

# The Lake Flyer

## Winnebago Audubon Society, Inc.

February 2018

All programs and activities are open to the public

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Editor: Janet Wissink • 920-216-1172 • winnebagoaudubon@gmail.com

Check our website for up-to-date information: [www.winaudubon.org](http://www.winaudubon.org)

### Eagles on the Fox River

in Oshkosh then join us for Lunch at Fox River Brewing Tap Room

**Saturday, Feb. 17**  
**10:00 am**

Open water in winter attracts Bald Eagles and waterfowl. Since the Great Backyard Bird Count runs Fri., Feb. 16 through Mon., Feb. 19, we will also count the birds we see and contribute our data to this international, citizen-science project which is coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon. See article below for details about the GBBC.

Meet us in the parking lot of the Lakeshore Municipal Golf Course (2175 Punhoqua Dr., Oshkosh), where we will set up scopes and use binoculars to check open water near the Butte des Morts bridge. We will then work our way back along the river through Rainbow Park.

After birding, we can warm up and talk about birds in the Fox River Brewing Tap Room (formerly Fratello's) across the river from Rainbow Park. Sample their craft beer or enjoy whatever your favorite beverage is. And, if you like, have lunch with us (Dutch Treat). The Tap Room is family friendly.

Please dress for the weather and bring your binoculars if you have them. We will have binoculars to share. This outing is free, open to the public, and reservations are not necessary.



### A family program: Nocturnal Creatures

**Saturday, March 10**  
**1:30 pm**

Coughlin Center, 625 E. County Rd. Y, Oshkosh

Join us for this family program given by N.E.W. Zoo of Suamico. Learn about the differences between day- and night-active creatures, with a focus on how nocturnal animals are able to survive in diverse ecosystems. What kinds of creatures do you think they might bring for you to see? Owls, bats, mice, who knows? Come find out about the creatures of the night.

Free and open to the public. Donations gratefully accepted.



### Save the dates for these upcoming events!

Look for details in our next newsletter, on Facebook, and our website.

### Calendar of Events

Visit [www.winaudubon.org](http://www.winaudubon.org) for updates and details.

- Feb. 17 Eagles on the Fox in Oshkosh (see above)
- Feb. 16-19 Great Backyard Bird Count (see left)
- Mar 10 Nocturnal Creatures, Family Program (see above)
- Apr 8 Birding at Terrell's Island
- Apr 14 Midwest Crane Count
- Apr 15 Spring Banquet & Whooping Cranes
- May Birdathon
- May 5 Oshkosh Bird Fest
- May 19 Birds & Flowers at South Woods
- June 16 Explore Uihlein Wetlands

### Become a Citizen-Scientist, Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

### Great Backyard Bird Count

of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, **February 16-19, 2018**, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

In 2017, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 100 countries counted more than 6,200 species of birds on more than 180,000 checklists!

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You can even add photos and sounds to your checklist.

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful!

Then keep counting throughout the year with eBird, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time.

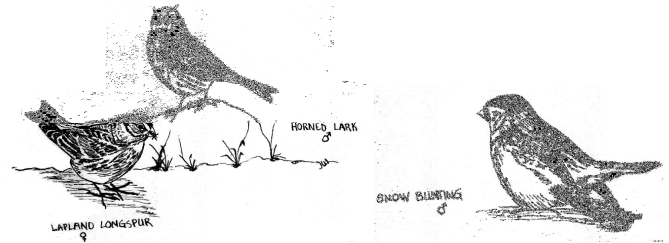
### Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use information from the Great Backyard Bird Count, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather and climate change influence bird populations?
- Some birds, such as winter finches, appear in large numbers during some years but not others. Where are these species from year to year, and what can we learn from these patterns?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

*The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners. The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by eBird. The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.*



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### 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.*

- |                          |                            |
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Gary & Elaine Coll

### In Memory of Carroll Gay

David Gay

### In Memory of Katherine & Russ Rill

Anonymous

### In Memory of Michele Ramseier Stone

Laura Ramseier

\*\*\*\*\*

Quiz Answer: Cedar Waxwing, *Bombycilla cedrorum*

2018

# YEAR OF THE BIRD

## Get Ready for the "Year of the Bird"

*"If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems in the world."*

Thomas Lovejoy  
Biologist and Godfather of Biodiversity

*A broad and timely alliance between Audubon, National Geographic, BirdLife, and Cornell steps up to protect birds and the places they need.*

By David Yarnold, (National) Audubon President and CEO

At Audubon, every year is the year of the bird. So when I got a call early 2017 from my good friend and former *San Jose Mercury News* colleague Susan Goldberg, now the charismatic editor-in-chief of *National Geographic* magazine and editorial director for National Geographic Partners, about a possible alliance between Audubon and Nat Geo, I was thrilled. What if, she asked, we made 2018 the Year of the Bird? And what if we could bring together dozens of organizations and use all of our combined storytelling expertise to elevate birds and the important place they have in our ecosystems?

