



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 35 Number 4

March/April 2000

Featured Speaker—March 9 meeting: *Scott Peterson, “The Past, Present, and Future Management of Harrier Marsh and Colo Bogs”*

Scott Peterson, Department of Natural Resources biologist, will discuss how these local birding hotspots can be managed for wetland and upland wildlife species with the reintroduction of native grasses, forbs, and wetlands. We’ll also hear about the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture and the Wetlands Reserve Program, and how they were used to purchase Harrier Marsh and Colo Bogs. Scott is also with the Saylorville Wildlife Management Unit.

Featured Speaker—April 20 meeting, *Mark Edwards, “Ledges Trails and Tales”*

Who’s the man behind the trails in Ledges State Park, has seen Scissor-tailed Flycatchers there, and just might be a reincarnation of Carl Fritz Henning, the first custodian of the park? It’s Mark Edwards, Trails Coordinator with the DNR and a “Ledges Lover” who has lived just south of the park for 30 years. Mark will draw on his experiences in and near the Ledges to weave an interesting tale of the past, present, and future of one of Iowa’s most unique state parks.

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: March & April

Jon Bahrenfus, Field Trip Chair

March

25—Little Wall Lake, Teigs Marsh, and other areas for waterfowl. Meet at the ISU Design Center parking lot at 0800 to carpool. Call Hank Zaletel @382-5427 for details.

April

8—Road Trip to Kellerton Bird Conservation Area and Sand Creek Wildlife Refuge. Sign up early. DNR biologist Melvin Moe will show us the reestablished Greater

Continued on page 3

In this Issue:

- Page 2
 - View From the Prairie
- Page 3
 - Conservation Corner
- Page 4
 - Observations From . . .
- Page 4
 - Cyber Birding—
- Page 5
 - Notes From the Field . . .
- Page 14
 - Birding Hot Spots

Bird Term of the Month: *Sexual Dimorphism.* When Male and female birds differ in plumage.



View from the Prairie

Kay Niyo, President

Have you been able to join us for some of the great Big Bluestem programs and field trips this fall?! I hope so. We have had some exciting times and there are more to come! Our next three speakers will be updating us on some favorite birding areas nearby. Scott

Peterson and Mark Edwards of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will be describing the future plans for Harrier Marsh, Colo Bogs, and the Ledges State Park. And Steve Lekwa, Director of Story County Conservation, will be discussing the latest developments with the Green Belt and other areas in Story County. Check the calendar and newsletter for more details.

Be sure and mark your calendars for the great upcoming field trips. The road trip on April 8 to Kellerton Bird Conservation Area and Sand Creek Wildlife Refuge will be a special celebration trip for BBAS members. Big Bluestem donated \$1,725 of our Birdathon proceeds to assist with the purchase of additional land for the Kellerton BCA. Melvin Moe, DNR biologist at Kellerton, has promised us a great morning viewing the Greater Prairie Chickens on their lek and other special grassland birds in that area. See an announcement in this newsletter for details about the trip.

Don't forget to reserve May 6 for a fun day of tracking down a record number of bird species for the 3rd annual Big Bluestem Birdathon. Karl and Carmon Jungbluth, BBAS Birdathon coordinators, have inspired many members to break all previous records, raise lots of money for environmental and educational projects, and win several categories of prizes from the National Audubon Society! The funds are being used for many important projects including providing two \$450 scholarships for two Ames teachers to attend the Audubon Environmental Education Camp in July 2000 in northeastern Minnesota. We are hoping to expand that opportunity to include other educators next year.

If you are looking for a special birding vacation this summer that isn't too far away, consider attending the American Birding Association's annual meeting in Fort Collins, Colorado June 26-July 2. They will be having

many fascinating speakers and great field trips in beautiful country that is not far from Iowa.

Some of us are still traveling hither and yon to add birds to our lists! A small group journeyed to Duluth for a long February weekend of birding with Frank Nicoletti as our guide. He has been the Duluth Hawk Ridge official counter for the past nine years and just published a beautiful article on Gyrfalcons in the latest issue of ABA's *Birding*. It was a memorable 3-day trip with all of us adding new birds to our lists. Some of the species of note were Ruffed Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Glaucous Gull, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, Short-eared Owl, Black-billed Magpie, Boreal Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, and Hoary Redpoll. We also stopped at Shakopee, Minnesota and saw the Tufted Duck, an Old World species, that is wintering on the water treatment ponds.

We invite you to join us at our meetings and field trips and to share your own birding experiences, whether they are about special visitors in your yards, local birding areas, or fabulous birding trips you have taken. Take time to bird in Iowa too! We Iowans are seeing more and more public land planted to prairie and it provides beautiful habitat. Get out and enjoy and then share your stories with us!

