

Letter from the Editor

Karen Forcum's best Illinois birding experience in the past decade was when she observed Greater Prairie-Chickens on their booming grounds. Here's what she wrote about her first encounter with the prairie-chicken:

"In the distance we could hear the rumblings of a thunderstorm and outside on the prairie in front of our blind the male prairie chickens danced to entice the females. It seemed like we were transported back in time to a day before civilization plowed away the prairie. As the storm approached, the chickens ceased their mating ritual and sought shelter, as did we. I felt an urge to cry and mingle my tears with the raindrops. Tears for a lost past and tears for a remnant of the past created by man who had destroyed the past."

Karen, who lives in Shelby County, just e-mailed me her responses to a birding questionnaire I posed on the Illinois list serve — IBET. The questionnaire sought comments from IOS members on our coming 10th anniversary issue of *Meadowlark*, and Karen was the first to reply. Her response seemed to encapsulate all that is true about birding in Illinois — the inexplicable feeling of seeing a rare bird and the haunting knowledge that if we don't protect and enhance what's left, we will lose some intangible part of ourselves.

That's how I feel about being part of IOS. But we also want to know what you think and feel about IOS and birding in Illinois. So, please take the time to answer these few questions and send the answers to me so I can add your thoughts to our 10th anniversary issue.

All I need is your name, how long you've been birding, your address, the best Illinois bird you've seen in the past 10 years (detailed descriptions welcome), your nemesis Illinois bird, where you think birding is headed in the next decade, how IOS has influenced you and what your favorite article is from *Meadowlark*. Send replies to: Sheryl De Vore, sdevore@voyager.net or 967 Braeburn Road, Mundelein, Illinois 60060. And get ready for our celebration!

— Sheryl De Vore

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In our next issue

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About our cover

Michael L.P. Retter created the cover drawing of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, a species documented for the first time in the state the summer of 2000. See page 42 for details.

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