

FEBRUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER



A different kind of Big Year

Ways you help make Madison Audubon rock

The scene opens on a man sitting in his office cubicle, listening intently to his earphones. His coworker rolls his chair over. “Watcha rockin’ out to, Brad?” Brad pops out an earphone and holds it up. A silky voice announces “Clark’s nutcracker,” which is followed by a chattering call and a rightfully puzzled look from the coworker. This is my favorite scene in the birder-themed movie, *The Big Year*. The movie goes on to follow Brad on a madcap adventure as he attempts to count the most possible bird species in one calendar year. Hilarity ensues.

A Big Year is a real thing and quite a feat—and not likely part of my birding future. But, last year was quite a big year of a different sort for Madison Audubon. As you’ll read in these pages, together we achieved a lot in **bird conservation, habitat protection and restoration, youth education, and celebration of nature**. We also had a strong year organizationally and financially—executing our strategic plan, using strong governance, and demonstrating professional standards and practices that led us to the final stages of land trust accreditation. All of this was in the face of serious threats to science and conservation at many scales. That all of this could be accomplished is a testimony to you, our supporters and partners, and our shared passion for birds.

2018 is going to be a big year, too. There are persistent and emerging challenges to conservation. Madison Audubon will be hard at work to meet those challenges and ensure that birds and the habitats they need are cherished and protected. One way we will be doing so is through the Year of the Bird campaign, our partnership with National Geographic, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon, and more than 100 other organizations. To celebrate the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the most powerful and important bird-protection law ever passed, the Year of the Bird will blend storytelling and science to educate, inspire, and raise awareness about challenges that birds face. It will include simple but meaningful actions that anyone can take for the health of our planet and birds. And it will need your help to be successful. You can find out more about the Year of the Bird and how to get involved on page 6.

I want to thank you again for making 2017 one heckuva big year for our amazing birds. Working together, we’ll make sure 2018 is, too.

Matt Reetz, executive director

PS. Clark’s nutcrackers are awesome.

BIRD CONSERVATION THROUGH RESEARCH

A snowy owl named Arlington

Goose Pond Sanctuary comes alive with a flurry of snowy owls

This winter is shaping up to be a great snowy owl irruption year. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources estimated there are at least 225 snowy owls in Wisconsin, up from the average two dozen that typically spend winter in the Badger State. What a treat for bird lovers, and an exciting opportunity for researchers!

Goose Pond Sanctuary has been flapping with snowy owl activity since Nov. 30, when the first white beauty made its appearance on Prairie Lane. Since then, at least four other snowies have made themselves at home around Goose Pond, and with such bird bounty at our fingertips, Madison Audubon stepped up to help trap owls and outfit one with a \$3,000 transmitter as a part of Project SNOWstorm.

Project SNOWstorm began its work in the 2013-14 irruption and as of Jan. 2018 has tagged 48 owls in 10 states. In Feb. 2015, a snowy owl named “Goose Pond” was caught by Gene Jacobs with Linwood Springs Research Station at the Central Wisconsin Airport. Goose was fitted with a transmitter funded by MAS donors, and released south of Goose Pond at the Arlington Agricultural Research Station.

Through data collected by Goose’s and other snowies’ transmitters, Project SNOWstorm has documented little-known and surprising aspects of snowy owl

ecology and behavior, and traced their migrations in unprecedented detail.

So with snowies all around again this winter, we jumped into action. On Jan. 4, Gene, Tom Meyer and Rick Hill with Cedar Grove Ornithological Station, and volunteers assembled and split into groups to scout for the birds.

By 1:30 p.m., the first snowy owl was spotted at the UW quarry near Goose Pond Road. One team camped out at that location, trying to entice the snowy into a cage baited with two starlings. Around 5 p.m., another snowy was spotted nearby, and a second team rushed to the site to try their luck with trapping this owl.

