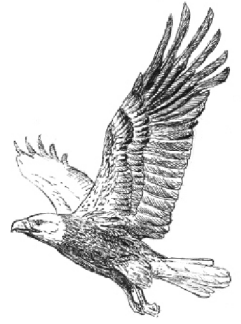




MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



UPCOMING EVENTS

All activities open to the public.

Vol. 31, No 4

Winter 2020

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our December 2020 meeting has been cancelled. Watch our website and Facebook page for upcoming meetings and changes.

Christmas Bird Counts: Eastern Knox County - Monday, December 14th, 2020. Contact Jim Mountjoy to participate, jmountjo@knox.edu.
Clinton/Savanna - Tuesday, December 15th, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Lost Nation - Wednesday, December 16th, 2020. Contact Mark Roberts to participate, 563-349-0956.
Princeton/Camanche - Thursday, December 17th, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Green Island - Friday, December 18th, 2020. Contact Ed Anderson to participate, 309-507-0477.
Burlington - Saturday, December 19th, 2020. Contact Chuck Fuller to participate, cfuller989@gmail.com.
Davenport - Sunday, December 20th, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Western Mercer County, Monday, December 21st, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Muscatine, Tuesday, December 22nd, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Van Petten, Wednesday, December 23rd, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Andalusia/Bufalo, Thursday, December 24th, 2020. Contact Kelly McKay to participate, 309-235-4661.
Bald Bluff, Sunday, December 27th, 2020. Contact Jason Monson to participate, jmonson75@hotmail.com.
Eastern Mercer County, Sunday, January 3rd, 2021. Contact Jason Monson to participate, jmonson75@hotmail.com.

Bald Eagle Days, QCCA Expo Center, Rock Island. January 10th-12th. Please check our website for updates regarding this event. If the event is held, Quad City Audubon members plan to host Bald Eagle viewing at scopes stationed at Sunset Marina and Arsenal Island. We would appreciate any member volunteers to help at these viewing sites.

Due to concerns for COVID transmission, carpooling is not advised for our field trips. Drivers should only transport members of their own families. Masks should be worn when in close proximity to others. Please take care to space yourself when viewing birds in a group. We can do this safely with an abundance of caution. Thank you!

Field Trip, Saturday, February 13th, 2021 - Smiths Island, Lock and Dam 14 near Le Claire, Iowa. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot at Lock and Dam 14 (Iowa side). 3 hour field trip to view gulls, eagles, waterfowl and winter passerines. Contact Tim Murphy for further information: 309-764-9779.

Field Trip, Sunday, March 14th, 2021 - Up the Mississippi River to Lock and Dam 13, Spring Lake, with stops along the way. Mostly a full day field trip (return around 2:00 p.m.). Due to COVID restriction, it is advised to bring a lunch. Meet at Brother's Restaurant in Rapids City, Illinois at 7:00 a.m. Contact Tim Murphy for further information: 309-764-9779.

Field Trip, Saturday, April 10th, 2021 - Cone Mash, Iowa: migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, early spring migrants. We expect to return around 1:00 p.m. from this long half-day trip. Due to COVID restrictions, it is recommended one bring a lunch. Meet at Marquette Street Boat Landing, Davenport, Iowa at 7:00 a.m. For further information, contact Tim Murphy: 309-764-9779.

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

OFFICERS

President

Jody Millar-2022

Vice President

Brian Peer-2022

Treasurer

Bernadene Bowles-2022

Secretary

Tim Murphy-2021

BOARD MEMBERS

Cathy White-2022

Bob Bryant-2022

Janelle Swanberg-2021

Rueben Segura-2022

Vacant-2022

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation

Bob Bryant

Field Trips

Board Members

Membership

Tim Murphy

Newsletter

Jason Monson

jmonson75@hotmail.com

Publicity

Vacant

Mississippi Currents is published quarterly

by the

Quad City

Audubon Society

P.O. Box 81

Bettendorf, IA 52722

www.quadcityaudubon.org

Direct all general emails to:

qcaudubon@gmail.com

President's Corner

2020 will be remembered for many things: mask-wearing, social distancing, and Covid-19; a hotly contested election for US President; and the last printed and USPS mailed Mississippi Currents Newsletter of the Quad Cities Audubon Society. It feels like a loss, but also feels like the right thing to do and the right time to do it. We asked our members to provide feedback on the idea of moving the Newsletter from printed and mailed to emailed and posted on our web site. All the feedback we received was supportive of this move. By doing this, we save hundreds of dollars a year that could be directed towards something more environmentally beneficial. We also reduce the effort of our Board members who are already handling multiple tasks to keep our organization operating and available to members.

