

Coulee Birder

MAY-JUNE 2012

Events

Coulee Audubon Meetings

Meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the Lower Level of the Ho Chunk Nation Headquarters at 724 Main Street, La Crosse. They are free and open to the public.

May 16 - A Russian Adventure!

Join us for a fascinating talk by biologist Kurt Brownell as he shares adventures from his six week, 6,000 mile journey. Kurt's first encounters with Russian culture began in the 1980s when he was one of two American scientists aboard the Soviet research vessel Mys Babushkina. He returned to Russia in 2010 to travel and teach at Muraviovka Park at a summer camp for children from the Amur Region. This park was set up and operates with support from the International Crane Foundation. Kurt's travels on the trans-Siberian railroad took him across two continents and included stopping at Irkutsk. Here he explored Lake Baikal, the world's largest freshwater lake by volume, and home to the only freshwater seals found on the planet.

Kurt currently works locally for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

June 20

Our annual Summer Pot-luck will be at a new location this year. The picnic shelter at Red Cloud Park in La Crosse has been reserved for us from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. There is electricity for those who bring hot dishes. Bring a dish to pass and your own utensils.

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President's report

by Dan Jackson

After a very quick and early start, migration slowed tremendously over the last weeks of April. However, as May arrived, that appeared to have changed. Many species of Warblers, Vireos, shorebirds, Flycatchers, and Terns as well as Grosbeaks, Hummingbirds, Tanagers, Buntings, and many other types of birds are being seen throughout the southern half of the state and many observers reported many First of Year (FOY) sightings on the first days of May.



Dan Jackson

The many early records seen in early April were mostly species that overwinter in the southern US. They were able to take advantage of the very early spring and moved north at record paces. The birds that are showing up now are mostly neotropical migrants – birds that overwinter in Central and South America. Since they are not aware of unusual weather patterns in North America, they start to migrate when the days get longer and when the minutes of daylight in the day triggers them to move. These birds have

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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 September-October newsletter is Sept. 1. Send information to: gskol@earthlink.net.
Bald Eagle photo (above) by Dan Jackson

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been migrating right on schedule and in some cases have even been a little behind schedule. However, the sightings of early May indicate that a major push is happening.

Fantastic warbler season hooked board member Puchalski

New board member Scott Puchalski provided the following background:

"I got involved in bird watching with my wife, Kim, around 2009. It started out more as trying to photograph birds and quickly turned into "What the **** was that?" My photos were lousy and I had no idea what I was looking at or for. I decided to put down the camera for a while



Scott Puchalski
2011 and the fantastic warbler season we had. I am hooked. I enjoy the beauty of the birds, the

If you have the chance, get out birding. It will be worth your while.

and try and figure out what I was looking at and hearing. It didn't get really serious for me until

outdoors and the sport of trying to locate the birds. I am fortunate to have a wife and friend who understands and shares in my new obsession and a friend and mentor in Dan Jackson, who shares a lot of the same interests as I do. I also enjoy a lot of the silent sports, including kayaking, biking, and being out in nature."

News briefs

MVC seeks birder help, offers hike

Help Mississippi Valley Conservancy compile bird species lists on area nature preserves! Maps of the properties are on the website at www.Mississippivalleyconservancy.org.

Abbie Church, conservation specialist at MVC says, "Knowing what birds are using our nature preserves will help us to better manage the lands and gauge the effects of past management.

Preserves needing a bird inventory (partial lists are great as well – we want to know about anything you see or hear!): Eagle Eye State Natural Area, Greens Coulee, Fish Creek, Romance Woods, Trempealeau Lakes, Water's Edge Woods, Kickapoo Bottoms, Angel Bluff, and Apple Valley Bluff.

Records can be submitted by email to Abbie: achurch@mississippivalleyconservancy.org, and if you'd like an Excel spreadsheet checklist of birds, let Abbie know! Keep track of the date you see or hear the birds so we can gauge if they are nesting on the property or just passing through.

MVC will offer a guided bird hike at the Holland Sand Prairie June 16 at 11 a.m.

And check out the new falcon cam on the MVC website. The camera monitors a peregrine falcon nest on Great Spirit Bluff near Dresbach.

<http://mississippivalleyconservancy.org/GetInvolved/SaveRaptorHabitat.aspx>

CRAS volunteers pick up trash

Four intrepid volunteers with Coulee Region Audubon celebrated Earth Day Weekend by gathering up 18 large garbage bags worth of trash along I90/Highway 61 from Dresbach to Dakota, MN., in approximately 2 1/2 hours on Saturday morning, April 21st. According to my calculations (although this IS higher math), that works out to 1.8 bags per man hour. I am not sure what that means - perhaps just a fun fact. A beautiful sunny morning greeted us - and just as we were finishing - a flock of approximately 20 White Pelicans circled over our heads in a kind of silent "thank you". You couldn't ask for much more than that! A big Thank You to Audubon volunteers Tom Link, new member Debbie Boen, and Marilyn Webster.

