

# Eastern Iowa Birdwatch

The Iowa City Bird Club Newsletter

Volume 17 Number 3

December 1997

## 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 10, Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count organizational meeting** at Jim Fuller's house, 6 Longview Knoll north of Iowa City. If you would like to participate but cannot attend the meeting, call co-compilers Jim Fuller at 338-3561 or Chris Edwards at 626-6362.

**December 21, Sunday. Iowa City Christmas Bird Count.**

**January 22, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting.** Carol Thompson will present "Birding in Costa Rica".

**January 31, Saturday, 6:30 a.m. Amana Turkey Walk.** Join us for a morning bird hike followed by breakfast at Amana. Meet at the Target parking lot in Coralville. Call Jim Fuller at 338-3561 if you plan to attend.

**March 8, Sunday, 8:30 a.m. Cone Marsh** for geese, ducks, raptors, and other early spring migrants. Chris Caster, 339-8343.

**March 26, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting.** Well-known Iowa birders Eugene and Eloise Armstrong will

talk about their search for all the owls of North America.

**March 29, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. Mississippi River** for waterfowl. Carol Thompson, 338-5361.

**April 16, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Meeting.** Carol Thompson and Rick Hollis will present “Birding Tamaulipas, Mexico”.

**April 18, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Ryerson’s Woods** for spring migrants. Meet at the Ryerson’s Woods parking lot, located south of the Johnson County Fairgrounds along S. Riverside Drive. Barbara Beaumont, 626-6227.

## Other Dates of Note

**December 20, Saturday. Cedar Rapids Christmas Bird Count.** Pete Wickham, (319) 363-6884.

**January 3, Saturday. North Linn County Christmas Bird Count.** Weir Nelson, (319) 848-4846.

**January 22 – 25, Thursday – Sunday. Iowa Winter Bird Feeder Survey.** See the survey form in this issue.

## Field Trip and Meeting Reports

**September 7, Hickory Hill Park.** It was mostly cloudy at 7:00 a.m., with thickening clouds, and the temperature was 68 degrees. The birds were not numerous, but we had a nice selection. We had a Barred Owl which flew in and perched almost directly over us. We also had two young Cooper's Hawks. Three of us stayed until 12:30, encountering a really nice flock of warblers about noon.

People (14): James Huntington (leader), Jack Bagford, Chris Caster, John Cordell, Chris Edwards, Julie Englander, Therese Guedon, Li-Hsien Lin, Christopher Lu, Naoko Mizumoto, Damian Pieper, Karolyn Ramnani, Richard Tetrault, Carol Thompson.

Birds (52 species): Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Cooper's Hawk, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Blue

Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Veery, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

**September 28, Peterson Property.** Eight of us spent a pleasant, albeit quiet, morning tramping around the Peterson Property near the Cedar River in Muscatine County. The birds were rather scarce – many of those on the list were solitary species representatives. Several present were able to get life birds and we were gifted with a look at an extraordinarily cooperative Black-Billed Cuckoo. One notable plant, Cardinal Flower, was seen.

People (8): Rick Hollis (leader), Julie Englander, Roger Heidt, James Huntington, Kay James, John McClure, Naoko Mizumoto, Mary Noble.

Birds (48 species): Pied-billed Grebe\*, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret\*, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier\*, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk\*, Wild Turkey, American Coot\*, Killdeer, Solitary Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Chimney Swift\*, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow\*, Barn Swallow\*, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee,

White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Winter Wren, Sedge Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, European Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellow-throat\*, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow\*.

\* Not seen at the Peterson Property, most being on a depressing swing through Cone Marsh.

**October 4, Coralville Reservoir.** The weather was super – just a great day to be outside and enjoy nature. The group all got in Bud's Blazer and headed for the reservoir area, stopping first at the small pond just north of the old Madison Center Headquarters site. We all enjoyed watching a family of Ring-necked Pheasants feeding in the grass around the pond. Farther north we found large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds gathering for the flight south as well as large numbers of Cedar Waxwings in the trees overhead, making feeding passes in flycatcher fashion. In the brush along both sides of the road many *lbj*'s flitted ahead of us but we were unable to make identifications of any but the common sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

At the north end of the road we used the scope to watch the duck hunters in their blinds (there were lots more hunters than ducks), huge numbers of Double-crested Cormorants and smaller numbers of American White Pelicans. At this location numbers of meadowhawks (small dragonflies) were observed. Christopher became much more interested in the odonates than the birds (or lack thereof) so he used Bud's net and collected some.

