



# 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 33 Number 4

March/April 1998

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—March 19 meeting: *Lisa Hemesath, "Teaming With Wildlife: A Revolutionary Approach to Wildlife Conservation"*

Teaming With Wildlife is proposed federal legislation that will create a national trust fund to support nongame wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, and conservation education in all 50 states. The National Audubon Society, along with 2,500 other organizations and businesses nationwide, is actively seeking support for this conservation legislation from the business community and legislators. Learn what birders can do at a local level to support Teaming With Wildlife! Lisa Hemesath has been a wildlife diversity biologist with the Iowa Department of National Resources since 1991.

## Featured Speaker—April 16 meeting: *John Pleasants, "Plants and Pollinators: A Complex Interaction"*

Plants and pollinators are prime examples of mutualism and coevolution. However, pollinators are not really interested in helping plants, so plants must manipulate pollinator behavior to accomplish reproduction. Among other things, John will talk about work on bumblebee foraging strategies and how plants exploit these strategies. He will also talk about what happens to endangered plant species that lose their specialized pollinators. Dr. Pleasants is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Zoology and Genetics, ISU.

*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 Sherry Dragula at 233-1532 to confirm space and location. Please call John Snyder at 232-8824 for the April meeting.*

### Coming Field Trips: March & April

*Kevin Healy, Field Trip Chair*

#### March

7- Des Moines River Bottom. Bald eagles and a rough-legged hawk have been seen west of Boone this winter. Eastern bluebirds have been present all winter near the YMCA camp. Meet at ISU Design Center parking lot at 0800.

Trip leader, Karl Jungbluth (515-432-5057).

27-29—Road trip to Prairie Chickens and Sandhill Cranes. Sign up early for this one. Leave Ames by

*(continued on page 8)*

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**Bird Term of the Month: Clutch**—a nest of eggs or a brood of chicks.

## As the Crow Flies . . .

Stan Cyran, President

The days are getting longer, the snow is melting, and a Northern Cardinal has begun singing in my backyard. Although it is not wise to indulge in "irrational exuberance," it seems as if the beginning of the end of the gray winter days may be in sight. The annual Christmas bird counts were warm and well attended. Many birds were seen, although curiously few seed eaters. Thanks to all who participated. A highlight of this time of year is the annual Sandhill Crane trip. Kay Niyo will lead this year's trip for the second time in a row, her seventh trip overall. This trip is a "must see" for anyone who has not witnessed the spectacle of thousands of these magnificent birds coming in to roost in the shallow waters of the Platte river after a day of feasting in the fields. The trip will begin on Friday, March 27th on the booming grounds of the Greater Prairie Chicken near Beatrice, Nebraska, and continue Saturday with shorebird and waterfowl viewing in the marshes of the Rainwater Basin. Saturday evening will be spent near Grand Island under the full moon listening to the trumpeting, rattling "gar-oo-oo" of *Grus Canadensis* as the birds alight in the braided river. Contact Kay Niyo for reservations if you want to attend. See you birding!

## Notes from the Field

Kevin Healy, Field Trip Chair

### State Forest Nursery

Fifteen hard-core birders braved cold January weather to tramp around the State Forest Nursery. We had clear skies, little wind and temperatures in the teens. We saw a total of fifteen species, including Mourning Dove, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Harris' Sparrow.

### Bird Drop-ins

*Below are some bird citations by BBAS members. If you have any special sightings to report, please e-mail me at shivvers@ameslab.gov so we can include them in our next newsletter.*

Mark Widrechner and Sherry Dragula stopped by the Bob Shetler Recreation Area about 4 p.m. on February 1, just below the Saylorville Dam. "There were few birds around, but just as we were getting ready to leave, an adult American White Peolican flew down the river. It was an impressive and unexpected sight. I left a message on the hotline last night. But who knows if it will stick around now that we're getting another taste of winter?"

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Ed and Liz Carbrey saw a pair of Pelicans below the Saylorville Dam on Friday, February 6. They said they looked very healthy and were on a sand bar a short walk down the east side of the river. Steve Dinsmore said the pair are undoubtedly the same pair that were seen on the Saylorville and Des Moines CBCs; they have been overwintering there.

