



Illinois Ornithological Society

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Letter from the editor

Meadowlark provides exclusive information

Birders are quite familiar with the fact that songbird population numbers are declining. They experience it on an emotional level when they go warbler watching in spring and reminisce about the good old days when the warblers were dripping out of the trees. Or they see an Ovenbird dropping caterpillars into the mouth of a Brown-headed Cowbird fledgling.

What many birders might not know is the latest research being done to explain this phenomenon and find solutions.

Meadowlark is the place where readers can find such exclusive information.

For instance, we featured Scott K. Robinson's work with neotropical migrants in the Shawnee National Forest in Volume 1 Number 1 and Volume 2 Number 4.

In this issue, we present two more pieces of the enigmatic puzzle of songbird population decline. One article by Gopaul Noojibail discusses research in eastern Pennsylvania regarding the relationship between Ovenbird breeding success and mammal abundance. This research has applications in Illinois as well as other states where Ovenbirds breed.

This is state-of-the-art first-time published information and as the saying goes, you read it here first.

Another article you won't want to miss is Robinson's piece on the rare summer birds of the Lowden-Miller State Forest. Illinois' first record of breeding Black-throated Green Warbler was found here. Robinson and his researchers also found breeding Chestnut-sided, Mourning, and Canada Warblers, Summer Tanagers, and Pine Siskins — a rare mix of northern and southern species.

The results of the studies may prove that migrant songbirds can colonize appropriate habitat when it is available, but further research might show that the site is just an ecological trap that looks like suitable habitat for successful breeding but really isn't.

We'll keep you posted. In the meantime, a trip to Lowden-Miller State Forest this summer should be on every Illinois birder's calendar.

Sheryl De Vore