

Big Bluestem Audubon Society, Ames, Iowa  
April, 1984  
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Tom Davis, Vice-Pres. 292-1869  
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#### APRIL MEETING

**WHEN:** Tuesday, April 10, at 7:30 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Room 205, Bessey Hall, ISU campus  
**WHO:** Carl Kurtz -- photographer, naturalist and farmer  
**TOPIC:** The Natural History of Minnesota, a photographic journey through many of the state's natural areas

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#### UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Spring Field Trips -- Set aside three dates for field trips to see migrating birds! Jim Murdock is planning to lead morning field trips on three Saturdays, April 21, May 5 and May 19. Destinations will be announced at our April 10 meeting. Contact Jim (233-3185) for complete information.

Tree Planting -- The chapter's annual tree-planting project is tentatively set for the last weekend in April, depending on weather and the availability of trees. Persons interested in helping should contact Pete van der Linden (232-3450) or Hank Zaletel (377-2889).

Audubon Trail -- Persons interested in helping rehabilitate the Audubon Trail in Brookside Park, Ames, should meet April 14 at 10:30 a.m. at the trail's entrance, or contact Tom Davis (292-1869) or Judy van der Linden.

Audubon Board Meeting -- The executive board will meet Wednesday, April 4 at 7:30 p.m. in room 210, Bessey Hall. Anyone interested may attend.

May Newsletter -- Deadline for submitting articles or artwork for the May newsletter will be Thursday, April 26, at 5 p.m. Send items to Judy van der Linden, 610 9th St., Ames.

IOU Meeting -- The Iowa Ornithologist's Union spring meeting will be held the weekend of May 5 at Indianola. Contact Hank Zaletel for more information.

## CONSERVATION/THE ENVIRONMENT

Steel Shot Legislation -- A large crowd turned out in Des Moines on March 15 for a public hearing on Senate Bill 788, a bill requiring use of steel shot statewide for waterfowl hunting. Proponents of steel shot outnumbered opponents almost three to one at the hearing. Both National Audubon Society and our chapter favor steel shot because it is non-toxic to wildlife, shoots well and is cost-effective.

Public input on the legislation is still welcome. Please consider writing a short letter to your state representative. We have compiled a fact-sheet to aid in letter writing. To obtain a fact-sheet or for further information call Sherry Dragula (292-4014).

Iowa Environmental Coalition -- The Iowa Environmental Coalition held a meeting on March 10, and two Bluestem members attended. When our chapter discussed the coalition in February, we decided to endorse rather than join until we learned more about it.

The coalition meeting included a discussion of accomplishments so far. They include: sponsoring a conference on hazardous waste and political action; sponsoring candidate forums on environmental issues; distributing a resolution on state and national handling of hazardous waste which resulted in 650 people introducing or supporting the resolution in 26 counties; gathering 11,600 signatures on petitions supporting hazardous waste legislation in Iowa; lobbying effectively for the hazardous waste bills, getting national coverage from the press, and making hazardous waste an important election issue.

Future goals include a leadership conference in May which will train state environmentalists in organizing and lobbying; working on a broad range of issues; fundraising; sponsoring a debate between Roger Jepsen and Tom Harkin; sponsoring a fulltime environmental lobbyist in Des Moines, and developing a packet of educational materials on hazardous waste for Iowa teachers.

For more information on the coalition and on the leadership conference, contact Sherry Dragula (292-4014) or Cindy Hildebrand (232-3807).

Garrison Update -- In February, Bluestem members voted to support the idea of establishing a grassroots office in North Dakota, hoping local efforts against the Garrison Diversion Project could be renewed there. No money was pledged for the project, since members decided to hear other chapters' response to it first. On March 28, Cindy Hildebrand talked to Tom Nicol-Thomas, project coordinator, and reported that chapter response from our region has been pretty discouraging. Most chapters apparently feel that little good can be done with their available funds, and thus have decided not to support the project financially. Anyone who can suggest where to go from here can contact Judy van der Linden, preferably before April 4, when Garrison will be discussed at the executive board meeting.

## BIRD GUIDES COMPARED

Janet Klaas, a reference librarian at Iowa State University Library, will publish an article this fall comparing the seven most popular field guides to birds of North America. The article will appear in Reference Services Review, Vol. 12, issue no. 2, Fall, 1984, a professional library journal that is available at the ISU Library.

