



Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 20 Number

1

April 2000

Calendar

Field trips, unless otherwise noted, leave from Terrill Mill Park, located across N. Dubuque Street from the Mayflower. Destinations may be changed at the discretion of the leader prior to leaving Terrill Mill; please contact the leader in advance if you plan to meet the group at the trip destination.

Meetings are generally held at 7:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month at Lucas Elementary School, 830 Southlawn Drive, near Towncrest in eastern Iowa City.

April 13, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting. "Attu Birding with James Huntington". The last birding trip to Attu Island, Alaska will take place this year. This will be James' 12th year on Attu, and his 5th as a leader. Come see some of the sights of a decade on Attu.

April 14, Friday, 6:30 p.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area and Williams Prairie. Bring your flashlight and join us for an evening foray to listen to the night sounds of amphibians, marsh birds, and owls. Karen Disbrow, 339-1017.

April 29-30, Saturday-Sunday. Mt. Ayr for Prairie-Chickens. An overnight trip to southern Iowa to view displaying Greater Prairie-Chickens on their lek at dawn. Call Darlyne Neff (if possible by April 15) at 338-6105 to participate.

May 4, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Planning Meeting for the Johnson County Spring Migration Count at Chris

Caster's house at 4 South Ridge Court in Coralville. If you cannot attend the meeting but would like to participate in the count, call Chris at 339-8343.

May 7, Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Amana. We'll hike the nature trail for warblers and other songbirds, visit the Lily Lake for water birds, and search for nesting Upland Sandpipers. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

May 13, Saturday. Johnson County Spring Migration Count. See page 5 for more information.

June 4, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. Indiagrass Hills in Iowa County. This private prairie preserve is home to nesting Henslow's Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, Dickcissels, Sedge Wrens, and Bell's Vireos. Chris Caster, 338-8343.

June 24, Saturday, 7:15 a.m. Lake Macbride area for Orchard Orioles, thrushes, and other woodland species. Ramona McGurk, 354-0366.

August 13, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area and other local areas for shorebirds. Bring rubber boots and insect repellent. James Huntington, 338-1837.

August 24, Thursday, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Picnic in Lower City Park at Pavilion 10 near the boat dock by the Iowa River. Bring something to grill, a dish to share, table service and a drink. Call Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 for more information.

September 16, Saturday, 9 a.m. – noon. Annual Hawk Watch at Stainbrook Preserve. Come join us on the hill to watch the hawks sail past. Located on Mehaffey Bridge Road just past the entrance to Sugar Bottom Recreation Area. Call Chris Edwards at 626-6362 or Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 for more information.

Other Dates of Note

May 19 – 21, Friday – Sunday. Iowa Ornithologists' Union Spring Meeting at Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point. Call Rick Hollis at 338-4834 or Karen Disbrow at 339-1017 for more information.

July 22, Saturday. Second Annual Iowa City 4th of July Butterfly Count. Sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. To participate for part or all of the day, call Chris Edwards at 626-6362.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

January 30, Mississippi River. This trip was cancelled due to inclement weather.

February 5, Amana and Kent Park. The annual Amana Turkey Trot once again preceded breakfast by several hours. The sky was clear and the temperatures frosty as the group of 16 hiked a back road through the Amana woods. A visit to the Lily Lake produced a lone Bald Eagle, a number which was over a hundred less than were counted there during the previous week. Then it was on to the Colony Inn for the real purpose of the outing. After the cholesterol intake ended, a brisk walk at Kent Park led to a Saw-whet Owl. As usual, no Wild Turkeys were sighted until three hours after the group had dispersed, when a flock of 20 displayed in a field just south of Amana.

Participants: Ed Allgood, Jean Allgood, Karen Disbrow, Julie Englander, Karole Fuller, Jim Fuller (leader), Vaibhav Garde, Roger Heidt, Kay James, Ramona McGurk, Joan Meyer, Mary Noble, Rosemary Petzold, Bob Stearns, Helen Yoder, Sarah Yoder.

Birds (14 species): Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Sparrow.

