

THE WARBLER
DES MOINES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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AUGUST 2016
EDITOR: JANE R. CLARK



Saturday, August 13 Field Trip

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at Casey's in Grimes for our August field trip. From there we will venture west in search of Upland Sandpipers and Buff-breasted Sandpipers that are found in short grass habitats. We will also visit some other areas in Dallas County. Bring a snack and beverage. Contact Denny Thompson for more information at cdnthomps@gmail.com or 515-254-0837.

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** is a delicate dove-headed shorebird, found primarily in migration in areas of short grass. It migrates primarily through the middle of the continent from its Arctic breeding grounds to southern South America. The **Upland Sandpiper**, a shorebird of grasslands, not shores, inhabits native prairie and other open grassy areas in North America. Once abundant in the Great Plains, it has undergone steady population declines since the mid-19th century, because of hunting and loss of habitat.

Pelican Festival, Coralville Lake—Sunday, September 11, 2016

The Coralville Lake Pelican Festival has been scheduled for Sunday, September 11, 2016, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The location for this event is the Iowa DNR headquarters at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, 2564 Amana Road N.W., Swisher, Iowa 52338. The event focuses upon the large fall migration of American White Pelicans through Iowa, on their way to the Gulf Coast. Spotting scopes and binoculars will be available for viewing pelicans on Coralville Lake, with expert volunteers to help with viewing and interpretation. Presentations will be made about pelicans and other nature topics. Groups involved in conservation and environmental areas are invited to set up booths, with information about their group, merchandise to sell and/or activities for kids. This is the sixth fall the festival will be held at this location. Exhibitor booths will be located near the viewing area of the lake any time after 9:00 a.m. There is no electricity or water, bring chairs if you need them. The ground can be a little rough so wear comfortable shoes. There will be a food and beverage vendor on site. This is an Iowa Audubon event hosted with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iowa City Bird Club and Cedar Rapids Audubon Society. For more information, see Iowa Audubon's website news at: www.iowaaudubon.org.

SOAR—Saving Our Avian Resources Annual Release Party

Join SOAR for their fall release party at a beautiful vineyard! They hope to have a wonderful turnout and enjoy some food and fun, live music by The Irregulars, and the thrill of watching some gorgeous creatures fly free!

August 28
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Venue: Dale Valley Vineyard & Winery
3097 285th St
Stuart, IA 50250 United States
<http://www.dalevalleyvineyard.com/>

MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT CRITICAL TO BIRD CONSERVATION

By Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon

Several laws are critical to preserving our nation's bird-life, including the Lacey Act of 1900, Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, and Endangered Species Act of 1972. But perhaps none are more important the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Most readers probably realize that it was the commercial plume industry of the late 1800s that resulted in catastrophic losses of egrets, terns, even flickers, all for the outrageous fad of decorating women's hats. That industry led to formation of what is now the National Audubon Society, as well as to President Theodore Roosevelt's establishment of the first national wildlife refuges.

Bird protection laws soon began appearing, and in 1916 Congress signed a treaty with Great Britain (for Canada) to stop the hunting of many songbirds and establish limited hunting seasons for designated game species. Two years later, the MBTA was passed, making it a crime to "pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill...or sell" a migratory bird, its parts, nests, eggs and feathers. The law's constitutionality was challenged in 1920, but the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that MBTA did not violate states' rights.

In 1936 our nation signed a similar treaty with Mexico and additional treaties with Japan and the Soviet Union in the 1970s. All these agreements increased the number of birds protected under the MBTA, while encouraging better habitat conservation and pollution control.

Earlier this year [2015] the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service announced it intends to review and improve implementation of the MBTA to hold industries more accountable for harm to birds. Some new threats to birds in recent years, such as wind turbines, transmission lines, oil pits and communication towers will be the focus of discussion. These threats combine to kill millions of more birds annually than just a couple of decades ago.

**From Iowa Audubon's Newsletter--Volume 11, Number 2, August 2015*

Celebrate conservation centennials—then call on Congress!

By Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon

The year 2016 is not only the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) but also the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service (NPS). Both have served to make the United States a world leader in conservation programs of many kinds.

Our national parks actually date back to 1872, when Yellowstone was given the world's first such park designation. But it was not until 1916 that the NPS was officially created by the federal government, after which the park system began to grow. Today NPS oversees not only national parks, but national monuments, national historical sites and more. It is a model which brought the concept of national parks to many other countries.

