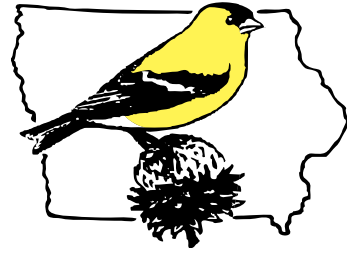


IOU News

Fall 2010  Volume 26 - Number 3



2010 IOU Fall Meeting

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, Jasper County

October 22 - 24, 2010

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting will be held October 22 - 24, 2010 near Prairie City, Iowa. Our hosts for the meeting will be the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. All meeting activities will take place at the Prairie Learning Center on the refuge. Be sure to plan some time to explore the exhibits and learn more about our state's natural heritage. Lodging will be available a short drive to the west on four-lane highway 163 in Pleasant Hill.

Neal Smith NWR is comprised of several thousand acres of tallgrass prairie and oak savanna and provides a look at what Iowa was before settlers discovered the rich soil beneath. Bison and Elk, both native to the area, have been reintroduced. As some of the lands have been restored, birding has become more and more interesting. Winter drives often find Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls cruising over

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IOU News

is a quarterly publication of the Publications Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.

IOU News Editor:

John Bissell
328 SE Cedarwood Dr
Grimes, IA 50111-1142
john.annabissell@gmail.com

IOU News Layout:

Anna Bissell
328 SE Cedarwood Dr
Grimes, IA 50111-1142
john.annabissell@gmail.com

IOU Publications Committee:

Ann Johnson, Chair
James J Dinsmore
Stephen J Dinsmore
Bill Scheible
John Bissell

IOU News issues:

- (1) Spring: Published approximately mid-March, depending on date of annual spring meeting.
- (2) Summer: Published late June or early July.
- (3) Fall: Published late August or early September, depending on date of fall meeting.
- (4) Winter: Published late November.

IOU Journal:

Iowa Bird Life
Stephen J. Dinsmore, Editor
cootjr@iastate.edu

Website:

<http://www.iowabirds.org/>

IOU Membership / Subscriptions:

Doug Hunt
1201 High Avenue W
Oskaloosa, IA 52577
<http://www.iowabirds.org/>

this newsletter was mailed to 388 members.

Schedule

All activities take place at the Prairie Learning Center at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

Friday, October 22

6:00 - 9:00 PM Informal reception and registration

Saturday, October 23

7:30 AM Field trips leave (box lunch)
1:00 PM IOU Board Meeting
2:00 PM Field trips return for afternoon programs

About Neal Smith NWR
– Karen Viste-Sparkman

Blurring the Lines Between Conservation and Agriculture: Bird use of prairie strips in crop fields
– Anna MacDonald

3:15 PM IOU Membership Meeting
6:00 PM Fall Banquet and Keynote Address

Umbrella for the Prairie: Prairie Chickens in Southern Iowa
– Stephanie Shepherd

Sunday, October 24

7:30 AM Field trips leave
NOON Lunch and Compilation

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the grasses. The area has a remarkable population of Ring-necked Pheasants, never as evident as opening day of pheasant season when birding the area becomes a bit more difficult! The oak savannas hold numerous woodland species and one never knows when a surprise may be lurking.

In fall the grasslands harbor numerous sparrows and the area has become a regular stopover for Smith's Longspurs, a target for our weekend. LeConte's Sparrow may be found as close as the Prairie Learning Center for those who prefer to stay near the action.

In addition to looking for the prairie species on the refuge, other field trips will be centered on Red Rock Reservoir. October is the best time of year to find the rare Sabine's Gull on the reservoir and waterfowl numbers should begin to build. One never knows what surprise is just around the corner at Red Rock in the fall.

