



IOU News

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter

Winter 2001 * Volume 17 - Number 4

Christmas Bird Counts— One Hundred Years Later

Paul Hertz

In the beginning, Christmas counts were done on Christmas Day, maybe in late morning while the turkey cooked. This year, I'm sure I will participate in several, maybe three of the day-long bird-finding events.

When the ornithologist Frank Chapman first suggested the census in the year 1900, he had in mind something gentle that people might do as part of their Christmas Day activities. It was in this spirit that Rett Olmstead, from Decorah, Iowa, conducted the first Iowa count on Christmas Day in 1903. He found nine species of birds.

Today, veteran counters start before dawn and compile their totals over hot cider and chili long after the sun has gone down. And never on Christmas Day.

From its simple, symbolic beginnings, the Christmastime bird census has evolved into an annual, three-week major project, offering birders multiple opportunities to participate in discovering and recording winter birdlife across diverse areas.

By the 1950s, there were annually twenty or more geographically distinct Iowa censuses conducted on days before and after Christmas. This enabled birders to begin participating in more than one count. In 1957, Fred Pierce wrote in his summary of the 1956 census (IBL 27:12-18), "A number of observers went on two or more censuses (Dennis Carter went on four!)"

In 2001, Kelly McKay plans to compile six Iowa Christmas Bird

Counts scattered along the Mississippi River border counties, three of them on consecutive days. This may be compared to the year 1931 when there were exactly six Christmas counts conducted in the entire state of Iowa.

In 1992 Stephen Dinsmore participated in ten Christmas counts on ten distinct days, which is near the possible limit. This year there are Iowa counts on eleven distinct days, so there does exist an opportunity for an unmarried counter with no children or pets and a little bit of vacation time to establish a new record.

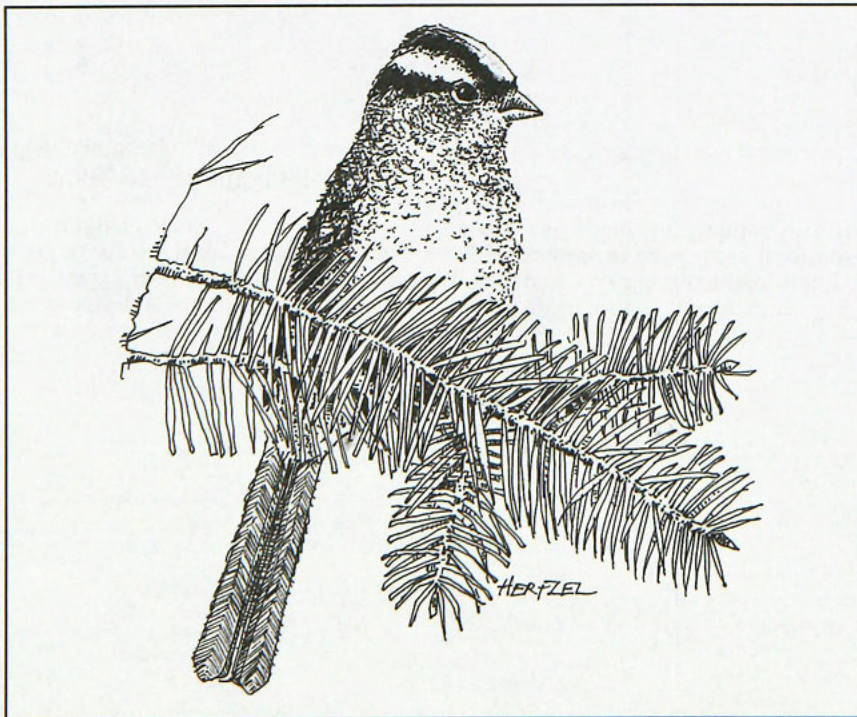
With the increases in state counts, levels of participation, and sophistication in strategies, species totals have grown, probably quite beyond what the far-seeing Frank Chapman imagined. When the originator of the Christmas bird census died in 1945, Iowa averaged about 16 count stations and a collective statewide total of around 65 species. Last year, seven of the tiny, 15-mile diameter counts matched that total alone.

In 1955, the statewide total finally broke 90 species. It took a record 21 counts. Today there are three individual counts that have recorded local totals in the 90s:

1990 Saylorville . . . 92 species
1998 Keokuk 91 species
1994 Davenport. . . 90 species

The statewide total surpassed 100 in the year 1963, and has not dropped below that mark in any year since then. The recent ten-year average is 132 species statewide, with a high of 142 in 1994.

For a look at the 2001-2002 schedule of Iowa Christmas Bird Counts as of late November, see page 4.



***IOU News* is a quarterly publication of
The Iowa Ornithologists' Union**

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Founded 1923

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Doug Harr, Ann Johnson, Tom Johnson, Fred Leshner, Ellen
Montgomery, Wolf Oesterrich, Ric Zarwell

Deadlines for Submission of Materials

IOU News is published four times per year, coincidental with the four birding seasons. In order to accomodate the timely assembling of the newsletter, please have submissions to the editor by the deadlines listed below. Thanks.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Coverage</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Spring	March 1 - May 31	February 15
Summer	June 1 - July 31	May 15
Fall	August 1 - Nov 30	July 15
Winter	Dec 1 - Feb 28	November 15



Kay Niyo, Editor, *Iowa Bird Life*

Regional Rare Bird Alerts

Iowa	(712) 364-2863
Missouri	(573) 445-9115
NW Illinois	(815) 965-3095
Wisconsin	(414) 352-3857
Minnesota	(800) 657-3700
So Dakota	(605) 773-6460

Hallet's Quarry Soon To Be Public Tract

In early November, Ames voters overwhelmingly approved a bond issue (86% yes) to purchase Hallett's Quarry and adjacent land on the north edge of Ames. The land will be converted to public space with restored prairie and wetlands as well as a system of trails around the two quarry lakes.

