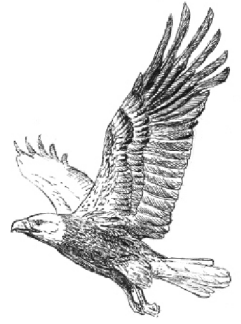




MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



UPCOMING EVENTS *All activities open to the public.*

Vol. 31, No 3

Fall 2020

All upcoming Membership Meetings are subject to change, depending on guidance from the State of Illinois regarding the coronavirus. It is recommended to check on our website for current status. The guidance as of this writing (8-22-20) is that Butterworth Center is open and we can continue to meet in the Library with the following guidelines: there will be a maximum of 26 people allowed due to social distancing requirements, chairs will be set up so they are 6 feet apart, and masks will be required to be worn at all times indoors.

September 10th, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Thursday - Membership Meeting, The Butterworth Center. Local environmental advocate Lori O'Dell McCollum will present "The Climate Crisis: What You Can Do to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint."

September 20th, 2020, 7:30 a.m., Sunday - Field Trip, Illiniwek and Dorrance Park. We'll be on the lookout for fall warblers and early migrants on this half day field trip. Meet at the east side of Route 84 at the south parking area of Illiniwek Forest Preserve. For further information, contact Tim Murphy 309-764-9779.

October 8th, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Thursday - Membership Meeting, The Butterworth Center. Our speaker this month is Quad City Audubon Board Member, Dr. Brian Peer of Western Illinois University. His program is titled "Prothonotary Warbler: Jewel of the Quad City Swamps." He will share information from research he and his students have been conducting on these beautiful birds in the Quad Cities area.

October 10th, 2020, 8:00 a.m., Saturday - Field Trip, Crow Creek Park (4701 Devils Glen Road), Bettendorf. We'll be looking for late fall warblers and early winter residents on this half day field trip. Meet at the Quarry Parking Lot.

November 15th, 2020, 7:00 a.m., Sunday - Field Trip, Lock and Dam 13. This is a field trip to focus on migrating waterfowl with an emphasis on the Mississippi River from Lock and Dam 13 to Savanna, Illinois. Meet at Brothers Restaurant (1718 2nd Avenue, Rapids City, Illinois) for carpooling/caravan.

December 10th, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Thursday - Membership Meeting, The Butterworth Center. Our speaker will be our club's president, Jody Millar, who will share her knowledge on Bald Eagles. Following the program, will be our annual Pie Night, with a few changes: there will be a one-way line into the kitchen where the pie will be served, and seating will be at new small tables in three rooms to provide social distancing. If you are able, please bring your favorite pie to share.

On the web at www.quadcityaudubon.org, and visit us on Facebook.

All membership meetings are held at the Butterworth Center, 1105 8th Street, Moline.



Audubon

The Quad City Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society

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Vacant

Field Trips

Board Members

Membership

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qcaudubon@gmail.com

Changes to the Newsletter

The Quad City Audubon Board is considering elimination of the printed Newsletter and using electronic versions only. For the remainder of 2020, the newsletter will continue to be mailed out in printed form. Beginning in 2021, Mississippi Currents could transition to an electronic only format. We are wondering how our membership feels about this. Please write us a letter (address on last page of this newsletter) or send us a note at our email address (qcaudubon@gmail.com). The newsletter has been available on our website (www.quadcityaudubon.org) for years, and will remain there.

President's Corner*Summer Takes Flight*

When I saw nearly one hundred tree swallows lined up on a roadside wire, I knew that the best of summer was over. Birds give us some of the first clues to the coming seasons. The flocking of birds as summer draws to a close is a sure sign of impending fall, and that other season – winter! On the golf course yesterday, I saw at least 50 robins foraging in the grass, many appeared to be juveniles. And on the rocky point near our house, I now count 11 killdeer where I formerly saw a pair or two. If you have a hummingbird feeder that you manage, then you are very aware of how many birds now compete for spots at the feeder where early on, visits were occasional. I have been changing the sugar water and cleaning the feeder every couple of days with the warm weather. I read where more small feeders are better than one large one, so I have two placed under my deck. That is all I can manage!

I hope members will make time in the coming months to join other QC Audubon members on a field trip to see fall migrants or to attend a meeting and hear some of the interesting speakers we have lined up. Please check the events column on our web page (quadcityaudubon.org) to find out the latest status and any changes to our schedule that might occur. We want everyone to stay safe – and to enjoy birding while doing so!

