

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 19 Number 2

September 1999

Calendar

Field trips, unless otherwise noted, leave from Terrill Mill Park, located across N. Dubuque Street from the Mayflower. Destinations may be changed at the discretion of the leader prior to leaving Terrill Mill; please contact the leader in advance if you plan to meet the group at the trip destination.

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.

September 12, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Hickory Hill Park or other local areas for warblers and other early migrants. Come prepared for heavy dew on the grass. James Huntington, 338-1837.

September 18, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Annual Hawkwatch at Stainbrook Preserve. For more information (including directions to the preserve), see the announcement on page two, or call Dave Conrads at 335-9293 or Chris Edwards at 626-6362.

October 9, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Cone Marsh in Louisa County for waterfowl. Eric Haley, 338-7341.

October 21, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Dean Able will present a program about mushrooms.

October 24, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Lake Macbride and surrounding local areas. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

November 14, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area near Palo for diving ducks, loons, and grebes. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

November 18, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. Cal and Bernie Knight will present “Enchanted Owls: Their Myths and Legends”.

Other Dates of Note

September 9 – 12, Thursday – Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists’ Union Fall Meeting at Ottumwa, in conjunction with the Inland Bird Banding Association and the Association of Field Ornithologists. Call Rick Hollis at 338-4834 or Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 for more information.

Other Dates of Note

September 25 – 26, Saturday – Sunday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.. Annual Hawkwatch at Effigy Mounds National Monument north of Marquette in Allamakee County. The schedule includes educational presentations, films, and fun activities for kids. Exhibits, raptor mounts, and live birds will be on display. For more information call (319) 873-3491.

News

ANNUAL HAWKWATCH. The Iowa City Bird Club will co-sponsor an annual hawkwatch on Saturday, September 18, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Stainbrook Preserve along the Coralville Reservoir. Bring your lawn chairs and binoculars and spend the morning. Telescopes will be set up for spotting migrating raptors. Banders from the nearby Cornell College banding station may bring netted raptors to Stainbrook for release.

To reach Stainbrook Preserve, from North Liberty take Front Street (which becomes Mehaffey Bridge Road) north 3.0 miles. Just beyond the bridge over the Coralville Reservoir, park along the roadside. The preserve is located on the hill to the right just past the entrance to Sugar Bottom Recreation Area.

Hourly programs will be held at the Raptor Center at nearby Macbride Nature Recreation Area:

9:00 a.m. Hawk Identification

10:00 a.m. Osprey Introduction

11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m. Live Raptor Programs

For more information, call Dave Conrads at 335-9293 or Chris Edwards at 626-6362.

PEARL KNOOP COLLECTION AT U OF I.

The papers of Marble Rock teacher/librarian/birdwatcher Pearl Knoop, who died last November, have been donated to the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa. The collection consists mostly of Ms. Knoop's bird lists from 1933 to 1998.

The library's finding aid says in part: "The papers are a record of Knoop's bird watching activities during these years; they also contain weather data from newspaper clippings and a card file of her bird sightings. The daily bird watching diaries provide some insight into Knoop's daily life, noting where she was and what she was doing when she sighted particular birds. On April 28, 1937, for example, she wrote, 'Came back from Floyd again Monday evening as school closed on account of Scarlet Fever. Went over to Schwarz' this afternoon, saw two Shrikes on way over ... Clair saw a Franklin Gull today.'"

The Iowa Women's Archives is located on the third floor of the University of Iowa Main Library, and is open to the public 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday. More information is available at the following web page: www.lib.uiowa.edu/iwa/.

– *Mary Noble*

FOURTH OF JULY BUTTERFLY COUNT. This summer Chris Caster, Eric Haley, and I turned our binoculars towards those other flying jewels, butterflies, and participated in the 25th annual Fourth of July Butterfly Count sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). We conducted our count on July 24 in the same count circle that is used for the Iowa City Christmas Bird Count. Despite the 101-degree heat and humidity, we had a fun day and tallied 741 butterflies of 29 different species. We visited areas of restored tallgrass prairie, open woodlands, and wetlands in Kent Park, Lake Macbride State Park, and

Hawkeye Wildlife Area.

