



I.O.U. NEWS

Winter 1990 Newsletter of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Volume 6 Number 4

Beth Brown Honored Jim Dinsmore

Beth Brown of Osceola recently received the Lawrence and Eula Hagie Heritage Award from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The award is given to recognize outstanding work performed by those who try to improve the quality of Iowa's natural environment. Beth was recognized for her work in environmental education and in wildlife rehabilitation. Beth works as a naturalist for Clarke County and has been a leader in working with youth. She commonly uses live owls and hawks she has rehabilitated as demonstrations in her work. Through these efforts she has increased student's interest in and understanding of our natural environment. Beth recently completed her second two-year term on the I.O.U. Board of Directors and is a member of the I.O.U. Education Committee. Congratulations to Beth for this well-deserved recognition.



Bluebird Conference **Rita Efta**

The Sixth Annual Bluebird Conference was held 25 August, 1990 at the Delaware County Community Center, Manchester, Iowa. Harold Luers and Al Yuska organized the meeting. Seventy-eight people registered for the conference, a very good turnout. We were happy to see many new bluebirders, one of the main reasons that the meeting is held in a different part of the state each year.

A report by the county naturalist was given on the bluebird program at the Osborne Nature Center. A film *Bluebirds: Bring Them Back* was shown followed by a report by DNR's Pat Schlarbaum on slot vs. hole nest boxes and new ideas on predator protection.

Regional reports were presented followed by an update of Minnesota's Bluebird program by Mary Ellen Vetter. Dr. Nixon Wilson of UNI spoke on deer ticks and Lyme disease. He was followed by Craig Hensley, naturalist at the Dodge Nature Center, St. Paul, Minn., who spoke on Bluebird nesting, biology and nestling foods in Arkansas. Jim Hansen, DNR non-game biologist, closed the meeting with an update of DNR programs. A short business meeting followed the program.



1990 Fall Field Trip **Steve Dinsmore**

Approximately thirty people attended the third annual I.O.U. Fall Field Trip to Saylorville Reservoir on Saturday, Nov. 3, 1990. The group braved rainy, cool weather to tally about 80 species for the day. Some of the highlights were Western Grebe, Osprey, eleven species of shorebirds, Black-bellied Plover and Sanderling, Long-eared Owl, and Snow Bunting.



Breeding Bird Atlas **Laura Jackson**

Anyone who has not already sent cards in—please do! Any coverage is important. For species such as Nighthawks, Swifts, Great-horned and Barred Owls, Wood Ducks, Hummingbirds, Turkeys, Pheasants and Quail, you may be able to get presence/absence or nesting status information from the local state park, county conservation board, or area biologist, if one of the areas in the block.

We are now accumulating all the data to send to regional coordinators for editing. Once we get their corrections back the Non-game Program will be entering the information into the computer. By May, 1991 we hope to have all of the information entered so we can start making sense of all the data.

Ornithology Meeting in Ames

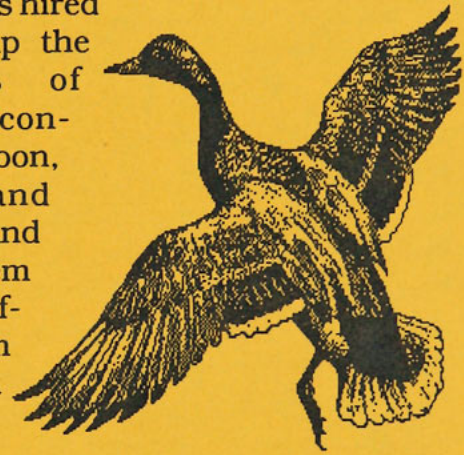
The American Ornithologists' Union (A.O.U.), the largest ornithological society in North America, will hold its annual meeting in Ames on 24-27 June 1992. This group, which publishes the journal *The Auk*, has a membership of about 3,500. The meeting will bring 350-450 of the leading ornithologists in North America to Ames. The meetings typically feature invited speakers as well as several hundred reports on recent studies of all aspects of birds and their biology. The group has never met in Iowa before so this will be a unique opportunity for I.O.U. members to attend such a gathering.

