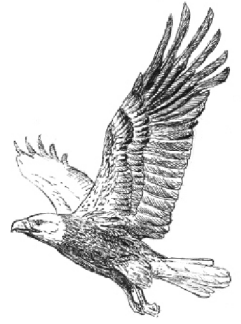




MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



UPCOMING EVENTS *All activities open to the public.*

Vol. 33, No 4

Winter 2022

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

Thursday, December 8th, 2022. Public Meeting 7:00 pm – Pie Night, Butterworth Center. Join us for our annual Pie Night. Please bring a pie to share. In addition to celebrating the season, we will share photos of our favorite birds from 2022 and also have a Bird Quiz like no other you have experienced.

Wednesday, December 14th, 2022. Clinton-Savanna Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Thursday, December 15th, 2022. Louisa Y Christmas Bird Count. Contact Laura Semken at lsemken@lousiacountyia.gov to participate.

Saturday, December 17th, 2022. Bald Bluff Christmas Bird Count. Contact Jason Monson at jmonson75@hotmail.com to participate.

Sunday, December 18th, 2022. Davenport Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Wednesday, December 21st, 2022. Princeton-Camanche Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Thursday, December 22nd, 2022. VanPetten Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Friday, December 23rd, 2022. Muscatine Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Saturday, December 24th, 2022. Andalusia-Buffalo Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Sunday, December 25th, 2022. Buchanan County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Monday, December 26th, 2022. Western Mercer County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Monday, January 2nd, 2023. Eastern Mercer County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Jason Monson at jmonson75@hotmail.com to participate.

Tuesday, January 3rd, 2023. Northwest Clayton County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661 to participate.

Wednesday, January 4th, 2023. Southeast Clayton County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kelly McKay at 309-235-4661.

Friday-Sunday, January 6th-8th, 2023. Bald Eagle Days at the QCCA Expo Center, Rock Island, Illinois. QCAS is looking for volunteers to help participants observe Bald Eagles. If you're interested, contact us at qcaudubon@gmail.com.

Saturday, February 11th, 2023. Winter Walk at Smith Island and Lock and Dam 14 with Dr. Brian Peer. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Lock and Dam 14 parking lot in LeClaire, Iowa.

Saturday, March 11th, 2023. Spring Waterfowl Walk at Princeton Wildlife Management Area. Meet at the PWMA boat ramp (south end of the management area) at 8 a.m. For questions, contact us at qcaudubon@gmail.com.



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-2023

BOARD MEMBERS

Cathy White-2022

Bob Bryant-2022

Forrest Stonedahl-2023

Rueben Segura-2022

Adrianna McBride-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

Jody Millar

Our recent mild weather has been wonderful for viewing late fall birds. The puddle ducks have arrived, and I had to bring my books back out to refresh my identification skills. Gadwalls can fool you into thinking they are female mallards. The female shoveler looked like a female mallard, too, until that big fat bill came into view. I am waiting for the divers to show up near me. That brief cold spell pushed the birds downstream. When I go out for the Christmas Bird Count, it will be interesting to see how many birds have moved down. In the Clinton/Savanna territory, waterfowl during the CBC easily numbers in the thousands. It is a sight to see!

Have you thought about participating in the Christmas Bird Count? Novice birders are welcome. Your identification skills will be sharpened while seeing some of the common winter birds that visit our feeders. But there are always a few unique birds, as well. This will be National Audubon Society's 123rd Christmas Bird Count. It starts December 14 and extends to January 5, 2023. If you are interested in joining a CBC team this year, reach out to the compilers (Kelly McKay (309-235-4661), Jason Monson (jmonson75@hotmail.com), and Laura Semken (lsemken@louisianacountyia.gov). Specific dates and contacts are listed on the front page of this newsletter.

You can also find out about the CBC by coming to our QC Audubon Annual Pie Night! It is a fun and informative social with a short meeting, a short program and plenty of time for sampling an array of pies and conversation. This would be a good opportunity to talk with other members who have been doing the CBC – some for years – and find out what it is like. The Member Meeting/Pie Night will be held on Thursday, December 8th, 7 pm, at the Butterworth Center in Moline, IL. See you there!

