



I.O.U. News

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter

Winter 1993 • Volume 9 Number 4

Bird Feeder Survey 1993

Our tenth year of winter bird feeder survey data was collected in 1993! Not only can we compare 1992 to 1993, we can also compare annual changes to our 10-year average.

Weather-wise, it was a more average Iowa winter. January temperatures were normal. There were a few days of below zero temperatures, but the temperatures moderated quickly. During the survey, some areas had below zero temperatures the first day, but were up in the 40s or 50s within another day. Precipitation from November 1992 through January was the third highest on record. Snow fell throughout the state during the first half of January. During the survey most areas had one to seven inches of snow on the ground. Usually the bird watchers flock to watch their feeders during years with good snow cover. Unfortunately in 1993, participation in the bird feeder survey dropped from over 1,000 to 859.

Bird-wise, 14 species showed significant increases from 1992 to 1993, (Table 1) while only 3 significantly decreased. Nine species were significantly higher in 1993 than their 10-year average. Five of these (mourning dove, robin, goldfinch, house sparrow and house finch) had 10 year highs. House finches were probably the biggest news. From less than one percent of the people having house finches during the early years of the survey to 7.5 percent having them in 1990, house finches exploded to over 43 percent

of the people observing them at their feeders. House finches have gone from a rare "other" species that required documentation to the 10th most commonly recorded bird in 1993.

The warm Indian summer days that lingered into October 1992, were a nice bonus for the late nesting goldfinches whose young were less than two months old when the Halloween ice storm hit in 1991. The milder temperatures were also beneficial to the mourning doves and robins who chose to linger. The ample fruit crop was also good for the robins and cedar waxwings.

Other than the increase in goldfinches and house finches, few other winter finches were observed. Pine siskins were higher than 1992, but still not a big invasion year where over 20 percent of the people observe them. Redpolls and evening grosbeaks were significantly more scarce in 1993, but they are an unpredictable boom and bust species which invade Iowa from the more northern climes.

Harris sparrows and song sparrows increased but tree sparrows decreased, reaching a 10 year low during the feeder survey and Christmas Bird Counts. To the dismay of many, house sparrows, starlings, and crows increased in 1993. Remember, hanging feeders, up-side-down entrances, perches less than 1 inch long, or specially designed feeders can discourage house sparrows and starlings.

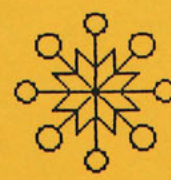


Table 1. BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

Percentage of households that observed each bird species during the Iowa Winter Bird Feeder Survey, 1984-1993.

	1992	1993	10-yr. average
Pheasant	3.7	5.4	4.8
Rock dove	4.3	4.5	5.6
Mourning dove	22.9	29.3	17.8
Redheaded woodpecker	12.1	13.0	13.6
Redbellied woodpecker	40.2	38.2	39.0
Downy woodpecker	70.0	73.2	69.2
Hairy woodpecker	34.2	38.3	35.1
Flicker	18.0	24.0	20.5
Blue jay	80.9	83.6	83.8
Crow	19.7	20.4	16.2
Black-capped chickadee	85.0	83.8	83.1
Tufted titmouse	26.0	24.8	22.6
Red-breasted nuthatch	5.6	8.6	9.0
White-breasted nuthatch	62.7	61.5	62.1
Brown creeper	5.6	5.1	6.2
Robin	1.1	5.8	2.9
Cedar waxwing	1.1	3.1	3.5
Starling	50.2	54.9	56.1
Cardinal	84.3	82.1	82.0
Tree sparrow	23.4	15.6	25.0
Song sparrow	8.0	10.6	10.5
White-throated sparrow	7.9	6.5	5.7
White-crowned sparrow	3.7	4.4	3.6
Harris' sparrow	5.3	7.3	5.6
Dark-eyed junco	83.9	86.6	85.1
Red-winged blackbird	1.8	1.7	1.8
Grackle	11.6	12.0	11.0
Brown-headed cowbird	3.2	3.3	3.2
Purple finch	25.8	27.6	28.8
Common redpoll	4.3	2.2	3.2
Pine siskin	9.8	15.9	18.0
American goldfinch	62.2	76.6	69.9
Evening grosbeak	.4	.3	2.5
English house sparrow	76.5	84.9	80.1
House finch	27.3	43.4	9.7*

Total participants 1290 859

*was not present all 10 years



Flickers increased in 1993 compared to 1992 during the bird feeder survey and had a 10-year high during the Christmas Bird Count. Downy woodpeckers and red-breasted nuthatches also increased in 1993, but were within the ranges observed during past years. For Iowa's top 10 list, dark-eyed juncos followed by house sparrows, black-capped chickadees, blue jays and cardinals were all seen by over 80 percent of the participants. Goldfinches and downy woodpeckers were seen by over 70 percent of the people while white-breasted nuthatches, starlings and house finches rounded out the top 10.

