

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

WMAS Chapter Updates

WMAS Publicity Campaign

Did you see the WMAS float in the Hales Corners 4th of July parade? The float was created by a board member, Colleen Resendiz, and we think it truly reflects the spirit of the Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society. Many thanks go to Roger Brinkmeier for the use of his truck and trailer for the parade, as well as to Anchor Printing for a beautiful job printing banners and bird cards for our float.



Board members (from left) Bill Holton, Colleen Resendiz, and Diane Lembck

WMAS Joins Wisconsin Coalition in Support of Recovering America's Wildlife Act

In July of this year your WMAS Board voted to join RAWA Coalition, a new coalition of Wisconsin organizations supporting the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA). RAWA was introduced in the House (H.R.2773) in April 2021 and in the Senate (S.2372) in July 2021, and would provide funds for scientific research, habitat management, and wildlife conservation efforts across the country. According to Wisconsin's DNR, Wisconsin's funding levels "would increase from \$1 million to an anticipated \$18 million annually. This would support the Wisconsin DNR and their partners to protect Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats in Wisconsin." For more information, and to contact your representatives in Congress, go to Wisconsin DNR's RAWA webpage <https://tinyurl.com/43txekts> or to <https://wicoalitionforrawa.org/>

Diversity and Inclusion at WMAS

The second annual Black Birders Week, May 30 through June 5, 2021, continued momentum begun last year in response to a conflict between a white woman with an unleashed dog and Black birdwatcher. The conflict had a silver lining: awareness-raising campaigns promoting diversity and inclusion; a national focus on challenges people of color have experienced in the outdoors; and an annual Black Birders Week organized by Black AF in STEM education. (<https://www.blackafinstem.com/>).

This year's Black Birders Week had many partners, including Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Bird Collective, the U.S. Fish Wildlife Service, and National Wildlife Federation. In support of all birders, WMAS has posted our statement of inclusion prominently on the home page of our website, <https://wisconsinmetroaudubonsociety.org/>. Like Audubon, we encourage all our members as well as all birders to be welcoming to all.

Gardening for the Birds, Bees and Butterflies

■ Article and photo by Jim Cieslak

The phrase "If you build it, they will come" is from a movie about an imaginary baseball field, but it holds true about any bird-friendly yard. Every time we pave, build, or grass over an area used by nesting, wintering, or migrating birds we increase the chances that some species is going to fail. Since no one but the birds pay the price for this, it goes unchallenged. Every one of our yards has the potential to be a welcome rest stop or nesting place for our native birds. Our chapter will continue encouraging and helping any member trying to make a difference. We have resource packets for anyone wanting start or expand their gardens using native plants. To get a packet or simply ask a question, please contact me at cieslakjames3@gmail.com.



Backyard Birding

■ Article and photo by Jim Cieslak

It is hard to believe the summer is almost over and the migration has begun again. In my last article, I was singing the praises of the House Wrens nesting in one of our boxes. About a week after the little ones fledged, they all left! I am trying not to take it personally. A pair of Chipping Sparrows is nest building somewhere near, and the original pair of Black Capped Chickadees has become a family of seven. A young male hummingbird has joined in the zooming about that they do so well. The Monarch and Swallow-Tailed butterflies, along with some interesting dragonflies, have added to the wonder. My daily species count for birds has dropped to an average of about 15, but that includes Great Blue Herons, Osprey, and Bald Eagles spotted each month for the first time this year. Each day of watching remains a joy.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding on Royal Catchfly



Karen Johnson

Member Highlight

■ By Jim Cieslak

One of our longtime members, Karen Johnson, was kind enough to share with us what she and her husband have done with native plantings. This typical Bay View home may be short on greenspace, but they have put it all to work for birds and pollinators. While the yard is heavily shaded, half of the front is prairie, and the other half is shaded by a hawthorn and is planted with spring ephemerals and Wild Ginger. Karen has recorded 109 species of birds in her yard. We hope you will spot many more this fall, Karen, and thanks for giving us a peek!

