

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER Volume 60 | Number 1 | Sept/Oct/Nov/Dec 2024
<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>



Olive-sided Flycatcher
 Photo by Doug Harr

This year's Birdathon was quite a success, with 181 species tallied among 5 teams. This total is higher than the previous 25-year mean of 125.7 species and is the 2nd highest total recorded. The weather was grand (thanks Karl!), unlike other years with rain. Seventeen waterfowl species, 19 shore-bird species (includes avocet, plovers, sandpipers), 15 sparrow species, and 22 warbler species were found. The attached PDF file shows the results for all the teams. Team Felted Kingfishers came in first place with 138 species, followed by Quick 3 Beers with 134, Pishing in the Wind with 129, Elis team with 124, and Peregrines with 97. Thirty-nine species were found by only 1 team, while 70 species were recorded by all five teams.

Wolf Oesterreich, compiler

2024 Big Bluestem Audubon Society Programs

All programs are held at the
 Ames Public Library (515 Douglas Ave.)

Business Meetings: 6:30pm - Programs: 7:00pm

2024 - 2025 programs

- Sept. 19th: LoraKim Joyner**
Topic: Birding for Life
- Oct. 17th: Steve Dinsmore**
Topic: Iowa's Changing Wildlife
- Nov. 21st: Susan Gwiasda**
Topic: Ames Climate Change Action Plan: An Overview
- Dec. 19th: Christmas Party**
- Jan. 16th: Carl Kurtz**
Topic: Prairie Birds
- Feb. 20th: Tyler Kelly**
Topic: Story County Conservation's American Kestrel
- Mar. 20th: Rich Leopold**
Topic: Brenton Slough
- Apr. 17th: LoraKim Joyner**
*Topic: Transformative Parrot Conservation:
 Parrot Conservation in the Americas*
- May 15th: Karen Hinkle and Hank Zalatel**
Topic: Birding in Belize

Data for Big Bluestem Audubon Society Birdathons										
										by Nick Osness
										6/17/2034
										v. 5
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Club total number of species	134	178	158	165	161		172	164	177	
Club total number of warblers		22	22	28	30			21	18	
Most species by one team		110			126	137		139	134	
Most warblers by one team				20	25				15	
Number of teams		11	10	5	7	9		7	7	
Number of observers		23	33	28	22			17	19	
Funds Raised	\$1,766	\$4,440	\$4,808	\$5,712	\$4,200	\$4,400	\$4,979	\$3,339	\$3,629	
Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Club total number of species	169	175	169	180	172	177	175	176	175	
Club total number of warblers	25	26	23	27	21	24	20	26	25	
Most species by one team	135	138	137	135	136	146	142	149	150	
Most warblers by one team		21	19	24	16	17	18	23	19	
Number of teams	6	5	4	7	6	5	4	5	5	
Number of observers	20	23		21	19	23	18	16	16	
Funds Raised	\$3,000	\$3,250		\$2,709	\$3,049	\$2,689	\$2,600	\$3,400	\$3,900	
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Club total number of species	178	156	183	183	Cancelled	178	167	176	181	
Club total number of warblers	27	21		27	due to	22	21	29	22	
Most species by one team	157	137	142	146	Covid	135	138	140	138	
Most warblers by one team	27	16		21		18	17	25	19	
Number of teams	4	4	5	5		5	3	5	5	
Number of observers	15	15	14	16			10		15	
Funds Raised	\$4,000	\$3,215	\$3,717	\$3,031		\$5,196	\$2,708	\$5,926		
Total Funds Raised	\$89,663									
Highest club total of species	183	2019						Highest total of species by one team:	157	2016
Highest club total of warblers	30	2002						Highest number of warblers by one team:	27	2016

The record setting team of 2016 was the Baffled Birders: Bruce Ehresman, Marlene Ehresman, Kelly Poole, and Gina McAndrews

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.

Going forward BBAS will have its December meetings at the same time (6:30 p.m. business meeting, 7:00 p.m. for the program) as we do for the other meetings. We are also switching our venue of the December meeting to the Ames public library. We will no longer have our December meeting at McFarland Park, beginning in December of 2024. December meetings will now be the 3rd Thursday of the month, the same as the other monthly meetings are scheduled. The change allows for consistency and avoids any confusion that may arise from having a December meeting that occurs at a different time, date, and location from the other BBAS meetings.

