



# MISSISSIPPI CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society



## UPCOMING QCAS EVENTS

Vol. 30, No 1

January-February 2019

Monthly meetings will be on the second Thursday March, April, May, September, October and December of 2019 at 7:00 pm, Butterworth Center, 1105 8th Street, Moline, IL.

### **No Monthly meeting in January and February 2019**

**January 11-13, 2019 ~ Bald Eagle Days** ~ We will have a small booth to assist visitors for bus tours. We will lead the eagle bus tours.

**January 26, Saturday ~ Muscatine Bald Eagle Watch** from 9 am to 2 pm at the Pearl City Station at the Muscatine Waterfront. Free and open to all ages. Visit website <https://muscatinecountyconservation.com/news-events/>

**February 15-18, Friday through Monday** ~ are the dates of the **Great Backyard Bird Count**. See [BirdCount.org](http://BirdCount.org) website for more information.

**February 16, Saturday** ~ We will meet at **Lock & Dam 14** at 7:30 am, Iowa side for carpooling. Three hour field trip to look for wintering waterfowl, gulls and eagles, potentially. Le Claire to Hampton and return. This will be a half day trip.

**February 23, Saturday ~ Figge Museum Eagle Viewing~ Family Day** - We will have scopes set up for viewing from 10 am to 2 pm.

**February 23, Saturday ~ Oberholtzer Awards** ~ Modern Woodmen Park, 9:30 am to 12 noon. Nahant Marsh Education Center's First Annual awards.

**March 14, Thursday ~ Monthly Meeting** ~ Heather Sanders will present a program on Owls.

**March 23, Saturday** ~ Full day trip to **Cone Marsh** or similar locations depending upon weather conditions. We will meet at Credit Island by the Army tank at 7 am for carpooling.

**April 13, Saturday ~ Princeton Marsh**. We will meet at 7 am on the east side of Slagle's parking lot, Le Claire, Iowa. This is an half day trip.



**Audubon**

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

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**From My Perch - by Tim Murphy**

By the time this newsletter arrives in your mailbox it will be early winter. Winter for birders can seem a bit awful. The rush of spring and fall migrations brings a lot of bird variety and breeding season in early summer creates the bird symphony each morning but winters seems to plod forth with only bits of activity.

Thank goodness for feeders. While many of us feed a great number of house sparrows and starlings we also can get views of a variety of other birds. For example, my yard is situated close to a pretty extensive ravine and attracts about 15 species of birds. This year, for many, the bonus birds are red-breasted nuthatch and pine siskin. These are birds that normally winter north of us but likely due to food shortages in their normal range have dropped farther south.

We can also get outside and view our winter birds in the "wild". We are of course blessed with a great many overwintering eagles. Normally the colder the better, as they tend to congregate at the base of our dams where the water remains open. Lock & Dam 14 in LeClaire and 15 at the Arsenal Island can present excellent eagle viewing.

Waterfowl, especially diving ducks, often feed on the Mississippi River when the channel is open. It is not uncommon to view large numbers of lesser scaup, common mergansers, goldeneye and bufflehead along Canal Shore Drive in LeClaire and Ben Butterworth Parkway in Moline. It is helpful to have a spotting scope as this can be viewing at a distance.

Finding birds in winter most often means finding their food source. In woods, woodpeckers have a consistent source of underbark insects and they are widespread. Other birds rely on fruits or seeds. Stands of eastern red cedars, that have berries through winter, (not all do) can hold cedar waxwings, robins, bluebirds and the occasional yellow-rumped warbler or hermit thrush.

Stands of seedy plants such as foxtail, bluestem, primrose and asters provide food and cover for goldfinch, song sparrow, tree sparrow and juncos.

So winter is not so bad for birders. Yes there is that bite of discomfort that cold brings, stinging fingers and feet. But one can better appreciate the warmth of our shelters and one can marvel at how birds manage to survive without them.

**Audubon Recent Donations**

Here is a list of our recent donations approved by the board members: \$200 to assist fund Bird Friendly Iowa; \$200 to assist Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to purchase land west of Decorah, Iowa; \$200 to assist purchase 30 acres of land along the Yellow River State Forest; \$250 to sponsor Oberholtzer Awards-a new award for a fundraiser for Nahant Marsh; and \$350 to Bald Eagle Days, which is not a donation but cost for our booth and our important presence at Bald Eagle Days.

