

The Lake Flyer

Newsletter of Winnebago Audubon

April-May 2021

All programs and activities are open to the public.

Vol. 42, No. 5

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Check our website for up-to-date information: www.winaudubon.org

Annual Midwest Crane Count Sign up Now!

Saturday, April 17, 2021
5:30 am - 7:30 am

If you haven't already volunteered, now is the time. We are still looking for counters with only 20 of 45 sites filled in Winnebago County. We heard that all the sites but one are filled in Outagamie County. Please tell your family and friends about this count.

This year for fun we are going to host an optional online social the night before the count, April 16th at 7:00 pm.

We'll review the count instructions and have time for questions and social time.

Here is the link:

<https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/1944899f75bd4dea8175e96eeb4c8760>

Anonymous dial in: +1-571-392-7650
PIN: 106 443 4322



Here are the details: Did you know that sandhill cranes are one of the oldest known bird species? A crane fossil structurally identical to the modern sandhill crane was

Continued on page 4

Calendar of Events

Apr 17Midwest Crane Count

May 1.....Oshkosh Bird Fest

May 8 or 15May Bird Count (See page 2)

May 26.....Evening on the Mascoutin Valley Trail:
Birds & Frogs (See page 2)

Summer? Picnic, Prairie Walk . . . Stay Tuned!

Sep 4 or 11Monarch Tagging

Sep 11 or 12 ..September Bird Count

Nov 18.....Program: Sustainable and Environmentally
Friendly UWO Campus Grounds

Dec 18 or 19 ..Christmas Bird Count

Oshkosh Bird Fest

Saturday, May 1

6:00 am - Noon
Menominee Park, Shelter 1

Rain or Shine! FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
Like us on Facebook and participate in the daily bird quiz.

Join us for some birdy activities to celebrate
International Migratory Bird Day
and the fact that Oshkosh is a BIRD CITY!

We had to cancel our 2020 event due to COVID-19, so to play it safe this year, our 10th event will be scaled back but still full of great activities for all to enjoy. Mask wearing and social distancing will be expected.

The day will begin at 6:00 am in Menominee Park at Shelter 1.

6 am - Noon: Big Sit, a unique way to bird watch.

7 am - 10:30am: Bird Banding Demonstration
with Dick Nikolai

8 am & 9:30 am: Bird Walks with Kelli Bahls

8 am - Noon: Student Bird Art Virtual Exhibit

10 am - Noon: Kid's Activities

10 am - Noon: Live Birds of Prey Walk

by Aves Wildlife Alliance

Be sure to check the tab, Artists of Oshkosh Bird Fest 2021, on our website where you will find Bird Artists of Wisconsin and Student Bird Artists of Oshkosh. Instead of hosting these two talented groups at the Masonic Center this year we are going virtual. We will feature photos and contact information for Bird Artists of Wisconsin plus they have their own Facebook page, Bird Artists of Wisconsin, where you can see more and buy on-line. In addition to featuring the amazing bird art of the Student Bird Artists of Oshkosh on our website after May 1, we will have a virtual exhibit (slide show) at Menominee Park.

See you there on May 1. 🐦



Looking For Volunteers For May Bird Count

May 8 or 15 (to be determined yet)

This is another great excuse (if you need one) to go birding and challenge yourself to identify birds not only visually but by their songs. Plus, you are contributing to on-going bird research around the world. You can do this by yourself or with family and friends. Make a day of it or plan a little time around your busy schedule.

On this annual bird count, observers record all birds seen or heard in Winnebago County on one day (24 hour period) in May. The May bird count has been conducted every year since 1966. The final results are submitted to the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

Anyone can participate. The amount of time you wish to commit is up to you. You can watch your feeders/yard for an hour or all day. You can walk, bike, or boat a certain area. For the more dedicated birder, surveying one of the 30 county areas is also an option.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- Record the number of each species seen or heard (including Starlings, House Sparrows, etc.)
- Record time spent watching
- Record distance traveled
- Record names of all observers
- Document unusual species and numbers

If you do plan on participating PLEASE contact Tom Ziebell with Oshkosh Bird Club and inform him of the location that you intend to cover to reduce duplication of birds counted.

