

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 16 Number 1

Spring 1996

Calendar

Field trips, unless otherwise noted, leave from Terrill Mill Park, located across N. Dubuque Street from the Mayflower. **Meetings** are generally held at 7:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month at Lucas Elementary School, 830 Southlawn Drive, near Towncrest in eastern Iowa City.

April 18, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting: Spring Wildflowers. Jim and Karole Fuller, 338-3561.

April 20, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Sutliff Wetlands. John McLure, 351-9121. Meet at Holiday Foods on Dubuque Street in North Liberty. We will go to a wetland area near Sutliff. Wear boots.

May 4, Saturday, 6:00 a.m. Fullers' Woods. Jim Fuller, 338-3561. Experience spring migration at this Cedar County woodland.

May 11, Saturday. Spring Bird Count. Rick Hollis, 338-4834. See Bird Club News on page 2 for more information.

June 2, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Frytown Conservation Area. Barbara Beaumont, 626-6227. Meet at Terrill Mill Park at 7:00 a.m. or at Frytown at 7:30 a.m.

June 16, Sunday, 6:00 a.m. Beams' Woods near Stone City. Chris Edwards, 626-6362. Explore this private nature preserve for woodland nesters such as Acadian Flycatcher, Veery, Scarlet Tanager, and Kentucky Warbler.

Other Dates of Note

April 13, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Cedar Rapids Audubon, Otter Creek Marsh. Waterfowl, hawks, eagles, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and possibly Sandhill Cranes. Meet at the Coe College Swimming Pool Parking Lot, on the west side of 13th Street between C and D Avenues NE.

April 14, Sunday. IOU, Southwest Iowa. Babs and Loren Padelford. Look for migrating shorebirds and early arriving passerines. Call Carol Thompson for details, 338-5361.

April 20, Saturday, Cedar Rapids Audubon, Earth Day Field Trip. Annual cleanup of Cedar Lake. Meet Dale Fye at the H Avenue parking lot, and bring shovels, rakes, bags, wheelbarrows, gloves, etc.

Calendar (cont.)

April 27, Saturday. IOU, Sweet Marsh. Francis Moore. Explore one of northeast Iowa's best birding locations. Call Carol Thompson for details, 338-5361.

May 4, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Cedar Rapids Audubon, Squaw Creek Park. Pete Wickham. Meet at the Squaw Creek Park lodge.

May 17-19. IOU Spring Meeting in Burlington. Call Carol Thompson for details, 338-5361.

county, that county may be participating and your counts may help them. The identities of all county coordinators is not yet known, but Carol Thompson (338-5361) will likely be doing Cedar County again. As with Christmas Counts, our data will be compiled and reported both state- and nationwide. Unlike Christmas Counts, there is no fee to participate. We do not have a recording form, but you may call your results in to Rick Hollis (338-4834). If you have any questions, call him and he will be happy to try to answer them. All participants are welcome!

Field Trip Reports

February 10, Amana Turkey Walk and Feast. This year was the 20th anniversary of the first Amana Turkey Walk first held on January 29, 1977. And, as in most years, the bird observers outnumbered the observed bird species. In recent years, we have had better luck finding Northern Saw-whet Owls than Wild Turkeys. Two cooperative owls were studied at their regular haunts in cedar trees around the Homestead Ice Pond area in the Amana Colonies. Many Wild Turkey tracks were seen in the snow but no birds. We also visited the cemetery in East Amana.

People (20): Barbara Beaumont, Carl Bendorf (leader), John Cranston, Mary Cranston, Jonni Ellsworth, Julie Englander, Jim & Karole Fuller,

Bird Club News

Rick Hollis is the new President of the Iowa City Bird Club. He succeeds **Ed Allgood**, who has been pardoned after three years on the job.

Rick has turned over the editorial reins of the newsletter to **Chris Edwards**, who is wondering what he got himself into.

We will again be taking part in the **National Spring Bird Count**. This year the day is Saturday, May 11. The rules are like Christmas Counts -- midnight to midnight, within a single county (instead of a circle), and count all the birds you see. Keep track of times and distances. If you travel into more than one

Laura Fuller, Amy Fuller Stockman, Randy Graesser, Lanny Haldy, Rick Hollis*, Ramona McGurk, John McLure, Mary Noble, Jim & Sharon Scheib, Carol Thompson, Helen Yoder. (* Winner of pancake eating contest.)

