



I.O.U. News

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter

Spring 1999 • Volume 15 Number 1

HEARD ON THE BIRDLINE

WINTER - December 1998 - February 1999

by Jim Fuller, Iowa City

A male MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD discovered by Lee and Nancy Schoenewe in O'Brien County on February 7 was the highlight of the winter. This bird, plus a female, were seen in the Little Sioux River valley for over a week. With the mild, late fall, shorebirds, some passerines, and water birds lingered in the state. One report of six species of shorebirds at the Runnells Wildlife Area in December was unprecedented. BROWN THRASHER reports came from eight different locations throughout the winter.

Unusual waterfowl and gulls highlighted December, starting with a juvenile BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE at Ottumwa through the 3rd. On the Mississippi River at Lock & Dam #18 north of Burlington, a RED-THROATED LOON and a WESTERN GREBE were present through the 20th, and appearing later were a BLACK SCOTER on the 22nd, and a WHITE-WINGED SCOTER on the 24th, while observers on the Keokuk Christmas count on the 21st reported BLACK and SURF SCOTERS and OLDSQUAW. Another SURF SCOTER lingered in Sioux County the first 18 days of the month. The best GULLS were a MEW on the Saylorville CBC the 20th and a GREAT BLACK-BACKED at Red Rock on the 25th.

The only VARIED THRUSH of the season was found on the 24th at a small woods in the

Hawkeye Wildlife Area in Johnson County, where a SPOTTED TOWHEE and BROWN THRASHER was also sighted simultaneously. Only two SNOWY OWLS appeared in the state. One near Boone was seen by many December 10-20, and the other was spotted in Fayette County on January 20. BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS were likewise reported twice, with sightings at DeSoto NWR on December 5, and at Grinnell January 6. There may have been a population explosion of the EURASIAN COLLARED DOVES at Grinnell, as ten individuals were observed in one tree there on December 3. Lesser numbers were reported throughout the winter. The recent split of RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, giving species status to the western form, SPOTTED TOWHEE, leaves us with the question of how many SPOTTED TOWHEES are normally found in the state. This season, we received reports of birds in Sioux, Cerro Gordo, and Johnson Counties.

OLDSQUAWS apparently were seen in greater numbers this winter. A female that was reported at the Saylorville Reservoir on December 20, may have been the same bird that spent most of the winter on the Des Moines River below the Saylorville Dam. Another found the Iowa River at Iowa City to its liking, and was present from January 12 through the end of February. Other winter reports came from the Mississippi River in Lee and Scott Counties, and from Terra Lake in Johnston.

After the first of the year, unusual GULLS were limited to the Mississippi River, when during the week of January 30-February 7 at Davenport, GREAT BLACK-BACKED, LESSER



BLACK-BACKED and GLAUCOUS GULLS were sighted around Lock & Dam #15. A LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL was also found at the Keokuk Dam on the 10th. A WHITE-WINGED SCOTER stayed on the Des Moines River downstream from the Red Rock Dam for three weeks in December and January.

PRAIRIE FALCON is always an exciting bird in Iowa, and two were reported. One was in Sioux County on January 7 and the other was in Boone County on February 21. Two other unusual raptors that received more press this year than normal were GOLDEN EAGLE and RED-SHOULDERED HAWK. In addition to the GOLDEN EAGLES that winter in Allamakee County, reports were also received from Polk, Clayton, Muscatine, Boone, and Buena Vista Counties. RED-SHOULDERED HAWK reports were also rather widespread and came from Allamakee, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buena Vista, Sioux, and Washington Counties, and an immature bird in Linn County that frequented Jim and Joyce Durbin's backyard in Marion for nearly two months.

Other interesting birds, all of which were reported more than once during the winter, included all three SWAN species, TUNDRA, TRUMPETER, and MUTE, LONG-EARED, SHORT-EARED, and SAW-WHET OWLS, and NORTHERN GOSHAWK.

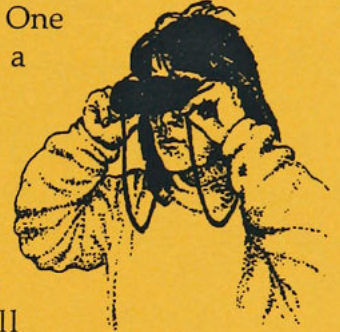
Iowa Spring Bird Count Is Your County Counted?

The 7th annual Iowa Spring Bird Count will be held on Saturday, May 8th, 1999. It is held on the same day, and according to the same rules, as the North American Migration Count, so that totals may be submitted to both counts.

Each county is a count territory, and in the interest of expanding our knowledge of spring migration in the state, we would like to have participation from as many of Iowa's 99 counties as possible. A county compiler

organizes the count within the county, assigns territories to be covered, and compiles the results, which are then submitted to the state compiler, and published in Iowa Bird Life.

