

IOU News



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Fall 2011 IOU Meeting Wrap-up

Dennis Carter leading a field trip at Seed Savers Exchange. Photo by Tom Schilke

By Tom Schilke

For birders, Decorah was the place to be August 26 - 28. A weekend of great weather, great speakers, scenic birding and lively socializing was in store for the 116 attendees registered for the fall meeting of the IOU.

Kicking things off was a social gathering at The Oaks Steakhouse a spacious accommodating restaurant, well known for its good food, meeting rooms, and well stocked bar. Conversations quickened as more people gathered at the registration table manned by local birders Dennis Carter, Larry Reis, Ellen Bell and Sioux City birder Rex Rundquist.

A well stocked table of deli food and snacks provided by Winneshiek County Conservation was a welcoming focal point as people drifted - greeting old friends, meeting newcomers, deciding on field trips, and visiting the tables covered with IOU merchandise, art work, and the expansive selection of books at the silent auction.

Outside, across the highway, the sometimes unpredictable turkey vultures showed up only in small numbers at the staging area - a sight that can often be quite spectacular as they prepare to go to the nearby roost, sometimes in the hundreds.

IOU News

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this newsletter was mailed to 387 members.

From 6:00 p.m. Friday, when registration opened, through 1:00 p.m. Sunday in Winneshiek and Allamakee Counties alone, 138 bird species were listed - a very good representation of this, the unique Paleozoic Plateau region of Iowa. A good mix of migrants were found, although not in large numbers. Twenty two species of warblers were tallied (including Golden-winged, Prothonotary, and Cerulean) and a surprising number of shorebirds for this area as well.

Field Trip Highlights

Effigy Mounds, Yellow River Forest - This time of year we can find an overlap of migrating birds and birds still in their breeding territories. Danny Akers and crew found Cerulean and Prothonotary Warblers still singing and a family of Acadian Flycatchers amongst a good list of other local and migrant bird species. The boardwalk at Effigy Mounds and multiple sites at Yellow River Forest are great places to bird.

Cardinal Marsh - A large group led by Francis Moore and Ellen Bell combed the marsh - an area known for diverse habitats and good birding possibilities. A Virginia Rail gave



Banquet speaker Ted Floyd leading a "bare naked birding" field trip at Seed Savers Exchange. Photo by Tom Schilke

onlookers a good show while darting in and out of cover. A family of six Cooper's Hawks worked a woodland edge. A family of seven Kingfishers commanded a pond and a pair of Sandhill Cranes were lifers for one field tripper.

Lake Meyer - Naturalist Larry Reis has spent 27 years bringing this park back into superb condition for birds and other wildlife. It is a showcase park for restoration and diverse native flora - a grocery store for birds. Larry's mix of folklore and interpretation on his trips were much appreciated inspiring a good number of people to buy his newly published book *Noting Nature* back at The Oaks. Hummingbirds were thick among the jewelweed and stunning red cardinal flower. A Northern Waterthrush worked a creek bank while a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker perched higher above.

A stop at the nearby **Ft. Atkinson Sewage Ponds** was very productive for shorebirds. One can walk completely around the three ponds and get close looks at birds along the edge. Stilt Sandpipers were very close at hand - a great look at a "lifer" for one birder.

Decorah City Parks - While observing the TV roost with Tex Sordahl and wondering how only ten trees can support 200-300 vultures, a Pileated Woodpecker flew right by. Sapsuckers and all of the other Iowa woodpeckers nest in the county. Somehow Tex and crew also managed to "blend in" with a 5K race as they birded the Decorah Eagle Cam site.

Seed Savers Exchange - this site is becoming internationally known for growing and preserving rare fruits, vegetables, animals and such. In the historic orchard birders were allowed to eat any apples found on the ground, which they did with delight. Dennis Carter led the groups - joined by Ted Floyd. Forty bird species were tallied near the orchard alone. Did anyone count the Buffe Runne Duck or the Roman Tufted Goose? How about the Mottled Java or the Black Sumatra? - good birds for a chicken list.

