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# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 27 Number 3

December 2007

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## 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.

**December 11, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Christmas Bird Count Planning Meeting** at the home of Jim and Karole Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE north of Iowa City. See page 2 for more information.

**December 16, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count.** See page 2 for more information.

**January 17, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting.** Chris Caster will present on aging and identification of Ring-billed, Herring, Glaucous, Thayer's, and Iceland Gulls in Iowa. Don't worry, Chris promises to make you gull masters in less than an hour.

**January 19, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Quad Cities** for gulls. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

**January 27, Sunday, 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. Bird Feeder Watch Social** hosted by Ed and Jean Allgood, 3122 Alpine Ct., Iowa City. Come for coffee and rolls and watch the winter birds visiting the feeders. For directions call Ed and Jean at 338-8090.

**February 9, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Amana Turkey Walk and Feast.** Join us for an early morning hike through the woods to search for Wild Turkeys and Saw-whet Owls, followed by breakfast at the Amanas. Please call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 if you plan to attend.

**February 17, Sunday, 1:00 p.m. Owl Prowl.** We'll spend the afternoon searching for roosting owls, such as Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, and Barred Owls. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

**February 21, Thursday, 7:00 pm. Meeting.** Jason Paulios will share his favorite birding spots on the Washington coast, with an emphasis on timing trips to maximize Pacific NW lifers.

**March 8, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Burlington Area** for Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Winter Wren, Lapland Longspur, waterfowl and more with local guide Chuck Fuller. Meet at the Fin & Feather parking lot on South Riverside Drive. This will be an all-day trip, so you may want to pack a lunch. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

Continued on next page →

## Schedule – continued

**March 25, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Beginning Birdwatcher Course: Basics of Birding I** at the Conservation Education Center at Kent Park. This is the first of six classes which are free to club members. Advanced registration is requested – call Brad Freidhof at 645-2315 to register. Contact Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 for more information. A full schedule will be listed in the next newsletter

**March 26, Wednesday, 7:00 pm. Meeting.** Learn how to easily enjoy the experience of the European fall migration in southern Sweden. Jim and Sharon Scheib share their September 2007 trip photos and European birding tips. Highlight birds included White-tailed Eagle, Black Kite, Egyptian Goose, and Black Woodpecker.

**March 29, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Cone Marsh** in Louisa County for Sandhill Cranes, ducks, geese, and other early spring arrivals. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP*. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**April 1, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Beginning Birdwatcher Course: Basics of Birding II** at the Conservation Education Center at Kent Park.

## Other Dates of Note

**March 11, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. Annual Prairie Preview** at Montgomery Hall at the Johnson County 4H Fairgrounds. This year's theme is "The Emerald Horizon: A Vision for Nature in Iowa" and the featured speaker is Connie Mutel. There will be information and displays from local environmental organizations and agencies.

### Christmas Bird Count December 16

This year's Iowa City Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 16th, unless extreme weather conditions require moving the count to a later date. Co-compilers are Bob Dick and Chris Edwards. If you wish to participate as a field observer or a feeder watcher or if you have questions, please call Bob between 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. at 337-4945 or 321-0706 (cell), or email at [bobd555@earthlink.net](mailto:bobd555@earthlink.net).

The pre-count planning meeting will be Tuesday, December 11th, at 7 p.m. at the home of Jim and Karole Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll NE, located off Dubuque St. north of Iowa City. Call Jim at 338-3561 if you need directions. Note: You do not need to attend the planning meeting to participate in the CBC. Your group leader will have information for you on the count day.

On count day, we will meet at noon for a mid-day compilation and lunch in Meeting Room C at the North Liberty Community Center, 520 W. Cherry St. in North Liberty. (This is the same location as last year.) Bring your own lunch.

Dinner and an updated compilation will be at The Brown Bottle Café, 125 Zeller St., North Liberty. Our private room is available beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Please note that the count area is a 15-mile diameter circle with the center located at Highway 965 and County Road F-28 (Penn Street) in North Liberty. This includes all of North Liberty and Coralville, but not all of Iowa City. If you plan to participate as a feeder watcher and are not sure if you are in the count area, please contact Bob. Also, if you know others who may desire to participate as a feeder watcher please encourage them and have them call Bob.

Please visit the ICBC web site at [www.icbirds.org](http://www.icbirds.org) for more information that Jim Scheib has provided.

## Membership Spotlight on: **Rick Hollis**

**Name:** Rick Hollis

**What is your occupation?** I supervise a microbiology lab at the university. Although I helped develop some of the techniques we use to help doctors know how to treat patients, I spend most of my time doing what supervisors do and playing with data.

