

MEADOWLARK

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President's Message

As I prepare this message Illinois state is experiencing an unseasonable early warm spell with record setting temperatures, which have triggered the start of the spring migration. Already several early arrivals have been noted. We are already anticipating the arrival of warblers and other neotropical migrants. I never cease to marvel at this annual event and hope I always will. I always ask myself — how and why do these remarkable birds make this long, arduous journey? Warblers normally weigh 15 grams (1/2 ounce) and require an additional 6-7 grams of fat as energy to cross the Gulf of Mexico. Not only do they need to store fuel for their flight, but they also need to time this flight and navigate a course to arrive on their breeding grounds when weather conditions are suitable and food resources are sufficient to rear and feed a brood. Crossing the Gulf is only one of the many hazards they face on their migration; they need to avoid predators and tall buildings or communication towers in their flight path. Increasingly their refueling stops once they cross the Gulf are becoming further apart due to conversion of forests and woodlands to other uses. Our knowledge of the migration stopover requirements of these species is poorly understood. It is estimated that with each gram of fat, a warbler-sized bird can fly about 120-130 miles. This fact raises other questions. How long do warblers forage to acquire that gram of fat? What food items are the most effective in replenishing the needed stored energy? How can we become better stewards and managers to meet migrants' needs? Obviously we need to provide secure breeding habitat in large blocks throughout their breeding range; we need to help other nations protect habitat used by native resident species and "our" North American migrants; we need to provide secure migration habitat along their migration routes.

How can we do this? One way is to support critically needed funding that will protect breeding and migration habitat. Currently the only funding proposal being considered is HR 701 The Conservation and Restoration Act. As you have heard me say before, your help is needed to ensure passage of this landmark-funding bill. If passed as it is now written, Illinois will receive some \$59 million per year. Much of this money will be used to protect habitat that will benefit migratory birds and other native species of wildlife. It will also provide more recreation opportunities and birding places. Write your congressmen and senators seeking their support. If you need information contact me and I'll gladly bend your ear about this issue (847-695-8225; Email Rmontey@aol.com). Passage of this bill will set the stage for a continuation and expansion of conservation measures that were first started by Theodore Roosevelt at the start of the 20th century, when he set aside the first wildlife refuge in Florida. Until next time.

Bob Montgomery

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Garganey drawing by David Athans

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