
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 26 Number 2

September 2006

Schedule

Field trips depart from the Dodge Street Hy-Vee in Iowa City unless otherwise noted. Meet in the southwest corner of the parking lot. Please contact the leader in advance if you plan to meet the group at the trip destination. Many of our trips are accessible to people with disabilities; for more information please contact the trip leader. **Meetings** are held at the Grant Wood AEA Southern Facility, 200 Holiday Road in Coralville, generally at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

September 16, Saturday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Annual Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve, located along Mehaffey Bridge Rd. just north of Sugar Bottom Recreation Area. Songbird banding and hourly raptor programs will be held at nearby Macbride Nature-Recreation Area. For more information call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

September 21, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Larry Stone, freelance writer and photographer from Elkader, will present “Iowa: Portrait of the Land.” This is based on Larry’s award-winning Earth Year 2000 book for the Iowa DNR.

September 24, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Coralville Dam Area for migrant shorebirds, sparrows and raptors. Linda Donelson, 351-7452.

October 8, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Birding and Boating at Lake Macbride. Hosts Richard and Nancy Lynch will provide the watercraft (pontoon boat, canoes and kayaks) or you may bring your own. Brunch will be served after the outing. Please call Richard and Nancy if you plan to attend, 624-3014.

October 19, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Mike Apicella, M.D., Professor and Head of Department of Microbiology will present “Birds, Pigs, Humans and Influenza: A consequence of the domestication of animals.”

October 22, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area for migrant sparrows, raptors and water birds. Ken Lowder, 351-1207.

November 4, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area in Linn Co. for migrant loons, grebes, and waterfowl. Meet at Hy-Vee at 8:00 a.m. or at the Perkins on 33rd Ave. in SW Cedar Rapids at 8:30 a.m. Diana Pesek, 363-3522.

November 12, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Allamakee County and Mississippi River Pool 9 for Tundra Swans and other waterfowl and wintering Golden Eagles. This will be an all day trip. Jim Fuller, 338-3561.

November 16, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting. Jerry White, from Muscatine, will present on gear for recording bird songs to include: types of gear, recording basics, and computer editing.

Continued on next page →

Other Dates of Note

September 8-10, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting at Hotel Manning in Keosauqua. Weekend activities include field trips, programs, Saturday evening banquet, and more. For more information visit www.iowabirds.org.

November 10-12, Friday-Sunday. Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival at Lansing, with field trips, boat excursions, programs, live music, and more. For more information contact Ric Zarwell at Ric.Zarweel@mchsi.com.

December 17, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Mark your calendars now for this annual event! Details will be provided in the December newsletter.

From Our President Chris Caster

Well I hope the summer season was less chaotic for you than it was for me and some other club officers. We got through the very ambitious schedule we set for ourselves last March, but it wasn't always easy. Occasionally substitute leaders were needed for field trips. Many of us were simply too busy with other things to bird. I wasn't birding personally either unless I was scheduled to lead a trip. It sure seemed like the majority of the posts to the IA-BIRD listserv were from elsewhere in the state.

The decision to participate in a clean-up day at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area seemed to be a good one. There is nothing like getting really dirty together to reinforce the bonds of friendship. We are grateful to Tim Thompson and the DNR for supplying us with trash bags and hauling all the stuff away. Seven of us filled two of our pickup trucks to overflowing with everything from shotgun shells to gas grills and golf bags. Thanks to Chris Edwards for inspiring the effort. It felt good to make a difference and I really think it could be a permanent addition to our yearly calendar.

We had good participation in the Spring Count, but not so much in the Birdathon. I really wish I could get some feedback regarding this event from club members. What does the membership

require to make this a yearly club event? And if the membership really doesn't want the ICBC involved in a Birdathon for the IBA Program, it would be nice to know the reasons for that as well.

Also, we are always looking for a little extra help here and there. Bernie Knight has asked that persons willing to help with refreshments at meetings contact her at 337-9140. Thanks to those who have already volunteered—it is appreciated.

It seems that many times our newsletter is a little late getting in the mail. This is due in large part to the difficulty in finding leaders for all our field trips. Karen Disbrow really tries to schedule a minimum of two events each month, which doesn't sound like a lot until she starts to make the phone calls. I know she would appreciate it if more members would give her a call at 339-1017, to say that they would be willing to lead an outing somewhere. All that is really required is that the leader be familiar with the destination and turn in something to Chris Edwards for the newsletter—Word docs as e-mail attachments are perfect.

Thanks everyone. I'm looking forward to a fun-filled fall. Go Hawks!

2006 Johnson County Spring Count

Chris Caster

The Spring Count was held on the 13th of May, which is as late in the month as it could be given that we usually set it for the second Saturday of the month. For this reason the weather conditions were just weird. The early morning temperature was 41 and it never reached 50. It was overcast most of the day and spotty light rain fell during the afternoon with winds out of the NW from 10-15 mph. For a Christmas Count this wouldn't have been a bad day, but I can say this was the first Spring Count on which I've left the house with thermal underwear. The good news was that regardless of the temperatures, by mid-May the birds have got to migrate. Thanks to what might have been one of the best count crews we've had, our club tallied 158 species that day.

The day's best bird, based on the number of birders who left their areas to find it, was likely the Cape May Warbler that Tom Kent and Jim Fuller discovered foraging in the trees bordering the north side of Swan Lake. The next best bird may have been the Willet that both Chris Edwards and Jim Scheib discovered on the beach above the Coralville Dam.

We had a whole bunch of additional 'good' birds. Three Snow Geese at Sand Point were unusual for May. Osprey, Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon were the best raptors. A Turkey Vulture landed in Rick Hollis's backyard—better clean up down there Rick! Four Common Loons were on Lake Macbride and two were seen flying high over Swan Lake headed southwest during the afternoon. A Hudsonian Godwit was at the S&G Materials Pit south of town. The Hawkeye Wildlife Area mudflats along the Amana Road produced large numbers of Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers, Sanderlings, and Black Terns. Fortunately the winds died down somewhat towards nightfall and five woodcocks were reported displaying from various places on the south side of Hawkeye Wildlife Area. A Virginia Rail was at Sycamore Bottoms, as were six Marsh Wrens. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was unusual as most of these birds should have migrated through our area already. Two Loggerhead Shrikes were discovered in nesting activities in SE Johnson County and three Harris's Sparrows were at an abandoned farmstead not far away. A Bell's Vireo was at Frytown Conservation Area, a Philadelphia Vireo was at Swan Lake Woods, and a White-eyed Vireo was along what I like to call 'Frigatebird Trail' at Lake Macbride. A Veery was at Redbird Farms. We had 24 species of warblers on the day, which is pretty good. A Kentucky Warbler was singing at the entrance to Hanging Rock Woods. Other good warbler finds included Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Orange-crowned, Yellow-throated and Cerulean Warblers. Elsewhere a Clay-colored Sparrow and a Common Nighthawk were also seen.

Maybe the most interesting bird encounter was had by Bob Dick and Bruce Gardner when a screech-owl nearly flew into their vehicle as they were playing their tape. Hey wake up guys!

