

# Coulee Birder

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



March/April 2010

## Events

### Meetings

#### Note the meeting location!

We are meeting in the EcoPark building located in Myrick Park, off of La Crosse Street. There is easy access parking nearby and the entire building is handicapped accessible.

### March 17 - Barb Thompson

Barb Thompson is the Outdoor Education Center Coordinator for the West Salem School District and, since 1996, a summer volunteer at the Muraviovka Park For Sustainable Land Use, a crane reserve environmental education camp in Siberia.

She will talk about the birds of the park, what Americans are doing to help increase environmental knowledge/ethics through teachers and children in the area and the joys and sorrows one feels when working with another culture in another country.

The park is a beautiful wetland/upland complex where temperate, tropical and mountain flora and fauna converge to create areas of unimaginable biodiversity. The endangered Red-crowned and White-napped Cranes nest there, with at least four other cranes species using the park lands a resting areas on their yearly migrations.

### April 21 - Bob Dubois

Bob will present a program on "Enjoying the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Western Wisconsin". The talk will focus on citizen enjoyment of the dragonflies and damselflies of northern Wisconsin through understanding the many fascinating aspects of their biology, ecology, and behavior. He will give tips about identifying damselflies and information

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## President's notebook

### Spring's here, get outdoors!

#### By Dan Jackson

I am excited that it is finally the beginning of March. For me, this has been a long, hard, and slow winter and I have been too busy with work and other commitments to do much birding. As a result, time has seemed to drag by especially slowly. I think that there is a lesson there. No matter how busy you are (or perhaps even more so when you are really busy), you need to take some time to get out and enjoy the outdoors.

For me, bird watching, wildlife photography, chasing dragonflies, walks in the woods, and other outdoor activities are very therapeutic. These activities help me to recharge myself so that I can handle all of the stress

and problems that come my way. Since, like most people, there is more than enough stress in my life, outdoor activities are important. If I am having a bad day at work, a short walk (or a quick birding trip) over the lunch hour can be just what I need to make it through the rest of the day. Of course, in the winter, taking that much-needed walk isn't always practical or possible.

Now that March is here, the spring bird migration has started. Golden Eagles are already leaving the bluff areas to head north and other birds like Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, and Lapland Longspurs are on the move. Over the last couple of weeks, I have

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## Dan Jackson re-elected as chapter president

Dan Jackson was re-elected as president of Coulee Region Audubon Society at the annual meeting in January.

In addition to his duties as president, Dan has been a bird tour leader (see events) and has been giving bird talks in the area

Sue Fletcher was elected to the board and will serve as vice president. She re-

places Tom Link, who completed his term on the board.

Also re-elected were Mary Sullivan, treasurer, Mark Webster, secretary.

Continuing on the board are Kurt Brownell and Janice Hatt.

Gretchen and Dave Skoloda serve as newsletter editors. Contact information is on page 4.

*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 May/June issue is May 1. Send information to: [dskoloda@earthlink.net](mailto:dskoloda@earthlink.net).*

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about how folks can become involved in Wisconsin's statewide dragonfly and damselfly survey (WOS).

Bob DuBois is an aquatic ecologist with the Bureau of Endangered Resources in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). He gives talks and leads outings and workshops that focus on Wisconsin's dragonflies and damselflies. He leads citizen monitoring efforts for dragonflies and damselflies through the Wisconsin Odonata Survey (WOS), curates the DNR Odonata collection, and manages the DNR Odonata web site, (<http://inventory.wiatri.net/odonata>).

He has published a field guide to Damselflies of the North Woods ([www.kollathstensaas.com](http://www.kollathstensaas.com)) and is currently preparing a field guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Rocky Mountains. He has written over 3 dozen scientific research articles on various topics related to the management and protection of dragonflies, damselflies, and stream trout fisheries.

DuBois has worked for the DNR since 1983 and is stationed at the WDNR Superior Service Center in Douglas County. Phone (715) 392-6976. Bob lives in Superior with his wife Linda, two dogs, a cat, and whichever of his three adult daughters happens to be home at the time. In his "spare" time he loves to teach (anything he knows about), canoe, fish for trout, and chase dragonflies.

