

# 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

## Upcoming Wisconsin Metro Audubon Programs

Wehr Birders meets each Sunday at 8:00 a.m. in front of Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W College Ave. No registration necessary, all experience levels welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them. The walk is free, parking at the Center is \$5 (Friends of Wehr members park free). *Wednesday evening programs will resume in the fall - watch our website, Facebook page and the fall newsletter!*

## Special Bird Walks in May



Photo credit: Colleen Resendiz

Watch our Facebook (@AudubonWMAS) page for updates on these and other birding events!

As part of World Migratory Bird Day, Bill Holton will be leading a walk at **Seminary Woods**

**on Saturday May 10th at 8 AM.** We will meet in the parking lot behind the Archdiocese of Milwaukee at 3501 S Lake Dr. This has been a very popular resting spot for birds heading further north.

Join Rita Wiskowski for a walk through beautiful and historic **Forest Home Cemetery** as we look for migrating and resident birds. We will meet at **8 AM on Saturday May 17th** outside the main office (near the corner of 27th & Layton Blvd). Extra binoculars will be available so this is the perfect event to bring those new birders in your life!

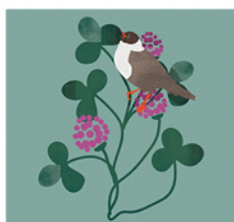
## Bird-Friendly Coffee with Greg DuBois - Brew City Bird Festival Keynote Speaker

*FREE, but pre-registration required at eventbrite as space is limited. Go to [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com), search in Milwaukee for Bird Friendly Coffee.*



WMAS and Wehr Nature Center are pleased to present the keynote speaker for the Brew City Birding Festival! Join us on Friday, May 9th for an evening with Greg DuBois of the Illinois Audubon Society. Greg will give a brief history of coffee consumption and production and explain how each of us can protect our migratory birds through the Smithsonian Bird Friendly certified coffee and cocoa program. He will also highlight migrating birds coming through our area.

Greg leads birding tours and monitors bird populations for the U.S. Forest Service at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie located 60 miles south of Chicago.



**SEE INSIDE FOR EVEN MORE GREAT PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP FROM WMAS!**



The program starts at 7:00 pm. Weather permitting, we will have a bird walk around the Nature Center starting at 5:45 with snacks and samples of bird-friendly coffee before the presentation.

**Location:** Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W College Ave (parking is free)

**Date:** Friday May 9th, 2025

**Time:** 5:45 p.m. walk (no registration needed), 6:45 snacks/coffee with program at 7:00 p.m. (register for program at eventbrite or see page 2 for Colleen's contact info)

Find out more about the Brew City Birding Festival at [Visitmilwaukee.org](http://Visitmilwaukee.org), type birding festival in the search tool.

### 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.

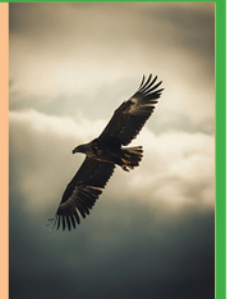
To learn more, visit the club's website <https://www.bipocbirdingclub.org/>, follow on Facebook and Instagram, or contact Rita Flores Wiskowski, the Milwaukee area coordinator, at (414) 766-0760 or email [bipocbirdingclubmilwaukee@gmail.com](mailto:bipocbirdingclubmilwaukee@gmail.com)



Bluebirds at Wehr Nature Center by Robert Slattery

**"NO BIRD SOARS TOO HIGH IF HE SOARS WITH HIS OWN WINGS."**

**- WILLIAM BLAKE**



## Find Us On Facebook



Wisconsin Metro  
Audubon Society  
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## WHO DO I CONTACT?

### MEMBERSHIP

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### WEHR BIRDERS

Colleen Resendiz | PHONE 414-379-6741  
EMAIL [Colleenresendiz@gmail.com](mailto:Colleenresendiz@gmail.com)

### ALL OTHER INQUIRIES

Colleen Resendiz | PHONE 414-379-6741  
EMAIL [Colleenresendiz@gmail.com](mailto:Colleenresendiz@gmail.com)

## IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP?

**Your renewal date is now printed on the back of the newsletter above your address.**

Renew directly through WMAS by using the form! More of your membership funds will support local activities and conservation projects. In 2024, WMAS made donations to support Wehr Nature Center; to Milwaukee County Parks to add 'bird dots' on windows at Holler Park; and the Brew City Bird Festival. Membership dues and donations also help to fund this newsletter, keep our 6 annual programs free, and maintain our website.

# BUTTERFLIES OF CATHOLIC ECOLOGY CENTER IN DODGE COUNTY

**MAY 17TH, 2025 – 10:00 AM TO NOON (RAIN DATE MAY 31)**

WI Metro Audubon Society (WMAS) will partner with the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association (SWBA-NABA chapters) <https://naba.org/chapters/swba/> for this visit to observe both butterflies and birds of the Center.

