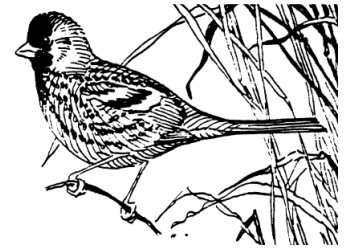


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# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

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Volume 35 Number 1

April 2015

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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**, 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 14, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course** at Kent Park CEC: “Backyard and Feeder Birds” by Jim Scheib. Free to members. Call Sydney Algreen at 645-1011 to register. See page 7 for more information.

**April 15, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**April 16, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting.** Photographers Linda and Robert Scarth will present “Capturing the Action: Images from Ecuador”. **This meeting will be held at the Kent Park Conservation Education Center.**

**April 19, Sunday, 8 a.m. Macbride Nature-Recreation Area.** Visit the Raptor Center and bird blind, and hike the nearby trails. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.*

**April 21, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course** at Kent Park CEC: “Birds of Terry Trueblood and Waterworks Parks in Iowa City” by Jim Scheib. Free to members. Call Sydney Algreen at 645-1011 to register.

**April 25, Saturday, 8 a.m. Field Trip to Trueblood Recreation Area and Waterworks Park,** two Iowa City parks with great trails for woodland, prairie, and wetland species. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.*

**April 27-May 22, 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. Co-sponsored by the Bur Oak Land Trust.

**April 28, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course** at Kent Park CEC: “Warbler Identification” by Karen Disbrow. Free to members. Call Sydney Algreen at 645-1011 to register.

**May 3, Sunday, 8 a.m. Hickory Hill Park.** This park is a hot-spot for warblers and other spring migrants. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.*

**May 6, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**May 9, 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.

Continued on next page →

## Schedule (continued)

**May 17, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Amana Area** for woodland, wetland, and grassland birds. Chris Edwards, 430-4732.

**May 20, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**May 21, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting.** Jim Fuller will present "Quest for Rare Iowa Birds".

**June 3, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**June 13, 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 17, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**June 20, Saturday, 8 a.m. - Noon. Turkey Vulture Festival** at the Coralville Dam East Overlook, sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, featuring exhibits, games, food, and fun. Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

**July 1, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**July 15, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**July 18, Saturday, 9 a.m. 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.

**August 5, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

**August 8, Saturday, 7 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area** or other local areas for shorebirds and other early fall migrants. **Meet at the Casey's off I-380 Exit 4 in North Liberty.** Bring boots and a spotting scope if you have them. Mark Brown, 358-8765.

**August 19, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk.** Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

## Other Dates of Note

**April 25, Saturday. Iowa Young Birders field trip to Starr's Cave near Burlington.** For more information, visit [www.iowayoungbirders.org](http://www.iowayoungbirders.org).

**May 16, Saturday. Iowa Young Birders beginning young birder workshop at Ledges State Park near Boone.** For more information, visit [www.iowayoungbirders.org](http://www.iowayoungbirders.org).

**May 22-24, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting in Algona.** Visit [www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org) for more information.

**June 13, Saturday. Iowa Young Birders advanced young birder workshop at Yellow River State Forest in NE Iowa.** For more information, visit [www.iowayoungbirders.org](http://www.iowayoungbirders.org).

**August 28-30, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting in Burlington.** Visit [www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org) for more information.

## From the President's Desk

### Karen Disbrow

Spring, finally! Listening to the robins, cardinals and migrating songbirds is a true joy. I plan to get out as much as I can this spring. Our weekday Warbler Walks are again planned for this spring. This is an awesome opportunity to learn more about these little beauties that visit Hickory Hill Park.

Both the spring and fall Iowa Ornithologists' Union meetings are listed in this newsletter. If you are interested in going or learning more about these meetings, please ask me or Rick Hollis. We both have a long history of attendance. I have often seen life birds on these trips.

