

waukee for hawks; and regional lakes for ducks, loons, and grebes.

"We get up earlier to go birding than we do for work," said Vogt, "but some of these trips just can't be missed, like Walter's annual rails trip or the 3 a.m. 'owl prowling.'" Trip leaders are usually COS members and attendance is free. Long distance trip costs are shared among participants, and birders of all ability levels are welcomed.

Conservation activities

COS has been involved in conservation throughout its nearly 100-year history. In the late 1930s, COS old-timers Karl Bartel and Al Reuss were active bird banders and conservationists, documenting the distribution and decline of breeding and migrating birds in the Chicago area. Many COS members who are active conservationists today were influenced by Karl and Al, among them Walter Marcisz, Al Welby, Marianne Hahn, Wes Serafin, and Christine Williamson.

COS is a founding member of the Bird Conservation Network, a coalition of birding and environmental organizations in Chicagoland. COS Conservation Chair Christine Williamson said, "COS members are among BCN's most active volunteers. Through BCN, COS has leveraged the support of its members for bird conservation in a network of 15 organizations representing nearly 50,000 people in northeastern Illinois."

As a group and as individuals, COS members are active volunteers in many bird conservation efforts:

- Lobbying for additional public land acquisition by county forest preserve districts, the state of Illinois and many municipalities.

- Habitat management and enhancement projects all along the Illinois shore of Lake Michigan, most notably at Montrose Point, the Lincoln Park Bird Sanctuary, North Pond and the south shore parks.

- This summer, COS members lead weekly bird walks at the North Pond in Lincoln Park to introduce Chicagoans to the miracle of neotropical bird migration. North Pond is a quality birding spot that has undergone major habitat enhancement, thanks to tireless work by COS member Veronica Cook.

- Wes Serafin has been dogged in his insistence that Cook County Forest Preserve staff protect and manage important bird areas in the Palos area.

- Walter Marcisz's total dedication to habitat protection in the Lake Calumet area is legendary.

Communications

All COS members receive *The Chicago Birder* newsletter bi-monthly, featuring birding news from the Chicagoland area, including a calendar of field trips, upcoming programs, classes and activities. Rare sightings and site guides to unique places nearby are also featured.

Part of the fun of birding is "chasing" rarities and the COS-sponsored listserve IBET ("Illinois Birders Exchanging Thoughts") links birders throughout the state for that purpose and more. Subscribers share rare sightings, trip reports and lively discussions about birds and behavior (both ornithological and human). To subscribe to IBET, visit the COS website at www.chicagobirder.org, where you'll also learn about upcoming field trips, meetings and classes, review the latest IBET posts, and check out links to other birding.

If you're the low-tech type, COS keeps you informed of hot birds via the COS phone chain. When a rare bird is called into the hotline at 708-378-5321, those on the phone chain get an alert call with location and other details.

To join COS

Membership is \$20 for an individual, \$25 for a family and \$15 for students. You can join the Chicago Ornithological Society on-line at www.chicagobirder.org; via e-mail to membership@chicagobirder.org; or by calling 312-409-9678.

Chicago Ornithological Society
601 S. LaSalle Building - #C980
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 409-9678
www.chicagobirder.org

*Jenny Vogt researched this article
and is the Field Trip Chair for the
Chicago Ornithological Society.*