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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Joe Tollari

The 32nd Bald Eagle Watch is over. Once again we were plagued by weather-related problems. One week prior to the event, we were experiencing 50° temperatures. During the event, we had snow, freezing rain, and plunging wind chills. We felt all of the joys of living in Iowa during January. Those who ventured out enjoyed a great program by Anna from the **Minnesota Raptor Center**.



She brought along a Great Horned Owl, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, and a Bald Eagle to demonstrate the characteristics of raptors. When asked why the birds behaved so well, she admitted that it is all about the food then proceeded to feed the eagle part of a rat – tail and all! The kids of all ages enjoyed that moment. Judging by the quality of questions, people were really paying attention. I guess that it

is all about reaching a few people and educating them about the wonders of the natural world. We did that.

This issue covers the next three months. There are a couple of events coming up in that time period. February is one of my favorite winter months, not because it is the shortest month of winter, but because it is time for the **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)**. I do count birds in my own backyard, but I especially like taking a cup of coffee and a donut to one of the area nature centers and spending a half hour in the bird observation room counting birds at the feeders. OK, as I age I like being comfortable while I bird watch.

We have scheduled **March 14** for the **annual Duck Waddle**. We never know what kind of weather there will be; we never know how much open water there will be; we never know if we are timing it too early or too late; we do know that whatever water fowl present will put on a show for us.

This year we are going to try our **Big Sit in April at John Deere Marsh**. We haven't finalized plans yet, so check our **Facebook page (Dubuque Audubon)** and/or our **web-site (www.audubondubuque.org)** in April for the details.



**2019 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Cackling Goose	2
Canada Goose	2324
Trumpeter Swan	40
American Black Duck	6
Mallard	290
Lesser Scaup	1
Bufflehead	2
Common Goldeneye	17
Common Merganser	30
Ruddy Duck	4
Wild Turkey	14
American White Pelican	1
Bald Eagle	52
Red-tailed Hawk	24
Rough-legged Hawk	1
Ring-billed Gull	97
Herring Gull	1
Rock Pigeon	151
Mourning Dove	47
Eastern Screech-Owl	2
Barred Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	43
Downy Woodpecker	43
Hairy Woodpecker	7
Northern Flicker	2
Pileated Woodpecker	2
American Kestrel	9
Blue Jay	48
American Crow	245
Black-capped Chickadee	109
Tufted Titmouse	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	49
Brown Creeper	1
Carolina Wren	3
Eastern Bluebird	6
Mountain Bluebird	2
European Starling	353
American Tree Sparrow	47
Fox Sparrow	1
Dark-eyed Junco	24
White-crowned Sparrow	2
White-throated Sparrow	1
Song Sparrow	2
Northern Cardinal	93
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
House Finch	39
American Goldfinch	48
House Sparrow	409
Total Individuals	4940
Total Species Reported	46

**THE 2020 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT (GBBC)**

By Joe Tollari

The 2020 GBBC will take place **Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2020**. This is the 23rd annual count. The Great Backyard Bird Count is a world-wide 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is welcome--from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as fifteen minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy and it helps the birds. You simply watch birds at your feeders or any location you wish to count. You watch the feeders and adjoining areas for at least fifteen minutes. I usually end up watching for thirty or more minutes. Tally up the numbers of each species you see. Keep counting and record the highest number of each species you see at any one time within the fifteen minutes. When you are finished counting, report your results online. Go to www.BirdCount.org for instructions on how to get started. The site includes links to creating an account, how to conduct a count, and submitting your observations.

I always learn something new from the GBBC results. Have you ever wondered where American Robins go for the winter? Evidently, they watch those Super Bowl commercials. You know the one where the announcer asks the question, "Now that you won the Super Bowl, where are you going to go?" The answer is Disney World. From the GBBC results, I have learned that, in February, the greatest concentration of Robins in the U.S. is - (Wait for it.) - Orlando, FL!



