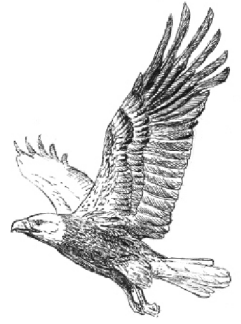




MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



UPCOMING EVENTS *All activities open to the public.*

Vol. 33, No 3

Fall 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, and on Facebook.

Thursday, October 13, 2022. 7:00 pm. Public Meeting via Zoom. Speaker: Dr. Brian Peer.
Subject to be announced.

Saturday, October 15, 2022. Field trip to Sunderbruch park and Fairmount Cemetery. Meet at the Sunderbruch main parking lot at 8:00 am.

Saturday, November 12, 2022. Field trip to observe migrating waterfowl. Meet at Shuler's Shady Grove Park/boat ramp in Rapids City, IL at 8:00 am.

Thursday, December 8, 2022. Public Meeting 7:00 pm – Pie Night, Butterworth Center.
Folks may bring pie to share, or just join in the fun. Program speaker to be announced. Please watch our web page for more information.

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

Visit us online at:
www.quadcityaudubon.org.



Audubon

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

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President's Corner*Jody Millar*

So hard to believe fall is upon us! I look up and see the vultures kettling into the up drafts that will propel them south. Days are getting shorter, nights cooler, a few leaves here and there turn color. Luckily, it affords us a new opportunity to see what the birds are up to.

I had hoped to check on local birds this weekend, but one day was too hot, the other too wet! Instead, I watched David Attenborough's "Hummingbirds: Jeweled Messengers" (Amazon Prime). The program highlights the many unique and wonderful features of these birds. The photography is, of course, marvelous. I encourage everyone to check out this program at their next opportunity. It will give you a special appreciation next time you have to clean and refill that hummingbird feeder!

Our next public meeting will be a "zoom" meeting. The turnout for our regular public meetings at Butterworth Center has been slim. With more and more people preferring to not meet in person, Dr. Brian Peer will be pulling together what promises to be an interesting program via "Zoom" for October 13 at 7:00 pm. Watch our web page for more details. Zoom meeting information will be emailed out to folks who have provided us with their email address. It will also be posted on our events site on our web page. Don't miss this opportunity!

We will be hosting our December Pie night in person at the Butterworth Center on December 8 at 7:00 pm. We will have a short public meeting and presentation before the pie social. Bring a pie if you wish, but do not feel obligated to do so – we always have plenty! This is a very nice social event that we hope many of our members who we rarely see will join us for this fun time.

Please feel free to share birds you have seen, taken pictures of, or have questions about at our email address: qcaudubon@gmail.com.



Thank you to Jody Millar and Britt Vickstrom for their photographs of a Yellow-breasted Chat (Upper left: Vickstrom) and Yellow-throated Vireo (Upper right and bottom left: Millar).

2022 Illinois State Spring Bird Count Results From Mercer County

By
Kelly J. McKay and Bill A. Bertrand

This year's Illinois State Spring Bird Count, coordinated by the Illinois Natural History Survey, was held on 7 May and marked the 49th year a count was conducted in Mercer County. Weather conditions during the count were decent with clear to partly cloudy skies, warm temperatures, and fairly light winds. However, spring migration this year was later than normal. Many of the neotropical migrant species were not yet back (e.g., flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, orioles, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and buntings). As a consequence, many expected species were either missed in Mercer County, or occurred in lower numbers than usual. This, coupled with declining population trends occurring in a majority of avian species, resulted in reduced numbers of individuals among many species this year.

