# The passenger pigeon. Vol. 72, No. 2 Summer 2010

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# The Passenger PIGEON

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THE PASSENGER PIGEON Vol. 72 No. 2 Summer 2010

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Send all manuscripts and related correspondence to the Editors. Information for "Seasonal Field Notes" should be sent to the Bird Reports Coordinator (see inside back cover). Art work and questions about the art should be sent to the Assistant Editor for art (see left column). Manuscripts that deal with Wisconsin birds, ornithological topics of interest to WSO members, and WSO activities are considered for publication. For detailed submission guidelines, see pages 131–132 of the Summer 2007 issue (Vol. 69, No. 2) or contact the Editors. As a general guide to style, use issues after Vol. 60, No. 1, 1998.



*Front Cover: The Baltimore Oriole* (Icterus galbula) *was selected by Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative International as Wisconsin's flagship for international conservation. A neotropical migrant with a winter range that extends from southern Mexico to northern South America, the gaudy blackbird is declining at a rate of 1.3% annually. Photo courtesy of Dave Frericks.*

## It's Been a Pleasure and an Honor

As with any new endeavor, I was a little bit apprehensive as I stepped into the role of WSO President two years ago. Even though I had been on the WSO Board of Directors for several years, and had been Vice-President for the two prior years, one can never tell what lies ahead. Well, I am here to tell you that I had nothing to be concerned about. Why? Because of the great group of people that is the WSO Board of Directors and, most importantly, because of you, the members of WSO.

As individuals and as a team, your board members work extraordinarily hard on behalf of the birds and birders of Wisconsin. They devote a great deal of time and energy to their areas of responsibility, assist others on the board as needed, and provide overall leadership to the organization. And, in the meantime, the group manages to have some fun along the way. I would like to take this opportunity to thank past and present board members and committee chairs Jeff Baughman, Scott Baughman, Sheldon Cooper, Noel Cutright, Jane Dennis, Barb Duerksen, Jim Frank, Bettie and Neil Harriman, Randy Hoffman, Michael John Jaeger, Margaret Jones, Mark Korducki, Lennie Lichter, Mike Mossman, Bill Mueller, Mariette Nowak, Ursula Petersen, Janine Polk, Christine Reel, Don Reel, Tom Schultz, Daryl Tessen, Mary Uttech, and Levi Wood for their assistance to me over the past two years and for their overall dedication to WSO.

Of course, without you, the members of WSO, there wouldn't be much of a need for a board of directors. I, as outgoing President, and the rest of the board thank you for your past support of this great organization. You make possible all of the activities that WSO sponsors and participates in. I ask for your continued support for Tom Schultz, our incoming President, the board of directors, and the various future activities, special funds, and events in which WSO is involved. With your active participation and financial support, WSO will continue to be one of the premier state birding and ornithological organizations in the country.

As I stated, thanks to all of you; whatever trepidation I may have had as incoming President was quickly put to rest. It has been a pleasure and an honor to have served you and WSO as President.

President

This Belted Kingfisher was photographed at its nest site by Jack Bartholmai.

## With Our Thanks

The Editors hope that each of you read the excellent *Spring Season: 2009* that was compiled by Marilyn Bontly for the Spring, 2010, issue, 72(1). When her predecessor, Karl David, wished to step down after ten years of preparing the Spring report, Marilyn most graciously accepted our offer to be the new compiler for that season. She did so with much trepidation and enlisted the assistance of Andrea Szymczak. When introducing herself to you readers, Marilyn told you about her mentor, Winnie Woodmansee, who was an excellent birder and teacher. Marilyn wondered to us, what Winnie would "think if she knew I was now compiling a seasonal report?" Marilyn, Winnie would be very proud. It was an exceptionally well done article. Thank you so much for taking on this task for WSO.

Marilyn warned us when she accepted this position, that she might not be able to do it for long. When the assistance from Andrea turned out to be so good, I think Marilyn felt comfortable (and that she wasn't abandoning us to a long replacement search) with Andrea becoming the new Spring Season compiler. So it is with total confidence that we welcome Andrea Szymczak as the new compiler for the Spring Season. You will find her contact information on the inside cover of this issue.

We heartily thank both of them for making our jobs as Co-Editors easier.

Bettie and Neil Harriman, Editors

Cooper's Hawk pictured at the nest with young by Jack Bartholmai.

# Orioles and Ocelots: Wisconsin's Costa Rica Connection

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It is a portentous prediction, largely unnoticed by the media. A recent article in the journal Conservation Biology predicts a mass extinction of monophageous insects (organisms that specialize in feeding on one species of plant) in the world's biodiversity hotspots (Fonseca 2009). The little things that run the world, it turns out, are rapidly losing ground—literally. Nowhere is that situation more acute than in the Tropical Andes.

Arguably the most biodiverse landscape on the planet, the Andes of northern South America are a treasure trove of biological wealth, the result of a unique convergence of tropical climate and complex topography. Rain drenched valleys and fog-enshrouded peaks support a spectacular radiation of species, thousands of which are found nowhere else. Strictly in terms of its feathered denizens, the rugged spine of the continent is the apex of global bird diversity (Mittermeier et al. 2000). More than 1,700 species have been documented. New species are still being discovered.

What then, of the insects? Tiny as they may be, the role insects play in ecosystems—herbivory, pollination, nutrient cycling, predation, food chain support—is enormous. Remove these six-legged building blocks of ecosystem function and the foundation begins to crumble. Thus, the predicted mass extinction of "specialists" is indicative of a much larger problem—ecosystem deterioration. The unraveling of the Tropical Andes' forested ecosystems is mirrored across Latin America and the implications for North America's neotropical migrant birds are enormous.

## A Migratory Spectacle

As summer wanes and the goldenrods begin to flower, shortening day length gives rise to physiological changes in birds. Migratory species become restless, increase food uptake, and add layers of fat in anticipation of the most demanding (and perilous) event of their peripatetic lives—hemispheric migration.

Then, responding to internal cues and prevailing weather conditions, they leave their breeding grounds for warmer climes in tropical latitudes.

Their numbers are legion. It is estimated up to five billion birds depart Canada's vast boreal forest every fall. Sweeping southward on a broad front, they are joined by hundreds of millions more from the United States. It is a spectacle of global proportion, rivaling even the great wildebeest migrations of Africa's Serengeti. And yet, under the cover of darkness, this nocturnal river of birds passes largely unnoticed. Some will spend two months traveling to their ancestral wintering grounds in South America. Others will abbreviate their journey, escaping the rigors of a temperate winter in the ruin-studded forests of Guatemala. Regardless of their destination, all are dependent on the availability of tropical habitats for survival.

Consider the Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*). Weighing in at 8 to 10 grams (a few feathers less than your average chickadee), twice a year this remarkable bird undertakes a journey that would put the most accomplished tri-athlete to shame, navigating every manner of hazard to run the gauntlet from its breeding grounds in eastern North American to its wintering grounds in the Tropical Andes and back. Upon arrival in South America, our little blue friend is confronted with a situation that is decidedly grim.

Ceruleans are rather finicky about their winter haunts, having a strong affinity for middle elevations on the humid, forested slopes of the Andes (Moreno et al. 2009). That is also the preferred habitat of the world's most heavily (legally) traded commodity—coffee. As you might imagine, given our appetite for lattes and cappuccinos, slopes at that elevation have been largely laid bare, converted to agricultural uses. More than 90% of the original vegetation has been lost, thrusting the tiny warbler into a rather tenuous spot—ever shrinking habitat. Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*), Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), and Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), all with core winter range in the Tropical Andes, are in comparably dire straits.

Shifting our focus northward, to the steamy lowlands of Central America, we find a landscape dominated by industrial agriculture. Central America's Caribbean slope forests are among the most endangered on the planet (Stotz et al. 1996), pushed to the brink of oblivion by a hungry world. A morning in an ultralight aircraft would reveal a landscape dominated by a green patchwork quilt of monocultures—sugar cane, citrus, bananas, pineapple, with oil palm (for biofuel) looming on the horizon. Isolated trees—lone, leafy giants—stand in silent testimony to the once vast forests that blanketed the region from volcanic summit to Gulf shore. Gone are the expansive tropical forests needed by Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), and Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*).

Across Latin America the story is the same. Burgeoning human populations coupled with an expanding agriculture frontier are delivering a potent one-two punch to the region's remaining wild places. Spectacular wildlife, including our neotropical migrants, are in retreat as remaining forests shrink. More than one-half of Wisconsin's 238 species of breeding birds winter in Latin America (Fig. 1).The same is true for North America's 650+ species of breeding birds.

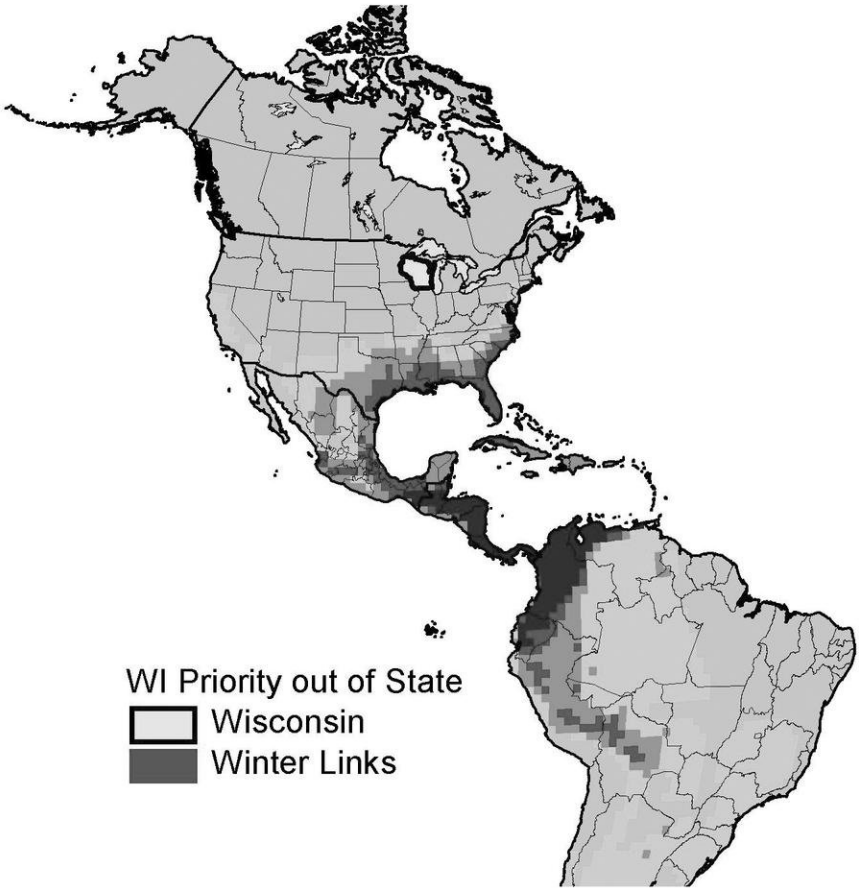


Figure 1. Wisconsin Winter Links. This map depicts the wintering distribution for Wisconsin priority species. Darker shading indicates a higher number of species. It is used as a coarse filter to direct Wisconsin's wintering bird habitat protection efforts. Developed by Peter Blancher et al in 2006. Map courtesy of Partners in Flight.

Their collective fate is inextricably linked to that of forests throughout the New World tropics.

## The Wintering Habitat Connection

Soft-ball sized and snowball white, the endangered Yellow-billed Cotinga (*Carpodectes antoniae*) is a habitat specialist, nesting in mangroves and foraging in adjacent upland forests. For years bird conservationists have fretted while this rare frugivore has careened toward extinction, the victim of relentless habitat destruction. The fate of this Pacific Coast endemic and its preferred habitat are one. Why should we care? Because the same mangroves that serve as breeding habitat for the cotinga provide essential wintering habitat for the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*),

the "little yellow comet" of Wisconsin's floodplain forests. Thus, wintering habitat conservation becomes a critical component of the calculus of conservation for this neotropical migrant. If we want the warbler's rich "zweet, zweet, zweet" to echo through stands of silver maple and swamp white oak every spring, conservation of Latin America's mangrove forests is not optional.

There has been long-standing recognition that tropical forests are important for neotropical migrants, but considerable debate about just how important. Ongoing scientific investigation is in the process of laying that debate to rest. The verdict? Wintering habitat is key to long-term conservation of many species. Indeed, the availability and condition of wintering habitat is the primary factor limiting populations for numerous neotropical migrants.

Recent work done by the Institute for Bird Population Studies (IBP) revealed both first-year survival and adult survival were the most important drivers of spatial variation in population trends for numerous neotropical migrants (DeSante and Sarraco 2009). Translation—survival of juveniles and adults is largely a function of habitat conditions on wintering grounds and migration routes. Conclusion—everything we do to protect and manage breeding habitat for those species will be of little value if we don't protect their wintering habitat. David DeSante, Director of IBP, was decidedly more candid during an interview for Cornell Lab's Living Bird magazine, "Now, if the bottleneck is winter survival, and you put all your efforts into breeding hatchlings [on breeding grounds], you are just increasing the number of birds that die each winter" (Strieffert 2007). A sobering assessment indeed. But in that dour reality lies a clarion call for action.

If we want to get serious about migratory bird conservation, really serious, we need to implement habitat conservation strategies that span continents. Nothing short of a massive hemispheric mobilization will be sufficient. As the clock ticks, trees fall, and populations of many of our most beloved birds—Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), and Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) (*see cover*)—continue to decline.

## Wisconsin Steps Up

In southwest Costa Rica, where "good roads" are few and far between, a large land mass juts defiantly away from the country's sinuous coast and into the turbulent Pacific. Landward of beaches occupied only by sea turtles and an occasional Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*), an industrious Howler Monkey can travel for miles in unbroken canopy. Below, on the dimly lit forest floor, five species of cats—jaguarundi, margay, ocelot, mountain lion, and jaguar—prowl muddy trails, ever alert for their next meal. The Osa Peninsula is still a wild place.

Considered a global conservation priority due to exceptional species richness and high levels of endemism, "the Osa" as it's known to those who frequent the area, is a land of superlatives—spectacular beaches, magnificent forests, gaudy birds. The peninsula's ecosystems, the cornerstone of which is a block of forest a quarter million acres in size, are intact

Table 1. Wisconsin bird "species of greatest conservation need" documented on the Osa Peninsula. E = Endangered, T = Threatened, SC = Special Concern.

| Species | Wisconsin Status |
|---|---|
| Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) | SC |
| Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) | SC |
| Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) | E |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) | SC |
| Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*) | SC |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) | SC |
| Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*) | T |
| Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) | SC |
| Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) | SC |
| Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) | SC |
| Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) | SC |
| Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) | SC |
| Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*) | SC |
| Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*) | T |
| Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) | SC |
| Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*) | T |
| Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*) | SC |

and functional, supported by a cast of thousands of plants and animal species. But even here, in this remote corner of Central America, the storm clouds of change are gathering. The peninsula's flat lands have been largely cleared for cattle pasture. Ocean views are fueling a growing real estate market for vacation homes. A proposed international airport on the Pacific slope promises massive landscape transformation.

Deep in the Osa's forests, among skulking antbirds and furtive agoutis, a surprising number of "Wisconsin's birds"—fifty four at last count—find safe harbor. Closer examination reveals 18 considered conservation priorities (Table 1). The Osa has served as their winter home for millennia. Today, the future of their forested redoubt is anything but certain. Compelled by conservation need and opportunity, Wisconsin has stepped into the breach. Since 2009, a home grown partnership has propelled the Badger State to the forefront of international bird conservation.

## The Anatomy of a Partnership

Wisconsin's Osa partnership is built upon the twin pillars of conservation science and effective partners. To ensure success, an international venture also requires an on-the-ground partner with capacity, political savvy, and intestinal fortitude.

Since 2003, Friends of the Osa (FOO), a Costa Rican non-profit conservation organization, has skillfully cultured a growing awareness of the Osa's biological treasures and the need to protect them. Not strictly a bird conservation organization, FOO has an ambitious, focused mission—ensure the Osa's forests are worth more standing than cut. The bottom line is ecosystem viability, underpinned by sustainable local economies. Achieving as much re-

Figure 2. The Pacific Ocean from Cerro Osa. Photo courtesy of Rick Stanley.

quires an organic, multi-faceted approach to conservation of the peninsula's 13 distinct ecosystems. Sound science provides the foundation for their efforts, the core of which includes establishment of a protected area network buttressed by community and government support.

By design, the network will connect to Corcovado National Park, crown jewel of the Costa Rica park system. Rugged and remote, at 100,000-acres in size Corcovado is not large enough to sustain wildlife that needs room to roam—jaguar, mountain lion, herds of white-lipped peccary, and large forest raptors including Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*). The network, referred to as the Corcovado-Matapalo Biological Corridor, will effectively enlarge the park by creating an archipelago of protected land extending from the park to Cabo Matapalo, the rocky headlands at the southern tip of the peninsula. Tens of thousands of acres of vital neotropical migrant wintering habitat will be protected as a result.

FOO's leader, Dr. Adrian Forsyth, is no lightweight. The Harvard educated biologist (a former student of the iconic E. O. Wilson) cut his teeth in the tropics long ago and has an impressive record of conservation accomplishments. Forsyth understands "many hands make for light work" and has become extraordinarily adept at forging effective partnerships.

In 2008, when a critical piece of the Cabo Matapalo corridor became threatened, Forsyth kicked things into gear. Cerro Osa, as the piece is known, is magnificent—1,500 largely forested acres offering stunning views of the Pacific Ocean (Fig. 2). The owner, an

eleven member partnership based in Florida, decided to develop the property for a resort and luxury homes, despite the presence of a conservation easement. "We knew there were technical problems with the easement," Forsyth said. "But if development proceeded, easements throughout the country would be in jeopardy. And development would compromise our ability to connect to Corcovado. We had to buy it to save it." The price was a whopping $3.2 million.

Undaunted, Forsyth marshaled an alliance of international heavy hitters—Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Blue Moon Fund, the Beneficia Foundation, and the American Bird Conservancy. All pledged funds to save the property.

At the same time, thousands of miles north, a new partnership with its eye on the Osa was fledging. In recognition of the importance of the Osa to Wisconsin's wintering migrants, the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI) International Program led formation of a unique coalition that also pledged support. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Neenah Paper, the American Transmission Company, and Xcel Energy provided vital funds to help protect Cerro Osa, as did numerous individuals and organizations. It is an innovative partnership, home grown, international in reach.

Ultimately, Cerro Osa was spared domestication by bulldozer, and became a key piece of the growing linkage to Corcovado. Just as important, for the first time in history Wisconsin rallied to save important wintering habitat for its migratory birds, heralding a new era of bird conservation for our state. Cerro Osa represents not an end point, but rather the beginning of a long-term commitment to save wintering habitat for our precious migratory heritage.

## A Future for Our Birds

Protection of wintering grounds for neotropical migrants is gaining steam nationally, and the seeds of locally driven, internationally supported conservation efforts are germinating throughout Latin America. Each new project site provides an anchor for species (including monophageous insects!) drifting toward extinction. That's very good news for our migratory birds, including the Baltimore Oriole and Cerulean Warbler. But much remains to be done.

The magnitude of forest destruction in the tropics is staggering. The anticipated loss of remaining habitat due to expected population increases in Latin America over the next 40 years—100 to 360 million—casts an air of uncertainty over the region's surviving tropical forests and all species dependent on them, including our neotropical migrants. There is a closing window of opportunity within which to act. Time is of the essence. We must all be part of the solution. Our untapped conservation capacity is considerable, our participation essential for success.

## How You Can Help

If you'd like to help support protection of vital wintering habitat for Wis-

consin's neotropical migrants, you can send a donation to:

The Natural Resources
Foundation of Wisconsin
P.O. Box 2317
Madison, WI 53701

Specify "Osa Project" on the memo line.

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Dave Frericks and Rick Stanley for use of their photos. And my deepest admiration for and thanks to the conservationists who labor in the trenches daily to save Latin America's magnificent forests.

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*Craig Thompson is a Regional Land Program Supervisor with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and serves as Chair of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative's International Committee. He has yet to see a Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoo.*

# Sapsucker Nesting Attempt in Fond du Lac County

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During the summer of 2008 I heard on at least two separate occasions the distinct irregular tapping of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker from across the lake on which we live in southeastern Fond du Lac County (T14N, R19E, S27). While sapsuckers are common migrants in this part of the state, they have usually departed by late April to early May. This particular bird, however, was observed in the middle and end of June.

According to the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas (WBBA), this species was observed during the atlas period in both Fond du Lac and Dodge counties, but not confirmed to have nested in this part of the state (see page 109). As can be seen from the WBBA sapsucker nest data (Cutright et al.), this is a common nesting species in the northern half of the state as well as along the Mississippi and Lower Wisconsin Rivers. However, confirmed nesting for the entire east-central portion of the state is lacking.

In his book, Wisconsin Birdlife, Sam Robbins (1991) states, "In the nineteenth century this summer range encompassed the entire state. The bird was an uncommon breeder in the south and became progressively more common farther north (Fig. 1)." He goes on to say that, "Only three modern summer records from the south-eastern region exist: 4–25 June (1948, Rock, M. T. Maxson); 27 June (1980, Green Lake, S. D. Robbins); and 1 July (1970, Kenosha, W. O. Moye)."

On 17 May 2009, I observed a sapsucker excavating a nest cavity in an old ironwood tree in the woods below my house. I photographed the bird as it worked on the cavity construction (Fig. 2) and observed several more times over the next few weeks. On May 24th, additional photos were taken (Fig. 3). I periodically checked on the nest and by the last week of May I could hear chirping of nestlings from within the cavity.

However, while this was a successful attempt at nesting, no young were produced. I checked the nest during the first and second weeks of June, but

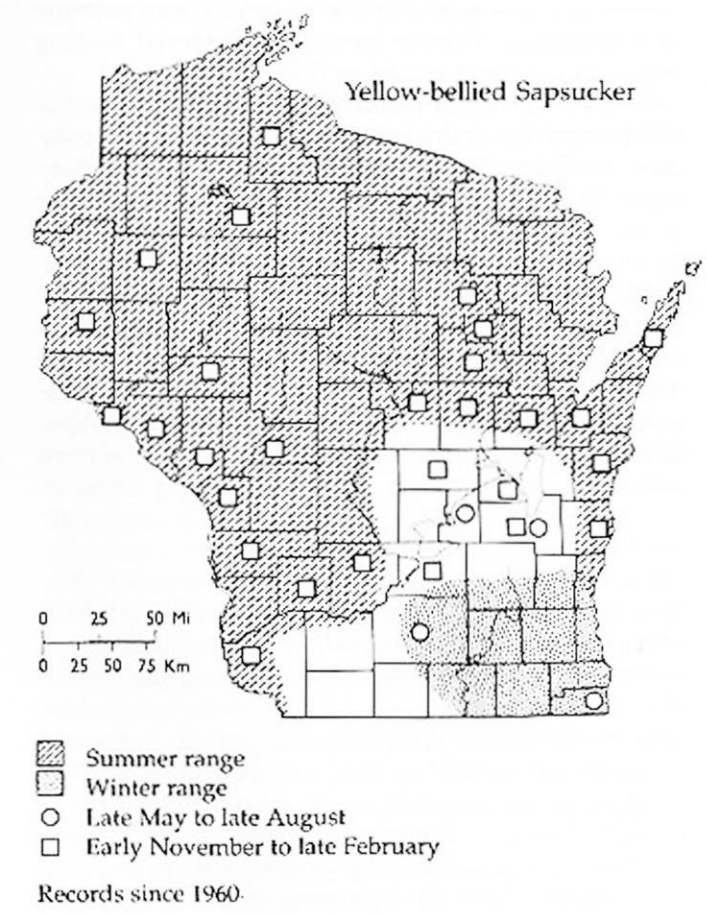


Figure 1. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker range from Wisconsin Birdlife.

no longer heard the young nor did I see the adults from then on. The amount of time between nest construction and hatching of the first young was not sufficient for fledging the young when the nest cavity appeared to have been abandoned. It seems that this nest was predated, perhaps by raccoons or red squirrels, which are abundant in the area.