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Steve Dinsmore reports that another interesting sighting from Colorado and Nebraska is a Gyrfalcon hanging around north of Ft. Collins. It eats only Canada Geese! He says it is pretty spectacular to watch it knock a goose out of the sky!

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A Brown Thasher has been hanging out at the Shivvers Nature Sanctuary since January 19. A Brown-headed Cowbird was visiting February 13. Both enjoy eating Audubon mix.

*Newsletter Deadline: Friday, April 3,  
1998 at 2 p.m.*

### Big Bluestem Audubon Society Officers and Committees

#### Officers:

- President: Stan Cyran 292-4876 scyran@pol.net
- Vice-President: Kay Niyo 233-8803 kniyo@aol.com
- Secretary: Mary Doud 296-2178 mfdoud@Ames.net
- Treasurer: Paul Ovrom 292-8862 nc7ao@ars-grin.gov

#### Board Members:

- Carol Berrier 965-8242
- David Guy 232-8825
- Kevin Healy 233-5914 khealy@ames.net
- Karl Jungbluth 432-5057 Karl.A.Jungbluth@noaa.gov
- John Pohlman 232-6816

#### Committee Chairs:

- Archivist: Hank Zalatel 382-5427 madowl@nevia.net
- Awards Chair: Stan Cyran
- Conservation Chair: Sherry Dragula 233-1532 mpwskd@aol.com
- Education Co-Chairs: Carol and Galin Berrier
- Field Trip Chair: Kevin Healy
- Fund Raising Co-Chairs: Kay Niyo and Stan Cyran
- Membership Chair: Mark Widrechner 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 Shivvers 292-0691 shivvers@ameslab.gov
- Special Publications Chair: Joyce Bahrenfus 432-3396
- Service & Special Projects Co-Chairs: Karl and Carmen Jungbluth

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



## Birders of the Month

by Stan Cyran

*(This is another in an on-going series profiling the birders in our midst. Why are they birders? How do they spend their time? How do they contribute their talents to society at large?)*

Joyce and Jon Bahrenfus have never let a little friendly competition disrupt their married life. In fact, it is one of the reasons they became birders. "There is something interesting about learning more and more about birds," Joyce indicates. "It is almost a competition with yourself to see how much you have learned, and certainly we compete with each other," she adds.

Joyce and Jon were not birders from their early days. "We started out just enjoying being outside," Joyce admits. "We didn't even have a decent pair of binoculars." One day, however, a friend named John Robinson showed them an Iowa Ornithological Union list of the birds of Iowa. "We were amazed at how many birds there were in Iowa," Joyce exclaims. Gradually, she and Jon began paying more and more attention to birds on their nature hikes. Their friend had also encouraged them to come to one of the meetings of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society. Although they had been members of the National Audubon Society (as well as various other environmental organizations) for years, they had never been to any meetings of their local affiliate. Finally, one of the BBAS programs caught their eye, and they attended. "It was a nice meeting, and there were a lot of people there who were interested in the same things that we were," she and Jon agree. They have since contributed immeasurably to the BBAS, serving on the board of directors, with Joyce additionally having served as secretary, and Jon having served as vice president and field trip chair. When asked what it is about BBAS that keeps them coming back, Joyce and Jon don't hesitate, "It's the people—there is always someone that we can learn from."

It is hard for Joyce and Jon to name their favorite birding place in Iowa. Harrier Marsh must rank pretty high, however. "It is close to some property of ours and we get over there a fair amount," Joyce notes. "It has gotten even more interesting since some improvements have been made."

Joyce and Jon try to add several days of birding to many of their vacations. Last year they visited the Salton Sea area of California after having been given some expert advice by another BBAS member, Wolf Oesterreich. In previous years, they have visited southern Arizona, including Patagonia and Ramsey Canyon, both known as some of the premier birding spots in the U.S. This winter, they will be heading for southern Texas.

And so, if you ever see Joyce and Jon with bird books in hand, binoculars raised, and a competitive gleam in their eyes, know this is the stuff that makes happy marriages and happy birding.

