

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

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



September-October 2006

Events

Sept. 20

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 7 p.m. at the Ho Chunk Nation Building, lower level, 725 Main Street, across 8th street from the Public Library Main Branch. Speaker will be Joseph Duff, co-founder, senior pilot and CEO of Operation Migration.

Oct. 13-15

Birds, People & their Future Together

* No Bird Left Behind: Oct. 13

* Upper Midwest Audubon Conference: Oct. 14-15, both meetings at Ho-Chunk Conference Center, Baraboo, WI

For more information visit: <http://madisonaudubon.org>

Oct. 18

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m. at the Ho Chunk Nation Building, lower level, 725 Main Street. Speaker will be Stan Tekiela, award winning author, naturalist, columnist, wildlife photographer and radio personality.

Fall programs begin with talk on Whoopers

By TOM LINK

I'd like to introduce myself to the readers of this newsletter and give you a "heads up" about some of Coulee Region Audubon Society's guest speakers in the fall. I'm Tom Link, the newest member of the CRAS board. I've had the pleasure of contacting two outstanding speakers, asking them to come to one of our meetings to give a presentation.

Our first meeting of the fall will be

See **PROGRAMS**, page 2

President's notebook

Advice sought on festival future

by DAN JACKSON

It is the beginning of a new program year for the Coulee Region Audubon Society, a time to look forward to a new series of programs and events, a time to reflect on last year's events, and also a time to talk about other important ideas.

If we look back on last year, the most important event to consider was the 3rd annual Mississippi Flyway Birding Festival that was held in May. The festival was a great event and was enjoyed by all who took part. The birding trips were very successful and attendees enjoyed the seminars and speakers.

Despite its success, the Birding Festival is now at a crossroads. In 2006, attendance dropped significantly and the committee lost a crucial resource when Bonnie Koop's position with Audubon's Upper Mississippi River initiative was eliminated. With the departure of Bonnie, a huge void has been left to fill in terms of the Birding Festival. In addition to all of her other duties and responsibilities, Bonnie carried a significant portion of the load of organizing and completing all of the tasks associated with putting on the festival. In 2006, this work load was ab-

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Report cites makeup of bird watching population

A report released in late June by the Outdoor Industry Foundation which profiled the "2005 American bird watcher" as having the following characteristics:

* Balanced by gender and marital status

* Just over a third will have children under the age of 18 living in their household

* Over two-thirds will be over the age of 35 with half over the age of 45 (mean age 45)

* Equally distributed across regions

* More than 8 out of 10 birders will be Caucasian (similar to findings for

hunting)

* Hiking will be the most popular additional outdoor activity

* Went on bird watching excursions 12 times on average during the year

* Close to a one-third will limit their activity to only a single outing during the year

* Only 5 percent will go on 31 or more field trips a year.

Demographically, according to the foundation, the bird watching population has remained very stable over the years,

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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 Oct. 20. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

Bird group hails EPA pesticide action

Here's a letter from Michael Fry of the American Bird Conservancy that circulated among bird enthusiasts bearing good news about pesticide regulation:

"This morning EPA called to tell me that ALL uses of carbofuran (a potent neurotoxin) will NOT be eligible for re-registration. This cancels uses for corn, alfalfa, potatoes, and rice. There will be a 4-year phase out period for 6 minor crops totaling less than 2 percent of current use: artichokes, spinach for seed, cucumbers, chili peppers, sunflowers,

and pine seedlings.

"ABC considers this a TOTAL victory, coming 21 years after the initiation of a Special Review by EPA. Next in line are cancellation of aldicarb and better regulation of rat poisons.

"Congratulations to all who sent FAXes, e-mails, letters, and comments. This is huge."

Michael Fry

American Bird Conservancy

The ABC also added the following information regarding the U.S. EPA announcement of plans to ban use of the pes-

ticide lindane.

The decision came as EPA was set to finish a 10-year effort to reassess acceptable limits for residues of existing pesticides, an undertaking mandated by the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act.