For more information on the count or if interested in surveying an area in the county, contact Tom Ziebell at ctiebell@new.rr.com or 920-312-1976.

Check the Oshkosh Bird Club website to learn which date the count will be held. 🐦

Find us on

From the Quiz Master:

I'm an active, tiny (4") plain buffy-colored, insect-eating bird. Males have a tiny red crown patch that is often concealed. Whoooo am I?

(Look closely to find the answer in this newsletter.)

Evening on the Mascoutin Valley Trail: Birds & Frogs

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

6:30 pm-8:30 pm

An evening stroll on the Mascoutin Valley Trail on the western edge of Winnebago County will be an opportunity to seek out birds and frogs. The section of trail we plan to visit boasts a wetland restoration area. One particularly large pond off the south side of the trail hosts a large number of bird species throughout the spring and summer season, including ducks, herons, egrets, rails, and swallows. Some spring migrants, such as warblers and thrushes, can also be found searching for insects in the nearby tree cover. Just to the east of this open wetland area we will most likely hear a variety of frogs calling in the wooded area that usually has small ephemeral ponds that provide perfect frog habitat.

Directions: We will park on Meadowbrook Road where the Mascoutin Valley Trail crosses. From Oshkosh, head southwest on State Road 44. Turn right onto State Road 91. Drive west for 13 miles. Turn left onto County Road E. In 1.8 miles turn right onto Meadow Brook Road. In .6 miles you will come to the trail crossing. Please park safely on the shoulder of the road.



Gray Tree Frog. Photo © A.B. Sheldon.

We encourage face masks and social distancing so that everyone feels comfortable. Bring binoculars and maybe insect repellent. 🐦

Annual Meeting Postponed for Now

Winnebago Audubon's fiscal year ends April 30, so we usually have an annual meeting during the month of April to elect officers and approve a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The Board of Directors has decided to postpone the annual meeting until we can have an outdoor meeting when the weather gets warmer. By then more people will have been vaccinated and we can feel comfortable coming together outside to enjoy some time together once again.

Watch for an announcement in our June-July newsletter. We will also publish a slate of officers and a proposed budget.

Join our Board!

Would like to be on our Board of Directors? We are a group of like-minded people who love birds and care for our environment. Volunteer or nominate someone you know to join our Board for 2021-22. Elections will be held this summer. Give Janet a call at 920-216-1172 or send an e-mail to winnebagoaudubon@gmail.com if you would like to know more about how you can take an active role in our chapter. 🐦



Morning Surprise

This morning walk in late March started like most late March days. It's damp, cold and overcast and I'm still wearing my winter jacket and hat. The sun hasn't broken the horizon when I leave home but the robins and cardinals are singing joyously. They believe that spring is here.

The UW Oshkosh campus is quiet. A flock of 30 juncos seen two days ago has departed. A downy woodpecker drums softly. Only two dueling male house finches are singing boisterously. Even the mallards seem lethargic this morning.

Then a brief, soft, beautiful, melodious warble drifts down from the treetops. What is that? I don't recognize the song. I stop to listen. Then a variant of that song plus some soft call notes fills the silence. I have to find this bird!

After much searching, I locate the singer perched 3/4 of the way up in a mature cottonwood next to the Fox River. Light conditions are less than ideal as I'm looking into a steely gray sky without binoculars.

The bird appears all-over gray as it blends in well with the dark tree branches. It is about the size of a robin (9") though somewhat more slender. It's tail is longer than a robin's. I can't make out any color except a uniform gray nor any other characteristics in the dim morning light. The bird sings intermittently. What a sweet song.