Species sighted included Black Swallowtail, Giant Swallowtail, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Clouded Sulphur, Orange Sulphur, Little Yellow, Dainty Sulphur, Bronze Copper, Eastern Tailed-Blue, 'Summer' Spring Azure, American Snout, Great Spangled Fritillary, Meadow Fritillary, Question Mark, Eastern Comma, American Lady, Red Admiral, Common Buckeye, Red-spotted Purple, Viceroy, Hackberry Emperor, Common Wood-Nymph, Monarch, Silver-spotted Skipper, Common Sootywing, Least Skipper, Fiery Skipper, and Peck's Skipper.

The Fourth of July Butterfly Count program has been held annually since 1975. In 1998, 346 counts were held throughout North America, including two in Iowa. The results are compiled and published in an annual report. For more information on NABA, send a self-addressed, stamped business envelope to NABA, 4 Delaware Road, Morristown, NJ 07960; or check out their web site at www.naba.org.

– *Chris Edwards*

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

April 18, Ringgold County and Lake Rathbun. We all met shortly before 6 a.m. Sunday morning at The Lodge, by Mt. Ayr's Historic Square, with Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist Mel Moe. The day started out chilly at 32 degrees F, sunny and clear. We drove a few miles east of Mt. Ayr to a fantastic viewing area. There we were treated to a fabulous view of 11 male Greater Prairie Chickens displaying for 2 females. Mel filled us in on the history of the re-introduction of this species. All the birds found today are native. None of the original banded birds brought in are still found, but their

progeny are displaying in several areas in Ringgold County. At 8 a.m. we went to another nearby lek where we had to remain in our cars to see two males displaying a few feet from the road. However, before the second car could completely turn around to get a good view the birds were spooked by the appearance of a coyote. Mel told us that the males start displaying in January; the females do not appear until later. The males display every morning from shortly before sunrise until 8 a.m., and every evening from sunset until dark. The area we visited has been bought by the DNR, which plans to build a viewing stand so visitors can be higher than the birds. We needed binoculars or scopes to see, since we were probably 100 yards from the birds across a level hayfield. It was a very memorable experience that I hope to repeat this next spring.

Following breakfast in Mt. Ayr, the participants dispersed to find their own ways back to Iowa City. Four of us (Ray, Eric, Mary, and Karen) stopped at Rathbun Lake and birded the Island View area from noon to about 2:00 p.m. The most memorable part of this portion of the trip was seeing a turkey fly overhead for 500 feet or more. A group of hunters had flushed the bird.

Participants: Ray Davenport, Karen Disbrow (leader), Jim and Karole Fuller, Janet and Mike Golio, Eric Haley, Cal and Bernie Knight, Mel Moe, Mary Noble.

Birds near Mt. Ayr (21 species): Greater Prairie Chicken (11 male, 2 female), Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, American Robin, European Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch,

House Sparrow.

Birds at Lake Rathbun (31 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Killdeer, Wild Turkey, Ring-billed Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Mourning Dove, Common Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, American Robin, Eastern Bluebird, European Starling, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

– Karen Disbrow

April 24, Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Williams Prairie. This field trip was scheduled for a spring evening with night birds and amphibians in mind. Our first stop was at the Gun Club Ponds along Greencastle Avenue at Hawkeye Wildlife Area, where we saw Wood Ducks and a Green Heron and heard the first of the evening's many Chorus Frogs. As dusk fell we moved up Greencastle Avenue to the Half Moon Lake area. Many ducks and other water birds flew over on their way to their roosts, and those birders with sharp ears and eyes were able to hear and see the flight displays of several nearby American Woodcocks. We heard many more Chorus Frogs and several Northern Leopard Frogs, as well as a Great Horned Owl. Next we moved on to Williams Prairie to listen for Common Snipe winnowing. We arrived in time to hear three brief displays before the noise of a distant chainsaw took over. We also heard Barred Owls and Spring Peepers. On the way home we stopped at a roadside grove and successfully roused an Eastern Screech-Owl.

