



## ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

### President's Message

When Eric Walters began his drive to establish a new birding group to be called the Illinois Ornithological Society back in the winter of 1991-92, he speculated that there were then some 240,000 people in Illinois with some interest in birds. At the time a national survey estimated that there were more than 1.2 million birding enthusiasts nationwide. A more recent estimate last year by the National Park Service claimed that birding is the most popular sport in America with 40 million adherents compared with the sport in second place, golf which 12 million play. There are a lot of us out there.

Based on that estimate and the fact that neighboring but much less populous states, Minnesota and Wisconsin had state birding groups with memberships of over 1200 and 1400 respectively, Eric believed IOS had a potential membership of at least 1200 and set an initial goal of 700 members. Today we have just over 500 members.

The question is why so few members? We know that there are more than 300 ABA members living in Illinois who are not members of IOS. One might ask whether IOS is competing for members with other organizations like the Illinois Audubon Society, the Chicago Ornithological Society, DuPage Birding Club and Evanston North Shore Bird Club, or even groups like Bird Conservation Network. But Minnesota and Wisconsin are in a similar position. Minnesota Ornithologists Union web site lists 22 other bird clubs in-state and Wisconsin Society for Ornithology lists 31.

At 500 members IOS is well able to maintain its current level of activities. The *Meadowlark* will continue to be published four times a year, as will *Wings Over The Prairie*, and we will continue to have a field trip program, an Annual Meeting, and to be IORC's institutional home. But IOS was conceived to do so much more. Our mission is to record Illinois birdlife and to promote the scientific, educational and recreational aspects of ornithology. The recording of Illinois birdlife part of our mission is well served as is the promotion of the recreational aspects of ornithology. It is the scientific and educational parts of our mission that need work.

Two things hold us back. The first is funding and the second is more people actively participating in our activities. All it would take to solve the funding issue is for each of you to recruit one new member for IOS. This should not be difficult. We all know birders who are not IOS members. Just as soon as we publish the Membership Directory, which is planned for this year, it will be easy to check who is and who is not a member. I encourage each and every one of you to actively recruit your friends. At \$25 a year, membership is a bargain, if only to get the *Meadowlark*.

As to more active participation, more on that later.

*Good birding.*

Michael Hogg

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