



# Big Bluestem Flyer

Big Bluestem Audubon Society Newsletter

*The mission of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society is to enjoy the observation and study of birds and natural ecosystems, contribute to their preservation and restoration, and engage in educational activities to benefit humanity, and to gain a broader understanding and deeper appreciation of the world we live in.*

Volume 35 Number 1

September/October 1999

**Featured Speaker—September 16 meeting:** *Ty Smedes, Professional Photographer, Urbandale, Iowa. "Trapping and Banding Raptors on the Upper Mississippi River, Wisconsin"*

For the past several years, Ty has photographed the experiences of a biologist trapping and banding raptors on the Upper Mississippi River in Wisconsin. He will share with us beautiful slides of the trapping and banding station and raptors in flight, coming into the station, in the net, in the hand, and being released. Join us for another of Ty's spectacular programs.

**Featured Speaker—October 21 meeting:** *Mark Vitosh, Program Assistant, Extension Forestry, Iowa State University. "Look at the bird in that tree. Which tree? That tree! Which tree?"*

As you looked at your favorite bird through your binoculars, did you ever want to know what kind of tree it was in? During this talk, you will be introduced to the terminology and tree characteristics commonly utilized during the tree identification process. Also, close and distant identification characteristics of common trees in the area will be shown.

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society (BBAS) meetings are held monthly, September-May (except December and March) on the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m., Room 2532 Veterinary Medicine Building, Iowa State University. If you need directions, please call any of the BBAS officers or committee chairs. See you there!

*If you would like to meet and dine with the speaker and the BBAS board before the monthly meeting, there are a limited number of reservations available. Please call John Snyder at 232-8824 to confirm space and location.*

## Coming Field Trips: September & October

*Jon Bahrenfus, Field Trip Chair*

### September

- 4- Errington Marsh, Big Creek Wildlife Refuge, Saylorville beaches, and upper reaches of Saylorville Lake. This is becoming a great annual Labor Day weekend trip to see fall shorebirds and waterfowl. Meet at 0800 at Kum and Go/BurgerKing parking lot at I-35 and 13th Street in Ames. Trip leader, Hank Zaletel (515-382-5427).
- 25- Grammar Grove Wildlife Area, Marshall County. View hawks and other migrants with Beth and Mark Prescholdt. Meet at the site at 0900.

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**Bird Term of the Month:** *Crest—a tuft of feathers on the top of a bird's head.*



## View from the Altamont Moraine

*Kay Niyo, President*

Welcome back from a summer of travels, vacations, family reunions, or whatever—hope you were able to include some birding during the summer and will have stories (and slides for the Christmas meeting) to share. The BBAS has another exciting year of programs and field trips planned.

Speakers include some favorites from previous years including Ty Smedes, who photographed the experiences of a biologist trapping and banding raptors on the Upper Mississippi River in Wisconsin. And Carl Kurtz has agreed to treat us to another wonderful “prairies for birders” as only he can do. Steve Lekwa will provide the latest information on the Greenways Program and other important developments in Story County. We’ll have some great new programs, too. Mark Vitesh, ISU Extension Forestry, will help us avoid the familiar phrase, “Which tree is the bird in?”! Jim Pease will provide the latest on “Nature Mapping” in Iowa, for which a few BBAS members have been trained. Donald Lewis will entertain us with tales from the “never boring life” of an ISU Extension Entomologist. Scott Peterson and Mark Edwards, both of the Iowa DNR, will update us on DNR management of nearby favorite birding areas such as the Ledges, Harrier Marsh, and others.

Our field trips will be equally fun times. We’ll be sure to hit all the Central Iowa hot spots for migrating birds, hopefully when they are hot. We also have some new trips planned. Barry Christianson, refuge manager at the Union Slough NWR in Kossuth County will lead us on a private tour of the refuge. We will try to see the migrating waterfowl, raptors, and warblers when they are moving through. Of course, plan on participating in the many Christmas Bird Counts held in the area. And, don’t forget our phenomenal Birdathon on May 6 that has become a major event allowing us to contribute in many ways to habitat preservation and environmental education.

So, check our fall calendar enclosed with this newsletter and the one for spring that will be published in January and mark the dates on your calendar.

The Iowa Ornithologists’ Union fall meeting should be exciting again this year as it is being held in conjunction with the Association of Field Ornithologists and the North American Banding Council on September 10-12 at Forest Lake Camp, Ottumwa. Call Darlene Ayres (515-682-1697) for registration and information.

We hope you’ll join us for a year of fun and discovery and, I guarantee, one or two experiences that you’ll never forget! Every year has them!

