

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER Volume 57 | Number 4 | Sept./Oct./Nov./Dec. 2022
<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>

2022-2023 Big Bluestem Audubon Society Programs

Business meetings begin at 6:30 p.m.

Programs begin at 7:00 p.m.

(except December meeting. Program starts at 6:00 p.m.)

All programs are held in the auditorium of the Ames public library unless otherwise noted

September 15th program:

Kelsey Fisher, Post-doctoral researcher,
ISU Department of Entomology.
Topic: The Iowa Monarch Conservation Program.

October 20th program:

Heather Wilson, REAP Coordinator,
Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
Location: Danfoss Room, Ames public library

November 17th program:

Todd Burras of Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames.
Topic: Preparing Your Backyard for Winter Bird Feeding
Location: Danfoss room, Ames public library

December 15th: Christmas Program

Location: Story County Conservation HQ at McFarland Park.
Please bring photos to share (on a flash drive) and desserts, too.
• Please bring bird seed as well for the McFarland Park bird feeders. Program starts at 6:00 p.m.

January 19th:

Tim Gedler, Retired Iowa Department of Natural Resources employee.
Topic: Purple Martins in Iowa

February 16th: Jim Pease, ISU Extension Wildlife Biologist.

Topic: Birds of East Africa and South Africa

March 16th: Mark Edwards, retired Iowa DNR.

Topic: Rewilding Iowa.

April 20th: Brandon Bergquist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Enforcement Officer.

Topic: Enforcement of Iowa Wildlife Laws and the Turn In Poachers Program-A Conversation with a Game Warden

May 18th: Stephanie Shepherd, Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Topic: Tax Preparation and License Plates:
How Do These Help Wildlife in Iowa?



Part of a group of 5 young Kestrels that recently fledged in Boone County. | Photo by Larry Dau.



Two adult Kestrels with 4 of their 5 fledged young in Boone County. | Photo by Larry Dau.



Three young Kestrels screaming for food as they see Dad in the distance approaching with a snake in Boone County. | Photo by Larry Dau.

PLEASE NOTE

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

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,
Tim Garner
timgarner@mediacombb.net



Support conservation in Iowa.

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.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER with Tim Garner

August, 2022

Our animal friends can teach us so much, provided we take the time to look.

This past May I looked out my east facing window and spotted two young quirkles, probably siblings from the same brood, eating the suet that I had placed for the birds. Their acrobatics, hanging upside while feasting on food meant for their avian counterparts, were so amusing that I didn't mind. These young squirrels played with each other, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Sandhill Cranes in flight in Burnett County Wisconsin. |
Photo by Larry Dau.



Western Kingbird |
Photo by Doug Harr.

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:
Big Bluestem Audubon Society
P.O. Box 543, Ames IA 50010

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

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER with Tim Garner - *continued*

then did something that I had never before witnessed: One of the squirrels allowed the other to lick its mouth, offering a sample of the suet, presumably to see if the other squirrel found the treat to its liking, or perhaps to give it assurance that the food was safe to eat.

A few days earlier I had attended the spring meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union in Carroll county. As part of our birding expedition on an unseasonably chilly May Sunday, our guides took us to a flooded farm field, where we observed a number of shore birds, all of which were life-listers for me. The one that really caught my attention was the Wilson's phalarope, which exhibited some of the most curious feeding behavior that I had ever seen. These birds probed the mud with their long beaks, and walked in tight circles, hoping to obtain a worm or some other subterranean morsel. It was fascinating to watch.

And recently, at a Big Bluestem meeting, Doug Harr explained how white pelicans use communal behavior to feed themselves. Apparently these pelicans, unlike their brown cousins, swim together in something of a semi-circle, forcing fish to cluster into a tight school. At the appropriate moment the entire flock of pelicans dives together and in a feeding frenzy feast on their quarry. It is an act that shows the power of cooperation.

When I considered all of these things, I was struck by how much the animal kingdom can teach us. The squirrels can teach us the benefits of sharing and the need to look out for one another. The Wilson's phalarope reminds us of the power of being diligent, and the importance of individual initiative. And the white pelicans bear witness to the fact that working as a group can bring about desired ends in a way that acting individually cannot.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Cy-Hawk Birding Challenge

In the spirit of friendly competition, the Big Bluestem Audubon Society and the Iowa City Birding Club will have their annual Cy-Hawk Birding Challenge on September 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Currently Big Bluestem has possession of the coveted trophy.

