



madison  
**AUDUBON**  
society

NEWSLETTER OF THE MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY

WINTER 2015-16

**SPECIAL  
FEATURE**

*Members share  
their favorite  
bird stories*

**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.*

## Something to crow about

### Pausing to give thanks for how birds make life better

I am a lucky guy. I have the world's third greatest job. I never had much of a shot at an NBA career and I lack the crooning chops to be the next Frank Sinatra. But third best is pretty darn good. And given the holiday season, allow me to take stock and share why I feel so very grateful.

First, I love birds. Quite simply, birds make life better. They're fascinating, beautiful, and vital to healthy natural systems. If they have brought you even a fraction of the joy they have to me, you too are lucky. To work every day with you to both celebrate and conserve Wisconsin's incredible birds is a privilege that defies description. I'm reminded of the words of the great philosopher John Muir: "In every walk with Nature one receives far more than he seeks." That's smart! So, I'll begin by expressing my gratitude for the very birds themselves.

I have to tell you, MAS is a unique Audubon chapter. You are the backbone of an organization that does a heckuva lot in advocacy, education, and habitat conservation in southern Wisconsin. You are a part of one of the most active chapters in the country in terms of habitat protection. MAS owns and manages two wildlife sanctuaries abounding with beautiful habitats, and has helped protect and restore many more acres beyond our own lands. MAS is also a leader in nature-based education. Our high-impact education programs reach hundreds of young Wisconsinites annually. And each week brings special experiences like chat-



We could "wax" poetic about birds any day - but Matt Reetz is especially grateful for them this season.  
*Photo by Kelly Colgan Azar.*

ting about a cool bird sighting, helping kids tag monarch butterflies, planning with conservation leaders, or working to acquire new lands. So, I am grateful that you sustain a truly unique organization that makes a difference in so many ways. It sure gives me a work week I can brag about.

Then there are the kids! In the words of another well-known philosopher, Winnie the Pooh: "Sometimes the smallest things take up the

(See "Gratitude", p. 2)



## Gratitude

(Continued from p. 1)

most room in your heart.” MAS brings fun and meaningful environmental education to kids in schools, after-school programs, community centers, and beyond. What a privilege it is to get kids outside to share our love of nature and watch their curiosity and enthusiasm flourish. For that, I am especially grateful.

Finally, when I started in the nonprofit world as a volunteer, it was the people that got me hooked. The staff, board, and volunteers at MAS are some of the most hard-working, caring, and downright fun people I have ever encountered. And, of course, your love of birds is the heart of our work. MAS is incredibly fortunate to have dedicated folks like you who give time, energy, and resources to ensure that the important work we’re doing now will continue forever. So, I am grateful to share a passion for our work with so many terrific people.

We’ve come a long way together and I’m excited about what the future holds. I am thankful that it’s in good hands with you and the dedicated folks here. And I will sure be grateful to get to know you better, whenever possible. Heck, I always welcome a nice chat. I promise not to break into any Sinatra tunes. For that, you will be grateful.

*Matt*

Matt Reetz, executive director  
mreetz@madisonaudubon.org



Red-bellied woodpecker by  
Kelly Colgan Azar

### Share your gratitude for birds with a gift membership

For the holidays, why not give a gift that gives again and again? When you give friends or family a Madison Audubon membership, you’re not only providing them with opportunities to explore, enjoy, and learn about nature year-round, you’re also giving a gift to birds, wildlife, and local youth.

*It’s easy - just fill out our MEMBERSHIP FORM on page 7, and be sure to check the “Gift Membership” box!*

### Seasons change for MAS staff

Rebecca Ressler was hired as one of the first staff to create and nurture Madison Audubon’s youth education programs in fall 2013. In just two short years, Rebecca has helped to build one of the most impressive nature-based education programs in southern Wisconsin from the ground up. Her central belief that nature should be accessible to all youth was demonstrated in the past 18 months of programming: with Rebecca leading the charge as education director, MAS provided over 260 programs for 4,600 youth in our service area. Rebecca’s dynamic personality and pa-

### Birds are the best teachers

Nature-based education provides value for local youth

Birds are an amazing teaching tool, regardless of whom you are educating. Every time I share my love of birds with someone else, I’m reliving those moments that initially hooked me on birds. Chickadees calling from neighborhood bushes, mallards preening on a log, or crows calling raucously in a schoolyard become more exciting when seen through the eyes of new birders—especially if they are children.

*“To be the ones helping, to create a tangible difference for their peers, community, and wildlife, is so empowering for these kids. It makes them see how valued they truly are.”*

– Carolyn Byers



free after-school care. When we take them out to collect prairie seeds that will be used to plant more bird habitat, or as we remove trash from their local parks, they are able to help local wildlife. To be the ones helping—to create a tangible difference for their peers, community, and wildlife—can be so empowering for them.

