

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER Volume 53 | Number 4 | April/May/June 2018
<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>

PROGRAMS

April 19, 2018 | Craig Meyers

Join Craig Meyers as he shares images and experiences from various photo adventures across America. See how the camera can draw you to places you might not otherwise see.

May 17, 2018 | Dick & Sharon Stilwell | Florida's Corkscrew Swamp

Florida Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is one of the last stands of old-growth cypress in Florida and is one of the most important wading bird rookeries in the United States. Dick and Sharon Stilwell of West Des Moines have been visiting, volunteering at, and photographing the natural wonders at Corkscrew Swamp for decades. Join them as they present their findings through their stories and photographs.



Greater White-fronted Goose in flight in rural Hamilton County, March 2018
Photo by Larry Dau

Program meetings take place in the Ames Public Library (515 Douglas Ave.). Meetings begin at 6:30 PM; programs begin at 7:00 PM.
Directions available at bigbluestemaudubon.org.

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The mission of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society is to enjoy the observation and study of birds and natural ecosystems, contribute to their conservation and restoration, engage in educational activities to benefit humanity, and gain a broader understanding and deeper appreciation of the world in which we live.

FIELD TRIPS

April 7, 2018 (1:00 PM) Spring Migration

May 12, 2018 | Bird-A-Thon (See President's Corner for Info.)

May 26, 2018 | Birder's Brunch

Final event of the 2017-18 BBAS year will be at McFarland Park (56461 180th Street) at 8:00 AM. Bring a food item to share as well as a plate, utensils, and a drink.

June 9-16, 2018 | BBAS California Birding Adventure

Explore California's Sierra Nevada mountains, foothills and chaparral, Monterey and Big Sur coastline, Central Valley, and take a sea voyage to Channel Islands National Park. Early-bird rates have been extended to the registration deadline of April 30. Email Eric Ollie for more information: uphawkeye@gmail.com.

Note: Field trip destination and target birds will be determined by the group that assembles at that time and will usually be confined to Story, Boone, Polk, or Hamilton Counties.

Monthly field trips are free and open to the public. Unless stated otherwise, all field trips will meet at 7:30 AM on the first Saturday of each month (Sept-May). We will meet at the public parking lot bordered by Wild Birds, Unlimited (213 Duff Ave), Harold Pike Construction, and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks (GPS coordinates: 42.024014, -93.611582). The destination and target birds will be determined by the group that assembles at that time and will usually be confined to Story, Boone, Polk, or Hamilton counties. Expect to be back at the parking lot generally between noon and 1:00 PM. For more information, contact Eric Ollie at (515) 238-3610 or uphawkeye@gmail.com. Carpooling is highly encouraged.

Notice to New Members of Big Bluestem Audubon Society Only:

We are sending you this printed version of our BBAS newsletter for the first two issues after you have joined the National Audubon Society or become a local member. We have now converted to a mostly electronically-delivered newsletter to save costs and be more green. If you want to receive a printed version, please notify me. Otherwise, you will receive the online version. If you supplied your email address upon joining, we will send you a notice and link for the newsletter each time a new version is available.

Thanks,
Larry Dau
1644 Maple View Pl.
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lgdau9@gmail.com



BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY OF CENTRAL IOWA

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER WITH ERIC OLLIE

Spring has arrived!

The days are longer. The sun is higher in the sky. The snow is fading away, and the temperatures are slowly rising. And birds are returning to Iowa! We say goodbye to the birds who were winter visitors and are reintroducing ourselves to the birds we haven't seen since autumn. Of course, when it comes to Spring, every Big Bluestemmer thinks of ... **Bird-A-Thon!**

Bird-A-Thon 2018 will be held over a 24-hour period on **Saturday, May 12th.**

Bird-A-Thon is our annual fundraiser, which accounts for the biggest chunk of our funding each year. Not only is it an extremely fun-filled day in nature in the midst of Spring migration (who could ask for more?), it is also a very critical event for BBAS, making much of what we do each year possible.

