

***THE WARBLER***  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 8**  
**SEPTEMBER 2015**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



### **SEPTEMBER 12 FIELD TRIP**

Our September field trip will include Voas Nature Area west of Minburn in Dallas County. Meet at Casey's in Granger at 8:00 a.m. Voas is a 265-acre prairie/wetland reestablishment with adjacent woodland. Contact field trip leader Dennis Thompson at [cndthomps@acm.org](mailto:cndthomps@acm.org) or phone at 515-254-0837 for more information.

### **New Meeting Place for Des Moines Audubon Beginning in September!**

Beginning in September, Des Moines Audubon meetings will be held in the lunchroom of the Northwest Community Center, which is located at 51<sup>st</sup> and Franklin Avenue. The Center is just west of Franklin Library and is not far from Westminster Church where we met for years. There is ample parking and the building is accessible. Our first meeting in this facility will be Tuesday, September 15, beginning at 7 p.m. If you have questions about this meeting place, please contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047.

### **September 15 Program: Once Upon a Time...in Iowa**

Doug Harr's presentation on Tuesday, September 15 will be an overview of what Iowa looked like about the time of European settlement, the types of wildlife that were common, how and why that has changed, and what the future might hold with conservation partnerships and better funding. Included will be a short look at a few of the most famous conservation figures in the history of Iowa and the country.

Doug spent over 38 years with Iowa DNR, as a Wildlife Management Biologist, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, and State Coordinator of Iowa's Wildlife Diversity (nongame) Program. He holds BS and MS degrees in wildlife biology from South Dakota State University, where he also served as an Instructor of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. Prior to his DNR career Doug worked briefly for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, was Captain in the US Army Reserves, and in retirement now serves as president of Iowa Audubon.

Meetings of Des Moines Audubon Society begin at 7 p.m. and are held in the Northwest Community Center, which is located at 51<sup>st</sup> and Franklin Avenue in Des Moines. The Center is just west of Franklin Library and is not far from Westminster Church where we met for years. There is ample parking on the south side of the Center and the building is fully accessible. For information about this program, please contact Jane Clark at [jrclark@radiks.net](mailto:jrclark@radiks.net) or 515-223-5047.

## Iowa Pelican Festival September 13

Iowa's annual Pelican Festival will be held on Sunday, September 13, from 11 AM to 4 PM. The location is the Hawkeye Wildlife Area on the northwest side of Coralville Reservoir, 2564 Amana Road NW. The festival will center around large migratory flocks of American White Pelicans that stop to rest and forage for fish on Coralville Lake. Interpreters from local birding groups will help visitors view pelicans through binoculars and spotting scopes.

Besides pelican viewing, from 12:30 to 3 PM, there will be short programs on pelicans, the fish of Coralville Lake, ornate box turtles, and mussels (freshwater clams). Exhibitors will have displays about conservation, nature and the outdoors. Iowa Audubon will feature a silent auction of bird-related items, with proceeds going to the group's conservation projects. Indian Creek Nature Center will feature a gift shop with many nature-related items for all ages. A local food vendor will offer lunch items, snacks and beverages for purchase.

The event is sponsored by Iowa Audubon, the Iowa City Bird Club, Cedar Rapids Audubon, US Army Corps of Engineers, and Iowa DNR.



## Des Moines Audubon Programs 2015-2016

### September 15

Doug Harr: Once Upon a Time in Iowa--History of the Iowa's Wildlife and Conservation

### October 20

Stephanie Shepherd--Landscaping for Wildlife

### November 17

Ray Harden--Bird Phenology in the Raccoon River Basin

### December—no program meeting

### January 19

Karen Viste-Sparkman and Stuart Sparkman--Off the Beaten Path: Birding in Bolivia

### February 16

Tim Gedler--Purple Martins

### March 15

Ty Smedes--Voyage To The Bottom Of The World

### April 19

Dennis Thompson--Birding in Cambodia



*"The first autumn sounds to reach my ears are the lispings notes of traveling warblers among the trees and the 'chink-chink' of southbound Bobolinks passing high overhead -- invisible but audible."*