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Arlington continued

With the barely bridled patience of a child on Christmas morning, the crew waited for the snowy to fly into the baited trap. When it did, the crew exuberantly returned to the Kampen Road residence to discover the other team had also successfully caught their bird! Volunteer Stacy Taritas later said, “That night was the experience of a lifetime.”

Both owls were young males and each was then banded. The smaller one was named “Quarry” where he was trapped. The larger of the two was named “Arlington,” and was fitted with a solar pack transmitter that sends hourly location GPS data through cell phone towers to “owl central” on the east coast.

Arlington can be tracked and more information about the project can be found on the Project SNOWstorm website (projectsnowstorm.org). The full stories are detailed in the Jan. 12, 2018 and Dec. 15, 2017 Friday Feathered Feature on snowy owls at madisonaudubon.org/fff.

Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin, resident co-managers & Maddie Dumas, land steward

HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

Writing our signature on the land

Science and aesthetics drive restoration at Faville Grove

As Aldo Leopold said, “a conservationist is aware that with each stroke of the ax he is writing his signature on the land.” So it is today, with a power brush-cutter and chainsaw replacing the ax. And what does our signature say, exactly?

A major focus of the past year’s work at Faville Grove Sanctuary has been the on-going restoration of the recently acquired Laas property. Beginning with 96 acres of eroded farmland, tangled woodlots, and a high-quality kettle bog fringed in places with invasive canary grass, we’re working toward open prairie, savanna, and a wetland with natives throughout. This broad vision, however, conceals a lot of

detailed planning and on-the-spot decision-making.

Looking to the brushy tangle on the kettle pond’s upland edge, we cut the non-natives with no second thoughts: honeysuckle, buckthorn, and nastiest of the nasty, multiflora rose. But what about black cherries and red cedars? Both native trees with a rightful claim to the niches they’ve occupied, they nevertheless reflect historical fire suppression in a naturally fire-adapted ecosystem like Faville Grove. Spindly cherry trees are cut. Sickly and crowded cedars likewise land on the burn pile.

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Restoration continued

Spared are select trees that satisfy aesthetics; a few burly cedars reach skyward like white pines, proffering a northwoods feel to the rise above the pond. A black cherry to the south sends a mighty horizontal branch with soft bark. But of course, these decisions go beyond aesthetics. These cherries and cedars might host eastern tiger swallowtails, red-spotted purples, coral or silver or juniper hair-streaks. Those caterpillars will in turn metamorphose into adults pollinating a variety of plants, or feed a diversity of birds come summer breeding time. So stands the treatise of the trees.

Another wooded area choked with buckthorn and honeysuckle might provide a windbreak for a nuthatch or a deer, but now that a contractor has cleared around majestic white oaks southwest of the pond, the open savanna will provide habitat for aerial-sallying flycatchers, red-headed woodpeckers, turkeys, and a rich groundlayer of wildflowers. A neighbor remarked that while hunting as a boy, he could spot a squirrel clear through these trees. With a lot of work, that stunning park-like view has been restored and will be further enhanced by the planting of native shrubs such as hazelnut and dogwoods.

More decisions arise from the presently farmed fields above the pond. These fields, prairie restorations

in-waiting, contain a long wash that leads to a gully slashing its way down the wooded slope, sending nutrients that fuel the reed canary grass invasion in the kettle wetland. To counter, we planted a filter strip of deep-rooted native grasses to hold soil and nutrients above the pond.

Crowded conifer plantations near the pond have for many years held the soil and harbored uncommon northern bird species like golden-crowned kinglets and red-breasted nuthatches. However, nearby tamaracks provide similar habitat in a native context, so these artificial stands will be cut, and the diverse grassland that replaces them will continue to stem erosion while supplying imperiled habitat for declining grassland birds—meadowlarks, bluebirds, and dickcissels among them.

Our work aims at understanding this particular piece of land. Each action has cascading effects, and carefully weighing our signature will drive dramatic increases in diversity. Taking a long view and unearthing the hidden intricacies of this living piece of land will allow us to revitalize and manage it for the future.

