

Meet a Member!

For years, mischievous students have attested to the fact that teachers have eyes in back of their heads! And what an asset for retired teacher **Marty Hunt**, who's transferred this innate talent to bird watching, which she's enjoyed all of her life!

Even after 37 years of teaching, Marty continues to work as a substitute teacher. Gym classes are her favorites. "The children are really surprised that I can still do their warm ups with them." It's no wonder she can keep up with them as she involves herself in hiking, jazzercise, and aqua aerobics. She admits, "I'm game for anything!"



Marty Hunt

Marty joined Hoy Audubon around 1975 and although she doesn't keep a life list, she's always on the lookout for birds as she travels. "I got 124 new birds in Belize and about that in Africa, and just a little less in Alaska." Someday she dreams of going to Nebraska on the Platte River to see the spring migration. Closer to home, she frequents Colonial Park, especially during warbler season, and Bong, when the cranes come in. "I can't believe how spectacular it is to see them fly. I also adore hummingbirds in my yard; they are mesmerizing!"

Even though Marty's been watching birds "forever," she still considers herself a novice. To expand her birding knowledge, she participates in a variety of field trips along with fellow birder, Muffy. Through Hoy she's met many friendly, upbeat people and is convinced that, "You can't love nature and not be a good person!"

Remember...you can see the Hoy Honker "In Living Color."

There are two ways to see our newsletter in color: view it on the Hoy website at www.hoyaudubon.org or get on the e-mail newsletter distribution list by sending an e-mail to Keith Kennedy (keith.kennedy@hoyadubon.org) and ask to be put on the electronic mailing list.



Canada Goose, Wind Point.

2010 WSO convention. The 71st annual convention of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology will be held in Door County, May 20-23. Visit www.wsobirds.org for details.

Songbirds in the US are getting smaller, and climate change is suspected as the cause.

A study of almost half a million birds, belonging to over 100 species, shows that many are gradually becoming lighter and growing shorter wings.

This shrinkage has occurred within just half a century, with the birds thought to be evolving into a smaller size in response to warmer temperatures. Researchers evaluated the sizes of hundreds of thousands of birds that pass through the Carnegie Museum's Powdermill ringing station in Pennsylvania. "On average, the decline in mass of spring migrants over the 46 year study was just 1.3%," says Dr. Josh Van Buskirk, lead author.

"For a 10g warbler that's a loss of just 130mg." But some species are losing more weight. For example, the rose-breasted grosbeak has declined in mass by about 4%, while the Kentucky warbler has dropped 3.3% in weight and the scarlet tanager 2.3%.

Of 83 species caught during spring migration, 60 have become smaller over the 46 year study period, weighing less and having shorter wings. Of the 75 species migrating in autumn, 66 have become smaller. However, there is little evidence that the change is harmful to the birds. Details of the discovery are published in the journal *Oikos* (from **BBC Earth News, March 12**).



The average weight of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks has declined by 4% in the last 46 years.

Hoy Activity Reports—A brief recap of some of our recent events for members.

Gull Frolic

On February 20, twelve members of Hoy joined up with over 200 gull lovers at Wintrop Harbor, Illinois, for the annual "Gull Frolic." Bread scrapings lured in over 1,000 gulls for observation by anxious spectators. Some notables of the seven species of gulls included both the greater and lesser black-backed, Thayers, glaucous and Iceland. Native Californian, Alvaro Jaramillo, provided an informative and entertaining presentation on the Asian slaty-backed gull, which is becoming more of a regular in North America. Not only were the gulls sated, but the visitors also enjoyed a delicious breakfast and lunch, included in the cost of admission.



Herring Gull, Lake Michigan

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Email addresses of Board members are available at: www.hoyaudubon.org

Election of Board of Directors: several open Director positions will be voted on at our May meeting. If you would like to be considered for a board position, please contact Stan Rosenstiel at 262-694-2206.

Next Board meeting is Thursday, April 22.

Monthly Program Coordinator

Stan Rosenstiel 262-694-2206

Field Trip Coordinator*

Bob McFall 262-697-5167

* If you have suggestions regarding future field trips please contact Bob McFall at: rmcfall@wi.rr.com or 262-697-5167

Newsletter

Linda Fare Hirsch
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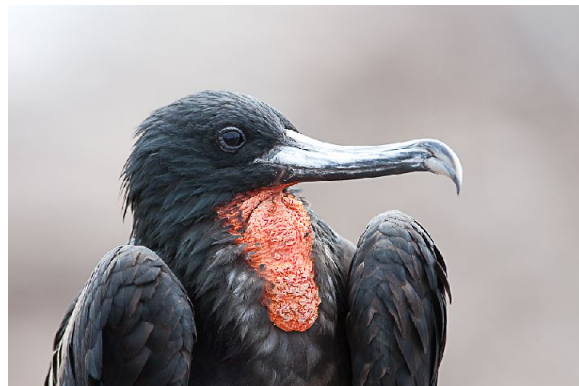
Ideas for the newsletter? We welcome your suggestions, recaps of birding seminars/activities, fun facts and birding tidbits for use in future newsletters. Please mail to the attention of Linda Hirsch at: Hoy Audubon, P.O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53402 or email to: hoynewsletter@hoyaudubon.org

