
Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 32 Number 1

April 2012

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**, unless otherwise noted, 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.

April 15, Sunday, 8 a.m. Macbride Nature-Recreation Area. Visit the Raptor Center and hike the nearby trails. Meet at the Macbride Raptor Center parking lot. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

April 17, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course at Kent Park CEC: “Approaches to Learning Birdsong” by Jerry White. Free to members. Call Brad Freidhof at 645-1011 to register.

April 19, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting. Special location: Kent Park Conservation Education Center. “Costa Rica: Images from a Green Land” by Linda and Robert Scarth.

April 24, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course at Kent Park CEC: “Birds of Hickory Hill Park and Waterworks Park in Iowa City” by Jim Scheib. Free to members. Call Brad Freidhof at 645-1011 to register.

April 27, Friday, 6 p.m. Night Sounds Field Trip. Visit local areas to listen for American Woodcock, Wilson’s Snipe, frogs, owls, and anything else that calls at night. Bruce Gardner and Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

April 28, Saturday, 8 a.m. - Noon. Field Trip for Kids ages 7-12, to be accompanied by an adult. Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

April 29, Sunday, 7 a.m. Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County for cranes, bitterns, rails, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and other marsh birds. Diana Pesek, 560-8393.

April 30 - May 18, Weekdays, 6:30 a.m. Hickory Hill Park Warbler Walks. Meet at the north parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane, off Dodge Street. Daily sightings will be posted on our web site

May 1, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course at Kent Park CEC: “Warbler Identification and Shorebird Review” by Karen Disbrow. Free to members. Call Brad Freidhof at 645-1011 to register.

May 5, Saturday, 8 a.m. - Noon. Field Trip for Kids ages 7-12, to be accompanied by an adult. Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

May 6, Sunday, 8 a.m. Hickory Hill Park for warblers and other spring migrants. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.* Karen Disbrow, 430-0315

Continued on next page →

Schedule (continued)

May 12, Saturday. Spring Migration Count. We will work in teams to count as many birds as possible in Johnson County. To participate, call Chris Caster at 339-8343.

May 18-May 20, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting in Iowa City, hosted by the Iowa City Bird Club. See page 6, and visit www.iowabirds.org for more information and to register.

June 2, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip to Squire Point. Barb Beaumont, 626-6227.

June 3, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip. Bruce Gardner, 643-2575.

June 9, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip. Chris Edwards, 430-4732.

June 16, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Indiangrass Hills in Iowa County for grassland birds such as Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Sedge Wren, and Bobolink. Mark Brown, 358-8765.

June 23, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip to Cedar County. Jerry Denning, (563) 732-2666.

June 24, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip to Cedar County. Bruce Gardner, 643-2575.

June 30, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip to Ben Rowold's family farm in Clinton County. Ben Rowold, 330-9655.

July 1, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

July 6-8, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Blockbusting Weekend, covering Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Muscatine, and Washington counties. Kickoff meeting at 6 p.m. Friday at the Kent Park CEC. Trips depart from N. Dodge Hy-Vee at 6:30 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. See page 4 for more information.

July 14, Saturday, 9 a.m. Annual Butterfly Count sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. We will visit Kent Park, Lake Macbride, and other areas. To participate, contact Chris Edwards at 430-4732.

July 15, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Breeding Bird Atlas Trip to southern Johnson County. Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

July 28, Saturday, 8 a.m. – Noon. Turkey Vulture Festival, East Overlook at the Coralville Dam. Contacts Terry Escher, Army Corp of Engineers, and Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

July 28, Saturday, 8 p.m. Moth Night-lighting Program and Demonstration at Sugar Bottom Recreation Area Campground, in conjunction with National Moth Week. Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

August 5, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area or other local areas for shorebirds and other early fall migrants. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

September 9, Sunday. Pelican Festival at Hawkeye Wildlife Area. Details in the September newsletter.

Other Dates of Note

April 20, Friday, 1 p.m. Crane Festival and Viewing Platform Dedication at Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County. Field trips will follow at 2 p.m. Contact Pat Schlarbaum at (515) 432-2823 for more information.

June 22-24, Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Blockbusting Weekend: the Loess Hills and the Big Sioux and Missouri River corridors (Sioux City area, including Harrison, Monona, Plymouth, Sioux, and Woodbury counties). For more information visit <http://bba.iowabirds.org> or email bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org.

Continued on next page →

Other Dates of Note (continued)

July 20-22, Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Blockbusting Weekend: the Upper Mississippi River bluffs and tributaries (Dubuque area, including Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, and Jones counties). For more information visit <http://bba.iowabirds.org> or email bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org.

August 24-26, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting in Marshalltown. Visit www.iowabirds.org for more information.

From Our President Karen Disbrow

What an exciting spring we are having, with many 80° days and then this past week a freeze/frost warning. The weather has been spectacular for birding and many species are arriving early.

We have a very busy schedule this spring and summer. Our Beginning Birder Course is underway and is once again attracting new members to our club. In late April and May we will be holding our weekday Hickory Hill Park Warbler Walks again. We have many Breeding Bird Atlas trips scheduled in June and July, and a BBA Blockbusting weekend planned for July 6-8.

Our biggest event is the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting right here in Iowa City. I joined the Iowa City Bird Club in May 1989, and two weeks later I went to my first IOU meeting in the Quad Cities with Rick Hollis, Carol Thompson and Bud Gode. What a marvelous birding and learning experience it was. I had bought my first binoculars on Friday before heading to the meeting. On my first birding field trip the following morning, I could not find the birds everyone else was observing. The leader asked how long I had been using my binoculars, and I explained that I just had gotten them the day before. The help I received in learning how to use those binoculars and the effort everyone made to assure that I saw the birds made the whole experience one of the best of my life.

This Spring's IOU meeting is a wonderful opportunity to hear some great speakers and bird with some of the best birders, not only in the state of Iowa, but anywhere. And as a Perennial Novice, I can vouch for the fact that you will see birds that are not always easy to find. You will meet people who will become some of your best birding buddies. And if you are a subscriber to the IA-BIRDS list serve, you will meet the people who so graciously share their birding sightings and locations with us.

