

BIG BLUESTEM FLYER

Volume 28, No. 7

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

March 1993

MONTHLY MEETING

HOW WOODCHUCKS BEHAVE

DICK TRUMP , Ames

Thursday, **March 18**, 7:30 PM
Room 2532, Veterinary Medicine Building, I. S. U., Ames

Dick Trump, long time member of our Society, has had a great and ongoing interest in the biology and behavior of woodchucks. Since the 1930's, Dick has studied woodchucks in natural and disturbed habitats, in dens at the Ames High School where he taught biology, and in a special observation den just yards from his home. He will share with us both his observations and interesting photographs illustrating the behavior of one of our largest rodents.

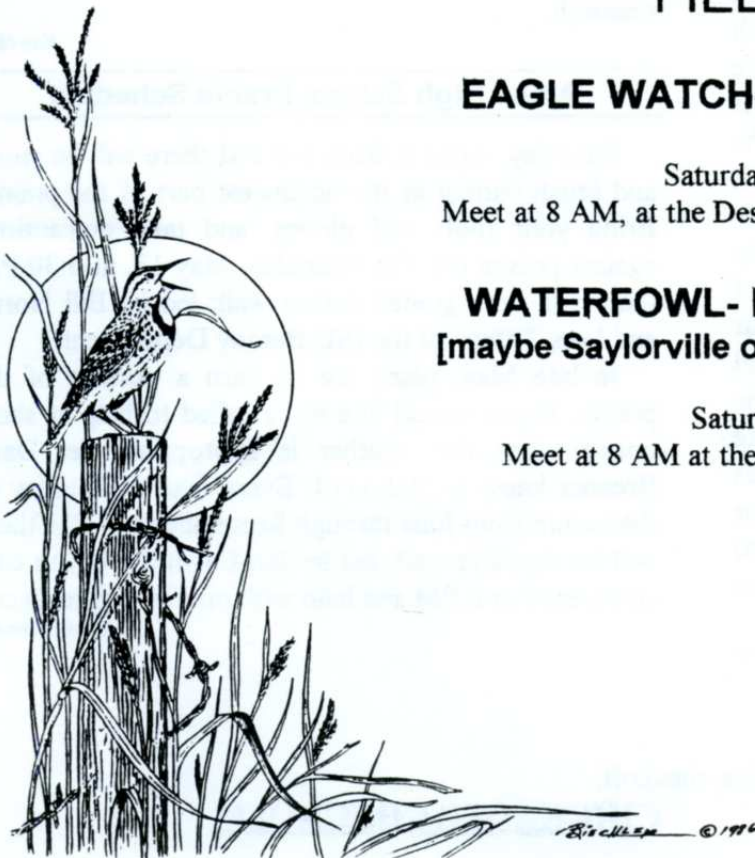
FIELD TRIPS

EAGLE WATCH- RED ROCK LAKE

Saturday, **March 6**
Meet at 8 AM, at the Design Center parking lot, I.S.U.

WATERFOWL- HENDRICKSON MARSH [maybe Saylorville or other area marshes as well]

Saturday, **March 27**
Meet at 8 AM at the Design Center parking lot, I.S.U.



Birding Class

On Tuesday, March 23 an introductory birding class will be presented at the Story County Conservation Center in McFarland Park. The starting time is 7 PM, and the class is free and open to anyone. Coordinated by BBAS member Mike Meetz and assisted by other members of BBAS, this session will present the topics birding organizations, feeding stations and nest boxes, your bird list and the value of it, and waterfowl identification.

The final class will be offered on Tuesday, April 13, at 7 PM, at the Conservation Center. Points to be discussed include: birding by habitat, basic shorebird identification, and personal birding experiences of some long time birders. These classes are co-sponsored by the Story County Conservation Board. Space is somewhat limited so please call the Conservation Center at 232-2516 and let them know if you would like to participate in either or both sessions.

