



# I.O.U. NEWS

Spring 1990 Newsletter of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Volume 6 Number 1

## **The Christmas Bird Count - Why I Go Cele Burnett, Ames**

The first time I went on a Christmas bird count, it rained. Forty degrees and rain. I spent the day with a man I met that morning over coffee and hot chocolate. He had a thick, hard-to-understand Swedish accent and long legs. I took five short steps for every one of his long strides.

I was novice at birding. By the time I found the bird in my binoculars, he had announced its species, recorded it dutifully in his green spiral notebook - in pencil - and moved five strides down the road. I had a miserable time.

I tried it again. The second year, I joined two married couples. David birded for a living. And he was very enthusiastic. I'm no couch potato, but one day in the field with David was bit depressing. I turned down an offer to walk one more abandoned railway right-of-way to ride with the driver who drove the car around to the other end of the linear trail. I felt pretty smug - and warm and comfortable - after hearing reports of only a few flitting tree sparrows.

The third year, I found my niche with Dave and Jeanne. Dave's the serious birder. He tolerates our presence as Jeanne and I tramp along behind him each winter on the bird count.

Dave's the counter, of course. He strides - another brown-capped long strider - ahead of Jeanne and me, spotting, counting, identifying the birds, calling back with his counts - "three jays, two nuthatches, four more crows" - periodically.

Jeanne is the recorder and second-counter-in-command. She records Dave's counts, stopping now and then to listen, to verify, and to add to the count.

I'm along for the fun of it. I'm a naturalist by profession, and I have a strong aversion to turning this bird count into another bird walk where I'm in charge of the group, where I'm supposed to know where we are and where we're going at all times and the name of everything out there in the woods, including the scientific nomenclature.

Besides, I'm of the strong opinion that - at the risk of offending anyone - there's more to life than birds. There's too much out there to ignore. Jeanne agrees. That's why Dave is always ahead of us. We tend to poke at things along the way. We look down when others look up. We walk in circles around trees to figure out what caused the scratch marks on the bark. We inspect the diversity of fungi and seeds and thorns. We examine and collect scat samples.

Every once in a while, we look up, but mostly we depend on Dave's good memory to keep track of the counts until we catch up to



him. These sightings are recorded, once we can find the pencil stuffed in among the tissues and mittens and laughter.

You see, we tend, well, to enjoy ourselves. Last year, we were joined by Paul who didn't quite know what to make of our Christmas tradition. By the time I had pulled loose my mittens from the gooseberry bush, I tripped over a log before stumbling into a tree which broke off at its base, causing Jeanne to lean against the big old oak tree in laughter. I proceeded to laugh so hard I cried, fogging my glasses. Well, Dave was striding out of sight in - take your pick - embarrassment, irritation, or resignation, and Paul was somewhere in between. He chose the serious birder position and stayed close to Dave the rest of the afternoon. But he continued to look back at the runny-nosed laughing birds in the rear - probably with envy. Obviously, Jeanne and I don't go birding to compete with Dave and serious birders with feathers in their caps.

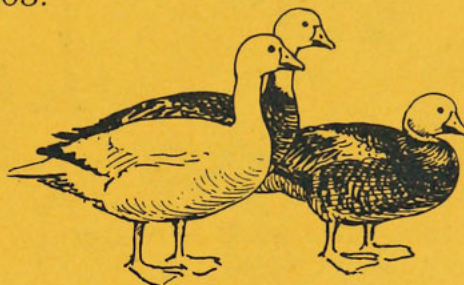
Which brings me to the point of all this. It's not how many birds you count on the Christmas bird count that's important. It's what you see along the way. It's the company you enjoy. It's the warm flush on your cheeks from feeling the cold and wind on your face all day. It's the good food and conversation at the boasting party later that night. It's falling asleep fast and deep at the end of the day. The birds are a fringe benefit; it's the count that matters. And I haven't been disappointed yet.

## State and County Bird Lists

Announcing a new feature for the *I.O.U. Newsletter* - a compilation of IOU members' state and county bird lists tabulated on a calendar year basis. Submission can be for one or all of the counties. One Minnesota birder has surpassed 200 species for all 87 counties, a remarkable achievement.

The threshold for the state total is 200 species and 125 for counties. This is a life long total and covers all species of wild birds positively recorded within the county or state. It is hoped that everyone will be able to submit a

total of over 125 species for their home county. One does not need to be a resident of Iowa, just an IOU member. Records through 1989 are due by April 15 and should be sent to Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803.



