



Hawks Eyed at Hitchcock

Article and photos by Jerry Toll

What a difference a year makes. In its second year of operation, the Hitchcock raptor banding program in Pottawattamie County attained its goal of capturing and banding over 100 raptors. There was a continuous stream of volunteers, students, and visitors to the banding station. The volunteer banders were trained to assist in the operation which increased the efficiency. We found that if one person trapped while the other processed the captures, then the capture rate increased. Two volunteers trained this season have been selected to become sub-permittees for the 2009 season.

Students from the raptor ecology class at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln visited on four occasions and experienced raptor field training first hand. The banding station is looking forward to future cooperative efforts with UNL and others interested in using the banding station as a platform for raptor research.

Raptor education outreach is a continuing goal of the banding station. There were numerous visitors invited to experience the process. During the annual Hawkfest at Hitchcock on September 27, we had the opportunity to show a captured Red-tailed Hawk and talk about its ecology and morphology to over 80 people gathered before releasing it.

This season, there were favorable weather conditions for the first time in 3 years. As an indication, the total raptors counted on the 2007 Hitchcock HawkWatch was about 9,273 which ended 20 December of that year. During the 2008 season, that number was eclipsed by the 10th of November with 9,750. This, despite the near collapse of the Swainson's Hawk migration past Hitchcock. Clearly, weather patterns played a role in making raptors available for capture this banding season.

This banding season, 5 species of raptors were captured, processed and released. The banding season lasted from 5 September until 2 November with seven day per week coverage. Only 4 days were missed due to poor weather conditions during the season. Of the 105 captures during the season, 70 were Red-tailed Hawks. The majority of those were aged as HY (hatch-year) juveniles (57). The remaining 13 were aged as AHY (after hatch year) adults. Gender cannot be definitively determined among redtails except during breeding season, but a few individuals were so large that they were most likely females. Four weighed in excess of 1400 grams and required a larger band size, (7D). The majority of the captures were of the eastern *B. j. borealis* subspecies. Of those, 5 were identified as Krider's. Five of the western subspecies *B. j. calurus* were captured, all after 8 October. Of those, three were light morph, one rufous morph and one dark morph.



Below: Male Merlin Lower Left: Juvenile Swainson's Hawk



The Sharp-shinned Hawk capture rate was again a disappointment this season. Despite efforts to attain starlings to use as lure birds at the beginning of the season, none were attained until 19 October, well past the peak season of accipiters. Nonetheless, 22 gutsy Sharp-shins were attracted to the pigeon lure weighing more than they and were captured. There were more than double the attempts than were captured. Of those captured, 17 were HY juveniles and 4 were AHY non-juveniles. There were 7 males and 15 females. Cooper's Hawk were more likely to be attracted to the pigeon lure, therefore, when compared to the ration of Sharp-shin to Cooper's seen at the Hawk-Watch, there was a disproportionately larger number of captures of Cooper's (11), a ratio of 2:1 compared to the HawkWatch's seasonal ratio of 5:1. Of those captured, 3 were HY juveniles, 3 were ASY (after second year) and 5 were AHY (after hatch year). There were five males and six females.

Two species were added to the capture list. A Merlin and a Swainson's Hawk. The Swainson's Hawk almost went undetected. Never having a Swainson's in hand before, I thought I had an intergrade eastern/western redtail. After documenting the unusual plumage and morphological characteristics and photographing it, it was released. When I saw it soaring, I knew what it was! I then had to backtrack and learn to look for those characteristics while the bird is in hand.

I wish to express my thanks to the Projects Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists Union for the financial support provided. This support, in part, made it possible for me to take the necessary 2 months away from work to operate the raptor banding station.

IOU News

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Kayleen Niyo, Editor

Rick Wright featured guest at Spring 2009 Meeting

The IOU is proud to have secured Rick Wright, Managing Director of "Wings," as our Banquet speaker. Rick is a native of southeast Nebraska, has taught laboratory courses in ornithology with Paul Johnsgard and worked as a collections assistant at the Nebraska State Museum. In 1985, he was a founding member of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Bird Records Committee.