At Swan Lake several hunters were positioned on the south shore with their decoys and the few teal left on the water remained safe in the

center of the lake. We watched an injured teal flapping in the water, only to discover it had been shot earlier, but none of the hunters were "sportsmen" enough to put it out of its misery. As we drove away it appeared as though it would not last long. North of Swan Lake at the old beaver pond the hunters were in control but there were no ducks and few other birds. The waters along Greencastle Ave. also had their share of hunters and we only saw one Great Blue Heron, a yellowlegs, and a Spotted Sandpiper. Poor birding but a wonderful day. We all had a good time.

People (4): Bud Gode (leader), Li-Hsien Lin, Christopher Lu, Steve Panther.

**October 18, Frytown Conservation Area.** Six birders visited this county-owned conservation area southwest of Iowa City. The weather was sunny, with temperatures around 35 degrees and a slight south wind.

People (6): Ed and Jean Allgood (leaders), Li-Hsien Lin, Christopher Lu, Damian Pieper, Steve Panther.

Species (21 species): Canada Goose, Turkey Vulture, Ring-necked Pheasant, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch.

**November 3, Meeting.** A number of us made the drive up the road to Kirkwood Community College for our joint meeting with Cedar Rapids Audubon. Lisa Hemesath of the DNR discussed Partners in Flight, the Teaming with Wildlife initiative, and National Migratory Bird Day.

**November 9, Pleasant Creek Recreation Area.** The weather for this trip was just plain balmy, which was a welcome change from the usual stiff north wind encountered on many previous November outings. We chose Pleasant Creek Lake in NW Linn County because its deep waters are often visited by diving ducks, loons and grebes during late fall until the water freezes over. The group had many nice looks at Common Loons and Horned Grebes. Not many diving ducks were present for viewing, but a few Canvasbacks, Ring-necked Ducks, and a Surf Scoter kept folks happy. And of course for those in the group fond of Ruddy Ducks and Coots, it was a great day. Leaving Pleasant Creek, Bud and Carol spotted a "Kriders" Red-tailed Hawk off the side of the road. After downing a little plastic as Carol calls it, at the Palo Mini-Mart, we pushed on to Cedar Lake below the Quaker Oats plant in Cedar Rapids. We found more Coots and a few Lesser Scaup, but it was the Hooded Mergansers that stole the show and a single Red-breasted Merganser that was topic for debate. Rounding out the top five was another Common Loon and 19 Horned Grebes. (I don't usually count, but Christmas is coming you know and I need the practice.)

People (8): Chris Caster (leader), Karen Disbrow, Bud Gode, Mary Noble, Carol Thompson, Carolyn (sorry I forgot the last name), Roger from Cedar Rapids who met us there, and Jean-Francois Carpentier, a visiting birder from France. Thanks to Bud for driving.

## Book Reviews

**Wild America. Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher.** Mariner Books. 1997. 434 pp. \$14.00.

**Kingbird Highway. Kenn Kaufman.** Houghton Mifflin Company. 1997. 318 pp.

\$23.00. Available at the Iowa City Public Library.

*Wild America* is a classic that is now back in print. In 1953, Roger Tory Peterson and his British friend James Fisher, who had never been to America, set out on a journey to view the birds, wildlife, and other natural wonders of this vast continent. They began their trip in Newfoundland and traveled south to Florida, along the Gulf Coast to Texas, south into Mexico, to the desert Southwest, up the Pacific Coast, and finally to Alaska. By the end of their journey, they had seen more species of birds in North America in one year than anyone ever had previously. The story is fascinating and exciting, and is beautifully illustrated by Peterson's numerous drawings.

*Kingbird Highway* tells of a similar journey. In 1973 Kenn Kaufman, who as a boy had been inspired by *Wild America*, set out to break the record for the most species of birds seen in a single year in North America. Although Kaufman is a well-known author and bird authority today, in 1973 he was an eighteen-year-old high school dropout who hitchhiked everywhere. Along the way he met most of the prominent birders of the day, including his hero Roger Tory Peterson. By the end of the year he had the record, but his interest in birds had moved beyond listing and had evolved into a desire to study the birds he had been chasing.

