

conservation activities. The group's efforts center on habitat protection in Du-Page County and conservation of birds, plants, and wildlife. The group is working to expand educational efforts in area schools. Long-time member Jill Venskus said while the group isn't very active in the birding realm, it is lobbying at a grass roots level on conservation issues affecting bird populations.

The **Thorn Creek Audubon Society** covers a long, narrow territory in the southwestern suburbs of Chicago. An affiliate of the National Audubon Society, Thorn Creek has over 800 members and good attendance at general meetings, which focus on bird topics. While there is a core of active, serious birders, many members are more feeder watchers than field birders, said President Marianne Hahn. Like many Audubon groups, Thorn Creek is very active on environmental issues and has been a critical campaigner in the fight to get the Joliet Arsenal site dedicated as a tall grass prairie national park. Conservation activities will likely focus in the near term on the re-authorization of the Endangered Species Act as well as proper management of the Joliet Arsenal and Lake Calumet. The group's educational efforts have been extraordinary; it co-sponsors subscriptions to *Audubon Adventures* for 130 classrooms in the area! Members are also active in community outreach and present birding programs to schools and other organizations.

The **Vermilion County Audubon Society** is another National Audubon affiliate which has been extremely involved in habitat conservation in its five county wide area. The group sponsors an Out-door School for fourth and fifth grade students, teaching environmental education, as well as supporting distribution of *Audubon Adventures* through bird seed sales. Children's camp scholarships and small grants for bird feeders for local

schools are also provided. The group has set up a birding education room, the Audubon Room, at the Danville Historical Society, and maintains several bluebird box trails. Members are also active in prairie and marsh habitat restoration and management. The society's 200 members include a core of active birders who relay bird sighting information from friendly area farmers (including Barn and Snowy owls) amongst themselves. Field trips often go as far afield as Jasper-Pulaski State Park in Indiana to see migrating cranes, as well as local natural areas. Bird counts in the spring and fall are seasonal highlights for members.

The **Shawnee Audubon Society** is a chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society. With large portions of the Shawnee National Forest contained within its southern Illinois territory, the 50-member group has been very involved in forest management issues. The group dogs the steps of the National Forest Service and tries to make the service live up to its management responsibilities. Habitat protection is of vital importance to the group, which is also working in an alliance to ensure good management of a large tract of contiguous federal forest in western Kentucky, called Land Between the Lakes, which borders the Shawnee Forest. The group was given the War Bluff Sanctuary in Pope County by patrons Dick and Jean Graber and is acting as a steward for the property. War Bluff has become the group's focal point. Many club activities center around the sanctuary and its management. Members are fairly active birders who have just set up a War Bluff Christmas Count Circle. Members also do a Pope County Spring Count and helped U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service researchers with Project Tanager in the Cache River area.

Unlike many groups, Shawnee Audubon has enough children who are members to warrant the possible

formation of a junior division. What are they doing right to attract these six- to sixteen-year-olds? Lots of outdoor environmental education, including an Insect Appreciation Day! The Belleville High School Ecology Club also recently became a member of the group. Because the membership territory is so large, three meetings per year are held at the War Bluff Sanctuary and three near Carbondale to give more people the opportunity to attend.

#### **Editor's Note:**

*We are sorry we could not include the names and activities of all the many interesting birding clubs in Illinois; however, we are offering a way for you to get the word out about your group. Our newsletter editor, Denis Bohm, will periodically publish pertinent information about your club's activities. Please send a double-spaced typed or computer-generated press release, with your name and daytime and evening phone numbers to Denis at 300 Inwood Drive, Wheeling, IL 60090-6712, Telephone: (847) 253-4705. He will include what he can depending on space restraints, timing, and other factors.*

*We also hope you will consider joining the **Illinois Ornithological Society** if you haven't already, and spread the word to other Illinois birders who may not know about us yet. What are we all about? We are dedicated to publishing information about birds and birding in Illinois, including site guides; maintaining a state birding checklist; and offering field trips and an annual meeting to educate people about birds. We are also working on a strategic plan for the next five years in which we expect to more finely tune our goals and get involved in more publishing and other bird-related activities.*

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