– *Jim Fuller*

February 17, Meeting. During the pre-presentation, our attention was called to the upcoming Great Backyard Bird Count, recent actions in the federal government, and upcoming field trips. Jim and Karole Fuller then presented a nice program entitled “Iowa, the Beautiful Land.”

Participants: Ed Allgood, Jean Allgood, John Bollenbacher, Karen Disbrow, Linda Fisher, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Eric Haley, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Joan Meyer, Mary Noble, Bob Stearns.

– *Rick Hollis*

February 19, Burlington. At 6:40 a.m. we left the “Fin & Feather” parking lot for Burlington, Iowa. The Iowa City area had received 6-8” of snow from Thursday night through Friday. The temperature was 22F and the sky was overcast with wind of less than 5 mph. As we traveled south the roads were clear. We spotted many Horned Larks along the edges of the fields. We met Chuck Fuller in the parking lot of the Port of Burlington. Burlington had received about one inch of snow, and the trees had a coating of ice that made everything beautiful to see. We went to the concrete storm drain that makes a great walkway in a wooded ravine in one of the city parks. There we heard and saw the Carolina

Wren, while the Winter Wren was darting in and out of the woody brush near the small stream. Another highlight of the day was tracking down the Lapland Longspurs. We finally spotted a large flock in a field but the presence of eagles and Northern Harriers kept the birds in the field and away from the road. Traveling to the Mississippi River on the road to the Calusa Elevator near Wever, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow gave us a real close look as the bird perched in the high weeds of the roadside. Many duck species were seen on the Mississippi here and on the Illinois side at the lock and dam.

Participants: Karen Disbrow (leader), Joan Meyer, Bob Stearns.

Birds (50 species): Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Widgeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lapland Longspur, Common Grackle, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Finch, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

– *Karen Disbrow*

March 12, Cone Marsh. At our first stop overlooking the northeast corner of the marsh, a thin sheet of ice covered the shallow water, and those of us who wore our long underwear were glad we did. Nevertheless, there were plenty of birds to take our minds off the chill. We were treated to large flocks of Greater White-fronted and Snow Geese, and were able to pick out five American Black Ducks and a Wood Duck from the hundreds of dabbling ducks here. Several dozen Common Snipe, Pectoral Sandpipers, and Killdeer represented the vanguard of the shorebird migration, and Red-winged Blackbirds and an Eastern Meadowlark heralded spring with their voices.

We moved on to the south side of the marsh, where the birds were closer, and we had excellent looks at many diving and dabbling ducks. One of the trip highlights occurred when a trio of Tundra Swans dropped in for fifteen minutes before heading north again. At the southwest parking lot, a possible Eurasian Tree Sparrow fled the scene, but we found several Fox Sparrows. Nearby a small flock of Rusty Blackbirds were seen by several members of our party. We then hiked along the dike, where American Coots were plentiful,

and as we watched hunters brought down five Snow Geese.

On our way back to Iowa City, Mike Dooley escorted us on a short tour of the S & G sandpits. It capped off an enjoyable morning in which we tallied 19 waterfowl species.

Participants: Chris Caster, Dara Dick, Robert Dick, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards (leader), Laura Hansen, James Huntington, Joan Meyer, Bob Stearns.

Birds (52 species): Pied-billed Grebe, Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, accipiter sp., Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Killdeer, Pectoral Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

– *Chris Edwards*

1999 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

Chris Edwards

The 1999 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 19. The total of 75 species was the second-highest ever in the 49-year history of the count, following the record of 79 species seen in 1998. The total was significantly higher than the ten-year average of 66, and was due in large part to the unseasonably warm weather earlier in December and the presence of open water on Coralville Lake and elsewhere. The day was pleasant with temperatures in the lower thirties and a very slight south wind. Skies were overcast and by mid-afternoon snow began to fall.

