

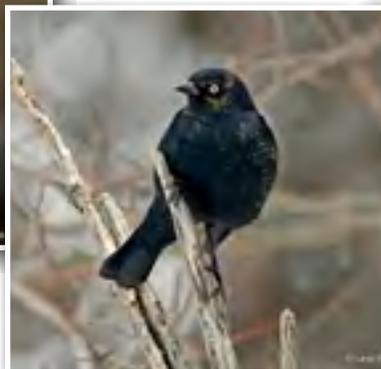
BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER Volume 59 | Number 2 | April/May/June/July/August 2024
<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>



White Crowned Sparrow
Photo by Larry Dau



Rusty Blackbird
Photo by Larry Dau

2024 Big Bluestem Audubon Society Programs

All programs are held at the
Ames Public Library (515 Douglas Ave.)

Business Meetings: 6:30pm - Programs: 7:00pm

2024 - 2025 programs

- Apr. 18th: Speaker: Ty Smedes**
Topic: Golden Eagles of Mongolia
- May. 16th: Speaker: TBA**
Topic: The Ames Pollinators Plan
- Sept. 19th: LoraKim Joyner**
Topic: Birding for Life
- Oct. 17th: Steve Dinsmore**
Topic: Iowa's Changing Wildlife
- Nov. 21st: Susan Gwiasda**
Topic: Ames Climate Change Action Plan: An Overview
- Dec. 19th: Christmas Party**
- Jan. 16th: Carl Kurtz**
Topic: Prairie Birds
- Feb. 20th: Tyler Kelly**
Topic: Story County Conservation's American Kestrel
- Mar. 20th: Rich Leopold**
Topic: Brenton Slough
- Apr. 17th: LoraKim Joyner**
*Topic: Transformative Parrot Conservation:
Parrot Conservation in the Americas*
- May 15th: Karen Hinkle and Hank Zaletel**
Topic: Birding in Belize

Going forward BBAS will have its December meetings at the same time (6:30 p.m. business meeting, 7:00 p.m. for the program) as we do for the other meetings. We are also switching our venue of the December meeting to the Ames public library. We will no longer have our December meeting at McFarland Park, beginning in December of 2024. December meetings will now be the 3rd Thursday of the month, the same as the other monthly meetings are scheduled. The change allows for consistency and avoids any confusion that may arise from having a December meeting that occurs at a different time, date, and location from the other BBAS meetings.

Forty Years Ago in BBAS

April-June 1984
by Hank Zaletel

Officers for the 1983/84 year were: John Stampe, President; Tom Davis, Vice-President; Laura Marak, Secretary; Judy Shearer, Treasurer; Judy van der Linden, Education.

Programs for April - June included in April, Karl Kurtz on "The Natural History of Minnesota, A Photographic Journey Through Many of the State's Natural Areas." In May, Jim Kienzler, DNR biologist, spoke on "Steel Shot: the Iowa Perspective." In June, Bill Horine spoke on "Alaskan Eagles: Up Close and Personal."

April work projects included tree planting and rehabilitation of the Audubon Trail in Brookside Park

Elections for the 1984/85 year were held: Jim Murdock, President; Sherry Dragula, Secretary; Board Members: Dave Edwards, Janet Graver and Mary Owings.

Over 500 trees were planted on the north side of U.S. 30 between Ames and Nevada on May 12. Thirteen members and friends participated on a beautiful sunny day.

Paul Martsching reported these unusual warbler sightings in May at Brookside Park: Worm-eating, Hooded and Pine. A Whimbrel was found at Hendrickson Marsh on May 12-14.

Legislative issues for these months included the Garrison Diversion in North Dakota, Acid Rain and steel shot in hunting.

Notice to New Members of Big Bluestem Audubon Society Only:

We are sending you this printed version of our BBAS newsletter for the first two issues after you have joined the National Audubon Society or become a local member. We have now converted to a mostly electronically-delivered newsletter to save costs and be more green. If you want to receive a printed version, please notify me. Otherwise, you will receive the online version. If you supplied your email address upon joining, we will send you a notice and link for the newsletter each time a new version is available.

