

Cedar Falls, May 13, 1974.

Dear Pete,

Enclosed is my manuscript.

I discussed the breeding bird census situation with Russell Hays. To his knowledge there are no persons other than myself who would be capable or willing to do this. Russell himself says that it is too strenuous for him. We do not have many good birdres here anymore, sorry to say, less than a handful. About your only possibility might be John Osnees, although Russell feels that this is work for younger people.

You might like to know that I added six species to my life list for Iowa, bringing it up to 209, and 29 species to my year list, bringing it up to 177, all at the convention.

I leave for Europe next Tuesday, returning the first week of September. My birding will be done mostly in Iceland, Germany, Austria, and Norway.

I enjoyed birding with you and hope to do it again next fall.

Sincerely Yours,



[Ronig]

BIRDING AREAS OF IOWA: THE UNGLACIATED NORTHEAST

Area covered: Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, and Half of Fayette
Counties, about 2400 square miles.

15-year Decorah Christmas Census Average: 34

Principal Towns and populations: Decorah, 7,458; Waukon, 3,883;
West Union, 2,624; Elkader, 1,592; Guttenberg, 2,177
Fayette, 1,947, and Lansing, 1,218.

Biotope: principally forested ravines and hills with farm land in-
terspersed, more in some areas than in others. The
forests are deciduous with oak the main species.

Introduction: In the northeast corner of Iowa is found a land-
scape totally different from the rest of the state. The change,
when driving into the area, takes place in about fifteen miles.
First, the hills start to become steeper and less rolling. Then
all resemblance to the rest of Iowa abates as one travels deep in-
to the heart of this unglaciated region. Roughly, the area stretches
from Strawberry Point in the South, to West Union, Fort Atkinson,
Kendellville, and the state of Minnesota. In the south, the area
tapers into the Mississippi Valley and touches the northern part of
Dubuque County. In Fayette and Clayton Counties there are no more
forests than in the rest of Iowa unless one turns to the streamsides.
The creeks have cut deep, forested ravines. We would have these
in the rest of the state also if it had not been scoured by the last
glacier and the country flattened. The really extensive forests,
reminiscent of those in more northerly climes, do not start until
one crosses a line running from Mc Gregor to Postville and Bluffton.
Here the trees are not so dependent on the streams as they are in
the rest of the state, and accordingly the forests are large, the
fields small.

Unlike the rest of the state, here it is not necessary to go
looking for a birding area; they are all around and there for the
taking. There are still a few favored spots and these will be men-
tioned in turn.

BIRDING AREAS OF IOWA: THE UNGLACIATED NORTHEAST

Area covered: Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, and half of Fayette

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Counties, about 2100 square miles.

Approximate population of area: (urban) Winneshiek, 12,800; Allamakee,
9,000; Clayton, 11,000; 1/2 Fayette, 7,300.

15 Year Christmas Censuses Average (Decorah): 34

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tioned in turn.

The only species of bird which is indigenous to this part of the state is the ruffed grouse. They are quite common, and walking along a few hillsides is certain to flush at least one bird. The drumming of the grouse is a curious thing for those who have not heard it. It is a throbbing sound which can be likened to a ball bouncing, shorter every time.

Turkeys are more common here than in other parts of the state. Yellow River Forest is the best place to see them, and a day trip will usually produce a turkey heard, if not seen.

As there are extensive woodlands, the dominant birds much of the year are the woodpeckers. The oak trees provide a plentiful supply of acorns for the red-headed woodpecker, while the large, secluded forests are favorable for the pileateds. The latter are more common here than in any other part of the state. A day trip to this area should get one every woodpecker for his list, especially in spring and fall.

The warblers are not as easy to see in this part of the state as there are more places than warblers to fill them. Where one finds them, they can usually be observed from a hillside, eliminating the need to get "warbler necks".

