

Making a Difference

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HAVE YOU ever wondered what you could do to help wildlife, but don't know where to start? In the next 12 issues of *Game News*, I'll try to lead you down a path that may help. Some of the recommendations are simple and some are a little more involved, but I think you'll find something that will fit your time and/or budget constraints.

Ducks Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Whitetails Unlimited and Ruffed Grouse Society are just a few wildlife conservation organizations you can join to help wildlife. There are many more out there and a little research on the Internet can go a long way in determining which one is best for you.

For a small fee you can join one of these organizations and not only contribute to wildlife conservation but also enjoy many of the benefits they offer when you join. Without trying to sound partial to any one group, take Ducks Unlimited (DU) as an example.

The first thing is to evaluate your passion in the outdoors. When I was younger I joined DU because I enjoyed duck hunting and reading outdoor magazines. With my membership, DU sends me a well-written, beautifully illustrated magazine that is educational and entertaining. I learned most of my duck identification from it.

Second, make sure the membership dues are within your budget and scrutinize how the money is spent within the organization. DU charges \$35 a year for membership. According to the DU website, 81 percent of that is earmarked for waterfowl and wetlands conservation and education, 16 percent toward fundraising and development and only three percent goes to administration and human resource purposes. I can handle those numbers. Also, I know of several local projects DU contributed funds to and they've helped conserve more than 12 million acres of wetland habitat in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

A third consideration is what other wildlife benefits from this organization? The main focus for DU is wetland habitat and waterfowl conservation, but think of all the songbirds, amphibians, reptiles, plants and other animals that also benefit.

Additionally, DU has sent me many extra items over the years such as shirts, equipment bags, decals and other items when I renewed my membership. They also hold fundraising banquets that encourage fellowship amongst its members and always have great auctions and raffles.

Good luck in your search and remember the Internet is a valuable tool in finding an organization that benefits the wildlife you love. □