In spite of the lack of young being produced from this nest, this is the only evidence I have for nesting attempts of this species in Fond du Lac County.

Figure 2. First sign of nest excavation—17 May 2009.

Figure 3. Bird at the nest site, photographed 24 May 2009.

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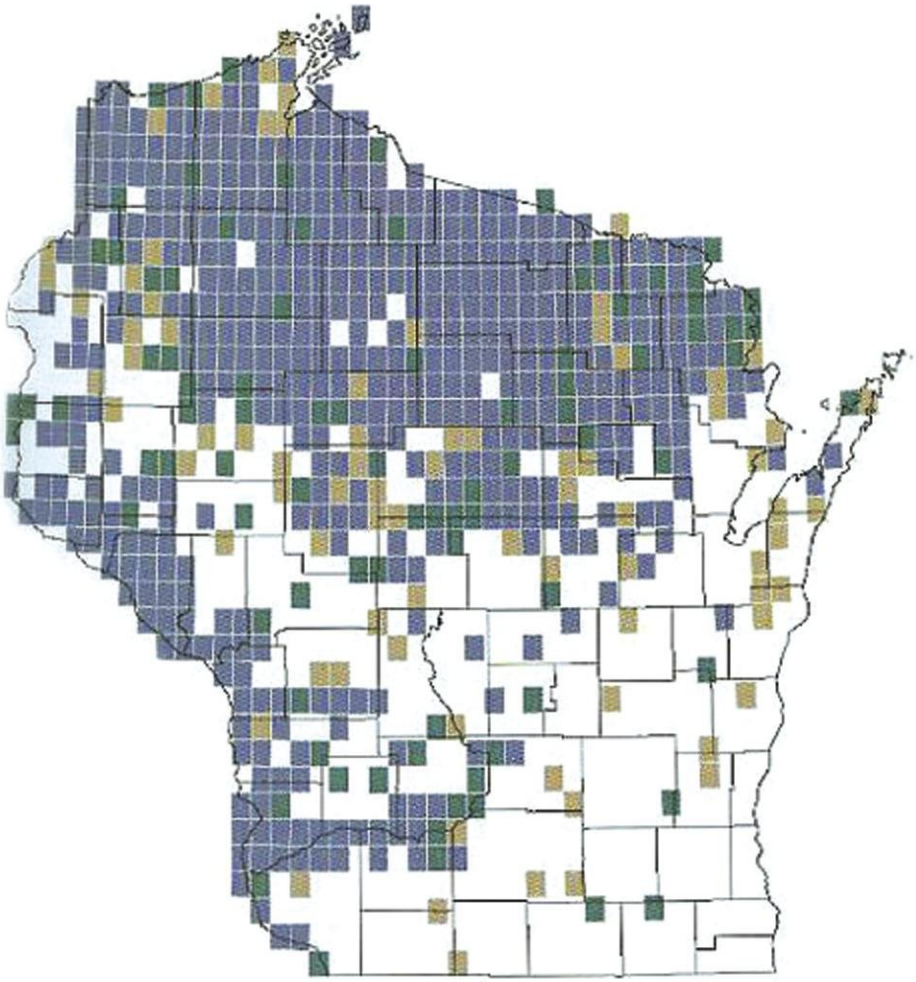
*Bill Volkert is the wildlife educator and naturalist for Wisconsin DNR at Horicon Marsh where he has worked for the past 25 years. He has also worked in Siberia, Mongolia, and Central America on a variety of conservation projects. In his free time he has pursued birds across North America, throughout the tropics of Central and South America, as well as Africa, Asia, and Austral-Asia. "My life list now exceeds ¼ of the world's birds (or at least it will by the time I return from Australia and New Zealand a bit later this year)."*

# Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



| Breeding Status | # of Quads | % of Total (1132) |
|---|---|---|
| Confirmed | 447 | 39.49 |
| Probable | 88 | 7.77 |
| Possible | 80 | 7.07 |
| **Total** | **655** | **54.33** |

Breeding by Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers from *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Wisconsin.*

Eastern Kingbird with young in the nest by Jack Bartholmai.

# "From Field and Feeder"

*This time "From Field and Feeder" has two stories about reproduction and care of the young in the avian world: Common Merganser and Spruce Grouse.*

## An Uncommon Common Merganser

June is usually the prime time for young birds to be leaving their nests. There are about 85 bird species in North America that use cavities, either holes in trees or man-made nest boxes, in which to lay eggs and rear their young. Woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and Great Crested Flycatchers are the more widely recognized cavity-nesting songbirds, while four species of ducks—Wood Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Mergansers—are also cavity nesters in Door County.

Accurate observations and the study of life histories of many kinds of birds are not terribly difficult to accomplish, although detailed study does demand much time and patience. Then there are those bird species whose life histories, especially their nesting habits, are not well-documented simply because of the birds' secrecy or their difficult-to-reach nesting locations.

One of Northern Door's best bird observers for many years has been Sue (Mrs. Charles L.) Peterson of Ephraim. She has led bird hikes, helped with Christmas Bird Counts and Door County Seasonal Bird Reports, and was involved in studying and documenting breeding bird species over a five-year period for the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Wisconsin.

An extremely valuable and timely observation was made this past Father's Day, 21 June, by Sue Peterson and her husband, Chick, as they sat leisurely on their west and north-facing deck. For two to three weeks prior to that date they had been noticing a hen duck flying to and from a cavity high in a nearby sugar maple tree (Fig. 1), the cavity being around 55 feet above the sloping ground below. Their sightings of the duck were always fleeting but they finally thought that it was one of the mergansers, either a Red-breasted or Common Merganser. The sheer large size of the bird ruled out the smaller Hooded Merganser while the color of the bird ruled out the Common Goldeneye.

It was 10 a.m. on that pleasantly warm Father's Day when all of a sudden they heard a loud crashing and wing-flapping noise, down through the leaves and to the ground. It was

Figure 1. Nest cavity in sugar maple tree.

Figure 2. Recently fledged Common Merganser chicks crossing parking lot.

Figure 3. Mother merganser and chicks heading out into Green Bay.

Figure 1. Female Spruce Grouse.

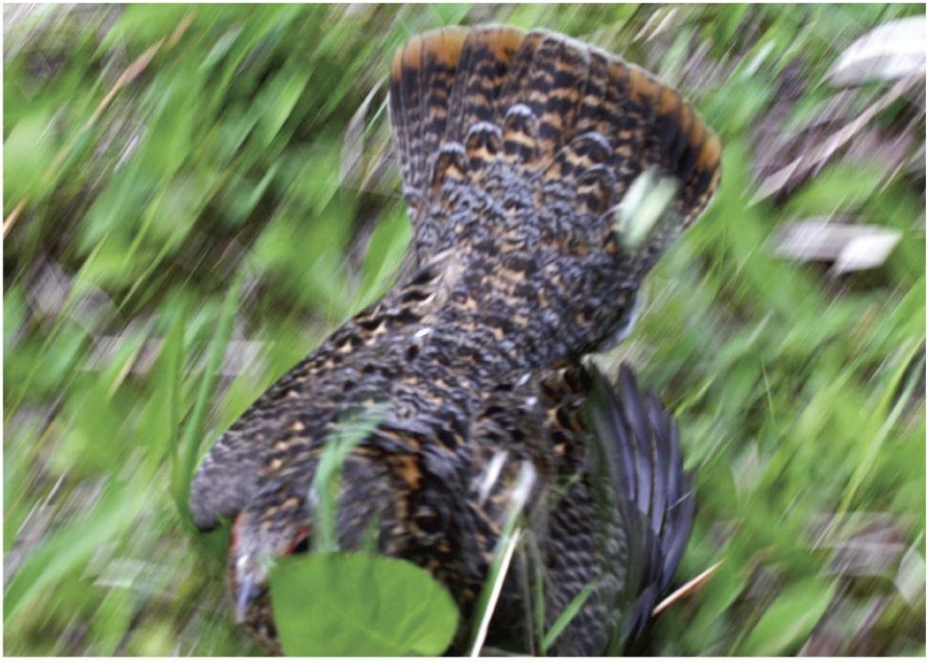


Figure 2. Attacking female Spruce Grouse.

the female merganser accompanying the first of her nestlings on its maiden "journey." Stunned, the Petersons watched the other ducklings begin falling, all within a minute, to where the others had landed. All the while the young were jumping out of the sugar maple cavity and falling, the female kept up a constant quiet cackling. All but one of the nine young birds survived the 55-foot drop to the bare ground or grass below. One young bird apparently landed on a rock and was instantly killed. Two actually got into a small nearby pond and were swimming around in circles, immediately causing Sue and Chick to grin with pleasure.

All of a sudden the eight babies got behind the mother and the tree trunk, within two minutes of reaching the ground. The excitement was all over within five minutes. That's when the Petersons stood up and realized that the hen was leading her young down the rather steep hill toward Eagle Harbor, around 600 feet away, and that the birds would have to cross the busy State Highway 42 before reaching the water. The popular Fyr Bal Festival was in progress and there were many people and much traffic.

Chick and Sue ran to the car, drove to the highway, parked between the Ephraim Historical Foundation building and the road and watched and waited for around 15 minutes. They felt it was critical that they be there in case they'd have to stop traffic, allowing the merganser family to safely cross the road which is about 50 ft. from the water. Prior to that, the female always flew from the tree cavity and toward the bay.

Judy Flottman, owner of the nearby Anderson House Workbench Gift Shop had sensed the excitement and joined the Petersons. All the while the three of them stood and waited, the female merganser continued flying above them in circles, quacking constantly. Because the young birds were not appearing into the open, Chick decided to walk into the nearby woods and look for the babies, while Sue was ready to stop traffic if need be. While Chick was walking and listening, he could only hear the female calling excitedly, circling above his head.

Suddenly the mother merganser swooped close to the ground and apparently had her babies clearly in sight. Now the young waddled out of the woods, crossed the grass, and came onto the black-topped parking lot (Fig. 2) of the Ephraim Historical Foundation, about 50 feet from the highway. It was then that the ducklings became aware of the growing crowd of people standing around and they headed toward the more secluded low stone wall corner of the parking lot. Soon a stranger came out of the crowd and said, "I can help you. I've raised many ducks." He walked to the young, gently herding them together, and said, "Quick, someone get a cardboard box," and in a very short while Judy had fetched one from her gift shop.

Chick and the unknown gentleman caught the eight baby mergansers, put them into the box, carried it across the highway and down to the shore. Obviously the constantly circling and quacking mother merganser knew exactly where her babies were because the second they were released into the water she landed very close to the front of them. Immediately the young joined their mother and began swimming out onto the bay (Fig. 3) toward

Horseshoe Island while all the people who watched the exciting affair began to applaud. The unusual trust in the mother merganser her babies had, and how marvelously she constantly communicated with her young highly disciplined family, were very evident.

What a great Father's Day this turned out to be, but with the father Common Merganser nowhere in sight. The male mergansers leave the female as soon as the eggs are laid. The female had incubated her clutch of nine eggs for about 28 days and from 24 to 48 hours after hatching, the babies were coaxed by their mother to jump the perilous distance of 55 feet to the ground. Now the mother would care for her young family. Even though they will be fully grown by around the end of July, they most likely will not take their first flight until early September, although they'll be able to hydroplane over the water at considerable speed even without the aid of their wings.

Thanks to the great sensitivity and careful observations of the Petersons, plus the help of other concerned people, not only did this uncommon Common Merganser story have a happy ending on Father's Day, but important new data regarding the life history of this unusually fascinating but little-understood duck have been recorded.

Additional Notes on the Common Merganser Story: On 5 May 2009, one of their guests, while walking in the yard, heard low quacking noises as a duck flew from the tree. Then on 8 May 2009, Chick, while out talking with guests, saw a duck fly out of the tree.

A bit later, on 20 May, Chick, Sue and Paul Flottman, while standing in Chick's studio, saw a duck fly out of the maple and over the studio. Sue noted dark and white on the bird. Their daughter Sara, while on the deck on 26 May, saw a duck fly out of the maple, and thought it was a Common Merganser at first, or a Wood Duck or Bufflehead, but eliminated a Hooded Merganser.

Four people saw the duck fly from the maple toward the southwest on 14 June, giving low raspy quacking as it flew—big duck. Then Sue and Chick began to think merganser. On 15 June, Sue was out walking on road in front of their house, and she saw the duck approach the cavity and fold its wings and go into the cavity—showing a lot of white. The next day, Chick saw a duck with a large white patch on the underwing as it flew and compared its size to a Mallard.

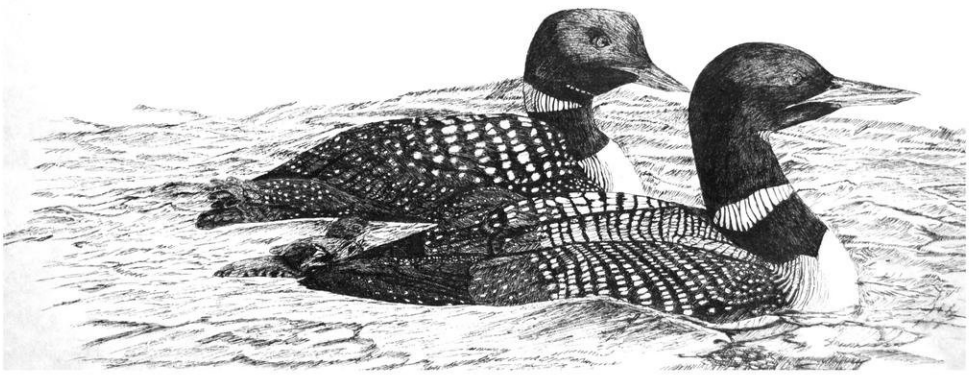
Then on 17 June, Sue had good look at the underside—white belly, brown head, and thought merganser, either common or red-breasted.

On 23 June (after the fledging on 21 June), Chick was sitting on deck at 6:30 a.m. with coffee, and he saw two female Common Mergansers circling over the nest cavity for about an hour—back over Anderson Pond and back to the nest site.—*Roy Lukes, Egg Harbor, Door County.*

### Spruce Grouse Attack

On 11 June 2009 I was hiking to a bog pond within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in northeast Sawyer County to look for dragonflies and butterflies. I had turned into a small opening of upland conifers between two bogs when I was bom-

barded by a bird directly at my feet. I looked down to find a female (Fig. 1) Spruce Grouse with at least one tiny chick! The sparrow-sized chick vanished into the vegetation beneath me while the hen made a racket around my ankles, doing her best impression of a vicious little yappy dog. She clucked and chased (Fig. 2) repeatedly, which ultimately resulted in her simply following me around wherever I went. I gave a brief, careful look for chicks but couldn't relocate any. The hen wasn't overly photogenic either as she was moving almost constantly and often too close for my lens to focus. I had been assaulted by Ruffed Grouse before but this was my first aggressive encounter with its less common, bog-dwelling cousin.—*Ryan Brady, Grand View, Wisconsin.*



Pair of Common Loons with young drawn by Steve LaValley.

# Fall Birds and Their Food Sources at the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center

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## INTRODUCTION

Every year as summer ends, we witness one of the most spectacular natural events of Wisconsin, fall bird migration. As thousands of birds stream through the state, the grounds of Schlitz Audubon Nature Center (SANC), located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, become a hotspot for birding activity.

Scientists have recently realized the importance of small patches of habitat known as stopover sites. A bird may spend from one day to two weeks resting, eating, and storing up fat at a stopover site (Piaskowski 2008). Without these sites, migration would be impossible. Because habitat destruction and human development have made migration more difficult and caused a decrease in bird populations, stopover sites are becoming increasingly valuable.

During fall migration, most birds feed primarily on arthropods (insects, mites, and spiders), supplemented by small fruits. Larger birds such as thrushes and waxwings eat whole fruits, while smaller birds drink the pulp by piercing fruit with their bills. The plants of SANC doubtlessly play a crucial role in providing food but there is currently little research on how beneficial each plant species is. The purpose of this project is to help SANC and other wildlife areas maintain good stopover sites by creating a catalog that clearly shows which plants are serving the most birds.

## METHODS

Between 19 September 2009 and 31 October 2009, I recorded bird activity in various parts of SANC during two hour intervals every afternoon. This timeframe included early, peak, and late migration in order to observe a variety of birds. I surveyed various types of habitat, including southern mesic forest, mixed forest, and prairie. Each time I observed a bird obtaining food from a plant, I recorded it in my notebook. Playbacks were not used; the birds were observed feeding naturally. There were four sections of my notes: *plant species*, *use*, *bird species*, and *number*. *Plant species* included flowers, vines, shrubs, and trees. The *use* section showed how the bird benefited from the plant. Possible entries under *use* included fruit, arthropods, seed, seed storage, and

Table 1. Green Ash

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 2 | storing seed |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 1 | arthropods |
| Downy Woodpecker | 5 | arthropods |
| Philadelphia Vireo | 2 | arthropods |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 2 | arthropods |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 3 | arthropods |
| | 1 | seed |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 3 | storing seed |
| Brown Creeper | 4 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 6 | arthropods |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Nashville Warbler | 4 | arthropods |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Magnolia Warbler | 8 | arthropods |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | 8 | arthropods |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Blackburnian Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Bay-breasted Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 8 | arthropods |
| Black-and-white Warbler | 3 | arthropods |
| American Redstart | 3 | arthropods |
| Northern Cardinal | 2 | seed |
| Total for 21 species | 70 | |

pecking. In *bird species*, I wrote the species name and in *number* I wrote the number of individuals of that species of bird. In order for a plant to be included in the report, a minimum of five individual birds needed to be observed feeding on that species of plant.

I arranged the data in plant-specific data tables and also in category graphs. For each plant there is a table of the birds that I observed feeding on that plant. In the graphs section, I divided the plants into three categories: *trees, shrubs,* and *wildflowers*. For each category, there are two stacked bar graphs comparing the usefulness of all plants in each category. One graph compares the number of individual birds that the plants fed on, and the other compares how many species the plants fed. I chose to use stacked bar graphs because they show the overall number of birds or species that the plants benefited.

## Results

Non-native species of plants are starred with an asterisk.

### Trees

Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)—(Table 1)

By far the most common tree on the property, birds used green ash greatly. Warblers, vireos, and other insectivorous birds were most often seen catching arthropods from the leaves of this plant. Ash trees are hosts for tiger swallowtails, ash and waved sphinxes, and polyphemus moths (Twedt 2004). Woodpeckers and

Table 2. White Spruce

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Downy Woodpecker | 2 | pecking |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 7 | arthropods |
| | 4 | seeds |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | 2 | seeds |
| Brown Creeper | 1 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 11 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Totals for 6 Species | 28 | |

Table 3. Norway Spruce

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Downy Woodpecker | 1 | pecking |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 2 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 20 | arthropods |
| Total for 3 Species | 23 | |

Brown Creepers used this tree species most often to hunt for arthropods on or in the bark. White-breasted Nuthatches and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were observed storing seeds in the trees' creviced bark.

White Spruce *(Picea glauca)*—(Table 2)

This northern-forest tree was very useful to many birds. Flocks of kinglets often hunted for arthropods in its needles. The nutritious seeds were an important source of food for chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches.

Norway Spruce *(Picea abies)**—(Table 3)

Although non-native, this tree was still useful to birds. It was an exception to the rule that non-native plants do not support many arthropods. Late in migration, flocks of kinglets often hunted for arthropods in the needles. However, this tree attracted half as many species and five fewer individuals than the native white spruce. The Norway is not known to be particularly beneficial to birds.

White Cedar *(Thuja occidentalis)*—(Table 4)

The many plantings of this tree have been very worthwhile. A few warblers, many kinglets, and some other birds fed on arthropods in its leaves. White-throated Sparrows, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Ovenbirds, Northern Parulas, Winter Wrens, Swainson's Thrushes, and numerous other warblers are common birds in white cedar forests (Dawson 1979).

Eastern Red Cedar *(Juniperus virginiana)*—(Table 5)

Late in migration, large flocks of Cedar Waxwings (Fig. 1) and other fruit-eating birds ate the berries that this tree copiously produced. Birds ate arthropods on this tree less often.

Figure 1. Cedar Waxwings eating red cedar cones.

Eastern White Pine *(Pinus strobus)*—(Table 6)

The scattered white pines on the property provided a substantial amount of arthropods for warblers, chickadees, and more. Chickadees, and probably other songbirds, ate the seeds as well.

Table 4. White Cedar

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Blue-headed Vireo | 1 | arthropods |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 2 | arthropods |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 7 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 3 | arthropods |
| Black-and-white Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| American Redstart | 1 | arthropods |
| Total for 6 Species | 16 | |

Table 5. Red Cedar

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Black-capped Chickadee | 4 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 3 | arthropods |
| American Robin | 1 | fruit |
| Cedar Waxwing | 20 | fruit |
| Purple Finch | 5 | fruit |
| Total for 4 Species | 33 | |

Figure 2. Northern Cardinal eating common buckthorn berries.

Quaking Aspen *(Populus tremuloides)*—(Table 7)

Although not many birds were observed on them in this study, aspen are known to be highly productive for birds. Quaking aspens are also a host for a variety of arthropods that are food for woodpeckers and sapsuckers (DeByle 1985). Many moths and butterflies use quaking aspens as a host tree.

Black Locust *(Robinia pseudoacacia)**—(Table 8)

Introduced from the Appalachian Mountains, this tree hosted many arthropods and supported a large amount of insect-eating birds. Black locust are host trees for silver-spotted skippers and three staff underwings (Twedt 2004). All birds observed in this tree were seen on the terrace by

Table 6. Eastern White Pine

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Downy Woodpecker | 1 | pecking |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 5 | arthropods |
| | 3 | seed |
| Brown Creeper | 2 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 3 | arthropods |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Black-and-white Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| American Redstart | 1 | arthropods |
| Total for 8 Species | 19 | |

Table 7. Quaking Aspen

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 1 | pecking |
| Downy Woodpecker | 1 | arthropods |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 1 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| Total for 5 Species | 6 | |

Table 8. Black Locust

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Blue-headed Vireo | 2 | arthropods |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 4 | arthropods |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 7 | arthropods |
| Brown Creeper | 1 | arthropods |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 3 | arthropods |
| Black-and-white Warbler | 5 | arthropods |
| American Redstart | 2 | arthropods |
| Total for 8 Species | 25 | |

the lake. It is possible that this position funneled in more migrants.

Slippery Elm *(Ulmus rubra)*—(Table 9)

Most trees on the property are very young due to Dutch Elm Disease. A small number of birds were seen using them. Birds are known to eat their seeds and elms host a variety of moths and butterflies.

Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)—(Table 10)

Quite productive, the birch hosted arthropods for a wide variety of birds. Redpolls, siskins, and chickadees are also known to feed heavily on the seeds while other birds feed on moth larvae.

American Basswood (*Tilia americana*)—(Table 11)

This common tree was a good source of arthropods. Although not observed in this study, birds eat the trees' buds and nest in their cavities.