Hallett's Quarry is the largest wetland in Story County and is an important birding area in Story County. In recent years, some of the major finds include both Yellow-billed Loon and Pacific Loon, Western Grebe and Clark's Grebe, Snowy Egret, Long-tailed Duck, Surf Scoter, and White-faced Ibis as well as many migrant ducks, geese, gulls, and other species.

I.O.U. member Erv Klaas was the leader of a local committee that played a major role in educating citizens about the area and getting people to support the issue in the election.

Harr Receives Award

Doug Harr recently received the national Partners in Flight Stewardship Award for 2000. Doug was recognized for his work on wetland restoration and waterbird conservation in northwestern Iowa.

Doug has been a leader in the wetland restoration program in Iowa. His work in this area has resulted in hundreds of wetland restorations and a great increase in the habitat available for wetland birds and other wildlife. Doug has worked for the Iowa DNR for more than 25 years, mostly in the northwestern corner of Iowa. He recently changed positions and now works in the Iowa DNR's wildlife diversity program in Boone.

Congratulations to Doug for this well-deserved recognition.

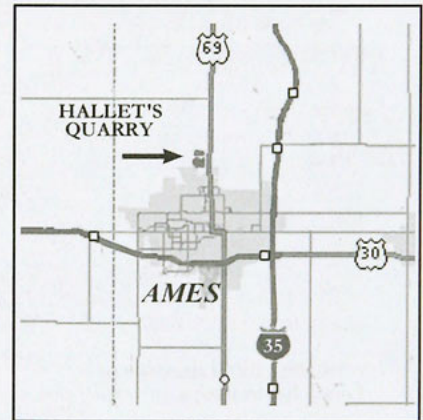


The View from Wolf's Den

Wolf Oesterrich

I live on the north side of Ames, on a ridge overlooking the south lake at Hallett's Quarry. I have a clear view of the fields to the west and much of the south lake when there aren't any leaves on the trees along my eastern property line. However, the western "bay" of the south lake is always visible. Since moving here in December 1997, I have kept records of all the avian species sighted from my backyard and house (especially from my study on the second floor). The total stands at 172 species. I keep monthly and yearly totals. The monthly totals range from 17 to 88 species, while the yearly totals range from 128 to 151 species. So far this year I've recorded 123 species.

One advantage of birding from my study is that I can often see flying birds and birds at the top of the trees at eye-level. While writing this article I stopped to watch a Turkey Vulture glide past. I felt as if I could have reached out and touched the bird. In August, I caught a glimpse of a bird with a long tail that flew into the trees. I thought, "Perhaps a cuckoo." Then it flew into the yard and landed in one of our trees. "Definitely a cuckoo, but which one?" It must have read my mind because it then flew up towards the window, banked, and then returned to the trees. A Black-billed Cuckoo! I can also see a small opening of the north lake. In December 1999, I was looking through my scope at this opening and talking to Kay Niyo on the phone. We were talking about the Yellow-billed Loon when I observed the loon cross my field-of-view. Not too many people can get a Yellow-billed Loon on their yard list! The family room picture window also offers spectacular views of the area and yard. In November 2000, I watched 4 Trumpeter Swans take off from the south lake and head west. They soon turned and flew through our yard, lower than the top of the trees, gaining elevation as they headed southward. My daughter, Annamarie, was watching with me and we didn't need binoculars to see these large birds that close. (Only the lead swan had a neck band.) Of course, having such a spectacular view can have its disadvantages. I often spend too much time looking out the window. Since the start of this article I have probably gone to the window at least 6 times. My wife complains that I



can't be giving her my full attention when I always have one or both eyes looking out the windows.

I recorded 66 species in September. I only saw 1 American White Pelican land on the south lake, although over 200 passed by one day. The only waterfowl were Canada Geese, 2 drake Wood Ducks (27th), and 36 Blue-winged Teal (12th). A single Osprey was first seen on the 2nd and then for another 8 days, with the last day being the 18th. Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns also visited the area. I thank the Great Horned Owl for reducing the numbers of Eastern Cottontails that were devouring our plants. (I don't mind them taking a little nip here and there, but when they eat the plant down to the ground, then I mind.) Five species of woodpeckers were observed. Flycatchers included: Eastern Wood-Pewees, many Empidonax sp., Eastern Phoebes, and Eastern Kingbirds. Only 1 vireo, a Blue-headed, was seen. Waves of Common Nighthawks, Chimney Swifts, and Cliff and Barn Swallows passed through the area in the middle and latter parts of the month. Only 4 warbler species were recorded: Nashville, Yellow-rumped, Common Yellowthroat, and Wilson's. The Lincoln Sparrow on the 14th may represent a new early extreme fall record for Story County. Several 1st fall male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were noted. The local Red-winged Blackbirds appear to have left. The only ones seen were those in migration.

This article originally appeared in the Nov/Dec issue of The Big Bluestem Flyer.