Keynote Speaker

Umbrella for the Prairie: Prairie Chickens in Southern Iowa

**Stephanie Shepherd
Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program**

In the late 19th century the Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido cupido*) was a popular and common game bird on Iowa's landscape. The 1950's saw the demise of this charismatic bird in the state with the last nesting attempt recorded in 1952. Roughly 30 years later efforts began to bring this iconic symbol of prairie grassland back and while success has been questionable many positive and unexpected things have arisen from this bird's return to Iowa. And the story continues with plans for a future effort to bring the boom back to southern Iowa's prairies.



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Field Trips

Field trips will center around these areas:

- **Neal Smith NWR** where we hope to find a few Smith's Longspurs moving through as well as fall sparrows
- **Yellow Banks County Park** along the Des Moines River and **Red Rock Refuge** near Runnells for migrants
- **Red Rock Reservoir** for water-related species which could include Sabine's Gull, a stray jaeger, or who knows what. The Army Corps of Engineers is planning a lake drawdown this fall so there will potentially be some nice mudflats for late shorebirds.

How To Get There

Neal Smith NWR is located in Jasper County just southwest of the town of Prairie City. From the west, take the Prairie City exit (18) on Hwy 163 and follow the signs through the refuge or consult your Sportsman's Atlas. From Interstate 80, exit at Colfax and go south on Hwy 117 through the town of Prairie City. Cross the Hwy 163 bridge and take the refuge road to the Prairie Learning Center.

Lodging

Lodging options are 15 - 20 minutes from the refuge. **All offer a continental breakfast.** For those desiring a bigger breakfast, Hy-Vee and McDonald's are both located in Pleasant Hill just west of the Sleep Inn. For those planning a later birding excursion the Five & Diner (opens 7:00 am) is also just west of the motel on the north side of University.

Sleep Inn & Suites

\$74.99 double or king **until October 1st (mention you are with the Iowa Ornithologists' Union)**
5850 Morning Star Court, Pleasant Hill
Highway 163 Exit of Hwy 65 Bypass
Phone: (515) 299-9922
http://www.sleepinn.com/hotel-pleasant_hill-iowa-IA112

Comfort Inn

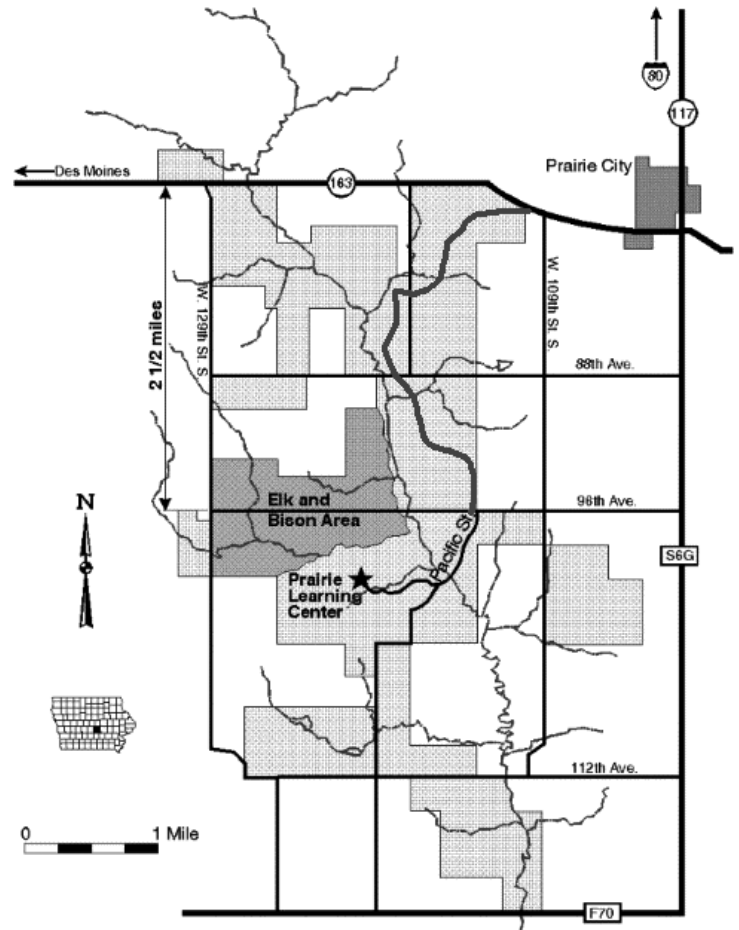
1402 N Walnut St, Colfax
Phone: (515) 674-4455
<http://www.comfortinn.com/hotel-colfax-iowa-IA095>

