

THE TRUMPETER: WISCONSIN METRO AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

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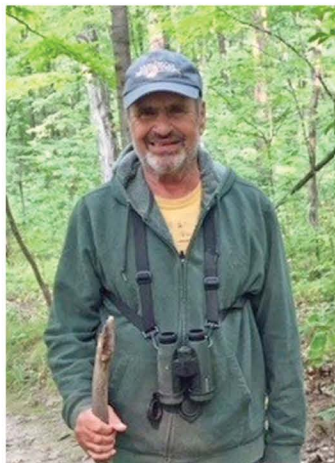
Upcoming Wisconsin Metro Audubon Programs

Wisconsin Metro Audubon presents in-person programs at Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Avenue. Join us at 7 pm. Zoom program available with registration. Send an email to wimetrobird@gmail.com

September 16, 2026	Bird Migration Trends in Southern Wisconsin	Rick Fare
October 21, 2026	The Dawn of an Osprey Population	William E. Stout
November 18, 2026	Specialty Banding of Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds	Mickey O'Connor

FALL PROGRAMS

September 16, 2026 - Bird Migration trends in Southern Wisconsin *Presented by Rick Fare*



Follow the fall bird migration through Wisconsin with Rick Fare, who will share the history of seasonal bird movement and offer practical ways to make the most of this remarkable annual event. He will explain the different types of migration, how birds prepare for their journeys, and the cues they use to navigate. The presentation will also cover ways to track

migration flights and explore how climate change is affecting bird movement.

Rick has been a birder for more than 40 years and has held many roles helping others discover the enjoyment of birding. He is a past president and current Education Chair of the Hoy Audubon Society in Racine. His honors include the Bronze Passenger

Pigeon Award from the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, recognizing outstanding contributions to the field of ornithology, and the Merit Award from the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin for his work supporting the study and propagation of bluebirds.

October 21, 2026 - The Dawn of an Osprey Population in Southeast Wisconsin: A Success Story *Presented by William E. Stout, Bird Bander*

Bill has studied raptors in the Milwaukee area as a longtime birder and bird bander since the 1980s.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

In the late 1990s, Bill launched an Osprey release project at Big Muskego Lake. From 1998 to 2003, he and his team released 36 Osprey nestlings. The lake's first breeding pair appeared in 2004; today, Big Muskego Lake supports three breeding pairs, with several more nesting pairs nearby, including two in Milwaukee County.

In 2002, Bill placed satellite transmitters on two Osprey nestlings to study their migration routes, natal dispersal distances, lifespan, and other population



Osprey with GPS transmitter

metrics. One of the fledglings transmitted migration data throughout its life. It survived 5 years and 5 months and successfully raised three young over three years (see Stout et al. 2008).

Since 2004, Ospreys have thrived in southeast Wisconsin. In 2024, Bill began fitting Osprey nestlings at Big Muskego Lake with GPS transmitters to expand understanding of their migration routes and, ideally, follow their movements throughout their lives. Bill fitted three Osprey nestlings with GPS transmitters in 2024 and three more in 2026.

Attend this presentation to learn more about these fascinating birds and what 28-plus years of research reveal about how they have adapted to urban environments.

IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP?

Your renewal date is printed above your address.

Renew directly through WMAS by using the form. 100% of chapter supporter memberships and donations are used to support our newsletter, local activities and conservation projects. Over the past year we have funded an Osprey transmitter, local land conservancies and the Merlin Bird ID project to make birding more accessible.

November 18, 2026 -

Specialty Banding of Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds in Wisconsin and Central America

Presented by Mickey O'Connor

This presentation explores the fascinating world of bird banding and why hummingbirds are a specialty. Learn about the natural history of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, how and why these tiny birds are banded, and how you can attract them to your yard.



Discover the valuable information revealed through banding data, including what we can learn about hummingbird movements, longevity, and populations. We'll also explore the hummingbird species found in Wisconsin, with a special focus on our occasional "winter" visitors, including the Rufous Hummingbird and Anna's Hummingbird.

