

THE TRUMPETER: WISCONSIN METRO AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Our mission is to encourage wise environmental practices through education and awareness.

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Wisconsin Metro AUDUBON SOCIETY

Special Announcement - Coming in Spring

In our next edition of *The Trumpeter* we will be rolling out a new program for members - **Gardening for the Birds, Bees, and Butterflies**. If you haven't already planted things in your yard to attract all of the winged wonders we share our world with, we will give you some ideas to help you turn your yard into a miniature wildlife refuge. Stay tuned!



A Letter to Our Members

Dear Audubon Friends,

How we have missed seeing you at in-person programs! We hope that you are well during this time of COVID-19 and that life is still meaningful and fulfilling despite the challenging circumstances we find ourselves in.

Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society has remained active through these times. We helped to sponsor an acoustic monitoring device last spring in the ephemeral pond area at Wehr Nature Center. Data from it has been analyzed, and we learned that there were three confirmed nestings for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the area. This led to habitat restoration, adding more beneficial plants for hummingbirds plus continuing removal of buckthorn in the area.

Wehr Birders has continued to meet on Sunday mornings. We meet at 9:00 a.m. during the winter months and will move to 8:00 a.m. in March. Our group has been small, and we wear masks and practice social distancing.

With the help of wonderful people like Carol Howard at Wehr, we have been able to offer virtual programs via Zoom. To be included in notices of upcoming Zoom programs, please make sure I have your email address. You can contact me at lembck6492@wi.rr.com if you have not been getting notices, and you will be added to the email list.

Through Bill Holton, our Conservation Chairman, we've been offered opportunities to volunteer at a property across from Horicon Marsh which Milwaukee Audubon Society is working on restoring. Bill also needs help maintaining the native gardens at the Stahl/Conrad Homestead in Hales Corners. Let Bill know if you're interested in volunteering at either site by emailing him at WHolton@wi.rr.com.

We hope that you are keeping safe, and that you, like us, find respite in nature and that birds bring you joy and hope.

Sincerely,

Diane Lembck

President, Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society

A SILVER LINING

Article and photos by WMAS Board Member Jim Cieslak

While it is hard to appreciate almost anything good coming out of this COVID-19 pandemic, I think I have found something. When this all started back in spring 2020, I decided to focus on birding and gardening to keep myself busy. While I had recorded the birds seen in my yard for over 6 years, I'd never really focused on what they did during the migrations. My 2020 backyard bird list is over 130 species, and considering that my home is in the middle of a very average subdivision, I have been happy with that total. I made it a point to spend at least two hours a day in the yard and I kept a careful record of what I saw. In April and May, I hit over 45 species and in September and October over 60. Both numbers exceeded my expectations, but what really amazed me were two general observations:

- Some of the migrants stayed in my yard for up to a month, including a Nashville Warbler, two Swainson's Thrushes, and three Warbling Vireos
- Almost all the migrants ignored my feeders but focused on the native plants and shrubs I have added over the years



Backyard Beauty, courtesy of Jim Cieslak.

This coming spring is not going to be much better for socializing, but I am already looking forward to it! Rarest birds seen, you ask? Western Tanager and Hoary Redpoll.

JANUARY: A TIME OF HUNGRY BIRDS

Article by Diane Lembck and Marsha Berenson

If you remember ancient mythology, you'll recall that January is named for the Roman god Janus. He is depicted with two faces, one looking into the past and the other into the future.

Another name for January is "The Month of Perihelion". Perihelion, a phenological name, is when our earth is the closest to the sun. The exact date of when we are nearest to the sun varies from January 1 to January 5; it's approximately two weeks after the December Solstice. This year it occurred on January 2nd. But we didn't gain any extra warmth, because during this time our Northern Hemisphere tilts away from the sun.

January is a time of hungry birds. The short days are spent eating to warm their tiny bodies. Waxwings working on frozen berries. Feeders active with finches, cardinals, and chickadees devouring sunflower seeds. Woodpeckers attacking suet. Hawks can be seen seeking prey at feeders, too.

According to an article in the November-December 2010 issue of *Audubon Magazine*, over a hundred bird species supplement their natural diets with foods offered at feeders. This is especially true in winter. Audubon,



Photos courtesy of John Berenson.