Attention Birders

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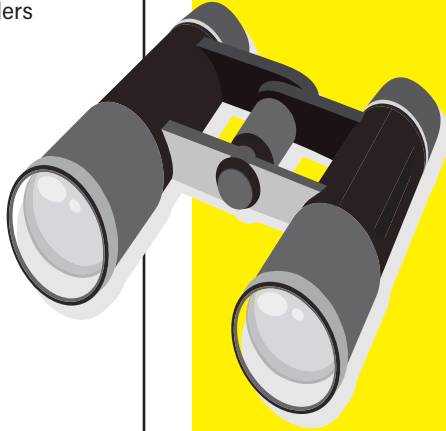
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Eli Kenyon will lead the following birding trips:

September 28th:

Tedesco Learning Center in Ames. 8:00 a.m.

October 12th:

Emma McCarthy Lee Park, 3400 Ross Road,
Ames. 8:00 a.m.

November 23rd:

Hendrickson Marsh. Meet at the boat ramp.
Travel east on Highway 30, go south on 740th
Avenue approximately 5 miles. 8:00 a.m.

December 14th:

Christmas Bird Count. Time and location TBA.

If you have any questions, contact Eli Kenyon at elikenyon18@gmail.com or at 641-891-3857. These trips are free and open to the public. No membership in the Big Bluestem Audubon Society is required to participate.

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 _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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

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Big Bluestem Audubon Society Column April, 2024



Common Nighthawk
Photo by Doug Harr



Eastern Bluebird
Photo by Doug Harr



Wilson's Warbler
Photo by Doug Harr



Sedge Wren
Photo by Doug Harr

A colleague of mine who teaches math at Ankeny Centennial High School has a favorite saying: "None of us is smart as all of us." She uses it to remind her students of the power of teamwork. I attended the Iowa Ornithologists' Union spring meeting in Clinton, Iowa in early May, and a Big Bluestem Audubon Society field trip that Eli Kenyon led at Brookside Park in Ames on Mother's Day weekend, and at each outing, the power and veracity of that aphorism was driven home to me in so many ways.

At the Iowa Ornithologists' Union meeting, we divided ourselves into birding groups, based upon our interests and the kind of habitats we wish to birdwatch in. Once we had arrived at our destination, people immediately began scouring the trees and skies for our quarry. People exclaimed "scarlet tanager in the oak tree about two-thirds the way up, near a snag on the left." Or "black necked stilt in the shallows about 50 yards, just to the left of the cottonwood tree." Or "I've got a scope on the spotted sandpiper perched on a log." The excitement is contagious. We help each other find the birds that have been sighted, congratulate one another on those sightings, and are pleased when one of the groups can add a long sought-after bird to our life list. The same can be said for the birding field trips that Eli Kenyon leads for the Big Bluestem Audubon Society. We help each other and are stronger and better for it.

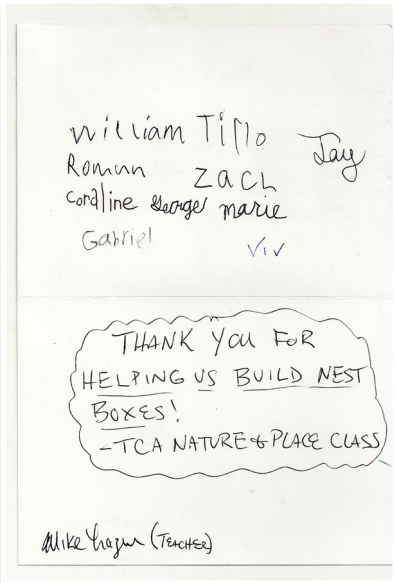
Gaining knowledge about the birds that we have spotted is just as rewarding. On my trip, I learned that sandhill cranes, when nesting, will lie down on the nest so as not to attract predators and that palm warblers can be identified by the incessant bobbing of their tails. Nor is the knowledge about animal behavior limited to birds. One of the gentlemen on a different field trip spotted a fox squirrel swimming across the Mississippi River, from the Iowa to the Illinois side! He said it looked like a wet rat when it emerged from that mighty river-its seemingly death-defying act of stamina and determination successfully completed. A squirrel can swim the Mississippi-who knew?

Our keynote speaker that evening touched on migration, and how one Harvard professor in the late 17th century postulated that birds migrated to the moon. And that the first real knowledge about migration came from Germany in the early 1830s, when a stork arrived with an arrow embedded in its torso-an arrow that had been made near present day Sudan, thus giving substantial evidence about the true nature of this remarkable avian behavior. I would have experienced or learned none of these things on my own. There is so much to be gained in the power of many, the strength of the collective.

To that end, I encourage you to attend as many Big Bluestem Audubon Society meetings this year as you are able. You will be exposed to such topics as birding in Belize. Or how the City of Ames is developing a climate change action plan, acting locally to help abate a world-wide problem. Attendees will also learn about Story County Conservation's plan to install nesting boxes for American kestrels, a species that has been in decline in recent years. Prairie birds, parrot conservation, the Brenton Slough, Iowa's changing wildlife, and the joy of birding-all will be explored and explained. You will learn about so many topics about which you may have been unfamiliar. And that exchange of knowledge, dialogue, and discussion is also a form of teamwork. Presenters and audience members learn from one another, and both benefit, proving again that none of us is as smart as all of us. Please attend-all of us will be better off because you did.

