

NOVEMBER 2018 NEWSLETTER



Clean your plates

Feeding winter birds and minimizing the risks

Feeding birds can be both a great source of joy and provide a valuable food resource. But feeders also carry potential risks to the birds we love because they can transmit disease unless they are cleaned effectively. And as the Maître D' of your local seed eatery, you want your feathered customers to leave happy, healthy, and with a 5-star review!

In a recent Wilson Journal article, researchers examined the effectiveness of three cleaning methods in removing bacteria from two types of feeders: those that had debris from normal use and ones completely free from debris. Researchers applied cultures of Salmonella to the perch and seed well area of all feeders before testing the following cleaning methods: scrubbing with soap and water, soaking in a diluted bleach solution for 10 minutes, and scrubbing with soap and water followed by a soak in bleach solution.



So what's the best method? That depends. All three cleaning methods reduced levels of Salmonella on feeders without debris. But scrubbing with just soap and water was the least effective method at reducing bacteria. And if a feeder has debris, significantly less bacteria gets removed overall.

At a minimum, when you clean your feeders, scrub as long as necessary to remove visible debris. Then soak or scrub them with a dilute bleach solution, rinse them thoroughly, and let them dry before adding bird feed. Cleaning feeders regularly will help avoid disease transmission and keep dining birds healthy. Before you know it, your backyard diner will be the talk of the neighborhood and you'll rest easy knowing your customers are satisfied.

Excerpt from the Project Feederwatch blog. To read more, visit feederwatch.org/blog/cleaning-preventing-disease



Tending the nest egg

Opportunities for year-end finances

This article is about taxes. Seriously, taxes. So let's get warmed up with a

little humor. Q: What's the most effective way to teach your kids about taxes? A: Eat 30% of their ice cream. There, that's better.

As you may know, there were big changes to federal tax law that took effect this year. The new law affects deductions like gifts to charity by doubling the standard deduction to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for married couples. Some financial pundits claim this will result in a big downturn in giving to charities like Madison Audubon because fewer folks will itemize deductions. It's too early to tell if that's the case, but I doubt those pundits ever met a bird enthusiast. Regardless, as fewer folks itemize under the new tax law, one form of charitable giving has become more attractive.

Many folks use IRAs as an effective tool for saving for retirement, but there's a catch. When IRA holders reach age 70 ½, they must make required minimum distributions (RMDs)—whether the money is needed or not—that raise their taxable income. However, you can transfer money directly to your favorite charities completely tax free. This is known as a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) and it effectively

reduces your RMD and the amount of tax you eventually owe.

There are further benefits to this strategy beyond the tax break and the warm fuzzies you'll get for all the good you are doing. Search for information online or ask your tax advisor. There are a few important things to keep in mind. There is a maximum QCD amount of \$100,000 per taxpayer, distributions must go directly from the IRA custodian to a charity (ask your broker about how to do so), and you cannot itemize the QCD as a deduction but you still get the benefit when claiming the standard deduction.

What if this benefit doesn't apply to you? There are still lots of ways to donate to your favorite charities. Check out our website for more options on supporting Madison Audubon. And on that note, please keep your eyes peeled for our annual appeal letter, our most important fund drive of the year. Supporters like you are what make the work we do together possible, and there is certainly much work to do. So, thank you in advance for your consideration—especially in this year of uncertainty.

Heck, let's end with one last joke. Did you hear about the birder who added the Wood Stork to her lifelist? She diversified her stork portfolio. Ba-dum-bum-TING!

Matt Reetz, executive director
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Anticipating beauty

Faville Grove starts a new revival project

This fall's plantings at Faville Grove will include a six-acre worn-out field known to the former owners as "The Sahara" because of its sandy soils. This piece and the adjacent sandy, white oak savanna will be seeded with over 100 native species. Here's a look at a few of those that might do particularly well in these parched, nutrient-poor conditions.

Old Field Thistle

The old field thistle can be divisive. Many who dislike "weeds" decry the growth of any thistle (even one as ecologically well-behaved as this). Others appreciate its beautiful composite flowers—soft violet-pink and attractive to butterflies. Goldfinches chirp with cheer—feasting on seeds and lining nests with down—in second-year prairie restorations where this native thistle becomes particularly abundant. Its seeds look like candy corn and are cleaned right around Halloween.

