



I. O. U. NEWS

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Summer 1988

Newsletter of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Volume 4 Number 2

BIRD MAN'S GARAGE IS A SANCTUARY

Daily Tribune, Ames, Iowa

Jim and Pat Dinsmore keep a tidy garage. With floor swept, shelves organized and bicycles hung from the ceiling, the garage is cleaner than some teen-agers' bedrooms.

To explain the bird nests, the two coarse thatches cleverly concealed in this immaculate carport, like half-eaten slices of pizza beside Billy's bed.

Suddenly, a red-breasted bird with a worm dangling from its beak glides through the open garage door and lights on the nests. "That's the male," Dinsmore said. "A cardinal."

He accommodates the creatures and can distinguish between boy and girl because he's an ornithologist, one who studies birds. Meanwhile, the male rations out the worm to the gaping mouths of two chicks born Friday. They squawk for more, and off he flies.

Such beauty is not lost on Dinsmore. A professor of animal ecology at Iowa State University, Dinsmore has spent his life studying and teaching about birds, but he still admires these minor miracles. "There's time for both" study and leisure observation, he said.

His knowledge enhances the beauty. He first noticed the nest when the family had a garage sale in the fall of 1982, and he's pretty sure the same female nested there in 1983, 1985, and 1986. One or two feathers of her crest, the word for the feathers atop a bird's head, are distinctively long.

For some reason, the bird nested across the street, in Don Wishart's garage, in 1984, but returned to the Dinsmores the next year. The cardinals found somewhere else to stay in 1987, when Dinsmore was on sabbatical, but they're back this year.

Cardinals usually live only about two years, so Dinsmore is viewing a phenomenon if it is the same bird.

"I can't imagine there'd be two identical cardinals nesting here," he said.

The birds have it good in the garage. His family, which includes three children, opens the large door early in the morning, so feeding can begin, and closes it at night to keep out predators, namely neighborhood cats.

Dinsmore fends off other evils, too. He has noticed a cowbird egg in the nest every year. Cowbirds, which commonly deposit their eggs in an existing nest, hatch and grow faster than cardinals and eventually force them from the nest. Parent cardinals can't distinguish between their own and cowbird chicks. This year he removed the egg.

BIRD MAN'S GARAGE (cont'd)

"Usually I left them alone, but this year I got fed up with it," he said.

The process begins in April, when the female weaves the nest. Dinsmore said the garage is a prime location because it offers protection as winter's cold melts into spring. The eggs hatch after being incubated by the female for about two weeks. Male and female share the feeding chores, and the chicks are ready to leave home in 10 to 12 days.

Cardinals nest twice a year, the second time in June, when they repeat the sequence. The birds in the garage have never nested there twice in the same year.

Cardinals were rare in Iowa 100 years ago, Dinsmore said. But when the state became more populated and more trees were planted, the birds extended their range northward. He said advents such as bird feeders helped foster the species.

Dinsmore's garage shelters the cardinal family better than most nest sites, but it only can do so much. Neighborhood cats can enter through the same open door. Sometimes the parent birds perch outside the garage and chatter while cats mill around the driveway.

One year the cats knocked down the nest. "There were baby birds sitting on the car," Mrs. Dinsmore said.

The cats are becoming a nuisance to Dinsmore. Maybe the felines would stick to the alleys if they knew how he dealt with the cowbird egg.

"Its just a bad time of year for them to be running around," he said, "because they do destory a bunch of bird nests."

FALL I.O.U. Meeting

The fall Iowa Ornithologists' Union meeting will be held on September 16-18 at the Dayton Oaks Camp near Dayton, Iowa. This is located in the richly wooded land along the Des Moines River south of Fort Dodge. A number of public areas are located nearby including Woodman Hollow, Brushy Creek, and Dolliver Memorial State Park. Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, and river otter have all been released in the area in recent years. The variety of woodlands should provide good birding for migrants that will be moving through at that time of year. The meeting is being hosted by the Fort Dodge Sierra Club and is under the local direction of Tom Tierney. More details on the meeting will be included with the next newsletter.



