



## Meet a Member!

Just because Gail Coombs works in a library and manages Hoy Audubon's lending library, it doesn't mean her head is always buried in books! On the contrary, Gail's immersed herself in many of the club's activities since 2007.



"Even though I was quite the novice, I wanted to participate in the Christmas Bird Count and was paired up with a more experienced birder." What thrilled her during that first count was the appearance of 89 cedar waxwings, which became a life bird for her.

Gail Coombs

Now every year, Gail dons her winter gear and heads down to the blustery Lake Michigan shoreline of Racine to count ducks, gulls and other hardy, and sometimes unexpected, residents.

Gail welcomes new sightings wherever she travels whether on the golf course, or often while gardening right in her own backyard. "I enjoy watching the American goldfinches, purple finches, cardinals and the occasional hummingbird." And on a few special occasions she indicated, "I have seen a European finch at the feeder, and once a Cooper's hawk that had landed on the deck rail clutching a mouse." This proves that if a birder stays alert, backyard surprises abound! Last year, Gail joined Hoy members on a Horicon Marsh field trip. "It yielded six-to-eight life birds in one day, so that was special for me!"

The *Stokes Field Guide to Birds* (Eastern Region), *Peterson's Field Guide*, and the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* accompany her during bird walks. Gail's advice to novice birders is, "Read and browse through your field guides again and again, and go birding with a group of experienced birders!" *Linda Fare Hirsch*

## Spying on Eagles!

You don't need a spotting scope to get a bird's eye view of an eagle nest just south of downtown Decorah IA. Cameras (one fixed and one pan/zoom) maintained by the Raptor Resource Project provide a 24/7 view into the lives of a very special eagle family.

Tom and I first started watching (and quickly became addict-

ed) due to a tip from a birder on a WSO outing on March 19. Three eggs had already been laid on 2/23, 2/26, and 3/2, but were in the process of hatching by the time we actually looked up the site. We were enthralled to see the last egg crack open and "E3" emerge. Dad and Mom faithfully take turns keeping the young warm and providing food through rain, wind, and snow.

We made a spur-of-the-moment pilgrimage and visited the nest on 4/12, tired of a dreary spring. We weren't sure about locating the nest without a GPS, but stumbled on it by chance and spent an enjoyable (warm and sunny @ 65 degrees) afternoon watching through our scope and binoculars. We spoke with other eagle fans from Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and shared the close-up view. We were able to see two parent switches (and baby heads) in about three hours before heading home.

The nest is located on private property along a trout stream and across from the Decorah Fish Hatchery. Bob Anderson is the director of the project and monitors (continued on page 4)

## Watch out for Invasives!

April 7, 2011 Meeting

Hoy Audubon recently invited environmentalist Melissa Warner to the April meeting to help members decipher just what the phrase "invasive species" means. Melissa indicated that she became interested in this topic quite by accident as a teacher and moderator of the St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club. "I pretty much learned as I went along," she admitted, and now considers herself well-versed in the area of the Southeast Wisconsin woodlands. As an integral participant in *Weed Out! Racine*, she

strives to control invasive plants that upset the balance and diversity of an ecosystem. Although Melissa's major focus is plants, she explained that invasive species also include fungus, bacteria, and animals that negatively affect the environment.



Great Horned Owl

Photo by Keith Kennedy

Through an in-depth slide presentation, Melissa helped us identify some of the native and non-native plants located in the area of the Root River Watershed. "My main goal is taking on the purple coneflower. Like other invasives, it started out innocently and spread!"

She stated that invasive plants may look attractive, but once they gain a foothold, they quickly crowd out a great num-

## 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, June 23rd, 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\*

\* If you have suggestions regarding future programs or field trips or would like to be a field trip coordinator for our club, please contact the Jennifer Wenzel directly.