What if, indeed.

2018 marks the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, one of the earliest environmental laws enacted anywhere in the world, and a key element of Audubon's genesis story. It was Audubon chapters—spurred by the wanton destruction of bird life wrought by the plume trade—that were the force behind Congress's adoption of rules that still protect birds 100 years later. As it made perfect sense to join forces with Nat Geo, an organization that spans the globe, it was also natural to expand the partnership to include two other groups with similar international breadth: Cornell Lab of Ornithology and BirdLife International. And once we did that, the lead partners recruited dozens of other organizations, ranging from the National Park Service to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Migratory Bird Program, to help in the cause.

Bringing the combined strengths of all of these organizations to bear on bird conservation is a type of collaboration that happens frequently—but often under the radar—in the NGO world. In truth, it's the only way that any of us can realistically tackle the scale of the threats

that birds face.

The Year of the Bird will celebrate the importance of birds in our lives: the wonder and passion and Internet memes (so many memes) that they inspire, and the roles they play in the web of life. The Year of the Bird collaboration gives us all an opportunity to recommit to our promise to protect birds and the places they need for the next century.

Throughout the year of storytelling and of science, of celebration and conservation efforts, the Year of the Bird will focus on how our changing environment is affecting bird populations and what we can do to stop the decline.

During the Year of the Bird, you will see the gripping stories and beautiful photography from around the world for which both *National Geographic* and *Audubon* magazines are known. You will also gain important insight into science and conservation efforts from Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and BirdLife International. All of these can be found at the Year of the Bird site: [birdyourworld.org](http://birdyourworld.org).

But Year of the Bird isn't a passive exercise—you have a critical role to play. Throughout 2018, we'll ask you to take simple actions that will help protect birds and provide you with themes that are sure to inspire. Each month, you could [make your home](#) and [your communities' buildings](#) bird-friendly, or you could join [a community science project](#) for a day, or you could help birds [stay safe during migration](#). Many of the actions are designed to engage others—your friends and family—with the natural world right alongside you. And you don't have to wait to get started: You can start now by beginning to plan your spring planting with our [Plants for Birds database](#). All of these small actions will help ensure that we'll have birds to love for the next century—and beyond.

This unprecedented coalition could come together only around the most bountiful, beautiful, and compelling wildlife on the planet. Now, more than ever, you're what hope looks like to a bird. And you have a lot of good company.

2018

# YEAR OF THE BIRD

Birds inspire us with their beauty, their grace, their tenacity. They are the most extraordinary and accessible avatars of the natural world, pausing in our backyards and at our bird feeders along their incredible migrations, singing in the dawn and reminding us of the interconnected web we live in from pole to pole. They serve as sentinels for the ecosystem; by monitoring their movements we can detect threats to habitats and ecosystems earlier than we would otherwise, and in addressing those threats we see that what's good for the birds is inevitably good for us as well.

Yet more than 200 of the world's bird species are at high risk of imminent extinction and many more face critical threats. By taking small steps—simple monthly actions for conservation, habitat preservation, and citizen science—can cumulatively make a large difference. *(from National Geographic)*

Help build a better world for birds by taking a simple but meaningful action each month. [Count Me In](https://secure.everyaction.com/dS085IbtnkSVsloby5h1ig2) (<https://secure.everyaction.com/dS085IbtnkSVsloby5h1ig2>)

# A Snowy December

By Janet Wissink

The “snowstorm” actually began on November 28 when a Snowy Owl was legally shot and killed at Wittman Regional Airport by an airport employee.

When I first learned of the shooting from a pilot, Doug Cooper, who was at the airport at the time of the incident, I was shocked and upset, as was the pilot. I did not know about depredation permits issued by US Fish and Wildlife Service, but soon learned that Wittman Regional Airport has one of these permits to use lethal methods on birds (except for Bald and Golden Eagles), if there is an immediate threat to human health and safety. According to Airport Director Peter Moll, the Snowy Owl was perched near the runway and efforts to make the bird fly off from its perch were unsuccessful. Because the runway had air traffic at the time, they felt the bird was an aviation hazard and there was no time to trap the owl.

It did not take long for the news to spread. Within a day I was contacted by Pat Fisher of The Feather Bird Rehab and Education Center in New London and connected to falconer Frank Ujazdowski. Together we met 10 days later with Moll, Operations Manager Pete Rausch, USDA Wildlife Services rep Chip Lovell, and others to propose a new protocol: on-call falconers would safely capture birds of prey on the airport grounds and The Feather would treat and release them in a new location.

