



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 34 Number 2

November/December 1998

Featured Speakers—November 19 meeting: *Kevin Healy and Paul Bystrak, "Birding with the Internet"*

The Internet is perhaps the most astonishing aid to birding ever created. Virtually everything that is known to humankind is available on the Internet, if you only know how to find it. At our November meeting, Kevin Healy and Paul Bystrak will explain what the Internet is and how to use it to your birding advantage. Using the wonders of modern electronics, they will take you to a variety of sites on the Internet to demonstrate the advantages (and probably some frustrations, too) of being computer literate. If you have been curious about computers, or afraid of them, or suffer from an unfulfilled interest in them, come to the November meeting and learn how to use the Internet to enhance your outdoor experiences.

BBAS Holiday for the Birds—December 17 meeting

This is the annual Audubon Holiday for people and birds. John Snyder will moderate the evening, which begins at 7:00 p.m. The BBAS Bird Holiday will be held at the Story County Conservation Center in McFarland Park. Bring 5-10 slides, a treat to share, and a contribution of money or seed for the Center's feeders. We'll make plans for the Ames, Boone, and Saylorville Christmas Bird Counts that follow in the next two weeks. Check the calendar for the exact dates. If you need directions to the Story County Conservation Center, please call John or any of the BBAS board members. See you there!!

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 speakers and the BBAS board before the monthly meeting, there is a limited number of reservations available. Please call John Snyder at 232-8824 to confirm space and location.

Coming Field Trips: November & December

Kevin Healy, Field Trip Chair

November

14- Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Sparrows, finches and other seed eating birds are usually quite easy to find in the weeds and brush at Chichaqua Bottoms in northeastern Polk County. Mark Widrechner will be leading this morning trip to see what we can turn up in the brush. Meet at the ISU Design Center at

0800 or at the headquarters at Chichaqua Bottoms at 0845. The staff at the Polk County Conservation Board wants to remind us this site is also popular with hunters in November, so please stay on the safe side by wearing Blaze Orange on this trip. For more information, please contact Mark Widrechner at 233-1532.

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Bird Term of the Month: *Hawking.* *Catching prey in the air. In one sense, 'hawking' is an alternative name for falconry. Otherwise, it refers to the capture of flying insects by birds, not only by the specialists such as the various kinds of aerial feeders, but also by the opportunists, as when Starlings exploit a hatch of flying ants. From Peter Weaver's Birdwatcher's Dictionary.*



View from the Prairie

Kay Niyo, President

Fall with all its glorious colors and crisp, cool air finally has arrived. Recent trips to East and Northeast Iowa via lesser traveled scenic county and state roads provided an entirely different artist's landscape from that of summer. As many of you well know, I often complain about having to return to "monotonous corn and bean land" after trips to other scenic areas of the country! But on the BBAS trip to Northeast Iowa, the corn and bean fields at the beginning of harvest season were a gently rolling patchwork of cream and tan fields of standing corn next to burnished copper-colored, ochre, and bronze bean fields interspersed by rivers of dark-green grass waterways. Along the county roads I noted increasingly common stands of big bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass, and forbs, the former inhabitants of our rolling landscape. The beautiful gold, rich brown, copper, and orange-red stems and leaves of the grasses and the gold and yellow inflorescences of the prairie sunflowers and compass plants vied for my attention. In the late afternoon sunlight of October, stands of "pure silver" little bluestem are a favorite of mine. By the time you read this, our landscape will have changed to the quietness of late fall and winter dormancy, but I hope you were able to experience the glorious blaze of color with which the growing season ended. Treat yourself to a trip to nearby Doolittle Prairie as Kevin Healy and others have been doing this fall to enjoy the beautiful native prairie and the migrating birds as he reports elsewhere in this newsletter; even a Merlin and a Sharp-shinned Hawk in the same tree! It truly is fall now that the Juncos and White-throated Sparrows have returned from their northern breeding areas.

Several BBASers were influenced by Pete Dunne's powerful raptor workshop at the fall IOU meeting and have been enjoying his many books and attempting to perfect raptor identification skills. Pete is vice-president of natural history information for New Jersey Audubon Society and director of the Cape May Bird Observatory at Cape May Point, New Jersey. For a free treat to his wordsmithing skills that provide wonderful mental pictures, enjoy his weekly thought on nature at <http://www.nj.com/audubon/petes.html>.



