

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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AUGUST 2026
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Des Moines Audubon Field Trip
Saturday, August 8th
Granger Centennial Park at 8:00 a.m.

Join Des Moines Audubon members on Saturday, August 8th. Meet in the parking lot of Granger's Centennial Park at 8:00 a.m. Centennial Park is just northwest of Casey's, between Rose Street and Highway 141. To get to the park from Highway 141, turn north on State Street and then right on Rose Street. From there we will be driving to Voas Nature Area, just west of Minburn in Dallas County. Please dress for conditions and trail walking. All levels of bird watchers are encouraged to attend! Contact Dennis Thompson at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-229-9615 for information about field trips.

Voas Nature Area in Dallas County is mostly known for its open expanses of reconstructed prairies and wetlands. These habitats are home to tiger salamanders, monarch butterflies, big bluestem, trumpeter swans, blue flag iris, pheasants, badgers, and other natural treasures of Iowa. However, some of the best-kept secrets of Voas can be found in the forests and oak savannas on the west and south ends of the park. In these spaces, some trees are over a hundred years old, the ground is covered in woodland wildflowers, and clear streams expose rocks and minerals which tell the story of Iowa's geological past.

Thanks in part to data gathered from the Voas Forest Management Plan, their staff are beginning to manage these woodlands more intentionally. Recently, Dallas County Conservation Board was awarded a grant to help fund forest management projects at Voas.

When woodland habitats are managed using techniques according to a plan, it creates more space and sunlight for our native plant and animal species to thrive. Standing dead trees, called "snags", will create new habitat for insects, which will be eaten by birds, and they will provide open cavities for many kinds of birds and mammals to nest in. As they fall and decompose, they will then create habitat for mushrooms, beetles, worms, and other small critters.

Please Note

The fall schedule of program meetings begins in September.

September 15—Grassland Birds by Lindsey Page, Polk County Conservation

October 20—Nebraska Birds by Ty Smedes

November 17—Wood Thrush Report by Anna Buckhardt Thomas, Iowa DNR

Birding in August

Just when you were getting settled into summer, the birds start moving south again. Fall migration differs from spring in a couple of different ways. First, there is no sense of urgency to get to the best breeding habitats so it tends to be more leisurely and drag out over several weeks. Additionally, with a successful season there are just more birds. Of course, adults may be looking a bit ratty or have even already molted into their winter plumage. Young birds frequently do not yet have the color of their parents. The challenges in identification may be a bit greater but with study and careful observation can be a lot of fun.

Although a few shorebirds, mostly males, have started south in July the largest flights are usually in August. One of the better places to search through flocks of shorebirds to find that elusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper is at Jester Park. Water levels and vegetation will dictate the best vantage point for scoping this area, but try from the boat ramp area, campground 4, and campground 6 at the upper reaches of the river. Buff-breasted are generally found in vegetation rather than at the water's edge so it will take some careful searching. They have sometimes been found in the more upland areas of the beaches, Sandpiper Beach at Saylorville for one.

Passerine migration is spread throughout and good birding may be had at any number of places. Some of our favorites this time of year include Jester Park, Walnut Woods State Park, Waterworks Park, Gray's Lake, and Ashworth/Greenwood Parks. At any of these places you will be tuning in to warblers and vireos as well as others preparing for the move south.

*From the Des Moines Audubon Website

A VISION FOR IOWA'S WILDLIFE Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity News June 3, 2026

First approved in 2006, the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) is a 25-year strategy for conservation of all wildlife in Iowa. The IWAP is a proactive plan designed to conserve all wildlife in Iowa before they become rare and more costly to protect.

Developed by a coalition of scientists, sportsmen and women, conservationists, and members of the public, this plan can help us protect wildlife and the places they live for future generations. If the steps in the action plan are successfully carried out, Iowa will have cleaner water and air - a healthy environment for people and wildlife. The Iowa Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) outlines six visions for Iowa. The first of those visions is the Vision for Iowa's Wildlife: "By 2030 Iowa will have viable wildlife populations that are compatible with modern landscapes and human social tolerance." The Plan then describes three more specific goals that make up this vision, and a suite of conservation actions needed to achieve these goals.

- Common species will continue to be common.
- Populations of species of greatest conservation need will increase to viable (self-sustaining) levels.
- The abundance and distribution of wildlife will be balanced with its impact on the economic livelihood and social tolerance of Iowans.

How Does the Wildlife Vision Translate into Action?

