



I.O.U. NEWS

Fall 1991 Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter Volume 7 Number 3

Diary of a Roadside Birder **Martha Camp, Ames**

June 23, 1990:

BZZZZZZ!!...Groggily I shut off my alarm, rolled out of bed, and began to dress for another day in the roadside ditches. I gradually became aware of the all-to-familiar sound of rain outside my window. Great, wet feet again today!! I drove to pick up my field assistant Doug Drynan, and we set off toward the roadsides we were to work on. The drizzle ceased as we neared the study area, so I dropped Doug off to census one roadside and adjacent rowcrop field, while I censored another nearby.

Later in the morning, censusing done, we searched for nests by walking side-by-side about a yard apart, parting the grass with long sticks. After an hour, we were rewarded, as a hen pheasant flushed, leaving behind a nest of 15 eggs. We recorded the condition and position of the nest so we could monitor it, and moved on. A little while later, we found a red-winged blackbird nest with two eggs, the male bird dive-bombing us from above. Three hours later, we had found no other nests, but two in one day wasn't bad.

Our final task of the day was to measure the height, density and composition of the vegetation in the roadsides.

That was soon done—Doug and I were an efficient team—and we headed home, ready for a shower and some DRY clothes.

From the first of May to the fourth of August, Doug Drynan and I conducted a study of bird's use of roadsides adjacent to rowcrop fields. The research, which will become the basis of my master's thesis, is one in a series of studies that Dr. Louis Best, professor in the Department of Animal Ecology at Iowa State University, had done on bird's use of strip cover habitats in Iowa. We worked on eighteen roadsides in Story and Boone counties. Ten roadsides were composed of mainly native prairie grasses and a few forbs, eight roadsides were almost entirely smooth brome. Five prairie grass and four smooth brome roadsides were burned in the spring by the Story County Conservation Board.

We found thirty-one species of birds in roadsides compared to only twenty-four in adjacent fields. The most common birds seen on roadsides were: red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, vesper sparrows, American robins, western meadowlarks, gray partridge, dickcissels, savannah sparrows, song sparrows, and eastern kingbirds. The relative abundance of birds on roadsides was about forty-five times greater than that in the fields.

Some birds (western meadowlarks, dickcissels, American goldfinches, eastern kingbirds, horned larks and killdeers) preferred burned roadsides, while others (ring-necked pheasants, gray partridge, and savannah sparrows) preferred unburned ones. There were no noticeable preferences exhibited by any species for native prairie grasses or smooth brome roadsides, which may be due to the fact that the roadsides studied, like many roadsides in Iowa, do not yet contain mature stands of native prairie grasses.

Eight species built a total of seventy-six nests on the studied roadsides: red-winged blackbirds (38 nests), gray partridge (17 nests), ring-necked pheasants (7), vesper sparrows (6), dickcissels (3), song sparrows (2), western meadowlarks (2), and common yellowthroat (1).

The data collected as a result of this first year of research indicate that roadsides may be a valuable and unique resource for some grassland birds, whose habitat has been greatly diminished as more and more of Iowa's land is converted to rowcrop farming. To augment the present data, I will be doing the same research in the summer of 1991 in Hardin County, Iowa—hopefully with a little less rain!

Martha Camp is a graduate student in the Department of Animal Ecology at Iowa State University. Reprinted with permission from *Roader's Digest*.

1991 Fall Meeting

Ann Barker, Princeton

The fall meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was held 13-15 September 1991 in south central Iowa at Camp Wesley Woods near Indianola hosted by the Rolling Hills Audubon Society. Although most IOU birders wouldn't let a monsoon stop them from finding birds, they did appreciate the decent weather which, if it could be faulted, was only a bit

warm and windy.

All events and meals were held at Methaqua Lodge, a large rustic and very welcoming building. Those who stayed at the camp were housed in nearby cabins. As a personal aside, a number of us will be eternally grateful to Ann Johnson for assigning the women to the one that had the indoor facilities.

