

BIG BLUESTEM FLYER

Volume 27, No. 7

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

March 1992

MONTHLY MEETING

Prairie Chickens in Southern Iowa

Melvin Moe, Wildlife Management Biologist,
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Thursday, March 19, 7:30 PM
Room 181, Design Center, I.S.U. Campus

Melvin Moe is the supervisor for Iowa's Prairie Chicken Restoration Project in southern Iowa. Since 1987 he has overseen releases of the birds to establish a breeding lek in Iowa. He will tell us where the birds come from, how the releases are done, and inform us on what has happened to the birds.

FIELD TRIPS

Eagle Watch

Lake Red Rock

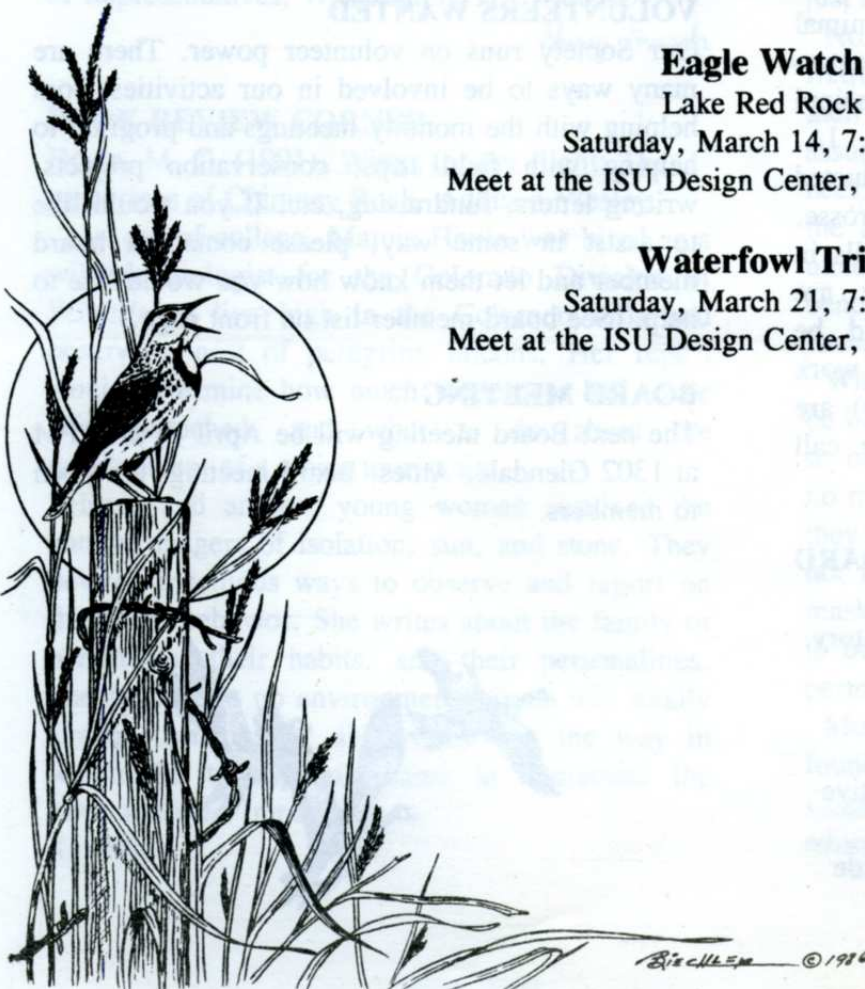
Saturday, March 14, 7:30 AM

Meet at the ISU Design Center, west parking lot

Waterfowl Trip

Saturday, March 21, 7:30 AM

Meet at the ISU Design Center, west parking lot



BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY

1991-1992

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BIRD SIGHTINGS

The following species were to be found in the Ames/Des Moines area on or about 3-1-92: Green-winged Teal, Shoveler, Canvasback, Redhead, Bufflehead, Common Mergansers, Eagles, Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer, Robins, Bluebirds, Canada Geese, Snow Geese, and Turkeys. Also an Iceland and Glaucous Gull at Saylorville.

Maridel Jackson

FEBRUARY 15 FIELD TRIP REPORT

Six people ventured out on the beautiful snowy morning of Feb. 15. We hiked around the State Forest Nursery in Ames and saw a small flock of Redpolls (about 12 birds) feeding on alder seeds near the parking lot. After that we went to Stuart Smith Park in Ames and observed a red-shouldered hawk. Another 10 species of "common" birds were observed, and the snow made the walking fun and especially scenic.

Sherry Dragula

FIELD ASSISTANT NEEDED FOR BIRD STUDY

Melinda Knutson, a graduate student in Animal Ecology at I.S.U. is looking for a field assistant to work in the floodplain forests of the Mississippi River between Winona, MN. and Lansing, IA. identifying songbirds. The study is to be conducted May 18- July with housing provided in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. The pay is \$850 per month. Skills in identifying songbirds by song and sight are necessary. Plant identification skills would be helpful. Possibility for additional data entry work in August. If you (or someone you know) are interested in being a field assistant please call Melinda at 233-4752.

STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD EVENTS

---Thursday, March 12, 7:30 - 9 PM, at the Story County Conservation Center,

Forum: "New Developments in Fisheries Management Programs."

---Sunday, March 22, 2 PM, YMCA Interpretive Center in west Ames,

"Introduction to Birdwatching Program," Slide presentation and possible walk.

NONGAME PROGRAM MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The following publications are available through the Nongame Program, by writing the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50319: *Nongame News*, Quarterly newsletter (free), *The Snakes of Iowa*, 16p., color (\$2), *The Lizards and Turtles of Iowa*, 20p., color (\$2), *The Frogs and Salamanders of Iowa*, 24p., color (\$2).

