



THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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MAY 2018
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK

Saturday, May 12th Field Trip
Saylorville Visitor's Center at 7:30 a.m.

Join Des Moines Audubon members on Saturday, May 12th as we celebrate the return of migrating songbirds. Meet in the parking lot of the Visitors' Center at Saylorville Lake at 7:30 A.M. The main species we'll be searching for will be warblers, but there could be a great variety of nesting and migrating birds. Bring a beverage and snack for break and dress for conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact Dennis Thompson at cnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837 for information about field trips.

TUESDAY, MAY 15th POTLUCK PICNIC
COTTONWOOD PICNIC AREA ALONG THE DES MOINES RIVER

Our traditional spring potluck will be held on Tuesday, May 15th at a shelter in Cottonwood Picnic Area along the Des Moines River below the dam at Saylorville Lake. We'll begin the picnic at 6:30 p.m. Bring a main dish, salad, and/or dessert to share and your own table service. Come before the picnic at 5:30 p.m. or earlier if you'd like to do some birding around the shelter and along the river, so bring your binoculars! Join us for a peaceful and relaxing evening in the park! Please note there will be no regular meeting in June, July or August. Contact Jane Clark for details about the picnic at 515-223-5047.



Attracting Birds to Your Yard
By Adam Janke

Learn how to design a backyard oasis for birds by providing essential habitat elements including food, shelter, and water. This publication discusses key considerations for incorporating bird habitat needs into landscape designs by laying out plants that provide shelter or food in a way that mimics the natural habitats of birds. The publication also discusses bird feeding and how to safely attract more birds into view in the backyard by providing the right types of food throughout the year.

Find this publication at: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/Attracting-Birds-to-Your-Yard>

Pedal the Prairie 2018
Saturday, May 19, 2018 at 9:00 a.m.
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

Enjoy a spring bike ride on the Prairie Parkway Bike Trail, the paved and expanded refuge entry road at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, featuring four-foot bike lanes on each side! Participants will have the chance to see bison and elk, ride among native wildflowers, toss seed bombs, meet live animals, hike the trails, and explore the Visitor Center.

Both the Prairie Parkway Ride (10 miles) and the Family Fun Ride (1.5 miles) begin at 9:00 a.m. Sag wagons will also be available. Snacks, refreshments, games and activities provided! Like all Refuge activities, Pedal the Prairie is a FREE EVENT. Riders and non-riders are welcome to attend!

There is no registration necessary for this event. Be sure to check their webpage regularly for maps, updates and information. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Neal_Smith/Events.html

*SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) will be helping folks learn about raptors while attending the 'Pedal the Prairie' event!



Eagle Watch
Gray's Lake, Des Moines

Joel Van Roekel of Des Moines Parks and Recreation will be at Gray's Lake every Tuesday 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for the next couple of months with a spotting scope to show off the eagle family as the eaglets grow up.



Birding Basics at Gray's Lake with John Bissell

Birding Basics is a free Des Moines Parks and Recreation program for novice and experienced birders to learn how to identify Iowa's avian community! The program runs **every Wednesday from 11:00 am - 11:45 am** through the last Wednesday of May. Interested parties should meet at the south parking lot at Gray's Lake's (2101 Fleur Drive). Pack a lunch and your binoculars, and come learn about Iowa's exquisite birds!



Osprey Watch
On-call, June and July
11:00-1:00
Woodland Hills Elementary
1120 South 95th Street, West Des Moines

Experience first-hand a conservation success story; Osprey. Osprey are an eagle-sized, fish-eating bird of prey that vanished from Iowa before European settlement. In 1997 the Iowa DNR (along with several other conservation partners) was able to bring Osprey back to Iowa. There are now 26 nesting pairs with two of these present in Dallas County. Dallas County Conservation Board will have spotting scopes set up on an active nest just west of Jordan Creek Mall. The scopes will be set up for viewing the birds from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. If you live or work in the area make it part of your lunch routine! For questions, contact Dallas County Conservation Board, phone: 515-465-3577 or email: conservation@dallascountyia.gov .

Birding in Florida and Arkansas-- January 2018

By Ray Harden

New Year's Eve day of 2017 Margaret and I went birding at St. Mark's Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf Coast of Florida. We were eager to see if the Vermilion Flycatcher would be in the same bridge where we saw it in 2015 and 2016. Sadly it was not there. However, the park ranger said that it had been spotted several times in an area further west. We did not observe the bird on this trip.

