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President's Message

Dear Members:

Are we straddling two worlds? The real one, with birds, trees and grass; and the virtual one made up of digital images, email conversations and IBET postings.

Last week, I worked in the real world, painting *plein air*. I was outside at a natural area, painting with pastels, like the impressionist painters. No computer. No Photoshop. No unlimited undos. I worked with my hands, using skill and craftsmanship like the old masters.

I was at the Print'09 trade show to see what's new in the print industry. To my surprise, the most interesting and inspiring presentation I attended was on email marketing. Not printing. What does this tell me? The digital world has become an important part of our lives.

I just received the IOS membership directory in my email. It's the first digital membership directory I've received from any birding organization. I have a stack of printed membership directories from other bird clubs. This digital directory, takes up "virtually" no space. It will be a convenient resource. I hope those of you who have opted-in will find it helpful when traveling to another part of the state or looking to keep in touch with new friends from a field trip or the Spring Birding Weekend. Yes, the IOS membership directory has been a long time coming. Our outgoing Membership Secretary, Geoff Williamson, and Barbara Williams, our new Membership Secretary put it together. IOS will publish it annually.

Thanks to Geoff Williamson, who has managed the IOS membership database for six years (from which the directory is generated). Geoff has meticulously maintained our records, generated quarterly reports, corresponded with members and produced email lists and mailing labels. Barbara Williams has taken over these responsibilities with Geoff's guidance. Now we are working on ways to speed up the membership renewal process. We are looking for solutions to bridge the gap between receiving your check in the mail, with the virtual world of online renewal with pay pal. (More to come on that as we make progress.)

Please, be sure to keep your contact information up to date with Barbara (membership@illinoisbirds.org). By keeping your email up to date, you'll be sure to receive the membership directory (we only produce it digitally), get your newsletters on time and in color and avoid delays in receiving your *Meadowlark*. Some members have made special requests as to how they are listed in the directory. Be sure to let us know what contact information you do and do not want published in future editions of the annual IOS Membership Directory.

Speaking of staying in touch, IOS has now joined facebook. If you are already on facebook, be sure to "be friends" with IOS. You can see what field trips are coming up, start a discussion with friends, post and view photos. If all IOS members were on facebook, we certainly would add another dimension to our birding experience. Virtually!

There are so many services, tools and toys IOS would like to offer our membership. All these things involving new technology take time and expertise to accomplish. If you are experienced in any of the new technologies or have computer skills that could benefit our 21st century re-invention of this birding organization, please contact me at president@illinoisbirds.org.

Good birding,

Jenny Vogt,
President