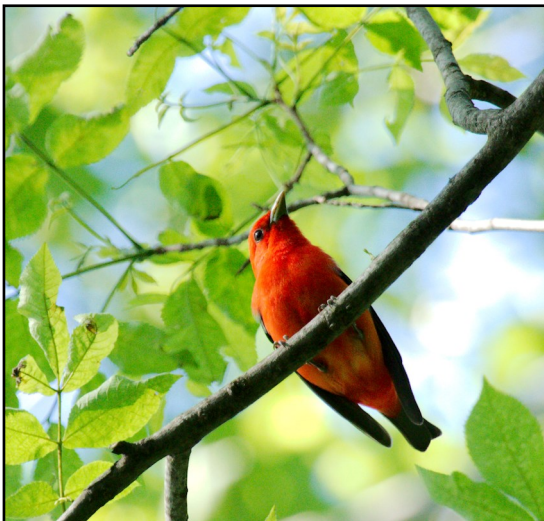
9 people in 5 field parties surveyed Mercer County. These observers spent 63.5 hours in the field, including 12.25 hours nocturnally, 10.25 hours on foot, and 41.0 hours driving. During the count, observers walked 11 miles and drove 355 miles. The 9 observers who surveyed Mercer County in 2022 included: Bill Bertrand (compiler), Shawn Hawks, Tammy Loussaert, Kelly McKay, Cathleen Monson, Jason Monson, Mark Roberts, Laura Semken, and Teresa Smith.

Overall, 134 species were identified during the count, exceeding the 48-year average of 126 species for Mercer County. This appeared to be pretty good news. However, total numbers of birds were shockingly low, with only 6,715 individuals recorded! Furthermore, just 10 species accounted for 50% of this total number (1,023 Red-winged Blackbirds, 443 American Robins, 319 House Sparrows, 307 Blue Jays, 267 European Starlings, 237 Mourning Doves, 210 Brown-headed Cowbirds, 204 Canada Geese, 186 Northern Cardinals, and 168 American Goldfinches). Many individual species from a wide array of families were reported in alarmingly low numbers including: 8 Mallards, 13 Rock Pigeons, 1 Greater Yellowlegs, 3 Lesser Yellowlegs, 10 Great Blue Herons, 28 Downy Woodpeckers, 1 Eastern Wood-Pewee, 4 Least Flycatchers, 10 Great Crested Flycatchers, 1 Red-eyed Vireo, 43 Black-capped Chickadees, 7 Horned Larks, 9 Bank Swallows, 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 24 Cedar Waxwings, 25 White-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Carolina Wrens, 3 Eastern Bluebirds, 1 Swainson's Thrush, 122 Eurasian Tree Sparrows, 26 House Finches, 7 Vesper Sparrows, 2 Savannah Sparrows, 1 Bobolink, 124 Common Grackles, 1 Northern Waterthrush, 1 Golden-winged Warbler, 2 Black-and-white Warblers, 2 Tennessee Warblers, 1 Orange-crowned Warbler, 5 Nashville Warblers, 13 Palm Warblers, 28 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 2 Scarlet Tanagers, and 17 Indigo Buntings, just to name a few! Additionally, even among the most numerous species recorded, several occurred in numbers much lower than normal (e.g., Red-winged Blackbird, American Robin, House Sparrow, and European Starling).

Despite the fairly gloomy numbers from Mercer County this year, we still identified a number of noteworthy species and/or numbers of individuals. Among these were 2 Common Mergansers, 1 King Rail, 38 Spotted Sandpipers, 1 Least Bittern, 2 Black-crowned Night-Herons, 61 Barred Owls, 99 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 1 Loggerhead Shrike, 8 American Pipits, 1 LeConte's Sparrow, and 2 Henslow's Sparrows.

Numerous species were absent in the county this year. Some of the missing species may simply have not returned yet by early May, as a result of spring migration running late? Additionally, Mercer County has experienced a substantial loss in the amount and diversity of habitat types over the last couple of decades, possibly impacting the composition of the migratory avian community? However, some of these missing birds may be due to severely declining population trends occurring among many species? Whatever the cause, the list of species not observed this year in Mercer County was itself concerning and included: Northern Bobwhite, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Dunlin, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern, Great Egret, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Purple Finch, Clay-colored Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Summer Tanager, and Blue Grosbeak. Besides this significant list of missing birds, 16 expected warbler species were not observed during the count (e.g., Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Pine Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler).

Although these results are discouraging, data from projects, such as the Illinois State Spring Bird Count, are how we monitor the populations of wildlife species across the globe. If we are to minimize the severity of the 6th Mass Extinction Event, we need to understand the variables causing it, and how they are impacting wildlife populations as well as the entire biosphere. The authors would like to thank all the participants on this year's count, and encourage everyone to get involved and contribute next year.



