

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



APRIL 8TH FIELD TRIP

For our Saturday, April 8th field trip, meet at Casey's in Grimes at 7:30 a.m. From there we will travel through Dallas County to Guthrie County to bird at Bay's Branch and other local birding areas. We'll be visiting a variety of habitats that could include marsh, wetland, restored prairie and upland looking for waterfowl and early migrating shorebirds. On the way, we'll stop by Marsh Farm Wetland, a wetland west of Grimes that has become a birding hotspot. A visit to some "migrant trap" woodlands in the open country could turn up migrating songbirds. Bring binoculars and dress for the conditions, which might include walking in wet grasses. Contact field trip leader, Denny Thompson at 515-254-0837 or cnthomps@gmail.com for more information. Please note the early starting time of 7:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 18 Program
A Beginner's Guide to Wildlife Photography
By Marlen Kemmet

What's a great way to learn wildlife photography? Learn from a local amateur photographer facing the same challenges you are. Dallas county resident and national magazine editor Marlen Kemmet has worked for years honing and improving his skills photographing locally and in several national parks. Many of the images in his presentation are from Central Iowa. This informative and entertaining program will feature dozens of proven tips and techniques aimed at making you a better wildlife photographer, even if you are just getting started.

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 the meeting place or the program, please contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047 or jrclark@radiks.net.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union 2017 Spring Meeting in Chariton on May 5-7.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union is partnering with the Lucas County tourism board for their Lucas County Birding Festival May 5-7. There will be field trips in the mornings and several presentations and workshops on Saturday afternoon, including a Trumpeter Swan release.

Information about this meeting can be found at: <http://iowabirds.org/IOU/NextMeeting.aspx> but registration for the festival will be handled through the Lucas County Chamber of Commerce. Contact Lucas County Birding Festival at 641-774-4059 or email office@charitonareachambermainstreet.com.

LOOKING FOR THE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER

Birding in Florida, January 2017

By Ray Harden

My goal for our Florida vacation this year was to see a Red-cockaded Woodpecker, which was listed as an endangered species in 1970 and its numbers are still declining. Our first birding stop was at a popular park on the shore of Lake Jackson in Tallahassee. As I parked near a large live oak tree I looked out the car window and saw a Pileated Woodpecker on the main trunk of the tree and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on one of the larger limbs. Two good birds before we got out of the car. This might be a good trip.

Margaret and I drove on many of the Florida back roads in the forest areas where the Florida Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reported Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. We paid special attention to trees that had been marked with white rings around their trunks, which indicated that the Red-cockaded Woodpecker had been seen on that tree.

In the Withlacoochee State Forest, near the town of Brooksville, we stopped on a seldom traveled sand road and looked for birds and paid close attention to the marked trees. While we were parked on the road a dozen or more small yellow birds were feeding on the ground, working their way toward us. They came closer and closer to just a few feet from our car. We got some good photos of them that allowed us to identify the birds as Prairie Warblers. The Red-bellied Woodpecker was the only woodpecker we saw.

We crossed into Georgia to visit the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge, another area that has Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. We watched many trees that were marked with white bands but no woodpeckers were seen. We did take a hike on a long boardwalk over the swampy ground and saw many species of birds. We sat on a bench and watched a pair of White Ibis feeding in the shallow water. An adult Barred Owl was roosting on a limb of a live oak tree that was hanging over the boardwalk. He sat and watched us take pictures of him-- posing nicely for our cameras. The most interesting thing on the boardwalk was seeing an adult alligator in the shallow water with a dozen or more baby alligators crawling on her back while we were just a few feet away.

We also birded in the Olustee Civil War Battlefield in northern Florida; it was listed as a good place to see the endangered woodpecker. We walked on the trails for over an hour reading about the battle and looking for birds. The only woodpecker we saw was a Red-headed Woodpecker. It was feeding on the trunk of a pine tree that had been damaged by fire.

A forest ranger at St. Mark's Lighthouse Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf Coast, told me a good place to see the bird was off Trail #109, about a 3/4 mile walk. I found the area he described and saw a half dozen or more pine trees had the white circles painted on them. I sat, looked and listened for over a half hour. The only bird I saw was a Turkey Vulture soaring high in the blue sky. But the highlights of the St. Marks visit were seeing a Vermilion Flycatcher, a Black-crowned Night Heron, and many species of ducks.

