

Prairie Rapids Audubon Society

General Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2022

Submitted by Kris Rash

With so much to catch up on after our long summer break the Prairie Rapids Audubon Society reluctantly got down to business as President Tom Schilke called the September 13, 2022 meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. Forty-four people were in attendance with eight being first time visitors.

Tom gave us updates on projects that have been progressing over the summer months. If you haven't visited Hartman Reserve recently you will notice the many bird feeders behind the building along the Pollinator Parkway. A binocular themed bench dedicated to long-time member Opal Uher is also there. A giant eagle nest inviting kids to be an eaglet has been erected and a large rock inscribed with a sentiment to another long-time member and leader, Dick Lynch, symbolizes the strength he was to PRAS. You have helped to fund many educational projects at Hartman. Give them a visit.

Other happenings included taking part in the Cedar Valley Pride Festival. Four of our PRAS board members had a display at the event with the theme "Let's Go Birding Together". They reported the day to be a success.

The placement of MOTUS towers is moving forward and it seems that the parts are beginning to be shipped. Once erected, tagged birds flying near will be monitored for their movements. We'll keep you posted with their progress.

Bluebird surveys have been conducted for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for the last 7 years. PRAS members have adopted 10 routes to travel once in January and again in June. They have never missed doing their surveys. The lab uses this info to track climate change affects and have recently added nuthatches to the survey count. We'll let you know how the January count turns out.

PRAS board members were also present with a display at the Hartman Reserve native plant sale held on July 14th. While we very much encourage the inclusion of native plants in your landscaping there wasn't much interest in our display at this event. However, please include native plants in your home planting projects.

Board member, Charlene Heiar, gave a short report on her program, "Budding Birders". Upon request she presents different birding topics to pre-school and elementary school age children at day care centers, libraries, churches and schools. She is adept at using her collection of realistic-looking bird puppets to get kids interested in their flying neighbors. This year alone she presented her programs to 489 kids. Maybe we could learn a thing or two from her.

If you haven't heard Dr. Doug Tallamy speak you will have another chance on October 9 in Marion from 1-3 p.m. at the Monarch Research Center. He will be providing tips on increasing biodiversity throughout the urban and rural landscape. It's a free event but you need to register at inhf.org

Bird-A-Thon! It seems as if I'm always writing about it. Like political commercials it keeps coming back. For those of you that have contributed thank you very much. If you still intend to there's no time like the present. We are keenly aware that costs of everything have gone up and that includes PRAS essentials. Our newsletter and bird feed expenses have doubled in the last year while our donations have dropped \$1,375 and 11 contributors by the end of September from 2021. Every little bit helps.

Continuing on with money matters, treasurer Francis Moore reports \$9,340.82 in our bank account and a negative \$619.87 in the bird feed fund (borrowed from the general fund). The September silent auction brought in \$64. Thank you for your donations of items and to Ken Heiar for organizing the sale.

Treats for tonight's meeting were provided by board members. Sign up sheets are on the kitchen counter to help provide goodies at future meetings. Also, if you'd like to help in the kitchen as a service to our group let a board member know. We promise no dishpan hands.

Identifying bird species by sound recordings is just one of the great features of the Merlin App. If you have not loaded this FREE app onto your smart phone from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, you're missing out on a wonderful birding

tool. Tom and Candace presented a brief demonstration of how the sound ID works. It occasionally has a few glitches but then don't we all.

"Wildlife of the Pantanal- The Forgotten Wilderness" was the title of the presentation brought to us this evening by Craig Meyers of Ames. Having previously seen his program on "Bears of the Katmai" we knew we were in for some excellent photography. In fact, Craig claims that it's his "camera that gets him out there" in such exotic surroundings. What makes this area so special is that it is the largest tropical wetland in the world. Its size varies seasonally from 54,000 square miles to 81,000 square miles and covers areas in three South American countries-Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil.

Craig stayed in a "floatel" on the river during his travels and was fortunate to have good internet connections. Each day would bring a different encounter with one of the hundreds of mammal, reptile, amphibian, fish and bird species of the region.

Among his many avian photos Craig featured the rare Hyacinth Macaw, Jabiru Stork and Great Potoo. The birds of the tropics are extremely varied in their body type and plumage.

South American Caimans, an alligator relative, were often spotted in the water. They, along with the Jaguar, were the apex predators of the region. Craig was thrilled to photograph jaguars, the largest cat in South America. Cattle ranchers were often known to kill jaguars that they believed harmed their livestock.

Farming and wild fires are two of the biggest threats to the Pantanal. More land is being cleared every year for growing crops and raising cattle. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro had lifted many environmental protections for the region. Ecotourism is popular and brings in more than 1 million people a year and would help preserve the integrity of the area.

There are ways you can help. Support non-profit organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund or The Nature Conservancy that are doing work in the Pantanal and the Amazon.

We want to thank Craig Meyers for sharing his travels with us. Hopefully he will take us again someday soon.