Mickey O'Conner, former Milwaukee County Zoo Aviary Zookeeper and bird bander, specializes in hummingbirds. In 2025 she was recognized by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology with the Noel J. Cutright Special Recognition Award. An exceptional avian zookeeper, she welcomed many Milwaukee County Zoo volunteers and helped make the Aviary a special place to visit. She has traveled to Central America, the Galápagos Islands, and Madagascar to introduce others to international bird travel.

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BIG MUSKEGO LAKE OSPREY BANDING WITH BILL STOUT AND THE CITY OF MUSKEGO CONSERVATION

By Pat Fojut, Photos by David Stokes

On July 6 and July 9, 2026, Bill Stout and a group of dedicated birders gathered in johnboats on Big Muskego Lake to band fledgling Ospreys and fit two of them with GPS transmitters. Once fitted with the transmitter, Matt Smith, conservation coordinator for the City of Muskego, will be able to track the Ospreys on their first flights and migrations for years to come as they connect to MOTUS GPS stations along the way.



Ospreys have thrived in the area since 2004, but more needs to be learned.

I joined the group on July 9 for a trip across Big Muskego Lake, traveling from the Boxhorn boat landing to the Big Muskego Lake Wildlife Area, where an Osprey platform held three chicks about two weeks away from their first flight. The lake is very shallow—only 3 to 5 feet deep—with emergent aquatic plants such as pickerelweed, white and yellow water lilies, and large stands of cattails. Our boat driver and long-time lake resident, Greg, explained that the special shallow-water boats are powered by a Louisiana-built motor called a “Go-Devil,” with an 8-foot extension that keeps the propeller near the surface so it can glide through vegetation. Although it was not as fast as modern motors, we enjoyed seeing White Pelicans,

terns, and a Great Blue Heron. While observers watched from the boats, Bill Stout and his support team built a plywood path to the tower which would hold a ladder. Bill climbed the ladder to check the three fledglings. Two had already been banded a few days prior, on July 6. The banded birds were about 40 days old, as was the third chick. After carefully placing the third chick in a duffel bag, Bill carried it down to the boats to take measurements, keep it calm, and attach a GPS transmitter to its back so the attached solar panel would receive plenty of sunlight. The process took about an hour in warm weather, and the team brought a large umbrella to shade the bird.

After taking photos with WMAS members, Bill returned the bird to the tower. We packed up the equipment and headed back to the boat launch, a 30-minute trip across the lake. WMAS and Tom Zagar each sponsored a GPS transmitter, and these two Ospreys (plus a 3rd from a separate trip) are trackable on the City of Muskego website – we saw Greg and Frank receive transmitters; Amy was fitted on a separate trip:



Bill Stout, bird bander & Bill Holton, WMAS

https://www.muskego.wi.gov/departments/lakes_forestry_conservation/bird_city_imbd/muskego_ospreys.php

For more details about the Osprey Project, read Paul Smith's article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on JSOnline.com, published July 26, 2026.

BIG SIT AT WEHR NATURE CENTER FOR FALL BIRD MIGRATION

October 10, 7 - 11 a.m. (Rain Date: October 11)

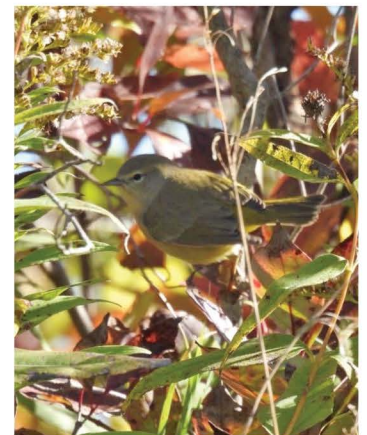
Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society is participating in Migratory Big Day with a Big Sit at Wehr Nature Center. Migratory birds move through our area as they return to wintering areas. The Big Sit coincides with World Migratory Bird Day. More information about Big Sits is available at <https://www.thebigsit.org/>

Please stop by and join us! Come any time between 7 - 11 and stay as long as you'd like. 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 identify as many bird species as possible from 7 AM to 11 AM. We will only count birds that are heard or seen from the boardwalk platform during these hours. We will share an ongoing list of the birds observed.

