

IOU News

Winter 2002 * Volume 18 – Number 4



Photo by Don Poggensee, 2002

IOU Fall Conference – a Memorable Event

By any measure, the 2002 IOU Fall Conference was a great success. The IOU membership owes a huge thank you to Ric and Betty Zarwell who orchestrated and coordinated the conference.

The Zarwells chose a great setting for the conference, at the YMCA camp north of Boone. The beautiful, forested river valley produced a spectacular show of hawks migrating on Sunday morning. Those participants who chose to spend the morning on the second-floor deck of the lodge were treated to waves of Broad-winged Hawks passing overhead in kettles sometimes numbering over 100 birds.

Field trips Saturday and Sunday morning visited Ledges State Park and various parts of the Saylorville Reservoir. Some notable finds among a total species count of 133 were Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, American Golden Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Eurasian Collared Dove, Carolina Wren, and 18 species of warblers.

The Zarwells also obtained a great list of speakers, including two legends of Iowa birding and two legends of American birding. Regarding the latter, it isn't often I get to discuss Eskimo Curlews with Paul Baicich, or listen in on a conversation between Kenn

Kaufman and Matt Kenne regarding molt cycles of Short-billed Dowitchers. This conference offered me both, and a lot more. For instance, it offered me a delightful, unexpected surprise— an opportunity to meet Jenny Vickers, from Somerset, England, the IOU's only current international member.

Thanks to all the speakers, trip leaders, hosts and participants for a truly great conference.

(For more details on the Fall Conference, see page 4.)

**IOU News is a quarterly publication of
The Iowa Ornithologists' Union**

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Founded 1923

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Dooley, Bob Cecil, Tom Kent, Reid Allen, Rita Goranson.

Cover photo: Field trip to Ledges State Park. **Don Poggensee.**

From The PRESIDENT

Greetings to all, since the fall IOU meeting. This was the best turnout for a fall meeting in many years. Thanks to Ric Zarwell for lining up the speakers, location, and exhibitors. Those who have hosted a meeting know all the extra work one must do.

The IOU fund drive was very successful as members gave \$4,665. Over \$10,000 was a gift from Ann Barker's estate. She continues with us by her example as a leader in IOU, her love for birds, and nature. We had a special meeting of the board November 10 to discuss financial issues. As most of you are aware our expenses are at least \$6,000 more than our income per year. Some decisions were made. Advertising will be looked into for the newsletter. Linda Zaletel volunteered to do this. A graduated due structure was passed- the names are great! Fledgling \$12.00 (student), Goldfinch \$20.00 (Regular), Bluebird \$35.00, Baltimore Oriole \$50.00, Great Egret \$75.00, Osprey \$100.00, Bald Eagle \$250.00, Peregrine Falcon \$500.00

A membership committee will work hard to find new members- please volunteer to help with this. Dues were not increased yet because past efforts have lost members. We would have to double the dues to make expenses. A finance committee is working to cut down our expenses and we will let the membership know the results. To encourage new members we will let them sign up for the student rate the first year. This is an opportunity for us to give many gift memberships to persons in our local clubs, family members, and others for a Christmas gift. We will also give a patch to memberships in the range \$50 to \$100, a t-shirt to memberships over \$100 to \$250 and both to those over \$250. We also will be obtaining new patches and t-shirts soon. We have had over a 25% return on the surveys and the information is appreciated. Opinions will be tabulated and summarized in a future article. Many opinions are expressed but a deep appreciation for IOU is clear. Thanks to Hank and Linda Zaletel for this job. Thanks to all the great volunteers that keep this organization going. Please continue to help. The nominating committee would appreciate hearing from you. Contact Mark Proescholdt, Matt Kenne, or Rich Hollis.

-Tom Johnson
Centerville, Iowa

Ann Barker



It is with great sadness that we write of the passing of Ann Barker, of Davenport, Iowa. Ann, who died August 8, 2002 after battling cancer for a year, was known to many IOU members through her exceptional service to the organization. Ann served as IOU president from 1991-1995, secretary from 1986-1990, and Iowa Spring Bird Count compiler and editor from 1998-2001, succeeding her mentor, Peter Petersen. She was also an active member of the Quad City Audubon, serving as secretary, vice-president, and president. Ann was the focus of a 2001 *Iowa Bird Life* article, "Meet an Iowa Birder - Ann Barker", written by Mary Lou Petersen (72:2-5).

Ann loved birding, here and abroad, compiling a life list of more than 900 species. And she was not just a skilled birder—Ann Barker was a birder of great conviction who contributed her energy and talent to promoting birding and conservation. Before she died, she made arrangements that her estate should donate \$10,000 to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. Yet, it would be a mistake to think that her life

was primarily focused on birding. Ann was a professional audiologist, serving the Davenport area for twenty-two years. She was the music librarian for the First Presbyterian Church in Davenport, and sang in the Sanctuary Choir



and the Chamber Chorale. Her ear was notorious for its precision, and her abilities at identifying bird songs was among the best.

But most of all, Ann Barker was an extraordinary and decent human being. In the words of Mary Lou Petersen, Ann was "a lovely woman who was dignified, brave, warm, beautiful, filled with love, music and humor." In *Mississippi Currents*, the newsletter of the Quad City Audubon Society (13:3), Tim Murphy wrote, "Beyond her many contributions she will be missed most for her personal qualities", citing her graciousness, her spirit, her resolve and her courage. Jim Dinsmore wrote, "Besides Ann's long service to the IOU and birding in Iowa, she will be remembered by many for the kind, generous, caring person that she was. She always had time to talk to others and a willingness to share information about birds and birding. Her smile could fill a room with the warmth that was behind it."

