

Coulee Birder



Newsletter of the Coulee Region
Audubon Society

March/April 2015

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.

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March 18

Mike Reese will tell us all about the new Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas project. Come learn how you can help contribute to this important project taking place during the next five years.

April 15

To be announced!

Looking ahead....

June 19...Potluck and birding!

President's Message

By Dan Jackson

These are scary times – especially for the environment. Over the past several years, politics at the state and federal level have become very polarized. Both Republicans and Democrats have focused much of their attention on appealing to their base supporters and have become increasingly uninterested in working together and considering compromise.

Currently, this is resulting in a tremendous attack on environmental legislation and policy. Programs that both parties have agreed on and developed together over several decades are the targets of attack under the guise of budget control. Lobbyists and large corporate interests have spent hundreds of millions to influence public policy and that expense is currently paying off in the US Congress and in state politics.

At the state level, the Wisconsin Governor has proposed a state budget that will freeze the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for the next 13 years. This program is used to purchase and protect special properties throughout the state and does so by partnering with other organizations in order to leverage state funds. That budget will also eliminate the policy setting function of the Natural Resources Board and move that role to political appointees. The budget would also significantly cut the budget of the Wisconsin DNR and eliminate many scientific positions in that organization.

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President's Message *con't from p. 1*

Those scientists currently review policies and decisions to make sure that they are environmentally sound. If they are gone, one more level of environmental protection and review will be go with them.

Although it is extremely important that our state and federal governments get spending and the current levels of deficit spending under control, this needs to be done without eliminating the safeguards that have been set up to protect our environment. Although it is important to help businesses find ways to make new jobs and to expand in a time of economic adversity, it is also important that this is not done without regard to potential permanent damage to the world that we live in.

I urge you to pay attention to what is going on in state and national politics and to let your representatives know when you agree and disagree with what is being proposed. In this time of political radicalism, we need to remind our representatives that winning a slight majority in any election is not a mandate for political extremism (on the left or the right). We need to make sure that we can be proud of the state, nation, and world that we pass to our children and grand-children.

On a happier note, this year marks the beginning of the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas. The first atlas was a 5 year project that started 20 years ago. The goal of the current 5 year project is to re-survey representative blocks of land throughout the state to determine what birds nest in our state at this point in time. The results of this atlas can then be compared to the first and future atlases to determine population and distribution changes and trends of the breeding birds of Wisconsin. Our March meeting will include a presentation by Mike Reese who is one of the coordinators of the current atlas and he will be discussing how birders of every skill level can get involved and help make sure that this project is successful.

Our chapter is already deeply committed to this project. Scott Puchalski, our Vice-President is the county coordinator for La Crosse County, I am the coordinator for Vernon County, and others have already indicated that they would like to help with the survey. We need as much help as we can get to make sure these and the surrounding counties are effectively covered for this important project and I hope that birders of all skill levels will help us out.

Please plan to attend the meeting and to volunteer to help with the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II.

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Annual Convention "Birding the Forest Transition"

The Annual Convention will be held in the Wausau area May 22-25. Field trips, skills workshops, a banquet with featured speaker are all part of the program. For more information, visit the WSO website.

Registration opens March 15.

<http://wsobirds.org/what-we-do/annual-convention>

Lots of opportunities in the coming months!

March 21 - Mississippi Waterfowl Field Trip. Dan Jackson will lead a waterfowl viewing field trip on Saturday, March 21. 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 18 - 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 early April 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 25 - 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 ?- - Prairie Chicken Viewing. If blinds are available, Dan Jackson will lead a trip to the Buena Vista grasslands to watch booming Prairie Chickens. The date will be set later this spring. Last year, this event was cancelled due to a severe decline in the population of these birds. Let's hope that the population has rebounded enough for this viewing to happen again!

April 26 - Earth Fair at the Myrick Hixon EcoPark. Lots of activities.

May 2 - 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 9 - International Migratory Bird Day event at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Another great event with bird-related activities for the entire family.

May 16 - 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.

*April 28, May 5 and May 12 -
Myrick Marsh Bird Walks. Start at 6:30 AM at the EcoPark building parking lot.*

*April 30, May 7 and May 14 -
Hixon Forest Bird Walks. Meet at 6:30 at the Hixon Forest parking lot.*

Coulee Region Audubon Society

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