

Dec. 16, 1962

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:

I have recent comments from all three of the above concerning the Field Checking List of Iowa Birds, and things seem to be congealing 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 Iowa 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 Iowa 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 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, wherever 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 Crossbills? Or even: Redpolls, Siskins, Towhees, Juncos, Longspurs, and ~~owls~~ 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:

