Bird City Wisconsin recognitions top century mark

Osceola, Sturgeon Bay meet criteria

The number 101 is a frequent target when a writer is trying to compile an impressive list. It can’t have been very long since you last saw “101 Ways to ...”

But 101 also describes a list that speaks volumes about the people of Wisconsin: It’s the current number of Bird City Wisconsin communities after the recent recognition of Osceola (100) and Sturgeon Bay (101).

Both join a program that recognizes forward-thinking communities across Wisconsin that understand the value of birds.

Bird City Wisconsin (BCW) recognizes municipalities for the conservation and education activities that they undertake to make their communities healthy for birds ... and people.

Osceola and Sturgeon Bay enter the program with some impressive accomplishments. Among the highlights of these two applications are the Grow Osceola (Osceola) and Crossroads at Big Creek (Sturgeon Bay) programs.

Both programs focus on using bird-friendly native plants and bringing together schools, garden clubs, and other organizations to involve them in bird conservation.

Actions like these are designed to benefit wildlife and to help build a connection with nature that will show current and future decision makers just how important it is to protect the natural world.

In announcing the new communities, BCW Director Dr. Bryan Lenz said the organization was “hopeful that initial recognition as a Bird City will serve as a springboard for Osceola and Sturgeon Bay to develop new, and often non-traditional, partnerships as they expand local conservation and education actions.”

Dr. Lenz said the fact that BCW has now enrolled more than 100 communities -- and maintained a 100% retention rate -- says a lot about both the program and the people associated with it.

A program launched by the Milwaukee Audubon Society, WSO and other state bird conservation organizations, BCW

WOS looking fit and trim after all that BIGBY birding!

By WENDY SCHULTZ
WSO BIGBY Birding Coordinator

Back in January 2016, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology took the reins, or perhaps more appropriately “the handlebars” of the Wisconsin Green Birding Challenge — better known as BIGBY, a.k.a. “Big Green Big Year.”

WSO now manages the spreadsheet and a webpage dedicated to this very exciting form of birding. Since that time, a Green Birding Facebook page also has been created, giving participants the opportunity to share photos and stories as well as encouragement and kudos.

The gale force winds, the Hooded Warblers, the steep hills, the Short-eared Owls, the flat tires, the Buff-breasted Sandpipers and oh-so-much-more.

Green birding is carbon neutral and relies on human-powered transportation, such as walking, biking or canoeing -- whatever mode one prefers -- as long as each trip starts from the SAME home base. Most BIGBY birders do much of their birding by bicycle and while some are satisfied keeping their trips close to home or within their favorite patch, others venture further. Much further.

Like our 2016 Wisconsin BIGBY Birding champion, with a record-breaking 243 species, ROSS MUELLE R of Outagamie County. He is a truly amazing machine, biking a total of 2,645 miles, and you can read his firsthand account of his BIGBY year on Page 15.

Finishing in second place for 2016 was STEVE THEI SSEN of Dane County with 201 species; third

Atlas announces 4 regional kickoff workshops for 2017

This year marks the midpoint of the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II, a critical year for ensuring the project is on track to complete this monumental effort by 2019. WSO members in particular are being encouraged to help get 2017 off to a dynamic start by registering for one (or more) of four planned Atlas Regional Kickoff workshops.

These events are for everyone, whether you’re a newer member of the Atlas team, a seasoned veteran or just want to learn how to participate for the first time in 2017. Each workshop will feature concurrent presentations tailored to new and returning atlarsers, the opportunity to meet county coordinators and expert birders from your region, and a field trip to a local hotspot.

These are the workshop locations and dates:

- **SOUTHWEST:** March 25, 12:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.: Kickapoo Valley Reserve/ Vernon County; there will be an optional nocturnal field trip from 7 to 9 p.m. focusing on owls and woodcock in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

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Please turn to Page 14

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EDITOR’S NOTE

You won’t want to miss out on these


Photographer Jim Edhuber also has put together a collection of 2016 birding moments that includes vagrants, special visitors and beautiful birds that nest here or migrate through the state. http://www.windowtowildlife.com/wisconsin-birding-year-rev...

Why eBird is a big deal: eBird is a real-time, online checklist program that has revolutionized how the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. Over the past decade more than 300,000 people have entered over 370 million bird observations worldwide. Wisconsin hosts one of the most active eBird communities http://ebird.org/content/wi/ and collects more eBird data in a year than most countries in the world. In 2016, 4,111 eBiders submitted 110,807 checklists of 1.4 million bird observations in Wisconsin alone! These data are not only useful for finding your next life bird, they also have great science and conservation value.

So if you’re already eBirding, thank you! And if you’re not, then go to http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/newyear2017

For the latest eBird happenings and to find out what’s on the horizon, be sure to check out http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/2016review/

The biggest bird stories of 2016: It’s hard to keep up with all the news flying in our direction these days. Thankfully our friends at Birdwatching magazine have us covered when it comes to the most important stories about birds and birders in 2016. Wisconsin is well-represented by Whooping Cranes, the late great Noel Cutright, and more. Get caught up with their year in review at http://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/blog/2016/12/27/year-in-review-2016/

-- CARL SCHWARTZ, Badger Birder Editor

KATE’S QUOTES

Naturalist KATE REDMOND offers us a monthly selection of quotes on birds, nature, conservation and life around us. Her early interest in birds kicked off a career as an environmental educator.

“We need the tonic of wilderness…. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable.

We can never have enough of nature.”

-- HENRY DAVID THOREAU, American essayist, poet, philosopher; naturalist

“Hemispheric solidarity is new among statesmen, but not among the feathered navies of the sky.”

-- ALDO LEOPOLD, "A Sand County Almanac"

“Man’s heart away from nature becomes hard.”

-- STANDING BEAR, a Ponca chief who in 1879 successfully argued in Federal Court that Native Americans are “persons within the meaning of the law”
Memo to backyard birdwatchers: Ready, set, count!

THE CORNELL LAB

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, Feb. 17-20, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish.

If you’re new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists. Go to: https://secure.birds.cornell.edu/cassso/account/create

If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

Click here for more info on how to get started: http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/

Last year, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 130 countries counted 5,689 species of birds on more than 162,000 checklists!

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You now can even add photos and sounds to your checklist.

Your participation can help make the GBBC even more successful. Then keep counting throughout the year by using eBird http://ebird.org/content/ebird/, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use information from the Great Backyard Bird Count, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch and eBird, to get the “big picture” about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

• How will the weather and climate change influence bird populations?
• Some birds, such as winter finches, appear in large numbers during some years but not others. Where are these species from year to year, and what can we learn from these patterns?
• How will the timing of birds’ migrations compare with past years?
• How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
• What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners. The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by eBird. The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

‘Bird School’ offers a stepping stone for beginners

Fall Creek -- “Bird School” is a 2½ day educational event, open to the public, that will provide an in-depth introduction to the fascinating world of birds.

The course will be held during spring migration at Beaver Creek Reserve in Fall Creek on Friday April 28 through Sunday April 30. It will consist of classroom presentations, outdoor field trips, hands-on demonstrations and group activities to create a fun learning experience.

The course, in its second year, is hosted by the Gaylord Nelson Audubon Society (GNAS) and is co-sponsored by Beaver Creek Reserve.

“Birds offer us a window into the natural world. If we stop and take a moment to look closely, seeing a wild bird can be a powerful thing,” said Bill Hogseth, Bird School founder. “Each bird has an incredible story – the warbler that just arrived from South America or the wren that’s nesting in your backyard. We hope this class will be a way for people to get to know birds better and, in doing so, deepen their own connection to nature.”

Students will be introduced to the basics of bird biology, identification, behavior, migration and conservation. The course begins on Friday evening with classroom presentations on beginning bird identification and birding by ear.

Saturday will feature an early morning field trip in the Augusta Wildlife Area, followed by additional classroom presentations, discussions and a keynote presentation by retired DNR naturalist Bill Volkert entitled “Journey of a Thousand Lifers: Around the World in Pursuit of Birds.”

The course will conclude on Sunday morning with a bird banding demonstration in which students will have the opportunity to see wild birds up close.

“Bird School” is intended for beginners of all ages who want to learn about birds and better understand their life cycles.

Anyone with a curiosity about nature is encouraged to enroll, including students, backyard birdwatchers, gardeners, hunters, teachers, farmers, hikers and artists.

The course will be taught by experienced birders and wildlife biologists from around the Chippewa Valley including Steve Bethkal, Emily Lind, Augie Wirkus, Robin Maercklein, Paula Kleintjes-Neff, Jeanette Kelly and Bill Hogseth.

Cost to enroll is $52, which includes a full dinner on Friday evening. A limited number of scholarships are available for students age 12-21.

