To whom it may concern,

We are pleased to submit a manuscript titled “Strolling through a century: replicating historical bird surveys to explore 100 years of change in an urban bird community” to be considered for publication as a Natural History Miscellany in *The American Naturalist.*

The way we came about the data in this manuscript are a story unto itself. About eight years ago one of our colleagues found a book titled ‘Wild Birds in City Parks’ in a Chicago antique store. This field guide for city bird watchers was published in 1904 – and in addition to species descriptions – contained summaries of a five-year bird survey conducted between 1898 and 1903 in Lincoln Park – the largest park in Chicago, Illinois. Subsequent investigations into this survey led us to the back halls of the Chicago Academy of Sciences where we were fortunate to discover an additional historical Lincoln Park bird survey conducted between 1927 and 1932. To carry on the legacy of these historical surveyors we conducted our own survey of the Lincoln park bird community from 2012 to 2015 and have summarized how bird diversity and community composition changed over 100 years in urban Chicago.

The changes in community composition were dramatic. Of the 121 species analyzed, 22 decreased in frequency. This included the blue jay, which were historically present year-round in Lincoln Park but are now rarely seen. An additional 32 species increased in frequency. This includes species such as the red-winged blackbird, American crow, and northern cardinal. The northern cardinal, for example, were observed on less than 1% of surveys between 1898-1903 but over 75% of surveys between 2012-2015. In addition to the wide spreading changes in the avian community, these data highlight other important historical events for Chicago’s bird community such as the arrival of the European starling, which we may not have known without the efforts of these historical surveyors. With our own efforts in standardizing these data across surveys we believe that this information provides a never before seen look into an urban bird community across 100 years.

We feel that this manuscript is an excellent candidate as a Natural History Miscellany. Not only is the data we present novel, we illustrate how some observed trends in Lincoln Park contradict those observed in Illinois over the last century. These changes likely highlight the slow and subtle ways species may respond to urbanization, which would not be discovered without the historical data we fortuitously found. As such, we believe that this manuscript and data will be of interest to the broad readership of *The American Naturalist*, especially because long-term studies disproportionately add to our understanding of how species respond to environmental change. It is our hope that the publication of this manuscript and data will encourage others to take up the mantle and continue these Lincoln Park surveys long into the future.

On behalf of myself and my coauthors, I thank you for consideration of our manuscript.