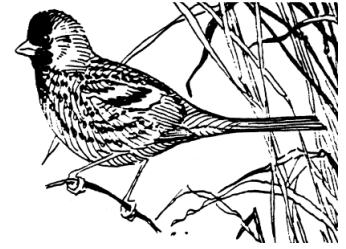

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch



The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 36 Number 1

April 2016

Schedule

Field trips depart from the Dodge St. Hy-Vee in Iowa City unless otherwise noted; meet at the west end 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 contact the trip leader.

Meetings are held at the Robert A. Lee Recreation Center, Room A, 220 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, generally at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

April 19, Tuesday, 7 p.m. Beginning Birder Course at Kent Park CEC: “Backyard and Feeder Birds” by James Scheib. Free to members. Call Sydney Algreen at 645-1011 to register. See page 8 for more information.

April 21, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting at Kent Park Conservation Education Center. Linda and Robert Scarth will present “Into the Pantanal: The World’s Largest Seasonal Wetland.”

April 22, Friday, 7:15 p.m. Night Sounds Field Trip to listen for American Woodcocks, frogs, owls, and other night sounds. Meet at the Waterworks Prairie Park parking lot off Dubuque St. Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

April 23, Saturday, 7 a.m. Otter Creek Marsh for rails, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and other marsh birds. Meet in the NE parking lot at Coral Ridge Mall (near the former Sears store). Bring boots for wet walking. Sharon Somers, 400-3959 and Linda Quinn, 330-3328.

April 24, Sunday, 8 a.m. Macbride Nature-Recreation Area. Visit the Raptor Center and bird blind, and hike the nearby trails. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.*

April 26, 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 Sydney Algreen at 645-1011 to register.

April 28-May 25, Weekdays, 6:30 a.m. Hickory Hill Park Warbler Walks. Meet at the parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane. Daily sightings will be posted on our web site. Co-sponsored by the Bur Oak Land Trust.

April 30, Saturday, 8 a.m. Terry Trueblood Recreation Area and Waterworks Prairie Park. Meet at the Waterworks Prairie Park parking lot off Dubuque St. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.*

May 3, 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 4, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk. Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

May 7, Saturday. Spring Migration Count. We will bird in teams to count as many birds as possible throughout Johnson County. To participate in this fun event, call Chris Caster at 936-0120.

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May 8, Sunday, 8 a.m. Hickory Hill Park for warblers and other spring migrants. Meet at the north parking lot at the end of Conklin Lane, off Dodge Street. *BEGINNING BIRDER TRIP.*

May 18, Wednesday, 8 a.m. Kent Park Bird Walk. Meet at the Kent Park CEC. Rick Hollis, 665-3141.

May 19, Thursday, 7 p.m. Meeting. Dick Sayles will present “Birds and Culture of Cuba.”

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

June 12, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Linn County Areas for summer breeding residents. Karen Disbrow, 430-0315.

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

June 25, 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.

June 25, 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.

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

July 16, 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.

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

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

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

August 21, Sunday, 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 a spotting scope and boots if you have them. Chris Caster, 936-0120.

Other Dates of Note

April 30, Saturday, Iowa Ornithologists’ Union Field Trip to Shimek State Forest and Lacey-Keosauqua State Park for spring migrants and breeding birds. There will be two sessions, starting at 6 a.m. and 10 a.m., with each session meeting at Casey’s General Store in Donnellson. For more information contact IOU Events Committee Chair Eric Ollie at uphawkeye@gmail.com.

May 1, Sunday, 1 - 4 p.m. Open House Fundraiser at Bickett-Rate Memorial Preserve, site of the Althea Sherman Chimney Swift Tower. Free-will offering, hosted by The Songbird Project. The preserve is located west of Tipton in Cedar County; from CR X40/Garfield Ave., drive W on 225th St. then S on Walters Ave. to its end.

May 7, Saturday, 7 a.m. - Noon. Spring Bird Festival at Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge in Louisa County. Activities include bird banding demonstrations, guided bird hikes, kids activities, and a raptor program. For details contact Jessica Bolser at 523-6982 or visit www.fws.gov/nwrs/threecolumn.aspx?id=2147571280.

May 7, Saturday, 9 a.m. – Noon. Iowa Young Birders field trip to Squaw Creek Park in Marion. To register, visit www.iowayoungbirders.org.

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May 7, Saturday, Spring Warbler Count at Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids. Camping is available on-site. Contact Rob Davis with questions or if you plan to attend, (712) 684-2697 ext. 114.