As usual every year we have a few expected birds slip through our net. Most notably were Great Horned Owl and Cooper's Hawk. Despite known nesting locations for both, neither were found. This was probably just poor planning/afternoon follow-up on my part. It would also be nice if we could come up with a consistent Spring Count location for the Eurasian Tree Sparrow. But it was another very excellent count. Thanks everyone!

Participants: Barbara Beaumont, Brady Belcher, Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards, Linda and Roger Fisher, Jim Fuller, Bruce Gardner, Kurt Hamann, Rick Hollis, Tom Kent, Jason Paulios, Diana Pesek, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Bill Scheible, Doug Wallace.

SPECIES LIST

Snow Goose	3	Barred Owl	1	Orange-crowned Warbler	2
Canada Goose	144	Common Nighthawk	1	Nashville Warbler	20
Wood Duck	20	Chimney Swift	45	Northern Parula	7
Gadwall	6	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5	Yellow Warbler	27
American Widgeon	2	Belted Kingfisher	3	Chestnut-sided Warbler	5
Mallard	40	Red-headed Woodpecker	10	Magnolia Warbler	7
Blue-winged Teal	51	Red-bellied Woodpecker	39	Cape May Warbler	1
Northern Shoveler	13	Downy Woodpecker	32	Yellow-rumped Warbler	13
Green-winged Teal	2	Hairy Woodpecker	9	Black-throated Green Warbler	5
Lesser Scaup	1	Northern Flicker	16	Blackburnian Warbler	3
Ring-necked Pheasant	12	Pileated Woodpecker	3	Yellow-throated Warbler	2
Wild Turkey	11	Eastern Wood-Pewee	1	Palm Warbler	5
Northern Bobwhite	1	Least Flycatcher	9	Blackpoll Warbler	6
Common Loon	4	Eastern Phoebe	6	Cerulean Warbler	2
American White Pelican	250	Great Crested Flycatcher	27	Black-and-white Warbler	9
Double-crested Cormorant	100	Eastern Kingbird	40	American Redstart	56
Great Blue Heron	84	Loggerhead Shrike	2	Ovenbird	33
Great Egret	8	White-eyed Vireo	1	Northern Waterthrush	15
Green Heron	4	Bell's Vireo	1	Kentucky Warbler	1
Turkey Vulture	28	Yellow-throated Vireo	9	Common Yellowthroat	52
Osprey	2	Blue-headed Vireo	9	Wilson's Warbler	2
Bald Eagle	3	Warbling Vireo	16	Scarlet Tanager	8
Red-tailed Hawk	6	Philadelphia Vireo	1	Eastern Towhee	8
American Kestrel	2	Red-eyed Vireo	23	Chipping Sparrow	102
Peregrine Falcon	1	Blue Jay	55	Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Virginia Rail	1	American Crow	70	Field Sparrow	22
Sora	5	Horned Lark	1	Vesper Sparrow	3
American Coot	12	Purple Martin	1	Lark Sparrow	3
Black-bellied Plover	1	Tree Swallow	97	Savannah Sparrow	7
Semipalmated Plover	9	N. Rough-winged Swallow	12	Grasshopper Sparrow	6
Killdeer	21	Bank Swallow	92	Song Sparrow	73
Lesser Yellowlegs	107	Cliff Swallow	189	Lincoln's Sparrow	30
Solitary Sandpiper	1	Barn Swallow	113	Swamp Sparrow	3
Willet	1	Black-capped Chickadee	75	White-throated Sparrow	140
Spotted Sandpiper	21	Tufted Titmouse	12	Harris's Sparrow	3
Hudsonian Godwit	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	20	White-crowned Sparrow	26
Sanderling	25	Carolina Wren	4	Northern Cardinal	156
Semipalmated Sandpiper	13	House Wren	104	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	48
Least Sandpiper	170	Marsh Wren	6	Indigo Bunting	45
Baird's Sandpiper	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	Dickcissel	2
Pectoral Sandpiper	10	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	28	Bobolink	15
Dunlin	260	Eastern Bluebird	32	Red-winged Blackbird	329
Short-billed Dowitcher	80	Veery	1	Eastern Meadowlark	63
Wilson's Snipe	3	Gray-cheeked Thrush	10	Western Meadowlark	2
American Woodcock	5	Swainson's Thrush	59	Common Grackle	179
Wilson's Phalarope	2	Wood Thrush	15	Brown-headed Cowbird	54
Ring-billed Gull	38	American Robin	154	Orchard Oriole	9
Caspian Tern	22	Gray Catbird	136	Baltimore Oriole	77
Forster's Tern	10	Brown Thrasher	23	House Finch	7
Black Tern	60	European Starling	132	American Goldfinch	178
Rock Pigeon	5	Cedar Waxwing	22	House Sparrow	107
Mourning Dove	78	Blue-winged Warbler	1		
Eastern Screech Owl	2	Golden-winged Warbler	1		
		Tennessee Warbler	112		

Book Review

Rick Hollis

The Smaller Majority: The Hidden World of the Animals that Dominate the Tropics. Piotr Naskrecki. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Anyone with an interest in nature should look at this book. It will take several times through to finish as the first time you will be so distracted by pictures that you will forget to read. They are so gorgeous that they distract from the text. The text is well-written and raises issues and make one think about what Naskrecki calls 'non-charismatic animals' – no birds, no cute fuzzy mammals. I had read several good reviews of *The Smaller Majority*, but was still not prepared for the photographs – they do not merely document the appearance of animals, they do it in a way that is nothing short of art. If you have your hands on a copy, resist the urge to just read it. You will miss the opportunity to learn many fascinating little things. For example, some Marsh Crabs (*Armases*) live in forest canopies and compete with hummingbirds for flower nectar!

Naskrecki points out that almost all conservation plans are made with large organisms in mind. The author suggests that perhaps conservation should be made with creatures traditionally thought of as 'bird food.' (There is one exception to the preserves for big things—in Brazil there is a preserve maintained to protect *Peripatus acacioi*, a member of the Oychpora, one of the weird little invertebrate phyla. I remember this from days as a student as being the link between annelids and arthropods.)

This thick, large 'coffee table' book has 278 pages of absolutely luscious pictures of what the author calls the Smaller Majority. There is no mention of scale for any picture, although the author says that most would fit into a matchbox. The exceptions are Coconut Crabs, which can reach 9 pounds with a three-foot leg span, and

Cane Toads, which can weigh up to 4 1/2 pounds.

Naskrecki has been an entomologist and studied katydids. But the book likes all the small creatures of the world – remember what JBS Haldane supposedly said upon being asked what biology told him about the Creator: "God must have an inordinate fondness for beetles – He made so many of them." There are pictures of onychophorans, tree frogs, warty tree frogs, eyelash frogs, caecilians, tiny flower mites that hitch rides from flower to flower in hummingbird nostrils, scorpions, lizards, weevils parasitized by fungi, ants parasitized by fungi, ricinulei, katydids, and yes, beetles. The book's pictures and text are divided into tropical humid forests, savannas and deserts.

Publisher's Weekly gave *The Smaller Majority* a starred review, and the reviewer says, "Naskrecki wants to raise awareness of the perils of extinction and habitat loss, but he also wants to reawaken a childish curiosity and delight in the small wonders of the natural world." The reviewer compliments Naskrecki on his clear prose and wonderful pictures.