Can you help? Compilers may do the count themselves, without any help, or may organize parties to cover assigned territories. One person can act as a compiler for more than one county. Even if only one individual counts birds for part of a day, results can be submitted and will contribute to the data base.



A count may be done as a county Big Day, or as a competition for a fundraiser for your local birding club. Use your imagination!

If you can act as a compiler for a county of your choice, please contact me at the address below, and the forms will be sent to you.

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Where Have They Gone? Tim Brush

Hank, Bob Cecil requested that I send some information on myself to you, for the newsletter, since I am a former Iowan now living elsewhere. I taught at Marycrest College (now Marycrest International University, I believe) in Davenport from 1986-1991. That was my first full-time college teaching position, after some post-doc research and part-time teaching in Massachusetts.

In Iowa, I taught ornithology among



several biology courses, and did a study of House Wrens and Prothonotary Warblers nesting along the Mississippi River. I worked at Big Sand Mound for four years and Princeton Marsh for 2 years, and had a little article published in the Journal of the Iowa Academy of Science in 1994 (Vol. 101, pp. 28-30).



© Laura Zerzan From "EGONEWS"

My family and I moved to the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas in August 1991, where we have been since. I live and work in Edinburg, whose main birding claim to "fame" is being within a 30-minute drive of both Santa Ana NWR and Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park! I teach ornithology and a few other biology courses, manage a small teaching collection, and do field research on birds in the valley.

Although I did a bit of work on shorebirds early on, my emphasis the last 4 years has been the conservation status of some of the valley specialties, such as Altamira Oriole, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Tropical Parula, Elf Owl, etc.

I'm interested in the impact of forest decline, fragmentation and/or Bronzed Cowbird parasitism on these birds. Several students have done master's theses, and I've published some articles in places like Texas Journal of Science, Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society, and Birding. There are always bird and nature festivals, and I've led field trips and given talks for several of those.

Regards,
Tim Brush
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Recent Literature

These articles can be obtained from your local library. Ask them to order on interlibrary loan for you.

- Bergin, T.M., L.B. Best, and K.E. Freemark. 1997. An experimental study of predation on artificial nests in roadsides adjacent to agricultural habitats in Iowa. *Wilson Bull.* 109:437-448.
- Dinsmore, J.J. 1998. Iowa's avifauna: recent changes and prospects for the future. *J. Iowa Acad. Sci.* 105:115-122.
- Hawks, S., and R. Klann. 1997. Helminth ova recovered from raptors admitted for rehabilitation. *J. Iowa Acad. Sci.* 104:47-49.
- Johnson, W., C.C. Adkinsson, T.R. Crow, and M.D. Dixon. 1997. Nut caching by Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata* L.): Implications for tree demography. *Amer. Midl. Nat.* 138:357-370.
- Perkins, J.L., W.R. Clark, T.Z. Riley, and P.A. Vohs. 1997. Effects of landscape and weather on winter survival of Ring-necked Pheasant hens. *J. Wild. Manage.* 61:634-644.

Iowa Birdline

319/338-9881



Solve the Crime: Save the Song of Spring Neotropical Migratory Birds and Their Midwestern Connections Middle School Activity Guide and Wildlife Learning Trunk

It's Done! The Iowa Ornithologists Union helped sponsor a new curriculum guide for middle school educators on neotropical migratory birds. Through a REAP CEP grant and support from I.O.U., ICEC, Partners in Flight, DNR, Iowa Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Des Moines Audubon Society, Cedar Rapids Audubon Society, Quad Cities Audubon Society and the Johnson County Bird Project, this curriculum has been printed and is available for purchase for \$10.00 or \$14.00 with postage.

Another grant was received in November from the REAP CEP to produce Wildlife learning trunks that corresponds with the neotropical curriculum. These Wildlife learning trunks will be available for school educators by January 1999.

The second grant also established workshops in conjunction with Area Education Agencies throughout Iowa, for educators to attend and learn how to use the trunks and booklet.

The goal of this interdisciplinary curriculum, and associated wildlife learning trunk, is to teach upper level elementary and middle school students about migratory bird conservation while emphasizing the connection between the people, birds, and land in different parts of the world. The trunk's hands-on activities follow the curriculum and encourage active learning through the use of games, storytelling, role-playing, and other fun activities.

To purchase this curriculum contact co-editor Linda Zaletel. (Price - \$10.00 - with postage it's \$14.00.)

Report of the Nominating Committee

**Bob Cecil, Chair
Mary Kuhlman
Tom Kent**

We propose the following slate of officers and directors for election at the spring meeting:

President: Mark Proescholdt
Vice President: To be announced

Board of Directors
Two Year Terms:

Phil Walsh
Curt Nelson
Maridel Jackson

State & County Bird Lists

Members are encouraged to submit their state and county bird lists for the 1998 calendar year. 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 1998 are due by May 30 and should be sent to Mary Lou Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, IA 52803.



