



Bluestem Flyer

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Big Bluestem Audubon Society
Ames, Iowa

Dave Edwards, Pres. 292-3790
Judy van der Linden, Vice-Pres. 232-3450
Barbara Bettis, Sect. 232-4863
Judy Shearer, Treas. 296-7512
Judy van der Linden, Ed. 232-3450

Monthly Meeting

WHEN: Tuesday, December 16, at 7:30 p.m.

WHERE: Meeting room of the State Nursery, 2404 S. Duff Avenue, Ames

WHAT: The Big Bluestem chapter's annual "Christmas Bash". Everyone attending is welcome to bring cookies, snack foods, beverages, etc. for the refreshment table. The "program" will feature **your** slides -- anyone may bring some of his favorite 2x2 slides of birds, vacations, etc., to show to the group. Come and enjoy the festivities!

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Christmas Birdcounts -- Bluestem members and other interested birders are invited to participate in one or both area Christmas birdcounts, scheduled December 20 in Story County and January 1 in Boone County. On each count day, the types and numbers of all birds seen are recorded by participants who either drive or walk through much of the bird habitat in each county.

More information and sign-up sheets for both counts will be available at the society's December 16 meeting. A \$3 fee will be charged each count participant. The money will be used to tabulate and record nation-wide count results in the July issue of "American Birds." Persons wishing to watch home bird feeders may add their sightings to the count results, and do **not** have to pay a fee.

The Story County count is being coordinated by Hank Zaletel of Colo. The day-long count will conclude with a tabulation party at about 4:30 p.m. at the home of Eric Munson of Ames.

The Boone County coordinator is Mark Widrlechner of Ames. Persons who have already expressed an interest in this count should receive a mailing on it this week. Others wishing to participate may call Mark (292-4014) or attend the December 16 meeting.

Board Meeting -- The society's executive board will meet Jan. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the Dave Edwards home.

News and Notes

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Bluestem 1987 Programs -- Programs scheduled for chapter meetings beginning in January are listed below. Persons willing to provide refreshments at a meeting should contact Barb Bettis (232-4863).

January 20 -- "How to Help it Happen -- a 1987 Iowa Conservation Update," Cindy Hildebrand

February 17 -- "Behavior of Fall and Wintering Snow Geese," Dr. Erwin Klaas

March 17 -- "Morels and False Morels," Dr. Lois Tiffany

April 21 -- "Warblers at Brookside Park," Paul Martsching

May 19 -- "Butterflies," Dr. Ken Holscher

June 16 -- annual potluck; location to be announced

Bird Feeder Survey -- The Iowa Ornithologist's Union and state Department of Natural Resources will be sponsoring a state-wide bird feeder survey January 22-25. Anyone with feeders may participate. Birds can be counted for any 24-hour period during the four days. Survey forms will be included in the January issue of the "Bluestem Flyer". For more information, call Hank Zaletel (377-2889).

Bird Puzzles for December -- Each of the short phrases below describes the name of a bird. Good luck! Answers at the December meeting.

1. What you are doing after a two-mile run
2. Sorrowing distaff relative
3. Has a glass jaw
4. Traveling rube
5. Party on the prairie

The answers to November's puzzles are:

1. Highway sprinter = Roadrunner
2. Drunken angler = Belted Kingfisher
3. Pale Robert = Bobwhite
4. Extended sidetrack = Longspur
5. U.N.C.L.E.'s chief adversary = Thrush



Boone River Effort -- Please help Iowa's rare species and a beautiful river. Your letters are needed to support the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) budget request for money to buy land for state preserves and land along the Boone River. Iowa has never appropriated funds for those purposes, and fiscal problems mean that these requests may be denied unless they get a LOT of support from Iowa citizens.

The DNR is asking for \$150,000 to buy preserves land such as hill prairies, "mound springs", fens, algific slopes, and loess hills land. Many of these areas are fragile and rapidly disappearing. The DNR is also requesting \$200,000 to buy land along the Boone River to protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and the river itself.

Please write to your state senator and representative sometime before March and ask them to support funding for the DNR budget proposals ("Land Acquisition, Various Preserve Sites" and "Land Acquisition, Boone River Protected Water Area") for Fiscal Year 1988. Address for all legislators: State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319.

