



PILEATED DRUMMINGS

Dubuque Audubon Society

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Birds Birds, Everywhere!

By Pat Fisher

Green Island was alive with birds swooping, diving, soaring, cackling, honking, twittering, chirping and whirring. No kidding, birds were everywhere I looked.

Groups of ducks were flying in battalions and then would fall from the sky into the open water and fields. Geese were sliding on the ice, swimming in the water, walking in the fields.

Eagles were sitting on the tops of muskrat houses, playing king of the hill. Eagles were thick in trees, thick in the sky where they cavorted with each other and thick on the ground. This winter I read an article expressing concern about the lack of immature eagles being seen. I felt reassured by the large number of immature eagles at Green Island.

Hooded Merganser males were in their courting duds. They looked very spiffy in their black and white hoods and streaked sides and necks. About a dozen males were strutting their stuff for the benefit of one female; arching their necks up and back, looking big and bold and making sure to get in her face.

Compared to the action all around, 3 regal Sandhill Cranes walked sedately down the road in front of our car. One put on a beautiful dance for the benefit of his companions and we were privileged to watch. They definitely had a rhythm all their own, with seemingly no reason to rush about.

A group of swans painted a patch of backwater brilliant white. Pelicans were also spotted.

Ducks of all kinds were easily seen, unlike some years where we only spot them with scopes. This was birding by car at its best. Many of the ducks were swimming right by the road so it was easy to identify them and get wonderful looks. There's nothing better than having Ring-necked ducks next to scaups for positive identification. Seeing a Canvasback next to a Redhead makes comparisons easy.

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Birds, Birds Everywhere!

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A new duck for me this year was a Ruddy Duck. It has a beautiful blue bill in breeding season. And again, I saw it up close and personal.

I spotted a shrike sitting on a thorn bush. This is a very appropriate location. I was not disappointed with some more common returning birds. Red-winged Blackbirds were back in full force. I heard my first Song Sparrow of the spring. And also heard and saw Killdeer, an early returning shorebird.

I'll be making a few other trips to Green Island this spring. By the time you're reading this newsletter, I hope to have seen other migrating shore birds. And a few weeks later I'll be down there looking for returning warblers. Spring is my favorite time of the year for birding and I already feel like I'm off to a terrific start.

The Audubon Spring Bird Count is Saturday, May 7th. Join us for a fun-filled day! Watch for details in the newsletter.

IOWA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS UPDATE – THREE YEARS COMPLETE

Well, another year is in the books for Iowa's 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) and what a fun year it was! I still think fondly of the Worm-eating Warbler I heard singing east of Wapello, and the White-eyed Vireo pair I saw attending young at a nest southeast of Ottumwa, and of course the Loggerhead Shrike family I observed in southeast Pottawattamie County. Not only did I enjoy many wonderful marathon-like atlasing trips around the state, but I also enjoyed meeting many of Iowa's most dedicated and skillful birders who are, not surprisingly, very enthusiastic about their local birding clubs and their Iowa birds.

So with three years complete, where do we stand now? In 2010, volunteers logged an additional 1800 hours of observation time, bringing the total to 5117 hours. Volunteers also completed an additional 21

blocks this season, bringing that total to 41. In addition, a new species was recorded in 2010, an elusive pair of Mississippi Kites in Wapello County, which elevated our total species count to 191. In the midst of these achievements, the biggest milestone of 2010 occurred when volunteers atlased the last of the unvisited blocks. At the beginning of the year, there were 144 unvisited blocks left, but now none remain. Nicely done folks!

Now with records in every one of Iowa's 791 blocks, we should rethink our atlasing strategy for 2011. To focus our efforts, the progress completion map on the website (bba.iowabirds.org) has been revised. Red pins now represent blocks with less than 5 hours of effort, yellow pins represent blocks with between 5 and 10 hours of effort and blue and green pins remain the same. So much like Babe Ruth's famous called shot during the 1932 World Series, where he pointed to the center field bleachers and then promptly hit a home run on the next pitch, I am pointing to these 438 red pins as our next atlasing goal. It sounds like a big number, but I think we are up to the challenge! After all, this data is crucial for the conservation and management of Iowa's wonderful birdlife.

Happy Birding!

