



# I.O.U. News

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Newsletter

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## For the Birds

### Ottumwa Workshop Teaches the Basics of Bird Banding

by Judy Krieger

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Birds of a feather have flocked together in the Ottumwa area this week (September 8-12, 1999) to promote bird banding methods.

Even with ideal weather Thursday morning, "We haven't had the big runs we had hoped for," Darleen Ayers said. The bird banders started about 6 a.m. "The early birds get the birds," Ayers of Ottumwa, said.

By 10 a.m. Thursday, the nets were nearly empty. A lone black-capped chickadee was the last bird taken from the net - Dan Froehlich gave Randy Wilson of Vicksburg, Mississippi, credit for an expert removal - and taken back to the instruction site for discussion.

The bird banding students, gathered around the bird in hand, discussing its merits - body size, feathering, age and even fat content. Froehlich said the bird had "one of the nicest tails." From Point Reyes Station, California, he is coordinator of MAPS Program Bander Training Program for the Institute for Bird Populations.

The bird was "a bit of an enigma," he said. Its crown and back were typical of a hatching chickadee. It lost its tail feathers, which were starting to grow back. Robert Yunick of Schenectady, New York, put water on the top of the tiny head to separate the feathers and check

the bird's skull to determine age.

Yunick earlier had counted the flight feathers and primary feathers of a Wilson's Warbler. Viewing the secondary feathers, Yunick said that it shows "the molt is complete." The bright yellow-breasted bird weighed 8 grams.

The dozens of bird group members who are becoming bird banding trainers have been scouting several southern Iowa sites to check out what kinds of birds are flying through the area. The main purpose in gathering is, as always, to help keep track of the birds.

That's what the bird bands do - mark the birds so that the next person who finds them can send in the numbers on the band to authorities who keep track of the bird's, movement.

Why Ottumwa for such a first in nation bird banding training workshop? Ayers volunteered to host the meeting, Jerry Jackson said. Ayers and Nelson Hoskins are co-chairpersons for the event hosted by the Ottumwa Bird Club.

The bird banders from throughout the country and Canada are taking the eight hours of camp sessions and workshops seeking certification to become trainers of bird banders.

Jackson, from Fort Myers, Florida, is a member of Inland Bird Banding Union, president-elect of American Field Ornithologists and chairman of the North American Banding Council. Members of all three groups and the Iowa Ornithological Association are attending this week's sessions.



A former resident of Burlington, Jackson "is the leader of the encampment," Ayers said. About four years ago, Jackson said some bird banders became concerned about the quality of information that was resulting from banding. "We needed to standardize the techniques" of banding, and improve training, he said. "We proposed the North American Banding Council."

The council - comprised of the major birding associations - set up a certification program that incorporates scientific procedures and ethical criteria. "This is the first test," he said.

More than 100 people are expected at the event, which ends Sunday. Of those from one to dozen banders are being evaluated to become trainers, through manuals and demonstrated ability.

At Thursday morning's workshop, about two dozen people were on hand to gather birds from 40 nets set up around the camp's primitive area, and discuss the merits of the birds netted.

The Forest Lake workshop "is one of 500 stations" set up this summer to catch breeding birds, Froehlich said. Volunteers will be submitting data to his group and the Banding Council.

The banders are checking "the success of the breeding season, how many adults are surviving, the birth rate and death rate" of the birds." Our program is to see the recapture rate" of the birds, he said. "We get a lot of information from banding."

The tiny metal bands are attached around a bird's leg. If the bird is later found, the finder is encouraged to remove the band, flatten it and send it to: Bird Band, Washington, D.C.

It is the only address, Jackson said, "that the U.S. Postal Service will accept without an address." People who mail in the bands will receive a certificate of where the bird was banded.

It's a lucky birder who finds a banded bird. For every 100 of the little song birds banded, only one will be found with a band. Jackson said, "a one percent ratio. You have to band a lot of birds to get any information."

Bird banders need a license to band, he

said, and that requires some training and experience. "We're trying to improve the ease of getting" a license, he said.

## **Rick's Ramblings** by Rick Hollis, Iowa City From the Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

It finally happened again, after years of turning over bird carcasses and looking for bands. While birding in California this fall (with Jan Akre, a former neighbor and Iowa City Bird Club member), I found another banded bird.

I have now found three. I was a bit disappointed to find for the second time that I had recovered a racing pigeon's band.



## **Recent Literature**

These articles can be obtained from your local library. Ask them to order on interlibrary loan for you.

