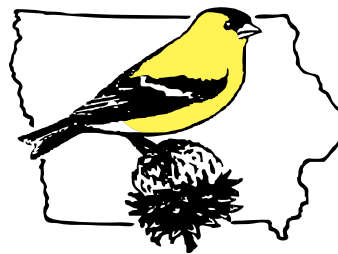


IOU News

Summer 2014  Volume 30 - Number 2



2014 IOU/NOU Spring Meeting

By Dennis Thompson

Photo by Rick Hollis

We shook things up a bit for our spring meeting, as it was held jointly with the Nebraska Ornithologist's Union. 162 people from eight states met May 16-18 at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center in Bellevue, NE. Fontenelle Forest is one of the largest private nature reserves in the nation, encompassing nearly 2,000 acres of forest, prairie, and wetlands along the Missouri River. The center easily accommodated our large group and the Reserve itself lived up to its reputation. 26 (!) miles of

boardwalk and well-maintained trails gave everyone plenty of opportunities for enjoying the birdy woodlands.

The meeting kicked off Friday evening with check-in and an opportunity to socialize. NOU traditionally offers a light dinner the first night and many folks took advantage of the lasagna meal. Ty Smedes presented his "Spring Passerine Migrants" program, whetting everyone's appetite for the weekend's possibilities. He has some stunning photographs and great narrative, so it was a wonderful start

IOU News

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This newsletter was mailed to 45 members.



Photo by Rick Hollis

to the festivities.

After an early breakfast Saturday morning, it was time to go birding. The weather couldn't have been more cooperative. Sunny, cool temperatures and little wind (imagine that!) made for near perfect birding conditions. Organized trips visited Hitchcock W.A., Lake Manawa and nearby parks, and Mills county in Iowa. Many folks spent the morning in Fontenelle. Others ranged far and wide in Nebraska, visiting a lot of the east-central portion of the state.

After lunch, Jerry Toll of Hitchcock hawk-watching fame got our afternoon session started with a presentation on the incredible variety of plumages within Red-tailed Hawks. He also talked about his banding efforts and the recovery rates of the banded birds. Having so many hawks in hand has given Jerry ample opportunity to study the differences between the age groups and the various subspecies (Eastern, Western, Harlan's, et al.). It was very interesting with great close-up photos.

Rick Hollis followed with a lively presentation on eBird. He explained its purpose, how to use it, and positives and negatives of the site. He thinks it's a great tool for tracking common birds and a little shaky on rarities. In some ways, it's the opposite of how we report through Iowa Bird Life. John Bissell is an eBird reviewer, and Rick and he answered a lot of questions.

An uneventful general business meeting closed out the session.

After the banquet, Dan Svingen gave his presentation, "Birding the National Grasslands". Dan is a Grassland Biologist for the U.S. Forest Service and is currently the District Ranger for the Ft. Pierre district. He gave

