

IOU News

Fall 2009



Volume 25 - Number 3



A Le Conte's Sparrow pops into view in a southern Iowa wetland. Photo by Jay Gilliam.

IOU 2009 Fall Meeting - Appanoose County

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting will be held Oct 16-18, 2009 in Centerville, Iowa. Our hosts for the meeting will be the Rathbun Bird Club. The Friday night social and check in will be held at the Motel 60 meeting room. All other meals and program activities will be held at the Manhattan Steakhouse, conveniently located on the south side of Centerville on Highway 5.

The Centerville area has long been known for its excellent birding, centered around Rathbun Reservoir. The lake is a

popular spot for migrating waterbirds such as gulls, ducks, loons, and grebes and the surrounding habitat is known for its sparrows and wintering owls. In recent years, Sedan Bottoms has become a popular and productive location, regularly producing Nelson's Sparrow and Le Conte's Sparrow in addition to large numbers of rails. The long list of rarities that have been found in Appanoose County includes Brown Pelican, Neotropic Cormorant, Snowy

Continued on page 3

IOU News

is a quarterly publication of the Publications Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.

IOU News Editor:

Bill Scheible
1524 Bilgarie Ct. NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
drbeel@mchsi.com

IOU News Layout:

Paul Hertzel
1432 E. State Street
Mason City, IA 50401
phertzel@rconnect.com

IOU Publications Committee:

Ann Johnson, Chair
James J Dinsmore
Paul Hertzel
Kayleen Niyo
Bill Scheible

IOU News issues:

- (1) Spring: Published approximately mid-March, depending on date of annual spring meeting.
- (2) Summer: Published late June or early July.
- (3) Fall: Published late August or early September, depending on date of fall meeting.
- (4) Winter: Published late November.

IOU Journal:

Iowa Bird Life
Kayleen Niyo, Editor
Kay@KayNiyo.com

Website:

<http://www.iowabirds.org/>

IOU Membership / Subscriptions:

Doug Hunt
1201 High Avenue W
Oskaloosa, IA 52577
<http://www.iowabirds.org/>

this newsletter was mailed to 431 members.

(Co-) Editor's note

The IOU Publications Committee is still seeking applicants for the position of Editor for *IOU News*, our quarterly newsletter. Tasks assigned to the editor include but are not limited to 1) soliciting and editing articles and announcements of interest to the membership and 2) layout and production of the mailed finished product.

Paul Hertzel has graciously consented to remain on duty as a co-editor, as he is well versed in the production aspects of *IOU News*. To provide Paul with much needed, albeit partial relief, at least from the news gathering perspective, I have agreed to function temporarily in an editor's role, my sole qualification being that I am fluent in the English language.

As announced earlier, anyone with an interest in this position is encouraged to contact Jim Dinsmore at oldcoot@iastate.edu or myself at drbeel@mchsi.com.

In the meantime, I welcome any contributions that you, the readers might make that would facilitate the dissemination of information of interest to IOU members. Despite our state's small size and relatively sparse population, I am amazed at the quality and expertise of Iowa's birders. Many of you have something to say, so let us hear from you.

Fall Field Reports *a gentle reminder*

The Fall reporting season extends from 1 August through 30 November and is a time for exciting finds for Iowa birders, from shorebirds and migrant Passerines at the beginning through waterfowl and gulls later in the period. Through the years many first Iowa records have occurred in the Fall, but the status of even our common migrants is important to document. For one thing, this is how population trends are identified.

So, everyone get out in the field as much as possible, record your sightings, and send the results to Paul Hertzel, Fall Field Reports Editor. Data can be entered on the IOU website at www.iowabirds.org/field-reports/ or by e-mail or snail mail to Paul at: phertzel@rconnect.com or 1432 E. State St., Mason City, IA 50401.

IOU Fall Meeting *continued from page 1*

Plover, Red Phalarope, Laughing Gull, Little Gull, Ivory Gull, Royal Tern, Burrowing Owl, Say's Phoebe, Vermillion Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Prairie Warbler.

Potential field trip locations include the vast Rathbun Reservoir area, Sharon Bluffs, Sedan Bottoms, Coline Wildlife Area, and the Woodpecker/Coffey Marsh area.

Our keynote speaker will be Jon Dunn.



Jon Dunn. Photo by Jo Heindel.

