



madison  
**AUDUBON**  
society

NEWSLETTER OF THE MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2017

Madison Audubon  
is your local  
Audubon chapter

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

## Through fresh eyes

*A younger generation calls us to action*

For several years running, toward the end of the summer, I've put the same question to each of the summer interns working at Faville Grove Sanctuary: Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic about the future? This year we had one self-proclaimed agnostic who said that she prefers not to think about it, but otherwise, the universal outlook has been optimism.

Granted, these kids (I think I'm old enough to refer to college students as kids) were just completing an internship in ecological restoration—the most optimistic field of endeavor that I can think of—but nonetheless, they're kids, looking at long futures in a world that is in turmoil. Their answers have stunned me every time.

But this year the interns did something different—they turned the question back on me. I stammered my way through a response, trying not to say flat out that I think their world is toast, but still conveying the idea that there are very large challenges ahead, and many people with vested interests in the status quo who will stand in the way of progress.

When I was a child I saw robins convulsing on the lawn, victims of DDT poisoning, my mother told me. My mother knew the problem, but it would be more than two decades before a ban was in place. Lead in gasoline? Likewise, decades between the time the

hazard was evident and the time it was outlawed. Habitat loss? We understand the problem, but haven't reversed it yet. Will we win the race against time in addressing the many challenges of climate change? Everyone knows what needs to be done (Did someone say carbon tax? How many decades ago?), but too many still cynically deny it.

Year after year, the young men and women that Madison Audubon hires as summer interns—they're really not kids at all—amaze me, not just by their optimism, but by their intelligence, their enthusiasm, their simultaneous idealism and worldliness. We can't let them down. It's not enough to say no to the lunacy that is rampant in political circles these days, or to the culture of unbridled self-interest that has very nearly tanked our society and our environment. We must work with young people to envision the world that they want to inhabit. And we must work together toward that end with all we've got and whatever time we have remaining.



Roger Packard, president  
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TOP: Stiff gentian adds a burst of color to the fall hues on the prairie. *Photo by Carolyn Byers*  
CENTER: Madison Audubon's summer interns inspire hope for the future. *Photo by Olivia Clark*  
BOTTOM: Fortunately for this early bird, the challenge of DDT has been solved. *Photo by Arlene Koziol*



## Looking out for the small but mighty

### Conserving Wisconsin's American kestrels

American kestrels are a beloved falcon for their tiny stature, big personality, and beautiful coloring. However, the kestrel population in our region declined 41% between 1966 and 2014, according to Breeding Bird Survey data. This is partly due to loss of their natural nest sites in tree snags. Our goal is to reverse that trend.

With help from volunteers and spearheaded by volunteer and former MAS board president Brand Smith, we have constructed, erected, and monitored 143 kestrel nest boxes, all since 2009. Nest boxes provide kestrels with a much-needed safe nesting spot to raise a brood of young and are an effective tool in increasing kestrel numbers overall.

Goose Pond Sanctuary provides ideal grassland habitat for these small falcons, but there were no nesting pairs on the property when we installed the first kestrel boxes in 1985. This past summer, seven pairs nested at Goose Pond Sanctuary, six of which successfully raised young. Three more pairs nested within a half mile of Goose Pond.

These ten nest boxes contribute to a much larger kestrel nest box trail—now the second largest in the nation. This year, a record number of 190 kestrels fledged from 47 of the 143 boxes. And in the past five years, an amazing 572 young have fledged! Visit [madisonaudubon.org/kestrel-data](http://madisonaudubon.org/kestrel-data) to see the full dataset from our monitoring efforts and the locations for confirmed kestrel nesting pairs in the Breeding Bird Atlas II.

This work has been helped significantly through our partnership with Janet Eschenbauch of the Central Wisconsin Kestrel Research project. Janet came to Goose Pond for four days this June to band and collect valuable data on kestrels, both adults and young. Many Madison Audubon members participated in and experienced this memorable activity. At the end of the fourth day, 32 adults and 102 young were sporting new Fish & Wildlife Service bands. Last year, Janet and her team also banded three adults and 93 young in the Columbia County area.

A few interesting findings from the banding efforts:

- One first-year male banded near Rio in 2016 was found this year nesting about 65 miles north in Janet's nest box in Buena Vista Marsh.



- Janet banded two adults at Goose Pond neighbor Judi Benade's prairie last summer. This year the female was back in the same box, while the male moved two miles northwest to a box at Ankenbrandt Prairie.
- We were surprised to learn the banded female kestrel that Janet caught nesting at our Wood Family Prairie was eight years old! She was banded as a nestling at Castle Rock State Park near Rockford, Illinois (91 miles almost due south).

