

I.O.U. NEWS

Winter 1988

Newsletter of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Volume 4 Number 4

MAGIC TREES AND THE BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

by Rick Hollis, Iowa City

It is far easier to work on the Breeding Bird Atlas project than I ever thought possible. 1989 will mark the last of the original five year period we have in which to complete the atlas. Breeding Bird Atlas work is not only easy, it is fun.

Initially I begged off, figuring that this project required the skills possessed by only the top ten percent of our birders. The fact that not all of these people are participating has stretched the remaining birders thin. If the project is to be completed, I realized that everyday birders like me were needed. So I joined, although I was still concerned that my "tin ear" would handicap me.

One of the reasons it is so easy, is that by June, the heart of the breeding period, the bulk of migration is over. Most of our breeders are fairly common birds, at least in those blocks which lack deep woods or marshes. These common species are birds which anyone can identify. Almost all shorebirds and warblers are excluded thus eliminating two of the most difficult to identify groups. The more leisurely pace of BBA birding will allow more time to look at the birds.

It has been a lot of fun, and the fun has occurred mostly because of the emphasis on leisurely birding. I do not have to

hurry to make sure I stop at all the places for fear of missing some bird. I can pause and take the time to watch what the birds are doing after I identify them (or even before I identify them).

You get to see nests. Carol Thompson and I, working a block in Cedar County, saw a kingfisher fly past. We realized that the nearby creek was perfect for kingfisher nesting as it had steep banks. Walking up and down the road and finding different sight lines through the meadow to the bank, we were able to find a hole a foot or so down from the top. Taking the time to watch the hole, we were rewarded by the sight of a kingfisher zipping into the hole thereby confirming Belted Kingfisher as breeding in the block.

Another group of wonderful experiences have been the sightings of the birds which came to me as I sat and waited. One morning in Johnson County, I was sitting and craning my neck to keep an eye on some cavities I thought Red-bellied Woodpeckers might be using. I was treated to a visit by a tribe of Tufted Titmice. Four of the curious little birds flew above and around me, chattering to themselves and scolding me. They seemed unsure as to what I was or as to my intentions. After careful examination, one peered at me from within three or four feet of my face and then they left. Shortly afterwards, I looked towards what I thought was a squirrel scratching in the leaves. It was two hen turkeys walking to within fifty feet of where I was seated.

My greatest finds, however, have been magic trees. On a recent trip to Cedar County, I stopped along a dirt road to check under a bridge for nests. As I got out of the car, I noticed a brownish bird in a roadside tree. Dropping my flashlight and mirror on the car seat, I grabbed my binoculars and discovered a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. While watching the cuckoo, a "lyb" flew in. Little yellow birds sometimes give me trouble. This one had dark wings with two white wing bars and a long bill. As I waited, hoping it would become more visible and its name would leap into my mind, I saw a Dickcissel in the tree top. Nearby a Western Meadowlark was singing. Then a Brown Thrasher flew into the tree. Wait! What's that bird in the shadows. A male Orchard Oriole! Ah ha! my lyb is his mate. Next a Song Sparrow hopped through the branches of my magic tree.

Sometime in the next few minutes my field notes show the following birds, still in the tree, Eastern Kingbird, American Robin, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, and European Starling. I was about to leave when I searched out my cuckoo again, only to realize that there were now two cuckoos in the magic tree.

On my short walk back to the car I heard a Savannah Sparrow in a nearby field, saw deer tracks and watched the thrasher fly from the tree to be joined by a second thrasher. Not a bad stop: six species possible-habitat, three species possible-singing males, and three species probable-pair. Those of you out there toying with helping on the BBA might note that I only recorded two species by ear. By the way, there were no nests under the bridge.

Volunteer, and remember if you stumble across something you cannot identify, you probably can get help. BBA birding will sharpen your skills. Besides, don't let me have all the fun.



1988 FALL MEETING

The fall meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was held September 16-18 at Dayton Oaks Camp, near Dayton and hosted by the Upper Des Moines Group of the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club. Approximately 50 members and guests were in attendance.

The lovely wooded setting of the camp provided an idyllic backdrop for the meeting. It enabled many members to find owls and other forest birds close at hand. The lodge was the center of activity, with a large dining/meeting area adjacent to the kitchen, and the more intimate, comfortable "fireside" room, in which most of the meetings were held. In the same building, dormitory style rooms housed most members for the weekend, with others staying in nearby cabins.