Ann Barker enriched the lives of those around her, and will be missed by all.

Regional Rare Bird Alerts

Iowa	(712) 364-2863
Missouri	(573) 445-9115
NW Illinois	(815) 965-3095
Wisconsin	(414) 352-3857
Minnesota	(763) 780-8890
So Dakota	(605) 773-6460

IOU News Deadlines for Submission of Materials

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Coverage</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Spring	March 1 - May 31	February 15
Summer	June 1 - July 31	May 15
Fall	August 1 - Nov 30	July 15
Winter	Dec 1 - Feb 28	November 15

Our request for additional money to help with the finances of the IOU this year, and in particular, the Iowa Bird Life journal, brought in many wonderful, generous donations. We wish to thank everyone, again, who responded to our plea. Your willingness to help out was indicative of the commitment to Iowa birds that we all share.

- IOU Treasurer and Board members.



FINAL REPORT - 2002 IOU FALL CONFERENCE

From Organizers and Hosts, Ric & Betty Zarwell

The 2002 IOU Fall Conference was held at Y Camp north of Boone, IA on Sept. 13-15th. The theme was "Bringing People to Nature Through Birding and Moving More Birders to Conservation Action." A total of 151 individuals registered, and a number of long-time members stated that it was the best attended and possibly the best IOU conference they could remember.

Because of their strong interest in the theme of the conference, and the potential for positive conservation action that Iowa birders have, two outstanding nationally known speakers came to Iowa at their own expense to make presentations. Kenn Kaufman provided numerous examples and insights about how people are brought to nature through birds and how birders have progressed to take positive actions to restore bird populations and their habitats. Paul Baicich enlightened the audience on what research on recreational birders is telling us about ourselves; and gave the keynote address entitled: "Where is birding going? New directions and opportunities."

In addition to these talks, three other speakers made noteworthy presentations. Dr. Jim Dinsmore provided an introduction and overview of Iowa birds and habitats; Doug Harr described Iowa DNR's Bird Conservation Area Program; and Ric Zarwell provided an update on Audubon Iowa's Important Bird Area (IBA) Program. Naturalist Mike Havlik gave a talk that included his injured owl, sang folk songs, and led discussions about the natural world.

Two half-day field trips were held on Saturday and Sunday, as is the norm for IOU conferences. Pleasant weather made for comfortable birding at Ledges State Park, Harrier Marsh, Saylorville Reservoir, and other nearby habitats. Sunday's field trip ended at the 3rd Annual Pelican Festival at Saylorville Reservoir where about 3,000 new and novice birders enjoyed great views of approximately 3,000 American White Pelicans. All speakers participated in one or more field trips.

All speakers and field trip leaders deserve a sincere thank you for making this conference a success.

The theme of the weekend was continued into Monday, Sept. 16th during a 1-day Workshop for Professional Personnel, also held at the Y Camp. A total of 52 individuals representing local, state, and federal agencies, non-profit conservation organizations and businesses actively participated. This event seemed to be at least as successful as the IOU conference. Dozens of suggestions were obtained during a group participation process for each of the two questions: "How can we bring people to nature through birding?" And, "How can we move more birders to effective conservation action?"

With neotropical migrants and other species exhibiting population declines, and humanity continuing to eliminate or severely degrade habitats across the Western Hemisphere, birders who choose to be involved in perpetuating birdlife for future generations to enjoy will have many opportunities to do so. Hopefully, the IOU conference and the workshop for professional personnel will help us begin to go down that road together.

Images from the Fall Conference



Lee Schoenewe (right), Spencer, Iowa, led morning field trips to Jester Park on the northwest side of Saylorville Reservoir. Photo by P. Hertzl.



Bob Myers, Perry, Iowa, and Jenny Vickers, Somerset, England. Photo by P. Hertzl.



IOU Records Committee chair and website manager Ann Johnson dined with Kenn Kaufman, author of several distinguished books on birding. Kaufman gave a presentation to the membership on Saturday. Photo by P. Hertzell.



Birding Ledges SP. Photo by Don Poggensee.



Keynote speaker Paul Baicich accompanied the membership to Jester Park on Saturday morning. Photo by P. Hertzell.

Above: IOU members enjoyed a spectacular day of hawk-watching on Sunday morning. Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Merlin, Northern Harrier, and American Kestrel were seen from the deck of the YMCA lodge. The photo was taken by Don Poggensee. Below, Jay Gilliam captured a kettle of Broad-winged Hawks moving down the Des Moines River Valley in view of the YMCA lodge.



WINGING IT

An Impromptu Hawkwatch

Matt Kenne

Upon leaving the dining hall after the meal Saturday evening, attendees were greeted by a welcome change in the weather: the day's damp overcast was being pushed aside by a fresh North breeze. Lingered outside before catching the evening's speaker, birders enjoyed watching several raptors catching a little late-day migration weather. Sharp-shinned Hawks flapped-and-glided past, an Osprey cruised down the river, a Merlin shot over, and a couple of Broad-winged Hawks dropped down to roost atop the wooded ridge behind the lodge; and these birds triggered the



Jay Gilliam photographed a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

hatching of a plan. Several participants consulted during the evening activities, and, with the weather forecast for Sunday looking to be an excellent post-front day for hawks to pull up stakes and head south, they decided to add a hawkwatch at the YMCA lodge for any that wished to forego the other planned field trips and try something different.

