

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 16 Number 3

Winter 1996

Calendar

Field trips, unless otherwise noted, leave from Terrill Mill Park, located across N. Dubuque Street from the Mayflower. **Meetings** are generally held at 7:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month at Lucas Elementary School, 830 Southlawn Drive, near Towncrest in eastern Iowa City.

December 12, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Christmas Count Organizational Meeting at Tom Kent's house, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City. If you would like to participate in the count but cannot attend the meeting, call Tom at 337-5231.

December 22, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Count.

January 26, Sunday, 1:00 p.m. Hawkeye Wildlife Area to search for Northern Saw-whet, Long-eared, and Short-eared owls. Chris Edwards, 626-6362.

February 8, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Annual Amana Turkey Walk and Feast. Meet at the Target parking lot in Coralville. Join us for a morning bird hike followed by breakfast at the Amanas. Carl Bendorf, 351-4958.

February 20, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting. The Ornate Box Turtle, an Endangered Species from Eastern Iowa, by Sandy Rhodes.

Other Dates of Note

December 14, Saturday. Cedar Rapids Christmas Count. Pete Wickham, (319) 363-6884.

December 28, Saturday. North Linn Christmas Count. Weir Nelson, (319) 848-4846.

January 11, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. Cedar Rapids Audubon trip to local areas. Meet at Coe College parking lot on the west side of 13th Street between C & D avenues.

January 11 - 12, Saturday - Sunday. Quad Cities Bald Eagle Days.

January 23 - 26, Thursday - Sunday. Iowa Winter Bird Feeder Survey. See the survey form on page 5 of this issue.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports

September 15, Hickory Hill Park. The group enjoyed a cool, clear fall morning in the park. We had to work for our ten warbler species, which were all seen in relatively low numbers. The highlights were nice looks at numerous Philadelphia Vireos, which were surprisingly abundant.

People (7): Chris Caster, Chris Edwards, Julie Englander, Bud Gode, Rick Hollis, James Huntington (leader), Naoko Mizumoto.

Birds (42 species): Canada Goose, Broad-winged Hawk, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Canada Warbler,

Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, House Finch, American Goldfinch.

September 28, Hawk Watch. Ten club members and approximately 50 other people counted hawks on a beautiful early autumn morning at the Coralville Reservoir.

People (10): Chris Edwards, Julie Englander, Bud Gode, Rick Hollis, Linda Johnson, John & Gail McClure, Ramona McGurk, Ann & Ed Perkins.

Birds (10 raptor species): Turkey Vulture (4), Osprey (3), Bald Eagle (3), Sharp-shinned Hawk (6), Cooper's Hawk (2), accipiter species (3), Broad-winged Hawk (2), Red-tailed Hawk (7), buteo species (4), American Kestrel (1), Merlin (1), Peregrine Falcon (2).

October 17 Meeting. Carol Thompson gave a wonderful presentation on wetlands. It was preceded by what had to be our longest business meeting ever.

Bernie Knight, our Treasurer, presented a Treasurer's Report. Income is meeting expenses.

Several books with connections to club members are or will soon be available. Margrieta Delle showed us a reprinting of the Althea Sherman book, *Birds of an Iowa Dooryard*. If purchased from the Johnson County Songbird

Project, a portion of the cost will go to the Songbird Project. Tom Kent is the co-author of an updated version of *Iowa Birds*, called *Birds in Iowa*. It will be available before Christmas. Carol Thompson is co-author of the long-awaited *Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas*. Carol suggested that club members contribute to a special fund which will be sent to the IOU to purchase copies of this book for local secondary schools. Copies purchased for this purpose are available at cost, so every \$12.50 will put a book into a school library. Contributions should be sent to Jim Scheib, 10 Longview Knoll, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Bird club posters that list our upcoming schedules are available from Rick Hollis for posting.

Rick Hollis discussed the results of the Iowa City Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting concerning the practical boundary between Hickory Hill Park and Oakland Cemetery. (See Rick's column in this issue for recent developments.)

The Iowa City Bird Club is sponsoring the IOU Fall 1997 Meeting in Iowa City. We discussed dates and a few details for the meeting. The meeting will be held at Camp Io-Dis-Eca near Sandy Beach. Our first choice for the meeting is the weekend of September 19-21, and our second choice is the weekend of October 3-5. Bud Gode has been in contact with the camp and will confirm the date. We will have further discussions on what we as a club and individuals can do to enhance this meeting. Please be thinking about ideas.

