



## Meet the 2024-2025 Board



These are your Big Bluestem leaders:

Front row: Hank Zaletel, Ex-Officio / Archivist;  
Doug Harr, Vice President;  
Heather Sanders, Treasurer / Membership

Middle row: Janet Gebler, Board member;  
Charli Hanway, Secretary;  
Tim Garner, President / Newsletter Editor;  
Eli Kenyon, Board member / Field Trip Coordinator

Back row: Kristi Harkins, Board member

### 2025-2026 Big Bluestem Audubon Society Programs

All programs are held at the  
Ames Public Library (515 Douglas Ave.)  
Business Meetings: 6:30pm • Programs: 7:00pm

#### 2025 Programs

- Sept. 18th:** **Laura Beskow and Lorna Carroll**  
*Topic: Lights Out Ames!*  
*The Impact of Light Pollution on Birds and Pollinators*
- Oct. 16th:** **Lindsey Page, Polk County Conservation Commission**  
*Topic: Grassland Birds*
- Nov. 20th:** **Teresa Testroet**  
*Topic: The Big Year: Hummingbird Nests*  
*at McFarland Park*
- Dec. 18th:** **BBAS Christmas Party, Ames Public Library Auditorium**

#### 2026 Programs

- Jan. 15th:** **Carl Kurtz**  
*Topic: Bird Habitat*
- Feb. 19th:** **Adam Janke, Iowa State University professor**  
*Topic: Forest Management for Birds*
- Mar. 19th:** **Lindsey Page, Polk County Conservation Commission**  
*Topic: Birds of Early Spring*
- Apr. 16th:** **Doug Harr, BBAS Vice President**  
*Topic: The Wildlife of Sax Zim Bog*
- May 21st:** **Joan Van Gorp**  
*Topic: The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge*
- June 18th:** **Big Bluestem Audubon Society**  
*Picnic and birdwatching event. Location TBA*

## Good bye ! submitted by Heather Sanders

Although Eli Kenyon was only a BBAS member for 1 1/2 year, he made a huge impact on many of our members. As a board member, field trip coordinator, and friend, Eli's strong knowledge of birds helped dozens of our members feel more confident about identifying various avian species.

Eli has offered several local field trips throughout the year, walking around lakes, fields, and parks, so everyone would enjoy finding species they had not seen before. Sometimes he would take people on trips individually because he was enthused at what he could introduce them to (for instance, in February he took President Tim Garner & me up to Hamilton County so the 3 of us could look for owls).



In July, Eli unfortunately left us, moving to the state of Virginia, so he could take on a new role with the US Dept of Agriculture.

We will miss seeing Eli at our meetings and on weekends during the bird walks, but we know that he is still doing his part to contribute to the field of conservation. This photo features Eli with Secretary Charli Hanway as the board said goodbye to him at the June board meeting.

If you are interested in being the field trip coordinator, or even leading a birdwalk trip every so often, please let Tim Garner know.

### 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](mailto:timgarner@mediacombb.net)



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Ex-Officio

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weatherbird58@gmail.com

**Website designer** | Ann Johnson

Last Year Summary:

- Since last fall, here are our accomplishments:
- Donated \$3,000 to Story County Water & Land Legacy Fund
  - Purchased children's bird books for Raising Readers of Story County
  - Participated in Monarch Magic program at McFarland park
  - Donated \$3,000 to Story County Conservation to plant native grass seed & prairie restoration
  - Donated \$5,000 to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for the purchase of Brenton Slough
  - Organized Trivia Night in March which earned \$826.16 towards conservation efforts
  - Donation of \$1,500 to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for Jewell to Little Wall Lake trail
  - Collected \$4,572.20 for Birdathon fundraiser
  - Participated in the Iowa Bird Festival at Wild Birds Unlimited
  - Donated \$300 to American Bird Conservancy
  - Donated \$300 to Institute for Bird Populations
  - Participated in outreach at two Ames Farmer's Markets
  - Planned ways to use social media to gain exposure as a club
  - Attended many organized bird walks as a club

End to the Local Membership Only Option - an Explanation

In April of 2025 the Big Bluestem Audubon Society executive board voted to end the option of allowing people to join only the Big Bluestem Audubon Society. Going forward when someone joins the National Audubon Society that individual will be automatically enrolled in the Big Bluestem Audubon Society. But individuals will not be able to join only the Big Bluestem Audubon Society.

