

Letter from the Editor

The gift of birding

Last Thanksgiving, Steve Bailey, his mother, Kathy, and I were looking out the window from my Mundelein home watching a Cooper's Hawk. It was sitting still on a tree, waiting for its holiday meal.

At an IOS annual meeting at Rend Lake, Dave Johnson and his father, Wilbur, or Wib, as they called him were enjoying camping and hearing birds sing in the early morning.

Wib and Kathy can no longer share a moment like that with their children. Both died, Kathy in late August and Wib in late October, leaving a legacy of a love of nature and the outdoors with their children. And it got me to thinking. Birding is a gift we give to others, even if we don't realize it.

My mother, though never a birder, gave me the gift of birding. She used to tell me about the Eastern Screech-Owls that lived in a hole in one of the many oak trees in our Hickory Hills backyard when I was in high school. She'd point out the Yellow-shafted Flicker revealing its underwings as it flew from oak to oak in our yard. I must admit, it didn't mean all that much to me at the time, but as I grew older and more interested in nature, I began to think of my mother's influence. And one day when she was on chemotherapy, I took her to the Morton Arboretum to find a Baltimore Oriole down the Joy Path. At our next stop at one of the sloughs in the Palos area, mom got tired and we had to go home. And I regretted not having spent more time sharing nature with my mother.

At this time of year, consider giving a rare and precious gift to someone – your time – out birding or hiking or enjoying the quiet winter woods. I've promised to take a friend and my brother birding for the past few years. Maybe as the New Year approaches, it's time to put the promise in action.

Sheryl DeVore

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About Our Cover:

Michael L. P. Retter produced the cover drawing of a subadult "Nelson's Gull" (*Herring X Glaucous hybrid*), which was seen last winter at Starved Rock Lock and Dam. Michael is a regular contributor to *Meadowlark*, both as an artist and as an author. A longtime Illinois birder, Michael is a freelance birding tour guide and artist, and will be leading trips at ABA's July 2005 Convention in Tucson. He also works for Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's Black Hills project, where he will be entering his 5th year of work in 2005. He accepts commissioned artwork and tours.

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