

**THE WARBLER**  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXIX, NUMBER 6**  
**JUNE 2022**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



### **FIELD TRIP TO CHICHAQUA—SATURDAY, JUNE 11<sup>th</sup>**

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, June 11 and the destination will be Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt in northeast Polk County. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot on the west side of the Ramada Inn (used to be Best Western Motel) located in the SW corner of the Ankeny 1st Street Interchange on I-35. This is also the location of the Ankeny Diner. Dress for conditions that could include walking in grasses. Chichaqua Bottoms includes over 8,000 acres along the Skunk River, with prairie, wetlands and riparian woodlands supporting at least 227 species of birds. The area's natural features include old oxbow river channels and backwaters, marshes, and wetlands. Chichaqua also includes sandy upland hills with reconstructed prairies and native prairie remnants. Target species include: Sandhill Crane, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat and Henslow's Sparrow. Dress for conditions. Contact Denny Thompson for more information at [cdnthomps@gmail.com](mailto:cdnthomps@gmail.com) or 515-254-0837.

#### **Interesting Side Note**

In 1910, a 100-foot-long Warren pony truss was constructed to span the Skunk River about a mile south of its current site. The bridge was used until 1992 when it was moved to its present location at Chichaqua near the campground. It is one of only 17 remaining bridges in Iowa of this design. The bridge is now restricted to foot traffic and crosses the old Skunk River. A photo of birders on this bridge can be seen on our website, [dmaudubon.org](http://dmaudubon.org)

### **TUESDAY, JUNE 21<sup>st</sup> PICNIC COTTONWOOD PICNIC AREA ALONG THE DES MOINES RIVER**

Our traditional spring picnic will be held on Tuesday, June 21<sup>st</sup> at a shelter in Cottonwood Picnic Area along the Des Moines River and below the dam at Saylorville Lake. Come before the picnic at 5:30 p.m. or earlier if you'd like to do some birding around the shelter and along the river, so bring your binoculars! We'll begin the picnic at 6:30 p.m. This is not a potluck so bring your own sack picnic supper, your own table service and beverage. Join us for a peaceful and relaxing evening in the park! Please note there will be no regular meeting in June, July or August. Contact Jane Clark for details about the picnic at 515-223-5047.

### **NO PROGRAM MEETINGS IN JUNE, JULY OR AUGUST**

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### **Our Logo, The American Redstart**

Our original logo was designed by an early member, Joseph Brown.  
That logo was used for this newsletter until our new logo was designed by Lynn Marsh of Ankeny.  
Thanks, Lynn!

## **American Redstart: Candelita**

### **From American Bird Conservancy's Bird of the Week, May 6**

- Scientific Name: *Setophaga ruticilla*
- Population: 42 million
- Trend: Decreasing
- Habitat: Breeds in open deciduous forests, second growth, and forest edge. Winters in a range of lowland forests and edges.

**About the American Redstart:** The American Redstart is one of North America's most recognizable wood-warblers, named for the adult male's glossy black plumage set off by vivid reddish-orange patches on its sides, wings, and tail. Females and young birds, often called "yellowstarts" by birders, are olive-brown above, with lemon-yellow patches on the sides, wings, and tail. Unlike many warblers of its family, such as the Prothonotary, Wilson's, and Hooded Warblers, the adult male American Redstart lacks yellow plumage.

The word "start" in this bird's name comes from an Old English word for "tail." An American Redstart constantly flicks its tail open and closed like a fan, flashing patches of bright orange or yellow. In Latin America, it is often called candelita, or "little candle." The American Redstart is also identifiable by characteristics seen in birds belonging to an entirely different family.

**Flashy and Flycatcher-like:** The American Redstart's short, rather flat bill, surrounded by stiff, whisker-like rictal bristles, resembles the bills of unrelated insectivorous birds of the New World flycatcher family, such as the Great Crested Flycatcher, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, and Eastern Phoebe. These features help the American Redstart catch insect prey while in flight, which it does more regularly than other warbler species.

**Breeding and Feeding, Territorial Trials:** The American Redstart is highly territorial throughout the year. On the breeding grounds, male redstarts court newly arriving females with behaviors similar to those usually used in defensive displays, including in-flight chasing and vigorous posturing. A male will show his mate several potential nest sites within a territory, but the female makes the final site choice. She builds a cup-shaped nest using bark strips, grass, plant down, and other natural fibers, and lines it with soft materials that include fur and feathers. The nest is "glued" with spider silk to the forked branches of a tree or shrub, well-hidden within the foliage.

The female redstart lays an average of three to four eggs, which she incubates herself for 10 to 13 days. Once the young hatch, both parents feed them for several weeks until fledging. Once the young are out of the nest, the parents split the brood, each continuing to feed one or two offspring for a few more weeks until they are fully independent. Brown-headed Cowbirds frequently parasitize American Redstart nests, leaving redstart parents to raise cowbird young, to the detriment of their own.

Although American Redstart pairs are usually monogamous during the breeding season, extra-pair copulation is common among both sexes, resulting in nestlings with mixed paternity. Occasionally a male redstart will mate with a second female outside of its territory once its first mate is on the nest. These polygamous males usually give more attention to their first brood than the second.

**Flashing for Food:** The American Redstart is a lively insectivore, especially during its breeding season, hopping among tree branches and foliage to glean its prey, which includes caterpillars, moths, flies, wasps, beetles, aphids, and spiders. It "flashes" its brightly colored wing and tail patterns by fanning its tail and drooping its wings as it forages — behavior that is thought to startle insects into flight, making them easier to capture, and giving this brightly colored little warbler yet another nickname: "the butterfly of the bird world." In late summer, the American Redstart adds small fruits to its diet. Planting serviceberry, magnolia, or other native trees that produce small berries and host a variety of insects might attract migrating American Redstarts to your yard.

