

IOU News

Summer 2012 

Volume 28 - Number 3

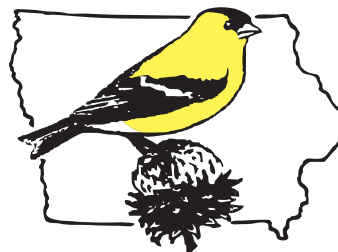


Photo by Don Poggensee

Fall IOU Meeting Wrap-up Marshalltown, August 24-26

Registration for the fall meeting of the IOU was set to begin at 6:00 p.m. in Marshalltown at the Best Western Regency Inn. A line was beginning to form at the registration table as food was set out and weekend information was positioned. Our local contact and field trip organizer, Mark Proescholdt, was in place and eager to offer suggestions on the best places to find birds in the area.

Before long a crowd had formed. Members of the Marshalltown Chamber of Commerce had set up a welcoming reception for the IOU and were busy serving complimentary wine and cheese while visiting with our attendees. Over 70 of our 93 registrants spent time at the social. Sheri Williamson, our

keynote speaker, had arrived without a hitch from Arizona and was busy getting acquainted with Iowa birders. This was her first trip to Iowa. We were thankful to have Dick and Sharon Stilwell graciously greeting her at the airport and getting her where she needed to be for the weekend.

It was good to see familiar faces mixing with the newcomers. Eleven registrants were attending their first meeting. President Paul Roisen was in his usual good form handing out name tags, greeting people, and making introductions. Long time members like Eugene and Eloise Armstrong were on hand reminiscing with old friends. I still recall Eugene's presentation

IOU News

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this newsletter was mailed to 291 members.

on sparrows over a decade ago at what was my first IOU meeting. Do you remember?

It was a pleasure to welcome back some IOU members that haven't been to a meeting for a while. Bird-bander Bob Van Ehrsvelde from Grinnell was on hand and ecologist Dean Roosa was recognized in the crowd amongst others. At any rate, young and old, first timer or veteran, our IOU is a diverse group of people brought together with a common interest in birds.

Field trips

The threat of much needed rain loomed for much of the weekend yet the showers and storms that did develop skirted most of the groups in the field. Late August hardly seems like the time for fall birding but our field trip results showed a wide variety of interesting sightings. In some places, parents were still feeding young, juveniles were begging for food, and juveniles were still looking like and acting like juveniles. Where there was water, shorebirds were present in ever changing flocks. Migrant warblers were seen in both bright and confusing fall plumages. As the weekend finished up, the Marshalltown area proved to be the place to be in Iowa for fine birding August 24-26th.

Grammer Grove

Ask any knowledgeable local where to find good birding in Marshall County and Grammer Grove tops the list. Mark Proescholdt knows this place like the back of his hand and knows his birds, especially warblers. A good mix of migrants were found in the park including Canada, Mourning, and Golden-winged Warblers, Wood Thrush, and Pileated Woodpecker.

Wolfe Creek County Park

Just over the Marshall Co. line is arguably the best place to bird in Grundy County. The Comet bike trail runs through it. Few birds get past the sharp eyes of trip leader Francis Moore. Both Pine and Black-throated Green Warblers and a Brown Creeper were seen in the mix. Stops at Sand Lake and Union Grove State Park in transit had Osprey and Black Terns.

Otter Creek Marsh

This large marsh in nearby Tama County offers good habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds. Denny Thompson and Doug Harr split duties taking people to the best areas in the marsh. Their knowledge of habitats and birds proved to be invaluable, especially for those in search of "life" birds. Having spotting scopes on hand and lots of sharp eyes on the lookout greatly increased the chances of seeing something unusual.

This was the weekend hotspot for shorebirds. Buff-breasted Sandpiper and both Black-bellied and American Golden-Plover were life birds for some. Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Sandhill Cranes were seen up close. The bird of the trip and of the weekend proved to be a Swallow-tailed Kite, first seen perched by Danny Akers and then in flight overhead by many others. What a find!