### **May 19 - Mike Reese - Butterflies of the Coulee Region**

Mike Reese has been an educator in Wautoma, Wisconsin for over 25 years, and spends much of his spare time taking nature photographs throughout Wisconsin. He also maintains a web site on the butterflies of Wisconsin ([www.wisconsinbutterflies.org](http://www.wisconsinbutterflies.org)), but is often distracted from butterflies to take other insect photos, especially damselflies, dragonflies, tiger beetles, and robber flies. He provided most of the photos for the book *Damselflies of the Northwoods*, has maintained the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) sightings page since 2001,

writes a quarterly article for their American Butterflies magazine summarizing the sightings, and has been the editor for the Wisconsin NABA butterfly counts since 2002. In addition, he is the state coordinator for the Butterflies and Moths of North America web site.

### **March 30th**

Sierra Club Meeting begins at 7 P.M. at Three Rivers House, 8th and Main, La Crosse.

Craig Thompson will present a program entitled "Orioles and Ocelots: Wisconsin's Costa Rica Connection".

More than 1/2 of Wisconsin's 238 species of breeding birds spend the winter in the tropics. The unabated loss of forests in Latin America is contributing to population declines for many of our most beloved birds - Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Wood Thrush, etc. Craig Thompson of the WDNR will describe a unique Wisconsin partnership spearheading efforts to help protect the magnificent forests of Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula, among the biologically richest places on earth and a vital wintering area for Wisconsin's neotropical migratory birds.

### **Field Trips/Activities**

#### **March 5 to 7**

Festival of Owls at the Houston Nature Center, Houston, Minnesota.

#### **March 6**

Leopold Day at Myrick Hixon Eco Park. See the web site at [www.mhecopark.org](http://www.mhecopark.org)

#### **Early to Mid-March**

The annual Salamander Survey needs volunteers to help with placing and checking traps. To find out more about participating, contact Dan Jackson at [DanielEJackson@earthlink.net](mailto:DanielEJackson@earthlink.net) or 608-483-2271.

#### **March 13 and 27**

Fred Leshner will lead two "Lansing Loop" field trips. March 13 is the Tri-state trip with the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and Coulee Region Audubon

Society. Meet at 9 AM at the La Crescent Kwik Trip at the stoplight in La Crescent. March 27 is the same trip with Wisconsin Society of Ornithology, with the same meeting place and time. These trips take 5-6 hours with a stop for lunch in Lansing, Iowa.

Early waterfowl migrants are expected, plus end of winter/early migrant Bald Eagles, often in numbers over 100. Early Eastern Bluebirds are possible, as well as the first Eastern Phoebes. Tundra Swans are possible, but their spring migration is often hard to see. They are in a big hurry on their 2500+/- miles migration from Chesapeake Bay to extreme NW Canada and are here and gone within 2-3 days.

### **April 17 - Crane Count**

Crane Count - Contact Jean Ledman at [jledman2@yahoo.com](mailto:jledman2@yahoo.com) if you would like to help count Sandhill Cranes in the area. She would like help with the count in order to train someone to be the compiler in 2011.

### **April 24 Highway Cleanup**

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Dresbach Information Center Parking Lot on I-90. We'll pick-up a two-mile stretch of I-90 and Hwy. 61 from Dresbach to Dakota, Minnesota. Safety Vests and trash bags are provided by the Minnesota DOT. Pick up takes about 2 1/2 hours. Wear sturdy shoes and work gloves. For those interested, we'll plan on meeting at Corky's Restaurant in La Crescent afterwards for lunch.

### **May Morning Bird Walks**

Join Pat and Bobbie Wilson and Dan Jackson for weekday morning bird walks from 6:30 to 8 a.m. to enjoy spring migration and to see our regular residents return. Feel free to leave early or stay later.

Tuesdays: May 4, 11, and 18 (La Crosse River Marsh, meet at the R.A.B.B.I.T. trail, near new Myrick Hixon EcoCenter parking lot)

Thursdays: May 6, 13 and 20 (Hixon Forest, meet at the Hixon Forest trail parking lot, off Milson Court)

# Fisherman feeds thieving barred owl

Terry Larson of Holmen sent us the following account of his encounter with a thieving owl.