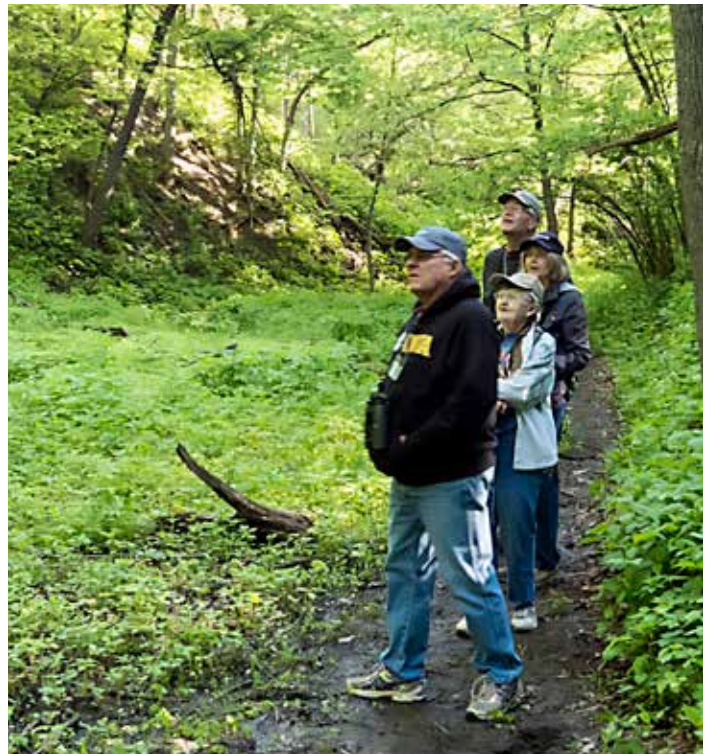


Photo by Rick Hollis

an overview on the history of the National Grasslands and then talked about the special birds they hold in the Northern Great Plains. Dan's insights into their special habitat needs and ID tips (especially on the Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrow) were very interesting. These are special places to visit and Dan's enthusiasm for them really showed. A few intrepid souls made a successful run down to Fremont county after the meeting for Chuck-will's-



widow and Whip-poor-wills.

Thanks again to John McCecil for setting up the silent auction. NOU also had a similar setup. IOU raised \$217 for the Publications Fund. Thanks to all who purchased items.

Sunday morning brought a repeat of the field trip options. Conditions weren't as nice, as it was warm and windy. The noon compilation determined that 176 species had been sighted in Nebraska and 170 in Iowa for an overall total of 202 for the weekend. That's quite a species count!

Many thanks to the NOU for making this a unique and very enjoyable meeting. Fontenelle is a great facility

and reserve. Dave Heidt and especially Betty Grenon did most of the upfront work in setting up the meeting. The presentations by Ty, Jerry, Rick and Dan were top-notch and greatly appreciated. Thanks to the field trip leaders: Elliot Bedows, Keith Dyche, Clem Klaphake, Paul Roisen, Neal Ratzlaff, Al Reyer, Justin Rink, Rick Schmid, Ross Silcock, and Jerry Toll. Mr. President, Paul Roisen, originally proposed the joint meeting and it wouldn't have been as successful as it was without his hard work.

Our 2014 fall meeting will be held August 22-24 at the Ankeny Best Western Inn.

Dedication of Yellow River State Forest as a Globally Important Bird Area

By Hank Zalatel

Iowa Audubon and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) formally dedicated the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River State Forest Conservation Area as the State's first globally important bird area May 31st.

The Cerulean Warbler, whose population has declined by 70% since the 1960s, was the bird that brought the recognition to the area. Local ornithologist Jon Stravers, located hundreds of breeding pairs in the deep forests and steep canyons of the area.



Nearly 50 people attended the dedication with officials from Audubon, IDNR, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and Clayton County Conservation Board making short remarks.

At the end of the ceremony, a beautiful sign was unveiled that will stand near the forest's headquarters denoting the importance of the area.



