

# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 18 Number 1

April 1998

## 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 16, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting.** Carol Thompson and Rick Hollis will present “Birding Tamaulipas, Mexico”.

**April 18, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Ryerson’s Woods** for spring migrants. Meet at the Ryerson’s Woods parking lot, located south of the Johnson County Fairgrounds along S. Riverside Drive. Barbara Beaumont, 626-6227.

**May 3, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Fullers’ Woods** in Cedar County for migrant passerines. Jim Fuller, 338-3561.

**May 9, Saturday. Spring Migration Count.** A great way to spend International Migratory Bird Day! To participate, call Johnson County coordinator Chris Caster at 339-8343. See page 2 for more details.

**May 24, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Iowa River Corridor.** If local arrangements can be made, we will be visiting this new public area along the Iowa River in Iowa County. If not, we will visit an alternate

destination. Rick Hollis, 338-4834.

**May 30 – 31, Saturday – Sunday, Maquoketa River Canoe Trip** with the Sierra Club. Canoe one day or camp overnight and canoe both days. Call Barbara Beaumont at 626-6227 for more details.

**June 13, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Lake Macbride** for nesting species including Prairie Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

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## Other Dates of Note

**April 25, Saturday. Annual Sandhill Crane Count.** To participate, call Jaime Edwards of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program at (515) 432-2823. For more information, see the article on page 9.

**April 25, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge.** For this and other CR Audubon trips, unless otherwise noted meet at the Coe College swimming pool parking lot on the west side of 13th Street between C and D Avenues NE in Cedar Rapids.

**May 2, Saturday, 6:15 a.m. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to Dudgeon Lake.**

**May 2, Saturday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Migratory Bird Celebration at Pinicon Ridge Park in Linn County.** Activities will include bird banding demonstrations, tree planting, a woodworking workshop, live raptor shows, exhibits, and guest speakers. For more information, call Gail at the Linn County Conservation Board, (319) 438-1364.

**May 10, Sunday. Johnson County Songbird Project's 7th Annual Mother's Day Bluebird Walk at Kent Park.** For information call Jim Walters at 683-2727.

**May 15 – 17, Friday – Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting in Ames.** For more information, call Rick Hollis at 338-4834.

**May 30, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to the Cedar River Greenbelt.** Meet at the corner of Edgewood Road and Blair's Ferry Road NE.

**June 13, Saturday, Cedar Rapids Audubon Nesting Bird Survey.** Call Pete Wickham at (319) 363-6884 for details.

## 1998 Johnson County Spring Migration Count

On Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, the Johnson County Spring Migration Count will be held. Like the Christmas Bird Count, the purpose of this count is to find as many species of birds as possible and record their numbers. This count is conducted nationwide on the same day so that the information gathered may be used to study national migration patterns. Participants may spend as many hours as they wish birding during the day on Saturday. Some like to get out there before sunup and bird until after sundown, but if you only have a few hours that would be equally appreciated. Feeder watchers and backyard birders can also help.

Unlike the Iowa City Christmas Bird Count this one will cover all of Johnson County. Since it is a larger area we really could use everyone's participation. We hope to be able to cover all the better habitats from woodlands to prairies, marshes and waterways. We had a modest turnout last year and still recorded 145 different species. Spring migration is always an exciting time and most anything is possible. Last year we recorded Johnson County's second ever Western Kingbird and the Cedar County group recorded a Black-Throated Gray Warbler.

Anyone interested in participating should call Chris Caster at 339-8343 for more information. An effort will be made to coordinate our activities to maximize our county coverage. A checklist will be provided for all participants which will need to be returned for compilation.

Also the group that has been counting Cedar County is always looking for a few more volunteers. If that sounds interesting you may call Carol Thompson for more information at 338-5361. We hope that you will be able to participate and we will do our best to make it fun for everyone. – Chris Caster

## Field Trip and Meeting Reports

**January 31, Amana Turkey Trot.** This year's Amana safari included birding in the old ice pond area and the railroad track corridor nearby as a preliminary for the real event, breakfast at the Colony Inn. The day was foggy and just cold enough that the twenty participants found it to be solid rather than mushy underfoot. The birding was highlighted by the location of four Saw-whet Owls, while the highlight of breakfast for most was the pancakes.

