

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



Field Trip—Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Saturday, September 14

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, September 14th and the destination will be Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Meet at the McDonald's on University Avenue in Pleasant Hill at 8:00 AM. We'll be looking for Henslow's Sparrows, Sedge Wrens, Bobolinks and migrant warblers. The prairie should be showy and it's always a treat to observe the bison. Please contact Denny Thompson for more information at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837.

Raptors of the Midwest, Tuesday, September 17
By Ty Smedes

While most Iowans may recognize our more common raptors like the Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks, along with the Great-horned and Barred Owls, there are many other raptors that only occasionally nest in our state, along with many other species that pass through during migration. Join us for an educational presentation where you will learn about the hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, and vultures that live in Iowa or migrate through on their way to nesting or wintering areas. We'll discuss their physical traits as well as identifying the prey they seek, and the habitat they prefer for nesting and rearing their young. You'll also learn tips for identifying these birds of prey, when you spot one sitting or on the wing. And of course there will be many colorful photos to help with identification.

Ty's photos have been published by many major magazines and book publishers, including Outdoor Photographer, Sierra, The Nature Conservancy, Smithsonian, Ducks Unlimited, The Iowa Conservationist, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and many others. He specializes in wildlife, prairie wildflowers, and landscape images. Ty has taught nature photography classes and is an experienced photo-tour leader. He has led nature photography tours to East Africa, Botswana, and Zambia. Recent adventure travel has taken him to the Falklands, South Georgia Island, and the Antarctic Peninsula, as well as the jungles of West Papua New Guinea. Information regarding Ty's books *Capturing Iowa's Seasons*, *The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles – 2nd Edition*, and *Iowa's Wild Beauty* can be found on his website at www.smedesphoto.com.

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 5110 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.

Des Moines Audubon June 8 Field Trip Report

By Roy Adolphson

Eighteen members and guests met in Ankeny for the Des Moines Audubon Field Trip on Saturday, June 8th. I was a little early, so I made a stop at the Dewey Ford dealership on Delaware Avenue, where I found two Western Kingbirds flying between perches on power lines and light poles in the car lot. Of course, then I was a few minutes late for the rendezvous at the meeting place, where everyone was just ready to pull out for the trip to Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt east of Elkhart and north of Bondurant in northeastern Polk County. The weather was warm, sunny and breezy for once, and the birds were singing, but it was difficult to locate some of them in the dense foliage. We started our exploration on NE118th Avenue, which runs east and west through the southern part of the refuge. We stopped first at a small bridge where many Cliff Swallows were in the air. Dickcissels were heard and seen perching in small trees or on tall plant stems, and Common Yellowthroats could be seen in the bushes and fence rows. A Bald Eagle was seen at a great distance, perched in a tree near a known nesting site. Some of us spotted a faraway Sandhill Crane. We also had some good views of a Field Sparrow at our second stop as it sang in the trees.

Along the way we ran into Ray Cummins, who earlier that morning had checked out the Sandhill Unit, a restored prairie and marsh area south of NE118th. He reported seeing a Henslow's Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's Vireo, and Willow Flycatcher in or near a thicket where the trail passes under a power line. Our group was able to locate all of these, although the chat and vireo could be heard clearly, but only gave brief looks to some of us. The Henslow's sat up for a short time, and the Willow Flycatcher sang its distinctive song in full view from the top of a small tree. Some people saw a Green Heron fly out of the thicket.

After that we drove around to the headquarters and campground area in the northern part of the park, a known breeding area for Prothonotary Warblers. We were treated to some good views of several males, as well as Great Crested Flycatchers and Red-headed Woodpeckers. Most of the group was deterred from further exploration on the trails due to the presence of voracious mosquitoes, so the excursion ended on a successful note, having seen 51 total species, including all of our target species.

Additional species seen at the Sandhill Unit by Ray Cummins: Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Ring-necked Pheasant, Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, American Crow, Chipping Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, Yellow Warbler.

Bonus species: Western Kingbird---seen at Dewey Ford on Delaware Avenue in Ankeny by Roy Adolphson.