Summer Meeting 2014 Bird List - 202 species

Species	IA	NE	Species	IA	NE	Species	IA	NE
Greater White-fronted Goose		x	Red-necked Phalarope		x	Gray Catbird	x	x
Snow Goose		x	Franklin's Gull	x	x	Brown Thrasher	x	x
Canada Goose	x	x	Bonaparte's Gull		x	European Starling	x	x
Wood Duck	x	x	Ring-billed Gull	x	x	Cedar Waxwing	x	x
Gadwall		x	Least Tern	x	x	Blue-winged Warbler		x
American Wigeon		x	Caspian Tern	x		Golden-winged Warbler	x	x
Mallard	x	x	Black Tern	x	x	Tennessee Warbler	x	x
Blue-winged Teal	x	x	Forster's Tern	x	x	Orange-crowned Warbler	x	x
Northern Shoveler	x	x	Rock Pigeon	x	x	Nashville Warbler	x	x
Green-winged Teal		x	Eurasian Collared-Dove	x		Northern Parula		x
Canvasback		x	Mourning Dove	x	x	Yellow Warbler	x	x
Redhead	x		Great Horned Owl	x		Chesnut-sided Warbler	x	x
Greater Scaup	x		Barred Owl	x	x	Magnolia Warbler	x	x
Lesser Scaup	x	x	Common Nighthawk	x	x	Cape May Warbler	x	x
Red-breasted Merganser	x		Chuck-will's-widow	x		Black-throated Blue Warbler		x
Ruddy Duck	x	x	Whip-poor-will	x		Yellow-rumped Warbler	x	x
Ring-necked Pheasant	x	x	Chimney Swift	x	x	Black-throated Green Warbler	x	x
Wild Turkey	x	x	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	x	x	Blackburnian Warbler		x
Northern Bobwhite		x	Belted Kingfisher	x	x	Yellow-throated Warbler		x
Common Loon		x	Red-headed Woodpecker	x	x	Palm Warbler	x	
Pied-billed Grebe	x	x	Red-bellied Woodpecker	x	x	Bay-breasted Warbler		x
Horned Grebe		x	Downy Woodpecker	x	x	Blackpoll Warbler	x	x
Eared Grebe	x		Hairy Woodpecker	x	x	Cerulean Warbler		x
American White Pelican	x	x	Northern Flicker	x	x	Black-and-white Warbler	x	x
Double-crested Cormorant	x	x	Pileated Woodpecker	x	x	American Redstart	x	x
Great Blue Heron	x	x	Olive-sided Flycatcher	x	x	Prothonotary Warbler	x	x
Great Egret	x	x	Eastern Wood-Pewee	x	x	Ovenbird	x	x
Cattle Egret	x	x	Acadian Flycatcher		x	Northern Waterthrush	x	x
Green Heron	x	x	Alder Flycatcher		x	Louisiana Waterthrush	x	x
Black-crowned Night-Heron	x		Willow Flycatcher	x	x	Common Yellowthroat	x	x
Yellow-Crowned Night-Heron	x		Least Flycatcher	x	x	Wilson's Warbler	x	x
White-faced Ibis		x	Eastern Phoebe	x	x	Canada Warbler		x
Turkey Vulture	x	x	Great Crested Flycatcher	x	x	Summer Tanager	x	x
Osprey	x	x	Western Kingbird	x	x	Scarlet Tanager	x	x
Bald Eagle	x	x	Eastern Kingbird	x	x	Eastern Towhee	x	x
Cooper's Hawk	x	x	White-eyed Vireo	x		Chipping Sparrow	x	x
Red-shouldered Hawk		x	Bell's Vireo	x	x	Clay-colored Sparrow	x	x
Broad-winged Hawk	x	x	Yellow-throated Vireo	x	x	Field Sparrow	x	x
Swainson's Hawk	x		Blue-headed Vireo	x	x	Vesper Sparrow	x	
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	Warbling Vireo	x	x	Lark Sparrow	x	x
American Kestrel	x	x	Philadelphia Vireo	x	x	Savannah Sparrow	x	x
Sora	x	x	Red-eyed Vireo	x	x	Song Sparrow	x	x
American Coot	x	x	Blue Jay	x	x	Lincoln's Sparrow	x	x
Sandhill Crane	x		American Crow	x	x	Swamp Sparrow	x	
Black-bellied Plover		x	Horned Lark	x	x	White-throated Sparrow	x	x
American Golden-Plover		x	Purple Martin	x	x	Harris's Sparrow	x	x
Semipalmated Plover	x	x	Tree Swallow	x	x	White-crowned Sparrow	x	
Piping Plover		x	Rough-winged Swallow	x	x	Northern Cardinal	x	x
Killdeer	x	x	Bank Swallow	x	x	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	x	x
American Avocet	x		Cliff Swallow	x	x	Blue Grosbeak	x	
Spotted Sandpiper	x	x	Barn Swallow	x	x	Lazuli Bunting		x
Solitary Sandpiper	x		Black-capped Chickadee	x	x	Indigo Bunting	x	x
Greater Yellowlegs	x	x	Tufted Titmouse	x	x	Dickcissel	x	x
Lesser Yellowlegs	x	x	Red-breasted Nuthatch		x	Bobolink	x	x
Hudsonian Godwit	x	x	White-breasted Nuthatch	x	x	Red-winged Blackbird	x	x
Reddy Turnstone		x	Brown Creeper	x		Eastern Meadowlark	x	x
Semipalmated Sandpiper	x	x	Carolina Wren	x	x	Western Meadowlark	x	x
Least Sandpiper	x	x	House Wren	x	x	Yellow-headed Blackbird	x	x
White-rumped Sandpiper	x	x	Sedge Wren	x	x	Common Grackle	x	x
Baird's Sandpiper		x	Marsh Wren	x		Great-tailed Grackle	x	
Pectoral Sandpiper	x	x	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	x		Brown-headed Cowbird	x	x
Dunlin	x	x	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	x	x	Orchard Oriole	x	x
Stilt Sandpiper	x	x	Eastern Bluebird	x	x	Baltimore Oriole	x	x
Buff-breasted Sandpiper			Veery	x	x	House Finch	x	x
Short-billed Dowitcher	x	x	Gray-cheeked Thrush	x	x	American Goldfinch	x	x
Long-billed Dowitcher		x	Swainson's Thrush	x	x	House Sparrow	x	x
American Woodcock	x	x	Wood Thrush	x	x	Sub Total	170	177
Wilson's Phalarope	x	x	American Robin	x	x	Total		202