Tim Garner, *newsletter editor*

The Community Academy of Ames (TCA) sent BBAS a thank you for a donation that the chapter made to them so that they could purchase bird nest box materials. Photos of the card, the class and the project itself were included.



Bald Eagle at Lake Red Rock
Photo by Eli Kenyon

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.



Cooper's Hawk
Photo by Laura Beskow

Community Outreach

In upcoming newsletter editions, BBAS members are encouraged to send in any photos of community outreach or other events that they participate in.

Heather Sanders reads a book about birds to young children at the Grimes Farms in Marshalltown as part of the Marshall County Conservation summer program on August 15th. These children were between the ages of 3-10. Afterwards they took a short walk through the woods to look for evidence of birds such as feathers, tracks, eggs, and were taught the skills of using binoculars.



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.

Team Quick Three Beers Birdathon Report - 135 Species Doug Harr, Karl Jungbluth, Mike Havlik - May 11, 2024

Unofficially, Karl's birding day starting at 1 am, when he heard Canada Geese and tree frogs while viewing a widespread display of Aurora Borealis! So much for getting a good night's sleep before Birdathon.

The team gathered at 6 am and assisted with a Friends of the Ledges "Birding Blitz" in Ledges State Park. Along with Park Manager Andy Bartlett and Birdathon team "Pishing in the Wind", we helped half dozen other watchers find and learn about birds in the park. In addition to the robins, we immediately heard a singing migrant Gray-Cheeked Thrush, and saw quite a few similar Swainson's Thrush along the Canyon Road.

It was a good morning for warblers, and we saw 17 warbler species in the park before noon. There were numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers in the trees, and a good number of less-common Blackpoll Warblers too. Working our way down into the canyon, birders new and experienced were thrilled to see a bright Scarlet Tanager, then a Yellow-throated Warbler in a Sycamore tree. There was a frenzy of activity near the Ledges stone cliffs, as dozens of Cliff Swallows had returned to their clay pot nests and were trying to decide who's was who's!

It was after 10 am, and being a beautiful spring day, crowds of park lovers were arriving with families, dogs (some in carrying backpacks) and lots of energy. We almost gave up and left, but decided to hike around Lost Lake anyway. Not long after separating from the dog caravan, a beautiful Mourning Warbler crossed the trail and popped up in a shrub for everyone to see! It's a nice yellow-green bird with a smoky gray head and a black bib. A while later, we found a bright yellow Wilson's Warbler with its black cap.

The Des Moines River was in flood, closing portions of the park road, so we checked the water's edge by the boat ramp and found several Orchard Orioles, with one pair working on a nest. A soaring Bald Eagle caught our attention, and then a Broad-winged Hawk. Soon, the Broad-wing was buzzed by another small hawk. That hawk swooped again, and as it headed toward the canyon, we could see the diagnostic light-colored wing "windows" of a Red-shouldered Hawk.



Northern Saw-Whet at Saylorville Lake
Photo by Eli Kenyon

After lunch, we headed to Harrier Marsh near Ogden where we heard an American Bittern in the cattails, along with Marsh and Sedge Wrens, and saw bright and noisy Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

As we approached another wetland nearby, we were fortunate to find a large grouping of shorebirds in a rainwater puddle in corn stubble. It was a good variety for a corn field including Dunlin, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least and White-rumped Sandpipers. Across the road in the main pond we could identify Gadwall, American Widgeon and Ruddy Ducks, along with the usual abundance of Canada Geese.

In another flooded field pond we located Pectoral Sandpipers and Savannah Sparrows, and a short distance away, a beautiful American Golden Plover.

Our last major stop for the day was Dunbar Slough, out west of Jefferson. More geese, but not a single heron. A pair of Upland Sandpipers flew past and landed with their wings up in nice view. We also found Great-tailed Grackles, bigger and more electronic sounding than everyone's favorite, the Common Grackle. Over a big wetland we watched Black Terns swooping and diving for bugs, and located a Redhead Duck.

Upon returning home, Karl toured the yard immediately located a pair of Golden-winged Warblers in evening sun. If only the photos had turned out. Soon, Nighthawks were overhead and it was a great ending to a golden Birdathon day.

Thanks for being a sponsor!



