

# Coulee Birder

*Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society*

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

May-June 2008



## Events

### **Audubon Meetings**

Audubon meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, La Crosse.

#### **May 21**

Program: Ken and Terry Visger - Mussels and the River

Terry will act out a story about a clammers wife in the early 1900's. She is a professional storyteller, founder of the Bluff Country Storytelling Guild, and actively involved the the La Crosse Storytelling Festival held each fall. Her story will depict the multi-million dollar clamping industry on the Upper Mississippi.

Ken is a self-described "old river rat with a passion for preserving what we have left of our great Upper Mississippi resources." He will talk about the threat to our native mussels and the life cycle of mussels

He is active in both the Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services and Mississippi River Wild, a refuge friends group.

#### **June 18**

Annual Picnic Pot-Luck at Myrick Park 6:00 PM

Meet at the Gun Club. Bring a dish to pass and your own dishes and utensils. A bird walk in the marsh will follow the picnic. The public is welcome to attend the pot luck and the bird walk.

### **Field Trips**

#### **May 13**

Last Bird Hike in the La Crosse River Marsh guided by Bobbie Wilson and Dan Jackson. Meet at the RABBIT Trail parking lot in Myrick Park just east of the old zoo at 6:30 AM.

See **EVENTS**, page 2

### **President's notebook**

## **Volunteers provide the spark!**

We're getting close to the end of the program year and I have been looking at my notes to prepare an annual report for national Audubon. This review has given me a chance to think about all of the people who have worked hard to make this year a success and I think that this is a good time to extend a thank you.

During the course of this year, we will have held 9 regular meetings, published 5 newsletters, completed 2 highway clean-ups, held the Christmas Bird Count, completed the crane count, completed the initial phase of the first Salamander survey, supported the MVC by arranging for birding guides for several of their hikes, run 3 birding field trips, and provided speakers for 2 area organizations.

All together, these events and the preparation for them represent hundreds of hours of time from dozens of people. I would like to give a special thank you to Gretchen and Dave Skoloda. Gretchen has done a great job for many years arranging our meeting places, identifying and arranging speakers and generally making the monthly meetings happen. She and Dave are also responsible for editing and publishing the newsletter which is also a major undertaking. I would also like to thank all of the members of the

board of directors for their contributions to making this organization a success.

Everyone works well together to identify meeting topics and to complete the business of our organization. Special thanks need to go to Mary Sullivan and Mark Webster for their efforts as Treasurer and Secretary. These are critical roles for any organization and they are in good hands for the Coulee Region Audubon Society.

Fred Lesher has been the field trip coordinator for many years. He is a great birder and his willingness to share his skills and experience with all of us is really wonderful. I know that I am a better birder because of my chances to go out with him and I really appreciate his knowledge and all the work that has gone in to scouting great birding locations and itineraries. Jean Ledman and Mark Webster are the coordinators of the Crane Count and the highway clean-up. These are important events and they run smoothly and efficiently thanks to the efforts of Jean and Mark.

Last (and not least) thanks to all of the members that take part in our meetings and participate in all of these

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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 September 1. The next newsletter will be for September and October. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.*

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### May 15

Last Bird Hike in Hixon Forest guided by Bobbie and Pat Wilson. Meet at the Hixon Forest Trail parking lot just east off of Hwy. 16 on Bluff Road Pass at 6:30 a.m.

Walks last until about 8:00 a.m. You are welcome to leave early or stay later. Bring binoculars and a bird guide if you have them.

### May 17 - Wyalusing

The Wyalusing field trip is scheduled for Saturday, May 17th starting at 6:30 am at the park entrance. The trip will go until about noon. This is a field trip to one of the best birding locations in Southwest Wisconsin. Some of the target species include: Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Henslow's Sparrow and more. Last year, all of these species were found. The trip will be led by Fred Lesher and Dan Jackson.

For those interested in car pooling, please call Dan Jackson at 483-2271 (home) or 317-3614 (cell) or e-mail him at [DanJackson@LBWhite.com](mailto:DanJackson@LBWhite.com). We will meet at 5:00am at the Kwik Trip in Stoddard. If others would like to car pool from a La Crosse location, that can be arranged as well.

### Sierra Club - May 27

7:00 PM at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, La Crosse.

Speaker: Shahla Werner, Ph.D., Chapter Director, Sierra Club, John Muir Chapter

Topic: Insects and Conservation Issues

We've heard a lot recently about invasive forest insects such as the emerald ash borer, hemlock woolly adelgid, Asian Longhorned beetle, and Sirex woodwasp. These insects are not found in Wisconsin yet, but may get here one day. Shahla Werner will tell us about the problems posed by these insects and efforts under way to help protect our forests and urban trees. Shahla will also cover the need for conservation of our

more familiar and friendly native Wisconsin insects.

