

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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NOVEMBER 2017
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Saturday, November 11th Field Trip

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the office parking lot of Jester Park on Saturday, November 11. From there we'll venture to various habitats around Jester Park and nearby areas. Waterfowl and other winter visitors such as northern finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches could be found. Bring binoculars, a snack and beverage and dress for the conditions. Ray Harden, Des Moines Audubon member, and Mike Havlik of Dallas County Conservation will be leading this field trip. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047 or jrclark@radiks.net for directions or more information.

A map of Jester Park can be found at: http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/media/297898/JesterPark_WebMap2014.pdf

Tuesday, November 21st, 7:00 p.m.
The Program: Madagascar I
By Paul Roisen

Paul Roisen will give a presentation on a portion of his trip to Madagascar. They covered so many miles and locations and took so many photographs that he has three presentations ready and he's not even half done. His program will cover birds, lemurs, people, habitat, and much, much more.

Paul spent 1953 in Paris (age 3) going to French pre-school while his parents learned French before heading to Madagascar as missionaries for the American Lutheran Church. The years 1954-1966 were spent in Madagascar where he attended French school while staying with his parents and siblings in the capital of Antananarivo. In 1961 Paul and his siblings began attending the American Mission School in Fort Dauphin, Madagascar which meant they were at boarding school for nine months out of the year.

In 1966 he returned to the United States and graduated from Blair High in 1968 and Wayne State College in 1973. Paul taught school for 36 years and retired in from teaching in 2009.

He returned to Madagascar after a 49 year absence for 35 days. It ended up being mostly a birding trip which he set up himself.

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.

Reminder--no program meeting in December

"In the fields today the red fruit of the wild roses made a pleasant contrast to the autumnal browns...a few crickets were chirping faintly...A solitary hawk was sweeping in low, wide circles over the fields -- perhaps a marsh harrier..."

(Selden Lincoln Whitcomb describing the landscape near Grinnell on November 20, 1885)

**Des Moines Audubon Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, December 23, 2017**

Des Moines Audubon Society's 2017 Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 23 beginning at 8:00 a.m. The annual Christmas Bird Count will take the place of our regular field trip in December—plan for a day or part of a day of counting birds in the Des Moines count circle. We'll meet at the Des Moines Art Center parking lot, but please contact Denny Thompson at 515-254-0837 or cndthomps@gmail.com ahead of time if you plan to participate. We'll be dividing into teams to check various Des Moines areas. *Dress warmly and appropriately.* Bring food and beverage for the day and plan to stay as long as possible. If you wish to remain at home but still want to be a part of this count, you may do so by keeping track of the birds visiting your neighborhood, in your backyard and at your feeders. Keep track of how many of each species you see during the day and at the end of the day, report to Denny. The Des Moines 15-mile diameter is centered at 63rd and University and it runs from Saylorville Dam to Lake Colchester (north of Norwalk) and the I-80 rest stop to the fairgrounds. The Des Moines CBC has been held since 1948.

***Please note there will be no December field trip other than the Christmas Bird Count**

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**Dallas County Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**Time - TBD**

Come join Dallas County Conservation Board and Raccoon River Watershed Association for a day of birding with a purpose. Each year local bird clubs gather around the Christmas holiday to take a "snapshot" of what birds are in their area. This information is sent to the National Audubon Society which looks at the long term health of bird populations over the last 100 years. Participants are divided into groups, each with an experienced birder in a different location in the county. We usually hike in the morning and drive the area in the afternoon. It does not matter if you are a beginning or experienced birder; the day is filled with beauty and opportunities for learning. Registration is required for this free program. For more information, or to register for this event, call 515-465-3577 or email conservation@dallascountyiowa.gov .

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Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge Bird Count Saturday, December 30

The Neal Smith NWR Christmas Bird Count will be Saturday, December 30. We'll meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Refuge Visitor Center. Anyone who wishes to participate can contact Karen Viste-Sparkman at karen_vistesparkman@fws.gov or the Refuge at 515-994-3400. She needs to know the number of people participating because lunch will be provided by the Friends of Neal Smith NWR.

**Have you paid your dues this year? Please check with us on the status of your membership.
515-223-5047 or jrclark@radiks.net**

Des Moines Audubon Society membership is for one year, from July to June.

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 _____

eBird: A real-time, online checklist program

By Tom Dougherty

If you haven't checked out the resources available on the eBird.org website, I highly recommend you give it a look. It has something to offer for all birders, no matter if you are a relatively new birder like myself or if you have years of experience. There is something of value here for everyone. Best of all, it is FREE! No subscriptions or one-time charges to pay.

Many people get started with eBird.org site for recording your bird checklists. You record a few simple facts about your trip, the time you started, how long you birded, how many people were in your group, etc. and then you record the numbers of each species you saw. Based on your location and the date you birded, eBird lists the most likely species you will see so you don't have to manually type in the names of the birds. There is an optional "Add Details" button for each entry you make if you wish to add photos, or other information such as the age or sex of the birds.

Once you've submitted your list, eBird will create your lifetime list of birds along with a separate listing for your year-to-date totals. You can even see your totals by county within a state as well. If your goal is to record birds in all 99 Iowa counties, eBird will track it for you automatically. The website will create a map of Iowa showing you all the counties you've visited so far.