Take time to enjoy our beautiful prairies this fall. Forbs and grasses are resplendent in glorious hues of yellow, gold, bronze, purple, and even blue — if you are lucky enough to find a Gentian.

## Notes from the Field

*Jon Bahrenfus, Field Trip Chair*

Saturday, June 5, was a nice day for the annual Birder’s Breakfast. The morning was a bit sticky, but we had a nice turnout of eighteen people for the breakfast at Ledges State Park. Species total was 65, or more, including Mississippi Kite, Broad-winged Hawk (2), Pileated Woodpecker (5), Prothonotary Warbler (still singing north of the bridge in the bottoms), Cerulean Warbler (3 territories), Yellow-throated Warbler (2 territories), Louisiana Waterthrush (2 territories), Wood Duck (with rafts of ducklings), Veery (heard by Mike Freiberg at dawn), Dickcissel (2, southeast of the park).

Karl Jungbluth saw two Pileated Woodpeckers leave the nest hole at 0720. One flew overhead to a nearby tree (awesome for a first flight). The other dangled from the hole for some time, then fluttered to the ground at the base of the tree. The youngster was found on the ground and was pretty defiant. Two young were still in the hole and seen by the entire group, which makes FOUR fledglings.

### Big Bluestem Audubon Society Officers and Committees

#### Officers:

- President: Kay Niyo 233-8803 [kniyo@aol.com](mailto:kniyo@aol.com)
- Vice-President: Karl Jungbluth 432-5057 [weatherbird@opencominc.com](mailto:weatherbird@opencominc.com)
- Secretary: Mary Doud 296-2178 [mfdoud@ames.net](mailto:mfdoud@ames.net)
- Treasurer: Donna Flanagan 482-4008 [dflana@iastate.edu](mailto:dflana@iastate.edu)

#### Board Members:

- Carol Berrier 965-8242
- Mike Freiberg 233-8213 [trogon70@hotmail.com](mailto:trogon70@hotmail.com)
- Kevin Healy 233-5914 [khealy@ames.net](mailto:khealy@ames.net)
- Stuart Huntington 296-0248 [x1hunting@exnet.iastate.edu](mailto:x1hunting@exnet.iastate.edu)
- John Pohlman 232-6816

#### Committee Chairs:

- Archivist: Hank Zalatel 382-5427 [madowl@nevia.net](mailto:madowl@nevia.net)
- Bird-a-thon Co-chairs: Karl and Carmen Jungbluth
- Conservation Chair: Linda Bystrak 597-3926 [pcpartner.net](mailto:pcpartner.net)
- Education Co-Chairs: Carol and Galin Berrier
- Field Trip Chair: Jon Bahrenfus 432-3396
- Membership Chair: Mark Widrechner 233-1532 [mpwskd@aol.com](mailto:mpwskd@aol.com)
- Program Chair: John Snyder 232-8824 [JESnyder@ix.netcom.com](mailto:JESnyder@ix.netcom.com)
- Publicity Chair: Mary Doud 296-2178
- Publications & Electronic Media Chair: Rebecca Shivvers 292-0691 [shivvers@ameslab.gov](mailto:shivvers@ameslab.gov)
- Special Publications Chair: Joyce Bahrenfus 432-3396
- Service & Special Projects Co-Chairs: Karl and Carmen Jungbluth

#### BBAS Web Site:

<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~shivvers/bluestem.html>

#### National Audubon Society Web Site:

<http://www.audubon.org>

#### Iowa Audubon State Director:

Paul Zeph [pzeph@audubon.org](mailto:pzeph@audubon.org)

Iowa Bird Sightings Hotline—1-319-338-9881

## Out and About in Story County —Colo Bog Wetlands Complex —aka—Colo Ponds

Hank Zaletel

It's official, the DNR has erected new signs on all the parcels of the Colo Ponds. The area is now called the Colo Bog Wetlands Complex.

Waterfowl took advantage of the new habitat and new wetland impoundment at one of the Colo Ponds this summer. It is located three miles east of Colo on the Lincoln Highway (E-41). Turn south on the gravel road, go over the railroad tracks, a parking lot for the marsh is on the right side.

Once or twice a week, I would walk around the entire marsh. Each week there would be thousands of new wildflowers in bloom, making the trip worthwhile, even if I didn't see any birds or wildlife.

Early in June, immature Hooded Mergansers began to show up. One, two, five, fourteen—whether they bred there or they were immature, male vagrants, it probably won't ever be known. They were there for about three weeks and then they disappeared.

Equally baffling were the three Snow Geese—two Snows and one Blue—that spent the entire summer there. I guess it was the appealing habitat and the overcrowding up north that contributed to their stay here.

On my last walk in the second week of August, I found four broods of young Mallards. The hen immediately went into the water and began her broken wing act to distract me from her young which were still on the shore.