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2011 Blockbusting Weekends:

June 24-26: Rathbun Lake: Appanoose, Lucas, Monroe, and Wayne Counties

July 8-10: NE Iowa: Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, and Winneshiek Counties

July 22-24: NW Iowa: Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Lyon, Osceola, and Palo Alto Counties

July 29-31: SW Iowa: Fremont, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie Counties

DUBUQUE AUDUBON SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April, 2011

Apr. 8 – Fri.	Owl Prowl	7:00 pm Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd, Peosta, IA Have you ever wanted to talk to animals like Dr. Doolittle? Well, you can! Join us for an informational program about owls, their habitats, and their calls...afterwards hike through the valley calling for owls and listening in amazement when they 'talk' back
Apr. 8 – Fri.	Woodcock Walk	7:15 pm at 30703 320th Street La Motte or meet at the Hurstville Interpretive Center at 6:40 pm to carpool The woodcocks mating ritual is truly a remarkable sight. Join us for a walk at dusk to look and listen for the elusive woodcock. Dress warmly! All ages welcome!
Apr. 14 – Thurs.	DUB. AUDUON PROGRAM: Breeding Bird Atlas and Warbler Identification.	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program: Breeding Bird Atlas – Year Four. Billy Reiter-Marolf will outline the progress made on the second Breeding Bird Atlas and plan for another effort to collect data this year. After Billy's program, we will review warbler identification in preparation for the Spring migration.
Apr. 15 – Fri.	Earth Jam with the Banana Slug String Band	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA Free Family Fun Activity. For more information contact DMASWA Solid Waste Education Office at 563-588-7933. 5:30 – 6:45 pm – Displays and children's activities. 7:00 pm – Performance by the Banana Slug String Band
May 7 – Sat.	Spring Species Count	8:00 am. Meet at the North Entrance to Eagle Point Park. This event is great for beginning bird watchers. Experienced bird watchers will help with locating and identifying resident and migrating birds. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather. 6:00 pm Meet at the picnic shelter area at Swiss Valley Park to tabulate the results and share experiences.
May 8 – Sun.	Birding with Expert Bob Spahn	1:00 pm Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd, Peosta, IA Enjoy an opportunity to watch birds with an experienced birdwatcher and teacher.

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

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Sandhill Crane

Will Cook

EARTH JAM WITH THE BANANA SLUG STING BAND

By Bev Wagner

This is a Free Family Event! The Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency, Keep Dubuque County Clean & Green, and E. B. Lyons Interpretive Center are sponsoring the 2011 Earth Jam featuring the Banana Slug String Band. The Earth Jam will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, April 15 at the E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center. Displays and children's activities will be from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. The Banana Slug String Band performance will perform at 7 p.m.

The purpose of the Earth Jam is to educate, inspire and have entire families participate in making responsible decisions for the earth. The event will educate the public through booths and hands on children's activities. The Banana Slug String Band will present their environmental message through high energy songs and musical performances! Community environmental partners will be providing the displays and activities.

SPRING BIRD COUNT

Join Audubon for our annual spring bird count on Saturday May 7. Every year we count the different kinds of migrating and resident birds in the Tri-states. We typically see more than a hundred different kinds of birds. All you need is a pair of binoculars to join. There are two groups: one group meets at Green Island Wildlife Refuge at 5AM and the other group meets at the North entrance of Eagle Point Park at 8AM. Stay as long as you like. We will tabulate our results at 6PM at the picnic shelter at Swiss Valley Park-Campground. Audubon will provide the brats and hot dogs and you provide your tableware, drinks and a dish to pass. See you there!



White-Eyed Vireo

DONATION FOR RESEARCH

By Gerry Zuercher

In August 2010, several members of the Dubuque Audubon Society enjoyed two weeks of birding in Paraguay. Joining the group were two experienced birders, Myriam Velazquez, the Director of Research for the Fundacion Moises Bertoni and Fredy Ramirez, a Biologist for the Fundacion. During their trip, the group visited the Mbaracayu Forest Nature Reserve, the largest remaining area of Atlantic Forest in Paraguay. While at the Mbaracayu Reserve, the group learned about research being conducted by the Fundacion and visiting scientists. One result from this experience is a commitment by Dubuque Audubon Society to support the Research Department and their goals. I recently returned to Paraguay and presented a donation from the Dubuque Audubon Society for the Research Department of the Fundacion Moises Bertoni. Myriam Velazquez graciously accepted the donation and indicated it would be used to help complete an addition to the research facility at Mbaracayu Reserve. The addition will expand the capacity for the research department to conduct their own projects and also to host visiting scientists who select Mbaracayu as their site for investigation. Thank you very much, Dubuque Audubon, for this worthwhile endeavor.