Dennis took a group over to check **a farm pond by the nearby town of Burr Oak**. A pair of Willets and ring-necked duck were tallied there - good finds for the weekend.

Heritage Valley - Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation - Brian Fankhauser of the INHF and Francis Moore led the group on a bird hike along the river way back to the largest Red Elm tree in Iowa. At this early time of day most of the birds were on the less accessible other side of the river,



Larry Reis leading a group of birders around Lake Meyer.
Photo by Tom Schilke

but some unusual insects and spiders caught the eyes and cameras of the hikers. Thanks to Brian for making this special trip on private INHF land possible for us.

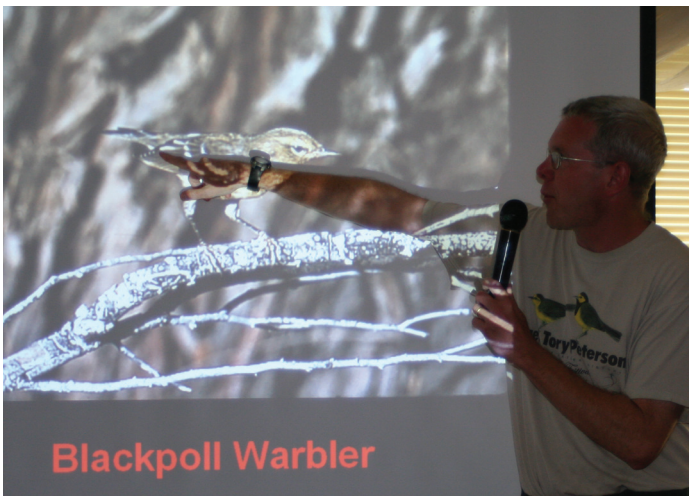
Saturday Afternoon Sessions

A large captive audience attended our afternoon educational sessions. **Bob Anderson** presented a session on his recent research on Peregrine Falcon (Duck Hawk) effigies. He proved that what are often referred to as bird effigy mounds are actually Peregrine Falcon effigies. Using stunning laser images, aerial photos, and detailed measurements as supporting evidence, he showed the builders had clear intentions of representing Peregrines near their historic nesting sites along the Mississippi River.

Bob is well known in Decorah and around the world for his work with the famous Eagle Cam. Nearly 207 million visits have been made to his Eagle Cam web site. Bob had much to share about the knowledge gained from the video cam and the recent satellite tracking of a fledged Decorah



Bob Anderson talking about the Peregrine Falcon effigies at Effigy Mounds as well as the world famous Bald Eagle cam project. Photo by John Bissell



Ted Floyd giving his keynote presentation on nocturnal migration and flight calls. Photo by John Bissell



Steve Dinsmore discussing the current status of the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas. Photo by John Bissell

Eagle dubbed D1 (google Decorah D1 for tracking info). Bob is director of the Raptor Resource Project and has studied falcons for over 30 years.

Ted Floyd put on an interactive session on warbler identification. Ted led us through key, sometimes overlooked, ID features while he had us guessing what the warbler images he projected might be. More important than field marks, Ted mentioned, are behavior, size and shape, and context (where, when, landscape, etc).

The afternoon ended with the IOU membership meeting. **Steve Dinsmore** gave an encouraging update on year four of Breeding Bird Atlas work. Good work has been done thus far with 63 blocks completed, but some intense work still needs to be done. Door prizes, composed of gift certificates to be used at the IOU store, were awarded to 5 lucky winners. In addition, ten of our first time attendees picked up a free copy of Tom Kent and Jim Dinsmore's book "Birds In Iowa."

Banquet

As tables were cleared of the fine meal served to us by the Oaks staff, President Paul Roisen warmed up the crowd with a few well timed bird jokes and awarded the grand door prize - a framed print of a Barred Owl donated by artist Judy Stiers - to winner John Rutenbeck.

Many know Ted Floyd, our key note speaker, as editor of the ABA magazine "Birding" and his contributions to birding and bird ecology through his writings and frequent speaking engagements. He is the author of the Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America and the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada. He also wrote the booklet Let's Go Birding that he so generously made available free of charge to all registrants.

