

Iowa Ornithologists' Union



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

I. O. U. NEWS

Winter 1986

Newsletter of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Volume 2 Number 4

A LOOK AT FIELD GUIDES Rick Hollis, Iowa City

Every now and then someone will ask me to recommend a bird book for a child or other beginner. There is a huge and ever increasing number of field guides available, and the table below lists titles, authors, dates, and the approximate price of a softbound copy.

With the exception of the Geographic Guide, all of the books listed below are easy to purchase in Iowa City. The National Geographic Guide is best purchased directly from them through their toll free phone number (1-800-638-4077).

Given the similarity in names, I will refer to the books by number:

1. Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Geographic Society, 1983. Edited by Shirley Scott. \$13.95.
2. Birds of North America (Golden Field Guide), Chandler, Robbins, and others, 1983. \$10.95.
3. A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies, Roger T. Peterson, 1984. \$11.95.
4. Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds: Eastern Division, John Bull and John Farrand, Jr., 1977. \$13.00.
5. Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding (3 volume set), John Farrand, Jr., Ed., 1983. \$42.00.
6. Birds of North America: An Audubon Society Beginner Guide, George Fichter, 1982. \$3.95.
7. Birds (A Golden Guide), Herbert Zim and Ira Gabrielson, 1956. \$3.00.
8. Peterson's First Guide to Birds, Roger T. Peterson, 1986. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.95.
9. Birds of North America: Eastern Region, John Bull and others, 1985. MacMillan. \$9.95.

A LOOK AT FIELD GUIDES (cont'd)

The first three are the guides that most of us use and are familiar with. They have been exhaustively reviewed elsewhere.

Guides 4 and 5 I mention only for completeness of the bibliography. Number 4 commits two sins: it uses photographs, and it is arranged by color. Number 5 is a three volume set and not truly a field guide. I will discuss them no further.

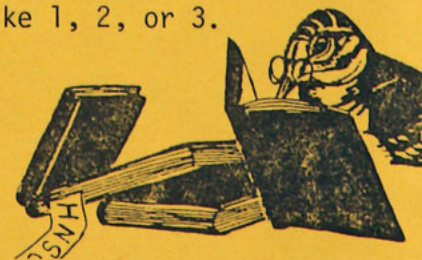
Books 6 and 7 both lack all species, and make a few mistakes. (Number 6 has a lovely picture of a male and female Red-breasted Merganser labeled Common Merganser.) They make up for this in my opinion by providing pictures which show the birds in natural backgrounds, acting like birds. In the species accounts, both give a short description of the bird's life style. This kind of information is amplified by material in their introductions and appendices. Either of these books provides the reader with some idea of how to watch birds and what birds do. Number 7 has an appendix which gives a description of eggs, nests, and food for almost every species pictured as well as a migration timetable.

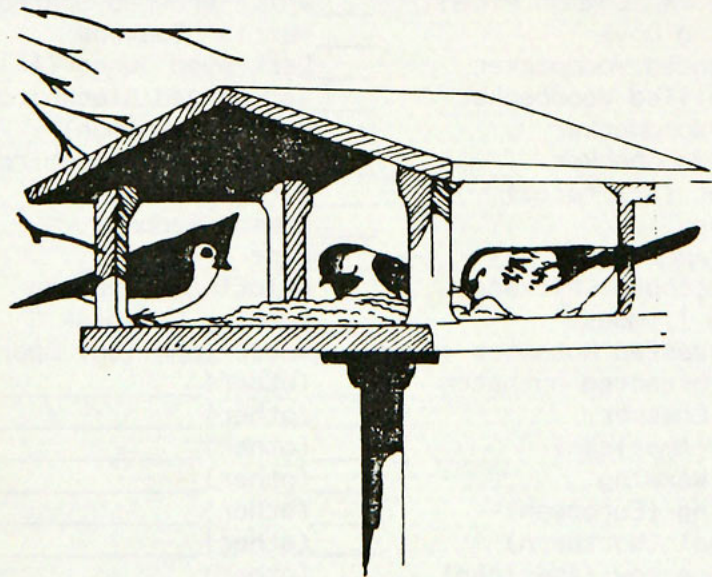
Guides 8 and 9 are field guides only. For the most part the pictures are birds against neutral backgrounds, and the text is limited to identification. Number 8 is arranged by color. While this arrangement can work for flower guides, it is poor at best for birds, unless extensive cross-listing is provided. This book does not provide that, and such an easy to identify species as the Cardinal could be missed if you saw only the female and tried to find by color. There is also little mention of the missing birds. Number 8 also contains almost no mention of calls or songs. Even I, with my notorious tin ear, use sound to identify and locate birds. I just do not use it as well as I would like. Peterson's book (8) is pretty much the same as the big guide (3) only leaving out over half of the species and some plumages of others (female ducks). Most, if not all, of the pictures are identical, the text is similar, and the maps are gone.