We saw and photographed several species of shorebirds, ducks, and songbirds. In one of the ponds there was a flock of fifty or more shorebirds feeding in the shallow water. Based on their size and feeding style they were either Willets or Whimbrels, but I am not sure. I wish I'd had my spotting scope.

We were standing on an observation platform over a large pond observing the ducks, herons, mud hens, coots and other birds that were feeding in the water. A man told Margaret that in the next pond to the south was a pair of Scarlet Ibis feeding in the shallows. Wow! That would be exciting to see one of those. It is a bird that is found in the northern part of South America and the West Indies Islands. Maybe it was an accidental that had been blown to Florida during the last hurricane.

We hurried over to see the birds. They were feeding in the shallow water, sticking their long curved beaks into the mud looking for prey. However, I could tell they were not Scarlet Ibis, they were Glossy Ibis.

We worked our way along the bank of the pond in waist to chest high grass, trying to get some good photos. The grass was in the way and the sun was at a bad angle. I decided to go around to the other side of the birds for a better shot. I got some good pictures before the birds flew away.

Margaret and I then headed back to our car. I took about two steps when I saw a long tail of an alligator protruding from the grass into the water less than ten feet away. It was a big alligator. Its body was in the tall grass close to where we had been standing. Then I saw the other alligator behind Margaret in the shallow water and another deep in the tall grass. The third one was almost completely hidden in the grass.

The alligators gave us a scare. Birding in Florida is not the same as birding in Iowa. It reminded me to always be aware of my surroundings.

Near the St. Mark's lighthouse I sat on a bench to look at ducks on the pond. Then I saw a little bird feeding in the weedy vegetation along the shore. I sat very still and watched it come closer and closer to me. It was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher coming closer every second. I kept zooming out with my camera lens to keep the bird in focus. The little creature kept flying from one weed to another feeding on insects, seldom sitting still. Sometimes it would go deep in foliage of the plants making it hard to see. Other times it fed on the top. I managed to get several good photos.

We saw large flocks of Yellow-rumped warblers feeding on juniper berries and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were also an abundant species. We took photos of many other species of birds at St. Mark's Wildlife Refuge.

On our way home we wanted to stop at the Dagmar Wildlife Refuge, west of Brinkley, Arkansas, to look for birds in the freshwater swampy habitat. This is the place where an ornithologist about ten years ago, thought he heard the call of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Most scientists think the Ivory-billed has been extinct for fifty years. We thought we would try our luck and look for a bird that is thought to be extinct.

We walked a mile or more on an old roadbed with water on both sides. A light misty rain was falling most of the time and heavy low clouds or fog limited our visibility.

We could see vague outlines of flocks of geese as they flew over our heads and sometimes we could hear their wing beats. We did hear gun shots at times from hunters in the lakes outside of the refuge. We did not see an Ivory-billed Woodpecker. But we did hear a Pileated Woodpecker drumming and calling.

We also saw a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Northern Cardinals, and many White-throated Sparrows.

It gave me an eerie feeling as we walked along the trail. At any moment I expected the monster from the Black Lagoon to surface from the depths of the water. The vista was like an old blurry black and white photograph, showing silhouettes of cypress trees and their reflection in the water. I would like to go back there in the summer and canoe the water trail through the swamp.

As we traveled further west on Highway 70 we saw large flocks of geese feeding in the fields. One field had a flock of White-fronted Geese. They are uncommon in east central Arkansas. It was a "life" bird for me.

We also stopped by a field that had a very large flock of Snow Geese feeding. All of a sudden hunters stood up and began shooting. Several geese were hit; the wounded ones began walking toward the main flock. A large black Labrador Retriever took off after the injured birds and began returning them to the hunters. He was amazing to watch. However, I did feel sorry for the geese-but they are not an endangered species.

We had parked on the shoulder of the highway. Because it was foggy I had turned on my flashers as we sat and watched the hunters. We had been sitting for only a minute or two when a car pulled in behind me with flashing blue lights. Oh, oh I thought I am in trouble for illegal parking. A young conservation officer came to my window and asked if we were okay. I explained that we were watching the dog work getting the geese for the hunters. He asked if they shot the geese from the road, I said no they were in blinds in the field. He said, "Okay, have a good day." and left. I was impressed that his first concern was about our safety.

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

Dues should be mailed to:

Jane 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

*Additional Contribution for Conservation Projects _____

*Additional Contribution for Bird Feeding Projects _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

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