



PROGRAMS

Dec 13, 2018 | Members' Night BBAS Christmas Party

Meeting will be held 6—9 PM at McFarland Park conservation center (56461 180th St., Ames, IA). Please bring a food item to share (cookies, candy, chips, crackers, meat, cheese, etc.) and either a bag of bird food to donate to Story County Conservation or a cash donation. Rent to use the center is waived for us, so we try to repay their generosity with bird food donations for their many feeders. Anyone wanting to share their photos of birds or nature in general (natural scenes only, please), load your pictures on a USB thumb drive, and bring it with you. But please, no more than 20 photos to avoid too long an evening when we must clean up and leave the center by 9 PM.

Jan 17, 2018 | Ty Smedes | Climate for Change

As we experience exploding expansion in human population and rapidly increasing pressure on maintaining habitat, the planet, and animal communities that make up our planet's ecosystems are under siege. Along with covering Iowa's natural history, outdoor writer/photographer Ty Smedes will share his adventures to the jungles of South America, the savannas of Africa and the high mountain stronghold of New Guinea's fabled Birds of Paradise. Ty's slide presentation and lecture will help us discover many spectacular species of wildlife and explore some of our planet's most wild places. He will discuss challenges faced by many of these creatures, highlight several local and global success stories, and consider the need for environmental sustainability during the 21st century.

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

January 5, 2019 | Ada Hayden Heritage Park

Meet at the southwest parking lot off Harrison Rd/Stone Brook Rd by 8:00 AM.

February 23, 2019 | Ledges State Park

Meet at the Oak Woods shelter by 8:00 AM.

March 30, 2018 | Saylorville Reservoir

Meet at the Saylorville visitor center by 8:00 AM.

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.

We will no longer be carpooling to the field trip. Those interested in attending a field trip should meet the group at the field trip destination at 8:00 AM, unless stated otherwise.

The field trip will usually last until around noon.

If you need a ride to the location, contact Eric Ollie at uphawkeye@gmail.com to see if a ride can be arranged. 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.

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
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER WITH ERIC OLLIE

Season's greetings to you all! Halloween has passed and just like the retail, advertising, and media industries that immediately skip straight over Thanksgiving right into Christmas, I will do the same. Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is nigh! Time to get the thermal underwear out of storage and sign up for your favorite BBAS CBC. Christmas Bird Count has been a yearly Audubon tradition for 118 years. At the time of its inception, there was a practice of having contests where the winner was the person who killed the most birds (any birds). Those offended by this practice decided to start a tradition of counting birds instead of killing them. 118 years later, the practice has spread around the country, continent, and even the world. CBC is great fun, easy to sign up for, and participation is open to birders of every skill and experience level. Just contact the person in charge of each CBC (the compiler), and that person will assign you a territory and team to count with. BBAS is very lucky to have four stellar counts to pick and choose from. They are:

1. **The Ames CBC** will be held on Saturday, December 15, with a registration deadline of December 7. Shane Patterson is the compiler for this count. You can reach him at shanepatterson@alumni.iastate.edu. The usual post-count compilation potluck will be at the City Church of Ames-Des Moines.
2. **The Saylorville CBC** will be held on Sunday, December 16. Contact Steve Dinsmore at cootjr@iastate.edu.
3. **The Carroll CBC** is the only weekday count. It will be on Wednesday, December 19, and you will need to contact Matt Wetrich at go_tweeting@hotmail.com.
4. **The Boone CBC** will be held on Saturday, December 29. Alex Kretzinger is the compiler, and you can contact him at alexkretzinger1@gmail.com.

Good birding!!!

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

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

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FIELD TRIP REPORTS BY ERIC OLLIE

September 8, 2018 | Robison Wildlife Acres 45 species - Canada Goose, Common Nighthawk, Turkey Vulture, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, American Goldfinch, Ovenbird, Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated-blue warbler, Pine Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting

October 13, 2018 | Jordan Family Wildlife Area 34 species - Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal

November 3, 2018 | West Peterson Park, Leopold Woods 26 species - Canada Goose, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Barred Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Northern Cardinal



Pine Warbler in rural Boone County this fall during migration
Photo by Larry Dau



Black-throated Green Warbler in rural Boone County this past September
Photo by Larry Dau



Cape May Warbler in Boone County taken this fall near Spark's Cemetery in Boone County | Photo by Larry Dau



Merlin in rural Boone County this fall
Photo by Doug Harr

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Christmas Bird Counts (See President's Corner for more info)

- Ames CBC | December 15
- Saylorville CBC | December 16
- Boone CBC | December 29

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.