I want to thank Grant Wood AEA for the free use of their meeting rooms. This May will be our last meeting there as they are relocating to a new facility. Remember Lench & Cilek North Ace Hardware and Forever Green Garden Center for the 10% discount to club members on regularly priced bird seed and suet; just bring your newsletter or member card. Thanks to the Johnson County Conservation Board for the continued use of the CEC for the Birding Course.

As always I am interested in setting up trips to where you want to go and to see the birds you want to see. If you have an idea, I'll find a leader.

Good Birding!

## Iowa Audubon Corner

Iowa Audubon is currently in discussions with member Ric Zarwell, of Lansing, plus contacts within the Trees Forever organization and Iowa's DNR Wildlife Diversity staff. The purpose is to consider establishing a new program recognizing cities and towns that create

more "bird friendly" communities. Some states have already initiated, or are about to start, such programs, often referred to as a "Bird City" designation.

To receive such a designation, communities would have to agree to certain practices fostering better habitat and greater bird appreciation. Wisconsin may be the current national leader with its "Bird City" program in over 80 cities. For such designation, Wisconsin cities must meet at least 7 of 22 criteria in four different categories: creation and protection of habitat, participation in programs that promote community forest management, limiting or removing hazards to birds, and public education. Finally, city government must adopt a resolution to hold a community celebration of International Migratory Bird Day each May.

Audubon Minnesota is also stepping into a similar program based upon the Wisconsin model, and it already has a "Bird-Friendly Community" strategy, led by a paid staff member. If and when Iowa initiates a similar program, it would likely be a partnership with Iowa's Trees Forever. Stay tuned.

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The Board of Directors recently approved the following projects to receive funding through Iowa Audubon's small grants program:

- Northern Saw-whet Owl banding and migration studies at Hitchcock Nature Center in Pottawattamie County.
- Study of Cerulean Warbler occupancy on NE Iowa public lands.
- Publication of "Birding – The Iowa Great Lakes Region", a five-county conservation board and USFWS project to update a birding map of the region.
- Restoration of oak savanna at the DNR's Ingham-High Wildlife Management Area.
- Experimental re-establishment of native wetland vegetation in a restored marsh at Dewey's Pasture Wildlife Management Area.

## **2014 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count**

### **Chris Edwards and Diana Pesek**

The 64th annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 14. The count area is a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Hwy. 965 and Penn Street in North Liberty. The total of 65 species was just below the ten-year average of 66. The all-time high count of 81 species was set in 2012. Weather conditions were pleasant, with temperatures of 47-54° F and very light S winds. Viewing conditions were fair to poor, with heavy fog throughout the morning and cloud cover in the afternoon. Area rivers and streams were open, the Coralville Reservoir and other bodies of water were mostly frozen, and there was no snow cover.

Three rarities were found this year: Orange-crowned Warbler (first count record), Ross's Goose (second count record), and Northern Goshawk. Other unusual species were Snow Goose, Northern Pintail, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Hermit Thrush, Rusty Blackbird, and Brown-headed Cowbird. New high counts were established for Ross's Goose, Eastern Bluebird, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Expected species not found included Common Goldeneye, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Shrike, Horned Lark, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and White-crowned Warbler.

### ***Waterfowl***

Nine waterfowl species were found, which is slightly more than usual. The unexpected hot spot was the aptly-named Goose Lake, a retention pond next to a housing development in North Liberty, where eight species were seen. Two Snow Geese there were the first in ten years, and two Ross's Geese provided the second record ever on the count. Four Cackling Geese were also present there. Two Northern Pintails provided the second record in the last ten years, and a Ruddy Duck was also unusual. Overall, Canada Goose (1,747) and Mallard (192) numbers were slightly below normal.

