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President's Message

In my last message I noted that IOS was conceived to do so much more to further its mission: to record Illinois birdlife and to promote the scientific, educational and recreational aspects of ornithology. The successful implementation of that mission imposes on us the responsibility to reach future generations.

My wife and I frequently attend the theater. It often strikes us at the theater and at our occasional forays to Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Lyric Opera that Chicago's theatrical arts have a growing problem. They are not connecting with the younger generations. The same thing struck me earlier this month when I talked to the Rockford Bird Club. Virtually no one there was under age fifty. I am told this is a typical profile at bird clubs around the state. It was certainly true of the last Evanston North Shore Bird Club meeting that I attended. How well does IOS do? Our student membership reached a high of 21 in 1995 and has since sunk to our current level of seven. These student members tend to be at university studying the natural sciences. When they graduate they take jobs most of which are out of state so we lose most of them as members.

Granted mid-week evening bird club meetings are not the ideal venue to attract youngsters to birding, but these meetings do not seem to attract twenty or thirty somethings either. One way to reach young birders is by providing active field trip and educational programs and to coordinate them statewide. We can reach out to schools with volunteers willing to talk to students about the wonders of birds and their importance to a healthy environment. Opportunities abound for such activities. For example, one of our IOS board members recently helped Boy Scouts get one of their badges by volunteering his time to teach them about birding. Such activities will catalyze the imagination of the next generation of birders. Stepping forth to help run these events as representatives of IOS is one way members can actively participate in reaching the next generation of birders while helping IOS achieve its mission at the same time.

Good birding.

Michael Hogg