

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society



November/December 2020

President's Message.....

Greetings birding family!

Meetings

We continue to deal with the challenges of this pandemic. Although in person meetings are still not happening, we are planning to create a program of virtual meetings, complete with speakers, starting with the January annual meeting. Please be patient with us as we, like everyone else, navigate this technology. In the Meantime.....

December 19

This is the annual Christmas Bird Count, which traditionally serves for our December meeting. It will still happen this year, but with obvious changes, the saddest of which is.....no pot luck Gathering that evening. We are hoping to host a virtual gathering for those who want to share their sightings. Look for more information in this newsletter or on our web page or facebook page.

We hope you are enjoying the fall migration. Swans and ducks are on the move. My dad and I watched large flocks heading south over Lake Onalaska accented by the setting sun. It is a great time of year for us. North of Alma, I shared swan watching with a young girl I work with. It was the best look she has ever had of a swan. It left her in awe. Birding is a gift that is best shared. The method it is shared may be different. Whether it is through sending a book or talking about birds over a video gathering, birds are a source of joy that people can always benefit from.

Speaking of video gatherings, our annual meeting will be going virtual in January. We will be sharing a video to help people learn how to use Zoom. We will still be allowing members to share photographs. More information will be coming out about the process. We will be holding elections at this meeting. If you are interested in setting the direction of our chapter's future, this is a great opportunity to gain leadership experience and feel good about making a difference for birds.

We are committed to making a difference for birds. We are blessed to have an incredible resource in our backyard. We are talking about a world-renowned organization. That organization is the International Owl Center. Their new facility will be world-class and a regional highlight that will increase the understanding of these amazing birds. That is why we, the Coulee Region Audubon Society, are donating \$1500 toward the needed-money for acquiring the final property as well as to own previously acquired properties free and clear for their future building site. We are excited for this project to keep moving forward!

Happy birding!

Jonathan Ringdahl

Christmas Bird Count

La Crosse / La Crescent Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is coming up on Saturday, December 19th

For those who haven't participated in the past, for the La Crosse CBC, we count all of the birds that we can find on the count day within a 15 mile circle that is centered on the La Crosse County Courthouse. I divide the circle in 25-30 sections and individuals or teams are then responsible for covering a pre-assigned section on the count day (this year 12/19/2020).

Section assignments are based on previous involvement. It is very helpful to have the same person count the same section each year since they have learned the "hot spots" in that section. Therefore, if I have a returning counter who wants to stay in the same section, they will have that choice. Due to scheduling issues close to the Christmas season, I always have a need for new counters for existing sections and, if there are enough volunteers, I can divide sections or have people work as part of a team.

For those who have participated in the past, thanks again for your help and I hope that I can count on you again this year. For people who haven't participated, I hope that you will give it a try!!

Please let me know whether or not you would be willing to participate this year as soon as you can (that makes my job easier since I don't have to send multiple requests to a large number of people). If you are unsure of your availability, please let me know that so that I can reach out again closer to the event.

I hope that you have a great Thanksgiving and holiday season and hope that I can count on your help!!

We will not hold a potluck this year. Instead, we will try to set up a Zoom meeting where we can share results and best sightings. The time of that event as well as a link will be shared during the last week before the count after the final roster is determined for the count.

If interested, this is a link to the CBC page of the CouleeAudubon.org website: <http://www.couleeaudubon.org/html/cbc.html>. This page includes a link to the latest map and prior year results.

Thanks!!

Dan Jackson



Two Pats and a Mary enjoying last year's CBC potluck.....to hold you over for next year's!

Your CRAS Board has been spending some money!

Jonathan already mentioned in his message our \$1500 donation to the International Owl Center's building fund. Given our lack of meetings this year, we have been using some of the funds we have to help promote related causes. We donated \$200 to the Russ Paulson Memorial, which will place a bench in one of his favorite birding areas. We have donated \$400 to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve for their Discovery Center Exhibit Upgrade. We also have purchased just under \$400 worth of bird seed and feeders to be given to health care workers to provide some calming relief in their off hours. Some of these have been distributed, but if you know someone who's been working overtime in the medical field who might appreciate a gift of a feeder and seed, let any Board member know and we'll get them fixed up. This is just a hint of the kinds of information that will be shared at our Annual Meeting in January. We would also love to have membership dues coming in, so that we can continue these projects and provide speakers in the upcoming months.

Whoooo's that calling?

We're entering that magical season of increased owl activity. Owls hooting and calling more, owls from further north showing up and drawing everyone out in the cold. They are amazing birds. But like any creature that needs to rest, hunt, then rest some more, the excitement of seeing one also brings responsibility on the part of birders. Giving them plenty of room, learning to recognize when you've gotten too close and giving their location some privacy are all important factors in helping these birds survive winter. Karla Bloem of the International Owl Center has developed a really great resource that covers not only owl "etiquette," but has specific examples of how to tell when the owl has "had enough." Check out this link, learn the signs, enjoy the owls briefly, then leave them alone. While you're checking out the link, also check out the information on two upcoming expert led owl prowls. Even though the Center is "COVID closed," they are still offering these outings.

https://www.internationalowlcenter.org/respectful_observation.html



This Great Gray Owl caused a lot of excitement when it hung around near Mauston in 2013.

Coulee Region Audubon Society

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