



# ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## President's Message

### Young eyes and ears, vs. old

The entire group heard it, a repetitive, cheery, cheery, cheery, reminiscent of a Carolina Wren, or a Mourning Warbler (but without the characteristic chorry at the end of a Mourning's song). But we were all sure it was neither a Carolina nor Mourning. Instead, it was one of our target species for the day's outing at Lowden Miller State Forest this last June – a Kentucky Warbler. Then, upset by our intrusion into his territory, the Kentucky flew in close, paused briefly on one branch, flitted to a second twig, and a third, then was gone, retreating back into the deeper woods. We had a typical look at this often difficult-to-see species.

I'm fairly confident everybody in the group saw him. But I'm equally certain all the young eyes in our group saw him first, and saw him better, than did the more mature (read that as older) birders on the trip. Those few seconds were a microcosm of what it's like to spend a day birding as part of an Illinois Young Birders outing. On that day in June I was the titular leader of the outing, mainly because of my previous experience at Lowden and knowledge of the somewhat confusing trail network. I cheerfully admit that my trip leadership skills were taxed to the limit on that day, trying to occasionally actually be the first to see or hear one of the many breeding species that use the pine and deciduous woods at Lowden—birds like the Kentucky Warbler and Acadian Flycatcher that are not easy to find for those of us who live in northeastern Illinois.

The mosquitoes were bad that Saturday, yet the enthusiasm injected into the group by the ILYB crew made it easy to ignore the persistent buzzing not to mention the welts. The discovery (of course by one of the ILYBers) of a Barred Owl, followed by repeated looks at the owl, was the capstone for the morning.

Candidly, it was a pretty slow day at Lowden. We had to work hard for the birds we saw, and we never saw at all (only heard) a couple of the target nesting warblers. Would a group of adult birders have stuck it out as long – especially with the mosquito swarms so omnipresent? I doubt it. Our collective mindset would probably have shifted to: "There are no birds here, let's get moving!"

I came away that June day with an even greater appreciation for our IOS members who support ILYB, especially Brian Herriott, whose leadership, commitment and persistence made it happen. ILYB continues to grow and is now at 50+ members and has four organizations as supporters (Chicago Ornithological Society, DuPage Birding Club, Evanston North Shore Bird Club and Illinois Audubon Society). If you want to learn more about Illinois Young Birders, check out the website at [illinoisyoungbirders.org](http://illinoisyoungbirders.org). Also check out the ILYB newsletter, *The Hoot*, to get a flavor of ILYB activities. You'll be impressed!

Individual birders and local organizations can support ILYB via the website and IOS welcomes that support. If you know of a local youngster who is or might be interested in birding, hook them up with ILYB. And take them out birding. They'll stretch your skills, perhaps rekindling the worldview that says: "Too hot, too cold, too buggy, I don't care, I'm seeing birds!"

I can personally say that's what lit me up at Lowden!

— Robert Fisher

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