



MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



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Field Trip Princeton Iowa Wildlife Management Area

On Saturday March 11, a hardy group of 8 birders braved a bit of early March cold to view waterfowl at Princeton Wildlife Management Area, just north of Princeton, Iowa. Immediately we were rewarded with great views of rusty blackbirds in non-breeding plumage. Rusty blackbird is different than most in that non-breeding plumage is much more colorful, kind of rusty if you will, than the black of the breeding adult male. This bird migrates through our area in March and is considered a bird in severe decline.

Our initial stop also held snow goose, Canada goose, mute swan, wood duck, Northern shoveler, American coot, mallard, gadwall and bald eagle. Common passerines were also present including red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, Northern flicker, dark-eyed junco, white-throated sparrow, common grackle, and the ever present red-winged blackbird.

We traveled north to the middle entrance of the park and walked along the levee. We were surprised at how skittish the waterfowl were. We would be a couple of hundred yards away and it seemed as soon as I would set up the spotting scope they would flush. It was difficult to give everyone a close up through the scope and we had to rely on binoculars for much of our identification. Here diving ducks including lesser scaup, ring-necked duck and bufflehead predominated.

Our last stop was the northernmost entrance. The path leads through bottomland floodplain forest, grassy areas and scattered wetlands. Here we observed sandhill cranes, a woodcock, red-headed woodpecker, hermit thrush, song sparrow, tree sparrow and white-throated sparrow.

Overall we were in the field about two hours and had 40 species and were only slightly chilled.

Tim Murphy
President QCAS

Upcoming Bird Hike at Nahant Marsh

Staff at Nahant Marsh will be hosting a bird walk on Thursday, June 22nd, 2023, from 6:30-8 p.m., at the Marsh, 4220 Wapello Ave, Davenport. These walks are for everyone: experts, novices, and people who have never gone birding in their entire life. Bring water and walking shoes. Loaner binoculars are available for participants. Please reserve your spot online; \$5 Goodwill Donation is appreciated at checkout. Register on-line at nahantmarsh.org. Click on "calendar", then the June 22 Bird Hike link, and then the "register online" box in the upper left.



Audubon

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

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From My Perch

May 2023

Hello Mid-Summer birders. Time certainly has a way of sliding by and nothing seems to be more ephemeral than Spring Bird Migration. Well actually that is not true for Spring Migration starts in late February/early March and lasts through much of May. Still many of us look forward with great anticipation that flush of late April and May warblers, orioles, tanagers, and vireos and that seems oh so fleeting. One week the ravines and woodlots are filled with birdsong and the next they seem empty as the breeding residents busy themselves with raising their young and the migrants have gone north.

Many other things though can be fleeting or at least in a constant state of change. Quad City Audubon as an organization is one of those "things". One of the primary changes to Audubon is our membership meetings. Yes we have had and continue to have membership meetings in which we briefly report on the organization's accomplishments and provide a speaker to discuss a topic that is environmental in nature.

We have had some wonderful presentations, culminating in Brian Fox Ellis recreating the role of Robert Ridgway a prominent Illinois ornithologist. Everyone in attendance raved about Mr. Fox's performance. Of course the in person audience was about 15. More telling that is at double our normal attendance at our Membership Meetings. Of course Covid, crushed many of our habits including in person attendance at such things. Zoom has took the place of the office meeting and often the classroom. Habits do change and possibly our in-person membership meetings are destined for the trash heap as well. We can zoom speakers and programs. However I have concerns. Where does the next generation of Quad City Audubon leaders come from? Where will we find the next Board Members, Treasurer, field trip organizer. Much of our current leadership came from a mixture of meetings and field trip attendees. We have a big challenge.

In the upcoming months, we will be updating our list of membership meetings and field trips. They will be posted on our website and printed in our newsletters. Members who have provided us with an email address will get a reminder of each event the week it occurs. I know our lives are busy, I myself love to travel in September for example. Still, I would hope some would mark their Google calendars, take a bit of time and pay us a visit at either a meeting or field trip.

Tim Murphy,
President QCAS

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 August 15th, 2023. Submissions are gladly accepted. Send to: Jason Monson, (309) 221-1177, jmonson75@hotmail.com

Visit us online at:
www.quadcityaudubon.org.



