

# The Bulletin

## Iowa Ornithologists Union

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### OUR PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Des Moines, Iowa  
January 29, 1929

Fellow Members of I. O. U.:

In this edition of the Bulletin our organization has reached a high point in its history. As our Union was formed for a closer cooperation of the bird students from over the State, the issuing of regular bulletins has been found desirable and the executive committee has decided that we should issue the Bulletin quarterly. Our enthusiastic and efficient co-worker, Dr. Roberts, has undertaken to get out several issues and his work will be greatly appreciated by all of our members.

In an early issue, it is our hope to publish the names and addresses of members, and have this supplemented in following issues so that every member may have a complete membership list. That this may be accurate and complete we want to urge that all send their dues to the Secretary at this time, if that has not been done before this. There are many persons in each community who would gladly join us if we made ourselves known, so with the present Bulletin as evidence of our life, let us procure new members. If you drop a card to our Secretary he will be glad to send you application blanks for new members.

Yours for a growing Union,  
A. J. PALAS.

Anderson, in his "Birds of Iowa," says: In the western part of the state it (The Black-capped Chickadee) is largely replaced by the Long-tailed Chickadee." In his "A Review of the Ornithology of Minnesota," Dr. T. S. Roberts gives the Black-capped Chickadee as a permanent resident and says of the Long-tailed Chickadee. "This Form is here recorded with a '?' from the western border of Minnesota, but all the specimens in the Survey Collection from that region seem to belong to the eastern form." In Bailey's "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States," the tail length of the Black-capped Chickadee is given a 2.50 to 2.70 and that of the Long-tailed Chickadee as 2.55 to 3.00. When measurements overlap, judgement is based on rather fine color distinctions. We have been measuring the tails of the Chickadees that have entered our banding-traps and all have been less than 2.70. It would be interesting if other bird-banders of the state would measure the length of the tails of Chickadees from their traps and report their findings.—Mrs. F. L. R. Roberts, Spirit Lake.

Sioux City is going to be the location for one of the largest conventions of bird students ever held in the Middle West when the Iowa Ornithol-

ogist's Union and the Nebraska Ornithologist's Union meet there next May. Not only are members of these associations to be present but there also will be invited hundreds of other interested naturalists. Plans are not yet ready to definitely announce, but "now just don't get in a hurry!" and "don't crowd up in front." We know it will be worth traveling five hundred miles to attend, so "Come On, Sioux City, with the announcement!"—Walter W. Bennett, Sioux City.

Mr. E. W. Sells of Paton, Iowa, sent me a fine specimen of Snowy Owl last week. There had been two of these birds seen there and one was shot and he sent it to me. It measured 23 inches in length and had a wing spread of nearly five feet. It weighed four pounds and six ounces. Paton is in Greene County, just over the line from Boone County. This is my first record for this bird in nearly eleven years of careful bird observation.

Last summer this same Mr. Sells called me by phone telling me that they had a pair of Burrowing Owls nesting near there. Being so unusual I drove to Paton and he went with me to a pasture hillside along Butterick's Creek about a mile northeast of Paton where we found them and I secured a fair picture of one of the birds at the entrance to their burrow. As far as I have been able to learn from all sources this is the farthest east nesting site ever reported for this bird. They are very interesting fellows and I intend to visit them next summer again and try for some better photographs.

Mr. Sells also took me to a very interesting colony of Black-crowned Night Herons about eight miles northwest of Paton. This was located in a large dense spruce grove around a farm yard and not near any pond or stream. I estimated that there were about fifty pair of old birds nesting there and an interesting sight they were. For those I. O. U. members who have never seen a colony of these awkward birds this would be an interesting sight. Before going out you should stop at the grain elevator in Paton and get all instructions and directions from Mr. E. W. Sells.—W. M. Rosen, Ogden.

One of the outstanding interests in bird life around Des Moines is the rapid increase of Cardinals. On the Christmas census Mrs. J. E. Stewart, Mrs. Chas. Christy and myself were covering a hill some distance from the others. Mrs. Stewart found a flock of Cardinals eating haw. They flew and she called out, "Watch for a flock of Cardinals that are coming your way." We watched and counted 19 flying across an open space.—Mrs. W. G. DuMont, Des Moines.

## NOTES AND NEWS

(By the Editor)

DR. F. L. R. ROBERTS, Spirit Lake, Iowa

This edition goes to all former members, also to all prospective members whose names are furnished to me. If you know of someone who might be interested in joining the Union, send me the name. At the same time, write a letter telling them they will receive a copy of the Bulletin and ask them to become a member. Because of the large number of copies, it has been found cheaper to print than to mimeograph this edition. It would require more than 3500 mimeographed sheets. If our membership is sufficiently increased, it might pay to continue printed Bulletins. Part of the expense of this edition is paid by our advertisers who paid \$2 each for the space used. It should be understood that this is a big price to pay for space in a periodical with such a small circulation. Members should show their appreciation by becoming acquainted with our advertiser's products and, if possible, by purchasing. In writing advertisers, be sure to mention that you saw their ad in the Bulletin.

