

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society
Website: <http://couleeaudubon.org/>



March-April 2008

Events

Audubon Meetings

Audubon meetings are held at 7:00 PM at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, La Crosse.

March 19

Joyce Powers, The What, Why and How of Rain Gardens -

Joyce is an ecologist with a vast amount of experience in restoring native ecosystems in Wisconsin. With undergraduate degrees in biology and English, she has a masters degree from the University of Chicago in zoology and a masters in Natural Science Communications from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Starting with native prairie plants, she founded Prairie Ridge Nursery in 1974, branching out to include wetlands, savannas and woodlands where she worked on restoration of native ecosystems. Currently she is a consultant on ecosystem restoration.

In her talk and slide presentation, Joyce will discuss rain gardens, what they are, why they are needed, and how they work. Included will be examples and pictures of native plants that thrive in rain gardens. Finally she will describe how to establish a rain garden.

April 16

Kim Grveles (Rescheduled from Feb-

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Sierra Club - March 25

March 25

Meets at 7:00 PM at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, Speakers are Philip and Monique Hooker. Their topic: Peru, a land of contrasting geography and vast archeological heritage, Peruvian cuisine and handcraft.

President's notebook

Today's youth nature deprived?

By Dan Jackson

In recent forums, there has been a great deal of discussion about how today's youth are becoming nature deprived. Many people feel that the current generation of children are not getting an adequate exposure to nature and outdoor activities and that this lack of exposure could potentially lead to long term issues for outdoor sports and the environment.

It is a common perception that today's youth are more caught up in school, social activities, electronic entertainment, and other indoor and sedentary activities than any prior generation. Children of prior generations often spent hours each day playing outside, and interacting with nature through fishing, hunting, and other activities. Over the past couple of decades, more and more children spend significant amounts of time in front of a TV or video game and parents are often scared to let their children play outside by themselves out of fear that a stranger may harm them. In addition, older kids are simply busier than kids of prior generations. They are involved in more sports and other school and extracurricular activities than their parents dreamed about.

As two income families have become the norm, there is less opportu-

nity for kids to play in the park or take hikes in the woods with one or more of their parents. This trend is already having an impact in the hunting community. Each year there are fewer hunters taking to the woods and fields and as a result there is less money being spent on guns, ammunition, and licenses. Since these purchases or taxes on these purchases are a major source of the funding for wildlife refuges and wildlife management agencies, this is a scary trend for agencies that depend on those funds. Many people feel that this trend will also occur in the involvement in non-consumptive outdoor activities such as bird watching.

Indirectly, there is a fear that this lack of involvement by future generations will lead to apathy toward the environment and environmental issues such as global warming and the continued loss of critical wildlife habitat throughout the world. Coupled with the impact of an ever-increasing human population, this could easily be a huge issue in the future.

Many organizations are actively trying to figure out how to combat the issue. Most agree that it is important to expose children as early as possible

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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 for the next issue is April 24. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

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bruary 20)

Kirtland's Warbler Says "Yes" to Wisconsin.

The federally-endangered Kirtland's Warbler was found nesting on Plum Creek Timber Company land in central Wisconsin in 2007. This was the first ever documented breeding of the species in Wisconsin, and the first nesting outside of Michigan since the 1940's.

The species population has increased in recent years resulting in the pioneering of new habitats such as in Wisconsin. In an attempt to better define the breeding status of this species in Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources is working in partnership with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a widespread and organized census effort beginning in 2008.

Kim will discuss the Kirtland's Warbler nesting activities, bird life history, conservation and management issues. An opportunity to sign up as a volunteer for the 2008 survey will be offered.

Kim is Assistant Zoologist/Ornithologist, Bureau of Endangered Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Field Trips

March 15

The Lansing Loop caravan trip will meet at 9AM, Sat. March 15 at the Dresbach Information Center across I-90 in Minnesota. We will proceed south along the west side of Pools 8 and 9 of the Mississippi River to Lansing, Iowa, where we will stop for lunch, then cross into Wisconsin from Lansing, and north on the east side of the Mississippi River to La Crosse. This will take about 6 hours.

Bald Eagles, other raptors, early waterfowl and eastern bluebirds are possible sightings. Trip leader is Fred Leshner.

April 9

Mississippi Valley Conservancy Linked to the Land Hike: 10 a.m. MacGregor's (private land)- Grant County. For more information see the

Conservancy web site at www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org

Spring Migration Bird Walks

Tuesdays, April 29 and May 6 and 13 in the La Crosse River Marsh, Meet at the RABBIT Trail parking lot in Myrick Park just east of the old zoo. Leaders Bobbie Wilson and Dan Jackson

Thursdays, May 1, 8 and 15 in Hixon Forest. Meet at the Hixon Forest trail parking lot just east off of Hwy. 16 on Bluff Pass Road. Leaders Bobbie and Pat Wilson

Start your day by checking out the spring migration. Bird walks start at 6:30 a.m. and last until about 8 a.m. You're welcome to leave early or stay later. Bring binoculars and a bird guide if you have them.

Crane Count

April 19

Help the International Crane Foundation (ICF) monitor the Eastern population of Greater Sandhill Cranes as they return to their breeding grounds in the Midwest by participating in the 2008 Midwest Crane Count. You might even be lucky enough to spot a member of the reintroduced flock of endangered Whooping Cranes. This year's count will be conducted on Saturday, April 19, from 5:30 am to 7:30 am Central Daylight Time.

Crane Count is organized by county in Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. To participate in La Crosse County, get in touch through e-mail with county coordinator, Jean Ledman at jledman2@yahoo.com.