Under the law, cumulative risk assessments for lindane and other organophosphate pesticides are to be finished Thursday. Many of the chemicals are potent neurotoxins such as carbofuran and aldicarb.

Lindane "is recognized internationally as one of the most toxic, persistent, bioaccumulative pesticides ever registered," said Jim Gulliford, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, in explaining why the agency chose to voluntarily cancel the chemical.

"EPA has determined [lindane's] remaining uses are not eligible for re-registration," Gulliford said. In the United States, the chemical is used in shampoos and creams to treat head lice and scabies, and as a seed treatment for barley, corn, oats, rye, sorghum, and wheat.

Fifty-two other countries already have banned lindane, and parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants are considering whether to add lindane to the "dirty dozen" chemicals effectively banned by the treaty.

Lindane is an organochlorine chemical, related to DDT, dieldrin, and other bioaccumulative chemicals that were mostly banned in the 1970s. Other isomers of this chemical were banned internationally, but the US has dragged its feet for decades, keeping this pesticide as a seed treatment that has the potential for long-term contamination of soils and groundwater.

In the current flurry of interest on carbofuran and aldicarb, lindane has not been in the limelight, but it is VERY good news to see it being cancelled by EPA. It is nice the "world leader" in pesticide regulation finally joins all the other countries in a positive environmental move.

Michael Fry
American Bird Conservancy

PROGRAMS from page 1

on **Wednesday, Sept. 20** stating at 7 p.m. at the Ho Chunk Nation Building, lower level, 725 Main Street, across 8th street from the Public Library Main Branch. Our speaker will be Joseph Duff, co-founder, senior pilot and CEO of Operation Migration.

This fall Joe will be flying his ultralight airplane, leading his 6th flock of Whooping Cranes south to Florida. He'll tell us about the history of this wonderful project as well as the current state, bringing us up to date on the status of the endangered whooping crane.

He will have some incredible photos to show and stories to tell. I'm sure he will share his insights into the future of this project and this beautiful bird. The Saturday before the CRAS meeting, Joe will be presenting at the Crane Festival in Necedah, WI. so there are a couple of chances to learn more about this amazing project.

Operation Migration, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization working in partnership with nine private and gov-

ernment agencies known collectively as the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. OM has a wonderful web site with much more information at: <http://www.operationmigratrion.org>" The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership also has a great website at: <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org>.

Guest speaker for our meeting Oct. 18 will be Stan Tekiela, award winning author, naturalist, columnist, wildlife photographer and radio personality. He will be giving his "uncommon facts about common birds" presentation and slide show. He has a new book coming out about loons and will talk about that also. Stan has published over 40 field guides to birds, wildflowers, trees, reptiles and amphibians. He also has recordings of bird songs. You can learn more about Stan at his web site at: www.naturesmart.com.

I hope to have a big turnout to welcome both of these outstanding speakers. CRAS meetings are free and open to the public.

CRAS member teaches birding

Tim Collins, Coulee Region Audubon Society Member who has also been active on the organizing committee for the Mississippi Flyway Birding Festival, is co-instructor for a Western Technical College course on birding for

the fall semester..

The course will provide information on basic identification techniques and on "vacation birding.". Two field trips to "practice what we have learned" are part of the course.

Birds of prey said to feed on our ancestors

NEWSWISE — A new study suggests that prehistoric birds of prey made meals out of some of our earliest human ancestors. Researchers drew this conclusion after studying more than 600 bones from modern-day monkeys. They had collected the bones from beneath the nests of African crowned eagles in the Ivory Coast's Tai rainforest.

A full-grown African crowned eagle is roughly the size of an American bald eagle, which typically weighs about 10 to 12 pounds. Punctures and scratches on many of the monkey skulls have led some researchers to rethink which animals may have preyed on our human ancestors, said W. Scott McGraw, the study's lead au-

thor and an associate professor of anthropology at Ohio State University.