Mugo Pine *(Pinus mugo)**—(Table 12)

Not very abundant, but still useful to birds when present.

Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)—(Table 13)

Although some birds were observed on this tree, it should have hosted many more birds, given its abundance. Sugar maples are shade tolerant and are therefore able to grow in and dominate established forests. Because there are so many maples on the property and few birds obtaining food from them, it is clear that maple is not a preferred tree for autumn feeding.

Table 9. Slippery Elm

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Red-eyed Vireo | 1 | arthropods |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 2 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 2 | arthropods |
| American Redstart | 1 | arthropods |
| Total for 4 Species | 6 | |

Table 10. Paper Birch

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Hairy Woodpecker | 1 | pecking |
| Blue-headed Vireo | 2 | arthropods |
| Brown Creeper | 1 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 3 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Total for 6 Species | 9 | |

Table 11. American Basswood

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Downy Woodpecker | 1 | pecking |
| | 1 | arthropods |
| Brown Creeper | 2 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 3 | arthropods |
| American Redstart | 3 | arthropods |
| Total for 6 Species | 12 | |

Table 12. Mugo Pine

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Hairy Woodpecker | 1 | pecking |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 2 | seed |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 6 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Total for 4 Species | 10 | |

Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*)—(Table 14)

Birds were only observed twice on this common tree. Some songbirds will eat its seeds (Twedt 2004).

## BUSHES AND VINES

Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)—(Table 15)

The most numerous and important

Figure 3. American Goldfinch gorging itself on sawtooth sunflower seeds.

Table 13. Sugar Maple

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Brown-creeper | 1 | arthropods |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Black-throated Blue Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| Total for 5 Species | 7 | |

Table 14. Ironwood

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Black-capped Chickadee | 2 | arthropods |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 4 | arthropods |
| Total for 2 Species | 6 | |

bush at the center, this plant is critical to the migrants. Each plant produces from a dozen to over one hundred nutritious berries. Birds used the berries' high lipid content to replenish stored fat before continuing migration. During the peaks of their migrations, Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes could be found on almost every single dogwood at the center. White-throated Sparrows were frequently observed on them as well as Philadelphia Vireos to a lesser extent.

Note: The less abundant Pagoda and Red-osier Dogwoods at the center are also known to feed many birds. However, this study began after nearly all their berries were eaten.

Table 15. Gray Dogwood

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Philadelphia Vireo | 2 | fruit |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 1 | fruit |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 2 | arthropods |
| Eastern Bluebird | 4 | fruit |
| Swainson's Thrush | 8 | fruit |
| Hermit Thrush | 11 | fruit |
| Gray Catbird | 3 | fruit |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Swamp Sparrow | 1 | fruit |
| White-throated Sparrow | 3 | fruit |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 1 | fruit |
| Scarlet Tanager | 1 | fruit |
| Total for 12 Species | 38 | |

Table 16. Common Buckthorn

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Downy Woodpecker | 1 | arthropods |
| Philadelphia Vireo | 2 | fruit |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| American Robin | 2 | fruit |
| Gray Catbird | 1 | fruit |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | 1 | fruit |
| Eastern Towhee | 1 | fruit |
| White-throated Sparrow | 14 | fruit |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 3 | fruit |
| Northern Cardinal | 1 | fruit |
| Total for 11 Species | 28 | |

Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)*—(Table 16)

Although the species is highly invasive and aggressive, many birds feasted on its abundant berries (Fig. 2). White-throated Sparrows almost seemed to prefer buckthorn berries. However, the berries are low in nutrients and do very little for birds. Also, being a non-native plant, buckthorn does not support nor attract arthropods, and therefore, very few birds were seen eating arthropods on buckthorn. Buckthorn has an overall harmful effect because it reduces the number of insect-hosting native plants which birds *can* use. After all, arthropods are the primary food source for most migratory birds. By eating the berries, birds not only spread the seeds, but their digestion process also increases the rate of germination.

Smooth Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*)*—(Table 17)

Also invasive, this buckthorn provides a small amount of birds with berries as well. However, for the same reasons as common buckthorn, this plant has an overall negative impact.

Wild Grape (*Vitis riparia*)—(Table 18)

A very beneficial plant, it produced a considerable amount of berries that

Table 17. Smooth Buckthorn

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Swainson's Thrush | 1 | fruit |
| White-throated Sparrow | 4 | fruit |
| Total for 3 Species | 6 | |

Table 18. Wild Grape

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 1 | fruit |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 2 | fruit |
| Northern Flicker | 1 | fruit |
| Gray-cheecked Thrush | 1 | fruit |
| Swainson's Thrush | 3 | fruit |
| Hermit Thrush | 5 | fruit |
| American Robin | 16 | fruit |
| Gray Catbird | 2 | fruit |
| White-throated Sparrow | 3 | fruit |
| Total for 9 Species | 34 | |

Table 19. Japanese Honeysuckle

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 1 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 2 | arthropods |
| Gray Catbird | 1 | fruit |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| White-throated Sparrow | 5 | fruit |
| Total for 5 Species | 10 | |

fed a variety of birds. American Robins favored this plant. This was also the only plant from which woodpeckers were observed eating fruit.

Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)*—(Table 19)

A small number of birds ate fruit and arthropods from this plant. By eating the fruit, birds spread this invasive plant.

**Wildflowers**

Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)—(Table 20)

Although this flower is removed by volunteers from the prairies, it serves as a very good source of seed and arthropods for many birds. Some birds such as sparrows and goldfinches ate seeds while perched on the flowers. Others, such as kinglets and warblers, plucked insects off while hovering. However, this highly adaptable goldenrod crowds out other native flowers and dominates large areas of woodland and prairie. Due to its aggressiveness, Canada goldenrod negatively affects wildflower diversity.

Table 20. Canada Goldenrod

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Black-capped Chickadee | 2 | arthropods |
| | 6 | seed |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 3 | arthropods |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 6 | arthropods |
| Tennessee Warbler | 1 | arthropods |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 5 | arthropods |
| Nashville Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | 2 | arthropods |
| Pine Warbler | 3 | seed |
| Palm Warbler | 3 | arthropods |
| Swamp Sparrow | 2 | seed |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 3 | seed |
| Dark-eyed Junco | 1 | seed |
| American Goldfinch | 24 | seed |
| Total for 13 Species | 63 | |

Table 21. Stiff Goldenrod

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| American Goldfinch | 16 | seed |
| Total for 1 species | 16 | |

Table 22. Sawtooth Sunflower

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Black-capped Chickadee | 3 | seed |
| American Goldfinch | 50 | seed |
| Total for 2 Species | 53 | |

Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*; in some treatments, *Oligoneuron rigidum*)—(Table 21)

This wildflower is native, like the Canada goldenrod. In some areas, it manages to compete with the numerous Canada goldenrods, but in comparison to the Canada, it is uncommon. The stiff goldenrod produces seeds late in the season that birds eat, particularly American Goldfinches.

Sawtooth Sunflower (*Helianthus grosseserratus*)—(Table 22)

This tall flower's seed seemed to be the main source of seed for American Goldfinches during early migration (Fig. 3). The flower's abundance enabled it to support large flocks of goldfinches throughout the fall. However, most seed-eating sparrows arrived after the goldfinches had already decimated the seed supply.

Table 23. Tall Coreopsis

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| American Goldfinch | 14 | seed |
| Total for 1 Species | 14 | |

Table 24. Sweet Black-eyed Susan

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| American Goldfinch | 6 | seed |
| Total for 1 Species | 6 | |

Table 25. Wild Bergamot

| Bird Species | Number of individuals | Food/Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Black-capped Chickadee | 5 | seed |
| Total for 1 Species | 5 | |

Tall Coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*)—(Table 23)

Although this plant is not widely distributed at SANC, American Goldfinches (and likely other birds) feed on this flower's seeds when present in moist thickets or woodland edges. Because of habitat loss, tall coreopsis is a species of special concern in Wisconsin.

Sweet Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*)—(Table 24)

Not very common; a flock of goldfinches was observed feeding on this flower once during the project.

Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)

On occasion, Black-capped Chickadees were observed eating the seeds of this common flower.

Other wildflowers with less than five birds observed feeding on them were: compass plant (most compass plant seeds had been eaten before migration); showy goldenrod; cup plant; grass-leaved goldenrod; ox-eye daisy; and New England aster.

## Discussion

### Trees

Green ash hosted the most individuals and species out of all the trees (Figures 4 and 5) and is therefore the most useful to fall migrating birds. It may seem that its abundance gave it an unfair advantage over the other trees; however, I believe this can be interpreted differently, for two reasons. First, when compared to other deciduous trees, green ash wins by a landslide, more than its abundance could have helped it. Second, green ash was not competing directly with the other trees that supported large numbers of birds. The only species that rivaled green ash were the spruces and the black locust. It is likely that the locusts' position on the lakefront gave them an advantage; migrating birds

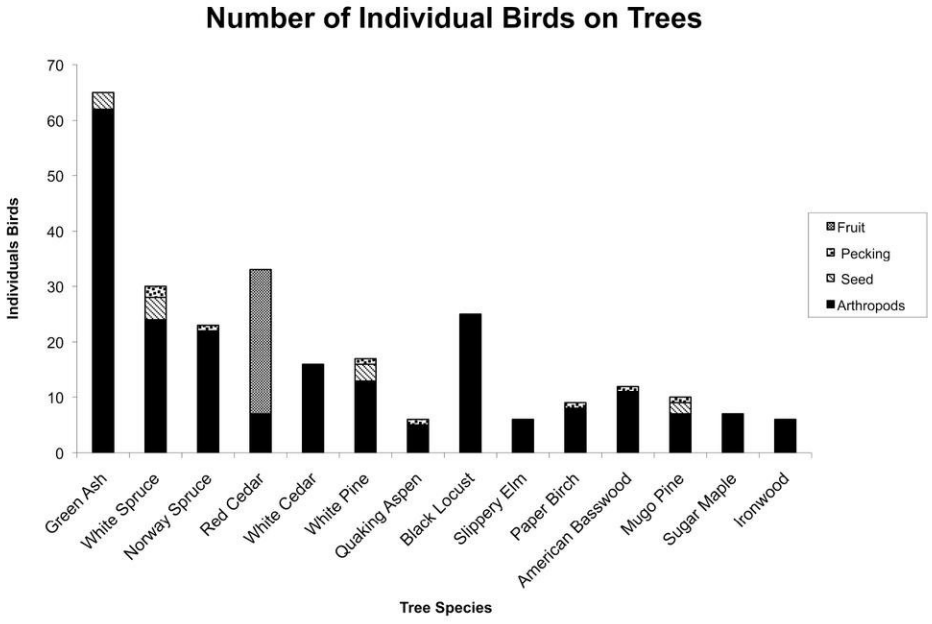


Figure 4. Tree totals of individual bird use.

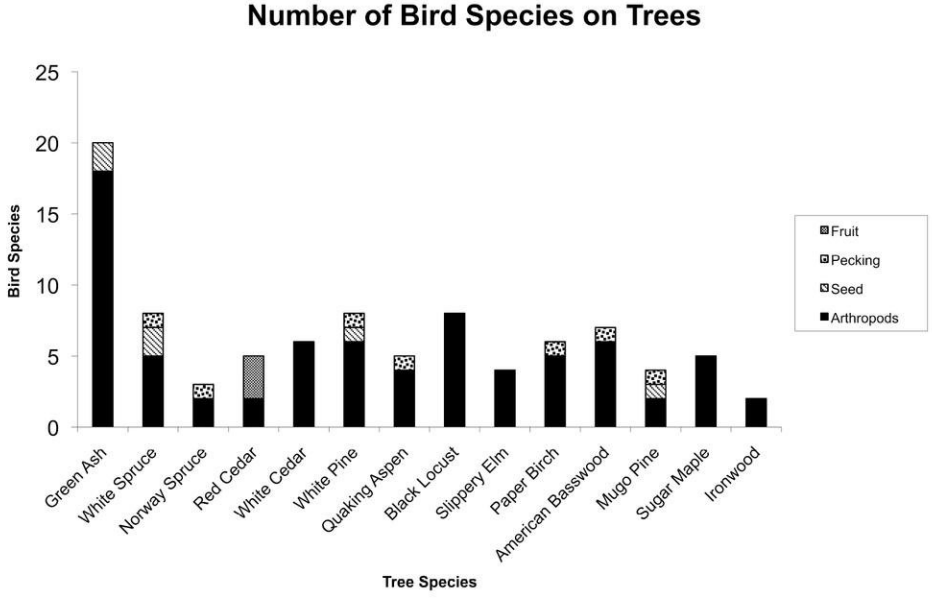


Figure 5. Tree totals of bird species use.

are known to congregate along the shores of large bodies of water. The majority of birds feeding on spruces were late migrants such as kinglets. When these birds were present at SANC, the deciduous trees, including green ash, had already lost their leaves and therefore could not support as many insects. Furthermore, the spruces did not attract many species while green ash still had leaves. For these reasons, the green ash can be deemed the most useful tree despite its high population.

Other trees of interest are the eastern red cedar and sugar maple. Red cedar plays a crucial role in feeding the flocks of Cedar Waxwings late in migration. Waxwings need cedar berries because they arrive after dogwood berries have already disappeared. If the red cedar did not exist at SANC, waxwings would either be forced to eat and disperse buckthorn berries, or not visit SANC at all in large numbers. Red cedar was the only tree on which birds were observed eating berries. I believe that SANC could benefit by planting other fruit trees such as red mulberry, black, pin, or wild red cherry to support other fruit-eating birds. The other tree of interest, sugar maple, is a common tree at SANC, but surprisingly unproductive. Although the sugar maples were more common than white cedar, American basswood, paper birch, and black locust, the maples failed to support more birds or species than them.

| The trees that fed the most individuals were: | The trees that fed the most species were: |
|---|---|
| 1. Green Ash | 1. Green Ash |
| 2. Red Cedar | 2. Black Locust |
| 3. White Spruce | 3. White Pine |

**Shrubs and Vines**

Regarding the shrubs and vines, gray dogwood hosted the highest number and variety of birds (Figures 6 and 7) with its copious supply of fruit. Gray dogwood was especially important to the migrating thrushes, who need berries to replenish their fat stores. Fortunately, this plant grows well at SANC and is widespread. Wild grape catered to the second-highest number of birds, but with a lower diversity of species. This was the second most useful plant for berry-eating birds other than waxwings. Common and smooth buckthorn did feed many migrants, but by doing so they spread their seeds. Their negative effect on biodiversity justifies buckthorn removal. This study did not demonstrate the rule that non-native species do not host arthropods. None of the shrubs provided many birds with arthropods, but the native dogwood did not show an advantage over the non-native buckthorns and honeysuckle. Another native shrub that should be mentioned is nannyberry. Only three Hermit Thrushes were seed feeding on their berries, yet nannyberry still is probably an important plant to have during fall migration.

Since birds were observed eating the berries of only three native shrub species, I believe a greater variety of native shrubs is needed to help remove buckthorn from birds' diets. American elderberry, wild black currant, and wild raspberry species are possible native species that could thrive at SANC.

| The shrubs/vines that fed the most individuals were: | The shrubs/vines that fed the most species were: |
|---|---|
| 1. Gray Dogwood | 1. Gray Dogwood |
| 2. Wild Grape | 2. Common Buckthorn |
| 3. Common Buckthorn | 3. Wild Grape |

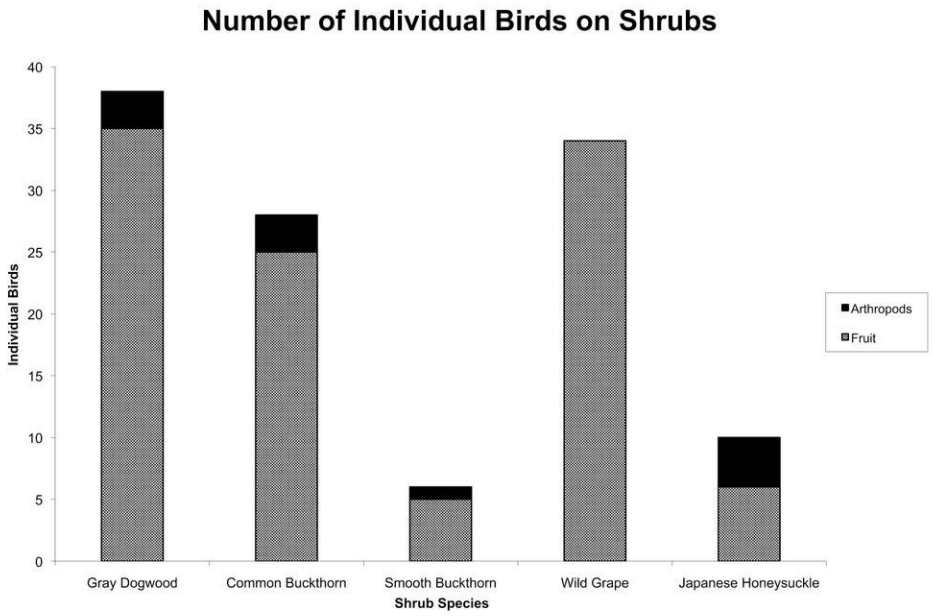


Figure 6. Shrub totals of individual bird use.

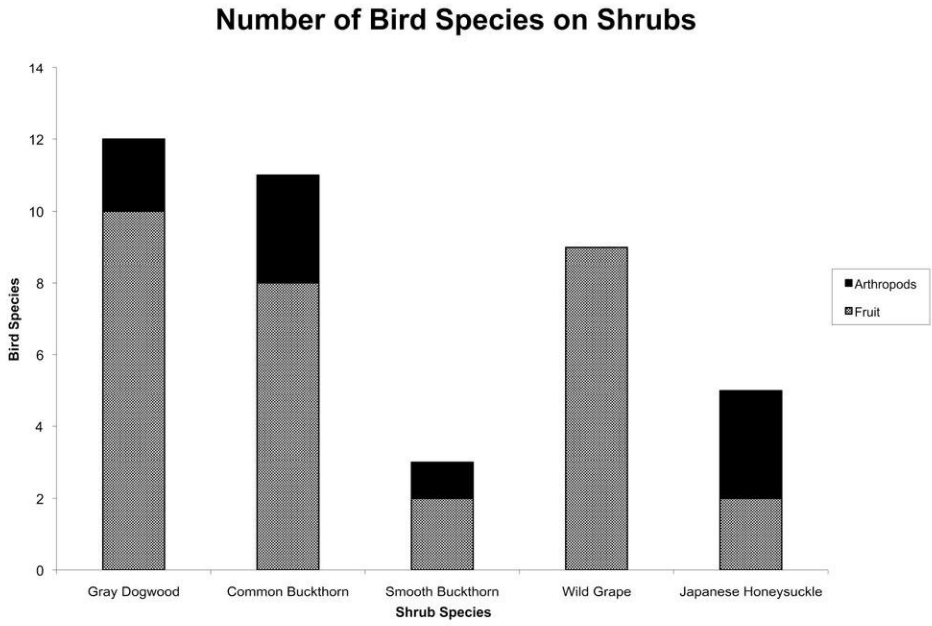


Figure 7. Shrub totals of bird species use.

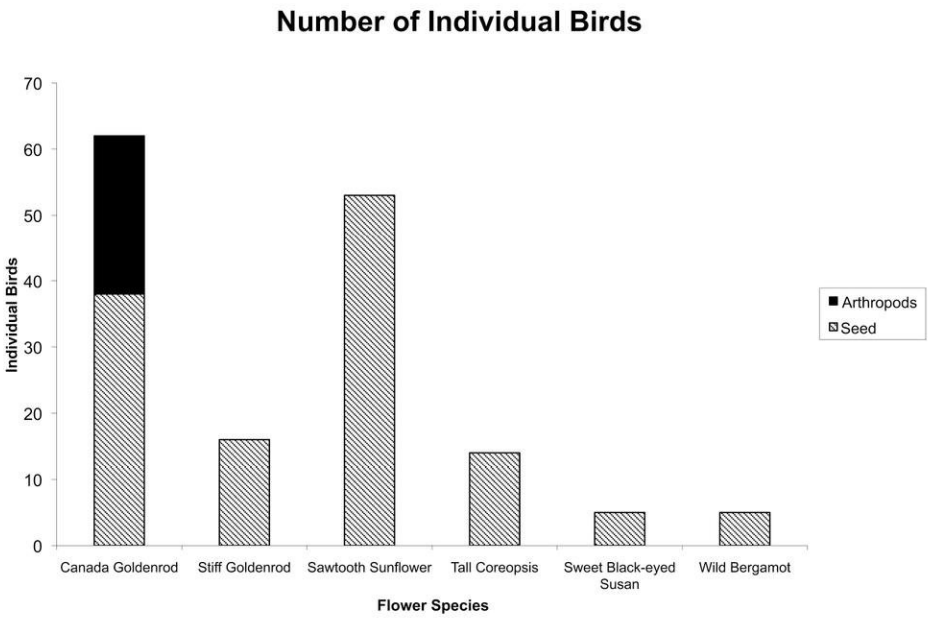


Figure 8. Wildflower totals of individual bird use.

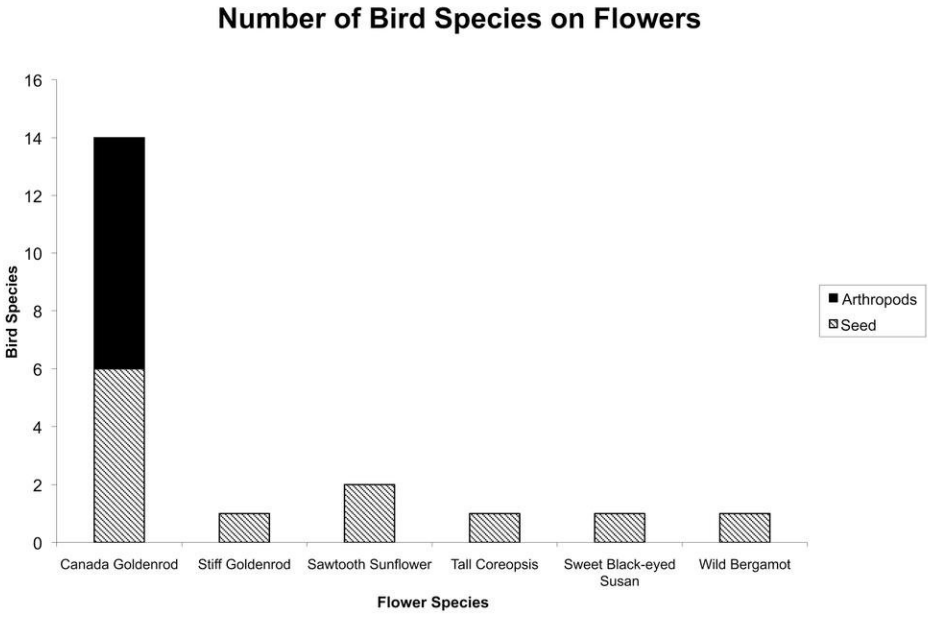


Figure 9. Wildflower totals of bird species use.