The first watchers appeared at 8:00 A.M., and a couple of Sharpies, an Osprey, and a few Broadwings quickly started the day as the previous evening had ended.

At 8:30, some watchers began a quick search to see if there was any better spot on the grounds for watching, and Jim Sinclair led others off on a warbler walk to wait for the sun to warm things up for the start of any "lift-off". There weren't any locations to equal the view from the large deck at the lodge, and its easy access to shelter, refreshments, and bathrooms were luxury accommodations compared to many hawkwatches! At about 9:00, Sinclair led his troops back from the warbler-less walk just in time to witness the real beginning of the day's

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Conservation Through Birding

Paul Baicich

Birding is in a quandary. By all accounts, it is the fastest-growing outdoor activity in America, yet it is amazingly ineffective in articulating its own interests. It is both a pastime that revels in the beauty, the wonder of some of the earth's grandest, awe-inspiring creatures, while at the same time stands witness as these marvelous birds and their habitats decline in far too many areas.

Birding is also a pastime with a split personality: its historic roots embedded in the very birth of the American conservation movement in the early part of the 20th century, while many of its most-avid devotees currently regarding conservation as a distraction to avian enjoyment.

Meanwhile, the holders of values of a broadening conservation ethic, known as environmentalism (after the popularity of Silent Spring in the 1960s and the launch of Earth Day in the 1970s) have generally viewed birding as a frivolous avocation, as just so much diversion when many "larger issues" are at stake.

In response to this unsettling dichotomy (conservation vs. birding), a number of birders from around the country have attempted to resolve the situation in favor of an effective birding pastime and in favor of the birds themselves. Conservation through Birding begins with the premise that the choice between conservation and birding is false; we are convinced that they must be one.

We assume, moreover, that neither conventional tendency gets us where we need to go for birds and birding. In fact, we assume that conventional approaches to either one without important features of the other are a dead end. However, asking those at either pole to accept the argument and assumptions of the other is going to fail – and it will probably do so miserably.

Given the current state of affairs, it is a new principled center for birding and conservation that has to be promoted.

Shortly after the middle of the 20th century, Americans decided that conservation should be furthered through regulation and acquisition. The 21st century may not be particularly kind to that approach. (This does not mean that acquisition and regulation are to be abandoned; it just means accepting that

they are insufficient, given the enormosity of the problems facing us.) If we all believe that birding, wildlife viewing, and related outdoor recreations are continuing to expand, attracting the interests of millions of Americans, then our best alternative for conservation may well be through developing an environmentally attuned recreation.

What concerned birders must do for our pastime and for our resource (the birds and their habitats) is inspire the burgeoning mass of newly interested birders and naturephiles to embrace closely related conservation concerns. Those concerns must be based on an awareness of birds and their habitats, and those are concerns that we already committed birder-conservationists can help develop.

We want to focus this through a movement called Conservation through Birding (CTB), which is based on three suppositions:

1. Birding is approaching nature through birds.
2. Through embracing nature, value and significance is ascribed to the natural world.
3. The recognition of value leads to a commitment to conservation.

Needs and Values

Unfortunately, the move toward better and well-rounded birding integration won't happen by itself, naturally, as it were. If that were the case we would certainly have it already! Moreover, expecting somebody else – some conservation body, some vaguely identified environmental group, or some bird plan – to do it for birds and birding is absolute folly.

Some level of concerted leadership on the issues of bird-conservation socialization, values, and ethics is vital.

First, birders need to be introduced to the recreation of birding in a new way, exposed to the connection between birding and conservation at the very start. This means that there should be additional and reinvigorated efforts by those engaged in education to acculturate the vast numbers of new birders to the links between the appreciation, the value, and the saving of birds.

Thereafter, birders at all levels of interest need the vision of an engaged pastime, one congruent with conservation interests, one which does not present gloom-and-doom, but rather is

willing to connect the million of Americans interested in birds with a positive view of birding potential, growing the avocation while at the same time protecting the birds. Birders will need continual, reaffirming, balanced socialization to make CTB work.

Unfortunately, what socialization birders have undergone thus far regarding conservation has often been the strange message that somebody else, somewhere, somehow, will take care of the interests of birds and birders.

CTB socialization will have to be strong enough to facilitate transition through each of the three steps (appreciate / value / save) with, nurturing, guidance, and encouragement.

CTB's maxim – we value what we use, and we conserve what we value – is critical, as we attempt to build a confident identity for ourselves. In a real sense, we have to build a network of enablers, spokespersons, and advocates, people who will empower and stimulate others to enjoy birds and nature through recreation and link that to conserving what we mutually value.

A center

We need a new principled center for birding and conservation, and by "center" we don't mean an institution; we mean a combination of thought and activity.

CTB assumes a profound responsibility to encourage and foster education and training of birders at all levels into a balanced approach for our recreation and our resource.

It also embraces the whole misnamed area of "birding economics," if only because economics gives societal value (although perhaps crassly) to the resource. Avitourism, ecotourism, birding trails, festivals, are all very much part of this trend. In fact, they might be viewed as the current leading-edge of organized birding growth. One could justifiably say that some members of local Convention and Visitors Bureaus with personal life lists in the double-digits are doing far more for bird preservation than many avid birders who pride themselves on their ID skills, yet harbor retrograde birding-not-conservation values, contributing nothing to the future of the birds which supposedly drive their passions.