In addition to the Mallards, broods of Blue-wing Teal and Shovelers were found. The Shovelers were the first recorded nesting in recent time. Coots produced three broods and Pied-billed Grebes one.

Earlier this year, John Snyder asked why more Spotted Sandpiper young were not found. Steve Dinsmore replied that most people were not in the right habitat or at the right time. This year there were two pairs here. On my last trip, I found one juvenile Spotted Sandpiper.

Other resident birds include Bobolinks, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows. On one out of every two trips here, Black Terns were seen skimming over the water.

If you have not yet visited this wonderful place, take some time to wander—you have to get out of your car and walk in—and view the wonderful flora and fauna that can be found here.

## Conservation Corner

Linda Bystrak, Conservation Chair

### The Iowa NatureMapping Program

Jason O'Brien, Guest Contributor

Iowa has become the third state to implement a new type of wildlife monitoring program, behind Washington and Virginia. This new program, known as NatureMapping, is designed to give participants the "basics" of how to collect information on common wildlife species in order to contribute to a statewide effort to map Iowa's biodiversity. There are not enough professionals, time, or funding to conduct an inventory of all the nation's flora and fauna without broader help. One way to achieve the needed inventory is to involve an interested public—that's what NatureMapping is all about. In Iowa, the program is directed by Dr. Jim Pease, ISU Extension Wildlife Specialist and coordinated by Jason O'Brien, Extension Wildlife Assistant.

The NatureMapping Program is a hands-on program that is growing and evolving. For the first year of the program in Iowa, we are concentrating on terrestrial vertebrate species. In future years, we expect to add an aquatic module that includes mussels and other invertebrates, a terrestrial invertebrate module, and, eventually, a plant module.

Individuals, schools, and other community groups can all participate. Individuals can record wildlife observations around their home, at their feeders, or any other place they enjoy wildlife. School participation, depending on the type of project chosen, can fulfill a valuable service to their community as well as engage students in a real and practical project of data collection and analysis. Communities may wish to preserve or restore sites: a species diversity 'report card' is the way to start building long-term plans. And, mapping species diversity is an important early step towards progressive community planning.

If you are interested in becoming a NatureMapper and would like to know when the next workshop is, please contact me, Jason O'Brien, at 515/294-7222 or by e-mail: [natty@iastate.edu](mailto:natty@iastate.edu). Involving the public in 'finding the pieces of the puzzle' is what NatureMapping is all about. We can all be a part of keeping Iowa's common wildlife common.

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NatureMapping Co-director  
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## Bird's-Eye View— Nature Observations From the Bluebird Bed & Breakfast

*Carmen and Karl Jungbluth*

August 1, 1999- The recent heat seemed to slow down the bird activity, but the seed is still disappearing from our feeders. One of the benefits of feeding birds in the summer is that we get to see the babies up close. The Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers are getting pretty independent by now. We also see the young Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, who look a lot like the females, and young Cardinals. If you think birds quiet down in the summer, you should hear the baby Blue Jays. What a bunch of whiners and beggars! The Red-winged Blackbirds are now completely gone, after being so conspicuous along the roadside while they nested. With the thick undergrowth, we occasionally hear, but seldom see the Yellowthroat, Thrasher, Catbird and Indigo Buntings, but they're around. A young Rufous-sided Towhee just showed up under the lilac bush, and seemed inclined to chase off every other bird in the area. We see the Red-tailed Hawk every day, too, and can hear the screeching of the immature which was fledged just across the creek.

Midsummer brought its share of rare bird excitement to our neighborhood. A Red-breasted Nuthatch showed up at our feeders on July 12 and 13, while on July 24th, a Carolina Wren sang briefly in the yard. Just down the road on July 16th, we discovered a pair of Blue Grosbeaks and young just off the nest! The grosbeaks brought a number of excited birders to our neighborhood as we watched them for a week.

## Log On and Be Counted for Great Backyard Bird Count 2000

Audubon and Cornell Need Families, Classrooms, to Put their Bird Sightings on the Map

New York, NY August 9, 1999—The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology urgently need the help of North Americans of all ages to count birds this winter. By participating in Great Backyard Bird Count 2000, February 18-21, bird watchers, regardless of skill level will help scientists document the status and the health of our winter bird populations at the turn of the millennium at the start of spring migrations.

Taking part is as easy as 1,2,3. The Cornell Lab <<<http://birds.cornell.edu>>> and the National Audubon Society, <<<http://www.audubon.org>>>, ask everyone—kids, adults, seniors, families, classrooms, and community groups—to count the birds they see at their backyard bird feeders, local parks, and other areas. Participants then enter their reports online at *BirdSource* <<<http://birdsource.org>>>, a user-friendly, state-of-the-art website developed by the Cornell Lab and Audubon.