The Hoy Honker is the newsletter of the Hoy Audubon Society, Inc. PO Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404

Activity Reports continued

Galapagos Islands-February 4. Imagine sitting in your deck chair on the shores of the Pacific Ocean listening to the lapping of the waves and catching glimpses of beautiful and unique wildlife! Hoy members could do just that when they attended Keith Kennedy's lecture and slide show of his trip to the Galapagos Islands. Along with his description of the wildlife, Keith wove in geographical, historical and political facts, allowing us a full picture of the islands.

Originally known as The Enchanted Islands, the Galapagos Islands lie 19 degrees west and one degree south, straddling the equator. "There are two seasons, cool from June to November and warm, from January to May," but Keith recommends the cool season for optimum sightings of animals. In fact, he was so entranced with the islands that he took over 5,000 pictures! "But I finally narrowed it down to about 2,000!" So, we knew we were viewing the "cream of the crop!"



Frigate bird, Galapagos Islands, Keith Kennedy

Keith's group of about fifteen photographers arrived in the islands shortly after some famous dignitaries had just visited, namely Prince Charles and Lady Camilla. He indicated there were lots of celebrations on the islands since 2009 marked the bi-centennial of Charles Darwin's birth. Darwin, both a geologist and a biologist, visited the Galapagos in 1835. The United Nations has recognized the islands as a World Heritage site.

We learned that promptness is the order of the day because, "If you miss your plane from the mainland, you miss your boat! You go right from the Galapagos airport to your panga (a 10 passenger rubber dingy or Zodiac) which takes you to the bigger boat, "The Alta", a 16 passenger sailboat. Keith admitted that it was a bit tricky to juggle all of your gear especially when the seas were rough. Luckily, only one person dropped a lens overboard. And Keith did not get seasick!

Of the 154 recorded species of animals, 61 are residents, 29 are endemic (only found there) and 15 are sub-species. "The animals are so tame you feel like you're in the Garden of Eden." His telephoto lens wasn't always necessary since a yellow warbler allowed him to get as close as 6 feet away! One interesting fact, "the Galapagos penguin is the only penguin found north of the equator."

He also photographed a docile marine iguana, although Keith figures Darwin might have been afraid of the species, dubbing them "Guardians of Hell." Their National Park Service guide, Juan, a trained zoologist, "was a tough task master, making sure no one veered off the marked trails." He noted that it was reassuring to see how sensitive the guides are about all visitors adhering to the Park's rules.

As true in all areas, some serious issues plague the Islands: One is over-population, which has grown from about 10,000 in 1990 to 30,000 residents today. Another is the abundance of feral goats, cats and dogs, invasive weeds and illegal fishing, which all threaten wildlife.

We certainly enjoyed this presentation which provided us a cozy respite from the February chill and the turnout was great!

2010 Conference of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. April 15-18, 2010. Duluth, Minnesota. Hosted by Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. See www.hawkridge.org for more information.

Location for our April Meeting: note that we will have our April 1 monthly meeting at the **Northside branch of the Kenosha Public Library**, 1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI ((262) 564-6100). For directions from Racine, check MapQuest or Google Maps (Ohio Street is almost a straight shot to the library).

Coastal Louisiana

The National Wildlife Federation in partnership with National Audubon offered our chapter two slots, all expenses paid, to learn about the importance of coastal marshes, bayous and beaches of Louisiana. Cristina Mondragon, a practicing lawyer with an environmental conservation background, and Eric Howe, a biology major, represented Hoy for this mid-January program. They shared their findings with Hoy members at our March 4th meeting, enhancing the lecture with slides and a video.

They joined up with about thirty others, comprised of historians and birders, who perused the Louisiana wetlands, learning about the measures now being taken to stop the rapid disintegration of coastal lands. Eric pointed out, “Fourteen million acres are recognized as important birding areas,” and Cristina added, “Hundreds of species use the Mississippi Flyway as a stopping point during migration.” In addition to providing birding habitats, Louisiana is vital in the production of energy and food. They noted, “What happens there will affect the rest of us.”

On their walks to Elmer’s Island, a wildlife refuge, and Grand Isle, Eric and Cristina noted the various bird species they sighted, which included the western sandpiper, snowy egret, piping plover, clapper rail, sharp-tailed and seaside sparrow, royal tern, brown pelican, red knot, willet, mockingbird, winter wren, and barn owl. They didn’t even have to wait for May to spy a Nashville warbler!

