



ILLINOIS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Guest Essay

Investing in our future

The formation of the Illinois Young Birders Club

Throughout the better part of the last two years, the IOS board has been discussing the idea of starting a birding club for young people in Illinois. As a new board member at the time, I was trying to find ways for IOS to get more involved in serving our younger members when I read about a new birding club in Ohio called the Ohio Young Birders Club. After some more research, I became convinced that a similar club was needed in the Land of Lincoln. Since then, IOS has talked with lawyers, insurance agents, other state birding groups and several young birders from other states – all the time learning more about how best to form a young birders club here in Illinois.

As a result of our efforts and patience, IOS is proud to announce the formation of the Illinois Young Birders Club.

The formation of a club specifically directed at young people on a state-wide level first began in Ohio. The Ohio Young Birders Club, headed by Kim Kaufman, began in May of 2006. You can learn more about this group by visiting their website at www.ohioyoungbirders.org. New York State also has a flourishing club for young birders. The New York State Young Birders Club can be visited at www.nysyoungbirders.org. Both of these clubs, and more specifically Kim and Kenn Kaufman, Carena Pooth and Hope Batcheller, have been incredibly helpful throughout the past two years. IOS thanks them all as well as Eddie Callaway and Dan Brady for their help with the Website and Peter Weber for the use of his photographs.

There are also more recent Young Birders Clubs in Pennsylvania and Indiana.

IOS believes that providing a centralized community for young birders is an investment not only in our children, but also in the future of our birding community at large.

The club has been formed for the benefit of birders ages 9 to 18 living in Illinois who want to meet fellow birders their age. Not only will they go on field trips with expert guides throughout Illinois, but members will also play a large part in planning the future success of this club. We are looking for charter members to help with the creation of the club. They will be able to help design a website and official logo, elect the youth advisory board, plan field trips, show off artwork and photos, write field trip reports, create a quarterly newsletter and interact with the larger birding community in Illinois. We will also introduce members to possible career paths involving birds if they so wish. We also hope to have our own yearly convention where members could be the keynote speakers. The annual membership fee is only \$10.

Adults and other birding and nature organizations are also invited to be a part of Illinois Young Birders by becoming a supporting member at \$20 per year or a partner organization at \$50 per year.

Please visit the website www.illinoisyoungbirders.org and click the tab that says how to join to learn more. The funds that we bring in from supporting Members and partners will be vital in our growth, especially in the first few years.

The Illinois Young Birders Club mission right now is simply to grow members and provide the statewide community for young birders in Illinois. I'm hopeful that we can start planning field trips and putting out a newsletter sometime in summer or fall. With time, IOS is confident that we can have one of the top Young Birders Clubs in the country.

— Brian Herriott, IOS board member

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