



PILEATED DRUMMING

Dubuque Audubon Society

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RESIDENT'S CORNER

By Wayne Buchholtz

P Fall is here. It is a wonderful time of the year. The leaves change color, the outside temperatures are moderate and for many of us, it is time to put away the shorts and t-shirts and break out something a bit warmer. The weather has and will continue to change. Many people will travel great distances to take in fall festivals and the dramatic leaf color change. But there is one fall event that you can appreciate, most likely, from your own backyard and that is the bird fall migration. There are billions of birds that will leave their breeding grounds in the north and begin the journey to their wintering grounds in the south. I encourage everyone to grab your binoculars, hiking boots, walking stick, ID book and a friend as you head to our nearby forests, prairies, lakes and rivers in search of migratory birds. This is a great time of year to observe species that are only here for a short time. Many of the birds that migrate through our area are only here to store up energy and move out again on their long trip south. The fall season is a fun and challenging time; simply because the birds can be quite difficult to identify. The males no longer have their brilliant breeding plumage and have instead molted into a less distinguishable, less colorful fall plumage. Some birds do not look any different than their spouse counterpart or for that matter, another similar species so it becomes difficult to identify some fall birds. Bird migration is a wonder of nature, one that is still not fully understood. In fact, migration is often viewed as the seasonal movement of birds during spring and fall to avoid harsh weather. That view is not completely correct. Migration most likely evolved as a way for birds to exploit resources, such as insects, that are seasonally abundant and avoid times and places where resources are scarce. Most birds are well equipped to handle cold temperatures, but when there is no food, birds must migrate.

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President's Corner

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But how do birds find their way while covering thousands of miles? There are several ways that include:

- Sighting features like rivers and mountains. (They don't call it a "bird's eye view for nothing.")
- Monitoring Earth's magnetic field, apparently with their visual system and with tiny grains of a mineral called magnetite in their heads.
- Observing the stars.
- Using the sun for guidance.
- Smell.
- And probably following their neighbors. (Many birds migrate in large flocks.)

Now that you are hooked and wondering just what you are missing, you had better get heading out. I am already there.

I will miss the next Audubon Society Meeting in October. I hope you don't. I have a good reason. I will be heading to the National Association of Interpreters Annual Conference at St. Paul Minnesota. I hope to do some birding with fellow interpreters and naturalists from all over North America. I will be going there for two reasons. First to learn a bit more about being a naturalist and pass that on to you and other visitors to the Mines of Spain and Dubuque area. The second reason is to accept an Award of Excellence for the Friends of the Mines of Spain. In April, they were awarded the Regional Award for our area in Manitoba (I didn't get to that one). They were nominated for an award on the National Level and will be awarded it in November. The award is for the \$1.8 million addition to the E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center.

See you soon, around town or probably on a trail looking for birds.

SHORT-EARED OWL

The Short-eared Owl is another of those species that is observed more frequently during the winter months in the tri-states area, probably because their preferred habitat is more exposed.



The Short-eared Owl is a medium sized owl (13-17 inches long) with buffy brown plumage with dark streaks on the chest, belly and back.

The most diurnal of Iowa's owls, this species may be seen actively hunting day and night. It tends to hunt at low heights above the ground. Although it generally uses acoustical cues to locate prey, it can rely on vision as well.

Short-eared Owls breed in, and are almost always associated with open country that supports cyclical populations of small mammals. In Iowa, these preferences typically include large expanses of marshland, native prairie or grasslands and some agricultural areas. These are areas with higher concentrations of its primary prey, voles.

These owls roost communally during winter and groups of 8 to 20 have been reported in Iowa.

A once common species in Iowa, the Short-eared Owl has suffered declining populations due to habitat loss. The once plentiful prairies, wetlands and grasslands have been converted to crop fields, housing developments, etc...

Look for these owls at White Water Canyon or even in open farm fields.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM: AMERICAN BADGERS AND THEIR SIGN

Katrina Huck works for Live Oak Associates, Inc., in San Jose, California. She conducts special status species surveys, biological surveys and monitoring.