- Jody Millar

QC Audubon spotlighted on Living Local

Living Local is a new lifestyle show on Local 4 WHBF-TV. The producer of the show invited QC Audubon to share some thoughts on birding close to home, and any tips we might have on feeding hummingbirds. As President of QC Audubon, I volunteered to speak on the show. I was asked to come to the studio and respond to several questions the producer had put together. The staff there was very professional. They had assembled a variety of hummingbird feeders to discuss. The topic of birding is so easy to talk about that we almost ran out of time before we could discuss feeding hummingbirds. We squeezed in the last statement about no need for red dye in the food, just ¼ cup sugar to 1 cup water is all that is necessary. The program was supposed to be on the air at 2 pm that Monday, but that was the same time the dreaded derecho windstorm hit our area. It was finally put on the air the following Tuesday. A link to the show segment can be found on the resource page of our website (quadcityaudubon.org) and on our Facebook page. The following is the YouTube link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lY6iYAxejI>

- Jody Millar



Pictured Above: (left) Brandy Auterson (WHBF), (right) Jody Millar (Quad City Audubon).

From the Board

Thanks to a donation from Caroline Kimple, Quad City Audubon Society donated a purple martin house shaped like gourds to Nahant Marsh Education Center. While I do not think martins nested there this year (It was installed fairly late), four purple martins were perching on the structure in June and it seems likely it will be used for nesting next season.

- Tim Murphy

Help Wanted: Quad City Audubon Seeks Volunteers

Quad City Audubon is seeking volunteers for the following positions: Treasurer, Membership, Publicity, and Conservation. Due to some recent changes in our organization, we are looking for volunteers to help with the management of Quad City Audubon Society. These are important roles that work closely with the board on a variety of matters.

Treasurer: has custody of QCAS funds, and distributes funds as ordered by the board; reports to the board at regular meetings or as requested; in general, manages the financial affairs of QCAS at the direction of the board of directors.

Conservation: keep informed of local, state, and national governmental policies and actions affecting the natural environment and conservation of natural resources, and draft conservation policy for board approval.

Publicity: distribute information regarding QCAS events to local media including radio and television stations, and assist with maintaining Quad City Audubon's social media presence.

Board Members: help guide the future of Quad City Audubon by making decisions about how we spend our resources, and programs our club offers.

If you feel up to the challenge, and would like to help out in any of these positions, please contact any board member; email us at qcaudubon@gmail.com.

2020 Illinois Spring Bird Count

The 48th annual Illinois Spring Bird Count was not a Coronavirus Casualty. In spite of the disease it was decided that birders in groups could maintain social distance while in the field and travel in separate vehicles if need be. In Rock Island County, 11 people participated in 6 field parties including two feeder watchers. 125 species of birds were observed which is just a bit below average.

The count day of May 9th was cool with a low temperature of 28 and a high of 65 degrees. It was largely sunny with light winds. The count date of May 9th is late and one would think we would be in about peak migration. However, it seems migration was a bit late this year. For example, a good number of yellow-rumped (84) and palm (39) warblers, early warbler migrants, were observed and late arriving warblers were not as present as one might expect.

Regarding species numbers overall, as has been typical, shorebirds and waterfowl have been mostly absent with little species diversity. It seems that waterfowl migration was pretty much completed by Spring Count with essentially resident birds and a few late migrants left. Shorebird habitat was hard to come by as few fields were flooded and those that were held very few birds. No bird species presented themselves in any larger numbers than usual except for black-throated green warblers, a record number of 20 since I started compiling in 1986. We did have 3 red-shouldered hawks and 2 Canada warblers, both species fairly hard to come by. In addition, a Wilson's phalarope was recorded for the first time. Notable misses included an amazing 0 ring-billed gulls. Additionally, American pelicans (118) and double-crested cormorants (38) were abnormally low numbers.

I would like to thank all those that took to the field. Our intrepid counters were Rita Coyne, Pat Carlson, Don Fish, Steve Freed, Jeanne Hedges, Stephen Johnson, Janelle Swanberg, Chris Swanson, and Dan & David VanLandegen. Regarding next year, we could certainly use more participants. Some of us are a bit long in the tooth and new blood will be needed. One can count feeders, their neighborhood or their property. So keep us in mind.