## Board Happenings

Submitted by Sherry Dragula

The Board met on Sunday, February 15 at Kay Niyo's house. The Board authorized the expenditure of funds for a second edition of *The Birds of Story County*. A discussion of upcoming field trips and monthly meetings followed. Karl Jungbluth gave a report on the last Iowa Audubon Council meeting. Our Chapter will host the next IAC meeting in Boone, on April 25. Karl informed the Board of the American Bird Conservancy's Important Bird Area (IBA) Campaign. As BBAS goes on field trips we will attempt to identify IBA's. The Board authorized expenditure of funds for a new spotting scope and tripod for use during BBAS field trips. BBAS is cosponsoring the spring Iowa Ornithologists' Union meeting on May 15-17 in Ames. Field trips and presentations will be held as well as a banquet and lunch. Volunteers are needed. We would like to put together a display to use at the meeting to commemorate our 30th anniversary. Contact Sherry Dragula if you have photos, clippings or any materials that could be used in a display. BBAS will be providing some funds for the new bird feeders at the Y camp outside of Boone. The Y camp reports that some 500 people per month are using their new blind and feeder setup. A Bird-a-thon was discussed and the Board agreed to start working on setting one up, probably to be held next May. BBAS will again provide a meal for the Master Conservation Program on June 23 at the Conservation Center. Volunteers are needed to bring food items.

*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. The next meeting will be April 5 at 7 p.m. at Kay's house. Thanks.*

### Continued page 4—Iowa Audubon Council

**Important Bird Areas**—The Iowa Audubon Society will be participating in identification of these areas, in cooperation with the American Bird Conservancy. Karl has data collection forms for those interested. Important Bird Areas hold a significant population of endangered species, WatchList birds or rare habitats, or have a long history of bird monitoring. In addition, large concentrations of water birds and raptors are important. The data collection process can be an exciting "citizen science" project, and Important Bird Area designation might be useful in guiding land use and management.

**BBAS will be hosting the April 25th IAC meeting!**—Karl and Carmen Jungbluth, Special Projects Chairs, will coordinate the day. Location is the Boone County Historical Center in downtown Boone. BBAS members should plan to attend the lunch and afternoon meeting to get a feel for what is happening with Audubon in Iowa. Please RSVP to Karl or Carmen.

## Conservation Corner

Sherry Dragula, Conservation Chair

### EDDYVILLE DUNES AND WETLANDS NEED HELP

A highway by-pass is planned to go through a unique sand hills area near Eddyville, Iowa. The wind-blown sands of the dunes were deposited 12,000-15,000 years ago in a process very similar to the formation of Iowa's Loess Hills. The 1200 acres of sand deposits, up to 60 feet thick, are punctuated by closed depressions forming open water wetlands and wet meadows. A preliminary draft flora list of the Dunes and Wetlands has documented over 600 species in the project corridor and Dunes area. They include the state endangered Pale-green Orchid and seven special concern species. The proposed construction area also supports Showy orchis, Twayblade, and Ladies-tresses. Preliminary studies also show the Dunes and Wetlands are home to 33% of the state's plant species, 50% of the nesting birds, 34% of the reptiles, 55% of the amphibians and 60% of the state's small mammal species.

Thanks to two Eddyville area naturalists, Pat McAdams and Glenda Buenger, the special qualities of the Dunes and Wetlands are becoming known. However, a 4-lane highway through the Dunes is the Iowa Department of Transportation's (IDOT) preferred route for the Des Moines to Burlington corridor. This proposal would directly impact about 100 acres of the Dunes, including protected species and diverse habitats. The IDOT must perform an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bypass. Alternate routes that minimize environmental impacts should be assessed by the EIS. However the IDOT timeline is very short for the EIS, only 5 months. Hopefully an alternative avoiding the unique resources of the Dunes will be agreed upon.

Please write a letter requesting that the agencies objectively evaluate alternatives that avoid the sensitive natural communities of the Dunes. Send your letter to

Mr. Harry Budd, Director, Project Planning, Iowa D.O.T., Ames, IA 50010.

Mr. Michael Schweyen, FHWA Iowa Division, 105 6th Street, Ames, IA 50010

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

(Thanks to Pat McAdams and Glenda Buenger for providing information on the Dunes and Wetlands.)

