



ILLINOIS BIRD CLUBS

Birds of a Feather: The Chicago Ornithological Society

The Chicago Ornithological Society (COS) is possibly the oldest birding organization in Illinois. Founded in 1912, COS originally admitted only professional ornithologists as members. Today, the group welcomes anyone with an interest in birds and birding. COS has evolved into a casual, friendly club of about 250 members from Chicagoland. Many members are serious birders, but programs, field trips and special identification workshops appeal to and educate all levels of birders. Field Trip Chair Jenny Vogt said, "The first thing you'll notice about COS is the friendliness: everyone loves to share their knowledge, ID tips, scope, lens cleaner, even a granola bar!"

Programs and services

COS is especially proud of its success in developing educational programs aimed at making beginners and experts alike better birders. The club offers frequent classes focusing on warblers, shorebirds, hawks, bird songs and the like, taught by COS members. Classes vary in length from one to several sessions and may include a field trip. Class fees are nominal.

COS also has a growing library of books and videos that members may borrow. All rental proceeds go toward expanding the library. COS also offers an "Introduction to Birding" class to the general public several times a year. This free, three-hour class is held at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Lincoln Park and includes a classroom discussion with slides and a bird walk.

*A brief pause in
COS's hardcore
birding trip to
Southern Illinois,
July 2000*

COS' monthly meetings, held at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, start with brief tips for tricky bird identifications such as gulls, sparrows or peeps, and sharing of the latest sightings and stories. "You'll hear about the lifer Red-cockaded Woodpecker as well as confessions of birders lured into a marsh by a duck decoy," said Vogt.

The evening's program often brings in famous speakers like Jon Dunn, Kenn Kaufman, Brian Patteson, and Jim Danzenbaker, with presentations on migration, nesting studies, confusing fall warblers, and stories from the field. Travelogues are another program option; guest speakers explore various regions from Central America or Africa to Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Field trips

COS holds about 40 field trips a year, at birding spots near and far. Local destinations include the Chicago lakefront several times during spring migration for passerines and again in the winter for gulls and ducks; annual trips to the Lake Calumet area and the sod farms south of Chicago for shorebirds; and regular visits to area forest preserves. Farther afield, the club travels to the Mississippi River for eagles; Concordia College north of Mil-