Thus, with this last printed newsletter, QCAS would like to extend a big thanks to Jason Monson for preparing the Newsletter and getting it to the printer, and Bernadene Bowles for driving to the printers, collecting all the newsletters and dropping them off at the Post Office bulk mailing facility. We would also like to thank the many other people who have carried out these tasks over the years that have enabled QCAS to share our love of birds and birding in printed form.

We are fortunate that Jason Monson has agreed to continue to produce our Newsletter this coming year. It is a difficult and time-consuming job. We appreciate it, Jason, very much.

The latest Newsletter will always be posted on our web site, www.quadcityaudubon.org. We would also be pleased to email out a copy to our members once a new issue comes out, four times per year. To have a copy emailed, you need to include an email address when you return your yearly membership form. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any Board member or email us at qcaudubon@gmail.com

Please also check our events calendar on our web site home page for event updates and changes.

- Jody Millar

2021 QCAS Officers and Board Members

The following slate of nominees was moved for approval at our December 2, 2020 conference call Board meeting. All members of the Board were present, and all voted to approve the following officers and Board members for 2021-2022. Voting by the Board was necessitated by the cancellation of the December public meeting where our voting is typically held.

The officers approved for new two-year terms are Jody Millar, President; Brian Peer, Vice President; Bernadene Bowles, Treasurer; and Tim Murphy, Secretary.

Board positions approved for new two-year terms are Cathy White, Reuben Segura, and Bob Bryant. Janelle Swanberg has one year remaining in her position as a Board member.

One Board position remains vacant and we are seeking one more volunteer for that position. We appreciate the time and effort our officers and Board members will be donating over the coming years. Thank you all for stepping up. We hope the work includes lots of good birding!

Below left: Hooded Merganser. Below right: Ring-necked Duck. Photographs by Jody Millar.



Help Wanted: Quad City Audubon Seeks Volunteers

Quad City Audubon is seeking volunteers for the following positions: Publicity, and Board Member. 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.

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.



Mitch and Marilyn Davis submitted more photographs from their trip to Cuba.

Left: Cuban Grassquit

Right: Olive-capped Warbler



Field Trip Illiniwek and Dorrance Parks September 20, 2020

Jody Millar, Tim Murphy, Mary Osborn, Sharif & Terri Ragheb, Cathy Konrad and Jan Watson.

This was a first field trip since Covid. While some of us wore masks for me at least foggy glasses and birding do not mix. I thus attempted to social distance myself and counted on the outside air to disperse any potential virus from my companions. It is not an ideal situation and I offer this as a word of warning to those who might contemplate coming on a field trip in the "Age of Covid 19".

Daybreak September 20 found 7 birders gathered at Illiniwek Park on a chilly 46 degree morning. Birds seemed largely silent except for chickadees as we walked along the lower trail through the newly planted trees. Trees that have grown remarkably fast, white oaks nearing 15 feet and three inches in diameter seemed to be in the majority.

Birds were scarce, though a brief sighting from 100 yards or more of a yellow billed cuckoo provided a few moments of excitement. Still as we returned to the parking lot the sun was warming the day, vireos, Carolina wren, blue jays and woodpeckers were calling, giving further signs of life.

We thus proceeded through the forest uphill until we reached the maintenance shed and parking area. The woods were quiet but the open brushy area held birds. Goldfinch, a late house wren, song sparrow, Nashville warbler, yellow-rumped warbler, cardinal, rose-breasted grosbeak, and eastern towhee were among the birds present.

We returned down the hill through the forest by a slightly different path and came across an open area that was filled with birds and some pretty small sight lines. Still it held scarlet tanager, redstarts, bay-breasted, more yellow-rumped, as well as chestnut-sided and magnolia warblers.

Our cold day had warmed up.

Our next stop was Fisherman's Corner at Lock & Dam 14. We stopped to pick up waterfowl and gulls but instead found three trees along the water that were filled with birds and sight lines very open. Yellow-rumped warblers were predominate but a good look was provided of a black-throated green warbler, another scarlet tanager, a cooperative blue-headed vireo and house finch.