Registration is required. More information is available at http://gaylordnelson-audubon.org/birdschool/
**UW-Stevens Point chosen for Federal Duck Stamp art competition**

**Madison** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has selected the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point to host the 2017 Federal Duck Stamp art competition.

This competition, which attracts many of the top wildlife artists from across the country each year, will be held Sept. 15-16 on the Point campus in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other key stakeholders.

Final judging for the stamp contest will take place over this two-day period and will be open to the public. The winning artwork will be featured as the 2018 Federal Duck Stamp, available for purchase July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. In addition to the stamp contest, other events include a decoy carving contest and exhibition, hosted by Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, and a Learn to Hunt program.

Wisconsin is one of the top five states in the country in number of duck hunters, with roughly 80,000 waterfowl hunters per year, and the Fish and Wildlife Service is recognizing the state’s considerable contributions to the duck stamp program.

The Federal Duck Stamp, formally known as the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, is required for waterfowl hunters age 16 or older. It is the longest running, single-themed U.S. postal stamp and represents a badge of honor each year for waterfowl hunters and is often purchased as a collector’s item.

Funding from stamp sales has contributed to the purchase of thousands of acres of federal public land in Wisconsin within nine national wildlife refuges, and numerous Waterfowl Production Areas within the Leopold and St. Croix Wetland Management Districts.

Many non-hunters also purchase the stamp in order to make a contribution to wildlife habitat conservation.

(The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is among those groups encouraging its members to do so.)

A recent federal duck stamp price increase (from $15 to $25) has bolstered land purchases across the country, with a new focus to purchase conservation easements to conserve waterfowl production habitat.


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**Horicon Marsh Bird Festival**

**May 12-15, 2017**

**Keynote speaker:**

- Al Batt Birder & Humorist

- Birding Adventure by Boat • Night Sounds Birding by Bicycle • Kids’ Activities
- Birds and Beers • Bird Lab • and more!

Phone: 920-485-4663 • 920-387-7893

[horiconmarshbirdfestival.com](http://horiconmarshbirdfestival.com)
June convention to tackle citizen science in Nicolet Forest

The theme for the 78th annual WSO Convention will be “Celebrating Citizen Science -- Breeding Birds of the Nicolet.”

The theme will take advantage of this year’s late date -- for just the sixth time WSO will be holding its convention in June -- to focus on two amazing chapters in the history of what is variously known as crowd science, civic science, participatory monitoring and participatory action research, conducted, in whole or part, by amateur or nonprofessional scientists.

The four-day convention will run June 16-19 – over Father’s Day weekend -- at the Potawatomi Carter Casino and Hotel. The hotel is within the Nicolet National Forest just south of Wabeno on the southern edge of Forest County.

For 30 years, this has been about the time and location for the Nicolet National Forest Bird Survey, the longest running volunteer bird monitoring program in our national forests. The Nicolet encompasses 1.6 million acres of mixed hardwood-conifer forests, lowland swamps, glacial lakes and wetlands in northeastern Wisconsin.

Keynoting the convention banquet on Saturday June 17 will be Dr. Robert W. Howe, of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, longtime director of the bird survey and one of three editors of the “Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Wisconsin,” published in 2006.

Howe is founding director of the Cofrin Center for Biodiversity and Barbara Haushurst Cofrin Professor of Natural Science. He has been a faculty member in UWGB’s Department of Natural and Applied Sciences since 1984, where he has taught courses ranging from introductory environmental science to advanced graduate courses in biology and ecology.

The convention not only will look back on the Nicolet Forest survey but ahead to the final three years of field work for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II, offering opportunities to join expert leaders and top regional atlasers to collect data for the Atlas in priority blocks in this area.

Start with learning how to nocturnally atlas during a post-banquet evening trip to a local priority block. On Sunday and Monday, the convention will offer a half-day local trip to collect data in a priority block with excellent habitat variety near Wabeno and full-day excursions to prime northern forest and boreal habitat in hopes of finding breeding evidence for 15 to 20 species of warblers, 10 species of sparrows, several species of flycatchers, vireos and thrushes, boreal specialties such as Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher; and many more. We will visit the Alvin Creek headwaters and other excellent stretches of forest further south.

This is a perfect chance to explore the incredible areas our North Woods have to offer, while contributing to a critical project for bird conservation.

The WSO Convention Committee has again reserved a large block of rooms allowing members to take early advantage of special pricing. And once again the arrangement offers convention-goers a chance to stay at the site of the Friday evening awards ceremony, silent auction, Saturday luncheon, annual meeting, workshops, paper sessions and Saturday evening banquet.

The hotel, located at 618 State Highway 32, Wabeno, has offered WSO a large room block hold at a discounted price of $83 per night plus tax for a Standard King or Double. Call toll-free to 1-800-487-9522 and mention WSO. The hotel has a large indoor pool, and free camping with electrical hookups in its parking lot on a first-come, first-served basis.

Rooms are reserved for WSO members from Friday, June 16, through Monday, June 19, but it’s first-come, first-served and all rooms will be released on May 16. The convention format initiated in 2015 -- with major field trips following rather than preceding Saturday’s annual meeting, presentations and banquet -- will be continued. Other details:

CONVENTION REGISTRATION at the hotel will begin on Friday afternoon, along with the opening of the silent auction. There again will be a picnic, included with registration.

THE CORE CONVENTION SCHEDULE will remain unchanged with registration continuing on Friday evening leading up to the annual Passenger Pigeon Awards ceremony and reception. Saturday will start early with local field trips, followed by a luncheon at the hotel, the annual business meeting and presentations.

A SATURDAY EVENING SOCIAL HOUR at the hotel will conclude the silent auction and lead into the banquet and keynote speaker.

ALL-DAY FIELD TRIPS will depart from the hotel on Sunday and Monday mornings, with a special “Birds and Beer” event planned for Sunday evening, tentatively to be held at the Big Easel Gallery and Bistro in Wabeno.

SILENT AUCTION PLANS are picking up steam, but your help again will determine how successful we are. Those interested in contributing should call coordinator Janet Speth at 608.886.8825 or e-mail her at janet.speth@gmail.com to arrange pick up. Items do not have to be bird-related. Once again Kay Simandl is donating some of her quilting artistry and renowned artist (and field trip coordinator) Tom Schultz is donating a Song Sparrow watercolor he did for the National Geographic Field Guide. Auction proceeds will be divided between the Breeding Bird Atlas and the fund to maintain WSO’s Honey Creek Preserve.

Bird City communities achieve more than 1,000 conservation actions

From Page 1

is in its seventh year of awarding recognition. “This astounding growth rate speaks to the innovative and appealing nature of Bird City’s approach to mobilizing community action on behalf of bird conservation.”

To be recognized as a Bird City, a community must meet at least 7 of 22 criteria spread across five categories: habitat creation and protection, community forest management, limiting threats to birds, education, and the recognition and celebration of International Migratory Bird Day.

“The success that Bird City Wisconsin has achieved (over 1,000 actions are taken each year to be awarded Bird City recognition and another 175 to meet the High Flyer requirements) is a testament to the hundreds of people who are responsible for Bird City programs in all 101 communities.

Lenz said BCW was working to improve the information and services that it provides to its communities, while also continuing to foster programs in other states. BCW has helped launch Bird City Minnesota and Bird Town Indiana and is helping in the planning process in Iowa and Texas.

Bird City maintains a web site http://www.birdcitywisconsin.org/Index.html and can be followed on Facebook www.facebook.com/BirdCityWisconsin/ or e-mail Lenz at director@birdcitywisconsin.org to join their email list.
Many ways to meet the Atlas Challenge for 2017

Members of the Steering Committee for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II have been extraordinarily busy during the first month of 2017. Because the new year is an exciting time for birders, with the opportunity it presents to set new birding goals for the year ahead, they have restocked the Atlas eBird pages with a number of challenges and the tools to help meet them.

What follows are teasers to content at http://ebird.org/content/atlaswi/ that actually is better displayed (with quick links and wonderful photos) online, so if you already are an eBirder and have a computer use it right now and take advantage of this article simply as a prompt.

But if you haven’t yet developed the eBird habit and aren’t yet among the more than 1,146 contributors to the Atlas, keep reading and see some of what you are missing out on if the Atlas doesn’t figure into your 2017 birding goals.

Challenges posed by the Atlas team

**Find one of these 16 species yet to be confirmed breeding in Wisconsin:**

1. Eurasian Tree Sparrow
2. Swainson’s Hawk
3. Prairie Warbler
4. Bay-breasted Warbler
5. White-faced Ibis
6. Laughing Gull
7. Chuck-will’s-widow
8. Black-billed Magpie
9. Little Blue Heron
10. Great-tailed Grackle
11. American Three-toed Woodpecker
12. Boreal Owl
13. Monk Parakeet
14. White-winged Dove
15. Solitary Sandpiper
16. Black Rail

Sure, there are reasons why these species haven’t yet been confirmed, but they’re not all outside the realm of possibility. Keep your eyes open and adding one of these species to your confirmation list could make for a very special 2017.

