



Birding Excitement: Winter Wandering & CBCs

The close of 2014 yielded some nice birds for those birders who braved the grayest days.

Just in time for Racine's CBC count week, a Snowy Owl landed in the empty lot north of Pugh Marina. While the fake (and somewhat cartoonish) snarling coyote decoys on the property sure kept the gulls away, Racine's Snowy was undeterred and used them as a convenient wind break.



Photo by Drew Goldberg

Another count week bonus was the Northern Goshawk, first found at the Wind Point Lighthouse by Jack Swelstad on December 1, then relocated by Rick Fare and John Dixon on December 13—nice work!

Racine's CBC turned up some good birds, despite the warmer-than-average weather. Notable sightings inland included a Northern Saw-whet Owl, a Merlin, three Tufted Titmice, a Lesser Black-backed and a Glaucous Gull, Common Redpolls (a rarity last year due to plentiful food sources in Canada), and a count week Eastern Towhee. The lakefront also yielded Common Redpolls and a "scoter slam" - one White-winged, one Surf, and two Black.

Two birds from the Racine CBC are under debate and will take some expert review of photos and video to unravel:

- ◆ A suspected Ross's Goose was located, but the bird exhibits bill features that could mean it's a hybrid
- ◆ A possible Pacific Loon was found but upon review, it looks more like a Red-throated

The Kenosha CBC has had some interesting preliminary results. Another Snowy (possibly Racine's bird, which vanished shortly before this one appeared) landed on the breakwater of the Kenosha Harbor just in time to be spotted by a CBC team. Another Kenosha CBC team picked up a Pileated Woodpecker at Petrifying Springs—a very nice find, and possibly a first for the Kenosha CBC! Lois Jensen has also reported a Pileated nearby; it's nice to hear these magnificent birds are sticking around.

In general birding news, Pine Siskin numbers were up in late fall, with some feeder watchers reporting over 45 hungry siskins at once. (Astonishing how much yellow some of the males were boasting, as in this photo at right.)



Photo by Kristin Wegner

Racine's public boat launch has been an excellent birding location for late fall/early winter, harboring a nice assortment of ducks such as Common Mergansers and an American Wigeon as well as more unusual birds. Great Black-backed Gulls were spotted on multiple occasions, and I was lucky enough to get my first blue-morph Snow Goose here after missing one in the same location two years earlier. The goose with the grin sailed around the harbor before wading up the boat ramp to bathe with its Canada cousins.



Photo by Kristin Wegner

Of course, the real stars of the area were the grebes: Rick Fare found a Western Grebe November 18 AND an Eared Grebe on November 22. The first was a one-day wonder, but the latter stuck around for over a week (photo on page 6) unfortunately moving on before Racine's count week.

Happy Winter Birding!

-Kristin Wegner

Make Tracks to Renew Your Hoy Membership!

Did you forget to renew last July?

Don't worry—it's not too late! Please take the time to renew today. Annual dues supports the newsletter and other fun and exciting Hoy programs so we can all keep birding together. See the last page for renewal details.

Hoy Board of Directors

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Frank Sharkozy 262-770-2481

Kristin Wegner

Elizabeth Wheeler 262-880-9250

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

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Thursday, February 12, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive
Mount Pleasant, WI 53406

All members are welcome to attend!

Field Trip Coordinator

Frank Sharkozy 262-770-2481

If you have suggestions regarding future programs or field trips please contact hoyfieldtrips@hoyaudubon.org

Newsletter Editors

Kristin Wegner
Eric Howe

Ideas for the newsletter? Send your suggestions, recaps of birding seminars/activities, fun facts, and birding tidbits to the attention of Newsletter Editor 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.

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Meet a Member: Frank Sharkozy



Hello Everyone, I'm Frank Sharkozy.

Some of you may know me from my Chicken Paprikash at the last two Christmas potlucks. I work as a machinist at a company that designs and builds custom tooling and work holding fixtures, but that's enough about that. As far as my age, I'm a little older than my teeth; truthfully, I was born in August of 1961.

I've been a Hoy member for about two and a half years now. About a year ago I thought it would be interesting to see what went on at a board meeting. Well, at that meeting, guess who was nominated and seconded to be your new field trip director? (Please come to the field trips so it looks like I'm doing a good job.)

I've been mildly interested in birds for years. I remember putting up a feeder and thistle sock in my back yard in Racine about twenty some years ago and just being amazed to see a couple of Goldfinches. I would usually see some sparrows and what not at the feeder, then one day looking out the window to check the feeder, I saw my first Rose-breasted Grosbeak and was moved to open a field guided that I bought for my daughter to learn its name.