Learn more about the Crane Count at the website: www.cranecount.org

The Annual Midwest Crane Count is a tradition dating back to 1976. It is one of the largest citizen-based inventories in the world. Volunteers are the most important part of this unique program. You can play an integral role in helping ICF study sandhill cranes. Join over 3,000 volunteer counters throughout the Upper Midwest to count cranes and witness the awakening of dawn. For helping ICF col-

lect valuable crane data, you will receive results later in the year, with a certificate for free admission to ICF's site in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Other events

April 18-20

Central Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Festival

A "Celebration of Grasslands for Birders and Bookies". Visit www.goldensandsrccd.org for additional information.

Audubon Spring Adopt-A-Highway Trash Pick Up

April 26

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Dresbach Information Center parking lot just off I-90/Hwy 61 in Minnesota. We'll be picking up a two-mile stretch of Interstate 90/Hwy. 61 from Dresbach to Dakota. Plan on 2 1/2 hours of pick-up time. Bring work gloves and wear sturdy, comfortable shoes. Orange Safety Vests and trash bags are provided. If you are interested, we plan on meeting for lunch afterwards in La Crescent. Rain Date: Sunday, April 27. Call Mark Webster at 787-6398 if you have questions.

Tips for cleaning your bird feeders

Terry Dukerschein of the US GS sent an e-mail with information on cleaning of bird feeders. The link below will take you to a very good article about how to care for bird feeders to prevent disease issues. These practices are especially important in the winter when birds are stressed and feeder populations are high.

<http://www.wnrmag.com/stories/2007/feb07/feeders.htm>

Court orders FCC to study bird deaths from towers

Washington, DC (February 19, 2008, American Bird Conservancy news) – A federal court of appeals has issued a ruling ordering the Federal Communications Commission to carefully evaluate the potential adverse effects of communications towers on migratory bird populations of the Gulf Coast region. A panel of federal judges ruled that national environmental laws like the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act require the FCC to more carefully consider these possible adverse effects in its tower permitting process.

“We are very pleased by today’s ruling which will require the FCC to assess the environmental impacts of towers,” said Darin Schroeder, American Bird Conservancy’s Executive Director of Conservation Advocacy. “Given the large number of bird deaths caused by towers,

an environmental review is long overdue. This is a huge victory for migratory birds and the millions of Americans who love to see them each year.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates between five million and fifty million birds are killed each year in collisions and other accidents caused by communications towers. In its decision, the court criticized the FCC for refusing to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service when approving such towers. The court also said the FCC failed to sufficiently involve the public in its tower approval process.

“The Catch-22 ... is that the Commission provides public notice of individual tower applications only after approving them,” the court wrote in its decision. Tens of thousands of communication towers dot landscapes across the country. In Texas alone, there are over

10,000 of these towers. Each month, the FCC receives more than 20 new applications for tower construction. The situation is critical along the Gulf Coast where thousands of communications towers dot the 1,000-mile stretch of coastline between Pt. Isabel, Texas and Tampa Bay, Florida. Towers along this major migratory bird route threaten many different bird species. Exhausted from their journey across the Gulf of Mexico, these migrating songbirds collide with towers or the accompanying guy wires. In some cases, the birds confuse the blinking lights atop the cell towers with the night stars they use to navigate their journey. The birds become disoriented and begin circling the tower until they collapse from exhaustion and plummet to the ground. The public interest law firm Earthjustice brought the case to federal court on behalf of the American Bird Conservancy. Earthjustice attorneys argued that FCC violated federal law by approving dozens of new towers each year with little or no environmental review.

“The court has clearly directed the FCC to respect national environmental laws when handing out permits for these towers,” said Earthjustice attorney Steve Rody. “FCC now must go back and carefully evaluate the environmental impacts of these towers.”

A copy of the decision can be found at <http://pacer.cadc.uscourts.gov/docs/common/opinions/200802/06-1165a.pdf>

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in outdoor activities that excite interest in the natural world. The Trempealeau and Mississippi Wildlife refuges have held events in the past few years that are specifically aimed at giving large numbers of grade school children exciting outdoor experiences. Schools have made field trips to nature centers and parks part of their curriculum, and groups like Audubon have created educational programs and resources aimed at reaching out to young people to insure that they are exposed to the beauty and wonder of the world around them. Each of us need to do our part to help have an impact on this issue. For parents and grandparents, this can simply mean making outdoor activities an important part of the family. Take nature hikes, collect bugs, talk about the earth and the environment and foster interest and excitement in our world. These activities could easily lead to lifetime interests.

We can also help by supporting programs or coming up with ideas for programs that will generate interest in the natural world. The Coulee Region Audubon Society continues to fund

Audubon Adventures curriculum packets for local teachers and the board routinely discusses ways to try to get more kids involved in activities that will lead to more interaction and appreciation of the natural world. Put on your thinking caps and help us out. If you have any ideas, we would love to hear about them!

Brownsville overlook needs funds for scope

We need your help! The new Brownsville observation area is complete and attracts hundreds of bird watchers from many areas, particularly during the fall migration. It is the premiere viewing location for tundra swans, eagles, ducks and geese. Mississippi River Wild is committed to placing a permanent mounted scope for bird watcher to use while they are there. The Friends of the Upper Mississippi Refuge have donated

1/2 the cost and we have agreed to provide the balance. We need to raise \$1600 so the scope can be in place this spring. Please consider giving to this cause. Any amount would be appreciated. Checks should be made out to MRW scope fund and sent to Ken Visger at 4987 Tschumper Rd, La Crescent MN 55947. Remember, all donations are tax deductible and MRW will provide a receipt upon request..



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Cornell Laboratory offers Living Bird magazine online

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Living Bird Magazine is now available online at www.livingbird.org. photos, video clips and sounds to accompany the reports that include, in the recent issue, articles from Alaska and Scope Quest 2008, a feature on birding optics.

The website features both articles,

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