DISTANCE FROM IOWA CITY TO SOME FAMILIAR BIRDING LOCATIONS

Cone Marsh – 25 mi.
 Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area – 40 mi.
 Davenport, Lock & Dam 14 – 56 mi.
 Otter Creek Marsh – 62 mi.
 Donnellson Unit, Shimek State Forest – 79 mi.
 George Wyth State Park – 83 mi.
 Lacey-Keosauqua State Park – 84 mi.
 Croton Unit, Shimek State Forest – 86 mi.
 Montrose, Pool 19 – 87 mi.
 Red Rock Reservoir Dam – 95 mi.
 Saylorville Lake – 115 mi.
 Rathbun Lake – 130 mi.
 Sedan Bottoms – 140 mi.

– Compiled by Mike Dooley

Good Luck, Mike Dooley Chris Caster

As some of you know, Mike Dooley recently moved to Salt Lake City to take a position in the Art History Department at the University of Utah. Mike's contributions to our bird club and to birding in Iowa have been significant to say the least.

Mike, originally from East Lansing, MI, came to Iowa City to attend grad school in Art History. He first became interested in birds while living in an apartment on the south side of Iowa City, next to what was once known as Sycamore Marsh. While there, Mike established a rapport with the owner of the S&G Materials Sand Pit and was given access to bird the area as he wished, reporting back all the birds he had found. The S&G Pit became a serious obsession and Mike built an impressive list there, including rare birds like Yellow Rail and Pacific Loon. And it wasn't long before Mike took it upon himself to investigate many other places near Iowa City that didn't seem to receive attention from birders, such as Redbird Farms and Frytown Conservation Area. Mike also spent a great deal of time in Louisa and Muscatine Counties and single-handedly put Cairo Woods and Cedar Bluffs on the birding map. Mike also developed a close relationship with the Indiangrass Hills people, occasionally helping with their controlled burns, documenting birds, and single-handedly putting that Iowa County site on the birding map as well.

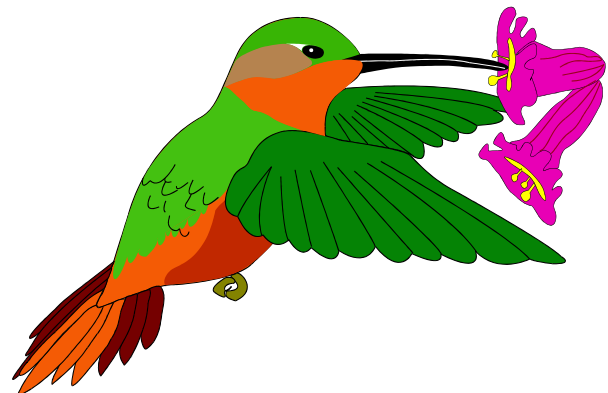
When the call came from the Audubon IBA program for site nominations Mike was one of the most serious contributors statewide and was awarded a new pair of binoculars from Eagle Optics for his efforts. If you go to the Iowa Audubon website you can find his submissions, as Mike wrote nearly all of them for this part of the state.

When Jim Fuller retired from the Iowa Birdline, Mike took the Iowa Birdline to the internet and

only gave it up when he moved to Washington, D.C. for a year. Within this then-new medium, he continued the high standards Jim had set for the phone-based birdline.

Mike also became skilled at producing maps of the areas he birded. Many of the maps available to us through the IOU and ICBC websites are his creations. Upon his return from a one year fellowship in D.C., Mike gave a very fine presentation to the ICBC on his research at the Smithsonian on bird art and its role in fostering the conservation movement in America. Mike also wrote a well-crafted article for the Fall 2004 *Iowa Bird Life* entitled "Birding Mississippi River Pool 19 in Winter." This article described in detail and with maps nearly 25 different points of birding access on both sides of the river from Ft. Madison down to Keokuk. The work certainly rivals anything found in national publications or regional guides.

Mike also has been very good about leading club outings to his favorite areas and has been a steady contributor to our club newsletter. He also has been a good birding companion and friend to many of us. We extend a most sincere thanks for everything, Mike. Good luck in your new assignment and **FINISH THAT DISSERTATION!!!**



Field Trip and Meeting Reports

April 6, Meeting. Jim Scheib gave a presentation of his previous trips to the Crex Meadows as a preview of the IOU fieldtrip he would lead there April 29th.

The retreat of the Wisconsin glacier 10 to 15,000 years ago, left a large lake in what is now Burnett County, WI, near the town of Grantsburg. Over the millennia this lake has evolved into the shallow sedge marshes that dominate the area. Crex Meadows is named after the Carex sedge that grows there. Historically, it was an important hunting ground for the Fox, Dakota, and Chippewa tribes. In the 1890s, large scale drainage of wetlands for farming upset the ecology of the marshes, causing a decline in the number of nesting and migrant waterfowl and other wetland species, but providing excellent habitat for Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse. Long-time residents recall flocks containing thousands of "prairie grouse" and these reports are substantiated by newspaper accounts from the period. In 1912, the Crex Carpet Company purchased 23,000 acres. Three carpet camps were located in the area. Each camp employed 50-100 men who harvested "wiregrass" from the marshes and shipped it to the carpet factory in St. Paul. The industry continued successfully for twenty years until market conditions and ecological changes in the marsh caused the bankruptcy of the Crex Carpet Company in 1933. By 1940, nearly two-thirds of the land was tax delinquent and in 1946, the state acquired 12,000 acres to start the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area. Crex now includes 30,000 acres including a 2,400-acre refuge and a 24-mile long auto tour. About 270 bird species have been found there.

Crex Meadows is within an area called the Northwest Wisconsin Pine Barrens, a long, narrow sand plain covering 1500 square miles. The soils of the sedge marshes consist of several

feet of organic material overlying 100-300 feet of sand. The upland areas have only thin, poorly developed topsoil. Crex contains the largest remnant of brush prairie and some of the most extensive sedge marshes in Wisconsin. Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Franklin's Ground Squirrel, Hognose Snake, and Prairie Skink are among Wisconsin's more uncommon species, which reach their peak abundance in brush prairie. Some of the common species of brush prairie include: Clay-colored, Vesper, and Savannah Sparrows, Rufous-sided Towhee, Eastern Kingbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Pocket Gopher, and Bullsnake.

Uncommon species of the sedge marshes include: Sharp-tailed and LeConte's Sparrows, and Yellow Rails. Common species of the sedge marshes include: Sandhill Cranes, Sedge Wrens, Bobolinks, American Bitterns, and Common Yellowthroats. The marshes are also important for breeding populations of Osprey, Bald Eagles, Trumpeter Swans, Karner Blue butterflies, Blanding's Turtles, and Red-necked Grebes. Timber Wolves have used the property on a regular basis in recent years and a pack has recently been designated the "Crex pack." Wildlife is especially abundant during the fall migration when about 50 Bald Eagles, 7000 Sandhill Cranes, 12000 Canada and Snow Geese, and thousands of ducks can be seen. The spring migration has fewer individuals, but a greater variety of species.

Of Iowa City interest, Jim showed us a Crex road sign that bore the name Kyllingstad Road. The Wisconsin DNR had purchased 200 acres from the estate of Aadne Kyllingstad in 1963. He was a first cousin of the grandfather of our very own David Kyllingstad. Aadne was born in 1885 in Sandness, Norway and died in 1961. He had owned the farm for 19 years, but never owned a car. He walked into town to buy his groceries.