Birds (14 species): Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, European Starling, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch.

March 2, Frytown Conservation Area. The day was sunny, cold, and extremely windy. The wind-chill factor was minus 15 degrees. The birds seemed to be hunkered down out of the wind. The great success of this hike was our invitation to Jim Walters' house for breakfast after the hike. We arrived just as Jim was taking a second batch of the most glorious, melt-in-the-mouth apricot Danish out of the oven. He also served us orange juice, mixed fruit, scrambled eggs with potatoes, and coffee. You will note that the food list is longer than the bird list. Thanks, Jim. We had a wonderful time!

People (6): Barbara Beaumont (leader), Julie Englander, Therese Gue'don, John McLure, Mary Noble, Don Slothower.

Birds (14 species): Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, owl species (flying away too quickly to identify), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Cardinal, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, House Sparrow.

Editor's Notebook

Birding is a good way to mark the passing seasons of the year. Each season has its own special charms and attractions to look forward to. No time of year is more eagerly anticipated by most birders than spring. After a long cold winter, it is exhilarating to see thousands of birds in their bright spring plumages winging their way north for another nesting season.

Although the first Robin may signal that spring is on the way, for me it officially arrives in March when I experience the sights and sounds of thousands of waterfowl settling down on Cone Marsh. The geese sometimes arrive before the ice is out, and the marsh ducks follow soon after. With a little determination and luck it is possible to see over twenty species of waterfowl in a day, and there's always the possibility of finding something exciting like a Cinnamon Teal or Tundra Swan. March is also a good time to see migrating raptors such as Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, and Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks. A late snowstorm may provide an opportunity to see flocks of Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings along the roadsides.

In April as the days grow warmer more birds arrive each week. One of my favorite places to visit during that time is Otter Creek Marsh. Sandhill Cranes, although not easy to see, have nested there for several years. Yellow-headed Blackbirds and tiny Marsh Wrens sing from the cattails. I always consider myself lucky to catch a glimpse of a Virginia Rail sneaking away through the reeds or hear an American Bittern calling from the marsh. I still haven't found that elusive Yellow Rail, although some people claim it exists.

In May the real show begins. The pace of migration gets fast and furious as waves of passerines and shorebirds arrive and depart daily. The woodlands come alive as the trees leaf out and the wildflowers bloom. The songs of orioles, thrushes, tanagers and grosbeaks fill the morning air. Brightly-colored warblers, fresh from the tropics, flit through the trees in search of insects. In the wetlands, flocks of sandpipers stop on the way to their breeding grounds in the far north. Birders arise before dawn for field trips, Big Days, and migration counts.

Then before we know it, most of the migrants have disappeared, and the resident birds get down to the business of nesting.

See you in the field this spring!

1995 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Tom Kent and Carl Bendorf

The 1995 Christmas Bird Count was held on 17 December and yielded 56 species, which ties the second lowest number for the last ten years. It was a pleasant day with temperatures in the upper 20s to low 30s, little wind, and 1 inch of patchy old snow cover. The Iowa River below the dam was open, but the Coralville Reservoir was mostly frozen. The number of participants was down from last year with 25 field observers in 8 parties and 14 feeder watchers at 8 locations. At lunch time we had 52 species. Sixteen gathered at the Mill Restaurant in the evening to conclude the day's activities.

This 45th consecutive Iowa City Christmas Bird Count recorded no new species. Rare species (seen in less than half of the last 10 years, number in parentheses) were Northern Pintail (3), Long-eared Owl (2), Northern Shrike (3), and Yellow-rumped Warbler (2).

Species present in larger than normal numbers (well above the ten-year average) were Canada Goose, American Kestrel, American Crow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Purple Finch.

Prominent misses (birds seen in 5 or more of the last 10 years) were Gadwall (5), Ring-necked Duck (5), Lesser Scaup (6), Common Goldeneye (7), Common Merganser (5), Red-headed Woodpecker (9), Horned Lark (5), Golden-crowned Kinglet (6), Eastern Bluebird (5), and Common Grackle (8). Present in fewer than normal numbers were Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Cedar Waxwing, and Northern Cardinal.