Bird-A-Thon is also very easy to participate in. Since this is the **20th BBAS Bird-A-Thon**, we are going all out to get as many participants as possible, and our goal to raise **\$5000.**

Here is what you do:

1. **Form a team:** For a bird to count toward your list, it must be seen or heard by at least two birders in your group. Teams must have at least two people with no max number, as long as the whole team stays together and is in the same place at the same time. Four birders on a team seems to work the best so all can fit in one vehicle.
2. **Choose a team name:** Be creative! Be whimsical!
3. **Register your team:** Email Barb Krumhardt with "Bird-A-Thon" in the subject line at barbara.krumhardt@gmail.com to register. List your team members, team captain, and team name.

| Continued on page 3

Membership Application Form

New member of the National Audubon Society. You will receive the *Audubon* magazine, the *Big Bluestem Flyer*, membership card. — \$20
Please make your check payable to **National Audubon Society** and include "Chapter Code H-57" on the check

Subscribe to the *Big Bluestem Flyer* for one year and participate in some Big Bluestem Society Activities — \$10
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:
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P.O. Box 543, Ames IA 50010

Name _____
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*Please do not use this form for renewals
to the National Audubon Society.*

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CONTINUED PRESIDENT'S CORNER

4. **Get sponsors:** Bird-A-Thon works when we get sponsors to donate money either based on how many bird species your team finds or with a set amount. Ask your family, friends, acquaintances, and coworkers (or even perfect strangers you bump into on the street) to support BBAS and its efforts to conserve, protect, educate, and recreate.
5. **GO BIRDING:** From 12:00 AM to 11:59 PM on Saturday, May 12 go into the wilds of Iowa, and identify as many bird species as you can. Remember, two birders must identify each species. Using recordings to call birds is prohibited. Bird for as little or as much time as you desire. You DO NOT have to be out all day. We appreciate your efforts.
6. **Report your findings:** The team captain (or whoever is designated) should report your findings to Barb Krumhardt (barbara.krumhardt@gmail.com).
7. **Collect donations:** Send your money to BBAS treasurer Brian Schilling at P.O. Box 543, Ames, IA 50010

Bird-A-Thon is truly a great time and is indeed a very important event for BBAS. It is easy, it is fun, and it does so much to help BBAS and the conservation of the nature we love!

FIELD TRIP REPORT BY ERIC OLLIE

January 23, 2018 | Story County

31 species - Canada Goose, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Lapland Longspur, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Harris's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Rusty Blackbird, Purple Finch, and House Sparrow.

February 3, 2018 | Story County

28 species - Canada Goose, Ring-necked Pheasant, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Short-eared Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

March 3, 2018 | Big Creek State Park, Saylorville Reservoir, Chichaue Bottoms, and Hendrickson Marsh Wildlife Management Area

28 species - Canada Goose, Ring-necked Pheasant, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Short-eared Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.

BIRD-A-THON MAY 12, 2018

SEE PRESIDENT'S CORNER FOR DETAILS. REGISTER YOUR TEAM BY EMAILING YOUR TEAM NAME, MEMBERS, AND CAPTAIN TO BARBARA.KRUMHARDTS@GMAIL.COM

PHOTOS AND CONTENT FOR NEWSLETTER BY LARRY DAU

Please send any photos you have of events, birds, wildlife, habitat or BBAS members in the field that you would like to see in the newsletter. We are also looking for short content items and announcements to include. Stefany Hulsebus edits all content and creates the layout of the BBAS Newsletter. We appreciate her expertise and help.



