

## Letter from the Editor

*A decade of Illinois birding: amateurs and professionals unite*

In my opinion, one of the most exciting things that has happened in the world of Illinois birding in the past ten years since IOS was formed involves the coming together of scientist and birder. Amateur ornithologists are learning more about scientific endeavors. Professional ornithologists are learning more about how amateurs can gather data important to the survival of declining bird species.

To me, it seems fitting to dedicate this tenth anniversary issue of *Meadowlark*, and the next three that follow it to all the citizen scientists as well as professional ornithologists who have done so much work to learn more about birds in the Prairie State.

Over the past decade, we have featured articles in *Meadowlark* about volunteer birders as well as professionals in Illinois who are making a difference. Our first issue, for example, included a story about more than 700 birders who spent 38,000 hours for six years gathering data for the breeding bird atlas. There's also the story about the Des Plaines River Wetland project, which shows how wetlands might be manipulated to bring back rare breeders such as the Yellow-headed Blackbird. And in a more recent issue, you'll find an article about how research on the Yellow-headed Blackbird, endangered in the state, is shedding new light on its needs.

Leaf through the pages of a back issue of *Meadowlark* and you'll find birders discovering new state birds, first breeding records, new birding hot spots, and early arrival and late departure dates for birds throughout the seasons. This information — along with where the bird was discovered to what kind of tree it was in to how it behaved and interacted with other species — is important to future researchers, in ways we don't yet realize. Every bit of data published is meaningful.

As we celebrate IOS's tenth anniversary, let's also celebrate us — beginning birders, advanced birders, budding ornithologists, professional ornithologists — all the folks who show their admiration for and desire to protect the avifauna of Illinois. It is thanks to all of you that IOS exists and that *Meadowlark* continues to get published. Let's vow to continue working for the birds of Illinois as we begin the second decade of IOS.

— Sheryl De Vore

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## About our cover

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To celebrate our tenth anniversary edition of *Meadowlark*, Denis Kania drew the special wrap-around color cover of Grasshopper Sparrows feeding young. He chose a grassland scene to remind readers how important it is to conserve and restore grasslands for birds who need this ecosystem in which to breed.

Denis did the cover illustration of an Eastern Meadowlark for our inaugural issue in July 1992. Since then, Denis has created our familiar logo and drawn copious illustrations for *Meadowlark*. He's also done illustrations for two books, "Northern Flights" (1999 Mountain Press) and "Birding Illinois" (Falcon Press 2000). Denis accepts commissioned work; clients have included The Nature Conservancy, the Chicago Park District, the Bird Conservation Network, the DuPage County Forest Preserve, and others. We are very grateful to have Denis's fine talent grace the covers and inside pages of *Meadowlark*.

Stay tuned for information on how you can purchase a limited edition print of this anniversary cover.

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