

# BIG BLUESTEM FLYER

Volume 27, No. 4,5

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

December 1991/January 1992

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

### Annual Holiday Season Party

Members' Treats and Slides

Wednesday, December 11, 7:30 PM

Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park

**Please note that this is a change from our usual meeting day and place.**

To reach McFarland Park go 4 miles north on Dayton Road from 13th Street in Ames. Then go east for 1/2 mile.

Please bring a few (about 10) of your favorite slides to share with the group: birds, plants, natural areas, or other things of interest to the members. Also, **bring a treat to share.**

### Iowa's Natural Beauty

Carl Kurtz, Photographer

Thursday, Jan. 16, 7:30 PM, Room 280 Town Engineering, ISU Campus

**Note that this is a change from our usual meeting place.**

Carl is a well-known nature photographer from St. Anthony, Iowa. His work has been widely shown and acclaimed. He is a graduate of ISU in Fish and Wildlife Biology. Carl is also a prairie restorationist. He has numerous prairie areas of various ages on his farm, some dating back to 1976. He has a special talent for capturing nature's splendor right here at home, in Iowa. You won't want to miss this program.

## FIELD TRIPS

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

AMES AREA, Saturday, December 14

SAYLORVILLE AREA, Sunday, December 15

BOONE AREA, Wednesday, January 1

More information inside.

### SKIING OR HIKING

Saturday, January 25, Camp Hantesa or E. River Valley Park

## BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY

1991-1992

**President:** Sherry Dragula, 292-4014

**Vice-President:** Tom Rosburg, 377-2930

**Secretary:** Nancy Dionigi, 233-3195

**Treasurer:** Mark Widrechner, 292-4014

#### Executive Board

Jon Bahrenfus, 432-3396

Mark Dobbe, 233-2845

Maridel Jackson, 964-0140

Kay Niyo, 292-5130

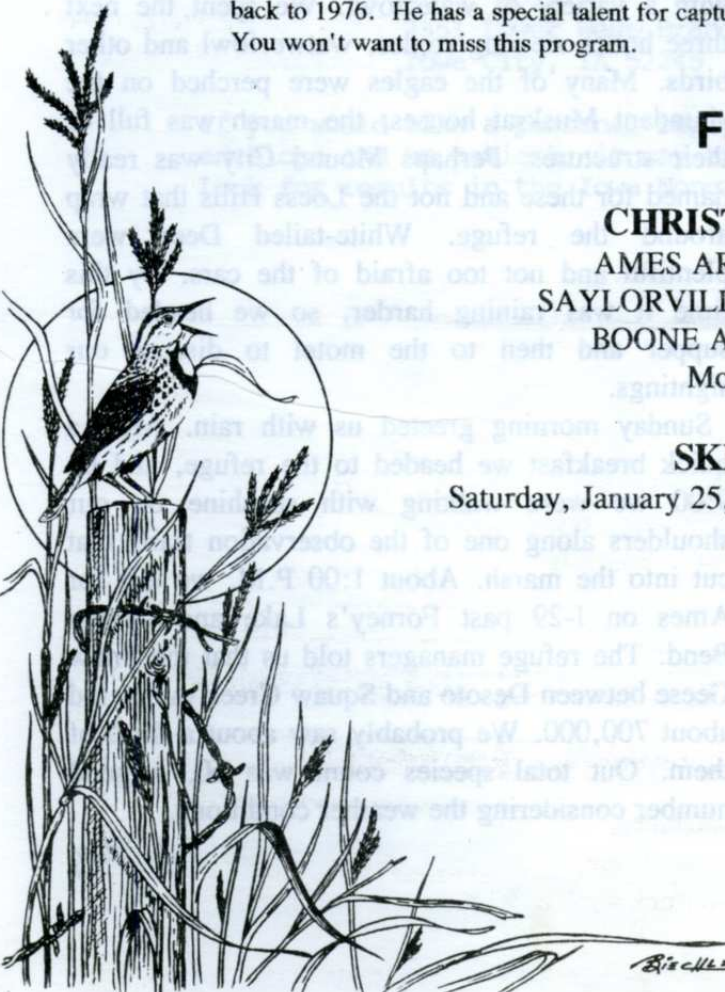
Paul Ovrom, 292-8862

#### Newsletter Editor and Membership Chair

David Edwards, 292-3790

#### Field Trips Chair

Mike Meetz, 382-2534



## BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Connor, Jack. 1991. *Season at the point: The birds and birders of Cape May*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press.

