

madison  
AUDUBON



Annual Report Edition | February 2020



# TIME FLIES

MATT REETZ, executive director



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.*



COVER: A rare but welcome winter visitor to Wisconsin, this varied thrush perches in a snow-covered and berry-rich tree. *Photo by Monica Hall* | ABOVE: The youthful energy of a juvenile red-tailed hawk is a good reminder to appreciate the passage of time. *Photo by Arlene Koziol*

I'm having a tough time wrapping my head around the fact that the year is 2020. How can that be? It doesn't seem that long ago that we were on the cusp of a new millennium and a computer glitch was about to plunge society into Y2K apocalyptic chaos. Spoiler alert: we survived.

As with the past couple of decades, 2019 seems to have flown by. There are two very good reasons for this—both backed by science! First, peer-reviewed research has shown that the subjective perception of duration of passed time is negatively correlated with level of neural activity. In less jargony language, you feel time has passed faster if you've been busy. Thanks to your support, Madison Audubon was incredibly active this past year in many ways—habitat management and restoration, public outreach, citizen science, youth education, field trips, adult classes, policy and issue advocacy, and much more. And during 2019, Madison Audubon enjoyed one of its busiest years ever in land acquisition, adding more than 200 acres to our wildlife sanctuaries that will protect habitat for birds (and bird lovers) forever.

Scientific research also demonstrates that a positive state and high

approach-motivation cause perceptual shortening of time during pleasant experiences. In other words, time flies when you're having fun. Working with you during this past year, all of us at Madison Audubon had an absolute blast. Don't get me wrong, the conservation of our birds and natural resources is indescribably important, and we take that work extremely seriously. But, Madison Audubon is also in the "joy" business, and it is a privilege is to engage with you to protect and celebrate Wisconsin's amazing birds and habitats.

So, thank you for a truly fabulous year. As we face the multitude of serious challenges ahead, I assure you that Madison Audubon will be full of busy bees that will also stop to smell the prairie flowers. That way, twelve months from now (or maybe in a decade or two), we'll have achieved even more together—and perhaps wonder again where the heck the time has gone.



Matt Reetz

# LEARN, GROW, ENJOY

## EVENINGS WITH AUDUBON

Public presentations | [madisonaudubon.org/events](http://madisonaudubon.org/events)

### EMERGING DISEASES IN THE BIRDS OF WISCONSIN AND BEYOND

Wed., Mar. 18, 7pm | Location: Capitol Lakes

*New and fascinating wildlife diseases, including a new bald eagle virus*

### ANNUAL MEETING & SNOWY OWL PROGRAM

Tues., Apr. 21, 6:30pm | Location: Middleton Public Library

*Meet-and-greet, updates from staff, and presentation on snowy owls*

## AUDUBON NATURALIST SERIES

Adult education classes | [madisonaudubon.org/naturalists](http://madisonaudubon.org/naturalists)

Expand your knowledge, and deepen your nature experience. Class topics include nature art in February, eBird in March, an introduction to birding in April, edible plants and bird photography in May, Birding by Ear in June. Learn more and sign up at our website.

## THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

On January 28, luck was on our side as volunteers and staff at Goose Pond captured the fourth snowy owl in six years. The female owl shown here was outfitted with the same GPS transmitter that Arlington, our snowy from 2018, and Coddington, a snowy from 2019, wore. This healthy girl, weighing in at a hefty 5.25 pounds, was named "Columbia."

The transmitter she now wears will track her movements throughout the year, giving scientists invaluable information about where, when, and how these elusive birds travel.

To track Columbia and learn more about the effort, visit [projectsnowstorm.org](http://projectsnowstorm.org).

Thank you to our volunteers, staff, and partners, especially Gene Jacobs, for making this initiative possible.