I'm scrolling through my mental inventory of slender gray birds. It is not a catbird, or mockingbird or northern shrike. I am mystified.

I watch for about 15 minutes but the bird with the upright posture does not move. I hesitate to leave but I do.

When I return home, I grab the field guide. As the bird's silhouette reminded me of a thrush, I turned to the thrush section and there, on the first page, is the slender gray bird — a Townsend's Solitaire. WOW! WOW! WOW!

Why am I so excited? It's because this bird is far from

home. It normally resides in the mountainous coniferous forests of the western United States. Individuals may wander east but they are certainly very rare visitors.

If I had better light conditions, I may have seen the white eye-ring. If the bird had flown, I may have noticed white outer tail feathers as well as a buffy underwing stripe. However, variations occur among individuals from drab to bright as to how bold the buffy wing patches are.

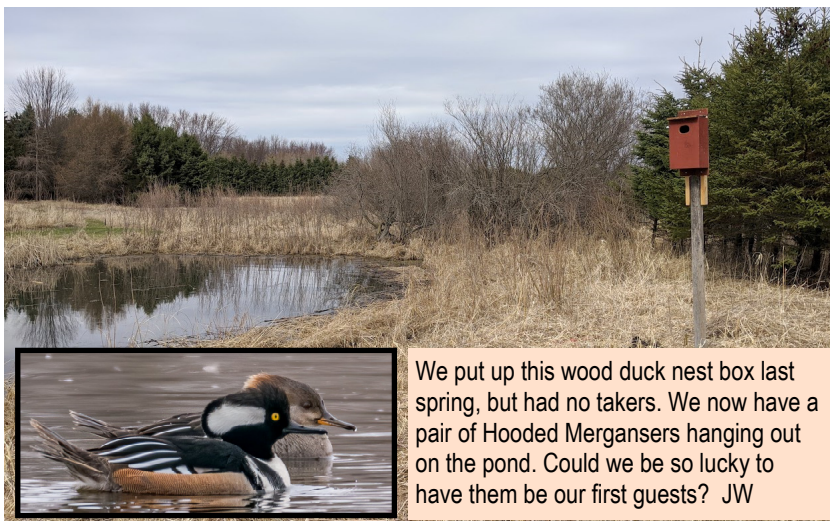
Today was one of the incredible joys and surprises of birdwatching. Because birds can fly or may be blown off course by strong, stormy winds, one never knows when or where an unusual bird that is way out of its normal range, may show up.



Townsend's Solitaire.
Photo by Gregg Kendall/Great Backyard Bird Count.

This encounter is a reminder to always check birds visiting your yard. Always tune into songs. If something looks unusual or sounds different, always pause and take a closer look or listen. I would have missed the Townsend's Solitaire if I hadn't wondered about the unfamiliar, but sweet, melodic song.

What a joy to see this bird in Wisconsin, a bird that I had only seen once before in Arizona in 1989. This bird was truly my surprise nature "Gift of the Day". 🐦



We put up this wood duck nest box last spring, but had no takers. We now have a pair of Hooded Mergansers hanging out on the pond. Could we be so lucky to have them be our first guests? JW

Hooded Mergansers. Photo courtesy of Matt Saunders.

Winnebago Audubon Society
*extends a sincere **thank you** for your support which allows us to continue to provide positive experiences in nature for our community.*

Grant Beckfield

Gene Jeske

In Memory of Robert Deputy

Jaquelyn Mueller

In Memory of Neil Koeneman

Mike and Kathy Swederske

found in Nebraska from the Pliocene period (5.3-2.6 million years ago). It is older by half than the earliest remains of most living species of birds.

You can support crane conservation efforts by participating in the International Crane Foundation's Annual Midwest Crane Count. Over 1,000 volunteers participate in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota in this spring survey which supports its mission to conserve the world's 15 species of cranes and the natural communities on which they depend. Sandhill Cranes once nearly disappeared from Wisconsin, but the species has successfully recovered and is slowly expanding into neighboring states. Observations of Sandhill Cranes can lend insight into threatened crane species, including the endangered Whooping Crane. There are now about 80 Whooping Cranes in the reintroduced population in central Wisconsin, and Crane Counters may have a chance of sighting a Whooping Crane during the survey.