Participants: Margrieta Delle, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Therese Guedon, Eric Haley, and two people whose names have escaped me

(sorry!)

Birds (28 species): Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Snipe, American Woodcock, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Tree Swallow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird.

– Karen Disbrow / Chris Edwards

May 23, Lake Macbride and Hawkeye Wildlife Refuge. The word was that Dudgeon Lake, the original destination for our field trip, was flooded out, so our trio of birders headed for the Lake Macbride area. We began with a search for the Prairie Warbler along Cottage Reserve Road, but had no luck. The first birds we picked up there were typical commoners for the habitat. The rain that had been threatening caught us at the entrance to the boat storage area, and the day looked a bit discouraging. However, ten minutes later the rain let up and the clouds gradually retreated over the course of the morning. We ended with spring-like temperatures, mostly clear skies, and rising winds.

At Cottage Reserve our walk through the woods began a bit too quietly for comfort. We decided to turn back about halfway in, and while we were looking in the direction of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo's song an Olive-sided Flycatcher lit on a bare branch right in front of us. This friendly bird lifted our hopes a bit. A minute later we had a nicely perched Broad-winged Hawk who flashed his broad-banded tail when he flew off. We emerged from the woods and headed for the residential section hoping for Purple Martins. We were disappointed in that quest, but we did

spot a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and as we returned to the car we heard a Yellow-throated Warbler back in the woods.

At Lake Macbride State Park South Eric Haley picked out the song of an Orchard Oriole, which allowed us a very long and leisurely look at close range. From there we wandered to Macbride Nature Recreation Area. We spent a long time trying to put our binoculars on a persistently singing Cerulean Warbler but in the end he eluded us.

Our final destination was Hawkeye Wildlife Area, mainly to look for the two Little Blue Herons that had been seen recently. Our best birds turned out to be along the Babcock Access road. On the pool one first encounters on the west side there was a smattering of marsh ducks, including a somewhat surprising American Wigeon. Two grassy spits on that same pool had plenty of shorebirds, but a number of Dunlins were all we could make out with binoculars. Amazingly, our fearless leader (me) had decided not to throw his spotting scope into the trunk before we left Terrill Mill Park. He will not make that mistake twice! The road to the access itself was flooded out, but on our way back we spotted a beautiful Lark Sparrow perched in a fallen dead branch, fairly near the roadside. He was quite unbothered by us stopping, nor by a passing pick-up truck with what was either a large dog or a small horse running behind it. We continued on down west of Greencastle but did not find the Little Blue Herons.

Participants: Ray Davenport, Mike Dooley (leader), Eric Haley.

Birds (59 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Green Heron, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal,

Northern Shoveler, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Dunlin, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker*, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher*, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse*, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler*, Cerulean Warbler*, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, meadowlark species, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

*Heard but not sighted.

– Mike Dooley

June 12, Indiangrass Hills in Iowa County. This trip was scheduled for Redbird Farms Wildlife Area in Johnson County; however, recent trips to land in Iowa County prompted a change in plans. Mike Dooley introduced me to this property due to a Birdline report of a Henslow's Sparrow sighting. Mike made contact with Sandy Rhodes in Iowa City, one of the co-owners of what has been called "Indiangrass Hills." The owners are private conservationists who hope to restore the nearly 640 acres of rolling hills to prairie. Much of the land is covered by short grass prairie, but there are also wooded strips and dogwood thickets. Nearly all our birds were heard or sighted from the roadside. We did make a short walk into one of the fields to find Dickcissel, Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrow and had really great looks at the latter two. There was also a large Fox Snake

at the entrance to the path. Bell's Vireos were heard in a few locations, but despite our patience they did not cooperate for viewing. A Northern Mockingbird entertained us from a large dead tree with flight displays and a large song repertoire.

