

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXVII, NUMBER 2
FEBRUARY 2020
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Field Trip Saturday, February 8

Let's try the bird blind in Walnut Woods State Park again, at 8 AM on Saturday, February 8. 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 cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837 for more information.

Des Moines Audubon Program Tuesday, February 18, 7 p.m. **Saving Prairies Can Save Grassland Birds** **By Doug Harr**

New science information released through nationwide media in late 2019 describes a 29% decline in our continent's birds since 1970. Largest losses have been grassland birds, declining 53% due to destruction of prairie and other grasslands by ever-expanding agriculture, increased pesticide use, climate change and other dangers. This presentation focuses upon many different Iowa grassland birds, their preferred types of prairie, plus the need to save, restore and better manage our critical native prairie habitat.

Our speaker, Doug Harr, is a Certified Wildlife Biologist who retired after more than 38 years with Iowa DNR. He holds BS and MS degrees in Wildlife Biology from South Dakota State University. Doug was a Wildlife Management Biologist in NW Iowa from 1972 to 2001, and then spent a year as a Wildlife Diversity Biologist at the Boone Wildlife Research Station. From 2002 to 2010 he was DNR's State Coordinator of the Wildlife Diversity Program. Today he is President of Iowa Audubon, Vice-president of Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) and also serves on the board of Audubon Minnesota which is a National Audubon Society office. Doug is an active member of many other conservation organizations, does independent contract work related to birds, and is Iowa's coordinator of the federal Breeding Bird Survey.

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.

Swan Soiree at Walnut Woods State Park Rescheduled
The Trumpeter Swan Soiree, originally scheduled for January 18, was rescheduled to February 15.

Saylorville Lake Bald Eagle Watch: February 23, 2020

Viewing of bald eagles will be from noon to 4 p.m. at various locations around the lake and along the Des Moines River. Start at the Visitors' Center for directions to viewing sites. Spotting scopes will be available with assistance from volunteers. SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) will be at Jester Park Lodge from noon to 4:00 p.m. Live eagle programs at 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00 p.m. Come learn about bald eagles in Iowa and the perils they face

Saturday, February 8, 2020 Des Moines Parks and Rec Bald Eagle Day Fellowship Baptist Church, 1503 SE 6th St, Des Moines, IA

The City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department is teaming up with Fellowship Baptist Church to host Bald Eagle Day on the SE 6th Street Bridge. All ages are welcome, there will be children's activities and the event is free and open to the public. Inside Fellowship Baptist Church, you will be able to warm up, relax, have a snack and listen to presentations. SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) will present a live education ambassador bald eagle at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. there will be spotting scopes and people on the SE 6th Street Bridge to assist with viewing some of the wild bald eagles in Des Moines.

Swan Soiree February 15, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Walnut Woods State Park, West Des Moines, Iowa

This event will celebrate North America's largest waterfowl species from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on February 15 at Walnut Woods State Park, 3155 Walnut Woods Drive, West Des Moines. Programs will be given both indoors and outdoors at the Walnut Woods State Park Lodge with concurrent outdoor viewing and interpretive presentations of trumpeter swans and wildlife given by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Des Moines Parks and Recreation, and Polk and Dallas County Conservation naturalists. Spotting scopes and binoculars will be provided. An estimated 120 trumpeter swans are wintering at the Dale Maffitt Reservoir and surrounding area southwest of Des Moines, providing a rare opportunity to view good numbers of free flying trumpeter swans. Hot chocolate, hot cider, cookies, hotdogs and other snacks will be provided free of charge. Donations will be accepted with proceeds going towards Iowa trumpeter swan restoration.

11-11:10 a.m.	Welcome
11:10-11:30 a.m.	Trumpeter Swans- Bringing Back a North American Treasure- Margaret Smith, Director, Trumpeter Swan Society
11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Live Trumpeter Swan Presentation- See, touch and learn about swans-Dave Hoffman, Iowa DNR
12-12:20 p.m.	Break & Youth Activities
12:20-12:40 p.m.	Trumpeter Swan Restoration in Iowa- Dave Hoffman, Iowa DNR and Ron Andrews
12:40-1 p.m.	"Return of the Trumpeter Swans" North American film documentary preview - Steve Harryman, filmmaker
1-1:20 p.m.	Birding Basics, Anna Buckardt, Iowa DNR
1:30 p.m.-	Guided field trip and Nature Photography 101, Swan and wildlife viewing with hands-on photo tips-Wildlife photographers Eric Williamson and Holly Welch.
11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	Youth activities- Bills & Beaks- How birds eat, and a Swan/Nature Touch Kit, Swan pine cone crafting, bird wings, trumpeter swan runway and outdoor activities- Anne Riordan, Iowa DNR

Trumpeter swans were once common in Iowa, but were gone from the state by the late 1880s. By the early 1930s, only 69 trumpeter swans remained in the lower 48 states. As the largest North American waterfowl, these magnificent all-white birds can weigh up to 32 pounds with an eight-foot wingspan. Public support has been vital in restoring trumpeter swans to Iowa. This event is being sponsored by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Polk and Dallas County Conservation boards, Des Moines Parks and Recreation and the Trumpeter Swan Society.

