

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXIX, NUMBER 4
APRI 2022
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Des Moines Audubon Field Trip
Saturday, April 9, 2022, 8 a.m.

We'll meet in the parking lot of the Grimes library at 8:00 a.m. The parking area is just northwest of the corner of First Street and James Street. From there we'll head to Guthrie County and visit Marsh Farm Wetland, Bays Branch, Lakin Slough and Springbrook State Park. Our primary focus will be on waterfowl and any early shorebirds. Beginners are welcome and this is a great way to improve your birding skills by joining a wide range of birders. Dress for conditions and bring binoculars if you have them. Please contact Denny Thompson at 515-254-0837 or cnthomps@gmail.com for more information.

Bird Hike at Raccoon River Park, West Des Moines
Saturday, April 16, 2022, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Des Moines Audubon will join West Des Moines Parks and Recreation on a bird watching hike on Saturday, April 16. All levels of bird watchers are welcome from "what is that bird called?" to "can you hear that Eastern Phoebe?" Meet in the parking lot of the Raccoon River Park Boathouse. Call 515-222-3435 (West Des Moines Parks) if you have any questions, or contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047.

Des Moines Audubon Program Tuesday, April 19, 7 p.m.
Inviting Birds to Your Yard, by Karl Jungbluth

Inviting Birds to Your Yard will be presented by Karl Jungbluth, a bird and gardening enthusiast who lives on the north boundary of Ledges State Park. The presentation will chronicle his years of efforts to turn an old uninteresting yard into a place of shelter and food for birds, and a place of peaceful beauty for people too. Karl will focus on bird-friendly native shrubs, highlight some of his prairie/pollinator plantings for sunnier spots and provide tips on making your veggie garden a bird and butterfly hangout. Along the way, Karl will also discuss living with four-legged wildlife and other challenges to success that make his garden like everyone else's, evolving on the edge of untamed.

Karl Jungbluth has been gardening south of Boone for 28 years - while watching birds AND the weather at the same time. Since retiring from the National Weather Service in 2013 he gets to spend a lot more time outdoors, whether working on a project in his open-air workshop, hiking in Ledges State Park or helping with bird surveys. Karl was a contributor to the ISU Extension publication "Attracting Birds to Your Yard."

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.

Birding Basics at Gray's Lake

Birding Basics began in early March and participants meet on Wednesdays, at Gray's Lake starting at 11 a.m. The group will meet at the Gray's Lake Terrace area in the south west corner of the park until further notice. There is a casual walk to search for migrating and resident birds. During the first half of the season, waterfowl are the main focus. Pelicans, Coots, Mergansers and various ducks are common visitors to Gray's Lake. As spring progresses the smaller songbirds arrive in Iowa on their migration and Gray's Lake is a good place to see them Yellow-rumped Warblers, Baltimore Orioles and an occasional Scarlet Tanager are bright and beautiful species that can be found as the group walks along the trail. John Bissell leads the group, pointing out birds, talking about their habits and answering questions. This program is great for beginners or people with some birding experience. Bring your own binoculars or you may borrow some of the city's. These outings run through May 25. These walks are sponsored by Des Moines Parks and Recreation.

Prairie Chickens at Kellerton Wildlife Area From Iowa DNR, March 2022

Kellerton, Iowa - The first rhythmic and haunting cooing begins as the night sky fades and sunrise begins. The short grass prairie booming ground prepares for a display found nowhere else in Iowa. This is Prairie Chicken country at the Kellerton Wildlife Management Area, in Ringgold County.

The annual ritual begins as early as mid-March and lasts through April. Male prairie chickens meet at the booming grounds every morning to display, spar and fight with other males trying to catch the eye of the females watching nearby.

"They will be out there until 8 a.m. or so, when they begin to slow down," said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Diversity Program. They will display each morning regardless of the weather. The area has an elevated viewing platform to help see all the action. "Some mornings you can hear them and some you can't. They are out there every day, but are less active if it's raining or really cloudy," she said. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own spotting scopes or a set of binoculars.

The prairie chicken population at Kellerton has benefited from a collaboration between the states of Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska, and the Nature Conservancy, Blank Park Zoo and the Ringgold County Conservation Board. The collaboration extended to area producers who help to manage 30 percent of the grasslands through grazing.

Some of the partners captured and relocated prairie chickens from Nebraska to the Kellerton area and the Dunn Ranch in northern Missouri to increase bird numbers and introduce new genetics to the population. While others worked to reestablish the rolling grasslands in the area. "There has been a lot of collaboration to improve the landscape across the state line to recreate 160,000 acres of rolling hills of grass with few trees," Shepherd said. "This partnership benefits not only the prairie chicken, but other grassland species as well."

One grassland species in particular, the Henslow's Sparrow, has benefited from this partnership. The Henslow's Sparrow is listed as a state threatened species in Iowa but the population at Kellerton is so large the area has been recognized as globally important for this species.

Viewing is best at sunrise but can also be good at sunset.



"Prairie-chickens (numbered) in countless thousands and their nests often covered acres of the prairie. The long-billed curlew, now unknown in Iowa, everywhere hovered over the prairie, an easy mark for every pot-hunter....." (Bohumil Shimek describing Iowa at the time of early European settlement.)

Brown Thrasher **By Carol Berrier**

A welcome addition was added to the cleanup crew under our bird feeders last 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 Gray 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

NATURE'S BEST HOPE:

A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard.
Douglas W. Tallamy, 2019. Timber Press, Portland, OR. 254 pp.
Book Review by Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon

Doug Tallamy, Professor of Entomology and Ecology at the University of Delaware, is one of the currently best ecology and habitat protection writers. His latest work focuses upon how homeowners everywhere can (and must) create habitat corridors between urban yards, creating what he calls a "Homegrown National Park". Tallamy's book features many photos of proper and improper yard habitats; discusses how we can slow or reverse the decline in our birds, insects and other species; why alien plants are bad when used instead of natives; and ends with a chapter of his answers to frequently asked questions. This is a book highly recommended to anyone wanting to create a yard that not only brings you nature's birds and beauty, but who also want to contribute to saving our entire planet

*Iowa Audubon Newsletter, April 2020, Volume 16

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 _____

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Telephone _____ E-mail _____

ANTI-TECH MAGPIES

Australian Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) generally live in social groups of up to a dozen individuals, cooperatively occupying and defending territory through vocal and aggressive behaviors. Older siblings among these magpies will also help to raise youngsters.

During one study, researchers discovered how quickly magpies team up to solve group problems. It involved new, durable, and reusable tracking devices, designed to follow bird movement.

Within 10 minutes of fitting the last of five miniature backpack-like tracking devices on these magpies, researchers watched as an adult female magpie - without a tracker - worked with her bill to try and remove the harness from a younger bird.

Within hours, most of the other devices had been removed. By day three, even the dominant male of the group had had his tracker successfully dismantled.

Well, back to the proverbial drawing-board!

From: THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN, March 2022

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