

Spring 2011 IOU Meeting Wrap-up

By Paul Roisen, Interim Vice President



The Spring 2011 meeting of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union took place in Shenandoah April 29th through May 1st. 73 birders attended the Fremont/Page county area event.

Attendees searching for migrants at Riverton WA. Photo by John Bissell

The weekend kicked off Friday evening with registration and a social gathering at the Shenandoah Historical Museum building. Registrants began arriving around 5:00PM to share snacks, drinks, the renewal of friendships, sign up for field trips, and for a first look at the many silent auction items. Bob Cecil, Mr. Silent Auction himself, reminded us frequently to “bid high and bid often.” Conversation of birds found and missed, conservation, politics, and past meetings continued until well past the bedtime of most intelligent birders – 9:00PM. Poor weather on Friday was a cause for concern as far as field trip

leaders were concerned, as it was really unknown just how good the birding would be for the weekend.

Saturday

Saturday brought an unexpectedly gorgeous day. Fueled by a delicious locally catered 6:00AM breakfast, the final signups for the field trips proceeded smoothly. Even before leaving downtown Shenandoah, it was obvious that birds, having heard about our grand gathering of birders, had flown in from points near and far anxious to be included in the final count. Saturday field trips, lengthened by the “box lunch”

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IOU News Editor:

John Bissell
328 SE Cedarwood Dr
Grimes, IA 50111-1142
john.annabissell@gmail.com

IOU News Layout:

Anna Bissell
328 SE Cedarwood Dr
Grimes, IA 50111-1142
john.annabissell@gmail.com

IOU Publications Committee:

Ann Johnson, Chair
James J Dinsmore
Stephen J Dinsmore
Bill Scheible
John Bissell

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Stephen J. Dinsmore, Editor
cootjr@iastate.edu

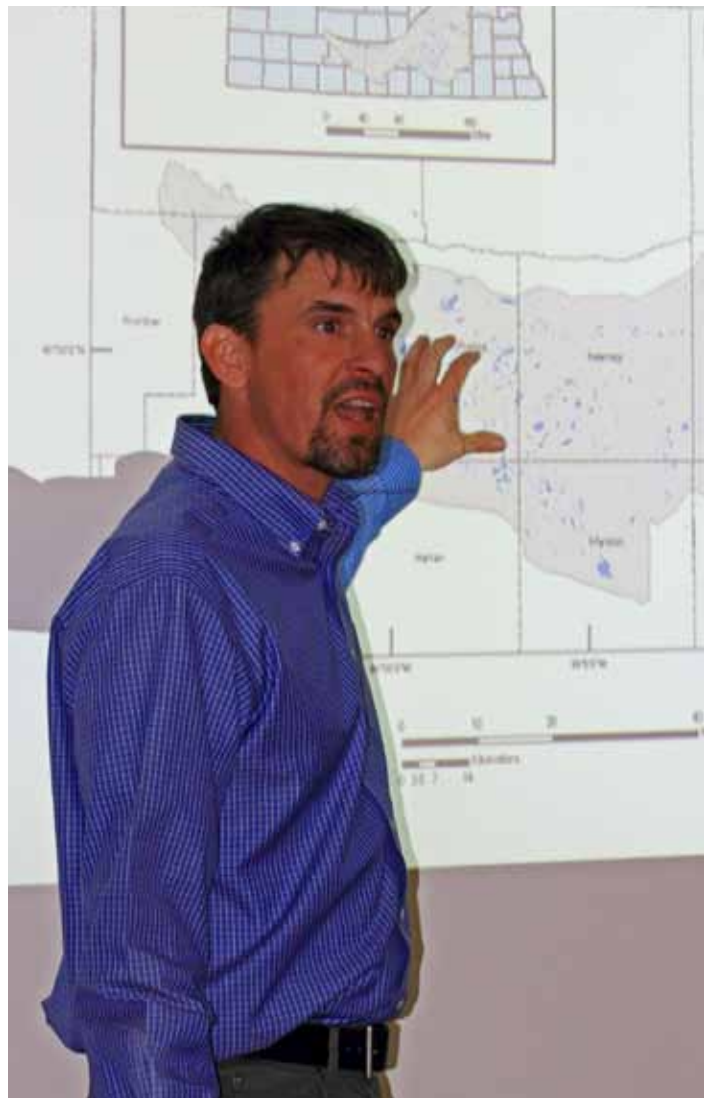
Website:

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IOU Membership / Subscriptions:

Doug Hunt
1201 High Avenue W
Oskaloosa, IA 52577
<http://www.iowabirds.org/>

this newsletter was mailed to 384 members.