Drew Harry, Faville Grove Sanctuary land steward



YOUTH EDUCATION

Quality over quantity

MAS education programs prioritize time with kids

I just finished crunching the numbers, and the results are in: the Madison Audubon education department reached 2,247 people in 2017. Woo! While this is a big number, you should know that it is about 800 fewer than last year—and I'm so proud of that. We've worked hard in the past year to focus on increasing the amount of time we spend with each child, and building relationships with them. This is much more important to us than attending huge events where we may get less than a minute with each participant.

We know that kids need to spend more time in nature: that being in nature reduces stress, improves mood, and improves focus when we return to school or work. It makes people kinder, happier, and more creative. But the kids we work with generally don't start out liking nature, and are sometimes dismayed to learn that we're going to bring them outside a lot. In order to create a new positive relationship with their natural environment, we need to spend as much time as possible with each kid, opening their eyes to all of the cool things they can find outside.

MAS educators visited Vera Court Neighborhood Center frequently during the past year, and spent about 27 hours with each child. In the 4th grade Lincoln Elementary classrooms that we visit weekly, we spent a whopping 40 hours with each child. That's a lot of memories for each kid to carry with them throughout life! We have partnerships like this at the Bayview, Salvation Army, and Goodman Community Centers, and are growing them at many schools around Madison.

Because we spend so much time with each child, and have been partnering with some of these organizations for several years, we try hard to keep our curricula fresh. This winter, before programming starts in February, I am working to create all new lessons to keep kids engaged.

For more updates and stories from the education department, check out the News Blog on the MAS website.

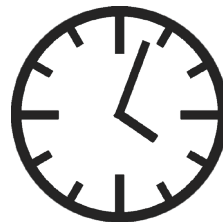
Carolyn Byers, education director



School groups reached: 37



Total people reached thru education programs: 2,247



Estimated staff hours it took to run the education department: 2,238

1:1

The ratio of staff hours to people reached, ensuring delivery of high quality education programs

CELEBRATION OF NATURE

Make 2018 your year to #BirdYourWorld

One hundred years is an eternity. Or perhaps a drop in the bucket, depending on your perspective. To an oak tree left alone in the woods, 100 years is a very achievable goal. To a mayfly, it's a number beyond one's wildest imagination. To a pollen grain trapped in mud at the bottom of a lake, a century is a pittance. To a species of birds protected under law, 100 years can mean the difference between flourishing and disappearing.

The most powerful and important bird-protection law ever enacted—the United States' Migratory Bird Treaty Act—was passed in 1918. The law has helped

protect hundreds of species of birds, and yet more than 200 of the world's bird species are still at high risk of extinction. Despite a century of bipartisan support, the law currently is under unprecedented attack by an administration that is undermining many of our most successful environmental protections. In 2018, alongside partners big and small, we will celebrate and defend our feathered friends and work together to promote bird conservation.

Sign the pledge and learn more at audubon.org/yearofthebird.

“ IF YOU TAKE CARE OF BIRDS, YOU TAKE CARE OF MOST OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD. ”

– *Thomas Lovejoy*

Biologist and Godfather of Biodiversity

SHARE BIG FOR BIRDS ON MARCH 6!

Help Madison Audubon kick off 2018 in a big way on Tuesday, March 6 during The Big Share. Your donation can help us win cash prizes and earn matching funds!

DONATE ON MARCH 6 AT
MADISONAUDUBON.ORG/BIGSHARE

Coordinated by Community Shares of Wisconsin to benefit 70 local non-profit organizations.



