

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
VOLUME XXXII, NUMBER 2
FEBRUARY 2026
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Field Trip
Saturday, February 14, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the Jester Park Nature Center at 8 AM on Saturday, February 14. We will check out the birds at the Nature Center and view the displays. We will explore more of the park, stopping to look for various species along the roadway, at the pine trees and at the bird feeding station near the bison/elk enclosure. Bring binoculars and dress for cold conditions. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact field trip leader, Dennis Thompson at cndthomps@gmail.com or 515-229-9615 for more information.

Des Moines Audubon Program Meeting
Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 7:00 p.m.
Birds of Galápagos Islands
by Julie Curry

Julie Curry will present on our regular meeting night her program on the birds she saw during her trip to the central and eastern islands of the Galápagos cluster. Julie is a member of the Des Moines and Big Bluestem Audubon Societies and a committed life-long learner. She will share observations from her 2025 trip to the Galápagos Islands—a journey inspired by a fifth-grade moment when she first saw a Blue-footed Booby in an encyclopedia. Her field experience as a birder is primarily the Midwestern states with annual trips to the Upper Texas Coast. Her interest in birding deepened after she retired from the Iowa Department of Education. She had served as the State Coordinator for an interagency system supporting infants and toddlers with special needs and their families. Julie contributes to several Christmas Bird Counts in our area.

Julie's program will focus on the birds and the arid or semi-desert habitats of the central and eastern Galápagos Islands—seabirds, shorebirds, land birds, birds of prey, and the Darwin finches—along with observations from sea to shore landings, hikes over diverse terrain, kayaking, and snorkeling excursions. The Galápagos cluster is shaped by the interaction of three tectonic plates, a trio of trade-winds, equatorial Pacific conditions, geographic isolation from continents, and geologically young volcanic formations. These factors contribute to a high level of endemic birds and make the islands an important protected area for breeding seabirds and other native species, supported by ongoing conservation efforts led by the Charles Darwin Research Center.

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 515-707-7468 or jrclark@radiks.net.

2025 Des Moines Christmas Count

By Dennis Thompson

The Des Moines Christmas Count was held on Saturday, 01/03/2026. It had been rescheduled from the previous Sunday due to bad weather. The low was 23 and the high was 35. There was no snow on the ground and water was mostly frozen with some open water on the larger bodies. We had 18 participants.

67 species were tallied which was a little lower than the last few years. Waterfowl and sparrow diversity were lower than normal. All-time high counts were set for Trumpeter Swan, Common Goldeneye, American Robin, and White-throated Sparrow. There were good numbers of Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Good finds included Northern Pintail, Pied-billed Grebe, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Brown-headed Cowbird, and meadowlark. There were low numbers for Red-tailed Hawk, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Song Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal. Barrow's Goldeneye, Ring-necked Pheasant and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were seen during count week but not on the count day. Many thanks to John Cecil for tackling the huge blackbird roost in Waterworks Park and for organizing and compiling the 2025 count.

Thanks to all the participants for making the count a success.

Italicized = new high for the count.

Greater White-fronted Goose	3	Pileated Woodpecker	8
Cackling Goose	17	American Kestrel	5
Canada Goose	7993	Merlin	6
Trumpeter Swan	460	Blue Jay	108
Tundra Swan	2	American Crow	3049
Mallard	1555	Black-capped Chickadee	78
Northern Pintail	2	Tufted Titmouse	2
Ring-necked Duck	11	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Bufflehead	2	Cedar Waxwing	64
Common Goldeneye	402	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Hooded Merganser	48	White-breasted Nuthatch	85
Common Merganser	61	Brown Creeper	23
Ruddy Duck	4	Winter Wren	2
Wild Turkey	14	Carolina Wren	1
Pied-billed Grebe	1	European Starling	34587
Rock Pigeon	462	Eastern Bluebird	92
Eurasian Collared-Dove	4	Hermit Thrush	2
Mourning Dove	38	American Robin	964
American Coot	26	House Sparrow	213
Ring-billed Gull	31	House Finch	97
American White Pelican	4	Purple Finch	3
Great Blue Heron	5	Pine Siskin	23
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	American Goldfinch	55
Cooper's Hawk	3	American Tree Sparrow	90
Bald Eagle	91	Dark-eyed Junco	416
Red-tailed Hawk	6	White-throated Sparrow	264
Great Horned Owl	3	Song Sparrow	2
Barred Owl	3	Meadowlark sp.	37
Belted Kingfisher	4	Red-winged Blackbird	17620
Red-headed Woodpecker	16	Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	77	Common Grackle	7
Downy Woodpecker	100	Yellow-rumped Warbler	17
Hairy Woodpecker	31	Northern Cardinal	96
Northern Flicker	103		

