

<b>FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK</b>
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Greetings to all members as we approach the end of 2008 with all sorts of bad news with respect to the financial situation in North America and elsewhere around the world. One must feel for the families attached to the auto industry with the threat of layoffs, job cuts and other unpleasantness. In particular at this time of year of course. But North Americans are pretty resilient and let us hope that the New Year will bring a reversal of these bad times.

Recently, Ron Berger from Israel contacted me to see if I would like to run his article on the Hula Nature Reserve, which will also appear in Gibbons magazine, so naturally I said that I should like to have it. In addition, Ron said he was working on a listing of animals found in Israel on stamps plus a later list of plants. I replied wondering if the subject (Israel animals and plants) was not a little narrow in scope. Ron's reply may be found on page 144, and after some reflection, I agree with the points that he makes, so you will see these lists in next year's journals.

This issue carries the usual slate of checklists, with some of them (Botany and Mammals) a bit shorter than usual, but the New Birds in the philatelic aviary at around a usual 7 pages. I sometimes think that the new issues go in cycles of popularity with stamp issuing agencies or the printing companies. I have been playing around with the images for the New Birds list, which Charles Braun sends as color pictures attached to a text printout, but since I am not all that knowledgeable on computers, it was a bit of a problem. However, I finally found that I could bring up the image and change the brightness and contrast, before inserting it in the document, where I could control the size. It seems to work pretty well.

There are already some exhibits coming in for the National Topical Stamp Show in Dayton, Ohio June 12-14, 2008 and I am hoping to see some biological exhibits so we can have some competition for the Biology Unit award. The Youth Champion of Champions competition will be held at the show, which is always exciting for the various Youth winners from shows around the country. There will be the usual tours on Thursday and Monday and of course aircraft will figure in those, since Dayton is one of the cradles of aviation. The Biology Unit meeting will be on Saturday at the usual time and I hope to see a greater number of B-U members there. The Chairman of the British Thematic Association has entered an exhibit and will be at the show, so I am hoping he will be able to give a short talk on the state of thematic collecting and exhibiting in England.

This month of December has been quite exciting for me, as I had my 78<sup>th</sup> birthday and my wife and I are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary, to be closely followed by the Christmas festivities. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking all the Associate Editors for keeping their columns coming and keeping our publication viable. A happy holiday season to all members.

Until next time - Alan J. Hanks

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