She has a Ph.D. in entomology from UW-Madison. She recently returned to Madison from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to become the Director of the Sierra Club's John Muir Chapter. She will also tell us what's going on in the Sierra Club in Wisconsin and the status of Sierra Club legislative priorities.

### Conservancy Links to the Land Hikes

May 17 - 10 a.m. Devils' Backbone

## Cold temps fail to deter hardy spring birders

Here's a reminder of what you miss if you don't get up early in May!

This report is from President Dan:

On the first of the Myrick / Hixon bird walks of the year a nice group of hardy souls braved the forecast and the chill for a wonderful walk in the marsh. The morning light was spectacular and the birds were cooperating. A total of 44 species of birds were seen.

Highlights were:

Common Loon (first I have seen in the Myrick Marsh The water level is very high due to flooding and beaver dams.)

Yellow-rumped Warblers (100+ feeding on the ground and on the floating vegetation in the marsh)

Palm Warblers(15-20)

Yellow Warblers (2)

Nashville Warblers (4)

Black-and-White Warbler(1 - First Of Year(FOY))

Orange-crowned Warbler (1)

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1)

Sora (2) almost tame, totally ignored the group

Eastern Kingbird (heard only - FOY)

Great Egret

Displaying Hooded Mergansers, Wood Ducks and many other species that were wonderful to look at in the great light.

The birds were moving very slowly with the cold. The Yellow-rumps and Palm Warblers were mostly feeding on the

(Stout Property in Grant Co.)

June 14 - 10 a.m. Holland Sand Prairie

July 12&13 - 7:30 - 9:30 a.m. New Amsterdam Grassland (limit 12 people per morning)

August 16 -10 a.m. Miller Bluff (North La Crosse Bluffs)

See the MVC website, [www.MississippiValleyConservancy.org](http://www.MississippiValleyConservancy.org) for directions and additional information or call 784-3606.

ground and someone spotted a dead tree that was loaded with Tree Swallows sitting scrunch together on all of the branches. There were easily 200+ birds on the single, small, dead tree.

This was the first of 6 annual walks that are sponsored by the Hixon Forest Nature Center. The Hixon Forest walks start from the Hixon Forest parking lot and are led by Pat and Bobbie Wilson. The first Myrick Marsh walk was led by Bobbie Wilson and myself (Pat, who usually leads, couldn't make it).

On May 1, Pat and Bobbie led the first of the walks in the Hixon Forest in La Crosse. The woods were hopping and noisy!! We ended up with 37 species. The highlights were:

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (FOY - finally)

Gray-Cheeked Thrush (FOY)

Ovenbird (FOY)

Veery (FOY)

Yellow-throated Vireo (FOY)

Empid (Least?) Flycatcher (FOY)

Tennessee Warbler (FOY)

Gray Catbird (FOY)

Swainson's Thrush (FOY)

Nashville Warblers (4-5)

Orange-Crowned Warblers (3-5)

Yellow-rumped Warblers (25+)

White-Throated Sparrows

Eastern Towhee (heard only)

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (many)

# **Kind pushes for bill to conserve migratory birds**

From the American Bird Conservancy

Representatives Ron Kind (D-WI) and Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD) have introduced legislation (act, H.R.5756), reauthorizing the existing Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), but at significantly higher levels, to meet the growing work needed to conserve neotropical migratory birds.

NMBCA currently provides a maximum authorization of \$6 million per year; last year Congress appropriated \$4.5 million, a \$500 thousand increase from the previous year, but grossly underfunded. Under the new law, that amount would increase to \$20 million by 2015.

Of the 178 continental bird species included on the American Bird Conservancy/Audubon WatchList of birds of highest conservation concern, over one-third, 69 species, are Neotropical migrants. At least 29 species of these migratory birds are experiencing significant population declines. Several species, the Cerulean Warbler and Olive-sided Flycatcher, have declined as much as 70% since surveys began in the 1960s. FWS lists 341 bird species as Neotropical migrants: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCA/BirdList.shtml>.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC)

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other special events and projects. On behalf of the board, I hope that we are meeting your expectations. As always, if you have any suggestions, please talk to me and/or the other board members. We are always open to new ideas and methods to educate and involve our membership in the wonders of our natural world. On that note, please make it a point to take the time to enjoy my favorite time of the year – spring and the spring migration. The woods and fields are full of life and song and are waiting for you to enjoy. While you are out and about, remember to share what you see with those you meet. You never know when you will ignite a fire of interest, if only you supply the spark!

