

Meet a Member!

Field trip coordinator for the Hoy Audubon Society, Bob McFall, 80, started birding by following cardinals...the St. Louis Cardinals, that is! A former teacher of biology and driver education, Bob also coached track and cross country for 44 years. He still enjoys sports, especially watching his granddaughter's Lake Forest College softball team and his grandson's track and cross country teams at UW-LaCrosse.



Bob McFall

"I took an ornithology class in college and got an A." Then demonstrating his wry sense of humor, he added, "Not many of those on my transcript!" That class seemed to be the catalyst for his birding career. "After I retired from teaching, but was still coaching, I had time to look for birds." His favorite spots were Tower Grove Park, a migrant trap on the south side of St. Louis, and Riverlands, near the lock and dam at Alton, Illinois.

In 2004, Bob and his wife, Frances, migrated northeast to the town of Pleasant Prairie and joined the Hoy Audubon Society. They both enjoy attending the programs where they've met a lot of nice people and have picked up a wealth of information about birding. Although Frances does not keep a list, Bob has logged in 577 species from the ABA area on his computer. "I'm most proud of the 264 on the Wisconsin list that I've compiled since 2004." Bob also mentioned that one member of a birding organization he belonged to in St. Louis recorded the biggest list in the world, over eight thousand! Perhaps Bob is aspiring to surpass, or at least tie, her total!

Along with family gatherings with their seven grown children and grandkids, Bob and Frances, who recently celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary, love sharing common interests. A favorite includes venturing out to Bong and the Kenosha Dunes. "We like to watch for hawks and count them, especially when we travel!"

Bob recommends the National Geographic field guide series for optimum birding, where he continually adds his own notes into the margins for ready reference. He also uses a scope with a window mount, admitting, "I'm too lazy to put it on a tripod."

Bob encourages birders to go with people who know more than you do. "If you keep at it you will get better."

Frances adds her own tip, "If you don't see anything, stay there; something will come along!"

Hoy Honker In Living Color. Anyone who's lived through the days of black and white television can surely appreciate today's high-definition and colorful, digital technology! Gone are the days of just darker and lighter shades of gray.



Canada Goose, Wind Point.

Well, you can get this same spectacular effect by receiving your Hoy Audubon newsletter via e-mail! Treat yourself to Keith Kennedy's gorgeous photography of birds and their Technicolor habitats. See the members' rosy cheeks as they embark on those frosty morning field trips! Plus, your newsletter will arrive faster than the traditional "snail mail!" There's two ways to subscribe. Send an e-mail to keith.kennedy@hoyaudubon.org or go the Hoy website at www.hoyaudubon.org

Special Note: one of Keith' Kennedy's photos is in the current issue (Jan-Feb) of Audubon magazine.

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

December Lakefront Birding. Frigid temperatures and blustery winds never truly deter a dedicated birder as witnessed by Hoy Audubon's December outings to Shoop Park on Lake Michigan. Bird walk leader Rick Fare feels that winter time lends itself to great birding along the lakefront, but he reminds birders, "Make sure you dress in layers to trap air for insulation just like the birds do!" On December 6, hardy members viewed some winter gulls including a lesser black-backed, a glaucous, and a Thayer's gull. On December 13, the group headed off to Sheboygan and Port Washington after the morning walk in Racine. "We were treated to the great looks of a black-legged kittiwake, a Barrow's goldeneye, and a Harlequin duck, along with more common winter ducks." Watch the Hoy newsletter and website for future bird walks.



Hoy birders at Shoop dressed for December weather!

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

Next Board of Directors Meeting:
Thursday, Feb. 25, 7:00 PM, 731 S. Main Street, Racine. All members are welcome. Come and find out what your club is doing!

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
- Keith Kennedy
- Christina Mondragon

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

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Activity Reports continued

Owl Prowl. Beth Goeppinger, a 17-year veteran naturalist at the Richard Bong State Recreation Area, packed the house on November 5, at the River Bend Nature Center as she presented an insightful talk and slide show on the various species of owls. We discovered the many fascinating adaptations owls possess that account for their success as the perfect night hunters. She also played a CD replicating the owls' calls and provided handouts of the numerous owl species.

Beth indicated that the owls' large eyes are fixed in their sockets and contain ten times more rods than daytime animals. "We would need eyes as large as grapefruits in order to see as well as they do at night!" And their necks have 14 vertebrae in contrast to our seven, which allows them to turn their heads 270 degrees to get a panoramic view of their surroundings.

"Ear tufts help for camouflage and show their mood," Beth noted, "and most have differentiated ears, which means one ear is higher than the other." Facial disks also help to funnel the sound.



Note the 'ear tufts' on the great horned owl.

We learned that the downy feathers on their legs and the cones on their wings muffle sounds and enable them to swoop down in absolute silence to surprise their prey. The audience even got to investigate these adaptations first hand as Beth circulated examples of the wings of the screech, barred and Great Horned owls.

Beth explained that after about eight-to-ten hours an owl expels the fur and bones of its prey in the form of a pellet. "It's like if you swallowed an Eskimo pie whole and spit out the stick."

As we viewed Beth's slides, she included highlights of each owl. What amazed many is that the Great Horned owl weighs only three pounds and yet can carry animals weighing up to eight pounds. This owl nests in January and lays four to six eggs but usually only two will make it. And the barred owl, a cavity nester, has a most unusual call that sounds like, "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all!"

At the conclusion of the formal portion of the program, Beth treated us "big kids" to a famous children's book by Jane Yolen entitled Owl Moon. Then she led us out to the woods for an owl prowl. Even though the owls chose to remain obscure that evening, the group thoroughly enjoyed the adventure!

