



# I.O.U. News

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter

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## Canada Geese Flocking to Area in Record Numbers

by Joe Wilkinson

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For years, the ponds west of Solon along Highway 382 have served as waterfowl stopovers. They might not have been ideal wetlands, with highway traffic a few steps away and trees harboring a few two many potential predators.

However, you could count on seeing several species of ducks as well as a few Canada geese holding over there early each spring. As temperatures warmed, they pushed north to more numerous - and hospitable wetlands to nest and raise young.

That stopover has become long term for three pairs of Canadas this year. At least one pair is raising young. Look closely and you can see their fuzzy heads poking above the grass, as they learn life's lessons; what to eat - how to avoid being eaten - and eventually how to fly.

That pond scene near Solon is indicative of the Canada goose story in Iowa. There are more of them, and they are taking up residence on ponds, marshes and backwaters where you would not have seen them just a few years before. And that's good news for birdwatchers, hunters and other outdoor fans enjoying the return of an Iowa native.

Giant Canada geese were common on the teeming wetlands that greeted European

settlers in Iowa in the 1800s. That was especially true throughout northern Iowa; the southern tip of the "Prairie Pothole Region."

There was a hungry world to feed, though. Those wetlands were drained. They became cropland and pastures. The marshes disappeared. So did many of the plant and wildlife species. Among them were the geese and many other waterfowl.

As the 1900s end, we have learned that not every acre needs to be plowed or paved. And as some of those marshy, low lying areas return to wetlands, they begin attracting more wildlife.

That means more Canada geese. By the 1960s, wildlife workers had begun reintroducing geese in selected areas. That number has grown ever since. Nesting geese brought off about 28,000 young in 1995. That was a modern production record - until now.

"I think the Canada goose population might be a little bit higher than it was last year," projects waterfowl biologist Guy Zenner. "Even though we had some cold weather in April, we're going to have good goose production - more than we saw last year."

Zenner says interior streams as well as ponds and marshes had good water levels at the time Canada geese needed it. He says the northern part of Iowa, with its numerous potholes and wetlands, looked especially good.

"The Mississippi River was probably the exception," Zenner cautions. "They had a little bit of flooding and that probably reduced



goose production there."

Canada geese are pretty well adapted to cold weather. Zenner points out their spring migration keeps them right on the snow line until they reach traditional nesting hotspots near the Arctic Circle.

"Most of the broods we've seen have had four or five goslings in them," says Zenner. "Given that situation, I would say the geese came through the nesting season quite well, despite the cold weather."

More local geese mean more opportunities for Iowa hunters to take Iowa geese during the goose season. That season was expanded from 60 to 70 days last year, in large part due to the Canada comeback. It also puts Iowa in the position as waterfowl producer, rather than only waterfowl "consumer" as northern birds migrate through.

The nearly nonstop rain of the last couple weeks made the countryside seem like a waterfowl paradise anyway. Even as things dry out, though, more geese are a 1990s fact of life.

Whether you enjoy hunting in the fall, feeding them along the river's edge or just stopping to watch a pair lock wings and drop onto quiet water at dusk, you don't have to go far to enjoy this latest wildlife success story.

## Fall 1996 Meeting by Mary Kuhlman, Ft. Dodge

The North Iowa Nature Club hosted the I.O.U. fall, 1996 meeting September 6-8 at the Lime Creek Nature Center near Mason City, Iowa. Members enjoyed the social gathering Friday evening at the nature center that included not only good food and conversation, but also a turkey peeking in at us through the large windows.

Migrating warblers and

shorebirds were seen on field trips held both Saturday and Sunday mornings to areas in Cerro Gordo and Worth counties. These included the Lime Creek and Mason City areas, Christianson-Taylor Wildlife Area, Silver Lake, Rice Lake, Shellrock River Greenbelt, Zirbel Slough and Ventura Marsh. Thanks go to Vergil and Joan Eness, Curt Nelson, Carolyn Fischer, and Rita Goranson for being field trip leaders

"Sea Gulls Made Simple" was the first program Saturday afternoon. Jim Bangma, special guest from New Jersey, gave this interesting presentation. He said he can see up to 15,000 gulls in one day in his home state, but Iowa actually has more species of gulls listed than does New Jersey.

In his program "The Iowa List - Past and Future," Tom Kent predicted that White-tailed Kite and Sprague's Pipit would be the next two birds to be added to our state list. In the opinion poll he gave the group, predictions by members varied widely! We will want an update in a few years!

The final program of the afternoon was by Curt Nelson. He highlighted some of the birding sites of north central Iowa, including many of the areas where the field trips were held. The I.O.U. business meeting concluded the afternoon session.

The evening banquet was held at Prime 'n Wine Restaurant in Mason City. Pam and Reid Allen announced that Ann Johnson won the bird quiz competition. Banquet speaker Jim Bangma fascinated the group with beautiful slides of many unusual birds of central India and tales of elephants and tigers.