We finished our morning at Dorrance Park. We only walked a bit of the way along the north edge of the park above the ball diamonds. Birds of the morning were a good many red-headed woodpeckers and a Swainson's thrush which gave us a brief look.

For the morning we had 56 species and a couple miles of exercise.

- Tim Murphy

Marathon Man

If everything goes according to plan, by the time January 5th, 2021 comes around, Hampton Illinois biologist Kelly McKay will become the most prolific Christmas Bird Count participant of the program's 120-year history. McKay enters this CBC season having completed 522 Christmas Bird Counts, just 9 counts shy of the current record holder, retired Georgia biologist, Paul Sykes.

Having a strong interest in birds, and wanting to be a biologist from a young age, Kelly has been on this path for years. Beginning his CBC "career" as a teenager, McKay's first count was in Iowa City. Some 40 years later, not only is he a leading participant, he is compiler of 10 counts in Iowa and Illinois. Christmas Bird Counts have taken McKay all over the Midwest. To date, he has participated in CBCs in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana and Michigan.

McKay has reached this high level of participation by completing Christmas Bird Count "Marathons". Around 2002, McKay was already completing 8 to 11 counts per season. He decided to really challenge himself and attempt to do a CBC every day of the season: 23 counts from December 14th through January 5th. That first attempt in the 2002-2003 CBC season saw McKay travel over 6,000 miles and complete "only" 20 CBCs, but the habit was born. The following year, during the 2003-2004 Christmas Bird Count, McKay completed his first marathon, 23 counts in a row, and he's been after it ever since.

Marathons are an exercise in planning and logistics, often weeks in the making. He acknowledges the team approach involved in him completing marathons year after year: his mother, and sisters, filling bird feeders while he's gone, taking care of his pets; accommodating land-owners who grant him access to their back yards and private lanes; fellow CBC compilers from Cassville, Wisconsin to Southern Illinois who work with him to schedule counts; his vehicles, which normally accumulate thousands of miles each year getting him from one count to the next; birders from all over who ride shotgun and scribe as they tally up birds day after day. Every year is something new on the CBC Marathon trail. Maybe a Piping Plover at Chicago Lakefront. Maybe a blizzard on the road to Princeton/Camanche. Suspicious landowner in Keokuk. Is that DNR officer following us?

Last year, Kelly completed his 11th Christmas Bird Count Marathon, and is scheduled to do his 12th this year. To date, only one other person has completed a CBC Marathon, Danny Akers, during the 2013-2014 season. Joining Kelly on any of the counts is something like a birding boot camp. He's up early, REAL early, often to afford him ample time to travel to the count circle to start off the morning owling. Before you know it, you're standing in the darkness, listening for the soft call of an Eastern Screech Owl, the "who cooks for you?" of a Barred Owl, or the distant hoot of a Great Horned Owl. Those are just the "expected" three. We're going to work a grove of pines for Northern Saw-whet Owls, or search a grassy lot for Short-eared. That's what makes it so exciting going with him. Around the corner, there's always a chance for just *one more bird*.

When day breaks, he'll be out in wind swept farm fields, trying to check off those open country birds, straining for the call of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings. He's checking openings in the lakes and rivers for waterfowl. Scanning bird feeders for Pine Siskins and Goldfinches. We'd better stop at the grain elevator and see if we can tease out a Eurasian Collared Dove. Hourly updates. "What's our 8 o'clock total? What's our 9 o'clock?" You'll eat breakfast in the car. And lunch. Bring a back-up bladder, there aren't a lot of places to go to the bathroom. He might finish the day on the river's edge, frigid wind bouncing the spotting scope as ducks pour in for the night. You'll bird until the end of the day. It will be 5, maybe 5:30, and daylight is going to be virtually absent by the time you sit down to tally up the day's numbers. Over the course of the day, it's these strategies that see him with high species totals and great finds of rare birds. I've birded with him on the first day, and the last day of the season, and it's that same intensity day in and day out.

This season, if you see Kelly while you're out and about, stop and see how the day is going. If you stick around long enough, you're sure to see a bird, likely to learn something new about birds or birding, and bound to be inspired. Wish him luck on his latest marathon, and his ascent to the top of the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count.