Fall Migration Hawk Watches

■ By Jim Cieslak

The fall migration will already be underway when you read this. Locally, we will try to see what is zooming by at Lake Vista Park in Oak Creek -- everything from swarms of swallows to rafts of ducks add to the spectacle. With favorable winds you can see almost anything, like the Roseate Spoonbill I saw one fall day. Besides the local Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles,



Roseate Spoonbill Photo © William Canosa

and Turkey Vultures that are there almost daily, you may see anything from a big Golden Eagle to a small Merlin. I plan on being there on Tuesdays, with Wednesday as a rain date. Two good alternatives, if you don't mind the drive, are Harrington Beach State Park and Illinois Beach State Park. If you would like to know when winds are favorable or when I will be at the bluff, send me your email and I will keep you posted, cieslakjames3@gmail.com.



Red-tailed Hawk, photo by Julian Jacobs

Identifying Wisconsin Waterfowl

■ By Marsha Berenson

How well do you know Wisconsin waterfowl? Characteristics such as size, shape, colors, flocking behavior, and silhouette are all important, as well as their calls and even the wing sound! Many resources are available to help us identify (ID) the myriad waterfowl that live, breed, or pass through Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Metro area.

As avid birders and members of WMAS and Audubon, you are no doubt familiar with the print and online resources Audubon offers. Audubon's online bird field guide lets you search by name, region, or taxonomic family (for example finches or flamingos). Just like in the print guide, the webpage for each bird includes photo, conservation status, habitat, feeding behavior, eggs, etc. For those who rely on print field guides, a newly updated *Audubon Birds of North America* was released this April.



Tundra Swan.

Artist Michael Riddet

Another helpful online ID resource is available through Ducks Unlimited (DU) <https://www.ducks.org/hunting/waterfowl-id/>. The webpages are organized by type of waterfowl: Dabbling Ducks, Diving Ducks, Geese, and Other (coots, cranes and swans, for example). Each ID includes calls, identification details, breeding areas, food, and migrating and wintering information.

Yet another comprehensive online ID resource is available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The waterfowl ID page <https://tinyurl.com/anu993yb> offers illustrations, full-color photos, and video footage of each species. You can also download *Ducks at a Distance*, a free, 56-page, full color pamphlet that helps birders recognize birds on the wing, at <https://tinyurl.com/2k4cp7n5>.



THINK YOU KNOW YOUR WATERFOWL?

Try this quiz! Answers are on page 5.

1. Which is a Diving Duck? Bufflehead. Northern Pintail. Shoveler. Wood Duck.
2. Which is a Puddle or Dabbling Duck? Canvasback. Hooded Merganser. Blue-Winged Teal. Ruddy Duck.
3. Which of the following words is NOT used to describe a group of ducks? A paddling. A team. A gaggle. A dopping.
4. What makes the outer feathers of ducks waterproof? A waxy substance secreted through the skin. Oil from a gland near the duck's tail. Scotchgard.
5. How can you tell a duck from a goose? Wing span. The call. Neck bones. Web foot configuration.
6. How is reproduction different for ducks and geese than it is for most other birds? A. Ducks and geese lay more eggs. B. Male ducks and geese have phalluses. C. Male ducks and geese do not have phalluses
7. A duck's quack does not echo. True. False.
8. Ducks have regional accents. True. False.

ABOUT DUCKS UNLIMITED



Ducks Unlimited (DU) is widely known as a hunters' organization. You may be surprised to learn that DU is also focused on conserving wetlands and grassland habitats essential for waterfowl and other wildlife. According to the national association's website, DU has conserved more than 14 million acres since 1937. In Wisconsin, DU conservation programs have restored and enhanced 134,000 acres of wetlands and adjacent habitat. Because Wisconsin is part of the Mississippi Flyway, DU Wisconsin helps provide important migration, breeding, and wintering areas for many of the continent's waterfowl such as Wood Ducks, Mallards, Blue-winged Teal and Canada Geese.