The Catholic Ecology Center is part of a 225 acre preserve including prairies, forest, the Rubicon River, Otter Creek, a pond and organic gardening areas. Donna Williams-Richter and Ethan Brown will lead us in spotting the butterflies. Some butterflies that we are likely to see include Eastern Comma, Gray Comma, Question Mark, Red Admiral, American Lady, Painted Lady, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Giant Swallowtail, Peck's Skipper, Hobomok Skipper and Mourning Cloak. Harvesters have been seen in numbers in the past, as well as colonies of Woolly Aphids, the host for this carnivorous caterpillar. Other exciting possibilities include Arctic Skipperling or one of the Tortoiseshells. Long pants and long shirt sleeves, a hat, insect repellent, binoculars and hiking shoes are recommended.

If you would like to be contacted in case of cancellation or other changes, please register your intent to attend with Donna Williams-Richter at [dowiri124@gmail.com](mailto:dowiri124@gmail.com).

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Trails are easy to travel, but rain may cause them to be muddy so proper footwear is encouraged.

**DIRECTIONS:** The Catholic Ecology Center is located at W1468 County Road NN Neosho, WI 53059. Visit their website at <https://catholicecologycenter.org> to get customized directions from your location. Estimated travel times are 1 hour from Madison and 45 minutes from downtown Milwaukee. Meet in the Ecology Center parking area.

If you have questions, contact Pat Fojut from WMAS at [ptfojut@gmail.com](mailto:ptfojut@gmail.com)



## HAWK ID WORKSHOP

**AUGUST 16, 2025  
1 - 2:30 PM  
WEHR NATURE CENTER**

**NOTE:** Registration will be required for this program- watch our website and Facebook in June for information.

Join WMAS for this much-anticipated workshop by Steve Holzman about birds of prey, with a particular focus on hawks of Wisconsin. Gain skills in recognizing these birds in flight in preparation for fall migration! If weather permits, we will go outdoors for practicing our ID skills, so dress appropriately.

Steve currently serves as the Vice President of the Board of Directors at the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. He enjoyed a 30 year career in natural resources, working first for the US Forest Service and then the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

For the past ten years, he and his wife Rachel have volunteered for a week each fall at the Cedar Grove Ornithological Research Station in Sheboygan County. The research station counts every raptor migrating south from mid-August to mid-November.







## : Bird Brief :

### ***Tree Swallow* (*Tachycineta bicolor*)**

Text, photos and art by  
Heidi Meier  
March 25, 2025

**ORDER:** Passeriformes (142 Families)

**FAMILY:** Hirundiniae (92 Species)

A little over a week ago in mid-March, a “Blood Moon” was visible during the early morning hours as the Earth passed in front of the full Worm Moon in a lunar eclipse. Now, the sun is continuing to angle north and the days are getting longer. Spring is underway! American Robins are foraging for worms, Mallards and Canadian Geese are pair bonding, Red-winged Blackbird males have claimed their desired breeding locations, and early Tree Swallow males are back to claim *their* best nesting location for the breeding season. In fact, a few days ago I spotted a male Tree Swallow on top of a nest box at Lakeshore State Park. It was a cloudy, cold, windy day, but he was determined to pick the best box. Today, not only did I see midges, but I saw a male Tree Swallow chirping while flying over the pond at Veteran’s Park. Tree Swallows are one of the first song birds to migrate to breeding grounds in the spring. This can be stressful for the swallow because food is scarce and the weather can be cold, windy, and even snowy. However, males must compete for and claim an optimal breeding site before the females arrive to begin nesting. Tree Swallows are almost always on the wing, so seeing midges today was a good sign that food is becoming plentiful enough to help replenish nutritional losses from their early migration to this region. I have seen Tree Swallows bathe on the wing and even drink on the wing. I find that swallows, in general, are very graceful drinkers; leaving behind minimal ripples or drops on the water surface, compared to swifts or other small birds.

Tree Swallows have some unique characteristics compared to other songbirds. They have slender bodies with pointed wings which allow for endurance and efficiency for staying on the wing for long periods of time. They fly in circular to oval patterns and reverse direction with ease. This acrobatic flight makes it easy to catch small insects. Tree Swallows have a short bill with a wide gape. They are able to open their mouth wide and quickly close their strong jaws once they catch an aerial insect. During the winter months, Tree Swallows often feed on berries and they are among only a few bird species that can digest the wax found on certain berries like bayberries, which are found in southern states.

Common habitats for Tree Swallows include forest edges, open fields, and fresh water which are areas plentiful with the insects on which they prefer to feast. During migration, large roosting flocks form as they move south, frequenting sugarcane fields in Louisiana as they make their way down to Central America. The huge flocks will perform flights that look like tornados prior to roosting.