May 13-15, Friday-Sunday, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting in Ames, which is close to many great birding hotspots including Ledges State Park, Brookside Park, Colo Bogs, Hendrickson Marsh, Saylorville Reservoir, and Harrier Marsh. Keynote speaker Mary Gustafson of Texas will talk about bird conservation initiatives in Mexico. Visit www.iowabirds.org for more information.

May 21, Saturday, Lucas County Big Day of Birding. See page 4 for more information.

June 3-5, Friday-Sunday, Loess Hills Prairie Seminar: Celebrating Forty Years of Nature in Western Iowa. Includes Saturday and Sunday field sessions and evening programs. For more information visit www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/educators/loess_hills_prairie_seminar/.

July 2, Saturday, Purple Martin Field Day at Casey's in Hills. Hosted by Jim Walters and The Songbird Project. For the starting time and other details, check our website prior to the event.

August 26-28, Friday-Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting in Spencer. Visit www.iowabirds.org for more information.

From the President's Desk

Karen Disbrow

It is a joy to hear the spring birds and see flowers amid the green yards. Although winter and cold temperatures seemed to linger on this year, ducks and geese migrated through very early and I for one managed to arrive at Cone Marsh a day late to see Snow Geese. Now that we have turned the corner to spring, there are many upcoming field trips and activities scheduled to observe the spring migration of songbirds, both locally and around the state.

Our Hickory Hill Park Warbler Walks will start on Thursday, April 28. The park is a great place to see migrant warblers and other songbirds, and the walks are a great chance to learn about these challenging birds with experienced leaders. Other groups have events planned in May that you may want to attend – see the “Other Dates of Note” portion of our schedule.

Our birding course has been a success again this year with 10 - 12 people attending, so you may see many new faces on field trips this year. Thanks to Johnson County Conservation for hosting our course at the Conservation Education Center.

Thanks to Lench & Cilek Ace Hardware on N. Dodge Street and Forever Green Garden Center on Forevergreen Road for offering a 10% discount on regularly priced birdseed and suet for our members. Thanks also to the Robert A. Lee Recreation Center for hosting our regular meetings.

As always, get out wherever you may be to enjoy the birds!

Membership Renewal Reminder

If you haven't renewed your membership dues for 2016, please do so now. Our annual membership dues remain \$15 per household or \$10 for students. Your mailing label shows the most recent year you have paid for. Please complete the membership renewal form on the inside back cover and send it with your check payable to “Eastern Iowa Birdwatch” to 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.

Kent Park MAPS Site Volunteer Assistance Sought

Rob Bradley and Mark Bowman, in collaboration with Johnson County Conservation, are seeking volunteer assistance in support of a MAPS bird banding project at Kent Park. The Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) Program uses a standardized bird banding protocol to generate data complementary to that of the breeding bird atlas. MAPS banding is promoted and supported by the Institute for Bird Populations and endorsed by such agencies as Partners in Flight, the USDA Forest Service, the USFWS, and the American Bird Conservancy.

In the spring and summer of 2016, we will band on the following Tuesdays, weather permitting: May 31, June 14, June 21, July 5, July 12, July 26, and August 2. On these dates we will set up ten mist nets and band for six hours beginning at dawn. When rain or wind prevents banding, we will default to the following Wednesday or Thursday.

How you can help

- Sew bird bags
- Record data (scribe)*
- Open mist nets (sunrise)*
- Clear mist net lanes of weeds
- Close mist nets (noon)*
- Extract birds from mist nets*
- Transport birds from mist nets to the banding bench
- Return fledglings to the site of capture
- Take photographs
- Make observations of breeding status-related behaviors (similar to Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas observations)**

*Orientation/training will be provided prior to the first MAPS morning. (Multiple days of training are needed to extract birds.)

**Skilled observer preferred (e.g., long-time birder or prior breeding bird atlas experience).

Benefits of team membership

- Contribute to bird conservation research
- Help Johnson County Conservation increase awareness of Kent Park's bird life
- Learn gentle bird grips and experience the in-hand beauty of Iowa's breeding birds
- Immerse oneself in the off-trail beauty of Kent Park
- Observe how in-hand identification, aging and sexing is accomplished
- If able to gain proficiency, experience the challenges and gratification of mist net extraction

If interested, please contact Mark Bowman at biophilist1@gmail.com or (641) 840-0351.

– Mark Bowman

Lucas County Big Day of Birding

Iowa Audubon has joined with Tourism Lucas County, Iowa DNR, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and others to create “ecotourism destination” status for Lucas County, focusing upon birds. With diverse forest, grassland, riverine wetland, and agricultural habitats, Lucas County is home to a great variety of birdlife, including wonderful places for neotropical migrants. Notable bird habitats include Stephens State Forest, Red Haw State Park and the Chariton River corridor. Two major portions of Stephens Forest and surrounding private lands have been jointly designated as Bird Conservation Areas and Important Bird Areas by Iowa DNR and Iowa Audubon.