Moll and Rausch were very receptive to the idea. They agreed that the airport would buy one bownet to keep there. Winnebago Audubon offered to pay for another and an anonymous donation to Winnebago Audubon would pay for a third one that the falconers could use.

A week later Ujazdowski had four additional falconers on the call list and the bownet for the airport. Everything was in place.

Ujazdowski received the first phone call from Wittman Airport two days later. There was a Snowy Owl hanging around. It took two days to lure it into the trap. The very next day a second owl was captured. Success!

Both Snowy Owls were cared for by Fisher at The Feather. Both were underweight and owl #2 had an infection.

Owl #1 was released a week later on a cold and cloudy afternoon, but to the cheers of all present. The pilot, whose phone call to me set in motion the new protocol, was thrilled to be asked to release the owl.

Owl #2 took almost a month to recover, but was also released back into the wild to the shouts of joy from those in attendance.



What a thrill to be part of this positive turn in events. One phone call from a concerned individual changed how an airport takes on the challenge of removing Snowy Owls from their property. The team of volunteers, consisting of five falconers, the Winnebago Audubon Society, and The Feather hope to expand the collaboration with airports in Green Bay and Appleton. They also hope it serves as an example to other airports on how to cope with Snowy Owls and other birds of prey.

Fisher and Ujazdowski are extremely dedicated individuals with a passion for birds. Fisher, a licensed bird rehabilitator, depends entirely on donations to fund her bird rehabilitation and education center. Ujazdowski is a licensed falconer who is volunteering his time to help rescue the Snowy Owls. We are extremely grateful for their time and efforts on this project. Winnebago Audubon is accepting donations to help cover their expenses.

## Want to learn more about Snowy Owls?

Check out Project SNOWstorm. Their goal is to take advantage of Snowy Owl irruptions to better understand and conserve this spectacular bird. For information about the lives of Snowy Owls, irruptions, tracking them, and monitoring their health, visit their website: <http://www.projectsnowstorm.org>. You will be able to view the tracking maps for the owls fitted with transmitters, too.

## Spring is all about birds during 2018

### Year of the Bird:

- 🦉 Terrell's Island
- 🦉 Crane Count
- 🦉 Whooping Cranes
- 🦉 Birdathon
- 🦉 Oshkosh Bird Fest
- 🦉 May Day Bird Count
- 🦉 South Woods
- 🦉 Uihlein Marsh



## Time to get involved . . .

Election of officers takes place at our annual meeting on April 15, so it is time to think about how you might contribute your time and talents to Winnebago Audubon. “Many hands make light work.” We can always use additional folks on the Board to help with coordinating activities, writing for the newsletter, handling our membership, etc. . . . There are a variety opportunities. Board meetings are not just all business. We love to chat about what birds we’ve seen and what new places we’ve explored. Give me a call or send me an email. I would be happy to answer any questions? 920-216-1172 or [winnebagoaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:winnebagoaudubon@gmail.com).



## Going Batty

Going batty? That's what my sister and I did on our New Mexican road trip in early October. Our final destination was Carlsbad Caverns specifically to watch the nightly mass exodus of Brazilian free-tailed bats, *Tadarida brasiliensis*, from the cave. Carlsbad hosts one of the largest Brazilian free-tailed bat colonies in the United States with an estimated half a million bats.

Dusk was quickly approaching as we sat in a light rain near the top of the 300-seat amphitheater which faces the cave entrance. The ranger had instructed us to turn off all electronic devices, that photography was forbidden, and silence was required. After all, we were visitors to the bats' home and we must respect them. At 6:10 pm about 100 bats emerged. They seemed disoriented by the inclement weather but still flew off into the fog for a nighttime of feeding. Hundreds more followed but this was not quite the spectacle I had envisioned.

We returned the following evening but now we knew to sit in the front row where we could actually see the bats emerge from the cave. Weather conditions were foggier than the previous night. The bat exodus mirrored that of yesterday. Disappointing.

We should have been heading home, but two days later, we decided to return for one last try. The day was sunny and warm. We're in the front row and thankful there is no rain or fog. The ranger-led program was to begin at 6:00 pm. But the bats don't respect a ranger's pre-set schedule. At 5:55 pm, thousands of bats exploded en masse from the cave. No hesitation or disorientation tonight. They circled once in front of the entrance, all turning simultaneously just like starlings do in a large flock. Not one bat collided with its close-flying neighbors. They swirled up and flew off to the southeast.

For the next 35 minutes without pause, as dusk deepened, thousands upon thousands of bats streamed from the cave, circled once and flew off. I sat there mesmerized. This was incredible.

When the last of the bats emerged, we departed for the visitor's center. Moments later, we were astounded to see an undulating ribbon of bats stretching to the south as far as we could see. More bats were leaving the cave! Why did we leave so early? The ranger had mentioned that the bats could be departing for their Mexican over-wintering home any night now. Was this that special night? I'll never know.