**Complete a block** – We estimate that it takes about 20 hours, including a few night hours, to complete a block. If you’re new to the Atlas team, or just want step up your Atlas game in 2017, this is the easiest way to do it! Get started by going to http://wsobirds.org/atlas-county-coordinators and getting in touch with your county coordinator.

**Atlas your way to a lifer** – Even better if you confirm your lifer as a breeder! Keep watch on Atlas communications throughout early 2017 as we’ll be rolling out details on how we can help connect you with the birds you want to see.

**Submit 50 Atlas checklists from low-effort areas** – This year, we need atlasers to travel to out-of-the-way places so we can start tackling remote blocks. Many easy-access blocks, i.e., those near urban areas, are close to complete, and we need to start taking those roads less traveled. Where can you travel this summer that has an untouched block?

**Go night atlasing** – After two years, many blocks are nearly complete, but lack the nocturnal birding hours are needed to give a true picture of the block’s diversity. By committing a few hours of night birding, the number of completed blocks will increase dramatically. Night birding tutorials have just been posted to the eBird Atlas site and a nocturnal field trip schedule is being announced in early 2017 to help with this goal.

**Submit 100 checklists during the breeding season, or 500, or 1000** – This one is pretty simple. Just take the bar you set last year and raise it! To find out how many checklists you have submitted to date, head to https://ebird.org/ebird/myebird

**Take the eBird checklist-a-day challenge** – As you set out to tackle your Atlas goals in 2017, the checklists you submit can help you work toward this year-long challenge. They don’t have to be three-hour treks across a rugged island reachable only by helicopter, involve staring down a moose, or even involve “exciting” species.

Your checklists can actually be short 10-minute jaunts taken on your lunch break through a downtown park, or even a night-time checklist that contains no birds!

There are other new tools that Atlasers need to check out on the Atlas eBird site:

**Complated blocks now displayed**:

There are now several ways to see which blocks are complete. A completed block is not closed, so if your home or favorite birding spot is in a complete block, you can continue to enter checklists.

But with over 1,200 blocks to cover, being aware of which blocks are already complete can help us all direct attention to the blocks that need your work the most.

**Acceptable Breeding Codes Chart**:

Wondering how to code a certain behavior for a certain species? You asked for it, here it is — a complete guide to which codes are good for which species and which aren’t.
**ATLASER SPOTLIGHT**

**Nick Anich: ‘This project can only succeed if everyone across the state chips in’**

The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II is a volunteer-driven effort to survey the distribution and abundance of our state’s breeding birds. This series has focused on some of the more than 1,146 volunteers who have been so vital to the Atlas. But in addition to those volunteers, there are a handful of project leaders who work tirelessly year-round to help pull off this effort.

This month, meet the Atlas coordinator, **Nick Anich**, a conservation biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in Ashland County!

**NAME:** Nick Anich

**HOMETOWN:** Ashland  
**AGE:** 36  
**NUMBER OF YEARS BIRDING:** I have been actively birding for about 16 years.

**OTHER CITIZEN SCIENCE EXPERIENCE:** I’ve been eBirding almost as long as I’ve been birding, and I’m a regular participant on some local Christmas Bird Counts. I also run two Breeding Bird Survey routes in Bayfield County, and have helped with some of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative’s owl and nightjar surveys.

**FAVORITE BIRD:** Whatever interesting bird I’ve seen lately is my favorite. I saw some Long-tailed Ducks yesterday. Tomorrow it will be something different.

**MOTIVATION TO ATLAS:** This is an incredibly important project if we want to effectively conserve our state’s birds and the habitats they breed in. In our current age, there is the danger that conservation, especially non-game conservation, will be receiving diminishing attention. The atlas is our chance to learn which species are doing well, which species are doing poorly, and which landscapes are most in need of our attention. The more we know about the basics, answers to questions like -- which species are we talking about, how many of them are there, where do they occur, what are the biggest threats to bird populations -- the better job we can do of applying our limited conservation resources to the most important issues.

And we can only gather that information through a project on this scale. This project can only succeed if everyone across the state chips in.

**PRIMARY ATLASING LOCATION:** At this point I’ve got the priority block I live in completed, two in Bayfield County half done, and three in Iron County I was eager to finish last year but was stopped by two huge storms that washed out roads everywhere up north. My blocks include a variety of habitats, from town, to barrens, to agricultural lands, to deep forest, which helps keep things fresh.

**MOST EXCITING ATLAS FIND:** Last year I was down near the Brunsweiler River in Ashland County, in some mature hemlock-maple forest near the Brunsweiler River in Ashland County. It was the only confirmation so far for Atlas II for a species that was confirmed in 10 blocks last Atlas, so it’s also a species we’re a bit concerned about.

**Most rewarding part of Atlasing:** Obviously I enjoy the parts that everybody else enjoys: getting outside, birding more slowly, hunting down a confirmation, and learning something new every day. I also have the unique privilege of being on the receiving end of all these observations, so I would say the most rewarding part is watching this effort unfold. Birders all across the state are contributing their time and skill and collectively over 1,100 people are piecing together an incredible picture of our state’s birdlife. I often think about what Noel Cutright or Sam Robbins, or any of Wisconsin’s other ornithologists over the past 150 years would think about watching all this data roll in -- and in real time. It’s amazing and very rewarding for us at Atlas central to see it unfold.

**Advice for someone “on the fence” about participating:** I think there is still a pervasive notion that the only people who can contribute to the project are real experts, but that is not the case. We’ve got backyard birders, we’ve got novices paired up with local experienced birders, and you see every type of birder making a contribution. If people are on the fence about participating, they have an interest but aren’t sure how to start, they should look up their county coordinator at [http://wsobirds.org/atlas-county-coordinators](http://wsobirds.org/atlas-county-coordinators), contact him or her and start the discussion. This project is so important and so enjoyable, we constantly hear how rewarding it’s been for people, so I’d hate for a birder to be sitting there missing out on the fun. Join us!

**Photo by Ryan Brady**

**Nick Anich, scoping Lake Superior at Cornucopia, notes: “I’ve been eBirding almost as long as I’ve been birding.”**

**Photo by Nick Anich**

**Nick Anich found this Swainson’s Thrush carrying food in some mature hemlock-maple forest near the Brunsweiler River in Ashland County. It was the only confirmation so far for Atlas II for a species that was confirmed in 10 blocks last Atlas.**

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**HOMETOWN:** Ashland

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**MOST EXCITING ATLAS FIND:** Last year I was down near the Brunsweiler River in Ashland County, in some mature hemlock-maple forest, when I was hearing this call note I couldn’t initially place. Then it dawned on me that it was the liquid “whip” note of the Swainson’s Thrush. I tracked it down and found 2 agitated adults carrying food. It was the only confirmation of this species so far for the Atlas, a species that was confirmed in 10 blocks last Atlas, so it’s also a species we’re a bit concerned about.

**Most rewarding part of Atlasing:** Obviously I enjoy the parts that everybody else enjoys: getting outside, birding more slowly, hunting down a confirmation, and learning something new every day. I also have the unique privilege of being on the receiving end of all these observations, so I would say the most rewarding part is watching this effort unfold. Birders all across the state are contributing their time and skill and collectively over 1,100 people are piecing together an incredible picture of our state’s birdlife. I often think about what Noel Cutright or Sam Robbins, or any of Wisconsin’s other ornithologists over the past 150 years would think about watching all this data roll in -- and in real time. It’s amazing and very rewarding for us at Atlas central to see it unfold.

**Advice for someone “on the fence” about participating:** I think there is still a pervasive notion that the only people who can contribute to the project are real experts, but that is not the case. We’ve got backyard birders, we’ve got novices paired up with local experienced birders, and you see every type of birder making a contribution. If people are on the fence about participating, they have an interest but aren’t sure how to start, they should look up their county coordinator at [http://wsobirds.org/atlas-county-coordinators](http://wsobirds.org/atlas-county-coordinators), contact him or her and start the discussion. This project is so important and so enjoyable, we constantly hear how rewarding it’s been for people, so I’d hate for a birder to be sitting there missing out on the fun. Join us!
Welcome to new WSO members

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology would like to welcome those new members who joined the organization between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, 2016.

Thank you for your support!

Your contributions make it possible for WSO to promote the enjoyment, study and conservation of Wisconsin's birds.