Spiderwort

The intense blue flowers graced with three petals and yellow anthers in electric contrast allow spiderwort to light up the Ledge Uplands on June days. New blossoms open each morning, typically fading by mid-day, but they can hold on longer with heavy overcast. It's a special



treat when consecutive days of clouds cause blossoms to stockpile in profligate splendor—but the bees disagree as to profligacy, and make good use of the bounty, as do early-July seed collectors.

Its seeds, upon close inspection, reveal intricate patterns as if they were carved, little prairie coins.

Wild Columbine

A hummingbird choosing to nectar on this savanna plant provides a ringing endorsement. With early-blooming red nectar tubes, the columbine resembles candles as the yellow wax of the flowers drips out at its bottom. Beautiful black seeds shine in simple elegance.

Rough Blazing Star

This striking representative of dry-mesic prairies dazzles with its flower spike, ranging from fuchsia to magenta to taffy. Reluctant to appear in small populations, this *Liatris* is often found in dense patches

in dry and sandy areas. We hope this attractive plant, a favorite of monarchs, becomes well-established in The Sahara.

The light and fluffy seeds are wind-dispersed, creating puffs of magic that will float into a new prairie restoration.

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A gift to wildlife

Creating new habitats at Goose Pond Sanctuary



Together with you, Madison Audubon is in the business of creating and supporting a thirst for discovery. We love to learn, and love people who feel the same way.

Usually one receives gifts for an anniversary, but this year, in celebration of Goose Pond Sanctuary's 50th year of restoration, research, education, and outreach, we decided to do the giving. In September, we restored two acres of high quality habitat for birds and amphibians.

Our goal is to provide loafing and feeding areas for puddle ducks and shorebirds including mallards, blue-winged and green-winged teal, northern shovelers, killdeer, and greater yellowlegs. Amphibians will also benefit because the "scrapes" are ideal for breeding chorus frogs, leopard frogs, and gray treefrogs.

Wetland scrapes are reconstructed depressions with gradual slopes and irregular shapes. Many species use the

perimeter of the scrapes, known as edge habitat. For example, breeding duck pairs like shallow water areas where emergent vegetation grows tall enough that they cannot see other pairs. The seven scrapes have a total perimeter of 3,700 feet—that's a lot of screening for these private pairs!

The seven wetlands were restored by removing sediment which had accumulated in the basin due to erosion from farm fields over the last 150 years. The wetland basin was dominated by reed canary grass, a highly aggressive invasive species.

Graham took the lead on the project by conducting elevation readings, and later mapped out the seven wetland scrapes totaling two acres using GPS. The scrapes are two-feet deep with shallow slopes. Three islands were sculpted in the scrapes.

Using two bulldozers, a large backhoe, and an excavator, LMS Construction moved over 5,000 cubic yards of

Goose Pond continued

sediment to adjacent uplands. They also repaired the water control structure which allows us to move water into the wetland basin before the water enters Goose Pond. The restored wetland habitat will have only a minor impact on the water level of Goose Pond since the scrapes hold about two percent of the water in Goose Pond.

Fall rye was hand-broadcast in the two uplands where the soil was deposited. This fall, the uplands will be seeded to prairie species and wildlife shrubs. We also collected seeds of high energy food for waterfowl including smartweed, water plantain, and Bidens. Soft-stem bulrush will be planted along the edge to help provide habitat for many invertebrates.

Thank you to all of our partners! Peter Ziegler with Wisconsin Waterfowl Association secured North American Wetland Conservation Act grant funding. Kurt Waterstradt, the head of the Fish and Wildlife Service Private Lands office, secured the permits, helped with coordination, and provided funding. LMS Construction, under the direction of Louie Meister, provided a service donation. Madison Audubon also provided funding.

We're sure the wildlife will appreciate everyone's work on this project!

Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin,
Goose Pond Sanctuary resident managers
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Magnificent monarchs

MAS works to protect butterfly populations

Thanks to our many volunteers, partners, and tagging event attendees, we tagged 1,400 monarch butterflies on their way to Mexico this fall. This project, part of Monarch Watch, is a citizen science-based research effort to learn more about monarch migration ecology.

Madison Audubon is working to protect monarchs in other ways too, including by having two MAS representatives, Brenna Marsicek and Mark Martin, participate in the Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative. They're helping create and

put into action an inclusive strategy that should dramatically increase the number of milkweeds in the state and bolster monarch populations.