People (18): Tim Barksdale, Greg Barton, Mike Dooley, Karen Disbrow, Jonni Ellsworth, Julie Englander, Jim Fuller (leader), Karole Fuller, Laura Fuller, Therese Geudon, Kay Heidt, Roger Heidt, Rick Hollis, Gail McLure, John McLure, Mary Noble, Joel Serlin, Helen Yoder.

Birds (16 species): Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Sparrow.

**March 14, Cone Marsh.** This trip was scheduled for March 8 but was postponed due to an impending snowstorm. It was held the following Saturday, and despite a low turnout it was a great morning of birding. The sun was a

welcome companion on this cold and breezy day. The highlight was an outstanding view of seven Tundra Swans resting and feeding in the northwest corner of the marsh. Twelve other waterfowl species were seen, as well as a flock of Rusty Blackbirds and five raptor species. We briefly joined and compared notes with a group from Cedar Rapids Audubon. On our way home we birded along the Iowa River bottoms and stopped at the sand pits along Sand Road.

People (3): Chris Caster (leader), Chris Edwards, Mary Edwards.

Birds (45 species): Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Hooded Merganser, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Horned Lark, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, House Sparrow.

**March 26 Meeting.** Eugene and Eloise Armstrong entertained the group by recounting the story of their successful quest to see all 19 North American owl species in 1996.

People (21): Dean Abel, Ed Allgood, Jean Allgood, Eloise Armstrong, Eugene Armstrong, Julie Buchsbaum, Chris Caster, Margriette Delle, Karen Disbrow, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards, Jane Fuller, Jim Fuller, Rick Hollis,

James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight,  
Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Damian  
Pieper, Carol Thompson.

## **Audubon's Birds of America Exhibit**

### **Chris Caster**

John J. Audubon's "Birds of America" is the title of the Iowa City Area Science Center's spring exhibit. This exhibit has been running since January 17<sup>th</sup> in the Old Capitol Mall in Iowa City and will continue through April 30<sup>th</sup>.

It is hard to be an American, let alone a birder, and not be familiar with the works of Audubon. We have all seen reproductions of his paintings on everything from postcards to magazine covers and T-shirts. Many of us can easily recognize one of Audubon's paintings when we see it. There is something special about his paintings – possibly the attention to details or the dynamics of the compositions, that make them memorable. The works of Audubon have become such a piece of Americana that I believe his genius and his years of laboring to accomplish what he did can often be taken for granted. Audubon's "Birds of America" is truly one of the monumental achievements in art and natural history. This work was published in four volumes and included 431 prints. The Audubon Memorial Museum in Henderson, KY has loaned 53 of the original prints to the ICASC for display. These are double elephant folio hand-colored prints whose creation was directed by Audubon in 1829 and 1830. For anyone who is an Audubon admirer, this exhibit is an opportunity that should not be missed. No book can truly capture the color and vitality that Audubon worked so hard to achieve and seeing these full-size originals testifies to the wonder of his creation.

The exhibit also includes 39 mounted bird specimens on loan from the University of Iowa's Museum of Natural History which are a nice compliment to the Audubon prints. Quite a

variety of bird types from raptors to warblers have been attractively displayed. Placed alongside the prints, these museum specimens help to illustrate the skill of Audubon in faithfully rendering each bird in size and proportion.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is a grouping of three glass aviaries. Each about ten feet long by seven feet high, these contain more than 20 species of exotic songbirds. The birds are well cared for and very active. Most species are ones that you won't see at the local pet store. No visitor can look upon these long and not gain an appreciation for what truly remarkable creatures birds are.

There are also some interesting activities for children. There are microscopes whereby one can examine the minute structure of feathers. There is a drawing station where one can explore the techniques devised by Audubon himself to produce life-size paintings of natural proportion in the field. Another table is set up for coloring and craft activities. There is a sculpted hand rail that children may walk through which helps them to gain insight into how a bird not only achieves lift, but forward flight. And there are also two computer work stations where one can explore CD-ROM versions of Peterson's North American Birds and the National Audubon Society Interactive Guide to North American Birds.

The staff is very friendly and helpful with any questions a visitor might have. There is also a very nice gift shop with a good assortment of books about birds ranging from field guides to children's books. Various Audubon items are for sale including T-shirts. There are even some

materials dealing with butterflies.