Letter to the BBAS

Paul T. Zeph, Executive Director, Iowa Audubon

You may have heard that I have been hired as the new Executive Director for the Iowa State Office. I want to introduce myself, and update you on my activities to establish the office in the Des Moines area. . . . I am very honored and excited to have been chosen to be your Executive Director, and I hope to meet all of you in the near future. . .

Office Location

Regarding an office for Iowa Audubon, I have been talking with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about utilizing some space in a small building that will be vacant in a couple of months on the southwest side of the Saylorville Lake dam, just north of Des Moines. The Corps wants to turn the building into a bird education facility, and they would like our office to be part of that project. I think it's a great partnership, and would give us our first "Audubon Center" of the state. (An Audubon Center is any facility or outreach initiative which incorporates Audubon programs and materials.) I'll be discussing this in future communications. . .

Additional benefits to having our state office at the Corps building are: we'll get a lot of exposure from public driving by who are coming to the lake for recreation; our rent

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Big Bluestem Audubon Society Officers and Committees

Officers:

- President: Kay Niyo 233-8803 kniyo@aol.com
- Vice-President: 432-5057 weatherbird@opencominc.com
- Secretary: Mary Doud 296-2178 mfdoud@Ames.net
- Treasurer: Paul Ovrom 292-8862 nc7ao@ars-grin.gov

Board Members:

- Carol Berrier 965-8242
- Mike Freiberg 233-8213 freiberg9@hotmail.com
- Kevin Healy 233-5914 khealy@ames.net
- Stuart Huntington 296-0248 x1hunting@exnet.iastate.edu
- John Pohlman 232-6816

Committee Chairs:

- Archivist: Hank Zalatel 382-5427 madowl@nevia.net
- Awards Chair: Stan Cyran 292-4876 scyrans@pol.net
- Conservation Chair: Sherry Dragula 233-1532 mpwskd@aol.com
- Education Co-Chairs: Carol and Galin Berrier
- Field Trip Chair: Kevin Healy
- Fund Raising Chair: Stan Cyran
- Membership Chair: Mark Widrlechner 233-1532 mpwskd@aol.com
- Program Chair: John Snyder 232-8824 JESnyder@ix.netcom.com
- Publicity Chair: Mary Doud 296-2178
- Publications and Electronic Media Chair: Rebecca Shivers 292-0691 shivers@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/~shivers/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

Out and About in Boone County —Harrier Marsh

Joyce and Jon Bahrenfus

Harrier Marsh is one of the best wetlands in Boone County and it is certainly one of the most accessible you'll find anywhere. Several large ponds almost lap the edge of the road offering excellent waterfowl watching without even getting out of the car. Not only can you bird in upholstered and air-conditioned comfort, but you will likely be rewarded with closer views than when birding on foot.

A restored wetlands, Harrier Marsh is an example of what can be achieved when government and private groups such as Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever cooperate. The marsh borders Highway 30 just south of Ogden, though the best viewing is along the gravel road immediately south of Highway 30. The complex consists of nearly four hundred acres and contains additional ponds not visible from the road. Should you decide to explore those on foot, keep in mind that the area is open to public hunting.

As with most wetlands, the best birding occurs during spring and fall migrations of waterfowl and shorebirds. You can see virtually all of the more common waterfowl as well as some that are a little harder to find in this area, such as pintails and white-fronted geese. Blue-winged teal, pied-billed grebes, and mallards are among the nesting species. Harrier Marsh is also a great place to watch shorebirds, so unless you have Hank Zalatel with you, be sure to take a birdbook.

Use your ears as well as your eyes; you'll likely hear the whinney of a sora or the scolding chatter of the marsh wren. In summer, the air is filled with the electronic sound of yellow-headed blackbirds perched atop cattails or sitting on the road. You can see black terns swooping over the water and northern harriers coursing above the fields.

Water conditions fluctuate from one year to the next, with ponds nearly drying up in late summer some years. About three-fourths of Harrier Marsh is grassland, providing habitat for pheasants, bobolinks, dickcissels, and several species of sparrows, including Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrows. Also at the marsh are a fair number of great-tailed grackles, a real treat since they are uncommon in this area. In fall, large strings of swallows and purple martins congregate on the electric wires along the road. Wildlife isn't limited to birds—don't be surprised if you see deer, muskrats or even a salamander on the road.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 30, turn south on J Avenue (J Avenue is about 2 miles east of Ogden). Go 1 mile and turn right (west) on 230th Street. For the next 2 miles you will pass through several parcels of Harrier Marsh. The marsh extends north to Highway 30 and also extends south of 230th Street. Its boundaries are easily recognized by green wildlife management signs.