Microtel Inn

11000 Federal Ave, Colfax
Phone: (515) 674-0600
<http://www.microtelinn.com/MicrotelInn/control/home>

Heartland Inn

300 34th Ave NW, Altoona
Phone: (515) 967-2400
http://www.heartlandinns.com/loc_Altoona.php



2010 IOU Fall Meeting Prairie City, Iowa

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

On-line registration:

If possible, please register through the IOU website at: <http://www.iowabirds.org/>

Make checks payable to: **Iowa Ornithologists' Union**

Mail to: Aaron Brees
6759 NW 6th Dr.
Des Moines, IA 50313

Mail-in registration:

2010 IOU Fall Meeting Registration Form

Copy, fill out, and mail--don't forget your check.

Name(s): _____
(Please include first and last names of all persons registering on this form)

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

	No. of Persons	Total Cost
Registration Fee:	\$15.00 x _____	= \$ _____
Meals:		
Sat. Box Lunch:	\$ 7.00 x _____	= \$ _____
Sat. Banquet:	\$14.00 x _____	= \$ _____
Sun. Lunch:	\$ 10.00 x _____	= \$ _____

Meatless Option? Please check here _____.

\$ _____ Total

Iowa Audubon - Not Another Bird Group!

Doug Harr

For those who have worked in the natural resource trenches for years, there really can never be enough advocates for conservation of birds and other wildlife. Just consider the hurdles wildlife must face in Iowa alone – conversion of grasslands to corn for ethanol, water pollution at a scale of international infamy, fragmentation of forests by housing and development, surrounding of public wildlife lands by wind turbines, saturation of croplands with pesticides of every hue, and the list goes on.

For over a century, the name of “Audubon” has been associated with conservation of birds and their habitats. Beginning in 1905 as a National Association of Audubon Societies, many independent, state-based, Audubon organizations eventually coalesced under the umbrella of the new National Audubon Society (NAS) in 1940. But many groups flying the Audubon flag have remained independent, with Massachusetts Audubon perhaps the largest and most well-known, actually pre-dating the national organization.

Throughout the 20 th Century, local chapters or affiliates of NAS existed across Iowa. For many years chapters were loosely connected via an Iowa Audubon Council, which met periodically to coordinate activities and interests, to issue position statements about various threats to Iowa’s birds and their environment, and even employ a part-time lobbyist. As a result of NAS reorganization in the late 1990s, which involved eliminating regional offices in favor of state offices, Iowa Audubon was renamed “Audubon Iowa”, to fit with new NAS policy. The Council was replaced by a Board of Directors representing each chapter plus members-at-large, and an Executive Director was employed with help of a 2-year NAS grant. But upon expiration of that grant, Audubon Iowa could not raise sufficient funds to retain the Director and NAS re-assigned him to Pennsylvania.

Over the next couple of years, various NAS staff attempted to oversee the Iowa organization from its New York office, which resulted in Iowa’s loss of its treasury control and being pushed into new NAS directions which

did not always meet Iowa’s needs. In 2004, the Board of Directors voted to become an independent state Audubon Society, joining about 16 other independent states. The name was changed back to Iowa Audubon, a new Red-headed Woodpecker logo was created, 501(c)3 status was received, and the organization was opened to board representation by any local bird organization, not just Audubon chapters (the Iowa City Bird Club joined in 2009).