Brand and volunteers have been busy this fall erecting or replacing nest boxes. If you would like to help put up or monitor boxes, please contact Brand. On behalf of our amazing kestrels, thank you to everyone who assisted with this project!



Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin, Goose Pond Sanctuary resident managers  
[goosep@madisonaudubon.org](mailto:goosep@madisonaudubon.org)

Brand Smith, MAS's American kestrel nest box coordinator  
[brandsmith@charter.net](mailto:brandsmith@charter.net) | 608-444-8952



## Biodiversity with a local flavor

*Faville Grove showcases a diversity of plant communities*

When we think about biodiversity, our minds may travel to the lush and distant lands of Africa, Costa Rica, or Brazil. Yet, some of the highest diversity on earth occurs in grassland and savanna systems. Consider this: In one square meter of a Wisconsin oak savanna, one can routinely document over 20 species of grasses and forbs. Oak savannas, unique in Wisconsin (and Faville Grove Sanctuary) occupy less than a tenth of one percent of their historic range in Wisconsin. However within these remaining savannas one can find over 27% of the vascular flora of the entire state! We don't teach oak savanna conservation in elementary school, despite the importance of this system.

The remnant landscapes of Wisconsin, a haven for thousands of aboriginal species, encourage species interactions that cannot be imitated by introduced species. Unfortunately, these remaining slivers of original habitat are chopped up and truncated. Restoration provides a wonderful opportunity to reintroduce many of the species found in remnant communities, as well as the fauna associated

with those communities.

Plant communities at Faville Grove Sanctuary include calcareous fen, dry-mesic, mesic, wet-mesic, and wet prairies, oak savanna, oak woodland, quartzite glade, bog, tamarack forest, shrub-carr, sedge meadow, spring runs, and open water ponds, each possessing varying biotic and abiotic make-up. The diversity is staggering.

A great benefit of our summer internship program is introducing interns to the wealth of diversity in their backyard. For example, I'll tell them about the prickly pear cactus, native to sand prairies in Wisconsin. "Really? In Wisconsin?!" they'll say.

Indeed, temperate Wisconsin is home to this desert-dweller, along with many other rare and surprising species. All because of our diverse landscape.

(See "Local biodiversity," p. 6)



Cristina Zepeda

## Welcome to our new interns!

Madison Audubon is fortunate to work with three talented, enthusiastic interns this school year: Cristina in communications, and Miranda and Bryce in education. You'll see their work manifest through the coming months. Learn more about Cristina, Miranda, and Bryce on our website ([madisonaudubon.org/who-we-are](http://madisonaudubon.org/who-we-are)).



Miranda VanStraten



Bryce Lackey

## Wingin' it

*A closer look at the amazing bird wing*

You can learn a lot about a bird by taking a close look at its wings. The shape of the wing affects a bird's speed, lift, and maneuverability. Below we share a bit more on five common bird wing shapes. Thanks to Jenn Deutscher for sharing the beautiful designs and wing shape descriptions (more at Alithographica.com).

### Color Key

- **Primary feathers**  
Responsible for thrust to propel the bird forward, and can be rotated individually to control flight directions and adjust lift and air resistance.
- **Secondary feathers**  
Run along the "arm" of the wing and sustain the bird in the air, giving it lift.
- **Primary coverts**  
Cover the base of primary feathers to assist with airflow.
- **Secondary coverts**  
Cover the base of secondary feathers to assist with airflow.
- **Alula**  
Used in slow flight with high angles of attack, such as landing and take-off.
- **Marginal coverts**  
Cover the front edge of wing, and are stacked like roof tiles to aid with air flow.
- **Scapulars**  
Shoulder feathers



#### Active Soaring Wings

Long and narrow. Excellent for soaring (flying without flapping) over water as long as wind currents are favorable. *Wisconsin example: Parasitic jaeger*



#### Passive Soaring Wings

Long and broad wings ending in long primary feathers with wide gaps in between. These slots help the bird take advantage of columns of rising hot air, allowing it to soar without reliable wind currents. *Wisconsin example: Turkey vulture*



#### Elliptical Wings

Optimized for bursts of fast, tightly controlled flight. Excellent at taking off quickly, maneuvering through branches, and avoiding predators. (Ordinary flight is slow and usually requires flapping.) *Wisconsin example: American woodcock or wild turkey*