Many of these kids will grow up to love birds, while some of them may only think about them in passing as adults. Either way, birds are providing them with an enriching and safe place to grow up, and helping them to realize how much they can contribute to their immediate world.

*Carolyn*

Carolyn Byers, education & operations specialist  
carolyn.byers@madisonaudubon.org

The kids I typically work with through our community center programs are in need of both a distraction from life and a positive focus. Many have complicated home lives and face persistent hunger—and an uncertain future. Birding and nature create safe spaces that kids can return to. During our lessons, they can forget about their problems for an hour or so, and focus on the natural world around them. If they need to retreat from life’s hassles during the rest of the week, that space, that wildlife, is always a constant.

Most importantly, we’ve seen the value of providing children the opportunity to give back. These kids need a lot of help: free lunches, tutoring to keep their grades up, or

and black tern platforms, field trips, stewardship projects, assisting with the capture and relocation of a snowy owl from a busy airport, and managing conservation interns. Mark Martin and Sue Foote-Martin, Goose Pond managers, noted that Tony was especially talented at catching monarchs for Madison Audubon’s citizen science tagging efforts. While Tony’s presence at Goose Pond will be missed, we’re pleased that he’s found a new role with the Natural Heritage Land Trust, another local organization dedicated to ecosystem restoration and protection.

Tony Abate has also moved on. Since stepping into the role of Goose Pond Sanctuary land steward in August 2013, Tony has helped with countless MAS efforts, including kestrel nest boxes



# The birds in our lives

*Since I began my work at Madison Audubon Society last year, I've realized something remarkable—everyone I meet has a bird story to tell.*

*You don't have to identify as a birder to take notice of the beauty, the quirkiness, the mystery, or the comfort of birds in your daily life. Since I asked our members and supporters for their bird stories, I've noticed something else: birds connect us. Not only do birds require us to take note of our natural surroundings, but they serve as a connection to important people in our lives: our friends, siblings, parents, and partners. I hope you enjoy reading these anecdotes as much as I have. And I hope that you all continue to share your stories with us!*

—Emily Meier, communications and outreach coordinator

## My mother sang to the songbirds through her kitchen window.

We lived on 40 acres in Door County, and my father planted birch, crab apples, and spruce near the east-facing kitchen window so the view was enchanting. He installed several bird feeders in that view so we always had a colorful display of chickadees, blue jays, cardinals, mourning doves, and many other chirping birds. When my mother sang to them, she seemed to directly speak to the goldfinches and I always assumed they sang back to her.



We'd see pheasant, varieties of woodpeckers, the occasional oriole or indigo bunting... but we always had the cardinals, chickadees, and goldfinches every season, almost any hour of the day, entertaining us while we baked sourdough bread in my mother's cheerful kitchen. It became such a part of every day I would forget to explain to my visiting friends that my mother sang to the birds, but it wouldn't take long for anyone to hear her from nearly any room in the house. She simply couldn't resist.

—Laura Beck Nielsen

I recall, somewhere around 1966, watching my dad standing in the back yard after work still dressed in his suit and tie. He was underneath the bird feeder with his palm out with seed in it. He stood there until a chickadee landed in his hand to eat. It was a thrill for both of us!

—Ginny Reetz

My first birding experience occurred when I took an ecology field course in 1969. We had five weekends devoted to field trips, the first being in the Mojave Desert. The rains had been good that winter, and so the desert was awash in blooms. We arrived about the time the hummingbirds were migrating through—there were Anna's, Costa's, Allen's, rufous, and calliope, dashing about, drinking nectar, fighting off other hummers, and mating... That weekend was an orgy of hummingbirds and displays and colors. How can one forget hummingbirds or the desert in a lovely spring bloom?

—Mara McDonald



I still recall the awe I felt sitting on the wooded hillside with my sister, as we watched a red-tailed hawk circle with the wind currents. I was in my early teens, and frequently hiked across the cropland, through the brush, over the barbed wire fence and into this secluded valley. My sister Jenny seemed to have always enjoyed bird identification and we were only 2 years apart in age and spent a great deal of time together. We would take a bit of food with us, our collie, and our bird and plant ID books and head for the place we both seemed to crave. I think that's where my particular interest in birds of prey began. The hawk had its huge cumbersome nest right there for us to observe and learn from!



We both agree that our love of nature was sparked by those childhood days of being surrounded by that incredible valley. We'd sit in the oak leaves, with the stream below us, to explore if no wildlife came along. There were rock outcroppings to climb and explore and a never-ending search for just the right object for Jenny to draw or paint.

I'm enjoying passing this love of birds onto my seven grandchildren. Reading nature books and taking them on walks is a good way to share the importance of what birds do in their world. Our oldest granddaughter's first word was "OWL". Guess I must be doing a good job!