IOU Fall Meeting

Ankeny, IA, August 22-24th, 2014

By Dennis Thompson

The fall meeting for IOU will be in Ankeny, IA, August 22-24th. We will be headquartered at the Best Western Metro North motel in Ankeny. There are many great birding locations in the area, including: Saylorville Reservoir, Big Creek S.P., Chichaqua WA, and Neal Smith NWR. Shorebird migration should be in full swing and it's a prime time for late summer vagrants.

Keynote Speaker - John Vanderpoel

Full Chase Mode: My 2011 Big Year

John is the creator and producer of the critically acclaimed identification videos, the *Advanced Birding Video Series with Jon Dunn* that include *Large Gulls of North America, Small Gulls of North America and Hummingbirds of North America*.

In September of 1966 as a teenager in the Chicago area, John became fascinated with birds after a cold front grounded dozens of warblers on the family property in Barrington, IL. He's been birding ever since. He has traveled extensively throughout the United States and Mexico both birding and filming for the video series.

In 2011, John set off to attempt a North American Big Year. His whirlwind adventure took him to all corners of North America. He sailed the high seas with the Admiral of the Atlantic, the Queen Bee of the Western Sea, and a modern day mystic. He raced ATVs over the stones of St. Lawrence Island with the Czar and up a snow covered pass on Adak Island in the middle of December with a frontier man. Scores of interesting people and more North American birds in one year than in his entire life awaited John. He wasn't searching for the meaning of life - he was too busy living it. For three hundred and sixty five incredible days.

John's presentation "Full Chase Mode: My 2011 Big Year" will include different stories from his Big Year adventures, some humorous and some informative.