Thanks Jim for another very interesting presentation.

Attendees: Jeanne Bonde, John Broz, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Bruce Gardner, Paula Griffin, Pat Keiffer, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dick and Nancy Lynch, Jim Miller, Alan Nagel, Ron Price, Linda and Robert Scarth, Jim Scheib, Marcia and Richard Shaffer.

– *Chris Caster*

April 23, Otter Creek Marsh. Thirteen birders participated in the outing to this marsh in Tama County. It was a perfect spring day, with abundant sunshine, warm temperatures and average winds. We found the target birds we go to Otter Creek to see – Sandhill Cranes, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Great-tailed Grackles – fairly quickly. The blackbirds and grackles regaled us with their harsh singing and came close enough for great looks. A Marsh Wren posed cooperatively for us toward the end of the outing, and we enjoyed its scolding. We also flushed an American Bittern along the southeastern part of the dike, which flew across the pond and stayed in the air long enough for decent looks. A Broad-winged Hawk migrating through the area was a hit with the group, as were two adult Bald Eagles on the nest that's been in the area for a few years now. Waterfowl were much less diverse than they had been on the last couple of trips taken during this time of year, with only six species of ducks and geese present. A couple of Soras called to us but remained hidden from view.

Participants: Nora Becker, Brady Belcher, Sarah Bissell, Diane Bradbury, Trish Ditsworth, Vicki Eaton, Jim and Karole Fuller, Bruce Gardner, Alan Nagel, Diana Pesek (leader), Dick Shaffer, Bob Strickland.

Birds (38 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, American Bittern, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Sora, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe,

Rock Pigeon, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Marsh Wren, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird.

– *Diana Pesek*

April 27, Meeting. James Huntington gave a presentation on Spring Shorebirds of Iowa, a topic on which he and Bob Dick had collaborated.

Attendees: I apologize, but the attendance roster for this meeting was lost.

– *Chris Caster*

May 14, Warblers and Waders. It was a dreary day with drizzle, temperature of 43° and NW wind at 10 mph. We started at Hickory Hill Park, where we were able to pull out a few warblers and vireos, including Golden-winged Warbler.

Diana Pesek mentioned having seen a Cape May Warbler the day before at Swan Lake in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, so we headed to that location. She led us right to the bird, but it was a duller individual than she and Brady had seen on Saturday. She then relocated the bright male Cape May Warbler.

Swallows were flying right on the deck, next to us. I was able to hold my hand out and I thought a few times that a Tree Swallow would perch on my hand. We had incredible looks at Tree, Barn, Bank, Cliff, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows literally at arm's length!

We checked a few other spots on the south side of Hawkeye. After the rest of the group headed home, Dave Kyllingstad and I decided to try the north side. We drove over to the Amana Road and then walked down to the water to find Semipalmated Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-

rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Short-billed Dowitcher.

Participants: Brady Belcher, John Broz, Andrea Dill, Therese Guedon, James Huntington (leader), Dave Kyllingstad, Diana Pesek, Linda Rudolph.

Birds (64 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Green Heron, Semipalmated Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Black Tern, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Blue Jay, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *James Huntington*

May 18, Meeting. Chris Caster gave a presentation on the American Ornithologists Union's 2004 split of Cackling Goose from Canada Goose. Since 1883 the AOU has been the recognized authority on the classification and nomenclature of birds in the Americas. They maintain the official checklist and oversee changes to common and scientific names of birds, the classification of species in their

relationships to one another, and the lumping or splitting of species.

The history of classification started long before Darwin. It seems to be an essential need for humans that starts even as a child begins to put names to things and evidence of it can be found in any culture. What we might call modern classification began in the 1600's with Linnaeus, but it was still based on observations that some organisms shared traits in common and yet were recognizably different. Darwin in the 1850's gave us evolutionary theory as an explanation for what we already had observed in nature for a very long time. The very basic question to all this is, "What constitutes a species?" Darwin actually made this question harder to answer. After Darwin organisms were seen no longer as discrete entities, but snapshots in a continuum that you could in theory trace back through the generations to the origins of life itself. If our classifications seemed arbitrary prior to Darwin they are certainly now.

Classification used to be based on the Morphological Species Concept—if it looks different, then it is. This still gets us pretty far. Around 1930 Ernst Mayr elucidated the Biological Species Concept—if organisms interbreed to produce fertile offspring then they should be considered a single species. Any regional variation would be reduced to a subspecies or race status. It was a powerful way of looking at the natural world, but it could not unequivocally solve every classification problem and was of no use in classifying extinct life forms. In the 1960s a couple of individuals put forth the Phylogenetic Species Concept—which emphasized the degree of evolutionary relationship that one organism has with another. It uses biomolecular analysis of nuclear and mitochondrial DNAs or proteins to compare life forms. In large part it is these new molecular techniques that are now turning our classifications on their heads.

Even with all these advances, the 1973 Peterson guide lists the Snow Goose and Blue Goose as

separate species. It took individuals in the field to notice that clutches of the Lesser Snow Goose contained both blue and white morph fledglings. And most of the changes to those birds in that 1973 book have been the result of better fieldwork. The American Birding Association for the last 25 years has been publishing articles discussing the finer points of bird identification. Field guides continue to rapidly improve. Our optics are better. We all get around more. We communicate better. The number of highly knowledgeable birders continues to grow. In most cases the molecular analysis is only supporting the changes that birders in the field considered necessary all along. And so it is with the Cackling Goose.

The classification of the Canada Goose has been a recognized problem since the late 1800s and various schemes had been proposed. Jean Delacour, a leading ornithologist who fled Paris in 1940 to come to America, in 1954 authored a four volume set "Waterfowl of the World." Ironically he was a collaborator with Mayr on a number of things and like Mayr chose to emphasize the relatedness over the differences in his schemes. Delacour was the author that seemed to solve the Canada Goose problem for ornithologists. His section on the Canada Geese was very well written. Delacour thoughtfully drew upon the best fieldwork available on Canada Geese and described twelve different races that spanned North America from Newfoundland to the Aleutians. Two of those races were believed extinct at the time. The Giant Canada Goose was soon rediscovered in Rochester, MN by Harold Hansen. Thanks to our game managers it is now breeding like rabbits in our city parks from Denver to Long Island. The Bering race of Canada Goose is still believed extinct.

The races of Canada Goose described tend to be larger bodied in the south and smaller bodied as you go north and also darker in color as you go further northwest. The large bodied forms include the Atlantic race, the Interior race which breeds around Hudson Bay, the Giant race

which historically bred on Midwestern prairies, the Moffit's or the Great Basin race which breeds west of the Rockies, the Vancouver race which lives along the coast of British Columbia, and the Dusky race which breeds in southern Alaska's Copper River Delta. Intermediate sized forms include the Lesser race which breeds inland across northern Canada and Taverner's race which breeds inland along the tundra in northern and western Alaska. The smaller forms include the Hutchins race which breeds along the coastal Tundra in northern Canada, the Cackling race which breeds along the coast in western Alaska, and the Aleutian race.