People (22): Carl Bendorf, Nancy Carl, James Corrigan, Margrieta Delle, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Bud Gode, Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Tom Kent, John McClure, Ramona McGurk, Naoko Mizumoto, Sally Moore, Mary Noble, Steve Panther, Ann & Ed Perkins, Jean Sanders, Richard Tetrault, Carol Thompson, and a visitor, David Bauer.

October 19, Maquoketa River. This Iowa City Bird Club/Sierra Club canoe trip was moved from October 12 to October 19. The river was very low, so we had to pay attention to our paddling...and still ran aground many times. Just after we put in, at Monticello, a Bald Eagle flew overhead. We saw three others during the trip, all adults. Pleasant temperatures and lovely trip!

People (17): Barbara Beaumont (leader) and Ramona McGurk from the bird club. The rest were from the Sierra Club: Rex Bazousett, Joe Berry, Susan Enzle (and three friends), Therese Guedon (and her son and his friend), Kurt Hamann, Kay Hyman, Laurel Ivy, Tom Martin, Don Slothower, Helena Worthen.

Birds (16 species): Great Blue Heron, Wood Duck, Mallard, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, kinglet sp., Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, House Finch, American Goldfinch.

October 19, Hawkeye Wildlife Area. We awoke to a very heavy frost and a light breeze, making for a nice crisp morning for a bird trip. The problem was the date – duck and goose season was underway. At most stopping points in the area there were more duck hunters than ducks. In spite of the hunters' presence and the noise almost 50 species were seen. Any trip in which at least six life birds were seen has to be a really fun trip. Julie spotted the Harris's Sparrow and it stayed close by so the entire group was able to get great looks at it. The harrier put on a nice aerial show for all to enjoy.

People (6): Julie Englander, Bud Gode (leader), Rick Hollis, John McLure, Naoko Mizumoto,

Jean Sanders.

Birds (49 species): American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, American Coot, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

Continued on page 9.

Book Reviews

How To Spot Hawks & Eagles. Clay Sutton and Patricia Taylor Sutton. 1996. Chapters Publishing Ltd. 144 pp. \$15.95. Available at the Iowa City Public Library. This guide to hawk watching is a worthy successor to the authors' previous book, *How To Spot An Owl*. Part one of the book is an introduction to raptor watching, including where and how to find raptors, observing raptors throughout the seasons, and migration hot spots. Part two includes profiles of all the North American raptors with life histories, range maps, identification, and clues to observing each species. The book is filled with excellent color photographs that will have beginners and veteran birders alike longing for a crisp fall day at Hawk Mountain or Cape May. – *Chris Edwards*

Illinois Wilds. Michael R. Jeffords, Susan L. Post, and Kenneth R. Robertson. 1995. Phoenix Publishing. \$36.00. The fly leaf describes this work as “a natural history of the wild lands in Illinois. This book is a historical depiction of what Illinois was like before settlement by Europeans and is also a showcase of the remaining natural heritage of the state.” There are 165 color photographs, many of which are stunningly beautiful. This is as much an art book as it is a scientific statement. Many readers travel along the interstate transects of the “land of the tall men” and imagine that Illinois is a vast quilt of grain fields bordered by a few rivers and interrupted by infrequent state parks.

The first two authors, Jeffords and Post, are entomologists; Robertson is a botanist. They have ferreted out a rich variety of habitats. They carry us from the northern dunes and fens with Queen-of-the-prairie, through loess hills along the Illinois River, into sand prairies with

purple coneflowers and New Jersey tea, past rock ledges that were part of the Ozarks with blazing stars and an eastern fence lizard, along the Vermilion and Wabash valleys with fire pink and beech forests of high floral diversity. There is a striking upright photo of a Pileated Woodpecker. We descend into the massive sandstone ravines of southern Illinois and see the paw paw, relative of the papaya. At the end of this long state, we are in tropical habitat with cypress swamps and hard pan forests.

Illinois Wilds may not appeal to those outside that state by the sound of the title, but the variety of habitats, often with relict species, assures application to a much larger region. This is a first-rate book about the importance and uniqueness of these nearly primeval, living repositories. My only criticism is that the authors go rather lightly into the geology, and they fail to identify the fungi, lichen, and mosses in their illustrations. – *John McLure*

Birding Classics

The Bird Watcher's Anthology. Roger Tory Peterson, editor. 1957. Harcourt, Brace and Company. 401 pp. This is an enjoyable collection of writings by great birders, naturalists, and explorers of the past. There are 85 selections in all, and each includes a short introduction and an illustration by Peterson. The book is divided into seven sections: “The Spark,” “The Lure of the List,” “Migration,” “Glamour Birds,” “Birds in Far Places,” “There Is Often Adventure,” and “The Full-Fledged Watcher”, which trace the progression of a birder from novice to seasoned observer.