Don't let Figge lights hurt our migratory birds

Recently, the QC Audubon Board of Directors became aware of a proposed lighting project at the Figge Art Museum. While architectural lighting can be very pleasing, it can also be a distraction to migratory birds. Along our area on the Mississippi River Flyway, millions of birds pass during peak migration. It is crucial that these birds not become distracted by city lights that can cause birds to detour flight and exhaust them, or even crash into lighted objects. Here is the letter that the QC Audubon Board wrote to the CEO of the Figge Art Museum and to the Mayor of Davenport regarding the Figge lighting project proposal.

To: Michelle Hargrave, Executive Director and CEO, Figge Art Museum

To: Mike Matson, Mayor, City of Davenport, Iowa

Subject: Don't let Figge lights hurt our migratory birds

The Mississippi River Flyway is one of our nation's most important corridors for bird migration, both for waterfowl and for neotropical migrants. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology estimates almost a half million birds passed through Scott County during peak migration on September 17, 2022. On two subsequent days, Cornell Lab estimated over 400,000 birds each day using radar. By November 4, 2022, 110 million birds were estimated to have passed through Scott County, Iowa during fall migration following the Mississippi River Flyway (Cornell Lab of Ornithology – BirdCast).

Most of these birds are flying at night, navigating with the night sky. When they pass over bright artificial lights and sky glow, they can become disoriented, resulting in detours, energy drain and collisions with buildings or windows. An estimated one billion birds are killed annually from direct collisions with illuminated buildings, towers, and other structures across the country. With 80% of the United States impacted by photo-polluted nights, light pollution poses serious threats to birds migrating at night, according to the National Audubon Society.

The Quad City Audubon Society would like to alert decision makers to this concern as an extensive lighting project is proposed for the Figge Art Museum in downtown Davenport near the riverfront. We request consideration be given to quell lighting during periods of bird migration to reduce the possibility of mass bird disorientation and possible collisions.

We would be pleased to assist you in working out a schedule of lighting that would remain aesthetically pleasing while protecting our Nation's precious bird resource.

Quad City Audubon Society

qcaudubon@gmail.com

Jody Millar, President

Dr. Brian Peer, Vice President

Tim Murphy, Secretary

Bernadene Bowles, Treasurer

Bob Bryant, Board of Directors

Adrianna McBride, Board of Directors

Rueben Segura, Board of Directors

Dr. Forrest Stonedahl, Board of Directors

Cathy White, Board of Directors

5th Annual Hawk Watch at Eagle Point Park

Kelly J. McKay and Mark A. Roberts

On a seasonably cool and overcast Saturday September 24th, 6 dedicated observers watched the skies over Eagle Point Park in Clinton, Iowa for 10.5 hours attempting to spot migrating raptors. The five-year tradition of this all-day hawk watch has been extremely fun and rewarding for the people who really get into this type of birding experience! However, this particular day turned out to be a decidedly poor migration day for raptors, with no development of thermals or updrafts to assist migratory movements of raptors. Nevertheless, the group carried on throughout the day since the event had been advertised to the public, and we were all gathered in this location for the love of birding! The 6 intrepid all-dayers were Linda Boardsen, Chris Brun, Kelly McKay, Eric Ollie, Mark Roberts, and Julie Roeder.

The North Overlook at Eagle Point Park has been the chosen location for our hawk watch each year. This location provides a truly spectacular view of five miles of the Mississippi River from high up on the bluff, allowing us to scan for birds over approximately 8,000 acres of Mississippi River wetlands and open water, as well as the forested bluffs bordering the river. This site also typically has a lot of traffic due to the fantastic views and the overall popularity of the park. Consequently, we were able to engage 46 people who stopped by on a variety of birding-related topics including: species observed, migration, optics, citizen science, the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, and various Audubon Societies.

Although raptors were the primary target group for the day, we did keep data on all other observed bird species. In terms of raptors, 8 species were recorded.

Bald Eagle – 13 individuals were spotted during the day. A few appeared to be hunting over the river, but the majority were flying high and moving southwards. The public is always enamored with Bald Eagles, and for good reason! Whenever visitors stop by, they want to see an eagle. Therefore, we always try to keep one in view in one of the scopes.

Turkey Vulture – 24 were seen that day. Although a few were high-flying apparent migrants, most were milling around low over the bluffs searching for a meal. The local vulture population is quite high, demonstrating what a poor thermal day it was with so few local birds out and about.

Osprey – A single bird was observed cruising south at altitude. Osprey are neotropical migrants, with the majority migrating earlier in the fall season.

Sharp-shinned Hawk – 5 sharpies were spotted from our vantage point. One definitely had the attention of a flock of 20 Northern Flickers. At first it appeared the hawk was driving the flickers on a hunt, but then the mob turned on the hawk and the rout was on!

