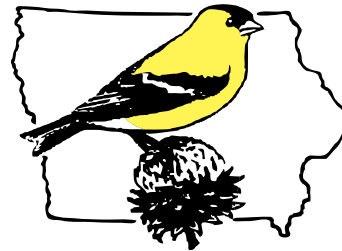


# IOU News

Summer 2015  Volume 31 - Number 2



## 2015 IOU Spring Meeting



*By Dennis Thompson with photos by Don Poggensee*

The Spring IOU meeting was held in Algona on May 21-23. 83 attendees made the trip to our northern border. Six first-time attendees were part of the group. The Kossuth County Conservation Board allowed us use of their new headquarters, Water's Edge Nature Center, as the meeting site. Its location on the shore of the lake at Smith Lake Park provided the opportunity to bird right out of the meeting room! It's a very nice facility and fit our needs perfectly. The fact that KCCB let us use it for free was very generous of them. Nate and his crew from the Titonka Food Center were always on time with the meals and the food was delicious.

The meeting kicked off Friday with check-in and an opportunity to socialize. An added bonus was the showing of Joel Greenberg's documentary: "From Billions To None:

The Passenger Pigeon's Flight To Extinction". The silent auction table also had a lot for folks to sort through. Field trip sign-up sheets were available for Union Slough, NW Kossuth County, A.A. Call S.P. and Eagle Lake canoe trip. Only two folks signed up for the canoe trip, so we decided to forego that option.

After an early breakfast Saturday morning, it was time to go birding. Pleasant temperatures, slight overcast and little wind made for great conditions and all three groups had a lot of success.

### **NW Kossuth County**

I'm sure most of you read Paul Hertzell's summary of the outing to NW Kossuth County (primarily Blazing Star

## IOU News

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

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- (4) Winter: Published late November.

### IOU Journal:

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*This newsletter was mailed to 51 members.*



WPA, Eagle Lake, State Line Marsh, Burt Lake, and Iowa Lake). The group had an amazing 121 species in five hours of birding! That has to be some kind of species per hour record for Iowa. Highlights were many and included: Snow Goose, Lesser Scaup, American Wigeon, Gray Partridge, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Virginia Rail, Common Tern, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Western Kingbird, Canada Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow and Pine Siskin.

### Union Slough NWR

Normally closed to the public this time of year, a lot of people took advantage of the opportunity to follow the "auto tour" route through the refuge. High water levels limited the available shorebird habitat, but it was still a good outing, topped off by a Neotropic Cormorant. Other highlights included: 13 species of waterfowl, American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Virginia Rail, Sandhill Crane and Great-tailed Grackle.

### A.A. Call State Park

This was also a productive outing that focused on woodland habitat. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers actively attending a nest hole near a trail gave everyone great looks. A possible Cordillerian Flycatcher was seen and heard by a few experienced birders and has been documented for the IOU Records Committee. An Acadian Flycatcher was a nice find, and a Philadelphia Vireo was very cooperative. Warbler highlights included Magnolia, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Black-and-white, Mourning, and Canada. A Scarlet Tanager perched low and in the open gave everyone great looks.



### Afternoon sessions

Larry Dau led off the afternoon session with a program on bird photography that highlighted the various techniques and equipment that he uses. Although not a professional, Larry's photos have appeared in various publications and are often showcased in Iowa Bird Life. After retiring from Iowa State University in 2010, he has been able to devote more time to his hobby and his wooded acreage near Ledges S.P. provides ample subject matter. His outstanding photographs were enjoyed by all.

Kevin Murphy from Iowa State University gave an update on the Multiple Species Inventory and Management project. This is a joint initiative between ISU and the Iowa DNR for monitoring species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) and is part of the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan. 296 species of mammals, birds, herps, fish, butterflies, odenates, and mussels were chosen as SGCN candidates. Randomly selected sites (nearly all

on public ground) throughout the state were selected for inventory. While SGCN species are the focus, all species found in these sites are being documented. The surveys were started in 2010 and are ongoing. Kevin shared some of their findings with some interesting results. They are good at surveying birds and butterflies, but herps are a real challenge. It was a very interesting overview of this project.

