



Meet a Member!

John Krerowicz

I've been a reporter with the Kenosha News since 1979, covering education, courts, the environment, police/fire, and various government meetings. Recently I've also been taking some photographs and creating video packages for the News online news program. When I'm not working, I spend a lot of time taking bird/wildlife photos; reading, mostly non fiction; doing crosswords; watching *Big Bang Theory* on TV; hoping to find movies worth watching on DVD, and eating.



Photo by
John Krerowicz

I remember 20 years ago or so complaining to friends about the annoying racket from backyard birds at ridiculously early hours. What changed my outlook was my two sons' interest in eagles, snakes and just about anything wild. We took our cue from them when planning our vacations and visited a lot of zoos and nature centers when the boys were young. The more I learned about nature, the environment and conservation, the more fascinated I became by it all. The past several years, I've combined my interest in birding with my photography hobby, and that has increased my interest in both. The boys still enjoy spending time in nature. And I still think birds get up awfully early and can be noisy, but now I appreciate and understand them much more than I did.

Beginners should be patient, observant, and willing to ask dumb questions of those who are more experienced. They should remember that birding is not a sport; it should become a way of enjoying nature.

I have used a couple guides, so I don't have a lot of experience. But of the ones I've relied on, the *National Geographic Field Guild to the Birds of North America* is my favorite. It includes drawings of juveniles, females, and males sometimes with spring, breeding and/or fall plumage, maps to show birds' ranges, and a paragraph packed with descriptions of behavior, calls, and identifying marks.

I have seen 232 bird species, mostly in Wisconsin but also some in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and Minnesota.

I seem to be attracted to warblers and raptors mostly. Warblers' colors make for impressive photographs and their frantic, quick pace keeps me alert, making photography an on-going challenge. Raptors have something regal about them that just about demands that you look at them. I also enjoy Great Blue Herons, possibly because they're my favorite color (it's certainly not because they look impressive head on).

Meet a Member, continued-

My favorite spots to bird usually are easy and quick to get to, almost never have crowds during the week, and have plenty of somewhat hidden spots to set up a chair, camera, and tripod to photograph birds. Those spots include:

1. Chiwaukee Prairie in Pleasant Prairie, with varied habitat, including at least two ponds, that attracts herons, woodpeckers, raptors, and grassland birds.
2. Kenosha Dunes in Kenosha, a great place for warblers in the Spring and Fall that also attracts shorebirds, woodpeckers, and ducks.
3. Bong State Recreation Area in Brighton for its grassland birds, raptors, and shorebirds around several secluded ponds.
4. Hawthorn Hollow in Somers because there's an open view to feeders but also it's an area where I've found cuckoos, plenty of warblers, bluebirds, wrens, scarlet tanagers, and woodpeckers.

I entered my 7th decade on September 3 of this year. I have been monitoring bluebird boxes for about a decade, starting with Stan R. the bluebird man as our mentor (my son and I began our monitoring activities by helping Stan with a Kenosha County route). I still help Stan with a route at Big Oaks golf course in Pleasant Prairie and I have an 18-box trail in Chiwaukee Prairie that I've monitored for 3 years. My son and I also did an owl survey for a few years, and I've been helping the DNR with a marshbird survey for the past several years.

I think the benefits of being a Hoy member include meeting and getting to know others with the same interests, having comfortable connections with people who can answer bird related questions and tip me off to good birding spots, and being able to have input into Audubon programs and the group's direction.

I have a website with bird photos and writings, although it hasn't been updated for a few years. I plan to return to it after the holidays. The address is www.ourwildlifewebsite.info.

Christmas Bird Counts—SAVE THE DATES!
Watch Hoy's website for details/updates.

Saturday, December 14—Racine CBC
Backup date December 15 (if hazardous weather)
To sign up, contact Eric Howe at cbc@hoyaudubon.org or 262-498-3355.

Saturday, December 21—Kenosha CBC
Backup date December 22 (if hazardous weather)
To sign up, contact Valerie Mann at naturalist@pringlec.org or 262-857-8008.

Burlington CBC Date TBA

Hoy Board of Directors

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

**Next Board of Directors Meeting:
 Thursday, October 24, 2013, 7:00 p.m.**

*Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive
 Mount Pleasant, WI 53406*
 All interested members are welcome.
 Come and find out what your club is doing!

