

THE POETRY OF HABITAT

by Matt Reetz, executive director

*There once was a bird in a prairie
Whose song was as sweet as a cherry
And looking beyond the grasses so blonde
Tall skyscrapers made him feel wary.*

Well, now that you have glimpsed my poetic skills, I want to assure you I'll stick to my day job. But this fall has been filled with so much land work that we have been thinking—even more than usual—about the important elegance of land conservation in protecting birds.

Here's a fun fact: Thanks to the support of our members, Madison Audubon is a nationally accredited land trust. Extra fun: Of all Audubon chapters in the country, our local and mighty organization owns and manages the third most acreage, weighing in at a whopping 2,000+ acres, with multiple land acquisition projects in the works. We have also assisted numerous partners to acquire thousands of acres more.

At the local level, buying and managing land for habitat is the most immediate and effective path to conserving birds. Our sanctuaries provide large expanses of native habitat that are safe and supportive for a variety of resident and migrating birds, mammals, amphibians, insects, and critters of all sorts. Grassland birds nest at these special places. Waterfowl flocks seeking refuge, especially during hunting season, find it at these special places.



Long-distance migrants that need nutritious, safe food refuel at these special places. All because of the vision of our members, volunteers, staff, and board of directors to proactively acquire, restore, and maintain this incredible resource. You've helped make Madison Audubon a uniquely effective local conservation organization by protecting special places. Thank you!

And because you tolerated my poetry, I'll share one more fun fact: These properties are FREE for anyone to visit, any day of the year. We invite members of the community, neighbors, schools, birders of all sorts, and historically-excluded nature lovers to explore our sanctuaries and soak up the sights, sounds, and aromas of restored and forever-protected habitats. By being there and caring about these places, you are doing so much good for birds. I invite you to visit and watch the birds—they are truly poetry in motion. ✨₁

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Madison Audubon board of directors currently consists of 13 members who guide the organization through big decisions, financial investments, and strategic advancements. Three members are currently up for reelection: Pat Clark, Matt Fortney, and Lisa Lepeak. Candidate statements are available at madisonaudubon.org/board-statements.

A big thank you to outgoing board members Galen Hasler and Topf Wells for their their nine years of service, creativity, and wisdom.

Madison Audubon's bylaws allow for members to nominate additional candidates. You may do so by submitting a brief statement from each nominee signed by at least 25 Madison Audubon members in good standing as of Nov. 1, 2021. Member nominations are due to



the Madison Audubon office no later than Dec. 6.

Our nominating committee will be developing a new slate of talented board candidates who will bring will bring unique expertise, new perspectives and enthusiasm to our board. We will share more about those candidates with you in preparation for 2022 election. Watch for ballots to appear in the February newsletter and please vote! ✈

Have you heard? Madison Audubon and National Audubon are two separate organizations. Your membership dues and donations to **Madison Audubon** support local land restoration, bird protection, youth education, and community engagement. ***Thank you!***

BIRDY FUN THIS WINTER

Winter is a fantastic time to go birding. It's more relaxed (some may even say more chill), it's interesting, and you see a whole different side of the birding world. The citizen science projects listed below all begin or are held in the winter, which means you can sign up now to have lots of fun while the snow flies. The programs listed below provide all the training and supplies you need. Please join us!

Christmas Bird Counts (1 day, dates vary)
Sign up today: madisonaudubon.org/cbc

Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring (5 hr/month, Mar-June). Sign up today:
madisonaudubon.org/kestrels

Bald Eagle Nest Watch (1 hr/wk, Feb-June). Sign up Dec. 1:
madisonaudubon.org/benw ✈

WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE OF SANDHILL CRANES?

by Topf Wells, board member & advocacy committee chair

The Sandhill Crane, one of Wisconsin's most iconic and majestic bird species—and a true conservation success story—is now in a shaky spot. In mid-October, a series of bills called the "Wisconsin Sporting Freedom Package" was introduced to the State Senate. It included a variety of hunting-related proposals, one of which would establish a hunting season on Wisconsin's Sandhill Cranes.

