State’s birders post 1 million eBird sightings in ‘16

By Lisa L. Gaumnitz
Wisconsin DNR

Madison – Wisconsin birders, take a bow. You identified and reported more birds through eBird, an international online bird observation website, than birders from most other states and nations in 2016.

Your submissions brought hundreds of people to Trempealeau County in early 2016 to see a rare greenish woodpecker more commonly found in Western states, recorded the first ever Tropical Kingbird in Wisconsin, and documented a Gyrfalcon in the Superior area that has set a longevity record for the species at 15 years and 8 months.

“Wisconsin is one of the leading users of eBird and that’s something to celebrate. I strongly encourage other recreational birders to give it a try for recording their own sightings and helping bird conservation,” said Ryan Brady, Department of Natural Resources bird monitoring coordinator.

“eBirding is fun, user friendly and the simplest form of avian citizen science you can participate in. You can be in your kitchen or sitting on the couch watching chickadees, driving to the store and see a Red-tailed Hawk, or go on a hike at your favorite park and report what you saw to eBird. And you don’t have to be an expert to do it.”

eBird was launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society to maximize the utility and accessibility of the vast numbers of bird observations made each year by recreational and professional bird watchers.

Birders enter information via the website about when, where and how they went birding, then fill out a checklist of all the birds seen and heard during their outing. Automated data quality filters developed by regional bird experts review all submissions before they enter the database and local experts review unusual records flagged by the filters.


Wisconsin birders’ participation is not surprising given that the state ranks second in the nation in the proportion of adults who birdwatch – 33% compared with 20% nationally, according to a 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey, and has had volunteers participate in all 117 Christmas Bird Counts since the first one in 1900.

Worldwide, eBird surpassed 370 million observations in 2016, representing 10,313

The Spring Hearings will offer WSO members an opportunity to voice their views on a range of important conservation topics. STORY ON PAGE 18

A state Sandhill Crane hunt is again put to a vote

By Andy Cassini and Matt Hayes
WSO Conservation Committee

Around the state, at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 10, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress will hold hearings in each county to discuss a multitude of DNR-related conservation issues.

Whether to open a hunting season on Sandhill Cranes in Wisconsin will again be up for consideration and these hearings provide everyone in the state a chance to voice their opinion.

QUESTION 80 reads as follows:
Sandhill crane hunting season (540616) (requires legislation) There are 700,000 Sandhill Cranes in North America and 17 states have hunting seasons, including two states in our flyway: Kentucky and Tennessee.

A management plan approved by 31 states and Canadian provinces in eastern North America established that the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes was large enough to be hunted and established a process for a state to apply for a limited quota based hunting season. In Wisconsin, the State Legislature must approve a quota-based hunting season on Sandhill Cranes before the DNR can develop a season.

Do you support legislation which would give the DNR authority to begin the process to develop a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes? 80. YES___ NO_____
Wisconsin likes to use eBird

From Page 1

species, from every country in the world. More than 300,000 people have entered data, and the project has continued to grow by roughly 30% a year for the last decade, according to Ian Davies, eBird coordinator. “The work that you guys do throughout Wisconsin is phenomenal,” Davies said in an email to Brady and other state bird conservation staff. “The degree of excitement and engagement in the (second Wisconsin Breeding Bird) Atlas, as well as eBird in general, is really a testament to your efforts. Wisconsin collects more eBird data in a year than most countries in the world.”

eBird’s continued growth is important because it helps provide a richer data set for researchers and natural resource professionals from Wisconsin and around the globe to use to help assess trends in bird populations on global, regional and local scales, says Nick Anich, a DNR conservation biologist who coordinates the Breeding Bird Atlas and leads Wisconsin’s eBird efforts. Wisconsin is using eBird to help complete its second atlas of the state’s breeding birds, This is a volunteer-based survey to help understand which birds breed in Wisconsin and how that has changed over the last 20 years since the first atlas survey was done.

Results of the survey, now entering its third of five years, will help guide bird conservation in Wisconsin for the next generation and the data are available to other eBird users as well, Anich said. The top counties where birders submitted the most checklists in 2016 were Dane, Milwaukee, Douglas, Waushesa and Ozaukee. Milwaukee led the state in species reported, with 269, edging out Dane with 267. Peder Svingen of Duluth submitted the most checklists for birds sighted in Wisconsin, 1,881 checklists reporting 219 species. Robin Maercklein was second with 1,766 checklists representing 204 species, and the Milwaukee County Parks Natural Areas Staff was third with 1,087 checklists representing 204 species.

Bill Grossmeyer led the way with the most species reported, 319, edging out Mary Backus with 318 and Tom Wood with 315. Five Wisconsin birders surpassed 200 or more species in a 7.5 mile radius circle centered at their home. For the third year in a row, Tom Prestby topped that list. Prestby had another exciting distinction in 2016: he was the one to sight nesting Piping Plovers in lower Green Bay.

Kate’s Quotes

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

“I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least -- and it is commonly more than that -- sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements.”

-- HENRY DAVID ThOREAU, writing in The Atlantic in 1862

“We accumulate our opinions at an age when our understanding is at its weakest.”

-- GEORG CHRISTOPH LICHTENBERG, German scientist and satirist

“The problem with quotes found on the Internet is that they are often not true.”

-- ABRAHAM LINCOLN

78th annual Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Convention
June 16-19 in Carter, Wisconsin
8-PAGE REGISTRATION PACKAGE will appear in the April issue of The Badger Birder
Tour of Lake Superior migratory stopover sites to celebrate IMBD

By Kim Grveles
Wisconsin DNR Avian Ecologist

Observing International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) has become a tradition in Wisconsin, and what better way to celebrate than to explore northern birding hot spots right at the peak of spring migration. This is an invitation to join the City of Superior, one of 101 Bird City Wisconsin communities holding an annual IMBD event, and its partners on Sunday, May 21, for a special guided tour of local habitats used by thousands of migratory birds each year as they make their way north to breed.

This year’s IMBD theme, Helping Birds Along the Way, recognizes the importance of “stopover sites” – the places and habitats where migratory birds stop to rest and refuel as they journey between nonbreeding and breeding sites. Some migratory birds, such as the Wood Thrush, fly more than 2,500 miles between Central and South America, where they winter, to the U.S. and Canada, where they will nest and rear young.

When these long-distance migrants pause between flights, they don’t just stop anywhere; they rely on a handful of resource-rich and strategically located sites where they may double their body weight as they acquire the energy-rich fat stores needed to fly thousands of kilometers across a continent, the Gulf of Mexico, or one of the Great Lakes.

From the air; the landscape below helps guide birds to habitats that appear to have the food, water and shelter they need. During spring in the Great Lakes, songbirds often concentrate on points of land with water over that extend into the water, such as Wisconsin Point, which protrudes into Lake Superior. Migrants also will utilize habitats adjacent to rivers and inland lakes.

One reason for birds choosing coastal habitats may be that their arrival coincides with the timing for aquatic insects to emerge from the water as adults to swarm and mate. Large swarms of midges and mayflies during the month of May occur along Wisconsin’s Great Lakes shores. River corridors, inland lakes, and wetlands can also have swarms of midges, mayflies, mosquitoes and gnats. These insects provide essential protein for birds to build the fat reserves needed to propel the next leg of their flight.

Superior’s IMBD celebration will begin with early morning hikes among the varied stopover habitats of a beautiful Superior park on the banks of the St. Louis River. Expect to see mixed songbird flocks including warblers and vireos, ducks swimming by on the river, and waterbirds, such as herons, foraging in the shallows.

About mid-morning, a tour bus will take participants to Wisconsin Point. According to eBird records, about 230 species have been documented throughout the year at this hotspot, with Northern Mockingbird, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Bobolink, Olive-Sided Flycatcher, swallows, gulls, terns, and ducks noted for the month of May.

Lunch will be at Amnicon Town Hall and will include a special presentation on migratory birds before a final stop at Camp Amnicon on the south shore of Lake Superior with its 500 acres of woodlands, wetlands and shoreline at the mouth of the Amnicon River. Birding promises to be rich as thousands of migratory birds pass through this site each spring. Recent bird counts have revealed at least 115 species stopping over in May including Sharp-shinned and Broad-winged Hawks, a variety of sandpipers, gulls, terns, woodpeckers, flycatchers, warblers, thrushes and other songbirds. Migrating Blue jays flying in formation and loons, cormorants and ducks should be visible from the shore.

Space on the tour bus is limited, so reserve your spot by phoning Superior Parks and Recreation at 715-395-7270. A $15 registration fee will be charged and includes the bus, guided tours and lunch.

The City of Superior, West Wisconsin Land Trust, Wisconsin Stopover Initiative, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Camp Amnicon have joined forces to stage this IMBD celebration of migratory birds and their Superior stopover habitats.

Great Wisconsin Birdathon is open for teams to sign up

By Diane Packett
Wisconsin Birdathon Coordinator

Birders all over the state are gearing up for the 2017 Great Wisconsin Birdathon, which runs from April 15 to June 15, and now is a great time to form your team and begin fundraising.

The Birdathon is supporting eight Bird Protection Fund projects under the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and this year is an especially important time to advocate for birds and their conservation.