— *Chris Edwards*

**Field Guide to Warblers of North America.** Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. Houghton Mifflin Company. 1997. 660 pp. \$20.00 (softcover). This latest in the Peterson field guide series covers the 59 species of wood warblers found in North American. There is enough information in this volume to classify it as a pocket-sized encyclopedia rather than as a field guide. There are 32 color plates illustrating

the various plumages of each species. The species accounts are illustrated with numerous color photographs, and subsections for each species include an introduction, description, similar species, voice, behavior, habitat, distribution, status and conservation, subspecies, taxonomic relationships, plumages and molts, and references. The range maps appear to be well-researched and are extremely detailed. Comparisons can be drawn between this book and *Warblers of the Americas* by Curson, Quinn, and Beadle (1994). The plates in this new book are not as large or as detailed as in the earlier volume, but in many other respects the new book is superior. The text is far more extensive, and the range maps are much better. Aside from the plates, my only disappointment is the curious lack of information regarding nesting behavior, which in most cases is limited to a brief description of the nest. In short, the book offers a wealth of information on a favorite family of birds.

— *Chris Edwards*

**1998 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 22-25, 1998 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 15, 1998:

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 22-25, 1998**

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 22<sup>rd</sup> to Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. Count birds on two consecutive days only. Please record which days you counted birds for us in the space below.  
 Check one:  Thursday (1/22) and Friday (1/23),  
 Friday (1/23) and Saturday (1/24), or  
 Saturday (1/24) and Sunday (1/25).
4. Is your feeder in Town (including suburbs) or in the Country?  
 Circle T or C.
5. Check the ONE description which best describes the area within a 2-block circle around your feeder:  
 suburban, houses with shrubs and small trees but few trees wider than 20 inches.  
 suburban bordered by: (circle 1) timber, grass, field or row crop.  
 town, neighborhood has many mature shade and street trees.  
 downtown with mostly buildings, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, high rises.  
 pasture  
 row crop (corn, beans, etc.)  
 timber  
 farmstead with mature trees and shrubs around house.
6. Type and number of feeders:  Thistle,  Sunflower (only),  Fruit,  Safflower,  Peanuts,  Mixed seed,  
 Peanut Butter,  Suet,  Cracked Sunflower,  Corn,  Millet (only),  unfrozen water,  
 other \_\_\_\_\_
7. On what date did you start feeding during 1997-98? 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.

## Carolina Wrens at Our House

### Cal and Bernie Knight

Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) have inhabited areas surrounding our house at 425 Lee St. in Iowa City for a number of years. These birds encourage the use of many adjectives:

- Spunky, with upcocked tails.
- Handsome, with the males sporting russet browns, pinkish legs, and decurved bill.
- Inquisitive, as they investigate every nook and cranny.
- Ever searching for insects on the plantings.
- Sing throughout the year, in all kinds of weather.
- Personality plus, and best of all –
- They love our hanging baskets.

Nestings have taken place in hanging baskets pre-1982 - 1985. Even then, during the coldest of winters, one wren perched daily on an electric roaster that was left out on the south porch. Perching on the handle, the bird made use of radiant heat from the chrome cover. Now let's add intelligence to the list of adjectives.

A hanging log packed with peanut butter mix, plus peanuts in a protected feeder, keep them happy. Along with using the hanging baskets left out over the winter months for their cover, they entertain us.

The eggs or fledglings cannot be photographed in their nest due to a narrow, four-inch covered tunnel leading to an igloo-type nest, completely domed with woven grasses. We are unable to see in until the size of the fledglings expands the nest. At this time we do not risk photos for fear of causing premature fledging. Two years ago Cal removed a wooden door from the garden

shed (which is attached to the house) and leaned it against the opening, awaiting repair. In a matter of two days a pair of wrens whizzed in and out constructing their nest. When finished the domed nest part was completely covered with a 7" mound of dried leaves. (There were no tunnels on two leaf-mounded nests observed.) Our reward for not replacing the door was watching three baby wrens practice flying on the patio as Mom and Dad Wren attempted to corral them, feed them, and offer worried protection.