Analysis of mitochondrial DNA found the smallest races to be 14% different from the larger races. In fact the smaller races proved to be far more similar to Barnacle Goose than they were to the larger races. And the larger races proved to be closer related to the Hawaiian Goose than they were to the smaller races. Thus a split was deemed necessary, because if the Hawaiian Goose was a separate species then the more distant smaller races had to be as well.

Some felt that the AOU should have adopted the name Tundra Goose for the new species—however they chose the name of the *B. c. minima* subspecies, Cackling Goose. To make things more confusing they adopted the name of the Hutchins subspecies *hutchinsii* as the new species name. Thus the Cackling Goose now contains the following:

Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii or Hutchins race
Branta hutchinsii taverneri or Taverner's race
Branta hutchinsii luecopareia or Aleutian race
Branta hutchinsii minima or Cackling race

All the other living races remain within the species called Canada Goose.

The Hutchins race does migrate through Iowa to wintering grounds in Texas. Since the split they have been reported on a number of CBCs. Separating the Hutchins race of Cackling Goose from our resident Giant race and the migratory Interior race is not very difficult. Both of our

Canada Goose races are much larger than our Cackling Goose, but that doesn't mean that mistakes can't be made. In general birders should look for a small goose with a somewhat squared head shape, steep forehead and short triangular bill approximately half the width of the head. Additionally the bill will be positioned near the middle of the face. All of the 'white-cheeked geese' migrate in family groups and you can expect the Cackling Geese to segregate from the larger Canada Geese. Using this idea will provide a surer sense of the perceived differences between individual geese, making identifications more certain.

Everything is not as certain as we would wish though, because some feel that the Lesser race of Canada Goose, *B. c. parvipes*, also migrates through Iowa in small numbers. There are no specimens, but a few knowledgeable Iowa birders have observed and photographed them and an article for Iowa Bird Life is in the works (Paul Hertz, pers. comm.) It is an intermediate size form and can be difficult to separate from races of Cackling Goose. It is highly conceivable that Lesser Canada Geese in Iowa may be misidentified as Cackling Geese. They are only slightly larger than the Hutchins race, so size isn't much help. Birders should focus on the shape of the head and bill. The Lesser race has a head that is more rounded at the corners and a more gently sloping forehead. The bill length will also be more than half the width of the head, typically over two-thirds the width. And the bill should be positioned higher on the face. Other plumage details are too variable to be reliable.

The DNR is currently unaware of the occurrence of Lesser Canadas in our state. Game managers across the country have not focused on subspecies in the way that ornithologists have, but on migratory populations. Currently the IOU has received little in the way of good data on these birds. Few birders have yet paid much attention to identifying subspecies in our state, but I think that will change.

If anyone is interested, there is a copy of Delacour's *Waterfowl of the World* at the U of I's Biology Library. It is worth a read. The section on Canada Geese is found in volume four.

Attendees: John Broz, Cathy Busch, Chris Caster, Linda Fisher, James Huntington, Tom Kent, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Dick Lynch, Jason Paulios, Jim Scheib, Marcia and Richard Shaffer, Gerry White.
– Chris Caster

May 28, Dudgeon Lake. Our destination, Dudgeon Lake, is a backwater on the east bank of the Cedar River in north Benton County. It has been nominated as an Iowa Audubon IBA site and is known for nesting Prothonotary Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, and Red-shouldered Hawks. Other IBA birds often reported from there include Bald Eagle, Wood Thrush, and Black-billed Cuckoo.

However it is nearly an hour drive from Iowa City and we decided to make a stop at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area along the way. As many will recall a Prairie Warbler was very reliable there and they are not often seen in Iowa. Fortunately Ken Lowder already knew exactly where to go for this bird and he was singing happily for us above the tree with the white ribbon attached. Very nice! Evidently this bird was later found to be straddling the line between Benton and Linn Counties and a few birders with GPS units went in to determine exactly which county got to record that bird. Crazy! Jay Gilliam of Norwalk reported on the listserv from using aerial photos, that the bird was actually within Benton County and I never heard anything to contradict this determination. Pleasant Creek SP is also an IBA site and we found a number of great birds there including Northern Bobwhite, Alder Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows, and Bobolink. These were all found on the SW side of the lake in or near the field where the dog trials are held.

Dudgeon Lake was not nearly as productive. Due to all the good birds at Pleasant Creek and a Casey's stop in Vinton we got there mid-morning and it was already beginning to get hot. We hiked well up the grassy trail even beyond where it forks in an effort to find our target birds. We hallucinated a few, but in the end we had only a lone Prothonotary singing along the gravel entry road to show for the IBA effort. It was a very cooperative and beautiful bird however and we probably spent ten minutes looking just at it. The only other interesting bird to report from there was an Olive-sided Flycatcher, also very nice and sitting high up in a bare tree as they most often do.

Participants: Brady Belcher, Chris Caster (leader), Ken Hunt, Ken Lowder.

– *Chris Caster*

May 29, Cairo Woods. Cairo Woods is located south of Columbus Junction in Louisa County. Getting there requires making some turns onto a series of gravel roads and you are sure to get lost if you don't know where you are going. If you plan to visit you should acquire a map from our website and take your Sporstman's Atlas. It is well worth it as Cairo Woods has many wide horse trails that take you over slightly hilly terrain and through a mixed bag of deep woods, brushy edge, and overgrown prairie. It has a little bit of everything. And you are sure to find many birds that can be hard to find closer to Iowa City. The park is best known for hosting Yellow-breasted Chats and Bell's Vireos.

There are two primary points of access, one at the northeast and the other at the southwest. On this day we chose to access on the southwest. Our first bird at the parking lot was a singing Lark Sparrow. Soon after heading north on the trail we heard two Bell's Vireos singing from separate territories. We also soon came upon a White-eyed Vireo. We never did get looks at any of the vireos. These birds are often hard to find, but their distinctive songs give them away within the dense shrubs. Not far from this point

we heard our first Yellow-breasted Chat calling. This bird was on a traditional territory and easy to find. It even performed a display flight for us.

After a chat with some women on horseback we continued north for a quarter mile or so before encountering anything interesting. When we came upon a pond, closer to the northeast entrance we found a number of Scarlet Tanagers flying about and a Summer Tanager was with them. A Pileated Woodpecker was a fly over as well. Up over the next hill we heard another Chat calling, but never got to see that bird. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was singing nearby.

We were nearly at the northeast entrance when we headed west into a more heavily wooded area. Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, four Wood Thrushes, Northern Parula, American Redstart, and Cerulean Warbler were all heard birds, but none were seen. The trail took us down into a wooded ravine and eventually fizzled out at a creek. We might have been able to pick up the trail on the other side, but that led to a portion of the park on the northwest corner that was unknown to me. Since it was already quite hot and we didn't have much water along, we decided that it would be best to head on back the way we came. Regrettably by turning around we likely missed out on finding a Kentucky Warbler, as I'm told that these have been found previously in this area.

The way back produced another look at the Summer Tanager. We also heard a Henslow's Sparrow in a small hilltop field. And as we approached the car we discovered a singing Orchard Oriole. We then headed into Columbus Junction to reward ourselves for our IBA efforts with a fine Mexican lunch at La Reyna. That is another bonus of birding Cairo Woods.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Diana Pesek.