Katrina will be sharing her passion for badgers, one of North America's least understood and least appreciated mammals. As an undergraduate at the University of Dubuque, Katrina studied badgers in eastern Oregon in order to learn about their diet and how they interacted with other carnivores in Wyoming sagebrush habitats. She continued her quest to learn about badgers as a graduate student at San Jose State University where she focused on identifying habitat features that are important for female den sites. Throughout her journey, Katrina has focused on learning about badgers from the signs they leave behind.

DUBUQUE AUDUBON SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November, 2011

Nov. 10 – Thurs.	DUB. AUDUON PROGRAM: American Badgers and their Sign	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program: Katrina Huck from San Jose, California. She'll discuss badger ecology and what can be learned about an animal without having to capture or see it.
Nov. 20 – Sun.	Bird Feeder Workshop	2:00 PM Hurstville Interpretive Center 18670-63rd Street Maquoketa, Iowa. Get ready to feed your winter visitors! This workshop will provide the materials and instruction to build your own bird feeder for your yard. We'll discuss what types of seed attract which birds and how to keep them safe and healthy! Registration required by Nov. 14 to prepare materials. Cost: \$7
Dec. 4 – Sun.	Bird House Workshop	1:00 PM Hurstville Interpretive Center 18670-63rd Street Maquoketa, Iowa. Bird houses are a wonderful addition to your yard and can increase the success of seeing birds around your home. Materials and information are provided. Cost: Wren- \$5, Bluebird- \$7, Kestrel-\$16. Pre-registration and payment required by Nov 28th in order to prepare materials.
Dec. 8 – Thurs.	DUB. AUDUON PROGRAM:	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program: TBA
Dec. 17 – Sat.	Christmas Bird Count	Mark your calendar for this fun, all-day event. There will be specific information in the next newsletter.
Jan. 21, 2012	Bald Eagle Watch	Mark your calendar and be ready to celebrate the return of the Bald Eagle.
Feb. 17–20, 2012	Great Backyard Bird Count	Start planning for this event.

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Iowa Audubon Liaison: Joe Tollari 563-583-2077

Web Master: Jan Friedman: Janfrdmn@yahoo.com

Website: www.audubondubuque.org

Editor: James Brown: dtsage@hotmail.com

SAVE THE DATES FOR THE NEXT GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

By Joe Tollari

The next Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) takes place Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2012. Until then, here are some highlights of the 2011 GBBC.

Participants submitted more than 92,000 checklists to the GBBC this year. New checklist records were set in 11 states and in 7 out of 13 Canadian provinces and territories. Altogether, participants identified 596 species and 11.4 million bird observations. What follows is a look at some of the trends and more notable findings of this year's GBBC.

The most numerous bird counted in the 2011 GBBC was the European Starling—a species that was entirely absent from North America before the late 19th century. One hundred birds were introduced in New York's Central Park in 1890 and 1891. Today, more than 200 million and are distributed across the entire continent.

The American Robin was the second most numerous species reported this year with more than 800,000

reported from Florida—for the third year in a row, the site of a massive roost near St. Petersburg. Overall, GBBC participants made 1,044,346 observations of robins this year.

As usual, there were some surprises during the GBBC. Participants reported two new species that have never appeared on GBBC checklists before. These include a Brown Shrike in McKinleyville, California—an Asian species far from home. Over on the East Coast, a participant reported a Common Chaffinch, another first for the GBBC. This bird was seen in Placentia, Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a Eurasian species that occasionally turns up in the Canadian Maritimes and the northeastern United States.

An observer in Manitowadge, Ontario, reported having an exceptional season for Hoary Redpolls. She counted 20 in her backyard on Friday morning of the GBBC during a big snowstorm! Hoary and Common redpolls are "irruptive" species. That means they occasionally and unpredictably move farther south from their usual wintering ranges in Canada. These movements are linked to the size of the seed crops. When there are fewer seeds up north the irruptive species move southward to find what they need. Two years ago, I had a group of five Common Redpolls at my feeder – a somewhat rare event for Dubuque.

Another rarity during winter in North America is the Swainson's Thrush. It's a common enough songbird in the summertime, when its fluting song can be heard across much of the continent—but in winter most of them are in Central and South America. A participant in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, reported a Swainson's Thrush to the GBBC this year. Only a handful of widely scattered reports of this species have been made to the GBBC during its 14 years, the most recent in 2005.