The hours of the exhibit are 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. M-F, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Sat., and 12 p.m. - 6 p.m. Sun. Admission fees are \$3.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children. Families of four are admitted for \$8.00. Certainly the John J. Audubon "Birds of America" exhibit is an enjoyable one. It has been very tastefully presented and includes something for everyone.

## **1997 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count**

### **Chris Edwards and Jim Fuller**

The 1997 Christmas Bird Count was held on December 21 and yielded 60 species, which is slightly below the ten-year average of 62. Temperatures reached the mid-30s, but the sky was overcast and there was a brisk SE wind throughout the day. There was one inch of spotty snow cover, the Iowa River and streams were open, and the Coralville Reservoir was partly open. The number of participants was slightly up from last year with 27 field observers in 8 parties. Bernie Knight organized our feeder watching effort, with 19 feeder watchers at 14 locations. At lunch time we had 54 species. Many participants gathered at the Mill Restaurant in the evening to conclude the day's activities.

The most unusual sighting was a Ruddy Duck seen on the duck pond at Morrison Park in Coralville. This was the first Ruddy Duck seen in the 47-year history of the Iowa City count, bringing the all-time list to 126 species. Another outstanding find was a flock of 22 White-winged Crossbills which was seen on the University of Iowa campus by many participants. This species had not been seen on the Iowa City count since 1957. A flock of Rusty Blackbirds was seen on a farm west of Iowa City for only the third sighting of this species on the count in the last ten years, and a Northern Shrike was seen at Hawkeye Wildlife Area. Species found in larger than normal numbers (well above the ten-year average) were Bald Eagle (all-time high), Northern Flicker, White-throated Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.

Prominent misses (birds seen in more than half of the last 10 years, with the number of years in parenthesis) were Great Blue Heron (6), American Black Duck (6), Rough-legged Hawk (9), Northern Saw-whet Owl (7), and Common Grackle (7). Species found in lower than normal numbers (well below the ten-year average) were Canada Goose, Herring Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Species seen during the count week but not on count day included Rough-legged Hawk, American Coot, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Common Grackle.

The ten-year counts of selected species are depicted below. A record number of Bald Eagles was seen this year, although some may have been double-counted as they soared from one area to another. Historically, the annual average between 1970 and 1989 was less than two, and none were seen before 1970. The number of Rough-legged Hawks found in the area varies considerably from year to year. Red-headed Woodpeckers are found in Iowa throughout the year, but winter populations vary due to the availability of acorns. Pine Siskin is another winter visitor whose numbers in Iowa vary greatly from year to year.



Nationally, this year marked the 98<sup>th</sup> consecutive Christmas Bird Count. In 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman and many other conservationists were disturbed at the slaughter of birds at an annual holiday event called a “side hunt,” in which the winner was the team that shot the most birds. As a protest, on Christmas Day of that year, Chapman organized 27 friends in 25 locations. Instead of shooting birds, they counted them. That simple protest turned into the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Today, 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.

Field Observers: Chris Caster, Jonathon Cronin, Phil Cronin, John Daniel, Karen Disbrow, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards, Mary Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Julie Englander, Jim Fuller, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Ken Lowder, Nancy Lynch, Richard Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Gail McLure, John McLure, Naoko Mizumoto, Amanda Niehaus, Mary Noble, Steve Panther, Karen Sarfaty, Jim Scheib, Dick Tetrault, Carol Thompson.

Feeder Watchers: Stephen Christian, Bob Dunn, Jean Dunn, Anne Edwards, Carolyn Gardner, Dave Gause, Marilou Gay, Melanie Hauptert, Gloria Henry, Margaret Alton Herr, Anne Hesse, Chuck Hesse, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Anne Perkins, Ed Perkins, Paul Shuff, Teresa Shuff, Bob Towner.