Birders should thank the trout for giving them access to more areas than they normally would have. Farmers will let an area around their streams stay wild, and there are dozens of trout streams owned by farmers, the county, or the state, which are easily accessible, often without permission from the landowners. The State Conservation Commission publishes several good trout maps which will show you good birding places. On private land it is usually best to ask permission to bird on the land, unless a stocked, designated trout stream is involved.

There are a number of other species which are also more numerous here than in other parts of the state, again because of the choicel habitat available. Both species of waterthrushes are common along the banks of streams. They seem to occupy the niche of the dipper in the east. Spotted and solitary sandpipers are also common, the latter only in migration. These three species usually arrive by the end of April, the Louisiana Waterthrush somewhat later. In contrast, the kingfishers will stay all year if open water is present. There is a pair for every stream that can support them. The numerous springs are good places to look for snipe. Some may winter in these places, and have been listed on area Christmas counts many times. Cliff swallows take advantage of the streams for food, and nearby rock walls for nesting. Other swallows are also common.

Whip-poor-wills are common anywhere in season. These and the woodcocks take advantage of the dead leaves covering the ground to camouflage themselves. These are also favorite feeding spots for theuses and some sparrows. The hawk migration is readily observed here, especially along the Mississippi. The hawks will fly in flocks in the fall and are then somewhat of a spectacle. All but one of the Iowa Lists-s listed birds of prey have been seen in this area. Golden eagles are seen here more frequently than in the rest of the state, while their bald relatives are common and can be observed from the two locks and dams- number nine near Harpers Ferry and number ten at Guttenberg.

The accompanying map shows the general locations of the areas mentioned in the following list.

In the warmer months it is always wise to be on the lookout for rattlesnakes. This is an area of the state where they are found.

The following is a more or less complete listing of the birding areas in these 3 1/2 counties. Most of the trout streams and woods on private land are also good birding areas, as well as the Mississippi, Turkey, Volga, and Upper Iowa River Valleys .

Joy Springs County Conservation Area is located just west of Strawberry Point. To reach it, go west out of Strawberry Point on highway 3, turn south at the third road going south (2 1/2 miles), and drive to the end of this dead-end road. There is also a sign indicating the turn if you are eastbound from Oelwein. The road is 15 miles east of that city. Joy Springs is on the upper reaches of the Maquoketa River, and is especially favored as a warbler area. It is mainly open woods.

Bixby State Monument Park is a good place to see birds like scarlet tanagers, cerulean warblers, and blue-gray gnatcatchers. It consists of about fifty acres of woodland located on Doe Creek. It is best reached by taking highway 3 to Edgewood, turning north at the center of town. This road runs directly through the park, which is located 1 1/2 miles north of Edgewood.

McGregor has a number of state parks, as well as a game refuge. Highway 340 leads to these. It intersects highway 18 near the middle of the town. To reach the game refuge, take the road that goes west from 340 near its intersection with 18. The road borders the refuge about a quarter mile farther down. Point Ann State Park is located east of the intersection. McGregor and Pikes Peak

state parks are accessible from the end of 340. The latter park was once host to an IOU convention, where members enjoyed the excellent birding areas. All three parks border the bluffs of the Mississippi, affording one a fine view of the river valley, and perhaps a look at some migrating birds of prey as well.

Turkey River Mounds State Monument Park is a remote area located on the Mississippi and the mouth and banks of the Turkey River. The road to it runs just north of Millville and five miles south of Guttenberg off highway 52. The riverbottoms provide excellent habitat for migrant songbirds, especially because the bulk of these tend to follow the larger rivers in their wanderings. species not commonly found "inland" may be more easily located here. These include Kentucky, Canada, Black-throated blue, hooded, and Connecticut warblers.

The last area in Clayton County that will be mentioned here is a significant part of Yellow River Forest. It is located on the Mississippi in the far northeastern corner of Clayton County on highway 76. The forest area starts 1 1/2 miles north of Marquette. This area consists of riverbottom forest, though it is higher than that in the preceding area.