**Tell us about your family.** I have been married to Janet since 1971. She has taught in the Iowa City schools since we moved to Iowa in 1973. Our daughter Jenny is presently teaching biology in a charter school in Albuquerque. My parents still live in the house I grew up in suburban Baltimore, MD. My brother and sister and their families also live in Maryland.

**Where did you grow up?** I grew up in Baltimore, but we took frequent trips to the mountains, including spending two weeks every summer in a state park. We also took frequent trips to the bay and ocean.

**When and how did your interest in birds develop?** My first birdwatching memories are walking around Herrington Manor State Park in far western Maryland with my mother, and watching birds with her in the my neighborhood. We used the little Robbins and Zim paperback and later Pough's guide. My interest waxed and waned and waxed and waned over the years. When I was at William and Mary in Tidewater, Virginia, working on my master's degree, I took a number of biology courses that got me in the field. I took an ornithology course which kicked off my birding activity.

**Did you have any birding mentors?** My mother, Mitchell Byrd at William and Mary, and once we moved out here, Mike and Carol Newlon, Tom Kent, Jim Fuller and Carol Thompson.

**When did you join the Iowa City Bird Club?** I was here nearly at the beginning. I was present at one very early meeting, before I knew many people. I was a regular attendee on the field trips Mike Newlon organized, back when our newsletter was a half page of field trip lists.

**Do you have a favorite bird or family of birds?** Probably the chickadees, titmice and nuthatches, also the woodpeckers; probably because their behaviors are so watchable.

**What particular aspects of birding interest you the most?** Bird behavior, and sharing birds with others.

**Do you keep a life list?** Yes, but without turning on my computer, I could not tell you what it is. For what it is worth, my life list is ca. 460, not counting 240 in Brazil and 28 in Hawaii. My Iowa list might be at 306.

**What was the most recent bird you added to your life list?** I am not sure, which shows you how much I pay attention to my list.

**What interesting birds have you seen in your yard?** A tie between a Yellow-headed Blackbird one snowy New Year's Day and a Eurasian Tree Sparrow right before our Christmas count one year.

**Where is your favorite place in Iowa to bird, and why?** That is hard. I have so many favorites places – Round Lake at Hawkeye Wildlife Area, the little clearing at the bottom of the first hill on the north path Hickory Hill Park. In a nutshell, it is wherever I am.

**Tell us about one of your most exciting Iowa birding moments.** Probably finding a Red Phalarope at Half Moon Lake in Hawkeye Wildlife Area one fall. I think it was the year when the ibis was there, and I was scoping shorebirds and found it. So often when I find birds, I am with others and it is hard to know who called people's attention to a bird as strange and who ID'd it. This one was all 'mine.'

**What is your "most wanted" Iowa bird?** I once identified a Ferruginous Hawk which was rejected by the records committee. In my dreams, I would like to find one for sure, a Prairie Falcon, or one of the strange hummingbirds (that did not escape from the Des Moines Botanical Gardens). In my yard dreams I would like a redpoll and Evening Grosbeaks.

**Tell us about a favorite birding experience or place outside of Iowa.** The Everglades area and southern Louisiana. Carol Thompson and I met in New Orleans once, between a conference I had just finished and one of hers that had not yet started. We did a circuit around the big lake and finished at Grande Isle. I may not have seen any new birds but it was a real ball. Birds, birds, birds.

**If you could visit any place on earth, where would it be?** The Jocotoco Preserve in Ecuador, Madre de Selva Preserve in Peru, and back to the Pantanal and Chapada do Guimarões in Brazil.

**Do you have any hobbies or interests besides birding?** Photography and reading, Hawkeye football and basketball, walking my dog.

**Do you have any favorite movies or TV shows?** *M\*A\*S\*H*, *Rockford Files*, *Hill Street Blues*, *NYPD Blue*, and *Law and Order SVU*.

**Have you read any good books lately?** I do a lot of escapist reading: mysteries, historical fiction, and science fiction, as well as non-fiction. Three in the latter category that I liked recently were *The Terror* by Dan Simmons, about the last Franklin Expedition; *Sharpe's Fury: Richard Sharpe and the Battle of Barrosa, March 1811* by Bernard Cornwell; and *Under Enemy Color* by S. Thomas Russel, a novel of early 19th-century Royal Navy. Some interesting non-fiction books: *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* by Lee Miller; *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How it Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* by Steven Johnson; *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation* by David A. Price; *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* by William M. Kelso; and *At All Costs: How a Crippled Ship and Two American Merchant Mariners Turned the Tide of World War II* by Sam Moses.

