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## **Taking Time to Remember Bob Chapel**

*To our readers: We dedicate this issue of Meadowlark, A Journal of Illinois Birds to the memory of Robert Chapel, a birder we loved, respected, and enjoyed, and who gave so much to the Illinois birding community. Bob was the Field Notes Compiler for the Fall Season for the Illinois Ornithological Society since its inception 10 years ago. He wrote many fine articles for Meadowlark, served on the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee, and appeared at nearly all the Society's field trips. The following article, which was published Nov. 6, 2002, is reproduced by permission of The Champaign-Urbana News Gazette. Permission does not imply endorsement of the paper.*

by Tom Kacich



Everyone's life can be seen as a sort of jigsaw puzzle with different people, places and interests providing the pieces that make up the picture. The picture that was Bob Chapel's life was filled in unexpectedly, yet appropriately, on Monday evening (Nov. 4, 2002).

Unexpectedly because about 54 hours earlier Bob had been alive and vibrant, on his way to Clinton Lake to scout for a bird-watching field trip he was leading for the Illinois Ornithological Society and the Champaign County Audubon Society on Nov. 16.

Appropriately because, in a hasty memorial to Bob and his life, the bird-watchers met the archivists. The people who make up the two passions of Bob's life gathered in the cramped corridor of a building full of the dusty history of the University of Illinois, with the recorded sounds of birds filling the air.

There must have been 100 people at the UI's Archives Research Center and they all served to complete Bob's picture. For someone whose life ended so suddenly, so violently, so horribly, it was not so sad an occasion. It was the kind of farewell most of us say we want, with reflection and stories and laughter. There were tight throats and heavy hearts and unimpeded tears, but there also were poignant stories about Bob's childhood, funny tales about his love for birds and his zeal for identifying them, and kind-hearted tributes about his dedication to his job.

No one broached the awfulness of Bob's death, how he had pulled off to the side of westbound Interstate 74 near Farmer City on Saturday afternoon.

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