### WildFlowers

In the wildflower category, Canada goldenrod fed more birds than any other flower (Figures 8 and 9). Part of its success was due to its ability to offer both arthropods and seeds. This allowed it to attract a diversity of birds much higher than any other wildflower. However, its superabundance also played a role. Were it not for Canada goldenrod's habit of taking over large plots of land, a greater variety of wildflowers would thrive at SANC. A better variety of wildflowers might promote a greater variety of birds. Wildflowers such as tall coreopsis and stiff goldenrod showed promise but needed to be more widespread to make a strong impact. On another note, nearly all the wildflowers recorded were observed in planted prairie habitat. SANC's woodlands, on the other hand, are in need of more wildflowers. To achieve woodlands with wildflowers that also support birds, more wildflower plantings should take place in areas where invasives have been removed from woodlands. SANC already has a good variety of prairie flower species, but some of the fields still lack a strong presence of natives.

| The wildflowers that fed the most individuals were: | The wildflowers that fed the most species were: |
|---|---|
| 1. Canada Goldenrod | 1. Canada Goldenrod |
| 2. Sawtooth Sunflower | 2. Sawtooth Sunflower |
| 3. Stiff Goldenrod | |

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the plants of SANC do a good job of assisting migrating birds in their journey. Thousands of birds use the Center to rest and refuel before continuing south. The most important aspect of the Center seems to be the large ash tree population which supports many insectivorous warblers, vireos, and kinglets. Other deciduous trees are important to insectivorous migrants as well. Gray dogwood is critical to frugivorous migrants such as thrushes and a variety of other birds. Common buckthorn may feed birds but there are many natives that could serve birds better. Canada goldenrod, although more useful than buckthorn, could be replaced with other native flowers to improve diversity. Fields dominated by Canada goldenrod should be weeded and planted with bird-friendly natives such as asters, coneflowers, strawberries, sunflowers, blazing stars, black-eyed Susans, prairie dock, compass plant, stiff goldenrod, and showy goldenrod. If all this is achieved, SANC will become an even more critical stopover site for songbirds in Milwaukee.

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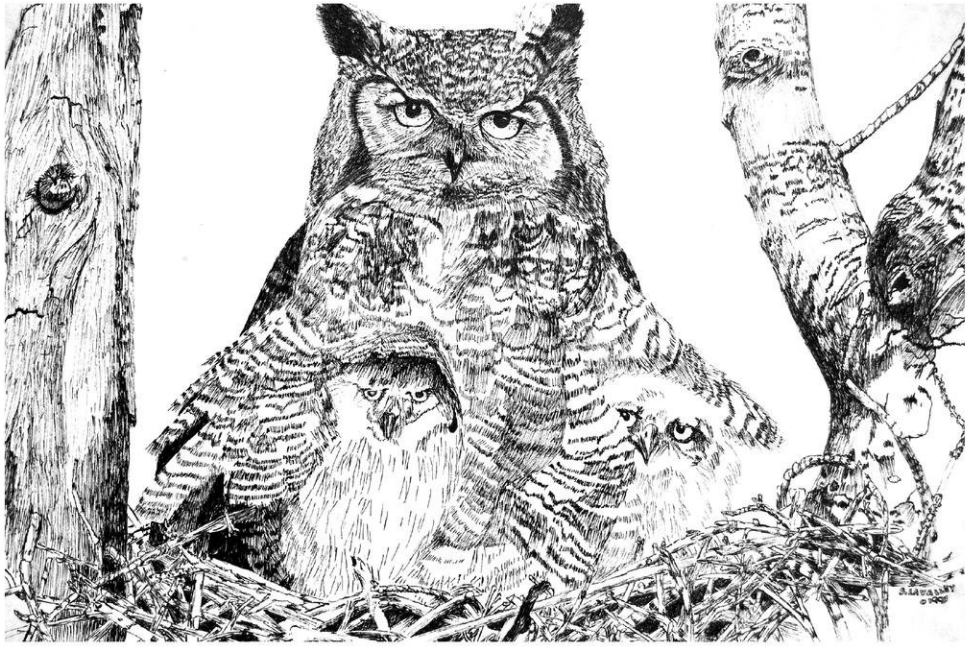

Great Horned Owl with two young as drawn by Steve LaValley.

# A Wintering Population of Golden Eagles in Southwestern Wisconsin and Southeastern Minnesota

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**ABSTRACT**

*We are studying a wintering population of Golden Eagles that extends from southwestern Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota into northeastern Iowa. The number of birds found during mid-January counts over the past six years has increased, likely due to increasing volunteer participation and skill. In 2010 the surveys tallied 96 Golden Eagles on 46 routes. In all years adults outnumbered immature birds and more birds were counted in Wisconsin than in either Minnesota or Iowa. An adult Golden Eagle was tracked from Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, to above the Arctic Circle near Hudson Bay. We believe that evidence collected to date shows that Golden Eagles are regular winter residents in this region and likely originate from the endangered breeding population on the western shore of Hudson Bay.*

## INTRODUCTION

Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) in North America are primarily found in the western United States and Canada from Alaska south into north-central Mexico (Kochert et al. 2002). Historically, small breeding populations also occurred in eastern North America through the Appalachian and Adirondack Mountains, but currently breeding Golden Eagles are found only around Hudson Bay in northern Ontario and Quebec (Morneau et al. 1994) although single nests have been reported in Maine. There are a few nesting pairs in Tennessee, and Geor-

gia (Kochert et al. 2002) as a result of introduction programs. In Ontario, the Golden Eagle is currently designated "Endangered" under the province's Endangered Species Act, while in adjacent Quebec it is a candidate for "Threatened" or "Special Concern" status. The species is not listed as endangered or threatened in the United States, although concerns over declines in local populations do exist.

Golden Eagles do not breed in either Wisconsin or Minnesota and do not receive any special conservation status in either state. Recently, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (Mueller and Kowalchuk 2009) listed the bird as a "rare but regular species" (r1) and an "uncommon migrant" (ucM) and "wintering species" (ucWR) in Wisconsin. In Minnesota there have been occasional reports of Golden Eagles in spring, fall, and winter from most counties in the state (Minnesota Ornithologists' Union records—www.mnmou.org) and they are considered a "rare migrant and winter visitant throughout" the state (Minnesota Ornithologists' Union 2009). In a review of wintering Golden Eagles in the eastern United States Milsap and Vana (1984) considered Crex Meadows Wildlife Area (7 records from 1963–1977) and Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois (5 records, 1957–1980) "regular wintering sites."

We report here on the initial work of a recently developed partnership intended to better document and understand the geographic range, population size, and wintering and migration dynamics of Golden Eagles wintering in the Upper Mississippi River Valley in southwestern Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota. This partnership consists of Audubon Minnesota, The National Eagle Center, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Program, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

## Surveys

Beginning in 2005, one-day, mid-January surveys for Golden Eagles have been organized utilizing volunteer surveyors assigned to predetermined areas in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and northeastern Iowa. Search areas are laid out where Golden Eagles are known or suspected to reside and surveyors are instructed to thoroughly cover their assigned area by slowly driving the roads, stopping frequently, and scanning bluff tops, edges of woodlots, and overhead for flying or resting eagles. Once a bird is confirmed as a Golden Eagle, the surveyors try to determine if the bird is an adult or immature, based on tail and outer wing patterns. All Golden Eagle sightings are recorded to location. Other raptors seen during the survey are also recorded.

Since 2005 the number of surveyors, hence the number of routes and the total area covered, has increased dramatically (Table 1). From 2005–2010 the number of Golden Eagles counted on these surveys has increased annually from 21 in 2005 to 96 in 2010. More Golden Eagles have been found in Wisconsin than in Minnesota by a factor of up to 4:1 in some years. Adults have made up 59%–70% of the birds counted over the years (Table 1). We believe the increase in birds counted is due to both the in-

Table 1. Results of Midwinter Golden Eagle Survey 2005–2010

| Year | Number of Participants | Routes | Number of Golden Eagles | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Wisconsin | Minnesota | Iowa | Total | Ad/Imm |
| 2010 | 140 | 48 | 71 | 24 | 1 | 96 | 59/37 |
| 2009 | 100 | 40 | 57 | 28 | 3 | 88 | 62/26 |
| 2008 | 67 | 23 | 48 | 12 | — | 60 | 36/24 |
| 2007 | 47 | 20 | 34 | 16 | 1 | 51 | 30/21 |
| 2006 | 48 | 20 | 22 | 7 | — | 29 | 19/10 |
| 2005 | 24 | 12 | 17 | 4 | — | 21 | 14/7 |

crease in surveyors and area covered as well as the increased abilities of individual surveyors, many of whom have participated in repeated years.

## Satellite Telemetry

To determine the birds' winter habitat use and home range as well as their breeding origins, migratory routes, and timing we began a program to attach satellite-tracked radio telemetry units to Golden Eagles wintering in this area. These units (Microwave Telemetry PTT-100s) weigh 70 grams with solar-recharged batteries and are set to capture GPS locations every hour from 06:00 to 17:00 hrs. daily. On 25 March 2009 we fitted an adult male with a PTT and released him in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin. This bird had been accidentally caught in a leg-hold trap 6 November 2008 in Montana Township, Trempealeau County, Wisconsin suffering leg injuries that were successfully treated at the University of Minnesota Raptor Center.

After his release the bird wandered around southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and as far south as Allamakee County, Iowa, finally moving north to Barron County, Wisconsin on 26 April. He traveled through north-central Minnesota (Itasca, St. Louis Counties) crossing into Ontario on 1 May then flew west to near St. Ignace Island on the northern shore of Lake Superior. He turned north at that point on 3 May and headed toward Hudson Bay. On 3 May he traveled 193 mi., the most of any day during spring migration, crossing the tree line and continued moving north over the tundra. On 6 May he arrived at a point near the top of James Bay then headed west and north again moving parallel with, but not always near the western shore of Hudson Bay. He arrived near Bibby Island on the western shore of Hudson Bay around 27 May at which time his daily movements slowed down considerably. It is at this point on 29 May that we concluded this was the end of his spring migration. His travel during spring migration as measured in straight line segments between evening roosts was 2,382 mi over 33 days for an average of 72 mi/d (Fig. 1).

We found no evidence that this bird nested in the summer of 2009. He made a series of movements with stopovers of various lengths over the summer. During June he slowly travelled in a northerly direction paralleling the western shore of Hudson Bay

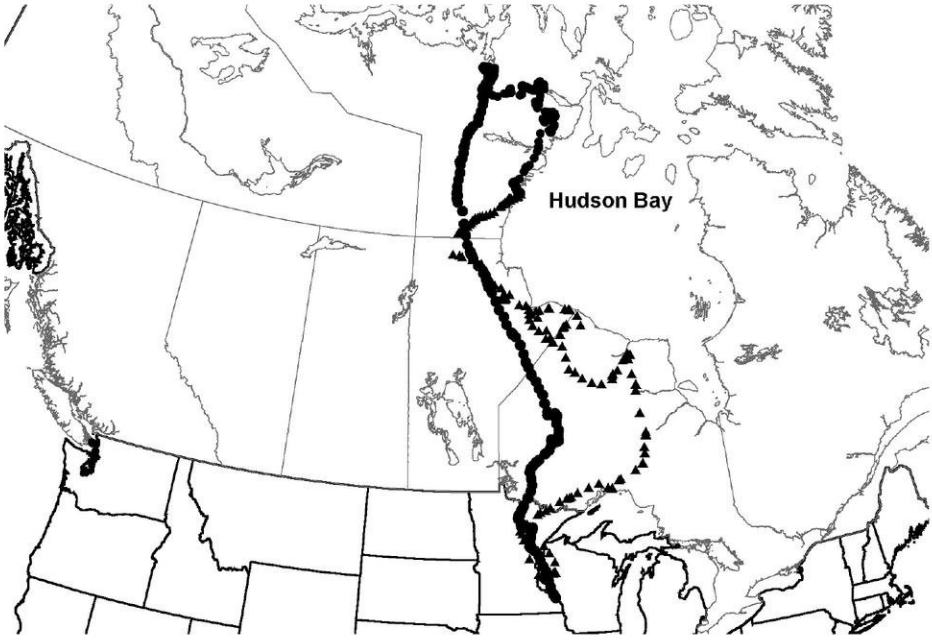


Figure 1. Spring and Fall 2009 Migratory Route of Golden Eagle 42. Triangles = spring migration, circles = summer movements (near Hudson Bay and north of triangles) and fall migrations.

spending most of the month in an approximately 370 sq. mi. area on a large peninsula on the west shore of Hudson Bay in Nunavut, Canada. He changed roosts every evening. In July he headed W/NW to an area in the Kitikmeat region of Nunavut, Canada, near the Black River and Franklin Lake. He spent the rest of the summer and early fall in this area going as far north as 66.9 degrees and 95.8 degrees west near Franklin Lake which put him above the Arctic Circle.

On October 7 he began moving southward covering 1,136 miles from 7–16 October varying from 14–170 mi/d. During this leg he did not retrace his spring path but basically took a compass heading south. He slowed his southward journey quite a bit between 17–20 October, traveling 127 miles over those few days. At this point he was about 200 miles north of the Minnesota/Canada border. He picked up the pace on the 21st and 22nd covering 226 miles and spent his first night in Minnesota on 22 October, roosting on a bank of the Little Fork River about 3 miles southeast of Little Fork in Koochiching County.

The next 8 days were spent in Minnesota traveling through Koochiching, Itasca, Aitken, and Pine Counties. His travels took him through or very near the Chippewa National Forest, Savanna Portage State Park, and Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge. He crossed into Burnett County, Wisconsin on 31 October, then through Barron, St. Croix, and Pierce Counties,

ending up in Buffalo County on 2 November which ended his fall migration. The total distance covered during this fall migration was 1,750 miles and took 26 days. His mean distance traveled per day was 67 mi and ranged from 0.5–170 mi/d.

## DISCUSSION

Personal observations and 6-years of mid–winter survey data present strong evidence that there is a regular wintering population of Golden Eagles using southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. We believe that these birds are not irregular migrants or visitors but constitute a regular wintering population. Evidence to date suggests that this winter range roughly encompasses an area from St. Croix Co. in Wisconsin and Goodhue Co. in Minnesota south into northeastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois (Fig. 2). This area coincides with an ecoregion known as the "Driftless Area" although further information may show that the regular winter range of these birds extends further. Incidental reports support the idea that Golden Eagles have regularly used this region for many years. We do not discount the idea that other portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota may also have small but regular wintering populations of eagles, although we have no evidence to support this.

Regular use of the Driftless Area by Golden Eagles would fit a wintering pattern seen in other parts of the Eastern United States where they are considered "local" in selected areas (Kochert et al. 2002, Milsap and Vana 1984). Satellite tracking and band re-

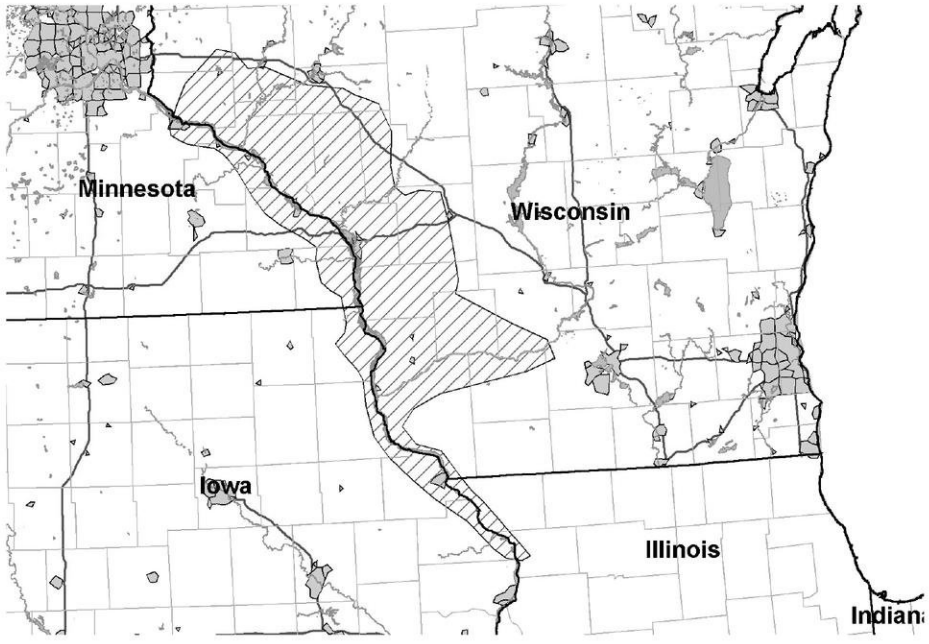


Figure 2. Potential Wintering Range of Golden Eagles through the Driftless Area.

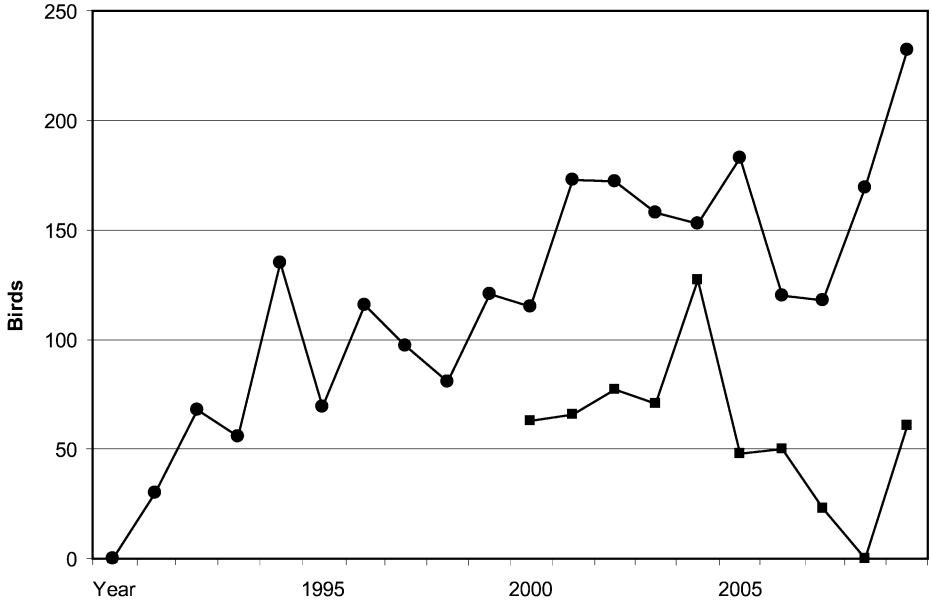


Figure 3. Fall (circles) and Spring (squares) Golden Eagle counts over Hawk Ridge, Duluth, Minnesota.

turns (Brodeur et al. 1996) have determined that these eastern wintering birds nest from the eastern shore of Hudson Bay in Quebec through Newfoundland to the Labrador Sea. Satellite tracking of individual birds has revealed that they leave their breeding grounds from mid to late October, traveling from 24–40 d and covering 1,000–1,800 mi to wintering areas in the Eastern United States. Individual birds took different routes to their wintering grounds where they remained between 93–135 d. Spring migration for these same birds lasted from 25–51 d (Brodeur et al. 1996).

Our current hypothesis is that the breeding origin of the Golden Eagles wintering in the Driftless Area is the endangered population that nests along the southwestern shore of Hudson Bay in Ontario, Canada. Evidence suggests that these birds leave their breeding area in fall and migrate south, probably paralleling the shore of Lake Superior then crossing over Duluth, Minnesota, and proceeding south into the Mississippi Valley region. Records of Golden Eagles during fall migration over Hawk Ridge in Duluth date back to 1951. From 1951–1963, 24 Golden Eagles were counted from Hawk Ridge with annual counts varying between 0–7 per year (Fig. 3). Counting during that period however was usually limited to September and early October (Hofslund 1966) so many birds may have been missed. Since the 1990s counts from Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory have been between 115–223 birds annually with smaller numbers in spring (www.hawkridge.org). Spring counts in Duluth, Minnesota also show a reg-

ular northward migration of Golden Eagles, although smaller in number.

*Conservation and Management*—Migratory birds rely on migration and winter habitats for their survival and an understanding of their needs on these areas is critical for developing conservation strategies (Bildstein 2006). Knowledge and consideration of the habitat and prey needs of these wintering Golden Eagles will be important to their future survival. While it is unusual for wildlife managers in Wisconsin and Minnesota to need to manage for a winter migratory population, successful conservation efforts will necessitate interstate cooperation between state natural resource agencies, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, local governments, and most importantly, private landowners. Ongoing efforts to manage forests in the Driftless Area should take into consideration wintering Golden Eagles.

In the same way that we rely upon, and expect, effective conservation of the neo-tropical migrants that winter in Latin America, so too are we expected to understand and conserve during the winter these eagles that breed to our north.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Red-winged Blackbird at her nest was photographed by Jack Bartholmai.

# Monitoring the Kirtland's Warbler Population in Adams County, Wisconsin

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On 12 May 2009, I walked into the stand in Adams County that had held Kirtland's Warblers in 2008. And before I was even into the prime habitat, I heard it. That had to be it. I veered off the main trail and into the pines. I kept walking, but still the bird was farther ahead. At first I thought the bird might be moving away from me, but it didn't seem to be changing direction. Eventually I realized the bird wasn't moving—it was just that the song was audible from a surprising distance. Finally I reached a leafless oak, and I saw the bird. It was a Kirtland's Warbler, returning to the same breeding site as last year! But I didn't have time to revel in it, because I saw the bird was banded, and I needed to read the unique colorband combination from the bird's legs. I saw indigo over yellow on the right leg. And as the bird turned and sang, I could see yellow above the aluminum band on the left leg (Fig. 1). It was the male known as YAIY (Yellow/Aluminum, Indigo/Yellow). This bird was originally banded on Eleuthera, Bahamas, on 20 March 2008, had held a breeding territory in this exact spot in 2008, and was now back to breed again in 2009. Later in the morning, I checked the other stand that held birds last year, and found a second male, with no leg bands. It was not bad for my second day in the field, and it was a promising start for the second year of detailed monitoring of Kirtland's Warblers in Adams County, Wisconsin.

I was very excited to be working as the Kirtland's Warbler monitor for 2009. I remembered reading online about the discovery of a nesting population of Kirtland's Warblers in Wisconsin in 2007, and reading on the WISBIRDN listserv about the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) field trip to the site last year. After studying Swainson's Warblers for my master's work in Arkansas, I was excited to be able to put my monitoring skills to use on this project. My objectives for the season were: 1) find males arriving at the site; 2) identify colorbanded birds and use their colorbands to keep track of them at the site; 3) find females arriving at the site; and 4) find and monitor nests to determine nest success.

Kirtland's Warblers are habitat spe-

Figure 1. Banded male Kirtland's Warbler known as YAIY (Yellow/Aluminum, Indigo/Yellow). Photo by author.

cialists, and only occur in areas that were historically sand barrens, and in relatively large tracts of young pines, especially jack pine. The Kirtland's Warblers in Adams County occupy several stands of young red pine planted by Plum Creek Timber. The pines range from Christmas-tree-height to about 15 feet tall, and are spaced in rows so there is a bit of room in between, but you generally bump shoulders with both trees when walking in between rows. There are occasional clearings of grasses, sedges, and blueberries where red pines failed to grow, and jack pines and northern pin oak have naturally regenerated at the site. During my time at the site, the most common birds I observed were Wild Turkey, Mourning Dove, Brown Thrasher, Nashville Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and Vesper Sparrow.

My typical day started just after dawn and ended when the birds stopped singing around late morning. Early in the season, my first objective was to find birds. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologist Joel Trick went out with me the first day, 11 May, to show me around, but we did not hear any birds. At that point, we were still wondering if any birds would show up, and if they did, would they be the banded males from last year? But we did not have long to wait, and I was happy to see that one of the two birds that arrived on the 12th was a returnee from last year.

