

# Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

May/June 2016

## Meetings

Monthly meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month at the Ho-chunk Nation Building, 724 Main Street, LaCrosse, starting at 7PM. They are free and open to the public.

### May 18

Mike Reese and Bill Mueller will present on the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II project. Even if you don't have your own atlas block, you can still contribute to this major citizen science project. Join us to learn how!

### June 15

Our last meeting before our summer break is the potluck, followed by birding on the trails. We will have the potluck at Myrick Park Center Gun Shelter. Please bring dishes and of course, a dish to share. We will have the potluck at **6PM** and go birding when we're done eating!

Though scheduled meetings won't resume until September, we hope to try organizing our own version of *Birds and Beers* get-togethers that have been popular in other regions. Watch the website and facebook for more info.

Submissions to the Coulee Birder are always welcome! Deadline for the next issue is September 1. Contact newsletter editor at [gwyntells@gmail.com](mailto:gwyntells@gmail.com).



### President's Message

By Scott Puchalski

The migrants are coming, THE MIGRANTS ARE COMING! I hope you're ready! As I sit here typing this note, I am listening to warbler songs, as well as other migrants, to keep my ear in tune with the approaching visitors. Due to the early spring the trees are going to make it tough this year to see the approaching invasion, so birding by ear will improve your chances of finding those hyperactive feathered flyers. I know some think that it is a daunting task to try and learn bird songs but I believe otherwise. We all have songs crammed in our heads and we may not be able to sing the words until we hear it coming from the radio and then we are able to sing along. I believe that is the same with the bird songs. Practice is the key. I highly recommend listening to CDs. I know for me it has made my birding more enjoyable, I enjoy the challenge. If you are looking to get help improving your skills, we have many field trips coming up that are listed in the events. We are always glad to have everyone join in.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty. Here are some of the reasons this treaty has been so important to conservation. Migratory birds connect people to nature and provide multiple benefits – ecological, economic, aesthetic and recreational – to humans and the natural environment. Migratory birds connect nations and even continents through migration, providing opportunities for international understanding and collaboration. Migratory birds are good indicators of environmental health because they are so visible and relatively easy to study. Birds are sensitive to environmental contaminants and can provide early warning of oncoming environmental issues. Birds and people both rely on healthy habitats (e.g. oceans, grasslands and forests) for survival and well-being. Birds need habitats that are also valuable to people. Ensuring healthy habitats for birds provides improved water quality.

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coastal buffering, ground water recharge, flood control, erosion protection and many other benefits to human society. Many bird species migrate as part of their life cycles. Migration is a perilous journey that involves a wide range of threats, many of which are caused by humans. Habitat loss due to urban development, agriculture and other human activities is the main threat to migrating birds. Migratory birds depend on suitable breeding and wintering grounds and stopover sites where they can rest and feed along their migratory routes. The loss of any sites used by the birds during their annual life cycle could have a dramatic impact on their chances of survival. Conservation works. Where we have invested in healthy habitats, birds are doing well. Healthy birds mean healthy forests, wetlands, grasslands, shorelines and oceans. By conserving birds we conserve our American landscapes and the economies and ways of life that depend on them. From farmers and ranchers to outdoor recreationists to children, we all benefit when birds thrive. You can find out more about the 100th year celebration and how you can be a part of it here.

<http://www.fws.gov/birds/MBTreaty100/>

Enjoy the outdoors....Scott

### **Events, events, events!**

Just stepping outside the door this time of year is an event! One never knows what might be seen passing through the area, making for birding that's even more fun than ever. We've been enjoying Baltimore Orioles in our yard the past few days, a nice change of pace from the finches. In keeping with the fever of spring, there are lots of things happening. Here are some of those.

**May 7** – International Migratory Bird Day event at Myrick Park. All kinds of activities for the whole family from 6:30AM to 12:30PM. More information can be found at <https://lacrossebirdday.wordpress.com/>

**May 13-15** – Wisconsin Society of Ornithology State Convention and field trips, Racine Wisconsin. See the WSOBirds.org website for information.

**May 14** – International Migratory Bird Day event at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Another great event with bird-related activities for the entire family.