**What is your favorite restaurant?** That is another toughie, we don't eat out much. Our lab goes out for people's birthdays and last year on mine, I chose The Pit – the barbeque place that used to be a gas station. I like New Mexican food, but around here I settle for Mexican.

**\*\*\*\*\* R E N E W A L R E M I N D E R \*\*\*\*\***

It's time to send in your annual membership dues for 2008! Our annual membership dues remain \$15 per household or \$10 for students. Your mailing label shows the most recent year you have paid for. Please complete the membership renewal form on the inside back cover and send it with your check payable to "Eastern Iowa Birdwatch" to Bernie Knight, 425 Lee St., Iowa City, IA 52246. Thank you!

## DVD Review

### Linda Donelson

**Quiz Birds: Birding the Hot Spots.** Directed by Richard K. Walton and Greg Dodge. Brownbag Productions, 2006. Running time 60 minutes. \$19.95.

This DVD presents movie clips of 300 species of birds to identify, with an accompanying answer key. Table of contents:

- New England–winter finches, hawks, owls
- Cape May, NJ–fall warblers and songbirds, migrating hawks
- Blue Ridge Mountains, VA–nesting songbirds, summer residents
- Everglades, FL–mid-winter herons, shorebirds, songbirds, and raptors
- Dauphin Island, AL–spring migrants
- Rio Grande Valley, TX–South Texas and Mexican specialties
- Southeastern Arizona–desert, grassland, and mountain residents
- Southern CA–coastal, desert, and Salton Sea birds
- Oregon–summer residents from the coast to the Cascades
- Costa Rica–La Selva lowland rainforest birds

John and I bought this DVD in the little bookshop of the New Jersey Audubon Society at Cape May. We watched it on our laptop computer as we waited to board airplanes on the way home, flying from Philadelphia to St. Louis and on to Cedar Rapids. The DVD kept us royally entertained. Imagine birding, while all the time you are still seated in an airport. That's the experience you feel in watching this fascinating series of clips of 300 birds. Many of the birds are as challenging as any you'll find in the field. You peer and guess and wish leaves weren't in the way, and maybe suddenly you have a flash of recognition. Some of the fall warblers and immatures are an education in themselves.

One of the charms of the DVD is re-visiting places where you may have already traveled. You'll recognize some non-Iowa birds as old

friends from Arizona, Florida, California, Texas, and so on. We've never been so well entertained when whiling away time in an airport.

## Field Trip and Meeting Reports

**July 14, Annual Butterfly Count.** This was our ninth annual Iowa City Butterfly Count. This year there were nine participants which is our best turnout ever. The youngest member of our party was 8-year-old Nasim Baty, whose enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge of birds, butterflies, insects, amphibians, fish, and plants seemed boundless.

We visited Kent Park, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Macbride Nature-Recreation Area, and Lake Macbride State Park. With everyone's help we set a new count record of 39 species, well above the average of 33, however only 368 individual butterflies were seen which is well below the average of 635. Three species were new to the count (Northern Cloudywing, Wild Indigo Duskywing, Northern Broken-Dash) and four species were seen in record numbers (Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Mourning Cloak, American Lady, Monarch).

Participants: Devan and Nasim Baty, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards (leader), Ken Hunt, Selina Lin, Mary Noble, Ben and Gen Rowold.

Butterflies (39 species, 368 individuals): Black Swallowtail 2, Giant Swallowtail 2, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail 12, Cabbage White 38, Clouded Sulphur 23, Orange Sulphur 5, Cloudless Sulphur 1, Little Yellow 13, Bronze Copper 9, Eastern Tailed-Blue 57, 'Summer' Spring Azure 13, American Snout 2, Great Spangled Fritillary 13, Meadow Fritillary 5, Pearl Crescent 7, Question Mark 2, Gray Comma 1, Mourning Cloak 2, American Lady 4, Painted Lady 2, Red Admiral 8, Common Buckeye 16, Red-spotted Purple 3, Viceroy 9, Tawny Emperor 2, Common Wood-Nymph 20, Monarch 45, Silver-spotted Skipper 23,

Northern Cloudywing 1, Wild Indigo Duskywing 1, Least Skipper 12, Fiery Skipper 1, Peck's Skipper 2, Tawny-edged Skipper 2, Northern Broken-Dash 2, Delaware Skipper 1, Byssus Skipper 4, Black Dash 1, Dun Skipper 2.

