



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 5

May/June 2000

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society (BBAS) meetings are held monthly, September-May (except December) 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!

Featured Speaker—May 18 meeting: *Steve Lekwa, "The Skunk River Greenbelt"*

Steve Lekwa, Director of Story County Conservation, along with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Polk, Warren, and Dallas counties have been developing a plan for maintaining connections to our natural areas in this era of rapid growth in central Iowa. Through this collective effort, Dunbar-Jones Associates was hired. They have conducted numerous public meetings in the area and have developed a plan to help save our green spaces. Steve Lekwa will introduce that "Central Iowa Greenways Plan" to us. He will discuss that plan and the potential implementation strategies. These strategies will give us opportunities to get involved by letting our local government agencies know that these "Greenways" are important to birds and birders!

Featured Activity—June 3: *"Birders' Brunch at the Ledges State Park"*

Don't miss the annual Birders' Brunch at the Ledges State Park near Boone. Meet in the upper Ledges at 0800. We will hike down the hill and have breakfast in the lower Ledges. Bring your breakfast.

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, 232-8824, to confirm space and location.

Coming Field Trips: May & June

Jon Bahrenfus, Field Trip Chair

There are several good opportunities coming up to see lots of warblers and other birds, and to enjoy springtime in Iowa. Please join us on one of the exciting field trips.

May

6—BBAS Birdathon. Have fun with fellow birders and help raise money for habitat preservation and environmental education. Call Karl and Carmen Jungbluth for details (432-5057).

13—Iowa Statewide May Bird Count.

See page 9 this newsletter for more details or call Kevin Healy (233-5914).

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- Cyber Birding—

Bird Term of the Month: *Hovering*—a technique a bird uses for various reasons, including to search for food. The bird usually holds stationary in mid-air by rapidly flapping its wings.



View from the Altamont Moraine

Kay Niyo, President

The BBAS program year is drawing to a close, and it has been a fun year! At this writing we are looking forward to two more programs, a birdathon, and several other important activities. Our board and committees have worked very hard to assist

in the growth of the organization. Our Nominating Committee has selected a great slate of new officers and board members for your consideration at the May meeting. They will be an outstanding team to lead BBAS further along in its development. And the Budget Committee put together a very positive budget, which also will be presented to the membership. Both are included in this newsletter.

Thanks to many individuals, BBAS has had much success raising money to fund many worthy projects. The board just voted to provide a scholarship to send a 5th or 6th grade student to a Young Naturalist Workshop being held August 13 to 19 at the YMCA Camp near Boone. They also decided to donate \$500 to the Osprey Introduction Project at Saylorville Lake, which is a cooperative effort of Boone and Polk County Conservation Boards along with the Iowa DNR and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. See articles elsewhere in this newsletter regarding both projects. You can help with the Osprey project by building platforms, catching fish for food, observing the hatched young Osprey, feeding them, photographing them, and many other tasks. Most of this activity will take place in July and August.

A group of BBAS members enjoyed a recent trip to observe the Greater Prairie Chickens booming at the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. You will recall that BBAS contributed \$1,725 for additional land acquisition for the preserve. DNR biologist, Mel Moe, told us about the recent acquisitions and the potential for additional adjoining land to be preserved. We learned that there are several other known leks on nearby private lands.

We are hoping that the annual birdathon, so ably co-chaired by Karl and Carmen Jungbluth, will be as successful this year as it was last year. Everyone who participated had a great day searching for birds. And the resulting proceeds have allowed BBAS to contribute funds to several worthy projects. The board has set up a committee to develop procedures for submission of requests for BBAS funds. BBAS has not had excess funds until the past two years when we began our birdathons and a few other fundraising

projects. The board is developing a proper procedure to have in place by early summer so we can choose the best projects to fund with BBAS money.

We have a few fun trips coming up. Join us for the warbler walk on Mothers' Day, May 14. This is always a popular event. Hank will lead us again on May 27th to look for shorebirds at Colo Ponds and other wetlands. And don't miss hearing Steve Lekwa, Director of Story County Conservation, who will be discussing the latest developments with the Green Belt and other areas in Story County. Join us for our annual birder's breakfast at the Ledges on June 3rd. That always is a delightful walk to see many of our returned migrants and, hopefully, the Pileated Woodpeckers who have been nesting in the lower Ledges the past couple of years.

