

MEADOWLARK

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Letter from the Editor

Take a first-timer on a CBC!

The first time I went on a CBC, many years ago (please don't ask how many), I was amazed to see robins in winter. It seemed anachronistic at first, puzzling, almost surreal. Now I knowingly nod when a new birder or first-time CBCer says to me, "We saw robins!"

I used to think the best time to get some new folks hooked on birding was in spring, when I'd take them to my favorite warbler spot and they could "ooh" and "ah" over the amazing array of colors. Unfortunately, while I'm "oohing" and "ahing," these beginners are struggling to get their binoculars focused on the bird, that, of course, is gone by the time they almost find it! They're frustrated, and I can hear them muttering, "This is too difficult."

But in winter, if you show a new birder a lovely colored avian creature against the backdrop of a dreary day, you've given them a glimmer of hope that maybe they can spot a bird, focus on it, and identify it. With that philosophy in mind, I encourage you to invite a new birder to join you during part of your Christmas Bird Count day. Point out the robins, the flocks of American Tree Sparrows with their cheery red caps, and yes, even the Black-capped Chickadees. Perhaps in the process you will remember what it was like when you saw your first American Tree Sparrow in the snow. The Christmas Bird Count season is a magical time for beginning and advanced birders.

Sheryl DeVore

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Yellow-breasted Chat drawing by Brian K. Willis.

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