To reach this area take I-80 exit 226 (Marengo-North English) south two miles to 240th St. Then turn west for three miles until you reach J Ave. Go south on J Ave. for one mile and turn west onto 250th St. Along 250th, vireos and mockingbirds have been seen, usually to the south, and Orchard Oriole, Loggerhead Shrike and Willow Flycatcher have also been seen. Continue west on 250th until the road becomes I Ave. heading south and go about one-half mile until you reach the pole-barn at the top of the hill. Park there and walk across the road, following a north-easterly path that will take you into the field for Henslow's Sparrow and Sedge Wren.

The owners of the property are very enthused and informed about the plant and animal life found on "Indiangrass Hills." They are delighted to have people bird this excellent property, but ask that you heed the following restrictions: a) do not drive on the property; b) stay off the few cultivated row crop areas (mainly west of I Ave.) which are being turned to hay fields; c) avoid the red or yellow flags marking herbicide application; d) don't enter any of the old out-buildings, of which there are a few. They even have a guest book. Introduce yourself if you see them at the pole-barn or doing their prairie restoration work. They would be very interested in learning of any species discovered. For more information you may contact Richard S. Rhodes II, 2014 Rochester Ave., Iowa City, IA 52245 or sandyr@fyiowa.infi.net.

Participants: Chris Caster (leader), Mike Dooley, Li-Hsien Lin, Ramona McGurk

Birds (44 species): Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Bell's Vireo, Blue Jay, N. Rough-winged Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.—
Chris Caster

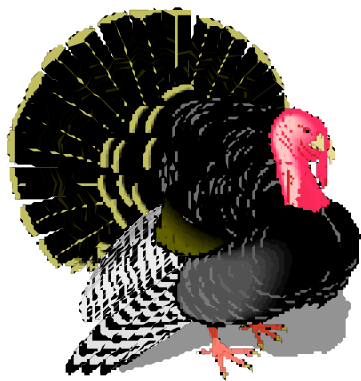
August 22, Hawkeye Wildlife Area. The morning started well with a stop along Swan Lake Road, where James coaxed a cooperative Sedge Wren into view in a roadside ditch. A short stop at Swan Lake produced a few water birds and swallows, but very few passerines. We spent most of the morning viewing the many shorebirds and water birds along the Babcock Access road and at Sand Point. Two American Avocets, one still in worn breeding plumage, provided the highlight of the trip. Shorebird diversity was not great, but there were impressive numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers. Pelicans, herons, and egrets were abundant, and there were still several active cormorant nests. A distant Franklin's Gull provided an identification challenge and provoked much discussion.

Participants: Chris Edwards, Julie Englander,

Therese Guedon, Eric Haley (leader), James Huntington, Tom Kent, Li-Hsien Lin, Mary Noble, Sue Spieker.

Birds (64 species): Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, American Avocet, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, dowitcher sp., Common Snipe, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, *empidonax* sp., Eastern Kingbird, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– Eric Haley / Chris Edwards



1999 Johnson County Spring Migration Count

Chris Caster

The county-wide bird count was held on Saturday, May 8th. The weather conditions were overcast and a mist was falling through the late morning hours and into the afternoon. The temperature hovered around a cool 50 degrees all day. Fortunately we had a good turnout and most persons were able to bird both the morning and afternoon. Our lunch time meeting was held at the shelter at Penn Meadows Park in North Liberty.

Coverage of the county was good and the total species count was 121, up from last year's total of 113, but still far short of the 145 species total from 1997. Again shorebirds seemed to be the deficiency. Water levels at Hawkeye Wildlife Area were quite high and only seven shorebird species were recorded.

The group did locate some good birds. Julie discovered a Mississippi Kite at Hickory Hill Park, which was by far the day's best bird. Other finds included Greater White-fronted Goose, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Mockingbird, and Cerulean and Yellow-throated warblers.

There were certainly many birds which we might have recorded but did not. Worth mentioning is the Prairie Warbler which had been so dependable at Lake Macbride in recent years. It was not located this year.

