

Letter from the Editor

The rare and the not-so-rare

Did you notice the handsomely drawn front cover of this issue of Meadowlark? And did you further guess immediately that it is a drawing of a Reeve or female Ruff? If you didn't, don't feel so badly. The Ruff is one of the rarer shorebirds to be seen in Illinois, and there are some birders still waiting to add that species to their Illinois life list.

What I hope you'll notice as much as the front cover is the contents of this issue based on a theme – shorebirds, the rare and the not-so-rare. We birders pay a great deal of attention to the rare ones, the Ruff seen last fall, for example, or the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper seen at Lake Chautauqua recently, and, of course, the Roseate Spoonbill seen in southern Illinois this summer.

But we birders must also pay attention to the not-so-rare shorebirds, the Pectoral Sandpiper, for example. That's not just a Pec. It's one of at the very least 5 percent of the world's population of Pectoral Sandpipers that migrate through Illinois annually. As for those "oh-so-common" Lesser Yellowlegs – at least one-fifth of the world's population migrates through Illinois annually. (See our lead article: An initial estimate of Illinois shorebird numbers and implications for management, beginning on page 42.)

We're losing shorebird habitat in Illinois, as well as throughout the world. The tens of thousands of Pectoral Sandpipers that pass through Illinois today are just a portion of what used to pass through here and other parts of the nation. And if we don't save habitat, they, along with the rare shorebirds we covet will be more and more difficult to find in the state as the years pass.

I hope the articles in this issue inspire you to support and promote current and future regional, state and federal initiatives to protect and create shorebird habitat.

Sheryl DeVore

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About Our Cover:

Michael L. P. Retter produced the cover drawing of a female Ruff or Reeve, a species mentioned in this issue's Illinois Ornithological Records Committee Report. Michael is a regular contributor to *Meadowlark*, both as an artist and an author. A longtime Illinois birder and field trip leader, Michael has worked as an interpretive naturalist at Cape May Bird Observatory.

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