**Conservation of the American Redstart:** The biggest threat to this migrant is habitat loss on both wintering and breeding grounds, which affects other birds including Cerulean and Blackpoll Warblers. Help support ABC's conservation mission! As nocturnal migrants, American Redstarts are frequent victims of collisions with glass, towers, and wind turbines; as insectivores, they are vulnerable to pesticide poisoning. ABC is involved in a number of large-scale conservation initiatives to protect and recover habitat for migratory birds, including BirdScapes and Joint Ventures. ABC's Collisions program offers solutions to keep American Redstarts and other migrating birds safe from collisions.

This article is re-printed, courtesy of American Bird Conservancy, <http://www.abcbirds.org>. A direct link to the American Redstart species account can be found at: <https://abcbirds.org/bird/american-redstart/>

**LOOKING FOR WARBLERS**  
**Magee Marsh, Lake Erie Ohio, By Ray Harden, May, 2022**

The morning sunlight was coming through the trees and a breeze was blowing in from Lake Erie. It was a cool morning in early May and a heavy coating of dew was on the grass. My wife, Margaret and I were going on an 7 AM bird walk. I thought we would be early, but the parking lot was nearly full with hundreds of cars. These people were serious birders.

There were thousands of people there and the car licenses plates indicated that they were from all over the United States. The most surprising thing was that we were there at the tail end of the Big Birding Week.

We were at Magee Marsh on the shore of Lake Erie, forty miles east of Toledo, Ohio. Ty Smedes, a nature writer and photographer, told me about this place several times and encouraged me to see this largest birding event in the United States. Magee Marsh is known for the concentration of warblers and other migrating birds in early May. The birds make a stop here for food and rest before they fly north to their breeding grounds in Canada and the Arctic.

There are more than 50 species of warblers in North America. Many have similar markings and calls making these birds difficult to identify. They are a beautiful group of birds. The famous ornithologist Roger Troy Peterson called warblers " the butterflies of the bird world", because of their many striking colors.

Magee Marsh and the entire southern shore of Lake Erie is a favorite area for birding enthusiasts to see warblers and they are difficult birds to observe. Most are insect eaters that feed high in the tree canopy, causing a condition in birders called "warbler's neck". Most warblers are the size of a small sparrow. Margaret and I started walking along the mile long boardwalk with cameras around our neck and extra batteries in our pockets. I had a pair of binoculars too. The boardwalk went through wetlands and usually there was standing water on both sides and a dense patch of trees and shrubs were against the wooden railings.

The first warbler I spotted was a yellow warbler. It was singing its song, "sweet, sweet, I am so sweet", as it was fluttering around in the trees a few feet in front of my face. He posed nicely for a photograph. The next bird that I tried to shoot with my camera was a ruby-crowned kinglet. It did not hold a pose. It was in constant motion in the new leaves of the trees as it fed on insects. Most of my photos of the kinglet were very blurry.

The surrounding trees were full of calling birds. The voices of robins, cardinals, blue jays, cat birds and geese were easy to identify, but there were many birdsongs that I did not recognize. I was told that the noisiest bird calling was a warbling vireo. I made an extra effort to get a picture of this plain little gray bird and add it to my "life bird list". Also, an addition to my list was the very similar looking Philadelphia vireo.

We saw many warblers such as, the black-throated blue, palm, magnolia, chestnut-sided, black and white, and lots more. A bird that I really wanted to see was the prothonotary warbler. It has a yellow body, dark blue-gray wing feathers, and a very distinctive black eye. Because of its elusive nesting habits, it is considered to be a challenging bird to photograph. We were lucky to see several of them.

Besides warblers we saw and photographed nesting green herons, a killdeer with three baby chicks, a sleeping whip-poor-will, a night hawk, trumpeter swans, many Canada geese with babies, and a small flock of sandhill cranes that flew over the marsh. During the four days at the Magee Marsh area, we saw and photographed sixty-three species of birds. Many of them were uncommon birds that Margaret and I have only see a few times during spring migrations. It was a good vacation and an interesting birding adventure. We might return to Magee Mash and the Lake Erie area sometime in the future to see more of this amazing group of birds.

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

## **Eurasian Collared-Dove, by Carl Nollen**

Ever since 10 Eurasian Collared-Doves flew into my yard in southeast Polk County on February 26, some of this species have made their appearance here every day. Their sleek, silvery plumage and white undertail feathers fanned out in flight are distinctive marks, in addition to the black mark on their necks. They are noticeably larger than mourning doves which are more brown and have a pointed tail. The two species get along well below my bird feeders. One day, seven mourning doves and two collared doves shared the ground.

Its genus and specific name come from the Greek. *Streptopelia* means “wild dove wearing a collar” and *decaocto* was a Greek servant girl transformed into a dove.

The Collared-Dove is a very recent immigrant to Iowa, first spotted in Grinnell in 1997. Now it is found throughout the state. Grain elevators and evergreens in small towns are especially favored according to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas. In my limited experience, they also like maple trees, probably due to their numerous branches. This year-round bird has established a home in Iowa and does not appear to displace any other birds unlike some of our older non-native species. It does well around human development which guarantees their success. Their nest is more substantial than the well-known flimsy platform of the mourning dove. Both species lay 2 eggs and may raise several broods in a year. Pigeons and doves are able to drink by sucking water, as opposed to most birds who need to take a beakful and raise their heads to let gravity trickle the water down.

Do you suppose legislators will try to sneak in a hunting season for Collared-Doves like they did for mourning doves? I bet they haven’t thought about it or even know about this new species. Due to this dove’s preferences for human habitations, hunting there would be dangerous. So maybe it will be safe from hunting.

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