has initiated a coalition of Bird Conservation Alliance (BCA) member organizations including National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife and the Joint Ventures Management Boards and other groups that will work together for an early reauthorization of the NMBCA under the campaign, Act for Songbirds!. Addition-

ally, the coalition will work to secure future full appropriations for the Act. For information about the coalition contact Alicia King @ 202-234-7181 or [aking@abcbirds.org](mailto:aking@abcbirds.org). Organizations can pledge their support by going to:

[www.birdconservationalliance.org/actforsongbirds/index.htm](http://www.birdconservationalliance.org/actforsongbirds/index.htm)

## **Spring highway cleanup helped by OHS students**

Coulee Region Audubon's Spring Adopt-a-highway clean up on Saturday, April 26th was a great success despite the 35 degree temperature, snow flurries, and the extremely strong NW wind that was blowing that morning. Eleven volunteers filled 29 large trash bags in just over two hours along the two mile route between Dresbach and Dakota, Minnesota.

We were honored to have the help of six dedicated and hardy Onalaska High School National Honor Society (NHS) students. We couldn't have done it without them!!

A great big THANK YOU goes out to the following OHS NHS Students:

Patty Edmunds

Kyle Edmunds

Ian Adcock

Brandon Hernandez

Mattie Buswell

Craig Lind

I also wish to thank John Edmunds for helping (and Denise Edmunds for helping to coordinate the students!), and thanks to the ever dependable Tom Link, and to Mark and Jean Ledman for passing up that wild turkey and still coming out to help! I think that in the eleven years that we've been picking trash on this route, it was never as cold as it was on Saturday. That's a real testament to those who braved the elements.

Thanks again to all the volunteers!

Mark Webster, Coordinator

## **Become a Bigbyist; Learn how here**

**By Bill Mueller**

**Conservation Chair, Wisconsin**

**Society for Ornithology**

Although conservationists spend a great deal of effort trying to get the public to be aware of environmentally-sound ways to do things, we don't always think we need to substantially change OUR OWN behavior.

If you are a birder, consider trying something different and "setting a good example" in 2008 by participating in the "Big Green Big Year" or "Bigby". This new attempt to find and count birds while on foot, muscle-powered conveyance (bicycle, kayak, etc.), or via public transportation, is gaining adherents in many locations around the planet. See more about the Bigby effort at:

<http://www.sparrowworks.ca/bigby.html>

"Bigbyists" are now found in a number of Asian countries in addition to the U.S., Canada, Australia, and several European countries. Join me and a slowly-growing number of Wisconsin birder/conservationists in seeing how many birds you can find in one or more fossil-fuel-free categories during 2008. There is an online forum to discuss and describe this process at: <http://www.sparrowworks.ca/bb/>

In a related development, involve these climate-friendly birding efforts in raising funds for avian conservation this year, in association with the folks doing a year-long, 12,000-mile, birding-by-bicycle adventure. See more about "The Bird Year", at:

[http://www.birdyear.com/Protect%20Birds/FFF\\_big\\_days.html](http://www.birdyear.com/Protect%20Birds/FFF_big_days.html)

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Coulee Region Audubon Society,  
P.O Box 2573  
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I've had some folks tell me that they think saving a few gallons of gas while birding really won't make any appreciable difference toward a climate-

friendly lifestyle. I beg to differ; it's all about emphasis, awareness, and a different mindset. I surely will drive my car this year, and sometimes will do so in search of birds. But I'm gradually chang-

ing the way I look at all of my own activities, and I think that may produce some surprising results. We'll see.

Bill Mueller, Conservation Chair,  
Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

## ***Contacts***

### **PRESIDENT**

Dan Jackson 608-787-6398  
DanielEJackson@earthlink.net mvweb@charter.net  
608-483-2271

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

Phoebe Sorenson  
1729 Barnabee Rd.  
La Crosse 54601  
788-7027

### **TREASURER**

Mary Sullivan  
608-785-7095  
marysullivan@hotmail.com

### **SECRETARY**

Mark Webster

### **BOARD MEMBER**

Tom Link  
608-783-8047  
link.thom@uwlax.edu

### **BOARD MEMBER**

Kurt Brownell  
Kurt.A.Brownell@mypo2.usace.army.mil  
608-269-6124

### **NEWSLETTER EDITORS**

Dave and Gretchen Skoloda  
608-781-7502  
dskoloda@earthlink.net

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