In these pages, you can join Ludlow Griscom on a Big Day in New York; witness the immense flocks of Passenger Pigeons in Audubon's day; bird the tropics with Louis Agassiz Fuertes as your guide; experience a red-letter day at Hawk Mountain; study oropendalas with Alexander Skutch; and visit a

flamingo nesting colony with Frank Chapman.

The Bird Watcher's Anthology is a small gem in Roger Tory Peterson's legacy to birders. It is out of print, but is available at the Iowa City Public Library and from used book dealers.

– *Chris Edwards*

Have a favorite book you'd like to recommend to other birders? Write a short review of your "Birding Classic" and send it to the editor.

1997 WINTER BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

SPONSORED BY THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION AND
THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES NONGAME PROGRAM

On two consecutive days during January 23-26, 1997 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 woodpeckers, 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, 1997:

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 *Wildlife Diversity News* and the I.O.U. Newsletter.

BIRDFEEDER SURVEY JANUARY 23-26, 1997

Please fill our 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 23rd to Sunday, January 26th. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.
 Check one: Thursday (1/23) and Friday (1/24),
 Friday (1/24) and Saturday (1/25), or
 Saturday (1/25) and Sunday (1/26).
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 1996-97? About _____
8. Comments or additional description of your feeder or yard: _____

HIGHEST NUMBER SEEN FOR EACH SPECIES DURING TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS

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

- I would like to receive the free *Wildlife Diversity 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 at (319) 338-9881.

New Books

There are three new books being published that are of special interest to Iowa birders.

The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas, by Laura Spess Jackson, Carol A. Thompson, and James J. Dinsmore. The first comprehensive statewide survey of Iowa's breeding birds, the atlas documents the presence of 201 species, 162 of which were confirmed breeding. This landmark volume will alert Iowans to the limited distribution of numerous species and serve as a guide to the management practices which could help insure that many future changes are positive ones. The atlas begins with an extensive introduction to Iowa's landforms, habitats, and the conditions affecting the abundance of species. From 1985 to 1990, 508 people donated 14,654 hours to locate birds in the field. This tremendous amount of work allowed the authors to create detailed accounts of the distribution and life history for each species of breeding bird in the state. Factors affecting each species are presented, and a distribution map and a photograph accompany each species account. Also included are literature citations for further research; although the fieldwork ended in 1990, information through 1995 is included. *The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas* provides a much-needed baseline for future comparisons of changes in Iowa's birdlife and, by extension, the lives of all animals in the state. It is being published by the University of Iowa Press and will be available in late 1996 for \$47.95 cloth or \$24.95 paper. For more information, call Carol Thompson at 338-5361.

Birds in Iowa, by Thomas H. Kent and James J. Dinsmore. *Birds in Iowa* describes the frequency and distribution of species of birds that have been recorded in Iowa through 1995,

including some data from 1996. The status including nesting status, a chart with relative frequency by thirds of months and early and late dates, and maps of county locations for selected species provide a convenient overview of common species. For rare species, more detail and maps of records by county are provided. For Accidental species, all accepted records are listed. For Casual and some rare Regular species, the number of records by year and month are charted. The seasonal and geographic occurrence of each species is summarized in the text. Species' ranges and vagrancy patterns are described, and changes in abundance are provided when appropriate. Introductory chapters describe the state list, geography and birding areas, and history of Iowa ornithology. The intent of this book is to provide a thorough review of bird records in Iowa and serve as a framework for additional study. *Birds in Iowa* is 400 pages, hardbound, and will be available in December for \$30. For additional information call Tom Kent at 337-5231.

