

## Letter from the Editor

### *Let's flock together ...*

IOS President Bob Fisher's message in this issue about a potential second Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas brought back memories. I really learned my breeding birds those five summers, including the sounds of young Yellow-headed Blackbirds begging from their natal marsh, as well as the fact that female Bobolinks look nothing like the males. That was long ago, and the memory reminds me that learning about birds and their behaviors and plumages continues indefinitely.

During the atlas, I discovered the Yellow-headed Blackbirds nesting in a marsh located on a gun club's property – the owners graciously allowed me to survey the area. I also discovered Yellow-headed Blackbirds nesting, in the same atlas block no less, in a marsh with a few houses on one side. Those blackbirds are no longer nesting in either place, and as you may know, this species might one day become extirpated from our state. It might be disheartening to go out in the same block and not discover the blackbirds, but the information would be important to tell the story of this bird's nesting status in Illinois.

I also remember the Western Meadowlark that sang in Lake County all summer long while I was working on the project, plus the discovery of three different Cedar Waxwing nests and how the bird sneaks in from the bottom of the tree to get to its nest. What joy to see the wide gapes of the nestlings as their parents plunked food into their mouths.

I would so enjoy embarking on that journey again, but it seems we are all so much busier now than we were back then, at least I seem to be – and I wonder would we be able to do it again? Would I? But there's one really important reason that has me thinking now is the time to repeat the project. It would bring us together. It seems sometimes, just as the nation seems divided, birders in Illinois can sometimes be divided. For one, there are all those contests out there where birders are doing big days and trying to beat one another, which can sometimes lead to divisiveness.

So, if all the birders in the state embarked on a single project, would that not be a way to bring us together? We can share stories about what we're seeing, help each other out and create more information for ornithologists. I'm willing to give it a try. We need the flock of birders in our state to pull together for the good of each other and birds, just like, if I may be so bold as to say, we need a nation less divided and more interested in helping out our fellow mankind.

Email me at [sheryl.devore@comcast.net](mailto:sheryl.devore@comcast.net).



# MEADOWLARK

A JOURNAL OF ILLINOIS BIRDS

Volume 21, Number 1 - 2012

ISSN 1065-2043

Visit Our Website at: <http://www.illinoisbirds.org>

## Articles

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- Bohm Woods and the SIUE Nature Preserve: Valuable Conservation Assets for Southwestern Illinois** 2  
– Richard L. Essner, Jr., Zachary R. French, Lane M. Richter, and Peter R. Minchin
- The Bobolinking Project: Experiments in Field Ornithology** 6  
– Kimberly Meyer Ramirez
- Birding the Jane Addams Trail in Northwestern Illinois** 9  
– Keith and Mary Blackmore

## Departments

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### Photo Essays:

- Peregrine Falcons nest at St. Michael Church** 10
- Sandhill Cranes attempt nesting in central Illinois** 20
- Mississippi Kites continue nesting in Rockford** 30
- Field Notes: The 2011 Breeding Season** 11  
– Steven D. Bailey

### About Our Cover:

Matt McKim-Louder created the cover depicting the nesting of an Eared Grebe at Sand Lake in Mason County in 2011. Eared Grebe is a very rare breeder in Illinois. An experienced birder and scientist, Matt is pursuing his doctorate at the University of Illinois. Matt is studying Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism of Prothonotary Warbler in southern Illinois.

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