– *Chris Edwards*

**August 19, Hawkeye Wildlife Area.** Shortly before the 7:00 a.m. start the radar showed rain only well north and south of Iowa City. Cloudy skies were welcomed to aid in shorebirding. However, as we were on Interstate 80 heading to HWA we ran into a brief downpour then had light drizzle on and off for a while.

We started at the Babcock area. At a mudflat area west of the parking lot was a Black-bellied Plover and several other shorebirds. Our main goal was to walk east from the parking lot to view shorebirds in the larger area of mudflats. It drizzled on and off, however only one person donned a rain suit and another a garbage bag. As we walked east it started to rain a little harder however only briefly so we were only slightly wet. We spent time looking through shorebirds and ended with a total of 11 species in this area. In addition the rain had left us for good.

The Greencastle area on the west side had a very minimum of cover and only yielded a Spotted Sandpiper. On the east side close to the road were a small number of shorebirds, mostly Least Sandpipers. Lots of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets were seen in both the above areas. Checked Round Pond and found little. A distant bird partially obscured apparently perched on a log in the marshy area ended up when he turned his head to be a male Ring-necked Pheasant. We then birded the area along Sand Point road for passerines hoping to find some warblers. We found only one, a female redstart which combined with a Common Yellowthroat seen previously yielded a total of two warblers. We enjoyed looking at several Yellow-billed Cuckoos. We ended our outing at 11:00 a.m.

Participants: Bob Dick (leader), Linda Donelson, Tony Franken, Ken Hunt, Tod Olmstead, Diana Pesek, Bill Scheible, Pete Wickham.

Birds (63 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Sedge Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Red-winged Blackbird, meadowlark sp., Common Grackle, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow. – *Bob Dick*

**September 8, Cairo Woods.** It was sixty-five degrees when we started and a fine day. We met at Fin-n-Feather and drove 32 miles south on Highway 218 to G62, where we turned east, and continued east until we got to Cairo Woods. Along the gravel approach road, a mile or two from Cairo Woods, we heard several Eastern Meadowlarks and stopped to investigate. Several Henslow's Sparrows sat up for us on the fence beside our car. We continued to see birds for more than an hour west along the road and beside an abandoned farmstead.

Next we explored the wooded dead-end road along the west edge of Cairo Woods. The Road

was active with Red-headed Woodpeckers, and also gave us a close look at a Black-billed Cuckoo with a worm in its bill. After seeing some warblers, we headed to the Main Access parking lot on the south side of Cairo Woods. The trails, which were last mowed about four weeks ago, presented wet walking. These trails are particularly fine just after they've been mowed.

You must always take a map when you visit Cairo Woods, because there are several blind loops and only one trail in and out of the parking lot. [Map:

[http://www.lccb.org/cairo\\_woods\\_map.htm.](http://www.lccb.org/cairo_woods_map.htm)] We walked a wide loop to the southernmost pond, then down to a sandy bottom creek. Dick Tetrault said it looked like an ideal spot for a Northern Waterthrush, and just then we saw one. Along the way we found a Bay-breasted Warbler, an Osprey and two Black-billed Cuckoos, as well as a Great Blue Heron.

The entire reserve is 525 acres, with entrances on the west, south and east. The west entrance has no maintained trail. The south entrance is near the nesting site for Yellow-breasted Chat and Bell's Vireo. White-eyed Vireo and Wood Thrush are common on the north end of the property. Scarlet Tanagers and Eastern Towhees can be found throughout. To reach the north end of the property, you drive south and east to the little town of Cairo, which was the first town in the United States to receive rural mail delivery. We continued north from Cairo to the long wooded entrance on the reserve's east side. We found a female Scarlet Tanager and a Great Crested Flycatcher there, and also thought we glimpsed, but did not confirm, a Wood Thrush and a Brown Thrasher. The temperature was 79 degrees when we headed home at 11:30 a.m.

Participants: Sarah Bissell, John Broz, John Donelson, Linda Donelson (leader), Bruce Gardner, Therese Guedon, Linda Rudolph, Richard Tetrault.

Birds (62 species): Canada Goose, Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Double-crested Cormorant,

Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, *empidonax* sp., Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, American Robin, Swainson's Thrush, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

–Linda Donelson

**September 13, Meeting.** Jim and Sharon Scheib presented on their three-week trip to Australia and New Zealand during November of 2006. Jim got many photos of birds throughout the trip, but only the final five days were dedicated to birds.