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 have binoculars to let visitors try their hand at birding.

Anyone interested in participating is welcome, there is no requirement to register ahead of time - but if you'd like updates about the event please sign up using this form: <https://forms.gle/Xn2UMhKtRb4EFnLD6> or contact Pat at ptfojut@gmail.com.



: Bird Brief :

Blackpoll Warbler (*Setophaga striata*)

ORDER: Passeriformes (144 Families)

FAMILY: Parulidae (116 Species)

There is a migrating songbird that is extraordinary in many ways! It weighs 12 grams, which is similar to a AAA battery, and has a black cap and white cheeks like a Black-capped Chickadee. Also, this bird has two white wing-bars and orange legs. In the spring, the plumage is more yellowish-olive and striped on the top, much like a Pine Warbler. This bird has a very high-frequency chirp or “tsit”, often inaudible to many people, and sounds like a tiny helicopter approaching and flying away. The diet is mostly insects foraged on bark, twigs, and leaves. During the winter migration, when insects are not as plentiful, this bird will consume nectar and fruits. This bird breeds in the north-central and northeastern United States to as far north and west as Noom, Alaska. The female makes a cup-style nest each year near her previous season’s nest and lines it with grasses, twigs, bark, and feathers. She selects a location for the nest in a tree or shrub or even on the ground. The breeding pair has around three to five eggs and may have a second brood. The nestlings hatch within 12 days and most fledge within two weeks, although some may stay with the parents for several weeks. Both parents incubate and feed the nestlings. Wintering habitats are in the northern Amazon in South America. This is very similar to other songbirds in the **Parulidae Family** or wood-warblers. Have you guessed this bird? It is a **Blackpoll Warbler**.

The Blackpoll Warbler is a **champion long-distance traveling songbird**. This warbler has the longest round-trip of any songbird. The spring migration can take a little over a month to go from the northern Amazon to the breeding grounds of the boreal forest. Blackpolls use several stopover sites in the southeastern United States and Great Lakes. Some Blackpolls choose more northeasterly breeding grounds such as Churchill, Manitoba, while others will migrate in a northwesterly direction toward Noom, Alaska. For warblers breeding in western Alaska, the total round-trip travel distance is approximately 13,400 miles or 1,118 miles per gram of body weight. During the fall migration back to the wintering habitat, Blackpolls from Noom will begin flying 2 weeks earlier than those coming from Churchill. Blackpolls from both locations will arrive around the same time to the eastern coast, like Nova Scotia, to begin the transatlantic flight. Yes, the final part of the migration is completely over the Atlantic Ocean and **non-stop**! The distance from Nova Scotia to the South American Amazon is around 2,500 miles and can take over **80 hours** traveling nearly 30 miles per hour. This is equivalent to a human completing **77 marathons**! The fall migration takes a little over 60 days to complete, which is slightly more than double the time for the spring migration.

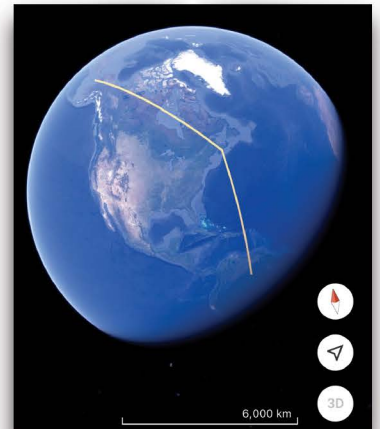
How can a 12-gram songbird navigate a transatlantic flight?

How much energy is needed for this flight?