- Field Trip Coordinators***
- Mary Ann Toutant 262-554-0563
 - Eric Howe 262-498-3355

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

- Newsletter Editors**
- Kristin Wegner
 - Eric Howe
 - 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 Newsletter Editor at: Hoy Audubon, P.O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404 or email to: hoynewsletter@hoyaudubon.org

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

Chimney Swift Conservation

At the August 1 meeting of the Hoy Audubon Society, Bill Mueller from the Western Great Lakes Bat and Bird Observatory talked about the conservation of Chimney Swifts, a species whose population is in decline.

Chimney Swifts are Neotropical migrants, arriving here in the spring, breeding during the summer, and congregating in large groups in late summer and early fall before flying to Peru and Chile for the winter. Sometimes called “flying cigars,” they are the ultimate aerialists, spending as much as 16 hours a day in flight. They do everything in the air: feed on insects, copulate, gather nesting material by flying low over trees and breaking off dead twigs from the canopy, and even bathe by flying low over water.

Unlike other aerial insectivores such as swallows or nighthawks, Chimney Swifts are unable to perch. Instead, they use their long toes to cling to the inside walls of chimneys, or in earlier times, to the inside of dead, hollow old-growth trees. A pair will build a half-saucer shaped nest from twigs cemented to the chimney wall with their saliva. Only one nesting pair will occupy a chimney. After the breeding season and before their fall migration to South America, Chimney Swifts congregate in huge numbers, roosting together for the night in large chimneys. In August 2012, more than 2,800 Swifts were counted at dusk funneling into a chimney at a Madison middle school.

In the Midwest, Chimney Swifts are a declining species, with some states experiencing a 4 percent annual drop in their numbers. Bird Life International has classified this species as Near Threatened. In 2009, Canada listed them as Threatened.

Excellent information about Chimney Swift conservation is available from the Wisconsin Chimney Swift Working Group, established by the Bat and Bird Observatory. As the Chimney Swift Working Group points out, “swifts rely almost entirely on man-made structures for nest and roost sites. Our chimneys are their homes.” That being the case, there are steps that people can take to help “keep this common species common.” The following information is from the Working Group’s website <http://wglbbo.org/wisconsin-chimney-swift-working-group>:

- a. If you have a masonry or clay flue-tile chimney, keep the top open and the damper closed from April through October to provide a nest site for these insect-eaters. Metal chimneys should be permanently capped to prevent birds and other wildlife from being trapped.
- b. If you have your chimney cleaned, do it from November to March before the Chimney Swifts return from their winter home in South America.
- c. Investigate an alternative venting system if you are converting a furnace or hot water heater to gas, leaving the chimney unlined and uncapped for the swifts.
- d. Work with local conservation groups to construct Chimney Swift Towers and educate your friends and neighbors about Chimney Swifts.

Information on building a Chimney Swift tower, which requires a concrete footing, is available at www.chimneyswifts.org.

Join Hoy Audubon for a “Swift Night Out,” held annually, to count Chimney Swifts as they funnel into chimneys in downtown Racine or Kenosha at dusk. This year’s counts took place on August 11 and September 8. Who says birders don’t have a night life?

- Sharon Kennedy



Chasing the Twitterers...

Chimney Swifts are twitterers. The closer they are to their roost, the more chattering and twittering you can hear. (Who knows what they say when they are 200 feet high.) The Swift Night Out events held this year in downtown Racine were well attended by curious and enthusiastic Hoy members. We enjoyed the highest count since we started keeping records in 2004: 532 Swifts. We watched two active chimneys on the last count night and were treated to well over 450 Swifts circling and swooping and swirling above one of their chosen roost chimneys before making their falling, fluttering entry. It really is great fun to witness this migratory phenomenon!

- Helen Pugh

119 Purple Martins Fledged!

Hoy members in Racine monitored 84 nest boxes located at the Racine Water Department, Coast Guard House, and Gateway Technical College. 165 eggs were laid in 34 nests. From those 165 eggs, Racine boxes fledged 117 Purple Martins, 9 fewer birds than in 2012, but still a great success story!