The trip began in Sydney on the southeastern coast of Australia. The Scheibs stayed in an area known as The Rocks which is Sydney's oldest historical district dating back to Australia's first settlement in 1788. Sites visited in Sydney included the Opera House, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Sydney Aquarium, and the ANZAC Bridge. This bridge is the longest cable bridge in Australia and named in memory of the combined Australia and New Zealand Army Corps that fought in WW I at Galipoli. Jim photographed many birds in Sydney, including a surprising Buff-banded Rail, and he also found some like the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo in the nearby Blue

Mountains. Non-birds seen included the Australian Fruit Bat with its three-foot wingspan and kangaroos.

The Scheibs traveled with a tour and the next stop was Melbourne on the southern coast. Koalas, wallabies, and Emu were seen there as well as a Tawny Frogmouth. The group then crossed Bass Strait to dock at the port of Burnie on the island of Tasmania. It was very rainy during this part of the trip. They visited the Cradle Mountain/Dove Lake area where Jim photographed Black Currawong and Tasmanian Native Hen.

The ship ride to New Zealand was very memorable. Wandering Albatross, Shy Albatross, Black-browed Albatross and Southern Giant Petrel were all seen. What was also memorable was the ship losing all power one night and set adrift. Fortunately the crew got things fixed and they were underway again—just another reminder that ecotourism has its risks.

Due to poor weather their ship wasn't able to make its tour of the southwest South Island fjords, and continued around to Dunedin on the east side of the island. One of the highlights was the Royal Albatross colony on the Otago Peninsula, the only albatross colony in the world on an inhabited mainland. Another highlight was the Blue Penguin colony at nearby Port Chalmers. These are the world's smallest penguins at 16 inches tall and they nest in burrows, although they will utilize nest boxes. Also seen were Yellow-eyed Penguins. These are the third largest penguin and possibly the world's rarest. Pairs prefer to nest in isolation from one another, so the term "breeding colony" can't really be applied as it is to other penguin species. Two more stops were made along the South Island. The Scheibs didn't do much at Christchurch due to the weather, but at Picton Jim photographed a Paradise Shelduck.

The tour crossed the Cook Strait to the capital city of Wellington on the North Island. There the Scheibs visited the architecturally unique

"Beehive" Legislature Building, the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum and the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. New Zealand habitats have been severely damaged by the introduction of large numbers of non-native species and conservation groups are doing what they can to assist the plight of their many endemics. The Karori Sanctuary is one incredibly ambitious project, began in 1995, to surround 252 hectares of native forest with a fence 8.6 km long to exclude over a dozen non-native mammals. The fence is 9 feet high and extends 3 feet below ground. The Tui, a starling and the Kaka, a parrot were seen there, as were Eurasian Blackbird, Grey Fantail, and the Tuatara lizard.

From Wellington the tour moved northward along the east coast of North Island to the town of Napier. On nearby Cape Kidnappers was seen an Australasian Gannet colony. Around the north side of the North Island a stop was made at Tauranga and the group journeyed inland to the town of Rotorua, the Maori Cultural Center, and the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley. This valley is one of the geothermal wonders of the world, with some 500 hot pools and 65 geyser vents. The Pohutu Geyser, Maori for big splash, is the most famous and erupts about every hour to a height of 90 meters.

The tour's final destination was Auckland, at the northwest of North Island, where the Scheibs stayed the weekend and visited the Sky Tower. This is the tallest tower in the southern hemisphere at 328 meters. Extreme sports are very big in New Zealand and Jim had a photo from the Sky Deck of a bungee jumper passerby.

The next five days the Scheibs dedicated to birding in the vicinity of Auckland. A ferry took them to Tiritiri Matangi where they spent five hours. This island is another conservation project. It had been farmed up until the 1950s, but now the mammalian predators and opossums have been removed and it is being reforested. A number of rare endemics have been released there including the Takahe, the



world's largest rail. This bird was once believed extinct, but can now be easily seen on this preserve. Other rare birds include the Stitchbird, a type of honeyeater that is extinct on the mainland, the North Island Kokako, and the Saddleback. The endemic Kokako and the Saddleback are members of a very ancient bird family called the wattlebirds found nowhere else. Other interesting birds photographed included a Variable Oystercatcher on its nest, a New Zealand Dabchick (a grebe), and a New Zealand Fairy Tern. There are many non-native birds in New Zealand and the Scheibs saw Greenfinch, Eurasian Goldfinch, and Chaffinch. Jim also photographed an Australasian Harrier, which he said was very shy due to hunting pressure.