### ***Pheasants to Coots***

Ring-neck Pheasants continue to be scarce in the area, but five birds were the highest count since 2007. Wild Turkeys (39) were below average for the fourth straight year. Northern Bobwhites have not been found since 2006. Single Great Blue Herons were found at Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Waterworks Prairie Park. Seven raptor species were found, highlighted by a juvenile Northern Goshawk photographed in North Liberty, which was the first count record since 1996. Cooper's Hawks (5) continue to do well, but no Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen. Bald Eagles (45) and Red-tailed Hawks (41) were below average, perhaps influenced by the poor visibility and/or mild weather. Only one Rough-legged Hawk was found, and this species proved difficult to find throughout the remainder of the winter. Three American Coots were unusual.

### ***Gulls to Crows***

Gull numbers fluctuate widely on the count, and Ring-billed Gulls (39) and Herring Gulls (6) were seen in fairly typical numbers. No other gulls have been seen on the count since 1993. Owl numbers were fairly low. An Eastern Screech-Owl was found at a usual spot west of North Liberty. Three Great Horned Owls and three Barred Owls were the only other owls found. Red-headed Woodpeckers (18) were up this year, while Northern Flickers (12) were down. Four Pileated Woodpeckers were found; this species was formerly scarce on the count, but has been a steady presence for the last 15 years. No Northern Shrikes were seen this year, and they were generally scarce throughout the state this winter.

Blue Jays (120) and American Crows (294) continued to be below average. Horned Lark was missed for the first time since 1996.

### ***Chickadees to Waxwings***

Black-capped Chickadees (266), Tufted Titmice (61), and White-breasted Nuthatches (79) were found in about average numbers. A single Red-breasted Nuthatch was at Kent Park, and this species was scarce in Iowa for the remainder of the winter. Brown Creepers (7) were at a ten-year high. Fruit-eating birds were a mixed bag: Eastern Bluebirds were seen in record numbers (52), but American Robins (57) and Cedar Waxwings (134) were both far below average. A Hermit Thrush at Hickory Hill Park was an unusual find.

### ***Warblers to Old World Sparrows***

A warbler visiting a peanut feeder in Bryce and Rosemary Plapp's Iowa City backyard was later photographed and determined to be an Orange-crowned Warbler, a first record for the count, bringing the all-time species list to 139. Single Fox and Swamp Sparrows were found at Hawkeye Wildlife Area. Other sparrows were found in fairly typical numbers, except for White-crowned Sparrow which was missed entirely. Northern Cardinals (256) were below average for the fifth straight year. One Rusty Blackbird and three Brown-headed Cowbirds were unusual. Winter finch numbers were low this year, with only one Purple Finch and 17 Pine Siskins. House Finches (66) and American Goldfinches (122) were below average. Eurasian Tree Sparrows continue their population growth and were found in record numbers (44).

### ***Count Effort***

This year there were 29 field observers in 11 parties. Field observers were Kyle and Dena Belcher, Carl Bendorf, Mark Brown, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Jerry Denning, Bob Dick, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, John Erickson, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Bruce Gardner, Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Andy and Katie Long, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Jason Paulios, Diana Pesek, Linda Quinn, Linda Rudolph, Jim Scheib, and Walt Wagner-Hecht.

There were 8 feeder watchers in 7 locations, continuing a downward trend in recent years. Feeder watchers were Donna Farley, Janet Hollis, Mary Lamm, Pat Peterson, Bryce and Rosemary Plapp, Sharon Somers, and Ronnye Wieland.

This year's count was organized by Diana Pesek, and 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 54 species. We met for an evening meal and compilation at The Brown Bottle Café in North Liberty.

Nationally, this year marked the 115th 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. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are available online at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc), through a cooperative project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Thanks to everyone who participated for making this year's count a success.