Studies of Iowa Birds

One of the best known waterfowl areas in Iowa is Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge near Titonka in north-central Iowa. For the past two years, Jim Gallagher, a graduate student at Iowa State University, has been studying the nesting success of the various species of waterfowl on the refuge. Union Slough was established as a place for waterfowl to nest although many other birds nest there or use it during migration. A study of waterfowl nesting success that was completed several years ago found that other than Wood Ducks and Canada Geese, ground-nesting waterfowl had very low nesting success with most of the losses due to predation and that the refuge was actually a drain on the waterfowl population. Thus Jim's study was designed to see if predator management would result in an increase in nesting success of ground nesting waterfowl.

Jim and an assistant searched the entire 2845 acre refuge three times each

summer to find duck nests. He monitored the nests until they hatched or were lost so he could determine their fate. A trapper was hired to live trap the predators of greatest concern (raccoon, skunk, and red fox) and remove them from the refuge. Jim found that duck nest success



has been higher in the two years of his study compared to the previous study, suggesting that it is possible to increase nesting success. However, predator management is both expensive and controversial.

Originally a resident of northeastern Minnesota, Jim worked for the U.S. Forest Service. Currently he lives in South Dakota and plans to continue a career in wildlife management upon completion of his M.S. degree. His work has been supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Both Jim and the student who did the earlier study, Joe Fleskes, kept records for the breeding bird atlas project. The result is that the Union Slough block is probably the most intensively studied atlas block in Iowa with several hundred hours of study logged on it. The list of birds found there is impressive with more than 100 species found and many of them confirmed as nesters.

WHAT DID YOUR FEEDERS TELL US??

During January of 1990, 1,200 households participated in the Winter Bird Feeder Survey. This was a great increase from a low of 840 participants in 1989. During the last 7 years an average of 1,096 people have participated each year. Participation rates between town and country observers has remained fairly constant. In the last 7 years 60 to 65 percent of the observers have lived in a town or suburb, and 35 to 40 percent reported from rural areas. Downtown areas continued to have the lowest participation followed by farm houses surrounded by row crops.

After incredibly low temperatures during December, January was downright tropical. During the survey period temperatures ranged from the teens to low forties. Black-capped chickadees, house sparrows, juncos, blue jays and cardinals continued to be our most widely observed birds and were reported by over 80 percent of the households.

Overall, there were few statistically significant changes between 1989 and 1990. Seven species increased, while only two declined. Red-bellied woodpeckers declined by 10 percent after a bumper year in 1989, yet were still on the high end of their normal observation rate since 1984. Robins also declined, (migration would have been the best option in December) but were on the high end of their normal observation.

Dark-eyed juncos, Harris sparrows, white-throated sparrows, white-crowned sparrows, pine siskins, common redpolls, and red-breasted nuthatches all increased significantly. The Christmas Bird Count also noted similar high counts for juncos, sparrows, siskins and redpolls. Pine siskins in particular went from being rare in 1989 to being observed at nearly 35 percent of the households. Siskin are normally "cyclic" and occur in boon and bust numbers although we did have relatively stable numbers between 1985 to 1988.

Likewise redpolls are also cyclic and their numbers are even more variable than the siskins.

Both siskins and redpolls come to Iowa from their nesting areas in Alaska and Canada.

Although the juncos, Harris', white-throated, and white-crowned sparrows increased, their numbers were basically within the range of previous years, although Harris' sparrows set a new high. Their increase may have been a reflection of better "feeder weather" and/or better habitat. During the last couple years the survey has been "plagued" by warm weather. Temperatures in the sixties tends to reduce the number of birds coming into feeders to eat, and the number of people who participate. Cooler weather brings the birds in and increases people's enthusiasm for watching and reporting what they saw at their feeders. Habitat-wise summer of 1989 which preceded the 1990 count, was the second of two drought years in a row for Iowa. However, rainfall was 70 percent of normal (compared to 40 percent in 1988) so grass and weed seed production could have been better for attracting these seed-eaters.

Red-breasted nuthatches increased for the second year in a row. House finches which just started arriving in Iowa in the early 1900s, were observed by over 7 percent of the participants. The remaining birds were observed at their usual numbers. It has been interesting to see the relative stability of most of the birds.

