

# Coulee Birder

*Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society*  
Website: <http://couleeaudubon.org/>

November-December 2006

## New faces: Welcome!

It was great to see so many new faces at the September and October Coulee Audubon meetings! If you signed up to get a "free trial" newsletter - this is it! If you'd like to continue to receive this newsletter and find out about more great programs and activities, please use the membership form on the last page of this newsletter. We'd love to have you as local members!

Those of you who have been members for a while could do us a favor by keeping an eye on your mailing label for your local membership renewal date.

To save us sending you a renewal notice, just check the date on the upper right corner of the mailing label on this newsletter. If that date is in the past, it's time to renew your membership. You may use the same local membership form.

Note - we're still working out the bugs regarding electronic newsletter delivery. If that's your preference, please check it on the membership form and then be patient for a little while longer - thanks much!

- Bobbie Wilson

## Salwey brings adventure tales to November CRAS meeting

Kenny Salwey, who will give the program for the November 16 Coulee Region Audubon Society meeting, has presented his story of living with nature along the Mississippi River hundreds of times to adult meetings as well as for children at schools in the region.

The film about his life, *Mississippi: Tales of the Last River Rat*, won an Emmy Award. It will be shown as part of the program.

The BBC-Discovery Channel docu-

mentary tells the story of the seasonal changes along the Upper Mississippi River through Kenny's eyes.

Kenny has also written two books about his adventures, "the Last River Rat: Kenny Salwey's Life in the Wild" and "Tales of a River Rat: Adventures Along the Wild Mississippi."

Meeting place for this meeting only has been changed to the UW-L Campus. See story at left for directions.

*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 Dec. 15. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.*

## Events

### Nov. 16 — note, a THURSDAY

Mississippi River Rat Kenny Salwey brings his tales of adventure to our November meeting. To accommodate lots of people, Room 140 in Cowley Hall (seats 190) has been reserved for Thursday, November 16, 2006 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Free parking is available in lot C-3 after 5p.m. This parking lot is accessed by East Ave. It is located across East Ave from the football stadium and adjacent to Cowley Hall. There is an entrance to Cowley visible from the parking lot. The public is invited and it's free.

### Nov. 18

Field trip to Pool 8 from Hwy 26, Houston Co. MN. Migrant Tundra Swans, other waterfowl, including large numbers of Canvasbacks. Check out the USFWS viewing deck. Return by 12 Noon. Trip starts at 7 a.m. at the Cowley Hall UW-LaCrosse parking lot north of the building. We will try to consolidate passengers four or fewer to a car.

### Dec. 16

Christmas Bird count. Contact Rick Kinzie for assignments (608) 734-3136. Kinzie said in an e-mail, "I could really use some additional help on the count this year. In years past we have been thin covering parts of the count in Minnesota as well as some areas in Wisconsin. The count starts for some participants before sunrise looking for owls but volunteers don't have to spend the entire day counting. Even a few hours covering neighborhood areas are a great help. Feeder reports are encouraged. I can be reached at 608 734-3136 or [huey@mwt.net](mailto:huey@mwt.net). Could you also post that everyone who attends the potluck not come before 5pm

See PROGRAMS, page3

# *More species at risk from mercury*

Mercury pollution is making its way into nearly every habitat in the U.S., exposing countless species of wildlife to potentially harmful levels of mercury, a new report from the National Wildlife Federation shows.

“From songbirds to alligators, turtles to bats, eagles to otters, mercury is accumulating in nearly every corner of the food chain,” says Catherine Bowes, Northeast Program Manager for the National Wildlife Federation and principal author of the report. “This report paints a compelling picture of mercury contamination in the U.S., and many

more species are at risk than we previously thought.

Fish, long thought to be the key species affected by mercury, are just the tip of the iceberg.” The National Wildlife Federation report, *Poisoning Wildlife: The Reality of Mercury Pollution*, is a compilation of over 65 published studies finding elevated levels of mercury in a wide range of wildlife species.

