

A REVIEW OF ORNITHOLOGY IN IOWA;
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OBJECTIVES.

by Philip A. DuMont.

Today the Iowa Ornithologists' Union is celebrating its 22nd birthday. These have been very full years and I want to review briefly some of the outstanding accomplishments during this time as I see them.

The first meeting 22 years ago differed in some respects from this one. There were no colored movies then. The field trips came along a little later. But we did have the keen interest in all phases of Iowa ornithology that typifies our meetings at the present time.

Charles R. Keyes (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 1, pp. 8-9) of Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Dayton Stoner, now Zoologist for the New York State Museum, and T. C. Stephens (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 13, pp. 2-6) of Morningside College, Sioux City, serving as a committee, issued an invitation to all persons interested in Iowa birds to attend a meeting held in conjunction with the Iowa Conservation Association at Iowa State College on February 28, 1923 (see Iowa Bird Life 2, p. 3-5).

About fifty persons attended and Walter M. Rosene (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 1, pp. 21-22; 2, p. 4; 11, pp. 62-66), of Ogden, was elected the first president, an office which he filled with untiring energy during the next four years. Dr. Stephens was elected vice-president, Mrs. Mary L. Bailey (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 1, pp. 8-9), of Sioux City, secretary, and Mr. Thomas H. Whitney of Atlantic, treasurer. The executive committee included Rev. LeRoy Titus Weeks (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 2, p. 2), formerly of Taber and later of Emmetsburg,

who will long be remembered for his presentation of "Poetry on Wings". I seldom see a bobolink without thinking of Rev. Weeks' poem that described ^{its} ~~their~~ song as "spink spank spink". [Homer R. Dill, Director of the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History and Arthur J. Palas (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 1, p. 8), who became the next president, were the other two committee members.]

According to the last membership list, only 12 of the Charter Members remain. One of my regrets is that I neglected to join until a year later. Dr. F. L. R. Roberts shares with me the disappointment of having 'just missed the boat'.

The second and third meetings of the Union were held during March and February, respectively, also at Iowa State College and with the Iowa Conservation Association. [At one of these Miss Althea Sherman gave her famous paper "Down with the House Wren Boxes" (Wilson Bull. 37, pp. 5-13). Summer field trips were held at the Ledges State Park, under the genial direction of Carl Fritz Henning (see Iowa Bird Life 3, pp. 2-4^{Ill. Feb. 69-70}), and at the Wild Life School at McGregor.]

I particularly remember the fourth meeting, held May 14 and 15, 1926, at Atlantic, because it was our first spring meeting, because we had our first real field trip, on which I saw my first Bell's vireo, but principally because at this meeting I presented my first paper. ["Birds of a City Marsh" was the title. Euclid Avenue in Des Moines now extends right through the middle of that marsh.]

[The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized, according to the concise statement on the cover of Iowa Bird Life, for the study and protection of

native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students. I can recommend the last point because I married the daughter of one of the charter members--Prof. Guthrie.]

For the first seven years mimeographed letters were sent out by the president or secretary at irregular times. Twenty-four of these letters were issued; the first bird notes being in letter No. 15 issued April 1, 1926. These notes, in letters 15 to 24, were excerpted in Iowa Bird Life 6, pp. 48-53. In 1929 and 1930, eight numbers of a letter-sized, printed publication, entitled "The Bulletin" were issued as Volume 7. These 44 pages contain a lot of good reference material on birds from all parts of the state. Dr. F. L. R. Roberts served as editor for the entire two years.

Beginning in 1931 the present Iowa Bird Life, now in Volume 14, appeared under the editorship of Fred J. Pierce. [To this man certainly belongs credit for ~~the~~ developing of one of the fine state ornithological journals. This magazine probably has done more to develop and maintain interest in Iowa birds than any other one thing. I think that you will find that the history of every successful state ornithological organization is high-lighted by its bulletin.]

You have heard (Iowa Bird Life, 1, p. 5) the statement made that "Iowa loses all of her good ornithologists". It is certainly true Dr. R. M. Anderson (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 12, pp. 4-7), raised in Winnebago County, author of the "Birds of Iowa", left Iowa to accept his present position of Chief of the Biological Division, National Museum of Canada, Ottawa. Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, raised in Clay County, taught school in Marshalltown before migrating to Oregon and subsequently to

Washington, D.C., where he now serves as Director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Several Iowa men, trained in museum technic, under Prof. Dill at the University of Iowa, have moved to the top in this or related fields. Alfred Bailey is now with the Colorado Museum and is one of the top-notch wildlife photographers. Walter J. Breckenridge, one of the outstanding bird artists, is director of the Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota. Wesley F. Kubishek, after 12 years at Coe College and in charge of the Bert Heald Bailey Memorial Museum, has become photographer for the Fish and Wildlife Service and is one of the best in the country.

There are ^{the late} many others including Dayton Stoner, ^{of the} ~~now State~~ Zoologist, New York State Museum; Charles J. Spiker, who has written on the birds of New York State; and Paul Bartsch (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 12, pp. 36-39), who completed an unpublished manuscript on the bibliography of Iowa ornithology from 1804 to 1899, is now at the U. S. National Museum in Washington, D.C. Prof. Lynds Jones, who was at Grinnell College for so many years, has continued his fine ornithological work at Oberlin College, Ohio. There are, of course, others who gained their start in Iowa, but I would like to suggest some that have made their finest contributions on Iowa birds.

Outstanding among Iowa bird students ^{was} ~~is~~, without doubt, Miss Althea R. Sherman. Her death on April 16, 1943, occurred in her 90th year at National. A splendid article by Mrs. H. J. Taylor appeared in the June 1943 number of Iowa Bird Life; the entire ^{issue} ~~bulletin~~ being a memorial to Miss Sherman. The June 1943 Wilson Bulletin said "She will be especially remembered for her remarkable nesting studies of the Flicker, Screech Owl,

Sparrow Hawk, and Chimney Swift. The earliest of these, which were among the first such studies made in this country, were published in 1910 and 1911. [Miss Sherman was also a bird artist of real ability, and shared with Louis Agassiz Fuertes the distinction of showing her work in 1919 at the first American Ornithologists' Union exhibit of bird paintings."]

The work of Dr. T. C. Stephens has set some real standards ~~[for others to shoot at.]~~ ^{The length of} His editorship of the Wilson Bulletin from 1925 to 1938 was surpassed only by that of Lynds Jones from 1888 to 1924. Besides a number of papers on Iowa birds, Dr. Stephens' greatest influence may yet be measured by the students he has had at Morningside College. At the present time, Dr. Stephens has done more towards the preparation of a bibliography on Iowa birds than any other person (Iowa Bird Life 7, pp. 30-32). [He, together with Miss Sherman, and Dr. Paul L. Errington, constitute Iowa's three 'members' of the American Ornithologists' Union; a class which is limited to one hundred ^{thirty} persons.]

Another teacher, who has had an unusual opportunity to direct interest in birds, is Mary L. Bailey of Sioux City. E. D. Nauman (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 1, pp. 30-31; 6, p. 13), of Sigourney, probably contributed more migrational records to the bird distribution files of the Fish and Wildlife Service than any other Iowan. However, the migrational records secured for Boone County by Walter ^{M.} Rosene were possibly the most complete of any maintained in the State and should be published. [I have talked with any number of persons who have stopped to see the Allert bird collection at Giard. Answering all of the many questions, as Mike is so well able to do, provides a service probably found in no other museum in the State.]

The Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State College has contributed monumental works on the birds of Iowa. The original project was decidedly an experiment. For many years Prof. J. E. Guthrie (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 5, pp. 29-30) had, through teaching courses in invertebrate and vertebrate zoology, bird study, and fish and game management at Iowa State College, brought to the minds of students ideas concerning protection and management of wildlife as we know it now. About 1932 the first cooperative research project was inaugurated with Iowa State College, the State Fish and Game Commission, and ~~the State Board of Conservation~~ ^{J. N. DARRING} jointly sponsoring the work. Following Prof. Guthrie's death in 1935, Prof. George O. Hendrickson (for biographical sketch see Iowa Bird Life 1, p. 22-23), was given the chief responsibilities for this work.

The Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, one of ten throughout the country, was established on July 1, 1935. [Dr. Logan J. Bennett was the leader selected to direct the] ^{with} research program [which was] sponsored by Iowa State College, the State Conservation Commission, and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service through the American Wildlife Institute. I am certain that more research on wildlife in Iowa has been completed during the nine years this program has been under way than during any other period. Prof. Hendrickson is doing an exceptionally good job of directing this work. [This Union should insist that Iowa Bird Life carry not alone an historical review of this program but if a list of the papers contributed by the various staff members and research students is not available from the College, I think it might well be published in our bulletin.

Look at some of the titles of papers that have been published during the past two or three years from this unit:

"Nesting of the Ruddy Duck in Iowa", by Jessop B. Low.

"Cover Requirements of the Eastern Ruffed Grouse in Northeast Iowa", by Emmett B. Polderboer.

"Mearns Cottontail Investigations in Iowa", by George O. Hendrickson.

"Ecology and Management of the Mourning Dove in Cass County, Iowa", by Elliott McClure.

"Development of a Bob-white Management Area in Southern Iowa", by Earl Sanders.

"An Analysis of Mink Predation Upon Muskrats in North-Central United States", by Paul L. Errington.

"Some Food Coactions of the Northern Plains Red Fox", by Thomas G. Scott.

How many of you have copies of all of these papers? How many of the authors do you know? Did you know such work was underway?

There have been some other excellent publications issued in connection with this work that probably are well known to all of you. Dr. Logan J. Bennett's monographic study of the "Blue-winged Teal" is frequently cited as a model for other researchers. The three Extension Circulars written by Thos. Scott and Geo. Hendrickson, with the dandy line drawings by Sid Horn, present useful booklets, especially for schools, on the wintering, nesting, and upland game, birds of the state.]

[^{a new}The newest] book, and one of the best, is on "Waterfowl in Iowa".

This publication by Jack W. Musgrove, Museum Director at the State Department of History and Archives, and Mary R. Musgrove, is illustrated with eight colored plates by Maynard F. Reece. It has had some flattering reviews and all agree that the State Conservation Commission did a real service in publishing this handy guide not alone for the bird students in the state but for all hunters and sportsmen as well.

The accomplishments which I have just enumerated, which in many instances have been by members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, have not necessarily reflected as an achievement of the Union. As I stated before, I think the publication of Iowa Bird Life for ¹⁴~~13~~ years, and the maintenance of such a high caliber magazine is perhaps most important. Besides numerous biographical sketches, notes on local bird observations, book reviews, and many local lists, the following papers which have been published in Iowa Bird Life are well worth further reference:

"County Lists of Iowa Birds", by Fred J. Pierce, 3, pp. 7-10.

"What Promotes Bird Study?", by A. J. Palas, 6, pp. 34-36.

"Local Bird Clubs in Iowa", by Fred J. Pierce, 6, pp. 36-39.

"Bird-Banding", by Myrle L. Jones, 7, pp. 4-7; 7, pp. 23-26; 8, pp. 49-50.

"A Project in Iowa Ornithology", by T. C. Stephens, 7, pp. 30-32.

By far the most amusing article in Iowa Bird Life is Mrs. M. L. Jones' "Birding with an Expert" in Vol. 13, pp. 62-64.

The publication of Christmas Bird Counts (see Iowa Bird Life 8, pp 9-11; 11 pp. 73-74) from all parts of the state is very much worthwhile. [It has proven impossible for the National Audubon Society to publish all of the reports which they receive. Leonard Wing has shown in his several articles that comparative data, such as those contained in the Christmas Bird Counts, lend themselves very well to determine trends.]

The newly inaugurated Iowa Spring Bird Census, [as announced by Dr. Martin L. Grant in Iowa Bird Life, 13, pp. 11-12 and 41-48,] appears to have been started off on a good basis. This cooperative effort should be continued even after gasoline rationing is discontinued. [It is important that in-so-far as possible the same area be covered each year.

Still another regular census or count that the Union should sponsor is a Breeding Bird Count. A program of this type has been under way for some time by the National Audubon Society, but here again the gain to ornithology in Iowa will result from as many persons as possible, in all parts of the state, joining in this needed work.]

Information on the breeding birds in Iowa is far from complete. The "Revised List of the Birds of Iowa" indicated that 136 species were known to have nested in Iowa during the period 1913 to 1933. Between then and May 1934, when the "Breeding Birds of Iowa" was published in the Oologist, Vol. 51, pp. 50-66, information was received from Logan Bennett of his finding nests of the Eared Grebe (Iowa Bird Life, 7, pp. 2-3), Black Duck, and Swamp Sparrow. Allert found the Duck Hawk along the Mississippi River (Iowa Bird Life, 9, pp. 34-36). A total of 144 species were shown in the Oologist as breeding.

Since then at least 13 more species have been found. Notations, or the citation of the records of breeding, were published for the Lesser Scaup Duck, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Double-crested Cormorant, Swainson's Hawk, and Hooded Merganser in the Oologist, Vol. 52, pp. 83-84. In addition, these records have been published recently, bringing the list of breeding birds to at least 157:

Piping Plover, by Bruce Stiles, Iowa Bird Life, 10, pp. 48-49.

American Egret, by James Harlan, Iowa Bird Life, 13, pp. 58-62.

Canvas-back, by Jessop Low, Auk, 58, p. 507.

Kentucky Warbler, by Myrle L. Jones, Iowa Bird Life, 12, p. 40.

Summer Tanager, by Myrle L. Jones, Iowa Bird Life, 12, p. 40.

Magpie, by Mrs. Ray S. Dix, Iowa Bird Life, 7, p. 34; 8, p. 56.

Gadwall, by Jessop Low, Iowa Bird Life, 11, p. 31.

Franklin's Gull, by Jessop Low, Iowa Bird Life, 11, p. 31.

There are still a number of birds expected to be found nesting, including the Brewer's Blackbird, Lark Bunting, Henslow's Sparrow, and the Hooded and Chestnut-sided Warblers.

I think it is very important that we consider why each of us is interested in birds. At a recent meeting of the Chicago Ornithological Society the evening was devoted to a discussion as to the kinds of records the various members kept. Some used the Audubon Society record book, which is very good. Others used field check lists and transferred this information to a card file. Still another fellow kept his records alphabetically, arranged according to the locality of his field trips. This, of course, brought up the point as to why we were keeping records anyway. I would like to ask each one of you that question now. Are you keeping daily lists, season's lists, and life lists to become acquainted with the birds? If so, don't be ashamed of it. As an aid, you should learn which are the best bird plates, where you may borrow a set of the bird song records, where the nearest museum is, [and who there is that can help you tell a cockatoo from a cross-eyed crane.]

Perhaps you are really gathering records because you are interested in bird migration and distribution. If so, are you using these data? Are you contributing to the Spring Bird Census or Count, [the Breeding Bird Count, when that is inaugurated,] and the Christmas Bird Count? Have you ever considered serving as a migration observer for the Fish and Wildlife Service? It is these records, such as E. D. Nauman submitted for so many years from Sigourney, that go into the distribution files. Reference is made to them in compiling ranges for all of Bent's bulletins, the American

Ornithologists' Union Check-List, and the various state lists. If you are interested you should write to Mr. Frederick C. Lincoln in Washington and let it be known. [Another use for your notes is in the Season Reports, published as a supplement to the Audubon Magazine. Iowa has recently been included in the newly-established "Middle-Western Region". These reports are received by Mrs. Hermon Dunlap Smith, Lake Forest, Illinois.]

[One of the best sources of migrational data is through bird-banding. Iowa has had surprisingly few bird banders. At the present time new co-operators are not being accepted, but directly after the war it is desired to increase the banding work considerably. Why not visit a banding station and see the types of traps in use, how the work is done, and the manner of keeping records, particularly the reports of recoveries?]

One of the greatest misfortunes in compiling migrational records is the possibility that nothing will ever be done with them. [I am concerned whether that may be the situation now with all of Walter Rosene's records.] This suggests the importance of issuing these data as local lists. Consideration should be given to including more local lists in Iowa Bird Life if such publication can be subsidized by a local bird club or the individual. [It might even be desirable for the material to be mimeographed in its preliminary form for review and the use of other students in the state. Since mimeographed papers are not generally included in bibliographies, this should be considered only as a temporary expedient.] It is highly desirable that the average dates of arrival and departure be determined in addition to the extreme range of spring and fall migration dates. [This was one of the weak points in my "Birds of Polk County, Iowa", which otherwise might be a good example to follow. Fred Pierce's list for Buchanan County is concise

and very useful.]

Students of bird distribution will continue to be interested in the state bird list. A total of 364 species were included in the "Revised List of the Birds of Iowa". There have been at least 13 species proposed as additions during the past ten years. These are as follows:

Black Vulture shot by Louis S. Trevarthen in Dallas Co., (Wilson Bull., 45, p. 203).

Shufeldt's Junco collected by Philip A. DuMont in Clay Co., (Wilson Bull., 46, pp. 200-201).

Glaucous Gull collected by Bruce Stiles in Pottawattamie Co., (Iowa Bird Life, 11, p. 36).

European Widgeon shot by George Van Wyngarden in Calhoun Co., (Wilson Bull., 47, p. 236).