Conservation Corner

Sherry Dragula, Conservation Chair

Update on Eddyville Dunes and Wetlands- Excerpts from the October 1998 Eddyville Dunes and Wetlands Newsletter

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Eddyville Bypass has been completed. By the time you read this comments to the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) will have been due. There are other opportunities for comments though.

As a result of public and agency comments on the Draft EIS, the IDOT has shifted the south end of the selected Near East Alternative to the west. This avoids the wet swale and sand prairie community immediately north and south of 182nd St. The realignment will impact other wetlands and sand prairie remnants west of 240th Ave. IDOT offers to set aside the former Near East Alternative's right-of-way (the swale and prairie north and south of 182nd St.) as mitigation for the project's secondary impacts. They will also mitigate for sand prairie and wetland impacts at the Teno property.

The IDOT has not modified any of the alternatives except the selected Near East Alternative. A number of concerns remain. Can they actually build the redesigned Near East Alternative without hydrological impacts to the Dunes? Is the set-aside offer adequate compensation for sand prairie destruction and habitat fragmentation? Will the set-aside land sustain the existing biological community? What about the Ornate Box Turtles? Shouldn't there be better provisions for a state-protected species, at least a permit to take and barrier fences? Does the creation of open-water wetland at Teno's compensate for the value and function of hillside seeps supporting bog twayblade and soft rush? The secondary and cumulative effects of the project require more attention. How will future development affect the set-aside areas? What provisions are there for the actual protection and management of "preserved" areas?

The EPA and Corps of Engineers will influence the final outcome for this project. The EPA must approve and the Corps must issue a permit. The Corps will hold its own public comment period when the IDOT applies for the 404 permit. Iowa's environmental community can feel empowered because our voices are making a difference at Eddyville. We know the agencies are talking with each other as they shape their decisions. You can help influence those decisions by sending a letter to the following:

Mr. Allen Farris, Iowa DNR Fish and Wildlife Bureau,
Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, 50319

Mr. Neal Johnson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
P.O. Box 2004, Rock Island, IL 61204

Dr. Jake Joyce, U.S. EPA Region VII,
726 Minnesota Ave., Kansas City, KS 66101

Notes From the Field

Kevin Healy, Field Trip Chair

Shorebirds

On September 5, ably led by Hank Zalatel, we toured wetlands in Story and Polk counties. Hank started us off with a chance to examine a Vesper Sparrow in the hand. Highlights were Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, a variety of sandpipers, Great Egret, and Common Snipe. Twelve participants logged a total of sixty-two species.

Skunk River Greenbelt

On September 19, Dr. Lois Tiffany and Rosanne Healy led a walk through the Skunk River Greenbelt from the 221 Access to Anderson Canoe Access. A Bleeding Mycena (mushroom which exudes a sanguine liquid when bruised), bracket fungi, and slime molds were identified. A mixed feeding group of butterflies on the trunk of an elm tree lent color to the walk. We listed twenty-seven species of birds.

Kate Shelley High Bridge

On September 26, a thunderstorm scared off all but the leader, Kevin Healy. He was joined by Karl Jungbluth at the site. They were rewarded with a good look at a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and minutes later, a spectacular view of a Peregrine Falcon flying south down the valley. The only certainty in birding—if you stay in, you won't see anything. A total of twenty-six species was observed.

Northeast Iowa Road Trip

During the weekend of October 2-4, six members left Ames for northeast Iowa. It rained Friday afternoon and most of Saturday. We quartered in Decorah, at the less than elegant Villager Lodge. During the rainy Saturday, we visited Bob Anderson of Bluffton, head of the Raptor Recovery Project. This summer, he released nine Peregrine Falcons from a cliff near Effigy Mounds, hoping to establish a cliff-breeding population. Initial reports of the released falcons are encouraging. Sunday was drier and breezy, a productive day which left us with a total of sixty-one species. Highlights included a mixed feeding flock at Effigy Mounds National Monument (six species of warblers, two vireos and both kinglets) and Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons flying along the Mississippi River at Pike's Peak State Park.



