

Letter from the Editor

Diary of a weary worker

In these economically trying times when our jobs require more and more of our time, we can forget, as I recently did, one of the key reasons to go birding.

On a recent Saturday, I spent from 7:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. working—my job requires these long hours on weekends once a month.

Sometime during the day, a Sage Thrasher was discovered at Montrose. I wasn't going to go to find it the next day. I was going to sleep in—and I had no desire to drive 60 minutes downtown from my northern Illinois home to add an Illinois lifer to my list.

So I slept in, while the zealous and sometimes crazed birder who also happens to be my husband got up at 5 a.m. to go find that state lifer.

When I got up at 8 a.m., much later than I usually do, I started to feel sad. And I didn't know why; that is, until my husband called me in the late morning and said, "You really should get down here. This bird is easy to see."

The computer was on, books and papers were strewn on the computer table, and work was waiting for me. I thought for a moment, and then in five minutes my clothes were on, the car was running and I was on my way to Montrose.

While driving, I thought about all those trips I used to make to Montrose early in the morning to see a rare bird or migrants flying in—and how it had been years since I had giddily headed south in hopes of a great birding experience.

When I arrived—someone had just flushed the bird and it had flown from where folks had been seeing it. Standing there with others trying to re-find the bird on a windy, but sunny, warmish autumn day, I felt that old adrenaline kick in, that old child-like glee that comes when you see a new bird, a rare bird or just a cool bird behaving in an interesting way.

I saw the bird. And I saw it again even closer as it fed on berries. Others around me saw the bird and we laughed like kids with ice cream cones. Suddenly I was alive, filled with energy.

That's what birds can do for us—bring us back to a sense of wonder, take us away from the grueling work we must do to survive. Perhaps all I really need to survive is to remember how much I love birds.

Sheryl DeVore

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About Our Cover:

Michael Retter created the gouache painting of a male Broad-billed Hummingbird for our cover. A central Illinois native, Michael currently lives with his partner, Matt, in West Lafayette, Indiana.

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