Pat Schlarbaum gave us an update on the Iowa Peregrine Falcon Restoration project. IOU funded the purchase last year of a falcon that is being used by the DNR for presentations. Pat gave us a history of Iowa's effort to reintroduce this species, which began in Cedar

Rapids in 1989. Birds were released in Des Moines in 1991, and nesting was attempted there in 1992. Successful nesting in Cedar Rapids and Des Moines in 1993 opened up the ongoing expansion of this species as a nester in Iowa. A highlight has been the return of Peregrine Falcons to their historic nesting sites in the bluffs of NE Iowa. This is a real success story due to the hard work of many folks (including Pat). Another well-received program.

Tyler Harms finished with an update on the Iowa Young Birders. They've led 40 field trips with 638 participants (328 young birders and 210 parents/grandparents). That averages out to 17 participants per trip. The average age of the young birders is 10.5, much younger than originally anticipated. There have been 99 volunteer leaders, many of them IOU members. Tyler thanked the IOU for its support of IYB through time and money since its inception.

The general business included reports from the various committees. For the first time in several years, we had two candidates for President which required a vote by secret ballot. Francis Moore was elected IOU President by a very slim margin over Rick Hollis. Other open offices only had a single candidate and the following were approved by the membership:

- Dennis Thompson will serve a second term as Vice-President

- Gerald White was elected for his second term to the board of directors.
- Linda Rudolph was elected to her first term on the board, replacing Keith Dyche who has served us the last four years.

After the banquet, Joel Greenberg from Chicago topped off the day with his keynote address. Joel is a well-known expert on the Passenger Pigeon and his talk compared its fate with that of two other species – Whooping Crane and Kirtland's Warbler. Both were near extinction at one time but are recovering, but only with intensive human intervention. Joel outlined the management techniques and their successes and failures. The Kirtland's Warbler seems to be faring well as long as the Jack Pine forests are managed and Brown-headed Cowbirds are controlled. It has been harder to increase Whooping Crane numbers and Joel still has concerns about its future. It was an interesting and compelling presentation.

### Sunday field trips

After Saturday's ideal conditions, Sunday was almost a complete washout. The same field trips were held, but only the NW Kossuth trip had a couple of hours where the rain and wind didn't spoil the outing. After notching 165 species on Saturday, we could only add 6 more on Sunday for an overall total of 171. Who knows where we would have

## Spring Meeting 2015 Bird List - 171 species

Snow Goose	Great Blue Heron	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Red-beillied Woodpecker	Horned Lark
Canada Goose	Great Egret	White-rumped Sandpiper	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Tree Swallow
Trumpeter Swan	Green Heron	Baird's Sandpiper	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Wood Duck	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Pectoral Sandpiper	Hairy Woodpecker	Bank Swallow
Gadwall	Turkey Vulture	Dunlin	Northern Flicker	Cliff Swallow
American Wigeon	Osprey	Stilt Sandpiper	Pileatted Woodpecker	Barn Swallow
Mallard	Bald Eagle	Wilson's Snipe	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Black-capped Chickadee
Blue-winged Teal	Northern Harrier	American Woodcock	Eastern Wood-Pewee	White-breasted Nuthatch
Northern Shoveler	Cooper's Hawk	Wilson's Phalarope	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	House Wren
Canvasback	Broad-winged Hawk	Franklin's Gull	Acadian Flycatcher	Sedge Wren
Redhead	Red-tailed Hawk	Ring-billed Gull	Alder Flycatcher	Marsh Wren
Ring-necked Duck	American Kestrel	Common Tern	Willow Flycatcher	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Lesser Scaup	Virginia Rail	Forster's Tern	Least Flycatcher	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Hooded Merganser	Sora	Black Tern	Cordilleran Flycatcher	Eastern Bluebird
Ruddy Duck	American Coot	Rock Pigeon	Eastern Phoebe	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Gray Partridge	Sandhill Crane	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Great Crested Flycatcher	Swainson's Thrush
Ring-necked Pheasant	Black-bellied Plover	Mourning Dove	Western Kingbird	Wood Thrush
Wild Turkey	American Golden-Plover	Black-billed Cuckoo	Eastern Kingbird	American Robin
Common Loon	Killdeer	Great Horned Owl	Yellow-throated Vireo	Gray Catbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Greater Yellowlegs	Barred Owl	Blue-headed Vireo	Brown Thrasher
American White Pelican	Solitary Sandpiper	Common Nighthawk	Warbling Vireo	European Starling
Neotropic Cormorant	Spotted Sandpiper	Chimney Swift	Philadelphia Vireo	Cedar Waxwing
Double-crested Cormorant	Upland Sandpiper	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Red-eyed Vireo	Tennessee Warbler
American Bittern	Marbled Godwit	Belted Kingfisher	Blue Jay	Nashville Warbler
Least Bittern	Ruddy Turnstone	Red-headed Woodpecker	American Crow	

ended if the weather had been a bit more cooperative?