"It seems that raptors have been a selective force in primate evolution for a long time," he said. "Before this study I thought that eagles wouldn't contribute that much to the mortality rate of primates in the forest.

"I couldn't have been more wrong."

The results may also have important implications for the mystery surrounding the death of one human ancestor who lived about 2.5 million years ago. Archaeologists discovered the skull of a 3 1/2-year old ape-like child in a cave in South Africa in 1924. Researchers believed this child, called the Taung child

(Australopithecus africanus), had been killed by a predatory cat. But McGraw said that puncture marks on the monkey skulls he examined closely resemble those found on the skull of the Taung child. "Eagles leave very distinctive beak and talon punctures around the face and in the eye sockets," "The skull of the Taung child has these same kinds of puncture marks."

The study is online at the website of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology, and is scheduled for publication in the journal's October issue.

Bonnie's new job

Bonnie (Koop) Hundrieser, who staffed the La Crosse Audubon office before it closed, has accepted a Byways Specialist position with the America's Byways Resource Center in Duluth, MN. The Resource Center is a supportive arm of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program, which is a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. In her new position, she will provide technical assistance to by-



Bonnie Koop

way groups and serve as the new Resource Center contact for the following States: Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. Bonnie can be reached at 1-800 4BYWAYS Ext. 5 or at bhundrieser@byways.org.

Audubon offers

"Chapter Networker"

Audubon members can keep up to date on the organization by accessing the "Chapter Networker."

The summer issue included such things as the Audubon Adventures Update and information on a Wetlands Wilderness in jeopardy.

The newsletter is available at:

<http://www.audubon.org/local/cn/networker.html>

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sorbed by committee members and especially by Gretchen Skoloda.

These events have led to a discussion by the Festival committee about the future of the Mississippi Flyway Birding Festival. The questions still unresolved include whether or not the Festival should be continued and if it is continued, what form it should take. Options being discussed include shortening the Festival to 1 or 2 days of birding events without presentations and speakers, combining the Festival with other events that are put on by the Fish and Wildlife Service or another agency, changing the focus of the event to make it more of a family and/or an educational event, or finding another organization that will handle most of the event's organizational effort so that it can be continued in a form similar to that of the past 3 years. At this point, this discussion will be led by the board of the Coulee Region Audubon Society. If anyone would like to be involved in the discussion, please call me.

Last year, we started work on the development of an e-mail list that could be used to distribute our newsletter elec-

tronically and could also be used to send out special reminders about club events and special issues. I have put together a mailing list of about 30 people, but would like to add more names. It would be nice to reduce some of the mailing costs associated with this newsletter and it would also be helpful to be able to send reminders about club meetings and activities and other special events. If you are interested and willing to be added to a mailing list, please send me an e-mail at DanielleJackson@Earthlink.net

For the past several years, the Coulee Region Audubon Society has provided copies of Audubon Adventures to local grade school teachers. Audubon Adventures are a set of teaching materials that cover a wide range of environmental subjects. If you know of a grade school teacher who might be interested, please contact me so that we can share this resource. Last year, we donated seven sets of materials to local teachers and we would love to provide even more.

Finally, please take note of the great programs planned for fall (story page 1). Hope to see you there!

REPORT from page 1

but there has been a recent drop in the number of Americans birding and the number of field trips taken. (2001 had 18.3 million birders taking an average of

31 outings a year; 2005 had 15.6 million birders taking an average of 12 outings per year.)



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Things to cheer about

Mississippi Valley Conservancy has purchased two more bluffland properties in its quest with the city to protect an 8-mile strip of the bluffs above La Crosse.

The project is more than halfway to-

ward its goal of 3,000 acres. The lands are open to hiking so bird watchers are welcome! See the website for more info: www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org.

Also, the Hixon Forest plan for establishing an EcoPark are underway with the support of seven local Rotary Clubs. Call 784-0303 for more info.

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