Participants included Jack and Ann Bagford, Chris Caster, Liz Christiansen, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards with daughter Mary, Jonni Ellsworth, Julie Englander, Eric Haley, Tom Kent, and Cal Knight (feeder watcher). Thanks

to all who helped.

SPECIES LIST

Grebes to Rails

Pied-billed Grebe	3
American White Pelican	260
Double-crested Cormorant	200
Great Blue Heron	9
Green Heron	3
Turkey Vulture	17
Greater White-fronted Goose	1
Snow Goose	5
Canada Goose	47
Wood Duck	11
Gadwall	2
Mallard	15
Blue-winged Teal	30
Lesser Scaup	8
Ruddy Duck	1
Osprey	1
Mississippi Kite	1
Cooper's Hawk	1
Broad-winged Hawk	7
Red-tailed Hawk	5
American Kestrel	3
Ring-necked Pheasant	10
Wild Turkey	4
Sora	10
American Coot	96

Shorebirds to Woodpeckers

Killdeer	15
Solitary Sandpiper	3

Spotted Sandpiper	5	White-breasted Nuthatch	7
Pectoral Sandpiper	2	Carolina Wren	2
Short-billed Dowitcher	1	House Wren	56
Common Snipe	3	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
American Woodcock	3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	12
Ring-billed Gull	9		
Caspian Tern	4	<i>Thrushes to Warblers</i>	
Black Tern	2	Eastern Bluebird	13
Rock Dove	13	Gray-cheeked Thrush	1
Mourning Dove	21	American Robin	53
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Gray Catbird	52
Great Horned Owl	1	Northern Mockingbird	1
Barred Owl	3	Brown Thrasher	14
Common Nighthawk	1	European Starling	69
Chimney Swift	18	Cedar Waxwing	12
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1	Blue-winged Warbler	1
Belted Kingfisher	2	Tennessee Warbler	7
Red-headed Woodpecker	8	Nashville Warbler	3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	13	Yellow Warbler	12
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5	Magnolia Warbler	1
Downy Woodpecker	11	Yellow-rumped Warbler	30
Hairy Woodpecker	1	Black-throated Green Warbler	7
Northern Flicker	5	Blackburnian Warbler	1
Pileated Woodpecker	1	Yellow-throated Warbler	2
		Palm Warbler	8
<i>Flycatchers to Gnatcatchers</i>		Blackpoll Warbler	1
Least Flycatcher	1	Cerulean Warbler	3
Eastern Phoebe	3	American Redstart	20
Great Crested Flycatcher	5	Northern Waterthrush	2
Eastern Kingbird	15	Louisiana Waterthrush	1
Yellow-throated Vireo	4	Common Yellowthroat	9
Warbling Vireo	8		
Red-eyed Vireo	5	<i>Towhees to House Sparrows</i>	
Blue Jay	55	Eastern Towhee	3
American Crow	77	Chipping Sparrow	29
Horned Lark	3	Field Sparrow	9
Purple Martin	1	Lark Sparrow	1
Tree Swallow	257	Savannah Sparrow	3
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	20	Grasshopper Sparrow	1
Bank Swallow	56	Song Sparrow	117
Cliff Swallow	62	White-throated Sparrow	24
Barn Swallow	211	White-crowned Sparrow	9
Black-capped Chickadee	49	Northern Cardinal	69
Tufted Titmouse	13	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5

Indigo Bunting	11
Bobolink	5
Red-winged Blackbird	306
Eastern Meadowlark	2
Western Meadowlark	2
Common Grackle	48
Brown-headed Cowbird	38
Orchard Oriole	1
Baltimore Oriole	22
House Finch	13
American Goldfinch	85
House Sparrow	51

To report a rare bird or hear about
the latest sightings, call the

Iowa Birdline
(319) 338-9881

Lake Macbride Osprey Introduction Project

Eric Haley

Despite the availability of existing nesting habitat along Iowa's rivers and lakes, Osprey are an uncommon sight in the state except during the height of their migration. While there are no documented nesting records, there is some anecdotal evidence that these fish-eating raptors nested in the state prior to European settlement. Currently, the Macbride Raptor Project, in a partnership with the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the USFWS, is in its third year of an Osprey introduction program aimed at establishing a wild breeding population of five pairs in the Lake Macbride and Coralville Reservoir area by 2006. This year, Waterloo/Cedar Falls joined the introduction program, and other sites may be selected in the near future.