If you have historical lists and want to enter them into eBird – no problem! Entering an older list is no different than entering a list you made today. If you own a smartphone, you know there is an app for just about anything these days and eBird is no exception. It has a free app for either Android or Apple mobile phones. The app uses the GPS capability of your phone to know where you are and presents you a checklist based on the date and your location. You simply enter your counts by just tapping the "+" next to each bird's name. I use it all the time and I can vouch it's quite handy to use.

You may be wondering if eBird gives you a checklist based on your location and time of the year, how does it let you record an uncommon bird for the area? No worries, eBird will include rarities for the area as well by simply checking on the page.

Another very cool feature of the mobile app is the ability to share your list. Let's say you are birding with a group of friends and you'd like to keep just one master list. No worries, one person can keep the group list and you can email your combined sightings to anyone in your group. Although there is one master list for the group, let's suppose you didn't see that Orchard Oriole on the combined list. No problem, you import the master list into your eBird account and you can delete the Orchard Oriole that escaped you this time.

The eBird.org site has many other useful benefits, too, in addition to its recordkeeping, that we'll highlight in future newsletters.

IN THE WEST: FIRES

From: The Birding Community E-bulletin, October 2017

This past summer was one of the worst wildfire seasons on record for the West, and the blazes seem to only be getting worse. At the season's peak, in early September, over 137 large wildfires were burning simultaneously in the West, covering an area of about eight million acres. The number and the drama approached biblical proportions. California, Utah, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington, along with British Columbia, seemed particularly hard hit. The raging conflagrations were exacerbated by record heat and drought in many parts of western North America.

We could conceivably be facing long-term trends that may significantly challenge the habitats, wildlife, and birds in the near future. We may be looking at bigger, hotter, and increasingly frequent fires in the years ahead. The number, size, and intensity of wildfires is seriously altering habitat for fish and wildlife (e.g., huge fires can damage soils by burning organic matter, breaking down soil structure, and reducing important water retention). The result is increased stress on both the land and its inhabitants. In one way, focusing on "stress" may come close to anthropomorphizing on behalf of birds and other animals, but major fires certainly make it more difficult for wildlife to recover afterwards. Birds that are able to escape may have to move longer distances to find appropriate replacement habitat. But the ultimate stress is on the land itself.

Related to this reality is shifting ecology. Milder winters are allowing more pine bark beetle larvae to survive and longer, warmer summers are supporting more generations of these beetles per year. The damage or death of swaths of coniferous trees will inevitably follow. Not only does this impact the species that once lived in the now beetle-infested forests, it leaves behind a ready tinder-box, waiting to burst into flame with the next lightning strike. Needless to say, it can take many decades, or even hundreds of years, for these mature forests to return.

Another trend is sweeping habitat destruction. These fires in the West are destroying forests, including interspersed sagebrush habitats which, in the decades ahead, are expected to shrink due to increasingly warmer temperatures and more frequent fires. Damaged sagebrush systems alone may have very serious consequences for besieged sage-grouse and other sage-associated bird species, as well as mule deer, pronghorn and numerous smaller species. Fires impacting sagebrush could take sage habitats 120 or more years to recover.

There is also the added threat of reducing or eliminating escape. For mammals, for example, the speed of a spreading fire can trap even the fastest of them, including pronghorn, elk, and deer. For nestlings or young birds, the fires almost certainly spell death; they are unable - or ill-equipped - to fly away. Adult birds can flee from a fire, young birds can't. Fortunately, this year many of these Western fires occurred after the nesting season was over.

While wildlife has had a long-standing and creative relationship with fire-induced habitat change, and though fire is normally a natural feature of many of these western landscapes, we seem to be entering a period of rapid fire-driven alterations in the West that are producing changes that nature is simply hard-pressed to keep up with.

If I Were The Wind

“The wind that makes music in November corn is in a hurry. The stalks hum, the loose husks whisk skyward in half-playful swirls, and the wind hurries on.

In the marsh, long windy waves surge across the grassy sloughs, beat against the far willows. A tree tries to argue, bare limbs waving, but there is no detaining the wind.

On the sandbar there is only wind, and the river sliding seaward. Every wisp of grass is drawing circles on the sand. I wander over the bar to a driftwood log, where I sit and listen to the universal roar, and to the tinkle of wavelets on the shore. The river is lifeless: not a duck, heron, marsh hawk, or gull but has sought refuge from the wind.

Out of the clouds I hear a faint bark, as of a faraway dog. It is strange how the world cocks its ears at that sound, wondering. Soon it is louder: the honk of geese, invisible, but coming on.

The flock emerges from the low clouds, a tattered banner of birds, dipping and rising, blown up and blown down, blown together and blown apart, but advancing, the wind wrestling lovingly with each winnowing wing. When the flock is a blur in the far sky I hear the last honk, sounding taps for summer.

It is warm behind the driftwood now, for the wind has gone with the geese. So would I—if I were the wind.”

From “A Sand County Almanac, with Essays on Conservation from Round River”, by Aldo Leopold, first published in 1949.

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