



Conservation Updates

2009 proved to be an outstanding year for Hoy's Native Song-bird Conservation Projects! Our Eastern Bluebird and Purple Martin conservation programs showed substantial increases over last year.

Bluebirds. The Eastern Bluebird (EB) Project has DOUBLED the number of fledged birds this year vs. last year! We did add a few new trails this year and also increased the number of boxes to existing trails for a total of 207 boxes. However, this alone does not account for the 507 Bluebirds that



507 ... the total number of Blue Birds fledged via Hoy Audubon EBB Trails in 2009!

were fledged. Dr. Kent Hall, Data Collection Coordinator for the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW), wrote us that Hoy's average number of fledged birds/nest box of 2.45 "surpassed one of the key goals for bluebirding in SE WI: achieving a fledgling rate of greater than 2 bluebirds/box."

The Hoy Audubon Trail program is now recognized by BRAW as a "Trail of Honor." Moreover, several of our trails (those of Rick Fare/Jill Hoffman; Paul/Nancy Willing; and H.Pugh/J.Wenzel) surpassed the state average for nest boxes and will be recognized as "Trails of Excellence" i.e. those trails with a minimum of 10 nest boxes that produce an average of 3 fledged birds/box. Even more impressive to Kent was that our nest boxes produced more Bluebirds (507) than Tree Swallows (452). His comments are most welcome, and Hoy has much to be proud of—our efforts resulted in the fledging of 954 new songbirds!

Special thanks to all 24 of our EB trail monitors: Al & Melody Orban, Ann and Greg Shea, Bunny Bugnacki, Eleanor Smith, Jennifer Wenzel, Jill Hoffman, John Krerowicz, John Raymond, Juanita Patterson, Keith Kennedy, Mark Hjortness, Maureen Kauffmann, Joyce Anderson, Nancy and Don Jobe, Nancy and Paul Willing, Ray Palenik, Skip Hoffman, Stan Rosenstiel. A special thank you to Rick Fare who oversees the trails and coordinates the monitors.

Purple Martins. In 2008, the Purple Martin (PM) site at the Racine Water Department had 11 nests and fledged 46 PM. We installed a second house there last fall (2008) and 42% of the 'apartments' were occupied this year. The 2009 total for the Water Dept PM houses was: 18 nests with 73 fledged PM's. Al-

though we were not able to attract PM's to the 3 new houses we installed this past April, we are optimistic that we will have success at these locations next year. Our feathered "purple" friends left Racine in August on their migration to their wintering grounds in South America. By the time you read this, they may be roosting in Louisiana awaiting a northerly wind to help them across the Gulf. The now-vacant houses await their return next April.

Hoy Activity Reports—A brief recap of some of our recent events for members.

Hoy Picnic at Johnson Park: A sampling of culinary specialties and animated conversation highlighted the Hoy Audubon's annual picnic held on August 6 at Johnson Park. Twenty-plus members attended on this weather-perfect evening and enjoyed hearing of each other's summer exploits. Bluebird box volunteers updated us on their successes and we learned of upcoming events. The evening ended with some rollicking rounds of bocci ball. The wide array of delectable delights hints at a possible future Hoy cookbook!

Safari Days at the Racine Zoo: Brilliant sunshine, a light lake breeze and a striking blaze of orange and purple wildflowers served as the setting for Safari Days at the Racine Zoo on August 15. The zoo graciously featured Hoy Audubon as the exhibitor of the day. Stephanie, a Parkside student and intern at the zoo, tirelessly assisted us with setup and tear down, as well as experiencing first hand an adventurous bird walk. Her animated personality helped to steer zoo patrons of all ages to our booth.

Hoy volunteers fielded questions, distributed Audubon pamphlets, provided bird identification fun sheets, and displayed a variety of reference books. As a bonus, Rick performed his ever-popular bird card trick for the children! Keith provided talks on optics, while Helen and Rick engaged novice and seasoned birders on two bird walks. In addition, Cristina and her father, Cal, helped a young birder with our Hoy bird quiz.