Each year, four hatch-year birds, four to six weeks old, are provided by the Wisconsin DNR. They are brought to a hack tower in the Macbride Nature Recreation Area with the hope that they will imprint on the area and return there when they are ready to breed. After the birds fledge, volunteers with the Macbride Raptor Project observe their movements as they over time spread out over an increasingly larger area. The hack tower is located on the Iowa River between the spillway at Lake Macbride and the Mehaffey Bridge on County Road F-28, and during the month of August most of the birds can be found in this area.

This year's birds will most likely remain along Lake Macbride and the Iowa River through the end of September. Birders in Johnson County can help with the project by reporting any

sightings of these birds to the Macbride Raptor Project. The four Osprey from this year can be identified by looking for a colored mark on the shoulder of one of their wings. When the bird is perched, this mark appears on the "shoulder" of the wing; in flight it can be seen on the crook of the wing. The birds will have blue or pink on either the left or the right wing; therefore they are called Right Blue, Right Pink, Left Blue, and Left Pink. These non-toxic, water-resistant marks will wear off after several months. The birds are more permanently marked with two silver bands, one on each leg.

In mid-August, these birds were joined by another juvenile Osprey that appears to also have these bands. If this sighting is confirmed, this bird could be the first sign of the success of the program – a released bird that has returned from its wintering grounds to the site of its fledging.

To report a sighting of a color-marked or banded Osprey in the Lake Macbride area (this year or next), call Jodeane Cancilla at the Macbride Raptor Project at (319) 398-5495. With luck, Osprey will become a much more common sight in Johnson County in a few years!

Call the same number if you have an interest in volunteering with the Osprey project next summer. The birds arrive in mid- to late June, and volunteer responsibilities for the first few weeks involve going to the hack tower to feed and observe the birds. After the Osprey have fledged, volunteers observe the birds by walking the shoreline or taking a canoe out on the water.



Visiting the International Crane Foundation

Bernie Knight

Have you visited the International Crane Foundation at Baraboo, Wisconsin? If not, why not? If you have, when was the last time? A weekend in the fall driving to Wisconsin offers a varied number of birding experiences. A trip to the Crane Foundation can be combined with a visit to the Birds in Art Exhibit at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum.

The International Crane Foundation is located five miles north of Baraboo, and is open to visitors May 1 through October 31. When will you ever be able to see fifteen species of the world's cranes? How much money and travel time would this add up to?

Drive through attractive wrought-iron sculptured gates and check out the visitor center. Do spend time listening to a lecture and slide show presented in a domed auditorium, where you are surrounded by crane murals. Allow time to walk the guided paths. Listen to the bugling of cranes. At times three or more species will stir your soul as they feature their specific calls.

“Making a Difference: The International Crane Foundation's Story” is a four-page presentation covering the profound reverence for these magnificent birds. In Japan, the cranes are honored as symbols of long life and a happy marriage. In Vietnam cranes are believed to carry the souls of the dead to heaven. In other countries native inhabitants have incorporated the crane's graceful movements into their own dances.

Many birders are aware of two Cornell University graduate students, George Archibald and Ron Sauey, who met in 1971. Through their interests in crane behavior they founded the ICF on the horse farm owned by Ron's parents, just north of Baraboo, Wisconsin. (The Knights visited this first accommodation some years ago.) The international scope which these two young men's organization has reached, along with habitat preservation and restoration, brings about far-reaching goodwill and cooperation with many countries. In fact, their goodwill in foreign countries has established rapport where our political figures have failed.