Still not convinced? Best reasons to be a crane counter:

- Doing something a little crazy is fun (especially with friends).
- You can do something good for the environment once a year without becoming a bird-nut.
- If you are a student, it counts as volunteer hours. You can put it on your resume.
- Crane Counting 101 is easy and it is all explained on the data sheet that you use on Saturday morning.
- You'll learn to speak crane-ese.
- It's a good excuse to watch a sunrise once per year. Don't be late – the early bird gets to count more cranes.
- Bring your binoculars, camera, and other gadgets. You'll be surprised what other wildlife you see that early in the morning.
- If the weather is nasty, you can count from inside the car with the heater on.
- Winnebago County is a great place to survey because we rank high in the number crane sightings.
- When finished you have a great excuse to get a hearty breakfast and then have your whole Saturday ahead of you.

Signing up is easy! Go to the [Winnebago County Map](#) of the 45 designated sites, select a site where you would like to survey, then contact Winnebago County Coordinator Shannon Davis-Foust, at winnebagobirds@gmail.com or 920-420-7426 to check availability and secure your site. The sites of those who counted in 2019 will be saved until the end of March. If you are not able to count this year, please contact Shannon so she knows your site is available.

You can find the data sheet and more information at the [International Crane Foundation](#) website.

COVID-19 Guidelines for 2021 Crane Count: If you are counting with others from outside your household, please plan on wearing a mask during the count and stay at least six feet from participants from different households. Participants should also avoid carpooling with other counters from outside their household and counting in large groups to limit exposure to COVID-19.

Thank you to Shannon for coordinating this effort for Winnebago Audubon and the International Crane Foundation. Please contact Shannon directly to learn more or volunteer.

Shannon Davis-Foust
Winnebago County Crane Count Coordinator
winnebagobirds@gmail.com or 920-420-7426

Earth Day

Clean-up Week

April 22, 2021 marks the 51st anniversary of Earth Day. I remember the first one. I was still in high school. Little did I realize what a significant role this day would play in protecting our environment. Thanks to Sen. Gaylord Nelson from Wisconsin who led the bi-partisan effort to create this national day, which is now celebrated globally, to address environmental issues.

“Earth Day 1970 inspired 20 million Americans — at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States — to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the impacts of 150 years of industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts. Thousands of colleges and universities organized protests against the deterioration of the environment and there were massive coast-to-coast rallies in cities, towns, and communities.

Groups that had been fighting individually against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife united on Earth Day around these shared common values. Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, urban dwellers and farmers, business and labor leaders. By the end of 1970, the first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of other first of their kind environmental laws, including the National Environmental Education Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Clean Air Act. Two years later Congress passed the Clean Water Act. A year after that, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act and soon after the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. These laws have protected millions of men, women and children from disease and death and have protected hundreds of species from extinction.” Excerpted from earthday.org.

Clean-up Week April 17-25

In celebration of Earth Day, April 22, 2021, let's do our small part by cleaning up our neighborhood, community and county. Grab a bag or bucket and pick up litter along your street, your road, your favorite trail and park, around retention ponds, rivers and lakes. Recycle the bottles and cans. Be safe and wear gloves. Share your photos with us on our [Facebook](#) page.

I pick up litter almost every time we visit our cabin up north. Sadly, it doesn't take long to fill up a 5-gallon bucket. I also carry a bag with me on my regular walks at home to pick up litter along the way. It's a small effort, but if everyone did this maybe it would have a positive effect on those that do carelessly litter.

Happy Earth Day!
Happy Spring!



