

## Letter from the Editor

### *The gift of bird song*

It starts with a slightly long, clear tone, then is followed by a series of higher, faster pitches, sometimes major, sometimes minor thirds repeated once or twice, some higher pitched than others – to my ears at least.

It's the song of the Hermit Thrush, which belongs to a family of some of the most beautiful songsters in the world.

Indeed, in Costa Rica and in Mexico, thrushes fill the forest with songs. Nightingale-thrushes, which are in the same genus as Gray-cheeked, Swainson's and Hermit Thrush, sing hauntingly beautiful melodies. And I've heard the Black-faced Solitaire in Costa Rica give its mellifluous series of several notes, sometimes followed by two notes at once, like I learned to play on the flute when I became more proficient on this instrument.

I've also heard the Townsend's Solitaire, a western species, which occasionally visits northern Illinois in winter. This species sang for my sister and me when we went to see it one year at Lyons Woods in Lake County.

I've only heard the Hermit Thrush sing in upper Michigan, echoing in pine woods and boggy woods, luring me into another dimension. But lucky Paul Clyne has heard the Hermit Thrush sing right here in Illinois. He writes about this wonderful surprise in this issue of Meadowlark – a little gift only for him.

Why and when birds sing is always fascinating to me – some sing during migration, some only when on their breeding grounds, and others even in fall and winter. White-throated Sparrows sang in my back yard all fall and now mostly are gone, taking their songs with them. If I'm lucky, on a Christmas Bird Count, I will hear the boisterous "Teakettle" of the Carolina Wren and the varied notes of the Song Sparrow. And come late winter, the American Tree Sparrow will offer its tinkling, love song before heading north.

This winter, listen for bird song and perhaps when the Hermit Thrushes come through in early spring, you may even hear one sing in Illinois, as Paul Clyne did.

*Sheryl DeVore*

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## About Our Cover:

Peter Olson crafted our cover of a Hermit Thrush. Peter is a professional artist working at the Northern Illinois University Art Museum. He has twice been selected to show his works at the highly acclaimed Leigh Yawkey Woodson Museum Birds in Art exhibit in Wisconsin. His art work can be viewed at <http://www.umarain.com/pete.htm>.

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