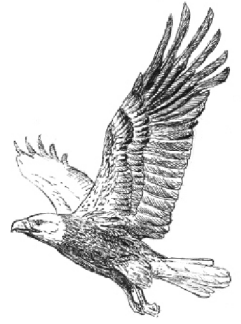




# MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



## UPCOMING EVENTS

*All activities open to the public.*

Vol. 33, No 1

Spring 2022

**Please observe COVID-19 protocols during membership meetings and field trips. Thank you for your help in these constantly evolving times.**

**On the web at [www.quadcityaudubon.org](http://www.quadcityaudubon.org), and on Facebook.**

**April 9, 2022, Saturday - Field Trip, Cone Marsh.** Meet at Marquette Street Boat Ramp in Davenport at 7:00 am.

**April 23, 2022, Saturday - Member Event, Nest Box Building.** Meet at Nahant Marsh, 42209 Wapello Avenue, Davenport at 10:00 am. We will be constructing small nest boxes. Donated materials will be available. If you are interested in making a nest box and taking it with you, you need to let us know by April 15 so we can secure enough supplies. You may sign up by sending a note to [qcaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:qcaudubon@gmail.com).

**April 23, 2022, Saturday - Davenport City Cemetery,** Rockingham Road and West River Drive. Dedication of Purple Martin Gourd Nest Colony. Presentations on Purple Martin management and habits by Nahant Marsh staff and Quad City Audubon. 1:30 - 3:30 pm.

**April 30, 2022, Saturday - Stroll Through Springtime,** Black Hawk Park, Singing Bird Lodge. 7:00 am bird walk, Program 9:00 am. 10:00am Wildflower Walk.

**May 7, 2022, Saturday - Earth Day 2022 Fair,** at the Freight House Farmers Market from 9 to 2. QC Audubon is planning on hosting a table and would appreciate volunteers to help. Contact [qcaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:qcaudubon@gmail.com) if you wish to volunteer.

**May 7, 2022, Saturday. 50th Annual Illinois Spring Bird Count.** Coordinated by Illinois Natural History Survey, a county by county survey of Illinois Birds. One may participate by joining a field party or by counting their neighborhood, personal property or feeder. For Rock Island County, contact Tim Murphy: 309-716-4575. For Mercer County, contact Bill Bertrand at [billandila@frontiernet.net](mailto:billandila@frontiernet.net). For information of other counties: <https://spring-bird-count.inhs.illinois.edu/>

**May 12, 2022, Thursday - Audubon Membership meeting at [Nahant Marsh](#),** 42209 Wapello Avenue, Davenport, 6:00 pm. A program, "Birds of Nahant Marsh" by Nahant ornithologist, Jimmy Wiebler will be presented, followed by a walk along the marsh to view evening birds.

**May 15th, 2022, Sunday - Field trip to Illiniwek and Dorrance Parks.** Half day trip. Meet at Illiniwek Park, east side of highway at 7:00am to view migrating and resident warblers, orioles, tanagers. This field trip may offer amazing views of a great many species.

**Sunday June 5th, 2022 - Field trip to Mississippi Palisades State Park.** This is an all-day event. Those interested in attending should meet at Shuler's Shady Grove Park/boat ramp in Rapids City at 6:00 am. Carpooling will be at discretion of participants. This has typically yielded good views of Yellow-throated, Parula, Kentucky, Cerulean Warblers and many other species.



**Audubon**

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

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**Now Hiring!**

Wild Birds Unlimited in Davenport is searching for part and full time employees at their store.

Anyone interested can Contact Mark Graham @ 563-445-3555 or 563-340-3383

Wild Birds Unlimited  
3616 Eastern Ave,  
Davenport, IA 52807  
563-445-3555

**President's Corner....**

Folks say, "time spent fishing is time never wasted". The same can be said for birding. Birding can help you land in a lovely spot to spend time enjoying birds, bird songs, and the Nature around you. It can also bring you mentally there when you see a flock of white pelicans riding thermals high above you flashing their wings in the middle of town. We hope more people can share this sense of wonderment by joining us for some of the special events we have scheduled for this spring.