– *Chris Caster*

June 3, Cedar Bluffs and Klum Lake. Both of these areas are probably far better known to turkey and mushroom hunters than birders. Cedar Bluffs Recreation Area is a very hilly, forested area of 176 acres on the east bank of the Cedar River in southwestern Muscatine County, not far from Conesville. There is no good route to get there from Iowa City and having a Sportsman's Atlas is probably essential to finding it. Anyone going there should be prepared for very steep muddy trails. Fortunately the trails weren't slippery and we had no accidents. Our first event was to discover a skunk foraging near the trail. It didn't seem overly startled by us, even though we had approached well within spray distance before noticing it. And after a minute the animal trotted off. Nearby we found our first Kentucky Warbler. This was our IBA target bird and those residing in Cedar Bluffs seem to have a slightly different song than those we have heard at other parks in our area. Mike Dooley and Bob Dick first reported on this atypical song a few years ago. Mike described it as "churry-churry-churry-churry-ta-weet ta-weeta." We discovered a total of three Kentuckys on territories at Cedar Bluffs and heard an additional Wood Thrush for the IBA effort. However not much else was stirring in the deep woods. Cedar Bluffs is certainly good habitat for Pileated Woodpecker though and the steep ravines will likely produce a Worm-eating Warbler one day. Above the wooded ravines the trail runs around some overgrown brushy areas and these have hosted Bell's Vireos, but none were found this day. We did find a singing Chestnut-sided Warbler, which was an unusually late migrant. There are only a few nesting records of the species in Iowa. And we finished the hike with a Ruby-throated Hummingbird perched on the power lines near Dave's van.

In Grandview, we took a short break on our way to Klum Lake. Klum Lake is an area of 650 acres located on the edge of the Mississippi River flood plain just east of Grandview in Louisa County. Most of it is marginally

accessible to birders on foot. An individual might cut brush and find some good birds, but it is very restrictive to groups. I've always thought that it would be interesting to bird it from a kayak. We parked at an unmarked pull-off on the east side of H Ave. and hiked north on the service road that runs along the base of the wooded bluff. It is very easy walking, but there is no loop—you have to walk back the way you came. We found Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Great-crested and Acadian Flycatchers, Scarlet Tanagers, a male Cerulean Warbler, and two Prothonotary Warblers—our IBA target bird. A Brown Creeper was also a nice find. There is a signed entrance at the south end along X61 and from there we drove the gravel road that winds up the east side to its end. This is probably the only place where you can see any of the wet area of Klum Lake. By this time it was getting late and not much was stirring. We did see a cuckoo there, but couldn't identify it to species. Wood Thrush and Chat are birds seen along the east side in previous years, but none were found this day. Thanks Dave for driving and telling us all about birding with your Dad in northern Alaska.

One postscript – Jerry White of Muscatine followed up on our trip and found 4 Bell's Vireos in the suitable habitat at Cedar Bluffs which our group didn't have time to cover. Thanks Jerry!

Participants: Mike Dooley and Chris Caster (leaders), Dave Kyllingstad, Diana Pesek

– *Chris Caster*

June 11, Brinton Timber. This trip was supposed to have been held on Saturday the 10th, but Mike and I decided that the weather report was too bad and we elected to postpone for 24 hours. The move was unannounced so as to not detract from the Coralville Reservoir Survey Mark Brown was to lead the same day.

If you have never birded Brinton Timber you should. It is proving to be without equal for deep-woods nesters in our part of the state. Its

334 acres hold a mix of woodland forest habitats including Skunk River floodplain, steep ravines, wooded creeks, mature uplands and second-growth woodlands bordering pastures. It is accessed at the end of Fir Ave. west of Brighton in southwest Washington County. When we visit, there are almost always horse trailers parked at the entrance and occasionally we have to let a small procession get by on the trail. The horses make for muddy trails on wet weekends like this one. One thing that I have found in the three years I've been birding Brinton is that the native woodland plants seem to be thriving. The garlic mustard that has plagued our Johnson County woodlands has not yet made it there and deer don't seem to be a huge problem. I wish all our woods could look as healthy.

There are about six miles of trails and maps have been placed at all the major intersections and the trees have colored markings. We also carry a trail map obtained from the IOU website—this is a very good idea, as things can get a bit confusing when you are out there. We probably walked over two-thirds of the trails in our IBA effort.

We ended up with a pretty good haul. We had over twenty Acadian Flycatchers, 3 Carolina Wrens, 3 Northern Parulas, 3 Scarlet Tanagers and 13 Louisiana Waterthrushes. The waterthrushes were from three family groups, always in the creek beds, and two single birds. One group included an adult very busy feeding four fledglings. The ravines and shallow, heavily wooded creeks of Brinton appear made to order for this bird.

The Kentucky Warblers got a good bit of our attention. We located 8 of these, including two pairs. One of these pairs caused us to pause for nearly a half hour. The female had a wriggling insect larva in her bill and the pair acted fairly agitated around a small area near our trail. We backed away to sit on a log where we could view the two through binoculars hoping to learn the location of their nest. We finally left when

it became clear that the warblers were more patient than we were.

Other IBA birds included a Broad-winged Hawk, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Prothonotary Warbler near the river, 5 Cerulean Warblers in the mature upland forest, and 9 Wood Thrushes scattered here and there. Brinton Timber will certainly have full IBA status after this data collection. Additionally, we found a very nice specimen of a Luna Moth, albeit deceased. We don't often see those. What a great place!

Participants: Chris Caster, Mike Dooley.

– *Chris Caster*

June 24, Wildcat Den State Park. Wildcat Den State Park is a 423-acre site east of Muscatine in the hills above the Mississippi. It is known for its cliff formations, a deep rocky ravine trail, and a spectacular overlook of valley where it opens up. It may be the southernmost point in the state where native White Pines still occur. Eastern Phoebes and abundant Rough-winged Swallows nest in the rock crevices and a number of IBA birds have been found in the park.

We accessed the park from New Era Road and then parked in the small pull-off across from the campground. We first hiked the trail heading west and found a coyote on the path. Initially the habitat wasn't so good for any of our target birds. The dense pine plantings didn't hold anything and the deciduous woodlands didn't seem sufficiently mature. The trail eventually reached the park boundary and we spent some time viewing the Barn Swallows and a pair of Grasshopper Sparrows out in the pasture carrying nesting material. They were technically outside the park, but we felt they were close enough to count for IBA purposes. We also heard a Northern Bobwhite there.

As the trail circled back into the park to the north we got into some better woodland habitat and found three Scarlet Tanagers. There was also an interesting array of black and white

feathers all over the trail that may have been from an accipiter kill of a Red-headed Woodpecker. Two Carolina Wrens and five Wood Thrushes were also heard. Eventually the trail circled into the northeast portion of the park. Near the creek side park road we found a pair of juvenile Pileated Woodpeckers. The trail then wandered below the rocky faces the park is known for and crossed the creek. Normally we find Louisiana Waterthrush here, but not today.

We headed on up the steep trail to the overlook and spent some time watching Red-headed Woodpeckers and Baltimore Orioles from above. The trail heads east from there along the bluff-top, paralleling New Era Road. We there found a singing Cerulean in the same locale as last year. It was curiously singing a song that from opening notes to ending trill was obviously patterned on the William Tell Overture. Mike commented that it was unclear how this bird was exposed to classical music or whether the local females prefer this to hip-hop.