#### SPECIES LIST

Canada Goose	4	Red-headed Woodpecker	7	Meadowlark sp.	10
Wood Duck	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	36	Rusty Blackbird	8
Mallard	288	Downy Woodpecker	100	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Gadwall	1	Hairy Woodpecker	11	Purple Finch	10
Ring-necked Duck	4	Northern Flicker	53	House Finch	69
Lesser Scaup	2	Horned Lark	5	White-winged Crossbill	22
Common Merganser	8	Blue Jay	175	Pine Siskin	107
Ruddy Duck	1	American Crow	1,017	American Goldfinch	338
Bald Eagle	57	Black-capped Chickadee	287	House Sparrow	686
Northern Harrier	2	Tufted Titmouse	51		
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Red-breasted Nuthatch	18		
Cooper's Hawk	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	93		
Red-tailed Hawk	67	Brown Creeper	2		
<i>Buteo</i> sp.	1	Carolina Wren	4		
American Kestrel	21	Eastern Bluebird	4		
Ring-necked Pheasant	17	American Robin	1		
Wild Turkey	36	Cedar Waxwing	131		
Ring-billed Gull	365	Northern Shrike	1		
Herring Gull	2	European Starling	786		
Gull sp.	86	Northern Cardinal	354		
Rock Dove	157	American Tree Sparrow	299		
Mourning Dove	117	Song Sparrow	6		
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Swamp Sparrow	3		
Great Horned Owl	3	White-throated Sparrow	28		
Barred Owl	3	White-crowned Sparrow	1		
Owl sp.	1	Dark-eyed Junco	566		
Belted Kingfisher	1	Red-winged Blackbird	1		

## Learning Bird Songs

### Chris Edwards

Learning bird songs can be one of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of birding. Aside from the purely aesthetic enjoyment found in listening to bird songs, a knowledge of bird songs and calls is invaluable for locating and identifying birds. Vocalizations can be an aid in identifying not only the warblers hidden in the dense forest undergrowth, but even the shorebirds feeding on a distant mudflat.

The best way to learn the common bird sounds in your area is to spend time in the field during spring migration and nesting season when birds are singing. For the bird song student, however, this time passes all too briefly. During the rest of the year, you can practice by listening to bird song recordings on CD or cassette. Personal computers are also a valuable resource. With practice and repetition, you can gradually add more and more species to your bird song vocabulary.

#### ***Bird Song Recordings***

Some of the best commercial bird song recordings are listed in the table below. The *Birding by Ear* sets in the Peterson Field Guide series are by far the best recordings available for learning bird vocalizations. These are excellent tutorials with extensive narration. Techniques such as comparisons, phonetics, and mnemonics are used to help the listener distinguish and remember songs. Birds with similar vocalizations are presented together so you can learn the important “field marks” of each

species. The original *Birding by Ear* features 85 of the most common species encountered in eastern and central North America. *More Birding by Ear* features many additional warblers, sparrows, and shorebirds, among others. Of special note are Bicknell’s Thrush and a comparison of Black-billed and Yellow-billed cuckoos. Each set features a useful booklet describing the vocalizations of each species.

Peterson’s *Eastern/Central Bird Songs*, National Geographic Society’s *Guide to Bird Sounds*, and Stokes’ *Field Guide to Bird Songs – Eastern Region* are best used as references. They present relatively brief snippets of songs and calls in species order without narration aside from the species name. The Peterson guide features most of Iowa’s avifauna on a single CD. The Stokes guide is the most extensive of the three, with more species, more time per species, and more sounds per species. It includes a lengthy booklet describing the songs and calls of all species. The National Geographic guide covers a larger geographical area (the entire continent), but presents the fewest species. The set includes only six wood warblers and five sparrows, and features less than one third of Iowa’s species. Of historic interest is a recording of Bachman’s Warbler, a species probably now extinct.

*Know Your Bird Sounds*, volumes one and two, each provide in-depth looks at the sound

Name	Total Species	Iowa Species	Total Time	Time Per Species
Eastern/Central Birding by Ear (Peterson)	86	85	188 min.	131 sec.
Eastern/Central More Birding by Ear (Peterson)	96	86	167 min.	104 sec.
Eastern/Central Bird Songs (Peterson)	267	229	74 min.	17 sec.
Field Guide to Bird Songs – Eastern (Stokes)	372	274	210 min.	34 sec.
Guide to Bird Sounds (National Geographic)	180	91	87 min.	29 sec.
Know Your Bird Sounds Volume 1	35	34	65 min.	111 sec.
Know Your Bird Sounds Volume 2	35	33	65 min.	111 sec.

repertoires of 35 common species. They were produced and narrated by Lang Elliot, and include detailed liner notes. Volume one includes yard, garden, and city birds, while volume two features birds of the countryside.

