

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter
Volume 17 Number 1 Spring 1997

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.

March 20, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Interactions Between Song Sparrows and Carnivores (of All Sizes) by Chris Rogers.

March 22, Saturday afternoon. Special work session to help box and send copies of *The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas* to Iowa schools. If you would like to help call Rick Hollis at 338-4834.

April 3, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Special work session to help work on the Iowa Birdfeeder Survey. The meeting will be in the ELP room at Lucas School. Call Rick Hollis at 338-4834 for details.

April 7, Monday, 7:00 p.m. Woodcock viewing with Jim Fuller, 338-3561. Meet at Hickory Hill Park at the north shelter near the Dodge Street entrance.

April 17, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Fun and Games with Birds. Rick Hollis and

Margriette Delle will challenge your minds with two games about birds.

April 20, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Redbird Farm Wildlife Area southwest of Iowa City. Ed and Jean Allgood, 338-8090. Meet at the Wardway Plaza/Eagles parking lot on S. Riverside Drive in Iowa City.

April 26, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. West Palisades Natural Area / Dow's Preserve in Linn County. Enjoy the wildflowers and birds with Karole Fuller (338-3561) and the Cedar Rapids Audubon club. Bring along a picnic lunch if you wish and continue friendships over a meal. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Terrill Mill Park or at 8:00 a.m. at the observatory parking lot on Ivanhoe Road.

May 3, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Muskrat Slough in Jones County. Mary Noble, 338-6097.

May 10, Saturday. Spring Migration Count. A great way to spend a Spring day! To participate call Chris Caster at 339-8343. See page 10 for more information.

June 8, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Hickory Hill Park for nesting birds. Ramona McGurk, 354-0366. Meet at the north parking lot near the Dodge Street entrance.

Other Dates of Note

March 15, Saturday. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to Cone Marsh.

April 5, Saturday. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to local areas.

May 3, Saturday. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to the Cedar River Greenbelt.

May 16 - 18, Friday - Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union / Tri-State Spring Meeting in Sioux City. This is a joint meeting with Nebraska and South Dakota, and the banquet speaker will be Kenn Kaufman, author of *Advanced Birding*. For more information call Carol Thompson, 338-5361.

May 17, Saturday. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to Browns' property on the Maquoketa River.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

November 21 Meeting. Bud Gode presented an educational talk on Iowa's dragonflies and damselflies. During the business portion, discussions were held on local bird news; the fate of Oakland Cemetery and Hickory Hill Park; Paula Bergstrom's and Barb Beaumont's resignations (as County Naturalist and County Conservation Board Member respectively) and the sorry state of the Johnson County Conservation Board; and the upcoming meeting and field trip schedule.

People (21): Ed Allgood, Jean Allgood, Harold Barber, Phyllis Barber, Robert Berry, Nancy Carl, Margriette Delle, Karen Disbrow, Jim Durbin, Joyce Durbin, Bud Gode, Thérèse Guédon, Rick Hollis, John McLure, Ramona McGurk, Sally Moore, Mary Noble, Ann Perkins, Ed Perkins, Jean Sanders, Carol Thompson.

January 26, Hawkeye Wildlife Area. While most sensible people were snug and warm at home, a group of six hardy birders struck out into the cold and snow in search of owls. We searched many cedar trees, but the owls eluded us. We did enjoy a close view of a flock of Lapland Longspurs on the road, which provided a Life Bird for two participants.

People (6): Chris Caster, Chris Edwards (leader), Julie Englander, John McLure, Ramona McGurk, Naoko Mizumoto.

Birds (15 species): Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur, American Goldfinch.

February 8, Amana Turkey Walk. This 21st annual walk was led by Carl Bendorf. It was a perfect winter day with no wind, temperatures in the 20's and large flakes of snow. Although many of us suspected we were being led in circles by our local guide, Lanny Halby, we enjoyed a brisk tour of the Iowa River bottomland between Homestead and Amana. The highlight may have been a bird we didn't

see! Along one of the old oxbows, we briefly studied a large but empty raptor nest in the top of a tree. Lanny later found out this was the local Bald Eagle nest which replaced the older and larger nest that blew down last year. We saw lots of Wild Turkey tracks in the snow but no birds. Following our hike, we enjoyed another terrific breakfast at the Colony Inn.

Species (16): Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Rock Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow.

Continued on page 6.

