

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

Coulee Birder

September/October 2014

Meetings

Monthly meetings are held at the Myrick/Hixon Ecopark, and begin at 7:00 PM. They are free and open to the public.

September 17

“Damsels and Dragons of Wisconsin and Minnesota.”

Dan Jackson’s presentation “Damsels and Dragons of Wisconsin and Minnesota” is designed to be a fun, informative introduction to the insect order Odonata which includes Dragonflies and Damselflies. It includes a section on the biology and life history of this order as well as a section on their identification.

October 15

To be announced!

Your newsletter editor, Gwyn Calvetti is always happy to receive your submissions!

President's Message



Dan Jackson

With today's high temperature only near 60 degrees Fahrenheit, I am finally having to come to grips with the idea that it is now September and that summer is almost gone. Since I am an avid bug nerd and love to chase dragonflies and butterflies, it is very hard for me to admit that soon the subject of my summer attentions will once again only be a memory.

This has been an interesting year in terms of dragonflies and butterflies. Last year's long, cold winter definitely had an impact on insects this year. Many species started appearing nearly 3 weeks late and I noticed that many species had lower than normal numbers throughout the flight season. Despite that, I was able to find a few species that I hadn't seen before which is always fun!

Since my bugs are disappearing, I am once again starting to pay attention to the birds. The fall migration is definitely under way and actually has been going strong for a couple of months (some shorebirds starting heading south in July). September is a great time of the year to look for southbound warblers, flycatchers, vireos and other neotropic migrants. The number of individual birds migrating in the fall migration actually

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higher than in the spring and they aren't in as big of a hurry. Unfortunately, they aren't singing and young birds and adult birds that have molted out of their breeding plumage often look very different than they did in May. This can result in more challenging birding but it is still worth the effort.

September is also the beginning of a new program year for the Coulee Region Audubon Society. We will be kicking off the new program year with our September meeting which will be held on Wednesday, September 17th. We are still working on our full lineup of speakers, but I will start off the year by doing a presentation on dragonflies on that date.

As always, if you have any ideas for future speakers, please share them with me or other members of the board. We are always looking for great speakers for our monthly meetings.

I hope that you will join us for the first meeting of the year!!

Please take note! Future meeting location is at this point uncertain.

I am sure that many of you read the article in the La Crosse Tribune that announced that the Myrick / Hixon EcoPark organization will be ending its agreement with the city of La Crosse and ceasing operations as of September 30, 2014. This is sad news to me since Stephanie Hanna and the EcoPark organization have done a great job of providing outdoor education opportunities for area children.

I talked to Steve Carlyon, the director of the La Crosse Parks and Rec Department and asked whether or not we would be able to continue to meet in the EcoPark building. At this point, Steve and his Department are still trying to sort out all the details so it is too early to get a definitive answer. However, it did sound promising. Steve also indicated that the city is interested in trying to figure out a way to continue to provide the outdoor education programming that was provided by the EcoPark.

Private lands birding opportunity

Though not in the Coulee Region, this looks like a wonderful opportunity to explore for grassland birds. John & Dorothy Priske of Fountain Prairie Farms are offering access for birders to their 280-acre farm in Fall River, Columbia County, which lies approximately 35 miles northeast of Madison. They report a 60-acre portion of grassland and wetland is currently hosting good numbers of Bobolinks, E. Meadowlarks, and other species they are unable to identify (although they did also mention Dickcissel).

The address is W1901 State Road 16 and THEY ASK VISITORS TO CONTACT THEM FIRST TO ARRANGE A VISIT. Their phone is 920-948-7925 and email is priske@centurytel.net. If you bird there, please enter your observations into eBird so we can reward their generosity with a list of species found on their property. Thanks.

Passenger Pigeon Centennial

It is not news to anyone reading this newsletter that September 1, 2014, marked the centennial of an extinction, when Martha, the last living Passenger Pigeon, took her last breath at the Cincinnati Zoo where she'd resided. Because of this centennial, there are many resources to explore, often online. I was privileged to hear a program presented by Kelly Bleich as part of West Salem's Garland Days. He framed his presentation with various readings of the writings of others, both modern and contemporary to Hamlin Garland himself. Wisconsin was a major nesting and roosting area for the bird, and can lay claim to be the location of the largest roost in the United States. This is an excerpt taken from a website that has gathered a wealth of material for those interested in learning more about this recent extinction event. Though it is of interest to curious naturalists, there is also information that might be useful for those in the classroom.

The largest recorded nesting of Passenger Pigeons in U.S. history took place in central Wisconsin in 1871. A conservative estimate of the nesting area was 850 square miles, and population estimates put the number of nesting pigeons at 136 million. Many recorded descriptions of this nesting exist in historic articles, books and other publications. One is by Chief Pokagon (of the Pottawatomie) whose descriptions of passenger pigeons are among the best ever penned: 'Every tree, some of them quite low and scrubby, had from one to fifty nests each. Some of the nests overflow from the oaks to the hemlocks and pine woods. When the pigeon hunters attack the breeding places they sometimes cut the timber from thousands of acres. . . I there counted as high as forty nests in scrub oaks not over twenty-five feet high; in many places I could pick the eggs out of the nests, being not over five or six feet from the ground.' [\(http://passengerpigeon.org/index.html\)](http://passengerpigeon.org/index.html)



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