Despite the fact that it wasn't the optimum time of day for bird



Hoy volunteers at the Racine Zoo Safari Days

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Programs
Stan Rosenstiel 262-694-2206

Next Board of Directors Meeting:

Oct 13, 7:00 PM, 731 S. Main Street, Racine. All members are welcome. Come and find out what your club is doing!

Additional committee members and chairs are still needed. If you can give a few hours of your time to help with some of our programs, please contact Helen Pugh.

Note: If you have suggestions regarding future field trips please contact Bob McFall at: rmcfall@wi.rr.com or 262-697-5167.

The **Hoy Honker** is the newsletter of the Hoy Audubon Society, Inc. PO Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404

Please email items or suggestions for our newsletter to Linda Fare Hirsch: lindafare-hirsch@aol.com

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

Activity Reports continued

watching, many species graced our presence including catbirds, chickadees, robins, grackles, gold and house finches, a ring-billed gull, cardinals and a group of cedar wax wings. Numerous barn swallows swept above us as they returned to their nests in a protected area on the north side of the monkey building. Some fuzzy-headed babies even peeked out as we investigated their habitats. Stephanie indicated that next year the zoo is planning an even bigger and better Safari Days so we look forward to our future participation in this excellent public relations venture.

Birding News From National Audubon: Released July 15 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a new report shows that one out of every five Americans watches birds. It also found that birdwatchers contributed \$36 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006 alone, the most recent year for which economic data are available. The five top states with the greatest birding participation rates include Montana (40 percent), Maine (39 percent), Vermont (38 percent), Minnesota (33 percent) and Iowa (33 percent). Ed. Note: Wisconsin has some catching up to do!

Horicon Trip. Field trips aren't just for school kids anymore. In fact, Bob McFall planned a fantastic Horicon trip on Saturday, August 22. Birders started out on a two-hour 15-mile pontoon boat trip provided by the Horicon Marsh Boat Tours and Bob reported, "The guide did an outstanding job and took us to places we couldn't have gotten to otherwise. The timing of the trip was perfect because now the area is almost dry." Some highlights of the trip included the spotting of a young green heron and a glimpse of the elusive Sora, a small rail that usually comes out on calm, clear nights so its unprecedented appearance was indeed a treat. Another interesting fact about the sora is that although it does not have webbed feet, it can swim quite well for short distances.

The group also enjoyed watching some busy muskrats going in and out of their 'house' just off the boardwalk on the Auto Tour Route. A highlight at the board walk was a sighting of a Least Bittern—everyone got a great look! Bob has lots of other field trips planned this year so watch your newsletters and the Hoy Audubon Society's website for more information.



Hoy birders on Horicon's Dike Road

Highlights of the Shore Bird program at River Bend Nature Center

Rick Fare and Keith Kennedy awed over 30 attendees at their Shorebird Program on September 3rd held at the River Bend Nature Center. Rick's facts on shorebird basics and identification coupled with Keith's expert photography, provided an enjoyable as well as informative presentation which was geared to both novice and experienced birders.

Audience participants were encouraged to ask questions which created a casual yet interactive exchange. We learned that four groups of shorebirds reside in North America, with plovers and sandpipers being the two most prominent in Wisconsin. In fact, there are over 30 shorebirds native to Wisconsin, and we explored many of their characteristics and habitats. Shorebirds are defined as a diverse group of wading birds that spend most of the time near water.

The woodcock is one exception which is seldom seen near water! One of the common characteristics of shorebirds is their cryptic



Willetts (pictured above) are one of the many shorebirds that can frequently be seen during spring and fall migration along our lakefront.

coloration, (subtle browns and blacks), which enables them excellent camouflage in their habitat of flat, sandy areas. Other features include simple vocalizations, long legs, and bills that are perfectly adapted for feeding. And despite the fact that they often work the same area, shorebirds do not seem to compete for food.