Birder's Guide to Hawkeye Wildlife Area

Chris Edwards

Hawkeye Wildlife Area is a 13,510-acre area in northwestern Johnson County managed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. It encompasses the upper flood basin of the Coralville Reservoir along the Iowa River, and extends for nine miles from Highway 965 almost to the Johnson-Iowa County line. The area contains open water, wetlands, fields, and woodlands, and the quality of the bird habitat varies with the water level of the reservoir. Access to most areas is from Swan Lake Road on the south and Amana Road on the north. Swan Lake, Williams Prairie, and Hanging Rock Woods are nearby areas also included in this guide. Most of this area is open to public hunting during season. Some of the roads are low-maintenance and at times are impassable due to mud, snow or high water.

During migration, the area supports large numbers of marsh ducks and geese, as well as pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets, gulls, and terns. When water levels are low or receding, extensive mudflats attract large numbers of migrating shorebirds. All of the regular Iowa shorebirds, including Piping Plover, American Avocet, Willet, Hudsonian and Marbled godwits, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Western, Baird's, and Buff-breasted sandpipers, and Red-necked Phalarope have been seen here. Migrating and wintering raptors are frequently seen. Long-eared, Short-eared, and Northern Saw-whet owls can usually be found during the winter. Weedy fields and hedgerows provide excellent places to find sparrows during migration. Wooded areas provide habitat for migrating and nesting warblers and other passerines. Summer residents, most of which probably nest, include Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, Brown Creeper, Sedge Wren, Yellow-throated, Cerulean, Prothonotary, and Kentucky warblers, and Lark and Savannah sparrows. Rarities seen in recent years include Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, White Ibis, Cinnamon Teal, Mississippi Kite, Northern Goshawk, Whimbrel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, California Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Snowy Owl, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Western Tanager.

South Side

To reach the south side of Hawkeye Wildlife Area, from North Liberty take Highway 965 2.0 miles north, then turn left at Swan Lake Road and continue west for 1.3 miles. Turn right onto **Old Headquarters Road**. It is named for the building on the right, which is the former wildlife area headquarters. The plantings and the small creek behind the building attract warblers and other passerines during migration. Continue to the first parking area on the left (0.3 mi.). From late April to early May and during October, the hedgerows along the road and in the nearby fields can be excellent for migrating sparrows, including Harris's, Lincoln's, White-crowned, and rarely Clay-colored. The road continues 1.7 mi. through fields and timber to a parking lot, where you may park and walk west for a view of the reservoir.

Return to Swan Lake Road and proceed west 0.9 mi. to a pullout on the left overlooking **Swan Lake**. During migration, scan the lake for waterfowl, grebes, shorebirds, and all six swallow species. During late summer Black Terns are sometimes seen flying over the lake.

Just past the Swan Lake pullout, turn right onto the **Sand Point** access road and continue 0.1 mi. to a parking area on the right. East of the parking lot is a small pond which harbors nesting Wood Ducks. The woodlot and plantings between Swan Lake Road and this parking lot can be good for warblers and other passerines during migration. The Sand Point road is closed to vehicles beyond the parking lot, but you may walk on the road approximately one mile to Sand Point. (This area is a wildlife refuge and is closed to the public from September 10 to December 25.) A spotting scope and rubber boots are recommended. During the walk you may hear nesting Lark Sparrows singing from the trees and Horned Larks in the fields. Farther out near the point, Savannah Sparrows nest in the low vegetation and American Pipits may be found during migration. Sand Point itself provides a panoramic view of the area, but the quality of the birding depends on the water level. In very wet years the entire area may be underwater, but when the water is low or receding, typically in late summer, mudflats provide habitat for thousands of shorebirds. In late summer and early fall you should also see large numbers of American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, and Great Egrets, as well as various gulls, terns, and marsh ducks.

Return to Swan Lake Road, turn right, and continue 0.8 mi. to Half Moon Avenue. A good location for Eastern Screech-Owls is located along Half Moon Avenue 0.2 miles to the left. To hear the owls, park alongside the road before dawn or after dusk and softly play a tape of the screech-owl's call. The tape may also rouse a nearby Barred or Great-horned Owl.

