

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

Website: <http://couleeaudubon.org/>

September-October 2007

Events

Meetings

September 19 — 7p.m. Ho Chunk Nation Building, lower level, 724 Main Street, La Crosse

Craig Thompson will present WCBI Tropical Birdathons: Acres for Antpittas. Thompson is a Master Bird Bander and has led birding trips to the tropics for the past 15 years. The photo presentation will focus on two recent birdathons to Ecuador and how they contributed to conservation of some of the world's rarest birds. (For more information, see page 3)

October 30 (NOTE: change of date and place) 7 p.m. Special joint meeting with Sierra Club Room 140, Crowley Hall at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse.

On July 1, 2006 Lonnie Dupre and Eric Larsen made history by becoming the first ever expedition to reach the North Pole in summer. Their observations of the effects of Global Warming are included in this presentation by Larsen. For more information, see page 2.

Other events

Oct. 20 — I-90 Trash pickup. Volunteers meet at the Dresbach Visiror's Center at 9 am. We are usually done by lunch time. Call Mark Webster at 787-6398 for more information.

Saturday, Sept. 22, 10:00 am

Hike with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (Audubon supplies birding guides to these MVC hikes). If you are up for a rare and diverse opportunity, this hike is for you! We will be exploring the private and rarely open to the public Toberman property, which contains tracts of dry prairie; dry cliff; oak savanna; and

See EVENTS, page 2

President's notebook

Birds departing, get out to look

It is hard to believe that it is September. It seems like yesterday that I was getting excited about the spring migration and now the fall migration is already into its third month (yes, the fall migration really does start in July with the return of adult shorebirds).

If you haven't had a chance to see some of the neotropic migrants that grace our area in the spring, summer and fall, you had better look soon. Many birds that come to our area to nest have already left or will leave very soon and warblers from up north are moving through right now. I have already seen reports from our area and from the northern part of the state of Purple Finches, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and even Dark-eyed Juncos that are on their way south. These are all birds that I associate with winter bird feeding. It can't be that late already!

Although it is the end of summer, it is also the beginning of a new program year for the Coulee Region Audubon Society. We have a few great speakers lined up and are working on more. As always, if you have any ideas, please share them with me or other members of the board. We are always looking for great speakers for our monthly meetings.

As an organization, we are also looking for ways to reach out and make everyone more aware of the world around us and the issues that affect the health of our planet. We will continue to purchase Audubon Adventures curriculum packets for grade school teachers who are interested in materials to teach children about the natural world. If you know of any 3rd-6th grade teachers who may

See NOTEBOOK, page 3

Regional Audubon conference set

The 3rd Annual Upper Midwest Regional Audubon Conference will be held Oct. 12-14 at the Embassy Suites in Bloomington, Minn.

The focuses of the conference are "Declining Species, Declining Habitat: Reversing the Trend," and "Mississippi River: America's Flyway." Field trips and a special presentation on global warm-

ing featuring John Flicker, president of the National Audubon Society, and Dr. Mark Seeley, University of Minnesota climatologist and Minnesota Public Radio weather commentator, round out the weekend's events. Find out more and get registration materials at <http://mn.audubon.org/> or call 651-739-9332 for information about registering.

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 November 1. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

Arctic explorers paddled part way to Pole

Global warming effects noted on North Pole adventure

Modern-day explorer Eric Larsen's life epitomizes adventure. Larsen, who will present the program for Audubon's October joint meeting with Sierra Club, is a polar explorer, dog musher, adventure racer and educator, he has spent the past 12 years of his life adventuring in some of the most remote and wild places left on earth. He has traveled enough wilderness miles to circle the globe nearly two and half times.

On a summertime journey to the North Pole with Lonnie Dupre, they pulled and paddled specially modified canoes over 600 miles of shifting sea ice and open leads of the Arctic Ocean. Larsen will relate how they did problem solving, setting goals and overcoming fear and failure as well as the expedition's efforts to bring attention to Global Warming and the plight of the polar bear. There is a dramatic story of encounters with polar bears.