The website, www.WIBirdathon.org, is open for registration and fundraising. Several new teams have already signed on, including the Chickadee Chicks representing Bird City Oshkosh, and Bill Mueller’s Backpacking Birders. Our newest Signature Team is the WYBC Teen Birders, fielded by the Wisconsin Young Birders Club, and we’ve heard rumors of a 20-something team called the Millennial Falcons.

This year the Birdathon is extending a special invitation to corporate sponsors to participate, through direct contributions or by fielding a team of their own. (Prior birding experience is not required — we have plenty of birders to send out with you!) Sponsorships help ensure that the Birdathon can continue to provide Wisconsin’s birders with the opportunity to raise both funds and friends for bird conservation. Sponsorship opportunities are spelled out on the website.

To start a team, simply gather a group of friends, family or coworkers. Everything you need is on the Birdathon website, including a “How To” instruction page. A team page will be launched for you, which you can customize with a personal message and photos and share with others so they can donate or pledge to your Birdathon effort.

Spring migration on Mississippi

The NRF is offering an outing focused on the ecology of migrating waterfowl. Jeb Barzen and Jim Nissen will lead this March 31 excursion along the Mississippi River between La Crosse and Lansing, Iowa. You do NOT need to be an NRF member to participate in this spring trip.

For more information and registration visit http://www.cvcent.com/d/rvab31.

Special trips for NRF members

If you are a member of the Natural Resources Foundation, you also can join one or more of the 20 special birding field trips being offered to support the Bird Protection Fund. Registration will open on March 22. Information is available at http://www.wisconsinconservation.org/
DNR honors Erdman for 50 years of conservation work

Tom Erdman, curator of the Richter Museum at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, has received special recognition from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) for his more than 50 years of contributions to avian conservation in northeastern Wisconsin.

The Jan. 19 recognition came as a surprise. Erdman, who plans to retire this fall, had just concluded a presentation to the Green Bay Bird Club on the ecology and population status of the Northern Goshawk in northeastern Wisconsin. NHC avian ecologist Sumner Matteson stepped forward and presented Erdman with a wooden miniature adult goshawk, hand-carved by Duluth artist William Majewski.

Among Erdman’s contributions to conservation, Matteson noted Erdman’s “firsts”:

1) First photographic documentation of the Arctic Tern (April 25, 1965) and Laughing Gull Aug. 3, 1965) occurring in Wisconsin.

2) First recorded successful nesting of the Little Gull in the United States. This was in the summer of 1975 in Manitowoc County, with a nest and two young fledged.

3) First documented nesting of the Snowy Egret in Wisconsin on June 15, 1975, in Oconto County, with two pairs among nestling Cattle Egrets in a Black-crowned Night-Heron colony.

4) First documented nesting of the Cattle Egret in Wisconsin in the summer of 1971, with two nests in a Black-crowned Night-Heron colony on Willow Island in Lower Green Bay (Brown County).

5) First documented nesting of the American White Pelican in Wisconsin, with two nests on Cat Island in Lower Green Bay in the spring of 1994.

In introducing Erdman, club president Nancy Nabak noted that he also had spent over four decades conducting research on mammals and herps in northeastern Wisconsin. Birds, however, have been his main focus throughout his career. As founder and director of the Little Suamico Ornithological Station on the shore of western Green Bay, Erdman has banded over 45,000 individuals representing close to 180 bird species.

In cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Wisconsin DNR, his pioneering research on toxics and colonial nesting birds on Green Bay and Lake Michigan eventually led to a massive PCB cleanup of the Fox River.

Photo by Nancy Nabak

Tom Erdman (right), curator of the Richter Museum at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, received a plaque featuring a miniature adult goshawk in recognition by the Wisconsin DNR of his more than 50 years of contributions to conservation of birds in northeastern Wisconsin. The presentation was made by avian ecologist Sumner Matteson (left).
WSO president makes our case to the NRB

WSO President Michael John Jaeger has spoken before the Natural Resources Board at both its December and January meetings. On Jan. 24, he provided comments on behalf of the Society on a draft master plan for the Horicon-Shaw Planning Group, which includes four state properties totaling about 12,400 acres in Dodge County, including the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area.

His comments supported a DNR staff recommendation that a potential new Gold Star Memorial bike trail segment be kept off of an existing Bachhuber Impoundment dike path near the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center that is heavily used by hikers, birders and school groups. The board kept this restriction in the approved master plan. Jaeger also recommended that the board direct the DNR to address the limitation of lead shot for upland hunting on DNR lands statewide. The board did not respond to this recommendation.

Try the eBirder and enjoy color photos 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 (many 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. With publication of our special 8-page annual convention registration package next month, this is the ideal time to make the switch to the eBirder.

So if you already use email, 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

Your financial support for WSO may yield tax savings

BY DANI BAUMANN
WSO Treasurer

It’s tax season, so here is a money-saving reminder: Because the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization, you may be able to use a portion of the WSO membership dues you paid during 2016 as an income tax deduction.

According to IRS guidelines, you may deduct as a charitable donation the amount of your dues payment that is more than the value of the benefits you receive. The fair market value of WSO’s tangible benefits during 2016 can be estimated at $30 per membership ($10 for The Badger Birder and $20 for The Passenger Pigeon). Therefore, anyone who paid dues during 2016 at the family level or above may be able to deduct a portion of that payment.

In addition, any donation you made to WSO or one of its special funds is fully deductible as a charitable contribution. Out-of-pocket expenses while donating time to the organization may be deducted, but a value for your time and personal services may not. Please consult your tax advisor regarding how this information affects you.
A chance to sponsor those last sexy Atlas species... while they last!

By Charlie Luthin
WBBA II Development Director

The “Sponsor-a-Species” campaign that was developed in 2015 to support the five-year Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II has been wildly popular.

Sponsor-a-Species (or S-a-S) provides a donor the opportunity to sponsor a favorite species from among some 240 Wisconsin breeding birds for a year or for the duration of the Atlas project for as little as $100 a year.

If the species is sponsored for a full five years, the donor’s name will be recognized with the sponsored species on the Atlas and eBird websites, as well as in the final printed version of the Atlas. What’s not to like about that!

The Sponsor-a-Species campaign is described on the WSO website at: www.wsobirds.org/sponsor-a-species

The Atlas project is starting its third season, and there are still a number of “sexy species” yet to be sponsored. Eleven NEW breeding species for Wisconsin have been recorded during this Atlas project that were not found during Atlas I (1995-2001). You can be part of history by sponsoring one of these new breeders.

Among the most exciting new species still available for sponsorship are Canvasback, Bufflehead, Yellow-throated Warbler and Blue Grosbeak.

Care for something a little more “exotic”? How about the Eurasian Collared Dove, Great Tit or European Goldfinch, now confirmed breeders in Wisconsin—whether we ultimately like having them here or not.

There are many other species remaining to be sponsored, including the common but charismatic Wild Turkey and Ring-necked Pheasant, the elusive King Rail, or the spectacular White Pelican and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Many species of waterfowl (Redhead, Common Goldeneye, Gadwall and Red-breasted Merganser), other waterbirds (Least Bittern, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Western Grebe), gulls (Ring-billed and Herring) terns (Caspian, Common and Forster’s), the ubiquitous Rock Pigeon, several swallow species and even a few songbirds (Savanna Sparrow, Brewer’s Blackbird, Common Grackle) are still available for sponsorship... but hurry, there is bound to be some competition for the remaining 55 species.

Sponsor your favorite species now at www.wsobirds.org/sponsor-a-species

Atlas team expresses its thanks to its faithful major donors

By Charlie Luthin
WBBA II Development Director

The five-year Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II project is an enormous and comprehensive statewide undertaking that, despite the majority of its work being undertaken by volunteers, still has significant costs.

Each year, funding is needed to pay for seasonal atlasers to survey high priority blocks where we have few or no volunteers.

Thus, the Atlas team is enormously grateful for the support of its major donors, and we would like to acknowledge the significant donations we have received during 2016 and the beginning of 2017.

Donations of $10,000 or more include:
-- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
-- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory
-- We Energies Foundation
-- Mary F. Donald and Arthur J. Donald Family Foundation, Inc.
-- Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin – Bird Protection Fund

In addition, the three major collaborators on this project, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory have each invested countless thousands of dollars in staff time and funding toward the Atlas effort.

Donations of $5,000 or more include:
-- Wisconsin Department of Administration / Coastal Management Program
-- Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation
-- Sally R. Luthin Memorial Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin

Cumulative gifts of $5,000 or more since the inception of the Atlas project in 2015 include
-- James E. Dutton Foundation
-- The Nature Conservancy-Wisconsin Chapter
-- Jim Frank

Thanks to each of our major donors (and to all the rest of our contributors, large and small) for the financial backing received in support of WBBA II.

Would YOU like to make a donation to the Atlas? Please go to: www.wsobirds.org/atlas and look for the “Donate” tab.
Pam Campbell: ‘I find that I’m never not an atlaser’

The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II is a volunteer-driven effort to survey the distribution and abundance of our state’s breeding birds. Since the project started in 2015, our volunteer team has grown to include more than 1,150 Atlasers who have submitted nearly 56,000 checklists.

