

***THE WARBLER***  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXIX, NUMBER 7**  
**AUGUST 2022**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



**Field Trip—Saturday, August 13, 8:00 a.m.**

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>. Meet at the Saylorville Lake Visitors' Center parking lot at 8:00 a.m. We will be focusing on early migrants and late summer bird activity. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Please contact Denny Thompson for more information at [cndthomps@gmail.com](mailto:cndthomps@gmail.com) or 515-254-0837.

**ONE STRANGE RAPTOR ADOPTION**

In June, webcam coverage of a Bald Eagle nest on Gabriola Island, British Columbia, revealed an adult Bald Eagle dropping a young – and very alive - Red-tailed Hawk into its nest. The hawk was likely to be ripped apart and fed to the lone eaglet in the nest.

"This bird likely came from a Red-tailed Hawk nest that was preyed upon by the adult Bald Eagles," ornithologist David Bird, a former professor of wildlife biology at Montreal's McGill University, told a radio audience on the show, *As It Happens*. "And the next thing you know, the little hawk bounces up and starts begging for food." Bird added, "That's what saved its life."

The pair of adult Bald Eagles adopted this baby Red-tailed Hawk and began raising it alongside their own eaglet. At the very start, the two young raptors kept to themselves, virtually on opposite sides of the eagle nest, and the female adult eagle didn't pay much attention to the smaller hawk. But by nightfall of that first day, the adult eagle began feeding and fussing over both young birds about equally.

This experience is rare, but not unprecedented. In 2017, another pair of nesting Bald Eagles, British Columbia, at the Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (SHMBS) north of Victoria, received notice when they raised a Red-tailed Hawk as their own. And this sort of situation has also been recorded in at least Michigan, Washington State, and Ohio, but not with such media attention and a constant webcam.

You can watch a short – under one minute – sequential video on the strange nest-situation as it developed:  
<https://weather.com/science/nature/video/an-unlikely-duo-baby-bird-meant-for-dinner-welcome-into-eagle-nest>

During the last week of June, both semi-fledged youngsters – the eagle and the hawk – were recorded at the nest, coming, going, feeding, and often heard offscreen in the background.

From The Birding Community E-Bulletin, July 2022

## Mississippi Kites—31 Years Later

On June 22 of 1991, Fred Crane, a Des Moines Audubon member who lived in Clive at the time, had returned from a trip out of town to find unusual and exciting visitors in his backyard. The visitors were Mississippi Kites, and there was a pair that spent the summer until the last week of August 1991. About 150 birdwatchers from across Iowa and Nebraska, Minnesota and Illinois came to see the kites and were rewarded with rare viewing opportunities, as the kites perched quietly on dead branches of oak trees.

Fred's backyard was part of several acres of mowed lawns with large oaks and other mature trees scattered throughout. The kites found this a suitable area for hunting insects which are a large part of their diet. According to Fred's written account of the kites at that time, Mississippi Kites had appeared in Iowa regularly before 1900, but even then, on a "casual" basis. Their range had been expanding after many years of decline. Few people had seen Mississippi Kites in Iowa, and few records had been accepted by the Records Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.

Mississippi Kites returned to Fred's backyard on May 2, 1992 and they again spent the entire summer. They returned in 1993, and on at least one occasion, three kites were seen at one time. During the summer of 1994, the kites were spotted only two to three times.

On May 15, 1995, a Mississippi Kite was sighted soaring high over the North Walnut Creek wooded floodplain between Clive and Windsor Heights. This was just to the east of Fred Crane's backyard. The next day, two kites were found, and for several weeks, kites were reported visible from the parking lot of Olivet Baptist Church on 73<sup>rd</sup> Street in Windsor Heights.

On Friday, August 4, 1995, Phil Walsh, also a member of Des Moines Audubon, saw an adult Mississippi Kite carry what appeared to be a frog into a hackberry tree, and Phil located a nest. One chick with white downy feathers peeked over the edge of a loosely built nest of sticks. During the next three weeks, Phil and others checked on the progress of this nest which was the first documented nest of a Mississippi Kite in Iowa. The chick developed rapidly, and on Saturday, August 26, members Pam and Reid Allen found an immature kite in a nearby cottonwood tree. But there was still an immature kite in the hackberry!

