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President's Message

This President's Message is the last from my three years in office. In *Meadowlark's* next issue, it will be IOS's fourth president speaking to you in this column. Periods with new leadership are wonderful opportunities for an organization to capitalize on new energy and ideas while allowing continued growth of worthwhile efforts begun in years past. IOS is poised at this juncture to do just that, with a talented and energetic board of directors in place coupled with a strong group of volunteers and officers.

One area in which we've had much activity over the last several years is in our communications capabilities using the Internet. Certainly the world wide web has become very important for the flow of information, and we are striving to use this medium for the benefit of IOS members, the Illinois birding community, and for the public at large. We have had some success in this area, yet there is more work to do. Our webmaster Bob Hughes has expanded the web page foundation that was created by Mary Hennen a number of years ago. The web page sports a new look, there are more photos of rarities occurring around the state, and new features like the quarterly photo quiz have been incorporated. In response the web traffic at the IOS site has doubled.

Lister's Corner is now available in an expanded version via the web site, and plans to upload the official Illinois bird list as compiled by IORC, the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee of IOS, should be realized shortly. We also hope to expand our use of email communications to provide members with news and information.

IOS is also proud to have cosponsored the first two Lake Michigan Gull Frolic events in Winthrop Harbor, Lake County. IOS contributed a display of a number of museum gull specimens and a photo quiz for the study and enjoyment of the numerous birders who attended the event, thereby enhancing the experiences provided at the Gull Frolic.

Meadowlark continues as a very strong journal of state bird life; provides a superb collection of a mix of articles, data, information and artwork; and remains a foundation of our organization. I think you'll agree that as an IOS member you are very well served by the journal.

Due to the generosity of members who contribute above the level of basic membership dues, IOS's financial position has solidified. The stable financial base has enabled IOS to start developing additional activities in support of Illinois ornithology and birding, such as the scholarship program for research on Illinois birds that was begun last year. We'd like to do more, but it is necessary to increase our membership to do so.

Increasing the number of members in IOS remains our greatest challenge. A state the size of Illinois with its level of birding activity should be able to support a much larger membership in a statewide birding organization. As we move forward in the years ahead, we will continue the activities and services you have come to expect from IOS, but attracting new members will be an important focus of our efforts.

Matthew A. Williams