Big Bluestem Audubon Society Officers and Committees

Officers:

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BBAS Web Site:

<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~shivvers/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



Conservation Corner

Linda Bystrak,
Conservation Chair

At the request of the board of directors, the following letter was sent to Congressman Nussle on behalf of BBAS. We hope the membership will approve of our action, and support our efforts to encourage the purchase of this important piece of property.

Dear Congressman Nussle,

On behalf of the nearly five hundred members of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society located in Ames, Iowa, I would like to ask for your assistance on a very important conservation issue. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has signed a contract to purchase a 1,045-acre woodland that connects Effigy Mounds National Monument with a unit of the Yellow River State Forest in Iowa. This area has been sought after by conservation groups for over 40 years and when the National Monument was established in 1949 it was proposed that someday this 1,045 acre woodland would also be acquired. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has been working on this project nearly 20 years to achieve that goal!

The property includes 2.5 miles of the Yellow River—one of the most scenic and popular Iowa rivers for canoeists and small mouth bass anglers. When combined with Effigy Mounds National Monument and the Yellow River State Forest property, 4,000 contiguous acres and a 7.8-mile greenway along the Yellow River will be established under state and national public ownership.

This 1,045-acre addition is one of the largest blocks of forest in northeast Iowa under single ownership. Such large tracts of woodland are rare in Iowa, which has a very low percentage of land in public ownership available for conservation and recreation uses. Habitat like this is essential for many of the more than 110 neotropical migratory birds species that nest in Iowa which depend on sites like this during migration and breeding.

Audubon is one of many partners working with Partners in Flight, a cooperative international effort within the Western hemisphere, involving citizens and governments in North, South and Central America to protect these neotropical birds and their habitats. In North America there are at least 16 federal agencies, 40 non-government organizations, numerous universities, the forest industry, and over 60 state and Canadian provincial fish and wildlife agencies working to protect these birds and their habitat. The purchase of this land in Iowa would be in support of this international effort, and would help insure the success of these neotropical birds during migration and the breeding season.

The total project will cost \$1,545,000 (which includes land acquisition, interest, real estate fees, survey, appraisals, signage, etc.) Final payment must be made by December 15, 2000. The entire parcel is in Forest Reserve and has been exempt from property tax since 1985. When acquired by the National Park Service they will make payment in lieu of property taxes, which will be a net revenue gain for local governments and school districts. Revenue from ecotourism will also be brought to that region as more bird watchers visit that area to see the neotropical species.

We urgently need your help to secure federal funding for this project. This project is so large that we need federal assistance to help with the acquisition. About half the funding for this project will come from private donors, the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. The other half, plus some initial management costs, is being requested from the National Park Service which requires congressional approval.

We hope that you will encourage the authorization and appropriation to the National Park Service of at least \$750,000 of the total cost of \$1.5 million, with the balance to come from state and private funds. We understand that you must introduce legislation to request a hearing on this project before March 10th, or we will lose another year, and this could jeopardize the entire project. We hope that you will consider this project important enough to initiate the hearings as soon as possible.

Respectfully,
Linda Bystrak
Conservation Chairperson
Big Bluestem Audubon Society

(Continued) Coming Field Trips

Prairie Chickens on their lek in Ringgold County. We will stay in Lamoni Friday evening and view the chickens at sunrise. Call Kay Niyo at 233-8803 and see page 13 for more information.

April 22—Help a nearby habitat on National Earth Day. Meet at the Design Center west parking lot at 0800 to carpool to site. Trip leader: Karl Jungbluth (432-5057).

Cyber Birding—Surf'n the Net with Paul and Kevin

By Paul Bystrak and Kevin Healy



Introduction: Despite recent evidence to the contrary (Ames' heaviest snowfall this winter in mid-February), spring will soon be here. So gear up for a little actual birding by visiting a web site which promotes interaction and compilation of data: Birdsource.

Website name: Birdsource: Birding with a Purpose

URL (the code you enter to direct your browser): <http://www.birdsource.org>

The Birdsource home page gives you links to several activities coordinated by one or more of the sponsors, National Audubon Society (<http://www.audubon.org>) and Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<http://birds.cornell.edu>). Links to these organizations are found immediately to the right of the Birdsource logo. It's worth a moment to click on <About Birdsource> to read a concise mission statement.

Birdsource has several irons in the fire at any given time and links to all of them. This article was written the weekend of the Great Backyard Bird Count. Click this link and you go to the GBBC home page (with links to its sponsors: the two mentioned above plus Wild Birds Unlimited and Ford Motor Company). Enter the Great Backyard Bird Count and choose an activity from the menu provided. You can find out more about the project, fill out a personal information form (heads up, you may get yourself on some mailing lists), enter your GBBC data, and review the GBBC results as they are submitted. There are many links on this page, including an abbreviated field guide.