Joni (top left) with sister Jenny (bottom left) in the valley that sparked their love of nature.

—Joni Crave

My mother, who lived from 1905 to 1972, stayed home to take care of the family while my father worked as a family doctor in Horicon, Wisconsin. I really don't know how she got interested in birds, but she cared enough to purchase the pioneering album of 78 rpm records of bird songs produced by Professor Allen of the Cornell University Department of Ornithology. I remember her being totally absorbed in listening to the songs of each species, all of which were preceded by Allen's announcements. She was undaunted in this pursuit despite the gentle teasing of some family members. Our home was on a hilltop at the edge of town so she had a good spot to observe annual migrations and she kept a detailed journal of her sightings. On my birthday, March 30, she would always reminisce about having gone outdoors the night before I was born and seeing flight after silent flight of northbound ducks. She would never have seen them if she hadn't been anticipating my imminent arrival.

I especially remember her calling me one summer morning when I was very young. As she did her usual chores she had spotted a group of baby chimney swifts teetering on the telephone wire that ran to our roof and concluded that they had just left the nest. We watched for a long time as the parents took turns demonstrating taking off and landing, circling the babies as if to say, "See? Here's how you do this." One by one, the babies tried it out until there was only one left. The parents persevered in their demonstrations until the last fledgling had managed to fly. This was a lesson that I came to value more with each passing year as I raised four children of my own.

—Johanna Karsten Fabke

Share your  
story or read  
more online:

[madisonaudubon.org/  
bird-stories](http://madisonaudubon.org/bird-stories)



Paradise Pond in early fall, covered with seed-bearing emergent vegetation. Photo by David Musolf

## Paradise found at Faville Grove

From the wet prairies of the Crawfish River floodplain on the east to the Laas Tamarack on the west, Faville Grove Sanctuary encompasses a diversity of wetland communities, including Paradise Pond. The pond has some new wetland neighbors to the south, with this summer's excavation of 11 wetland depressions and the filling of two drainage ditches on a farm that was enrolled by a neighbor in the federal Wetland Reserve Easement Program. Over the past two years, Madison Audubon has helped to seed the adjacent cropland to diverse prairie, and this fall we are planting the restored wetlands and remaining cropland on the farm to improve habitat in the Faville Grove area.

### Paradise Pond: a prairie pothole

Wetlands, those fascinating provinces of water on the landscape, display dynamic ecological processes. And prairie potholes—glacial depressions surrounded by grasslands, fed largely by precipitation and displaying seasonally fluctuating water levels—are as dynamic and productive as they come. At Faville Grove, we are restoring the prairie/pothole complex across a broad landscape. This is the story of Paradise Pond, a restored prairie pothole, which spent many years as a cow pasture.

*In spring, snowmelt and precipitation fill the pond. Frog calls decorate spring and early summer: chorus frogs, spring peepers, green frogs, leopard frogs and tree frogs, along with the trill of American toads. Teal, wood ducks, and geese nibble on the yellow water crowfoot; resting on the journey north, or making Faville Grove their home for the season.*

*Summer thickens and water thins. Macrophytes colonize the drying mudflats, the vegetation achieving remarkable zonation. As the water lowers, various annual plants establish across this gradient: several species of smartweed, rice cutgrass, water plantain, ditch stonecrop and others. Before you know it, Paradise transforms from a pond to concentric rings of vegetation.*

*Vegetative diversity, both spatial and temporal, attracts bird diversity. Swamp sparrows dart through late summer's annual plants, which drop abundant seeds that will be picked up by dabbling ducks from the pond bottom next spring. As the water again recedes, shorebirds will probe the mudflats.*

*The 11 new potholes on our neighbor's property are already filling with water and with wildlife like tadpoles, mergansers, and spotted sandpipers. One blue monkeyflower blooms vigorously along the pond's edge, a precursor. We will closely watch the evolution of these ponds, as they rear waterfowl by the dozens, nourish migrating shorebirds, and pulse from mudflats to brimming potholes.*

Visit Faville Grove Sanctuary near Lake Mills and explore its diverse wetland habitats! More at [madisonaudubon.org/faville-grove](http://madisonaudubon.org/faville-grove)

## Madison Audubon annual board elections

Three members of the Madison Audubon board of directors have terms that expire in March 2016. The board of directors has unanimously nominated all three to stand for reelection. The candidates are:

Arlyne Johnson  
Sue Knaack  
Topf Wells

### Call for Member Nominations

Members may nominate additional candidates to run for election by submitting a brief statement from each nominee signed by at least 25 MAS members in good standing as of Nov. 1, 2015. Member nominations are due to the Madison Audubon office by Dec. 12, 2015. Ballots will appear in our spring newsletter.