On Saturday, May 21, a “Big Day of Birding” (BDB) will survey Lucas County, including several farms to be opened by their owners only for this special event. A major purpose is to try increasing the county's already extensive species list. Five volunteer teams, led by some top Iowa birders, will each be assigned a portion of the county to record all observed species.

Teams will all be provided with a van and driver, so that birders can just concentrate on birding. BDB team sizes will be limited by number and sizes of vans, so volunteers for the day must contact event coordinator Doug Harr (iowaaudubon@gmail.com) by May 7, in order to sign up and receive further information.

Besides finding all bird species possible, the field trips are aimed at helping new or less-experienced birders learn identification. Each team member will be given a special Big Day of Birding t-shirt plus snacks and beverages for the day. Pin Oak Nature Center, south of Chariton, will serve as event headquarters. A goal of this BDB is to provide advance information about Lucas County's birds, with plans to initiate a new birding festival in 2017, to be publicized across Iowa and nationwide.

– Doug Harr

Friends of Johnson County Conservation Field Trip

Friends of Johnson County Conservation (FJCC) is a 501(c)3 tax-deductible organization whose mission is to support the educational and conservation functions of the Johnson County Conservation Board. Membership levels are: Student \$5, Individual \$12, Family \$20, Supporter \$50, Sustainer \$100, and Benefactor \$250.

As a benefit of membership, a guided tour of Johnson County Conservation's new Pechman Creek Delta property is being provided to FJCC members by Conservation Director Larry Gullet on May 28. This is a chance to explore this beautiful area located south of Iowa City along the Iowa River.

As the organization grows, plans include having a number of public events each year and some members-only events. The first public event is a Johnson County Conservation photo contest which will be announced in the next Johnson

County Conservation newsletter. For more information contact Rick Hollis at: Johnson.Co.Cons.Friends@gmail.com.

– Rick Hollis

Volunteer Needed for Herbert Hoover Breeding Bird Survey

Several years ago, I began doing annual breeding bird surveys at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site in West Branch. Throughout the years I've had great help from Jim Fuller, Bill Scheible, Dave Kyllingstad, and Bruce Gardner. However I'm no longer able to conduct these surveys, and 2015 was my last. The survey has provided meaningful breeding bird data to the park staff, and they would like to continue the surveys. I'm looking for a volunteer (or volunteers) to do the survey this year. The protocol used will require some training which I am happy to provide. Completion of the survey will take somewhere around three hours. If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer, please contact me at lowderman@aol.com. Or contact Byrony Forbes at the HHNHS directly at (319) 643-7852 or byrony_forbes@nps.gov. Thank you.

– Ken Lowder

Macbride Raptor Project Family Events

The Macbride Raptor Project will host a new family-friendly event the first Saturday of every month from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event, at 2095 Mehaffey Bridge Road NE, Solon, is free and open to the public. The Raptor's Nest (MRP educational center) will be open with staff and volunteers available to answer questions about the project and/or raptors. Snacks and crafts will also be provided for families. A different raptor will be featured each month. March's featured raptor was Aura, the Turkey Vulture, to honor the return of Turkey Vultures in the area.

2015 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards and Diana Pesek

The 65th annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 20. The count area is a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Hwy. 965 and Penn Street in North Liberty. The total of 70 species exceeded the ten-year average of 67. The all-time high count of 81 species was set in 2012. Weather conditions were pleasant, with temperatures of 37-51° F and moderate S winds. Skies were clear in the morning and partly cloudy in the afternoon. Area rivers and streams were open, the Coralville Reservoir and other bodies of water were ice-free, and there was no snow cover.

Highlights

Six rare species (for the count) were seen this year: Greater White-fronted Goose (third all-time record), Trumpeter Swan (fourth all-time record), Red-breasted Merganser (fourth all-time record), Redhead (fifth all-time record), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (fifth all-time record), and Harris's Sparrow (eighth all-time record). Uncommon species (not seen in most years) were Gadwall, American Black Duck, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, American Coot, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Species seen in numbers significantly *above* the ten-year average were Trumpeter Swan (all-time high), Gadwall (ten-year high), Canvasback (all-time high), Redhead (all-time high), Ring-necked Duck (ten-year high), Lesser Scaup, Common Merganser, Ring-billed Gull (ten-year high), Eastern Bluebird, European Starling (ten-year high), White-crowned Sparrow, Common Grackle, House Finch, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

Species seen in numbers significantly *below* the ten-year average were Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Harrier, Mourning Dove (ten-year low), Northern Flicker, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow (ten-year low), Dark-eyed Junco (ten-year low), Northern Cardinal (ten-year low), and Pine Siskin.

