

# Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

Website: <http://couleeaudubon.org/>



January-February 2006

## Events

### January 18

Pot Luck and Annual Meeting will be held at the Ho Chunk Nation Building, lower level, 725 Main St, La Crosse.

The pot luck will begin at 6 PM, followed by the annual meeting and a slide show by members.

Bring a dish to pass, your own eating utensils and slides or photos of birds you would like to share with members.

### February 15

Lower level of the HoChunk Nation Building, 725 Main Street, La Crosse 7:00PM

Kurt Brownell, Natural Resource Specialist for the Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Natural Resource Project will present a talk titled "History of the Mississippi River". It deals with the beginnings of the Mississippi River after the last glaciation and changes brought to the river by European settlement and commercial navigation. It will include photos and a discussion of how the river's environmental health has declined and what the Corps is currently doing to reverse environmental degradation on the river.

His primary job with the Corps is working on designing Environmental Management Program (EMP) projects such as island building projects like the Stoddard Islands, design and oversight of prairie restoration on dredge disposal sites and embankments, invasive species control, and forest inventory and management.

Kurt has a degree in Wildlife Management and Biology and has worked for the Corps for the past three years. Previous to that, he worked for the Army at Fort McCoy where he managed the environmental restoration program, was a

See **EVENTS**, page 4

## President's notebook

### Time for passing the torch

By **BOBBIE WILSON**

As I write this the old year is waning and the new year is about to begin. It's a time for reflection—and for looking forward. Tradition is good, and holds families and groups together. But change is also necessary, to keep organizations strong and vibrant.

The Christmas Bird Count, for example, is an Audubon tradition that we hope will go on forever. It has also been traditional to gather afterward for a post-count tally and holiday potluck supper, in recent years at the home of Laura Johnson and Mike Furr. This get-together

is a treasured ritual—but there is room for change. A new location would give our longtime gracious hosts a break and give others a chance to entertain a room full of hungry birders.

It is also traditional for Coulee Audubon to hold its annual membership meeting at the beginning of the year. On the third Wednesday in January, after sharing our pictures and a potluck supper, we elect those who will lead the club into the near future. The event has elements of both tradition and change. It

See **NOTEBOOK**, page 2

### **2006 backyard bird count encourages first-timers**

By **Kurt Brownell**

Preparations are now underway for the ninth annual Great Backyard Bird Count, which returns for its ninth season February 17-20, 2006. This year's theme, "Count Birds with a Buddy", encourages enthusiasts of all ages to share their love of birds with a friend, a child, a scout troop, a class, or a co-worker, opening new eyes to the joy of birding and the fun of creating a unique snapshot of winter bird abundance and distribution across the continent.

In 2006, for the first time, the Lab of Ornithology and Audubon are launching an element of friendly competition. Awards will be given to localities that submit the most checklists, record the greatest number species, or count the highest number of birds. A photo contest will also be held based on bird pictures taken during the event and submitted for posting on the GBBC gallery. Media may obtain photos, local contacts, and background information by calling

See **COUNT**, page 2

*We need your contributions of material for the Audubon newsletter. Please send your suggestions for articles, news of events and other things birders need to know. Deadline for copy is the third Friday of the month preceding publication. The next deadline will be Feb. 17. Send information to: [dskoloda@earthlink.net](mailto:dskoloda@earthlink.net) or by mail to Newsletter, W6396 Riverview Drive, Onalaska, WI 54650.*

# Seeking solutions to window strikes

Mary Strasser reports that she has had good success on seriously problematic windows at her home with the application of a new type of decal. It has a frosted appearance to the human eye, but the side facing outward to the yard gives off an ultraviolet color that is supposed

to be visible to birds. The decals are static clinging and applied to glass exterior. Perhaps this ultraviolet color application could be studied and built into window glass somehow..

We'll have to ask Mary for more information on this at the next meeting. She

## Whoopers as snow birds

**BY WDNR**

MADISON – After four years of re-introduction efforts, 45 wild whooping cranes released in previous years are now migrating independently between Wisconsin and Florida. An additional 19 juvenile cranes are close to completing their aircraft led migration and four other “direct release” juvenile cranes left their central Wisconsin rearing grounds on Thanksgiving logging an impressive 488 miles on their first day

In addition, the first wild whooping crane eggs to be laid in Wisconsin in over a century were produced this spring by whoopers released as part of the multiyear effort to re-establish a migrating population of the endangered cranes in eastern North America. Although the young and inexperienced parents were unable to successfully hatch the eggs, project biologists are optimistic that this development is an indication of good things to come.

A team of biologists, bird behavior specialists and pilots have painstakingly reared whooping cranes from eggs produced in captivity and conditioned the

juveniles to follow ultralight aircraft so that they may learn a safe migration route.

“The first ‘class’ of cranes from 2001 is maturing now,” said Beth Goodman, a conservation biologist and crane project coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources. “There were five nests built this year and there is potential of seven adult breeding pairs for next year. We’re on target to reach the project goal of 25 breeding pairs and 125 migratory birds in the eastern population by 2020.”

In addition to the birds conditioned to follow the ultralight aircraft, biologists are using a direct autumn release technique. This fall, four chicks were released directly into the wild for fall migration with wild cranes. The technique is intended to complement the known success of the aircraft led migration effort. If successful and captive breeding programs can produce enough eggs, both methods will be used to release 20 to 30 birds annually for the next five years.

So far, the direct release birds seem to be learning the migration process quickly according to Goodman.

Soon after being released they spent

See **WHOOBERS**, page 3

was responding to an e-mail from Kurt Brownell who passed along information from an NPR Morning Edition presentation on the danger birds face from window strikes.

According to Ornithologist Daniel Klem, who was quoted in the segment, some 1 billion birds are killed by flying into windows every year in the United States.