## Research on Iowa Birds

Probably the greatest birding spectacle that occurs in Iowa every year is the migration of Snow Geese through western Iowa. In the past, few of those geese wintered in Iowa. In recent years many of them have stayed later in the fall and some years they have wintered in southwestern Iowa and northwestern Missouri. A recently completed study by Susan Davis at Iowa State University has provided the first detailed information on how the geese spend their time, data that are important in understanding their ability to survive at the northern edge of their wintering range.

Susan studied geese near Riverton, Iowa, at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern Missouri, and at a reservoir near Kansas City. She did most of her "field work" from a car, using it as a blind so she could get close to the birds. Her work consisted of systematically describing what the birds were doing at set intervals throughout the day. She found that although the birds spent most of their time either sleeping or loafing, they did spend an appreciable amount of time feeding, especially in corn stubble. As long as snow cover was light and the birds could find food, they seemed to have little problem surviving, even if the temperatures were very low.

Susan, a native of Wisconsin, started her education at Kansas State University. She is a seasoned traveler, having spent 14 months in the Galapagos Islands, the central Andes Mountains, and Patagonia before starting work



at Iowa State. From 1985-87, she and her husband Tim, who is a botanist, lived in lowland Bolivia where he did field work. While there, Susan studied the bird life of that little-studied region and also gave birth to their first child. With their degrees finished, they would like to return to the tropics. They see unlimited opportunity to study tropical plants and animals and a great need for work to be done. Susan's study was sponsored by the Welder Wildlife Foundation of Texas. Ironically, the director of that group studied waterfowl in southwestern Iowa 35 years ago.



### Elton Fawks Honored

The Oak Valley Bald Eagle Refuge in Hampton, Illinois has officially been renamed the Elton E. Fawks Bald Eagle Refuge. Illinois Department of Conservation Director Mark Frech recently made the announcement in Milan as part of the fourth annual Bald Eagle Days.

"The renaming of the refuge is an appropriate memorial to a man whose passion in life was protecting the bald eagle," Frech said. Fawks, who was a long-time IOU member, died last October at the age of 81. He began working to protect eagles in the 1940s.

In the 1950s he organized a nine-state study of eagle populations discovering the eagles were dying at an alarming rate. He continued to work on behalf of eagles and helped bring about the government ban of DDT, which was infecting eagles through the fish they eat.

In 1982, after a 12-year battle, Fawks helped establish the refuge, located near Lock and Dam 14 in Hampton. "He always had a lot of projects going on, but this one took up the lion's share of his time," said David Fawks,

Elton's son.

The refuge now includes 174 acres where an estimated 120 eagles roost during the cold winter months.

Reprinted from the Quad-City Times.

### Nominations for 1990-1992

The nominating committee, consisting of Pete Petersen, Jim Sinclair and Carol Thompson has assembled the following slate of candidates to be voted on at the upcoming meeting at La Crosse: Secretary - Hilda Sickles; Treasurer - Wayne Livermore; Board of Directors (two openings) - Rick Hollis and Eloise Armstrong. All of these positions are for two year terms. Additional nominations may be made at the meeting, and the election for these positions will be held at that time.



### Big Day Count 1990

The IOU Big Day Count's primary objectives are to have fun and to promote friendly competition. They also help to raise funds for the IOU endowment fund and special projects.

The counts are divided into categories of **statewide and county** counts. Traveling plaques will be presented at the fall IOU meeting for highest species count for the state and county.

A minimum contribution of \$10.00 per team is required. the Big Day rules remain the same as last year. The counts can be taken any time up to May 16. Those wishing to participate need to request an entry form from Ray Cummins at 609 S. Main St., Centerville, IA 52544.





