

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXVI, NUMBER 5
MAY 2019
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Saturday, May 11th Field Trip
Saylorville Visitor's Center at 7:30 A.M.

Join Des Moines Audubon members on Saturday, May 11th 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 cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837 for information about field trips.

TUESDAY, MAY 21ST POTLUCK PICNIC
COTTONWOOD PICNIC AREA ALONG THE DES MOINES RIVER

Our traditional spring potluck will be held on Tuesday, May 21ST 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.

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 from 11:00 am - 11:45 am. Birding Basics will focus on migrating songbird species as they journey north. 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.

Birds Tell Us That We Need to Act on Climate-- Are you Ready for Climate Watch?
By National Audubon Society
April 23, 2019

Learn how you can help Audubon track how certain species are adjusting to climate change.
<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch>

In 2016, Audubon's climate scientists piloted a new research project to see how climate change is affecting birds. Climate Watch, as it's known, recruited volunteer birders and community scientists to fan across the country at the same time, twice a year, to count bluebirds and nuthatches. The goal was to see how both species are moving across the landscape to adjust to global warming.

Bluebirds and nuthatches were deliberately selected as the focal birds. They're charismatic and easy to identify. Plus they live in the United States during winter and summer, which is when both Climate Watch surveys take place. Scope was also important. Audubon's 2014 Birds and Climate Change report expected bluebirds and nuthatches to shift their ranges as temperatures rise, and between the seven species—Eastern, Western, and Mountain Bluebirds plus White-breasted, Red-breasted, Brown-headed, and Pygmy Nuthatches—they had pretty good geographic coverage, spanning most of the country.

But, not good enough so changes were made. Climate Watch takes place during two distinct seasons—winter (January 15-February 15) and summer (May 15-June 15)—each year. Participants are free to conduct their surveys at any time during these time windows. **This year, the survey will take place May 15–June 15** and is open to the public, including all interested Audubon chapters and centers, in addition to organized groups and individuals with an interest in birds. Climate Watch volunteers can also search for goldfinches (American and Lesser), towhees (Eastern and Spotted), and Painted Buntings. "We wanted to make sure everybody could get involved," says Brooke Bateman, senior scientist at the National Audubon Society in charge of the Climate Watch program. "We wanted more urban coverage and geographic coverage."

The additional species fill those niches. American Goldfinches are urban and suburban birds that are widespread across the continental United States. Painted Buntings and Eastern Towhees add Texas and Florida to the map, while Lesser Goldfinches and Spotted Towhees invite westerners into the fold. The only states where Climate Watch species aren't common are Alaska and Hawaii (none of the species live on Hawaii).

In 2014, Audubon released the Audubon Birds and Climate Change Report highlighting the risks that climate change poses to birds across North America. In response, thousands of people asked how they could help make the world a better place for birds. Now, you can help by observing birds in your area, using a specific protocol, to help us learn about how birds are responding to the changing climate.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact coordinator Doug Harr at dnharr@gmail.com. Help build a better world for birds by joining Climate Watch to test and improve climate models. Sign up for more information at https://www.audubon.org/news/how-join-climate-watch-community-science-program-audubon#joinCW__

What is the time commitment?

Volunteers in the pilot period generally were able to complete one survey square in two to four hours (12 five-minute point counts per square). Surveys should either be started in the morning and completed before noon, or started in the afternoon and completed before sunset.

Target species

Climate Watch focuses on these species: Eastern Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Western Bluebird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, Lesser Goldfinch, Painted Bunting, Eastern Towhee, and Spotted Towhee. These birds are easy to identify, have an enthusiastic constituency, and Audubon's climate models for these species offer strong predictions for range shifts for us to test. In future years, Climate Watch will include additional target species threatened by climate change covering a broader range of habitats and regional interests.

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
By Carol Berrier

Have you ever noticed a tree with rows of small holes in its bark? These holes are sap wells drilled by a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a member of the woodpecker family. The sapsucker's main source of food is the sap that wells up in these pits and the insects that are attracted to the sap. Over 200 tree species may be used, but the sweetest sap comes from the white birch. Other favorites include basswood, hickory, apple, and Scotch pine.

The birds' nest holes are often in the same tree as its sap wells. The most migratory of woodpeckers the monogamous sapsuckers return to the same tree and the same mate each spring, after spending the winter in the southern states or Central America. The sexes migrate separately, with the females flying farther south and the males returning first in early April.

Sapsuckers usually choose a fungus-infected tree that makes excavation easy. Foresters have learned that in the long run sapsuckers are good for the woods. The birds compensate for the loss of an occasional defective tree by feeding on harmful insects, including bud worms, tent caterpillars, and carpenter ants.

Sapsuckers not only supply other species with abandoned nest holes, they also provide food from their sap wells. Thirty-five bird species occasionally feed on sap and insects at these wells, as do squirrels, chipmunks, porcupines, and bats. The early spring sap wells can be lifesavers for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, which often arrive before woodland flowers bloom. I have observed migrating kinglets feeding on sap.

The eight-inch long Yellow-bellied Sapsucker has a black back and wings barred with white, prominent white wing patches, a dull yellow breast, a bright red forehead patch, a black bib, and a throat patch that is red in the male and white in the female. Close relatives in the western states include Red-breasted, Red-naped, and Williamson's Sapsuckers.

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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BOOK NOTES: KENN KAUFMAN'S LATEST

In his latest book, *A Season on the Wind: Inside the World of Spring Migration* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019), well-known author and bird enthusiast, Kenn Kaufman, introduces readers to an equally well-known birding locality in northwestern Ohio, and the magic and wonder of bird migration.

In each chapter, the author in a deliberate and thoughtful manner introduces readers to birds, a place, and the phenomenon of bird migration. Whether it is information about waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, or warblers, or avian research techniques such as bird-banding, radar studies, and the contributions of waterfowl hunters, the reader is guided carefully into an understanding and appreciation of them all.

Central to Kaufman's narrative are key birding locations and prominent ornithological players, many in the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area or at Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and the growing community of birders that increasingly visits northwestern Ohio during spring migration every year. Additionally, the subject of wind-power and the continuing debate over appropriate siting of energy-producing wind towers frequently appears in the narrative, along with other reminders to birders that it is insufficient to simply enjoy or even enthusiastically share birds if we hope to save them in perpetuity. Saving them must be a central part of the greater picture.

In this book, Kenn Kaufmann elegantly presents his subjects, and in the end leaves his readers with both an enjoyable and a thoughtful read.

From The Birding Community E-bulletin, April 2019 is distributed to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats. Access an archive of past E-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): <http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

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