Linda Atkins, Middleton, WI
Matthew Berg, St Croix Falls, WI
Gary Casper, Slinger, WI
Robert Demge, Port Washington, WI
David Edlund, Tomahawk, WI
Christopher Fries, Perkins, MI
Diane Gloede, Cashton, WI
Kurt Goergen, Eau Claire, WI
Carlos Gonzalez, Melrose, WI
Darla Hobbs, Reedsburg, WI
Suzanne Kaepler, Cedar Grove, WI
Brad Kraut, Oconomowoc, WI
Hilda & David Kuter, Madison, WI
Frances Leick, Stratford, WI

Michael & Sue Lietz, Rhinelander, WI
Kimberlee McKeefry, Green Bay, WI
Maureen Murphy, Milwaukee, WI
Mike & Susan Nesemann, Lake Mills, WI
Dory Owen, Windsor, WI
Stewart Randall, Delafield, WI
Bill Reichenbach, Pewaukee, WI
Peter Schmidt, Viola, WI
Kevin Spaulding, Madison, WI
Ed Spoon Verona, WI
Christopher & Suzanne Stone, Bayside, WI
Eleanor Wages, New Berlin, WI

WSO BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Jenny Wenzel
Secretary

So tell us a little about your background and how you first got involved in birding.

I have lived my entire life in Wisconsin and have always been interested in nature, wildlife and the outdoors.

Highlights of my North Woods summer vacations growing up were always seeing wildlife, including Bald Eagles nesting, deer, an occasional bear, and getting brief glimpses of Pileated Woodpeckers while out fishing or hiking.

At night, listening to Whip-poor-wills and Barred Owls calling while sitting by the campfire always was (and still is) a treat.

I have also always enjoyed feeding backyard birds but was turned on to ‘birding’ as a hobby by a beginning birder warbler walk I saw advertised by the Hoy Audubon Society at the local bird food store in 2007. I quickly made lots of new friends and was hooked on birding!

I have been active in the Hoy Audubon Society ever since and have served on the Board of Directors for Hoy holding various positions, including treasurer, newsletter editor, vice president, president and I am currently a director.

How did you come to join WSO?

I became involved in WSO because of the wonderful birding field trips and friends that I made.

The annual WSO convention and winter birding trips are some of my favorite WSO activities. I am currently WSO secretary, having served on the WSO board of directors since I was elected at the 2012 convention.

Do you do a lot of birding?

I have observed 342 species of birds in Wisconsin and my favorite bird is the Pileated Woodpecker. I have travelled to Costa Rica and Peru on birding trips and in the U.S. I've visited Texas, Arizona and Washington for birding with great friends.

Tell us a little about your work and other activities.

I live with my husband, David, in California. We've been married for 19 years. We monitor a 20-box bluebird trail at the South Hills Golf Course in Racine County and still vacation up in Marinette County each summer.

I'm employed as an occupational therapist and a certified hand therapist, working for Aurora Health Care.

When I'm not birding, David and I enjoy gardening, hiking, kayaking, fishing, and spending time with family as well as with our furry family of dogs and cats.

Try the eBirder and enjoy color and prompt delivery

If you use email but still are getting the snail mail version of The Badger Birder you are missing out on a lot.

The eBirder has added many color photos (most of them of birds) and graphics along with the increased content. Printing in color costs a lot, so if you are still getting the newsletter by mail, it remains in black and white; but on the internet we added the color for free.

In addition, the eBirder goes out to members almost as soon as it is completed around the 1st of the month, while the snail mail version reaches folks at least a week and sometimes two later by the time it's printed and mailed.

So if you already use email, this might be the time to switch to the eBirder. All it takes is an email request to membership@WSOBirds.org

And did you know that you can look up past issues of the Birder on the WSO website? Check out http://wsobirds.org/ebb-recent Only members receive the most recent issues, so if you want to keep up on current happenings, keep your membership up-to-date or join WSO today.
Hearty birders brave bitter cold and tackle the lakefront

BY THOMAS SCHULZ
Field Trip Co-chair

The sunshine was bright, but the temperature was bitterly cold (zero degrees!) – and a brisk west wind added to the chill.

Despite the cold, close to 40 hardcore birders showed up at South Shore Yacht Club as we gathered for our first field trip of the year.

Unfortunately, the very cold weather of the past several days had completely frozen the entire harbor area, and the only waterfowl hanging out were a group of Canada Geese that were huddled up on the ice. An adult Cooper’s Hawk was perched in a large nearby spruce – the first of the year for many attendees!

From there the group headed down to an area near the mouth of the Milwaukee River (which was also entirely frozen, including the harbor), where an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull had been spotted about an hour earlier during scouting. Unfortunately he had departed prior to our arrival, and all that was left was a large flock of Herring Gulls.

The next stop was further north at the North Point Snack Bar. Lake Michigan was still largely open, but there were many ice floes scattered about, and the ducks (mostly Common Goldeneye) were fairly far offshore. We could see large flocks of ducks further north, so we drove up to North Point for a better look.

More Common Goldeneye were present, but even more numerous were large groups of Greater Scaup, with a few Lesser Scaup and a couple of Redheads mixed in.

It was interesting to see their behavior as they swam about through the ice floes – forming long, single-file lines that apparently made it easier to get through the floating ice patches. The highlight there was spotting a Long-tailed Duck that was swimming and diving in front of the other birds, and there were a couple dozen or so Buffleheads here and there also – as well as Red-breasted Mergansers and Herring Gulls.

The group’s next destination was the Port Washington Harbor, with an initial stop at Coal Dock Park.

With the fishing channel having open water, in addition to the standard species we had already found, we added singles of Ring-necked Duck, American Coot, and a nice male Green-winged Teal.

We then moved over to the Marina parking area, to check out the waterbirds that were hanging out between the docks, between which the water was mostly frozen.

Sitting on the ice were good-sized groups of Canada Geese, but we carefully picked out a few interesting birds among them, including two Greater White-fronted Geese and a Ross’s Goose – both quite unexpected at this time of year!

Other highlights included two Cackling Geese, a Northern Pintail, a couple of American Black Ducks, and an adult Great Black-backed Gull.

Our final stops for the day were at Sheboygan’s lakefront, where the Sheboygan River was mostly solid ice.

Sitting among the Herring Gulls there was another Great Black-backed Gull Moving to North Point for a final stop, the remaining members of the group found an adult Glaucoous Gull and a lone Ring-billed.

Thanks to everyone who braved the cold to participate in this field trip, and to Jeff Baughman for co-leading.
Tufted Titmouse: *Baeolophus bicolor*

By DIANA HIERLMEIER

The Tufted Titmouse is a common songbird of deciduous forests in eastern North America. This species is easily identified by its overall grayish color, lighter on the breast and belly, and by its gray crest and blackish forehead. Its flanks have a rusty wash that resembles the color of beech or oak leaves in winter. In juvenile plumage, the black on the head is reduced. Their length averages 6.3 inches, wingspan is 11 inches and weight varies from 0.6 to 0.9 ounces.

These birds are acrobatic foragers, often flock with chickadees, nuthatches and woodpeckers and are regular visitors to feeders, where they are assertive over smaller birds. They often hang upside down or sideways as they investigate cones, underside of branches and leaf clusters.

Conservation status for the Tufted Titmouse is currently “Least Concern.” Populations increased between 1966 and 2014, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey with 100% of the Tufted Titmouse population living within the U.S. This species has expanded its range northward over that last 50 years, a trend currently being observed anecdotally in Wisconsin and which the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas is expected to shed light on. Possible explanations include climate change, reversion of farmlands to forests and the growing popularity of backyard bird feeders.

The Tufted Titmouse is typically found in woodlands below 2,000 feet, deciduous and evergreen forests, backyards, parks and orchards; typically in areas with dense canopy and a variety of tree species. The birds occur in areas where rainfall is greater than 24 inches per year, and are more common where rainfall exceeds 32 inches per year. These birds mainly eat insects all year long including caterpillars, beetles, ants, wasps, stink bugs, treehoppers as well as spiders and snails. The Tufted Titmouse also consumes seeds, nuts and berries, including acorn and beech nuts.

Experiments with titmice indicate that they always choose the largest seed available. Because mast is such an important resource, variations in the survival and productivity of mast-bearing trees probably impact their population density. This species routinely spends its entire life not far from its birthplace. They regularly eat snow in winter when water is not readily available.

The Tufted Titmouse is monogamous and mates for life. These birds are territorial during the breeding season, live either in pairs or in trios composed of a breeding pair and one of their offspring from the previous year. From the end of July until August they form small flocks that remain together until the following spring. Nest building begins in late March through April with the first eggs laid around May 4-11.

Nests are built in tree cavities that have been excavated by other species such as woodpeckers. This species is dependent upon dead wood for their homes, another reason for allowing dead wood to remain standing. Inside the cavity, the nest consists of a cup made from damp leaves, mosses and grasses and bark strips. The inner lining of the nest cup is lined with hair sometimes plucked directly from living animals. Hair from old nests has been identified from raccoons, oppossums, mice, woodchucks, squirrels, rabbits, livestock and even humans.

The Tufted Titmouse also will nest in artificial structures including nest boxes, fence posts and metal pipes. Clutch size for this species is three to nine eggs, and they typically produce one brood per year. Incubation ranges from 12 to 14 days and the nestling period ranges from 15 to 16 days.

Unlike chickadees, Tufted Titmouse pairs do not gather into large flocks outside the breeding area. Instead, most remain on the territory as a pair. They hoard food in the fall and winter and will take advantage of a bird feeder’s bounty by storing many of the seeds they get. Storage sites are typically within 130 feet of the feeder. The birds will take only one seed per trip and usually shell the seed before hiding it.

The Tufted Titmouse is a very vocal bird and quick to respond to the sounds of agitation by other birds and will come in close to investigate or join a group of birds in mobbing a predator. Their vocalizations consist of call notes given by both sexes and a song usually produced by the male. There are 10 different groups of calls currently recognized with the most common call being “peter-peter-peter.” These inquisitive birds are easily attracted to playbacks or whistled imitations of their songs.

The most typical predators of adults are feral and house cats, various hawks, owls and snakes. Individuals give typical high-pitched passerine alarm calls in response to overflying hawks.

**FUN FACTS:**

-- In Cherokee legend, the Tufted Titmouse is regarded as a messenger.

-- A group of titmice are collectively known as a “banditry” and a “dissimulation” of titmice.

-- The oldest known wild Tufted Titmouse lived 13 years and three months.

-- Reliable locations for sighting this species include Wyalusing State Park in Grant County, Cook Arboretum in Rock County and Putnam Park in Eau Claire.

**To dig more deeply:**


**DIANA HIERLMEIER,** her husband, two dogs and an indoor cat enjoy an acre of farmland in Random Lake that is a certified Wildlife Habitat and an Advanced Bird Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation.
KEEP LOOKING UP

Bird feeding year-round: Your thoughts?

By STEVE PETZNICK

This topic seems to be polarized with both sides offering legitimate reasons to either feed birds or not to feed them during the warmer months. I’m presenting both sides of this debate with the hope that some folks will share their thoughts on the subject with me so I can present a follow-up article with tallied results in April.

Reasons to feed throughout the year

are many and varied:

In spring a late season snow may cover up native food sources, local native food sources may be depleted from a harsh or prolonged winter, it’s easier for migrants to find food and thus more time can be spent resting. Then there’s the person enjoyment gained from attracting colorful birds into your yard for and the knowledge gained from observing feeding behaviors of “warm weather” species.

In summer, feeding provides a quick and easy food source for avian parents “on the go” so more effort can be devoted to offspring care. And people can get closer to birds more easily since we tend to be outside for extended periods, learning different colorations of plumage in immature birds, watching parent teach the young how to dine at feeders and observing the learning curve that takes place in offspring. Summer is also the time when species are replacing flight and body feathers, which takes a lot of energy.

Natural disasters such as drought, floods, fires or tornados can wipe out local food sources at a critical time causing higher local mortality. Feeding buffers those food losses.

In fall, there can be an overabundance of birds as resident, migrants and first year birds all tap into the same natural food sources. By feeding you help reduce the impact on local natural food reserves. Feeding in fall allows birds to bulk up more easily for migration, and for those already en route, offers a quick stop for refueling. Migrants often gather in mixed flocks with resident species who know where area food sources are, saving migrants time and energy. Providing seeds high in fats and oils is healthier for birds than eating berries from non-native shrubs or trees like buckthorn.

According to an article in the Jan. 5, 2015 issue of Birds & Birding entitled Winter Bird Feeding: Good or Bad for Birds, "A study conducted during winter in Wisconsin showed that Black-capped Chickadees with access to bird seed had a much higher overwinter survival rate (69%) compared with those lacking access to human-provided seed (37%)." I invite you to read that article because it shares more thoughts on whether we should provide supplemental feeding at all. Which brings me to the other side of the topic.

Reasons not to feed year round:

Feeders can bring unexpected species together and bring birds together more frequently than normal, therefore creating ideal conditions for disease, parasites and other contaminants to be transmitted. Sick birds normally subject to the natural culling process are allowed the chance to live longer and spread disease.

Then there is problem of attracting unwanted mammals such as bears, raccoons, opossums and feral cats. My father-in-law who lives southeast of Antigo doesn’t feed during warmer months due to bears visiting feeders and causing destruction. Some of his feeders are only 10 feet from the house!

Many people believe there are plenty of natural food resources during the warm months. Also, people are more active and have less time to watch birds. There’s a greater financial expense to feed year round, plus the need for a more rigorous hygiene schedule to maintain healthy feeding stations.

So do any of these pros or cons stand out as your justification for whether to feed or don’t feed year around? The topic has many facets, so give the issue some thought and draw your own conclusions.

If you feel strongly either way, I ask that you contact my work email address and share your thoughts. Your opinion will be published every comment, but all opinions will be tallied.

I look forward to sharing the results come April when some of us will stop feeding for the season and others will continue. Until then, keep looking up.

STEVE PETZNICK welcomes your opinions by contacting him at Steve.Petznick@outagamie.org Besides being a naturalist and land steward for over 25 years at Mosquito Hill Nature Center, Steve served on New London’s Tree Board for eight years, was a catalyst for New London becoming a Bird City Wisconsin and continues to serve as co-chair of New London’s Bird City committee.

Photo by Melissa Penta for the National Wildlife Federation

“Some of my greatest backyard bird-watching moments have been in summer, when parent birds brought their fledglings to introduce them to my feeders and baths,” says Wisconsin naturalist George H. Harrison, author of seven books about backyard birding. “I’ve seen fuzzy, rotund baby chickadees, red-capped Downy Woodpecker young and spot-breasted American Robin chicks, many begging for food from overworked parents.”
Birding clubs in Wisconsin

Lafayette County Bluebird Society opens nature center with a broader mission

In the third part of The Badger Birder’s series on birding groups in Wisconsin, Carol McDaniel, president of the Lafayette County Bluebird Society (LCBS), offers a look at her organization:

MISSION: The society is dedicated to the conservation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesters.

FACILITIES: Since 2014, LCBS has owned and operated the Bluebird Nest Nature Center, 308 Main St. in Darlington. Programs and displays at the center are free and open to the public and are intended to increase public interest and awareness in specific areas of the natural world in order to build a strong base of individuals who will support the ecosystem of Southwestern Wisconsin.

The programs are focused on native birds, threatened and endangered species, the Driftless Area, and the general fauna and flora of Southwestern Wisconsin. The center is open 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Friday. The society holds its regular meetings at the center. Due to turnout, its annual meeting each April is held at the Town Bank in Darlington.

HISTORY: The LCBS was founded in 1981 with the mission of bringing bluebirds back to the county. The first meeting was held in a church basement and about 10 people attended. The organization is incorporated and has a healthy membership.

Club members are involved yearly with monitoring and reporting bluebird trails throughout the county. Monitors report via email to the club president each week during the nesting season. A final report is compiled in September.

Many monitors report to the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW). Members reported over 600 bluebirds fledged from its trails in 2016.

Each June LCBS has a bluebird trail hike and picnic. LCBS has designated the Simple Box, a nest box designed by LCBS members, as its official nest box for bluebirds.

The Society also has placed Purple Martin housing near Argyle and at Yellowstone Lake State Park in an effort to bring the Purple Martin back to Lafayette County. LCBS conducted a Red-headed Woodpecker survey in Lafayette County in 2010.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS:

-- Matt Nechvatal, Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II coordinator for Lafayette County, will speak March 20 at the nature center about the atlas.

-- Dr. Stanley Temple will speak April 9 at the LCBS Spring Meeting as part of the celebration by Darlington, a Bird City Wisconsin community, of International Migratory Bird Day. Temple’s talk is titled “Making the Migratory Bird Treaty Work, Then and Now: A Centennial Assessment.” Temple is Beers-Bascom Professor Emeritus in Conservation at UW-Madison and a senior fellow of the Aldo Leopold Foundation.

MEMBERSHIP: Membership fees are $5 for youth, $10 for individuals and $20 for families; an application form can be found on the web site. Meetings and trail hikes are free and open to the public and are posted on the web site and on Facebook.

MORE INFORMATION: Visit the LCBS web site at www.lafayette-countybluebirdsociety.wordpress.com or email lafayettecountybluebirdsociety@yahoo.com or visit the Bluebird Nest Nature Center page on Facebook.
Great Wisconsin Birdathon will again make it fun to give back to the birds

By DIANE PACKETT
Great Wisconsin Birdathon Coordinator

Whether you’re a backyard birdwatcher or a 24-hour birding marathoner, the Great Wisconsin Birdathon will once again be an opportunity to join your friends and give back to Wisconsin’s birds.

This annual event, to be staged in conjunction with a number of field trips offered through the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, raised more than $77,000 for Bird Protection Fund priority projects in 2016. Plans are taking shape for the 2017 GWB campaign, which will take place from April 15 to June 15, with the goal of raising at least $75,000.

