

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

Wisconsin Metro Audubon Programs

We plan to offer in person programs at Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Avenue in Franklin. Depending on the speaker and the situation due to Covid, programs may be offered by zoom, also.

■ September 21, 2022

Bill Stout, "Hawk and Owl Banding in Milwaukee County"

An Urban Raptor Population Ecology and Nesting Study in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Area

Bill will describe this project about banding Great Horned Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Osprey nestlings. These populations will be monitored to determine their movements, migration patterns, lifespan, and other population metrics. This project will generate a better understanding about urban wildlife ecology.

■ October 8, 2022

Birdability Big Sit at Wehr Nature Center

See article in newsletter.

■ October 19, 2022

Eddee Daniel, Milwaukee-based photographer and writer

"The Milwaukee River Greenway: A Wealth of Nature in the Heart of the City"

Eddee Daniel, founder of A Wealth of Nature website and photographer of urban wilderness, will guide us through the surprises and beauty of the

natural landscape within the city illustrated in his photographs of the urban wilderness along the Milwaukee River.

■ November 16, 2022

Gary S. Casper, Great Lakes Ecological Services, LLC

"Bio-Acoustic monitoring reported for Wehr Nature Center"

Gary will describe the project and we will learn the techniques of Bio Acoustics. The 3 year study provides information on Breeding Bird Species to focus management on in the preserved areas of Wehr Nature Center.

■ Bird Walks

Wehr Birders bird walks are each Sunday at Wehr Nature Center starting at 8:00 AM or 9:00 AM in winter months. Birders of all levels are welcome to join us, no reservations required.

Follow us on facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AudubonWMAS/> for updates to "pop up" bird walks in a variety of places or make sure we have your email address. You are also welcome to call 414-425-9616 for updates.



WE CAN ALWAYS USE YOUR HELP

We are always looking for help on different projects. If you see something in this newsletter that you would like to help on, please let us know. Education outreach is something we are trying to create presentations for and if you like to do things like POWER POINT, we can use your help. Please email Jim with questions and to find out more.



**WHEN WE DAMAGE THE EARTH,
WE DAMAGE OUR CHILDREN.**

Wendell Berry

WMAS Diversity Statement

Just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems, the diversity of human experience strengthens our conservation and education efforts for the benefit of nature and humankind. Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society is welcoming to all, providing educational and conservation programs that are free and open to the public. Yet we recognize that our open door policy is not enough to bring more voices and experiences to our Society. To that end, we strive to foster inclusivity by:

- 1) providing programming in, for and by diverse communities
- 2) continuing the discussion regarding diversity, equity and inclusion
- 3) welcoming ideas & viewpoints of all community members regarding meaningful inclusion

Find Us On Facebook



**Wisconsin Metro
Audubon Society
@AudubonWMAS**

FALL HAWK MIGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

Starting any time now, we will again be able to witness the spectacle of the fall migration. In past years, we have tried viewing the event from the north end of Lake Vista Park in Oak Creek but have had only fair results. The most successful watches in the area have been at Concordia University in Mequon, Harrington Beach State Park near Belgium, and Illinois Beach State Park just south of the state line. If you have a favorite spot, we would love to hear about it. A Facebook Friend, Vick Berardi, post a good summary from Illinois Beach almost every day during the season and includes some great photos. Please contact Jim Cieslak if you are interested in a ride-along or meet-up somewhere, he will also act as a clearing house for anyone interested in being paired up with others. He is planning on visiting Illinois Beach, Chickwaukee Prairie and Lapham Peak this season. As always, migration activity is very dependent on favorable winds and weather. Good luck and let us know how it goes.



About BIPOC Birding Club

The club was formed in June of 2021 for people of color and anyone who shares and supports the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access for all. Its long-term goals are to encourage love of nature and birding for those who might not have considered it, to foster curiosity that might lead to life-long careers and hobbies, to offer the healing aspect of nature to all, and to encourage more people of color to become birders and nature enthusiasts.

To learn more, visit the club's website <https://www.bipocbirdingclub.org/>, follow on Facebook and Instagram, or contact Rita Flores Wiskowski, the Milwaukee area coordinator, at (414) 766-0760 or email bipocbirdingclubmilwaukee@gmail.com



SAVE THE SEEDS, PLEASE!