- Tim Murphy



Marilyn and Mitch Davis submitted these photographs of birds they observed on a trip to Cuba in March. From left to right: Lizard cuckoo, Cuban tody, and Bee hummingbird.

Building Better Birders and Citizen Scientists Workshops

Kelly J. McKay (BioEco Research and Monitoring Center), Mark A. Roberts (Clinton County Conservation Board), and Brian P. Ritter (Nahant Marsh Education Center), are presenting a series of workshops throughout Iowa, funded through a grant from the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP). The following are local workshops being offered around the area.

Thursday, September 17th, 2020, 8:00 – 9:30 a.m., Bird Identification Presentation, Birds of Iowa: Passerines, Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63rd St., Maquoketa, Iowa. 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., Beginning Birder Hike, Prairie Creek Recreation Area, 1215 E. Summit St. Maquoketa, Iowa. Hosted by Jackson County Conservation Board.

Saturday, September 19th, 2020, 7:00 – 9:00 a.m., Beginning Birder Hike, Environmental Learning Center, Cedar Street at Hwy 61, Muscatine, Iowa. 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., Birds of Iowa: Passerines, also at the Environmental Learning Center. Hosted by Muscatine County Conservation Board.

Friday, September 25th, 2020, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Bird Identification Presentation: Raptors of Iowa. 9:00 – 9:30 p.m., Live Birds of Prey. 9:30 – 10:00 p.m., Owl Prowl Bird Hike, all at Soaring Eagle Nature Center, 3923 N. 3rd St., Clinton, Iowa. Hosted by Clinton County Conservation Board.

Saturday, September 26th, 2020, 6:00 – 8:00 a.m., Beginning Birder Hike, Soaring Eagle Nature Center, Clinton, Iowa. 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Annual Raptor Watch, North Overlook, Eagle Point Park, Clinton, Iowa. Hosted by Clinton County Conservation Board.

Monday, November 2nd, 2020, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m., Bird Identification Presentation: Waterfowl of Iowa, Hurstville Interpretive Center, 18670 63rd St., Maquoketa, Iowa. The group will then caravan over to Green Island State Wildlife Area for a Beginning Birder Hike from 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Hosted by Jackson County Conservation Board.

Friday, November 20th, 2020, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., Bird Identification Presentation: Nocturnal Raptors of Iowa, followed by an Owl Prowl Bird Hike from 8:00 – 10:00 p.m., both at the Cedar Valley Park, 106 River St., West Branch, Iowa. Hosted by Cedar County Conservation Board.

All of these programs are free and open to the public.



Ring-billed Gulls. *Larus delawarensis*. This is one of my favorite birds. I first got interested in them, and birds in general, back in the late 1990s when my wife was a student at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. Ashland is situated on the shores of Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay in very northern Wisconsin.

At that time, I had been a land-locked midwesterner for my entire life, and never experienced the big waters of Lake Superior before. Moving to northern Wisconsin was like moving to another world to me. The people spoke differently than I was used to, and these birds, Ring-billed Gulls, were everywhere. In the lake, on the shore, kiting on the breeze. In the parking lot at Wal-Mart, McDonalds, and any other place where a spare French fry or potato chip might land. I was in love with them.

I saw them everywhere. I loved their call. I felt like I was living in some far flung coastal town (I suppose I was). "Seagulls," I said. "Ring-billed Gulls," my wife corrected. I quickly learned, you can't call them seagulls. That's amateur.

While I was enamored with these little gulls, I soon learned the locals were indifferent, leaning towards annoyed with Ring-bills. "Sky rats," one girl called them. Wherever you went in Ashland, you were almost certain to see or at least hear them. Hanging around garbage cans and dumpsters. Scouting around parking lots in search of their next snack. I worked at a fast food restaurant much of my time up there. If I had to run an order out to someone in the parking lot, I would often receive an escort from a few of them. One of the locals told me about a little girl's birthday party she attended on the beach.

Continued on page 5

Mississippi Currents

Support Conservation With Iowa Natural Resources License Plates

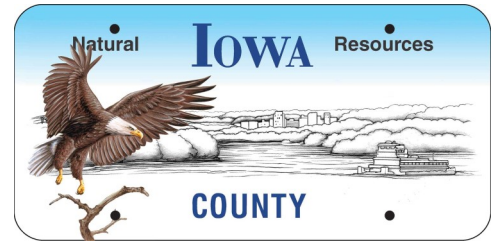
Iowa drivers can support conservation in their state by purchasing Natural Resource license plates. These plates provide funding for the Wildlife Diversity Program as well as the REAP (Resource Enhancement And Protection) program.

Drivers have 5 plates to choose from. For the bird enthusiast, you can select the American Goldfinch, Bald Eagle, or Ring-necked Pheasant. You may also choose a White-tailed Deer or Brook Trout.

Initial registration costs \$45, while annual renewal is \$25. \$10 of your purchase price, and \$15 of your annual renewal will go directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program, \$35 of your purchase price and \$10 of your renewal will support REAP projects. Just take your existing plates and vehicle registration to your County Treasurer's office and tell them you want the Natural Resource license plates.

Wildlife diversity monies go directly to funding the conservation of Iowa's 550 species of non-game wildlife (those creatures not considered sport fish or game). Biologists use these funds to conduct wildlife surveys, protect habitat, track threatened and endangered species, promote public understanding of Iowa's diverse birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians, as well as match federal grants to protect and manage "animals of concern or in serious decline", such as grassland and forest songbirds, rare amphibians and reptiles, winter roosts of Bald Eagles, research on Bobcat home range and movements, and Prairie Chicken restoration.

Monies going to REAP support Iowa's city, county and state parks; water quality improvements; wildlife habitat and prairie and woodland restoration; public recreation lands; historic preservation and conservation education. The REAP program has been in effect since 1989, and distributes its annual funding in various ways: \$350,000 for conservation education, DNR for administration of REAP, DNR for land management (parks, mostly), DNR for land acquisition and development (open spaces), county conservation boards, soil and water enhancement, city parks and open spaces, historical resources, and roadside vegetation. Since 1989, REAP has funded 787 projects totaling over \$14,000,000 in Jackson, Clinton, Scott, Muscatine and Louisa Counties alone. A grant through the REAP Conservation Education Program is the source of funding for the Building Better Birders and Citizen Scientists workshops outlined on page 4 of this newsletter.



Ring-billed gulls, continued from page 4

When it was time for cake, the gulls quickly worked up the nerve to mob the party. I watched people in parking lots practically hand feed them French fries.

This Ring-bill was photographed outside my truck window at a Burger King in Duluth, Minnesota this year, doing what they do best - begging for scraps. We'd stopped for lunch, and pulled into a spot to eat before moving on with our day trip. Sitting there, I wondered how long these gulls have been living in such close proximity to us. Have they always scavenged from humans - around dumps and dumpsters, outside back doors, looking for scraps? Has anyone studied the A1C and cholesterol levels of "city gulls" compared to "rural" gulls? I'd be interested to know if a diet loaded with fast food and convenience store leftovers is as hard on their health as it is on ours.

In the meantime, they remain one of my favorites. A pest to many, I moved someplace new 20+ years ago, and was smitten right away with this "new bird" I'd "found". They remind me of the early years of my courtship and marriage to my wife, when I was young and new to birding. They remind me that wherever you go, whether it's in the city or out on the waves of Lake Superior, you can spot a bird to keep your interest. And they remind me that I should probably spend less time in fast food restaurants.

- Jason Monson

Membership Application

☐ I would like to join as a new member of the National Audubon Society and my local chapter. Please send me *Audubon Magazine*, *Mississippi Currents*, and my membership card. Enclosed is my check for \$35 payable to National Audubon Society. (include **Chapter # H63** on your check)

OR

I would like to join only as a member of Quad City Audubon ☐ in lieu of National Audubon. Please send me *Mississippi Currents*. Enclosed is my check for \$10 payable to Quad City Audubon.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Send to: Quad City Audubon Society
P.O. Box 81
Bettendorf, IA 52722
www.quadcityaudubon.org

Mission Statement

The Quad City Audubon Society is dedicated to the enjoyment of birds; a better understanding of the natural world; stewardship of natural areas and habitats; fellowship; improvement of community awareness of environmental issues; and education of youth for the benefit of future generations.

Thanks to those who contributed to this issue of *Mississippi Currents*. The next deadline is November 15th, 2020. Submissions are gladly accepted. Send to:

Jason Monson
(309) 221-1177
jmonson75@hotmail.com

Visit us online at:
www.quadcityaudubon.org