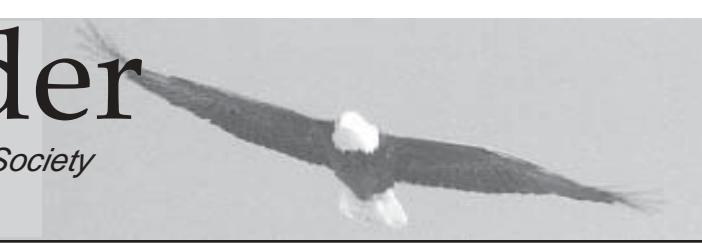


Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

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

November-December 2008



Events

November 19

Coulee Region Audubon meeting at 7:00 p.m. Nov. 19 at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, La Crosse.

The November speaker will be Wisconsin birding guide author Steve Betchkal. Steve's presentation will be "Birding By Ear". He will also spend some time discussing his latest book "All of This and Robins Too: A Guide to the 50 or So Best Places to Find Birds in Wisconsin".

Since identifying his first wild bird in 1969 (an American Robin, what else?), Steve has been chasing birds across Wisconsin and the North American continent. He has birded in 42 states, 54 national wildlife refuges, and is approaching 600 different birds seen in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

In June, he conducts two Breeding Bird Surveys in Wisconsin, one in the region of Bloomer, the other runs through Augusta.

He writes about birds for the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram and is featured as a regular columnist for Wisconsin West Magazine. His bird articles have also appeared in Cabin Life, Northland Adventures and Birder's World.

Betchkal says "Birds are beautiful and captivating – whether describing their behaviors, their diversity and physical adaptations or the music they make. They are also central to discussions about global warming, and other current environmental topics."

December 20

December meeting will be the La Crosse Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 20.

The Coulee Region Audubon Society

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President's notebook

Help us cut newsletter costs

By Dan Jackson

In an effort to cut costs and to be more environmentally conscious, the board has decided that it would make sense to make a major plea to our membership to switch from a hardcopy newsletter to an electronic newsletter. In the last fiscal year (June 2007 to May 2008) we spent nearly \$800 to print and mail our chapter newsletters. Considering that our chapter's annual budget is only about \$2,000, this represents an extraordinarily large part of our budget. If this amount can be significantly reduced, it will mean that

more money will be available to pay for speakers, education projects, and to cover the costs of other initiatives in which the chapter would like to participate.

Our newsletters are sent to our local members and to members of the national Audubon Society that live in the general La Crosse area. Although we know that our local membership is interested in the contents of our newsletter, we also recognize that national members outside of the immediate La Crosse area may not be inter-

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Time to renew local membership

We are already two months into the new program year so it is time to catch up if you haven't renewed your local membership in the Coulee Region Audubon Society. Although our meetings are open to the public and national membership entitles you to receive our newsletter, the Coulee Region Audubon Society relies on local memberships to pay for speakers and all of the other chapter expenses.

If you haven't sent in your annual renewal payment already, please use the form on the back page of the newsletter

to send in your 2008-2009 Coulee Region Audubon Society renewal. Simply complete the form and send it along with your check made out to the Coulee Region Audubon Society to:

Mary Sullivan

Treasurer

Coulee Region Audubon Society

PO Box 2573

La Crosse, WI 54602-2573

As always, thank you for your continued support of the Coulee Region Audubon Society!

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 January 2. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

DNR proposes delisting Trumpeters, Osprey

MADISON – Populations of trumpeter swans, currently listed as a state endangered species, and ospreys, currently listed as a state threatened species, have recovered to the point that both species would be removed from the state endangered and threatened species list, under a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources proposal.

“The statewide populations of these two species have increased to the point where we are now confident that they no longer qualify as endangered or threatened under state statutes,” says Sumner Matteson, an avian ecologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources who oversaw the recovery programs for both species.

A proposed rule that would delete trumpeter swan from the Wisconsin endangered species list and the osprey from the Wisconsin threatened species list was the topic of a public hearing in

October. Matteson said in a telephone interview Nov. 5 that there were few comments on the proposal and the delisting recommendation will be made to the DNR Board in January.

Both species will continue to receive protection under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Matteson says.

“The successful reintroduction of trumpeter swans and the successful recover of ospreys in Wisconsin is really a testament to the conservation partnerships between private organizations, businesses, scores of dedicated individuals, and state, federal, and tribal governments that have helped restore populations of these birds and ensure they will remain an integral part of Wisconsin’s biological diversity,” Matteson says.