Big Bluestem members may bird in any one of the following counties: *Story, Boone, Hamilton, Greene, and Webster*. You may bird with a team or by yourself. You may bird for one of the 3 days listed above. Once you have compiled your list of birds and the total number of species sighted, submit your results to Eric Ollie via e-mail at uphawkeye@gmail.com. Any questions prior to the event should also be directed to Eric.



Black Turn | Photo by Doug Harr.



Philadelphia Vireo in Boone County fall 2021.
| Photo by Larry Dau.



Franklin's Gull at Saylorville Lake in Polk County fall 2021. | Photo by Larry Dau.

PHOTOS AND CONTENT FOR NEWSLETTER BY TIM GARNER

Please submit any photos of birds, wildlife, habitat, or events that you would like to be included in the flyer newsletter to Tim Garner (timgarner@mediacombb.net). We are also looking for short content items and announcements.



Yellow-Throated Vireo | Photo by Doug Harr.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER with Tim Garner - *continued*

As Big Bluestem Audubon Society members, we act individually, like the Wilson's phalarope, pursuing our hobby, feeding songbirds and creating micro-habitats in our yards which benefit all avian species. Like the white pelicans, we belong to a strong local chapter as well as a vibrant National Audubon Society, with the knowledge that we achieve a great deal when united for a common cause. And we are a group of people who share a common love of birds and wildlife, and in so doing we have a bond with one another, not unlike those young squirrels that I observed in my back-yard last spring.

The animals really can teach us so much.

Yours,
Tim Garner



Sanderlings in flight at Saylorville Lake in Polk County fall 2021. | Photo by Larry Dau.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union will hold its fall meeting at YMCA Camp Abe Lincoln in Scott county. The conference will begin at 4 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 16th and will conclude at noon on Sunday, Sept. 18th.

Details about the programs, and Steve Bechtel, the keynote speaker, and registration can be found at iowabirds.org



Warbling Vireo in Boone County. | Photo by Larry Dau.

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society promotes fostering an inclusive, equitable, and diverse climate and culture, where all members of our organization can thrive. We welcome people of all backgrounds and seek to create a membership that is inclusive of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences while enhancing a culture of respect and civil discourse. We aspire to attract and retain a diverse membership.

Looking Back - In place of 30 years ago.



by: Hank Zalatel, Archivist

Eurasian Collared-Dove by Carl Nollen

Ever since 10 Eurasian Collared-Doves flew into my yard in southeast Polk County on February 26, some of this species have made their appearance here every day. Their sleek, silvery plumage and white undertail feathers fanned out in flight are distinctive marks, in addition to the black mark on their necks. They are noticeably larger than mourning doves which are more brown and have a pointed tail. The two species get along well below my bird feeders. One day, seven mourning doves and two collared doves shared the ground.

Its genus and specific name come from the Greek. *Streptopelia* means "wild dove wearing a collar" and *decaocto* was a Greek servant girl transformed into a dove. The Collared-Dove is a very recent immigrant to Iowa, first spotted in Grinnell in 1997. Now it is found throughout the state. Grain elevators and evergreens in small towns are especially favored according to the 2nd edition of the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas. In my limited experience, they also like maple trees, probably due to their numerous branches. This year-round bird has established a home in Iowa and does not appear to displace any other birds unlike some of our older non-native species. It does well around human development which guarantees their success. Their nest is more substantial than the well-known flimsy platform of the mourning dove. Both species lay 2 eggs and may raise several broods in a year. Pigeons and doves are able to drink by sucking water, as opposed to most birds who need to take a beakful and raise their heads to let gravity trickle the water down.

Do you suppose legislators will try to sneak in a hunting season for Col-

lared-Doves like they did for mourning doves? I bet they haven't thought about it or even know about this new species. Due to this dove's preferences for human habitations, hunting there would be dangerous. So maybe it will be safe from hunting.

From June, 2022, Des Moines Audubon Newsletter

American Redstart: Candelita

From American Bird Conservancy's Bird of the Week, May 6

- Scientific Name: *Setophaga ruticilla*
- Population: 42 million
- Trend: Decreasing
- Habitat: Breeds in open deciduous forests, second growth, and forest edge. Winters in a range of lowland forests and edges.

