



Coulee Birder

November/December 2014

Meetings

Monthly meetings are held at Myrick-Hixon Ecopark LaCrosse, and begin at 7:00 PM. They are free and open to the public.

November 19

The town of Houston, Minnesota became known for owls thanks to Alice the Great Horned Owl, the Houston Nature Center's only live animal. Karla Bloem is the Center's Executive Director and is the foremost authority on Great Horned Owl vocalizations. She received a Bush Leadership Fellowship in 2008 for a self-directed study program to better help her create an owl center in Houston.



Karla's presentation will cover some of her research on Great Horned Owl vocalizations, plans for the International Owl Center, some things you can do to help owls, and one of her feathered ambassador owls.

December 20

Our December "meeting" is our annual Christmas Bird Count, which will take place December 20. Look for more information in the President's message.

President's Message



Dan Jackson

Now that chilly weather has arrived, it is time to face the facts – fall is here and winter is just around the corner. Although that may bring visions of cold and snow to most, for me it is a sign that the Christmas Bird Count is just around the corner!!

This year will mark the 115th year of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count program and the 50th year of the La Crosse Christmas Bird Count!!

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count was originally started to create an alternative to the bird shoots that were traditionally held around Christmas and New Years Day. Luckily, someone had the great idea that it would be better to count birds during the holiday season than to shoot them. After 115 years, it is safe to say that this idea caught on and has been a great success. In fact, this tradition has turned into one of the leading citizen science projects on the North American continent and, with over 100 years of data it is a valuable tool for scientists.

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is actually made up of hundreds of local Christmas Bird Counts. For each of these local counts, the object is to try to count all of the birds found within a fifteen mile "count circle" on a specific count day which must occur between December 14th and January 5th. On that count day, participants count birds in pre-assigned sections of the circle or at their own feeders (if they are located within the count circle). When the day is done, the count data is tallied and submitted to the National Audubon Society who combines the data from all of the counts and analyzes it to look for trends and interesting events regarding bird populations and distribution.

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President's message...from p. 1

This year, there will be at least 2 Christmas Bird Counts held in the Coulee Region area. The La Crosse Area Count will be held on Saturday, December 20th and the Trempealeau count will be held on Sunday, December 14th. If you enjoy counting birds, your help with either or both of these counts would be greatly appreciated!

The La Crosse Area Christmas Bird Count, which is hosted by the Coulee Region Audubon Society, counts all of the birds found inside a count circle that is centered on the La Crosse County courthouse in downtown La Crosse. The limits of the circle are approximately the lower end of Goose Island Park to the south, the southern tip of Brice Prairie to the north, ¼ mile east of County OA to the east, and the far edge of Hokah to the southwest. It includes all of La Crosse, La Crescent, Onalaska, Barre Mills, Hokah, and part of Dakota.

If you are available on December 20th and would like to help out with the La Crosse Area Christmas Bird Count, we can really use your help! If you want to count birds at your own feeder or help count the birds in one of many pre-assigned sections of the count circle, please e-mail me at DEJackson2256@gmail.com or call me at (608) 483-2271. Birders of all skill levels are welcome!

During our January meeting, we will be holding our annual meeting which includes an election of half of the board of directors. This January, the three positions on the ballot will be the Secretary, the Treasurer, and one of the at-large board positions.

Our bylaws specify that board members should serve a maximum of 4 terms on the board. This has been largely ignored and currently, two of the board members whose terms end in January are at this point. Mark Webster has been our Secretary for more than 4 terms and Kurt Brownell has served as a board member for more than four terms as well. Both have done a great job for the organization, but it is time to give them a break and have others step in and fill their shoes.

This is important for many reasons. First and foremost, a position on the board is not a life time commitment. We need to follow the bylaws on this issue to make sure that people realize that even a single term commitment would be a big help. We also need to get more people involved in these roles to take advantage of their experiences and passions and to give them more ownership in the success of the organization. Having new members join the board on a regular basis is good for the organization's health and vitality.

Please consider one of these two positions on the board. If you are interested, contact any current board member so that we can add your name to the ballot in January. Thanks for your support!!

Coulee Audubon Fall Highway Clean-up

The Coulee Region Audubon Society held its Fall Adopt-a-Highway Trash Pick-up on Saturday, October 18th, 2014. Six volunteers picked up a total of 21 large trash bags (and some larger items) along a 2-mile stretch of I90/Hwy 61 from Dresbach to Dakota, MN. The pick-up took approximately 2 1/2 hours.

It was a little cloudy and cold to start, but turned out to be just a beautiful, sunny fall day. The fall colors on and around the river bluffs were spectacular.

A great debt of thanks goes to Audubon volunteers Tom Link & Dianne, Dan Jackson, and Pat & Bobbie Wilson. Thanks so much. It was a great turnout and the effort very much appreciated.

Mark Webster, Coordinator



Time for some field trips!

Mississippi River Waterfowl Viewing – November 16, 2014.

We will meet at noon on the street behind the Kwik Trip at the stop lights in La Crescent. We will head south and checkout the mudflats below the entrance to the Wildcat Landing in Brownsville and we will also stop at the refuge overlooks just south of there. This is not the date of the US Fish & Wildlife Service viewing event so it won't be as crowded. This is a great opportunity to see thousands of Ducks, Geese and Swans.

Lake Michigan Lakefront Birding. (January 10, 2015?)

We will join the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) field trip along the shore of Lake Michigan. The trip will probably be held on Saturday, January 10th. It starts at the South Shore Yacht Club in Milwaukee at 8:00 AM and goes as far north as Sheboygan. This trip is a great chance to see waterfowl including Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks as well as other specialties including Snowy Owls and rare gulls. We will carpool from La Crosse. Details will be announced via e-mail in December.

Other field trip possibilities:

Northwoods Birding, February ?

We would spend a long day checking out the north woods in WI. We would leave before dawn and return after dark with visits to several locations in the Clam Lake and Gordon areas in search of boreal birds.

It's Annual Renewal Time

For those who aren't members of National Audubon, we are already 2 months into the new program year and therefore it is time to catch up if you haven't renewed your local membership in the Coulee Region Audubon Society for this program year. Although our meetings are open to the public and national membership entitles you to receive our newsletter, the Coulee Region Audubon Society relies on local memberships to pay for speakers and most other chapter expenses.

If you haven't sent in your annual renewal payment already, please consider using the form on the back page of the newsletter to send in your 2014-2015 Coulee Region Audubon Society renewal. Simply complete the form and send it along with your check made out to the Coulee Region Audubon Society to:

Marty Lohman, Treasurer
Coulee Region Audubon Society
PO Box 2573
La Crosse, WI 54602-2573

As always, thank you for your continued support of the Coulee Region Audubon Society!

Some of our members have already renewed. If you are unsure of your membership status, feel free to send an e-mail to Dan Jackson at DanJackson@LBWhite.com.

Coulee Region Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2573
LaCrosse WI 54602

Contacts

President
Dan Jackson
DEJackson2256@gmail.com
608-483-2271

Vice President
Scott Puchalski
obsidianblur@gmail.com
608-769-2563

Treasurer
Marty Lohman
mdlohman@gmail.com
608-769-6144

Secretary
Mark Webster
mweb@charter.net
608-charter.net

Board Member
Gwyn Calvetti
gwytells@gmail.com
608-786-2526

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

Newsletter
Gwyn Calvetti
gwytells@gmail.com

Facebook
www.facebook.com/CouleeRegionAudubon

Web
www.couleeaudubon.org

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