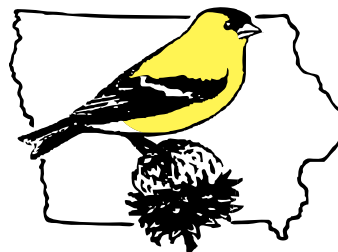


# IOU News

Fall 2015



Volume 31 - Number 3



## IOU Fall Meeting Wrap Up Fort Madison, August 28-30, 2015

*By Dennis Thompson*

The Fall IOU Meeting was held in Ft. Madison on August 28-30 and had 66 attendees. The Comfort Inn worked well for us, logistically, and Zach and his staff went out of their way to accommodate us. I received several comments that the lunch and banquet dinner were the tastiest we've had at recent meetings.

The Friday evening social was well attended and

everyone seemed to have a good time. Eugene and Eloise Armstrong got to reminisce with many of their IOU friends and it was good to see John Rutenbeck return from Colorado to visit his old stomping grounds. Field trip sign-up sheets were available for Lacey-Keosauqua (two groups), Croton Unit of Shimek State Forest, and the Burlington area.

## IOU News

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

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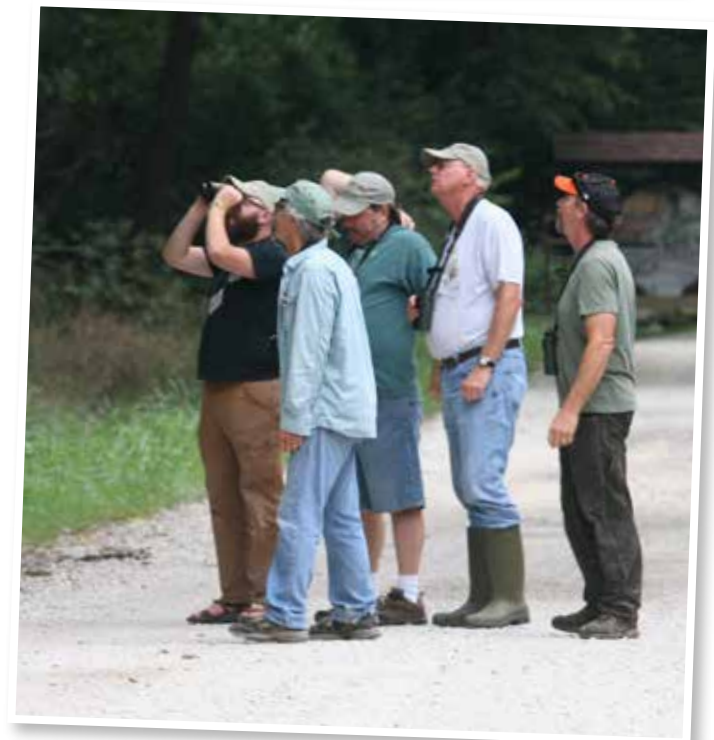
*this newsletter was mailed to 51 members.*

## Field trips

Our field trip destinations were the same for both Saturday and Sunday mornings. Chuck Fuller led an outing around Burlington, including Blackhawk Bottoms, Sullivan Slough and Starr's Cave. Bob Cecil's group visited the Croton unit of Shimek State Forest. Since there's so much to see around Lacey-Keosauqua S.P., Paul Roisen and the Sparkman's each led a tour to that area. The weather was very pleasant on Saturday, but a bit foggy and very warm on Sunday. Even though there wasn't a big push of migrants, we still managed to record 132 species. That included 21 species of warbler with Hooded and Prothonotary being the highlights. White-eyed Vireos and Blue Grosbeaks at several locations were also big hits.

## Afternoon sessions

**Iowa Audubon—  
Bird Conservation  
& Education for the  
21st Century.** Doug  
Harr provided an  
interesting background  
on Iowa Audubon and  
the similarities and  
differences between





the two organizations. Following is a summary of his presentation.