Common species (seen in most years) missed entirely were Great Blue Heron, Red-headed Woodpecker (second miss in 20 years), Horned Lark (third miss in 20 years), Red-breasted Nuthatch (first miss in 25 years), and Swamp Sparrow.

Species not seen on the count but seen during the count week were Common Loon and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Some Interesting Trends

Red-headed Woodpecker counts have always fluctuated widely, but the numbers show a disturbing downward trend. Going backwards, the annual averages on the count for the last four decades are 8, 16, 20, and 47.

Northern Shrike, a winter visitor to our area that breeds in northern Canada and Alaska, is being seen much more regularly. It has been found 8 times in the last 10 years; in the prior 55 years it was seen about 3 times per decade.

Yellow-rumped Warbler, which winters to our south, has shown a more pronounced increase. The species has been found in 8 of the last 11 years; prior to that it was recorded only 3 times in 54 years.

In the last decade, nine species have been seen on the count for the first time. Five of these have already been seen more than once, and are likely to occur again: Ross's Goose, Cackling Goose, Trumpeter Swan, American White Pelican, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. The other four were lingering migrants: Blue-winged Teal, Common Loon, Tree Swallow, and Orange-crowned Warbler.

Count Effort

This year there were 33 field observers in 11 parties. Field observers were Lois Albrecht, Dena Belcher, Kyle Belcher, Mark Brown, Russell Brown, Barry Buschelman, Chris Caster, Brandon Caswell, Bob Dick, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Peter Hansen, Rick Hollis, Andy Long, KT Long, Nancy Lynch, Jamie McCoy, Jason McCurdy, Mary Noble, Jason Paulios, Diana Pesek, Linda Quinn, Mark Rolfes, Deb Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, Jim Scheib, Joan Schnabel, Sharon Somers, Donna Warner, David Weiss, and Patrick Weiss. There were 6 feeder watchers in 5 locations, continuing a downward trend in recent years. Feeder watchers were Barbara Beaumont, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Janet Hollis, and Aurelia Moreton-Gotwals. Thanks to everyone who participated.

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 66 species. We met for an evening meal and compilation at The Brown Bottle Café in North Liberty. We collected \$91 in donations for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count program.

Nationally, this year marked the 116th 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, through a cooperative project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Here's a challenge for next year: let's improve our count effort in two areas, owling and feeder watching. Our owl totals have declined in the last several years, and additional early-morning owling efforts could help determine if owl populations have actually declined in our area, or if we just haven't been out in the field early enough to detect them. And our feeder watcher group has declined by almost 80% in the past ten years – if you know anyone who feeds birds within the count circle, please try to recruit them as a feeder watcher next year!

SPECIES LIST

Greater White-fronted Goose	2	American Kestrel	22	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
Cackling Goose	12	American Coot	3	Eastern Bluebird	46
Canada Goose	2274	Ring-billed Gull	1187	American Robin	25
Trumpeter Swan	8	Herring Gull	1	European Starling	1157
Gadwall	57	Rock Pigeon	320	Cedar Waxwing	199
American Black Duck	1	Eurasian Collared-Dove	7	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Mallard	842	Mourning Dove	52	American Tree Sparrow	109
Northern Shoveler	4	Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Fox Sparrow	1
Canvasback	45	Great Horned Owl	3	Song Sparrow	12
Redhead	40	Barred Owl	2	White-throated Sparrow	19
Ring-necked Duck	42	Belted Kingfisher	1	Harris's Sparrow	2
Lesser Scaup	76	Red-bellied Woodpecker	57	White-crowned Sparrow	16
Common Goldeneye	5	Downy Woodpecker	74	Dark-eyed Junco	228
Common Merganser	59	Hairy Woodpecker	13	Northern Cardinal	156
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Northern Flicker	9	Red-winged Blackbird	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	Pileated Woodpecker	2	Common Grackle	17
Wild Turkey	36	Northern Shrike	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Bald Eagle	74	Shrike sp.	1	Purple Finch	9
Northern Harrier	1	Blue Jay	69	House Finch	179
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	American Crow	731	Pine Siskin	1
Cooper's Hawk	3	Black-capped Chickadee	148	American Goldfinch	87
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	2	Tufted Titmouse	27	House Sparrow	652
Red-tailed Hawk	46	White-breasted Nuthatch	73	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	42
Rough-legged Hawk	3	Brown Creeper	4	TOTAL SPECIES	70
<i>Buteo</i> sp.	1	Carolina Wren	2	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	9,409



Introduction to Birding Course March 29 – May 8, 2016 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 at the west end of the parking lot. For more information, call Karen Disbrow at (319) 430-0315.