### Newsletter Editors

Jennifer Wenzel  
Linda Fare Hirsch  
Sharon 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 53404 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.

ber of trees and plants. Melissa then listed some major offenders. For example, the teasel's decorative pods look great in flower arrangements, but the plant now inhabits a sizable portion of Highway 32, near 4 1/2-mile Road. Japanese knotweed has created an impermeable fence by the Horlick Dam boat launch site which impedes fishermen, and although it's probably impossible to eradicate all of it, spraying efforts are underway to thin it out. "The black locust tree's extremely hard wood is great for fence posts, but it has miserable thorns, clones itself and spreads crazily!" She also warned of the wild parsnip's oil, which can cause a chemical burn on the skin if exposed to sunlight. "And even an innocent-looking plant like the creeping bellflower kills everything in its way, and its long tubers allow it to spread like wildfire!"

Many of the plants initially served positive purposes until their growth got out of hand. "The multiflora rose helped to stabilize river banks, but is considered dangerous because of its huge thorns, and the white mulberry aided in the production of silk worms, but has become too widespread. This overgrowth can adversely affect forests, fishing, health, recreation and many other areas since everything is linked together," she warned.

A big project for *Weed Out! Racine* is to eliminate garlic mustard and Dames Rocket. The DNR has a special "do not compost" ruling regarding garlic mustard. *Pull it, bag it and landfill it!* Another focus is to cut woody plants and treat their roots and stems. Other goals are to plant oaks and native forbs near Colonial Park, engage in targeted spraying, work on river buffer maintenance at Island and Riverside Parks, and remove thistle.

Melissa recommends that we get involved in some of the efforts of *Weed Out! Racine*, the Sierra Club or other environmental groups and seek out more information at our libraries and on line. Thank you, Melissa for all of your enthusiasm and efforts in eradicating these pesky invasives! *Linda Fare Hirsch*

## Migratory Bird Conservation in Wisconsin

Andy Paulios, who works for the DNR in the Bureau of Wildlife Management and coordinates the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI), gave a talk on "Migratory Bird Conservation in Wisconsin" at the March 3 Hoy meeting. WBCI has 170 partners working together to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation, emphasizing voluntary stewardship, with the shared vision of "restoring imperiled bird populations" and "keeping common birds common."

Wisconsin has over 225 breeding bird species, and it is an important migratory stopover area. We have two federally listed species, the Piping Plover and the Kirtland's Warbler. While we have no endemics, in the summer Wisconsin has a fourth of the world's population of Golden-winged Warblers as well as a healthy population of Cerulean Warblers. In terms of habitat, Wisconsin has a little of everything: Northern forest, grasslands, wetlands, Great Lakes, and rivers. Issues include the loss and fragmentation of habitat, lack of population data, and a changing climate. Wisconsin has a strong tradition of wetland protection, but a loss of grasslands has equated to a loss of species like the Henslow's Sparrows.

Against that overview, Andy introduced us to Billy the Baltimore Oriole, a common Wisconsin breeder that feeds on Lepidoptera larvae, spiders, insects, fruit, and nectar. The males arrive in early May and immediately defend their territory. The female weaves a nest suspended at the end of a long branch in a tall tree (in Andy's



Andy Paulios

**Location for our Summer Meeting:** The June meeting will be at **River Bend Nature Center**, 3600 N. Green Bay Road, Racine. For directions check MapQuest or Google Maps.

### Bird Conservation continued

yard, it's a cottonwood). The pair raises one brood a year. Wisconsin has about 260,000 Baltimore Orioles, about four percent of the world's population. Despite being common, they are in slight decline in Wisconsin (an annual decrease of less than one percent, according to Breeding Bird Survey data).

So why are Baltimore Orioles in decline? In mid-August, after about three months in Wisconsin, Billy is on his way home.



Baltimore Oriole

Photo by Keith Kennedy

### Migration is the most dangerous time of his life.

Our Neotropical migrants, which fan out across North America to breed during the summer, funnel into a much smaller area in Central America and northern South America, where they spend the rest of the year. Billy the Bolsero (Spanish could well be his first language) is headed for

the Osa Peninsula on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. He travels at night, migrating over land through Mexico into Central America. His long trip is filled with hazards: thousands of tall towers to fly into, windows to collide with, and cats and other predators to kill him. During the day he refuels. If lucky, he'll benefit along the way from habitat conservation, providing him with full-service migratory stopover sites as he traverses ten states and six countries.