Past Half Moon Avenue, Swan Lake Road is dirt for the next 1.1 mi. and may be impassable during wet weather. (If so, take a detour by driving south on Half Moon Avenue, then west on 250th Street, then north on Greencastle Avenue back to Swan Lake Road.) If the road is passable, continue west for 0.4 mi., and then turn right onto the **Babcock** access road. Continue to a parking lot (1.0 mi.) at the end of the road. From here, you should see many of the same species that are visible from Sand Point. Dead trees to the north and west provide roosting sites for many waterbirds. During late fall and early spring this is often a good place to view Bald Eagles. In late summer a walk eastwards towards Sand Point may

provide views of many shorebirds; rubber boots and a spotting scope are recommended.

Return to Swan Lake Road and continue west for 0.7 mi. to **Greencastle Avenue**. Turn right and drive north 0.6 mi. to a parking lot on the left. The parking lot overlooks Half Moon Lake (also called Crescent Pond), which can be excellent for waterfowl and shorebirds during migration. In March, White-fronted Geese and many species of marsh and diving ducks can usually be found here. This is an excellent place to view raptors, including Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, and Bald Eagles from late fall through early spring. Peregrine Falcons and Merlins are sometimes seen in this area during migration when shorebirds are present. You can continue north on Greencastle Avenue 0.1 mi. to a "Road Closed" sign.

Turn around and drive south on Greencastle Avenue 1.0 mi. (past Swan Lake Road), where in most years there is a small pond divided by the road. This is called the Gunclub Pond, and you should see teal and Northern Shovelers here during spring, and Wood Ducks and Green Herons during the summer months. Continue 0.1 mi. to a parking lot on the right. In the area to the west of this parking lot are many scattered Eastern Redcedar trees. During the winter months these cedars often harbor roosting Long-eared Owls and occasionally Short-eared Owls. To locate the owls, check the ground beneath the cedars for pellets and white wash. Often the owls are not seen until they flush from the trees and fly a short distance away. Please keep disturbance to the owls at a minimum, and be cautious in this area during deer hunting season.

To explore more of Hawkeye Wildlife Area, return to Swan Lake Road, turn left and drive west. This low-maintenance gravel road continues more than six miles through a mixture of cultivated fields, wet areas, and small woodlots. In fall there are many weedy areas along the road to check for sparrows. The Round Pond access (1.5 mi.) is usually not very productive for birding, but may attract a few marsh ducks and shorebirds during spring migration. When you arrive at the "T" intersection (3.4 mi.) turn right and drive 0.1 mi. to a parking lot at the **Big Bend** area. During the early summer you may wish to search for nesting birds in the bottomland forest to the west. Walking can be difficult, but birds that have been found include Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, and Prothonotary and Yellow-throated warblers, the latter in the sycamore trees several hundred yards northwest of the parking lot.

Return to the intersection, turn right and continue 1.2 mi. to Cemetery Road. Along the way, listen for Lark Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, and Dickcissels. The extensive grassy fields along this road sometimes harbor wintering Short-eared Owls, which are best viewed from Cemetery Road at dawn or dusk.

At Cemetery Road, turn right and drive west 0.8 mi. to Grabin Road. Turn left and drive 0.2 mi. to Williams Prairie, a small wet prairie on the left owned by The Nature Conservancy. In some years Sedge Wrens have nested here. Continue on Grabin Road 1.3 mi. as it zig-zags south and east to 250th Street. From here it is 9.5 mi. back to the starting point.

North Side

To reach the north side of Hawkeye Wildlife Area, from North Liberty take Highway 965 5.5 miles north. After crossing the Coralville Reservoir, turn left at Cou Falls Road, and when it veers right (0.2), bear left onto Amana Road. There are many parking areas along Amana Road from which you may view the wetland area to the south or explore the wooded ridge to the north. Drive west on Amana Road 0.3 mi. to a parking lot on the left, across from the Hawkeye Wildlife Area headquarters. The parking lot offers a view of the vast floodplain to the south. Waterbirds and raptors are often seen from here but are usually very far away.

Continue 0.8 mi. to another parking lot on the right. North of the parking lot over a small rise is a clearing where American Woodcocks display at dusk and dawn during April and May. Just east of the parking lot is a grove of Eastern Redcedars where Northern Saw-whet Owls are often found during the winter. Search the branches carefully and check the ground for pellets and droppings. Once located, saw-whet owls are normally quite tame and may be viewed at close range.

