



## 2008 Fall Meeting at Iowa Falls Keynote Speaker: Bill Thompson III

By Paul Roisen



Photo by Julie Zickefoose

Born in Pella, Iowa, Bill Thompson, III is the editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, the magazine founded by his parents in 1978. He is the author of many books about birds and nature, including, most recently *The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*, part of the Peterson Field Guide Series from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing. Bill has led birding trips all across North America and has spoken or performed at more

than 50 birding and nature festivals.

He is a founding director of the Ohio Ornithological Society and a longtime member of The American Birding Association. He has served since 2006 as a member of the Birding Roundtable, which consults with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on making National Wildlife Refuges more bird- and birder-friendly. He is also the founder of The Whipple Bird Club.

He has trekked to many of the world's great birding hotspots including sites in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America. But some of his favorite bird watching is done near home, on the 80-acre farm in the rolling, wooded hills outside of Whipple, Ohio, that he shares with his wife, artist/author Julie Zickefoose, and their children, Phoebe and Liam.

When he is not playing with his children, or watching birds, Bill likes to play guitar with his (locally) popular band, The Swinging Orangutans, which includes his wife Julie. You can check out his website at [www.billofthebirds.blogspot.com](http://www.billofthebirds.blogspot.com)



## ***IOU News***

is a quarterly publication of the  
**Iowa Ornithologists' Union**

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### **IOU News deadlines:**

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Coverage</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Spring	Mar 1—May 31	Feb 20
Summer	Jun 1—Jul 31	May 20
Fall	Aug 1—Nov 30	July 20
Winter	Dec 1—Feb 28	Nov 20

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*This newsletter was mailed to 424 members*

### **Directions:**

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union Fall Meeting will be held September 12-14, 2008 in Iowa Falls. *Please note that there are THREE locations in Iowa Falls where activities will take place.*

### **Scenic Empress Boat Club-1113**

**Union Street.** From the intersection of Old US-20 (IA941 or Washington Ave.) proceed north five blocks on US 65 to Union Street, turn left (west) and go 6 blocks. The boat house is across the street from Riverbend Middle school.

### **Calkins Nature Center-18335**

**135th Street.** From the intersection of Old US-20 (IA941 or Washington Ave.) proceed west on Washington Avenue, at the west city limits, turn south at the National Guard Armory onto Georgetown Road. Follow the signs on 135th Street to the nature area (approximately 3 miles).

### **Gentle Student Center-1200**

**Main Street.** From the intersection of Old US-20 (IA941 or Washington Ave.) proceed north five blocks on US 65 to Union Street, turn left (west) and go TWO blocks to Main Street, turn right (north) and go 4 blocks just before Elm street. The Center is on the west side of the street.

## **Sign up for the Scenic Empress River Cruise!**

6:00-7:30 on Friday, Sep 12. Cost: \$9.63 per person--Beer and wine permitted--BYOB Please contact Tom Schilke directly if you wish to do the river cruise. (Also let him know if you need to cancel.) Email: [tsschilke@hotmail.com](mailto:tsschilke@hotmail.com) Phone:319-232-8199 Snail mail: Tom Schilke, 1432 Liberty, Waterloo, IA 50702-3434

We need a **committed** minimum of 20 people by August 29, 2008 (max. 50). Pay and get your ticket Friday night at Scenic Empress Boat Club.



## Fall Meeting Schedule

## Lodging

### FRIDAY, Sep. 12th--Scenic Empress Boat Club

5:00-9:00 Registration, Social time with snacks, and Field trip sign-up  
(6:00-7:30) Optional Empress cruise on the Iowa River.

