

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

May/June 2014

Meetings

Monthly meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month at the Myrick-Hixon Ecopark, starting at 7PM. They are free and open to the public.

May 21

What can I say? Storyteller Gwyn Calvetti will be telling a few tales, sharing her program "Birds in Legend and Lore." Relax and enjoy as she tells stories drawn from folklore and an original story or two, told in the time honored oral tradition. These birds might talk, but the stories all reflect true avian behaviors and characteristics.

June 18

Our last meeting before our summer break is the potluck, followed by birding on the trails. We will have the potluck at the EcoPark, moving to outdoor tables if so desired. Please bring dishes and of course, a dish to share. We will have the potluck at **6PM** and go birding when we're done eating!

Though scheduled meetings won't resume until September, we hope to try organizing our own version of *Birds and Beers* get-togethers that have been popular in other regions. Watch the website and facebook for more info.

Submissions to the Coulee Birder are always welcome! Deadline for the next issue is September 1. Contact newsletter editor at gwyntells@gmail.com.



President's Message

By Dan Jackson

It is hard to believe that it is already May!! This last winter was a tough one and time seemed to really drag since it was hard to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors without getting frostbite. Despite that, time has moved along and we are now starting my favorite month of the year.

As always, the Coulee Region Audubon Society and other area organizations have a very full calendar of activities for the month of May. Please take a look and join us on one or more of these events and field trips.

I have some sad birding news that is important to share. I was scheduled to lead a group to the Buena Vista Marsh near Wisconsin Rapids to view Prairie Chickens on April 26th. Unfortunately, a week before that event, the Prairie Chicken viewing for the remainder of the spring was cancelled. It turns out that very few male Prairie Chickens are being seen on the leks this spring. It was decided that any disturbance to the few remaining birds is not acceptable.

Despite tremendous effort, the Prairie Chicken population in Wisconsin has been shrinking for many years. This winter was especially hard on the remaining population with prolonged extreme cold and deep snows. This was exacerbated by the presence of a Gyrfalcon and other predators on the marsh over the winter.

This one two punch seems to have taken its toll. Many of the traditional leks have no returning males this year. It seems that the winter was especially hard on the older experienced males that are familiar with the traditional booming grounds and who re-establish those sites each spring.

It will be very interesting to see what happens in the future to this
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remnant population of what was once a thriving bird in the state of Wisconsin. It is very possible that we are in the middle of the final extirpation of yet another species in the state of Wisconsin.

This event should be a reminder that bird populations and habitat are more critical than ever. As an organization and as individuals, we need to make sure that we stay involved and aware of environmental issues that are affecting the birds and other wildlife of the state of Wisconsin and that we do our part to protect them.

Events, events, events!

Just stepping outside the door this time of year is an event! One never knows what might be seen passing through the area, making for birding that's even more fun than ever. We've been enjoying White Crowned Sparrows in our yard the past few days, a nice change of pace from the finches. In keeping with the fever of spring, there are lots of things happening. Here are some of those.

May 10 – International Migratory Bird Day event at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Another great event with bird-related activities for the entire family. Check out the brochure for all the details at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/trempealeau/>

May 15-18 – Wisconsin Society of Ornithology State Convention and field Trips. Field trips all 4 days, convention activities on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon. See the WSOBirds.org website for information.

May 18 - Wyalusing Field Trip. Dan Jackson will lead a Coulee Region Audubon field trip to Wyalusing State Park starting at 6:30 at the entrance to the park. Wyalusing is the best birding destination in western Wisconsin and is the home to a number of special species of birds. This is Sunday morning rather than the usual Saturday morning since Dan will be leading a trip for the WSO convention on Saturday.

May 13 -Myrick Marsh Bird Walks. Start at 6:30 AM at the EcoPark building parking lot.

May 8 and May 15 -Hixon Forest Bird Walks. Meet at 6:30 at the Hixon Forest parking lot.

Two events hosted by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy add to the birding fun as well.