Flight of the Godwit **Book Review by Doug Harr**

Flight of the Godwit, by Bruce M. Beehler. Smithsonian Books, Washington D.C., 2025. 264pp.

Shorebirds include a variety of avian species that often are only viewed at a long distance, making some kinds quite difficult to identify, even when birders use a spotting scope. But viewing and learning to identify them can be one of the most fun things about birding, and it can make us want to learn more about all shorebirds and even any other kinds of birds.

In this excellent and recommended new book, author Beehler covers several trips from 2019 to 2022, following shorebirds where they migrate across the U.S. and Canada. His purpose was to see them at migration stopover points, then observe them at nesting sites, and finally watch them head south during fall migration. Although his interest is in all kinds of shorebirds, he focuses upon what he calls his “Magnificent Seven.” Those are Hudsonian, Marbled, and Bar-tailed Godwits; Long-billed and Bristle-thighed Curlews; Whimbrels; and Upland Sandpipers—all some of the largest and somewhat easier-to-identify shore-birds.

There are three parts in the book, Part 1 starting with his own birding history and the natural history of all shorebirds. In Part 2, chapters focus upon areas where he traveled and stopped to view his seven shorebirds, from spring migration to breeding locations. Part 3’s chapters discuss wintering and the magic of migration distances and locations. The Epilog ends with concern about threats to shorebirds and population declines.

In addition, each chapter has single pages that give extensive information about individual shorebird species. There are also illustrations of many different shorebirds, more than just the seven primary species focused upon in this writing. All pictures, by artist Allen Messer, are black-and-white drawings, but they are excellent artworks that can help birders see many details of each different species.

Author Bruce M. Beehler is an ornithologist who has written 19 books on birds, science, nature, and conservation in general. He is also a bird researcher at the Smithsonian Institute of Natural History, and an affiliate of the American Bird Conservancy.

*From the Newsletter of Iowa Audubon, December 2025. Volume 22, Number 3

Alert: Possible Finch Irruption

Birdwatchers in the northeast, the Great Lakes region, and New England should stock their feeders well and keep a weather eye on them. It looks like it is going to be an irruptive year, according to the Finch Research Network. See: finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2025-2026 .

Due to food shortages in the boreal forests of Canada, finches that often overwinter there, including redpolls, pine siskins, evening grosbeaks, and pine grosbeaks, as well as birds not in the finch family, including Bohemian waxwings and red-breasted nuthatches, may migrate farther south. In some cases, they might fly as far south as the Carolinas.

The prediction stems from data provided by a network of volunteers who monitor the seed production in fir, spruce, birch, and alder trees in the boreal forests of the area.

“We knew that there was almost no wild food for all of Ontario and Quebec this year,” Matt Young, president and founder of the Finch Research Network told Zoe McDonald of the media group Vermont Public

Exactly where, when, and how many of these birds will migrate is hard to say. “That’s the beauty of finches. Because there is an unpredictability that always leaves you with some intrigue, like, are we going to get birds this year? Are we not going to get them? That is what builds that excitement,” Young said.

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 515-707-7648.
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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