**SPECIES LIST**

Snow Goose	2	Mourning Dove	150	European Starling	1,006
Ross' Goose	2	Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Cedar Waxwing	134
Cackling Goose	4	Great Horned Owl	3	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Canada Goose	1,747	Barred Owl	3	American Tree Sparrow	526
Mallard	192	Belted Kingfisher	1	Fox Sparrow	1
Northern Pintail	2	Red-headed Woodpecker	18	Song Sparrow	22
Lesser Scaup	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	63	Swamp Sparrow	1
Common Merganser	21	Downy Woodpecker	81	White-throated Sparrow	19
Ruddy Duck	1	Hairy Woodpecker	26	Dark-eyed Junco	507
Ring-necked Pheasant	5	Northern Flicker	12	Northern Cardinal	256
Wild Turkey	39	Pileated Woodpecker	4	Red-winged Blackbird	5
Great Blue Heron	2	American Kestrel	24	Rusty Blackbird	1
Bald Eagle	45	Blue Jay	120	Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Northern Harrier	8	American Crow	294	House Finch	66
Cooper's Hawk	5	Black-capped Chickadee	266	Purple Finch	1
Northern Goshawk	1	Tufted Titmouse	61	Pine Siskin	17
Red-tailed Hawk	41	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	American Goldfinch	122
Rough-legged Hawk	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	79	House Sparrow	845
American Coot	3	Brown Creeper	7	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	44
Ring-billed Gull	39	Carolina Wren	2		
Herring Gull	6	Eastern Bluebird	52	TOTAL SPECIES	65
Rock Pigeon	198	Hermit Thrush	1	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	7,275
Eurasian Collared-Dove	7	American Robin	57		

## In Memoriam: Sharon Scheib

Sharon Scheib passed away peacefully at her home, following a three year battle with lung cancer, on Sunday, March 15, 2015. Sharon was raised in Smethport, Pennsylvania, where she graduated valedictorian of her high school class. She was an Alden scholar at Allegheny College earning a B.A. in English. She attended Temple University in Philadelphia, PA for graduate work where she met her future husband, James.

Sharon and James were married in 1967 in Smethport. She was a devoted mother to two sons, Chris and Eric, and a loving grandmother to her two grandsons, Matthew and Jacob. She enjoyed visits from her grandsons nearly every summer.

Once an English teacher, always an English teacher. Sharon taught English in Pennsylvania and in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In 1983, she became an Administrative Secretary for the

University of Iowa Foundation in Iowa City. From 1984 to 2004 she was Director of Communication and External Relations for the Henry B. Tippie College of Business. A writing initiative scholarship has been created in her name for the graduate program there.

Sharon was an avid birder and long-time member of the Iowa City Bird Club. This hobby influenced her travels and resulted in birding trips around the United States and to Sweden, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, twice to Mexico and twice to Alaska. Her favorite U.S. birding location was SE Arizona.

A pet lover, Sharon took in eleven stray cats, despite being allergic to them, but only found homes for five, leaving six at home with her family in addition to two dogs. She belonged to several local book clubs, helped arrange the annual holiday meal for the Swedish club, and worked on events for volunteers of Iowa City Hospice.

Sharon will be greatly missed by all who knew her.



## Introduction to Birding Course March 24 – April 28, 2015 at Kent Park



The Iowa City Bird Club and the Johnson County Conservation Department are offering a 6-week Introduction to Birding Course at the Conservation Education Center in Kent Park. There will be six Tuesday evening sessions along with six weekend field trips to area birding hot spots.

**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 sessions or pick one or more to attend. Classes can hold 30, and advanced registration is requested – please call Sydney Algreen at (319) 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 spotting scopes available to share on those field trips requiring one. All field trips will depart from the N Dodge Street Hy-Vee in Iowa City unless otherwise noted; meet in the SW corner of the parking lot. For more information, call Karen Disbrow at (319) 430-0315.

**Tuesday, March 24, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING I** by Rick Hollis. This will include field identification of birds, field guides, and equipment every birder needs, or might someday need.

**Sunday, March 29, 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 31, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II** by Rick Hollis. Continuation of first session topics.

**Saturday, April 4, 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 7, 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 11, 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, and bring a spotting scope if you have one.

**Tuesday, April 14, 7 p.m. BACKYARD AND FEEDER BIRDS** by James Scheib. This session will cover the common birds found in our backyards during the year, and what types of feeders and food to use to attract them.