#### High-Speed Wings

Medium-long and narrow, optimized for sustained speed. *Wisconsin example: Peregrine falcon*



#### Hovering Wings

Small relative to body size. Excellent for tightly controlled flight and hovering. Articulates mostly at the shoulder rather than the wrist. *Wisconsin example: Ruby-throated hummingbird*



## A vision realized

*Wingspan observation pavilion soars beyond expectations*

There's a new landmark at Goose Pond Sanctuary, and it has Madison Audubon members' fingerprints all over it. The newly completed *Wingspan* observation pavilion now sits in Bicentennial Prairie, overlooking Goose Pond and all its wonders. This structure was proposed by John and Marlen Kaiser to honor the work of resident managers Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin. With support from the Kaisers and many generous MAS members and supporters, the pavilion was designed and constructed by Jim Gempeler, Kurt Straus, Don Schmidt, and many other in-kind donors. "The structure, the process, the incredible response from donors was better than we could have imagined," says director Matt Reetz.

*Wingspan* is free, open to all, and is wheelchair-accessible. We invite you to visit the beautiful new pavilion during daylight hours any day of the week.

## Making the most of winter

*Citizen science gets you birding in the snow*

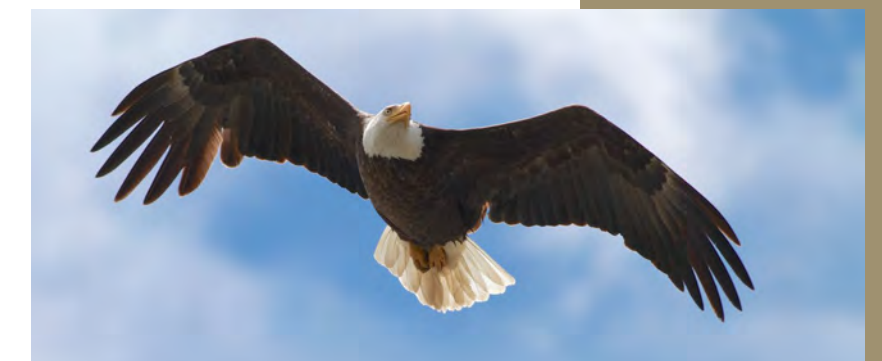
A lot of people raise their eyebrows when I say this, but here it is: I love winter. If you love winter too, or at least put up with it for the sake of birds, join us for our winter citizen science programs! These activities allow you to make the most of the "off-season" by observing birds and documenting what you see in a variety of ways, for different purposes.

The **Christmas Bird Count** is the nation's longest-running citizen science bird project, now in its 118<sup>th</sup> year. Madison Audubon is coordinating the Madison-area count for the first time, and we hope many of you participate in this event again this Christmas!

**Climate Watch** is a nation-wide program that looks at how climate change is impacting or will impact habitat for birds. Madison Audubon volunteers survey eastern bluebirds (and document other species observed along the way) between January 15-February 15. All it takes is spending one morning outside!

And for you baldie fans out there, **Bald Eagle Nest Watch** is a brand-new Madison Audubon program in partnership with the Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources, which will be spearheaded by MAS volunteer Drew Cashman. Adopt a bald eagle nest, visit it once per week for an hour until fledging, and help biologists determine how this species is doing in Dane County.



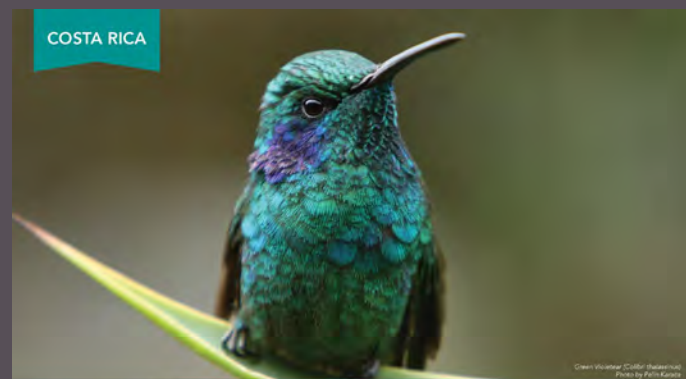
Visit [madisonaudubon.org/citizen-science](http://madisonaudubon.org/citizen-science) to learn more and sign up. See you in the brisk winter weather!

