

***THE WARBLER***  
**DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
**VOLUME XXIII, NUMBER 9**  
**OCTOBER 2016**  
**EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK**



**Saturday, October 8 Field Trip**

For our October 8<sup>th</sup> field trip, we'll meet at 8:00 a.m. in the northeast parking lot near Petco at Southridge Mall to bird areas in Warren County. We'll visit Bank Swallow Bend for sparrows, including Nelson's and LeConte's. We'll also go to Lake Ahquabi State Park. Bring a snack and beverage. Contact Denny Thompson for more information at [cndthomps@gmail.com](mailto:cndthomps@gmail.com) or 515-254-0837.

**Winter Birding in Northern Minnesota at Sax Zim Bog**  
**By Hank Zaletel**  
**Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m.**

The Sax-Zim Bog in far northern Minnesota is prime habitat for Great Gray Owl, Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Connecticut Warbler. Bobcat, Lynx, Pine Marten, Fisher also use this habitat. Mature bogs are also important wintering habitat for Great Gray Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, White-winged Crossbill, Pine and Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll and Hoary Redpoll. The best time for the winter specialties is mid-December through late February. The Zaletels have gone on this Carroll CCB sponsored trip three times with Matt Wetrich. Hank has an entertaining presentation on the wonderful birds that were seen and the occasional logistical challenges they encountered. This program will highlight winter trips taken over the past three years to see these northern species that are seldom seen in Iowa.

Hank Zaletel retired after several years as transportation librarian at Iowa State University/Iowa Dept. of Transportation. He is currently president of Big Bluestem Audubon in Ames, a library board member of Nevada Public Library, secretary of Story County Pheasants Forever, and board member and volunteer of Ames Historical Society. He is also a birdwatcher, traveler, history buff, camper, live music lover and in need of a place to keep all of his books.

Des Moines Audubon meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and are held in the lunchroom of 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. There is ample parking and the building is accessible. If you have questions about this meeting place, please contact Jane Clark at 515-223-5047.

**Upcoming Des Moines Audubon Program**  
**November 15, 2016**  
Mark Rouw will present a program on Iowa's Big Trees

## **Ames Big Bluestem Audubon Field Trip, October 29 Colo Bogs, Hendrickson Marsh, Chichaqua Bottoms**

Despite their watery names, these three places have a variety of habitat, attracting a variety of bird species. What array of sparrows and waterfowl will we find? Meet the group at the parking lot behind Wild Birds, Unlimited located at 213 Duff Avenue, Suite 4, in the Duff Centre in Ames for a 1:00 PM departure. NOTE the DEPARTURE TIME. For information, contact Eric Ollie at [uphawkeye@gmail.com](mailto:uphawkeye@gmail.com) or 515-238-3610.

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### **Bluebird Trail By Carol Mefford**

Step- Right -Up and volunteer for an easy job that will help increase the population of our Eastern Bluebirds. Carol Berrier, who now resides in Delevan, Wisconsin, monitored the 10 bluebird boxes at Saylorville's Sandpiper Beach access for 15 years. Since she moved, I have had the delightful responsibility of monitoring these boxes. A previous newsletter from a current leader in nest box management here in Polk County, Rogers Shell, lists the total Polk County nest boxes at 192. Mr. Shell is always on the lookout for new volunteers to train and the odds are good that there is a bluebird trail at a park or trail close to you. The program is always in need of more volunteers!

From my 10 boxes at Sandpiper this past spring/summer season, I had 34 Eastern Bluebirds fledge, plus 18 Tree Swallows and 5 House Wrens. Pregnancy, delivery, and raising the children are always so much easier when the duty belongs to someone else! And so it is with the nest boxes. The Eastern Bluebird's population numbers were in a steep decline because of a number of factors including habitat loss, pesticide related issues, several consecutive severe winters, and MOST IMPORTANTLY - the spread of nonnative species such as the House Sparrows and European Starlings. Consequently, the introduction of nest boxes, built to meet the needs of the Eastern Bluebirds, has helped to significantly boost the numbers of our native bluebirds.

The nest boxes are placed where there is a mowed grassy area. This allows the bluebirds to swoop and catch insects. Tree Swallows are also attracted to the same nesting sites if there is water close by, so at Sandpiper and similar environments, there are two nesting boxes placed about 10 feet apart. The Eastern Bluebird, who arrives in Iowa first, often gets housekeeping set up before the more assertive Tree Swallow arrives, and these two then tolerate each other. Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird are a diligent couple busily raising broods of 3-5 eggs all summer; usually two families although occasionally three. The bluebird nest is neatly compact and organized. Carefully opening the nest boxes to monitor and solve any problems, if needed, is a thrill. Who has set up housekeeping? Each nest is unique. Mr. and Mrs. Tree Swallow like to top their nest with feathers. (I swear they were Gypsy Rose Lee in a former life, and when they are done with raising their one family, they are as busy as jet pilots on the wing.) Or occasionally, teeny, tiny little eggs from Mr. and Mrs. House Wren are found among a nest of sticks.