Book Review

Kay Niyo

Jack Connor. *Season at the Point: The Birds and Birders of Cape May*. 1991. The Atlantic Monthly Press, New York. 290 pp. \$21.95. Hardcover. Available at the Ames Public Library, 598.916 CON.

After meeting, visiting, and birding with Pete Dunne at the fall IOU/Des Moines Audubon Society meeting at Camp Sunnyside in September, I checked in my computer list of "good books" for a favorite book that I had read several years ago. I thought it was written by Pete, but I was wrong. It was written by Jack Connor; however, much of the reason for writing it was because of Pete's lifetime devotion to the Cape May Bird Observatory. The history of birding on Cape May Point goes back to at least 1633. Many people have birded the point since then. But it really became well known in 1976 when Pete Dunne completed the first continuous daily count at the Point and reported a total of 48,621 hawks for the season, which was nearly twenty thousand more hawks than had been seen in the best year on Hawk

Mountain, Pennsylvania. In 1977, Conner writes that growing crowds of hawkwatchers skeptical of the 1976 count joined Pete to scrutinize his identification and record-keeping skills. Pete is quoted as saying, "Birdwatchers I'd been reading about my whole life showed up. It was all I could do to keep from climbing down and genuflecting." That year Pete's final total was 81,145 hawks, an average of 146 per hour, nearly five every two minutes. The editors of *American Birds* wrote, "Cape May Point must now be considered the Raptor Capital of North America."

Conner introduces us to the many birders, raptor banders, and naturalists who have contributed to the vast knowledge from studies at the Cape. Many of these individuals are still on the staff at the Cape according to the web site at <http://www.nj.com/audubon/calmunu/calcmbo.html>. You can enjoy their daily fall counts at <http://www.nj.com/audubon/rbamenu/cmhw98.html> and their yearly counts since 1976 at <http://www.nj.com/audubon/rbamenu/cmhw25.html>. Fascinating reading about the history of the Point after meeting the individual who "made it famous."

Board Happenings

Mary Doud, Secretary

On October 5, Board members met at Kay Niyo's house.

Iowa Audubon State Director, Paul Zeph, is located in West Des Moines and currently working out of his home until the paperwork is completed for the facilities near Saylorville. Paul is seeking information that members have on the following subjects: What do members want to see happen in Iowa? Audubon history in Iowa. Important bird areas. Projects relating to birds in Iowa. The future existence and possible roles and responsibilities of the Iowa Audubon Council need to be determined.

The Dove Hunting Status—The Iowa Audubon Council has voted to remain neutral on this issue, with no formal position on opposing Dove hunting. Big Bluestem Audubon Society motioned and approved a vote to oppose Dove hunting. The *Birdathon News* recognized the BBAS for donations raised from the spring's local birdathon. The BBAS also received an outreach award for publicity. A birding class for kids will be held May 4-17, 1999 at McFarland Park. Volunteers are needed to help with the classes.

Stan Cyran has T-shirts and coffee for sale (rainforests project). They will be available at the next general meeting. The BBAS received an Outstanding Education Award for the 1996/97 year due to their involvement with the *Audubon Adventures* Program. Joyce Bahrenfus and Sherry Dragula have finished the brochure for BBAS. We currently have over 400 members.

The next meeting will be December 6, at Kay Niyo's home.

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.

Highlights from the First Thirty Years of Big Bluestem Audubon Society (formerly the Ames Audubon Society), Part II

Sherry Dragula

We left off in March of 1982 when the Society became a Chapter of the National Audubon Society. That Spring 600 trees were planted by BBAS along Highway 30 east of Ames and bluebird boxes were built for the Prairie Rail Trail near Roland. In May, a joint meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' and the Nature Conservancy co-sponsored by BBAS brought in 143 people. The Field trips of that meeting recorded 158 species. In the Fall, a membership drive and bird seed sales were conducted at North Grand Mall. In September, the newsletter was re-named the "Bluestem Flyer."

In 1983, there was more involvement in conservation issues. The Iowa Audubon Council (IAC) was reactivated at a meeting in Eldora. BBAS successfully opposed the sale of Ames parkland for development, supported a minimum mowing policy for the IA Dept. of Transportation, and testified in support of a statewide ban on lead shot. BBAS planted 700 trees that spring along Highway 30.