Tuesday, March 29, 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.

Saturday, April 2, 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, April 5, 7 p.m. BASICS OF BIRDING II by Rick Hollis. Continuation of first session topics.

Sunday, April 10, 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 12, 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 16, 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 19, 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 24, 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 26, 7 p.m. BIRDS OF TERRY TRUEBLOOD AND WATERWORKS PARK IN IOWA CITY by Jim Scheib. Learn the variety of birds that are found throughout the year at these nearby parks.

Saturday, April 30, 8 a.m. Field Trip to TERRY TRUEBLOOD and WATERWORKS PARK. Visit these two Iowa City parks with great trails for woodland, prairie, and wetland species.

Tuesday, May 3, 7 p.m. WARBLER IDENTIFICATION & REVIEW by Karen Disbrow. Warblers are among our most colorful birds. Compare and contrast similar species within this interesting and challenging group.

Sunday, May 8, 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.

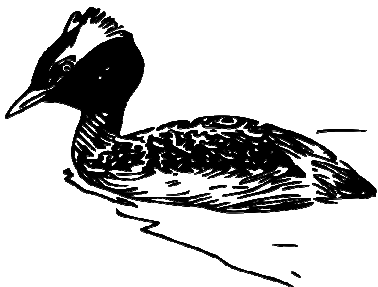
Books for Birders

Jason Paulios

A Sugar Creek Chronicle: Observing Climate Change From a Midwestern Woodland. Cornelia F. Mutel. University of Iowa Press, 2016. 240 pages. Paperback. \$16.00. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

The latest in the Bur Oak Books series from the University of Iowa Press is Cornelia Mutel's account on climate change as seen from the mixed oak woodlands in rural Johnson County, Iowa. The book is cleverly structured to follow the four seasons during the year 2012, each season featuring daily journal entries detailing weather and climate notes interspersed with notable updates on various woodland species in the acreage alongside Iowa natural history. Paired with the day-to-day of 2012 country living are complimenting memoir sections detailing growing up in Madison, her mother's early death, and parenthood in Iowa City.

Her writing is organized and passionate, her love of the natural world is infectious and I often found myself considering putting down the book to wander a nearby nature trail. Throughout all the meditative trail walking anecdotes filled with chipmunk scurrying and spring ephemeral blooming are sobering climate science facts and how they are impacting all these things we care about. Her research is presented in small digestible amounts and her teaching background is evident in the way in which she breaks down complicated earth science processes. A book for all Iowa City Bird Club nature lovers.



Literature Droppings

Rick Hollis

Differential Regional Movements in Hatch-year and Adult Blackpoll Warblers

In a fascinating paper published in *Biology Letters* last year, J. Morgan Brown and Phillip D. Taylor studied post-hatch dispersal in Blackpoll Warblers. They put tiny transmitters on 10 adult and 14 hatch-year birds on their breeding grounds in SW Nova Scotia. Excepting the one adult and three hatch-year birds that died before leaving, all birds were tracked up to ca. 500 km each. Adult birds crossed the Gulf of Maine and tended to move south along the New England coast, with 66% being detected as far south as Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Hatch-year birds on the other hand tended to travel circular, less direct routes. This suggests that adults have learned how to migrate and that hatch-year birds are still learning. Very few studies of this type have been done.

Persistent Impacts of West Nile Virus on North American Bird Populations

Based on personal observations, I noticed a regional drop in Blue Jay populations as West Nile Virus (WNV) went through in the early years of this century. A few years later their population seemed to have recovered. Others noticed an increase in American Crow deaths, although I personally did not notice an effect on local populations.

In a multi-authored paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, annual survival rates were examined over time for the years that WNV passed through and the years after. All species were classified as to whether there was No Effect, a Transient Effect, or a Persistent Effect. The study is based on mark-recapture data for 49 species collected at 500 banding stations. Two major patterns were observed. Some species showed a major decline in survival, followed by recovery to pre-WNV levels. Field Sparrows, Downy Woodpeckers, and Red-eyed Vireos

exhibited this pattern. Other species exhibited lower survival rates as WNV passed through and survival rates never recovered during the course of this study. Swainson's Thrush, Purple Finch, and Tufted Titmouse fell into this category. For Red-eye Vireos a 29% decline was observed suggesting that perhaps 30 million Red-eyed Vireos died as result of WNV. While Red-eyed Vireos are recovering, Warbling Vireos had a small decline as WNV went through, but have yet to recover. Nearly 1/3 of the Warbling Vireos in the US may have died due to WNV.