The weekend concluded after the traditional picnic lunch and compilation. Special thanks to the members of the North Iowa Nature Club for their work in making the meeting successful. The spring meeting will be a tri-state meeting in Sioux City with South Dakota and Nebraska. It will be held May 16-18, 1996.



## Attendance:

**Algona:** Matt Kenne  
**Ames:** Barb Bettis, Ed & Liz Carbrey, Jim & Steve Dinsmore, Michael & Paul Freiberg, Dixie Overton  
**Ankeny:** Carol & Galin Berrier, Maridel Jackson  
**Bettendorf:** Cathy & Jim Konrad  
**Cedar Falls:** Ed & Jean Leonard  
**Cedar Rapids:** Dale & Helen Fye  
**Clear Lake:** Jean & Vergil Eness, Barb Larson  
**Clive:** Jane Clark  
**Coralville:** Richard Tetrault  
**Davenport:** Dan Dorrance, Tim Fenske-Crawford, Mary Lou & Pete Petersen  
**Decorah:** Dennis Carter  
**Des Moines:** Bob Cecil, Barb Miller, John & Mary Mitchell  
**Estherville:** Harold White  
**Ft. Dodge:** John & Judy Garton, Mary Kuhlman  
**Ida Grove:** Pete Ernzen, Don Poggensee  
**Indianola:** Aaron Brees, Jim Sinclair  
**Iowa City:** Bud Gode, Rick Hollis, Tom Kent, Carol Thompson  
**Lake Mills:** Sibyl Sand  
**Liscomb:** Beth & Mark Proescholdt  
**Marion:** Jim & Joyce Durbin  
**Marshalltown:** Joan Buwalda, Jean Eige, Edna Kirse, Alice Smith, Linda Tasler, Ethal Tietje, Russ Widner  
**Mason City:** Carolyn Fischer, Rita Goranson, Beth McBride, Ellen Montgomery, Curt Nelson, Marty Pauley, Tim Phalen, Jan Walter  
**Nevada:** Hank Zaletel  
**Nora Springs:** Reva Pedelty  
**Norwalk:** Ann Johnson, Sue Spieker  
**Osceola:** Beth Brown  
**Oskaloosa:** Ron Muilenburg  
**Paullina:** Darwin Koenig  
**Princeton:** Ann Barker  
**Sioux City:** Bob & Phyllis Nickelson  
**Spencer:** Lee Schoenewe  
**Ventura:** Pat Hansen  
**Waterloo:** Dick Kraemer, Francis Moore  
**West Des Moines:** Pam & Reid Allen, Richard & Sharon Stilwell

**Chicago, IL:** Jim & Kate Frazier  
**Moline, IL:** Ava Reynolds  
**Heartland, MN:** Mr. & Mrs. Al Batt  
**Cliffside Park, NJ:** Jim Bangma



## Birds of An Iowa Dooryard Reissued

Birds of An Iowa Dooryard, by Althea Rosina Sherman (1853-1943) was published posthumously in 1952. This important and long unavailable work is being republished by the University of Iowa Press in October. Sherman, a self-taught ornithologist, was a pioneer in the field of life studies - she was the first to report on the entire nesting cycle of Screech Owls, American Kestrels, Northern Flickers, Chimney Swifts, and other species.

She was the third woman to become a fellow in the American Ornithologists' Union and an early mentor to Margaret Morse Nice, Cordelia Stanwood, and others.

The new paperback issue, with sixteen of Sherman's detailed illustrations and a new forward by nature writer Marcia Myers Bonta, is available for \$13.95 (plus \$2.00 shipping and handling) from: Johnson County Songbird Project, 2511 Hwy 1 SW, Iowa City, IA 52240.

The Songbird Project is currently restoring Sherman's Chimney Swifts' tower which was constructed in 1915 for the direct observation of nesting swifts. All proceeds from the Songbird Project's sales of this book will go to the tower restoration. For more information call Barbara Boyle: 319/628-4824.





## State & County Lists - 1995

by Peter C. Petersen, Davenport

For 1994, 20 people reported lifetime Iowa totals, down to 1993 levels from a high of 24 last year. Four more people reported county totals. Eugene and Eloise Armstrong had 309 for the year up five from 1994. We received at least one listing for 43 counties, down five counties from last year.

Please send your totals for Iowa and any counties you have recorded at least 125 species within Iowa through December 31, 1996 to the compiler by May 31, 1997. The address is 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803. The total number is all that is needed, not a complete listing. Do not forget the new species split off in August of 1995 by the A.O.U. and on the new ABA list.

### Big Day 1996

by Reid Allen, West Des Moines

Big Day Spring 1996 went out with a whimper not a bang. Only three entries (each included a contribution to the Endowment Fund and Project Fund). Nevertheless, there were three winners (one never loses on a Big Day).