About the American Redstart:

The American Redstart is one of North America's most recognizable wood-warblers, named for the adult male's glossy black plumage set off by vivid reddish-orange patches on its sides, wings, and tail. Females and young birds, often called "yellowstarts" by birders, are olive-brown above, with lemon-yellow patches on the sides, wings, and tail. Unlike many warblers of its family, such as the Prothonotary, Wilson's, and Hooded Warblers, the adult male American Redstart lacks yellow plumage.

The word "start" in this bird's name comes from an Old English word for "tail." An American Redstart constantly flicks its tail open and closed like a fan, flashing patches of bright orange or yellow. In Latin America, it is often called *candelita*, or "little candle." The American Redstart is also identifiable by characteristics seen in birds belonging to an entirely different family. Flashy and Flycatcher-like: The American Redstart's short, rather flat bill, surrounded by stiff, whisker-like

rectal bristles, resembles the bills of unrelated insectivorous birds of the New World flycatcher family, such as the Great Crested Flycatcher, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, and Eastern Phoebe. These features help the American Redstart catch insect prey while in flight, which it does more regularly than other warbler species.

Breeding and Feeding, Territorial Trials:

The American Redstart is highly territorial throughout the year. On the breeding grounds, male redstarts court newly arriving females with behaviors similar to those usually used in defensive displays, including in-flight chasing and vigorous posturing. A male will show his mate several potential nest sites within a territory, but the female makes the final site choice. She builds a cup-shaped nest using bark strips, grass, plant down, and other natural fibers, and lines it with soft materials that include fur and feathers. The nest is "glued" with spider silk to the forked branches of a tree or shrub, well-hidden within the foliage. The female redstart lays an average of three to four eggs, which she incubates herself for 10 to 13 days. Once the young hatch, both parents feed them for several weeks until fledging. Once the young are out of the nest, the parents split the brood, each continuing to feed one or two offspring for a few more weeks until they are fully independent. Brown-headed Cowbirds frequently parasitize American Redstart nests, leaving redstart parents to raise cowbird young, to the detriment of their own.

Although American Redstart pairs are usually monogamous during the breeding season, extra-pair copulation is common among both sexes, resulting in nestlings with mixed paternity.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Looking Back - In place of 30 years ago. - continued

Occasionally a male redstart will mate with a second female outside of its territory once its first mate is on the nest. These polygamous males usually give more attention to their first brood than the second.

Flashing for Food: The American Redstart is a lively insectivore, especially during its breeding season, hopping among tree branches and foliage to glean its prey, which includes caterpillars, moths, flies, wasps, beetles, aphids, and spiders. It "flashes" its brightly colored wing and tail patterns by fanning its tail and drooping its wings as it forages — behavior that is thought to startle insects into flight, making them easier to capture, and giving this brightly colored little warbler yet another nickname: "the butterfly of the bird world." In late summer, the American Redstart adds small fruits to its diet. Planting serviceberry, magnolia, or other native trees that produce small berries and host a variety of insects might attract migrating American Redstarts to your yard.

Conservation of the American Redstart: The biggest threat to this migrant is habitat loss on both wintering and breeding grounds, which

affects other birds including Cerulean and Blackpoll Warblers. Help support ABC's conservation mission! As nocturnal migrants, American Redstarts are frequent victims of collisions with glass, towers, and wind turbines; as insectivores, they are vulnerable to pesticide poisoning. ABC is involved in a number of large-scale conservation initiatives to protect and recover habitat for migratory birds, including BirdScapes and Joint Ventures. ABC's Collisions program offers solutions to keep American Redstarts and other migrating birds safe from collisions.

This article is re-printed, courtesy of American Bird Conservancy, <http://www.abcbirds.org>. A direct link to the American Redstart species account can be found at: <https://abcbirds>.

Identifying Meadowlarks Karen Disbrow

If you see a meadowlark on a fencepost and it does not vocalize, but you see it fly away, look at the tail feathers. Eastern Meadowlarks have more whiter outer tail feathers than Western Meadowlarks. In Easterns, the number of white outer tail feathers on each side appear to be the same as the

number of dark feathers in the middle. Westerns have more dark feathers in the center of the tail than white on either side.

In breeding plumage, the malar area (between the face and the throat) is also different between the two species, with Western being mostly yellow, and Eastern having white bordering the yellow throat.

So as one who struggles with bird song, I have found these traits to be helpful, especially when the birds aren't vocalizing.