**FIELD TRIP ~ photos by Jo Ann Whitmore**

On November 18, 2018, Quad City Audubon Society had a field trip north on route 84 along the Mississippi River. It was a cold, icy and snowy day. We were surprised to see hundreds and hundreds of swans resting in a harvested corn field south of Spring Lake. Spring Lake was covered with ice which might have caused the swans to rest in the corn fields. It was a mixed flock of Tundra Swans and Trumpeter Swans.

The Tundra Swans come down from Alaska and were on their migration route to spend the winter in the eastern United States. In the spring, they will return to Alaska through Canada.

As we observed the beautiful swans, we noticed five American Pipits bobbing their tails and feeding among the corn stubble. They would fly up and land a short distance away. They seem to be able to almost disappear in the earth.



## Overview of the “Beginning Birding Tour” Program at Nahant Marsh in 2018

By Kelly J. McKay and Britt C. Vickstrom

In 2018, the Nahant Marsh Education Center initiated a “Beginning Birding Tour” Program at the marsh. This program was financially and logistically supported by the Nahant Marsh Education Center (in kind contribution) along with a \$2,000 grant from the Quad City Audubon Society. Similar to the program conducted for the past two years at Rock Creek Park by the Clinton County Conservation Board, the objectives of this effort were to develop better birding skills among the public as well as establishing a core group of skilled “citizen scientists,” for projects like the Christmas Bird Count and Illinois State Spring Bird Count, in addition to many other citizen science programs.

During this inaugural year, we conducted 12 tours at the marsh during the spring migration (2, 6 May), summer breeding (6, 16 June and 11, 21 July), and fall migration (8, 18 August, 12, 23 September, and 10, 20 October) seasons. The tours alternated between Wednesday and Saturday mornings beginning around sunrise (6:30-7:00 AM) and continuing until 9:00 AM-12:00 PM depending on the interest of the participants. Tours also alternated among regions of the marsh that were explored including: 1) east side of the marsh, south of the education center, 2) east side of the marsh, north of the education center, 3) west side of the marsh and along Wapello Avenue, and 4) Carp Lake area. However, due to frequent flooding this year the latter two routes were only accessible a couple of times each.

The initial year of this program was, we believe, very successful. Overall, 104 total participants took part in the tours (more than 8 individuals per tour), ranging from a low of 3 participants on 10 October to a high of 14 participants on 23 September and 20 October. Furthermore, the success of this program was demonstrated by the fact that several participants in the tours also were involved with the BioBlitz Program conducted at Nahant Marsh in late June, and several others have signed up to participate on various local Christmas Bird Counts this season.

In regard to the birds, Nahant Marsh proved to support an extraordinary number of species through the spring, summer, and fall seasons. Overall, these tours identified 138 total species! Diversity during the program ranged from a low of 39 species observed on 21 July to a high of 72 species encountered on 2 May. This produced an average of slightly over 54 species per tour. In 2018 this program yielded 26 species of waterfowl and other waterbirds, 9 species of raptors, 10 shorebirds, and all 7 species of woodpeckers occurring in Iowa. Additionally, we observed 6 species of flycatchers, 5 vireos, 4 thrushes, 8 sparrows, 7 blackbirds, and all 6 species of swallows occurring in Iowa. An impressive diversity of warblers was also recorded during the tours (19 species)! Some of our highlight species included: American Black Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Pileated Woodpecker, Willow Flycatcher, Blue-winged Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and Orchard Oriole. Furthermore, we encountered five very “good” species such as a single immature Little Blue Heron molting into adult plumage, 4 Whimbrels flying low over the marsh, and singles each of Bell’s Vireo, Sedge Wren, and LeConte’s Sparrow.

We are hopeful that a continuation of this program in the future will produce not only better birders, but also a reliable source of “citizen scientists” throughout the local area. We hope to see many more participants in 2019.

### Membership Application

I would like to join/renew as a 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 \$20 payable to National Audubon Society. (include **Chapter #C4ZH630Z** on your check)

**OR**

I would like to join/renew 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  
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### 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 the *Mississippi Currents*. The next deadline is February 15, 2019. Submissions are gladly accepted. Send to:

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