SPECIES LIST

Great Blue Heron (1), Canada Goose (577), American Black Duck (3), Mallard (211), Northern Pintail (1), Bald Eagle (29), Northern Harrier (5), Sharp-shinned Hawk (2), Accipiter species (3), Red-tailed Hawk (70), Rough-legged Hawk (6), American Kestrel (25), Ring-necked Pheasant (25), Wild Turkey (31), Ring-billed Gull (7), Herring Gull (3), Rock Dove (181), Mourning Dove (92), Eastern Screech-Owl (2), Great Horned Owl (8), Barred Owl (8), Long-eared Owl (6), Short-eared Owl (6), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1), Belted Kingfisher (1), Red-bellied Woodpecker (42), Downy Woodpecker (99), Hairy Woodpecker (12), Northern Flicker (13), Blue Jay (147), American Crow (2,282), Black-capped Chickadee (272), Tufted Titmouse (47), Red-breasted Nuthatch (39), White-breasted Nuthatch (73), Brown Creeper (4), Carolina Wren (6), Winter Wren (2), American Robin (10), Cedar Waxwing (73), Northern Shrike (1), European Starling (1,248), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1), Northern Cardinal (193), American Tree Sparrow (700), Song Sparrow (28), Swamp Sparrow (13), White-throated Sparrow (28), White-crowned Sparrow (9), Dark-eyed Junco (605), Red-winged Blackbird (1), Brown-headed Cowbird (70), Purple Finch (23), House Finch (67), Pine Siskin (50), American Goldfinch (121), and House Sparrow (913).

FIELD OBSERVERS

Ed Allgood, Jean Allgood, Carl Bendorf, Chris Caster, Phil Cronin, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Jim Fuller, Bud Gode, Randy Graesser (Amana), Lanny Haldy

(Amana), Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Dick Lynch, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, John McLure, Mary Noble, Eric Satdorf, Jim Scheib, Dick Tetrault, and Carol Thompson.

FEEDER WATCHERS

Clark Cox, Shirley Cox, Anita Frimml, Clem Frimml, Marilou Gay, Rich Gay, Gloria Henry, Sherle Kasik, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Ann Perkins, Terry Perkins, Barbara Putnam, and Sharon Scheib.

Partners in Flight Meeting

Carol Thompson

At our IOU meeting last spring, Lisa Hemaseth, biologist with the Wildlife Diversity Program asked our group to participate in the Partners in Flight effort to identify species of concern and identify management needs. The original intent was, and still is, to form a state planning group that will formulate a state plan. However, before the state group could meet, the Midwest coordinator scheduled a meeting to discuss a regional plan for the southern Great Plains area. Most of Iowa, excluding north-central and extreme north-eastern is considered part of that region. Lisa, Mel Moe (DNR biologist), and I attended that meeting which was held on January 26-27 near Kansas City. (Which means coming home on Friday the 27th. What fun!)

The country has been divided into physiographic regions based on similarities of habitat and expected bird species to facilitate management. The goal of this meeting was to discuss the list of species of conservation concern and identify their habitats. The prioritization scheme is based on global abundance, breeding and non-breeding ranges, threats during both breeding and wintering, population trends, and the importance of the area under consideration for the species. (For a more detailed discussion of the scheme read Hunter et. al, 1992). Scores had been assigned to species for our sub-region (Iowa, northern Missouri, west-central Illinois) prior to the meeting for state consideration. States may have lists that differ in some respects from the regional based on state priorities. Species also may be listed because of a lack of information. There are two methods for presenting scores;

sums which range from 7-35 or ranks which range from 1-5. They are essentially equivalent. The scores are ranked as follows:

- 5 (30-35) Very high priority, continued survival in doubt
- 4 (24-29) High priority, need monitoring and management
- 3 (20-23) Moderate, may need monitoring, management
- 2 (13-19) Low (this may include edge of range species of local interest)
- 1 (7-12) Very low

Species can be of concern in a region as a breeder, a transient (the area is a significant migration pathway), or as wintering.

Habitat subclasses were designated for each of 4 major habitats based on species preferences. Some of these classes may be less important in Iowa; they were developed for the larger region. The list for our region is quite large, because Iowa is at the crossroads of the major habitats having both woodlands and grasslands as a primary landscape component. The importance of grasslands, however, is reflected in that of the 15 species listed as high priority, 8 are grassland species and 4 require wet grasslands, while the rest are either woodlands or shrub species.

Future meetings will attempt to estimate area of habitat needed to support the targeted populations, and identify land use and management practices that can enhance habitat quality. State meetings will be held to further refine the list and discuss problems specific to

Iowa. Comments on the list can be sent to Lisa Hemaseth, Wildlife Research Station, 1436 255th St., Boone, Iowa 50036.