## New Members

Please take the opportunity to welcome the following new members to our organization:

Edward & Jean Allgood, Iowa City; Elizabeth Anderson, Britt; Minda & Paul Babinat, Sioux City; Doria Baldock, Des Moines; Frederick & Jeanne Bark, Solon; Robert & Virginia Bell, Russell; Ethel Bern, Sioux City; Barbara Boyle, Oxford; Gary Buresh, Independence; Barb Busenbarrick, Creston; James Connor, Coralville; Jean Conover, Mapleton; Howard Cox, Zearing; Genevieve & Howard Curry, Glenwood; Jean Hagert Dow, Ames; John Egenes, Story City; Leonard & Natalie Feldt, Iowa City; Carolyn Fischer, Mason City; William Foley, LeMars; Mary Ford, Guttenburg; Anna & Paul Hain, Wilton; Jane & Darrell Hanel, Boone; Ellen Hansen, Dakota City; Richard Harmon, Spirit Lake; Howard Hart, Lanesboro; Ben Hibbs, Marshalltown; Bryan & Tiffany Johnson, Centerville; James Larson, Oelwein; Isabelle & Marvin Lemke, Des Moines; Edward & Jean Leonard, Cedar Falls; Mark Lindahl, Des Moines; James & Mary Ludeman; John Manson, Ringsted; Maria McKean, Armstrong; Donald & Jean Moeller, LeClaire; Nadine Nelson, Ely; Warren Piette, Iowa City; Randy Pinkston, Iowa City; Matthew & Wanda Prather, Iowa City; Delores Ranshaw, Chariton; Donna Rourick, Atlantic; Mrs. Sylvan Runkel, Des Moines; Lucy Steere, Greene; Beverly Steverwald, Carlisle; Dale Sullivan, Burlington; Mark Vavroch, Montezuma; Bernice & Charles Walling, Oskaloosa; George Walters, Anamosa; Sallie White, Estherville.

## Breeding Bird Atlas Update Carol Thompson, Iowa City

The Breeding Bird Atlas committee met on March 3 to review our progress and make plans for the coming year. This is **ABSOLUTELY** our last year of field work. We have made good progress on most of the priority blocks and will hopefully have all of them completed by the end of the year. We would also like to complete one or two standard blocks in each county. Many of our standard blocks are not yet completed and many are not even started. We are updating the coverage map which should be available in about a month. Some people have not yet turned in their cards. It would really be a shame if we expended effort in duplicate coverage because we didn't know an area had been done. If you would like to work on a block this year, please contact either Laura Jackson or Bruce Ehresman of the DNR (515/432-2823). We will probably be contacting individuals to request their assistance on specific blocks.

There have been some problems with lack of documentation on some of the rarer species. We may be contacting atlasers to request further confirmation of a particular species. This is not a criticism of anyone's birding skills, but rare or uncommon species should be documented by everyone. We are also starting to request funding from outside sources to finance the publication. If anyone has any contacts or knows of a possible funding source, please let us know.

Iowa Birdline

319/338-9881



# TRI-STATE BIRDING CONVENTION

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

MINNESOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

WISCONSIN SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY

May 18-20, 1990

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse  
LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

The La Crosse Audubon Society and the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse Biology Department invite you to the first joint convention of the IOU, MOU, and WSO. Come meet birders from your neighboring states, bird the Mississippi and Coulee Region, and learn from panels and papers. Our banquet will feature Great Gray Owl expert Dr. Robert Nero.

## PRECONVENTION TRIP May 17-18

A motorcoach will leave La Crosse at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 17 for Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien. We will bird the bluffs and shores of Wisconsin to Wyalusing. Overnight we will stay at the park in a dormitory-style group camp with bunks. Participants need to bring a sleeping bag. Friday morning we will return through Iowa and Minnesota to La Crosse by 4:00 p.m. Two lunches, dinner, and breakfast are included. Cost is \$40.00 per person. Space is limited. We will leave from site B on the UW-L map at 8:00 a.m. There is an excellent chance of seeing a large number of bird species on this trip amidst scenery that is perhaps the most spectacular in the three states.

## FRIDAY May 18

- 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Registration at "Port O' Call" in Cartwright Center
- 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Social hour in Port O' Call.  
*Slide sharing. Bring a few of your favorite funny, mysterious, puzzling, embarrassing, or otherwise interesting bird slides.*
- 9:00 p.m. Owls and night sounds field trip.

## SATURDAY May 19

5:00 a.m.

### FIELD TRIPS

- 1 Brice Prairie.**  
Herons, shorebirds, icterids, hawks.  
*Marsh, water, fields, low woods.*
- 2 Goose Island.**  
Herons, ducks, shorebirds, warblers, sparrows.  
*Edges, wooded river bottoms.*
- 3 Kipp State Park, MN.**  
Hawks, flycatchers, Henslow's Sparrow.  
*Dry upland, wooded bluff, river overlook.*
- 4 Pettibone-Shore Acres-La Crescent, MN.**  
King Rail, Common Moorhen, warblers, vireos.  
*Low woods, marsh.*

6:00 a.m.