Who are these incredible volunteers? It turns out that once you get past the binoculars, our Atlasers are as varied as the bird species they observe. This series turns the spotlight on a few of the many dedicated men and women who have helped the Atlas achieve such tremendous success to date.

**NAME:** Pam Campbell  **AGE:** 62

**HOMETOWN:** Menomonie

**NUMBER OF YEARS BIRDING:** I’ve been fascinated by birds since childhood. My earliest bird memory is of a Barn Owl that lived in our dairy barn hayloft when I was 4 1/2 years old. This is probably why my favorite birds are any and all owls.

**OTHER CITIZEN SCIENCE EXPERIENCE:** I started eBirding in 2003. I had been participating in Project FeederWatch for several years and it was requested that we submit our lists to eBird. Soon, I was listing all of my sightings. I’ve also participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count, done bluebird trail monitoring and Christmas Bird Counts.

**Motivation to atlas:** When I first heard about the Atlas II project, I borrowed a copy of the first Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas from a friend. It’s an astonishing piece of work and I knew I wanted to participate in the new one.

**Primary atlassing location:** I am the primary atlasser for two blocks and find that I’m never not an atlasser. I report breeding activity wherever I see it, focusing on my home county of Dunn.

**Most exciting Atlas find:** One of my most memorable Atlas finds was a hummingbird nest. I was scanning a wooded area with binoculars, trying to find a vocalizing Yellow-throated Vireo. I was hoping to see a female to confirm a breeding pair. A tiny flutter among the oak leaves caught my eye. So, rather by accident, I found a female Ruby-throated at her nest.

**Most rewarding part of atlassing:** Atlassing has taught me to slow down and observe and it has sharpened my listening skills. It’s so amazing to see what the birds will reveal. I also enjoy the challenge of photographing these behaviors.

**Advice for someone “on the fence” about participating:** To anyone who is considering giving atlassing a try, please do! I think you will be surprised by how fun and enjoyable it will be. It’s my favorite reason to just get outdoors and enjoy the birds.

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**Milwaukee Parks and Atlas II: Making every look count**

**By Brian Russart**

**Natural Areas Coordinator / Milwaukee County Park System**

Milwaukee County Parks staffers are busy, with only two full-time employees to manage the system’s 10,000-acre Natural Areas Program. Up against that, we didn’t even participate in the first year of field work for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II in 2015 even though we were conducting hundreds of bird surveys and entering that general data into eBird.

Last year, 2016, Natural Areas staff submitted 487 checklists for the Atlas within the system’s natural areas, which fall within 28 of Milwaukee County’s Atlas blocks. During our activities within those blocks staff made 582 breeding bird confirmations for 77 species of birds. Overall we conducted 1,411 bird surveys that led to 101,000 bird observations totaling 201 species.

We ended up conducting 1,123 surveys at 116 of our natural areas, and found 123,795 birds made up of 204 species. This brings our list up to 236 species using the habitat within the Park System, and that’s only since 2013. All our surveys have been entered into eBird. Along the way, we learned a lesson that might be valuable to other Atlasers: Make every look count.

Due to our heavy workload, we decided to make very focused Atlas surveys where we looked specifically for potentially unconfirmed species in any given block.

To do this, we created an Excel file with tabs for each survey block that contained Milwaukee County Parks natural areas. On the top of the block’s data sheet is a list of all the parks and parkways that fall within that particular block. Within the data sheet there are two columns: one with probable breeding species based on the habitat types in the natural areas in that block, and another with species already confirmed for that block. This allows staff to focus solely on species that may be present based on existing habitat, and also species that haven’t yet been confirmed for that block.

To date, 100 species have been confirmed breeding in Milwaukee County, including some species that may surprise people, such as: Hooded and Pine Warblers, Acadian Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Willow Flycatcher, Marsh Wren, Grasshopper and Henslow’s Sparrows, American Woodcock, Hooded Merganser, Merlin, Virginia Rail and many more.

In fact, 32 priority conservation species from Wisconsin’s All Bird Conservation Plan have already been confirmed as breeding in Milwaukee County during the first two years of the Atlas. The next three years will be used to fill in the data gaps, because there’s potential breeding habitat for up to 120 species within the park system.

This method of focused surveys may well be helpful for other surveyors in the state. If anyone would like a copy of our Excel database to review or use as a model, please contact me at Brian.Russart@milwaukeecountywi.gov.
Atlas priorities in 2017: Completing blocks and filling gaps

By Carrie Becker
Atlas Communications Director

With two of five years finished, Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas organizers are taking stock of effort to date and prioritizing needs to help volunteers make the most impact in 2017. One of their biggest efforts will be in encouraging all participants to atlas at night. According to Atlas coordinator Nick Anich, this important step should result in a dramatic increase in the number of completed blocks, which is otherwise trending low at this point in the project.

"Right now, we’re showing just 14% completion on priority blocks after our second season,” Anich said. “This is alarmingly low, but the good news is that it’s also artificially low. With completion of just a few nocturnal hours in some blocks and the addition of one or two final visits in other blocks, our priority block completion rate will jump immediately to right around 40%.”

In general, Atlas guidelines recommend at least a couple hours of night effort over at least two visits in spring and summer to help reach block completion. “This is the only element lacking in many blocks and something we can quickly fix. If we can finish up our night effort requirements and convert the many “nearly complete” blocks to officially complete blocks, we’ll be back on pace,” Anich added. (Check out a four-part nocturnal atlasing guide at http://ebird.org/content/atlaswi/)

To help build momentum for nocturnal atlasing, Atlas organizers and county coordinators are arranging a series of local night birding efforts taking place throughout the state during Nocturnal Atlasing Week, April 21–30. Details will be released in mid-March and can be found by visiting http://wsobirds.org/atlas-events.

How Birders Can Help in 2017

In addition to completing nocturnal atlasing hours, Anich outlined a number of steps Wisconsin birders can take in 2017 to help ensure the Atlas stays on track for completion.

1) Finish nearly complete blocks and move on

It generally takes about 20 hours, including a few night hours, to complete a block. Many blocks can be finished off now with just a few specialized effort hours. Anich stressed that sometime it’s also okay for atlasers to just move on, even if a block is not complete. “If you’re at 46% of species confirmed and you’ve put 30 hours in, call it “good enough” and move on to the next block.”

2) Choose birding locations with Atlas in mind

There are 1,283 priority/specialty blocks that must be completed for the Atlas project to be a success, and 38% of these blocks have not yet been claimed by a principal atlaser. “When looking for a place to bird, head for one of these first!” Anich said.

3) Only Atlas in priority blocks in June-July.

Although it is common practice for atlasers to report from their homes, workplaces and cabins, Anich advises that atlasers who actively seek out new locations should choose a priority block. This is especially important during the critical months of June and July.

4) Visit areas with information gaps.

Atlasers who are traveling across the state, or are willing to travel to atlas, are encouraged to seek out blocks in low-effort areas that need attention. There are hundreds of blocks that lack checklists.

Tools provide insight to where Atlasers can help most

Anich noted that there are several tools available to help birders find out where they can atlas this year to provide the most impact:

-- The Block Request Tool is a very easy way to see if a priority block is available, assigned, or competed.

-- Once potential blocks have been identified, the explore a Region tables in Atlas eBird combined with the interactive map will show what activity has been competed in any given block and give atlasers a more in-depth look at the territory.
Bird of the Month

Red Crossbill: *Loxia curvirostra*

By Diana Hierlmeier

The Red Crossbill is a stocky red or somewhat green finch with plain blackish wings, short notched tail and thick, curved bill with crossed tips. The head and body of the male is a deep brick red to red-yellow or green. Its long and pointed wing feathers are blackish brown, lacking wing bars. Its tail is blackish brown. The female is uniformly olive or grayish with greenish or greenish yellow chest and rump.

Its wing feathers are blackish brown, also lacking wing bars, with a blackish brown tail. Legs and feet of both sexes are gray-black. The average length for this species is 5.5 to 6.5 inches, weight is 1.4 ounces and wingspan is 10 to 10.75 inches. These birds have a swift, bounding flight with rapid wing beats.

This bird is considered an irruptive species and can occur anywhere a suitable cone crop exists, which is unpredictable from year to year. The erratic and nomadic movements preclude accurate population estimates.

In Wisconsin, the Red Crossbill occurs in conifer forests harboring large cone crops. The first Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas documents this species breeding in pine-dominated, upland conifer forests, lowland conifer forests and conifer shrub habitats. Mature conifer stands typically produce larger cone crops, which helps to maximize the birds’ foraging efficiency.

The Red Crossbill can breed any time of year it finds a sufficiently large cone crop, even in the middle of winter, and as a result its molts and plumages vary more than those of other North American passerines. It is considered an uncommon breeder in Wisconsin but when present it is typically abundant in the northern tier of the state, but a possible breeder in conifers anywhere.

The Red Crossbill forages predominantly on conifer seeds of spruce, pine, Douglas fir and hemlock. It also will consume buds of various trees, seeds of some weeds, some berries and insects.