If you are looking for a special birding vacation this summer that isn't too far away, consider attending the American Birding Association's annual meeting in Fort Collins, Colorado June 26-July 2. They will be having many fascinating speakers and great field trips in beautiful Colorado.

And don't forget the Iowa Ornithologists' Union annual spring meeting, which will be held at Camp Ewalu near Strawberry Point the weekend of May

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Big Bluestem Audubon Society Officers and Committees

Officers:

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

Board Members:

- Carol Berrier 965-8242
- Mike Freiberg 233-8213 trogon70@hotmail.com
- Kevin Healy 233-5914 khealy@ames.net
- Stuart Huntington 296-0248 x1huntin@exnet.iastate.edu
- John Pohlman 232-6816

Committee Chairs:

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

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



Bird's-Eye View— Nature Observations From the Bluebird Bed & Breakfast

Carmen and Karl Jungbluth

March 1, 2000—Just like last year, we are having another very mild late winter. In fact, the first rush of “spring” migration is ahead of last year. As 10 inches of snow melted, geese, bluebirds, ducks, Bald Eagles, robins, redwings, killdeers, and flickers streamed north during the week of February 20. The bird activity last weekend was mesmerizing around our house. Carmen saw a dozen bluebirds in the front yard checking out the birdhouses. Canada Geese could be heard at any hour of the day or night. Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and flickers zoomed around the neighborhood.

This afternoon, Carmen watched in dismay as the winter resident Sharp-shinned Hawk captured one of our favorite backyard birds, a Downy Woodpecker. When will the Sharp-shin head north? The good news is, we still have numerous downys coming to the feeders.

April 1, 2000—Just like last month, and last year, the weather is still warm and dry. The grass is green and all would be well, if there was a little more moisture in the fields and some water in the seasonal wetlands. Around home, I've been chasing up a Woodcock lately at the edge of the woods. The bird bursts up with whistling wings. I've even heard some of their aerial display, but it doesn't seem like the displays have focused on any particular point. The robins are singing butthings appear to have settled down a bit since most of the migrating robins ^{OTMTM}-have headed north. During the past week, Song Sparrows sang a lot, and a Fox Sparrow and Field Sparrow were seen and heard out back.

At least four kinds of early wildflowers are making a good show in the woods, including some early Dutchman's Britches. And across the creek, the Great-horned Owls have two fuzzy white chicks. They stumble around in the nest and flex their stubby wings as the adult perches in a reclining position on the edge of the nest. I saw the chicks for the first time on March 12th.



Conservation Corner

*Linda Bystrak
Conservation Chair*

The Bird Watchers “Earth Day”

There are numerous bird conservation efforts occurring in North America. They include the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Colonial Waterbird Plan. There is also the Nature Conservancy Ecoregion Plans, USFWS Ecosystem Plans, about a dozen Joint Venture Implementation Plans, and an Important Bird Area project. Never before has there been so much effort put into managing birds!

So why, all of a sudden, are people so interested in managing birds? For years we managed waterfowl for hunting purposes. Over 3.2 million hunters in the U.S. have a lot of political power. But now we are also managing for non-game species, for shorebirds, for neo-tropical migrants, and for colonial waterbirds.

Partners in Flight (PIF) is one of the newest bird conservation plans, and is for non-game landbirds that are often not addressed or only incidentally addressed in other plans. It's original efforts were focused upon neo-tropical migrants flying between North America and Central and South America, but now it has grown to include all the non-game birds.

PIF is an unusual effort not just because of its objectives, but because of its partnerships. It is an international joint venture between government agencies at all levels, universities, dozens of conservation and birding groups, individuals, and property owners. And not just any property owners, but big property owners. A representative of the Cattleman's Association, representing thousands of private landowners is a member of PIF. Land managers from the various branches of the military, and the Bureau of Land Management are included in PIF. Companies like Weyerhaeuser, International Paper Co., Georgia Pacific, and a dozen other renewable resource industries are also members. These members meet periodically in local, regional, state, national and international committees to discuss issues such as management, monitoring, research, education and information dispersal.