This year *BirdSource* encourages participants to be especially aware of Bald Eagles. "In light of the proposed removal of the Bald Eagle from the list of Endangered and Threatened species, we encourage

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## Board Report

*Mary Doud, Secretary*

The board met on June 20 at Kay Niyo's house and made plans for programs and field trips for 1999/2000.

The committee chairs were reorganized and updated. Linda Bystrak is the new Conservation Chair. Jon Bahrenfus replaces Kevin Healy as Field Trip Chair. And, Karl and Carmen Jungbluth are the new Bird-a-thon Coordinators. The board agreed to discuss strategic planning in general and form a committee for the 1999/2000 season. The strategic planning committee will determine our goals and if we want to do more special projects, hands on community projects (more involvement with members and city/county parks and rec; i.e., weed clean-up at Brookside Park), and/or choose local areas to preserve. John Pohlman, Karl Jungbluth, Mary Doud, and Linda Bystrak are on the committee.

Executive Director, Paul Zeph, needs time commitments for education programs and set up of the Army Corps of Engineers' building as a center and office. Finalizing the use of the building is still pending. The State Office would like to coordinate activities in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of Earth Day. Past activities include city education fairs, school programs, and outdoor workdays and programs.

Ideas for the \$2,050 in proceeds from the 1999 Bird-a-thon include more *Audubon Adventures* materials for classrooms, education videos and/or posters, teacher scholarships to Audubon camps, student scholarships to children's Audubon camps, Y-Camp for bird education programs, training and registration support for local environmental teams to attend competitions, and purchase binoculars, guides, feeders, etc. for classrooms and bird education programs. There was a suggestion that we have a binocular drive to collect old, but functioning binoculars to lend out.

*If you would like to help on any committee, contact the chairperson, or if you have any concerns, issues, or information you would like brought before the board, please give it to any board member at least one week before the next meeting so it will get on the agenda. Thanks.*

## Everyone's Invited to the First Annual Iowa Audubon Conference

*October 22 & 23*

Iowa's first all-Audubon conference promises to be a day and a half of Audubon sharing, learning, camaraderie, and lots of fun! With a variety of workshops, field trips, speakers, and entertainment, this gathering will appeal to every Audubon member's interest. Look for details and registration materials in the September issue of the Iowa Audubon state newsletter, or contact the state office at 515-267-0701.

# Big Bluestem Audubon Society

## Events Calendar—Fall 1999

All events are free and open to the public.

- General meetings are held Thursday evenings in Room 2532, Veterinary Medicine Building, Iowa State University, beginning at 7:30 p.m.
- Field trip participants meet in the west parking lot of the ISU Design Center. Check the newsletter or with trip leaders to confirm time.

September

- 4—Errington Marsh, Big Creek Wildlife Refuge, Saylorville beaches, and upper reaches of Saylorville Lake. This is becoming a great annual Labor Day weekend trip to see fall shorebirds and waterfowl. Meet at 0800 at Kum and Go/BurgerKing parking lot at I35 and 13th Street in Ames. Trip leader: Hank Zaletel (515-382-5427).
- 10-12—Iowa Ornithologists' Union fall meeting, Forest Lake Camp, Ottumwa, Iowa. Held in conjunction with the Association of Field Ornithologists (AFO) and North American Banding Council (NABC). Contact Darlene Ayres (515-682-1697) for registration and information.
- 16—General Meeting: Ty Smedes, "Trapping and Banding Raptors on the Upper Mississippi River, Wisconsin," 7:30 p.m.
- 25—Grammar Grove Wildlife Area, Marshall County. View hawks and other migrants with Beth and Mark Prescholdt. Meet at the site at 0900. From I-35, go east on E18 to Bangor, stay on E18 north until it turns east. Go about 2 miles east on E18, turn south at the brown sign for Grammar Grove. Turn west at second right, which is entrance to park. Bring binoculars, lunch, lawn chair, bug repellent. Trip leaders: Carol and Galin Berrier (515-965-8242).