Currently the foundation is located in a new location featuring a wheel-shape designed building, housing the various cranes. Also, an outdoor amphitheater allows visitors to sit and watch (bring your camera) as the rare Whooping Crane pair stroll out in front of you – as they live within a well-simulated setting of a Wisconsin wetland.



Located on the present 225-acre site you will find laboratories and a hatchery. A costumed “parent” teaches juvenile cranes feeding tactics. In another location on the site, but not open to visitors, is “Crane City”, a complex of crane pens and buildings. This site was completed in 1989 and contains 66 pens for breeding the endangered cranes of the world. ICF has developed training programs to teach conservation strategies and sponsor a limited number of promising foreign students from Russia, China, and other countries in developing environmental education programs for people who live in and around crane reserves.

It is just 200 miles from Iowa City to Baraboo, where you can walk a thriving prairie, visit cranes from fifteen different countries, and leave with a deep respect for the Crane Foundation. You will marvel at the exquisite beauty of the African Black-crowned Cranes as an inquisitive pair follows you along an extended fence line.

The International Crane Foundation’s mailing address is P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, Wisconsin, 53913-0447, and their phone number is (608) 356-9462.

123 miles farther north of Baraboo finds you at an attractive mansion museum featuring “Birds in Art”, an international exhibition organized by the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum at Wausau, Wisconsin. Birding friends from Wisconsin cued us in on this wonderful display of bird art. Each year for 25 years this has been a specialized feature. This year the exhibit runs September 11 to November 14. You will gaze in awe at paintings and sculptures of the birding world produced by world-famous artists. Just one example is a bronze in the outdoor sculpture court of a family of life-like Wood Ducks perched on a 60” log. Add this display to your travels. You won’t be sorry!

Bird Notes

THE LIFE OF BIRDS. If you haven’t already tuned in to *The Life of Birds*, David Attenborough’s new 10-part series currently airing on PBS, you should. The world-renowned wildlife expert made 70 filming trips to 42 countries and flew over 250,000 miles to produce the series. He investigates birds’ capacity for flight, methods of hunting and food gathering, courtship and mating rituals, and complex social systems. More than 300 bird species are featured. The series airs at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday and again at 6:00 p.m. Sunday. A handsome companion book is also available from Princeton University Press (cloth, \$29.95).

– *Birder’s World*

IS EXTINCTION REVERSIBLE? According to an astounding note in the October issue of *WildBird*, scientists in New Zealand are attempting to revive an extinct bird species through cloning. The Huia bird held great cultural significance for the Maori, New Zealand’s indigenous population, because of its large white-tipped black tail feathers. These feathers caused a European fashion craze, and the bird was over-hunted to extinction in the 1920s. Scientists and ethicists met in July and decided that, despite ethical and financial concerns, cloning should be attempted. Researchers will search for cells to clone in the bones and tendons of preserved specimens. If none are found, they will try to extract DNA from the specimens and use “Jurassic Park technology”. If that method fails, the nucleus of a cell removed from a taxidermic Huia specimen could be fused with the ovum of another bird to start the regeneration. [Editor’s Note: does this mean that the Passenger Pigeon and Ivory-billed Woodpecker could one day be revived? The mind reels at the possibilities.] – *WildBird*

NEW EDITION OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE AVAILABLE. The long-awaited third edition of the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America is now in book stores. This guide has long been the favorite of many serious birders, and the new version offers many improvements. Eighty new species and 35 new color plates are featured in this edition, and even the old plates appear sharper and crisper. Many of the shorebird, gull, and flycatcher plates have been re-done. The colors on the range maps are easier to read, and subsections under each species account are highlighted with bold type. The most compelling reason to purchase the new guide, however, is that it incorporates all the name changes, splits, lumps, and sequence changes made to the American Ornithologists' Union checklist since the last edition (a lot has changed since 1983!) The guide lists for \$21.95.

– *Chris Edwards*

Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published three times per year (usually April, August, and December). Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to editor Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, or e-mail at CREdwards@aol.com.

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. **To lead a field trip**, contact field trip coordinator Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

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