### Special Projects: YMCA Camp Bird Feeding Stations

The YMCA Camp north of Boone has recently set up two bird feeding stations with viewing blinds. The blinds are used in bird and wildlife education programs, reaching 300-500 adults per month in the winter, and over 20,000 kids during the summer. The Y-Camp has asked BBAS members to donate money or seed to benefit these programs. If you are interested in supporting this special project, you can bring seed to any BBAS activity for delivery to the Y-Camp. Or, make checks payable to *Big Bluestem Audubon Society* and mail to Karl Jungbluth, 1372 Peony Lane, Boone, IA 50036 or call Karl, 432-5057 for more information.

## Iowa Audubon Council Report

by Karl Jungbluth

On January 31, 1998, the Iowa Audubon Council met in Indianola. This was an important meeting, since the establishment of an Iowa Field Office of the Audubon Society is moving forward on several fronts. Nineteen Audubon members representing nine Iowa Audubon chapters were present. The Iowa Field Office promises to benefit birds and their habitat in Iowa. The time is approaching for Audubon members to come forward to support the state office concept. A summary of items follows.

*Search for an Executive Director of the Iowa Field Office*—34 applications have been received thus far, and the job "remains open until filled" so interested persons are still encouraged to apply. A selection team is currently narrowing the field to a pool of "best qualified" candidates. Interviews are likely in March or April. This is an exciting step for Audubon in Iowa!

*Iowa Audubon Board of Directors*—to support the new executive director, another team is working to build a state Board of Directors. The board will consist of one representative from each chapter or affiliate in Iowa (12 in all) and up to 13 board members from the pool of Auduboneers Karl Jungbluth has been elected as the BBAS representative. **Important:** Names of people who would be an asset to the Iowa Audubon Board of Directors should be presented to Karl Jungbluth or Sherry Dragula. The Iowa Audubon Council will also continue to play a role, so there are many opportunities to volunteer for Audubon in Iowa.

*Fundraising*—commitment, and yes, funds will be needed to establish a successful state office. Potential major donors are being identified, and National Audubon has committed substantial matching funds to get the Iowa office started. Iowa Audubon members will also need to show their support for the State Office. This is our chance to make a difference in Iowa through an Audubon Office, and each member will be asked to contribute soon. With some 5,300 members in Iowa an average of \$10 per member will raise over \$50,000! Stronger contributions will help us realize our dreams.

*Literature*—The Iowa Audubon Council also reviewed drafts of printed material, which are being developed to explain the Audubon mission, goals, and its uniqueness in Iowa. The literature will be used for fundraising and recruitment of board members.

*REAP*—The Iowa Audubon Council remains a member of the REAP Alliance. It should be noted there are a number of REAP assemblies coming in February. These meetings will allow the DNR to present what has been accomplished in each district, and allow us to suggest projects and priorities. Plan to attend! The Boone and Story county assemblies will be held in Des Moines.

(Continued on page 3)

## In the beginning . . .

*Since we will be celebrating our first thirty years, I think it is appropriate to recall the first year through the minutes of the meetings. The minutes begin . . .*

A regular meeting of the Ames Audubon Society was held in 122 Kildee Hall Tuesday, September 10, at 8 p.m.

The business meeting was called to order by President Ben Bereskin. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The treasurers [sic] report was given with an approved balance of \$19.38. A present membership report was given and membership cards were distributed.

Old business—The constitution in its entirety has not been accepted by the membership. The completed constitutional draft is to be ready by the October board meeting and should be available for membership approval at the regular October meeting. A further discussion and explanation of the Constitutional wording concerning payment of dues followed. Mrs. Alfine moved that the wording, "dues are payable at application and effective til the 1st day of the next month, one year hence", be accepted. Mr. Miller seconded the motion and it was passed.

New business—President Bereskin reviewed the Ames Audubon Society's history and activities to date. He read several selections from a biography of John James Audubon. Project and committee assignment suggestions were then made by Mr. Bereskin. These suggestions (names of members) are subject to member approval and will be recorded when final assignments are made at a later meeting. The election of an additional executive board member was discussed. Mr. Hamilton moved that the term for this board member be one year. The motion was seconded and passed. Mr. Dave Hoffman was elected to the executive board position. A discussion of the Congressional Redwood Park bill passage followed. Future programs and outings were then discussed. Dr. Weller will present a program on the Arctic Tundra at the October 15th meeting. A hike was planned for September 22nd at 3 p.m. along the Railway Park area.