There were several reasons for this decision. First and foremost the local chapter only option didn't get you anything for your money. All of the BBAS activities-attending meetings, birding outings, access to the newsletter, etc. are offered free of charge to the public. And there was no desire on the part of the executive board to start charging for any of these things either.

Secondly, the fee for joining only the Big Bluestem Audubon Society was \$10; the fee for joining the National Audubon Society is only \$20. The executive board did not feel that the extra \$10 was a substantial financial burden. And when one joins the National Audubon Society one at least receives the quarterly magazine, which is wonderful, in my opinion.

Finally, keeping 2 sets of membership books, one for those who belong only to the local chapter and one for those who belong to both the local and national organizations is a bookkeeping nightmare. Local membership expiration notices would have to be sent out when due, which can occur at any time during the calendar year. Reminders have to be sent when someone doesn't respond. This work compounds monthly. The payoff simply isn't worth the effort.

For all of these reasons, the local only membership option was discontinued.

Membership Application



New member of the National Audubon Society. \$20.00  
Included in the introductory membership fee:

- subscription to the *Audubon* magazine, published by the National Audubon Society
- subscription to the *Big Bluestem Flyer*
- participation in Big Bluestem Audubon field trips
- attendance at monthly meetings and presentations

Please make your check payable to:  
**National Audubon Society**, (include "Chapter Code H-57" on your check)

Mail membership check to:  
Big Bluestem Audubon Society, PO Box 543, Ames, IA 50010

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_

State\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

e-Mail\_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Big Bluestem Audubon Society?\_\_\_\_\_

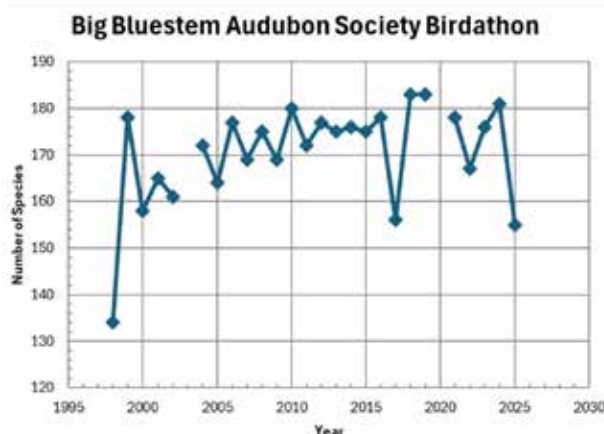
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## The 2025 Birdathon

occurred on Saturday, May 10 and was a HUGE success. Thanks so much to the 4 teams who participated and collected money from sponsors for this fundraiser. Also, many thanks to the sponsors (many who have given generously for several years) for their kind contributions. This year, a total of \$4,572.20 was made for our club. The money earned is used for donations to conservation programs for projects, in addition to general expenditures to keep the club functioning.

Information submitted by Heather Sanders, BBAS treasurer

To the right is a list of the Years Total. Year 2003 is missing (no one can remember the total) and 2020 was cancelled due to Covid. The average over all the years is 170.5.



Information submitted by Wolf Oesterreich



A White-crowned Sparrow on its way to Canada.

## Team Quick Three Beers Birdathon Report

- 117 Species

Doug Harr, Karl Jungbluth, Mike Havlik, Mark Widrlechner - May 10, 2025

Submitted by Karl Jungbluth

It was a glorious May day, especially for graduation parties and farmers planting corn. It was a bit warm for a Birdathon, topping out at 86 degrees with wall-to-wall sunshine. Wow. The "blocked" weather pattern held warbler migration to a trickle and produced dry weather, which dried up our shorebird habitat. So, our final count was lower than most years, but as in every year, we had a unique and enjoyable time!

Doug started out hearing a Whip-poor-will on the Des Moines River bridge on E-57. By the time we met up at the Ledges State Park boat ramp, Barred Owls were calling in all directions and soon after we could hear the morning chorus with Orchard Orioles, Warbling Vireos and Eastern Kingbirds in the trees along the river.

We focused next on the Ledges Canyon Road and the Oak Woods Picnic Area. It was quickly apparent that the resident birds were happy, with lots of Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, but the migrant warblers were few and far between. The Louisiana Waterthrush was singing loudly along the creek. At Inspiration Point we encountered both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers. Bright red, singing-I'd call that inspirational!

