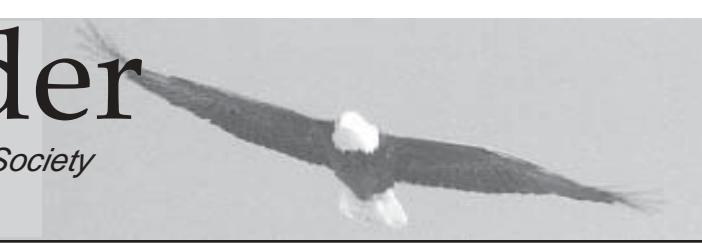


Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

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

November-December 2009



Events

MEETINGS

NOTICE - NEW MEETING LOCATION

We are meeting at the new Eco Park building located in Myrick Park, off of La Crosse Street. There is easy access parking nearby and the entire building is handicapped accessible.

Watch for Audubon signs as you enter the main entrance on the south side of the building. Meetings begin at 7 p.m., are free and open to the public.

November 18

Matt Heater, vice-president of the Coulee Region Herpetological Society, will give a presentation on the Native Reptiles and Amphibians of Wisconsin. He will bring live, exotic reptiles and amphibians for his presentation.

Matt is an avid outdoorsman and an independent reptile researcher. He has been researching Timber Rattlesnakes in the Coulee Region since 2002 in conjunction with the Wisconsin DNR and has taken part in other survey and research projects with Massasauga Rattlesnakes, Wood Turtles, Cricket Frogs, Glass Lizards, Box Turtles, Black Rat Snakes, Ringneck Snakes, and Blue-spotted Salamanders.

He has worked in the pet industry for 15 years and has owned over 3,000 reptiles and amphibians of over 200 species. He has bred 5 species of herps in captivity and has worked with 1/6 of the venomous snake species of the world.

Matt is an avid photographer and videographer and is especially interested in taking pictures and videos of reptiles and amphibians. He is currently working on a DVD field guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Wisconsin.

See EVENTS, page 3

President's notebook

Counting on you to count

By Dan Jackson

It is time to stand up and be counted! Oops, I goofed!! In fact, it is actually time to stand up and do the counting! To count birds to be exact. Now that winter is peeking around the corner, there are several bird counting efforts that you can take part in that will occur over the next few months. These include the Audubon Christmas Bird Count(s), Project Feeder Watch, and the Great Backyard Bird Count.

This year marks the 110th year of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

The first Christmas Bird Count was started to create an alternative for the bird shoots that were traditionally held around Christmas and New Years. Someone had the great idea that it would be better to count birds during the holiday season than to shoot them. After 109 years, it is safe to say that this was a successful idea. In fact, this tradition has turned into one of the leading citizen science projects on the North American continent and, with over 100 years of data, a valuable tool

See NOTEBOOK, page 2

Time to renew memberships

We are already two months into the new program year and it is time to catch up if you haven't renewed your local membership in the Coulee Region Audubon Society for this program year. 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, meeting space rent and most other chapter expenses.

If you haven't sent in your annual renewal payment already, please use the form on the back page of this newsletter to send in your 2009-2010 renewal. Com-

plete 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

Thank you for your continued support of the Coulee Region Audubon Society!

Some of our members have already renewed. If you are unsure of your membership status, feel free to send an e-mail to **Dan Jackson** at DanJackson@LBWhite.com

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 January/February issue is January 1. Send information to: dskoloda@earthlink.net.

Details provided for bird counters

La Crosse Count

Saturday, December 19

The La Crosse Christmas Bird Count, counts all of the birds found inside a 15-mile "count circle" that is centered on the La Crosse County courthouse. Volunteers can count the birds at a single feeder within the count circle or 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. Participants can commit to a few hours to a whole day of counting. Birders of all skill levels are welcome.

At the end of the day, all participants are invited to take part in a potluck and social event that allows participants to share their results with other members of the count team.

For more details or 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 by December 12th.

Vernon/Crawford County

Christmas Bird Count

Monday, December 28th

A new Christmas Bird Count, centered northeast of Desoto, will be held this year on Monday, December 28th. The count is being set up and will be coordinated by William Mueller, who is the conservation chair of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology. Bill decided to start a new count in that area because that section of the state is currently not represented in the Christmas Bird Count program.

