



I.O.U. News

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter

Spring 1994 • Volume 10 Number 1

Strictly for the Birds Fuller's bird line helps birders know where to look

Suzanne Barnes

Reprinted with permission of the Cedar Rapids Gazette (c) 1994

One of the phone lines going into the home of Jim and Carole Fuller is strictly for the birds.

The Iowa Bird Line, which Jim has managed for the past 51/2 years is sponsored by the Iowa Ornithologists Union. The number is (319) 338-9881.

The line is actually an answering machine, which is called by people all over the state. In 1992, there were 7,813 calls to the line, or an average of 150 a week, Jim says. This year, he expects the calls to be pretty close to 10,000.

A professor of operative dentistry at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry, Jim was asked to manage the line because "I know the state and I know the birds and it just seemed like a reasonable person to do it."

There are bird lines in "many other states and many other communities." In those areas, they are usually called an RBA or a "Rare Bird Alert."

"And that's mainly the purpose of it, is to dispense information about rare or unusual birds in the state. I fear sometimes that we have less than unusual birds listed on it, but that is the purpose of it, so that people who are interested in birds will know when there are unusual or rare birds in the state and where they are. It usually gives information, if it's something that's really rare, of somebody to call to gain additional information or updates."

During one recent week, the bird line detailed sightings of such feathered visitors as an oldsquaw, tundra swan, California gull, western grebe, Lapland longspur, merlin, and pileated woodpecker.

He records a message once a week, "but I update it as often as is necessary, as long as we get new information," says Jim. "Sometimes that's three or four times a day and sometimes it isn't any more than once a week."

Sightings of rare birds are more frequent during migration periods. "What happens is the really unusual birds get turned around and a bird that might normally be in the Rocky Mountains somehow gets to Iowa."

One rare bird, a Ross' gull was sighted Oct. 31 in Iowa for the first time ever. "It is rarely seen in the lower 48 states; it's an arctic bird. How it got to Red Rock Reservoir over by Pella, I don't know. I happen to be one of the two people that found it."

"It was pretty exciting, especially because the bird is somewhat pink and there aren't very many pink birds, except for flamingos."

Many people who call the bird line hop into their vehicles and fly over to the sighting site. Jim, a birder for the past 20 years, is one of them.

He's also gone farther than the Iowa borders in his quests. "I spent a month in Alaska looking at birds last May and June." They went places tourists don't usually go, like Attu, at the very end of the Aleutian Islands.

The island was uninhabited, other than a Coast Guard station where 20 people live and work. "But it does have a nice air strip there for that



It was an interesting place, muses Jim. "The Eskimos all had ATVs and they all had CB radio and they all had cable TV. They knew who Michael Jordan was, every one of them. But nevertheless, they didn't have running water."

In Alaska, Jim was able to add 46 birds he'd never seen before to his list of sightings. Most were from Asia, as he had hoped.

All birders keep a list of the birds they have seen. "They keep various lists, whether it's an Iowa list or Johnson County list or an American Birding Association (ABA) list or a lower 48 or an international or a yard list or a feeder list."

There are more than 800 different birds that have been seen in the ABA area, which north of the Mexican-United States border. Jim has seen more than 650. The most reported sightings is 811, he says.

PROFILE/ DR. JAMES L. FULLER

Address: Iowa City

Age: 57

Hometown: Burlington

Education: bachelor's degree from Grinnell College; doctor of dental surgery from the College of Dentistry at the University of Iowa.

Occupation: professor of operative dentistry

Family: wife Carole; daughters Anne Means, Madison, Wis.; Laura Fuller, Iowa City; Amy Stockman, Oxford; four grandchildren.

Interests: birds, prairies, fishing, hiking, outdoor pursuits.

NEW ADDRESS

Newsletter Editors have moved!!

Our new address is :
Hank & Linda Zaletel
1928 6th St
Nevada, IA 50201

Iowa Bird Life Back Issue Sale

In an attempt to reduce our inventory of back issue of Iowa Bird Life and to make these issues available to our members, the following special sale will be available at the spring meeting. Back issues for Iowa Bird Life for years prior to 1990 will be on sale at 50 cents per issue. I do not have a detailed list of all of the issues that are available but most issues are available at this price. The terms are strictly cash and carry. Please send me your list of issues you want prior to the meeting and I will have them available at the meeting. Otherwise give me your want list on Friday night and I will do my best to fill your order. Pay for the issues when you pick them up. At this great price, no mail orders will be filled. If you can't attend the meeting, get a friend to pick them up for you.—Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014.