Banquet speaker Joel Jorgensen discussing shorebird migration in the Rainwater Basin in Nebraska. Photo by Don Poggensee



Jim Sinclair looking for shorebirds at Riverton WA. Photo by John Bissell

option, produced at unexpected record 162 species. Wherever one went--Riverton WA, Missouri River Bottoms, Waubonsie State Park, Rapp Park, Pierce Creek, Porter's Lake, Manti Park, or Wabash Trace – birds dripped, skulked, sang, scratched, or perched in just about every type of habitat possible.

The afternoon programs began with a presentation by President Dinsmore on the finer points of bird identification. Next was a short IOU business meeting – highlights were an update on the progress of the current Breeding Bird Atlas project by coordinator Billy Reiter-Marolf followed by the election of officers. Newly elected board members are Don Brown(2013), Keith Dyche (2013), Karen Viste-Sparkman (2012), Vice President Tom Schilke, and President Paul Roisen.

Bill and Joyce Burch (Des Moines), Chad Lankford (Sac City), Kathleen Myers (Des Moines), and Willard Piercy (Council Bluffs), first time attendees at one of our meeting, were recognized and provided with a copy of “Birds In Iowa” by Tom Kent and James Dinsmore as a welcoming gift.

The Banquet

The highlight of the IOU meetings is almost always the Saturday evening banquet and the excellent speakers that provide us with education and entertainment. The Spring 2011 keynote address – “Sandpiper, Playas, and Soybean Fields: Shorebird Migration in the Rainwater Basin, Nebraska” by Nebraskan Joel G. Jorgensen was no exception.

Mr. Jorgensen is the Nongame Bird Program Coordinator with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. His talk provided a fascinating introduction to the importance of the Nebraska Rainwater basin to shorebirds and other migratory waterbirds. Joel began with an overview of the Rainwater Basin, describing the dynamics of the playas themselves and the birds that use them. He then finished his talk by detailing his recent work with Buff-breasted Sandpipers on the agricultural lands surrounding the playas. His work leads him to estimate that 20,000 to 30,000 Buff-breasted Sandpipers use the Rainwater Basin region during

spring migration. He also described their habitats (mostly soybean fields) and behavior (mostly feeding), and then concluded his talk by discussing their body condition and stopover ecology. His presentation was timely for this meeting because of the shorebird concentration at Riverton Wildlife Area. I suspect that many IOU members are considering a future trip to the Rainwater Basin to experience the spring shorebird migration!

Sunday

Anxious to add to the stunning one hundred and sixty-two species from yesterday, breakfast was quickly dispatched and field trips were off by 7:00AM. Sunday's field trips provided attendees with the opportunities to go look for species that had been seen by participants on the Saturday field trips. The day ended with an additional 22 species being added to yesterday's total.

Final compilation showed a very successful 184 species. Highlight birds were a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Whimbrel, Red-necked Phalarope, White-eyed Vireo, and Hooded Warbler.



Field trip leader and host Keith Dyche leading a trip at the Riverton Area. Photo by Don Poggensee

Birding the area was a stimulating experience. Between the great weather, food, birding, fellowship, and amenities many of us will certainly return here to bird again.

A monstrous “Thank you” goes out to the Dyche family for putting on an outstanding weekend. Lots of work

for little recognition, and on top of that, Keith made the time to find and post all the neat birds being found in the area before the meeting. Well done, Keith!



