

Letter from the Editor

Important Bird Areas

Volunteers and staff members of various conservation organizations have been working on a very important list for Illinois – not a list of birds – rather a list of Important Bird Areas, known as IBAs. Why? It's simple. Birds won't come if they can't find the right habitat. Designating an important bird habitat gives credence to its ability to not only provide the right migratory and breeding grounds for Illinois' avifauna, but also for other creatures and plants that also need good habitat to thrive.

Some of you may have submitted nominations for this list, and think the work is over. Actually, scientists, volunteers and land managers are just beginning to make use of this list – and in fact, the list is not yet complete – nor has the program been promoted nearly as much as it should be.

For starters, you'll find two tables in this issue showing sites that are still being considered for nomination as well as others that need to be considered. Another table shows the IBA list, so far, and shows that only about half have been properly introduced to the public. You can help by writing nominations or volunteering to research some of the sites that need to be examined for their ability to provide habitat for migrants. And you can help by getting the publicity out to local newspapers, conservation groups and other interested parties.

For the first time since the program was initiated, there's a published list of the IBAs along with an article describing the IBA program, a map, and tables showing what needs to be done further.

You're seeing this first in Meadowlark and have IOS Board Member Bob Fisher to thank for spending a great deal of time putting together this piece. You owe it to yourself and the birds you love to watch to read this article and take one small step to help this program. By reading this article, you'll also likely learn about some new birding hot spots in Illinois, which we will be featuring in future issues of Meadowlark. See the next issue, for example, with a bird finding guide to Pyramid State Park.

For more information on IBAs, visit the Web site, www.habitatproject.org.

Sheryl DeVore

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Note: The Index to Meadowlark Volume 14 will be published as an addendum or in a future issue.

About Our Cover:

Eric Secker drew the Yellow-headed Blackbird on this issue's cover. Eric is a board member for the DuPage Birding Club and an active representative and Web master for the Bird Conservation Network. He has worked as an Important Bird Areas consultant and data analyst for BCN and Audubon – Chicago Region. Eric also runs his own Web site design business, Piazza Design. You can visit his website at: <http://piazadesign.com>.

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