At left, a Scarlet Tanager. Photo by Rueben Segura.

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.

Results from the 2022 Illinois Audubon Society Chapter Big Day Bird Count Event

By
Kelly J. McKay and Mark A. Roberts

Many of you are probably familiar with the concept of Big Day Bird Counts. These events are typically competitions between teams to see who can identify the greatest number of bird species within a defined area over a given time period. They often involve a fundraising aspect for some organization or project. In 2021, the Illinois Audubon Society began an annual Chapter Big Day Bird Count Event which is held the Saturday after the Illinois State Spring Bird Count. This program did not involve fundraising, but was simply a competition between various chapters of the Illinois Audubon Society. Participating chapters recruit teams consisting of as many individuals as possible, who then separate into different groups to cover as much of the state as possible. The competition is 24 hours long, running from midnight to midnight. During the 2021 inaugural Big Day, Team Emiquon from the Emiquon Audubon Society in central Illinois won the competition.

In February 2022 I was recruited by Jo Fessett, one of the leaders of Team Emiquon. She explained that the Emiquon Audubon Society was determined to defend their championship. Therefore, they were attempting to assemble a team with many of the best birders in Illinois. I accepted the offer and set about to put together a group of 1 or 2 other birders to join the team. Big Days are extremely intensive and involve a grueling 24-hours of "hard core" birding! After approaching 5 or 6 birding friends, Mark Roberts (who has become one of the most prolific birders in the Quad City area over the last couple of years) was the only one interested in taking on this exhausting and challenging day of birding. Overall, Team Emiquon had 16 members covering most regions of the state. We had groups of team members in southern, central, and northcentral to northeast Illinois. Mark and I intensively covered a relatively small territory in northwest Illinois, along the Mississippi River and including Carroll, Whiteside, Rock Island, Mercer, and Henderson Counties.

Our original plan was to nocturnally bird from the Quad Cities upriver to the Lost Mound Unit of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (UMRNWFR). We would then spend the day birding several locations within these five counties working downriver from Carroll County to Henderson County. Our proposed itinerary included: 1) Mississippi Palisades State Park, 2) Lost Mound, 3) Spring Lake Unit UMRNWFR, 4) Ayers Prairie Nature Preserve, 5) Thomson Causeway Recreation Area, 6) Lock and Dam 13, 7) Quad Cities, 8) Milan Bottoms, 9) Loud Thunder Forest Preserve, 10) Swan Lake Hunting Club, 11) Keithsburg Division of the Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge, 12) Big River State Forest, and 13) wetlands on the south end of Oquawka. Consequently, with this many proposed sites we would only be able to spend about 1.0 hour per site. This was unrealistic and we knew we would not be able to visit all these locations.

Mark and I departed my house at midnight on 14 May to begin our Big Day adventure. We nocturnally birded from 0000-0523, stopping at six distinct locations including: Merodosa Flats east of Cordova, County Line Marsh on the Rock Island/Whiteside county line, Highway 84 wetland south of Fulton, Spring Lake, Highway 84 wetland north of Mississippi Palisades State Park, and Lost Mound. Some of the noteworthy species we identified during the night included: Common Nighthawk, Chuck-will's-widow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule, Least Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Eastern Screech-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Sedge Wren, and Henslow's Sparrow. We had 33 total species by the beginning of daytime birding (i.e., 0523).

We were still in Lost Mound during the first few minutes of diurnal work (0523-0540). In these first few minutes, we added several notable birds such as Trumpeter Swan, Wild Turkey, Green Heron, Cliff Swallow, Lark Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Yellow Warbler. As we departed Lost Mound, we had recorded a cumulative total of 52 species.

The next 5.25 hours (0545-1100) was spent in Mississippi Palisades State Park. Although we spent far too long at this location, it was not misused time. We identified 100 species within the park including: Yellow and Black-billed Cuckoos, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, all 7 woodpeckers, 7 flycatchers, 5 vireos, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Veery, Wood Thrush, Orchard Oriole, 28 warblers (e.g., Ovenbird, Worm-eating, Louisiana Waterthrush, Golden-winged, Mourning, Kentucky, Hooded, Cerulean, Pine, Yellow-throated), and Summer and Scarlet Tanagers. As we left this location, our cumulative total for the day was 128 species.

