

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXVI, NUMBER 4
APRIL 2019
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Field Trip, Saturday, April 13th

For our Saturday, April 13th field trip, meet at Casey's on 1st Street in Grimes at 8:00 a.m. From there we will travel through Dallas County to Guthrie County to bird at Bay's Branch, Lakin Slough, Springbrook State Park and other local birding areas. We'll be visiting a variety of habitats that could include marsh, wetland, restored prairie and upland looking for waterfowl and early migrating birds. On the way, we might stop by Marsh Farm Wetland, a wetland west of Grimes that has become a birding hotspot. A visit to some "migrant trap" woodlands in the open country could turn up migrating songbirds. Bring binoculars and dress for the conditions, which could include walking in wet grasses. Contact field trip leader, Denny Thompson at 515-254-0837 or cndthomps@gmail.com for more information.

Tuesday, April 16, 7:00 p.m. **Wildlife of the Pantanal** **By Craig Meyers**

The Pantanal of Brazil is truly one of the great wildlife-viewing opportunities available in the world. Please join Craig Meyers as he takes you on a tour of just some of the many species of wildlife in this great wetland.

According to National Geographic, the Pantanal covers over 70,000 square miles—an area the size of Washington State—in the center of South America. Most of the Pantanal is in Brazil, but, as nature recognizes no political boundaries, the Pantanal spills into neighboring Paraguay and Bolivia. And though it's often overshadowed by the Amazon rain forest to the north, the Pantanal quietly boasts the highest concentration of wildlife on the continent.

Each year when torrential rains fill the Pantanal's giant basin, a vast flooded landscape is created. When the downpour subsides, water slowly drains into the Paraguay River, leaving behind fish and snail-filled pools that attract huge flocks of egrets, storks, and spoonbills. .

Craig is a central Iowa wildlife photographer who has been taking photographs for more than 40 years, and has used his retirement to travel to areas both in the U.S. and elsewhere to photograph wildlife in its natural habitat.

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 jrc Clark@radiks.net .

Birdwatching Classes at Gray's Lake with John Bissell

The Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department is again offering free birdwatching classes every Wednesday now through May 29th. Birding Basics will focus on various waterfowl migrating during the early spring dates and then migrating songbird species as they journey north as the weather warms. Residential birds are always a welcome sight in the park and we will occasionally check in on Bluebird boxes located at Gray's Lake. Please note that due to construction in the park, for the 2019 season the group will be meeting at the terrace area located at the South West parking entrance to Gray's Lake.

Everyone is welcome to join in from the avid birder to the armchair naturalist. John Bissell leads as the group casually moves down the trail. John helps locate and identify birds as well as answer participants' questions. It is free to attend and a great way to spend your lunch hour, outside with nature. There will be some extra binoculars and spotting scopes on site for you to use if you do not have your own and there is no registration, just show up.

Note: As this article was being written, Gray's Lake was still closed due to recent flooding. There was a large amount of damage done to the park and trails that needed to be repaired and cleaned up before the park can reopen to the public. Please watch Des Moines Parks social media posts for the most current information. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Joel at Des Moines Parks and Recreation 515-248-6369 or jmvanroekel@dmgov.org.

Make and Take Oriole Bird Feeders Saturday, April 13th 1:00—2:30 p.m. Forest Park Museum south of Perry Pre-registration is required: Cost \$25.00

Have you ever looked at a beautiful piece of jewelry and said, "I can't afford this." How would you like to lure in vibrant, flying jewels that would come annually from Nicaragua to sing in your yard and welcome spring? Dallas County Conservation Board invites you to come build a Baltimore Oriole bird feeder. Oriole feeders are unique in that they are designed to hold oranges and grape jelly, a favorite treat of this bird. This particular design is water resistant. There will be staff, building materials, and tools for assembly.

Spring River Paddling & Birding Float Raccoon River Redfield Dam to Pleasant Valley Saturday, May 4, 1:00—5:00 p.m. Registration is required for this program.