### ***Personal Computers***

Personal computers are a valuable tool for learning bird songs, and there are several helpful software programs available. CD-ROM programs such as Peterson Multimedia Guides' *North American Birds* and National Audubon Society's *Interactive CD-ROM Guide to North American Birds* allow you to hear a bird's vocalizations while viewing its picture. Both programs allow you to test your skills with bird song quizzes, and the Peterson guide allows you to customize your own quiz groups. It should be noted that in general the audio quality on these CD-ROMs is very good, but due to data compression it is inferior to the aforementioned bird song CDs.

There are two software programs available which can be used to control and manipulate the popular bird song CDs. *AviSys Song* and *Bird Song Master* work with Peterson's *Eastern/Central Bird Songs*, Peterson's *Western Bird Songs*, and National Geographic's *Guide to Bird Sounds* CDs, which must be purchased separately. I have used *AviSys Song* for over a year and have been delighted by its capabilities. You can play a bird's song instantly just by clicking its name on a checklist. You can create and save groups of birds and play back their songs sequentially or randomly, with or without narration. I use this feature to create groups of "problem" birds with similar songs for periodic review. I also prepare for upcoming birding trips by setting up groups of unfamiliar birds that I expect to encounter on the trip. By connecting a cassette recorder to your computer, you can easily create your own customized bird tapes for listening on the go. I have not used *Bird Song Master*, but it offers similar features.

*AviSys Song* requires Windows 3.1 or 95, while *Bird Song Master* is available in both Macintosh and PC formats. Both are available through ABA Sales or direct from the publishers.

Learning bird songs may at first seem bewildering, but these resources certainly make the process much easier.

## News

A hearty farewell is in order for two long-time club members, Carol Thompson and Barbara Beaumont. Carol, our mailing list guardian and regular field trip leader, meeting presenter, and newsletter contributor, will be moving to Texas this summer. Barbara Beaumont, our field trip coordinator and also a regular field trip leader, will be moving to Minnesota during the summer. Carol and Barbara, thanks for your hard work and friendship over the years. We wish you good luck and good birding!

The Johnson County Soil & Water Conservation District is holding its annual tree and live plant sale. Tree orders were due by April 1, but orders for live prairie plants will be accepted until May 15. This year 16 different wildflowers and 7 different grasses are being offered at very reasonable prices. The wildflowers are native Iowa prairie species such as Black-eyed Susan, Blazing Star, Pale Purple Coneflower, Prairie Phlox, and Wild Bergamot, and are excellent for butterfly gardens. Several prairie seed mixes are also available. For a catalog, call the JCSWCD at 337-2322. Another source of prairie plants is Project Green's annual garden fair at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on May 9. For information, call Marylin Smith at 337-3210.

## The Annual Sandhill Crane Count Officially Comes to Iowa

The morning sun comes up slowly in early spring. Once up, it warms the chilly, damp air over Iowa wetlands even more slowly. Most of us greet these nippy mornings by pulling a thick blanket up around our ears, sinking deeper into our warm beds. But sunrise on the morning of the Sandhill Crane Count finds nearly 3,200 people braving the elements to watch and listen for Sandhill Cranes in wetlands across the Midwest. The count enables the International Crane Foundation (ICF) to determine trends in the crane population throughout the Midwestern region. This survey, one of the largest single-species surveys in the world, is made possible by volunteers who participate for a variety of reasons. Some see it as a chance to get outdoors and greet spring after a long winter. Others view the count as an opportunity to see a wildlife species reinhabit and successfully nest in its original breeding ground. Still others see the count as an adventure, going to new sites every year, while some prefer the ritual of counting at the same site each year, monitoring crane progression at their locale. For whatever reason, seeing and hearing cranes and other wildlife on a brisk spring morning is definitely part of the enjoyment volunteers get from participating in the annual spring count.

Sandhill Cranes last nested in Iowa in 1894 near Hayfield in Hancock County. After that, crane sightings were rare, even for birds migrating through Iowa. Changing land use patterns and unregulated hunting and egg collection, coupled with other forms of disturbance during settlement times coincided with a dramatic decline in the number of sandhills in the

Midwestern states. In recent years, however, cranes have started to trickle back into Iowa marshes, coming in from Wisconsin where prime nesting sites are already occupied by territorial adults.

