

Big Bluestem Flyer

February, 1995 Vol. 30, No.5

Monthly Meeting

Natural Areas of Ames- A Closer Look at Our Own Backyard by Bill Norris

**Thursday, February 16, 7:30 p.m., Room 2532, Veterinary Medicine
Building, Iowa State University**

Bill Norris, a graduate student in the Botany Department at I.S.U., will share the results of three years of field work to assess the biological diversity and integrity of lands in and near Ames. His work has been supported by the City of Ames, I.S.U. and the Iowa Science Foundation and was initiated because of concerns about converting natural and agricultural lands to residential and commercial development. Bill will describe the ways he has measured the natural qualities of land and the most exciting things he discovered along the way. At a time when Ames is reviewing its land use plan, Bill's findings are especially important.

Field Trip

Saturday, February 18, 9 a.m.- Trip to Des Moines River Valley, Boone

Co. Meet at the west parking lot of the ISU Design Center at 9 a.m. We will search the bottomlands for sparrows, finches, and other seed-eating birds. Wear boots and be prepared for thick weeds, burs, and the possibility of nearby hunters (blaze orange would be an advantage). Contact Mark Widrlechner for further information, 233-1532.

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY- BOARD MEMBERS

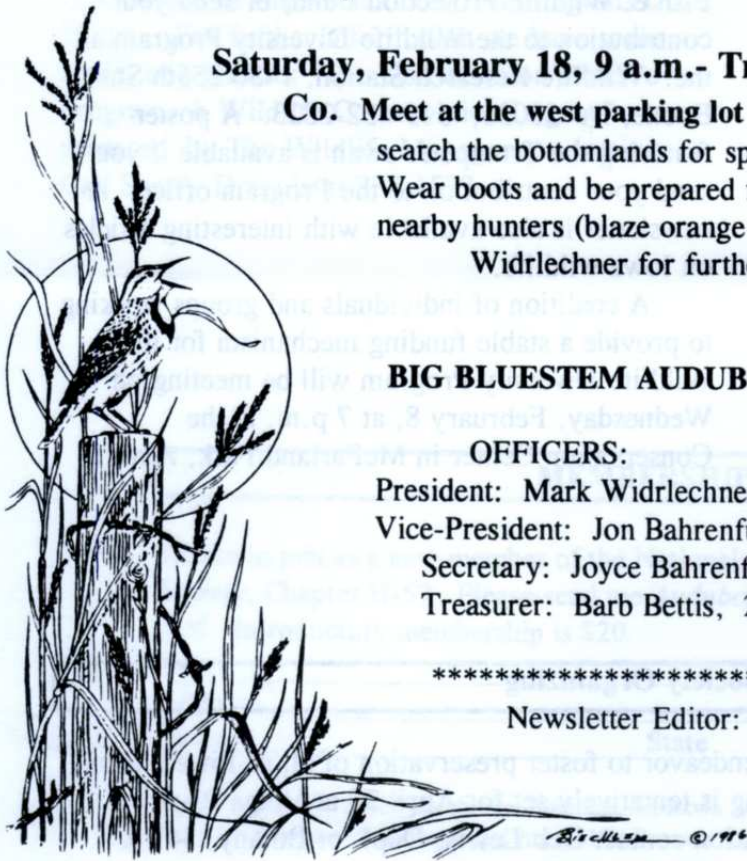
OFFICERS:

President: Mark Widrlechner, 233-1532
Vice-President: Jon Bahrenfus, 432-3396
Secretary: Joyce Bahrenfus, 432-3396
Treasurer: Barb Bettis, 232-4863

Additional BOARD MEMBERS:

Kay Niyo, 233-8803
Rebecca Shivers, 292-0691
Lloyd Crim, 432-5026
Don Sanderson, 232-2227
Stan Cyran, 292-4876

Newsletter Editor: Sherry Dragula, 233-1532



Bird Count Reports

More than 30 intrepid birders travelled the roads and trails of Boone County on New Year's Day with the goal of counting all the birds in the Count circle. They were helped by 10 feeder watchers. A cold, northwest wind and thick weeds and brush were challenging, but observers saw a record 57 species. Record numbers of Mourning Doves, Blackbirds, Juncos, Goldfinches and nine other species were seen. There was a bumper crop of weed seeds in the bottomlands making them an ideal spot to find seed eaters. On February 18, BBAS will sponsor a field trip to the Des Moines River Valley to see if we can relocate these very large flocks of sparrows and finches.

The Saylorville Count recorded 74 species. There was no open water on the count so the number of species was down from past years. Good numbers of raptors were seen and a white-winged crossbill was seen.

REAP License Plates Available

Iowa's newest license plates will not only dress-up your vehicle with our state bird and flower, they will also improve a vast array of our most precious natural resources, many very close to your home. The money raised from the natural resources plates will go to the Resource Enhancement And Protection Fund, better known as REAP-- Iowa's nationally acclaimed program for improving city, county and state parks, fish and wildlife, soil and water conservation, historic resources, roadside vegetation management, and environmental education. To buy a set of the standard, sequentially numbered natural resource plates, take your current plates and registration to your county treasurer and request the natural resource plates. The initial cost of the plate is \$35; and there is a \$10 annual renewal fee. Personalized plates are also available.

Funds Needed for the Wildlife Diversity Program

The Iowa Department of Natural Resource's Nongame Program has changed its name to the Wildlife Diversity Program. It is still the program responsible for the 400+ species of non-harvested wildlife in Iowa. Funds for the program come only from contributions made on your Iowa Tax form or directly to the Program's Office.