October

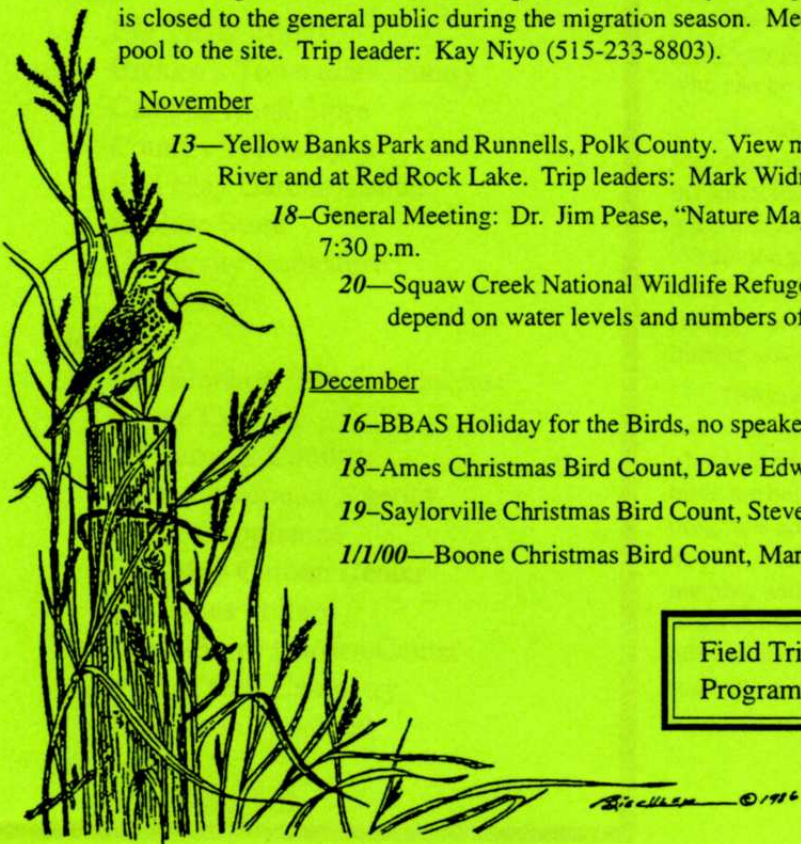
- 2—Doolittle Prairie, Story County. Migrating songbirds and gorgeous native prairie. Meet at 0800 at ISU Design Center Parking lot. Trip leader: Kevin Healy (515-233-5914).
- 21—General Meeting: Mark Vitosh, "Look at the bird in that tree. Which tree? That tree! Which tree?," 7:30 p.m.
- 22&23—Iowa Audubon Fall Conference, Y-Camp near Boone. Contact Iowa Audubon at (515-276-0701).
- 30—Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Kossuth County. Refuge manager will lead a special tour of the refuge, which is closed to the general public during the migration season. Meet at 0800 at ISU Design Center Parking lot. Will car pool to the site. Trip leader: Kay Niyo (515-233-8803).

November

- 13—Yellow Banks Park and Runnells, Polk County. View migrating song birds and waterfowl along the Des Moines River and at Red Rock Lake. Trip leaders: Mark Widrlechner (515-233-1532) & Kay Niyo (515-233-8803).
- 18—General Meeting: Dr. Jim Pease, "Nature Mapping of Iowa and Tales of an Animal Ecologist," 7:30 p.m.
- 20—Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Missouri or DeSoto Bend NWR, Iowa. This trip will depend on water levels and numbers of geese. Call trip leader Kay Niyo (515-233-8803).

December

- 16—BBAS Holiday for the Birds, no speaker, the Story County Conservation Center, 7:00 p.m.
- 18—Ames Christmas Bird Count, Dave Edwards (515-292-3790).
- 19—Saylorville Christmas Bird Count, Steve Dinsmore (970-482-5264) [steve\\_dinsmore@usgs.gov](mailto:steve_dinsmore@usgs.gov).
- 1/1/00—Boone Christmas Bird Count, Mark Widrlechner (515-233-1532).



Field Trip Chair	Jon Bahrenfus	432-3396
Program Chair	John Snyder	232-8824

## 1999 BBAS Bird-a-thon Raises Over \$4,100 !

*Karl and Carmen Jungbluth,  
Birdathon Co-Coordinator*

Bird-a-thon 1999 was a huge success as we raised \$4,145 for local education programs and the Iowa Audubon State Office. Thanks to EVERYONE who helped out! The chapter totalled 180 bird species in six counties. People are learning there really are a lot of birds in the local area, and where the habitat is located. Twenty-three people birded and we had fun, more than doubling last year's dollar total. Mike Havlik and Amy Yoakum saw the most birds with 110 species, but other teams were close behind at 109. Kevin Healy raised over \$1,000. Thank you Kevin!!

Twenty business sponsors increased our visibility and opened doors for future partnerships. Over 100 individual sponsors heard the Audubon message, and they enjoyed giving! Publicity reached Ames, Boone, and Des Moines newspapers. Some newspapers ran stories with photos. A newspaper reporter accompanied one team, and he wants to go again next year. We are gaining the confidence to set higher goals on future projects.

