



# PILEATED DRUMMINGS

*Dubuque Audubon Society*

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## **W**arblers on the Wing! By Pat Fisher

Dave and I spotted our first warbler of the season on April 9th. It was a Yellow-rumped Warbler flitting among the tree tops on the south side of the road at Sunfish Lake. We only spotted one, an early bird! Last spring in late April and early May this same area proved to be a sure spot to see these and Palm Warblers. There was a 2-3 week window when they were THICK before they migrated further north for breeding. The yellow-rumps were in the tree tops while the palms were congregated at the end of the road, left-hand side, in the smaller trees and tops of grasses.

This area is in Wisconsin and ends at O'Leary's Lake, which is possibly a more familiar name. The other side of Dubuque's lock and dam is another way to define it. The road at Sunfish Lake has water on both sides of it. The Sunfish Lake portion opens out to the Mississippi River. The



© B. L. Sullivan

The other side of the road has some open water and the road is tree-lined. You can pull off the road to park and walk along the edge of the road, or just park and look at birds from your car.

A warbler that breeds in this area is the exceptionally beautiful Prothonotary Warbler which sports a brilliant yellow head and breast with blue-gray wings. Start looking for this bird around the beginning of May. I generally see these birds right above the water's edge, on tree trunks, so look low, not high, to spot them.

They also have a distinctive song, a series of high, metallic, rising notes: tsweet tsweet tsweet tsweet tsweet. If you are like I was when I first started learning about birds, you might be thinking: "Warblers, what are those?"

(Continued on Page 2...)

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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As I have found out, there are many birds that are warblers. Most are small, and move quickly, making them a challenge to get your binoculars on. But they are well worth pursuing. Many, like the prothonotary and the

**yellow-rumped**, are brightly colored. A few warblers spend their summer here but most are just traveling through.



**The best time to see warblers is late April through May. Our spring bird count is timed to be at the height of the warbler migration.**

There are many locations to see warblers in and around Dubuque. Water is usually the key. The Mississippi River is a migration fly-way for numerous birds, including warblers. Check out any of the parks that border the river. At Mines of Spain park, southern edge of Dubuque, follow the signs to Julien Dubuque's monument. This is a spot where you can look over the tree tops which is a good vantage point for spotting those birds that like to hang out high in the trees. After leaving the monument, turn left and park in the first parking area on your left. Cross the road and take the Catfish Trail which goes along Catfish Creek. This is another good spot to see warblers.

**In Dubuque County, check out Swiss Valley park. Park at the nature center and take the trail out of the end of the parking lot. This is the Stream Bottom Trail. Less than a quarter mile will bring you to a foot bridge. Cross the bridge to the small walnut grove. This edge area is a great spot for finding warblers.**

Another place in the county is Finley's Landing county park. Go north on Hwy. 52. Take a right on Sageville Road and watch for a brown county park sign pointing you to the park. Beyond the campground is a marshy backwater area which is prime habitat for warblers. And if you can't find birds, you'll be delightfully serenaded by a chorus of frogs! Check out the

Dubuque Audubon website for other great places to see birds!

Birds, frogs ... what more could you want? Flowers, yes!! Spring flowers are out in full force! The wild ginger and blood root have been here and gone. Dutchman's breeches, Virginia bluebells and trillium are up now. Blue wood phlox, Jacob's ladder, shooting stars and many more spring ephemerals are gracing our hillsides. Hope you can get outside to enjoy the many beauties of our area.

**And join us on our spring bird count on Saturday, May 8th. Details are elsewhere in the newsletter. New birders are always welcome! We're a friendly group and always eager to enlarge our numbers. More eyes see more birds!**

## COFFEE CAN SAVE MIGRATORY BIRDS

By Dave Fisher

When my wife and I went to Costa Rica for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we saw many exotic and beautiful birds such as the Blue Crowned Motmot, Toucans, and the Resplendent Quetzal. But one familiar bird we were delighted to see was the Eastern (Baltimore) Oriole that migrates each winter to Central America before returning to the US to nest in the spring. Unfortunately, the population of Orioles as well as other migrants such as the Scarlet Tanager and Wood Thrush has been declining due to habitat loss.

According to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, much of the habitat loss is due to clearing of the tropical forest for full sun coffee plantations where 98% of tropical birds are eliminated. But shade grown coffee plantations where coffee trees are planted under the forest canopy preserves tropical bird habitat. "Shade grown coffee plantations play a key role in the conservation of migratory birds with find a sanctuary in their forest-like environment." Audubon Premium Shade Grown Coffee is 100% organic, Fairly Traded, and preserves tropical bird habit.