Moving forward to two and a half years ago, my girlfriend Debbie and I went to Hawthorn Hollow for a walk through the woods. I had brought along my binoculars that day, we hadn't seen much until the tiniest little grey bird with a bright yellow stripe on its head landed on a low branch, offering us a good look. Upon getting back the main building I asked a woman their if she knew what the bird was and she said it was probably a Golden-crowned Kinglet; again looking in a guide, I saw that she was correct. At work the next day I was wondering if there were any birding clubs in Racine, so googling "Racine birding" led me to the Hoy Audubon webpage. This was on a Monday just before the first of the Wednesday evening Colonial Park walks that year, and it's been a wonderful time ever since.

Some of my favorite Hoy memories have been the Horicon marsh trips, woodcock walks and looking for owls, just to name a few. I've had a few irons in the fire over the years, I was a member of Racine Instinctive Bowmen, also the Tripoli Rocket Society; you may have seen some of their lost rockets hanging in the trees out at Bong in the winter. Other interests include hunting, camping, and things I'm sure I've forgotten. I think my life list is at about 170 species, not a huge number, but a lot more than when I first joined Hoy. As far as bird guides, I have the Sibley's app on my iPhone and an old Petersen's that I keep with my binoculars and also some old Golden Books guides I'm fond of just for the fact they were printed in Racine. I've truly enjoyed the time spent birding with the members of Hoy and the knowledge you have shared with me and consider all of you my favorite guides. The best advice I think I can offer a new birder is start young. Well that's enough about me, actually too much. I look forward to meeting all of you on future birding adventures.

Warmest regards, *Frank*

The Big Sit 2014

Hoy's fourth annual Big Sit took place at the Wind Point Lighthouse on September 20, 2014. Since numbers were a bit low last year (only 16 species), we decided to position the count circle in a different location this time. Instead of staking out some space on the sand, we moved up on the grass, which gave us a decent view of the water, close-ups of the surrounding shrubs, and a great vantage point for the lighthouse's feeders.

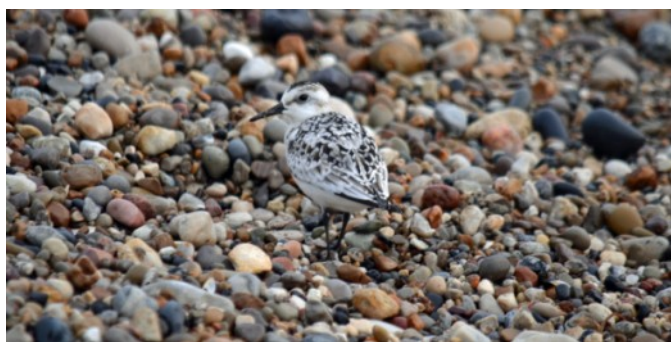
All three of these areas proved key to amassing the 33 species we added to the Bird Board. (It was almost 34, but no one inside the circle got the Spotted Sandpiper that I saw whiz by after I had walked downhill to the beach. Too bad!)

No matter the numbers, it was a beautiful day to bird at the beach.



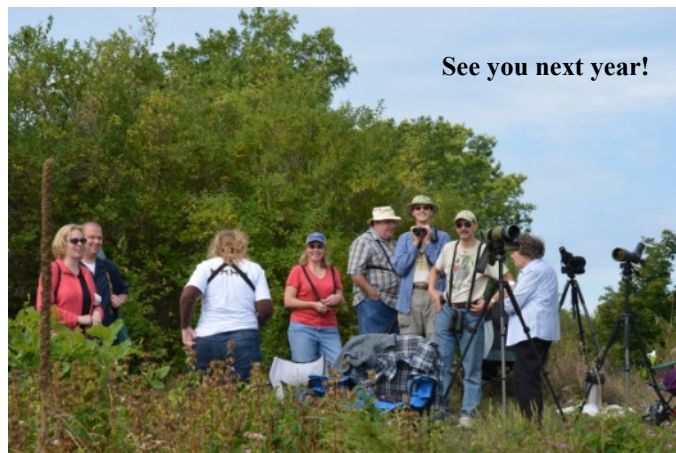
As in prior years, we got a few easy birds: European Starlings, House Sparrows, Mallards, and American Crows can almost always be found there, no matter the season or weather. Double-crested Cormorants numbered nearly 100.

Some of the more interesting migrants included six Northern Pintails, two Forster's Terns, and a solitary Sanderling (these shorebirds have been present all four years—just doesn't feel like the Big Sit 'til we get one). We saw this last bird zip over the water and assumed it had moved on, but when I left the circle and wandered down to the shore, I was startled to discover the bird probing the stones beside me, so close I could nearly have touched it. As you can see from the photo, the bird's juvenile plumage makes for excellent camouflage against a pebbly beach; when it stopped moving, it seemed to dissolve into the stones.



Staying close to the shrubs gave us five species of warblers: Tennessee, Palm, Orange-crowned, Magnolia, and Yellow-Rumped, plus a pair of Gray-cheeked Thrushes.