The following information is from Hunter, W. C., M. F. Carter, D. N. Pashley, and

Grasslands: G

Mosaic - mix of height and density classes G-MX
Undisturbed tallgrass (2-5 yrs. old) G-UT
Disturbed tallgrass G-DT
Tallgrass with woody components (shrubs) G-TW
Savanna G-S
Rank annual G-A

Shrub/Brush/Riparian: S

No subclasses

K. Baker. 1992. The Partners in Flight Prioritization Scheme in D. M. Finch and P. W. Stangel (eds.) Status and Management of Neotropical Migratory Birds, USDA Forest Service General Technical Report RM-229.

Wetland Grasslands: W

Disturbed wet meadow W-DM
Undisturbed wet meadow W-UM
Undisturbed emergent wetland W-UE
Disturbed emergent wetland W-DE
Mudflats, beach bars W-M

Woody/Riparian: R

Fencerow R-F
Woodlots R-W
Wooded edge R-E
Upland hardwood R-U
Bottomland floodplain hardwood R-B
Narrow riparian hardwood R-N

Species	Status ¹	Score	Habitats	Comments
Piping Plover	B, D	29	W-M	
Least Tern	B, D	28	W-M	
Henslow's Sparrow	B	26	G-UT	
Dickcissel	B, D	26	G-UT, G-TW, also ag	
Franklin's Gull	B, T, D	26	W-DE, W-UE	
Greater Prairie Chicken	B, D	25	G-MX	
LeConte's Sparrow	T	25	G-UT, G-A, W-UM	
Cerulean Warbler	B, P	25	R-B, R-U	
Short-eared Owl	B, W, D	24	G-MX	
Loggerhead Shrike	B, D	24	G-TW	
Field Sparrow	B, D	24	G-TW, S	
Bobolink	B, D	24	G-UT	
Red-headed Woodpecker	B, D	24	R-W, R-U, R-B, R-N	
Harris's Sparrow	W, T, D	24	S	Uncertain, needs monitoring
Sedge Wren	B, D	24	W-DM, G-UT, W-DE	Monitor, status unclear
Black-billed Cuckoo	B	23	R-U, R-F	
Bell's Vireo	B	23	S	
Chimney Swift	B	23	Urban, R-B	
Grasshopper Sparrow	B, D	22	G-DT	
Am. White Pelican	T	22	Lakes	
Baltimore Oriole	B	22	R-F, R-W, R-B, R-N, R-U	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	B	22	R-W, R-B, R-N, R-F, R-U	
Great-crested Flycatcher	B	22	R-W, R-U, R-B, R-N, R-F	
Least Bittern	B	22	W-DM, W-UE	
Eastern Wood-Pewee	B	21	R-U, R-W, R-B, R-N	
Northern Harrier	B, W, D	20	G-MX	
Whip-poor-will	B	20	R-U	
Gray Catbird	B	20	S	Monitor, status unclear
Orchard Oriole	B, D	20	S, R-F	
Upland Sandpiper	B	20	W-DM, G-M	
Western Meadowlark	B	19	G-DT	Monitor
Eastern Meadowlark	B	19	G-UT	Monitor
Black-crowned Night-Heron	B	19	W-UE, W-DE	

Yellow-breasted Chat	B	18	S
Blue Grosbeak	B, P	15	S
Sharp-tailed Grouse			G-TW
Bald Eagle	B, W		R-B
Rufous-sided Towhee	B		R-W, R-U

¹Status: B=breeder, T=transient, W=wintering, D=populations showing decline, P=peripheral population

Most of the following species, although breeders, are at the edge of their range in Iowa. Most have a ranking of 20-22: Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Kentucky Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-throated Warbler, Whip-poor-will, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, Prothonotary Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Northern Parula, Mourning Warbler, Veery.

These species are on the list of concern for the region, but for the southern area, the focus of attention will be on grassland species or birds that nest in woodlots or narrow riparian areas since southern Iowa has very few large blocks of woodland habitat that could support more than a few pairs of the above species.

In addition to the above, there are two suites of transient species of concern, shorebirds and warblers. Some efforts may be directed towards management of habitat where available especially along the larger rivers.

