



PILEATED DRUMMING

Dubuque Audubon Society

VOL. XL—NO. 3

April 2012

Published monthly exc. Jan., July, Aug.

www.audubondubuque.org

RESIDENT'S CORNER

By David Yarnold,
National Audubon Society President

P

We need your help fighting the latest attack that threatens birds, sea turtles, and pedestrians at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina.

U.S. Representative Walter Jones has introduced legislation aimed at overturning the National Park Service's balanced, science-based new rules designed to protect nesting, and young sea turtles and birds—as well as pedestrians— by managing off-road vehicle traffic. The bill would abolish the plan and allow for off-road vehicle (ORV) use across the entire park, destroying nesting sites and chicks in their wake.

Stop this bad beach driving bill in its tracks. Send a message to your members of Congress to let them know that you support protecting the rare birds and sea turtles of Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

As a national park, Cape Hatteras National Seashore has been required under federal law since 1972 to establish beach-driving rules. Most national seashores either have regulations in place to manage and restrict ORV use or do not allow ORV use at all. With temporary beach driving rules implemented in April 2008, beach-nesting birds and sea turtles at Cape Hatteras showed signs of recovery after reaching alarming lows. **No piping plover chicks survived to fledge in 2002 and 2004, but 15 chicks fledged in 2010 and ten fledged in 2011. And a record-breaking 153 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2010 and 147 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2011.**

The Park Service released their plan after an extensive public comment process in which the **majority of people supported better management of off-road vehicles**. ORV advocates represent just a small minority of the 2.5 million people that visit Cape Hatteras National Seashore every year.

The park service's new rules already allow ORV use on the majority of the Seashore. The plan also increases visitor access to beaches. The new rules represent a balance between recreational use, pedestrian use and the needs of wildlife. We can't let this legislation undermine the great comeback birds and wildlife are making at Cape Hatteras and set a dangerous precedent for weakening vehicle management at other national parks.

Tell your legislators to stop this bad bill and uphold critical protections for wildlife at Cape Hatteras. Contact Rep. Bruce Braley (Iowa) at (202) 225-2911, Rep. Don Manzullo (Illinois) at (202) 225-5676, and Rep. Ron Kind (Wisconsin) at (202) 225-5506

EXCITEMENT ABOUNDS THIS SPRING

By Jenny Ammon

March 10th was the Annual Duck Waddle at Green Island, sponsored by the Dubuque Audubon Society. This was one of the best birding adventures I have been on! It served as a great way to invite spring, get a chance to see the waterfowl moving through, a chance to see the very beginning of some bird courtship behaviors and finally a fantastic way to start the weekend, even if I was up at 5:15 am on a Saturday! This Audubon adventure served as my catalyst to truly embracing spring. I had the opportunity to bird with experts in the field and see birds I had studied and memorized in college and hadn't seen since. On the drive into Green Island I caught a glimpse of a Wood duck pair tucked behind branches, they reminded me that it will not be long before the amphibians will be awake and calling for their mates. Frogs begin to call around this time every year; first the spring peepers and chorus frogs, then the leopard frogs, toads, and lastly the green and bull frogs. I think it is fitting that the day end with a chorus, in the spring and summer months we get a chorus of frogs to sing the day away. The early morning birding expedition also lent me the opportunity to see Sandhill cranes so close, I got a glimpse of the red cap covering their intense looking eyes and I could hear their call, which is a sound I will not soon forget! Five trumpeter swans flew over as I overheard some participants discuss the reintroduction of that species and how successful that project has been. This kind of positive news is a twist on the normal negative news we are typically subjected to.

If it seems like I am excited about this stuff...it is because I AM! We live in a county with 3 interpretive centers (Swiss Valley, EB Lyons, and River Museum) and so many conservation groups I don't have fingers enough to count! Opportunities for learning are endless! There are places in this county that offer sights that cannot be seen in other places: pasque flowers, skunk cabbage, woodcocks, ice caves, trout streams and that is just the icing on the cake. The fact is, Dubuque County has many public areas to enjoy in all seasons and the activities you choose to participate in are totally up to you. Some of my favorite spring activities are pretty cheap and

pretty simple: hike, find morel mushrooms, or go fishing. (Side note: I took my 2 year old daughter fishing a couple of weeks ago when the IDNR stocked trout into Heritage Pond. We both did more worm wrangling and bird watching than real fishing, but it was a lot of fun!) Swiss Valley Nature Center has rooms and rooms of displays and live animals to discover as well as nature themed back packs that can be checked out for two weeks, for free! We also provide some great spring public programs like the owl prowl, woodcock watch, natural Easter egg dying and star programs. If you haven't attended any of these programs, you should check out our website www.dubuquecounty.org or our Swiss Valley Nature Center Facebook page for more details.