A special thank you to Sherif Ragheb for providing the photo collages to the left from Cone Marsh and Swamp Oak.

Illinois Spring Bird Count 2023

The 2023 Illinois Spring Bird Count for Rock Island County is in the books. The short story is 14 observers counted 142 species. This number of species was last tallied in 2015. The good showing was in large part due to the observation of a much larger number of shorebirds species than normal, 13; a good number of warblers, 20 and a few species that have generally gone north at this time of year.

Prior to count day weather had been a big factor on bird migration. A long lasting cold front in April and the first days of May had kept many birds from migrating. A week earlier I participated in Stroll Through Springtime at Black Hawk Park and we had a record low number of bird species for that event, 45. Many birds that should have been present simply were not.

The weather did turn. May 5, we picked up a southerly flow and birds began to arrive. May 6th itself was near perfect with mostly clear skies after 8:00am or so and moderate temperatures. However the biggest influx of birds, particularly warblers, came a couple of days later according to my backyard observations.

Highlights of the count included: Woodpeckers: We had a lot of woodpeckers in general but red-headed (71) were the most since 1997 and red-bellied (68) was a high number itself. Plus white-breasted nuthatch (64) was the most since 1996. Other species with high numbers include eastern phoebe (31) past record 39 in 1995, purple martin (120) a record. Purple Martin have greatly increased in Rock Island County primarily due to the nest boxes at lock and dam 15 near Muscatine that are maintained by the USACE. House wren (228) was a record high as was blue-gray gnat catcher (82). Brown-headed cowbird (277) thrived this year with a near record high number. Finally Eurasian tree sparrow (27) continue to increase, also a record high.

Unusual species for Rock Island County included: a red-breasted nuthatch, 2 hermit thrush, a veery, 57 American golden plover, Baird's sandpiper, and 2 stilt sandpipers.

Birds in apparent decline include: common grackle (118) a record low, house sparrow 129 our 2nd lowest number, American crow (47) which seem to have not rebounded from West Nile of several years ago and a great many grassland birds. Horned lark (5) dickcissel (2) lark sparrow (3) barn swallow (51) are near record low numbers. Savanna sparrow, grasshopper sparrow and vesper sparrow, while never common were not found this year continuing a long term trend.

I want to thank all of the participants: Pat Carlson, Judy Hartley, Jeanne Hedges, Elizabeth Russell, Forrest and Sousa Stonedahl, Janelle Swanberg, Chris Swanson, David Van Landegen, Cathy White, Jo Ann Whitmore, Walt Zuurdeeg and a cameo appearance by Bill Hickerson who was not a count participant but who was in the field and added three shorebird species to our total.

The Illinois Spring Bird Count began in 1972. The count is a census of all the birds found in the State of Illinois on a specific date in early May and organized on a county by county basis. It is my understanding that Quad City Audubon has participated since inception. I have compiled Rock Island County since 1986. The numbers reflected in this report are based on sightings from 1986 to present.

The Statewide Count is organized by the Illinois Natural History Survey. Reports and statistics from previous years can be found at <https://spring-bird-count.inhs.illinois.edu/>

The Illinois Spring Bird Count is an excellent way to judge our bird populations over time. Not only abundance but their relative locations within the State of Illinois. This is Citizen Science at its near best. For more information or to participate in upcoming years, feel free to refer to the website or contact me at 309-764-9779 or molmurphy53@gmail.com.

Tim Murphy
President - Quad City Audubon Society

Recent Field Trips

On April 8, 2023, QC Audubon members ventured on a field trip to Cone Marsh. It was a clear day and a great opportunity to see waterfowl and shorebirds. Many dabbling ducks were seen (Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall) along with a few divers (Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead). The shorebirds seen include Lesser Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Willet, and Sandhill Crane. Some of the members ventured on to Cedar Bottoms Wildlife Area where Bluebirds and Red-Headed Woodpeckers were seen.

On May 13, 2023, a few members of QC Audubon met up and looked for birds in Dorrance and Illiniwek Forest Preserves. Several warbler species were heard but only a few showed themselves. Species identified included Tennessee Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler and Yellow Warbler. Several vireos were also found including Yellow-throated, Blue-headed, Warbling and Red-eyed. It was a pleasant spring walk with one morel mushroom found, too!

Jody Millar
Vice President - Quad City Audubon