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Iowa
Lakeside
Laboratory

Celebrates 90th Birthday 1999

In 1999, Iowa Lakeside Laboratory is celebrating its 90th birthday. Professor Thomas H. Macbride of the University of Iowa and a number of biologists from other Iowa colleges established Lakeside in 1909 as a private summer field station. It was one of the first in the United States. In 1936 Lakeside became a state institution, and today it is run cooperatively by Iowa State University, the University of Northern Iowa, and the University of Iowa through the Iowa State Board of Regents. Since its foundation, Lakeside's mission has been to provide students an opportunity to get hands-on experience working with Iowa's natural and human environments through its field-oriented summer courses and to provide research facilities and support for graduate students and faculty working on research projects in northwestern Iowa.

Six sections of the Natural History Workshop, each on a different aspect of the natural history of Iowa will be taught in 1999. This course has no prerequisites. Each section lasts one or two weeks and can be taken on a credit or non-credit basis. Sections that will be taught in 1999 are:

Section A. Amphibians and Reptiles (August 8-13)

Section C. Nature Photography (August 8-13)

Section G. Prairies and Prairie Restoration (August 8-13)

Section L. Life in Lakes (June 27-July 2)

Section P. Field Archaeology (May 23-28, May 31-June 4, or June 6-11)

(Section P can be taken for one week or two consecutive weeks for one credit per week.)

Section U. Sketching Nature (May 23-June 4)

Other courses being offered during the summer of 1999 are First Term--(May 23 or May 31-June 18) Archaeology, Ecology, Environmental Geology of Northwest Iowa, Freshwater Algae, Ornithology; Second Term (June 20-July 16) Aquatic Biology, Ecology and Systematics of Diatoms, Evolution, Plant Taxonomy, Prairie Ecology; Third Term (July 18-August 6 or August 13) Conservation Biology, Environmental Analysis of Watersheds: Hydrology and Surficial Processes, Plant Ecology, Restoration Ecology, Wetland Ecology.

There will be an Adult Nature Weekend at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory August 6-8, 1999. This is an opportunity to participate in field trips to various natural areas in the Iowa Great Lakes region supplemented by evening interpretive programs. Learn more about Iowa's natural history from some of the leading naturalists in the state while in a relaxed and congenial setting. For more information, contact Dr. Lois Tiffany, Department of Botany, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1020; phone: 515-294-3121; or contact Iowa Lakeside Laboratory.

For more information about Lakeside, please contact the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory Administrative Office, 131 Bessey Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1020; phone: 515-294-2488, email: lakeside@iastate.edu, or log onto our Web site at <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~Lakeside>. The complete 1999 Iowa Lakeside Laboratory Bulletin and registration form is on the Web.



Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Spring Meeting - April 30, May 1-2, 1999



in cooperation with the
Rathbun Bird Club
Centerville, Iowa



The Rathbun Lake Bird Club will host the Friday evening social mixer at the Motel 60 conference room. This is located one block north of the intersection of Highway 2 & 5. All field trips will leave from Motel 60 parking lot and divide up at the Lake Center Mall parking lot.

Field trips are planned for Colyn and Russell Slough, Lake Rathbun and Moffitt Ridge, Sharon Bluffs State Park, Prairie Ridge area and Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Area.

Depending on water levels, we should have some excellent marsh habitat. The Sedan Bottoms is a new DNR area of 2,000 acres of Chariton River floodplain.

Area specialties include nesting Bald Eagles, Mockingbird, Henslow Sparrow, and, of course, we are planning to top Des Moines' unusual Buff-bellied Hummingbird with our own surprise.

Schedule of Events

Friday, April 30	7:00-9:00 PM	Registration and social at Motel 60 Centerville, Iowa
Saturday, May 1	6:00-6:45 AM	Continental breakfast, Motel 60
	6:45-7:00 AM	Field trips leave Motel 60 and divide up at Lake Center Mall parking lot.
	12:00-1:00 PM	Lunch at Rathbun Fish Hatchery

Afternoon programs 1:00-4:00 PM

Iowa Winter Feeder Survey by Dave Horn & Rick Hollis

Iowa's Bald Eagle Recovery by Bruce Ehresman

Land of the Inuit by Dennis & Cecile Thompson

6:00 PM	Social time
6:30 PM	Dinner at Green Circle Restaurant - park on north side

7:30 PM **Birding the Four Corners of Iowa** by Eugene & Eloise Armstrong

Sunday, May 2	6:00-6:45 AM	Breakfast at Motel 60
	7:00-12:00	Field trips
	12:00 noon	Noon meal and compilation at Motel 60





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