Curt Nelson, spring host, and Vice President Carol Thompson.

SPRING I.O.U. MEETING



The spring meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was held May 20-22 at Mason City, hosted by the North Iowa Nature Club. Approximately 76 members and guests were in attendance.

Friday night's social gathering at the Lime Creek Nature Center provided registration, information on local birding areas, sign-up sheets for field trips, and delicious homemade refreshments, compliments of NINC members. Curt Nelson welcomed IOU members for the NINC, previewing the weekend's activities and supplying answers to questions and additional information. Prior to dusk, many got an early start on their weekend bird lists on the nature center grounds, an extensive woodland stretching along the Winnebago River, just north of Mason City.

The campus of Mason City's North Iowa Area Community College served as headquarters for the weekend's meeting and meals and provided dorm space.

Following Saturday's 5:45 AM breakfast, field trips set out for the Shell Rock River Greenbelt, with leaders Jim and Jan Walter; Rice Lake and Elk Creek Marsh, led by Curt Nelson and Iowa Wildlife Management Biologist Guy Zenner; and Ventura Marsh (a boat trip), led by Iowa Waterfowl Biologist Jim Hansen. At Rice Lake, the majority voted to pursue a possible Vermillion Flycatcher which had been reported a week earlier. Lady luck, however, had decided to accompany the Ventura Marsh trip instead, and the elusive flycatcher was not found.

For those at Ventura, the boats afforded a rare opportunity to see the marsh from an entirely different perspective, getting up close and personal with nesting Canada Geese, Mallards, Soras and Virginia Rails. Probably the most spectacular bird seen was a very cooperative drake Surf Scoter, who obligingly stayed the entire weekend,

allowing birders to come within close range for viewing and photography. This is apparently a new late record for Iowa for this species.

Back at NIACC's Activities Center after lunch, the following workshops were held:

- Wildlife Plantings, with Weir Nelson
- Wildlife Photography, with Lowell Washburn
- Marsh Restoration in North Central Iowa, with Guy Zenner
- Waterfowl Nesting Studies, with Jim Hansen
- Procedures of the Records Committee, with Barbara L. Wilson
- Bird Topography or "How to Describe a Bird" with Peter C. Petersen

Between and after sessions, crack birders could occupy their time with the "Oh No, Not More Shorebirds" skin identification quiz.

The business meeting was held following the workshops. Minutes will be published in IOWA BIRD LIFE.

At 6:30 PM, members could be found at the Madonna Inn for the banquet. Our featured speaker was Neil Bernstein, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology at Mount Mercy College, Cedar Rapids, who gave a fascinating description of what it was like to live at the Palmer Research Station on the Antarctic peninsula while conducting research on Blue-eyed Shags.

The winners of the Shorebird identification contest were announced, with a tie for top shorebirder between Darwin Koenig and Mark Proescholdt. Keep that in mind next time you're straining your eyes at the dim and distant flock of peeps and Darwin or Mark is nearby.

On Sunday morning, the Ventura Marsh field trip was repeated, with leader Jim Hansen assisted by Ted LaGrange. Guy Zenner led a group to the Gabrielson Wildlife Area and Pilot Knob State Park.

Returning to the nature center and thinking birding was over for the morning, birders were thrilled when John Cecil rushed up to say his father, Bob, had

SPRING I.O.U. MEETING (cont'd)



discovered what was without a doubt the bird of the weekend--a Henslow's Sparrow--in the prairie just north of the parking lot. The bird was detected by its distinctive song, which it consistently repeated while sitting still long enough for everyone to get a decent look through the spotting scope. A lifer for many, it couldn't have been better if it had been planted.

Over a delectable lunch of sandwiches, fruit, cake, and more, Pete Petersen led the compilation of the bird list. 138 species were seen on Sunday, with an additional 15 seen on Saturday only, for a weekend total of 153.

