

# Coulee Birder

*Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society*

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

September-October 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.

### September 17

Scott Craven, state specialist in Wildlife Ecology with the University of Wisconsin Extension will present a program on "Challenges to Wildlife Conservation in Wisconsin".

Craven is well-known around the state for his monthly appearances on Wisconsin Public Radio where his knowledge of wildlife provides answers to questions about encounters with wildlife, hunting, bird watching and habitat for wildlife.

He has a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has done extensive research in wildlife damage control and wildlife management on private lands.

His statewide programs focus on wildlife damage management, urban wildlife management, youth education, and wild life-based recreation.

There will be time for questions from the audience.

### October 15

Pat and Bobbie Wilson will present a program and show slides of their trip this summer to the Svalbard Archipelago, a Norwegian territory at the same latitude as Northern Greenland, closer to the North Pole than to the Arctic Circle.

Some of the birds sighted include nesting Glaucous Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Thick-billed Murres, Dovkies, Black Guillemots, Northern Fulmars, Long-tailed Jaegers, Great Skua, Purple Sandpipers, Snow Buntings, Red Phalaropes, Pink-footed Geese, Bar

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### **President's notebook**

### **Honor RTP by helping teachers**

August 28th, 2008 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of Roger Tory Peterson. Although Mr. Peterson died in 1996, honoring his life seems like a great idea near the time of this special anniversary.

As an avid birder, I am very aware of the impact that Mr. Peterson had on my life. He was the inventor of the modern field guide and was considered by many to be America's foremost naturalist. I have spent a large number of hours looking through many of his books in order to identify birds, wild flowers, reptiles and other interesting creatures that I have encountered. Being able to identify a new bird is always exciting and his books started me on a life-long hobby (that some would say is now an obsession).

According to an e-mail that I received from the Thayer Birding organization, Roger Tory Peterson was inspired by his 7th grade teacher, Mrs. Blanche Hornbeck, who had her students join the Junior Audubon Club. She encouraged Roger's drawing efforts and provided the "spark" that changed his life. She told the class "Your objective will be to learn all you can about birds, be kind to birds and protect them."

This statement is a great reminder that it is the duty of each of us to try to

do our part to be the "spark" that changes the lives of those around us — especially when it comes to teaching today's children about the natural world and the wonderful members of that community.

The Coulee Region Audubon Society would like to honor the life of Roger Tory Peterson by helping local teachers to ignite that spark among today's 3rd to 6th grade students. We would love to purchase Audubon Adventures outdoor education materials for local teachers to use as a part of their classroom curriculum. If you know a teacher(s) who work with this age group, please have them contact me or any member of the board so that we can purchase a set of this material for their classroom.

I would also urge all of you to honor Roger Tory Peterson by taking part in an outdoor activity or doing something else to perpetuate his love of nature. Taking a hike, going bird watching, chasing butterflies with a child, or helping us get the word out to local educators about the materials that we have to offer are just a few ideas that come to mind.

Another great idea would be to join the Coulee Region Audubon Society's

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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 November 1. The next newsletter will be for November and December. Send information to: gskol@earthlink.net.*

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nacle Geese and Common Eiders.

They also have photos of polar bears and Arctic fox, walruses and seals, along with great scenery and a few adventure tales.

Pat and Bobbie are long-time Audubon and Sierra Club members. Some of their travels have taken them to Central America, Ecuador and kayaking in the Arctic.

### Field Trips

October 4

Fred Lesher will lead a hawk watch to Genoa Old Settler's Park on Saturday, October 4. The park provides excellent viewing of Pool 8 of the Mississippi River from 150 feet above the river. Time will be 9 a.m. to at least 12 noon. Object will be watching migrant raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Osprey, Harriers, American Kestrels and Bald Eagles. These birds of prey and many other birds of prey species follow the Mississippi River enroute to the Texas Gulf, Central and South America to winter. Some songbirds should also be present along the bluff viewing site, and rafts of migrant waterfowl will be visible on Pool 8 of the Mississippi River.