In 1994, we hope to attract more participants. Please remember to mark January 27-30 on your calendar to participate in the Bird Feeder Survey. Give a copy of the form to friends or family members that also feed birds, or send a copy to your local newspaper.



Eagle Guide

The Quad City Convention and Visitors Bureau has published a free "Visitors Guide to Quad Cities Bald Eagles." From mid-December through February, eagles congregate along the open waters of the Mississippi River in the Quad Cities area. The booklet tells you where and when to see them.

Call toll-free 1/800-747-7800 or write Box 3097, Rock Island, IL 61204 for your copy.

Grammer Grove Field Trip

Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb

September 18, 1993 was the scheduled day for an I.O.U. field trip at Grammer Grove Wildlife Area in Marshall County. The optimistic plan was for hawk and warbler watching. Unfortunately, the day was almost calm with a heavy overcast so that all that flew over the hawk watch were mosquitos.

However, other birds were hopping around and even with poor visibility 15 species of warblers (including Cape May, Canada, Golden-wing and Pine) were seen by some of those searching the trees and shrubs. Add a few vireos, a Red-breasted Nuthatch and an immature Cooper's Hawk, plus a few others and we had a fairly good day.

I think one of the pleasures of these field trips is seeing old friends and meeting new ones, in spite of birding that doesn't always live up to our expectations.

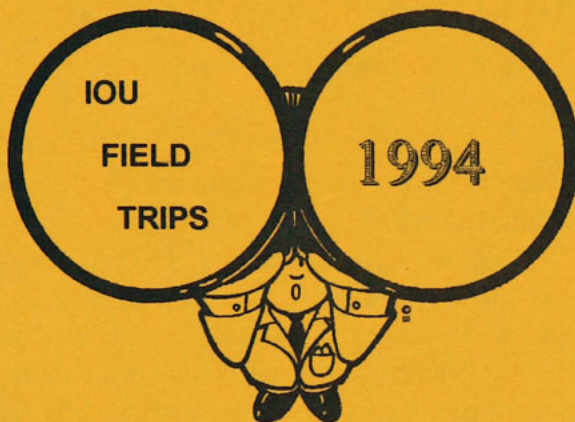
I hope that the 34 people from across the state who wandered around at Grammer Grove that day share my feelings.



NEW ADDRESS
Newsletter Editors have moved!!

Our new address is :
Hank & Linda Zaletel
1928 6th St
Nevada, IA 50201





Field Trip Committee Report

January 30, 1994 -- Mason City area
Meet at Lime Creek Nature Center at 8:00 a.m.
Look for winter specialties in northern Iowa
Goshawk, Prairie Falcon, Townsend's Solitaire, Snow Bunting, winter finches
Contact: Curt Nelson (515) 696-5600

April 9, 1994 -- Cone Marsh
Returning waterfowl, Smith's Longspur, early shorebirds
Contact: Rick Hollis (319) 338-4834

September 25, 1994 -- Snake Creek Marsh
Back by popular demand!
Search for Yellow Rail, LeConte's and Sharp-tailed Sparrows
Contact: Ann Johnson (515) 961-2002

November 12, 1994 -- Southwest Iowa
Bird DeSoto Bend, Lake Manawa, and IPL Settling Ponds
Returning geese (including Ross'), waterfowl, gulls, and eagles
The last few falls have turned up a number of unexpected species such as Black
and Surf Scoter, Oldsquaw, Red-throated and Pacific Loon.
Contact: Loren and Babs Padelford (402) 292-5556