## By Terry Larson

I was ice fishing way down towards the last cottage on Long Lake near Trempealeau trying different holes, not having much luck, and was fishing a hole with just my fishing pole and a skimmer. No other fishermen were on the ice. I caught a nice bluegill about 7.5 inches and threw it on the ice about a foot from me. A large owl swooped down, legs and talons extended, and tried to take the bluegill I had just thrown on the ice. It surprised me to say the least. I yelled at it and it missed my fish but swooped around and tried it again. I yelled at it again and it went and sat in a tree on the east bank about 30 feet from me. It just sat there and stared at me. I went and got my bucket and put the bluegill away. I caught a small perch and threw it on the ice. The owl swooped down, grabbed the perch and flew away. I thought that was it. About 15 minutes later, the owl flies back and sits in the tree. I catch another small perch, throw it on the ice, and the owl swoops down and grabs the perch. It flies away again and I can hear it hooting in the woods

— Hoo-hoo-to-hoo, hoo-hoo-to-hoo-aw —ending with a raucous jumble of hoots and gurgles that almost sounded as if the owl was laughing.

Ok, now I really think the owl is done. I catch a small perch and throw it back. The owl swoops in front of me. I never heard it or saw it before it swooped in front of me. He came back and evidently wanted more. The owl goes and sits in the same tree as before. I catch another small perch, throw it on the ice, the owl grabs it, flies away, and does the raucous call in the woods again. I end up feeding the owl four small perch and one small bluegill from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. I do not know what the owl did with the fish but I do not believe the owl could eat all those

fish in that time period. It is possible the owl brought some fish to its mate sitting on a nest as they do nest at this time of the year. It appeared to me that this owl has done this before and expected to get fish. It did not seem very afraid of my presence. I hope it is happy.

I have ice fished Long Lake for years and this experience was memorable and totally unexpected. I have heard the barred owls hoot there before but have never witnessed the hunting method of this owl.

*Editor's note: If you go to YouTube.com you can find a video of a barred owl snatching goldfish from a homeowner's pond.*

## Earth Day's story told on website

**MADISON - People around the globe will mark the 40th anniversary of Earth Day (April 22) this spring. Countless activities related to Earth Day also will take place before and after April 22.**

**How did this unique annual observance come to pass? How did it change the course of political life across the country and around the world? Why does it continue to resonate with so many people?**

**A new Web site, "Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day: The Making of the**

**Modern Environmental Movement," tells the story of Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson and how his idea, conceived as a "national teach-in on the environment," became a historic turning point.**

The site, at <http://www.nelsonearthday.net>, contains more than 200 Web pages with more than 500 original documents, images, quotes, video clips and audio media from Nelson's three terms as a U.S.

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stated to hear the first real bird songs of the year - Northern Cardinals are calling back and forth to each other, Chickadees are scolding, and Titmice are announcing their territories. For my mental sanity, this is a great sign. I now know that the season really is changing and that knowledge will help me get through these last few weeks of winter.

As cold as it has been the last few days it is hard to believe that by this time next month Red-winged Blackbirds will be back on territory and the Mississippi will have lots of open water filled with flocks of ducks, geese, and swans. I am looking forward to some of the rites of passage into spring. I have already

started to think about making maple syrup, I am dreaming of spring migrants, and even my garden looks inviting (I wish it would stay that way through the whole summer).

So, if you are like me and winter has you down, take heart. Spring is on its way and it is time to start making plans for the new season. Make sure that you include some of the great Audubon activities that are coming soon in your plans. The Lansing Loop, the Crane Count, the highway clean-up, and other field trips will be here before you know it. When you make those plans, make sure that you invite someone to join you. Outdoor activities are great medicine for people of all ages.

## Falcon exhibit to open

Myrick Hixon EcoPark will introduce its new peregrine falcon exhibit March 13 with an "Raptor Day" event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the EcoCenter.

The exhibit is sponsored by Dairyland Power, a partner in the Raptor Resource Project, and has been involved in the recovery of the peregrines for the last 15 years.

The opening ceremony with a live peregrine will be at 10 a.m. At 11:30 there will be a snack break and artist reception. At 12:30 p.m. the Coulee Region Rehabilitators will show live hawks and owls.

The event is free. Just call 784-0303 or e-mail [info@mhecopark](mailto:info@mhecopark) to sign up.



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senator from Wisconsin and his subsequent work as counselor of the Wilderness Society.

The Web site is a cooperative ven-

ture of the Nelson Institute, the Wisconsin Historical Society, which houses a large collection of archival

materials from Nelson's career, and the Nelson family.

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### Coulee Region Audubon Society Local Membership

\$15 Household     \$30 Supporting

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Thank you!