In 1986, the DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources developed a recovery plan for the trumpeter swan that established a recovery goal of at least 20 breed-

ing and migratory pairs by the year 2000. A reintroduction effort was very successful and the Wisconsin population has increased from zero in 1986 to 126 breeding pairs occurring in 20 Wisconsin counties in 2008.

Osprey were one of the raptor species whose populations were decimated by the insecticide DDT in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1970s the state’s nesting population numbered fewer than 100 pairs. The statewide population increased to just under 400 pairs from 1993 to 2002 and has been above 400 pairs since 2003.

Swan viewing set

View migrating Tundra Swans and other waterfowl from the overlook 3 miles south of Brownsville from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 15. USFWS staff and Mississippi River Wild volunteers are sponsoring the event. For more information call 783-8405.

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will hold the 2008 La Crosse Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 20th and we are looking for help. Our count is part of Audubon national’s Christmas Bird Count program which is one of the oldest citizen science projects in the United States. This year will mark the 109th year of the project in the United States and it will be La Crosse’s 44th year.

For the La Crosse Christmas Bird Count, we count all of the birds that we find inside a 15 mile “count circle” that is centered on the La Crosse County courthouse in downtown La Crosse. Volunteers can count the birds at a single feeder within the count circle, can work by themselves or as a member of a birding team to count the birds in one of many pre-assigned sections of the count circle. Any commitment from a couple of hours to a whole day of birding would be greatly appreciated and birders of all skill levels are welcome.

After we are done counting, all participants are invited to a Christmas Bird Count Potluck dinner. It is a social event

that allows participants to have some fun and share their results with other members of the count team. This year the dinner will be held at the house of Kurt Brownell in rural Sparta.

If you are interested in helping out with the Christmas Bird Count, please e-mail or call Dan Jackson, the count compiler at DanJackson@LBWhite.com or call him at his home phone - (608) 483-2271.

Directions to Kurt Brownell’s home for the pot-luck:

Take I-90 east to exit 25 (Hwy 27). Take Hwy 27 north to the first stoplight (Hwy 16). Go right. Continue to the next stop light (Water St.). Go right and travel approx. 1/2 block. Take the first left (Walrath St.). Continue less than a mile to John St/Igloo Road. Go right and travel 1.7 miles, crossing the interstate and going through a subdivision. Keep going straight. Kurt’s house is on the right side of the road in the country, surrounded by pine trees. The fire number is 18019. If you get to a sharp right bend in the road back in the woods, you have gone too far. The road dead ends.

Trash Pickers Wade Through Fog

Coulee Region Audubon Society held its fall Adopt-a-Highway Trash Pick-up on Saturday morning, October 18, 2008. Six volunteers picked up 22 large trash bags of refuse along I90/Hwy 61 in a 2 mile stretch from Dresbach to Dakota, MN. We decided that it was too foggy to go birding, so why not pick up trash?

The pick-up lasted approximately 2 1/2 hours. Afterwards, we all met at Corky’s Restaurant in La Crescent, enjoyed some delicious pizza, and shared our roadside findings. A few interesting things were found, such as an old ID from St. Francis, a pair of slightly used golfers gloves (good as new with a good washing), a blaze orange knit hunting cap, and a floral women’s undergarment (decidedly, not reusable!).

Many thanks to the other volunteers; Pat & Bobbie Wilson, Sue Fletcher, Tom Link, and last but not least - Marilyn Webster.

Mark Webster
Coordinator

Bar-tailed Godwit sets nonstop flight record

USGS biologists have reported that the record for the longest nonstop bird flight has been broken. A **bar-tailed godwit** identified by the researchers simply as E7 flew 7,257 miles across the **Pacific Ocean** without intermission. The previous record belonged to a Far-Eastern curlew, which flew 4,038 miles nonstop.

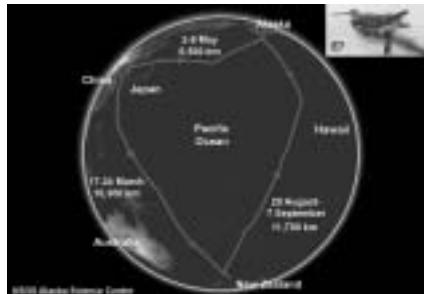
Biologist Robert Gill, Jr., said that the bird achieved the record without gliding.

