

THE WARBLER

DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME XXXI, NUMBER 8

SEPTEMBER 2025

EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



**Des Moines Audubon Field Trip
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Saturday, September 13, 8:00 a.m.**

The Des Moines Audubon Society field trip will be held on Saturday, September 13th and the destination will be Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Meet at the McDonald's on University Avenue in Pleasant Hill at 8:00 AM. We will be looking for fall warblers, Monarchs, and other migrating species. While experiencing the changes and sounds of the season we might also observe the bison or elk at the Refuge. Please contact Denny Thompson for more information at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-229-9615.

**September Program
Tuesday, September 16, 7:00 p.m.
Native Plants and Native Birds in Iowa
By Doug Harr**

It is important to know how a great variety of native prairie plants serve to host the wonderful variety of Iowa's grassland birds. This presentation will focus upon different types of prairies, showing examples of the common native plants in each type, and the kinds of birds that prefer to use each type of native grassland. Because of the massive loss of Iowa's prairies, many of these grassland birds have gone into steep decline, with some listed as Threatened or Endangered, while most are now considered Iowa's "Species of Greatest Conservation Need".

Doug received BS and MS degrees in Wildlife Biology from South Dakota State University, and then served a 38 1/2-year career at Iowa DNR. He worked as a Wildlife Management Biologist in Northwest Iowa for 29 years, then as a Wildlife Diversity Research Biologist at the Boone Research Station, before promotion to spend 8 years as DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program State Coordinator. In retirement, Doug is president of Iowa Audubon, an independent state federation of local Audubon chapters plus independent bird clubs. He also represents Iowa on the Advisory Board for National Audubon's Upper Mississippi River Regional Office, covering Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri.

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 jrclark@radiks.net or call 515-223-5047.

**From Iowa DNR
Wildlife Diversity News
June 11, 2025
Like a Moth to a Flame....**

In 2025, the Wildlife Diversity Program of Iowa Department of Natural Resources is releasing a series of articles throughout the year on how to support wildlife where you live. We are going to examine some actions you can take around your house that you may not have thought about before - changes to how you use light at night.

You have likely heard the term light pollution and how it makes the stars in the night sky less visible. Maybe you have even been hearing recently about how artificial light impacts bird migration. Roughly half of the world's insects are nocturnal and while artificial light is not the main cause for insect declines it is a contributing factor. The good news is that it is a contributing factor *that we can do something about* at our home and in our town!

ALAN & Nocturnal Insects

Humans have modified the world in a lot of visible ways and coincidentally one of the biggest modifications we have made has been in the pursuit of better visibility. It is estimated that artificial light covers at least ¼ of the Earth's surface and it impacts the natural world in many unexpected ways. ALAN or Artificial Light at Night refers to any human made light that shines at night. It mostly refers to outdoor lighting but interior lights can also be impactful.

Some ways that artificial light at night can impact insects:

- EXHAUSTION: Lights draw in some species of insects (like that moth) who are confused by it which can cause them to circle and fly around the light for hours, wasting energy, often leading to death.
- BEING EATEN: If those insects confused by the light do not exhaust themselves to death, they may end up as a meal because the congregation of insects attracts their predators. While these predator-prey interactions are natural, the light can tilt things too far in the predator's favor.
- INTERRUPTED BREEDING: Fireflies depend on species specific lighting patterns to find others of their kind and artificial lights can drown these out and interfere with their signals.
- DISORIENTATION: Aquatic insects (like Mayflies) can be fooled by the reflection of lights on wet pavement and lay their eggs on the road or sidewalk.
- HIT BY CAR: Street lamps and vehicle head lights draw insects into danger on our roads.

These are just a few of the disruptions artificial light can cause insects. If you want your home to be a welcoming place for pollinators and other insects then examining the lighting...at your home, in your town...can make a big difference!

What you can do!

How many outdoor lights do you have? Is the light from them targeted where it is needed? How often are they on? How much light is spilling out from inside the house?

Make a plan:

Shielded downward directed lights that shine right where they are needed are the ideal - Can you replace some of the existing lights?

Timers or motion sensors installed on outdoor lights are a great way to ensure they are not being used when they aren't needed.

Can you replace some bright cool white bulbs with some that are a warmer tone?

Pull blinds at night and turn off lights in rooms when they are not being used.

- If you do not own your home you can talk to your landlord about updating the lighting. Maybe reach out to the city council too! Spreading the word and educating is a huge help!

Save Iowa's River Corridors for Birds and All Wildlife

By Doug Harr

Iowa is well-known for having the most natural land converted to agriculture of any state the U.S., more than 85% according to reports from 2023. Adding industrial development areas along with the urban/suburban expansion and expanding highways, we have lost this nation's largest percentage of natural habitat for birds and much other wildlife.

Corn, soybeans, and other agricultural products certainly are important to Iowa and the world, but now far too much marginal land continues being converted to crops, causing even further decreases in many kinds of native birds, mammals, insects, and other natural wild creatures. While restoring more wetlands and saving our small remnants of native prairie and forests has been somewhat successful in the past three decades, Iowa still must do more to save our river corridors.

River corridors are home to a variety of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, which can provide a refuge for many species. Corridors can increase biodiversity, improve resiliency, and encourage genetic diversity by allowing migratory species to mate in distant areas and prevent inbreeding. Monarch butterflies need connected land corridors to feed and rest along their 3,000-mile migratory journey twice each year. Range expansion for migrant creatures can also reduce conflict with climate change, and river corridors can help species adapt by moving across weather zones into areas where temperatures are those preferred or desired by some wildlife species. Finally, these corridors can help improve water quality.

There are many rivers in Iowa critical for birds to use for migrating, nesting, or finding sites for winter cover protection. If large and lengthy riverine corridors have portions of good remnant habitats, then we must do all possible to protect and even connect those corridors across the state. Virtually all rivers and even many small streams have importance for this. Some of Iowa's very best include the following rivers: Big Sioux, Boone, Cedar, Chariton, Des Moines, Grand, Iowa, Little Sioux, Mississippi, Missouri, North, Racoon, Rock, Skunk, Turkey, Upper Iowa, Wapsipinicon, and Winnebago.

Since the 1920s, projects by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), various county conservation boards (CCBs), Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and more organizations have worked to enlarge, connect, and permanently protect increased portions of these corridors. This past June, USFWS celebrated the 100th anniversary for the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife & Fish Refuge, including more than 240,000 acres along 261 miles of the river in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Iowa DNR, USFWS, CCBs, TNC, INHF and other groups have focused upon assembling protected corridors, especially along the Boone, Cedar, Des Moines, Iowa, Skunk, and Wapsipinicon rivers. This has been very important work saving as many of the corridors as possible. However, much more must be done on those, as well as aiming at a lot more corridors currently having minimal protected areas.

New state and national laws should prohibit expanding agricultural lands into critical wildlife habitats along our rivers, land which often results in poorer crop production due to much lower soil qualities in these typically hillside and river bottom lands. That will require much more difficult work by conservation-minded Iowans, but we must do it if we want to save the diminished numbers and varieties of our birds and other wildlife.

From the Iowa Audubon Newsletter, August 2024, Volume 21, Number 2

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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