The Miranda Shorebird Centre is about an hour southeast of Auckland, and like Tiritiri Matangi, is a must-see for those birders visiting New Zealand. Once the Scheibs got past all the cows they saw many birds including Pied Stilt, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Stint, and Wrybill. The Wrybill has a curiously shaped bill that curves up and to the right side, very suitable for flipping objects on the beach in search of food.

Other areas visited near Auckland included the Bay of Islands, location of the earliest European settlements, and the Waitomo Caverns. Jim wound up the talk with a photo of a Kaka Parrot at the top of the forest tower fern trees. Thanks Jim for another outstanding presentation.

Attendees: Ann and Jack Bagford, John Broz, Chris Caster, Carole and Jack Clark, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Karole Fuller, Doina and Lauren Johnson, Dave and Darlene Kyllingstad, Kristen Lawton, Dick Lynch, Gail and John McLure, Mark Oxley, Linda Rudolph, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Bill Scheible, Marcia and Richard Shaffer, Elliot and Timothy Stalter. – Chris Caster

**September 15, Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve.** It was a brisk, clear morning with very light variable winds, warming to about 55F by noon. We had a good turnout of participants,

with 40 people signing the guest list and probably a few more who didn't.

During the early part of the watch, small numbers of Broad-winged Hawks and an occasional accipiter were seen, mostly far to the W or NW across the reservoir. The usual kettle of Turkey Vultures rose from the Lake Macbride Area and were seen throughout the morning. At least one adult and one immature Bald Eagles were seen. An American Kestrel, an unusual sighting for our watch, cruised by. We experienced a late morning lull, but around noon things really picked up just as most of the crowd was leaving. First two accipiters, identified as Sharp-shinned Hawks after some discussion, passed low right overhead. As we were watching them, we noticed a kettle of 30 or more Broad-winged Hawks higher up directly overhead. Shortly afterwards two smaller kettles of Broad-wings passed overhead. We suspected that many more had probably passed over, but they weren't detected so high up in the bright blue sky.

Raptors (8 species, 103 individuals): Turkey Vulture 25, Osprey 1, Bald Eagle 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 3, accipiter sp. 5, Broad-winged Hawk 61, Red-tailed Hawk 3, American Kestrel 1.

Other Birds (26 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Ring-billed Gull, Chimney Swift, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, Orange-crowned Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch.

– Chris Edwards

**September 30, Birding by Boat on Lake Macbride.** It couldn't have been a nicer early Fall morning. A clear blue sky, a soft breeze, and a temperature at 8:00 a.m. that made you

glad you took along a light jacket. Thanks to Steve and Ann Valenta of Solon, we had a second pontoon boat this year to accommodate all 14 birders in a single leisurely trip. We've had better birding days on these twice a year outings of the ICBC on Lake Macbride, but the beautiful surroundings and the gorgeous weather more than made up for the modest 24 species seen. After two hours on the lake we returned to feast on another of Nancy's brunches.

Participants: Ed and Jean Allgood, Jack and Ann Bagford, Barbara Beaumont, Karen Disbrow, Therese Guedon, Kurt Hamann, Chris Laughton, Dick and Nancy Lynch (hosts), Mary Noble, Steve and Ann Valenta.

Birds (24 species): Canada Goose, Common Merganser, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– Dick Lynch

**October 6, Hawkeye Wildlife Area.** Only four ICBC members reported for duty and braved the record warm temperatures to find some good birds. We first birded the Greencastle Avenue area in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area which, among other interesting birds, produced one of the target birds for the trip – Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. There were three seen well and undoubtedly several more that we could not identify. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate our other target sparrow – LeConte's. We then visited the Babcock Access which is under construction now. A new parking lot/boat ramp is being built and we learned that the road down to the "old" boat ramp area will be closed in the future. On the day prior to our outing, this area had hosted nice shorebird numbers; however, most had departed. We did identify

single birds – Long-billed Dowitcher and Stilt Sandpiper. The trip produced forty-eight total species.

Participants: Tony Franken, Jim Fuller, Ken Hunt, Ken Lowder (leader).

Birds (48 species): Canada Goose, American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Sora, Killdeer, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Savannah Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, meadowlark sp., Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, House Sparrow.

– Ken Lowder

**October 18, Meeting.** Jason Paulios presented on his trip to Ecuador to participate in the Mindo Cloudforest Birdathon. Jason got involved because his brother in Madison is involved with the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, one of the event sponsors. This birdathon took place in the Choco Bioregion of northwest Ecuador. The Choco is a narrow zone of wet forest, between the Andes and the Pacific coast. There are more endemic species of birds here than anywhere else in the Americas. Much of the lowland forests have already been destroyed, but a number of groups are working to preserve habitat and promote eco-tourism. Chief of those is the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation, creator of the Ecoruta El Paseo del Quinde or "hummingbird highway." This was based upon a cobblestone Inca road that led from the mountains to the

coast. Jason saw many hummingbirds during his seven days in the Choco.

