

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

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

March-April 2009



Events

Meetings

Audubon meetings are held at 7 p.m. at the Ho Chunk Nation building, lower level, 725 Main Street, La Crosse, across from the Main Branch of the La Crosse Public Library.

March 18

Pat Manthey, Wisconsin DNR, Bureau of Endangered Resources will present a program on the Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Project. Trumpeter swans - named for their resonant, trumpet like call - are the largest native waterfowl species in North America. Adults have white plumage and can stand up to four feet tall and weigh between 20 and 30 pounds.

Trumpeter swans were found in Wisconsin until the 1880s, when market hunting and feather collecting almost drove the species extinct.

Beginning in 1989, Wisconsin biologists flew to Alaska for nine consecutive years to collect surplus trumpeter swan eggs that were then hatched in incubators at the Milwaukee County Zoo. After they hatched, the young swans were either placed in a captive rearing program or decoy rearing program until they were released to the wild.

April 15

Dr. Eric Anderson discusses the wild cats of Wisconsin.

Dr. Anderson is a professor in the Wildlife Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, where he teaches courses in conservation biology, ecology, biostatistics, and wildlife field techniques. He has won numerous teaching awards and considers teaching to be his "raison d'être". Although teaching is his passion, he maintains an active research program. His work has focused

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President's notebook

Old friends returning

By Dan Jackson

It is March and spring is fast approaching. For those of us who are bird watchers, this is an exciting time. Spring migration is already under way and the current trickle of northward migrants will soon turn into a wild torrent with an exciting array of old friends returning to our area or passing through on their way to northern breeding areas.

Don't miss out on this fabulous time. Get out and do some bird watching or, if that is not your thing, at least do some hiking. After a long and

sometimes ugly winter, I am sure that we all need to spend a little more time outside.

This is also a time that many of us start thinking about yards and gardens. If you have been sneaking peeks at the seed catalogs with dreams of new flowers and bushes that you can use to add beauty to your yard, try to also think about plantings that will help out our feathered and non-feathered friends as well. There are wonderful bushes and flowers that provide food and shelter for both resident and mi-

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Minnesota plans breeding bird atlas

The Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas is gearing up for its first season in spring 2009. Minnesota is only one of 7 remaining states – and the only state along the Mississippi Flyway - that has not yet developed an atlas. The atlas goals, like most states, are to map the occurrence and breeding status of all species in the state, produce base-line information for monitoring changes to bird populations, and increase opportunities for citizen scientists.

Minnesota used the public land survey system as the basis for locating Priority Blocks to survey and randomly se-

lected the NE quadrant (in most cases) of each of the 2400+ townships for the survey. Each block is about 3 X 3 miles and will be surveyed once during the next five years.

For persons who participated in the Wisconsin atlas project, the protocols will probably sound familiar. Volunteers will survey every habitat type in their block within a single breeding season and make multiple visits throughout the season - including visits at different times of the day. A block is considered complete

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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 May/June issue is April 30. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

Bino bands raise money for Maine birds

Steve Walker and Judy Camuso from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife have come up with an innovative way for birders to support Maine's non-game bird activity, and at the same time label their binoculars with a lost-and-found system.

The department has started selling metal "Birder Bands" that can be locked onto binocular straps. Each of the Birder Bands has a unique registration

Each individual band costs \$20 per year, with the funds going to state-based bird conservation projects.

- Maine Wildlife Department

number and each has the phone number where lost and recovered optics can be reported, thus allowing the Department the

ability to notify the registered owner and then reunite him/her with their binoculars.

To participate in this system, each individual band costs \$20 per year, with the funds going to state-based bird conservation projects.

Here's the Maine promotional pitch: "Everyday, your Wildlife Department is working hard to protect Maine's birds, bird habitat, and access for birders. Maine's hunters and anglers through license fees and equipment taxes have paid for the bulk of these efforts.

"With declining funds available for non-game and endangered species work, our bird conservation efforts now also depend on Maine's birding community to help conserve what you care about.

"For years bird bands have helped biologists understand migratory bird population trends and habitat needs. Now the Maine Birder Band is available as a tool for wildlife watchers of all stripes to support the non-game and endangered species conservation efforts of your Wildlife Department."

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gratory birds. Adding some of those to your plans will provide beauty and the extra benefit of being able to attract some new visitors to your yard throughout this year and the years to come.

The beginning of spring also means that the elections have come and gone. Now that our new president has been in office for more than a month, all of the excitement (and annoyance) of the election season has disappeared. But, no matter what your affiliation, it is impor-

tant to stay tuned to all of the changes that the new administration is trying to implement. A great deal of money is being spent and many new programs are being discussed. It is important to stay tuned in and to voice support or opposition to our representatives as the need arises. It is an important part of the process that is also our civic duty.

Enjoy spring! It is a fabulous time of the year and it is bringing the warmth and sunshine that we are all looking forward to.

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primarily on carnivores, particularly bobcats, wolves, and black-footed ferrets, but he has also worked with songbirds, turtles, bats, and flying squirrels. He has authored numerous scientific journal articles on North American carnivores, and particularly on the bobcat. He has also co-authored 6 book chapters dealing with carnivores and wildlife habitat selection. Currently, Anderson and his graduate students are modeling the distribution of bobcats in the state and investigating the return of the cougar to the wilds of Wisconsin.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Wisconsin is home to three native cat species: bobcat, lynx, and mountain lion which is making its return after a 100-year absence from the state. Find out about the natural history and current status of these cats, as well as the role they play in Wisconsin's ecosystems. Join us

as we explore what we know and don't know about the feline predators of Wisconsin and how concerned we should be about our safety in the woods!

