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Letter from the Editor

How to memorialize birders

This issue features a memorial to three excellent birders – Ben Gelman, Jerry Kumery and Jim Landing. But they were more than that – they were teachers. Ben taught southern Illinoisans about birds through his columns and book. Jerry Kumery educated others about birds through his beautiful photos and interesting posts to IBET, the Illinois birders list serve. Jim Landing pointed out bird features to help folks with identification in the field for many years. He also organized myriad workshops so we could sort out all those gulls and shorebirds.

But, they were more than even birders and teachers. They were human beings. And it seems fitting during this time of mourning and before the Christmas Bird Counts begin to remember we all are humans and even though we have disagreements with “birders” and “teachers,” we must remember to treat humans with respect.

Many of us, if not all, have sent or been sent an “unkind” e-mail regarding our beliefs, thought processes and values as birders. Some of us get our feelings hurt for what folks have said about us on e-mails or in the field. And surely many of us need to be apologized to or offer our own apologies.

May I offer a suggestion on how we can best memorialize these fine people, especially with the holidays just around the corner? Treat birders with respect. Think before you send that e-mail. (E-mails can be very dangerous!) And send more good wishes to birders about their fine photography, great workshop, great story, great note and great e-mail that actually helped you understand more about bird behavior and identification.

I will try to do the same.

But remember, like you,
I'm only human.

Sheryl DeVore

Articles

- The long, slow exodus of Chimney Swifts in fall 2006** 42
— Paul R. Clyne
- Illinois Beach State Park Hawk Watch records first Swainson's Hawks** 47
— Vic Berardi
- IOS awards two grants for research on Red-headed Woodpeckers and American Golden-Plovers in Illinois** 48
- In Memoriam – Birders, friends, teachers Ben Gelman, Jerry Kumery and James Landing** 49

Departments

- Seasonal Highlights** 53
- Western and Red-necked Grebes: from one slough to another
 - For Say's Phoebe, visit a hawk watch
- Sheryl De Vore
- Yard Birds** 54
- Reflections on backyard birding throughout Illinois
— Robert Fisher
- Thirteenth report of the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee** 56
— Douglas F. Stotz
- Field Notes: The 2006 fall migration** 62
— Douglas F. Stotz

About Our Cover:

Barbara Williams created this issue's cover of Chimney Swifts migrating. Barbara has been a devoted student of natural history for many years and has been a birder since she saw her first Scarlet Tanager at the age of 4. She ran the biology department at the Burpee Museum of Natural History for 13 years. She lives in Rockford with her husband, Daniel.

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