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Winter 2021

Developing capture techniques and monitoring movements of sandhill cranes breeding in Iowa

Sandhill cranes (*Antigone canadensis*) were extirpated from Iowa in the late 19th century as a result of habitat loss and over-harvest. Nearly 100 years passed before sandhill cranes started recolonizing Iowa, with the first breeding effort since 1894 documented in 1992. Reproduction primarily occurs in the northeast quadrant of the state, with limited nesting in northwest and southwest Iowa. In recent years, reproduction has been documented in 38 counties, and documentation of cranes has occurred in 72 counties.

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As cranes become widespread and more common in Iowa, it is



Matt Garrick with a captured Sandhill Crane.

increasingly important to improve our understanding of cranes in the state, as there is considerable uncertainty regarding population size, population affiliation, migration corridors, and habitat use. In spring and summer 2020, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources partnered with Iowa State University and the U.S.G.S. Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit and initiated a small pilot project to capture sandhill cranes breeding in Iowa.

Captures occurred between May and August. We used spotlights to find cranes while armed with dip nets to capture and tag cranes. Hatch-year cranes, known as colts, were captured in agriculture fields, and radio marked to aid in finding family group roosting locations. A total of 7 cranes were captured (3 adults and 4 colts). Two colts that were near flight age received GPS/GSM transmitters, however, one of the colts was predated a few weeks later.

Sandhill Crane Research



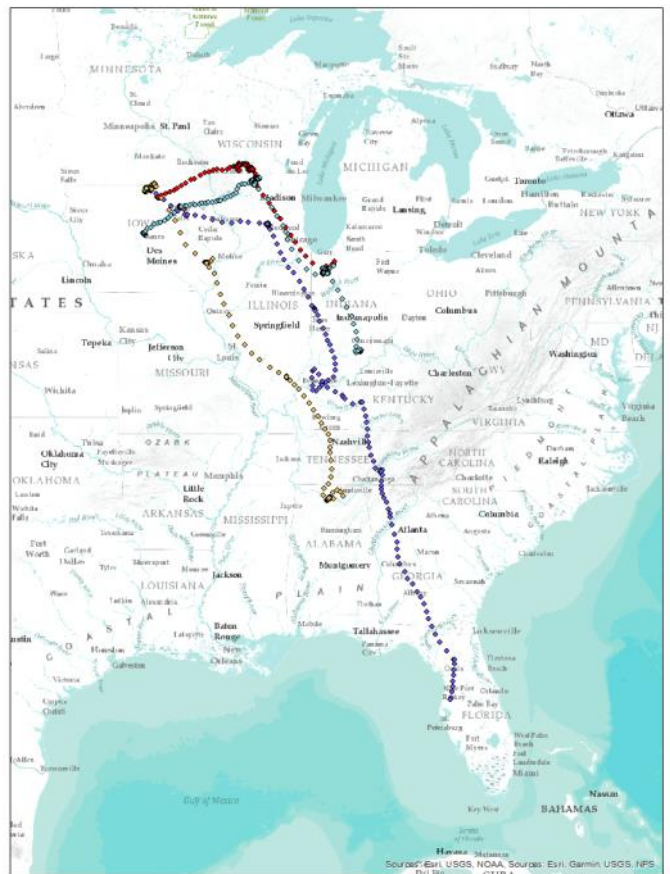
Researchers Orrin Jones and Bob Klaver at a Sandhill Crane nest at Elk Creek Marsh in north central Iowa

All cranes captured were also marked with a standard USGS leg band. These were the first cranes to be banded in the state of Iowa.

The marked cranes movements during fall have varied. The cranes have spread out from Wisconsin to Florida. Two of the cranes initiated migration with a significant movement northeast into Wisconsin, while two cranes made more typical movements in a southeasterly direction. Important staging sites were used in southeastern Iowa, central Wisconsin, northwest Indiana, and northern Alabama. Cranes will continue to be monitored as winter progresses into spring and the cranes begin to return to breeding areas.

This project relies upon important partnerships with both public land managers and

private landowners. Captures will continue into summer 2021. Locations of nesting/breeding cranes are important for the success of the crane project, and we would be grateful if you are aware of any to report locations to Orrin Jones, at orrin.jones@dnr.iowa.gov



Movement patterns of GPS marked cranes.

Matthew Garrick is a Waterfowl Research Specialist with the Iowa DNR, Clear Lake Wildlife Research Section.

President's Corner

The New Website is Live!



With the 2021 Iowa TWS Virtual Winter Meeting quickly approaching, the Iowa TWS Executive Committee hopes you all are able to join us on February 9th! We are looking forward to hearing from students and professionals across the state as they give updates

about on-going research and projects. Additionally, we are excited to announce the keynote presentation, *COVID-19: raising the profile of connections between wildlife and human health*, which will be given by Dr. Julie Blanchong from Iowa State University! For a full meeting agenda, check out the meeting hyper-link below.