Continued on page 13

2002 Christmas Counts



<u>Date</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>email</u>
Dec 14	Ames	Story	Dave Edwards	515 292-3790	dcejce@qwest.net
Dec 26	Andalusia/Bufalo	Muscatine/Scott	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	kellyJmckay@aol.com
Jan 01	Boone County	Boone	Mark Widrlechner	515 233-1532	mwpskd@aol.com
Dec 14	Bremer County	Bremer	Francis Moore	319 232-0217	flmoore@forbin.net
Dec 21	Burlington	Des Moines/Louisa	Chuck Fuller	319 753-0710	CFuller989@aol.com
Dec 28	Carroll County	Carroll	Rob Thelen	712 792-1793	rthelen@pionet.net
Dec 15	Cedar Falls/Waterloo	Blackhawk/Grundy/Butler	Francis Moore	319 232-0217	flmoore@forbin.net
Dec 14	Cedar Rapids	Linn	Jim Durbin	319 377-7194	durbinjames@mcleodusa.net
Dec 14	Cherokee	Cherokee/O'Brien	Dick Bierman	712 225-5552	dajabier@netins.net
Dec 18	Clinton/Savannah	Clinton/Jackson	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	kellyJmckay@aol.com
Dec 15	Davenport	Scott	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	kellyJmckay@aol.com
Dec 26	Decorah	Winneshiek	Dennis Carter	563 382-3754	
Dec 21	Des Moines	Polk/Dallas	Dennis Thompson	515 254-0837	cgtompson@mchsi.com
Dec 14	DeSoto NWR	Harrison	Mindy Sheets	712 642-4121	mindy_sheets@fws.gov
Dec 28	Dubuque	Dubuque	Charlie Winterwood	319 588-2783	cwinterwood@yahoo.com
Dec 18	Eldora-Union	Hardin/Marshall/Story	Mark Proescholdt	641 496-5219	
Jan 04	Grinnell	Poweshiek	Bob Van Ervelde	641 236-6600	
Dec 27	Humboldt County	Humboldt	Dan Gifford	641 469-6583	giff57@aol.com
Dec 28	Ida County	Ida	Don Poggensee	712 364-3491	donpog@pionet.net
Dec 15	Iowa City	Johnson	Chris Edwards	319 626-6362	CREdwards@aol.com
Dec 16	Jackson County	Jackson	Ann Burns	319 872-3621	jc-cons@co.jackson.ia.us
Dec 17	Jamaica	Guthrie/Greene/Dallas	Ray Cummins	641 856-3518	cummins@sirisonline.com
Dec 16	Keokuk	Lee	Bob Cecil	515 277-5709	wewarb@aol.com
Dec 17	Lost Nation	Clinton/Jackson/Jones	Karen Brix		cccb@netins.net
?	Marshalltown	Marshall	Ed Savage	641 752-0105	
Dec 14	Mason City	Cerro Gordo	Rita Goranson	641 423-1699	ritag@mach3ww.com
Dec 22	Muscatine	Muscatine	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	kellyJmckay@aol.com
Dec 28	Neal Smith NWR	Jasper	Paul Charland	515 994-3400	paul_charland@fws.gov
Dec 28	North Linn	Linn	Weir Nelson	319 848-4846	birdforfun@aol.com
Dec 21	Omaha, NE	Mills/Pottawattamie	Betty Grenon	402 731-2383	grenon925@aol.com
Dec 23	Princeton/Camanche	Clinton/Scott	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	kellyJmckay@aol.com
Dec 14	Rathbun Res.	Appanoose/Monroe	Mike Stephens	641 437-1736	
Dec 14	Red Rock Res.	Marion/Mahaska	Aaron Brees	641 872-1602	abrees@hotmail.com
Dec 15	Saylorville	Polk/Story	Jim Dinsmore	515 292-3152	oldcoot@iastate.net
Dec 21	Shenandoah	Fremont/Page	Barbara Cunningham	712 246-1203	bjcswwu@heartland.net
Dec 21	Sioux City	Woodbury	Jerry Probst	712 258-1296	probstsuebee@aol.com
Dec 14	Spirit Lake	Dickinson	Lee Schoenewe	712 262-8194	lschoe@evertek.net
Dec 27	Western Mercer Co	Louisa	Kelly McKay	309 755-6731	kellyJmckay@aol.com
Jan 04	Westfield	Plymouth	Larry Farmer		
Dec 15	Waterloo/Cedar Falls	Blackhawk/Grundy/Butler	Francis Moore	319 232-0217	flmoore@forbin.net
Dec 18	Worth County	Worth	Curt Nelson	641 696-5600	mpauley@jumpgate.net
Jan 03	Yellow River Forest	Allamakee	Darwin Koenig	712 448-3837	ddk@pionet.net

Christmas Counts by Date

Dec 14	Ames, Bremer Co., Cedar Rapids, Cherokee, DesSoto, Mason City, Rathbun, Red Rock, Spirit Lake
Dec 15	Saylorville, Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Iowa City, Davenport
Dec 17	Jamaica, Lost Nation
Dec 18	Clinton/Savannah, Eldora-Union, Worth Co.
Dec 21	Burlington, Des Moines, Omaha, Shenandoah, Sioux City
Dec 22	Muscatine
Dec 23	Princeton/Camanche
Dec 26	Andalusia/Bufalo, Decorah
Dec 27	Humboldt Co., Western Mercer Co.
Dec 28	Carroll Co., Dubuque, Ida Co., North Linn
Jan 01	Boone Co.
Jan 03	Yellow River Forest
Jan 04	Grinnell, Westfield

I O U Bird Listing Information

Please return this form within a week or so of the new year in order for your totals to be included in the next compilation. All totals should be accurate as of December 31, 2002.

