

Big Bluestem Flyer

Volume 22, No. 4

December, 1987

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, December 15, 1987, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
Room 191-1, College of Design, ISU Campus

"Party and Members Slide Show"

(Refreshments: Potluck Cookies and Deserts)

Our annual holidays meeting is a time for sharing experiences from the year through short slide shows. (There are no fixed limits, but please be prepared to make an interesting commentary). A second category of slides from members we may call the "mystery birds" or "what is it?" slides.

The Ames' Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 19, 1987. Steve Dinsmore, 292-3152, is in charge of assignment and data reporting this year.

Materials will be delivered to participants at our December meeting. A semi-potluck supper, tally, and conversation will be held at the Edwards' home, 2308 State Ave, beginning at 5 p.m. Main dish, beverage, and table service will be provided plus left-overs from the party earlier in the week.

The Boone Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Friday, January 1, 1988. Mark Wildrlechner, 292-4014, is managing this one and he is contacting participants directly. Final tally and conversation will be held following the day's count at the Golden Corral in Boone.

BIG BLUESTEM AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: David C. Edwards, 292-3790, Membership Chair

Vice President: Michael Meetz, 382-2534, Program Chair

Secretary: Barbara Bettis, 232-4863

Treasurer: Mark Wildrlechner, 292-4014

Executive Board: Sherry Dragula, 292-4014,

Conservation Chair

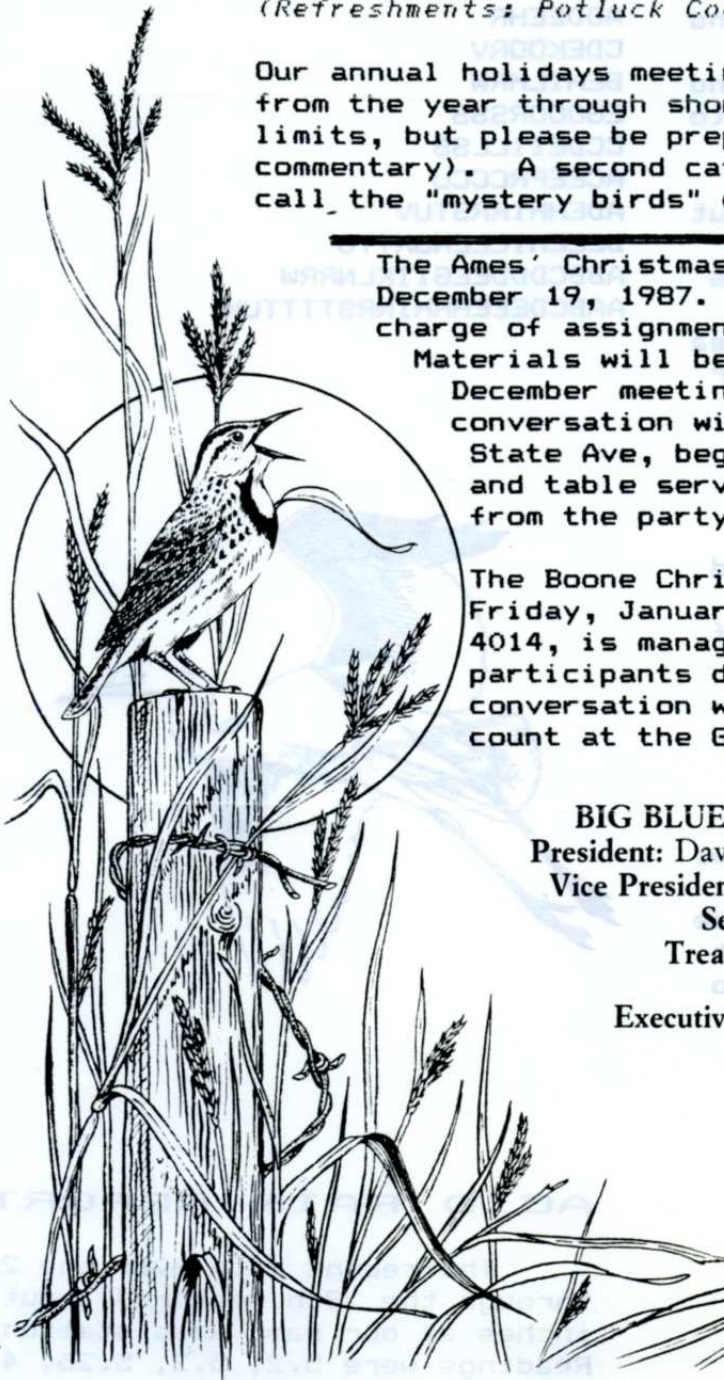
Barbara Heikens, 296-2999,

Education Chair

Marianna Loy, 292-0769

Andy Fix, 296-7554

Kay Niyo, 292-5130



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Christmas Bird Counts

The Christmas Bird Count is an old tradition of the Audubon Society across the country. The data collected provide the basis for much of our knowledge of the movements and locations of birds during the beginning of the winter period. The comparisons across years tell us what may be happening to bird populations.

All kinds of birders participate in the counts. A circular area of five mile radius is divided up rationally into areas and leaders are placed in charge of them. Less-experienced birders, and those who may have a shorter time to spend, work in groups with the leaders. There is room for even those who are only able to point out where they see birds; everyone has to start out sometime, and the CBCs are good events to learn from experts. Feederwatchers in the area are also encouraged to report their total sightings to the coordinator at the end of the day.

