

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



Saturday, August 10th Field Trip
Saylorville Visitors' Center at 8:00 A.M.

Join Des Moines Audubon members on Saturday, August 10th in the parking lot of the Visitors' Center at Saylorville Lake at 8:00 A.M.. The main species we'll be focusing on are shorebirds and other migrants. 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.

May Field Trip Report for Des Moines Audubon
By Roy Adolphson and Jane Clark

The Des Moines Audubon Field Trip on Saturday, May 11th started at Saylorville Lake Visitors' Center. It was another chilly morning. There were 17 birders who showed up anticipating spring migrants, and we ended by seeing 84 total species, 17 of which were warblers! Things started out a little slow at the visitors' center, but we had a nice fly-by of a Pileated Woodpecker. We then moved on to Cottonwood Recreation Area below the dam. There we found a Yellow-throated Warbler in the sycamores and a Clay-colored Sparrow hanging out with many Chipping Sparrows and American Goldfinch. We also observed a small group of Palm Warblers flitting to and from some disturbed soil to nearby shrubs and a Forster's Tern was flying over the adjacent pond. Some saw Orchard Orioles along the entrance drive to Cottonwood.

Next we went below the dam to Bob Shetler area and checked out the ponds, wet areas and streams. We had a distant view of a Green Heron across the river and we found Northern Waterthrush, Prothonotary Warbler, American Redstart, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Swainson's Thrush. Later we walked the paved trail below the big pond and were rewarded with a Wood Thrush singing its flute-like song and its wik-wik-wik call, a Golden-winged Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Wild Turkeys were observed in a few places during the morning.

A possible Fish Crow that was heard and observed at the last turnaround below the dam along the river was an obvious highlight, although the chances of it getting accepted as a record are probably slim. At the end of the trip, Denny led a couple other vehicles down to Lakeview Recreation Area west of the dam where we scoped the Osprey nest on a distant cell tower, but couldn't find the bird. However, we did pick up a Great Egret and a Spotted Sandpiper.

Mark your Calendars for this Fall Lineup of Programs

Tuesday, September 17, 7:00 p.m.
Ty Smedes, Raptors of the Midwest

Tuesday, October 16, 7:00 p.m.
Karen Viste-Sparkman and Stuart Sparkman, Travels to Peru

Tuesday, November 19, 7:00 p.m.,
Stephanie Shepherd, Iowa DNR, Rusty-patched Bumblebee

Birding By Month in the Des Moines Area

Check out our website at <https://dmaudubon.org/>. Under "Birds", click on the link in the text and select a month to get some ideas on the best places in the area for birding during each month as well as ideas of what you might find.

Birding Des Moines in August (as found on our website)

Just when you were getting settled into summer, the birds start moving south again. Fall migration differs from spring in a couple of different ways. First, there is no sense of urgency to get to the best breeding habitats so it tends to be more leisurely and drag out over several weeks. Additionally, with a successful season there are just more birds. Of course adults may be looking a bit ratty or have already molted into their winter plumage. Young birds frequently do not yet have the color of their parents. The challenges in identification may be a bit greater but with study and careful observation can be a lot of fun.

Although a few shorebirds, mostly males, have started south in July the largest flights are usually in August. One of the better places to search through flocks of shorebirds to find that elusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper is at Jester Park. Buff-breasted are generally found in vegetation rather than at the water's edge so it will take some careful searching. They have sometimes been found in the more upland areas of the beaches, Sandpiper Beach at Saylorville for one.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Meeting in Pella, August 23-25

The 2019 IOU Fall Meeting will be held in Pella on August 23-25. Central College will be the host. Tim Barksdale is a noted nature videographer from Missouri and is excited to be the keynote speaker. Check out information about the upcoming IOU meeting. You can get there directly by going to: <https://iowabirds.org/IOU/NextMeeting.aspx>.

Register by August 15. \$20 gets you into all Field Trips, all films, all afternoon presentations, the keynote address, and the Sunday wrap up. Yes, you can register and order no meals. Registration is open now, but you must make your food orders before August 16th.

Tim Barksdale (Birdman Productions, Filmmaker, Recruiter, Uniter not Divider) will be showing 2 of his own films and has obtained permission to show several other nature documentaries. Just come for the nature film festival! Barksdale will be an inspiring and exciting keynote speaker who will be asking us all to think about what we can do help save the planet. There will also be some fantastic field trips and other Saturday afternoon presentations.