### MADISON AUDUBON STAFF

#### CENTRAL OFFICE

Carolyn Byers, *education director*  
Brenna Marsicek, *communications director*  
John Minnich, *financial manager*  
Matt Reetz, *executive director*

#### FAVILLE GROVE SANCTUARY

Drew Harry, *land steward*  
David Musolf, *volunteer resident manager*

#### GOOSE POND SANCTUARY

Mark Martin (*volunteer*) and Susan Foote-Martin, *resident managers*  
Graham Steinhauer, *land steward*

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LEFT: Columbia the snowy owl is Wisconsin's newest enrollee of Project SNOWstorm. Photo by Monica Hall



# THE VIEW FROM HERE

DREW HARRY, Faville Grove Sanctuary land steward

DAVID MUSOLF, Faville Grove Sanctuary manager

ROGER PACKARD, Madison Audubon board president



ABOVE: The distant line of trees previously marked the old sanctuary boundary—and the end of grassland habitat. | OPPOSITE: Sunny days are ahead: this winter's tree- and brush-cutting reveals a beautiful vista, connecting new sanctuary land and old. Photos by Drew Harry

We are working hard at making connections at Faville Grove—especially those that make patchwork landscapes more whole again. In 2019, we added three parcels of land to the west end of Faville Grove Sanctuary. On the southernmost parcel of 88 acres, we had been working with the landowner to improve habitat for seven years before Madison Audubon acquired it. While there is plenty of work yet to be done, this tract fits right in with the sanctuary, with diverse restored prairie, restored wetlands, and invasive species under reasonable control.

The other new parcels, totaling more

than 115 acres and connecting sanctuary lands north of Highway 89 to Springer Road and Hillview Lane, had seen no habitat work before we acquired them. While these properties immediately increased the area of contiguous, legally protected land, what is contiguous in the eyes of the law is not necessarily so in the eyes of a meadowlark. For our beleaguered grassland and wetland birds, fencerows of boxelder trees and honeysuckle shrubs or conifer plantings are like "No Trespassing" signs.

We've already made great progress on the new properties clearing fencerows and marsh edges of



invasive brush and trees that interrupt, for grassland birds and humans alike, the vistas of the expansive landscape of moraines, drumlins, kettle wetlands, prairies, and savannas. It will, nonetheless, take years and lots of hard work to integrate the new properties into the sanctuary and fully develop their habitat potential.

The views from Springer Road and Hillview Lane reveal much of the work yet to be done—from spraying reed canary grass and wild parsnips in summer, to planting cultivated fields to prairie in fall, to removing even more trees and brush in winter. Yet with the clearing we have already done, it's possible to see in the distance the successful model for biodiversity established in the rest of the sanctuary: a marsh edge of sedges, blue joint grass and blue flag iris; diverse prairie plantings and open savannas. These nearby sanctuary lands already provide

habitat for bobolinks, dickcissels, savannah sparrows, field sparrows, swamp sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, common yellowthroats, yellow warblers, northern flickers, warbling vireos, brown thrashers, and eastern kingbirds, to name just a few of the birds. As we work to satisfy a meadowlark's definition of contiguous, all of our native wildlife will thrive in the expanded landscape. Come out and view the progress!



Faville Grove Sanctuary caretakers Roger Packard, Drew Harry, and David Musolf

## A Few of Our Accomplishments in 2019

1. Acquired three new properties: 88 acres, 63 acres, and 52.5 acres with the support of generous donors and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
2. Enhanced native diversity, collecting seed of 363 plant species, planting 26.5 acres to prairie, burning 280 acres at different times of year, and controlling invasives.
3. Raised the environmental awareness and training of five more terrific summer interns and educated the public through field trips, including two trips for nationwide audiences through National Audubon and the Grassland Restoration Network.

## Sanctuary Goals for 2020

1. Improve habitat on recently acquired lands by reducing woody and herbaceous invasives, introducing native plant species, and controlling runoff from neighboring agricultural lands.
2. Continue to educate interns and the public and enhance visitor experiences.
3. Pursue additional exciting land acquisitions opportunities.