SCIENTISTS FOUND A BIRD THAT'S 3 SPECIES IN ONE, AND WE'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT
 BY MICHELLE STARR | NOVEMBER 12, 2018 | REPRINTED FROM SCIENCEALERT.COM—NATURE

An unusual warbler in Pennsylvania has been discovered harbouring an incredible genetic secret. He's the hybrid of not two, but three different genetic species of birds. His mother was a hybrid of two warblers - and his father was a warbler of an entirely different third genus. "It's extremely rare," said ornithologist David Toews of Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

"The female is a Golden-winged/Blue-winged warbler hybrid - also called a Brewster's warbler. She then mated with a Chestnut-sided warbler and successfully reproduced." Bird hybrids aren't uncommon - after all, Brewster's warbler has been known since 1874, and it's well known that hybridization can lead to the development of new species. But generally, it's only two species. The fact that this one bird is a three-species hybrid is fascinating - but it also reveals something alarming about declining warbler numbers in Appalachia.

He was first spotted in May 2018, by bird-watcher Lowell Burket. After taking a video of the little fellow, Burkett noticed that he had colouration similar to both Golden-winged (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) and Blue-winged (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) warblers - but that his song was more like that of a Chestnut-sided warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica*). After spotting the strange bird several times, Burket reported his discovery on The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's birding website, eBird, and reached out to researchers. "I tried to make the email sound somewhat intellectual so they wouldn't think I was a crackpot," Burket said. "Within a week researcher David Toews came down. We found the bird again and collected a blood sample and measurements. It was a very interesting and exciting morning for us."



Boone County Red-eyed Vireo | Photo by Larry Dau

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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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Present this coupon with your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS.

Offer good until June 30, 2019

CONTINUED SCIENTISTS FOUND A BIRD THAT'S 3 SPECIES IN ONE, AND WE'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT

A few days later Burket got a text message from Towes, punctuated with several exclamation marks - it turned out the amateur bird-watcher had been correct in his observations. The researchers studied the genes that code for colouration, and used those to piece together what the mother bird would have looked like - arriving at a Brewster's warbler mum and a Chestnut-sided warbler dad.

It's the first time this hybrid combination has ever been seen. But it's also sobering. Some populations of Golden-winged warblers have declined dramatically across Appalachia. A new type of hybridisation event could indicate that there are not enough mates for everyone, so the birds are having to look to other species for reproductive options.

"That this hybridization occurred within a population of Golden-winged warblers in significant decline suggests that females may be making the best of a bad situation," Toews said. "It also tells us that wood-warblers in general have remained genetically compatible long after they evolved major differences in appearance."

We know that some bird hybrids remain fertile, and are able to reproduce - after all, the triple-hybrid's mum was a hybrid herself. At this time, though, it's not known whether the triple hybrid will be able to reproduce - or, even if he can, whether he looks too weird for female birds to choose him as a mate. It's definitely a situation that bears watching, though - not just for the individual bird, and the warblers of Appalachia, but for what it can tell us about avian hybridisation in general.

"This finding of 'hybrids hybridising' provides a novel avenue for the movement of genes between distantly related taxa not yet observed or described in birds," the researchers wrote in their paper. The discovery has been published in the journal *Biology Letters*.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet in town of Ogden, Boone County
Photo by Doug Harr



Wilson's Warbler this past Fall in Boone County
Photo by Larry Dau

30 YEARS AGO IN BBAS BY HANK ZALETTEL

The December Christmas party was held at the ISU Design Center and featured a "modest" number of member slides that were to "delight, brag or confuse." In January, the DNR's Pat Schlarbaum spoke on "Bird Shelter and Nest Boxes."

The Ames and Saylorville Christmas Counts were coordinated by Steve Dinsmore and Boone's Count by Mark Widrlechner. The Ames tally and potluck was held at Dave and Jeanne Edward's house.

With tax time approaching, members were reminded of the Chickadee Check-off and the successes of the program, which included the Barn Owl reintroduction program, Otter program, Bluebird Census, Breeding Bird Atlas, and the Winter Bird Feeder Survey.

NEW MEMBERS OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Ames

David Brenner
Jerry Dickinson
Hugo Franzen
Timothy Stewart

Kamrar

David Espinoza

Paton

Richard Burnell

Story City

Theresa Fisher

Webster City

Susan Hanken
Sharon Jewell
Carol Kress

Woodward

William Goodrich



Magnolia Warbler in rural Boone County taken this fall during migration
Photo by Larry Dau

NEWSLETTER Volume 54 | Number 1 | September/October 2018

<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

We welcome new members!

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