

It is time to begin a formal communication network for the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas. This represents a first effort in that direction. Recently (December), a meeting, attended by Carol Thompson, Barb Wilson, John Fleckenstein, Darwin Koenig, and Doug Reeves was held to keep the project on track. A variety of topics was discussed from how to get more folks interested in the atlas to practical problems related to record keeping and field work. Many of the topics that were covered at the meeting are addressed in this newsletter; others will be addressed later. If you have information to contribute to the newsletter, please send it when you can. At present, I am expecting to prepare 3 newsletters per year on a schedule of January, May, and September. Please have your notes, articles or other information to me by the first of the month the newsletter will go out so I can get it in the correct issue.

A Cooperative Venture

The Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas is a cooperative venture between the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Ornithologists Union, and some non-affiliated individual birders. At its inception, the project had a steering committee of individuals who had been involved with Iowa birds for some time and who communicated frequently. Unfortunately, 3 key players left Iowa at a very critical time and the project began a year late. Even then, communication lines had not been well established and there have been some misunderstandings. Hopefully, what follows will clear up some of the problems.

The Iowa DNR, particularly the Nongame Program, has a vested interest in the atlas. Surprisingly little is known about some bird species, and it is hard to prepare projects to benefit species without knowing something about their current distributions. That is why the Nongame Program took the lead and started the project, especially since the blocks had been plotted and all of the necessary forms had already been printed. It is also the reason that wildlife management professionals outside of the Nongame Program are being specifically requested to do an atlas block this year. The Iowa Ornithologists Union also has a tremendous interest in the atlas project. Birders want to know where to go to see a particular species and the closer it is to home the better. Also, birders want to learn about new "hotspots" where certain species assemblages can be found. In addition, the IOU and Audubon groups have the greatest numbers of qualified observers to participate in the survey. So, because of logistic considerations, the Iowa DNR is the data processing center for the information and provides (increasingly) some of the raw data. On the other hand, the IOU provides the majority of the people to do actual atlassing and provides much of the field data. Members may request specific information from the DNR and will eventually receive a final report of activities.

Both parties have made significant commitments and it is important that people from both parties communicate their concerns with one another. The December meeting provided a tremendous vehicle for such communication and resulted (I think) in a renewed spirit of enthusiasm and cooperation.

Update on Progress

After 2 full field seasons 190 (22%) Breeding Bird Atlas Blocks have had some work accomplished in them. Using the criteria of 75 species observed or 25 hours expended, only 24 blocks (less than 3%) have actually been completed. We are way behind schedule and will have a difficult time completing the atlas at the present rate. Let's all give it a boost and get some blocks done this year.

Following is a list of the finished blocks by county. At least one block has been done twice (total of 104 hours by 4 observers). Let's keep this from happening by directing the efforts of our atlas observers into blocks that really need the work.

Finished Blocks - By County

County	Block Number(s)
Allamakee	111
Boone	439
Carroll	433
Dickinson	7,8,36
Dubuque	291, 292, 315, 345
Fayette	155
Guthrie	519
Hardin	306
Kossuth	70
Lee	860
Lyon	1, 2, 59, 60
Plymouth	188
Polk	522, 523
Pottawattamie	685
Ringgold	811

Coordinator's Workshop

A Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator's Workshop is being planned for the spring IOU meeting at Sioux City. Further details will be included at the meeting. Meanwhile, a general meeting about the atlas project is being planned for April 22 for residents of Kossuth County. For more information, contact Adele Black, Naturalist, Kossuth Co. Conservation Board or this editor. Also, if you have a group that is interested in a presentation on the atlas project, let me know; I will try to accommodate as much as possible.

Page Missing from Booklet

The instruction packet is missing one page of bird species information (nesting season, etc.). I have enclosed a copy here and will try to add the page to all copies sent from this office in the future.

"Missed Species"

There seems to be a tremendous concern that we are going to miss rare bird species because of the alignment of atlas blocks. People have suggested changing the locations of blocks, adding new blocks, and allowing people to create a block around a particular sighting. Certainly we will miss a few rare species! Nothing we can do will get them all. But, I am much more concerned with species that are being missed within a block than I am with rare species that do not happen to nest within the boundaries of a block. Somehow we usually hear about most other rare species. Also, with 860 atlas blocks in the state, I cannot allow the changing of boundaries or addition of new blocks--the bookkeeping headaches would drive me and my technicians crazy. On the other hand, if you do locate a rare species outside a block, let us (DNR and IOU) know so we can take precautionary or management measures and/or get the word out to the rest of the birding community.

