

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXI, NUMBER 10
NOVEMBER 2014
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Saturday, November 8 Field Trip

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Saylorville Lake Visitor's Center on Saturday, November 8. From there we'll venture to various habitats around the lake and in the surrounding area, looking for loons, grebes and other migrating species. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Golden-crowned Kinglets, White-throated Sparrows and juncoes are busy flitting among the falling leaves. Bring binoculars, a snack and beverage and dress for the conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact field trip leader, Dennis Thompson at cdnthomps@acm.org , or 515-254-0837 or for more information.



"In the fields today the red fruit of the wild roses made a pleasant contrast to the autumnal browns...a few crickets were chirping faintly...A solitary hawk was sweeping in low, wide circles over the fields -- perhaps a marsh harrier..." (Selden Lincoln Whitcomb describing the landscape near Grinnell on November 20, 1885)



Tuesday, November 18 Program **Bird Nests – a Tour of Avian Architecture and Hidden Treasures** **By Bruce Ehresman**

Learning how to carefully spot and identify nests is a challenge welcomed by a growing number of experienced and beginning birders alike. From huge platform nests located high in trees to neatly woven cup nests hidden in the grass, the amazing diversity of nests nearly matches the diversity of the birds themselves. Join Bruce Ehresman as he discusses nest sites, nest types, and nest materials of birds in Iowa and beyond. Bruce will show how this information can help a keen observer determine the type of bird that made a particular nest - and how important those nesting aspects are to a bird's life cycle. In addition to photos, he will bring in various examples of nests for first-hand views. Bruce participated in both of Iowa's Breeding Bird Atlases, during which time he spent several thousand hours locating nests across the state. He is excited to share what he has learned with others who appreciate wildlife.

Bruce is a Wildlife Diversity Bird Biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at the Wildlife Research Station near Ledges State Park. He was recently presented the Iowa Conservation Hall of Fame Award by the Iowa Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Bruce and his wife Marlene live in Ames.

Meetings of Des Moines Audubon Society begin at 7 p.m. and are held in the lower level of Westminster Presbyterian Church, which is located at the corner of Beaver and Franklin Avenues in Des Moines. Parking is available on the north and west sides of the church and an elevator can be accessed at the west door. For information about this program, please contact Jane Clark at jclark@radiks.net or 515-223-5047.

Wilderness Symposium
Sunday, November 9, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Jester Park Lodge

*Where is your wild place? A Backcountry Ranger, a Wildlife Biologist
and a Naturalist/musician will share their wilderness stories.*

**2:30 Wilderness & Wildness by Connie Saylor Johnson,
U.S. Forest Service Wilderness Ranger**

3:30 Music by Naturalist/Musician Chuck Jacobsen

4:00 Iowa's Wildness by Pat Schlarbaum, IA DNR

Event sponsored by: Polk County Conservation & Dallas County Conservation

River Critters & Wildlife, by Dr. Jim Pease
Tuesday, December 2 at 11 a.m., Jester Park Lodge

Paddling Iowa rivers since the age of 12, Dr. Jim Pease is a wildlife and interpretive specialist who will help you find and understand the wildlife along Iowa's rivers. From birds and mammals to trees and shrubs, Jim knows them and knows how to help you understand them and their relationship with the river.

This program is part of OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors). There is no charge for the program, but an optional luncheon follows the program at noon in which pre-registration is required. The cost of the catered lunch is \$9.00. Lunch registration is due the Friday before the program. To register for lunch: www.leadingyououtdoors.org .

Also: Winter Birds
Tuesday, December 2 at 6:30-7:30 p.m., Jester Park Lodge

This presentation might make you the envy of the neighborhood. Learn all of the secrets to setting up a successful bird feeding station where you live. Birds you can attract, feeder types, food varieties, and placement in your yard will be a few of the topics discussed.

NEONICS AND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

By January 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency will ban the use of neonicotinoids, often called "neonics," at National Wildlife Refuges across the country. Neonics are widely used nerve insecticides that an increasing number of scientific studies have shown are harmful to bees, but also to birds, mammals, and fish. Most often, agricultural seeds are coated with the neonics, which spread the toxins throughout the plant as the plant grows. More importantly, recent studies have raised concerns over the impact of neonics on birds and on aquatic systems. Neonicotinoids currently account for 40 percent of the global pesticide market and are used to treat most of the corn and soybean crops in the U.S. Ironically, these nicotine-like chemicals were introduced in the 1990s in response to health concerns linked to older pesticides.

In the announcement concerning the phase-out of neonics on refuges, the chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Jim Kurth, wrote, "We have determined that prophylactic use, such as a seed treatment, of the neonicotinoid pesticides that can distribute systemically in a plant and can affect a broad spectrum of non-target species is not consistent with Service policy." In the same USFWS memo by Kurth, the Service announced that it will also begin to phase out the use of genetically modified crops to feed wildlife on refuges.