**Sunday, April 19, 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.

**Tuesday, April 21, 7 p.m. BIRDS OF TERRY TRUEBLOOD AND WATERWORKS PARKS IN IOWA CITY** by Jim Scheib. Learn the variety of birds to be found throughout the year at these nearby parks.

**Saturday, April 25, 8 a.m. Field Trip to TERRY TRUEBLOOD and WATERWORKS PARKS.** Visit these two Iowa City parks with great trails for grassland and wetland species.

**Tuesday, April 28, 7 p.m. WARBLER IDENTIFICATION** by Karen Disbrow. Warblers are among our most colorful birds. Compare and contrast similar species within this interesting and challenging group.

**Sunday, May 3, 8 a.m. Field Trip to HICKORY HILL PARK.** May is prime time for viewing warblers in Iowa, and this park is an Eastern Iowa hot-spot for viewing migrant warblers and other songbirds.

## Field Trip and Meeting Reports

**January 4, Bird Feeder Watch Social** at the home of Jim and Karole Fuller. With wind chills well below zero and a fresh covering of snow on the ground, eighteen brave souls ventured out to enjoy the indoor warmth while watching the feeders, with both birds and humans consuming the goodies.

Twenty-two avian species appeared, with the highlights of Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pine Siskins, and White-throated, Song, and American Tree Sparrows. A few Bald Eagles ventured past on the wing, and a Barred Owl was heard while snow removal activities occurred prior to the gathering. Probably the most exciting visit, however, was from a Cooper's Hawk that swooped in and presumably snared a starling.

Attendees: Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller (hosts), Peter and Katie Hansen, Lauren and Doina Johnson, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Linda Quinn, Tom and Carol Rosenberger.

Birds (22 species): Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

*– Jim Fuller*

**January 15, Meeting.** Rick Hollis gave a presentation on a recent trip to Sax-Zim Bog and the North Shore of Lake Superior near Duluth, Minnesota. Barry Buschelman and Sharon Somers also joined Carroll County

Naturalist Matt Wetrich's "Minnesota Avian Adventure Trip" in winter 2014. The group had great fun seeing Great Gray Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, and other northern specialties, but they struck out on water birds on frozen Lake Superior.

Attendees: Sydney Algreen, Barry Buschelman, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, John and Randee Fieselmann, Linda Fisher, Bruce Gardner, Rick Hollis, Mary Oxley, Gerry Peterson, Linda Quinn, Tom and Carol Rosenberger, Bob and Linda Scarth, Donna Warner.

**January 25, Coralville WinterFest** at Iowa River Landing. The Iowa City Bird Club had a display with information about bird feeding, and a bird viewing area with a spotting scope. Several Bald Eagles were seen along the Iowa River. Thanks to Bruce Gardner and Linda Fisher for helping with this event.

*– Karen Disbrow*

**February 7, Bald Eagle Watch and Expo.** Exhibits and programs were held at North Central Junior High School. Speakers included Luke Hart of Macbride Raptor Project, author and photographer Ty Smedes, and Mike Havlik of the Des Moines Y Camp. Exhibitors included Cedar County Conservation, Iowa Audubon, Iowa City Bird Club, Iowa County Conservation, Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Iowa Wildlife Federation, Johnson County Conservation, and The Songbird Project. Bruce Gardner manned a spotting scope to show inquisitive visitors Bald Eagles below the Coralville Dam. The event was very well-attended this year, with 230 visitors at the school, and a similar number at the dam. Thanks to those who helped out with this event.

*– Karen Disbrow*

**February 15, Quad Cities and Mississippi River.** Boy, was it cold. We probably saw a high of 4 degrees, and as anyone who has birded much knows, it always feels at least 10 degrees colder when you are along the river. Fortunately



the wind was not a problem and it ended up being a pretty fine morning.