A social gathering Friday night kicked off the meeting. Refreshments were served and members were provided with information about field trips to be held Saturday and Sunday. Saturday morning, following breakfast, field trips departed for Brushy Creek Natural Area, Dolliver State Park, and the Carlson Recreation Area. Later that morning, at the conclusion of the trips, a presentation on "Owls: Some Interesting Facts" was given by Carol Thompson.

After lunch, three workshops were presented, from which those attending could choose two. They were: "Iowa Hawk Studies" with Jon Stravers, Dept. of Natural Resources, "Bird Skinning and Mounting" with Jim Dinsmore, and "Brushy Creek Natural Area" with Jan Schamel. The fall business meeting was convened at 3:00.

Outside of the meetings, the most frequented gathering spot for most members during the afternoon seemed to be the table in the corner where a hawk skin quiz had been set up. With field guides banished from the area, and with flight and "jizz" impossible to see, we were reminded only too well how tough identification of hawks, especially accipiters, can be.

After a sumptuous evening banquet, the winners of the hawk quiz were announced: first, Barb Wilson; second, Darwin Koenig; and third, Mark Proescholdt. A drawing was held for fifteen Chickadee Checkoff Bald Eagle posters which were personally autographed by photographer Don Poggensee. The featured speaker was Dr. John Kolesar, a Fort Dodge Optometrist and amateur photographer. His fascinating slides of birds and insects followed the chronology of butterfly metamorphosis, and examined in detail the construction of a Northern Oriole nest.

Sunday morning's field trips were essentially a repeat of Saturday's. On our return to camp, we were treated to a delicious cookout lunch. Pete Petersen led the compilation of the official bird list. A total of 104 species was tallied for the weekend, with 93 seen on Sunday, and an additional 11 seen on Saturday only. Highlights were: Swainson's Hawk, Winter and Carolina Wrens, Connecticut and Wilson's Warblers, and Black Billed Magpie.

Our special thanks go to the Upper Des Moines Group of the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club, specifically to Mina Landes, Tom Tierney, Mary Kuhlman, Gary Donnermeyer, and Steve Estlund, Webster County Naturalist, all of whom did an excellent job of planning and conducting a fine meeting. The official species list for the fall meeting is available from Ann Barker, 25368 250th St., Princeton, Iowa 52768.

ATTENDANCE: ✓

Adel: Janet Eppard
Ames: Jim and Steve Dinsmore
Ankeny: Annjean Hartogh
Auburn: Rita Efta
Booneville: Eloise and Eugene Armstrong
Cedar Rapids: Roberta Oppedahl
Centerville: Ray Cummins
Churdan: George Naylor
Clinton: Jackie Gardner
Colo: Hank Zaletel
Davenport: Mary Lou and Pete Petersen
Des Moines: Anne and Fred Crane, Esther Dungan, Jeanette Frost, Hilda Sickels
Elma: Mary Jo Hartogh
Estherville: Harold White
Fort Dodge: Gary Donnermeyer, Steve Estlund, John and Vernetta Kolesar, Mary Kuhlman, Mina Landes, Genevieve Mason, Jan and Ray Schamel, Tom Tierney
Hastings: Barb Wilson
Humboldt: Dottie Toyne
Ida Grove: Don Poggensee
Indianola: Jim Sinclair
Iowa City: Bud Gode, Carol Thompson
Keokuk: Bob Cecil
Lake Mills: Sibyl Sand
Laurens: Ron Harms
Liscomb: Mark Proescholdt
Lohrville: Margaret Seeck
Marshalltown: Marlys Huff, Jim and Pauline Mairs, Harriet Olsen
Mason City: Jan and Jim Walter
Montezuma: Darwin Koenig
Princeton: Ann Barker
Waterloo: Francis Moore



RESEARCH ON IOWA BIRDS

Most birders in Iowa have probably noticed that in many corn and soybean fields, there are narrow contoured strips of land that are planted with some type of grass rather than a crop.

These strips, known as grassed waterways, have long been advocated as a way to cut down soil erosion as well as providing some wildlife cover in croplands. However, no one has really studied these waterways to see how valuable they are for birds. No one, that is, until Georgia Bryan started such a study in central Iowa. Georgia, a native of Missouri, did her undergraduate work at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point and started graduate work at Iowa State in 1987.

