

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



Field Trip Saturday, February 12

The Des Moines Audubon February field trip will be held at Waterworks Park in Des Moines. We'll meet at the amphitheater at 8:00 a.m. We'll be looking for the usual winter birds, including Pileated Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper. Bring binoculars and dress for the conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Please contact Denny Thompson at 515-254-0837 or cndthomps@gmail.com for more information.

Des Moines Audubon Program, Tuesday, February 15, 7 p.m. **John Swanson, Watershed Coordinator**

John Swanson, Watershed Management Authority Coordinator for Polk County Public Works will present a program about the Central Iowa Water Quality Infrastructure Project. John has been working in Central Iowa for 10 years on various watershed projects. Currently, he coordinates across the metropolitan area to address flooding and water quality concerns in both urban and rural areas. In the upcoming presentation, he will be sharing information about the edge of field "blitz" projects that will result in about 150 saturated buffers and bioreactors installed eventually in Dallas and Polk Counties. Saturated buffers have underground lateral pipes that divert tile-drained water through a vegetative buffer. The vegetative buffer removes sediment, phosphorus and pesticide runoff, while creating wildlife habitat. Bioreactors are excavated pits filled with wood chips that filter tile drainage water. Join in on the presentation to learn more about what led up to this successful project and how it is now expanding to other areas of the state.

*Masks are required in Polk County Buildings and social distancing guidelines are recommended.

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.

2021 Des Moines Audubon Christmas Bird Count

The Des Moines Christmas Count was held on Sunday, 12/26/21. It was a nice late-December day with a high of 45 degrees, overcast skies and strong winds in the afternoon. There was no snow on the ground and water was mostly frozen with some open water on the larger bodies. We had 15 participants in field parties or as feeder watchers. The 75 species tallied is a good count. Species seen this year but three or fewer times in the past ten years were: Bufflehead, Ring-necked Pheasant, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Northern Shrike, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Species not seen this year but seen in seven or more times in the last ten years were: American Black Duck, Redhead, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Harris's Sparrow. All-time high counts were set for Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Ring-billed Gull, American White Pelican, White-breasted Nuthatch and Red-winged Blackbird. The individual count of 120,079 birds is the second highest ever, only slightly behind last year's record. And like last year that's without locating a crow roost. Many thanks to John Cecil for tackling the huge blackbird roost in Waterworks Park and for organizing and compiling the 2021 count, and to all the participants for making the count a success.

Italicized = new high for the count.

Snow Goose	7	Belted Kingfisher	9
Greater White-fronted Goose	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	97
Cackling Goose	27	Downy Woodpecker	181
Canada Goose	5498	Hairy Woodpecker	21
Trumpeter Swan	15	Northern Flicker	50
Tundra Swan	1	Pileated Woodpecker	9
Northern Shoveler	1	American Kestrel	5
Gadwall	31	Merlin	5
American Wigeon	3	Northern Shrike	1
Mallard	771	Blue Jay	110
Northern Pintail	1	American Crow	601
Canvasback	16	Black-capped Chickadee	335
Ring-necked Duck	93	Tufted Titmouse	17
Greater Scaup	8	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2
Lesser Scaup	11	Cedar Waxwing	32
Bufflehead	6	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
Common Goldeneye	87	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>170</i>
Hooded Merganser	66	Brown Creeper	18
Common Merganser	27	Winter Wren	4
Ruddy Duck	2	Carolina Wren	10
Wild Turkey	10	European Starling	3756
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	Eastern Bluebird	78
Rock Pigeon	514	American Robin	89
Mourning Dove	165	House Sparrow	293
American Coot	32	House Finch	185
Ring-billed Gull	<i>18292</i>	Pine Siskin	25
Herring Gull	638	American Goldfinch	318
Iceland Gull	2	Fox Sparrow	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	American Tree Sparrow	203
Glaucous Gull	2	Dark-eyed Junco	408
Double-crested Cormorant	1	White-crowned Sparrow	1
American White Pelican	<i>480</i>	White-throated Sparrow	87
Great Blue Heron	11	Song Sparrow	17
Cooper's Hawk	8	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>85000</i>
Bald Eagle	2104	Common Grackle	500
Red-tailed Hawk	33	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Great Horned Owl	6	Northern Cardinal	234
Barred Owl	4		

January Field Trip Report By Roy Adolphson

January's field trip took place on the 8th, attended by nine members on a cool, cloudy morning. We met at the Walnut Woods State Park bird blind, which afforded close looks at some of the winter regulars, including several Northern Cardinals, American Goldfinches, White-breasted Nuthatches, Blue Jays, and an especially nice male Red-bellied Woodpecker, that showed ample red on his belly as he clung to a suet feeder. Trip leader Denny Thompson heard a Pileated Woodpecker in the distance, so we took a walk down the park road to see if we could locate it. We didn't find it, but we did get a good look at a Brown Creeper on a tree trunk about 15 feet from the road.