The goal is to bring the land managers of government and private land in North, Central and South America together to manage their land for NON-GAME BIRDS! It is, in essence, the ultimate wildlife management plan because, to make it work, we have to protect all the various ecosystems where birds live. Of course, while we are doing that, we are also protecting the food, water and habitat of millions of other non-bird species.

Non-game birds are becoming the “umbrella group” under which we protect other flora and fauna. For centuries man has managed habitat for waterfowl, but in the 21st century we may well be attempting to manage wetlands, forests and grasslands for non-game birds. That is why PIF's “International Migratory Bird Day,” the second Saturday in May every year, should be the equivalent of “earth day” for birders everywhere.

For more PIF information be sure to visit www.partnersinflight.org/pifbcps.htm

It's Been Almost Two Years — How Are We Doing?

Paul Zeph

Iowa Audubon Executive Director

July 2000 will mark the two-year anniversary of Iowa Audubon, the state office of the National Audubon Society. It's been a very busy two years, with lots of planning, meetings, speeches, fundraising, and activities going on behind the scenes. It's time to step back ask a few questions: Are we having an impact? How is the education program coming? Are we finding the money needed to keep the state office running?

It's too soon for thorough analysis, but I can certainly shed a little light on how we're doing right now and what the next year ahead looks like!

Are we having an impact? Iowa Audubon is now known throughout the nonprofit conservation community, and is a partner in several DNR and federal government initiatives. We are regularly asked for input on policies, sought out for quotes in news articles, and requested as a participant on committees. The Audubon name has always carried weight, but now that organizations, agencies, and individuals have one number to call, it makes it easier to quickly use our name to weigh in on issues and to express our concerns. I regularly hear comments from folks in other organizations who are very happy and impressed that Audubon is directing resources to Iowa to support an office. I immediately tell them that the office wouldn't be here without the hard work and support of our chapters and members from throughout the state.

How is our education program coming? Last fall we launched the "Help a Habitat" campaign. With the support of REAP and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, we developed and are distributing copies of an education and action guide to teachers all across Iowa. Through this, and our website (www.helpahabitat.org), we are reaching tens of thousands of students and adults this year with basic, positive habitat information. As a result of our efforts, thousands of people will be involved in habitat improvement projects this year. In future years we can build on this foundation and conduct education campaigns targeting specific habitats or types of wildlife. In addition, we are seeking funding for bird education and action programs and for Audubon education staff at nature centers throughout Iowa.

Are we finding the money needed to keep the state office running? Since we started asking Audubon members to help build our Iowa Audubon effort, the number of donors has grown steadily. Each time I send out a mail appeal, I receive another pile of donations from members

who have never given to Audubon's Iowa program before! Our Board of Directors is growing as we add members with fundraising interest and experience, and we are getting help from a development consultant to connect us with new donors who are interested in Audubon's work. It's a slow and steady building process, and so far we've been able to cover our basic operating expenses. This next year, however, will be a crucial period for us to find donors who can support us with major gifts annually, and find a few foundations who can help us in our start-up phase.

We're doing great, thanks to you! Iowa Audubon is not just the state office, it is the combined effort of all the exciting and important work we all do across the state on behalf of the Audubon Cause. Audubon has never been stronger in Iowa, and over the next few years we'll become an even stronger and exciting force for habitat conservation!

Board Happenings

Mary Doud, Secretary

The mailing list could soon hit 500, possibly in May 2000. A motion to offer the 500th membership free, paid by BBAS. There is a National Audubon membership issue regarding where membership base and dues will go in the future. The current process will remain intact for 3 years (each chapter keeps the dues of any member they recruit—\$15 the first year, \$5.50 in the years after). After 3 years, each member must specify where their membership base is—the state office, their local chapter, or an Audubon center; and the dues will go to that entity, with National Audubon retaining \$10 to service that member. Any member can change his/her membership base. But if the member does not specify a base, the dues will go to the state office. These recommendations are causing concerns.