Included in the presentation are stunning images and video of the conditions faced on the Arctic Ocean.

A gifted communicator, Larsen travels the country giving motivational and educational lectures to K-12 schools, universities, non profit organizations and cor-

porate groups. Several documentaries have also been created around expeditions in which Eric has been involved.

Larsen lives in Grand Marais, Minn where he is planning for his next expedition and writing two books.

Birdathons raise funds to protect tropical habitats

Craig Thompson, program presenter for September's meeting, says that for the past two years WBCI-sponsored Tropical Birdathons have raised thousands of dollars for protection of critically endangered tropical habitats. In addition to being great fun, the birdathons provide world class birding and establish partnerships for future conservation action. Equally important, they offer a successful model for involving birders in the conservation of tropical habitats.

Thompson has worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for 20 years and presently supervises the wildlife, endangered resources, parks and real estate programs for the DNR's West Cen-

tral Region.

The WBCI is a statewide alliance of 163 partner organizations working to protect Wisconsin's rich birdlife. Recognizing more than half of Wisconsin's 238 species of breeding birds depend on tropical habitats for survival, in 2005 WBCI created an International Committee to advance conservation of migrant birds on their wintering grounds in Latin America.

Built upon the twin pillars of education and conservation action, WBCI International seeks to collaborate with organizations capable of advancing bird conservation in Central and South America.

EVENTS from page 1

southern dry, dry-mesic, and mesic forest communities. These native communities also contain numerous valuable native plant and animal species including several state-listed species like Cliff goldenrod, Upland boneset, American ginseng, and Yellow Lady's Slipper. We will also check out ancient burial mounds located high on the bluff-top, 400 feet above The Great River Road. Fabulous views of the Mississippi River Valley.

Trip Leader: George Howe

Audubon Representative: Kurt Brownell

Difficulty: Moderate to challenging

Extras to bring: camera and bug spray

Directions: Take Hwy 35 south from La Crosse to Cty Hwy N. Park on south side of N. The Spring Lake Inn will be

on the north side of the road.

Sept. 22 — Dancing for the Blazing Stars — Concordia Ballroom, benefit dance for Mississippi Valley Conservancy and its work for habitat conservation. More information, page 3.

Sept. 25 — Sierra Club meeting at 7 pm at the Ho Chunk Nation Building at 8th and Main Street, La Crosse.

The program, An American Icon: Utah's Redrock Wilderness, will be presented by Clayton Daughenbaugh. The campaign to protect this wilderness which is the largest remaining network of unprotected wild lands in the lower 48 states, is a priority of the Sierra Club. It contains redrock temples, gorges, ponderosa-studded plateaus and miles of naturally sculpted redrock over about 9.5 million acres.

Sun shines on Spring Adopt-a-Highway Pick-up

The Coulee Region Audubon Spring Adopt-a-highway pickup was a great success! On a spectacularly sunny day, eleven dedicated Audubon and Community members (possibly a new record!) filled thirty-five large garbage bags with trash along our two mile adopted stretch of I-90/ Hwy 61 between Dresbach and Dakota. On April 28 part of our trash-picking group consisted of five Onalaska High School National Honor Society (NHS) Students! A special thanks goes out from Coulee Region Audubon to the following NHS students who participated: Jackie Edmunds, Mitch Thompson, Andrew Jones, Katie Swift and Nathan Jakowski.

THANK YOU! It was a fantastic group effort!

Mark Webster, Coordinator

Peregrine pioneers view banding of chicks

By Dave Skoloda

Two peregrine falcons rocketed past Dan Berger and Chuck Sindelar at eye level on a bluff across the river from Onalaska. The peregrines were agitated, crying harshly as they flew back and forth, because their three chicks had been removed from the cliffside nest for banding.

The banding this summer was part of Bob Anderson's efforts to track the successful return of the falcons to their natural nesting sites on the bluffs after the birds were nearly extirpated in North

America due to the effects of DDT use in the mid- 1900s. His helpers, Dave Kester and Amy Ries, rappelled to pick up the chicks and return them to the nest.

