



## Meet a Member!

Is it possible that Irving Berlin wrote his 1915 hit, "I Love a Piano," with Helen Norman in mind? After all, that's the year this amazing and extremely active woman was born.



Helen Norman

The piano has always been a passion of Helen's. She's played and taught piano, integrating it among her years as an elementary and high school teacher. And it's apparent she's directed church choirs, since she's spruced up many Hoy holiday parties by leading members in choruses of "Jingle Bells" and other favorites.

It's natural that Helen's love of music easily transfers to the melodic sounds of birds. Her first taste of birding came as a child while growing up on a farm in North Dakota. "My mother loved birds and fed them in our yard, but she had no way to provide water. So she convinced my father to have the blacksmith create a birdbath." From then on she and her mother enjoyed watching the various birds in, as Helen puts it, "our unique contraption!" Swimming, hiking, tennis, and spying a "new" bird, all provided Helen with a fun-filled childhood. And despite being raised during the Great Depression, she considers herself fortunate. "We always had food and other essentials."

After attending Ed Prins' slide presentation with her daughter Muffy in 1978, Helen joined Hoy Audubon. "I saw beautiful pictures of birds that I knew I'd never have a chance to see personally." Helen also noted that "chickadees are my favorites. They are so tiny and active."

Peterson and Western Printing Field Guides, along with knowledgeable club members, assist Helen on bird walks. And she offers some words of advice. "Be patient. Go out and look as often as you can. Join a group and learn from your friends."

*Linda Fare Hirsh*

**Did you know?** Hoy Audubon Treasurer **Jenny Wenzel's** photo of a parasitic jaeger taken at Jaegerfest in 2009 (see page 2) was featured in the October 2010 issue of *Birder's World* magazine. Congratulations Jenny!



Three Franklin's Gulls with a Ring-billed Gull on the rocks at the Wind Point Lighthouse, November 14. *Photo by Keith Kennedy*

## Shoop Trail Maintenance

On Saturday, October 2, a group of volunteers from Hoy Audubon, in spite of high winds and cool temperatures, cleared the overgrown trail at Shoop Park. This was part of an effort by Hoy Audubon in conjunction with the Racine Parks and Recreation Department to improve the birding experience at Shoop.



*Trail clearing crew.*

## Cats Indoors--The Challenge!

There is no question that birds are better off when cats stay indoors. Exact numbers are unknown, but scientists estimate that every year in the United States alone, cats kill hundreds of millions of birds, and more than a billion small mammals, including rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks. Feline predators include both domestic cats that spend time outdoors and stray cats that live in the wild, sometimes as part of a colony.



Dolly, under 'house arrest' since her adoption from the Humane Society in 1994.

Outdoor cats themselves are also at increased risk.

They can get hit by cars; attacked by dogs, other cats, or wildlife; contract fatal diseases, such as rabies, feline distemper, or feline immunodeficiency virus; get lost, stolen, or poisoned; or suffer during severe weather conditions. Outdoor cats lead considerably shorter lives on average than cats kept exclusively indoors. Primary birds impacted by outdoor cats are:

- Common songbirds, such as the Cardinal, Blue Jay, and House Wren
- Rare and endangered species, such as the Bobolink, Cerulean and Golden-Winged Warblers
- Birds that nest or feed on the ground, such as the Eastern Bluebird and Meadowlark.

**Solutions:** Cat owners should keep their cats indoors. Many veterinarians and animal welfare organizations support keeping cats indoors for their own safety, as well as to prevent them from killing wildlife. The American Bird Conservancy ([www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)) provides a wealth of information about techniques people can use to help their cats adjust to an indoor lifestyle. *Helen Pugh*



## Hoy Board of Directors

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Email addresses of Board members are available at: [www.hoyaudubon.org](http://www.hoyaudubon.org)

### Next Board of Directors Meeting:

Thursday, Dec 16, 7:00 PM, 1737

Centennial Lane, Racine. All interested members are welcome. Come and find out what your club is doing!

### Monthly Program Coordinator\*

Dana Garrigan 262-652-1737

### Field Trip Coordinator\*

Bob McFall 262-697-5167

\* If you have suggestions regarding future programs or field trips please contact the coordinators directly.

