

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 1
JANUARY 2017
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



January 14 Field Trip

Join us for winter birding on Saturday, January 14 at 8:00 a.m.. Dress for conditions, wear warm boots for cold conditions and bring a beverage and snack for break. Contact trip leader, Dennis Thompson at 515-254-0837 or cdnthomps@gmail.com for information about where the January field trip will begin, or check our website at www.dmaudubon.org for details.

Beginners are welcome--this is a great way to improve your birding skills by joining a wide range of birders. Field trips, held the second Saturday of most months, provide wonderful outdoor experiences for Des Moines Audubon members and guests. Not only are these opportunities to see some good birds, they are also times of socializing with people who enjoy the same things that you do. Destinations are selected based on the likelihood of finding a nice selection of species for the time of year.

Tuesday, January 17 Program **Rich Leopold, Polk County Conservation Director**

Rich Leopold, Director of the Polk County Conservation Board will speak to our group about the birding components of the proposed Jester Park Nature Center. Plans include incorporating plantings for birds and pollinators into the landscape, feeding stations for public viewing, birding/migration displays, and rental of binoculars and guidebooks.

Jester Park Nature Center will provide a place for our increasingly urban community to learn about, understand, and value our natural landscape and resources. According to their website, this "Gateway to the Outdoors" will benefit people of all ages and backgrounds through education, recreation, community engagement and conservation with activities that nourish mind, body and soul and enhance our environment.

There are updates on plans and proposals for other Polk County Conservation parks and Rich will be able to answer questions about those projects, too. Over his career, he has held a variety of biologist, naturalist, and administrative positions within the Iowa Environmental Council, U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Minnesota and Iowa Departments of Natural Resources and served as the coordinator for IOWATER, Iowa's statewide volunteer water-quality monitoring program. Most notably he was the Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources from 2007 to 2010 within Governor Chet Culver's cabinet.

Des Moines Audubon meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and are held in the lunchroom of the Northwest Community Center, which is located at 51st and Franklin Avenue in Des Moines. The Center is just west of Franklin Library. There is ample parking and the building is accessible. If you have questions about this meeting place, please contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047

Tuesday, February 21 Program

Conservation Purposes and Rewards of Bird Banding, by Mark Bowman.

Upcoming Activities

Owl Prowl

Friday, January 27

6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Jester Park, Camp Area #5

Bundle up and join a Polk County Conservation Board naturalist for a campfire program to learn about owls. After a brief discussion about these flying predators of the night, we will go for a hike and learn how to call three different species of owls. No registration required.

Swan Soiree

Saturday January 28

Swan Observation at Dale Maffitt Reservoir

Programs at Walnut Woods State Park

Come celebrate the return of this beautiful and majestic bird to Iowa's landscape. The gathering was so well received last year that Iowa DNR has been asked to host another event. Guest speakers, kid's activities, live swans and the potential for viewing wild swans are all in the planning.

Beginning Birding

Sunday January 29th

1:00-3:00 PM

Forest Park Museum, Perry

Are you looking for a new and exciting way to connect with Nature? Come learn the basics to identifying birds. A Dallas County Conservation Board naturalist will guide you through field marks, behavior and calls to help take out the mystery of backyard birds. There will be observation of birds at feeders as well. Birding is a great hobby for people of all ages and a fun social activity that connects across generations. Registration is required for this free program. For more information or to register for this program, contact: Dallas County Conservation Board at 515-465-3577

Jester Park Lodge

Feb 7, 2017 11:00 AM

Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors

Looking for an excuse to get out of the house, make some new friends, enjoy a good meal and learn about the exciting world of nature? Polk County Conservation programs are held the first Tuesday of each month. The February nature program will start at 11:00 a.m. at the Jester Park Lodge. Joel Van Roekel with Des Moines Park and Recreation along with David Johnson and Rogers Shell, Polk County Blue Bird Trail Ambassadors, will talk about blue birds and their important role in the environment. They will share beautiful pictures and discuss how to attract them by building nest boxes and establishing habitat for wildlife.

An optional luncheon follows the program at noon. The cost of the catered lunch by The Radish is \$10. Call 515-323-5300 to register for lunch only; deadline is February 3. Lunch is chicken parmesan, pasta marinara, vegetable, salad, breadsticks, and dessert.

Des Moines' Lost Bird Sanctuary

By Carl Nollen

In 1943, 100 years after the founding of Fort Des Moines at the junction of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers, the first bird sanctuary was established in Des Moines. This notable first for birds made the front page of the Des Moines Sunday Register, May 23, 1943. The Des Moines Audubon Society took a 10-year lease on a three-acre wooded ravine between 26th and 28th Streets in the 800 block. It was hoped this spot would soon resemble the area as it looked 100 years before. A sanctuary for birds was desired since there were some people yet who took to shooting birds for pleasure. It was remembered that a couple of bob whites had come to nest in this area, but some youths promptly got out their shotguns and killed them. Other bird lovers thought this spot would help toward the cultural enrichment of the community. It would also be a new way to control neighborhood blighted areas.