If we are to have a useful and interesting publication, our members must contribute to its columns. Not all of these contributions will be of equal scientific value. Not all of the notes will be interesting to any one member; but, as our membership consists of people of all degrees of ornithological attainments, so should our Bulletin try to carry to each individual member something of interest. You are hereby invited to send in some contributions for the coming numbers. These contributions should be brief. They should deal with personal anecdotes regarding our members, with observations and records, with notes from your reading, with anything which pertains to birds or bird study.

Phil DuMont is a Des Moines boy who is with the American Museum of Natural History in New York. His mother let me read a letter from him dated Jan. 9. In it he spoke of the Christmas census. "The best birds on any Iowa list were the Lewis Woodpecker from Sioux City and the Red-shafted Flickers of Miss McCabe's (Des Moines). He also remarked that he and Kenneth Nelson had a list of 52 species on Dec. 26. "I ended up the year with 308 and 207 in New York region which is evidently a new record for the east,—added 61 birds to my life list this year." At the meeting of the American Ornithologist's Union in Charleston, S. C., in November, Phil observed 99 species. In addition he observed 15 species from the boat on the trip from New York.

Thomas Huxley remarked that going thru life without a love of nature is like going thru an art gallery in which all of the pictures have been turned to the wall.

About forty letters were written in getting together the news notes and ads for this edition. You can save the editor considerable time by sending in notes without waiting for personal invitations to do so.

Chas. J. Spiker is now in Syracuse (N. Y.) University. He is completing his work for an M. A. degree.

The State Fish and Game Department has, for free distribution, placards, 8x10 inches and small cards 3x6 inches, headed: "Do Not Kill the Wild Birds! Warning!" These cards also display the state law on this subject.

In a letter to me, Weir R. Mills, says, "We have a lot of remarkable people in our organization. I am acquainted with only a few of them, but such men as Stephens, Rosen, Bennett, and Whitney would be outstanding characters anywhere."

The Bluejays' coloring now has protective significance. When the sky is blue the shadows on the snow are blue, not gray. To demonstrate this, lay a small piece of mirror on the snow in such a way that the sky is reflected. Step back a few steps and observe it.

The following appear on the program of the Sioux City Bird Club this year: Mrs. T. C. Stephens, Mrs. M. A. Clark, Mrs. E. A. Fields, Mr. Wm. Youngworth, Prof. F. C. Steinbrenner, Walter W. Eennett, Mrs. Marie Dales, Miss Grace Smith, Mr. C. W. Ainslie, Prof. S. C. Cobb. The officers of the year are: Dr. A. N. Sloan, Pres.; Wm. Miller, Vice Pres.; Mrs. J. A. Dales, Sec.; T. M. Murdoch, Treas.

C. F. Henning, custodian of the Ledges State Park at Boone, is writing some animal stories for an eastern book firm, for use in schools.

Last year Dr. Dayton Stoner of Iowa City banded 1049 birds. These were mostly Bank Swallows banded in the region about Spirit Lake. Oscar P. Allert of McGregor banded between 500 and 800. Mrs. Marie Dales of Sioux City and Dr. F. L. R. and Mary Price Roberts of Spirit Lake banded between 300 and 500. Joseph N. Beck of Ramsen, Mr. and Mrs. Burr B. Butler of Whitten and Chas. J. Spiker of Sioux City each banded between 100 and 200.

The Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers are said to chisel out for themselves, in the fall of the year, a roosting cavity similar to the hole they make for themselves for a nest in the spring. Can any Iowa observer varify this?

In connection with Mrs. Bailey's record it is interesting to note that a Lewis Woodpecker was found in Rhode Island on Nov. 16, as noted in the current number of "The Auk."

Do you have any bird-books, glasses, cameras, etc., that you would like to sell? I would like to receive ads for the next edition of the Bulletin. The charge is 2c per word. You can do yourself and the Bulletin a real service by sending in an ad now before you forget.

Dr. E. W. Johns, who was formerly at Ames is now at Fort Collins, Colorado.

At present the black feathers which are to form the "bib" of the male English Sparrow show thru their gray tips. Later these tips will wear off and the black will appear bright and new. The Bobolink attains his "bright black wedding coat" by the same process.

On the 18th of November, A. J. Palas, W. F. Kubichek, Mrs. W. G. DuMont, W. M. Rosen, and Dr. F. L. R. Roberts met at the Rosen home in Ogden for discussion of I. O. U. affairs.