Currently Rick resides in southeast Arizona where he is a professional guide. He is a frequent lecturer at birding festivals and conventions. Rick enjoys all kinds of birding, from the frantic pace of the World Series to quiet puddle-watching. Rick has birded parts of Iowa but never the Swan Lake area and is enthused by the birding opportunities that will be available to him while here in Iowa.

Spring Meeting
May 1-3, 2009
Swan Lake State Park
Carroll, Iowa

The Spring 2009 Meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union will be headquartered at Swan Lake State Park just a couple of miles southeast of Carroll, Iowa. Meals and meetings will be held in the fabulous Conservation Education Center at Swan Lake State Park. There is room for just about anything we want to do and it is equipped with a state-of-the-art audiovisual system. The meeting is scheduled for May 1-3, 2009. Hosting the meeting will be Matt Wetrich--Naturalist for Carroll County Conservation. Matt has been busy planning activities, field trips, meals, and possibly a song and dance routine in case things get a little slow.

Birding at Swan Lake State Park and surrounding area have produced well over 200 species. The past year alone has produced just about every regular waterfowl species including Long-tailed Duck along with two species of scoters. Rarities such as Kentucky and Hooded Warblers, Lazuli Bunting, Piping Plover, and Red-necked Grebe made for an interesting 2008 spring and early summer.

Field trip possibilities would include Swan Lake, Whiterock Conservancy, Black Hawk State Park, Dunbar Slough, Snake Creek Marsh, portions of the Raccoon River as well as some other "secret" locations which will only be revealed to attendees.

2008-2009 Christmas Bird Count Schedule

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Compiler</u>	<u>Email/Telephone</u>
Ames	Dec 20	Shane Patterson	shane7896@yahoo.com
Andalusia	Jan 2	Kelly McKay	KellyJMckay@aol.com
Boone County	Jan 3	Mark Widrlechner	mpwskd@aol.com
Buchanan County	Jan 3	Danny Akers	birdmandan1231@hotmail.com
Burlington	Dec 20	Chuck Fuller	cfuller989@aol.com
Carroll County	Jan 4	Matt Wetrich	matt@naturebymatt.com
Cedar Rapids	Dec 20	James Durbin	durbinjames@imonmail.com
Cherokee	Dec 14	Dick Bierman	dbierman@mchsi.com
NW Clayton County	Dec 15	Danny Akers	birdmandan1231@hotmail.com
SE Clayton County	Jan 2	Danny Akers	birdmandan1231@hotmail.com
Clinton	Dec 18	Kelly McKay	KellyJMckay@aol.com
Dallas County	Dec 20	Tom Lawson	tom.lawson@mchsi.com
Davenport	Dec 14	Kelly McKay	KellyJMckay@aol.com
Des Moines	Dec 27	Dennis Thompson	cndthomps@acm.org
DeSoto/Boyer Chute	Dec 27	Jerry Toll	geritol48@cox.net
Dubuque	Jan 3	Charles Winterwood	cwinterwood@yahoo.com
Eldora-Union	Dec 17	Mark Proescholdt	641-496-5219
Ida Grove	Dec 27	Don Poggensee	donpog@netllc.net
Iowa City	Dec 14	Chris Edwards	credwards@aol.com
Jackson County	Dec 19	Dan Wenny	dwenny@inhs.uiuc.edu
Jamaica	Dec 16	Ray Cummins	Cummins@sirisonline.com
Keokuk	Dec 15	Stephen Dinsmore	cootjr@iastate.edu
Lamoni	Dec 21	Matthew Torres	matthewt34@hotmail.com
N Linn	Dec 30	James Durbin	durbinjames@imonmail.com
Mason City	Dec 20	Rita Goranson	ritag@mchsi.com
W Mercer County	Dec 23	Kelly McKay	KellyJMckay@aol.com
Muscatine	Dec 21	Kelly McKay	KellyJMckay@aol.com
Neal Smith NWR	Jan 3	Karen Viste-Sparkman	karen_visteaparkman@fws.gov
Princeton/Cordova	Dec 22	Kelly McKay	KellyJMckay@aol.com
Rathbun Lake	Dec 14	Michael Stephens	641-437-1736
Red Rock	Dec 20	Aaron Brees	abrees@hotmail.com
Saylorville	Dec 14	Stephen Dinsmore	cootjr@iastate.edu
Shenandoah	Dec 20	Keith Dyche	kadd27@hotmail.com
Sioux City	Dec 14	Jerry Probst	probstsuebee@aol.com
Taylor County	Dec 27	Kelly Norris	kellydn@frontiernet.net
Worth County	Jan 1	Curt Nelson	cnelson@omnitelcom.com