Book Reviews

How Birds Migrate. Paul Kerlinger. 1995. Stackpole Books. 228 pp. This is an interesting book about an fascinating subject. The author draws heavily on current scientific research, and presents it in a very readable and informative style. Topics include seasonal timing, day vs. night migration, migratory rest stops, navigation,

flight speed and distance, weather and geographical barriers, flocking behavior, and the calls of migrating birds. Dozens of case studies and black-and-white illustrations are presented throughout the book. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

Iowa Wildlife Viewing Guide. James J. Dinsmore, Stephen J. Dinsmore, Bruce L. Ehresman, Laura S. Jackson. 1995. Falcon Press Publishing. 96 pp. This useful guide features 77 of the best wildlife viewing locations throughout the state. Birds are featured prominently. The locations are separated into four major regions: the Loess Hills of extreme western Iowa, the Prairie Pothole region of northwest and north central Iowa, the Northeast Plateau, and the Iowa Heartland. Local areas covered include Cone Marsh, Palisades-Kepler State Park, Coralville Lake and Cedar Lake. There are many color photographs and several excellent color illustrations. It is available at the Iowa City Public Library and from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Diversity Program, Wallace State Office Building, 902 E. Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319-0034, for \$8.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling.

Birdfinder: A Birder's Guide to Planning North American Trips. Jerry A. Cooper. 1995. American Birding Association. 376 pp. This book tells traveling birders when and where to go in North America to see as many species as possible. It is designed to supplement the more detailed birding guides available for the major hotspots. It features nineteen major trips

and shorter treatments of thirteen additional locations. Chapters include the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, South Florida in Winter, Late Spring in Southeastern Arizona, Summer in Colorado, Central and Southern California, Northeastern Minnesota in Winter, and many others. The information for each trip includes a list of the key, probable, possible, and remotely possible species to be found; a map of the area; available birdfinding guides and rare bird alert numbers; and an itinerary of where to go and what to look for on each day of the trip. It appears to be a very useful book for planning birding trips. If you visit one of the locations other than at the recommended time, it may not be quite as helpful. Available from ABA Sales for \$15.95.

Bird Notes

AOU NAME CHANGES AND SPLITS. The American Ornithologists' Union has made more taxonomic changes, which were summarized in *The Auk* 112: 819-830. The ABA is still in the process of formally adopting these changes. Those affecting North American species are as follows:

- **Great Egret** is moved from the genus *Casmerodius* to the genus *Ardea*, to become *Ardea alba*.
- **American Swallow-tailed Kite** is renamed Swallow-tailed Kite.
- **Common Black-headed Gull** is renamed Black-headed Gull.
- **Northern Flicker** is split into Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) and Gilded Flicker (*Colaptes chrysoides*) of the Southwest.
- **Scrub Jay** is split into Florida Scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), Island Scrub-jay (*A. insularis*) of Santa Cruz Island, and Western Scrub-jay (*A. californica*).
- **Gray-cheeked Thrush** is split into Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*), and Bicknell's Thrush (*C. bicknelli*).
- **Rufous-sided Towhee** is split into the two former species, Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) and Spotted Towhee (*P. maculatus*).
- **Sharp-tailed Sparrow** is split into Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*).
- **Northern Oriole** is split into Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), Baltimore Oriole (*I. galbula*), and Black-backed Oriole (*I. abeillei*) of Mexico.

—*Birdchat*

GREAT GRAY OWL IRRUPTION. A Great Gray Owl thrilled Iowa birders for several

weeks in February at Big Marsh near Parkersburg in Butler County. It was one of at least five reports of the species in Iowa this winter. There is only one previously accepted record of a Great Gray Owl in Iowa, from 1974 near Decorah. This has been a major irruption year for this species throughout the northern states, including Minnesota and Wisconsin. Perhaps the heavy snow cover in northern areas made it more difficult for the owls to find prey.

—*Winging It, Iowa Birdline*

MORE WINTER IRRUPTIONS. This winter has been a major irruption year in the eastern U.S. for many northern birds, including Northern Saw-whet Owls, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, Northern Shrikes, and Black-capped Chickadees. There have also been many reports of redpolls, crossbills, Northern Hawk-Owls, Gyrfalcons, and Evening Grosbeaks. In contrast, there were few reports of Snowy Owls. Here in Iowa, there have been more Red-breasted Nuthatches and Common Redpolls than usual, as well as several Hoary Redpolls reported. There was a flurry of Evening Grosbeaks reported in late November and early December and several White-winged Crossbills seen throughout the season.