We started out with a quick drive across the I-80 bridge. The river was fairly choked with ice north of the bridge, so we headed for the Illinois side of L&D 15. Nothin'! So it was back to the Iowa side and Canal Shore Drive. Below the bridge the viewing was great. There were large numbers of diving ducks present and many were close enough to shore that scopes weren't necessary, and we could stay warm in the truck. We had great looks at both Greater and Lesser Scaups, Ring-necked Ducks, many Canvasbacks, Common Mergansers, and Common Goldeneyes. The best bird was a Long-tailed Duck. Laureen thought it to be cute. Further up-river we also had a nice look at a male Hooded Merganser.

L&D 14, from the Iowa side, was a bit more interesting. There weren't many gulls and all were Herrings, but there were American White Pelicans, more ducks, Bald Eagles, and the usual group of stalwart photographers braving the cold for yet more eagle shots. Unfortunately I don't think any of them caught the two we saw doing aerial acrobatics. It would have certainly made their day. This stop required some time outside and so we enjoyed a long brunch at the McDonald's in Bettendorf. We did appreciate their piping hot coffee and hot chocolate.

You know it is cold when there aren't any fishing boats below the dam in Davenport. Emma did recognize a photographer we had seen at L&D 14 and struck up a conversation. L&D 15 in Davenport wasn't terribly interesting though. There was only a lone Herring Gull. The Rock Pigeons roosting on the dam appear to be increasing in numbers, and coincidentally perhaps, no Peregrine Falcons were spotted on the nearby buildings. Lots of eagles though.

Credit Island made for a quiet drive. We were thankful for the large feeding station provided by the Quad Cities Audubon Society. And at the north end of the island we found our first

Ring-billed Gulls slumming with the Mallards. No American Black Ducks, although the wing speculums on a number of the females sure looked purple. The motorcycles racing on the ice along Concord Street were certainly entertaining. What is it about left turns though? Why doesn't anyone ever race clockwise?

The hemlocks at Fairmont Cemetery contained a decent number of chickadees, but nothing more. We were amazed though by the numbers of Eurasian Tree Sparrows at the house at the upper entrance – the most I had ever seen there and they surely outnumbered the House Sparrows. We also had some nice looks at a Brown Creeper. And down the lane, a Carolina Wren and a large group of siskins were taking full advantage of Walt Zuurdeeg's feeders.

Thanks to Emma and Laureen for being such good sports.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Emma Caster, Laureen Ipsen.

Birds (37 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– Chris Caster

**February 19, Meeting.** Authors James Sandrock and Jean Prior gave a presentation based on their 2014 University of Iowa Press publication, *The Scientific Nomenclature of Birds in the Upper Midwest*.

Attendees: Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, Bruce Gardner, Linda Rudolph, Bob and Linda Scarth, Bill Scheible, Donna Warner, Kai Weatherman.

**February 21, Amana Turkey Walk and Feast.** The group birded around the Amana area in the early morning, and then enjoyed a hearty breakfast at the Colony Inn. The morning was capped off with a stop at the new Kent Park bird blind. This annual tradition may go on hiatus next year, as the attendance has slowly dwindled over the last few years.

Participants: Bill and Chelsea DeVivo, Karen Disbrow (leader).

Birds (22 species): Canada Goose, Mallard, Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

**February 21, Iowa City Freeze Fest at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area.** The club had displays and a spotting scope setup at this new event. Bald Eagles, a Red-tailed Hawk, and Canada Geese were observed. The event was very well-attended and we plan to participate again next year.

– *Karen Disbrow*

**March 14, Burlington Area.** We arrived at the Port of Burlington at 7:50 a.m. where we were greeted by our host, Chuck Fuller, and by a resident Peregrine Falcon. During the course of the day we visited Crapo Park and Aspen Grove Cemetery in Burlington, Starr's Cave Preserve, Sullivan Slough, Green Bay Bottoms, the Wever Elevator, the Fort Madison riverfront, Trumpeter Marsh, Heron Bend, and Montrose. It was a wonderful day and we found 62 species.