Tim Barksdale has been filming the wild lands of the world for years. It has instilled in him a burning passion to engage and draw attention to the decimation of our natural lands and its flora and fauna. He will be challenging us to all do what we can to save our corner of the planet. There is no question you will leave "Filming the End of Nature" with hope and the inspiration to get out and save the world.

Sedge wrens nesting now or soon on Missouri prairies and wetlands!

Sedge wrens are roving nesters. In North America, these 4.5-inch migrants nest in marshes, wet meadows and grasslands. North American populations breed in the upper tallgrass prairie region of the U.S. and Canada, and winter from central Mexico east to the coastal areas of the southeastern U.S.

“What makes these birds so unusual,” said Dr. Mark Robbins, ornithologist with the University of Kansas, Lawrence, “is that they will breed in May and June in Canada and the upper Midwest and then in mid-July through early August, en masse, travel southward to Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri to breed again before continuing their southern migration.”

Some winter as far north as southern Missouri, with increasing numbers found in recent years at Prairie State Park, due perhaps to climate change (see Robbins, “Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) Early Winter Status at Prairie State Park, Barton County, Missouri,” *The Bluebird*, Vol. 75, No. 3, pp. 26–29).

There are separate populations of sedge wrens that are year-round residents in central Mexico, and others that are year-round residents in South America from the high Andes to the Patagonia plains. Research is currently underway to determine if these separate populations are in fact separate species. Read more about sedge wrens in the Missouri Prairie Journal article, “Nomadic Sprites,” by James P. Jackson, which can be found at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zHreolKq_NzMd_1JsKtquKM1TfngF2ae/view .

*Reprinted with permission. Originally published in the Missouri Prairie Foundation e-newsletter, July 10, 2019, with link to full article, Nomadic Sprites, by James P. Jackson, Fall 2009 Missouri Prairie Journal, Vol. 30(3):8–11.



Sedge Wrens

From National Audubon: Text © Kenn Kaufman, adapted from “*Lives of North American Birds*”

Habitat: Grassy marshes, sedgy meadows. Breeds mostly in damp meadows of grass or sedges, also in lush hayfields and other fields with dense low growth and scattered bushes. Generally not in deep-water marsh, but may be along their grassy edges. Winters in rank weedy meadows, coastal prairies.

Related to the Marsh Wren but different in some key habits, the Sedge Wren is a rather mysterious creature for many birders. It is often hard to see as it creeps about in damp sedge meadows of the east and midwest, occasionally coming up to give its dry rattling song. As a summer resident it is oddly erratic in many areas, showing up and breeding one summer and then vanishing again. Overall, its numbers seem to be gradually declining. [It is considered by Audubon to be Climate Threatened.]

A word of caution is in order: at all stages in the annual cycle, Sedge Wrens require wet tall grass meadows, a habitat constantly in threat from agriculture and development.



Brown Thrasher, by Carol Berrier

A welcome addition was added to the cleanup crew under our bird feeders this spring. Joining the grackles and redwings in their quest to rid the lawn of every dropped seed, was a Brown Thrasher. This twelve-inch bird has a reddish-brown back, wings, and tail, heavy brown striping on its buffy white underparts, a large bill, and yellow eyes. A long tail accounts for half of its twelve-inch length. The sexes look similar.

Brown Thrashers seek brushy hedge rows or shrubbery for their nesting habitats. Their bulky nests are usually only two to seven feet above the ground, or even on the ground. Much of their foraging is also done on the ground. Looking for beetles, ants, caterpillars and other insects, they send fallen leaves flying. They search shrubs for berries and lawns for earthworms. They are fond of acorns which they can crack with their strong bills.

Brown Thrashers are excellent musicians. While their alarm calls sound like the loud smacking of lips, their songs are melodious and varied. Each phrase of their original song is repeated, making it easy to distinguish from the catbird’s song.

The male thrasher defends his nesting territory by singing loudly from the treetops. But when courting his mate, his song is soft and intimate. Often Brown Thrashers raise two broods with the male caring for the first brood while the female starts a second.

**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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