We are also doing the Turkey Vulture Festival again this year, this time after fledging has occurred, and a moth night-lighting event to celebrate National Moth Week. Our annual butterfly count is another great opportunity to learn something new (binoculars with close focusing are great for this).

I want to thank University Camera for donating a new pair of binoculars as a door prize for the Beginning Birder Course again this year. University Camera is a great store, and if you have not been there, go see Roger and be sure to mention that you are in the Iowa City Bird Club. Before Ken Hunt left town for his new job at the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, DC, he donated his scope and tripod for the club's use. He said he planned to upgrade his optics as soon as possible. Thank you, Ken – they have been great to have for our trips.

Good Birding Everyone!
Karen

BBA Blockbusting Weekend July 6-8

The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas II is heading into the home stretch, and 2012 is your last chance to participate in this important citizen science effort. BBA Coordinator Shane Patterson gave the following update in the Spring newsletter of the BBA, *The Iowa Nester* (available at <http://bba.iowabirds.org/>): “The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) is moving along nicely as we march into the final year of data collection. As of this writing, 126 participants have logged more than 7,000 BBA field hours and have submitted over 109,000 records of 193 species, including 163 confirmed as nesters. In 2011 alone, we documented nesting for 36 of the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan’s species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), contributing to a total of 45 SGCN birds confirmed thus far. Among these highlights last year were American Bittern, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Black Tern, Black-billed Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Veery, Blue-winged Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Henslow’s Sparrow.”

This summer, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Ornithologists’ Union will be conducting three Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) blockbusting weekends, including one right here in Johnson County on July 6-8. The weekend will kickoff at 6 p.m. at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park with a presentation about the BBA. Volunteers will receive a refresher on how to participate, how to determine breeding-bird status, and how to turn in observations. On Saturday and Sunday, volunteers will meet at 6:30 a.m. at the N. Dodge Hy-Vee in Iowa City and will then fan out to BBA blocks (predetermined areas to inventory) searching for nesting birds. Atlas volunteers are encouraged to visit any blocks within a reasonable driving distance, and there will be a sign-up sheet to divide up the targeted blocks. Volunteers are responsible for making

arrangements for their own accommodations and meals. If you plan to participate, please RSVP to the BBA coordinator on the Monday prior to the weekend of each event.

In addition to the blockbusting weekend, we have scheduled eight Iowa City Bird Club field trips in June and July for BBA surveys. These trips will target various BBA blocks in Johnson and surrounding counties. It takes 20 hours of cumulative survey effort to “complete” a BBA block. Going into this final year of the project, it will not be realistic to complete every one of the blocks across the state, however at a minimum we would like every block to have a least 5 hours of survey effort logged. In addition to these trips, individuals are encouraged to survey on their own or with others whenever they have time available. If you would like to survey during the week and would welcome others to join you, email Karen (k_disbrow@yahoo.com) a few days in advance and she will send a message to the club email list.

For more information, and to view the up-to-date status of all BBA blocks in Iowa, visit the Iowa BBA website at <http://bba.iowabirds.org>, or contact BBA Coordinator Shane Patterson at bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org.

Renewal Reminder

If you haven’t yet renewed your membership for 2012, please do so now to ensure continued delivery of our newsletter. 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 Bruce Gardner, 3055 Wapsi Ave. NE, Iowa City, IA 52240. If you have any questions about your membership status, please contact Bruce at 643-2575 or woodsidefarms@juno.com.

Iowa Young Birders

Explore. Inspire. Conserve.

Carl Bendorf

“Birds, it must be admitted, are the most exciting and most deserving of the vertebrates; they are perhaps the best entrée into the study of natural history, and a very good wedge into conservation awareness.”

Roger Tory Peterson

In 1981, Tom Shires and I (with encouragement from Tom Kent) volunteered to create the *Eastern Iowa Birdwatch* as a newsletter for the Iowa City Bird Club. At that time, I was still a beginning birder who benefitted greatly from the mentoring and friendship of many local birders. Three decades later, my wife Linda and I have moved back to rural Johnson County after recent stints in Minneapolis and Chicago. As a way to give back to all those birders who were so helpful to me, we’ve created the Iowa Young Birders as a new not-for-profit organization. Our goal is to encourage young birders across Iowa to connect, meet new friends, share observations, and learn more about birds and conservation issues.

A full slate of field trips is being scheduled across the state in conjunction with local Audubon groups and bird clubs, including the Iowa City Bird Club. All young birders ages 12-18 and their families are welcome to register and attend. In addition, Young Birder Field Day will be held on Saturday, September 1st. Workshop highlights will include:

- Tips for getting the most out of your binoculars (or help selecting your first pair!)
- Basics of identification, or “what bird is that??”
- Introduction to bird photography (using the camera you already own)
- Update on Iowa habitat conservation (and why it matters!)
- And, of course, we’ll go birding!

Young Birder Field Day activities will be centered around the Coralville Reservoir and Lake Macbride. Workshops will be at the Coralville Lake Visitors Center at the Coralville Dam. Meals will include a continental breakfast, healthy (and tasty!) sack lunch, and an evening family-style meal at Wild Finch Farm in rural Johnson County. On Sunday morning, there will be an optional field trip for those who are staying overnight.

Iowa Young Birders will also be represented at both the Iowa Ornithologists’ Union meeting in Iowa City on May 18-20 and the July 28 Turkey Vulture Festival at Coralville Lake (co-sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Iowa City Bird Club.)

Ross Silcock of Tabor, IA, is chair of the Board of Directors. Lynn Alex and Dave Dierks, both of Iowa City, are serving as vice-chair and secretary/treasurer respectively. As we launch Iowa Young Birders, we’ve also received great encouragement and advice from long-time Iowa City area birders, Tom Kent and Jim Fuller.