Brenna Marsicek, communications director  
[bmarsicek@madisonaudubon.org](mailto:bmarsicek@madisonaudubon.org)

## Costa Rica: Birder's Paradise—Savegre, Sarapiquí & Arenal February 24-March 6, 2018

Madison Audubon is hosting an 11-day field trip with Holbrook Travel to some of the best birding locations in Costa Rica. The country boasts of over 900 species of birds, such as the keel-billed toucan, great green macaw, yellow-tailed oriole, and red-lored parrot. A local bilingual birding guide paired with Madison Audubon volunteer Levi Wood will help you make the most out of your trip.

Spots will fill up quickly! To learn more about the itinerary, trip highlights, and pricing, visit [madisonaudubon.org/costa-rica](http://madisonaudubon.org/costa-rica). The cost of the trip includes a donation to Madison Audubon.



Madison Audubon is a proud member of the following organizations:



## Paying it forward

*MAS education programs help students become the teachers*

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade kids in our after-school programming at The Salvation Army have been with us from the start. When we began working with these excitable souls, they were just five or six years old. They've grown with our programming, learning about Wisconsin animals, plants, and habitats. In short, they're experts!

This year, we decided they were ready to become the teachers themselves. Throughout the 2017-18 school year, those older kiddos will each be mentoring several kindergarten – 2nd graders, and they're excited! So far, we've had three lessons with only the older group so that they can prepare for their new roles. We have visited three local parks, each with a different level of "wildness": Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Washington Manor Park, and Sandburg Woods. The older kids will help the younger to explore these areas, comparing and contrasting the wildlife and habitat.



When asked how they're feeling about our upcoming first lesson with the littles, students replied:

*"Happy! I want to show the little kids something new."*

*"I'm excited to see what the little kids think of all of the places we'll bring them."*

And more specifically, *"I want to show them the old paper wasp nest!"*

Next week will be our first lesson with both age groups. We'll talk about planned field trips, play some team-building games, and decorate nature journals. We're sure looking forward to watching all of these

kids grow together over the school year.

Carolyn Byers, education director  
carolyn.byers@madisonaudubon.org

## Local biodiversity

(Continued from p. 3)

In a square meter quadrat in some of our prairie restorations at Faville Grove, we've averaged 18.5 species per square meter, achieving diversity of over 100 plant species in each restoration. That's close to the diversity found in remnant prairies and savannas.

There may yet be hope that we can stitch together a free-flowing river and a continuous expanse of native landscape. And there is hope we can inspire the next generation to see the rippling tides of diversity hidden beneath them; see native seeds waiting to be cast upon an expectant shore, or dry prairie, or calcareous fen, or oak savanna.

In fact, we don't need to hope too hard here at



Faville Grove. Thanks to our members, volunteers, and staff, we're accomplishing it. If you'd like to ingest your daily dose of biodiversity, stop by Faville Grove Sanctuary any time.

Drew Harry, Faville Grove Sanctuary land steward  
faville@madisonaudubon.org

## DONOR ROLL

*Thank you to those who donated August-October*

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If you are a member of Madison Audubon only, your gift of \$20 or more above will renew your membership for one year.

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\*Madison Audubon serves Dane, Columbia, Sauk, Iowa, Richland, Jefferson, Dodge, and Marquette counties.

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### EVENINGS WITH AUDUBON

*Cat Wars: The devastating consequences of a cuddly killer* with author Peter Marra

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 15 | 7:00 p.m. | Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, 333 N. Orchard



### FREE WINTER FIELD TRIPS

Embrace the winter weather with one of our free winter field trips. Offered on a variety of dates, locations, and focus species. Learn more at [madisonaudubon.org/field-trips](http://madisonaudubon.org/field-trips).

ABOVE LEFT: Our next EWA will feature a discussion of the impacts of outdoor cats on birds. *Image provided by Peter Marra*  
ABOVE RIGHT: Get out your parka; winter can be a great time to bird! *MAS Photo*  
RIGHT: The house finch is a common visitor at backyard birdfeeders, even through the winter months. *Photo by Kelly Colgan Azar*

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## Proposed Board Slate

The Madison Audubon board consists of 12 members, three of whom are currently up for reelection. Those members include Roger Packard, president, Marcia MacKenzie, vice president, and Pat Eagan, member-at-large. Candidate statements are available at [madisonaudubon.org/board-statements](http://madisonaudubon.org/board-statements).

The 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 as of Nov. 1, 2017. Member nominations are due to the Madison Audubon office no later than Dec. 8, 2017.

Watch for ballots to appear in the spring newsletter, due out in February, and please vote!