Marietta Sand Prairie

When on the lookout for birds one can hardly escape noticing the plants, insects and other landscape features that makeup good wildlife habitat. We were fortunate to have prairie experts / naturalists Carl Kurtz and Nancy Slife to lead walks through one of our state preserves - Marietta Sand Prairie - and through some other prairies that Carl manages. Although the grassland birds more common to these sites were less common on this day, a Sora put on a real show out in the open to the delight of the onlookers.



Photo by Don Poggensee

Saturday Afternoon Sessions

Fisher Community Center on the river in Marshalltown.



Gerald White "Recording Birds 101"

IOU member Gerald White has developed a passion for recording birds. One of his recordings (Eurasian Tree Sparrow) is being used by Lang Elliot in his production of bird songs. Gerald took us step by step, in the simplest terms, from how to make a recording

in the field to processing a memorable finished product. With the aid of a quality sound system and a well planned power point presentation, we could hear and see the transformation of a bird recording as he took it from its raw original state, and by gradually eliminating unwanted noise, produced an easily recognizable song.

Gerald mentioned that this was his first time presenting a session like this. Judging from the audible gasps among the

crowd as he brought recordings to a new life, and the positive comments that followed, he should do presentations like this much more often.

For those getting started in bird recording, Gerald notes that nature sounds are usually not very robust so a microphone is needed that can capture soft sounds. He recommends using a microphone that has a low self noise figure, no more than 23dBa and preferably less. The recorder should be capable of recording in a wave format at 44.1khz at 16 bit. There are free programs that are capable of editing and viewing sound files. Gerald recommends starting with Audacity (from sourceforge.net)

to edit files and Raven Lite (from Cornell) to view and save sonograms. For more information contact Gerald at gdwhite@machlink.com.



Sheri Williamson "Good Birders Don't Wear White"

Many had already met Sheri either at the social or on a field trip and

Meeting Attendees

Danny Akers, Ankeny, IA
Eloise Armstrong, Van Meter, IA
Eugene Armstrong, Van Meter, IA
Michael Becker, Cedar Rapids, IA
Carl Bendorf, Solon, IA
Carol Berrier, Delavan, WI
Galin Berrier, Delavan, WI
John Bissell, Grimes, IA
Garry Brandenburg, Albion, IA
Aaron Brees, Des Moines, IA
Donald Brown, West Des Moines, IA
Bill Burch, Des Moines, IA
Joyce Burch, Des Moines, IA
Kathy Burch Myers, Des Moines, IA
John Cecil, Des Moines, IA
Robert Cecil, Des Moines, IA
Larry Dau, Boone, IA
Stephen Dinsmore, Ames, IA
Karen Disbrow, Iowa City, IA
Rose Dooley, Evansdale, IA
Keith Dyche, Shenandoah, IA
Edwin Freese, Adel, IA
Janet Freese, Adel, IA
Ken Gregory, Dysart, IA

Mary Ann Gregory, Dysart, IA
Joel Haack, Cedar falls, IA
Linda Haack, Cedar falls, IA
Doug Harr, Ogden, IA
Mary Jo Hartogh, Elma, IA
Candace Havely, Waterloo, IA
Paul Hertzell, Mason City, IA
Rick Hollis, North Liberty, IA
Nelson Hoskins, Sully, IA
Marlys Huff, Marshalltown, IA
Ginny Huntington, Ames, IA
Stu Huntington, Ames, IA
Margaret (Margo) Hutcheson, Des Moines, IA
Maridel Jackson, Ankeny, IA
Ann Johnson, Norwalk, IA
Thomas Johnson, Mystic, IA
Dorothy Kelley, Des Moines, IA
Mike Kelley, Des Moines, IA
Matt Kenne, Algona, IA
Karen Kinkead and Lena, Ames, IA
Carl Kurtz, St. Anthony, IA
Chad Langford, Sac City, IA
Carol Mefford, Ankeny, IA

