Hoy Audubon Society

HOY HONKER
October–December 2026 Newsletter

Shoop Park Redevelopment Update

In second quarter of 2026, the proposed redevelopers of Shoop Park, one of Hoy Audubon's favorite birding places, obtained their critically needed (and unanimous) Racine City Council approval.

Lead developer Craig Leipold of Wind Point, who teamed up with The Keiser Group for the project, has described his vision as a dunes-style golf course, with many sand traps and few trees to obscure golfers' vision of Lake Michigan.

The Hoy Audubon Society Board of Directors has opposed the project because of the sweeping removal of trees and other natural bird habitat that it will entail. Wind Point and Shoop Park provide critical habitat for birds migrating along the Lake Michigan pathway, and it is one of the best birding habitats in all of Wisconsin.

The developers have indicated the work will begin in 2027 — a full year later than Leipold had initially said he envisioned.

Based on the loss of trees and wildlife habitat that would be caused by the current project plans, Hoy filed an official objection to the project with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on September 10. Hoy also sent additional materials concerning the impacted bird species and ecological impact of the project.

If the project does indeed move toward completion, what, if anything, will be left for birds and wildlife?

The developers have promised to plant disturbed areas with native plants. Their consulting ecologist, Jens Jensen, has promised to improve the existing prairie west of Lighthouse Drive by removing unwanted species and planting new native plants into it.

These sorts of changes, however, will take time — years — and in the meantime there will be a certain loss of bird habitat.

Hoy Audubon will continue to monitor this project and to provide updates as we learn more.

— Mick Burke, Hoy President

2026 Purple Martin Lakefront Conservation Initiative Recap

First, please thank our Hoy Purple Martin Monitoring Team:

* **Coast Guard No./So. + Gateway House & Gourds**: Helen Pugh, Bill Halliday, Jane Raymond
* **Prairie School**: Chris Glass, Caden Klamut, Helen Pugh
* **Siena Center**: Tammy Ruggaber, Jill Cervenka, Helen Pugh
* **Racine Water Dept**: Tom and Karen Gavahan
* **Kenosha Water Dept**: Marianne Giannis, Debby Eisel
* **Back ups**: Mike McConnell, Annie Shace

The spring was cold with delayed nesting. The loss of hatchlings was most evident at the Racine Water Department. The smoke from Canada was concerning, but it didn't linger long enough to harm the nestlings.

Despite these challenges, we had a total of 605 eggs laid, 496 eggs hatched, and **466** chicks fledged. That is a nearly 24% increase in the number of Purple Martins fledged this year compared to last year!

Overall, the increase of fledglings is very encouraging. Hopefully another box will be set at Prairie School next Spring. This was only the 3rd season for Prairie's box; it was 100% occupied, and it fledged more birds (64!) than any other box has done in our history!

Our team visits the sites once a week from mid-April to mid -August. We welcome trainees!

- article by Helen Pugh, photo by Bob Salvatore

Lights Out Campaign

To help birds migrate safely at night, turn off outside lights and block inside lights (with curtains, blinds, etc.) during fall migration: **August 15—November 30**

Hoy Board of Directors

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Jennifer Wenzel 262-488-8077

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

Next Board of Directors Meeting:

October 8, 2026

All members welcome; contact Hoy for more info if you'd like to join in person or via Zoom.

Renew or Donate Online

To join Hoy, renew your Chapter Supporter membership, or make a donation, visit www.hoyaudubon.org/donate/

Newsletter Editor
Kristin Wegner

Ideas for the newsletter?
Send your suggestions, recaps of birding seminars/activities, fun facts, and birding tidbits to the Newsletter Editor at: Hoy Audubon, PO 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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Welcome, Karen!

Please join us in welcoming our new treasurer: Karen Johnson! She was recently voted in by the Hoy board of directors, and she's already been instrumental in pulling together information concerning the developments at Shoop Park and the potential impacts to birds and their habitat.

(This is not a photo of Karen, obviously—it's a Rusty-patched Bumble Bee, taken by Jenny Wenzel. But Karen has already been quite busy, so a bee seemed appropriate!)

Adventures with John: A "Royal" Gull Sighting

Several years ago, Hoy stopped at what was once known as Pugh Marina during its annual Gull frolic, which is held in mid-February. We travel to several different Racine lakefront spots looking for wintering gulls and waterfowl.

As I was scanning the many gulls on the ice, I noticed a very dark-backed gull with what appeared to have pure white wingtips. I took several photos of it on the ice but was still not sure of its identification. I kept watching it in hopes it would take flight so I could see its wings better.

Luckily it obliged, and I was able to get several flight shots of it. As it turned out, these were key in my identifying it as an adult Great Black-backed x Glaucous Gull hybrid, also known as a "King Gull" by folks who study gulls.

I was really stoked, as this is a rare hybrid in the gull world, and in my option, a beautiful bird!

All birders present were able to get good looks of it sitting on the ice and in flight.

After that, we all went for a celebratory lunch at one of our favorite diners in Racine.

- *article & photo by John Dixon, Field Trip Chair*

Editor's note—Unexpected sightings like these are why it's always a good idea to scan the entire flock! (And to attend Hoy field trips!)

Field Trip: Wind Lake Sod Farms

Hoy's annual visit on August 29 to the Sod Farms was well attended and well documented with an eBird list. There were 17 birders from Milwaukee, Oak Creek, Kenosha, and, of course, Racine. The temperature was very comfortable with mostly cloudy skies. We saw 21 American Golden Plovers and four Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Those were definitely the target birds of the morning.

We made five stops to find the birds. Most of them were located in the muddy fields between the growing sod. We met out there at 8 AM, birded for a good three hours, and enjoyed great camaraderie. A number of us have been going there for years and we felt it was the best trip ever! If you don't have a scope, there were plenty available to share. Be sure to join us next year.