State & County Bird Lists

Pete Petersen, Davenport

Members are encouraged to submit their state and county bird lists for the 1993 calendar year. Submission can be for one or all of the counties. The threshold for the state is 200 species and 150 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 150 species for their home county. One does not need to be a resident of Iowa, just an IOU member. Records through 1993 are due by May 22 and should be sent to Pete Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803.



Sometimes the Magic Works, Sometimes It Doesn't

Gloria Foster

Though the day started cold and windy (20 November 1993), 35-40 expectant people met at the Red Rock Visitor's Center at about 8 am with smiles, scopes and binoculars for an IOU field trip. It sounded good. The '92 November group had seen both Red-throated and Pacific Loons, and in 1991 a Mute Swan and Thayer's Gull had put in appearances. The I.O.U. News had even called sighting a Black-legged Kittiwake, "...a nearly annual appearance."

So, we divided into hopeful groups, one led by Ann Johnson and the other by Tim Schantz. Great leaders. Each group would go to certain spots in the morning, have lunch, then go to the spots the other group had already seen. Great plan. That way everyone would have a chance to see every promising spot. The problem was that not a single promising spot harbored any of the above-mentioned species. What we did see was five White Pelicans, numerous Ring-billed and Herring Gulls of various ages, two Bald Eagles, and rafts of Mallards keeping company with a few Common Mergansers.

But, the wind died down, leaving us under a sunny, mild sky. The company was excellent. We got to know new people, and shared birding stories and pictures of one immature and one adult snowy owl which had been at Lake Rathbun for the past five consecutive days. In the absence of magnificent bird finds, we found each other interesting, inspiring and amusing. In fact, we had such a good time, I expect we'll all be back, nodding at each other in some early-morning parking lot or field or woods, the next possible chance we get!

(P.S. After the morning's search, two carloads of birders went buzzing down to Lake Rathbun to see the Snowy Owls, which, you guessed it, had flown. However, they did see lots of Canada Geese, a mystery goose hanging out with them, and

a female Ring-necked Duck. Ah, well, as the old Indian chief said, after he decided he'd die, and didn't, "Sometimes the magic works, sometime it doesn't." It was fun, anyway.)

Iowa and North American Spring Bird Count

In conjunction with the Third Annual North American Migration Count, Iowa will hold its Spring Count on May 14, 1994. The counts will be conducted on a county basis. We are seeking county coordinators to organize the count and to prevent duplicate or overlapping coverage. As with the Christmas Bird Count, all birds found during the 24 hours period are to be reported. Unlike the Christmas Bird County, no fees are collected.

Iowa birders are encouraged to assist in this important project. Your participation as a coordinator or a participant is essential to its success. For count forms and additional information contact Pete Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA, 52803, or by phone 319/355-7051 (evenings).

New Publication

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has issued a new publication entitled Nest Structures for Ducks and Geese. It contains plans and nesting information about ducks and geese. It can be ordered by writing to: Publications, Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources, Wallace Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50319-0034.



Nominations for 1994/95 Year

The nominating committee consisting of Bob Cecil, chair, Diane Porter, and Francis Moore have proposed the following slate of officers to be voted on at the spring meeting:

Treasurer: Pam Allen, Des Moines

Secretary: Mary Kuhlman, Fort Dodge

For the two board openings, four candidates have been proposed:

Beth Brown, Osceola

Maridel Jackson, Ankeny

Tim Schantz, Lake Red Rock

Harold White, Estherville

The nominating committee will provide brief biographies of each of the candidates at the spring meeting to assist the membership in their selection. Nominations will also be taken from the floor at the time of the election.



Recent Literature on Iowa Birds

Dinsmore, J.J., and S.J. Dinsmore. 1993. Range expansion of the great-tailed grackle in the 1900s. *J. Iowa Acad. of Sci.* 100(2):54-59, 1993.

Gabrey, S.W., P.A. Vohs, and D. H. Jackson. 1993. Perceived and real crop damage by wild turkeys in northeastern Iowa. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 21:39-45.