Broad-winged Hawk – 6 were spotted cruising south at altitude. This neotropical migrant, which has an abbreviated migration season, was probably already through this region since a big push of broad-wings were noted earlier in the week along the river. We always have scheduled this event to try to catch the large kettles of broad-wings migrating along the river, but in five years have never been successful. We suspect that with the prevailing westerly winds in the Midwest, more robust updrafts occur on the east side of the river, resulting in a greater concentration of broad-winged kettles on the Illinois side.

Red-tailed Hawk – A single bird was spotted circling low over the bluff-top trees. It was believed to be a hunting, non-

migrant individual.

Merlin – A single bird raced past our location, with constant and powerful wingbeats (i.e., typical Merlin flight pattern). Maybe it was hunting some of the songbirds congregated in the park or maybe it was just passing through...probably both!

Barred Owl – A single Barred Owl responded to a call very early in the day. Since our likelihood of getting any owls was not high, Mark played a Barred Owl call and was able to get a response from a cooperative bird.

Overall, 81 total species of birds were recorded, including the 8 raptors. The total number of individuals tallied for each species will be submitted to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union for inclusion in seasonal field notes. Some of the highlights from the 73 non-raptor species included: 2 Trumpeter Swans, 100 Wood Ducks, 55 Pied-billed Grebes, 60 Chimney Swifts, 7,000 American Coots, 2 Caspian Terns, 400 American White Pelicans, 30 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 1,000 Tree Swallows, 6 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 1 Brown Creeper, 2 Carolina Wrens, 3 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 4 Gray-cheeked Thrushes, 8 Swainson's Thrushes, 3 Purple Finches, 26 White-throated Sparrows, 1 Eastern Towhee, 1 Rusty Blackbird, 2 Summer Tanagers, 1 Scarlet Tanager, 30 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and 2 Indigo Buntings. Additionally, 11 species of warblers were encountered. These included: 1 Black-and-white, 8 Tennessee, 3 Orange-crowned, 2 Nashville, 1 Mourning, 1 Cape May, 2 Magnolia, 1 Blackburnian, 3 Palm, 10 Yellow-rumped, and 3 Black-throated Green Warblers.

Even though it was not a great day for birding results, our group enjoyed the views and each other's company. Kelly led two separate bird hikes through the day, one around the north end of Eagle Point Park and the other to Soaring Eagle Nature Center at the south end of the park. The day's true hero was Chris Brun who brought roasted chicken and potato salad for the whole group! Some of the best birding times are when people spend time together, teaching and helping one another and just enjoying the great outdoors. Hopefully, this "Hawk Watch" tradition will continue into the future.



The North Overlook at Eagle Point Park offers a spectacular view of Pool 13 on the Mississippi River.

Quad City Audubon Board Member Recruitment

Quad City Audubon Society is seeking nominations (self-nominations are especially welcomed!) for Officers and Board Members for 2023. While it is expected that our current QCAS Board will retain many officers, we have great need to get some new faces involved.

Currently the Board is to meet 6 times per year prior to our membership meetings in March, April, May, September, October and December. Other board meetings may be called as issues demand.

The Board is composed of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and 5 Board members. Of the 5 Board members, one position is to be filled by the outgoing President.

Each position is a two-year term. Here is a description of duties:

President:

Jody Millar has been our President for the past four years and would like to step down. The position of the President is to prepare an agenda for the Board meeting, for the general membership meetings and to chair those meetings. Typical agenda items include planning meeting speakers, field trips, funding requests and requests for our organization to participate in a variety of community events. Jody would be happy to train.

Vice-President:

Our current Vice-President is Brian Peer. The role of the Vice-President is to chair the meeting in absence of the President. In addition the Vice-President, with input from the Board, is ultimately responsible for organizing and securing a program for the general membership meetings.

Treasurer: Our current Treasurer is Bernadene Bowles. The treasurer's responsibility is to pay bills as approved by the Board, deposit and track receipts, monitor balances in bank accounts and to provide a report to the Board. Currently Bernadene has indicated she would remain in this position but a replacement would be considered if anyone would like to take over these responsibilities.