2001 Christmas Counts

Date	Count	County	Contact	Phone	email
Dec 15	Ames	Story	Dave Edwards	515 292-3790	<i>dcejce@qwest.net</i>
Dec 22	Andalusia/Buffalo	Muscatine/Scott	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	<i>kellymckay@aol.com</i>
Jan 1	Boone County	Boone	Mark Widrechner	515 233-1532	<i>mpwskd@aol.com</i>
Dec 15	Bremer County	Bremer	Francis Moore	319 232-0217	<i>flmoore@forbin.net</i>
Dec 15	Burlington	Des Moines/Louisa	Chuck Fuller	319 753-0710	<i>CFuller989@aol.com</i>
Dec 29	Carroll County	Carroll	Rob Thelen	712 792-1793	<i>rthelen@pionet.net</i>
Dec 16	Cedar Falls/Waterloo	Blackhawk/Grundy/Butler	Francis Moore	319 232-0217	<i>flmoore@forbin.net</i>
Dec 15	Cedar Rapids	Linn	Jim Durbin	319 377-7194	<i>durbinjames@mcleodusa.net</i>
Dec 15	Cherokee	Cherokee/O'Brien	Dick Bierman	712 225-5552	<i>dajabier@netins.net</i>
Dec 20	Clinton/Savannah	Clinton/Jackson	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	<i>kellymckay@aol.com</i>
Dec 16	Davenport	Scott	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	<i>kellymckay@aol.com</i>
Dec 22	Decorah	Winneshiek	Dennis Carter	319 382-3754	
Dec 22	Des Moines	Polk/Dallas	Dennis Thompson	515 254-0837	<i>cgtompson@home.com</i>
Dec 22	DeSoto NWR	Harrison	Jerry Toll	712 642-4121	<i>jertol@radiks.net</i>
Dec 29	Dubuque	Dubuque	Charlie Winterwood	319 588-2783	<i>cwinterwood@yahoo.com</i>
Dec 19	Eldora-Union	Hardin/Marshall/Story	Mark Proescholdt	641 496-5219	
Dec 29	Grinnell	Poweshiek	Bob Van Ersvelde	641 236-6600	
Dec 29	Ida County	Ida	Don Poggensee	712 364-3491	<i>donpog@pionet.net</i>
Dec 16	Iowa City	Johnson	Chris Edwards	319 626-6362	<i>CREdwards@aol.com</i>
Dec 14	Jackson County	Jackson	Dan Wenny		
Dec 18	Jamaica	Guthrie/Greene/Dallas	Ray Cummins	641 856-3518	<i>cummins@jetnetinc.net</i>
Dec 15	Jefferson County	Jefferson	Dave Killman	641 472-3554	<i>sordfish@kdsi.net</i>
Dec 17	Keokuk	Lee	Bob Cecil	515 277-5709	<i>wewarb@aol.com</i>
Dec 17	Lost Nation	Clinton/Jackson/Jones	Karen ?		
?	Marshalltown	Marshall	Ed Savage	641-752-0105	
Dec 15	Mason City	Cerro Gordo	Rita Goranson	641 423-1699	<i>ritag@mach3ww.com</i>
Dec 23	Muscatine	Muscatine	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	<i>kellymckay@aol.com</i>
Dec 29	North Linn	Linn	Weir Nelson	319 848-4846	<i>birdforfun@aol.com</i>
Dec 15	Omaha, NE	Mills/Pottawattamie	Betty Grenon	402 731-2383	<i>grenon925@aol.com</i>
Dec 19	Princeton/Camanche	Clinton/Scott	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	<i>kellymckay@aol.com</i>
Dec 15	Rathbun Res.	Appanoose/Monroe	Mike Stephens	641 437-1736	
Dec 15	Red Rock Res.	Marion/Mahaska	Aaron Brees	641 872-1602	<i>abrees@hotmail.com</i>
Dec 16	Saylorville	Polk/Story	Jim Dinsmore	515 292-3152	<i>oldcoot@iastate.net</i>
Dec 22	Shenandoah	Fremont/Page	Barbara Cunningham		<i>bjcswwu@heartland.net</i>
Dec 22	Sioux City	Woodbury	Bob Livermore	712 239-3954	<i>livermrg@usfilter.com</i>
Dec 15	Spirit Lake	Dickinson	Lee Schoenewe	712 262-8194	<i>lschoe@evertek.net</i>
Dec 18	Western Mercer Co	Louisa	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	<i>kellymckay@aol.com</i>
?	Westfield	Plymouth	Larry Farmer		
Dec 20	Worth County	Worth	Curt Nelson	641 696-5600	<i>mpauley@jumpgate.net</i>
Dec 20	Yellow River Forest	Allamakee	Darwin Koenig	712 448-3837	

Christmas Counts by Date

Dec 14	Jackson County
Dec 15	Ames, Bremer Co., Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Cherokee, Jefferson Co., Mason City, Omaha, Rathbun, Red Rock, Spirit Lake
Dec 16	Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Davenport, Iowa City, Saylorville
Dec 17	Keokuk, Lost Nation
Dec 18	Jamaica, Western Mercer County
Dec 19	Eldora/Union, Princeton/Camanche
Dec 20	Clinton/Savannah, Worth County, Yellow River Forest
Dec 22	Andalusia/Buffalo, Decorah, Des Moines, DeSoto NWR, Shenandoah, Sioux City
Dec 23	Muscatine
Dec 29	Carroll County, Dubuque, Ida County, North Linn, Grinnell
Jan 01	Boone County

EXCERPTS

It is not many years ago that sportsmen were accustomed to meet on Christmas Day, 'choose sides' and then, as representatives of the two bands resulting, hike them to the fields and woods on the cheerful mission of killing practically everything in fur or feathers that crossed their paths—if they could. . . Now, *Bird-Lore* proposes a new kind of Christmas side hunt, in the form of a Christmas bird-census, and we hope that all our readers who have the opportunity will aid us in making it a success by spending a portion of Christmas Day with the birds and sending a report of their 'hunt' to *Bird-Lore* before they retire that night.