### FIELD TRIPS

- 5 Grandad Bluff.**  
Woodpeckers, flycatchers, most passerines.  
*Deep hardwood forest, blufftop view.*
- 6 Hixon Forest.**  
Pileated Woodpecker, gnatcatcher, Blue-winged and Cerulean Warblers.  
*Deep hardwood forest, ravines.*
- 7 La Crosse River Marsh.**  
Herons, Bob-white, Sora, Marsh Wren, Common Moorhen.  
*Marsh.*
- 8 French Island.**  
Gulls, Upland Sandpiper, sparrows, Orchard Oriole.  
*Edges, Black River, Lake Onalaska.*



**SATURDAY, May 19 (continued)**

- 8:00 a.m. **Breakfast** Choice of pancakes or French toast; bacon, ham or sausage; coffee or tea. \$4.00
- 9:00 a.m. Greeting, Main Hall Auditorium
- 9:10 a.m. Paper I "Upper Mississippi River Peregrine Reintroduction," Tordoff and Redig
- 9:50 a.m. Paper II "Human Use Patterns and Avian Mortality on Seagull Bar in Marinette, WI"  
Wendel Johnson
- 10:30 a.m. **Intermission**
- 10:45 a.m. Paper III "Henslow's Sparrow in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin," Steve Dinsmore
- 11:25 a.m. Paper IV To Be Announced
- 12:30 p.m. **Lunch** Stacked ham with Swiss on rye with salad, soup, and beverage. \$5.50
- 1:30 p.m. Panel I "Breeding Bird Survey Summary" Panel II "Endangered Species"
- 2:25 p.m. Panel III "Records Committee Issues" Panel IV "Beginning Birding"
- 3:20 p.m. Panel V "Editing a State Journal" Panel VI "Birders and Politics"
- 4:15 p.m. Business meetings.
- 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. **Social Hour.**
- 7:00 p.m. **Banquet at Cartwright Center** Turkey Breast with all the trimmings. \$12.00
- 8:00 p.m. Dr. Robert Nero  
*We are pleased to have Dr. Nero as our speaker. He holds a Ph.D. in Zoology and Wildlife Management from the University of Wisconsin. He has served as Assistant Director of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Saskatchewan, Chief of Natural History at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, and as Wildlife Specialist with the Manitoba Department of Natural Resources. He is the author of the books **Redwings** and **The Great Gray Owl, Phantom of the Northern Forest**. Dr. Nero is well known for his nature writings, which have appeared in numerous magazines and journals.*