I do not like incomplete guides. The idea of simplification to avoid confusion is appealing. However, any adult who birds, even in their own yard, will almost certainly sooner or later see a bird not pictured. Then they really will be confused. For example, in the nasty genus Empidonax, both 8 and 9 picture one example. But, while 9 refers you to book 3 and lets you know there are other species, book 8 makes no mention of any other species which are similar in appearance! My first guide was 7, and as you will read, I do recommend it with reservations. But, I still remember my amazement when I discovered that there were other birds. Along with the amazement, I was a bit disappointed. Somehow I felt misled and betrayed.

In terms of the language used, all of these books are very similar. They do not use many big words, and the text can be understood by all. All except 6 and 7 sometimes slip in a bit of specialized language which could send a novice running to a dictionary or just plain running.

My suggestion: For children, start them on 6. I gave my daughter one when she was three. She had a field guide "like Daddy's" to carry, she learned to recognize some birds, and it gave her an appreciation for the variety of avian life styles. As the child gets older, say five or six, give them book 7. It will have more species pictured and expand their knowledge. You will have to read to the child, but both of these books use simple language which a child can understand. They will learn the species. Then when they are ready, give them a real field guide like 1, 2, or 3.





HIGHEST NUMBER SEEN FOR EACH SPECIES DURING 2 CONSECUTIVE DAYS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ___ Ring-necked Pheasant | ___ White-throated Sparrow |
| ___ Rock Dove (Common Pigeon) | ___ White-crowned Sparrow |
| ___ Mourning Dove | ___ Harris' Sparrow |
| ___ Red-headed Woodpecker | ___ Dark-eyed Junco (All races) |
| ___ Red-bellied Woodpecker | ___ Red-winged Blackbird |
| ___ Downy Woodpecker | ___ Grackle (Common) |
| ___ Hairy Woodpecker | ___ Brown-headed Cowbird |
| ___ Flicker (All races) | ___ Purple Finch |
| ___ Blue Jay | ___ Common Redpoll |
| ___ Crow (American) | ___ Pine Siskin |
| ___ Black-capped Chickadee | ___ Goldfinch American |
| ___ Tufted Titmouse | ___ Evening Grosbeak |
| ___ Red-breasted Nuthatch | ___ House (English) Sparrow |
| ___ White-breasted nuthatch | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Brown Creeper | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Robin (American) | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Cedar Waxwing | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Starling (European) | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Cardinal (Northern) | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Tree Sparrow (American) | ___ (other) _____ |
| ___ Song Sparrow | ___ TOTAL SPECIES SEEN |

Please fill out carefully. Feel free to copy the form for friends and patrons.
Thank you and enjoy yourselves!

A LOOK AT FIELD GUIDES (cont'd)

For your adult friends or teenagers that are (or you wish were) interested in birds, start them out with a real one. Why mess around and give them something which is incomplete? Books 8 and 9 are nice. The pictures are nice, and the text is useful. But they do lack birds your friend could see. Give them any one of the "big three" (numbers 1, 2, or 3) and help them. Be available to explain any fancy words (like lores or tarsus). And by all means, take them birding or sit with them and watch their feeder. Your help and encouragement will do more to nurture their interest than any book.

BLUEBIRD SEMINAR

The first annual Bluebird seminar was held September 27, 1986 at the beautiful Lime Creek Nature Center at Mason City. The meeting was attended by approximately 60 people from various parts of the state and Minnesota.

There were many items on display including various Bluebird boxes, sparrow traps to fit the boxes, Bluebird literature, and predator control handouts. There was a great deal of enthusiasm among the attendants as they exchanged ideas and solved problems encountered on their trails.

This year's seminar was planned for northern Iowa as it was a joint meeting with the Minnesota Bluebird Recovery Program. Plans are to have it more centrally located in the future.