Return to: *IOU News*, 240 12th Street SE, Mason City, IA 50401

Name: _____

E-mail or postal address: _____

County of residence: _____

Iowa State Life List Total: _____

Iowa 2002 Annual List Total: _____ (Total species seen in Iowa during 2002)

Yardlist Total: _____

<u>Regional Big Day Totals:</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Names of Participants</u>
<i>Example:</i>	<i>Polk County</i>	<i>5/20/94</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>Gordon Brown, Steve Dinsmore</i>

COUNTY LIFE LIST TOTALS

_____ Adair County	_____ Davis County	_____ Jefferson County	_____ Pocahontas County
_____ Adams County	_____ Decatur County	_____ Johnson County	_____ Polk County
_____ Allamakee County	_____ Delaware County	_____ Jones County	_____ Pottawattamie County
_____ Appanoose County	_____ Des Moines County	_____ Keokuk County	_____ Poweshiek County
_____ Audubon County	_____ Dickinson County	_____ Kossuth County	_____ Ringgold County
_____ Benton County	_____ Dubuque County	_____ Lee County	_____ Sac County
_____ Blackhawk County	_____ Emmet County	_____ Linn County	_____ Scott County
_____ Boone County	_____ Fayette County	_____ Louisa County	_____ Shelby County
_____ Bremer County	_____ Floyd County	_____ Lucas County	_____ Sioux County
_____ Buchanan County	_____ Franklin County	_____ Lyon County	_____ Story County
_____ Buena Vista County	_____ Fremont County	_____ Madison County	_____ Tama County
_____ Butler County	_____ Greene County	_____ Mahaska County	_____ Taylor County
_____ Calhoun County	_____ Grundy County	_____ Marion County	_____ Union County
_____ Carroll County	_____ Guthrie County	_____ Marshall County	_____ Van Buren County
_____ Cass County	_____ Hamilton County	_____ Mills County	_____ Wapello County
_____ Cedar County	_____ Hancock County	_____ Mitchell County	_____ Warren County
_____ Cerro Gordo County	_____ Hardin County	_____ Monona County	_____ Washington County
_____ Cherokee County	_____ Harrison County	_____ Monroe County	_____ Wayne County
_____ Chickasaw County	_____ Henry County	_____ Montgomery County	_____ Webster County
_____ Clarke County	_____ Howard County	_____ Muscatine County	_____ Winnebago County
_____ Clay County	_____ Humboldt County	_____ O'Brien County	_____ Winneshiek County
_____ Clayton County	_____ Ida County	_____ Osceola County	_____ Woodbury County
_____ Clinton County	_____ Iowa County	_____ Page County	_____ Worth County
_____ Crawford County	_____ Jackson County	_____ Palo Alto County	_____ Wright County
_____ Dallas County	_____ Jasper County	_____ Plymouth County	

2002 Species Lists

At left is an opportunity for IOU members to share their species list totals with others. In the spring issue of the *IOU News*, we will publish life and year lists; county, and yard lists; records of Big Days. Some time after the first of the year, participating members should complete the form with their list information, and send to the address:

IOU News
240 12th Street SE
Mason City, IA 50401

phertzel@rconnect.com

We are in debt to Mary Lou Petersen, currently the top lister in Black Hawk, Clinton, Muscatine and Scott Counties, for many years of compiling this information. It is a slow, tedious task, but she did it annually, by hand, and with care. Last year was her final year at this job, and we owe her a big thanks.

Winging It *continued from page 6*

flight: a small kettle of Broadwings with an extra Swainson's Hawk tagging along, and the first Merlin of the day passing right over the deck.

For the next two hours, watchers were thrilled by a large passage of Broadwings that had roosted overnight along the Des Moines River valley north of the camp. Swirls and lines and kettles, of dozens and hundreds, soared over the watch site and along the ridgeline on the far side of the river. Those that had never before seen a hawkwatch in action enjoyed an amazing show, with close-up views of Sharpies, a Red-tailed Hawk stooping on a Bald Eagle, and plenty of opportunities for sharing identification features. Even veterans like Sue Mattix, a regular hawk counter at the Hitchcock Nature Area hawkwatch in Pottawattamie County, were impressed by the numbers of Broadwings. In all, 11 species of raptors were seen, with the final count of Broad-winged Hawks easily over 1300 birds, and 3 Merlins viewed from that one location.

On Directions and the Iowa Rare Bird Alert

Mike Dooley

It has been my undeserved (trust me) honor to compile Iowa's Rare Bird Alert for the IA-BIRD listserve since July of this year. I thought it might be useful to offer some thoughts on one particular aspect of this endeavor. Most of you have probably gathered by now that I'm a stickler regarding directions to bird sightings, and a few of you may actually prefer the term "crank." Here is my philosophy on directions.

First, the key word in Rare Bird Alert is "alert," as in alerting your fellow birders to the presence of a good bird, which, hopefully, they will be able to find for themselves. Secondly, when posting directions to our sightings, I address them to that unknown listserve member who is a beginning birder or new arrival in the state and who is unfamiliar with the natural areas not only in Iowa generally but perhaps likely within their own immediate vicinity.