Fall 2008 IOU Meeting Wrap-up

Article By Paul Roisen; Photos by Don Poggensee

The Fall 2008 meeting of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union (IOU) took place in Iowa Falls September 12-14th. Eighty-five birders attended the annual event. Two out of state birders--Kay Niyo of Golden, CO and Bill Thompson III of Marietta, OH vied for the honor of having travelled the farthest to get there. As the "raven" flies they both would have traveled an amazing exact 661.5 miles each. However, when computed as "driving miles" Bill took home the championship with 793 miles to Kay's 761.

Friday Evening Social

The weekend kicked off Friday evening with registration and a social gathering at the Scenic Empress Boat Club. At 6:00PM many boarded the Empress for a phenomenal river cruise. A harvest moon, good company, swallows over the river, and the occasional birds heard or seen along the banks of the river made for a great start to the weekend. Snack and drinks were provided courtesy of Hardin County Conservation Board.



Banquet

The highlight of the IOU meetings is almost always the Saturday evening banquet and the anticipated keynote address. Fall 2008 was no exception when Ellsworth Community College (ECC) Gentile Student Center hosted the banquet providing one of the best meals ever. Bill Thompson III worldwide traveler, birder, and speaker provided us with an outstanding presentation on why we need to get children involved with nature. Bill centered his photographs and speaking around his book titled "No Child Left Inside: Using Birds to Fight Nature Deficit Disorder." It really brought home how valuable our planet's habitat is and why we need to get our children to view it as valuable as well.

The evening ended with people lining up to purchase Bill's latest book and chat a little with him as he personalized each person's book.



Saturday

The day began with a great 6:00AM breakfast which allowed us to fuel up for the day while re-connecting with old friends and make a few new ones.

The recent addition of a "box lunch" option again allowed for lengthened Saturday field trips to Big Marsh, Maynes Groves, Pine Lake State Park, Buckey Marsh, Sax and Fox overlook, or just walking the amazing Calkins Nature center property.

The afternoon program began with Carl Kurtz-- St. Anthony, IA who regaled us with anecdotes from his vast experience as a photographer. The sharing of his photographs and insights into digital photography left many of us with the urge to grab a camera and head to begin our own photographic adventures.

Next was the IOU General Meeting which included an update by Nicki Nagl on the Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) #2 project. First year results were encouraging and questions about data entry were answered.

A lengthy and spirited discussion on whether to raise the IOU dues ensued. Noting that printing costs were outstripping dues the membership did vote to raise due to \$30.00 annually effective January 2009.

David Eastman (Cedar Falls), Mary Kelly (Dubuque), Jim Moreland (Boone), Michael Tompkins (Waterloo), and Jennifer Webster (Fairbanks) first time attendees at one of our meetings were recognized and provided with a copy of "Birds In Iowa" by T. Kent and J. Dinsmore as a welcoming gift.

The IOU Board met briefly after the conclusion of the General Meeting.

The rest of the afternoon was available for participants to peruse the Calkins Nature Center itself which contains a great egg collection as well as numerous bird silhouettes which a number of our birders tried to identify. It was much more difficult than one would imagine.



