

Ames Audubon Society

February Newsletter - 1977

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292-8833

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Invite a Friend or Neighbor

WHAT : Birds of Little Tobago
WHO : Dr. James Dinsmore
WHEN : Tuesday, February 8
WHERE: Room 122, Kildee Hall, ISU

Dr. Dinsmore is well known to most of us as he teaches ornithology at ISU and talked to us about the Sooty Tern last year. He has concentrated much of his research in the Caribbean and will share with us his experiences and slides about its abundant birdlife.

February Field Trip: This month we will attempt to call owls using a tape recorder visiting some of the spots where we had such success on the Christmas count. On the count day my party alone heard 29 Great Horned Owls, 25 Screech Owls and 8 Barred Owls. We saw all three species and had four Barred Owls flying about over our heads. If the wind will cooperate we should have similar luck. We will leave promptly from the north end of the Lincoln Center parking lot at 6:00 a.m., Saturday February 12. Wake-up you sleepy heads and join us.

The 1977 Christmas count: We had another fine count this year tallying 49 species + one subspecies equalling last year's total. Forty-three observers participated, not including nine at feeders. The area was again divided into eleven area with a group leader in charge of each. This year these leaders were James Dinsmore, Sven Gafvert, John Hill, Bob and Joan Jefferson, Erwin Klaas, Lotus and Wilmer Miller, Bob Moorman, Terry Quinn, Judy Rod, Jeff Ruprecht and myself.

Observers included: Jim Bednarz, Karl Bockhop, Tom Brindley, Nancy Brown, Grif Buck, Steve Buck, Gene and Marilyn Bums, Barney Cook, Nancy Cowan, Phillip Cox, Janice Coy, James Dinsmore, C. R. Elder, Sven Gafvert, Edna and Jean Hempstead, John Hill, Paul Hollander, Bob and Joan Jefferson, Pam Kaufman, Erwin Klaas, Edwin Kline, Tom Knudsen, Kent Korthas, Wm Lane, Kenny Lane, Helen Luscaleet, Steve Maloy, Paul Martsching, Lotus and Wilmer Miller, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Moorman, Tacy Pedersen, Margaret Plauffe, Terry Quinn, Beula Rah, Jerry Ranch, Paul Richards, Pete Roberts, Doug Rod, Jim Rod, Judy Rod, Jeff Ruprecht, Cedo and Mark Ryan, Harriet Simmonds, Richard Trump, Orfa Wilhelm, and Paul Zbaracki.

Two new species were added to the Ames count: Carolina Wren and White-crowned Sparrow. I was gratified to see the owl population as high as we found it. The red-headed woodpecker count is still high but below last year's outstanding total. The sparrow count excellent: field, Harris, white-throated, fox and swamp sparrows were seen. The most common bird missed was the purple finch not seen the day of the count. We also missed bluebirds although the Tribune carried an account of them in Ames shortly afterwards. The count total included:

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| 1. Mallard (26) | 2. Red-tailed Hawk (4) |
| 3. Am. Kestrel (2) | 4. Bobwhite (23) |
| 5. Ring-necked Pheasant (96) | 6. Common Snipe (2) |
| 7. Rock Dove (307) | 8. Mourning Dove (25) |
| 9. Screech Owl (27) | 10. Great-Horned Owl (42) |
| 11. Barred Owl (9) | 12. Belted Kingfisher (2) |
| 13. Common Flicker (22) | 14. Red-bellied Woodpecker (48) |
| 15. Red-headed Woodpecker (76) | 16. Hairy Woodpecker (27) |
| 17. Downy Woodpecker (15) | 18. Horned Lark (35) |
| 19. Blue Jay (231) | 20. Com. Crow (277) |
| 21. Black-capped Chickadee (248) | 22. Tufted Titmouse (22) |
| 23. White-breasted Nuthatch | 24. Brown Creeper (6) |
| 25. Winter Wren (1) | 26. Carolina Wren (1) |
| 27. Am. Robin (4) | 28. Golden-crowned Kinglet (4) |
| 29. Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1) | 30. Cedar Waxwing (11) |
| 31. Loggerhead Shrike (1) | 32. Starling (921) |
| 33. House Sparrow (2915) | 34. W. Meadowlark (1) |
| 35. Meadowlark (sp) (19) | 36. Red-winged blackbird (55) |
| 37. Rusty Blackbird (12) | 38. Com. Grackle (7) |
| 39. Brown-headed Cowbird (16) | 40. Cardinal (98) |
| 41. Am. Goldfinch (84) | 42. Dark-eyed (Slate - col.) Junco (616) |
| 43. Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (6) | 44. Tree Sparrow (381) |
| 45. Field sparrow (2) | 46. Harris Sparrow (6) |
| 47. White-crowned Sparrow (1) | 48. White-throated Sparrow (4) |
| 49. Fox Sparrow (2) | 50. Swamp Sparrow (3) |
| 51. Song Sparrow (26) | |

1977 Dues: Sit down today and send your check to Lois Carr for this years dues. A membership form for this purpose is enclosed. Thanks.