Kickoff your spring paddling season with Dallas County Conservation Board. Our floats strive to introduce you to the waters of the three Raccoon Rivers that traverse our county and to introduce you to a new contact point in the wilds of Dallas County. The wild contact will be the BIRDS as we link this float with the Big Year Birding Challenge. Our river corridors represent some of the best wild habitat remaining. These linear stretches of wildness are home to a wide array of feathered wildness. The spring migration of warblers should be at peak, mixed in with the more common local bird species. This avian diversity will make this float a wild contact for both the paddler new to ornithology and the veteran birder. Share a float and connect to the feathered wilds of our place.

**For more information on both of these programs or to register:
Dallas County Conservation Board
14581 K Avenue, Perry, IA 50220
Office Hours: M-F 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
conservation@dallascountyiowa.gov phone: (515)-465-3577**

**Iowa Important Bird Area Spotlight Species:
Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*)
By Doug Harr**

Birders know that almost all warblers are beautiful, but some species in particular tend to stand out. The Prothonotary Warbler is one of those, and sometimes a local name reflects its glowing color, such as “golden swamp warbler” or “candle-in-the-swamp”.

The reference to swamps in those two nicknames is a perfect guide to learning something about the species’ habitat. Hardwood swamps or wet woodlands without an understory are preferred, where this bird can find a hollow tree in which to nest. Prothonotaries are the only eastern cavity-nesting warbler (the only western cavity-nester is Lucy’s Warbler) and will even use a nest box in the right habitat.

Because of preferred hardwood swamp habitat, Prothonotary Warblers are most common in the south-eastern U. S., although they range across eastern Iowa into southeast Minnesota. They also may be found up the Des Moines River corridor into central Iowa, near the Missouri River in southwest Iowa, and even have been recorded nesting in wooded wetlands near Spirit Lake, that area being about the very farthest northwest extend of its U.S. range.

Males are very easy to identify, with a robust body, relatively long bill, bright yellow to yellow-orange body, bluish-gray wings and tail, with a coal-black eye that contrasts with the bright yellow, unmarked face. Females are similar but a much duller olive-yellow.

Prothonotaries are somewhat slow foragers, compared to other warblers. Males tend to forage higher in trees and shrubs than females, both seeking Lepidoptera, beetles, flies and spiders. Outside the nesting season they will also feed on berries and even nectar.

Mating and nest-building begins almost immediately after females arrive on the breeding grounds, a few days after males arrive. In the species’ southern U.S. range, two nests may be raised annually, but typically only one per year in Iowa and the Great Lakes states. Large amounts of green mosses are used in the nest cavity, thought to help maintain stable incubation temperature. Clutch size usually is 4-5 eggs, one egg laid daily; with incubation lasting 12-14 days after the final egg is laid. Young will fledge at 9-10 days after hatching, able to fly short distances. If a new fledgling falls into the water, it can easily propel itself across the pond surface for a distance of up to 15 meters.

Prothonotary Warblers appear rather tame near humans, often easily observed within a few meters. But they are highly vulnerable to habitat fragmentation, and continuing loss of even hardwoods in swamps and wet woodlands is causing a gradual decline of this species across its breeding and wintering range. For nesting, a pair requires wet, wooded habitat of more than 100 acres in size, so if housing and other development or pasturing takes place near wooded swamps or in forested river floodplains, this species will continue in decline. As a result, it has been placed on various U.S. watch lists, and in Canada, where it occurs only in southern Ontario, Prothonotary Warbler is now listed as a Canadian endangered species. It is because of the decline of this bird that it has been named a “criteria species” to help designate Iowa’s Important Bird Areas.

From: The Iowa Audubon Newsletter, Volume 11, Number 2, August 2015

TIP OF THE MONTH: SONGBIRD NEST BOXES

It's the time of year to review your nest-box situation, time to make sure nest boxes are cleaned out and in good repair, and time to consider whether it's appropriate to locate more nest boxes to your property. Placing bird houses on your property adds pizzazz to the landscape of your surroundings, with the added benefit of attracting cavity-nesting songbirds to your property including bluebirds, chickadees, titmice, wrens, tree swallows, Purple Martins, and more. But be aware that habitat placement, height, and, especially precise dimensions for the nest boxes are essential requirements. For excellent resource information, refer to the NestWatch details available from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at: <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/> .

From: The Birding Community E-bulletin, March 2019 Website:<http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

**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 _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

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