**May 21 - 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.

**May 10 and May 17** -Myrick Marsh Bird Walks. Start at 6:30 AM at the EcoPark building parking lot.

**May 5, May 12 and May 19** -Hixon Forest Bird Walks. Meet at 6:30AM at the Hixon Forest parking lot.

An event sponsored this summer by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy might be of interest as well. They are hosting a "Linked to the Land" event on June 18 Father's Day Whip-Poor-Will Hike at one of their properties in Trempealeau County. Learn more at: <http://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/GetInvolved/HikesEvents/>

### **Birds and Beers, anyone????**

Many other regional birding groups, such as the Twin Cities, Madison and the Green Bay have established more informal gatherings for birders to meet and share stories. The venue changes from meeting to meeting and they are somewhat unscheduled. Sometimes birding might be part of the agenda beforehand, other times it's just a chance to meet others who share your interest. For example, when a Great Grey Owl decided to hang out on the grounds of the Capitol Brewery in Madison last year, there was a somewhat spontaneous Birds and Beers scheduled. We'd like to try and create our own "Birds and Beers," and Mark Webster and Gwyn Calvetti have volunteered to try and kickstart it.

## No Good Deed Goes Unnoticed!

Saturday, April 9, 2016 was a chilly, but sunny day with little to no wind - actually a perfect day for trash picking. Six CRAS volunteers picked their way along a two mile section of I90/Hwy 61 for about 2 1/2 hours and yielded 19 large trash bags of stuff - aka Trash. Then, afterwards we enjoyed a fun lunch at Corky's Restaurant in La Crescent, MN. Our new VP Jonathan showed us a video he took of a very large Semi-Truck Tire and Rim that he found - and proceeded to roll down an embankment towards the highway! (It did fall over prior to reaching the road!) The video should be posted on the CRAS Facebook Page. It is very exciting.

There was a very large flock of White Pelicans gathered together in Blue Lake just south of the pike east of La Crescent. Pretty cool.

Thank you to the participants - Jean and Mark Ledman, Jonathan and Shirley Ringdahl, and Doug Stratton.



## What Bird **IS** That?

While nothing really beats spending lots of time going over your field guide of choice....we all own a few...there are new ways to help with some of those tricky IDs. You may be familiar with the "Merlin" bird app. You answer a variety of questions about size, appearance, coloration, where and when you sighted the bird in question, and a list of possibilities is returned. Now they're beta testing a photo ID app. You can't use it in the field...yet...but by taking a photo, then uploading it to the app and answering those questions, it will give you some possibilities to consider. It's not foolproof. I uploaded a photo of a bird I'm pretty certain was a Yellowlegs and it told me Solitary Sandpiper. My bird clearly had bright yellow legs, but they weren't as obvious in my photo, so Merlin can be forgiven. It's still a fun one to try out, and maybe one day, those with those smartphones will be able to use it on the spot. Check it out!

<http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/photo-id/>

**Coulee Region Audubon Society**

**P. O. Box 2573**

**LaCrosse WI 54602**

**Contacts**

President

Scott Puchalski

[obsidianblur@gmail.com](mailto:obsidianblur@gmail.com)

608-769-2563

Vice President

Jonathan Ringdahl

[jonringdahl@gmail.com](mailto:jonringdahl@gmail.com)

Treasurer

Marty Lohman

[mdlohman@gmail.com](mailto:mdlohman@gmail.com)

608-769-6144

Secretary

MaryJo Clark

[clarx01@centurylink.net](mailto:clarx01@centurylink.net)

Board Member

Gwyn Calvetti

[gwyntells@gmail.com](mailto:gwyntells@gmail.com)

608-786-2526

Board Member

Paul Hayes

[pjhayes@mwt.net](mailto:pjhayes@mwt.net)

Board Member

Roger Hanson

[nosnohrd@gmail.com](mailto:nosnohrd@gmail.com)

Newsletter

Gwyn Calvetti

[gwyntells@gmail.com](mailto:gwyntells@gmail.com)

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/Coulee](https://www.facebook.com/Coulee)

RegionAudubon

Web

[www.couleeaudubon.org](http://www.couleeaudubon.org)

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Thanks!