Mark Webster, Coordinator

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We will have a bird hike following the pot-luck.

Directions are: Lang Dr. to St. Andrew St. to Powell St.

Field Trips

Saturday, May 5th

Dan Jackson will lead a field trip for the International Bird Day (IMBD) event that will be held at the Myrick Hixon EcoPark. The hike will start at 6 a.m. at the EcoPark building. There will also be family friendly trips later in the morning. More details about the IMBD event can be found at www.mhecopark.org

May 1, 8 and 15

May 3, 10 and 17

The Tuesday/Thursday field trips are co-hosted by the Myrick/Hixon EcoPark and Coulee Region Audubon and will be led by Bobbie and Pat Wilson and Dan Jackson. They are scheduled

for the first 3 weeks of May and started May 1. Each trip starts at 6:30 a.m. and will go until about 8:30 (people are welcome to leave earlier if they choose).

The Tuesday morning Marsh trips will start at the base of the rabbit trail which is located about 100 yards east of the Myrick/Hixon EcoPark building. From there, we usually do a loop through the marsh on the main trails.

The Thursday morning Hixon Forest trips will start at the main Hixon Forest trail parking lot at the end of the gravel drive accessed from Milson Court. For those trips, we usually take the forest trail parallel to the road along the golf course and then take a loop into the valley before coming back out on the road.

Saturday, May 19th

The Wyalusing State Park trip lead by Dan Jackson will begin at 6:30 a.m. at the entrance to the park. We usually bird until about noon with targets including Henslow's Sparrows, Yellow and Black-billed Cuckoos, Louisiana Waterthrush, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher. We usually have pretty good luck finding most or all of those species as well as migrants that are still moving through the area.

All trips are free and open to the public, although car-pooling and the sharing of gas expenses for the Wyalusing trip is encouraged. Dan Jackson plans to camp in the park that weekend but will help facilitate car-pooling if people are interested. Contact him at DEJackson2256@gmail.com

Flyway action report: BP spill still causing harm

By Mark Webster

Coulee Audubon secretary

New Orleans, Louisiana is ground zero for Mississippi Flyway River Issues. That is because oil from the BP Deep Water Horizon oil spill, which began 2 years ago on April 20, 2010, is still harming bird life and ecosystems in the Gulf of Mexico.

That was one good reason why National Audubon held its first ever Mississippi Flyway Action Network (MFAN) workshop in New Orleans, which I attended in March. One of the attendees was Doug Meffert, Ph.D, Audubon Louisiana Vice President, who recently appeared on local New Orleans TV to speak about the continuing detrimental environmental impacts from the BP oil spill. He spoke of the oil which still can be found seeping up from wetland soils, and of the oil and tar found on barrier islands - which has

been blamed for the recent deaths of birds, wildlife, crustaceans, and dolphins - among other sea life.

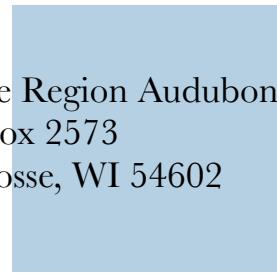
David Muth, Director of the National Wildlife Federation in Louisiana (who lead our field trip to the Jean Lafitte Park and Preserve on the 2nd day of our workshop) also spoke recently on NPR about the continuing detrimental effects of the BP oil spill, citing evidence of oil still seeping up in coastal wetlands. By simply wading into wetlands or placing your hand on wet soils, he said, "oil will flow."

One of the major topics of the workshop was the RESTORE Act, which mandates that 80% of the USEPA Clean Water Act fines to be levied against BP and its subcontractors (the amount to be determined during the on-going trial in New Orleans) be spent for ecosystem restoration in the 5 Gulf

States affected by the spill: Louisiana; Alabama; Mississippi; Florida and Texas. The RESTORE Act was recently passed by the U.S. Senate by a large bipartisan vote (76-22) - an almost unheard of measure these days! The RESTORE Act also recently passed in the U.S. House on April 19th as part of the Surface Transportation Act. That is good news for the gulf. The bill now goes to conference committee to iron out the differences between the Senate and House versions.

The greatest lesson in advocacy that we learned at the workshop was to be vigilant. Grassroots action is what it's all about. 21 people from 10 Mississippi Flyway states learned that to be an effective advocate for birds and the environment, we must all "apply endless pressure, endlessly" in order to effect real change.

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Cornell Lab streams video of heron nest

Ithaca, NY--In a first for technology and for bird watching, thousands of people watched live recently as a tiny Great Blue Heron emerged from an egg in between its father's gigantic feet. To watch the

heron nest live, visit www.AllAboutBirds.org/CornellHeron

With high-definition and nighttime cams streaming 24/7 from the Cornell Lab of

Ornithology's Sapsucker Woods in Ithaca, New York, viewers around the world are now able to follow the surprising lives of herons.

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