Birds of an Iowa Dooryard, by Althea Rosina Sherman (1853 – 1943). Published posthumously in 1952, this important and long-unavailable work has been republished by the University of Iowa Press. Sherman, a self-taught ornithologist, was a pioneer in the field of life studies – she was the first to report on the entire nesting cycle of screech-owls, American Kestrels, Northern Flickers, Chimney Swifts, and other species. She was the third woman to become a fellow in the American Ornithologists' Union and an early mentor to Margaret Morse Nice, Cordelia Stanwood, and others. The new paperback issue, with sixteen of Sherman's detailed illustrations and a new forward by nature writer Marcia Myers Bonta, is available for \$13.95 (plus \$2.00 shipping and handling) from: Johnson County Songbird Project, 2511 Hwy. 1 SW, Iowa City, IA 52240. (The

Songbird Project is currently restoring Sherman's Chimney Swifts' tower – which was constructed in 1915 for the direct observation of nesting swifts. All proceeds from the Songbird Project's sales of this book will go to the tower restoration.) For more information call Barbara Boyle at (319) 628-4824.

Computer Corner

Chris Edwards

National Audubon Society Interactive CD-ROM Guide to North American Birds. 1996. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. This new multimedia guide covers 723 regular North American species, and includes 2,100 color photographs, 700 range maps, and 700 audio vocalizations. All the text from the Audubon *Field Guide to North American Birds* and *Master Guide to Birding* is included.

Individual species screens may be accessed in two ways: by scrolling through the Bird Browser, which displays fifteen small bird photographs per screen in taxonomic order; or by selecting a family name and species name from a drop-down index list of all species. The primary screen for each species displays one large photograph of the species. Up to three additional photographs, a range map, text from the Audubon *Field Guide* and *Master Guide*, and an audio clip of vocalizations may be accessed by clicking on icons.

The Identifier tool is used to find one or more bird species that match a designated criteria. A search may be performed on one or more of the following: life zone, location (state or province), shape, color, or size. The results of a given search, which are likely to be quite large, are displayed in taxonomic order in the Bird Browser, with fifteen species photographs per screen. If you select a location, you must also choose a season (winter, summer, or spring/fall), so you cannot produce a year-round list for a specific state. A spring/fall search for Iowa yielded some erroneous results, with Ferruginous Hawk, Sprague's Pipit, and Lark Bunting included, but such common species as Great Egret, Green Heron, Killdeer, and Barn Swallow omitted.

A Skill Builder tool allows you to test your visual and audio identification skills. It includes pre-defined quizzes on such difficult groups of birds as gulls, shorebirds, warblers, and sparrows. Each quiz consists of twelve similar species, and you must match each photograph or vocalization to the correct species name on a list. This feature is fun and instructive, but you cannot create your own customized tests for specific locations or groups of birds.

There are many other features, including a Life Zone Browser which displays a photograph, description, and list of typical birds for 9 life zones and 53 habitats. A Life List feature allows several users to enter life lists, which can include the species name, location, date, and notes. The lists can be printed and sorted by name, taxonomic order, or date. A Trip Planner includes descriptions of 20 North American birding hotspots. A short introduction to birding, a list of rare bird alerts, a list of suggested readings, and five video essays on bird behavior are also included.

This is a useful and high-quality product, but when compared to the similar *Peterson Multimedia Guide*, it falls short in several areas. The search tools are less capable and sometimes produce questionable results. The quiz feature is much less flexible and cannot be customized, which is one of the highlights of the Peterson guide. The Audubon guide does not include vagrants (723 species compared to 949 in the Peterson guide). The program supports only 256-color mode, compared to the higher-quality 16-bit color of the Peterson guide, so the photographs are not as sharp and rich. The Audubon guide does offer faster performance, with a brief one- or two-second pause between screens on my system. One shortcoming shared by both programs is the quality of the audio recordings, which are adequate but not as high-

quality as I would prefer, especially for the high-pitched and buzzy songs of the warblers and sparrows. Another minor inconvenience is the lack of any written program documentation.

In summary, both the Audubon and Peterson multimedia guides are exciting and useful new products which will undoubtedly improve with future revisions. I prefer the Peterson guide for the reasons given above, but I would not hesitate to recommend either program. The Audubon guide runs in Windows or Macintosh and can be purchased locally for as low as \$39.99.

Field Trip and Meeting Reports (cont.)

November 10, Pleasant Creek. The field trip to Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area and Cedar Lake yielded 30 species, mostly waterfowl in small numbers. Brisk NW winds, cold temperatures and overcast skies characterized the day. Despite the cold it was a fun outing with some good looks at the birds and a break at the Palo Mini-Mart. Thanks to Bud and Carol for driving.

People (8): Chris Caster (leader), Chris Edwards with junior birders Mary and Daniel Edwards, Bud Gode, Therese Guedon, Rick Hollis, Carol Thompson.