On the return to our vehicle we journeyed up the rocky ravine trail. It isn't very long, but it has to be one of the unique places in the state with its perpetually cool temperatures, creek, pines, ferns, rocks and Rough-winged Swallows flitting about. The area seemed tailor-made for Acadian Flycatchers, but none were found. And overall we were a bit disappointed that we hadn't found greater numbers of our target birds. Though when we reached our vehicle what should we hear, but a Yellow-throated Warbler singing in the pines overhead. It took awhile, but we got some nice looks at the bird. And then what do you know, but a Kentucky Warbler started singing from the woods on the other side of the road. We got nice looks at that bird as well.

Participants: Chris Caster, Mike Dooley.

– *Chris Caster*

July 1, Matsell Bridge Natural Area. This outing was an IBA survey of Matsell Bridge

Natural Area in Linn County. Due to predicted hot and humid weather, we decided to explore the Red Oak trail, a woodland trail that's on the east side of the park and is about two miles long, instead of the longer, more open and sunny trails in the main part of the park. The Red Oak trail leads to the park's rental cabin and to a lovely view of the Wapsipinicon River. Unfortunately, this trail didn't produce many IBA species, just one singing Cerulean Warbler. The weather turned out a little cooler and windier than predicted and so the morning's walk was a nice one despite the lack of IBA birds.

Participants: Nora Becker, Diane Bradbury, Linda Donelson, Diana Pesek (leader).

Species (23): Turkey Vulture, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Cerulean Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting.

– *Diana Pesek*

July 15, Butterfly Count. This was our eighth annual butterfly count. We visited Kent Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Macbride Nature-Recreation Area, Lake Macbride State Park, and Solon Prairie. In 8½ hours we found 31 species and 374 individuals. The 374 butterflies is the lowest in the history of the count, and is about half the normal average. However we had some exciting finds including a Regal Fritillary at MNRA (a very rare stray to Johnson Co.); 4 'Olive' Juniper Hairstreaks in two different locations at HWA; and 2 American Coppers, a first count record, also at HWA. We saw our first Little Yellows, Common Buckeyes, and Common Sootywings of the year. There were no Painted or American Ladies seen, and we also missed Red-spotted Purple.

Our count was held in conjunction with the North American Butterfly Association's 4th of July Butterfly Count program. More than 400 counts are held annually throughout North America. Count results provide information about the distribution and relative population sizes of butterflies. Comparisons across years can be used to monitor changes in populations and study the effects of weather and habitat change on butterflies. We use the same 15-mile diameter count circle that is used for the Christmas Bird Count.

Participants: Chris Caster, Chris Edwards (leader).

Butterflies (31 species, 374 individuals): Black Swallowtail 2, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 6, Cabbage White 91, Clouded Sulphur 4, Orange Sulphur 6, Little Yellow 5, American Copper 2, Gray Copper 3, Bronze Copper 3, 'Olive' Juniper Hairstreak 4, Eastern Tailed-Blue 27, 'Summer' Spring Azure 37, American Snout 1, Great Spangled Fritillary 18, Regal Fritillary 1, Meadow Fritillary 3, Pearl Crescent 21, Question Mark 4, Eastern Comma 2, Red Admiral 3, Common Buckeye 2, Viceroy 7, Common Wood-Nymph 61, Monarch 38, Silver-spotted Skipper 5, Common Sootywing 2, Least Skipper 2, Delaware Skipper 1, Byssus Skipper 4, Black Dash 1, Dun Skipper 1.

– *Chris Edwards*

August 13, Shorebird Trip. A pleasant morning greeted us with a temperature of 64° and light SE winds. We headed straight for Greencastle Avenue in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area. A quick stop at the Gun Club Ponds produced nice looks at several Solitary Sandpipers. We proceeded down Greencastle, hoping that the dropping water levels would provide habitat for shorebirds. It did, and there were birds. There were not a lot of shorebirds, but we had Lesser Yellowlegs, a number of Least Sandpipers, a couple of Solitary Sandpipers, and one peep that caused us pause. It had dark legs, rufous-edged upper scapulars

and mantle with some rufous on the crown. I called it a juvenile Western Sandpiper, but was a little troubled by the bill, which didn't seem as long as I would have expected. We had a nice treat of two Sandhill Cranes calling as they flew by, and a winter plumaged Black Tern passed by.

We next tried Babcock Access where we spotted a Eurasian Tree Sparrow, but saw little else. The water level at James Avenue was too high, but we marveled at the number of pelicans.

We observed large numbers of swallows sitting on various telephone wires. Most were Tree Swallows, but Bank, Cliff, and Barn Swallows were also present. When the group dispersed, Chris and I gave a quick check again at Greencastle, but the shorebirds had departed.

Participants: Chris Caster, Bob and Dara Dick, Jonni Ellsworth, Tony Franken, Anna Guedon, Geraldine Guedon, Therese Guedon, Ken Hunt, James Huntington (leader).

Birds (47 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Kingbird, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *James Huntington*

Johnson County Birding Highlights, Spring & Summer 2006

Mike Dooley

The spring season in Johnson County was strong on shorebirds but less productive for uncommon duck species, although in the general waterfowl category there was, at least, no shortage of geese. The best warbler outings were consistently from Hawkeye W.A. and the Lake Macbride area, while Hickory Hill Park remained frustratingly barren except for a short spell late in migration. Outstanding spring finds in the county included Yellow Rail, Snowy Plover, and two incidents of Black-necked Stilt.

MARCH

The first substantial waterfowl report for the Johnson County year came on March 4th, when 17 species were identified around Hawkeye W.A. These included 750 GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE and 200 SNOW GEESE at or over Round Pond. A few days later two ROSS'S GEESE were picked out among the gathering while nine ROSS'S GEESE were at Babcock Access on the 10th. Elsewhere, a winter-surviving GRAY CATBIRD made a brief appearance in a backyard in Iowa City on the 3rd.

The goose contingents were still passing through at mid March. Numbers at Babcock Access on the 16th included 700 GREATER WHITE-FRONTED, 100 SNOW, and 5 ROSS'S. Four EURASIAN TREE-SPARROWS were in the general vicinity as well. Shorebirds began to trickle in toward the end of the month. Of special note was a DUNLIN on the reservoir between Sand Point and Babcock Access on the 29th, potentially a record early spring arrival for Iowa. To boot, this DUNLIN had a relative in tow the very next day.

APRIL

A lone ROSS'S GOOSE, not fooling anyone, appeared on the first day of April at Water Works Park north of Iowa City. The first activity at South Sycamore Bottoms, the wetland on the south side of Iowa City, was an AMERICAN BITTERN flushed on the 4th. Several days later on the 9th a SANDHILL CRANE was present. Also on the 9th two LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES and two NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS were seen along Johnson-Muscatine County Rd. in the extreme southeast corner of the county. A day earlier, no less than three WINTER WRENS were along a creek at Sugar Bottom north of North Liberty.

The county's first taste of the warbler season came during the second week of April when a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER was back in place in the woods at the end of Cottage Reserve Rd. on the 12th. On the 14th, around a dozen SMITH'S LONGSPURS were discovered in farmland a few miles southeast of Hills, and were relocated over the next couple of days, with an UPLAND SANDPIPER calling in the area as well on the 16th. West of Iowa City on the 12th, an AMERICAN BITTERN flushed from along one of the large ponds at Red Bird Farm's north property.