If you haven't done so already, be sure to register for the FREE Iowa TWS Virtual Winter Meeting on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 by visiting: <https://iowatws.wildapricot.org/events>. We encourage all existing members to renew their membership for the Iowa Chapter of The Wildlife Society at: <https://iowatws.wildapricot.org/join>. If you are new to Iowa TWS, be sure to join our chapter to stay up-to-date on news regarding management, research, education, and conservation in Iowa!

Looking forward to seeing you all (virtually) on February 9th!

ITWS President Kelsey Fleming is a Private Lands Biologist with the Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The executive board would like to announce that the iowatws.org website has been updated and is now live. This new site will allow members to explore past newsletters and TWS documents, manage their memberships, and review their registrations and receipts. We are very excited about this and think that the new functionality will improve the online experience for our members.

As part of the update, we have imported current memberships into the new site. When members try to register or renew their membership, they will be prompted to log in. No passwords have been set up, so you will need to click "forgot password" and set up your new password.

If you are not currently a member, you will be able to register for an event or buy a membership without logging in. Once you have purchased a membership or registered for an event, you will receive an email with a temporary password. The board would like to thank Ann Johnson for all of her work creating the previous website and helping the board to keep it up to date over the years.

Please stop by www.iowaTWS.org and check out the updated website. If you have any issues with the new website or have pictures you would like to add, please email Nathan.schmitz@gmail.com.

ITWS Secretary-Treasurer Nathan Schimtz is a Natural Resource Technician 2 with the Heritage Hill Sub-Unit of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Statewide Updates

North East Iowa

Jason Auel: Iowa DNR Management Biologist, Cedar-Wapsi Unit NE Iowa

The Slough Bill (Iowa Code 427.1 [36]) is a state law that enables counties to implement a property tax exemption for prairies and wetlands. County participation, however, is optional based on a vote of the County Supervisors. This year Chickasaw County did away with the slough bill for tax exemptions, on the grounds that it is considered wildlife habitat. As a result, area landowners are now applying for tax exemptions through the state and I have been very busy working to check and approve them all by February 1.

Work on the Slough Bill applications continues while doing our normal job duties of CWD sampling, fall water level management at Big Marsh and Sweet Marsh. Staff changes due to Mike Olsen's retirement have also kept our Unit pretty busy the past few months.



Wetlands like these can be exempt from property tax in some Iowa counties.

South Central Iowa

Jim Coffee: Iowa DNR Forest Wildlife Biologist, Chariton Research Station

Even with COVID restrictions in place there continues to be plenty going on inside the Iowa DNR. Starting in January of 2021 there will be a wild turkey project in southeast Iowa. With an emphasis in the Odessa wildlife unit, there will be up to 40 female wild turkeys marked with GPS transmitters. These will be the first turkeys tracked in Iowa since the early 1990's. The goal will be to find successful nests and then to radio mark day old poults in an effort to look at overall poult mortality. We hope to track poults past four weeks of age, a timeframe where much about turkey poult movement and mortality is unknown. This is data that is sorely lacking from wild turkey biology.



Wild turkey hen on a nest.

This also piggybacks on to an existing wild turkey project that is investigating the prevalence rate of LPDV (Lymphoproliferative Disease Virus), a

Statewide Updates

South Central Iowa Continued

relatively newly discovered virus in wild turkeys. Little is known about its population level impacts. Last spring turkey hunters submitted over 600 legs from harvested birds for testing of LPDV. Kelsey Smith from Iowa State University is currently a graduate student working on this project.

Several wildlife units in southern Iowa are assisting with a bush honeysuckle research project. Aerial spraying has been occurring at the Rathbun, Red Rock and Grand River wildlife units in an effort to slow the impacts of bush honeysuckle on our forest resources. In conjunction with this Jenny Fredrickson from the Boone research station has been monitoring wildlife usage in these treated areas.



Bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)

As a final highlight, just a general armadillo update. Starting with the first report of the year back in

March, there were a total of 36 armadillo sightings reported this year. Twenty-five of those reports were of live armadillos. Sightings came from



Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*)

twenty-two counties around the state with Wapello County having the highest number of reports at seven.

Central Iowa Tyler Harms: Biometrician, Boone Wildlife Research Station

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic changing the game a bit, the DNR Wildlife Research Section in central Iowa embarked on a number of research efforts in 2020 to guide future conservation and management decisions. Early in 2020, a research team led by spatial analyst Dan Kaminski wrapped up a project modeling summer resource selection

Statewide Updates

Central Iowa Continued

for the federally threatened Northern long-eared bat in Iowa with a published manuscript in the *Journal of Mammalogy*. This project has since been expanded to include four additional bat species of conservation concern with completion planned for 2021.



Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

In August, a team of DNR staff and volunteers led by avian ecologist Anna Buckardt Thomas struck out across the northern half of the state on a journey to capture and collar adult and juvenile trumpeter swans as part of a cooperative project with the Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and several other Midwest wildlife agencies. The team fitted 9 adult swans with GPS-GSM collars that will collect location data every 15 minutes for up to three years, which will then allow for examination of swan habitat use and movements throughout the annual cycle. Addition-



A Minnesota Trumpeter Swan fitted with a GPS-GSM collar.

ally, the team marked 32 juvenile swans with plastic alphanumeric neck collars as part of a mark-resight effort to estimate juvenile swan survival. Ultimately, this effort will provide valuable information on the status of Iowa’s trumpeter swan population to guide the revision of the management plan for this species.