In 1984, the membership drive and bird seed sales took place again at North Grand Mall. A newsletter survey revealed that members belong to BBAS because of their interest in wildlife, a desire to learn about nature, and because it gives them a chance to interact with people who have similar interests. "Thoughts Afield" was a regular column of the newsletter. The Audubon Trail in Brookside Park was refurbished by members this year and in 1985. A Legislative Committee of the IAC was formed in June. Two issues BBAS tackled then were eventually successful. They were working to stop the building of an Ames Reservoir and stopping the building of ball diamonds in the undeveloped E. River Valley Park. By the end of this year we changed our regular meeting place to the ISU Design Center.

The start of our involvement with the *Audubon Adventures* series for environmental education in the classroom began in 1985. Our Chapter purchased material for five classrooms and we continue this project with 30 classrooms today. In November an Audubon Trail interpretive brochure was completed. In 1985 through June of 1987, Bird or Birder Notes were a regular feature of the newsletter.

In 1986 three important changes in the way we worked made BBAS more efficient and economical. Our membership list was computerized making record keeping easier. We started using 3rd class bulk mail, cutting our postage costs in half. And, our Bylaws were revised to bring them up-to-date. In October, BBAS hosted a supper for the Aldo Leopold Centennial Celebration speakers.

Continued from page 2—Letter to the BBAS

and other expenses will be lower than conventional office space; and we'll be in a natural setting, befitting our mission. Another reason this partnership is a nice fit is that the staff at the Saylorville Lake complex have adopted a mission of restoring native vegetation on Corps lands which surround the lake, and educating the public about native vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Iowa Audubon's First Year

I'm going to be hiring an office manager this fall, and beginning the search for a development director. As we obtain grants for special projects, we'll add program staff and interns. By the spring, we should be operating at full capacity.

I'll be working with a team of educators from throughout Iowa to develop a dynamic bird education program that will blend the best that is currently going on in the state with some new elements developed by our state team and the National Audubon Education office.

We will also begin an initiative where Audubon volunteers will begin identifying natural areas of the state that are important for bird nesting, feeding, roosting, migration, or education purposes. This is a fairly new National Audubon effort called the Important Bird Area (or IBA) program.

In addition, I'll be working closely with the other conservation organizations throughout Iowa on areas of common concern, and with education organizations to improve and strengthen environmental education in the state.

Funding the Office

Our primary task this year will be finding a number of ways to raise the money needed to sustain our office. In the long-term, the success of the office will depend on individual donors across the state, and we need to begin cultivating donors of all types—big donors, small donors, once-a-year donors, property donors, member and non-member donors. I'll be hiring a development director as soon as we have a permanent office, but there are plenty of things we can do together this fall to start the process.

I'll be sending out a mail appeal in October to all members and "friends" of Audubon to introduce myself and to ask for a little help from everyone to get the ball rolling and meet our matching grant requirements. I'll need your help in promoting members to pitch in, especially this first year to get us off to a good start.

I'll also be starting an Iowa Audubon newsletter this fall, and every donor, officer, and chapter leader will automatically be added to that mailing list. In my next communication, I'll update you on some of the programs we'll be launching this first year, and ways [the BBAS] can participate. . .

My temporary address is P.O. Box 71174, Des Moines, 50325. Please don't hesitate to contact me with a question or concern, some advice, or ideas on how I can help you protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats across Iowa.

Sincerely,

Paul T. Zeph
Executive Director

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Iowa Audubon Council Report

Karl Jungbluth

The Iowa Audubon Council met October 17 at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory adjacent to West Lake Okoboji. The Lab has a beautiful new facility designed for nature education and water quality research. Many of us began the day with a field trip to nearby Dickinson County wetlands, natural areas, and lakeshores. Trip leader Lee Schoenewe even located a resident Black-headed Gull, a first time sighting for most of us. Nineteen Iowa Audubon members attended the meeting representing nine chapters. Paul Zeph, Executive Director, gave a report on the new State Office which now has a phone number, 515-267-0701, and an address, P.O. Box 71175, Des Moines, Iowa, 50312. Paul will be working out of his home until the agreement for office space with the Corps of Engineers can be finalized. Paul is actively working on several projects, and welcomes your input. First is an Important Bird Areas program for Iowa, which will combine many organizations and volunteers in identifying areas which are important to birds in Iowa. Second is emphasis on bird education, including the development of a signature Iowa Audubon education program. Paul has done his homework and believes there is a niche to be filled at the high school level. For more information, or comments, contact Karl Jungbluth or Paul Zeph at pzeph@audubon.org.