If birders don't know where Genoa Old Settler's Park is, meet at the entrance road to Goose Island off Hwy. 35 south of La Crosse at 8:30 AM and Fred will lead from there.

If the park entrance road is closed to vehicles for the season, we will walk up the 1/4 mile entrance road, birding up and down. There is a pit toilet and drinking water in the park if it is open. Bring a sandwich and beverage if you wish.

November 8

Minnesota Ornithological Union welcomes Coulee Region Audubon Society members to participate on a field trip along both sides of the Mississippi River from La Crescent, Minnesota to Lansing and back to La Crosse.

Meet at the La Crescent Kwik Trip at 9 a.m.. The trip will go south along the Mississippi River, cross at Lansing

into Wisconsin, then north back to La Crosse again following the river.

The group may stop for lunch along the way but Fred suggests bringing a snack and beverage. This will be about a 6 hour trip but people can leave as they wish.

For more information, please call Fred Lesher at 608-783-1149 or e-mail him at corax6330@yahoo.com

## Refuges build connections with America's birders

by Maggie O'Connell

The National Wildlife Refuge was born for the birds on Pelican Island in Florida – and today offers America's birders some of the finest winged parades found anywhere in the world. Waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, raptors, neotropical migrants — almost anything that flies stops at a national wildlife refuge.

Nearly 170 refuges have been designated Important Bird Areas by the American Bird Conservancy and the National Audubon Society.

*Maggie O'Connell is a visitor service specialist with the Refuge System Division of Visitor Services and Communications.*

Friends groups and private sponsors to introduce youngsters to nature. Others celebrate their bird populations with community festivals. Many participated in last year's Big Sit, the nation-wide bird watching event sponsored by Bird Watcher's Digest; still more are expected to join in this year's observation on October 12.

Recognizing how important refuges are to birding, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 launched its National Wildlife Refuge System Birding Initiative. The Initiative will both help birders appreciate the value of refuges and help na-

### Sierra Club Meeting

Tuesday, September 30, 7:00 p.m. Ho Chunk House 725 Main Street, La Crosse. Pat Wilson tells about his three week canoe trip in July on the Nahanni River in the Northwest Territory.

tional wildlife refuges recognize the value of birders as advocates, volunteers and economic supporters of local communities.

A 14-member Birders Team, representing different sectors of the birding world, is spearheading the drive. The Team includes authors, editors, educators, conservationists and business leaders. Two additional panels provide support and feedback: a group of independent biologists, educators, authors and other birding specialists; and a panel of Service staff biologists, refuge managers and visitor services specialists.

Birders love it when refuges post bird sighting lists outside visitor centers or offices for those early morning or late afternoon visits. Birders value tips on where and when to look for their favorite species. So, local bird club members might make good front desk volunteers. Bird groups also could be asked to help establish, monitor and interpret nest boxes and platforms for species of concern. The Refuge System has created a custom-made Web site, <http://www.fws.gov/refugees/birding/index.html>, to help nurture connections with birders.

"Through the Birding Initiative, we believe we can help foster a better appreciation of refuges as premier birding locations and, along the way, help reconnect people to nature," says Jon Andrew, Southeast Region Refuge Chief and chair of the Birding Initiative. "In the long run, we not only kindle a passion for birds, but a passion for conserving and managing wildlife habitats for all time."

## **Friends group forms for Trempealeau refuge**

Friends of Trempealeau Refuge is a new organization formed for the purpose of supporting Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.

The Refuge is home to a diversity of plants and animals, including rare species and habitats including wetlands, prairies and savannahs. The Refuge is also an important resting and feeding site on the Mississippi River flyway, a major international bird migration corridor. Continuing development along the Mississippi River Flyway has reduced the suitable area available to migrating birds for critical rest stops, making the Refuge increasingly important. In addition, this Refuge is increasingly busy as more people seek out wildlife-related recreation and information.

The Refuge will benefit if it has more resources to use in meeting management goals, such as invasive species control and habitat improvements. Protection and enhancement of critical natural resources is at the heart Friends of Trempealeau Refuge.