Knot, [was] collected by Thomas G. Scott and Dr. R. L. Roudabush in Hamilton Co., (Auk, 55, pp. 275-276).

Brown-headed Nuthatch collected by Ed. S. Currier in Lee Co., (Wilson Bull., 47, p. 240).

Chuck-wills-widow, [was] collected by Wm. L. Talbot in Lee Co., (Wilson Bull., 47, p. 239).

Ruff, [was] collected by W. C. Thietji in Louisa Co., (Auk 58, p. 257)

Pallid Horned Lark, [was] found dead by Mrs. Amy G. Baldwin in Winneshiek Co. (Auk 59, p. 433).

Laughing Gull, [was] observed by Bruce Stiles in Pottawattamie Co., (Iowa Bird Life, 11, p. 36).

Red Phalarope, [was] observed by Lillian Serbousek in Iowa Co., (Iowa Bird Life 10, p. 27).

Audubon's Warbler, [was] observed by Dr. C. C. Smith in Winneshiek Co., (April 30, 1934 (unpublished).

Churchill Savannah Sparrow series collected by Philip A. DuMont in Polk and Clay Counties were identified by James L. Peters and Ludlow Griscom in their monographic study of this species.

I have mentioned record keeping as a means of bird identification and

record keeping with migration and distribution as the goal. The third field, and by far the least explored, is in bird watching. You may wish to call it bird behaviour, research, life histories, or wildlife management. These are all a part of or a result of bird watching. The studies being conducted by the Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit are good examples of this type.

The finest contribution or stimulus to this field was the recent ^{book} [publication] "A Guide to Bird Watching", by Joseph J. Hickey. [I like the introductory paragraph in this book. "Bird watching embraces individual enterprise on the one hand, collective effort on the other. Above all else, it is marked by a ready exchange of experience, by a high regard for truth, and by a conviction that wild birds express the most spectacular development of nature."]

Mr. Hickey points out the need for undertaking studies not now reported on in standard reference books. Such things as the location of roosts, more exact population estimates, examples of homing instinct--as best proved by banding--and longevity, toleration of different species, and behaviour studies of all types are suggested. [I can heartily recommend this book for your use no matter what phase of ornithology you are interested in.]

Everyone of you must remember that the present and future ornithological work in the state is in your hands. No one is coming in from 'outside' to work out all of these fascinating problems.

[In conclusion, I would like to summarize, as I see it, the objectives of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, either mentioned in this paper or herewith presented.

1. Publication of a bibliography on Iowa ornithology.
2. Inaugurate Breeding Bird Censuses on a state-wide basis.

3. Continue and expand the Christmas Bird Counts and continue their publication in tabular form in Iowa Bird Life.

4. Continue and expand the Iowa Spring Bird Count.

5. Encourage the publication of local lists in all possible ways.

6. Enlist more cooperators in furnishing migration data for the Fish and Wildlife Service distribution files.

7. Begin now to prepare as a bird-banding cooperator.

8. Expand the library project (Iowa Bird Life 12, p. 24) to serve as a depository for gifts of books, pamphlets, reprints, letters, bird notes, and photographs of Iowa bird students.

9. Consider the establishment of a photograph salon with the prize-winning photos to be added each year. The collection, as it accumulates, might be loaned for showings over the state.

10. Encourage the establishment of local bird clubs, with an affiliation arrangement whereby the clubs' reports might be published in Iowa Bird Life, as is done now. Benefits to the clubs should be through the supplying of lists of recommended books, films, speakers, information on good birding areas, bird collections, and local bird lists. Encouragement might be given by supplying sample programs for the year's meetings, field trips, and a constitution.

11. Preparation of an ornithological history of Iowa. The one written up by Prof. Swenk for Nebraska is a good model.

12. Preparation of a report on the Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit and a bibliography on publications resulting from its work.

13. Endeavor to establish a depository for record specimens as was outlined in my article "The Role of the Accidental or Straggling Species of

Birds in Iowa", which appeared in Iowa Bird Life, 5, pp. 8-9.

14. Continue the close cooperation with the State Conservation Commission, knowing your local conservation officer, enlist him as a speaker, or assist him with local meetings, and voicing an opinion with respect to the season's regulations. Iowa is most fortunate in having two men like Fred Schwob and Bruce Stiles responsible for the protection of the state's wildlife resources.

15. By all means continue Iowa Bird Life with Fred Pierce as Editor, and plan to hold another annual meeting next year as successful as this one.]