The state Audubon office is working on a possible Pelican Festival to be held in September at Saylorville Lake. The BBAS Board formed a Project Committee (Linda Bystrak, Donna Flanagan, Jim Dinsmore, and Marlene Erhesman) to develop a process for submitting project proposals to the board for consideration, prioritization, and recommendation. There are many projects to consider. Projects approved at this meeting included \$500 for the Osprey project, \$138 to purchase field guides for the Boone county Naturalist, and \$250 to sponsor a 5th/6th grade student to attend Y-camp workshop.

The board voted to support a candidate for Regional Representation to Audubon. The board approved the slated presented by the Nominating Committee, Mary Doud and Stu Huntington. They also approved a budget submitted by Budget Committee members John Pohlman, Donna Flanagan, and Mike Meetz.



Osprey Introduction

A cooperative effort of Boone and Polk County Conservation Boards along with the Iowa DNR and US Army Corps of Engineers

Would you like to see these awesome raptors on the Des Moines River or Saylorville Lake?
We need your help!

- To establish a breeding population, 4 birds per year for 4 years must be released. Each bird has a pricetag of \$500 plus supplies. Total cost for the project will be approximately \$15,000.
- Volunteers will be crucial to this project. If you or a group you are involved in are interested in helping out with the osprey, please call Joe Boyles at Polk County Conservation (515-323-5362) or Heather Freidhof at Boone County Conservation (515-795-2809) for volunteer opportunities.
- Ospreys are large, narrow-winged raptors that catch fish. They have unbelievable dives into the water to snatch up their favorite meal.
- Ospreys build nests in naturally tall, dead trees or artificially made platforms near large bodies of water.
- Ospreys have been found to be tolerant of humans and are easy to watch.
- A young osprey is held in a hacking tower to bond or imprint on a specific area. If successful, they will return to the imprinted area as breeding adults.
- Ospreys do not readily disperse to new homes. Introduction programs like this are vital in returning them to the state of Iowa.

Please detach and return

I would like to be a part of the Osprey Introduction by:

Donating my time OR Making a Pledge

I pledge:

\$1,000 \$500 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other

Name or Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Make checks payable to:
Boone Co. Cons. Foundation
1601 322nd Lane
Madrid, Iowa 50156

Thanks for your contribution!

Big Bluestem Audubon Society Budget

Income	Adopted 99-00	Proposed 00-01
National Audubon Society Rebate	1,900.00	2,100.00
Donations	80.00	50.00
Newsletters (projected income \$33)	50.00	75.00
Chapter Projects:		
Brekke's Coupons	150.00	150.00
<i>Birds of Story & Boone County</i> *Book Sales	105.00	500.00
Christmas Bird Count	0.00	175.00
Birds Unlimited coupon	0.00	75.00
T-shirt Sales	352.19	60.00
Raffles, Buttons	50.00	0.00
Bird-a-thon	2,000.00	5,000.00
Memorials	0.00	0.00
Other (Acct Interest; Insurance Adjustment)	30.00	0.00
Total	\$4,717.19	\$8,185.00
Expenses		
Newsletter (includes April/May)	\$1,435.00	\$1,700.00
Chapter Projects:		
Christmas bird count	0.00	175.00
Bird-a-thon	1,100.00	3,000.00
<i>Birds of Story & Boone County</i> Book Purchase	0.00	900.00
Donations/Dues		
Iowa Audubon State Office	00.00	400.00
Board Expenses	0.00	100.00
Projected IA Audubon dues	0.00	0.00
Insurance	195.00	275.00
Field Trips	0.00	0.00
Programs (includes April/May)	170.00	150.00
<i>Audubon Adventures</i>	1175.00	600.00
Other (account deposit fees, brochures)	100.00	20.00
Total	\$4,175.00	\$7,320.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	\$1,987.63	
Cash on hand as of 4-11-2000	\$3,337.78	

2000 North American Spring Bird Count

The 2000 North American Spring Bird Count will be held on Saturday, May 13. The Spring Count is modeled and administered in much the same way as the Christmas Bird Count except that tallies are made on a county-wide basis. Persons who are interested in participating either individually or in a group should contact Hank Zaletel (515/382-5427 (h); or at work (515/239-1200); or 800-262-0003, x1200 for further information.