It comes easy to me to think in these terms because, lo and behold, I was once that beginning birder. Maybe some of you were too. When I started birding I lived in Iowa City and yet had no knowledge of Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Coralville Reservoir, or even Hickory Hill Park. Meanwhile a host of other mysterious places started showing up when I joined IA-BIRD, some of them apparently nearby. Once I figured out where Hawkeye and the reservoir were, then it took me a good while to get the hang of negotiating the individual spots in those areas. It turned out "Sand Point" was part of Hawkeye W.A., for example. Fortunately, I had help once I got to know some of the local birders. Can you imagine how lost I would have been trying to find a Marbled Godwit posted to the listserve with no more to go on than that it was "at Hawkeye W.A." or even "at Sand Point," when I had no experience with the access points at the reservoir?

This brings me to my next point. The bird I take generally for granted, might be an exciting, sought-after life-bird for somebody else. I might casually toss out that there was a Marbled Godwit "at Sand Point," to stick with our example, and somewhere on the list a new Johnson County-area birder would love to see their first godwit but hardly knows where to begin searching an area as large as Hawkeye W.A.

(assuming they've even figured out that's where Sand Point is). Hawkeye's a big place, but the same problem translates to almost any natural area you want to name, wet or dry. Please, do what you can to facilitate getting the new birders their first sightings—those early life-birds build excitement over birding and this leads to good things for conservation and the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, to name but two.

What we need to know is, how does one get to that named spot within the larger area, or how does one find a place to view the body of water you've named in your report. Perhaps we could allow that it's reasonable to expect new Iowa birders to get themselves a Sportsman's Atlas in order to find where the natural areas are—but they're not going to find Sand Point listed in that atlas.

As far as the RBA goes, I'll do the heavy lifting there, although the RBA doesn't always come out in time for every chaseable bird (and remember, "chaseable" is in the eye of the beholder). Simply name the natural area in your post and I'll give directions on how to get there. As I've gone along, I've built a go-to file with economical directions to every natural area posted to the RBA, adding each new one as it comes up. I've also learned more and more ways, by all-too-frequent necessity unfortunately, to research these places. I've even gotten on the phone to a sod farm two hours away to nail down their location. I've also e-mailed some of you personally. But if it's any kind of good bird that has a reasonable chance of staying put for another day or two, tell us precisely how to get to the specific spot within that natural area (or on that big lake shore), even if I don't put an RBA out that evening. Assume we are utter strangers to your particular natural area when you give us your directions.

And a special note on waterfowl and related birds, waders, shorebirds, and gulls and terns: even if the bird in question is a one-day wonder, you are still teaching a new birder, and probably a few others of us, where to look for such birds. The godwit may be gone, but now we know where to look for shorebirds in the area.

Serendipity

Jim Sinclair

I hate the question, "what is your favorite bird?" Sometimes asked with earnest interest, sometimes merely as conversation filler and sometimes asked with snide undertones. Regardless of the situation, I hate the question because there is no easy answer, in fact, perhaps no answer at all. However, I may be able to help the birding community out of this social dilemma. When the question arises, explain that while you do not have a favorite bird, you do have a favorite aspect of birding. At this point each birder is on his own, because if there is one thing that characterizes birding, it is the remarkable number of aspects it entails. From the broadest categories of friendship, knowledge and travel, most of us have a particular facet of birding which we cherish.

While any answer I may give concerning a favorite bird involves digressions and qualifiers about various birds at various times and situations, my answer for favorite aspect of birding is one word — serendipity. Now some in the birding community will look upon that answer in horror - as the antithesis of what birding is to a community grounded in science and the pursuit of knowledge. While I too subscribe to the notion of birding as the accumulation of facts and information I also know that studying such things as migration tables and vagrancy patterns rarely brings a smile to my face as does the serendipity of birding.

The dictionary definition of serendipity is "the knack of stumbling upon interesting discoveries in a casual manner." We all know a number of birders who consistently "stumble upon" good birds on a regular basis. Most of these events are far from serendipity and are in reality the result of a good birder knowing when, where and what to look for. In most cases a "good bird" is much more a case of knowledge and talent trumping luck than the other way around. But it is in those instances when chance and fortune play a major role in a birding experience that truly make me smile. Let me recount for you a day when serendipity played a large part in my birding experience.

The plan, such as it was, was to take the day off and bird my way to the spring 2002 I.O.U. conference in Ottumwa. A casual day of birding with the hope of "stumbling upon an interesting discovery" or two. My only specific destination was the wetland complex at Sedan Bottoms, both to explore an unfamiliar area and to hopefully see the Cinnamon Teal that had been found at that location.

By mid-morning, after taking a short detour, during which I had an opportunity to work on my Missouri list, I arrived at the Sedan Bottoms. Although the Cinnamon Teal was not immediately evident, the profusion of birds was remarkable. Ducks, pelicans, shorebirds, herons and my first Common Yellowthroat of the year - all before I even got out of the car!

Not being familiar with Sedan Bottoms, I paused at this point, wondering how to approach the area in regards to birds and in particular to finding the Cinnamon Teal. Actually, the decision on where to go was easy, if you want to find a Cinnamon Teal in Iowa you follow the Blue-winged Teal, which is what I did. Hike, flush teal, scope and hike again, all the way to the very back levy all with absolutely no sign of a Cinnamon Teal. And was this distressing? Absolutely not. The place was hopping with the kind of new profusion of life that only spring can bring. Hundreds of Blue-winged Teal, assorted other ducks, various shorebirds, including Willets, Hudsonian Godwits, one Marbled Godwits and a pair of passing Peregrine Falcons all combined to make the long trek more than worthwhile. The hike back to the car included more peering at teal (final total, over 600) and several interesting discoveries including a couple of mangled snake carcasses and one pathetic coot head sitting forlornly on a tussock of grass. One more sweep of the scope with nary a sign of a Cinnamon Teal and it is off to Ottumwa.