When he's at home in the Osa Peninsula, Billy is with macaws, parrots, antbirds, etc., a big change from the robins and chickadees he saw in his Wisconsin yard. Many of our Neotropical migrants, especially warblers, fit into mixed-species flocks on their wintering grounds.

### The quality of the wintering habitat is important for birds.

It directly affects their survival over the winter and indirectly affects their reproductive success the following year. A study in Puerto Rico showed that when overwintering female American Redstarts were "upgraded" to high-quality mangrove forest habitat with abundant food resources (high insect biomass), they became fatter than control birds that stayed in low-quality second-growth scrub habitat (Studds and Mara, *Ecology*, 86(9), 2005, pp. 2380-5). **Fatter is good if you're a bird.** Fatter females lay more eggs and have better reproductive success. A

female that loses weight over the winter may be unable to reproduce. Unfortunately, forest is being lost in the tropics, squeezing Wisconsin's birds into ever smaller wintering grounds and further limiting food resources.

In March, Billy leaves the Osa Peninsula for Wisconsin. **Once again, he faces the dangers of migration.** In a hurry to get to his breeding grounds, he crosses the Gulf of Mexico (remember, he traveled over land in the fall), with no guarantee that he'll have good weather for 18 hours of sustained flight. A study of Black-throated Blue Warblers showed that their survival was very high on their breeding and wintering grounds. Migration with all of its perils (tall towers, windows, predators, and storms) is when birds are most vulnerable, and many birds will not survive their 1,500- to 2,000-mile journeys.

The stakes are high. **Over half of Wisconsin's breeding bird species spend their winters south of the U.S. border.** Migration will always be dangerous, but we can take steps to reduce window collisions and predation by cats. We can protect and restore good habitats along migration routes.

**Protecting Wisconsin's birds requires that we protect their Latin American winter homes, too.** Wisconsin is one of several states leading the way on Southern Wings, an initiative of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to send money to partners in the tropics for restoring and managing wintering bird habitats and for acquiring lands in critical core habitats. The non-profit group Friends of the Osa has received donations of more than \$60,000 from three partners (the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, the DNR through a contribution from the Bell Family Foundation, and Neenah Paper) for protecting and restoring winter habitat used by Wisconsin's birds in the Osa Peninsula. To learn more about the Osa Project, including how you can donate, click here:

<http://www.wisconservation.org/index.php?page=osa-project>

### So what can you do to help Billy the Baltimore Oriole/Bolsero?

You can support WBCI partners. For a complete list of endorsing partners, go to the WBCI website ([www.wisconsinbirds.org](http://www.wisconsinbirds.org)) and click on "Endorsers." You'll find many familiar names: Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund, Ducks Unlimited, International Crane Foundation, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, and the list goes on.

You can donate to the Bird Protection Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Click on the link in the upper right hand corner of the WBCI website.

You can drink shade-grown coffee. Shade-grown coffee plantations are filled with birds of many species, while coffee trees grown in the sun support only a handful of bird species.

You can turn your backyard into a full-service "hostel" by planting native trees, shrubs, and flowers that provide birds with shelter and food (insects, fruit, and nectar). You can treat your windows to minimize bird collisions, and you can keep your cat indoors. *Sharon Kennedy*

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### Spying on Eagles...continued.

the cameras, zooming in with brief glimpses and amazing detail between parent changes while the babies were small. An infra-red camera operates at night but is not visible to the eagles. In less than a month, the babies no longer fit under a parent and are about the size of small chickens. The live feed on [www.ustreamtv.com/decoraheagles](http://www.ustreamtv.com/decoraheagles) features a chat room monitored by volunteers from around the country and has been very educational. Many schools and senior centers, as well as fans from all over the world, have been watching the eaglets grow and thrive. The eagle parents have had a 100% success rate in fledging 2 eggs in 2008, 3 in 2009, and 3 in 2010. F