The role of the human monitoring the boxes is to prevent or fix problems. First of all, the main goal is to pull out and eliminate the messy nest of the House Sparrow. (Actually, the monitor may need to eliminate Mr. and Mrs. House Sparrow themselves.) Ants, raccoons, wasps, mowers knocking over the houses can all be a problem for the bluebirds. Visiting once a week to check on the assigned boxes is a quick, enjoyable and rewarding outing. Do email Rogers Shell at [deeshell@live.com](mailto:deeshell@live.com) and sign up so that volunteer positions are filled and ready for the return of the Eastern Bluebird in early 2017! The manager of the Saylorville boxes is Janene Parks who can be reached at [jparks74@hotmail.com](mailto:jparks74@hotmail.com) .

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### **American White Pelicans**

In *A Sand County Almanac*, pioneering conservationist Aldo Leopold described a migrating group of American White Pelicans this way: "Let a squadron of southbound pelicans but feel a lift of prairie breeze...and they sense at once that here is a landing in the geological past, a refuge from that most relentless of aggressors, the future. With queer antediluvian grunts they set wing, descending in majestic spirals to the welcoming wastes of a bygone age."

*From the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds page*

## WHOOPING CRANE SENTENCING

Readers may remember the report from earlier this year of the case of Trey Frederick who admitted to shooting and killing two Whooping Cranes in east Texas: <http://conta.cc/2bN23n2> .

Mr. Frederick will be sentenced this fall. His violation of the Endangered Species Act, in this case a Class A misdemeanor, is punishable by up to a year in prison and/or a \$50,000 fine. This situation is being closely followed by many, including the folks at the *Eastern Crane Bulletin* and the International Crane Foundation. In fact, the International Crane Foundation has asked that Frederick be sentenced to no less than a month in jail, at least a \$15,000 fine, 300 hours of community service, and a revocation of the teen's hunting license for at least five years.

The issue highlights the wide variation of potential sentencing in cases of Whooping Crane shooting deaths. *In 2009, a poacher responsible for the shooting death of Whooping Crane #217 - mother of W1-06, the first wild Whooping Crane chick hatched and fledged in the eastern U.S. in more than a century - was fined \$1.* Then, at the opposite end of the spectrum, in 2012, a man who shot a Whooping Crane from the wild population in South Dakota was fined \$85,000, sentenced to 30 days in jail, given two years of probation, had his hunting privileges revoked for two years, and was also given community service.

Some sentencing standardization in these cases is probably in order, if only to send the message that shooting a Whooping Crane is a significant crime that carries real personal consequences.

## ACCESS MATTERS: MAINE BREAKTHROUGH

Roxanne Quimby, the cofounder of Burt's Bees, began buying large parcels of land in Maine in the 1990s. Using the earnings derived from the company's line of natural care products, she went public with her plan in 2011, a plan to make tens of thousands of acquired acres into a National Park. She wanted this to occur during this year - the centennial year of the National Park Service. Since the National Park designation would have required Congressional action, Quimby had to settle for promoting National Monument designation, a designation only requiring action by the President of the U.S.

On 12 August, she signed paperwork to transfer land from her nonprofit Elliotsville Plantation, Inc, to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This amounted to 87,500 acres in Maine's Katahdin region, just east of Baxter State Park (209,501 acres). Quimby's foundation package included a \$40 million endowment to fund park operations, with \$20 million at launch and another \$20 million to be raised within three years. The land-value of this 87,500-acre gift to the public has been estimated at \$60 million.

There is disagreement in Maine over this action, between critics opposed to federal government presence and those who view the move as an economic lifeline that will protect the land. The region has been struggling with double-digit unemployment especially since the closing of two regional paper mills.

Despite this controversy, the White House moved quickly, with President Barack Obama announcing National Monument status for the land on 24 August, exactly one day before the centennial of the National Park Service. In lauding the action, the National Parks Conservation Association said that the designation is likely to create hundreds of jobs in the Katahdin region, "giving an economic boost to the entire state while permanently protecting a landscape that inspired American conservationists from poet Henry David Thoreau to President Theodore Roosevelt."

Together with neighboring Baxter State Park, the new Katahdin Woods and Waters Monument should ensure that this large landscape remains intact. Notable birds of the region include Spruce Grouse, Northern Goshawk, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Merlin, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and a very long list of breeding warblers, including Mourning, Cape May, Pine, Bay-breasted, and Blackpoll.

This promises to be a win-win-win situation, with new jobs, protection for birds and other wildlife, and public access. That access means securing opportunities for visitors to hike, canoe, hunt, fish, snowmobile, snowshoe, cross-country ski, photograph, and go birding.

*From: The Birding Community E-bulletin, September 2016*

**Des Moines Audubon Society membership is for one year, from July to June**  
**If you would like to check on the status of your membership, please email jrclark@radiks.net**  
**or call 515-223-5047**

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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