The Wildlife Diversity Program conducts educational events such as Bald Eagle Days, Hawk Watches, and presentations to groups such as Audubon. They conduct research on neotropical migrant birds, toads, bats, wetland birds, & red-shouldered hawks. They are responsible for reintroduction programs for otters, Peregrine falcons and Trumpeter swans. The Wildlife Diversity Program produces publications such as the Watchable Wildlife Guide, Iowa's Breeding Bird Atlas, and booklets on amphibians & reptiles, and bats.

Without your contributions, none of this would happen. Please make a generous contribution on your Iowa Tax Form (look for the ✓ mark on line 62 of the IA 1040 form, the Fish & Wildlife Protection Fund) or send your contribution to the Wildlife Diversity Program at the: Wildlife Research Station, 1436 255th St., Boone, IA 50036, 515-432-2823. A poster featuring the Trumpeter swan is available if you send your contribution to the Program office. A newsletter is also available with interesting articles on Iowa wildlife.

A coalition of individuals and groups working to provide a stable funding mechanism for the Wildlife Diversity Program will be meeting on Wednesday, February 8, at 7 p.m. at the Conservation Center in McFarland Park, Ames.

Iowa Native Plant Society Organizing

The Iowa Native Plant Society is forming. It will endeavor to foster preservation of all of Iowa's native plants and plant communities. An organizational meeting is tentatively set for April 29 at Volga River Recreation Area, near Fayette, Iowa. For more information contact Deb Lewis, Dept. of Botany, 341 A Bessey, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011. Phone: 515-294-9499.

Conservation Reserve Program

At our January meeting, Jim Pease, Extension Wildlife Biologist, presented an excellent program on the importance of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to wildlife. Among CRP's benefits: 1) saving 40 million tons of Iowa soil per year, 2) increase in grassland bird species including pheasants, W. meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrow, bobwhite quail, 3) Blocks of CRP have increased duck nest success, 4) Controlled grazing helping wildlife, 5) Filter strips along streams benefit aquatic species, 6) New wetland acres provide habitat.

The Conservation Reserve Program has created more than 36 million acres of wildlife habitat nationwide (2.2 million acres in Iowa). Yet most of these grasslands and wetlands could be lost if Congress and the administration fail to preserve this federal agricultural program in the 1995 Farm Bill.

Your U.S. Senators and Representative need to know that CRP is a highly successful program where farmers, taxpayers, wildlife and the environment all come out winners. Addresses: U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510 U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. For further information we have some copies of a booklet "The Conservation Reserve Program: A Wildlife Conservation Legacy" prepared by The Wildlife Management Institute. Call Sherry Dragula at 233-1532.

Ames Land Use Policy Plan

The City of Ames is in the process of developing a new Land Use Plan for the City and surrounding 2 mile zone. Issues such as how much growth to plan for, where to put new development, what kind of development will be encouraged, transportation strategies and how parks and natural areas will be dealt with are all part of the Land Use Plan. The City has come out with a list of proposed Goals and Objectives for the Plan. A community-wide meeting is scheduled for February 7, 1995 at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium of City Hall to comment on this plan. If you would like further information on the plan call Sherry Dragula, 233-1532.

Spring River Conference - March 17-19

Timed to coincide with the spectacular gathering of many thousands of sandhill cranes along the Platte River in central Nebraska, the annual Audubon Spring River Conference sponsored by the West Central Regional Office will be held March 17-19 at the Ramada Inn in Kearney, Nebraska. The focus of the 1995 conference will include the Platte, Niobrara and Missouri River ecosystems and associated wildlife with emphasis on sandhill cranes. The importance of the Conservation Reserve and Wetland Reserve Programs to wildlife will also be featured. A reception with the National Audubon Society Board of Directors will held Friday evening and field trips are offered daily to see the cranes. For a Conference brochure call Sherry Dragula, 233-1532.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I'd like to join as a new member of the National Audubon Society and of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society, Chapter H-57. Please send me *Audubon magazine*, *The Big Bluestem Flyer* and my membership card. Introductory membership is \$20.

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Please make your check payable to: National Audubon Society and include chapter code H-57 on the check. Send To: Mark Widrechner, Membership Chair, 2121 Burnett Ave., Ames, Iowa 50010

Upcoming Events

February 16, Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Meeting: Natural Areas of Ames, Bill Norris
February 18, Saturday, 9 a.m., Field Trip to Des Moines River Valley
March 16, Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Meeting: California Desert by Wolfgang Oesterreich
March 18, Saturday, Field Trip to see waterfowl at Little Wall Lake (or Bay's Branch)
March 31-April 1, Friday eve. through Sat., Trip to see Prairie chickens in S. Iowa
April 8, Saturday, Field Trip to see waterfowl at Hendrickson's Marsh & Colo Ponds

Iowa Birdline

The Iowa Birdline is a recorded summary of interesting bird sightings updated weekly. You can call the Birdline at **319-338-9881**, and hear a recorded message and leave a message of your interesting sightings.

Bird Finding Guide for Missouri Available

The Audubon Society of Missouri has published a bird finding guide for the state of Missouri. It is 177 pages and contains details on 128 outstanding areas including directions and what birds to look for at various times of the year. The guide also covers flora and non-avian fauna for each site. A Missouri bird check list is included. It can be ordered for \$10 plus \$1.50 postage from: Kay Palmer, 15100 S. Clinkenbeard Rd., Ashland, MO 65010. Phone:314-657-1910

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY
2121 BURNETT AVE.
AMES, IOWA 50010

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 131
AMES, IA