of the Interior in Columbia, Missouri. Mr. Peterson normally works with neck bands rather than leg bands, but eventually tracked these latest geese down. He found they were banded on Akimski Island in southern Hudson Bay,

Ontario, on 23 July 1999. Mr. Peterson informed me that there was a major banding operation on the island.

If you spot any banded geese, send the following information to Jeff Peterson, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, 608 E. Cherry St., Room 199, Columbia, Missouri, 65201: observer's name and address, place of observation, distance and direction to nearest town, collar type, characters, color of characters and background (for example black on yellow), date of sighting, activity of birds, and size of flock.

“Hey Cal, Owls in the Yard!” Bernie Knight

Little did we know in June of 1999 that the excitement of three Barred Owls arriving in our back yard would last through the month of July and into August. In previous years Barred Owls had nested in the top of a tall evergreen just beyond our lot line. Giving the nest site away had been one mature owl perched in an adjoining oak steadily keeping its eyes directed toward the nest. Crows annoyed and dashed at the nesting owl, set forth great cawing sounds and met with success. The owls did not return the following year. At that time we thought the west side of Lee Street belonged to the Barred Owls, and the heavily wooded ravine across the street on the east side belonged to the Great Horned Owls. There were times when weird screams and garbled owl sounds, and nighttime outlines of four large owls in combat alerted us to territorial battles.

We were delighted during the early months of 1999 to hear the ever resonant “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?” calls coming from

the east side of the ravine. Daily at 3:00 in the afternoon the owls set up their communication concert. In early June, Ruth, a next door neighbor, called to say a “BIG OWL” was watching her practice the piano and was in a low sumac in our yard. This information started a most entertaining episode for the Knights.

Mother Owl brought her two young, still covered in fluff, into the yard. At first she kept a close eye on the two youngsters. Perched on a garden bench she watched intently her two adventuresome youngsters, with sleepy eyes, nestled close together in a hickory tree as they kept track of our movements. We continued our outdoor chores nearby. Yes, we resorted to anthropomorphism! Lady Owl landed in the hickory, proceeded to tear apart a squirrel and feed it to the young. His Honor (a darker version) and Her Highness (of lighter feathering) started joining us daily as we lunched on the patio. Lunching on the patio is a daily event at our house. Cal plugs in the two fountains and Bernie caters a tray lunch, slamming the door as she exits with the trays.

Now, perhaps owls in the yard aren't that unusual. What made it unusual? The two youngsters, now feathered out, awaited us and promptly took turns bathing in the 42” fountain, just 35' from us. Taking turns, each plunged deeply into the water, out of sight, and perched squarely on the upward water stream, which seemingly shot them upward to a tree limb. This daily ritual turned into a neighborhood specialty performance with friends and neighbors watching with disbelief.

At times His Honor and Her Highness watched us from a distance of nine feet. We wondered, “Do they want a tuna sandwich?” Not really. Their main attraction was the numerous chipmunks wrecking havoc in Bernie's plantings and stone walls. She was elated to see the

“chippie” population diminish.

Lady Owl kept her distance, staying high in the trees, after giving lessons to the young on catching chipmunks, which provided a one-gulp tasty morsel. A clumsy young owl patiently awaits a chipmunk, drops downward silently and in early attempts misses. Grabbing a chunky stick nearby he practices grabbing, shaking and punishing the stick. All this appearing to be done in great anger.

In the early stages of development we did not hear the “Who cooks for you?” call. Instead the two young used a nasal “scheez – neeze” with a deep nasal sound. Neighbors were also noting this call. Does anyone out there know about this call? Literature we have checked does not mention this. The same sound was heard this summer. Do let us know.

In August 2000, we were amazed once again to see a Barred Owl bathing in the fountain. Yes! We have extended an invitation to the owls, “Do come back!”

Now if any of you are skeptical as to the summer’s entertainment, stop by and ask Cal to show you the video he took of the bathing ritual.

Book Review

Eric Haley

Hope Is the Thing with Feathers: A Personal Chronicle of Vanished Birds. Christopher Cokinos. Putnam, 2000. 259 pages with illustrations, index, and bibliography. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

It is easy to forget—easier still never to know—that Passenger Pigeons and Carolina Parakeets roamed the skies and river bottoms of this part of Iowa a mere 150 years ago. Never

having known these birds, we cannot truly understand the measure by which our world has been diminished in their passing. In his new book on the extinct birds of North America, Christopher Cokinos aims to give us some degree of insight into the nature of these vanished creatures and the circumstances leading to their disappearance. Knowing that there is no real possibility of restoring these lost species to the landscape, Cokinos instead aims, as he explains it, to “restory” them into our imagination.

