

Coulee Birder

Newsletter of the Coulee Region Audubon Society

March/April 2017

Meetings

by a Coulee A
field guide or

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.



President's Message
By Scott Puchalski

March 15

Little Trees Need Hugs Too!

Maintaining Habitat for Ruffed Grouse and other Wildlife in the Driftless Area

Scott Walter, Great Lakes Regional Wildlife Biologist

Changes in our forest community over the past 50 years have led to concurrent changes in our forest wildlife community. Ensuring a diverse and healthy wildlife community requires widespread adoption of specific forest management practices on private lands in the Driftless Region. Learn about the changes in our forests over the past 50 years and explore some challenges and opportunities in forest management to help ensure healthy and diverse wildlife communities in years to come.

April 19

The Great Bird ID Challenge

Scott Lee will bring us a great hands-on opportunity to practice ID skills. About 100 study skins, in protective tubes provided by a Coulee Audubon small grant, will be available for inspection. Bring your favorite field guide or use one of Scott's!

Happy Spring,

The annual migration has started. We had a few of the earliest migrants show up a bit early this year. The waterfowl have moved in and this year has been good for Greater White-fronted Geese, Cackling Geese, Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese. They are usually a bit hard to find in the Mississippi flyway. The Sandhill Cranes have moved in and have been pairing up. Great Horned Owls are on their nests. Many other residents have begun their courtship. It is a good time to be out and observing all the wonders of spring. We are also heading into field trip season. We have listed the upcoming events and hope that you can join us. All experience levels are welcome, it is always a good time to improve your birding expertise and to share the expertise you have.

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 seeing the Robins 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.

March 18-Mississippi Waterfowl Field Trip. Dan Jackson will lead a waterfowl viewing field trip on Saturday, March 18. 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.

March 31- Jim Nissen is running a bus tour around upper Pool 8 to observe the waterfowl migration. The tour is organized by the Natural Resource Foundation.

You can register for the event following this link <http://www.cvent.com/d/rvqb31>

April 8 - 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 22- The CRAS Spring Adopt-a-Highway Clean Up. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Dakota Fire Station. 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 25, May 2 and May 9 -Myrick Marsh Bird Walks. Start at 6:30 AM at the EcoPark building parking lot.

April 27, May 4 and May 11 -Hixon Forest Bird Walks. Meet at 6:30AM at the Hixon Forest parking lot.

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas Regional Kickoff Workshop

Maybe you've heard about this project. Maybe you've even been surveying an atlas block or two of your own. If you'd like to learn more about it, or would like additional tips to aid in your bird surveys, consider taking part in the Regional Kickoff Workshop for our area at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Read on for more information.

March 25, 12:30 p.m.–6 p.m.: Kickapoo Valley Reserve / Vernon County

*optional nocturnal field trip 7–9 p.m.: owls and woodcock, Kickapoo Valley Reserve

This year marks the mid-point of the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II, a critical year for ensuring we're on track to complete this monumental effort by 2019. Help us get 2017 off to a dynamic start by joining us at our FREE Atlas Regional Kickoff workshop.

This event is for everyone, whether you're a newer member of the Atlas team, a seasoned veteran, or just want to learn more about how to join us in 2017. The workshop will feature concurrent presentations tailored to new and returning atlasers, the opportunity to meet county coordinators and expert birders from our region, and a field trip to a local hotspot. A light meal will be served after the meeting.

Register at the WSO WBBA II website: <http://wsobirds.org/atlas-2017-regional-kickoff-workshops>

What happens to your Audubon dues?

Each year, we dutifully submit our annual dues to be part of the Coulee Audubon Society. Some of that money is of course used for various administrative costs associated with any small organization such as ours. One aspect of our mission is education. We have provided a number of small grants to teachers in our region. Those grants have covered costs for a variety of projects designed to bring students closer to our natural world. The study skins used by Scott Lee at our April meeting are in protective tubes that were obtained with some of our grant money, for use by the Trempealeau school district.

We have had other opportunities to 'grow" our young birders and environmentalists as well. About two years ago, a young lady who was at that time a student at Richland Center High School, made a request for scholarship funds to allow her to take part in the Cornell Young Birder's Event. This was a life changing event for Ember Hobbs, who is now a student at Cornell University majoring in biology with an emphasis in Ornithology. With some space in this edition of our newsletter, here is an excerpt from her report on her YBE experience.

The best part of the trip was, of course, the birding. We spent hours in the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, where we saw numerous shorebirds. My favorite bird of the trip was here; the green heron. We spotted five large, dark birds in a dead tree, sunning themselves in a manner quite reminiscent of vultures...when we turned the scope on them, we discovered that they were all juvenile bald eagles! In relatively undocumented roadside wetlands, four Virginia rails responded to a recorded call. We were able to see these small, peculiar birds up close when they came to investigate the speaker. I believe all of the students saw a lifer (the first time a person has seen a particular bird species in his/her life) at some point during the trip, which was cause for great excitement.

The Young Birders' Event as a whole reinforced many of my personal beliefs, and opened my eyes to new opportunities. It was an indescribable experience to be around so many people with the shared goal of bettering the world through understanding and conserving avifauna. My eyes were opened to the great opportunities available at Cornell University. Being part of the community of birders there left me with a sense of fulfillment, and I am now more eager than ever for the possibility of attending the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with a biology major. I would like to offer special thanks to: Barbara Duerksen--without you, I would never have even known that the Young Birders' Event existed; the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and the Coulee Region Audubon Society--your contributions to fund the tuition and travel costs is greatly appreciated by myself and my family. Thank you all so much. This was, truly, a life changing event.



The cranes are returning...so is spring!

Coulee Region Audubon Society

P. O. Box 2573

LaCrosse WI 54602

Contacts

President

Scott Puchalski

obsidianblur@gmail.com

608-769-2563

Vice President

Jonathan Ringdahl

jonringdahl@gmail.com

Treasurer

Marty Lohman

mdlohman@gmail.com

608-769-6144

Secretary

MaryJo Clark

clarx01@centurylink.net

Board Member

Gwyn Calvetti

gwyntells@gmail.com

608-786-2526

Board Member

Paul Hayes

pjhayes@mwt.net

Board Member

Roger Hanson

nosnohrd@gmail.com

Newsletter

Gwyn Calvetti

gwyntells@gmail.com

Facebook

www.facebook.com/Coulee

RegionAudubon

Web

www.couleeaudubon.org

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Thanks!