Notes From the Field Trips

Field Trip to Kellerton—Kay Niyo, Trip Leader

Seventeen hardy birders showed up on the field trip on April 8 to view the Greater Prairie Chickens at Kellerton in Ringgold County after driving down to southern Iowa in a small snowstorm the previous night. When we arrived at the Prairie Chicken lek early Saturday morning, the birds were already out performing their courtship rituals. Spotting scopes were needed to get a good view, but we were well rewarded for our efforts. At least 17 Prairie Chickens were on the lek, along with several Northern Harriers and a few Meadowlarks. Melvin Moe, the manager of this wildlife area, gave an interesting overview of the reintroduction program, noting that small groups of Prairie Chickens can now be found in several spots in southern Iowa. Mel is optimistic about the future of the birds and said that there are also Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls nesting in the area, a rarity in Iowa. After leaving the lek, we visited the Ringgold Wildlife Area, the Mount Ayre Wildlife Area, and the Sand Creek Wildlife Area—all great birding areas within about 20 miles of the lek. An early afternoon stop at a colorful local eating establishment to eat lunch and tally our bird list capped off the trip. The total count was 53 species with more than 10 additional species sighted the previous evening by early arriving birders.

February 27—Field Trip to Red Rock Lake, Paul Bystrak, Trip Leader

This field trip was billed as an attempt to find a few of the hardiest gulls and eagles during the depth of winter; however, it turned into a celebration of spring for the fourteen club members who went along. Instead of finding a few birds eeking out an existence around rare openings in the ice, we found the ice mostly gone and waterfowl migration in full swing. We ended up with about 45 species, including 15 species of ducks plus Pied-billed Grebe and American Coot, despite high winds that made using scopes difficult. Impressive numbers were seen, such as about 4500 Snow Geese, about 300 Northern Pintails, 90 Green-winged Teal, 80 Gadwalls, 350 Ring-necked ducks, 6 Blue-winged Teal, 20 Northern Shovelers, and 25 American Wigeon. While there were thousands of gulls present, they were all Ring-billed Gulls except for a single immature Herring Gull. We also saw lots of eagles, perhaps as many as 160 of them altogether, and were privileged to witness many aspects of eagle behavior, including catching and eating fish, harassing

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Bird Drop-ins

*Sightings by
BBAS Members*



February 26—Karl Jungbluth was out checking the early morning activity around his house. Bluebirds were singing and checking out boxes, Killdeers and flock after flock of Canada Geese were heading north. Flickers were visible again. Then, robins trickled in by the dozen. At some point, a large group of Cedar Waxwings mixed in with the robins and they headed over to the cedars. There must have been 150 waxwings. A male Common Merganser was a fly-by. The ice was completely gone on the gravel ponds by Highway 30, the Des Moines River (no birds, but a Bald Eagle overhead), and the Harrier Marsh. One Killdeer and a dozen Coots at the pond. There was a tiny bit of ice left on Don Williams Lake where he saw a Turkey Vulture and about 1500 Snow Geese took off and landed in a partially tilled corn field. There were a few Canadas and Mallards, and a Ring-billed Gull. Spring arrived in a hurry.

March 4—Linda and Paul Bystrak worked Saylorville Lake during the afternoon, upriver from the mile-long bridge. There was a raft of waterfowl that ran along the east shore from above the bridge to almost the Rt 17 bridge. They had 20 species that included Greater White-fronted Geese, Gadwalls, American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, and Ruddy Duck. While counting ducks, they were serenaded by 3 Barred Owls, numerous bluebirds, and flickers. There was an Eastern Meadowlark singing to the bison in Jester Park, also.

March 7—Since it was such a beautiful evening, Karl J. stayed outside after sunset listening to the Snow Geese overhead and the owls hooting nearby. As it got closer to dark, a Woodcock provided a half-hearted display (a bunch of peents and one arial) on the neighbor's property to the west of his house. He stood waiting for more, and a bat swooped by! This occurred about 3 miles south of Boone. What a spring!

