

Coulee Birder

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

and creatures of your yard today. You will also consider how you and your family use your yard so you can better decide how much space is needed ... or indeed whether you even want to go into areas as a bird owner. This basic plan will help you decide where you want to go and what you like about your yard. It is a measurement before you want to be later. Repeat the inventory periodically to see how the habitat is improving.

Enter answers in both columns: what you have and do "today" and what you hope to have, your "goal" for the future. View action plans in Creating a Healthy Yard for methods to meet goals.

DATE:	TODAY	GOAL
% Percentage of overall space that has...		
Edible plants		
Extra food/birds		
Lawn		
Impervious surface (patios, etc.)		
Number of pesticide applications per year		
Number of watering times per week		
Compost pile? (yes/no)		
For the birds (yes/no)		
Do you offer a variety of bird feeders?		
Do you offer a water source?		
(ponds, ponds, streams, other)		
	YES	
	YES	
	YES	

January-February 2007

Events

Audubon Programs

Meetings are held at the Ho Chunk Three Rivers House, 724 Main Street, La Crosse at 7 p.m. The building is located across the street from the La Crosse Main Library.

January 17

Annual Meeting and Pot Luck.

The pot luck will begin at 6 p.m., followed by the annual meeting and a slide show by members.

Bring a dish to pass, your own eating utensils and slides or photos of birds you would like to share with members.

February 21

Mark Peterson, Executive Director for Minnesota Audubon, will discuss Minnesota Audubon activities and how they work to influence legislation concerning birding and the environment.

Mark was the former Executive Director of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College, Ashland.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail, please send your request, along with your e-mail address to: Gretchen Skoloda at

gskol@earthlink.net

This will save the society postage and paper.

Sierra Club Programs

Jan. 30, at 7 p.m. at Ho Chunk Three Rivers House.

Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt, the associate director for the Mississippi Valley Archeology Center will present a program on Oneota Culture in the La Crosse area.

February 27 at 7 p.m. at the Ho

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President's notebook

by **Dan Jackson**

It is the end of December and a new year is almost upon us. For bird watchers, this can be a slow time, but it can also be a time of renewal. If you like keeping lists, the beginning of a new year is a great time to start a new list of birds seen for 2007. A new list can mean renewed excitement when you see your old bird buddies come to your feeder. It can also give you a chance to rekindle your excitement about the natural world and give you an excuse to get out and enjoy it.

A new year is also a good time to take a good look at yourself and the things that are important to you. This introspection may result in resolutions and plans for making

improvements in your life and hopefully, it will also result in resolutions to do something to protect the world that you live in. With the ever growing population of humans, we are placing huge pressure on the world's natural resources and wild places. If you care about them, a new year is a great time to resolve to do something that will make a difference in the world that we live in.

I urge all of you to get more involved in helping to protect our planet. The scope of your involvement is up to you. However, try to do a little more in the new year than you did in the old one. This involvement can take any form that

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Audubon urges pledge to create bird-healthy yard

Audubon's website (audubon.org) offers visitors help in assessing the state of your yard as bird habitat and suggestions for how to reach your goals to improve it.

The website says, "When you view your yard as 'habitat,' your ecological awareness will be heightened. For in-

stance, you'll begin looking at plants for their edible offerings: Do they bear fruit, nuts, seeds, nectar? Your yard will be practical but bountiful as well.

"The objective is to increase food and water sources for wildlife, shelter and nesting opportunities, native plantings,

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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 Feb. 20. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

FWS won't list Cerulean as threatened

By Audubon News

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), after stalling for six years and missing numerous deadlines required under the Endangered Species Act, has issued a decision not to list the Cerulean Warbler as a threatened species. The National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, and regional conservation organizations that petitioned the agency in 2000 to list the Cerulean as threatened expressed grave concerns over the songbird's future without the comprehensive protections provided by the Act.

The Cerulean Warbler population has dropped almost 82 percent throughout its U.S. range over the last 40 years, making it the fastest declining warbler in the country. The rate of decline has quickened and the threats to its survival, particularly from mountain removal mining, have worsened while the groups' petition has been pending before the FWS.

The FWS decision comes after the surface mining is expected to increase dramatically in the core of the Cerulean's range where the bird has already suffered drastic population declines - 80 percent in the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia, and 65 percent in the Ohio Hills in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

A multi-agency environmental study of mountaintop mining in four states (WV, TN, KY, VA) found that between 1992 and 2012, some 1.4 million acres of forests will be lost, more than half

due to mountaintop mining. The study noted that this loss of habitat for forest birds with core breeding areas in the Appalachian coal fields has "extreme ecological significance in that habitats required by these species for successful breeding are limited in the eastern United States." The Partners in Flight program has identified 15 songbirds with habitat in these forests as priority species for conservation, with the Cerulean as the highest priority. Ceruleans will be the most affected because they favor the steep slopes and ridge tops targeted by mountaintop removal. More than 70 percent of breeding Cerulean Warblers are found in the Ohio Hills and Cumberland Plateau regions targeted by groups sued the agency in February 2006 for repeatedly violating deadline requirements under the Act. In June, the FWS settled that case by promising to render a final decision by November 30. The decision was entered into the Federal Register Dec. 6.