Frank Chapman, 1900.
Bird-Lore 2:192

Despite the fact that the Bald Eagle is protected under the game laws of the State of Iowa a few of them are killed each year. In most instances it is the result of a person "wanting to see if he can hit it." It is highly improbable that the eagle will ever nest in Iowa again, but every effort should be made to preserve the migrant birds while they are with us.

Philip A. Du Mont, 1934.
The Bald Eagle as an Iowa bird.
Iowa Bird Life 4:2-4

Just below Bee in the days of the settlement was a cluster of old white pines, in one of which was an eagle's nest.

Not far away in Minnesota lived a pioneer bachelor Yankee who, while out hunting one day, shot the sitting eagle. This pioneer afterwards became our neighbor, and this was the story that he told us 60 years ago. He said:

"I shot the old bird off the nest with my rifle, but did not kill her. She came tumbling through the branches and hit the ground with a thump. Tige, my dog, a big ornery brute, rushed in to finish her, but she just natchely reached out, quicker'n lightning, and grabbed him by the snoot." Tige did some howling, he said,—there was no fight in him—till his master killed the bird and pried the talons loose.

Ellison Orr, 1937. Notes on the

nesting of the Bald Eagle in
Allamakee County, Iowa.
Iowa Bird Life 7:18-19

The original fauna of Iowa included ten nesting species belonging to the bird-of-prey order. Today, two of these are gone. . .

The Bald Eagle and the Swallow-tailed Kite are the two once-common species now lost. Is it just a coincidence that they are, of all ten, the two most picturesque and spectacularly beautiful? The niches they occupied, the habitats they required, and the food chains of which they formed the ends, are still in existence. Why are they gone? To what can we contribute this impoverishment of our fauna; this loss of two beautiful species that once graced the Iowa landscape? If the food to feed them and habitat to furnish homes for them are still here, why are not they?

Richard Pough, 1937. Iowa hawks
and their ecological niches.
Iowa Bird Life 7:42-43

From 1906 through 1976, Iowa had no documented nesting Bald Eagles. The demise and subsequent recovery of the Bald Eagle as a nesting species in Iowa is, in many regards, reflective of the trend for the overall Bald Eagle population in this country. Once thought to be gone from the state forever, then viewed with guarded optimism, the eagle has made a dramatic come-back far surpassing the recovery goals set for this species.

Bruce L. Ehresman, 1999.
The recovery of the Bald Eagle as an
Iowa nesting species.
Iowa Bird Life 69:1-12

It was a record year for Bald Eagles with a total of 2,695 counted statewide, well above the 10-year average of 1,472. As expected, most were found along the Mississippi River (1,932: 72% of total) with smaller numbers in the Middle Third (356: 13% of total) and Southern Third (248: 9% of total).

Stephen Dinsmore, 2001.
Iowa Christmas bird count 2000-2001
Iowa Bird Life 71:64-83

Nearly 2,500 Bald Eagles Spent the 2000-01 Winter in Iowa

from the Iowa DNR

A record 2,493 bald eagles spent last winter in Iowa up from the previous high of 1,776 counted in 1999. The majority of wintering eagles were in the southeastern quarter of Iowa.

Eagles were found in 41 counties which is nine less than last year. The cold weather concentrated the eagles in a few areas with open water. As a result, low eagle counts occurred on most small rivers and extremely high counts occurred in open water areas below the locks and dams of the Mississippi River. The Des Moines River continued to be the second most important eagle wintering river, but held only about seven percent of all eagles counted. The Missouri River held one percent of the eagles.

"We feel that the bald eagle in Iowa is in excellent condition right now," said Doug Harr, biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resource's Wildlife Diversity Program. "Besides hosting a healthy winter population, we also think the goal of having our national bird nesting in every county in Iowa is within reach."

In Iowa, it appears there are about 120 active nests in at least 53 counties. What's interesting, Harr said, is that 42 percent of the Bald Eagles counted in Iowa last winter were immature. "Anytime you have an increase in the juvenile population the overall population is expanding," he said. In 1991, the DNR knew of only 13 nests.

The winter survey is part of a nationwide effort coordinated by the Raptor Research and Technical Assistance Center in Boise, Idaho. The center now estimates there are about 6,500 eagle nests in the lower 48 states.

For more information, contact Doug Harr at (515) 432-2823.



Fall Meeting Notes

Tom Johnson

Carroll hosted its first ever I.O.U. meeting on Sept. 7-9, 2001. It was a success in many ways. The location was new for many of us, and the birds were cooperative with lingering looks at many fall warblers along trails that often enabled us to look down at the birds. This saves the neck! The food was the best I have enjoyed in all the meetings I have attended.

The members gathered at the shelter on Swan Lake State Park on Friday night in a driving rain storm. Would this break? It did, to a sunny day with interesting field trips to the Raccoon River, Corridor Parks, and Dunbar Slough. The afternoon programs were excellent with Don Poggensee showing tremendous bird and nature slides, and giving us amateurs hints on how to take better shots. Kay Newman gave an entertaining program on raptors and her rehabilitation center. The evening program was a slide show documenting Jim and Steve Dinsmore's Alaskan trip. As always, Jim did a great job of entertaining us. Thanks to all the speakers.