The report highlights mercury levels in fish, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians living in freshwater, marine, and forest habitats from across the country. The accumulation of mercury in fish has been

well-understood for years, leading 46 states in the U.S. to issue consumption advisories warning people to limit or avoid eating certain species of fish. However, scientists have recently discovered that mercury accumulates in forest soils, indicating that wildlife that live and feed outside aquatic habitats are also at risk of exposure to mercury.

“Scientific understanding of the extent of mercury contamination in wildlife has expanded significantly in recent years,” says Dr. David Evers of the Biodiversity Research Institute, wildlife toxicologist and leading researcher in this field. “We are finding mercury accumulation in far more species, and at much higher levels, than we previously thought was occurring. This poses a very real threat to the health of many wildlife populations, some of which are highly endangered”

Mercury accumulation in fish is not only a concern for the health of people who eat them, it also poses a threat to the fish themselves. *Poisoning Wildlife* pulls together the major findings from over 20 of the 65 published studies that attribute adverse health impacts on fish, birds, and mammals with elevated mercury levels in those species. Fish with high mercury levels have difficulty schooling and spawning, birds lay fewer eggs and have trouble caring for their chicks, and mammals have impaired motor skills that affect their ability to hunt and find food.

Several states have already taken action to reduce mercury pollution from major sources like waste incinerators, chlorine manufacturers, power plants, and consumer products, and the results are very promising.

In places where mercury emissions have been cut, such as Florida, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, mercury levels in fish and wildlife have been reduced in a matter of years, not decades, as scientists have previously thought.

“Now that we have hard evidence that mercury is affecting more species than originally thought, anything short of

## **National Board wants U.S. to act on global warming, wind energy**

The National Audubon Society Board of Directors met from October 6th through October 8th in Oahu, Hawaii. The following are highlights of actions and committee work at this meeting.

### **Key Board Actions:**

The Board devoted a significant amount of their meeting time on global warming and wind energy development. Alan Wilson, Chair of the Conservation Committee, led a discussion on a refined Audubon Framework for engaging on the broad issue of global warming focusing on Audubon’s key strengths.

- Science - birds as indicators
- People - motivating individual action
- Grass Roots - build policy capacity
- Field Presence - work at local, state and national levels

As part of the Framework, the Board adopted the following Principles to guide our actions:

- Global warming is a serious and present threat to people, birds and other wildlife. The U.S. should adopt a clear national policy to proactively reduce the threat of global warming.

- Adopt quantitative and mandatory domestic reduction targets for all green-

house gases with a credible system to measure emissions and track progress.

- Use economic incentives as well as mandates to achieve the reduction targets.
- Increase research and implementation of safe and cleaner technology and energy production.
- The U.S. should assume a global leadership position to address this threat to human and ecosystem health.
- Local and State governments should take aggressive actions on their own or with regions. The cumulative impact of many actions will make a difference in both combating global warming and creating political demand for action.

During the discussion on global warming, the Board also agreed that Audubon has a unique role to play in the ongoing debate on wind energy. The Board asked staff to develop a national policy on wind energy that addresses the overarching need for the development of renewable energy resources while assuring avian impacts are clearly taken into account. Advocating for extension of the federal Production Tax Credit for wind power was identified as one early action Audubon should take. This credit currently expires every few years; extending its duration will promote longer-term project planning.

# CRAS member cites destruction of forest habitat in Tasmania

Coulee Region Audubon's Mary Strasser <mrstrass@msn.com> wrote the following to draw attention of Audubon members to one of the world's special places that is threatened.

"The issue of concern to me and Mike is the shocking destruction of old growth forests and wildlife in the rainforests of the Australian island state of Tasmania. Mike and I had the good fortune to visit this World Heritage listed region while visiting Australia about 10 years ago. The area has old growth trees over 400 years old and is rich with unique wildlife species. We saw wombats, an echidna, spotted quolls, Tasmanian devils, cockatoos, fairy wrens, and parrots in the Tasmanian

forests when we visited that island in 1996. Some of these species are now threatened or endangered. A logging company, Gunn Corporation, has been buying up large tracts of these lush old forests and cutting down the ancient trees... There are international campaigns protesting Gunn's senseless destruction of Tasmania's spectacular rainforests and endemic wildlife. As of this writing, more information is available on taking action on this issue at the website of the Rainforest Action Network <ran.org> (Click on the "old growth" icon and then go to "current campaigns.") The Wilderness Society of Australia has updates on this situation also at <wilderness.org.au>

## PROGRAMS from page 1

as Mike is busy before then."

