

# COULEE Birder

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2011

## Events

November 16

Meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Eco Park building located in Myrick Park off La Crosse Street. The program is free and open to the public. There is easy access parking and the entire building is handicapped accessible.

Scott Mehus, Education Director from the National Eagle Center will present his ongoing research on The Golden Eagle Research Project. Scott has been studying the local golden eagle population for over 15 years. Scott will bring Donald, the National Eagle Center's live golden eagle for up close observation.

Each year a count is made of golden eagles on the third Saturday in January," Mehus commented, "This year we had more than 100 observers and they counted 80 golden eagles on the Minnesota side alone." Not surprisingly, as the number of observers increases, so do sightings of the big raptors, indicating that there may be many more in the area than are currently known.

This past year observers have found 93 wintering golden eagles. The project has also radio collared 2 golden eagles to study migration patterns.

The data Mehus is gathering suggests there may be more goldens to discover, and he hopes to attract more surveyors for this coming winter to expand the survey range in Wisconsin. Come and learn about these fascinating birds. the research and how you might help with the monitoring surveys.

See **EVENTS**, page 3

## President's Report

**By Dan Jackson**

Fall is definitely here. I looked out at the maple tree in my front yard this morning and realized that it had lost most of its leaves over the past couple of days. I know what I will be doing today! In addition to raking leaves, this is a great time to enjoy the waterfowl on the Mississippi. The northern migrants are arriving in big numbers now and the closed areas



are full of birds. If you haven't had a chance to check them out, I would urge you to do so. The concentrations of ducks, geese and swans are a spectacular sight.

The best viewing locations in the area are the Goose Island closed area on the south end of Goose Island County park and the Brownsville closed area south of Brownsville. Each of these locations have overlooks along the highway that allow you to get great looks at the birds. The best overlook for the Goose Island closed area is on the west side of Hwy 35 about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of the entrance to the park. There are two overlooks that allow viewing of the Brownsville closed area. Both are south of Brownsville on the east side of Hwy 26. These flocks typically peak in mid November so the time is right to check them out. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, Coulee Audubon will have a waterfowl viewing field trip and the USF&WS will also be holding a waterfowl observation event at the Brownsville overlook. Join us for the fun. I have promised Sue Fletcher that we will bring nice weather with us so it bound to be a great event!!

See **PRESIDENT**, page 2

We welcome contributions of material for the newsletter. Please send suggestions for articles, news of events and other things birders need to know. Deadline for copy for the January/February newsletter is Jan. 2. Send information to: [gskol@earthlink.net](mailto:gskol@earthlink.net).

## President's report from page 1

The last couple of weeks have been marked by many interesting avian visitors to the upper midwest. There have been close to a dozen sightings of birds that are normally found in the southwest part of the US in this region. This has included a Couch's / Tropic Kingbird in Duluth, a Western Tanager in Merrill, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and a Western Kingbird near Kewaunee, and the first Inca Dove ever found in Wisconsin was spotted on the Concordia College campus just north of Milwaukee, and other birds in Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan. Pay attention - you never know if you will be lucky enough to find something special in your back yard. If you do, please let me know. I would love the chance to share your bird and to help document it for the state records committee!!

This year's La Crosse / La Crescent Christmas Bird count is coming up on Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> and I could really use your help. I am always looking for more volunteers to count the birds at their feeders!! If you live in the count circle and have an active feeder, please give me a call. I would also love to have more volunteers who will help count sections of the count circle. Please see the CBC article for more details.

As always, the board of directors of the Coulee Region Audubon Society is looking for new ideas for field trips, activities, speakers, and other ideas that you might have for making our meetings and program year even better. We would welcome any suggestions that you can make!! Enjoy the birds!!

## Feeder Watch celebrates 25th season

*Ithaca, NY*—When thousands of Americans begin tallying birds at their backyard feeders next month for Project FeederWatch, they will launch the 25th season for this popular citizen-science program. The information reported online from across the continent helps scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology track changes in the numbers of birds and the distribution of species. Anyone with an interest in birds and nature is invited to learn more about the project and become a “citizen scientist.” The new season of FeederWatch begins November 12, but participants can come on board at any time at [www.FeederWatch.org](http://www.FeederWatch.org).

Because most birds reproduce yearly, FeederWatch data cover nearly 25 generations of birds. Keeping tabs on 25 human generations would mean covering about 500 years! Many mysteries and surprises have been revealed since the program began in 1987. Some species, like Northern Cardinals and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, are expanding their ranges to the north, probably the result of a changing climate and the alteration of habitat. The Evening Grosbeak, once a familiar feeder bird in winter, has disappeared from much of its former range. Meanwhile, an invasive

species, the Eurasian Collared-Dove, has spread from Florida to Alaska in less than a decade and is quickly becoming one of the more familiar birds at feeders across the country.