Many thanks to Paul Hertzell, Keith Dyche, Matt Kenne, Doug Harr and Mark Proeschoeldt for doing a great job as field trip leaders.

Thanks again to Larry, Kevin, Pat and Tyler for their entertaining and informative presentations. Another big “Thank you” to Joel for traveling from Chicago to share his story about the Passenger Pigeon, Kirtland’s Warbler and Whooping Crane. He mentioned several times how much he was enjoying the meeting. Special thanks goes to Tyler Harms for doing a lot of behind the scenes work in procuring the site, working with the caterer and organizing the field trips.

As always, a lot of work was put in by the following folks: John McCecil for setting up the Silent Auction; Doug Harr for handling the Iowa Audubon booth; and to Karen Disbrow and Rick Hollis for supporting the IOU booth. Sales from all three efforts were very successful. Thanks to the membership for their financial support.

Finally, thanks to all the attendees for making this such a fun meeting. The fall meeting will be headquartered at the Comfort Inn in Ft. Madison on August 28-30. Well-known Iowa-based photographer Ty Smedes will be our keynote speaker, highlighting his recent trip to Antarctica. The fall meeting will be here before you know it, so mark it on your calendars! It’s another great Iowa birding area, so I hope to see you all there.

## Obituaries

### Russell Ralph Widner

*May 6, 1935—January 31, 2015*

Russ Widner, a member and financial supporter of the Iowa Ornithologists’ Union since 1977, passed away peacefully in Spokane, Washington. Russ lived in Marshalltown where Beth and Mark Proeschoeldt first introduced him to “birding”. Upon retirement he moved to Arizona where he continued his passion for birds. His wife Joyce, son Greg Widner, daughter Cyndy Lane, and two children survive him.

### Sharon Engstrom Scheib

*July 19, 1944—March 15, 2015*

Sharon passed away peacefully at her home in Iowa City after a three-year battle with cancer. Sharon was an avid birder and member of the Iowa City Bird Club and the Iowa Ornithologists’ Union. Sharon was deeply committed to expansion and success of the Trippie College of Business. The Sharon Scheib Professional Writing Initiative (The University of Iowa Foundation) was established in her honor to help others develop and use the power of the written word to enhance their professional careers. Her husband James, sons Christopher (Jennifer) Scheib and Eric (Sara) Scheib along with grandsons, Matthew and Jacob, survive her.

Yellow Warbler	Song Sparrow
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Lincoln’s Sparrow
Magnolia Warbler	Swamp Sparrow
Blackburnian Warbler	Harris’s Sparrow
Bay-breasted Warbler	Northern Cardinal
Blackpoll Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Black-and-white Warbler	Indigo Bunting
American Redstart	Dickcissel
Ovenbird	Bobolink
Northern Waterthrush	Red-winged Blackbird
Mourning Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Common Yellowthroat	Western Meadowlark
Wilson’s Warbler	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Canada Warbler	Common Grackle
Scarlet Tanager	Great-tailed Grackle
Eastern Towhee	Brown-headed Cowbird
Chipping Sparrow	Orchard Oriole
Clay-colored Sparrow	Baltimore Oriole
Field Sparrow	House Finch
Vesper Sparrow	Pine Siskin
Lark Sparrow	American Goldfinch
Savannah Sparrow	House Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow	
Henslow’s Sparrow	
Le Conte’s Sparrow	