Also in August, the Upland Wildlife Research Team in partnership with Iowa State University gradu-



Ring-necked Pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) on a August roadside survey.

Statewide Updates

Central Iowa Continued

student Zachary Dienes and with the help of DNR staff across the state conducted the first roadside surveys of what will be a multi-year and multi-state project evaluating factors contributing to variability in upland bird counts along roadside survey routes.

In September, wildlife veterinarian Dr. Rachel Ruden and biometrician Tyler Harms secured approximately \$320,000 in research funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop



White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) camera trap image.

models to estimate white-tailed deer density using remote camera data and test the efficacy of pooled testing of tissue samples to guide Chronic Wasting Disease surveillance and management.



North American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

And how best to round out the year? Why not with a badger project? Spatial analyst Dan Kaminski, furbearer biologist Vince Evelsizer, wildlife diversity technician Jenny Fredrickson, and biometrician Tyler Harms are putting the finishing touches on a habitat suitability and multi-scale occupancy model for badger using data from the spotlight and bow hunter observation surveys which will ultimately be applied across the Midwest region to identify priority areas for conservation action to benefit this Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

If you have statewide updates from your region to add to the next edition of *Wildlife Sightings*, send the information to the newsletter editor by email: eyheraldep@wmpenn.edu

Heard a good wildlife story lately? *Podcasts worth a listen*

Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever “On the Wing” Podcast: features stories with the organization’s biologists, members, volunteers and experts on the topics of upland bird hunting, wildlife habitat, bird dogs, wild game cooking and epic adventures afield.



MEATEATER Podcast: Building on the belief that a deeper understanding of the natural world enriches all of our lives, host Steven Rinella brings a deep and relevant look at all outdoor topics including hunting, fishing, nature, conservation and wild foods.



Bear Hunting Magazine Podcast: hosted by Clay Newcomb, covers variety of bear hunting topics to help you become a better bear hunter. From strategy and tactics to gear reviews and stories from the field.



BHA Podcast and Blast: Hunting. Angling. Public Lands. That's the meat of what BHA's Podcast & Blast with Hal Herring is about, and it covers the gamut. With guests that range from backcountry hunters, outdoor writers and policy experts to legendary anglers and some of our community's most prominent voices, we seek to uncover the stories, the truths, the controversies and the epic conversations fostered by our public lands heritage.



PODCAST & BLAST
with Hal Herring

Upcoming Events

Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference: The 81st Annual Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference will be held VIRTUALLY Monday, February 1 - Thursday, February 4, 2021. <http://www.midwestfw.org/html/registration.shtml>

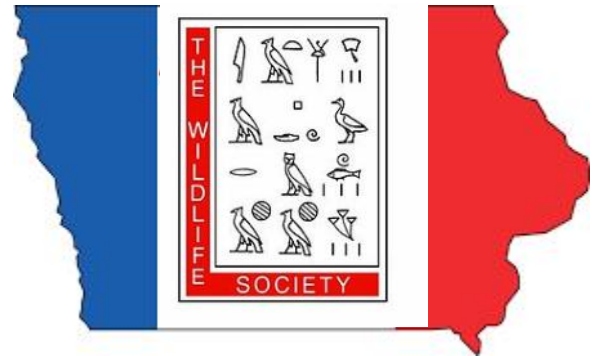
Iowa Association of County Conservation Board Employees (IACCBE) Winterfest: The annual late-winter CONFERENCE for 2021 HAS BEEN CANCELLED. Join us next year January 2022 at the Marriott Convention Center in Coralville, IA

National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic: Cancelled for 2021. Plans are underway to host a virtual gathering in late February to kick off a brand new, mission-centric campaign aimed at increasing public lands, upland bird populations, and upland hunters as a whole.

National Wild Turkey Federation 45th Annual Convention and Sport Show: VIRTUAL event to be held February 15-21, 2021. <https://convention.nwtf.org/>

2021 Iowa Chapter The Wildlife Society Committee Chairs

Audit: Travis Russell
Awards: Stephanie Shepard
Conservation Review: Katy Reeder
Education and Information: Pete Eyheralde
Membership: Matt Dollison
Resolutions and Public Statements: Brain Sauer
Nominations and Elections: Pete Hildreth



Iowa Chapter of The Wildlife Society

VIRTUAL Winter Meeting
Tuesday, February 9, 2021

<https://iowatws.wildapricot.org/events>

Pete Eyheralde
Newsletter Editor
(eyheraldep@wmpenn.edu)

2021 Iowa Chapter The Wildlife Society Executive Committee

President: Kelsey Fleming
President-Elect: Matt Dollison
Past President: Nick Baumgarten
Secretary-Treasurer: Nathan Schmitz
Member at Large: Ryan Kurtz