May 10th **Mother's Day Bird Hike – Sugar Creek Bluff SNA** **8:00 – 10:00a.m.**

Treat your mom to a special Mother's Day treat. Craig Thompson, Land Program Manager WIDNR and expert birder will lead us on a guided hike of Sugar Creek Bluff SNA and will help identify the many species of birds entering the area.

Please RSVP to kfrise@mississippivalleyconservancy.org or call [608-784-3606 ext.6](tel:608-784-3606) and leave name and phone number Directions:

From La Crosse, follow Hwy 35 south to just past Ferryville. Turn left on North Buck Creek Road and follow to the top where you will find our small parking area and sign

May 17th **Birds & Brunch at Boscobel Bluffs** **8:00 – 10:00a.m**

Boscobel Bluffs is a scenic 389-acre property in Grant County overlooking the City of Boscobel. It was purchased in 2013 and is home to the elusive and State Threatened Hooded Warbler. Bird experts Craig Thompson and Jonathon Rigden will lead you on a guided hike to beautiful overlooks and will be identifying the various birds in the area. Brunch will follow.

Please RSVP to kfrise@mississippivalleyconservancy.org or call [608-784-3606 ext. 6](tel:608-784-3606) and leave name and phone number

Directions: From Boscobel, WI: From the intersection of State Highway 61 and County Road MS, head east on County Road MS. Just past the intersection of MS and Oakes Road, the trailhead of the Property is to the east/left of County Road MS.

Spring Adopt A Highway Clean-Up

The Coulee Region Audubon Society held it's Spring Adopt-a-Highway Trash Pick up on Saturday, April 26, 2014. Four volunteers met at the Dakota Fire Station in Dakota, MN. to pick up trash along the two mile stretch of I90 to Dresbach, MN. that we "adopted" in 1996. Our normal meeting place at the Dresbach Information Center Parking Lot was closed due to the new bridge construction, and will be closed until 2016.

We were greeted with a bright, sunny day and fairly warm temperatures as we proceeded to pick up 21 large bags of trash along the two-mile route. After about 3 1/2 hours, we finished and all met at Corky's Restaurant in La Crescent, MN. for well deserved lunch and to share stories of our interesting (or not so interesting) finds. Among the more interesting (or unusual) finds were; a brand new child's plastic sled, a rubber inflatable raft, the heavy base of a fountain pen, a brand new rubber tie-down strap (with tag still on), and the vast majority of a Silver Chevrolet Sedan - in many, many pieces of course!

Many, Many THANKS to Audubon Volunteers Humphrey Kearns, Tom Link and Marilyn Webster!

Birds and Beers, anyone????

Many other regional birding groups, such as the Twin Cities, Madison and the Green Bay area have established more informal gatherings for birders to meet and share stories. The venue changes from meeting to meeting and they are somewhat unscheduled. Sometimes birding might be part of the agenda beforehand, other times it's just a chance to meet others who share your interest. For example, when a Great Grey Owl decided to hang out on the grounds of the Capitol Brewery in Madison last year, there was a somewhat spontaneous Birds and Beers scheduled. We'd like to try and create our own "Birds and Beers," and Mark Webster and Gwyn Calvetti have volunteered to try and kickstart it. We thought *Pearl Street Brewery* might be a great place to start, supporting a local microbrewery that just happens to be close to wetlands trails. "Warblers and Wine" could be an option, too. Watch the facebook page and email announcements for the first event, probably sometime in July.

Whooo Shopped at Peoples Food Coop?



Coulee Audubon was one of three organizations chosen to receive funds from the Peoples Food Coop "Beans to Bags" program. Customers can choose to donate their five cent bag credit to one of the three designated groups. Gwyn Calvetti Represented Coulee Audubon, receiving a check \$288.48. presented by Member Services Manager Karen Acker.

Thanks to all who contributed and thank you Peoples Food Coop for a great program that helps many groups in our community.

Coulee Region Audubon Society

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