A motion was made and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

Mr. Kurtz, a longtime park board member presented a program on the parks in the Ames area, showing colored slides of existing facilities, and commenting on projected park plans.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Kenneth Hawley

Approved October 15, 1968

## JOB ANNOUNCEMENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IOWA OFFICE, NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

National Audubon Society is seeking applicants for the position of Executive Director of its Iowa Office. The Executive Director will be the chief executive officer for Audubon within Iowa responsible for the organization's overall performance in that state. The position will be based in or near Des Moines, Iowa and requires substantial travel throughout the state as well as occasional travel to other states to attend national meetings and events, and for fundraising.

This is a new position that follows the recommendations of the National Audubon Society Strategic Plan to strengthen our commitment to the conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats at the grassroots level. The Executive Director will be responsible for the growth, management, and integration of all Audubon programs within Iowa including: communications, media relations, government affairs, environmental education, campaigns, wildlife policy, habitat restoration, science, sanctuaries, Audubon centers, private landowner outreach, and fundraising. The Executive Director should have extensive fundraising experience and the capacity to raise funds to sustain and enlarge the state program.

The Executive Director must be able to work effectively with the Iowa Audubon Council, Audubon chapters, and volunteers to "create a culture of conservation at the community level." The Executive Director will develop opportunities for education, training and support for volunteers to enable chapters to promote membership and achieve their conservation goals.

The Executive Director will also contribute to the Audubon mission and national agenda as a member of a team of state office executive directors throughout the country.

Please send inquiries to Glenn Olson, Field Director, National Audubon Society, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825, telephone: (916)481-5332; fax: (916)481-6228.

## A Big Bluestem Birdathon?

Birdathons are used by Audubon chapters throughout the country to raise awareness about birds and to raise money for chapter activities and bird conservation. BBAS has not conducted a Birdathon in the past. Is this the time to start? Karl Jungbluth, Special Projects Chair, is considering starting up a BBAS Birdathon, and would like to hear your opinions on the subject..

Birdathon teams scan skies, trees, and wetlands to identify as many birds as possible in a one-day period. Participants obtain pledges from individuals and businesses, ranging from 25 cents up to \$10 or more for each species spotted. Birdathons raise over \$1 million annually, and event publicity reaches 35 million people. A Birdathon could raise awareness of Big Bluestem Audubon and the Audubon Society in Iowa. Half of the money would go toward the new Iowa Field Office, and half would stay right here with our chapter. Interested? Talk to Karl.

## 1998 Rivers and Wildlife Celebration

The National Audubon Society's Rivers and Wildlife Celebration (formerly known as the Spring River Conference) is the premiere wildlife event in the Midwest. In its 29th year, the Celebration is held each spring at Kearney, Nebraska along the Platte River to coincide with the world's largest gathering of Sandhill Cranes. It is scheduled March 13-15, 1998.

Featured speakers include Kent Clegg, Whooping Crane Biologist from Idaho; John Flicker, President, National Audubon Society; Frank Gill, Director of Science, National Audubon Society; and Pauline Drobney, co-founder and first president of the Iowa Prairie Network.

For more information and the registration and program agenda, write the Audubon Nebraska, 140 North 8th Street, Suite 217, Lincoln, NE 68508. Registration for all events at reduced prices must be postmarked by February 28, 1998. Most field trips have limited space available.

## Have you cleaned your bird feeding stations recently?

With all the birds visiting our bird stations this winter, it is extremely important to keep them clean to minimize the threat of disease. Whenever birds are concentrated, as they usually are in the winter around the bird water and feeders while the snow keeps the ground covered, there is a greater chance for transmitting diseases. To prevent birds from getting sick because of poor feeder cleanliness, you should

1. Keep the feed dry. Scrape out old seed that accumulates in feeder corners or at the bottom of the cylindrical sunflower feeder. Snow gets in, melts and drips down inside, causing the sunflower seeds on the bottom to get moldy. Scrub it out with a solution of two ounces of bleach with one gallon of water. Let the feeder air dry.

2. The discarded seeds and seed hulls should be scooped up and removed. Mice, voles, and rats may be visiting you, since they are attracted by this. On the good side, you may see a screech owl visit your feeder to have lunch on one of these rodents!