Varland, D.E., E.E. Klaas, and T.M. Loughin. 1993. Use of habitat and perches, causes, of mortality, and time until dispersal in post-fledging American kestrels. *J. Field Ornithl.* 64:169-178.

Varland, D.E. and T.M. Loughin. 1993. Reproductive success of American kestrels nesting along an interstate highway in central Iowa. *Wilson Bull.* 105:465-474.

Cerro Gordo County Field Trip

Ann Johnson, Norwalk

A few hardy souls braved the cold and snow of 30 January, 1994 to explore the Shell Rock River Greenbelt and other areas of Cerro Gordo County. The folks from the Mason City area proved once again to be wonderful hosts, seeing to such details as doughnuts and hot coffee to start the morning.

The feeders at Lime Creek Nature Center were abuzz with activity as the brilliant sun shone down to trick us into believing that it was actually warm. The lack of food supply this year has severely curtailed the presence of some of the species that the northern reaches of our state have come to expect, but we "Southerners" were pleased with the day.

A Northern Goshawk graced us with its powerful flight as it hunted the greenbelt area. A couple of Northern Shrikes perched high in the tops of trees, carefully surveying the area below for morsels to add to the winter larder.

Ring-necked Pheasants scratched for food in the open fields and three Gray Partridge flushed near some bales of hay. The village of Rock Falls, with its numerous feeding stations and wonderful habitat, played host to a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Accipiters can certainly quiet activity in a hurry! Perhaps one of the most interesting highlights was watching a Great Horned Owl sitting on her nest, incubating eggs in sub-zero temperatures. A sight like that puts birders' complaints and discomforts in perspective.



The Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Spring Meeting

Ames, Iowa

May 20-22, 1994



This year the Maple-Willow-Larch dormitory complex at Iowa State University (Lincoln Way and Wallace Rd.) just north of C.Y. Stephens Auditorium will serve as the site of the spring meeting. All activities will take place here except for the Sunday lunch which will be served at McFarland Park northeast of Ames.

We will have a special speaker this year that we are flying in from Massachusetts. Jon Atwood is a research biologist at the Manomet Observatory for Conservation Sciences at Manomet, Massachusetts. He is the acknowledged expert on the California Gnatcatcher. He will speak on this subject and the various attempts that are being made to save this species.

Jim Dinsmore will speak on his newly published book: *A Country So Full of Game: The Story of Wildlife in Iowa*. I sure that he will be glad to autograph copies.

Field trips will head for the Ledges, Colo Ponds/Hendrickson Marsh, Brookside Park in Ames, and Bob Pyle Marsh/Little Wall Lake and Anderson Lake

Schedule of Events

Friday, May 20	7:00-9:00 P.M.	Registration at the Maple/Willow/Larch dormitory complex and social get-together.
Saturday, May 21	6:00-7:00 A.M.	Continental breakfast at dorm complex.
	7:00 A.M.	Field trips leave from dorm parking lot.
	12:00 noon	Lunch on your own.
	1:15 P.M.	Matte Patterson speaking on the birds of grasslands and CRP.
	1:50-2:30 P.M.	Jim Dinsmore speaking on <i>A Country So Full of Game</i> .
	2:45-3:25 P.M.	Trumpeter Swan reintroduction in Iowa by Pat Schlarbaum of the DNR.
	3:30 P.M.	Business meeting.
	6:00-7:00 P.M.	Banquet
	7:00 P.M.	Jon Atwood speaking on Gnatcatchers and Natural Community Conservation Planning.



**Residence Hall Housing and Food Reservation Form
Iowa State University
Department of Residence**

Conference Group Name Iowa Ornithologists Union

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Male or Female
Address			
City	State	Zip	
Daytime Telephone (plus Area Code)			

ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

Check In Date _____ Check Out Date _____

- Single Air Conditioned \$18.00/person/night
- Double Air Conditioned \$12.50/person/night
- Roommate's Name, If Known _____
- Please assign roommate _____ Non-smoking Roommate _____
- Family Air Conditioned \$25.00/family/night
(2 single beds and 1 rollaway)

Special Needs: _____

DO NOT ENCLOSE PAYMENT FOR ROOMS OR MEAL PLANS. You will pay at the time you check in and pick up your room key. Payment must be made by cash or personal check. No credit cards can be accepted. Check out time is at 1:00 p.m.

