

***THE WARBLER***  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 7**  
**AUGUST 2017**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



**Saturday, August 12<sup>th</sup> Field Trip**  
**Saylorville Visitor's Center at 8:00 a.m.**

Join Des Moines Audubon members on Saturday, August 12<sup>th</sup> in the parking lot of the Visitors' Center at Saylorville Lake at 8:00 a.m.. The main species we'll be focusing on are shorebirds and other migrants. Bring a beverage and snack for break and dress for conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact Dennis Thompson at [cdnthomps@gmail.com](mailto:cdnthomps@gmail.com) or 515-254-0837 for information about field trips.

**Mark your Calendar for this Fall Lineup of Programs**

**Tuesday, September 19, 7:00 p.m.**  
**John Pearson, Iowa DNR**  
**The History of the Iowa State Preserves System**

**Tuesday, October 17, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Doug Harr, President, Iowa Audubon**  
**Bird Friendly Iowa**

**Tuesday, November 21, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Paul Roisen, Iowa Birder**  
**Madagascar**

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**Birding, Birdwatching**

The first recorded use of the term "birdwatcher" was in 1891; "bird" was introduced as a verb in 1918. The terms birding and birdwatching are today used by some interchangeably, although some participants prefer birding, partly because it does not exclude the auditory aspects of enjoying birds.

In North America, many birders differentiate themselves from birdwatchers, and the term birder could be unknown to most lay people. At the most basic level, the distinction is perceived as one of dedication or intensity, though this is a subjective differentiation.

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

## **Success for the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping Cranes**

The remote muskeg of the taiga in Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta, Canada and its surrounding environs have long been the last holdout for nesting Whooping Cranes on the continent. This wild population, discovered in 1954 by Robert Porter Allen, is the population that migrates annually to the area of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast. All other experimental Whooping Crane populations have derived - one way or another - from the eggs of birds from this Canadian breeding population.

This year, in a report issued by Mike Keizer, External Manager at the Wood Buffalo National Park, a record number of Whooping Cranes were found in the Park during the recent 2017 nesting survey run by Parks Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada. This season's survey found a record 98 nests, an increase of 16 over the previous record of 82 nests set in 2014. Another aerial survey will be run next month to determine the number of fledged colts, as the young cranes are called. This is exciting news and important information for crane fans everywhere.

For updates on the wild Whoopers and the Wood Buffalo National Park breeding season, check out:  
<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org>.

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## **Proposed FCC Rule Change Presents a Threat**

A proposed Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule would exempt construction of communication towers from our nation's environmental laws. Currently, the birds benefit from existing lighting guidelines, but the rule change could have a negative impact on birds, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and possibly other bedrock environmental laws.

Millions of birds are directly harmed by colliding with towers each year, and other species avoid tall structures such as towers because they serve as perches for predators. The FCC has treated communication towers as subject to NEPA for the last 43 years. As a result, the current protocols for environmental analysis are used to protect at-risk species whenever new towers are built. One important example is the need for appropriate siting of towers in the habitat of Greater Sage-Grouse. Sage-Grouse are among the species that avoid tall structures in their habitat and accordingly lose the use of sagebrush habitat if there are towers present.

Furthermore, exempting towers from environmental review would have other negative impacts. "Without NEPA, the public loses its ability to comment on proposed tower locations, or to ask that the environmental risks those towers pose to migratory birds or species of conservation concern be minimized," said Steve Holmer, American Bird Conservancy's Vice President of Policy.

The current concern extends to changing recently adopted lighting guidelines that help reduce the number of birds killed at towers - an estimated 7 million birds per year. New lighting standards can reduce collisions by as much as 70 percent while also lowering energy costs. "We appreciate that hundreds of tower operators have already adopted the new standards, and urge the operators of the remaining towers to change their lights to save birds and to save energy," added Holmer. Basically, it would not be wise to step back from progress already made.

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## **Bird Feeder Care**

Hot, wet weather often leads to moldy seeds in our bird feeders. Be sure to dispose of wet, spoiled seed and clean the feeders before the birds' health is affected.

If you are unsure about when you last paid your dues, please email jrclark@radiks.net or call 515-223-5047.

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

## NEONICS BILL

On June 23, 2017, Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) and Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced the Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2017 (H.R. 3040), directing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to suspend registration of a toxic group of pesticides called neonicotinoids, or "neonics." Originally introduced in the 1990s, these pesticides were originally seen as a wonderful alternative to DDT. Neonicotinoid insecticides quickly became top sellers in global pesticide markets to such an extent that it is now difficult to find pest control commodities that do not contain one or several of the neonicotinoid insecticides. Unfortunately, this "miracle alternative" to older deadly pesticides was too good to be true.

Now neonics, the most commonly used insecticides on Earth, are understood to be deadly to birds, bees, and aquatic life. One seed coated with these insecticides is enough to kill a songbird. A coalition of conservation organizations, beekeepers, scientists, and business leaders, has requested the EPA to suspend the four most toxic neonics - imidacloprid, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, and dinotefuran - until a comprehensive study of their effects on wildlife and humans is completed. The Conyers/Blumenauer bill has been presented before, at least since 2013, with no fewer than 70 co-sponsors each previous time. You can find more details from the American Bird Conservancy at: <https://abcbirds.org/article/american-bird-conservancy-supports-bill-suspend-neonics/>.

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### **Birds found by Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon, in our area on a recent birding day.**

At the Dallas County sod farm, Upland Sandpipers plus lots of Horned Larks (and too many Killdeer to count). On Xavier Avenue south of Granger, a Green Heron posing on a lump of mud in the marsh just west of the road. At Jester Park and Saylorville Lake, nine species of shorebirds, best of which were one Stilt Sandpiper and one White-rumped Sandpiper. A female Orchard Oriole flitting along the side of the Lincoln Access road next to the Mile Long Bridge. At least five Yellow-billed Cuckoos seen or heard along Xavier Avenue near Granger, in the woods near Sandpiper Beach at Saylorville, and near the Longhouse at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Red-headed Woodpeckers were abundant, with at least 7-8 seen at several locations.

**Who Is This?**  
**by Carol Berrier**

Perhaps you have seen her and not known her name. She has a calm demeanor, and readily visits our bird feeders. She looks much like a large brown sparrow, with a streaked breast, prominent white eyebrow stripes, white wing bars, and a striped crown. She is a cardinal-sized female Rose-breasted Grosbeak. As you might guess from her name, she has a large, thick bill, ideal for cracking seeds.

Expect to see the rosy-red colored breast only on the male grosbeak, which looks very different from his mate. The male is also about eight inches long, with a thick white bill and powerful jaw muscles. But, no camouflage for this flashy male. He has a black head, back, wings and tail, which contrast with his white wing patches, rump, and belly. The triangular splash of rose-red on his breast makes for easy identification. Noticeable in flight are his pinkish underwings. The female's underwings are golden yellow.

Handsome as his plumage is, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak is noted even more for the beauty of his robin-like song. Thoreau called him "our richest singer, perhaps, after the wood thrush." The female can sing also, and sometimes does while incubating her eggs. Her affectionate mate also often sings softly while taking his turn at incubation. He also helps feed nestlings and fledglings a diet of insects, which they soon learn to augment with seeds and fruits.

In August, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks molt their feathers and acquire winter plumage. The males trade their black heads for brown, their brilliant red for faded red, and their breasts become streaked. They are ready for their migration to Central and South America where they spend the winter. Look for their return, again in breeding plumage, in late April or early May.

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