

A Birdline would benefit many people in the state, not just the hard core birders, although they would be among the heaviest users. It would provide up to the date information on:

1. Rare Birds,
2. General information: Migrant arrivals, large concentrations, etc.
3. Birding events: Christmas counts, meetings, etc.

There are several advantages that the proposed system would have over the present informal network. First, every person in the state would have access to the information. Any birder would be able to instantly find out if warblers or shorebirds are in. If you want to know if this is a finch year, one phone call would answer the question, without calling 4 or 5 people around the state or waiting for the next Field Reports. This phone call need not be very expensive. The machine would answer around the clock so one could call between 11 P. M. and 8 A. M. when rates are the lowest. At this time, Sioux City can make a 3' call to Iowa City for less than 50¢. Costs might further be reduced by having one person call and relay the information to others.

At the Spring 1981 meeting a motion was passed setting up a committee to investigate this. Rick Hollis was put on the committee and told to find others. The following I. O. U. members have taken part (in person) in discussions: Carl Bendorf, Rich DeCoster, Tom Kent, Carol and Mike Newlon. Through correspondence, Pete Petersen, Ross Silcock and Hank Zaletel have contributed.

Following the first round of discussions, a questionnaire was sent out, to active birders, to gauge whether there was sufficient interest around the state. Somewhere between 55-60 were sent out and as of this date I have 29 returned. A summary is on

the enclosed questionnaire.

Based on the response we feel that there is enough interest in Iowa to: 1. Keep the line going (at least 5 pieces of information on line per week), 2. Use the birdline often (765 calls per year, based on a very limited sample), and 3. Pay for it (at least in part). We have commitments for approximately \$470, but many of these people expressed the feeling that we were asking too much (\$20-25 for the first year) and thought that the I. O. U. should help with the funding.

The costs of setting up a Birdline would be as follows:

\$100-300	Purchase of the answering device
\$250.20	Business phone line per year
\$ 68.00	Installation fee for business line
\$ 75.00	Temporary deposit (9 mos) to phone co.
<u>\$100.00</u>	Stationary and telephone costs to the editor.

\$ 518-718 The First Year's Costs.

\$ 350 Subsequent year's costs.

We propose to set up the birdline. We believe that we can get the system rolling on private donations. (These would be given to the I. O. U., so they would be tax deductible, but earmarked for the birdline.) We believe that a significant amount of future costs may also be met through private donations. In addition to individual contributions we are seeking donations from local bird clubs or Audubon societies.

We ask that the I. O. U. commit itself to providing ongoing expenses for 3 years. At the end of that time the Birdline would be evaluated. We also ask that Rick be given 5-10' Saturday evening at the Fall Meeting to present these ideas to a larger audience, and that a flyer be inserted in the next I. B. L. to bring this to the attention of all members.

Our present plans call for setting up the line in Iowa City. Rick Hollis will probably run the line with back up help from

others. He will sort out incoming information, edit it into a script and record the tape. This will entail trusting people he knows and phoning others for details. Phone calls may also be made to get more detailed directions. We have not firmly settled on the frequency with which new messages would be placed on line. It seems likely that it would be nearly daily during seasons when birders are most active, and less often during the slower times of the year.

Each message would start out with the date recorded, then move onto items 1, 2, & 3 (first paragraph). The message would run 2-3' and priority would be given to recent and important sightings. On rare birds, information would be included on the last date seen, detailed directions and a local contact. After the message, the caller could leave information for the editor. This would be the primary source of information for the line.

The Birdline is only intended as a rapid means of disseminating information. It is not meant as a means of permanent storage or evaluation. These would still be the responsibilities of the birders and the Field Reports Editor and the Records Committee.

Sample message: This is the Iowa Birdline. This message was recorded on 23 February at 10 PM. The snowy owl at Alta's grain elevator (Buena Vista Co.) has been reliably present since Feb. 2. It arrives about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before sunset. Look at the top of the tallest elevator from Center Street. Phone Jerry Hopple 333-456-8888. The snowy owl in Dubuque has not been seen for 3 days. Solon (in Johnson Co, near Lake MacBride) has a Curve Billed Thrasher from Main St. take Second Ave. (There is a DX station and a mortuary on the corner) and drive 3.2 miles. There is a white trailer on your right and the bird visits the large feeder on the E side of the house at irregular intervals all day. Ruby Berride, 3193382323. Redpolls are being reported from all over the state, but the Hoary Redpoll reported Feb 5 from Waterloo's Black Hawk Park has not been seen since. Remember to look carefully at all Redpolls. At the tone leave me the following information: Your name, address, phone number and detailed directions. Thank you.