We hope all Iowa City Bird Club members will encourage young relatives, friends and neighbors who may have an interest in birds to check out our field trips, membership opportunities, Field Day, and other resources at www.IowaYoungBirders.org. You can also connect with us through Facebook at www.facebook.com/IowaYoungBirders.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting in Iowa City, May 18-20

The Iowa City area has historically been a great place to experience spring migration, and this year should be no exception. The Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting is being held in Iowa City the weekend of May 18-20, hosted by the Iowa City Bird Club and sponsored by the Cedar Rapids Audubon Society, Johnson County Conservation Board, and University of Iowa Museum of Natural History. You do not need to be a member of the IOU to attend, so we hope many local birders will come out and enjoy the great lineup of speakers, field trips, and other activities.

The meeting will be held in three different locations in the Iowa City area, so pay particular attention to the locations in the schedule. The Friday night social will be held at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History, Macbride Hall on the Pentacrest in downtown Iowa City. Here we will have the opportunity to see the results of the major renovations to Bird Hall and its historical exhibits, including the Laysan Island Cyclorama. The rest of the meeting, with the exception of our final meal and compilation, will be held at Montgomery Hall at the Johnson County Fairgrounds (4261 Oak Crest Hill Rd. SE). Activities will conclude with a species compilation and lunch Sunday at noon at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park, three miles west of Tiffin on Highway 6

Field trips are scheduled for both Saturday and Sunday mornings, and will cover a wide variety of habitats. Attendees should expect migrating passerines and shorebirds as well as breeding species beginning to settle in for the summer. The meeting coincides with prime time for finding a Connecticut Warbler in Hickory Hill Park, and maybe, just maybe, another Black Rail will sound off in Johnson County this spring. Field trip destinations will include Hickory Hill Park, Cone Marsh, Lake Macbride, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Indiangrass Hills, Brinton Timber, the Amanas, and Kent Park

Our Saturday evening keynote speaker is author and tour guide leader Alvaro Jaramillo, who will present "Birding Outside the Box – How to Bird Like a Pro!" Most bird identification lectures focus on field marks, and the specifics of separating Species A from Species B. Few ask exactly how we identify birds. What is our brain going through in order to do this? How does our brain get tripped up during bird identification? Have you ever encountered the "leaf bird," the "branch bird," or, worst of all, "the plastic bag snowy owl?" Why do experts identify birds almost without thinking, while the rest of us need to struggle? Are they different from the rest of us, or are there tricks? The truth is that bird identification is pretty tricky stuff, but our brains are wired to shortcut much of the thinking involved in doing it. The trick is training yourself to do it like a pro and get your brain to switch on those short cuts! That is the aim of this presentation: a lighthearted but informative explanation of how the heck the pros do it, and how our brain identifies birds. Some of what you see here will be common sense, some may seem like non-sense, and some will just plain old surprise you.

Saturday afternoon will feature several short programs including another talk by Alvaro. Author tables and an IOU merchandise table will be setup, and a silent auction of books and other nature-related items will take place throughout the day.

Participants must register by Wednesday, May 16. Registration is \$20 plus the cost of any desired meals (\$9 for breakfast, \$6.50 for lunch, and \$16.50 for the banquet). For more information and to register, visit <http://www.iowabirds.org/Meetings/NextMeeting.aspx>, or call Karen Disbrow at 430-0315.

IOU Spring Meeting Schedule

Friday, May 18, Hageboeck Hall of Birds, UI Museum of Natural History, Macbride Hall

5:00 - 8:30 p.m. Registration, cash bar, snacks, field trip sign up, author tables, tour the exhibits

7:00 p.m. Special presentation, “Annotated References to Iowa Birds Prior to 1900”, Tom Kent

Saturday, May 19, Montgomery Hall, Johnson County Fairgrounds

6:00 a.m. Breakfast (sausage, gravy and biscuits, scrambled eggs, French toast, sausage links, bacon, hash browns, cinnamon rolls, assorted bagels and cream cheese, mixed fruit, orange and apple juice, and coffee)

7:00 a.m. Field trips depart – be sure to pickup your box lunch of a deli sandwich (beef, turkey and bacon, ham, or avocado veggie), chips, and cookie/brownie.

12:30 p.m. IOU Board Meeting

1:30 p.m. Field trips return

1:45 p.m. Panel discussion, “Working With Beginners, It’s Easier Than You Think!” with Rick Hollis, Doug Harr, Lee Schoenewe, Carl Bendorf, and Alvaro Jaramillo

2:30 p.m. “American Journey - An Exploration of the American Continent through a look at the Blackbird-Oriole Family”, Alvaro Jaramillo

3:15 p.m. “Chimney Swifts: The Mysterious Bird of the Fireplace”, Ron Windingstad

3:45 p.m. BBA Last Season Update, Shane Patterson

4:00 p.m. IOU Membership Meeting
Special Presentation on Iowa Young Birders by Carl Bendorf

6:00 p.m. Group Photo courtesy of Iowa City Bird Club

6:30 p.m. Banquet (carved roast beef or juicy slow roasted pork loin, rozoni baked zeti, au jus and pork gravy, twice baked potatoes, Normandy blend vegetables, mixed green salad, rolls, and cupcakes)

7:30 p.m. Keynote Address
Alvaro Jaramillo - *Birding outside the Box - How to bird like a Pro!*

Sunday, May 20, Montgomery Hall, Johnson County Fairgrounds

6:00 a.m. Breakfast (same menu as Saturday)

7:00 a.m. Field trips depart – be sure to pickup your box lunch of a deli sandwich (same menu as Saturday)

12:00 Noon All field trips end at the **Conservation Education Center in Kent Park** near Tiffin for lunch and a species compilation

1:00 p.m. Have a safe trip home!