**Total 171**



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# IOU Fall Meeting

## Meet Us in Ft Madison

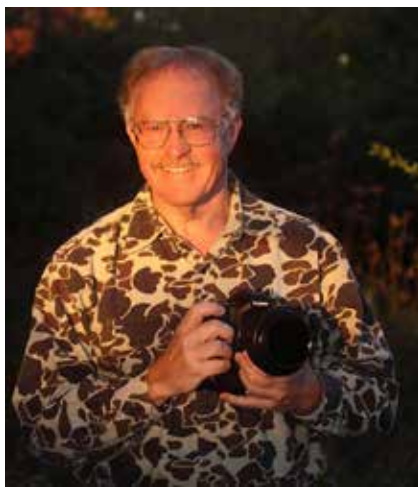
### Register By 8/24/2015

By Dennis Thompson

IOU's fall meeting will be held in Ft. Madison, IA, 8/28 - 8/30. We'll be headquartered at the Comfort Inn, located at the intersection of highways 2 and 61. Situated along the Mississippi River and with access to the rich woodlands of Shimek State Forest, this area is one of the top spots for nature lovers in Iowa. Although no longer vocal, a few of the prized SE Iowa passerines (White-eyed Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, along with Blue-winged, Yellow-throated, Pine, Cerulean, Worm-eating, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers) should still be around. Red-shouldered Hawks are fairly common residents. Grasslands around Lake Seguma should still hold open country birds, including Henslow's Sparrow. While SE Iowa is not known as a shorebird hotspot, favorable water levels along the Mississippi River have attracted good numbers over the years. Passerine migration will be in full swing and late August is one of the best times of the year for wandering vagrants. Bob Cecil is busy putting together a list of prime field trip options. Our keynote speaker will be Ty Smedes, who will take us on a visit to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island and Antarctica. Ty puts together great programs and he is especially excited about this one.

#### **Keynote Speaker - Ty Smedes** *Voyage To The Bottom Of The World*

In December of 2014, Ty Smedes 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, the diamond in the Southern Ocean's crown of Sub-Antarctic islands, a spectacular



glaciated landscape home to some of the greatest wildlife densities found anywhere on earth. Ty will take us ashore to visit the huge Fur Seal Colonies and to witness the titanic struggle between bull Elephant Seals, each battling to become beach-master. We will visit King Penguin colonies numbering 250,000 or more. We'll see and hear their struggles to survive in a challenging climate, where some of the roughest seas in the world meet. This island, just 100 miles long and with 100 million birds, is the most wildlife-rich island on the planet! Along the Antarctic Peninsula, Ty will show us the dazzling blue icebergs in shapes that defy the imagination. These host several penguin species and the leopard seals that hunt them - framed by a backdrop of endless glaciers and stunning mountain-scapes. Join Ty for this educational and visually stunning presentation about this incredibly beautiful and wildlife-rich part of the world.

Ty Smedes is an Urbandale resident and a long-time IOU member. Ty's photos have been published by many major magazines and book publishers. He specializes in landscapes, wildlife, and prairie wildflower images. As a feature writer for the Iowa DNR's Iowa Outdoors Magazine, his goal is to photograph and write about many of the less known birds, animals, and places. Ty has taught nature photography classes and is an experienced photo-tour leader, having led nature photography tours to Yellowstone and Teton parks, as well as the Eastern Sierras, during the fall season. He was also co-leader of a nature photography tour to Brasil in 1996 and has led nature photography tours to East Africa in 2005, 2008, and 2010, as well as Botswana in 2006, 2013, and 2014. Information regarding Ty's two books "Capturing Iowa's Seasons" and "The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles – 2nd Edition" can be found on his website at [www.smedesphoto.com](http://www.smedesphoto.com). His third book, to be titled "Iowa's Wild Beauty", is nearing publication.

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## Schedule

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### Friday, August 28, 2015

*Comfort Inn*

- 5:00 pm - 8:30 pm** Registration/Social Time/Field Trip sign-up
- 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm** Board Meeting

### Saturday, August 29, 2015

*Comfort Inn*

- 6:00 am - 7:00 am** Breakfast - scrambled eggs, bacon, pancakes, toast, juice, coffee (free for those staying at the Comfort Inn)
- 7:00 am - 12:30 pm** Field Trips - don't forget your sack lunch (sandwich, chips, cookie & drink)
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm** Results of window-killed bird study in Quad Cities - Kelly McKay
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm** Formal surveys for birds in Iowa - how birders can contribute  
Steve Dinsmore - Iowa State
- 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm** A birding tour of Cuba  
Denny Thompson
- 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm** IOU Membership Meeting  
Francis Moore
- 6:15 pm - 7:00 pm** Banquet - Mediterranean Herb Crusted Chicken or Salisbury Steak, Parsley Baby Red Potatoes, Tossed Salad or Coleslaw, Green Beans w/ Bacon & Onion, Chocolate Cake
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm** Voyage to the Bottom of the World  
Ty Smedes

### Sunday, August 30, 2015

*Comfort Inn*

- 6:00 am - 7:00 am** Breakfast - scrambled eggs, bacon, pancakes, toast, juice, coffee (free for those staying at the Comfort Inn)
- 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm** Compilation

## Directions

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The Comfort Inn is located at 6169 Reve Ct. in Ft. Madison. This is at exit 18 of Highway 218 (the intersection of highways 2 and 218).

