



# Illinois Ornithological Society

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## **President's Message**

I remember Mr. Cantor. He was my older brother's high school biology teacher, and he led bird walks at the school every Wednesday morning during spring and fall. My brother knew I was interested in birds so he arranged for me to go on one of the walks. It was with suspense and uncertainty that I arrived that morning, and when Mr. Cantor asked me if I had binoculars, I had to sheepishly say, "No." But that was no problem: the trunk of his car was filled with spare pairs and I could borrow one. Wow!

Then the fun started. I was introduced to Barn Swallows, whipping across the ball fields as we approached the adjacent woods. It didn't matter that I couldn't quite get the binoculars on the swallow, because soon we were looking at the meadowlark perched on a post. After entering the woods, Mr. Cantor was telling our group that the bird saying "teacher Teacher TEACHER" was an Ovenbird. A what? I had no clue what an oven bird was, nor did I have a clue as to how he found this little thing, motionless, but singing, in the middle of the woods. With great patience, he got me on my lifer Ovenbird. I also remember Dick Evans. I met Dick through the Cayuga Bird Club in Ithaca, New York, the first bird club I ever joined. Dick took me on my first Christmas Bird Count. He let me look through his telescope at my first Common Loon. He passed to me countless tidbits of bird lore, explained to me why this bird was this and that bird was that. When I was getting ready to move to Chicago he told me, "I'll bet you'll see a lot of Dickcissels out there." He was right. I think of Dick every time I see one.

Here in Chicago and in Illinois I've met many others who have generously shared their passion for birds with me. My life is very much the richer for it. I'm still learning, and through IOS I continue to meet people like Mr. Cantor and Dick Evans who open windows big and small to help me better experience the birds around me. I am deeply in debt to all the people who have given so much to me through birds and birding.

One of IOS's objectives is "To encourage others to become interested in birds and birding in Illinois." I hope we all make this one of our own, personal objectives, and take advantage of every opportunity to give back to the birding community and to the public at large what we've been so lucky to receive. I know I feel privileged to do so. Take a first-time Christmas Counter out. Speak to community groups, and introduce them to birds. Spread the word about our birds. Not only does it make a difference, but you'll also enjoy sharing what you have to offer other folks.

Through IOS you'll have many opportunities to learn from your fellow members. Take advantage of these. Also take advantage of your opportunities to share what you have to offer. Together we can bring the wonder the birds to everyone around us.