Birders statewide are finding creative ways to use the Birdathon as a tool to raise awareness and support for birds’ needs throughout the year in Wisconsin. Organizations and Bird City Wisconsin communities that participated last year received 50% of their teams’ earnings, totaling $12,000, to be used for their local projects.

The Walk in the Parks event by the Noel J. Cutright Bird Club will send teams of birders to the parks of Ozaukee and Washington Counties again this year, and in the same spirit, the River Raptors team, headed by ornithologist Sumner Matteson, is recruiting teams to bird by kayak along different stretches of Wisconsin’s rivers.

Our lineup of Signature Teams is still being finalized, but Cutright’s Old Coots, the Lake Superior eBirders and the Secretary Birds will be back, along with two new teams: the Finch Gang, well-known bird wranglers of the Glacial Heritage Area, and a new Lower Wisconsin Riverway team headed by Barb Barzen.

Through its annual field trip booklet, the NRF will be offering its members 19 trips to benefit the Bird Protection Fund in 2017. New offerings this year include hummingbird banding with Mickey O’Conner, birding Cat Island with Tom Prebysh, and fall birds of Pheasant Branch with Mike McDowell.

We are currently arranging winter and early spring field trips to see owls and other raptors and migrating waterfowl, and hope to offer “pop-up” trips for breaking events, such as Wood Duck jumps.

Watch the Great Wisconsin Birdathon website (WIBirdathon.org) as well as the GWB and Wisconsin Birding Facebook pages and the Wisbirdn listserv for announcements.

The Birdathon website will be available for team and individual registration around Feb. 15, and will have the latest updates on the campaign.

The GWB is a partnership between the NRF, Wisconsin DNR, Bird City Wisconsin, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Madison Audubon Society, Wisconsin Audubon Council and the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative.

Among the Bird Protection Fund’s priority projects are the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II, Bird City Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Bird Monitoring Program, Wisconsin Stop-Over Initiative, Wisconsin Kirtland’s Warbler Project, Whooping Crane Reintroduction Program, Important Bird Areas-Southern Forests and Greater Prairie Chicken programs, as well as an education program in the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica.

Email Diane.Packett@wisconsin.gov or call 920-219-2587 for more information.

It took many to make Honey Creek purchase a success

By MICHAEL JOHN JAEGERT
WSO President

We’ve now wound down the formal campaign to fund the purchase of the 104-acre Dischler addition to our Honey Creek Nature Preserve in the Baraboo Hills. We were very successful and can complete the purchase. We closed on part of the property in December and will formally acquire the second part this spring.

What truly amazed me was how many people helped make this a success. We had more than 200 donors. And in the end, every donor counted.

Many people told me that they could only give such-and-such amount, but they wished they could give more. I count myself in that group. We’re grateful for every donation we received, no matter what the size. And while we benefitted enormously from both a Sauk County mitigation grant and a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant, we needed every gift to reach and top our goal of $500,000.

I was interested in how many donations of different sizes we received. The chart labeled “Number of Donors” shows the basic distribution. You can see that we had 57 donors who gave up to $100, some 58 more between $101 and $250, and an additional 30 donations of $251 to $500. That’s 145 separate donations of $500 or less.

The chart “Cumulative Amount Raised” shows the total amount raised at increasing donation levels. For example, donations of up to $100 netted us $2,290. All donations of up to $250 yielded $8,090 and all gifts up to $500 totaled $14,565. Totaling up all donations of up to $1,000, we raised $28,665.

Members matter. You should all be proud of your contributions. Again, thank you so much.
January proves warmer, drier -- and quieter -- for birders

By Mark Korducki

After a cold and snowy December, the month of January began with above normal temperatures and continued that way for much of the month.

There also was little snow during the month. It was a fairly quiet month for birding but a few rarities were found to make things interesting.

A Black-billed Magpie was observed in Douglas County feeding on a deer carcass with ravens. This species is rare but regular in winter in the northwest corner of the state.

A Northern Mockingbird in Grant County was a nice find and appears to be overwintering. Grant also produced a Eurasian Tree Sparrow as did Kewaunee County. This species has been showing up in the state with greater regularity in the past few years. Will nesting be documented?

Winnebago County was a gull hotspot. Nine species were reported during the second and third week of the month. An adult California Gull was the rarest of the bunch. Even more unusual for the season, however, was the Franklin’s Gull that was seen for the Christmas Bird Count week and continued well into January.

A few Snowy Owls were found near Freedom and another turned up in Milwaukee. After the invasions of the last few winters, this season has produced only a handful.

Winter finches also have made a poor showing but in mid-month Bohemian Waxwing numbers increased significantly in the north and central part of the state. This colorful and gregarious species is always a treat.

The days are slowly getting longer and this increased photo period will undoubtedly trigger Northern Cardinals and House Finches to start singing.

Spring migration is not far away.

In addition to compiling this monthly report, Mark Korducki coordinates Wisconsin’s 92 Breeding Bird Survey routes.

33 competitors travel 5,853 ‘green’ miles in their BIGBY year

From Page 1

place goes to Tony Nowak, also of Outagamie County, with 188 species. All in all 33 competitors covered a total of 5,853 “green” miles, with 4,894 miles biking, 930 walking, 18 skiing or snowshoeing and 5 kayaking or canoeing.

The concept of green birding has been around for many years. In 2006 a group of birders in Montreal, Quebec, decided to try for a “Big Green Big Year” and issued a challenge to birders all over the world to join with them. More than 500 people responded. In 2010 Milwaukee bird watchers Tim Vargo and Owen Boyle issued the challenge for Wisconsin.

Among the advantages of going green: you gain a deeper appreciation of your local area, you reduce your negative impact on the environment, you are physically active and you might even see more birds! Being out in the elements also means that you are surrounded by the sounds and sights of nature instead of being in the confines of a motorized vehicle.

Yes, of course, so much depends on where you live in the state, the distance to bodies of water, forest or specialty habitat, your willingness to get up early and bike in the dark just to see a single bird or whether you have the strength and stamina to tackle miles of hills because you live near drumlins and this is how you must travel to see your next target species.

Even if you’ve never tried it before, there is no time like now — and walking or biking short distances is a great way to start. It is so darn good for you. If you are a little competitive, or like to see how you compare to others in the state, you may be interested in getting your name on the “spreadsheet.”

Not so sure but want a little more information? Just go to the WSO website, click on BIGBY in the upper right hand corner near the search box, and there you will find all the information you need. You can also scroll to the bottom of the page and click on “2016 info” if you want to see some inspirational BIGBY birding.

While the competitive part is fun, nothing beats the pleasure of seeing the countryside, touring so many pastoral back roads and experiencing the interesting topography of our lovely state. Yes, it is exhilarating and quite addicting — but cooler than cool is the great feeling of getting to know your local birds and their habitats without burning fossil fuels.

Hope to see more of you on the list! Contact me at bigby@wsobirds.org for more information.

Past BIGBY Champions

2015: Tom Schultz (Green Lake) 231
2014: Ross Mueller (Outagamie) 230
2013: Alex Stark (La Crosse) 220
2012: Jesse Ellis (Dane) 215
2011: Dan Schneider (Dane) 240
2010: Scott Baughman (Sheboygan) 234
2016 state BIGBY champ: 243 species, 2,645 miles -- on a bike

By Ross Mueller
2016 WSO BIGBY Champion

The Big Green Birding Year – BIGBY – has become my preferred method of birding for the last four years. And 2016 was a particularly good year, thanks to my birding friends, especially members of the Northeast Wisconsin Birding Club, and to my experiences in previous years, iPhones, Facebook pages, good weather at important times and good fortune. And the BIGBY page on the WSO website kept up interest levels and communication through the year.

I’d like to review some of my adventures and misadventures, starting in my own backyard, favorably located just four blocks from downtown Appleton near the Fox River. My 2016 Yard List was 132 species – all BIGBY qualifiers. I have Fox River “flyovers” plus birds attracted by decades of birdscaping and an excellent water feature. The list includes Glaucous Gull, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Olive-sided, Yellow-bellied and Acadian Flycatchers, five vireos, all the swallows and 23 warbler species.

My most vivid yard memory is the Yellow-throated Warbler that I did not see: several club members bided my yard while I was trout-fishing in the Driftless Area for three days in May. Before leaving, I told Stuart Malcolm, one of the birders, NOT to find a Connecticut Warbler. He obliged (along with Michael Gray, Vicki Buchman and Lynn Koss). I received a text message: “No Connecticut Warbler, but we did have Yellow-throated Warbler………seriously.”

I never did get the warbler.

