

**THE WARBLER**  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 2**  
**FEBRUARY 2015**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10<sup>TH</sup> PROGRAM**  
**NOTE: THIS MEETING IS ONE WEEK EARLIER THAN USUAL**  
**Eagles, Falcons And Ospreys—How We Got To Where We Are**  
**By Pat Schlarbaum**

Pat Schlarbaum, Natural Resources Technician for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Diversity Program, will present a program on Tuesday February 10th, highlighting his work helping numerous species recover, including Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons.

In response to a question from Ames Tribune Outdoors Editor Todd Burras about where his affinity for raptors comes from, Pat responded: "Raptors are a biological indicator species of the health of the environment. Rachel Carson alerted Americans to the unacceptable use of DDT in the environment. It was the demise of the Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles that provided the impetus to ban DDT and create an Endangered Species Act. Beyond just returning the species, a main provision of the Act was to improve the environment and habitat to allow endangered species to recover."

Educating the public is where Pat Schlarbaum shines. He has worked with the Wildlife Diversity Program since 1985 with individuals and groups that have a passion for: Barn Owls, River Otters, Bluebirds, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Red-shouldered Hawks, Prairie Chickens, Sandhill Cranes, Trumpeter Swans, and Ospreys.

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 [jrclark@radiks.net](mailto:jrclark@radiks.net) or 515-223-5047.

**FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup> FIELD TRIP**

**For the Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup> field trip, we'll meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking circle near the bird blind at Walnut Woods State Park.** We will view the activity at the feeders in the park and we'll also travel to Maffitt Reservoir. Dress for conditions, wear warm boots for cold weather and bring a beverage and snack for break. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! *Contact field trip leader Ray Cummins at [raymond.madeline@gmail.com](mailto:raymond.madeline@gmail.com) or phone 641-895-3686.*

**Saylorville Lake Eagle Watch**  
**Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Stop by the Saylorville Visitors Center to learn about our national symbol, the Bald Eagle. The tour will consist of five stops and include a theater show at the Visitors Center and an eagle presentation at Jester Park Lodge. Venture out to different areas around the lake to observe eagles in their natural setting. The Jester Park Lodge will be hosting a live eagle used for education. Hourly programs starting at 1:00 p.m. will give you a close look at this amazing species. The Saylorville Lake Visitor Center is located on the east end of the dam, off Highway 415 on Horseshoe Road. If you would like to volunteer at this event, either at the Visitors Center answering questions about birds at the feeders, or helping with spotting eagles at viewing sites around the lake, please contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047 or [jrclark@radiks.net](mailto:jrclark@radiks.net).

## **Cold-weather Clown: Harlequin Duck**

A Harlequin Duck was seen at the Center Street Dam in downtown Des Moines, first spotted by Aaron Brees on December 3, 2014 and was observed until January 15, 2015.

From: American Bird Conservancy  
Friday, January 10, 2014--ABC's Bird of the Week: Harlequin Duck

The Harlequin Duck borrows its name from the Italian comedic character, the harlequin, who wears brightly colored clothes. "Lords and Ladies" is another nickname, again because of the vivid coloration of the males. These ducks give distinctly unduck-like squeaks when interacting, the source of yet another local name: Sea Mouse.

Although the male's coloration is stunning, females and immature birds are more subdued, or cryptically colored, for protection against predators.

The eastern North American population was in decline but is slowly recovering. It is listed as threatened in Maine and is considered a species of special concern in Canada and the western United States.

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## **Sandhill Crane Bus Trip March 28-29 to Kearney, Nebraska**

Polk County Conservation is sponsoring a bus trip to the Platte River near Kearney, Nebraska, to view the migration of nearly 500,000 Sandhill Cranes. These large birds fill the skies, fields, and river valley as they stop to eat and rest on their long migration northward. Participants will get off the bus to view cranes at Fort Kearney State Park and the Rowe Sanctuary and will also visit the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument while in the Kearney area.

To register for the trip, go to the Polk County Conservation website, [www.leadingyououtdoors.org](http://www.leadingyououtdoors.org) and then go to the calendar date of March 28. Click on "register" and the link will take you to the registration site for the trip. If you do not have access to a computer to register, you may call the Polk County Conservation reservation line at 515-323-5370 and be registered over the phone. You will need a credit card to charge the trip costs.