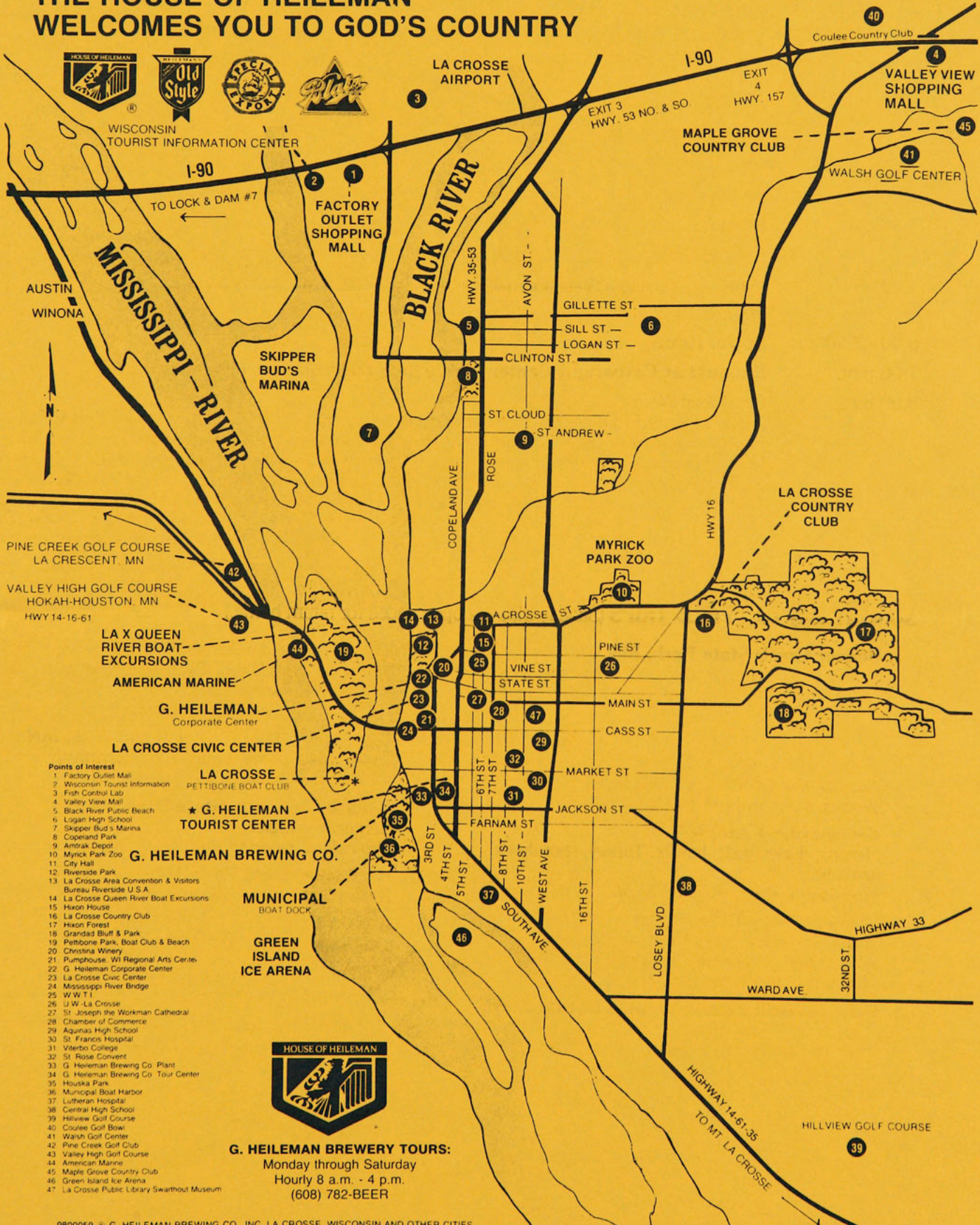
**SUNDAY May 20 FIELD TRIPS** (Sunday trips are open ended for return home.)

- 1 **Beaver Creek State Park, MN.**  
Acadian Flycatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue-winged and Cerulean Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Turkey.  
Woods, stream.
- 2 **Bohemian Valley, WI.**  
Acadian Flycatcher, Veery, warblers.  
Woods, stream, farm fields.
- 3 **Brownsville-Reno, MN.**  
Herons, ducks, gulls, hawks, Turkey, shorebirds, warblers.  
Mississippi River, wooded bluffs.
- 4 **Harpers Ferry-Effigy Mounds Natl. Mon., IA.**  
Waterfowl, gulls, terns, Prothonotary and Worm-eating Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush.  
Mississippi River, wooded bluffs.
- 5 **Kellogg Sand Prairie-Weaver Bottoms, MN.**  
Waterfowl, Willow Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Lark sparrow, Orchard Oriole.  
Sandy grasslands, pines, sedge meadows, Mississippi backwaters.
- 6 **New Albin, IA.**  
Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Prothonotary Warbler.  
Mississippi River.
- 7 **Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, WI.**  
Warblers, Bell's Vireo, Orchard Oriole, sparrows, Cormorant, Osprey.  
Riverbottom woods, prairie edge, sloughs, marsh.
- 8 **Whitewater River-Weaver Bottoms, MN.**  
Waterfowl, Turkey, Louisiana Waterthrush, warblers.  
Woods, ponds, ridges, Mississippi River.
- 9 **Wildcat Mountain State Park, WI.**  
Kentucky Warbler.  
Dry ridges, wooded floodplain, Kickapoo River.
- 10 **Wyalusing State Park, WI.**  
Kentucky, Cerulean, Worm-eating and Prothonotary warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Red-shouldered Hawk.  
Wooded bluffs, grassland, Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers.
- 11 **Upper Mississippi Natl. Wildlife and Fish Refuge Tour.** Lake Onalaska and Sommers Chute by boats. Limited participants, cancelled if raining. Ducks, gulls, Osprey, shorebirds, Prothonotary Warbler.  
Mississippi River, Pool 7.
- 12 **Yellow River State Forest, IA.**  
Red-shouldered Hawk, Turkey, Acadian Flycatcher; Blue-winged, Cerulean and Kentucky Warblers.  
Woods, grassland, marsh.