Every couple days, a few more males would arrive at the site. As more birds started to show up, I spent much of the day rotating among singing birds, trying to read their colorbands. I also spent some time spot-mapping territories by following singing birds and taking GPS locations at song perches, which allowed me to plot on a map the rough territory boundaries of each male. Once I knew where the territory boundaries were, it was easier to keep track of individual birds. During this time period, I also searched for female Kirtland's Warblers. Females generally arrive about a week after the males, and do not sing, so my primary method of locating them was to find and follow males until I observed a female with them.

On 19 May, I found my first female, and then in quick succession found

two more, as the two adjacent males were paired as well. Generally, unpaired males would sing high and consistently from the tops of trees, but paired males spent more time lower in trees or on the ground near the female. Even though the vegetation was dense in some areas, interpreting behavioral clues and listening for chip notes helped me determine if a female might be nearby.

After I found pairs, my next objective was to locate nests. Kirtland's Warblers nest on the ground, often at the edge of a clearing, and often in a clump of grass under blueberries or under the lowest branches of a pine tree. First, I noted locations where females were seen and recorded directions that they headed when seen with nest material. I decided not to follow them too closely during this time, as the literature says that this is the stage where they are most prone to abandon their nest if they feel disturbed. After I knew the general location they were in, I then searched what I considered to be suitable nest sites in the area. I wasn't sure how successful this technique would be. I felt some pressure to live up to Jennifer Goyette's success in 2008, when she found 5 nests. During my M.S. work, I became quite good at locating Swainson's Warbler nests, which are often at head-height, but wasn't sure how I would fare with these ground-nesters. However, on 29 May, I visited one of my suspect nest locations and flushed a female. I snuck off and watched from about 20 feet away, and in 10 minutes, I saw her return with a mouthful of pine needles! Though I found several nests by systematically combing birds' territories, it was time consuming and challenging. I assumed nests would become easier to find later when adults were making frequent feeding visits to nestlings.

In late May, we hosted a WSO Field Trip, and brought 78 lucky birders in to see Kirtland's Warblers. I went into the field trip weekend with both excitement and trepidation. As a birder, I can understand the desire to want to see a new species, and I hoped that we could give everyone the chance to see a bird. However, as a biologist who often works with sensitive species, I am acutely aware of the effects of disturbance, and taking dozens of people into the habitat of an endangered species needs to be done with appropriate precautions to minimize disturbance to the birds. Luckily, as I had just found the nest of the only female in the north stand, I felt we could safely march people in to see the other male in that stand, who was unpaired. However, as I'm sure many field trip participants remember, this didn't quite work out as planned. When we arrived at the previously unpaired male, he had found a female overnight! This was good news for him, but bad news for viewing, as he was focused on his female, stayed low, and sang infrequently. Just about the time we realized he was paired and not going to cooperate with us, it started to rain, and two of the three groups of trip attendees were about to head back having heard but not seen a Kirtland's Warbler. But we switched to plan B. I also had an unpaired male staked out on the other stand on the edge of the breeding colony. This location ended up involving more off-trail walking than some people wanted, but we were able to take groups in to see this bird, who was much more cooperative. This bird

Figure 2. WSO members watching a Kirtland's Warbler on the field trip to the Adams County area. Photo by Joel Trick.

often perched at the tops of trees, sometimes leafless oaks, and nearly everyone on the trip got to see one, and most people got great looks through a scope (Fig. 2). Protection and use of natural resources is always a delicate balance. By taking birders into the site in a controlled way, we were able to make the WSO trip a good experience for all (people and birds). I know a lot of happy birders left with a new appreciation of the bird and the site.

Several days later, retired USFWS biologist Ron Refsnider came out to help us capture and band the birds. To do this, we set up a mist net and played a Kirtland's Warbler song. The territorial male, angry about the intruder in his territory, flew over to the song and was captured in the net. We recaptured as many of the males as we could, including males that were already colorbanded last year (to take feather and toenail samples for later analysis), and we put colorbands on the legs of the new males so they could be later identified in the field. The male that had just paired up on the morning of the field trip was still staying close to his female, and when he approached the net, she came too, chipping agitatedly. When she approached the net, I stepped behind her and flushed her into the net, and we were able to colorband the first female Kirtland's Warbler ever banded in Wisconsin (Fig. 3). It was very useful for us to be able to identify all the birds at the site by their individual colorbands, but also, since three Kirtland's Warblers have been found wearing bands they were given in the Bahamas, I have high hopes that our birds will be seen again on the wintering grounds, or identified if they ever

Figure 3. First female Kirtland's Warbler ever banded in Wisconsin. Photo by author.

shift to a new breeding location. Later in the season, we were able to capture and band 3 fledged young, and I hope that at least one of those birds will be seen again somewhere. It is easy to marvel at how birds find their way to a site like this. The total population of Kirtland's Warblers is now approximately 1800 pairs, and Adams County is approximately 280 miles west of the main breeding sites in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, but birds have found their way to suitable habitat here. Banding birds is invaluable to help us figure out how birds move between locations.

Barry Benson of U.S. Department of Agriculture - Wildlife Services operated 3 Brown-headed Cowbird traps at the site again this year. The traps were big enough to walk into, and held about a dozen cowbirds in them at all times. Cowbirds at the site would see the flock of cowbirds flying around in the trap, and fly into the trap to be with others of their kind. We removed over 300 adult cowbirds from the site in 2009. Cowbird trapping is commonly used at the Kirtland's Warbler sites in Michigan as well. We also made the decision to remove any young Brown-headed Cowbirds that we found from Kirtland's nests, as young Kirtland's Warblers stand very little chance of receiving adequate food in a nest where cowbirds hatch first and quickly grow to be significantly larger than the Kirtland's nestlings (and soon larger than adult Kirtland's Warblers as well). Perhaps at some point the population will increase to the point at which cowbird trapping will not be needed, but since Kirtland's Warblers are a frequent and naïve host of cowbirds, we feel that trapping is key to helping this small population persist.

I monitored nests the minimum number of times necessary to figure out the nest schedule. I knew from the

literature that nests take about 7 days to build, 3 days of laying before incubating, 14 days of incubating, and 10 days of brooding and feeding young, so I observed nest contents periodically until I could estimate a hatch date. I then monitored nests weekly from a distance to make sure they were still active, and returned to the nest when it was time for them to fledge to verify nest success. Starting in mid-June, the eggs in the first nests began to hatch. As I had hoped, it was much easier to find the remaining outstanding nests when adults were bringing food. Sometimes males would even sing near the nest with food. I watched one male sing persistently within 10 feet of the nest with an entire dragonfly in his mouth. I quickly began to find the nests I had still been looking for, and I was able to find a nest for all but one of the 8 males that spent the breeding season at the main site. One of those males actually had three nests. The first nest failed after we removed Brown-headed Cowbirds from it, the second nest was a nearby renesting attempt with the same female, and his third nest was with a second female in a separate tract of land. From mid-June on, my mornings were extremely busy. I was rotating among different nests, trying to be at each nest around the time of hatching, sometimes working through the weekend if necessary. When a nest fledged, it could be challenging to find the young. The adults would chip often, and sometimes I would hear the young respond, but it often required 15 minutes to an hour of searching to verify visually that fledglings had made it out of the nest. It was very rewarding when I did finally see fledged young, and I was surprised that we had so many successful nests this year. At the main site, we had 9 nests, of which 5 were confirmed to be successful, fledging an estimated 19 young. One nest with 4 young was still active when my time in the field ended, and we do not know if that nest was successful or not. We lost 2 nests to Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism, and 1 to an unknown predator.

In addition to monitoring the birds at the main breeding stands, I tried to survey much of nearby Adams County, at least by car, to check other stands of pine that appeared suitable. At one point, I located a fairly large stand of young pine that looked similar to the main breeding stands. I didn't find any birds at the site, but I called Kim Grveles, biologist from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) who is in charge of the volunteer survey effort, and mentioned that it would be a good place to send a volunteer. On 10 June, I checked my email to find that two surveyors, Paul Charland and Rebecca Samerdyke, had located an unbanded male on this stand, about 6 miles away from the main site. This stand turned out to be an unexpected success story, as that male did find a mate, and the pair fledged 4 young. From what I've read, it's somewhat unusual to find a lone pair of Kirtland's Warblers, as they often like to set up territories next to other Kirtland's. But the overall density of birds here in Wisconsin is far less than they have in Michigan, and this pair seemed to do just fine on their own. If a single pair can successfully raise young, this reinforces the importance of good survey coverage across the state.

On 26 June, Jeffrey Potter of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wis-

consin (NRFW) came to shoot some video of Kirtland's Warbler and the site. NRFW, through their Bird Protection Fund, is the major financier of the Kirtland's Warbler project, and without their financial assistance, I'm not sure how many resources would be devoted to monitoring this population. I was planning to do some nest searching that morning, but when we got out of the car, I heard a bird singing across the road, on the opposite side of where most of the birds were. I took off north, not knowing what to expect. I thought it was actually more likely to be one of our existing birds exploring the neighboring habitat. But when we arrived at the bird, I found it to be another unbanded male! Presumably this bird had been trying to set up a territory elsewhere, and gave up on that territory late in the season but found the Adams County population. In early July, we captured and colorbanded this male, so if he returns next year to breed, we will know.

In total, 10 males, 10 females, and 10 nests were found in Adams County in 2009, and at least 6 successful nests fledged an estimated 23 young (and could be as many as 27 young if the 1 nest with unknown fate succeeded). Also, volunteer Jack Swelstad found 2 pairs of Kirtland's Warblers in Marinette County in 2009, including a male that had been banded in the Bahamas this spring. At least one Marinette County nest was successful this year, fledging 3 young. In 2008, 8 males, 5 females, and 5 nests were found at the Adams County site, and 2 nests were successful, producing 10 young. This is an encouraging upward trend, but the future of Kirtland's Warbler in Wisconsin is not yet secure. Plum Creek Timber has been very cooperative and allowed us to conduct monitoring at the site and provided us with maps of adjacent suitable stands to search as well. But the early-successional preferences of Kirtland's Warbler means that they will be leaving these stands at some time in the next 10 years, and it is crucial that suitable habitat exists for them to continue breeding. Plum Creek is a major landowner in the area, and we hope we can get a cooperative effort going to manage lands in a configuration and rotation that is suitable for Kirtland's Warblers. Another option, which would be even better, would be to establish a barrens reserve in the area managed for Kirtland's Warblers as well as a multitude of sensitive species that occur in this habitat. I encountered 3 slender glass lizards at the site this year, a state endangered species. In addition to rare vertebrates, there are many species of rare invertebrates and plants that inhabit barrens that would likely benefit from management at the ecosystem level rather than management directed towards producing commercial timber. Sand barrens are a globally rare ecosystem, and it would be great if we could set aside some land in Adams County to provide habitat for Kirtland's Warblers and other inhabitants of sand barrens communities (similar to the way habitat management is occurring at the Black River State Forest). 2009 was a banner year, but the next few years are a critical period for Kirtland's Warbler in Wisconsin, and we need to be planning ahead to ensure suitable habitat exists for the species in the future.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Many contributed to the study of Kirtland's Warblers in Wisconsin this year. The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin provided critical funding for this monitoring—their website, should you want to learn more, or possibly make a contribution, is: http://www.wisconservation.org. The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology contibuted funds for vegetation analysis at the site, the results of which will be forthcoming. I worked closely with Joel Trick (USFWS) and Kim Grveles (WDNR), and they provided comments that improved this article. Plum Creek Timber was very helpful, and Todd Watson provided maps of adjacent stands to search. Barry Benson of USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services operated cowbird traps. Jennifer Goyette provided pre-season advice, Linda and John Probst helped in the field, Jon Robaidek (WDNR) checked two late-season nests, Ron Refsnider helped with capturing and banding birds, and Nancy Livingston provided accommodations. Jack Swelstad monitored nests in Marinette County. Many additional volunteer surveyors conducted searches for Kirtland's Warblers across the state.

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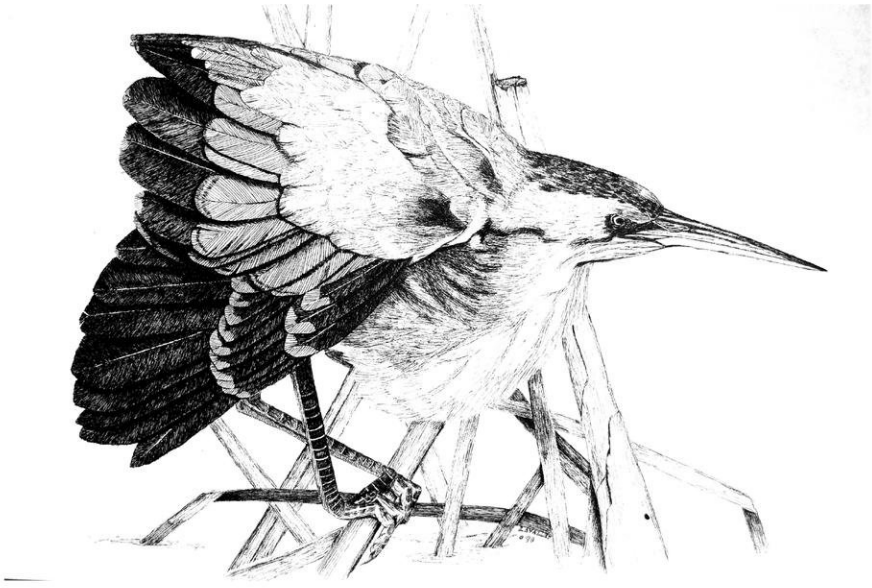

Green Heron in the marsh by Steve LaValley.

# Wisconsin Big Day Counts: 2009

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Lately I have been thinking a lot about green. Not the color green necessarily, though it is my favorite color, but rather the concept of going green. My husband and I recently bought a house and are already investigating an assortment of green technologies that will help to lessen our carbon footprint, such as using solar panels, composting food and garden scraps, growing our own vegetables, using native landscaping plants, and owning only one vehicle. Great, you might say, but what does this have to do with birds? These actions will provide numerous positive benefits to birds and other wildlife, but it is the topic of reduced vehicle use that is the most relevant for this discussion.

Being a one-car family has meant an increased reliance on public transportation, carpooling, bicycling, and walking. These were sacrifices that we were willing to make, thus far in a successful way. I realize that adopting this lifestyle choice may not be possible for many families and thus I am not advocating that everyone sell their second vehicle (though kudos to you if you already have). I would like to suggest, however, that you consider alternative modes of transportation for at least one day of the year—the Big Day. Imagine using only the city bus system to conduct your Big Day. Or perhaps better, using only a bicycle to transport yourself from one birding hotspot to the next. Not only will you detect many bird species because you will be outdoors all day, but you will also be benefitting your health through increased exercise and the environment through decreased carbon output.

It is with this in mind that I would like to promote a change in our way of thinking about Big Days. Although it is very exciting and noteworthy to achieve high species totals during Big Day events, I believe it is equally praiseworthy to conduct Big Days in an environmentally-conscious manner. I propose that future Big Day summaries highlight both categories—highest number of species seen AND the "greenest" route. Perhaps the ultimate challenge is then to be the highest achiever in both categories!

## Summary

Only six reports were submitted in 2009, four from Daryl Tessen, one from Jim Frank, and one from Bill

and Karen Boyd. Thus, this article's focus on reduced vehicle usage is perhaps timely. If the current economic situation is causing some to discontinue their Big Day events, then using alternative modes of transportation might be one solution to reducing costs. I encourage you all to go green!

All counts were conducted in May, and Daryl Tessen had the highest species total of any count at 173. Eighteen common and widespread species were recorded on every count, including Mallard, Mourning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, and Baltimore Oriole. Fifty-one species were recorded on only one route, including several species that are rare to Wisconsin such as White-faced Ibis, Summer Tanager, Northern Mockingbird, and Blue Grosbeak.

## The Counts

**Daryl Tessen**, *173 species*, 16 May, Heckrodt Preserve, B pond (Calumet Co.), Two Rivers, Manitowoc, Fischer Creek County Park, Cleveland, Sheboygan, F/K pond (Fond du Lac Co.), Horicon Marsh, G pond (Winnebago Co.). ***Highlights:*** Despite high winds throughout the day, Daryl tallied the highest species total (173) and the highest number of shorebird species (24) for the 2009 Big Days. In addition to the expected shorebird species, Daryl also observed seven shorebirds not recorded on any other count: American Golden-Plover, Piping Plover, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Pectoral Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, and Wilson's Snipe. Daryl found several uncommon gulls on this route, including Little Gull, Iceland Gull, and Lesser Black-backed Gull. This also was the only count to detect Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

**Daryl Tessen**, *164 species*, 20 May, Jersey/Breezy Pt. ponds, Governor Dodge State Park, Wyalusing State Park, Spring Green Preserve, Baxter's Hollow, Mud Lake Wildlife Area, Arlington ponds, Horicon Marsh. ***Highlights:*** Daryl observed many grassland and open shrubland species on this route, including expected species such as Northern Harrier, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bobolink, and less expected species such as Henslow's Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and Upland Sandpiper. He also observed four grassland/shrubland species not observed on any other routes: Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Dickcissel, and Western Meadowlark. Although this route did not have the highest warbler total, there were several uncommon warblers observed, including Kentucky Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Cerulean Warbler. This also was the only count to record Hudsonian Godwit, Least Bittern, Common Moorhen, Whooping Crane, and a rare sighting of Blue Grosbeak.

**Jim Frank**, *152 species,* 19 May, Ozaukee County. ***Highlights:*** Staying within the confines of Ozaukee County, Jim observed the highest number of waterfowl (15), thrush (6), and warbler species (25). Given this feat, it is surprising that there were no thrush or warbler species unique to this count and only one unique waterfowl species—Canvasback. This was one of only two routes to record Osprey, Franklin's Gull, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Pine Warbler, and the only

route to record Red Knot, American Woodcock, Great Horned Owl, Brown Creeper, and White-crowned Sparrow.

**Daryl Tessen**, *125 species*, 9 May, Horicon Marsh, F/K pond (Fond du Lac Co.), Sheboygan, Cleveland, Manitowoc, Two Rivers. ***Highlights:*** Daryl observed 14 species of waterfowl on this route, including one not seen on any other route—Snow Goose. He recorded approximately 200 Caspian Terns and 250 Common Terns, and also noted Black Terns and Forster's Terns as being on the route. This was one of only two routes to record Ring-necked Pheasant, Cattle Egret, Peregrine Falcon, Black-necked Stilt, and Glaucous Gull, and the only route with Lapland Longspur, Purple Finch, and the rare White-faced Ibis.

**Daryl Tessen**, *115 species*, 11 May, Jersey/Breezy Pt. ponds, Arlington ponds, Baxter's Hollow, Spring Green Preserve, JJ ponds (Sauk Co.), Devil's Lake State Park, Lakes Marie and Emily. ***Highlights:*** Waterfowl also were well-represented on this route, including two species not seen on other routes: Ring-necked Duck and Bufflehead. This was one of the few routes to record Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Louisiana Waterthrush, and the rare Northern Mockingbird, and the only route for Common Loon, Winter Wren, and Worm-eating Warbler.

**Bill and Karen Boyd**, *29 species*, 4 May, Racine County. ***Highlights:*** Bill and Karen win this year's award for conducting the "Greenest Big Day." They walked for two miles along the Root River and thus burned no fossil fuels to count birds. Bill and Karen recorded the highest number of woodpecker species (6) of any count, including Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Pileated Woodpecker. They also observed two late migrants—Dark-eyed Junco and Fox Sparrow—which were not recorded on any other counts.

## Big Day Rules

For all who wish to participate in future Big Day counts, please remember these rules and guidelines:

- The count must be taken within a 24-hour calendar day (midnight to midnight).
- The count must be taken within the state boundaries, but it may cover as many parts of Wisconsin as birders can reach in the time limit.
- All participants must be within direct conversational contact at all times during the birding and traveling periods. This excludes meal and rest stops if birding is not conducted during those times. This limits the number of parties involved to one, and participants to the number safely and comfortably seated in one vehicle.
- Areas can be revisited during the day.
- The same areas may be covered on different Big Day counts.
- No fees are involved in conducting the counts.
- Be sure to drive safely. Sleep deprivation is characteristic of those engaging in Big Days, and drivers and passengers alike are urged to use great caution while driving.
- Counting individual birds is optional.
- Please note that there is no special Big Day form. Standard checklists,

such as WSO's *Wisconsin Birds - Field Checklist*, may be used.

- It is critical that all unusual species—whether they are early or late sightings, or rare species—be completely documented. Reports of rarities are subject to review by the WSO Records Committee.
- Completed Big Day results should be sent directly to Randy Hoffman, WSO Bird Reports Coordinator [see inside front cover of this issue for address], and clearly marked as a Big Day report. All 2010 Big Day reports must reach Randy Hoffman no later than 15 January 2011 to be included in *The Passenger Pigeon* Big Day summary for 2010.

*Kim Kreitinger is currently working as a contract biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and PRBO Conservation Science. Kim has been involved with numerous bird conservation projects in Wisconsin and California, including the development of the Wisconsin All-Bird Conservation Plan and the Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan for BCR 12. Kim previously worked in California for seven years for PRBO Conservation Science and the Endangered Species Recovery Program and also served as the California Coordinator for Partners in Flight.*

House Finch at the busy nest with young by Jack Bartholmai.

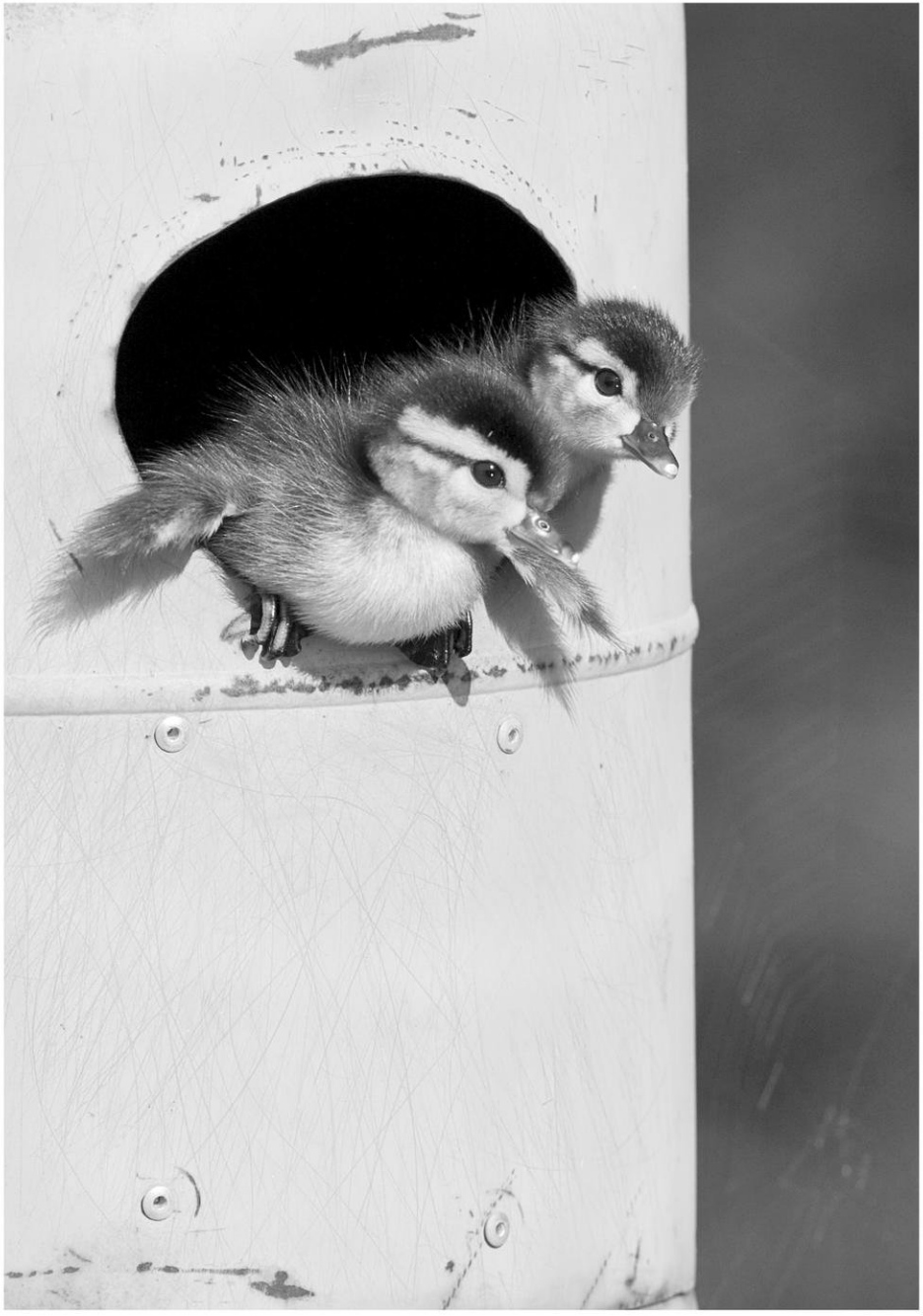
## 50 Years Ago in *The Passenger Pigeon*

The lead article by William Southern focuses on the birds of Hunt Hill Sanctuary located near Sarona in Washburn County. Of the 125 species recorded, 65 were recorded as breeding on the property, which is now operated by the Friends of Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary (http://hunthill.org/about-hunt-hill/). The Sanctuary's current mission is to serve as a wildlife preserve and learning center that is open to all and is dedicated to fostering understanding, appreciation, and protection of the environment.

