



How Well Do You Know Your Honkers?

The Snow Goose vs. The Ross's Goose

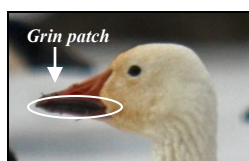
Telling a Snow Goose from a Ross's Goose can be tricky but here are a few field marks to go by:

A Snow Goose is quite a bit larger than a Ross's and this is quite evident if you are lucky enough to see the two together. As shown in the photo below, the head of the Snow Goose is wedge shaped, rather large, and is very often stained a rusty color on the face and forehead, whereas in the Ross's Goose the head is quite small and is very rounded and does not have any rusty stain on the face.



Snow Goose among Canada Geese (Kristin Wegner)

In the Snow Goose the bill is quite large and the bill has a strongly curved border at the base. The bill also has a large "grin patch" which is the thick black line where the upper and lower mandibles meet.



In the Ross's Goose (below), the bill is small, triangular in shape, and has a straight border at the base of the bill. The base of a Ross's bill also has a warty blue patch that, if seen, is very distinctive. The Ross's does not have a "grin patch."



Ross's Goose (Jerry DeBoer)

Both types of geese have pinkish legs and feet. In flight they both have white wings with black wingtips, so unless they are close together so you can compare their size, this field mark is not as reliable as the others for separating them.

The Snow Goose also has a "blue" morph (shown below), and it is fairly common to see one. It has a white head, but the body is a dark bluish-gray color.



Blue Morph Snow Goose (John Dixon)

This morph is quite variable in the amount of bluish-gray feathering it has on the body. Otherwise it has the same characteristics of a white morph Snow Goose. There is rarely a "blue" morph Ross's Goose.

- John Dixon

Help Make Birds Count - Join the Great Backyard Bird Count!

The next Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2016. 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.

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

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Thursday, February 18, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

All members are welcome to attend!

Location TBA—Contact a board member for location details.

Field Trip Coordinator

Coordinator needed; contact Hoy to help!

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

Newsletter Editor

Kristin Wegner

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

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Meet a Member: Kay McClelland

My name is Kay McClelland and I am 76 years old. I grew up in Michigan in a rural area and attended a one room school. I love reading, fiber arts, spending time outdoors, playing with my grandchildren and archaeology. I am on the board of the Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund where I enjoy plant identification and telling people about the prairie on nature tours. My favorite bird at Chiwaukee is the woodcock and I was thrilled the one time I saw a bobolink from only 10 feet away. Education and real estate are my primary business interests.

My friend Gladys McGilsky invited me to Hoy Audubon about 12 years ago. The programs are always interesting and informative. I like to hear about the birds people are seeing in the area. I wish I had more time to attend the many field trips and bird watching activities and always have a good time and learn something when I do go. The opportunity to get to know other members who are passionate about nature and preservation is the biggest benefit of my membership in Hoy Audubon.

I have been interested in birds since the age of 5 when I visited my Grandma Johnson on the farm and watched the house wren and her nest in the apple tree in the front yard. My mother has a greater knowledge of birds than I do. I have called her describing birds and she either tells me what it is or points me in the right direction. Some of the birds she has identified long distance include the kingbird, the female Rose-breasted Grosbeak and the female Indigo Bunting. Her best advice to me is about the little brown birds. She says always check out the females. Mom turned 99 on Nov. 15, 2015 and still watches the birds out the east window, where there has been a bird feeder for many years. This is probably my favorite place to watch and study birds and their habits.

I don't keep a life list. My favorite bird is the Black-bellied Whistling Duck. They have long pink legs, dark pink bill, a black belly, grey head and reddish brown breast. This duck is a common sight in San Antonio, Texas. Besides the odd name and unusual colors, it is fun to watch them jostling for perching spots on tree branches, whistling and chuckling when they go to bed at night. In Wisconsin I like chickadees, although common, they always look so perfect, with never a feather out of place. My favorite birdsong is to hear a mockingbird singing on a moonlit night. I have never heard a nightingale, but I can't imagine it would be more beautiful and mysterious than to hear a mockingbird singing after midnight when the moon is full. The most interesting bird I have ever seen is a baby albatross. One or both of the parents had just fed it an oily mixture of regurgitated fish. The baby was so full it looked like a fuzzy brown oval the size of a bowling ball and just sat there wobbling on the ground.

I have an old Peterson guide for ID and a National Geographic complete book of North American birds for more information. My favorite bird artist is J. J. Audubon and I also like Owen Gromme of Wisconsin. I very much enjoyed a book on bird evolution called *The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time* by Jonathan Weiner.