In March, the iridescent, glossy, blue males arrive back to choose nesting sites in northern climates. Tree Swallows prefer nest sites that face east or south during the first half of the breeding season and then base their choice on availability later in the breeding season if they plan an additional brood. Once the brownish females arrive, pairs become established through mating rituals. Tree Swallows form monogamous pairs. Females typically make a cup-shaped nest in nest boxes or empty tree cavities by using dried grasses. Then,

***here is my favorite behavior Tree Swallows perform!***

Once the very small white eggs have been laid, the pair will find curved, typically white or pale, feathers that the female will place under the eggs. These selected feathers have been shown to curl around the eggs acting as camouflage from predators, acting as insulation, and acting to repel moisture. Scientists once believed the feathers prevented parasites, but this has been disproven. Studies have proven, though, that feather lined nests lead to more successful offspring that fledge earlier compared to those from non-lined nests.

There is one more behavior I have noticed with Tree Swallows. From time to time, I will see a male pick up a curved white feather, drop it from flight, catch it again, and repeat. There are times I have seen a group of males trying to catch the falling feather. This behavior is not entirely understood. However, scientists have hypothesized they are building agility, competing for territory, teaching young, or just “playing.” However, I have wondered if the males might be dropping the feather in an attempt to rid it of parasites before putting it in the nest. At any rate, this “feather playing” is really great fun to watch!

**References:**

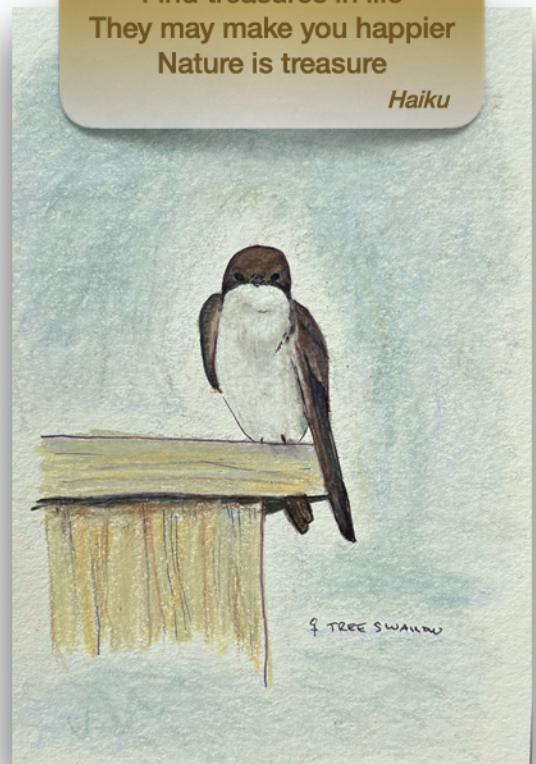
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Top view of an empty  
Tree Swallow nest

Find treasures in life  
They may make you happier  
Nature is treasure

*Haiku*





# BIRD FESTIVALS IN WISCONSIN 2025

The following festival list is from Cornell University's All About Birds website. For more festivals all over the country (and world), see <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/birding-festivals/>

## **May 9 – 10 Northwoods Birding Festival, Manitowish Waters, WI**

Explore the wildlife and natural beauty of the Wisconsin Northwoods with a variety of guided hikes and tours, bird watching expeditions, live bird-of-prey presentations, bird-banding demonstrations, and interactive workshops.

## **May 9 – 11 Horicon Marsh Bird Festival, Horicon, WI**

Highlights of this year's Bird Festival NEW trips to Old Marsh Road, night sounds, boating and birding, live birds of prey, smaller more intimate guided tours, and so much more! Registration required.

## **May 9 – 18 Brew City Birding Festival, Milwaukee, WI**

The Brew City Birding Festival is a week of nature-filled exploration and discovery! Enjoy experiences all over the city, from guided outings to engaging talks and interactive activities for all ages, including the WMAS Bird Friendly Coffee presentation at Wehr Nature Center. Find a list of events at <https://www.visitmilwaukee.org/things-to-do/nature-outdoors/bird-city/brew-city-birding-festival/>



## **May 16 Washington Island Birding Festival, Washington Island, WI**

Lake Michigan is a flyway with thousands of migrating birds passing through this time of year. Washington Island provides an essential stopover for thousands of migrating birds. The variety and rarity of these birds is a significant draw for the birding community.

## **May 22 – 24 Chequamegon Bay Birding and Nature Festival, Ashland, WI**

This year's event will feature dozens of field trips, indoor programs, workshops, keynote speaker, and a dinner. Expect great birds, beautiful destinations, and expert trip leaders.