Two outstanding birds were found this year, a Vesper Sparrow west of Tiffin and a Ruddy Duck on Lake Macbride. These were only the second and third records respectively for these two species in the history of the Iowa City count. Other rare species (seen in less than half of the last ten years, with the number of years in parenthesis) were Pied-billed Grebe

(3), Double-crested Cormorant (4), Snow Goose (4), American Wigeon (2), Canvasback (4), Hooded Merganser (4), American Coot (3), Killdeer (3), Hermit Thrush (2), Eastern Towhee (2), Fox Sparrow (1), and Red-winged Blackbird (4).

All-time high counts were recorded for many species: Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Shoveler, Hooded Merganser, American Kestrel, Wild Turkey, American Coot, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Fox Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow. Other species seen in larger than normal numbers (well above the ten-year average) were Canada Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, Bald Eagle, Horned Lark, Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, White-crowned Sparrow, and House Finch.

Prominent misses (birds seen in more than half of the last ten years, with the number of years in parenthesis) were Eastern Screech-Owl (9) and Brown-headed Cowbird (7). Species found in lower than normal numbers (well below the ten-year average) were Rough-legged Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Horned Owl, Blue Jay, American Crow, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

There were 29 field observers in 10 parties, slightly above average for recent years. Field observers were Carl Bendorf, Alyssa Cohen, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Mary Edwards, Jonni Ellsworth, Mike Feiss, Jim Fuller, Vaibhav Garde, Randy Graesser, Chuck Gustatson, Lanny Haldy, Eric Haley, James Huntington, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Richard Lynch, Nancy Lynch, Ramona McGurk, Gail McLure, John McLure, Joan Meyer, Mary Noble, C. Rosemarie Petzold, Sally Robertson, Jim Scheib, Bob Stearns, Dick Tetrault, and David Weiss.

There were 14 feeder watchers this year: Jinx Davison, Jean Dunn, Anne Edwards, Carolyn Gardner, Charles Gay, Marilou Gay, Gloria Henry, Margaret Alton Herr, Sherle Kesik, Bernie Knight, Robert Towner, Jim Walters, Ronnye Wieland, and Jo Wiley.

At our noon tally at the Coralville Recreation Center we had 70 species. At the end of the day many participants gathered at The Mill Restaurant in Iowa City for a well-deserved meal and compilation. Special thanks are due to Bernie Knight for coordinating the feeder watchers and to Jim Fuller for hosting the planning meeting.

Nationally, this year marked the 100th consecutive Christmas Bird Count. In 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman and many other conservationists were disturbed at the

slaughter of birds at an annual holiday event called a “side hunt,” in which the winner was the team that shot the most birds. As a protest, on Christmas Day of that year, Chapman organized 27 friends in 25 locations. Instead of shooting birds, they counted them. That simple protest turned into the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Today, more than 45,000 people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and many Pacific Islands participate in this annual bird census.

Christmas Bird Count results are published annually in a special issue of *American Birds*. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are also available on the Internet at <www.birdsource.org>.

SPECIES LIST

Pied-billed Grebe	1
Double-crested Cormorant	9
Great Blue Heron	1
Snow Goose	1
Canada Goose	1,306
Wood Duck	1
American Black Duck	2
Mallard	5,337
Northern Shoveler	55
Gadwall	67
American Wigeon	10
Canvasback	2
Lesser Scaup	49
Common Goldeneye	78
Bufflehead	1
Hooded Merganser	19
Common Merganser	137
Ruddy Duck	1
Bald Eagle	50
Northern Harrier	6
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	1
Red-tailed Hawk	68
Rough-legged Hawk	1
<i>Buteo</i> sp.	1
American Kestrel	37
Ring-necked Pheasant	21
Wild Turkey	134
American Coot	18
Killdeer	5