Quad City Audubon Society Board has decided to try some hands-on meetings in hopes of attracting more members and guests to join us. In April, we will be hosting a bird nest box construction event. Attendees are welcome to take one home to install in your back yard. However, we need to have an idea how many boxes to have available and thus need all attendees to sign up. The sign up is simply to send an email to [qcaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:qcaudubon@gmail.com) and let us know that you will be attending and would like to take home a nest box. These boxes will be suitable for small birds, and are targeted for Prothonotary Warblers. Tree Swallows and House Wrens may also be found using these boxes. Extra boxes will be donated to the Prothonotary Warbler Project lead by Dr. Brian Peer of Western Illinois University. Check our web site for updates on this event.

For our May meeting, we will host a Bird Identification refresher lead by James Wiebler of Nahant Marsh. The workshop will be held at Nahant Marsh and an evening birding walk will follow the presentation. This is an excellent way for new birders to get some pointers on identification. Nahant Marsh also has binoculars available to use for those without.

Our June Field Trip to Savanna Palisades State Park will give folks a look at a number of migrating warblers. Last year during a stop at Thomson Prairie we saw a Yellow-breasted Chat and a Blue Grosbeak.

We hope you will find time this spring to come out and join us!

- Jody Millar



Above, from left: Mark Roberts, Brian Ritter, Kelly McKay, and James Wiebler, 2021 IAN/ICEC "Ding" Darling Environmental Education Award Winners. Photo by Colin Shirk.

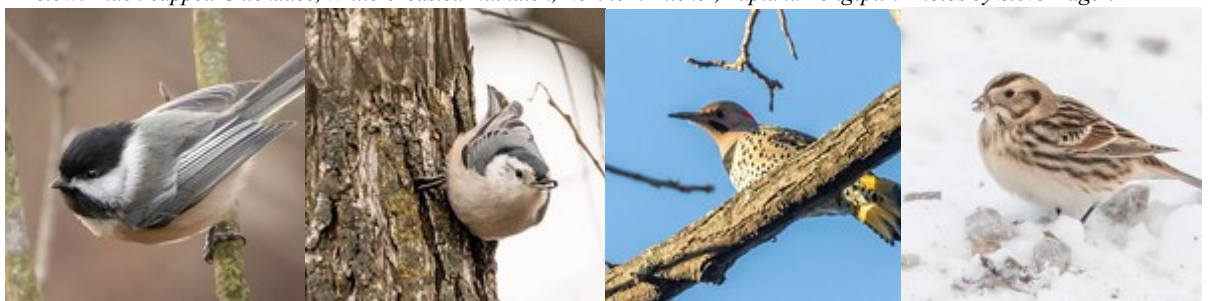
**Member Photo Page**

Attention all bird photographers! We would like to start a member's photo page on our web site. All photos submitted to [qcaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:qcaudubon@gmail.com) during a month will be loaded to our web site photo page for the next month. We encourage all members to participate. This will also be a way of letting fellow members know about some great bird sightings. Please be sure to include your name, location, and date of photo. We hope you will take this opportunity to share some of your great photos!

**Building Better Birders Workshops Land 2021 "Ding" Darling Environmental Education Award**

The Iowa Association of Naturalists and Iowa Conservation Education Council awarded Mark Roberts, Brian Ritter, Kelly McKay, and James Wiebler the 2021 "Ding" Darling Environmental Education Award For Outstanding Program or Event which Informs and Educates the General Public. The award recognized the four men for their multi-year Building Better Birders Workshops and Citizen Scientists programs, which have been presented across Iowa since 2020. These workshops were funded through a grant from the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) and reached a total of 1,806 participants at 100 workshops in 26 counties across Iowa.

Below: Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker, Lapland Longspur. Photos by Steve Hager.





