

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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JANUARY 2020
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Field Trip Saturday, January 11

Let's meet in the circle drive at the bird blind in Walnut Woods State Park at 8 AM on Saturday, January 11. We'll check out the birds at the blind and in the woods at the park and later check for more birds at Maffitt Reservoir if there is open water. Maffitt, primarily located in Polk County, also has corners that reach into Warren, Dallas and Madison Counties. The reservoir was constructed in the early 1940s, as a backup water source but it is also a popular birding spot.

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 cnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837 for more information.

Des Moines Audubon Program, Tuesday, January 21, 7 p.m.

Photographing Birds of Costa Rica
By Rex Andersen

Rex Andersen traveled to Costa Rica in November, 2018 with several other photographers - his presentation is a pictorial of the birds he saw in Costa Rica. Rex is retired and does wildlife photography for his own entertainment and as a hobby. He continues to visit locations where he can do wildlife photography. He has been to Kearney, Nebraska to photograph Sandhill Cranes, and just recently to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. Rex will also be going to Ecuador in February with another group of photographers. He belongs to 'Camera's for Conservancy' (a volunteer group of wildlife photographers), and is a member of Des Moines Audubon Society.

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 jrclark@radiks.net.

Make Windows Safer, Day and Night

Up to 1 billion birds are estimated to die each year after hitting windows in the United States and Canada.
The cause: By day, birds perceive reflections in glass as habitat they can fly into. By night, migratory birds drawn in by city lights are at high risk of colliding with buildings.

So, what can the average person do to help their feathered neighbors?

Reduce Bird Window Collisions

At our November meeting, handouts from American Bird Conservancy were available with information about how to reduce bird window collisions. Many times, these collisions are caused when birds are drawn to lights or confused by outside habitat being reflected in windows. Although one person may not witness many strikes each year, multiplying those few individual instances by all the windows in the US can quickly become a large number and a significant threat to bird populations.

Luckily, there are many simple solutions that can be implemented to alert birds that windows are solid and not an extension of their habitat. Adding closely-spaced decals to the outside of windows, striping windows with tempera paint or soap, using UV-reflective tape, or using one-way transparent films over windows are all temporary ways to protect birds from window strikes. More permanent solutions include using etched or bird-friendly glass, windows with screens on the outside, and installing netting outside of windows. Another tip is to place bird feeders either within 3 yards of windows, to reduce the impact speed of a potential collision, or farther than 10 yards away, to reduce the overall likelihood of a collision.

From American Bird Conservancy:
<https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>

Birds die each year in the United States when they hit glass windows, walls, and other structures, making this threat one of the costliest to bird populations. Bird collisions happen because birds see the world differently. Millions die from collisions with man-made objects each year. Have you heard the “thud” as a bird hits your window? You're not alone. Every U.S. home kills about two birds each year—including long-distance migrants like the ruby-throated-hummingbird. To birds, trees and sky reflected in glass appear to be habitat. They fly into windows at high speeds, and the loss of life is staggering.

Here are some quick and affordable ways to protect birds from your windows. These should be applied to the outside of the glass.

Note: No window product, including ABC-tested products, can guarantee elimination of window collisions. Results will vary depending on local bird populations, landscape conditions, product used, and building design. In addition, ratings assume that patterns are applied to the outside surface of glass, or that surface reflections do not obscure the pattern.

1. Apply Tempera paint (available at most art supply and craft stores) freehand with brush or sponge, or use a stencil as a template. Tempera is long-lasting, even in rain, and non-toxic, but comes right off with a damp rag or sponge. Find stencils at michaels.com, amazon.com, or download stencils for free at spraypaintstencils.com.
2. Use tape to create patterns. Any opaque tape can work, but translucent ABC BirdTape transmits light and is made to last outdoors. Visit birdsmartglass.org for more information.
3. Most window films designed for external use are not patterned and will not deter birds. However, there are good options. White CollidEscape is see-through from the inside, opaque from the outside. Solyx Bird Safety Film has narrow horizontal or vertical stripes. With Feather Friendly's 'do it yourself' tape, the backing is pulled off, leaving just the pattern. Find links at birdsmartglass.org.
4. If you don't want to alter the glass itself, Acopian Bird Savers (also known as Zen Wind Curtains) are unobtrusive, as well as highly effective. See birdsavers.com for more information.
5. You can protect birds with lightweight netting over the window or removable screens. Several companies, (birdscreen.com, birdsavers.com, easyupshades.com) sell screens or other barriers that can be attached with suction cups or eye hooks. Or use a motorized solar shade (sunsetter.com/order/easyshades) to make glass safe when you're not there. These options must be several inches in front of the window, so birds don't hit the glass after hitting the net.
6. What about prefabricated decals? Birds see decals shaped like raptors as obstacles but not as predators. To be effective, any type of decal must be spaced as described on page 1, more closely than recommended by most manufacturers (windowdressingetc.com, windowalert.com, duncraft.com). H

For more information, contact:

P.O. Box 249, 4249 Loudoun Avenue, The Plains, VA 20198 www.abcbirds.org • abc@abcbirds.org

Pileated Woodpeckers at Ledges State Park

By Carol Berrier

A pair of spectacular pileated woodpeckers successfully raised their young at Ledges State Park the spring of 2009. Mile-long tracts of mature woods replete with rotting trunks and logs, as well as dead trees, are needed for pileateds to establish a territory, making them rare sights in our state of few and fragmented woodlands. Their favorite food, large black carpenter ants and wood-boring beetle larvae, are found in the heartwood of diseased trees.

