



International Migratory Bird Day Celebration!

In celebration of International Migratory Bird Day, Hoy Audubon held its first-ever “Racine Bird Festival” on May 14 at the Root River Environmental Education Center. Admission was free, and several other environmental groups participated.

In the morning, 25 people went on three guided bird walks along the Root River. Thanks to the inclement weather (45 degrees, strong winds, and the occasional downpour), warblers that belonged in the treetops were hunkered down at eye level, allowing people to get great looks at them. Foul-weather birding can have its rewards!

Inside the REC Center, there was live music, information about our migratory birds and the hazards they face, and for the kids, face painting and pinecone birdfeeder making. The grand finale was a live raptor and owl show presented by Schlitz Audubon Nature Center. About 90 people enjoyed close-up views of a Red-tailed Hawk, a Barn Owl, a Peregrine Falcon, and a Turkey Vulture.



Keith Kennedy recorded the day for posterity. There are a few of his photos from the festival throughout this newsletter for you to enjoy.

Sharon Kennedy

Chiwaukee Prairie Bird and Plant Hike

Hoy members met at Chiwaukee Prairie on a calm morning July 16. We were grateful for the clouds and just a bit of rain that fell to keep us cool. Eric Howe led 8 members on a bird identification hike at 7am. We were treated to many sightings of the Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, and a flying Green Heron. Many times the gurgling calls of Sandhill Cranes could be heard. Kay McClelland led a plant walk at 9am with 12 of us in tow. She told us about the ridge and swale structure of the prairie and how it was formed by the wave action of Lake Michigan. She identified many plants and some that are locally endangered. The prairie had many plants in flower to enjoy. According to Kay, every week has a different blend of flowers in bloom and the largest bloom toward the end of the season. (The smaller plants prefer the shade!) Chiwaukee Prairie is an important area for our birds as well as an important and beautiful plant ecosystem. Visit the prairie, and I'm sure you'll agree. For more information, visit <http://www.chiwaukee.org/>

Helen Pugh

White-nose Syndrome: A Killer Disease for America’s Bats

Dr. Deanna Byrnes, a bat biologist on the faculty at Carthage College, presented a program on “Local Bat Ecology and the Threat of White-nose Syndrome” at the June 2 Hoy meeting. She did her undergraduate work at Cornell University, and she earned her doctorate from UW-Madison, where her field work took her to Papua New Guinea.

Bats are mammals that can fly. They are in the order Chiroptera, derived from the Greek words “cheir” for hand and “ptera” for wings. The wing itself is made of stretched-out skin.

North America has 45 species of bats, of which seven are found in Wisconsin and in the Northeastern United States in general. The most common species here is the Little Brown Bat, an insect-eating bat that hibernates in caves during the winter. They are long-lived (5-15 years), they have a low reproductive rate (one pup per year), and it takes them one to two years to reach reproductive maturity.

In early summer, female bats form maternity colonies in warm places like attics where they give birth and nurse their young. Who knows what male bats are up to at this time! In the fall, males and females swarm at the entrance to a cave or mine. They copulate, but ovulation and fertilization are delayed. During winter the bats hibernate with normal periodic arousal. In early spring, ovulation and fertilization take place, followed by a 50- to 60-day gestation period. The bats leave the cave or mine where they spent the winter for their summer roost sites. The largest hibernaculum in Wisconsin is the Neda mine, an abandoned iron mine in Dodge County where as many as 140,000 bats may congregate.

The greatest threat to Wisconsin’s bats is white-nose syndrome, a disease that has not (yet) reached here but has already devastated hibernating bat populations in the Northeast. The disease was first reported in February 2006 among bats hibernating in a cave near Albany, New York. The following winter the disease spread to four nearby caves. During the winter of 2008, mortality was greater than 90 percent at the New York sites. By August 2009, the disease had spread



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

Next Board of Directors Meeting:
August 25, 7:00 PM, 4007 1st St., Kenosha 262-552-8130. All interested members are welcome. Come and find out what your club is doing!