Limited quantities of material are also available on river otters, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, kestrels, bluebirds, attracting backyard wildlife and bird feeding, by writing the Ia. D.N.R., Nongame Program, Route 1, Ledges Rd., Boone, IA 50036.

Posters are available with a donation for postage, mailing & handling costs. This year's poster is "Celebrate Nongame". Bluebird and peregrine falcon posters are also available.

And don't forget the "Chickadee Checkoff" on line 61 of the Iowa 1040 tax form and line 15 of the Iowa 1040A form. Let's give Iowa's wildlife a big boost this year!

Sherry Dragula

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Our Society runs on volunteer power. There are many ways to be involved in our activities from helping with the monthly meetings and program to helping with field trips, conservation projects, writing letters, fundraising, etc. If you would like to assist in some way, please contact a board member and let them know how you would like to help. (See board member list on front page.)

BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be April 6, at 7 PM at 1302 Glendale, Ames. Board meetings are open to members.



WETLANDS PROTECTION UPDATE

In the past few months we urged you to comment on proposed changes to the national "Wetlands Delineation Manual" that would narrow the definition of wetlands and open millions of acres to development. By early February the EPA had tabulated 52,000 of 75,000 responses, revealing that 56% are opposed to the changes. An Audubon wetlands specialist said that this is the largest number of comments received on a regulatory matter related to the environment in recent memory. Congratulations, activists.

However, a new piece of legislation could shift the debate over wetlands in favor of stronger protection. Rep. Don Edwards's bill would expand Section 404 to regulate the draining, excavation, and flooding of wetlands and give greater input to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the EPA in the permitting process. It would essentially base the nation's wetland policy on science rather than politics. To help this effort, you can ask your congressman to co-sponsor Edwards's wetland protection bill. Most of our Chapter members are served by Rep. Neal Smith. You can address a note to him: The Hon. Neal Smith, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515.

Sherry Dragula

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Houle, M. C. (1991). Wings for my flight: The peregrines of Chimney Rock. Addison-Wesley.

Just out of college, Marcie Houle was hired as a wildlife biologist for the Colorado Division of Wildlife to live high in the Colorado hills and observe a nest of peregrine falcons. Her report would determine how much wilderness had to be left untouched, and what to do about the development of a major tourist site.

Houle and another young woman survived the natural dangers of isolation, sun, and stone. They devised ingenious ways to observe and report on the birds' behavior. She writes about the family of peregrines, their habits, and their personalities. She found that no environmental issue was totally simple. Among her discoveries was the way in which the townspeople came to appreciate the birds and their importance.

Kay Niyo

GLASS PANES AND BIRD KILLS

Source: D. Klem, "Glass and bird kills: An overview and suggested planning and design methods of preventing a fatal hazard." (1991)

"Windows are non-selective killers of birds, and this particular man-caused mortality factor may be contributing to population declines of select species and birds in general. Windows also are important and valuable components of human dwellings, and a solution at any one problem site most likely will have to maintain the functional and aesthetic qualities of glass. Because transparent and reflective plate glass is invisible to birds, various current and potential solutions require altering windows so that birds functionally recognize them as barriers. Problem sites generally are unique, and acceptable solutions will require creative planning and design...."

Expert estimates of human-caused bird mortality show collision with glass to make up about one third (33.6%). Other major causes are hunting (41.5%) and vehicle collisions (19.7%) with no other listed source being more than 2 percent. The collective deaths from such as domestic pets, research, pollution, poisoning, powerlines, etc. is just over 5 percent.

No species seems to be immune, though the frequencies of deaths of specific species reflect their being near to human dwellings. The usual assumption is that the birds have broken their necks but examinations show that that is wrong; the actual cause is head injury. Many deaths go unnoticed because the birds fall into the shrubbery beneath windows and are promptly collected by savvy scavengers.

What can be done? Windows in flight areas will be hit unless they are covered by some kind of net or other window covering. Collections of decals, no matter what their shape are not effective unless they cover a significant part of the window. It is not the hawk or owl shape that matters, it is the masking of the glass barrier so that it can be seen to be a structure, and some of the dimensions of permitted gaps seem to be quite critical.

More information and technical references can be found in Klem's article published in Wildlife Conservation in Metropolitan Environments, edited by L. W. Adams and D. L. Leedy.

David Edwards

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENTS - 1992

March 14	Saturday - Field Trip to watch eagles at Red Rock
March 19	Thursday, 7:30 PM - Meeting, Malvin Moe "Prairie Chickens in Southern Iowa"
March 21	Saturday - Field trip to Watch Waterfowl
April 16	Thursday, 7:30 PM - Meeting, Laura Jackson, DNR Nongame Biologist "Birding Costa Rica"
April 18	Saturday - Field Trip to Tieg's Marsh, Shorebirds & Waterfowl
April 25	Saturday - Field Trip to local marshes
May 2	Saturday - Field Trip to McFarland Park to see Warblers & Wildflowers
May 9	Saturday - Field Trip to Brookside Park to see Warblers & Wildflowers
May 21	Thursday, 7:30 PM - Meeting, Tom Rosburg "Iowa's Loess Hills"
May 29-31	Friday-Sunday, Loess Hills Seminar and Field Trip
June 6	Saturday - Birder's Breakfast and Hike, Ledges State Park
June 13-19	National Audubon Society Convention, Washington, D.C.
June 24-27	American Ornithological Union Annual Meeting, Ames, Iowa

Our regular meeting place is Room 181, Design Center, ISU campus. Meeting place and Field Trips are subject to change. Field Trip starting times and meeting place will be printed in the monthly newsletter and announced at monthly meetings. For further information call Sherry Dragula, President at 292-4014 or Mike Meetz, Field Trip Chair at 382-2534.

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