2011 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards and Bob Dick

The 61st annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 18. The total of 67 species is just above the count's ten-year average of 65. The morning was cool, with a low temperature of 22°, but the afternoon high was a balmy 51°. Skies were clear all day, with calm conditions in the morning giving way to light southerly winds in the afternoon. The Coralville Reservoir and other standing water had a thin layer of ice in the early morning, which had mostly melted by afternoon. The Iowa River and smaller streams were open, and there was no snow cover.

Rare finds this year included Mute Swan (second count record), Turkey Vulture (fourth count record), and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (fourth count record). The warm temperatures resulted in a number of unusual water birds, including Cackling Goose, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, and American Coot. New high counts were established for Ruddy Duck and Northern Shrike. There were a number of surprising misses this year, including Red-headed Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, White-crowned Sparrow, and Purple Finch.

Waterfowl

Waterfowl numbers and diversity, with ten species, were the highest since 2006. The highlight was a juvenile Mute Swan on Round Pond at Hawkeye Wildlife Area. This is only the second Mute Swan record for the count, and as with most Mute Swans found in Iowa, it is unknown whether this bird was from a feral population or escaped from captivity. Cackling Geese were found for the fourth time in six years. Other unusual waterfowl included a ten-year high count 49 Gadwall, one Green-winged Teal at Waterworks Prairie Park, three Bufflehead near Jolly Roger, and a record-high count 39 Ruddy Ducks. Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers also set ten-year high counts. Curiously, Mallard numbers were far below average.

Pheasants to Shorebirds

Only two Ring-necked Pheasants were found, the lowest number since 1957. Perhaps this mild winter will help reverse their downward population trend. Wild Turkeys were also found in below-average numbers this year, and for the fifth straight year no Northern Bobwhites were found. A Pied-billed Grebe and a Double-crested Cormorant, both on Lake Macbride, were rare finds. Winter Turkey Vulture records seem to be increasing, and one seen near Jolly Roger was the third record in ten years, and only the fourth record overall for the count. Eight Northern Harriers were a ten-year high, but otherwise raptor numbers were unremarkable. An American Coot was the first in ten years.

Gulls to Woodpeckers

Only three Herring Gulls were seen, but Ring-billed Gull numbers were far above average. Eurasian Collared-Doves were found for the second straight year in Solon, where there appears to be a healthy population. Mourning Dove numbers were the lowest since 2004, but down only slightly from the last two years. It is clear that we need to expand our owling efforts next year. The eight Great Horned Owls seems indicative of a healthy population, but the single Barred Owl is obviously an under-representation of that widespread species. No other owls were found. Eastern Screech-owls may in fact be experiencing a population decline as we did not find any for the third time in four years. For the first time since 1995, no Red-headed Woodpeckers were found. Other woodpeckers were all found in below-average numbers, perhaps in part due to our decrease in feeder watchers this year.

Shrikes to Waxwings

Northern Shrikes were seen for the fifth straight year, and the four individuals seen this year were a record high count. From 1951 to 2006, the average was 0.5 per count, but from 2007 to 2011, the

average has been 2.4 per count. This year Blue Jays were seen at about half their normal level, and American Crow numbers were also below average. Many feeder birds, including Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and both nuthatches, were found in below average numbers this year. Factors may include a decrease in our feeder-watching efforts, and a lack of snow cover to concentrate birds. Carolina Wren was missed on our count for the first time since 1987. Single Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were found together in a feeding flock at Kent Park. Ruby-crowned Kinglets are rare in winter and this was only the fourth count record. American Robin numbers fluctuate widely in the winter, and only two were found this year after last year's record count. Likewise, Eastern Bluebird and Cedar Waxwing numbers were below average this year.

Warblers to Old World Sparrows

Two Yellow-rumped Warblers were a nice find. Once extremely rare on our count, they have now been found in five of the last seven years. White-throated Sparrows were scarce this year, and no White-crowned Sparrows were found. American Tree Sparrow numbers were down slightly, and Dark-eyed Juncos were found at about half their normal levels. No Lapland Longspurs or Snow Buntings were found, which is not surprising considering the lack of snow cover. Icterids were well-represented, with one each of Red-winged Blackbird, meadowlark sp., and Common Grackle, and 30 Brown-headed Cowbirds, a ten-year high. No Purple Finches were found for the first time since 1967, and House Finch numbers were far below average. Only two Pink Siskins were found. The House Sparrow count was the lowest in almost 30 years, but it's hard to gauge whether this represents a recent downward population trend, or a lack of motivation on the part of counters to tally this species – probably a bit of both. Eurasian Tree Sparrows, regular on our count since 2003, were found in two locations.

Count Effort

This year there were 35 field observers in 11 parties. Field observers were Lois Albrecht, Jessica Alexander, Ed Allgood, Dena Belcher, Kyle Belcher, Mark Brown, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Jerry Denning, Bob Dick, Dara Dick, Karen Disbrow, John Donelson, Linda Donelson, Chris Edwards, Mary Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Linda Fisher, Jim Fuller, Bruce Gardner, Rick Hollis, Ken Hunt, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Ken Lowder, Nancy Lynch, Jason McCurdy, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Diana Pesek, Ben Rowold, Linda Rudolph, Jim Scheib, Bill Scheible, and Sharon Somers. There were 8 feeder watchers in 6 locations, a decrease from last year. Feeder watchers were Barbara Beaumont, Linda Fisher, Jim and Carolyn Gardner, Janet and Jenny Hollis, Nancy Johns, and Sharon Scheib.

This year's count was organized by Bob Dick. The results were compiled by Chris Edwards. On the day of the count we met for lunch at the North Liberty Community Center, at which time we had 56 species. We met for an evening meal and compilation at The Brown Bottle Café in North Liberty.

Nationally, this year marked the 112th consecutive Christmas Bird Count. More than 45,000 people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and many Pacific Islands participate in this annual bird census. Christmas Bird Count results are published annually in a special issue of *American Birds*. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are available online at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc, a cooperative project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Special note: Bob Dick is stepping down as co-compiler after this year's count. For the past nine years, Bob has handled most of the pre-count organizational planning for the count. Thank you, Bob, for all your efforts over the years.