Fall Meeting Compilation List

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Canada Goose | Caspian Tern |
| Wood Duck | Forster's tern |
| Gadwall | Black tern |
| Mallard | Rock Pigeon |
| Blue-winged Teal | Eurasian Collared-Dove |
| Green-winged Teal | Mourning Dove |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | Black-billed Cuckoo |
| Wild Turkey | Yellow-billed Cuckoo |
| Pied-billed Grebe | Great Horned Owl |
| American White Pelican | Barred Owl |
| DC Cormorant | Common Nighthawk |
| Great Blue Heron | Chimney Swift |
| Great Egret | RT Hummingbird |
| Green Heron | Belted Kingfisher |
| Turkey Vulture | Red-headed woodpecker |
| Osprey | Red-bellied woodpecker |
| Bald Eagle | Downy woodpecker |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Hairy woodpecker |
| Cooper's Hawk | Northern Flicker |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | Pileated Woodpecker |
| Broad-winged hawk | Olive-sided Flycatcher |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Eastern Wood-Pewee |
| American Kestrel | Yellow-bellied Flycatcher |
| Merlin | Willow Flycatcher |
| Sora | Least Flycatcher |
| American Coot | Eastern Phoebe |
| American Golden-Plover | Great Crested Flycatcher |
| Killdeer | Eastern Kingbird |
| Spotted Sandpiper | White-eyed Vireo |
| Solitary Sandpiper | Yellow-throated Vireo |
| Greater Yellowlegs | Blue-headed Vireo |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | Warbling Vireo |
| Least Sandpiper | |
| Baird's Sandpiper | |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | |



- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Red-eyed Vireo | BT Blue Warbler |
| Blue Jay | BT Green Warbler |
| American Crow | Blackburnian Warbler |
| Horned Lark | Bay-breasted Warbler |
| Tree Swallow | Blackpoll Warbler |
| Northern RW Swallow | Black-and-white Warbler |
| Bank Swallow | American Redstart |
| Cliff Swallow | Ovenbird |
| Barn Swallow | Northern Waterthrush |
| Black-capped Chickadee | Mourning Warbler |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | Common Yellowthroat |
| Carolina Wren | Wilson's Warbler |
| House Wren | Canada Warbler |
| Sedge Wren | Summer Tanager |
| Marsh Wren | Scarlet Tanager |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | Eastern Towhee |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | Chipping Sparrow |
| Eastern Bluebird | Field Sparrow |
| Veery | Vesper Sparrow |
| Gray-checked Thrush | Lark Sparrow |
| Swainson's Thrush | Savannah Sparrow |
| Wood Thrush | Grasshopper Sparrow |
| American Robin | Song Sparrow |
| Gray Catbird | Lincoln's Sparrow |
| Brown Thrasher | Northern Cardinal |
| European Starling | Rose-breasted Grosbeak |
| American Pipit | Indigo Bunting |
| Cedar Waxwing | Bobolink |
| Blue-winged Warbler | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Golden-winged Warbler | Eastern Meadowlark |
| Tennessee Warbler | Common Grackle |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | Brown-headed Cowbird |
| Nashville Warbler | Baltimore Oriole |
| Northern Parula | House Finch |
| Yellow Warbler | Pine Siskin |
| | American Goldfinch |
| | House Sparrow |

Sunday

Another outstanding breakfast and off birding by 7:00AM. Sunday's field trips provided attendees with the opportunities to go look for species that had been seen by participants on the Saturday field trips. A return to Calkins Nature Center for lunch and final compilation provided the end to a wonderful weekend.

Total species seen for the weekend was 143. Highlight birds were Red-shouldered Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Veery, Gray-checked and Swainson's Thrush (flew overhead in the evening), Black-throated Blue Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.

Birding the area was a stimulating experience. Between the food, birding, fellowship, and amenities many of us will certainly return here to bird again.

A big "Thank you" goes out to the co-hosts--Tom Schilke, meeting organizer, Nancy Slife ECC professor, and Wes Weis of the Hardin County Conservation for providing us with a well run and entertaining weekend. Iowa Falls should be proud of the publicity brought to the community by these fine people.



The Habitat under construction

Photos and article by Matt Wetrich

With financial assistance from the Iowa Ornithologists Union, Carroll County Conservation is currently in the process of installing *The Habitat*, an outdoor classroom of sorts. *The Habitat* will be used to attract wildlife as well as the interests of humans. *The Habitat* will be a living, evolving attraction, complete with pond, stream, waterfalls, and native plants. Once completed, complementary educational displays will adorn the inside walls of the adjacent Conservation Education Center with hopes of inspiring park visitors to provide some habitat at their own home. As most construction projects do, this one started behind schedule, putting us half completed through November. Work began after our annual Fall Fest was held October 18th, about a month later than planned. If all goes well, hard-scaping will be completed this fall/winter and plants installed early spring of '09 - looking pretty and finished for the Spring IOU meeting May 1-3.