If you return to the Birdsource home page you can review Christmas Bird Count data from years past. The preliminary results of the 1999-2000 CBC are also available. You can see the results of your efforts and, unless your count coordinator pocketed your \$5, see your name on the internet.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—

April 14



Bird's-Eye View—Nature Observations From the Bluebird Bed & Breakfast

Carmen and Karl Jungbluth

January 1, 2000—The New Year began like it should, with another Boone Christmas Bird Count. Carmen watched the feeders on this mild, snow-free day and counted 16 species. This included a couple of Flickers, which haven't been seen before or since! Purple Finch numbers were quite high at 53 and we had at least 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches. A chipmunk and a small 'possum showed up just for fun. The rest of the count included Cardinals, Blue Jays, White-breasted Nuthatches, Tufted Titmouse, Hairy, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, plus Juncos, Goldfinches, Crows, Chickadees, House Sparrows, and a House Finch.

February 1, 2000—Winter hasn't been too tough up to this point, and it seems that the number of birds using our feeders has decreased a bit. I hate to say it, but maybe the Sharp-shinned Hawk has had something to do with that! It's a common visitor in the morning. Still, on some days, we've had 100+ Juncos, 50 Goldfinches, 70 Purple Finches and 22 Cardinals in our yard. Around mid-January, we noticed a lot of Great Horned Owl activity. We heard a lot of hooting, and the owls were even visible on several nights at dusk. On January 30, one of the owls was seen sitting on last year's Red-tailed Hawk nest by the creek. Since then, the owls have been pretty quiet!

Board Happenings

Mary Doud, Secretary

Linda Bystrak asked for funds to sponsor an Iowa team to the national Envirathon. No action taken. Carol Berrier will send out a mailing to area teachers regarding Earth Day. Karl Jungbluth reported the goal for Birdathon 2000 is \$5000. The money will be spent for binoculars, field guides for Boone County naturalist programs, and scholarship(s) for teachers to Environmental Education Workshop July 2001. Use of map coordinates when reporting data to International Migratory Bird Day will facilitate use of information to identify important bird areas. One hundred dollars was approved for a nature mapping workshop for BBAS members.

Mary Doud will chair the Nominating Committee and John Pohlman will chair Budget Committee. If you are interested in serving on any of the committees or the board, please contact Mary. The next regular board meeting will be held Sunday, April 8, at 1900 at Kay Niyo's home.



Notes From the Field Trips

Saylorville and Big Creek, Polk County

Sixteen people attended the January 22 field trip to the Saylorville dam. The morning was sunny but cool. Fresh snow covered the landscape. Although there were not as many birds as we would have liked, we did see three Bald Eagles, a large flock of Canada geese, and some Common Mergansers. After leaving the reservoir, we visited the north end of Big Creek Lake to search for owls. No owls turned up, but we did see several Red-tailed Hawks, an accipiter, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a Northern Shrike. We totaled about 25 species for the entire trip.

Tour de Feeders, Boone and Story County

On February 5, seventeen people enjoyed a field trip to the homes of Carmen and Karl Jungbluth and Rosanne and Kevin Healy to view their bird feeders. We started out at the Jungbluth home, The Bluebird Bed & Breakfast, near the Ledges State Park in Boone County. Nuthatches, Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and woodpeckers were dining at their feeders. The highlight was the sudden appearance of a Sharp-shinned Hawk that gave everyone a breathtaking close-up view. After enjoying the pleasant atmosphere of the bed & breakfast, we retreated outside to view a Great Horned Owl sitting on its nest in the valley. By the time we set out for Kevin & Rosanne Healy's home east of Ames it was mid-morning so we were a bit late for the best birding there. We spotted some of the same species that we had seen at the Jungbluth's home and enjoyed a pleasant visit while swapping feeder ideas. Thank you Kevin & Rosanne and Carmen & Karl for your generous hospitality!

Winter Birding in Northeast Minnesota

Six members of BBAS took a long weekend trip to Duluth, Minnesota February 11-14, 2000. Kay Niyo, our president and trip leader, shepherded Ken Lane, Wolfgang Oesterreich, Paul Bystrak, Chaiyan Kasorndorkbua, and Kevin Healy. Ken's Dodge Caravan turned over 100,000 miles on the way up to Duluth and performed admirably throughout the trip.

We owe our trip's success to Frank Nicoletti, our Duluth guide. Frank is a Duluth ornithologist who is the official counter for the Hawk Ridge hawk count. Frank

and Dave Benson, also on staff at Hawk Ridge, have an article on Gyrfalcons in the February 2000 issue of American Birding Association's *Birding*. We met Frank Saturday morning and proceeded out of town, heading north along Lake Superior. Our first find was a tree full of Bohemian Waxwings. Soon we got a fleeting look at a Boreal Chickadee. We looked (without success) for a Varied Thrush that had been seen at a feeder near Two Harbors.

