

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXVI, NUMBER 2
FEBRUARY 2019
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Field Trip Saturday, February 9

Let's try this again--meet in the circle drive at the bird blind in Walnut Woods State Park at 8 AM on Saturday, February 9. We'll check out the birds at the blind and in the woods at the park. Then, if Maffitt Reservoir is frozen, we could also bird at Raccoon River Park. Bring binoculars, a snack and beverage and dress for the conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact field trip leader, Dennis Thompson at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837 for more information.

Tuesday, February 19, 7 p.m. **Birding the Lower Rio Grande Valley & Texas Coast** **By Doug Harr**

In November 2017, Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) led a week-long birding trip to south Texas, with 4 guides and 20 birding participants. Over 180 species of birds were recorded, adding new "lifers" for everyone's list, even including those who had birded there previously. This presentation features great photos of beautiful birds, butterflies and other creatures, plus views of diverse habitats visited along the Gulf Coast and Lower Rio Grande River--one of America's very best birding locations.

Our speaker, Doug Harr, is a Certified Wildlife Biologist who retired after more than 38 years with Iowa DNR. He holds BS and MS degrees in Wildlife Biology from South Dakota State University. Doug was a Wildlife Management Biologist in NW Iowa from 1972 to 2001, and then spent a year as a Wildlife Diversity Biologist at the Boone Wildlife Research Station. From 2002 to 2010 he was DNR's State Coordinator of the Wildlife Diversity Program. Today he is President of Iowa Audubon, Vice-president of Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) and also serves on the board of Audubon Minnesota which is a National Audubon Society office. Doug is an active member of many other conservation organizations, does independent contract work related to birds, and is Iowa's coordinator of the federal Breeding Bird Survey.

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.

Book Worms

Reading and discussing nature books is a fun wintertime activity, without having to lace up your boots. Join *Book Worms* discussions led by Polk County Conservation naturalist, Heidi Anderson at Plot Twist Bookstore, 502 N Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny. February 28 - 7:00-8:30 p.m.. *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben. For questions please call 515.323.5339. Please note there is a \$5.00 fee. Register at: <https://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Polk/Park/Polk-County-Education-Programs/Events/12162/Book-Worms.aspx>.

Red List of Threatened Species: A Few Surprises for Us

Established in 1964, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species has evolved to become the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of animal, fungi and plant species. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species maintains a record of how close species may be to extinction. BirdLife International is responsible for annually measuring the health of the world of birds for this tally. Every year, BirdLife updates which birds are stable, which are in recovery, and which have slipped toward extinction. In the most recent release, there were a few surprises for us in North America. Here are a few of the upbeat stories:

Red-headed Woodpecker, with formerly declining populations, may have stabilized. Now placed in a "Least Concern" category, the species' population is considered healthy and stable enough that it is unlikely to face extinction anytime soon.

Henslow's Sparrow has stabilized, thanks in part to habitat management. In particular, the species has benefited from the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), where farmers are paid to remove land from cultivation and instead plant species that will improve the health and quality of the habitat.

Some of these changes fit into familiar patterns, with habitat alteration, pesticides, and climate change playing a role. Whether or not you agree with all these findings, they deserve consideration. See complete article at: <https://www.birdlife.org/news/tag/iucn-red-list> .

From The Birding Community E-bulletin, December 2018

2018 Des Moines Audubon Christmas Bird Count By Denny Thompson

The Des Moines Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, 12/22/18. It was cloudy, with a high of 35 degrees. There was no snow on the ground and moving water was open with ponds and lakes mostly frozen. We had 23 participants in 14 field parties and 7 feeder watchers.

The result was a count record 82 species! That shattered the old record of 76 (set twice). The individual count of 101,150 was three times the previous record. That's obviously due to the icterid (blackbird) roost at Waterworks Park, but we had high-end counts of several species. The rarest bird was a Franklin's Gull, a first for the count. An amazing 22 species of waterfowl were tallied, including Ross's Goose, Mute Swan, Tundra Swan and Bufflehead. Other highlights included: Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Horned Lark, Winter Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Harris's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird and Great-tailed Grackle. John Cecil estimated 80,000 icterids coming to roost at Waterworks Park, but said it could just have easily been twice that number. The sheer volume of birds and that they still were streaming in after dark makes an accurate estimate almost impossible. Several regular species were in higher numbers than usual, with several setting records. All-time highs were set for Cooper's hawk, Rock Pigeon, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow and Northern Cardinal. Red-tailed Hawk and White-breasted Nuthatch almost set records. American Crow numbers are down since the downtown roost has been actively harassed. We still had 1,101 crows, but that's a far cry from the 10-14,000 from a few years ago.

