

data; others are more folksy and anecdotal, filled with news about members. The Chicago Audubon Society publishes a series of informational pamphlets and special count information. Several clubs publish checklists of birds in their area. The Illinois Ornithological Society is excited about the prospect of publishing a revised state checklist, if funds can be found, and when the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee completes it.

Birding entered cyberspace some time ago, as the net surfing birders out there know very well. The Internet and various on-line computer network services provide a perfect medium for keeping in touch with bird sightings nationwide. You can sub-

scribe to the National Birding Hotline Cooperative and order automatic delivery of the rare bird alerts from almost anywhere in the country. Both the Chicago and DuPage Rare Bird Alerts are part of the NBHC. The DuPage Bird Club maintains a home page on the World Wide Web with a profile of the club and upcoming events. The Chicago Ornithological Society, Illinois Ornithological Society, and the Evanston North Shore Bird Club are also exploring the possibility of setting up home pages on the World Wide Web.

Anxiety about attracting new blood, and specifically younger members, is a nearly universal trait among Illinois bird clubs. The state's Audubon chapters are committed to birding and environmental education for children, and sponsor several programs to reach out to kids in school and through camps. Many clubs are increasing outreach efforts into their communities, sending speakers out to talk about birds and birding, advertising in local community events calendars, and attracting as much notice as they can for the sport of bird watching, considered America's second most popular hobby.

What separates Illinois birding organizations is their degree of involvement in conservation issues. While birders as a group tend to be environmentally conscious, their clubs sometimes are not active in local or national conservation campaigns. Some clubs publish action alerts in

their newsletters to give members a chance to sound off individually to the powers that be about a particular issue affecting bird conservation. But in a number of clubs, conservation action is left up to the individual, and the club itself does not involve itself in environmental issues.

The recreational bird clubs, such as the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society and the DuPage Bird Club, tend to rely on other more specialized conservation groups to take action on specific issues. As Peggy Camden, president of the DuPage Bird Club, said: "We are a pure birding club and not conservation-related. People come to our meetings and know what they will get is pure birding. Our members belong to other groups for conservation activities."

Alan Branhagen, president of the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society, said that while the club often donates cash to worthy environmental efforts, "there's so much going on in the conservation realm already that anything we do as a club seems kind of redundant. We want to focus on what we are here to do - educate birders about birds."

Some Illinois birding clubs started life in the early part of the century as nature appreciation societies, which may explain a little about the emphasis of the clubs on recreational activities, rather than environmental activism. The Evanston North Shore Bird Club started 77 years ago as an offshoot of the Evanston Garden Club and the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society was a division of the Rockford Nature Study Society formed early this century. The Chicago Ornithological Society was founded nearly 80 years ago by a group of professional ornithologists who in the early years approved only other area scientists as new members and didn't allow women into the group without a struggle.



*Bob Chapel, an IOS member, watches birds during a recent Christmas Bird Count in central Illinois. Bird clubs statewide help organize bird counts in spring and winter, and thus contribute important state data for research. Photo by David B. Johnson.*