We then turned inland, hoping for a Three-toed or Black-backed Woodpecker. No luck, but we did see a Gray Jay. Saturday afternoon was notable for Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, and a Hoary Redpoll at feeders east of Isabella. A sad note was the opportunity to examine a very fresh Ruffed Grouse in the hand. We returned to Duluth and scanned the harbor looking for Snowy Owl without success.

Sunday started slowly, sighting a Sharp-tailed Grouse west of Cromwell. We looked for Black-billed Magpie, Great Grey Owl, and Northern Hawk Owl. We found the Northern Hawk Owl after lunch and Black-billed Magpies shortly thereafter. The Great Grey Owl eluded us. Later in the afternoon, we had an opportunity to observe the Northern Hawk Owl hunting and feeding. It cast a pellet while perched on a willow tree. One of us retrieved the pellet. It weighed 8.7 grams and contained remains of *Microtus* spp., or voles. It then flew from its perch atop a low tree and successfully caught a vole, which it carried in its right-foot talons to the top of a short power pole near our van. Some of us watched the feeding drama through our spotting scopes. As the owl landed, it quickly dispatched the wiggling vole with a bite through the back of the neck. The owl then bit off the head, leaned back and swallowed it. It bit off the upper body to just below the ribs, including the front legs, and swallowed it. The owl then very carefully picked out three sections of the intestines with the very tip of its beak and leaned over and dropped them to the ground. In two more quick bites, it finished its nutritious meal, hind legs, tail, and all! It then began hunting again! It perches and hunts like a Kestrel and has "eye spots" on the back of its head as defensive coloration. Its feather patterns have a plush, almost furry look. What a beautiful bird! We also observed Short-eared Owls hunting over the bog at dusk.

Monday morning, from the Perkins parking lot in Superior, we found a mature female Snowy Owl trying to stay camouflaged among the icy chunks on the frozen harbor to avoid the resident male Peregrine who is overwintering there. She was well camouflaged until the "ice

Linda and Hank Zaletel Honored

Kay Niyo

Over 50 Big Bluestem members were delighted as a surprised Linda and Hank Zaletel were presented the 1999 Olav Smedal Award by Selection Committee member Mike Meetz at the February 17th BBAS meeting. Mike had tricked each of them by telling them that the other one was going to be the recipient!

The award is made annually by the Selection Committee from the Ames Chapter of the Isaac Walton League of America and the Story County Conservation Board. It is a memorial to Olav Smedal who was an outdoor writer at *The Tribune* in Ames for 22 years. It seeks to honor those who by act or communication have done the most to accurately present to the public of Central Iowa excellence in the conservation of natural resources, air, water, woods, wildlife, and soil, and outdoor pursuits representing highest standards of ethics and sportsmanship. Preference is given to candidates who exhibit excellence in providing public information, leadership, and/or involvement.

Linda Zaletel has worked with the Story County Conservation for 20 years as a campground registrant, unit ranger, and naturalist. She co-founded the environmental education program for Story County. She has been heavily involved in Heritage Days programs, Halloween Hikes, and the Older Wiser Livelier Seniors (OWLS) programs. She recently was awarded a grant for a city-wide tire recycling program. Linda is co-editor of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union newsletter with Hank. She has authored a teaching guide for Iowa birds and been awarded a REAP grant for environmental education curriculum development. Linda also is an active teacher/mentor for the Becoming an Outdoors Woman and Outdoor Journeys for Girls programs. She works with the raptor and wildlife care program. Through her many activities, Linda has reached thousands of Story County citizens through hundreds of programs.

Hank Zaletel is the historian for the Des Moines Audubon Society and the Big Bluestem Audubon Society. He also is a past officer of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society. He was heavily involved in the *Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas Survey*, *IOU News*. Hank is co-author of two editions of *Birds of Story County* and co-editor of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union newsletter. He has led numerous field trips for Big Bluestem Audubon Society and the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. He has assisted with the beginning birder classes taught at the Story County Conservation Center. Hank is very active in and has served as an officer for the Story County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Hank is the main person responsible for the protective status for Colo Bogs and has helped to obtain large parcels of land in Story County for habitat preservation.

We congratulate Linda and Hank and thank them for all of their lasting contributions to the people, wildlife, and landscapes of Central Iowa. We are fortunate to be the recipients of their many talents.

BBAS Sponsors Free Nature Mapping Workshop for Members

Those of you who attended our November meeting will remember the Nature Mapping presentation made by Dr. Jim Pease and graduate assistant Jason O'Brian. In support of their efforts and because of the potential for this to be an important mapping and wildlife monitoring project, BBAS will sponsor a Nature Mapping workshop for its membership.