Thanks,
Tim Garner
timgarner@mediacombb.net



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Horned Lark
Photo by Larry Dau



Blackbird
Photo by Larry Dau

**Your
Donations
At
Work**



Thanks to your financial support of Big Bluestem Audubon Society, our organization in the past year has been able to do the following:

Fund an effort to engage in the eradication of invasive plant species at Ledges State Park, make a generous contribution to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and the American Bird Conservancy. And purchase Audubon Adventure kits, for use by elementary teachers. These kits focus on improving students' non-fiction reading and writing skills while learning more about birds.

**We are so grateful for your support.
You have made a difference!**

Membership Application Form

New member of the National Audubon Society. You will receive the *Audubon* magazine, the *Big Bluestem Flyer*, membership card. - \$20

Please make your check payable to *National Audubon Society* and include "Chapter Code H-57" on the check

Subscribe to the *Big Bluestem Flyer* for one year and participate in some Big Bluestem Society Activities - \$10

Restrictions are that you will not be a National Audubon Society Member or have voting privileges, and you cannot be an officer or committee chair.

Please make your check payable to *Big Bluestem Audubon Society*.

Send your check and this coupon to:

Big Bluestem Audubon Society
P.O. Box 543, Ames IA 50010

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

*Please do not use this form for renewals
to the National Audubon Society.*

For Official Use Only
C1ZH570Z

On February 23, Flaco, the Eurasian eagle owl, flew into a building in Manhattan and crashed to the ground. He died shortly thereafter. When that news came through on a notification on my cell phone, my heart sank.



Lapland Longspur
Photo by Larry Dau

Flaco, as you will recall, escaped when someone cut open a hole in his enclosure at a New York City zoo a year earlier. At first the zookeepers attempted to recapture him, (even the NY police department was called into action, but Flaco proved to be uninterested in being taken into custody, and flew away from his would-be captors, prompting the police department to tweet “well, that was a hoot” on X.) At first, his caregivers at the zoo were concerned that, because he had never lived in the wild before that he would lack the requisite hunting skills needed for survival.

But Flaco proved them wrong. Within a few days he had been spotted dining on a rat that he had snared with his impressively long talons. And so began his improbable but, in my view, incredibly heartwarming rise to the avian equivalent of superstardom, capturing the hearts of New Yorkers and bird lovers everywhere alike, and inspiring numerous stories in national publications, including the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. Amateur birders photographed him throughout the city, and he landed atop air conditioners and balconies, delighting the residents of the Big Apple, who felt, with great justification, deeply privileged to see an owl with a nearly 6 foot wingspan up close. And he was an incredibly beautiful specimen. Absolutely gorgeous in my view.



Horned Lark
Photo by Larry Dau

His death prompted a back and forth between those who said that the individuals who opened his cage were ultimately responsible for Flaco’s untimely death (owls can live for decades in captivity) and those who felt that Flaco at least had a year in the wild, which is what nature had intended for him. My point here is not to side with one view or the other. I wish rather to reflect on how birds can so inspire awe, wonder, affection, and even love. Those interviewed in those newspapers all spoke of a reverence for Flaco, and some unabashedly shed tears upon learning of his death.



Grackle
Photo by Larry Dau

I, too, felt a deep sadness and a great sense of loss, while at the same time feeling gratitude for what Flaco had given me, indeed all of us who followed his exploits in Manhattan and Central Park. He reminded us of the remarkable power of instinct—a bird who had never hunted before, and yet instinctively knew how to do so. A bird who navigated for a year the numerous hazards of living in a city that never sleeps—with its windows, skyscrapers, and city lights, and traffic. He became, for me at least, a metaphor for the beauty and inspirational power of birds, who, in their flight, their songs, and their ability to adapt and to survive, remind us of why we fell in love with these amazing descendants of dinosaurs in the first place.