SPECIES LIST

Cackling Goose	27	Ring-billed Gull	1133	Eastern Bluebird	11
Canada Goose	3831	Herring Gull	3	American Robin	2
Mute Swan	1	Rock Pigeon	302	European Starling	549
Gadwall	49	Eurasian Collared-Dove	9	Cedar Waxwing	153
Mallard	222	Mourning Dove	97	Yellow-rumped Warbler	2
Green-winged Teal	1	Great Horned Owl	8	American Tree Sparrow	291
Bufflehead	3	Barred Owl	1	Song Sparrow	15
Common Goldeneye	54	Belted Kingfisher	2	Swamp Sparrow	4
Common Merganser	174	Red-bellied Woodpecker	48	White-throated Sparrow	5
Ruddy Duck	39	Downy Woodpecker	102	Dark-eyed Junco	384
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	Hairy Woodpecker	12	Northern Cardinal	217
Wild Turkey	23	Northern Flicker	13	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Pileated Woodpecker	2	Meadowlark sp.	1
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Northern Shrike	4	Common Grackle	1
Turkey Vulture	1	Blue Jay	76	Brown-headed Cowbird	30
Bald Eagle	96	American Crow	530	House Finch	57
Northern Harrier	8	Horned Lark	3	Pine Siskin	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Black-capped Chickadee	226	American Goldfinch	212
Cooper's Hawk	5	Tufted Titmouse	40	House Sparrow	395
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	4
Red-tailed Hawk	110	White-breasted Nuthatch	73	TOTAL SPECIES	67
Rough-legged Hawk	2	Brown Creeper	1	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	9,702
American Kestrel	25	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1		
American Coot	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1		

News from the Songbird Project

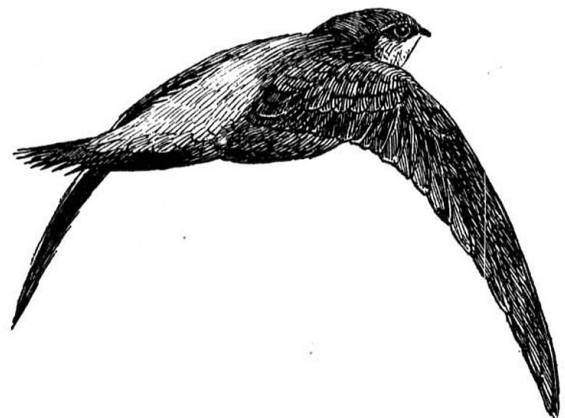
The Songbird Project has launched a major fundraising campaign to complete the restoration of the Althea R. Sherman Chimney Swifts' Tower at the Bickett-Rate Memorial Preserve in Cedar County. Matching funds are being provided by the State Historical Society of Iowa, Historic Site Preservation Grant Program in the amount of \$87,500.

The Bickett-Rate Memorial Preserve is owned and managed by the Cedar County Historical Society. It comprises over 540-acres including one-and-one half miles of Cedar River frontage and beautiful hardwood forests filled with wildflowers. It also has a native sand prairie and farmland in production.

At the gateway to Bickett-Rate, the historic Edgewood Hall will house an interpretive museum on Althea Sherman and her work - with the tower right outside.

Many Bird Club members should be receiving a mailing with all the details on this exciting project. If you fail to receive this mailing and would like information, contact Sherman Project Director Barbara Boyle at:
4althea@windstream.net.

The Songbird Project is always looking for volunteers to monitor bluebird trails and purple martin colonies in the Johnson County area. For more information contact Jim Walters at 319-466-1134 or jcmwalt@infionline.net.



Millerbirds Return to Laysan Island

Chris Edwards

Ever since I was a young boy, I've been fascinated by the Laysan Island Cyclorama in Bird Hall at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History. Laysan Island is a 1,025-acre atoll in the northwest region of the Hawaiian Island chain, 800 miles northwest of Honolulu. Specimens and material for the cyclorama were collected during a University of Iowa expedition to the island led by Homer R. Dill in 1911. The exhibit, the first natural history cyclorama in the world, was completed in 1914 and has enthralled museum visitors for nearly a century.

As an adult, my fascination with the cyclorama increased when I learned that a distant cousin of mine, Alfred M. Bailey (who later became Director of the Denver Museum of Natural History), traveled on another University of Iowa expedition to Laysan Island in 1913-14 to rid the island of non-native rabbits. The rabbits had been introduced to the island by the manager of a former guano-mining operation, and quickly stripped the island of its vegetation, which devastated the island's bird populations. Bailey's visit was not entirely successful, as he ran out of poison and bullets. Expeditions from other institutions subsequently completed the task, and the last rabbit on the island was finally destroyed in 1923. By then the Laysan Rail, Laysan Honeycreeper, and the 'Laysan' subspecies of the Millerbird had become extinct.

Fast forward nearly 100 years. Laysan Island has been protected since 1909, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has worked hard to remove non-native plants and animals and restore the habitat. The island is home to the Laysan Duck (the rarest duck species in the world), the Laysan Finch, Hawaiian Monk Seals, several endangered plant species, and millions of nesting seabirds. Six hundred fifty miles to the south, the world's only surviving population of Millerbirds lives on the tiny island of Nihoa. The 'Nihoa' subspecies, thought to be very closely related to the extinct 'Laysan' subspecies, is critically endangered and only about 775 birds are thought to survive.

Now, thanks to a collaboration between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the American Bird Conservancy, Millerbirds have returned to Laysan Island. In September of 2011, after years of research and planning, biologists captured 24 'Nihoa' Millerbirds and relocated them to Laysan Island, in an attempt to establish a second breeding population and reduce the risk of the species' extinction. A team of biologists will remain on Laysan Island for the first year to monitor the birds' movements and behavior. All 24 birds were banded with colored leg bands, and 12 of the birds were affixed with radio transmitters, which allowed the biologists to track their movements for the first three weeks until the batteries expired. Tracking the birds has been a challenge, as when Millerbirds are not singing, they can be mouse-like in their habits, staying hidden in the dense vegetation.

