

ZALSTEL

12/1/80

November 26, 1980

Dear Tom Kent,

I am writing in response to your editorial comments that have followed the field reports in the past two issues of Bird Life. I concur with you that a listing should be made of all species that require documentation. This listing should be published in Bird Life. I also feel that until a listing is made of Iowa birds which would include population numbers and distribution all bird sightings should be reported to field notes. It is my feeling that up to fifty percent of the members of IOU have little knowledge of bird numbers or distribution. (As you have perceived, I don't know the dates of the reporting periods. I think these should be included in each issue in a prominent position) What might be a very common bird at their feeder or on their farm might otherwise be an uncommon or rare bird in any other part of the state. If they thought that it was common, they would not make the effort to report it. Likewise, if we were to exclude the common birds from being reported, we are excluding the same fifty percent of our club whose only birding occurs at their feeder or in their backyard.

I think that for many species of birds there have been significant changes in their populations, at least in central Iowa. A prime example is that of the yellow warbler. Brown states that it is an abundant breeder. During the past spring migration in central Iowa, I saw only two yellow warblers. This summer I found only one nest with three fledglings and one cowbird. There were no other sightings.

Another species that Brown considers a common breeder is the wood thrush. I have been in Iowa for three years. In 1978, I saw two birds in migration and none nesting. In 1979, there were none seen in Ames but two at the IOU meeting in Waterloo. In 1980, two were seen in migration and one nesting this summer. These numbers do not suggest to me that it is a common species or breeder.

As I have mentioned in previous letters, there is a scarcity of tufted titmouse. I did not see any this summer.

Another bird which I have seen only once in three years is the water pipit.

In regard to the blue list, I feel that after each new list is published in American Birds, the following issue of Bird Life should divide the birds into groupings as you did, rare, uncommon, common. You would state that reports for rare and uncommon should always be reported and common only if there are significant changes. Again this reporting would depend on the listing of birds being updated each year.

If I can be of any help in any way, please notify me.

Sincerely,

Hank Zaletel

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