### SATURDAY, Sep. 13th--Calkins Nature Center

6:00 Breakfast  
7:00 Field trips depart (Lunch in the field--sack lunch if you purchased one)  
1:00 Field trips return to Calkins  
1:15 Thomas H. Kent--"Bird Records of Early Iowa Ornithologists."  
2:00 Carl Kurtz--St. Anthony, IA -- Slideshow  
2:45 IOU General Business Meeting: Update on the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas project.  
4:00 Introduction of new IOU members  
4:15 IOU Board Meeting in Calkins Library

**Move to--Gentle Student Center** at Ellsworth Community College for banquet

6:30 Saturday Evening Banquet  
7:30 Keynote: Bill Thompson III-- Editor of "Bird Watcher's Digest" from Whipple, OH. Title--"No Child Left Inside: Using Birds to Fight Nature Deficit Disorder"

### SUNDAY, Sep. 14th--Calkins Nature Center

6:00 Breakfast  
7:00 Field trips depart  
12:00 Field trips return  
Lunch and Final compilation

Lunch will be in the field **Saturday** allowing field trip groups to stay out somewhat longer than usual. We plan to be back for the afternoon program which will begin around 1:15P.M.

**Motels**--Register by August 29, 2008 for the IOU discount.

**Super 8 Motel** - Iowa Falls is \$67.20 for all rooms. 641-648-4618 or the 1-800-800-8000 national number or [generalmanager4675@cdt.hotel.com](mailto:generalmanager4675@cdt.hotel.com)

**AmericInn** of Iowa Falls--\$69.94 +tax for a king and \$74.90 + tax for two queens. 641-648-4600 or toll free 1-866-436-6835 or [iowafalls.ia@americinn.com](mailto:iowafalls.ia@americinn.com)

Both have an indoor pool and early breakfast - waffles, sausage gravy, etc.

Both are located on Hwy 65 on the south edge of town.

**Scenic City Motel** - 11237 Highway 65; Iowa Falls, IA 50126 641-648-2553--Possibly a less expensive alternative BUT may be FULL of construction workers.

### Camping:

**Circle C** Private RV electric and water sites for \$12-14 (no restrooms or showers). (641) 648-9936 ; HWY 941; (Old HWY 20). On old Hwy. 20 between Iowa Falls and Alden. It is privately run.

**Pine Lake State Park**--22628 County Hwy. S-56; Eldora, IA 641-858-5832. Pine Lake State Park offers one of the largest campsites in the state. There are 128 camping units available with 92 electrical hookups and modern shower and rest room facilities and a trailer dump station. Camping permits are available by registering at the campground.

**Beeds Lake State Park** outside of Hampton has modern camping facilities. 1422 165th Street, Hampton, IA 50441 (641) 456-2047.

### Eagle City Park

Primitive camping SE of Eagle Falls on 160th Street across the road from Eagle City Winery.

### Bessman-Kamp Park

Primitive camping NW edge of Alden.

### Hosts for the weekend

Tom Schilke, Nancy Slife (Ellsworth Community College), and Wes Weiss (Hardin County Conservation Board).



# FALL MEETING REGISTRATION

**On-line registration** at the IOU website:

[http://www.iowabirds.org/iou/current\\_meeting.asp](http://www.iowabirds.org/iou/current_meeting.asp)

Make all checks out to **Iowa Ornithologists' Union (IOU)**

Mail to: Paul Roisen, 4420 3rd Ave, Sioux City, IA 51106-2902

**Mail-in registration:** Copy, fill out, and mail--don't forget your check.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone# \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee:	No. of Persons	Total Cost
\$14.00 x _____	= \$ _____	

## Meals

Sat. Breakfast: \$ 6.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sat. Box lunch: \$ 6.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sat. Banquet: \$14.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sun. Breakfast: \$ 6.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sun. Lunch: \$ 6.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Meatless Option? \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Breakfasts** will include egg casserole, fruit, juice, coffee, donuts

**Sack Lunch (Sat.)** Pasta salad, cold meat sandwich, fruit, cookie, drink (pick it up BEFORE you leave on field trip.

**Banquet meal**--chicken, pork loin, salads, vegetable, roll, dessert - (veggie option- lasagna).

**Lunch Sunday**--Two soups (vegetable and tomato basil) tossed salad and a croissant sandwich.





Photo by Paul Roisen

**Calkins Nature Center and Natural History Museum** will be open extended hours from 1:00-9:00PM. A museum guide will be on hand. There is a large bird blind, extensive historic bird and egg collection, unique Native American and fossil exhibits and more plus hiking trails and live bird and animal section. Be sure to find time this weekend to take the bird quizzes in the museum - quite a challenge! Both the Nature Center and the Museum are a **MUST** for the weekend.

