



Meet a Member!

What started out as a casual pastime eyeing warblers out of her kitchen window in the late 1990s, has developed into a passion for Hoy member Sharon Kennedy.

When I realized I was seeing warblers in our yard," Sharon said, "Dick Keyel, a longtime Hoy member, assured me that I wasn't just imagining them, and told me how lucky we were that when the warblers pass through here in May, our trees have only just begun to leaf out so that we can actually see the birds." Sharon

devised her own ingenious technique of warbler identification - saying the same key words over and over again, which she willingly presented at one of the Hoy meetings with her program entitled, "Learning Birds with Words."

"I'd find a warbler Keith could photograph, let's say a Nashville, and I'd tell him that he was looking for the one with a yellow throat, gray head, white eye ring" she explained. Sharon continued applying her clue-based descriptions to other warblers and feels her system has proven invaluable.



Sharon Kennedy, birding at Wind Point

"When you're in your fifties and trying to learn warblers, you need any learning tool you can find," she added, with a humorous lilt in her voice.

In 2006, she perfected her skill as she joined in the May warbler walks at Colonial Park with other Hoy Audubon members. "It's fun being with other people who share the thrill of seeing spring migrants, whether for the first time—or the hundredth!"

Sharon's yard list has 120 birds to-date; her Wisconsin list, 237. She's even broken her yard list down to specifics. "I've seen 28 of the Eastern warblers in our yard. The two most common are the American Redstart and my all-time favorite, the incredibly beautiful Magnolia." She's anxiously awaiting the arrival of one that's managed to evade her thus far—the Connecticut warbler.

Sharon uses Sibley's Field guide to Eastern Birds and she enjoys logging her yard sightings onto *eBird*, which she sees as a thorough and efficient way to track both the spring and fall migrations. "I like to think that I've put this little patch of land on the ornithological map!"

For new bird watchers, Sharon recommends spending time watching birds close to home with people who are at your birding level, as well as going on Hoy bird walks and field trips. "You'll see a lot of birds and, because you'll be with good birders, you'll be confident in their identification."

With dedication and persistence to her art, Sharon is almost guaranteed to spy that evasive Connecticut warbler during the upcoming 2012 spring migration!

-Linda Fare Hirsch

Do you know your neighbors?

Test your knowledge of your mammal neighbors:

- Which species of fox has moved into the city? Which species lives in wooded habitat and climbs trees?
- Where could you find a river otter in Kenosha County?
- What mammal is the most common prey base (i.e., food of choice) for raptors?
- Name the only poisonous mammal in North America.
- If you have holes dug in your lawn, do you have a skunk problem?

(Answers at the end of the article)

Beth Goepfinger, Wisconsin DNR Naturalist at Bong State Recreation Area for 19 years, shared her wealth of knowledge of **The Mammals of Southeastern Wisconsin** at Hoy's monthly meeting, November 3, at the Kenosha Northside Library.

Beth touched on thirty of Southeast Wisconsin's mammals in field guide order, from the opossum (North America's only marsupial) to the white-tailed deer. Some of these neighbors are so numerous they can be pests: grey squirrels, for example, raid our bird feeders and eat bird eggs out of nests in the spring. Others are less common, rare, or perhaps just rarely seen. A few fox squirrels still live in southeastern Wisconsin, left over from the days of the savannas. The red squirrel is rare in our area, but can be found in some pine forests. The nocturnal southern flying squirrel is fairly common but rarely seen. Take a walk in the woods at night, Beth said, and the chittering you mistake for birds may well be flying squirrels.

A collection of mammal skins to identify and skulls to examine rounded out the presentation.

Answers to the questions above:

Red fox. Grey fox.

Bong, the Fox River, the DesPlaines River

Vole

Shrew

No, Beth says, you have a grub problem, and the skunks are helping you out by digging up and eating the grubs. —

—Barb Vass



Red Phalarope-Wind Point-Photo by Sharon Kennedy

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Email addresses of Board members are available at: www.hoyaudubon.org

Next Board of Directors Meeting:

Tuesday, January 3, 7:00 PM. Location TBA-contact a board member for details. All interested members are welcome. Come and find out what your club is doing!

Monthly Program Coordinator*
Dana Garrigan 262-652-1737

Field Trip Coordinators*
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* If you have suggestions regarding future programs or field trips please contact the coordinators directly.

Newsletter Editors
Jennifer Wenzel
Sharon Kennedy
Eric Howe

Ideas for the newsletter? We welcome your suggestions, recaps of birding seminars/activities, fun facts and birding tidbits for use in future newsletters. Please mail to the attention of Linda Hirsch at: Hoy Audubon, P.O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404 or email to: hoynewsletter@hoyaudubon.org
The Hoy Honker is the newsletter of the Hoy Audubon Society, Inc. PO Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404.