A bit further from home, I listed 206 species in my 7.5-mile radius “PATCH,” and most were BIGBY-qualifiers. My Patch includes a variety of habitats: Bubolz Nature Preserve (Northern Shrike), Outagamie County Landfill (November/December gulls), Jefferson Park and the outflow of Lake Winnebago (Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-necked Grebe), farm fields and ponds northwest of Sherwood (Red-necked and Wilson’s Phalaropes, Stilt Sandpiper, winter field birds) and the Fox River from Lake Winnebago through 1000 Islands Nature Center in Kaukauna (Harlequin Duck, White-winged Scoter and Peregrine Falcon). Other Patch birds included Ross’s Goose, all the swans, Northern Bobwhite, Baird’s Sandpiper, Sanderling, 9 gull species, Snowy Owl, Carolina Wren and Harris’s Sparrow.

The Harris’s Sparrow was an excellent BIGBY adventure. Thanks to Dar Tiede, our Christmas Bird Count coordinator who was emailed by a CBC participant in late October that her brother, Gene, possibly had a Harris’s Sparrow in his yard in Neenah. Dar confirmed the sighting and notified some area birders. I called Gene to set up a time for viewing – told him I’d be arriving in cycling gear at which point he said, “You don’t have to ride a bike, I’ll drive over and pick you up.”

I rode.

Gene’s yard was about 15x20 feet and could only be viewed through his bedroom window, where I sat, and eight minutes later the sparrow appeared. This was a minor triumph considering the eight unsuccessful rides, each a 12-mile roundtrip, to Bubolz Nature Center for an overwintering Harris’s Sparrow earlier in the year.

The greater adventures begin beyond the Patch. Each BIGBY year, I’ve covered the Buena Vista Grasslands to the Sheboygan Lakefront and much in between. My cabin near Hartmann’s Creek State Park serves as a base of operations in that area; Buena Vista is a 25-mile ride and usually I can pick up my target birds: Brewer’s Blackbird, Grasshopper Sparrow, Common Raven, Western Meadowlark and Upland Sandpiper. My luck with Prairie Chicken has been poor, but a Northern Mockingbird (confirmed breeding) was a total stroke of good luck.

My base of operations for the Sheboygan lakefront and Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest is my sister-in-law’s farmette adjoining the Sheboygan Marsh State Wildlife Area near Greenbush. Early last June, the lakefront produced Little, Lesser Black-backed, Bonaparte’s and Franklin’s Gulls along with Common Tern, and the following day, in the Kettle Moraine, I added Hooded and Cerulean Warblers plus Henslow’s Sparrow. On my ride home from Greenbush, I added American Bittern at dawn in the Marytown Marsh, then Dickcissel in the surrounding agricultural fields. Nice trip, indeed.

I had several excellent day trips: a couple of rides to Mack State Wildlife Area near Shiocton, one in April another in June. The April trip was mainly for Red-headed Woodpecker at the Herb Behnke Unit of the Wolf River Bottoms IBA. Got the woodpecker, and then picked up Trumpeter Swan at Mack. The June trip was combined with a stop at Mosquito Hill Nature Center for Prothonotary Warbler; then a hop over to Mack for Black Tern, Yellow-headed Blackbird and, one of my most uplifting sightings: Least Bittern – a three-year BIGBY nemesis.

My favorite day trip of the year was to Killsnake State Wildlife Area for Short-eared Owl on Nov. 14. I left home at 1 p.m. and arrived at 3:40, hoping that my wait for the owl would be short. Five minutes later, two owls appeared, very close. I had a couple of hours riding in the dark on the way home, but a gorgeous sunset was followed by rise of the “super-moon” in the east. A “cycling high.”

I’ve been asked about my equipment: mountain bike for sloppy urban riding, two touring bikes, each with fenders, rack, rear paniers for scope/tripod, one for fair weather long-distance rides and an older bike for less than ideal conditions, and one good road bike for efficient long rides when I’m not taking the scope and tripod. Compact Zeiss 10x25 binoculars have proven excellent. Kowa Prominar TSN 824M fluorite scope with Manfrotto 190 compact tripod. The Canon SX50 HS camera fits easily in a handlebar bag or fanny pack. I try to photograph as many BIGBY birds as I can. Two Planet Bike “Blaze” front headlamps and “Superflash” tailights for dark riding. And always A helmet with mirror.

I ended up with 243 species, 2,645 miles on the bike and the best of adventures and memories.

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Ross Mueller at the Mack State Wildlife Area

Next month’s Badger Birder belatedly takes a look at highlights of 2015 BIGBY champ Tom Schultz’s big year.
WSO weighs in on DNR’s Horicon master plan

By Michael John Jaeger
WSO President

I appeared before the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board on Jan. 24 to comment on the Horicon-Shaw Planning Group draft Master Plan.

This plan includes four state properties totaling about 12,400 acres in Dodge County. The four are Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area, Shaw Marsh Wildlife Area, Sinnissippi Public Hunting Ground and the Horicon Rough Fish Station.

The Society has been interested in the development of this master plan, as it includes one of southern Wisconsin’s premier birding sites. We raised two points. First, we felt the DNR should consider requiring non-toxic shot use for hunting in upland areas of the refuges. Second, we were concerned with the safety hazard that might result from allowing part of Horicon’s trail system leading away from the Education Center to be used as a bicycle trail.

Here are my comments:

“I’m submitting these comments on the Draft Master Plan on behalf of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. We have 2 areas of concern. The first relates to Non-Toxic Shot.

“Earlier in this planning process we asked the department to consider requiring non-toxic shot for shotgun hunting in upland areas of the Master Plan’s refuges. Ingestion of lead is known to cause serious illness and mortality in birds and other wildlife.

“The Fish and Wildlife Service bans lead shot for all bird hunting in federal refuges, including upland areas, and all waterfowl production areas, many of which also include significant amounts of upland habitats. “The department’s Oct. 16, 2016, summary of public comments received on the draft master plan states that: “It is outside the scope of master planning to address this issue. This is a statewide issue; the department cannot set property-by-property standards.”

“Given this guidance, WSO encourages the board to direct the department to address the limitation of lead shot for upland hunting on department lands statewide.

“I’d like to point out that last year’s Conservation Congress spring hearings included a question about limiting use of lead shot in upland areas of DNR lands. This ballot question ended in a near tie, missing a majority by only 39 votes out of the total 3,879 votes cast. Over 49% supported the idea.

“Our second concern regards the potential Gold Star Memorial Trail. Allowing bicycles along the southern edge of the Bachhuber Impoundment would be an unreasonable safety hazard for existing users of this trail.

“This section of trail starts from the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center. It is used heavily by wildlife watchers and educational groups, including large numbers of children. Mixing wildlife watchers, school groups and bicyclists in this location is an accident waiting to happen. The attention of wildlife watchers is often focused on animals well off the trail, especially when using binoculars or spotting scopes. And the focus of schoolchildren is probably on anything but the trail. WSO believes that adding bicycles in this area would discourage these long-established uses, in addition to creating a substantial safety risk.

“WSO is in no way against bicycle use of trails in general, just concerned with the specific conflicts in this location. If this section of trail is opened to bicyclists, they should be required to dismount and walk their bikes. This would lessen the conflicts with existing trail users near the Center.

“Thank you for the opportunity to comment this morning.”

This edition of the Birder went to press prior to the NRB meeting, so look for a follow-up story on what action the board did with the draft Master Plan in our March issue.

Atlas training opportunities to be offered

Register today

Atlas Regional Kickoff Events are FREE, but registration is required at least two weeks prior to the session you wish to attend. Sign up today at http://wsobirds.org/atlas-2017-regional-kickoff-workshops.

Split session topics

For Beginners: Intro to atlasing, successful strategies, overview of protocols
For experienced atlassers: Tricky codes, nocturnal atlasing, in-depth look at confusing protocols

What to bring:
- Personal laptop, tablet or mobile device for data entry session (if you have one)
- Your own food and drink for the day
- A friend! We want to add 300 new atlassers this year and you can help us do it.
- Binoculars/fiel clothes/boots, plus headlamp if attending a nocturnal field trip
- Questions about these events? Contact William Mueller at wpmueller1947@gmail.com

Workshop details

- Atlas results to date
- Focus areas and goals for 2017
- Basic training for new atlassers
- Advanced training for returning atlassers

- eBird data-entry workshop
- Tips from region’s top atlassers, with Q&A
- Chance to meet county coordinators, Atlas planners and other area atlassers

From Page 1

-- NORTHWEST: April 1, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.: Rice Lake Public Library / Barron County, with an optional morning field trip from 7 to 9:30 a.m. for spring waterfowl on Rice Lake.

-- NORTHEAST: April 8, noon to 5:30 p.m.: UW-Green Bay/Brown County, with an optional nocturnal field trip for owls, woodcock and snipe in southern Door County.

-- SOUTHEAST: April 29, 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.: Kenosha Public Library / Kenosha County, with an optional nocturnal field trip from 6:30 to 9 p.m. for owls and marsh birds in Racine and Kenosha Counties.