The announcement of the package elicited widespread opposition from the public, government organizations, conservation groups (like Madison Audubon and the International Crane Foundation), and many in the hunting and fishing community. However, the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues voted 3-2 to recommend all 18 bills for consideration by the Wisconsin Senate or State Assembly. If they pass those houses, the bill would land on Governor Evers' desk.

A Sandhill Crane hunt is neither an effective way to prevent crop damage (the dominant argument for establishing the hunt), nor does it ensure proper safeguards to prevent crane populations—now stable after decades of work—from declining. The proposed hunt has already been rushed through the committee stage without proper consideration of the best available science and opinions from stakeholders—like YOU!

Our Sandhill Cranes need you to speak up to support their protection. We will be working with a coalition of partners on this issue and share more information and how you can help. However, we urge you to contact your legislators to share what Sandhill Cranes mean to you and your opinion on this proposed hunt (more info at madisonaudubon.org/cranes). Thank you for being an advocate for Wisconsin's amazing birds!



Get to know your winter feeder birds

Wisconsin is home to a delightful diversity of birds, many of which stay here through our cold, snowy winters. You may see many of these birds in your backyard in our coldest months, but your chances are greatly increased if you provide winter shelter (shrubs, trees, and native grasses), food (seed or suet), and water (heated bird bath). Keeping house cats indoors will ensure your feeder birds are safe from feline hunting too. The Winter's Wonderful Backyard Birds handout showcases 13 common winter feeder birds:

madisonaudubon.org/winter-birds

And if you're one of the many folks who took your feeders down during the mystery bird illness, yes!, you can put feeders back up—just be sure to clean them monthly with a 10% bleach-water solution. Happy birding!

A FLEDGLING CLUB FOR BIRDERS OF COLOR

by Brenna Marsicek, director of communications & outreach



For a few years, Dr. Jeff Galligan had an itch to do something big for birders of color in Wisconsin. Then COVID hit, and along with it the mental and physical stress that came with isolation, and Jeff decided now is the time. So on Juneteenth of this year, Jeff—an educator at Madison College and a Madison Audubon board member—met with a friend, Dexter Patterson, and launched the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin.

BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and this club is for those folks and allies. Jeff was aiming to build a community, get people out birding who hadn't birded before, and enjoy nature in a safe environment. In just four months, he has done that and so much more.

"I thought we would start a Facebook group and have a few people come out to our birding trips, and maybe grow over time," said Jeff. "I was not expecting the reception we got." In September, the *Wisconsin State Journal*

published an article about the group and its youngest member, Roman Pommerening, who is 6 years old, has a bird list of over 100 species, and participated in Madison Audubon's Forces of Nature summer camp this year.

"I see so much of myself in that kid," added Jeff, whose first memories of birdwatching involved sitting on a ladder for hours, writing notes about American Robins coming and going from their nest. "If someone like Roman—or Jasmine Banks, who came to one of our trips with her daughter and granddaughter, all new to birding—benefits from this club, we've done our good work."

"Part of me feels like the BIPOC Birding Club might be the most important thing that I do," added Jeff. "This is my passion. This is soul work."

Now, after the article was picked up by the *Associated Press* and published in scores of outlets across the country, Jeff says that his goals have changed.

“Now I want to get society to hop on board and open opportunities that are plentiful for people who are privileged, but are so much harder for folks who aren’t.” That goal is beginning to take shape this fall, with the club receiving invitations for private guided trips, bird banding events, and more.

“We’re just getting started,” adds Jeff, with a twinkle in his eye.

As of late October, the BIPOC Birding Club launched a second chapter in Milwaukee, coordinated by Rita Flores Wiskowski. “There has been a lot of interest in the club having a presence in Milwaukee and so we are answering the call,” said Jeff. The chapter’s inaugural outings were on November 13 at Havenwoods State Forest and along the lakefront.

If you want to help support this fledging birding club, the best way is embrace and welcome the idea that everyone has a right to bird, be outdoors, and have a voice in conservation. Reading, Googling, listening to podcasts, participating in workshops, and having conversations are all great ways to approach that. Then join the BIPOC Birding Club for a field trip, and meet some of the birders who participate.