Doug Reeves, IOU member and state non-game biologist, prepared an honor roll of Bluebirders having 30 or more nest boxes. Reeves said Mark Dietzenbach of St. Lucas had 250 Bluebird nest boxes that he checked weekly. The birds in the boxes produced 660 Bluebirds this year.

Other IOU members who were honored are: Gil Sandvick of Long Grove; Marion Brewer, Cherokee; Rita Efta, Auburn; Bruce Ehresman, Boone; Paul and Mary Felsing, Knoxville; and Dean Mosman, Elkhart.

Reeves said interest has increased tremendously. So far 87 people have sent in reports regarding 1,976 Bluebird boxes. At least 2,600 Bluebirds were raised in the boxes.

- Rita Efta, Auburn
Hank Zaletel, Colo



WATCH THE BIRDIE

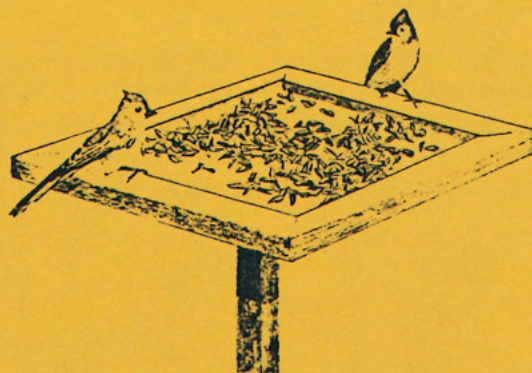
Statistics watchers are keeping their eyes on bird watching, fast becoming one of the USA's most popular activities. About 30 million people watch birds in backyards or fields, says a 1980 study by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Census Bureau. Half are early birds ages 25-44. The National Audubon Society, which says the USA has more birders than basketball fans, says membership age dropped from 42 to 37 in three years.

- USA Today

IOWA CHRISTMAS COUNTS

| Count Name | Date | Compiler | Phone |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Lost Nation | Thurs., Dec. 18 | Sharon Kaufman | 319-847-7202 |
| *Oakville (Aledo, IL) | Fri., Dec. 19 | Peter C. Petersen | 319-355-7051 |
| Cedar Rapids | Sat., Dec. 20 | Dale Fye | 319-364-1638 |
| Iowa City | Sat., Dec. 20 | Tom Staudt | 319-337-5935 |
| *Muscatine | Sat., Dec. 20 | Peter C. Petersen | 319-355-7051 |
| Waterloo | Sat., Dec. 20 | Francis Moore | 319-232-0217 |
| Rathbun | Sat., Dec. 20 | Bill Heusinkveldt | 515-856-2342 |
| Burlington | Sat., Dec. 20 | Charles Fuller | 515-856-3518 |
| DeSoto NWR | Sat., Dec. 20 | Eric Smith | 712-642-4121 |
| Sac County | Sat., Dec. 20 | Margaret Seeck | 712-465-2865 |
| Ames | Sat., Dec. 20 | Hank Zaletel | 515-377-2889 |
| Lucas County | Sat., Dec. 20 | Beth Brown | 515-342-2783 |
| Tri State | Sat., Dec. 20 | Ross Silcock | 712-629-5865 |
| Cedar Falls | Sun., Dec. 21 | Francis Moore | 319-232-0217 |
| *Davenport | Sun., Dec. 21 | Peter C. Petersen | 319-355-7051 |
| Cherokee | Sun., Dec. 21 | Dick Bierman | 712-225-5552 |
| *Princeton (Camanche, IA Cordova, IL) | Mon., Dec. 22 | Peter C. Petersen | 319-355-7051 |
| *Clinton (Fulton, IL) | Tues., Dec. 23 | Peter C. Petersen | 319-355-7051 |
| Jamaica | Tues., Dec. 23 | Ray Cummins | 515-856-3518 |
| North Linn | Sat., Dec. 27 | Weir Nelson | 319-848-4846 |
| Sioux City | Sat., Dec. 27 | Wayne Livermore | 712-239-1408 |
| Omaha | Sat., Dec. 27 | Betty Grenon | 402-291-1602 |
| Des Moines | Sat., Dec. 27 | Eugene Armstrong | 515-996-2726 |
| Shenandoah | Mon., Dec. 29 | Betty Walters | 712-246-5086 |
| Boone County | Thurs., Jan. 1 | Mark Widrlechner | 515-292-4014 |
| Lehigh | Sat., Jan. 3 | Mina Landes | 515-573-3482 |
| Ft. Dodge | Sun., Jan. 4 | Mina Landes | 515-573-3482 |

