



***THE WARBLER***  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 2**  
**FEBRUARY 2017**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**

**FEBRUARY 11 FIELD TRIP**

The Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup> field trip will find us meeting at 8:00 a.m. at the circle drive by the bird blind at Walnut Woods State Park. Please contact Denny Thompson at 254-0837 or [cdnthomps@gmail.com](mailto:cdnthomps@gmail.com) for more information. We might also check out Maffitt Reservoir for waterfowl. Monthly field trips are usually held on the second Saturday of the month, providing great 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. Beginners are welcome and this is a great way to improve your birding skills by joining a wide range of birders. Dress for conditions and bring a snack for break.

**Tuesday, February 21 Program**  
**Bird Banding: Conservation Purposes and Rewards**

Mark Bowman will present a program about bird banding, the purposes and rewards of banding, and some amusing observations about in-hand bird behavior. Then he will specifically discuss a project to set up a banding program at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge located east of the Des Moines area. This project is called Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship, also known as "MAPS". Mark's goal, along with Biologist Karen Viste-Sparkman of the Refuge, is to establish a bird banding support team at Neal Smith.

In order to establish a site at Neal Smith, they need to recruit, educate, and train a team of volunteers. They currently have some volunteers with whom Mark has banded in the past, but they will need several more. There are many skills that can be of use in this project, yet the most fundamental one is that of extracting birds from mist nets.

Mark has been banding birds with a team at Kent Park (about seven miles west of Coralville) since 2014. Many people enjoy the experience of holding and releasing a wild bird, as well as of observing its beauty close-up.

Although the Neal Smith NWR "MAPS" Site initiative may take two years to establish, a small group of self-selected bird enthusiasts will find tremendous gratification in helping to found it. Please attend to learn more about the banding process and to gauge your level of interest,

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 51<sup>st</sup> 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

## **Lunch with Eagles at Grays Lake, February 10**

On February 10, Iowa DNR will be hosting a Lunch with Eagles at Grays Lake, 2100 Fleur Drive in Des Moines. There will be outdoor viewing and a replica eagle nest from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

## **Des Moines Parks and Recreation Bald Eagle Day, February 11 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Fellowship Baptist Church, 1503 SE 6th St, Des Moines, Iowa**

The City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department is teaming up with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Fellowship Baptist Church on February 11<sup>th</sup> to host Bald Eagle Day on the SE 6th Street Bridge. Between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. there will be spotting scopes and people on the bridge to assist with viewing some of the wintering Bald Eagles in Des Moines and a Bald Eagle nest located along the Des Moines River Trail. Inside Fellowship Baptist Church, you will be able to warm up, relax and listen to presentations. All ages are welcome, there will be children's activities and the event is free and open to the public. For more information call Joel at Des Moines Parks and Recreation (515) 248 6369.

The first presentation will be author and photographer, Ty Smedes starting at 10:30 a.m. followed by Kay Newman from S.O.A.R. presenting at 11:30 a.m. with a live Bald Eagle onsite. Molly Hanson from Iowa Rivers Revival will present at 12:30 p.m. followed by an encore program with Kay Newman starting at 1:30 p.m.. Throughout the day the Iowa DNR will have their replica Bald Eagle nest onsite.

If you are available to volunteer during this event, please contact Jane at [jrclark@radiks.net](mailto:jrclark@radiks.net) or 515-223-5047.

## **Saylorville Bald Eagle Watch Sunday, February 26, Noon - 4 p.m.**

Once the idea that we would offer a program of bald eagle viewing seemed absurd in the face of the species' pending extinction, this event is a testament that conservation can and does work. Come view what is possible when we choose to care for the wilds. The open waters below the dam at the Saylorville Reservoir create feeding opportunities that congregate central Iowa's wintering eagles and almost guarantee you a chance to view an eagle. This program is a joint effort between Dallas County Conservation Board, Polk County Conservation Board and the Army Corps of Engineers. It provides the public with the thrill of viewing eagles in the Des Moines River Valley and educational programming to increase your understanding of these majestic birds. Specific viewing locations and programming schedules can be obtained at the Saylorville Visitors' Center on the day of the event. Driving tour of Saylorville Lake with outdoor viewing at selected sites around the reservoir. Start at Visitors Center 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. For more information call 515-276-4656 Saving Our Avian Resources (SOAR) programs at 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. at Jester Park Lodge. Come learn about eagles in Iowa and the perils they face.

If you are available to volunteer during this event, please contact Jane at [jrclark@radiks.net](mailto:jrclark@radiks.net) or 515-223-5047.

## **Bird-oriented Resolutions for 2017**

First, take the time to enjoy birds this year. This is a good idea whether you expect to spend time in your back yard, on local or national trips, or even abroad. Simply relax, enjoy yourself, and relish the wonder of birds. This is potentially the easiest part of this suggested three-part resolution.

Second, resolve to share the wonder of birds with others. Take others out and help them discover the amazing world of birds that has already inspired you. Introduce birds to your neighbor, a co-worker, a local teacher, a local office-holder, or a group of kids.