Klem is a professor at Mulhensberg College in Allentown, Pa. He says that the yearly death toll from window strikes accounts for about 5 percent of all the birds found in the United States each fall.

Klem told NPR that while attempts to find solutions to the window hit problem have been few and relatively modest, a major exception is on the campus of Swarthmore College. It recently agreed to turn a \$71 million science center into an experiment, by using it to test a new kind of glass designed to ward off oncoming birds.

The center uses so-called fritted glass, which is etched with closely spaced rows of small circles. When standing right in front of it, the glass is hard to see through, but from a slight distance, the dots don’t obscure vision that much, according to the NPR interviews..

Klem says that after years of studying the window strike problem, he has learned that, “If you are going to come up with a solution to this problem, you are going to have to come up with one that doesn’t muck up the way people look out their windows,”

## NOTEBOOK from page 1

---

is the ritual of the passing of the torch.

This meeting will mark the end of my two year presidency, and it has been a privilege to serve this group. Birders, and in particular Coulee Audubon members, are some of the nicest and most down-to-earth folks I know. You deserve strong and lively leadership, and that comes with change. A slate of new and continuing board members and officers will be up for election at the January meeting.

We owe thanks to those just completing terms, as well as those who have accepted nomination to office. Their roles in the history of the Coulee Region Audubon Society are important to the continued existence and progress of this club. Let’s have a great turnout to celebrate our club and elect a strong new slate of leaders. Bring a dish to pass and your energy and good will as we ring in the old and ring in the new!

## COUNT from page 1

---

Miyoko Chu. For additional information about this year’s event or for a copy of the news release, contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at [cornellbirds@cornell.edu](mailto:cornellbirds@cornell.edu) or contact Audubon at [citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org). —Pat Leonard ([pe127@cornell.edu](mailto:pe127@cornell.edu)), Miyoko Chu ([mcc37@cornell.edu](mailto:mcc37@cornell.edu)), and Erica Barton ([ebarton@audubon.org](mailto:ebarton@audubon.org)).

## Wings of Spring added to growing list of festivals

The first annual Wings of Spring Confluence Birding Festival will be held on Friday and Saturday, April 28 and 29, 2006.

A partnership of organizations within the Confluence Greenway is planning the Festival to spotlight birding opportunities where the great rivers meet. The Festival is reserved for school groups on Friday, April 28.

The public is invited to attend the Festival on Saturday, April 29, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Wings of Spring Confluence Birding Festival will be based at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary near Alton, Illinois.

“The Festival will offer programs and events for all levels of birding interest including educational programs, speakers, vendors, on-site tours of migratory shore birds and guided birding tours at other Confluence sites,” said Ken Buchholz, program chair. Buchholz, representing Audubon Missouri, continued, “The Festival will celebrate the Confluence, part of the Mississippi Flyway, as an important area for birds and a destination for bird watching.” For more information on the Festival contact the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-800-258-6645 or visit the website at [www.wingsofspring.org](http://www.wingsofspring.org)

### **WHOOPERS** *from page 2*

---

time with other whoopers and sandhill cranes in wetlands in Mill Bluff State Park and Necedah. With the arrival of strong northerly winds on Thanksgiving day they took flight and covered 400 miles on their very first day of migration. Their second day took them into Tennessee’s Hiwassee State Wildlife Area.

“The 45 birds released so far are doing what we’d hoped,” said Goodman. “They are migrating on their own and selecting good habitat. They’ve made extensive use of private and public central and southern Wisconsin wetlands in over 17 counties and 15 different state wildlife areas including the lower Wisconsin River, the Horicon area and the core re-introduction area of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge.”

Twenty-one of the 45 cranes had already arrived in Florida by early this week. The 19 juvenile whooping cranes migrating with the ultralight plane crew and are currently in southern Georgia possibly only another day’s flight away from Florida. News and daily updates on the migration are available online at <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org> - Exit DNR>.

**See separate file for the ad**

*Here’s the ad that will appear in Birder’s World Magazine about the Mississippi Flyway Birding Festival. We’ll have more details on the festival in our next issue of the Coulee Birder. Meanwhile, mark your calendars for this great event.*



Coulee Region Audubon Society,  
P.O Box 2573  
La Crosse, WI 54602

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
La Crosse, WI  
PERMIT NO. 182

## EVENTS from page 1

quality control foreman at a paper mill, a marine biologist on the Pacific Ocean, and a biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service in La Crosse. He is a long-

time Audubon member.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail, please send your request,

along with your e-mail address to:  
Gretchen Skoloda at  
gskol@earthlink.net

## Contacts

**PRESIDENT**  
Bobbie Wilson  
608-788-8831  
pbWilson@centurytel.net

**BOARD MEMBER**  
Dan Jackson  
djackson@mwt.net  
608-483-2271

**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Gretchen Skoloda  
608-781-7502  
gskol@earthlink.net

**BOARD MEMBER**  
Kurt Brownell  
Kurt.A.Brownell@mvp02.usace.army.mil  
608-269-6124

**TREASURER**  
Mary Sullivan  
608-785-7095  
marysullivan@hotmail.com

**AUDUBON OFFICE**  
Bonnie Koop  
(608) 784-2992 or e-mail at  
bkoop@audubon.org

**SECRETARY**  
Mark Webster  
608-787-6398.

**NEWSLETTER EDITORS**  
Dave and Gretchen Skoloda  
608-781-7502  
dskoloda@earthlink.net

### Coulee Region Audubon Society Local Membership

\$15 Household     \$30 Supporting

I'd like to receive the newsletter electronically

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mail with your check to:  
Coulee Region Audubon Society  
PO Box 2573  
La Crosse, WI 54602-2573

Thank you!