*Mississippi River counts



COMING EVENTS IN EASTERN IOWA

- Sun., Jan. 11 Feeder workshop and seminar, 2:00-4:00 PM, Deere-Wiman House, Moline, Illinois. See different types of feeders and how they work. Presented by Pete Petersen, Deere-Wiman Ornithologist.
- Fri., Jan. 16- Keokuk Bald Eagle Days. Hourly programs, Keosippi Mall at 1 and
Sun., Jan. 18 2 PM. 319-524-8041. Concurrent lectures on Bald Eagle biology.
- Sat., Jan. 17 Cedar Rapids Audubon Society field trip to Davenport and Dubuque for Eagles. For information, contact Jim Messina (319-362-8023).
- Sat., Jan. 24 Kossuth County Conservation Board, "Landscaping for Wildlife." Laura Jackson, Des Moines (515-281-4815). Kossuth Extension Service, 1306 N. Main, Algona. Adele Black.
- Sat., Jan. 24 Mississippi Bend Bird and Nature Club field trip to Cordova Nuclear Power Plant. Presentation on the plant's impact on nature. Meet at 10:14 AM at the Clinton County Court House. Leader: Carol Rogers (319-324-8897).
- Sun., Jan. 25 Iowa City Bird Club field trip to Davenport (Lock 14, Lock 15, and Credit Island) for Eagles. Meet at 6:30 AM at the parking lot north of the Iowa Memorial Union. Leader: Jim Sandrock (319-338-5774).
- Sat., Jan. 31 Cedar Rapids Audubon Society field trip to McBride for cross-country skiing and a visit to the Raptor Rehabilitation Center. Leader: Neil Bernstein (319-364-1047).
- Sat., Feb. 7 Lime Creek Nature Center, Mason City. "Landscaping for Wildlife." Laura Jackson, Des Moines. 515-281-4815. Fred Heinz, Mason City. 515-423-5309.
- Fri., Feb. 13- Quad City Bald Eagle Weekend. Co-sponsored by the Iowa Department of
Sun., Feb. 15 Natural Resources and the Illinois Department of Conservation, with help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Programs, field trips. Held at Modern Woodmen Insurance, Rock Island, Illinois.
- Sat., Feb. 14 Cedar Rapids Audubon Society field trip to Matsell Bridge. For information, contact Jim Messina (319) 362-8023.
- Sat., Feb. 14 Iowa City Bird Club field trip to Amana Woods - Turkey Walk and Amana breakfast. Meet at 6:30 AM at the parking lot north of the Iowa Memorial Union. Leader: Carl Bendorf (319) 351-4958.
- Wed., Feb. 25 Iowa City Bird Club meeting. Workshop on owls: behavior, nesting, habitat, feeding, identification. May be followed by field trip to look for owls. 7:00 PM, First National Bank in Towncrest, Iowa City. For information: Bud Gode (319) 351-5245.
- Sat., Feb. 28 Cedar Rapids Audubon Society - Kestrel banding. For information, call Jim Messina (319) 362-8023.
- Sat., Mar. 7 Lee County Conservation Board. "Landscaping for Wildlife." Laura Jackson, Des Moines (515) 281-4815.
- Sat., Mar. 14 Workshop: Landscaping for Wildlife, with Iowa's Urban Wildlife Biologist, Laura Jackson. Co-sponsored by Mississippi Bend Bird and Nature Club and the Quad City Audubon Society. For information, call Doris Sandvick (319) 225-6191.



- Sun., Mar. 15 Iowa City Bird Club field trip to the Mississippi River at Montrose. Meet at 6:30 AM at the parking lot north of the Iowa Memorial Union. Leader: Carol Thompson (319) 338-5361.
- Tues., Mar. 17 "Rehabilitation of Iowa Raptors and View of Iowa's Song Birds" - Beth Brown, Osceola. Westminster Presbyterian Church, Beaver and Franklin in Des Moines. 7:30 PM.
- Sat. Mar. 21 Cedar Rapids Audubon Society field trip to Coralville Reservoir. Leader: Duane Carr (319) 366-4477.