Continue west 0.4 mi. to another parking lot on the south side of the road. Except in very wet years, Savannah Sparrows nest in the vegetation south of the road here. This is a good location to listen for Whip-poor-wills calling at dusk from the wooded bluffs during the late spring and summer.

Continue along Amana Road 0.7 mi. to Greencastle Avenue. Northwest of this intersection on the hillside is a small grove of cedars which sometimes attracts wintering Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Continue west on Amana Road 4.1 mi. to a parking lot on the left. The area south of the road is **Hanging Rock Woods**, a large wooded ridge which juts out into the surrounding bottomland. The southern tip of the ridge is private land, but the northern part of the ridge and most of the surrounding bottomland is public. A trail leads through the woods along the ridge top. This is an excellent location for spring warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other migrants. During the summer, Cerulean and Kentucky warblers can be found, and Prothonotary Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, and Brown Creeper have been found in the bottomland forest at the end of the ridge. From here it is 12.3 mi. back to the starting point.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports (cont.)

People (12): Carl Bendorf (leader), Jonni Ellsworth, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Laura Fuller, Randy Graesser, Lanny Haldy, Rick Hollis, Ramona McGurk, Naoko Mizumoto, Marcia Schutterle, Amy Stockman.

February 20 Meeting. After a brief business meeting, Sandy Rhodes gave a fascinating talk on Johnson County's population of ornate box turtles.

People (9): Nancy Carl, Margriette Delle, Karen Disbrow, Rick Hollis, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Ramona McGurk, Sally Moore, Carol Thompson.

Book Reviews

Hummingbird Gardens: Attracting Nature's Jewels to Your Backyard. Nancy Newfield and Barbara Nielsen. 1996. Chapters Publishing, Ltd. 139 pp. including an index, references and resources (e.g. sources for buying plants). Available at the Iowa City Public Library. I should start out by saying that I've met Nancy (thanks to Bill Gates and Alex Bell) and she's a nice lady. I regret that we were unable to connect in the field. To whatever extent this prejudices my review, I am guilty. This is yet another gorgeous hummingbird book, with wonderful pictures of birds and flowers. If I ever move and try to plant a hummingbird garden, I will certainly consult it. There are three main sections: a general introduction, a section with subsections on various regions of the country (e.g. Southwest, Midwest & East, etc.), and a guide to hummingbirds and hummingbird plants. The regions are rather large and vague – I think Iowa is in the same region as Maryland. The guide is, however, only a supplement. It contains no mention of the plants' shade/sun preferences, and it does not truly describe the plants (most pictures are of flowers). Although trees, shrubs and vines warrant a section, there is nothing for hardy perennials. All in all a lovely, pleasant book. I wish that a bit more attention had been paid to printing, as the copy I saw was rather faint on the top half of many pages. – *Rick Hollis*

1996 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards, Jim Fuller, Tom Kent, and

The 1996 Christmas Bird Count was held on 22 December and yielded 53 species, which is the second lowest number during the last ten years. It was a pleasant day with temperatures in the 30s, little wind, and no snow cover, but temperatures during the week preceding the count were far below normal. The Iowa River below the dam was open, but the Coralville Reservoir was frozen. The number of participants was similar to last year with 25 field observers in 8 parties and 16 feeder watchers at 12 locations. At lunch time we had 47 species. Many participants gathered at the Mill Restaurant in the evening to conclude the day's activities.

This 46th 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 Wood Duck (4), Cooper's Hawk (4), Northern Goshawk (2), Northern Shrike (4), and Lapland Longspur (4).

Richard Tetrault

Species present in larger than normal numbers (well above the ten-year average) were Canada Goose (all-time high), Wild Turkey, Belted Kingfisher (all-time high), and House Finch (all-time high).

Prominent misses (birds seen in 5 or more of the last 10 years) were Gadwall (5), Lesser Scaup (6), Common Goldeneye (6), Short-eared Owl (5), Northern Saw-whet Owl (7), Horned Lark (5), Golden-crowned Kinglet (5), Eastern Bluebird (5), Swamp Sparrow (8), Red-winged Blackbird (5), Brown-headed Cowbird (8), and Pine Siskin (8). Species found in fewer than normal numbers (well below the ten-year average) were Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker (ten-year low), Blue Jay (ten-year low), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin (ten-year low), Cedar Waxwing (ten-year low), European Starling (ten-year low), Song Sparrow, and House Sparrow (ten-year low).