“None of these important changes in the distribution and abundance of birds would be understood without the help of our dedicated FeederWatchers,” said project leader David Bonter. “By watching and keeping track of the birds in your own neighborhood, you really can make a difference.” More than 50,000 people have participated in FeederWatch, and new participants are welcome to join at any time. “The more people watching, the more we can learn about the birds that brighten the winter landscape,” said Bonter.

To learn more about joining Project FeederWatch and to sign up, visit [www.FeederWatch.org](http://www.FeederWatch.org) or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 989-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher’s Handbook with tips on how to successfully attract birds, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

## EVENTS from page 1

### Field Trip

#### Saturday, Nov. 12.

Dan Jackson will lead a waterfowl observation field trip. Meet at 1:00 PM at the Kwik Trip in La Crescent that is located just west of the stop lights at the west end of the causeway between La Crosse and La Crescent. From there, we will head south to the Brownsville overlooks and the Wildcat landing mudflats. Depending on weather, birds and interest, the trip will last 2-3 hours.

### Christmas Bird Counts

#### Coulee Region Audubon

Saturday, Dec. 17, 2011

For this event, we count all of the birds that we can find inside of a 15-mile "count circle" that is centered on

the La Crosse County courthouse. We are looking for volunteers to count the birds at their feeder (if it is within the count circle) or to work by themselves or as a member of a team to count the birds in one of many pre-assigned sections of the count circle. We would like feeder counters to count all of the birds at their feeder on at least one occasion on the count day (multiple observations would be even better). Section counters are asked to commit to at least a few hours of birding. 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](mailto:DanJackson@LBWhite.com) or call him at his home phone, (608) 483-2271 by December 11th. Additional details regarding the potluck will be posted on the web site at [www.couleeaudubon.org](http://www.couleeaudubon.org)

### Trempealeau

#### Sunday, December 18, 2011

Anyone interested should contact Al Wernecke by e-mail at [aja701@trwest.net](mailto:aja701@trwest.net) or phone @ 608-534-6330.

### January 16, 2012

Annual meeting and pot luck. Watch the newsletter and web site for details.

## *Who's who on the board...*

## Mary Sullivan relishes the outdoor life

Mary Sullivan, Coulee Region Audubon's long-time treasurer, is a retired nurse who found Audubon a place to join others in enjoying the out of doors.

Here's Mary's response to our request for a little biographical information.

"In my nursing career I worked at St. Mary's in Rochester, Winona Hospital and in later years in home care here in La Crosse. I was born in Fairmont, Minn. and grew up on a farm. So I've always loved the

outdoors. When my nursing career finished I began volunteering at Myrick Park and joined Audubon.



This was a way to enjoy the outdoors with others. I like La Crosse with all the birding events also camping up on

the North Shore every year.

"I was elected treasurer in 1998. This is my excuse to run

downtown once a week or more to get mail and deposit checks. This duty and mailing the newsletter is my part of my contribution to local Audubon.

"I have six siblings all well and the youngest just retired this week. He leads birding walks in Oregon. So call me if any of you are in Portland area and need info on birding there.

My only regrets in life will be that I didn't camp or canoe enough."

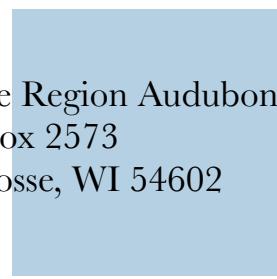
## Adopt-a-Highway team cleans I-90

The CRAS Fall Adopt-a-Highway Trash Pick up on Saturday, October 29, 2011 went very well. Six volunteers (many picking for the first time!) spent 1 1/2 to 2 hours beautifying a 2 mile stretch of I-90 and Hwy 61 along the Minnesota bluffs.

Thirteen large trash bags were filled. A big thank you to Tom, John, Ken, Mary, and her 14 year-old grandson, Evan.

Mark Webster  
Coordinator

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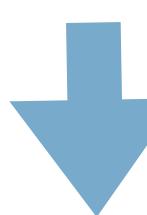


## FWS launches new bird data program

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program recently launched the Midwest Avian Data Center (<http://data.prbo.org/partners/mwadc>), a cutting edge data

management and decision support system to provide readily accessible avian monitoring data to the Midwest bird conservation community, according to Katie Koch, Midwest

Bird Monitoring coordinator who works out of the Marquette, MI, office of FWS.



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