The Millerbirds attempted out-of-season breeding attempts shortly after their arrival, with eight nests and two chicks. Unfortunately, all of these nesting attempts failed, but the overwinter survivorship of the translocated birds appears to have been good, with at least 21 birds surviving the winter storm season. Recently, the birds have entered their proper breeding season, and early indications look promising. A total of eight pairs have been seen carrying nesting material, building nests, or exhibiting other breeding behavior. The first complete nest was discovered in late February, and the first eggs on March 8. By March 15, two pairs were incubating eggs and one pair was feeding nestlings, and in late March, the first fledgling was sighted! Although they're thousands of miles away in a place I'll probably never visit, I feel a special connection to these birds, thanks to the Laysan Island Cyclorama.

For more information about this project, including photographs and recent updates, visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/nihoamillerbird.html> or <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/sets/72157627685823012/>



Introduction to Birding Course March 20 – May 1, 2012 at Kent Park



The Iowa City Bird Club and the Johnson County Conservation Department are offering a 7-week Introduction to Birding Course at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. There will be seven Tuesday evening sessions along with six weekend field trips to area birding hot spots, plus two field trips for kids ages 7-12.

Tuesday evening sessions are \$5 for adults and free for children accompanied by an adult. Iowa City Bird Club members receive free admission (a one-year membership is \$15 per household or \$10 for students). Participants may attend all seven sessions or pick one or more to attend. Classes can hold 30, and advanced registration is requested – please call Brad Freidhof at 645-1011 by noon of the Tuesday session. Handouts and refreshments will be provided. Come to class early and bird the loop path near the Conservation Education Center.

Weekend field trips are free. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring binoculars to all field trips; if you don't have a pair let us know in advance and loaners can be arranged. If you have a spotting scope, you are welcome to bring it. Club members will have several scopes available on those field trips requiring one. All field trips will depart from the Dodge Street Hy-Vee in Iowa City unless otherwise noted – meet in the SW corner of the parking lot. For more information on field trips, call Karen Disbrow at 430-0315.

Tuesday, March 20, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING I by Rick Hollis. This will include field identification of birds, field guides, and equipment that every birdwatcher needs, or might someday need.

Sunday March 25, 8 a.m. Field Trip to CONE MARSH. Located about 25 miles SE of Iowa City, Cone Marsh is an excellent place to view migrating ducks, geese, and other water birds. Wear boots for walking in wet areas, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. **Meet at the Fin & Feather parking lot.**

Tuesday, March 27, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II by Rick Hollis. Continuation of first session topics.

Saturday, March 31, 8 a.m. Field Trip to KENT PARK near Tiffin. We will explore the trails in Kent Park looking for migrating songbirds and resident woodland birds. **Meet at the CEC in Kent Park.**

Tuesday, April 3, 7 p.m. WHERE TO BIRD IN JOHNSON COUNTY by Rick Hollis. Well known, lesser known and secret places to watch birds and study nature in and around Johnson County.

Saturday, April 7, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HAWKEYE WILDLIFE AREA near North Liberty. We expect to see ducks, geese, American White Pelicans, and other early spring migrants. Wear boots for walking in wet areas.

Tuesday, April 10, 7 p.m. BACKYARD AND FEEDER BIRDS by James Scheib. This Session will cover the birds found in our area's backyards during the year, and what types of feeders and food to use to attract them.

Sunday, April 15, 8 a.m. Field Trip to MACBRIDE NATURE-RECREATION AREA. Visit the Raptor Center, observe birds up close from the bird blind, and hike the nearby trails. **Meet at the Macbride Raptor Center parking lot.**

Tuesday, April 17, 7 p.m. Approaches to Learning Birdsong by Jerry White.

Tuesday, April 24, 7 p.m. BIRDS OF HICKORY HILL PARK AND WATERWORKS PARK IN IOWA CITY by Jim Scheib. Learn the variety of birds that are found throughout the year at these nearby parks.

Friday, April 27, 6 p.m. NIGHT SOUNDS Field Trip. Local areas for American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, frogs, owls, and anything else that calls at night.

Saturday, April 28, 8 a.m. - Noon. Field Trip for Kids age 7-12 with Rick Hollis. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Meet at the CEC in Kent Park.**

Tuesday, May 1, 7 p.m. WARBLER IDENTIFICATION AND SHOREBIRD REVIEW by Karen Disbrow. Warblers are coming! Warblers are among our most colorful birds. Compare and contrast similar warblers.

Saturday, May 5, 8 a.m. - Noon. Field Trip for Kids age 7-12 with Rick Hollis. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Meet at the CEC in Kent Park.**

Sunday, May 6, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HICKORY HILL PARK. This park is a great place to view warblers and other migrating songbirds.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

January 8, Feeder Watch Social hosted by Jim and Karole Fuller. A congenial and hungry group of 27 birders gathered to converse and eat on a warm and “brown” winter morning. Due to the “open” winter thus far, both feeder birds and Bald Eagle numbers were quite low. Avian highlights were Carolina Wren and Pine Siskin, while bakery highlights were numerous. Another highlight was the presence of Bernie Knight, long-time bird club member. Following the gathering, a number of the group pursued and observed the Northern Saw-whet Owl at Hickory Hill Park.

Participants: Ed and Jean Allgood, Barbara Beaumont, Chris Caster, Sue Chase, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, John and Linda Donelson, Drew Dillman, Jonni Ellsworth, Linda Fischer, Jim and Karole Fuller, Kurt Hamman, Barbara Haring, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Chris Lawton, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Diana Pesek, Linda Quinn, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Blossom Shaw, Jean Walker.