On Monday, August 28, Phil Walsh located a third adult Mississippi Kite in the same vicinity. The question then was, just how many kites could there have been along this portion of small North Walnut Creek, the larger Walnut Creek, and the Raccoon River? And how long had they been nesting here? That summer, Phil also observed kites soaring over his home which was south of Grand near Greenwood Park. A few years earlier, Bonnie Callan spotted one at Greenwood Park near the Des Moines Science Center which was located there at the time. Walnut Creek flows east in the wooded floodplain adjacent to the Greenwood and Ashworth Parks.

This summer of 2022, Mississippi Kites are still causing a stir and excitement among birders. Since 1991, they have been sighted in several locations around the Des Moines area. Over the years, they have been reported east of Wakonda Golf Club and along SW 9<sup>th</sup> Street in south Des Moines. They have been reported for a number of years since about 2016 in the general vicinity south of Ashworth and 29<sup>th</sup> Street in West Des Moines, with up to seven seen as recently as June 18 of this year. A pair has also been reported this summer in northeast Des Moines. They have been seen in the Ottumwa area for several years and they continue to be seen flying overhead along 73<sup>rd</sup> Street in Windsor Heights occasionally.

\*This article was taken from a summary of a late 1995 Des Moines Audubon "The Warbler", which included information from Fred Crane's original article which was written in 1991.

**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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**TEXAS WINTERING WHOOPER NUMBERS**

The official Whooping Crane count was finalized in May: last winter, an estimated 543 Whooping Cranes arrived and wintered along the Texas coast, after their arrival from their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada, fully 2,500 away.

Each fall the cranes arrive at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding habitats on the Texas coast, where they spend the winter. After arrival, wildlife biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will survey the birds by air and analyze population trends.

“It is exciting to see another record year as Whooping Cranes continue to increase in number and expand their winter range,” said Wade Harrell, the Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator. Next year, the Service should be adding the South San Jose Island and Heron Flats Secondary Survey areas to their Primary Survey area, given enough Whooping Cranes there to meet the protocol for inclusion. Then, conserving additional winter habitat for the species will be a key component of future recovery efforts.

The preliminary review of aerial surveys of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo crane population located 543 Whooping Cranes, including 31 juveniles, in the primary survey area (approximately 160,125 acres) centered on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. This is an increase from the last survey in the winter of 2019-2020 estimating 506 Whooping Cranes, indicating that the population has clearly grown over the last two years. (No survey was conducted during winter 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 concerns.)

An additional 38 birds were recorded outside the primary survey area during the survey, which is also a record high. This marks the fifth year that the population has topped the 500-mark.

More details on the release of these numbers can be found here:  
<https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2022-05/record-high-number-whooping-cranes-wintered-texas>

From The Birding Community E-Bulletin, June 2022

## **Dim the Lights for Birds at Night**

Over 80% of North America's migratory birds migrate at night, and artificial light can impact their journey. Migrating at night has many advantages for a bird. Night skies are calmer and cooler than daytime skies which makes their very long journeys easier and lowers their risk of overheating.

Nocturnal migrants are also better able to avoid predators. Many birds navigate using the stars and moon as a compass, but light pollution can interrupt this navigation. Light pollution from homes, businesses, sports complexes, and industrial areas often disorients birds or attracts them to the light, slowing their migration and threatening their survival.

Light pollution is especially dangerous because it causes many birds to collide with buildings during migration, resulting in hundreds of millions of bird fatalities in North America each year. Light pollution is increasing by 2% each year, but citizens and their communities can help reduce light pollution and in turn protect migrating birds.

Here are a few actions you can personally take to reduce light pollution and protect migratory birds:  
~Turn off non-essential nighttime lights and use timers or motion detectors on essential lights to keep the usage to a minimum. (This helps save energy and money too!)  
~Change the color of your lights from cool (green and blue) to warm (red and yellow). This has been shown to reduce disturbances to migrating birds. (Light color is measured in kelvins- the lower the number, the warmer the light.)

Excerpted from: Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity News, May 12

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