At Lost Lake, we saw lots of American Redstarts and Gray Catbirds, and heard our first Red-eyed Vireos of the year. We escaped just as a troop of Boy Scouts was lining up to invade the forest. Off to quieter places, like Bjorboda Marsh. At the marsh, we saw and heard Bobolinks and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and a lone Sandhill Crane was probing in the grass! Canada Geese were lounging in the road (and elsewhere). They objected loudly when we approached. Eastern Kingbirds seemed to be on every fence, but our tally of species was still shy of 100 at lunch. We decided to head to some wetlands in Story County to try to add to the total. Hendrickson Marsh provided that boost, where we also met up with Mark Widrlechner for awhile, and shared bird information with a friendly Marshall County birder and another of the four Birdathon teams. We added Gadwall, Hooded Mergansers, and a sleeping Western Grebe, but the views were far off in the distance. On a tip, we located a Bell's Vireo singing in a dense cluster of shrubs.

We slowly worked our way back toward Boone on the back roads, methodically adding 10 more birds over the late afternoon. A wooded hike at Robeson Acres in Story County was a nice break from the open farm country. We added Black-and-White Warbler, and Red-headed Woodpeckers were flashing white in the dappled sunshine. Slowly we found Lark Sparrows and Horned Larks at the edges of farm fields, and a Sedge Wren in a private prairie planting.

Our final bird of the day was a Least Sandpiper, taking advantage of some mud in stormwater retention pond on the west side of Ames. Birds make use of every habitat they can find!

Thanks for being a sponsor again this year and helping out the birds!



Doug and Mike hike right below a Scarlet Tanager.



## BBAS Outreach *Photo by Janet Gebler*

In order to inform the public about Big Bluestem's mission, we participated in the Ames Farmer's Market twice this summer. On June 7 Carson Noble and Janet Gebler interacted with over 85 people at the Ames Farmers Market Booth. As Janet said, "This was good publicity for BBAS."



On July 19, Tyler Morrison, Carson Noble, & Laura Beskow didn't let the rain stop them from participating

## Iowa Bird Festival

*Submitted by Todd Burras, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited, Ames, Iowa*

In celebration of World Migratory Bird Day on May 10, Wild Birds Unlimited, with support from Big Bluestem Audubon and several other partners, hosted the first Iowa Bird Festival at its store and in various parks around the city of Ames. More than 100 people participated in bird walks that included a sunrise warbler walk at River Valley Park, followed by walks at Brookside Park, the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor and Ioway Creek, and culminated with a stroll through downtown Ames to count chimney swifts going to roost at the Octagon Center for the Arts.

A series of programs included talks on migration (WBU Davenport store manager Isaac Caron), raptors (wildlife expert Jim Pease with a live barred owl) and planting for pollinators (honeybees and ponds expert Jamie Beyer). Educational booths were staffed by Big Bluestem Audubon, the Iowa Wildlife Center, Iowa Young Birders, Boone County Conservation, Story County Conservation, Lights Out Ames, Bird-Friendly Ames, "Our Iowa" magazine, the Ames Community Academy and the City of Ames.

World Migratory Bird Day was created in 1993 by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and is officially celebrated in the Western Hemisphere on the second Saturday of May in the United States and Canada, and on the second Saturday of October in Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. It has been coordinated by Environment for the Americas since 2007. Wild Birds Unlimited plans to recognize the fall migration with a bird walk and in-store program Saturday, Oct. 11, at 1311 Buckeye Ave., in Ames.



### 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](mailto:timgarner@mediacombb.net)). We are also looking for short content items and announcements.

### 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.*

## President Jimmy Carter was a birder?

By Doug Harr

Last January, former President Jimmy Carter passed away at age 100, oldest former U.S. president. Although serving only from 1977 to 1980, he did much to help preserve our nation's natural habitats and wildlife, especially by adding eleven national parks (eight in Alaska), new national forest lands, and national wildlife refuges. He was also the first president to push for development of renewable energy and talking about his concerns for climate change. Older Americans might recall what he did, but many may not know that he was also an avid birder. Throughout his life, Carter birded all seven continents and in 1994 was awarded by Audubon for his work in conservation that protects birds. From 1989 to 1996, Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosaline also conducted North American Breeding Bird Surveys near Plaines, Georgia, where they lived. A newsletter sent to all BBS volunteers nationwide told a humorous story about this. While the Carters stopped every half mile to count all birds seen and heard for three minutes, a passing person wondered why black cars kept parking behind them as they counted. Then it was learned that those were Secret Servant agents following the Carters, something always done to protect all our past presidents.