Secretary:

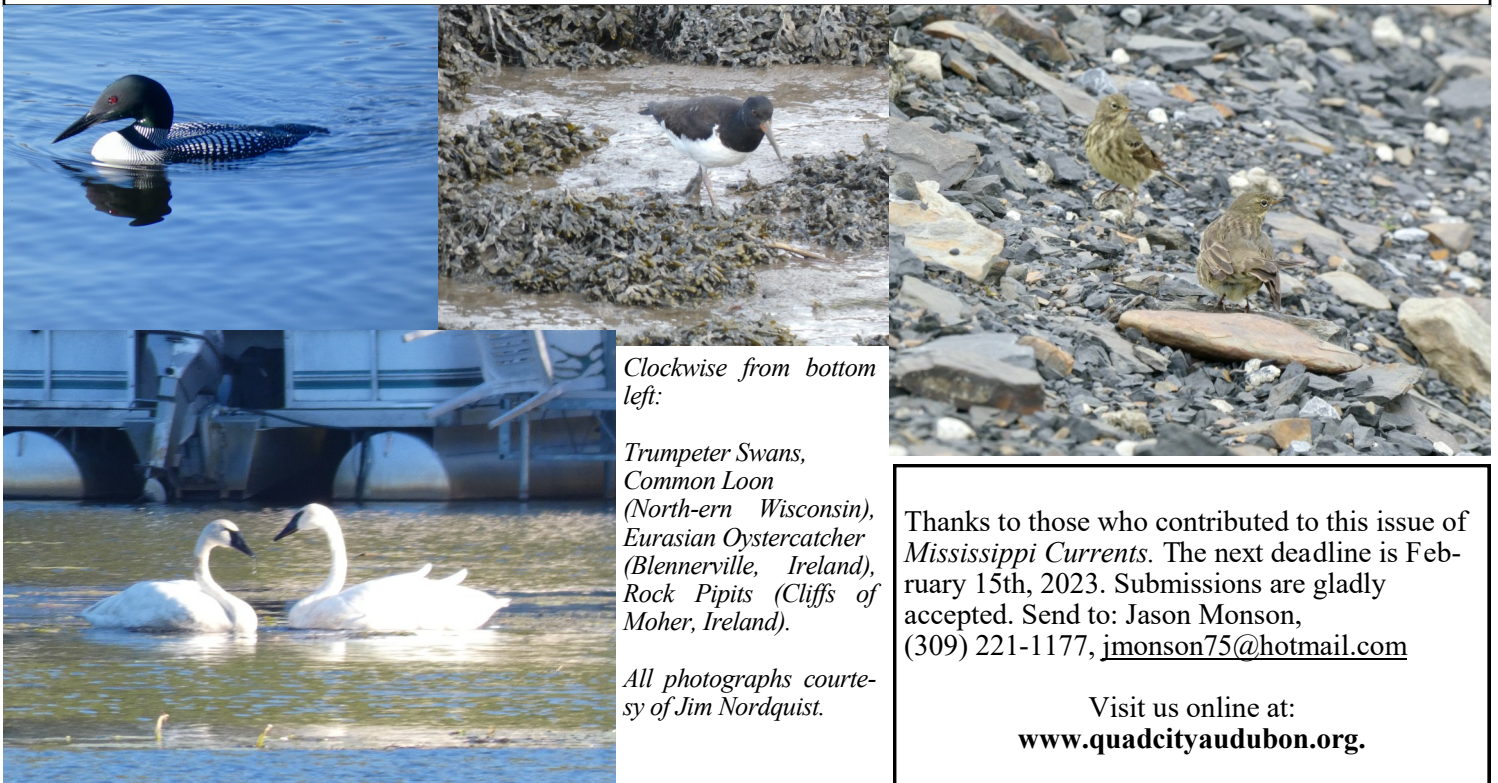
Tim Murphy is our current Secretary. The responsibility of the Secretary is to prepare meeting minutes of the Board Meetings and other correspondence as assigned.

Board Members:

Our current board members are Cathy White, Adrianna McBride, Ruben Segura, Bob Bryant, and Forrest Stonedahl. Only Forrest is slated to return for 2023. Presently, there is at least one known vacancy on the Board. A board member is expected to attend meetings as scheduled. The dates and times of the meetings will be set to accommodate board member schedules. The basic responsibility of the Board has been to supply input in organizing field trips, speakers for membership meetings, approve expenditures and to evaluate requests from the community for our support. Serving as a board member does not require a large time commitment, and it is an excellent way to learn more about QCAS activities.

In summary, we do need assistance and would be happy to accept nominations for filling any of the positions. If you are interested, or can recommend someone else who might be, please contact Tim Murphy at 309-764-9779 or email qcaudubon@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration.