Although I had not found my "target" bird, Sedan Bottoms had truly exceeded expectations. In fact, I mused

to myself, if I had found the teal, I may not have made the long hike, may not have found the godwits, may not have seen the Peregrines and may not have had such a thoroughly good time. Interestingly, in a case of what might be termed negative serendipity, Aaron Breese arrived at Sedan Bottoms only moments after I had left and immediately found the Cinnamon Teal. He took more pleasure in telling me this story than I thought really necessary.

You cannot depend on serendipity while birding but you can certainly relish it when it happens. Before this day was over I would have one last birding experience which came about as much by good fortune as any other factor. Arriving at Forest Lake Camp early I was strolling the grounds when a familiar vehicle pulled up. Long time I.O.U. members, Joan and Virgil Eness parked their car and we proceeded to catch up on the trip to Ottumwa, birds seen, birds missed, etc. As our conversation continued, I glanced up and noticed a large bird soaring in the distance. I mentally check off Turkey Vulture before a second glance caused me to reach for my binoculars. Spiraling upwards, occasionally tilting with the wind was a Golden Eagle, in fact a second year bird. Virgil and Joan quickly affirmed my I.D. and we congratulated ourselves on kicking off the I.O.U. spring meeting in such fine fashion.

Serendipity can often be reduced to the little word, if. If I hadn't chased all those Blue-winged Teal, I wouldn't have seen the Godwits; If I had lingered at Sedan Bottoms a moment longer I may have seen the Cinnamon Teal; if the Eness' and I had not picked that place and time to catch up, we wouldn't have seen the Golden Eagle; and finally if I hadn't been actively birding, I could not have enjoyed any of the above events. So folks, grab your bins and head out the door to go birding and maybe, just maybe, serendipity's shadow will cross your path.



Jim Dinsmore Retires from Iowa State University

Story City—A retirement party for Jim Dinsmore was held on Friday, August 9th, 2002, at McFarland Park in Story County. Over 180 current and former students, family members and birding friends attended. Linda Zaletel served as host and highlighted many moments of Jim's past. A light meal was served and the day concluded with the release of a rehabilitated Red-tailed Hawk.

Jim Pease, a professor in Animal Ecology and friend of Jim, wrote fondly for the occasion: "I'll miss him because

he's just about the best colleague and friend you could ever hope for in academia (or anywhere else, for that matter). Who else would have an e-mail address of 'oldcoot'? Who else would put 'Far Side' cartoons on his tests. Who else would put 5-inch floppy disks, the old ones, unlabeled, at that, in every one's mailboxes just to watch us try to figure out what they were. Who else would leave a sign on his door for months (made by a former grad student) that said: 'Jim Dinsmore, Ornithologist, Stool of Agriculture'? Who else could

you trade puns with in class or in the field and laugh heartily at each other's jokes even when the students are groaning or (worse) giving us blank stares. Thanks, Jim, for brightening up the department, for being such a great teacher and colleague, and for lightening up the floor on our side of the building."

I believe these our wonderful words which I couldn't have said any better. Good luck Jim.

-Hank Zaletel, Nevada, Iowa

An Interview with Jim Dinsmore

IOU News: What are some of the principal things you're looking forward to in your retirement?

Dinsmore: More free time to do things I want to do when I want to. If it looks like it is going to be a nice day, it will be great to take off for Saylorville rather than knowing I have a long list of things that need to be done at work. Also looking forward to getting around the state and also broader horizons more. Finally, would like to contribute where I can to conservation issues here in Iowa. I think I have a unique perspective and can offer that in a variety of situations.

IOU News: Will you be maintaining a presence (office or otherwise) at ISU?

Dinsmore: No, I gave up my office this summer and am in temporary digs now. Plan to be out before Christmas. Have moved most of my stuff home to an office I have there. Probably will be around the dept, etc on informal basis. Also have two grad students that I will be working with to finish up.

IOU News: Will you continue to do research and write on the birdlife of Iowa?

Dinsmore: I do plan to continue to work with Iowa birds although the type of research I did with grad students will be ending. Still have lots of other things I would like to do.

IOU News: Are there any current projects in the works that you could discuss?

Dinsmore: Probably the big one now is the Important Bird Areas program. Plan to be active with that in the next sev-

eral years for sure. Also active with Iowa Audubon and The Nature Conservancy in Iowa.

IOU News: Will you continue to compile the Saylorville CBC?