Birds (30 species): Common Loon, Pied-Billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, American White Pelican, Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-Necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-Tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Ring-Billed Gull, Rock Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, American

Tree Sparrow, House Sparrow.

Grumblings from Rick's Desk

Number 1: Our Loss Is Surely Someone Else's Gain. Paula Bergstrom, Johnson County's naturalist, has resigned due to problems in getting along with Director Rod Dunlap. Paula was dedicated to her job and worked well with school students and the general public in numerous ways to increase their knowledge about our natural environment. I've worked with Paula personally, through the bird watching course I taught through the museum, birding Kent Park on many Christmas Counts, and during some of the planning sessions for the Coralville Reservoir Breeding Bird Survey. She was knowledgeable about birds and many other aspects of nature.

It continually puzzles me. Johnson County tends to vote towards the left end of the spectrum and almost always supports the candidates who are more identified with environmental issues as opposed to those candidates who seem anti-environment. Yet we continue to have a County Board of Supervisors and Conservation Board that mismanage Kent Park and seem to actively or passively operate in ways that can be seen as anti-environment. In case anyone wonders, I consider the long time opposition to a nature center, as well as the amount of destruction that has occurred to construct the nature center, and the cutting down of good habitat so that walnut plantings can grow straighter, to be mismanagement.

Number 2: Our Loss Is Surely No One Else's Gain. As we discussed at our last bird club meeting, the Iowa City Parks and Recreation Board voted to pass a recommendation to not expand Oakland Cemetery into Hickory Hill Park. This expansion was aimed at a section of land

originally obtained for the cemetery. After no use for over 50 years, the City Council loaned that section of land to Hickory Hill Park in the 1970s.

Rather than accept the recommendation of the board, the City Council (apparently responding to a “shadow lobby,” which includes the *Press-Citizen* and is more important than others who speak out in public at the Parks and Recreation Board meetings) voted to have an engineering firm examine the options of expansion. The engineers reported on three options.

Then, at a work session on November 13, the Council apparently decided to limit all cemetery expansion to the cemetery side of the fence. It is important to note that not all councilors were present and no formal vote was taken. If you start at the gate which lies between Oakland Cemetery and HHP, we will see a small expansion of the cemetery to the NE of the gate, which is near the small ravine into which work crews formerly dumped clippings and flowers. We will see a larger expansion of the cemetery to the S and SE of the gate, mostly in the grassy valley. Neither will take a large amount of woods and probably will not impact in any large way upon our use of the park. And, the ideas “decided” upon would probably prevent expansion into other parts of what we consider HHP. Legally the city can use this land as park or take it back for use as cemetery.

City staff was directed to find the heirs of the people who deeded the land to the city. At least one of these people has been found and has expressed a pro-expansion belief. In light of this, it would appear that the majority in favor of keeping the cemetery on the cemetery side of the fence may be gone, as those on the Council who want to expand have an excuse to do what the “shadow lobby” wants. There was some discussion of purchasing land on the east side of HHP to replace the woods taken from the heart

of the park. I cannot see how any land on the east could possibly compensate for the woods that would be lost.

At one point in this long gory mess, Councilor Larry Baker was quoted in the paper as saying that he wished that those councilors who are against taking land from the park to articulate what qualities would be lost if scrub trees are cleared for cemetery use. I do not know if Councilor Baker was at the public hearing held by Parks & Rec. Had he been, he would have heard some articulate discussion on both sides of the issue. I think this is a clear invitation for us to call or write Iowa City Councilors and explain to them why the large block of trees make HHP unique. The councilors are listening to the arguments from people who want to be buried near their relatives. What no one seems to realize is that this is an argument which will go on forever. Expand now and face the same arguments in ten years, or fifty years or whatever. Sooner or later, we will run out of space in Oakland Cemetery. Then what? There will still be living people with relatives buried in Oakland Cemetery. Do we tear down a house on 7th Avenue or 1st Avenue? Iowa City needs a new large cemetery.

I should apologize for the length of this discussion, but HHP is very near to me, and this cemetery expansion comes at a time when a small housing development had been approved which will take out some of the wooded area on private land at the extreme NE end of the park (near Highway 1). As I followed the cemetery expansion issue, the way Iowa City government works became more clear to me. It is clearly not enough for a person to speak out in hearings. Call or write your city councilors and let them know how you feel.