Birding Story County: January was cold and windy limiting the activity of all our usual observers. Only common winter residents - No Snowy Owls, Red Polls, Snow Buntings or Longspurs - have been seen. As for my own birding, I was out only three times - on Sunday - the twenty-third to McFarland, then the following Sunday by car cruising east of Ames in an vain attempt to see Snowy Owls and then one short trip to Brookside at noon. Instead of my usual account, I thought some might be interested in a typical winter bird walk.

Sunday - January 21 - was a beautiful winter day. The sky was blue and bright, the wind was light and after the bitter cold the temperature at freezing actually seemed balmy. I arrived at McFarland at about 2 p.m. and headed north across the newly planted prairie heading toward the spring on the west end of the park. It should be open and running water should attract birds and with luck I might spot the covey of bobwhite living there. I have seen large numbers of Juncos in the prairie before but not today. After crossing it, I skirted the south edge of the woods, seeing and hearing nothing until I reached the spring. I passed the spring and turned to wait. In moments, a bird landed at the spring. My glasses showed that it was a Goldfinch. I could hear a Cardinal singing in the woods below the spring as well as a woodpecker and a nuthatch. Several other goldfinches as well as Juncos and a Tree Sparrow were seen while I waited. I had not seen many birds but some were there where I had expected to see birds. After tramping around in the low bushes, trying to flush the quail, I headed toward the wood to see the Cardinal and find what type of woodpecker was there. I kept my eyes open for owls and hawks as I have often seen them there. However, I saw no birds in the woods this trip.

The adjacent farm has recently changed hands and the new owner is pushing his fields back to his property line. Hedgerows are disappearing and huge brush piles have been left on park property. They grieve me but maybe a winter wren might have a shelter deep in their depth; but not this time. I next decided to walk the new trail to the Skunk. I heard several cardinals calling and saw a Red-bellied Woodpecker fly across the path but saw no other birds until I reached the river where I heard and saw soon after a small flock of Chickadees. Chickadees are such saucy active birds, I always enjoy watching them feeding in the tall weeds. I worked my way north paralleling the river toward Soper's Mill seeing a few birds including a downy woodpecker, cardinals, White-breasted Nuthatches and Crows. As I reached Soper's I noted several Red-headed Woodpeckers. Just as I spotted the old bow bridge, I saw a large number of birds along the fence row up the hill back toward McFarland. This hillside has a south exposure and and I have seen birds there frequently, so I turned back toward McFarland remembering Sven saw Shrike in the area last year. The birds proved to be Junco's - several hundred - and more Red-heads including one out in the corn stalks. There is a farm pond in that area worth checking for ducks later in the spring but not worth checking today. As I reached the high ground leading back to the lake, I saw birds including a Titmouse and more Goldfinch. I remembered the Towhee I had seen in the area but suddenly a huge bird flushed in the woods ahead. It dove down not up and circling; thus it was an owl and not a hawk, the Great-horned Owl I had seen in the same place in December. The sun was sinking so that I buttoned my jacket which I had opened earlier but I still had time to check the pothole and the marsh at the upper end of the lake for Pheasants and Song Sparrows and maybe even a Snipe.

But just because you should see a bird in an area doesn't mean you will. None were spotted today - so back to the car to total up what was seen - 16 species in all compared to 18 on a similar trip last year. As I drove back into Ames I enjoyed the crows flying into town for their nightly roost. A fine day's birding since I don't see Goldfinches, Titmice or Owls everytime I go out.

Birds noted in January

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| 1. Ring-necked Pheasant | 2. Rock Dove |
| 3. Gt. Horned Owl | 4. Yellow-shafted Flicker |
| 5. Red-bellied Woodpecker | 6. Red-headed Woodpecker |
| 7. Hairy Woodpecker | 8. Downy Woodpecker |
| 9. Bluejay | 10. Crow |
| 11. Black-capped Chickadee | 12. Tufted Titmouse |
| 13. White-breasted Nuthatch | 14. Starling |
| 15. House Sparrow | 16. Meadow Lark (sp) |
| 17. Northern Cardinal | 18. Am. Goldfinch |
| 19. Slate-colored Sunco | 20. Tree Sparrow |
| 21. Harris Sparrow | |

Soper's Mill: The application to have the Soper's Mill Bridge added to the National Register of Historic Places was submitted to the State board in Iowa City this fall, and we are awaiting action from that group. It is our impression that the bridge flooring will be replaced by means of county money this year. We can be proud of the accomplishments made thus far on the bridge. Let's all keep up our interest and support in maintaining the bridge as a valuable structure in our local heritage. I believe such projects give the community a good impression of our group.

Conservation Note: (Jeff Ruprecht) I read with concern Gladys Black's coment in a recent Des Moines Register article about our barren countryside which provides so little cover for birds and animals. Fencerows and roadsides are sprayed with utter passion for cleanness (the beer cans remain). Can we do anything to make a difference? Here are some suggestions: 1) act to preserve remaining cover and habitat; 2) voice our disapproval of blanket roadside spraying; 3) plant and maintain little pockets of cover where none now exist. Couldn't many of us make a formal commitment to the third suggestion, and perhaps on our own property or on that of a friend make some wildlife plantings. Species of plants which provide food and cover are available. Perhaps next fall we could tour as a group these little endeavors. Let's talk about this or other project ideas you may be interested in.