## Summary of the 20th Eastern Knox County Christmas Bird Count

*Jim Mountjoy*

The Eastern Knox County Christmas Bird Count was held on Dec. 14 2021, and was our 20th running of the count, so it seems like a good opportunity to compare this year's results with what we might now be able to call the 'long-term' averages.

We only had eight observers in the field, but they formed five to six parties and put in a substantial number of hours to give us good coverage of the circle. We missed the enthusiastic participation of Jean Jorgenson, whom we lost recently, but we drank a toast to her memory at the post-count roundup and dinner.

We managed to find 67 species on the count this year (plus a Rusty Blackbird as our only 'count week' bird). This is a bit below our average of 70.25 species, but this was anticipated as mild weather such as we had been experiencing usually results in fewer waterfowl species being found, and fewer waterfowl species correlates with lower species totals overall. (If you like statistics, the R2 is 0.30, so waterfowl numbers account for about 30% of the variation in our species totals.) The complete lack of snow also made it harder to find certain species such as Horned Larks (we found 13, our second lowest total) and Lapland Longspurs (none this year).

Some of the scarcer species that were found included Ruby-crowned Kinglet (only our second ever, and the other one was 19 years ago on our first count!), Long-eared Owl, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. We set or tied record numbers for seven species, including Bald Eagle (26), Winter Wren (6), Eurasian Tree Sparrow (200), Common Grackle (871), and Yellow-rumped Warbler (6). Some other 'good birds' included a Short-eared Owl, 38 Trumpeter Swans, and 3 Red-breasted Nuthatches.

We managed to find all 33 'reliable' species this year that had been seen on all of the previous counts, but some of those species can be in low numbers and make me worry about missing them. For example, we found only four Eastern Bluebirds and two Carolina Wrens, both species apparently reduced in numbers due to high mortality in the cold weather of last February. Our tally of only 20 Tufted Titmice was a record low, and geese were scarcer than usual - the five Greater-White-fronts was the lowest total in 10 years, and we did not find any Cackling Geese.

Once again, an enjoyable day in the field produced some interesting sightings and added to a valuable collection of data on bird populations. We hope to do it again in 2022!



*Clockwise from upper left: a male Downy Woodpecker works on a suet feeder while a Brown Creeper looks on, a male Common Goldeneye, a male and two female Hooded Mergansers, a male Ring-necked Duck. All waterfowl photographed on the Mississippi River.*

*Photographs by Jody Millar.*

## Local Results from the 2022 National Midwinter Bald Eagle Count – A Substantial Increase in the Number of Eagles Wintering Locally This Year

Kelly J. McKay

The National Midwinter Bald Eagle Count, compiled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, censuses Bald Eagles across the United States during the first half of January each year. For more than two decades, I have participated on this count by censusing eagles along seven distinct routes spanning 80.5 miles of the Upper Mississippi River from Lock and Dam 13 in Clinton, Iowa to Keithsburg, Illinois. Additionally, I also survey 1.0 mile of the Rock River at the confluence with the Mississippi. As a result, my participation involves surveying 81.5 river miles within the local area. Data from this project also represents the Illinois State Midwinter Bald Eagle Count coordinated by the Illinois Audubon Society, as well as the Iowa State Midwinter Bald Eagle Count coordinated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

November and December of 2022 were extraordinarily mild, leaving the Mississippi River completely ice-free throughout much of the Upper Midwest. As a result, a considerable proportion of the northern Bald Eagle population remained well north of our local area during the early winter period. Consequently, very low numbers of eagles were reported during the Christmas Bird Counts throughout Illinois and Iowa. However, a combination of bitterly cold weather around the first of the year coupled with very low river levels, produced significant ice cover throughout the region by early January. In fact, ice cover throughout my seven survey routes ranged from a low of 56% to a high of 96%, and averaged 65% over the 81.5 river miles that I surveyed locally. This resulted in a substantial influx of Bald Eagles into Illinois and Iowa.