Never have we been scolded with such belligerence as when Bernie jerked winter bittersweet from a pot early in the spring. To our dismay, the Carolina Wrens' newly built nest was dismantled. Yes, she heard about the destruction from two loud, vocal birds.

Guidebooks inform us that the call should be interpreted as "*tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle*". Never do we pick up this call. "*I miss you, I miss you, I miss you*" often rings out as they communicate in loud, rich whistled notes. Also, a low, throaty growl is emitted as they approach the nest, once hatching takes place. This growl has been taped by Cal. They are constantly in contact by song and can be heard throughout the neighborhood.

Three hanging baskets spaced 30" apart have been in use at one time: basket one was occupied by the domed nest and the female; basket two was the resting space for the watchful male; and basket three held an active Cardinal nest. Hatching took place at similar times. The highly active Carolina Wrens not only fed their own

babies, but attempted to take over parental rights on the young Cardinals. As the Cardinal would bring in food the female actually hopped up and down in anger awaiting her turn to feed the baby Cardinals. Both nests fledged successfully and never once did we see any disturbance from the Cardinals as they tolerated their neighbors.

Our observations of the wrens plus the other peanut-feasting species is within 24" eye-to-eye. On a shelf anchored to the windowsill in front of our kitchen sink we watch the variations in coloration, feathers and habits, which are readily discernible. (Currently, this includes three Red-breasted Nuthatches, Chickadees, Titmice, and Downy Woodpeckers.) A

puzzling question to us is the difference in the bill length in the Carolina Wrens. The waxy males seem to carry a longer, decurved bill. They grayish females often have a shorter and even straight bill at times. Our research does not explain this. Is anyone out there an expert on this differentiation?

The following illustration shows Cal's way of excluding squirrels and starlings from the peanut feeder. Starlings, with their bill length added to their neck stretch, were able to reach into the peanut feeder. Peanuts now last much longer and the small birds move in and out of the metal guards easily.

## **From the President's Desk**

Hi gang,

One last big "thank you" to all of the club members who helped make the fall IOU Meeting

a huge success: Bernie Knight, Bud Gode, Carol Thompson, Cal Knight, Nancy Carl, Karen Disbrow, Jim Fuller, Sally Moore, Jim Scheib, and the field trip leaders (Carl Bendorf, Chris Caster, Jim Durbin, Chris Edwards, Lanny Haldy, James Huntington, Tom Kent, and Pete Wickham). The first three on the list deserve special salutes. Although they were not responsible for the 2,000 Broad-winged Hawks seen at Io-Dis-E-Ca, they made the entire meeting possible. Many of the approximately 80(!) registrants told me how nice the meeting was and what a wonderful job we did. I was worried, if we could pull it off, given my infamous organizational skills. All I did was talk to people at a meeting to come up with a list of jobs. I asked for volunteers and hands went up. Thank you all.

While there has been nothing more to date on the Hickory Hill Park Trails issue, the Iowa City Council has decided on the 10-acre plan for cemetery expansion. My reading of the maps takes this to near the trail crest, just west of the withholding dam. Time will tell what will happen to the park, but I feel it will not be pleasant.

– *Rick Hollis*

## Birds in Forested Landscapes

Chris Edwards

I got out of the car and closed the door quietly. Although it was a bright summer morning, the sunlight barely broke through the dense canopy to the forest floor below. I was here at my family's cabin in Jones County to census nesting thrushes as part of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Birds in Forested Landscapes (BFL) project. During this ten-minute observation period, I would note the presence and behavior of any thrushes, as well as potential predators and nest parasites. With my tape player and notebook in hand, I checked my watch and then attuned my ears to the forest.

Most of the birds remained hidden in the dense foliage, so I listened to their songs and calls. A Red-eyed Vireo repeated his song over and over from the treetops. An Ovenbird's loud "teacher-teacher-teacher" rang through the woods. Two Acadian Flycatchers, perhaps rival males, scolded and chased each other. A female cowbird sputtered as it flew over. Then I heard the flute-like, downward-spiraling song of the Veery, one of two woodland thrushes that nest in Iowa. The Veery continued to sing and call for several minutes, but did not show itself. By the end of the observation period, I still had not heard Iowa's more common thrush, the Wood Thrush. I played a tape of its songs and calls, but there was no response.