Every autumn millions of birds converge at Cape May, New Jersey, on their annual migration flight to wintering grounds as far away as Brazil and Peru. Connor says the number of birds and diversity of species create a birder's paradise unmatched anywhere, including Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania. We meet in the book many of the interesting individuals who devote August through November each year spending all daylight hours counting for the Cape May Bird Observatory's Autumn Hawk Watch. The census has averaged 66,000 hawks a season for the past twelve years.

Connor also shares his vast knowledge of birds, their aerodynamics, their special adaptations, their migratory patterns, and their relationship to the environment. The book is beautifully illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings.

*Kay Niyo*

## ARMCHAIR ACTIVIST

Our chapter is launching a new conservation project, the "Armchair Activist". The program began in a Chicago-area chapter and has spread to Audubon chapters nationwide. Five chapters in Iowa are participating. The facet of the program in which we would like you to participate is called "Letter of the Month Club". If you join, every month you will receive a mailing on a particular conservation issue. It will be a local, state or national issue (four of each a year). There will be background information on the issue plus a sample letter and a listing of where your letter should be sent. Your part is to write a letter. By working together on the same issue each month it is hoped that we will have more influence on policy decisions affecting the environment. If you want to join, please follow the instructions below. Six dollars will defray the printing postage costs for our chapter.

Send the following to:

Sherry Dragula  
RR 6  
Ames, IA 50010

Name:

Mailing Address:

Evening and Day Phone:

## WATERFOWL FIELD TRIP REPORT

On Saturday, November 16, seven of us packed into two cars and headed west, using Red-tailed Hawks as mile markers. Our first geese were seen along I-80, and we saw our first immature Bald Eagle just south of Avoca, along a river crossing.

We arrived at the Riverton State Refuge observation tower around 11:00 A.M. The panoramic view of the Nishnabotna River valley enabled us to see thousands of Snow Geese and other waterfowl. After satisfying our birding appetites, we headed to the picnic area in Waubonsie State Park for lunch. The hazy overlook had me trying to imagine how Wahbonsey, Chief of the Potawatomie, lived in these Loess Hills in the 1840s.

After some exploring, we piled into the cars and headed for Missouri by following the prairie-bordered backroads (Highways 275 and 11) that skirted the Loess Hills.

After checking in at Big Lake State Park, we drove to Mound City and the Squaw Creek Refuge. Along the way we observed about 3000 Snow Geese feeding in fields, but the rain dampened our visibility. The refuge was covered with a variety of waterfowl. We spent the next three hours viewing eagles, waterfowl and other birds. Many of the eagles were perched on the abundant Muskrat houses; the marsh was full of their structures. Perhaps Mound City was really named for these and not the Loess Hills that wrap around the refuge. White-tailed Deer were plentiful and not too afraid of the cars. By this time it was raining harder, so we headed for supper and then to the motel to discuss our sightings.

Sunday morning greeted us with rain. After a quick breakfast we headed to the refuge, and by 9:00 we were walking with sunshine on our shoulders along one of the observation trails that cut into the marsh. About 1:00 P.M. we left for Ames on I-29 past Forney's Lake and Desoto Bend. The refuge managers told us that the Snow Geese between Desoto and Squaw Creek numbered about 700,000. We probably saw about a third of them. Our total species count was 60, a good number considering the weather conditions.

*Mike Mealy*

1992 WINTER BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

SPONSORED BY THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

AND THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE'S NONGAME PROGRAM

On two consecutive days during January 23-26, 1992, observe your feeder and using this form, describe your feeder and record the birds that visited you. In the space provided, list the highest number of each species that you saw together at any one time. For example, if you saw 10 juncos at 9:00, 11 at 12:00 and 7 at 4:00, the number you should record is 11. If males and females can be distinguished (cardinals, downy woodpecker etc.) record the combined total. For example, if you saw 3 male cardinals at 11:00 then 1 male and 2 females at 2:00, record 5 cardinals--the highest count for the males and the highest count for the females combined. Count only on the two consecutive days and record only the birds that you see at your feeder, under your feeder, or in the trees around your feeder. Do not count birds which just flew past your house and did not use your feeder area. We want information only about birds influenced by your feeders. If you cannot get an exact count, record your best estimate. An honest estimate is far more useful than 'umpteen' or 'too many to count.'

