

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXI, NUMBER 7
AUGUST 2014
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



AUGUST 9th FIELD TRIP

Please meet at the fountain at the NE corner of Waterworks Park (just inside the park off Fleur Drive) at 8:00 a.m. for our next field trip. We'll plan to bird both Waterworks and Ashworth Parks. Our main objective will be the Mississippi Kites that summer in the area. We'll also be on the lookout for the Acadian Flycatchers and Summer Tanagers that nest near Ashworth Pool. Please contact Denny Thompson at cnthomps@acm.org or 515-254-0837 for more information.

Iowa Ornithologist's Union Meeting, August 22-24

Spring and fall meetings of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union are the highlight of the birding year for many. This is a great time to see old friends and make new ones as well as enjoy some educational presentations and some great outings.

The fall meeting will be in Ankeny, Iowa, August 22 – August 24. We will be headquartered at the Best Western Metro North motel in Ankeny. There are many great birding locations in the area, including: Saylorville Reservoir, Big Creek State Park., Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt, and Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Shorebird migration should be in full swing and it's a prime time for late summer vagrants. Our keynote speaker will be John Vanderpoel from Denver, Colorado. Below is a description of his background and presentation:

John is the creator and producer of the critically acclaimed identification videos, the *Advanced Birding Video Series with Jon Dunn* that include *Large Gulls of North America*, *Small Gulls of North America* and *Hummingbirds of North America*. In September of 1966 as a teenager in the Chicago area, John became fascinated with birds after a cold front grounded dozens of warblers on the family property in Barrington, IL. He's been birding ever since. He has traveled extensively throughout the United States and Mexico both birding and filming for the video series.

In 2011, John set off to attempt a North American Big Year. His whirlwind adventure took him to all corners of North America. Scores of interesting people and more North American birds in one year than in his entire life awaited John. John's presentation "Full Chase Mode: My 2011 Big Year" will include different stories from his Big Year adventures, some humorous and some informative.

There will be two other presentations on Saturday afternoon:

Rich Leopold from Polk County Conservation will provide a status of the Polk County Water and Land Legacy Fund initiative titled "Exciting Promises Being Fulfilled". Also, Kevin Murphy will present results from his study of shorebird use of sheetwater in Iowa's Prairie Pothole region. Both should be very interesting programs.

Registration is \$20. For a full schedule, dining options, and field trips, visit www.iowabirds.org/meeting or contact Denny Thompson at 515-254-0837.