Cokinos focuses on six extinct birds—the Carolina Parakeet, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the Heath Hen, the Passenger Pigeon, the Labrador Duck, and the Great Auk. In each section, he summarizes what was known of the natural history of these birds, often quoting liberally from explorers’ journals, settlers’ diaries, and the writing of early naturalists. He also sorts through the current scientific literature to provide cogent explanations of the likely environmental factors and social forces that contributed to each species’ extinction. There’s a lot of fascinating information here, such as the theory that Carolina Parakeets, a colonial and cavity-roosting species, declined in large part due to being outcompeted for hollow tree trunks by the then recently introduced European honeybee. There’s also a good discussion of the collusion of ill-timed natural disasters and political infighting among conservationists that led to the irreversible decline of the Heath Hen.

Cokinos is a poet by trade, and elegantly weaves together these complex narratives. His ultimate aim, I think, is at our hearts and consciences. His chapter on the disappearance of the always rare Ivory-billed Woodpecker, as Cokinos tells it through the eyes of the researchers studying the bird at the time, is close to heartbreaking. As the book’s subtitle indicates, this is for the author a personal and deeply felt exploration

into the past.

So in addition to describing the known facts about each species, Cokinos aims wherever possible to track down the full story of the last known surviving individual of each of these species, and in so doing, to personally involve himself as a researcher in the story he tells. This strategy makes for some of the book's strongest shortcomings. For example, upon discovering the story of "Buttons," the last known free-roaming Passenger Pigeon, which was shot by a 14 year old boy in Ohio in 1900, Cokinos devotes a full and rather tedious chapter to describing how he tracked down the location where it was shot and the descendants of the boy who shot it. But in other sections, this represents one of the book's greatest strengths, as the author compellingly relates, without descending into pathos, the stories of the last Heath Hen; of "Doodles," the last surviving captive Carolina Parakeet (did these names cause these species to go extinct out of sheer embarrassment?); and of "Martha," the last Passenger Pigeon, who died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914.

In the book's final chapters, Cokinos details the possibility of scientists bringing these birds back from extinction through reconstructing their DNA à la "Jurassic Park." But he concludes that currently there's not much hope of that; what's gone is gone. On the other hand, as a lesson in habitat restoration, he examines the efforts currently underway to reestablish the Greater Prairie Chicken, of which the Heath Hen was believed to be a subspecies, on Martha's Vineyard. The lesson Cokinos wants to leave us with is that each species is a precious and irreplaceable resource, and that the legacy of each of these vanished birds should serve as a cautionary tale that any extinction is one too many.

Rick's Ramblings

Rick Hollis

Birds and Diseases of People. Not only are deer sometimes hosts for *Borrelia burdorfeii*, the bacteria responsible for Lyme's Disease, but American Robins can also carry the bacteria and transmit to bacteria to ticks. American Crows are not the only species capable of carrying West Nile Virus – they are just more susceptible. Among the birds which have been documented to be infected are Black-crowned Night-Herons, Mallards, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Laughing, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, Rock Doves, Fish Crows, and American Robins.

There is yet another deer-related disease for birders to worry about. Not to frighten you, but there is another tick-transmitted disease that birders need to be aware of – we need not be scared to go into the woods, but we should raise our consciousness to ticks in places outside of NE Iowa. HME (it has a long name – but ehrlichiosis will do) is a disease that has the White-tailed Deer as its main reservoir. It is transmitted by the Lone Star Tick. We know that deer are everywhere. The Lone Star Tick is only found in southern and eastern Iowa. It is tiny, about the same size as the tick that carries Lyme's Disease – which is to say the nymph is tiny, about the size of two of the letters in the word "LIBERTY" on the penny. Symptoms of HME are mild to severe flu-like symptoms with prolonged incubation and a variety of other ambiguous symptoms. It is not a disease that most doctors in the state are apt to be familiar with, so be aware.

AOU Checklist supplement. The latest checklist supplement arrived with the following changes.

Changes in Generic or Specific names, or checklist position (this for the real sticklers):

- Oldsquaw is now Long-tailed Duck
- Crested Caracara changed from *Caracara plancusto* to *Caracara cheriway*
- Skuas (*Catharacta*) are merged with Jaegers (*Stercorarius*)
- Black-capped Chickadee is changed from *Poecile atricapillus* to *Poecile atricapilla*
- Boreal Chickadee is changed from *Poecile hudsonicus* to *Poecile hudsonica*
- Gray-headed Chickadee is changed from *Poecile cinctus* to *Poecile cincta*
- Juniper Titmouse is changed from *Baeolophus griseus* to *Baeolophus ridgwayi*
- Pine Bunting is changed from *Emberiza leucocephala* to *Emberiza leucocephalos*
- Bullock's Oriole is moved after Streak-backed Oriole

Splits (changes adding species to the list by breaking one old species into one or more new species):

- Nazca Booby is split from Masked Booby
- Gunnison Sage is split from Greater Sage-Grouse
- Arizona Woodpecker is split from Strickland's Woodpecker
- Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) is split from Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*)
- Stripe-headed Tanager is split into the following four species: Western, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, and Hispaniolan Spindalis.

