

Coulee Birder

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2012

Meetings

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

November 14 - Note earlier meeting date because of Thanksgiving.

Wind Turbines and Sandhill Cranes is Eileen Kirsch's topic for the Nov. 14 meeting of the Coulee Region Audubon Society. She will discuss landscape use and movements of Sandhill Cranes using the Horicon Marsh during fall roosting and migration staging.

Kirsch is a research wildlife biologist with Upper Mississippi Environmental Science Center since 1991. Her research interests are in how birds use habitat and how this use affects their fitness. She considers airspace as habitat and is embarking on a new research direction studying bird movements aloft during migration.

She has worked with many species and groups of birds including least terns, piping plovers, double-crested cormorants, secretive marsh birds, grassland and forest songbirds, and sandhill cranes, asking questions about distribution, habitat use and selection in breeding and migration seasons.

See **EVENTS**, page 3

President's report

by **Dan Jackson**

Fall is definitely here. I woke up this morning to find snow on my car and on the ridge tops. I am not sure that I am ready for winter, but I am excited that the waterfowl migration is just about to peak. 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.



Dan Jackson

The best waterfowl 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 has overlooks along the highway that allow you to get great looks at the birds. Lake Onalaska also has tremendous flocks of birds on the western side of the lake but the birds aren't as close and therefore harder to enjoy. However, Lake Onalaska is the spot where I have had the best luck over the years to find sea ducks including Scoters.

The waterfowl flocks typically peak in mid November so the time is right to check them out. On Nov. 10, 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. It should be a great event! Details on page 3.

The last couple of weeks have been marked by many interesting bird sightings in the Upper Midwest. In the La Crosse area, this has included Surf and White-winged Scoters on Lake Onalaska, an adult male Rufous Hummingbird and a possible juvenile Rufous Hummingbird (or 2) at the

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.
Bald Eagle photo (above) by Dan Jackson

President's report from page 1

same feeder on Granddad's Bluff, Snow Buntings at the Trempealeau NWR, an American Pipit in Vernon County, and a flock of Evening Grosbeaks in West Salem. In other areas of the state, Snowy Owls are starting to show up and winter finches including Red and White-winged Crossbills, Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, and both Redpolls are being seen in higher than normal numbers in the southern half of the state. Of special note are multiple observations of Evening Grosbeaks as far south as Illinois. This seems to be a big year for them. If anyone is lucky enough to have them visit their feeders, I would really appreciate a call. That is a bird that I have been hoping to see in this area for close to 20 years!

This year's La Crosse / La Crescent Christmas Bird count is coming up on Saturday, December 15th and I

could really use your help. I am always looking for more volunteers to count the birds at their feeders! I would also love to have more volunteers who will help count sections of the count circle. Please see the CBC article below for more details.

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

Welcome to our new board member Marty Lohman! Thanks for your willingness to serve, Marty.

Time to sign up for Christmas Bird Count

La Crosse Christmas Bird Count – Saturday, December 15

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. The Potluck will be held at Pat Schmid's house starting at 5:30 p.m. 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 11th.

Trempealeau Christmas Bird Count - Sunday, December 16

Contact person is Al Wernecke and coordinator.. For more information or to sign up, contact him at ajja701@triwest.net

Audubon highway cleaners fill 25 garbage bags

The Coulee Region Audubon Society held its Fall Adopt-a-highway Trash Clean up on Saturday, Oct. 20. It was a beautiful day - although a bit foggy at first. Eight volunteers filled 25 large garbage bags along our 2-mile route from Dresbach to Dakota, Minn.

The fun really started with the coordinator's blue Volkswagon beetle being covered in bright yellow trash bags and reflective safety vests! I believe that this may be a new color that VW has not sanctioned yet!

Check out this new color scheme on our Coulee Region Audubon Facebook page.

Then, after seeing a huge flock of 30 or so White Pelicans soaring over the Mississippi River, we all headed to Corky's Restaurant in La Crescent for lunch and a lot of laughs. It was a very fun and worthwhile endeavor, seemly enjoyed by all involved. And it should be known that it actually pays to clean up our roadways, as Marty found \$5 during the pick up!