The DNR has worked with conservation partners to raise the profile of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), to raise awareness of their needs and to spur conservation efforts, rather than provide legal protection. The plan helps conservationists focus limited time and resources on the species that stand to benefit most by identifying which plant and animal species are declining or otherwise reliant on conservation across various taxonomic groups: amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, fish, and invertebrates (mussels, butterflies, bumble bees, crayfish) and the types of activities that benefit these species.

The Plan was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on December 31, 2025, and has been approved. If you have any questions about the IWAP, please contact Katy Fullin, Wildlife Action Plan Manager at: katy.fullin@dnr.iowa.gov

SOAR - Saving Our Avian Resources

June 2, 2026

Since 2004, SOAR has been keeping a detailed dataset on eagles admitted for rehabilitation as part of our ongoing research on lead poisoning in wildlife. There is information on almost 1000 eagles in this dataset. The winter of 2026 set a record for the number of eagles admitted during the first quarter of the year. In the 22 previous years, SOAR averaged 22 eagle admits during the first three months of the year. In 2026, 38 eagles were admitted during this winter timeframe! Twenty-nine of these were lead poisoned.

Unfortunately, this high percentage of lead poisoned eagles (76%) is not unusual. Iowa is the winter home for thousands of northern nesting eagles, where fishing lakes are frozen over. They have discovered that scavenging is an efficient way to find food in the winter. If a deer, pheasant, or other game animal is shot with lead ammunition, there are fragments of lead or lead shot or entire lead bullets left in the carcass or field dressings. Check out SOAR's web page to see our radiograph research on what has been found in eagle digestive tracts.

Several of our valued volunteer transporters have had eagles die on their way to our facility, as the lead poisoning shuts down the eagle's liver and kidney functions and prevents their red blood cells from carrying oxygen. The volunteers all question why this is happening. Something that is completely preventable with hunters switching to non-lead ammunition. These preventable eagle deaths are happening all across the country during the fall and winter. Please spread the word and get your favorite hunter to switch to copper bullets and slugs and non-toxic shot.

*Bald Eagles admitted with lead poisoning sometimes have secondary injuries. Of the 29 eagles admitted with lead poisoning; five also had traumatic injuries, one was illegally shot, one was found near a wind turbine with injuries consistent with a collision, and one had injuries most probably from a leg hold trap. Twenty-one had no other injuries.

This winter SOAR admitted 37 non-eagle patients representing 10 different species. On a happier note, SOAR has released 34 of our rehabilitated raptors back to the wild this winter quarter for a second chance at being wild and free. Twenty-seven of these birds were ones that SOAR needed to hold over the winter. Timing releases with the seasons is important, as birds need mild weather conditions to successfully adjust to life in the wild and locate suitable shelter. Release sites are selected to ensure appropriate habitat for the species and to provide natural travel corridors such as rivers, streams, or large grassland areas, allowing newly released birds to move easily and settle in new locations. This habitat travel lane is especially important to our resident owl species (e.g. Great-horned Owls, Barred Owls, and Screech Owls) as they tend to stay near release sites. We know this from band return data. Other species like Red-tailed Hawks, Bald Eagles, and American Kestrels are expert travelers and will take to the skies and find a spot they like long distances from release sites.

On the road again and again and again. One of the main challenges of rehabilitation is getting the bird patient to SOAR's facility. SOAR takes in injured raptors from the western half of Iowa, working with County Conservation Boards and Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Conservation Officers and other wildlife rehabilitators. It is almost a daily occurrence that we need to get in a vehicle loaded with carry crates to meet someone with raptors that need some help. Our volunteer transporters are so much appreciated, we could not function without them. Our SOAR vehicles travel approximately 4000 miles each month. Your donations for fuel and vehicle maintenance are essential for our mission.

SOAR also did some programming this winter quarter. A presentation was given at a regional naturalists' meeting on procedures for acquiring non-releasable education raptors. The IDNR permit issuing office found the list of rules, regulations, and other considerations SOAR compiled for the Naturalists helpful too, when fielding inquiries from permit applicants. SOAR's Executive Director did phone interviews with news media regarding eagles and lead poisoning with the Des Moines Register, Iowa Public Radio, and KHOI Community Radio. For 22 years, SOAR has been taking every opportunity to urge hunters and anglers to get the lead out.

SOAR - Saving Our Avian Resources, soarraptors.org
25494 320th Street, Dedham, IA 51440

**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 _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

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