



Celebrating Noel Cutright

The birding world lost one of its best when cherished conservationist and ornithologist Dr. Noel Cutright passed away November 10, 2013, at the age of 69.

Noel enriched every aspect of birding, from large efforts such as helping to create Bird City Wisconsin to smaller, but no less important, activities: introducing nesting sites for Peregrine Falcons at power plants, gathering data during Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, and speaking to numerous groups about birding and conservation.



To learn more about the life and work of this extraordinary man, visit www.hoyaudubon.org/newsletter/cutright and you'll be redirected to an excellent article by Jan Uebelherr.

Did you know that Noel was also quite active locally?

- ◆ He was a long time supporter of Chiwaukee Prairie. Several years ago, he was instrumental in getting Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund its equipment trailer as well as significant wetland remediation funds which were used for recent land acquisition.
- ◆ Two of the Breeding Bird Survey routes in Wisconsin that Noel conducted were right here in Kenosha and Racine Counties (the Paris and Raymond BBS routes).
- ◆ Noel was Hoy's contact with WE Foundation and helped secure funding for the Purple Martin Lakefront Initiative.
- ◆ Noel was a popular speaker at Hoy and presented one of our best-attended programs ever in April 2010 regarding wind power.

Eric Howe shared this remembrance:

"I recall on one of the very first WSO convention trips I attended, I saw this man along the roadside just beyond the edge of the group. His head down, ear towards the woods hundreds of feet away and appearing deep in thought. A few minutes later he called out to the group, "Hooded Warbler!" We all rushed toward him and then continued along the road. From the woodland, faintly, we heard the warbler's song. I was amazed at Noel's talent and that inspired me the following winter to learn as many songs and calls of birds as I could before the next migration began. Noel's unending positive attitude and deep knowledge of conservation issues we face around us has touched and taught so many others."

Noel will be missed, but his dedication, his energy, and his passion for the natural world will not be forgotten.

Editor's Note: My thanks to those who shared notes and memories for this article. Photo by Keith Kennedy.

Racine 2013 CBC: Preliminary Results

Due to a forecast that included potentially hazardous road conditions, blowing snow, and low visibility, Racine's 2013 Christmas Bird Count was postponed until Sunday, December 15.



Despite the drop in temperature, the count was a success, turning up a nice assortment of species that may top last year's list.

Highlights of the results so far include a Northern Shrike (King's Corner), a Northern Pintail (Quarry Lake Park), a Carolina Wren (doing its best Winter Wren impression at Shoop Park ravine), two Black Scoters (Shoop Park), four Tundra Swans (Cliffside Park & again later in North Bay), and a Glaucous Gull (Wind Point Lighthouse). Some of the sparrows spotted were a White-crowned (at a feeder), two White-throated (Colonial Park & Cliffside), and a Fox (Colonial). The Wind Point / Shoop Park area put on a nice raptor show: a Northern Harrier, two Rough-legged Hawks (spotted by yours truly), and a Bald Eagle. Racine's Courthouse added a Peregrine Falcon, and at least two Kestrels have been reported.

My favorite sighting was the Snowy Owl, which Eric Howe relocated at Pugh Marina right at the end of our count. The sun was down, the moon was up, and he was, as he put it, "five seconds from giving up," when he finally spotted the elusive bird.

As results are tallied for the Racine, Kenosha, and Burlington CBCs, watch for updates: www.hoyaudubon.org/cbc

-article and photo by Kristin Wegner

Project Passenger Pigeon

Saturday, February 22, 5:00 p.m.
Pringle Nature Center
9800 160th Ave, Bristol, WI

Senior Fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation Stanley Temple will speak about the 100 years since the Passenger Pigeon became extinct. Stan's presentation explores the ecology and life history of the Passenger Pigeon and other extinct and endangered birds, current extinction crises, endangered species recovery, human relationship with wildlife, and sustainable use of biological resources.

