



## ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

### President's Message

#### Dear Members:

This is my last message to you as President. My six years is up. It is time for new leadership and fresh ideas.

Over the 17 years since IOS was founded, birding has flourished in Illinois. It would not surprise me if 10,000 people are active birders in our state today given the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's estimate of 41 million active birders nationwide in 2001. Yet our membership has not kept pace. It has fluctuated in a band between 400 and 500 for some years now and is currently 472. Compare this to IBET's 1,500 members or the newcomer Illinois Birders Forum's 465 members.

The intervening years have seen the growth of the internet technologies that have given IBET and the IL Birders Forum their virtually cost-free platforms. The information sharing made possible by these networks has significantly enhanced our birding experience. They do, however, make us re-evaluate our model. If you can find out what is being seen and where through IBET and go on free field trips with your local bird club, why do you need to be a member of IOS?

The answer of course is the *Meadowlark*, our field trips' rare bird focus and to support our scientific and educational mission. Unfortunately the membership revenues are not sufficient to support a strong scientific and educational part to our mission. The identification skills focus at events like the Gull Frolic are good, but we need to develop youth-focused programs to build the next generation of birders. If we are to continue building our scientific and educational programs, we must attract more resources whether that be membership revenues, sponsorships or more volunteers.

We have successfully adapted some of our programming to address the challenges of the internet age, but need to do more. For example, our field trips have attracted strong interest since we started to focus on difficult-to-find species, and our educational events, the Gull Frolic, the Spring Birding Weekend and the habitat-dependent Shorebird Spectacular have become excellent membership draws. Also in planning is an Illinois Young Birders Club.

We have adopted the internet to enhance our offerings and reduce our costs. Overtime our web site has become a better communications tool and we have additional improvements in the planning stage such as a Members Only section with premium content.

There is a lot to be proud of. Thanks must go to our energetic board and the many others who support our activities. Today we have more members active in running our programs than ever before and we continue to innovate to make our offerings more attractive. I am confident that this will continue and that our leadership is up to the task of maintaining and improving the excellence of our programs.

***Good birding and Good Luck.***

*Michael Hogg,  
President*

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