

JAMES E. LANDING (1928-2007)

Illinois and Indiana birders and conservationists lost a great birder, friend, historian and activist when Dr. James "Jim" Landing, 78, passed away Sept. 3, 2007. Jim was born Jan. 7, 1928 in Buffalo, New York, then moved to Indiana where he grew up and began birding. He later moved to Illinois and continued his passion for birding. In a recent post on IBET, Jim reported he had 395 bird species in Illinois, which would place him second on the latest Illinois Ornithological Society's Listers Corner, state high count.

But more than a lister, he was also an educator. He led countless bird trips for Chicago-area bird groups, taught many new birders about the hobby, and gave a number of programs and talks about birds and bird-related topics.

Although he birded throughout Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and elsewhere, his favorite spots were the Lake Calumet wetlands and Lincoln Park, especially Montrose Harbor, the Magic Hedge, Montrose Point and the Jarvis Bird Sanctuary.

Over the years, Jim worked behind the scenes in so many aspects, with the Chicago Park District and area bird clubs, to save the vegetation in the Magic Hedge, and have additional plantings put in (and kept alive) to enhance migrant bird habitat.

He helped Bill Jarvis in the maintenance of the Lincoln Park Bird Sanctuary (which later was named for Mr. Jarvis). He could be found there at any time of the year, educating birders of all ages. Without his assistance, Montrose Point would not be what it is today.

What I will remember Jim for most though, is his constant and long-lived work in helping to save the very important bird habitat of the Lake Calumet wetlands. When the expansion of dumps in the area threatened to destroy what wetlands remained there, in 1980, he organized the Lake Calumet Study Committee, which was an umbrella organization of dozens of birding, conservation and environmental groups. For as long as that organization existed, he worked hard, both with the groups involved, but also with the southeast Chicago residents, and politicians and whatever it took, to protect habitat in that area. In a report Jim gave about the Lake Calumet Study Committee's involvement in protecting Lake Calumet area habitat, he wrote

"During the period of the Lake Calumet Study Committee, not one acre of targeted wetlands was lost to industry or municipal purposes. They are all still there"

This is THE testament to Jim's hard labor, and all that he managed to do over the years behind the scenes.

Jim was also in the forefront in helping to defeat the proposal to put

an airport in the Calumet area (1992). He later put together an exhaustive proposal for a Calumet Ecological Park — a national park. That never came to be, but in part due to Jim's laying the ground for it, the City of Chicago now has purchased many of the Calumet wetlands, and they will be saved as natural habitat, for birds and other local native flora and fauna.

Jim Landing taught Geography at the University of Illinois at Chicago for decades, bringing conservation issues into his classroom whenever he could.

Jim was also a prolific writer — among his works while at University of Illinois, was his history book, *Black Judaism*. His *Montrose Musings* on IBET, the Illinois birding listserve, often would mention the history of birding and birders in Illinois and Indiana, and were a wealth of information. He wrote articles for both *Meadowlark: A Journal of Illinois Birds* and *Illinois Birds & Birding* and *Illinois Audubon* magazine. In the *Meadowlark*, he delved into his favorite subject — gulls — and offered his advice and wisdom on identifying this difficult group of birds.

In fact, he helped begin along with Dave Johnson the popular Gull Frolic in northern Lake County, which has become THE meeting place for birders in winter — not only to learn more about gulls but also to share camaraderie and the joy of birding.

Jim served as Conservation Chair and later Public Land Use Chair of the Chicago Audubon Society. He received the Protector of the Environment, Single Act Award from Chicago Audubon Society in 1981. He will be sincerely missed by many for the friend that he was, and his helpfulness in so many ways. This is a true loss for Illinois birds and birders.

— Alan B. Anderson
Des Plaines
Chicago Audubon Society



Jim Landing stands next to a sign at the Magic Hedge in Chicago. He was instrumental in helping protect the Montrose Point region.