After heading back to the bird blind area for a brief warmup in our cars, we took the trail through the woods to the Raccoon River. A Barred Owl was hanging out in the timber, giving us extended looks before flying right over us. We had seen or heard a few Eastern Bluebirds in the park, but when we arrived at the riverbank, we were unexpectedly descended upon by a flock of at least twenty bluebirds. They hung out in the bushes and trees for quite a while, sometimes going down to a small puddle of open water by the bank of the frozen river. A few Cedar Waxwings were in the area as well.

Then we moved on to nearby Purple Martin Lake, where not much was going on but a little ice fishing. We did see some Dark-eyed Juncos, but the Northern Shrike that had been reported recently wasn't in evidence, so we headed over to Maffitt Reservoir, going into the picnic area on the east side. The lake was mostly frozen, but hundreds, if not thousands, of Canada Geese had kept a small area open out in the middle. Most of the birds were on the ice surrounding the opening, but many were paddling around in the water. They were a little too far away for good viewing with binoculars, but Denny scoped a few duck species, including Redhead, Greater Scaup, and Common Goldeneye. There were also about 60 Trumpeter Swans mixed in. The wind was a little more biting by the lakeshore than it had been in the woods, so we didn't stay too long. All in all, it was an interesting morning for birding.

WAYWARD STELLER'S SEA-EAGLE

For many months, a Steller's Sea-Eagle has been tantalizing North American birders with its wide-spread and unpredictable appearances. This very large Old-World eagle is normally found in northeastern China, Japan, Korea, and easternmost Russia. It has also rarely been seen in Alaska, with perhaps a dozen total reports. A few individuals have also reappeared in Alaska for multiple consecutive summers.

Consequently, it was exciting, but not altogether that surprising, when one was spotted on Alaska's Denali Highway in late August, 2020. It was observed and photographed for multiple days at milepost 65 on the highway, and also on the upper Maclaren River.

Wonderful story back in 2020... but there's more. Much more!

Apparently, the sea-eagle wandered farther inland. It was actually identified in Quebec and New Brunswick in July 2021, individually identified by a distinctive white spot on its left upper wing coverts. Then, after several months of evading human notice, it reappeared in Nova Scotia in early November, where it was observed by dozens of birders before it disappeared again. (There was also a remarkable sighting of an adult Steller's Sea-Eagle in Goliad County, Texas, in March 2021. This might have involved the same individual, but the evidence is certainly inconclusive. Unfortunately, the Texas bird was only photographed perched, not exposing any white spot on the wing.)

The story doesn't end here however. The Steller's Sea-Eagle was discovered again, this time on the lower Taunton River in Massachusetts last month. This is when it hit the birding-scene and the news really big-time. The bird was reportedly seen along the Taunton River on 12 December, but somehow the word only got out on 19 December. Then bird was observed by many scores of birders on 20 December and early into the morning of the 21 December. Indeed, there are over 300 photos of this rare visitor while it was in Massachusetts – with several accompanying Bald Eagles - archived on eBird.

All too quickly it vanished again, only to be rediscovered on 30 December in the Five Islands area of Sagadahoc County, Maine.

At the time of this E-bulletin, indications are that the sea-eagle is still on the Maine coast. Regardless, wherever you are birding in North America this winter, you might want be on the lookout for this magnificent – and wandering - raptor!

See <https://ebird.org/species/stseag> or <https://maineaudubon.org/news/rare-bird-alert-stellers-sea-eagle/>.

**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..... \$15.00
Family..... \$20.00

*Additional Contribution for Conservation Projects _____

*Additional Contribution for Bird Feeding Projects_____

Name_____

Address_____

City/State/Zip Code_____

Telephone_____ E-mail_____

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