Blackpoll Warblers, like other migrating birds, rely on navigation factors such as the stars, moon, sun, magnetic field, and wind direction, to name a few. Blackpolls have longer wing chords, which allows the bird to flap its wings more efficiently during long flights. The wing chord is a measurement from wing bend to the tip of the longest primary feather. What is really required for a long flight is the ability to have **continuous energy**. This warbler has been shown to double its body weight in fat, which is the fuel for flight. Long-distance migrating birds are able to more efficiently store, mobilize, and convert fats for energy. Specialized proteins can carry mobilized stored fats into the bloodstream. Specialized enzymes



Text, photos and art by
Heidi Meier
August 15, 2026



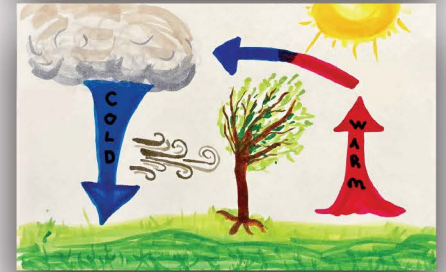
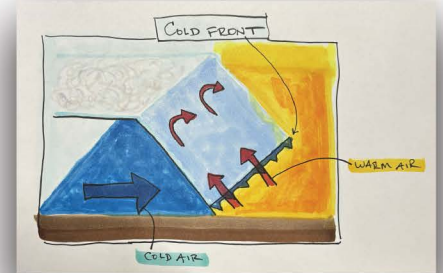
6,648 miles

Noom to Nova Scotia: 3,280 mi
Nova Scotia to Amazon: 2,800 mi

then transport fats into muscle tissue, where the mitochondria oxidize the fats into fuel. If the Blackpolls were burning gasoline for the long-distance, non-stop flight, scientists state this would be equivalent to getting **720,000 miles per gallon!** Wouldn't it be something if we could make and use fat as efficiently in our daily lives instead of relying on fossil fuels, natural gas, and nuclear energy?

Why does this bird fly over the ocean only on the southerly migration?

The main reason for the transatlantic autumn migration is weather. There are stronger southward directional tailwinds from cold fronts. When combined with the Earth's natural rotation, this leads to westerly winds, which is optimal for flight away from land and over the ocean. Researchers have discovered that Blackpolls take flight from the North American coast and fly towards South Africa at altitudes of around 6,500 feet. Flight altitudes change when strong cold air meets warm air. This causes lighter warm air to rise above the cold air, which provides greater uplift. Near Bermuda, the tailwinds become slower with diminished cold air, which causes the Blackpolls to drop to around 5,000 feet and change direction towards Bermuda. Then the flight and altitude change again near Antigua, where they begin to fly southwest toward South America into colder air and reach nearly 21,000 feet. The temperature at this altitude is around 32°F, and the air is 50% less oxygenated than on land. However, the wind conditions soon become favorable for the final descent to the South American coast and Amazon. Blackpolls can fly at high altitudes because of their unique physiological ability to extract oxygen using a counterflow system. This allows the air and blood to exchange oxygen efficiently in the lungs, which is crucial for long-distance flight.



Blackpoll Warblers are Olympic long-distance athletes. **What a bird!**

One more question - **Do Blackpolls sleep in flight?** Scientists have been attempting to learn the answer to this question. However, sleep studies in this small bird are challenging. Do they use half their brain to sleep while the other half stays alert? Inquiring minds would love to know!