Field trips on both mornings covered the Red Rock area thoroughly, visiting Runnells, the Swan Wildlife Refuge, the Highway 14 bridge, and tailwater areas, as well as Lake Ahquabi State Park and Warren County Conservation Board parks. The camp itself was quite productive for warblers and an occasional Great Horned Owl carrying its squirrel prey. The field trip leaders were outstanding; all were excellent birders who knew the area almost as well as their own backyard.



Walnut Creek NWR Manager Dick Birger confers with Gladys Black

Saturday afternoon's program included three top caliber workshops: 1. Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge with Dick Birger, refuge manager 2. Gull identification techniques by Tom Kent 3. Birding Red Rock and Warren County with Tim Schantz and Ann Johnson.

The business meeting followed the workshops and lasted nearly an hour and a half. It was very well attended, lured perhaps by the numerous door prizes offered by the Rolling Hills Audubon at its conclusion. Following the drawings, the Records Committee held a short meeting.

The camp staff outdid themselves for the evening banquet which featured sumptuous roast pork with all the trimmings. Afterward, the group was treated to a fascinating presentation entitled "The Farallons-An Ecological Trap." Tim Schantz shared experiences from his two month stay at Point Reyes Bird Observatory. The tiny piece of land off California's coast is a magnet for out of range species, including most eastern North American species, and is thus singularly responsible for fattening the California state list substantially.



Board Member Gene Armstrong
and Jeanette Frost

Following field trips Sunday morning, the group returned to the camp for a picnic lunch and compilation of the bird list. 118 species were tallied for Sunday, with an extra 16 seen on Saturday only, yielding a total of 134 for the weekend. Highlights include Peregrine Falcons, Willets, Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Western, Baird's and White-rump Sandpipers, Short and Long-billed Dowitchers, Bell's Vireo, and Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Once again, our most sincere thanks to Ann Johnson, Jim Sinclair, Tim Schantz, Gladys Black, and all the members of the Rolling Hills Audubon Society who hosted a flawless meeting! Mark your calender now for the Spring meeting in Cedar Rapids, May 15-17, 1992.

Attendance:

Adel: Jan Eppard.
 Algona: Matt Kenne.
 Ames: Ed & Elizabeth Carbrey,
 Jim Dinsmore.
 Booneville: Eugene & Eloise
 Armstrong.
 Cedar Rapids: Dale & Helen Fye.
 Centerville: Ray Cummins.
 Clarinda: Sue Stroyls.
 Clinton: Jacqueline Wacker.
 Clive: Jane Clark.
 Colo: Hank Zaletel.
 Cumming: Linda Packard.
 Davenport: Mary Lou & Pete
 Petersen, Dan Dorrance.
 Des Moines: Bob & John Cecil,
 Jeanette Frost, Barbara Miller,
 Karen Disbrow, John & Mary
 Mitchell, Ruth Buckles,
 Steve Ristau.
 Elma: Mary Jo Hartogh.
 Estherville: Harold White.
 Fairfield: Diane & Mike Porter.
 Ft. Dodge: Mary Kuhlman, Mina
 Landes, Dorothy Zehr.
 Glenwood: Doug Rose.
 Hastings: Barb Wilson.
 Indianola: Blair Lawson, Bill &
 Jane Overland, Bill & Mary Ann
 Gilbert, Jane & Roy Godwin,
 Jim Sinclair, David Youngblut.
 Iowa City: Jim & Sharon Schieb,
 Tom Kent, Rick Hollis, Randy
 Pinkston, Jim & Karole Fuller,
 Bud Gode, Dick Tetrault.
 Knoxville: Tim Schantz,
 Marjorie Fee.
 Lake Mills: Sibyl Sand.
 Liscomb: Beth & Mark Proescholdt.
 Marion: James & Joyce Durbin.
 Mason City: Rita Goranson, Jan &
 Jim Walter.
 Muscatine: Gerald White.
 New Virginia: Maxine Henry.
 Norwalk: Sue Spieker, Ann &
 Paul Johnson.