Field trip leader Ross Silcock scanning Riverton WA for shorebirds. Photo by John Bissell

2011 IOU Spring Meeting Compilation List

Snow Goose	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Semipalmated Sandpiper
Canada Goose		Least Sandpiper
Trumpeter Swan		White-rumped Sandpiper
Wood Duck	White-faced Ibis	Baird's Sandpiper
Gadwall		Pectoral Sandpiper
American Wigeon	Turkey Vulture	Dunlin
Mallard		Stilt Sandpiper
Blue-winged Teal	Osprey	Long-billed Dowitcher
Cinnamon Teal	Bald Eagle	Wilson's Snipe
Northern Shoveler	Northern Harrier	Wilson's Phalarope
Northern Pintail	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Red-necked Phalarope
Green-winged Teal	Cooper's Hawk	
Canvasback	Broad-winged Hawk	
Redhead	Swainson's Hawk	Franklin's Gull
Ring-necked Duck	Red-tailed Hawk	Bonaparte's Gull
Lesser Scaup		Ring-billed Gull
Bufflehead	American Kestrel	Forster's Tern
Hooded Merganser	Peregrine Falcon	
Ruddy Duck		Rock Pigeon
	Virginia Rail	Eurasian Collared-Dove
Ring-necked Pheasant	Sora	Mourning Dove
Wild Turkey	American Coot	White-winged Dove
Common Loon	Sandhills Crane	Eastern Screech Owl
		Great Horned Owl
Pied-billed Grebe	American Golden-Plover	Barred Owl
	Semipalmated Plover	
American White Pelican	Killdeer	Common Nighthawk
		Whip-poor-will
Double-crested Cormorant	Black-necked Stilt	
	American Avocet	Chimney Swift
American Bittern	Greater Yellowlegs	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Great Blue Heron	Lesser Yellowlegs	
Great Egret	Solitary Sandpiper	
Snowy Egret	Willet	Belted Kingfisher
Cattle Egret	Spotted Sandpiper	
Green Heron	Upland Sandpiper	Red-headed Woodpecker
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Whimbrel	Red-bellied Woodpecker
	Hudsonian Godwit	

2011 IOU Spring Meeting Compilation List

Downy Woodpecker		
Hairy Woodpecker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Eastern Towhee
Northern Flicker		American Tree Sparrow
Pileated Woodpecker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Chipping Sparrow
		Clay-colored Sparrow
Least Flycatcher	Eastern Bluebird	Field Sparrow
Easter Phoebe	Swainson's Thrush	Vesper Sparrow
Great Crested	Wood Thrush	Lark Sparrow
Flycatcher	American Robin	Savannah Sparrow
Western Kingbird		Grasshopper Sparrow
Eastern Kingbird	Gray Catbird	LeConte's Sparrow
	Northern Mockingbird	Song Sparrow
White-eyed Vireo	Brown Thrasher	Lincoln's Sparrow
Bell's Vireo		Swamp Sparrow
Yellow-throated Vireo	European Starling	White-throated Sparrow
Blue-headed Vireo		Harris's Sparrow
Warbling Vireo	American Pipit	White-crowned Sparrow
Red-eyed Vireo		
	Cedar Waxwing	Northern Cardinal
Blue Jay		Rose-breasted
American Crow	Tennessee Warbler	Grosbeak
	Orange-crowned	Indigo Bunting
Horned Lark	Warbler	
	Nashville Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Purple Martin	Northern Parula	Eastern Meadowlark
Tree Swallow	Yellow Warbler	Western Meadowlark
Northern Rough-winged	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Swallow	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Brewer's Blackbird
Bank Swallow	Palm Warbler	Common Grackle
Cliff Swallow	Blackpoll Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Barn Swallow	Black-and-white Warbler	Orchard Oriole
	American Redstart	Baltimore Oriole
Black-capped Chickadee	Ovenbird	
Tufted Titmouse	Northern Waterthrush	Purple Finch
	Louisiana Waterthrush	House Finch
White-breasted Nuthatch	Common Yellowthroat	American Goldfinch
	Hooded Warbler	
House Wren		House Sparrow!
Sedge Wren	Summer Tanager	
Marsh Wren	Scarlet Tanager	