Jason flew into Quito, the capital. He says it was convenient that Ecuador uses U.S. dollars for their currency, but you need to bring lots of ones, as few of the merchants are able to give change for a twenty. The first destination after leaving Quito was the Yanacocha Reserve. This is 2,000 acres of polylepis forest at 11,000 ft. altitude. This contains the entire range of the Black-breasted Puffleg hummingbird. Jason got photos of these hummers: Shining Sunbeam, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Golden-crested Puffleg, and Sword-billed Hummingbird, and also photographed Golden-capped Tanager and Red-crested Cotinga.

The birdathon's base of operation was the Tandayapa Lodge, owned by Tropical Birding Inc. Some twenty species of hummingbirds come into the lodge feeders including Green Violet-ear, Western Emerald, Booted Racket-tail, Purple-throated Woodstar, and Violet-tailed Sylph, which Jason found to be the star of the show at Tandayapa. There were also fruit feeders at the lodge, which attracted spectacular birds like the Red-headed Barbet. A typical day started around 4 a.m. and they would leave the lodge at 5 a.m. There was a blind at the lodge with black lights where Jason got to view Immaculate Antbirds feeding on the moths attracted to the lights before sunrise. Andean Cock-of-the-Rock leks are present in the forest nearby.

One of the most interesting days on the trip involved visiting the refugia of Angel Paz. This man has become world-renowned as the "Antpitta Whisperer," because of his abilities to coax these seldom-seen birds into view. He has managed to train the local birds, normally secretive, to come to stumps along the trail where he feeds them specially prepared worms. He actually has names for many of the birds and he will call them out by name if they don't appear promptly.

Birding Ecuador means traveling to habitats at different elevations. Jason's group visited the Mindo Cloudforest Reserve at Milpe, which is a lower elevation foothill forest at about 3,000 feet. Birding here involved walking in a circle until you hear chip notes that indicate a feeding flock. Birds seen here included Purple Honeycreeper, Orange-bellied Euphonia, Silver-throated and Flame-faced Tanagers and Broad-billed Motmot. In the lowlands the clouds roll in towards dusk, which brings the birds down low. The birds seem to really get excited during this time too.

Jason also journeyed to the eastern slope of the mountains to visit the San Isidro Lodge, run by a different tour group than Tandayapa. The food at the San Isidro Lodge was extremely good according to Jason, but the better reason for a birder to visit is the presence of the "mystery owl." Also known as the San Isidro Owl, it was only recently discovered and believed by many to be a new species, although one was only this year captured for study.

Jason amazingly photographed a sloth when he spotted something strange far off in a tree. The sighting was of great interest to the local guides as the animal was evidently way out of range. Other trip highlights were sighting the Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, the signature bird of the Choco region and an Ocellated Tapaculo, one of the top five most sought-after birds in the region. The bird of the trip for Jason was the Toucan-Barbet. This bird must have feathers of nearly a dozen hues. Jason says they sound like calliope whistles as the male and female call in tandem on different pitches. Thanks Jason for a very fun and interesting presentation.

Attendees: Ed and Jean Allgood, Jeanne and Larry Bonde, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Drew Dillman, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Jim Fuller, Therese Guedon, Ken Hunt, Bernie Knight, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Kristen Lawton, Dick and Nancy Lynch, Jim Miller, Jim Scheib, Marcia and Richard Shaffer.

—Chris Caster

**November 11, Redbird Farm Wildlife Area.**

Even on a slow birding day, Redbird Farm delivered four Fox Sparrows, one of the most notable species consistently seen in this diverse 496-acre reserve. We started out at 2:30 pm, with 65 degrees and a heavily overcast sky, and no wind. Everyone agreed, it was a soft and lovely day. We wore orange but heard no hunters, and passed only one, returning to his car.

We headed into the corn and sorghum field on the east side of the main parking lot, known by some of us as "Sparrow Alley." A flock of two or three dozen House Sparrows was present, with White-throated and Fox Sparrows and Northern Cardinals. Later we scouted Redbird Farm's two large ponds and two smaller ponds in the central prairie area, then looped through the woods past two medium-sized ponds. Our sum total was a large flock of Red-winged Blackbirds in a far tree, a few calling American Crows, a Blue Jay or two, a couple of Juncos, and a few Black-capped Chickadees.