The current but undated *Bird List for Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary* only lists 109 species, with 100 of them marked as summer or permanent residents. There are 40 species that appear in the *Pigeon* article that are unlisted on the *Bird List*, and 25 species are currently listed that are not included in the *Pigeon* article.

This seems like an ideal opportunity for someone to prepare an accurate and up-to-date list for this interesting property and to do more field work during all seasons to better document the property's bird life. I'm sure that the many visitors to the Sanctuary would greatly appreciate a more comprehensive list of bird species occurring on the property.

*Excerpt from Vol. 22 (2), 1960 by WSO Historian Noel J. Cutright, 3352 Knollwood Road, West Bend, WI 53095. h. 262 .675. 2443, w. 262. 268. 3617, noel.cutright@we-energies.com.*



Young Wood Ducks were caught abandoning the nest by Jack Bartholmai.

# Lessons for the Seasons: Summer 2009

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No extraordinary bird events were of note in the summer of 2009. Granted localized flooding persisted in southern Wisconsin, and widespread drought continued for the fifth summer in the far north. Also, several rare birds made appearances, but such is the norm for a birding summer. Normal equates to typical variations in weather and a few rare birds to chase.

As I continue to state in these columns—in general, birding in summer is for conservation, while birding the rest of the year is for pleasure. I know. I know. Conservation includes stop-over habitat and wintering grounds habitat, but those aspects of conservation are minor compared to Wisconsin's role in providing breeding bird habitat. Put another way, birders most often participate in the observation of birds for the interest of the observer. There are hundreds of different reasons for birding and for the impacts of the bird on the birder. Thankfully, many birders have taken an additional step and have given something back to the birding community.

Anyone would have a difficult time perceiving a person saying, "I really don't like birds, I'm in it simply to conserve habitat." The deep love of something or someone is one of the strongest calls to action. With all the people out there claiming to love birds, why do so few participate in organized bird surveys?

Ostensibly, the prime reason is an incomplete mastery of bird song. I can fully understand the trepidation of many, because learning all the bird songs is a very challenging thing to do. Furthermore to conduct a USGS BBS (Breeding Bird Survey) roadside transect, you really need to know your bird songs. My estimate from the bird surveys I conduct is 95% of the identification is by song alone for surveys during June and early July. Other broad-based surveys, such as the Nicolet BBS, also require a good knowledge of bird song, but the subset of songs to know is usually smaller than required for roadsides. The primary difference is point counts will lead to less ground covered over a period of time. Some surveys are in place to focus more narrowly on a few species, such as the recently developed owl and nightjar surveys. These more focused surveys require knowledge of a much smaller number of species calls.

Scores if not low hundreds of birders participate in these citizen science

surveys. They give an incredible amount of time and energy to help us comprehend our bird world better. The knowledge attained and data showing trends help decision-makers and professional biologists develop plans and appropriate resources to help birds. These surveys are invaluable in helping the birds we love so much; however, is the giving back limited to advanced birders?

The remainder of this lesson is focused on bringing more birders into the conservation fold and maybe changing a few advanced birders' summer routes. I propose that while citizen science is great for helping birds, it generally takes the personal responsibility away from the birder and places it on others to do the actual conservation. Don't read me wrong, we should not give up these great citizen science opportunities and we should encourage more participation.

Let's lay out the problem. This past summer three Eastern Screech-Owl reports were submitted for the summer season. Even the owl survey, actually run in April, produced only 10 birds on four routes. Wow, from these data the bird must be extremely rare in the state and the politicians need to take action. We all know that this is not true, but how do we really know the data do not accurately reflect the situation?

While coordinating the Madison Christmas Bird Count (CBC) back in the 1980s, I had the pleasure of working with Al Shea who through love and passion developed a systematic owl survey for the CBC. The results were phenomenal and for several years Madison had the highest Eastern Screech-Owl tallies in all on North America. Numbers ranged from approximately 80 to 140 for the count circle. Similar numbers should be expected for any urban/suburban area with many small parks and lots of large trees. Over five million acres of this habitat is found in the state and averaging 20 acres per owl pair, 250,000 Eastern Screech-Owls may reside in badgerland.

Yet, only 3 reports from the summer season were submitted to the coordinator. Most listers probably got their year bird back in March and don't need to spend the time for another check mark. Most avid birders have seen one at some point in their lives and do not have an inner drive to go out of their normal patterns to see another. Surveys do not lend themselves to gathering information on the species, due to daylight timing or the passive nature of the survey with no play backs allowed. Maybe another way is possible.

Spend time documenting what's on your property or if you are an apartment dweller know your local park. Others may have land up north for whatever reason. Get to really know your property. Counts need not be as systematic as the Audubon Breeding Bird Surveys that used standardized methods. Simply walk your land and record the birds you see and hear. Jot down on a piece of paper or print a map from any of a number of online sources and mark the location of nests, young, singing perches, etc. Do this at different times during the breeding season and different times during the day and night.

Over the last twenty years I have documented all the birds that nest on my small ¼ acre suburban lot. I also record those species that utilize my

land as part of their range some nest close by and extensively use my land. Others, such as the neighborhood Cooper's Hawk, occasionally make forays through my back yard potentially to find a snack. Still others have nested only sparingly.

My results:

- American Robin—Two successful nests every year for twenty years. Twice a successful third nesting occurred.
- Chipping Sparrow—Attempted nesting every year. Sixteen years the first nesting successfully fledged Brown-headed Cowbirds, two years the land owner intervened. In 12 of the years, a second nesting produced Chipping Sparrows.
- House Finch—Attempted nesting sixteen out of twenty years with only five being successful. Blue Jays seem to find the eggs about two days before they should hatch.
- Mourning Dove—Attempted nesting twelve out of twenty years.
- Northern Cardinal—Part of territory every year with nesting on my land five years out of twenty.
- Gray Catbird—Part of territory sixteen out of eighteen years with nest on my land four of those years.
- Common Nighthawk—In 2001, they successfully fledged young on my flat roof.
- Green Heron—In 2002, they successfully fledged young in a large silver maple in my back yard. They have nested in large silver maples in the neighborhood every year since.
- Cooper's Hawk, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, and Common Grackle have used my yard as foraging territory for all twenty years.
- Every year I observe Chimney Swifts flying through my large silver maple to collect small sticks for their nest.
- For 18 of the past twenty years, I have had Eastern Screech-Owls use my land as part of their territory. The past two years have changed with a Great Horned Owl taking its place.
- No House Sparrows or European Starlings.

Granted the site is small and larger landowners cannot be this intense regarding their observations. The value to me is I know my birds. I can observe any responses they exhibit when I make a decision on what to do in my yard—an invaluable feed-back loop that helps me make better bird habitat decisions in the future.

The upshot is, for the summer reporting season, if you submit a similar survey of your property, I will publish it. I believe such an undertaking will promote better on-the-ground conservation and that is what the summer is all about.

Young Pileated Woodpecker at nest hole by Jack Bartholmai.

# The Summer Season: 2009

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Few observers included comments about the summer's weather in their reports. Most likely they were still recovering from the great birding in May. Karen Etter Hale's description from Jefferson County indicated a relatively normal June until the last 9 days when the temperatures climbed into the upper 80s and lower 90s. More than 4 inches of rain fell during June. In July, a completely different pattern persisted for the entire month. Madison recorded the coolest temperatures ever. Daryl Tessen reported well below normal precipitation for the entire period. Farther north observers reported drought conditions persisting for the fifth year. Many lakes in the Minoqua area were down 8 to 10 feet from the long-term average. June and July wildfires in the Northern Highland State forest confirmed the perceptions of dry soil and vegetation.

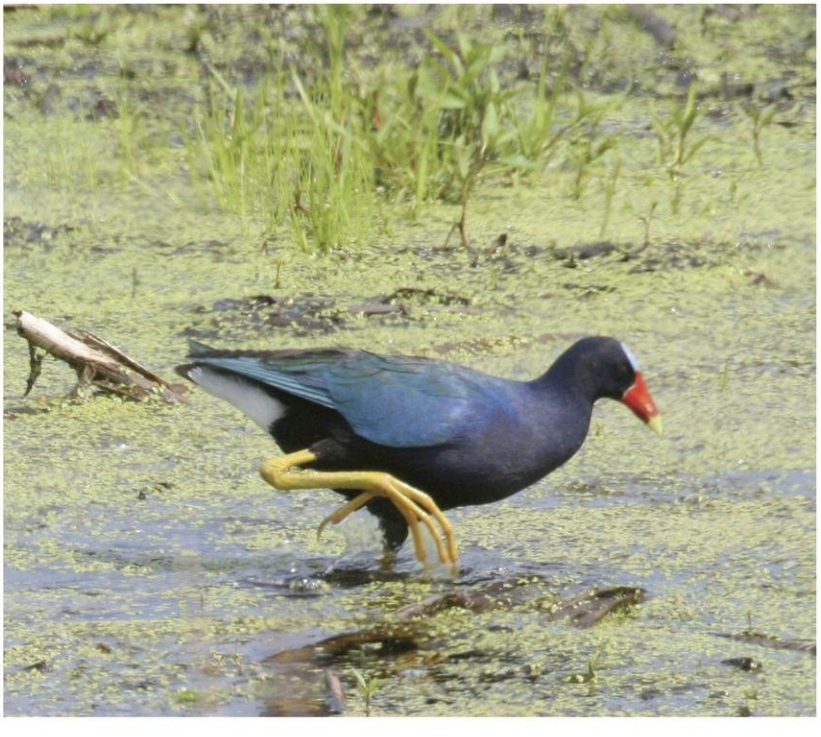
Observers recorded 272 species during the season. The account that follows gives details on 178 of them. An additional 85 species that are not mentioned were common and widespread enough to be reported from more than 25 counties. The remaining nine species, generally noted in 10-25 counties, are listed here, along with the number of counties in which each was recorded: Green-winged Teal (14), Common Merganser (11), American Bittern (23), Virginia Rail (24), Solitary Sandpiper (18), Whip-poor-will (25), Tufted Titmouse (17), Brown Creeper (21), and Yellow-headed Blackbird (18).

## Rarities

Observers located several rarities during the season. Among these, eight species are worthy of special note. The first was Wisconsin's second summer Harris's Sparrow, which spent nearly the entire month of June at a feeder in Burnett County. Second, a spectacular appearance by a Purple Gallinule gave many of Wisconsin's birders either a life bird or a state bird. Excellent photographs were taken. Third, the now near-annual Rufous Hummingbird appeared at a feeder in Bayfield County in late July. This corresponds very closely to the post-breeding movement time for male birds and needless to say the July bird was a brilliant male. Fourth, Kirtland's Warblers were documented fledging more than 25 young birds. Fifth, the Chuck-will's-widow returned to the

Figure 1. Snowy Egret flying over Eldorado Marsh, Fond du Lac County on 17 July 2009 by Dan Jackson.

Figure 2. Cattle Egret at a pond near Eldorado Marsh in Fond du Lac County on 19 July 2009 was photographed by Dan Jackson.



Figures 3 and 4. Purple Gallinule photographed by Kelly Rueckheim on 9 June 2009 in Walworth County.

same location for the fifth consecutive year. Sixth, a summer Black-billed Magpie was photographed. And finally, many northern waterfowl remained into June including very tardy Surf and Black Scoters in Manitowoc.

Although less rare, a number of additional species, some out of season, helped to make this an interesting summer season: Red-throated Loon, Horned Grebe, Snowy Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, nesting Black-necked Stilts, American Avocet, Willet, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Red Knot, Red-necked Phalarope, Little, Laughing, Franklin's, Thayer's, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls, Black-backed Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike, White-eyed Vireo, nesting Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-throated Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Summer Tanager.

## Other Features of the Season

The season's events can be summarized into three primary features; localized flooding, localized drought, and the coolest July ever recorded. Places in southern Wisconsin experienced patchy heavy rain that lingered from May causing many to worry about a repeat of 2008. An example worth mentioning is the pond that is adjacent to County Highway V in northern Dane County. Waters rose and rose until they crested a foot or so on top of the road. This event was unprecedented and provided an excellent foundation for American Coots to build their nests. In the far northwest, drought lingered from the past five years with many lakes 8 to 10 feet below normal high water marks. Waterfowl and marsh birds were affected and Common Loons that occupied several lakes for decades were now nowhere to be seen. Unknown are the effects of a very cool July, but one can speculate on aquatic productivity. Lesser Yellowlegs that normally occur in relatively large flocks in July were found, but in small scattered flocks. Habitat, especially in south central Wisconsin, did not seem to be a limiting factor with plenty of shallow water.

Continued efforts by an individual and a group foray provided additional insights into breeding bird populations. Andrea Szymczak walked 21 different survey locations in the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. She walked 48 miles of trail and documented the number of singing males. Some results were even more astounding than 2008 with 2009 listed first followed by the 2008 numbers: Acadian Flycatcher (130 – 61), Blue-headed Vireo (24 – 24), Chestnut-sided Warbler (50 – 27), Black-throated Green Warbler (40 – 27), Blackburnian Warbler (2 – 1), Cerulean Warbler (28 – 10), Kentucky Warbler (1 – 1), and Hooded Warbler (229 – 167). Another phenomenal count was carried out in one day. The birding "smackdown," an event developed by Craig Thompson, brings together several birders for an intense survey of a property in one morning. This year's event was held on private 1,000 acres of land in Crawford County. These results were similarly eye-popping: Yellow-billed Cuckoo (25), Eastern Wood-Pewee (93), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (70), Blue-winged Warbler (24), Cerulean Warbler (14), Indigo Bunting (94), and Field Sparrow (25). John Romano doing a Co-


lumbia County Big Year added many species for that county that were normally missed during the summer.

## County Coverage

The "Contributors and Cited Observers" section keeps expanding every year due to expanded use of the data submitted to ebird. This summer's list contains 254 names compared to the 134 names in last year's report. Observations were submitted for every county in the state. Examining this year's single- and multiple-county reporting forms and the data submitted to ebird, I note that every county had at least fifty species recorded.

This summer's data we collected have value and every birder submitting to ebird or through hard copies to WSO should know their efforts can be used to help bird conservation. The data come in different forms. Those mentioned above are of the most value, because they cover spe-

Figure 5. California Gull near Wisconsin/Illinois border on 17 July 2009 by Tom Prestby.

Figure 6. A "search image" photo of the California Gull, Kenosha County at State Line Beach on 17 July 2009 by Tom Prestby.

cific habitats and especially the ones that are repeated year after year. The summer report for the most part does not use national Breeding Bird Survey data, mostly due to unavailability at the time of compilation, although the more rapid birder self-entry of BBS data may alleviate that concern in the future. Some birders, Quentin Yoerger is a prime example, place the results of their BBS route onto ebird. This slight amount of extra work is extremely valuable to the seasonal editor for making evaluations between years. The best information for understanding our breeding bird populations is to conduct intense surveys year after year.

Until we have data, such as we have for many European countries, which snow the population of a species in the country within small statistical errors, we cannot do acceptable bird conservation. The paradigm stills holds that for the most part people bird ten months of the year for fun and they bird in June and July for conservation. Everyone is encouraged to participate in single or group counts. Furthermore, if you are a landowner, it should be your moral obligation to know the breeding bird populations on your land.

## REPORTS
## (1 June–31 July 2009)

***Snow Goose (Blue Phase)***—Reported from Ashland on 2 June (Brady).

***Trumpeter Swan***—Reported from 17 counties with highest numbers from Burnett 15 June (Paulios) with 12 birds.

***Gadwall***—Noted from 9 counties during the reporting period: Adams (Anich), Columbia (Schaufenbuel), Dane (Martin), Dodge (Stutz), Fond du Lac (25 birds, Frank), Langlade (Francken), Sheboygan (S. Baughman), Walworth (Frank), and Waukesha (Gustafson) Counties.

***American Wigeon***—Observed only in these counties: Ashland (Anich), Columbia (Romano), Dane (Prestby), Fond du Lac (Kavanagh), Manitowoc (Domagalski), and Waukesha (Gustafson).

***American Black Duck***—Observers reported this species from 6 counties with 11 birds in Burnett most of the summer (Fantz). Also, seen in Douglas (Maerecklein), Manitowoc

Figure 7. Band-tailed Pigeon at the home of Thomas Rhorer in La Crosse County from 20-22 July 2009 was photographed by Rhorer.

Figure 8. Rufous Hummingbird at a feeder in Bayfield County on 30 July 2009 was photographed by Ryan Brady.

(Mooney), Milwaukee (Mooney), Oneida (Uslabar), and Vilas (Prestby) Counties.

***Northern Shoveller***—Ten birds were reported 12–14 July in Dane County (Prestby) and 26 July in Columbia County (Kavanagh). In addition, reports also came from Dodge (mob), Green Lake (Schultz), Jefferson (Kollath), and Walworth (Kavanaghs) Counties.

***Northern Pintail***— Reported from 4 counties: Columbia (Romano), Dodge (Schaufenbuel and Szymczak), Marathon (Hoeft), and Walworth (K. Kavanagh).

***Canvasback***—These 3 counties provided the season's only observations: 11 June–22 July in Dodge (K. Kavanagh and S. Holschbach), all season Manitowoc (Sontag), and 2 July Ozaukee (Frank).

***Redhead***—At least 460 birds were recorded 21 June in Winnebago County (Ziebell). Additional observations were from eight counties.

***Ring-necked Duck***—At least 35 birds were recorded 15 June in Burnett County (Paulios). Additional observations were from 17 counties.

***Greater Scaup***—Observers found late migrants 13 June in Manitowoc (Sontag) and Door (Cobb), 12 June in Milwaukee (Prestby), and 7 June in Douglas (Svingen) Counties. A few birds spent the entire summer in Manitowoc (Sontag and K. Kavanagh) and Kewaunee Counties (Sinkula).

***Lesser Scaup***—Four June records with the latest being 7 June Manitowoc (Sommer, S. Cutright, and Bontly) County. Additional sightings came from Columbia (Romano), Douglas (Svingen) and Milwaukee (Frank) Counties.

***Surf Scoter***—A tardy bird lingered 1–9 June in Manitowoc County (Schaefer and Sontag). See *"By the Wayside"* for more information on this sighting.

***Black Scoter***—A female hung around Manitowoc County from 1–23 June (Domagalski and Sontag).

***Bufflehead***—June birds were reported from 3 June in Douglas (Svingen) and 11–20 June in Manitowoc (Fitzgerald and Evanson) Counties.

***Common Goldeneye***—Found in Door (the Baumanns), Douglas (Svingen), Kewaunee (Sinkula), and surprisingly Sauk (Hutnik) Counties.

***Red-breasted Merganser***—At least 47 birds were reported 2 June in Manitowoc (Schaefer) County. Additional observations came from 11 counties.

***Ruddy Duck***—A normal season with observations in 12 counties including more than 200 seen in Fond du Lac County 18 July (Jakoubek). Out of normal summer range was a bird 12 June in Clark County (Risch).

***Gray Partridge***—Only reports, 11 June in Crawford (Sandstrom), and 7 July in Manitowoc (J. Holschbach) Counties.

***Ruffed Grouse***—Birds were reported in 22 counties compared to 34 counties in 2008.

***Spruce Grouse***—Mid-summer sightings were rare with the only reports 3 June in Florence (K. Kavanagh) and 16 July in Vilas (J. Baughman) Counties.

***Sharp-tailed Grouse***—Reports came from the more traditional locations such as Crex Meadows (Haseleu, Keiser, and J. Campbell) and Namekagon Barrens (Maerecklein) in Burnett County and Douglas County Barrens (LaValleys), but also from the Riley Lake Barrens in Price County (K. Kavanagh and Krakowski).

***Greater Prairie-Chicken***—Reported at various times throughout the season from the Buena Vista Grasslands in Portage County (Schaufenbuel and Anich).

***Wild Turkey***—Reported from as north as Ashland, Iron, and Vilas Counties. Amazing is the comparison to thirty-one years ago, when a single observation was made in Juneau County by someone named Hoffman.

***Northern Bobwhite***—The nine reporting counties are slightly down from recent years: reported from Adams (Anich), Calumet (Uslabar), Columbia (Romano), Eau Claire (Forsgren), Kenosha (Fitzgerald), Manitowoc

(Sontag), Rock (Yoerger), and Sauk (B. Kavanagh). Most unusual was a report 12 June from Door County (R. and C. Lukes)

***Red-throated Loon***—An outstanding summer observation of a bird that remained 14 June–4 July in Douglas County (Svingen).

***Common Loon***—Schilke observed a bird 16 June on the shallow Schoeneberg Marsh, Columbia County, and 3 birds 27 July on Lake Monona in Dane County (Schwarz) were out of the normal pattern for this species. None of the remaining 26 reporting counties were considered unusual.

***Horned Grebe***—Speculation as to whether a 22 June bird in Kewaunee County (Sinkula) was a tardy migrant or actually spending the summer loafing in Lake Michigan will probably never be resolved.

***Red-necked Grebe***—Ziebell counted 7 on 21 June in Winnebago County. Other reports came from these counties: Burnett (Keiser), Columbia (Romano), and Door (Cobb). Most intriguing was a bird that summered on Beaver Dam Lake in Waukesha County, well south of the normal southern limits in the state (Gustafson and Szymczak).

***American White Pelican***—The number of reporting counties rose again to 21 this season with many high numbers. Kollath reported 150 at Zeloski Marsh in Jefferson County, Prestby had 180 in Green Lake County, Ziebell counted 174 on Rush Lake in Winnebago County, and Hoffman counted 147 on Schoeneberg Marsh in Columbia County. All these reports indicate a continued expansion of the species in the state.