Birds (21 Species): Canada Goose, Bald Eagle, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, European Starling, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

– *Jim Fuller*

January 15, Owl Prowl. It was a sunny afternoon with a temperate of 32° F and snow on the ground. We headed to Hickory Hill Park to locate the Saw-whet Owl that had been seen previously. After about 30 minutes of searching, Ben West spotted the owl. Everyone got good looks, and it was a life bird for several

people. Walking up the hill we heard a Tufted Titmouse singing.

After leaving the park, we headed over to Nancy Lynch’s home with hopes of seeing a Barred Owl. No luck, but we did see feeder birds including Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, American Goldfinches, Northern Cardinals, and House Finches.

The group then decided to head to the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids to see the Snowy Owl which had been reported there. Along a side road, we spotted a group of Ring-necked Pheasants, a rare sight this winter. We found the Snowy Owl perched on the airport fence near the Runway #5 sign.

From Cedar Rapids, we headed to Morse to see if the resident screech-owl was at home or calling. For the first time, we did not receive a call back to our tape. By then it was getting late so we did not try to call the Barred owl at Hickory Hill Park.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Jonni Ellsworth, John Erickson, Linda Fisher, Barb Haring, Ken Hunt, Pat Keiffer, Terry Mangold, Ramona McGurk, Gerald Petersen, Linda Quinn, Sharon Somers, Jean Walker, Ben West.

– *Karen Disbrow*

January 19, Meeting. A DVD documentary of the Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Florida was shown. This is a 30-minute tour of the swamp during spring. The visuals give a good overview of the boardwalk through the cypress swamp and into the Everglades, the sea of grass. Many bird species are featured, including Limpkins and lots of herons. A few insects (especially butterflies) are seen, as well as frogs and an apple snail in its native habitat. I visited the Corkscrew Swamp in 1978. I think it is a remarkable place that gives a real feel for the cypress swamp and the Everglades. Put this place on your “must-see” places to visit when in Florida.

Attendees: Karen Disbrow, John Erickson, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Bruce Gardner, Peter Hanson, Pat Keiffer, Nancy Lynch with her daughter and son-in-law, Gerald Peterson, Dick and Marcia Shaffer, Blossom Shaw.

– Karen Disbrow

February 4, Amana Turkey Walk and Feast.

Our first stop was at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park to see the Common Redpolls which were visiting the feeders. We saw groups of Wild Turkeys in two fields on our way to the Amanas. We had very few birds at the Amanas. At the Amana Lily Lake there were many eagles on the far side from us.

Bernie Knight was able to meet us for breakfast at the Colony Inn. As usual the food was awesome and the group enjoyed seeing old friends and making new ones.

Participants: Theresa Carberry, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Cecile Gouard, Pat Keiffer, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Linda Quinn, Viana Rockel, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Sharon Somers, Jean Walker. (My apologies if I have forgotten anyone as I have misplaced my notes.)

– Karen Disbrow

February 23, Meeting. Ty Smedes gave a presentation about his new book, *The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles*. This is a wonderful book with fantastic photographs. Many of the photographs are unlike anything I have ever seen of this bird. Ty described how he was able to withstand the cold weather to get such close shots. This book is a great story of the amazing Bald Eagle that returned from near-extinction. I know that I never expected to see one in the wild as a teenager growing up on the Illinois prairie. Ty signed copies of his book for everyone who bought a copy.

Attendees: Ed and Jean Allgood, Barry Buschelman, Karen Disbrow, John Erickson, Linda Fisher, Jennifer Fuhrman, Bruce Gardner,

Peter Hansen, Khristen Lawton, Ruth Lindeen, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Linda Rudolph, Bob and Linda Scarth, Bill Scheible.

– Karen Disbrow

February 26, Quad Cities. Like last year's trip, we began our outing on the Illinois side. Just north of the I-80 bridge is the town of Rapids City, and there is a private road that runs north along the river. Normally there are lots of diving ducks, but today there weren't hardly any to find, although Jerry did finally get those elusive Common Mergansers on his list.

Our next stop was Lock and Dam 14, from the Illinois side. I had never visited it before, but was curious from recent posts made by Jim Forde. It was a longer walk than I had imagined across the earth dam to the actual spillway structure. But there were many gulls flying about, including two adult Thayer's and an immature Glaucous along with the Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. A small number of divers were present above the dam, with good variety. The highlight though was a lone Greater White-fronted Goose, not a bird I had expected to find on the Mississippi.

We of course made a stop at L&D 14 from the Iowa side. There was a large roost of gulls above the dam and we found two first-winter Great Black-backed Gulls, one adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, a couple of first-winter Thayer's Gulls, and one very light immature gull that was likely a first-winter Iceland Gull. And we even had two separate flocks of White-fronted Geese and some Snow Geese fly over.

We made a brief stop at L&D 15 in Davenport. We got great looks at a Peregrine Falcon flying about, but not much else. There were lots of Ring-billed Gulls in the backwater along Credit Island, but no rarer gulls. Three White Pelicans were on the river south of the island and a Carolina Wren was singing nearby.

On the way over to Fairmount Cemetery, we spied four Turkey Vultures soaring over the

hills. The hemlocks at Fairmount Cemetery had been hosting some crossbills recently and we hoped to find them. A small flock was present, but they were not cooperative. We waited patiently for them to call or fly, as they waited patiently for us to give up. Fortunately James got a look at one of them to identify them as White-winged for us. We had spent quite a bit of time looking at gulls and it was getting later in the day, so even the feeders at the back entrance were not busy. We did manage to find some Pine Siskins though and that was fun.

Thanks to Sharon and Jerry for driving. And special thanks to James for co-leading.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, John Erickson, James Huntington, Linda Quinn, Sharon Somers.

Birds (43 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, European Starling, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, White-winged Crossbill, House Sparrow.

– *Chris Caster*

March 10, Burlington. We met at the Fin & Feather parking lot and sorted ourselves into as few cars as possible for the trip. Chuck Fuller and Jon Rutenbeck met us at the Port of Burlington. We had just missed the Peregrine Falcon. We headed to the storm sewer, entering via the indoor tennis building parking lot. Next we visited the cemetery, and then followed our

usual route to the Green Bay Bottoms. We made stops at Sullivan Slough, the Alliant Power ponds, Black Hawk Bottoms, Heron Bend North and South, Trumpeter Marsh, and Montrose Marsh.