#### **Possible Field Trips**

Big Marsh - BBA 238 and 239 in Butler Co....Maynes Grove and Mallory Park - BBA 133 in Franklin Co....Pine Lake State Park...Sac and Fox Overlook and Sand Springs...Eagle City Park centered in BBA 296 and 297...Buckeye Marsh, Alden and Calkins...Create your own from over 60 other under-birded county owned areas (maps provided)

### **The Case for an IOU Dues Increase**

By John Rutenbeck, IOU President

**At the Spring IOU Meeting, I notified members that a dues increase is very likely starting in January 2009. While this is a decision that must be made by the general membership of the IOU, the Board will be recommending a move to \$30 individual dues starting in January 2009. The general membership will be asked to consider this issue on Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at the Fall Meeting in Iowa Falls.**

The following information may help to explain why the Board is taking this position:

- The current IOU individual member dues are \$20 (Goldfinch level)
- While some members do pay more than \$20 in yearly dues, half of our members pay at the basic rate of \$20
- It currently costs \$32 per IOU member to produce the three major publications of the organization, namely Iowa Bird Life, IOU News and our website, Iowa Birds and Birding, which includes the heavily used listserv.
- This means that the \$20 individual member rate is a loss leader for the organization; members who join at that rate are being underwritten by \$12 each just for the publications of the organization
- Comparisons made with the ornithological unions of Iowa's neighboring states for individual dues include:
- Wisconsin & Michigan \$30, Minnesota & Illinois \$25, Kansas \$20, S Dakota \$16, Nebraska & Missouri \$15
- Iowa's publications are among the best in the country and the Board believes we need to provide a dues rate that will more fully support those publications
- Article IX—Finances and Assets, Section 1 of the IOU Constitution states: "The I.O.U. shall not engage in deficit spending unless specifically approved by the membership." However, the latest report from our Treasurer indicates a deficit of approximately \$3,700 for the 2007 fiscal year. Part of this deficit is due to the creation of the Projects Committee and our desire as an organization to help with the "identification, study and protection of birds" as stated in Article I, Section 1 ("Purpose") of our Constitution. Our Projects Committee supports organizations around the state involved in the study and protection of birds through habitat conservation/restoration and educational efforts.

The proposed increase of \$10 per year in dues works out to \$.83 per month

In summary, the Board believes that a dues increase of \$10 is necessary to maintain the financial integrity of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.



# Spring Meeting Wrap-up

By Paul Roisen

The Iowa Ornithologist's Union's (IOU) spring meeting was held in Oskaloosa May 9-11th. Birders attended from five states--Arizona, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Iowa. Despite having to compete with Mother's Day (there were lots of Moms there) the number attendees still tallied 82. Hosts Mary Beth and Doug Hunt provided good eats, plenty of room, numerous field trip opportunities and great fellowship.

The weekend started off Friday evening with registration and a social gathering at Bradbury Hall on the Nelson Pioneer Farm. Snacks and drinks were served as participants renewed friendships and also made new acquaintances.

Saturday and Sunday both began with superb breakfasts--those of us who ate at the motel were envious--followed by field trip departures at 7:00AM. Locations such as Ever-Tru Wildlife Area, Millgrove Access Wildlife Area, Diamond Lake, Maskunky Marsh and Lake Keomah State Park as well as Eveland Access WA, Peter's Wildlife Area and White Oak made choosing a field trip for the day a difficult one. As it turned out none were disappointed by their choices. Some of us wished for one more day to "hit" one more place before leaving! Saturday's field trips included an old-fashioned "box lunch" which allowed us to stay out a little longer before returning for the afternoon meetings.