Mike Mefford, Ankeny, IA
Barbara Miller, Des Moines, IA
Francis Moore, Waterloo, IA
Jim Murdock, Ames, IA
Kevin Murphy, Ames, IA
Wolfgang Oesterreich, Ames, IA
Art Ollie, Clinton, IA
Eric Ollie, Ames, IA
Joyce Ollie, Clinton, IA
Shane Patterson, Ames, IA
Bruce Plakke, Cedar Falls, IA
Linda Plakke, Cedar Falls, IA
Don Poggensee, Ida Grove, IA
Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, IA
Billy Reiter-Marolf, Granger, IA
Paul Roisen, Sioux City, IA
Dean Roosa, Ames, IA
Linda Rudolph, Coralville, IA
Maria Rundquist, Sioux City, IA
Rex Rundquist, Sioux City, IA
John Rutenbeck, Burlington, IA
Bill Scheible, Cedar Rapids, IA
Tom Schilke, Waterloo, IA
Jim Schmit, Des Moines, IA

Karen Schweitzer, Des Moines, IA
Jeff Skrade, La Crosse WI
Paul Skrade Ames, IA
Nancy Slife, Iowa Falls, IA
Stuart Sparkman, Des Moines, IA
Greg Stempien, Grinnell, IA
Dick Stilwell, West Des Moines, IA
Sharon Stilwell, West Des Moines, IA
Tom Stone, Waterloo, IA
Tommy Stone, Evansdale, IA
Dennis Thompson, Johnston, IA
Fred Truck, Des Moines, IA
Lorna Truck, Des Moines, IA
Bob Van Ersvelde, Grinnell, IA
Laura Vander Meer, Le Mars, IA
Peter Vander Meer, Le Mars, IA
Karen Viste-Sparkman, Des Moines, IA
Tom Vujovich, Des Moines, IA
Gerald White, Muscatine, IA
Sheri Williamson, Bisbee, AZ
Charles Winterwood, Dubuque, IA
Gretel Winterwood, Dubuque, IA

found her to be energetically friendly and excited to be in Iowa. She is very knowledgeable about many subjects, especially birds, the challenges they face to survive, and the challenges we come across in trying to get to know and understand them. Drawing on her experiences and the experiences of others while studying birds, Sheri shared how we have an impact on bird life - sometimes without even knowing it. One example given was that of a nesting bird that was particularly sensitive to color, especially white, to the point of not returning to the nest with food until that perceived white threat was gone. The more we become aware of the sensitivities of the birds we love, the more success we can have as birders, at the same time insuring their survival.



Carl Kurtz
“Bird Photography in a Digital Age”

Substituting for Ron Huelse, who was attending to a family emergency, was Carl Kurtz. Carl is a keen observer of the natural world and is well known as a nature photographer, writer, and interpreter. His photographs have appeared

in numerous magazines and publications. The bird photographs Carl shared were exceptional. With each photograph he took us back in time to the place, setting, and thought process he used to take the photograph. Often, his photos captured birds actively doing something interesting in their natural habitat. Carl showed us that even the most common birds display interesting behaviors that can be communicated with a digital image.

With the appearance of digital cameras and computers, capturing images of birds and wildlife has become easier and less expensive. The challenge is in knowing your equipment and increasing your odds by planning to be in the right place at the right time.

Shane Patterson - “BBA update”

As our current BBA coordinator, Shane has been busy compiling the flood of data that has been coming in from BBA observers from around the state in this, the final year of the project. Shane shared the most recent findings. Most impressive was the response from our IOU volunteers who helped push data collection to a level far surpassing what might have been expected. In May, Shane put out a plea for people to be on the

look out for owls. Data was lacking, especially for Screech Owls. Birders responded with increased owl reporting. Data collection will wrap up in October and the major task of putting it together will start.