The Executive Director and the Iowa Audubon Council also continue to formulate a Board of Directors for the Iowa Office. Responsibilities for the Board have been defined and approved by the Council. The Board will be comprised of representatives from each Iowa Audubon Chapter, and up to 12 at-large-members who are being contacted at this time. The Board will likely meet for the first time in January or February. At the last Big Bluestem Board meeting, there was a consensus that the Iowa State Office should be moving forward with its mission now that the Executive Director is here and chapters have raised money to support the effort. I voiced this clearly to the Iowa Audubon Council, but most people on the Council still want to move slowly in relinquishing IAC responsibilities to the Executive Director and Board. The IAC did vote to fold the IAC treasury into the State Office, but other changes and reducing of IAC duties were tabled until the next meeting. This will give Paul and the developing Board of Directors a bit more time to get their feet on the ground. The Council revisited its position on a possible Mourning Dove hunting season in Iowa. The Council voted to remain neutral on the issue, mirroring the National Audubon position on most hunting. The outcome of the vote was nearly identical to the vote take one year ago. Iowa Audubon and National Audubon will only oppose hunting if it threatens survival of a species, and will only support hunting if the species in question is doing ecological damage (such as deer in some areas). Please note that the Big Bluestem Board voted strongly to oppose dove hunting, and I voted their position at the IAC meeting. We are still free as a chapter and as individuals to oppose dove hunting if we choose. You will likely hear more about this from the Legislature. As you can tell, there are still many important issues being decided at Iowa Audubon Council meetings, and we need more participation from Big Bluestem! Anyone can attend an IAC meeting, and we need one more representative to the Council from our chapter. Please contact Karl if interested. Notice: The next IAC meeting will be January 23, 1999 and it will be hosted by our Chapter! This will make it easy for BBAS members to be involved. More details to come.

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—
DECEMBER 15.**

Out and About in Story County —Doolittle Prairie

Kevin and Rosanne Healy

Sightings between 6 p.m. and nightfall at the Doolittle Prairie during the month of October,

	October				
	6	7	8	12	13
Golden-crowned Kinglet	x		x		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				x	
White-throated Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x
Swamp Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x
Lincoln Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x
Song Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x
Harris's Sparrow		x	x	x	x
White-crowned Sparrow			x	x	x
Fox Sparrow			x		
Junco				x	
Yellow-rumped Warbler		x	x		
Red-tailed Hawk		x	x		
Merlin		x			
Sharp-shinned Hawk		x	x		
Common Snipe			x		

On October 7, the Merlin and the Sharp-shinned Hawk were perched in the dead tree near the parking area at dusk. Merlin got there first, left shortly after arrival of Sharp-shinned Hawk. I expected some fist-cuffs, but was disappointed.

On October 8, Wolf and Sherry joined us. It was a beautiful afternoon. We saw lots of sparrows and watched the Sharp-shinned Hawk hunting.

On October 13, I went to the south end of the property. Lots of immature birds in the cattails. I think there were some house finches, but could not be certain. No raptor activity. Nice to see the field sparrow. The county DNR people were harvesting seed from the area north of the driveway and a farmer was combining the field east of the southern part of the property. I do not know what effect this will have on the dickeybird population.

Directions: I-35 north from Ames to Exit #123 (Roland, Zearing). Go west across interstate and take first gravel road south. Entrance to Doolittle Prairie is about 1 1/2 miles south on west (right) side of road. Rather poorly marked and difficult to see with corn standing. Lane is narrow and rutted, but should not present a problem to cars unless we get a substantial rain.

Did you know . . . gulls can drink either fresh or salt water. Most animals cannot excrete salt, but a gull has a pair of glands above the eye that handles the problem nicely. These glands enlarge when the gull drinks salt water and flushes the salt from its system through opening in the bill.

<http://www.traverse.com/media/dbnews/droppings.html>

Continued from page 1—Coming Field Trips

December

19—Ames Christmas Bird Count.

20—Saylorville Christmas Bird Count.

January

1—Boone Christmas Bird Count.

Plan to attend the December 17 Holiday for the birds and sign up for the Christmas Bird Counts.