*Photo by Jenny Wenzel*

It's not too late to tune in and watch. Tom and I were told that the eaglets will fly around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July after much flapping to strengthen their wings. Although the trees will leaf out shortly, we may go back to see all our eagles fly. *Karen Gavahan*

## Upcoming Activities

**June 2, Thursday, 7:00 PM.** Monthly Program-Local Bat Ecology and the Threat of White Nose Syndrome. River Bend Nature Center, Racine. 3600 N. Green Bay Road, Racine. Note: prior to the meeting, a **bird and wildflower walk** will be conducted at **5:30 PM** (meet in front of the main building).

**June 4, Saturday. Kettle Moraine State Forest** (Southern Unit) field trip. Meet at **7:00 AM** at the Hwy 20/194 park & ride to carpool.

**June 5, Sunday. New Munster Bird Survey** (Kenosha Co.). **Early morning** to 10:00 AM. Contact Eric Howe for more info.

## Changing of the Guard

I'm happy to report there was at least one non-political election this year! Hoy's new Officers and Board of Directors was elected at the May general membership meeting. We welcome new Board members Barbara Vass and Marty Hunt to the Board. The Board will miss Keith Kennedy on the Board and as the Editor of the newsletter. His career has taken a new turn and we wish him the very best. We thank him for his past efforts of formulating the Power Point presentations for our classes on "Beginning Birding" and program presentations on "Shorebirds", "Birding in the Galapagos", and many others. He was instrumental in clearing the birding trail along Shoop Golf Course. Keith's beautiful photographs and well laid out newsletter have set a new high standard. Our new Vice President Jenny Wenzel is up for the challenge and has accepted the Editor position. We also thank Bob McFall for his efforts organizing our field trips (the Horicon trips were particularly memorable and well attended), and we'll miss him at our Board meetings. Changes to the Committee Chairs: Marty Hunt accepted the Publicity Chair position earlier in the year and has been doing a great job. Sharon Kennedy has accepted the Membership Chair position on a temporary basis. The complete list of Officers and Board of Directors is listed elsewhere in this newsletter. Our Hoy club has many activities and goals which would not happen without the time of these involved individuals. Sincere thanks go to each and every one of them.

*Helen Pugh, President*

**June 24, Friday. Visit the Courthouse Peregrine Family.** Meet at **8:00 AM** on the southwest lawn of the Racine County Courthouse, 730 Wisconsin Avenue. We will enjoy watching the Peregrine Falcons as the young beg for food and their parents fly in breakfast. Scopes will be set up for your viewing pleasure.

**June 25, Saturday. Purple Martin colony visit and Eastern Bluebird walk.** Meet at **1:00 PM** at Racine Water department entrance on Michigan Blvd. to see the Purple Martins. (1:00 to 2:30 PM). For Bluebird trail tour (3:00-4:30 PM) meet at **3:00 PM** at the parking lot for Johnson Park-entrance off of Hwy. 38 and Emmertson Road.

**July 7, Thursday. Hoy Annual Summer Picnic-Petrified Springs in Kenosha County.** Meet at **5:30 PM** at Picnic area #3. Bring a dish to pass! Check the website for further details as the date gets closer!

**July 16, Saturday. Chiswaukee Prairie Bird Walk and Plant Hike.** Meet at **7:00 AM** for a bird walk. Or meet us at **9:00 AM** when Kay McClelland will join us and lead a plant ID hike! Meet at the corner of 121st Street and 2nd Avenue, southeast Kenosha County. It is recommended to bring water, insect repellent (for ticks), and wear long pants and sun protection.

Check the website for updates on all Hoy Audubon Activities

[www.hoyaudubon.org](http://www.hoyaudubon.org)



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Magnolia Warbler *photo by Jenny Wenzel*

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*Birding at Horicon NWR in August, 2010.*

**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 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 [jenny.wenzel@hoyaudubon.org](mailto:jenny.wenzel@hoyaudubon.org) and ask to be put on the electronic mailing list.