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Illinois Ornithological Society

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Peter Olson • Michael L. P. Retter

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TKAde@aol.com

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President's Message

Dear Members:

When you read this, our last field trip of the year will have just been completed – another event in our tradition of pushing the envelope in the search for hard to find species here in Illinois. This trip set for Nov. 10 at Pyramid State Park to was set to seek the elusive Sprague's Pipit, a bird that migrates through our state in very small numbers. It is rarely seen.

Targeting a rare bird can be hit or miss. Take our most recent field trip looking for the Yellow Rail in the fall. No Yellow Rail, but what a great trip – Long-tailed Jaeger, Prairie Chicken and Sabine's Gull highlighting 88 species seen for the day!

After a certain amount of experimentation over the years we have settled on a field trip program of 10 to 12 a year, including the Annual Meeting. Most of the field trips target difficult-to-find birds, such birds as Smith's Longspur, Sabine's Gull, Painted Bunting and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. But these trips offer so much more than the opportunity to chase rare birds. Some such as the Annual Meeting, Gull Frolic and Shorebird Spectacular are also designed to be educational. The objective is to give participants the opportunity to see birds as well as improve identification skills and enable even beginning birders to make tricky IDs. By the end of our Shorebird Spectacular this year everyone could separate a Greater Yellowlegs from a Lesser Yellowlegs and a Least Sandpiper from a Semipalmated Sandpiper.

For those of you who live for field trips, checkout the new Illinois Birding Calendars page on the IOS website, www.illinois-birds.org/calendar/index.html, with its monthly listings of birding events around the state.

The IOS field trips are a wonderful way to make new birding friends from all over the state and beyond, explore our beautiful state and see avian species. So far this year, 216 species have been seen during our field trips throughout the state. Our Chickens Trip to Colorado chalked up 227 species, including every species of prairie-chicken and grouse with the exception of ptarmigan. Finding a white plumaged bird in a blizzard proved too much of a challenge.

Our Field Trip Chair, Travis Mahan and his peerless trip leaders deserve our thanks for their well planned and executed events.

Look for our 2008 Field Trip schedule on our Web site and mark your calendars for the Annual Meeting on the weekend of April 25-27th in Southern Illinois. The Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Birding Fest of Southernmost Illinois. Details will be posted shortly on the IOS Web site.

Good birding.

Michael Hogg,
President

MHKiwi@aol.com