The event will include a chili dinner. The deadline for registration and payment (\$10 cash or check) is February 21, 2014. To register, email naturalist@pringlenc.org or call 262-857-8008.

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**Next Board of Directors Meeting:
 Thursday, February 13, 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
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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 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.

Our Namesake: Dr. Philo Romaine Hoy

No, Hoy is not an acronym! Dr. Philo Romaine Hoy was a real person, born in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1816. In 1840, he graduated from the Ohio Medical College in Cincinnati, Ohio. How did he find his way to Racine? Ohio had an epidemic of some sort, and Dr. Hoy and a friend took a canoe trip for their health. They traveled to Lake Superior and down the western shore of Lake Michigan. Voila! The Territory of Racine, as it was then known, was beautifully situated. So with his health restored, he returned to Ohio to practice medicine.

In 1846, Dr. Hoy moved to Racine—a growing community of 2000 people—with his wife and young son, Albert. He bought two lots from the government on 9th Street, between Wisconsin Avenue and Main Street. He put up a front to the squatter’s cabin then on the premises, built an office and stable, and hung out his doctor’s shingle. His practice became large, requiring long drives in the county—through rain and snow, heat and cold, sometimes at night over barely passable roads. (His daughter noted that one of his virtues was that he never “growled” about the weather!)

His travels were not spent in idle, sleepy rumination. Aside from his country doctor’s medicine case and a box of splints and instruments, he also carried a gun. Remember, that’s how animals including birds were studied at the time—in the hand! His other items were a butterfly net, sometimes a fish net, a botany box, his pocket lens, and a collection bottle for insects. Best of all, he had his alert, all-observing eyes, which seemed telescopic or microscopic at will.

Dr. Hoy began his ornithological observations in Racine the year of his arrival. In time, he became one of the foremost naturalists in the country and a leading conservationist. His scientific interests covered an exceptionally broad field. By 1876, his collection contained 318 species of birds, eggs of 150 species, 35 mammals, 50 reptiles, 1300 beetles, 2000 moths, etc. His published papers covered birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks, insects and Indian antiquities. He was the first person to investigate the deep-water fauna in Lake Michigan.

Long before his death, he was a strong advocate for the preservation of flowers and birds. A man of unusual foresight, he believed there would come a time when it would be necessary to preach for the conservation of natural resources. He had physical energy, mental hunger and a joy of life. He died in 1892, at the age of 76.

His daughter, Mrs. William Henry Miller, presented a program to the bird club at the time (May 2, 1922) on the personal characteristics of her father. The Journal Times articles of the day are available on the Wisconsin State Historical Society’s website. Visit www.hoyaudubon.org/history/hoy and you will be redirected to the article on Dr. Philo R. Hoy. It’s fascinating! His observations include reference to many now-absent species.

-Helen Pugh

Waterfowl of Wisconsin

Saturday, January 25, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.
 Salem Community Library
 24615 89th Street
 Salem, WI 53168

Learn how to identify ducks, geese, swans, and other waterfowl. This informative program will cover the habitats and adaptations for life in the water for a variety of waterfowl that live in Wisconsin. Hoy Audubon’s Rick Fare will present.

Registration is required and opens on January 2. Call 262-843-3348 or register on the Community Library website to register:
www.communitylib.org

Small Numbers but Big Fun

Hoy held its third annual “Big Sit” at the Wind Point Lighthouse on September 28, 2013. The Big Sit! is an international birding event with very simple guidelines:

1. Pick a spot.
2. Draw (or imagine) a circle 17 feet in diameter.
3. Sit inside the circle.
4. Count all the bird species you observe in 24 hours.

It sounds (and is) simple, but it can yield some surprising results. Hoy’s first Big Sit in 2011 gave me three lifers: Sanderlings, a Bonaparte’s Gull, and an American Golden Plover. 2012 brought more Sanderlings winging up and down the shore and some exciting raptor flyovers: Cooper’s Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, a couple of Merlins, an Osprey, and a photogenic Red-tailed Hawk that joined us for lunch, perching in a cottonwood that overlooked the circle as if it was our mascot.