Georgia has been studying birds on 48 waterways the past two summers. She found 36 species of birds in these waterways in 1987 and 3 more in 1988. Although many of these birds were not spending a lot of time on the waterways, 12 species did nest there. The most common nesters were Red-winged Blackbird and Dickcissel but Grasshopper Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Ring-necked Pheasant, and Vesper Sparrow also nested there fairly often. Many of their nests were lost to predators or mowing while cowbird nest parasitism was also fairly common. Probably some changes in the mowing schedule for these strips could make them much more valuable as habitat for birds. Thus waterways are an important habitat for some birds that live in Iowa's cropland. Georgia plans to finish her thesis in spring 1989 and then hopes to find a job with a conservation organization. Her research has been sponsored by the Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources and the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation.



We Goofed!

We gave the wrong number for the Northwest Iowa Bird Line. The correct number is 712/262-5958



BALD EAGLE DAYS

There will be three DNR sponsored Bald Eagle Days this year. The first will be held at Keokuk, January 20-22, to be followed by the Quad Cities, February 3-5 and the newest at Red Rock Reservoir March 10-11.

At Keokuk, the indoor programs are at the Keosippi Mall on Main Street. Outside, there will be three observation areas with biologists and spotting scopes.

The event at the Quad Cities will be held at The Modern Woodmen of America building in Rock Island. The Modern Woodmen is located on highway 92 by the river. The event and times will be similar to Keokuk.

The event at Red Rock Reservoir will be centered at the visitor center near the dam on highway 14.

1989 WINTER BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

SPONSORED BY THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

AND THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES NONGAME PROGRAM

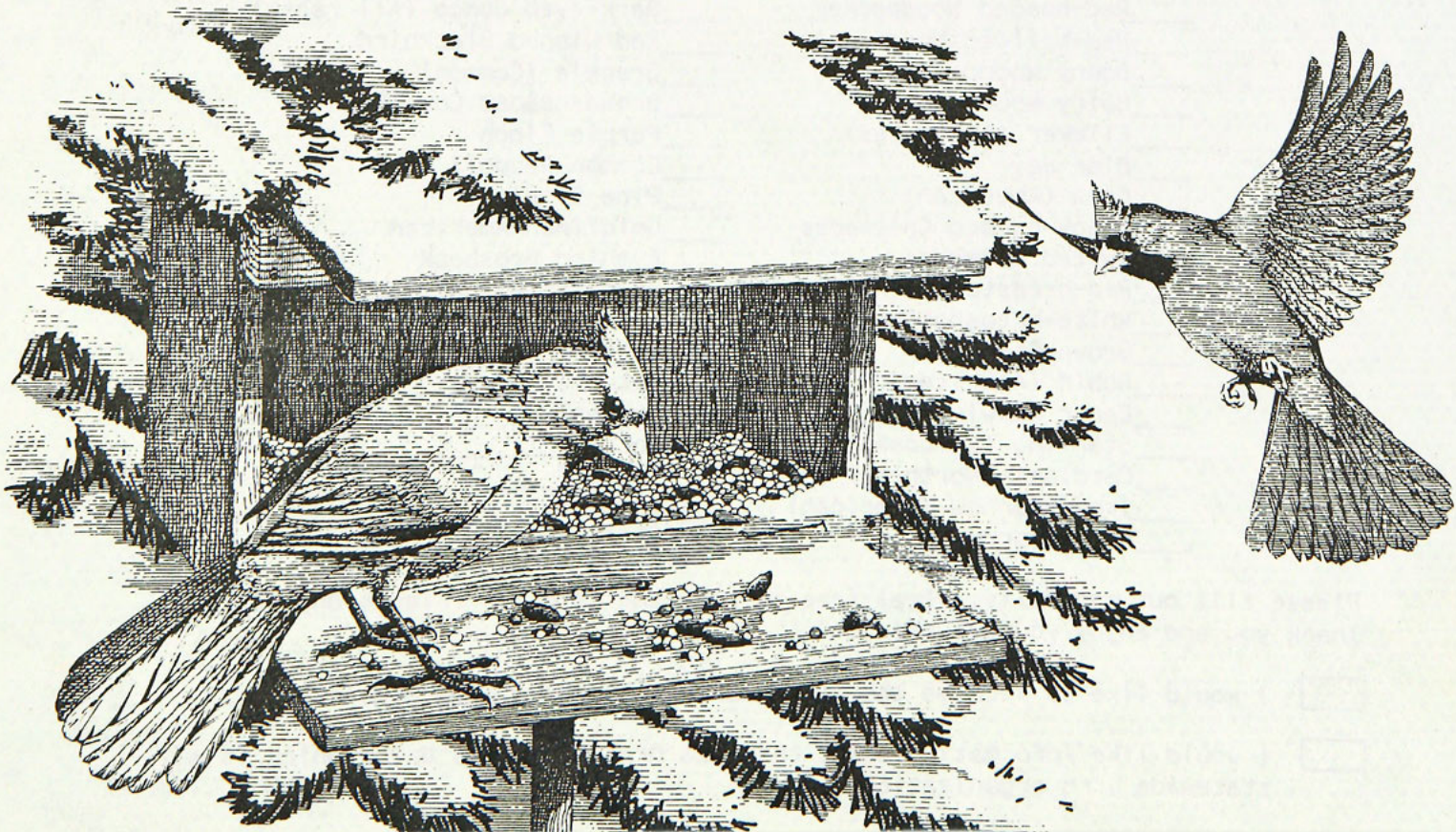
On two consecutive days during January 26-29, 1989, observe your feeder and using this form, describe your feeder and record the birds that visited you. In the space provided, list the highest number of each species that you saw together at any one time. For example, if you saw 10 Juncos at 9:00, 11 at 12:00 and 7 at 4:00, the number you should record is 11. If males and females can be distinguished (cardinals, downy woodpecker etc.) record the combined total. For example, if you saw 3 male cardinals at 11:00 then 1 male and 2 females at 2:00, record 5 cardinals--the highest count for the males and the highest count for the females combined. Count only on the two consecutive days and record only the birds that you see at your feeder, under your feeder or in the trees around your feeder. Do not count birds which just flew past your house and did not use your feeder area. We want information only about birds influenced by your feeders. If you cannot get an exact count, record your best estimate. An honest estimate is far more useful than 'umpteens' or 'too many to count.' Mail the completed form to me by February 12, 1989:

R. J. Hollis

3351 Lower West Branch Road

Iowa City, IA 52240

If you would like a personal reply, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and be patient; it may take 12 months before I can get back to you. Look for results in the Iowa Nongame News and the I.O.U. newsletter.



FEEDER SURVEY JANUARY 26-29, 1989

1. Name _____
- 2A. Address _____
- 2B. County _____ 2C. City _____ 2D. Zip _____
3. The feeder survey period this year runs from Thursday, January 26th to Sunday, January 29th. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.
Check one: Thursday (1/26) and Friday (1/27),
 Friday (1/27) and Saturday (1/28), or
 Saturday (1/28) and Sunday (1/29).
4. Is your feeder in Town (including suburbs) or in the Country? Circle T or C
5. Check the one description which best describes the area within a 2-block circle around your feeder:
 suburban, houses with shrubs and small trees but few trees wider than 20 inches.
 suburban bordered by: (circle 1) timber, grass, field or row crop.
 town, neighborhood has many mature shade and street trees.
 downtown with mostly buildings, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, high rises
 pasture
 row crop (corn, beans, etc.)
 timber
 farmstead with mature trees and shrubs around house.
6. Type and number of feeders: Thistle, Sunflower(only), Fruit, Safflower, Peanuts, Mixed seed, Peanut Butter, Suet, Cracked Sunflower, Corn, Millet(only), unfrozen water, other _____
7. On what date did you start feeding during 1988-89: About _____
8. Comments or additional description of your feeder or yard: _____

HIGHEST NUMBER SEEN FOR EACH SPECIES DURING 2 CONSECUTIVE DAYS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ring-necked Pheasant | <input type="checkbox"/> White-throated Sparrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Dove (Common Pigeon) | <input type="checkbox"/> White-crowned Sparrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mourning Dove | <input type="checkbox"/> Harris' Sparrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-headed Woodpecker | <input type="checkbox"/> Dark-eyed Junco (All races) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-bellied Woodpecker | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-winged Blackbird |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Downy Woodpecker | <input type="checkbox"/> Grackle (Common) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hairy Woodpecker | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown-headed Cowbird |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flicker (All races) | <input type="checkbox"/> Purple Finch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Jay | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Redpoll |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crow (American) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pine Siskin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-capped Chickadee | <input type="checkbox"/> Goldfinch American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tufted Titmouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Evening Grosbeak |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-breasted Nuthatch | <input type="checkbox"/> House (English) Sparrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White-breasted nuthatch | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brown Creeper | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Robin (American) | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Waxwing | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Starling (European) | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cardinal (Northern) | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Sparrow (American) | <input type="checkbox"/> (other) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Song Sparrow | <input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL SPECIES SEEN |