Number 3: No, I am not making this up. It is a great second-hand report (from a friend of a friend who got it directly from the horse’s

mouth). The compiler of the Turkey Point, Maryland, Hawk Watch reported that the best bird they saw one day was “a sharpie that came over during a lull in the rain. It headed directly south, took a sudden turn in my direction and flew in a beeline directly at the little kangaroo on my hat. I ducked my head just in time to get a light tap.” Now the guy wants to put a really big kangaroo on his hat and attract some really big accipiters. (No, I do not know why he has a little kangaroo on his hat.)

– *Rick Hollis*

Bird Notes

BARN OWL NESTING FAILURE. It appears that the harsh winter of 1995-96 was a difficult one for Iowa's Barn Owls. After a banner year in 1995 when ten active nests were found, no nests were found in 1996. The only confirmed Barn Owl sighting in the first half of 1996 was of an owl which starved to death during January in Mahaska County. Unlike Great Horned Owls, Barred Owls, and Eastern Screech-Owls, Barn Owls are not adapted to withstand harsh winters. If they do not find a constant supply of mammal prey, they quickly become emaciated and often die during spells of sub-zero temperatures with deep snow. Grasslands in the Conservation Reserve Program in southern Iowa have greatly benefited Barn Owls in recent years, and it is hoped that their numbers will begin to recover in that area.

– *Wildlife Diversity News*

NEW PUBLICATION. Partners In Flight and the American Bird Conservancy have launched a new quarterly magazine, *Bird Conservation*, devoted to bird conservation in the Americas. It will feature species profiles, interviews with important bird conservationists, Partners In Flight news, and features on how readers can actively participate in bird conservation. A subscription is available for a \$10 minimum donation to American Bird Conservancy, 1250 24th St NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20037.

REPORTING BANDED BIRDS. Bird Bands can be reported by calling 1-800-327-BAND from 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. EST or e-mailing Wendy_manear@nbs.gov. The bands have 8-9 numbers stamped on them. A certificate of appreciation with the original banding information will be sent by mail. Reports of live sightings of color-marked birds may be sent to Mary Gustafson at Mary_Gustafson@nbs.gov

or BBL Biologist, Laurel, MD. In either case, be prepared to report the band number, location, date, and finder's name and address. Let Rick Hollis know if you see any of these; he has the contact information for them and will pass the information back to the bird club, should we see any. Some marked birds to be on the lookout for include: Ring-billed Gulls with yellow leg bands from NY; House Finches with various colored bands from Mankato, MN; Semipalmated Plovers with a green flag above the left knee and split light-blue & white bands above and below the left knee from DE; Black-bellied Plovers with various colored bands from AK; and American Bitterns with wing tags put on in MN.

KINGLET CALYPTURA REDISCOVERED IN BRAZIL. After more than a hundred years without a confirmed record of the Kinglet Calyptura (*Calyptura cristata*), this enigmatic species was rediscovered by Brazilian ornithologist Ricardo Parrini on October 27, 1996 about 60 km from Rio de Janeiro City. On that Sunday morning, while watching birds in the forested foothills of the Serra dos Orgaos, Parrini located two individuals, probably forming a pair, of a crested, remarkably tiny bird that without doubt could only be the Kinglet Calyptura. A team of other ornithologists and friends from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and the local birdwatchers's club observed the birds again in the following days at the same place. A circumstantiated note on the observations made by this team is due in a future issue of *Cotinga*, journal of the Neotropical Bird Club. A follow-up survey that aims to get additional data on ecological and behavioral aspects of the species hopefully will enable scientists to find it in other places along the Serra do Mar.

Iowa City Bird Club

Eastern Iowa Birdwatch is published quarterly. Members are encouraged to send articles, reviews, notes, and comments to Chris Edwards, 85 Whitman Ave., North Liberty, IA 52317, or e-mail to CREdwards@aol.com.

Annual membership dues are \$5.00, payable by January 1st for the coming year to Bernie Knight, Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, 425 Lee St., Iowa City, IA 52246. Check your mailing label for the year you have paid through.

DUES NOTICE

Our annual \$5.00 membership dues, which pay for an entire year of Eastern Iowa Birdwatch, are due now for 1997. Check your mailing label below for the most recent year you have paid for. If your label says "96", please send \$5.00 for 1997. If your label says "95", send \$10.00 total for 1996 and 1997 in order to remain on our mailing list. Please make checks payable to "Eastern Iowa Birdwatch" and send to Bernie Knight, 425 Lee Street, Iowa City, IA, 52246.

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