### Newsletter Editors

Linda Fare Hirsch

Keith Kennedy

**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](mailto:hoynewsletter@hoyaudubon.org)

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

## Hoy Activity Reports

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

**Jaegerfest.** Several members of Hoy Audubon Society headed north in late September for the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology's (WSO) Field Trip to Superior, WI entitled "Jaegerfest."

Jaegerfest has become an annual WSO pilgrimage to Wisconsin Point in Superior where the hopes are high for getting views of a rare species of bird as it migrates through the area...the jaeger. Parasitic jaegers are the species of jaeger most likely to be seen during this field trip, but on rare instances you may catch a glimpse of a Pomarine or long-tailed jaeger if you're lucky. Jaegers are well-known for their habit of pursuing gulls and terns and forcing them to drop their food, which was observed at length during the 2009 Jaegerfest trip.



Parasitic Jaeger. Photo by Jenny Wenzel.

This year only a lucky few caught glimpses of the parasitic jaeger as it flew past the beach at a great distance, but there were other birds to enjoy, for sure! Multiple Harris's sparrows were seen in the area and other birds spotted included American pipsits, American golden plovers, a few Franklin's gulls, and some warblers (mostly yellow-rumps and palms). A few people even caught glimpses of a Sabine's gull. If you weren't seeing much at the point, you could even head a little further north to Hawk Ridge in Minnesota to get a glimpse of some of the migration happening up there. Despite some heavy rainfall during the trip, a good time was had by all! We'll be looking forward to next year's trip and hoping for more jaegers! *Jenny Wenzel*

**Status of Wisconsin bird populations-Bill Mueller.** Ornithologist and conservation biologist Bill Mueller gave a talk on changes in populations, distributions, and abundance of Wisconsin birds at the August 5 Hoy meeting. About a third of the bird species in Wisconsin are in decline, about a third are increasing, and about a third are stable. Much of what we know about bird populations comes from Breeding Bird Surveys. In Wisconsin there are 90 routes, each 24.5 miles long, monitored in June by expert birders who make a 3-minute stop every half mile to count every bird seen or heard. The Christmas Bird Count, with about 105 counts in Wisconsin, and the Great Backyard Bird Count also monitor bird populations.

Thanks to nest boxes, wood ducks are increasing in Wisconsin. Blue-winged teal are declining. The Cooper's hawk is doing very well as it adapts to urban environments. In Wisconsin the broad-winged hawk population is flat, but in Manitoba it is in decline, which is worrisome. The American kestrel is in slight decline here but, for reasons unknown, in precipitous decline in New England.

Wild turkeys are a conservation success story, with about a half million in the state. Sandhill cranes are another success story. In the 1930s, there were only 30 nesting pairs in the state; now there are thousands.

The northern bobwhite is in decline in Wisconsin and even in the South. The upland



sandpiper and field sparrow, both grassland birds, are also in decline. Western meadowlarks have declined 97 percent in Wisconsin in the past 50 years, but they are doing all right in the Great Plains. In general, grassland birds are doing the worst in Wisconsin. Years ago when dairy cows were pastured, we had more grassland birds.

The population of ring-billed gulls is exploding because they like landfills and garbage. Common terns, which nest on sand beaches that also attract humans, are endangered in Wisconsin. Caspian terns are another endangered species here. Like the great blue herons we see here in the summer, they are not breeding; they are just "hanging out"!

The rusty blackbird has declined 85-99 percent in less than 40 years. It is North America's second fastest declining species (see box below).



Rusty Blackbird. Photo by Keith Kennedy

Mourning doves are doing well and have not been adversely affected by hunting. Short-eared owls, a grassland bird, are declining in Manitoba and Canada. They have bred at Buena Vista, and in some years a dozen will spend the winter at Bong. The long-eared owl, an enigmatic species, is in decline based on Duluth banding results from the past 16 years.