Interspersing images of his family, birds, and unlikely yet productive urban settings with recorded nocturnal bird flight calls, Ted brought to life how he discovered nocturnal birding and how productive it can be. His presentation of "Birding at Night - the New Frontier" gave us insights into nocturnal birding and had us thinking about exploring this new way of birding.

Activity at the silent auction was like a birder's feeding frenzy as almost all books sold giving us over \$300 to put into the publications fund. Bob Cecil has gotten plenty of exercise over the years hauling boxes of books around to sell and will now be handing those duties over to son John. Many thanks to Bob for making silent auctions so successful.

Sunday with Ted

Ted Floyd is a fine speaker and educator. When he is outside in his element among the birds, he really shines.

At 4:45 a.m. the next morning a sizable group followed Ted out to Seed Saver's to try some of this nocturnal birding. The hour or two before sunrise is generally one of the more productive times for nocturnal birding as distracting insect and human noises are at a low for the evening and migrating birds are beginning to descend. In Ted's own words, from his "Nocturnal Night Call" listserv, here is how the trip went.

"We listened for 45 minutes starting at 5:00 a.m., and we enjoyed a slow but steady flight of Veeries, Swainson's Thrushes, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and some grosbeak/tanager flight calls. Also a few American Redstarts, a number of Chipping Sparrows (I believe the Chipping Sparrows were just local birds moving around, doing the zugunuhe thing), and a various warbler/sparrow flight calls. Nice to hear Great-horned Owl, Barred owl, and Eastern Screech Owl, and fascinating, if a bit morbid, to watch John Bissell get decapitated by a Common Nighthawk. Poor fella didn't have a chance..."

After breakfast, two groups stripped down to do some "Bare-Naked Birding" with Ted. "Stripped down" of any binoculars or magnification aids and armed with a heightened three dimensional awareness inspired by Ted, each group slowly walked from the Seed Saver's parking lot to an active spot along a creek, intently watching and listening, ready to describe any bird seen or heard. Gregarious Cedar Waxwings snatched insects over the

stream. A pair of Yellow-throated Vireos fought briefly. A Black and White Warbler crept along a tree branch while a Northern Waterthrush chipped nearby. A Nashville Warbler announced its presence.

"Binoculars tend to make you focus narrowly and you often miss things," Ted pointed out. He has a talent for describing what he sees and hears. "Swainson's Thrush - over there - sounds like a drop of water. Magnolia Warbler overhead, flight call sounds like a spark" he tells us. Red Starts flash their wings to startle insects and the Blackpoll is a strong warbler, he points out as more birds begin to appear by sight or sound. All together, we probably found and identified more birds without our binoculars than if we had used them.

In Conclusion

People that are familiar with Mabe's Pizza say it is the best in Iowa. There was barely a crumb left of 17 pizzas when we started the final compilation after the pizza buffet. We had a good bird list for the weekend and we had brought together a whole lot of happy, smiling birders. As one newcomer to an IOU meeting and birding told me with a big smile on her face, "Oh, there are so many knowledgeable people here, and they are all willing to share their knowledge."

I don't know about you, but after this meeting I find myself pausing to listen to the night sky more often and watching the birds a while longer before raising my binoculars.

Thank you to all attendees for everything you did to make the meeting a success.



Banquet speaker Ted Floyd leading a "bare naked birding" field trip at Seed Savers Exchange. Photo by Tom Schilke



Early morning birding in Decorah. Photo by John Bissell

2011 Decorah Fall Meeting Compilation

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Ring-necked Duck
Hooded Merganser
Ring-necked Pheasant
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Green Heron
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
Virginia Rail
Sora
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper

Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Stilt Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Phalarope
Ring-billed Gull
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared Dove
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Eastern Screech Owl
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Eastern Wood Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Acadian Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch

White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Swainson's Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Blue-winged Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Cerulean Warbler

Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Prothonotary Warbler
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Common Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler
Canada Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Meadowlark Species
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