Eagles at Gray's Lake

Report from Joel Van Roekel, Des Moines Parks and Recreation

The pair of Bald Eagles at Gray's Lake was brave enough to handle all the construction in and around Gray's Lake along with the flooding and they were able to raise three young birds this season. In early April, Parks and Recreation started Bald Eagle Watching on Tuesdays over the lunch hour where park visitors could see and learn about the eagles while viewing with spotting scopes and binoculars. Flooding caused some cancellations of the event right away but when the water receded, staff was on hand to set up the scopes and answer questions about the eagles. There were usually between 50-75 people that would take advantage of the spotting scopes and one lucky school just happened to be in the park for a field trip lunch break and three busloads of students were invited to view the eagles. The eaglets were doing well and growing rapidly when Gray's Lake flooded a second time, shutting down the nest viewing again. Construction caused the whole park to then be closed until late in June. When the park was opened again, the eaglets were mostly out of the nest and on the move. I have spotted the young birds in the area but have not seen all three together.

"So completely has the whole State passed beneath the plow, so quickly assumed the appearance of one vast farm, that one who thus studies the Iowa of today realizes with difficulty the strange picturesque wildness of fifty or sixty years ago...The whole flora of the prairie went down to rise no more..."

(Thomas Macbride, 1895, from THE EMERALD HORIZON)

Des Moines Audubon Membership Dues

Membership dues for Des Moines Audubon Society (DMAS) have been \$10.00 for an individual and \$15.00 for a family for many years. Recently, the DMAS Board voted to make a recommendation to increase the annual dues to \$15.00 for an individual and \$20.00 for a family. This recommendation will be brought before the members at our September program meeting.

Our dues income during the fiscal year was \$1042.00 although this varies from year to year depending on the timing of dues payments.

Where do the dues go? The newsletter printing, labels and tabs for sealing the newsletters made up most of the expenses at \$884.52 during the last fiscal year and the postal bulk mailing fee and postage expenses were \$425.00 for a total of \$1309.52. Although postage fees have remained about the same for years, printing has increased. There were also bank fees, website and domain expenses, and Liability Insurance.

In addition to these items, bird feeding expenses totaled \$723.07. Many members have made additional contributions identified specifically for bird feeding and those contributions are very much appreciated.

Contributions from DMAS toward conservation and habitat projects have been funded by donations that were specifically identified for "conservation" from our members, from the Wiese Trust, and the Helene Peaseley Certificate of Deposit and are not paid with membership dues income.

The Iowa DNR has a new Bird Biologist August 8, 2019 from Iowa DNR

Since long time bird biologist, Bruce Ehresman, retired in early 2018, the Iowa DNR has been without a bird specialist on staff. About a month ago the Wildlife Diversity Program welcomed new team member Anna Buckardt Thomas! Anna introduces herself below. If you see her around, probably staring through a pair of binoculars, please welcome her to Iowa.

Hello! My name is Anna Buckardt Thomas and I'm excited to be joining the Iowa DNR's wildlife diversity program as an avian ecologist (i.e. professional bird nerd). I have been a birder since childhood and I am thrilled to be starting a career where I can use my passion and interest in birds to make positive conservation impacts in Iowa.

Birds never fail to amaze me! They come in so many shapes, sizes, and colors, and you can find them just about anywhere in the world. From the top of a tree, to a burrow in the ground, to spending their lives flying over the open ocean, birds represent an immense amount of global diversity and have so many fascinating adaptations.

Many North American songbirds, for example, migrate to Central or South America for winter. As a reference, José, Costa Rica, in the middle of Central America, is 2,262 miles from Des Moines, Iowa in a straight line. Despite these immense travel distances, and birds' inability to read human maps, some individuals are able to return to the same exact nesting area year after year, an amazing navigational feat! Or consider the small Black-capped Chickadees that live in Iowa all year. They are able to survive both the intense heat of summer and the bitter cold of winter (a span of over 100°F), without any air conditioning or mittens.

Over 400 species of birds can be found visiting Iowa for at least part of the year and of those, nearly 200 breed in the state. From American White Pelicans to Red-headed Woodpeckers and Bobolinks, I can't wait to learn more about these birds and about their lives here in Iowa. Next time you see a bird, take a moment to appreciate the amazing things they do to survive!

"There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds... There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter..."

-- Rachel Carson

**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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