Our chapter has given out over 130 packets of native wildflower seeds at events in just over a year.

We would like to continue to do so as we meet with other groups. They are so popular that The City of Franklin has agreed to fund the purchase for their 2 events. If you are growing native wildflowers in your yard, please consider donating some seeds to our supply. All you do is put the seed heads in a paper bag (different bag for different seeds) and send Jim an email. We will come and get them, sort them, and package them for future events. Who knows where your garden can spread to!



THE FALL BIG SIT

The Big Sit is a great way to focus on all the birds in one place as observers listen and observe any birds seen or heard from their station. We will also visit with Wehr visitors that are curious about our checklist. We will have binoculars and a scope to let visitors try their hand at birding.

Participants need to dress for the weather, bring a camp chair, snacks and water. We will have a station at the Wehr deck to help introduce the Big Sit to Wehr visitors. At the South Pier, find WMAS sponsored Wehr birders watching for migrating birds. The participants will spot as many bird species as possible from 7 AM to Noon. We will only count birds that are heard or seen from the boardwalk platform during these hours. We will share an on-going list of the birds observed. The pier extension will be off limits during the Big Sit Sensory. Anyone interested in participating is welcome to sign up. Contact Pat Fojut (ptfojut@gmail.com) I will be sending out a form so you can select a two hour time slot.

Donations are encouraged to Wehr Nature Center in support of their accessibility programs.





A Committee of Vultures
(*Cathartes aura*)

Photos and Text by Heidi Meier
meierdvm@hotmail.com
<https://naturenotes.onuniverse.com/>
 August 1, 2022

: Bird Brief : ***Turkey Vulture (Cathartes aura)***

ORDER: Cathartiformes (5 Families)

FAMILY: Cathartidae (7 Species)

The miracle of fall migration is in full flight. Warblers, shorebirds, falcons, hawks, cranes, owls, passerines, and so many more birds are traversing our skies on their way to wintering habitats and, perhaps, stopping over to forage and rest. Our local summer bird residents are also starting their migration to warmer climates. One of my favorite bird species getting ready to leave for the winter is the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). This bird may not be a fan favorite feathered friend, but it is one of the most overlooked and important birds in our skies. Perhaps, after reading this, you may find a new appreciation for this unique bird.

The Turkey Vulture belongs to the New World Vultures with seven other species in the Family **Cathartidae**. The name *turkey* comes from the resemblance to the male turkey's bald red head while *vulture* derives from the Latin word *vultur* which implies something that tears. In its foraging technique, the vulture will place a foot on the carcass and rip flesh off the bone. Other names for the Turkey Vulture include *Turkey Buzzard*, *Buzzard*, *John Crow*, and *Carrion Crow*. I think the Carrion Crow is the most descriptive alternative name because this scavenging black bird feeds primarily on the decaying flesh of dead animals. No matter what stage of putrefaction, the Turkey Vulture is able to resist infectious disease and toxins because of the high acidity of its digestive tract. Additionally, foraging deep inside a carcass can be messy, thus the reason the Turkey Vulture has no facial feathers for food to adhere to, allowing it to stay cleaner. With all this said, its scientific name *Cathartes aura* is Latin meaning *cleansing breeze* and is absolutely true. The Turkey Vulture removes unwanted natural decomposition and cleanses the environment of potentially harmful infectious agents found in decaying carcasses. This special bird does the dirty work to help keep a cleaner planet and does not prey on the living. The Turkey Vulture is neither predator nor prey. It is a gentle giant!

Turkey vultures have a few anatomical and behavioral differences when compared to other birds. First, these gregarious birds are very quiet. They are unable to produce vocal sounds since they lack the sound producing organ called the **syrinx**. When they vocalize, they simply grunt or hiss. Second, you