The center of the new Vernon/Crawford County Christmas Bird Count

is the intersection of Gilman Road and Bishop Road just southeast of the hamlet of Retreat in southwest Vernon County. The count circle (area to be counted) includes Retreat, West Prairie, Red Mound, and Fargo in Vernon County, and DeSoto, the Rush Creek State Natural Area, Ferryville, and Rising Sun in Crawford County. It extends west up to the Iowa state line and covers the bottomland on the Wisconsin side of the river almost all the way south to Hwy. 171. It also includes a bit of the northern end of Lake Winneshiek.

If you are interested in helping out with this count, please contact Bill at iltlawas@earthlink.net or call him at (414) 643-7279 or (262) 638-0735.

Trempealeau Christmas Bird Count date is pending. If you would like to participate in this count, contact Al Wernecke at 534-6330.

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for scientists.

The Christmas Bird Count is actually made up of hundreds of local Christmas Bird Counts. For each of these local counts, the object is to try to count all of the birds found in a fifteen mile count circle during the count day (a single day which must occur between December 14th and January 5th). On that day, teams go out to count birds in sections of the circle, and other participants are recruited to count birds that come to their feeders within the circle. The count data is tallied and submitted to Audubon National who analyzes the data to look for trends and interesting events regarding bird populations and distribution. Additional species found during the 3 days before and 3 days after the count day are recorded to track all of the bird species found during the count week.

In our area, there will be three local Christmas Bird Counts this year. The La Crosse Area Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 19th, the Trempealeau Christmas Bird Count date will be set soon, according

to Al Wernecke of Trempealeau, and there are plans for a new Vernon County / Crawford County Christmas Bird Count in the Desoto area that will be held on December 28th. Your help with any or all of these counts would be appreciated!

Where the Christmas Bird Count is a group effort, Project Feeder Watch is an individual effort. For Project Feeder Watch, each participant is asked to count birds that are seen at a single location. Typically, this is a bird feeding station, but it might also be any other location that regularly attracts birds. This project runs for 21 weeks each winter and goes from the second Saturday in November to the first Saturday in April. Participants are asked to count birds on a series of pairs of count days that should occur at least once every 2 weeks and as often as once per week.

Project Feeder Watch was developed and is managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Like the Christmas Bird Count, this relatively new survey has shown itself to be a very valuable tool for studying bird populations. To find

out more about it, look at the Project Feeder Watch website: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html> on the internet.

Similar to Project Feeder Watch, the Great Backyard Bird Count is also more of an individual effort (although you can count with others). The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual 4 day event that is held in mid February each year. Participants are asked to count and record all of the birds found at a specific location on any day during the count period. Participants can do multiple counts by counting at several different locations and/or counting the same location on different days during the count period. For this winter, the Great Backyard Bird Count will be February 12-15, 2010.

If you enjoy watching or feeding birds, please consider taking part in one or all of these bird surveys. They are important citizen science projects and you can help make them better by taking part!!

EVENTS from page 1

January 20, 2010

Annual meeting and pot luck at Myrick-Hixon Eco Park. Bring a dish to pass and photos to share. Pot luck begins at 6 p.m. Watch for more details in the January/February newsletter.

FIELD TRIPS

November 7

Fred Lesher will lead a Lansing Loop field trip. Interested participants should meet at 9 a.m. at the La Crescent Kwik Trip at the La Crescent stop light.

Birds likely to be sighted include Tundra Swans and assorted waterfowl at stops along the route.

Trip route will go south to Lansing, from La Crescent on Hwy. 26, cross into Wisconsin at Lansing, then north on Hwy. 35 back to La Crosse. There is a possible adventure to Red Oak Road, a Mississippi River backwater closed area 15+- miles south of Lansing as well.

There will be a stop for lunch in Lansing with a return to La Crosse about 3 p.m.. There is no charge for the trip.

For more information, contact Fred at 783-1149 or e-mail him at

corax6330@yahoo.com

RIVERS & BLUFFS FALL BIRDING FESTIVAL

Nov. 7-8

Nov. 14-15

Experience Up-Close Views of 15,000 to 18,000 elegant tundra swans, 200,000 to 300,000 colorful ducks and geese, plus numerous bald eagles and hawks, all within wildlife-rich Pool 9 on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge

Special Fall Migration Cruises - 9 a.m. to Noon, and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sundays November 7 -8 and 14-15.