Iowa Audubon Newsletter  
April 2025  
Volume 22 Number 1

# Birdwalk on the Young property

Submitted by Heather Sanders, Photos by Charli Hanway

On Saturday, June 14, BBAS members were invited to the Young family's property in north Ames to enjoy some birding in their field, followed by a breakfast with different types of breads. Elliot Young has been attending the monthly BBAS meetings since he was a 5th grader, and currently he is the youngest member we have ever had in the club. It is a delight to see how devoted and knowledgeable Elliot is with bird identification and the care that he has for wild birds on his property. He is usually accompanied to these meetings by either a parent or grandparent. The family was gracious to invite club members out to their property for this fun birding event.



## The Young Family

Here are two comments from participants about this event.

*"It went really well! We had all ten people, and found a few cool birds like the Dickcissel and the Red-headed woodpecker. We had a ton of fun!"*

Elliot Young

*"It was a treat to tour the Young & Young's diverse property, and see how Elliot and his family explore it and share it with others. The homemade snacks were the best ever!"* Karl Jungbluth



Iowa Department of Natural Resources,  
Wildlife Diversity News

January 29, 2025,

2024 Nesting Report for Osprey

Summary of 2020-2024

Osprey nesting results.

In 2024, 23.1% of monitored active nests had an unknown outcome (i.e. we do not know if the nest successfully fledged young or failed). This rate is lower than last year (36.4% unknown outcome nests in 2023). We thank our volunteers for helping to improve reporting and we will continue to work with monitors to reduce the percentage of unknown outcome nests in future years. More complete reporting improves the certainty of our trend data for this species. Based on available data, 64.1% of monitored active nests were successful (25 nests) and a minimum total of 47 young were fledged. This is a notable increase from last year where 48.5% of monitored active nests were successful (16 nests) and a minimum total of 26 young were fledged. An average of 1.57 young were produced per known- outcome active nest, the third highest fledge rate since 2016. The Spirit Lake area continues to see fluctuations in the number of active nests. In 2018, there were a record 5 active nests, which decreased to only 1 active nest in 2023 but this year saw an increase to 3 active nests recorded in the area. Additional years of nesting data and additional nest searching will help us better understand the stability of this segment of the population.

## Attendance for 2024-2025 year

These numbers only represent individuals that signed the attendance sheet, including both members and visitors. To make sure we have an accurate number of attendees, please make sure you sign the sheet at each meeting, even if walk in late.

September - 26, October - 24,

November - 17, December - 22,

January - 26, February - 14,

March - 23, April - 15, May - 24

## Are you looking for something fun to do that involves nature?

Check out these local county conservation web sites to see what's going on in your area:

Boone County: <https://www.boonecounty.iowa.gov/conservation/upcomingevents/>

Dallas County: <https://www.dallascountyiowa.gov/501/Conservation>

Hamilton County / ISU Extension & Outreach: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/hamilton/events>

Marshall County: <https://www.marshallcountyia.gov/calendar.aspx?CID=22>

Polk County: <https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/events/>

Story County: <https://www.storycountyiowa.gov/calendar.aspx?CID=41#changeDateMonthDropDown>



# Summer Adventures

"I've always wanted to see albatross when they come to be on land once a year. I was at the **Galapagos Islands** the first week of June when the Wave Albatross were breeding. This mother is sitting on the one egg the parents produce per year."

Julie Curry



**Greg Courtney** began his summer travels with Steve Dinsmore from June 1-6, where they went on a six-day trip to Montana. Their adventures involved birding and photography, with the main goal of tagging Mountain Plover. After coming home for a few days he returned to Montana in addition to Oregon for another 2 1/2 weeks (June 12-29). The main objective of this trip was to teach a short workshop on aquatic insects at French Conservation Camp, ISU's field station in western Montana, and to collect aquatic flies in both states for a collective research project with Yale University. On this trip he tried to fit in some birding. He traveled to Malta, Montana where he visited Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge and the Little Rocky Mountains. He also went to southeast Oregon, where he visited Malheur National Forest and Great Salt Lake, Utah, where he enjoyed Antelope Island and Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. The following captions and photos are from his second trip up north.