O. S. Thomas of Rock Rapids had an Evening Grosbeak at his feeding station this winter. This bird is an erratic winter visitor in Iowa. It is a bird of the northwest but in recent years has extended its range to New England. It is very fond of the seeds of the boxelder tree and it is believed that the extension of range is caused by extensive planting of this tree. In southeastern Russia, where the boxelder has been extensively planted, the Hawfinch, a near relative of the Grosbeak, has extended its range across the plains far from its usual winter habitat. A. A. Allen also remarks that the planting of apple orchards in Oklahoma has caused the Robin to extend its range westward and for the Arkansas Kingbird to extend its range eastward.

I have had four Cardinals wintering here; one a male, I know by his distinctive marks and this is his tenth winter here. He is here all year, of course, and I do all-year feeding, but I noticed him first in the winter. He and his little wife raised four broods last year and four this. They have used a different nest every time.—Toni R. Wendelburg, Des Moines.

Bird students of Sioux City are very fortunate in having a distinguished visitor with them this winter. Many bird lovers have gone out to see this visitor, who makes his abode in the Council Oak Tree in Riverside Park. This tree is well known in local history. Why this bird, the Lewis Woodpecker, should choose this tree will be briefly described.

Dr. T. C. Stephens made known the fact that the Council Oak is a bee tree. It is also known that this species of woodpecker lives mostly on insects, usually caught on the wing. Because of the very mild weather, the bees have been somewhat active, as several observers have reported. Thus it is reasonably safe to assume that our friend is feeding on honey bees whenever he can.

An abundant crop of acorns also furnishes the Lewis Woodpecker with another food supply. It is probable that he robs the caches of numerous Red-Headed Woodpeckers, who are residents in the park this winter. The Red-headed Woodpeckers take every opportunity to drive the intruder away. The big, black woodpecker does not retaliate in the least, but flies off with slow wing beats, evidently not caring to quarrel with his lesser relatives.

The Lewis Woodpecker was first reported by Mrs. H. M. Bailey in November. The bird has stayed on through December and was still as vigorous as ever at the time of this writing, January 17, 1929.—Wm. Youngsworth, Sioux City.

Wier R. Mills of Pierson is on the program of the Academy of Science and Letters of Sioux City for January 29th. His subject is, "A Botanist's Pilgrimage from the Black Hills to Rainy Lake."

The response to notices for dues for 1928 is slow. Those in arrears please give this your attention.—W. F. Kubichek, Sec., Cedar Rapids.

The day before Thanksgiving we found at Riverside Park quite a list of birds we had not seen in winter in other parts of the country about here. There were eight Red-headed Woodpeckers. There are not often found in the winter and are still here. A Lewis Woodpecker was really the find of the year and was found and identified by me on that date and later by at least a dozen members of the Bird Club. As far as I can find by looking up the records, this is the first record for Iowa and is considerably east of its most easterly range which is western Nebraska. Two Kingfishers were seen here on November 29th and again we saw one on the 19th of December, but they have not been reported later than that. A flock of a dozen Robins are spending the winter at McCook Lake and in Stone Park. Bluebirds were seen at Riverside December 19th, and a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets have spent the winter so far on the bank of the Sioux River. A Red-tailed Hawk was a Christmas record but we usually find at least one every winter. We do not consider either the Robins or Bluebirds rare winter records, but do not always find them. While Flickers are always with us, we find more here this winter than usual. The Golden-crowned Kinglet is not a common winter record but, next to the Lewis Woodpecker, the Kingfisher has been the greatest surprise for I can find no one who remembers seeing them here so late in the winter. We have had an abundance of the usual winter birds also.—Mary L. Bailey, Sioux City.

#### Buy Your Bird-Glasses From the Bulletin

Thru the courtesy of J. Alden Loring of Owego, N. Y., you can now purchase your bird-glasses from the Bulletin of the I. O. U.

ON ALL GLASSES, THE BULLETIN WILL GET A LIBERAL COMMISSION. None of this money goes to the editor or to any member of the I. O. U. All of it will be used in giving you a better Bulletin.

We can furnish prism-binoculars, new or second-hand at prices ranging from \$13 to \$85; opera-glasses or "field-glasses" (Galilean type) new or second hand, from \$2.25 up; also telescopes, microscopes and pocket magnifiers.

In some cases there is as much as 25 percent discount to the buyer, from the regular prices. Besides this, on every glass, the Bulletin will receive a commission. I have known and dealt with Mr. Loring for some years and know him to be honest. He guarantees satisfaction. Glasses will be sent on approval. A liberal allowance will be made for your old glasses towards the purchase of new ones. I will have on hand a few of the most popular sellers. If you will tell me what you want, I will quote prices; or send, or have sent, glasses on approval.—Write to the editor.

Mrs. R. G. Brenner reports a Brown Thrasher that has come to her feeding shelf daily since December 16th. The bird is apparently in good health.