Schedule

Friday, August 22

Best Western Metro North

5:00 - 8:30 pm Registration and Field Trip Sign-up
Snacks and Socializing

7:30 pm IOU Board Meeting

Saturday, August 23

Best Western Metro North

6:00 am Hot Breakfast Buffet

7:00 am Field trips leave
Pick up your box lunch:
Lunch meat sandwich, Chips,
Fruit, Cookie

12:30 pm Field trips return

1:45 pm Rich Leopold - Polk County Water &
Land Legacy Bond - exciting promises
being fulfilled

2:30 pm Kevin Murphy - Waterbird use of
sheetwater wetlands in Iowa's Prairie
Pothole Region

3:15 pm Presenter

4:00 pm IOU Membership Meeting

6:30 pm Banquet

7:30 pm Keynote Address
John Vanderpoel - My 2011 Big Year

Sunday, August 24

6:00 am Hot Breakfast Buffet

7:00 am Field trips leave

12:00 Noon All field trips end at the Best Western
Motel for the compilation of species

1:00 pm Have a safe trip home!

Lodging Options

Blocks of rooms at a reduced price are being held at the Best Western Metro North. Mention that you are with the Iowa Ornithologists' Union to get this special rate. There are many lodging options in Ankeny, with a few more listed.

Best Western Metro North

133 SE Delaware
 515-964-1717
 double queen \$79 (normally \$93)
 single queen \$70.50 (normally \$83)

Days Inn

105 NE Delaware
 515-965-1995

Super 8

206 SE Delaware
 515-964-7647



Photo by Stephen J. Dinsmore

Camping

Saylorville Reservoir

multiple sites

Jester Park

Thomas Mitchell S.P.

Registration Information

Online registration:

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

Make checks payable to Iowa Ornithologists' Union
 Mail to: **Dennis Thompson**
7503 Wildflower Ct.
Johnston, IA 50131

Registering by mail:

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

Name(s): _____

(please include first and last names of all persons registering)

Address: _____

I am a new attendee

			No. of People		Total Cost
Registration Fee	\$20.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Breakfast	\$11.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Lunch	\$8.50	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Banquet	\$17.50	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sun. Breakfast	\$11.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Meatless option? check here			_____	Total \$	_____

Report of the Library/Historical Committee Spring 2014

By Hank Zalatel

The family of a deceased long-time IOU member sent three boxes of 35 mm slides to the Committee. The slides were of common Iowa birds taken over a number of years. Unfortunately, none of the slides were identified by location or date. With the rise of digital photography and the ease of access to the Internet, there is no longer a need for a collection of stock 35 mm images. As a result, the Committee decided not to place the images in its collection.

IOU members desiring to serve on the Library/Historical Committee should contact Hank Zaletel at madowl@midiowa.net.

The IOU Archive is located at the Special Collections Department at Iowa State University. The Department is located in Room 403 of Parks Library. Please view the campus map for directions to the University Library. Special Collections is open Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., or by special appointment.

Contact information:

Email: archives@iastate.edu

Phone: (515) 294-6672

Fax: (515) 294-3186

Summary of Grant Reports for Projects Funded in 2013

By Candace Havelly

The IOU Projects Committee fully or partially funded nine of the applications received in 2013. The Committee had a budget of \$5,000 with which to work. Detailed summaries of projects from Ringgold County and Pammel Park were highlighted in the Spring IOU 2014 issue. Brief summaries of all of the awards granted in 2013 are hereby presented. Each of them fulfills the mission statement of IOU: the identification, study and protection of birds in Iowa.

1. \$150 to The Springbrook Conservation Education Center: Bird ID by Kids. This project funded the acquisition of new bird identification books, mainly the Kaufman Field Guides for student use during the songbird banding and other programs. The Springbrook Conservation Education Center serves approx. 15,000 participants per year with one of the most popular activities being the banding of song birds. During this class the staff catch birds utilizing a mist net, bring the bird inside to gather biological information (species, gender, age), band the bird, and record data. While accomplishing the scientific part, students are educated about bird anatomy, migration, and basic facts/biology. The students have the opportunity to see the birds'

ear, skin, and listen to the heartbeat. To say the least the students and accompanying parents/teachers gain a whole new appreciation/understanding of birds, while the scientific community conducts research. The impact of the programs include: Making more people aware that songbirds are protected; increasing band returns, by explaining the process; raising awareness and appreciation of birds; and increasing the number of feeders and the amount of time students spend watching a feeder.