Finally, and this is particularly important, do something to secure the future for birds. It doesn't have to be a huge endeavor, but it should be directed at whatever local, regional, or international effort fits you best. You can help make a difference to protect birds, but it only happens if you make that initial deliberate effort.

Enjoy, share, protect. This is a winning formula for a successful resolution in 2017. Best of luck to you all!

*From: The Birding Community E-bulletin, January 2017*

**Iowa IBA Spotlight Species: Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)**  
**By Doug Harr, President, Iowa Audubon**

With the exception of passionate birders, many Iowans may not know of the Red-shouldered Hawk (RSHA). This state-listed endangered species is not often seen unless one is willing to spend time searching its favored habitat, typically forested river bottomlands or other swampy forests. During their spring breeding season, however, they might be more easily identified in flight above a forest canopy, while noisily emitting a keeyar-keeyar-keeyar scream. The species' name relates to rufous coloration on the upperwing coverts, evident on both adult males and females. Seen from below, rufous underparts with white barring are visible, along with black trailing wing edges and a black-and-white multi-banded tail.

Most RSHAs in Iowa are found in the state's eastern third, as well as up the Des Moines River corridor into central Iowa, and also along a small portion of the Missouri River. This medium-sized buteo preys upon foods typical of its swampy habitats, such as frogs and snakes, but also mice and small birds.

Courting and nesting activity begins in March and April, with broods then hatching in May. Four eggs are typical, with incubation starting before all eggs are laid, resulting in asynchronous hatching. Incubation averages 33 days per egg, so an entire nest might take as long as 40 days or more for a complete hatch. Fledging occurs about 35 days after each egg has hatched, and young usually leave the nest by early to mid-June.

RSHAs have declined over much of their native range, due primarily to loss of contiguous forest habitat, but also to pesticides and, until mid-20th century, illegal shooting of these protected birds. Although still listed as endangered or threatened in Iowa and a few other states, recent surveys appear to indicate the species may be recovering in numbers, and here in Iowa it is now being observed more frequently. Part of that may stem from an increasing recovery and protection of bottomland forests, something strongly advocated by ornithologists and wildlife conservationists.

Jon "Hawk" Stravers, a member of Iowa Audubon's Board of Directors, is one of the Midwest's leading experts on Red-shouldered Hawks, having conducted surveys of them for years in northeast Iowa, formerly with retired DNR State Ecologist, Dean Roosa. These surveys, along with trapping and banding RSHAs, have been continued for 37 years, mostly in Clayton and Allamakee Counties. Today, Straver's RSHA work continues in that area, plus elsewhere in Iowa.

In addition, Jon has been a leader in conducting songbird surveys in the same area of NE Iowa, focusing especially upon Cerulean Warblers. His findings resulted in the designation of this region as the first Globally Important Bird Area in Iowa. That designation will serve to enhance habitat for all birds, including Red-shouldered Hawks. (For a great story about Jon and his work, see the May-June 2015 issue of DNR's Iowa Outdoors magazine.)

Four subspecies of RSHA are found in the United States: one in the Midwest and Northeast, a second in Texas and a third in Florida and the South-east. A fourth ranges from southern Oregon to Baja California. Due to its distant separation from eastern types, plus differences in coloration, there have been arguments that this might be considered a separate species.

From Iowa Audubon's Newsletter  
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*"Birds should be saved for utilitarian reasons; and, moreover, they should be saved because of reasons unconnected with dollars and cents. . . [T]o lose the chance to see frigate-birds soaring in circles above the storm, or a file of pelicans winging their way homeward across the crimson afterglow of the sunset, or a myriad of terns flashing in the bright light of midday as they hover in a shifting maze above the beach - why, the loss is like the loss of a gallery of the masterpieces of the artists of old time."*

*-- Theodore Roosevelt (1859-1919) 26th President of the United States, historian, naturalist, explorer*

**Beaks, Bones & Bird Songs:  
How the struggle for survival has shaped birds and their behavior**

Roger J. Lederer. Timber Press, 2016. 280 pp.  
Book Review by Doug Harr, President, Iowa Audubon

Author Dr. Roger J. Lederer, Emeritus Professor of Biological Sciences, was a long time teacher of ornithology and ecology at California State University. His latest book is an interesting and easy-to-read explanation about how birds often can adapt to a changing environment, but also how some things are changing so fast that birds can no longer evolve quickly enough. The book is a wealth of good information about the anatomy, physiology and ecology of birds, essentially making it what may be considered a good introductory text to the science of ornithology. Because in some ways it's really a "fun" read, it can provide very good background information for anyone who has never taken a formal ornithology course. As one who took ornithology in college and later spent a little time as an instructor, I still managed to learn some things about birds of which I was not aware. For example, research in France has shown that birds living along roadways can avoid car collisions by adapting their flight to posted speed limits and inhabiting stretches of road where they find the most commonly-posted speed limits. At least one bird name in Lederer's book is in error ("Rock Dove"), but some bird names are changed often enough that almost anyone might mistakenly recall and repeat a former name—I'm certainly guilty on occasion. In summary, this book can be a wonderful read for anyone who has never taken a formal ornithology course and just wants to easily learn a lot more about our amazing birds.

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