SPECIES: Great Blue Heron (3), Canada Goose (2,328), Wood Duck (3), American Black Duck (1), Mallard (356), Bald Eagle (35), Northern Harrier (4), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1), Cooper's Hawk (1), Northern Goshawk (1), Red-tailed Hawk (51), Rough-legged Hawk (5), American Kestrel (14), Ring-necked Pheasant (18), Wild Turkey (53), Ring-billed Gull (12), Herring Gull (39), Gull species (1), Rock Dove (142), Mourning Dove (132), Eastern Screech-Owl (1), Great Horned Owl (10), Barred Owl (7), Belted Kingfisher (10), Red-headed Woodpecker (8), Red-bellied Woodpecker (50), Downy Woodpecker (95), Hairy Woodpecker (16), Northern Flicker (9), Blue Jay (92), American Crow (1,721), Black-capped Chickadee (320), Tufted Titmouse (43), Red-breasted Nuthatch (1), White-breasted Nuthatch (83), Brown Creeper (4), Carolina Wren (2), American Robin (1), Cedar Waxwing (1), Northern Shrike (1), European Starling (702), Northern Cardinal (259), American Tree Sparrow (405), Song Sparrow (18), White-

throated Sparrow (9), White-crowned Sparrow (9), Dark-eyed Junco (403), Lapland Longspur (1), Meadowlark species (4), Common Grackle (6), Purple Finch (9), House Finch (217), American Goldfinch (236), and House Sparrow (400).

FIELD OBSERVERS: Carl Bendorf, Chris Caster, Phil Cronin, John Daniel, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Julie Englander, Jim Fuller, Randy Graesser, Lanny Haldy, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Ken Lowder, Nancy Lynch, Richard Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Gail McLure, John McLure, Mary Noble, Mike Parker, Dick Tetrault, Carol Thompson, John Van Rybroek, and Ronnye Wieland.

FEEDER WATCHERS: Anne Edwards, Anita Frimml, Carolyn Gardner, Dave Gause, Marilou Gay, Gloria Henry, Sherle Kesik, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Terri Lindquist, Ken Lowder, Mary Lowder, Ken Pilarczyk, Paul Shuff, Teresa Shuff, and Sherri Weiss.

Grumblings from Rick's Desk

A few months back, in an obituary of Roger Tory Peterson, I bemoaned the fact that although I had seen many of the old field guides, I had never seen a copy of Chester Reed's Bird Guide. Within a short time, Ed Folk very kindly shared his copy of *Part 2, Land Birds East of the Rockies, from Parrots to Bluebirds* [1906, 09.12] with me. This copy was given to Ed's sister in 1913 and passed on to Ed. Ed must have had the book in constant use, and the family had it rebound so he could continue to use it.

What a marvelous little book. It is less than half the size of a modern guide, and being rather long and narrow, easily fits in a shirt pocket. It has one-page workups of 191 species, including a portrait that is about 1"x2", and descriptions of habits and habitats, notes, nest, and range. The pictures are birds in their natural environment, and are excellent, excepting a few action figures (goatsuckers and swifts). They are far better than the stiff pictures in either Chapman's *Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America* (1895, 1912, 1920 – I wonder how many of these Reed actually did), or Chapman and Reed's *Color Key of North American Birds* (ca 1903). It is easy to see how this book was responsible for igniting excitement in the generation that taught most of us (or the generation that taught them).

The front of the book has a lovely introduction (and obligatory figure of the anatomy of a bird) and the book closes with an advertisement for a pair of field glasses that Reed endorses. Among the species

are the Carolina Paroquet (nearly extinct), Ivory-billed Woodpecker (confined to Florida and possibly the Indian Territory), Bachman Warbler (rare and local) and Bewick Wren (locally abundant in interior U.S., in some places replacing the House Wren). Game Birds (more than 100 species) are covered in another book.

Even though I realize that my binoculars are better than the ones Reed is selling, I have a pair rather like them – perhaps I should use them in the field some day. That would surely shorten my list. It's nice to think about going in the field with \$5.00 (postpaid!) binocs and seeing Carolina Parakeets. A great, public thank you to Ed for allowing me this opportunity!