I completed my survey routes over a three-day period (10-12 January). Overall, 2,260 eagles were recorded. This represented the second highest number of birds censused over the last decade! Of these, 1,421 (62.9%) were located in Iowa, while the remaining 839 (37.1%) were observed in Illinois. Additionally, the recent troubling trend of decreasing proportions of young birds was halted this winter. Of the 2,260 eagles recorded this year, 1,324 (58.6%) were adults and 18 (0.8%) were unaged. The remaining 918 (40.6%) were immature birds. This was the highest proportion of young eagles reported locally since 2013, when 45.6% of the local wintering eagle population consisted of immatures! Furthermore, the proportion of young eagles in 2022 was slightly higher than the 20-year average from 2000-2019 (38.5%). This is all good news for Midwestern Bald Eagle populations. However, we must remember that wintering eagle populations along the Upper Mississippi River do fluctuate widely from year to year. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the average number of birds being recorded locally has been steadily declining over the last two decades. For example, from 2000-2009 these local routes averaged 2,439 eagles/year. This average declined to 1,420 eagles/year between 2010-2019. From 2020-2022, the average number of local wintering birds has slipped to 1,290 eagles/year.

As I mentioned in last year's summary article, an unknown amount of this significant reduction in locally wintering eagles can possibly be attributed to changing eagle usage of the landscape, rather than an actual decline in the overall population. I am referring to a trend which has been occurring throughout the Midwest for well over a decade – where substantial numbers of Bald Eagles appear to be wintering further inland away from the Mississippi River. These birds have been undoubtedly utilizing various inland food resources (e.g. winter or hunter-killed deer, gut piles from the hunting season, road-kills, and dead wildlife/livestock). These alternative food resources are risky for Bald Eagles for a number of reasons which include, but are not limited to, increasing collision rates with vehicles, increasing amounts of lead poisoning, as well as the elevated potential for exposure to various agrichemicals used in livestock operations (e.g., hormones, antibiotics, medications, etc.). If an increasing number of wintering Bald Eagles are no longer concentrating along the major riverways of the Midwest, survey routes which predominately census along these rivers will be encountering an overall smaller proportion of the birds actually present within the region. This could negatively impact our ability to accurately monitor regional Bald Eagle population trends. The obvious question is “why are more eagles wintering away from rivers?”

Although based only on anecdotal information, the answer to this question may be linked to an apparent significant reduction of “winter-killed” Gizzard Shad, which is the primary food resource for wintering Bald Eagles on the Mississippi River. Over the same period that we have observed more eagle using inland areas, myself and other eagle researchers have noted a substantial decline in the amount of “winter-killed” Gizzard Shad within the Mississippi River as well as some of its tributaries. Historically, enormous numbers of this oxygen-sensitive fish are “winter-killed” each year as a result of fluctuating dissolved oxygen levels in the river which is largely influenced by variations in ice cover. This abundance of “winter-killed” shad, provides a reliable and readily available food resource which has supported the large Midwestern wintering population of Bald Eagles for more than a century. If the abundance of this food resource is declining it may be creating food shortages, of an unknown magnitude, for eagles on the river. This could explain why more eagles are moving inland during the winter months. If something is reducing shad populations on the Upper Mississippi River, this could certainly begin to negatively impact Bald Eagle populations wintering in the Midwest, by reducing winter survival. If Bald Eagle populations were to be negatively affected, I would expect to see a manifestation of this to be lower proportions of immature birds within the population.

Once again, I want to strongly urge state and federal resource agencies to start researching and addressing this complicated and potentially serious issue involving wintering Bald Eagle populations and distribution, as well as the availability of Gizzard Shad, throughout the Midwestern landscape. Although this incredible species survived the dark days of the DDT era and has exhibited a strong recovery, other potentially serious problems and threats still persist. This further emphasizes the importance of data generated by the National Midwinter Count, in order to closely monitor the populations of our fragile yet resilient national bird.