Capturing "first place" and "Award of Excellence" certificates was the team of Pete Petersen, Brian Blevins and Don Moeller. Their total of 204 species on May 13, 1996 ranks as the highest number for any Big Day count in Iowa! For "second place," the team of Eloise and Eugene Armstrong, Dennis Thompson and Phil Walsh were given "Award of Merit" certificates for 153 species on May 13, 1996, and special note of "most life birds seen by a team member," that being Phil Walsh.

"Third place" certificate "Awards of Distinction" (for perseverance) went to the team of Kelly McKay, Ulf Konig and Tim Fenske-Crawford. They choose to wait until May 14, 1996 for their Big Day and, as a result, suffered for 2 hours stuck in sand, 20-25 mph winds most the day, then rain and downpours! Still, the team found a creditable total of 130 species.

Not to take anything away from these three fine teams, it was a disappointing response to a fun activity that could raise funds for I.O.U. Therefore, next spring you are encouraged to participate in the Spring County Migration Count. We need help in this project in as many counties as possible. Contact Pete Petersen for information.

#### Iowa Totals — 200 Minimum

Pete Petersen	373
Eugene Armstrong	362
Eloise Armstrong	360
Brian Blevins	360
Mark Proescholdt	341
Beth Proescholdt	338
Pam Allen	337
Reid Allen	337
Ann Johnson	332
Mary Lou Petersen	323
Curt Nelson	307
Ann Barker	302
Jan Walter	297
Corey Blevins	292
Rita Goranson	287
Lee Schoenewe	284
Bill Huser	279
Charlotte Scott	273
Matt Kenne	273
Doug Harr	249



**County Totals - 125 Minimum**

Allamakee		
Mark Proescholdt	160	
Appanoose		
Dwight Blumer	253	
Charlotte Scott	237	
Steve Dinsmore	177	
Black Hawk		
Pete Petersen	227	
Mary Lou Petersen	221	
Boone		
Steve Dinsmore	245	
Mark Proescholdt	207	
Beth Proescholdt	195	
Eugene Armstrong	195	
Eloise Armstrong	195	
Bremer		
Mark Proescholdt	156	
Jill Feldkamp	143	
Butler		
Mark Proescholdt	175	
Cerro Gordo		
Curt Nelson	268	
Jan Walter	266	
Rita Goranson	244	
Steve Dinsmore	175	
Clay		
Lee Schoenewe	256	
Clinton		
Pete Petersen	251	
Mary Lou Petersen	197	
Dallas		
Eloise Armstrong	196	
Eugene Armstrong	195	
Steve Dinsmore	177	
Des Moines		
Pete Petersen	219	
Dickinson		
Lee Schoenewe	242	
Doug Harr	231	
Steve Dinsmore	195	
Franklin		
Mark Proescholdt	164	
Fremont		
Steve Dinsmore	242	
Mark Proescholdt	191	
Greene		

Steve Dinsmore	214	
Mark Proescholdt	170	
Grundy		
Mark Proescholdt	175	
Guthrie		
Steve Dinsmore	228	
Eugene Armstrong	221	
Eloise Armstrong	220	
Mark Proescholdt	188	
Hamilton		
Steve Dinsmore	203	
Mark Proescholdt	199	
Hardin		
Mark Proescholdt	237	
Beth Proescholdt	217	
Jackson		
Pete Petersen	233	
Jasper		
Mark Proescholdt	178	
Beth Proescholdt	157	
Johnson		
Pete Petersen	250	
Kossuth		
Matt Kenne	264	
Steve Dinsmore	180	
Lee		
Steve Dinsmore	195	
Linn		
Pete Petersen	205	
Louisa		
Pete Petersen	259	
Lyon		
Doug Harr	175	
Madison		
Eugene Armstrong	266	
Eloise Armstrong	263	
Marion		
Steve Dinsmore	210	
Mark Proescholdt	209	
Marshall		
Beth Proescholdt	259	
Mark Proescholdt	258	
Muscatine		
Pete Petersen	257	
Mary Lou Petersen	220	
Palo Alto		
Lee Schoenewe	170	
Polk		



Steve Dinsmore 302  
 Eugene Armstrong 295  
 Eloise Armstrong 294  
 Pam Allen 285  
 Reid Allen 282  
 Mark Proescholdt 256  
 Pete Petersen 243  
 Beth Proescholdt 241

Pottawattamie  
 Steve Dinsmore 197

Poweshiek  
 Mark Proescholdt 160

Scott  
 Pete Petersen 310  
 Brian Blevins 286  
 Mary Lou Petersen 281

Story  
 Steve Dinsmore 278  
 Mark Proescholdt 239  
 Beth Proescholdt 216

Tama

Mark Proescholdt 228  
 Beth Proescholdt 175

Wayne  
 Charlotte Scott 229

Winneshiek  
 Dennis Carter 220

Woodbury  
 Bill Huser 247

Worth  
 Curt Nelson 181  
 Jan Walter 154

Wright  
 Steve Dinsmore 217  
 Mark Proescholdt 159

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