Enjoying Nocturnal Migration by Identifying Flight Calls

By John Bissell

Every spring and fall, birders gear up for what are considered the most exciting times of the year for birdwatching, the migration of neotropical songbirds to and from their wintering grounds. Each year, we can count on trees filling with colorful warblers, and shrubs and prairies concealing skulking sparrows, thrushes, and cuckoos. The best months to experience migration tend to be April and May, and then again in August, September, and October, when southbound migration tends to be a little more drawn out. While I thoroughly enjoy heading outdoors to watch and photograph birds during spring and fall migration, I have recently added a new dimension to my enjoyment of birding, and that is heading out late at night to witness nocturnal migration.

Enjoying nocturnal migration consists of either staying up really late or getting up a couple hours before dawn, and listening to the multitude of tzeets, tzips, sees, and other sounds emanating from overhead. Certain weather conditions should be present for optimal nocturnal migration to take place. In the spring, nocturnal migration tends to be most pronounced during a period of light southerly winds with a low cloud ceiling or following the passage of a front. In fall, the conditions are similar, except there should be a light north wind component. It should be noted that nocturnal migration occurs in pulses, and there are often periods of time where nothing is heard. Therefore, it helps to listen for around 30 minutes to make sure you aren't listening during a temporary "lull" in activity. Generally, the altitude of nocturnal migration is dependent on wind and cloud cover, and often birds migrate just over tree-top level at dawn as they descend to find a place to spend the day. Historically, during periods of very low clouds, nocturnal migration was a dangerous time for birds, as they tended to be drawn to high profile light sources such as skyscrapers and communication towers. Collisions with guy wires and buildings often took place around these structures, and many birds died each year as a result. However, research has been

done, and changing the light colors on these towers from white to red has sharply reduced this hazard.

If you are interested in learning flight calls of migratory songbirds, there is computer software that I highly recommend called Flight Calls of Migratory Birds by William Evans and Michael O'Brien. This software covers every songbird that has a flight call, and has sound recordings of each species' call note. The large percentage of nocturnal flight calls are emitted by thrushes, warblers, sparrows, tanagers, grosbeaks, and cuckoos. Shorebirds and rails also have nocturnal flight calls, but they are not covered in the software.

For someone just getting started in identifying nocturnal flight calls, I would recommend starting with the thrush family. Veery, Swainson's, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes call frequently, and their calls have a distinctive burry quality that easily separates them from warblers and sparrows. Furthermore, the call notes within the thrush family are sufficiently different from each other that with practice, it will be easy to ID any thrush flight call you hear. This is the easiest way to tick Gray-cheeked Thrush for the year, as their flight call is easy to identify. Often, a birder can hear more thrushes in a single night than they will see in an entire year! Warblers and sparrows are considerably more difficult, but there are individuals within each family that are relatively straightforward. White-throated Sparrows are pretty distinctive, as well as Common Yellowthroats, Indigo Buntings, and Dickcissels. I have never heard cuckoos emit nocturnal flight calls, but they commonly call at night, and their calls are very distinctive. With practice, it's easy to differentiate between Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoo nocturnal flight calls.

After you have mastered the straightforward species, take a shot at learning the other warblers and sparrow flight call notes. Imagine how many species you could add to your year list just by sitting on your deck at night and listening.

IOU Fall Meeting

Decorah, IA – August 26-28, 2011

Decorah, in Winneshiek County, is a favorite destination for many Iowans any time of year. The scenic, forested rolling hills and limestone bluffs of the county are dissected by quality rivers and cool sparkling trout streams. Many say the best canoeing and trout fishing in the state are found here. Unique geological formations and hundreds of tree and plant species are preserved for public enjoyment. As we know, diverse natural communities translate to quality birding opportunities.

Decorah prides itself in its Norwegian heritage – evident in its shops, culture and laid back atmosphere. Luther

College is at home here. Although our meeting focus for the weekend will be bird related, there are plenty of interesting opportunities to look into in the area.