***Double-crested Cormorant***—Ziebell estimated 300 to be present in Winnebago County on 21 June, which is significantly less that 5,000 reported in 2008. This species was seen in an additional 34 counties.

***Least Bittern***—Noted in 12 counties this season; a report from 26 July along Muskeg Creek in Bayfield County (Brady and Oksiuta) was by far the farthest north. Ziebell had 13 birds 21 June in Winnebago County.

***Great Egret***—Reported from somewhat more counties (24) than in recent years. The highest number was 85 birds seen at Myrick Marsh in La Crosse County (Mooney).

***Snowy Egret***—Three reports: 1 June in Door County (Schilke), 17–21 July at El Dorado Marsh (Fig. 1) in Fond du Lac County (Otto and K. Kavanagh), and 18 July in Dodge County (Tessen, T. Wood, and Mooney).

***Cattle Egret***—Seen in the following counties: Dodge (Schaefer, Jackson, and S. Cutright), Fond du Lac (Fig. 2) (Schaefer and Bontly) and Walworth (Thomas).

***Black-crowned Night-Heron***—At least 55 birds were noted in Dodge County on 19 July (Mueller). Observed in 12 counties in all.

***Yellow-crowned Night-Heron***—The only summer report was a single bird 19 June at the Arena Boat Landing in Iowa County (A. Holschbach).

***Osprey***—Good news from the expanding range front with a bird seen all summer at the Lulu Lake State Natural Area in Walworth County (Howe).

***Sharp-shinned Hawk***—Reported only from a higher than normal 19 counties.

***Northern Goshawk***—Noted from only 4 counties; Door County (Schaefer and Cobb), Florence and Forest Counties (K. Kavanagh), and a much farther south sighting in Juneau County 5–6 June (Schrinner and Hoffman).

***Red-shouldered Hawk***—Reports were up over previous years with birder sightings from 22 counties.

***Merlin***—Observed in these 10 counties: Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, Iron, Langlade, Marathon, Oconto, Rusk, Sawyer, and Vilas.

***Peregrine Falcon***—Reported from Ashland, Buffalo, Dane, Dodge, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Vernon, and Winnebago Counties.

***Yellow Rail***—No sightings reported for a second summer.

***King Rail***—Matteson reports a DNR sponsored marsh bird survey had 6 individuals reported with 5 at the Rat River Wildlife Area in

Figure 9. Rufous Hummingbird in flowering shrubs on 30 July 2009 in Bayfield County by Ryan Brady.

Figure 10. Black-backed Woodpecker at a nest hole in Vilas County on 30 June 2009 taken by Joe Schaufenbuel.

Figure 11. Black-billed Magpie photographed by Marie Christenson on her deck near Grandview in Bayfield County on 5 June 2009.

Figure 12. Harris's Sparrow photographed by Bill Schmoker at his feeders between 2 June and 3 July 2009 in Burnett County.

Winnebago County and one at the El Dorado Wildlife Area in Fond du Lac County. No observations were received from birders submitting seasonal report forms.

***Purple Gallinule***—A bird was discovered on 7 June and remained in the same area (Figures 3 and 4) through 10 June in Walworth County (Fitzgerald and Petherick). A sample of the numerous documentations can be seen in "*By the Wayside.*" Another specimen was found in the parking lot of Oscar Mayer in Madison, Dane County on 30 July and retrieved by biologist Jake Fries.

***Common Moorhen***—Noted in eight counties: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, La Crosse, Racine, and Waukesha.

***American Coot***—High water rose over County Highway V in northern Dane County and on 4 June Hoffman noted a coot nest built on the submerged road. An emergency drainage scheme eventually lowered the water levels, but the habitat still supported an estimated 400 birds on 15 July (Prestby). Additional reports came from 23 counties.

***Whooping Crane***—Summer observations away from the release area in Juneau County were confirmed in Columbia, Fond du Lac, and Dodge Counties.

***Black-bellied Plover***—Two late departure dates noted: 3 June in Adams County (Anich) and the same date in Columbia County (Otto).

***American Golden-Plover***—No reports from the summer season 2009, which is quite unusual compared to recent summers.

***Semipalmated Plover***—Lingering spring birds were noted in four counties with the latest being 11 June in Dodge County (K. Kavanagh). Some returning birds began to appear in several areas as early as 17 July in Milwaukee County (Mooney and Goodman).

***Piping Plover***—Julie Van Stappen reports that within the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (Bayfield County) four nests fledged 10 chicks, which is one fewer than 2008.

***Black-necked Stilt***—Nesting occurred at nearly the same spot as 2008 at Horicon Marsh (Dodge County) along the Main Dike Road. Eight birds in total including four young were first seen by Schaufenbuel on 2 June then subsequently by dozens of observers. A bird stopped 9 June at Nine Springs in Dane County long enough to be photographed (Gold). From 18 July to the end of the period up to five birds resided at El Dorado Marsh in Fond du Lac County (Spencer and Vokoun). These birds may have been post-nesting wanderers from Horicon Marsh.

***American Avocet***—A more typical year than 2008 with three summer reports: 16 July in Dodge (S. Cutright), 22 July in Fond du Lac (Reichhoff), and another 6 birds 22 July in Kewaunee Counties (Thiessen).

***Greater Yellowlegs***—Only 11 county reports were received, indicating a rather poor showing this summer. Probable early migrants were a 30 June bird in Manitowoc County (Sontag) and 5 July in Dodge County (Schaefer).

***Willet***—Well above recent summers, observers submitted reports from six counties: Dodge (Graham), Fond du Lac (Reichhoff), Kenosha (Fitzgerald), Kewaunee and Manitowoc (Thiessen), and Sheboygan (the Brassers).

***Lesser Yellowlegs***—The last spring migrant was recorded 17 June in Winnebago County (Bruce) and the first fall migrant was seen 1 July in Dodge County (Schilke).

***Upland Sandpiper***—Reported from 14 counties nearly statewide in distribution. Interesting were birds seen 5 July in Bayfield County (Oksiuta) and an adult and three juveniles seen at the Faville Grove Sanctuary 27 June in Jefferson County (Thiessen).

***Whimbrel***—The only report came 26 June when 2 birds were seen in Manitowoc County (Sontag).

***Hudsonian Godwit***—The only report was 2 June in Dodge County (Tessen).

***Marbled Godwit***—An exceptional summer with several reports coming from the Horicon Marsh vicinity: 2 June (Tessen), 27 June (Wood), 5–9 July (Bahls and T. Wood) in Dodge County, and 22 July in Fond du Lac County (Re-

ichhoff). Another bird stayed 11–12 July in Eau Claire County (Cameron).

***Ruddy Turnstone***—Five counties held birds 1 and 2 June. The last spring birds were seen 6 June in Douglas County (Oksiuta) and 9 June in Manitowoc County (Sontag). The only fall bird was seen 22 July in Douglas County (LaValleys).

***Red Knot***—One going and one coming: A late spring migrant was 9-10 June in Milwaukee County (Mooney, Gustafson, and Idzikowski) and the only fall migrant was returning 17-26 July in Manitowoc County (Sontag and Domagalski).

***Sanderling***—Several birds seen on the big lakes 1-3 June. The latest spring migrant was 9 June in Manitowoc County (Sontag).

***Semipalmated Sandpiper***—The latest spring departure was 12 June in Milwaukee County (Fitzgerald). The earliest fall migrant was 7 July in Burnett County (J. Campbell).

***Least Sandpiper***—The largest concentration was 56 birds 14 July in Iowa County (A. Holschbach).

***White-rumped Sandpiper***—The latest departing bird was 20 June in Dodge County (Wilson and Evanson). Two fall migrants: 16 July in Manitowoc (Schaufenbuel) and 17 July in Milwaukee (Mooney) Counties.

***Baird's Sandpiper***—The latest spring migrant was 11 June in Dodge County (K. Kavanagh). Seen in fall migration in Columbia (Romano), Manitowoc (Kavanaghs and Frank), and Milwaukee (Mooney) Counties.

***Pectoral Sandpiper***—A light late summer movement with only seven counties reporting birds. The first fall migrant was recorded 7 July in Burnett County (J. Campbell).

***Dunlin***—The last spring report: 18 June in Dodge County (Tessen).

***Stilt Sandpiper***—An average early fall migration with reports from 9 counties and the first report was 10 July in Kenosha County (Fitzgerald).

***Buff-breasted Sandpiper***—No early migrants this summer.

***Short-billed Dowitcher***—The last spring migrant was seen 13 June in Dodge County (Tessen). The first bird of the fall season appeared 1 July in Dodge County (Schilke). The species was observed in 8 counties overall.

***Long-billed Dowitcher***—An early fall migrant was seen 17-28 July in Dodge County (Tessen and Schaufenbuel).

***American Woodcock***—Reported from 16 counties, which is about normal for the summer season.

***Wilson's Phalarope***—Reported from 4 counties: 2 June Calumet (Tessen), 12 June Manitowoc (Schilke), 13 June Dodge (Tessen) and 5–28 July (Grover), and 30 June Jefferson (Kollath).

***Red-necked Phalarope***—One bird lingered in spring 2 June in Dodge County (Tessen and Schaufenbuel) and an early fall migrant also appeared 19 July in Dodge County (Martin).

***Bonaparte's Gull***—Present throughout the season in Manitowoc and Sheboygan Counties. Unusual though was a bird seen 23 July in Sawyer County (Prestby).

***Little Gull***—Only Manitowoc County harbored this species. Seen from 1 June through 26 July (Schaefer and S. Cutright) with three birds present 14 July (Sontag).

***Laughing Gull***—A single sighting of a bird lingering 1–8 June in Milwaukee County (Tessen, Petherick, and Fitzgerald).

***Franklin's Gull***—Only two reports for this period: 18 June in Kenosha County (Carlock) and 27 June in Manitowoc County (Sontag).

***California Gull***—Present throughout the season in far northern Illinois with the bird venturing into Wisconsin (Figures 5 and 6) 10–17 July (Fitzgerald and Prestby). See "*By the Wayside*" for a description of this sighting.

***Thayer's Gull***—Present until 27 June in Manitowoc County (Sontag) for a rare summer record.

***Iceland Gull***—Present until 26 June in Manitowoc County (Sontag) for a rare summer record.

***Lesser Black-backed Gull***—Four reports: 6–10 June in Manitowoc (Fitzgerald and T. Wood), 13–27 June in Sheboygan (S. Baughman and Bontly), 23 June in Douglas (Bruhnke), and 10 July in Kenosha (Fitzgerald) Counties.

***Glaucous Gull***—Continuing the pattern of northern gulls not wanting to go north, a bird was seen 3 June in Racine County (Fare) and another lingered 4–27 June in Manitowoc County (Sontag and Bontly).

***Great Black-backed Gull***—Three reports: 1 June to 1 July in Manitowoc (Rickaby), 27 June–26 July in Sheboygan (Frank and Bontly), and 27 July in Kewaunee (S. Cutright) Counties.

***Caspian Tern***—Present through most or all of the entire season in 18 counties with 345 individuals reported 26 July in Kewaunee County (S. Cutright).

***Black Tern***—Reported from 33 counties with the highest number being 150 individuals 21 June in Dodge County (Mertins).

***Common Tern***—Reported from 14 counties, including many inland reports.

***Forster's Tern***—Present through the season in 14 counties. High counts were 62 individuals 21 June at Rush Lake in Winnebago County (Ziebell) and 24 individuals 19 July in Dodge County (Graham).

***Eurasian Collared-Dove***—Observed only in Columbia County 11–27 June (Fissel and K. Kavanagh).

***Band-tailed Pigeon***—Present at Thomas Rohrer's feeder 20–22 July (Fig. 7) in La Crosse County, which represents Wisconsin's third record for this species. See "*By the Wayside*" for a description of this sighting.

***Eastern Screech-Owl***—Only reports came from Columbia, Iowa (A. Holschbach), Milwaukee (Wilson), and Vernon (Reynolds) Counties.

***Long-eared Owl***—The only reports were 1 June–19 July in Manitowoc County (J. Holschbach and Sontag) and 23 June at Powell Marsh, Vilas County (Prestby).

***Short-eared Owl***—Three reports this season: 4 June–19 July at Dike 17, Jackson County (Romano and Otto); 4 June at Buena Vista Grasslands, Portage County (Schaufenbuel); and 5 June in Winnebago County (Bruce).

***Northern Saw-whet Owl***—June observations came from Forest (Schubbe), Jackson (Prestby and Otto), and Vilas (J. Baughman) Counties.

***Common Nighthawk***—This year's 28 reporting counties are above average and probably due to increased effort to document nocturnal birds. Thirteen individuals reported 13 June in Oconto County (Szymczak) could all be nesters.

***Chuck-will's-widow***—For the fifth straight year the Chuck has made its appearance near the correctional facility in Jackson County. Reports spanned the period from 4 June (Romano and Prestby) until 27 July (Cameron).

***Rufous Hummingbird***—A stunning male (Figures 8 and 9) was photographed 29–30 July in Bayfield County (Verch and Brady). See "*By the Wayside*" for a description of this sighting.

***Black-backed Woodpecker***—Birds were found in Florence (K. Kavanagh), Forest (Richmond and Prestby), and (Fig. 10) Vilas (Peczynski) Counties.

***Pileated Woodpecker***—A photo of a pair at a nest hole in Dodge County 10 June (Guse) may be the first documented nesting in that county in decades.

***Olive-sided Flycatcher***—Reported from 5 southern counties in early June indicating a good migration in the first few days of the month. The last southern report was 13 June Racine (Kennedy). Mid- to late-June breeding

season records came from 11 northern counties. Intriguing are 5 June reports from Washburn (Haseleu) and Polk (Hoffman) Counties that could have been a southern edge-of-range breeders or late northbound migrants. An individual seen 28 July in Marinette County (Campbell) could have been the first southbound bird.

***Yellow-bellied Flycatcher***—Eight southern counties reported birds 1–10 June with the latest being a 13 June bird in Milwaukee County (Wilson). Ten northern counties had probable breeding activity.

***Acadian Flycatcher***—Reported in 21 counties north to Fond du Lac. Twenty-four individuals were tallied 11 June along the Emma Carlin Trail, Jefferson County (Szymczak).

***Alder Flycatcher***—As is usual, most of the 49 reporting counties were northern. The highest tallies of individuals were 16 individuals 6 June Price County (Krakowski), and the same number at Crex Meadows, Burnett County 20 June (Prestby).

***Willow Flycatcher***—Reported from 31 counties, but unlike 2008 no reports from above the tension zone.

***Loggerhead Shrike***—The Spring Green Reserve bird, Sauk County, was relatively easy to find 1–17 June (A. Holschbach).

***White-eyed Vireo***—Two reports: the first from the Spring Green Reserve, Sauk County, was seen 7–12 June (Stutz and Prestby), the second bird was found in Green County 4 June through 23 July (T. Wood and Schilke).

***Bell's Vireo***—Seen and/or heard by at least 11 observers in these counties: Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Green, Iowa, Marquette, Rock, Trempealeau, and Winnebago.

***Yellow-throated Vireo***—Among the 55 reporting counties, the most northern ones were Douglas and Bayfield.

***Blue-headed Vireo***—Seven birds in Walworth County 14 June (Szymczak) were at the south end of the Kettle Moraine State Forest where they have been recorded annually for several years. The 27 other reporting counties were all northern ones.

***Gray Jay***—Reported from these six counties: Douglas (Paulios), Florence (Christensen), Iron (Brandt), Lincoln and Oneida (K. Kavanagh), and Vilas (mob).

***Black-billed Magpie***—A bird was photographed (Fig. 11) 5 June in Bayfield County (Christenson).

***Tree Swallow***—Frank recorded 1020 on 9 July at Horicon Marsh, Dodge County.

***Cliff Swallow***—Risch noted significantly fewer birds at traditional colonies in Taylor County.

***Boreal Chickadee***—Two reports this season: 20 June in Forest (Prestby) and 18 July in Vilas (Schaufenbuel) Counties.

***Carolina Wren***—Reported from 6 locations: two locations in Dane (Stutz and K. Kavanagh), Kenosha (Howe), Milwaukee (Bontly), Rock (Yoerger), and Waukesha (Coulter and Zimmerman) Counties.

***Winter Wren***—Among the 20 reporting counties were two separate locations in Sauk County.

***Marsh Wren***—Ziebell found 1,150 in Winnebago County 21 June. Reported from 39 counties in all.

***Golden-crowned Kinglet***—Noted in 9 counties within normal range. A significant find was up to 5 individuals throughout the summer in the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest (Szymczak).

***Ruby-crowned Kinglet***—Reported only from five counties: One bird was beyond the normal southern range limit with a sighting 19 June in Wood County (Schaufenbuel). Also reported in more typical locations: Florence, Forest, Marinette, and Vilas Counties.

***Blue-gray Gnatcatcher***—Paulios recorded the farthest north bird in Burnett County 12 June.

***Eastern Bluebird***—We tend not to get from observers information that lets us track with any confidence how well this species is doing. The number of reporting counties varies for multiple reasons. This year's number (60) is

significantly above anything reported in recent memory.

***Swainson's Thrush***—Ten late migrants were reported from southern Wisconsin in early June with the latest being 6 June Milwaukee County (Hagner). Reports from normal breeding range came from Ashland (Oksiuta), Florence (K. Kavanagh), and Oconto (Reimer) Counties. Early fall migrants were seen 25 July in Ozaukee (S. Cutright) and 31 July in Waukesha (Szymczak) and Milwaukee (Zehner) Counties. A bird reported 3 July in Outagamie County (Rickaby) is intriguing, because it is out of range and out of normal migration times.

***Wood Thrush***—Reported from 40 counties, including as far north as Ashland (Yoerger), Douglas (LaValleys), and Iron (Brandt) Counties.

***Northern Mockingbird***—Successful nesting was confirmed at Spring Green Reserve in Sauk County where a family spent the summer and an adult was seen feeding two fledged birds 25 July (Hoffman). Also reported 7 June in Manitowoc (Sontag) and 4 July in Sheboygan (the Brassers) Counties.

***Blue-winged Warbler***—Of the 34 reporting counties, Chippewa (Betchkal) was the most northern. An amazing 24 birds were recorded on the 2 June "smackdown' in Crawford County (*fide* Thompson).

***Golden-winged Warbler***—Of the 25 reporting counties, Adams (Anich) and Juneau (Grover and Liss) were the most southern. No reports from anywhere in the Kettle Moraine, where they formerly bred in abundance.

***Brewster's Warbler***—A male was seen 14 June at the Sandhill Wildlife Area in Wood County (Grover and Liss).

***Tennessee Warbler***—Lingered until 1–2 June in Brown and Oconto Counties (Schilke) and Green Lake County (Schultz). More intriguing was a bird in full song recorded 12 June in Kenosha County (N. Cutright). The first fall migrants were in Dane County 14–31 July (Paulios and Ziebell).

***Nashville Warbler***—High estimates came from Stutz on a survey of Moquah Barrens in Bayfield County 27 July where he recorded 50 birds.

***Northern Parula***—Reported from 18 counties with most being the more obviously northern. A late or summering bird was observed 6–16 June at Baxter's Hollow in Sauk County (Schaufenbuel and Heikkinen).

***Chestnut-sided Warbler***—Reported from 46 counties. While the majority of the reports came from northern counties, there was a good representation from more southern locations, such as Sauk (Heikkinen) and Walworth (Howe and Szymczak) Counties.

***Magnolia Warbler***—This season's records came from 17 counties with apparent late migrants in the southeast in early June as exemplified by 1–5 June reports from Milwaukee County (Bontly and Wilson).

***Cape May Warbler***—The only observations were 5 and 6 June in Menominee and Vilas Counties respectively (Evanson), 13 June–6 July in Florence (Strelka), and 23 July in Door (Rickaby) Counties.

***Black-throated Blue Warbler***—Reported from these 4 counties: Ashland (Yoerger), Florence (K. Kavanagh), Iron (Oksiuta), and Vilas (J. Baughman).

***Yellow-rumped Warbler***—Reported from 29 central and northern counties with the farthest south 4 June in Juneau County (Prestby).

***Black-throated Green Warbler***—Most reports came from 31 central and northern counties; however, significant numbers (40) were found throughout the breeding season in Walworth and Waukesha Counties (Szymczak).

***Blackburnian Warbler***—Reported in 26 counties with a 14 June sighting in Walworth County (Howe) obviously the farthest south.

***Yellow-throated Warbler***—Reported 11 June through 12 July Wyalusing State Park in Grant County (A. Holschbach, Prestby, and Wood). Another bird was found 5 June in Waukesha County (Gustafson) and presumably the same bird was relocated 23–31 July (Szymczak).

***Pine Warbler***—Present through the season in 35 counties with the highest total individuals being 15 on 2 July in Iron County (Prestby).

***Kirtland's Warbler***—Kirtland's Warbler: Wisconsin recorded 12 males and 12 females. Eleven nests were found with 7 or 8 successful producing 26 to 30 young (*fide* Grevles).

***Prairie Warbler***—For the second summer in a row—no reports!

***Palm Warbler***—Reported from these typical counties for breeding: Douglas (Paulios), Forest and Oneida (Prestby), and Vilas (Richmond).

***Blackpoll Warbler***—A late migrant was seen 1 June in Brown County (Schilke).

***Cerulean Warbler***—The farthest north were individuals 5 June in Polk County (Brown) and 20 June in Marathon County (Hoeft). Other reports came from 12 additional counties, including 14 individuals seen on the 2 June "smackdown" in Crawford County (*fide* Thompson) and 28 throughout the season in the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest (Szymczak).

***Black-and-white Warbler***—Reported from 34 counties overall.

***Prothonotary Warbler***—Observed in 11 counties. Significant was a canoe trip on the Sugar River in Rock County 7 June that produced 27 singing males (Paulios).

***Worm-eating Warbler***—No reports this season.

***Northern Waterthrush***—Eighteen counties with reports this season are well above average. A late migrant appeared 1 June in Washington County (Diehl).

***Louisiana Waterthrush***—All reports came from either Grant or Sauk Counties, except a bird seen 25 July in Iowa County (A. Holschbach).

***Kentucky Warbler***—Three reports: 1 June–19 July in Grant (Prestby and Stark), 14–16 June in Walworth (Szymczak and Howe), and 13 July in Crawford (Duerksen) Counties.

***Connecticut Warbler***—Three reports: 13–16 June Burnett (Paulios and Keiser), 13–27 June in Douglas (Maerecklein), and 7 July in Florence (K. Kavanagh) Counties.

***Hooded Warbler***—Reported from 15 counties. A systematic survey of the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest in June by Szymczak recorded 229 birds.

***Wilson's Warbler***—Continuing the pattern of late migrating warblers, this species was seen in 3–8 June in Ozaukee County (Frank).

***Canada Warbler***—Noted in 15 counties with several apparent late migrants with last being 13 June in Winnebago County (Ziebell).

***Yellow-breasted Chat***—At least ten individuals reported from seven counties: Dane (Heikkinen and Schwarz), Grant (S. Cutright), Kenosha (Winze and Szymczak), Lafayette (Yoerger), Portage (David), Sauk (mob), and Waukesha (Gustafson).

***Summer Tanager***—Seen 5 June in Manitowoc County (Trick).

***Field Sparrow***—Among the 34 counties from which these were reported, the highest number of individuals was 20 on 4 June in Grant County (Mertins).

***Lark Sparrow***—Prestby found 16 on 1 June at the Spring Green Preserve in Sauk County. Additional reports were submitted from10 counties including a 10 June sighting in Douglas (LaValleys).