In summary, the authors looked at nine families and two other species. The chart below summarizes their results. Groups in bold are groups for which the majority of species show some effect coinciding with WNV passage.

A Supergene Determines Highly Divergent Male Reproductive Morphs in the Ruff

I am not going to talk about supergenes, but this paper in *Nature Genetics* (an advance online copy) caught my eye and led me to learning more about Ruff biology. I have always wanted to see a Ruff, or better yet a lek of breeding Ruffs. Ruff males display a variety of fantastic puffery, such that individual birds can often be recognized. Female Ruffs (formerly called Reeves) visit the lek and choose with whom

they will mate, often mating with more than one male. What I did not know was that there are three kinds of males. *Independents* are aggressive, defend territories at the lek, and feature 'hypervariable' plumages in mostly dark colors. Scattered about the *Independents* are *Satellite* males with white ornamentations. They compete with the *Independents* for mating. *Independents* weigh more and have longer bills, wings, legs and tails. Both *Independents* and *Satellites* are larger than females. Lek breeding would be confusing enough if it stopped there, but it does not. There is a third kind of male, *Faeder*, which are the size and coloration of females. *Faeder*s hang around displaying *Independents* and try to sneak a mating in now and again.

How is such a complicated system maintained? The authors worked with a captive population of Ruffs in British Columbia. They checked a number of physiologic and behavioral traits in the three kinds of males. I was surprised to learn that *Independents* have the smallest testes of the three types of males. The genetics are much more complicated than I feel like writing about, but if you are really interested, I have the paper.

Here are several photos:

<http://www.arkive.org/ruff/philomachus-pugnax/image-G142589.html>

Group	Species Total	None	WNV Effects		Some Effect	Percent Effect	
			Persistent	Temporary		Some Effect	No Effect
Thrushes	5	2	3	0	3	60%	40%
New World Warblers	12	4	6	2	8	67%	33%
Finches	2	0	2	0	2	100%	0%
Vireos	3	0	1	2	3	100%	0%
Flycatchers	6	4	1	1	2	33%	67%
Wrens	3	1	1	1	2	67%	33%
titmice	3	1	2	0	2	67%	33%
New World Sparrow	9	2	2	5	7	78%	22%
Cardinals	4	2	1	1	2	50%	50%
Other 1	1	1	0	0	0	0%	100%
Other 2	1	0	0	1	1	100%	0%
All	49	17	19	13	32	65%	35%

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

January 10, Bird feeder Watch Social. With temperatures hovering below zero outdoors, it was most comfortable indoors for the 23 Iowa City Bird Club members who participated in the annual feeder watch and social hosted by Jim and Karole Fuller. Highlights were the 26 species of birds that appeared presumably to watch the indoor birders consume coffee and breakfast treats. Highlights of the avian group were Sharp-shinned Hawk, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Northern Flicker, and White-throated and American Tree Sparrows, plus the two species that visited shortly after the formal conclusion, Song Sparrow and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Thanks to all who participated, and to those who provided those tasty goodies and mixed the mimosas.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Martha Eckey, Linda Fisher, Jim and Karole Fuller, Therese Guedon, Peter and Katie Hansen, Barbara Haring, James Huntington, Doina Johnson, Josh Karp, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Seth and Jaeda Petchers, Linda Quinn, Robert and Linda Scarth, Jim Scheib, Sharon Somers.

Birds (26 Species): Mallard, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, House Sparrow.

– Jim and Karole Fuller

January 21, Meeting. Tom Hazelton, President of the Iowa Counties Conservation

Board, gave a marvelous presentation on “The History of County Conservation Boards in Iowa; When & How County Parks Were Started.”

In 1943 the State Conservation Commission was formed, and in 1955 it became the Iowa Counties Conservation Board. Today all of Iowa’s 99 counties have county parks, and most have nature centers or conservation education centers. There are also seventeen state parks that are managed by county conservation boards. We have many great parks and natural areas in Johnson County, but be sure to get out and explore the other 98 counties as well.

During the business portion, a motion was passed to reimburse Bruce Gardner for his procurement of a digital projector and microphone system for the club. The acoustics in our new meeting location are not optimal, necessitating use of the microphone. Thanks to Bruce for researching these items and finding models that fit our needs.

Attendees: Barry Buschelman, Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, Bruce Gardner, Peter Hansen, Linda Quinn, Bob and Linda Scarth, Angela Schneider, Marcia Shaffer, Donna Warner, Kelsey Willardson.

– Karen Disbrow

January 24, Coralville WinterFest. This was the first of three festivals in which we participated this winter. We saw Canada Geese and Mallards flying along the Iowa River, but the best treat was a pair of Bald Eagles building a nest just feet away from the walkway. Thanks to Barry Buschelman, Bruce Gardner, and Ramona McGurk for helping hand out information to festival-goers.