All activities and meals will be at The Oaks Steakhouse, attached to the Bluffs Inn. One block east of Hwy. 9 and Hwy. 52 intersection on the south side of Decorah.

All registrants will receive a free copy of the booklet “Lets Go Birding” by Ted Floyd. New IOU members and first time attendees will also receive a copy of “Birds in Iowa” by Thomas Kent and James Dinsmore.



Lodging:

Blocks of rooms reserved at an IOU discount rate at conveniently located Bluff's Inn and Super 8 until Aug. 12th.

Bluffs Inn: One block east of Hwy. 52 and Hwy. 9 intersection on Hwy. 9
All rooms - single, double, suites
\$67.20 (tax included in price)
563-382-8600 or 877-382-8600

Super 8: 810 Hwy. 9 East
Two bed rooms
\$65.52 (tax included in price)
563-382-8711

Also nearby but mostly booked with weddings - call for rates and availability

Quality Inn and Suites
(near the Super 8) 563-382-2269

Country Inns and Suites
(across from the Bluffs Inn) 563-382-9646

Also cabins and B&Bs throughout the area.
Check a complete listing on www.visitdecorah.com or for more information phone the Chamber of Commerce at 563-382-3990

Camping:

Pulpit Rock Campground
505 Pulpit Rock Road – about a mile north of Hwy. 9 off of Hwy. 52
Trailers/RVs \$17.00 night
Electricity \$3.00 night
Tents \$13 night
75 gravel sites, 50 grass sites - NO RESERVATIONS
popular resort like campground

A 12 mile loop bike trail around Decorah connects the campground with the state fish hatchery (site of the eagle cam), the ice cave, parks and the Bluffs Inn

Lake Meyer County Park

About 14 miles from our meeting site outside of Calmar off Hwy. 24
\$10.00 per night without electricity
\$15.00 per night with electricity

Meals:

All meals served at the Oaks Steakhouse except the box lunch which will be taken with you on Saturday field trips. All meals include tax and gratuity.

Saturday breakfast: \$8.60

Full breakfast: scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, fruit and drinks

Saturday box lunch: \$6.50

Turkey, beef or vegetarian sandwich, chips, fruit, dessert, drink

Saturday night banquet: \$13.75 plate

Choice of Chicken Marsala, Pork Loin, or Vegetarian Penne Regate ala Vodka Prima Vera, salad, veggie, roll, drink
Request business attire for the banquet

Sunday breakfast: \$8.60

Full breakfast: scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, fruit, drinks

Sunday lunch: \$7.00

Pizza buffet including drink by locally famous Mabe's Pizza

Field trips:

Don't have to travel far for good birding. We have chosen four of the favorite local sites to explore - all 15 miles or less from our meeting site.

Cardinal Marsh – 1,165 acre diverse wetland, upland, timber on Turkey River floodplain.

Seed Saver's Exchange – trails lace through 890 acres of sparkling streams, limestone bluffs, and century old white pines. The property is home to preservation gardens, historic orchards, rare farm animals, large visitor center, and of course good birding.

Meyer's Lake – 156 acres, lake and diverse habitat. Headquarters of Winneshiek County Conservation.

Decorah City Parks – Decorah State Fish Hatchery (trout), Malanaphy Springs State Preserve (64 acres, large spring, waterfall, over 300 vascular plants) and other parks along the river.

Other possible field trips:

BBA block atlasing – Over 25 nearby breeding bird atlas blocks, each encompassing 9 square miles, can still be searched and recorded for signs of breeding bird activity. Do BBA service work before, after or during the weekend and mileage is tax deductible.

The Mississippi River Flyway – about a 45-60 minute drive from Decorah.

Indoor possibilities:

Hoslett Museum – Bird collection of about 700 study skins, 250 mounts, and the 3rd largest eggshell collection in Iowa (1427 eggs representing 287 species). Guided tours possible.

The Porter House – Victorian age home with natural history collections (butterflies, insects, birds, rocks). Guided tours possible

The Vesterheim Norwegian – American Museum - Norwegian heaven

Downtown – The Sugar Bowl for real ice cream and Oneota Food Co-op for real specialty foods (sorry, I have a weakness for these places).

