Events

November 19

Coulee Region Audubon meeting at 7:00 p.m., Nov. 19 at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, La Crosse.

The November speaker will be Wisconsin birding guide author Steve Betchkal. Steve’s presentation will be “Birding By Ear”. He will also spend some time discussing his latest book “All of This and Robins Too: A Guide to the 50 or So Best Places to Find Birds in Wisconsin”.

Since identifying his first wild bird in 1969 (an American Robin, what else?), Steve has been chasing birds across Wisconsin and the North American continent. He has birded in 42 states, 54 national wildlife refuges, and is approaching 600 different birds seen in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

In June, he conducts two Breeding Bird Surveys in Wisconsin, one in the region of Bloomer, the other runs through Augusta.

He writes about birds for the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram and is featured as a regular columnist for Wisconsin West Magazine. His bird articles have also appeared in Cabin Life, Northland Adventures and Birder’s World.

Betchkal says “Birds are beautiful and captivating – whether describing their behaviors, their diversity and physical adaptations or the music they make. They are also central to discussions about global warming, and other current environmental topics.”

December 20

December meeting will be the La Crosse Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 20.

The Coulee Region Audubon Society

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 next issue is January 2. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.
DNR proposes delisting Trumpeters, Osprey

MADISON – Populations of trumpeter swans, currently listed as a state endangered species, and ospreys, currently listed as a state threatened species, have recovered to the point that both species would be removed from the state endangered and threatened species list, under a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources proposal.

“The statewide populations of these two species have increased to the point where we are now confident that they no longer qualify as endangered or threatened under state statutes,” says Sumner Matteson, an avian ecologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources who oversaw the recovery programs for both species.

A proposed rule that would delete trumpeter swan from the Wisconsin endangered species list and the osprey from the Wisconsin threatened species list was the topic of a public hearing in October. Matteson said in a telephone interview Nov. 5 that there were few comments on the proposal and the delisting recommendation will be made to the DNR Board in January.

Both species will continue to receive protection under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Matteson says.

“The successful reintroduction of trumpeter swans and the successful recovery of ospreys in Wisconsin is really a testament to the conservation partnerships between private organizations, businesses, scores of dedicated individuals, and state, federal, and tribal governments that have helped restore populations of these birds and ensure they will remain an integral part of Wisconsin’s biological diversity,” Matteson says.

In 1986, the DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources developed a recovery plan for the trumpeter swan that established a recovery goal of at least 20 breeding and migratory pairs by the year 2000. A reintroduction effort was very successful and the Wisconsin population has increased from zero in 1986 to 126 breeding pairs occurring in 20 Wisconsin counties in 2008.

Osprey were one of the raptor species whose populations were decimated by the insecticide DDT in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1970s the state’s nesting population numbered fewer than 100 pairs. The statewide population increased to just under 400 pairs from 1993 to 2002 and has been above 400 pairs since 2003.

Swan viewing set

View migrating Tundra Swans and other waterfowl from the overlook 3 miles south of Brownsville from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 15. USFWS staff and Mississippi River Wild volunteers are sponsoring the event. For more information call 783-8405.

Trash Pickers Wade Through Fog

Coulee Region Audubon Society held its fall Adopt-a-Highway Trash Pick-up on Saturday morning, October 18, 2008. Six volunteers picked up 22 large trash bags of refuse along I90/Hwy 61 in a 2 mile stretch from Dresbach to Dakota, MN. We decided that it was too foggy to go birding, so why not pick up trash?

The pick-up lasted approximately 2 1/2 hours. Afterwards, we all met at Corky’s Restaurant in La Crescent, enjoyed some delicious pizza, and shared our roadside findings. A few interesting things were found, such as an old ID from St. Francis, a pair of slightly used golfers gloves (good as new with a good washing), a blaze orange knit hunting cap, and a floral women’s undergarment (decidedly, not reusable!).

Many thanks to the other volunteers; Pat & Bobbie Wilson, Sue Fletcher, Tom Link, and last but not least - Marilyn Webster.

Mark Webster
Coordinator
Bar-tailed Godwit sets nonstop flight record

USGS biologists have reported that the record for the longest nonstop bird flight has been broken. A bar-tailed godwit identified by the researchers simply as E7 flew 7,257 miles across the Pacific Ocean without intermission. The previous record belonged to a Far-Eastern curlew, which flew 4,038 miles nonstop.

Biologist Robert Gill, Jr., said that the bird achieved the record without gliding.

This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that continuous wing-flapping helps birds to preserve their energy according to Gill.

Gill and his team followed migrations of bar-tailed godwits from their summer breeding places in the western Alaska tundra to New Zealand where they remain until the next year. The scientists implanted the females with transmitters, while males, which are generally smaller, were supplied with external transmitters. The birds flew for five to nine days without rest, a few landing on South Pacific islands before resuming their trips. The flights were monitored by satellite in 2006 and 2007.

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Bar-tailed Godwit

According to Gill and his team, the birds were expending energy at eight-to-ten times the rate they do at rest. The previous record for a boost in energy output is seven times the “basal metabolic rate.”

According to Proceedings of the Royal Society B oceans, mountain

ranges, deserts, ice fields and other open territories do not always present obstacles for bird migration as it had been considered before. On the contrary, they might offer convenient and smooth air-routes. During a flight the birds encounter few predators and are safe from different infestations that take place on earth.

Flights across the Pacific Ocean are preferred by most bar-tailed godwits, but the birds have to prepare a fuel supply for such a long journey. So they consume plenty of tiny clams to store body fat.

“Theyir bodies can consist of 55 percent fat at this time,” said Gill.

Both Gill and Rob Schuckard, a team leader at the Ornithological Society of New Zealand feel concern about the godwit’s future. The number of birds that flew from the north to the south dropped from 155,000 to 70,000 since 1990s. As Gill supposes, the main cause of this problem is habitat loss. However, the role of climate change can not be underestimated. If airflow direction changes, the birds might benefit from tailwinds, but such shifts may also cause greater headwinds, which will postpone their migration.

Gill hopes to continue his investigation of bar-tailed godwits in order to study the effect of climate change on them and to learn more about their metabolism.

Pennies for the Planet Makes a Big Difference with Small Change

A new element of the Together Green initiative will soon provide an opportunity for young people to make a measurable difference in the world. Pennies for the Planet is a powerful tool for engaging young people and provides an opportunity to raise money for three Audubon efforts to protect wildlife and wild places.

Targeting grades two through six, the program aims to reach 675,000 young people and their families a year, primarily through schools. Kits can be downloaded from www.togethergreen.org.

See PLANET, page 4
Audubon Chapters can participate by collecting pennies and especially by helping give exposure to this wonderful program.

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