



THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXV, NUMBER 6
JUNE 2018
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK

FIELD TRIP TO CHICHAQUA—SATURDAY, JUNE 9th

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, June 9 and the destination will be Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in northeast Polk County. Chichaqua Bottoms includes over 8,000 acres along the Skunk River, with prairie, wetlands and riparian woodlands supporting about 200 species of birds. Target species include: Sandhill Crane, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat and Henslow's Sparrow. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot on the west side of the Ramada Inn (used to be Best Western Motel) located in the SW corner of the Ankeny 1st Street Interchange on I-35. Dress for conditions. Contact Denny Thompson for more information at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837.

REMINDER: NO PROGRAM MEETINGS IN JUNE, JULY OR AUGUST

Des Moines Audubon May Field Trip Report
By Roy Adolphson

The Des Moines Audubon Field Trip on Saturday, May 12th, started at the Saylorville Lake Visitors' Center. It was a chilly and rainy morning, about 50 degrees with off-and-on light showers, and I almost decided not to go. Fortunately, I got a prodding phone call from a friend of mine who wanted to see some warblers, and I'm really glad I went. About 14 intrepid souls showed up, including 4 new younger people, and we ended up seeing about 44 total species, 19 or 20 of which were warblers! Things started out a little slow at the visitors' center, but the trees around the feeders yielded a Blackburnian and a Yellow Warbler. Next we went below the dam and checked out some swampy areas around the ponds and streams. American Redstarts were seemingly everywhere, along with Yellow-rumped and Wilson's Warblers, a Northern Waterthrush, a Great Crested Flycatcher, and a rather disheveled Red-eyed Vireo. Some Magnolia and Chestnut-sided Warblers were noticed along the roadway. We tried to locate some Yellow-throated Warblers known to be in the sycamores at Cottonwood Recreation Area, but I think only one person caught a glimpse of one.

By about ten o'clock, several folks bowed out due to the chilly weather or prior commitments, but about eight of us journeyed on to Oak Grove, a picnic area with tall oak, basswood and walnut trees surrounded by timbered ravines. We couldn't entice an Ovenbird to show itself, but the trees were full of warblers like Tennessee, Nashville, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, and Black-and-white. One person found a Canada Warbler. As we started to walk out (the gate was closed), we had the good fortune to get amazingly close looks at Bay-breasted and Black-throated Green males at fairly low levels in the trees right along the roadway! That really made our day.

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

For information about the dates, contact Dallas County Conservation Board, by email: conservation@dallascountyiowa.gov or phone: 515-465-3577. Experience first-hand a conservation success story; Osprey. Ospreys 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!



Baltimore Orioles
By Carol Berrier

Returning by early May from wintering in Mexico, Central or South America, or occasionally our southeastern states, orioles are greeted by winter-weary Iowans, hoping to lure them close, with orange halves, sugar-water, and grape jelly. Members of the blackbird tribe, Baltimore orioles have black heads and upper parts, fiery orange under parts, and two white bars on each wing. Early colonists, noting that the birds wore the colors of Lord Baltimore, named them the "Baltimore birds." Later the beautiful Baltimore oriole became Maryland's state bird.

Male Baltimore orioles return about a week before females to stake out nesting territories several acres in size. A tall deciduous shade tree, often at a forest edge, in a park, or along a residential street makes an ideal nesting tree. To claim it, the male perches high in the upper canopy, and loudly sings his clear, short song. Each bird has his own distinctive, easily identifiable musical phrase that he sings over and over. When a female arrives, he courts her with a series of low bows and soft whistles.

The female, although not as colorful as her mate, is eye-catching with an olive-brown back and orange-yellow breast. She may also have a bit of black on her head. She is possibly the most skillful nest builder of North American birds. She locates her nest near the end of a drooping bough, twenty to sixty feet above ground and hidden by leaves. She hangs a tangle of plant fibers over several supporting twigs, and for the next five to eight or more days, produces a four to eight-inch long intricately woven pouch, firmly attached to the branches.

The four to six eggs are incubated by the female who sometimes sings on the nest. The nestlings are fed protein-rich insect diets by both parents. The favorite year-round oriole food is the caterpillar. Even the destructive, hairy tent caterpillar, avoided by most birds, is a delicacy. Insects, spiders, snails, fruits, nectar, buds, and some seeds are staples of the oriole's diet.

