

***THE WARBLER***  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 6**  
**JUNE 2015**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



**FIELD TRIP TO CHICHAQUA—SATURDAY, JUNE 13<sup>th</sup>**

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, June 13 and the destination will be Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in northeast Polk County. Chichaqua Bottoms includes over 8,000 acres along the Skunk River, with prairie, wetlands and riparian woodlands supporting about 200 species of birds. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot on the west side of the Best Western Motel located in the SW corner of the Ankeny 1st Street Interchange on I-35. Dress for conditions. Contact Denny Thompson for more information at 515-254-0837.

**REMINDER**  
**NO PROGRAM MEETINGS IN JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST**

**FUNKY NESTS, ANYONE?**

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Celebrate Urban Birds" is running its "Funky Nests in Funky Places" again. Participants are asked to send in photos of nests in "old boots, barbecue grills, motorcycle helmets, traffic signals, rakes, old tires, and who-knows-what."

Entries can be submitted in categories such as "cutest," "funniest," "funkiest," or "most inconvenient." This unique educational project has many positive features, and project leader, Karen Purcell, adds, "This contest is a lot of fun but it's also about really being aware of what's around you and taking the time to appreciate birds and all of nature."

The deadline for entries is June 15, and there are a number of fine contest prizes. (If you're wondering, there are also guidelines on responsible and appropriate behavior around bird nests.

Here is a full description and the opportunity to browse some fascinating submissions:  
<http://celebrateurbanbirds.org/community/challenges/funky-nests-2015/>

**\*Excerpted from the May 2015 The Birding Community E-bulletin** which is distributed to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats. You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): <http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

## ~~~~Birdwatching: Hunting with Binoculars~~~~

By Tim Gedler

June 13, 10:00 a.m.

At: Bass Pro Shops in Altoona

Surveys indicate Birding has become one of the leading and growing hobbies over the last couple decades. Join Tim Gedler who is the park ranger at Walnut Woods State Park. Tim will highlight aspects of birdwatching and identification with a focus on Iowa bird species. Plus be prepared to hear some bird calls!

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### **Iowa Important Bird Area Spotlight Species: American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*)**

**By Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon**

In his wonderful book, “Essential Field Guide Companion”, famed birder, author, and Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, Pete Dunne, starts out descriptions of bird species with a nickname listed right beneath its proper common and Latin names. For the American Woodcock, it is “Meatloaf on a Stick”.

Perhaps no other North American bird could have such a fitting nickname. For this plump, softball sized shorebird with short legs, short tail, virtually no visible neck, and a long stick-like bill; it’s a nearly perfect description!

But of all shorebird species on our continent, woodcock spend almost no time near a shore. Instead, this is a bird of damp forest floors, where it spends most all its life (never perching on branches) poking in the soil for earthworms to feed on, nesting, walking, and seldom seen in flight unless one nearly steps on it. Flight is drunkenly erratic with legs dangling below. It does use more woodland openings and fields in its winter range, and also for males to perform their famous flight displays, sometimes called a “sky dance” ritual, in order to attract a mate, when a nasal “peeent” call most often is heard.

A woodcock’s upper parts are mostly dark brown with pale mantle lines and buffy-edged scapulars. Underparts are an unmarked buffy-cinnamon color, and the head is also buffy, with bold bars crossing the back of the crown. Its eyes are very large and placed rather far back and high on the head. Male, female and juveniles are all similar in color and pattern.

This is one of the earliest ground-nesting birds, starting in January in the deep south, late March-early April in the Midwest, and May in the most northern woodlands. Although preferring habitat dominated by aspen, alder and birch, woodcock will nest in almost any suitable moist woodland. Typical of shorebirds, it usually lays 4 eggs and incubates for 20-22 days. Young are precocial and leave the nest within hours of hatching. They grow quickly, reaching adult size and able to fly within 30 days.

American Woodcock singing ground surveys indicated a long-term annual decline in population of -.08% annually from 1968-2012, but between the years 2002-2012 it appeared that numbers perhaps had stabilized.