Schedule:

All activities are in the upper level of the Oaks Steakhouse connected to the Bluff's Inn

Friday, Aug. 26, 2011

7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Social in the upper level of the Oaks Steakhouse. Cash bar.

- Area information available from the Decorah Chamber of Commerce

- Sign up for field trips
- Learn about and view the Turkey Vulture roost. (200-300 come to roost each evening across the street)

Saturday, Aug. 27

6:00 - 7:00 a.m. Breakfast

7:00 - 1:30 p.m. Field trips

1:00 p.m. IOU board meeting

2:00 p.m. Bob Anderson – director of the Raptor Research Center and Decorah Eagle Cam. What has been learned from the Eagle Cam and exciting new discoveries about Peregrine Effigies.

3:00 p.m. Dr. Ted Floyd - Warbler ID workshop.

4:00 p.m. Billy Reiter-Marlof – Breeding Bird Atlas coordinator. NE Iowa BBA update. Trends and discoveries in NE Iowa breeding birds - BBA maps available

4:15 p.m. IOU membership meeting
Afternoon times may flex - because we in the IOU are flexible.

6:00 p.m. Banquet (cash bar)

7:00 p.m. Keynote speaker Ted Floyd
Birding at Night - The Final Frontier

Sunday, Aug. 28

6:00 a.m. Breakfast

7:00 - noon Field trips

Additional slacker field trip – The Bare-naked Birder with Dr. Ted Floyd.
Later start time, no optics, just you and your senses

12:00 p.m. lunch and compilation

1:00 p.m. Have a safe trip home or check out the town.

Dr. Ted Floyd – Keynote Speaker Nocturnal Bird Sounds

Ted Floyd is the Editor of *Birding*, the flagship publication of the American Birding Association. Dr. Floyd is widely published in birding and ecological publications. His more than 125 articles have appeared in scholarly journals such as *Ecology*, *Oecologia*, *Animal Behaviour*, *Journal of Animal Ecology*, and *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* as well as in popular magazines such as *Natural History*, *Birdwatcher's Digest*, and *Birding*. He has contributed chapters to textbooks and guidebooks published by Oxford University Press, Houghton Mifflin, and National Geographic. Three books are also among his publishing successes – Senior author of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada* (University of Nevada Press, 2007), author of the *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (HarperCollins, 2009) and *Let's Go Birding* (American Birding Association, 2008).

Ted has broad interests in birding and ornithology, especially as they relate to conservation and management. In recent years, he participated in



the creation of Bird Conservation Plans for Partners in Flight and in the production of Eco-Regional Plans for The Nature Conservancy. Currently, Ted is contributing to an effort to describe the nocturnal flight calls of migrating birds in western North America, and his findings are helping to clarify basic patterns of occurrence of birds on active migration in the West. His work has also highlighted the value of nocturnal flight calls as an identification aid for bird species that are otherwise easy to overlook when out in the field.

Registration Information

Online registration:

If possible, please register through the IOU website at: <http://www.iowabirds.org>

Make checks payable to Iowa Ornithologists' Union
Mail to: **Tom Schilke**
1432 Liberty Ave.
Waterloo, IA 50702

Registering by mail:

Copy, fill out, and mail - don't forget your check!

Name(s): _____

(please include first and last names of all persons registering)

Address: _____

			No. of People		Total Cost
Registration Fee	\$20.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Breakfast	\$8.60	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Box Lunch	\$6.50	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sat. Banquet	\$13.75	x	_____	= \$	_____
Circle one:	Chicken Marsala				
	Pork Loin				
	Veg. Penne				
Sun. Breakfast	\$8.60	x	_____	= \$	_____
Sun. Pizza Lunch	\$7.00	x	_____	= \$	_____
Meatless option?	check here		_____	Total \$	_____

Iowa Ornithologists' Union
1201 High Avenue West
Oskaloosa, IA 52577

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Iowa Ornithologists' Union

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