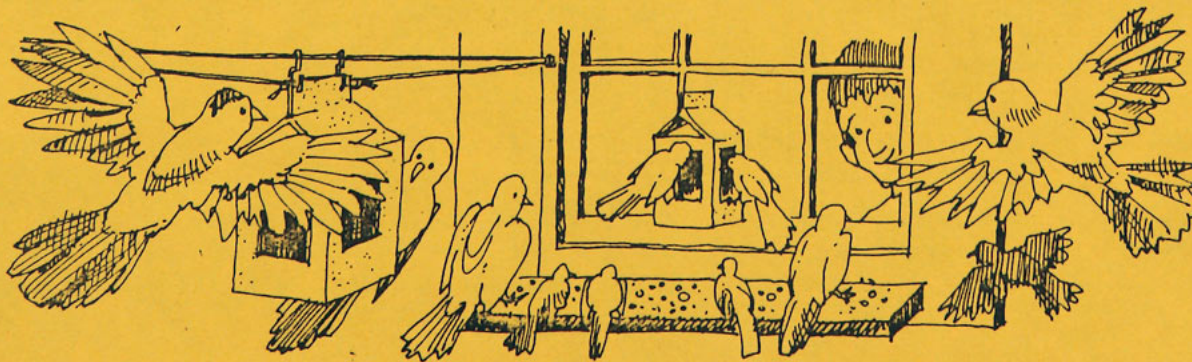
BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

So far this year, we have received 104 atlas cards from county coordinators and observers. Because there were more requests for information this year, we expect that some people still have this year's cards but have forgotten to send them in. If you still have results from this year, please send them in to Doug Reeves, Wildlife Research Station, Boone, IA 50036 as soon as possible so we can get the data processed and update the coverage.

Among the people who have worked hardest on the atlas this year are Barb Wilson, Tanya Bray, Darwin Koenig, Jim Dinsmore, and Steve Dinsmore.

These people deserve a hearty thank you for helping to provide information about Iowa's birdlife. Thanks also to the others who contributed to the information gathered this year. We still need additional help and will provide additional information to any interested party.

During the next year, additional Department of Natural Resources personnel will be involved with the project. This should result in 30-40 additional blocks being completed next year. If each one of us recruits just one additional atlaser who completes one block, we will gain significantly on the project and get closer to completing it on schedule.



FEEDER SURVEY JANUARY 22-25, 1987

1. Name _____
 - 2A. Address _____
 - 2B. County _____ 2C. City _____ 2D. Zip _____
 3. The feeder survey period this year runs from Thursday, January 22nd to Sunday, January 25th. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.
Check one: Thursday (1/22) and Friday (1/23),
 Friday (1/23) and Saturday (1/24), or
 Saturday (1/24) and Sunday (1/25).
 4. Is your feeder in Town (including suburbs) or in the Country? Circle T or C
 5. Check the one description which best describes the area within a 2-block circle around your feeder:
 suburban, houses with shrubs and small trees but few trees wider than 20 inches.
 suburban bordered by: (circle 1) timber, grass field or row crop.
 town, neighborhood has many mature shade and street trees.
 downtown with mostly buildings, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, high rises
 pasture
 row crop (corn, beans, etc.)
 timber
 farmstead with mature trees and shrubs around house.
 6. Type and number of feeders: Thistle, Sunflower(only), Fruit, Safflower, Peanuts, Mixed seed, Peanut Butter, Suet, Cracked Sunflower, Corn, Millet(only), unfrozen water, other _____
 7. On what date did you start feeding during 1986-87: About _____
 8. Comments or additional description of your feeder or yard: _____
-

1 9 8 7 W I N T E R B I R D F E E D E R S U R V E Y

SPONSORED BY THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

AND THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES NONGAME PROGRAM

On two consecutive days during January 22-25, 1987, observe your feeder and using this form, describe your feeder and record the birds that visited you. In the space provided, list the highest number of each species that you saw together at any one time. For example, if you saw 10 juncos at 9:00, 11 at 12:00 and 7 at 4:00, the number you should record is 11. If males and females can be distinguished (cardinals, downy woodpecker etc.) record the combined total. For example, if you saw 3 male cardinals at 11:00 then 1 male and 2 females at 2:00, record 5 cardinals--the highest count for the males and the highest count for the females combined. Count only on the two consecutive days and record only the birds that you see at your feeder, under your feeder or in the trees around your feeder. Do not count birds which just flew past your house and did not use your feeder area. We want information only about birds influenced by your feeders. If you cannot get an exact count, record your best estimate. An honest estimate is far more useful than 'umpteen' or 'too many to count.' Mail the completed form to me by February 2, 1987:

R. J. Hollis
3351 Lower West Branch Road
Iowa City, IA 52240

If you would like a personal reply, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and be patient; it may take 12 months before I can get back to you. Look for results in the Iowa Nongame News and the I.O.U. newsletter.