Field guides compiled by National Geographic Society and National Audubon Society and those written or recently revised by Roger Tory Peterson and "Golden Guide" authors Chandler Robbins, Betel Brunn and Herbert Zimm are compared in the article with respect to their illustrations, narrative

(Cont. on page 4)

# Thoughts Afield by Tom Davis

## Only a Visitor

As I arrived, the rampant April rush of springtime activity came to a halt. A strange silence had fallen. I felt as if I had walked into an orchestra chamber in the middle of a building crescendo, only to have each player stop and turn to watch me with disgust until I became situated. I took a familiar seat on a fallen log and waited for the concert and its accompanying drama to begin. I had chosen this spot not by chance, but because I had been here before. This had become one of my places of escape, a site of insight, a favorite, reserved place that I had come to know and respect.

This wasn't your normal, run-of-the-mill, fallen-log seat near the Skunk River. The moss-covered log was "cooshy" and comfortable. At its base a sturdy basswood tree had replaced the fallen log and occasionally held lazy crows and restless warblers. Once, while I sat here, a Red-shouldered Hawk rested on the tip of the basswood tree, only to leave as quickly as it had appeared. It was here that I watched my first Blackburnian Warbler and American Redstart display their flashy colors along the clearing. This small opening held a natural, freshwater spring. Three small mounds of bubbling sand were the source of life for several leopard frogs, several spring peepers, one spotted salamander and many microscopic aquatic animals. Jewelweed and skunk cabbage sprouted around its perimeter but somehow the bright green layer of water cress had remained green throughout the winter. I had tasted its fresh tangy leaves several times.

I waited. The smell and silence of spring were refreshing. Which actor would make the first appearance? I remembered the young buck I had seen last spring. His new antlers, like bumper pool knobs, were barely visible between his ever-alert ears. He had arrived downwind of me and immediately sensed something was different. Though only our eyes moved as we watched each other, he soon caught my scent and bounded away with a resounding snort and his white flagtail glowing in the gray woods. I had seen several large deer tracks on my way in this day. I wondered



White-throated sparrow

if we would meet here again.

Suddenly, a pair of Wood Ducks swooped in to perch on a limb overlooking the spring. I had noticed several large holes in an old snag nearby. They seemed to be eyeing those holes also. The feathers of the male were spectacular. Over 20 different colors changed their tones with each movement. The ducks began to watch something else. All I could see were old leaves flying. Then a Rufous-sided Towhee came into view. In an attempt to uncover insects, this bird was rearranging the entire forest floor. The brilliant, burnt orange and black breast bobbed up and down as oak leaves flew in all directions. I took in a boisterous argument between four Robins, three Blue Jays and a fat fox squirrel, a distant, eerie, "krrreeee" of a Red-tailed Hawk soaring above the river and the march of several inquisitive carpenter ants up one of my pant legs and down the other!

I had been seated for an hour. I dozed in the warm sun for a few minutes. Up until now I had moved very little. I had been rewarded with some special memories and a feeling of inner peace among the animals and plants of springtime. As I walked out, the sounds of birds and frogs did not stop as they seemed to when I arrived. As a visitor, I had visited and left only footprints.

Have a seat at your favorite spot this spring and get to know yourself again.

As April 15 approaches, don't forget the checkoff for non-game wildlife at the bottom of your state income tax form.

descriptions of each bird, range maps, voice descriptions, arrangement of information and four other criteria. An excellent table within the article summarizes these comparisons for all seven guides.

PLACES TO GO, BIRDS TO SEE

Ducks and geese continue to move through Iowa and should be much more abundant locally as the ice moves off lakes and potholes. Paul Martsching suggests the three best places to see ducks near Ames are Hickory Grove Park, about 15 miles east of Ames on new Highway 30, Hendrickson's Marsh, east and south of Ames, and Little Wall Lake, north on Highway 69 about 18 miles. Paul will give directions to any of these areas. For information about or directions to any of the birding "hot spots" listed below, contact the person whose name or initials appear after each entry.

Date sighted -- Location -- Birds seen -- Contact for latest information

1. March 24 -- Forney's Lake -- Barrow's Goldeneye (first sighting ever of this species in Iowa) -- Hank Zaletei (HZ), 377-2889
2. March 24-25 -- Saylorville -- Ring-billed Gulls and thousands of ducks at marina and Herring Gulls by dam -- HZ
3. March 24-25 -- Hendrickson's Marsh -- Bald Eagles, Loggerhead Shrike -- HZ
4. March 24-25 -- Big Creek -- Saw-whet Owl, Long-eared Owl, Goshawk, most kinds of ducks, 300-400 Snow and "Blue" Geese -- HZ
5. March 18 -- Hendrickson Marsh -- Mallards, Lesser Scaup, Pintails, Canvasbacks, Redheads and Ring-necked and Ruddy ducks -- Paul Martsching (232-0472)

(In the past several weeks, Common Grackles, Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds and Kildeer have returned to the Ames area -- Ed.)

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