Ring-billed Gull	167
Herring Gull	15
Gull sp.	9
Rock Dove	228
Mourning Dove	115
Great Horned Owl	3
Barred Owl	6
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	4
Red-headed Woodpecker	12
Red-bellied Woodpecker	72
Downy Woodpecker	139
Hairy Woodpecker	33
Northern Flicker	26
Horned Lark	56
Blue Jay	66
American Crow	551
Black-capped Chickadee	413
Tufted Titmouse	82
Red-breasted Nuthatch	18
White-breasted Nuthatch	115
Brown Creeper	13
Carolina Wren	5
Winter Wren	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	50
Eastern Bluebird	8
Hermit Thrush	1
American Robin	23
Cedar Waxwing	296
Northern Shrike	1
European Starling	1,410
Northern Cardinal	385
Eastern Towhee	1
American Tree Sparrow	251
Vesper Sparrow	1
Fox Sparrow	2
Song Sparrow	26
Swamp Sparrow	3
White-throated Sparrow	39
White-crowned Sparrow	16
Dark-eyed Junco	463
Red-winged Blackbird	35
Common Grackle	5
Purple Finch	19
House Finch	116

Pine Siskin	6
American Goldfinch	169
House Sparrow	518

Spring Migration Count

The Johnson County Spring Migration Count will be held on Saturday, May 13. Like the Christmas Bird Count, the purpose of this count is to find as many species of birds as possible and record their numbers. This count is conducted nationwide on the same day so that the information gathered may be used to study national migration patterns. Participants may spend as many hours as they wish birding during the day on Saturday. Some like to get out there before sunup and bird until after sundown, but if you only have a few hours that would be equally appreciated. Feeder watchers and backyard birders can also help. Anyone interested in participating should call Chris Caster at 339-8343 for more information. An organizational meeting will be held on Thursday, May 4 at 7:00 p.m. at 4 South Ridge Court in Coralville. A checklist will be provided at this meeting for all participants which will need to be returned for compilation.

Alternative Birding Spots in the Iowa City Area

Mike Dooley

When I bought my *Iowa Sportsman's Atlas* I started noticing a lot of red areas on the county maps that I had never heard of and which, judging by their summaries, sounded promising as birding spots. Why had I never heard these names come up in the Iowa Bird Life field reports, or over IA-BIRD, I wondered? I decided to do some exploring and discovered a few surprises outside the Lake Macbride-Hickory Hill Park-Cone Marsh triumvirate. I first visited Cairo Woods and Cedar Bluffs only last summer, but I've birded Redbird Farms regularly for the past couple of years or more.

Cairo Woods Wildlife Area, Louisa County – 525 acres, primarily a bridle trail area. In six or seven visits I have yet to encounter another soul there. Substantial field and shrub sections, two good deciduous woods, one with a stream and one bordering a river, several smaller deciduous groves, and two small ponds. The trails are wide, well-groomed, and reach all areas. Most of what you want is roughly south of the parking area.

Highlight birds: American Woodcock, Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Bell's Vireo,

Yellow-throated Vireo, Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Henslow's Sparrow, Orchard Oriole.

Directions: Cairo Woods is about five miles south of Columbus Junction in Louisa County, and fifteen miles south of Cone Marsh. There are no road signs whatever indicating its existence. Drive south through Columbus Junction to Columbus City, which nearly adjoins it. Take County Road X-37 east out of Columbus City about ½ mile to 218th Ave., which veers off southeast. Follow 218th less than three miles until it ends at 105th St. Turn left on 105th and continue about ¼ mile to Q Ave., then turn right (south) on Q Ave. and drive about ½ mile to 100th St. Turn right on 100th, follow it until it shortly ends and continue driving on the narrower gravel road. This road – only one lane wide – curves sharply left, then right, and continues up over a rise. At the bottom of the rise is the parking area for Cairo Woods (just before you arrive you'll be thinking this can't possibly be right). You'll see a brown sign with an equestrian icon.

To get to Columbus Junction from the south end of Cone Marsh, go east on 250th St. 1½ miles past T Ave. to Highway 70 (Conesville), then south seven miles.

Cedar Bluffs Recreation Area, Muscatine County – 176 acres. They had just completed the trails there at the end of last summer. I've only walked them twice but I believe this very obscurely-located little park could be a real gem. One part is field and shrub with a line of pines bordering two sides. The other part is good deciduous woods deeply cut by a stream. There are essentially only two looping trails, one for the field section and one that carries you up and down wooded bluffs and simultaneously along and across the stream. Worm-eating Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush are surely potentials here.