The IOU General Meeting included a number of presentations: 1) The records committee gave a lesson on note-taking techniques, 2) Nicki Nagl, Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) coordinator, did an outstanding job providing general information on BBA #2 as well as specific "how to" helps on participation and data entry, 3) Linda Donelson made us envious with a photo review of the IOU California birding trip, and 4) General business was attended to.

The highlight of the afternoon honored Ann Johnson for her tireless efforts on the part of the IOU in many areas but mostly for the website which she has turned into the envy of other states. For those of you who use this website you know it is truly an incredible tool and information site for Iowa birders. Ann received a certificate and was honored with a lifetime membership to the IOU. Truly she deserves even more. THANKS AJ!!

IOU members, Torre Hovick and Marlene Nehrer, first time attendees at one of our meetings were recognized and provided with a copy of "Birds In Iowa" by T. Kent and J. Dinsmore as a welcoming gift.

The IOU Board met briefly after the conclusion of the General Meeting

Dr. David Lambeth of Grand Forks, North Dakota provide the Saturday night banquet entertainment. His photos of North Dakota birds and habitat along with his knowledgeable commentary were certainly worth the price of admission. The presentation was of particular interest to some as a June IOU birding trip is scheduled for North Dakota where they will join up with Dr. Lambeth to visit some of the North Dakota birding hotspots.

Sunday's trips were shortened back to noon so final compilation could be made by 1:00PM. Severe weather predictions threatened Sunday's field trips however Mary Beth Hunt stayed up all night doing a reverse rain dance so that the weekend would end on a positive note. Her efforts were rewarded and thirty-one species were added Sunday.

Interesting birds seen were Prothonotary Warbler, Pine Warbler, Semipalmated Plover, Veery, Short-billed Dowitcher, White-winged Dove, Common Nighthawk, and still-present Red-breasted Nuthatches. Despite a lack of shorebirds, gulls, and waterfowl the weekend still yielded a total of one hundred and fifty-three species.

Birding the Oskaloosa area was a "first" for an number of the participants and it did not disappoint.



Photo by Jay Gilliam: Keith Dyche (L) and Tammy Hertzell (R) encourage Ann Johnson to accept her award.

## Spring Meeting Final Compilation List

Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
Gadwall  
American Wigeon  
Mallard  
Blue-winged Teal  
Northern Shoveler  
Lesser Scaup



Hooded Merganser	Barred Owl	House Wren	Louisiana Waterthrush
Ruddy Duck	Common Nighthawk	Sedge Wren	Kentucky Warbler
Ring-necked Pheasant	Chimney Swift	Marsh Wren	Common Yellowthroat
Wild Turkey	Ruby-throated Humming- bird	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Wilson's Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Belted Kingfisher	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Yellow-breasted Chat
Double-crested Cormorant	Red-headed Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird	Summer Tanager
American Bittern	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Veery	Scarlet Tanager
Great Blue Heron	Downy Woodpecker	Swainson's Thrush	Eastern Towhee
Great Egret	Hairy Woodpecker	Wood Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Green Heron	Northern Flicker	American Robin	Clay-colored Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Pileated Woodpecker	Gray Catbird	Field Sparrow
Osprey	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Brown Thrasher	Vesper Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Willow Flycatcher	European Starling	Lark Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Blue-winged Warbler	Grasshopper Sparrow
Broad-winged Hawk	Easter Phoebe	Golden-winged Warbler	Henslow's Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Great Crested Flycatcher	Tennessee Warbler	Song Sparrow
American Kestrel	Eastern Kingbird	Orange-crowned Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Yellow-throated Vireo	Nashville Warbler	Swamp Sparrow
Sora	Blue-headed Vireo	Northern Parula	White-throated Sparrow
American Coot	Warbling Vireo	Yellow Warbler	Harris's Sparrow
American Golden-Plover	Red-eyed Vireo	Chestnut-sided Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow
Semipalmated Plover	Blue Jay	Magnolia Warbler	Northern Cardinal
Killdeer	American Crow	Cape May Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Greater Yellowlegs	Horned Lark	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Lesser Yellowlegs	Purple Martin	Black-throated Green Warbler	Dickcissel
Solitary Sandpiper	Tree Swallow	Blackburnian Warbler	Bobolink
Spotted Sandpiper	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Yellow-throated Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Short-billed Dowitcher	Bank Swallow	Pine Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Wilson's Snipe	Cliff Swallow	Palm Warbler	Western Meadowlark
Ring-billed Gull	Barn Swallow	Blackpoll Warbler	Common Grackle
Herring Gull	Black-capped Chickadee	Cerulean Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Caspian Tern	Tufted Titmouse	Black-and-white Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Forster's Tern	Red-breasted Nuthatch	American Redstart	Baltimore Oriole
Black Tern	White-breasted Nuthatch	Prothonotary Warbler	House Finch
Rock Pigeon	Carolina Wren	Ovenbird	American Goldfinch
Eurasian Collared-Dove		Northern Waterthrush	House Sparrow
Mourning Dove			White-winged Dove