I sometimes wonder what it would be like not to be excited over the splendor this earth provides! Each day we receive the ultimate gift of beauty with a sunrise and the subsequent singing of our morning bird chorus. To experience this and not feel waves of joy and blessing is unfathomable. A simple spring walk provides a glimpse into the life of the wild: squirrels bounding up and down tree branches showing off their agility, turkey vultures wobbling in their 'V' in the sky, the American toad burrowing into your flower bed. All of these sightings give us a chance to be more connected and see that we are part of the earth. Whether it is an Audubon Duck Waddle, or an afternoon fishing with the family, we live in a place where the outdoors are important; it may not make you as giddy as it makes me but we can both agree that any time spent in the great outdoors is a time well spent.

PEREGRINE FALCON BOAT TRIP

Peregrine Falcon pairs are returning to cliff eyries and wildlife viewing along the Mississippi River will be exceptional. May 4-6 will be a weekend devoted to Peregrine Falcon observations. At 6:00 pm on Friday May 4, there will be a Fish Fry and program at Harpers Ferry Community Center, Harpers Ferry, Iowa. On May 5 and May 6, there will be two hour river tours from daylight to dusk. Tours will depart from the Harpers Ferry Boat Ramp. Contact Captain Robert Vavra at Andy Mountain Campground 563-586-2123. Tour and Fish Fry are free will donations.

DUBUQUE AUDUBON SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April, 2012

Apr. 12 – Thurs.	DUB. AUDUBON PROGRAM: ORCHIDS: MASTERS OF DECEPTION	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program: Rasika Mudalige-Jayawickrama, Professor of Biology at the University of Dubuque will speak on the characteristics of orchids.
Apr. 14 – Sat.	BATTY ABOUT BATS	2:00 pm Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63rd. St, Maquoketa, IA 52060 Join a naturalist in celebrating National Bat Awareness & Appreciation Week. There are so many myths about bats, come and learn the truths of these flying mammals.
Apr. 15 – Sun.	WATERFOWL VIEWING	2:00 PM Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63rd. St, Maquoketa, IA 52060 Join bird watcher Bob Walton, in viewing the migrating waterfowl and shorebirds at the Hurstville Marsh. Learn to identify different birds. All ages and skill levels welcome!
Apr. 22 – Sun.	WILD EDIBLES!	1:00 pm at Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Road, Peosta, IA Andy Benson, an expert in wild edibles, will show us what is delicious and nutritious in your yard and along nature trails. Andy will teach us some identification, preparation of wild edible and take us on a hike! Please call to preregister 563.556.6745
Apr. 23 – Mon.	EARTH JAM	5:30 PM EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA Live music, booths, activities and fun for all! Music starts at 6:30pm. This is great fun for the entire family. Sponsored by Keep Dubuque County Clean and Green, Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency, Dubuque County Conservation Board, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
May 10 – Thurs.	DUB. AUDUBON PROGRAM:	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque, IA 5:30 pm – Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 pm – Program
May 12 – Sat.	SPRING SPECIES COUNT	Save the date for this annual species count. More on this event next month.

OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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

President: Wayne Buchholtz 563-582-7215

V-Pres.: Joe Tollari 563-583-2077

Secretary: Jenny Ammon 563-556-6745

Treasurer: Maggie O'Connell 563-923-4308

At-Large Board Members:

Jenny Ammon

Lalith Jayawickrama

Terri Stanton

Nita Wiederaenders

Charlie Winterwood

Michele Zuercher

Field Trips: Terri Stanton

Membership: Joe Tollari 563-583-2077

Newsletter:

Conservation: Charlie Winterwood 563-588-2783

Programs: Michele Zuercher 563-557-3021

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

PILEATED WOODPECKER

The Pileated Woodpecker is the mascot of the Dubuque Audubon Society. Our newsletter is named **Pileated Drummings** for the drumming sounds that echoed through the forests when Europeans first settled here. The drumming sounded like a form of communication. We know now that it is how the woodpeckers claim a territory.

The size of an American Crow, the Pileated Woodpecker is the largest woodpecker found in North America. It is an iconic animal in our local deciduous forests and is a big, dashing bird with a large, dull black body and eye-catching red crest.