Wild Birds Unlimited, and other sources suggest using a variety of feeders with high-quality foods that are high in calories and fats. Oil sunflower seeds, peanuts, and suet fit the bill.

By keeping your feeders well-stocked you can help the birds while you continue to enjoy their colorful plumage and fascinating antics right outside your windows.

WMAS PROGRAMS WINTER 2021

Programs are held on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM at Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Avenue unless otherwise noted ** If you need more information, contact WMAS President Diane Lembck at 414-425-9616 or email lembck6492@wi.rr.com ****NOTE:** Currently, our programs will be offered at the scheduled time **via Zoom**. To receive an invitation and Zoom access information, be sure we have your current email address.

FEBRUARY 17, 2021 7:00 PM

ZOOM PROGRAM: ANTARCTICA: A PLACE LIKE NO OTHER

Speaker: Karen Etter Hale - Conservation Maven

Join Karen Etter Hale on a trip of a lifetime to experience the history, the icebergs, the mammals, and the numerous birds of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island, and the Antarctic Peninsula. This vast and often forbidding land is home to Wandering Albatrosses, enormous colonies of King Penguins, southern fur seals, and birds you've never heard of. Come and get up-close views of this incredible place.

Karen has had a lifelong interest in birds. She has been the chair of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative since its inception in 1999. Since retiring in 2014 after 25 years as the executive secretary of the Madison Audubon Society, she has continued to serve on several statewide committees, including Atlas II, Bird City Wisconsin, Wisconsin Audubon Council, the Wisconsin Chimney Swift Working Group, and the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. The motto of her birdathon team, the Finch Gang, is "Give or Else!"

MARCH 17, 2021 7:00 PM

ZOOM PROGRAM: THE WETLANDS AND ECOLOGY OF THE LOWER WISCONSIN RIVER

Speaker: Mike Mossman with the Wisconsin Wetlands Association

The lower Wisconsin River was named Wisconsin's 6th Wetland of International Importance at The Ramsar Convention. Join in to learn more about its unique features and why it was named a wetland of international importance.



WEHR NATURE CENTER – ADULT VIRTUAL AND HYBRID PROGRAMS

More information at friendsofwehr.org/events/
Pre-registration and fees are required.



Zoom - The Brews and Botany Series

Enjoy an interactive discussion about the botanical origins of favorite brews featuring Dr. Chris Tyrell, Curator of Botany at the Milwaukee Public Museum and local botanical beverage specialists.

Session 1: The Zip in Your Sip – Friday, January 22, 7-8 pm

Session 2: Prost to Plants! – Friday, January 29, 7-8 pm

Session 3: Toast to Your Health – Friday, February 5, 7-8 pm

Zoom - Slightly Naughty Nature

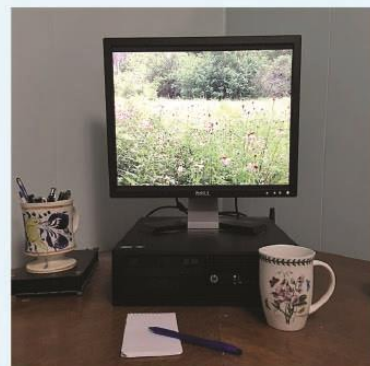
Adults are invited to explore the nature of romance, courtship, and reproduction in the plant and animal world.

Saturday, February 13, 7- 8 pm

Zoom - Manage Your Yard Naturally: Early Spring Preparation

Protect your plants and the wildlife that depends on them.

