

The Lake Flyer

Winnebago Audubon Society, Inc.

November-December 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

Birdscaping Your Backyard

Thursday, Nov. 15

6:30 Social; 7:00 Program

Evergreen Retirement Community

Lower Level Commons, 1130 N. Westfield St., Oshkosh

Winnebago Audubon Society and Wild Ones Fox Valley Area Chapter are co-sponsoring this informative program on "Birdscaping Your Backyard" with Mariette Nowak. It is free and open to the public.

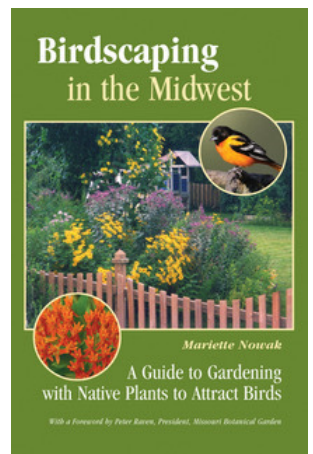
Learn how to increase the variety of birds in your yard by growing native plants that offer birds their natural habitat and a yearlong smorgasbord of berries, nuts, seeds and insects. Gardeners and native plant enthusiasts can play a vital role in restoring and preserving native communities that support not only birds, but also other wildlife including butterflies, bees, and bats.

Oshkosh is a designated Bird City Wisconsin community, as are many others in our area. Birdscaping your backyard provides much needed food and shelter to migrating birds in addition to our year-round feathered friends. Visit www.birdcitywisconsin.org to learn more about the Bird City Wisconsin program. And save the date for Oshkosh Bird Fest on Saturday, May 4, 2019 (www.oshkoshbirdfest.com).

Mariette Nowak is the author of the book, "Birdscaping in the Midwest". She is also the past director of the Wehr Nature Center in Milwaukee County, where she served for 18 years. An avid birder, she is a board member and newsletter editor for the Lakeland Audubon Society and past board member of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology.

In addition, she is Founder and President of the Kettle Moraine Chapter of the Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes. She has also served as a past vice-president of the national organization.

In Walworth County, she serves on the Park Committee.



 * 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. *
 * Audrey Rhyner *
 * Billie Jo Rylance *
 * Tom Sullivan *



23rd Annual Toward Harmony with Nature

Saturday, January 19, 2019
 Oshkosh Convention Center

This year's conference will feature keynote speaker, David Cordray, Senior Restoration Ecologist and Engineer and owner of Environmental Returns, LLC, along with nine other expert presenters. In Cordray's presentation, "The Value of Ecological Restoration", he will share his journey to finding ecological awareness and his insight into why we must actively participate in restoring the health of our lands. He will explore reasons for striving for ecological health, how the work benefits others and how we can influence a greater ecological awareness.

There will be nine other native plant experts on a full range of natural landscaping and native plant topics for urban, suburban and rural yards.

Space is limited. To register and for program details, please go to:

<http://www.TowardHarmonywithNature.org>.

Bluebirds at Utica Golf Club

by Dave Misterek, Trail Monitor

My wife, Christine, and I are glad to report on another year of successful bluebird monitoring at Utica Golf Course. For those of you who are not familiar with this effort, a brief background summary is in order. This bluebird trail is sponsored by Winnebago Audubon Society and the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW). It is composed of 37 bluebird houses that were placed at Utica Golf Club several years ago with the approval of the golf club owner, Greg Johnson. I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the support that is given by Greg and his staff in providing a safe environment for the bluebird houses at this location. We have found Utica Golf Club to be a great option to attract bluebirds and other native cavity nesting songbirds who depend on birdhouses for safe nesting sites. Without the assistance of bird lovers who install and monitor bluebird houses on appropriate habitat, these beautiful birds would be dependent on natural tree cavities for nest sites. Unfortunately, natural cavities are declining due to changing land uses and competition from



aggressive non-native birds such as starlings and house sparrows (English sparrows). The semi-open grass habitat found at golf courses provides ample volumes of insect larva and insects for food and is a good example of that preferred by bluebirds. Our bluebird trail is composed of 32 birdhouses at Utica Golf Club, 3 additional ones located in my yard and 2 more in the back yard of my daughter Jennifer and her husband, Mark. Following guidelines of BRAW, we monitor and record the nesting activity of bluebirds and other songbirds weekly and send the monitoring report to BRAW at the end of the nesting season.

Our bluebird trail may also be called a bluebird/tree swallow trail because of the large number of tree swallows that are found in eastern Wisconsin and the favorable birdhouse nest sites provided for them on our trail. The competition between bluebirds and tree swallows for nest sites is a friendly one as the two species do not harm one another and are both beautiful song birds that are important members of our environment. This year we have

continued with the experiment of placing bluebird houses in pairs 20 feet apart to see if bluebirds and tree swallows will nest close to each other. If they do, it may increase the total production of both species. In our experiment we established 8 pairs of bluebird houses and found that a majority of each pair of houses did produce successful bluebird and tree swallow nests at the same time. Evidently, the bluebird pairs will potentially accept the presence of tree swallows in their nest territory even though they do not allow other bluebirds to nest within their territory. Next year, we intend to continue our experiment with paired birdhouses to further explore this alternative.