WMAS PROGRAMS FALL 2021

Programs are held on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM at Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Avenue unless otherwise noted. As of this writing, Wehr Nature Center requires masks and social distancing as well as other COVID-19 health precautions. If you need more information, contact WMAS President Diane Lembck at 414-425-9616 or email lembck6492@wi.rr.com.

October 6, 2021 7:00 PM
IN PERSON! Wisconsin Moths
Presented by Randy Powers,
Reconstruction Ecologist and
Nature Photographer



Promethea Moth (Source Wiscontext.org)

Join Randy Powers as he discusses Wisconsin moths and the study of butterflies and moths, also known as Lepidoptera. In Wisconsin alone there are approximately 3500 known species of moths, providing both entomologists and enthusiasts alike with a vast array of species to study and admire. Randy has a Masters Degree in Botany and Zoology, with thirty years of ecology field experience in natural area problem solving, restoration, and management.

October 16, 2021 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM
IN PERSON! Bird Walk at Forest Home Cemetery, Milwaukee

Enjoy "Birding 101" and learn how to identify birds from sight and sound. Event is free and open to the public as well as WMAS members. Pre-register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/168733001951>

November 17, 2021 7:00 PM
IN PERSON! Avian Vision, Window Collisions, and How You Can Save Birds - Presented by Bryan Lenz, Ph.D, Glass Collision Program Manager & Bird City Americas Director



Dr. Bryan Lenz Ph.D.

Join us for a presentation by American Bird Conservancy's Dr. Bryan Lenz to discuss the scale of the window collision problem, how birds see the world, the science behind collisions solutions, and what you can do to keep your windows from killing birds. Bryan is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Masters of Science from Oxford Brookes University and a Masters of Art and Ph.D. from Tulane University.



OTHER EVENTS

October 30, 2021 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
IN PERSON! Cedarburg Bog Field Trip
Pre-registration and fee required.

The field trip, led by Senior Ecologist Don Quintenz, begins and ends at the Cedarburg Bog. Details and directions will be emailed to registered participants prior to the trip. Members: \$45; non-members: \$60. Information available at <https://www.schlitzaudubon.org/event/cedarburg-bog-field-trip/>.

WEHR NATURE CENTER EVENTS

As of this writing, Wehr Nature Center requires masks and social distancing as well as other COVID-19 health precautions. More information at <https://friendsofwehr.org/events>

Nov 27, 2021 6:30 PM—7:30 PM
IN PERSON! Family Owl Prowl
Jacobus Park
Pre-registration and fee required.

Come prepared to walk in search of Great-Horned and Eastern Screech owls. Each child will dissect an owl pellet to discover what owls eat for dinner!

Dec 10, 2021 7:00 PM—8:00 PM
Adult Owl Prowl
Grant Park Clubhouse

Join a naturalist for an evening out with the owls. An interactive program will highlight the habits and adaptations of owls and include a walk listening and looking for Great-Horned and Eastern Screech owls.

Dec 11, 2021 6:30 PM—7:30 PM
IN PERSON! Family Owl Prowl
Wehr Nature Center
Pre-registration and fee required.

Repeat of November family program.

Dec 19, 2021 9:00 AM—4:00 PM
IN PERSON! Christmas Bird Count
No fee, but pre-registration required.

Help count wintering birds at Wehr Nature Center and other sites within the southern half of Milwaukee County. Beginners and experienced birders welcome. Please email Carol at carol.howard@milwaukeecountywi.gov for more information and to register.