Male Red-breasted Merganser at Saylorville Lake, Polk County, April 2018
Photo by Larry Dau



Female Red-tailed Hawk sitting on nest in rural Boone County, April 2018 | Photo by Larry Dau



Franklin's Gull at Saylorville Lake in Polk County, April 2018 | Photo by Larry Dau



The strange look of a male Double-crested Cormorant in full breeding colors. A trophy mate for any female Cormorant | Saylorville Lake in Polk County, April 2018 | Photo by Larry Dau



A LONG LOST STORY: GREAT HORNED OWL BANDING—CIRCA 1965

FORWARD BY LARRY DAU

ARTICLE BY NORMAN C. WARD, JR. [PICTURED AT LEFT, BOUNDARY WATERS, 1980]

Sometimes things occur in strange and mysterious ways. The following account of Great Horned Owl banding was written by Norman Ward, a good friend of mine, while we were in high school in the 1960s. It disappeared for over half a century. Then suddenly reappeared in a very unusual way. I believe the article was originally intended for *Iowa Bird Life* but was never submitted.

I received a phone call from Brian Button, editor of *Iowa Outdoors*, about a year and a half ago. Brian said the hand-written story about Great Horned banding was discovered inside a bird book purchased at a sale. He thought the account was very interesting but had no idea who the author was, since it was unsigned. However, one of the first lines of the story began, "Pete Petersen, Larry Dau and myself." Brian knew who I was and gave me a call. I immediately remembered the event and knew it was written by Norman. Brian felt he might include the story in a future *Iowa Outdoors* issue but agreed I could publish it.

In Bettendorf, Iowa, Norman and I were avid bird watchers. In those early years, we participated in several Eastern Iowa Christmas Bird Counts with Pete and Mary Lou Peterson. Norm also assisted Pete with bird netting and banding activities. Norm was a very strong teenager, and I marveled his ability to climb large trees to band owls and raptors. Even more amazing, he used only a rope and no cleats. Some of the trees were dead from Dutch Elm Disease—probably would not meet OSHA standards! The article below is printed with Norman's permission. It is in his exact words as written by him at 17 years of age, with some very minor editing. Really a fine piece of writing for a teenager or an adult. I appreciate having this opportunity to share this story from the past and hope you enjoy it.

This is an account of a nest of Great Horned Owls I banded on Saturday, April 10, 1965.

Pete Petersen, Larry Dau, and myself arrived at the nest site early afternoon that Saturday. The nest site was located about five miles SW of Princeton on County Road H. The nest tree was located on the southern fringe border of a relatively large oak woods.

The nest platform itself was on the extreme topmost fork of an unusually slender and very tall White Oak. I judged the tree to be about 65 feet tall. After having difficulty climbing to the first limb, even with the aid of a rope, I finally reached a position directly under the nest. After reaching this precarious position, I was completely immobilized from further climbing for several minutes due to violent swaying of the tree caused by a very strong and turbulent wind. It was then that I was shocked with fear to note how small the limb to which I was clinging really was.

After the wind calmed down somewhat, I heard the young owls snapping their beaks and uttering a queer Sapsucker like note. Gathering courage, I disregarded the wind and elevated myself eye level to the nest. Here I found myself confronting the onslaught of two very angry young Great Horned Owls.

| Continued on page 5

Buying from the businesses listed on this page not only benefits the birds but also helps our local economy and provides funding for BBAS. Donations fund our various habitat restoration and educational projects. Present the coupons at the time of your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS.

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Offer good until June 30, 2018

CONTINUED GREAT HORNED OWL BANDING

Not desiring to lose an eye, nor receive facial injuries, I cowardly descended to a point several feet under the nest. Here I began wondering if the parent owls weren't somewhere nearby watching and waiting for a chance. It was then that I began recalling such coined expressions as "tiger of the air," "killer of the night," or "silent death."

But, after receiving loud shouts of encouragement and advice from my comrades, I again inched my way up to a position slightly above the nest. Again, the owls assumed defensive positions, snapping their bills loudly and spreading their underdeveloped wings all in a very impressive manner. Seeing that in my totally tenacious position I couldn't possibly band the owls, I grudgingly placed my life into the trust of the seemingly weak branches supporting the nest and actually crawled onto the nest, much to the annoyance of the bewildered owlets.