But the bird of the day was bird #26, spotted by John Dixon. As the rest of us were losing steam, John shouted, "Jaeger!" and sure enough, there was the bird we had earlier joked about seeing, a Parasitic Jaeger hounding a Ring-billed Gull in hope of an easy meal. It was too fast for our cameras and was soon so far out over the lake that we lost sight of it. But what a thrill!



- article and photos by Kristin Wegner

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II: Kickoff Meeting

February 27 - March 1, 2015

Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center
Rothschild, WI

Website: wsobirds.org/atlas-kickoff-meeting

The first Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas (WBBA) was conducted from 1995-2000 to collect data on the distribution, abundance, and habitat of breeding bird species throughout the state. The comprehensive data now serves as baseline data for current and future monitoring programs and to assist in avian conservation.

The WBBA 2 is set to begin field work in early 2015, starting with a Kickoff Meeting that will offer training for those who will gather data for the Atlas, a keynote speech by eBird's Chris Wood, and field trips.

You don't have to be a formal ornithologist to attend! All Wisconsin bird lovers are welcome to attend to learn more about what the atlas is and why it's so important to participate. Pre-registration is \$10 until February 15; walk-in registration is \$15.

Can't attend the meeting? Watch our website for details on additional training meetings. The atlas will also be collecting photos of birds exhibiting breeding behavior (see the website above).

- Eric Howe

Birds in Film

The sun sets early these days (though by the time you read the *Honker*, we'll be back on our way to longer light!), so if you find yourself in need of an indoor bird fix, check out these movies with avian appeal:

A Birder's Guide to Everything (2013): A teenage birder thinks he may have spotted the extinct Labrador Duck and embarks on a road trip with his friends to continue the search. (For more info, visit: abirdersguidetoeverything.com)

The Big Year (2011): Based on the book of the same name, it focuses on three birders attempting to break the record for most birds seen in a year. (Hoy even did a field trip to watch this one!)

March of the Penguins (2005): The moving documentary that examines the difficult lives of Emperor Penguins in Antarctica. (Side effect: may make Wisconsin seem toasty by comparison!)

Winged Migration (2001): A film that uses innovative camera technology to soar alongside migrating flocks of geese and other birds around the world. (Editor's note: *Watch for the Canada Geese who land in the desert in the snow; it's an amusing juxtaposition!*)

Fly Away Home (1996): A girl finds an abandoned Canada Goose nest and nurtures the eggs until they hatch...but when the geese are ready to fly, who will teach them how to migrate South?



The next Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be Friday, February 13, through Monday, February 16, 2015. This event, open to everyone, provides a wonderful opportunity for bird enthusiasts of all ages and experience levels to observe birds and gather valuable scientific data.

Participants count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC, then report their sightings via eBird. You're encouraged to count for as long as you'd like at as many locations as you'd like. (You don't have to stay in your backyard!) Traveling, stationary, and incidental counts are acceptable. Every bit of data helps!

If you're interested in photographing the birds you find, you may wish to enter photos from your count in the GBBC Photo Contest. For more details, including count instructions and Photo Contest rules, visit birdcount.org.

Does Winter Have you Ready to Screech?



Photo by Kristin Wegner

Birding slow?

Stuck inside?

Garage or basement filling up with wood scraps?

Consider building (or buying) your own Screech Owl box.

You don't have to live in the forest to provide habitat for owls, but having a yard with plentiful trees helps.

So what are some good box characteristics?

The box should contain ventilation holes and some form of door or hinged lid to allow seasonal cleaning. (It may remind you of a large bluebird box.) A sloped roof will shed rain. Some boxes also feature an interior perch for the owls.

What about the tree?

Choose a straight tree that is set back a bit from any houses or bustling activity. The box will need to be firmly attached to the trunk and shouldn't swivel or dangle. It is recommended that the opening of the box face East for optimal light exposure. Keep in mind that the box will need to be *at least ten feet* off the ground—be very careful when installing!

And what about the owls?

You may not see an owl right away, and even if one takes up residence, you may not notice it unless you watch carefully, as the owl may be tucked down out of sight during the day. Observe the box from a respectful distance at dawn and dusk, and you may see the owl enter and exit. Screech owls don't always spend the night in the same spot, so the owl may come and go, or even be replaced by a different owl.

For instructions for building your own Screech Owl box, visit: getintobirds.audubon.org/build-screech-owl-box

Hoy's Upcoming Activities

Thursday, January 8, 7:00 p.m. - CANCELLED DUE TO WEATHER
Hoy Meeting, Program: Red Hot Chile Peepers

*Kenosha Southwest Public Library,
 7979 38th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53142*

Mike Wanger will present his birding experiences in Chile.

