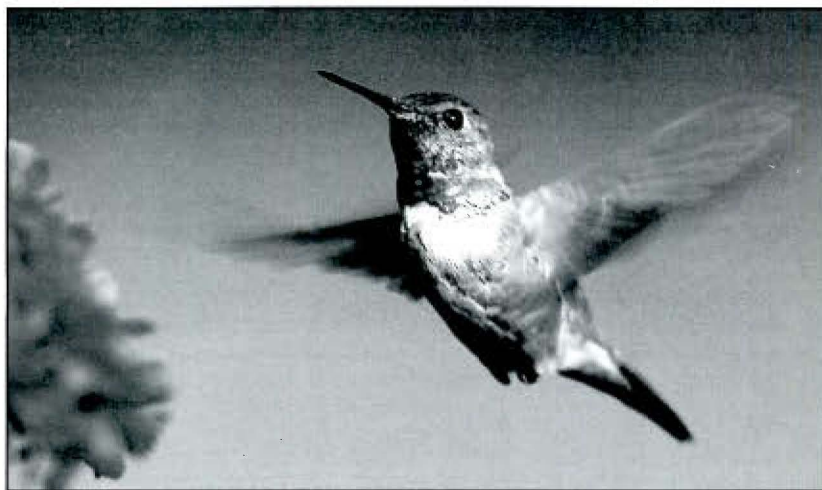


On the home front, the Bird Professor is a bird feeder with a timer, which allows the homeowner to dispense bird seed only when it's convenient for him to watch birds who become trained to fly in to the rattle, announcing that the diner is open for business. At \$170, the Bird Professor is a far cry from the upside down pop bottle feeders of our youths. For the ultimate landscaping statement, birdwatching.com suggests a "gorgeous, upscale, hand-made copper birdbath that is a work of art." A price wasn't given on the web site, probably because of fears of sticker shock. A Bird Cam video recorder allows you to relay field filming straight to your TV or VCR at home, allowing you to preserve your memories of field birding forever. The Bird Cam costs \$400, which by way of perspective is more than the price of a ticket to Arizona and back for some the real thing, as opposed to the recorded thing. And with Walker's Nature Ear II, you have "binoculars for your

The "father of biodiversity," Edward O. Wilson, told Boyce Rensberger in the November/December 1999 issue of Audubon magazine, that "If we continue at the current rate of deforestation and destruction of major ecosystems like rainforests and coral reefs, where most of the biodiversity is concentrated, we will surely lose more than half of all the species of plants and animals on earth by the end of the 21st century." Wilson went on to predict that most species destruction will come from areas already known as hot spots, such as the central American tropics, where biodiversity is extremely high. When asked what he thought America would look like in 100 years, he replied: "In the United States the trajectory is less threatening, but even here we would see shrinkage of fauna and flora over most of the country. And especially in our own hot spots, such as Hawaii and California. For example, in Hawaii alone, where species are disappearing at one of the highest rates in the world, there are more than 100 species of trees that consist of 20 individuals or fewer. So in a century, America would still be biologically rich in most places. But without a stronger conservation policy, it would be partly impoverished, and especially locally a lot of individual states would lose species."



Rare hummingbirds graced Illinois feeders in the latter part of the 20th century. Will advanced field identification products help us identify more of these difficult-to-identify beauties? The photo of a Rufous Hummingbird at a Springfield, Illinois feeder on 15 November 1998 was taken by Dennis Oehmke.

ears" with sound amplification increased by a factor of three to five. Even age can't stop a birder now from recognizing the upper ranges of warbler songs or chip notes from a distance. The Walker Ear II is available on the web for a mere \$214 plus shipping and handling.

Conservation

But even as birders' comfort levels increase and their ability to circumnavigate the globe in pursuit of their avocation becomes simple, all is not rosy for the birds themselves. Some birders hate to hear the word "conservation" but without more of it, and urgently, birders may get themselves to exotic locales, only to find them lacking in birds.

Illinois is likely to be one of those impoverished states in the future when it comes to biodiversity unless drastic land preservation measures are undertaken immediately, based on predictions from the OpenLands Project. For example, the developed land in the Chicagoland metropolitan region, which is part of a major migratory bird flyway, could double by the year 2028, according to OpenLands' Strategic Open Lands at Risk (SONAR) project.

Sprawl from the center of Chicago outward now affects 13 counties and will reach at least six more, if left unchecked. Such sprawl would threaten more than 300 high-quality natural areas, putting even more pressure on what little land is left undeveloped.

The good news is that birders and bird conservationists are getting better organized and are getting public officials to listen to their concerns. In Chicago, the Bird Conservation Network, a coalition of bird groups active in the 13 county area described above by OpenLands, has written a green paper on the importance of the Lake Michigan flyway to migrating birds. The paper and much face-to-face project work and relationship building with officials from the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District and other agencies has resulted in an unprec-