

Economic considerations

Birders spend a great deal of time and money in their pursuit of birds. Sports experts now refer to birding as a sport and have recently proclaimed that birding has more active participants than any other sport. With this in mind, I wondered what the Spring Bird Count as a sport might mean in economic terms. I realize it's impossible to get (or give) exact figures, however, I thought it would be fun to at least provide some thought on the matter. In formulating possible economic considerations I felt there were at least three arbitrary standards and designated "values" (and, I'm sure, all are debatable): an "average" value for a person's time — \$18/hour; the price of gasoline (which was nearly \$3 per gallon at the time

of the 2006 Count) or the mileage reimbursement rate for using a vehicle (40 cents per mile); and the cost of food and drink for one day (average of \$16 per person). So, using the above standards and values:

- * 1356 participants times an average of \$16 for food/drink consumption = \$21,969
- * an average of 7.3 participation hours per person (1356) times \$18 per hour [7.3 is based 4889 daylight party hours x 2.0 persons per party + 156 nocturnal party hours] = \$178,180
- * 21,248 daylight miles driven times \$0.40 per mile = \$8,500 (or, alternative: about 22,000 miles at 20 miles per gallon times \$3.00 per gallon = \$3,300)

Therefore, based on the above computations, plus the added time and mileage required for everyone to drive to and from the count site, the nocturnal miles (which were not included in the mileage above), compilers time and expenses in preparing for and following up after the count, and other unlisted, but real expenses, the estimated economic input into the 2006 Spring Bird Count may well exceed \$250,000. Now that an economic value has been attempted, perhaps someone can devise a viable system to enhance this concept and provide some bonafide standards and guidelines.

Acknowledgments

It's difficult to think of new ways to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of Spring Count compilers and loyal participants; however, please know that, on behalf of the entire state of Illinois, all of your efforts and dedication are very much appreciated and that the count would not be possible without you. Please accept my most sincere

thanks. Of course, extra thanks to all the county compilers/coordinators (identified in Table 8) for your advance preparations and post count compilations. The results of the 35th Spring Bird Count are now in the record books — thanks ALL for making this possible. And, let's plan now for a 100% county participation rate in 2007.

Dates of future counts:
 2007 = May 5
 2008 = May 10
 2009 = May 9

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TABLE 8: 2006 County Statistics

N/R = No Report

County	Area	Number of		Number of T I M E		Miles		Hours		County Compiler
		Sp.	Birds	Obs.	Ptys	Start-End	W/D	W/D		
Adams	3	147	8,032	17	8	*0430-2130*	11/353	21/35	Al Dierkes	
Alexander	1	126	2,620	5	3	0515-1720	4/149	5/14	Ida Domazlicky	
Bond	2	96	2,413	6	4	0530-2000	8/96	12/5	Charley Marbut	
Boone	4	134	11,734	30	22	*0515-1910	77/390	80/16	Arlene Brie	
Brown	3	151	2,605	2	1	*0330-1730	4/140	9/5	Michael Ward	
Bureau	4	120	6,023	4	3	*0430-1500	10/137	13/10	Doug Stotz	
Calhoun	2	137	9,202	18	8	*0500-2130*	8/268	6/41	Wilda Sutherland	
Carroll	4	146	6,862	2	2	*0200-1730	6/281	6/16	Jeffrey Baughman	
Cass	3	109	1,638	1	1	*0430-1430	0/138	0/9	Robert Randall	
Champaign	3	157	11,863	38	23	*0400-2045	78/376	114/21	Beth Chato	
Christian	2	119	2,686	7	4	*0400-1930	14/212	32/9	Clark Olson	
Clark	2	61	1,488	4	3	0530-1530	2/30	6/6	Donna Clem	
Clay	2	64	559	2	2	0630-1430	2/45	3/3	Terry Esker	
Clinton	2	165	4,531	7	3	*0000-2045	17/337	25/19	Dan Kassebaum	
Coles	2	150	4,873	15	7	*0300-2115*	34/77	31/22	Tyler Funk	