In an effort to monitor their recovery and dispersal across the Midwest, the International Crane Foundation conducts an annual crane survey in early spring. Organizing and continuing a multi-state survey is quite an undertaking, and ICF does an incredible job of recruiting volunteers and collecting consistent data across the board. Many Iowans have been involved in the annual survey for several years, however, Iowa has not formally coordinated a Sandhill Crane survey effort in conjunction with ICF. That is about to change. With the number of birds steadily increasing each year, Iowa's Wildlife Diversity Program feels it is time to be more actively involved in monitoring the return of this majestic "prehistoric" creature to Iowa wetlands. This spring, April 25th, 1998, will mark the first formal Sandhill Crane Count in Iowa. Now you, too, can be one of those early risers braving the elements on a brisk, yet tranquil spring morning to watch and listen for Sandhill Cranes heralding the coming of warm weather.

### *How the Count Began...*

The Annual Sandhill Crane Count was started in 1975 as a high school project. The purpose of the count was twofold. One, it served as an excellent tool for teaching about cranes and wetlands. Secondly, the count was a means of

collecting information about the distribution and frequency of cranes in Wisconsin. Today, the survey takes place in five Midwestern states (Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Michigan) and involves over 3,100 volunteers. Participants have collected a staggering quantity of information, which has been shared with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as well as with other state agencies and conservation groups. This information is used to analyze population changes over time and to monitor recovery and return of cranes to their natal breeding grounds.

A multi-state survey is an extensive undertaking. As a result, there are biases inherent in the count. The count is scheduled after migration to avoid counting migrating cranes, but before the birds become secretive and difficult to find as the nesting season begins. A Saturday in mid-April is the best compromise. A late spring, however, brings late migration which results in a larger count, while an early spring brings early nesting, which results in a lower count. Weather on the day of the count also affects results, since fog can obscure the birds and heavy wind may mask calls, causing the final tally to be low. Heavy snow or rainstorms may also prevent some participants from reaching their site. These effects all complicate the process of making comparisons between years, and explain much of the year-to-year fluctuation in the numbers of cranes. However, data collected from this annual count is still valuable in analyzing population changes over time and to monitor dispersal to new sites.

To diminish the effects weather may have on results, data is averaged within two periods of three years each. This average is then compared with the average from the next period. For example, data from 1983 – 1985 is averaged and compared with the average from data collected from 1986 – 1988. By comparing the average

number of individual cranes and pairs per site, population changes over a given time period can be analyzed as to whether they are increasing, decreasing or remaining stable. All too often, biologists are only able to document the decline of a species. But now, crane counters are witnessing the opposite trend as crane populations increase and expand their range outward from central Wisconsin. Further evidence for range expansion comes from other Midwestern states. Illinois, Indiana and Ohio have all recorded nestings in the 1980s, their first in over 70 years. Iowa recorded a nesting in 1992, our state's first since 1894! Experience history in the making by becoming a volunteer for the Annual Sandhill Crane Count. Your reward will be witnessing the return of a majestic bird to Iowa wetlands.

The annual crane count is held around the third weekend in April. In 1998, the count will be on Saturday, April 25th. If you would like to be a volunteer "Crane Counter", please contact Jaime Edwards at (515) 432-2823.

*Produced by Iowa's Wildlife Diversity Program, modified from "20 Years of Counting Cranes: What Have We Learned?," International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, Wisconsin.*

## Book Reviews

**Iowa Sportsman's Atlas.** Sportsman's Atlas Company. 1998. 110 pp. \$19.95.

**Iowa Atlas & Gazetteer.** DeLorme. 1998. 64 pp. \$16.95.

These two new state atlases are very useful additions to any outdoor enthusiast's library. Both are available at local bookstores.

This is the latest edition of the *popular Iowa Sportsman's Atlas*, which makes use of Iowa

DOT county road maps, one county per page. All public areas are marked in red, and the accompanying text on each page includes brief descriptions of these areas, as well as special attractions and a listing of hotels and motels in the county. The maps include all county roads, but only paved county roads are named, which can make navigation difficult. Some maps are so crowded with information that it is difficult to determine the exact location of certain sites. These criticisms aside, the atlas is an invaluable aid in locating public areas. The *Sportsman's Atlas* is an oversized 11" x 14", has durable laminated covers and is conveniently spiral-bound.