You can read the full memo at: www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/agricultural-practices-in-wildlife-management_20849.pdf
Access a summary: <http://refugeassociation.org/2014/08/u-s-fish-and-wildlife-service-bans-gmos-and-neonicotinoid-insecticides/>

From The September 2014 Birding Community E-bulletin

EAGLE "TAKE" PERMIT COULD START A TREND

Until 31 July, an eagle "take" permit had never been issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to a project in any industry. But after the nearly five years since "take" permits went into effect, to allow for the accidental harm or killing of eagles in the process of regular business, a permit was issued to a wind-power project in northern California.

Under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, eagle "take" permits can have a maximum term of five years, but in late 2013 the USFWS extended the maximum term to 30 years, which, corresponds to the operational life of most wind projects. This 30-year extension which supports a wind industry desiring a degree of certainty for its investments, not surprisingly generated opposition from several organizations, some which had even supported the five-year term.

With the previous rule, adopted in 2009, the USFWS had defended the five-year permitting process, stating at the time that a permit of any longer duration "would be incompatible with the preservation of the Bald or Golden Eagle." Accordingly, the increase to 30 years did not appear to be supported by any newly available information and came as a surprise to many.

The American Bird Conservancy has even filed suit in federal court in June, claiming that the 30-year policy is in violation with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. You can find details at: www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/140807.html.

Among the arguments made in defense of a shorter permitting period is the one that many factors impacting eagles and their populations (e.g., habitat loss, prey abundance, wildfires, and climate change) will surely change over a 30-year period, and the ability to plan for such changes will now become potentially more limited.

Defenders of the 30-year extension say that these newly revised permits will still require a review of the projects every five years, and that the projects may be required to undertake additional conservation measures.

Still, there is no legal mandate to comply with the eagle guidance, and not all wind-power projects will need to obtain an eagle-take permit. Realistically however, the USFWS will likely start to issue more eagle take permits for proposed and operating wind-power projects, and an increasing number of applications will also likely be submitted in the future.

The question arises: Can wind, solar, bio-fuel, and other renewable energy sources be encouraged without putting birds, bats, and related habitats at risk? The answer should be yes, but the ways to reach those goals - including the eagle issue - are fraught with many detours and pitfalls. Given the pending review and legal challenges, it is unclear how the eagle permitting process may evolve over the next few years, and how much-needed comprehensive "smart energy" approaches will result.

From The September 2014 Birding Community E-bulletin

MISSING THE SOUNDS OF SUMMER NIGHTS

By Ray Harden

A lady asked me about a strange sound she was hearing in the night that was coming from a grove of trees near her house. She said that it was a sound that she had never heard before, perhaps a cry from an animal or a bird. It was definitely an eerie sound, she said, different from the other sounds of a late summer's night. From her description I was sure that it was an immature great horned owl that was calling to its parents for food. When I saw the lady a few weeks later she said the creature making the sound was gone, and she did not miss it.

But the sounds of summer nights are things that I miss. Last summer there was a robin nesting in our yard that sang before the sun rose and sang long after sunset. He has flown south and I miss his cheery call. I fondly remember the night's sounds that I heard on camping trips in northern Minnesota, a whip-poor-will that called for hours behind my tent, the cry of a loon on the lake, the croaking of frogs, and the occasional howl of a timber wolf that echoed off the hills around the lake.

During the last evenings of summer and early autumn there are fewer sounds to hear in the night. In the last few days before a killing freeze, the annual cicadas begin screeching in late afternoon and field crickets produce their chirping sounds at the onset of darkness.

The katydids, large green insects similar to grasshoppers, were making the still nighttime air quiver with their song. It is a simple monotonous three note song that some writers have paraphrased as "Six more weeks" or "Frost is near".

When I take an evening walk in the woods along Frog Creek there are still a few frogs serenading as they cling to the last warm days of autumn. Sometimes I hear the call of a great horned owl that frequently roosts in a tall cottonwood tree. However, there are not as many sounds of living things now as there were in the days of summer.

The hush comes gradually over the land with the deepening of autumn. Unless we listen closely, we don't notice the change as our sense of hearing becomes attuned to the increasing sound of silence in the nocturnal air. When I am awakened in the middle of the night, I no longer hear the sounds of summer- I hear the coming of winter's silence.

"Goldfinches, mainly in dark winter plumage, are now busy feeding on weed seeds along the roads. We saw one flock of about twenty-five and lesser groups, welcoming the familiar 'I've cheated ye, I've cheated ye.'" (Selden Lincoln Whitcomb describing the countryside around Grinnell, Iowa, in 1886)

Please call 515-223-5047 to check on the status of your membership.

~~~MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE~~~

**Des Moines Audubon Society membership is for one year, from June to May.**

**Dues should be mailed to our Treasurer,  
Jim Clark, 9871 Lincoln Avenue, Clive, IA 50325**

**Please make checks payable to "Des Moines Audubon Society"**

**Membership Levels and Dues:**

Student (under 18).....\$1.00  
Individual Adult..... \$10.00  
Family.....\$15.00  
Life.....\$125.00  
(May be paid in five annual payments of \$25.00)

\*Additional Contribution for Conservation Projects \_\_\_\_\_

\*Additional Contribution for Bird Feeding Projects \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**9871 LINCOLN AVENUE**

**CLIVE, IA 50325**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**