The Audubon Society was organized in 1886 in New York, by George Bird Grinnell. Its goal was to stop the millinery plume trade, which was decimating birds in the southeastern US. Other states soon organized Audubon Societies, which came together in 1905 as the “National Association of Audubon Societies”, changed in 1932 to the “National Audubon Society”. NAS went on to become a national leader in passing many environmental laws in the 1970s, including the Endangered Species Act. NAS opened an Iowa office in 1998, with representatives of each local

Iowa chapter serving on the state board. Unable to raise enough funds, NAS closed its Iowa office in 2003, leaving the board without a home. In 2004, the board moved to create an independent Iowa Audubon Society, with a Boone office opened in 2010. Iowa Audubon now also offers board representation to any Iowa bird club seeking to become part of the organization.

With primary goals of bird & habitat conservation, plus educating the public about birds, most of Iowa Audubon’s funds go to projects related to these goals. Examples include partnering with other conservation groups to acquire public lands for habitat at Big Spirit Lake, Boone Forks Wildlife Area, and the recent Paint Creek addition to Yellow river State Forest. A small grant program has helped fund Northern Saw Whet Owl and Cerulean Warbler research, savannah and wetland management on DNR lands in the Iowa Great Lakes Region, field guide books and binoculars for Ringgold

Top and right two photos by Ty Smedes



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County Conservation Board, and much more.

Although independent, Iowa Audubon today continues working in partnership with National Audubon through the Audubon Minnesota office. Iowa Audubon also issues policy statements regarding the environment to Congress, the Iowa General Assembly, and to local and state media. It is a member of the REAP Alliance, Iowa Environmental Council, Bird Conservation Alliance (of the American Bird Conservancy), and also assists in environmental reviews of transmission line construction, oil pipeline routes and more.

Iowa Audubon is proud to be a sister organization of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, and because of closely related interests hopes to work as closely with IOU as possible.

### A birding tour of Cuba

In April, 2013, Denny and Cecille Thompson spent two weeks on a bird survey in Cuba. The trip was put

together by IOU member Sharon Stilwell through the Caribbean Conservation Trust. The CCT is based out of Connecticut and is the only American group licensed to lead ornithological study trips to Cuba. There were 14 participants plus two ornithologists (Alvaro Jaramillo and Luis Diaz) and a tour "attaché". There are 28 bird species found only on Cuba and the group managed to see 26 of them. Denny shared photographs of the unique wildlife as well as the many cultural highlights of the island. And yes, there were pictures of old cars. Cuba has immense potential as an ecotourism destination, so it will be fascinating to see how the recent thaw in US/Cuba relations plays out.

### An overview of the new and improved IA-Bird website

Ann Johnson provided a useful and informative overview of the new website. She spent a lot of time on how to find information about where each species can be found in the state and what time of year they occur. Her presentation