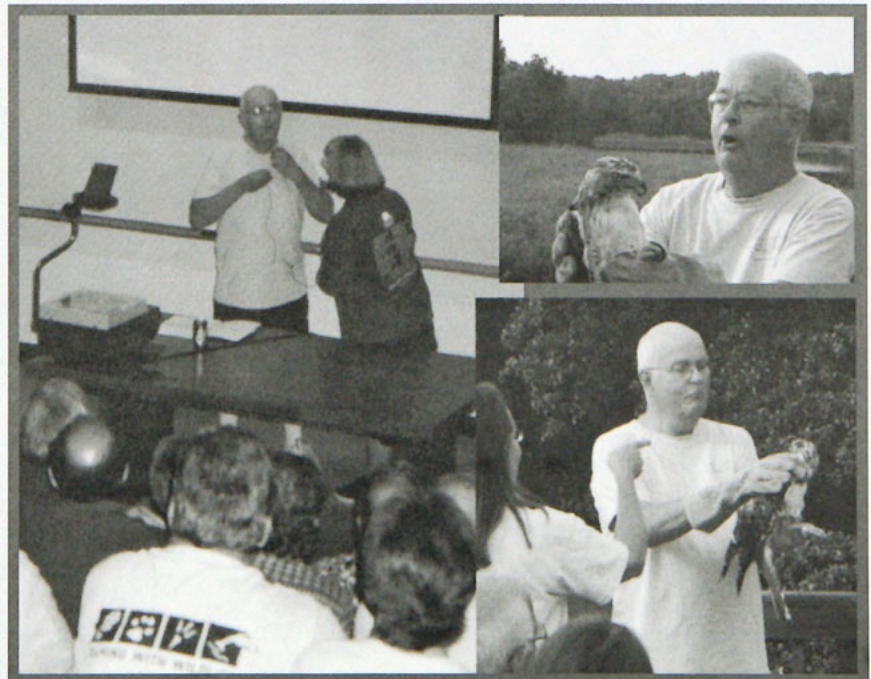
Dinsmore: Yes, I do plan to continue as compiler of that for at least the near future.

IOU News: Will Pat continue to supply the brownies?

Dinsmore: Brownies—No, Pat retired from that last year. We stopped having the "dinner" last year and just had snacks.

IOU News: Do you have any advice for people thinking about a career in ornithology?

Dinsmore: Yes, I do think that there are lots of opportunities but people need to be broad in their background. I can see lots of opportunities for people working with various conservation issues such as the PIF plans, NABCI plans, etc as well as with state and federal agencies. Universities will not be hiring people like me in the future but rather will want people more like Steve (strong quantitative background and ability to apply that to a variety of issues). Hope that make sense.



A retirement party for Jim Dinsmore culminated with the release of a rehabilitated Red-tailed Hawk. Photos by Reid Allen and Rita Goranson.

Winter Field Reports – Bob Cecil

The winter reporting season is from December through February, and offers you an opportunity to share your sightings with other Iowa birders and the scientific community. Even if you are not an active birder, you probably make observations that have value to the birding community. I encourage you to participate in the process by submitting field reports. As Winter Field Reports Editor, I would like to offer a few suggestions to make your reporting more accurate and my job a little easier:

- Please summarize your sightings, submitting only those that are more significant for your area. You know your area far better than I do, and are far better qualified to determine what should be included. If you have trouble trying to decide what to include, look at past field reports, or use Tom Kent/Jim Dinsmore's excellent *Birds in Iowa*.

- Please submit your sightings in checklist order (loons, grebes, etc.). You can get a copy of the checklist from the Iowabirds.org website.

- Please provide the following information, preferably in the following order: species, number, date, and specific location, including county. For especially unusual sightings, written documentations are necessary - you may get the form from the website or by contacting me.

- Generally, you do not need to include observations from Christmas Bird Counts, but if you do, please note that you are doing so. I work with Aaron Brees (the CBC editor) to make sure significant CBC sightings are included in the Field Reports.

- Including an e-mail address is great since I can contact you if I have questions.

- It is imperative that you get your reports into me as close to the end of February as possible. We have very tight deadlines for getting the report to "North American Birds."

Thank you for your help - it is critical to the growing knowledge of our birds. It struck me a few days ago that while we have dozens of organizations who support worthwhile conservation efforts, it's just us who provide measurable information on their effectiveness in maintaining or increasing bird populations.

Bob Cecil
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Awards

IOU member Michael Meetz of Story County is this year's recipient of the Lawrence and Eula Hagie Heritage Award. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) presents the award annually to Iowans who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to conservation of the natural environment.

Meetz was recognized for his prairie-wetland reconstruction project near his home, as well as "his inexhaustible efforts to educate Iowans about the environment" (Nicole Paseka, *Iowa Natural Heritage*, Summer 2002). Meetz, who has worked for 25 years at Iowa State University, is a virologist with the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at the College of Veterinary Medicine. He received \$1000 and a hand-carved acorn sculpture donated by Dennis and Linda Schlicht of Center Point, Iowa.

Congratulations to Michael for a well-deserved recognition.

Book Review

Iowa Sportsman's Atlas (revised). 2002. Sportsman's Atlas Company, Lytton, Iowa. \$19.95. This revised edition of this indispensable guide has several new features that make it easier to navigate Iowa's rural roads. The most important change is that all of the rural roads are now named on the maps (210th Street, B Avenue, etc). Although the type used is vanishingly small, it is legible and should make it much easier to find many of the more remote public areas than in the past. Another useful modification is that towns and cities, which were hard to decipher in previous editions, are now shaded gray on the maps, making them much easier to locate. Finally, the maps themselves have also been updated with new public areas or additions to existing ones added to the maps. This is a must item for any Iowa birder who plans to bird far from home.

-Jim Dinsmore, Ames, Iowa



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Three ways to help the IOU financially

The IOU membership has remained steady over the last decade, and as a result, has had consistent annual revenues. However, publication costs have risen to the point the organization has begun to use reserves in order to meet expenses. We look to our members to help. Here are three suggestions on how members can help:



- Purchase a gift membership for a friend, each year.
(increase annual revenue and potential membership)
- Make a donation now.
(increase reserves and potential interest)
- Make a donation later – remember the IOU in your will.
(increase future reserves and potential interest)

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