We now traveled back to Lost Mound and birded from 1100-1300. Again, we spent too much time here as well. However, several more highlight species were encountered such as White-rumped Sandpiper, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Prairie Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak. Our two diurnal visits to Lost Mound produced 81 species. As we departed this location, the cumulative total for the day was 142 species.

As the day started to get warmer, Mark and I separated for two hours (1330-1530). I birded the Spring Lake Unit of the UMRNWFR, while Mark worked Ayers Prairie Nature Preserve and general areas in Carroll County. Once again, we lingered at these sites too long. While Spring Lake produced 71 species, Ayers only yielded 3 species. Nevertheless, several noteworthy birds were observed at these sites including: Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Sandhill Crane, Black and Common Terns, Bank Swallow, Marsh Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, Yellow-headed and Rusty Blackbirds, and Prothonotary and Blackpoll Warblers. Our cumulative total for the day was now 158 species.

Next we birded Thomson Causeway Recreation Area for 1.25 hours (1615-1730). We recorded 46 species here. Examples of notable birds included: Bonaparte's and Herring Gulls, Caspian and Black Terns, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Orange-crowned and Yellow-throated Warblers. We departed Thomson Causeway with 162 total species for the day.

We finally left Carroll County at approximately 1740 hours. Overall, 59 species were encountered in this county and we departed with 167 cumulative species for the day. Since we were extremely behind schedule, we decided to skip Lock and Dam 13 and drive straight to the Quad Cities. As a result, we made no birding stops in Whiteside County. Consequently, only 24 species were tallied in Whiteside County and we left the county with 167 total species for the day.

Once we arrived in the Quad Cities, we decided to save time by driving straight through. As a result, we only birded in the Quad Cities for 0.5 hour (1800-1830) and made a very short 0.25-hour stop on the edge of Milan Bottoms (1830-1845). We identified 35 species in the Quad Cities, while Milan Bottoms yielded 24 species. These locations produced a few mentionable birds such as Gadwall, Hooded Merganser, Chimney Swift, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. As we left the Quad Cities our cumulative total for the day was 169 species, and by the time we finished Milan Bottoms this total had increased to 171 species for the day. Overall, we recorded 50 species in Rock Island County.

Continued on page 5

Results from the 2022 Illinois Audubon Society Chapter Big Day Bird Count Event

Continued from page 4

Since we were running out of time, Loud Thunder Forest Preserve was not birded. We decided to drive straight to the Swan Lake Hunting Club in Mercer County. Our total for the day as we left Rock Island County was 172 species. Daylight was quickly fading as we arrived at Swan Lake. We ended up birding here for 1.0 hour (1930-2030). This site produced 40 species of birds including: Ring-necked Pheasant, Sora, Semipalmated Plover, Dunlin, Baird's Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Great Horned Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Marsh Wren, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Towhee. We departed Swan Lake with 178 cumulative species for the day.

We simply ran out of time, so we knew we would not get to the Keithsburg Division of Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge, Big River State Forest, or the wetlands south of Oquawka. Therefore, we spent the last 2.0 hours of the day (2030-2230) birding generally in Mercer County. We encountered 42 species in the county and recorded 3 new species for the day (Northern Bobwhite, Purple Martin, and Northern Mockingbird). We left Mercer County with 181 cumulative species for the day. Our Big Day odyssey ended upon our arrival back at my house at 2315 hours. Mark and I had just birded 23.25 hours non-stop and had recorded 181 species for our team!

A couple of weeks later the Illinois Audubon Society announced the final awards. All teams combined identified 251 species of birds during the Big Day Event! Team Emiquon Audubon Society successfully defended their title, winning the competition with 227 species. The runner-up was Team Lake-Cook Audubon Society with 194 species. Among the individual awards, I won the award for the highest species count by a single individual (181 species). Mark also had an extremely good day with 160 species recorded. Anyone interested in participating next year should let me know. I am sure Team Emiquon will be going for a three-peat!