Our special thanks go to the North Iowa Nature Club and its members Curt Nelson, Genevieve Nelson, Virgil and Joan Eness, John and Thelma Fromm, Leora Gildner, Pat Hansen, Fred Heinz, Beth McBride, Marty Pauley, Reva Pedelty, Edna Peters and Jim and Jan Walter, who all did an excellent job of planning and conducting a fine meeting. In addition, we are grateful to the Walters, as well as Jim Hansen and Guy Zenner, for their excellent guidance on very productive field trips. Mark your calendars for the fall meeting which will be held September 16-18 at Fort Dodge. Anyone wishing a copy of the official species list for the spring meeting may contact Ann Barker, 25368 250th St., Princeton, IA 52768.

1988 SPRING MEETING ATTENDANCE

Eugene & Elosie Armstrong - Booneville
Ann M. Barker - Princeton
Beth L. Brown - Osceola
Bob & John Cecil - Keokuk
George & Frieda Crossley - Dubuque
Ray Cummins - Centerville
Jim Dinsmore - Ames
Steve Dinsmore - Ames
David & Jeanne Edwards - Ames
Lois Eggleston - Walnut
Virgil & Joan Eness - Clear Lake

1988 SPRING MEETING ATTENDANCE (cont'd)

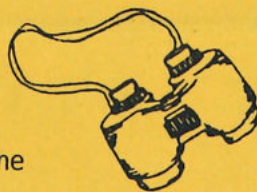
Janet Eppard - Adel
Edgar & Mary Folk - Iowa City
John & Mary Fleckenstein - Des Moines
John & Thelma Fromm - Mason City
Jacqueline Gardner - Clinton
Leora Gildner - Nora Springs
Jim Hansen - Clear Lake
Pat Hansen - Mason City
Ron Harms - Laurens
Mary Jo Hartogh - Elma
Fred Heinz - Mason City
Rick Hollis - Iowa City
John & Margaret Hoogerheide - Des Moines
Marlys Huff - Marshalltown
Matt Kenne - Algona
Harvey & Anna Mae Kirchgatter - Waterloo
Darwin Koenig - Montezuma
Richard J. Kraemer, Sr. - Waterloo
Mary Kuhlman - Fort Dodge
Mina Landes - Fort Dodge
Robert Livermore - Sioux City
Wayne C. Livermore - Sioux City
Beth McBride - Mason City
Richard & Pauline Mooney - Des Moines
Francis L. Moore - Waterloo
Bob Myers - Perry
Curt Nelson - Mason City
Genevieve Nelson - Mason City
Bob & Phyllis Nicholson - Sioux City
Mary E. Noble - Iowa City
Harriet Olson - Marshalltown
Marty Pauley - Mason City
Reva Pedelty - Nora Springs
Dr. & Mrs. Richard L. Penney - Mason City
Edna Peters - Rockwell
Peter & Mary Lou Petersen - Davenport
Marietta Peterson - Atlantic
Gerald L. Probst - Sioux City
Beth Proescholdt - Liscomb
Mark Proescholdt - Liscomb
Sibyl Sand - Lake Mills
Hilda Sickels - Des Moines
Jim Sinclair - Indianola
Alice Smith - Marshalltown
Carol Thompson - Iowa City
Tom Tierney - Fort Dodge
Jim & Jan Walter - Mason City
Barbara Wilson - Hastings
Hank Zaletel - Colo
Guy Zenner - Northwood



