

# MEADOWLARK

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## President's Message

The Joliet Army Arsenal, which is being decommissioned, represents the largest undeveloped tract of land near Chicago with the potential of becoming a birding hotspot if kept natural. Despite the presence of endangered and threatened species there, the U.S. government did not at this writing intend to designate the arsenal as a wildlife refuge. Not surprisingly, numerous groups including land developers have expressed an interest in the land.

This situation creates an issue for IOS to ponder. To what extent should we be involved in land use issues? One of our stated objectives is to support the well-being of birds and birding in Illinois. On a broad scale, this objective would naturally intersect with issues of land use and conservation.

Since the inception of IOS, we have invested our energy strictly with birds and birding rather than spending some of our resources delving into conservation-related issues. While it is important to note that our identity focuses on birds, we can not ignore the land use issues that constantly are presented to IOS for potential involvement. We support saving land from unnecessary development as well as protecting land to insure avian diversity.

It appears prudent now to address the land use question and formulate the approach IOS should take in the future regarding this issue. Membership input will help achieve a well-rounded solution. Feel free to contact me with your thoughts on this topic.

*Eric Walters*

## Articles

- Rufous Hummingbird:  
First Illinois Record and Specimen** 42  
- Ellen B. and Sherwin Strauss
- Rufous Hummingbird: Second Illinois Record** 43  
- Robert Danley
- Reddish Egret: First Confirmed State Record** 45  
- Sue Friscia
- Slaty-backed Gull Sight Record for Indiana  
with Comments on Identification** 47  
- Kenneth J. Brock
- Fulvous Whistling Ducks at Belleville -  
Escapes or Wild?** 59  
- Photo Essay by Dennis Oehmke

## Departments

- Field Identification** 51  
A Beginner's Guide to Identification  
of Dark-mantled Gulls in Illinois  
- Peter C. Petersen
- Bird Finding Guide** 54  
Gull Birding in Illinois  
- James E. Landing
- Seasonal Highlights/Fall Migration 1993** 60  
Northern Gannet, Anhinga, Prairie Falcon, Black Rail,  
Vermilion Flycatcher, Sprague's Pipit, Pine Grosbeak,  
Bohemian Waxwing, Black-headed Grosbeak
- Field Notes** 64  
Fall Migration 1993  
- Robert Chapel