The atlas project was designed to be a systematic sampling of Iowa birdlife over a short number of years. The purpose is to give a comparative picture of Iowa--that is, to compare regions and to provide data to compare with again at a later date. It was not designed to include everyone's favorite birding areas or

each "special habitat." The so-called "priority blocks" were created to provide information on county, state, and federally managed areas so that management recommendations can be made. These are really the only lands we have an opportunity to do something about in Iowa.

Regional Coordinators

Here, as near as I can tell, are the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas area coordinators for 1987. Please let me know if there are errors in this list.

Coordinator	County(ies)		
Michael Andorf Rt 1 Rowley IA 52329	Buchanan	Adele Black Kossuth Co. Cons. RR 2 Box 216A Algona IA 50511	Kossuth
Eugene Armstrong Rt. 1 Booneville IA 50038	Dallas	Ed Brekke-Kramer 317 E. First St. Fairmont MN 65013	Dickinson, Emmet
Richard Biermann 901 Harris Cherokee IA 51012	Cherokee	Cathy Conway RR 1 Wellman IA 52356	Washington,
John Bowles 229 University St. Pella IA 50219	Marion, Jasper, Poweshiek	Ross Silcock Box 300 Tabor IA 52653	Taylor Adams
George Crossley 1959 Stanton Dubuque IA 52001	Dubuque	Darwin Koenig PO Box 389 Montezuma IA 50171	Winneshiek, Allamakee
Dr. James Dinsmore Dept. Animal Ecology Iowa State University Ames IA 50010	Story, Boone	Jan Libbey Wright Co. Cons Bd. RR 2 Lake Cornelia Park Clarion IA 50525	Wright
Rita Efta RR 1 Auburn IA 51433	Sac, Calhoun	Robert Livermore RR 1, Box 60 Sioux City IA 51108	Plymouth, Woodbury
Ms. Kathy Fisher RR 2 Keosauqua IA 52565	Van Buren	John Fleckenstein Iowa Dept. of Nat. Res. Warren, Wallace State Office Bldg. Des Moines IA 50319	Polk, Clarke
Ardis Galvin RR 1, Box 145 Aita IA 51002	Buena Vista	Phyllis Harris Rt. 1 Union IA 50258	Hardin, Marshall
Douglas Harr Big Sioux Wildlife Unit 301 1/2 First Ave. Rock Rapids IA 51246	Lyon, Osceola	Curt Nelson RR 4 Mason City IA 50401	Hancock, Cerro Gordo,
Melvin Moe Mt. Ayr Wildlife Unit SCS Office Bldg Mt. Ayr IA 50584	Ringgold, Decatur	Peter C. Petersen 235 McClellan Blvd. Davenport IA 52803	Clinton, Scott, Muscatine

Francis Moore 336 Fairfield St. Waterloo IA 50703	Franklin, Butler, Black Hawk, Lee, Davis, Bremer Iowa, Benton	Diane Porter 908 E. Briggs Fairfield IA 52556	Jefferson
Dan Ray PO Box 38 Middle Amana IA 52307		Barbara Wilson RR 1, Box 41 Hastings IA 51540	Pott., Cass, Mills, Adair, Montgomery
Douglas A. Reeves Rt. 1, Ledges Rd. Boone IA 50036	Webster, Hamilton	Greg Woodley Fayette Co. Cons. Bd. RR 1 Fayette IA 52142	Fayette
Charlotte Scott 320 E. Lee Seymour IA 52590		Kevin Williams Morrison IA 50657	Grundy
Carol Thompson 1116 Muscatine Iowa City, IA 52240	Johnson Counties Without Coordinators	Peter Lowther Dept. of Biology, UNI Cedar Falls, IA 50614	Des Moines

According to my records we still do not have coordinators for 30 Iowa counties. If I have made a mistake and included a county with a coordinator, please let me know. Also, if you know of someone who might be interested in being a coordinator, please ask them about it and contact me. The counties that do not have coordinators are:

Cedar	Linn	Greene	Monroe
Chickasaw	Louisa	Guthrie	O'Brien
Clay	Lucas	Harrison	Palo Alto
Clayton	Madison	Henry	Pocanontas
Delaware	Mahaska	Humboldt	Shelby
Des Moines	Monona	Ida	Sioux
Jackson	Tama	Keokuk	Wapello
Jones	Union		

Bookkeeping Details

While attempting to get this year's forms processed, I have come across a few details that would make our job here considerably easier. Regardless of how hard we try, all of us will sooner or later omit something from one of our data cards but some bits of critical information are not being recorded. It is especially important that you write the number of the atlas block on the field data card. The name is much less important. In addition, the name or number of the county you are in is important. We can figure out the township and range numbers later if necessary and the quadrant/sections are pretty much for you to use to keep track of where you have been. It is also important to record the amount of time you spent on the block. If you put the actual hours down, we might eventually be able to determine if some specific times of day have been inadvertently avoided (e.g., night for owls, whip-poor-will, etc). Remember, the more complete the card, the better the information.