# THE HOUSE OF HEILEMAN WELCOMES YOU TO GOD'S COUNTRY

(Points of Interest)



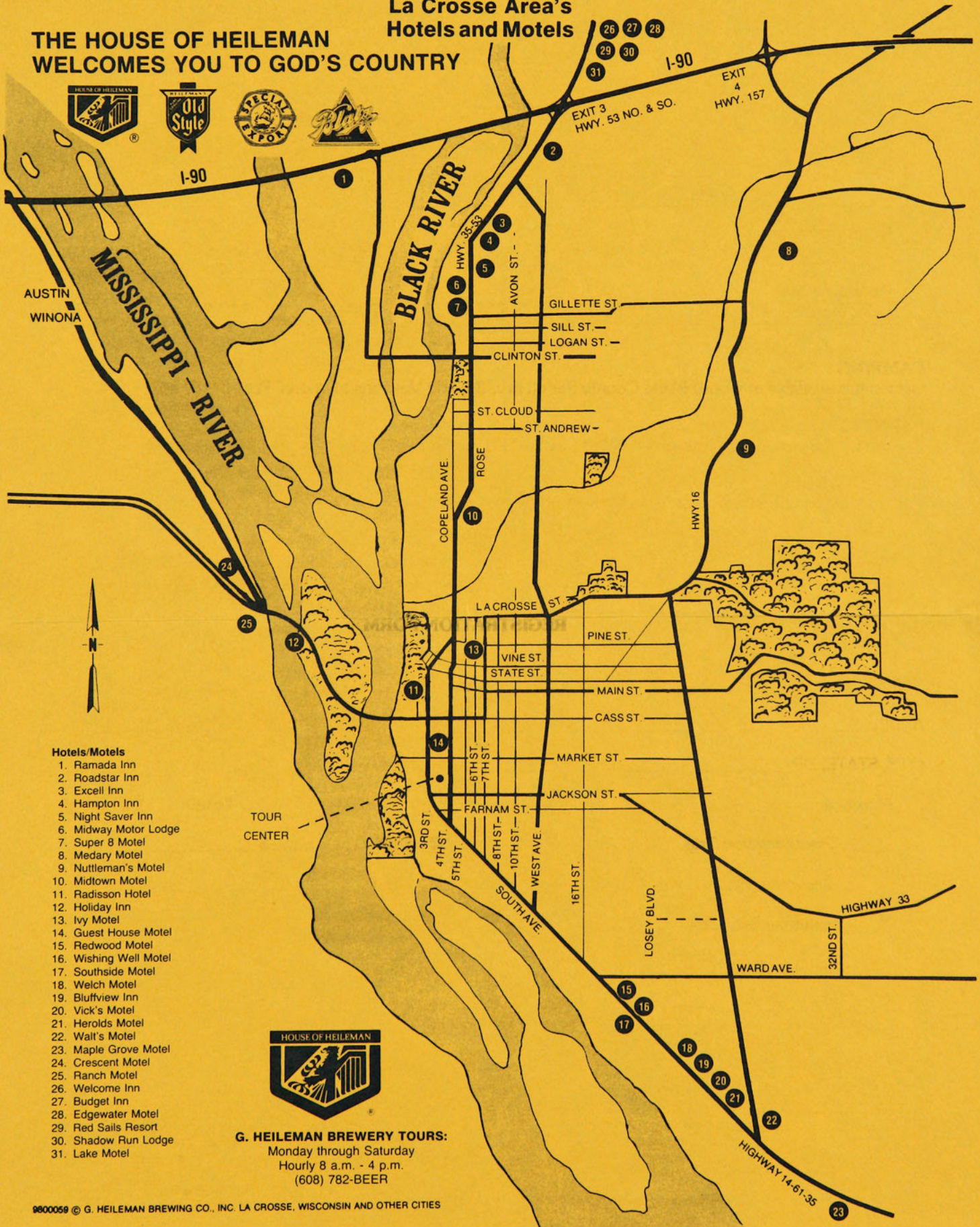
- Points of Interest**
1. Factory Outlet Mall
  2. Wisconsin Tourist Information
  3. Fish Control Lab
  4. Valley View Mall
  5. Black River Public Beach
  6. Logan High School
  7. Skipper Bud's Marina
  8. Copeland Park
  9. Amtrak Depot
  10. Myrick Park Zoo
  11. City Hall
  12. Riverside Park
  13. La Crosse Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Riverside U.S.A.
  14. La Crosse Queen River Boat Excursions
  15. Hixon House
  16. La Crosse Country Club
  17. Hixon Forest
  18. Grandad Bluff & Park
  19. Pettibone Park, Boat Club & Beach
  20. Christina Winery
  21. PumpHouse - WI Regional Arts Center
  22. G. Heileman Corporate Center
  23. La Crosse Civic Center
  24. Mississippi River Bridge
  25. W.W.T.I.
  26. J.W. La Crosse
  27. St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral
  28. Chamber of Commerce
  29. Aquinas High School
  30. St. Francis Hospital
  31. Waterloo College
  32. St. Rose Convent
  33. G. Heileman Brewing Co. Plant
  34. G. Heileman Brewing Co. Tour Center
  35. Houppa Park
  36. Municipal Boat Harbor
  37. Lutheran Hospital
  38. Central High School
  39. Hillview Golf Course
  40. Coulee Golf Bowl
  41. Walsh Golf Center
  42. Pine Creek Golf Club
  43. Valley High Golf Course
  44. American Marine
  45. Maple Grove Country Club
  46. Green Island Ice Arena
  47. La Crosse Public Library Swarthout Museum

