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Letter from the editor

Part of the reason for IOS' existence and for this journal is to publish scientific data collected via Christmas and Spring Bird Counts and throughout the four seasons. Much of this data is gathered by everyday birders like you and me who are interested in improving our identification skills, documenting breeding success, recording migration trends, observing birds in the backyard, or engaging in myriad other ways to enjoy birding in Illinois.

While the data may appear to be just an extensive list of species and numbers, I urge you to take a closer look. What you discover could enhance your enjoyment of birds as well as help future researchers in their quest to protect the birds of Illinois.

While doing a breeding bird transect survey of two Lake County Forest Preserves this summer, I reviewed Vernon Kleen's 1992 and 1993 breeding season reports published in *Meadowlark*. I learned that Alder and Least Flycatchers are late migrants and that I could not necessarily count them as breeding birds even if they did appear in mid-June.

An Illinois Department of Conservation wildlife biologist also informed me that he has used *Meadowlark*'s published data for research on Canada Geese.

These experiences encouraged me to send my bird sightings to the appropriate field notes editors. I hope you will do so, too. Just send your detailed information - species seen, exact date, and exact location including city and county - to the editors mentioned at the end of the reports.

And before you go out in the field, why not check the back pages of *Meadowlark*? There is a great deal to be learned there.

Should you have questions or comments about the data we publish in *Meadowlark*, please write to me or one of the field notes editors. And while you're still gotpen in hand, thank Vernon Kleen, Robert Danley, Robert Chapel, and Eric Walters for the many long hours they have put into compiling this useful information.

Sheryl De Vore

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About Our Cover

David Athans drew the male and female Oldsquaw in winter plumage. The Oldsquaw was one of 27 species of ducks seen in Sangamon County last winter. Athans, a member of the Chicago Ornithological Society, has exhibited his drawings at the Midwest Birding Symposium and also sells his works through Wild Birds Unlimited. Athans accepts commissioned work and can be reached at 708-388-0285.