

Letter from the Editor

A goshawk in my backyard

Every once in a while a great bird appears in your yard. My latest great yard bird is an immature male Northern Goshawk. He's been here for several months and as I write this, he's hopping on the ground and jumping up onto a log pile and then onto a telephone wire, turning his head, watching, listening, waiting for the kill. House Sparrows meanwhile are chattering their two-syllable alarm calls. Earlier he sat in a silver maple and at least four American Goldfinches perched in various branches above him, surrounding him, it seemed, in a circle.

Today, I also heard a male Northern Cardinal singing as snow flurries gently fell on his back, and the Red-winged Blackbirds are returning, sampling sunflowers from my feeder. The birds in my backyard in late February reflect an interesting avian season, the one poised between winter and spring.

This is bird watching! Not listing, but bird watching, and I get to do it right in my own backyard. What happens when you watch birds, as opposed to count them? You learn about their behaviors and you feel as if you are part of their world for just a bit. Plus you learn more about their plumage characteristics. The goshawk has four tail bands, visible when perched, as opposed to three on a Cooper's Hawk. The bands may be slightly to very wavy. My goshawk has wavy bands on the underside and just very slightly wavy bands on the outside. He also has the characteristic fluffy white undertail coverts, much fluffier than what you'd see on a Cooper's Hawk.

The squirrels seem much warier of him than they do of the adult Cooper's Hawk that has also been visiting my yard, allowing for great comparisons.

Dave Johnson showed me my first goshawk several years ago. It was perched far away on private land in Lake County so we didn't get a great look at it. I added it to my life list and now realize it truly wasn't a lifer because I couldn't identify it myself. So, now I can safely say that Northern Goshawk is on my ABA list, Illinois list, Lake County list and backyard list.

Oops, I've turned back into a lister. So it goes in the world of birding. We can be listers, watchers, behavior specialists, citizen scientists and identification gurus. That's what's so great about this hobby. See you in the field.

Sheryl DeVore

MEADOWLARK

A JOURNAL OF ILLINOIS BIRDS

Volume 13, Number 4 - 2004

ISSN 1065-2043

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

Articles

- Mottled Duck at Lake Springfield:** 122
first state record
– H. David Bohlen
- Tufted Duck in Sangamon County:** 123
fourth state record
– H. David Bohlen
- Photo Gallery** 124
– Jerry Kumery
- Substantiating Audubon's Washington Eagle** 125
– Scott Maruna
- Birding Rockford in early June:** 130
a primer for the IOS Annual Meeting
– Daniel T. Williams
- The 2004 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count** 132
– Vernon M. Kleen

Departments

- Field Notes: 2004 spring migration** 142
– Paul R. Clyne
- Index to Meadowlark Volume 13** 159
– Renee Baade

About Our Cover:

Michael L. P. Retter created the cover gouache painting of a sleeping female Tufted Duck seen last spring at Lake Springfield. Michael is a regular contributor to Meadowlark. A longtime Illinois birder, he is a freelance artist and birding tour guide and is coauthoring a book on the birds of the Black Hills. He accepts commissioned artwork and tours.

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.