"Marbled Godwit are one of several shorebirds that nest in open grasslands, often quite distant from the wetlands where they feed. This individual was part of a pair that seemed quite upset by my presence on the loop road at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Montana. I have to assume there was a nest nearby."

14 June, 2025

Western Tanagers are among the most colorful and vocal songbirds in western forests during the summer. This male was one of several photographed in the Little Rocky Mountains of central Montana."



19 June, 2025

"Black-throated Gray Warbler had been on my "target" list for a couple years. Although I heard them a few times, I had never actually seen one. Consequently, I was thrilled to spot (and photograph!) this male while birding at Finley National Wildlife Refuge in western Oregon."

"In May, I spent 10 days in **Papua New Guinea** (at a location in the highlands) with some German friends. Following several failed attempts at flight shots, this male Ribbon-tailed Astrapia (a Bird of Paradise) finally dropped to a branch and flew across and in front of me. His tail was well over 3ft in length, and I'm guessing it to be close to 4ft. I loved Papua New Guinea with its friendly peopled incredible bird life! But you have to take great care, due to persistent crime. I will eventually put together a presentation for one of our meetings, as time allows."



"I then spent a week with Australian friends in Queensland, and found more great birds and mammals. Here, a dominate male Victoria's Riflebird began displaying when a female came in, closely followed by a couple of juvenile males. He had to show the youngsters who's boss!"



Ty Smedes





21 June, 2025

"While driving along the main road to Malheur Field Station in southeast Oregon, I saw a couple Black-necked Stilt in a roadside ditch. On slowing down to take a photo, I couldn't help notice a nest with 3 newly hatched chicks. The most precocious of these (pictured) had ventured down into the water."

25 June, 2025

"White-headed Woodpecker was an unexpected "lifer" on my June trip to the Pacific Northwest. Most of my birding focused on wetlands, grasslands, and mesic forests rather than the dry forests that harbor this species. If not for a side-trip to a mixed Lodgepole Pine / Ponderosa Pine stand in Malheur National Forest, Oregon, I probably would have never seen one of these." "Antelope Island, on the northeast side of Great Salt Lake, Utah, is one of my favorite birding spots in the west. It is not only an amazing place to see waterbirds, but has a healthy population of Burrowing Owls. This was one of 30 seen the morning I visited the island."



27 June, 2025

"Great Salt Lake, Utah, is one of the most important stop-overs for birds in the Great Basin. Its significance is due in large part to the abundance of shore / brine flies (Ephydriidae), which can number into the billions in the lake. These flies are a critical food resource for thousands of birds, including several species of gull. This California Gull was one of many running along the shoreline with mouth agape, hoping to catch a shore-fly breakfast"



## In Memoriam

It is with sadness that we note the death of member

*Cornelia Flora*

We offer our condolences to Cornelia's friends and family.



**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 12-31-2025**

213 Duff Ave. Ames, IA 50010 (515) 956-3145  
Monday-Friday 9:30-5:30 Saturday 9-5 Sunday 12-4  
www.ames.wbu.com

**BIRDSEED • FEEDERS • BIRDBATHS • OPTICS • NATURE GIFTS**

### Brekke's Town & Country Store, Inc.

1 1/2 miles east of I-35 on new U.S. 30 and 1/4 mile north

Hours: 8-6 M-F, 8-4 Sat. (515) 232-7906

<u>Purchase</u>		<u>Donation</u>
Up to \$15	\$	1.50
\$15 and over	\$	3.00
\$35 and over	\$	5.00
Over \$70	\$	7.50

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

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

**Expires 12-31-2025**

### 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.

NEW MEMBERS  
OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY



Who's New?

