



Illinois Ornithological Society

Publisher

Illinois Ornithological Society

Robert Montgomery, President

Sheryl De Vore, Chief Editor

Mary Hennen, Vice-President

Michael Hogg, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Steve Bailey

Vic Berardi

Mary Hennen

Michael Hogg

Keith McMullen

Robert Montgomery

Joe Suchecki

Douglas Stotz

Geoff Williamson

Recording Secretary

Denis Bohm

Associate Editors

David B. Johnson

Peter Lowther

Christine Williamson

Art Editor

Denis Kania

Staff Photographers

Joe B. Milosevich, Dennis Oehmke

Staff Illustrators

David Athans, Brian K. Willis

Pre-Press Production

Kathy Ade

Printing

CityWide Printing

DesPlaines, Illinois

Membership Secretary

Denis Bohm

Editorial Advisory Board

Laurence C. Binford

Dale Birkenholz

H. David Bohlen

Kenneth J. Brock, Victoria J. Byre

Robert T. Chapel

Mary Hennen, Scott Hickman

L. Barrie Hunt

Vernon M. Kleen

Scott K. Robinson

W. Douglas Robinson

Robert Szafoni, David Willard

Letter from Editor

Playing favoritism

Birders who know me well, also know my two favorite Illinois birds (if it is really possible to choose!). Here's why I'm attracted to these two particular species.

The first time I saw the Black-Throated Blue Warbler was at Ryerson Woods over ten years ago. I had been listening to bird song tapes that spring. I was alone. The bird was alone. It sang. And it was glorious. I felt as if I had been transported into another dimension. There was something immensely satisfying in having an auditory recollection emerge from my brain just before the most interesting pattern of black, blue, and white emerged from a shrub.

What is it about this bird that has since captured my passion? Perhaps it is the fact that we see fewer of them during migration than we see of other more common warblers like the Yellow-rumped, Palm, or Black-throated Green Warblers, or even Blackburnians and Bay-breasted. I'm sort of an individualist and a free-thinker in this world, and I look upon the Black-throated Blue Warbler that way as well. Although I have observed the Black-throated Blue Warbler at Ryerson Woods on May 10 every year for the past eight years; last year, I nearly missed seeing my favorite warbler at all. That same year my birding colleagues were exclaiming they were seeing higher than normal numbers of the black and blue beauty — which only proves how fickle life can be. Another life lesson learned from a bird!

When the Black-throated Blue Warbler flies north to breed, my other favorite Illinois bird remains, the Yellow-headed Blackbird. My first encounter with this bird was at McDonald Woods in Lake County. What a sound that bird made! What a spectacular golden-yellow color on its head! What freedom it seemed to have flying over my head and back into the wetlands! What really solidified this species as a favorite was when I was doing the breeding bird atlas years ago and learned the call of the young from their nest. The same season I luckily confirmed them breeding in two different places in my atlas block in Lake County.

The sorrows and joys of life balance each other. One of the Yellow-headed Blackbird nesting sites was at a gun club. The next year, the club decided to expand its shooting range to include the wetland where the birds bred. I never could find them after that. Another breeding spot for these birds was at a marsh at the end of a subdivision. The residents built a duck blind, allowed purple loosestrife to take over, and, well, you know the rest of the story.

Breeding bird habitat is tenuous, and so is life. That's why both are so precious.

To learn the favorite birds of other Illinoisans, see the article beginning on page 24.

Sheryl DeVore