*And this last one isn't in Wisconsin – but if you want to travel a bit, this is a nice festival...*

## **May 15 – 18 Indiana Dunes Birding Festival, Porter, IN**

The Indiana Dunes Birding Festival celebrates the natural diversity and exceptional birding in this area. With rich diverse habitats, and miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, the area is a prime hotspot for migrating birds. Registration required.



# WEHR BIRDERS



Wehr Birders meets every Sunday at the Wehr Nature Center (9701 W College Ave).

Walks begin at 8:00 March through October, and 9:00 November through February.

Our walk varies based on time of year. In early spring we focus on the lake, but as migration picks up and warblers begin to pass through, we will add the prairie and College Ave woods to the walk. We typically walk 1.5 – 2 miles using the boardwalks and wood chip or grass trails. Walks are shorter in the winter, an hour or a bit more; but in migration we typically walk 1.5 – 2.5 hours. Last May we usually had species counts in the 40's! Stay as long as you like. All experience levels are welcome. We usually have an extra pair or 2 of binoculars so if you are new, feel free to join us and borrow ours. Walks are free; Wehr Nature Center charges \$5 for parking (Friends of Wehr park free).



Birder photos by Colleen Resendiz





REVIEWED BY ROBIN LANGENBACH

**"BIRDING TO CHANGE THE WORLD"**  
A Memoir by Trish O'Kane



This book tells the story of how birds can inspire you and others to view nature and the world around you through a different lens. The author's journey started in New Orleans, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. Her house had been destroyed, and she was surrounded by devastation. But she was able to cope only because of the birds. Birds began to fill her life, and she even dreamed of them.

However, the emotional overload in New Orleans became too much to bear. When presented with the opportunity to pursue a PhD at UW-Madison, O'Kane decided to make the move. At her new home, she encountered a mewing Gray Catbird. Having never seen one, she had to learn more. She enrolled in an ornithology class, where she became obsessed. The class took her all over Madison during a once-a-week bird identification lab. She started doing her birding homework in Warner Park, across the street from her house. When watching a Northern Cardinal in the winter snow, she thought about what it is to sing or to do anything with your whole heart and soul. She took her cue from that Cardinal. She wanted to live her life with the full focus and joy it demonstrated.

Her once-a-week assignment turned into several hours a day, and all day on weekends in Warner Park. The park consisted of several habitats including meadows, wetlands, thickets, woods and a marsh island. Perfect for birding! Just as she recaptured her joy, she learned of the city's plan to build a paved sidewalk through the meadow. A neighbor suspected it was just the beginning of more "improvements". Her neighbor was right. The park was about to get a radical make over including parking lots, apartments, a pontoon pond, and removing a large stand of trees. This was turning point for her. She and her husband decided to fight for the park. They had never been involved in any environmental action, but again, O'Kane drew inspiration from the birds by watching how they defended their territory.

She observed that the first thing birds do when they move into a new area is gather information. She began by talking to people in the neighborhood as well as the kids and people she had met in the park. All of them had one thing in common. They loved the park and were upset about the possibility of it being paved over. This resulted in her forming "Wild Warner", a group dedicated to exploring the park and using their observations to influence the city planners to rethink their plans. She then formed "Bird Buddies", a children's group who were instrumental in saving the park's geese from being culled. Wild Warner also worked

to eliminate firework shows in the park, which had created a toxic mess in the marsh, and finally, they saved the park from the bulldozers. All of this was accomplished with the enthusiasm and diligence of her "mighty flock".

There's so much more to say about this book. It puts you in touch with the lives of Great Horned Owls, Gray Catbirds, American Woodcocks and Sandhill Cranes to name a few. Most of all, it puts you in touch with your soul.

## Bird Surveys – Citizen Science at work!

by Colleen Resendiz



Townsend's Solitaire by John Kaspar

WMAS is honored to partner with Milwaukee County Parks Natural Areas staff to assist in conducting bird surveys at county natural areas and parks. Last year, volunteers using a weekly list we post on Facebook contributed almost **575** hours doing surveys at a number of land areas! In addition to the excitement of finding a new birding spot, some surprising birds have turned up – a brown thrasher along the freeway at Alcott Park, a pileated woodpecker at the Little Menomonee River Pkwy, and recently a Townsend's Solitaire at Dineen Park.

Milwaukee County tracks every parkland and reviews eBird to see if there are surveys for each week. Each year they identify priority parks, week by week. A park could be a priority because there are no surveys done for that week; or because there are surveys but they think there may be more species there than previously identified.

Based on the spreadsheet they create and share with WMAS, we curate suggested locations based on accessibility to the property (some of the locations are difficult to access) and then post the weekly list on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/AudubonWMAS/>.

Join the fun and make a meaningful contribution to your local parks!



Wisconsin Metro Audubon  
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WMAS thanks M&M Printing and  
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## MEMBERSHIP OR GIFT FORM

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