

# BIG BLUESTEM FLYER

Volume 27, No. 9

Newsletter of the Mid-Iowa Chapter of the National Audubon Society

May 1992

## MONTHLY MEETING

### IOWA'S LOESS HILLS

**Tom Rosburg, I.S.U. Department of Botany**

Thursday, May 21, 7:30 PM

Room 181, Design Center, ISU Campus

Tom Rosburg was born and raised in Monona County, Iowa (Loess Hills Country). He came to ISU and got his B.S. in Fish and Wildlife Biology, his M.S. in Botany studying "Restoration of native grasses on Iowa pasture". He worked for the Bureau of Land Management in Wyoming and also has farmed in Iowa. He is currently working on his PhD in Botany at ISU, his dissertation being "Ecology of Native Grasslands". His study area is Iowa's Loess Hills. Tom is an accomplished photographer (some of his prairie photos are on display through May at the McFarland Park Conservation Center) and he is serving as our Society's Vice President. This program will be a general natural history of the Loess Hills and Tom will provide some information about the research he is conducting.

## FIELD TRIPS

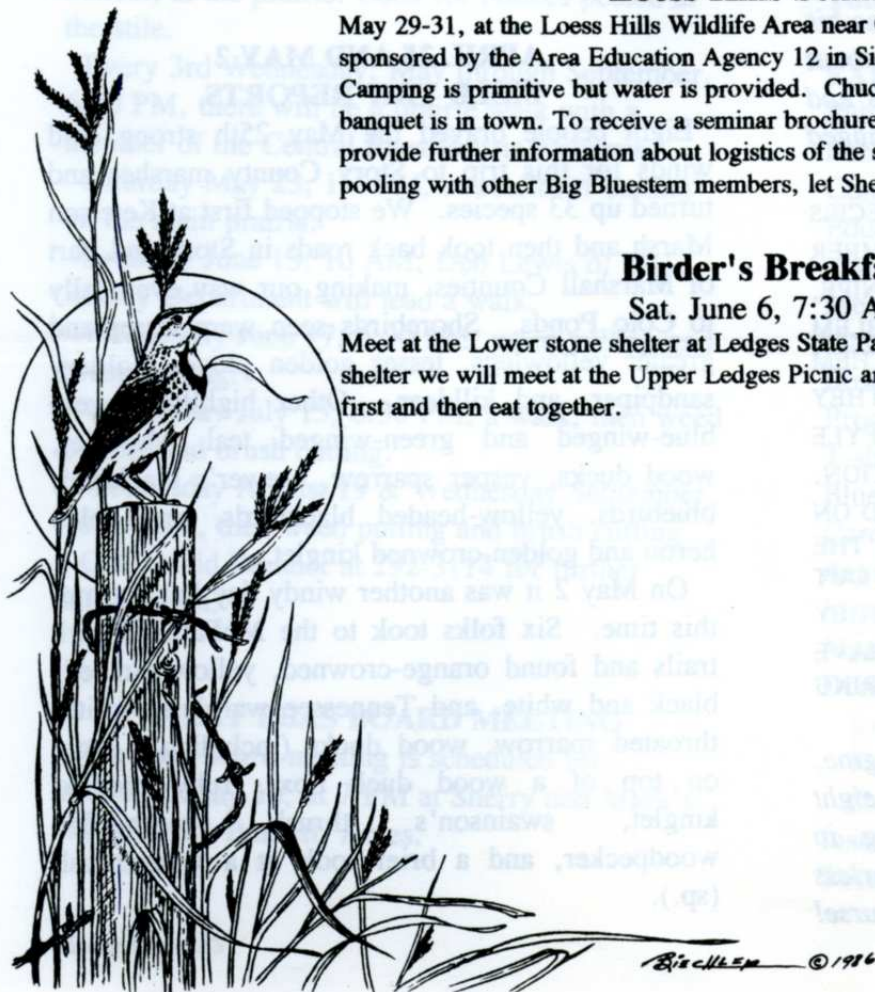
### Loess Hills Seminar

May 29-31, at the Loess Hills Wildlife Area near Onawa. This is an outdoor learning experience sponsored by the Area Education Agency 12 in Sioux City. Tom Rosburg will be one of the presenters. Camping is primitive but water is provided. Chuckwagon food provided on Friday; Saturday evening banquet is in town. To receive a seminar brochure call Sherry Dragula at 233-1532. Tom Rosburg can provide further information about logistics of the seminar, (377-2930). If you are interested in car pooling with other Big Bluestem members, let Sherry know.