*-- John Kieran, (1892-1981) journalist, sportswriter, author, radio and TV personality*

*(John Kieran was a dedicated bird watcher and observer of the natural world.)*

**Des Moines Audubon Society membership is for one year, from June to May.  
Dues should be mailed to our Treasurer,  
Jim Clark, 9871 Lincoln Avenue, Clive, IA 50325**

**Please make checks payable to "Des Moines Audubon Society"  
Membership Levels and Dues:**

Student (under 18).....\$1.00  
Individual Adult..... \$10.00  
Family.....\$15.00  
Life.....\$125.00  
(May be paid in five annual payments of \$25.00)

\*Additional Contribution for Conservation Projects \_\_\_\_\_  
\*Additional Contribution for Bird Feeding Projects \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Whose Baby Bird Is This?  
By Carol Berrier**

A bird of a different color appeared under my feeders in mid-August. Resembling an immature Starling, it was a bit smaller and much grayer. It was surrounded by fledglings of several species being cared for by their parents. But no obvious parent was in sight for this bird. However, an adult Song Sparrow soon began feeding the bird, confirming my suspicion that it was a Brown-headed Cowbird - - a brood parasite.

The Brown-headed Cowbird male is black with a brown head, and measures about seven inches long. His brief "song" sounds like dripping water, "glug-glug-gee". The female is gray-brown without markings, much like the fledgling in question. She produces a lengthy chatter. High in a tree she stakes out the bird nests in her territory.

After mating, the female Cowbird will look for a briefly unattended nest in which to quickly deposit her egg. She must do this to reproduce, for Cowbirds do not build nests. Cowbirds often lay an egg each day for five or six days (each in a different nest), then take a break and begin again, totaling about 40 eggs per season. The Cowbird egg is usually larger than the host's egg, and will hatch sooner, giving the hatchling a head start. The nestling is aggressive, often pushing the host's eggs and nestlings out of the nest, or causing them to starve.

Historically, Cowbirds were always on the move, following the buffalo herds of the Great Plains to feast on insects stirred up by the grazers. This left the parasitized host birds free to raise another brood of their own after the herds had passed. As the east was opened for farming and settlement, and the bison disappeared, Cowbirds spread eastward, stayed put, and preyed upon some birds repeatedly.

Only about 3% of the Cowbird eggs result in mature Cowbirds, but that is enough to threaten the existence of some species, such as the Kirtland's Warbler. Some host species such as Robins, Bluejays, Catbirds, Orioles, and Thrashers have learned to recognize and eject the Cowbird eggs. Other species abandon their nests. Of the 220 recorded host species, about 144 are successfully parasitized and raise Cowbird young.

If you see our vocally-talented Song Sparrow, or our cute little rusty-capped Chipping Sparrow feeding an over-sized, gray offspring, or even a Cardinal with a homely gray baby, be assured that they are foster parents.

**Going Native: Iowa Prairies Seminar  
Perry on Saturday, September 19**

**Register by Friday, September 11: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/dallas/GoingNative>**

Going Native: Iowa Prairies Seminar is \$25 per person payable at the door and includes lunch catered from Hotel Pattee. Registration can be completed by contacting ISU Extension and Outreach Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Caitlyn Ryan, at (515) 993-4281 or [cryan@iastate.edu](mailto:cryan@iastate.edu). Check-in will begin at 9 a.m. and the event will conclude at 5:30 p.m. after a prairie visit and Native American performances at Forest Park Museum.

- Keynote speaker, Chad Hunter, Iowa State University lecturer in landscape architecture and design fellow for the ISU Community Design Lab, will present, "Poems in the Landscape: An Exploration of the Works and Techniques of Landscape Architect, Jens Jensen."
- ISU Extension and Outreach Field Agronomist, Meaghan Anderson, will discuss Milkweed for Monarchs.
- Anna MacDonald, Badger Creek Lake Watershed Project Coordinator with Madison County's Soil and Water Conservation District, will offer information pertaining to farm conservation through the use of prairie strips.
- Jim Uthe, Roadside Biologist for Dallas County will discuss how to establish prairies within your own yard space.

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**