Sunday field trips ended and we compiled at Swan Lake. We appreciate having this meeting in a new site and hope to return again. Our thanks goes to RobThelen for accepting the invitation to host the fall meeting. He planned the majority of this plus did the food. I did notice his brothers Ed and Marty were also involved all the time. Goodbye Carroll. Hope to return soon.

Fall Meeting Species List

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Pied-billed Grebe | 51. Black-billed Cuckoo | 101. Philadelphia Vireo |
| 2. American White Pelican | 52. Yellow-billed Cuckoo | 102. Red-eyed Vireo |
| 3. Double-crested Cormorant | 53. Eastern Screech Owl | 103. Blue-winged Warbler |
| 4. Great Blue Heron | 54. Great Horned Owl | 104. Golden-winged Warbler |
| 5. Great Egret | 55. Barred Owl | 105. Tennessee Warbler |
| 6. Green Heron | 56. Common Nighthawk | 106. Orange-crowned Warbler |
| 7. Canada Goose | 57. Chimney Swift | 107. Nashville Warbler |
| 8. Wood Duck | 58. Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 108. Northern Parula |
| 9. Mallard | 59. Belted Kingfisher | 109. Yellow Warbler |
| 10. Northern Pintail | 60. Red-headed Woodpecker | 110. Chestnut-sided Warbler |
| 11. Blue-winged Teal | 61. Red-bellied Woodpecker | 111. Magnolia Warbler |
| 12. Northern Shoveler | 62. Downy Woodpecker | 112. Black-thr. Blue Warbler |
| 13. Gadwall | 63. Hairy Woodpecker | 113. Black-thr. Green Warbler |
| 14. Trumpeter Swan | 64. Northern Flicker | 114. Blackburnian Warbler |
| 15. Turkey Vulture | 65. Pileated Woodpecker | 115. Bay-breasted Warbler |
| 16. Osprey | 66. Eastern Wood-Pewee | 116. Black-and-white Warbler |
| 17. Bald Eagle | 67. Olive-sided Flycatcher | 117. American Redstart |
| 18. Northern Harrier | 68. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher | 118. Ovenbird |
| 19. Sharp-shinned Hawk | 69. Willow Flycatcher | 119. Northern Waterthrush |
| 20. Cooper's Hawk | 70. Least Flycatcher | 120. Common Yellowthroat |
| 21. Broad-winged Hawk | 71. Eastern Phoebe | 121. Wilson's Warbler |
| 22. Red-tailed Hawk | 72. Eastern Kingbird | 122. Canada Warbler |
| 23. American Kestrel | 73. Horned Lark | 123. Scarlet Tanager |
| 24. Merlin | 74. Purple Martin | 124. Northern Cardinal |
| 25. Peregrine Falcon | 75. Tree Swallow | 125. Rose-breasted Grosbeak |
| 26. Gray Partridge | 76. No. Rough-winged Swallow | 126. Indigo Bunting |
| 27. Ring-necked Pheasant | 77. Cliff Swallow | 127. Eastern Towhee |
| 28. Wild Turkey | 78. Barn Swallow | 128. Chipping Sparrow |
| 29. Virginia Rail | 79. Blue Jay | 129. Vesper Sparrow |
| 30. Sora | 80. American Crow | 130. Lark Sparrow |
| 31. American Coot | 81. Black-capped Chickadee | 131. Savannah Sparrow |
| 32. Semi-palmated Plover | 82. Tufted Titmouse | 132. Grasshopper Sparrow |
| 33. Killdeer | 83. Red-breasted Nuthatch | 133. Henslow's Sparrow |
| 34. Greater Yellowlegs | 84. White-breasted Nuthatch | 134. LeConte's Sparrow |
| 35. Lesser Yellowlegs | 85. House Wren | 135. Song Sparrow |
| 36. Solitary Sandpiper | 86. Sedge Wren | 136. Lincoln's Sparrow |
| 37. Spotted Sandpiper | 87. Marsh Wren | 137. Swamp Sparrow |
| 38. Upland Sandpiper | 88. Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 138. Bobolink |
| 39. Marbled Godwit | 89. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | 139. Red-winged Blackbird |
| 40. Semipalmated Sandpiper | 90. Eastern Bluebird | 140. Eastern Meadowlark |
| 41. Least Sandpiper | 91. Swainson's Thrush | 141. Western Meadowlark |
| 42. Pectoral Sandpiper | 92. American Robin | 142. Yellow-headed Blackbird |
| 43. Common Snipe | 93. Gray Catbird | 143. Great-tailed Grackle |
| 44. Wilson's Phalarope | 94. Brown Thrasher | 144. Common Grackle |
| 45. Franklin's Gull | 95. Cedar Waxwing | 145. Brown-headed Cowbird |
| 46. Ring-billed Gull | 96. European Starling | 146. Orchard Oriole |
| 47. Caspian Tern | 97. Bell's Vireo | 147. House Finch |
| 48. Black Tern | 98. Blue-headed Vireo | 148. American Goldfinch |
| 49. Rock Dove | 99. Yellow-throated Vireo | 149. House Sparrow |
| 50. Mourning Dove | 100. Warbling Vireo | |

Winter Field Reports Due

Winter field report data are due to the editor, Bob Cecil, within a few days after the end of the season. The winter season extends from December 1 to February 28.