*A pair of Trumpeter Swans (left) and a raft of Lesser Scaup (right) make their way along the Mississippi River.*

*Photos by Jody Millar.*



## Rio Grande Valley and Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

*Tim Murphy*

This past February I had the need to get out of town and decided I might as well look for birds, so I headed for Rio Grande Valley and east around Padre Island. In the event someone would like to make the trip, I am going to review most of the places I saw in more or less order of my travel.

Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge: 2000 plus acres with, at least this time of year, many shallow lakes. Upon arrival in Corpus Christi, I drove straight to Santa Ana in an attempt to view a Bat Falcon, a first-time bird for the United States. With some luck it was found. Later, I spent a long morning walking the park and it was not seen. The park is closed to cars, one can travel only on bike or on foot. Trails are largely paved. The wetlands hold a good variety of puddle duck, shore-birds and raptors.

Estero Llano Grande State Park: My personal favorite. Caught a guided birding trip at 8:00am on Sunday led by volunteers. Again, only foot traffic allowed and I did not see any bikes. A series of shallow ephemeral ponds at least in winter. Walking from the parking lot to the visitor center I saw Altamira Oriole, White-winged Dove, Curve-billed Thrasher and Green Jay. The visitor center and covered deck overlooks a wetland that was filled with black-bellied whistling ducks, egrets, herons, grebes and other waterfowl. The trip was led by very knowledgeable guides and we had 78 species for the group in just over three hours of birding. It was also mentioned that bird populations in the area seemed to have been hurt very badly by the severe cold snap of the year before and for example most of the winter sparrow population seemed to be absent.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. A 500 acre park. No vehicles allowed but they have a tram that will make shuttles into the park. I got there late in the afternoon. Took the last tram into the interior and walked out. They have a hawk watching platform that overlooks a wetland complex. Most of the park is scrubland overgrown with invasive grasses. I saw very few birds and missed the Rose-throated Becard. I did find a viewing area near the entrance with water flowing but limited birds near dusk.

Edinburg Scenic Wetlands Trails: I found this park to be disappointing, small and very popular with families and kind of crowded. Supposed to have all three kingfishers, I saw none but barely stayed as I decided Bentsen would be a better bet.

Falcon State Park: As far west as I went. A very dry, scrub timber park. Largely along Falcon Dam Reservoir. I walked the three-mile loop around the park and saw almost nothing. Later I ran into a volunteer at the park who told me there was a camper who fed and had a water drip for birds at his campsite and the public was invited. I sat at the picnic table and birds came including Long-billed Thrasher, Inca and Common Ground dove and we had a very delightful visit. Contributed money for bird seed.

Chapeno Falcon Picnic Area: A near abandoned RV park on the Rio Grande. Good sized raft of assorted ducks on the river. Vermillion flycatcher and black phoebe seen. Met a couple from Maine who volunteered at Falcon and was told to go to....

Salineo Tract: A postage stamp of a park. The major attraction is the RV lived in by a volunteer couple from Iowa City. They maintain many feeding stations. Altamira Orioles, Green Jay, Chachalacas come to feed as one sits in front of the RV, at least until an accipiter spooks the birds and then one has a wait until everyone settles down.

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge: Again, almost none of the park open to vehicular traffic. I went for Aplomado Falcon and egrets. Very few views of wetlands or the very large wetland. Did not see the falcon and overall disappointed. I might add all the federal visitor centers were closed I assume due to Covid.

Sabal Palm Audubon Center & Sanctuary: Actually, in Mexico I believe, but passport not required. Concession and birding viewing run by another agency. Audubon evidently has much of the land. Very nice trails and blinds and a fair amount of water.

South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center: Privately run concession with programs, an extensive boardwalk over a wetland that holds alligators and a great many birds habituated to people. Great for pictures. At some distance a good many shorebirds, gulls and terns. Adjacent to this complex is a city owned boardwalk which is free.

