THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXI, NUMBER 6
JUNE 2014
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK

DES MOINES AUDUBON FIELD TRIP--SATURDAY, JUNE 14

The Saturday, June 14 field trip of Des Moines Audubon Society will meet at 7:30 A.M. Gather in the northeast corner of the parking lot at Southridge Mall for a birding trip to various recreation and birding areas in Warren County, such as Lake Ahquabi State Park and Summerset Trail. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend. Contact field trip leader, Dennis Thompson at 515-254-0837 for more information.

HOW EXPENDABLE ARE BALD EAGLES?

In February 2013, an article in **The Birding Community E-bulletin** described a situation in Fisherville, Ontario, where a Bald Eagle nest in close proximity to an area designated to support a wind-power facility was removed. In that article, it was also stated that in the U.S, the Bald and Golden Eagle Act still covers active and inactive nests, making these sorts of activities difficult: http://refugeassociation.org/?p=7314#bald .

Unfortunately, there is increasing evidence that more eagle nests are being removed lately, and that more "take" permits related to wind-power are being granted across the country.

A recent count of eagle nest removals made by the Center for Conservation Biology (at the College of William and Mary in Virginia) indicates a clear uptick of this activity. The Center has been monitoring eagles and their nests within the Chesapeake Bay for decades. Since removal of Bald Eagles from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection, the Center has recorded an increase in nest trees cut during local logging operations. Thirteen nests have been recorded as cut since 2007.

In a summary, the Center states that the "recent increase in cutting of [Bald Eagle] nest trees may reflect a broader public misconception that nests are no longer protected following their delisting." For a summary of the situation by Bryan Watts, see: www.ccbbirds.org/2014/03/22/uptick-cutting-bald-eagle-nest-trees-social-experiment-continues/ .

From: The Birding Community E-bulletin, April 2014

CLIVE GREENBELT BIRD PROGRAM
Saturday, June 14, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The Green and Sustainable Clive Committee is sponsoring an educational program on birds in the Clive Greenbelt/Walnut Creek area. This event will be held Saturday, June 14th beginning at 9 a.m. in Porter Greenbelt Shelter which can be reached from 100th Street in Clive. The access road for the Greenbelt is just south of the Casey's Store where Swanson Boulevard intersects with 100th Street. Joe Boyles, naturalist with Polk County Conservation Board, will present the program and lead a walk on the trails in the park.

Green Energy: Green Enough for Birds?
By Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon

Most birders likely believe that moving to sources of environmentally friendly energy is a good thing. There's no doubt—at least in concept—that anything done to reduce use of carbon-emitting fuels is an admirable goal but at just what other costs? Losses of birds and habitat to multiple new energy sources indicate that for now, green energy should be colored in a darker shade.

New research and surveys are painting quite a bleak picture for birds. A recent peer-reviewed study in the scientific journal Biological Conservation indicates at least 328,000 birds now die annually in wind turbine collisions. With the projected expanse in wind farms by 2030, it is calculated that avian mortality will approach 1.4 million per year—and that doesn't even address the possible much larger losses of bats.

Recent disturbing news concerns birds burned to death at the world's largest solar energy farm in southern California. The Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating Station features 350,000 thousand solar panels (mirrors) that reflect light to three collecting towers situated in the midst of five square miles of panels. Concentrated light is used to heat water to steam energy, and temperatures surrounding the towers can reach 1,000 degrees. Since the facility opened this past winter, dozens of birds have been burned to death when attracted to the solar farm, probably viewed from above as if it were a lake. A two-year study to determine danger to birds at this facility is in progress, but it is already thought avian losses may be great enough to deter construction of similar facilities. Evidence shows that new photovoltaic solar arrays can produce 1.5 times more power, without generating such bird-frying heat.

Then there's ethanol—a product that when burned yields fewer carbon emissions than pure petroleum products. Good in theory, except that more petroleum fuels now are used to plant and harvest more crops for ethanol, while destroying millions of habitat acres and the carbon sequestration those acres provide. The latest innovation, using corn stover to make ethanol, also is leaving large expanses of Iowa's winter landscape completely denuded to ground level, with no place for wildlife to find shelter or food.

Green energy developers may admit to some avian losses from their ventures, but most also say something like, "There are lots of birds, so our project won't really make a difference". But that completely discounts additive mortality effects from hundreds of wind and solar farms. When combined with staggering losses to feral cats, power line collisions, and building collisions, billions of birds are now dying annually. In reality, there's no such thing as truly "green energy", and the best way for people to reduce bird mortality is for everyone to conserve energy by every possible means.