John Snyder provides another sure sign that spring is coming. Yesterday on his way home, between 1700 and 1730, he saw 2 or 3 Vultures on the north edge of Ames, in the area north of 24th Street and east of Stange.

March 12—Karl J. got good views of a Harlan's Hawk late in the morning as it was chased by crows. This was on the northern fringes of Ledges State Park. The Great-horned Owl was sitting tight on its nest in the same area. He could see some fluffy white along side the adult, possibly a hatchling.

March 15—David Edwards saw a Carolina Wren in the side yard today yelling for whatever!

April 18—Will Fields saw a pine siskin singing on the Iowa State campus. There were also several Yellow-rumped Warblers hawking insects over Lake Laverne. He also heard a Blackpoll Warbler as well.

April 19—Donna Flanagan saw two Nighthawks flying over campus near Lake Laverne.

Boone County Earth Year 2000 Calendar

There are many activities planned in Boone County this year which might be of interest to Big Bluestem member Boone County Earth Year 2000 Committee members Karl & Carmen Jungbluth at 432-5057 or Mike Havlik at 795-2451 for more information.

Date	Time	Activity- Leader	Place
May 6	Saturday All Day	Birdathon!- Jungbluth	Countywide
May 21	Sunday 12:30 PM	Eco-Picnic with outdoor activities- Mike Havlik	McHose Park
July 1	Saturday 8 AM	Ledges SP family Birdwalk- Jungbluth	Campground Entrance
July 1	Saturday 8 PM	Bats of Iowa at Ledges SP- Havlik	Campground Entrance
August 5	Saturday 8 AM	Ledges SP family Birdwalk- Jungbluth	Campground Entrance
August 5	Saturday 8 PM	Ledges SP Owl Prowl- Havlik	Campground Entrance
August 26	Saturday 3 PM	Monarch Butterfly Tagging- Freidhof	Ledges State Park

The Return of Osprey to Central Iowa: Big Bluestem Donates \$700!

An exciting new project is beginning to take shape at Jester Park. In mid-July, Osprey will be introduced to the Des Moines River and Saylorville Lake area. These large raptors, also known as the fish hawk or fish eagle, hunt fish almost exclusively. They are a real treat to view as they dive into the water after their prey. This is a cooperative effort between the Boone and Polk County Conservation Boards, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and most importantly YOU. Volunteers will have the opportunity to work with the birds or help pay for the birds through donations. That's what our chapter did by donating \$500 to the project, and an anonymous donor contributed another \$200 to give the project a great start.

To help insure success, 4 birds will be released each year for the next 4 years. These birds are obtained from Minnesota when they are about to fledge or fly from their nest. They will be held in a "hack" tower for approximately 10-14 days and then released. This protected shelter gives the birds time to "bond" or "imprint" on Saylorville Lake and the Des Moines River. When they return from their migration as adults, this area will be used for nesting. The Osprey will be a great bird to bring to this area for they are considered to be an indicator species. That means their presence gives us clues about the health of our environment. In the case of the Osprey, their habitat is mainly water. This is a big issue in the state right now and should continue to be so.

If you are interested in getting involved by volunteering or sponsoring a bird, call Joe Boyles at Polk County Conservation (323-5362) or Heather Freidhof at Boone County Conservation (795-2809).

Field trips—Continued from page 6

other birds, and aerial courtship displays. Other signs of spring included redwings on territory, American robins, killdeers, Common Grackles, Bluebirds, and Yellow-shafted Flicker.

March 25—Field Trip to Hallett's Quarry, . . . , Hank Zaletel, Trip Leader

Fifteen people attended the field trip to Hallett's Quarry, Teig's and Bob Pyle Marshes, Little Wall Lake, Anderson Lake, and Richard's Wildlife Area. It was a sunny day but gusty winds made for a bone-chilling day at Little Wall Lake. Thirty-nine species of birds were seen. A few ducks and geese were seen at Hallett's Quarry. As

a result of the drought, there was no water at Teig's and Bob Pyle Marshes. Because of the strong winds, passerines were hunkered down, and few were seen.