## 2015 Fall species tally (Ft. Madison)

|                        |                        |                               |                              |                         |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Canada Goose           | Least Sandpiper        | Yellow-bellied Flycatcher     | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher        | Hooded Warbler          |
| Wood Duck              | Pectoral Sandpiper     | Acadian Flycatcher            | Eastern Bluebird             | Wilson's Warbler        |
| American Wigeon        | Stilt Sandpiper        | Least Flycatcher              | Swainson's Thrush            | Canada Warbler          |
| Mallard                | Short-billed Dowitcher | Eastern Phoebe                | Wood Thrush                  | Summer Tanager          |
| Blue-winged Teal       | Ring-billed Gull       | Great Crested Flycatcher      | American Robin               | Scarlet Tanager         |
| Northern Shoveler      | Herring gull           | Eastern Kingbird              | Gray Catbird                 | Eastern Towhee          |
| Green-winged Teal      | Caspian Tern           | White-eyed Vireo              | Brown Thrasher               | Chipping Sparrow        |
| Ring-necked Pheasant   | Forster's Tern         | Bell's Vireo                  | European Starling            | Field Sparrow           |
| American White Pelican | Rock Pigeon            | Yellow-throated Vireo         | Cedar Waxwing                | Lark Sparrow            |
| Double-crested         | Eurasian Collared-Dove | Warbling Vireo                | Blue-winged Warbler          | Song Sparrow            |
| Cormorant              | Mourning Dove          | Philadelphia Vireo            | Golden-winged Warbler        | Northern Cardinal       |
| Great Blue Heron       | Black-billed Cuckoo    | Red-eyed Vireo                | Tennessee Warbler            | Rose-breasted Grosbeak  |
| Great Egret            | Yellow-billed Cuckoo   | Blue Jay                      | Orange-crowned Warbler       | Blue Grosbeak           |
| Green Heron            | Eastern Screech-Owl    | American Crow                 | Nashville Warbler            | Indigo Bunting          |
| Turkey Vulture         | Barred Owl             | Horned Lark                   | Northern Parula              | Dickcissel              |
| Osprey                 | Common Nighthawk       | Purple Martin                 | Yellow Warbler               | Bobolink                |
| Bald Eagle             | Chimney Swift          | Tree Swallow                  | Chestnut-sided Warbler       | Red-winged Blackbird    |
| Cooper's Hawk          | Ruby-throated          | Northern Rough-winged Swallow | Magnolia Warbler             | Eastern Meadowlark      |
| Red-shouldered Hawk    | Hummingbird            | Bank Swallow                  | Black-throated Green Warbler | Yellow-headed Blackbird |
| Red-tailed Hawk        | Belted Kingfisher      | Cliff Swallow                 | Blackburnian Warbler         | Common Grackle          |
| American Kestrel       | Red-headed Woodpecker  | Barn Swallow                  | Black-and-white Warbler      | Baltimore Oriole        |
| Peregrine Falcon       | Red-beilled Woodpecker | Black-capped Chickadee        | American Redstart            | House Finch             |
| Semipalmated Plover    | Downy Woodpecker       | Tufted Titmouse               | Prothonotary Warbler         | American Goldfinch      |
| Killdeer               | Hairy Woodpecker       | White-breasted Nuthatch       | Ovenbird                     | House Sparrow           |
| Greater Yellowlegs     | Northern Flicker       | Carolina Wren                 | Northern Waterthrush         | Eurasian Tree Sparrow   |
| Lesser Yellowlegs      | Pileated Woodpecker    | House Wren                    | Kentucky Warbler             |                         |
| Solitary Sandpiper     | Olive-sided Flycatcher | Sedge Wren                    | Common Yellowthroat          |                         |
| Spotted Sandpiper      | Eastern Wood-Pewee     |                               |                              | <b>Total 133</b>        |

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sparked a lot of interesting discussion. Several folks gave Ann a well-deserved “thank you” for all the hard work she put into updating the website. It is a critical component of making IOU a great organization.

### **Business meeting**

**Treasurer’s Report:** Mary Beth Hunt gave a brief summary of our financial status. Both balance sheet and profit/loss comparison documents were offered. The body was reminded that year by year comparisons should be made with caution, as our various bills come due and are paid at irregular intervals from year to year. Net income has been healthy, and recent meeting financial reports have finished in the black. At this point it looks as if the organization could finish the year under budget. Members can always access financial reports through the I.O.U. website.

**Membership Coordinator’s Report:** Membership Coordinator Cecille Thompson reported that the current membership number is 398. The organization has received 36 new members since the beginning of the year. Some of these are former members whose membership had lapsed.

**Publications Committee:** Ann Johnson reported that the year’s first issue of Iowa Bird Life has been published and the second will be coming soon. John Bissell reminded the body that he is always looking for articles for the I.O.U. Newsletter.

**Records Committee:** Chair Paul Hertzel spoke on behalf of the Records Committee. He informed the group of the membership of the committee. They reviewed two records for the winter quarter, ten for spring, and an additional two are pending. The entire process is now electronic. The committee will hold a face-to-face meeting on October 25 in Ames.