Later I explored the surrounding forest in an attempt to locate the Veery I had heard and observe possible nesting behavior. After climbing down a steep, rocky embankment and walking along a creek, I made an exciting discovery. A small bird flushed from a nest just

above the forest floor a few feet away. When it perched nearby, through my binoculars I saw the warm brown upperparts and lightly spotted breast of a female Veery. Being careful not to disturb the nest, I peered in and saw two spotted eggs: one bluish-green Veery egg and one larger white cowbird egg. I quickly left the area to minimize any disturbance to the nest.

My excitement at finding the nest was dampened somewhat on a subsequent visit, when I discovered that a predator had destroyed the nest. I observed firsthand how nest parasites and predators can have an affect on woodland nesting birds in today's fragmented landscape. As one of many volunteers participating in the BFL project, my observations are useful to scientists at Cornell studying these birds.

The BFL project evolved from Project Tanager, which ran from 1993 to 1996 and addressed the question of how North American tanagers are affected by forest fragmentation. (For more information about Project Tanager, see the July 1997 issue of *WildBird*, featuring our own Margrieta Delle.) BFL was started in 1997 and focuses on seven species of forest thrushes and two accipiters. The overall goal of the project is to determine which specific habitat and landscape features are associated with successful breeding populations of forest thrushes and hawks. BFL findings will be used to develop management recommendations for conserving forest birds and their habitats. These recommendations will become part of the North American Bird Conservation Plan, which is being developed by Partners in Flight. In the

face of continuous habitat destruction, Partners in Flight seeks to identify the habitat requirements of healthy bird populations and to ensure the long-term protection and management of bird habitat throughout the continent.

BFL volunteers help answer these conservation questions: How much habitat do different forest-dwelling bird species require for successful breeding? How are habitat requirements affected by land uses in the surrounding landscape, such as human development, logging, and agriculture? How do the habitat requirements of a species vary across its range? How do rates of nest predation and cowbird parasitism vary with different sizes and types of forest and in different geographic regions?

As a participant, I chose a forest patch, selected a census point within the patch, and then visited the point twice during the breeding season to conduct a ten-minute census. I spent additional time at the site searching for thrushes, looking for evidence of nesting and recording habitat characteristics of the site. This fieldwork was only one part of my research. Using a topographic map, I determined the size of the patch and the characteristics of the surrounding landscape. I transferred my results to computer-readable data forms and mailed them to the lab. I was able to survey only one forest patch in 1997, but I hope to census several more patches next year.

It is often discouraging to read of the many environmental threats facing birds today. This is one way birdwatchers can help make a difference. There is no cost, and each participant receives an instruction book, data forms, and a cassette tape. To sign up, contact the lab by telephone at (607) 254-2446, by e-mail at [forest\\_birds@cornell.edu](mailto:forest_birds@cornell.edu), or by mail at BFL, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159

Sapsucker Woods Rd., Dept WB, Ithaca, NY 14850. For more information about the Birds in Forested Landscapes project, visit their web site at [www.ornith.cornell.edu](http://www.ornith.cornell.edu).

## Bird Notes

**AOU CHANGES.** The forty-first Supplement to the *AOU Checklist of North American Birds* was published in the July 1997 issue of *The Auk*. It includes name changes, splits, and sequence changes that will eventually be reflected in field guides and checklists. The Solitary Vireo has been split into three species: Blue-headed Vireo, which occurs as a migrant in Iowa; the Plumbeous Vireo, which breeds in the Rocky Mountains and Great Basin; and Cassin's Vireo, which nests in the mountains along the West Coast. The Plain Titmouse has been split into Juniper Titmouse, of the interior west; and Oak Titmouse, which occurs west of the Sierra Nevadas. The Asiatic race of Marbled Murrelet, which has been recorded as a vagrant in North America (and in Iowa), has been recognized into as a distinct species, the Long-billed Murrelet. The supplement also includes major changes in the sequence of bird families on the checklist. Vultures are no longer considered to be related to hawks, and have been moved to follow the storks. The shrikes, corvids (jays and crows), and vireos are now believed to be closely related and appear after the swallows. The supplement includes several name changes which do not affect Iowa birds.—*Birdwatcher's Digest*