New counters should dress appropriately for the weather, noting that time will be spent in the fields, woods, creek areas, and roads and streets. Country areas are covered by vehicle. Leaders of each segment area will establish their own time schedule, but it is typical to begin when the light is strong and continue until the area has been covered or it becomes too dark to see. A few hardy people will arise earlier to listen for owl calls.

One of the peculiarities of the count procedure is the request that the participants pay a small fee to underwrite the costs of the data collation and publication. Thus, after a day of hard work, the leaders will then be asking us to pay for it. Its worth it!



BIRD ANAGRAMS

Each line contains the letters for the complete common name of a bird seen in Iowa. What are they?

AORS
EERVY
EILMNR
DILUNN
EOPRSY
AADLLRM
ADDEEHR
CDEKORV
BEHILMRW
EGOOORSSS
CCDEIILLSS
ACEEPRCCCU
ADEHHIRRSTUV
BEEHILLLNORTTU
ABBCDDDEEGIIKLNRRW
AABCDEEEHHHINRSTTTUW



ACID RAIN REPORT

The recent rain over the 26th through the 29th measured about 2 inches at our east Ames station. Readings were 5.2, 5.2, 5.25, 4.25 and 4.5 over the period. Recall that a pH of 5.6 is normal rain.

RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS

The past couple of weeks have been surprisingly slow around central Iowa. The well-publicized Groove-billed Ani was still at the Krumm Wildlife Area near Grinnell on November 19th.

Elsewhere, lots of ducks and gulls have been present at the Saylorville Reservoir in Polk county. A few loons and grebes are also present. Notable sightings at Saylorville include seventeen Tundra Swan on the 13th, two female Oldsquaw on the 17th, a Western Grebe on the 19th, and a late Pectoral Sandpiper and three Dunlin on the 27th.

At nearby Big Creek State Park lots of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls and a Northern Saw-whet Owl are being seen. Several Northern Shrike are also present along the west side of the park.

Other Saw-whet Owls are present at Ledges State Park and other Boone county sites.

It looks like this winter will be a good one for Snowy Owls. There have been numerous reports from northwest and northcentral Iowa this past week, and one was seen between Ames and Boone on the 27th at the ISU Agronomy Farm.

A few Snow Buntings and Evening Grosbeaks have also appeared in the last few days. A male House Finch has been visiting an Ames feeder for the past week.

Finally, the Snow Goose migration at Desoto NWR in western Iowa is in full swing. On the 25th there were 300,000+ Snow Geese, 7 Ross' Geese, a female Surf Scoter, and several Bald Eagles. A total of 27 waterfowl species were seen on that day.

Steve Dinsmore



DESOTO BEND FIELD

TRIP REPORT

[reprinted from November because the second half was lost between editing and printing and the puzzles feature mislocated.]

