COORDINATORS NEWSLETTER

We are entering the third year of the breeding bird atlas project. Approximately 120 of the 860 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 yourvolunteers. They would like to know how things are going too.

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