**G. HEILEMAN BREWERY TOURS:**  
Monday through Saturday  
Hourly 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(608) 782-BEER



**La Crosse Area's  
Hotels and Motels**

**THE HOUSE OF HEILEMAN  
WELCOMES YOU TO GOD'S COUNTRY**



**Hotels/Motels**

1. Ramada Inn
2. Roadstar Inn
3. Excell Inn
4. Hampton Inn
5. Night Saver Inn
6. Midway Motor Lodge
7. Super 8 Motel
8. Medary Motel
9. Nuttleman's Motel
10. Midtown Motel
11. Radisson Hotel
12. Holiday Inn
13. Ivy Motel
14. Guest House Motel
15. Redwood Motel
16. Wishing Well Motel
17. Southside Motel
18. Welch Motel
19. Bluffview Inn
20. Vick's Motel
21. Herolds Motel
22. Walt's Motel
23. Maple Grove Motel
24. Crescent Motel
25. Ranch Motel
26. Welcome Inn
27. Budget Inn
28. Edgewater Motel
29. Red Sails Resort
30. Shadow Run Lodge
31. Lake Motel



**G. HEILEMAN BREWERY TOURS:**  
Monday through Saturday  
Hourly 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(608) 782-BEER



**MOTELS**

The following motels have rooms blocked for the Tri-State Birding Convention. When making a reservation, identify yourself as being with the convention. We urge you to make reservations early as there will be a strong demand for rooms that weekend. Rates shown do not include tax. Area code is 608. Zip code is 54603. \*Indicates indoor pool.

Facility Address, Phone	1 bed 1 person	1 bed 2 people	2 beds 2 people	2 beds 3 people	2 beds 4 people
<b>Exel Inn</b> 2150 Rose St., 781-0400	\$26.95	\$31.95	NA	NA	NA
<b>Hampton Inn*</b> 2110 Rose St., 781-5100	\$42.00	\$49.00	\$49.00	\$49.00	\$49.00
<b>Night Saver Inn</b> 1906 Rose St., 781-0200	\$29.00	\$31.50	\$37.50	\$40.50	\$43.50
<b>Roadstar Inn</b> 2622 Rose St., 781-3070	\$32.00	\$38.00	\$38.00	\$42.00	\$46.00

**CAMPING**

Camping is available at Goose Island County Park (Hwy. 35) and Veterans Memorial Park (Hwy. 16).

**PARKING**

Parking for the convention is reserved in the Cowley Hall Parking Lot, marked as site "P" on the map.

**BOOKSTORES**

The convention will have bookstores which are an excellent source of birding references.