The best birds of the day were two early phoebes. Chorus frogs were heard. And as usual John and Chuck were great guides.

Birds (63 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Wild Turkey, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch.

People: Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, John Erickson, Cecile Gouard Linda Fisher, Rick Hollis, Linda Quinn, Sharon Somers,.

– *Karen Disbrow*

March 22, Meeting. Shane Patterson, the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator, gave us an update on the status of the Iowa BBA, with a focus on the blocks in Johnson, Iowa, Cedar, Washington and Muscatine counties. Shane reminded us that eagle, raptor and owl nesting

behavior can be observed as early as February and March. A Long-eared Owl, a rare breeding bird in Iowa, was found in our part of the state during the first BBA project in the late 1980s, and in recent weeks a Long-eared Owl was found in NE Johnson County. Long-eared Owls use old crow nests in pines or cedars, and March-April is the time to look for nesting pairs.

We will be hosting a BBA Blockbuster weekend July 6-8. There are two other blockbusting weekends scheduled during this last year of the 5-year BBA project. So let's get out there and find some breeding birds in as many blocks as possible this season.

Sukie Brown then presented a photographic tour of Tanzania. Her photographs were amazing, and included close-up shots of birds, lions, giraffes and more. It was a great program on this fabulous area that we all would like to visit.

Attendees: Nancy Carl, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Bruce Gardner, Gary Gussin, Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis, Pat Keiffer, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Kristen Lawton, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Gail McLure, Sally Moore, Viana Rockel, Jim and Sharon Scheib, Marcia Shaffer,

– Karen Disbrow

March 25, Cone Marsh. What an amazing morning. It is still March and we stood on the dike and did not shiver. Our eyes did not water scoping birds at the caboose. All in all we had 43 species, very short on divers and passerines. The shrike was at its normal place on the NE of the intersection of 210th and T Ave., at the SE corner of the marsh. Four cars, fourteen people, plus the Scheibs and Dog Scheib for part of the morning.

Participants: Diane Bradbury, Anne Burke, Cathy Cole, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Mike Feiss, Thérèse Guédon, Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis (leader), Li-Hsien Lin, Linda Quinn, Elliott Stalter, Kristine Stalter.

Birds (43 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, 1 possible Ross's Goose, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, European Starling, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Sparrow.

– Rick Hollis



HELP WANTED

Christmas Bird Count Compiler

Seeking motivated individual to carry on sixty-year tradition of citizen science. Will train – no experience necessary. Good organizational and communication skills helpful. No pay or benefits, but the current compiler will buy the successful candidate a frosty beverage at next year's CBC dinner. Please direct all inquiries to Chris Edwards at credwards@aol.com.

**Cell Phones and
Bird Photography
Rick Hollis**

We see more and more bird photographs being shared, often accompanied with the apology, “Sorry about the picture quality, I took it with my cell phone.” But let’s face it, you always have your cell phone with you, and the built-in cameras on these devices are getting increasingly better. So rather than apologizing for the pictures, let us focus on what we can do to make them better. I will specifically discuss iPhones, as that is what I have.

National Geographic’s photo website, <http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/> has an article titled “Tips for Better iPhone Photography”. Most of the tips are focused on traditional photography topics such as light, composition, etc. But some suggestions are worth noting for taking bird photographs:

- Use both hands and make sure the camera is as steady as you can make it.
- The shutter releases as you lift your finger off the button on iPhones. Learn where your cell phone shutter releases.

- Don’t use the digital zoom. You’ll get better results if you enlarge the image on your computer.
- Keep your phone dry. Cell phones are not as waterproof as most of our binoculars. You know where you bird and what conditions you are out in.

There are also add-ons and apps which will help you. Telephoto add-on lens are made for iPhones. Apps like Camera+, which are free or nearly so, will add an image stabilizer to your phone. If you really want to increase magnification, you can get surprisingly good pictures by holding your phone up to your spotting scope or a pair of binoculars mounted on a tripod. I have been experimenting with this myself. The problem is holding the phone still, and correctly spaced over the ‘sweet spot’. The good news is that iPhone mounts are coming. Meopta is making them for their spotting scopes, and presumably will be adapting them for other scopes. And once people get their hands on them, they surely will be trying them on different scopes and different phones. Or you could go the do-it-yourself route and create your own mount.

IOWA CITY BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Please send this form with your annual membership dues to Bruce Gardner, 3055 Wapsi Ave. NE, Iowa City, IA, 52240. Annual dues are \$15 per household or \$10 for students. Make checks payable to “Eastern Iowa Birdwatch”. Members receive a 10% discount on birdseed and suet at the Ace Hardware store at 600 N. Dodge Street in Iowa City.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Check here for e-mail subscription only

Iowa City Bird Club

For general bird club information, or to lead or suggest a field trip, contact our president and field trip coordinator, Karen Disbrow at (319) 430-0315 or k_disbrow@yahoo.com.

Annual membership dues are \$15 per household or \$10 for students, payable by January 1st for the coming year. Check your mailing label for the year you have paid through. Make checks payable to Eastern Iowa Birdwatch and mail to Bruce Gardner, 3055 Wapsi Ave. NE, Iowa City, IA 52240. You may contact Bruce at (319) 643-2575 or woodsidefarms@juno.com.

Our club web site is located at www.icbirds.org and is maintained by Jim Scheib. You may contact Jim at (319) 337-5206 or jim@tenlongview.net.

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published three times per year, in April, September, and December. Members are encouraged to send submissions and comments to the editor, Chris Edwards, 4490 Daniels Cir. NE, Solon, IA 52333. You may contact Chris at (319) 430-4732 or credwards@aol.com.

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

Chris Edwards, Editor
4490 Daniels Cir. NE
Solon, IA 52333