## Lodging Options

### Motels

#### Comfort Inn

6169 Reve Ct.  
319-372-6800  
\$79 free hot breakfast included  
8/21/2015

#### Super 8

5107 Avenue O  
319-372-8500

#### Boulders Inn

49001 Avenue O  
319-246-1401

#### Knights Inn

3440 Avenue L  
319-372-8829

### Camping

#### Chatfield Park

3592 Iowa Rd. Keokuk  
319-759-9477

#### Pollmiller Park

2448 county road J42 West Point  
319-759-9477

#### Wilson Lake

2195 22th St. Donnellson  
319-759-9477

## Field Trips

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- Cascade Ravine/Sullivan Slough/Blackhawk Bottoms - adjacent to Mississippi River. Water birds, hawks, owls, passerines
- Geode S.P. / Wilson County Park
- Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. / Lake Seguma - water birds, hawks, sparrows, icterids and other passerines
- Mississippi River south of Ft. Madison - Waterfowl, pelicans, cormorants, shorebirds
- Shimek S.F. - Croton unit - hawks and passerines
- Shimek S.F. - Farmington and Donnellson units - hawks and passerines

## Registration Information

### Online registration:

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

Make checks payable to Iowa Ornithologists' Union  
Mail to: **Dennis Thompson**  
**7503 Wildflower Ct.**  
**Johnston, IA 50131**

### Registering by mail:

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

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

(please include first and last names of all persons registering)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a new attendee

			No. of People		Total Cost
Registration Fee	\$20.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Breakfast	\$9.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
<small>(free for those staying at the Comfort Inn)</small>					
Sat. Lunch	\$12.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Banquet	\$18.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sun. Breakfast	\$9.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
<small>(free for those staying at the Comfort Inn)</small>					
Meatless option? check here _____			Total \$ _____		

# The Co-Evolution of Birding and Photography

By Tyler M. Harms

In 1816, French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce successfully transferred a still image from a small camera to a piece of paper coated with silver chloride, thus sparking the development of a tool, a hobby, and a way to preserve memories for years to come – photography. Not long after in 1885, American innovator George Eastman shaped photography as we know it today with the development of film, and later founded the Eastman Kodak Company. In 1888, Kodak produced the first film camera (rightfully named the “Kodak”) which was a box approximately 12 inches long and 4 inches wide. After years of evolution, here we are today, taking high-resolution digital images through spotting scopes with our smartphones.

Just as photography has evolved, so too has the role of photography in birding, albeit over a much shorter time scale. Here I present a brief history of photography in birding as well as its many applications, and pose questions regarding whether this increasingly popular hobby has evolved to be a help or hindrance in birding.

Photography and birding are two hobbies that seem to fit well together. See a group of a dozen birders hiking across a field and I would wager a bet that at least half of those birders has a device capable of taking photographs, whether it's a digital SLR (single-lens reflex) with a 500mm zoom lens or an iPhone. When I venture out for a day of birding, I rarely leave the house without my camera. In fact, photography is so popular among birders that a quick Google search of “photography and birding” produces a number of sites that offer tips and advice on bird photography, discuss optimal photography equipment for birding, or advertise birding and photography tours. Even the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has multiple pages about bird photography on their famed website, “All About Birds”. But what is it about photography that gets birders interested in being a photographer? Or what is it about birds that gets photographers interested in being a birder?

To me, it's simple. There's a reason I love to watch birds, which I'm sure is the same for most birders. Birds





are pretty good looking! Nothing beats the brilliant array of colors offered by migrant warblers in the spring, the elegance of a Green Heron standing on a log at the edge of a pond, or the sheer beauty of a Cedar Waxwing posing, head high in a crabapple tree. The diversity of shapes, sizes, and colors of our avian friends make them superb photographic subjects and, ultimately, photographs that are wonderful pieces of art. Even my wife, who is not a birder, allows four bird photographs or prints to hang in our living room and absolutely enjoys them! But I'm a birder, so I might be a bit biased when it comes to the greatness of birds. But, take my good friend and "uncle-in-law" Dan, who began as an amazing photographer that one day discovered new territory...birds. Dan started photographing the birds at a wetland near his home, and would send me pictures asking for identification assistance. After a dozen or so emails and Facebook messages, Dan entered the world of birding and, to this day, is a birder and a photographer. Whether we choose to look at birds through binoculars or a camera

viewfinder, we recognize the beauty that birds offer.

