



PROGRAMS

September 19, 2019 | Paul Brooke | Pantanal Birds & Jaguars

Dr. Brooke will present on the Pantanal, its birds and jaguars. He coauthored "Panthera Onca: Jaguars of the Northern Pantanal," a book that examines the intricate lives of jaguars, from their courtship to their hunting. Brooke will show his own images as well as those of other professional photographers of jaguars killing prey, mating, fighting, etc. It will truly be a special night to see these unbelievable photographs and hear about Brooke's adventures.

October 17, 2019 | Matt Wetrich, Wolf Oesterreich, Eric Ollie Alaska: Fire and Ice

In July 2019, BBAS led a week-long birding and nature tour to the wilds of Alaska. Through snow-capped mountains, glacier-filled valleys, forests of spruce and aspen, marshes where the mountain streams met the ocean, and on the open ocean itself, many birds, mammals, insects, and wildflowers were found. Join us for a report of our adventures, told through our pictures and our tales.

November 21, 2019 | Mark Bowman, Mike Havlik | American Kestrel Conservation

There will be four topics regarding American Kestrels: 1) their biology, 2) Dallas County Conservation Board's conservation efforts, 3) the American Kestrel Partnership, and 4) the Genoscape Project ("Full Cycle Phenology"). Afterward, we will invite audience input about advancing conservation efforts for this species.

December 12, 2019 | Christmas Meeting

Details will be announced in the next newsletter. The Story County Conservation Center is not available this year.

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.

2	Officers and Committees; President's Corner; Membership Form
3	CyHawk Big Day
4	Proposed Bike Trails Stabs Through the Heart of Ledges State Park
7	Bird-A-Thon; 30 Years Ago In BBAS
8	New members

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

September 7, 2019 | Robison Wildlife Acres

(63050 632nd Ave, Nevada, IA)

Fall migration and warblers! 'Nuff said? We had 14 species of warblers, including a Pine, Bay-breasted, and Black-throated Blue Warbler here a year ago. Meet at the Robison parking lot by 8:00 AM.

September 22, 2019 | CyHawk Big Day

For the annual, friendly competition: 1) Form a team - at least two people; 2) Register team with Eric Ollie. 3) Go birding within the state of Iowa in the 24-hour period of the competition (9/22). 4) Report findings. We are the reigning trophy holders. Let's keep it!

October 19, 2019 | Loya's Little House B&B at Grandad's Farm

(56676 160th Street—nearly due East of Gilbert on South Skunk River)

Over the last 40 years, Denise and Dean Biechler have transformed their Ames farm and residence into an ideal habitat for viewing wildlife. Positioned on the banks of the South Skunk River, just north of Soper's Mill, it is an ideal place to search for migrating sparrows, finches, raptors, and other migrants and resident birds. Assemble at the main shelter and parking lot on the northeast corner of Ada Hayden Heritage Park at 8:00 AM to carpool to Grandad's farm and bird the trails until around 11:00 AM.

November 23, 2019 | Saylorville Reservoir Area

Meet at the Saylorville Lake Visitor Center by 8:00 AM. Waterfowl will hopefully be abundant. We will see what ducks, geese, swans, or even scooters we can find, along with many possible passerine species.

Monthly field trips are free and open to the public. Unless otherwise stated, field trips generally end between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM, depending on interest and success finding birds. Participants will meet at the field trip site unless an alternate meeting place is announced to facilitate carpooling. Field trips almost always involve some hiking away from hardened surfaces and often in less-than-ideal conditions. Come prepared with appropriate dress and footwear. It is highly recommended that all participants have their own binoculars. If you have any questions please contact Eric Ollie at uphawkeye@gmail.com.

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.
Boone, IA 50036
lgdau9@gmail.com



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OF CENTRAL IOWA**

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER WITH TIM GARNER

Dear Big Bluestem Audubon Society Members,

"I owe my life to my hobbies..." Franklin D. Roosevelt. FDR was referring to philately, as he was an avid stamp collector. But his words can apply to any hobby one might have. Birding is a rather young hobby for me. My late mother was a birdwatcher and cared for bluebird nesting boxes at the Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids for many years. For whatever reason, I didn't become interested in birding until I was in my 50s. But as anyone who has discovered a new hobby can attest, there is a special happiness in finding a new interest and sharing that interest with like-minded individuals.

I am relatively new to BBAS, but I quickly realized that this was an interesting club populated with friendly people, all of whom share a passion for birds in particular and for nature in general. That much said, my knowledge of birds is modest. My abilities to identify a bird by sight or song do not extend much beyond the cardinal, blue jay, robin, and nuthatch level.