Brownsville: I did not go but was told there is a park where parrots come to roost nightly.

I spent four days east of Corpus Christi in Rockport, Texas between Port Aransas and Aransas Wildlife Refuge. The weather changed and we went from upper 80's to three days of windy, overcast mid 40's high temperatures. It was chilling and I was not prepared.

Big Tree State Park: Whooping Cranes but not in the stamp sized roadside attraction but rather in yards near there. One can see them from your car parked on the road.

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge: This has a several mile long driving route with trails, overlooks, picnic areas, and turn offs scattered along its length. Good for shorebirds, herons, egrets and waterfowl. Saw Whooping Cranes at a distance with spotting scope. There is also a birding boat that leaves from Rockport and goes into Aransas twice daily. It has a deck but also an enclosed section for inclement weather. The captain is said to be very knowledgeable. I did not go.

Port Aransas: Take the ferry to Port Aransas. A tourist town with scattered wetlands and beaches along the gulf. Not many shorebirds on the ocean when I was there. Two wetland areas of note are Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, Hans and Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge and the south jetty. The south jetty is beach front and had a Harlequin Duck and a Little Gull which attracted a lot of attention. With help of birders, I saw the gull but the duck was absent when I was there.

Padre Island National Seashore is said to be the largest remaining barrier island in the world. It is almost completely undeveloped. On the ocean side is the gulf where I saw little and it was cold and windy. On the bay side were ducks, shorebirds in variety of public access points and less wind.

On my last day Mustang Island State Park yielded two Aplomado Falcons on a roosting structure built for it 100 yards from the highway.

Overall, I spent 9 nights in Texas using a combination of owner rentals and a motel. I birded pretty hard and did little other sightseeing. Met a lot of other birders, some experts and many novices who were always willing to give advice on what to see where. I had 135 species, many which were new to me. It was a lot of driving and a fair amount of walking but a lot of good people and plenty of good food as well. A great many small nature areas scattered about. Many birders in winter. Heavily populated and most of rural ground is horizon to horizon agriculture.

## Summary of the 2021-2022 Local Christmas Bird Counts

**Jason L. Monson – Kelly J. McKay – Stephen B. Hager – Cathleen D. Monson  
Laura Semken – Chuck Fuller**

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, twelve participants in 5 field parties and a single feeder watcher teamed up to start the CBC season on the Clinton-Savanna Christmas Bird Count. 90 species and over 40,000 birds were identified in 48 ½ hours in the field. The following noteworthy birds were seen: 6,149 Tundra Swans, 130 Trumpeter Swans, 2 Greater Scaup, 1 Horned Grebe, 384 Sandhill Cranes, 21 Double-crested Cormorants, 1 American Pipit, 1 Smith's Longspur and 4 Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

Fourteen observers in 7 field parties put in 61 ½ hours in the field in some insufferably windy conditions for the Princeton-Camanche CBC on December 15<sup>th</sup>. In spite of the unseasonably warm temperatures and incessant wind, our group was able to spot some top-notch birds: 54 Trumpeter Swans, 28 Great Blue Herons, 1 Chipping Sparrow, 1 Eastern Towhee, 1 Eastern Phoebe, and 2 Virginia Rails. 4,752 birds in 65 species were tallied.

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021, fifteen participants in 6 field parties tallied 56 species and 5,015 individual birds on the inaugural Louisa Y Christmas Bird Count in Eastern Iowa. This first year of the count turned out some excellent birds for any midwestern CBC, including: Snow Goose, Greater-White-Fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Green-winged Teal, Trumpeter Swan, Wilson's Snipe, Long-eared Owl, Fox Sparrow, Field Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow.

Eight field parties with 16 observers and 3 feeder watchers participated in the Burlington CBC on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021. 9,290 individual birds across 89 species were counted. Some noteworthy birds were observed: American White Pelican (286), Snow Goose (4), Trumpeter Swan (188), Wood Duck (2), Hooded Merganser (1), Ruddy Duck (1), Merlin (1), Peregrine Falcon (1), Gray Catbird (1), Field Sparrow (2), Fox Sparrow (1), Pine Siskin (6), and Horned Grebe (2).