It is now time to start your feeders. Remember, the most popular food for the widest variety of birds is sunflower seeds. Peanut feeders and suet are also popular with chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers and tufted titmice. White and red millet are attractive to juncos and other winter sparrows. Goldfinches, redpolls, pine siskins and house finches enjoy Niger seed as well as sunflower seeds. For additional information on bird feeding, write to the Nongame Program at the Boone Research Station. Enjoy yourselves!

Please save the enclosed form so you can participate in the 1991 Bird Feeder Survey. Feel free to make copies for your friends, family, school or local newspaper. Thank you for your participation!

1991 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 24-27, 1991, 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 'umpteen' or 'too many to count.'

Mail the completed form to me by February 12, 1991

R. J. Hollis
3351 Lower West Branch Road
Iowa City, IA 52245

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.

Start Here

BIRDFEEDER SURVEY JANUARY 24-27, 1991

Please fill out carefully. Feel free to copy the form for friends and patrons.

Thank you and enjoy yourselves!

1. Name _____
2A. Address _____
2B. County _____ 2C. City _____ 2D. Zip _____

3. The feeder survey period this year runs from Thursday, January 24th to Sunday, January 27th. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.

Check one: ___ Thursday (1/24) and Friday (1/25) ___ Friday (1/25) and Saturday (1/26), or
___ Saturday (1/26) and Sunday (1/27).

4. Is your feeder in Town (including suburbs) or in the Country? Circle T or C

continued on other side

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 1990-91: About _____
8. Comments or additional description of your feeder or yard: _____

HIGHEST NUMBER SEEN FOR EACH SPECIES DURING TWO 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"/> House Finch |
| <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 DIFFERENT SPECIES SEEN |

I would like to receive the free *Nongame News*.

I would like information about the Iowa Ornithologists Union which is a statewide bird organization.

If you see a rare or unusual bird, please report it to the Iowa birdline 319/338-9881.

Table 1. Winter Bird Feeder Survey.

Percentage of participating households that observed each bird species during the survey from 1984-1989. Includes average number of birds observed at feeders in 1989.

	IOWA								
	Average		Percentage of Households Observing Each Species						
	Number in	1990	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986	1985	1984
Dark-eyed junco	6.5	8.4	82.3	70.7	84.7	82.2	88.7	87.1	88.7
Blue jay	3.8	3.9	82.1	81.8	87.2	83.7	84.7	82.7	84.6
House sparrow	24.9	25.8	83.8	79.8	82.6	78.5	82.9	79.5	77.4
Black-capped chickadee	4.8	4.7	84.5	87.3	80.5	81.4	82.6	78.2	81.8
Northern cardinal	4.9	4.9	80.4	78.4	79.9	79.2	80.6	81.1	83.3
American goldfinch	12.0	13.3	71.0	69.5	71.3	63.6	70.6	71.6	72.9
Downy woodpecker	2.7	2.6	73.5	77.4	72.6	67.8	65.4	59.9	61.4
European starling	7.0	7.4	56.3	53.7	60.5	52.7	59.1	60.4	58.9
Purple finch	6.1	5.5	26.9	24.0	29.9	22.9	42.9	19.1	34.8
Hairy woodpecker	1.8	1.8	37.7	41.7	35.0	35.9	35.6	28.5	30.7
Red-bellied woodpecker	1.5	1.5	39.8	49.9	37.7	38.7	33.9	30.0	35.2
American tree sparrow	12.8	11.0	21.9	17.7	22.9	17.8	23.0	38.0	30.2
Pine siskin	3.9	8.4	34.4	5.4	20.2	22.8	22.4	20.4	15.4
Tufted titmouse	2.7	2.7	21.6	22.7	19.6	20.6	18.7	21.0	22.2
American crow	5.2	7.0	17.2	16.8	16.8	15.7	18.1	15.2	5.7
Northern flicker	1.5	1.6	21.2	21.7	22.9	18.7	17.8	17.7	18.4
Evening grosbeak	8.3	10.1	0.8	0.5	1.7	0.9	14.4	0.2	5.3
Common grackle	3.9	5.2	11.5	11.2	13.6	12.8	13.7	12.9	4.3
Red-headed woodpecker	1.9	1.7	3.0	9.8	12.0	6.7	11.7	13.1	21.8
Song sparrow	6.1	6.7	8.4	6.3	10.9	6.2	10.5	11.5	13.7
Mourning dove	4.9	5.0	19.0	19.4	18.5	10.4	8.9	13.8	13.0
Rock dove	4.3	5.2	5.1	4.9	6.2	5.0	7.3	7.1	6.6
Harris' sparrow	6.5	4.2	7.9	3.9	5.8	3.1	5.9	6.4	2.9
Brown creeper	1.3	1.3	9.4	10.2	7.3	8.9	5.5	3.8	3.9
White-throated sparrow	7.7	4.6	6.0	3.2	3.8	3.9	5.4	5.4	7.3
Common redpoll	1.8	4.2	3.2	0.7	3.4	1.6	3.9	3.5	4.3
Cedar waxwing	13.9	10.6	4.9	3.7	3.1	2.0	3.9	2.2	7.1
Brown-headed cowbird	3.9	3.1	2.1	2.1	4.8	2.8	3.8	3.6	3.6
White-crowned sparrow	4.4	3.8	2.7	0.8	2.1	2.7	3.8	4.3	5.5
American robin	3.2	2.4	4.3	7.0	3.4	1.3	3.5	2.2	0.7
Ring-necked pheasant	3.6	5.4	4.8	4.5	5.9	3.4	3.4	4.7	3.0
Red-winged blackbird	1.4	2.8	1.9	0.6	1.6	0.8	2.6	2.5	2.4
White-breasted nuthatch	2.7	2.7	67.2	74.3	64.6	70.3	N/A	51.2	59.7
Red-breasted nuthatch	2.7	1.9	11.1	5.5	4.4	7.4	N/A	4.5	9.9