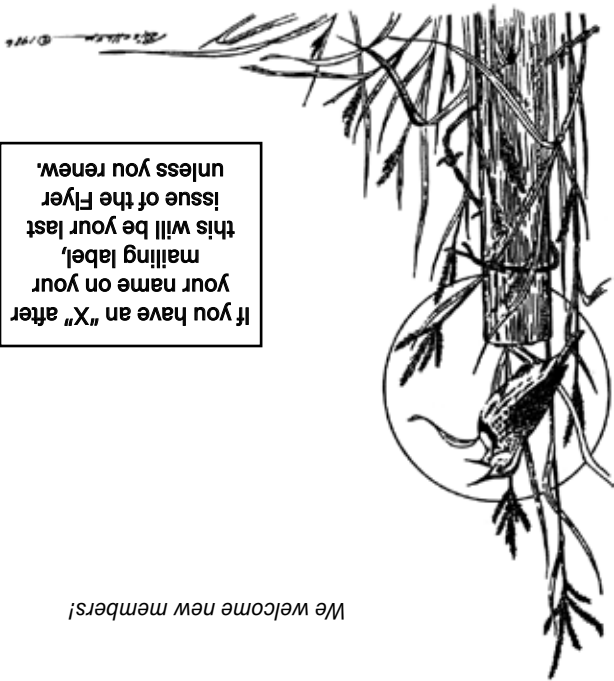
*Big Bluestem Audubon Society would like to welcome these new members:*

Wade Ditty - Joined 4/9/25, Mary Elver - Joined 4/15/25, Carolyn Wight - Joined 4/18/25, James Twedt - Joined 5/6/25  
Daphne Reyes - Joined 5/8/25, Cathie Padgett - Joined 5/21/25, Carson Noble - Joined 5/23/25, Leo Milleman - Joined 6/2/25  
Kathryn Kramer - Joined 6/5/25, Kristin Gerhard - Joined 6/11/25, Dale Barrie - Joined 6/13/25, Ginny Shenk - Joined 6/20/25  
Diane Furry-Stiles - Joined 6/23/25, Mariele Wagle - Joined 6/26/25, Doug Fairchild - Joined 7/7/25, June Botto - Joined 7/11/25  
Patricia Strah - Joined 7/14/25, Letitia Simons - Joined 7/14/25, Ariane Schmidt - Joined 7/18/25, Lori White - Joined 7/21/25  
Laura Shanks - Joined 7/23/25, Steven & Brenda Golay - Joined 7/23/25

We are so glad you are a part of our organization!

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.

NEWSLETTER Volume 61 | Number 1 | Sept/Oct/Nov/Dec 2025



Big Bluestem Flyer  
Tim Garner, president  
Big Bluestem Audubon Society  
PO Box 543  
Ames, IA 50010-0543

We welcome new members!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



# Make Way for Ducklings: A Rescue Story

*Submitted by Heather Sanders*

On Saturday, June 14, nine little ducklings were having a happy time living in the courtyard at Ankeny Centennial High School. Born just a few hours ago, they were out there with their mother who did not let them out of her site (she flew in there to lay them in a quiet place under a bush).

At 6:00 am while Tim Garner had stopped in to school briefly, he walked by the courtyard and saw that the mama duck was sitting near all of her babies. He wanted to release them so they could find the nearby pond for food and water. He had to find a way to open the school door, let the ducks walk through the building, then open the second door to release them outside. But this would take a second person to coordinate efforts to get them out. So he called me at 6:15 am to see if I would come over to help him open the doors as he shooed them out. We both had an early morning commitment so could not go in until at least 2:00 pm.

When we both got to the school, I arrived to the courtyard first but did not see the babies anywhere. I could hear a very frantic call from the mother who was searching for these babies. I walked out there and could hear many very high-pitched screechy calls back, although I did not see them anywhere. I turned around as Tim arrived and said that I thought they had all fallen about 8 feet into the storm sewer. While mama was searching for them, they were also responding back to her underground. Tim and I had no idea how we would get these ducklings out because the storm sewer lid was sealed into the cement. Apparently what we think happened was that as the mother lead them across the pavement, they maybe sensed a water source, so walked right over the storm sewer and dropped through. The openings were only a couple of inches across, which was just enough space for them to fall through.

I asked Tim if the custodian could come in on the weekend to help pry the lid off and rescue them. So he called Cody Cameron, Centennial's custodian, who got a crowbar, hammer, chisel, rope, board, and large bucket. Cody had to break some of the cement by pounding the hammer against the chisel, breaking the seal, then using the board and crowbar to pry the lid from the cement. That was the easy part. Now, we had to make sure we got all 9 ducks into a bucket to lift them out which took most of the time.