– Karen Disbrow

February 6, Bald Eagle Watch and Expo. About 200 people attended the expo, and 300 or more stopped at the Coralville Dam Tailwater West to observe eagles. Linda and Robert Scarth gave a presentation on eagles, raptors & owls. Mike Havlik brought his Barred Owl to

teach visitors about not throwing food along roadsides – it draws rodents which in turn attract owls into the paths of vehicles. Many exhibitors came with activities for kids and information on state, county, and local groups. Thanks to Bruce Gardner, Barry Buschelman, Ben Rowold, Linda Quinn, and Donna Warner for helping, and special thanks to Doug Harr for emceeding the event while I was ill.

– *Karen Disbrow*

February 18, Meeting. Former ICBC member Mark Bowman from Grinnell Audubon Society presented “A Bird in the Hand: Observations of Intimate Beauty & Unexpected Bird Behavior When Banding.”

Related to Mark’s presentation, please see the note on page 4 regarding volunteer opportunities with the MAPS banding station he and Rob Bowman are operating at Kent Park.

Attendees: Karen Disbrow, Bruce Gardner, Peter Hansen, Jaeda Harmon, Rick Hollis, Doina Johnson, Kristen Lawton, Nancy Lynch, Mark Oxley, Linda Quinn, Bob and Linda Scarth, Joan Schnabel, Sharon Somers, Donna Warner.

February 20, Freeze Fest at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area. This was the second year for this community event. Thanks to Rick Hollis, Bruce Gardner, and Linda Fisher for helping with spotting scopes on the patio while I manned the displays. A swan, Canada Geese, Green-winged Teal, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, a Red-tailed Hawk, and up to 20 Bald Eagles were seen.

– *Karen Disbrow*

February 21, Quad Cities. This trip was originally scheduled for February 14, but that morning we were under a winter storm warning and while waiting at Hy-Vee the snow really began to come down. Only Jerry Denning came out for it and we both felt it wasn’t a good day to go, so the two of us agreed to try again the

following Sunday. I apologize to those not aware of the reschedule – that was my fault.

What a difference a week made. It was still pretty cool, but a beautiful day. We started out on the Illinois side north of the I-80 bridge. There was a modest raft of divers in the channel – mostly Canvasbacks and Lesser Scaup, but Ring-necked Ducks, Redheads, and Common Goldeneyes were also present.

Our second stop was Lock and Dam 14 from the Illinois side where we found single adult Mute and Trumpeter Swans keeping each other company as a small group of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls roosted nearby on the ice. L & D 14 from the Iowa side had more gulls roosting on the ice. There was construction going on though and we weren’t able to approach the larger roost from as close as usual. We were able to spot an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull in the group though. A couple of pelicans were on the river below the dam. Most exciting were the group of 18 Tundra Swans that flew over heading north. They were calling constantly, as was a Killdeer flyover.

After something to eat at McDonalds in Bettendorf, we visited L & D 15. There were probably more Rock Pigeons on the dam than gulls, nearly all of which were Herring. Credit Island produced our first Common Mergansers and a Great Blue Heron. There were small groups of gulls on the ice west of the island, but nothing new. We spent some time watching the birds at the Audubon Society feeding station. Before leaving Credit Island we found a group of Ring-billed Gulls with one interesting looking bird. It looked similar to the other first-winter birds, but with a nearly all-black bill. We spent a lot of time stalking this bird thinking that perhaps it was a Laughing Gull, but when the group finally took to the air we saw that the upper-wing pattern was very Ring-billed.

The hemlocks at Fairmont Cemetery were pretty quiet. The number of Eurasian Tree Sparrows at the upper entrance continues to increase over

what I remember. Pine Siskins, American Goldfinches and House Finches dominated the feeding station down the lane.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Jerry Denning.

Birds (38 species): Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Mallard, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, American White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Chris Caster*

March 12, Burlington Area. We met our host Chuck Fuller at the Port of Burlington to start a great day of birding. It was overcast and chilly with temperatures ranging from 37° to 54° F. We started with a Peregrine Falcon perched on the rail at the top of arch. We next went to Crapo Park, where a run was gearing up. We made our way to the stormwater walkway, which was under construction. We had to work hard for the birds there, and ended up making three stops at different spots of the walkway during the day to find birds. The Carolina Wren cooperated at the first stop, but the Winter Wrens did not appear until the last stop. We also found a Hermit Thrush that Chuck thought overwintered in that protected area.

