

Letter from the Editor

Congratulations to all of you! If you're reading this, you definitely have had something to do with the success of IOS, which celebrates its 15th anniversary since its founding in 2007. And you also helped keep Meadowlark going. We've published four issues annually for 15 years, with this issue beginning our 16th volume.

If you still have Volume 1, Number 1, compare it with this issue and notice how much we've grown while maintaining our mission. That first year, 15 persons and organizations gave us seed money to get IOS and the Meadowlark off the ground. Today, we have 106 patrons, sponsors, supporters and contributors including individuals and organizations. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Though, of course, Meadowlark, is important to me, and those funds help keep us afloat, that money also has helped IOS establish a scholarship grant to help pay for research on the birds we love to watch in Illinois. Besides our annual meetings, we now have an educational shorebird weekend of workshops and birding. We now have a Web site that improves every year. None of that would be possible without your generous support.

Those of you who know me, know what's important to me — education, research, conservation and, of course, the pure joy of birding. I truly believe IOS and Meadowlark have helped further those goals.

Over the years, I've been encouraged by the researchers who want to publish in Meadowlark. We've had articles on regional trends and annual variations in the fall migrations and in the spring migrations of Midwestern birds; population declines in the 2002 Chicago area Christmas Bird Count and how they may be related to West Nile virus; the effect of temperature on abundance and food choice of birds at feeders in northeastern Illinois; and so much more.

Since Volume 1, Number 1, which featured an article on the first breeding record of Red-breasted Merganser in the state, we now have 15 full years of articles published on state firsts, which researchers will, no doubt, find useful as the years pass. Indeed, consider this issue's feature on the return of the Trumpeter Swan as a breeding species in Illinois.

We've published fun stories, too. For example, we predicted what Illinois' next new bird would be — of course, the next new bird was the Red-cockaded Woodpecker at Illinois Beach State Park, which wasn't even on the list. We did eventually add Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Inca Dove, Roseate Spoonbill and Hermit Warbler to the state's list of avifauna — and all those birds made it to the top 12 on the list.

During these past 15 years, we've lost some wonderful volunteers — Bob Chapel, who compiled the fall field notes and wrote articles about the Smew that flew over to the Illinois side from St. Louis among others and Todd Fink, who wrote about shorebirds and the first Curve-billed Thrasher — to name just a few. Many more noted birders in the Illinois community have passed away since the founding of IOS, and we are lucky to have met them and learned from them.

I never imagined I'd be editing a state ornithological journal for so long — but it's just in my blood, I guess, and it's also thanks to you, the IOS supporters. And, of course, also, thanks to the birds — the intriguing, colorful, enchanting birds of Illinois. If I can't be outside watching them, it's great to be inside reading and writing about them.

Sheryl DeVore

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About Our Cover:

Barbara Williams created this issue's cover of Trumpeter Swans. She's been a devoted student of natural history for many years and has been a birder since she saw her first Scarlet Tanager at the age of 4. She ran the biology department at the Burpee Museum of Natural History for 13 years. She lives in Rockford with her husband, Daniel.

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