Clockwise from bottom left:

Trumpeter Swans, Common Loon (North-ern Wisconsin), Eurasian Oystercatcher (Blennerville, Ireland), Rock Pipits (Cliffs of Moher, Ireland).

All photographs courtesy of Jim Nordquist.

Thanks to those who contributed to this issue of *Mississippi Currents*. The next deadline is February 15th, 2023. Submissions are gladly accepted. Send to: Jason Monson, (309) 221-1177, jmonson75@hotmail.com

Visit us online at:
www.quadcityaudubon.org

Sunderbruch Park Field Trip

October 15th, 2022 dawned pretty chilly, just above freezing, but the skies were clear, the wind light and the day promised to warm fairly quickly. Eight Audubon members, Pat Carlson, Cathy Konrad, Tim Murphy, Julie Pearson, Sherif & Teri Ragheb, Forrest Stonedahl and Cathy White met at Sunderbruch Park in Davenport for a morning of fall birding.

Sunderbruch is a very nice park in west Davenport on Telegraph Road. The park entrance is on the lowest part of the park, bordered by a creek. The hillsides are timbered and the central part of the park is a fairly decent prairie restoration. The park has been noted for a good number of bluebirds with some nest boxes provided by the City and Quad City Audubon.

We began the field trip by walking up the relatively steep hill through the prairie restoration. Blue jays, crows, chickadees, flicker, red-bellied woodpecker and white-breasted nuthatch were identified by call and our first winter bird, American tree sparrow, perched nicely for us in the fence row.

Overall, birding was slow until we reached the portion of the trail that intersected with timber. Eastern towhee, cardinal, downy woodpecker, ruby-crowned kinglet, hermit thrush and cedar waxwing were added to the list. Song sparrow and goldfinch were present in the prairie a few steps later.

Little new was added for a while, but we had a decent look at a Cooper's hawk soaring overhead. Confirmation was greatly aided by Forrest Stonedahl's camera, which gave us a more certain view of the long barred tail with a relatively wide terminal white band.

Overall raptors were moving and we added red-tailed hawk, broad-winged hawk, sharp-shinned hawk and turkey vulture before the morning was over.

We decided to cross over from Sunderbruch to Fairmount Cemetery as a somewhat hidden trail connects the two. Along the trail, both ruby-crowned and golden-crowned kinglets were present. Most everyone had a good look at a cooperative golden-crowned who not only showed his gold crown but the red patch in the middle of the crown as well.

Notable birds in Fairmount included eastern phoebe, yellow-rumped warbler, orange-crowned warbler, blue-headed vireo and hairy woodpecker.

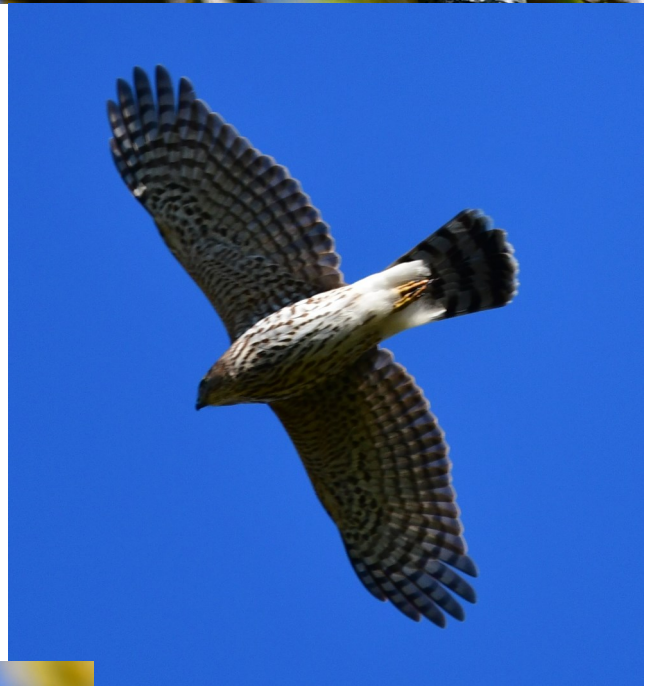
We closed out the morning with a return to the cars via Sunderbruch, spotted a flock of white-throated sparrows, a winter wren and a lot more kinglets.