This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that continuous wing-flapping helps birds to preserve their **energy according to Gill**.

Gill and his team followed migrations of bar-tailed godwits from their summer breeding places in the western **Alaska** tundra to **New Zealand** where they remain until the next year. The scientists implanted the females with transmitters, while males, which are generally smaller, were supplied with external transmitters. The birds flew for five to nine days without rest, a few landing on South Pacific islands before resuming their trips. The flights were monitored by satellite in 2006 and 2007.



Bar-tailed Godwit



Godwit Flight patterns/USGS images

According to the scientists, the birds were expending energy at eight-to-10 times the rate they do at rest. The previous record for a boost in energy output is seven times the "basal metabolic rate."

According to **Proceedings of the Royal Society B** oceans, mountain

ranges, deserts, ice fields and other open territories do not always present obstacles for bird migration as it had been considered before. On the contrary, they might offer convenient and smooth air-routes. During a flight the birds encounter few predators and are safe from different infestations that take place on earth.

Flights across the **Pacific Ocean** are preferred by most **bar-tailed godwits**, but the birds have to prepare a fuel supply for such a long journey. So they consume plenty of tiny clams to store body fat.

"Their bodies can consist of 55 percent fat at this time," said Gill.

Both **Gill** and **Rob Schuckard**, a team leader at the **Ornithological Society of New Zealand** feel concern about the godwit's future. The number of birds that flew from the north to the south dropped from 155,000 to 70,000 since 1990s. As **Gill** supposes, the main cause of this problem is **habitat loss**. However, the role of climate change can not be underestimated. If airflow direction changes, the birds might benefit from tailwinds, but such shifts may also cause greater headwinds, which will postpone their migration.

Gill hopes to continue his investigation of **bar-tailed godwits** in order to study the effect of climate change on them and to learn more about their metabolism.

Pennies for the Planet Makes a Big Difference with Small Change

A new element of the Together Green initiative will soon provide an opportunity for young people to make a measurable difference in the world. Pennies for the Planet is a powerful tool for engaging young people and provides an opportunity to raise money for three Audubon efforts to protect wildlife and wild places.

Targeting grades two through six, the program aims to reach 675,000 young people and their families a year, primarily through schools. Kits can be downloaded from www.togethergreen.org.

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ested in receiving it.

With this in mind, we have included a stamped, self-addressed postcard with this issue of the newsletter and ask that you send it back to us with your selection for newsletter delivery. Members who do not return the card will be removed from the newsletter mailing list. When you return the card, make sure that you use the card to specify how you would like to receive the newsletter in the future. The card includes options for whether or not you would like to continue to receive the chapter newsletter and, if you want it, whether you want to receive it electronically or via the U.S. mail.

I urge you to allow us to send your copy of the chapter newsletter via e-mail. If you send us your e-mail address, it will absolutely not be sold or shared with any other organization or group. However, if you would prefer to not receive your newsletter via e-mail, that is understood

and we will continue to mail it to you.

For those members who are willing to receive their newsletters electronically, we have created 2 separate e-mail distribution lists. Members of the CRAS Information list will receive chapter newsletters, field trip invitations and reminders, local birding information, environmental action alerts, and other information related to environmental issues. We will keep the number of messages sent to this list to a handful of messages per month but the number will fluctuate according to season (bird messages) and the environmental issues that are currently in the news. Members of the CRAS Newsletter-only distribution list will only receive e-mails used to distribute the newsletter (1 message bi-monthly).

Please fill out and return the postcard whether or not you want to continue receiving a copy of this newsletter. We would really like the feedback.



Coulee Region Audubon Society,
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Audubon Chapters can participate by collecting pennies and especially by helping give exposure to this wonderful program.

Funds raised this school year will benefit:

- Project Puffin

•Francis Beidler Forest Audubon Center and Sanctuary
•Sagebrush Ecosystem

Contacts

PRESIDENT

Dan Jackson
DanielJackson@earthlink.net
608-483-2271

BOARD MEMBER

Janice Hatt
(608) 498-1119
wooliesrus@charter.net

VICE PRESIDENT

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

BOARD MEMBER

Kurt Brownell
Kurt.A.Brownell@mvp02.usace.army.mil
608-269-6124

TREASURER

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

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

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

SECRETARY

Mark Webster
608-787-6398
mvweb@charter.net

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Thank you!