You can also learn more about the club and make a donation to support programming, renting vehicles, and getting more people outdoors and experiencing nature at: bipocbirdingclub.org

You never know which kid or adult, sitting on a ladder watching the robins, might find their spark by watching birds. ✈

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

by Drew Harry, Faville Grove Sanctuary land steward

Lessons of influence and interconnectedness shape our restoration ecology work at the sanctuaries. At modern day Faville Grove, the prairie is confined by land survey markers or fencelines. Big bluestem, asters, and tick-trefoil sometimes defiantly escape those boundaries. A roadside retaining prairie species also retains ideas of wildness—those plants indicate a once powerful and ancient prairie exerting its influence.

On a broad geographic scale, the prairie peninsula stretched its influence from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains eastward, through the Great Plains and into

the valleys and rolling hills of Wisconsin. The carpet of prairie accompanied powerful fires, most often Indigenous-influenced, a policy not written in any statehouse but legislated with an autumn breeze.

On the local scale, the prairies exert influence from the sky to the underworld, sequestering carbon, recharging groundwater, filtering runoff, and cleansing ponds, creeks, and streams. Biodiversity courses through every square foot of prairie and attracts pollinators, birds, mammals, and creatures small and large. Prairie restoration leads to positive

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE, continued



feedbacks. Short-eared owls return and eat the voles, which allows wood lilies to bloom, set seed and proliferate, and the ecosystem again dances with intricate strands of life.

On the microscale, a sphere of influence might include a dust-like seed of an eastern prairie white-fringed orchid: rebounding from projections of local extinction in Aldo Leopold's melancholy essay "Exit Orchis," to a population in the hundreds today. Toothpick-wielding summer interns extend this influence, cross-pollinating blossoms of the state-endangered orchid to sustain numbers between small, isolated populations.

Prairies exert their influence on our ideas as well. A sphere of influence may conjure colonialism and hegemony, but the ability of a diverse landscape to influence people carries less of that baggage. Once summer interns see the rare, high-quality examples of native landscapes, they lament the ubiquitous degradation. The call to action is implicit.

Presented with mere slivers of our natural heritage, many think outside the lines, step outside the boundaries, and dream of a valley of fire and a pasqueflower peppered moraine, dream of orchids and wolves and people in a reciprocal relationship with that influence.

People—dangerous, important influencers—sometimes carelessly spread manure and bulldozers. However, at Faville Grove, following Leopold's influence, we focus on the healthy spread of ideas, a land ethic, and a culture. Those ideas percolate and recharge; those ideas filter and cleanse the news, attract followers and diversify; those ideas build upon each other, cross-pollinate, and take root to improve a thriving and important thing—the biosphere. ✨

More habitat for ducks, cranes, and more

Wildlife in Columbia County has gotten another boost, thanks to two land purchases by Groundswell Conservancy and supported by funding from Madison Audubon and others. The two purchases included wetlands and woods at Anderson Waterfowl Production Area (20 acres) and Becker Lake WPA (35 acres). These habitats are excellent for supporting water-loving, grassland, woodland birds, mammals, reptiles, and much more. Thank you for your support and love for birds!

WILD TIMES AT GOOSE POND

by Mark Martin, Susan Foote-Martin, & Graham Steinhauer, Goose Pond team

This fall has been wild and alive with great animals, great projects, and great events. We (Mark and Sue) were honored to be awarded the 2021 Harold "Bud" Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award from Gathering Waters on Sept. 15. This award is really a testimony to the people we work with and places we have come to love. We're happy that we've been able to do our part to make a difference in Wisconsin.

The following day on Sept. 16, a record number of Peregrine Falcons were reported at Goose Pond (two!). A Peregrine was photographed 10 days later to reveal color bands on its ankle. We checked with Greg Septon who banded this bird—turns out it was "Colby," a four-year old male banded on May 31, 2017 at the MG&E Power Plant in Madison. It's not uncommon to spot a migrating Peregrine at Goose Pond hunting ducks and shorebirds. This year, one was reported flushing shorebirds, including a Hudsonian Godwit. We hope the Godwit outmaneuvered the fast-flying Peregrine.