Highlight birds: Pileated Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat.

Directions: You can't get there from here, as they say. The best bet is to start in Nichols, in Muscatine County, at the intersection of Highways 22 and 70 (Nichols is east of Lone Tree along Highway 22). From Nichols go about 5½ miles south on 70 to 231st St. Take 231st east three miles to Echo Ave., just across the Cedar River on your right. Take Echo south and after more than four miles it curves right (west) and become 276th St. After about one and one-half miles 276th ends at Casey Ave. Cedar Bluffs is a few hundred yards north (right) on Casey, on your right.

Geographically Cedar Bluffs is only five miles from Cone Marsh, but because of the Cedar

River it ends up being a fourteen-mile drive. To get to Highway 70 and 231st St. from the south side of Cone Marsh, go east on 250th St. 1½ miles past T Ave. to Highway 70 (Conesville). 231st is 1½ miles north.

Redbird Farms Wildlife Area, Johnson County – 500 acres. More and more folks have discovered Redbird just outside Iowa City but it's probably still worth advertising. It has a substantial tract of brambled meadow that transitions into field, a good solid deciduous woods, and two large wooded ponds. The trails are not kept up well, however, and can get a little overgrown in the woods as the summer wears on. Also, the trail along the meadow can be mushy as you first follow it from the parking area. As at Hickory Hill there are a few eminently walkable deer paths branching off the main trails in the woods. Across Black Diamond Rd. from the main area is another section which is all field with a pond at its center. This has been good sparrow habitat during migrations.

Highlight birds: Black-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch (late August), Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler.

Directions: Take Highway 1 west out of Iowa City towards Kalona. About 3½ miles past Highway 218 turn right on Black Diamond Rd. (County Road F-52). Take Black Diamond a little more than three miles until you cross Old Man's Creek, then look for the Redbird Farms parking area on your right. The meadow trail leads off to the right side, the trails to the woods are at left.

Book Reviews

Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds. Scott Weidensaul. North Point Press, 1999. 420 pages with index and bibliography.

Gatherings of Angels: Migrating Birds and Their Ecology. Kenneth P. Able, ed. Comstock Books, 1999. 193 pages with index, bibliographies, illustrations and color photographs.

Both available at the Iowa City Public Library.

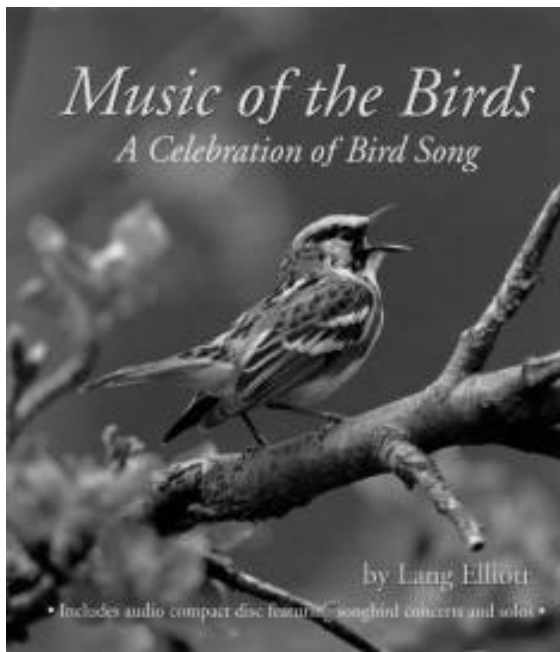
Two good books on bird migration were published last year. The first of these released, Scott Weidensaul's *Living on the Wind*, is easily one of the best works of natural history I've read in a while. Weidensaul's book is an engrossing and thorough account of the biology of bird migration in the western hemisphere. Weidensaul traveled over 70,000

miles in researching this book, zigzagging the Americas from Cape Churchill, Manitoba to the southern tip of South America—a distance, he points out, that is less than a peep sandpiper would travel in its lifetime. Weidensaul's passion for his subject is obvious, whether he is describing the action on a May morning at a Gulf Coast bird banding station, the spectacle of seeing over 400,000 migrating raptors on a fall day in Veracruz, Mexico, or local efforts to educate ranchers in Argentina of the harmful effects of pesticide use on Swainson's Hawks and other migrants.