It was amazing to watch the nests being built. Then the inch-long eggs were laid.

From those tiny eggs, the hatchlings grew into fuzzy, then feathery Purple Martin miniatures.



In Kenosha County, Hoy members monitored 42 nest boxes, 28 at the Kenosha Water Department and 14 at Pringle Nature Center. Only 2 Purple Martins fledged this year in Kenosha County compared with 8 fledglings in 2012.

Possible reasons for the lower number of fledglings:

1. The cold spring resulted in later than normal nest building.
2. Adults may have abandoned their young because of lack of insects.
3. House Sparrows continue to be a problem, with 22 House Sparrow nests in Racine and 15 in Kenosha nest boxes.

I enjoyed helping Helen Pugh monitor the nest boxes at Gateway. Thanks to the other Hoy members who monitored boxes. We were able to add 119 Purple Martins to the population and help ensure the survival of the species.

- Mary Schroeder

*Top photo: Mary Schroeder with nest box
Center photo: Approx. 8-day-old Purple Martin nestlings
Photos by Helen Pugh*

Hoy's 2013 Bluebird Batch

This year the Hoy Audubon trails had 344 boxes that produced 707 Eastern Bluebirds, 683 Tree Swallows, and 64 House Wrens. Bluebird numbers were down compared to last year's 956 fledglings.

2012 was a very good year for producing Bluebirds, therefore it was a huge disappointment when the cold Spring of 2013 delayed nest building. Bluebirds arrived late and started building nests even later. By that time, they had to compete with Tree Swallows, House Sparrows, and House Wrens. Bluebirds usually get started building nests before these other species, and, with more effort invested in their nests, defend them. The late start meant second and third broods were likely to be in smaller proportions as well. Very few of our monitors did better this year than last year.

I am looking forward to improvement next year and suspect the rest of the monitors are too. Thanks to all the trail monitors for their dedication and hard work. - Stan Rosenstiel

Become a Bluebird Monitor

Do you enjoy watching bird behavior? Would you like to see up close the birth and raising of young birds? Would you like to participate in a project to help bird populations grow? Do you like to take a healthy walk or ride in a golf cart?

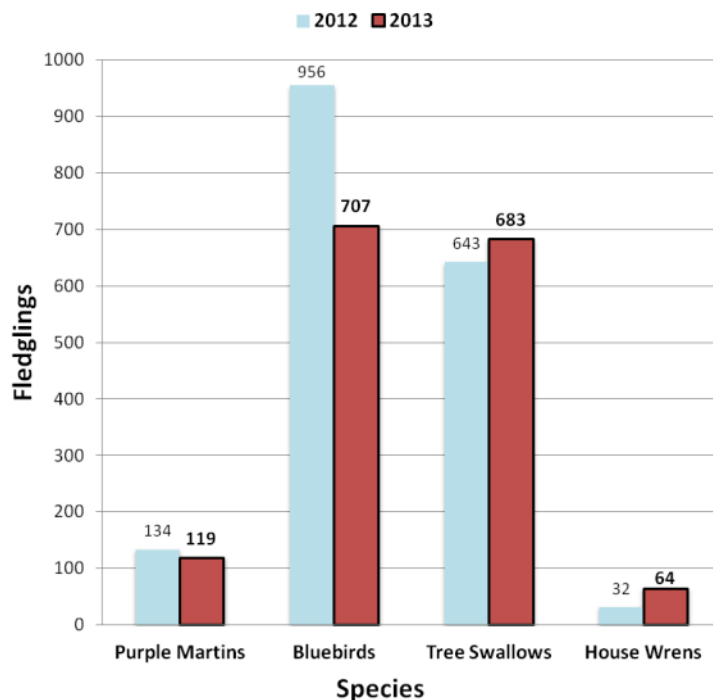
If you answer yes to these questions, why not become a Bluebird monitor? Opportunities exist to either have your own trail or assist others on theirs. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding. - Rick Fare

If you are interested in becoming a Bluebird monitor, please contact one of our Bluebird coordinators:

Stan Rosenstiel: 262-694-2206

Rick Fare: 262-902-9020 or email rifare@aol.com

Hoy's Fledglings, 2012 vs. 2013



**Mudflats & Algae Mats:
Hoy's Trip to Horicon**

Article and photos by Kristin Wegner



Roadside Birding on Route 49

Hoy's 2012 Horicon trip was my first visit to Horicon and provided outstanding looks at birds and their habitat, so I was thrilled to attend again this year. Saturday, August 17 focused mainly on birding on Route 49, as it offered the best views of shorebirds. (Horicon Lesson #1: one side of the road is Dodge County and the other side is Fond du Lac County, so proper eBird etiquette is to keep a separate list for each side of the road.) Those who attended last year's field trip were surprised by mud and algae on the Fond du Lac side, which last year had been a veritable Pelican City with deeper water and little vegetation.

This year we saw relatively few Pelicans anywhere, though we did tern up (ha!) quite a number of Black Terns. The Fond du Lac side was a haven for shorebirds: Lesser Yellowlegs; Pectoral, Semipalmated, Least, and Stilt Sandpipers; and of course the ever-present Killdeer and too-distant-to-identify Peep species. A handful of less common shorebirds also cropped up: two Short-billed Dowitchers, three Baird's Sandpipers, one White-rumped Sandpiper, and ten Black-bellied Plovers (Lifer #267 for the author).



Hybrid "Goofy" Goose

Two odd Geese presumed to be Canada x Graylag hybrids (and thus not "countable" despite their interesting appearance) also lounged about with their Canada cousins.

A handful of male Yellow-headed Blackbirds still sported their yellow hoods. From time to time a raptor would buzz the assembled peeps, causing a great commotion and reshuffling of flocks. These hunters included Peregrine Falcons, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a Northern Harrier. Marsh Wrens popped up to scold both birds and birders when they approached too close to favored reeds.

We were joined briefly by a birder from Israel whom a couple of us had met the day before, when he had been quite



Marsh Wren, scolding

Mudflats & Algae Mats, continued-

excited about hearing his first Song Sparrow, a common enough bird for us, but a Lifer for him. (Horicon Lesson #2: A familiar bird can be a treasure.) Hoyers helped him find a few more Lifers and recommended some additional Wisconsin hot spots (hint: see page 5).

The group did have a few misses, however. Two Wilson's Phalaropes reported Friday had departed by Saturday. (Fortunately, Saturday's Hoyers did get to see ten Red-necked Phalaropes.) There were reports early Saturday of a King Rail and a Black-necked Stilt on the Dodge County side of Route 49, but we were unable to find them for all our diligent searching.

Sunday began with more Route 49 birding and a much larger crowd of birders, since the WSO group was assembling. Few shorebirds came close to the crowd, so we were surprised to find a Virginia Rail a mere seven or so feet from the road! It popped in and out of the grasses as it pecked like a chicken at the algae mat. Upon spotting a particularly juicy darter larva, it darted far out into the open, much to the delight of all the photographers. *How could this get any better?*



Breakfast is served...

We then heard soft peeps, and the Rail emerged with three fluffy black chicks in tow. Their legs were nearly full-length but their bills were much shorter, with a black stripe in the center similar to the Ring-billed Gull's ring. This merry, squeaking parade set off around the perimeter of the algae mat to seek shelter in the deeper cattails.



Horicon Lesson #3: Never stop looking!

Bong Recreation Area

Bong State Recreation Area, located in the northwestern corner of the county, has been developed into a rather intensive recreation area. When you visit you may share this park with ATVs, horses, hang gliders, model airplane hobbyists, bikers, cross-country skiers, hunters, and fishermen. Yet, despite the popularity of this park, there remains plenty of room to roam and ample good birds to see. The park consists of managed prairie, marsh, lake and pond, brushy field, hardwood forest, and cedar and conifer plantings.

Early spring brings the flocks of waterfowl, which can be observed on Vern Wolfe Lake or on one of the many other bodies of water within the park. Common Loons, Horned Grebes, Greater White-fronted and Snow Geese, Tundra Swans, etc. are a sampling of the birds that can be found here in early spring. Osprey and Bald Eagle may spend some time hunting at the various bodies of water during migration.