Mail the completed form to me by February 12, 1992:

R. J. Hollis  
3351 Lower West Branch Road  
Iowa City, IA 52245

If you would like a personal reply, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and be patient; it may take 12 months before I can get back to you. Look for results in the Iowa Nongame News and the I.O.U. newsletter.

BIRDFEEDER SURVEY JANUARY 23-26, 1992

Please fill out carefully. Feel free to copy the form for friends and patrons. Thank you and enjoy yourselves!

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_
- 2A. Address \_\_\_\_\_
- 2B. County \_\_\_\_\_ 2C. City \_\_\_\_\_ 2D. Zip \_\_\_\_\_
3. The feeder survey period this year runs from Thursday, January 23rd to Sunday, January 26th. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.  
 Check one: \_\_\_\_\_ Thursday (1/23) and Friday (1/24),  
                   \_\_\_\_\_ Friday (1/24) and Saturday (1/25), or  
                   \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday (1/25) and Sunday (1/26).
4. Is your feeder in Town (including suburbs) or in the Country?  
 Circle T or F.
5. Check the DONE description which best describes the area within a 2-block circle around your feeder:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ suburban, houses with shrubs and small trees but few trees wider than 20 inches.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ suburban bordered by: (circle 1) timber, grass, field or row crop.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ town, neighborhood has many mature shade and street trees.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ downtown with mostly buildings, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, high rises  
 \_\_\_\_\_ pasture  
 \_\_\_\_\_ row crop (corn, beans, etc.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ timber  
 \_\_\_\_\_ farmstead with mature trees and shrubs around house.
6. Type and number of feeders: \_\_\_\_\_ Thistle, \_\_\_\_\_ Sunflower(only), \_\_\_\_\_ Fruit, \_\_\_\_\_ Safflower, \_\_\_\_\_ Peanuts, \_\_\_\_\_ Mixed seed, \_\_\_\_\_ Peanut Butter, \_\_\_\_\_ Suet, \_\_\_\_\_ Cracked Sunflower, \_\_\_\_\_ Corn, \_\_\_\_\_ Millet(only), \_\_\_\_\_ unfrozen water, \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_
7. On what date did you start feeding during 1991-92? About \_\_\_\_\_
8. Comments or additional description of your feeder or yard: \_\_\_\_\_

HIGHEST NUMBER SEEN FOR EACH SPECIES DURING TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS

- |                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| _____ Ring-necked Pheasant      | _____ White-throated Sparrow       |
| _____ Rock Dove (Common Pigeon) | _____ White-crowned Sparrow        |
| _____ Mourning Dove             | _____ Harris' Sparrow              |
| _____ Red-headed Woodpecker     | _____ Dark-eyed Junco (All races)  |
| _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker    | _____ Red-winged Blackbird         |
| _____ Downy Woodpecker          | _____ Grackle (Common)             |
| _____ Hairy Woodpecker          | _____ Brown-headed Cowbird         |
| _____ Flicker (All races)       | _____ Purple Finch                 |
| _____ Blue Jay                  | _____ Common Redpoll               |
| _____ Crow (American)           | _____ Pine Siskin                  |
| _____ Black-capped Chickadee    | _____ Goldfinch American           |
| _____ Tufted Titmouse           | _____ Evening Grosbeak             |
| _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch     | _____ House (English) Sparrow      |
| _____ White-breasted Nuthatch   | _____ House Finch                  |
| _____ Brown Creeper             | _____ (other) _____                |
| _____ Robin (American)          | _____ (other) _____                |
| _____ Cedar Waxwing             | _____ (other) _____                |
| _____ Starling (European)       | _____ (other) _____                |
| _____ Cardinal (Northern)       | _____ (other) _____                |
| _____ Tree Sparrow (American)   | _____ (other) _____                |
| _____ Song Sparrow              | _____ TOTAL DIFFERENT SPECIES SEEN |

- \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to receive the free Nongame News.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I would like information about the Iowa Ornithologists Union which is a statewide bird organization.

If you see a rare or unusual bird, please report it to the Iowa birdline 319-338-9881

## STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD EVENTS

**1** Join the Story County Conservation Board to "Make a Wildlife Holiday" on Sunday, December 8, from 2-4 P.M., at the Story County Conservation Center. Brighten the holidays for our feathered and furred friends. First, learn how Iowa animals survive the winter cold. Then, create a tasty holiday gift for them using suet and peanut butter, pine cones and pop bottles, lumber and logs. This hands-on program is especially designed for young people and their favorite adults. The program promises you and your child a fun way to learn about the spirit of giving.