### Spring Meeting Photos

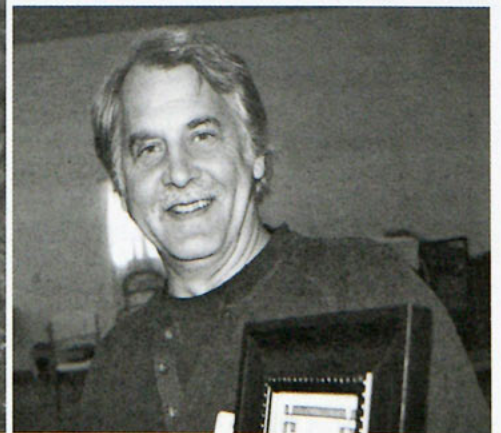
Above: Professor Dinsmore teaches note taking 101 (Photo by Jay Gilliam)

Upper Left: Field Trip Leader Doug Hunt points out a bird.

(Photo by Don Poggensee)

Lower Left: David Lambeth spots a bird as Mary Beth Hunt looks on. (Photo by Don Poggensee)

Below: Paul Hertzell presents Jay Gilliam with the 2007 Top Birder Award. (Photo by Jay Gilliam)





# Big Day Report

By Paul Hertzell

A Big Day is a 24-hour birding adventure in which a group of participants attempts to record as many species as possible in some geographic region. The *IOU News* publishes all new Big Days and maintains historical record totals by county and by month.

There were six Big Days reported for the year 2007. Big Days run in Greene and Mitchell counties bring to 20 the number of Iowa counties that now have Big Day records. The record total in Emmet County was increased from 122 to 140 with a Big Day conducted on 16 May. Jim Fuller, John Rutenbeck and friends set new winter Big Day records for the months of January and December.

## 2007 Big Days

(\* denotes a new record total)