In 2007, at a public meeting regarding the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Refuge staff asked for volunteers to do the organizational work of forming a Friends group for the Refuge. The Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan states: "Friends groups play a critical role in helping the public understand the importance of protecting and preserving refuges. They provide critical support by volunteering, raising funds and educating the public. Trempealeau

NWR ...needs to establish its own Friends group that will provide an independent voice for the protection, conservation and enhancement of refuge resource. Trempealeau Refuge is a tax exempt non-profit organization, according to Pat

Caffrey, president. Contact Pat (caffreyp@netscape.net) or one of the board members if you are interested in joining. Board of Directors: Pat Caffrey, Vickie Hirschboeck, Scott Lee, Joel Von Haden, Peg Zappen.

## **Coulee Audubon history emerges from local basement**

The following are some tidbits from a box of recently recovered records for the Coulee Region Audubon Society. They were stored in the basement of Dr. Cameron Gundersen who called Phoebe Sorenson and asked that she come and get them. The entire box of records has been turned over to the archives at the La Crosse Public Library where they will be catalogued and made available to anyone who wants to look at them. The records include membership lists, program notes, bird sightings, minutes from meetings, financial reports and other organizational information from 1965 to 1985.

Here are some of the highlights gleaned from the records:

CRAS was organized in May, 1965, with a membership list of 63 names,

many of them couples. Dues were \$2, prorated quarterly.

The first officers were Jerome Rosso, president; Burleigh Randolph, vice-president; John Ellenbecker, Secretary; Arthur Ginskey, Treasurer; Sister Anges Marie and James Conway, directors.

Some of the names on the early membership lists and remain members in 2008 include Mr. and Mrs. Fred Lesher, Mr. and Mrs. David Goode, Pat and Bobbie Wilson, Artis Assen and Phoebe Sorenson.

One of the newsletters in 1975 was handwritten and contained information about programs, field trips, legislation affecting birds and bird sightings.

Fred Lesher gave a program in November of 1975 entitled "Backpacking the Kek Trail in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area".

## **Spur-of-the-moment outings can yield additions to your list**

*Editor's note: Dan Jackson, CRAS president, sometimes organizes a birding outing on short notice when he learns that the time is right to see some great birds. The following is an example of what can happen when his invitation to travel is accepted. Here's his report on a spur-of-the-moment outing to Horicon Marsh in July.*

Larry Johnson and I made the trip to Horicon yesterday that I posted on Tuesday. Sorry for the short notice, but the presence of three species of rare birds made going in a hurry make sense.

We had a great day and were successful in our attempts to see the 3 rarities that were found this week. The highlights were:

Glossy Ibis (1)

White-faced Ibis (1)

Black-necked Stilt (2)

10 other species of shorebirds including Short-billed Dowitchers(25), Wilson's Phalaropes(2), Wilson's Snipe(3), Least(7), Semi-palmated(3), Pectoral(5), and Solitary Sandpipers(5), Killdeer(25), and Lesser(150) and Greater Yellowlegs(20)

Virginia Rail(1)

Black-crowned Night Herons(10)

Black and Forster's Terns (many)

Dickcissels (2)

Sedge and Marsh Wrens (1 of each seen - others heard)

And lots of other great birds.

*See what you missed?*

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electronic information list. I have put together an e-mail list that is used to send chapter newsletters, announce field trips, share local bird sightings, and forward information on current issues that affect the organization and/or the environment. If you would like to be added to the list so that we can reduce the cost of mailing newsletters and share other great information, please send an e-mail request to DanJackson@LBWhite.com"



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## Note of thanks from Mississippi Wild

On behalf of Mississippi River Wild, I would like to extend a sincere thanks for your generous donation to our Scope Fund. Two scopes have been ordered,

(one handicapped accessable) and should be installed soon. The Brownsville overlook is becoming a real destination for wildlife viewers. It is even a featured trip

in the new Elder Hostel brochure. Once again, thanks for supporting the Upper Miss resources.

Ken Visger, Mississippi River Wild

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