

Letter from the Editor

On writing letters

As I write this letter, the McHenry County Board was in the throes of deciding whether to rezone property at Harmony Hill Road in McHenry County from agriculture to estate district. The rezoning would allow the building of homes on what is now a former horse farm with woodland and fields of crops—the habitat where a pair of Swainson's Hawks, endangered in Illinois, have just nested and reared two young, for the second year. (See Bob and Anita Morgan's fascinating article in this issue about these birds.)

What can you do? Write letters. Call folks on the phone. Write more letters. Make copies of this article and send it to the McHenry County Board with a letter. Maybe by the time you read this, it will be too late, but let them know how you feel anyway. Let them know you care.

To get you started, here's the address and phone number of McHenry County Board: McHenry County Government Center, 2200 North Seminary Ave, Woodstock, IL 60098 (815) 334-4000. Ken Koehler is the chairman. You can find the board members' home phones and office phones at this Web site: <http://www.co.mchenry.il.us/CountyBrd/default.asp>

Consider that the Swainson's Hawk may very well soon be on the extirpated list of breeding birds of Illinois, as the Swainson's Warbler likely is, as other birds one day might likely be.

We are all very busy. We love watching birds; what little time we have is spent watching the birds we love. But what about spending five minutes right now doing something for the birds – write a letter about the Swainson's Hawks or about any other bird species you think is losing ground in Illinois to someone who makes decisions about policies that affect them. It's easy to do so today – if you've got Internet. The only way we know if we can make a difference is by trying. I'm writing my letter as soon as I'm done with this one.

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About Our Cover: Peter Olson created our cover illustration of the Brown Pelican, seen by some lucky birders in Illinois last fall. Peter is the Preparator of the Northern Illinois University Art Museum. He has been showcased in more than 100 art exhibits in the past decade, including the highly acclaimed Birds in Art show at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin. Peter is also an IOS board member and editor of the IOS newsletter. We are lucky to have Pete sharing his wonderful talents with us.