Proof of the growing public interest in birds was the increased number of people calling Audubon Society members. More people were putting out bird feeding trays and wanted to know what kinds of birds they saw. Miss Irene M. Smith, President of the Des Moines Audubon Society and a teacher at Monroe School, found that children were also more interested in birds each year. "Once, just after the boys and girls had joined the National Audubon Society, and received their pins, a northern yellow throat flew in the kindergarten window. It is the same bird pictured on their pins, and the children could identify it from the picture." Often winter bird lovers were called to identify the goldfinch because it had changed color from the summer.

Summer birds that would be spotted in the winter included robins, bluebirds, and even an occasional brown thrasher. A flock of 25 or more bluebirds was seen in Waterworks Park during the winter of 1940/1941. A bird count had been taken in early May of 1943 by the Des Moines Audubon Society and 25 people in 6 parties observed 139 species in 6 different areas and counted 4430 individual birds. There were 21 species of warblers. The scarcity of the yellow-headed blackbird was noted, with only one being seen. It was remembered that 15 years before there were great flocks of this species at the old East 14th Street and Euclid Avenue slough. This area became an early shopping mall, now mostly barren land for several years.

Another evidence of the increasing interest in birds was the gain in the Des Moines Audubon Society's membership. Of the 100 members, 30 were new. A good bird identification book, which would cost only a dime, was advised for beginners.

Another advantage of membership might be for men who were about to be inducted into the army for the World War. Long hikes might toughen them up, and looking for birds might relieve the tedium of this "road work" and develop their powers of observation. A man whose eye was trained to spot a Blackburnian warbler may be quicker at noticing a Japanese sniper in a coconut tree!

The opening of Interstate 235, also known as the MacVicar Freeway, doomed this sanctuary 20 years later. This wooded refuge between School and Center Streets was filled in and paved for the expressway.

Story County Sandhill Cranes

December 14, 2016

The four Sandhill Cranes that were staying at our wetlands were observed by my husband Roger almost every morning for the past three months. During those months, their morning departure time, flying south from the wetlands, moved from 6:50 AM to 7:30 AM. (The wetlands are located about a mile southeast of the intersection of I-35 and Hwy 30.)

Ten days ago, on the afternoon of 12/5/16, we saw the cranes standing on a soybean field, much closer than usual to our house. They did a little jumping and flapping, and we were able to watch them without them flying off. The next morning at 7:30 a.m., Roger saw them take off in their usual direction, to the south. But they flew very high, bugling constantly, which they had not done before.

A little later, a friend called to tell me that she had been driving south on 580th Avenue, the paved road that runs south from our land, and she had been following the cranes. She said she loved watching them fly because "they remind me of gangly awkward teenagers -- they sort of take turns flying in front and they keep jostling into each other." She followed them all the way to Cambridge, and when she turned her car around, they were still flying south. We haven't seen them in the past week, so we know they are gone. We hope so much to see them again next spring.

Cindy Hildebrand

Editor's note: Cindy Hildebrand posted this message to the Iowa Bird listserv on December 14, 2016. It is reprinted here with her permission.

THE WARBLER
VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 1
JANUARY 2017
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
9871 LINCOLN AVENUE
CLIVE, IA 50325



**Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 1142
Des Moines, IA**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

It's time to make the tax season just a little bit wild....

Since 1982, when the Iowa legislature created the Fish and Wildlife Fund Tax Check-off, Iowans have been able to bring a little wildness into the tax season. The Fish and Wildlife Tax Check-off, affectionately called the Chickadee Check-off was created to allow people to make a charitable donation to wildlife conservation in Iowa out of their tax refunds or by tacking a few dollars on to any taxes owed. When filling out the state income tax form, just look for the contribution line (usually somewhere between lines 55-60) and write in any dollar amount next to Fish/Wildlife.

All the money contributed through the chickadee check-off helps support the Wildlife Diversity Program at the Iowa DNR. This program has statewide responsibility for all the wildlife that can't be hunted, fished or trapped from Peregrine Falcons to Poweshiek Skipperling butterflies. You can learn more about the program on their website: www.iowadnr.gov/wildlifediversity . Please consider donating to the Chickadee Check-off this tax season and supporting wildlife conservation in Iowa!

If you prefer you can make direct contributions to the Wildlife Diversity Program, rather than through the tax return. Send a check made out to Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program and mail to:

Wildlife Diversity Program
Boone Wildlife Research Station
1436 255th St.
Boone, IA 50036

DNR CONTACT: Stephanie Shepherd at 515-432-2823 ext. 102 or stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov