

IOWA BIRD LIFE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

VOL. VIII

DECEMBER, 1938

NO. 4



OFFICERS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

President—O. S. Thomas, Rock Rapids, Iowa
Vice-President—Miss Lillian Serbousek, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Sec'y-Treas.—Miss Kate E. LaMar, 1231 39th St.,
Des Moines, Iowa
Editor—Fred J. Pierce, Winthrop, Iowa

Executive Council:

J. Wilbur Dole, Fairfield, Iowa
Ethan A. Hemsley, Dubuque, Iowa
B. O. Wolden, Estherville, Iowa

Ex-officio Council Members (Past Presidents):

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Walter M. Rosen | Dr. F. L. R. Roberts |
| Arthur J. Palas | Dr. G. O. Hendrickson |
| Walter W. Bennett | M. L. Jones |

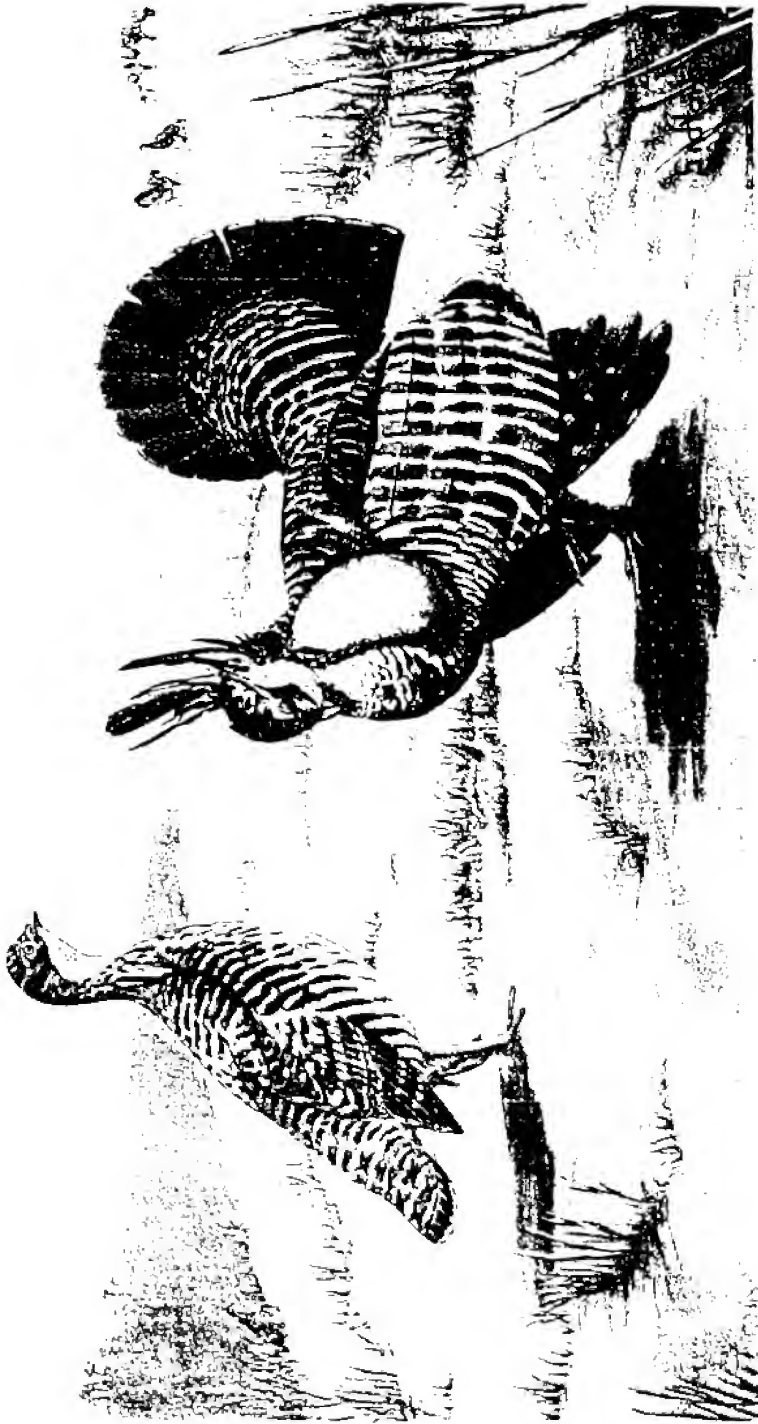
The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 28, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publications of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; 'The Bulletin,' 1929-1930; 'Iowa Bird Life,' beginning 1931.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Iowa, \$1.00 a year (includes membership dues). Outside of Iowa, 50c a year. Special rate for all libraries, 50c a year. Single copies 15c each. (Keep the Editor informed of your correct address.)

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE
WINTHROP, IOWA



PRAIRIE CHICKENS: A SCENE IN EARLY IOWA

This is a typical prairie scene—a pair of the birds on the knoll chosen by the male as "looming grounds". The female (left) looks on while the male inflates the air-sacs (on the sides of the neck) by which the "looming" is produced. This is a part of the spring courtship performance indulged in by this bird. From a drawing by Sidney H. Horn for Iowa State College.

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN BREEDING IN
DAVIS COUNTY, IOWA, 1938

By MAURICE F. BAKER and GEORGE O. HENDRICKSON*

The status of the Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido americanus* Reich.) in Iowa has been under the scrutiny of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union since its organization. DuMont (1933) reported that remnants of breeding flocks resided in 20 counties, and Youngworth (1936) listed approximately 40 counties as having breeding flocks of Prairie Chickens. Neither of the quoted writers gave explicit data concerning nests, young, numbers of individuals, exact localities of breeding, or cover conditions for the bird.

During the past five summers the junior writer has inquired about nesting Prairie Chickens and followed up reports of breeding birds in many localities. A number of members of the Union have observed adult Prairie Chickens particularly in winter and late in the spring but have not obtained breeding records of the bird in recent years. The State Conservation Officers have co-operated splendidly in stimulating watchfulness and in securing reports of the birds from sportsmen and farmers. Because of the efforts of Officer Clyde Updegraff in Davis County, finally a vigilant farm boy, Roger Fry, discerned the nest of Greater Prairie Chicken and the information was furnished to the senior writer. The junior writer late in August joined in a close search for Prairie Chickens in the vicinity of the nesting site. Between August 25 and 28, on adjacent Sections 5 and 8 (east), West Grove Township, Davis County, six adults and two broods of young Greater Prairie Chickens were observed. Section 5 is in an organized Game Management Area on which particular protection and care have been given for several years to Bob-whites and Prairie Chickens by Paul Woolard, a resident farmer on the area, and by his neighbors.

The two above-mentioned sections are part of an almost level area of tableland about two miles wide and five miles long surrounded by roughly eroded tracts. In regard to crops, nearly one-half the area was in timothy, partly mown for hay and partly cut and shocked for seed. Usually red clover had been sown with the timothy but generally it had not succeeded. The remaining acreage was about equally divided into small fields of corn, shocked oats or oats stubble fields, and larger fields of bluegrass pasture, for the most part lightly grazed.

Several farmers of the area spoke of seeing Prairie Chickens in winter, and from their remarks it seemed that 30 to 40 Prairie Chickens were in the area during the cold period. In spring, apparently all had left except seven which remained on the Fry farm, the northeast quarter of Section 8, where they were frequently seen throughout the spring. This farm has a somewhat larger acreage of timothy and is more nearly level than other neighboring farms. Also much of the timothy had been headed, or clipped high, for seed the previous year, and a half-dozen small stacks of the threshed timothy straw were scattered over the fields. The birds were often seen on those stacks in spring and early summer, but the several members of the Fry family differed among themselves as to how much or little the low stacks, three to eight feet high, were used as drumming centers. One adult chicken was reported as killed by a hawk late in spring, leaving six, which was the number observed by the writers late in August.

The single observed nest was found on June 11 when the Fry boy was crossing a timothy field. At that time the hen walked from the nest, but the eggs were not touched by the boy. The senior writer

*Journal Paper No. J-591 of the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa, Project No. 494. Iowa State College in co-operation with the Iowa State Conservation Commission, the United States Biological Survey, and the American Wildlife Institute.

was notified on the following day, and he advised that no one go near the nest again. On June 25 he went to the Fry farm to see the nest and it appeared to have been abandoned. The nest was situated in a clump of timothy of which the stems were taller and the stand denser than the surrounding grass. The stems around the nest were so close together that the site was concealed very well. The nesting materials were chiefly old timothy stems and a few timothy leaves in a layer about one inch thick. As it may be presumed, the materials were arranged so as to form a hollow in the center of the nest, but the soil was level underneath. The 12 eggs in the nest were collected several days later for the Iowa State College Museum, and it was apparent that at least several were fertile.

On August 25 the first observed signs of the chickens were a few feathers, droppings and dust baths found between the first few rows of corn at the edges of two small cornfields of the Fry farm. Later in the day four adults were flushed from deeper in a field as the observers walked through at intervals of 15 rows. In the afternoon of the same day and twice more in the next two days four adults, presumably the same ones each time, were flushed from the same field. Usually, the birds flew to a large lightly-grazed bluegrass pasture on the Woolard farm, Section 5, just across the road from the cornfield or to an adjacent uncut timothy field of the Fry farm. From such actions it may be suggested that the adults spent the very warm daylight hours in the cooler cornfields. Walking at intervals of five rods through the uncut timothy, approximately 50 acres, on the Fry farm the observers found nine roosting sites of Prairie Chickens as evidenced by droppings. At this point it may be stated that but one Ring-necked Pheasant, a male, was observed on the two sections in the three days of intensive search. Droppings characteristic of pheasants were noticed twice in the corn and once in the unharvested timothy, and a secondary wing feather of a pheasant was found in the corn. The farm folk of the two sections said they had seen no pheasant hens or young on the farms, but had seen two male pheasants. Later in the week more pheasants, adults and young, but no Prairie Chickens, were found in another part of the county on farms with a larger acreage, nearly 75 per cent of the area, in corn and small grain, and consequently a lower percentage of acres in grass for hay and pasture than in the area inhabited by the Prairie Chickens.

The first brood of three young, about three-fourths grown, and one adult, apparently a female, were first seen August 26 at six p. m., near sunset, in a small field of shocked oats on the northwest quarter of Section 8. When flushed they flew to a small adjacent cornfield from which the adult was flushed again but not the young. The adult when leaving the cornfield struck the upper strand of a woven-wire fence and about one-eighth mile east of there struck the upper barbed wire of a fence as the bird lowered to alight in a field of standing timothy. Only two or three body feathers were found at each site of the fences, and the chicken could not be flushed from the timothy. On the evening of August 27, three young and one adult were flushed from the same oats field as on the previous day. Search in the two cornfields adjacent to the oats revealed dust baths, a few feathers, and droppings indicating three young and one adult chickens, though they were not flushed from the corn. After systematic search through the bluegrass pasture and the other fields of Section 5, seven young, about three-fourths grown, and one adult were flushed from the shade of a small patch of thistles and other weeds near an old quail feeding shelter at the edge of the pasture. After flushing, the birds flew across a shallow grassy and wooded ravine. The chickens alighted in the weedy pasture land just beyond the ravine, but were not flushed again during one hour of attempt by the observers. Prairie Chicken dust baths were not clearly discerned in the fields of Section 5, but a few droppings were seen in the fields.

Earlier in the day a covey of 14 Bob-whites, mostly well-grown young, was flushed near a short row of Osage orange between the two pastures mentioned above and within a few rods of the site from which the larger brood of Prairie Chickens had taken flight. Reported observations of the Fry and Woolard families suggest that the brood of seven Prairie Chickens was reared on Section 8, and hence the writers had probably driven the birds into the range of the Bob-whites.

Literature Cited

DuMont, Philip A.

1933. A Revised List of the Birds of Iowa. Univ. of Iowa Studies in Natural History. 15 (5): 1-171.

Youngworth, William

1936. The Present Status of the Prairie Chicken in Iowa. Iowa Bird Life 6 (1): 3-5.

BANDING BIRDS AT LIZARD LAKE

By MR. AND MRS. M. L. JONES
POMEROY, IOWA

There seems to be something about the bird hike of the annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union which causes one to want to go on observing birds indefinitely. At least we were thus smitten and hied ourselves off to Lizard Lake, a small body of water northwest of Fort Dodge in Pocahontas County. Like many shallow lakes in this part of Iowa, it was bordered with the usual shallow water vegetation.

Much amusement was afforded by the cavorting of two pairs of Ruddy Ducks, as they dived, skimmed the water and played tag. Their ability to skim the surface of the water, half flying and half swimming, was amazing. To watch them for a time convinces one that Disney will have difficulty in ascribing too much animation to "Donald Duck". Our variety list for the day, while containing no unusual records, was fairly complete and representative. In fact, it was our largest daily record for any season. A Florida Gallinule, several King Rails, Black-crowned Night Herons and Marsh Wrens were observed at close range, while the Yellow-headed Blackbirds were everywhere. The nest-building of the Yellow-head, while not so far advanced on the average as that of the Red-wing, was well under way. Many nests were found and a few contained one or two eggs.

Since the nests of the Yellow-headed Blackbirds were so numerous, it seemed that we might later profit from a day of bird-banding in that region. With this in mind on June 2, 1938, the area was again visited, but incubation was not as far along as had been expected on account of hard rains and winds which had emptied or destroyed many of the earlier nests. While looking over the area we found a number of floating nests which were not positively identified. Also on this date we found an egg which had apparently been deposited outside of any nest along the lake bank. We were told by the farmer near by that the egg had been there at least as early as May 29. The egg was later identified by Dr. Hendrickson as that of a King Rail.

We considered that June 21 was about as late as we could stay in that vicinity and visited Lizard Lake on that day. For four and a half hours we waded about among the rushes and reeds, literally plucking young birds from the air. Many of them were old enough to be out of the nest and were depending upon their protective coloration for concealment, for, as one approached, the young birds "froze" with heads erect, not unlike the stance of a Bittern. It was therefore a simple matter to pick most of them from their perches.



FEMALE YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD FEEDING
YOUNG

Photographed by M. L. Jones

Bird-banding in deep water, although interesting, is somewhat laborious. Nothing carried in the hand could be carried with arms relaxed as it would be submerged. Pockets were too low, even a shirt pocket at times dipped into the water, especially if one slipped into a hole or stumbled over the entangled vegetation. Since pockets were useless, the only high and dry place for the necessary banding equipment proved to be under the hat. It usually required an assistant to handle bands, books and pliers. Even the birds were sometimes wet when in trying to escape, as only a few did, they dropped into the water. It was interesting to notice that upon getting into the water they quickly managed to swim to some leaning plant stem and climb well out on top.

Most of the Red-winged Blackbirds had flown so that only four were captured and banded. The Yellow-heads, however, seemed to be the more numerous of the two species and the young not so far advanced. At any rate, we succeeded in banding 22 of them.

We hope to devise some method for capturing adult Yellow-headed Blackbirds in considerable numbers, otherwise return records will not be obtained in any gratifying numbers. It seems most unfortunate that funds can not be made available to the Biological Survey for more extensive banding operations. Bird-banders receive no remuneration for their time or equipment. (The equipment may range from a few dollars to several thousand dollars.) The bands, however, are furnished by the Biological Survey. The cost of the clerical work required for keeping the records of millions of birds available for ready reference must be appalling.

Many requests for banding permits are refused because of a lack of Federal funds. Until this is adjusted, return records will not be of sufficient volume for a maximum benefit to the student of ornithology, nor to hold the interest of the isolated operator. Doubling the number of stations in the Middle West would undoubtedly result in four times the number of return records, while with so few stations, the great majority of birds wearing a band will never stray into a second banding station.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN WESTERN IOWA

By IVAN BOYD
SHELBY, IOWA

Bird lovers always hate to see the migration of birds end so quickly in the spring, and likewise, reluctantly bid farewell to our own summer residents when they leave in the fall. At the time this article was written the migration of sparrows was at its height. Birds, both migratory and permanent residents, that I have observed in the past 12 years in Union, Adair, Cass, and Shelby Counties, Iowa, have afforded me a greater appreciation of the great outdoors.

Ornithologists in these four counties are not as fortunate as those in areas along the Mississippi, Missouri, and other large rivers of the state. Wooded areas are small, lakes are scarce, and ground cover is limited. The trees remaining are being rapidly cut for stove wood. The lakes are artificial and usually shores are grazed so closely that they provide very little cover for shore or water birds. The native prairie would have afforded excellent protection for many feathered creatures, but it too has been ruthlessly destroyed. I know of two fields of prairie land that have been plowed within the last year. One of the fields contained 40 acres. Destroying our native prairie plants not only upsets the natural habitat for many of our ground-nesting birds but also the natural habitat of other wild-life. A few farmers in Cass County are taking an interest in beneficial birds and are leaving corners of some fields untouched. Those having timber are letting some of the dead trees remain for the use of those birds which nest in holes made in trees.

The Starlings are rapidly increasing in this part of Iowa, but it is my belief that they will not cause serious damage to other nesting birds. These birds seem to prefer the barnyard and trees near by rather than the timber. In this respect they are like the English Sparrow. Just occasionally a Starling nest may be found far away from dwellings.

The two artificial lakes at Creston are void of tall grasses, and very little swampy ground can be found. The Great Blue Heron, American Bittern, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers and Black Tern have been observed along the shore. Mallards, Blue-winged Teal, Scaup, American Merganser, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull and White Pelican were seen last spring (1938) during migration. I missed the opportunity of seeing 25 or 30 Pelicans which landed on McKinley Lake at Creston last spring. This is the first report of these birds in this community. They remained on the lake about 24 hours.

Red-tailed and Sparrow Hawks are quite numerous. While driving along by-roads of Adair and Cass Counties it is unusual not to see 5 or 6 Sparrow Hawks and almost as many Red-tailed Hawks. Red-shouldered and Marsh Hawks are less common but are occasionally seen. I haven't seen a turkey vulture for many years in any of these four counties. They evidently remain near more wooded areas. As evidence of this I counted approximately 65 of the vultures on Sept. 5, 1938, soaring in the air over the wooded area in Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. Prior to this I had never seen more than six at one time. The reduction of game has no doubt caused the disappearance of the Turkey Vulture in some parts of the state.

At the southern edge of Union County and the southwest corner of Cass County are two large tracts of undisturbed timber. Whip-poor-wills and Barred Owls are quite numerous there. The only occasion I have had of seeing a Great Horned Owl in Shelby County was one that had been shot by a farmer who said it had been disturbing his

chickens. Cedar Waxwings were seen in flocks of 15 or 20 birds at various times all summer. Surely they must nest here but I have found none of their nests. Likewise the Warbling Vireo and the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher could be heard or seen almost any day in some dense tree in the woods. Mockingbirds have nested at two different places four years in succession, near Atlantic. Probably the same pairs come back each year, as they have built their nest near the same place every spring. By the middle of August I had heard the buzzing "tseep" of the Brown Creeper and the call of the Tufted Titmouse. Either some of them remained with us all summer, possibly nesting here, or they started their fall migration unusually early.

Perhaps others have wondered, as I have, if our winter bird inhabitants are increasing in species or if the mild winters have caused some birds such as Meadowlarks, Robins, Cardinals, Bluebirds, Mourning Doves, Bronzed Grackles, Red-headed Woodpeckers and even the Mockingbird to linger with us all winter. Since lack of food, rather than cold weather, influences the migration, perhaps the increase of feeding stations has caused this change. Some of the more experienced observers tell me that 25 years ago the Cardinal was seldom seen either in winter or summer this far north.

The last Quail I have heard or seen in any of these counties was in Cass in 1935. On a soil conservation farm near Floris, Iowa, it is estimated that there are 50 to 60 Quail in four coveys. Practically all the 187 acres are suitable cover for game birds. To my knowledge only one Red-breasted Nuthatch has been seen in Cass County. That record was made November 1, 1931, in Atlantic. The Red-bellied Woodpeckers are being seen much more frequently. The Dickcissel probably is more abundant in western than in eastern Iowa. I have counted as many as 15 Dickcissels on one mile of highway. Probably no bird in the state, unless it is the Indigo Bunting, sings more persistently while sitting on the telephone wire. Could there have been enough resin weeds on the early prairie before telephone wire was made to supply perches for all the Dickcissels? Old-timers tell us that the resin weed was the favorite perch of the Dickcissel, that being one of the tallest and heaviest weeds of the prairie.

GENERAL NOTES

Canadian Pine Grosbeak at Ames.—On October 30, 1938, Mr. and Mrs. B. R. Rozeboom informed us that a Canadian Pine Grosbeak had been seen on each of the four previous days at the State Highway Commission Building grounds, Ames. We drove down at noon of that date and observed the grosbeak feeding on the white snowberries of the shrubbery at the north side of the building. The bird remained in the neighborhood and was seen to feed again upon the snowberries at 3 p. m. Shortly thereafter it flew north toward the College woods and has not been observed since. DuMont ('A Revised List of the Birds of Iowa', 1933) lists this grosbeak as a "very rare winter visitor".
—GEORGE O. HENDRICKSON, Ames, Iowa.

American Egrets at Waterloo.—One of the city mail carriers asked me about some large white birds he had seen near Millersdale, south of Waterloo, so I drove down to see them on August 25, 1938. They proved to be American Egrets—beautiful snowy white birds with black legs and yellow bill. I saw only two, but others had seen as many as eight or ten there quite regularly for some time. They were last seen about October 1. On one trip I saw 13 Great Blue Herons with one egret with them. Egrets are more wary than herons and take flight first.—HARVEY NICHOLS, Waterloo, Iowa.

American Egrets and Other Birds in Emmet County.—American Egrets were more numerous in Emmet County during the fall of 1938 than in any previous year. The following observations of these birds were made by C. F. Wolden, at High Lake and vicinity. He saw the first one on August 22, and two on the following day. They were occasionally seen for several weeks, and on September 15 he saw nine in one flock, and one alone, on the wing. On September 18 he saw four on a little lake (Bur Oak Lake) southwest of High Lake. The last one was observed on October 12.

On May 20-21, 1938, I observed 14 Hudsonian Godwits in a flooded field.

On September 2, 1938, a Whip-poor-will was heard at dawn close to our home at Estherville. These birds have been very rare here for many years, although individuals have been heard at High Lake during spring migrations.—B. O. WOLDEN, Estherville, Iowa.

The American Egret in Northwest Iowa.—In DuMont's 'Birds of Iowa' the American Egret is listed as "Formerly a common late summer visitor, but absent for nearly twenty years". He goes on to say: "The egret may be expected in increasing numbers as a late summer visitor". This was written in 1933, and the prediction is proving to be correct as reports of the bird have become more regular each year.

On August 24, 1938, in company with Wilfred Crabb, State Naturalist at Stone Park, I saw an American Egret flying low over a swamp area in Liberty Township, Woodbury County, Iowa. Mr. Crabb and I returned to the spot on the second day after and found seven of the birds. We succeeded in collecting an adult female which is now in the study collection of the department of biology at Morningside College. Six birds were seen on the 27th by Mr. Crabb, in the same place, and on September 2 the writer visited the area again and found four of the birds. The stomach of the bird collected was found to contain two small beetles and numerous grasshoppers. The contents of the stomach have been preserved and are now in the possession of the writer.—BRUCE STILES, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

American Egrets at Dubuque.—American Egrets seem to be recapturing some of their former northern range. Listed as formerly breeding north to Wisconsin, they are again coming north in greatly increasing numbers during the late summer and early fall months. After the era of terrific slaughter for their plumes for the millinery trade, these slender, white birds were rarely seen in this vicinity prior to 1936. This fall they were reported from numerous points along the Mississippi River in numbers from one to several hundred.

I first observed them, in 1938, across the river from Eagle Point Park, on July 25. Evidently, a flock of 35 had but recently arrived and were located in a comparatively small area. On July 28 I could count but 25, and these were much more scattered. They were evidently spreading out over the bottom lands in search of feeding and resting grounds. This number gradually decreased until on October 1, I saw but one bird. No doubt, by this time the others had begun their return journey to the sunny south. My maximum count of 35 this year was more than double that of last year when I counted 16 in the same area.

This is a wonderful come-back for a species of which T. Gilbert Pearson wrote, in part, in 'Birds of America', date of article not given: "For several years past the National Association of Audubon Societies has been employing guards to protect the few remaining breeding colonies . . . but it is debatable whether the species can be saved, altho without the efforts of the Audubon Society the bird would have disappeared entirely by this time."—ETHAN HEMSLEY, Dubuque, Iowa.

American Egret.—I saw five American Egrets on September 20 and three on October 1, 1938, both records made at a small pond about one and a half miles east of Tama.—THEODORE R. SWEM, Ames, Iowa.

August Records from McGregor.—During six days at the National Wild Life School at McGregor, Iowa, a total of 92 species of birds was recorded by the group attending the School. A flock of nine American Egrets which were seen from the Heights with the aid of a telescope, and a flock of five American Egrets and two Little Blue Herons which were seen and identified by several people on the steamer excursion on August 4, 1938, probably provided the biggest thrills. These birds were seen on both the Iowa and the Wisconsin sides of the Mississippi River, near McGregor. They were seen at reasonably close range, and the identifying marks—size and bill color—were easily seen. One of the herons had definitely bluish primaries. On the night of August 3, a Barn Owl was seen just outside of the Heights Hotel. Other unusual birds on the week's list were Wood Duck, Pileated Woodpecker, Ruffed Grouse, Turkey Vulture, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.—MARY E. ROBERTS, Springdale (West Liberty), Iowa, and JACK W. MUSGROVE, Des Moines, Iowa.

Fall Migration at Conesville.—Between September 1 and November 1, 1938, I have observed the following species of birds in or near the extensive marsh at Conesville, Iowa: Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tailed, Marsh and Sparrow Hawks, Great Horned, Short-eared and Barred Owls, Hooded Merganser (one), Black Duck, Mallard, Shoveller, Gadwall, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Pintail, Wood Duck, Canvas-back, Ring-neck, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Blue, Snow and Canada Geese, Double-crested Cormorant, Yellow Rail (one observed), Sora, Virginia and King Rails, American and Least Bitterns, American Egret (about 30), Great Blue, Black-crowned Night and Green Herons, Wilson's Snipe, Killdeer, Lesser Yellow-legs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Woodcock (10), Pied-billed Grebe, Coot, Herring Gull, Ring-necked Pheasant, Quail, Rusty, Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds, Bronzed Grackle, Starling, Robin, Bluebird, Eastern Meadowlark, Goldfinch, Kingfisher, Blue Jay, Crow, Barn, Rough-winged and Bank Swallows, English, Swamp, White-throated and Song Sparrows, Junco, Long-billed Marsh Wren. The list of ducks includes almost all those normally recorded for Iowa. Those missing are Redhead, American and Red-breasted Mergansers and Bufflehead.

The Wood Ducks were quite common until about October 20. They were mostly in flocks of from 2 to 50, and the total number observed is estimated at 500.

A duck which was apparently a hybrid between a Black Duck and a Mallard was shot at Conesville November 6, 1938. The plumage of this bird was similar to that of the Black Duck except that the speculum had large white edges. The Black Duck does not have a white-edged speculum, while the Mallard does.

On November 12 and 13 very few ducks were left in the marsh except Lesser Scaup, Ring-necks and Mallards. The Mallards were most numerous, and probably totaled several thousand. They seemed to be feeding in cornfields, mostly on shelled corn left in the wake of mechanical pickers, and a large majority of them were heavily loaded with corn.

Two female Golden Eagles, which were shot in Iowa, have been received by the State Historical Museum in Des Moines. No further data are available for these birds.—JACK W. MUSGROVE, Des Moines, Iowa.

Records from Central Iowa.—From November 2, 1937, to February 17, 1938, I saw 23 Rough-legged Hawks. The Red-tailed Hawk was noted in decreasing numbers. The Short-eared Owl was recorded on December 15, 18 and 20, 1937. Bob-whites are very scarce, and my only record is a covey of 12, seen on December 20, 1937. Greater Prairie Chickens were noted as follows: two on December 16, five on December 17, and four on December 20, 1937. I saw two Meadowlarks on December 16, 1937. On May 19, 1937, I saw a pair of Mockingbirds, my first record of this species. My first impression was that they were shrikes; but the large white patches on wings, very conspicuous in flight, and their different manner of flight, indicated they were Mockingbirds. My best bird record for this year, was a flock of 20 or 25 Golden Plovers, which alighted on a plowed field and were observed at close range, on May 15, 1938. My only previous record is May, 1909.—HENRY BIRKELAND, Roland, Iowa.

Brown Thrasher Evicts Catbird.—For the past six years a pair of Catbirds have built their first nest in the shrubs on the south side of our garden gate, and have raised their second brood on the north side. They completed their nest as usual last spring, and there was one egg in the nest when a pair of Brown Thrashers came and, with very little quarreling, took over the Catbirds' nest. I saw the thrasher nose out, so to speak, the Catbird egg. I didn't see the thrashers take a single piece of nesting material into the nest, although it might have been done. The Brown Thrashers reared a brood of four young in this nest. The Catbirds immediately built a second nest on the north side of the gate, 18 feet from their first nest, and raised their young successfully. There was never any enmity between the birds at any time. A pair of Blue Jays reared their young in a tree the branches of which extended over the nests of both Catbird and Brown Thrasher, while a House Wren nested in a box 5½ feet above the Catbird.—WALTER L. BURK, Vinton, Iowa.

Late Departure Dates in the Fall Migration.—A comparison of fall departure records over a period of years will reveal many "average" dates and a few late ones. Quite a number of so-called summer residents, such as various hawks, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Robin, Meadowlarks and blackbirds, often remain well up into the winter, their lingering seeming to depend more on availability of food rather than on cold weather. Late dates for such species do not have especial significance. My own records go back for 20 years, and I have found that in addition to a long series of average dates of departure, there are quite a number that seem to be quite late. I am listing some of these below, all records having been made within Buchanan County unless otherwise noted.

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Pied-billed Grebe, Nov. 18, 1931 | Bluebird, Nov. 28, 1933 |
| Nighthawk, Oct. 2, 1931, Keokuk County | Myrtle Warbler, Nov. 1, 1931 |
| Ruby-thr. Hummingbird, Oct. 4, 1931, Jasper County | Palm Warbler, Oct. 17, 1925 |
| Phoebe, Oct. 21, 1931, Clayton Co. | Bobolink, Sept. 25, 1938 |
| Tree Swallow, Oct. 23, 1931 | Cowbird, Sept. 21, 1932 |
| Barn Swallow, Sept. 20, 1924 | Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Oct. 2, 1927 |
| House Wren, Oct. 4, 1937 | Red-eyed Towhee, Oct. 21, 1928 |
| Catbird, Oct. 6, 1927 | Vesper Sparrow, Nov. 25, 1929 |
| Brown Thrasher, Oct. 9, 1927 | Fox Sparrow, Nov. 9, 1930 |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush, Oct. 11, 1931 | Field Sparrow, Oct. 30, 1933 |
| | Swamp Sparrow, Oct. 24, 1931 |
| | Song Sparrow, Nov. 1, 1925 |

—FRED J. PIERCE.

Redpoll at Dubuque.—I saw a Common Redpoll at the north edge of Dubuque on October 30, 1938. This was the first one I had ever seen, so I was careful to look it over closely to be positive of its identification. The Minnesota migration dates given for it would make this seem quite early for its appearance here, but about this time southern Minnesota had experienced a heavy snowstorm, which may account for its appearance.—ETHAN HEMSLEY, Dubuque, Iowa.

Wild Ducks in Cornfields.—Just north of here there were about 5,000 ducks in the cornfields every night for several weeks in November, 1938. All were Mallards except for a few Pintails and Wild Geese. It is reported that the new dams in the Mississippi raised the water and the wild rice in the river was killed out. This caused the ducks to come inland to feed, which is an unusual situation here.—O. P. ALLERT, Giard, via McGregor, Iowa.

American Magpies Nest in Bremer County, Iowa, the Second Successive Year.—Two years ago a pair of Magpies came to the John Jennings farm near the south county line of Bremer County and have lived there continuously since that time. Early in December, 1936, they arrived, apparently winter migrants; but when spring came they continued to stay, and in April built a nest in the orchard. Six eggs were laid, incubated and hatched. Neighbors' children took the young for pets but they did not survive in captivity, perhaps because of lack of proper food and care. (See account of this first nesting in September, 1937, issue of 'Iowa Bird Life', p. 34.)

The adult birds continued to make this farm their home through the winter of 1937-'38 and again in April, 1938, built a nest in the same location as the preceding year. Seven young were hatched and neighbors' children were allowed to take them for pets, but again they were not successful in raising the young. The adult birds evidently are not easily discouraged, as they continue to make this farm their home although they were robbed of their brood in the two successive years. They hatched one brood each year.

The orchard, which is adjacent to the poultry yard, is the place they selected for their nest. It was built about 12 feet from the ground in the top of a plum tree and closely protected on the north by a taller mulberry tree. The barrel-shaped nest is about 3 feet high and about 2 feet thick; the opening or entrance is on the south side and is 6 to 8 inches in diameter. The nest was constructed of thick coarse sticks and the cup of the nest was lined with grasses and fine twigs. At the time of my last trip to the farm, which was early in October, 1938, the Magpies were using the nest as a roosting place. When we arrived at the farm at 6:30 a. m. the Magpies were chattering and quarreling with other birds in the treetops. Smaller birds were dashing about in the orchard, excited and alarmed. After the Magpies had flown away to another farm, peace and quiet was soon restored.

As to food habits—this past summer the Magpies consumed quantities of tent caterpillars in the walnut trees, according to the people living on the farm. The Magpies spend a great deal of time in the poultry yard and out among the stock and often alight on the backs of horses, sheep and cattle. Grain is also a part of their diet. In the winter of 1936-'37 some of their food consisted of the carcass of a calf. The owner of the farm would be glad to have the birds made use of in some museum or zoo, as he feels they are not beneficial on his farm and he does not have as many resident birds as he had before the Magpies came.—MRS. RAY S. DIX, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Correction.—The records for Bell's Vireo in Clayton County in the last issue of 'Iowa Bird Life', p. 39, should have been May 19, 1933, and May 8, 1936, instead of June 19, 1933, and June 8, 1936, as printed.

White-winged Scoter in Pottawattamie County.—On November 30, 1938, a Mr. Brown who lives at Lake Manawa in Pottawattamie County gave me a large female White-winged Scoter, which he had shot on Lake Manawa on November 23. I gave the specimen to Taylor Huston of the State Conservation Commission, and it is to be mounted for the State collection. DuMont (1933) lists the bird as "An uncommon migrant along the Mississippi and Missouri River valleys, rare through the interior of the state." He does not list a record for this county.—BRUCE F. STILES, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

RECENT BIRD BOOKS

THE BIRD LIFE OF LOUISIANA, by Harry C. Oberholser (Dept. of Conservation of Louisiana, New Orleans, 1938; paper binding, pp. i-xii+1-834, 8 colored pls. & 37 pls. from photographs; price, \$1).

The geographical position of Louisiana and the varied kinds of bird habitat found in the state are responsible for the great diversity and abundance of its bird life. There are beaches and islands, coastal marshes and prairies, semi-tropical bays and wooded uplands—each type of country with its distinctive bird-fauna. Louisiana birds have long attracted attention. As early as 1758 an account of birds in this territory was published. The illustrious Audubon spent many months studying birds in Louisiana and did some of his best painting there.

Doctor Oberholser's personal studies of Louisiana birds have been extensive. In the preparation of this book he made a very thorough search of the literature, examined all available bird specimens taken in the state, investigated various sources of information, and made use of all reliable data. The completion of his work is this list of 430 species and subspecies for the State of Louisiana. The opening chapters describe bird migration and give a calendar of migration dates for the state. There is a short chapter urging protection of birds. Then follows the descriptive list of Louisiana birds, with information on habitat, field identification marks, nesting and life history, and detailed state records. Those who dream of a stabilized nomenclature will not be comforted to find that the author has departed from the A. O. U. 'Check-List' and has given different scientific names for no less than 70 birds. The continual changing of scientific names by our bird doctors convinces us that, after all, the vernacular names are the ones that possess real stability; we may be thankful that they undergo little change through the years.

Among the "state" bird books this latest addition takes a prominent place. It is a model of thoroughness and accuracy, and is written by one of our foremost ornithologists. The low price at which it is sold assures a very wide distribution for the book. How we should like to have a book of similar scope and price for our own state! The people of Louisiana are to be congratulated on their good fortune in this matter.—F. J. P.

* * * * *

IOWA: A GUIDE TO THE HAWKEYE STATE, compiled by the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA for State of Iowa (The Viking Press, New York City, 1938; cloth, pp. i-xxviii+1-583, 80 photographs and drawings and 13 maps; price, \$2.50).

With its elaborate system of "tours" covering the highways of the State, and its detailed information on the hundreds of historic or scenic

places worth visiting, this book seems destined to become the Iowans' most popular "travel book." While a review of the complete book is not within our scope, we should like to call attention to the chapters on Iowa fauna and flora, which are well worth reading. It is gratifying to find that the natural background has been given prominence in a book of this kind. The public has an awakened interest in nature, and this book, leading the way to a greater appreciation of things in our own state, will have a good influence in the cause of nature education.

The topographic features of Iowa are first outlined, then follows an account of the weather and seasonal changes. There is a good description of the natural resources, in which the game birds and fur-bearers form an integral part. The Wild Turkey, once common, is extinct except for a few remaining in state parks. The Bob-white is still a resident, but the Prairie Chicken has decreased until, in 1933, it was thought that 2,000 would be a fair estimate for the State. The State's introduction of exotic birds such as Ring-necked Pheasant and Hungarian Partridge is mentioned, and the book takes the optimistic view that: "The farmlands, the meadows, and the cultivated areas of Iowa now are as plentiful with bird life as the grasslands of pioneer days." In a handbook embracing so many subjects a complete bird list was impossible. Representatives of various prominent bird families are mentioned rather briefly. We note a few slips that ought to be corrected in future editions of the book: the Bobolink is listed as an early spring migrant and the Belted Kingfisher and the Hermit Thrush as late spring migrants; the American Bittern is described as one of the most conspicuous of prairie birds in early days; the Killdeer lives in marshy regions, according to the book.

We read that large game animals are rare, but the small fur-bearers furnish a fair crop annually. Rabbits, squirrels, migratory ducks and resident game birds entice the hunter, while 131 species of fish are found in the streams but only 26 are common. A special chapter on Iowa flora covers the subject very nicely. As with bird life, habitat determines the flowers to be found in a particular region; various regions with their respective floral features are described in some detail. A chapter on geology lists the prevailing formations in different parts of Iowa and gives the history of their composition—interesting reading to both student and layman.—F. J. P.

* * * * *

Another worth-while publication which comes from the Federal Writers' Project is 'A Guide to McGregor, Iowa', a 24-page booklet which gives the history of this interesting region and tells what points should be visited. Several "tours" are outlined. Raymond Kresensky, one of our members, is Director of the Federal Writers' Project in Iowa.

* * * * *

The State Conservation Commission, Des Moines, has published a very attractive and useful guide called 'Iowa's State Parks and Preserves'. It contains 80 pages descriptive of all the State-owned areas and is illustrated by about 150 lithographs.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Clayton County roads lead to the Allert Bird Museum, in the village of Giard. Without question the best private bird collection in eastern Iowa, bird students have found much valuable study material there, and its genial owner, Oscar P. ("Mike" to all his intimate friends) Allert, always willing to give expert advice in ornithological problems. The Dubuque Bird Club visited the museum as a feature of its annual fall "Hawk Trip," on October 16. Dubuque has a very active bird club, and it is already talking about the prospective Iowa Ornithologists' Union convention in that city in 1940.

Our President, Judge O. S. Thomas, writes of his summer vacation trip: "On our summer vacations we always keep a bird list, and each year add a number of interesting birds. The trip is never a bird trip exclusively, so we do not try to see all the birds of the locality visited. The past August we visited in southwestern Colorado, eastern Utah and northern New Mexico. Some of the birds that we saw were: Magpie, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Lark Bunting, Prairie Falcon, Raven, Rocky Mountain Jay, Sage Hen, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Red-shafted Flicker, Mountain Chickadee, Cassin's Kingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Gambel's Quail, Long-crested Jay, Shufeldt's Junco, Audubon's Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Black Phoebe, Black-necked Stilt and Water Ouzel. Along the streams in the mountains we were constantly on the watch for Water Ouzels. In Rocky Mountain National Park the rangers told us of a nest under a waterfall, but we did not have time to make the trip; however, we did see two of the birds."

Walter L. Burk, of Vinton, has aided the Iowa Ornithologists' Union in a very material way. Becoming interested in having more members in his vicinity, he sent for a supply of sample copies of 'Iowa Bird Life' and went out on a one-man membership campaign. In about two weeks he sent our Treasurer nearly \$35 in memberships, subscriptions and sales of back numbers of the magazine. Vinton is not a large city and doubtless there are no more bird lovers in that section than in other parts of the state. It is a good illustration of what could be done elsewhere, if we were to get out and actively invite others to join us.

Our membership is quite well distributed over the entire state, with not a great concentration in any of the larger cities. Sometime we should like to publish a map of Iowa showing the location of our members. Below is a list of all the cities having five or more members or subscribers. It will be noted that only one city outside of Iowa is included in this list.

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Ames, Iowa, 8 | Dubuque, Iowa, 7 |
| Burlington, Iowa, 5 | Sioux City, Iowa, 6 |
| Cedar Falls, Iowa, 5 | Vinton, Iowa, 22 |
| Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 15 | Washington, D. C., 5 |
| Des Moines, Iowa, 16 | Waterloo, Iowa, 8 |

Walter Rosen gave an illustrated lecture before the Women's Club and Cedar Falls Audubon Society on December 7. Mr. Rosen has been giving bird lectures over the state for many years. His illustrative equipment formerly consisted of a large series of colored lantern slides of birds and wild flowers made from his photographs. Within the last two years he has become a moving picture photographer, specializing in colored films. His series of movies on the nesting of the Duck Hawk, taken on the cliffs at Lansing, Iowa, represent much skill and patience. When Mr. Rosen goes into a thing he does it thoroughly, and we can look for many fine movies to come from his camera in the future.

Our convention at Spirit Lake next May, in the lakes region of northwest Iowa, promises to be one of the best in our history, especially in regard to the variety of bird possibilities on the field trip. In the next issue of 'Iowa Bird Life' we hope to have an article on what birds may be expected in this region, as well as an illustration or two showing the landscape features.

Quite a large number of our members are school teachers. Two more have been added to the list recently. Miss Mary E. Roberts is teaching in the high school at West Liberty, and Wesley Bartlett at Primghar, Iowa.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Beginning with our printed 'Bulletin' in 1929, our organization has published a quarterly bird journal for ten years and has never missed an issue. This is somewhat of a record among the state bird serials. There are many state bird society publications, some mimeographed and others printed, issued as quarterlies, semi-annuals or annuals. 'The Florida Naturalist', published by the Florida Audubon Society, while not strictly ornithological, has had one of the longest careers as a state quarterly. It is in its 18th volume. 'The Migrant' of the Tennessee Ornithological Society is in its eighth printed year. 'The Flicker', organ of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, is in its second printed year. 'The Oriole', a Georgia quarterly, is in its third year. 'The Nebraska Bird Review', formerly a quarterly, is now published semi-annually. The Missouri 'Bluebird' is mimeographed, while Illinois and Indiana have printed annuals.

The material that we have published has not possessed equal scientific value, of course, but we have always striven for accuracy. At times, when there has been a shortage of bird notes, the Editor has written "filler" items; at other times of abundance the condensation of material has been necessary, and long articles have been rejected. An average based on a period of years shows the writings of Iowa bird students to be lengthy enough to warrant a larger 'Iowa Bird Life' if we could afford it. With our present income and pay-as-we-go policy, an enlargement of the magazine is impossible. In the past the Editor has made up the deficiency, in a small measure, by securing advertising. In a magazine of limited circulation this is a very hard task.

There are at least 500 people in Iowa who have sufficient interest in birds to become members of our Union. How to reach these people is a problem. If every member would put his shoulder to the wheel and secure at least one new member during the coming year, we could broaden our influence and publish a larger and better magazine. The question is not one of survival, but of increasing our usefulness. We should like to see our members get behind a drive for new members.

We are always ready to send sample copies of 'Iowa Bird Life' to your bird student friends. Let us hear from you frequently, and send us your bird notes through the year. The form in which we published the 1937 Christmas census was so well received that we plan to print the 1938 census in tabulated form. Send your census to the Editor.
—F. J. P.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Membership dues are payable January 1st. Send your dollar to Miss LaMar (at 1231 39th St., Des Moines) at once. Each year those who send their dues promptly save the Secretary much valuable time in sending out notices, as well as postage. We shall very much appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

THE OOLOGIST

is the only publication on the American Continent devoted to those who are interested in collecting, preserving, and studying birds' eggs. Fifty cents per year.

THE OOLOGIST
LACON, ILLINOIS

Iowa Orn. Union's
"FIELD CHECK-LIST"

Convenient pocket size, listing all Iowa birds, fine for the field trip.

Prices: 500, \$2.15; 100, 50c; 50 or less, 1/2c each, postpaid.

Order from
MISS KATE LA MAR, Sec'y
1231 39th St.
Des Moines, Iowa