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Notes from the President continued

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Why eBird?
Pete Fenner

If you haven’t yet visited the eBird website, I encourage you to do so. The web address is simple- http://ebird.org. This website is managed and owned by the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. It has become an essential place and tool for birders all over the world.

At the main page, you will find interesting features, articles and photos about birds in general, birders in particular and rarities being seen. As I am writing this, there is a link to “Bird Cast”, http://birdcast.info, which is a real-time prediction of bird migration: when they migrate, where they migrate, and how far they will be flying. Simply said, there is a tremendous amount of interesting information on this website to read about and look at regarding birds.

That however, is just scratching the surface of eBird. If you create your own account, by establishing a login ID and password, eBird can become much, much more for you. Thousands of people across the globe have now done this and log their sightings into eBird. Furthermore, the data you enter is also very important and beneficial for science and conservation. A “checklist” is a group of birds sighted by a person at a particular place and time. There will be approximately a half million checklists entered into eBird for the month of March 2016. So, while that is “critical mass”, your specific participation and bird sighting data is needed, wanted and useful. And, you will be helping to conserve birds by contributing to population and distribution data. Furthermore, there is a free eBird app (for both iPhone and Android users) that allows you to enter your sightings in the field. Say goodbye to the old pencil and paper!

In return, you get a program which maintains all your bird lists. You can easily see your lists, whether you are interested in life sightings, state birds, your county, or even your yard list or another favorite “hotspot”. If you are competitive, you can see how you rank among all the other eBirders. I remember once paying $100 for software that did a fraction of what the eBird website does for you, and it is all FREE. I often go back to see when and where I was when I saw that “fill in the blank” bird. eBird does that all for you.

Sign up for “alerts”, and eBird will send you an email when a target bird is seen in your area. You can get updates hourly or daily, depending on how much information you want and how willing you are to “chase”. The more people that are entering data, the better the alerts are. And, they are pretty good already!

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Dennis Endicott
My favorite season has to be Spring. After being cooped up inside with the drab grayness of winter, I look forward to being outdoors and to witness the spring migration of birds and the renewed vibrance of nature. Of course, to some species, and “early spring” starts in February or March. Waterfowl may begin migrating as soon as the frozen lakes and marshes start to thaw. Then other groups of birds begin their northward migration.

But the greatest northward flood of songbirds, which is timed to following their insect foods of choice, is in April and May. It is during this peak of spring bird migration, the first week of May, that we in Illinois participate in the Spring Bird Count. This year on May 9, teams of volunteers from each county will go out into the field to “count” birds.

- Volunteers record the (1) number and (2) species of all birds seen or heard.
- Additional information is also recorded: (3) the number of hours spent looking for birds; (4) the number of miles driven; and (5) the number of miles walked.
- Within each county, count teams will visit the wide range of different bird habitats that is unique for each in order to garner a count for the widest number of species.
- May include “owling” during the pre-dawn hours.

 jewel images continued inside