Thanks to those who went to businesses for sponsorships and prizes—Mary Doud, Kevin Healy, Joyce Bahrenfus, and Sherry Dragula. We can't forget our Business Sponsors—say thanks the next time you shop there.

### Thanks to our BBAS Bird-a-thon '99 Business Sponsors

#### Ames

Big Table Books  
Brekke's Town and Country  
Campus Book Store  
Country Landscapes  
Earl May Garden Center  
Explore Store  
University Bookstore  
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#### Boone

The Bluebird Bed & Breakfast  
Boone Cellular  
CT Farm & Country  
Duffee Insurance Agency  
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Earl May Garden Center  
Dr. James Pollard  
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Thompson Financial

#### Mt. Ayr

Woodlink, Ltd.

## Cyber Birding—Surf'n the Net with Paul and Kevin

*By Paul Bystrak and Kevin Healy*

Welcome to CYBER BIRDING, a new feature of the Big Bluestem Audubon Newsletter. What we hope to do in this column is to provide some ideas of places you can go in cyberspace to enhance your birding experiences. The Internet contains a vast amount of information, so if you are looking for details on a potential birding location, need to buy some new equipment, want more information on a bird species, or whatever it is you need: it is probably on the Internet. All you have to do is find it!

This column won't be about how to use your computer. We assume that you have a minimal amount of skill in that regard. Instead, in each issue we will cover a site, or group of similar sites, and tell you what to expect there; suggesting ways to use it to improve your birding experiences.

The Internet is frighteningly literal. To access the sites we discuss, you have to type in the URL (address) exactly as it appears in this column. If you have trouble, check your entry - you have probably made a typographical error.

Remember, cyberspace is fascinating, but no replacement for the real world! Get out there and see some real birds! And then post your sightings all over the Internet... And if you have a topic you would like to see covered, or a favorite site that could be featured, be sure to e-mail us at [pbystrak@pcpartner.net](mailto:pbystrak@pcpartner.net) or [khealy@ames.net](mailto:khealy@ames.net).

Appropriately, we will start with the Home Page of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society.

The URL for this site is: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~shivvers/bluestem.html>. The Webmaster is Rebecca Shivvers, who can be reached at [shivvers@ameslab.gov](mailto:shivvers@ameslab.gov).

The site is fairly typical for a local bird club. It has several features that could be of use to birders, especially those who live in central Iowa, or who expect to travel to that area. For instance, it has all the back issues of the club Newsletter. These contain, in addition to the usual club business, columns on Conservation issues, local birding spots, field trip reports, and so on. By reading these, you can get a pretty good idea of where to go birding and what to expect at the different seasons.

The site also contains a list of the officers of the club, who would be good contacts if you were new in the area. There is a bird hot line phone number that you can call to see what good birds are being seen in Iowa. And a list of upcoming meeting programs and field trips, making this a good place to find out how to meet other birders in the Ames area. Or if you are a member with a memory like mine, it is a good place to find out when the next meeting is or possibly a faster way to find the officers' phone numbers or e-mail addresses. It is not hyperlinked to other birding sites, so we will save a discussion on hyperlinking for a future column.

# Notes from the State Office

*Paul Zeph, Executive Director*

## Iowa Audubon in the Next Millennium

It is fortuitous that the Iowa Audubon state office was launched on the eve of the new millennium. Most states do not have a state office yet—there are only 22 at present—and will not be able to ring in 2000 with a statewide plan to promote the Audubon Cause. As our calendar enters a new age, so does Audubon in Iowa with exciting new directions and unlimited potential!

One millennium event that is fast approaching will help us reach a lot of people with the Audubon message of habitat protection—Earth Day 2000! April 22 will mark the 30th anniversary of Earth Day. Knowing that educators, youth, and general public interest in Earth Day 2000 will be extremely high, Audubon is spearheading an “Iowa Earth Day 2000 Education Coalition” to combine resources and focus attention throughout the 1999/2000 school year on the inclusive theme of “Helping a Habitat.”

The coalition’s goal is “one million Iowans taking action to help a habitat.” With schools, conservation groups, individuals, agencies, businesses, and landowners all doing something at a public park, roadside, schoolyard, farm, or backyard, our goal of a million Iowans doing something to help a habitat is very possible.

What can you do now to help the campaign and promote habitat awareness and action? Begin talking about “helping a habitat” for Earth Day. What can the chapter do? What can you and your coworkers do? Does the company you work for have a space that could use some bird boxes and another tree or two? Can you do something with your neighbors? Do you know someone that works for your city parks department, or is a landowner in need of some habitat enhancement ideas? It will take months to plan exciting activities that will make a lasting impact, so it’s not too soon to start now!

