



# MILEATED DRUMMINGS

*Dubuque Audubon Society*

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## **L**ife in the Snow By Pat Fisher

Nature is fascinating! At Dubuque's Bald Eagle Watch in January, I purchased some books from Larry Stone. He has a marvelous collection of books related to the natural world.

I am in the middle of reading "Winter World" by Bernd Heinrich. (I also bought his book entitled "Summer World".) Heinrich is a biologist who has a cabin in Maine. Many of his experiences relate to the world around his cabin. His focus is on discovering how animals survive winter conditions. I have been amazed at some of the stories he relates, all with scientific backup, of course.

Did you know:

- Wood frogs, as well as spring peepers, chorus frogs and gray tree frogs, survive the winter by freezing solid? They don't bury themselves in mud, as some frogs do. They stay on the frozen ground, under leaf matter. As soon as these frogs feel ice crystals forming on the outside of their body, they have an adrenaline surge with a massive increase in blood glucose. This glucose enters their cells where it acts as an antifreeze. But between the cells, special proteins promote ice crystal formation. In about 15 hours, the frog is frozen solid except for the insides of its cells. Its heart stops. No more blood flows. It no longer breathes. By most definitions, it is dead. But these frogs will revive in the spring when the weather warms up. Amazing? Yep!

- Did you know that turtles were around at the time of the dinosaurs? For some reason they were able to survive when the dinosaurs could not. Turtles breathe oxygen with their lungs, as we do. During hibernation, they are able to live for 6 months at the bottom of ponds and rivers, buried in mud, where all breathing, movement and almost all heart activity stops. Their oxygen needs are low but they still need to uptake oxygen, possibly through their skin from the surrounding mud and water. Amazing? Yep!

(Continued on Page 2...)

# Treasures in Our Midst!

Continued from Page 1...

- Did you know that a ruffed grouse can burrow in the snow and create igloo-like snow caves? They do this to keep warm during cold winter nights or to wait out a snow storm. Snow affords remarkable insulation and even at extremely cold air temperatures, like -40 degrees, heat rising from the earth can keep the temperature near 32 degrees at ground level under the snow. Amazing? Yep!
- Did you know that gray squirrel nests, which look like haphazard brush-piles of leaves and twigs, are anything but? One nest that was examined was made of red oak twigs with leaves still attached. This meant the twigs were chewed off during the summer. Inside were layer upon layer (26 in one spot) of single flattened dried green oak leaves. These served as watertight interlocking shingles. The inside lining was finely shredded inner bark from dead poplar and ash trees. This left a round, cozy 9-centimeter-wide central cavity (the outside dimension being 30 centimeters). Amazing? Yep!

This book is perfect winter reading. And it is encouraging me to get out in the woods and fields to look and listen. There is life all around us, even in this cold and snowy land. It certainly gives me a new appreciation of survival. If you're interested in seeing Larry's inventory of books, you can go to his website at [www.larrystonesiowa.com](http://www.larrystonesiowa.com)

## ADOPT A SWAN

By Charles Winterwood

The Hurstville Nature Center has several cygnets that are looking for a home in Dubuque, Jackson, or Clinton counties. The Iowa DNR's Non-game Wildlife Program is phasing out its Trumpeter Swan reintroduction program over the next year and a half, and they need to find homes for last year's cygnets.

There are 41 wild non-captive breeding pairs of Trumpeter Swans in Iowa and 50 captive pairs which produced 28 cygnets last year. These are the cygnets that the Iowa DNR is trying to adopt out. They can fly so there is no assurance that they will stay in their adopted homes, but they will be a

pleasure to behold for as long as they stay in their adopted home. The Hurstville Nature Center would like a donation to help pay for feed this past winter. Please contact Ann Burns at 563-652-3783 if you have a pond and are willing to host a pair of swans for the summer.

## ANNUAL APPEAL A GREAT SUCCESS

By Joe Tollari

Thank you to those who responded to our annual fundraising letter. Sixty-one members contributed \$3,480. That is a new record in both contributors and dollars raised. We received contributions from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. Your continued support will help us fund programming and local projects for the upcoming year. Below is an alphabetical list of our donors.

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

**February, 2011**

<b>Feb. 10 – Thurs.</b>	<b>DUB. AUDUON PROGRAM: Namibia: What Have You Done for Your World Today?</b>	<b>EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program: Nicole Tscharner will discuss her personal journey in volunteer work in Namibia. Nicole was born and raised in Dubuque and graduated from the University of Dubuque. She is an Animal Care specialist at PetSmart. Cookies: Michele Zuercher and Margreet Ryan</b>
<b>Feb. 13 – Sun.</b>	<b>Prehistoric and Unique Fish of the Mississippi River</b>	<b>1:00 pm at EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA Dennis Weiss – Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources will speak on some of the fish that lived here in the past and that still live here. Dennis will have specimens of gar, paddle fish and more.</b>
<b>Feb. 18-21 – Fri.-Sat.</b>	<b>Great Backyard Bird Count</b>	<b>Now is the perfect time to brush up on your winter birds, and remind family and friends that the 14th annual GBBC is just around the corner. Downloadable flyers are available on the GBBC website to help you spread the word. Visit at <a href="http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/">www.birdsource.org/gbbc/</a></b>
<b>Feb. 26 – Sat.</b>	<b>Owl Prowl</b>	<b>6:00 pm Bellevue State Park—Nature Center Hooting for a good time? Join a naturalist from the Hurstville Interpretive Center to learn more about owls in Iowa and then head outside to do some owl calling! Dress for the weather. All ages welcome!</b>
<b>Feb. 27 – Sun.</b>	<b>Clams and Unique Fish of the Mississippi River</b>	<b>1:00 pm at EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA Dennis Weiss, Wildlife Biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will speak about the variety of mussels or clams that call the Mississippi River home. He will explain the life cycle of mussels and why they depend on fish and certain circumstances to survive. Specimens will be on hand to see.</b>
<b>Mar. 12 – Sat.</b>	<b>Duck Waddle</b>	<b>Put this date on your calendar and join us for our annual adventure to Green Island to observe the water fowl migration. More information in the next newsletter.</b>

## OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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

**President: Pat Fisher 563-556-5814**

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**Treasurer: Maggie O'Connell 563-923-4308**

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**Programs: Michele Zuercher 563-557-3021**

**Iowa Audubon Liaison: Joe Tollari 563-583-2077**

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## CALL FOR BOARD MEMBERS

By Pat Fisher

Your DAS Board is looking ahead and planning for the new year. We need at-large board members and are also looking for someone to fill the secretarial position starting next fall. The Board meets at 5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m., right before the monthly membership meeting, October through May. The secretary takes minutes during the meeting, types them up and circulates them to the board before the next meeting. We are a friendly group and welcome any interested person. Please call or email me. Thanks!

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – 2010

By Charles Winterwood and Joe Tollari

On December 18, 2010, fifteen Audubon members covered eastern Dubuque County, East Dubuque and the southwest tip of Wisconsin to document every bird seen in our count circle. Combined, they spent

16 hours on foot covering 7.75 miles and 23.5 hours in cars covering 237.8 miles. Temperatures ranged from 5° F in the morning to 15° F in the afternoon – not bad as long as we stayed out of the wind. We counted 3,469 birds in 52 species. There were two unusual sightings: Northern Bobwhite and Northern Goshawk. An item of concern is the Bald Eagle population. Of the 67 Bald Eagles counted, only 15 were immature eagles. This has been observed in other count circles. No one is sure what is happening. Below is a list of species and number of birds sighted.

Canada Goose – 39	Northern Flicker – 3
Trumpeter Swan – 1	Pileated Woodpecker – 1
Mallard – 86	Northern Shrike – 1
Lesser Scaup – 4	Blue Jay – 131
Common Goldeneye – 11	American Crow – 141
Common Merganser – 67	Horned Lark – 28
Ring-necked Pheasant – 2	Black-capped Chickadee – 153
Wild Turkey – 46	Tufted Titmouse – 33
Northern Bobwhite – 1	White-breasted Nuthatch – 90
Bald Eagle – 67	Eastern Bluebird – 19
Sharp-shinned Hawk – 2	American Robin – 28
Cooper's Hawk – 3	European Starling – 770
Northern Goshawk – 1	Cedar Waxwing – 6
Red-shouldered Hawk – 1	American Tree Sparrow – 36
Red-tailed Hawk – 25	Song Sparrow – 7
Rough-legged Hawk – 4	Swamp Sparrow – 1
American Kestrel – 1	White-throated Sparrow – 7
Ring-billed Gull – 2	White-crowned Sparrow – 2
Rock Pigeon – 134	Dark-eyed Junco – 570
Mourning Dove – 55	Snow Bunting – 15
Great Horned Owl – 2	Northern Cardinal – 251
Belted Kingfisher – 3	Purple Finch – 15
Red-headed Woodpecker – 1	House Finch – 35
Downy Woodpecker – 69	American Goldfinch – 156
Hairy Woodpecker – 10	House Sparrow – 274
Red-bellied Woodpecker – 54	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 2	



*Ruffed Grouse*

## **JANUARY PROGRAM REVIEW: MISSISSIPPI RIVER MUSEUM**

By Michele Zuercher

Lee Jackson presented the research and conservation efforts at the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium. He began by discussing how zoos have evolved from the menageries and entertainment purposes of the 1800s to the education, conservation, and research efforts which started in the 1970s. With an increasing awareness of the natural world in zoos, there came an increase in the types and number of regulations with the bio-diverse zoo animals. Today, there are captive breeding programs and population management plans for endangered and threatened species and even some animal species not immediately threatened. The Museum's conservation and research efforts focus on fish, amphibians, and freshwater invertebrates. Some of the animals in these plans are the Wyoming toad, Malagasy frogs, nine species of salamanders, Asian turtles, and the Eastern Massasauga snake. Lee and his crew work on the husbandry details of animals that are in need of conservation attention (and possible reintroduction) but are not in the critical listing yet. A field trip tour of the animal husbandry area may be in the works; stay tuned for further details.

## **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

By Joe Tollari

The 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will take place Friday, February 18 through Monday, February 21, 2011. This is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate; from beginning bird watchers to experts. Follow the three simple steps to participate.

**(1)** Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. You can count for longer if you wish. You can count birds in your own backyard, at the bird observation rooms at one of the nature centers, or on a hike through a park or woods. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.

**(2)** Count the greatest number of individuals for each species that you see together at any given time. You may find it helpful to print out your regional bird checklist to get an idea of the kinds of birds you are likely to see in your area in February.

**(3)** When you are finished, enter your results through the GBBC web site. You will see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count.

Go to the website ([www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/)) for more information and checklists. The website is easy to use and full of information. I suggest downloading one of the PowerPoint documents which lead you through the process.

I plan on participating again this year (my third year). I will observe at my own feeders and may also go out to the Swiss Valley Nature Center and E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center to count in their bird observation rooms.



*Swamp Sparrow*  
Gerhard Hofmann

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Swan  
Paul Horn

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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