The Davenport Christmas Bird Count was held on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Thirty-two field observers in 12 field parties, and a single feeder watcher identified 129,394 birds and 97 species. Participants put in 98.75 hours in the field counting, yielding several impressive birds: 315 Cackling Geese, 8 Mute Swans, 2 Greater Scaups, 5 Sandhill Cranes, 1 Glaucous Gull, 101 American White Pelicans, 3 Peregrine Falcons, 1 Northern Shrike, 1 Gray Catbird and an impressive 54,809 Red-winged Blackbirds.

Seven observers in 4 field parties spent 31 hours in the field on December 21<sup>st</sup> for the Van Petten CBC. 4,391 individual birds across 64 species were counted. Notable birds that day included: 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 34 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 4 Field Sparrows, 8 Fox Sparrows, 2 Red Crossbills, 1 Lincoln's Sparrow and 1 Orange-crowned Warbler.

The Western Mercer County Christmas Bird Count was held on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. Twelve observers in 5 field parties spent 49.25 hours in the field counting 13,211 birds across 80 species. Participants were treated to several interesting finds that day: 7 Tundra Swans, 7 Killdeer, 3 Northern Saw-whet Owls, 1 Northern Shrike, 17 Hermit Thrush, 4 Field Sparrows, 2 Eastern Towhee and 2 Lincoln's Sparrows.

On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, seven feeder watchers and 18 participants in 5 field parties counted over 13,000 birds on the Muscatine CBC. Putting in 31 hours in the field, observers spotted several interesting species: 1 Horned Grebe, 180 American White Pelicans, 1 Northern Saw-whet Owl, 2 Peregrine Falcons, 40 Fox Sparrows and 20 Rusty Blackbirds. 78 species were identified.

12 participants in 4 field parties identified over 15,000 birds on the Andalusia-Buffalo Christmas Bird Count on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Several notable species were observed, including: 3 Brewer's Blackbirds, 4 Eastern and 2 Western Meadowlarks, 18 Hermit Thrush, 7 Winter Wrens, 55 Eurasian Collared Doves, 68 American White Pelicans and 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet. 82 species were identified.

Four participants in 2 field parties put in 21.25 hours in the field on the Buchanan County CBC, held on Christmas Day. 52 Eurasian Collared Doves, 1 Long-eared Owl, 1 Northern Saw-whet Owl, 1 Merlin, 1 Northern Shrike and 2 Red Crossbills were just a few of the noteworthy birds observed that day. 61 species and 4,297 individual birds were tallied.

On December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 4 field parties with 9 participants enjoyed some unseasonably warm weather reaching into the mid-forties on the 9<sup>th</sup> Bald Bluff Christmas Bird Count. Observers tallied 76 species and 7,020 individual birds. Two new species were added to Bald Bluff this year with 75 American White Pelicans and 1 Orange-crowned Warbler! Sixteen species set a record for high numbers for the circle, including: Red-shouldered Hawk (3), Bald Eagle (72), Cooper's Hawk (4), Eurasian Collared Dove (116), Long-eared Owl (12), Barred Owl (38), Northern Saw-whet Owl (19), Great Blue Heron (19), Red-headed Woodpecker (40), Northern Flicker (60), Brown Creeper (25), Golden-crowned Kinglet (93), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3), Yellow-rumped Warbler (92), Purple Finch (145) and Rusty Blackbird (60). Other notable species from this year included Wilson's Snipe, Short-eared Owl, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Towhee and Western Meadowlark.