LaGrange, T. G., and G. G. Zenner. 1998. Iowa's role in the harvest of several Canada Goose populations in the western Mississippi Flyway. Pages 143-149 in D. H. Rusch, M. D. Samuel, D. D. Humburg, and B. D. Sullivan, eds. *Biology and management of Canada Geese*. Proc. Intern. Canada Goose Symposium, Milwaukee, WI.

Zenner, G. G., and T. G. LaGrange. 1998. Densities and fates of Canada Goose nests on islands in northcentral Iowa. Pages 53-59 in D. H. Rusch, M. D. Samuel, D. D. Humburg, and B. D. Sullivan, eds. *Biology and management of Canada Geese*. Proc. Intern. Canada Goose Symposium, Milwaukee, WI.



Zenner, G. G., and T. G. LaGrange. 1998. Giant Canada Geese in Iowa: Restoration, management, and distribution. Pages 303-309 in D. H. Rusch, M. D. Samuel, D. D. Humburg, and B. D. Sullivan, eds. Biology and management of Canada Geese. Proc. Intern. Canada Goose Symposium, Milwaukee, WI.

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Clark, W. R., and T. R. Bogenschutz. 1999. Grassland habitat and reproductive success of Ring-necked Pheasants in northern Iowa. *J. Field Ornithology* 70:380-392.

Clark, W. R., R. A. Schmitz, and T. R. Bogenschutz. 1999. Site selection and nest success of Ring-necked Pheasants as a function of location in Iowa landscapes. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 63:976-989.

Dinsmore, J. J., S. J. Dinsmore, and D. L. Howell. 1999. Least Terns and Piping Plovers in Iowa: Persistence of Marginal populations. Pages 51-55 in *Piping Plovers and Least Terns of the Great Plains and nearby*, K. F. Higgins, M. R. Brashier, and C. D. Kruse, eds. South Dakota State University, Brookings.

Horn, D. J. 1999. The species richness of birds visiting a yard is influenced by the feeders/ seeds present. *J. Iowa Acad. Sci.* 106:21-25.

Hubbard, M. W., D. L. Garner, and E. E. Klaas. 1999. Wild Turkey poult survival in southcentral Iowa. *J. Wildl. Management* 63:199-203.

Schmitz, R. A., and W. R. Clark. 1999. Survival of Ring-necked Pheasant hens during spring in relation to landscape features. *J. Wildl. Management* 63:137-146.

## HEARD ON THE BIRDLINE

Fall 1999

September 1-December 1

Jim Fuller, Iowa City

All sightings reported to the Iowa Birdline are considered tentative until submitted and approved by the Records Committee of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union.

Fall provides an extended period for vagrants and unusual migrants to be seen in the state. Featured birds reported during this time were POMARINE JAEGER, SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER, and BROWN PELICAN. The POMARINE JAEGER was reported by the Hitchcock Nature Center hawk watch on 24 November, when observers watched it soar for ten minutes. Except for the fall of 1996 when there were five records at Saylorville and Red Rock Reservoirs, there has been only one previous sighting of this pelagic bird in the state. Ric Zarwell observed the SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER, a juvenile, at close range at Zirbel Slough in Cerro Gordo County the evening of 16 September, but it had departed by the following morning. This would be a fifth state record. The BROWN PELICAN, first discovered at the Saylorville Reservoir on 22 September, obliged many by consorting with a large WHITE PELICAN flock for nearly two more weeks.

Shorebirds and breeding dispersal waders highlight September Counties from mid-October to the first week in November. Very large flocks of LAPLAND LONGSPURS were also seen in northwest and north-central Iowa at this time. The first SNOW BUNTING observation was on 27 October. It was a good year for NORTHERN SHRIKES, and the first of many reports came from Hancock County on 25 October. SPOTTED

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TOWHEES were sighted especially early this year, with two in Dickinson County on 1 September and one at Karl Jungbluth's southeast of Boone on 9 September.

The only owl reports were three SHORT-EARED OWLS in the Sedan area of Appanoose County on 17 September, and LONG-EARED OWLS at Doolittle Prairie north of Ames on 25 October, and the Hawkeye WA in Johnson County on 17 November. A



highlight of November was the male VARIED THRUSH that frequented Dave Yager's yard in Fenton from the 2nd on.

GOLDEN EAGLES seemed exceptionally common, and they were seen on four October-November days at the Hitchcock Nature Center hawk watch, and PRAIRIE FALCONS were recorded on 23 and 24 October and 7 November at Hitchcock. Another PRAIRIE FALCON was seen north of Ankeny on 30 November.