**Membership Committee:** Paul Skrade offered a report on behalf of the Membership Committee. New updated checklists are available and there are new items being offered for sale. The recently published I.O.U. Yellow Book can be purchased online through the merchandise page on iowabirds.org. New members get a free copy of the Yellow Book, and an I.O.U. decal. The group is considering updating the “fledgling member” fee by extending it to students of all ages. The committee wants

to offer benefits to members. These currently include RBA notification through Twitter exclusively for I.O.U. members. This has already attracted several new members. Paul Roisen has been contacting lapsed members to learn why they left the group.

**Projects Committee:** Tyler Harms briefly spoke about the goal of branding projects with the I.O.U. logo to promote awareness of the organization and its contributions to bird conservation. There are plans to provide small signs at project locations where appropriate and logo stickers on some physical objects such as binoculars purchased through grant money through the Projects committee. The costs of this are still being investigated.

**Library/Historical Committee:** Candace Havelly spoke on behalf of chair Hank Zalatel. Some archival documents will soon be received from Carl Bendorf which date from his years as I.O.U. president. These materials will join the special collections at the Iowa State University library. These archives can be visited by anyone during normal library hours.

**Personal Privilege:** Carl Bendorf thanked the organization for its support of Iowa Young Birders. Carl is moving to Colorado, but Iowa Young Birders will carry on their activities under the leadership of Tyler Harms.

**Events Committee:** This ad hoc committee was created by past president Paul Roisen for the purpose of organizing field trips and educational events outside of the I.O.U. semiannual meetings. President Moore announced that committee members Eric Ollie and Tyler Harms are discussing plans for these sorts of events. Eric addressed the body briefly. It is hoped that such events can become a recruiting tool and a value-added activity to benefit I.O.U. members.

**I.O.U. Survey:** Paul Skrade spoke about a survey prepared by a committee of I.O.U. members which grew out of a general dissatisfaction about the organization’s ability to retain members. This survey has been completed and is ready to be disseminated to both members and non-members through I.O.U. website, the Iowa birding Facebook group, the RBA Twitter group and perhaps additional avenues. Fashioned after a survey by the American Birding Association, the primary objective of this instrument is to discover why a person becomes a member,

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remains a member, refuses membership, and/or lets membership lapse. The survey asks of responders “How can the I.O.U. serve your birding-related needs?” The survey will be implemented soon. Paul thanked various members who provided feedback on a draft of the survey.

### **Evening session**

Ty Smedes had graciously provided a copy of his books (Capturing Iowa’s Seasons and The Return of Iowa’s Bald Eagles) as a raffle prize for one of the first fifty registrants for the meeting. The lucky winner was Barb Fisher-Krueger, and boy, was she excited. The vice-president got a hug, and she had her picture taken with Ty.

Ty’s evening presentation was titled “A Voyage to the Bottom of the World”. In December of 2014, he spent almost a month exploring the southern reaches of the globe on the Ortelius cruise ship. The first stop was the Falkland Islands, the site of the largest Black-browed Albatross colony in the world, numbering 220,000 breeding pairs. In addition, Rockhopper Penguin pairs were breeding in various places among the albatross. Next stop was South Georgia Island, home to some of the greatest wildlife densities found anywhere on earth.

This island, just 100 miles long and with 100 million birds, is the most wildlife-rich island on the planet! Ty’s photos, videos and audio did a fabulous job of showing the grandeur and chaos of the huge Fur Seal, Elephant Seal and King Penguin colonies, the latter containing 250,000 birds. Along the Antarctic Peninsula, Ty captured the dazzling blue icebergs in shapes that defy the imagination. It was just a stunning presentation of sight and sound. A lot of folks are now trying to figure out how they can wrangle a visit to those magical places.

Many thanks to the speakers and field trip leaders. Also thanks to Doug Harr and Karen Disbrow for manning the IOU sales booth. It was another fun and relaxing meeting. Several attendees mentioned how much they enjoyed spending the weekend with their fellow birders. I hope you can join us in Ames next May 13-15 for our spring meeting. Our keynote speaker will be Mary Gustafson. Mary works for the American Bird Conservancy as the Rio Grande Joint Venture Coordinator—a partnership of organizations working collectively on bird conservation issues in south and west Texas and northeastern Mexico. Mark your calendars, and we’ll see you in Ames next spring!