On the Sidelines

Doug Harr and Karen Disbrow are often seen at meetings and around the state promoting birding with displays and merchandise sales. The displays they maintain on the sidelines of our meetings spur interest in educating the public about birding. The silent auction was a big success again. John Cecil has taken over the responsibility of managing the sale from his dad Bob Cecil. Echoes of Bob (and now John) reminding people to “Bid high and bid often” must be etched in the memories of IOU members as \$326 was taken in from the silent auction. Thanks to all the generous donors and bidders.

Banquet

A mouth watering buffet of roast beef, baked chicken, vegetable lasagna and all the fixings was provided by the friendly folks at the Marshalltown Hy Vee. Clean up was quick and anticipation was high for the keynote address “Hummingbirds-More Than Just Eye Candy” by Sheri Williamson of the Southeast Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO).

Sheri is internationally known as a hummingbird expert. Throughout the afternoon Sheri was busy signing copies of her books and chatting with birders. She is the author of “The Hummingbirds of North America” of the Peterson Field Guide series.

To begin her talk Sheri said that we often see hummingbirds as what we want them to be rather than the as incredible survivors they are. As we would soon learn during Sheri’s fascinating, detailed talk they are truly “More Than Just Eye Candy.”

Sheri listed for us major points about hummingbirds that should deservingly give them more respect as survivors.

1. They have less DNA in cell nuclei than other birds.
2. They see four distinct peaks of color - we see three.
3. Their muscles are like insects having one nerve that fires the muscles.
4. They are in the Old Family of birds - fossils date 30-44 million years.
5. Have been admired for millennia as evidenced in ancient art.
6. Their iridescence is magical - like that of a Quetzal.
7. They are pugnacious and ferocious warriors.
8. They share a partnership with flowers as pollinators.
9. Territoriality is a huge part of their lives.
10. Sounds - they are good mimics, sing and most can make

sounds with their wings. The Anna's is the best known singer and moves at the bottom of its display dive faster than the space shuttle.

11. In family life they are not good role models - the female does it all.
12. They are predominantly tropical in diversity (160 sp. in Ecuador) - when migrating, one gram of fat will carry them 300 miles - usually have 3-6 grams of fat.
13. They have bigger brains in proportion than we do.

The Birds

By show of hands at the banquet it looked like around half of our birders had at least one life bird during the weekend. Some "lifers" mentioned were Solitary Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, Canada Warbler, and of course the Swallow-tailed Kite. Others added birds to a county list or saw birds for the first time in Iowa. New birding areas were explored and new friends were made.

Counting only the birds seen in Marshall, Tama and Grundy Counties from 6:00 p.m. Friday to 1:00 p.m. Sunday, 137 bird species were identified. Of these, 17 species were warblers. Not bad for late summer / early fall birding.