Rick stressed the importance and timeliness of molting and how it directly plays into the birds' migration patterns. He also pointed out that at any given time the same bird can look quite different and encouraged us to refer to our birding books to check all three views. He also recommended searching for basic clues like the size of the beak in relation to its head, closely observing the shapes of the wings and tail (rounded or pointed), discriminative markings like bands or splotches of color, and darker or lighter etchings around the wing caps.

Many shorebirds breed in the Arctic due to the 24 hours of daylight which affords them optimum time for insect feeding. The Red Knot is probably the shorebird that travels the longest distance-- from the Arctic to South America-- a mere 9,000 to

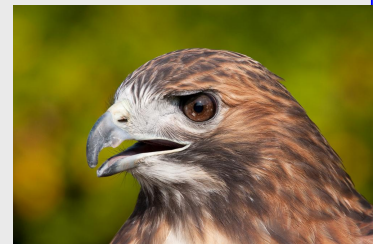
10,000 mile trek! This shorebird perfectly times its stopover at Delaware Bay just when the horseshoe crabs are laying their eggs and eats one egg every five seconds. This allows it to double its body weight before continuing its migration. In order for a 160-pound man to double his weight he would have to devour 53 cheeseburgers every day for a month (or 42 bean burritos for the vegetarian)!

Check out our future programs (see below) since they're an excellent way to learn first hand about various species.

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, October 1, 7:00 PM: Raptor Migration Through Southeastern Wisconsin.

Presented by **Vic Berardi**. Vic is founder of the Illinois Beach State Park Hawk Watch, co-founder of the Illinois Winter Raptor Survey, and on the board of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. River Bend Nature Center, Racine.

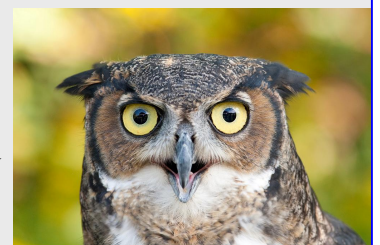


Saturday, Oct. 10, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM: Fall Fun Fest. Pringle Nature Center, Kenosha County.

Sunday, Oct 18, 8:00 AM-2:00 PM: Hawk Watch at Harrington Beach State Park. Sponsored by WSO. Meet at the lower beach parking area. Please note that there is a state park entrance fee. Bring a bag lunch or cooler.

Saturdays, Oct 31, Nov 7, Nov 21, Nov 28, 8:00 AM: Lakefront Birding. Join Hoy Audubon bird expert Rick Fare to look for late fall migrants and winter ducks along Lake Michigan. Meet at the Shoop Golf course parking lot at 8:00 AM.

Thursday, Nov 5, 7:00 PM: Owl Prowl—Discover the adaptations and biology that make owls the perfect night hunters. Presented by **Beth Goeppinger**, Naturalist, Richard Bong State Recreation Area. Learn which owls call Wisconsin home and how you can identify them by sight and sound. Dress to be outside as we will try to call owls that evening. River Bend Nature Center, Racine.



Saturday, November 14, 3:30 PM to dusk: Field trip to see the Short-eared Owls at Richard Bong State Recreation Area.

Bong is conducting a short-eared owl search. Meet at the nature center at 3:30 P.M. You may wish to go early and do some birding prior to meeting at the nature center. A Wisconsin State Parks sticker is required (can be purchased at the park entrance).

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
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Annual renewals for Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" memberships are due on July 1 of each calendar year. To renew your Chapter Supporter membership for 2009/2010, please send a check payable to Hoy Audubon Society and mark the appropriate box (s) below:

☐ Chapter Supporter Dues: \$12

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Looking for shorebirds at Shoop.

From your Hoy Honker Newsletter crew (Linda, Cristina, Keith): We welcome your suggestions, recaps of birding seminars/activities, fun facts and birding tidbits for use in future newsletters. Please email to: lin-dafarehirsch@aol.com