Grosbeaks Galore Workshop

On Saturday, October 8th, about one hundred birders and naturalists gathered at the Forest Beach Migratory Preserve, formerly Squires Country Club, in Belgium, Wisconsin (Ozaukee County) for the “Grosbeaks Galore!” workshop.

Dr. Douglas W. Tallamy, Professor of Entomology & Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, was the keynote speaker. He is the author of “Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants.” His main message was that we need to use a wide variety of native plants in our yards which will provide food for many species of insects. Insects will in turn be food for our birds. When non-native decorative species of plants are planted, the insects have less to eat, their numbers decrease, and birds and other animals that depend on insects cannot thrive. Manicured lawns and roads do not provide the native plants and insects that birds need. There are 128,000,000 homes and 4 million miles of roads in the United States!

Kim Grveles, of the Wisconsin Stopover Initiative, spoke about “Stopover Ecology: Providing an Oasis for Birds”. Threats to migratory bird stopovers include habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, water quality degradation, and towers and buildings.

Vicki Piaskowski, Birds Without Borders, spoke about bird species that will benefit from your native plantings. Some of the suggested plants were elderberry, dogwood (turkeys eat), thimbleberry, and serviceberry. Cone flowers attract insects for birds. She suggested using a no-mow grass.

After lunch, people visited booths with information about birds, wildlife, plants that attract birds, and threats to birds: invasive plants, window collisions, and domestic pets. Outside, Johnson Nursery displayed native plants that would attract birds. There was also a water fountain display in the lower level of the building.

For the first breakout session, some of us joined the “Habitat and Birds at Forest Beach Migratory Preserve” walk with Joel Trick of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We hiked through vegetation that now grows where the golf cart path used to be. On our walk we spotted a Northern Harrier, a Kestrel, an American Robin, a White-Crowned Sparrow, and heard a Mourning Dove and Killdeer.

“Orioles to Ocelots: the other homes for our birds” was presented by Craig Thompson of the Wisconsin DNR. More than half of the 238 species of birds that breed in Wisconsin winter south of the U.S. border (in Costa Rica and Peru, for example). Deforestation and development in these Latin American areas is threatening our Wisconsin birds’ winter habitat, and thus threatening their long term survival. Craig is working with the DNR on an important project to protect these threatened habitats for our birds. More information about this project can be found at this website <http://www.wisconservation.org/index.php?page=osa-project>.



Baltimore Oriole Photo by Keith Kennedy

The second breakout session was “How to Identify and Control Invasive Species” with Kelly Kearns, of the Wisconsin DNR. She noted that there weren’t many invasive plants on the grounds of the Forest Beach Preserve since the country club had kept the grounds well-manicured, but she did find a few, such as Canada thistle, garlic mustard, and multiflora rose.

Scott Diehl, Wisconsin Humane Society, and Bill Mueller, Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, presented “Threats to Migratory Birds.” Dr. Noel Cutright wrapped up the day with his talk “Connecting Migrant Birds with the Landscape.”

For more information about the preserve, which is free and open to the public, search “Forest Beach Migratory Preserve” on-line. Also see the August 2011 issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine for more details about this preserve and other migratory stops along the Great Lakes. -Gail Coombs

Locations for our December Meeting: Meeting Locations: Note that the December meeting will be at the River Bend Nature Center, 3600 N. Green Bay Rd., Racine. Our January meeting will be at the Kenosha Northside Library, 1500 27th Ave., Kenosha. For directions check MapQuest or Google Maps.

Late Fall Bird Walks at Shoop

Hoyers who braved the wind gusts at Shoop on November 5 got to see a Red Phalarope, a shorebird that at this time of year should be in the open ocean, not Lake Michigan! Rick Fare found this rare bird a few days before our walk, and it was considerate enough to stick around for us. (See photo on page 1.)

On November 12, we started at Shoop, where there wasn't much action, and then checked out the lakefront at Olympia Brown school. That's where Kristin Wegner spotted and photographed "a sparrow with an eye-ring." We watched it for an hour as it made many short, low flights over the grassy area before dropping down – and all but disappearing - into the grass and weeds. Rick and John Dixon identified it as a young Grasshopper Sparrow. As it turns out, this was a record late sighting for this species in Wisconsin. – Sharon Kennedy



Grasshopper Sparrow-photo by Kristin Wegner

Winter Birding Program

Rick Fare and Helen Pugh presented the Winter Birding program at Kenosha's Southwest Library on October 3rd and Salem's Community Library on November 10th. The talk covered the birds' adaptations to survive Wisconsin winters, bird feeding in winter, and common birds that may be seen. The Power Point program included many beautiful photographs by Keith Kennedy, and was well received by the participants. These programs are part of the Bird City Wisconsin initiative.

