



ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

President's Message

OpEd column needs your input

Bitter January wind gusts shake the windows overlooking my desk as I contemplate what to say in this column, my first as President of IOS. Sunset was several hours ago, yet our yard is bright – the snow cover contrasting with the stark, bare limbs of our deciduous trees and bushes, the conifers rendered as dark, formless shapes against the white. Sounds are magnified in the cold. My wife, Karen, and I can faintly hear our local pair of Great Horned Owls calling back and forth to each other, first the higher pitched female, then the deeper, more sonorous male voice in response. The atmosphere of the moment recalls what Poe might have been thinking when he penned those words, "It was in the bleak December," from his famous poem, "The Raven." But then I realize the owls are communicating, not about bleak winter, but rather the promise of winter's end. More to the point, they are communicating, and that's what this column is supposed to be about.

Communication is the heart of the IOS mission, through *Meadowlark* and *Wings Over the Prairie*, through our website, where we can find everything – from our field trip schedule, to Lister's Corner, to challenging bird ID quizzes – and through the conversations we have with all the members of the IOS family, whether at a board meeting, or a conversation on a field trip or IOS event, like the February Gull Frolic, where discussion, laughter and camaraderie are the order of the day. Edgar Allen would have been hard pressed to maintain his customary bleak mood while at a Frolic! Who knows, a lyrical panegyric describing the grace of a gull might have flowed from his pen were he in attendance.

So what shall I communicate first? That's easy! Thanks! First to Jenny Vogt, who served IOS so capably as President, to Geoff Williamson, our recently retired Membership Secretary, to Denis Bohm, who relinquished organizing the Gull Frolic this year after many years of service, to Sheryl Devore, who guides the Meadowlark into being four times each year, to Marj Lundy, Editor of the IOS newsletter, to Bob Hughes, website Webmaster, to Michael Retter, Field Trips Chair, to Denis Bohm and Alex Meloy who faithfully record the minutes and keep the books, to our active board: Steve Bailey, Joan Bruchman, Scott Cohrs, Jon Duerr, Brian Herriott, Marj Lundy, Jeff Walk and Barbara Williams – each of whom takes up and guides one or more IOS activities or event on behalf of you, our members.

The second idea I want to communicate: Change is coming! You'll hear more about what's on our plate as the year progresses, through the website and *Wings Over The Prairie*. Your Board has ambitious plans and ideas for the future direction of IOS. The first change: we're going to deep six this column, converting it to a Meadowlark OpEd page. Different IOSers will inform you of what's going on within IOS, advancing challenging ideas about the present and future direction of our community of birders. To each of you who read this column, if you have a thoughtful idea or perspective on the state of birding in Illinois, drop me a line and we'll figure out how to get that message out to the membership. Remember, communication is our *raison d'être*.

*Your voice and ideas are important :
Don't hesitate to speak out.*

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