Reprinted with permission from: The Newsletter of Iowa Audubon, Volume 10, Number 1, April, 2014

PLEASE CALL 515-223-5047 IF YOU ARE NOT SURE IF YOUR DUES ARE UP-TO-DATE

~~~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_____

Coffee, Conscience and Bird Conservation
By Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon

To avian ecologists and many birders, our dwindling bird numbers can be attributed to several causes: habitat loss, pesticides, climate change, window and tower collisions, and predation by cats, to name a few. Some of these we can personally help reduce around our own homes, by ending pesticide use, reducing window reflections, or keeping our cats indoors. Larger global problems are hard for individuals except by helping educate the general public and by urging political action. But for coffee drinkers, there's something we can all do to help birds far beyond our borders.

Coffee is grown mostly in tropical regions of our planet. In the western hemisphere, plantations range from Mexico into the northern half of South America. This region is home to some of the beautiful and diverse avian life on earth, and it also serves as the wintering grounds for a large percentage of North America's breeding birds. So when habitat in those nations is lost to logging, mining, soybean farming, and industrial coffee plantations, the birds of both North and South America suffer.

Something American consumers can impact is how the coffee we enjoy every day is grown. Before the 1970s, much coffee farming consisted of small family operations that grew and hand-picked coffee in the understory of tropical and montane forests. Today, however, giant industrial food conglomerates produce a product most often seen in those familiar bright red or blue containers dominating grocery store shelves. This is mostly robusta coffee, a harsh variety with less flavor, requiring bright sun for growth. Harvested by large mechanical pickers, it is bulldozed and replanted every couple of years, because most types produce heavy crops only one time.

There is an alternative rising in popularity and which coffee-drinking birders should use if they value conservation of our planet's natural resources and their birding hobby. Arabica varieties have more flavor and usually thrive best in the shade of taller tropical vegetation. This is often a perennial producer, not yielding as heavy an annual crop, but which can keep producing for up to a dozen years, before replanting is necessary. Grown in smaller acreages and harvested by local workers, this also results in many more jobs for residents. Much is organically grown and sold through expanding "fair trade" markets. This all means that as many as 85-90% of the native bird species continue to thrive on such plantations. By contrast, in industrial sun-coffee plantations 90% or more of the avian species can disappear.

"Bird-friendly" coffee costs a little more than the product in those red or blue cans, but it's really a small price to pay for saving our birds. It can also be a little harder to find in stores, but many larger grocery chains and almost all organic food stores now carry shade-grown coffees, as do bird supply stores such as Wild Birds Unlimited. Some of the major US coffee house chains are moving towards more bird-friendly coffee, with Caribou Coffee taking the lead by now offering only bird-friendly coffee (also sold in most supermarket aisles today).

When buying coffee, look especially for those approved by the Smithsonian Institution ("Bird Friendly"®) or by the Rainforest Alliance (with a rainforest frog emblem). There are several others, but not all organic or fair-trade coffees are bird-friendly. So be sure to read the small print on the bag or can to assure it also says "shade grown". Then enjoy your daily coffee even more while you think about the Cerulean Warbler and Wood Thrush—not to mention Emerald Toucanet and White-winged Tanager—habitat you've helped preserve.

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"Oh, Give Me A Home"

"Primary cavity nesters, like woodpeckers and northern flickers, do the heavy construction for most cavity nesters, drilling holes or hollowing out nesting and roosting spaces. Secondary cavity nesters such as eastern bluebirds, black-capped chickadees and tree swallows, use holes made by primary cavity nesters, in addition to holes formed by natural processes of decay, insects, fire or breakage which are also used by American kestrels, screech-owls, wood ducks and barred owls. Many natural snag (standing dead or dying tree) trees contain a variety of nesting cavities. Generally, the bigger the snag, the greater the value to birds. Large snags provide greater areas for excavation and feeding and a larger number of holes for several primary cavity-nesting species.

By Pat Schlarbaum, with the Wildlife Diversity Program of Iowa DNR

March/April 1997 Iowa Conservationist
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THE PASSENGER PIGEON

The story of the extinction of a species that was probably the most populous bird in North American is a story studded with sadness. No one seemed to know or even care that the Passenger Pigeon was doomed until it was too late to do anything about it. Fueled by historic events at the time, a slaughter of epic proportions went virtually unheeded, with triple technological feats of the 19th century -- the telegraph, the spread of railroads, and, specifically, the invention of the refrigerated railroad car in the 1870s -- accelerating the demise of this species. In four decades (c.1860-1900) the species shrunk from "bewilderingly vast... to virtually gone."

Joel Greenberg chronicles this story in *A Feathered River Across the Sky* (2014, Bloomsbury), a story that otherwise might simply be depressing without some of the lessons Greenberg cites.

An absence of awareness concerning the species' biology, an ease in harvesting the birds for growing food needs, a rapid advance of technology, and a lag-time between unbridled harvesting and law-enforced wildlife management in America all combined to make the "impossible" happen - the extinction of the species.

Greenberg asks us to reflect on the enormity of the consequences of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. His recounting of this cautionary tale occurs during this centenary year, marking the death of "Martha" at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914, the world's last Passenger Pigeon to ever inhabit the earth.

We would be wise to consider the lessons.

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