Bring more Life in your Landscape

Do you want to see more birds around your home? Next spring would you like to have migrating birds stop by your yard? There's a growing movement to re-develop our urban, suburban, and rural landscapes to accommodate wildlife's needs. Now is a perfect time to start learning about improving your landscape to make a positive impact for our wildlife—read; birds, butterflies, moths, etc. Ask for the following books for Christmas, and if you already have them, gift them! "Birdscaping, Beyond the Birdfeeder" by Mariette Nowak and "Bringing Nature Home" by Dr. Doug Tallamy.

Obituary: Larry K. Larson, age 74, died at home on Wednesday, September 14th, 2011 after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson Disease. Larry was a devoted husband and father. He was a member of the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection where he served as deacon, worship assistant and lay minister. He also served as president of the Hoy Nature Club and Churchmen's Club.

Get Involved in the Christmas Bird Count!

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC), in its 112th year nationwide, has become a valuable method to monitor the winter range and numbers of bird populations throughout the decades (www.christmasbirdcount.org).

Join the Hoy Audubon Society on foot and by vehicle for part of or the whole day as we count all birds we find in various habitats in eastern Racine and Kenosha counties. New field observers will be paired with more experienced birders within designated count areas where possible. For each count, there is a \$5 fee for all field participants aged 19 and above. Paid participants will receive the "American Birds: Summary of the CBC" issue from NAS in Fall 2012. Home feeder watchers located within the count circles are also welcome to participate at no cost (email/call for instructions).

Racine CBC: Saturday, December 17. To sign up, contact Eric Howe at cbe@hoyaudubon.org or 262.594.5853. If hazardous weather exists on the 17th, the backup date is the 18th.

Kenosha CBC: Thursday, December 22. To sign up, contact Valerie Mann at naturalist@pringlenc.org or 262.857.8008. If hazardous weather exists on the 22nd, the backup date is the 23rd.

In December, you have the opportunity to register online at Audubon's website (christmasbirdcount.org). Once logged in, you will have the option to sign up for a CBC. Be sure to use the count code "WIRC" for Racine and/or "WIKC" for the Kenosha CBC.

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, December 1, 6:00 PM: Annual Holiday potluck dinner. This is our annual potluck dinner—please bring a dish to pass and some flatware, Hoy will provide beverages. River Bend Nature Center, Racine.

Saturdays, December 3rd and 10th. Lakefront Birding. Meet at 9am at Shoop Park (between 3 and 4 Mile Rd. on the lakefront). We'll look for migrating waterfowl and hike along the lakefront. Dress warm!

Saturday, December 17. Racine Christmas Bird Count. See above.

Thursday, December 22. Kenosha Christmas Bird Count. See above.

Thursday, January 5, 7:00 PM: Birding Costa Rica. Two of our Hoy Audubon members, Eric Howe and Jenny Wenzel, participated in a conservation birding trip last winter to the Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica. They will share their experiences and the important conservation value of the area. Kenosha Northside Library.

Saturday, January 7. WSO birding field trip on Lake Michigan. Start in Milwaukee at the South Shore Yacht Club at 8:00 A.M. Hoy members from Racine and Kenosha should meet at the Ryan Road Park and Ride at 7:30 AM and car pool to the event.

Saturday January 14. Field trip to the Owen Gromme Art Exhibit at the Waukesha Historical Museum (101 West Main Street, Waukesha). 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. Adults \$7, Seniors (62+ \$6). Hoy members from Racine and Kenosha should meet at the Ryan Road Park and Ride at 9:00 AM and car pool to the event. We may go birding prior to this event. Check the website for an update.

More info on activities can be found at www.hoyaudubon.org.

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 044626

RACINE, WI 53404

www.hoyaudubon.org



Birding at Hoy's first Big Sit-On the Beach at Wind Point-September 2011.

Please take the time to renew your Hoy Audubon Chapter Membership for 2011/2012. Annual renewals for Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" memberships are due on July 1 of each calendar year. Please send a check payable to Hoy Audubon Society.

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Checking a bluebird box for eggs!

Remember...you can see the Hoy Honker "In Living Color." There are two ways to see our newsletter in color: view it on the Hoy website at www.hoyaudubon.org or get on the e-mail newsletter distribution list by sending an e-mail to jenny.wenzel@hoyaudubon.org and ask to be put on the electronic mailing list.