So, while my heart is broken for what we have lost, I will always be grateful for what Flaco has given us. Rest well, sweet owl, rest well. You made so many people so very happy.

Tim Garner, *newsletter editor*

Book Review

Doug Harr

(Originally published in the Iowa Audubon Newsletter.)

Tending Iowa's Land: Pathways to a Sustainable Future, by Cornelia Mutel, Editor. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, Iowa, 2022. 302pp.

Over the past three decades, Iowa City author Cornelia Mutel has written several excellent books about Iowa's natural resources, climate change and more. In her newest book reviewed here, she is the editor of chapters written by 27 Iowans, all with various backgrounds in farming and our environment. The book is divided into four sections, about Iowa's soil, water, air and life (biodiversity of flora and fauna). Cornelia first opens with a general introduction and her own brief history of Iowa's life and land. Then she writes a prelude to begin each of the four sections, briefly explaining what the contributing section writers will discuss about soil, water, air and life. What is interesting was Cornelia's request for each contributor to write in their own storytelling fashion, which they do. Those writers alternate first with a chapter typically based upon careers as environmental engineers, wildlife biologists, university professors and more. They write in similar styles, easy to read for almost anyone, while still focusing upon the typically scientific practices of their individual jobs, what they learned

about how Iowa's environment has been badly damaged especially due to intensified monotypic agriculture since WWII, and how Iowa farmers must now move into "regenerative agriculture" as quickly as possible. Each of these somewhat more science-based chapters is followed by a personal story from another Iowan having a diversified old farm or natural habitat in their life's background. This allows each to explain what they learned about Iowa's land, water, air and wild creatures as they grew up in or worked outdoors. Every contributing writer in Cornelia's entire book wants their word spread to Iowans. It is what we all now should know about work being done by concerned landowners, environmental organizations, government agricultural agencies, and even individual volunteers to help reclaim, restore, and regenerate our soil, water, air, and biodiversity. Contributor Pauline Drobney wrote, "It is easy to feel helpless when confronted by the staggering loss of Iowa's native landscape, but we have tremendous power to help reverse that loss." The essential purpose of Cornelia Mutel's new book is exactly that many Iowans now have this knowledge and power, so we understand what has to be done and how rapidly we must all join in restoring and properly managing our lands and environment. *Tending Iowa's Land* is an absolutely inspiring work that is a must-read for all Iowans

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society promotes fostering an inclusive, equitable, and diverse climate and culture, where all members of our organization can thrive. We welcome people of all backgrounds and seek to create a membership that is inclusive of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences while enhancing a culture of respect and civil discourse. We aspire to attract and retain a diverse membership.

WHO'S WHO

Well I figured out why the red Screech Owl moved to another box this year. A Gray Screech Owl was looking out of the old box today. So 2 Screech Owls at my place and 2 more across the street.

In the Harrier Marsh area large flocks of mixed Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs.

*Photos attached.
Larry Dau, Boone Co.*

PHOTOS AND CONTENT FOR NEWSLETTER BY TIM GARNER

Please submit any photos of birds, wildlife, habitat, or events that you would like to be included in the flyer newsletter to Tim Garner (timgarner@mediacombb.net). We are also looking for short content items and announcements.



Gray Screech Owl
Photo by Larry Dau



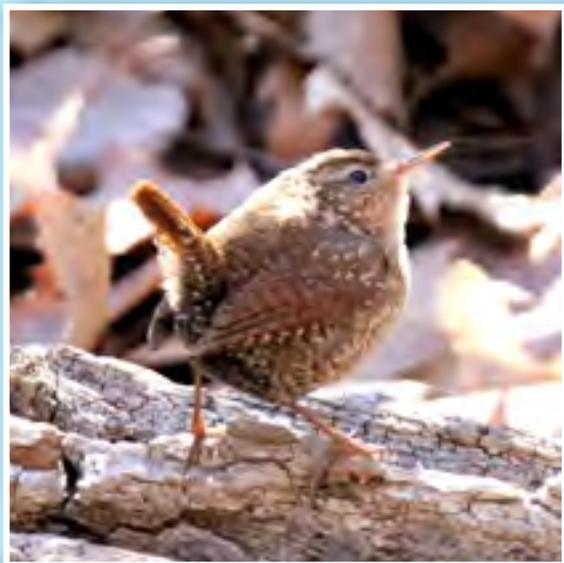
Red Screech Owl
Photo by Larry Dau

This Year in Review. Look What We Did.