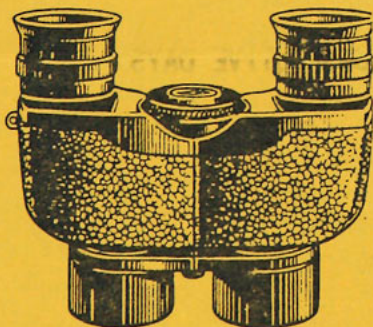
Please fill out carefully. Feel free to copy the form for friends and patrons. Thank you and enjoy yourselves!

- I would like to receive the free quarterly Nongame News newsletter.
- I would like information about the Iowa Ornithologists Union which is a statewide bird organization.

TRISTATE MEETING PLANNED

SAYLORVILLE FIELD TRIP

On November 19, 1988, approximately 40 people gathered at Saylorville Reservoir for the third annual IOU field trip. Although the weather was not the greatest, the birding was very good. Some of the noteworthy birds seen by all or part of the group included Surf Scoter, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Black-bellied Plover, a probable Lesser Black-backed Gull, Long-eared Owl, four Northern Shrikes, and Snow Bunting. Also, the participants enjoyed the numerous Bald Eagles and hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls using the lake. Thanks to everyone who made this trip a success.



SPRING MEETING

The spring 1989 meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union will be held at Davenport on 19-21 May. The meeting will be hosted by the Quad City Audubon Society and will be held at the Davenport Izaak Walton League clubhouse near I-80. The Davenport area has numerous good birding areas to visit. More details will be available later. This promises to be a good meeting so plan to attend.

A combined meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology will be held at LaCrosse, Wisconsin from 17-20 May 1990. Carl Bendorf and Jim Dinsmore attended a recent planning session for this meeting. Some of the activities planned for the meeting include an overnight field trip on the Thursday-Friday preceding the meeting, paper sessions and workshops on Saturday, a nationally prominent speaker at the banquet on Saturday, and field trips on Saturday and Sunday. This should be a unique opportunity for members of the IOU to meet members of the other two organizations, exchange ideas with them, and learn from those members as well as bird in an area with many interesting attractions. Mark those dates on your calendar now.

IOWA'S FAVORITE BIRD



The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Nongame Program is conducting a survey to find out Iowans' favorite bird. "It will be fun to see which birds Iowans like most," said Laura Jackson, nongame biologist for the DNR. "At the same time, the survey will give us some ideas on which birds Iowans relate to the most. It can help us gear some of our educational efforts to provide information about those species."

To participate in the survey, write the names of three bird species on a postcard and mail to Nongame Program, Wildlife Research Station, RR 1, Boone, Iowa 50036. Entries must be received by Dec. 31. The names of the winning birds will be announced at a later date.

1989 COMING EVENTS IN IOWA

- Jan. 5, Thurs. Iowa City Bird Club program "Birds of East Africa" by Ed Perkins at 7:00 PM at the 1st National Bank in Towncrest, 1117 William, Iowa City. Bud Gode: 319-351-5245.
- Jan. 14, Sat. Quad City Audubon Society field trip to Lost Creek Woods for owls. Meet at the Amoco station at the Middle Road (Bettendorf) exit on I-80 at 5:30 AM. Bundle up! Ann Barker: 319-289-3175.
- Jan. 17, Tues. Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) program "Bird Shelter and Nest Boxes by Pat Schlarbaum, DNR Nongame officer at 7:30 PM, Rm. 181, Design Center, ISU. Mike Meetz: 515-382-2534.
- Jan. 17, Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "Hoot for an Owl" by Danielle Worth at 7:00 PM, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Beaver & Franklin, Des Moines. Jan Eppard: 515-996-2668.
- Feb. 18, Sat. Big Bluestem Audubon field trip to Ledges and Big Creek State Parks for owls (long & short eared & saw-whet owls). Steve Dinsmore: 515-292-1038.
- Feb. 25, Sat. Iowa City Bird Club Amana walk and breakfast. An early morning hike in the Amana Woods followed by a good Amana breakfast in the company of your fellow birders. Carl Bendorf: 319-351-4958.
- Feb. 25, Sat. Mississippi Bend Bird and Nature Club Workshop: A make and take workshop for nesting boxes for the following birds: bluebird, wren, robin, kestrel, and barn owl. To receive a box and information, Glenn Downs: 319-843-2368.
- Mar. 18, Sat. Big Bluestem Audubon field trip to Bays Branch for waterfowl. Steve Dinsmore: 515-292-1038.
- Mar. 21, Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "Birding the Four Corners of Iowa" by Eugene Armstrong at 7:00 PM, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Beaver & Franklin, Des Moines. Janet Eppard 515-996-2668.
- Apr. 18, Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "The World of Woodpeckers," by Gary Nelson at 7:00 PM, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Beaver & Franklin, Des Moines. Janet Eppard: 515-996-2668.