Donald Kroodsma, author of *Birdsong by the Seasons*, states that juvenile Eastern and Western Meadowlarks can learn each other's songs, whereas calls are innate, making them a more reliable indicator of species. Former club member Margrieta Delle once discovered such a meadowlark along Greencastle Avenue, singing Western songs but giving Eastern calls, thus making it an Eastern Meadowlark.

Reprinted from Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, Iowa City Bird Club, April, 2022



Ruddy Turnstone | Photo by Doug Harr.



Caspian Terns at Saylorville Lake in Polk County fall 2021. | Photo by Larry Dau.



Northern Mockingbird | Photo by Doug Harr.



Sandhill Crane in Burnett County Wisconsin fall 2021. | Photo by Larry Dau.

Prairie Warbler | Photo by Doug Harr.



Brown Thrasher | Photo by Doug Harr.

Bird-A-Thon

In May of this year, the Big Bluestem Audubon Society held its annual fundraiser, known as the bird-a-thon. We are happy to report that we raised a robust \$2,758! We use these funds to support various conservation and education efforts, both locally, nationally, and internationally.

Examples of our philanthropy include a donation to the Story County Conservation Board toward its purchase of what is known as the Bradshaw property, land valued for its wildlife habitat. Additionally, the Big Bluestem Audubon Society made a generous donation to the Institute for Bird Populations, which works to conserve birds and habitat in Central and South America. And finally, BBAS donated money to Audubon Adventures, a National Audubon Society initiative that provides a curriculum for elementary teachers to use to teach our young people about the importance of conservation and birds in our ecosystem. This grant was given to teachers in Story county.

BBAS fielded 3 teams. Doug Harr, Karl Jungbluth, Mike Havlik, and Alex Kretzinger constituted one team, Wolf Oesterreich, Paul Domoto, Jeff Nichols, and Mary Doug another, and the third team consisted of the duo of Eric Ollie and Matt Wettrich. Each team secures pledges; some people give a set amount, others base their contribution on the number birds a particular team spots.

Thanks to all of you who made a contribution, and a special thanks to those who organized and served on a team. Numerous song birds were spotted, and a fine time was had by all.

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 various habitat restoration and educational projects. Present the coupons at the time of your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS.

**Donate \$5 of your
next purchase*
of \$25 or more
at WBU to BBAS**

**Big Bluestem
Audubon Society**



*Coupon must be presented at time of purchase.
One coupon per purchase.
May not be combined with any other offer.
Valid only at Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames.

Valid through 12-31-2022

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Brekke's offers Big Bluestem Audubon Society a donation when bird seed or other bird products are purchased.

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Offer good until 12-31-2022

NEW MEMBERS
OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

We are pleased to announce that the following people have joined the Big Bluestem Audubon Society.

Welcome!

And thank you for joining our ranks.

- Diane Buman
- William Bates
- Diane Dentlinger
- Anne Marie Fiore
- Janet Gebler
- Gloria Johnston
- Shellie Orngard
- Joan Van Gorp

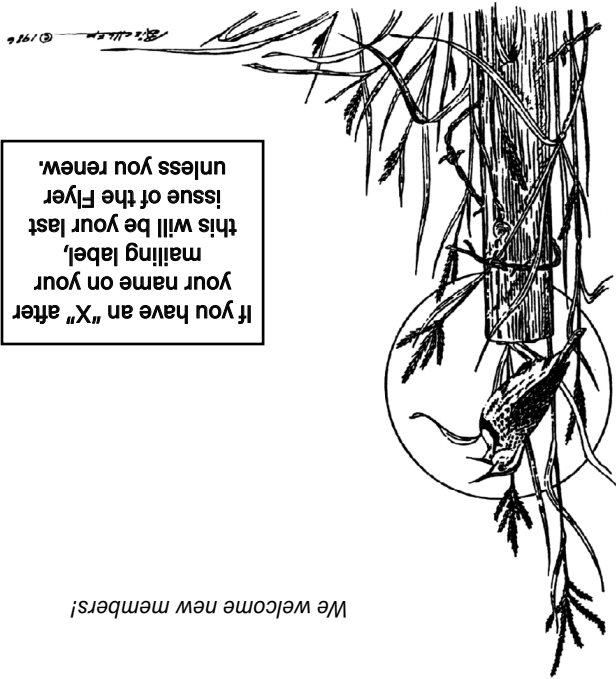


Limpkin | Photo by Doug Harr.



Grasshopper Sparrow | Photo by Doug Harr.

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