- Donated \$1,250 to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Donated \$100 to the Iowa Wildlife Center
- Lead 10 birders on a breathtaking California trip thanks to Eric Ollie & Rachel Clark
- Lead several BBAS members on Saturday morning bird walks around Ames thanks to Eli Kenyon
- Donated \$183.80 to 3 elementary classrooms in Ames for Audubon Adventure kits
- Sponsored the Conservation Crew of Minnesota & Iowa by giving \$6,700 to help remove invasive shrubs from Ledges State Park

This was all made possible because of the support from birdathon donors, your membership fees, memorial money, & donations from Wild Birds Unlimited & Brekke's Town & Country Store, in addition to the many hours of donated time that members have put in to help support conservation.

by Heather Sanders



Bird-A-Thon Is Coming!

When? May 11 th

Where? Anywhere in Iowa

Who? Anyone who wants to participate may do so

How? It's easy. Form a team (as many people can be on it as you like) and on May 11 th , go birding and record as many species as you can. Get people to sponsor you at any level, and have them write a check to Big Bluestem Audubon Society. No donation is too small! Turn in your list of birds which you spotted to Wolf Oesterreich at wolfoest@gmail.com by May 13th.

If you don't have a team to sponsor, but you would still like to support the Big Bluestem Audubon Society, just write a check to the Big Bluestem Audubon Society and mail it to Big Bluestem Audubon Society, P.O. Box 543, Ames, IA. 50010

All payments are due by May 31st, either to the team which you're sponsoring or to the BBAS address listed above.

Please consider making a donation. It is our one and only fundraiser. Questions? E-mail Tim Garner at timgarner@mediacombb.net or telephone or text him at 515-451-0960

Ledges State Park 100 th Anniversary - By Karl Jungbluth

2024 is a big year for Ledges State Park, with the 100 th Anniversary of the park dedication coming on November 9 th. The Friends of the Ledges have many activities planned, including bird hikes and an all-day celebration on September 28 th with music, food and kids activities.

- To keep up with the latest events, follow the Friends of the Ledges on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheLedges>
- The next bird hike will be a Woodcock Watch at 7 pm on Saturday, April 13 th , leaving from the Upper Parking Lots.
- On May 11 th , it's BBAS Birdathon day and World Migratory Bird Day, plus the park will be hosting a **Bird Blitz**. All birders, including Birdathon teams, are invited to spend some time in the park, submit their list via eBird, and help propel the park toward 100 species for the 100 th Anniversary.

Invasive Shrub Removal - Ledges State Park - By Karl Jungbluth

Thanks to a largely snow-free winter, an ambitious invasive shrub removal project made great progress in Ledges State Park since August of 2023. Volunteers, along with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) crews, dedicated hundreds of hours to the difficult work of cutting and treating invasive shrubs, all for the benefit of native habitats in the park. As of the end of March, a total of 40 acres have been cleared of autumn olive, honeysuckle, barberry, multiflora rose and buckthorn.

Did you know the **25% of the CCMI crew work was funded by a generous donation from Big Bluestem Audubon Society?** Thank you BBAS, and ALL Birdathon participants and supporters!!! The \$6700 donation funded a crew of 6 for one week at the end of February.