It will be held in Room 128 of the Science II building at ISU, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 1, 2000. Please arrive early to check-in. Participants are asked to bring a 7.5' quad (seven and a half minute quadrangle map) of your home/work area that you wish to monitor. These maps can be purchased through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Energy and Geological Resources Division, Geological Survey Bureau by calling 319/335-1575. They are about \$5.00 each. They also can be obtained at Explore, 620 West Lincoln Way, Ames.

Participants who would like lunch to be provided should bring \$5, payable at the door. Otherwise, bring your own lunch. There is no registration fee, but reservations should be made by March 24. Contact Jason O'Brian at 515-294-7222 or e-mail him at natty@iastate.edu. You may also mail your registration to him at Nature Mapping, Department of Animal Ecology, 124 Science II, ISU, Ames, IA 50011-3221

NATIONAL AUDUBON BIRDATHON



OFFICIAL SPONSOR SHEET

100% of all donations go directly to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitat!
Your Gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Name: _____	Likely Species Count: _____
Street Address: _____	_____
City, State, Zip: _____	_____
Phone, Day: _____ Night: _____	My Goal: \$ _____
Chapter: <u>Big Bluestem Audubon Society</u>	

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY— MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO Big Bluestem Audubon Society

Sponsor's Name	Address	Phone Number	Pledge Per Species	Gift	Corp. Match?	Date Paid
			Total Pledged			Total Paid

Top Copy - Birder
Bottom - Coordinator

Big Bluestem Audubon Society's

BIRDATHON!

May 6, 2000

Get in the Picture!-- Last year's Birdathon was nationally acclaimed. Help us make this year even better!

Big Bluestem's Birdathon raised \$4400 for Audubon projects in 1999. We bought binoculars for the YMCA Camp north of Boone, delivered Audubon Adventures to 14 classrooms and supported the Iowa Audubon State Office. Proceeds will also send two Story County teachers to an Audubon Teacher's Camp in Minnesota this summer. Twenty-three people went birding, we had over 100 sponsors and 180 species were sighted in a single day. That's the most species in our region! Nationwide, Audubon chapters raised over \$700,000 for birds and habitat.

Who Participates?-- Anyone! Audubon Society members, expert birders, beginners, friends and family.

Here's what to do-- Form or join a Birdathon team and collect pledges from friends and family. Ask sponsors to pledge support based upon the number of bird species seen, or they can pledge a fixed amount. If you don't have a team, contact the Birdathon Coordinators and we'll set you up! A pledge form and more information are in this newsletter. If you can't go birding on May 6th, pledge to the chapter or your favorite team. *Every penny raised in the BBAS Birdathon will stay in Iowa, and it is tax deductible.*

Big Bluestem Audubon's Birdathon 2000 Goal--

Highlight the birds we see locally

Raise \$5000 for local Audubon efforts and bird habitat!

Fund Audubon Adventures in 4th & 5th grade classrooms

Support bird education at the Des Moines YMCA Camp

Purchase binoculars for Boone County's Naturalist

Send Local Teachers to Audubon Teacher Camps

Support the Iowa Audubon Field Office



About Audubon Adventures-- These educational materials help young people in 4th and 5th grade to learn about birds, habitat and environmental issues. Audubon Adventures provides a student newspaper, a videotape, Teacher's Resource Manual and classroom activities. Kids are our greatest resource.

Birdathon Coordinators-- If you have questions or need motivation, contact Karl and Carmen Jungbluth, 1372 Peony Lane, Boone, Iowa, 50036 or phone 515-432-5057. E-mail us at bluebird@opencominc.com

BIRDATHON!

GET IN THE PICTURE



Last year's Birdathon exceeded our wildest dreams. We'd like *you* to be in the picture this year. If more people get involved, we can do more for birds, wildlife and habitat. Birdathon provides a chance to introduce new people to birds. And it's fun! Just ask any of last year's Birdathoners.

Helpful Hints for Fledgling Birdathoners

- Team up with a friend and Birdathon together.
- Ask people that you know (friends, family, co-workers, neighbors) for pledges.
- Get pledges from people who talk with you about birds and nature.
- Tell sponsors what the Birdathon will benefit and why Audubon is important to the community.
- People *enjoy* giving to those that they know and trust. They feel good giving to causes which you support.
- Suggest a specific amount appropriate for the person. No donation is too small (or too large!).
- Use Birdathon as an opportunity to tell people about Audubon's work to conserve birds, other wildlife and their habitats.
- **The Key-** Find just five people that you know enjoy birds. They'll be glad to sponsor your Birdathon. After success with the first five, you'll be willing to try for more!

Birdathon + Kids = Fun

Can you imagine the sense of accomplishment when a child spots 10 new species of birds in a single day, and gathers some pledges to help mother nature?