Along with the IOU contribution there have been private donations as well as budgetary funds allocated for this project. The project budget is upwards of \$10,000. Several dump truck loads of field stone have been donated by local farmers, saving us thousands of dollars.

It is with great appreciation that I submit this progress report to the fine members of the IOU and look forward to seeing all of you May 1, 2, and 3, 2009 for a fantastic spring meeting at the beautiful Conservation Education Center at Swan Lake State Park. Thank you!



2008 IOU Bird Listing Report Form

Please return this form within a week or so of the new year in order for your totals to be included in the next compilation. Of course, **all categories are optional**. Contributed totals should be accurate as of December 31, 2008, and should adhere to the standards of the official Iowa State List (accidentals and casuals should have Records Committee acceptance).

Return to: Paul Hertzell, 1432 East State Street, Mason City, IA 50401
 or send email to: phertzell@rconnect.com

Name: _____

E-mail or postal address: _____

County of residence: _____ Iowa State Life List Total: _____

Personally Found by Me in Iowa: _____ Yardlist Total: _____

Iowa 2008 Annual List Total: _____ (Total species seen in Iowa during 2008)

2008 Bigby Total: _____ (Total species found without using gas)

Regional or Statewide Big Day * Totals:	Region	Date	Species	Names of Participants
<i>Example:</i>	<i>Dickinson Co</i>	<i>27 Aug 08</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>Lee Schoenewe, E&E Armstrong</i>
*Record totals should be accompanied by the species list.				

COUNTY LIST TOTALS

_____ Adair County	_____ Dallas County	_____ Jasper County	_____ Plymouth County
_____ Adams County	_____ Davis County	_____ Jefferson County	_____ Pocahontas County
_____ Allamakee County	_____ Decatur County	_____ Johnson County	_____ Polk County
_____ Appanoose County	_____ Delaware County	_____ Jones County	_____ Pottawattamie Co
_____ Audubon County	_____ Des Moines County	_____ Keokuk County	_____ Poweshiek County
_____ Benton County	_____ Dickinson County	_____ Kossuth County	_____ Ringgold County
_____ Blackhawk County	_____ Dubuque County	_____ Lee County	_____ Sac County
_____ Boone County	_____ Emmet County	_____ Linn County	_____ Scott County
_____ Bremer County	_____ Fayette County	_____ Louisa County	_____ Shelby County
_____ Buchanan County	_____ Floyd County	_____ Lucas County	_____ Sioux County
_____ Buena Vista County	_____ Franklin County	_____ Lyon County	_____ Story County
_____ Butler County	_____ Fremont County	_____ Madison County	_____ Tama County
_____ Calhoun County	_____ Greene County	_____ Mahaska County	_____ Taylor County
_____ Carroll County	_____ Grundy County	_____ Marion County	_____ Union County
_____ Cass County	_____ Guthrie County	_____ Marshall County	_____ Van Buren County
_____ Cedar County	_____ Hamilton County	_____ Mills County	_____ Wapello County
_____ Cerro Gordo County	_____ Hancock County	_____ Mitchell County	_____ Warren County
_____ Cherokee County	_____ Hardin County	_____ Monona County	_____ Washington County
_____ Chickasaw County	_____ Harrison County	_____ Monroe County	_____ Wayne County
_____ Clarke County	_____ Henry County	_____ Montgomery Co	_____ Webster County
_____ Clay County	_____ Howard County	_____ Muscatine County	_____ Winnebago County
_____ Clayton County	_____ Humboldt County	_____ O'Brien County	_____ Winneshiek County
_____ Clinton County	_____ Ida County	_____ Osceola County	_____ Woodbury County
_____ Crawford County	_____ Iowa County	_____ Page County	_____ Worth County
	_____ Jackson County	_____ Palo Alto County	_____ Wright County
			_____ Total Ticks

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Table of Contents

Hitchcock Hawkwatch.....	1
Spring Meeting.....	2
Christmas Bird Counts.....	3
Fall Meeting Wrap-up.....	4-5
Habitat Project.....	6
2008 Listing Form.....	7