November 14 Field Trip to Bong Wildlife Refuge

As a follow-up to Beth's owl talk, Hoy members sought out some short-eared owls that frequent Bong's prairie land. Short-eared owls prefer hunting at twilight and dawn, so at 3:30 PM, we caravanned down Bong roads, stopping at two choice spots to set up our scopes and ready our binoculars. These owls possess amazing aerial ability, their long wings allowing them to hover from a few feet to as high as 1,300 feet above the ground as they await their prey of choice—the meadow vole, which comprises 75 to 80 percent of their food. Their hooting resembles a dog's bark which they accompany with a definitive wing clap.

After a half hour wait, we excitedly spied the flappy flight of four magnificent short-eareds as they swooped down into the distant grasslands. A northern harrier also graced the horizon to a raucous chorus of sandhill cranes and resident frogs. The successful sighting sent birders happily off to their cars on this perfect November evening.

Location for our Winter Meetings: note that we will have our January, February, and March monthly meetings 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).

Rare Bird Alert! A dark-eyed junco belonging to the western ‘Oregon’ race (or subspecies) has been observed again this winter at a backyard feeder in North Bay (Sharon Kennedy).

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, ‘there are two widespread forms of the Dark-eyed Junco: “slate-colored” junco of the eastern United States and most of Canada, which is smooth gray above; and “Oregon” junco, found across much of the western U.S., with a dark hood, warm brown back and rufous flanks’. So take a good look at the juncos at your feeder this winter—you may have your own “Oregon Boy.”



“Oregon Boy” a dark-eyed junco of the western Oregon subspecies.

Christmas Bird Count—by Linda Hirsch

Winter cap...Check. Mittens...Check. Insulated socks and boots...Check. Long underwear...Check. These and many other “necessities” accompanied me on my very first Christmas Bird Count. My trainer and brother, Rick Fare, and I set out at 7:30 AM to begin the National Audubon Society’s annual event. Rick had already soloed at 5:30 that morning, counting two screech owls at the River Bend Nature Center. With binoculars in tow, we first stopped at the Dekoven Foundation, discovering an abundance of house finches, chickadees, sparrows and mourning doves at a birdfeeder. A lone red-breasted nuthatch entertained us as it paraded upside down diligently seeking its own feast of insects from beneath the bark of a maple tree. We also spied a downy woodpecker in the upper branches of an elm. Rick showed me how to record the birds using an efficient dot system.

Sanders Park was next, where we spotted a red-tailed hawk along the route. Although Canada geese continually filled the skies, they were most prolific near Sanders. Their communal honking resembled a siren as groups of 20 to 25 flew overhead, with the final total reaching to over 200! The urgent calls of blue jays and crows and the persistent tapping of the downy, hairy and red-bellied woodpeckers added to the cacophony. When I mistakenly labeled a junco as a white-breasted nuthatch, Rick immediately pointed out the difference. “Notice that the nuthatch has a black cap and a pointy beak as contrasted to the primarily gray covering of the junco and a blunt beak.” It helps to go along with a seasoned birder to learn how to differentiate among bird species.

At 11 AM we met Mike Moore from the *Racine Journal Times*

January Meeting Cancellation. A heavy snowfall and hazardous road conditions forced us to cancel our monthly January 7 meeting at the Kenosha Library. We are looking forward to rescheduling Wayne Rohde’s “Trip West...Plus” program in the near future. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you but safety was our primary concern.

at Colonial Park. Both he and I were captivated as formerly obscure chickadees and woodpeckers answered the bird calls Rick played on his handy purple ipod! It even encouraged some others we hadn’t encountered at our previous stops including a goldfinch, six herring gulls and eight traveling mallards.

Coming full circle around 2 PM at River Bend, we counted 26 birds, including a gaggle of 14 geese. By this time my head whirled with numbers and facts, and I bid Rick goodbye around 3, thanking him for a fun-filled and educational day.

For a full list of species observed during the CBC, please go to the Hoy Audubon website: www.hoyaudubon.org

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, February 4, 7:00 PM: The Galapagos Islands—a photographic journey. Presented by **Keith Kennedy, Hoy Audubon.**

Discover why these are still called ‘the enchanted islands’ 175 years after Darwin’s visit. Explore the diversity of unique life forms through images taken during a photographic expedition to the Galapagos. Kenosha Northside Library, (see directions at top of this page).



Blue-footed Booby

Saturday, February 20, Illinois Ornithological Society ‘Gull Frolic’, Winthrop Harbor, IL. The cost is \$10 and includes a continental breakfast, coffee, and lunch featuring ‘Sea Gull Stew’. Lecture at 11:00 AM on ID of slaty-backed gull. You can meet at the law office, 731 Main St. in Racine at 8AM to car pool or visit the Hoy website for directions to the event.

Thursday, March 4, 7:00 PM: Hoy Audubon Monthly Program. Check our website for updated details on the program which will be held at the Kenosha Northside Library, (see directions at top of this page).

Saturday, March 28, WSO birding trip to Dane and Columbia Co. ponds for ducks, swans, geese, pipits, longspurs, and sparrows. Meet at the Ryan Road/I-94park & ride at 8AM to carpool. We will catch up with the WSO tour by mid-morning.

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 call Stan Rosenstiel at 262-694-2206 for information and directions.

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
P.O. BOX 044626
RACINE, WI 53404
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*Don't forget
to feed us
this winter!*



Hoy Audubon winter birding on the lake front (Shoop).