There are documented cases of it consuming apple slices, suet, millet, peanut kernels and fruit. This species feeds in flocks and can be seen foraging by clambering about and over cones, often hanging upside down to open cones. It will also take grit and salt from roads, which can lead to mortalities.

The Red Crossbill shows great variation in its bill shape, perhaps associated with its preference to feed on different trees species with different sized cones.

The crossbill’s odd bill shape helps it get into tightly closed cones. A bird’s biting muscles are stronger than muscles used to open the bill so the Red Crossbill places the tip of its slightly open bill under a cone scale and bites down. The crossed tips of the bill push the scale up, exposing the seed inside. Bills of young birds are not crossed at hatching, but cross as they grow.

By 45 days of age, the bills are crossed enough for the young to extract seeds from cones.

The Red Crossbill builds an open cup nest of twigs lined with grasses, lichen, conifer needles, bark shreds, hair, plant fibers and feathers. It is well concealed in dense cover on conifer branches typically 10 to 40 feet above ground and well away from the tree trunk.

The female lays a clutch of three to five eggs and she incubates them for 12 to 25 days. The female spends much time brooding young at first, while the male brings food for them and her. Later both parents feed the nestlings. Young leave the nest 18 to 20 days after hatching. The young are fed regurgitated conifer seeds by their parents.

This species has at least 10 distinct call types in North America, each with its own ecological niche, appearance, areas of occurrence and patterns of movement. Its song is a “chika-chika-chika-chika, chee-kee-kee-chee-chee” with hard “kip-ki” call notes while in flight.

The Red Crossbill is a global species with U.S. populations stable in most areas. It is listed as “Least Concern” in conservation status but rapid deforestation in the Pacific Northwest has caused declines in that area.

Fun Facts:

-- The oldest Red Crossbill was a female aged six years and one month when found in South Dakota, the same state where she had been banded.

-- A group of crossbills is collectively known as a “crookedness” and a “warp” of crossbills.

Author’s Note:

Many years ago I had the opportunity to band several hundred of these birds during an “irruptive” event on the east slopes of the Cascade Mountains.

Among the statistics collected from each bird was whether it was “right-billed” or “left-billed”, whether the top part of bill crossed right or left. There was some thought that seeds more difficult to extract from cones and larger seeds made a population predisposed one way or the other.

Based on my observations of 347 individuals, 49% were left-billed and 51% right-billed. Although this was a relatively small sample, measurements taken did not support the theory of cone size determining direction of the crossed bill. Also, these birds display a huge array of plumage variation, more so than descriptions relay.

To Dig More Deeply:


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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.
Buena Vista/Necedah trip yields a few choice birds

By TOM SCHULTZ
WSO Field Trips Co-chair

About 16 birders gathered at 8 a.m. along Highway W in Portage County just north-west of Bancroft in the Buena Vista Grasslands. The skies were cloudy, and there was a moderate west wind, but at least temperatures were well above zero - in the mid-20s. After sharing greetings, and waiting a short time for late arrivals, we headed west to Taft Rd., and then took it north.

A little ways beyond the Lake Rd. intersection we stopped to check out some bird feeders, and found Mourning Doves, a Black-capped Chickadee, juncos and an American Tree Sparrow. The group U-turned and headed back to Lake Rd., which we took west. Not far down Lake Rd. we spotted a Greater Prairie-Chicken on the north side, and when we stopped to scope the field we were able to discern about six more individuals. Unfortunately, the only other birds found along this stretch were American Tree Sparrows. This general lack of roadside birds proved to be typical for the day – likely due to some of the heavy snowfalls this winter, which really seem to have flattened out the weedy vegetation.

We turned south on Townline Rd., then east on Highway W to Elm, only finding crows and starlings along the way. About 0.7 miles south of W we stopped along Elm Rd. to view one of WSO’s properties at Buena Vista – this one a 20-acre parcel. These two properties (the other 40 acres) were purchased in the late 1950s and in 1962 were placed under a 99-year lease to the Wisconsin DNR for prairie-chicken management. While at this stop we spotted a Northern Shrike atop a distant tree, and most were able to get scope views. Farther down the road we added a Blue Jay.

The group took Mill Rd. west to Townline, then south to a home with several bird feeders; the owner greeted us along with his very furry, friendly dog. In and around this area we observed Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal and others.

We continued south on Townline, then west on Tower Rd. to Highway 73 – with a gas station pit stop near the Highway 13 intersection – and drove through Nekoosa and west to Babcock and Ball Rd., skirting the south side of the Sandhill State Wildlife Area. Once again, this area was very quiet, and we found only a few birds along this 9-mile stretch – such as Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawk and Pileated Woodpecker.

Our group headed south on Cranberry Rd., then west on N. Bear Bluff Rd., and then west again on E. Bear Bluff Rd., passing close to Bear Bluff itself - where our target bird was Golden Eagle. We stopped adjacent to the bluff, and were very pleased to spot one fairly quickly as it flew not far from us.

We continued west and the road eventually took us to Highway O and then south and east to the village of Mather. From there we took Highway H and then 9th St. across the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge to Highway 80, which we took south. Just a short distance down the road we spotted a group of crows, and nearby were a couple of Common Ravens – another one of our target birds for the trip.

We ended our trip at the Petenwell Dam, on the Wisconsin River just a few miles east of the city of Necedah. The highlight there is always the Bald Eagles that perch and fish just below the dam. There were virtually no waterfowl present – except for a lone American Goldeneye spotted briefly as it flew downstream.

Thanks to everyone who participated and to Jeff Baughman for co-leading. As is often the case, this outing didn’t produce large numbers of species or individuals, but rather a series of interesting target birds, including a Greater Prairie Chicken.
WSO paying attention as DNR revises chicken management plan

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is in the process of revising the 10-year Greater Prairie-Chicken management plan. The previous plan covered 2004-2014. The agency’s tentative timeline is to complete a draft of the plan this spring, offer a final public review this summer and seek the plan’s approval by the Natural Resources Board this fall. The overall management plan also addresses populations at three other DNR wildlife areas, Mead, Paul J. Olsen and Leola.

WSO is closely following these plans. Dr. Peter Dunn, UW-Milwaukee professor and a member of the WSO Conservation Committee, has a long-term research program on the conservation genetics of Wisconsin prairie chickens and is following the master plan revision on behalf of WSO.

The DNR held a public meeting Feb. 22 in Wisconsin Rapids to provide information on the plan revision process, current prairie chicken population status and research updates, as well as several draft alternatives, and to gather initial public input. A WSO representative attended the meeting, and the Conservation Committee intends to keep WSO members apprised of how the planning progresses.

Interested individuals also can submit comments via an online comment form through Friday, March 10. To sign up to receive more information, go to http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/prairiechicken.html

Or for additional information, contact Mark Witecha, DNR upland wildlife ecologist, 608-267-7861; or Lesa Kardash, DNR wildlife biologist, 715-421-7813

WSO has a 60-acre investment in Buena Vista’s prairie chickens

BY MICHAEL JOHN JAEGER
WSO President

The Buena Vista Wildlife Area (BVWA), located in southwestern Portage County, totals approximately 13,843 acres. Of this, 9,633 acres are owned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The remaining acreage is managed by the DNR through long-term lease agreements. The leased lands consist of 4,150 acres owned by the Dane County Conservation League and 60 acres owned by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

The BVWA has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) due to the presence of the largest population of Greater Prairie-Chickens in the state, as well as other rare species.

The federally-endangered Karner blue butterfly, federally-threatened gray wolf, state-endangered regal fritillary butterfly, and state-threatened Henslow’s Sparrow and wood turtle are found in the area.

Other uncommon species include Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Northern Harrier, Short-Eared Owl, Upland Sandpiper and Blanding’s turtle.

In 1958, Madison native and longtime high school teacher Paul Olson led an effort to acquire prairie chicken lands in central Wisconsin. This area was the home base for Fred and Fran Hamerstrom, whose prairie chicken studies were the impetus for this pioneering project to acquire and restore habitat for them.

Ultimately, over 13,000 acres were acquired under the leadership of Paul Olson and the Dane County Conservation League. The project was the earliest wildlife success story to emerge from the private sector in Wisconsin and received national recognition.

The WSO purchased two parcels, which it still owns (one of 20 acres, the other 40 acres), as part of Paul Olsen’s bigger effort. The Summer 1959 issue of The Passenger Pigeon (Vol. XXI, pg. 51-57) http://digitcoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/EcoNatRes/EcoNatRes-idx?type=header&id=EcoNatRes.pp21n02 had an excellent overview of WSO’s efforts written by Daniel Q. Thompson and titled “Our Investment in the Prairie Chicken...”

I’d like to repeat his closing words: “These purchases are a unique opportunity to participate in a pioneering venture in wildlife conservation. The prairie grouse program in Wisconsin has been an outstanding example of imaginative research coupled with bold planning.

“It remains for us to match these early accomplishments with forthright action in executing the restoration plan. We have had to be content with erecting a monument to the Passenger Pigeon — let us lose no time in creating a living memorial to the magnificent wildlife heritage embodied in the Prairie Chicken.”