Good birds around the water spots of the county's northern section opened the second half of April. On the 17th, three GREATER SCAUPS were on the upper Coralville Reservoir, seen from the Amana Rd. side. A couple of days later, a rare county GOLDEN EAGLE sighting occurred off Twin View Heights on the lower reservoir. Also on the 19th, a SNOWY EGRET was spotted along the north arm of Lake Macbride and relocated the following day. This latter outing turned up a sizeable flock of 30 AMERICAN AVOCETS working Sandy Beach on the lower reservoir. Nearby, a pair of YELLOW-THROATED WARBLERS were singing in the North Unit of Lake Macbride State Park. On the 21st, six more AMERICAN AVOCETS were off Sand Point, but best of all was a WHITE-FACED IBIS identified at Twin View Heights.

Meanwhile, also on the 21st, an excellent sparrow find was a singing HENSLOW'S SPARROW in the northeast field section of Hickory Hill Park. Another HENSLOW'S was at Water Works Park a couple

of days later and relocated on the 24th. On the 22nd, a SANDHILL CRANE was present again at South Sycamore Bottoms and the next day an AMERICAN BITTERN flushed from along the marsh edge. The bittern continued at least through the 26th. A PEREGRINE FALCON was a flyover in the area as well. The best bird of the spring in Johnson County may have been a YELLOW RAIL found at Water Works Park on the 24th and relocated the following day.

In late April, the shorebird invasion began in earnest and continued through late May. On April 25th, five MARBLED GODWITS were scoped on the upper reservoir from the north side and relocated the next day. On that day as well, 12 AMERICAN AVOCETS were off Sand Point. Six avocets were closer to the north shore on the 27th. On other bird fronts, the first CERULEAN WARBLER at the familiar campsite territory at Macbride NRA made its vocal debut on the 26th. Another CERULEAN WARBLER was along the sailboat trail on the 27th. Also on the 27th, a COMMON MOORHEN was discovered plying the waters of Swan Lake. This bird stayed around at least through early May.

MAY

May opened up with a stellar warbler for the county, a HOODED WARBLER which came to a backyard in Iowa City. Also on the 1st, one each of GOLDEN-WINGED and CERULEAN WARBLER were at Swan Lake Woods, the area near the Sand Point parking lot. Two SANDERLINGS were at Sandy Beach on the lower reservoir on May 3rd. Over at the upper reservoir, two HUDSONIAN GODWITS, three RUDDY TURNSTONES, and a few WILLETS were viewed from Amana Rd., as well as a COMMON TERN. The godwits and one each of the Willets and turnstones stayed over until the 4th, joined by an AMERICAN AVOCET, two SANDERLINGS, and a RED-NECKED PHALAROPE. The 4th was also a good day for songbirds. Highlights included a WHITE-EYED VIREO along the lake trail north of the Cottage Reserve area, and a CLAY-COLORED SPARROW passing through near Swan Lake.

Two remarkable shorebird finds occurred at the upper reservoir on May 5th, when a BLACK-NECKED STILT and a SNOWY PLOVER were found at different times of day. An aggressively hunting PEREGRINE FALCON kept the general shorebird flocks nervous that day as well. On the 7th, three SANDHILL CRANES were a flyover at Babcock Access, while a MARBLED GODWIT was seen next door from Sand Point. The godwit was still there on the 9th, as well as three AMERICAN AVOCETS, one RUDDY TURNSTONE, and four SANDERLINGS. At Swan Lake Woods a GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER was a highlight among many different migrants. On May 10th the highlight of that day's Hickory Hill Warbler Walk was not a warbler but a male SUMMER TANAGER, uncommon in Johnson Co. The walk did turn up a GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER along the way, and a couple of more on the 16th.

Meanwhile the annual Johnson County Spring Count took place on May 13th. An unseasonably cold and gray day hindered the final species list somewhat. A full article on the count appears elsewhere in this issue of *Eastern Iowa Birdwatch*.

A second HOODED WARBLER made an appearance in the county on the 15th, near the northernmost loop of the mountain bike trail at Sugar Bottom Recreation. Godwits swarmed into the upper reservoir on the 16th. From the north shore 10 HUDSONIAN GODWITS and a substantial 22 MARBLED GODWITS were seen. On the 18th a NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD was at the entrance to Water Works Park. Also on the 18th a couple of wader sightings were SNOWY EGRET at Round Pond in Hawkeye W.A. and SANDHILL CRANE at Sycamore Bottoms. Among a good list of warblers this same day at Hanging Rock Woods in Hawkeye W.A. were two GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS and a KENTUCKY WARBLER.

A very uncharacteristic drought of major spring warbler outings at Hickory Hill Park in Iowa City was finally broken on the 20th. A catalogue of 21 warbler species included BLUE-WINGED, GOLDEN-WINGED, CAPE MAY, MOURNING, and CONNECTICUT WARBLER. A bird club outing on the 21st to the forested Gardner property south of Morse turned up two PILEATED WOODPECKERS among other sightings.

Two IBIS SPECIMENS, presumably White-faced, were seen from the north shore of the upper reservoir on the 24th. Another, clearly identifiable WHITE-FACED IBIS (or perhaps one of the previous birds), appeared at Round Pond on the 25th. Other waders and shorebirds on this excellent day around the reservoir included SNOWY EGRET, the spring's second BLACK-NECKED STILT, three WILLETS, eight HUDSONIAN GODWITS, and 13 RUDDY TURNSTONES. All of these species continued on the 26th.

Back to woods birding, a CONNECTICUT WARBLER was singing in Hickory Hill Park on the 26th. What was presumably the same HOODED WARBLER from two weeks earlier was found at Sugar Bottom on the 27th, again at the north end of the bike trail, and behaving territorially. A YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER was also at Sugar Bottom. Nearby, an obscure wooded area west of the Mahaffey Bridge produced one each of ACADIAN FLYCATCHER and CERULEAN WARBLER. On the 29th, the same two species were found in the woods at Squire Point on the lower reservoir. Yet another ACADIAN FLYCATCHER as well as a PILEATED WOODPECKER were at Turkey Creek, closing out the spring season in Johnson County.

JUNE AND JULY

Our summer report for Johnson County is succinct in the extreme. For starters, there were no uncommon birds reported anywhere in the county during June. Meanwhile July would only produce a thimble's worth of reports, all shorebirds, all off Sand Point. On the 2nd, a good-sized flock of shorebirds included eight WILLETS. More than a week later, on the 12th, a lone AMERICAN AVOCET was managing to find meals despite the usual summer rise in water levels at the reservoir. Two days later, the avocet population rose to three birds, our last visitors of note for the summer season.

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Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published three times per year (usually April, September, and December). Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to editor Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, or e-mail at credwards@aol.com.

Annual membership dues are \$15 per household or \$10 for students, payable by January 1st for the coming year. Make checks payable to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, and mail to Bernie Knight, 425 Lee St., Iowa City, IA 52246. Check your mailing label for the year you have paid through.

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The club web site is maintained by Jim Scheib and is located at icbirds.org.

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