In the last year of reporting, over the last four seasons, more people contributed information for the winter season than for any of the other three seasons. This may seem odd, since the winter season has the lowest diversity of birdlife of the four seasons. Only 124 species made it into the *Iowa Bird Life* winter Field Report last year, compared to 247 species listed in the spring report, 242 in the fall report, and 154 in the summer report. Some of the common species do not get mentioned in the published field reports, but the number is about the same for each season.

Although the diversity is lowest during the winter, the ratio of rarities to total species is the highest. Last winter, 7% of the birds reported were from the 'casual' and 'accidental' classifications of the Iowa state list. In the preceding fall, and again this spring, the ratio was 4%, and last summer it was only 3%.

So in the winter, fewer species, and probably fewer birds altogether are seen, but a higher percentage of them are unusual. I know that's why I spent a day last winter in vain driving around the windswept barrens of Boone County.

Proescholdt Wins Fall Quiz Basic Birder Donates Prize

In the Fall issue of the IOU News, we presented a quiz. Recall, the question was: Which two 'casual' species have never been recorded in Iowa in the fall? Among the small collection of responses received, three correct answers from three alert, studious birders were found. The correct answers are: Mountain Bluebird and Lazuli Bunting.

We put the three correct answers into a hat, and in a random manner, drew out a single entry. It belonged to **Mark Proescholdt**, past president of the IOU, and finder of seven of the 15 casual species occurring in Iowa. Mark won a new *Droll Yankees* bird feeder donated by Ellen Montgomery's *Basic Birder* store in Mason City, IA. Congratulations, Mark. And thank you, Ellen.

I.O.U. Bird Listing Information

Please return this form within a week or so of the new year in order for your totals to be included in the next compilation. All totals should be accurate as of December 31, 2001.

Return to: Mary Lou Petersen, 3448 Maple Glen Drive, Bettendorf, IA 52722-2899

Name: _____

E-mail or postal address: _____

County of residence: _____

Iowa State Life List Total: _____

Iowa 2001 Annual List Total: _____ (Total species seen in Iowa during 2001)

Yardlist Total: _____

County Big Day Totals:			
County	Date	Species	Names of Participants
<i>Example: Cerro Gordo</i>	<i>9/09/00</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>Rita Goranson/Paul Hertzell</i>

COUNTY LIST TOTALS

_____ Adair County	_____ Davis County	_____ Jefferson County	_____ Pocahontas County
_____ Adams County	_____ Decatur County	_____ Johnson County	_____ Polk County
_____ Allamakee County	_____ Delaware County	_____ Jones County	_____ Pottawattamie County
_____ Appanoose County	_____ Des Moines County	_____ Keokuk County	_____ Poweshiek County
_____ Audubon County	_____ Dickinson County	_____ Kossuth County	_____ Ringgold County
_____ Benton County	_____ Dubuque County	_____ Lee County	_____ Sac County
_____ Blackhawk County	_____ Emmet County	_____ Linn County	_____ Scott County
_____ Boone County	_____ Fayette County	_____ Louisa County	_____ Shelby County
_____ Bremer County	_____ Floyd County	_____ Lucas County	_____ Sioux County
_____ Buchanan County	_____ Franklin County	_____ Lyon County	_____ Story County
_____ Buena Vista County	_____ Fremont County	_____ Madison County	_____ Tama County
_____ Butler County	_____ Greene County	_____ Mahaska County	_____ Taylor County
_____ Calhoun County	_____ Grundy County	_____ Marion County	_____ Union County
_____ Carroll County	_____ Guthrie County	_____ Marshall County	_____ Van Buren County
_____ Cass County	_____ Hamilton County	_____ Mills County	_____ Wapello County
_____ Cedar County	_____ Hancock County	_____ Mitchell County	_____ Warren County
_____ Cerro Gordo County	_____ Hardin County	_____ Monona County	_____ Washington County
_____ Cherokee County	_____ Harrison County	_____ Monroe County	_____ Wayne County
_____ Chickasaw County	_____ Henry County	_____ Montgomery County	_____ Webster County
_____ Clarke County	_____ Howard County	_____ Muscatine County	_____ Winnebago County
_____ Clay County	_____ Humboldt County	_____ O'Brien County	_____ Winneshiek County
_____ Clayton County	_____ Ida County	_____ Osceola County	_____ Woodbury County
_____ Clinton County	_____ Iowa County	_____ Page County	_____ Worth County
_____ Crawford County	_____ Jackson County	_____ Palo Alto County	_____ Wright County
_____ Dallas County	_____ Jasper County	_____ Plymouth County	

Iowa's Important Bird Area Program Officially Begins January 1st

Ric Zarwell

Audubon leaders and others interested in all-bird conservation in Iowa are forging ahead to officially launch the Iowa Important Bird Area (IBA) Program on January 1, 2002. Three small grants have been approved and will provide funding for the initial year of operations.

State IBA Programs have typically taken 3 or more years to complete. The first overarching goal for 2002 will be to establish a broad bird conservation partnership that solicits and uses input from birders, naturalists and other citizens to identify, nominate, select and publicly recognize a network of Iowa's most essential habitats for birds. At a point in history when 1 in every 8 bird species in the world (12.5%) is facing extinction, and 1 in every 5 U.S. bird species is in a downward population trend, the IBA Program provides a vital way to help ensure viable populations of birds and other wildlife into the future.

