



# UPPER IOWA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Spring Spoilers:



## Hawk Watch

*Driftless Area Wetlands Centre  
Marquette, IA*



**Oct. 8, 2022**  
**10:00am-2:00pm**

### Wetlands Centre Activities:

Migration Viewing & Bird ID with Experts (All day)  
Live Raptor Programs @ 11am & 1pm - River Valley Raptors  
Raptor Migration Information

Hands on Educational Activities for Kids (All day)

### *Celebrate the Migration with Us!*

For More Information  
[www.driftlessareawetlandcentre.com](http://www.driftlessareawetlandcentre.com)  
563-873-3537

The Wetlands Centre is located at  
509 US 18, Marquette, IA  
0.5 miles west of the Marquette-Joiet Bridge on Hwy 18



***\*This FREE event features  
activities for everyone,  
especially kids!***

Sponsors: Upper Iowa Audubon Society • Friends of the Marquette Driftless Area • Driftless Area Bird Conservation  
Driftless Area Wetlands Centre • Raptor Resource Project

# PLEASANT RIDGE GRASSLAND BIRD SANCTUARY

## Dedication



## FROM THE NEST

JON STRAVERS,  
DIRECTOR, DABC



**Saturday, May 14** was World Migratory Bird Day in the Americas, but it was also an important day for conservation in northeast Iowa. Phil and Sharon Specht officially dedicated a portion of their farm near Marquette in Clayton County as the **Pleasant Ridge Grassland Bird Sanctuary**.

This 244-acre property was granted a permanent conservation easement through the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to maximize the protection of grassland bird habitat. Phil's practice of grazing his cattle in a rotation that "takes half and leaves half" has produced a haven for grassland birds that will now continue to do so for generations.

At the dedication, Phil spoke about how his conservation ethic was formed throughout his life, in particular, how his relationship with his brother Dan centered around their mutual respect of caretaking for the land.

Others spoke at the farm including State Representative Chuck Isenhart, and Dr. Paul Skrade, who also led a birding hike sponsored by Upper Iowa Audubon Society.

Afterward, the celebration continued at the Driftless Area Wetlands Centre where there were additional speakers and live music by Sophia Landis.

Truly a cause for celebration as this property, with its many conservation values and the protection from the easement, will provide a fine example of maintaining important agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and open space, while providing important public benefits.



*A special thanks to Upper Iowa Audubon for their support of our Cerulean Warbler surveys in Yellow River State Forest in 2022!*

This year we looked closely at Cerulean presence/absence in areas that have recently been managed as Savana restoration or in a "Shelterwood" type management.

Our results were mixed in that regard, but we also sampled Cerulean presence at sites within YRSF that have been occupied in previous years. Our results in that regard were positive. We are still working on the final report, but all of our reports on both Cerulean Warblers and Red-shouldered Hawks are available on our website:

[www.driftlessareabirdconservation.com](http://www.driftlessareabirdconservation.com)



*Submission by Paul Skrade*

*photos courtesy of  
Alicia Hraha Mullarkey*

# OWL BOXES BUILDING PROJECT:

submitted by Dean Peterson,  
UIAS Board member



Upper Iowa Audubon Board members Bruce Ventura and Dean Peterson assembled 5 barn owl boxes, with help from the personnel at the Yellow River State Forest this past winter.

With assistance from the forestry personnel, three locations were identified and three of the boxes were placed in abandoned barns, on February 9th, 2022.

To date, there has not been any owl activity. The boxes will be checked again this fall. We currently have two remaining boxes, with at least one more possibility for placement.

We are hopeful as they say, "Build It, and They Will come!"

## SPRING YELLOW RIVER STATE FOREST BIRD WALK RECAP:

SUBMITTED BY DEAN PETERSON



Upper Iowa Audubon held their 2nd annual Spring Bird Hike at Yellow River State Forest on May 7th. This year's hike was led by Ric Zarwell and Dean Peterson. The group met at the Nelson Loop allowing the hikers a view of the wooded hillside and the restored prairie along Big Paint Creek. Eighteen birders split up taking a different part of the loop, but crossing the bridge over Big Paint gave each group a chance to look for birds in each of the associated habitats. A variety of spring migrants and local birds were observed even though the day warmed quickly and slowed the vocalization down some. Audubon member and plant specialist, Mary Damm, provided a wealth of information on the native plants and helped to identify the blooming spring flowers. We had a great day enjoying the "Birds and Blooms"! Thanks to everyone who participated, we look forward to seeing you next year!

# PRAIRIE RESORATION PROJECT:

submitted by Dean Peterson and Connie Hvitved, UIAS Board members

Native prairie once covered the vast majority of Iowa! Managers at the Yellow River State Forest would like to convert 120 acres of cropland back to native prairie habitat. Thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Friends of the Yellow River Forest, 40 acres of prairie has been restored within the boundaries of the YRSF. With support from the IDNR Forestry, Area Pheasant Forever Chapters, local conservation groups and individuals, prairie seed for the forty acres was purchased and planted this spring. Upper Iowa Audubon Society contributed \$500 through the Donald C. Larson Trust.

This newly planted area is a permanent prairie restoration and will be highly visible when established. The area will serve as an excellent outdoor classroom as well.

For more info check out Yellow River State Forest at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Forests/Yellow-River-State-Forest>

## PRAIRIE QUEST FARM FIELD DAY RECAP:



At 10 AM on June 4th a combination bird and prairie walk were held at Mary Damm's Prairie Quest Farm in the Bloody Run Creek watershed in northern Clayton County. 14 UIA members and other friends were in attendance.

Mary Damm provided an overview and history of her property, focusing on how pasture plants, can form a grassland ecosystem serving the needs of grassland birds as well as grazing cattle. Mary also explained how she documents the diversity and growth of pasture plants. Phil Specht described how he uses rotational cattle grazing to create habitat for Bobolinks and a variety of other grassland birds, sharing eight years of Bobolink nesting research. Ric Zarwell discussed the bird life he found and documented on Prairie Quest Farm during four brief survey visits earlier in the spring.

Mary and Ric then led a walk across the current densely vegetated grasslands pointing out pasture plants and birds, respectively. Participants learned that well-managed pastures can and do provide an ecosystem in which birds, mammals, and many other forms of biodiversity can thrive.

UPPER IOWA AUDUBON SOCIETY

605 Washington St.  
Fayette, IA 52142

## UIAS BOARD MEMBERS:

# Fall Birding Festival

The Allamakee County Conservation Board staff are offering a fall Birding Festival on November 12, 2022. The festival is headquartered at the Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center, one mile south of Lansing. Final plans have not yet been announced, but usually include a speaker and field trips when Tundra Swans and other waterfowl are concentrated in maximum numbers on the Mississippi River. Following indoor presentations, UIA board members Dean Peterson and Ric Zarwell will again assist with field trips to experience a true wildlife spectacle on the river.

**For specific times and other details, call the Driftless Center at 563-538-0400.**

Connie Hvitved, President  
Kat Busse, Vice President  
Lilly Jensen, Secretary  
Jeremy Leitz, Treasurer  
Ellen Bell  
Marlene Michel  
Dean Peterson  
Gene Dale  
Sharon Rossman  
Rachel Sandhorst  
Paul Skrade  
Jon Stravers

*Emily Neal, Newsletter Editor*