The DNR currently manages WSO’s two parcels under a 99-year lease, signed in 1962. The overall DNR management goal for the BVWA is to protect and enhance large, open grassland habitat with different vegetation heights and densities to meet seasonal habitat needs of numerous grassland-dependent wildlife species.

A variety of methods are used, including prescribed burns, grazing, share-cropping, mowing, seeding and invasives control.

New advice on protecting nest boxes from predators

Nest box guards work, but the most effective aren’t the ones most people use, according to new research presented during a Wildlife Society conference in Raleigh, N.C.

“Studies have shown that over time, predators can learn locations of nest boxes. So potentially as they age, next boxes can become more of an ecological trap,” said Robyn Bailey, a biologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who presented the research.

People use a variety of devices to prevent predators from raiding nest boxes. But until now, it wasn’t clear how well these nest guards worked, said Bailey.

The data came from NestWatch, a citizen science project in which volunteer bird-watchers find nests and monitor them until the chicks either fledge or perish.

Bailey and her colleagues examined records of about 16,000 nesting attempts by more than 32 species of birds.

Compared with unprotected nests, nests in boxes with predator guards were about 5.2% more likely to have at least one chick survive, said Bailey.

All the different designs helped, and none dramatically outperformed the others. But cone-shaped guards that fit over the support pole appeared to have a slight advantage, protecting chicks more consistently than alternatives.

Although cone-shaped guards worked best, they weren’t the most popular design, making up only 9% of guards in the study.

In contrast, 53% of guards used cylindrical “stovepipe” designs, while 20% worked by extending the opening of the box.

Using multiple types of protectors on the same nest box didn’t seem to help.
Creating Green Lake Bird and Nature Club seemed like the NATURAL thing to do

In the fourth part of The Badger Birder’s series on birding groups in Wisconsin, WENDY AND TOM SCHULTZ take a look at the fledgling Green Lake Birding and Nature Club:

**The Green Lake Bird and Nature Club** is still fairly new – founded in January of 2015 to encourage the mutual interests of nature-loving folks in our area. Surrounded by the White River Marsh State Wildlife Area (SWA), Puchyan Marsh and the Snake Creek Wetlands Area to the north of us, Grand River Marsh SWA to the west, and Horicon National Wildlife Refuge not too far south — we have plenty of wetlands, forests and grasslands to explore. And let’s not forget big and beautiful Green Lake itself, deepest in Wisconsin. In between are prairie remnants and open farm fields. It can truly be a birdwatcher’s smorgasbord out here.

**History:** The Green Lake group of bird enthusiasts really started to form about 33 years ago, when we moved to the area in 1983 and started an annual Christmas Bird Count. Along with organizing the CBC, bird expert and illustrator Tom Schultz gave many presentations to service clubs, school groups, men’s and women’s groups, all to help newcomers feel prepared and confident in the field. While the collection of birders began to grow, we were still affiliated with the Owen J. Gromme Bird Club of Fond du Lac, and many of those birdwatching friends would head west to bird and help with the Green Lake CBC.

As years went by, membership in the Gromme Club waned, and it folded in 2000. Tom had become more involved with the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology, his growing art career, and then a young family. Fast forward to 2014 when our youngest turned 21 and the itch to organize a Green Lake bird club made perfect sense to me. After holding a series of birdwatching classes as a “feeler,” we took the leap and opened the new club on Jan. 26, 2015.

Now in our third year, our club has been gaining popularity. And although we are really a BIRD club in terms of our main focus, we added the word NATURE to our name as a way to include a broader range of interests.

**Meeting times/programs:** We meet monthly from September through May on the second Tuesday at 6 p.m. Summer is not off-limits, but if we meet, it might be less structured — like the “movie night” we scheduled twice last summer. Monthly meetings are casual and generally start by having attendees share what they’ve been seeing. We talk about upcoming events, birds to look for and where to go to find them, and after a quick break to grab a snack, we sit back for the main presentation.

Most programs in the first two years were given by us, and because many in our group are still relatively new to birding, we do lots of teaching and review — covering subjects such as a particular bird species and their field marks, or learning bird songs, the spring and fall migration, etc.

**Location:** Our meetings take place in the City of Green Lake at Town Square—which had been the former courthouse and now converted (five years ago) into a vibrant community center. Located in the heart of downtown, this beautiful building is operated by the Green Lake Renewal group, and they have generously provided us with our own Bird Club room upstairs.

**Membership:** We have no membership or annual dues, and welcome attendance by anyone interested. Certainly we have a number of “regulars” who try and make every meeting, while others come less frequently. We put a collection basket out on the snack table where folks can drop donations if they wish, and we do some fundraising at our annual and very popular “BIRDS and BREWS,” held the Friday evening before our annual bird festival.

**What else we do:** Our annual Green Lake Bird Festival takes place on the last Saturday in April. Because this celebration of International Migratory Bird Day is a requirement to maintain our Bird City status, club members embrace the occasion and spread the word. The festival starts with an early morning field trip followed by several presentations back at Town Square with coffee and other refreshments. Various bird-related items are donated and put up for sale, and we usually include a few raffles.

Throughout the year we also plan occasional field trips to local hotspots. We have gone in search of Snowy Owls and Northern Shrike, we’ve observed Wilson’s Snipe and American Woodcock displaying in the evening, and ventured out at night on owl prowls. Our club has made birding and nature-loving a year-round activity.

**Contact:** Our members stay connected through email and/or our Green Lake Bird and Nature Club Facebook page. We do have a few who don’t use the computer at all, and we call them for upcoming events or changes to our usual routine. To find out more about our organization, please contact President Tom Schultz at 920-960-1796.

The Green Lake Bird and Nature Club offers members educational presentations as well as field trips to local hotspots.
February warmth ushers in a wave of very early migrants

By Mark Korducki

The mild winter weather continued into February and little new snowfall was recorded. An unusually early warm front moved into the state on the 17th. Many record highs were shattered and some areas flirted with 70 degree temperatures. This strong warm front ushered in a wave of early spring migrants.

Geese, cranes and blackbirds were the first to arrive. Greater White-fronted Geese were recorded in good numbers across the southern half of the state. Early Rusty Blackbirds were found at a few locations as well. A few people recorded peenting Woodcocks, which is very early for this species. It's nice to step outside and hear all the vocal residents and recently arrived migrants.

The rarest bird seen during the month was an adult Slaty-backed Gull found in Milwaukee County. This bird was quite cooperative over several days and was seen by many in at least two locations. A frozen pond located near a landfill held a nice variety of gulls and eight species were recorded during this time. A reliable Ross's Goose also appears to have overwintered in the county. Two different Harlequin Ducks were also found along Lake Michigan in Milwaukee County.

As spring is approaching, grouse are starting to display. Several spruce grouse were found in Forest County, including some handsome, displaying males. Booming Greater Prairie-chickens were found in Portage and Marathon Counties.

It was a slower winter for Snowy Owls, but 51 individuals were observed during the season.

Birders found the Nicolet National Forest quiet but a few evening grosbeaks, white-winged crossbills and bohemian waxwings were found.

Exotics that seem to be slowly on the rise include Great Tit and European Goldfinch. The former were found in Sheboygan and Ozaukee. Racine and Kenosha County seem to be the center of the goldfinch population.

The balmy temperatures and increased bird song have given spring fever to many. It's a great time to be a birder.

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

State Sandhill Crane hunt under consideration again

From Page 1

The WSO Conservation Committee is asking society members to consider this issue through the lens of four major reasons for preserving biodiversity: pragmatic, biological, aesthetic and ethical.

From a pragmatic view, we protect biodiversity because it is useful to us in some way: trees provide oxygen, plants provide medicines, and fish provide protein. Therefore, we must protect them to protect ourselves. Sometimes we argue for preserving biodiversity based on the biological implications.

For instance, if we institute hunting, how will this affect a given population and can that population withstand this hunting pressure? We might also argue for protecting a species on aesthetic grounds. Like the Quetzal, because its beauty is truly inspiring. Finally, there is an ethical argument based on the premise that other species simply deserve the right to exist and to live free of human-caused pressures.

From a pragmatic standpoint, a properly managed Sandhill Crane hunt would likely be sustainable and would probably not result in a large or dangerous population decline (especially if closely monitored). Based solely on population size, it appears that the Sandhill Crane population in Wisconsin could likely withstand a hunt. The number of Sandhill Cranes in Wisconsin is reasonably high and mates would likely be quickly replaced should one member of a pair be killed.

However, there are other factors beyond population size that need to be considered:

First, if a bird loses a mate due to hunting, it is typically unable to successfully fledge a chick for at least two to three years after it finds a new mate, even if it retains its breeding territory.

Second, models currently being considered to manage the Great Lakes population are based on harvest models used for cranes harvested while migrating along the Platte River in Nebraska. It is currently unknown how these management scenarios will affect the population in the Great Lakes.

Lastly, this population in the Great Lakes was threatened with extirpation less than 100 years ago. The last thing that anyone wants is to cause a similar crash to this population.

Another issue to consider is that an extensive and expensive effort has been undertaken to re-establish a migratory flock of Whooping Cranes in Wisconsin. Opening a hunting season on Sandhill Cranes would place Whooping Cranes at greater risk of accidental shootings. A Sandhill Crane season provides hunters with a "plausible" misidentification excuse if they were to shoot a Whooping Crane. Though they would still be responsible for their actions, legal action may be reduced on these grounds.

