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## **Letter from the editor**

When it comes to gulls, I am lucky if I can separate an adult herring from an adult ring-billed. My gull-identifying skills are, shall we say, extremely limited. I have decided it is time to bridge the gap between the gull gurus like Ken Brock, Jim Landing, and Peter Petersen and gull gulpers like me. (A gull gulper is one who sees a gull, responds with a gulp, and then redirects her attention to Common Goldeneyes and Buffleheads).

Here's my idea. Get all the people together who find it impossible to get excited about a bird that has so many different plumages many of which can be described in one word - dirty. Then get all the gull nuts together, the ones who can't understand why you don't clearly see that the bunched tertials/secondaries are lighter than the folded primaries on a first winter Thayer's Gull. Then let's have an all-day gull pow wow out on the lake shore. Perhaps the neophytes and experts can then find some common ground. To get things started, we feature in this issue Peter Petersen's beginner's guide on identifying dark-mantled gulls in Illinois, Jim Landing's article on where and when to find gulls in Illinois, and Ken Brock's article on the first record for a Slaty-backed Gull just across the Illinois border in Michigan City, Indiana. Ken admits in his article that he almost dismissed the slaty-backed as just another lesser black-backed. Kind of makes a gull gulper feel a little better, doesn't it?

*Sheryl De Vore*

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## **About Our Cover**

Leslie A. DeCourcey drew the Reddish Egret, a species documented for the first time in Illinois last fall. DeCourcey began her professional art career as staff artist at Brookfield Zoo in 1980. Her works hang in private and corporate collections in seven states. DeCourcey accepts commissioned work at 708-387-9265.

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