CELEBRATION OF NATURE

Science for the fun of it

Citizen scientists make a difference for birds

The middle of winter in Wisconsin isn't known for exceptional birding. But it still offers plentiful opportunities to get outside, breathe some crisp, fresh air, and find some neat critters. Recently, three of us tromped the UW-Arboretum, snow crunching under our feet and cheeks rosy from the cold, as we searched for birds as part of National Audubon's Climate Watch citizen science program. Suddenly, a flash of gray flew across our field of vision: a northern shrike! What a start to the day!

Climate Watch is just one of Madison Audubon's three lively winter citizen science programs. In addition to helping prevent cabin fever from taking hold, these programs create great ways for people to collect interesting data that help tackle research questions that will ultimately benefit birds. Climate Watch is a one-day event each winter and summer during which participants help document how bird habitat is affected by the changing climate. Thanks to you, we've enjoyed one of the highest participation rates in the country for this program.

Madison Audubon also coordinated the 2017 Christmas Bird Count for the Madison area, a challenge that was previously tackled by volunteer and avid birder Aaron Stutz. Thanks to over 100 dedicated citizen scientists, the count brought great results: 97 species observed (a record for the Madison count, which began in 1949), nine high-counts, and some really cool birds—ovenbird and Iceland gull just to name a couple.

And my personal favorite is our brand new program, Bald Eagle Nest Watch. Dane County has 12 bald eagle nests, and we're monitoring whether these nests produce young, how many fledge, and if there are any human disturbances to the nests. Each of our 50 stellar volunteers has been assigned a bald eagle nest to visit once per week for an hour per visit until the young fledge. By the time you read this, eggs will be in the nests, adults will be hunkering down to incubate their next generation, and nest watchers will be nearby to document what's happening. Data will go to the WDNR to help inform eagle management practices.

Lastly, we're prepping for summer programs, too. For example, Madison Audubon's Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring Program has been running for 30 years, starting at Goose Pond and now including 149 boxes in seven counties monitored by 20 volunteers. You can participate in Cornell's Project Feederwatch, get in on the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II program, or if you're more interested in plants, check out Project BudBurst. You have options when it comes to citizen science!

Keep your eye out for more citizen science opportunities through Madison Audubon. We'd love to link you in and get you out with us. Heck, we might even see another shrike!

Brenna Marsicek, communications director

2017 FINANCIALS

By the numbers

Reviewing a healthy year for Madison Audubon

Madison Audubon is committed to transparency and effective financial management, vital components to achieving our mission and building support for our work. These pie charts share our organization's income and expenses in the past year. The expenses chart provides an important perspective to help show how various aspects of our activities are interwoven to create the important results we achieve together.

Our expenses fall into three main categories:

- **Programs** involve effective education, advocacy, and land protection services that constitute our shared goals.
- **Administration** is core mission support that includes finance, human resources,

communications, systems, and board oversight. Our programs cannot function without it.

- **Fundraising** is core mission support that allows us to offer free education programs for underserved kids, maintain and restore wildlife habitat, and provide opportunities for the public to enjoy nature.

Madison Audubon operates incredibly efficiently, maximizing the effectiveness of every dollar. All of our expenses, including core mission support, ultimately support dynamic, robust programs and honor the trust our donors place in us. Thanks to you, we have a solid core at the center of our organization that enables meaningful and lasting conservation!

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

Cash.....	\$427,106*
Accounts receivable	\$1,199
Prepaid expenses	\$5,746
Investments.....	\$1,656,231
Property & equipment (net).....	\$5,451,221
TOTAL ASSETS	\$6,773,833

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$13,152
Accrued expenses.....	\$21,622
Notes payable.....	\$2,803
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$37,577