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

~~~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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Important Bird Area Spotlight Species: Bobolink (*Dolichonyx orizyvorus*)**

**By Doug Harr**

Ask a birder if there is an iconic symbol of grasslands or hayfields in the northern United States, and probability is high that many would say it's the Bobolink. A small member of the blackbird family, brightly patterned males sing from tall grass stems, weeds or even during flight—a gloriously melodic jingling that has resulted in an old nickname of “prairie bells”.

Bobolinks are remarkable because of their annual round-trip migrations of 12,000-13,000 miles, between breeding grounds in the northern US and southern Canada, and wintering grounds in central South America. But loss of grasslands that comprise both wintering and nesting habitat for Bobolinks has resulted in a steady and significant decline in populations. Losses of grasslands to row crop agriculture plus residential and industrial expansion into rural areas are very big culprits. Perhaps even worse is the fact that mid-summer hay cutting coincides almost precisely with peak Bobolink nesting activity, thereby destroying vast numbers of nests. In Brazil and Argentina, where most spend the winter, conversion of grasslands to soybeans or rice may be as serious a loss as North America's nesting habitat loss.

Bobolinks are an “area sensitive” species, requiring fairly large expanses of relatively open grasslands in order to successfully reproduce. In Iowa today there are fairly few expansive grassy landscapes, thus severely restricting prime nesting habitats. Sites of less than 40-acres in size, while sometime supporting a nest or two, may actually constitute a population “sink”, rather than a source, due to increased predation and other problems.

A polygynous species, female Bobolinks typically lay an average of 5-6 eggs sired by multiple males. Incubation lasts 10-13 days, with young fledging in a little less than two weeks. Ground nests are constructed in dense grasses and forbs, fine grasses lining an outer nest bowl of coarser grasses. Grasslands situated near wetlands are favored. Males do not conduct much nest defense, and females will run from the nest before flushing after a disturbance. Foods consist primarily of small seeds, spiders and insects, plus rice and small grains on their wintering grounds

Given their continued decline, Bobolinks will remain a “criteria species” for Iowa's Important Bird Areas. Conservation of remaining grasslands must be a top priority.

*Reprinted with permission from the Newsletter of Iowa Audubon, Volume 10, Number 2, August 2014*

## **The Pelicans are Returning to Iowa!**

On Sunday, September 7, join Iowa Audubon, The Iowa City Bird Club, Iowa DNR, US Army Corps of Engineers, Johnson County Conservation Board and others for the annual *PELICAN FESTIVAL* at Coralville Reservoir.

Come and view migrating American White Pelicans with spotting scopes, assisted by local bird experts. Programs about pelicans, other birds and wildlife will be presented throughout the afternoon, and exhibitors from several conservation organizations and commercial enterprises will have display booths. Lunch and refreshments will be available on the grounds, and kids can get a FREE face painting.

This fun annual event will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, 2564 Amana Road NW (east of Iowa Hwy 965), Swisher, IA. Follow directional signs, and Iowa DNR staff will direct you to parking areas.

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## **UTAH'S FIRST MODERN NESTING CALIFORNIA CONDORS**

Wildlife conservation organizations and public land management agencies excitedly and optimistically reported in early June that a California Condor apparently hatched in the wild in the state of Utah. This is a first for Utah since an experimental population of condors was released in Vermilion Cliffs National Monument in northern Arizona in 1996. While captive-bred condors have successfully nested in northern Arizona, the birds have been spending more time in Utah each succeeding year.

"It was only a matter of time before birds started nesting in Utah", said Chris Parish, Condor Field Project Supervisor with The Peregrine Fund. "There is great habitat in Utah and the condors did not take long to find it."

Observed parenting behaviors by the adult California Condors had been encouraging. But Parish reported that researchers were still waiting to visually confirm the existence of a condor chick. This would only happen when the young condor approaches the edge of the cave where it is being raised.

The Utah California Condor pair self-selected a nesting cavity in a remote canyon within Zion National Park, and the pair has been under observation by researchers since they began exhibiting courtship behavior this past winter. The nest cave, 1,000 feet above the canyon floor, was actually discovered by following radio and GPS signals from transmitters mounted on both parent birds. Earlier this year, the birds displayed behavior suggesting that they were incubating an egg, and they were exhibiting signs that they were tending a chick. Usually, one adult will stay in the nest cave caring for the egg or chick while the other forages widely. They will trade these roles every 2-3 days.

"This is a significant milestone in the process of restoring a species to its historical habitat," reported Keith Day, Wildlife Biologist with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. "It proves that Utah still has suitable habitat for these magnificent birds and that the selection of the Arizona-Utah region for establishing a population was a valid choice."

Currently, lead poisoning is the most significant obstacle to successful condor recovery in Arizona and Utah. Condors will ingest lead when feeding on the remains of animals shot with lead-based ammunition. Utah and Arizona both are working with hunters to reduce condor exposure to lead ammunition. "Our hunters have been very supportive of our lead ammunition reduction efforts," said Day. "They have readily and voluntarily joined in our program."

"The California Condors have become a very charismatic species and have been captured in many vacation photos in our area's national parks," adds Fred Armstrong, Chief of Resource Management and Research at Zion National Park. "Repeat visitors come to recognize them by their wing tag numbers and routinely ask about them."

The presence of California Condors in what is today Utah is known through remains dating back to the Pleistocene, but there is only a smattering of old Utah reports from the 19th century for the species.

For more information on the California Condor recovery program, visit: [www.peregrinefund.org/projects/california-condor](http://www.peregrinefund.org/projects/california-condor) .

From: **The Birding Community E-bulletin, July 2014**

## **BOBWHITE CONCERNS, BOBWHITE MEETING**

The current status of Northern Bobwhite in the U.S. is less than ideal. Once a common and prolific breeder in pastures, grassy roadsides, and farmlands across the eastern half of the country, the species has experienced a severe decline over a number of decades.

With this in mind, Northern Bobwhite experts from around the country were meeting in West Des Moines, Iowa, at the end of July for the 2014 meeting of the National Bobwhite Technical Committee (NBTC). The NBTC - comprised of representatives of state wildlife agencies, academic research institutions, and private conservation organizations - is the technical group guiding the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). Headquartered at the University of Tennessee, NBCI is intended to elevate Northern Bobwhite recovery from an individual state-by-state proposition to a range-wide, policy-level leadership endeavor. The NBCI goal is to restore wild populations of Northern Bobwhites in this country to levels comparable to those of 1980. Expected to be a central topic at the West Des Moines meeting is the new NBCI Coordinated Implementation Program, a plan that can be viewed at: <http://goo.gl/wcQJBh>.

This plan was adopted in March by the NBCI Management Board - a group comprised of state wildlife agency directors. The group laid out a specific, step-by-step roadmap for identifying and developing NBCI Bobwhite Focal Areas, along with identifying measures of success on a landscape scale.

Although the primary target is the Northern Bobwhite, the program's impacts extend beyond bobwhites to include a suite of declining grassland songbirds, pollinators, and other species. Some of the other birds considered include Greater Prairie-Chicken, Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Dickcissel. The NBCI conservation approach to species other than bobwhites is summarized at: <http://bringbackbobwhites.org/not-just-bobwhites>. For more information on the NBCI, see: [www.bringbackbobwhites.org](http://www.bringbackbobwhites.org).

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**