Echo Valley State Park is, as the name implies, a deep valley. it has been carved by a tributary of the Turkey River. Reach it by going east out of West Union on highway 18. Turn onto county road B-64 just out of the city. a mile later, there is a railroad track which you can follow into the park for some good birding. If you would rather drive, go 1/2 mile east from the intersection of highways 150 and 56. Turn north on the road, which is marked to lead you to the park.

Brush Creek Canyon State Forest Reserve, although mentioned in the author's account on Birding Areas of the Waterloo Region, deserves a mention. Take the first road inside Arlington's boundaries from the west north, keeping to the left at the first fork, and going straight north at the first intersection. This is the access road to the forest. It is an area of extensive woodlands and brushy areas, located on a tributary to the Volga River. This is the closest of the good northeastern birding areas to Waterloo, consequently it is visited more often than most. It boasts of a large variety of migrants and breeding birds typical of this part of the state.

Gouldsburg County Conservation Area is another Fayette County area. Fine bottomlands have been formed here, at the fork of the Little Turkey River and Crane Creek. It is reached the most easily from highway 18. Take this road to its junction with highway 102, turning north on the gravel instead of south on the highway. Continue north on this road until it ends on another, east-west road. The park is southwest of the intersection.

The best Fayette County areas lie along the Turkey River. This stream meanders through the northern part of the county, providing excellent bottomland. Take the gravel road northwest out of the southwestern corner of Clermont. After two miles on this road, we cross the Turkey twice. Go north at the first fork, and the road soon winds along the river. Keep left at the first fork, then right at the next four. Here, the road leaves the valley, returning to it once more. A left turn at the next fork will get you onto w-42 and back into West Union. The area you have passed through is mostly private land, on which you can bird after obtaining permission. To follow this river farther, as well

as the other streams mentioned, get county maps at the local county court houses or from the highway commission.

Unfortunately, there is not space in this whole periodical to describe all of the good birding areas in the two remaining counties. These are in, my opinion, the best birding areas in the state for the type of birding they have to offer.

Cardinal Marsh is one of the few areas where waterbirds can be observed. Ducks, herons, rails, and grebes, as well as gulls and terns may all be seen here at one time or another. The marsh is not large as marshes go. It is reached by going north out of Ridgeway on highway 9 to the first intersection. Take the gravel road west four miles, to where it ends. The marsh is east of the county line road just north of this point.

Upper Iowa River is a favorite for canoeing. Birders of the IOU may remember the Decorah convention many years ago. Canoeing here demonstrated itself to be one of the best ways of seeing birds along a river.

There are countless other birding areas in Winneshiek County. Many, such as Twin Springs, Siewers Springs, and North Bears Creek are on your county map. All of the trout streams are excellent for birding. A local contact, such as Darwin Koenig of Castalia, can give you the specific areas.

The final county, Allamakee, is perhaps the best of all. It is the most remote, with numerous areas of secluded forests. The most important of these will be mentioned in this account.

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Yellow River Forest is located mainly in this county. In addition to the largest main area, there are numerous sizeable adjoining parts, mostly located along highway 364 south of Harpers Ferry. The main forest unit is reached by going north at the first intersection north of the junction of 364 and highway 76. Turkeys, ruffed grouse, and pileated woodpeckers are a few of the goodies one is likely to get here.

Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge is located in three other states, as well as in Iowa. Close to three hundred species have been observed on the various units of the refuge. The two Iowa units are located across highway 76 from Effigy Mounds National Monument (a good birding area with many miles of trails giving good access), and south of lock and dam 9, accessible from X-52. As with all federal refuges, permission must be obtained ahead of time to visit the areas.

Further Suggestions: renting a canoe and paddling around the various streams is one of the best ways to find birds. In this way, you are seeing the birds from a whole new perspective.

I wish you good birding in Iowa's prime birding area.

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Cedar Falls