The best way to spot and identify birds is to go with an experienced birder. I am not very good with field marks unless a bird is sitting quietly on my bird feeder. So I love to go with an expert who points my binoculars in the right direction and tells me what bird I am seeing.

Bikes and Birds Across America

Earlier this year, Hoy Member Stan Rosenstiel biked across the southern United States, keeping an eye out for birds as he went. Here's some of Stan's story. But stay tuned: Stan will give a talk about his journey at an upcoming meeting!

Circumstances lined up for me this year that allowed me to ride my bicycle across the USA from San Diego, California to St. Augustine, Florida. This took me through the arid and semi-arid southwest. The high deserts of New Mexico and Arizona are beautiful. I went through many areas I would never have gone to otherwise. It was difficult yet rewarding.

I did not plan to do the trip alone. I had contacted a person on the Internet who seemed to be experienced and whose agenda seemed to match my thoughts. However, the more I talked to him the less it appeared that we were in sync. I had already paid for my plane ticket, and had to come up with a plan B. As we began to ride, my fears were realized and I had to decide when to separate. The morning of the fourth day was the time.

I rode with a couple guys for an hour or so one day and camped with other cyclists on 7 nights in the first half of the trip, but I was on my own most of the way.



The Suwannee River (yes, the one from the song!)

A website allowed me to find people who opened their homes to bicycle tourists and I was able to do that a few nights. I have made my house available to cyclists and hosted some this summer and fall.

In terms of cycling, I went 3000 miles in 51 days. I mostly camped in a tent. I had four flat tires. In small towns in California, New Mexico, and Texas, food could be hard to find.

Bikes and Birds, continued-



He did it! Stan at the journey's end in St. Augustine Florida

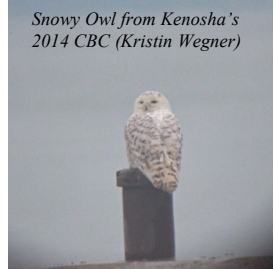
Opportunities for birding were mainly at the places I camped. Nonetheless, I was able to identify over 140 species of birds, including 15 life birds. These are: Oak Titmouse, Bullock's Oriole, Gambel's Quail, Crissal Thrasher, Sage Thrasher, Phainopepla, Olive Warbler, Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee, Zone-tailed Hawk, Hutton's Vireo, Rufous-crowned and Cassin's Sparrows, and Snowy and Wilson's Plovers.

- article and photos by Stan Rosenstiel

Where Have All the Snowies Gone?

The early and rapid influx of Snowy Owls into Wisconsin has not been an entirely joyous occasion. Rescued Snowies have been found to be malnourished, and the number of sightings has dropped significantly across the state. While Racine and Kenosha counties each had a Snowy Owl reported this fall, none have been reported on eBird in either county since November 1 at the time of this publication.

To learn more about the plight of this year's owls and historical information on Snowies in Wisconsin, check out Ryan Brady's article in the December 2015 issue of the WSO's newsletter *The Badger Birder* at wsobirds.org/ebb-2015-11



Snowy Owl from Kenosha's 2014 CBC (Kristin Wegner)

As noted in that article and elsewhere, if you see a Snowy Owl, please give it plenty of space to avoid stressing a bird that is likely already stressed from a long journey into unfamiliar territory. If the bird appears in poor condition, contact your local DNR or a wildlife rehabilitator for advice.

- Kristin Wegner

What Are *You* Doing Here?

Unusual Visitors Descend on Wisconsin

Fall and early winter brought some interesting birds to Wisconsin, birds that generally stay farther, sometimes *much* farther, west or south of us. While Kenosha and Racine counties missed out on the action (apart from a couple of Franklin's Gulls in Racine), elsewhere in the state, the wandering and the weird continued to pop up.

The Milwaukee area turned up a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and a Western Kingbird (which unfortunately proved to be a "nemesis bird" for some Hoy members who tried for it but missed). On November 12, an astonishing 145 Franklin's Gulls were counted as they migrated south past Milwaukee.

Multiple Anna's Hummingbirds were sighted in the state, including one female who stayed for several days in Jefferson County. Birders who ventured out to see her were quite fortunate in that she had selected the feeders at a house of gracious hosts, who even put out chairs for visitors. The "price of admission" to see the bird was a donation of a non-perishable item for the local food pantry. What a great idea, and something to keep in mind if you ever have a rarity turn up in your own backyard!



Female Anna's Hummingbird, Jefferson County (John Dixon)

The rarity that, in my mind, would certainly win this season's *Most Magnificent Plumage* award was the Lewis's Woodpecker found in Trempealeau County at a private home on November 22. Fortunately for the birding world, two of the residents at that home were attentive young birders who identified the woodpecker and got the word out. Thanks to their efforts, many excited birders were able to make the trek west to see it, and the "host family" truly went above and beyond to make their visitors feel welcome, even setting out a crock pot of warm soup on frigid days.