All three swan species were reported, with an adult MUTE SWAN staying throughout the period at Diamond Lake west of Montezuma, and an estimated 2000 TUNDRA SWANS were on Pool #9 of the Mississippi River north of Harper's Ferry in late November. There were no known sightings of the Eurasian subspecies of the GREEN-WINGED TEAL (Crecca) in the state until Ric and Betty Zarwell spotted one on Pool #9 of the Mississippi River on 21 November. In Pam and Reid Allen's yard at West Des Moines, a COMMON YELLOWTHROAT pushed the season into late November.

A couple of our invasion species also made news. The EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES at Grinnell were seen regularly throughout the fall, and there was also a report of one at Mason City. And over 200 EURASIAN TREE SPARROWS were seen in a field north of Burlington on 12 September.

**Editors Note:** The article A Big Warbler Day by Jim Sinclair that appeared in the last newsletter originally appeared in The Warbler, the newsletter of the Des Moines Audubon

## Central Iowa Ornithologists

From the Marshalltown Times Republican

The Central Iowa Ornithologists trace their roots back to a bird identification class taught by Helen Grimes that enthused students like Laura Glasgow. Through the leadership of Homer Rinehard, the group was formally organized in the mid-sixties, and Rinehart became the club's first president.

In the group's thirty-plus years, membership has ranged from fifty to over one hundred, and there have always been several active birders to assume the leadership positions. Current officers include Linda Tasler, president, Craig Stoker, vice-president, Joan Buwalda, treasurer.

"Most of our active members are retired now," explained veteran birder Laura Glasgow, who has been active in birding since the ornithologist group was first formed in the early sixties. "So that means that we can go out on field trips just about anytime we want to, any old day of the week."

"Sometimes our field trips last all day, sometimes they only last half a day. It kind of depends on the weather conditions. Bird migration times in April and September are important to us, we spend a little more time on our field trip then."

Any birding enthusiast can become active in the organization. They meet at the Fisher Community Center on the last Thursday of every month, promptly at 7 PM just as they have for over three decades now.



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# Christmas Bird Counts

Thurs. Dec. 16	Clinton	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Fri. Dec. 17	Princeton	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Sat. Dec. 18	Cherokee	Dick Bierman	712/225-5552
Sat. Dec. 18	Mason City	Rita Goranson	515/423-1699
Sat. Dec. 18	Sioux City	Bob Livermore	712/239-3954
Sat. Dec. 18	Cedar Rapids	Jim Durbin	319/377-7194
Sat. Dec. 18	Dubuque	Charlie Winterwood	319/588-2783
Sat. Dec. 18	Ames	Dave Edwards	515/292-3790
Sat. Dec. 18	Rathbun	Mike Steven	515/437-1736
Sat. Dec. 18	Bremer	Francis Moore	319/232-0217
Sat. Dec. 18	Red Rock	Ann Johnson	515/961-2002
Sat. Dec. 18	Spirit Lake	Lee Schoenewe	712/262-8194
Sat. Dec. 18	Burlington	Chuck Fuller	319/753-0710
Sat. Dec. 18	Shenandoah	Ross Silcock	712/629-5865
Sun. Dec. 19	Waterloo	Francis Moore	319/232-0217
Sun. Dec. 19	Iowa City	Chris Edwards	319/626-6362
Sun. Dec. 19	Saylorville	Jim Dinsmore	515/292-3152
Sun. Dec. 19	Davenport	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Sun. Dec. 19	DeSoto NWR	Mindy Sheetz	712/642-4121
Mon. Dec. 20	Keokuk	Bob Cecil	515/277-5709
Mon. Dec. 20	Lost Nation	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Tues. Dec. 21	Jamaica	Ray Cummins	515/856-3518
Wed. Dec. 22	New Boston, IL	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Sun. Dec. 26	Muscatine	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Sun. Dec. 26	Des Moines	Dennis Thompson	515/254-0837
Mon. Dec. 27	Andalusia	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
Mon. Dec. 27	Decorah	Dennis Carter	319/382-3754
Wed. Dec. 29	No. Linn	Jim Durbin	319/377-7194
Wed. Dec. 29	Yellow River	Dennis Carter	319/382-3754
Sat. Jan. 1	Fairfield	Dave Killman	515/472-3554
Sat. Jan. 1	Boone	Mark Widreckner	515/233-1532
Sun. Jan. 2	Grinnell	Bob VanErsvelde	515/236-6600
Sun. Jan. 2	Westfield	Larry Farmer	712/568-2940
Sun. Jan. 2	Sterling/Rock Falls	Kelly McKay	309/755-6731
	Marshalltown	Ed Savage	515/752-0105
	Neal Smith NWR	Pauline Drobney	515/994-3400



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