Setting a new species count record means there weren't many misses. Unless Ring-necked Pheasant numbers really rebound, that bird will continue to be very difficult for this count. We rarely get Eastern Screech-Owl anymore, so that doesn't really qualify as a miss. Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were in the count circle earlier in the week, but decided to spend Saturday at the Saylorville Lake marina instead.

2018 Des Moines Audubon Christmas Bird Count

By Denny Thompson

Thanks to all the participants for making the count a success.

Bold = new to the count. *Italicized* = new high for the count.

Snow Goose	1	Belted Kingfisher	9
Ross's Goose	1	Red-headed Woodpecker	2
Greater White-fronted Goose	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	<i>126</i>
Cackling Goose	114	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
Canada Goose	9981	Downy Woodpecker	<i>148</i>
Mute Swan	1	Hairy Woodpecker	27
Trumpeter Swan	221	Northern Flicker	14
Tundra Swan	6	Pileated Woodpecker	3
Gadwall	5	American Kestrel	9
American Wigeon	3	Merlin	5
Mallard	<i>770</i>	Blue Jay	<i>212</i>
Northern Pintail	2	American Crow	1101
Green-winged Teal	2	Horned Lark	6
Redhead	1	Black-capped Chickadee	<i>255</i>
Ring-necked Duck	6	Tufted Titmouse	12
Greater Scaup	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	10
Lesser Scaup	6	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>158</i>
Bufflehead	3	Brown Creeper	8
Common Goldeneye	48	Winter Wren	2
Hooded Merganser	17	Carolina Wren	<i>12</i>
Common Merganser	3	Eastern Bluebird	16
Ruddy Duck	7	American Robin	33
Wild Turkey	24	European Starling	<i>3786</i>
American White Pelican	9	Cedar Waxwing	125
Great Blue Heron	9	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>10</i>
Northern Harrier	2	American Tree Sparrow	169
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Dark-eyed Junco	701
Cooper's Hawk	9	Harris's Sparrow	3
Bald Eagle	78	White-throated Sparrow	<i>102</i>
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	Song Sparrow	9
Red-tailed Hawk	68	Northern Cardinal	<i>283</i>
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>68000</i>
American Coot	4	Brown-headed Cowbird	72
Franklin's Gull	1	Rusty Blackbird	4
Ring-billed Gull	69	Common Grackle	<i>12000</i>
Herring Gull	64	Great-tailed Grackle	16
Rock Pigeon	<i>1210</i>	House Finch	62
Eurasian Collared-Dove	19	Purple Finch	1
Mourning Dove	231	Pine Siskin	28
Great Horned Owl	5	American Goldfinch	177
Barred Owl	5	House Sparrow	415

It's Winter Time and The Eagles Are Flying!

Des Moines Parks and Rec Bald Eagle Day 2019

Saturday, February 9, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

Fellowship Baptist Church; SE 6th Street Bridge, Des Moines

On the SE 6th Street Bridge between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 pm there will be spotting scopes and people to assist with viewing some of the wild Bald Eagles in Des Moines. Inside Fellowship Baptist Church, you will be able to warm up, relax, have a snack and listen to presentations. Kay Neumann of SOAR will present with a live education ambassador bald eagle at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Contact: Joel Van Roekel, jmvanroekel@dmparks.org , 515 248 6369

Eagle Watch Sunday, February 24, 12:00—4:00 p.m. at Saylorville Lake.

At one point the idea that we would offer a program of bald eagle viewing would have seemed absurd in the face of the species' pending extinction. This event is a testament that conservation can and does work. Come view what is possible when we choose to care for the wilds. The open waters below the dam at the Saylorville Lake create feeding opportunities that congregate central Iowa's winter eagles and almost guarantee you a chance to view an eagle. This program is a joint effort between Dallas County Conservation, Polk County Conservation and the US Army Corps of Engineers. It provides the public with the thrill of viewing eagles in the Des Moines River Valley and educational programming to increase your understanding of these majestic birds. **Specific viewing locations and programming schedules can be obtained at the Saylorville Visitor Center on the day of the event.**

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9871 LINCOLN AVENUE
CLIVE, IA 50325



**Nonprofit
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Permit No. 1142
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