Cody tied a large bucket to his rope, then slowly lowered it underground to the ducks. There was a large pipe underground that the ducks kept escaping to when they saw the bucket move, so making sure he was stable (not to scare them away) was very tedious. Cody sat there very still holding the bucket at an angle and every time a duckling got close to the pipe edge, the duck would jump in towards the water, sometimes landing in the bucket. If the duck landed in the bucket, Cody slowly pulled it upwards to release the baby which jumped out and ran to its mother.

Imagine going through this process eight more times. Sometimes it took multiple tries, because as he was lifting the duckling, it got scared and jumped back into the water, going back into the pipe for a while. Once all nine ducklings were out of the storm sewer, we had to make sure there were none left in there before closing up the lid again. We wanted to search for the eggs to see about how many babies we expected to get. Lifting up branches of the bush where they were laid, we saw the nest. We were very happy that all nine of the hatchlings had made it out from the storm sewer safely. They all had found their mom to run to and they all huddled in the grass.

Now was another challenging part... pushing them from the grassy area towards the door to go inside the school. Every time that Tim and Cody would take their feet and motion for them to go inside, the ducks would turn the other direction. I was standing at the outer door ready to release them, but I was having the time of my life watching both of these men trying to work together to get ten ducks out the door. I couldn't stop laughing.

Within a few minutes, I saw all ten make their way through the first door, waddle in single file past me through the school's hallways, and go right out the second door. I grabbed my phone to take video shots of it and we all were excited to see them heading to their new home. The next thing they did was march down the sidewalk and right out to the pond near the school's edge.

The pictures show Cody and Tim working to get these ducks home.



*Mom is calling for her babies.*



*Scooping the duckling up with a bucket.*



*Siblings watch as one is taken away.*



*The first one runs off towards mom.*



*Three saved so far.*



*Seven bonding ducklings seem to know where to run to.*



*Cody tried to lead them inside.*



*Tim decides to give it a try.*



*They march through the school hallways.*



*And away they go to their new home.*



*Cody Cameron*



*Tim Garner*



*Heather Sanders*

## Procreation & Death in my Back Yard

### By Ty Smedes

This spring, a pair of Eastern Bluebirds set up housekeeping in a nest box located between our back porch and the treed ravine behind our house. I needed to test some new photography equipment, so I decided to use the pair as test subjects. The female lays an egg each morning, until a full clutch of perhaps five eggs has been accumulated - and she already had two eggs. From a photo blind, I watched her fly away from the nest box at 9:00 am one morning, and having likely spotted an insect, I saw her land amongst the foliage in the ravine. I knew her watchful mate would soon join her, as usual. But something else briefly caught my attention, and when I returned my gaze to the ravine, a hawk flew into the back of the large white oak near where I had last seen the female bluebird. I quickly trained my lens on the raptor, thinking it was probably a Cooper's Hawk, but could only see a head and breast behind thick foliage. But I was surprised to learn it was a Broad-winged Hawk. In a few moments, the hawk flew to a limb on the backside of the same tree. While in flight, it was apparent a small animal was clutched in one foot. Upon landing a second time, I could see most of the hawk, including the prey animal it held in its grasp. My heart sank! It was a bluebird. My first thought was that it had picked off the female when she was occupied with the insect she had just caught. But I also knew the male would have flown in to join her when she left the nest. Which one was it?! I zoomed in for a closer look and could see the bluebird's namesake blue tail. But, knowing both the male and female have blue tails, I couldn't tell the shade of blue, and if it was male or female, due to the angle and poor lighting. Interestingly, the hawk did not attempt to eat its prey at either sitting, and soon left our yard. I wondered if it was taking the meal to its mate, perhaps waiting at a nest somewhere close by? Later that afternoon I learned which bird had been predated when I spied the female peeking from the nest box, looking for the mate that would never appear. She initially maintained loyalty to the nest when the next morning I found she had laid a third egg. The Broad-winged Hawk was a new yard bird, but it was small consolation for the potential loss of the bluebird brood. At this writing, I can only speculate whether she will incubate, hatch, and raise a brood by herself. Stay tuned...

From Des Audubon Newsletter

## Feathered Facts

Submitted by Heather Sanders, information taken from "Bird Brain Teasers" by Patrick Merrill

Archaeopteryx have dated back 150 million years, known as the oldest species of bird. They have reptile features which includes teeth, a tail with vertebrae, wings with clawed fingers, and feathers. These features are unique to modern-day birds.