Pleasant Hill: Dick & Nancy Birger.
 Pleasantville: Gladys Black, Bruce Hollingsworth.
 Princeton: Ann Barker.
 Simpson College: Anne Bohnet.
 Sioux City: Bob & Dustin Livermore.
 Tabor: Ross Silcock.
 Walnut: Marietta Petersen.
 Waterloo: Dick Kraemer, Francis Moore.
 Bellevue, NE: Loren & Babs Padelford.
 Omaha, NE: B.J. Rose.

IOU People

On May 16, 1991 **Judy Knight** of Spencer received a Governor's Volunteer Service Award for her involvement in the Iowa Nongame Program.

Two of Iowa's younger birders have left the state to work on graduate degrees. **Steve Dinsmore** finished a B.S. at Iowa State and is enrolled at North Carolina

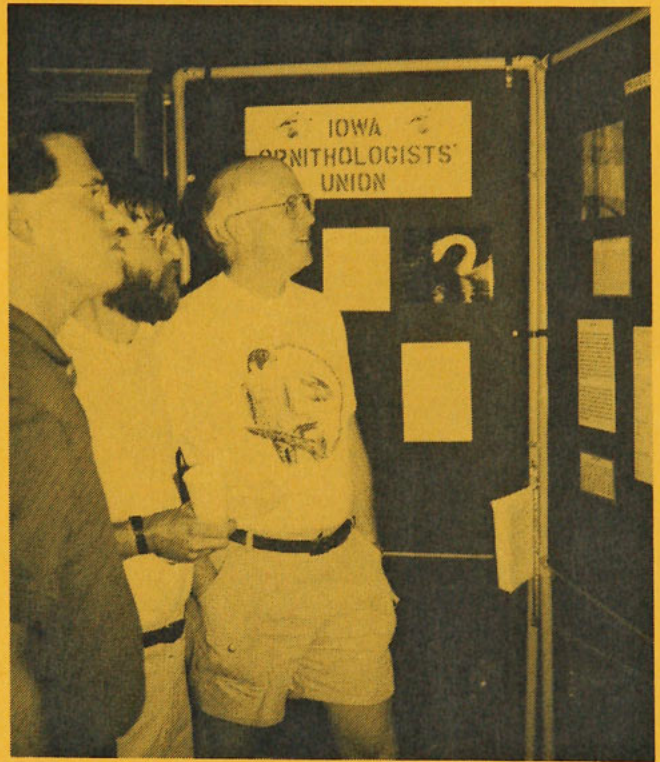
CONGRATULATIONS

State University in Raleigh. He will be doing a study of shorebird habitat use on the Outer Banks off the coast of North Carolina. **Eric Munson** finished a B.S. at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and is enrolled at the University of Illinois. He will be working on a study of birds in Central or South America.

IOU Display

Rick Hollis, Iowa City

The IOU display is almost finished thanks to the efforts of Carol Thompson and her friends. The display consists of three self-supporting panels that contain information on the IOU and its activities. Copies of Iowa Bird Life and the Newsletter are available for review as well as a dispenser for membership brochures.



Matt Kenne, Rick Hollis and Blair Lawson view the new IOU display

The display comes in two large boxes 40x55x3" and 10x10x55" and will fit in most station wagons or mini-vans. The plan would be that members would drive half way to a transfer point with Iowa City being home base.

The display was built for members to use at their club functions, local meetings, fairs etc. to promote IOU membership. To date, it has been scheduled for two hawk watches in Iowa City (Sept. and Nov.), The Buckskinners Reunion at Lacy-Keosaqua (mid-Oct.), Iowa City's Prairie Preview (March 1992), and the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Ames (June 1991). Contact Carol Thompson 319/338-5361 or Rick Hollis 319/338-4834 for scheduling.