(From DNR's Nongame News)



Christmas Bird Counts

Cherokee	Sat., Dec. 15	Dick Bierman	712/225-5552
Dubuque	Sat., Dec. 15	John Miller	319/556-2269
Lucas Co.	Sat., Dec. 15	Beth Brown	515/342-2783
Rathbun	Sat., Dec. 15	Bill Heusinkveld	515/856-2342
Shenandoah	Sat., Dec. 15	Barbara Cunningham	712/246-1203
Bremer	Sat., Dec. 15	Francis Moore	319/232-0217
Cedar Rapids	Sat., Dec. 15	Pete Wickham	319/363-6884
Marshalltown	Sat., Dec. 15	Ed Savage	515/752-0105
Spirit Lake	Sat., Dec. 15	Doug Harr	712/472-3751
Mason City	Sat., Dec. 15	Jan Walter	515/424-1413
Glenwood	Sat., Dec. 15	Doug Rose	712/527-3380
Ames	Sat., Dec. 15	Steve Dinsmore	515/292-3152
Sac Co.	Sat., Dec. 15	Rita Efta	712/688-2873
Cedar Falls	Sun., Dec. 16	Francis Moore	319/232-0217
Saylorville	Sun., Dec. 16	Steve Dinsmore	515/292-3152
Quad Cities	Sun., Dec. 16	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Red Rock	Sun., Dec. 16	Gladys Black	515/848-5865
Jamaica	Tues., Dec. 18	Ray Cummins	515/856-3518
Princeton	Thurs., Dec. 20	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Des Moines	Sat., Dec. 22	Eugene Armstrong	515/996-2726
DeSoto	Sat., Dec. 22	Karen Drews	712/642-4121
Decorah	Sat., Dec. 22	Carol Hasvold	319/382-9392
Keokuk	Sat., Dec. 22	Bob Cecil	515/277-5709
Muscatine	Sun., Dec. 23	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Clinton	Sat., Dec. 29	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
North Linn	Sat., Dec. 29	Weir Nelson	319/848-4846
Sioux City	Sat., Dec. 29	Jerry Probst	712/233-2742
Yellow River	Sat., Dec. 29	Carol Hasvold	319/382-9392
Boone	Tues., Jan. 1	Erik Munson	515/292-1712