Iowa Fish and Game Trust Fund

In the past an attempt was made to shift money in the Fish and Game Trust Fund (which comes from license fees and taxes on sporting gear) to the State General Fund. This money is used for wildlife management. The attempt was stopped, but to make sure that this kind of transfer won't occur, a constitutional amendment has been proposed which would require that the Trust Fund be used for wildlife management. (This constitutional protection is currently given to the Road Use Tax Fund.) If the amendment passes the Senate and House this year, it will go to Iowa voters for a general vote in 1994.

The Iowa Senate passed the amendment with only three no votes. The amendment may not get out of subcommittee in the House. If you want to voice your support for constitutional protection for the Fish and Game Trust Fund you can do so to the Speaker of the House, Rep. Harold Van Maanen and/or your state representative. The address is, State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319. You might also ask your legislator to get Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund money released so it can be used to fill vacant wildlife staff positions in the Department of Natural Resources.

Shewry Dragula

Book Review

Rawlins, C.L. 1993. Sky's Witness: A Year in the Wind River Range. Henry Holt and Company, New York. 326 pp.

The author a native of Wyoming, is a back country hydrologist who collects rain, snow, and the water of the high lakes in the Wind River Range to measure air pollution. He and his helpers travel the alpine wilderness in all seasons by touring skis, snowshoes, pack llamas, float-tubes and a tiny raft. He provides fascinating accounts of his many several-day trips in 0 to -20 degree F weather into the wilderness to the collectors near the continental divide. We discover the geology, the natural history of the central Rockies, the flowering of plants, and the ways of mountain animals. He provides insight into the lives of the Shoshoni in this harsh country before the arrival of settlers. He helps us to understand the effect of twentieth-century living on a wilderness that feels pristine but bears the chemical trace of distant smokestacks and freeways. The snow, ice, and water samples are shipped to the National Atmospheric Deposition Program lab in Champaign, Illinois for detailed assay. A year later a "hideous wad of computer printout" is sent back to the Forest Service office in Jackson. He says five or six years of computer data has been stacking up and must be analyzed. A fascinating book of wilderness research.

Kay Niyo

Ames High School Prairie Schedule

Saturday, April 3, from 1-3 PM there will be wood and brush cutting at the northwest part of the prairie. Bring your tools and gloves, and take precautions against poison ivy. On Thursday, May 13, at 6:30 PM there will be a guided nature walk led by Bill Norris and Lois Tiffany of the ISU Botany Department.

In late May, plans are to burn a portion of the prairie. If you would like to be called to help at short notice when the weather is appropriate, let Dave Brenner know at 292-3114. Every first Wednesday of the month from June through September at 7 PM there will be a prairie walk led by Jan Edwards. If you can, come early at 6 PM and help with prairie maintenance.

David Brenner

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CHICKADEE CHECKOFF!

Story County Conservation Board Events

All events are held at the Conservation Center unless otherwise stated.

March 1-25, "The Beauty of Trees" photographic display by Betty Stanley.

Monday, March 8, 7:30 PM, Story County Conservation Board meeting, public invited. Thursday, March 11, 3:30-5:30 PM, Kid's for Saving Earth Club (registration required). Saturday, March 13, 10 AM-Noon, Indian Creek Ikes Cabin near Maxwell, Uncle Ikes for Kids: Signs of Spring (registration required).

Owl in a Mornings Outing

Eight of us crunched through the Brookside snows in the predawn darkness on February 23. We were calling owls, hoping to hear a response or catch a glimpse. A Barred Owl and later a Great Horned Owl mixed their calls with the trains, buses, cars and crows. We had a similar experience in the High school prairie but without the owls. The crows kept us company here- squadrons of them left constantly, heading out to begin their early morning feeding sorties.

We were walking along the Des Moines River when the sun broke the horizon. We encountered no owls but our bird list was growing. By 8 AM we met the others at the Ledges and walked the Lost Lake Nature Trail. We searched the usual places and found a single Northern Saw-whet Owl at its daily roost. Everyone had an opportunity to see the bird, study its roost and examine the pellets in the snow.