A Potential Problem for Local Bald Eagles – The Proposed Development of a Vertiport Facility on the Rock Island Riverfront

By
Kelly J. McKay

I am writing this article as a “heads up” to Quad City Audubon Society members. In late May I was contacted by a concerned citizen, who wishes to remain anonymous and is also a member of the Rock Island Planning Commission, regarding the proposed development of a “vertiport” facility along Sylvan Slough at 3050 3rd Avenue in Rock Island by Jake Pautsch, CEO of the Davenport-based DIFCO, Incorporated. This location was a former contaminated property which was cleaned up as a “brownfield” site. It was then acquired for development by Mr. Pautsch. My contact indicated that they had been assisting with cleaning up garbage and debris from the site over a considerable period of time and had several conversations with Mr. Pautsch about plans for the site. Initially, he wanted to develop a solar panel electrical generating facility (i.e., solar farm) at this location. Everyone, including myself, thought this was a great idea. According to my contact, this plan experienced various problems and delays for a couple of years, during which time this person lost touch with Mr. Pautsch.

The issue of this property resurfaced earlier this year when the Quad City Times and Quad City Dispatch ran articles indicating that Mr. Pautsch was now planning to develop a “vertiport” facility at this location. What is a “vertiport” you ask? I had also never heard this term. As far as I can tell from the newspaper articles, it is basically an airport for vertical take off and landing aircraft. According to Mr. Pautsch, this facility will be used by helicopters to service various hospitals in the Quad Cities, but will also eventually service battery-powered vertical take-off and landing aircraft, which is as yet a nonexistent new technology. The use of this area for medical helicopters is very confusing for a couple of reasons. First, I believe local hospitals all have their own heliports where patients are delivered directly to the hospital. Second, if patients are flown in to this facility in the middle of Rock Island, they will have to be loaded into ambulances and transported through city traffic to a hospital. How will this provide medical treatment quicker than flying them directly to the hospital via a heliport, or even into the Quad City Airport? The proposed “vertiport” development will be massive and its potential impacts to local wildlife substantial. Pautsch's plan includes a 24,000 square foot hangar and facilities for lease, refueling facilities, a pilot lounge, a prototype visual navigational aid beacon, and an area navigation instrumentation approach and departure egress.

My purpose for writing this article is to mobilize, or at least alert, local Audubon members to the serious negative impacts I believe this development project will have on the large population of Bald Eagles which typically utilize this immediate area during the late fall, winter, and early spring months (i.e., November through April). My concern (shared with other environmental leaders within the Quad Cities) and opposition to this proposed development is three-pronged. First, the lower end of Arsenal Island, which is less than 0.5 mile from the proposed development site, is a major foraging area for the local wintering eagle population, often with 250+ birds spending the daylight hours foraging for fish below Lock and Dam 15. Consequently, throughout the day, the sky is often crowded with hunting eagles. My concern is the likely disturbance arriving and departing aircraft will have on the foraging birds. Also, with so many large raptors in the air at all times, the potential for collisions with arriving and departing aircraft may be substantial.

Second, with so many foraging eagles concentrating at this location, there is the very real potential for adverse eagle/aircraft encounters particularly during the early morning (i.e., approximately one hour before sunrise until two hours after sunrise) and late day (i.e., two hours before sunset until one hour after sunset) periods. It is during these times, when the large numbers of birds at this concentrated foraging site will be dispersing to and from various night roost locations via low level flight paths, thereby increasing the risk of negative encounters with approaching and departing aircraft.

Third, and probably the most serious impact, will occur to the substantial number of Bald Eagles that often night roost along Sylvan Slough (50-100+ birds) immediately adjacent to the proposed development site...literally just meters away on the other side of the slough! Wintering communal night roosts is the habitat type utilized by wintering eagles which is the most sensitive to human disturbances. The function of a communal night roost is to provide the birds with a secluded area where they can spend the night conserving valuable energy reserves. Night roosting eagles are very susceptible to, and will not tolerate, increased levels of human disturbance. Given the close proximity of the proposed “vertiport” development to this known significant night roost location, will certainly have serious negative impacts on the night roosting eagles. These impacts will include not only the extreme disturbance caused by arriving and departing aircraft, but the often overlooked disturbance resulting from the lighting of the facility including navigational beacons. In my opinion, this development at this location will cause most, if not all, eagles to abandon the Sylvan Slough night roost, and significantly impact the local wintering Bald Eagle population. *Continued on page 6*