We also checked out the lovely marsh now present on the south side of the road, but the walk yielded only a few startled pheasants. We were lucky to see four Red-tailed Hawks along the road and two American Kestrels, plus some Mallards on a farm pond.

Participants: John Broz, Ben Caster, Chris Caster, Emma Caster, Terry Lindquist, Linda Donelson (leader), Jonni Ellsworth, Tony Franken, Ken Hunt.

Birds (19 species): Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, House Sparrow.

—Linda Donelson

**November 15, Meeting.** Mark Brown presented on a trip that he and his wife Matsalyn made to Taiwan during November of last year. Mark was born and raised in Ft. Dodge, but his mother was from China. Although this was a family trip, Mark managed to pursue and photograph a large number of birds and butterflies during his two-week stay.

Mark led off with a photograph of the Taipei 101 Building, modeled after a bamboo stalk and currently the tallest building in the world. It is particularly impressive given that it is surrounded by buildings no more than ten stories tall. It was an appropriate beginning for a trip to the second most dense population zone in the world. Taiwan has 23 million people on an island only a quarter the size of Iowa. Much of the island is mountainous, so those people are squeezed along the coasts and primarily in the north of the island around Taipei. Astonishingly, about 20 percent of the island's natural habitat is protected. Mark explained that it helps that it is fairly mountainous and thus much of it is unsuitable for settlement or agriculture. The elevation range is from sea level to 13,000 ft. The island is on the Tropic of Cancer, so the climate is subtropical. Usually it is in the low 70s in November, but temperatures were in the 80s every day without much rain.

Taiwan is the "Kingdom of Butterflies". There are about 400 species found on the island and about 50 species are endemics. It was interesting to learn that the five families of butterflies represented on the island can also be found in Iowa: skippers, gossamer wings, swallowtails, brushfoots, whites and sulphurs. The collection of butterflies for sale as mounted specimens has been an important industry there, and the people are very protective of their winged treasures. During the migration of the Purple Milkweed Butterfly for instance, a highway that cut across their migratory route was closed for ten days. Additionally deflective netting was put up and UV lights were placed at overpasses to lure the insects under the highway.

Over 500 species of birds have been recorded on Taiwan and there are 150 resident species, fifteen of which are endemic. Mark got nice photos of the most highly sought-after bird on the island, the Taiwan Blue Magpie. This bird is known locally as the “Long-tailed Mountain Lady” and it was recently voted the official bird of Taiwan by an overwhelming majority of the population. Mark had quality photos to share of nearly forty different species. Some like the Black-browed Barbet were extremely colorful and exotic to see, but a number of birds looked very much like some of our birds. The Grey Heron would have been easy to pass over for a Great Blue. The Little Egret looked very much like our Snowy. They have the same Eurasian Tree Sparrow that has established itself in our state. Some like the White Wagtail could be seen in North America if you wished to travel to western Alaska—probably easier to travel to Taiwan. Some like the Crested Myna were once established exotics on this continent—there are three myna species on Taiwan. Other birds like the Brown Shrike, Crested Goshawk and Brown Dipper obviously have close cousins in North

America. Some like the Plumbeous Redstart aren’t what they seem—this bird is actually an old world flycatcher. One of the more interesting birds described was the Taiwan Whistling-Thrush, the “Glass Bird”, which has a loud call like rusty bicycle brakes.

Of course the best part of the presentation was getting to meet young Russell Brown. Matsalyn says he looks like his dad. I didn’t ask whether Dad’s talk put him to sleep or not. The rest of us stayed awake though. Great job Mark. Thanks for taking the time out of your newly hectic life to share with us.

Attendees: Ed and Jean Allgood, Mark, Matsalyn and Russell Brown, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Linda Fisher, Therese Guedon, Ken Hunt, Doina and Lauren Johnson, Bernie Knight, Dave Kyllingstad, Khristen Lawton, Dick and Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Sue Sarlette, Marcia and Richard Shaffer, Lisa Spellman

*–Chris Caster*

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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, 4490 Daniels Cir. NE, Solon, IA 52333, or [credwards@aol.com](mailto:credwards@aol.com).

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**For general bird club information**, contact Iowa City Bird Club president Chris Caster at 339-8343 or [cjcaster@earthlink.net](mailto:cjcaster@earthlink.net).

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

**The club web site** is maintained by Jim Scheib and is located at [icbirds.org](http://icbirds.org).

### *Eastern Iowa Birdwatch*

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