After arranging the bands, pliers, gloves, etc. into an order so that I could easily grab them when needed, I began to cautiously handle one of the owlets with my free hand. After convincing myself that they would only attack with their beaks, I turned to the problem of banding them. Since the wind was still violently rocking the tree, I could only use one hand for the banding operation.

Opening the bands became quite a problem. After assuming several unsuccessful positions, I had to resort to allowing the wind to settle. Then, balancing myself on my knees and shins, I quickly opened two bands. After banding both owls, I sat much relieved looking down at the comical owls who were now squatted, looking up dumbly, blinking their eyes. I chuckled aloud, rather ashamed of having been frightened by these little bluffers. I recalled how ferocious they first acted, but they then proved to be rather passive. In fact, I remarked to my patiently waiting companions that they were, "really as harmless as kittens." Among the debris in the nest were 19 whole pellets (rodents presumably), a complete pheasant wing, loose pheasant feathers, the remains of a Flicker, a whole Starling, a fresh rabbit breast (meat attached), a variety of bones, and rabbit fur.

I descended from the tree with no further incidence. After more closely examining the area around the base of the tree, I found more pheasant feathers but fortunately, not a single sign of poultry depredation.



In this photo you can see that young Great Horned Owls can be pretty menacing, especially when you are way up in a tree at their nest! | Photo by Stephen Dinsmore, April 2005

30 YEARS AGO IN BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON (BBAS) BY HANK ZALETEL

"All About Iowa Snakes" was the May 1988 program presented by Paul Hollander, a herpetologist. It was held in room 181 in the College of Design.

May-June field trips went to McFarland and Brookside Park. The birder's breakfast was held at Ledges State Park at the Trading Post shelter. The April trip visited Izaak Walton Park off Stagecoach Road for displaying Woodcocks who put on a dazzling display.

BBAS service project day was held May 14 at East River Valley Park. Young trees were protected from munching beavers by encasing them in chicken wire.

1988-1999 Elected Officers: President: Mike Meetz; Vice-President: Sherry Dragula; Secretary: Kay Niyo; Treasurer: Mark Widrlechner; Executive Board: Elizabeth Carbrey, Steve Dinsmore (also field trip leader), Andy Fix, Barbara Heiken (also education chair), and Tom Rosburg.

AMES READS LEOPOLD BY ERIC OLLIE

BBAS is partnering with the Ames Public Library, Outdoor Alliance of Story County, Friends of Ada Hayden, and others to present "Ames Reads Leopold" on Sunday, April 29 from 2:00-4:00 PM at the Ames Public Library. Join guest readers as we explore the conservation and land ethic writings of Burlington, Iowa, native Aldo Leopold. His most famous work, *A Sand County Almanac*, published in 1949, is still popular with naturalists and writers alike. Readers will share essays from this book, his other books, and from other like-minded writers.

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Bird-A-Thon 2018 | May 12, 2018
See President's Column for details.

Board Meeting | Not yet scheduled
Contact Eric Ollie if you want to attend a board meeting.

MAY 17 VOTE FOR 2018-2019 BOARD AND OFFICERS

The BBAS officers and Board of Directors will be voted on at the May 17 membership meeting. All positions are tentatively set to remain the same, as per the following:

- Eric Ollie, President
- Doug Harr, Vice-president
- Brian Schilling, Treasurer
- Hank Zaletel, Secretary
- Marlene Ehresman, Director
- Wolf Oesterreich, Director
- Matt Wetrich, Director

NEW MEMBERS OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Ames

Carol Berryman
Janice Coy
Louisa Eckart
Robert Klaver
Sandra McKee
Wayne & Irene Shireman
Diane Shonrock
Eve Zelinsky

Boone

Julie Lyon
Vivian Kasey

Nevada

Andrew Swanson

Ogden

Daryl Johnson

Omaha

Sylvia Hanson



Small flock of Migrating Geese in Hamilton County March 2018. Note three species present: Greater White-fronted, Snow, and Ross's Geese | Photo by Larry Dau

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If you have an "X" after
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ing label,
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you renew.

We welcome new members!

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