

Letter from the Editor

A bird in the hand

This has been a difficult year for many of the key players in getting *Meadowlark* out and delivered to your mailboxes. Because of illnesses, family emergencies, and job difficulties, some of us have had a little less time to devote to IOS, and as you likely have noticed, the issues have been a little late. (We're working on that).

Difficult years, however, can teach us a bit about the wildlife experience. When suffering from a long-term ailment, caring for a loved one, having too much to do at work; you can't get out and bird as much as you'd like. And that can be very disheartening.

However, there's a silver lining in every bird feather. Stuck at home, you're forced to look at what's all around you. Sure, you may not get a rare bird in your back yard (although see Bob Fisher's article in this issue), but you can watch Baltimore Orioles feeding on grape jelly from your feeder; you can watch a young oriole learn how to get itself some grape jelly and how to take a bath. You can watch the damselfies dancing on the helianthus leaves and the bee balm finally opening up into soft, purple flowers.

You can watch goldfinches bringing their young to thistle feeders; the fledglings quivering in anticipation of a yummy morsel.

You can listen to cardinals singing all summer long, even after most birds have fledged their final young of the season.

You can discover a water plantain growing in a wet spot next to your Norway spruce in the front yard; and you can watch two juvenile squirrels have the time of their lives running up and down your trees.

Like you, I long for exotic birds to see and new horizons to explore, but I hope, you, like I, can also enjoy what's right in front or back of your yard.

Sheryl DeVore

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About Our Cover:

Michael Retter created the gouache painting of a Sprague's Pipit for our cover.

A central Illinois native and regular contributor to *Meadowlark*, Michael currently serves as both a Technical Reviewer and the Sightings Department Editor for *Birding*. He also leads tours for *Tropical Birding* and *Birding America*. You may see color versions of his artwork featured in this issue at <http://www.xenospiza.com/>

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