

COULEE *Birder*



JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2012

Events Meetings

Coulee Region Audubon meetings are held at 7 p.m. in the Eco Park building in Myrick Park off La Crosse Street. There is easy access parking nearby and the entire building is handicapped accessible. The meetings are free and open to the public.

January 18

Pot-Luck and Annual Meeting

Pot-luck begins at 6 p.m. with a brief meeting for the election of officers and a financial review of the year from 7:00 to 7:30. Please bring a dish to pass and your own dishes and utensils. Everyone is welcome but if you would prefer to not take part in the potluck, please come at 7:00 for the meeting and slide shows that follow.

Members and guests are invited to share pictures of wildlife or other outdoor related items and experiences. There will be a notebook computer and projector available

if you would like to share digital pictures. Otherwise, please bring your own equipment. We have many great photographers and there will be interesting photos and experiences to share and discussed.

Feb. 15, 7 p.m. - Program to be announced. Check the website for program details.

See **EVENTS**, page 3

President's Report

By Dan Jackson

It is hard to believe that 2011 is over and that a new year has begun. For me, last year was a great year for birds. We hosted the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology convention here in La Crosse and timed it perfectly to coincide with one of the most spectacular spring migration events that I have seen. Close to 190 species of



Dan and friend

were found on convention field trips including over 30 species of warblers. The birding during that week was absolutely amazing! This fall, the birding in Wisconsin was also spectacular. There was a huge influx of rare birds that showed up in Wisconsin that are normally found far to the west and southwest. Some of those highlights

included Western Tanager, Say's Phoebe, Scissor-tailed flycatcher, Inca Dove, Vermillion Flycatcher, and there were many more. For

See **PRESIDENT**, page 2

We welcome contributions of material for the newsletter. Please send suggestions for articles, news of events and other things birders need to know. Deadline for copy for the March-April newsletter is March 1. Send information to: gskol@earthlink.net.

Snowy Owl photo (above) by Dan Jackson

President's report from page 1

many hard core birders, these birds led to many trips throughout the state to take advantage of these rarities.

This winter has been really interesting as well. The Snowy Owl irruption that started in November has been fun to experience. I have personally seen a minimum of 13 different Snowy Owls this winter and probably many more than that. I have heard of reports of at least 22 birds in the Coulee Region, which is absolutely amazing! Although many of these birds have now dispersed, there are still a few around.

In addition to the Snowy Owls, this year's slow start to the winter has kept many late migrants in the state.

Despite the great year last year, I am excited that a new year has arrived. The start of a new year means a clean slate for my year lists. That always brings new excitement to my birding. With a new list comes a new appreciation for sightings of birds that are seen on a regular basis. Even birds such as House Sparrows and European Starlings are a new addition to my list and therefore exciting once again.

I hope that you are also excited about a new year and I hope that the new year brings you many

new birds and other fun experiences. If heading outdoors brings joy to your life, take someone with you and share that joy. It is only through appreciation of our world that people will see the need to fight to protect it.

I'll close with one more thing: The Coulee Region Audubon Society may have to move its meetings out of the Myrick Hixon EcoPark building. The EcoPark is currently talking about increasing our rent from \$20 per meeting to \$95. If that decision holds, we simply will not be able to afford to continue to meet at that location. We have offered a compromise and are waiting for an answer.

If the EcoPark does not reconsider their proposed rent, we will either move back to the Ho-Chunk Nation building across the street from the main branch of the La Crosse Public Library or we will move to a meeting room in the Cartwright Center on the UW-La Crosse campus. Please feel free to e-mail or call me with your thoughts on this issue.

As always, the board of directors of the Coulee Region Audubon Society is looking for new ideas for field trips, activities, speakers, and other ideas that you might have for making our meetings and program year even better. We would welcome any suggestions that you can make!! Enjoy the birds!!

Bird count climbs on warm weather and volunteers

This year's Christmas Bird Count, due in part to warm weather and also in part to a great effort by everyone involved, was one of the most successful in terms of the number of species and the number of birds seen that we have had in recent years. Ninety-eight people helped out with this year's count. This included 50 people who worked by themselves or as a member of a team to cover the 27 sections of the count circle and also included 48 people who counted at 40 different feeders in the count circle.

Our results were great. We saw close to 14,000 birds of 72 species on Saturday 12/17/11 and an additional 5 species were seen during count week (the 3 days before

and after the count day). Highlights included seven species of owls (Snowy, Long-eared, Short-eared, Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, Eastern Screech, and Barred Owls), Chipping and White-crowned Sparrows, a Glaucous Gull, a Merlin, a Northern Harrier, 13 Snow Buntings, a White-winged Crossbill, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Thanks to everyone who helped with this year's count!! It is really great to have that many people involved in this event!

