It is March and spring is fast approaching. For those of us who are bird watchers, this is an exciting time. Spring migration is already under way and the current trickle of northward migrants will soon turn into a wild torrent with an exciting array of old friends returning to our area or passing through on their way to northern breeding areas.

Don’t miss out on this fabulous time. Get out and do some bird watching or, if that is not your thing, at least do some hiking or other outdoor activities. After a long and sometimes ugly winter, I am sure that we all need to spend a little more time outside.

This is also a time that many of us start thinking about yards and gardens. If you have been sneaking peeks at the seed catalogs with dreams of new flowers and bushes that you can use to add beauty to your yard, try to also think about plantings that will help out our feathered and non-feathered friends as well.

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 May-June newsletter is May 1. Send information to: gskol@earthlink.net.

Snowy Owl photo (above) by Dan Jackson

See EVENTS, page 3
President’s report

There are wonderful bushes and flowers that provide food and shelter for both resident and migratory birds. Adding some of those to your plans will provide beauty and the extra benefit of being able to attract some new visitors to your yard throughout this year and the years to come.

The beginning of spring also means that the election season is in full swing. Although the extreme politics of the last couple of years has been difficult to bear, the polarization of our political system definitely requires us to stay tuned to the debates and proposed new policies and laws. Pay attention and let our elected officials know what you think about what they are doing. Big money is not the only way to influence the people in Madison and Washington. Whether you agree or disagree, let your representatives know how you feel. It is important to let them know that we care about what they are doing and to remind them that they are in office to represent us – their constituents.

Enjoy spring! It is a fabulous time of the year and it is bringing the warmth and sunshine that we are all looking forward to.

News briefs

Mark Webster to attend Audubon's Mississippi Flyway Action Network

Coulee Region Audubon Board Member, Mark Webster, with support from Coulee Region Audubon, will be attending Audubon’s upcoming Mississippi Flyway Action Network (MFAN) workshop in New Orleans. As part of Audubon’s new strategic plan, Audubon is using the four flyways as a way to organize its work and tell the story of how we all work together to protect birds and habitat. This Mississippi Flyway Action Network is the first grassroots, chapter leader program as part of that new framework. Workshop sessions will include such topics as; using social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to promote Mississippi Flyway Education, bird and habitat preservation, and how to effectively build local coalitions, among many other things.

Earth Fair set for Earth Day

The 2012 Earth Fair will be held on Earth Day, April 22, to celebrate this year’s theme: “Earth Day is Every Day!” To build on the success of the 2011 Earth Fair at the EcoPark, the 2012 Earth Fair will showcase a preview of the new outdoor adventure playscapes at the EcoPark.

This is the 4th Annual Earth Fair put on by Coulee Partners for Sustainability (CPS). CPS is a non-profit organization that formed in 2007 with the purpose of increasing environmental awareness in the Coulee Region through a variety of educational events. CPS’s aim is to involve people of all ages to share and spread the knowledge of environmental issues and discuss ways in which we can better our society and create a sustainable community. For more information on CPS, visit www.cpslax.org.

Pulchaski elected to CRAS board

Scott Pulchaski was elected to the Coulee Region Audubon Society board of directors at the annual meeting in January. He replaces Janice Hatt.

Board officers re-elected are: Dan Jackson, president; Sue Fletcher, vice-president; Mark Webster, secretary; Mary Sullivan, treasurer, and Kurt Brownell, board member.
Field Trips

March 24 - Mississippi Waterfowl Field Trip
Dan Jackson will lead a waterfowl viewing field trip on Saturday, March 24. Meet at 8 a.m. at the entrance to Goose Island. We will head south and look for waterfowl and other early migrants as far as Genoa or Rush Creek and finish around noon. The trip is free and open to everyone.

April 14 - Annual Midwest Crane Count - 5:30 a.m.-7:30 a.m.
The Annual Midwest Crane Count is one of the largest citizen-based wildlife surveys in the world. One of the primary purposes of the Crane Count is to monitor the abundance and distribution of cranes in the Upper Midwest. Each year, the Crane Count involves over 3,000 volunteer participants spread over 100 counties in six states.

The Crane Count is organized by county in Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. Sue Fletcher will coordinate La Crosse County this year.

Past participants will receive an email from Sue Fletcher in the next few weeks inviting participate again. If you have not counted before and would like to join the count, please send Sue an email at: jiren@centurytel.net and she will help you get started. We will be using e-Bird this year to document our results, and she can assist you with that but we will still have paper field count sheets. More information on the Crane Count can be found at: www.savingcranes.org.

April 21 - The CRAS Spring Adopt-a-Highway Clean Up
Meet at 9 a.m. at the Dresbach, MN. Info Center Parking Lot on I90/Hwy 61. Plan on beautifying the highway for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Please bring work gloves and wear comfortable, sturdy shoes. MN. DOT provides Safety Vests and Trash Bags. For those interested, we’ll plan on meeting afterwards for lunch at Corky’s Restaurant in La Crescent.

April 21 - Prairie Chicken Viewing
Dan Jackson has reserved 6 spaces in the blinds for viewing Prairie Chickens. We need to meet the coordinators 2 hours before sunrise in the marsh. Sunrise that day is about 6:05. This will mean leaving La Crosse about 2:00 a.m. in order to get there on time. Spaces will be filled on a first come/first served basis. Cost for viewing is $15 which is non-refundable. Other dates are available if anyone would like to go on their own. Please contact Dan at DanJackson@LBWhite.com to reserve a spot on this trip.

May 19 - 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.

May 1, May 8 and May 15 - Myrick Marsh Bird Walks
May 3, May 10 and May 17 - Hixon Forest Bird Walks
Leaders are Pat and Bobbie Wilson and Dan Jackson. More details will be included in the May/June newsletter and on the website, www.couleeaudubon.org

Photographers can get up close with cranes in Nebraska

For the photography freaks among us, there is this opportunity to get really close to 10,000 cranes at the Rowe Preserve on the Platte River in Nebraska.

Photo blinds are set up very close to the major crane roosts. Blinds are available for $200 per night (plus tax) from March 17th through April 7th, with a maximum capacity of two people. Because of the close proximity of the cranes, you are not allowed to leave the blind until a staff person or volunteer comes to get you. The safety of the cranes is their highest priority, so the rules are enforced. Each blind has a porta-potty. For additional information click here or call 308-468-5282.
Audubon offers free online guide to birds

The Audubon Online Guide to North American Birds is FREE to use on the Audubon.org homepage. This searchable online guide to North American Birds features 750 species of birds in 22 Orders and 74 families. The guide covers all of North America’s breeding birds—approximately 580 species—as well as an additional 180 non-breeding species that visit the U.S. and Canada.

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