One of the highlights was a Great Horned Owl nest on the cliff at Starr's Cave.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow (co-leader), Chuck Fuller (co-leader), Jaeda Harmon, Andy and KT Long, Seth Petchers, Linda Rudolph.

Birds (62 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Thayer's Gull, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

**March 19, Meeting.** Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon, presented his new program, "*Birding Peru: Ocean, Andes and the Amazon Basin*". Doug and former Iowa Audubon President Karl Jungbluth of Boone spent nearly two weeks birding Peru in November 2014. In just twelve days of actual birding they were able to observe 415 species of birds, adding 220 lifers to Doug's world list and about 280 to Karl's list. Doug has birded Ecuador and Panama previously, while Karl has birded across

Central America, so some species had been previously seen by both.

They began their trip near Lima with semi-pelagic birding, then moved on to coastal wetlands, next flying up to the ancient Inca capital of Cuzco in the high Andes. From there they explored Machu Picchu and nearby river valleys, then drove to over 14,000 feet altitude to observe birds in the Puna grasslands, wetlands, and rare dwarf *Polylepis* woodlands.

Next, Karl and Doug traveled to Manu International Biosphere Reserve, one of South America's most pristine national parks, working multicolored bird flocks in the cloud forests. After a boat trip down the High Mother of God River, a major Amazon tributary, they spent three days birding from jungle-based Amazonia Lodge. Finally, they returned to Cuzco and Lima, birding (and breathing hard) at a 16,000-ft. pass in the Andes.

Some of the wonderful life birds seen by both Doug and Karl included Humboldt Penguin, Inca Tern, Coastal Miner, Inca Wren, Mountain Caracara, Paradise Tanager, Versicolored Barbet, Golden-collared Tanager, Andean Cock-of-the-rock, Oscellated Piculet, White-browed Tit-spinetail, Hoatzin, Blue-headed Macaw, and Round-tailed Manakin. One of the greatest experiences was spent on a gravel bar in the river, observing at least four parrot species feeding on a riverbank clay lick, like a scene from public television's *Nature* program.

Attendees: Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Bruce Gardner, Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis, Pat Kieffer, Jane Knoedel, Dave Kyllingstad, Khris Lawton, Larry Mahoney, Gail McLure, Mark Oxley, Linda Quinn, Tom and Carol Rosenberger, Bob and Linda Scarth, Marcia Shaffer, Donna Warner.

– Doug Harr

**March 29, Cone Marsh.** It was cold and spitting rain, which limited our time outside our vehicles. Plus, it was dark! But we had a good time on a lousy morning.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Bruce Gardner (co-leader), Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis (co-leader), Laureen Ipsen, Larry Mahoney, Ramona McGurk, Linda Quinn.

Birds (33 species): Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, American Kestrel (south of Lone Tree), American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle.

– Rick Hollis

**April 1, Kent Park Wednesday Walk.** An absolutely delightful spring morning with newly arrived species! We went for a 1.7-mile walk and then drove around the park.

Participants: John Erickson, Rick Hollis (leader), Larry Mahoney, Donna Warner.

Birds (26 species): Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Pheasant, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark.

– Rick Hollis

**April 4, Kent Park.** What a gorgeous morning to be out on a walk. Although we saw no flowers, spring was certainly in the air. Amongst our visual treats from the morning was a pair of Eastern Bluebirds at the perfect angle to the sun, so we could see the male glowing against the prairie grasses. We watched as they entered a nest cavity in a dead branch. There was an absolute mob of Fox Sparrows, going back and forth at the north boundary of the park. After an hour walking, some folks continued on in cars to check out some ponds and the lake in Kent Park. While on the dam we were thrilled to have five Trumpeter Swans pass over us, repeatedly, before flying off.

Two of us continued to Tom's Pond, where there was very little water and no birds, and Goose Lake, where we saw Canada Goose, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead.

Participants: There were people on the trip, about ten of us. I even had the list in my pocket when I got home. I have no idea where it is now.