Christmas Bird Counts

New Boston	Fri., Dec. 17	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Cdear Rapids	Sat., Dec. 18	Pete Wickham	319/363-6884
Ames	Sat., Dec. 18	Dave Edwards	515/292-3790
Lucas	Sat., Dec. 18	Beth Brown	515/342-2783
Shenandoah	Sat., Dec. 18	Barb Cunningham	712/246-1203
Omaha	Sat., Dec. 18	Betty Grenon	402/731-2383
Rathbun	Sat., Dec. 18	Bill Heusinkveld	515/856-2342
Mason City	Sat., Dec. 18	Curt Nelson	515/696-5600
Spirit Lake	Sat., Dec. 18	Lavonne Foote	712/336-2098
Montgomery Co.	Sat., Dec. 18	Dave Carlisle	712-623-3432
Marshalltown	Sat., Dec. 18	Ed Savage	515/752-0105
Bremer	Sat., Dec. 18	Francis Moqre	319/232-0217
Iowa City	Sun., Dec. 19	Tom Kent	319/337-5231
Saylorville	Sun., Dec. 19	Steve Dinsmore	515/292-3152
Red Rock	Sun., Dec. 19	Tim Schantz	515/627-5935
Quad Cities	Sun., Dec. 19	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
DeSoto	Sun., Dec. 19	Mindy Sheets	712/642-4121
Waterloo	Sun., Dec. 19	Francis Moore	319/232-0217
Lost Nation	Mon., Dec. 20	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Jamaica	Tues., Dec. 21	Ray Cummins	515/856-3518
Clinton	Wed., Dec. 22	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Princeton	Thurs., Dec. 23	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Keokuk	Sun., Dec. 26	Bob Cecil	515/277-5709
Muscatine	Sun., Dec. 26	Pete Petersen	319/355-7051
Decorah	Mon., Dec. 27	Dennis Carter	319/382-3754
North Linn	Wed., Dec. 29	Weir Nelson	319/848-4846
Yellow River	Wed., Dec. 29	Dennis Carter	319/382-3754
Boone	Sat., Jan. 1	Mark Widrlechner	515/233-1532
Sioux City	Sun., Jan. 2	Bob Livermore	712/239-3954
Walnut Creek NWR	Sun., Jan. 2	Ann Johnson	515/961-2002



BIRDFEEDER SURVEY JANUARY 27-30, 1994

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

1. Name _____
- 2A. Address _____
- 2B. County _____ 2C. City _____ 2D. Zip _____
3. The feeder survey period this year runs from Thursday, January 27th to Sunday, January 30th. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.
 Check one: _____ Thursday (1/27) and Friday (1/28),
 _____ Friday (1/28) and Saturday (1/29), or
 _____ Saturday (1/29) and Sunday (1/30).
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 1993-94? About _____
8. Comments or additional description of your feeder or yard: _____

HIGHEST NUMBER SEEN FOR EACH SPECIES DURING TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS

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

_____ TOTAL DIFFERENT SPECIES SEEN

_____ I would like to receive the free Nongame News. (NEW SUBSCRIBERS ONLY)
 _____ I would like information about the Iowa Ornithologists Union which is a statewide bird organization. If you see a rare or unusual bird, please report it to the Iowa birdline 319-338-9881.

1 9 9 4 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 ORNITHOLOGIST'S UNION

AND THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE'S NONGAME PROGRAM

On two consecutive days during January 27-30, 1994 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 'umpteens' or 'too many to count.'

Mail the completed form to me by February 12, 1994:

R. J. Hollis
3351 Lower West Branch Road
Iowa City, IA 52245

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.

I.O.U. Winter Field Trip



Join your I.O.U. friends on 30 January 1994 for an excursion into the wilds of northern Iowa. The season is showing promise for winter finches and we should be able to uncover Snow Buntings, Northern Shrike, and who knows what else. Curt Nelson will lead us to his favorite haunts in Cerro Gordo County. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Lime Creek Nature Center (watch for signs on I-35 north of Mason City.

For more information, contact Curt Nelson at 515/696-5600.

Motels:

- Colonial Inn, \$26-28, 515/423-6325
- Comfort Inn, \$46-52, 515/423-4444
- Days Inn, \$40-45, 515/424-0210
- Hanford Inn, \$33-38, 515/424-9494
- Hawkeye Motel, \$22-25, 515/423-4826
- Maple Crest, \$21-24, 515/423-9471



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