2019 Des Moines Christmas Count by Dennis Thompson

The Des Moines Christmas Count was held on Saturday, 12/21/19. It was very mild with a high of 52. There was no snow on the ground and moving water was open with ponds and lakes mostly open. We had 18 participants in 9 field parties and 3 feeder watchers.

The 68 species seen would historically have been a near record count, but it's about average for the past 10 years. Species seen this year but three or fewer times this decade were; Ross's Goose, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Wilson's Snipe, Glaucous Gull, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Spotted Towhee and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Species seen seven or more times this decade but missed this year include: Snow Goose, Gadwall, Redhead, Eurasian Collared-Dove, American Coot and Great Blue Heron. All-time high counts were set for Trumpeter Swan, Eastern Bluebird and Yellow-rumped Warbler. We only had a single flock of Wild Turkeys and Cedar Waxwings. The count of 8500 American Crows came from someone who's monitoring the downtown roost.

Thanks to all the participants for making the count a success.

Italicized = new high for the count.

Ross's Goose	2	Red-headed Woodpecker	4
Greater White-fronted Goose	12	Red-bellied Woodpecker	82
Cackling Goose	140	Downy Woodpecker	97
Canada Goose	15494	Hairy Woodpecker	30
Trumpeter Swan	267	Northern Flicker	38
Tundra Swan	3	Pileated Woodpecker	1
Wood Duck	1	American Kestrel	6
American Wigeon	1	Merlin	5
Mallard	1590	Blue Jay	201
American Black Duck	1	American Crow	8500
Ring-necked Duck	2	Black-capped Chickadee	233
Greater Scaup	1	Tufted Titmouse	10
Lesser Scaup	5	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
Common Goldeneye	65	White-breasted Nuthatch	95
Hooded Merganser	7	Brown Creeper	6
Common Merganser	23	Winter Wren	1
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Carolina Wren	9
Ruddy Duck	16	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2
Wild Turkey	7	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
Rock Pigeon	674	Eastern Bluebird	99
Mourning Dove	149	American Robin	151
Wilson's Snipe	1	European Starling	1969
Ring-billed Gull	359	Cedar Waxwing	8
Herring Gull	38	House Sparrow	239
Glaucous Gull	1	House Finch	39
American White Pelican	5	American Goldfinch	135
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Spotted Towhee	1
Cooper's Hawk	7	American Tree Sparrow	91
Bald Eagle	191	Song Sparrow	31
Red-tailed Hawk	50	White-throated Sparrow	38
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Dark-eyed Junco	404
Great Horned Owl	3	Red-winged Blackbird	1100
Barred Owl	3	Yellow-rumped Warbler	37
Belted Kingfisher	5	Northern Cardinal	273

**So, what can the average person do to help their feathered neighbors?
Information From: Cornell Lab of Ornithology and American Bird Conservancy**

Watch Birds, Share What You See

The world's most abundant bird, the Passenger Pigeon, went extinct, and people didn't realize how quickly it was vanishing until it was too late. Monitoring birds is essential to help protect them, but tracking the health of the world's 10,000 bird species is an immense challenge. To understand how birds are faring, scientists need hundreds of thousands of people to report what they're seeing in backyards, neighborhoods, and wild places around the world. Without this information, scientists will not have enough timely data to show where and when birds are declining around the world. Enjoy birds while helping science and conservation: Join a project such as eBird, Project FeederWatch, a Christmas Bird Count, or a Breeding Bird Survey to record your bird observations. Your contributions will provide valuable information to show where birds are thriving—and where they need our help.

Spread the Word about Birds

More than 200 bird species nest in Iowa, but over 420 species spend at least part of their year here. Birds aren't able to tell us exactly what they need so it's our job to advocate for them. Actively considering birds and other wildlife when planning new development or landscaping can reduce negative impacts to their populations. Becoming a local community advocate for bird-friendly planning and education can greatly increase the interest in, and impact of, local conservation efforts. Volunteering can help people connect with their local birds and public lands while improving habitat quality for birds. Spread the word; birds are beautiful, birds are important, birds are worth conserving!

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DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
9871 LINCOLN AVENUE
CLIVE, IA 50325



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