Loss of the species’ preferred regenerating forest (sapling, or second-growth) habitat may result in future declines. In Iowa, woodcock range has actually expanded somewhat since the state was settled, but overall numbers declined. Iowa’s first Breeding Bird Atlas project found woodcock in 143 survey blocks and confirmed nesting in more than 20%. In the recently-completed BBA2 project, however, the species was observed in just 92 survey blocks with confirmed nesting in fewer than 11% of survey blocks.

Ruffed Grouse, native to northeast Iowa forests, utilize habitats similar to woodcock, and work there to better manage for grouse is likely to have a positive effect upon woodcock. But nationally, it’s estimated that approximately 20 million acres of second-growth forest are needed to bring woodcock numbers back to the level of the early 1970s.

Previously published in Iowa Audubon’s Newsletter  
Volume 11, Number 1, April 2015

**MORE IMPORTANT BIRD AREA NEWS: COVERING THE BOREAL ZONE**  
**The Birding Community E-bulletin April 2015**

In May of 2014, the Boreal Songbird Initiative and Ducks Unlimited released a publication, "Boreal Birds Need Half: Maintaining North America's Bird Nursery and Why it Matters." These organizations then launched a related and parallel campaign, backed by leading bird and conservation groups across Canada and including Alaska. This effort, for the first time, describes the conservation benchmarks necessary to ensure that the boreal forest continues to be an important North American bird nursery.

The campaign advances the idea that at least half of the boreal forest region must be protected and remain free of large-scale industrial disturbance. That level of protection is necessary to maintain healthy populations of the full spectrum of bird species and other wildlife inhabiting the North American boreal forest. Moreover, that area of the boreal that is developed in the future should be carried out with the highest global sustainability standards, with special emphasis on maintaining healthy and pristine wetlands and waterways. Additionally, both protected areas and industrial activities should proceed only with the free, prior, and informed consent of affected native communities.

This scientific report takes a closer look at this amazing relationship and what we can do to preserve the hundreds of species that intimately rely on this vast, mostly-intact forest. (In North America the boreal forest covers most of inland Canada and Alaska as well as parts of the extreme northern continental United States (northern Minnesota through the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to Upstate New York and northern New England.) This continues the ever-growing research concluding that larger, interconnected protected areas are necessary in order to maintain our planet's amazing collection of biodiversity.

More information can be found at [www.borealbirds.org/announcements/boreal-birds-need-half-campaign](http://www.borealbirds.org/announcements/boreal-birds-need-half-campaign). The main campaign website can be found along with the original report from last year. It also allows individuals, groups and businesses to add their endorsement. [www.borealbirdsneedhalf.org/](http://www.borealbirdsneedhalf.org/).

Additional bird and conservation organizations have endorsed this campaign, including the National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, Birdzilla, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Environment for the Americas, Nature Canada, Nature Needs Half, and Wild Bird Centers of America.

The North American Boreal Forest has been dubbed "North America's Bird Nursery" due to its impressive role in supporting migratory birds. The statistics are astonishing:

- 325+ bird species breed in the boreal forest—nearly half of those found in Canada and the U.S.
- Between 1 and 3 billion birds breed in the boreal each summer, expanding to 3 to 5 billion once the young have hatched.
- During fall, the majority migrate south to spend their winters. More than 1 billion settle in the U.S. while the remainder settles from Mexico and the Caribbean to South America.
- 80% of North American waterfowl species, 63% of finch species, and 53% of warbler species breed in the boreal. Some of those species are listed here (Source: Boreal Songbird Initiative)

Dark-eyed Junco (80% breed in the boreal forest)  
White-throated Sparrow (83% breed in the boreal forest)  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (68% breed in the boreal forest)  
Blackpoll Warbler (82% breed in the boreal forest)  
Canada Warbler (64% breed in the boreal forest)  
Palm Warbler (98% breed in the boreal forest)  
Connecticut Warbler (estimated 91% breed in the boreal forest)  
Bay-breasted Warbler (estimated 79% breed in the boreal forest)  
Black-throated Green Warbler (estimated 51% breed in the boreal forest)  
Blackburnian Warbler (estimated 55% breed in the boreal forest)  
Swainson's Thrush (73% breed in the boreal forest)  
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (87% breed in the boreal forest)  
Lincoln's Sparrow (84% breed in the boreal forest)

**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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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**