### Birder's Breakfast

Sat. June 6, 7:30 AM

Meet at the Lower stone shelter at Ledges State Park near Boone. (In case of flooding at the Lower shelter we will meet at the Upper Ledges Picnic area). Bring your breakfast. We will bird in the park first and then eat together.



## BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY

1991-1992

**President:** Sherry Dragula, 233-1532

**Vice-President:** Tom Rosburg, 377-2930

**Secretary:** Nancy Dionigi, 233-3195

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### Newsletter Editor and Membership Chair

David Edwards, 292-3790

### Field Trips Chair

Mike Meetz, 382-2534

## APRIL 18 FIELD TRIP TWO REPORTS

*The filed trip to Tieg's March and Little Wall Lake was quite an adventure. We left in fog wondering if we were going to be able to see the road much less a feather. I was later told that the fog was great for sneaking up on birds.*

(7:45 AM) HALLETT'S QUARRY, NINE FIGURES STUDIED A SLEEPING LOON SHROUDED BY A POTATO-SOUP FOG (PEA SOUP IS GREEN). THEY (THE PEOPLE) MOVED ON TO THE NORTH.

*We made a stop at Hallett's Quarry where we saw one tired loon. I am referring to the bird, of course. A couple of birders learned that it doesn't pay to dawdle getting out of the car. You can easily be left without ever reaching a spotting scope.*

*We eventually made our way to Tieg's Marsh which was still covered in thick fog. This made everything eerie, and left some of us to wonder if we might all disappear to have our bones discovered by archaeologists hundreds of years later. Not long into the hike our leader asked a very inexperienced but dedicated birder to go into the water and flush out a bird. His excuse was his boots were too short. Don't hunters know about proper footwear? We continued through bogs and thickets with many sightings, mostly blue-winged teal.*

BY 10:30 AM THESE BIRDERS HAD 25 SPECIES CLINGING TO THEIR LIST, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF DUCKS, VARIOUS SPARROWS, COMMON SNIPE, AND A FORSTER'S TERN. THE BIRDERS' PROBLEM WAS NOW TO LOCATE THE CAR ENABLING THEM TO RETURN AND REPORT THEIR FINDINGS. THEY KNEW THAT THEY STOOD IN THE BOB PYLE MARSH, BUT EXACTLY WHERE? GOOD QUESTION. QUICK! FIND THE DRAINAGE DITCH LOCATED ON THE EASTERN BORDER AND FOLLOW IT TO THE TRUCK TO CHECK THE COMPASS AND PASS OUT SNACKS. ONE OF THE BIRDERS HOPED THEY WOULDN'T STARVE TO DEATH, LATER TO HAVE THEIR BONES DISCOVERED BY A WANDERING SEARCH PARTY.

*Then it was time for us to find our cars. Imagine, for a moment, what it feels like to have eight people deep in a marsh, in fog, pointing in different directions. And where did our fearless leader keep his compass? In his truck, of course!*

*What astounds me, however, is that he left his chocolate there as well!! It was only due to the late appearance of a birder from down the road that we were able to make our way back safely.*

(11:45 AM) PEERING THROUGH THE FOG THE BIRDERS SHARED THEIR SPOTTING SCOPES WITH OTHERS STANDING ON LITTLE WALL LAKE'S SHORE. THEY STUDIES THE BOBBING MASSES OF COOTS, RING-NECKED DUCKS, CANVASBACKS, AND OTHER WATERFOWL UNDULATING ON THE WHITE-CAPPED WAVES. THEY OBSERVED HUNDREDS OF AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS FISHING IN THE SHALLOWS. AMERICAN EGRETS, GREAT BLUE HERONS, AND BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS HELPED PUSH THE COUNT FOR THE DAY TO DOUBLE NICKELS (55).

*Little Wall Lake was spotted with coots, scaup, northern shovelers, ruddy ducks, and pelicans. The highlight was the beautiful flight patterns put on by the pelicans right above our heads. Guess where our leader's camera was? Could our leader have been preoccupied with turkeys?*

Carrie Dixon  
MIKE MEETZ

## APRIL 25 AND MAY 2 FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Eight people braved the May 25th strong cold winds for this trip to Story County marshes and turned up 33 species. We stopped first at Ketelson Marsh and then took back roads in Story and part of Marshall Counties, making our way eventually to Colo Ponds. Shorebirds seen were lesser and greater yellowlegs, lesser golden plover, solitary sandpiper, and killdeer. Other highlights were blue-winged and green-winged teal, shoveler, wood ducks, vesper sparrow, brewer's blackbird, bluebirds, yellow-headed blackbirds, great blue heron and golden-crowned kinglet.