WATERFOWL QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Which is a Diving Duck? Bufflehead. A diving duck's body is more compact and wider in the middle and tapering toward the end than a dabbling/ puddle duck. The wings are more compact, the legs are set much farther back on their body, and their feet are much larger and have a lobed hind toe.
2. Which is a Puddle or Dabbling Duck?. Blue-Winged Teal. The "tell-tail" sign of a dabbling duck is tail feathers above water and head beneath the water.
3. Which of the following words is NOT used to describe a group of ducks? A gaggle is a group of geese.
4. What makes the outer feathers of ducks waterproof? It is oil secreted from a gland near the duck's tail. The main function of a duck's preening behavior is to waterproof the feathers by distributing preen oil from the uropygial gland at the base of the tail to the feathers.
5. How can you tell a duck from a goose? The primary way scientists differentiate between ducks and geese is based on how many bones they have in their necks. Ducks have 16 or fewer bones in their necks, while geese and swans have between 17 and 24 neck bones.
6. How is reproduction different for ducks and geese than it is for most other birds? Waterfowl like ducks and geese are unusual among birds in that the males have phalluses and most other birds do not. In addition, the females have some built-in defenses — unique sacs and spirals in the oviduct —to prevent unwanted penetration.
7. A duck's quack does not echo. False. This is an urban legend found on many "random facts" websites. However, it has been disproven by experts at the University of Salford, near Greater Manchester, England, who proved that there is an echo but it can be hard to hear.
8. Ducks have regional accents. True. Back to England, where scientists found that city ducks tended to have a "shouting" quack to compete with the noisy city, while their country cousins generally had softer voices.



Green Winged Teal. Artist Terry Doughty

Waterfowl Stamps Fund Statewide Conservation Projects

For many years, Wisconsin's waterfowl hunters have been required to purchase a waterfowl stamp to legally harvest them. Sales of the stamps (and turkey and pheasant stamps) bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. The funds are available as grants for statewide projects including habitat management, restoration, education, and research projects.

Artists from around Wisconsin compete annually to have their painting featured on a stamp. The first stamp, in 1978, was painted by wildlife artist Owen Gromme. The price was only \$3.25 and generated over \$400,000! The price of this year's stamp, Pintail Ducks by Caleb Metrich, is \$12.00. Total stamp revenue from 1978 through 2018 was over \$18 million. For more information go to <https://tinyurl.com/5ap7h6zc>.

Note: waterfowl stamps used with permission of WI DNR.



Wood Ducks by Owen J. Gromme



Pintail ducks by Caleb Metrich

IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP?

Your renewal date is now printed on the newsletter above your address. Your renewal date is also on the magazine label of the National Audubon magazine.

Renew through WMAS! More of your donation will support local activities and conservation projects. Use the form in our newsletter or on our website, <http://www.wisconsinmetroaudubonsociety.org>

You'll find more waterfowl ID quizzes at <https://www.ducks.org/media/quizzes> and <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/quizzes/duck-and-waterfowl-identification-try-a-free-quiz/>.



Hooded Mergansers
Artist Samuel Timm

Conservation Notes

▪ **Mysterious Songbird Deaths Waning**

Reports of blind and dead songbirds made national news this summer. At least 11 states and DC were affected, and many organizations and bird lovers shut down their feeding sites. This August, scientists at the Cornell Wildlife Health Lab theorized that the cause may have been due to a cicada eruption in mid-May. The illness waned as the cicadas died off and dropped significantly after the cicadas disappeared.

▪ **Gov. Evers Signs Hydrologic Restoration Bill**

This August, Gov. Evers signed 2021 Act 77 with bipartisan support. According to the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, the bill will create an efficient review and permitting process for projects including wetland, stream and floodplain restoration. The bill was supported by conservation, sporting heritage, local government, and real estate affiliated groups.

▪ **Wisconsin DNR Closes Sharp-tailed Grouse**

Hunting Season For the third year in a row, Wisconsin DNR closed the fall Sharp-Tailed Grouse hunting season because of concerns over the birds' population viability. While DNR surveys showed a 38% increase in the

number of males compared to 2018, that increase was on DNR managed land only. On non-managed property there was a 12% decline, and on private lands, no grouse were encountered.

▪ **Wisconsin's Green Fire Comments on UN Climate Change Report**

In an interview by Rhinelander public radio station WXPB, Fred Clark, Executive Director of Wisconsin's Green Fire said "[The report] is a sharp, sobering assessment of what we can expect in the next 20 years or so in our climate future, but also some of the unknowns." Clark also said that the report makes it extremely clear that human activity is causing extreme weather, but that it's not too late. The actions of individuals can help, but most of the work needs to be done at corporate, government, and global levels.