This year we again monitored the trail weekly and enjoyed watching and recording the nesting success of these wonderful songbirds. Even though the nesting season is now ended, the bluebirds are still very evident on the golf course as they continue their fall migration to southern states to spend the winter. We have kept records of the nesting activity and can happily report that the total results of the songbird nesting on this trail this year includes the production of 55 young bluebirds, 127 young tree swallows, 7 young house wrens and 3 young chickadees. The bluebird success was significantly reduced this year due to the huge snow storm we witnessed in early spring, however, we are confident that they will return in large numbers next year. We reported this successful production to BRAW. They in turn accumulate this data from other bluebird monitors state wide and are able to announce at a later date a total production for the entire state. As a result, Wisconsin is always among the top producers of bluebirds in the U.S.

With predator guards installed on the birdhouse posts we are able to reduce most raccoon and other mammal predation. We do have a few houses that initially are occupied by house sparrows that are present at nearby farms. These non-native birds are a main avian predator of bluebirds and are known to kill adult and young bluebirds and tree swallows on their nests. Fortunately, we are able to control these predators by placing birdhouses far from farm buildings and through the use of VanErt sparrow traps at the beginning of the season. Another main avian predator of bluebirds is the starling. This non-native bird can be controlled through the use of the bluebird house entrance hole that is designed to be too small for starlings but the right size for bluebirds.

As a side note to those of you who may be interested in placing one or more bluebird houses in your back yard or other appropriate habitat to try your hand at promoting bluebirds or other cavity nesting songbirds, I give you enthusiastic encouragement and advice that you follow guidelines provided by BRAW at www.braw.org. This guidance includes birdhouse plans, placement guidance and monitoring recommendations. Please also consider joining BRAW to receive additional guidance in promoting this important songbird. So, for now so long, good luck in your bluebird house experiences and hope to report to you again next year.

Editor's Note: Thank you, Dave and Christine, for your dedication to bluebirds!



North Shore Notes

One of the compelling aspects of nature observation is the unexpected. We had just parked the truck in a small park overlooking Lake Superior in Ontario, Canada, when a 6 to 7 inch bird landed on the hood. The slender bird was a warm brown with a black-streaked breast and a very subtle eye line. My first thought was a thrush but its breast was a beautiful, pale straw-yellow. No thrushes have yellow breasts.

Racing through my mental inventory, eliminating sparrows and warblers, I wondered if this bird was a pipit. My limited experiences with pipits (they're only migrants through Wisconsin) is that they are ground feeders foraging at least a football field away (!) on a dark muddy field. They blend in so well with their surroundings that they are virtually impossible to find, let alone see field marks.

Yes, this temporary hood ornament was an American pipit, *Anthus rubescens*. Several other pipits were feeding on the ground all around us. When they flew, their white outer tail feathers, which are a good identification mark, were obvious.

Nesting in the high arctic, these sparrow-like birds migrate to the southern United States and Mexico to overwinter. This small flock was on its long journey with a big lake to cross or fly around. To have such a hard-to-find bird land at eye level just three feet away was a treat.

This pipit encounter was just one highlight in the late September rustic camping road trip my sister and I took to explore the west coast of lower Michigan, north shore of Lakes Superior and northern Minnesota.

Sleeping Giant Provincial Park on Lake Superior near Thunder Bay provided another memorable experience when we were treated to soothing rock music. You ask, soothing rock music?

We hiked to the "Sea Lion", a unique rock formation formed from years of eroding wave action on the towering lakeside cliff. On our return trip, we took a short detour down to the lake. The narrow beach was composed of the "typical" small, wave-washed, smooth gray stones found along Lake Superior. We watched the gentle rhythmic waves and noticed that every third wave was slightly



American pipit.

larger. When that wave receded, we heard a soft, pleasant, hard-to-describe, sound. What was making this sound? We soon noticed that, very imperceptibly, a few stones were shifted and tumbled by the wave. Was this the source of the sound? To verify this, we focused our attention on these stones. Sure enough, as the wave broke, the stones rolled back and forth, occasionally bumping into each other thus creating a soft sound. We lingered awhile to watch and listen—mesmerized by this tranquil musical scene. This was "rock music" at its finest. We also learned: Although the beach looks static, it is really constantly rearranging itself.

Our two week adventure was filled with so many unexpected surprises. We witnessed migrating monarch butterflies drifting by at a rate of 600 individuals per hour at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. We threw snowballs in Canada and mined for amethysts north of Thunder Bay. We walked across the headwaters of the "mighty" Mississippi River at Minnesota's Itasca Lake State Park. We survived a week of rain when the daily temperature never exceeded 50° F. In spite of the weather, we had a great time, laughed a lot and were blessed with many pleasant memories.

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From the Quiz Master:

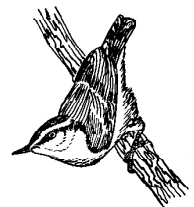
I'm a purple-colored quartz crystal. Presence of the element manganese gives me my purple color. What gem am I?

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

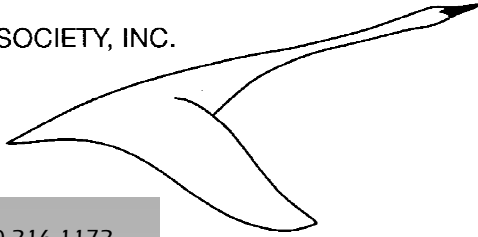
Word of the Day: Nut

A hard-shelled, one-celled fruit that does not split open at maturity. eg. Acorn or Hazelnut

Our January newsletter will reveal our list of interesting and fun Programs and Field Trips for 2019.



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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
Emily Berger, bergeree1989@gmail.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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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 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: **C8ZZ12OZ**

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

Quiz Answer: Amethyst (S10z)

*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.

Vickie Michels
Kelly O'Hanlon
Joan Truax
Roger Verstegen
Pat Weis
Kelly Wilson

*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*