

A PLANNING GUIDE FOR MEETINGS
OF THE
IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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PLANNING GUIDE FOR IOU MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to aid a local organization in hosting an annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union (IOU). The suggestions in this guide are based on experience in organizing past meetings and they reflect the general goals and desires of the IOU and its members.

The IOU was founded in 1923 as a state wide organization dedicated to promoting the enjoyment and study of birds. To further this goal the IOU holds two general meetings per year: in spring and fall. The meetings are traditionally hosted by various local bird groups and Audubon societies. The location and dates of a meeting are usually set at the previous meeting. Any and all groups of bird enthusiasts are invited to host IOU meetings. If your group would like to host a future meeting, simply make your desire known to either the President or Vice President of the IOU. Once the invitation is accepted by the IOU, the IOU Vice President will coordinate and assist in the planning process. One factor which is considered in choosing meeting sites is the desirability of rotating the location around to various regions of Iowa.

TIME OF MEETING

The dates of meetings should be set in consultation with the IOU Vice President.

The *Spring Meeting* is usually held during May, preferably not on the expected peak weekend of migration (approximately May 10-18). During peak migration many birders prefer to spend the entire weekend out in the field in their home territories and not sitting inside at meetings. Avoid Mother's Day, Memorial Day, and other special holidays or events. Need to check to avoid conflicts with meetings of Nature Conservancy and Iowa Academy of Science.

Alternative approach is to hold meeting during June and use field trips to search for interesting local breeding birds, or hold the meeting in March to coincide with peak waterfowl migration.

The *Fall Meeting* is usually held from September through November. November can be risky for weather. Date of fall meeting can be set to coincide with some local ornithological specialty. For example, northeast Iowa in November is perfect for Golden Eagle, Ruffed Grouse, Tundra Swan. An October meeting could focus on sparrows and field trips and workshops can be planned accordingly. Avoid Labor Day and Thanksgiving. Give thought to avoiding dates that will conflict with other local events such as football games, opening days of hunting seasons, etc.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The formal announcement of the meeting should reach the membership no less than one month before the meeting. Notice further in advance is better. The announcement usually consists of an insert mailed out with the IOU journal, IOWA BIRD LIFE. Planners of the meeting must be aware of the deadline for the journal which will appear at the appropriate time before the meeting. This means that the announcement (including all details) must be prepared, duplicated, and received by the Editor in plenty of time to insert in the mail with the journal. The final layout of the announcement will be prepared by the IOU Vice President. The local details must be finalized by the local committee and forwarded to the IOU Vice President.

DETAILS NEEDED FOR ANNOUNCEMENT:

- Meeting Dates
- Name and address of person to receive registration and fees
- All prices (registration fee, banquet fee, lunch fee)
- Registration deadline date
- Directions and maps, if needed to find meeting and meal sites
- List of local motels including address, phone, price range
- List of camping areas including location, phone, price range

Below is a typical outline of the general schedule of an IOU meeting. The details of each event must be set and included in the announcement.

Friday night informal gathering: LOCATION AND TIME?

Saturday morning field trips: WHERE TO MEET? START AND FINISH TIMES?

Saturday lunch: ON YOUR OWN? IF NOT, WHERE AND WHEN?

Registration table: WHERE AND WHEN?

Afternoon program: BREAKDOWN OF ALL EVENTS INCLUDING LOCATION OF MEETING ROOMS(S), TIMES, TITLES, AND PRESENTERS.

Business meeting: LOCATION AND TIME? (agenda set by resident)

Banquet: WHERE AND WHEN? DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM AND PRESENTER.

Sunday morning field trips: WHERE TO MEET? START AND FINISH TIMES?

Sunday lunch: WHERE AND WHEN?

DISCUSSION OF GENERAL SCHEDULE

FRIDAY EVENING INFORMAL GATHERING: Informal social gathering at motel headquarters, local person's home, other suitable meeting place. Both light alcoholic (beer, wine) and non-alcoholic drinks and light snacks are suggested. Set a definite start and stop time. Purpose is to give those who arrive on Friday a place to meet. Strive for a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Name tags can be helpful.

FIELD TRIPS: Start at a definite place and time. Should be done and return in time for people to eat lunch and attend meetings. See FIELD TRIP PLANNING for further discussion.

REGISTRATION TABLE: A table should be set up in the hall or other room adjoining the main meeting room. Use directional signs to guide people. Staff the table with several people including a host to direct arriving members and guests to the table and see that ALL register. Anyone is welcome to attend any and all general meetings, but all should be pre-registered or pay the registration fee at the door. The work of the host is extremely important. Many many be attending their first IOU meeting and might feel ill at ease. A cordial welcome and some friendly guidance will be most appreciated. Others will be seeking various types of information. See further discussion in CASHIER and HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE.

SATURDAY LUNCH: Usual practice is to let people eat on their own. If there is not a selection of appropriate restaurants in the vicinity, other arrangements must be made to provide a lunch.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON: The IOU Vice President, in consultation with the local group, will be arranging a program of workshops, speakers, presentations, etc. This will include a business meeting in late afternoon. A coffee Break will be scheduled in mid-afternoon. The program should be concluded in plenty of time for people to get ready for the banquet.

SATURDAY BANQUET: The evening banquet is the formal climax of the weekend. The meal should be in a pleasant setting with appetizing and sufficient amounts of food. Dinner can be either buffet style or served at tables. The cost should be kept within moderate range. If possible, try to give some choice and variety for the main course. Combine chicken with ham, ham with beef, etc.

Tables should be arranged both to facilitate dinner conversation and a good view of the after dinner program. A head table is usually not used. The local committee may arrange for table decorations.

SUNDAY: Field trips are again scheduled for morning. Field trips can then end directly at lunch location. Sunday lunch is usually a picnic style or buffet meal. A large shelter (in case of rain) can be reserved at a park if the weather is warm enough. After the meal the list and discussion of birds seen on field trips will be conducted. The meeting closes with remarks by president.

MEETING HEADQUARTERS

The most convenient arrangement is to headquarter the meeting at a motel/restaurant which can provide:

1. Meeting room(s)
2. Banquet facilities
3. Lodging for those who wish to stay at meeting site

Other considerations are proximity to birding areas, other lodging, restaurants, and moderate costs. It is often possible to use meeting rooms at a motel for a nominal fee if the banquet is held at same location. Also can check on availability of reduced room rates for meeting participants.

If this type of facility is not available, there are alternative locations for meetings and meals. Church basements, schools, and community meeting buildings are some possibilities. Check to see that there are restaurants that are open at least one hour prior to start of field trips on both Saturday and Sunday. If there are none, make other arrangements for breakfast. Sometimes you can arrange for a place to open early if we can send a good size group of people there. Or arrange for coffee and doughnuts at field trip meeting location.

One important feature in planning the meeting location is the availability of suitable meeting rooms. The specific requirements will be dictated by the exact schedule of events. Factors which must be considered include the following:

- Room for general business meeting to seat approximately 100.
- Room(s) for smaller meetings, workshops, and presentations as scheduled.
- Appropriate location for registration tables.
- All meeting rooms should be able to be darkened for showing slides.
- Electrical outlets in rooms convenient for slide projection.

The actual room requirements should be checked with the IOU Vice President. The schedule of events will indicate the number and size of required rooms. Often one larger room can be effectively divided into smaller rooms.

LOCAL COMMITTEE

It is suggested that early in the planning process the local group should hold an organizational meeting. At this meeting the arrangements should be discussed and people can be designated to carry out the various tasks. It is the responsibility of the local organizing committee to establish the registration and meal fees; collect, record, and deposit all funds; and pay all bills incurred during all stages of the meeting.

CASHIER:

- Collect by mail the advance registration forms and funds. Record the full name, address, and fees paid.

Name	Address	Reg. fee	Banquet	Lunch	Total
J. Bird	Iowa City	\$2	\$8	\$5	\$15

- Deposit checks in bank. You may use a personal account if more convenient. Keep copies of deposit slips for your report.

-The people responsible for the meals will need to know what the totals are for each meal. Cashier will need to keep accurate totals up to and probably beyond the registration deadline. Despite firm requests there will always be some late registrations and people showing up at the meeting unannounced. The IOU wants everyone to be welcome, but it is very hard to save someone a place at a meal if nobody knows they are coming. The cashier will need to work closely with restaurant to see how much leeway will be allowed for late additions (or deletions) to meal totals. Even when all registrations appear to be in, it might be advisable to add a few spaces, just in case.

-To make things go easier at the registration table, make up envelopes ahead of time containing maps, program schedules, meal tickets and name tag (name and home town-large and easy to read). Write person's name and the fees paid on outside and file in alphabetical order.

-Compile a separate list of all registered participants with home towns and give to IOU secretary to include in meeting summary.

-Arrange to pay all local expenses:

- Meal costs
- Room charges
- Coffee and doughnuts
- Miscellaneous expenses

-Compile a complete and accurate report which itemizes all receipts and expenses. Contact the IOU treasurer about disposition of surplus or deficit. The local organizing committee will be held responsible for making up deficits.

FIELD TRIP PLANNING

It is helpful to designate one (or more) or your areas more active field birders as field trip chairperson.

The goal of IOU field trips is two-fold: education and enjoyment. A recent (1982) survey of IOU members showed the following preferred approach to field trips at meetings, in order of preference:

1. Look for local specialties.
2. Explore a new locale or habitat.
3. Learn general identification skills from an experienced birder.

To meet these goals it is essential that your field trip chairperson(s) does some advance planning for the trips. Here is a suggested procedure:

A. Plan groups for a maximum of ten persons each (three cars).

B. Pick out your favorite birding areas. Plan a number of possible routes that could take various groups to bird one or more of the favorite areas. Plan a route and schedule for each group that will allow them to cover the areas in a thorough manner. Estimate driving and walking times to determine how much area each group can cover.

C. If it is necessary to send more than one group to any one area, will need to send them there at slightly different times so they don't interfere with each other.

D. Formulate a list of local birders who are familiar with areas. These people need not be expert birders.

E. There are a good number of experienced birders from around the state that are very willing to pair up with a local guide and assist in leading field trips. The IOU Vice President will provide a list of potential leaders.

F. Both the local guide and the additional leader of each trip should be sent IN ADVANCE a map with the route and suggested timetable, time and place to meet, a blank checklist of birds, and a copy of some suggestions for leading field trips available from the IOU Vice President.

The main problem in organizing field trips is dividing people into manageable groups. There are several ways to approach this problem.

1. Put a field trip sign-up form on the registration form so people can sign up in advance.

Advantage: Gives you an advance idea of which people want to go on what trip.

Disadvantage: Hard for people to know in advance where they wish to go. May want to change their minds.

Note: This method can give a rough idea of how many trips to plan and to what areas.

2. Have people sign up on sign up sheets at meeting. Put trip destination/description on top of sheet. Put space for eight names on sheet. When one sheet/trip is full, put out next sheet.

Advantage: Automatically spreads people out to various trips and limits size of groups. People can decide after hearing about areas and can sign up on specific trips with their friends.

Disadvantage: There is probably not time at meeting to sign up before the Saturday morning trips.

3. Have everyone meet at a certain time. Take first eight arrivals, add two leaders, and send them off. As people gather, periodically shout "Anyone who wants to go to area A, follow that brown car over there!".

Advantage: Allows people to decide at last minute on destination. As people arrive groups can form and leave as soon as they are filled.

Disadvantage: Can be chaotic to organize large groups of people as they stand around trying to fully waken. You may have trips and leaders ready to go to certain areas and no participants who choose to go there. After everyone shows up and leaves you may have a lot of leaders left over. This leadership is then wasted.

4. Give everyone a map and some general directions and let everyone go off on their own.

Advantage: Requires no organization and is very flexible.

Disadvantage: All the good birders will go off together. Everyone else will wander around the county and wonder why they need to attend a meeting to do so.

The best arrangement is probably to use a combination of approaches.

A. List three to five possible trip destinations/descriptions on the advance registration forms sent out with IOWA BIRD LIFE. Leave space to record both a Saturday and Sunday preference. This will give a rough idea of how many people want to go on field trips and where they think they want to go.

B. On Saturday morning, use method 3 above.

C. Put out sign up sheets at registration tables and afternoon meetings. Put a destination/description on top of each sheet with space for eight names. When one trip is full people will have to sign up for a different trip. On Sunday morning, use sheets at meeting place to put right people on right trip. Use leaders to check off names on sheet and assemble their group.

D. At either afternoon program or after banquet, the local field trip chairperson should give a brief description of the Sunday trips including a description of the habitats and possible birds. Remind people of how to sign up and meeting place and time.

*PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

-Arrange for a news release announcing meeting to appear in any local news media (newspaper, club newsletter, radio station). If desired, the IOU Vice President can assist in preparing the news release.

- Your local newspaper may wish to do a story about the meeting.
- Make a special invitation to any appropriate local organization (nearby Audubon societies, nature groups).