The following morning, even before the first hint of dawn, we returned to our front row seats. Only the occasional distant hoot of a great horned owl broke the



silence. As first light appeared, we heard a soft distant hum. Looking around, we couldn't see anything. The hum grew louder and, all of a sudden, about 500 bats came swooping in from behind, fast and low, about 8 feet over our heads and flew directly, without hesitation, into the cave. WOW! That was exciting. Absolute silence returned. Then another distant hum (from beating bat wings) grew louder. A second group of bats flew low over our heads and disappeared into the cave. Then the show was over. The very small number of returning bats was only a tiny fraction of the enormous number of bats which had left the cave the night before. Perhaps most of the bats had departed.

Our "batty" experience was over. Now it was time to return home. For years I had wanted to watch the bats leaving Carlsbad Caverns. It took three nights but the mass exodus was one of the most extraordinary and amazing natural phenomenon I have ever witnessed. It exceeded my expectation.

I would encourage everyone to visit Carlsbad Caverns to watch the bats. Late September into early October is the best time to see the greatest number of bats, for both adults and young are flying. Be sure to get a front row seat. This awesome spectacle was the perfect exclamation point on a fabulous 3-1/2 week adventure discovering New Mexico's natural and cultural history.

Oh yes, the enormous cave was also worth seeing!

## New website coming soon!

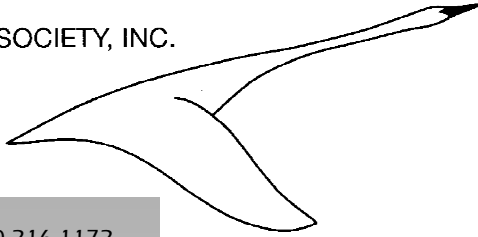
We are excited about our new website that should be completed for you early this spring. It will be more user-friendly and attractive along with helpful resources and links. We'll let you know the new web address as soon as it is ready for you to use.

## From the Quiz Master:

I'm a 7" crested, grayish-brown bird with a yellow belly, black mask and yellow band on the tip of my tail. I often travel in flocks searching for berries and fruit. You could see me in all seasons. Whooo am I?

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

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P.O. BOX 184  
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**OFFICERS**

**President:** Janet Wissink, 920-216-1172  
winnebagoaudubon@gmail.com

**Vice President:** OPEN

**Secretary:** Zaiga Freivalds  
920-233-5914 / zaigam@charter.net

**Treasurer:** Mike Brandel  
mbrandel49@gmail.com

**DIRECTORS**

Kelli Bahls  
920-537-2121 / kabahls@outlook.com

Anita Carpenter, 920-233-6677

Daniel Fiser  
920-216-1876 / dsfiser@hotmail.com

Evelyn Meuret  
920-573-7828 / evelynmeuret57@att.net

Dave Moon  
920-235-4429 / djmoon@northnet.net

Pat Nichols  
920-426-0261 / patnichols@earthlink.net

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**Important Note: TEMPORARILY AWAY?** Please notify us if you will be temporarily away. The post office will not forward your newsletter. If your newsletter is returned to us, we remove you from our mailing list. Please contact Pat Nichols at patnichols@earthlink.net or 920-426-0261 with any questions.

**RENEWALS:** Your mailing label includes your membership expiration date above your name. If you are a "Chapter Only" member the word CHAPTER will appear after the expiration date. Please renew your chapter membership by filling out the application form below. Thank you for helping us save on the cost of renewal reminders.  
If you are a member of National Audubon, NATL will appear after 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 by using the application below.

**Winnebago Audubon Society Mission Statement:** Advance the mission of the National Audubon Society to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity through grassroots efforts of community outreach and advocacy.

**AUDUBON SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**Chapter Only Membership:** Your \$20.00 stays in our chapter and you receive the Winnebago Audubon chapter newsletter and all chapter benefits. Make \$20.00 check payable to **Winnebago Audubon**.

**OR**

**National Audubon Membership:** Your \$20.00 includes chapter membership and all chapter benefits, PLUS *Audubon* magazine and all national benefits. Make \$20.00 check payable to **National Audubon Society**.

I do not wish to receive solicitations from National Audubon Society.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Code: **C8ZZ120Z**

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

**Word of the Day: Rachis**

Another term for the central shaft of a flight (wing) feather.

*Welcome to  
Winnebago Audubon*

A special thank you to all those who are renewing again this year as well. 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.

Barb Cattani  
Dale & Margit Rezabek  
Ann Rosenberg  
Carol Rosenberg

*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*

**Pat Nichols, Membership Chair**  
(email me at: patnichols@earthlink.net)