Iowa Audubon and the coalition is getting the ball rolling, but the success of Earth Day 2000 will depend on all of us lending a hand to plan local events, publicizing Earth Day to our respective members, and taking a personal action to help a habitat.

Working together we can achieve our goal of one million Iowans taking meaningful action for habitat, and hundreds of thousands of people more aware of their environment. How’s that for a fun way to kick off the millennium?

## Meet your new committee chair

Linda Bystrak was born in California, but spent most of her life on the east coast. She and her husband moved to Huxley, IA in 1998. Linda has taught life sciences K-college in three states, been accepted by ISU grad school (at the age of 50+) to work on a third degree, and enjoys volunteer work involving natural history topics.

# MacBride Raptor Project

*Eric Haley*

As some of you may know, the MacBride Raptor Project is conducting an Osprey reintroduction program at Lake MacBride. The program is now in its third year, and we would appreciate your help in the form of reports of any sightings of Osprey in the Lake MacBride area over the next couple of months. (Lake MacBride is located in Johnson County, roughly between North Liberty and Solon.)

Each year, four birds are fledged from a hack tower located in the MacBride Nature Recreation Area off County Road F-28. The last of this year’s birds left the tower about two weeks ago. Currently, most of the birds can be found on the stretch of the Coralville Reservoir from the Mehaffey Bridge on County Road F28, north to the spillway that separates Lake MacBride from the reservoir. Within the next few weeks, they will start to range further; one bird has already left the immediate area of the hack tower. Volunteers for the osprey project go out twice a day to get sightings of the birds, but this will soon become more difficult as the area to cover becomes larger.

The four birds that have been released this year can be identified by a (non-toxic) colored mark on the wrist of one wing (when perched, this mark appears on the “shoulder” of the wing; in flight it is on the crook of the wing). The colors are blue or pink, on either the left or right wing; the four birds are thus called Right Blue, Right Pink, Left Blue, and Left Pink.

Right Blue is the bird that has moved out of the area, and has not been seen in about a week. Needless to say, we’d be very eager to hear about any sightings of this osprey.

In addition there are currently two other osprey in the area, an adult bird (identify immatures by the white edgings to the dark feathers on the back of the bird and the upperside of the wings, which gives the bird a scaly, mottled appearance; adults are solid dark above) and another bird in immature plumage. This immature is going through a molt, and lately has visibly been missing secondary flight feathers on each wing (close to the crook of the wing). This bird may be a return from the first year of the introduction program (1997), having spent the past year and a half in Central or South America. If so, it will have a silver band on EACH leg; we have an unconfirmed report that this is the case, but we need a better sighting. This bird may be our first return.

So in short, if you see an Osprey in the Lake MacBride area, check to see if you can see either the colored mark on the wrist or, if unmarked, bands on the legs (the marked birds are also banded). To report a sighting, you can call the Raptor Center directly at 319-398-5495, email me at [jon-haley@uiowa.edu](mailto:jon-haley@uiowa.edu), or just post to the list. The more specific you can be about where you spotted the bird the better.

We appreciate any help in getting sightings of these birds. They’re a real treat to watch. Although I’m merely a volunteer, I’ll be happy to try to answer any questions raised by this posting.

## Book Review

Kay Niyo

Kenneth P. Able, Ed. *Gatherings of Angels*. 1999. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. 193 pp. Hardcover. Available at the Iowa State University Library.

This book is recommended for birders who are interested in the grandeur of bird migration. Ken Able states "Twice each year, billions of birds, entire species, swarm across the globe, traveling thousands of miles as they follow the sun to populate regions that are habitable for only part of each year. The spatial scope of these migrations exceeds all other biological phenomena." He has assembled a group of leading experts in the Western Hemisphere to provide information for the layperson who wants to learn more about the basic biology of bird migration. There are descriptions, photos, and maps of the great spring flights of songbirds across the Gulf of Mexico, massing of Sandhill cranes on the Platte River, kettles of a million Broadwings, vast intercontinental flights of shorebirds from their staging areas, and many other amazing descriptions of migratory research. Early radar operators called the echoes from birds and other unknown targets "angels." As he states, "There is something almost miraculous about their explosive appearance just after dark as the woods, fields, marshes, and mud flats disgorge their avian contents into the night sky. The numbers are sometimes incredible, hundreds of thousands of individual birds crossing a line one mile long every hour for most of the night." Hence, the name of the book, *Gatherings of Angels*.

Continued from page 4—Log On...

our birders to pay attention not only to common backyard birds, but also to our country's national symbol," said Frank Gill, Senior Vice President for Science at National Audubon. "This citizen science project will allow all Americans to monitor vigilantly the health and abundance of their national bird with an immediacy and breadth never before possible."