Everyone added a layer of clothing when we arrived at Little Wall Lake because of the wind chill. The majority of the ducks and geese were seen here. Richard's Wildlife Area is a new Hamilton County public area located one mile north of Anderson Lake. At Anderson Lake we walked along the railroad tracks that pass through the south boundary of the marsh. Highlights included a muskrat and White Pelicans that obligingly flew right over our heads.

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

By Paul Bystrak and Kevin Healy



One of the things that makes it a little easier to bird in a new area is to have a checklist of the local birds. That way you know if the chickadees in the local area are supposed to be black-capped or Carolina, for instance, saving you the trouble of having to figure it out by your own wits! Check lists are even more useful if you have one before you go to a new place. Then you can find out what birds are there, and plan to bird the right habitats to see the species that you want to see. But how do you get a checklist before going to a new place? Unless you know someone who has been there and saved a list to lend you, it's not an easy thing to do. The answer, of course, can be found on the Internet.

The Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in Jamestown, ND maintains a website that attempts to collect bird checklists for everywhere in the country. You can find it at:

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/othrdata/chekbird/chekbird.htm>

This sounds pretty ambitious, and it is: their collection is not real comprehensive at this time, but it includes lists from most of the National Wildlife Refuges as well as some other useful lists. As an example, you can go to the Iowa page

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/othrdata/chekbird/r3/19.htm>

and find that they have an Iowa checklist that is maintained by Ann Johnson; plus lists from DeSoto, Mark Twain, Upper Mississippi, and Union Slough National Wildlife Refuges, Effigy Mounds National Monument, and the Herbert Hoover Historical Site (!). The latter comes as a surprise, and a quick check of the list shows that it might be worth a birding trip – for instance, Henslow's sparrow is listed as an uncommon summer resident. As another example, if you are thinking about going to Texas, there are 19 lists from Texas, including most of the places you would probably want to go. Each list has a contact person, so that you can send your additions after your trip to the site! And they even include a Record Documentation Form to do this with.

On the down side, all the lists we looked at are in HTML, the language of the Internet. This format is not very printer friendly, and you can expect even simple lists to take 6 or more pages when printed. Also, the lists

posted on the site are prepared by many different people, so they differ in layout and abbreviations used. You find yourself frequently scrolling up to the top to see what an asterisk means on this list, or the letter R means on that list (sometimes means 'rare' sometimes means 'resident'). The lists are not annotated either, so there may be insufficient details to find the really rare birds on the list. However, these are fairly minor concerns compared to the convenience of actually having a checklist before you start your trip.

So, before you start out on your next trip, try this website. You may find a checklist to make your bird finding a whole lot easier and your trip more rewarding.

**Newsletter Deadline—
August 11, 2000**

View from . . . page 2

20th. It provides another opportunity to meet or renew friendships with birders from all over the state, enjoy some excellent programs, and bird in new habitat.

Thanks to Rebecca Shivers, editor of our *Big Bluestem Flyer* for several years, and to all of the many faithful contributors during this time, the National Audubon Society awarded Big Bluestem Audubon Society third prize in the small-sized chapter newsletter competition. There were five division sizes and four places in each division. So our very own *Big Bluestem Flyer* is among the 20 best Audubon chapter newsletters in the United States! Congratulations and thank you to all who helped make it possible!

I hope everyone will get out and spend lots of time this spring, summer, and fall in our many scattered Iowa prairies. They are such a treasure and we all should take time to study not only the grasses and forbs, but all of the fascinating butterflies, beetles, ants, voles, mice, snakes, and other fun critters who live in our native prairie remnants and even in our many reconstructed prairies. And of course you birders will be enjoying the many species of birds who love the prairies. Perhaps you will be lucky and flush the Yellow Rail at Doolittle Prairie as Steve and Jim Dinsmore did one spring, or nearly step on a Meadowlark nest with eggs at Doolittle as I did one year. Have a wonderful summer and join us in the fall for another fun year!

