



ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

President's Message

One of the reasons so many of us are attracted to the sport of birding, yes it is a sport and it is the most popular sport in the country way ahead of the next most popular sport golf, is that it is what we want to make of it.

If you want to do a Big Year you can. If you want to feel part of something big, just join the birding throng at Montrose during the migration or if you prefer the solitary experience, you can find plenty of remote places in Illinois to bird. If you want to debate the finer points of field identification or just get some help on identifying that orange-headed warbler, go on IBET. If watching feeders is your thing, that's OK too. Whatever your inclination you are free to bird at your own pace, at your own level.

The marvels of today's technology enrich the experience. It is no accident that Bob Fisher set a new Illinois Big Year record last year; or that more birders join the 350 club each year. The instant communications of the Internet have contributed by spreading the word of rarity sightings. The Internet has also enabled the average birder to improve identification skills through multiplying bird chat lines and web sites devoted to birding. How else would more than a handful of people have had the opportunity to add a Fork-tailed Flycatcher to their Life List given that it was a one day wonder?

While advancing technology has improved the birding experience, it also represents a challenge for bird clubs. One need no longer belong to a bird club for the inside skinny on where to find the birds. Just go online. If you do not believe me, just look at our Listers Corner on the IOS web site. Look at the Life List section. The names in bold are IOS members. The other names are birders enjoying the benefits of IOS without contributing to the organization. If you are close to any of those non-members, invite them to become members. Cajole them, embarrass them, whatever it takes. Experience shows that personal influence is the most effective way to recruit members. And we need the members and the revenues they represent if we are to thrive and grow. It is just \$25 a year.

It is now easier than ever to join. Again the marvels of advancing technology! To become a member or to renew your membership, all one has to do is go to our web site Home Page (www.illinois-birds.org) and hit the Membership Information button on the left hand side, then follow the instructions. We now have enrolled with PayPal so that we can accept payment online. No more having to write a check, find the renewal form or wonder when your check will be cashed. It could not be easier or more convenient.

Good birding.

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