Still, I share with you the love of birds—their beauty, amazing diversity, their ability to instill joy with their melodious songs—and wonder at their ability to fly-things that have inspired awe in people from time immemorial. So, thank you for being a member of BBAS. Please attend as many meetings as you are able.

Thanks, too, to the Big Bluestem officers and board members, for they have helped make my transition to president smooth. They have already provided invaluable assistance to me during my short tenure.

Finally, we are always looking for individuals who would like to present at our meetings. If you have a presentation that you would like to share or know someone who does, please reach out to me at timgarner@mediacombb.net.

Good birding to you all!

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

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CYHAWK BIG DAY: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 BY ERIC OLLIE

Once again we renew our friendly rivalry with our eastern Iowa friends. It will be Ames vs. Iowa City, Cyclones vs. Hawkeyes, BBAS vs. ICBC. Last year, after years of frustration, Big Bluestem finally wrested the Kent-Dinsmore Trophy away from Iowa City Bird Club for the first time! Please help us retain the trophy and turn our isolated victory into a streak. The rules are simple: form a team of at least two birders; register your team members with Eric Ollie (uphawkeye@gmail.com); and go birding for any length of time within the 24-hour period on Sunday, September 22.

For a bird to count toward your list it must be 1) living, 2) wild 3) free and able to come and go as it pleases, 4) seen within the borders of the state of Iowa, and 5) it must be positively identified (seen or heard) by at least two members of your team. After your birding day is done, email your full species list to Eric Ollie. I will compile the BBAS list and send our results to ICBC. The winner should, hopefully, be determined and announced within a week or so.

Any amount of time you can spend birding would be very helpful to the cause. You could easily find a bird that no one else found in a short amount of time. The more eyes and ears in the field covering more territory for BBAS the better! What do you say? Lets keep that trophy right here in Ames!



CyHawk trophies



Black and White Warbler at Namekagon Barrens in NW Wisconsin | Photo by Larry Dau



Blue Grosbeak at ISU Research Park in Ames | Photo by Eric Ollie



Golden-winged Warbler at Namekagon Barrens in NW Wisconsin | Photo by Larry Dau



Rare Heerman's Gull recently seen at Saylorville Lake in Polk County | Photo by Eric Ollie

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.

PROPOSED BIKE TRAIL STABS THROUGH THE HEART OF LEDGES STATE PARK BY KARL JUNGLBLUTH

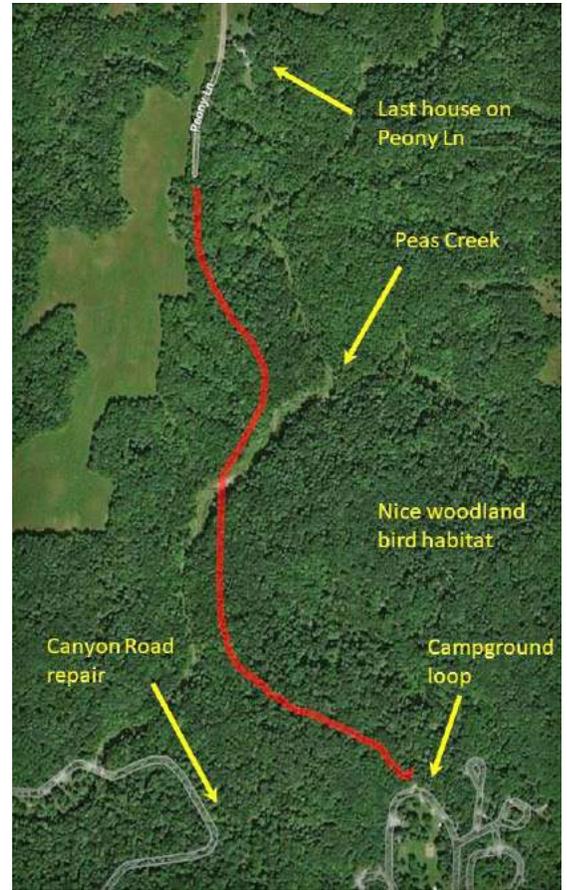
When central Iowans think of bird diversity and woodland wildflowers, Ledges State Park immediately comes to mind. As a neighbor to the park and a BBAS member for 25 years, I learned in July that the Boone County Trails Advisory Committee proposed building a multi-use bike trail through the undeveloped north portion of Ledges State Park. This is where the finest woodland birds live, mostly undisturbed. Now, the threat of forest fragmentation, construction, habitat destruction, and human disturbance loom over one of the best blocks of Iowa woodland (see map).