Field Trips

March 14

Lansing Loop Field Trip led by Fred Lesher

This is primarily a Mississippi River Valley trip. We will be searching for early migrant waterfowl and raptors. Passerines are scarce, but it is possible we will see early sparrows and wintering finches. There are several active bald eagle nests along the way.

Meet by 9 a.m. at the Kwik Trip in La Crescent, MN. at the junction of Hwys 16/35/61 at the only stoplight in La Crescent. Car-pooling for the round trip is possible and encouraged.

Depending on weather and sky condi-

tions, we will proceed in caravan south out of La Crescent on Hwy 16, then turn left onto Hwy 26, south along the River. Lunch is on your own in Lansing, Iowa or bring a sandwich.

After a short side trip to the Lansing Power Plant, we'll, cross the river into Wisconsin, then go north on Hwys 61/35 to La Crosse. Depending on conditions we will make several stops along the way.

This is about a 65-70 mile round trip.

You may leave when you wish. We are usually back to La Crosse by 2 P.M.

April 18

Crane Count

Contact Jean Ledman at jledman2@yahoo.com if you would like to help count Sandhill Cranes in the area.

Global warming bird impact

Audubon Issues Report on Global Warming & Birds

On February 10, Audubon issued a report drawing from 40 years of Christmas Bird Count data that documents a shift among bird populations coincident with warmer winters. Among the big movers are Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and Boreal Chickadee that have shifted north into the Canadian Boreal, their ranges moving an estimated 433, 288, and 279 miles respectively since 1966.

The northward and inland movement of North American birds provides new and powerful evidence that global warm-

ing is having a serious impact on natural systems in the USA. Dramatic policy changes and incentives for alternative energy are needed to combat such ecological disruption. New research from Audubon California reinforces the national findings, predicting that about 80 of that state's native bird species will experience significant climate-driven reductions in their geographic range over coming decades.

Audubon is urging citizens to take action by signing a petition demanding aggressive federal policy action at www.birdsandclimate.org.

Coulee Audubon members asked to help with wildlife monitoring

Coulee Audubon members have been asked to consider volunteering for wildlife monitoring this spring.

Mississippi Valley Conservancy's Abbie Meyer is looking for expert birders to help survey about four properties in Grant County this spring. At least one of the properties is considered habitat for cerulean and hooded warblers. The others are grassland bird habitats. Time frame for this project is April-

May. For more information contact Abbie at 784-3606, ext. 5.

Also, the annual Salamander Survey needs volunteers to help with placing and checking traps. The survey is typically done around the middle to end of March.

To find out more about participating, contact Dan Jackson at DanieLEJackson@earthlink.net or 608-483-2271.

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when all habitats have been surveyed and about 75 percent of the expected species are reported. Time required to complete a survey block is estimated to be about 25 hours, but can vary depending on surveyor skill level, habitat types, and ease of access. If, however, a block cannot be completed in one season, final observations can be made in subsequent years. For species of Special Conservation Interest, or that are state listed or rarities, additional information may be requested.

Minnesota has a contract with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to manage the database, provide Priority Block maps, enable online data entry, and make results available online to the volunteers

and the general public in both text and map formats. Submission of observations on paper remains an option.

The handbook, other surveyor materials, and Priority Block maps will be available early in 2009. Bonnie Sample, project coordinator, says, "We welcome all interested volunteers. Please join us!" To add your name to the list of interested surveyors or to learn more about the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas, contact:

Bonnie Sample
MN Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator

bsample@audubon.org
651-739-9332

Timberdoodles draw priority attention

Partners in Flight and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) have ranked American Woodcock among the highest priority species in need of conservation action within several Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has also named the species as one of a handful of national focus species. At the same time, many states have declared American Woodcock to be a species of significant conservation need within their respective State Wildlife Action Plans.

A public and private coalition headed by the Wildlife Management Institute seeks to improve management practices, monitoring, and technical assistance to improve American Woodcock habitat.

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May Morning Bird Walks

Join Pat and Bobbie Wilson and Dan Jackson for weekday morning bird walks from 6:30 to 8:00 a.m. to enjoy spring migration and to see our regular residents return. Feel free to leave early or stay later.

Tuesdays: May 5, 12, and 19 in the La Crosse River Marsh. Meet at the R.A.B.B.I.T. trail, near the new Myrick Hixon EcoCenter parking lot.

Thursdays: May 7, 14 and 21 at Hixon Forest. Meet at the Hixon Forest trail parking lot, off Milson Court.

Highway Cleanup

The Spring CRAS Adopt-a-highway Clean-up will be held on Saturday, April 25. We'll meet at 9 am at the Dresbach Information Center Parking Lot on I-90. We'll pick-up a two-mile stretch of I-90 & Hwy 61 from Dresbach to Dakota, MN. Safety Vests and trash bags provided by MN. DOT. Pick up takes about 2 1/2 hours. Wear sturdy shoes and work gloves.

For those interested, we'll plan on meeting at Corky's Restaurant in La Crescent, MN. afterwards for lunch.



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***TIMBERDOODLE* from page 3**

Steve Williams, WMI President, stated that "We are overdue at bringing some focused attention to this suite of species. Our challenge now is to integrate wood-

cock habitat management into lands that we conserve and restore on national wildlife refuges, and then bring those lessons

to the private landowners we work with through the Partners for Wildlife program."

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