The *Iowa Atlas & Gazetteer* is a brand new offering in the popular DeLorme series of state topographic atlases. The 11" x 15" atlas features 51 pages of professionally-detailed, color topographic maps which are more visually appealing than the road maps in the *Sportsman's Atlas*. Land features such as forests, waterways, and elevations are clearly visible, and unpaved county roads at regular intervals are named. The gazetteer section includes listings of federal and state lands, biking and hiking trails, canoe trips, historic sites, scenic drives, campgrounds, and fishing and hunting areas. Many of the public areas featured in the *Sportsman's Atlas* are not marked. For example, Kent Park, Hanging Rock Woods, Muskrat Slough, Matsell Bridge Natural Area, and Redbird Farms Wildlife Area, all marked in the *Sportsman's Atlas*, are not listed. However, the *Iowa Atlas & Gazetteer* does feature state preserves, which are not listed in the *Sportsman's Atlas*.

Which atlas should you buy? The *Sportsman's Atlas* gets the nod because of its more comprehensive listing of public lands. However, the *Iowa Atlas and Gazetteer* is a better all-purpose atlas. Personally I plan to use both.

– Chris Edwards

## Bird Notes

**BIRDSOURCE WEB SITE MONITORS BIRD POPULATIONS.** BirdSource, a new web site co-sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, has been launched to track bird movements. Birders report their sightings over the Internet, and the results are then made available on the web site. During the past winter, BirdSource was used to track what may have been a record-breaking winter finch invasion across North America. Colorfully animated maps were updated regularly to show how the invasion progressed. In February, the BirdSource Great '98 Backyard Bird Count was held. Nearly 15,000 people reported more than half a million birds seen during the three-day count. BirdSource's next endeavor, Warblers on the Web, will take place this spring. The site will also be used to compile Christmas Bird Count and Project FeederWatch data. Visit BirdSource at <http://birdsource.cornell.edu>.

**EL NINO EAGLES.** This winter's mild weather caused by El Nino had an effect on the number of Bald Eagles wintering in Iowa. The DNR's recent winter Bald Eagle count tallied a record 1,737 birds, compared to the previous high of 1,473 recorded last year. According to DNR wildlife technician Bruce Ehresman, open water was so readily available that eagles were able to winter throughout the state. While both Iowa and Minnesota experienced record counts, the count in Missouri, which is always the leading state for wintering eagles, was way down. Many of the eagles that normally winter in Missouri apparently stayed farther north this year.

– Cedar Rapids Gazette

**FISH-EATING BIRDS UNDER ATTACK. A**

depredation order for Double-crested Cormorants has been proposed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that would allow fish farmers to kill cormorants preying on their fish stocks. According to the FWS, 92,000 cormorants would be killed annually, and the population, estimated at 1-2 million birds and growing 8% a year, would not be affected. Sport fisherman are also joining the aquaculture industry in demanding that the FWS control fish-eating birds such as cormorants, kingfishers, herons, ibises, and egrets. The FWS disputes fishermen's claims that fish-eating birds cause major reductions in sport fish populations.

– *Ornithological Newsletter*

**POWER LINE HAZARD.** Last fall about 75 Franklin's Gulls died near Sibley, Iowa, after being blown into utility lines during a violent thunderstorm. Most of the birds had broken or amputated wings, and state biologists concluded that the flock had been blown into the wires during the storm the night before. About 50 birds were found dead, and another 25 were so badly injured that they had to be euthanized.

– *Birdwatcher's Digest*

### **CERULEAN WARBLER ATLAS PROJECT.**

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology is expanding its Cerulean Warbler Atlas Project to the Midwest and Southeast this year. The project, aimed at surveying known and potential breeding sites, was launched last year in the Northeast. Participants surveyed for breeding pairs, established whether males were holding territories, searched for signs of possible nesting success, and recorded critical habitat information. The Lab will attempt to identify important populations of Cerulean Warblers in each state and determine their status. This information will be used to develop a detailed atlas of the species' populations and a set of land-management guidelines and conservation strategies for this high-priority species. If you would like to participate in the project, contact the Lab by mail at CEWAP, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850, by telephone at (607) 254-2446, or by e-mail at forest\_birds@cornell.edu.

– *Birdscope*

## Iowa City Bird Club

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



**For general bird club information,** contact Iowa City Bird Club president Rick Hollis at 338-4834.

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