Nestlings fledge after twelve days and are fed by both parents. But after two weeks, the female takes a well-deserved rest when she molts, leaving the male to care for the fledglings for another week. Then he too molts. There is no thought of a second labor-intensive brood! Females and juveniles migrate south in mid-August, followed by males in September.

In 1973, because of reported hybridization of our eastern Baltimore orioles with western Bullock's orioles, taxonomists lumped the two species together as subspecies of the newly named northern oriole. This hybrid population ceased to exist, and finally in 1995 the decision was reversed and the old names restored.



"Then migrating warblers, lemon-colored, whirled down along the frail branches till I could hardly tell which were leaves and which were birds. I sat down on roughened ivory grass to follow the warblers with my field glasses. Scores of tiny birds, gay and quaint, making evanescent compositions among the laced twigs."

-- Florence Page Jaques, (1890 - 1972) author

Books by Florence Page Jaques - Illustrated by Francis Lee Jaques

- Canoe Country - 1938 - The University of Minnesota Press
- The Geese Fly High - The University of Minnesota Press
- Birds Across The Sky - The University of Minnesota Press
- Snowshoe Country - 1944 - University of Minnesota Press (Awarded 1946 John Burroughs Medal)
- Canadian Spring - 1947 - Harper & Brothers
- As Far As The Yukon - 1951 - Harper & Brothers

SANTA ANA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE REPRIEVE?

In the January 2018 edition of The Birding Community E-bulletin, things were not getting any better in the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge "Wall" controversy. The Department of Homeland Security had recently announced that the first new section of the proposed border wall at the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) in South Texas would be at the Santa Ana Refuge, specifically built on the well-known levee by the north end of the refuge.

The proposed 2.9-mile section of wall at Santa Ana NWR would be constructed in a 10-mile gap in the existing barrier. The new wall would be a 30-foot tall concrete base with an additional 18 feet of steel bollard fence atop it. Additionally, there would be a 150-foot "enforcement zone" stripped of vegetation next to and south of the wall. This zone would include a road and surveillance towers with floodlighting.

There would be no wall at either end of this construction. At least for the time-being, this new section of wall would simply be a barrier to walk around!

Santa Ana NWR has been long been a regular "Mecca" for birders and a place where unique "South Texas specialties" are regularly found. Santa Ana was created in 1943 to protect migratory birds, and 94.9% of its property was acquired through Duck-Stamp/MBCF dollars. Some 400 bird species have been observed at Santa Ana, and many other wildlife species including rare mammals, herps, and butterflies call the area home.

Birders, Refuge Friends, and conservationists of all stripes have been watching developments at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge for almost a year, concerned that plans for construction of the huge border-wall would be accelerated, possibly isolating or destroying valuable habitat in the Refuge System in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. This issue was summarized in the February issue of The Birding Community E-bulletin: <https://tinyurl.com/Feb18Ebulletin>

In March, when the 2,232-page omnibus spending bill was passed by Congress and signed by President Trump, it contained a particular short sentence in reference to The Wall: "None of the funds provided in this or any other Act shall be obligated for construction of a border barrier in the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge."

Thus, the long, contentious, and unexpected struggle over The Wall at bird-rich Santa Ana seems to have come to a close. The spending bill includes \$1.6 billion for border barriers and technology, with restrictions on the kind of construction that can be done to only existing fencing, but Santa Ana NWR is essentially exempt. "The bill is very explicit in keeping any new border walls from going up in Santa Ana," said Scott Nicol, co-chairman of the Sierra Club Borderlands. "I think we were successful in making walling off Santa Ana politically toxic."

Originally, the Santa Ana border wall was looking like a pilot project for other sections of the wall, if only because the land was federally owned and a place where a wall might be easily built. In addition, the Administration had issued bidding guidelines that drew on elements of eight prototypes that were each about 30 feet (9.1 meters) high, much higher than existing barriers.

But the reprieve may be temporary. "This bill stated that there wasn't going to be any funding allotted for this year, but that doesn't mean that, that may not happen next year," said Rio Grande Valley No Border Wall organizer Melinda Melo.

Moreover, the threat still looms for other Lower Rio Grande Valley locations like the National Butterfly Center, Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park, La Lomita chapel, and home-and-farm properties owned by individuals along the Rio Grande. The border-wall battles over habitat in the Lower Rio Grande Valley will surely continue.

From: The Birding Community E-bulletin, April 2018

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*"Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance."*

.....Theodore Roosevelt

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

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City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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