3. Water feeders should be cleaned daily with a brush and fresh water, since seeds and bird droppings contaminate the water. It is not uncommon to see birds taking a bath in the cold winter days.

4. You should also check your suet feeders. With the weather fluctuating between warm days and cold nights, the suet could become inedible.

*Adapted from Wild About Birds. DNR Bird Feeding Guide. (1995), pages 248-249.*

## Make Your Own Peanut Feeder

A peanut feeder can be made from a scrap of 1/4" mesh hardware cloth that is about 8 1/2" x 18". Other materials include a circle of wood that is 3/4" thick with a 5 1/4" diameter and a smaller piece of wood that is 1 1/2" thick cut from a piece of two-by-four (I used a wooden spool.). You will also need a small chain, 18" long, and a soldering gun and solder. I don't own a soldering gun, so I just bent the wires to the inside of the feeder.

To make the feeder, lay out the hardware cloth and expose the wire tips on one of the long sides. Glue and nail the two pieces of wood together and then drill 3/8" diameter hole through them. This will be the top of the feeder. Lay the chain on the hardware cloth and attach the chain at the bottom. Next, roll wire into a cylinder and clinch wire ends. Solder the wire ends to seal. Roll up the end where chain is fastened. Clinch the bottom flat. Last, insert the chain through the top. Fill the feeder and hang it up. Peanuts are very tasty for your chickadees, downy and hairy woodpeckers, blue jays, nuthatches, and starlings. These feeders are inexpensive and easy to make as gifts.

## Make Your Pheasants a Feeder

If you also have some extra 1/2" hardware cloth laying around, it is very simple to make this into a cylinder. The cloth should be about 65 - 75" long and 3' wide. The cylinder should be rolled into approximately a 10-12-inch diameter. The hardware cloth will overlap, since the corn will flow out if it is not at least a double thickness. Fasten the roll with hog rings or small wire fasteners used for rabbit cages. So your feeder does not fall over, attach it to a square piece of scrap exterior plywood, at least 24 inches on a side. Place the cylinder in the center of the board and draw an outline of the circle created by the wire. Next, drill several pairs of holes about 1/2 inch apart. Wire the cylinder onto the base through these holes. Set it up on four bricks to discourage rodents from living underneath. Fill it with corn kernels and watch the turkeys and pheasants flock to your feeder!

*NOTE: These feeder instructions were adapted from the DNR Bird Feeding Guide published by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources authored by Carrol L. Henderson.*

### REAP Meeting to be Held

The Regional REAP meeting for Polk, Story, Warren, Dallas, and Boone counties will be held at Izaak Walton League on Valley Dr. in Des Moines on Sat. Feb. 21, from 1:30 PM to 4 PM. This is your chance to have input about the funding of the Resources Enhancement and Protection Program in Iowa.

### Nominations Sought for the Big Bluestem Audubon Society Officers and Board

A nominations committee has been formed by President Cyran to find nominees for all Officer positions and 3 expiring Board member terms. The committee consists of Kevin Healy, Joyce Bahrenfus, and Mary Doud. The Nominations Committee will submit a slate of Officers and Board Members for consideration at the annual election held at the May meeting. If you have nomination suggestions or would like to serve in one of these capacities, please contact a committee member before April 5, 1998. If you would like to join or head any of the other committees and/or like information about the duties of the committees, contact the committee chair listed on page 2 of this newsletter.

Paul Ovrom, John Pohlman, and John Snyder were appointed to the Budget Committee. If you have any suggestions for the 98-99 budget, please contact them before April 5, 1998.

### The Swan Area West of Ames is Named

According to articles in the *Ames Tribune* and the *Boone Today*, The Boone County Conservation Board named the area of the trumpeter swan restoration project at the intersection of U.S. Highway 30 and Lincoln Way in mid-January. The name chosen for the 16.7 area area is 'Mabaska,' the Native American word for swan. Two adult swans and their five cygnets live there. Sometimes ducks or geese stop by. The Iowa Department of Transportation owned the land, and the Boone County Conservation Board bought it in August 1997 with the help of a family from north of Ames.

