



# Illinois Ornithological Society

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## **Letter from Editor**

### *The dreaded D word*

In our last issue, we featured an eclectic mixture of summertime birding ventures, the status of some of Illinois breeding birds, and even an article on butterfly identification. In this issue, I must bring up the dreaded D word.

### *D stands for Documentation.*

Please don't stop reading. I know documenting rare birds sometimes takes the spontaneity and fun out of birding for some of you.

But consider what jotting down field marks might do for you. Here's an example that has convinced me it's time to start writing not only at my computer, but also in the field.

A birder and I were out (I won't say who, because I don't want him/her to share in the embarrassment) in central Illinois when we noticed a Western-type Kingbird. It was his/her first Western in that county and my second Western in the state. So we were pretty excited. Only trouble is, the bird could have been, a Couch's perhaps, or some other Western-type Kingbird. The birder and I neglected to write some distinguishing marks that may have helped in our identification, and so the bird goes down in history as a Western-type Kingbird. (And I sure could have used a lifer Illinois bird!)

It's not that difficult to keep blank paper and pen with you in your birding vehicle, and then jot down notes when you see a bird. When you get home, you start remembering things that weren't there and forgetting things that were. Did that bird have white outer tail feathers or not? What was the color of the lores? Gray? Black? EEEK. The bird is gone, and you'll never know.

This issue features the Fifth Annual Report of the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee, a standing committee of the Illinois Ornithological Society. It's IORC's duty to review bird records and decide if the information warrants accepting the observation. Without written details, IORC can't do its job, and we, as birders, can't learn more about bird identification.

Several articles in this issue were written by those who thoroughly documented a rare species record that got accepted by IORC. The authors provide a service by giving you an idea of what to look for when you think you're seeing maybe an Allen's Hummingbird or a White-winged Dove, or a Black Skimmer. I hope you enjoy reading this issue's rare bird stories as well as IORC's annual report, and that you'll try some documenting of your own next time you're out in the field.

*Sheryl De Vore*