Yellow-Breasted Chat
Photo by Doug Harr

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society At Work and Bird-A-Thon Update

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society has been active in financially supporting worthy causes during the past year. Here is a list of the organizations and the amount which each has received: (these donations were approved by members of the executive board: Doug Harr, Heather Sanders, Charli Hanway, Karen Hinkle, Eli Kenyon, and Janet Gebler)

\$100.00 to the Iowa Wildlife Center for rehabilitation of injured wildlife \$183.00 to purchase Audubon Adventure kits for 3 elementary teachers in Ames. These kits, if used, provide opportunities for students to learn about birds while honing their non-fiction reading skills.

\$87.27 to the Community Academy as part of its Project Nest Watch, an after school program.

\$6,700 donation to the Friends of Ledges for the removal and cleanup of invasive plant species.

\$1,000 donation to the Story County Conservation Commission for the purchase of nesting boxes for American kestrels. The Donna Flanagan Memorial funds were used as part of this purchase. We are so grateful for the generosity of this family.

\$250.00 to Iowa Young Birders, to promote the interest in bird watching among youngsters.

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society had a very successful bird-a-thon fundraiser in May. A grand total of \$4,079.55 was raised. Thanks to all who contributed! Your generosity makes the philanthropy of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society possible.

5 teams competed. The team led by Wolf Oesterreich and Paul Domoto raised the most money. Eric Ollie and Matt Wetrich spotted the most birds. Eli Kenyon and his relatives fielded a team, as did Doug Harr, Karl Jungbluth and Mike Havlick. (See the article from Karl Jungbluth elsewhere in the newsletter.) And Nick Osness, Jon Bahrenfus and Joyce Bahrenfus competed as the Peregrines.

Again, a special thanks to those who fielded a team and to those who contributed!



Upland Sandpiper
Photo by Larry Dau



Grasshopper Sparrow
Photo by Larry Dau



Red-bellied Woodpecker in Boone
Photo by Doug Harr



Mississippi Kite at Ottumwa
Photo by Doug Harr

Scarves for Birds



Concerned about the plight of birds in today's rapidly changing world, BBAS member Pegi Bevins, a local handweaver and dyer, created Scarves for Birds, a project that combines her love of weaving with her love for birds. Each month, Pegi weaves a silky Tencel scarf in the colors of an endangered bird. The scarf is then displayed for the month and raffled off at Wild Birds Unlimited in Ames. At the end of the month, one lucky ticket holder receives a one-of-a-kind scarf for the cost of a \$5 raffle ticket. All proceeds from the raffle go to various organizations that are helping birds survive climate change, habitat loss, poaching, and more. With the local population in mind, Scarves for Birds is kicked off each year with a handwoven and hand dyed "Cy" scarf, just in time for football season! The 2024 Cy scarf is shown on display in the photo below, so be sure to visit Wild Birds Unlimited in August! Scarves for Birds is Pegi's way of making a difference in the world, one scarf at time.

BBAS Businesses

Please know that if you make a purchase at either Wild Birds Unlimited or Brekke's Town and Country Store, Inc. that these businesses will make a donation to Big Bluestem Audubon Society. Be sure to present the coupon when making the purchase. We thank these fine businesses for their generous support.

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.

Expires 12-31-2024

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www.ames.wbu.com

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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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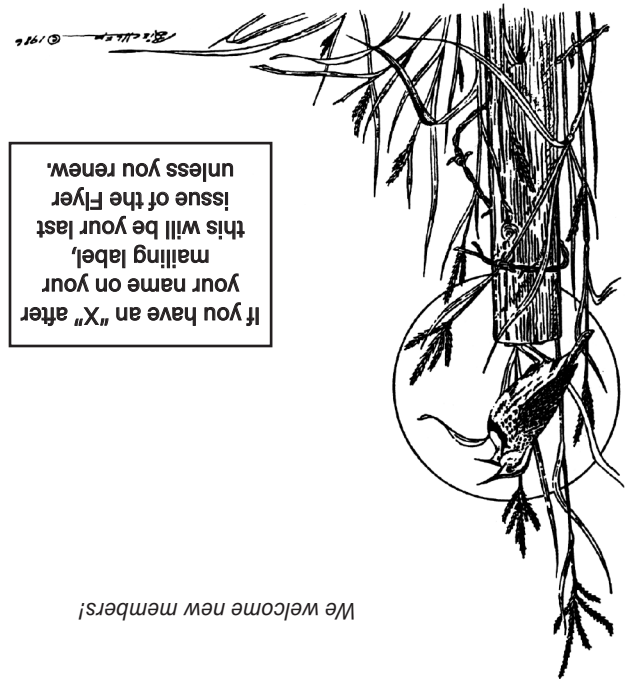


A gull was exploring this motorcycle at Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor, Maine.

Photo by Heather Sanders

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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<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>



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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

We welcome new members!

Big Bluestem Flyer
Heather Sanders, Interim President
Big Bluestem Audubon Society
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