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THE GREATEST FEAT A BIRDER CAN DO

Art, Photography, and Text by Holden Van Dyke

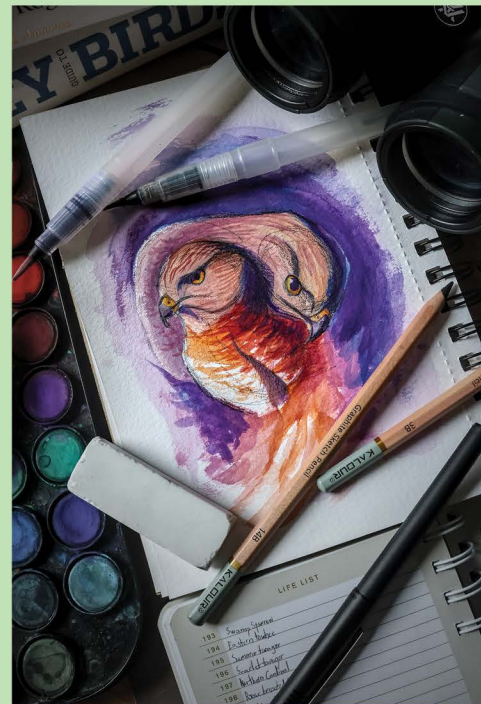
Last time I wrote an article here, I discussed why we like birds as a collective species. And hopefully I answered my own question. However, nearly right after finishing that article, I discovered another reason I love birding that I had completely missed. We often associate the most thrilling parts of birding to be finding a new lifer, seeing a rare bird venture into your yard, or ranking high on the lister leaderboards. But I believe that there is one moment that has the potential to be the most fulfilling part of birding. Yet, we might overlook it entirely. One that completely changed my ideas and beliefs as a person.

This past winter, my family and I visited Disney World for the first time. Unable to bring my camera equipment, I only brought my trusty binoculars along. Yet to my surprise, the trip went extraordinarily well! If you know where to look, you can have some great results at Disney! (Now take this from a guy who has never left the Midwest) However, my favorite birds I saw on the trip were not the freakishly large grackles, variegated herons, or prehistoric Wood Storks. Situated on a bridge right next to the infamous castle is where they would spend most of their day. A pair of ghostly pale-headed Red-shouldered Hawks. Believe me when I say that this was the only attraction I ever needed. My family mostly left me alone to attend to these amazing hawks' world where I could view them from often ten feet away! As I watched the birds through my bins (which quite frankly I did not need), it brought free advertisement to those around me. Many curious faces stopped and asked what I was looking at. Most of the people I met had never even seen a hawk, let alone one at such a close distance. They were transfixed on what seemed to be an elusive animal of the woods preening in a tree nearly within arm's length! And for every person I met who stood in awe of this bird, I handed them my binoculars without hesitation. Watching people first feel honored to hold a delicate tool, then fumble trying to find and focus on the bird. But the smile they created when they saw the hawk look back at them through the bins is one of the greatest feelings of giddy that I have felt in my life. I believe this gives people a sense of awareness when seeing a wild creature acknowledge your presence. I made many smiling faces that day, easily making it the highlight of my trip. Dare I say of my life.

I think we all agree that birds have shaped our lives for the better and have opened our eyes to the natural world around us. So why not do the same for others? Long before where I am today, I was very reclusive and rarely tried to start an interaction with someone (unless forced to). But now as I've grown over time, I realize that you might not please everyone, but you can certainly try to please anyone. Since my vacation, I've tried to make a conscious effort to introduce someone

to birds when they ask "What are you looking at?" You could just very well inspire someone to view the natural world differently. Now of course, I'm not trying to grow a mass birding cult - all I want is for more people to appreciate what nature offers them in this rather dreary world. Think of all the ways that birding shaped you and let you experience fantastic moments. I'm sure there are plenty of others who would like those things too. They just need someone to help them find it.

Not every interaction might have the best chances, but if you manage to somehow spark someone into a new passion, I believe that is one of the greatest feats of any birder. Even if you manage to make someone at least interested, you did something truly extraordinary. Who knows to this day if I actually sparked any new birders while in Florida, but in the back of my mind I think I at least did something. And that has made all the difference.