I had high hopes for 2013, but the weather (as it often does) had other plans. Strong winds from the south discouraged migrating birds, so after checking off the usual Wind Point residents (Herring Gulls, European Starlings, Mallards, and so forth) the tally slowed dramatically. After 8 hours of scanning water, sky, and trees, we turned up only 16 species for the day, down quite a bit from previous years’ counts. (We did get Sanderlings again though!)



With so few birds out and about, each bird was cause for celebration. I was excited to see an American Crow exploring the beach at sunrise; where I live, the West Nile virus has drastically reduced their numbers. At one point, I looked toward the Fog Horn building and found this Starling perched on a star. Even the most common birds have their moments.

It wasn’t what you’d call a Big Day in terms of numbers, but numbers aren’t everything. The slow pace gave us time to enjoy other pleasures: catching up with friends we hadn’t seen for awhile, enjoying home-baked treats several members brought, and even building sand castles.



Wind Point is a somewhat popular destination on a sunny day, and a crowd of birders surrounded by optics is a somewhat intriguing sight. Many beachgoers wandered over to say hello and ask what we were doing. A casual, public event like this is important because it offers a welcoming atmosphere for beginners. In fact, Hoy’s 2011 Big Sit was my first event with the group and it’s where I met many of the birders I most enjoy birding with. So no matter the final count, this will always be a special event for me.

Looking forward to 2014!

- article and photos by Kristin Wegner

Get Involved in the GBBC!



The next Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2014. This event, open to everyone, provides a wonderful opportunity for bird enthusiasts of all ages and experience levels to observe birds and provide valuable scientific data.

Participants count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC, then report their sightings via eBird. You’re encouraged to count for as long as you’d like at as many locations as you’d like. (You don’t have to stay in your backyard!) Traveling, stationary, and incidental counts are acceptable. Every bit of data helps!

The GBBC website lists several examples of questions that your data can help to answer:

- How will the weather influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other “irruptive” species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds’ migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

If you’re interested in photographing the birds you find, you may wish to enter photos from your count in the GBBC Photo Contest.

For more details, including count instructions and Photo Contest rules, visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc/

Want a Great Backyard? Build a Feeder!

Saturday, February 8, 1:00 p.m.
Pringle Nature Center
9800 160th Ave, Bristol, WI

The weekend before the national Great Backyard Bird Count, come and make a feeder for your backyard. We will offer a short identification session, how to report data for the count, and some fun activities to learn about the birds.

Pre-registration is required (<http://ow.ly/oq8qp>) as supplies are limited. Feeder price is \$12.00.

Please bring your own hammer.

Reflections on Nicholson Wildlife Refuge

Article and photos by Sue Schuit



Nicholson Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is Caledonia’s largest park and is located on 5 Mile Rd. in Caledonia just west of Nicholson Rd and east of Highway H. Its history is important and its beauty is undeniable.

Our personal history and reflections of this little-known gem go back many years. Living in the historic district of Racine in our younger life we became acquainted with many conservancies, bike trails, parks and walks in Racine County. We now live in Caledonia and are very familiar with all of the beautiful walking trails, Nature Centers, Parks and Conservancy rambles that rural Caledonia has to offer.

However, Nicholson will always remain one of our favorites. Why is it so special? Upon reflection, I believe that it is a microcosm of everything that is beautiful and special about Wisconsin. There are so many vignettes that make up this Refuge.

The Refuge’s 122 acres is surrounded by – and contains – picturesque farmland. Pockets of woods, a rookery, marsh, wetlands, prairies, and winding streams are all viewable, walkable, and thoroughly magical. The emerald greensward framed by pines and woods is directly ahead when you pull into the park. It is within yards of the road but miles from civilization. The tree-lined entrance to the Louise Erickson trail is an immediate sedative and, for some reason, I liken it to a walk along an imagined Parisian boulevard or a ramble through the Normandy countryside. Perhaps this is due to the peaceful, gentle “Far from the Madding Crowd” beauty versus a rugged, “hit you between the eyes” spectacular wilderness. The woodland trail opens to prairie and farm fields on your right while ponds, marsh lands and bird watching are to the left. A fork in the path continues through the small woodland.