Send reservation to: Residence Hall Reservations
1209 Friley Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50012-0003

Reg94006





Sunday, May 22

6:00 A.M.
7:00 A.M.
12:00 noon

Continental breakfast.
Field trips depart.
Lunch and compilation at
McFarland Park.

Make checks payable to Hank Zaletel, 1928 6th St., Nevada, IA 50201. Deadline for registration May 14, 1994. Questions??? call Hank Zaletel, work 1/800-262-0003, home 515/382-5427 or Jim Dinsmore, work 515/294-7669, home 515/292-3152.

Registration for lodging in the dormitories should be sent to the university on the enclosed sheet. NOTE: they accept cash and checks but no credit cards.

Ames Motels:

University Inn, 316 S. Duff, 1/800-422-5250
Budgetel, US 30 at Elwood Dr., 1/800-428-3438
Comfort Inn, 1605 S. Dayton Rd., 1/800-221-2222

Camping: Hickory Grove Park, 2 miles west and 2 miles south of Colo.
Ledges State Park, 5 miles south of Boone on the Des Moines River.

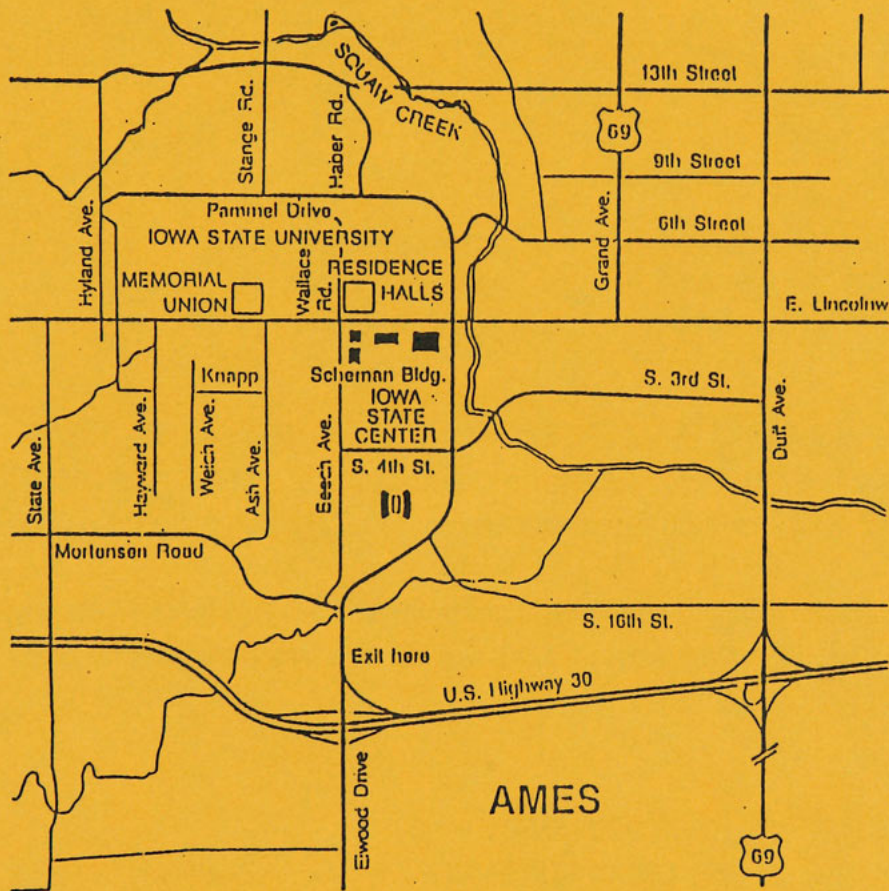
Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Registration: —	\$5.00	_____
Sat. breakfast: -	\$2.50	_____
Banquet: ———	\$8.00	_____
Sun. breakfast -	\$2.50	_____
Lunch: ————	\$6.00	_____
TOTAL		_____





Iowa Ornithologists' Union
 4024 Arkansas Drive
 Ames, IA 50010



Ann L. Kent
 211 Richards St
 Iowa City IA 52246-3519