**150** Greene Co\* —

11 May 2007 Stephen Dinsmore, Jay Gilliam

**143** Polk Co — 13 May 2007

Aaron Brees, Stephen Dinsmore, Jay Gilliam

**140** Emmet Co\* —

16 May 2007 Rita Goranson, Matt Kenne, Paul Hertzell

**90** Mitchell Co\* —

14 May 2007 Carolyn Fischer, Rita Goranson

**71** Month of January\* —

10 Jan 2007 Chuck Fuller, Jim Fuller, John Rutenbeck

**75** Month of December\* — 19 Dec

2007 Bob Dick, Chuck Fuller, Jim Fuller, John Rutenbeck

## Iowa Record Big Days by

### Month

**January 71** 10 Jan 2007

Chuck Fuller, Jim Fuller, John Rutenbeck

**February 64** 29 Feb 2000

Pam & Reid Allen

**March 90** 27 Mar 1988  
S J Dinsmore, Ross Silcock

**April 141** 29 Apr 1989 S  
J Dinsmore, Paul Hertzell

**May 204** 13 May 1996  
Pete Petersen, Brian Blevins,  
Don Moeller

**June 135** 1 Jun 2005 Danny  
Akers, Rita Goranson, Paul  
Hertzell

**July 120** 28 Jul 2005  
Eugene & Eloise Armstrong,  
Dennis Thompson

**August 136** 26 Aug 2005  
Lee Schoenewe, Ed Thelen

**September 135** 5 Sep 1987  
Stephen J Dinsmore, Jim Sin-  
clair, Andrew Fix

**October 91** 5 Oct 2002  
Lee Schoenewe, Gary Grange

**November 87** 11 Nov 2003 Ed  
Thelen, Lee Schoenewe

**December 75** 19 Dec 2007  
Bob Dick, Chuck Fuller, Jim  
Fuller, John Rutenbeck

## Record Big Days by County

**Allamakee 126** 10 May 2003  
Ric Zarwell, Betty Zarwell, Meliss  
Wolfe, Matt Paulson

**Cerro Gordo 145** 11 May 2002  
Paul Hertzell, Rita Goranson,  
Carolyn Fischer

**Clayton 94** 08 May 2004  
Danny Akers, Julie Brazell

**Clay 148** 09 May 2004  
Lee Schoenewe, Gary Grange,  
Pete Ernzen

**Decatur 130** 11 May 2006  
Jeff Livingston, Matthew  
Torres, et al

**Dickinson 91** 05 Oct 2004  
Gary Grange, Lee Schoenewe

**Emmet 140** 16 May 2007  
Rita Goranson, Matt Kenne, Paul  
Hertzell

**Floyd 118** 21 May 2005  
Curt Nelson, Rita Goranson, Paul  
Hertzell

**Fremont 171** 11 May 1991  
Steve Dinsmore, Ross  
Silcock, BJ Rose, Doug Rose

**Greene 150** 11 May 2007  
S J Dinsmore, Jay Gilliam

**Hancock 141** 09 May 2005  
Carolyn Fischer, Rita  
Goranson, Paul Hertzell

**Johnson 136** 08 May 2004  
Tom Kent, Jim Fuller

**Kossuth 153** 14 May 2002  
Matt Kenne, Paul Hertzell

**Marshall 123** 10 May 2003  
Mark Proescholdt, Paul Hertzell

**Mitchell 90** 14 May 2007  
Carolyn Fischer, Rita Goranson

**Polk 162** 12 May 2006  
Stephen Dinsmore, Jay Gilliam,  
Aaron Brees

**Warren 154** 09 May 2003  
Aaron Brees, Jim Sinclair

**Winnebago 127** 09 May 2004  
Paul Hertzell, Rita Goranson

**Woodbury 165** 08 May 2004  
Jerry Probst, Bob Livermore,  
Dave Stage

**Worth 136** 13 May 2003  
Paul Hertzell, Rita Goranson

In order for your Big Day to be included along with those published above, we ask that its parameters be comparable. That means that your group contain at least two individuals, and they stay within the boundaries of some definable region of Iowa. Please conduct the Big Day according to ABA rules for Big Days, and adhere to the ABA Birding Code of Ethics.



## BBA Update

By Nicki Nagl, BBA Coordinator

Greetings Birders! The 2<sup>nd</sup> Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas is underway and is off to a great start thanks to your determination and effort. Since the website became available in March we have close to 100 user accounts created and over 200 blocks visited thus far. With goals in mind, ideally it would have been desirable to get 1/5 (160) of the blocks completed in the first year, but considering all of the weather-related problems and website issues, I think we have done very well this season. Congratulations to everybody for already working in over 200 blocks during this first year! That is an awesome accomplishment!

On a side note, another worthy goal might be to look at the blocks you started this year and plan to complete them by the end of next field season. This way, you can start atlas work in other new blocks you're interested in and continue to complete blocks in a reasonable time frame. Remember, at the end of the five years, we would like to see *all* of the blocks visited and completed, with 20 hours of visitation, and nesting *confirmation* records for *all* birds breeding in Iowa in as many blocks as possible. Keep these goals in mind as you plan out next season's BBA adventures!