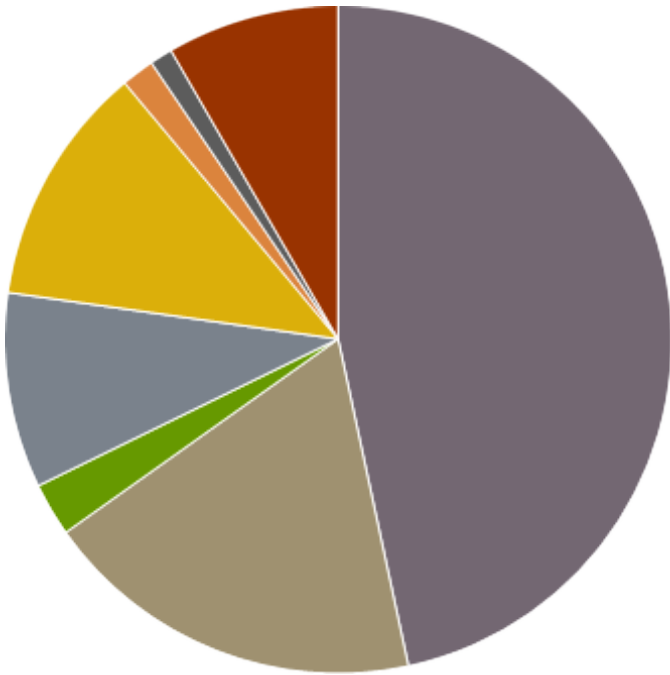
NET ASSETS

Unrestricted.....	\$5,813,769**
Assets with donor restrictions.....	\$1,526,491
Board designated.....	\$163,666
TOTAL NET ASSETS*	\$7,503,926
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$7,541,503

*A portion of cash assets has been designated as an operating reserve fund.

**Most of Madison Audubon's assets are Sanctuary lands.

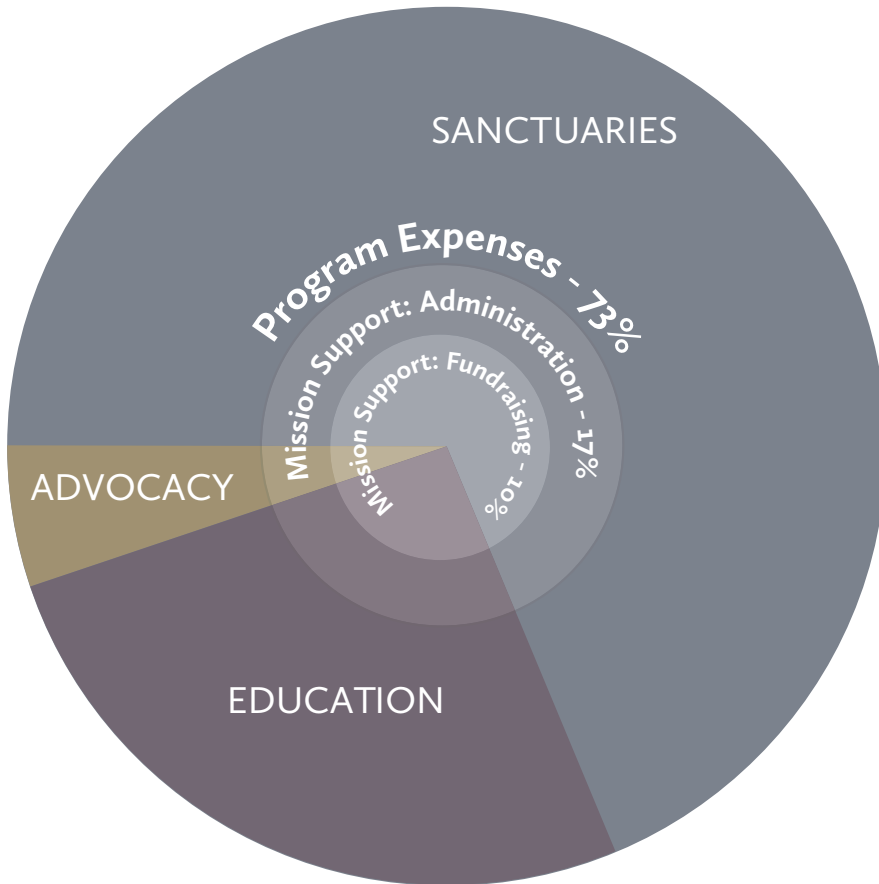
INCOME



Contributions & Memberships.....	\$287,230
Grants & Government Contracts.....	\$114,334
Events.....	\$15,895
Investments.....	\$58,320
Bequests*.....	\$72,095
Community Shares.....	\$9,973
National Audubon Support.....	\$6,968
Sales & Land Rent.....	\$51,556
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TOTAL INCOME	\$616,372