This Month's Birding Hot Spot

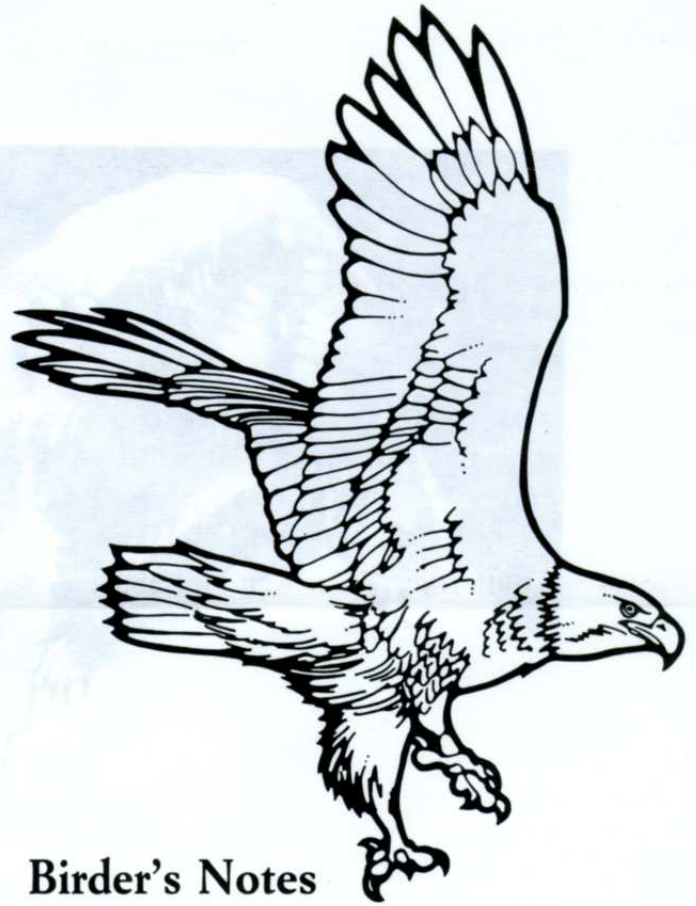
Finding Owls In Central Iowa -- This article contains some tips for locating Long-eared, Short-eared, and N. Saw-whet owls in central Iowa.

All of these owls typically arrive in late October and depart in March, so midwinter is probably the best time to look for them.

Probably the best place to see all three of these owls is Big Creek State Park in Polk County. From Polk City, drive NW on Highway 415 until you reach NW 100th Street (about 3 miles). Turn right (north) on NW 100th and follow this gravel road straight north to the parking lot (about 1 mile). Park and follow the shore of the lake to the west, looking in the cedars for all of the owls. Long-eared and Short-eared owls may be flushed from any of the cedars, particularly those along the first ravine west of the parking lot. N. Saw-whet Owls are best found in the cedars along the lake between the parking lot and the first point. N. Saw-whet Owls usually roost 4-6 feet off the ground and are easy to find if you look closely.

A good place to see Short-eared Owls is Teig's Marsh in NW Story County. From Ames, drive north on Highway 69 to County Road E-15 (about 10.5 miles). Turn left (west) on E-15 and drive west for 3 miles. Turn right (north) on the gravel road and drive about .5 miles north to a small bridge. Park on the bridge. The marsh is to the east of the road. As many as a dozen Short-eared Owls may be seen hunting over the marsh in some years. The best time to see the owls is just before sunset on a calm night.

A good place to see N. Saw-whet Owls is the Lost Lake area of Ledges State Park in Boone County. The parking lot for this area is located halfway down the hill, about .1 miles west of the headquarters and old wildlife exhibit. Follow the trail that heads west from the parking lot for about .25 miles to the north finger of Lost Lake. The N. Saw-whet Owls frequent the scattered cedars around this part of the lake, particularly those along the west bank and on the ridge that runs parallel to the water 50 feet to the east. One to three N. Saw-whet Owls have been seen here annually since 1977 -- *Steve Dinsmore*.



Birder's Notes

November 28 -- Large V-formations of ducks have flown over central Iowa the past few days as they head south for winter. Thousands are stopping at Saylorville Lake, and can be seen using a strong spotting scope. Hundreds of Red-breasted Merganser, 30-40 Goldeneye and three Bald Eagles were all seen there this past week.

As those birds move south, many winter visitors are returning to Iowa. A wave of Pine Siskin returned to this area on November 15, and Saw-whet, Long-eared and Short-eared owls have all returned to the Big Creek State Park area (see owl-finding article elsewhere in this issue). There is evidence that this may be a good winter to see many northern birds in Iowa. Keep on eye out at feeders and along roadsides for unusual finches and birds of prey.

A group of birders in the Saylorville area last weekend had an exciting field trip, according to Hank Zaletel. The birders first saw a Rock Wren near Saylorville dam, the furthest east in Iowa this bird has ever been sighted. Later, they spotted a Pacific Loon (formerly the Artic Loon). Next, they saw Glaucous Gulls at the nearby Oak Grove beach, and a short distance up the highway, they found a Sandhill Crane!



Big Bluestem Audubon Society
 2308 State
 Ames, Iowa 50010

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SHERRY DRAGULA
 MARK WIDRLECHNER
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