❁ CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS ❁

Lost Nations	Fri., Dec. 16	Pete Petersen	319-355-7051
Cedar Rapids	Sat., Dec. 17	Dale Fye	319-364-1638
Muscatine	Sat., Dec. 17	Pete Petersen	319-355-7051
Marshalltown	Sat., Dec. 17	Ed Savage	515-752-0105
Lucas Co.	Sat., Dec. 17	Beth Brown	515-342-2733
Ames	Sat., Dec. 17	Steve Dinsmore	515-292-1038
Sioux City	Sat., Dec. 17	Jerry Probst	712-274-2545
Dubuque	Sat., Dec. 17	John Feller	319-582-6161
Omaha	Sat., Dec. 17	Ross Silcock	712-629-5865
Iowa City	Sat., Dec. 17	Rick Hollis	319-338-4834
Bremer Co.	Sat., Dec. 17	Francis Moore	319-232-0217
Cedar Falls	Sat., Dec. 17	Francis Moore	319-232-0217
Saylorville	Sun., Dec. 18	Steve Dinsmore	515-292-1038
DeSoto	Sun., Dec. 18	Ranger's Office	712-642-4121
Red Rock	Sun., Dec. 18	Gladys Black	515-848-5865
Quad Cities	Sun, Dec. 18	Pete Petersen	319-355-7051
Decorah	Sun., Dec. 18	Darwin Koenig	515-623-2402
Oakdale	Mon., Dec. 19	Pete Petersen	319-355-7051
Jamaica	Tues., Dec. 20	Ray Cummins	515-856-3518
Princeton	Thur., Dec. 22	Pete Petersen	319-355-7051
Yellow River	Mon., Dec. 26	Darwin Koenig	515-623-2402
Des Moines	Mon., Dec. 26	Gene Armstrong	515-996-2726
Clinton	Mon, Dec. 26	Pete Petersen	319-355-7051
Shenandoah	Tues., Dec. 27	Ross Silcock	712-629-5865
North Linn	Wed., Dec. 28	Weir Nelson	319-393-4927
Keokuk	Sat., Dec. 31	Bob Cecil	319-524-6407
Tristate	Sat., Dec. 31	Ross Silcock	712-629-5865
Glenwood	Sun., Jan. 1	Ross Silcock	712-629-5865
Boone	Mon., Jan. 2	Mark Widrlechner	515-292-4014



**BALD EAGLE DAYS IN
DUBUQUE AND JACKSON
COUNTIES**

There will be a Bald Eagle Day held at the Dubuque Mines of Spain Nature Center January 7.

A similar event will be held at Bellevue by the Jackson County Conservation Board.

Contact Ann Burns at 319/652-3783 for more information.

TRUMPTER SWANS

Peggy Hines of the Minnesota DNR is interested in sightings of Trumpeter Swans, in Iowa. She would like to know the location, date, and the numbers of birds seen. Be sure to report any wing tags and their location. Contact Peggy at:

P.O. Box 823

Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

218/847-1588

Besides contacting Peggy, be sure these sightings are reported to the winter field reports editor and the birdline!



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

HANK & LINDA ZALETEL
715 WEST
COLO, IOWA 50056

BLK. RT.



Thomas H. Kent
211 Richards St
Iowa City, IA 52240

IOWA BIRDLINE



319-338-9881