Nominations Committee Report

The Nominations Committee submits the following slate of candidates for election at the May meeting of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society: President—Karl Jungbluth, Vice-President—John Pohlman, Secretary—Mary Doud, Treasurer—Donna Flanagan. Board Members: Mike Freiberg, Bruce Ehresman, Alvin Ravenscroth, Linda Thomas, and Paul Bystrak. Thanks to Mary Doud and Stu Huntington for providing a slate. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

Donate \$\$\$ to Your Big Bluestem Audubon Society through Purchases at Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames

Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames will donate 10% of your purchase of specified birdseed, birding, and nature related products to Big Bluestem Audubon Society (BBAS). Different products will be specified in each issue of this newsletter. Present the coupon below at the time of your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS. Donations will fund the various habitat restoration and educational projects undertaken by BBAS.

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Continued from page 1—Coming Field Trips

14—Mother's Day Warbler Walk. Meet at north parking lot at Brookside Park at 0800. Trip leader, Kevin Healy (233-5914).

27—Colo Ponds and other wetlands. Waterfowl and shorebird trip. Meet near the cannon in the parking lot at the Nevada Courthouse at 0800. Trip leader, Hank Zaletel (382-5427).

Spring Bird Count—May 13

In conjunction with the 2000 North American Spring Bird Count (page 5), the eighth annual Iowa Spring Bird Count will be held on Saturday, May 13, 2000. It is held on the same day, and according to the same rules as the North American Migration Count, so that totals may be submitted to both counts.

Each county is a count territory, and in the interest of expanding our knowledge of spring migration in the state, we would like to have participation from as many counties as possible.

I am the compiler for Story County. I organize the count within the county. I assign territories to be covered and I compile the results. They are then submitted to the state compiler who tabulates the data. This information is published in *Iowa Bird Life*.

This count is fashioned after the Christmas Bird Count except that the whole county is the base. The count can be done as a county Big Day or as a part of our local birdathon. Contact Kevin Healy (233-5914) if you would like to participate. Counts can be started for Boone or Hamilton Counties if there is interest.



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.

OR

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.

Send your check and this coupon to Mark Widrechner, Membership Chair, 2121 Burnett Ave., Ames, Iowa 50010.

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
e-mail _____ fax _____

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

Birdathon! There's still time to join the fun!

The birds are returning and the excitement is building toward our 3rd Birdathon! We'll have more than 20 people out in the field. Birdathon takes place on May 6th, and you can still be part of it. Teams from Big Bluestem will be out birding all day, and raising pledges to support our chapter education and conservation projects. Even if you don't know a thing about birds, you can still join in, raise some pledges, or donate to Birdathon! Our goal is to raise \$5000 this year!

Contact the Birdathon Coordinators, Karl & Carmen Jungbluth at 432-5057 if you'd like to join the fun and go birdwatching with one of our Birdathon teams. Donations will still be accepted up through our May meeting, or you can send your donation made out to Big Bluestem. Send it to Birdathon, c/o The Jungbluths, 1372 Peony Lane, Boone, IA 50036.

And don't forget, everyone who goes Birdathoning or makes a donation is eligible to win great prizes: binoculars, T-shirts, wildlife shrubs, bird feeders, books and more!

Young Naturalist Workshop

The Des Moines YMCA Camp near Boone is looking for budding young naturalists to participate in a statewide Young Naturalist Workshop. This will be a 6-day, 5-night residential experience for students just out of the 5th or 6th grade who are interested in the outdoors. The workshop will run from Sunday, August 13 through Saturday, August 19, 2000.

The Big Bluestem Board of Directors recently voted to spend \$250 to nominate a student from Story County and send them to the workshop!

The workshop will celebrate the natural world and introduce students to professionals already working with nature and nature education. Each day, participants will sign up for a variety of classes offered by conservation agencies and individuals from around the state, including Iowa Audubon. Students will learn skills, experience adventure, and bring back a presentation for their sponsoring organization. The goal is to give young naturalists the vision and tools to choose conservation as a career or hobby.

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

HANK ZALETEL
1928 6TH
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