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

- Develop and procure an orientation packet for each participant to receive at registration. Could contain city map, county map, copy of local newsletter, local bird checklist, copy of meeting program, letter of welcome from local group, IOU membership application form, etc.
- Arrange for each arriving person to be greeted at least once and directed toward registration table.
- Work to create a congenial and friendly atmosphere during entire weekend.

CHECKLIST

- ___ Meeting rooms reserved
- ___ Saturday meal reserved
- ___ Sunday meal reserved
- ___ Hold local organizational meeting
- ___ Assign committee duties with chairpersons
- ___ Calculate meal and registration costs
- ___ Set program with IOU Vice President
- ___ Program and cost details to IOU Vice President
- ___ Plan field trip routes and contact leaders
- ___ Give news release to local media
- ___ Reconfirm room and meal reservations
- ___ Make invitation to all local members and local groups
- ___ Make up orientation packets
- ___ Arrange for workers at registration table
- ___ Check meeting room layouts (chairs, tables, audio-visual equipment).
- ___ Coffee and doughnuts for field trips (if needed)
- ___ Coffee for afternoon coffee break.
- ___ Buy or make name tags and meal tickets
- ___ Develop a list of all local people who helped with meeting and give to IOU Vice President so a "thank you" can be prepared

PLANNING THE PROGRAM

The goals of the afternoon program are education, entertainment, and sharing experiences. The duty of the IOU Vice President is to insure that a blend of local and state wide talent is balanced in a varied and interesting program. All programs should be primarily ornithological and have a connection to the birds of Iowa. These meetings are a good time to exhibit the talents and knowledge of local people. However, the IOU Vice President must remain aware of the desires and goals of the IOU as a whole.

The local host group and the IOU Vice President should work closely together in planning the program. The local group should forward to the Vice President any and all suggestions and ideas for the afternoon and after dinner programs. The local group is best aware of potential local speakers, workshop leaders, and presenters. The IOU Vice President must do the same on the state level.

In a survey of IOU members in the fall of 1982, members were asked to rate their interest in various meeting program activities. The results of the survey indicated the following order of preference for programs:

1. Field identification techniques at an advanced level (this topic was listed as the first preference by a 2 to 1 margin over other topics.)
2. Areas of research open to non-professional birders.
3. Bird photography
4. State regional reports
5. (tie) Field ID techniques at a beginning level
6. Travelogues by members
7. How to run a breeding bird survey
8. Bird feeders and feeding
9. Bird banding techniques
10. Techniques of recording bird songs

The survey also yielded the following program topic suggestions:

- How to conduct census for monitoring population trends
- Field ID of bird songs
- Papers by students in wildlife related fields
- Equipment for bird watching
- Scientific papers on state ornithological work
- Winter census
- Life and year list reports by willing members

A perusal of the convention reports in past issues of IOWA BIRD LIFE will give titles of programs at past meetings. The above listed ideas are but a fraction of the possible program topics. The main emphasis should be on helping people to learn about birds in an entertaining manner. The programs can be lectures with slides, informal workshops in identification problems, panel discussions with

audience participation, demonstrations of banding; photography; study skins; discussions of bird songs with recorded examples --- the list of possible programs is limited only by the imaginations of the planners.

In planning the programs the interests and needs of both the beginner and the expert should be considered. Try to have a little something for everybody.

The post banquet programs generally come in two forms. At the spring meeting the usual program is an accomplished speaker with a slide show. Care must be taken to choose a topic and speaker that is entertaining and not weighed down with too much scientific obscurity and repetitive scenery.

The fall meeting banquet is usually less formal than the spring meeting. Favorite ideas are a well organized slide fest, slide ID quiz with a panel of experts, study skin ID program, or other similar light fare.

AFTER THE MEETING

1. Check to make sure that all bills are paid. Prepare a financial report and contact IOU Treasurer.
2. All facilities and rooms are cleared and returned to good condition.
3. Make sure that appreciation is expressed to all local volunteers and other who help with meeting.
4. Send a report to the IOU Vice President outlining your general comments and reactions to the planning and hosting of the meeting. Some of the best ideas come from those who actually are involved with carrying out the meeting. Write your suggestions down so they can be passed on to the next group. Include your comments about the things that worked, as well as the things that don't work. Successfully hosting an IOU meeting is a big responsibility. There is a lot of work done behind the scenes that the average meeting participant never realizes. The membership and officers of the IOU sincerely appreciate the efforts of local hosting organizations. **THANK YOU!**

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