DUBUQUE AUDUBON SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY
MARCH
APRIL

THURSDAY February 13th	Dubuque Audubon Program: "STORYTELLING IN WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY"	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque. 5:00PM– Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 6:00PM– Anders Exner will illustrate a wonderful story of birds and other wildlife through the eye of a lens.
THURSDAY March 12th	Dubuque Audubon Program	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque. 5:00PM– Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 6:00PM– Check our website for updates.
SATURDAY March 14th	DUCK WADDLE	Join the group to see the interesting migrating waterfowl at the Green Island Wildlife Area. Meet at Banworth and Udelhoven Furniture parking lot, junction of US 61/151 and US 52. We will leave promptly at 6:00AM to carpool and caravan. Dress warmly. After our adventure we may have breakfast at the Riverview Café in Bellevue, IA, to compile our list and share stories of bird adventures.
SATURDAY March 21st	RACING EXTINCTION	7:00PM (doors open at 6:00 PM). Galena Territory Owners' Club, 2000 Territory Dr, Galena. This Emmy-nominated film follows a team of artists and activists as they expose the hidden world of extinction with rarely-before-seen images of precious and endangered species. It showcases high tech innovations and simple ideas that are helping to win the race against extinction. Complementary popcorn and beer. \$10 suggested donation for non-members, RSVP's not required, but seating may be limited.
SATURDAY March 28th	BLUEBIRD WORKSHOP	10:00AM – 12:00PM. Swiss Valley Nature Center, 13606 Swiss Valley Rd, Peosta. Learn about the plight of the Eastern Bluebird. We will discuss their habitat and what struggles this beautiful bird faces in its nesting attempts. Help the bluebird out by building your very own bluebird house to take home. Dubuque County Conservation Society will provide all materials needed. Participants must bring a hammer and drill. One house/family. Call 563-556-6745 to register.
THURSDAY April 9th	Dubuque Audubon Program	EB Lyons Interpretive Center, 8991 Bellevue Hts, Dubuque. 5:00PM– Dubuque Audubon Society Board Meeting 6:00PM– Check our website for updates. ** Check also for the Big Sit on April 25.**



A Dubuque-land Winter Guest

by Craig Kruse



Interested In Having A Voice On Our Board?

Join us for a Board meeting around 5PM on the second Thursdays of the month to see how we function. If you're interested in then becoming a Board member, we do have positions open. In May of every year, we will elect officers, too! There will be openings if you'd like more of a participatory role. Feel free to sit in any of our monthly meetings.

Dubuque-land birder Dave Shealer was driving down Riverview Road behind the John Deere plant just outside of Dubuque one day this past December, when he noticed a unusual looking bird sitting on a power line just down the road from him. When he got his binoculars fixed on the bird, much to his surprise, it turned out to be a **Mountain Bluebird**, a very rare bird to be spotted in our part of the state. There have only been a handful of them reported in Iowa, and to our knowledge up until now, none had been reported in Dubuque County. And there was not just one of them. There were two – a male and a female! These birds are so rarely seen in Iowa that when he posted them on eBird.org, people came to see it from as far away as Iowa City and Ames, Iowa. It even drew in a gentleman that delivers goods all over the USA and thought a stop in Dubuque was in order. It was a great sighting by Dave.



The Mountain Bluebird is a smaller thrush, generally 7 ¼ to 7 ½ inches. That's just a bit bigger than our Eastern Bluebird. Males are a vivid blue, fading to white in the belly. Females are a drab greyish brown with touches of blue in the wing and tail. Both genders lack the rusty red breast of our Eastern Bluebird. During the breeding season, Mountain Bluebirds are generally found from New Mexico all the way north to Alaska and from California to western South Dakota. They like to breed in short grass fields and agricultural fields with scattered trees and bushes at up to 12,500 feet above sea level. The male will pick out several nesting sites, usually consisting of tree knots and rocky fissures for the female to choose from, and she will build a nest in the one she likes. A brood often consists of 4-8 young. Mountain Bluebirds, generally survive by eating insects, and when they are not available, they will eat small fruits. They can be seen hovering kestrel-like above prairies looking for food and then dropping down to the ground to make their catch. As breeding season ends, they will gather into groups of 30 or more to migrate to their wintering grounds in the fields and open areas of mid- to southwestern United States and Mexico and at least once to Dubuque, Iowa.



Newsletter News Flash

In an effort to streamline our printing process, we're reducing the number of editions throughout the year. Yearly editions will be February, May, August, and November.