Jon Dunn has lived much of his life in California, where he became a birder at age eight, an event triggered, he says, by the life-altering appearance of a bright male Hooded Oriole in his garden. Jon has extensive knowledge of the identification and distribution of North American birds, and has published numerous papers in a wide variety of journals. He has also long been interested in Asian avifaunas. Jon has been Chief Consultant/Editor for all five editions of the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, the most recent published in 2006. He is the co-writer and host of the two-video set *Large and Small Gulls of North America*, as well as co-author (with Kimball Garrett) of *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* and the *Peterson Field Guide to Warblers*. Jon is a member of the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union and the ABA Checklist Committee, and has served more than 20 years on the California Bird Records Committee. Beyond birds, Jon has a keen interest in politics, history, and the cinema.

Directions:

Friday night social and check in at Motel 60, 117 N. 18th St., Centerville, IA. The motel is on Highway 5 just north of its intersection with Highway 2.

Programs and meals at Manhattan Steakhouse, 24256 Highway 5, Centerville, IA. From the junction of highways 2 and 5, go south on Hwy 5 approximately 3 miles. The restaurant is on the east side of the highway.

Lodging:

Motels

Motel 60 & Villa, 117 N. 18th street, Centerville
(641) 437-7272

Super 8 Motel, 1021 N. 18th Street, Centerville
(641) 856-8888

Don Elen Motel, 920 E. Maple Street, Centerville
(641) 437-4780

Honey Creek Resort State Park, 12633 Resort Drive,
Moravia
(877) 677-3344

Angel's Motel, 308 N. Frontage Road, Moravia
(641) 724-3130

Camping

Leah Bradley Park, southwest of Centerville
Sharon Bluffs State Park, southeast of Centerville
Rathbun Lake – multiple campgrounds
Consult your Sportsman's Atlas for directions and additional information



Sharon Bluffs State Park. Photo by Jay Gilliam.



Rathbun Lake, upper end. Photo by Jay Gilliam.

Schedule

FRIDAY, Oct. 16 – Motel 60

5:30-9:00 P.M. Registration
 Social time with snacks
 Field trip sign-up

SATURDAY, Oct. 17 – Manhattan Steakhouse

6:00 A.M. Breakfast
 7:00 A.M. Field trips depart
 Noon Lunch
 12:45-1:00 P.M. Ray Cummins – Appanoose
 County Birding Areas
 1:00-1:15 P.M. Kenneth Hamilton – Honey
 Creek Resort/Sedan Bottoms
 Wildlife Area land trade
 1:15-1:40 P.M. Torre Hovick – Grasshopper
 Sparrows/grassland birds in
 the Kellerton BCA area
 1:40-2:05 P.M. Tyler Harms – Marsh-bird
 surveys in Iowa
 2:15-4:00 P.M. OU General Business Meeting
 4:00-4:10 P.M. Introduction of new members
 4:15-5:15 P.M. IOU Board Meeting
 6:30-7:30 P.M. Saturday Evening Banquet –
 Manhattan Steakhouse
 7:30-8:30 P.M. Speaker: **Jon Dunn – Sparrows**

SUNDAY, Oct. 18 – Manhattan Steakhouse

6:00 A.M. Breakfast
 7:00 A.M. Field trips depart
 12:00 P.M. Field trips return
 Lunch



Rathbun Lake. Photo by Jay Gilliam.



Sedan Bottoms. Photo by Jay Gilliam.



Northern Harrier. Photo by Jay Gilliam.

2009 IOU Fall Meeting Centerville, Iowa

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

On-line registration:

If possible, please register through the IOU website at: <http://www.iowabirds.org/>

Make checks payable to: **Iowa Ornithologists' Union**

Mail to: Aaron Brees
6759 NW 6th Dr.
Des Moines, IA 50313

Mail-in registration:

2009 IOU Fall Meeting Registration Form

Copy, fill out, and mail--don't forget your check.

Name(s): _____
(FIRST and LAST names of ALL persons registering on this form)

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

		No. of Persons			Total Cost
Registration Fee: \$15.00	x	_____	=	\$	_____
Meals:					
Sat. Breakfast: \$ 6.00	x	_____	=	\$	_____
Sat. Lunch: \$ 5.00	x	_____	=	\$	_____
Sat. Banquet: \$13.00	x	_____	=	\$	_____
Sun. Breakfast: \$ 6.00	x	_____	=	\$	_____
Sun. Lunch: \$ 5.00	x	_____	=	\$	_____

Meatless Option? Please check here _____.