We viewed the video “One River, Two Courses,” which explained that 20,000 tons of rock are dropped yearly to help keep the land from sinking, and that other serious steps are also being taken to trap nutrients and prevent further devastation.

How can we help? We can support the Federal restoration program of the Louisiana coastal areas, spread the word in our chapters and support Audubon. The good news is, with these conservation efforts in place, the wetlands can come back; the system is very resilient.

When asked whether the trip provided a positive outlook for Louisiana, Cristina answered, “We came away hopeful... extremely hopeful!”

Ocelots and Orioles: Wisconsin’s Costa Rica Connection. A benefit for Wisconsin’s migratory birds. April 24, 5:00-8:00 PM at the Milwaukee County Zoo’s Conference Room, 9715 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee. For more information, go to www.wisconservation.org

Hoy Earth Day event, April 24. We will join forces with the Racine Rotary Club to plant native shrubs, forbs, and trees at Myers Park in Racine (lakefront, at the foot of 11th Street). Please join our happy troop at 9 AM, Saturday, April 24th.

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, April 1, 7:00 PM: Birds and Wind Turbines presented by **Dr. Noel Cutright**. Birds are not the only winged animals at risk due to the presence of wind turbines. New research shows that bats may be at even greater risk



Wind turbines near Horicon Marsh.

than birds. Noel Cutright will discuss what we know and don’t know about wind turbine wildlife interactions. He will also talk about various factors that are considered in the construction of a modern wind farm in Wisconsin. Where: the Northside branch of the Kenosha Public Library.

Saturday, April 10, George W. Mead State Wildlife Area. Meet at 7:30 AM, Saturday at the headquarters building along CTH S, 2 miles south of CTH C or 6.2 miles north of Hwy 10. This trip will be led by Joe Schaufenbuel and Gerry Janz. **Note:** Bob McFall has reserved 8 rooms (for Friday night) under his name at Comfort Suites, 300 Division Street, Stevens Point. Call (715) 341-6000 by March 26. Cost \$89 + tax.

Wednesdays, April 14 & 21, 6:00 PM: Woodcock walks at Cliffside Park and Chiwaukee. At Cliffside, meet at picnic area #2 by the yellow gate. We will do some general birding while waiting for the woodcocks to become active usually close to dusk. If you want to go to Chiwaukee on either of these dates, please RSVP to Stan Rosenstiel at 262-694-2206; he can also provide information and directions.

Saturday, May 1, 8:00 AM, Birding Tichigan Marsh with Jerry DeBoer. Meet at Highway 20 Park and Ride 7:20 A.M. Directions to Tichigan parking lot. Highway 20 through Waterford to Buena Park Road. Right on Buena Park to Ranke Road. Left and up the hill in a half mile, Ranke turns north and becomes Marsh Road. Go about 0.6 miles and cross Tichigan Creek—the parking lot is soon after that. Be ready for ticks.

Thursday, May 6. Birding Tips. 7:00 PM at River Bend Nature Center. Get the latest tips on warbler ID and other migrants.

Friday to Sunday, May 28-30. Birding Wyalusing with Rick Fare. Bob McFall has reserved 8 rooms under his name (for Friday and Saturday nights) at the Super 8 Highway 18 and 35 south, Prairie du Chien. Cost \$89 + tax. Call (608) 326-8777 by May 13.

Bird walks and other miscellaneous activities for April-May: Please see the enclosed birding calendar or visit the Hoy Audubon website for dates of local bird walks and other birding activities too numerous to list in this column.

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Be on the lookout for Eastern Bluebirds—a sure sign of spring! (note that some EB's do over winter in S.E. Wisconsin). K. Kennedy



Hooded Merganser female, K. Kennedy

If you have not renewed your Hoy Audubon Chapter Membership for 2009/2010—do it now.

Annual renewals for Hoy Audubon Society “Chapter Supporter” memberships are due on July 1 of each calendar year. Please send a check payable to Hoy Audubon Society.

Chapter Supporter Dues: \$12 Total amount enclosed: _____

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The International Crane Foundation's Annual Midwest Crane Count 2010 is being conducted on Saturday, April 17th, 2010 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. The count is a tradition dating back to 1976. It is one of the largest citizen-based inventories in the world. One of the primary purposes of the Crane Count is to allow ICF to monitor the abundance and distribution of cranes in the Upper-Midwest. The contact info for the crane count is: Joan Garland, Crane Count Coordinator, International Crane Foundation, E-11376 Shady Lane Road, Baraboo, WI 53913 (608) 356-9462 ext. 142 or go to: cranecount@savingcranes.org