The Pileated Woodpecker is particularly adept at excavating and uses this ability to construct nests, roost cavities, and to find food. They excavate distinctive rectangular holes – at times a foot or more vertically by 3 to 6 inches horizontally. These holes play a crucial role in the forest ecosystem by providing nesting and shelter cavities for other birds as well as mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

The Pileated Woodpecker favors mature deciduous and mixed deciduous-conifer woodlands, and at times smaller woodlots. Only large-diameter trees have enough girth to contain nest and roost cavities of this species. Consequently there is concern for population of this woodpecker where old-growth forests are being converted to younger stands, or are being lost altogether.

Look for this woodpecker at Swiss Valley or Mines of Spain nature areas or any other large tract of deciduous forests.



OUR NEW COFFEE MASTER

We are announcing that Kristine Thielen has taken over the responsibility for selling Audubon bird-friendly, shade-grown premium coffee. Coffee is available for sale at all meetings, at Swiss Valley Nature Center and at E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center. It is available in various roasts in regular and decaf blends. You can also order from Kristine directly at 563-584-0079.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT HIGHLIGHTS

By Marshall Iliff, Christopher Wood, Brian Sullivan, Dick Cannings, and Pat Leonard

The 2012 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was one of stark contrasts. Arctic-dwelling Snowy Owls and redpolls irrupted into the Great Plains and the West in the largest numbers ever recorded in the 15-year history of the Great Backyard Bird Count. Participants reported Eurasian Collared-Doves and Great-tailed Grackles in northerly locations. And spring migration was already underway for several species including Red-winged Blackbirds, Sandhill Cranes, and Snow Geese. Even the Blue Jay, a species often thought to be resident, showed unusual patterns with low numbers recorded in much of the East.

First, let's look at the raw numbers. GBBC participants submitted a record-smashing 104,151 checklists with 17.4 million individual bird observations! Participants set new checklist records in 22 states and in 6 Canadian provinces. Across the continent and in Hawaii, participants identified 623 species.

Participants reported the Northern Cardinal on more checklists than any other species for the eighth year in a row, closely followed by the Mourning Dove. The most numerous bird reported during this year's count was the Snow Goose, followed by the Tree Swallow with its first-ever top-10 appearance. The reason: A massive flock of swallows reported in Ruskin, Florida.

The Snowy Owl invasion in the winter of 2011-12 made headlines this year. Numbers have been above average nationwide. In addition to the overall greater numbers, Snowy Owl records were set throughout the Great Plains south to Kansas and in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Canadian bird watchers were treated to many more views of Snowy Owls this year too, with 428 owls reported to the GBBC—four times the number reported in 2011!

But why would Snowy Owls irrupt in numbers that recall Harry Potter's magical world more than anything we've recently witnessed in North America? The most likely explanation is that

movements of Snowy Owls are closely linked with the abundance of prey, such as lemmings, in the Arctic. The populations of this prey rise and fall in cycles. At times, prey populations grow very large and support large numbers of Snowy Owls and other predators. But when the prey populations crash, the owls may be forced to wander in search of food.



Snowy Owl

Like Snowy Owls, small finches called Common Redpolls also range widely in some years in response to fluctuating food supplies in the arctic. (In this case, seeds rather than lemmings.) Typically, their movements are restricted to the mountains of the West as well as their other normal wintering areas. This year's invasion brought large numbers of redpolls to Montana, Idaho and the eastern portions of Washington and Oregon, with a few stragglers making it as far south as California! Conversely, redpolls did not move much into the Northeast this year. Canada was missing some of its redpolls this year, with numbers down significantly from 61,850 last year to just under 45,000 this year.

In a normal year, American Coots would be expected only in more southerly areas that do not freeze, but counts this year were off the charts, with coots overwintering well to the north and the species occurring in elevated numbers across the continent. The reason is twofold: a banner breeding year during 2011 and a milder winter that left favorite habitats such as freshwater ponds, lakes and rivers unfrozen. This general pattern of freshwater species overwintering farther north has been obvious in many species this year, including many ducks (e.g., Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser etc.), Pied-billed Grebe, Belted Kingfisher and others.

In the Canadian provinces bordering the Great Lakes, reports of waterbirds were way up this year, and not just because of greater numbers of participants. The warmer weather and lack of ice bumped up reports of Tundra Swans from 222 last year to 3,735 this year. There were also huge jumps in the numbers of Canvasbacks, Redheads, and Sandhill Cranes reported from Canada.