During the first months of the new year an education and outreach committee will be formed and a campaign will be launched that will provide considerable additional information about how IOU members, Audubon Chapter members and other interested people can actively take part in this exciting citizen science and public participation initiative. IOU members and many others will be asked to personally nominate individual habitats that they feel are of high importance in accordance with specific IBA site criteria that has been developed by Iowans for use in our state. Iowa's officially designated IBA sites will then receive attention in a whole series of steps including data collection, long-term site monitoring and land stewardship activities that will be explained in detail at a later date.

Iowa is widely recognized as having the most highly man-altered landscape of any state, and also has the smallest percentage of its land area in protective public ownership of any state. Iowa, therefore, has very great conservation needs as well as special opportunities for habitat protection and restoration, and bird conservation. The Iowa IBA Program will prioritize and gain public recognition and support for the state's remaining bird habitats by

using standardized, science-based criteria, and will therefore help "get more bang for the buck" from tight budgets within local, state and federal conservation agencies as well as within privately funded conservation organizations.

Furthermore, officially designated and publicly recognized IBA sites are likely to attract additional future funding for on-site preservation, habitat restoration and management. As a grassroots initiative with a history that dates back to the mid-1980's in Europe and to the mid-1990's in the U.S., the IBA Program will coordinate closely with and add to, new all-bird conservation activities by the Wildlife Diversity Program of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and initiatives of other public and private organizations.

Within the Audubon program, IBA's are usually discrete sites of a few acres to over a thousand acres in size that provide essential habitats for one or more species of birds during breeding, wintering or migration. IBA sites include both public and private lands, and these lands may be either unprotected or protected. IBA Partners will nominate special bird habitats to become officially designated IBA sites by providing basic information on a simple IBA site nomination form. By focusing attention on the most essential and vulnerable habitat areas, the IBA Program will promote proactive habitat conservation and more effective local land use planning and broad natural resource management to the benefit of birds.

Developmental work for Iowa's IBA Program has been ongoing on several fronts over the past two years. A 16-member IBA Technical Committee was formed in 2000 under the Chairmanship of Dr. James Dinsmore, Professor of Animal Ecology, Iowa State University. Many committee members are bird conservation leaders representing the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, while others are with the Wildlife Diversity Program of the Iowa DNR, or are private bird conservation consultants.

Recent efforts to open an Audubon Iowa State Office in Des Moines and to

build new partnerships with public and private organizations, have generated significant interest in the IBA Program. Audubon Iowa sent myself to receive IBA Coordinator training at Audubon's First National IBA Conference, a 4-day Workshop at Everglades National Park in January 2001. Later during 2001 the IBA Technical Committee finalized a set of standardized, science-based criteria to be used in the state's site nomination process.

The initial year of work by the IBA Coordinator will be funded by grants from the New York Community Trust, the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Community Foundation, and the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation. A large grant that I prepared and submitted in mid-2001 set out a detailed multi-year plan for a statewide IBA Program, but unfortunately, it was not funded. Therefore, in 2002 the IBA Program will have to be focused on the Northeast Quadrant (approximately 25 counties) of the state, where the bulk of year 2002 funding will be coming from. Additional funding to support the program across the entire state will be sought throughout 2002.

Although National Audubon is currently sponsoring and facilitating individualized IBA Programs in 35 states across the nation, Iowa will have the first such program in the entire Midwest. Iowa's IBA Program will be a large, complex and challenging undertaking; but one that is vitally important if we want to have healthy habitats and a diverse avifauna for future generations to enjoy.

In terms of an introduction, I am recently retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. My last assignment was as Coordinator of the Clear Lake Enhancement And Restoration (CLEAR) Project where I organized and provided leadership to a coalition of 27 private organizations and public agencies in a water quality project focused on a badly polluted lake and a complex urban and agricultural watershed. Earlier I had done conservation work in 10 counties in Southeast Iowa, in 5 counties in Northeast Iowa and across 23 counties in Northcentral Iowa.

continued on page 8- see IBAs

An Unexpected Look at an American Bittern

Rita Goranson

On October 8th, at Union Hills Wildlife Management Area, Cerro Gordo County, I was looking for fall sparrows. There were possibilities for Sharp-tailed or LeConte's yet, and I was trudging around the hills, checking out all of my favorite spots for sparrows, but with little luck.

I had seen a few Swamp, a Fox and some Song Sparrows, and now I had to walk the mile back to the car. I looped around and went past the first pond area that I had checked earlier. As I walked by the pond, up and out of the swamp grasses flushed an American Bittern. It circled around and low several times allowing me to get good looks at the bird. It had a muddy brown body with brown inner wings and darker contrasting flight feathers. The wings were narrow and were somewhat pointed. As it flew I even could see the black neck streak, and the stripes in the crook of its neck. Its nasal honk was so primitive for such a graceful bird.

Not only was this a later than usual view of this bittern for me, but to be able to see all of its identifying marks as the bird leisurely flew around was exciting. Typically, I hear the bittern or see it only as a quick glance as it speeds away further into the marsh. This experience made up for the lack of fall sparrows at the Union Hills WMA.

Spotted Sandpiper Eludes Peregrine Falcon by Diving Underwater

Frederick Leshner

The United States Fish & Wildlife Service conducted weekly shorebird censuses during July and August of 2001 on lower Pool 8 of the Mississippi River between Brownsville and Reno, Minnesota. This location is very near the point where Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa meet. The purpose of censusing shorebirds was to document the effects, if any, on shorebird populations during an experimental drawdown of water levels on Pool 8 to encourage growth of vegetation on acres of freshly exposed mudflats.