Audubon coffee is also robust and tasty. It is available in Whole Bean or Ground. Audubon coffee is available for sampling and for purchase at Dubuque Audubon Society meetings. For special orders, call Dave at 563-542-0864.

# **D**UBUQUE AUDUBON SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**May, 2010**

May 8 – Sat.	Spring Species Count	8:00 am – Meet at the north entrance to Eagle Point Park to begin the day. Eagle Point is great habitat for migrating warblers. Continue at various other sites in Dubuque County for the remainder of the day. Do as little or as much as you wish. 5:30 pm – Meet at the Sycamore Pavilion at Swiss Valley Park to tally our observations and enjoy a picnic supper.
May 8 – Sat.	Intro to Wildlife Photography with Stan Bousson	10:00 am, Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd. Stan Bousson is a friend of DCCB and a wonderful photographer. He will be sharing his expertise on wildlife photography and giving participants a chance to get hands on with the subject matter. Please call to preregister for this program at 563.556.6745
May 13 – Thurs.		Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 1755 Delhi, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program: At this time, our speaker cancelled. We are looking for a replacement. Stay tuned.
May 23 – Sun.	Celebration of the Reopening of Heritage Trail	Graf Park in Graf, Iowa 11:30 am Tristate Trail Vision Annual Meeting 12:00 pm Guided hike of the trail with Brian Preston 1:00 pm Fossil talk and collecting Free popcorn and ice cream supplied by Dairy Council to trail users
May 23 – Sun.	Dutch Oven Cooking 101	1:00 pm at Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63 <sup>rd</sup> St., Maquoketa. Join Doug Gonner for an afternoon of cooking up some food Dutch oven style! Learn how to cook with a Dutch oven, enjoy sampling some delicious dishes, and learn insider tips. Minimal cost for food. Bring your own Dutch oven or use one of ours. Bring food for a dish if you like too.
May 29 – July 21	Tall Grass Prairie: Past, Present and Future	Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63 <sup>rd</sup> St., Maquoketa. Come and check out this fun and informative traveling exhibit about Iowa's tall grass prairie heritage.
June 18 – Fri. to June 20 – Sun.	Breeding Bird Atlas Blockbusting Weekend	Training will take place in Clinton, Iowa on the evening of June 18 (See article elsewhere in the newsletter). If you have already had the training, call Charlie Winterwood at 563.588.2783 for local instructions and meeting place.

# MISSISSIPPI RIVER PEREGRINE FALCON FIELD DAY

## PROMOTES NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

By Lowell Washburn

After being driven to the brink of extinction across much of North America, the peregrine falcon is currently staging a remarkable comeback. So far this spring, Iowans have documented a modern-day high of 14 active peregrine territories, up one from the 13 nests recorded last year.

The most exciting aspect of the ongoing recovery is that wild, free flying peregrines are returning to recolonize the historic Mississippi River cliff ledge nest sites of their ancestors. For countless generations, the limestone bluffs bordering Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin provided a hub for mid-continent breeding populations. Now, for the first time since the mid-1960s, wildlife watchers are once again presented with ample opportunities to both hear and observe as adult falcons defend territories and perform the spectacular aerial courtship displays that have earned their fame.

But although contemporary outdoor enthusiasts may currently thrill to the spectacle, the idea of falcon watching is not exactly new to the Mississippi. People have, in fact, been observing the species for more than a thousand years here. And although the last of these unnamed citizens vanished long before the first European explorers arrived, hard evidence of their deep admiration for the peregrine still exists in the form of the earthen effigies they left behind.

Although multitudes of mounds have been looted and destroyed, many remain. At northeast Iowa's Effigy Mounds National Monument, around 200 have received permanent protection. Constructed in a variety of shapes and sizes, mounds exist on both public and private lands. Effigy mounds were fashioned to represent a number of wildlife species including bears, eagles, bison and turtles. My personal favorites, of course, are the peregrine effigies.

As we move into a new millennium, concerted

efforts are currently underway to rekindle that profound level of respect and esteem toward peregrine falcons. A classic, boots to the ground example of that endeavor occurred [recently](#) as groups totaling more than 100 elementary and environmental science students from northeast Iowa's MFL MarMac School District and Native American youths of the Ho-Chunk Nation teamed up to participate in our first ever Mississippi River Peregrine Falcon Field Trip.

