

trying to find a club in your area. What follows are profiles of some of the interesting activities of a random selection of bird clubs in the state in rough geographic order. The other clubs in Illinois are undoubtedly also providing wonderful member birding activities!

The North Central Illinois Ornithological Society, based in Rockford, has about 80 members. Like many bird clubs, members span the spectrum from an older clique of retired birders to hard-core listers and beginning birders. Programs focus on bird identification of particular bird families, travel programs, and bird conservation. Field trips are generally run at least monthly and are regional, rather than long distance, usually venturing as far afield as the Chicago lakefront and Madison, Wisconsin. The group donates funds to local conservation efforts, but is primarily dedicated to watching the birds of the local environment and the northern Illinois region. Christmas and Spring Counts are popular club events.

The Evanston North Shore Bird Club is another independent birding club with 250 members who are mostly knowledgeable and dedicated birders, said Kris Richardson, the group's president. There is a hard core, fanatical listing element in the club, but many members are individuals and families who love birds and want to learn more about them. Evanston North Shore donates money to worthy land acquisition and conservation campaigns in support of bird conservation. The club is increasing its environmental awareness. Community outreach to attract new members will also be a priority, said Richardson. For example, an October meeting featuring live owls was widely advertised in Chicago's north shore communities to bring families with children into the club's sphere. Other programs are bird-related and include travel pro-

grams and many identification seminars. Field trips are run locally, regionally, and sometimes nationally.

The Chicago Audubon Society is the state's largest bird-related group with about 6,000 members in the Chicago metropolitan area. An affiliate of the National Audubon Society, Chicago Audubon supports research efforts such as spring, summer, and winter bird counts, a 15-year-old feeder watch study and publishes the data widely. Birding information is disseminated several ways. A telephone hotline rare bird alert for the metro area is very well used by area rarity chasers. *The Compass* is the society's monthly tabloid newsletter which combines environmental and birding news for area members. Educational efforts include scholarships to enable children and teachers to attend Audubon nature camps. Classroom birding education is provided through joint sponsorship of subscriptions to the monthly *Audubon Adventures*, a magazine for grade school children published by the National Audubon Society. A phone-in information hotline for questions about birds receives about 80 calls per month. An annual conference on birding and wildlife topics provides a forum for more intensive adult education.

Chicago Audubon is active locally and statewide on conservation issues and has supported land purchases in Guatemala to protect neotropical migrant wintering grounds. Another campaign collected and sent binoculars to Guatemala to support conservation efforts there.

The Chicago Ornithological Society now accepts amateur birders of all levels and provides a series of beginning birder field trips to give newcomers a thorough grounding in birding basics. The fanatical hard-core birding element is perhaps somewhat higher than in other organizations, which may explain why some members travel some dis-

tance from widespread suburban locations to attend general meetings at the Field Museum in Chicago. Programs range from well-known national experts to club member slide nights and travel-related slide programs. Frequent field trips check local hotspots during all seasons and regional trips have gone afield to Sault St. Marie, Whitefish Point, Duluth, Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, and the Platte River. Long-distance trips have included California, Texas, Florida, Mexico, and the Caribbean. A bi-monthly newsletter keeps members informed about events and trips, and includes highlights of the rare and unusual birds seen in the Chicago area during the preceding two months. The society has funded projects revitalizing native and ornamental vegetation at lakefront migration hot spots.

The DuPage Bird Club celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1995 and has 175 active birders. The club emphasizes birding, and programs reinforce birdwatching education. Well-known speakers from around the country have been brought in for identification programs and other general programs, which are well-attended. Field trips are run to local and regional areas, as well as to more distant birding areas. A revamped telephone hotline format received national attention from the American Birding Association for its innovative practice of putting the boring directions to specific locations at the end of the sightings reports. Much information about birds seen at specific local hotspots is available on the club's World Wide Web home page. Christmas counts are a popular holiday event for members. President Peggy Camden says the club is "a great tool to make friends. There's an instant camaraderie in this club among member birders."

The DuPage Audubon Society is an affiliate of the National Audubon Society and is most active in