Many birders recognize names such as Sandy Komito or Neil Hayward, both currently tied for the American Birding Association (ABA) big year record of 748 species (pending the ABA's acceptance of the Rufous-necked Wood-rail, Neil may reign supreme). In 2013, Isaac Sanchez and David Pavlik both decided to take the big year challenge to the next level by embarking on an ABA photographic big year, and the idea has become a recent trend in the birding world. Since then, others have done state photographic big years or photographic big days. As many photographers know, getting an identifiable photo of a bird is no easy task. A photographic big year offers difficulties above a regular big year. Not only does one encounter the logistical difficulties of travel and chasing birds, but all photographers out there know how difficult it is to get an identifiable photograph of a bird let alone one of artistic quality. A Blackpoll Warbler, for example, will rarely sit still long enough for one to catch it in the viewfinder. And even if one did sit still, it would

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likely be too high in the tree. This is not quite as easy as getting an identifiable look through binoculars, hence why most photographic big years result in fewer species (David Pavlik photographed 585 species during his photographic big year in 2013). However, this is yet one more example of how birding and photography go hand in hand.



Photography can also be an excellent tool for birders.

If you can't identify a bird in the field, why not snap a photo and identify it when you get home? I've done this countless times. Find a rare bird? You'd better snap a photo for proof of your record. But, are we relying too much on photography these days? I've been on field trips with some great birders and I recently led a trip on which one birder carried only a camera, not binoculars. I'll admit, there are some days I bird without binoculars and use only my ears for identifying birds (mostly in spring when birds are singing). However, this birder was snapping photos of every bird we saw. When asked why they didn't carry binoculars, they simply said that they obtain photos of every possible bird they see on an outing and identify them when they get home. Not a bad idea, I thought, particularly if you stumble across a rare bird. But, thinking about it more, I wondered what this would do to one's field identification skills.

Birders are amazing in that they can get a fleeting glimpse of a bird, pick out a handful of distinctive characteristics, process those characteristics, and pull a bird name from a bank of several thousand options in a matter of seconds. Field identification skills are critical for birders, and often times it takes several years for a birder to hone those skills. In the advent of modern photographic technology, perhaps field identification skills aren't so critical any longer? Why spend hours training yourself on identifying fall warblers or gulls when you can simply photograph every bird you see and identify them from your desk chair?

Photos are particularly helpful in identifying and documenting rare birds. There's no better piece of evidence to authenticate a rarity than an identifiable shot of the specimen. It's the next best thing to collecting (or killing) the bird and identifying it in hand. Photos are so important in the documentation process that, in Iowa, 734 accepted records of 1328 total records submitted to the IOU Records Committee since 2000 have included photos. Even more

interesting is the trend in accepted records with photos since 2000; only 10% of accepted records in 2000 included photos jumping to nearly 63% of accepted records in 2005 remaining somewhat steady through 2014. Obviously there's no question about a record when an identifiable photo accompanies it, and the increase of photos accompanying rare bird

documentations have likely improved the accuracy of bird records in Iowa and across the nation. But what about when bird photos were much more difficult to obtain? Verification of rare bird records relied heavily on accurate descriptions of birds from the field. Of course, field notes in rare bird documentations today are certainly not discarded if a photo is included. But, the person documenting the rare bird may feel field notes are less important if a photograph is obtained, which might be incorrectly assumed based on the trend we see in accepted records with photos in Iowa. If a photo is obtained, are field notes really that important?

The answer is YES. Even though it might seem easier to snap an identifiable photo and not have to worry about taking notes on the rare bird sighting or snapping a photo and identifying it later at home, the photo is only one piece of the puzzle. Ann Johnson, former chair of the IOU Records Committee, states that even with photos serving as descriptive field notes, written narrative is often critical in evaluating rare bird documentations. Identifying a bird is not just knowing what the bird looks like, but also knowing when the bird was seen (e.g., spring or summer), where the bird was seen (e.g., habitat type), what the bird was doing (e.g., any distinctive behaviors), or what the bird sounded like, all of which are difficult or impossible to record with a photo.