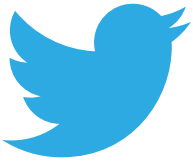
## **The IOU Wants to Hear From You**

*By Tyler Harms*

The Iowa Ornithologists’ Union needs your help! We’re launching an effort to determine how we can better serve people who have an interest in Iowa’s birds. Below is a link to a 15-minute survey for both IOU members and non-members that gathers information about you and what you would like from the IOU. This survey will not only help us understand our members and non-members better, but will allow us to better help YOU learn more about Iowa’s birds and how you can enjoy them. The survey is completely anonymous. However, if you’d like to enter for a chance to win one of two copies of the Sibley Guide to Birds (2nd Edition), please include your contact information.

We ask that you complete the survey by November 27. Scan the QR code or go to <http://www.tiny.cc/IOUSurvey> to complete the survey. If you would like to request a paper copy of the survey or have any questions, please call Paul Skrade (563-425-5222) or Tyler Harms (515-320-4975). Help us help you by taking the survey today!





## **@iowarba: The IOU's New Rare Bird Alert**

*By Gerald White & Paul Skrade*

Finding a rare bird can be exciting and fun. A big part of that enjoyment is sharing the find with others. Rare birds are often not around for very long and if you are in a remote area you may be limited in how you can spread the word. This is no longer a problem for IOU members. If you can send a single SMS (text) message from your cell phone, everyone registered for @iowarba will be notified of your sighting. Since the launch of @iowarba sightings of several notable accidental Iowa species have been shared including Long-tailed Jaeger, Common Raven, Pine Grosbeak, and Harlequin Duck.

“I would like to share my experience with the Pine Grosbeak. It was reported on the iabird email listserv that Doug Harr had found the bird Saturday during the Ames CBC and I was on site to look for it early Monday. After searching that morning with several others the bird was relocated but not until after one of the searchers felt he needed to leave. I sent a text to @iowarba and the person who left early was able to turn around and see the bird.”  
Gerald White

“Without @iowarba I know I wouldn't have been able to see the Long-tailed Jaegers! I had spent the morning birding Cone Marsh in Louisa County and was filling up at a nearby gas station before making the drive back to Illinois. Suddenly the @iowarba text from Aaron Brees buzzed through: ‘juv. jaeger x2 whtbrst pt, redrock,prob longtailed’. Instead of heading home, two hours later I was scoping over Lake Red Rock with several Iowa birding friends, enjoying good looks at the Jaegers. Thanks Aaron for sending the inaugural RBA!” Paul Skrade

@iowarba is not designed to replace the iabird listserv but to supplement it. It can provide you a personal notice with a simple text to your phone and another way for you to quickly get the word out when you are away from a computer. The listserv is one method of communicating. Others choose to share their sightings on Facebook. It wasn't all that long ago that the main way of sharing sightings was using a phone tree. We hope that @iowarba can be an effective way of getting the word out quickly and easily, but for that to happen it will need a larger number of users registered. Signing up for the service is easy and only takes a few steps. You will need to set up a Twitter account and then elect to “follow” @iowarba. If you choose, those will be the only tweets you see. After you enable mobile notifications you will receive the tweets as text messages and you can also send alerts to the subscribers by texting.

To send a text rare bird alert enter 40404 in the “To:” box. Use the exact wording D iowarba at the start of your text message. That goes through as a direct message to @iowarba which is then automatically tweeted to all followers. There are options available that determine how you see tweets and it is simple to turn off the notifications. Complete instructions are found on the IOU web page: <http://www.iowabirds.org/Connections/Twitter.aspx> (From [www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org) in the menu along the top of the page click on “Connect With Others”, “IOU on Twitter”.)

Exploring the ways that new technology can be integrated into birding! The IOU appreciates your support and participation.

**Iowa Ornithologists' Union**  
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**Iowa Ornithologists' Union**

# **IOU News**

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