On August 7, 2001, three shorebird censusers in a shallow draft motorboat approached a small island just to the Wisconsin side of the channel. An adult Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) perched on a snag flushed and flew west into Minnesota. An immature Peregrine Falcon flushed seconds later, but unlike the adult, it launched an attack on a Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) which flushed simultaneously with it. As the Spotted Sandpiper flew low over the water, we were surprised to see it land in the water. The young falcon stooped toward the Spotted Sandpiper, which quickly dove under water as the falcon approached. The falcon circled several times, and when the sandpiper surfaced in about 10 seconds, it made a second pass at the sandpiper, which again dove underwater. This time, the falcon circled briefly, then departed. Soon the spotty surfaced a second time, and began to swim slowly and weakly toward shore. When it encountered a line of algae and duckweed floating

parallel to shore, it appeared waterlogged, unable to swim through even this small obstacle. Once it attempted to fly, fluttering very hard, but the wing load was too heavy and it flopped back into the water. Suddenly, a second Spotted Sandpiper flew toward the struggling bird. As it approached the waterlogged bird, the struggling bird fluttered its wings a second time, gained enough altitude to shake off more water, and the two birds flew together off into further life on the Mississippi.

According to *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*, (Terres, 1980), "both adults and young Spotted Sandpipers can swim; adults can dive from surface or from air to escape hawks (see Kelso, 1926)." Peter Matthiessen writes in *The Wind Birds* (1967) that adult Spotted Sandpipers swim as a phalarope, can dive, and even run along the bottom in shallow water like a Dipper. Matthiessen also reports that the Spotted Sandpiper can fly straight into the water if pursued while aloft, using its wings to continue its flight below the surface. The bird we observed did not fly into the water, but twice dove from the surface. We of course did not observe its underwater locomotion, but it did move 10-15 feet underwater each time after diving. There was a strong river current, and during the second dive, the bird definitely moved downstream.

I have never before observed a diving Spotted Sandpiper. This event was silently and subtly dramatic. An older, more persistent Peregrine Falcon would easily have taken the exhausted Spotted Sandpiper surfacing the second time. The Spotted Sandpiper had one slim chance of survival—diving—and it was successful.

IBAs (continued from page 7)

I earned a B.S. degree in Wildlife Biology and a M.S. in Natural Resources (emphasis Environmental Education and Interpretation) both from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. I first began serious birding on a Saturday in March 1966 when I had a life-changing learning experience involving both Lesser and Greater Scaup, and I've been an active birder ever since. Building public-private partnerships and working as part of a team

along with people who are, or want to be, effective stewards of the natural world are things that I enjoy very much.

Being selected to be the Coordinator of Iowa's IBA Program is both an honor and a serious challenge. Active and effective participation by IOU members will be essential to the long-term success of the IBA Program in Iowa, and I hereby request direct and purposeful involvement by as many IOU members as possible as the IBA Program undergoes more specific plan-

ning, organization and implementation. Much additional information will be forthcoming in the months ahead, but in the meantime, if I can answer any questions about the IBA Program or be of any assistance to you related to all-bird conservation, please contact me at:

P.O. Box 299
Lansing, Iowa 52151
(563)538-4991

zarxzar@salamander.com

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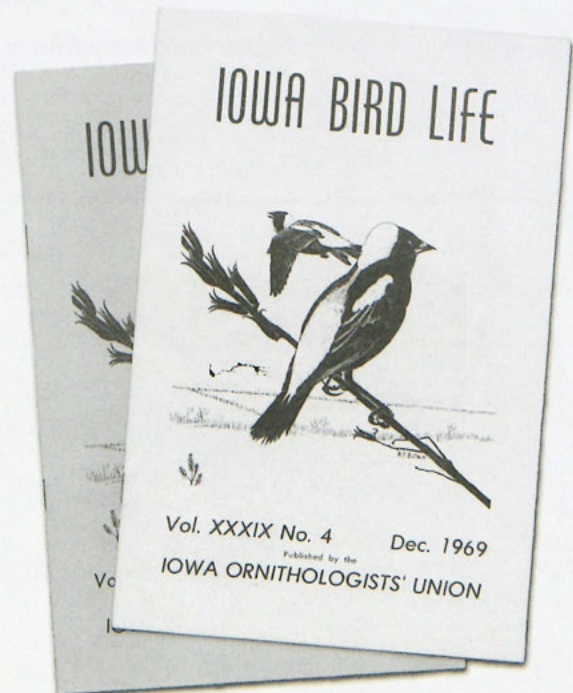
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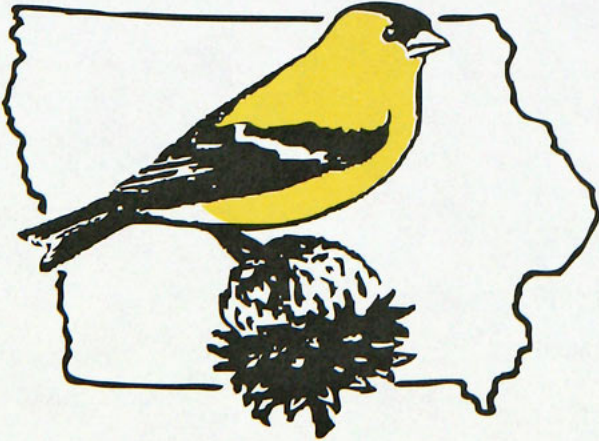


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