Wednesday, March 31, 7:30-8:30 pm



NATIONAL AUDUBON AND OTHER WINTER EVENTS

Most events are virtual and require preregistration; some require fees

Online - The Basics of Bird Photography

Learn how to create beautiful images of birds! Presented by Mitchell Lake Audubon Center (Texas)
Saturday, January 23, 2021,
10 - 11:30 am Central Time
More information at mitchelllake.audubon.org/events/basics-bird-photography

Webinar - Deciphering Winter Bird Behavior

Wednesday, January 27, 2021,
7 - 8 pm
Free. Pre-register at audubon.org/events/deciphering-winter-bird-behavior

Online Course - Introduction to Bird Song

February 3-24, 2021, 7-8:30 pm
Eight-week online course.
Additional details and registration at uwm.edu/field-station/workshops/spring-workshops/

Zoom - Birding with Needle & Thread

Explore the love of birds through the medium of needle and thread. Artwork will feature birds on quilts from the National Quilt Show and private collections, cross stitch, embroidery, and more. Audubon Society of Central Arkansas meeting.
Free; preregister.
Thursday, February 11, 2021,
7-8 pm Central Time

More information at ar.audubon.org/events/birding-needle-thread



Photo from Audubon Society of Central Arkansas.

2021 Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12-15, 2021
Your observations will provide critical information to scientists on bird distributions and abundance. Submit your observations online to gbbc.birdcount.org. An article with more information is included in this newsletter on page 6.

Virtual Lecture Series: Guiding Wetland Restoration through Monitoring Breeding Marsh Birds

February 18, 2021, 7-8 pm
Presented by Northeastern Wisconsin Audubon Society; speaker is Stephanie Beilke from Audubon Great Lakes. More information at newiaudubon.org/events

Online and In Person - International Festival of Owls

March 5-7, 2021
Presented by the International Owl Center, Houston, MN
Details available at festivalofowls.com and InternationalOwlCenter.org

CONSERVATION. IT'S FOR THE BIRDS!

A whole flock of opportunities to support our mission is available. Whether it's participating in an international bird count, contacting state or national legislators about environmental funding issues, or restoring local habitats, your help is invaluable to the birds we admire and enjoy.

At the local level, our annual members' meeting, including elections of WMAS board members, will be held in April. You'll have the ability to vote and even throw your own hat in the ring. Committees and volunteers will be needed for projects including membership diversity and restoration and maintenance of native plants. Note that our April meeting might be virtual, and our voting might be by email. More information will follow later in the year.

On the state level, some of you may wish to subscribe to the Wisconsin Legislature Notification System, notify.legis.wisconsin.gov, to get email updates about legislation that affects our natural resources. Or, you might want to join a political action group such as conservationvoters.org/, wisconsinenvironmentcenter.org/, or others.

The Audubon website makes it easy to learn about environmental concerns and the actions underway to address them. The Conservation page audubon.org/conservation has one-click links to important initiatives on The Migratory Bird Act, climate, clean water, and community science in partnership with Cornell Lab of Ornithology and eBird.org.

How do you support our mission?

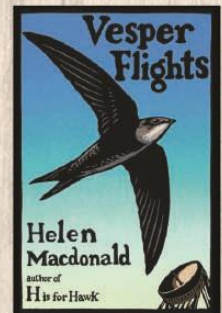
Send your comments, suggestions, articles, and photos to our editor at marshasb@wi.rr.com

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

THE BEST OF 2020

You'll probably agree that there's not much good to say about 2020. But it wasn't ALL bad, as editors from Audubon.org, the L.A. Times, the BBC's Science Focus magazine, and Kirkus Reviews were happy to point out. These are just a few of the non-fiction nature-related books judged to be the best published last year.

- *What It's Like to Be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing--What Birds Are Doing, and Why*
Author David Allen Sibley
- *Becoming Wild: How Animal Cultures Raise Families, Create Beauty, and Achieve Peace*
Author Carl Safina
- *Photography Birds: Field Techniques and the Art of the Image*
Author and Photographer Gerrit Vyn
- *Vesper Flights*
Essays by author Helen Macdonald, author of *H is for Hawk*
- *Owls of the Eastern Ice: The Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl*
Author Jonathan C. Slaght
- *The Falcon Thief: A True Tale of Adventure, Treachery, and the Hunt for the Perfect Bird*
Author Joshua Hammer
- *Flights of Passage: An Illustrated Natural History of Bird Migration*
Authors Mike Unwin and David Tipling
- This last book, *Afield: Portraits of Wisconsin Naturalists, Empowering Leopold's Legacy, Volume One*, by Wisconsin author Sumner W. Matteson, didn't make any "best of" lists. However, it's notable because of the topic: Wisconsin's naturalists from Increase Lapham to Eric Epstein, a 20th century naturalist known for his work with the Nature Conservancy and Wisconsin's DNR. You can hear Matteson read Chapter 1 of his book at youtube.com/watch?v=IzIjQqBYkdo.



