

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



**Field Trip—Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Saturday, October 13th**

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, October 13th and the destination will be Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Meet at the McDonald's on University Avenue in Pleasant Hill at 8:00 AM. We'll be looking for fall migrants, especially raptors and sparrows. The prairie should still be of interest with the changing seasons and it's always a treat to observe the bison. Please contact Denny Thompson for more information at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837.

**Tuesday, October 16th, 7 p.m.
Conserving New Zealand's Unique Island World
By Suzanne Gucciardo**

Conserving New Zealand's Unique Island World will describe why this island nation is like no other on Earth. Imagine a world so isolated that it had no native land mammals, and where birds ruled the water, land and sky. A number of remarkable species were exterminated once the Polynesians settled the islands, but the coming of Europeans accelerated the loss of unique species and their habitats.

Beginning in the early 20th Century, protection of native rare species grew from a handful of efforts to a national priority. Some of the methods developed to restore New Zealand habitats are now exported to other countries. Even though there may seem to be little in common between an island nation and the mid-continental Midwest US, there are lessons Iowans can learn from the New Zealand experience.

Suzanne Gucciardo has an MS in Biology and a PhD in Ecology from Iowa State University. She taught natural sciences in the Botany, Wildlife Ecology and Zoology departments at Iowa State for a while before joining the National Park Service (NPS). After 18 years as a resource manager for the NPS, she retired in 2014 to travel. Suzanne has been to all seven continents and many island nations since then and she is still eager to share the wonders of the World with others.

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

Fall Migration!

From Wildlife Diversity News by Iowa DNR

When you think of animals migrating, the first image that pops into your head will likely be a bird, maybe a V of snow geese and Canada geese flying overhead, but many other species migrate as well such as mammals, and many insects.

Migration is usually driven by winter conditions which often reduces an animal's food supply, so they move to where the food is.

There are a couple different types of migration. Some species migrate only short distances looking for better conditions. For example bighorn sheep (not found in Iowa) tend to graze on mountain slopes in the summer, and then move down into valleys in the winter where it's easier to find food. Other species, like the American robin decide to migrate, or not, depending on where they live and how plentiful their food is in the winter.

However there are many species that migrate long distances and spend the winter in more tropical, less harsh conditions. Actually, with many of these species it would be more accurate to say that they travel north during the summer for more favorable breeding conditions and then return to the more tropical areas when those conditions disappear.

There are generally two different ways that migrants decide when to migrate. *Obligate migrants* use hard-wired instinct to determine when to migrate. They use conditions like the changing amount of day light to tell them when to leave and either return south for the winter or come north for breeding season. *Facultative migrants* generally travel shorter distances. Though they tend to migrate at approximately the same time every year, because they have relatively shorter distances to travel, they are more in tune with the weather conditions of the moment and if the season is colder or warmer than usual they might tweak their migration times by days or even weeks. The distinction between these two types of migrants is not a hard and fast rule, and in fact many species fall somewhere in between.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

By Carol Berrier

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds nest in the eastern United States, sometimes raising two broods a season. In the fall females have finished their single-handed parental tasks of nest-building, laying and incubating two eggs, and teaching the fledglings how to find food. They then have time to devote to doubling their body fat for the long fall migration. The males have already fattened up and often leave two weeks before the females.

Both sexes spent the summer aggressively defending their feeding territories from other birds, even from their mates. In fact, one could hardly call them mates, for they come together only briefly to copulate on neutral ground. The males mate promiscuously with any female that happens by.

The females do share food with their nestlings and briefly with their fledglings, before chasing them off to fend for themselves. Insects provide essential protein in their diets. A banana peel placed near your feeder will attract a favorite - fruit flies.

As you might guess a ready supply of food is crucial in the life of a hummingbird. These birds are only three inches long and weigh one-tenth of an ounce. With more than 600 heartbeats a minute the birds have extremely high metabolisms and must eat almost constantly or go into a state of torpor, which they often do at night. But somehow with extra body fat, they are able to make the 20 hour non-stop trip across the Gulf of Mexico.

Perhaps your nectar feeder is claimed by a hummingbird. Don't worry; you can leave it out until the birds have left. Its presence won't tempt the bird to stay up north too long. But do be sure to clean it every two or three days, and put in fresh nectar. Remember to use one part white sugar to four parts water - and no red dye. Birds can tell by the length of daylight hours when they should leave for the south.

Fall Warbler Migration **From Wildlife Diversity News by Iowa DNR**

Migration season is always a birder's paradise as species that aren't usually found in Iowa can be seen passing through. August through October are typically peak migration months.

Warblers are one such group of birds that are fun to watch. During fall migration many warblers have their winter coats instead of their bright breeding plumage which can make it an extra challenge to identify the different species. Though they sing less because they aren't searching for a mate, listening for their short vocalizations is still one of the best ways to help identify warblers. This is especially useful if you want to identify the species as they migrate during the night. Most warblers migrate, or at least start their migration, during the night. They will "drop-out" during the day and use that time to refuel for the next flight.

In addition to the 10 species of warblers that breed in Iowa, there are also at least 16 that pass through Iowa during migration. Two of these species—the bay breasted warbler and the Canada warbler—are Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) meaning these species have a low or declining population.

Canada Warbler

The Canada warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*) nests in the northern United States and in Canada and spends winter in northwestern South America. It is one of the earlier migrants and may spend only two months at its breeding location. Unlike many warbler species, the Canada warbler does not have a noticeable difference in its breeding and non-breeding plumage. It is sometimes called the "necklace warbler" because of the band of dark streaks across its chest. Both sexes have the necklace, although the male's may be slightly darker and more conspicuous. The chest, throat, and belly are yellow and the back is grey. They also have white eye rings or spectacles.

Bay Breasted Warbler

The bay breasted warbler (*Setophaga castanea*) breeds in the northern United States and Canada and spends winter in northwestern South America. It is one of the later migratory species and may linger quite late into fall. In summer, the male is known for having a blackface, chestnut head, and reddish-brown on the flanks. The female has a more muted version of the male's plumage. During the fall migration, the bird is in its non-breeding plumage and becomes a greenish "confusing fall warbler." In order to identify it look for light streaking on the back, thick wing bars, dark colored legs and feet and the reddish wash that some birds keep from breeding season.

Des Moines Audubon Members' Contributions Support Carroll Prairie

Earlier this year, Des Moines Audubon Society contributed \$3,000 toward the purchase of Carroll Prairie in Story County. This contribution was made possible by generous gifts to Des Moines Audubon from our members and from proceeds from the Helene Peasley fund.

The Carroll Prairie property is bisected by West Indian Creek, a watershed that Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) and Story County Conservation Board have been actively protecting and restoring. Jennett Heritage Area, protected through INHF with Iowa Prairie Network support in 2011, is just downstream.

Lorna Carroll Sellberg, a Story county resident and passionate conservationist, worked closely with INHF to create the opportunity to protect her family's 49-acre property, which includes native prairie remnants, oxbow wetlands and the meandering West Indian Creek.

INHF will help Story County Conservation begin their efforts to build off the past care and attention that Lorna so willingly gave to the property. Potential practices include: prescribed fire, woody vegetation removal, invasive species monitoring/removal, and native prairie interseeding on pasture. The property will be open to the public following the transfer to Story County Conservation Board.

Thank you to all who have made contributions to Des Moines Audubon for conservation projects!

**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.
If you are unsure of the status of your membership please call 515-223-5047.**

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 _____

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