The first "true birds" evolved about 50 million years later such as the ichthyornis which is a small flier that resembles a tern, and hesperornis, a flightless, loonlike diver which is the size of a small seal.

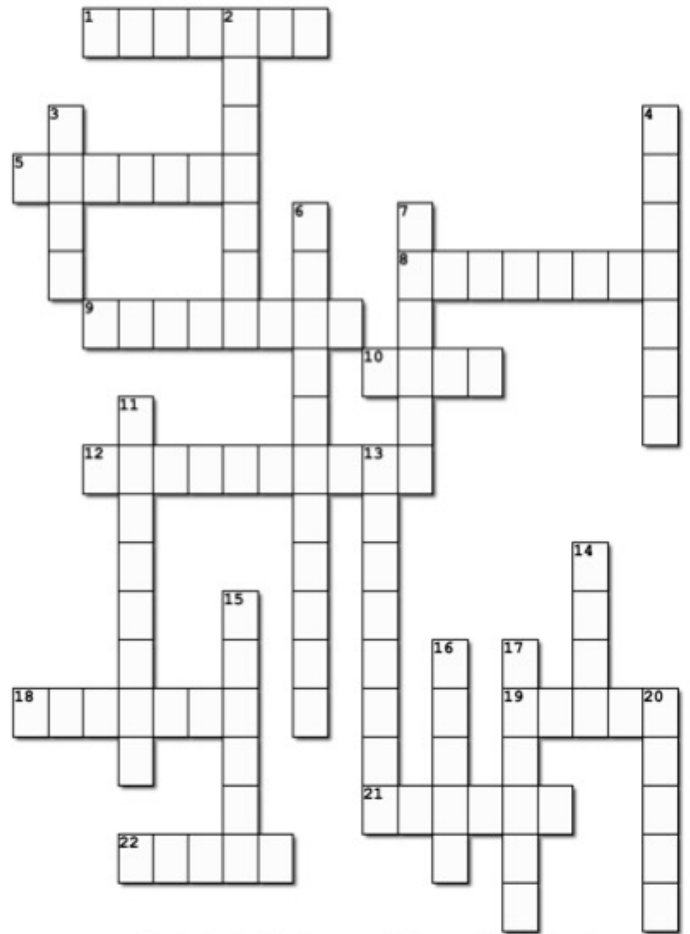


During World War II, the United States used a pigeon corps of 54,000 birds to carry messages for them. More than 3,000 soldiers were known as pigeoneers, and they trained and cared for them. The birds parachuted from airplanes, released from submarines, flew during the day or night, and sometimes carried cameras to take reconnaissance photographs.



## Characteristics of Birds

Crossword created by Heather Sanders



### Across

1. Birds of prey are also called \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Wing feathers that sometimes are bright and beautiful are also called \_\_\_\_\_ feathers.
8. Birds that live in a tree are called \_\_\_\_\_ birds.
9. Plumage on a bird that could be brightly colored.
10. There are many shapes and sizes based on a bird's diet.
12. Some birds are \_\_\_\_\_, like the ostrich and penguin.
18. Many birds \_\_\_\_\_ to warmer climates in cold and snowy seasons.
19. All birds have \_\_\_\_\_ no matter if they can fly or not.
21. Long, sharp hooked claws that are found in raptors for tearing prey.
22. Birds that live near \_\_\_\_\_ can sometimes fly long distances.

### Down

2. The largest bird on Earth is the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a symbol for peace.
4. This kind of bird is well-known for living in Antarctica.
6. Birds are \_\_\_\_\_ because they keep a constant body temperature.
7. Birds have been known to reach \_\_\_\_\_ of 100 miles per hour.
11. The penguin uses its wings as \_\_\_\_\_.
13. The \_\_\_\_\_ bird is the Bee Hummingbird.
14. Soft, fine feathers \_\_\_\_\_ feathers that keep a bird warm.
15. When a bird has left parents to fly out on its own \_\_\_\_\_.
16. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the symbol for strength and the national bird of the United States.
17. There are almost \_\_\_\_\_ thousand kinds of birds.
20. Some birds have very pretty \_\_\_\_\_ as they reply back to another one.

Answers to puzzle will be given next newsletter.