- Fee: \$185; includes motor coach transportation, lodging (double occupancy), Sunday continental breakfast, and admission fees
- Departure is from the Living History Farms parking lot on Saturday March 28 at 7 a.m. and return on Sunday at 5 p.m.
- Minimum age 12
- Registration deadline is March 13

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## **Bald Eagle Day Viewing and Programs, Des Moines Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup>**

Viewing will be on the SE 6th Street Bridge beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. Programs will be given at the Fellowship Baptist Church, which is the first building on the south end of the bridge—1503 SE 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

Volunteers are needed to help with scopes and assisting with the viewing of eagles on Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup> and to help with activities inside the church. If you can help that day, please contact Jane Clark at 223-5047 or [jrclark@radiks.net](mailto:jrclark@radiks.net).

Programs include:

Ty Smedes will be giving a slide presentation and lecture

Kay Neumann's—SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) will present

Other activities in the church ongoing.

## 2014 Des Moines Christmas Count

### By Dennis Thompson

The Des Moines Christmas Count was held on Saturday, December 27. Temperatures hovered around the freezing mark, with a moderate northwest wind. We had 16 participants in 7 field parties and 5 feeder watchers.

Our total of 63 species is at the low end of counts in this century, but would be one of the higher pre-2000 counts. We totaled 18,549 individual birds, which is a bit lower than recent counts. Saylorville being ice-free definitely impacted our waterfowl and gull numbers. That was especially notable for Mallards, with only 323 on our count (thousands were still on Saylorville). Still 18 species of waterfowl is quite good. The hotspots were Maffitt and the Johnston gravel pits. Our individual totals were boosted by the return of the major downtown American Crow roost. Overall numbers for land birds were generally average to below average.

Highlights included: Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Shrike, Winter Wren, and Pine Siskin. Notable misses were Great Blue Heron, Rough-legged Hawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Eastern Screech Owl. A single Red-winged Blackbird was our only Icterid.

Thanks to all the participants for making the count a success.

Snow Goose	4	Barred Owl	4
Cackling Goose	27	Belted Kingfisher	1
Canada Goose	5386	Red-bellied Woodpecker	54
Trumpeter Swan	78	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
Gadwall	3	Downy Woodpecker	68
Mallard	402	Hairy Woodpecker	22
Northern Pintail	1	Northern Flicker	17
Canvasback	1	Pileated Woodpecker	3
Redhead	4	Northern Shrike	1
Ring-necked Duck	8	Blue Jay	89
Greater Scaup	1	American Crow	8500
Lesser Scaup	4	Black-capped Chickadee	185
Bufflehead	1	Tufted Titmouse	24
Common Goldeneye	216	White-breasted Nuthatch	90
Hooded Merganser	11	Brown Creeper	1
Common Merganser	33	Carolina Wren	3
Red-breasted Merganser	2	Winter Wren	2
Ruddy Duck	7	Eastern Bluebird	20
Wild Turkey	22	American Robin	44
Bald Eagle	90	European Starling	548
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Cedar Waxwing	83
Cooper's Hawk	4	American Tree Sparrow	81
Red-tailed Hawk	35	Song Sparrow	3
American Kestrel	7	White-throated Sparrow	15
Merlin	4	Dark-eyed Junco	433
American Coot	38	Northern Cardinal	166
Ring-billed Gull	15	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Herring Gull	21	House Finch	50
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	Pine Siskin	9
Rock Pigeon	854	American Goldfinch	139
Mourning Dove	166	House Sparrow	440
Great Horned Owl	4		

**Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge CBC Results**  
**By Karen Viste-Sparkman**

The Neal Smith Christmas Bird Count was held January 3 in pleasantly warm and calm conditions. In total we found 43 species of birds on count day, plus two more count week species. We counted a total of 3105 birds.

This is the 19th time the count has been done on the refuge. We had 29 participants this year, in 6 parties, plus 3 feeder counters. We had counters who came from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Viet Nam, in addition to the United States. We also had a group of preschoolers who counted 1 crow, so we had quite an age range in our participants, although I didn't ask how old the oldest person was!

We have only had more species twice before, 48 in 2012-13, and 47 in 2007-08. Our average number of species is 33. Our cumulative number of species for all count years is 76. The number of individual birds counted was our 3rd highest.

The most numerous species was Canada Goose, with 848. Notable species included Eastern Screech-Owl (a count first), Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Common Grackle. These are species we don't expect to get every year. We didn't have any major misses, although the Short-eared Owls that have been present off and on this winter were not seen at all count week.

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**