The common nighthawk has declined dramatically in the Midwest. The red-headed woodpecker is in decline in Wisconsin whereas the pileated woodpecker is increasing at a rate of 4.5 percent a year. The brown thrasher, a shrub nester, is in decline, in part because no one is concerned about preserving shrub habitat.

Golden-winged warblers are in decline in Wisconsin, and cerulean warblers are in dramatic decline. Logging has been good for both the chestnut-sided warbler and the mourning warbler. Last summer, there were 30 Kirtland warblers in Wisconsin with many active nests. Until recently, this species bred only in Michigan.

So what can you do to help birds survive and thrive? Support the groups that are working to preserve their habitats including the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and the Nature Conservancy. Sharon Kennedy

**Take Part in the Rusty Blackbird Blitz. January 29 thru February 13th, 2011.** The Rusty Blackbird has been steeply declining, with estimates of an 85-99% population drop over the past 40 years. **The Migratory Bird Center**, part of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, needs your help in mobilizing a "blitz" to locate Rusty Blackbirds and create a map of wintering Rusty Blackbird "hot spots" that will help focus research, monitoring and conservation attention. Learn more at [http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty\\_blackbird/blitz.cfm](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty_blackbird/blitz.cfm)

## Get Involved in the Christmas Bird Count!

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC), in its 111th year nationwide, has become a valuable method to monitor the winter range and numbers of bird populations throughout the decades ([www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc)).

Join the Hoy Audubon Society on foot and by vehicle for part of or the whole day as we count all birds we find in various habitats in eastern Racine and Kenosha counties. Every effort will be made to pair new field observers with more experienced birders within designated count areas. There is a \$5 fee to participate for all field participants aged 19 or older. Paid participants will receive the "American Birds: Summary of the CBC" issue from NAS in Fall 2011. Home feeder watchers located within the count circles are also welcome to participate (please email/call ahead for instructions).

**Racine CBC: Saturday, December 18.** To sign up or for more information, contact Eric Howe at [cbc@hoyaudubon.org](mailto:cbc@hoyaudubon.org) or 262-594-5853. Should hazardous weather exist on the 18th, the backup date will be Sunday, December 19th.

**Kenosha CBC.** The date has not been decided at the time of this newsletter printing. Please check our website for updated information or contact Eric Howe.

## Upcoming Activities

**Thursday, December 2, 6:00 PM: Annual Holiday potluck dinner.** This is our annual potluck dinner—please bring a dish to pass and some flatware, Hoy will provide beverages. River Bend Nature Center, Racine.

**Saturday, December 18. Racine Christmas Bird Count.** See info in box above.

**Thursday, January 6, 7:00 PM: Exploring Churchill, Manitoba.** Eric Howe, Rick Fare, John Dixon, and Jack LeSuer.

Four of our Hoy Audubon members visited Churchill for 10 days last summer and will share their birding experiences and discuss other aspects of the boreal flora and fauna. Kenosha Northside Library.



Willow Ptarmigan. Photo by Eric Howe

**Saturday, January 8. WSO birding field trip on Lake Michigan.** Start in Milwaukee at the South Shore Yacht Club at 8:00 A.M. Hoy members from Racine and Kenosha should meet at the Ryan Road Park and Ride at 7:30 AM and car pool to the event.

**Friday-Saturday Jan 14-15.** Golden Eagle Count and Survey in western Wisconsin and SE Minnesota. This is a citizen contribution to science event. The trip details are not yet firm so please check our website in late December for updated info.



### For Wisbirdn, click here!

If you're new to birding and wondering how it is that the good birders always seem to know where the good birds are, it's because they regularly check "Recent Postings from the Wisconsin Birding List." You can check recent postings right now by clicking here:

<http://birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/WISC.html>.

If you subscribe to the mailing list of the Wisconsin Birding Network (Wisbirdn), you will receive an e-mail of each posting as it comes in. To subscribe (it's free), go to this link and follow the directions for subscribing: <http://www.portalscards.com/wisbirdn/index.html>. The advantage of subscribing is that it saves you from checking (or remembering to check!) for postings every day. But, fair warning, your inbox will be filled every day with Wisbirdn postings, especially when birds are migrating through Wisconsin. Only subscribers may post sightings. Every posting you receive will include directions for unsubscribing.