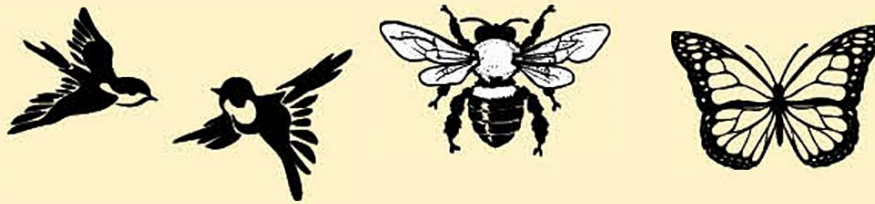
may have witnessed a Turkey Vulture perched and spreading its wings like a Cormorant. Reasons for this **horaltic stance** are realigning flight feathers, drying feathers after rain or morning dew, thermoregulation, and baking off bacteria from the feathers. And finally, an overheated Turkey Vulture can cool blood vessels in its legs by defecating on them, which is called **urohidrosis**. The evaporated water from the feces will subsequently cool the body, and because of the extraordinary ability to kill bacteria in its highly acidic digestive tract, the defecation can also act as an antiseptic wash.

How does the Turkey Vulture seek food while soaring? Turkey Vultures have a large olfactory bulb allowing for a strong sense of smell, especially for **ethyl mercaptan** which is emitted from decaying flesh. In fact, the Union Oil Company of California added chemicals to its gas lines in the 1930s so leaks could be located by Turkey Vultures. Not only does the Turkey Vulture have extraordinary sense of smell, it can soar effortlessly because of its light wing load. It is able to harness kinetic energy by using rising columns of warm air and then simply soar slowly in circles over great distances smelling for its next meal. Turkey Vultures fly in a V-shaped dihedral wing posture for roll stability during gusts of wind; this is called **passive stability**. Additionally, they are able to soar slower because they extend the primary feathers or “fingers” which allows air to easily pass through the open slots; thus reducing any wind turbulence at the wingtips. This helps to prevent stalling speeds and keep them aloft. The V-shape and outstretched fingers of this large circling bird will make the Turkey Vulture easier to identify high in the sky.



References:

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4. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Handbook of Bird Biology, 3rd Ed. Irby J. Lovette and J. W. Fitzpatrick. 2016. John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., Chichester, West Sussex.
5. The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior. David Allen Sibley. 2001. Andrew Stewart Publishing, Inc., NY and Toronto.
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Gardening for the Birds, Bees and Butterflies *UPDATE*

We are pleased to announce that Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (117th and Cleveland) is going to allow us to create a garden on their grounds. It is going to be located on the east side of the church property, adjacent to their existing labyrinth garden. We would like to thank our member, Cathy Dietrick (left in photo), for proposing this to the church, and Karen Brienzo (right in photo) for championing the project within the church leadership. Since the grass has already been removed, we will begin planting and seeding in fall, and add to it each year as needed. Supporting hummingbirds and pollinators will be its primary function. The church has agreed to the placement of a small sign, which will include our chapter name and the names of any major donors to the project. Please consider a donation in support of this project or help with the annual care.



Contact Jim Cieslak for further information.

THANK YOU DONORS



We are very fortunate to have members and friends who donate to us in support of our programs. If you see something we are doing, and would like to see us do more, please consider a donation in support of the activity. We are currently supporting: Bird City, a local bird banding project, handouts and wildflower seeds at community events, Wehr Nature Center events, and our first community garden is in the works. If we missed your name, we apologize. Please contact Jim Cieslak and your name will be in our next issue. Thank you to the following individuals for your recent contributions.

Christopher White

Tom Niemiec

● WHO DO I CONTACT?

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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, www.wisconsinmetroaudubonsociety.org



We have invited some of our friends from Wehr Photo Club and BIPOC Birders to share some of their pictures with us. We hope to make this a regular feature, as they say – a picture is worth a thousand words. Enjoy!



Eastern Bluebird – Menomonee Park
– Jyoti Sengupta



Black Tern – Horicon Marsh
– Ramona Lenger



Golden-crowned Kinglet – Whitnall Park
Richard Knisbeck



Tundra Swan – Milwaukee County Zoo
– Sheila Hall



GIRL SCOUT CAMP VISIT

We were recently invited to speak to some girl scouts at Camp Alice Chester. They turned out to be about 250 in number! While we tried to focus on things they can do to help birds in their own yard, they were not happy to hear that 40% of the world's birds have disappeared over the last 50 years. Our hope is to continue this outreach with youth, civic and senior groups throughout our area. If you know of a group that would like a presentation, please let us know.



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