**AUDUBON WATCHLIST.** The National Audubon Society has released its second annual WatchList, which lists 105 bird species identified as in danger or decline. The list, developed by Partners In Flight, documents non-cyclical declines in bird populations and pinpoints rarer species whose habitats are

threatened or disappearing. The following Iowa nesting species are on this year's list:

Short-eared Owl	Chuck-will's-widow
Red-headed Woodpecker	Wood Thrush
Bell's Vireo	Prairie Warbler
Cerulean Warbler	Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler	Kentucky Warbler
Dickcissel	Henslow's Sparrow
Bobolink	

The National Audubon Society's web site, at [www.audubon.org/bird/watch](http://www.audubon.org/bird/watch), includes more information about each species on the list, including rankings for relative abundance, breeding and winter distribution, threats to breeding and non-breeding range, and population trends.

**NEW BIRD CONSERVATION AREA.** The Iowa DNR has proposed a landmark bird conservation area in southern Iowa to protect grassland birds. The new Kellerton Bird Conservation Area in Ringgold County would be the DNR's first major acquisition aimed at protecting non-game wildlife, and would be the first bird conservation area of its kind in the nation. The project could eventually encompass 10,000 acres, but the initial area would cover 680 acres of CRP grassland that is currently home to Greater Prairie Chickens, Northern Harriers, and Short-eared Owls. The tract includes at least three prairie chicken leks, and viewing blinds will be constructed so visitors can observe the prairie chickens' courtship displays. The Kellerton project is based on a new model for grassland preservation developed by Partners in Flight. – *Cedar Rapids Gazette*

**WILD EMUS.** Eirik Blom predicts that the next (un-natural) addition to North America's avifauna could be the Emu. It seems that the bottom has dropped out of Emu farming and some farmers are letting their birds go. There have been reported sightings in Texas and Los Angeles, and an attempted nesting.

– *BWD Skimmer*

**GLOBAL WARMING.** Some Brits recently analyzed 74,258 records of egg-laying in 65 species over the 25-year period 1971-1995. Twenty species showed significant trends towards earlier laying dates, averaging 8.8 days, while one showed a trend towards later dates. The twenty species included a wide range of species, including water birds, insectivores (both migratory and non-migratory), corvids, and seed-eaters. This data is similar to data for waders in the Netherlands and amphibians in Britain. This is one more set of data in the mounting evidence that global warming is here.

– *Nature*

**BIRD GROUP NAMES.** The following group names are from Terry Ross's Baltimore Birdclub web site (<http://204.255.212.10/~tross/baltnbird.html>). Most of these terms date back at least 500 years. Some of them have been in continuous use since then, while others have gone out of fashion and been resurrected in the last century or two; still others only exist on lists. At a nearby site, Terry offers some whimsical group names, such as a dip of Goldfinches or a drift of Snow Buntings.

A bevy of quail  
 A bouquet of pheasants (when flushed)  
 A brood of hens  
 A building of rooks  
 A cast of hawks (or falcons)  
 A charm of finches  
 A colony of penguins  
 A company of parrots  
 A congregation of plovers  
 A cover of coots  
 A covey of partridges (or grouse or ptarmigans)  
 A deceit of lapwings  
 A descent of woodpeckers  
 A dissimulation of birds  
 A dole of doves

An exaltation of larks  
A fall of woodcocks  
A flight of swallows (or doves, goshawks, or  
cormorants)  
A gaggle of geese (wild or domesticated)  
A host of sparrows  
A kettle of hawks (riding a thermal)  
A murmuration of starlings  
A murder of crows  
A muster of storks  
A nye of pheasants (on the ground)  
An ostentation of peacocks  
A paddling of ducks (on the water)  
A parliament of owls  
A party of jays  
A peep of chickens  
A pitying of turtledoves  
A raft of ducks  
A rafter of turkeys  
A siege of herons  
A skein of geese (in flight)  
A sord of mallards  
A spring of teal  
A tidings of magpies  
A trip of dotterel  
An unkindness of ravens  
A watch of nightingales  
A wedge of swans (or geese, flying in a "V")  
A wisp of snipe

## Iowa City Bird Club

**Eastern Iowa Birdwatch** is published three times per year (April, August, and December). 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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