Annamarie Osterreich was our only youngster birder in 1999, and we'd like lots more to join her this year. With help from her Dad, Annamarie saw over 20 species, had 8 sponsors and was one of our top fundraisers! She earned a nice prize.



This year, we're looking for volunteers to lead a couple of Kid's Birdathon Teams. No experience necessary, just a willingness to take some kids out on May 6th and have fun! Contact your Birdathon Coordinators and we'll help with the details.

Look at it this way. Birdathon dollars are valuable for our projects. Spending time introducing kids to birds and nature...priceless!

1999 Accolades from National Audubon's *Birdathon! News*

"Big Bluestem deserves special recognition for the excellent media coverage both before and after their Birdathon! They placed an article in the Boone News-Republican before the big day, providing information and a contact for interested people, an ad in the same paper, and three short articles in three other Iowan papers. After it was all over, they had yet another article in the Boone Today, featuring three beautiful bird photos, one of which was an incredible shot of some Blue-winged Teal in flight!"

Camp Chiracahua

Michael Freiberg

Camp Chiracahua was run by Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. It is designed for birders between the ages of 12 and 17. Our tour guides were excellent. Rob Day who is a middle school teacher in California was one. The other was professional tour guide Dave Jasper. Eight people from around the country participated in this event. They included Nick Laviola, Athena Arthur, Scott Schuette, Steve Landes, Paul Bjornen, Tom Haynes, Mike Viecelli, and myself. All are excellent birders.

This was a great experience for all of us. We recorded over 170 total species on the trip. We all saw many new birds and milestones were reached by just about all of us.

The water areas were low with activity, but we managed to pick up some Cinnamon Teals. We had excellent views of Gray Hawk, Zone-Tailed Hawk, and Prairie Falcon to wrap up an excellent set of raptors. Birds that were in abundance include Gambel's Quail, White-Winged Dove, Band-Tailed Pigeon, Blue-Throated, and Magnificent Hummingbirds, and Acorn Woodpeckers.

Our trip list included thirteen species of hummingbirds, sixteen species of flycatchers, eight species of warblers, and eight species of owls. This is an extraordinary list to brag about.

Some other birds that were included were Common-Ground Dove, Flammulated Owl, Western and Whiskered Screech Owls, Northern Pygmy and Elf Owls, White Eared, Berilificent (Berrilline x Magnificent Hybrid), Violet-Crowned, Calliope, and Allen's Hummingbirds.

Flycatchers were in abundance. Western-Wood Pewee, Cordilleran, Buff-Breasted, Vermilion, and all three Myiarchus species of flycatchers were seen. Also showing up were Rose-Throated Becards, Sulphur-Bellied Flycatcher, and four species of kingbirds.

The Elegant Trogons at Cave Creek and Garden Canyons were the trip favorites for most of us.

We learned many things on this camp. Some which included bird behavior, songs and calls notes, and also the different ecosystems of the Southwest.

Rob and Dave are geniuses with nature as a whole. We learned about all sorts of plants and animals. We got great looks at Coatimundis and Cou's Deer. By learning these things, we now know which habitats would be best to find certain birds.

One of the advantages gained by going on a birding camp for students is I got to meet young birders my age. They were all really great people and fun to bird with.

Personally, I saw fifty-one lifers on the trip, which brought my total life list to 499 species. I recently picked up number 500 with a Yellow-billed Loon at Little Wall Lake. THANKS, KEVIN HEALY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(Continued) Notes from the Field Trips

chunk" rotated her head as viewed in the scope! Frank said the two Snowy Owls, to avoid the Peregrine, have to wait until it is quite dark to fly into the port to hunt pigeons around the grain elevators. No visit to the Twin Ports is complete without a pilgrimage to the Superior dump, where we saw Glaucous Gulls. We left Duluth at 11:30, stopping at the Blue Lake Water Treatment Plant in Shakopee, Minnesota to look for the Tufted Duck. Perseverance paid off after thirty minutes of searching from the van. We were back in Ames by 6:30 p.m. and happy to have added from 5 to 7 new species to our life lists and had another great birding adventure!

Donate \$\$\$ to Your Big Bluestem Audubon Society through Purchases at Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames

Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames will donate 10% of your purchase of specified birdseed, birding, and nature related products to Big Bluestem Audubon Society (BBAS). Different products will be specified in each issue of this newsletter. Present the coupon below at the time of your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS. Donations will fund the various habitat restoration and educational projects undertaken by BBAS.

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17th North American Prairie Conference

The 17th North American Prairie Conference will be held in Iowa this year, at North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City. This opportunity to continue your education on Iowa's native ecosystem will convene July 16 and go through the 20th. The conference will attract biologists and other prairie enthusiasts from New York, Louisiana, Manitoba, and many points in-between, all eager to share information about their research and experiences with prairies across North America. There will be three major speakers, all day field trips, over 80 concurrent sessions, barbecue, banquet, entertainment, and special sessions for Iowa teachers.