**Madison Audubon encourages planned gifts and honors gift intent. Per financial practices, bequests are typically placed into long-term investments that protect gift principal.*

EXPENSES



Sanctuaries.....	\$240,045
Education.....	\$90,853
Advocacy.....	\$18,114
Administration.....	\$82,001
Fundraising.....	\$46,572
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TOTAL EXPENSES	\$477,584

Introducing: AUDUBON NATURALISTS SERIES

Expand your bird-watching and naturalist skills with these adult education classes!

LEARNING THE ROPES OF eBIRD: **Getting comfortable using the birding smartphone app**

Using the eBird app on your smartphone while birding can enhance your bird-watching experience. Learn the ropes at this class! Taught by Kyle Lindemer. **\$10/person**

APRIL 28, 9 – 11 a.m.

BIRDING 101: **Build your birding knowledge from the ground up**

A three-part session with both classroom and field-based learning. Each day involves a slightly more advanced set of skills and information, but all is intended for entry-level birders! Taught by Chuck Henrikson. **\$20/person**

MAY 5, MAY 12, AND MAY 19, 8 – 10 a.m.

BEGINNING BIRD AND WILDLIFE ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY: **An insider's tips and tricks**

Learn the techniques and tricks used to achieve awesome, frame-worthy bird photos using your own camera and equipment. Taught by Arlene Koziol. **\$15/person**

MAY 7, 9:30 A.M. – 12 p.m.

BIRDING BY EAR: **Learning to identify birds without sight**

Particularly geared for individuals with vision loss or impairment. Taught by Kerry Wilcox, in partnership with the Wisconsin Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired. **\$20/person**

JUNE 2, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. &
JUNE 16, 8 – 10 a.m.

BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION: **Techniques for drawing the natural world**

See and capture the world through the eyes of an artist as you learn basic drawing skills and notice details you might not have seen before. Taught by Carolyn Byers. **\$20/person**

JUNE 30, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Additional classes and registration info at:

madisonaudubon.org/naturalists



MADISON AUDUBON BOARD VOTES

Madison Audubon members, we need your votes!
Three members of the current Board of Directors are up for re-election: Roger Packard (president), Marcia MacKenzie (vice president), and Pat Eagan (member-at-large).

We count on your votes to make this important aspect of our organization work. Please return this ballot by mail or vote online.

Ballots are due by Monday, March 5, 11:59 p.m.

Your name: _____

Vote for all candidates

OR

By candidate:

Roger Packard

Marcia MacKenzie

Pat Eagan

Address: 1400 E. Washington Ave., Ste. 170, Madison, WI 53703

-- or --

Website: madisonaudubon.org/2018-board-ballot

Upcoming *Evenings with Audubon*

BALD EAGLE STATUS AND MONITORING IN WISCONSIN with Dan Goltz, DNR

FEBRUARY 20 | 7 – 8 p.m. | Aldo Leopold Nature Center, 330 Femrite Drive, Monona

BATS WHO BEAT THE ODDS with Jennifer Redell, DNR

MARCH 20 | 7 – 8 p.m. | VFW Post 1318, 133 E. Lakeside Street, Madison

MARVELOUS CHIMNEY SWIFTS with Sandy Schwab, WI Chimney Swift Working Group

APRIL 17 | 7 – 8 p.m. | Capitol Lakes, 333 W. Main Street, Madison

Descriptions available at madisonaudubon.org/events