We had to really work for our ducks. The rafts were in the widest portion of the Mississippi River and were too far out to be identified with scopes. We saw a flock of 25 Greater White-fronted Geese fly in at Green Bay Bottoms, but

the Snow Geese had already passed through. Overall it was a great day of birding.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow (leader).

Birds (63 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

March 19, Cone Marsh. Fourteen participants had a wonderful trip to Cone Marsh in Louisa County. We had a cool, partly cloudy and almost windless morning which made scoping easier than usual. In all we tallied 49 species and we had a wonderful experience with Snow and Greater White-fronted Geese. We were at the caboose corner when several large flocks of geese returned to the marsh from feeding in the corn fields. Skein after skein, estimated at 1,500 geese, flew right over our heads and then we watched them settle in the marsh.

There were several other highlights. We listened to a Western Meadowlark on one side of the car and an Eastern Meadowlark on the other side of the car singing back and forth. We had good scope views of Wilson's Snipe, and this was a life bird for several participants. A female Northern Harrier flew right by us several times. We saw early Eastern Phoebes and Tree Swallows. We saw several groups of Sandhill Cranes flying, landing, and feeding, and heard them calling almost the entire time we were at the marsh.

Participants: Jerry Denning, Lynne Doxie, Therese Guedon, Peter Hansen, Jaeda Harmon, Pat Kieffer, Kate Kostenbader, Ted Lepic, Linda McHard, Seth Petchers, Gerry Peterson, Linda Quinn, Linda Rudolph (leader), Walt Wagner-Hecht.

Birds (49 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, American Robin, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– Linda Rudolph

March 24, Meeting. Ken Lowder and James Huntington each presented slide shows about their birding trips to Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Ken traveled to Bhutan in March and April of 2015, and James visited at

the same time of year in 2014. They both traveled with organized birding tours with about a dozen participants.

Bhutan is a small land-locked country in south Asia at the eastern end of the Himalayas, lying between China and India. It is about the same size as Indiana, with a population of 770,000. It is a constitutional monarchy and is predominantly Buddhist. The farsighted fourth King of Bhutan carefully opened the country to the outside world, allowing some tourism, but all visitors must be accompanied by a Bhutanese guide. The national language is Dzongkha, of Tibetan origin, and English is widely taught in schools. Bhutan's landscape ranges from subtropical plains in the south to subalpine Himalayan mountains in the north, where some peaks exceed 23,000 feet. According to Ken, Buddhists have a strong respect for the natural world, and possibly as a result of these beliefs, much of the landscape is heavily forested and still remains in a natural state.

One major east-west road traverses the country, and most of the birding was done along this road. The frequent truck traffic on the road proved to be a challenge while birding. Both Ken and James spent several days camping during their three-week visits, and Ken remarked that this experience was somewhat like an English safari, sleeping in tents and stopping for tea at the same time each day.

Ken and James both presented slides of Bhutan's stunning birdlife. These included Asian Emerald Cuckoo, Eurasian Hoopoe, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Beautiful Nuthatch, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Blood Pheasant, Himalayan Monal, Satyr Tragopan, Spotted Laughing-Thrush, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Pallas' Fish Eagle, Snow Pigeon, Ward's Trogon, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Gold-billed Magpie, White-capped Redstart, and many others. Ken said Mrs. Gould's Sunbird was quite possibly the most beautiful bird he's seen in his life (Google this species and you'll see why). James' favorite was the Fire-tailed

Myzornis, a stunning green and red bird. A target bird for both groups was the Wallcreeper, a monotypic species (which means it is the only species in its bird family). Another fascinating monotypic species was the Ibisbill, a forager in fast-moving mountain streams. On his trip, James saw over 200 life birds in Bhutan.

Aside from the birdlife, both Ken and James noted the spectacularly beautiful mountainous scenery, which was dotted with centuries-old monasteries and dzongs (fortresses). James hiked to the Tiger’s Nest, a sacred Buddhist monastery built in 1692. One common sight throughout Bhutan, especially along ridges and mountain passes, were groups of prayer flags – colorful flags used to bless the surrounding countryside.

Thanks to James and Ken for giving us a look at this fascinating country.

During the business portion of the meeting, a motion was approved to contribute up to \$75 towards face-painting for children at the upcoming Turkey Vulture Festival. Karen

discussed the City of Iowa City’s improvement plan for Hickory Hill Park.

Attendees: Ed and Jean Allgood, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Linda Fisher, Therese Guedon, Peter Hansen, James Huntington, Khris Lawton, Ken Lowder, Nancy Lynch, Mark Oxley, Linda Quinn, Tom and Carol Rosenberger, Linda Rudolph, Jim Scheib, Bill Scheible, Doug and Sharon Somers, Donna Warner.

– Chris Edwards



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

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