- article and photos by Helen Pugh

In Memoriam

We send our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Steve Navulis, a long-time Hoy member who passed away on June 30.

Planting for Pollinators

A new feature where I share some of the fun things David and I see in our gardens!! My love of gardening has grown so much since adding plants (with a focus on natives) to attract birds and pollinators!!

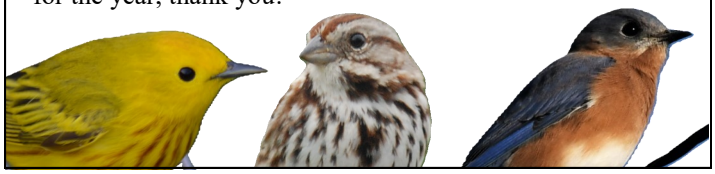
Pictured: Endangered Rusty-patched Bumble Bee on Rattlesnake Master

Make a note to add some native plants to your garden!

- article and photo by Jenny Wenzel

Renew Your Membership

Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" membership dues for the 2026-2027 period were due on **July 1**.We accept dues and donations via mail or via PayPal at **www.hoyaudubon.org/donate/** If you've already renewed for the year, thank you!



Upcoming Activities

If you have questions, contact hoyfieldtrips@hoyaudubon.org.

Thursday, October 1, 7:00 p.m.
Hoy Meeting, Program: Foraging – A Year in Plants
Hawthorn Hollow, 880 Green Bay Rd, Kenosha, WI
Beth Goeppinger was the DNR naturalist at Richard Bong Recreation Area for 28 years. She is an avid outdoor enthusiast with a special interest in botany, bugs and birds. Currently living in Lake Geneva, she is often found roaming Wisconsin with binoculars and a camera.

Saturday, October 10, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m. (backup date: Oct 17)
Hoy Field Trip: Hawk Watch at Chiwaukee Prairie
121st St. and 2nd Ave., Pleasant Prairie, WI 53158
Hoy will meet at Chiwaukee to watch for migrating raptors. Bring your binoculars, a chair, water, snacks, and layered clothing in case it's breezy. If migration conditions are poor, we will postpone the trip until October 17; watch Hoy's website and Facebook page!

Thursday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.
Hoy Meeting, Program: Wintering Raptors of SE Wisconsin
Hawthorn Hollow, 880 Green Bay Rd, Kenosha, WI
Vic Berardi, founder of the all volunteer Illinois Beach State Park Hawkwatch and well known raptor photographer, will discuss wintering raptors of southeastern Wisconsin. Emphasis will be on raptor descriptions, occurrences and possible locations to find these birds in the winter months. Vic spends a great deal of time in the winter searching for raptors and photographing them. His photographs have been used by several conservation organizations and in raptor field guides. He recently served as the Chair of the Winter Raptor Survey program for the Hawk Migration Association (HMA) and is currently on their Board of Directors.

Friday, November 13, 7:00 p.m.—9:30 p.m.
Hoy Field Trip: Owl Prowl at Bong State Recreational Area
Meet at DNR parking lot on north side of Hwy BB (7th Street)
We will drive near and within the park to listen for owls. (A WI State Parks vehicle admission sticker is required to park within Bong.) If excessive wind and/or rain is forecasted, this event may be canceled. Watch Hoy's website and Facebook page for updates!

Saturday, November 14, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.
Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding
Shoop Park, Racine, WI
Meet at the Shoop parking lot to look for fall migrants. We may walk to the Wind Point lighthouse as well, depending on lake level. Dress for cold & windy weather and wear sturdy walking shoes.

Saturday, November 21, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.
Hoy Field Trip: Waterfowl at Eagle Lake
Eagle Lake Park 23705 Church Rd, Kansasville, WI
Tentative: We'll meet at the parking lot closest to the lake at Eagle Lake Park and then proceed to other stops around the lake. The field trip may be changed to Shoop Park if there are low waterfowl numbers at Eagle Lake. Watch Hoy's website and Facebook page for updates!

Saturday, November 28, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.
Hoy Field Trip: Kenosha Lakefront Birding
7825 First Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53143
We'll meet at the Southport Park parking area (just north of the Kenosha Sand Dunes). Along the lake we'll be looking for migrating ducks, scoters, grebes, and other waterfowl. Dress warmly!

Saturday, December 5, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.
Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding
Shoop Park, Racine, WI
Along the lake we'll be looking for migrating ducks, scoters, grebes, and other waterfowl. Dress warmly!

Saturday, December 12, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.
Hoy Field Trip: Kenosha Lakefront Birding
7825 First Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53143
We'll meet at the Southport Park parking area (just north of the Kenosha Sand Dunes). Dress warmly!

December meeting details TBD; watch Hoy's website and Facebook for details!

★Christmas Bird Counts★

Watch Hoy's website and Facebook page for updates!

December 14: Burlington CBC (backup Dec 15)	Contact Nick Mimier at nickmimier@yahoo.com or 262-363-8856.
December 19: Racine CBC (backup Dec 20)	Contact Eric Howe at cbc@hoyaudubon.org
December 21: Kenosha CBC (backup Dec 22)	Contact Valerie Mann at kenoshacbc@gmail.com or 219-477-0006.

Join Hoy Audubon or renew your Membership!

Renewals for Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" memberships are due on **July 1** of each calendar year. Chapter Supporter dues are $15 per individual. To join or renew online, visit www.hoyaudubon.org/donate/. To join or renew by mail, complete this form and send with a check payable to **Hoy Audubon Society**.

Total amount enclosed: _____

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Hoy distributes newsletters and field trip announcements by email. Please enter your email address below to be added to this distribution.

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