Blue Jay
Jim Ridley

The arrival of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in North America is perhaps the most striking change in North American avifauna in the past two decades. First released in the Bahamas around 1980, they colonized Florida within a few years and spread across the country in a little more than a decade, reaching California by 2001. In 2012, it is obvious that the species has largely colonized the Pacific Northwest, even reaching Alaska, yet it remains strikingly absent from New England. The number of Eurasian Collared-Doves reported in Canada jumped from 367 last year to 864 this year. Great-tailed Grackles also continue to push northward in the West and on the Great Plains.

Although many people consider Blue Jays to be resident birds present year-round in consistent numbers, this is not the case. Not only are Blue Jays migratory, but their numbers also fluctuate substantially from year to year. The cause for

these fluctuations is probably tied to cycles in wild food abundance (specifically acorns). This year was a “down” year for Blue Jays across much of the country.

Mid-February is usually the time of year when most birds are on their wintering grounds--but not all. Sandhill Cranes and Red-winged Blackbirds are moving north in considerable numbers. This year, one of the most amazing spectacles was the large numbers of Snow Geese on the move, with some of the highest counts ever recorded in New York and Pennsylvania. Perhaps the most impressive counts of all were from Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Missouri where two counts together recorded two million Snow Geese!

The Great Backyard Bird Count allows us to look at birdlife across the continent over a single weekend. No other effort to count birds gathers as much data in such a short period of time. To understand long-term bird populations and movements also requires data about bird populations throughout the year. That’s why the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon also invite you to report the birds you see anywhere in the world on any day of the year, by participating in the free eBird project. If you enjoyed the Great Backyard Bird Count, please head over to www.ebird.org and enter your next checklists now or anytime!



Lesser Yellowlegs
Arthur Morris

2012 DUCK WADDLE

By Ted Harms and Joe Tollari

We have all commented on the unusual weather this March. We really did not know what to expect at Green Island. Some one remarked that this was perhaps the warmest Duck Waddle on record. Wind chills were made for a brisk time on the exposed dikes, but, once we move into protected areas, it was quite nice. There was plenty of open water which allowed the waterfowl to roam far and wide. Fortunately we had plenty of spotting scopes. Most importantly, the birds did not disappoint. We saw 42 species of birds. Half of them were geese and ducks. It was a good day. Ted Harms has compiled a list of the birds seen on the Duck Waddle.

Am. White Pelican	Common Merganser
Turkey Vulture	Ruddy Duck
Gr. White-fronted Goose	Bald Eagle
Snow Goose	Northern Harrier
Trumpeter Swan	Red-tailed Hawk
Wood Duck	American Kestrel
Gadwall	American Coot
American Wigeon	Sandhill Crane
American Black Duck	Killdeer
Mallard	Greater Yellowlegs
Blue-winged Teal	Lesser Yellowlegs
Northern Shoveler	American Woodcock
Northern Pintail	Ring-billed Gull
Green-winged Teal	Herring Gull
Canvasback	Mourning Dove
Redhead	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Ring-necked Duck	Downy Woodpecker
Greater Scaup	American Crow
Lesser Scaup	Horned Lark
Bufflehead	American Robin
Common Goldeneye	Red-winged Blackbird



Northern Pintail

Alan And Elaine Wilson



Horned Lark

Dave Furseth

OPERATION RELEAF: Residential Tree Program

This is a great opportunity to buy trees for your yard. Dubuque County Alliant Energy customers are eligible to purchase trees for \$25.00 each (*average retail cost per tree is \$65.00 with the remaining cost funded through a grant from Alliant Energy*). Tree purchase is initially limited to two (2) trees per household to ensure all customers have an opportunity to purchase trees. Advanced purchase is recommended. In the event that additional trees are available on distribution day, they will be released for purchase at 9:00 a.m. on a first come/first served basis, or until all trees are sold. **Trees must be picked up on Saturday, April 28, 2012, between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. at Swiss Valley Park in Peosta.** Any trees not picked up by 11:00 a.m. on distribution day will be considered a donation to Dubuque County Conservation Society. **Trees are non-refundable, exchanges will not be accepted and plant material is under no warranty and/or guarantee. There will be Free Tree planting and Care workshops during the distribution.**

To order a tree and to register for the tree planting and care workshop, go on-line to:
www.alliantenergy.com/CommunityInvolvement/CommunityOutreach/OperationReLeaf/index.htm.

Scroll down to Dubuque County and click on the order form. You can also call or e-mail Jenny Ammon at (563) 556-6745; E-Mail: dcclawler@mwci.net

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

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Dubuque, IA 52001
Permit # 459

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**

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

STREET _____ E-mail _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CODE: C1ZH500Z

Mail check payable to Dubuque Audubon Society. Mail to:

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