



Illinois Ornithological Society

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President's Message

The generosity of birders is quite amazing. Before a recent business trip to Oklahoma, I contacted a local birder using the American Birding Association's membership listings to ask for tips on birding the area. When I arrived at my hotel, I found his care package: detailed directions and hand-drawn maps, a checklist, road maps, and a 40-page booklet showing the dates of occurrence of all birds in the state. While birding in Colorado earlier this year, my wife and I encountered a fellow who went well out of his way to give us exceptionally helpful information for finding some of our target birds. He even stopped by our hotel in the evening to bring copies of maps that he hadn't had with him when we first met, and patiently described routes we should follow to get our birds. To be sure, I do the same for folks who visit Illinois. Just yesterday I faxed hand-drawn maps and detailed descriptions for birding the Lake Calumet area to a birder who contacts me when he has business in Chicago. Yet the effort that people are willing to put into helping visitors who share their passion for birding still astounds me.

It's not just visiting birders who benefit from the generosity in the birding community. Consider IOS's field trips. These trips are a wonderful way for Illinois birders to experience the bird life in our state (and even beyond our borders), but they don't happen all on their own. The effort our trip leaders put into making the trips enjoyable for everyone is considerable. Often quite considerable. There are the hours spent scouting. The time spent planning routes, forming backup plans. Correspondence with trip participants. On trip day, being at the meeting place early. Making sure everyone gets on the bird. Keeping car caravans together. Organizing meal breaks and bathroom stops. Certainly there is the reward and satisfaction of a job well-done, and the real pleasure of bringing enjoyment to fellow birders, but there is significant effort that goes into running a field trip.

Behind the scenes, more people are giving their time to make the trips happen. The field trip schedule needs to be organized and leaders recruited. Trip descriptions need to be drafted. Meeting places and times set. Schedules are assembled, checked and double-checked. Phone numbers and e-mail addresses gathered. Lodging information is pulled together for those who might travel from farther away. The trip schedules and information are laid out in the newsletter and are posted on IOS's web site. There is a lot to be done even before the trip leader gets the first inquiry about the trip!

As we are by-and-large a volunteer organization, all this gets done through the generosity of IOS's volunteers, people working hard to help others enjoy the wonders of birding. It doesn't stop with the field trips, either. You are holding in your hands this issue of *Meadowlark*, the fruit of many people's labor, especially that of our editor Sheryl De Vore. There is yet more behind-the-scenes work in keeping our organization running. We owe a big debt to all the folks that make it all happen, and we should be sure to show them our appreciation for their generosity.

Why is there such generosity? Well, it is rewarding, truly, and there is a lot of satisfaction in helping others in their birding, and in helping IOS achieve its goals. Here's a thought: why don't you consider helping out, in whatever way you can, so that you can experience these rewards for yourself?

— Geoff Williamson

Visit our website at: <http://www.chias.org/ios>