



Illinois Ornithological Society

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President's Message

I can feel it coming. The days are longer. The sun rises higher in the sky, and it feels warmer, too, even if the thermometer tells me it's colder than it feels. Cardinals are beginning to sing, and there is more energy in the swirling flocks of blackbirds. Winter is starting to release its hold on our part of the planet and, as it recedes, the anticipation grows inside me — as I know it does in birders all around the state. Spring is upon us!

Birders are energized. Field trips are organized. Plans are made for a big day in May. Favorite migration hot spots are monitored daily. When will that first warbler return? Is there a push of warm air from the south expected today? What surprises will this year's spring bring?

We as birders get excited because the birds themselves are excited. This is their time to race north, to stake out nesting territories, to find mates, to use the bounty of springtime Earth as it reawakens from its winter retreat. We marvel at these precious feathered bundles who visit us on their long journeys, pausing to share such exuberant and beautiful song, dazzling us with gaudy plumage, and inspiring us as they burst with energy that comes merely from being alive.

We will watch this spring's passage as we always do. We will see what birds are early, which linger late. We did the same last year, and in this issue of *Meadowlark* you can read about what we observed then. How does it compare with what's going on now? Read and you can judge for yourself. Take some time to leaf through past years' spring migration reports to see what the near-term trends are. Are birds arriving earlier, perhaps in response to a warming climate? Are some species increasing in number? Are some decreasing? The observations that we all make this spring will find their way into next year's *Meadowlark*, and they will fill in a bit more of the big and changing picture of bird life in Illinois.

Your membership in IOS supports the painting of this picture, this writing of today's history of birds in Illinois. To be sure, IOS's field trips, annual meeting and other activities are great ways to get out and enjoy the presence of birds in our lives, especially during the energetic and exciting spring season. Please do enjoy these benefits of membership. But feel proud, too, that as a member you are integral to IOS's success in maintaining and publishing a record of the birds in our state.

— Geoff Williamson

Visit our website at: <http://www.illinoisbirds.org>