The Iowa REAP Program has granted 50 scholarships of \$100 each to be awarded to Iowa K-12 teachers (application procedures are appended below). These grants should cover most of the registration fees for the full conference. NIACC is eager to welcome many educators from our state and we encourage you to apply for one of the grants. There will be three grants awarded in each AEA and five "at large" awards. If there are grants still available in some areas by April 1, those will be added to the at-large pool and available to others across the state. Drake graduate credit will be available for those who are interested.

For more information, contact Carol W. Schutte, North Iowa Area Community College, 500 College Drive, Mason City, Iowa 50401. 515-422-4319, fax: 515-422-4115' schutcar@niacc.cc.ia.us

Application for a Teacher's REAP Grant to attend the 17th North American Prairie Conference July 16-20, 2000 at North Iowa Area Community College. Fifty REAP grants will be awarded through this application procedure. Three will be granted in each AEA region and five "at large" awards will be available. If, by the end of March, there are grants still available in specific AEAs, those will be added to the at-large pool and awarded elsewhere in the state.

Criteria for judging the applications will include 1) effective articulation of interest in and involvement with prairie concerns and 2) probability that the applicant will incorporate knowledge from the conference into their classroom curriculum, school grounds projects, and/or community education involvement. An attempt will be made to equitably distribute grants among novices just beginning their interest in prairie and active prairie proponents who can serve as mentors to others in the group. Upon acceptance of a REAP grant, the applicant agrees to complete a follow-up questionnaire in February, 2001 to relate how (if) the prairie conference affected their classroom and/or community prairie education efforts. This will be used for assessment feedback to the REAP committee only, and will not be associated with any individual teacher in any way.

* * * * *

Name _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address _____ E-mail _____

City, State, Zip _____ School _____

Grade(s) taught _____ City _____ AEA# _____

Please check all that apply

Have you previously attended:

*A regional prairie conference ___ *A state prairie conference ___

*Local prairie workshops ___ * Lectures/seminars on prairie ___

Do you have native prairie remnants in your area that you share with students? Yes ___ No ___ Not sure of locations ___

Have you yourself started or been involved with a prairie reconstruction project in your area/schoolyard? Yes ___ No ___

Do you have plans to start a prairie reconstruction project in your area? Yes ___ No/not possible ___ Maybe ___

Attach a separate sheet of paper with a one page narrative describing your own experience and interest in the prairie ecosystem. Also give a brief explanation of your reasons for wanting to attend the conference.

Mail both pages to:

Carol W. Schutte
North Iowa Area Community College (or NIACC)
500 College Drive
Mason City, Iowa 50401

Please write: "REAP application" in a bottom corner of the envelope.

All applications must be received by April 1, 2000. Earlier applicants may have an advantage! If you have questions, please contact Carol at 515-422-4319 or schutcar@niacc.cc.ia.us.

Iowa Nature Mapping Workshop Registration Form

Last Name First

Name of School/Group/Organization or Individual you represent

Address City/State Zip Code

County Work Phone / Fax

Home Phone

E-mail

How did you find out about Nature Mapping?

Workshop date that you are signing up for—

Check one of the following:

 April 1 Iowa State University, Science II, Rm 128, Ames, IA (\$5.00 for lunch payable at door) No registration fee.

 April 29 Hartman Reserve Nature Center, Black Hawk Co., Cedar Falls, IA A workshop fee of \$5.00 will be due the day of the workshop. (Note: Please bring a sack lunch)

Time: All workshops will be 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM.

(Please arrive one half-hour before to check in)

IMPORTANT: Between now and the workshop please purchase a 7.5' quad (seven and a half minute quadrangle map) of your home/work area and bring it to the workshop. You can get those maps at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Energy and Geological Resources Division, Geological Survey Bureau by calling 319/335-1575 or at Explore, 620 West Lincoln way, Ames,. They are about \$5.00 each.

Please send ASAP (deadline one week before workshop) to:

Jason O'Brien, Extension Wildlife Assistant
NatureMapping
c/o Animal Ecology Dept.
124 Science II
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-3221
or e-mail: natty@iastate.edu

Questions? call Jason at 515/294-7222 or Jim Pease 515/294-7429

How Can You Help a Habitat ?

Paul Zeph

Iowa Audubon Executive Director

April is around the corner, which means Earth Day is coming too! Audubon has been promoting the "Help a Habitat" campaign to inspire hundreds of thousands of Iowans to do something outdoors to improve or create a small piece of wildlife habitat.

Do you know of a teacher who is interested in wildlife or the environment? How about a community group that's looking for an Earth Day project? Check out the campaign's web site: www.helpahabitat.org. Teachers can order a free booklet and everyone can get some ideas on how to help. Or they can call the Iowa Audubon state office and request a copy: 515-267-0701.

Does your yard provide all the habitat ingredients for birds and other wildlife? They are food, water, shelter, and space. A free backyard conservation booklet is available which provides many suggestions and handy tips. Call the Natural Resources Conservation Service toll free for the booklet: 1-888-526-3227.

Everyone can do something, from planting a few more native flowers to putting up another bird house, to setting out a birdbath. If you don't have a yard, you can plant a butterfly garden in a pot or planter box. Join the celebration of our natural world and inspire friends and neighbors to Help a Habitat!

See the Greater Prairie Chickens at Kellerton

Plan on joining BBAS for a guided view of the Greater Prairie Chickens at Kellerton Bird Conservation Area near Lamoni, Iowa on April 8. DNR biologist Melvin Moe will lead us on a guided trip at sunrise Saturday to watch the Prairie Chickens booming on their lek at Kellerton. He also will show us many acres of short grass prairie and the nearby Sand Creek Wildlife Refuge where we should see many sparrows and other great birds. Make your own room reservations at the Super 8 in Lamoni at (515) 784-7500 for Friday night April 7 and plan on meeting fellow birders there. We will rise very early Saturday morning to meet Mel at sunrise. Call Kay Niyo at 232-8803 in mid-March for more information.

Bird Drop-ins

Sightings by
BBAS Members



With the unusual weather we are having this year, many different birds are showing up sooner, if they have even left. I still heard my killdeer in January and again February 19! Please e-mail me your early sightings at shivvers@ameslab.gov. This will help us keep our county records up to date for the next printing of the Boone and Story County bird books. Don't assume someone else has seen your early birds.

February 23—Karl Jungbluth reported several small flocks of Horned Larks along the highways between Boone and Johnston last Thursday and Friday (when it was snowing). However, things have changed in the week since then! Carmen saw a Bluebird singing across the road from our house Tuesday morning. Early this evening, I saw a flock of Grackles and Redwings heading north, and at least one Redwing was singing loud down by the creek behind our house. They do nest down there, but I haven't seen any of their posts along the road yet. Maybe tomorrow. Robins and Turkeys were heard today, too. And a Killdeer.



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.

Birding Hot Spots—Highway 30 Gravel Pits West of Boone

by Jon & Joyce Bahrenfus

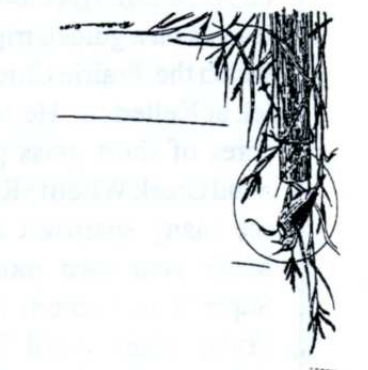
In the Des Moines River valley just west of Boone is a public area with two gravel pits on the north side of Highway 30. During spring migration, this area often has excellent birding. To access the gravel pits, turn off of Highway 30 about 0.6 mile west of the Des Moines River bridge. Following rainy weather the access road can be quite rutted so you may want to drive a short way in, park to the side of the access road, and walk the short distance to the water. Although most of this area is public access, the north central part is still being quarried and is private, so don't trespass—go only where public access signs are posted. The area's varied habitat usually yields an interesting variety of birds. Scan the open water for geese and ducks, especially diving ducks. Frequently there are terns, gulls, grebes, and an occasional loon (when people are fishing, you may not see much waterfowl). Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, and Great Egrets can often be found along the water's edge and if you are lucky you may spot hawks or an osprey in the surrounding trees. Because of the proximity to the Des Moines River, you'll want to watch the skies for flocks of pelicans, cormorants, or vultures—maybe even an eagle.

After birding the south side of the area, return to Highway 30 and head west. Turn right (north) on the next blacktop road. In a short distance, turn right on the next paved road (old Highway 30). Go east 0.8 mile until you come to the parking lot (as you drive, watch for shrikes along the fencerow on the right). The north side of this public area has some of the choicest birding. A walk along the old roadbed heading south from the parking lot is likely to yield orioles, buntings, bluebirds, sparrows, and warblers. There are lots of small willow thickets interspersed with brush around several small ponds. If you are there at the right time, these willows can be alive with warblers. Exercise care if you are walking around with binoculars glued to your face as there are steep banks next to some of the ponds. Look for sora rails, wood ducks, and other water birds. Several years ago we even heard a quail here.

If you are near here during spring migration, take an hour to check it out—it can have great birding!

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

S DRAGULA & M WIDRLECHNER
2121 BURNETT AV
AMES IA 50010



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Big Bluestem Flyer
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Boone, Iowa 50036

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