On May 2 it was another windy day but warmer this time. Six folks took to the McFarland Park trails and found orange-crowned, yellow-rumped, black and white, and Tennessee warblers, white-throated sparrow, wood ducks (including a male on top of a wood duck box), ruby-crowned kinglet, swainson's thrush, red-headed woodpecker, and a brief look at a waterthrush (sp.).

Sherry Dragula

### IOWA ARBORETUM BIRD WALK

Members of our Society will lead a bird walk in the Iowa Arboretum (take Iowa Hwy. 17 to Luther, go 2 1/2 miles west on Boone Co. Rd. E-57, then south on the gravel road following the signs to the Arboretum). The date is Sunday May 17, at 5 PM. Please join us.

### THREE "BURNS" DONE THIS SPRING

BBAS members recently participated in three successful burns to promote desirable vegetation in Ames. The first burn was at the Grand Avenue underpass of the railroad, where accumulated crown vetch thatch was burned off. The second was the burning of the Mortensen Parkway prairie landscape, and finally the Niyo backyard prairie was burned. Thanks to all who assisted with the burns.

### AMES HIGH PRAIRIE

#### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR SUMMER

All events take place to the west of Ames High School, at the prairie. Look for notices posted at the stile.

Every 3rd Wednesday, May through September, 6:30 PM, there will be a prairie walk with a member of the Central Iowa Prairie Network.

Saturday May 23, 1-4 PM, sweetclover cutting on the main prairie.

Saturday June 13, 10 AM, Deb Lewis of ISU Botany Department will lead a walk.

Wednesday June 17, 6:30 PM, weed pulling and brush cutting.

Wednesday July 15, 6:30 PM, a walk, then weed pulling and brush cutting.

Wednesday August 19 & Wednesday September 16, a walk, then weed pulling and brush cutting.

Call David Brenner at 292-3114 for further information.

### NEXT BBAS BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 18, at 7 PM at Sherry and Mark's house, 2121 Burnett, Ames.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR WEEKENDS AT CONSERVATION CENTER

Volunteers are needed to greet people and answer simple questions at the Conservation Center at McFarland Park from now through November. Shifts are 10-2 and 2-6 on Saturdays and 1-5 on Sundays. The Conservation Center staff will tell you what you need to know and couples are welcome to volunteer.

If you would like to help please call Karen Strobusch at the Center, 232-2516.

### BBAS FINANCES FOR 1991-1992

#### BUDGET PLAN FOR 1992-1993

	1991- 1992	1992- 1993
<b>INCOME</b>		
NAS rebate	1799.00	2170.00
Donations	20.50	30.00
Projects: Card Sales	387.65	400.00
Audubon Adventures	210.00	210.00
Bluebirders Directory	79.13	80.00
Armchair Activist	40.00	65.00
Misc. (T-Shirt sales)	18.15	400.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2554.43</b>	<b>3355.00</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Publications	1353.11	1485.00
Publicity	0.00	30.00
Conservation	6.39	30.00
Education	390.00	390.00
Aud. Adventures		
Membership	0.00	20.00
Field Trips	0.00	0.00
Bird Counts	0.00	0.00
Program	60.25	60.00
T-shirts	0.00	240.00
Bluebird Directory	79.13	80.00
Card Sales	165.60	170.00
Armchair Activist	65.00	65.00
Misc.	61.75	25.00
Memberships & Donations:		
Iowa Aud. Council	100.00	100.00
Nature Conservancy	35.00	35.00
Story Co. Cons. Bd.	75.00	75.00
Insurance	220.00	240.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2611.23</b>	<b>3045.00</b>

## BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENTS - 1992

May 21	Thursday, 7:30 PM - Meeting, Tom Rosburg "Iowa's Loess Hills"
May 29-31	Friday-Sunday, Loess Hills Seminar and Field Trip
June 6	Saturday - Birder's Breakfast and Hike, Ledges State Park
June 13-19	National Audubon Society Convention, Washington, D.C.
June 24-27	American Ornithological Union Annual Meeting, Ames, Iowa

For further information call Sherry Dragula, President at 233-1532 or Mike Meetz, Field Trip Chair at 382-2534.

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