



Big Bluestem Audubon Society, Ames, Iowa  
March 1983  
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# Bluestem Flyer

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## MARCH MEETING

(Please note that the meeting is not March 15 as listed in the September Newsletter)

- WHEN: March 8, 1983, 7:30 pm.  
WHERE: 210 Bessey Hall (across the street south & a little west of Kildee Hall)  
There is an elevator in the south hallway of Bessey Hall.  
WHO: Rochelle Renken, Graduate Student, Dept. of Animal Ecology, ISU.  
TOPIC: The Birds and Mammals of North Dakota.

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## MARCH FIELDTRIP

The fieldtrip will be held March 12 and our destination will be Hendrickson's Marsh. We will leave from behind C.Y. Stephens at 9:00 am. Dress according to the weather, but rubber boots and waders are suggested. We will have at least two spotting scopes, but more would be nice.

Last month's trip to the Ledges was a success. The 15 persons in attendance were rewarded for having waded through ankle deep mud and...

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FLYING AROUND by Tom Davis

COLD WEATHER STRATEGY: RUFFLE YOUR FEATHERS AND LOOK THE OTHER WAY

Though we have had a relatively mild winter in Ames this year, it is still cold outside. Some mornings the narrow red line of mercury has sunk into single digits and yet at 7 am, the only noise or movement one can detect are bird activities - English sparrows mobbing the neighbors' feeders or pigeons sailing effortlessly onto a distant rooftop or Cy the cardinal whistling his cheerful morning ballad.

Birds use several strategies for surviving winter's chill. First and most obvious is their feather layer. The combination of down feathers and contour feathers make up one of the most efficient insulators known in the animal world. This layer may keep the skin surface 20-40° F warmer than the outermost feather surface. Birds also have a different type of respiratory system. Air does not simply go in and out of a dead-end air sac like in our lungs but follows a unidirectional path through the lungs and through a system of air sacs that surround the lungs and internal organs. This system is also very efficient and may help to insulate the vital organs against the cold Iowa winter. Birds are also very good at finding sheltered places out of the wind, in bright sun or near chimneys to help reduce the effects of the freezing air. If only we could ruffle our feathers and fly to a warmer place!!!

PROWLING FOR OWLS

The whisper of February snowflakes contrasts with the echo of owl calls. These brittle nights are broken by the calls of breeding owls busy defending their territories. During late fall and early winter, adults pair up and establish their breeding territories. Eggs are laid as early as January insuring that young owlets will find plenty of animals when they leave the nests and learn to hunt. Now is the time to visit your favorite riverside woodlot or secluded pine grove at dawn or dusk to hear the wild, spooky sounds of our Iowa owls- An experience you will never forget!!