Species added to list (new species that can be counted)

- Chinese Pond-Heron
- Black Kite (Hawaiian records)
- Yellow-throated Bunting

There are other changes, but most of the rest refer to Central American species. As always, as soon as one list is out, the discussions and rumors start for next set of changes. One possible split in the future is splitting White-winged Crossbill into two species. Red Crossbill splits have been bantered around for years. Anybody know the details on this one?

World Wildlife Fund's top ten most-wanted species list for 2000. These are the species whose survival is most endangered by illegal multi-billion-dollar global trade: tiger, giant panda, minke whale, hawksbill sea turtle, Sumatran rhinoceros, Tibetan antelope, Asian box turtle, Javan pangolin anteater, Asian ginseng plant, and horned parakeet.

California Condor Mortality. Between March and mid-July, four of the twenty-five California Condors released in Arizona died of lead poisoning. After the first death in March, the remaining condors were recaptured and tested for lead poisoning. All received clean bills of health, but subsequently three more died. Seventeen shotgun pellets were found in one dead bird's digestive system. Recently, radio tracking on one more condor has been lost.

Pelicans Marked. Over 400 American White Pelicans have been color-marked with pink patagial flags (actually they are cattle ear tags) in Lac Qui Parle County, Minnesota. Keep your eyes open as pelicans pass through eastern Iowa this fall. Send information about sightings to Eric Nelson, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge, 51 E 4th St., Room 101, Winona, MN, 55987; telephone (507) 494-6234; e-mail <Eric_Nelson@fws.gov>.

Interesting odds and ends fell out of an article about grasslands in the June/July 2000 issue of National Wildlife. At the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, biologists were curious as to the identity of ground-nest nest predators. They placed tiny video cameras at the nests, and discovered that the most common nest predators were ground squirrels, followed by mice, cowbirds, and white-tailed deer.

There is a 4-foot-long, 80-pound salamander that lives in Japan. That is one awfully big amphibian, and is hard to imagine.

I recently moved and have a new address and home phone number:

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Common Checkered-Skipper (1), Common Sootywing (4), Least Skipper (13), Fiery Skipper (1), Peck's Skipper (1), Sachem (2), Delaware Skipper (1), Dun Skipper (2).

– *Chris Edwards*

Iowa City Butterfly Count

Chris Edwards

Chris Caster, Ramona McGurk, and Mary Noble joined me on the second annual Iowa City Fourth of July Butterfly Count, held on July 22. We had a great day and recorded 37 species, far surpassing the 29 species seen on our inaugural count last year. The weather was pleasant for both butterflies and counters, with sunny skies and a high temperature of 80 degrees. We spent the morning at Kent Park and Hawkeye Wildlife Area, and later visited Lake Macbride State Park and Solon Prairie. The best sightings were Hayhurst's Scallopwing and Common Checkered-Skipper, both new species for all of us, at Hawkeye Wildlife Area.

Species List: Black Swallowtail (2), Giant Swallowtail (2), Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (3), Checkered White (1), Cabbage White (162), Clouded Sulphur (33), Orange Sulphur (44), Cloudless Sulphur (1), Little Yellow (28), Dainty Sulphur (11), Bronze Copper (11), Eastern Tailed-Blue (61), Spring Azure (27), Great Spangled Fritillary (9), Meadow Fritillary (2), Pearl Crescent (4), Question Mark (6), Eastern Comma (2), Gray Comma (2), American Lady (2), Red Admiral (11), Common Buckeye (7), Red-spotted Purple (2), Viceroy (16), Common Wood-Nymph (12), Monarch (18), Silver-spotted Skipper (5), Hayhurst's Scallopwing (1), Horace's Duskywing (1),

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Annual membership dues are \$5.00, payable by January 1st for the coming year to treasurer Bernie Knight, Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, 425 Lee St., Iowa City, IA 52246. Check your mailing label for the year you have paid through.

For general bird club information, contact Iowa City Bird Club president Rick Hollis at 665-3141.

To lead a field trip, contact field trip coordinator Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

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