The Friends of the Ledges group also secured grants from local foundations, including the Leonard Good Trust, Boone County Community Foundation, Boone County F.O.R.C.E and the Iowa Ornithologists Union. Volunteers are a very big part of the project, and over 40 volunteers have worked nearly 500 hours to cut smaller invasive shrubs. More volunteer work days will be scheduled this spring, so follow the DNR website if you'd like to help. <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/Ledges-State-Park> or <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheLedges>

Cleared areas need to be monitored for regrowth of invasive shrubs, and we'd also like to know how birds are using the more open habitat. When you visit the Ledges, please check out locations in the upper portion of the park where work was done. You can't miss the giant brush piles. Please report your observations to Karl Jungbluth (weatherbird58@gmail.com) or Ledges@dnr.iowa.gov, and if you'd like a personal tour, contact Karl.



CCMI work crew cuts invasive honeysuckle northeast of the Lost Lake Parking Lot.



CCMI crew ready to work on a cold morning in December 2023.



CCMI crew cuts and piles invasive Autumn Olive shrubs.



CCMI work crew takes a lunch break on a nice February day, 2024. Two days later, it was 8 degrees.



Map of cleared invasive shrubs between August 2023 - March 2024.

The Big Bluestem Audubon Society would like to acknowledge and mourn the death of a long-time member, **Donna Flanagan**.

We offer our deepest sympathies to her family and friends. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation for the donations to Big Bluestem Audubon Society made in loving memory of Donna by the following individuals:

Brenda and Scott McCloud,
Steven and Randi Peters,
Ronald and Linda Meyers,
and Sandra Kay Moore.

Your generosity will enable our organization to financially support initiatives that promote the conservation of the birds that we all love.

We thank you.

I had a great day of birding in Greene & Carroll Counties today, ending up with 53 species, my largest number in one day so far this year. FOY species for me included 1 **Eastern Phoebe** (Hobart Wildlife Area in NW Green Co.), 2 **Wood Ducks** (Dunbar Slough), and 4 **Smith's Longspurs** (Hunter Tract of Dunbar Slough). There were 4 longspurs, 2 each in different locations. Two along the road on the east side of the Hunter Tract were feeding in grass right at the roadside, so I stopped and took photos only about 20 ft. from me. While in the grass they did not give me the best shots, but then one flew up and landed on the fence, in perfect sunlight for more photos (one attached here). This was the first time I've ever gotten photos of Smith's Longspurs, and I've never seen any kind of longspur perch on a fence before. Perching on a wire sure makes the very long rear claw completely visible!!!

Doug Harr Ogden



BBAS Businesses

Please know that if you make a purchase at either Wild Birds Unlimited or Brekke's Town and Country Store, Inc. that these businesses will make a donation to Big Bluestem Audubon Society. Be sure to present the coupon when making the purchase. We thank these fine businesses for their generous support.

Donate \$5 of your next purchase* of \$25 or more at WBU to BBAS



Big Bluestem Audubon Society



*Coupon must be presented at time of purchase. One coupon per purchase. May not be combined with any other offer. Valid only at Wild Birds Unlimited of Ames.

Expires 12-31-2024

213 Duff Ave. Ames, IA 50010 (515) 956-3145
Monday-Friday 9:30-5:30 Saturday 9-5 Sunday 12-4
www.ames.wbu.com

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Brekke's offers Big Bluestem Audubon Society a donation when bird seed or other bird products are purchased.

Present this coupon with your purchase and a donation will be given to BBAS.

Expires 12-31-2024

NEW MEMBERS

OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

We are pleased to announce that the following people have joined the Big Bluestem Audubon Society.

Welcome!

And thank you for joining our ranks.

Denny Seitz

Fun Fact: Denny belongs to ROMEO, which stands for Really Old Men Eating Out, a dining group!

The mission of the Big Bluestem Audubon Society is to enjoy the observation and study of birds and natural ecosystems, contribute to their conservation and restoration, engage in educational activities to benefit humanity, and gain a broader understanding and deeper appreciation of the world in which we live.

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<http://bigbluestemaudubon.org/>



If you have an "X" after your name on your mailing label, this will be your last issue of the Flyer unless you renew.

We welcome new members!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Big Bluestem Flyer
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PO Box 543
Ames, IA 50010-0543