

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



Saturday, May 13th Field Trip
Saylorville Visitor's Center at 8:00 A.M.

Join Des Moines Audubon members on Saturday, May 13th as we celebrate the return of migrating songbirds. Meet in the parking lot of the Visitors' Center at Saylorville Lake at 8:00 A.M. Migration should be in full swing and morning will find the air full of song with the arrival of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles, Indigo Buntings, and wood warblers. The main species we will be searching for will be the warblers, but there could be a good variety of migrating birds. Please dress for conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact Dennis Thompson at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837 for information about field trips.

Woodpeckers of Iowa, by Ray Harden
Tuesday, May 16, 7 p.m.

Ray Harden of Perry will present a program on Woodpeckers of Iowa at our May 16 meeting. Woodpeckers that can be found in Iowa include Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. He will provide details about each of the woodpeckers, pointing out differences in adults and juveniles, and between male and female of each species. He will also mention two unusual visitors, from the west and north, that have been seen a few times in Iowa.

Ray and his wife Margaret have traveled to many foreign countries and have done environmental studies in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Belize. They have also volunteered for environmental work projects over the years in Arizona, Hawaii, and Iowa. Ray informed Perry readers for two decades with his nature writings, based on his long career as a science teacher in the Perry school system, his work with the Dallas County Soil and Water Conservation District Commission, the Dallas County Conservation Board, and the Raccoon River Watershed Association. Ray has a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from the University of Missouri in Columbia and a Master's Degree in biology from Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

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 jrc Clark@radiks.net.

Limpkins Mysteriously Visiting Iowa

By Doug Harr

Limpkins are a kind of aquatic bird typically found in freshwater marshes from Florida and the Caribbean islands to Central and South America. It is an unusual bird named for its limping gait, feeding mostly upon freshwater mussels and Apple Snails. In the past Limpkins have occasionally appeared in other Gulf coastal states. But over the past five years they have begun showing up during the summer in several upper Midwest states, as far north as Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Last year Limpkins began showing up in Iowa, first near Chariton in June, then at Little Storm Lake Marsh WMA in July. In August two were viewed at Green Island WMA along the Mississippi between Dubuque and Clinton. Finally, in October a Limpkin was seen on a private wetland in Polk County, where it later died, cold weather probably killing this tropical species.

It was amazing that many Iowans viewed some of these five Limpkins appearing here for the very first time, a new species added as the 432nd on Iowa's bird list. Why have Limpkins begun coming to the upper Midwest? It appears that Limpkins are following an expanding range of Chinese Mystery Snails, an invasive species related to Apple Snail, a favorite Limpkin food in Florida.

It may be beneficial for Limpkins to come north in the summer and help remove this invasive snail that could be of concern to our wetland habitat, but not all is yet known about a danger from this snail. Iowa birders should keep their eyes open while looking for marsh birds again this coming summer, hopefully spotting a Limpkin.

*From: Newsletter of Iowa Audubon, April 2023
Volume 20, Number 1

Great Backyard Bird Count Results: Wow!

Half a million participants did their bit for birds

News release March 21, 2023, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

New York, NY, Ithaca, NY, and Port Rowan, ON—The 2023 Great Backyard Bird Count exceeded all expectations. Organizers estimate that more than 500,000 participants from around the globe made the latest count the best ever. First, a look at the numbers:

- 7,538 species reported
- 202 participating countries
- 390,652 bird lists submitted
- 151,479 photos, videos, and sounds uploaded
- 555,291 estimated global participants

The Great Backyard Bird Count is hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. Many thanks to all who participated.

Ranked by number of checklists submitted, the highest number came from United States due to its size and history of the count—the count began in 1998 in the U.S. and Canada and went global in 2013. But India has marched up the list fast each year, now ranking number two for number of checklists in 2023 and Canada is third.

Taking a look at the number of species reported yields a different result. Colombia takes the crown as the country with the most species reported, with a mind-boggling 1,293. Ecuador and India follow, lucky birdwatchers in both countries also reporting more than 1,000 species.

Participation across the United States, ranked by number of checklists, is dominated by the birdy states of California, Texas, and Florida. In Canada, the top three provinces participating were Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec.

Red-winged Blackbirds were seen in the northern United States and Canada earlier than usual this year, possibly because of a somewhat milder February. One report documented more than 30,000 of these birds in Indiana.

Migratory Birds Can Partially Offset Climate Change Study examines a key but costly strategy

For release: April 11, 2023, From Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Ithaca, NY—Deteriorating habitat conditions caused by climate change are wreaking havoc with the timing of bird migration. A new study demonstrates that birds can partially compensate for these changes by delaying the start of spring migration and completing the journey faster. But the strategy comes with a cost—a decline in overall survival. The findings by researchers from Cornell University, the University of Maryland, and Georgetown University are published in the journal *Ecology*.

"We found that our study species, the American Redstart, can migrate up to 43% faster to reach its breeding grounds after delaying departure from wintering grounds in Jamaica by as much as 10 days," said lead author Bryant Dossman. He led the study while a graduate student at Cornell and is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Georgetown. "But increased migration speed also led to a drop of more than 6% in their overall survival rate."

Tactics for speeding up migration can include flying faster and making fewer or shorter stopovers to refuel along the way. Though migrating faster helps compensate for delayed departures, it can't entirely make up for lost time. In general, for a 10-day delay, Dossman says individuals can recover about 60% of the lost time, but that means still arriving late on the breeding grounds.

Jamaica has become increasingly dry in recent decades and that translates into fewer insects, the mainstay of the redstart diet. Now, it takes the birds longer to get into condition for the rigors of migration, especially from poorer quality habitats. At the same time, plants are greening and insects are coming out sooner on the breeding grounds—also because of climate change.

"On average, migratory songbirds only live a year or two, so keeping to a tight schedule is vital. They're only going to get one or two chances to breed," said Dossman. "Longer lived birds are less likely to take the risk of speeding up migrations because they have more chances throughout their lives to breed and pass on their genes."

The study is based on 33 years of American Redstart migration departure data at the Fort Hill Nature Preserve in Jamaica. Senior co-author Peter Marra, director of the Earth Commons—Georgetown University's Institute for Environment & Sustainability—oversees the study site. Using this historical data in tandem with automated radio tracking and light-level tags, scientists compared the redstarts' expected departure date with their actual departure date in recent years to see how it's changed.

"The behavioral shifts documented in this research remind us that the manner in which climate change affects animals can be subtle and, in some cases, able to be detected only after long term study," shared Amanda Rodewald, a co-author on the paper as well as the Garvin Professor and Senior Director of the Center for Avian Population Studies at the Cornell Lab.

"Understanding how animals can compensate is an important part of understanding where the impacts of climate change will play out," said Marra. "In this case, we may not lose a species entirely, but it is possible that populations of some species may go extinct locally due to climate change."

What happens on the redstart wintering grounds carries over into the breeding season. Though the redstart population is stable and increasing in much of its breeding range, detailed eBird Trend maps show the species is declining in the northeastern United States and southern Quebec, Canada.

"The good news is that birds are able to respond to changes in their environment," Dossman said. "They have some flexibility and variation in their behaviors to begin with, but the question is, have they reached the limit of their ability to respond to climate change?"

Research funding was provided by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Smithsonian Institute, and the National Science Foundation.

Reference: Bryant C. Dossman, Amanda D. Rodewald, Colin E. Studds, Peter P. Marra. Migratory birds with delayed spring departure migrate faster but pay the costs. *Ecology*. December 2022.

*Editor's note: The American Redstart has been the logo bird for Des Moines Audubon for decades. The most recent logo was created by Lynn Marsh.

**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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