All Special Fall Migration Cruises are conducted by Mississippi Explorer Cruises. Each cruise departs from the waterfront in Lansing, Iowa. Mississippi Explorer Cruises use large, enclosed, and heated boats with large windows on all sides. Passengers will enjoy a cozy ride in the most comfortable tour boats on the Mississippi. Free hot apple cider will further sweeten the experience. Ric Zarwell and at least one birding expert will be on

each cruise to help visitors observe, identify, and understand the enormously abundant wildlife, and biologically-rich river habitats.

Pre-registration is required. To register, call toll-free - 877-647-7397

For more details, go to www.MississippiExplorer.com

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Saturday, December 19

Coulee Region Audubon Society's 45th Christmas Bird Count

Monday, December 28th

Vernon and Crawford County Christmas Bird Count

Trempealeau Christmas Bird Count date is pending. If you would like to participate in this count, contact Al Wernecke at 534-6330.

See article on page 2 for details and how to participate.

The counts are part of the national Audubon Christmas Bird Count program which is one of the oldest citizen science projects in the United States. This year will mark the 110th year of the project in the United States.

Duck Stamp purchase helps birds through habitat purchases

**By Karen Etter Hale
Executive Secretary
Madison Audubon Society**

Have you bought your 2009-10 Duck Stamp yet? If you believe that duck Stamps are for duck hunters only, please read on.

Since Duck Stamps, which are property titled "Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation" stamps, were established in 1934, more than \$700 million has been raised for the direct protection of wetland and grassland habitat for our National Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas. This amounts to 5.2 million additional acres of habitat for hundreds of species of birds of all kinds -- not just ducks.

Duck stamps (for short) are one of the best bargains in the world. Out of every \$15 spent on the annual stamp, 98 percent, or \$14.70 goes directly to acquisition and perpetual easements for wildlife. These stamps can be purchased at most post offices, on the Internet, and at a variety of outdoor stores.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study released in July 2009, reported that one of every five Americans -- 48 million of us -- watch birds, everyone from the casual backyard birder to those of us who bird nearly every day. If each of us purchased one stamp each year, it would amount to \$676.2 million for on-the-ground bird conservation each year.

One way to show that it's not just hunters who support habitat preservation with their dollars, is to display the attrac-

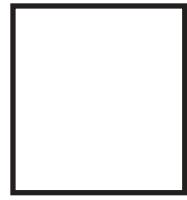
tive stamp in a reusable clear plastic holder attached to your binoculars (or hat, pack, or favorite birdng vest). Holders can be purchased from the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (<http://www.wsobirds.org/duckstamps.pdf>) or Wild Birds Unlimited. In addition to affixing the holder to my binocs (by punching holes in the strap with an awl), I inserted an extra slip of paper in the back with my name and contact info and a couple of emergency numbers, including the one for our local warden.

If you've read this far, I hope you've been convinced and will rush right out to buy that very important Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation stamp.

To find out more about Duck Stamps and the Duck Stamp story, see <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/>



Coulee Region Audubon Society,
P.O Box 2573
La Crosse, WI 54602



Conservation groups to hold annual banquets

Two important conservation partners have annual banquets this month:

Mississippi Valley Conservancy Nov. 19 at the Radisson, 5 to 8:30.

Speaker is Bob Anderson with his peregrine falcon. \$30 per person. Call 784-3606 by Nov. 13 to attend.

Myrick Hixon Eco Park November 12 at the Eco Park, 6 to 9.

Drake Hokanson and Carol Kratz with slides from Antarctica. \$40 per person. Call 784-0303 by November 5 to attend.

Contacts

PRESTIDENT

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

BOARD MEMBER

Janice Hatt
608-498-1191
wooliesrus@charter.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Tom Link
608-769-4666
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 or
gskol@earthlink.net

SECRETARY

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

Coulee Region Audubon Society Local Membership

\$15 Household \$30 Supporting

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PO Box 2573, La Crosse, WI 54602-2573 Thank you!