A Potential Problem for Local Bald Eagles – The Proposed Development of a Vertiport Facility on the Rock Island Riverfront

Continued from page 5

My concern over this proposed development extends beyond wintering Bald Eagles. Throughout all seasons of the year, this location supports substantial concentrations of many larger avian species (e.g., many species of migratory waterfowl, a variety of gull species, Double-crested Cormorants, American White Pelicans, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Turkey Vultures, etc.). The potential impacts of this development on these species is unknown. What is certain, is that with such a concentration of large birds at this location throughout the year, the potential for negative avian/aircraft interactions is a very real concern!

I sent a letter voicing my opposition to this proposed development to Miles Brainard, Community and Economic Development Director for the city of Rock Island. I would encourage all QCAS members to write to Mr. Brainard as well. We may need an Elton Fawks-style large letter writing campaign to prevent this very destructive project from negatively impacting the local avian, and especially wintering Bald Eagle, community. Mr. Brainard's email address is: brainard.miles@rigov.org

Coming Soon: Building Better Birders and Citizen Scientists Workshops 2

By
Kelly J. McKay, Mark A. Roberts, Brian P. Ritter, and James M. Wiebler

Between September 2020 and February 2022, we conducted 100 “Building Better Birders and Citizen Scientists Workshops” across 26 counties in Iowa as part of a Resource Enhancement and Protection – Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP) grant that we received from the state of Iowa. Although funded by REAP-CEP, this project was a collaborative partnership involving the Iowa DNR, BioEco Research and Monitoring Center, Clinton County Conservation Board, Nahant Marsh Education Center, Blevins Wild Bird Shop and Art Gallery, and the Clinton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever.

During this project, conducted in the middle of the raging COVID-19 pandemic, we had two primary attendance goals: 1) to interact with 900 total participants among the 100 workshops, and 2) to interact with 2,700 cumulative participants throughout these 100 workshops. The REAP-CEP Committee thought these were unrealistically high goals, especially amidst the pandemic. Nevertheless, when we completed our 100 workshops we had smashed both goals. These workshops had serviced 1,806 total and 3,098 cumulative participants! Additionally, all avian data collected during the course of these workshops were included in seasonal reports submitted to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. Consequently, these workshops also produced 1,056 citizen scientists! The success of this program was acknowledged as we were awarded the 2021 Iowa Ding Darling Environmental Education Award from the Iowa Association of Naturalists and the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition.

During the initial workshops, there were far more counties interested than we could possibly serve. Therefore, we submitted another REAP-CEP grant request this year to provide workshop opportunities to additional counties, and possibly even non-county affiliated nature centers. On 24 June the REAP-CEP Committee, in a 5-0 vote, approved us for another grant! As a result, we will be conducting the “Building Better Birders and Citizen Scientists Workshops 2” across 25 new counties or nature centers in Iowa from the fall of 2022 through the spring of 2024. Each county or nature center will host a series of 3 different workshops (i.e., 75 total workshops) which will be free to the public. As with the initial program, host organizations will be able to build their own specific workshops choosing from several programming options including: various bird identification PowerPoint presentations based on species groups or habitat guilds, a variety of “public-friendly” avian research presentations, diurnal bird hikes of varying lengths, nocturnal “owl prowls,” and any other type of miscellaneous presentation or program conducted by the host organization.

All the collaborative partners from the initial workshops will be involved with this new series of workshops. Additionally, 2 new partners have joined in this collaborative effort: Cedar-Wapsi Chapter of Pheasants Forever and the Clinton County Conservation Foundation. We are also hoping to design a “Building Better Birders” Website, so that anyone will be able to find out when and where workshops will be held, as well as what each workshop will consist of in terms of programming. Stay tuned for more information as these new “Building Better Birders and Citizen Scientists Workshops” are developed.

*At right, Bald Eagle. Photograph by
Rueben Segura.*