So, a huge thanks to all the volunteers - Jean and Mark Ledman, Marty Lohman (our new Board Member), Gwen, Tom Link, and last but not least - Deborah and David Herczog. Coulee Audubon really appreciates the strong volunteer effort to make our environment a little cleaner!

Thank you,
Mark Webster, Coordinator

EVENTS from page 1

December 15

Christmas Bird Count, potluck and social event. See article with details on page 2.

January 16, 2013

Potluck and annual meeting

The potluck begins at 6 p.m. and the meeting at 7 with a slide show of members' pictures in the Lower Level of the Ho Chunk Nation Headquarters at 724 Main Street, La Crosse. Look for details in the January/February newsletter or on the website at www.couleeaudubon.org/ The event is open to the public.

Field Trips

November 10

Mississippi River Waterfowl Viewing. We will meet at noon on the street behind the Kwik Trip at the stop lights in La Crescent. We will head south and check out the mudflat just below the entrance to the Wildcat Landing in Brownsville and then at the wildlife overlooks a little farther

south. We will get to the overlooks before the end of the US Fish & Wildlife Service ends its observation event. This will mean that the overlook will be a little crowded, but it will also mean that we can take advantage of their displays and expertise.

Saturday, January 12, Lake Michigan Lakefront Birding. We will join the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) field trip along the shore of Lake Michigan. The field trip starts at the South Shore Yacht Club in Milwaukee at 8 a.m. and goes north as far as Sheboygan. This trip is a great chance to see waterfowl including Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks as well as potential sightings of Snowy Owls and unusual gulls. We will carpool from La Crosse. Details will be announced via e-mail in late December.

February 2-3. Sax-Zim Bog and Duluth Birding. We will once

again be taking a trip to visit it the Duluth area and the famous Sax - Zim bog. This trip will be limited to 20 people and we will once again hire a local guide to help lead the group if participation is high enough to justify splitting the group in half. If you are interested, please call or e-mail Dan Jackson. We need to gauge interest in order to decide whether or not to hire Erik Brunke as a guide for the weekend.

Other Possible field Trips.

We are also talking about other field trips for the new year. They include a Golden Eagle viewing trip in Buffalo County, a northwoods day trip to Ashland, Bayfield and Douglas Counties in January or February, a Prairie Chicken viewing trip in April, and potentially a winter birding trip to Fort McCoy or to the Black River State Forest. More details to come in future newsletters and on the web site, www.couleeaudubon.org/

Chapter helps kids get connected to nature

Onalaska's Northern Hills Elementary School has ordered Audubon Classroom Materials for its 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classes, and Curt Rees, Northern Hills principal, has responded with the following thank-you note to Dan Jackson.

"Let me start by saying thanks for buying these for us again. The kids do enjoy the newsletters and it helps us teach skills in non-fiction reading and also in science. My order form is attached and it would give us two sets for each of our classrooms in grades 3, 4, and 5. Please pass on my thanks to the rest of the chapter as well!"

Dan had sent an e-mail reminder to Rees that included the link to the web site that talks about the Audubon Adventures program:

<http://education.audubon.org/audubon-adventures>.

Dan pointed out that the new set for this year is called "Sharing Our Earth" He added: "However, sets from previous years are also available. We are happy to order one kit for each class (the kit includes 32 copies of each of 4 newsletters). If your teachers would prefer to order the older ones (at \$23 each) we would be happy to order 2 per class. Depending on interest (and therefore our budget), we might be able to

order more later in the year. If you know of other teachers who would be interested who teach in the Coulee Region, please feel free to share this invitation with them as well."

Dan continued: "When your staff have picked out what you would like, please send me an e-mail and I will have it ordered for you. We will cover all costs. I just need to know what products you would like and the address to which they should be shipped."

Dan's initial reminder was rewarded as Rees responded: "Yes, we'd love to have these resources again. We always appreciate interesting non-fiction material and

See **KIDS**, page 4

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KIDS from page 3

the kids love to read about animals (emphasis mine).“

So you can see by this example how easy it is for

Audubon to do its share to help young people get connected to nature -- “Sharing Our Earth” with the birds and the rest of the

fantastic critters that need clean air and water and a share of the landscape!

- D.S.

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