"The birding community is greatly concerned because the Cerulean has been declining throughout its range for such a long period of time," said Greg Butcher, Ph.D., Director of Bird Conservation with Audubon. He said the bird has declined an average of 6 percent per year over the last eight years, compared to an annual average of 4.3 percent from 1966 to 2004.

"It's a tragedy that the Fish and Wildlife Service won't step up and act now, before this songbird moves any closer toward extinction," said DJ Gerken, staff attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit

organization representing the conservation groups.

Since the petition was filed, new information has come to light about the increasing loss and fragmentation of the Cerulean's eastern forest habitat from mountaintop removal mining. This form of mountaintop mining.

In 2000, 28 groups throughout the East petitioned the FWS to list the Cerulean as threatened, citing the precipitous decline in population and the growing threats to its summer breeding habitat in higher-elevation deciduous forests, including logging, sprawl development and mountaintop removal mining. FWS biologists at one time considered the bird a 'candidate species,' and found in 2002 that the groups' petition warranted further study. However, the agency, which has continually come under fire for ignoring its own scientists' analysis in favor of politically expedient decisions, evaded issuing a final determination until forced by the court.

"The FWS decision not to list the Cerulean Warbler is just one more example of the administration's blatant disregard for science," said Caroline Kennedy, senior director of field conservation with Defenders of Wildlife. "Any delay in taking the steps necessary to protect the warbler and its habitat only propel the songbird closer to extinction."

"The Southern Appalachians form the southernmost range for the Cerulean, one of the songbirds most cherished by the growing number of birders who come to the mountains of western North Carolina," said Bob Gale, Ecologist for the Western North Carolina Alliance. "The federal government is shirking its responsibility to do everything possible to keep this bird from disappearing from our mountains altogether."

Conservation groups said they will continue their efforts to protect the Cerulean Warbler, including a possible legal challenge to the agency decision, continued tracking and documentation of the bird's population, advocating improved logging practices that do the least damage to Cerulean habitat, and seeking habitat protection on national forest lands.

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works and is meaningful for you. It might mean getting involved in a highway or river clean-up day (remember ours in April and October), helping to teach children about the wonders of our world (find a teacher that could use the Audubon Adventures material for his/her classroom), writing legislators and other government officials to urge them to make good choices, or, it might include be-

coming more involved in one of many organizations who are making a difference in this area and throughout the world.

Our world is wonderful place. We owe it to our children, grand children, and their grand children, to take good care of it so that they can enjoy it too. Have a Happy New Year that is full of great accomplishments and fulfilled resolutions.

Audubon's

HABITAT INVENTORY

The first thing to do is define your starting point so that you can assess your needs, track progress and celebrate successes. The Habitat Inventory will help you identify the features and creatures of your yard today. You will also consider how you and your family use your yard so you can better decide how much space is needed — or indeed whether you even require — such areas as a lawn or a patio. From this baseline portrait you can decide where you want to go. It's sort of like taking your weight and measurements before beginning a fitness program. It lets you see where you are now and determine where you want to be later. Repeat the inventory periodically to see how the habitat is improving.

*Enter answers in both columns: what you have and do "today" and what you hope to achieve, your "goal." The arrows indicate which direction to work toward. View action plans in *Creating a Healthy Yard* for methods to meet goals.*

	<u>TODAY</u>	<u>GOAL</u>
DATE: _____		
% Percentage of overall space that has...		
Native plants	↑	_____
Exotic plant pests	↓	_____
Lawn	↓	_____
Impervious surface (patios, etc.)	↓	_____
Number of pesticide applications per year	↓	_____
Number of fertilizer applications per year	↓	_____
Number of watering times per week	↓	_____
Compost pile? (yes/no)	_____	YES
For the birds (yes/no)		
Do you offer a variety of bird feeders? (seed, suet, nectar, other)	_____	YES
Do you offer a water source? (birdbath, pond, stream, other)	_____	YES
Do you offer nesting and sheltering areas? (nest boxes, snags, brush piles, other)	_____	YES
Have you lessened the threats to wildlife?	_____	YES
Participate in citizen science projects?	_____	YES

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and biodiversity while decreasing invasive plant sprawl, lawn size, water and pesticide use, and polluted runoff. As you change or introduce an element, ask "Who or what will benefit from this action?" and "How does it affect the environment beyond my home?"

Since we're heading into Wisconsin's winter (such as it is), we will have some

time to plan for our gardening and yard work in the spring. Printed above is one of the forms suggested by Audubon for beginning this process. A second page of the PDF file asks you to inventory the number of wildlife species you find, the amount of time you spend in your yard in various pursuits, the percentage of space used for these activities, your "eco-

logical address" (climate, natural habitat, etc.) and details such as direction of prevailing winds and soil types. Check it out. We'll follow up with more information in the next newsletter, but you can download the helpful forms on the Audubon web site. Click on "Audubon at Home" to take the pledge.



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Chunk Three Rivers House.

John Pappenfuss, a local Sierra Club member traveled to the Brooks Mountain Range in Alaska above the Arctic Circle

with the National Sierra Club in August of 2006. He backpacked, camped, hiked,

fished and saw lots of wildlife. He will present his pictures of the trip.

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Thank you!