Peregrine releases – what are we creating? As we are reintroducing Peregrines as breeding birds in many states you have to wonder what we have done. Maryland is a good case in point. I have this information in front of me and they have been releasing Peregrines longer than Iowa. There were about 10 nest sites prior to the disappearance of breeding Peregrines by the mid-1960s. All were on cliffs in the mountains or Piedmont. After hacking 90 eyases from 1975-1984, MD now has 8 breeding pairs and several pairs which are holding territories but have yet to breed. All are on the coastal plain, and all nests are on artificial structures. Some of this is because all releases were done on the coastal plain to avoid Great Horned Owls and because prey was more abundant. Yes, MD now has about the same number of Peregrines as before, but they breed in different parts of the state. They are truly different birds and, what's more, because of the difference in the locations of their nests, they almost certainly dine differently.

Spring Count on May 10: I hope this year we can double the number of people in the field. Chris Caster will be this year's coordinator, as I may be in the Everglades. (See page 10 for more information on the count.)

– Rick Hollis

Bird Notes

BIRDS IN FORESTED LANDSCAPES. Following the success of Project Tanager, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is launching a new project this spring, Birds in Forested Landscapes. Initially, the project will focus on seven species of forest thrushes as well as the Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk. Although thrushes may be common in most forest habitats, many of their populations are thought to be declining. Forest hawks may also be declining, but little is known about how habitat fragmentation is affecting their populations. By collecting critical data on distribution and nesting success of these species, participants will help with the development of conservation strategies to help forest-bird populations.

Participation in the project involves selecting appropriate study sites, making two or more visits to the sites to census birds and determine their breeding status, searching for nests, filling in data forms, and returning the forms to the Lab for compilation and analysis. Participants will receive complete instructions and reference materials, in addition to a tape or CD for learning bird vocalizations and to playback in the field during censusing. To participate, write to Birds in Forested Landscapes/BPS, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850; call (607) 254-2440; or send an e-mail to forest_birds@cornell.edu.

CONDORS FLY FREE IN ARIZONA. On December 12, 1996, six California Condors were released in the Vermillion Cliffs area of northern Arizona. The birds have been fitted with radio transmitters to enable biologists to track their movements. Approximately ten miles of federal land around the release site will be temporarily closed to the public for the condors. There are now 121 California Condors in existence, including 17 released into the wild in southern California. *— Birder's World*

WINTER BIRDING. For the second straight year Great Gray Owls have been reported in Iowa, with up to three found in Cerro Gordo County in February. Snowy Owls have been reported from several northern Iowa counties throughout the winter, and three were present at Hawkeye Wildlife Area in Johnson County in late November. However, the number of Northern Saw-whet Owls seen appears to be down from recent years. The huge movement of western mountain species into the Great Plains reached Iowa's borders, as a Clark's Nutcracker was found in southwestern Iowa in December and a Pinyon Jay wintered in Boone County.

— Iowa Birdline

WATCH LIST. Partners in Flight and the National Audubon Society recently released a Watch List of 90 species that need special attention due to declining population levels. These birds are not currently listed as threatened or endangered. Following are the Iowa nesting species included on the list (underlined species are of special concern due to recent or prolonged dramatic population drops):

American Bittern	Prairie Warbler
Black Tern	<u>Cerulean Warbler</u>
Black-billed Cuckoo	Prothonotary Warbler
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Kentucky Warbler

Short-eared Owl	Dickcissel
Chuck-will's-widow	Clay-colored Sparrow
Chimney Swift	Field Sparrow
<u>Red-headed Woodpecker</u>	Lark Sparrow
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Grasshopper Sparrow
Veery	Henslow's Sparrow
Wood Thrush	<u>Bobolink</u>
Gray Catbird	<u>Yellow-headed Blackbird</u>
<u>Loggerhead Shrike</u>	Orchard Oriole

To receive a free information kit that includes the Watch List and other information about bird conservation, call toll free 1-888-AUDUBON.

– *WildBird*

Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published quarterly. Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to the editor: Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, telephone 626-6362, e-mail 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.

Johnson County Spring Migration Count Saturday May 10, 1997

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by participating in the annual Johnson County Spring Migration Count. The local count is part of a national effort which was started several years ago by a Maryland birder and has since grown to include almost all states and provinces. It is similar to the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count, but there is no participation fee and each count covers an entire county. You may spend as little or as much time in the field as you want during the 24-hour period. In Iowa, county results are published annually in *Iowa Bird Life*. Last year, Johnson County fielded only three parties who found 109 species. This year let's shoot for 150!

To participate, call Chris Caster at 339-8343.

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