One unusual aspect of the trip was the use of Merlin App to identify calls. Merlin agreed with the human ear nearly 100% of the time. However, Merlin also picked up birds that none of us heard or saw. These included great horned owl, field sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, brown thrasher, and swamp sparrow. The last bird seemed particularly unlikely since we were not near expected habitat.

Still this app holds great promise when it comes to confirming calls.

Overall we had a great morning with 37 species. We had some good looks at birds, the weather was cooperative, our group congenial and as Cathy Konrad remarked the field trip "exceeded expectations". Plus, on a personal note, it was especially good to see a healthy Pat Carlson.

Tim Murphy



From top to bottom: Blue-headed Vireo and Cooper's Hawk. From left to right: White-throated Sparrow and Orange-crowned Warbler. All photographs from the Fall Field Trip courtesy of Forrest Stonedahl.

Waterfowl Field Trip 11-12-22

Six Audubon members, Cathy Konrad, Forrest and Susa, Stonedahl, Tim Murphy and Cathy White made the annual Fall Waterfowl Field trip from the Quad Cities to just short of Savanna, IL. Following a week or more of 70 degree weather, 34 degree temperatures and a 12 mile per hour wind from the northwest was a bit of a shock.

I had stopped at Lock & Dam 14 prior to meeting the group and found essentially no waterfowl. The drive to our first major stop, Lock and Dam 13 was not much better. We picked up a wood duck at the pump station south of Albany. Ruddy duck, hooded merganser and ring-billed duck were seen near Fulton.

Lock & Dam 13 was nearly a complete bust. The shallow water that normally is filled with waterfowl this time of year was empty save for coots and a pair of Trumpeter swans that landed as we scanned in vain.

The Channel above the dam, always very reliable for diving ducks too was empty. Fortunately for us Dick Sayles had birded the area and he had spotted a snow bunting. It took a couple of tries but eventually our group all had a good look at the bird.

The water around the Thomson Causeway Campground was much better as we picked up gadwall, widgeon, green-winged teal, Wilson's snipe as well as a few woodland birds. Numbers of birds though was still very poor.

We then drove to the overlook at Ingersoll Nature Center by way of Big Slough Recreation Center and viewed lesser scaup, redhead, bufflehead, northern pintail, and northern shoveler. A quick stop and Spring Lake gave us Tundra Swan for 19 species of waterfowl.

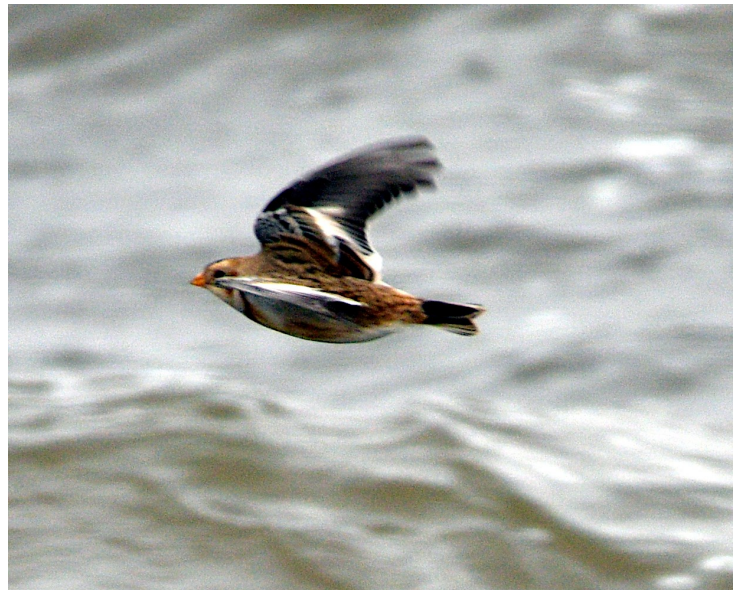
Our last stop was when Cathy Konrad and I scanned a huge flock of red-winged blackbirds, cowbirds and grackles trying to pick out a rusty blackbird but to no avail.

For the day we ended up with 55 species with the snow bunting the most unusual bird of the day. Waterfowl were scarce and it seems obvious the vast majority of diving ducks and quite possibly puddle ducks have yet to migrate this far south.

Tim Murphy



Above, Trumpeter swans, below, Snow bunting. Seen on the November Fall Field Trip. Photographs courtesy of Forrest Stonedahl.



At left, Eastern Phoebe photographed on the Fall Field Trip. Photograph by Forrest Stonedahl.

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.