Our last birding day in Florida was at Tate's Hell State Forest, near the town of East Port. Margaret and I were in the woods before sunrise. A layer of fog drifted through the loblolly pine trees. Every little breeze dissipated the fog, but in a few seconds it would return and settle in the lowest areas of the forest floor. The pines were tall spindly trees and sparsely planted. There were several dead ones that had been broken due to storms or damaged by fire. This was perfect woodpecker habitat. According to Florida's DNR this was one of the best places to see this bird. We sat, listened, and watched for movement in the trees.

When the sun rose the birds became active. Warblers began feeding in the saw palmetto, robins were calling, and we heard several woodpeckers feeding in the dead trees. We finally saw a wood pecker working in a tree some distance away. My first thought was it's a Red-bellied Woodpecker, the most common in the area. A big truck drove by on the main highway and frightened the bird, causing it to fly closer to us. I zoomed in with my telephoto lens and saw its large white cheeks - it was definitely a Red-cockaded Woodpecker. My photos were not very good but good enough to identify the bird. I added an endangered species bird to my life list.

On our drive home we made a stop at the Dagmar Wildlife Management Area near Brinkley, Arkansas. This is the place where an Ivory-billed Woodpecker was reportedly seen in 2006. It was listed as extinct in 1992. This reported new sighting has given hope that the bird may still be living in the northeast swamps of Arkansas. The Ivory-billed is 19 1/2 inches long, three inches longer than the Pileated Woodpecker that is seen in Iowa.

Margaret and I hiked on an old railroad bed trail through the swamp for nearly an hour hoping to see or hear the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. We saw many species of birds but no Ivory-billed Woodpecker--maybe next year.

**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)

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WISDOM DOES IT AGAIN

Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross and the world's oldest known breeding bird in the wild, successfully hatched another chick in February at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial within Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The chick hatched just about two months after Wisdom, at least 66 years old, was first spotted incubating an egg at the same site that she and her mate, Akeakamai, use each year. Laysan Albatrosses typically mate for life, but Wisdom has likely had more than one mate.

"Wisdom... has returned home to Midway Atoll for over six decades and raised at least 30-35 chicks," said Bob Peyton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader for Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Memorial.

We know the age of Wisdom because she has been a banded bird since 1956. The much-respected ornithologist, Chandler Robbins, first put a band on Wisdom in December of that year, and multiple bands, each significantly worn away by time, the sea, and sea air, have been replaced on multiple occasions. Wisdom is estimated to be at least 66 years old, but she could actually be older!

"Because Laysan Albatross don't lay eggs every year, and when they do, they raise only one chick at a time, the contribution of even one bird to the population makes a difference," added Peyton. Albatrosses start to arrive returning from sea to breed in late October, and by the end of November nearly every available nesting space on the atoll is claimed by a breeding pair.

Wisdom and Akeakamai are not alone in calling the Refuge and Memorial home. The atoll is actually home to the world's largest colony of albatrosses. Nearly 70% of the world's Laysan Albatross and almost 40% of Black-footed Albatross, as well as a handful of endangered Short-tailed Albatross, all rely on the Refuge and Memorial. For more details and shareable social media about Wisdom, visit: <http://bit.ly/WisdomsChick2017>

From The Birding Community E-bulletin, March 2017

MORE INSIGHT ON GETTING THE LEAD OUT

Starting in the late 1980s, the U.S. federal government began phasing in a ban on toxic lead shot for waterfowl hunting - a ban which became nation-wide in 1991. The learning process, and the production of quality alternatives, was not easy, but the goal - removing toxic lead over wetlands and reducing lead-carrying deadly game that was predated by raptors, such as eagles - was successful. The move toward steel and other alternate shot grew, since some areas and states adopted parallel restrictions. (Some non-waterfowl hunters - such as pheasant hunters - had to find nontoxic alternatives if they hunted on National Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas.)

This subject has been written about multiple times in the Birding Community E-bulletin, and in the quarter century since the original ban on lead shot, manufacturers have greatly improved the quality of steel shot. This may sound like an esoteric subject, but it has broad bird-conservation consequences for species ranging from doves, to waterbirds, to eagles. Fortunately, Pheasants Forever magazine ran an article, "The Evolution of Steel," by Greg Breining, that explains the technicalities, pluses, and minuses of steel shot. Breining presents solid arguments and background that can make a real contribution to the discussion over "getting the lead out." You can find the article on the Pheasants Forever blog: <http://pheasantsforever.org/BlogLanding/Blogs/Field-Notes/The-Evolution-of-Steel.aspx>

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