2011 Decorah Fall Meeting Attendees

Danny Akers - Ankeny
Bob Anderson - Decorah
Eugene Armstrong - VanMeter
Eloise Armstrong - VanMeter
Ellen Bell - Ridgeway
Carl Bendorf - Arlington Heights, Ill
Linda Bendorf - Arliongton Heights, Ill
Caorl Berrier - Delavan
Galín Berrier - Delavan
John Bissell - Grimes
Bill Bossman - Pierre SD
Daria Baosman - Pierre SD
Arron Brees - Des Moines
Suzanne Brown - Evansdale
Barbara Brown - West Des Moines
Don Brown - West Des Moines
Douglas Brown - North Liberty
Bill Burch - Des Moines
Joyce Burch Des Moines
Dennis Carter - Decorah
Chris Caster - Coralville
Bob Cecil - Des Moines
Mary Cecil - Des Moines
*Elaine Dalrymple - Cedar Falls
Stephen Dinsmore - Ames
Karen Disbrow - Iowa City
Linda Donelson - Iowa City
John Donelson - Iowa City

Jim Durbin - Marion
Keith Dyche - Shenandoah
Dave Eastman - Cedar Falls
Chris Edwards - Solon
Brain Fankhauser - Decorah
Carolyn Fischer - Mason City
Ted Floyd - Lafayette CO
Scott Garrett - Cedar Falls
Cathy Garrett - Cedar Falls
Jay Gilliam - Norwalk
Linda Haack - Cedar Falls
Joel Haack - Cedar Falls
*Terry Haindfield - Highlandville
Aaron Haines - West Union
*Jean Hall - Waterloo
Tyler Harms - Ames
Doug Harr - Ogden
Mary Jo Hartogh - Elma
*Candace Havelly - Waterloo
Paul Hertzell - Mason City
Doug Hunt - Oskaloosa
Mary Beth Hunt - Oskaloosa
Maridel Jackson - Ankeny
Ann Johnson - Norwalk
Dorothy Kelley - Des Moines
Michael Kelley - Des Moines
Mary Kelley - Dubuque
Matt Kenne - Algona
Cathy Konrad - Bettendorf
*Corey Lange - Ames
*Charles LeMaster - Charles City

*Susan LeMaster - Charles City
Lynn Marsh - Ankeny
Dewey McConville - Centerville
Brad McConville - Centerville
Winston McWilliam - Coal Valley Ill
Evans McWilliam - Paton
Marlene Michel - Cresco
Francis Moore - Waterloo
Kathy Myers - Des Moines
Curt Nelson - Mason City
Bob Nicholson - Sioux City
Phyllis Nicholson - Sioux City
Josh Obrecht - Ames
Mary Lou Petersen - Bettendorf
*Mary Jo Piech - Cedar Falls
*Bruce Plakke - Cedar Falls
*Linda Plakke - Cedar Falls
Diane Porter - Fairfield
Mark Proescholdt - Liscomb
Larry Reis - Calmar
Paul Roisen - Sioux City
Linda Rudolf- Coralville
Rex Rundquist - Sioux City
Maria Rundquist - Sioux City
John Ruttenbeck - Burlington
Richard Sayles - Blue Grass
Tom Schilke - Waterloo
Lee Schoenewe - Spencer
Paul Skrake - Ames
Nancy Slife - Iowa Falls
Ty Smedes - Urbandale

Bernice Smedes - Urbandale
Tex Sordahl - Decorah
Stuart Sparkman - Des Moines
Mike Stephens - Centerville
Vicky Stephens - Centerville
Sharon Stilwell - West Des Moines
Dick Stilwell - West Des Moines
Tom Stone - Waterloo
Tommy Stone - Evansdale
Richard Terault - Coralville
Gery Terault - Coralville
Dennis Thompson - Johnston
Cecille Thompson - Johnston
Lorna Truck - West Des Moines
Fred Truck - West Des Moines
*Tom Underwood - Oshkosh - WI
Vicky Van Dyke - Boone
Doug Van Dyke - Boone
Peter VanderMeer - Le Mars
Laura VanderMeer - Le Mars
Karne Vista-Sparkman - Des Moines
Jacqueline White - Clinton
Gerald White - Muscatine
JoAnn Whitmore - Moline Ill
Charlie Winterwood - Dubuque
Ric Zarwell -Lansing