Want to help monarchs? Plant milkweed! Monarchs only lay eggs on these plants—native species are best!





Sunny skies ahead

Faville Grove's new energy production project

Are you ready for a little good news on climate change for a change? Just

a smidgen, but good news nonetheless. With

help from Midwest Solar Power LLC, Madison Audubon is getting into the business of producing carbon-free, solar electricity. We're installing a 7.6-kilowatt photovoltaic array at our land steward's residence on Prairie Lane at Faville Grove Sanctuary. In full sun, the array will produce 7,600 watts of electricity that will run backwards through the electric meter into the local utility's wires, producing about 10,000 kilowatt-hours of clean energy per year.

No, this won't save the planet, but it is a step in the right direction. Plus, it says something about the economics of solar electricity when our finance...

...committee concludes that, aside from its environmental benefits, the project represents a smart investment of donated funds that will return substan-

tial cost savings over its estimated 30-year lifespan.

Prices of solar electric panels have dropped steadily in recent years. If you're a homeowner with a sunny spot that isn't already occupied by your vegetable garden, you can claim a federal tax credit of 30% of the cost of a system installed through 2019 and receive a rebate of up to \$2,000 from the Focus on Energy program. As a non-profit, Madison Audubon can't claim a tax credit, but we did secure a Renewable Energy Grant from WPPI, a Solar for Good grant from RENEW Wisconsin, and a Focus on Energy rebate, totaling about half the project cost. We hope to install photovoltaic arrays at Goose Pond Sanctuary next year, so for those of you who lack the needed sunny spot (and those of you who just can't get enough of the sun), you can still get a solar buzz with a contribution to Madison Audubon.

Roger Packard, president
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Save the date: Nov. 27 is #GivingTuesday

Save some room on your holiday shopping list for donations to Madison Audubon in honor of or gift memberships for loved ones! #GivingTuesday is Nov. 27— a day of online giving to your favorite non-profits. Keep an eye on your email, Facebook, and Twitter for ways to give. Thank you!

Helping pave the path

Working with older youth to explore conservation careers

Most of my days are spent with children in middle school or younger. And boy, they are delightful. But every so often and every summer, we have the pleasure of working with older youth through one of our favorite programs, Conservation Academy.



We have an amazing partnership with Operation Fresh Start, a local non-profit (operationfreshstart.org). OFS seeks to provide a path forward for disconnected youth (ages 16-24) through education, mentoring, and employment training. The construction crews work to build environmentally-friendly and affordable housing, while their conservation crews help Dane County Parks and Madison City Parks to build and maintain trails, remove invasive species, and plant native plants. We work directly with the conservation crews to enrich their programming.

Our program, Conservation Academy, occurs weekly during the summer. We meet the OFS conservation crews at parks around Madison, where they get to spend three hours learning and trying new things. Each week we introduce participants to professionals in the environmental field, ranging from fish biologists to arborists, water

pollution specialists to field techs, who describe their job and the career path that brought them there.

The primary discussion topics: what these professionals do, why its important, and the steps that Conservation Academy participants could take to work towards having that job

in the future. We aim to make students aware of career pathways they may not have considered, and to give them tangible steps to take in order to land their dream job.

The best part about each lesson is the hands-on segment. These young adults spend so much time working hard to improve our parks, and this is their chance to enjoy, learn and play! WDNR arborists taught students to identify native tree species, UW Canid Project folks let them try out their telemetry equipment, and Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District staff took the students on a behind-the-scenes tour of the facility. In past years they have held fish after electrofishing demonstrations and helped wrangle and band Canada geese.

We're very excited to report that one of the Conservation Academy graduates

Ready and willing

A story of planned giving

When I settled down in Madison back in the 1970s I wanted to get involved in a local birdwatching group and discovered Madison Audubon. It seemed like a good fit so I joined... But I soon learned that MAS was about more than just birds!

Over the years I volunteered for Madison Audubon in a variety of ways: illustrating birds, helping with the annual Seed Sale, the Art Fair and Prairie's Jubilee!, and designing and editing the CAWS newsletter for nearly 30 years.

Goose Pond became a regular spot to go birding especially in spring and fall when migration peaked. Dorothy Haines needed help with scope days so I volunteered to help visitors identify waterfowl. We and other volunteers always had a great time helping people find birds through the scopes. It gave us the opportunity to show them the variety of species that used Goose Pond as a refuge.

