

Coulee Birder



Newsletter of the Coulee Region
Audubon Society

March/April 2014

Meetings

Monthly meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month at the Myrick-Hixon Ecopark, starting at 7PM. They are free and open to the public.

March 19

This month's speakers are well known to *Coulee Audubon*. Dan Jackson and Scott Puchalski will be helping us all sharpen our Warbler identification skills in hopes that spring, and the migration, will indeed arrive.

April 16

Jon Stravers will be giving a presentation on his ongoing research on Cerulean Warblers. Jon W. Stravers is the Driftless Area Coordinator for the National Audubon Society's Mississippi River Initiative, founder of the Big Blue Sky Music Project, co-author of [The Raptors Of Iowa](#), and co-author of [Gladys Black: The Legacy of Iowa's Bird Lady](#) and [Sylvan T. Runkel: Citizen of the Natural World](#).

Looking ahead....

May 21...Gwyn Calvetti will be spinning tales of "Birds in Legend and Lore."

June 18...Potluck and birding!



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President's Message

By Dan Jackson

For me, this has been a very slow year for birding. The northern finches (Redpolls, Crossbills, Siskins, and Grosbeaks) stayed north and the weather has simply been too cold on a regular basis to allow for the usual winter trips that I like to take. Luckily, that should change soon. The days are getting longer, the sun is getting higher and warmer, and sooner or later it will prevail and spring will come! At this point, Horned Larks are already on the move and others won't be far behind!

As usual, the months of March, April, and May will be packed with many birding and other activity options. This will include a waterfowl observation trip in March, Prairie Chicken viewing, the Crane Count, the Highway Cleanup, a field trip to the Genoa Fish Hatchery, the Earthfair and more in April, and many birding events in May.

If you haven't started yet, this is a good time to start getting ready for the spring migration. Dust off your field guides and do some browsing to make sure that you can quickly find each family in the guide.

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If you haven't learned to identify birds by ear, perhaps this is the year to try!! If you are interested, I would strongly suggest looking for a copy of John Fieth's CD called "Bird Song Ear Training Guide". It is available via Amazon and is a great CD that includes recordings of close to 200 species of birds that were all recorded right here in Wisconsin. Since birds do have regional dialects, if you do most or all of your birding in this area, that is a big help!!

Unlike many other sources of bird songs, John's CD is great because it starts each species by playing the call itself. It then follows with the species and a mnemonic that can be used to remember the call (For Example, "Who Cooks For You" for the Barred Owl). It then plays the song once more so that you can mentally combine that mnemonic with the song.

I play the contents of this CD on my way to and from work in March and April. I set my car stereo or iPod to shuffle so that I can listen and quiz myself. This really does work. Before I found this CD, I had a really hard time learning bird songs. With John's CD, I was able to learn nearly all of the songs of Wisconsin birds in just a single spring.

Being able to identify birds by song is really helpful. Not only can you zero in on those birds that you really want to see, it also expands your world and allows you to get a better understanding of what birds are all around you when you are outdoors. If you haven't made the effort yet, I would strongly suggest that you try it. You will be really happy when it comes together!!

I hope to see you on one or more of the many activities that are planned for the next few months. Hang in there! We have almost made it and spring is on the way!!

Lots of opportunities in the coming months!

March 22 - Mississippi Waterfowl Field Trip. Dan Jackson will lead a waterfowl viewing field trip on Saturday, March 22. Meet at 8 a.m. at the entrance to Goose Island. We will head south and look for waterfowl and other early migrants as far as Genoa or Rush Creek and finish around noon. The trip is free and open to everyone.

April 12 - Annual Midwest Crane Count - 5:30 a.m.-7:30 a.m. The Annual Midwest Crane Count is one of the largest citizen-based wildlife surveys in the world. One of the primary purposes of the Crane Count is to monitor the abundance and distribution of cranes in the Upper Midwest. Each year, the Crane Count involves over 3,000 volunteers spread over 100 counties in six states. The Crane Count is organized by county in Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. Scott Puchalski will coordinate La Crosse County this year. Other area counties are also looking for volunteers. Past participants will receive an email from Scott in the next few weeks inviting you to participate again. If you have not counted before and would like to join the count, please send Scott an email at: obsidianblur@gmail.com and he will help you get started. More information on the Crane Count can be found at: www.savingcranes.org.

April 26 - The CRAS Spring Adopt-a-Highway Clean Up. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Dresbach, MN. Info Center Parking Lot on I90/Hwy 61. Plan on beautifying the highway for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Please bring work gloves and wear comfortable, sturdy shoes. MN DOT provides Safety Vests and Trash

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

April 26 - Prairie Chicken Viewing. Dan Jackson will lead a trip to the Buena Vista grasslands to watch booming Prairie Chickens. This is set for April 26th the coordinators 2 hours before sunrise in the marsh. Sunrise that day is about 6:05. This will mean leaving La Crosse about 2:00 a.m. in order to get there on time or staying overnight in a motel in that area. Spaces will be filled on a first come/first served basis. Cost for viewing is \$15 which is non-refundable. Other dates are available if anyone would like to go on their own. Please contact Dan at DEJackson2256@gmail.com to reserve a spot on this trip.

April 27 - Earth Fair at the Myrick Hixon EcoPark. Lots of activities including birding hikes. Dan Jackson will lead a one hour hike that starts at 12:30 PM.

May 3 - International Migratory Bird Day event at the Myrick/Hixon EcoPark. This will include bird-related activities for the entire family. This will include bird banding, birding field trips, and much, much more.

May 10 - International Migratory Bird Day event at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Another great event with bird-related activities for the entire family.

May 18 - Wyalusing Field Trip. Dan Jackson will lead a Coulee Region Audubon field trip to Wyalusing State Park starting at 6:30 at the entrance to the park. Wyalusing is the best birding destination in western Wisconsin and is the home to a number of special species of birds. This is Sunday morning rather than the usual Saturday morning since Dan will be leading a trip for the WSO convention on Saturday.

April 29, May 6 and May 13 -

Myrick Marsh Bird Walks. Start at 6:30 AM at the EcoPark building parking lot.

May 1, May 8 and May 15 -

Hixon Forest Bird Walks. Meet at 6:30 at the Hixon Forest parking lot.

If you shop at the People's Food Coop

Coulee Audubon has been designated to receive money generated by their Beans to Bags program in March and April. Customers may donate their .05 cent bag credit to one of three non-profits. If you shop there, shop often and tell them to give your credit to Coulee Audubon!



Spring migration will be here soon!

Coulee Region Audubon Society

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