In the past six years, funds raised by Iowa Audubon have been focused upon bird conservation, education, and activities of political interest specific to Iowa. Iowa Audubon has helped the INHF and DNR purchase bird habitat, assumed management of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program from NAS (yes, we still work on joint concerns with NAS), cost-shared a new bird education feature for Woodbury County’s Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, helped fund 2010 bird surveys in the Iowa River Corridor, co-sponsored publication of the Makoke Birding Trail guide and much more.

So, why should Iowa Ornithologists Union members have any interest in Iowa Audubon? Aren’t both groups pretty much all about the same thing? The answer is yes and no. According to its constitution, the purpose of IOU is “... to encourage interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds and to unite all those persons who have this interest in common ... [to] collect and preserve knowledge on the occurrence of birds in Iowa, publish a journal appropriate to its purposes, conduct meetings of its members, and promote bird study in Iowa,...[and it] is organized for educational and scientific purposes.” According to Iowa Audubon’s constitution, its purpose is “ To protect, restore and enjoy Iowa’s natural ecosystems with a focus on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats... to [advocate] the viewpoints of Iowa Audubon on issues relating to conservation and the environment ...[and] to help persons of all ages acquire knowledge about the natural world, our place in it, and the need to preserve it.”

To simplify it a bit, IOU is aimed more at the scientific observation and official record-keeping of

Iowa's birdlife, while Iowa Audubon's primary mission is conservation of bird habitat, including public position statements about what we are doing wrong (or right) with our natural resources. Both groups overlap in their desire for the education of all Iowans about birds and habitat. It appears, then, that the two organizations serve to greatly compliment each other in our joint concern for birds. And while Iowa Audubon currently is a smaller organization than IOU, perhaps 80% of its members are also members of IOU.

I'll conclude with a blatant suggestion that everyone

interested in Iowa's birds should consider membership in both organizations. At \$30 for an individual IOU base membership and \$10 for an Iowa Audubon individual membership, a total of only \$40 annually seems like a pretty inexpensive investment in the future of our wonderful avian resources. I've been a member of Audubon (NAS and/or Iowa Audubon) for 41 years and an IOU member for 33 years, and I've never felt my memberships in either were wasted. For more information about Iowa Audubon, visit the website at www.iowaaudubon.org.

Boone Forks Woodland Bird Conservation Area

Bruce Ehresman

The Iowa DNR is moving forward with its efforts to designate another special area of Iowa as a focal area to promote bird conservation efforts, and it will be known as the Boone Forks Woodland Bird Conservation Area. It encompasses the Boone Forks region, where the Boone River joins the Des Moines River in Hamilton and Webster counties, and is particularly special for birds and bird watchers.

This is one of the richest areas in the state for woodland nesting birds such as the Wood Thrush, American Woodcock, Pileated Woodpecker, Cerulean Warbler, and Whip-poor-will. Results from Iowa's Gap Analysis Project (2003) shows this area to contain some of the highest bird diversity in the entire state, and recent Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas data indicate there are approximately 125-135 bird species that breed in this region each year. This area also supports crucial habitat for birds during migration, providing both feeding and roosting areas that help sustain migrants as they move between winter and summer habitats, making it the clear choice for Iowa's 16th Bird Conservation Area (BCA).

The Des Moines River is of particular importance because it is the connecting corridor for wildlife movements, from Minnesota to Missouri, and it traverses the central portion of the state. With its wooded bluffs, scenic sandstone cliffs, and abundance of wildlife, it is appreciated by a large number of outdoor enthusiasts each year. The Boone River, which forms the core area of the eastern



arm of this BCA is equally important to a large number of wildlife species. Almost all of the warbler species that nest in or migrate through Iowa can be found along these two watersheds, especially during spring.

Of course the success of this BCA is dependent on the cooperative action of many partners, and in this case public agencies like Iowa DNR, Webster and Hamilton County Conservation Boards, and NRCS; private conservation organizations like Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Audubon, Iowa Ornithologist's Union, and National Wild Turkey Federation; and of course private citizens; all will need to work together to insure that this area remains an important bird conservation area far into the future.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union
1201 High Avenue West
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

[Address Service Requested]

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

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