Long revered for its beauty and jubilant call, the Sandhill Crane may deserve protection on its aesthetic value alone. Just because we can hunt it, does not necessarily mean we should hunt it. For many, this elegant and stately species serves as the hallmark of spring's return and all that is wild in our state.

The Sandhill Crane also is one of only 15 species of cranes worldwide, all of which have some level of cultural, spiritual and philosophical importance. The Sandhill Crane is a truly iconic symbol of the avian fauna of Wisconsin, and from an ethical standpoint, perhaps should not be classified as a game bird, measured only by its ability to sustain a hunting season.

Ethics however are unique to the individual, so, as part of the WSO birding community, we are asking you to decide for yourself where you stand on this issue and encouraging you to make your voice heard on April 10.

For a county-by-county listing of locations for these hearings, see http://dnr.wi.gov/About/WCC/Documents/spring_hearing_2017/2017hearinglocations.pdf

For a more detailed WSO issues paper on this topic: http://wsobirds.org/sandhill-crane-hunt

To find more information on the ICF website: https://www.savingcranes.org/
**Call Notes**

**Night sounds: Nature is busy after dark if we listen**

By Jim Knickelbine

When the weather is mild, it’s nice to sleep with a window open just a crack. Letting in some fresh, cool air seems like a healthy thing to do after being cooped up so much in the winter. With that come some risks, especially if one is a light sleeper, because even in winter nature is busy at night.

At our house, there is always a background hum of human activity. I-43 is not far away and it seems the traffic is constant. The same is true for Rapids Road. And each night a train enters and later exits the city, blowing its horn at every intersection, it seems.

I typically hear the pleasant sound of the wind chimes that friends gave me when my dad passed away. They remind me whether the night is calm or blustery. During the latter the sound of wind in the spruces at the edge of the yard is noticeable, and I’m thankful to have a warm home.

On one such night recently during our extended January thaw, I was happily asleep when at 3 a.m. a blood-curdling, high-pitched but descending shriek made me jump, even though it is a familiar sound. It was an Eastern Screech Owl -- a small bird not much larger than the Saw-whet Owls we band in fall. On that night the Screech must have been in the spruces right near the house, judging by its volume. After a few screeches it sang another song, a soft mellow trilling much more pleasant to the ear. It continued calling in that way for quite a while, although probably not as long as it seems when one is awakened and trying to fall back asleep.

The Screech is a year-round resident, and in warmer months when outside at dusk we hear these birds almost every evening. A neighbor told me that they have been nesting in Wood Duck houses he places along the river, and for the owl’s sake I’m grateful that he does.

Of course, after being awakened by the Screech Owl sleep does not come again immediately, and it’s a while before I’m happily unconscious again. Then, at about 4:30 a.m. a series of deep, booming hoots erupts just outside. The local Great-horned Owls are back. They are courting, and call back and forth to each other.

The male’s hoot is deeper, and the female’s higher pitched. Perhaps they were attracted to the yard by the screech owl’s earlier calls, or perhaps by the rabbits that feed on the leavings of bird seed beneath the feeders -- Great-horneds are opportunists and will eat anything smaller than they are. Actually, sometimes, larger. Opportunity aside, this night they are about pair bonding, calling back and forth before moving on to look for a meal elsewhere.

I’m glad they’re neighbors, just as I appreciate my fellow humans nearby. The sound of the owls makes the place feel just a little wild and uncivilized, even if they cause me to lose another hour of sleep.

Owls aren’t the only midnight distractions. One night someone’s car alarm went off far away, causing the local pack of coyotes to feel obligated to sing along. And on another night recently a red fox sang his bark-bark courtship song. And in spring, if I’m especially lucky, I’ll hear the song of an Eastern Whip-poor-will among the toad chorus, a song that used to keep my dad awake at night, but one that is now heard less and less frequently. I’ll find out in a couple of months.

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Jim Knickelbine is education co-chair for WSO. A native of Manitowoc, he is executive director of Woodland Dunes Nature Center and Preserve and a licensed bird bander. He also leads WSO’s Wisconsin Oriole Count.
2015 Big Green Birding Adventure required planning, long rides

By Tom Schultz

I had participated in the Wisconsin BIGBY (Big Green Big Year) challenge for several years, but in 2015, my wife Wendy and I decided to put a little more effort into it — just to see how well we could do. We knew the key to finding a long list of bird species over a given year required visits to strategic locations at particular times — and, of course, some degree of luck!

The year started slow, mainly with birds around the house and neighborhood (Green Lake County). We live in a rural setting, with a mixture of woods and meadows, so our feeder activity is fairly good. One evening (Jan. 21) we took a walk and found four owl species and on around our property: Great Horned, Barred, Eastern Screech, and Northern Saw-whet. The Saw-whet was calling quite close to our house and I heard it while going out to the garage. This prompted us to walk further down the road and listen for the other species. A VERY lucky evening.

Winter is not typically a pleasant time for biking, but we did have a fairly mild day on Jan. 17 so we decided to bike a 9-mile loop hoping to find one of our target birds, a Northern Shrike, which we did. Another late-winter target ride took place on March 7, when we found a Rough-legged Hawk, and then the next day took a chilly 24-mile ride to get a Snowy Owl a few miles south of Green Lake.

Hoping to find a variety of waterfowl on Lake Maria in the southern part of the county, we took a 38-mile bike ride on April 6. As usual, there were many hundreds of birds on the lake, and we picked up quite a few species, including Greater Scaup, Canvasback, Red-breasted Merganser and Horned Grebe. We also found Greater Yellowlegs in a pond along the way, and a big group of Bonaparte’s Gulls on Green Lake.

On May 9 we biked a 29-mile loop through the White River State Wildlife Area for marsh, woodland and prairie birds. We knew we needed to leave EARLY (in the dark at 4 a.m.) to get there in time to hear Whip-poor-will, which we accomplished. Other highlights were American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Least Flycatcher, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, along with several species of warblers.

We needed Horicon Marsh for certain species, and as it turned out we made three bike trips to Horicon over the course of the year. The first was on May 13, and we picked up cool birds like Snowy Egret, Whooping Crane, Common Gallinule, Short-billed Dowitcher, Black Tern and Yellow-headed Blackbird — and a bonus along the way was finding a huge flock of Lapland Longspurs.

On May 21 we rode to Comstock Bog in Marquette County — a round trip of 34 miles. We were hoping for a Yellow Rail, which we knew required a twilight or nighttime visit. We left home around 5:30 p.m. and biked to Germany, and enjoyed a burger at the Longbranch Saloon before heading over to the bog. Along the way, I stopped my bike in time to get a look at a Lark Sparrow, but unfortunately it took off before Wendy could get on it — one of only two birds that separated us for the year!

We arrived at Comstock Bog around 8:25 p.m. and weren’t disappointed as we could easily hear the distinctive rhythmic clicking call, “tick-tick, tick-tick-tick,” making the trip worthwhile. The challenge then was biking home in the dark, using our bike headlights, which Wendy found pretty eerie.

In order to find certain specialty species we knew we had to make a trip over to Buena Vista Grasslands, and because of the distance, it had to be a two-day adventure. We left home May 30 after morning rains delayed our departure until almost noon, but still got very wet when the rain restarted! We biked to Plainfield, about 49 miles, and stayed overnight in a motel. To get to Buena Vista by dawn, we left our room about 2:45 a.m. — and in the dark biked the additional 15-20 miles to get there. It worked out, for we arrived in time to hear the distinctive moaning calls of Greater Prairie-Chickens displaying on a lek not too far off the road. Other highlights included Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Brewer’s Blackbird and a very-special Loggerhead Shrike.

Unfortunately, Wendy missed a Short-eared Owl that I spotted in my scope, but it dipped below a hill before she was able to get a look. We left the Buena Vista around 9 a.m., hoping to get home in time for a nephew’s graduation that afternoon, and ended up biking about 80 miles that day.

Twice during June we biked through the White River Marsh to try for more marsh birds, and also worked on Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II blocks along the way.

Our longest ride of the year took place July 21-24, when we pedaled to Manitowoc via Fon du Lac and Sheboygan. En route we stopped at the Highway 45 wayside (east of Lake Winnebago) and found Bell’s Vireo, and we also picked up Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Common Tern and Great Black-backed and Little Gulls during this trip. On the ride home, several miles south of Manitowoc, we had our biggest surprise of the ride — encountering inveterate birder Bob Domagalski walking along the highway south of Manitowoc.

On his longest BIGBY ride of 2015, Tom Schultz encountered birder Bob Domagalski walking along the highway south of Manitowoc.

Photo by Wendy Schultz
Devil’s Lake and Devil’s Lake State Park are located three miles south of Baraboo in Sauk County. Greatest relief in the Baraboo Hills is attained at Devil’s Lake, where three 500-foot bluffs flank a spring-fed body of water covering approximately 360 acres.