—*Birdwatcher's Digest, Iowa Birdline*

NEW MIGRATORY BIRD PUBLICATION.

The Citizen's Guide to Migratory Bird Conservation is a new 32-page publication detailing how individuals can help migratory birds. Produced jointly by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the guide is available for \$5.00 (or \$2.00 each for five or more) from Martha Fischer, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. It is also available for \$3.50 from ABA Sales.

—*Birdwatcher's Digest*

SPECTACLED EIDER WINTERING TERRITORY FOUND. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists in Alaska recently discovered where Spectacled Eiders spend the winter. By fitting twenty-two of the threatened sea ducks with radio transmitters, they found thousands of eiders wintering far offshore in holes in the Bering Sea pack ice. Only the birds' movements and body heat keep the holes open.

—*National Geographic*

CALIFORNIA CONDORS TO BE RELEASED IN ARIZONA. In April up to ten California Condors will be released near Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. The area is within the historical range of the condor and should provide opportunities for public viewing. There are currently 103 California Condors in existence, including fourteen released into the wild in California.

—*Birder's World*

SANDHILL CRANES TAUGHT TO MIGRATE. Young Sandhill Cranes have been trained to follow an ultralight aircraft from Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho to their wintering grounds at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. Six of the eleven cranes successfully completed the eleven-day, 800-mile trip. If the cranes return to Grays Lake this spring on their own, the experiment will be attempted on endangered Whooping Cranes. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service hopes to establish a second population of migrating Whooping Cranes. The current wild population migrates from Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada to Texas' Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

—*Birder's World*

WOODPECKERS GROUND SPACE SHUTTLE. A pair of Northern Flickers caused \$2 million in damage and delayed the launch of

the space shuttle by more than a month last spring when they pecked 200 holes in the foam insulation covering the space shuttle Discovery's fuel tank. In response, NASA has formed a Bird Investigation Review and Deterrent (BIRD) team to identify and prevent hazards to human endeavors from flying wildlife, and hazards to wildlife from human space flights. Team member Jerome Jackson offers this suggestion for homeowners with problem woodpeckers: cover the area of siding with a painter's clear-plastic dropcloth or fine-mesh bird netting. [Editor's note: as one who suffered from this problem, I found that long white plastic strips cut from a garbage bag and hung from the eaves worked well. A life-size cardboard Great Horned Owl had no effect.]

—*Cedar Rapids Gazette*

OSPREY NESTING PLATFORMS. An Illinois resident has built six Osprey nesting platforms along the Mississippi River near Nauvoo and hopes to entice the endangered birds to nest there. Bob Baxter, a U. S. merchant marine, became interested in Ospreys while watching them from the deck of a Great Lakes ship. There has been only one confirmed nesting of Ospreys in Illinois during the past forty years.

—*Chicago Tribune*

PINTAILS DECLINING. Although 1995 was a terrific year for breeding waterfowl in the northern Great Plains and in the Prairie Provinces, the Northern Pintail continues to decline. According to wildlife biologists there was a seven percent decline for the year, and numbers in the three prime breeding areas are 59-77 percent below the long-term average. The prolonged drought in Alberta and Saskatchewan is thought to be responsible.

—*Birdwatcher's Digest*

KIRTLAND'S WARBLERS INCREASING.

Kirtland's Warblers are continuing their increase, with the 1995 census showing 765 singing males, compared to 633 in the previous year. The birds may be expanding into Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where eight singing males were found. [Editor's note: as a range map in the February 1996 issue of *Birding* illustrates, a spring sighting of Kirtland's Warbler in eastern Iowa isn't completely out of the question.]

—*Birdwatcher's Digest*

Pacific island of New Caledonia routinely fashion leaves and twigs into hunting tools that resemble the earliest human stone tools, according to a New Zealand ecologist. The crows make two types of tools and use them to tease out grubs and other prey from trees and logs. The study reinforces the growing belief that crows and their relatives – ravens, magpies, nutcrackers, jackdaws, jays and rooks – are among the most intelligent birds.

—*Chicago Tribune*

CROWS USE TOOLS. Crows on the South

Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published quarterly. Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, or e-mail to CREdwards@aol.com.

Annual membership dues are \$5.00, payable by January 1st for the coming year to Bernie Knight, Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, 425 Lee St., Iowa City, IA 52246. Check your mailing label for the year you have paid through.

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