Miss McCabe reports two Red-shafted Flickers, on December 25th.

A flock of Red-Winged Blackbirds have remained in Des Moines City limits along the river in Highland Park district through the months of November and December. They have been seen by various persons and were last reported on December 25th by Miss McCabe who counted 20 birds.

Golden-crowned Kinglets have been more frequently reported the last three months than other years. Cedar Waxwings, Redpolls, Purple Finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches have been less common.—A. J. Palas, Des Moines.

I noticed a Kingfisher flying across Dutch Creek in Wapsipinnicon State Park, Anamosa, at noon, December 31.—Chas. R. Keyes, Mount Vernon.

An ideal place for bird study, when it can be found, is a partly wooded area on the bank of a stream, with a grassy meadow, leading further, perhaps farther on another copse, and then cornfields. In such a location, exactly, to both sides, east and west of the electric power-plant (about five miles south-east of the heart of the city) Miss Morrison and I hiked during the Christmas census. We found nearly a hundred Downy Woodpeckers, Hairy, Red-headed, Red-bellied (one pair), two Flickers, flocks of Juncos, Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Thirteen Cardinals, a few Song and Tree Sparrows, quite a few White-breasted Nuthatches, some Bluejays, and a number of Purple Finches. Our territory lay on the banks of the Des Moines.—Toni R. Wendelburg, Des Moines.

On January 3rd I found a Belted Kingfisher at Buffalo Grove, north of Winthrop. There were frequent open places in the creek, thru which the bird could fish, but two days later the big blizzard came and on the morning of January 7, it was 22 below zero. A Mourning Dove which had been wintering on the Pierce farm was seen as late as December 23. Both of these species wintered here during the winter of '20, '21 but up until this winter, I have not known them to repeat the experience.—Fred J. Pierce, Winthrop.

On January 9th I received a letter from Dr. M. H. Swenk, Secretary of the Nebraska Ornithologist's Union, in which he suggests May 10 and 11 as the date for the meeting at Sioux City. W. F. Kubichek, Cedar Rapids.

### SOMETHING NEW

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An artificial KEY based on size, color and markings of eggs; and size, materials and positions of nests. 44 pages, beautifully printed on excellent paper, with fly leaves for notes. Size 5 1-2x8 1-2 inches, flexible binding. Fits outside coat pocket, especially useful for field work. Price \$1.00 post-paid.—Address HOWARD JONES, Author of "The Nests and Eggs of the Birds of Ohio", Circleville, Ohio.

We are at this time in the Museum completing our group of Hawks and Owls, augmenting our series of scientific skins and installing a collection of sea-birds.—Homer R. Dill, Iowa City.

Mrs. Toni Wendelburg, secretary of the Des Moines Audubon Society, has been accused, in a news-paper write-up, of flirting with her Cardinals, for she can go to her window any time, and if the Cardinals are within hearing, they come to her call of "sweeter."—Mrs. W. C. DuMont, Des Moines.

There was a fine colony of Cliff Swallows on a cliff of the Upper Iowa River near Bluffton, July 9, 1928. There were about 135 nests, some about twenty feet above the water. I was informed at Decorah of other colonies on a cliff of the Upper Iowa both in Alamakee and Winneshiekie counties.—Chas. R. Keyes, Mount Vernon.

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, of Des Moines have had Quail coming in their garden regularly to be fed. In the morning, here they come, single file, like Indians, hop over a stone wall and are ready for their cracked corn and hemp.—Mrs. W. G. DuMont, Des Moines.

Since the spring of 1927, I have had a pair of Carolina Wrens in my homeplace in Des Moines, two miles from the business center,—right in town. I have a great many trees and shrubs, much wild grape and other tangle. I purposely built a new brush pile last spring hoping they would use it, and they did! Raised two young! They are around almost constantly and sing all year round.—Toni R. Wendelburg, Des Moines.

(I have asked Mrs. Wendelburg for a more complete write up of these birds for a future edition.—Editor)

Twelve or thirteen members of the Des Moines Audubon Club went for the Christmas bird census. Flu worked havoc, also vacation trips, for there should have been more. We found 32 species, 1642 individuals. Miss McCabe saw two Red-shafted Flickers and a flock of 32 Red-winged Blackbirds the day before, making 34 species known to have been here. A Sharp-shinned, a Cooper, a Red-tailed, two Red-shouldered, a Broad-winged, a Rough-legged, and a Sparrow Hawk were seen. Two Barred Owls, a Screech Owl, 59 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 11 Red-bellied, nine Flickers, 129 Cardinals (30 in one flock) were also reported. The largest number of any one species was 353 Slate-colored Juncos. Some other noteworthy records were, a Vesper Sparrow (positively identified) three Golden-crowned Kinglets, one Robin.—Toni R. Wendelburg, Des Moines.

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