As an Audubon member, I'm a believer in preserving the best of our limited natural areas. Since hearing of the trail news, I have been talking and meeting with neighbors, other Audubon members, the DNR, and the Trails Advisory Committee to make sure the habitat is represented in this decision. The BBAS Board wrote a letter to stakeholders, and I hope you will add your voice while decisions can still be impacted.

First, some background. Since 2011, the Boone County Trails Advisory Committee has worked to develop a bike trail connecting the city of Boone to the popular High Trestle Trail near Madrid. Along the way, the route crosses valuable Des Moines River corridor habitats. The semi-governmental committee of roughly 10 people includes representatives from the Boone County Supervisors; the cities of Boone, Ogden, and Madrid; the Boone County Conservation Board; and several at-large members.

Between 2013 and 2015, a few public meetings were held. Since then, the Committee has worked away from public view, contracting with Snyder & Associates to contact landowners for trail access and define a [trail route](#) (see pages 3 and 13).

| Continued on page 5



Proposed trail route through Ledges State Park, south of Boone

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

Offer good until June 30, 2020

CONTINUED PROPOSED BIKE TRAIL STABS THROUGH THE HEART OF LEDGES STATE PARK

On July 12, the Committee posted a Facebook video inviting viewers to “take a ride” on a new trail heading south of the Boone Speedway, down Peony Lane, through the middle of Ledges State Park, and on to the Iowa Arboretum, the 4H Camp, Swede Point Park, and the High Trestle Trail. The video is not an actual trail, but it IS the Committee’s only current working option. The video was posted before most homeowners on Peony Lane received contact and without any public input. After several requests from residents, the video was removed from the Boone County Trails Initiative Facebook page, but it [can still be found](#).

The idea for the route was to follow portions of long-abandoned old roads, making it seem “doable” at first glance. At second glance, the route passes through a large block of high-quality woodland habitat, home to dozens of species of conservation concern, including some that are state endangered or threatened. It is clear that the selected route was not properly vetted by the Trails Committee, Snyder & Associates, or the DNR.

The significance of the park—as stated in the letter from the BBAS Board—is due to its beautiful forested, rugged terrain and incredible biological diversity. Diversity includes 779 documented plant species, according to “The Vascular Flora of Ledges State Park (Boone County, Iowa) Revisited: Revelations and Recommendations” by Thompson, Norris and Lewis (Source: Castanea, Vol. 74, No. 4 (Dec., 2009). Of the 779 species, populations of 13 plant species are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern by the Iowa DNR.

Of course, we know about the birds! According to Bruce Ehresman, 39 species of birds that nest or probably nest in the park are considered “species of greatest conservation need” according to the [Iowa Wildlife Action Plan](#). Another 28 species on the list have been documented in the park. The goal of the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan is “to conserve all wildlife in Iowa before they become rare and more costly to protect” and to “help us protect wildlife and the places they live for future generations.” Even thoughtful trail development goes against those goals.

The park is an Iowa Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA). One of the key birds in the IBA designation is the Red-shouldered Hawk, an Iowa Endangered Species. Other Ledges birds that are the focus of the IBA program include Long-eared Owl, Broad-winged Hawk, American Woodcock, Black-billed Cuckoo, Pileated Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler and Bobolink.

To improve the survival rates of declining bird species, the Iowa Audubon Recommended Woodland Management Practices include: avoiding further fragmentation or destruction of forest habitats, management of larger, non-linear blocks of habitat, decreasing edge, and consolidating and connecting blocks of forest habitat.

Clearly, cutting a new trail through Ledges State Park would go against ALL of these management principals. Trails dissecting habitat and causing an upsurge in human activity have been scientifically shown to negatively impact predators and prey alike. In late July, while hiking the proposed route, I came across an Acadian Flycatcher. Where would this bird go if a trail was cut through? I’ve only seen Acadian Flycatchers in one other location in the park.

Another concern is the steep, erodible terrain of the park, flash flood prone Peas Creek, and the destruction that trail, bridge, and drainage construction would cause. Several oak trees are already dying in the campground, where a new road was added last year. Impacts of the trail would be much wider than the trail bed itself. Planners talk about a concrete bridge at the creek. How does one get a concrete truck down 18% slopes without compacting tree roots and clearing more trees? Additionally, a trail would be in the same terrain where a mudslide on the Canyon Road cost taxpayers more than \$500,000 to repair.

| Continued on page 6



Acadian Flycatcher along the proposed trail route | Photo by Karl Jungbluth

CONTINUED PROPOSED BIKE TRAIL STABS THROUGH THE HEART OF LEDGES STATE PARK

Actions taken since July – The Trails Committee now knows people care about the bird and habitat diversity of Ledges State Park! The Peony Lane neighborhood has researched, raised questions and defended the park, the habitats, and the privacy of their own front yards. Several BBAS members have reached out to the DNR and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to voice concerns and provide background data.