Other chapters in this book include bird irruptions, the evolution of bird migration, habitat fragmentation in the tropical rainforest and in the states, and conservation efforts. I found his discussion of how migratory birds fit into the ecology of their wintering grounds especially interesting. While in Central America, for instance, Orchard Orioles act as the sole pollinators of a species of coral bean tree. Tennessee Warblers in Costa Rica pollinate a vine bearing flowers with red, sticky nectar; dominant Tennessees in winter are marked with bright red pollen on their heads. Virtually every page of this book has some new, interesting fact on it. Weidensaul's prose is constantly engaging, and often poetic. This is an excellent book for anyone with an interest in birds and bird migration.

Kenneth P. Able's *A Gathering of Angels* is a collection of essays on bird migration written by leading researchers in the field. As such, it is less targeted at the layperson than Weidensaul's book but nevertheless makes for an educational and enjoyable read. Two introductory essays deal with the scope, evolution, and basic evolution of bird migration. The other essays deal with the migration biology of a specific species (Blackpoll Warbler, Broad-winged Hawk, Sandhill Crane, and White-rumped Sandpiper) or with a specific migratory stopover habitat (Louisiana cheniers, the Alaskan Copper River Delta's importance to shorebirds, and Rocky Mountain wildflower meadows' importance to hummingbirds). The text of the book is accompanied by some very good color photographs.

– *Eric Haley*



Music of the Birds: A Celebration of Bird Song. Lang Elliott. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999. 136 pages with index and references. Hardcover, \$35.

I have a special affinity for bird songs. For me, there are two seasons: the fleeting period in spring and summer when I can spend a few mornings roaming through Iowa's woodlands listening to the songs of warblers, vireos, tanagers, and grosbeaks; and the rest of the year. This volume captures a little of that spring magic and makes it available all year long.

The dust jacket gushes, "An engaging and informative text, rare and glorious photographs, and an audio compact disc featuring the songs of more than seventy birds combine to make Lang Elliott's *Music of the Birds: A Celebration of Bird Song* a ground-breaking work."

The text, a blend of poetic appreciation and scientific explanation of bird song, is in my opinion the weakest component of this multimedia work. The author draws heavily on the prose of nineteenth-century poets and naturalists, many of whom are quoted extensively. This becomes a bit tedious, and readers like myself who desire more than a cursory discussion of the scientific viewpoint will want to look elsewhere. On the other hand, the dozens of color photographs featuring birds caught in the act of singing are stunningly beautiful.

The author's forte is recording natural sounds, and the accompanying compact disc is first-rate. The recordings are crystal clear, the narration is informative, and the selections are well-chosen and varied. The disc features a number of "Nature's Finest Singers" and "Lesser

Musicians”, but the most interesting portion is a large selection of flight songs, night songs, and other special songs. Many species have special songs which are given only under special circumstances, and these rarely-heard songs are a treat for any student of bird song.

– *Chris Edwards*

An Illustrated Guide to Iowa Prairie Plants. Paul Christiansen and Mark Müller. University of Iowa Press, 1999. 237 pages with index, references, and a key to the families. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

Müller’s line drawings are a wonderful complement to Christiansen’s descriptions. All descriptions include maps. Some are formally arranged, with sections on Stem, Leaves, Inflorescence, Flowers, Fruit, and Habitat, while other descriptions are shorter. This reader found the key to the families a bit confusing. I was looking for more differentiation between the various levels. This would be a wonderful addition to any prairie enthusiast’s library.