\$ _____ Total

Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas II Update

As the second year of the BBA winds down, we have a lot to be thankful for. First and foremost, thanks goes to all of the dedicated volunteers throughout Iowa who have devoted time to traveling to various blocks searching for signs of nesting, like agitated parents, or best of all baby birds. Without your time and commitment, we wouldn't be where we are today. After two years of atlasing, we have collected nearly 3200 hours of observation, more than doubling what was accomplished last year. Over 630 out of 791 total blocks have been worked in compared to a little over 360 blocks last year, and we now have 189 species recorded as possible nesters in Iowa. What a wonderful accomplishment! Whether it is one record or hundreds, every report is important in documenting Iowa's breeding birds. The information collected for the BBA is extremely valuable and it is clear that birders care about the future and protection of Iowa's birdlife. Keep up the great work, Atlasers, and most of all THANK YOU!

With almost two years of data collection under our belt, we are starting to see some very exciting trends when comparing the first Iowa BBA to our current one. For example, from 1985-1990 there were only 3 confirmations of Bald Eagles nesting in the state of Iowa. As of August 2009, there have been 29 confirmations and many reports of probable nesting. It is great to see such a great comeback of this majestic bird. Another species making a comeback is the Henslow's Sparrow. During the first Atlas, there were only 7 records of Henslow's, none of which confirmed nesting. So far in the second BBA, we have recorded nearly 100 reports of this grassland species, three of which were confirmed nesting, and around 25 probable nesting records. This species' dependence on protected areas like those put into Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), helps everyone realize the importance of habitat protection. Some surprises of the Atlas include species that were not found in Iowa twenty years ago, and are now beginning to nest more frequently in the state. A few of these species include Trumpeter Swans and Eurasian Collared-Doves. There is much that is yet to be discovered about Iowa's nesting inhabitants. It will be interesting to see what other surprising finds or trends develop after five years of such an exciting project.

The Breeding Bird Atlas invites everyone to participate, from beginning to expert birders. Atlasing is a great way to enhance your birding skills and gives you a chance to explore different parts of Iowa and its birdlife. Participating in the BBA may be a new and exciting experience for many birders, and it provides a great opportunity to observe and learn more about birds' breeding and nesting behavior. Everyone has the opportunity to learn something new when participating in the BBA! If you are someone who enjoys being outdoors, visiting new places, bird watching and having a good time, atlasing is just the thing for you!

With a little over three years left in the project, there is still much to be done. When we look at the data compared to the first Breeding Bird Atlas, we are in better shape now than we were back then. With the development of the website at <http://bba.iowabirds.org>, volunteers can enter their records, and see up-to-date progress for all of the blocks within the state. If you haven't already, I encourage you to visit the website or contact the BBA Coordinator for more information. With this advancement in

technology, it is easier for us to see areas that still need more atlas work completed within the project. If you look on the website, you will notice that there are around 150 blocks that have not received any attention, therefore, we have no idea what birds could be nesting in these areas. If you get the chance, please spend some time in these blocks so they can be included in the final outcome of the project. Visiting a block with no data is much like a scavenger hunt, and can be a lot of fun as you "discover" what lies within the block. Take advantage of the adventure that awaits you!

Another thing to keep track of is how much time is spent in a block. As we move forward, we need to remember that each block needs to receive 20 hours of observation. As mentioned earlier, over 630 blocks have been visited, which is an awesome accomplishment, but a lot of these blocks have less than 5 hours. As more and more species are confirmed nesting, more time will need to be spent on those species that are more difficult to find or confirm. This may mean taking time in the evening and trying to confirm species that are more active at night, such as owls. Also, don't forget about early season nesters. When deciding which blocks to visit, go to blocks with little or no time and data, or go back to ones you have already visited and try to upgrade breeding evidence of species you have found previously. By visiting the block again, you may even pick up a new species!

A final component to keep in mind is that the project could always use more volunteers. During the first Breeding Bird Atlas, 508 volunteers contributed over 14,000 hours to the project. As of right now, we have nearly 200 people who have contributed around 3200 hours. If each block were to receive 20 hours, the project would need close to 16,000 hours of contribution. We have a long way to go, but with enthusiasm and diligence of birders throughout the state, this goal is something we can attain. Please encourage others who are interested in learning more about birds to join you on an outing. The success of the project depends on volunteers throughout the state, and it's great to see more people become involved as time goes on. Thanks again for your participation and accomplishments so far!

For more information on where blocks are located and how you can get started, visit the website <http://bba.iowabirds.org>, or contact the BBA Coordinator at the contact information below.

Nichole Nagl,
AmeriCorps BBA Volunteer Coordinator
Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
Boone Wildlife Research Station
1436 255th Street
Boone, IA 50036
bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org
PHONE: (515) 432-2823
CELL: (515) 298-3072

#422 for Iowa

In 1996, in *Birds in Iowa*, Tom Kent and Jim Dinsmore put forth a list of 17 species that they thought would be likely to appear in Iowa. Well, 13 years have passed and 7 of them have done just that: Sprague's Pipit, Painted Bunting, Yellow-billed Loon, White-winged Dove, Arctic Tern, Brambling and Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

Being curious about such things, I asked Tom and Jim to offer an updated assessment of Iowa's next species. To broaden the sample, I sent the same question to the current members of the IOU Records Committee, there being no more capable group than these folks to weigh in on the issue. To narrow the field, I asked each expert to provide his or her one best candidate.