Bird Directory

The Johnson County Songbird Project recently released its Bird Information Resource Directory. The 32 page booklet has articles on bird conservation and habitat as well as listings of bird and

Coming Dates

- Nov. 9 Rolling Hills Audubon (Indianola) field trip to Red Rock.
Sat. Meet at Red Rock visitor center at 8:30 am. Ann Johnson:
515/961-2002.
- Nov. 13 Tallgrass Prairie Audubon program "African Wildlife" by
Wed. Mark Wagner at 7:30 pm, Isaac Walton, Newton. Take
Hwy. 14 north, turn west at Oakridge Apple sign, left at
second drive on south side. Pauline Mairs: 515/752-2219.
- Nov. 14 Quad City Audubon program "Prairie Ecology" by Bo
Thurs. Dziadyk at 7:00 pm at Butterworth Center. Doris
Sandvick: 319/225-6191.
- Nov. 16 Tallgrass Prairie field trip to Rock Creek State Park northwest of
Sat. Grinnell. Meet at beach parking lot at 9:00 am. Ken
Saunders: 515/236-4844.
- Nov. 19 Des Moines Audubon program "The Galapagos Islands" by
Tues. Evelyn Anderson and Bonnie McCready at 7:15 pm,
Westminster Church, Beaver & Franklin. Jane Clark: 515/
223-5047.
- Nov. 21 Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) program "Natural Beauty
Thurs. of Iowa" by Carl Kurtz at 7:30 pm, 181 Design Center, ISU.
Sherry Dragula: 515/292-4014.
- Nov. Cedar Rapids Audubon field trip to Squaw Creek NWR in
22-24 northwest Missouri. Dale Fye: 319/364-1638.
- Nov. 26 Rolling Hills Audubon (Indianola) program "Raptors" by
Tues. Jon Stravers at Red Rock visitor center at 7:30 pm. Ann
Johnson: 515/961-2002.
- Nov. 30 Iowa City Bird Club field trip to Burlington area for ducks,
Sat. Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Meet at Terrill Mill Park on
Dubuque St. across from Mayflower Residence Hall at
7:00 am. Jim Fuller: 319/338-4834.
- Jan. 16 Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) program "Flora & Fauna of
Thurs. West Texas" by Wolfgang Oesterreich at 7:30 pm, 281
Town Engineering, ISU. Sherry Dragula: 515/292-4014.

NOTE: Christmas Bird Count information must be to the editor by November 10 to be included in the next issue.

environmental organizations, a list of pertinent books and magazines, and a speakers directory with topics and contact numbers. The booklet which costs \$2 is available at Iowa City stores or from the Johnson County Songbird Project, 2511 SW Hwy 1, Iowa City, IA 52240.

IOU Stocking Stuffer

Unable to decide what Christmas gift to get for the discriminating birder in your family? The IOU Goldfinch pin, first offered for sale this Spring, could be the answer. Priced at \$5.00 each, for a limited time, 2 can be purchased for \$8.00. Make checks payable to the IOU and mail to Pam Allen, 1601 Pleasant St., West Des Moines, IA 50265.

Request for Assistance

I am studying American Coot migration and would appreciate observations of neck-collared coots, initiation of migration, and whether their nocturnal roosting site is open water or vegetation. All data used will be acknowledged. Please send information to Gerald Kaufmann, Dept. of Biology, Loras College, Dubuque, IA 52204-0178.

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IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION




STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

HANK & LINDA ZALETEL
715 WEST
COLO, IOWA 50056

Thomas H Kent
211 Richards St
Iowa City IA 52246

IOWA BIRDLINE

 **319-338-9881**

IOU Fall Field Trip **Jim Sinclair, Indianola**

Join Ann Johnson, Jim Sinclair and Tim Schantz for the Fall IOU field trip, Saturday, **November 23** at Red Rock Lake. Meet at 8:00 am at the Corps of Engineers headquarters located at the south end of the dam. Bring a sack lunch and prepare to bird the lake for loons, grebes and ducks, the spillway area with its truly staggering numbers of gulls, and a special stop at Paul and Mary Felsings to enjoy one of the most active feeder operations that you can imagine. Call Jim Sinclair at 515/961-4616 for information.

BLK. RT.