In mid July, I joined Doug Harr and several of my neighbors at the Trails Committee regular meeting. It was the first meeting with public participation in years, and the Committee listened. Doug concisely presented why the park is important and why fragmenting the forest would be bad for several threatened species.

As a result of the above actions, on July 31, a number of DNR park personnel, biologists, and department managers hiked the proposed route with trail designers Snyder & Associates. It is reported that DNR personnel voiced concerns and that the DNR might be stepping back from its initial support of the trail. The DNR has yet to officially say “No trail.” As of the latest August 15 Trails Committee meeting, the Committee has yet to say no to a trail through the Ledges either. They appear to be waiting on a decision from the DNR.

What you can do – Please take a few minutes and send a note to the director of the DNR. Voice your support for protection of the natural resources in our state parks, those special blocks of bird and habitat diversity, and specifically oppose cutting up Ledges State Park with a bike trail.

Kayla Lyon, Director Iowa DNR
Wallace State Office Building
502 East 9th Street, 4th Floor
Des Moines, IA 50319-0034

Thank you to everyone who has assisted with this effort.



Red-eyed vireo late summer in Boone County | Photo by Larry Dau



Warbling vireo recently seen in Boone County | Photo by Larry Dau

BIRD-A-THON 2019 RESULTS

Bird-A-Thon's five teams found a total of 183 species. Team Felted Kingfishers won with 146 species. The teams this year and their favorite birds seen:

Quick Three Beers: Karl Jungbluth, Doug Harr, Mark Widrlechner - Scarlet Tanager, Golden-winged Warbler and Green Heron

Felted Kingfishers: Eric Ollie, Matt Wetrich, Jeremy Carter - Black-crowned Night-Heron, Prothonotary Warbler, Great Horned Owl

The Worm Eaters: Nick Osness, Joyce and John Bahrenfus - Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Henslow's Sparrow

Pishing In The Wind: Wolf Oesterreich, Paul Domoto - Common Loon, American Bittern, Black-throated Green Warbler

Baffled Birders Baffled Birders: Bruce and Marlene Ehrsmann, Kelly Poole, Gina McAndrews, Joseph McGovern - Magnolia Warbler, Virginia Rail, Gray-cheeked Thrush

Bird-A-Thon is the main fundraising event for BBAS. In 2019, \$2689.05 was raised, with the possibility of some donations still coming in. Thank you to all who participated and donated.



Adult and young Trumpeter Swans at Snake Creek in Greene County this past summer | Photo by Larry Dau



Male Wood Duck at Swan Lake State Park in Carroll County last Spring | Photo by Larry Dau

30 YEARS AGO IN BBAS BY HANK ZALETEL

Officers for the 1989-1990 year were Mike Meetz, president; Sherry Dragula, vice president; Kay Niyo, secretary; Mark Widrlechner, treasurer; Steve Dinsmore, Andy Fixx, Barbara Heikens, John Richard and Tom Rosburg, board members; Dave Edwards, newsletter editor.

Programs were held in Room 181 in the ISU Design Center. In September, Steve Lekwa, SCCB, spoke on Roadside Management Prairie Projects. October featured Pat Schlarbaum on Peregrine Falcon Projects and Steve Fettig on Isle Royale National Park. Bolivia: Savannah Geology and Botany was presented by Tim Killeen in November.

September field trips visited Doolittle Prairie and SW Hardin County prairies, hawkwatching at Luther Bridge in October and Squaw Creek NWR and Saylorville in November.

NEW MEMBERS OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Ames

Judith Blair, James Esterly, Hunter Hamilton,
Bruce Harmon, Steve Terrill, Daryl Thomason,
Gregory West, Jane Zaring

Boone

Andrew Bartlett, William Beardmore,
Mike Conyers, Robert Northern

Gilbert

Michael Bird

Grand Junction

William Radebaugh

Jewell

Clyde Cole

Madrid

Marian Houseman, Marnie Schellinger

Norwalk

Conrad Lawler

Perry

Pam Hagen, Fredi Juri

Bishopville, MD

Donald Roessler



Very rare Yellow-billed Loon seen behind a Common Loon at Brushy Creek Lake in Webster County | Photo by Eric Ollie

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<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>



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