* First time attendees that received "Birds of Iowa" book by Tom Kent and Jim Dinsmore

Iowa's Next Species for the Next Decade

By Josh Obrecht

I've always been fascinated at first state records and extralimital records of birds. While perusing some other states' listserves, I noticed some discussions about the next species to be seen in those states. I thought this was a wonderful idea and decided to open it up to the IOU community. In the past decade, Iowa has added 18 species to the state list, not including the Fulvous Whistling-Duck that was added but seen in 1994, within the past decade. I asked for their top ten species that would be seen in Iowa and gave them points on their ranking (10 points for 1st down to 1 point for 10th). I received lists from 10 participants.

After tallying the results, 47 species received votes. The point totals for the Top 12, due to ties, are listed along with all the other species that received votes. A quick glance at the list shows many species that are difficult to identify and may have already been in the state and disregarded as a regular species.

Some tidbits about the Top 12:

Inca Dove – As one participant stated about the Inca Dove, “to me this is an easy #1 without any close #2.” Seen in recent years in surrounding states and frequents feeders.

Glaucous-winged Gull – Seen in all of our surrounding states, this species poses identification and hybridization issues with other gulls.

Ash-throated Flycatcher – Identification poses the biggest issue with seeing this species.

White-tailed Kite – The number 1 potential species according to Kent and Dinsmore (1996).

Calliope Hummingbird – Females can easily be confused with females of the *Selasphorus* genus.

Purple Sandpiper – Seen in a few Midwest states, look carefully through shorebird flocks.

Broad-billed Hummingbird – Distinguishable from the regular hummingbird species. Keep an eye out in the fall.

Band-tailed Pigeon – Feeder visitor that has been seen in all surrounding states.

Tufted Duck – Can be confused with Ring-necked Duck and scaup. Also leads to origin questions.

Species (First Place Votes)	Total Points
Inca Dove (4)	74
Glaucous-winged Gull (1)	60
Ash-throated Flycatcher (1)	53
White-tailed Kite	33
Calliope Hummingbird (1)	32
Purple Sandpiper (2)	31
Broad-billed Hummingbird (1)	29
Band-tailed Pigeon	28
Tufted Duck	20
Black-chinned Hummingbird	13
Harris's Hawk	13
Tropical Kingbird	13

Others receiving votes (in order of points received): Magnificent Hummingbird, McCown's Longspur, Red-naped Sapsucker, White-throated Swift, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Canyon Towhee, Kirtland's Warbler, Black Skimmer, Northern Wheatear, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Common Poorwill, Hermit Warbler, Mountain Plover, Gull-billed Tern, Black Phoebe, Barnacle Goose, Smew, Hepatic Tanager, Pacific Golden Plover, Wilson's Plover, Sooty Tern, Elegant Tern, Cassin's Finch, Hammond's Flycatcher, Steller's Jay, Red-necked Stint, Rhinoceros Auklet, Dusky Flycatcher, Dovekie, Sandwich Tern, Carolina Chickadee, Brewer's Sparrow, Cassin's Vireo, Monk Parakeet, Heerman's Gull

Black-chinned Hummingbird – According to Akers (2007), there's been one surrounding state record from the St. Louis area. Can be confused with Ruby-throated.

Harris's Hawk – Kent and Dinsmore (1996) state “This relatively tame hawk is often kept by falconers; therefore, the origin of some records has been questioned.”

Tropical Kingbird – Hard to distinguish from other *Tyrannus* kingbirds including the common Western Kingbird.

References:

Akers, D.J. 2007. Checklist Comparison: Iowa and Surrounding States. *Iowa Bird Life* 77(2):86-96.

Kent, T.H. and J.J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Published by authors, Iowa City and Ames, IA.

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IOU News

CONTENTS

2011 FALL MEETING WRAP UP 1-6

Tom Schilke

IOWA'S NEXT 10 SPECIES 7

Josh Obrecht