Our pond webcam continues to document incredible footage of activity in and around Goose Pond, making these sights accessible to anyone, any-



where with an internet connection. Some of the most fun identifications from the camera this fall include American White Pelican and three Ibis (Glossy or White-faced), as well as white-tailed deer and Bald Eagles. The pond cam has helped folks like Carole Wilson connect with Goose Pond on an almost-daily basis:

"Many thanks to you and the volunteers for keeping this webcam going—I have it on much of the day, even at work, as the background noise of the birds is wonderfully calming! I have gotten friends out of state tuning in, and my father, who has dementia, enjoys watching the birds, even though he lives in North Carolina. I'm a member of both the Madison and National Audubon Societies, and it's great to see my donation promoting awareness of birds and the benefits of this wonderful sanctuary!"

Thank you to our volunteers who keep

WILD TIMES AT GOOSE POND, continued

this camera running! You can tune in any time at madisonaudubon.org/pond-cam.

We enjoyed seeing and tagging migrating monarchs at the sanctuary again this fall. With help from staff, volunteers, and field trip attendees, we were able to tag 1,113 monarchs this fall, bringing our total to 7,428 butterflies tagged at Goose Pond Sanctuary since 2012! Jim Otto opened and closed the season, tagging the first monarch on Aug. 28 and the last on Sept. 28. A few stragglers came through on Oct. 2, and the last monarch was seen on Oct. 9 at Erstad Prairie. Overall, the season was slower than average, but numbers were still high enough for excellent tagging days during early September. As in past years, showy goldenrod was the most popular item on the menu. Over 95% of all mon-

archs netted during its peak bloom were captured on this highly sought-after plant. If you don't have showy goldenrod in your garden, we highly recommend it!

Looking forward, we are excited to coordinate the 2021

2021 Poynette Christmas Bird Count (CBC) again this year. Since beginning in 1971, just one year was missed so this will be the 50th Poynette CBC. The count will be held on Friday Dec. 31. We welcome feeder and field counters to join us in surveying 177 square miles near Goose Pond. If you would like to help



with this count, please contact Mark at goosep@madisonaudubon.org or 608-333-9645.

We welcome you to come out to Goose Pond this winter to hike or snowshoe the trails or search for winter birds and animal tracks. You never know what you're going to find out here! ✨



Madison Audubon is your local Audubon chapter, serving 10 counties in southern Wisconsin.

Together with our members, we work to protect and improve habitat for birds and other wildlife through land acquisition and management, education, and advocacy.

SMILING EYES

by Carolyn Byers, director of education

Fall in Madison brings blue skies, golden leaves, and now, smiling eyes. We're back to teaching in person again! This means we're taking kids out into nature, instead of building that relationship through screens. All of our lessons at schools and community centers take place outside and masked—and it is so good to be together again!

Let us paint a few pictures:

We're out walking the wellness path at Lincoln Elementary when some kids find a "daddy longlegs." Lots of them jump back and say "eew" while some step forward and ask questions. I pick the spider up to give kids a closer look. One wide-eyed child asks a flurry of questions followed by, "Can I hold it?" Their teacher later whispers, "That was huge for them! They smushed a spider earlier this week."

One of our educators, Milcah, is leading kids from Vera Court through the woods at Cherokee Marsh North. Kids are



running around picking up acorns while we walk down to the water. They all compare the beautiful shades of brown produced by our oak trees. We look for acorns with and without hats, ones with holes nibbled in them, and special black acorns (the trees produce these when they're really stressed). Their pockets and minds are full at the end of the walk!

The Lincoln kids are practicing observing like scientists in their nature journals. We move through the class, handing each child something special—a cicada exoskeleton. Some kids won't touch it at first, but all of them are curious. Alexis, another of our educators, wanders around giving each child what they need: a prompt like, "What do you notice? What do you wonder?" She offers help sounding out a tricky word or encouragement while they try to draw the cicada in two different positions. After a few hesitant minutes, their questions flow faster than we can answer.

Last year during virtual learning, huge smiles and excited nature stories kept our hearts light. This year, we're excited for muddy boots, surprise wildlife sightings, and feeling the breeze on our faces—together. And of course, all of those smiling eyes! ✨



A DONOR TESTIMONIAL

My nest emptied this year as our youngest flew off to college. I have time now to think about my nest egg—and what kind of legacy I want to leave for my kids. And eventually their kids.

