Woodward Brown, 4815 Ingersoll Des Moines 12, Iowa.

cc: Fred W. Kent, 302 Richards, Iowa City, Iowa. cc: Peter C. Petersen, 2736 E. High St., Davenport, Iowa.

Dear Woody : c

I have recent comments from all three of the above concerning the Field Checking List of Iowa Birds, and things seem to be congesling into a definite format. Your latest tentative list, received Dec. 7, seems quite satisfactory, and the few following remarks are mere minor details.

Just one suggestion with regard to the cover of the 3x5" folded card: I would like to see added the line "Number of species" at the end, after "Temp.", as the card has it now. This I find very useful for comparative purposes.

I am willing to omit the "old common names", but not for the reasons given. You say that the new AOU checklist has been out five years, but how many people do you know who have a copy of it; or have even seen it? If the list were generally available the situation would be different. Furthermore, I suspect the great majority of lows birders have no list later than Peterson's 1947 "Field Guide", which, fortunately, does have some of the "new" names as well as the old ones. However, the current edition of the lows Check-list does have all the new ones, and this alone has probably done more to straighten out people than all other sources.

Also, I would like to change my mind about putting in the "Rock Dove", and suggest that it be left out. Kent really convinced me by pointing out that the feral bird doesn't occur around Iowa City. Here at Cedar Falls we are a little closer to Iowa [4] Falls, where they are common in the "wild" state, but, nonetheless, the presence of the species on everyone's card is undoubtedly more a source of confusion than anything else, so I would recommend it be omitted. I waste a lot of time explaining to students why "pigeons" don't "count."

Family Names. I feel these should be simplified, and, whereever possible, reduced to one word. Also, whether one word or not, the first word should be the one called for the most in the list of species just below.

The worst example is "Grosbeaks, Finches, Sparrows, and Buntings". (Why omit Grossbills? Or even: Redpolls, Siskins, Towhees, Juncos, Longspurs, and oven Dickcissels?). In the list of species as Brown has written it, and which I approve of, all of the words are supplied directly where needed except "Sparrow", which is the third word in the family title. No matter what, it seems thus that "Sparrows" should come first. A newcomer, looking at the list, would see no reason to supply "Sparrow" after, say, "Field", than to supply "Grosbeak", or "Bunting", etc. I would recommend as a family title no more than "Sparrows, Finches, etc."

I like the list of species in the "Sparrow" family exactly as Brown has written them. However, to be a little more consistent in the other families, and to make it more readily possible to supply the missing last names, the following changes in other family names seem in order:

Hawks. "Marsh Hawk" can be changed to "Marsh", since the word "Hawk"is bmitted

everywhere else in the family.

"Sandpipers, etc." seems a better title for this family. As with the Sparrows, there is no point in listing "Woodcock, Snipe", when Willet, Dowitcher, Godwit, etc., are omitted. Then, in the list proper, the word "Sandpiper" can be omitted in the three places where it occurs. Also, I like to encourage students to learn common names for the families, and "Woodcock, Snipe, Sandpipers" is not unnecessary but deceptive, in implying that Snipe are not sandpipers, and in implying that there are no other common names in the family.

"Owls". Omit the word "Typical" since it is not used in forming the common names. "Flycatchers". Similarly, omit "Tyrant", and then the word "Flycatcher" can be

dropped out from the two places where it occurs.

"Thrushes". Omit "Solitaires and Bluebirds", for same reasons.

"Kinglets". Omit "Gnatcatchers" from the family name, since it occurs below, and the only word to be supplied is "Kinglet". The scientific name of the family, "Regulidae" makes it clear, the kinglets are the most important elements.

"warblers". Omit the word "wood". Otherwise it is not clear that the names should

be "Black-and-white Warbler", etc.

"Blackbirds, etc." Omit Meadowlarks, Orioles." Then leave out the word "Blackbird" where it occurs twice in the list.

All of these changes would make for consistency, clarity, and simplicity. They would omit much confusion and not add any. (All these names in caps.)

Two of the families are rather clearly broken up into easily recognizable tribes, with uniformly-applied common names, and for them I would suggest a slightly different treatment:

"Gulls". Omit the word "Terns", and put it, instead, in the now blank space just above "Forster's." Then, by not having a blank line between gulls and terns, it should be clear that they belong in the same family. Now, it is not clear which are which.

Similarly for the ducks. Put "Swans" only at the head, then "Geese" before "Canada" (omitting Goose"), then "Ducks" before Mallard, omitting the "Duck" from "Black" and "Wood". Leave the blank line before "Redhead", "Ruddy", and the Mergansers. (The alternative here is to put in subfamily names, which would also be satisfactory, i.e., "Ducks (Pond)", "Ducks (Sea)", "Ducks (Ruddy)", and "Mergansers." In fact, I would prefer this latter, as then blank lines would always be used to separate families, and for that purpose only.)

VI/tws/Nosk/Voys/Is/Ismoyss. "Doves". I would favor omitting the word "Pigeons", but if it were to be put in, put "Doves" first, since the only ones listed are doves.

I like the word "Mimics" instead of "Mockingbirds, Thrashers". In any case, why begin with the rarest of the three, and omit the Catbird, the most common of the three? where there is just one species in the family, you have regularly repeated the family name in the species name, which is inconsistent with the treatment of the other families, but, I suppose, could easily be justified, so I would not object.

The AOU Checklist committee had announded that "Red/winged Blackbird" is a misprint. It should be "Red-winged Blackbird". (Auk., July, 1962). We should follow.

I will be interest in your reactions, and the above suggestions should not be adopted unless you all agree they make the list simpler. Consistency is only a virtue if it is generally helpful, and this might not be true here. So don't hesitate to object to any of the items# suggested.

Martin L. Grant