Field Trip Report: Winter Birds at Jefferson Park and Heckrodt Nature Reserve

By Kelli Bahls

On Saturday, March 6th, a group of twelve participants assembled at Jefferson Park and Heckrodt Wetland Reserve in their masks and winter gear. The temperature was a brisk 25 degrees with light east winds and partly sunny skies.

At the first stop of the morning at 9:00 a.m., the group gathered along the shore of the Menasha Channel at Jefferson Park. Large rafts consisting of several hundred COMMON GOLDENEYES stretched across the length of the channel into Lake Winnebago. These enigmatic diver ducks typically arrive at the park in October and depart for northern climes in April. With so many goldeneyes, it can sometimes be difficult to pick out other diver duck species in poor lighting conditions. Looking east was difficult due to the sun angle, but there are some waterfowl species that simply cannot be mistaken for diver ducks – such as the vocal CANADA GEESE and eleven TUNDRA SWANS standing out on the rocks at the mouth of the channel. We were briefly treated to the musical sound of the swans hooting and calling amongst one another before they resumed feeding and preening. Other sightings at Jefferson Park included moderate-sized flocks of REDHEADS and RUDDY DUCKS, as well as two BALD EAGLES seated high in the treetops.

We spent about an hour and a half at Jefferson Park before heading over to Heckrodt Wetland Reserve. A cooperative COOPER'S HAWK circled the parking lot upon our arrival. The feeder stations boasted numerous AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES in their flaxen-colored plumage, as well as BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, DOWNY WOODPECKERS, and WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES. We listened for a distant TUFTED



Barred Owl. Photo by Kelli Bahls.

TITMOUSE as we meandered toward the Lopas Pond observation deck. The pond was still frozen, but some of the first-of-season RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS could be heard nearby. Continuing around the preserve, we observed a small herd of resident WHITE-TAILED DEER resting in the trees not far off the boardwalk.

Not long after leaving the deer, one of the field trip participants received a call – her husband and son had gone up ahead on the trail, and they'd spotted an owl! The group proceeded with cautious optimism, hoping that the bird would still be there when we arrived. To our surprise, the sleepy BARRED OWL was still there and provided excellent views. The group admired the owl for a short while, pointing the bird out to other curious passersby, before making the return trek to the parking lot.

After tallying 27 species in 3½ hours and the temperature considerably warmer than it had been earlier in the morning, the group said their good-byes in front of the nature center. 🐦

*Ruby-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus calendula**





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If you are a member of National Audubon which automatically makes you a member of our local Chapter, NATL will appear with the expiration date. You will receive renewal notices from National or you may renew by using the form below.
If you are receiving a complimentary newsletter, COMP will appear with an expiration date. Please consider joining our Chapter or National (Dual) by using the application below.

Our Mission:

Winnebago Audubon encourages people to enjoy and protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through recreation, education, conservation, and restoration of the natural environment.

AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please choose one:

- \$20.00 — Local Winnebago Audubon Chapter Membership.** You receive the Winnebago Audubon Chapter newsletter.
- \$35.00 — Dual Membership (Local Winnebago Audubon Chapter AND National Audubon Membership)** You receive Winnebago Audubon Chapter newsletter and National Audubon magazine.

Make check payable to Winnebago Audubon.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail _____

Chapter Code: **Z12**

Mail this form with payment to:
Audubon Membership
PO Box 184, Oshkosh, WI 54903

Word of the Day:

montane

adjective: of growing in or inhabiting mountain areas

*Welcome
to Winnebago Audubon*

You are invited to participate in activities of your local Winnebago Audubon chapter. It's a great way to meet like-minded people and to enjoy what nature has to offer. A special thank you to all those who are renewing again this year as well.

Tammy Bauer
Barbara Girens
Randy Klauer
Justus Paul

If you are a new member of National or the Chapter and haven't seen your name here in the last couple of issues, please contact **Membership Chair** at winnebagoaudubon@gmail.com or 920-216-1172