Some birders needed more so we headed to the Big Creek area and again successfully found another Saw-whet. In the same area we flushed two Long-eared Owls. Other birds seen or heard that morning included Kingfisher, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks and the other usual winter avian residents: 26 species in all.

Mike Meetz

Texas Travels 1993

Eugene & Eloise Armstrong, Bob Myers and I arrived at Port Lavaca on January 29th. We stopped at the Union Carbide clubhouse and got an excellent view of a Northern Jacana which was the first of 48 new species I added to my life list. We also watched a beautiful male Vermillion Flycatcher enjoying supper.

Our boat trip with Captain Ted left from Rockport on Saturday morning. This is the best way to visit Aransas NWR. The Whooping Cranes were

magnificent as we watched them guard their individual territories from younger male intruders. We also saw Clapper Rail, American Oystercatchers, Roseate Spoonbills, Tricolored Herons, Reddish Egrets & Ruddy Turnstones. A note of WARNING--if you take this trip in the winter time, take warm clothes (even if it is TEXAS). It was below freezing, with a strong wind out on the water. Several stops allow for great viewing with your scope. The boat has an enclosed area but best views are from on top.

The Brownsville area has lots of great birding. Laguna Atascosa NWR has several walking trails as well as auto tour areas. Here we viewed Green Jays, Groove-billed Anis, Great Kiskadee and many varieties of waterfowl. We "DID THE DUMP" at the Port of Brownsville. It was a real experience seeing hundreds of Cattle Egrets eagerly awaiting their "breakfast". The large water area gave us close-up views of many American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts. At Sabal Palm Grove Audubon Sanctuary we saw a Buff-bellied Hummingbird near the Headquarters. Santa Ana NWR, west of Brownsville, could easily be a full days trip or two. There are miles of trails, a driving tour and a tram. Here we found Least Grebes, Plain Chachalacas & Olive Sparrows.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park is a haven for "Winter Texans". Many of them feed the birds near their campers and this attracts Audubon's and Altamira Orioles, Green Jays, and Chachalacas (a really BIG feeder bird) and other birds. We found a pair of Hook-billed Kites and had a passing view of Red-billed Pigeons along the Rio Grande trail. An excellent view of an Elf Owl turned out to be a knot hole.

In Salineno along the river we saw a Ringed Kingfisher and were visited by a Green Kingfisher (just a few feet from where we were standing). We heard many tales from a local resident as we waited 5 hours in the rain to view the return trip of Muscovy Ducks we had missed earlier. It never happened.

In San Ygnacio, Bob took a walk down to the river alone and was amazed to see several Muscovys fly by. Eugene thought Bob would have a heart attack running back up the hill to tell us about them. We eventually scoped them 3 miles north of there.

We never saw the sun (well maybe once if we did not blink). But we had only one really drizzly day (5 hour Muscovy day). All in all it was a terrific trip with great friends.

Maridel Jackson

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

*March 19-21, Friday-Sunday	National Audubon's Spring River Conference in Kearney, NE, includes trips to see migrating sandhill cranes and waterfowl
April 15, Thursday	7:30 PM, BBAS Meeting, Jean Prior, Geology of NE Iowa
April 17, Saturday	BBAS Field Trip, Local marshes north of Ames including Tieg's and Little Wall Lake
May 9, Sunday	BBAS Field Trip, Warbler Wander at Brookside Park and newly protected Ann Munn Woods
May 15 and 16	Saturday and Sunday, IOU Spring Meeting, Keosauqua, IA
May 20, Thursday	7:30 PM, BBAS Meeting, To be announced
*June 5 and 6, Saturday and Sunday	Loess Hills Seminar
June 12, Saturday	BBAS Field Trip, Annual Birder's Breakfast at Ledges State Park
June 26, Saturday	BBAS Field Trip, Bluebird Box Hike with local experts
July 10, Saturday	BBAS Field Trip to Elkhart, IA to watch purple martins
August 14, Saturday	BBAS Prairie Field Trip



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