– *Rick Hollis*

The Birder’s Bug Book. Gilbert Waldbauer. Harvard University Press, 1998. 290 pages, including references, index, and a few color illustrations. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

These four chapter titles (out of ten) say enough to give you the book’s flavor: ‘Bugs that Birds Eat’, ‘Bugs Fight Back’, ‘Bugs that Eat Birds’, and ‘Birds Fight Back’. Waldbauer is both an entomologist and a birdwatcher, so he brings equal measure to both sides of these chapters. This is not the easiest, quickest-read bird book I’ve ever read, and in fact I confess to dozing off occasionally. But it is just jam-packed with interesting little facts. Get it out, read it, and you will learn facts you never knew (or never expected to learn about).

– *Rick Hollis*

Every Creeping Thing: True Tales of Faintly Repulsive Creatures. Richard Conniff. Henry Holt, 1998. 256 pages, including references and index. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

I could not pass up a book with a title like this, and I was glad I decided to bring it home. This is another book that is not about birds, although at least one chapter’s topic is birds and some other chapters touch on things avian. A fun read full of facts you never knew about creatures you probably do not often think about – you may never use it, but will enjoy reading it. Chapter topics include snapping turtles, porcupines, bloodhounds, grizzly bears, weasels and moles.

– Rick Hollis

NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE AT THE IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Condor's Shadow: The Loss and Recovery of Wildlife in America. David S. Wilcove. A comprehensive overview of the current state of our wildlife, and how it came to be that way.

The Backyard Birdhouse Book: Building Nestboxes and Creating Natural Habitats. Rene and Christyna M. Laubach. Illustrated with numerous color photographs, maps, and diagrams.

Trogons, Laughing Falcons, and Other Tropical Birds. Alexander Skutch. Illustrated by Dana Gardner.

News

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY. There has been interest expressed in publishing a membership directory listing the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of club members. It would be distributed with an upcoming newsletter to club members only. If you would like your telephone number and/or e-mail address listed, please send the information to Chris Edwards at credwards@aol.com or 85 Whitman Avenue, North Liberty IA, 52317, or print it along with your name on a 3" x 5" card and send it with your membership renewal to Bernie Knight.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE for the next issue is August 1, 2000.

Rick's Ramblings

Rick Hollis

Hickory Hill Park – those words have often flowed from my pen since I moved to Iowa City almost 30 years ago. There have been more discussions of Hickory Hill Park in the press in the past few years, almost all involving actions that would damage the park: Oakland Cemetery's expansion, the First Avenue extension, the proposed "Terry Trueblood

Walking-Biking Interstate Path System” through the park, allowing dogs to run free through the park, bicycles in the park, etc.

The major problem that links all of these together raises concern in all of us who love the park whenever a new threat is perceived, perhaps even concern that is far greater than the actual immediate problem. If this problem were to be solved, I think many of our concerns about the future of the park might be assuaged. This problem is the fact that the government of Iowa City does not realize what it has in Hickory Hill Park, and further the government of Iowa City has no idea what to do with the park. Almost all of the other areas owned or controlled by Parks and Recreation are places that are either mowed or paved border to border. Hickory Hill Park is the glaring exception. They do not seem to have any kind of a real plan for the future of the park, any real idea about vegetation management or bike and dog management other than to mow the paths or post some signs. No plan other than some vague commitment to keep Hickory Hill Park natural. We need a real management plan for the park. A plan which will make a decision on the direction we want the vegetation to go and work to manage it in that direction. Should the southern part of the part be an overgrown woods or more open savanna-like habitat, except by the parking lots? Should the northern part be maintained mostly as lawn or pasture or should we at least aim for native grasses? We cannot keep making these decisions as we are forced to or as succession dictates.