On another note, we encourage subscribers going paperless! We send the color (!) PDF by email – no waiting as it goes through transit. If you're interested, send an email with a request in the subject line to audubondubuque@gmail.com. We will never share your information. **Happy reading!**

OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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

- President:** Joe Tollari 563-583-2077
- V-Pres.:** Ken Kiss
- Secretary:** Wayne Buchholz
- Treasurer:** Maggie O'Connell; **Co-Treasurer** Stormy Mochal
- At-Large Board Members:**
 - Craig Kruse Terri Stanton Michele Zuercher
 - Allie Schmalz Lalith Jayawickrama
- Field Trips:** Tony Moline
- Membership:** Joe Tollari 563-583-2077
- Newsletter:** Michele Zuercher
- Conservation:** Charlie Winterwood 563-588-2783
- Iowa Audubon Liaison:** Joe Tollari 563-583-2077
- Web Master:** Jan Friedman janfrdmn@gmail.com
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Birding With Benefits: How Nature Improves Our Mental Mindsets

By: Jill U. Adams

Reprinted with permission from Audubon Magazine Winter 2019

Anyone who birds a favorite park over and over knows intuitively why they keep going back: It just feels good. Being in nature—pausing in it, sitting with it, discovering its wonders—brings a sense of calm and renewal. Now science is backing up our intuition with data and revealing the benefits run much, much deeper. Of hundreds of published studies, none alone is definitive, but together [they offer a growing sense](#) of what's lost as people spend more time than ever indoors.

In England, for example, research [revealed](#) that urban green spaces reduced residents' sense of isolation and loneliness. Living a short walk from a park in Los Angeles seemed to [offer the same](#) mental-health boost as a two-point decrease in unemployment. In Spain, schoolchildren raised in greener neighborhoods [had more](#) neural connections in brain regions tied to working memory and attention.

"The field is starting to build momentum right now," says University of Washington environmental psychologist Gregory Bratman, who led [a recent review](#) of findings across social and health sciences. "Evidence is there to support the conclusion that contact with nature benefits our mood, our psychological well-being, our mental health, and our cognitive functioning," he says.

What's harder to pinpoint is precisely why this relationship exists. One leading theory is that nature can restore our attention and counter the mental fatigue that today's urban and sensory-filled environments cause. A second is that it can reduce stress; blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones all drop with time in nature, studies show. Both factors—cognitive function and stress response—have been linked to conditions such as depression. Both factors—cognitive function and stress response—have been linked to conditions such as depression.

More investigations are now delving into complex practical questions that doctors, therapists, educators, and public-health experts want to understand. What elements of an outdoor setting are most important and for how long? How do our individual traits, preferences, and backgrounds influence how we respond? Answering these questions isn't easy, since it can be tricky to design experiments that isolate nature's diffuse effects. Bratman calls this a "next huge frontier" to explore.


Doctors will be key partners in this effort. Nooshin Razani, director of the [Center for Nature and Health](#) at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, works with low-income patients to "prescribe" regular park visits. In two small early trials, she's found that these excursions increased children's resilience and also reduced parental stress and loneliness. Whether the adults visited a park independently or in a group didn't affect the results—a finding that could help inform other programs. "I really felt like we needed experimental data," she says.

But Razani also believes in simply talking with patients and listening to their experiences. "I think we really need to take a moment to understand why depression and anxiety are increasing," she says. With that knowledge will come more tools for addressing the public-health challenge. "I absolutely think being outside is part of the solution to that."

Dubuque Audubon Society

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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

If you are a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically a member of the local Audubon Society and do not need to sign-up separately.

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.

LOCAL MEMBERSHIP: This category of membership is local chapter only. You will receive 4 issues (August, November, February, & May) 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

NATIONAL & LOCAL MEMBERSHIP: If you wish to become a member of both local and national:

Go to Audubon.org → Click on "JOIN" then "Become a member"

The membership in National is \$20 per year. Any amount you give above that is considered a donation. The National membership automatically gives you membership in the local group in addition to the award-winning *Audubon* magazine. It is a good idea to note the month you joined so you will not be confused by multiple early reminders.

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

STREET _____ CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ E-mail _____

CODE: CIZH900Z

Mail check payable to Dubuque Audubon Society.

Mail to:

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