The Lewis's Woodpecker is named after Meriwether Lewis of Lewis and Clark fame. (And if you had the chance to have a bird named after you, this would be a cool one to pick.) It displays a bold, cherry-red face and belly, unlike the slight red tint of the actual Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Unusual Visitors, continued-



Lewis's Woodpecker, Trempealeau County (David Flores)

In the sun, its black head and back take on a dark green metallic sheen. This was only the fourth Lewis's ever reported in Wisconsin. (Over Thanksgiving weekend, I was quite grateful that this gorgeous bird provided the perfect excuse to avoid Black Friday shopping and bond with my fellow bird nerds.)

I do have a soft spot for one particular wayward bird, however. It wasn't the most flashy or the most colorful. Even its name, the Common Ground-dove, suggests that it is nothing to write home about. But it *is* worth writing about when you spot one way up at the edge of Door County, over a thousand miles north of where it's expected to be.

This little dove (and I do mean little; it's a bit smaller than a Cedar Waxwing) caught my eye as my husband and I hiked along the beach at Rock Island State Park. The bird also preferred the hikers' path through the sand instead of the thicker grasses, so we were treated to nice views all afternoon. I say it's a pretty great start to the marriage of two birders when you find a rare bird on your honeymoon.

- Kristin Wegner



Common Ground-dove, Door County (Kristin Wegner)

Volunteers Needed for the WSO's Annual Convention

The Kenosha and Racine area is fortunate to host the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology's Annual Convention this May. Hoy Audubon is co-hosting the picnic for the attendees on Friday, May 13, at Petrifying Springs Park and is seeking volunteers to assist with setup, bring grills, coolers, or baked goods/desserts. Seasoned co-leaders for bird walks to highlight our local birding hotspots are sought. Contact Jenny Wenzel at jenny.wenzel@hoyaudubon.org or 262-752-0887. For more information about the weekend of presentations and fieldtrips or to register, visit wsobirds.org or check Hoy's website.

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, January 7, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Birds and Words

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

You probably remember Edgar Allen Poe's *Raven*, but do you know Mary Oliver's *Crow*? Hoy member Kristin Wegner will discuss the influence of birds on poetry.

Thursday, January 14, 6:00 p.m.

Winter Birding Program

*Milaeger's
4838 Douglas Avenue Racine, WI 53402*

Rick Fare will discuss the adaptations birds have evolved to cope with harsh winter conditions as well as ways to attract birds to your feeders. You will also be able to make your own pinecone feeder.

Saturday, January 23, 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 4, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Wild Utah: America's Red Rock Wilderness

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

Clayton Daughenbaugh, conservation organizer with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, will present "Wild Utah", a multi-media slideshow about the red rock canyonlands of Utah and the movement to protect them.

Friday, February 12 through Monday, February 15

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 13, 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 3, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Bugs, Butterflies, and Moths

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

Dan Bantz, retired Milwaukee teacher and avid lifetime lepidopterist, will discuss differences between moths and butterflies and the importance of insect conservation. Dan will also display his collection of beautiful insects from around the world.

Saturday, March 26, 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.

**WBBA II
Season 2
Kickoff
April 1-3, 2016
Rothschild, WI**



**Wisconsin
Breeding
Bird
Atlas II**

The WBBA II is a comprehensive citizen-science project organized by the WSO, WDNR, and the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory (WGLBBO). The aim of the Atlas is to record the distribution and abundance of breeding birds statewide between 2015–2019 and to document how various birds' populations have changed since the first atlas (1995-2000). The results will further our understanding of the conservation needs of Wisconsin's breeding birds. Volunteers of all abilities are crucial for the success of the project. Patient observations will reveal what birds are nesting in your area. For a 2015 season summary, visit: hoyaudubon.org/atlas

Get started with the 2016 field season at this year's atlas training conference at the Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center in Rothschild, just outside Wausau. To sign up for the atlas training conference, watch for information at: wsobirds.org/atlas-events

-Eric Howe

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.

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 044626

RACINE, WI 53404

www.hoyaudubon.org



Common Goldeneye (Kristin Wegner)

Join [Hoy Audubon](http://www.hoyaudubon.org) or renew your 2015/2016 Membership!

Renewals for Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" memberships are due on July 1 of each calendar year. Chapter Supporter dues are \$12 per individual. Please send a check payable to **Hoy Audubon Society**.

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*Cedar Waxwing
(Kristin Wegner)*