2. \$350 to Mills County Conservation Board: Bird Viewing Blind at Pony Creek Park. A permanent bird viewing blind at Pony Creek Park that is accessible for students and the public will help to increase the public and school groups' awareness of bird watching and conservation. The bird viewing blind construction was delayed due to unforeseen projects that arose. The Mills County Conservation Board has purchased the materials using the grant money to construct the bird blind and it will be constructed immediately once the ground has thawed in 2014. The blind will serve as a valuable tool for education year round as adults and children visit the park for bird watching programs.

3. \$400 to Allamakee County Conservation Board: Peregrine Falcon Education. Two days of environmental outreach to schools in Allamakee County and the Marquette and McGregor school systems were provided about the Peregrine Falcon, and the lore and ecology of the Mississippi River. Due to inclement weather the planned river cruise had to be canceled, so instead, the Harpers Ferry Community Center was transformed into different learning centers. Elders of the Ho-Chunk Nation also taught children about their native beliefs and customs. Dianne Moller from Hoos Woods Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Milton WI, also presented live-bird programs with her Peregrine Falcon, in immaculate feathered condition. Ms. Moller also brought her Merlin and Screech Owl. This program is so important to the communities in Allamakee County that local civic organizations help to support an evening Fish Fry for the students and the community.

4. \$500 to Ringgold County Conservation Board: Avian Education/Nature Center. The Ringgold County Conservation Board works hard to provide environmental education programming to the communities of Ringgold County with only 1 full-time employee and limited funding. Funds from the IOU have helped enable staff to provide an excellent environmental program with increasing wildlife displays for the public to view.

5. The Conservation Board is working towards building a natural resource center for Ringgold County. The nature center would be beneficial addition to the community. It would serve as a local resource for the community and provide a venue for low-cost family outings. In addition, the center would provide and increasing learning opportunities, with ever changing environmental education programs and displays. Specifically, funding from the Iowa Ornithologist's Union has provided for several bird mounts including: a Snowy Owl, a Barred Owl, 2 juvenile Great Horned Owls and a Kingfisher. These mounts will be used for the bird and habitat displays in the nature center, as well as for regular programming with the public and community groups.

6. \$500 to Mitchell County Conservation Board: Binoculars for Beginning Birders. IOU funds were used to help purchase a set of 25 binoculars to be used for environmental programming through the MCCB.

The binoculars have been used in classrooms, on wildlife hikes, during summer camp activities and at care facility programs. Two pairs of binoculars are provided at the Milt R. Owen Nature Center and receive the most use by visitors to view birds at the feeding station. Through this increased exposure to the bird life of Iowa, there is an increase in interest in Iowa birds and bird watching, and a corresponding increase in bird-related programming. Specifically, several groups, especially care facilities have requested more bird-related programming. This contributes to fostering a greater appreciation of local avian diversity, encouraging interest in birds and bird watching and fostering awareness and participation in bird conservation efforts.

The binoculars will also be used to conduct species inventories of the new oak savannah area that the MCCB is actively restoring. Environmental education programming and interpretation will be conducted in the restored area. The MCCB plans to continually increase the number of bird education programs that utilize the binoculars with the belief that the more people that are exposed to the beauty of birds, both in feather and song, we will generate public support and interest for habitat preservation and other conservation efforts, such as the oak savanna project.

7. \$600 to Madison County Conservation Board: Pammel Park Bird Blind. A permanent bird viewing blind was built near the Nature Center at Pammel Park. This location provides easy access from trails as well as from the nearby campground. The bird blind is located in the transition zone of grasslands and upland timber. These zones provide habitat for a diversity of bird species, and provide an excellent spot for bird viewing. A wider zone of habitat influence includes the riparian ecosystem associated with Middle River which is located within ¼ mile of the blind location.