The post-count potluck, as in previous years, will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the home of Mike and Laura Furr, W5324 Cty MM. Directions: Take Hwy 14 to MM. Go up the big hill. Their home is on the left near the top of the hill. Their lane makes an acute angle from MM and through a dense pine plantation. Please

bring a dish to pass. Both the count and pot luck are open to non members.

### Jan. 17, 2007

Jan. 17, 2007 — Annual Meeting. 6 p.m. at the Ho Chunk building, 724 Main St., La Crosse, for a potluck followed by the meeting and slide show with slides and comments provided by members.

## REPORT from page 2

phasing out this toxic metal is inadequate," says Bowes.

The scientific studies compiled in the report show mercury in a wide variety of species:

Freshwater Fish: Brook Trout, Walleye, Yellow Perch, Rainbow Trout, Northern Perch, Largemouth Bass

Birds in Aquatic Habitats: Bald Eagle, Great Egret, Wood Stork, Northern Shoveler, Common Loon, Red-winged Blackbird, White Ibis, Common Tern, Belted Kingfisher

Birds in Forest Habitats: Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Louisiana Waterthrush, Bicknell's Thrush, Carolina

Wren, Prothonotary Warbler

Mammals: Florida Panther, Indiana Bat, Mink, River Otter, Raccoon

Reptiles, Amphibians, Invertebrates: Two-lined Salamander, Snapping Turtle, Crayfish, American Alligator, Bullfrog

Marine Life: Tiger Shark, Sperm Whale, Striped Bass, Loggerhead Sea Turtle, Narwhal, Polar Bear, Beluga Whale, Ringed Seal

Poisoning Wildlife: The Reality of Mercury Pollution is available at <http://www.nwf.org/news>. National Wildlife Federation is at <http://www.nwf.org>.

— Newswise

## President's notebook

### By Dan Jackson

As in past years, the board of directors of the Coulee Region Audubon Society is trying to make this year's programming as exciting as possible. See the Programs column on page 1 in the newsletter for details on field trips and our upcoming programs.

In addition to our field trips and programming, we are also trying to make a difference through other activities and donations. We continue to purchase "Audubon Adventures" for elementary school teachers who would like to use these great materials in their classrooms. We have also made donations to the Jocotoco Foundation in order to help protect very special habitat in Ecuador, the American Birding Association in order to support their efforts to encourage young people to get involved in birding, and we donated enough money to Operation Migration to get the Whooping Cranes at least one mile closer to their wintering area in Florida.

We are off to a great start to what we believe will be a great year and we encourage you to get involved and take part in as many of the events and activities as you can!

## Found: Binoculars

FOUND September 25th: BINOCULARS. Call 608-534-5071

Allen Blake Sheldon  
absheldon@earthlink.net

## Check out the "Networker"

Audubon members can keep up to date on the organization by accessing the "Chapter Networker."

The summer issue included such things as the Audubon Adventures Update and information on a Wetlands Wilderness in jeopardy.

The newsletter is available at:  
<http://www.audubon.org/local/cn/networker.html>

A reminder: This newsletter is posted as a PDF file at:  
[www.couleeaudubon.org](http://www.couleeaudubon.org)



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## The few, the mighty, clean up I-90

**By Mark Webster**

With a minimum of people (3), which is often the case, we picked up 18 bags of assorted trash in 2 1/2 hours along I-90 near Dresbach Oct. 14. Some inter-

esting items found were: a commercial fluorescent light fixture complete with extra bulbs; a car top bike carrier; several hubcaps; a baseball cut completely

in half; an empty LP gas tank for a charcoal grill; and a brand new plastic tarp (still folded). Assisting Marilyn and myself was Tom Link.

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### Coulee Region Audubon Society Local Membership

\$15 Household     \$30 Supporting

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Thank you!