

Letter from the Editor

On approaching a rare bird

A Burrowing Owl in Champaign County! If you hear that news and you're anywhere near (or maybe far away from) central Illinois, you're out the door and in your car with binoculars, scope and possibly, a camera.

The adrenalin pumping inside you might urge you to jump out of the car and get as close as you can to snap a picture of the bird to prove that you've seen it.

As birders, we hopefully all know that's not the way to approach a bird. A cautious, slow, quiet approach is always best when trying to see a rare bird, or any bird for that matter. But sometimes we do get overzealous and forget that rule, which can have some unfortunate consequences. The aforementioned Burrowing Owl, for example, was spooked by an overzealous birder. It flew off and was never seen again. Yet a few other birders were able to get good photos of the owl without approaching it with too much vigor, without even getting out of the car.

Now, for those of you who didn't get to see the owl and are experiencing a sense of indignation, where does that indignation come from? Are you upset because someone chased the bird away and then you couldn't add it to your list? Or are you upset because the bird might have suffered undue stress? I admit in my case it's a little bit of both. These situations serve to remind us how fragile the birds we love to see really are, how they endure so many kinds of stresses in their lives.

Yet, there's no sense admonishing someone else for something we may have done ourselves at one time in the heat of birding passion. We're all human and make mistakes. Let's try to remain calm in the midst of a frenetic birding world so more can enjoy the experience, and perhaps the bird we seek feels just a bit more secure.

And, hey, you can always read about it here in *Meadowlark*, in case you didn't see it.

Sheryl DeVore

MEADOWLARK

A JOURNAL OF ILLINOIS BIRDS

Volume 12, Number 4 - 2003

ISSN 1065-2043

Visit Our Website at: <http://www.illinoisbirds.org>

Articles

- The effect of temperature on abundance and food choice of birds at feeders in northeastern Illinois** 122
– David Joseph Horn et al.
- A Christmas Bird Count marathon: part 2** 127
– Kelly J. McKay
- Burrowing Owl in Champaign County** 132
– James O. Smith
- The 2003 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count** 133
– Vernon M. Kleen

Departments

- Field Notes: 2003 spring migration** 143
– Paul R. Clyne
- Volume 12 Index** 159
– Renee Baade

About Our Cover:

Peter Olson created the Burrowing Owl cover for this issue. Peter, who serves on the IOS Board of Directors, is the Preparator at the Northern Illinois University Art Museum. His work has been showcased in more than 100 art exhibits in the past decade, including the juried Birds in Art show at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum.

Join IOS Today:

Members of the Illinois Ornithological Society receive *Meadowlark*, the quarterly journal, plus *Wings Over The Prairie*, the IOS newsletter. Members are also invited to special field trips, the annual meeting, and other IOS functions. For information on how to join, please see the Inside Back Cover.

Copyright© by the Illinois Ornithological Society. No part of this journal may be reproduced without the written permission of IOS and the chief editor, except brief passages of a paragraph or less in which attribution is made to the journal and author.