A winter storm on New Year's day brought in some more "appropriate" temperatures and snowfall, leading to some treacherous road conditions for the 11<sup>th</sup> Eastern Mercer County CBC on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. A record 10 observers in 6 field parties counted 9,315 birds in 70 species while navigating drifting snow and temperatures that barely crept into double digits. Just the same, hardy participants added 8 Common Mergansers, 1 Merlin and a Savannah Sparrow to the growing list of species found in this count circle. 10 species broke new record highs: Canada Goose (2,547), Bald Eagle (46), Herring Gull (24), Northern Flicker (24), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3), Horned Lark (606), Lapland Longspur (166), Golden-crowned Kinglet (26), American Tree Sparrow (728) and Dark-eyed Junco (1,222). Owl diversity was good, with 6 species, although numbers were low with a total of only 26 individuals. This was a low year for both American Kestrels and Red-tailed Hawks. Regardless, diurnal raptors overall had very respectable diversity with our 2<sup>nd</sup> ever Golden Eagle, the aforementioned Merlin, Bald Eagles, Kestrels and Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged Hawk. Other 'good birds' for the day included 1 Wilson's Snipe, and 4 Rusty Blackbirds.



*From top to bottom: American Kestrel, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Red-tailed Hawk.. Photos by Steve Hager during this season's Christmas Bird Counts.*

## Summary of the 2021-2022 Local Christmas Bird Counts

(continued from page 6)

Ten field observers in five field parties and 4 feeder watchers participated in the Northwest Clayton County Christmas Bird Count on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. 68 species and 6,786 individual birds were identified. Notable birds included: 153 Wild Turkeys, 10 Gray Partridge, 3 Golden Eagles, 1 Merlin, 3 Northern Shrike, 2 Common Redpolls and a single Harris's Sparrow.

The following day, 13 participants in 7 field parties, along with 2 feeder watchers tallied just over 8,000 birds on the Southeast Clayton County CBC. Noteworthy birds from the day included: 3 Tundra Swans, 4 Golden Eagles, 2 Red-shouldered Hawks, 4 Northern Shrike, 1 Townsend's Solitaire, 4 Fox Sparrows, 1 Harris's Sparrow, 1 Lincoln's Sparrow and a single Brewer's Blackbird. An impressive 78 species were identified.

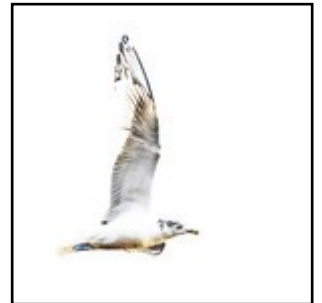
The compilers would like to thank the dozens of individuals who helped make these Christmas Bird Counts possible again this year. In spite of (or perhaps *because* of) the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, birding appears to be a welcome reprieve for many. The introduction of another local count circle is a welcome addition to the local birding community, and it is reassuring to see this citizen science project grow. Thank you all, and we hope to see you again next winter!



Above: American Tree Sparrow

Below: Ring-billed Gull

Photos by Steve Hager



Thank you, Kevin Schuchmann, for these photographs of the Townsend's Solitaire spotted during the Southeast Clayton County Christmas Bird Count.

## Meet the Board

My name is Forrest Stonedahl. I am a computer science professor at Augustana College. I've been a birder since 2013, and have accumulated a life list of 611 species in the world, and 475 species in the U.S., mostly thanks to the motivation and identification skills of my wife Susa, who is a far more avid birder than I.

We have a 2-year-old daughter Katalia (pictured with me here), who enjoys leafing through the pages of our Kaufman field guide and pointing out the ducks, puffins, turkeys, eagles, cardinals, and occasionally a chachalaca (which I haven't seen yet, but would like to!)





### 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](http://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 May 15th, 2022. Submissions are gladly accepted. Send to:

Jason Monson  
(309) 221-1177  
[jmonson75@hotmail.com](mailto:jmonson75@hotmail.com)

Visit us online at:  
**[www.quadcityaudubon.org](http://www.quadcityaudubon.org)**



Left: Bald Eagle

Above: Red-bellied Woodpecker

Below: Hermit Thrush

Photos by Steve Hager