- Jason Monson

Upcoming Events from our friends at Iowa Young Birders

December 12: Winter Birds Virtual Event - Most of our approximately 300 bird species that we regularly see in Iowa do not spend the winter months here. However, some birds stick around all winter and, believe it or not, some birds come to Iowa for their winter vacations each year. Join us to learn all about these cold-hardy species! We'll talk about how these birds adapt to the winter months including what they eat, how they stay warm, which habitats they use, and what you can do to help them survive during this challenging season. It's sure to be a "cool" program! This event is free but advanced registration is required. A computer or smart device with a microphone and internet connection are recommended to join this event, but there is also an option to call in.

January 9: Virtual Birding Day - Though we may not be able to bird together in person right now, we can still bird together virtually. Let's join together for a day of birding across Iowa and see how many different species we can see! Birding together virtually is simple - all you need to do is pick your favorite place to enjoy birds and go there on this day. Keep a list of the birds you see and either 1) share that list with us on eBird or 2) send us your species list and we'll enter it for you. At the end of the day, we'll tally the list of species seen and places visited and share it with participants. You can bird all day or for just a few minutes, travel miles and miles or stay in your yard, it's completely up to you. Register for this event to receive instructions on how to share your birding lists with us and to receive updates about this exciting day. We hope you can bird with us, even if just for a few minutes!

Founded in 2011, Iowa Young Birders encourages 8-18 year old Iowans to study and enjoy birds and birding. Learn more about these upcoming events, news, and how you can help at www.iowayoungbirders.org.

Field Trip Crow Creek Park October 10, 2020

Janelle Swanberg, Terri and Sharif Ragheb, Jody Millar, Tim Murphy.

October 10 was a marvelous fall morning, temperatures mid 60's with only the unexpected annoyance of some mosquitoes along the stream bed creating any discomfort.

We noticed immediately the trees and shrubs were loaded with dozens of cedar waxwings, many in a shaggy appearing juvenile plumage as opposed the sleek feathers of the adults. Ruby kinglets and yellow-rumped warblers and goldfinch were also common as we worked our way along the creek bed and east into the park. Eastern towhees called and were seen. A single orange crowned warbler was spotted in a tangle of underbrush and a blue jay imitated a house sparrow.

We walked along the park trails and song sparrow, juncos and hundreds of white-throated sparrows were in nearly every thicket. A purple finch showed itself just long enough for ID in a tree top and a small group of Eurasian tree sparrows were active along the eastern park boundary. Cooper's, sharp-shinned and red-tailed hawks were among other notable species sighted.

We spent a busy two hours in the park and tallied 34 species. Birds were everywhere. Common expected species to be sure but we had plenty to sort through in search of more unusual species and it was near perfect temperature. We also had the added entertainment of watching a couple hundred or so cross-country runners practicing for their upcoming conference meet.

- Tim Murphy

Annual Appeal/Local Membership

Quad City Audubon has a number of changes upcoming. Foremost it has been planned for more than a year that our written mailed newsletter will no longer be. It will be replaced by an electronic newsletter. This eliminates the single largest expense of Quad City Audubon, the printing and mailing of our newsletter. It also makes environmental sense and from that aspect probably long overdue.

The newsletter has also signified membership. If one is a member either through National Audubon or as a local member, one received a printed newsletter. That, of course, will no longer happen. National membership includes a subscription to the quarterly magazine, but local membership will largely be to support our Chapter.

We do appreciate your support and local membership/contributions have become an important funding source for local and regional environmental projects. Over the past couple of years, we have contributed to land purchases around Yellow River State Park and Upper Iowa River, we have supported prothonotary and cerulean warbler research, we have purchased binoculars and financially supported beginning birding classes and have provided purple martin nesting houses at both Nahant Marsh and Credit Island. Finally we purchase seed and maintain a feeder at Credit Island.

Local membership dues are \$10.00. Membership runs from January 1 to December 31.

If you have any questions or concerns please email any Officer or Board member listed on the inside cover of the newsletter by email to: qcaudubon@gmail.com or one may call me at 309-764-9779.

Please send your payment with the attached form (back page of newsletter) to: Quad City Audubon Society
PO Box 81
Bettendorf, IA 52722

Respectfully,

Tim Murphy,
Membership Chair

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 February 15th, 2021. Submissions are gladly accepted. Send to:

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

Visit us online at:
www.quadcityaudubon.org