-- eBird data-entry workshop
-- Tips from region’s top atlassers, with Q&A
-- Chance to meet county coordinators, Atlas planners and other area atlassers

The Badger Birder 16 February 2017
WSO TOTALS FORM

Deadline: March 1, 2017

NAME

2016 Wisconsin Year Total: (threshold 200)

Wisconsin Life Total: (threshold 200)

ABA Area Life Total: (threshold 400)

The ABA Checklist delineation of the "ABA Area" will be used. This currently encompasses "the 49 continental United States, Canada, the French islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon, the adjacent waters to a distance of 200 nautical miles from land or half the distance to a neighboring country, whichever is less. Excluded by these boundaries are Bermuda, the Bahamas, Hawaii, and Greenland. (See http://blog.aba.org/2016/11/the-aba-adds-hawaii-now-what.html for an explanation of pending inclusion of Hawaii in "ABA Area.") Participation in submitting this total is limited to those who have a claim to being residents of Wisconsin.

2016 BIGBY Total: (threshold 100)

BIGBY= Big Green Big Year. This number is the total of all the species seen by selecting a center point (most likely your residence) and then noting all the birds found when walking, biking, canoeing, etc. from this central location. Any species found with the aid of a motorized form of transportation are not countable.

COUNTY LIFE TOTALS (threshold 125)

After each county for which you want to enter a county life total, please enter total on line provided:

Adams_________ Kenosha_________ Shawano_________
Ashland_________ Kewaunee_________ Sheboygan_________
Barron_________ La Crosse_________ Taylor_________
Bayfield_________ Lafayette_________ Trempealeau_________
Brown_________ Langlade_________ Vernon_________
Buffalo_________ Lincoln_________ Vilas_________
Burnett_________ Manitowoc_________ Walworth_________
Calumet_________ Marathon_________ Washburn_________
Chippewa_________ Marinette_________ Washington_________
Clark_________ Marquette_________ Waukesha_________
Columbia_________ Menominee_________ Waupaca_________
Crawford_________ Milwaukee_________ Waushara_________
Dane_________ Monroe_________ Winnebago_________
Dodge_________ Oconto_________
Door_________ Oneida_________
Douglas_________ Outagamie_________
Dunn_________ Oconto_________
Eau Claire_________ Pepin_________ Pierce_________
Pepin_________ Price_________ Polk_________
Fond du Lac_________ Portage_________
Forest_________ Price_________ Racine_________
Grant_________ Racine_________ Richland_________
Green_________ Rock_________
Green Lake_________ Rusk_________
Iowa_________ Sauk_________
Iron_________ Sauk_________
Jackson_________ St. Croix_________
Jefferson_________ Sauk_________
Juneau_________ Sawyer_________

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Fold and send to:
(see reverse)

BOB DOMAGALSKI
P.O. BOX 296
ST. NAZIANZ, WI 54232

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Fold in thirds, exposing return address.

Close with tape.

Attach correct postage.

DO NOT STAPLE!

Thank you.

BOB DOMAGALSKI
POST OFFICE Box 396
ST. NAZIANZ, WI 54232
5th rare Whooping Crane poached in Indiana

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is taking the lead in the apparent shooting death of a rare Whooping Crane that was migrating through Indiana.

Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a $2,500 reward for tips leading to a conviction in the fifth such poaching incident in the state since 2009.

The female bird was one of only about 100 Whooping Cranes that comprise its Eastern migratory population.

The Fish and Wildlife Service cited initial reports that the bird was killed with a high-powered rifle.

The bird’s remains were sent to its forensic lab in Oregon for confirmation as part of the investigation, said agency spokeswoman Tina Shaw.

Shaw said FWS was working with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Indiana DNR said the bird was found a few miles south of Lyons in Greene County, about 100 miles northwest of Louisville, and likely shot over the New Year’s weekend. Anyone with tips can call 317-346-7017.

Whooping Cranes are closely monitored by biologists with both banding and radio transmitters.

As of the first of the year, at least 35 Whooping Cranes have been confirmed in Indiana, three in Illinois, six in Kentucky, seven in Tennessee, 28 in Alabama, five in Florida, four in Georgia, and one in Louisiana, according to the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, a group of non-profit and government agencies working to return Whooping Cranes to the eastern US.

Largest hunting violation recorded in Jordan

The illegal killing and trading of birds is one of the rising issues for conservationists in the Mediterranean region.

It is a major challenge for governments and conservation organizations, as penalties in the region are not currently serving as a deterrent to illegal killing activities.

Authorities in Jordan announced recently the seizure of 7,000 dead birds in the largest illegal hunting violation ever recorded in the kingdom after receiving reports of a person who was in possession of large numbers of dead birds in the eastern desert.

Rangers from the Royal Department for Protecting Environment and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature caught the hunter and seized the dead birds in October.

Pigeon enthusiast punished for killing protected hawks

The U.S. attorney for the District of Connecticut said Thomas Kapusta, 63, of Westbury, N.Y., has been sentenced in Hartford to one year of probation for killing Red-Tailed Hawks and Cooper's Hawks and ordered to pay a $5,500 fine and perform 90 hours of community service at a local shelter.

Red-Tailed Hawks and Cooper's Hawks are birds of prey and consume pigeons as part of their natural diet. These raptors are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

According to court documents and statements, Kapusta and Adam Boguski were racing-pigeon enthusiasts who constructed and maintained a large pigeon coop and regularly let them fly outside the coop for exercise. Because they viewed hawks as a threat to their pigeons, they systematically captured, shot and killed them, and disposed of their carcasses.

Kapusta pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to take, capture and kill hawks, and four counts of taking, capturing and killing them. Boguski pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to take, capture and kill hawks, and two counts of taking, capturing and killing hawks. He awaits sentencing.

1. Drink great coffee
2. Support tropical habitat
3. Boost Bird City

Some of our most beloved Neotropical migrant songbirds – especially our thrushes, orioles, tanagers, and warblers – are suffering from loss of habitat when they fly south for the winter. One of the easiest things we can all do to support our migratory songbirds is to make sure that the coffee we buy comes from coffee farms that preserve bird habitat by using shade-grown practices that maintain large trees for wintering songbirds.

Bird City Wisconsin has established a partnership with Birds & Beans, a seller of shade-grown, organic coffee that is certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center as Bird Friendly.

TO PLACE AN ORDER:
2. Place your order
3. At the last step during checkout, when it asks, “Who referred you?” enter BCW2016

Bird City recommends forming a coffee club so that you, your family, friends and coworkers can place a large order that will reduce costs by saving on shipping.
WSO CALENDAR

Field Trips
March 12 (Sunday) – Sheboygan: Lakefront Birding
Meet: 8 a.m. at the Sheboygan Marina for birding along the Lake Michigan shoreline, moving either toward the south or north.
Directions: take Hwy. 23 (Erie Ave.) east into downtown Sheboygan. Continue east on Erie to 4th St., turn right (south) on 4th to Ontario Ave. At Ontario turn left (east) and follow it to lake (Broughton Dr.). Turn right on Broughton Dr. and continue south until you see the marina on the left. Depending on current birding information, our travels may take us north to Manitowoc and Two Rivers harbors or south to Harrington Beach State Park and Port Washington areas. Bring a bag lunch.

The complete 2017 field trip schedule was published in the January issue of The Badger Birder and appears online at http://wsobirds.org/what-we-do/field-trips

Honey Creek Birdathon/Bandathon
May 13-14 (Saturday-Sunday) at Honey Creek
Meet: At the Cox Nature Center on the Harold and Carla Kruse Nature Preserve at Honey Creek in Sauk County. Banding will be conducted both days, weather permitting. Arrive by 8 a.m. on Sunday to join other WSO birders in a Birdathon that will include a hike up Honey Creek valley. Camping facilities will be available and the Nature Center building will be open.
Directions: The Honey Creek Nature Preserve can be reached by going west out of Prairie du Sac on Highway PF approximately 15 miles to Skyview Dr. Turn left and travel 3/4 mile to Alder Drive. Turn left and continue to the Cox Nature Center.

78th Annual Convention
June 16-19 (Friday-Monday over Father’s Day weekend)
Headquartered at Potawatomi Carter Casino and Hotel in the Nicolet National Forest just south of Wabeno on the southern edge of Forest County. The hotel is offering WSO members a large number of rooms at discounted price of $83 per night plus tax for a Standard King or Double. Call 1-800-487-9522 and mention WSO to reserve now. (An incorrect number was published previously.)

WSO Membership Application or Renewal

Name __________________________________________
Address _______________________________________
City/State/Zip ____________________________
Phone (___________)
E-mail ______________________________________

Make check payable to WSO and send with form to address below
WSO Membership PO Box 3024 Madison, WI 53704-3024