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

Newsletter Editors
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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 53404 or email to: hoynewsletter@hoyaudubon.org

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Bats, continued from page 1... more than 800 kilometers from the first site to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia. By May 2010, the disease had jumped to Missouri and Canada, and by May 2011, to Kentucky, Tennessee, and Maine. **In five years the disease has killed over a million bats.**

In 2008, the cause of the disease was identified as a new species of cold-loving soil fungus, *Geomyces destructans*, which attacks bats during their winter hibernation. Bats with white-nose syndrome have white fuzz growing on their noses, ears, and wings. The fungus penetrates into the skin, damaging the wings. Infected bats rouse more frequently and exhibit odd behaviors, coming out of hibernation in mid-winter and flying around to look for insects; they either starve or freeze to death. The fungus is transmissible from bat to bat. People can carry the fungus on their shoes from cave to cave.

To slow the spread of the disease, local cave closures and gear decontamination procedures for people entering caves have been implemented. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has listed our cave bats as threatened, giving them the authority to close off areas to humans.

Educational campaigns are underway to raise awareness about the threat that white-nose syndrome poses to our cave bats. Deanna recommended three online resources: from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome/; from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, <http://wiatri.net/inventory/bats/index.cfm>; and from Austin, Texas-based Bat Conservation International, www.batcon.org.

If raising awareness is not enough to make people care about the fate of our bats, then perhaps an economic argument will. A study published in the April 1, 2011, issue of *Science* magazine estimated that, by eating huge numbers of insect pests, bats provide pest-control services worth over \$3 billion a year to U.S. agriculture. Especially here in the heartland, there is a cost if we lose our bats.

After Deanna presented her talk, a timely article on white-nose syndrome, "Crisis in the Caves" by Michelle Nijhuis, appeared in the July/August issue of *Smithsonian* magazine. The article is available online: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/What-is-Killing-the-Bats.html>

Sharon Kennedy

Locations for our Meetings: Note that the meetings will be at **River Bend Nature Center**, 3600 N. Green Bay Road, Racine. For directions check MapQuest or Google Maps.



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"98 cents of every dollar from the sales of 'Duck Stamps' goes to the purchase of wetlands. One third of America's threatened species make their home in wetlands." You can order your stamp at www.duckstamp.com, go to the Racine County Clerk's office, or most Wal-Marts. In Kenosha, Gander Mountain also sells them. For \$15.00 you can make a solid donation for conservation. Every year. It's not too much.

Grosbeak Galore!!

Save the date and make your reservation NOW. This event will be listed in our next newsletter as a Field Trip, October 8, 9AM-4PM. Driving time is 1 hour and 15 minutes. The former Squires Country Club is being transformed into the Forest Beach Migratory Preserve and is hosting a one day workshop, "How to Create an Oasis for Migratory Birds on Your Property". Learn how to make a small investment that will pay off BIG for migratory birds. A link is provided on our webpage. The fee is \$5 and includes lunch, excellent speakers and both indoor and outdoor activities. Call to reserve your spot, 608-264-8594, or email kim.grveles@wisconsin.gov with your mailing address and phone number.



Upcoming Activities

August 4-Meeting-7PM River Bend Nature Center-Seth Cutright-Hawk Migration and Hawk ID.

August 20-Field trip to Horicon Marsh-Meet at the Highway 20 Park and Ride at 7AM. Some members may stay overnight at the Audubon Inn in Mayville and meet up with the WSO Horicon field trip the following morning.

September 1-5:30PM Bird Walk at River Bend Nature Center, followed by the meeting-7PM-Tom Schultz-The Art of Field Guide Illustration.

September 3-Field trip to the Sod farms to look for the American Golden Plover and other shorebirds. Meet at the Highway 20 Park and ride at 7AM.

September 10-Wind Point BIG SIT! We'll meet early at either the Wind Point Lighthouse or Shoop Park and see how many species of birds we can find from one stationary location. Bring a chair and some snacks to get you through the day! Stay a few minutes or a few hours! Check the website for updates.

September 10 Saturday, 7 PM: Swift Night Out! We will meet at the corner of Water Street at Park Avenue to locate Chimney Swift roosts and count the Swifts at they enter the roost. Rain date is September 11. More info at www.chimneyswifts.org

See the website for field trip updates www.hoyaudubon.org

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Birding at Wyalusing State Park in May, 2011



Please take the time to renew your Hoy Audubon Chapter Membership for 2011/2012. 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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Checking a bluebird box for eggs!

Remember...you can see the Hoy Honker "In Living Color." There are two ways to get our newsletter in color and save a tree: 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 jenny.wenzel@hoyaudubon.org and ask to be put on the electronic mailing list.