Here's a good recent example of why it's worth checking the Wisbirdn postings. On Sunday, November 14, Rick Fare found three Franklin's gulls on the rocks just north of the Wind Point lighthouse. Jenny Wenzel posted Rick's finding on Wisbirdn. These are the Franklin's gulls in Keith's photo on page 1.

The previous Sunday, November 7, a red phalarope showed up at South Metro Pier in Oak Creek. According to the Sibley Field Guide, the red phalarope is "uncommon. Breeds on high-Arctic tundra ponds. Migrates and winters in small flocks on open ocean;

rarely seen from land or inland."

Four different birders posted the location of this bird on Wisbirdn. They know that if you post it, other birders will come, and sure enough, they did! Keith was fortunate enough to get photos of the phalarope that afternoon.

The only thing that the good birders didn't mention in their posts is the two killer flights of stairs that lead down to the pier!

Sharon Kennedy



Red Phalarope, Nov. 7, South Metro Pier, Oak Creek, WI. Photo by Keith Kennedy

### Are you sure the large group of geese you are looking at are all Canada geese?

Casual observers may incorrectly decide that they are simply looking at a large group of Canada geese. Rick Fare knows to scan the Canada geese and look for a much smaller goose with a short neck and a short triangular bill that looks like a Canada goose albeit a miniature version—a **cackling goose**. This goose is now recognized as a distinct species that breeds farther westward and northward than the Canada goose. In early October, Rick spotted a single Cackling Goose in a large flock of Canada geese that were foraging in the grassy area near the pavilion at North Beach, Racine. Rick gave me a call and I was able to get a number of photographs in good light. Thanks Rick! For more on the cackling goose, go to: All About Birds: [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/cackling\\_goose/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/cackling_goose/id)



Cackling goose, Oct. 6, North Beach, Racine, WI. Photo by Keith Kennedy

### Snow Geese at Bong!

Members of Hoy Audubon who attended the short-eared owl program at Richard Bong State Recreation Area on Saturday, Nov. 13 got to see a small group of snow geese near the picnic area. What made this an extra



Snow Goose, dark morph, Nov. 16, Richard Bong State Recreation Area, Kansasville, WI. Photo by Keith Kennedy

special sighting is that the geese were the blue or 'dark morph' form. They were still there almost a week later when this photo was taken. The snow geese may still be out there so take a ride to Bong and you may even get to see the short-eared owls and the Northern shrike that has been hanging out there. Keith Kennedy



Photos from the Oct-Nov Hoy Audubon Lakefront Bird Walks at Shoop and Wind Point.





**Purple Martin help needed in Lake Geneva area:**

We need to hire responsible person to install a Purple Martin housing assembly on a dock on Lake Geneva, and monitor box during the April – July season. Will pay for your time. Please contact Helen Pugh at 262-637-4359.

**Locations for our Meetings:** Note that we will have our December meeting at River Bend Nature Center in Racine. However, the January and February meetings will be 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).

**Hoy Honker...the on-line edition.** This is our first extended version of our bi-monthly newsletter. There are two ways to see our newsletter in color: view it on the Hoy website at [www.hoyaudubon.org](http://www.hoyaudubon.org) or get on the e-mail newsletter distribution list by sending an e-mail to [keith.kennedy@hoyaudubon.org](mailto:keith.kennedy@hoyaudubon.org) and ask to be put on the electronic mailing list.



**Hoy Audubon Birders to present January program on expedition to Churchill, Manitoba.**

Remember to mark your calendars for **January 6, 2011** when the 'Churchhill 4' will talk about their exciting trip to see the shorebirds of northern Manitoba, Canada. Note: Churchill is also a world famous destination for photography of polar bears in winter!

**Join Hoy Audubon and Support Your Local Birds**



**Join the Hoy Audubon Society and become a Chapter Supporter!** Annual dues for Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" memberships are only \$12. Join today by sending a check (payable to Hoy Audubon Society) to:

Hoy Audubon Society, P. O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404

**Hoy Honker is the official newsletter of the Hoy Audubon Society**

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