***PLEASE NOTE: January's meeting is at Kenosha's**

SOUTHWEST library branch.*

Saturday, January 24, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Waterfowl and Gulls on the Racine Lakefront
Shoop Park, Racine

We'll begin at Shoop Park then make our way southward to the Racine Harbor. Bring your binoculars (and spotting scope if possible) and dress for the weather!

Thursday, February 5, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Greater Prairie Chickens in WI

*Kenosha Northside Public Library,
 1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53140*

Friday, February 13 through Monday, February 16

The Great Backyard Bird Count!

A world-wide, joint effort by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Bird Studies Canada—open to all.

Saturday, February 21, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Waterfowl and Gulls on the Racine Lakefront
Myers Park, Racine

We'll begin at Myers Park then make our way northward to the Racine Harbor. Bring your binoculars (and spotting scope if possible) and dress for the weather!

Thursday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Red Hot Chile Peepers

*Kenosha Northside Public Library,
 1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53140*

Saturday, March 28, 8:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Eagle Lake Waterfowl

Meet at Hwy 11 / I-94 Park and Ride

Prior to birding at Eagle Lake, we'll check the wetlands west and north of the intersection of Hwy 11 and 75. We'll then meet at Eagle Lake Park (north side of the lake, south of Church Rd.) sometime after 9:00 a.m. **Check our website prior to the trip;** if the lake is still frozen by late March, we may go birding elsewhere.



Remember to Watch the Weather!

Heavy snow, icy roadways, poor visibility, or other potentially hazardous conditions may cause a field trip to be cancelled. We post cancellations on Hoy's website and the Hoy Facebook page/group whenever it is possible to do so ahead of time. **If you are unsure whether a field trip will take place, please use good judgment when deciding whether to attend.**

And wherever you go, bundle up warm!

Looking for More Activities?

Check out our neighboring groups' events and programs!

Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society:

wimetroaudubon.org/events.html

Sierra Club, Southeast Gateway Group:

wisconsin.sierraclub.org/segg/

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology:

wsobirds.org/what-we-do/field-trips

The WSO is also sponsoring two larger events this year:

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II: Kickoff Meeting

February 27 - March 1, 2015

Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center

Rothschild, WI

Website: wsobirds.org/atlas-kickoff-meeting

See page 3 for more information.



Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II

2015 WSO Convention

Friday, May 22 through Monday, May 25

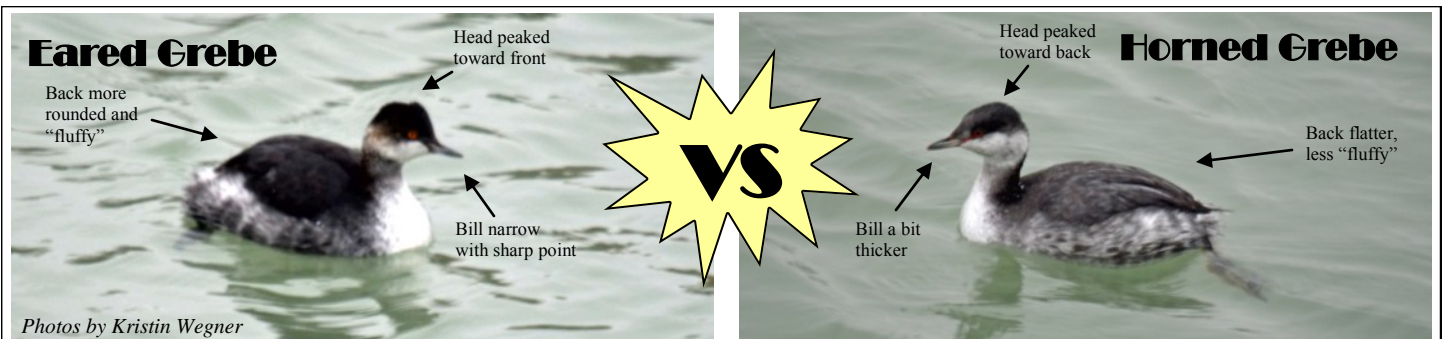
Wausau, WI

Convention will follow slightly different format this year, with the main convention events on Friday and Saturday and all-day field trips on Sunday and Monday. Watch the WSO's website for details! wsobirds.org/events/eventdetail/5/-/



Shoop Winter Birding, photo by Jenny Wenzel

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 044626
RACINE, WI 53404
www.hoyaudubon.org



Please take the time to renew your [Hoy Audubon Chapter Membership for 2014/2015](http://www.hoyaudubon.org). 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.

Chapter Supporter Dues: \$12 per individual

Total amount enclosed: _____

Do you wish to receive chapter newsletter by email only?

Yes, my email is: _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Send to: Hoy Audubon Society, P. O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404

Sanderling, photo by Kristin Wegner



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 email newsletter distribution list by sending an email to hoynewsletter@gmail.com and asking to be put on the electronic mailing list. You can now find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HoyAudubonSociety