Mississippi Kite
"Bill" P. Bergen

DUCK WADDLE 2011

By Joe Tollari

Weather is always a consideration when reviewing a Duck Waddle. This year the ambient temperature (34°F) was rather mild. However, the strong winds created very uncomfortable wind chills. The strong winds even buffeted the spotting scopes making it difficult to focus in on distant birds. I suggest that you read Pat Fisher's article. She describes the birding conditions and birding results much better than I can. We saw 33 species of birds. They are listed here.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| American White Pelican | Hooded Merganser |
| Greater White-fronted Goose | Ruddy Duck |
| Canada Goose | Bald Eagle |
| Cackling Goose | Northern Harrier |
| Trumpeter Swan | Red-tailed Hawk |
| Gadwall | American Coot |
| American Wigeon | Sandhill Crane |
| American Black Duck | Ring-billed Gull |
| Mallard | Herring Gull |
| Northern Pintail | Loggerhead Shrike |
| Canvasback | American Crow |
| Redhead | Horned Lark |
| Ring-necked Duck | American Robin |
| Greater Scaup | Song Sparrow |
| Lesser Scaup | Lapland Longspur |
| Bufflehead | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Common Goldeneye | |



Hooded Merganser
William L. Newton

LIKE THE DODO, GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

By Howard Higley

Once upon a time as a student, I remember a small room projecting above the roof of the Senior High School Building. It was the site of the school nature museum but now used for other purposes. It was maintained by the “Pines Nature Club” under the direction of Professor Ross Harris, the head of the science department. “Prof” Harris was an excellent scholar and teacher who really inspired students to appreciate and protect nature and the environment. Unfortunately, he died quite early in his teaching career. His students however, continued his efforts for many years after his passing as the “Pines Nature Club.” One of the many natural items in the museum display was a rare stuffed passenger pigeon, which after the dismantling of the area, came into my charge after being in several unrecognized and unappreciated displays.

This now extinct preserved bird, a Passenger Pigeon, has now found a home at the E.B. Lyons Nature Center’s extensive collection in its recently expanded location just off of Highway 52.

The Passenger Pigeon was once perhaps the most numerous of birds on Earth! Uncounted numbers blackened North American skies. They traveled in great flocks often three or four miles in length and miles wide. They flew so closely together that the sky and sun were obscured. Trees were

smashed and broken when they perched, and the ground was covered in great heaps of their soil. John James Audubon related that the noon-day sun was “obscured by [the Pigeons] and the flights often lasted for three days in continuous succession. As they flew across the sky each of the thousands and thousands of birds followed exactly the movements of the bird in front of them in great sweeping, swerving movements and maneuvers.” During mass feeding sessions the ground was rapidly cleared of all growth and trees broken as they roosted for the night.

Hundreds and thousands of these birds were slaughtered each season, decades after decades. And there were diseases that took their toll during the 1870’s. Even then, huge flocks still existed. But soon the flocks were scattered, and the species’ hold on the skies was broken forever. John James Audubon said this about our (now extinct) Passenger Pigeon:

“When a Pigeon is seen gliding through the woods and close to the observer, it passes like a thought, and on trying to see it again, the eye searches in vain; the bird is gone.”



Passenger Pigeon

MARCH PROGRAM REVIEW

By Michele Zuercher

Turtles were the topic of presentation by Casey Arensdorf, a senior at the University of Dubuque. He presented the details of the five-year study, conducted by himself and the many other undergrad student researchers before him. The crews use different traps in the channel and backwaters of the Mississippi River for snapping turtles, three varieties of map turtles, painted turtles and soft-shell turtles. A catch-and-release system was used, whereby the edges of the turtle shell are marked. They get various length measurements, weight, species identification, height and whether it has been caught previously. Other conditions measured were the number of other turtles per trap at one time, trap location, trap orientation and lunar phases during the experimental period. There were less turtles in areas of human activity than in less disturbed areas. Lunar phases have an effect on the number of turtles caught. The lower temperatures and cloudy sky conditions kept the turtles away from the traps. Turtles tend to stay in a particular area, though some have been recaptured miles away from the original location. They hope to continue the research to further explain long-term questions.



Ruddy Duck
Mundy Hackett

COMING IN APRIL

By Michele Zuercher

Billy Reiter-Marolf, the Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) Coordinator for Iowa, will present information to conduct the fourth BBA for our area on April 14th. He will share the collaborative effort from years past and discuss some background information for volunteers who wish to identify breeding birds in northeastern Iowa counties in July.



American Coot

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Non-Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Dubuque, IA 52001
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Killdeer

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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