**REGISTRATION FORM**

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

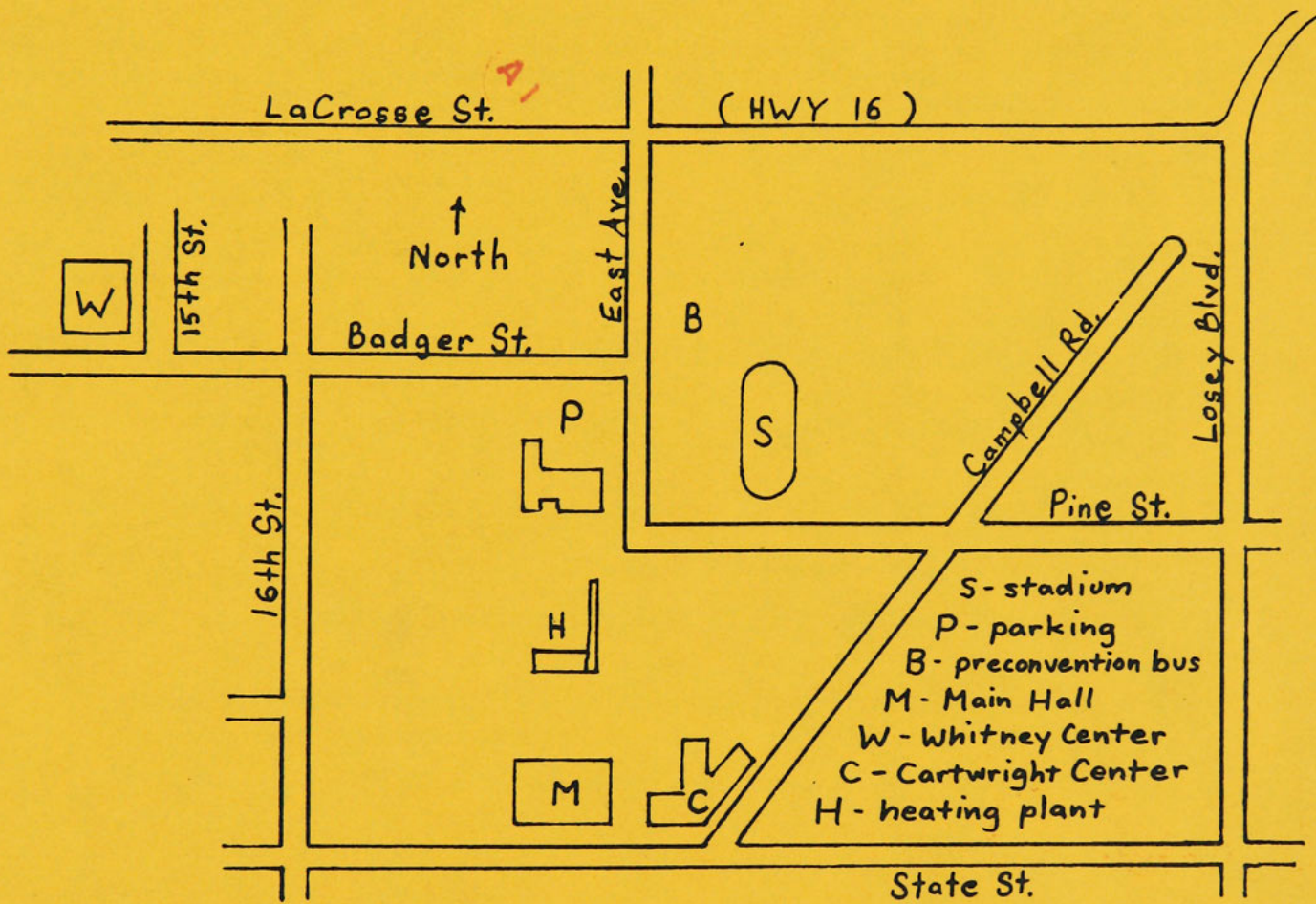
CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Number</b>	<b>Totals</b>
_____ Preconvention Trip @ \$40.00 .....	\$ _____
_____ Registration @ \$5.00 .....	\$ _____
_____ Saturday Breakfast @ \$4.00 .....	\$ _____
_____ Saturday Lunch @ \$5.50 .....	\$ _____
_____ Saturday Banquet and Speaker @ \$12.00 .....	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	\$ _____

Make checks payable to **Tri-State Birding Convention**.  
Return the registration form with check by **April 25, 1990** to:

Tri-State Birding Convention  
c/o Stephen McGovern  
Route 2, Box 96  
Westby, Wisconsin 54667





**IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION**

HANK & LINDA ZALETTEL  
 715 WEST  
 COLO, IOWA 50056



Thomas H Kent  
 211 Richards St  
 Iowa City, IA 52246