Fall Meeting - Marshaltown 2012 Bird List

Canada Goose	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Mourning Warbler
Wood Duck	Downy Woodpecker	Common Yellowthroat
Gadwall	Hairy Woodpecker	Wilson's Warbler
Mallard	Northern Flicker	Canada Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Pileated Woodpecker	Scarlet Tanager
Northern Shoveler	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Eastern Towhee
Green-winged Teal	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Chipping Sparrow
Gray Partridge	Yellow-bellied	Field Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Flycatcher	Vesper Sparrow
American White Pelican	Willow Flycatcher	Lark Sparrow
Double-crested	Least Flycatcher	Song Sparrow
Cormorant	Eastern Phoebe	Swamp Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Great-crested Flycatcher	Northern Cardinal
Great Egret	Eastern Kingbird	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Green Heron	Empid Sp.	Indigo Bunting
Turkey Vulture	Yellow-throated Vireo	Dickcissel
Osprey	Warbling Vireo	Bobolink
Bald Eagle	Red-eyed Vireo	Red-winged Blackbird
Northern Harrier	Blue Jay	Eastern Meadowlark
Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Crow	Yellow-headed
Cooper's Hawk	Purple Martin	Blackbird
Broad-winged Hawk	Tree Swallow	Common Grackle
Red-tailed Hawk	Northern Rough-winged	Brown-headed Cowbird
American Kestrel	Swallow	Orchard Oriole
Sora	Bank Swallow	Baltimore Oriole
American Coot	Cliff Swallow	House Finch
Sandhill Crane	Barn Swallow	American Goldfinch
Black-billed Plover	Black-capped Chickadee	House Sparrow
American Golden-Plover	White-breasted Nuthatch	Swallow-tailed Kite
Semipalmated Plover	Brown Creeper	
Killdeer	Carolina Wren	
American Avocet	House Wren	
Spotted Sandpiper	Sedge Wren	
Solitary Sandpiper	Marsh Wren	
Lesser Yellowlegs	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Least Sandpiper	Eastern Bluebird	
Baird's Sandpiper	Veery	
Pectoral Sandpiper	Wood Thrush	
Stilt Sandpiper	American Robin	
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Gray Catbird	
Long-billed Dowitcher	Brown Thrasher	
Gull Sp.	European Starling	
Black Tern	Cedar Waxwing	
Forster's Tern	Golden-winged Warbler	
Rock Pigeon	Tennessee Warbler	
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Nashville Warbler	
Mourning Dove	Yellow Warbler	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Chestnut-sided Warbler	
Great Horned Owl	Magnolia Warbler	
Barred Owl	Black-throated Green	
Common Nighthawk	Warbler	
Chimney Swift	Blackburnian Warbler	
Ruby-throated	Pine Warbler	
Hummingbird	Black-and-white Warbler	
Belted Kingfisher	American Redstart	
Red-headed Woodpecker	Ovenbird	

The IOU Membership Committee

This year's membership Committee consists of Doug Harr, Karen Disbrow, Rick Hollis and Paul Skrade. Paul's main committee task is to update and monitor IOU's Facebook page--something best done by someone like Paul, who is very familiar with Facebook.

The membership committee's overall task is to recruit and keep members. One new project this year is the creation of three additional IOU traveling displays. Along with the current older one, all panels will be distributed to storage places across the state, so that any IOU member might have more ready access to pick up and use one of these displays at virtually any kind of local event--bird club meetings or field trips, community festivals, IMBD events in May, etc. Currently, panels are stored at Sioux City, Boone and Iowa City, with the fourth still looking for a home somewhere along the "east coast" of Iowa. New photos and information sheets are being completed to go with each display, bringing the IOU information up-to-date. When they're ready, we will try to let everyone know where they are stored and how you can get one to place at an event.

At the May IOU meeting, a suggestion was made that we try

learning why some former members decided not to renew, so that we might improve attractiveness of our organization to more birders. The membership committee is devising a short questionnaire to be sent to members who have dropped off our roles in recent years. We hope that some responses might lead us to discover new ideas for fostering a growing and healthy membership.

Finally, the committee is also in charge of IOU merchandise sales: polo shirts, T-shirts, caps and bird checklists. A sales table is prominently featured at each semi-annual IOU meeting, and online sales are now available through Ann Johnson's webmaster efforts. The newest feature is an online merchandise inventory to help the committee better track supplies and when we need to re-order items.

The committee would gratefully receive ideas from our general membership that might help improve the organization and boost participation. Any suggestions may be emailed to: dharr@netins.net.

Doug Harr
Membership Committee Chair

Rehabilitated Bald Eagles Released Back to the Wild

ISU College of Veterinary Medicine's Wildlife Care Clinic teamed up with SOAR (Saving Our Avian Resources) to release two rehabilitated Bald Eagles at McFarland Park on Saturday, March 23. The eagles had suffered some type of poisoning, probably from lead. It was great to see them let back into the wild. The event was attended by a very large crowd, including many children. One bird was an adult male. The other probably a 3-4 year old female. The birds did not disappoint. The younger and very feisty female flew off to a distant tree. The male immediately took to the skies, finally circling high above the park.



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