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Read any good books lately?

Our editor welcomes your suggestions at marshasb@wi.rr.com



2021 Great Backyard Bird Count

Citation: This article was taken from
birdcount.org/ on Jan. 8, 2021

The 24th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will take place
Friday, February 12 through Monday, February 15, 2021.

Participation is simple: count birds anywhere during the four-day count and spend at least 15 minutes doing so. Your observations will provide critical information to scientists on bird distributions and abundance. Submit your observations online to gbbc.birdcount.org

The Great Backyard Bird Count uses eBird, one of the world's largest nature-databases with more than 100 million bird sightings contributed each year and used by professionals for science and conservation.

Great Backyard Bird Count results from 2020:

- **268,674** Estimated Participants
- **27,270,156** Total Birds Counted
- **6,942** Species of Birds Identified
- **194** Countries



BACKYARD BIRDING

NEW FEATURE!

Article and photos by WMAS Board Member Jim Cieslak

We know you'll enjoy this new, regular feature in our quarterly newsletter. Articles will include little bit about what has been seen, what may be seen in the months ahead, and a picture or two worth sharing. Jim hopes that YOU and the 500 or so other members who get this newsletter will be contributors. We might not have enough space for everything in our print edition, but we'll have lots of room on our website. Keep an eye on our website for rare or exceptional sightings; we will post them as soon as they are known. If you want to send a picture or story from your yard, you can reach Jim at cieslakjames3@gmail.com.

The last few months of 2020 are now behind us (good riddance!). I was still seeing a few migrants into November, including a few warblers and White Crowned Sparrows. My species count for each month was: Oct. - 54, Nov. - 33, Dec. - 19. My favorite winter visitors (Red Breasted Nuthatches and Dark-eyed Juncos) are near the feeders almost every hour.

I don't expect to see any surprise visitors until the end of February. Eagles seem to check out the local small lakes every spring, and then comes March when anything starts to be possible. Until then, hang in there! Come spring, we may be able to do some social distancing in my yard or yours.



Dark Eyed Junco, courtesy of Jim Cieslak.

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A FINCH, IT'S A SUPERFLIGHT!

Article and photos contributed by WMAS member Rita Wiskowski

Bird enthusiasts all over the country, including southeastern Wisconsin, are enjoying an irruption of winter finches that is the best we've seen in recent history. An irruption this widespread that includes every species of boreal finch is called a *superflight*. Here are a few of these finches seen in our area:

Common Redpolls can be found eating the seeds of trees such as willow, alder, birch, and spruce. This redpoll was with a flock of about 30 eating from a birch tree near Lakeshore State Park. If you are lucky you might find the less common Hoary Redpoll in a redpoll flock. The Hoary Redpoll is a very light-colored version of the Common Redpoll and has a bit smaller bill.

Pine Siskins are showing up at feeders everywhere this winter, but also will happily forage through wildflower seeds or conifer trees.

If you don't catch a glimpse of the yellow on its wing you can also identify them by their very sharp bills. This Pine Siskin was found at the Grant Park feeder in South Milwaukee where bird watchers have been amused at the spunkiness they exhibit while defending their space at the feeders. Perhaps those sharp bills are intimidating to other birds.

Evening Grosbeaks are normally not seen as far south as southern Wisconsin, but this year is an exception. They love sunflower seeds so can be attracted to feeders. They've been regular visitors to the Grant Park feeder since late November and that is where this one was found in early January.

Keep an eye out for these and others. Red Crossbills, White-winged Crossbills, Purple Finches and more are being seen in local parks and backyards throughout our area.



Common Redpoll



Pine Siskin



Evening Grosbeak

Wisconsin Metro Audubon
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Franklin, WI 53132

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WMAS **thanks** Haber M&M Printing, D G
Marketing, and Steve Wiskowski for
their help with printing, mailing, and
logo design!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Refer to mailing address for your renewal date



Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

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