Due to the unfortunate website hacks that occurred in June, it is understandable that this may have affected people's ability to enter data right away. With all of the security recently added to the site, one should not have to worry about this. It is a good idea to enter your data when you get the time so everyone can see the progress being made and so they can observe the interesting species distribution information. By entering your field data ASAP, it also allows others to see where work has been done in order to not duplicate efforts. Entering your data is a fun thing to do for everyone's benefit.

Also, if online data entry is not for you, do not let it discourage you from participating in the BBA. Nicki, the BBA Coordinator, will gladly enter your data for you. If this is a route you are interested in taking, please send your field card(s), filled out to its best completeness, to:

**BBA Coordinator  
Boone Wildlife Research Station  
1436 255<sup>th</sup> St.  
Boone, IA 50036**

Thank you for all of your enthusiasm, hard work, and support of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas. Your help and dedication to this project has been outstanding thus far, and is greatly appreciated. You are truly making a valuable contribution to the state of Iowa, its citizens, and its bird life.

If you have any questions regarding the BBA, feel free to email Nicki (BBA Coordinator) at [bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org](mailto:bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org), or call at (515)432-2823 ext.114. If interested, Nicki can come and visit your local birding club or Audubon Chapter to talk about the Atlas project and its progress thus far. Thank you and keep up the good work!





## **Is Ethanol Bad for Birds?**

By Harley Winfrey

I recently decided to stop buying ethanol at the gas pump because of concerns about its environmental impacts. With the prominence of ethanol in the Iowa economy, and corn in the Iowa landscape, I think it's worthwhile to consider the effects of ethanol production on birds.

Reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases is a top conservation concern, and many reports depict plummeting populations of many bird species as a result of global climate change. Since the energy provided by ethanol comes from corn fields instead of oil fields, it would seem to be a good first step toward a renewable energy future. But researchers at Cornell and California Universities (*Natural Resources Research*, March 2005) point out that ethanol production takes more than sunlight and soil. Because of petroleum-based fertilizers, transportation, and processing, a gallon of corn-based ethanol takes more than 1.29 gallons of petroleum to produce. A 2006 Consumer Reports study also found that ethanol-fueled cars got up to 40% lower gas mileage than identical cars running on conventional unleaded.

Even without this inefficiency, the economics of using corn for fuel lead to other problems for birds. With billions in annual subsidies to support the market, ethanol is cheap at the pump while corn commodity prices soar. As a result, farmers are putting more land into corn production—more than 500,000 acres of Iowa CRP land were released for cultivation in 2007. Just a few miles from my home in Boone County, a field previously full of dense grassland habitat for Blue Grosbeaks, Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows was tilled up this spring. We've all seen in our field trips across the state that the "old hay field" habitats of CRP fields have higher diversity than the surrounding agricultural deserts. Nationally, studies have shown that grassland bird species are more abundant in landscapes with a higher proportion of CRP lands. (*Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 1998 26-2)

CRP lands are not just good bird habitat—they also often buffer riparian areas and filter pollutants before they reach waterways. A report by Iowa State's Center for Agricultural and Rural Development asserts that the return of environmentally sensitive CRP lands to crop production would result in increased loss of sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous, and carbon sequestration. These effects would have far-reaching implications for Iowa birds. And this year's flooding has led to calls to release more land from CRP restrictions.

What about the worldwide impacts of using food for fuel? According to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, up to 75% of the recent surge in global fuel prices can be attributed to biofuels. Besides the obvious cause of corn being diverted from the food supply, the ethanol market has led to land being switched from other food crops in favor of corn. Ultimately, the higher food prices have the greatest impact in countries with low standards of living, particularly the tropics and southern hemisphere. One can only assume that those in rural areas will turn to increased hunting to feed their families, putting more pressure on some of the most diverse, but also most at-risk bird habitats in the world.

I feel compelled to share what I have learned about this issue with the IOU membership because of our unique niche in the relationship between agriculture and birds. I hope to see discussion of ethanol's effect on birds on the Iowa Birds listserv and at IOU meetings. I also welcome anyone with more information about the benefits of ethanol to share them in a future newsletter.



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