The land cover in this 9,400 acre park is primarily oak forest with red maple understory. But it also includes areas of sugar maple forest, stands of yellow birch, white pine and red cedar groves, prairie-like glades on the top of the bluffs, thickets of red elder and mountain maple at the bottom of the bluffs, marshy areas, and abandoned farmland being invaded by trees and shrubs.

A total of 248 species have been recorded for the park. The peak in spring migration is generally during the first half of May, while the peak in fall migration usually occurs during the second half of September. The park is a major staging area for Turkeys Vultures in spring (April) and fall (October) when up to 300 or more congregate. Best viewing is along South Shore Road during early morning or late afternoon. Included in the approximately 115 species of summer residents are the Turkey Vulture, 9 raptors, Sandhill Cranes, 6 woodpeckers, 7 flycatchers, Brown Creeper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 4 thrushes, 4 vireos, 17+ warblers, 13 sparrows and 2 finches.

An interesting area for birds is the southwestern corner of the lake, with its oak forest and edge, large cottonwoods, willow thicket, marsh, beaver pond, and shoreline. This is an excellent spot for migrants, including Orchard Oriole, and for such summer residents as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Cerulean Warbler. Park across from the boat launch or along the dead end road. Best results are achieved by exploring this productive area on foot. Across from the dead end road watch for a 5 foot stone column marked Wild-Wood. From this column face uphill (west) on South Shore Road and walk about 100 feet on the left side of the road to a faint foot path leading into the woods. Walk this path for access into the hardwood forest along Messenger Creek. This is a good spot for Acadian Flycatcher and Louisiana Waterthrush.

Follow South Shore Road east along the south shore of the lake. Stop at the pull-offs on the bluff side of the road and listen for Black-throated Green, Blackburnian and Canada Warblers. Also explore the wooded area with the large white pines and hardwoods just west of the bathhouse for these species; a boardwalk follows the shoreline in this wooded area. Along the Grottos Trail, Group Camp Trail and/or Group Camp Road check for such forest interior species as Wood Thrush and Scarlet Tanager. Also of interest is a Great Blue Heron rookery in a pine plantation by the former Group Camp.

Drive to the north end of the park via Burma Road, South Shore Road and North Shore Road. For more information on the park, stop at the Nature Center, which is located along the North Shore Road.

The bluff trails are highly recommended, as they afford excellent views of the lake in its mountain-like setting, but they are steep. A climbing tip: the west and east bluffs are less steep at their north ends than at their south ends. Characteristic birds of the bluff edges and faces are Turkey Vulture, Winter Wren, Black-and-white Warbler, and Indigo Bunting.

Another interesting area is Steinke Basin, which is located east of the east bluff and south of CTY DL. Take DL east from the lake to the designated parking lot on the south side of the highway. From the lot one can walk south on the unpaved service road and return via the Steinke Basin Loop, as indicated on the map. In the Basin one finds pine plantations, oak peninsulas from the adjoining upland forest, aspen groves, shrubby thickets, hedgerows, marshy areas and weedy fields. Species apt to be found include Willow and Alder Flycatchers, Sedge Wren, Eastern Bluebird and Blue-winged Warbler.

The Townsend’s Solitaire is of special interest for the area. It has been reported in the park in most winters, including this winter, since first being found in February 1980. Its dates span from Oct. 22 to April 13. Most records come from the south face of the east bluff between the Balanced Rock and Potholes Trails.

These are the steepest trails in the park and are not maintained for winter use; extreme caution is required when hiking the bluff trails in winter. The solitaire is usually associated with red cedars and also mountain ash and buckthorn, as it feeds on the fruits of these trees.

Don’t be afraid to explore all this area has to offer. You won’t be disappointed in either the views or the birds you will find at Devil’s Lake State Park.

“Let’s Go Birding” aims to encourage enjoyment of Wisconsin’s rich birding opportunities and also to introduce additional readers to Wisconsin’s Favorite Bird Haunts, Fifth Edition, compiled by Daryl Tessens for WSO and available for purchase online from the WSO Bookstore, currently at a 50% discount. The Baraboo/Sauk County chapter was written by Kenneth I. Lange.
So I pose this question to you:

What is your favorite bird song -- and why?

BY ANITA CARPENTER

Winter; or what we’ve had of it, was tardy arriving this season but
finally got here in earnest in early December on cold northwesterly
winds. The temperature was a chilling 21 degrees with a wind chill
in single digits. A brief snow squall sent flakes swirling in whisps
on bare pavement when I was out for my morning walk. Although
I snuggle deeper into my winter jacket, I love these frigid, frosty
mornings. I feel free and alive

As I inhale this cold arctic air, a soft cooling sound makes me look
skyward. Could it be? Yes, it is!

Forty tundra swans are winging low overhead heading eastward
just ahead of winter’s advance. Their appearance is three weeks
later than usual as they hopscotch along a migration route which
that extends from nesting grounds in northern Alaska and Canada to
wintering areas at Chesapeake Bay.

I watch them until they disappear from view. A joyous wave of
exhilaration sweeps over me.

I continue along the Fox River solid, iced over and clogged with ice
floss. Yesterday the river was open. How quickly things change.

As I walk along, I become lost in thought. Then unexpectedly this
question pops into my head. What is my favorite bird song? Several
possibilities quickly come to mind.

Is it the first “cheer, cheer, cheer” of a Northern Cardinal breaking
its winter silence on a sunny, clear January day? How about the first
trill of a Red-winged Blackbird, just back from winter’s southern
vacation, announcing his return and that spring is coming but we
may have to be patient.

I love hearing a chorus of robins singing in full glory at the earliest
hint of dawn’s light. The soft tremolo of an Eastern Scrreech Owl
in the depth of night always sends me outside for a better listen.

I never tire of the “peent” of a woodcock, the drawn out “kwonk” of
a Yellow-headed Blackbird or the croak of a raven. A Winter Wren’s
flute-like song, which is longer than the vocalist, adds a delicate
sweetness to the North Woods spring chorus.

Canada Goose music is magical. Honking, migrating flocks with
their April departure to the north and return in October tell me all
must journey to the North Woods to hear them. A loon’s familiar
yodel and its mournful wail are true symbols of wildness. These
stillness-breaking, distance-penetrating songs stir my soul. When I
hear them, I drift into a peaceful place. Perhaps I’m jealous for they
inhabit places I long to be.

So if someone asks me, what IS my favorite bird song, my answer
would be whichever one I’m listening to at the present time. Each
song is unique in its own way, a pleasure to hear, and often stirs
memories of friends, places or events associated with previous avian
encounters.

Yet two songs really touch my soul. The first is the ethereal
mournful wail of the loon in the deep, dark stillness of a northern
night. Even thinking about it gives me goose-bumps. The second is
the collective murmuring coos uttered by Tundra Swans migrating
overhead. Such a gentle, soothing sound from these beautiful, ma-
jestic birds. Their lean white bodies silhouetted against a clear blue
sky make me wish I could join the flock. With the freedom of flight I
could see this beautiful world from their perspective.

So I pose this question to you: What is your favorite bird song and
why?

I hope the songs, whatever they are, give meaning and inspiration
to your life as much as they do mine.

Anita Carpenter is a naturalist who shares her passion and knowledge
of birds, butterflies and other critters with enthusiasm. In 2012 the
National Audubon Society honored her with the Great Egret Award
in recognition of her 32 years of outstanding service to Winnebago
Audubon. She doesn’t do email, but invites you to drop her a line at 304
Scott Ave., Oshkosh, WI 54901 to share your thoughts and favorite bird
songs so she can share them in a follow-up article.

It was a long, green ride, covering 1,281 miles for 231 species

From Page 15

Domagalski walking along the road working
on one of his Atlas blocks.

On Aug. 15 we again biked to Horicon
Marsh, then all the way over to Mayville
hoping to see a Rufous Hummingbird that
had been coming to a feeder. It turned out
we had missed it by about 20 minutes, and
it didn’t reappear during the next couple of
hours while we waited. This was certainly
our most disappointing miss of the year. It
was a long ride back to Waupun, where we
stayed in a motel.

The next day was the WSO
Horicon Marsh field trip, and we got an early
start to bird before the group I was leading
as WSO field trip co-chair arrived. Our best
new species that day was Franklin’s Gull,
which flew right over us along the Auto Tour.

We made our last ride to Horicon Oct. 5,
hoping to get Long-billed Dowitcher (which
we did), and were also pleasantly surprised
to find White-rumped Sandpipers. Also in
October we biked over to Germania Marsh
to search for Ruffed Grouse (no luck), but on
the way home we had a surprise encounter
with two Cattle Egrets west of Princeton.

Our final rides of the fall/winter were
on Nov. 28 after a friend spotted a White-
winged Scoter on Green Lake, and then Dec.
8, to look for winter gulls at the Berlin land-
fill – but only managed to find Thayer’s.

I finished 2015 with 231 species – my
personal record for BIGBY – and I covered
1,281 miles, mostly by bike. My previous
best had been 205 the year before, covering
879 miles.
Some eye-catching questions might benefit from your vote

On Monday, April 10, there will be 72 public hearings, one in each county starting at 7 p.m. where individuals interested in natural resources management have an opportunity to provide their input by non-binding vote and testimony to the Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Board and the Conservation Congress on proposed rule changes and advisory questions relating to fish and wildlife management in Wisconsin.