For the detailed count information, please go to our website, Couleeaudubon.org

EVENTS from page 1

March 21 - Craig Thompson will weave a whopping good yarn about a group of Wisconsin birders who recently traveled to remote southeast Peru to enjoy some of the best birding on the planet while helping to protect this remarkable biodiversity hotspot.

Field Trips

Saturday, January 7 - Wisconsin Society of Ornithology Field Trip. Meet at 4:00 a.m. (yes, that is AM) in the outer section of the Office Depot parking lot. We will car pool to Milwaukee and plan to arrive in time to be there for the start of the WSO Lake Michigan trip which begins at 8:00 at the South Shore Yacht Club. Trip highlights will include up to 7 species of gulls, Scoters, Harlequin, and Barrow's Goldeneye (sea ducks), plus many other species of waterfowl. We will also venture out to Six-mile road and may see Snowy Owls, Short-

eared Owls, and other neat birds. Expect to be back in La Crosse between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 15 - Golden Eagle Field Trip. Leave at 11:30 a.m. from the outer section of the Office Depot parking lot. We will car pool to Alma where we will join Scott Mehus to see Golden Eagles. This trip will also meet the training requirement for the Golden Eagle Survey which will take place the following Saturday. Expect to be back in La Crosse at about 6:00-6:30 p.m.

For those interested in the trips on 1/7 and 1/15, please email an update to Dan at DanielEJackson@earthlink.net on your plans so that he can work on logistics.

January 27-29 - A group will head to Duluth to bird in the Sax-Zim bog. Leave at various times on

Friday with small groups leaving in the morning, at noon, and about 5:30. Expect to be home at 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. on Sunday. We will spend quite a bit of time in the bog looking for northern specialties and may also bird in Duluth and other area hotspots. This trip is close to capacity but email me at DanielEJackson@earthlink.net if you are interested in case I have a late cancellation.

International Festival of Owls

March 2 - 4 - Houston, Minnesota - Something for everyone in the family. Live owls, bus trips to call in owls, photography sessions, banquet with speakers, face painting, kid's owl calling contest and building owl nest boxes are all part of the event.

Go to www.festivalofowls.com to get all the details or to register, or call the Houston Nature Center at 507 896 4668.

Lennie Lichter weighs in on bird count results

Lennie Lichter, our stalwart webmaster, offers the following observations after reviewing bird count tallies from previous years:

"I have been working on the tally sheets for the last seven years and have added that spreadsheet to the "Species Tally Sheets" page (linked from the Christmas Bird Counts page in the website). It looks like an incredible 124 species have been found on Christmas Bird Count days here in the La Crosse area since 1965!

A few of the species names have changed during that time and one of them -- the Oregon Junco -- no longer exists as a species.



It's interesting to go back in time to see what species were pretty common here 40 some years ago and are no longer around, as well as seeing what species have just begun to turn up here in the last couple of decades or so. The "Selected Species Charts" page will lead you to examples of both of these trends, and also to some of the common species that have had their ups and downs through the years.

The unusual pattern of American Robin numbers that began around

1991 continues with only 36 found this year. For a span of more than 20 years now, we have had few if any Robins on the Count in odd-numbered years while over 100 and sometimes many times that amount have been seen in the even-numbered years."


Readers who check out Lennie's charts will see dramatic decreases, for example, of Evening Grosbeak and Northern Bobwhite, and sharp increases for the Tufted Titmouse, the American Crow, Eastern Bluebird and House Finch.

See all of this at the Coulee Region Audubon Society website:

www.couleeaudubon.org

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

Coulee Audubon raises \$850 for Snowy Owl Rehabilitation



Coulee Region Audubon helped raise more than \$850 for the Coulee Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc. by issuing a challenge grant of \$200 to Audubon members and other birders. The money

will be used to help with the feeding and rehabilitation costs for 2 snowy owls injured in the area. The birds eat a lot of mice in a day at a cost of \$1 to \$1.50 per mouse in addition to vet expenses.

If interested in making a tax-deductible contribution, send it to Coulee Wildlife Rehab Center, Inc. E4485 Dodson Hollow Rd., Chaseburg, WI 54621.

Contacts

President
Dan Jackson
DanielEJackson@earthlink.net
608-483-2271

Board Member
Janice Hatt
608-498-1191
wooliesrus@charter.net

Vice President
Sue Fletcher
796-9820
jiiren@centurytel.net

Board Member
Kurt Brownell
KurtBrownell@gmail.com
608-269-6124

Treasurer
Mary Sullivan
608-785-7095
marysullivan@hotmail.com

Newsletter
Dave and Gretchen Skoloda
608-781-7502
dskoloda@earthlink.net
or gskol@earthlink.net

Secretary
Mark Webster
608-787-6398
mvweb@charter.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
Thanks!