

# Big Bluestem Flyer

Volume 22 No. 9

May 1988

## Monthly Meeting

### ALL ABOUT IOWA SNAKES

Raul Hollander, Herpetologist

Tuesday, ~~10th~~, Room 181, College of Design, ISU, Ames

(Refreshments by Mike & Kathi McGinley and Kay Niyo)

10th  
17th  
→ Do a Special Mailg. on  
Field Trips

### BIRDS AND WILDFLOWERS

→ Saturday, May 7th, 8:30 AM at McFarland Park

Story County Conservation Board is sponsoring an accompanying breakfast. Call the McFarland Park office at 232-2516 for reservations and fees.

### BIRDS AND WILDFLOWERS

→ Saturday, May 14th, 8 AM at Brookside Park in the north parking lot.

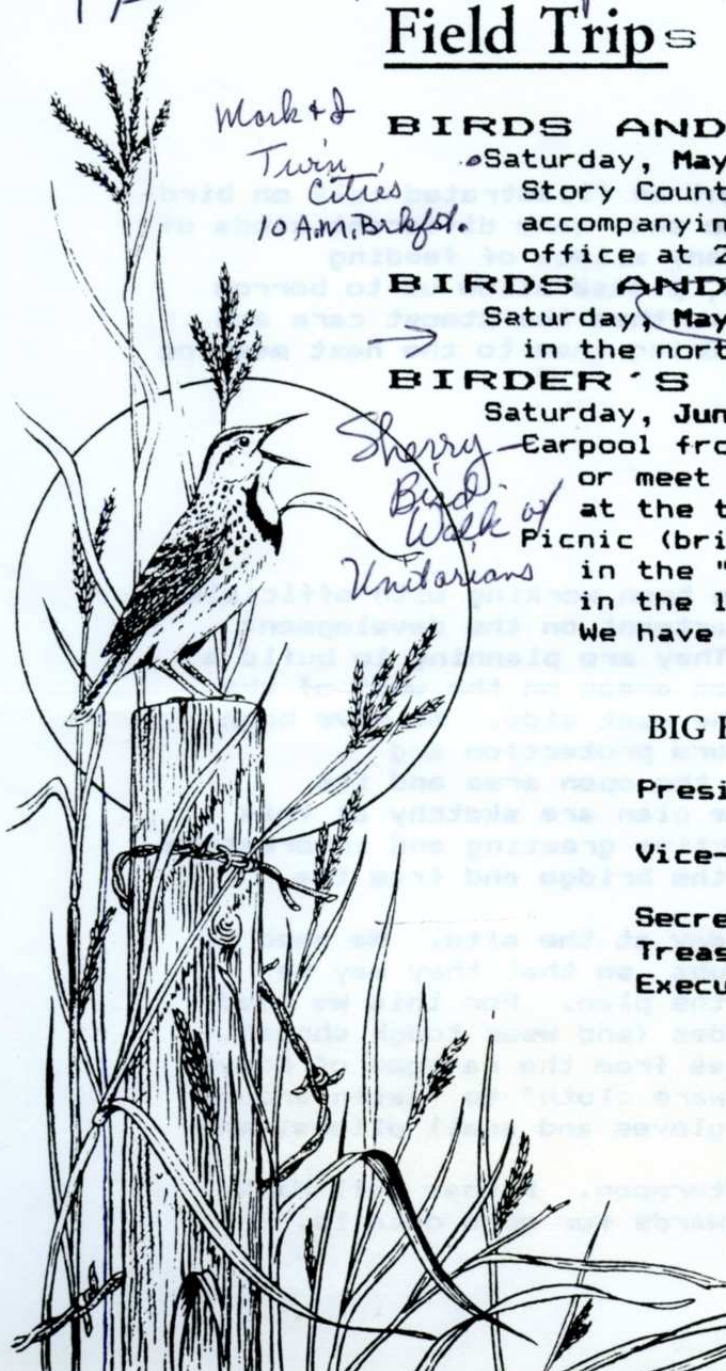
### BIRDER'S BREAKFAST

Saturday, June 11th, Ledges State Park

→ Sherry Bird Walk of Unitarians  
Carpool from Design Center Parking Lot at 7 AM or meet for Birding at 7:30 AM at the top of the canyon drive Picnic (bring-your-own) breakfast at 9 AM in the "TRADING POST" stone shelter in the lower part of the park. We have it reserved for the day.

### BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: David C. Edwards, 292-3790  
Membership Chair, Newsletter Editor  
Vice-President: Michael Meetz, 382-2534  
Program Chair  
Secretary: Barbara Bettis, 232-4863  
Treasurer: Mark Widrlechner, 292-4014  
Executive Board  
Stephen Dinsmore, 292-3152  
Field Trips  
Sherry Dragula, 292-4014  
Conservation Chair  
Andy Fix, 296-7554  
Barbara Heikens, 296-2999  
Education Chair  
Kay Niyo, 292-5130





## **1988-1989 SOCIETY OFFICER ELECTIONS**

The slate of officers has been prepared by a nominating committee for vote by the membership at our May (official annual) meeting.

President: Michael Meetz

Vice President: Sherry Dragula

Secretary: Kay Niyo

Treasurer: Mark Widrlechner

Executive Board #1 (2 year): Tom Rosburg

Executive Board #2 (2 year): Stephen Dinsmore

Executive Board #3 (2 year): Barbara Heikens

Executive Board #4 (1 year): Elizabeth Carbrey

## **1988-1989 BUDGET**

A proposed budget will be presented for approval by the members at the May meeting.

## **SHARE BIRD FEEDER SLIDES**

The Chapter has been asked to present an illustrated talk on bird feeding. To aid in that, we need to show many different kinds of feeding arrangements. If you have any slides of feeding arrangements, with or without birds, please allow us to borrow them for copying. We promise to give them the utmost care and will return them promptly to you. Bring them to the next meeting or call Mike Meetz.