In the winter it is stark, lonely and beautiful; in spring wet, warm, and unbelievably vibrant and humming with life; in summer it is soothing in its shady coolness until broken by blindingly bright sunlight swarming with dragon and butterflies; while autumn shows off stunning colors, swarms of frogs, throbbing cricket choruses and migrating birds. The sound of ever-rustling grasses and unobstructed sunrise and sunsets are a constant in all seasons.

Due to our wet spring, some time had gone by before we decided to visit NWR this year. We were upset to see that the refuge had not been maintained for some time. We found overflowing garbage cans, a trail impassable due to waist high grass, and an area being used for debris dumping. I voiced our concerns to the Caledonia Parks and Rec Dept. They received prompt attention. I was asked to become involved and started doing some research.

Plans to acquire the land from the farmers in the region were initiated in 1973, with the original goal being to purchase 200 acres. Much of the money to purchase the land, roughly 80%, was to come from state and federal sources. The proposal went forward in 1975 with an initial parcel of 25 acres and an additional 66 acres added in 1976. NWR reached its current size of 120+ acres in the 1980’s. In 1983 a 2.5 mile trail loop was dedicated to Louise Erickson, a long-time resident who had been a driving force in establishing the wildlife refuge.

Hoy Audubon is integral to NWR. Melissa Warner and Helen Pugh were great resources, and I found that we were not the only NWR champions. I received a 1980 NWR Center Plan from a long-time Hoy member, Margaret Petrick. We learned that the park fund was started with \$50,000 raised by Hoy, Kiwanis, Rotary Club donations. The total purchase price was \$105,000. Plans included cattail control, preparing ground for prairie grass, deepened ponds with walkways, and transplanted evergreens for owl coverage. Long term plans called for towers or blinds and a boardwalk for high water path clearance.

Fast forward: Last year Melissa Warner was awarded an \$8,000 grant from the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network to build the boardwalk. It is currently being built and installed by the talented volunteers in the First Choice Pre-apprenticeship program of the Human Capitol Development Corporation in Racine. The Village of Caledonia has become enthusiastically involved and has grand plans for enlarging the parking lot, creating clearly defined boundaries and signage, and placing a small educational building in which to engage, educate, and re-introduce this Caledonia asset to the public. After nearly 40 years of planning, the boardwalk is being installed. Grants are being written, boundaries will be defined, culvert pipes have been replaced, and invasives are being tackled.



While I am happy to play a small role in the rebirth of Nicholson Wildlife Refuge, I must admit that at the same time it is bittersweet. Our forgotten gem has been remembered once again.

Sue Schuit is an involved nature-lover, book lover, volunteer and activist in her spare time. The Schuits are happy to call Caledonia home and Sue is a grant-writer, finance, governance and non-profit consultant.

Racine Lakefront Birding

To cover Racine's lakefront, it is best to work from south to north due to the traffic patterns within the city. Follow 16th Street east to the lake, take a right hand turn and you will go down a hill on a dead-end road. This is Carre-Hogle Park, an exciting area to bird. The wave action of Lake Michigan has formed a thumb of sand which juts into the lake about 50 yards and attracts gulls and shorebirds throughout the year. Over the years the sand will continue to build up and it is quite possible that in the not too distant future, the sand may extend much closer to the rock jetty. Not only is this thumb an attractive spot for birds, but the sheltered hillside pulls in some good birds, too, so walk the bottom of the hill south to the fence indicating private property. Good birds seen in this location include Carolina Wren, Willet, and a nice variety of common and uncommon gulls and terns. Scope the jetty in the winter for Snowy Owls.

