

COORDINATORS NEWSLETTER

We are entering the third year of the breeding bird atlas project. Approximately 120 of the 960 blocks have currently had any coverage. Clearly at this rate the project will not be completed. There still seems to be considerable confusion as to what is expected of our coordinators. Hopefully this letter will clear up any misunderstandings and clarify the responsibilities.

First and foremost, we need to get the blocks assigned and worked on. We have included a list of Iowa Ornithological Union members in your county. Suggestions for other persons to contact are county naturalists, state conservation people in the area, local bird clubs, etc. Emphasize the fun aspects of the project as well as explaining how its done. A group "blockbusting" field trip may be a good opportunity to get people interested in the project. People won't want to participate unless you're enthused about the project.

A press release is included for release to the local papers. Add some items of interest about your specific area and include your name as coordinator. Most people don't know about the project. We need to get the word out to as many people as possible.

Once a block has been assigned you should check to make sure the work is progressing smoothly. Sometimes a person will be having difficulty with identification or with confirming behaviour. Try to get another birder to go out and help in these problem situations.

Block cards should be turned in to you by late September or early October. You need to review the cards and decide whether sightings are reasonable or whether specific birds expected to be present are being missed. In the case of expected but missing species, a special trip should be made to look for these birds by yourself or an experienced birder. The reviewed cards should be sent to Doug Reeves by early November. If you feel that you cannot make good quality control judgements on sightings, please get back to the steering committee. We will try to arrange for this to be done by someone else.

If you feel that you can't get the coordinators job done, let the atlas committee know. It does the project no good to keep putting it off until next year. This project shouldn't be intimidating, rather it should be fun. Some effort will be required on the part of all of the coordinators to get the job done.

We will be sending periodic updates on the progress of the atlas. Pass these along to your volunteers. They would like to know how things are going too.

will have more than 75 breeding species. We recommend that a block be surveyed for 25 hours or until 75 species are found. It should be possible to survey a block in a single year, but this is not necessary.

SUMMARY

We can not complete the Breeding Bird Atlas without your help. There is work for birders of every level of skill. The project provides a chance to improve your birding skills. It gives you a chance to get to know an area near your home or perhaps elsewhere in the state. You can work alone or with a friend.

It also gives you a chance to use your skills to further knowledge of the bird communities of Iowa. We will be able to determine which species are common here and which are rare. It will give us a baseline against which to measure changes in Iowa's bird communities. We will be able to determine the impact of large scale habitat changes such as changes in farming practices, and the impact of residential and industrial development.

If you want to help with the Breeding Bird Atlas or would like more information, contact your county coordinator or John Fleckenstein, Bureau of Preserves and Ecological Services, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. (515) 281-8967.

Atlas committee members

Doug Reeves
Wildlife Research Station
Boone, Iowa 50036
515-432-2823

Darwin Koenig
Box 389
Montezuma, Iowa 50171
515-623-2102

Carol Thompson
1116 Muscatine Ave.
Iowa City, Iowa 52240
319-338-5361

John Fleckenstein
5400 NE 23rd
Des Moines, Iowa 50317
515-263-1738

Barb Wilson
RR1 Box 41
Hastings, Iowa 51540
712-624-8800

Jim Dinsmore
Dept. Animal Ecology
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011
515-294-6148