As a coordinator you can help me and my technicians out by getting observers to send their cards to you, proofing the cards, and then sending them on to me. I will provide addressed, stamped envelopes for mailing finished cards in if you will let me know how many cards you will be sending. That will at least save you postage.

Parting Chirps

The atlas project is fun. It is that simple. Don't let your observers be scared away by the instruction booklet. Rather help them understand it and get started. Nobody that I know has quit the project because he or she did not enjoy it.

We need an increased effort to get this job done in a reasonable amount of time. Efforts are being made to get additional people involved but we need your help too.

Attached on the following pages are some important and helpful bits of information from Barb Wilson and Carol Thompson. Share them with your atlas participants and help use them to recruit new members.

This is the tax season and I am sorry to report that the "Chickadee Checkoff" declined again last year to \$176,000. It has declined every year since it began and is beginning to get very close to just covering operating expenses. That means no more projects like the purchase of Shield prairie in Muscatine County, the railroad trail from Bondurant to Baxter, the overlook at Runnels, hiking trails in Strasser's Woods, or other "capitals" projects. Please help us get the word out to keep the checkoff from dropping further.

A SUGGESTED LETTER TO LANDOWNERS

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union and the Department of Natural Resources are co-sponsoring a survey of the breeding birds of Iowa. This is our first statewide bird survey and is similar to surveys completed in six other states. The Breeding Bird Atlas will give us a good idea of where in the state a species is found. It will help us describe which birds are common and which are rare. We will be able to repeat the survey in the future and measure changes in bird populations.

We are gathering information for the Atlas on over 800 blocks across the state. Blocks are three miles on a side. Most are distributed one per township. The remainder are located to include an important natural area such as a wildlife area or a nature preserve.

Part of a survey block is located on your land. I have responsibility for this block and would like permission to do survey work there. This will require one to three visits between March and August. I will walk over the area, making notes on the birds I see there.

I will be in touch by telephone or in person for your answer. If you have any questions about the survey, I can answer them then.

Sincerely,

Thank you for volunteering to help with the Breeding Bird Atlas Project. This is a cooperative project of the Iowa Ornithologists's Union and the Department of Natural Resources. Its purpose is to discover what species of birds breed in Iowa, what their distributions are, and to very roughly estimate their numbers. Our project is modeled after Atlases completed in six states and underway in eighteen states.

These pages are a summary of the complete instructions. When you finish reading them, you will not know everything necessary to complete a survey block, but you should have a good idea of what will be required.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey is designed so that it can be repeated in the future to detect changes in bird populations. The methods, therefore, must be followed closely so that changes in survey results reflect changes in bird populations, not a difference in methods.

The survey is to be completed in five years. (We have done three years work and have two years to go.) This should be enough time to complete the project. It should also be a short enough time that bird populations will not change a great deal during the survey.

Survey blocks are nine square miles; three miles on a side. Most are distributed regularly, one per township. A few are located to include important natural areas. Approximately 860 blocks were located to represent a cross-section of Iowa's landscape. Considerable planning went into their location, and they can not be moved to new locations.

Since we are not surveying every piece of land, some species will be under-represented or may not even appear on the survey. This is a problem with most surveys. We are aware of it and will include a section on under-represented species in the final report. If you know of locations for rare species which are not on a survey block, send in a nest record card or simply a note.

GUIDELINES AND HINTS

This is a survey of resident birds, not migrants. The date on which you see a species should tell whether it is a migrant or breeding species. The detailed instructions include a list of breeding dates.

The survey is intended to collect data on breeding species. You may find a singing male on one visit, see nest building later, and finally see an adult feeding young. Record each event on your field card but only the most definite evidence of breeding on the master card. Breeding codes are defined on the cards.

Most species are breeding in late May and early June. Evidence of breeding may be collected at other times for many species. Active hawk and owl nests may be found in late winter and early spring. Oriole and goldfinch nests are conspicuous from late summer into winter. Many songbirds are still feeding their young in late June and July. Six or eight hours on your block at this time may net a number of new species and upgrade many others.

Total time required to complete a block will vary somewhat. You could probably work for hundreds of hours and still find a new species on occasion. It appears that few new species are found after about 25 hours work. Few blocks in Iowa