***Grasshopper Sparrow***—Among the 31 reporting counties, the highest number of individuals was 20 from the Spring Green Reserve in Sauk County 13 June (Bontly).

***Henslow's Sparrow***—Noted in 15 mostly southern counties. The highest number of individuals reported was 12 in Green Lake County on 10 June (Prestby).

***Le Conte's Sparrow***—Reported from 10 mostly northern counties: Bayfield (Anich), Brown (Rickaby), Burnett (J. Campbell), Eau Claire (Betchkal), Jackson (Paulios), Oneida (K. Kavanagh and Prestby), Vilas (Prestby), and Wood (Prestby and Schaufenbuel). A new location at the Parker Creek Fisheries Area in Polk

County was discovered 22 June (Hoffman). Finally, the southern population at Comstock Bog in Marquette County was documented 21 June (Schaufenbuel).

***Nelson's Sparrow*** (formerly Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow)—No report for the summer season.

***Lincoln's Sparrow***—Reported from 13 northern counties and one southern county, 13 June in Fond du Lac (Franke).

***Harris's Sparrow***—A bird spent the period of 7–28 June at the feeder of Bill Schmoker in Burnett County (Fig. 12) for only the second summer record for this species.

***White-crowned Sparrow***—An extremely late spring migrant was seen 7 June in Manitowoc County (Domagalski).

***Dark-eyed Junco***—Noted only in these counties: Burnett (Schmoker), Bayfield (Stutz), Florence (K. Kavanagh), and Vilas (mob).

***Blue Grosbeak***—A young male bird was first seen at the Spring Green Reserve, Sauk County, 5 June by Aaron Holschbach and seen by dozens of birders through 11 June.

***Dickcissel***—Birders found this species with relative ease, observing it in 29 counties as far north as Bayfield. Most places reported a few individuals with the exception being 25 birds tallied in southwest Dane (Martin) and Iowa Counties (Prestby).

***Eastern Meadowlark***—This year the number of counties in which birders found this species (51) was nearly four times as many as reporting westerns.

***Western Meadowlark***—Observers found this species in 14 counties this year, which is up from recent summers seasons. Most interesting are the reports from Florence County 7 June (Christensen) and Forest County 1 July (K. Kavanagh).

***Brewer's Blackbird***—Noted in 28 counties. The highest number of individuals reported was 45 at Buena Vista Grassland, Portage County, 4 June (Schaufenbuel).

***Orchard Oriole***—Noted in 35 counties this season. This number is slightly higher than 2008.

***Purple Finch***—Observed in 22 mostly northern counties. Out of range was an individual seen 11 June in Racine County (Jarvis).

***Red Crossbill***—Two reports: 21 June in Oneida (K. Kavanagh) and 3–16 July in Vilas (J. Baughman) Counties.

***White-winged Crossbill***—Brady found a single bird 31 July in Douglas County for the season's only sighting.

***Pine Siskin***—Reports from 21 counties, up significantly over 2008.

***Evening Grosbeak***—Reports from 6 counties: Bayfield (Brady), Burnett (Schultz), Douglas (Maerecklein), Florence and Forest (K. Kavanagh), and Vilas (J. Baughman).

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Mourning Dove with two young in the nest by Jack Bartholmai.

# "By the Wayside"—Summer 2009

*These reports of rare species include Surf Scoter, Purple Gallinule, California Gull, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Rufous Hummingbird.*

### SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*)

**1 June 2009, City of Manitowoc Impoundment, Manitowoc County**—A small gathering of waterfowl was in containment area as I was scanning for Little Gull. With scaup and Redheads was a single duck that stood out because of stiff tail cocked almost vertical. Size didn't play a huge role in the ID. Body color was solid black. Only other colors on the bird came from the head and bill. The head had 2 bright white patches that very easily caught your eye, even peripherally. Like headlights. One patch at the nape of neck, the other on the bird's forehead from over the eye to bill base. Iris was white and bill was bulbous and colorful. Distal ⅓ was a deep orange and middle had white and black areas. No other features stood out.—*Tom Schaefer, Hartford, Wisconsin.*

### PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinica*)

**7–10 June 2009, a marsh in Walworth County**. *(The bird remained for four days and was documented by several persons. Here is a sample of the documentations.)*—A large rail-like bird was seen while [I was] driving past at 55 mph toward evening on the 7th of June. During this extremely brief observation the purplish impression of the body with the contrasting green wings, the primarily red beak tipped with yellow, and the bluish frontal shield were all seen. The bird also had long yellowish green legs, and the bird was rather heavy bodied, often being hunched over when feeding on top of the emergent vegetation (extremely long toes facilitated its movement over this surface). After I turned the car around, I noted the above characteristics again but just with the naked eye. It wasn't until the next morning that I was able to fully document the bird with photos and note a few more details about the bird's appearance and behavior. These details include, the under tail coverts were completely white with no dark central area that a Common Moorhen would show. The bird was definitely an adult gallinule since it was purple and green with very bright bare parts rather than the yellowish color or mottled look a young gallinule would have.—*Sean Fitzgerald, Burlington, Wisconsin.*

**9 June 2009**—We arrived at the

pond south of Honey Creek on Highway DD at about 3:30 pm on Tuesday, 9 June. There already was a birder using his car for a blind parked on the east side of the road about even with the mid-point of the pond. I talked to him and at his suggestion I drove to the owner's house, turned around and came back to park behind the other birder. The bird was in the pond, feeding about 25–30 yards away. It moved around in the pond from mid-point to the vegetation at the south end of the pond for the 40–45 minutes we were there. Near the end of that time it moved near the front of the pond where it disappeared behind some vegetation which was on a little rise in the bank that concealed it from us. After a few minutes we left. The bird displayed a chicken-rail type body, by that I mean long legs and toes, short or no tail. The wings, under parts, head, and neck were a bluish purple. The bill is red with yellow at the distal end. Toes and feet about the same color of yellow. The forehead shield is a pale blue. The undertail coverts were white. It is about the size of a banty hen.—*Robert and David McFall, Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin.*

**9 June 2009**—When I first observed the bird without my binoculars the bird had an all-around dark appearance. It was not quite twice the size of the Sora that was nearby in the tall grass. When I put my binoculars on the bird, it had an overall dark purple appearance. The mantle appeared to have a greenish tinge to it, depending on the angle of the bird. There was no white flank stripe, which would be expected on a Common Moorhen. The under tail coverts were distinctly white. No black stripe was detected. The bill was quite large relative to the size of the head and had a rounded appearance. It was noticeably red with a yellow tip. The bird also had a pale blue shield above the bill on the forehead. This feature stood out prominently, especially when the bird was facing me. Finally, the legs were bright yellow and the toes were exceptionally long (roughly one quarter of the length of the bird's body) and were quite noticeable when the bird was walking. The bird was walking around, picking at floating vegetation in the marsh. At one point, it grabbed onto the base of a small marsh plant and pulled the entire plant out of the ground. On a couple of occasions, the bird seemed to be scared by something and it ran for a bit with its wings lifted into the air.—*Kelly Rueckheim, Ontario, Wisconsin.*

### California Gull
### (*Larus californicus*)

**10 July 2009, State Line Beach at Kenosha near the Illinois state line.**—I figured that with the cool cloudy weather yesterday afternoon I would have the State Line Beach to myself if I stopped on my way from Madison (Yeah, OK, I realize Kenosha is not in a line with Madison and Milwaukee). I was right. I arrived at about 4 p.m. and found the beach covered with gulls. After about an hour of intense searching through the 2000+ gulls, I spotted the adult California Gull bathing in the water with a few Herrings and Ring-billeds. The darker mantle was what caught my attention immediately but the head shape and dark eye are pretty obvious as well. From a distance, the bill looks like it just has a red spot on it but when magnifying

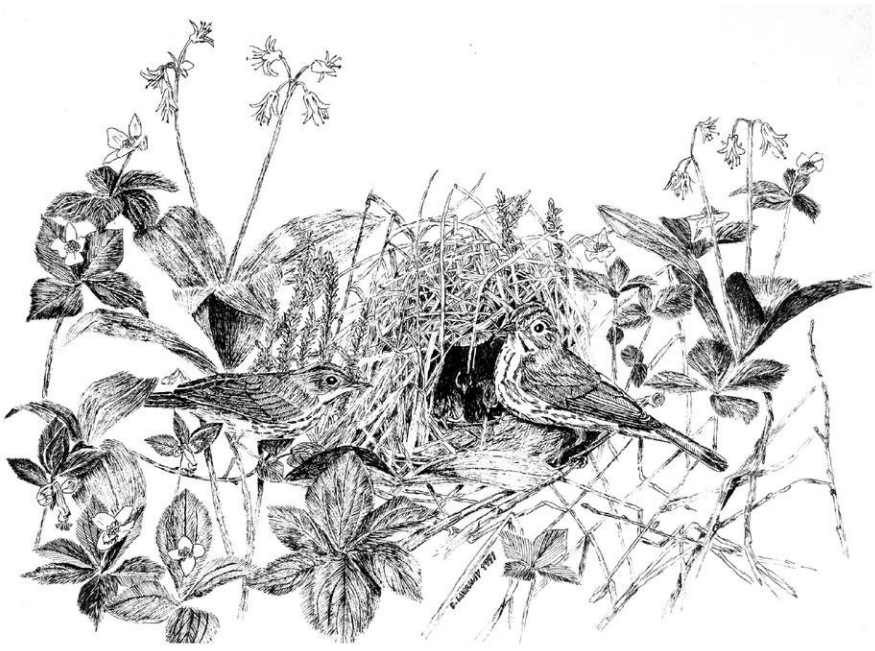
with the scope I could see the black tip. The bird soon moved to the beach and I studied the other features such as the red orbital ring, yellow legs, and size in between that of Ring-billed and Herring Gull. It was not easy to stay on the bird by any means—I lost it and had to respot it about 5 different times as it would walk down to the waterline (not in sight from near the parking lot) or when it would get up with a couple hundred gulls and they reshuffled their positions on the beach. After about the 4th cycle of studying it, losing it, and finding it again it made a short flight where it flew north along the beach, wheeled briefly over the channel on the state line (and into Wisconsin), and worked its way back south to land in the water and eventually settle back in on the beach.—*Tom Prestby, Madison, Wisconsin.*

### BAND-TAILED PIGEON (*Patagioenas fasciata*)

**20–22 July 2009, at a feeder in La Crosse, La Crosse County**—Very large purple-grey pigeon, grouse-sized or larger, distinct white band [at] back of neck, yellow bill with black ⅓ tip, yellow legs, nape shingled above white band, broad tail in flight, impression of lighter terminal and lateral tail bands, bobbing head motions like Rock Pigeon while feeding/walking. Bird's behavior during observation: Observed three days in a row: primarily on ground under feeders, also on bird bath and deck chair. Feeding activity: pecking at seed on ground but very alert, raising head often, later on bird bath drinking and perching, also on deck chair.—*Thomas Rohrer, La Crosse, Wisconsin.*

### RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*)

**29–30 July 2009, at a feeder eight miles west of Ashland, Bayfield County**—The Rufous (male) bird appeared to be similar in size to the numerous Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the feeder area on the edge of the house. The bird had a bright bronze dorsal side (head, nape, back, and tail). The throat was bright red in appropriate light and had a white patch beneath it. The belly was the same bronze color as the dorsal side. Wings were a darker color (appeared dark green). The male would occasionally feed from a specific feeder, but spent most of the time chasing the ruby-throats around. It would sit for 5–15 seconds on a branch of a nearby oak providing excellent, although brief views.—*Dick Verch, Ashland, Wisconsin.*



Ovenbirds at their ground nest by Steve LaValley.

# WSO Records Committee Report: Summer 2009

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The WSO Records Committee reviewed 23 records of 13 species for the summer 2009 season, accepting 16 of them. One additional spring 2009 record was reviewed and accepted.

Of note is Wisconsin's 3rd record of a Band-tailed Pigeon and first summer record of a Harris's Sparrow. Also of note is a controversial duck initially suspected of being a Mottled Duck.

## Accepted Records

**Surf Scoter—**

#2009-057 Manitowoc Co., 1 June 2009, Schaefer, N. Cutright.

This all black duck was similar in size to associated Redheads. There were white patches on the nape and forehead. The sloping and bulbous bill was black and white proximally, and orange distally.

**Purple Gallinule—**

#2009-060 Walworth Co., 7 June 2009, Fitzgerald; 8 June 2009, Mooney, Tessen; 9 June 2009, Gustafson, McFall, Rueckheim (photo).

This coot-sized bird had a deep blue body, head, and neck, but a greenish back. The relatively short bill was bright red with a yellow tip and a light blue "frontal shield" above the bill.

In addition, there were white undertail feathers.

**Black-necked Stilt—**

#2009-064 Dane Co., Gold.

#2009-029 Dodge Co., 21 June 2009, T. Wood.

This tall, thin shorebird was as large as a Greater Yellowlegs with even longer legs. The top of the head, back of neck, back, and wings were black; the throat, front of neck, breast, and belly were white. The thin, straight bill was black; the long thin legs were pink.

Of note is the report on 21 June that one fuzz-ball chick was tended by the pair of Black-necked Stilts. (Other subsequent reports indicated the pair fledged 4 young this summer). This is Wisconsin's third reported nesting of this species, all in Dodge County.

**California Gull—**

#2009-024 Kenosha Co., 17 July 2009, Prestby (photo).

This adult plumaged gull was in between a Herring and a Ring-billed Gull in size with a mantle darker gray than that of a Herring, but less dark than a Lesser Black-backed Gull. The iris was noticeably dark in color and the yellow bill revealed a red and black spot at the gonys. The legs were yellow and the head was rounder than typical of Herring Gulls.

**Band-tailed Pigeon—**

#2009-061 La Crosse Co., 20-22 July 2009, Rhorer (photo).

This very large pigeon was purple-gray in color with a white band across the back of the neck, a yellow bill with black tip, yellow legs, and a lighter gray band across the last half of the gray tail.

This is Wisconsin's third record of a Band-tailed Pigeon.

**Rufous Hummingbird—**

#2009-062 Bayfield Co., 29 July 2009, Verch; 30 July 2009, Brady (photo).

This Ruby-throated Hummingbird-sized bird was orange/bronze colored on the head, back, rump, and sides instead of green. The throat gorget was bright red and had a white patch below it. The wings appeared dark greenish.

**Black-billed Magpie—**

#2009-097 Bayfield Co., 10 June 2009, M. Christenson (photo).

This photo of a magpie on the porch railing of the house easily demonstrated a crow-sized bird with a black head and bill, black back and wing, and long black tail. The white breast and scapular stripe were also evident.

**Harris's Sparrow—**

#2009-063 Burnett Co., 2 June–3 July 2009, Schmoker (photo).

The photo revealed a White-crowned Sparrow size and shaped bird with brown and gray striping on the back, a gray back half to the face, and a striking black foreface and crown.

This is Wisconsin's first summer record.

## Old Records Accepted

**Black-necked Stilt—**

#2009-029 Dodge Co., 26 April, 3, 9 May 2009, T. Wood.

The description was as mentioned above, in the accepted records for the summer of 2009.

## Records Not Accepted

**Mottled Duck—**

#2009-055 Dane Co., 31–4 August 2009 (photo/video).

The written reports, photos, and videos provided ample information with which to assess the identity of this duck. Even with this wealth of information, the only conclusion reachable was that this bird didn't fit the expected patterns of any species and even evaded a consistent speculation as to hybrid status.

The duck was in the mottled brown plumage typical of female dabbling ducks and was slightly smaller than a Black Duck or Mallard.

The bill was primarily black with a sizable orange area, but considerably more black than seen on female Mallards, more in line with a female Gad-

wall. The characteristic black spots at the corners of the beak on a Mottled Duck were not apparent. On the right side of the bird's bill, the black of the bill extended into this area, making determination impossible. On the left side, the orange seemed to extend into the area where the black "spot" should have been.

The warm brown edgings to the body feathers that a Mallard or Mottled Duck would have were very limited, leaving the overall cooler brown tones to take on a bit more of a Black Duck tone. Yet this bird was not anywhere near as dark as a Black Duck.

The speculum was briefly seen at distance on video and by several observers and always appeared to be purple, again more of the pattern of a Black Duck. The light bluish color of a Mottled Duck or Mallard was not seen. Interestingly, the usual pattern for Mottled duck/Mallard hybrids is to see evidence of the white line along the speculum of a Mallard. No white was evident to any observer.

Everyone around the country with familiarity with Mottled Ducks and Mallard/Mottled hybrids seems convinced this bird isn't consistent with a Mottled Duck. Just as consistently, no one seems able to make a strong case for exactly what genetic mixture has come together in this bird, however. It will remain anyone's guess.

**Brown Pelican—**

#2009-058 Dodge Co., 17 June 2009.

A five second look at this bird in flight with some "backlighting" suggested the identity to the observer. The information supplied did not give any relative size to this bird, only that it was large and had a large, long beak, but no trailing legs. The underside of the wings was uniformly brownish-gray and the breast was grayish. The bill was gray, as was the top of the head.

An adult Brown Pelican would have had a darker, brown breast instead of a grayish breast. An immature Brown Pelican would have had a darker head than described and a lighter grayish line extending out through the middle of the underside of the wing, a trait specifically mentioned as not present.

Unfortunately, without more relative size and shape information, the rule-outs of immature cormorant or even a Black-crowned Night-Heron aren't addressed. The details given don't fit well with specific Brown Pelican plumages if the overall bird is accepted as a pelican.

**Golden Eagle—**

#2009-059 Fond du Lac Co., 9 June 2009 (2 birds).

Two large, all dark raptors were reported in flight. The wings were indicated to be held relatively flat while gliding. No description of the head was presented.

No indication was made in the report that Turkey Vultures were considered in the differentials for identification. The relatively flat wing plane while gliding does not rule out the vultures. They tend to have some degree of dihedral to the wings when gliding, but not exclusively.

**Blue Grosbeak—**

#2009-065 Waukesha Co., 29 July 2009.

The limited description of this bird was that it had rufous wingbars and a gray bill.

Without a relative size and shape for the bird and the size and shape of the bill, it isn't possible to categorize this individual. Unfortunately, even the blue body color was overlooked in the description.

**Chaffinch—**
#2009-066 Waukesha Co., 5 June 2009.

A finch with a rusty face and cheek with a surrounding gray crown and nape were mentioned. The throat, breast, and belly were buffy in color. The black wings had a single white wingbar and a white streak at the shoulder. The finch-shaped bill was gray. In flight, the bouncing finch pattern of flight was noted.

The identity of the bird is that of a Chaffinch, but this bird is another of the presumed releases of European passerines from northeastern Illinois.

With the passing of this summer season, the Records Committee will be replacing Bill Cowart after 5 years of service. We wish to thank Bill for his thoughtful deliberations on hundreds of reports in his tenure as well as his sense of humor.

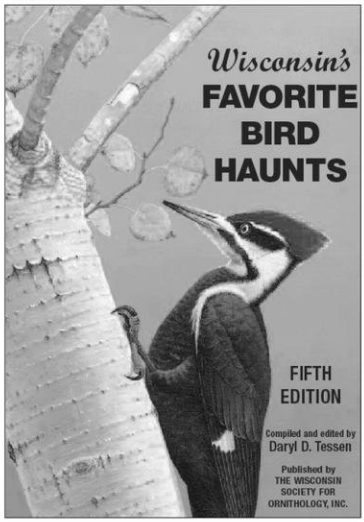
The 2009 Records Committee will find Steve Lubahn joining Mark Korducki, Ryan Brady, Jerry DeBoer, and Jim Frank.

# About the Artists

**Jack R. Bartholmai** is an amateur wildlife photographer and wood sculptor living near Beaver Dam with his wife Holly. His work appears frequently in local newspapers, travel brochures, calendars, and bird publications. He gives numerous presentations on birds and his work. He is an active member of the Horicon Bird Club. Jack was the 2005 recipient of the WSO Bronze Passenger Pigeon Award.

**Steve LaValley** developed interests in both birds and art in high school. His drawings focus on birds and their surroundings, which reflect his concern for habitat use and management. He and his family live in Douglas County where he works for the WDNR.

Immature Red-headed Woodpecker in nest hole by Jack Bartholmai.




# *Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts,* Fifth Edition (2009)

This edition marks the fourth time this comprehensive bird-finding guide to Wisconsin has been compiled and edited by Daryl Tessen.

- New in this edition: An **annotated checklist** of 443 species and a **birding highlights** quick reference.
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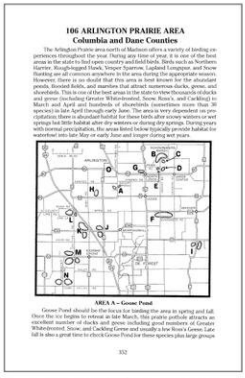
- Contributions from birders throughout the state.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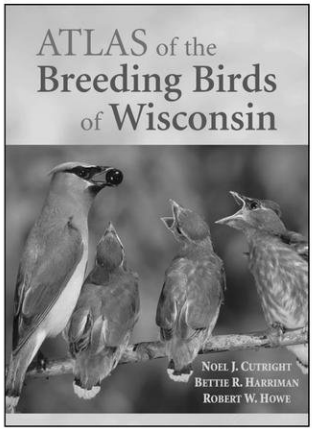
AREA A – Goose Pond

145 articles cover some 1,100 areas and include detailed maps.

Designed for durability and functionality, this book is printed on heavy coated paper and has a spiral binding so it lies flat when open. 6" by 9", 556 pages. ISBN: 978-0-9774986-3-5.

Published by The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Inc., with proceeds used for projects supported by the organization.

Visit the WSO website, www.wsobirds.org, for an order form that includes price and ordering information, or contact WSO Bookstore at 262-594-2021 or wsobookstore@hotmail.com.



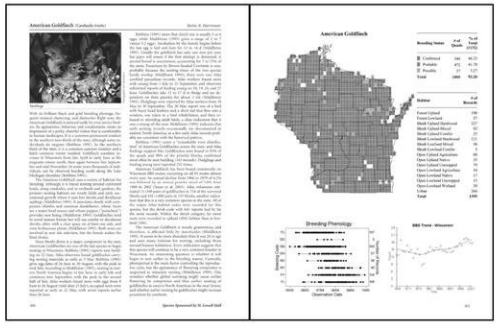

# *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Wisconsin*

- Features almost 1,400 photographs, distribution maps, and figures – **all in color**!
- Based on studies done by more than 1,600 field observers between 1995 and 2000.
- Edited by Noel J. Cutright, Bettie R. Harriman, and Robert W. Howe.

The largest natural history survey ever conducted in Wisconsin has resulted in this comprehensive guide to birds that breed in the state.

Hardcover, large format (9" x 11.25"), 624 pages. Copyright 2006. ISBN-10: 0-9774986-0-3; ISBN-13: 978-0-9774986-0-4.

Published by The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Inc., with proceeds used for projects supported by the organization.



The two-page species accounts – 214 of them in all – provide a host of information on the state's breeding species, including their range, habitat preference, breeding biology, conservation concerns, and population trends. An additional 23 less-common species also are covered. Also included are chapters on Atlas methodology, results, history, habitats, and conservation.

Visit the WSO website, www.wsobirds.org, for an order form that includes price and ordering information, or contact WSO Bookstore at 262-594-2021 or wsobookstore@hotmail.com.

## THE WISCONSIN SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is an educational and scientific non-profit organization founded in 1939 "to encourage the study of Wisconsin birds." The Society achieves this goal through programs in research, education, conservation, and publication.

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# CONTENTS SUMMER 2010

Volume 72, Number 2