**2** The board will sponsor "Iowa's Nongame Program" featuring Bruce Ehresman, Nongame Wildlife Technician, on Thursday, December 12, 1991 at the center from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. [Same time and place but one day after our next BBAS meeting.] This program is part of a monthly series of adult forums sponsored by the Conservation Board this fall and winter to discuss natural resource issues. Each forum will be presented by experts from the Iowa DNR. The public is invited to learn, discuss, and ask questions about Iowa's natural resources from the professionals.

No registration or fees are required. For more information, including information about other public programs and a flyer listing the dates and topics of the forums, contact the center at 232-2516, or contact

Cele Burnett, Environmental Coordinator  
Story County Conservation Board  
McFarland Park  
RR 2 Box 272V  
Ames, IA 50010

Native American Chief to friend as they look over the plains:  
"Someday these millions and millions of buffalo will be gone,  
and they will be replaced by the white man's sheep and cattle,  
and their belching will produce methane which will cause global warming."



## PAUL ERRINGTON MARSH PROJECT

Conservation groups have proposed protecting and restoring a 200 acre prairie pothole complex 8 miles northeast of Des Moines. This is a very high quality prairie pothole according to Ben Van Gundy, director of the Wetlands for Iowa program of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The Foundation has an option to buy the complex until Jan. 30, 1992. Plans are to have the Iowa Department of Natural Resources manage the area for waterfowl, pheasant, and other wetland and upland wildlife. Central Iowa Audubon Chapters, the Izaak Walton League, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and the Natural Heritage Foundation are all involved in fundraising for this project. If you would like to help, contact Sherry Dragula at 292-4014.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Planning is still underway for the Christmas Bird Counts in Ames, Saylorville, and Boone. The Ames count is being organized by Mike Meetz and Dave Edwards. Please call either of us (numbers on the front cover) if you have suggestions or concerns. The Ames count day is Saturday, December 14. At the end of the count day we will meet at David and Jeanne Edwards's home, 2308 State Avenue, for a chili supper and tally.

The Saylorville count will be the day after the Ames count, on Sunday, December 15. Steve Dinsmore is the count leader, assisted by his father, Jim, who is receiving calls and helping with the arrangements. Jim can be reached at 292-3152.

The Boone count, scheduled for January 1, will again be led by Erik Munson. He plans to contact past leaders and make arrangements. If you would like to contact him, you may call his father, Bruce, at their Ames home at 232-5077. At the end of the Boone count, we will likely meet for supper and compilation of results at a Boone area restaurant.

Feederwatchers, persons who wish to count the birds at their feeder on the count day, are asked to call count leaders for materials and instructions.

There is a fee of \$5 attached to being a part of each count; the fees underwrite the costs of compilation at the national level and the publication of the results in American Birds.

*David Edwards*

## BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY EVENTS - 1991/1992

December 11	Wednesday, 7:30PM - Members' Slides and Holiday Treats at the Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park
December 14	Saturday, Ames Christmas Bird Count
December 15	Sunday, Saylorville Christmas Bird Count
January 1	Wednesday, Boone Christmas Bird Count
January 16	Thursday, 7:30 PM - Meeting, Room 280 Town Engineering, Carl Kurtz, St. Anthony, Photographer, "Natural Beauty of Iowa"
January 25	Saturday, Field Trip, Skiing or Hiking, Camp Hantesa or E. River Valley Park
February 15	Saturday, before sunrise, Owl Prowl
February 20	Thursday, 7:30 PM - Meeting, Dr. Richard Schultz, "Local Forestation Project on land treated with sludge"
February 29	Saturday - Field Trip to watch eagles at Red Rock or Saylorville
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"
June 5-7	Friday-Sunday, Loess Hills Seminar and Field Trip
June 13	Saturday - Birder's Breakfast and Hike, Ledges State Park

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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December 1991, January 1992  
**BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
 2308 STATE AVE, RR 5  
 AMES IA 50010

<b>BULK RATE</b>
<b>U. S. POSTAGE</b>
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<b>AMES, IA</b>

**\*HANK ZALATEL**  
 715 WEST ST  
 COLO, IA 50056

**RENEW**