## Essential giving for generations to come

*"The care of the Earth is our most ancient, most worthy—and after all—our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope."*

— WENDELL BERRY

How many of you saw the lunar eclipse and the amazing "blood moon" in September?! It's hard not to be awed by what nature provides, and how it entertains us if we just take a moment to notice and to celebrate.

Galen and I have spent a lifetime enjoying nature in all of its diversity and entertaining displays. Birding is one of our favorite activities. Galen has birded all over the world but backyard birds or the occasional rare winter sighting can be equally exciting. Birding invites us to be outdoors, enjoying the changing landscape throughout the seasons.

We had the privilege of touring in Ireland this summer with our two oldest grandchildren, age 13 and 15 and, to our joy, the example of birding and enjoying the world of nature has trickled

down from us, to our children, to them. We now have three generations of avid birders!

For this reason, we see it as vital to give generously to organizations that strive to educate individuals and preserve and improve the experience of the natural world for generations to come.

Madison Audubon accomplishes this with creativity and energy and we are happy to support these local effort by being legacy donors.

—Grace and Galen Hasler



*In recent years, many folks have informed us of their intent to include a gift to MAS in their wills. As a service to our members, MAS offers many planned giving options to ensure that the seeds of today will thrive in the future. A few things you might not know about a planned gift to MAS:*

- Anyone can give a Legacy Society gift—no matter your age or income.
- You're the boss. You can give whatever you like!
- It's not as complicated as you might think.
- Making a planned gift is your choice and is not binding. You can change it at any time.
- You don't have to tell us about it. But if you do, we would love to welcome you as a member of the Legacy Society!

**To join the Legacy Society, contact our office. We'll answer any questions you might have and help walk you through the process.**

Email executive director Matt Reetz at [mreetz@madisonaudubon.org](mailto:mreetz@madisonaudubon.org) or call (608) 255-BIRD

## DONATIONS IN MEMORY

*In Memory of Liz Middleton*  
Patricia Becker  
Martha Christensen  
Frances Johnson  
Charlotte Kalish  
Mark Martin and  
Sue Foote-Martin

*In Memory of Elizabeth (Betty) Hawkins*  
Bruce Brandsness  
Julie Brandsness and  
Ricky Giese  
E. Ann and  
Robert Djupstrom

*In Memory of Walter (Ben) Washburn*  
Barbara Besadny  
Claire Gervais and  
David Blouin  
John and Linda  
Schilling

*In Memory of Joe Sloup*  
Karen and Michael  
Austad

*In Memory of my mother Peggy*  
Maggie Jones

*In Memory of Susan Connell-Magee*  
Kevin Magee

*New members and quarterly donors are now listed in our monthly electronic newsletter.*

## JOIN BOTH MADISON AUDUBON & NATIONAL AUDUBON

New Membership

Renewal

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\$40 Individual Membership

\$60 Family Membership

\$25 Student Membership

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Gift to Madison Audubon

Gift in Honor of:

Gift in Memory of:

Gift Membership for:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

Check to Madison Audubon enclosed

Pay by  Visa  MasterCard

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Three-digit code on card back \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to find out more about Madison Audubon's legacy society. Please contact me!

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE ADDRESS ON PAGE 8, OR GIVE ONLINE AT [madisonaudubon.org](http://madisonaudubon.org)

*Madison Audubon Society and National Audubon Society are tax-exempt, not-for-profit organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. When you join, you will receive subscriptions to both the Madison Audubon newsletter, published four times per year, and to AUDUBON magazine, published six times per year.*

## EVENINGS WITH AUDUBON

A collaboration with UW's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

### NATURAL WONDERS AND TRIBULATIONS OF AFRICA'S ALBERTINE RIFT

John Bates is the associate curator of birds at Chicago's renowned Field Museum. Join us for this special evening of stories as John speaks about biodiversity, science, and people in a war zone in sub-Saharan Africa.

NOVEMBER 17 | 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery  
330 N Orchard Street | Madison, WI

RIGHT: the regal sunbird is endemic to the Albertine Rift region. *Photo by Lip Kee Yap*



## Thank you, monarch tagging volunteers!

Thanks to the help of over 120 volunteers, 639 monarch butterflies were tagged at Madison Audubon's Goose Pond Sanctuary this fall!



Learn more about monarchs, our citizen science tagging efforts, and how to create monarch-friendly habitat of your own at [madisonaudubon.org/monarchs](http://madisonaudubon.org/monarchs)

ABOVE: Enthusiastic monarch tagging volunteers at Goose Pond Sanctuary. *Photo by Emily Meier*

RIGHT: Monarchs on meadow blazing star, a butterfly magnet! *Photo by Arlene Koziol*



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