Berger and Sindelar know all about the near loss of the peregrines; they did the final survey in 1964 that confirmed studies by Joe Hickey, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, that there were no longer peregrines east of the Mississippi River. Berger, who lives in California, and Sindelar, a Waukesha resident, were invited to watch the banding.

Anderson said after the banding was

completed that there are now eight cliff nests on the Wisconsin side of the river in this region and four on the Minnesota side.

Sindelar said that when they surveyed the river bluffs for nests 50 years ago they found one just south of La Crosse and another near Homer on the Minnesota side. The peak of the pre-DDT peregrine population was in 1955, he said. After that they declined. The last young were seen in 1962 at Maiden Rock, they said.

Berger and Sindelar searched the bluffs along the Mississippi, the Hudson River Valley, the Susquehanna and other sites known to have had peregrines in their 1964 survey. But there was not trace of them. Now they return each year to see the evidence of the successful recovery program.

"I didn't expect to see that again," Berger said as the peregrines flashed past.

(This is a condensed version of a newspaper column I wrote this summer. DS)

NOTEBOOK from page 1

be interested, please pass along their name and contact information so that we can offer the material to them.

In this electronic age, there are a large number of issues and campaigns that are discussed and marketed via the internet and e-mail. I receive a number of e-mails about issues, events, and news items that

affect our environment and our area. I try to forward the most important to our e-mail list. If you would like to be included on that list, please send me a request at DanJackson@LBWhite.com.

Enjoy the warmth. Fall and winter aren't far away.

Nature of Learning grants announced by foundation

Audubon chapters qualify to apply for newly announced Nature of Learning grants to promote local environmental education.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in cooperation with the USFWS (National Wildlife Refuge System and the National Conservation Training Center) and National Wildlife Refuge Association, will be soliciting applications from organizations interested in initiating The Nature of Learning program, the community-based environmental education initiative.

Nature of Learning seeks to:

* Use National Wildlife Refuges as outdoor classrooms to promote a greater understanding of local conservation issues.

* Encourage an interdisciplinary approach to learning that seeks to enhance student academic achievement.

* Utilize field experiences and student-led stewardship projects to connect classroom lessons to real world issues.

* Involve partnerships among local schools, community groups, natural resource professionals and local businesses.

Start-up grants of up to \$10,000 will be awarded on a competitive basis to support initial expenses associated with new programs. Schools or non-profit organizations, including "Friends" groups, Cooperative and Interpretive Associations, Bird Observatories and local Audubon groups are all eligible to apply for funding. Programs must involve a partnership with a local school (or schools), community group (e.g., Refuge Friends Group), and National Wildlife Refuge.

The Nature of Learning supports one of the six major Fish and Wildlife Service's priorities: "connecting people with nature ensuring the future of conservation."

To learn more about the qualifying projects, applications, and details of Nature of Learning program, visit:

<http://www.nfwf.org>

Dancing for the Blazing Stars

Mississippi Valley Conservancy's Dance Extravaganza with live music by Grand Picnic and Cheers Big Band will be held Saturday, Sept. 22 at the Concordia Ballroom, 1129 La Crosse St., La Crosse WI

Admission is free if you join as a new member of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC) the night of the dance. For current members and others: \$5 per person, parents with children \$10. All proceeds go to support MVC's land conservation efforts.

Here's the schedule:

5:30-8:00 p.m Folk dancing (Grand Picnic and caller, Joel VanderZee)

8:30-10:30 p.m Ballroom dancing (Cheers Big Band) Food provided by the Three Rivers Waldorf School

MVC is a regional, non-profit land trust in La Crosse that has permanently conserved over 4,000 acres of bluffs, prairies, wetlands and streams in the Coulee Region since its founding in 1997.

See DANCE, page 4



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DANCE from page 3

The Conservancy works with private landowners and local communities on voluntary conservation projects in seven counties along the Mississippi River. The

counties include Buffalo, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon, Crawford and Grant County.

Contact the Mississippi Valley Conservancy by e-mail: mrich@mississippivalleyconservancy.org

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