## **ANNUAL SOCIETY SERVICE PROJECT**

Several Executive Board members have been working with officials of the Ames Park and Recreation Department on the development plans for East River Valley Park. They are planning to build a foot bridge to connect the recreation areas on the west of the river to the natural preserves on the east side. We have been interested in carrying out a long-term protection and interpretation project, focusing on the open area and its immediate surrounds. Details of the plan are sketchy at this time, but we have in mind some effective greeting and information displays at both the entrance from the bridge and from the existing parking lot to the east.

This spring we plan to have a work day at the site. We need to root prune some small trees and shrubs so that they may be transplanted to areas in line with the plan. For this we need volunteers to bring long-bladed spades (and wear tough shoes). Secondly, we must protect other trees from the ravages of beaver teeth. We will have suitable "hardware cloth" to fasten around the trees; volunteers should bring gloves and small pliers, and metal shears if you have them.

The work date is May 14th in the afternoon. Please call Mark Widrlechner, Mike Meetz, or Dave Edwards for more details.



## GROUNDWATER HEARING

A reminder that there will be one more Groundwater Hearing by the DNR in our area on May 17th at 1:30 PM in the Auditorium at 900 East Grand in Des Moines. The pollution industry will be there pushing for their interest in making our drinking water their convenient sewer. If you can't attend the meeting, you can help by writing a short note to the DNR expressing the necessity of zero-levels of pesticides, herbicides, and other contaminants in our drinking water.

## Transplanted Puffins Return to Maine's Seal Island

by Dr. Stephen Kress, Audubon ornithologist

The effort to restore Atlantic puffins to Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge off the coast of Maine had its first important success this summer with the sighting of two three-year-old puffins that had been transplanted as chicks to the island in 1984. Until the 1850s, Seal Island was the largest puffin colony off mid-coast Maine. But by 1887, fishermen who captured adult puffins for food had wiped out the colony.

The Seal Island Project began in 1984 as a cooperative program of the National Audubon Society, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Modeled after the successful earlier effort to restore puffins to Eastern Egg Rock in Muscongus Bay, the Seal Island Project has taken on the ambitious task of rearing and releasing 1,000 transplanted puffin chicks over the six-year period 1984-89. Scientists want to learn more about puffin survival and growth rates and the behavior associated with the formation and growth of colonies.

In 1984, 100 ten- to twenty-eight-day-old puffin chicks from Great Island, Newfoundland, were transplanted to Seal Island. They were reared in artificial burrows and fed a diet of silversides, placed in the burrows by research assistants. After fledging from their nesting island, puffins spend the next two or three years at sea. The restoration project is based on the assumption that transplanted birds that survive will return to the Maine coast rather than their natal home in Newfoundland.

Every year since then, additional chicks have been reared and released at Seal Island. To date, the project has successfully fledged 534 of 549 transplanted chicks, a success rate of 97 percent. The project will transplant 200 chicks each year in 1988 and 1989.



Perhaps the most important lesson learned at the previous restoration project at Eastern Egg Rock is that there is likely to be great variation from year to year in the number of puffins that return. After leaving their nesting islands, young puffins must find food on their own. Even in a natural colony, fledgling puffins are not fed by their parents and must rely on a mix of instinctive feeding behavior and learned fishing skills. It takes a great deal of luck for a young puffin to avoid predators and raging North Atlantic storms, as well as human-created hazards such as oil slicks and fishing nets. Most young puffins probably die at sea their first winter.

Apparently, once every several years sea conditions favor the survival of transplanted puffin fledglings. Because the odds for survival fluctuate so greatly, transplants must continue for many years.

Although the return visits of transplanted puffins to Seal Island are encouraging, establishment of a new colony is far from assured. The success of the project will ultimately depend on one or more years when 50 percent or more of the young return, providing the "critical mass" necessary for puffins to stay and breed.

## The Audubon Activist

From the outside, conservation issues often seem complicated and impregnable. Many Audubon members want to help stop pollution and the destruction of wildlife habitat, but do not know where to begin. Whether you are new to the environmental front lines or a savvy veteran, the *Audubon Activist* is your ticket to greater effectiveness. This bimonthly newspaper, published by National Audubon Society, gives you background information on important conservation issues, the latest legislative picture, and advice from other Auduboners who are fighting the same battles.

As a member of Audubon's Activist Team, you will also receive occasional "Action Alerts," which are one-page summaries of issues that need your urgent attention. This system works; your voice will be heard.

For a free sample issue of the "Activist" (subscriptions are \$9 a year), write: *Audubon Activist*, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. □



## APRIL WOODCOCK DISPLAY FIELD TRIP

Frankly, it didn't look like it was going to be a very good outing. It had been raining, and a cold north wind was gusting. At the appointed time, however, the rain had stopped and there was not much wind in the sheltered valley at the Izaak Walton League Park. Thirteen hardy people showed up, including two from Marshalltown. We hiked around to the east side of the lake and approached the grassy area that Woodcock have used in the past. We sat on the grass and waited. A Brown Thrasher provided the background music, aided by the concerned Canada Goose on the lake. Blue-winged Teal paddled about and then took off in flights. At last, from behind us, where we did not plan it to be, and much "smaller" in sound than we expected, came the repetitive "peint, peint, peint, peint, peint" and then the peculiar sound of the Woodcock's wings as it hover-flies up and around in circles. After a minute or two, it fell from the sky to the spot at which it began and started the cycle once again. After a few such observations the cold began to get through to us, and we moved toward the road through the area the Woodcock was landing. That interrupted one cycle but by the time we were clear, it again came down to its launching point. All-in-all, a brief but very exciting display.



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