If not now, when?

■ By Jim Cieslak

It is hard to watch the news these days without wondering: When will we start to take climate change seriously? The fire department in Fort Atkinson stopped trying to put out a fire because the city's water supply was dangerously low. The City of Chicago is being threatened by the high water level of Lake Michigan. The fires out west have set new records for destruction and have turned our local skies from blue to gray. Record high temperatures have reached levels I did not think were possible. We know how to fix this but we lack the will to do so. What will the next generations think of us? You and I will probably be gone before this is fixed, but at least let them say "we know they tried".

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

TRUMPETER EDITOR WANTED!

Always wanted to see your name in print? Now's your chance! Marsha Berenson, WMAS's Trumpeter editor, will be stepping down after the first of the year to spend more time on conservation and citizen science. She and the WMAS Board stand ready to help you get started in January and flow through the printing process for a successful Spring issue. Interested? Contact [Marsha at marshasb@wi.rr.com](mailto:Marsha@marshasb@wi.rr.com).

FeederWatch: A Citizen Science Opportunity from Cornell Labs

FeederWatch is a November-April survey of birds that visit backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. Volunteers of all ages and skill levels are welcome, and no feeder is required!! Your counts contribute to a data-set covering the US and Canada. The annual participation fee is \$18 for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members), which covers a Welcome Kit with a bird ID poster, a calendar, the annual summary of results from the prior season, and access to the digital version of Cornell Lab's Living Bird. Learn more at <https://feederwatch.org/about/project-overview/>

Waterfowl Poetry

MALLARDS

Patricia Carney, Poet

Mallards fly
by the pair
Skimming the surface
of the air
O'er the lake's
smooth veneer
Elongated necks with
pointed bills
Skipping like flattened
stones

First one then
two in retreat
Lower landing gear
with webbed feet
And out-stretched wings
breaking flying form
Two mallards sink
from the sky
Like flung rock with
sudden splash

From one element
to another
Less resistance
to the other,

Now no longer
slim sky birds
Skimming through
the air
But buoyed decoys
resting by the pair.

Poem taken from Birdbrains, August 2017. Used with permission of the author. To reach Ms. Carney, contact marshasb@wi.rr.com.

Holiday and Any Day Gift Ideas

Looking for that ideal gift for the special people (including yourself!) in your life? Consider these thoughtful gifts, many that directly benefit birds, animals, and their natural habitats.

From Audubon: Gift memberships (from WMAS too!), bird adoptions, Audubon gear including totes, water bottles, field journals; coloring book or puzzle for the kiddos. <https://gifts.audubon.org/>.

From Bird City Wisconsin: Birds & Beans Coffee. Organic, Bird Friendly® coffee from family farms in Latin America that provide good, forest-like habitat for birds. Purchases support your local Bird City. <https://birdcitywisconsin.org/birds-beans>.

From World Wildlife Federation or Sierra Club: All sales including gift memberships benefit organizations' programs. Notable at WWF: large selection of blown glass bird ornaments and adoptable plush birds for the little ones. <https://Shopnwf.org>. Notable at Sierra Club: sturdy hiking and camping gear and boy and girl hiker dolls for the little ones. <https://store.sierraclub.org/>.

BOOKS FOR THE NATURAL GARDENER

- *Landscaping with Native Plants of Wisconsin*, by Lynn M. Steiner
- *Birdscaping in the Midwest: A Guide to Gardening with Native Plants to Attract Birds*, by Mariette Nowak.

BOARD GAMES FOR FAMILY FUN

- **Wingspan:** Gorgeous, realistic drawings of birds on each card, plus graphics of habitat, food, and type of nest. One to five players, ages 10+, playing time 40 – 70 minutes; moderately complex.



- **Seikatsu:** Beautiful strategy game. Players take turns placing colorful tiles of fanciful birds and flowers into a shared garden area. One to five players, ages 10+, playing time 15 – 30 minutes. Easy to learn.



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