COMING EVENTS IN IOWA



- Sunday, Jul. 10 Iowa City Bird Club Picnic to Cedar Valley Park. The park is located on the Cedar River in Cedar Valley which is in Cedar County. Lots of nice hiking trails and scenery, not to mention the fact that it is a breeding block. We'll have a grill and some lemonade; bring plates and utensils and something for the group to share. Meet at the University of Iowa parking lot at the corner of Clinton and Market Streets at 1:00 PM. For further information, call Bud Gode or Carol Thompson, (319) 338-5361.
- Sunday, Aug. 14 Quad City Audubon Society field trip and picnic. Meet at 5:00 PM at the Army tank on Credit Island for shorebird viewing. Potluck at 6:00. Bring a dish to pass and your own table setting. Call to coordinate food: Dwight Mohlenbruck, H-788-2564, W-323-2520. Leader: Kelly McKay.
- Thurs., Sept. 8 Quad City Audubon Society meeting, 7:30 PM at Butterworth Center. "Birding on the Texas Coast and Rio Grande Valley" with Gil Sandvick and Pete Petersen.
- Sunday, Sept. 18 Quad City Audubon Society field trip to Mississippi Palisades State Park (Illinois) for hawks, ducks. Meet at Luciani's, Rapids City, at 7:30 AM. Bring a lunch. Leader: Pete Petersen (319) 355-7051.



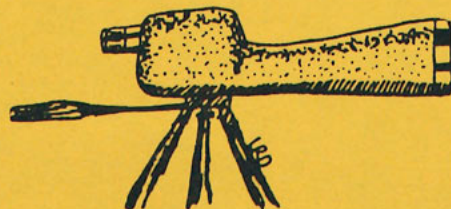
BREEDING BIRD ATLAS NOTES - Doug Reeves, Boone

So far, Iowans have spent 3,432 hours in the field doing Breeding Bird Atlas work. There are 20 counties that have not been worked in at all yet (Table 1). In 23 counties only one block has been worked in, while one county has had 12 blocks investigated.

Seventy-five counties have less than 4 blocks worked in. We definitely need more work done in the 43 counties that have less than 2 blocks started. Many birders are discovering that the Breeding Bird Atlas project has more to offer than birds. Several people have commented that during atlassing they have found habitats that they had not known about previously.

Table 1. Counties for which there is no atlas data.

Adair	Cedar	Grundy	Keokuk
Audubon	Chickasaw	Hancock	Marshall
Benton	Delaware	Henry	O'Brien
Black Hawk	Des Moines	Jefferson	Scott
Bremer	Floyd	Jones	Wapello



BIG DAY COUNT 1988



This year's Big Day fielded 8 teams -- 3 single county counts, and 5 state counts. Preliminary results show that these teams spent over 117.1 hours in the field in identifying over 213 separate species. They collected and/or contributed a record \$538 to the IOU endowment fund (75%) and IOU special projects (25%).

The high species count in the statewide category was a team from Ames led by Steve Dinsmore with 170 species. Others, in order, are (2) Tetrault's Tigers - T. Kent, F. Moore, C. Bendorf and D. Tetrault (160); (3) TA&A - E. and E. Armstrong and D. Thompson (153); (4) Tetrault's Tigers (138); and (5) Quad City - A. Barker, T. Brush, and W. Zuurdeeg (133).

The highest species count in the county category was B.J.'s Boys with Doug and Roger Rose finding 20 species in Fremont County. Others, in order, are (2) The Big Deal Team - B. Livermore, J. Probst, and D. Stage (107), (3) Rathbun - R. Cummins and B. Huseinkveld (96).

The best bird found was a Curlew Sandpiper by Tetrault's Tigers, the second Iowa sighting. Other good birds included Little Blue Heron (QC), Ross's Goose (TAA), Osprey (BDT), Swainson's Hawk (BDT), Sandhill Crane (TT&QC), Piping Plover (BDT, TAA, QC), Willet (BDT), Ruddy Turnstone (BJB), Western Kingbird (BJB), Veery (TT), N. Mockingbird (R&QC), Caper May Warbler (TAA), Summer Tanager (BJB), Clay-colored Sparrow (TAA), Leconte's Sparrow (BDT), and Great-tailed Grackle (BJB).

Iowa Ornithologists' Union



Hank & Linda Zaletel
715 West
Colo, Iowa 50056



Thomas H. Kent
211 Richards St
Iowa City, IA 52240