Construction of the blind began in August of 2013 and was completed September 5, 2013. Building materials were purchased locally and the labor was conducted by employees of the Madison County Conservation Board. The blind, which was officially opened on September 21, 2013, is the first of its kind in the area and is being used regularly. The feeding stations have attracted large numbers and varieties of bird species. This project has also increased awareness about the unique bird species

residing in and migrating through this area and provides a great mechanism to do outreach to the public. CCB members/staff have also increased their participation in birding surveys, and plan to implement a Christmas Bird Count in the future as well as to participate in other organized counts on an annual basis, including the Great Backyard Bird Count. The blind has also helped establish contact and networking opportunities, including coordinating programs with Doug Harr and the Iowa Audubon Society, Makoke Trail users, and receiving an invitation to participate in Urban Bald Eagle Days in Des Moines.

- 8. \$750 to Jon Stravers: Northeast Iowa Cerulean Warbler Monitoring.** IOU funding allowed us to conduct additional observations on Cerulean Warbler populations within the Yellow River Bird Conservation Area. Transect searches and specific locations were conducted by boat, foot, ATV, and in 4-wheel drive automobiles on trails and logging roads. Observations documented 92 active Cerulean Warbler territories within Yellow River State Forest (YRSF). 30 of the territories were newly found in 2013. Of the 92 territories identified, there is record of Cerulean activity in eleven of these sites every year for the past five breeding seasons (2009-2013). It may also be significant that 55 of the active territories were within 300 meters of Paint Creek. Similar to our findings in previous years, we found that Cerulean Warbler territories were often “clustered” together. This conspecific attraction is similar to findings in Cerulean Warblers studies in Southern Indiana (Kirk & Islam 2007; K. Islam personal communication).

Many of the 92 active territories were centered in the lower portion of fairly deep canyons where there was a stream, or an intermittent stream, or wet soil conditions during May and June. Many of the territories also included topographic diversity i.e., they were near a bluff or steep incline and also included vertical stratification with large mature trees with distinct open topography in the upper branches. Although Ceruleans are considered an interior forest species, they were found near the edge of recent timber harvests within YRSF, and at edge habitats near YRSF Headquarters and the Sawmill. More work is needed to identify these pockets of Cerulean Warblers and to understand how they use the various habitats throughout the breeding

and post-breeding season. It may be significant that even though there has been consistent timber management in some sections of YRSF, there has nevertheless been no regular timber management in slopes that exceed a 30 degree slope (Bob Honeywell, YRSF forester, personal communication). Consequently, the researchers believe there is additional opportunity to do a more sophisticated analysis of the 2009-2013 Cerulean data which may help in understanding some of the habitat requirements. There are also opportunities to investigate some of the population dynamics and perhaps try to determine nesting success in this population of Cerulean Warblers. As a result of the findings of our Cerulean study, the Bird Conservation Area in northeast Iowa was recently designated a Globally Significant Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and Birdlife International.

- 9. \$750 to Pottawattamie County Conservation Board: Hitchcock Nature Center Raptor Banding Programs.** IOU grant money allowed researchers to continue their banding of migrating raptors during as part of a long-term monitoring project in coordination with the Hitchcock Hawk Watch, in the Loess Hills of western Iowa. 173 raptors were banded in total, but Fall 2013 was a very unusual diurnal raptor banding season. In past years, red-tails were more than 61% of the total birds banded in a season. This year they averaged only 49%. This was also the second lowest year for the total number of Redtails captured in a season. This corresponds to the lowest count of red-tails at the HawkWatch for the past 10 years. The majority of red-tailed hawks banded have always been juveniles. This season, the lowest ratio of 1.58 juveniles for every adult banded was recorded. Conversely, the second and third most populace species in the sampling, sharp-shins and cooper’s hawks, respectively, both had their best showing this year by a wide margin. The diversity of raptor species banded was about average this season. Singles of Peregrine, Merlin and Broad-winged Hawk completed the season.