Confession: I've never written a will.

I know, I know! I should've done it years ago. I have kids and pets and places and issues I care about deeply, such as bird conservation and land protection. I want to help make the world a better place for those I love, even after I'm gone.

But for some reason, my husband and I always found excuses to procrastinate about the will—it's too complicated, we're too busy, I'll take care of that once I complete this project. Or take this trip. Or paint this room. And where and how do we even start the process? We definitely had a bit of we-don't-have-a-will guilt.

When Madison Audubon decided to sign on with Freewill to offer a free, quick estate planning tool to our members, I reviewed the materials carefully, really liked what it offered our members, and

additionally, found an answer to my own procrastination. Then one recent night, I gathered my financial materials together, sat down on a comfy couch with a cup of hot cocoa and my pandemic pooch at my feet, and put together my will in less than an hour.

When I came to the optional prompts about charities that matter to me, I puffed up a bit with happiness as I pondered how lucky I am for actually wanting to include a gift to Madison Audubon, who I work for, alongside what I will leave to my family. The process was painless from start to finish.

And despite having an empty mug of cocoa at the end, I had an unexpected feeling of satisfaction.

-Becky Abel, Madison Audubon member, birder, donor, and director of philanthropy

To start your own free will, visit our website: madisonaudubon.org/freewill. You can also contact Becky at babel@madisonaudubon.org or 608-255-2473 ext. 5 to learn about her experience. ✨

STOCK IN OUR STOCKINGS!

Are you planning to make a year-end gift to birds? A lot of our members are making gifts of their highly appreciated stock instead of cash gifts this year. Birds and

habitat benefit from your gift. And you get a DOUBLE bonus—you receive a tax break for your charitable deduction and you avoid capital gains taxes.



Stock Monday is Nov. 29 and Giving Tuesday is Nov. 30. Both are great opportunities to join the movement to give back and pay it forward.

Contact Becky at 608-255-2473 ext. 5 or babel@madisonaudubon.org with questions. ✨

2021 DONORS

Thank you! Your commitment to birds and conservation is incredible. We are grateful to all of our supporters at all levels, but due to space constraints, donors are listed on our website: madisonaudubon.org/2021-donors

Donate on a regular basis without having to lift a finger! The Frequent Flyers Club allows for automated contributions, tailored to your schedule and amount. Sign up: madisonaudubon.org/give

You can leave a legacy. Members of the Kestrel Legacy Circle have named Madison Audubon in their will or estate, thereby strengthening our organization and mission well beyond their lifetimes. Learn more: madisonaudubon.org/legacy

A gift for birds and a tax break for you!

Did you know? If you are 70 ½ or older, you can make direct gifts to Madison Audubon from your Individual Retirement Account to avoid paying income tax on your Required Minimum Distribution. Now that's something to be jolly about!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND JOIN US!

Tues., Nov. 16, 6pm: Evenings with Audubon: "Lead exposure in Wisconsin birds," by Sean Strom, WDNR. Held online (Zoom and Facebook) & recorded.

Mon., Nov. 29: Stock Monday

Tues., Nov. 30: Giving Tuesday

Tues., Dec. 14, 2021 through Weds.

Jan. 5, 2022: Christmas Bird Counts held throughout the area. Visit madisonaudubon.org/cbc to find one near you.

Thurs., Jan. 20: Special presentation by Scott Weidensaul, "A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds." Held online (Zoom), co-sponsored with Aldo Leopold Audubon Society.



Learn more and register for all these great activities at madisonaudubon.org/events

EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!



No computer? No problem!

We know not everyone has a computer or wants to spend time on one to get updates from their favorite bird organization (ahem!). However, we care about all of our members, and want you to be as informed as your tweeting and typing counterparts.

Madison Audubon is now offering limited, monthly paper updates mailed to your home. These updates provide all the good information that comes to email-receiving members in print, so you can stay in the loop on the good things that happen in between these quarterly newsletters. Note: active membership is required to opt-in to monthly mailed updates.

To enroll, fill out and mail this section to:

Madison Audubon,
1400 E Washington Ave #170,
Madison WI 53703.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

PHOTO CREDITS

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MADISON AUDUBON TEAM

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