In addition to the redpolls mentioned above, other irruptive species such as Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches were on the move too. This year, participants reported 66,471 Pine Siskins, up 65% from last year when adjusted for the number of checklists. That explains all of the Pine Siskins at my feeder last winter!

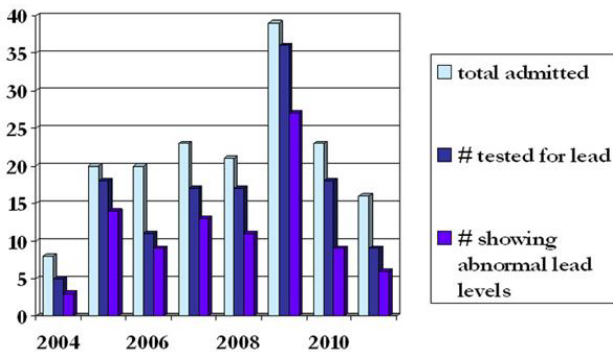
These are just some of the observations made from data submitted in February, 2011. For a full report go to www.birdsource.org and select Highlights of 2011 GBBC.

LET'S GET THE LEAD OUT!

By Walt Wickham

Executive Director, Clinton County Conservation Board

Lead has been used in hunting ammunition for centuries. Recently, there has been a growing movement for banning the use of lead ammunition. The use of lead shot and lead bullets (even lead fishing sinkers) has been shown to negatively impact the health of wildlife, humans and the environment. Sixty-two species of Iowa birds (including upland birds, raptors and waterfowl) have been shown to have ingested and/or been poisoned by lead shot. People who eat wild game harvested with lead ammunition often, unknowingly, ingest lead fragments with their meal. Lead can affect health, impair ability to fight off disease and impact reproduction. Kay Neumann of S.O.A.R. (Saving Our Avian Resources), a nonprofit raptor rehabilitation and education center located in Dedham, Iowa, has been a leader in the charge, in Iowa, against the use of lead ammunition. Kay, an advocate for non-toxic ammunition and a hunter herself, estimates that as many as 80 bald eagles die every year due to ingesting lead fragments found in deer carcasses and gut piles. In 2005-2006, 13 of 25 bald eagles that were brought in for treatment to the rehab center were found to have ingested lead. In bald eagles, even small amounts of lead can cause damage to the nervous system, paralysis and eventually death.



Incidents of Abnormal Lead Levels in Bald Eagle admitted to Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators, 2004 to March 2011

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service banned lead shot for hunting waterfowl nationally in 1991 due to concerns over the ingestion of lead by waterfowl. This switch is credited for saving the ducks everywhere. There are 35 states that ban the use of lead in at least some situations. Many Iowa's state and county public hunting areas also have some sort of ban on the use of lead. Iowa hunting regulations (www.iowadnr.gov) lists state-managed wildlife areas that prohibit lead for all hunting except for deer and turkey hunting. Non-toxic ammo is even required for target shooting in many state and federal wildlife areas. Most recently, an attempt to ban lead shot for dove hunting in Iowa was essentially knocked out by a legislative committee, allowing the legislature to decide the issue next year. Those opposed to a ban on lead ammunition cite the higher costs of nontoxic ammunition and question the true affect of lead on wildlife populations. They feel it is just another attempt by anti-hunting groups, such as the humane society, to cripple legal hunting. The fact is, there are non-toxic alternatives available at costs comparable to lead. A recent review of ammo prices found several cost-effective, non-toxic alternatives. As demand increases for non-toxic ammunition, the prices will continue to drop. Most hunters also consider themselves to be conservationists. They tend to be people who care about wildlife and have a love for all the outdoors. Shouldn't it make sense that hunters would be willing to make a small sacrifice and switch to nontoxic ammunition so they can help to protect all wildlife, the environment and even their own health? For more information on non-toxic shot go to www.iowadnr.gov or www.soarraptors.org.

The ultimate test of a man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today, for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.... Gaylord Nelson



Dubuque Audubon Society
James Brown, Editor
PO Box 3174
Dubuque IA 52004-3174

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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 **INTRODUCTORY ONLY**

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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Mail check payable to Dubuque Audubon Society. Mail to:

Dubuque Audubon Society
PO Box 3174
Dubuque, IA 52004-3174