Among the 81 advisory questions being voted on that evening, these particularly caught the eye of the Badger Birder editor:

QUESTION 3: List Eurasian Collared Doves as an unprotected species:
Eurasian Collared Doves are currently a protected species in Wisconsin because that is the default status for any bird which is not otherwise listed in administrative code. Collared doves are exotic to North America but are relatively common in some states and appear to be establishing themselves in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II, a comprehensive field survey that documents the distribution and abundance of birds in an area, lists observations of collared doves in 24 counties. Collared doves have been encountered by mourning dove hunters and there is potential to inadvertently commit a protected species violation if a collared dove is shot. Classifying them as unprotected species would make it easier to remove collared doves in a nuisance situation and would allow hunter harvest of this exotic species. Other birds which are listed as unprotected are Starlings, English sparrows, coturnix quail, and chukar partridge.

QUESTION 4: List Monk Parrots (Parakeets) as a depredating species under wildlife damage and nuisance control rules:
Monk Parrots are not known to be present at this time but it is possible that they could naturally colonize in Wisconsin, most likely in urban areas. Other birds which are listed as depredating species and can be removed only when they are depredating certain crops or are a health hazard or nuisance include cowbirds, crows, grackles, house sparrows, starlings, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

QUESTION 64: Support increased planting/maintenance of milkweed (540116):
Monarch butterflies are important pollinators in Wisconsin. Population levels have declined in the U.S. by 90% over the last 20 years. The U.S. Dept. of the Interior is considering placing the monarch butterfly on the Endangered Species List, and the Wisconsin DNR is actively encouraging efforts to preserve this species. Milkweed plays a critical role in the habitat needs of the monarch (female monarchs only lay their eggs in/on milkweed plants), and it is believed that much of the population decline is due to the disappearance of milkweed. Several city, towns, and villages in Wisconsin identify milkweed as a noxious weed by ordinance and take aggressive actions to remove or prevent the planting of it within their communities.

64. Do you support having the DNR encourage local governments to remove milkweed from local noxious weed ordinances and encourage the planting and maintenance of quality milkweed plots?

QUESTIONS 70-71: Control of high capacity wells (540316) (requires legislation):
High capacity wells are currently approved with no notice to area residents and limited consideration of impacts to surface waters. Often, impact of high capacity well use is not apparent until after the well has been in operation. This can include effects on both surface waters and residential wells. 70. Do you support legislation which would require public notice be sent to area residents within a two mile radius upon application of any high capacity wells? 71. Do you support legislation which would include the authority to suspend a high capacity well approval for a well that has caused impact or impairment to area wells, wetlands or surface waters?

QUESTION 78: Maintain Stewardship Fund (450316):
In 1989, funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was funded at $25 million per year and in 2010 reached a high of $86 million. Currently the Stewardship Fund is budgeted at $33.2 million dollars per year. Stewardship funds are used to purchase and develop lands for hunting, fishing, trapping and recreating lake and stream access and easements, partnerships with local governments, and protection of unique parcels of land. Other benefits include timber harvest, tourism, many different kinds of outdoor recreation and increased water quality. 78. Do you support the Legislature continuing to fund the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund at adequate levels with wise use of the funds by the NRB and the DNR?

QUESTION 82: Change in funding for Stewardship Program (440316, 640116) (requires legislation):
The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was created by the Legislature in 1989 to purchase land in Wisconsin to be used by the public for hunting, fishing, trapping, bird watching, hiking and other outdoor activities. Funding for this program is approved by the Legislature every two years in the state budget with borrowing authority, not actual cash. Because of this funding structure, accumulated debt service is currently over $930 million, with interest alone over $1 million per week. Some states have found alternative ways to fund this type of program. Missouri has a 1/8 of 1% sales tax that brought in over $90 million dollars in 2016. Minnesota has a Legacy Fund, created in 2000, that's funded by 3/8 of 1% sales tax. Michigan has The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, where funds are derived from royalties on the sale and lease of state owned mineral rights. 82. Do you support legislation which would change Stewardship funding from a borrowing-based program to a cash-based program?

QUESTION 83: Wisconsin game bird, the wild turkey (710316) (requires legislation):
There are now an estimated 350,000 wild turkeys in Wisconsin with 130,000 turkey hunters enjoying hunting these magnificent birds. At present, Wisconsin does not have a state symbol designating a State Game Bird. 83. Do you support legislation which would name the wild turkey as the Wisconsin State Game Bird?

For complete information: http://dnr.wi.gov/About/WCC/springhearing.html

For the hearing location in your county: http://dnr.wi.gov/About/WCC/Documents/spring_hearing/2017/2017hearinglocations.pdf
Bird Digest

It’s been a quiet year for Snowy Owls in Wisconsin

As of Jan. 24, only 51 presumed-unique Snowy Owls have been reported in 27 Wisconsin counties. This count is far below that of recent irruptions, including 135 by the same date last year, 239 in 2015, and 248 in 2014, and more on par with a “typical” non-irruption year in the state.

This report comes from Ryan Brady, bird monitoring coordinator for the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative in the DNR’s Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation.

Current hotspots for finding one are the Freedom area in Outagamie County, Menomonie area in Dunn County, and within Superior city limits in Douglas County.

Familiar places like Horicon Marsh, Buena Vista Marsh and the Milwaukee lakefront have also seen owls in recent weeks.

Wisconsin’s modest numbers are generally reflective of much of the Lower 48, though Eastern states are hosting slightly higher numbers as far south as Virginia.

This year’s birds appear to be a mix of first-year, second-year and adult owls, whereas some years are dominated by a single age class.

Although an influx of new owls won’t happen at this late date, those that are here should stick through at least early to mid-March, joined then by a few migrant owls northbound from wintering areas as far south as central Illinois.

In case you missed it ...

A posting from listserve honcho

Peter Fissel on Wishbird:

“Some of you doubtless had noticed (as I did) that the Bird Trax gadget on the WSO website hasn’t been working for some weeks. Thanks to Webmaster Paul Jakoubek, it is now functional once again.

“Thanks, Paul!”

So check it out at http://wsobirds.org/rare-bird-alerts

2016 BIGBY champ earns some refreshment

Ross Mueller of Outagamie County received this new beer glass from WSO as the 2016 Wisconsin BIGBY Birding champion, with a record-breaking 243 species after biking a total of 2,645 miles. His first-hand BIGBY account appeared in last month’s Badger Birder. The 2015 winner, Tom Schultz, gets a chance to tell his story on Page 15 of this issue.

In appreciation for EVERYTHING...

Christine Reel is treasurer emeritus of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, but continues to play an active role handling the Society’s convention finances and serving as treasurer for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II.

She also has served for many years as treasurer and registrar for the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative’s Annual Meeting.

Last October, organizers of the 2016 WBCI event in Rothschild, which partnered with Bird City Wisconsin and the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum for “Protecting Birds through Action & Art,” surprised Reel with this well-earned recognition.

We all appreciate what Christine has done for birding in Wisconsin.

DNR hires migratory game bird ecologist

Madison - Taylor Finger has been named the new Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources statewide migratory game bird ecologist.

Born and raised in Wisconsin, Finger received his bachelor’s degree in wildlife management and biology from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and a master’s degree in waterfowl ecology from the University of Western Ontario.

The migratory bird program manages Wisconsin’s duck, goose and mourning dove populations and sets annual season regulations.

Waterfowl have played an important role in Finger’s life since a young age, and this interest turned into a professional passion while receiving his bachelor’s degree. In past roles, Finger interned as a waterfowl bander for the Minnesota DNR, conducted Black Duck and Brant research in New Jersey, teal research for the Wisconsin DNR, and completed his master’s degree research on Lesser Scaup migration.

Finger will work in Madison, lives north of the Wisconsin Dells with his wife Michelle and enjoys spending time outdoors with his family.

In appreciation for EVERYTHING...
WSO CALENDAR

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

March 18 (Saturday) -- Dane & Columbia County Ponds (first date option*)
Meet: 7 a.m. at Goose Pond, one mile south of Hwy. 51/60 on Goose Pond Road. Our group will tour by auto to several ponds and flooded fields. A wide variety of water birds, shorebirds, migrant passerines and others are possible. *Note: Trip will take place on this date or March 25, depending on conditions. Watch for announcement via Wisbirdn and on WSO website. Complete 2017 field trip schedule appears online at http://wsobirds.org/what-we-do/field-trips

WSO Board of Directors
April 23 (Sunday) 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Quarterly meeting will be held at Horicon Education and Visitor’s Center on Highway 28 just north of the City of Horicon. Members are always welcome; bring a lunch.

Honey Creek Birdathon/Bandathon
May 13-14 (Saturday-Sunday) 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. Go 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 Cox Nature Center.

78th Annual Convention
June 16-19 (Friday-Monday over Father’s Day weekend)
Headquartered at Potawatomi Carter Casino and Hotel in Nicolet National Forest just south of Wabeno. Hotel offers WSO members a discounted price of $83 per night plus tax for a Standard King or Double. Call 1-800-487-9522 to reserve.

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