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

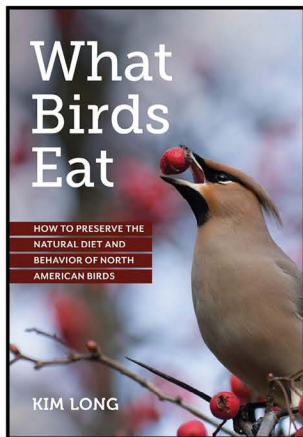


REVIEWED BY ROBIN LANGENBACH

"WHAT BIRDS EAT"

How To Preserve the Natural Diet and Behavior of North American Birds

By Kim Long



This is a most fascinating book! It presents the whole story, not only of birds' diets, but also of how they eat, how they find food, and how their bodies process food, from their beak to their feet, from their esophagus to their cloaca. The first chapter answers the question of how birds evolved. Contrary to popular belief, birds are not descended from pterodactyls. However, they are the descendants of creatures that survived the catastrophic

event in which all other dinosaurs became extinct. For comparison, the book features an evolutionary timeline of when birds appeared versus other prehistoric creatures.

Before discussing what birds eat, the author explains how their anatomy is structured to aid in the consumption and digestion of food. Can you imagine preparing your food for consumption without the aid of hands and fingers? The author explains how their anatomy compensates for the lack of these appendages. When describing the external anatomy, he identifies the tongue as a bird's most essential eating tool. It's used to probe for insects or nectar, to manipulate prey, to grab vegetation and, in the case of vultures, remove tissue from carcasses. Birds' ears are another fascinating feature. Sound is channeled to the ears with the aid of feathers, plus, birds can recover from hearing loss by regenerating cilia in the middle ear. When it comes to sight, the book describes the degree to which a bird can move its eyes. For example, an owl can only move its eyes 3 degrees while a goldfinch can move its eyes 66 degrees. Even the frequency at which motion is perceived by different species of birds is a consideration in a bird's diet. What remarkable creatures!

For the most part, we're familiar with what birds eat. The majority of birds include insects in their diet, but diets change along with the seasons. For example, a hummingbird's diet consists of insects and nectar. During nesting season, their consumption of insects increases to provide the chicks with a diet of protein and minerals. When migration approaches, their nectar consumption

increases because of the fat reserves and energy required to make the journey.

Another interesting fact is that birds have the ability to select food based on the nutritional value it provides. How are they able to determine this? The book provides information about this capability, along with details about feeding behavior and food preferences. The material is supported by numerous illustrations, photos, charts and diagrams, as well as the diet profiles of over 100 species of birds.

This is only a sample of the information we can learn from this book. With the specialized features and adaptations required to support such a diversity of diets, in different habitats, in different stages of life, and in different seasons of the year, they have evolved to survive in almost every ecosystem.

Particularly helpful, especially for birders, is that having knowledge about what birds eat, when they eat, and where food is most abundant in their preferred habitats, the search for birds becomes much easier. For those who love birds, the book enriches our understanding what they need as they face the ever-increasing challenges in a changing world.



WEHR BIRDERS



Wehr Birders meets: Sundays at 8:00 am through October at the Wehr Nature Center in Franklin

November through February, we switch to 9:00 am.

NOTE: We will not meet if there is excessive snow (or rain) or if temperatures fall below 0 with the wind chill. Otherwise, use your judgment. We typically walk 1 – 1.5 miles although if bird activity is good, we may go further! Open to birders of all experience levels. Most walks are 90 minutes – 2 hours, feel free to come and go as you need to!

WHO DO I CONTACT?

MEMBERSHIP

Diane Lembck | PHONE 414-425-9616
EMAIL lembck6492@wi.rr.com

PROGRAMS

Pat Fojut | PHONE 414-839-0987
EMAIL ptfojut@gmail.com

WEHR BIRDERS

Colleen Resendiz | PHONE 414-379-6741
EMAIL Colleenresendiz@gmail.com

ALL OTHER INQUIRIES

Colleen Resendiz | PHONE 414-379-6741
EMAIL Colleenresendiz@gmail.com

Wisconsin Metro Audubon
Society
6492 S. 121st St
Franklin, WI 53132

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