The sanctuary continued to grow and more land was planted in native prairie,



providing habitat for more than waterfowl. It was wonderful to see this treasure for wildlife develop over time. I began to think how important it is to make sure this will always be here for the birds, the insects and animals that depend on it. So when it came to updating our will recently, my wife, Deb, and I decided we wanted to include Madison Audubon to be a part of our legacy. We want to ensure this organization and its sanctuaries are here for wildlife, that it will continue to grow and be enjoyed for generations to come.

Patrick and Deb Ready

Learn more about leaving your legacy to birds,
habitat, and education through Madison Audubon's
Legacy Society:

madisonaudubon.org/legacy-society

Changes for the Board of Directors

Two to renew, four to review, and three to bid farewell

Madison Audubon's board of directors has nominated a slate of six candidates to run for election for board next spring, including two current members whose terms are expiring and four individuals new to the board. With three current members stepping down, the slate will increase board membership from 12 to 13 beginning in 2019.

Many thanks to outgoing board members Marcia MacKenzie, Jim Shurts, and Arlyne Johnson who have helped to usher in many changes to Madison Audubon during their terms—Marcia as vice president and chair of the development committee, Jim as chair of the land protection committee, and Arlyne as chair of the strategic planning committee. All three plan to remain active with Madison Audubon,

so be sure to thank them the next time you see them at events or at the sanctuaries!

Two renewing board members (Sue Knaack and Topf Wells) and four new candidates (Pat Clark, Matt Fortney, Lisa Lepeak, and Olivia Pietrantonio) will be on the ballot this winter. Members may nominate additional candidates by submitting a brief statement from each nominee, signed by at least 25 current Madison Audubon members, no later than Dec. 7, 2018.

Please watch for ballots in the February newsletter, review the board biographies and candidate statements on our website, and vote!

madisonaudubon.org/2018-ballot

Faville Grove continued

Lead Plant

This prairie shrub indicates high-quality prairie. Purple flowers, orange stamens, and yellow anthers may sound like a zany combination, but the colors somehow meld into a sophisticated *gravitas*. Compound leaves dusted with white give the plant its name and form an attractive base. Hundreds, if not thousands, of insects visit lead plant flowers, from monarchs, eastern tailed-blues, and gray hairstreaks to

jewel beetles, leaf beetles, and weevils, to soft-winged flower beetles, lady beetles, and the lead plant flower moth. Its seed forms gray heads that retain a buttery, floral aroma.



Drew Harry, land steward
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Conservation Academy continued

now has a career with Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, and he discovered that job opening while on a field trip with Madison Audubon. After the field trip, and with a lot of prodding from his OFS Crew Leader, the Conservation Academy graduate applied, interviewed, and landed the position. It's wonderful to see all of the hard work and training they put in

at OFS pay off. Madison Audubon was happy to play a very small role in his discovering a new path forward. These tenacious students are making Madison a better place through their work with OFS, and we're excited to see where they're headed next.

Carolyn Byers, education director
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Calling bird watchers!

Volunteers needed for two citizen science programs

Get some fresh winter air and help study birds by joining one of our citizen science programs. Watch an eagle family grow over the course of a nesting season with Bald Eagle Nest Watch, or spend just one day surveying for birds with Climate Watch. Visit the links below to learn more and sign up.



Bald Eagle Nest Watch

Monitor eagle nests and document egg laying, hatching, and fledging.

Weekly visits to nests, Feb.-June

madison
audubon.org/
benw



Climate Watch

Survey bird species at 12 locations to study effects of climate change.

One day, Jan. 15-Feb. 15

madison
audubon.org/
climate-watch

OFF-SEASON OPPORTUNITIES

Break up the winter with two hands-on experiences you won't forget



FIELD MUSEUM: BEHIND THE SCENES JAN. 23, 2019

Spend the day with Field Museum experts as we explore the museum's Bird Lab, Egg Collection, and Peggy Macnamara's art studio.

Registration opens for members on Dec. 15:
madisonaudubon.org/events



NATURE DRAWING: WINTER EDITION Feb. 1 or 2, 2019

Seeds, feathers, and other trinkets found in winter can be wonderful to explore through illustration. Work with MAS staff Carolyn Byers to learn how.

Registration opens for members on Dec. 15:
madisonaudubon.org/naturalists

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