This first of its kind joint venture was conceived and coordinated by the DNR's Pat Schlarbaum. The outing began with hiking trail explorations that led to viewing and interpretation at several of the centuries old effigies. Students were also provided with opportunities to witness the awe-inspiring aerial displays of courting peregrines and to view territorial falcons along historic cliffscapes near Waukon Junction's Paint Rock. Side trips included visits to the highly visible peregrine pair currently nesting atop a "concrete cliff" at McGregor's Agri Bunge grain facility

For a dozen centuries or more, human beings and peregrine falcons coexisted in harmony against the majestic backdrop of the upper Mississippi. Then, in less than a mere 20 year blink of an eye, the widespread use of DDT pesticides had led to the species complete elimination - all the way from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean.



Extinction is final. And although America came perilously close to forever losing this environmental sentinel, the peregrine falcon is receiving a miraculous second bid for survival. The question now is whether or not future generations will maintain the level of commitment needed to prevent renewed peregrine populations from being frittered away for a second time. The peregrine's future [may](#) largely hinge on our ability to instill a keen sense of stewardship to future generations.



## OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us!

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## 2010 IOWA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS BLOCKBUSTING WEEKEND

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will be hosting a Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) Blockbusting Weekend in Dubuque, Clinton and Jackson Counties on Friday-Sunday, June 18-20, 2010. The BBA is a five year project where volunteers search for evidence of birds nesting throughout the state to enhance our understanding of these species, their breeding range and their habitat selection. Everyone is invited to participate, regardless of previous birding experience.

The weekend will begin with a presentation about the BBA on Friday evening. Volunteers will learn how to participate, how to determine breeding bird status, and how to turn in observations. During Saturday and Sunday, volunteers will be out in blocks (predetermined areas to inventory) searching for nesting birds. Atlas volunteers are encouraged to visit any block within a reasonable driving distance, and there will be a sign up sheet to divide up the targeted blocks. Volunteers are responsible for making

arrangements for their own accommodations and meals. If you plan on participating, please RSVP to the BBA Coordinator the Monday prior to the weekend of the event. For more specific information, please visit <http://bba.iowabirds.org> or contact Billy Reiter-Marolf, the BBA volunteer coordinator at [bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org](mailto:bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org) or phone 515-432-2823 ext. 117.

Remember:

### Clinton/Dubuque

Birding in Dubuque, Jackson & Clinton Co.

**Friday June 18 @ 7 PM** - BBA Presentation &

Training at Bickelhaupt Arboretum,

340 South 14th St., Clinton, Iowa

**Sat. June 19 & Sun. June 20** - Birding in Clinton, Dubuque & Jackson Co.



## WHERE TO FIND SPRING BIRDS

By Melissa Mayntz, About.com Guide

There are no bad places to look for birds in spring, but birders interested in spotting the first new arrivals and seeing the greatest number of species will check specific types of areas, including:

- Parks and gardens with early blooming flowers and trees
- Newly turned or planted agricultural fields
- Open waterways especially where winter ice is receding
- Blooming orchards
- Bird-friendly backyards with full feeders and spring plants

The key to knowing where to look for birds in spring is to seek out green spaces and the fresh, bright colors of spring flowers. Migrating birds seek out those same spaces as beacons of food after their long journeys, and it is there that many spring birds can be seen.

# THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count made history, breaking the record for the most checklists submitted. More than 63,000 of you submitted 97,209 checklists! Tallies came in from all 50 states in the U.S. and all 10 provinces and 3 territories of Canada.

When it comes to large-scale patterns, one of the more notable trends was the scarcity—and sometimes absence—of winter finches such as Pine Siskins and redpolls.



Pine Siskin

That's in stark contrast to the massive invasion of siskins during last year's GBBC. Over time, the GBBC has captured dramatic swings in the numbers of these species reported from year to year. These fluctuations may be influenced by the birds' food supply and reproductive success far to the north. This year, they presumably didn't need to travel as far south to find enough food.

In terms of overall numbers of birds counted, the American Robin led the way by a huge margin with 1,850,082 individuals reported. (Of these, 1,450,058 were reported from Saint Petersburg, Florida, where robins roost in massive numbers!) Canada Goose was a distant second with reports of 748,356 birds. Snow Goose, American Crow, and European Starling all came in with about 500,000 individuals each.

Participants also reported some rare—and wonderful—sightings. In Lake Havasu City, Arizona, numerous birders reported a Black-legged Kittiwake. In McAllen, Texas, 16 GBBC participants reported a Crimson-collared Grosbeak—the first time the species has been reported during the count since 2005. Birders off the coast of San Diego added a new species to the GBBC species list this year when they sighted a Red-billed Tropicbird, the first verified sighting of this species for the GBBC.

For a [more detailed summary](#) of this year's results and to view the count's [Top-10 lists](#), visit the GBBC website at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

## PINE SISKINS

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The Pine Siskin is the commonest of the irruptive "winter finches."