While national parks protect some of our most scenic lands and critical wildlife habitats, the Migratory Bird Treaty has served well in protecting most bird species in the United States, Canada and Mexico—all partners in the MBT—from illegal hunting or killing, trade, and other threats. The MBT was a linchpin in subsequent creation of many national wildlife refuges, reducing environmentally hazardous chemicals and much more.

Still, according to the 2016 "State of the Birds" report, 37% of all avian species in North America are in decline or of high conservation concern. In addition, many of our national parks are suffering shortages of staff, deterioration of facilities and other problems. In both cases, much of the blame must be laid at the feet of Congress, which continues to reduce agency budgets, refuse consideration of additional protection for wildlife and public lands, deny climate change, and essentially fight anything that even remotely relates to good conservation of air water, soil, forests, wildlife and all natural resources.

While this is a banner year in the history of conservation, it is now more important than ever that we contact our elected officials (both federal *and* state), demanding that they must become much more environmentally responsible, if they wish to see a great future for our country.

**From Iowa Audubon's Newsletter-- Volume 12, Number 2, August, 2016*

BANDING AMERICAN KESTRELS

By Ray Harden

I was invited to take part in the American Kestrel banding project in early June with Mike Havlik from the Dallas County Conservation Department, Mark Bowman, a volunteer for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Perry High School biology teacher Jeff Fox, and his intern from Iowa State University, Amie Geffery.

Havlik had checked the kestrel nests several weeks earlier, these are large boxes on utility poles in the Perry and Minburn area. He knew that some of the kestrel chicks would be ready to band and the information used for future scientific research.

The American Kestrel is a common bird that is seen in central Iowa along roadways sitting on electrical wires or hovering above the ditches as it hunts for food. It is sometimes called a sparrow hawk. It is slightly larger than a robin, 10 1/2 inches long with a wingspan of 23 inches. Both sexes are the same size. Their unique feature is their face; there are two black streaks on their white cheeks. The male's wings are a blue-gray color while the female's are all brown. The male can be recognized in flight by the white spots on the back edge of its wing. The female has brownish-orange stripes on her breast while the male has a light orange breast with dark spots. Both are very handsome birds.

The first box that was examined had five chicks covered with downy white feathers. They were less than a week old, but they squealed loudly and were trying to defend themselves - their claws were raised and their beaks opened in a threatening defensive position. They were all quickly fitted with a US Fish and Wildlife leg band by Mr. Bowman and returned unharmed to their nest.

The second box examined was 1 1/2 miles away. Mike climbed the ladder and opened the box and reported that there were four very recently hatched birds and they were too young to handle and band. He closed the box and we moved on to the next box.

When Mike had climbed to the ladder to check the third nest, he was about to look inside when an adult bird flew out of the hole - giving him quite a start. The box only had one buff colored egg. The female will lay two or three more and after a month of incubation they will hatch.

Our next stop was near the Voas Nature Area. Kestrels had been seen for several days perched in a nearby tree and flying into the box. Mike was sure there was a nest. However, when he opened the lid, it was deserted. It appeared that a raccoon had destroyed the nest. This mated pair of kestrels might breed again and try to raise a brood.

At the fifth nest site four babies were inside, about eighteen days old. There were two males and two females. The most developed male flew when the box was opened, but made a soft landing in the tall brome grass. Amie easily caught it and held it for Bowman as he put a band on its leg. When it was being returned to the box the little kestrel dug its talon into Mike's finger deep enough to draw blood. The remaining birds were going to be banded but the banding tool broke and couldn't be repaired in the field. The other three babies were banded later.

Man-made nesting boxes are very helpful for kestrels. They naturally nest in cavities in hollow trees, but they have a lot of competition with many other birds - especially starlings. Across the United States the American Kestrel population is down 47%, but in Iowa the birds have increased their numbers by 19%. This increase is due to man-made nesting boxes placed around the state. Over 750 boxes were attached to the back of road signs along Interstate 35 in Iowa several years ago.

The Dallas County Conservation Department has maintained boxes in the county for several years. The Perry High School Advanced Biology Class made six new ones to replace the worn boxes and add new boxes. To help with the project, the Perry Middle School students shop class made forty as part of a mass production learning project. When these boxes are placed around the county it will greatly help one of Iowa's most handsome birds of prey - the American Kestrel.



“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.”

.....Theodore Roosevelt

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 _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

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