Birds (40 species): Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, Turkey Vulture, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, House Finch, American Goldfinch.

– Rick Hollis

## Literature Droppings

Rick Hollis

### *Dark-eyed Junco Subspecies*

Dark-eyed Junco subspecies have always fascinated me. I know we see a range of differences in appearance that go beyond males and females. Every time I see an article about this, I try to get my hands on it. This one had a number of fascinating tidbits. First, wing length and the amount of white in a bird's tail are strong contributors to a bird's dominance and breeding success. Second, these are traits that can undergo rapid evolution. Dark-eyed Juncos in North America have at least six easily separated forms: White-winged, Red-backed, Gray-headed, Slate-colored, Pink-sided and Oregon. There are additional recognizable forms within these groups. The author examined tail whiteness, wing length and tail length in numerous specimens. White-winged, Red-backed, Gray-headed, and Pink-sided seemed to be non-overlapping in these traits. Slate-colored and Oregon are a bit more confusing as each contains some separately identifiable populations. The specimens used for this study were collected in the 1900s. At that time most of these groups hybridized at their points of contact, but this may no longer be true. Gray-headed and Oregon juncos used to hybridize in places where they no longer do, despite still overlapping.

The article made no mention of the Cassiar Junco, which is thought to be a hybrid population of Oregon and Slate-colored juncos. Some birds in our area look like Cassiars; a typical male has gray or strongly grayish brown (but not pure brown) sides that contrast with a blackish hood. The hood strongly contrasts with the mantle. [Geographic variation in morphology of Dark-eyed Juncos and implications for population divergence. Elise D. Ferree. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology*, 125(3):454-470. 2013.]

**Green Chameleons Breathe Like Birds**

Before I talk about lizards, I need to explain how breathing works. Mammalian lungs function like bellows: air comes in and air goes out. Gas exchange occurs in dead end sacs called alveoli. The air at the bottom of the lungs never fully leaves, and so the air is never fully oxygenated. Birds do it differently. When they breathe in, air inflates air sacs in the body. Air leaves these sacs when they empty and flows through the parabronchi in the lungs. It then enters different sacs before leaving the body. This unidirectional airflow is highly efficient and is thought to occur because flight demands a large amount of oxygen. Everything made sense until someone discovered crocodilians have lung plumbing similar to birds. Then it was discovered in monitor lizards, and recently it was found in Green Chameleons. In chameleons scientists used 3D X-rays, theatrical smoke and live chameleons. Not only were their lungs plumbed like bird lungs, but they functioned like bird lungs. Previously it was hypothesized that airflow in avian lungs was a function of pressure gradients. In chameleons, at least partially, shapes and angles direct airflow. Put all this together and it suggests that rather than a single origin of unidirectional

airflow evolving in birds and monitors and crocodilians and Green Chameleons, this trait evolved several different times. And when you consider that chameleons are not very active, it suggests the demands of a high energy/highly active lifestyle was not the only driving force behind the evolution of this trait.

**Kent Park Volunteers Needed**

The Johnson County Conservation staff is looking for a few volunteers to cover the Kent Park Conservation Education Center on summer weekends. Four-hour shifts from noon-4 on either Saturday or Sunday, as well as some holidays, are available. Training is provided. To volunteer, call Sydney Algreen at 645-1011.

**Renewal Reminder**

If you haven't renewed your membership dues for 2015, please do so now. Your mailing label shows the most recent year you have paid for. Please complete the membership renewal form below and send it with your check payable to "Eastern Iowa Birdwatch" to Bruce Gardner, 3055 Wapsi Ave. NE, Iowa City, IA 52240.

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**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](mailto:k_disbrow@yahoo.com).

**Our club web site** is located at [www.icbirds.org](http://www.icbirds.org). You may contact webmaster Jim Scheib at (319) 337-5206 or [jim@tenlongview.net](mailto:jim@tenlongview.net). Also visit us on Facebook.

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