Over 232 species of birds have been reported at Bong (via ebird.org) and over 100 species can be found within the park during nesting season. Examples of this wide variety of Summer nesting birds include Henslow's, Savannah, Field, Vesper, and Clay-colored Sparrows. Other field birds include Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, Sedge Wren, and Upland Sandpiper. The winnowing call of the Wilson's Snipe can be heard from Spring through early summer as can the peenting of the American Woodcock. Orchard Orioles can often be found in the large oak trees near the visitor center. The marsh areas within the park provide nesting sites for Sora and Virginia Rails, various ducks, Black Terns, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, American and Least Bitterns, and Marsh Wrens.



Short-eared Owl,
photo by John Krerowicz

In winter this area is frequented by good numbers of raptors including Rough-legged Hawk (common), Northern Harrier, occasional Snowy Owls, and annual sightings of Short-eared Owls. Best time to see Short-eared Owls is at dusk flying over the open fields hunting for mice. In the past several winters, small groups of Eastern Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers have been seen. Northern Shrike are also regular winter visitors to the park.

Bong State Recreation Area is located on Hwy 142, about .8 mile west of Hwy 75. Parking is not permitted on the highways and one must have a state park sticker to enter the park.

- Jerry DeBoer, "Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts"

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, October 3, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Living the Wild Life: An Animal Rehabilitator's Story

*Kenosha Northside Public Library,
1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53140*

Rehana Ftacek, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, will present a program on her wildlife clinic. Peesh is the only licensed wildlife rehabilitation facility in Kenosha County and the closest one to Racine County. The clinic's web site is www.peesh911.com.

Saturday, October 5, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Hawk Watch

Illinois Beach State Park (North Unit), Zion, IL

Hawk counters identify and count migrating raptors and Turkey Vultures. The entry to the North Unit is at Sheridan Road and 17th Street, two miles south of the Illinois/Wisconsin border. Take 17th Street into the park and meet at the pavilion just east of Sand Lake.

Wednesday, October 23, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Member Presentation: The Raven: Fact and Fiction

Southwest Library, 7979 38th Ave., Kenosha, WI 53141

The raven is one of the most interesting and intelligent birds and has always been closely associated with humans. **Rick Fare of Hoy Audubon** will discuss its biology, life cycle, and ecology will along with its influence on literature, folklore, and mythology.

Saturday, October 26, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding

Shoop Park, Racine

We'll meet at the parking lot at Shoop Park and walk northward along the lakeshore trail to the Wind Point Lighthouse. It's usually cold and windy at the lakeshore, so dress for the weather and wear sturdy walking shoes (0.6 miles one way). We'll also bird here every Saturday morning throughout November!

Saturday, November 2, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding

Thursday, November 7, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Don't Feed the Park Animals

*Kenosha Northside Public Library,
1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53140*

Watch Hoy's website for program details.

Saturday, November 9, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding

Saturday, November 9, 2:00 p.m. to Dusk

Hoy Field Trip: Bong State Recreational Area

Meet at Visitor Center of Bong State Recreational Area (State Parks sticker required.) We'll bird a bit, attend a Short-eared Owl program hosted by the Bong Naturalist Association, then look for the owls at sunset. See Hoy's website for details.

Saturday, November 16, 23, and 30, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding

Thursday, December 5, 5:30 p.m. Setup; 6:00 p.m. Dinner

Annual Holiday Potluck and Program

Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive, Mount Pleasant, WI 53406
Hoy's annual Holiday Potluck. Bring a dish to pass along with your own dinnerware and utensils. Hoy will provide coffee and napkins. We'll discuss upcoming events and share holiday songs.

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 044626

RACINE, WI 53404

www.hoyaudubon.org



Novembrrrrrr Birding at Shoop Park, November 2012, photo by Kristin Wegner

Please take the time to renew your [Hoy Audubon Chapter](http://www.hoyaudubon.org) Membership for 2013/2014.

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 per individual

Total amount enclosed: _____

Do you wish to receive chapter newsletter by email only?

Yes, my email is: _____

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



Banded Canada Goose, Racine CBC 2011, photo by Kristin Wegner

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 email newsletter distribution list by sending an email to hoynewsletter@gmail.com and asking to be put on the electronic mailing list. You can now find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HoyAudubonSociety