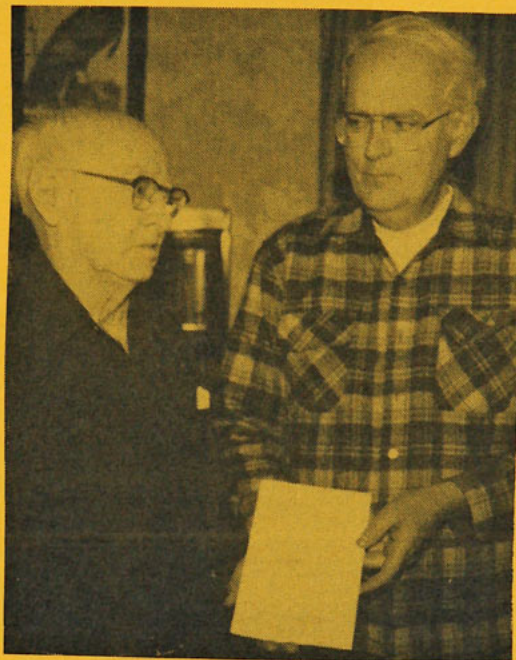
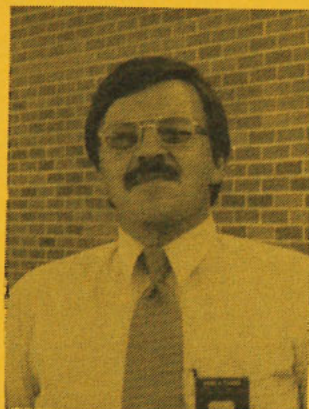
Coming Dates

- Jan. 3
Thurs. Loess Hills Audubon (Sioux City) program "Birding in the Southwest" by Jerry Probst, Bob Livermore and Dave Stage at 7:30 p.m., Sioux City Art Center, 513 Nebraska. Ken Baldwin: 712/252-1364.
- Jan. 10
Thurs. Quad City Audubon program "Natural History of Papua-New Guinea" by Pete Petersen at 7:30 p.m. at Butterworth Center. Ann Barker: 319/289-3175.
- Jan. 15
Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "Birds of the Pacific" by Tim Schantz, Westminster Church, Beaver & Franklin at 7:15 p.m. Jane Clark: 515/223-5047.
- Jan. 21
Sun. Loess Hills Audubon (Sioux City) field trip to Ponca State Park. Meet at South Sioux City Hy-Vee parking lot at noon. Bob Moritz: 712/252-2898.
- Feb. 16
Sat. Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) field trip to Ledges & Big Creek State Park for owls. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the west parking lot of ISU Design Center. Sherry Dragula: 515/292-4014.
- Feb. 19
Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "North American Waterfowl Management" by Dr. Erwin Klaas at 7:15 p.m. at Westminster Church, Beaver & Franklin. Jane Clark: 515/223-5047.
- Mar. 19
Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "Return to Churchill" by Gene and Eloise Armstrong at 7:15 p.m. at Westminster Church, Beaver & Franklin. Jane Clark: 515/223-5047.
- Mar. 21
Thurs. Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) program "Prairie Chickens & Sharp-tailed Grouse in Nebraska" by Roger Hill at 7:30 p.m., 181 Design Center, ISU. Andy Fix: 515/233-4956.
- Mar. 30
Sat. Big Bluestem Audubon (Ames) field trip to Bays Branch, Greene County at 7:30 a.m. Meet at west parking lot of ISU Design Center. Sherry Dragula: 515/292-4014
- Apr. 16
Tues. Des Moines Audubon program "Birding the Bay of Fundy-New Brunswick" by Jim Sinclair and friends at 7:15 p.m. at Westminster Church, Beaver & Franklin. Jane Clark: 515/223-5047.





Craig Fannes,
Fall Banquet Speaker



Gray'L
The Great Gray Owl

Jim Dinsmore, new editor of Iowa Bird Life,
presents **Fred Pierce**, first editor of Iowa Bird Life,
with the current issue.

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

HANK & LINDA ZALETEL
715 WEST
COLO, IOWA 50056

Thomas H Kent
211 Richards St
Iowa City, IA 52246

IOWA BIRDLINE
 **319-338-9881**

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