

MEADOWLARK

A Journal of Illinois Birds

Volume 9, Number 3 – 2000

ISSN 1065-2043

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Letter from the editor

Many of you probably don't know that Coral Ackerman introduced me to birding. I was a young reporter at the time (15 or 16 years ago) and saw a press release about a College of Lake County birding class. I decided to write a story about it. The first class, I saw a duck. Not just any duck. A blue-winged teal. A duck with soft-blue patches on its wings when in flight.

Do you remember the excitement of finding your first Hooded Warbler? Black-throated Blue Warbler? Connecticut Warbler? I do. I found them all at Ryerson Woods. I can tell you exactly where I saw them, and I have Coral Ackerman to thank for introducing me to the Lake County Forest Preserves.

Dave Johnson instilled in me a passion for breeding birds. One day 10 or more years ago, I ran into him at the post office and he said, "Hey, want to do some breeding bird atlases?" He gave me a block in Grayslake, Illinois, and I spent one of the happiest summers of my life finding birds and nests and adults feeding young, and learning about bird behavior. Seeing young Spotted Sandpipers trying to pump their not-yet-developed tails, or hearing the distinctive call of Yellow-headed Blackbird young begging for food in a marsh – that was heaven on earth.

Many IOS members have helped me understand the finer points of bird identification and bird distribution – people like Steve Bailey, Eric Walters, my friends from the Palos region, and my friends from southern Illinois. The people who willingly share their knowledge and expertise with others are those who make a difference that will reverberate long after they are gone.

I'll let you in on a secret. When you teach, you learn. You also experience an indescribable joy. What strikes me most about teaching birding classes is that I get to experience vicariously through them, what it's like to see or hear your first Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, Kentucky Warbler, White-eyed Vireo...

Please share your knowledge. Teach others. Not only for them. But also for you.

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About Our Cover:

Peter Olson drew the cover art of a Scott's Oriole. See page 91 for an account of a first Illinois record of this species. Peter is a professional artist working at the Northern Illinois University Art Museum. You can view his work on line at www.nature-as-metaphor.com

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