IOU funds were also used to fund Saw-whet Owl banding. Saw-whets can demonstrate characteristics of both an irruptive migratory species and a regular migrant. Both types were clearly demonstrated this season. Fall 2013 at Hitchcock Nature Center (HNC) 26 saw-whets compared to a range between 72 and

36 during the past 4 years of effort. However, our banding effort was hampered this past season by unfavorable weather conditions and unfavorable moon cycles resulting in decreased hours of operation. To compensate, the number of owls captured was compared to the number of hours that went into the effort each season. It was found that the ratio this year was very close to 2009 when 36 owls were banded. In most years, the large majority of saw-whets banded are juveniles. This fall, the ratio of juveniles to adults was virtually reversed. A particular exciting finding was learning that a saw-whet banded at Hitchcock in 2012 was captured this fall north of Sacramento California. In contrast, a saw-whet that was first banded in 2010 at Hitchcock was recaptured. Important work on determining migration habits of raptors through Iowa contributes to the body of knowledge and is made possible by the granting of IOU funds.

10. \$1000 to Tyler Harms & Cathy Mabry McMullen: Grassland Bird Nesting Study in Polk County.

Agriculture and urban development have drastically reduced the amount of native grassland habitats across the Midwestern United States resulting in declines in grassland bird populations. Effective, science-based management of remaining grassland habitats is crucial to the conservation of grassland birds. This requires the evaluation of various grassland management practices (e.g., prescribed fire, mowing, haying) in regards to their impacts on vegetation characteristics and reproductive success of grassland birds. The impacts of mowing and haying on vegetation characteristics and grassland bird reproduction at Camp Dodge Army Base (hereafter called Camp Dodge) located in Johnston, Iowa was evaluated. Camp Dodge is approximately 1,780 ha with approximately 1,335 ha in a mosaic of grassland fields in various stages succession as well as riparian areas, early-successional forest, and field rows consisting primarily of shrubs and small trees. A study was conducted on 14 fields (>15 ha) of restored grassland habitats. Three transect surveys per field were conducted for ten grassland-associated bird species from May-August 2013. Focal species included Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*), Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*), Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*), Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*),

Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*), Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), and Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*). Researchers recorded all individual birds of each focal species observed on transects as well as any evidence of breeding (e.g., nest building, presence of fledglings, etc.) for all focal species. Vegetation characteristics in each field every 200 m along bird survey transects were also assessed. The vegetation assessments were done in May while birds were actively constructing nests and before any mowing or haying occurred on fields.

As a result, researchers were able to:

- Document breeding territories, and when possible, document the presence of nests and fledglings in 2013 prior to the change in the timing of mowing.
- Evaluate the influence of vegetation characteristics in response to mowing and haying on
- the abundance of grassland bird species.
- Obtain baseline information needed to support an application for an Audubon Important
- Bird Area designation on Camp Dodge.

This project has important implications because Camp Dodge staff will use the information to evaluate use of the fields by grassland birds and alter their mowing schedules to allow grassland bird nesting in the fields. Camp Dodge staff members are now re-evaluating their management of grasslands and hay fields on the base. This project also provided valuable information on the impacts of mowing and haying on vegetation characteristics and, thus, impacts on grassland birds. Using various modeling approaches, preliminary abundance estimates have been obtained for six grassland bird species of conservation concern on Camp Dodge. Researchers report that the estimates range from 85 (± 64) Sedge Wrens to 503 (± 298) Eastern Meadowlarks on the base. Further research is scheduled to continue this project in 2014, repeating the field methods described above. This will add to the existing data and allow researchers to obtain more precise abundance estimates. In addition, it allows them to further document breeding activity of grassland birds on the base. Knowing the impacts of haying on grassland bird populations will better allow us to assess the utility of haying and mowing as a grassland management practice in Iowa.

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