The response overwhelmingly favored a hummingbird. As to species, Anna's was the top choice, with one vote for Magnificent Hummingbird. All respondents pointed out the fact that out-of-range hummingbirds appear at easily monitored feeders and are likely to do so in late Fall, after our Ruby-throateds have departed the state. In addition, neighboring states have recorded a variety of vagrant hummingbirds, and as one respondent noted: "We are woefully short of Hummingbird species on our Iowa list when compared with other nearby states..." [For the record, Iowa has recorded 3 species of Hummer: Ruby-throated, Rufous, and Green Violetear].

One voter chose Ash-throated Flycatcher: "...does a fair amount of post-breeding wandering and has been recorded in many of our surrounding states. One would think that some of these birds have passed through Iowa, so why not have a birder stumble across one?"

There was one vote for Common Poorwill: "...a migratory species that breeds just west of Iowa. It has undoubtedly occurred in the state but has escaped detection because of a lack of people actively seeking a rare, nocturnal bird."

A final vote was for White-tailed Kite. Interestingly, this species was placed at the top of the list by Tom Kent and Jim Dinsmore back in 1996. "...the number of extralimital records appears to be increasing".

In fairness to the voters, some of whom wished that I had allowed them more latitude by giving them more than one choice, this was an arbitrary decision on my part to limit the length of the discussion. It is, in my mind and hopefully that of you, the reader, an intriguing subject that can be viewed as a question to be asked in perpetuity.

-William Scheible

Reference: Kent and Dinsmore, 1996: Self published.
Birds in Iowa. pp. 4 - 9

Popular Birding Festival Flies in New Direction

The **Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival**, headquartered in Lansing (Allamakee County), Iowa, has followed essentially the same 3-day format for each of the past 7 years. For 2009, however, the organizers have chosen to place greater emphasis on extended first-hand birding experiences in key Mississippi River Flyway habitats.

This year, indoor activities will be replaced by a wide variety of "Fall Migration Cruises" on the comfortable, heated passenger boats of Mississippi Explorer Cruises. These large and stable boats, with windows on all sides, can hold up to 90 passengers and are the most comfortable touring boats on the Upper Mississippi River. Experienced birders and naturalists will accompany each cruise. Visitors will be treated to amazing close-up views of thousands of elegant Tundra Swans as well as hundreds of thousands of other migrating waterfowl. Bald Eagles will be abundant at this time of year, too.

Wildlife cruises will be offered on Saturdays and Sundays on three consecutive weekends: Oct. 31 / Nov. 1, Nov. 7 / 8 and Nov. 14 / 15. All cruises will embark from the waterfront in Lansing and will explore Pool 9 of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. There will be 2 cruises each day: 9 AM to noon and 1 PM to 4 PM. Additional boats will be used if necessary, and "Fall Migration Cruises" can also be booked on non-weekend days by interested groups or organizations.

Cruise reservations should be made in advance, and trips will be filled on a first come-first served basis. Reservations can be made and additional information obtained at www.MississippiExplorer.com or by a toll-free call to 877-647-7397.

In addition, half- or full-day land-based birding trips can be arranged for the Tri-state area of Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota on days when river cruises are not scheduled. These outings will be similar to the field trips conducted during previous Rivers and Bluffs Birding Festivals. Arrangements for land-based birding trips can be made by e-mailing Ric.Zarwell@mchsi.com or by phoning 563-538-4991.

-Ric Zarwell
Lansing, IA

Ed. Note: Having attended 2 previous **Rivers and Bluffs Festivals**, I can vouch for the absolutely stunning experience of witnessing the massive waterfowl numbers that pass through NE Iowa in November. Visitors from more than 2 dozen states have attended previous festivals, and I highly recommend making this journey.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union
1201 High Avenue West
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

[Address Service Requested]

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Mason City, IA
Permit No. 251

|||||
*****AUTO**3-DIGIT 522
Thomas H Kent
624 LARCH LN
IOWA CITY IA 52245-3435

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

IOU News

CONTENTS

2009 FALL MEETING 1, 3-5
CO-EDITORS' NOTE 2
BREEDING BIRD ATLAS UPDATE 6
#422 FOR IOWA 7
RIVERS & BLUFFS FESTIVAL 7