He goes on to say that "We're especially enthusiastic about the potential of citizen science through the Internet. "It means we'll have that many more eyes out there scanning the North and Latin American landscapes, counting for the birds. We need every U.S. zip code and Canadian Postal Code to be represented on this year's maps."

Great Backyard Bird Count is a perfect family or youth group activity. Last year, classrooms all across the U.S. logged on. The updated site features a "Let's Talk About Birds" list of words associated with birds and their environments; "Bird-Brained Bibliography" suggests reference books, field guides, and novels for educators, students, and beginning birders. New additions include *How to Birdwatch*, an introduction to birding, using binoculars and field guides; and *Where in the World Were These Birds?* a geography/research lesson. Site visitors can view colorful bird images, hear bird vocalizations, and see trend data from last year's backyard count and other citizen-science projects, such as Project FeederWatch and Christmas Bird Count.

Directions are provided at the site. Participation is free. No registration is necessary. For more information, prospective counters can call toll-free -800-843-BIRD (2473).

## Bird Drop-Ins

August 13—There was an Olive-sided Flycatcher south of Boone this evening. Also, numerous Common Yellowthroats by the creek. It feels like fall migration weather out there!

August 15—Here's some of the more notable birds we saw at the Ledges State Park this morning. Pileated Woodpecker (seen and heard clearly), Carolina Wren, Broad-winged Hawk, Great Blue Heron (17), Great Egret, Wilson's Warbler, Chestnut-side Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Waterthrush (3). The wren and hawk were seen up the canyon, but the other were on the river or in the previously flooded willows near the river and the creek. It is now dry enough to walk in the willows, and that's where the warblers were today.

August 16—A Piping Plover was on the east pond at Harrier Marsh south of Ogden.

August 18—Stephen and James Dinsmore observed an adult Arctic Tern at the Sandpiper Beach area of Saylorville Reservoir. They watched the bird from 1730-1755 with a small flock of Forester's and Black Terns to the east of the beach. The bird was just beginning to molt. **This is a potential first state record!** It was last spotted August 20 in the same area.



## Clip and Join

Do you have a friend who has a burning desire to learn about birds and the natural world, and wants to meet other like-minded individuals? Or, are you looking for that unique and special gift? Don't wait any longer, just clip the membership application form below and send it in.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

New member of the National Audubon Society (receive the *Audubon* magazine, the *Big Bluestem Flyer*, membership card, and participate in all Big Bluestem Audubon Society activities)—\$20. Please make your check payable to: National Audubon Society and include "Chapter Code H-57" on the check.

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Subscribe to the *Big Bluestem Flyer* for one year and participate in some Big Bluestem Audubon Society activities—\$5.50. Restrictions are that you will not be a National Audubon Society member or have voting privileges, and you cannot be an officer or committee chair. Please make your check payable to: Big Bluestem Audubon Society.

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NOTE: Please do not use this form for renewals to the National Audubon Society.



*Continued page 1—Coming Field Trips*

From I-35, go east on E18 to Bangor, stay on E18 north until it turns east. Go about 2 miles east on E18, turn south at the brown sign for Grammar Grove. Turn west at second right, which is entrance to park. Bring binoculars, lunch, lawn chair, bug repellent. Trip leaders: Carol and Galin Berrier (965-8242).

**October**

**2—Doolittle Prairie, Story County.** Migrating songbirds and gorgeous native prairie. Meet at 0800 at ISU Design Center Parking lot. Trip leader: Kevin Healy (233-5914).

**30—Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Kossuth County.** Refuge manager will lead a special tour of the refuge, which is closed to the general public during the migration season. Meet at 0800 at ISU Design Center Parking lot. Will car pool to the site. Trip leader: Kay Niyo (233-8803).

**Seasonal Prairie Report-4 July***Carl Kurtz*

The summer solstice may occur on June 21, but summer on the prairie does not really start until after the 4th of July. Perhaps it is because the prairie is generally short in June as compared with its increasing height in July, or maybe it is the increasing profusion of flowering plants in mid- and late summer.

I noticed the change tonight when I happened upon a large colony of black-eyed Susan's that were in perfect form. Of course they are common and ordinary in one sense of the word. Their color was enchanting in the evening light—like rays of sunlight glowing against the green backdrop of grasses and evening shadows.

When we begin to appreciate the ordinary events of each day, we see the importance and interrelationship of all life forms. Each has its place and time, marking the season. Black-eyed Susan's are the beginning of summer on the prairie, if you have not visited your favorite prairie lately, now is the time.

**Newsletter Deadline: October 15, 1999  
at 2 p.m.**

***If you have an "X" after your name on your mailing label, this will be your last issue of the Flyer unless you renew.***

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