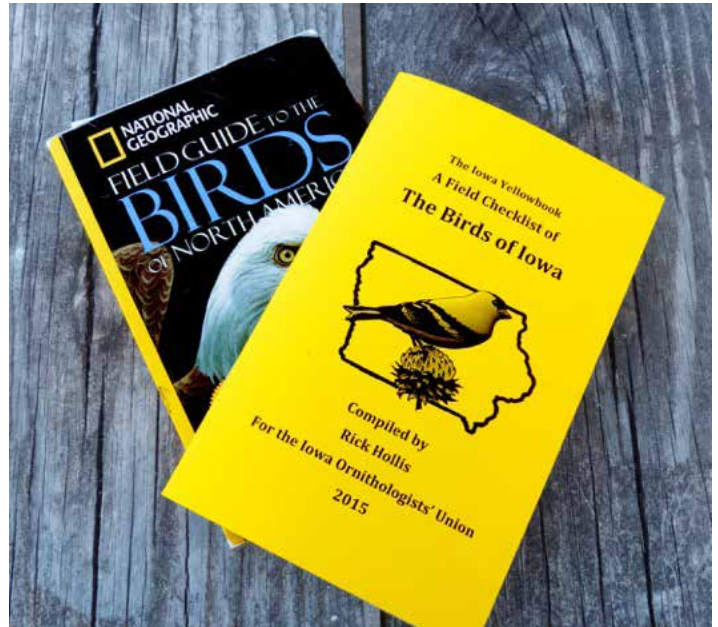
So, what's my point? Photography and birding are "two peas in a pod". Photos assist in documenting rare birds, aid in identifying birds you can't quite get in the field, add a little fun to keeping lists (e.g., photographic lists and big years), and allow us to preserve an image of that one awesome life bird that we can share and enjoy for years to come. But, don't let photography turn you into a lazy birder. Always remember the importance of field identification skills and don't forget to take good field notes when documenting a rare bird. I think it will be a while before Google invents binoculars that will identify birds for us. But even when they do, what is the fun in that?

# A New Supplemental Guide for Iowa Birders

## The Iowa Yellowbook A Field Checklist of The Birds of Iowa

Compiled by Rick Hollis  
Article by John Bissell

Longtime IOU member Rick Hollis has come up with a handy guide to supplement any Iowa birders' field guide. "The Iowa Yellowbook, A Field Checklist of the Birds of Iowa" is a booklet that focuses on the timeframes that specific birds can be found in the state. The first 5 pages include the table of contents, a general guide on how to use the booklet, what the IOU is and how to join, and how to report and document birds to the IOU. The next 11 pages focus on the birds that are considered regularly occurring in Iowa along with a bar graph of the months of the year and when a bird is most likely to be seen during the year. For migrants, early and late dates are also shown. (See graph sample below) The graph also indicates if the bird nests in Iowa. The last 5 pages are a graph of Iowa's casual and accidental bird species. This is a more general graph that lists the seasons a rare bird is most likely to be seen. No bars are used since accidental and casual species aren't documented enough on a yearly basis to provide the quantity of data needed to make the bar graph. The inside of the back cover also has a map of Iowa's landforms. Finally, the back cover discusses the IOU Code of Ethics.



Personally, I find just as much enjoyment and intrigue in the arrival and departure times of regular migratory birds as I do in documenting rare birds. The Yellowbook provides more specific arrival and departure information that a field guide does not, and therefore, the Yellowbook makes a great supplement to your field guide. This booklet can help a birder decide if a sighting they feel is unusually early or late needs to be documented to provide a better understanding of the arrival and departure times of Iowa's birds.

Yellowbooks will be on sale at IOU meetings as well as some venues and events where IOU information will be on display. The cost is \$6.00 for 2 booklets. It will also be

on sale through the IOU website using the following link: <http://ioubirds.org/IOU/Merchandise.aspx>. Finally, it should be noted that this booklet will be given for free to new IOU members who attend a meeting. This is a great supplemental guide for birders of all skill levels, and I highly recommend it.

Species	Nest	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brown-headed Cowbird	N												
Orchard Oriole	N												
Baltimore Oriole	N												
House Finch	N												

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