There is another problem that we are going to face in the future. Did anyone notice the labeled aerial photos that accompanied the newspaper articles about First Avenue? Very neatly labeled are the boundaries of Hickory Hill Park and the Storm Water Management Area. But if you are walking, you see no signs indicating boundaries, nothing to let you know when you have left Hickory Hill Park. When you are in the Storm Water Management Area, it looks like a park, it feels like a park, it smells like a park. We are setting ourselves up for a repeat of the cemetery debate 20 or 50 years down the road. Everyone will think it is park and then someone will say it was purchased for storm water management and we need to mow it or pave it or something. All of the paths here are ‘unofficial paths’. Too bad. It needs to be clearly and completely given to Hickory Hill Park or they need to do what other places do with water management areas – either totally pave them or plant a nice boring mono-culture stand of some non-native conifer. Trash it good and at least no one will think it’s a park. If you want to go watch birds or spend some time in a quiet natural setting you would know to leave Iowa City, because all Iowa City would have would be little gerrymander-shaped natural areas.

By the way, without entering into the First Avenue debate, the root of the problem is the

fact that a previous city council gave the north end of Scott Blvd. to ACT because ACT threatened to take all its nice white collar jobs to a different city. If we still had that, we could pave it and develop the northeast corner without Captain Irish Boulevard. If we had a paved Scott Blvd. which connected to Highway 1 and thence to I-80, people would be used to traveling that way. People in eastern Iowa City would have a choice to head north. Go east to Scott Blvd. or west to Dodge. It would not be so bad as to make so many people think we need another road. We might be able to do without extending First Avenue. This person also wonders that if the development east of the present northern terminus of First Avenue had been constructed with two roads in and out instead of having the only road in or out be First Avenue, if the northern terminus of First Avenue did not so clearly promise a future by running past an intersection and ending at a road block, if these were not true, would we want it so badly? At least the council, although going ahead with the grading, put off actually paving the road until next year, after another council election. The council barely voted to go this far. Before the last election almost everyone wanted to push it through. Pay attention, because clearly our votes do matter in some things.

Last night at Prairie Preview, I heard that the city has budgeted a chunk of money to dredge behind the withholding dam in the park. I was not aware that it had so silted in that it needed dredging. Perhaps it might need a few folks with chainsaws to clear out trees around the drain, but dredging? Even in 1993 I didn't see that much silt behind the dam. Given the immediate upstream habitat, I would sooner think the dam along Scott Blvd. would need dredging.

Not that all governmental action has been bad. There have been three federal actions or proposed actions that promise good things: the creation of more national parks and preserves, a proposal for more restrictive wetlands regulations, and Clinton's proposed record wildlife budget. On the other hand there have been three loony bills to surface in our state legislature, including the perennial dove hunting bill and a bill to restrict endangered species listing in the state to only those species on the federal list. I believe that both of these are dead this session, but the dove hunting bill will surely surface again, and again, and again... Another bill which has apparently passed the Senate is "Intentional Interference with Lawful Hunting, Fishing, or Fur-harvesting Activities on Public Lands". Please express your opinions in opposition to this. It seems that it would not be too much of a push to say that someone canoeing down stream, past a fisherman on a bank would be "intentionally interfering". Or ditto for birdwatching or walking near where someone was hunting. Many of us non-consumptive users of Iowa's environmental areas have griped, amongst ourselves, about hunters interfering with our right to watch birds, but have never sought legislative assistance. Like I said, this is goofy. There are more non-consumptive users than hunters or

fisherman and most of us are trying to live with each other.

On other subjects, a Tip of the Old Binoculars to Mike Dooley who recorded a hat trick plus one in goose species, seeing Canada, Greater White-fronted, Snow, and Ross's Geese at the sandpit south of Iowa City on March 7. Does that guy do anything but bird? Another Tip of the Old Binoculars to Jim and Karole Fuller. I have not kept track of how many presentations they have made for us since I took over this job, but it seems they always have some new talk and wonderful slides for us. How fortunate we are that they live in our midst and are willing to share with us. Shortly after speaking to us, the Fullers packed off for a long warm vacation in the California desert. Along their way to their final destination, they caught up with another valued member of the ICBC in Arizona, where they shared a meal and some birding with Bud Gode.



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Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published three times per year (usually April, August, and December). Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to editor Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, or e-mail at credwards@aol.com.

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To lead a field trip, contact field trip coordinator Karen Disbrow at 339-1017.

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