Work your way north along Main Street to 11th Street and turn right to get back to the lake. Towards the bottom of the hill there will be a parking area on your right. This is Samuel Myers Park. Similar to Carre-Hogle Park, this area has a growing beach that attracts gulls, terns, and shorebirds. There is also a protected hillside that is worth checking out during migration. Good birds seen in this area include Northern Mockingbird, Willet, Avocet, and Whimbrel.

Keep heading north to the boat launch in Racine Harbor and check the area off of the boat launch. When iced in, gulls find this a nice quiet place to rest, but it is typically open water that attracts winter ducks.

Head back to Main Street and turn right (north) till you go over the Root River bridge. Hang an immediate right turn onto Dodge Street. Dodge Street goes about 2 blocks and then you must go left. Just after turning left, take a right onto Reichert Court. This will take you to another area to view the north side of the harbor/the Pugh Marina, where good numbers of gulls and ducks can be found in the winter. Snowy Owls have occasionally been seen out on the rock wall in this area.

A few more blocks to the north is North Beach which can also be an excellent loafing area for gulls.

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



This Harlequin Duck spent several weeks in the Racine Harbor this fall, giving local birders fantastic views. At first, the duck was identified as a female, but plumage changes during its stay revealed it was an immature male. *Main photo by Keith Kennedy, inset photo showing plumage changes by Rick Fare.*

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, January 2, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Film: Ordinary Extraordinary Junco

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

January's meeting will include a showing of the film *Ordinary Extraordinary Junco*, which will reveal fascinating facts about this relatively common but far from ordinary bird, which has been hailed as a "scientific rock star."

Saturday, January 11, 8:00 a.m.

Field Trip: WSO Lake Michigan Birding

*South Shore Yacht Club
Milwaukee, WI*

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology will begin the field trip in at 8:00 a.m. Dress warmly and bring your "energy" foods.

Thursday, February 6, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Texas Birding

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

Jennifer Ambrose will be speaking on her first trip to the Rio Grande Valley, located in south Texas along the United States/Mexico border. The focus will be the birds that she saw at some of the well-known state and national parks, such as Estero Llano Grande, Bentsen Rio Grande, South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center, Quinta Mazatlan, and more. She will have many photos and stories to share.

Saturday, February 8, 9:00 a.m.

Field Trip: Gulls and Waterfowl on the Racine Lakefront

*Myers Park
Racine, WI*

We'll begin at Myers Park (take 11th Street east to the lake; southwest of Gateway Tech) and make our way northward to the Racine Harbor. Bring your binoculars (and a spotting scope if you have one) and dress for the weather!

February 14-17

The Great Backyard Bird Count!

A world-wide, joint effort by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Bird Studies Canada—open to all.

Thursday, March 6, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Nighthawk Survey

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

Jana Viel will present preliminary findings from her June 2013 Nighthawk survey in Southeast Wisconsin. The study examined these birds' populations and behavior as well as the impact of environmental factors such as predators and light pollution.

Saturday, March 29, 8:00 a.m.

Field Trip: Eagle Lake Waterfowl

We'll meet at the Hwy 20/I-94 park and ride at 8:00 a.m. to carpool out to Eagle Lake. Prior to birding at Eagle Lake, we'll check the wetlands west and north of the intersection of Hwy 11 and 75. We'll then meet at Eagle Lake Park (north side of the lake, south of Church Rd.) sometime after 9:00 a.m.

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

Hoy Meeting, Program: TBA

Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive, Mount Pleasant, WI 53406
Watch the website for more details as the date approaches!

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 044626

RACINE, WI 53404

www.hoyaudubon.org



Snow Goose (blue morph) among Canada Geese, photo by John Dixon

Please take the time to renew your [Hoy Audubon Chapter Membership for 2014/2015](http://www.hoyaudubon.org).

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?

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



2013 Hoy Audubon Birding at Shoop, photo by Sharon Kennedy

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