Thirteen members trekked to western Iowa for the late October field trip; nine hardier ones camped out in Wilson Island State Park, having one campground to themselves and some reported skunks. Pre-dawn entry to the preserve in three cars got us to the photo blind and the observation tower at first light, though the heavy overcast and nearby thunderstorms made sun-up a theoretical calculation. Steve Dinsmore was right when he said there wouldn't be many geese there. There were several hundred Snow Geese but no others. Instead, there was a good variety of ducks and other migrants. Five good sightings of Bald Eagles, a well-fed coyote, and the ubiquitous deer made it a good trip for our car load. We didn't compare notes across the groups for a grand tally, but our group listed 45 bird species including these of interest: Pie-billed Grebe, ? Scaup, Mallard, Coot, Gadwall, Bufflehead, Surf Scoter, Ruddy Duck, Wood Duck, Black Duck, Widgeon, Snipe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Swallow, Brown Creeper, Northern Flicker, Rufous-sided Towhee, Rusty Blackbird, Wilson's Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Harris Sparrow (which our group thought should be renamed "copperhead"), White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. Heard but not seen were Screech Owl and Great-horned Owl.



NEWS FROM NAS

By Peter A.A. Berle
President, National Audubon Society

Every time it rains or snows, Audubon volunteers are checking the pH of the precipitation. The Audubon Citizens Acid Rain Monitoring Network is now in full operation. More than a hundred stations around the country have been reporting their results throughout the fall, and the number is growing steadily. After a rainfall, each volunteer tests the rain using a kit and following procedures developed by Audubon, and phones in data that is recorded in a central computer. Our army of citizen monitors also provides the results to local news media.

In keeping with Audubon's tradition of sound science, the test program has numerous safeguards to insure the accuracy of the results. Citizen monitors save their rain samples for 72 hours. Roughly 10 percent of the samples are called in, at random, and tested by the Bodega Laboratory—part of the University of California at Davis—providing a continuous check on the accuracy of the data acquired by the field stations.

Our first round of results correlates closely with the 1984 data published by the National Atmospheric Deposition Program, which is run by a host of federal agencies—another indication that our measuring techniques are accurate. The difference between the federal program and ours, of course, is that the federal data doesn't come out until a year or so after it is collected and it does not receive the local attention generated by the reporting of Audubon citizen monitors.

The message to date: Acid rain does indeed fall in large portions of this country. While pH varies by place and by rainstorm, there are a lot of low readings out there. The problem will not go away. By making all of us aware that rain contains more than we think, the Audubon Citizens Acid Rain Monitoring Network is doing much to galvanize the political will to pass effective acid rain legislation in Congress.

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MARK WIDRLECHNER
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Clean Air Update: Bill Goes to Senate Floor

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee scored a hit in late October when it reported out a good clean air bill that contains provisions on acid rain, air toxics, and urban smog—the three key pieces that environmentalists are fighting for. As the legislation goes to the Senate floor, all chapters and activists can join the ballgame by asking their senators to cosponsor the bill. The bill is generally referred to as the Environment and Public Works Clean Air Bill; it has not been assigned a number yet.

Your senators should also be encouraged to speak to Majority Leader Robert Byrd about speedy consideration of this important legislation. Byrd, a senator from West Virginia, which produces polluting high-sulfur coal, is likely to try and stop the bill short. Strong pressure from his colleagues is needed to persuade him to take the broader view and bring the bill up for a vote.

Meanwhile, in the House, the Energy and Commerce Committee is looking for a middle ground on its acid rain and urban smog proposals. The stalemate that has been blocking action in that committee continues, but the moderates are looking for a way to make both Chairman John Dingell and Subcommittee Chairman Henry Waxman happy. It is not easy, but some progress has been made.

It is important to keep the pressure on the members of this committee. You can help by asking your representative to join the more than 170 signers of the Vento-Green letter, which calls for clean air legislation. Let him or her know you expect clean air legislation to pass in *this* Congress. For more information, contact Connie Mahan in Audubon's Capitol Hill office, 801 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003; 202-547-9009.

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