WINTER BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

The 1987 Winter Bird Feeder Survey will be conducted January 22-25. Last year we learned that twice as many people had purple finches at their feeders than they did in 1985. Evening grosbeaks went from being nearly non-existent in 1985 to about 14 percent of the feeders in 1986. There was an error on the survey form for last year which affected the nuthatches. Therefore, no results are available for them in 1986. These and other findings are included on the following table:

| Species | 1986 Percent occurrence | 1985 Percent occurrence | 1984 Percent occurrence |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dark-eyed junco (all races) | 88.7 | 87.1 | 88.7 |
| Blue jay | 84.7 | 82.7 | 84.6 |
| House (English) sparrow | 82.9 | 79.5 | 77.4 |
| Black-capped chickadee | 82.6 | 78.2 | 81.8 |
| Cardinal (northern) | 80.6 | 81.1 | 83.3 |
| Goldfinch (American) | 70.6 | 71.6 | 72.9 |
| Downy woodpecker | 65.4 | 59.9 | 61.4 |
| Starling (European) | 59.1 | 60.4 | 58.9 |
| Purple finch | 42.9 | 19.1 | 34.8 |
| Hairy woodpecker | 35.6 | 28.5 | 30.7 |
| Red-bellied woodpecker | 33.9 | 30.0 | 35.2 |
| Tree sparrow (American) | 23.0 | 38.3 | 30.2 |
| Pine siskin | 22.4 | 20.4 | 15.4 |
| Tufted titmouse | 18.7 | 21.0 | 22.2 |
| Crow (American) | 18.1 | 15.2 | 5.7 |
| Northern flicker | 17.8 | 17.7 | 18.4 |
| Evening grosbeak | 14.4 | 0.2 | 5.3 |
| Grackle (common) | 13.7 | 12.9 | 4.3 |
| Red-headed woodpecker | 11.7 | 13.1 | 21.8 |
| Song sparrow | 10.5 | 11.5 | 13.7 |
| Mourning dove | 8.9 | 13.8 | 13.0 |
| Rock dove | 7.3 | 7.1 | 6.6 |
| Harris' sparrow | 5.9 | 6.4 | 2.9 |
| Brown creeper | 5.5 | 3.8 | 3.9 |
| White-throated sparrow | 5.4 | 5.4 | 7.3 |
| Common redpoll | 3.9 | 3.5 | 4.3 |
| Cedar waxwing | 3.9 | 2.2 | 7.1 |
| Brown-headed cowbird | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.6 |
| White-crowned sparrow | 3.8 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| Robin (American) | 3.5 | 2.2 | 0.7 |
| Ring-necked pheasant | 3.4 | 4.7 | 3.0 |
| Red-winged blackbird | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| White-breasted nuthatch | N/A | 51.2 | 59.7 |
| Red-breasted nuthatch | N/A | 4.5 | 9.9 |



BALD EAGLE DAYS



Keokuk will host the 3rd annual event January 16-18. The indoor events take place at Keosippi Mall on Main Street. There will be an hourly program featuring a live Bald Eagle, and on the weekend at 1 and 2 PM concurrent special lectures on Bald Eagle biology. Spotting scopes will be set up on the riverfront for viewing.

Quad City area Bald Eagle Days will be Friday, February 13 through Sunday, February 15 at Modern Woodmen Insurance on the riverfront in Rock Island, Illinois. The event is co-sponsored by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Department of Conservation, with assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Presentations on Friday will be primarily for school and senior citizens groups. On Saturday and Sunday, programs will be presented every hour, featuring a live Bald Eagle. Booths and displays will round out the indoor features.

On the levee, telescopes will be set up for viewing, and biologists will be on hand to answer questions. Trips will be made to nearby Credit Island and to Lock 14, where the wintering Eagle population tends to concentrate.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

President:

Carl Bendorf
825 7th Avenue
Iowa City, IA 52240

Editor, Iowa Bird Life:

Tom Kent
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52240

Co-Editors, The I.O.U. News

Hank & Linda Zaletel
715 West Street
Colo, IA 50056

CLASS: L
Thomas H Kent
211 Richards St
Iowa City IA 52240

NONPROFIT ORG