### Prairie Chicken Lek, Migrating Waterfowl, and Sandhill Crane Field Trip Planned for March 27-29

A trip to Nebraska to see a Prairie Chicken lek, migrating waterfowl, and Sandhill Cranes has been planned. We will leave Friday, March 27th about 1 p.m. to travel to the Burchard Lake Wildlife Management Area near Beatrice, Nebraska to view (from blinds) Prairie Chickens booming. We will stay at Lincoln Friday night and visit many marshes in the Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District Saturday morning and early afternoon on our way to see hundreds of thousands of Sandhill Cranes feeding in fields south of Grand Island. At dusk, we will thrill to the sound and sight of the cranes as they fly in from all directions to roost for the night on the Platte River sandbars. We will stay south of Grand Island near the river Saturday night and bird our way back to Ames Sunday morning. A block of rooms has been reserved for both nights. Call Kay Niyo at 233-8803 for information and to reserve space.

*Editor's Note: Please call Kay as soon as possible, since this is prime viewing time. Hotel rooms close to the sites will be difficult to find if you wait until the last moment!*

### Bird Chat

Dear B.C.:

It seems like yesterday I was warm and happy, busy tossing leaves around, looking for bugs and worms. Mom and Dad were talking to friends and neighbors. They were talking about moving on, but I was having a great time playing, saw my first snow, still warm, and boom, it got cold—and now, as I look around, I wonder what I'm doing here. My fellow brown thrashers abandoned me. It's too cold to sing. The cardinals and the mourning doves have befriended me, but since I don't speak their dialect, I feel very alone. What happened? Where is everybody?

B. Thrasher

Dear B. Thrasher:

Your problem is you forgot to migrate. While you were busy playing in the leaves, your friends grouped together to fly south to enjoy bugs and worms down south. Since it is too late for you to go south and El Niño seems to keep the temperatures above normal here, hang in there for another month. Your friends should be returning around the first of April. Continue eating your millet, sunflower seeds, and cracked corn. You'll make it. Next year, plan to migrate south in September or October, regardless of the climate here. Weather in Iowa is known to change quickly.

B.C.



## 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.

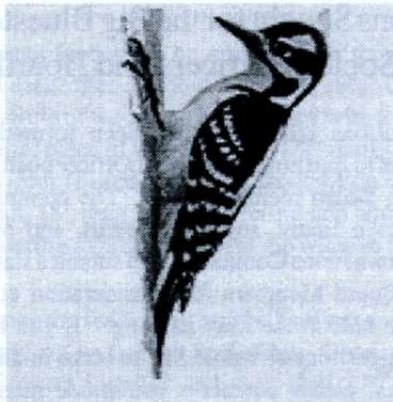
**Continued page 1—Coming Field Trips**

1300 Friday, arrive in SE Nebraska in time to see Prairie Chicken courting activities on the lek. Up early Saturday morning, observe migrating waterfowl and raptors as we make our way to Grand Island, Nebraska to see the sandhill cranes. Stay overnight in Grand Island and return Sunday afternoon. Trip leader, Kay Niyo (515-233-8803) to make your reservations.

**April**

4- Waterfowl and shorebird trip. It's hard to say, writing in mid-February, an El Niño year, where the birds (which birds?) will be here in April. But we'll find them. Meet at ISU Design Center parking lot at 0800. Trip leader, Sherry Dragula (515-233-1532) or call Kevin Healy (515-233-5914) for details.

25- Waterfowl and shorebird trip. It's hard to say, writing in mid-February, an El Niño year, where the birds (which birds?) will be here in April. But we'll find them. Meet at ISU Design Center parking lot at 0800. Call Kevin Healy (515-233-5914) for details.

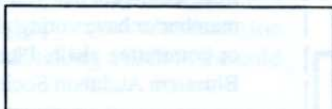


**Project Feeder Watch Update**

Now is a good time to sign up for PFW. You'll get two years for one: sign up now and get in on the rest of this year and be automatically enrolled in the 98-99 season. Also, check out the web site <http://birds.cornell.edu> if you can and look at the Great 98 Backyard Bird Count.

Margaret A. Barker, Education Outreach Coordinator, Project Feeder Watch, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. (607) 254-2440 phone. (607) 254-2415 fax. URL: <http://birds.cornell.edu>

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



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