The Pine Siskin is gregarious even in the breeding season. It nests in loose colonies, and pairs may visit one another's nests. The nest is defended against other siskins primarily during egg laying and incubation. Breeding birds flock together to forage.

Following a large irruptive winter flight, some individuals may stay near a dependable food source and breed far south of the normal breeding range. The heavily insulated nest helps keep the eggs warm in cold climates. In addition, the female incubates the eggs constantly, and is absent from the nest only for brief periods. Her mate feeds her while she sits on the nest.



Her mate feeds her while she sits on the nest.

# SPRING BIRDING TIPS

By Melissa Mayntz, About.com Guide

Spring is a fantastic time for birding as many seasonal migrants return and nesting season begins. This is the season many birders look forward to most after a long winter with fewer birds, and with the right spring birding tips it is easy to make the most of this season's best birds.

## Benefits of Spring Birding

Birding in spring can be rewarding on many levels. Not only does spring bring the return of many summer residents to northern areas, but birders who are active early in the season can easily find unusual migrants and rare birds that have strayed from their traditional migration routes. Because many spring birds are in their breeding plumage, it can be easier to identify them based on colors and feather patterns. Birding by ear is also easier in spring, as many birds are singing to claim and defend territories and advertise their willingness to mate.

Later in the season, birders can not only continue seeing beautiful birds, but as those birds begin to nest it gives birders an outstanding opportunity to witness different bird behaviors, including courtship rituals and nest building. This allows birders to learn even more about their favorite species in an intimate and exciting way.

## Spring Birding Tips

### To make the most of birding during the spring...

**Dress Appropriately:** Spring weather can be unpredictable and what looks like a warm day in the morning can quickly become frigid with a late season snowstorm. Dress in layers and wear footwear suitable for wet and potentially slippery ground.

**Avoid Dangerous Trails:** Many hiking areas are closed in the winter because of avalanche dangers. These same areas may not open in early spring, and they should be avoided until local authorities have inspected the area and deemed it safe for hikers and walkers. Similarly, avoid areas prone to flooding and mudslides that may happen without warning during an unpredictable spring.

**Be Wildlife Aware:** Birds are not the only wildlife that becomes more visible in spring. When birding in remote locations, be alert and aware of other potentially

aggressive and dangerous wildlife, such as bears, moose, wolves, coyotes or mountain lions. Especially after a hard, lean winter, these predators may be more aggressive than normal and could be dangerous.

**Leave Nests Alone:** It can be tempting to peek into or touch a nest with spring bird families, but doing so will cause stress on both adult birds and any young that have already hatched. If the adults become too stressed they may believe the nesting site is unsafe and abandon it, so it is best to observe nests from a safe distance.

**Prepare for Allergies:** Spring season is allergy season for many birders, and being prepared for the discomforts of allergies can make spring birding much more enjoyable – and can lead to fewer sneezes that may scare away birds. Choose non-drowsy allergy medication and keep spare pills in your field bag for long birding trips. Stay hydrated, and carry along plenty of tissues if needed.

**Bird By Ear:** There is no better season to learn birding by ear than spring, when many returning migrants use song to stake their territories and claim mates. Invest in downloadable bird songs or CDs so you can learn which birds you hear, but avoid playing those songs in the field when they might distract or confuse birds.

**Check All Heights:** In prime migration habitats and fresh spring areas, check all heights of the foliage for visiting birds. Mixed flocks of several species often travel together, but when they are feeding or resting you will spot different birds on the ground, at mid-level heights and at the tree tops.



**Be an Early Bird:** The morning chorus just after sunrise is the best time of day to spot spring birds, as that is the time when most birds are singing and foraging. Early risers will

often have the most exciting birding experiences as they spot more species and different behaviors.

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Yellow Warbler

The mission of Dubuque Audubon Society is to provide educational opportunities to the people of the tri-state area and to preserve the natural habitat of birds and other wildlife.

**DUBUQUE AUDUBON SOCIETY  
NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Do NOT use this form to renew a membership in National Audubon Society. Use the form mailed to you by the National Audubon. There are two categories of memberships in the Dubuque Audubon Society

**CATEGORY A:** This category includes membership in National Audubon Society and the local chapter. You will receive 6 issues of Audubon Magazine and 9 issues of the local chapter newsletter, Pileated Drummings.

\_\_\_\_\_ National Audubon Society Free Membership

**CATEGORY B:** This category of membership is local chapter only. You will receive 9 issues of the local chapter newsletter, Pileated Drummings. All funds will remain with the local chapter. Membership year is from July to June.

\_\_\_\_\_ Local Chapter Dues      \$10.00

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