Crow-sized pileateds waste no time in exposing their food, sending wood chips flying with their mighty chisel-shaped bills, and leaving big vertically oblong holes and piles of chips in their wake. Long, barbed, sticky tongues dart out to extract the insects from their tunnels.

Once seen, a pileated woodpecker is hard to forget. Its size alone is breathtaking. Both sexes are mostly black with bright red crests, white necklines and throats, and white linings on the underwings. In addition, the male has a red patch on the black line off the base of his black bill, and his red crest extends to his bill. The female has a black forehead between her red crest and bill and no red moustache.

Similar to the flicker in its preference for ants, there is also a similarity in their calls. The pileated pair communicates with ten to fifteen “cuk” calls, louder and more irregular than those of the flicker; also with low-pitched drumming that trails off in volume and frequency. “Woika, woika” calls are used during courtship and territorial disputes. Unlike the flicker, the pileated does not have an undulating flight pattern.

Loud and conspicuous during the spring mating season, pileateds become stealthy and quiet around their nest. They choose for their nesting tree a dead, bark-free tree about fifty feet in height. Our Ledges pair chose such a tree, drilling their round nest hole about twenty feet above ground. Nest holes are about four inches in diameter, extending a foot or two in depth within the tree allowing the parents easy access, and are used only one season for their single annual brood. Three to five white eggs are laid and the parents share incubation duties with the male taking the night shift.

Photographic records have shown a female actually removing her eggs, one at a time lengthwise in her bill, from a downed tree to another intact site. Incubation may begin before the clutch is complete, leading to nestlings of differing size. Hatching takes place in fifteen to eighteen days. Both sexes feed their young regurgitated insects. The nestlings can be heard making their humming calls when a parent approaches, and three eager heads appeared at “our” nest, two males and a female. Pileateds fledge about four weeks after hatching and will remain with their parents until late summer when they disperse to find new territories.

A pileated woodpecker pair will stay together throughout the year, each having excavated a separate roosting cavity for use at night. They forage in the same vicinity by day. In the fall their diets expand to include berries and fruits such as dogwood, wild grape, Virginia creeper, poison-ivy and sumac. Ants and larvae are consumed year-round. Pileateds can adapt to suburban life and bird feeders. People often ask whether it is “*pil* leated” or “*pie* leated”. No matter which way you say it when with a group of birders, some will say you are wrong.

Drink Coffee That’s Good for Birds--Where to buy *Bird Friendly* Coffee?

Bird Friendly coffee comes from farms that provide good, forest-like habitat for birds. ***Bird Friendly*** coffees are shade-grown, meaning the coffee is planted under a canopy of trees, rather than land that has been cleared of all other vegetation. ***Bird Friendly*** coffees are also certified organic, meaning they are grown without the use of chemical pesticides that are harmful to the environment. And all bags of ***Bird Friendly*** coffee are 100 percent pure.

According to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, Peet Coffee brand is ***Bird Friendly*** and it can be found at Fareway, Target, Wholefoods, Hy-Vee and Walmart. Whole Foods carries ***Bird Friendly*** AllegroCoffee and other organic grocers are trying to carry many more such brands considered bird friendly through various certifiers.

Rainforest Alliance standards for shade cover are less stringent than “***Bird Friendly***” standards, but more than 70 percent of ***Rainforest Alliance*** coffee certified farms maintain shade cover and the standard promotes preserving forest in reserves and along waterways. On farms where forest canopy is not the native ecosystem type, conservation area set-asides of 30 percent or greater are required in the standard.

Caribou Coffee is certified ***Rainforest Alliance***. There are a lot of brands under the ***Rainforest Alliance*** certification, and some companies use only 100% shade-grown.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER DE-LISTING

Here is a positive Endangered Species story, a success story involving a highly threatened migratory songbird, the Kirtland's Warbler. If anything, this is proof that when the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) can document that a population of species is healthy and exists in adequate numbers, delisting should not be onerous.

Kirtland's Warbler nests almost exclusively in central Michigan in young jack-pine forests that are about 80 acres or larger in size, and include a multitude of small, grassy openings. The impact of habitat reduction and Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism originally led the FWS to list the Kirtland's Warbler when the 1973 Endangered Species Act was passed into law.

In actuality, the estimated population had already plummeted to about 400 birds in 1971. The goal of the conservation plan between the FWS and the state of Michigan's Department of Natural Resources was to eventually reach 1,000 pairs of nesting warblers per year, but that number has now been surpassed. Currently, about 2,000 pairs of this species highlight the success of this species' recovery. The FWS more than a year ago proposed to remove the Kirtland's Warbler from the ESA list, and the final decision was expected soon.

The future of the Kirtland's Warbler still will depend on continued and regular hands-on management. Indeed, while the species awaits a de-listing, the FWS says that without continued human involvement, the birds' numbers would once again plunge. A specific designation - conservation reliant - indicates as much.

Right now, there many creative plans being implemented - including arrangements with private forests and golf courses - across the warbler's breeding range to provide the specific on-the-ground habitat mix that these birds will need into the future. Of course, this will also have to include some creative and long-term funding.

Fortunately, the forces behind the Kirtland's recovery insist that the ESA works and that the Kirtland's Warbler federal/state and public/private model can serve as an example to help other fragile species.

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