

MEADOWLARK

A Journal of Illinois Birds

Volume 4, Number 2 - 1995

ISSN 1065-2043

President's Message

Standing about 5 feet from my open car window one bright Sunday was an unusual looking gull. It was so close I didn't need binoculars and after a lengthy study, I was convinced I had found my first Thayer's Gull in the hard-to-identify 1st winter plumage. What stole my thunder was my passenger who had been looking equally hard, and was pronouncing it an Iceland Gull! After inconclusive vigorous debate, we noticed the gull had shifted position, and the way the sun shone on it gave it a whole different appearance. I realized it was indeed an Iceland Gull and as I was about to sheepishly turn and apologize, my friend had begun to recant his identification and say it was a Thayer's Gull.

It wasn't until we set to paper both our observations that we could confidently identify this species. Others who read the documentation later agreed.

That experience highlights the fact that birders, even skilled ones, can be looking up close at the same bird and see field marks differently. How then can amateurs reasonably expect to impact ornithology? The answer is in written and pictorial documentation, the only means for other reviewers to assess the viability of unusual sightings. If I had started taking notes when I first saw that gull, I probably would have arrived at the correct identification earlier.

When sending details to our Illinois Ornithological Records Committee, which is aggressively reviewing old records, it is vital to have written materials. Take notes. Try drawing the bird. Take photographs. After my experience, I will more readily trust the rare sighting that comes from a birder with a heavily used notepad over a birder who took no notes in the field.

Eric Walters

Articles

- Endangered and Threatened Birds of Illinois:** 42
An overview of the species and their habitats

- James R. Herkert,
Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board

- First Confirmed Illinois Record
of the Glaucous-winged Gull** 47

- David B. Johnson, Laurence C. Binford, Ph.D.,
Alan Stokie, and Walter Marcisz

Departments

- Bird Finding Guide ~ Fermilab** 51
- Denis Kania and Peter Kasper

- Feeder Station** 57
Illinois' First Backyard Bird High Count

- Sue Friscia

Backyard lister attracts 221 species on farmstead

- Judy K. DeNeal

- Photo Essay** 61

A Day in the Life of a Glossy Ibis

- Dennis Oehmke

- Seasonal Highlights/Fall Migration 1994** 62

Northern Gannet, Ground Dove, Sharp-tailed Sparrow,
Ross' Goose, *Branta x Anser* Hybrid, Yellow Rail

- Field Notes ~ Fall Migration 1994** 66
- Robert Chapel

About our cover: Our art editor Denis Kania drew the Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Twenty one individuals of this species were seen in one day during fall migration at Illinois Beach State Park in Lake County. For more information, see Seasonal Highlights. Kania has exhibited his drawings at the Midwest Birding Symposium and A Touch of Nature in Chicago. He accepts commissioned works and can be reached at (708) 961-5364.

Copyright © by the Illinois Ornithological Society. No part of this journal may be reproduced without the written permission of IOS and the chief editor, except brief passages of a paragraph or less in which attribution is made to the journal and author.