Continued from page 5—Highlights . . . Part 2

BBAS was part of the effort which passed the landmark Iowa Groundwater Protection Act in 1987. We also worked to help pass the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection bill. Our new logo, with the drawing of a meadowlark and Big Bluestem grass by Dean Biechler, was unveiled in the September 1987 newsletter. Later in 1990, the format for the newsletter was recognized by our Regional office for its well-designed front page and beautiful drawing. In October, BBAS members began the Acid Rain Monitoring project as part of a nationwide network.

Of course during all of these years, BBAS continues to hold monthly meetings with programs and field trips. Accounts of most of the field trips are recorded in the newsletter. A service project to protect trees in E. River Valley Park was conducted in May 1988. A big increase in *Audubon Adventures* classrooms to 28 happened in October of 1988. BBAS Birders assisted with the *Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas* in June of 1989. And a new project, the maintenance of Mortensen Mound (at Mortensen and Ash in Ames) began with brush cutting and a burn in 1990.

Donate Dollars to Your Big Bluestem Audubon Society by Buying Bird Products at Brekke's Town & Country Store

Brekke's Town & Country Store generously offers Big Bluestem Audubon Society (BBAS) a donation when bird seed and other bird products are purchased. Present this coupon with your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS. Donations will fund habitat restoration; environmental education; and *Audubon Adventures*, a bimonthly elementary classroom teaching program used in central Iowa schools.

Brekke's Town & Country Store, Inc.
1 1/2 miles east of I-35 on new U.S. 30 and 1/4 mile north

Hours: 8-6 M-F, 8-4 Sat. (515) 232-7906

<u>Purchase</u>	<u>Donation</u>
up to \$15	\$1.50
\$15 and over	\$3.00
\$35 and over	\$5.00
over \$70	\$7.50

Offer good until February 27, 1999



Clip and Join

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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.

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

NAS Upper Mississippi River Campaign

Chapter Networker, Summer 1998, Volume 111, No. 3, page 13.

In the Iowa Audubon Council report by Karl Jungbluth in the September/October 1998 Big Bluestem Flyer, the following is given about the Upper Mississippi River Campaign:

The Audubon Strategic Plan set up a process to identify regional issue campaigns. The Upper Mississippi River Campaign is the first regional campaign. . . . To help realize this vision, NAS, through its 50 chapters and the nearly 50,000 members in the river's five-state watershed (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri), will collaborate with others on three immediate objectives (sample goals follow objectives):

1. To inform people about the ecological significance of the Upper Mississippi and its watershed for birds, fish, wildlife, habitat, and people:

- Design, fund, and implement a birding trail on roads along the Upper Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers
- Sponsor field trips on the river
- Collaborate on exhibits with river museums and communicate through *Audubon Adventures* publications
- Provide presentations, slide shows, and an Internet Web site

2. To take direct action at selected urban, rural and natural places on the river and in the watershed, resulting in definitive protection of existing habitat and restoring habitat that has been lost:

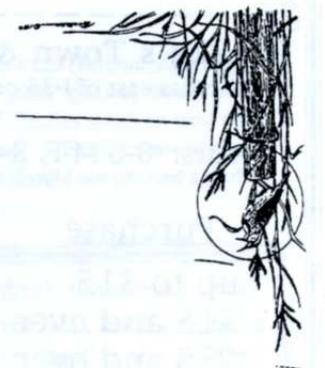
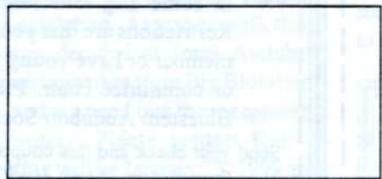
- Work with land trusts and public agencies to help protect and restore specific critical river habitats
- Support urban riverfront renewal efforts
- Support the stewardship and protection of wildlife refuges in the watershed

3. To influence public decisions and actions that affect the quality of the water, health of the soil, and the ecological value of habitat in the river, lands and bluffs, and the landscapes of the watershed:

- Support the Environmental Management Program (EMP) for the Upper Mississippi River
- Monitor and comment on navigation system studies
- Collaborate with others in completing a report on the natural resources of the Upper Mississippi River

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Dan McGuiness, NAS Upper Mississippi River Campaign; 26 E. Exchange St., #215, St. Paul, MN 55101; tel: 612/290-1695; FAX: 612/225-4686; dmcguiness@audubon.org

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