# EVER-CHANGING

MARK MARTIN & SUE FOOTE-MARTIN, Goose Pond Sanctuary resident managers  
GRAHAM STEINHAUER, Goose Pond Sanctuary land steward



TOP: Dedicated volunteers braved the December cold to plant a new Goose Pond prairie. *Madison Audubon photo* | 2nd ROW LEFT: A common raven had never been recorded during the Poynette CBC—until now! *Photo by Mick Thompson* | MIDDLE: Masses of monarchs made September special. *Photo by Arlene Koziol* | RIGHT: Were you lucky enough to be one of the visitors to Goose Pond to catch a glimpse of a black-necked stilt? *Photo by Arlene Koziol*

Even after living and working at Goose Pond for many years, we can safely say no single year—let alone decade—is the same. The past year was one for records and milestones, and these pages include some of the highlights. We look forward to working toward our goals for the future with you and seeing how Goose Pond will change in wonderful, unexpected ways as well. Cheers to a new decade of conservation and celebration!

**Grab Your Hipwaders:** It was a

record year for high water at Goose Pond and probably the highest water in the past 80 years. March flooding had us flabbergasted. Water still covers 200 acres compared to the average of 60 acres. It'll be interesting to see what happens this year.

**Seeds of Hope:** Thanks to our seed collectors and planters, we hand-broadcasted seeds for 20 acres of new prairie. The focus was on creating our largest short-grass prairie planting—16 acres dominated by local genotype little bluestem and



prairie dropseed. Grassland wildlife and prairie insects (and visiting humans) will benefit greatly.

**Ravin' Birders:** We rang in the new decade with the 49th Poynette Christmas Bird Count held on Jan. 4, 2020.

Thanks to the 28 field observers and 10 feeder counters who found 50 species and 7,792 birds. In comparison, the previous year we found 62 species and 10,903 birds. The highlight of the count was Becki Tomlinson's finding of a common raven, the first ever for the count. Ravens are uncommon in this part of the state but were found nesting near Goose Pond, making it the southernmost nesting area for the species in Wisconsin.

**The Nest Search Effort:** The five-year Atlas II project is in the books. We were very pleased with the effort put forth by 192 participants who submitted 2,445 checklists and confirmed 136 species nesting in Columbia County. There was a core team of birders that spent many days this past summer working in teams to complete the 18 priority blocks and survey for selected species. The Poynette NW block had 69 confirmed nesting species, more than any other priority block. A true testament to the hard work of the volunteers!

The highlight of the year was Brand

Smith finding the first pair of black-necked stilts that has ever nested in Columbia County. The pair ended up raising four cute youngsters. Our efforts with the Atlas created lasting memories, including the night six of us surveyed a large wetland and found a singing king rail while the neighbors shot fireworks overhead! All the observations, data, photos, and experiences will provide ample material for the publication of the Atlas II Breeding Birds of Columbia County.

**Butterfly Bonanza:** Thanks to our monarch tagging volunteers who assisted 220 visitors to tag 2,100 monarchs at Goose Pond. We will never forget the day that 1,800 monarchs roosted in a single spruce tree in our yard!

Goose Pond belongs to Madison Audubon members—all of you! If you haven't yet, come out and get to know Goose Pond. If you're a regular, we hope to see you again soon.



Goose Pond Sanctuary crew, from left to right: Graham Steinhauer, Mark Martin, Sue Foote-Martin

## Sanctuary Goals for 2020

1. Erect the 10th MOTUS tower in Wisconsin that will track the movements of birds and other wildlife moving through our state.
2. Install a webcam on Goose Pond that will allow anyone to view birds on the pond from their computer or smartphone.
3. Conduct research on milkweed establishment by seed and plugs, plant a monarch demonstration garden, and tag a large number of migrating monarchs.



# SMILES FOR MILES

CAROLYN BYERS, director of education



Thank you to our major education program donors:



Theda & Tamblin Clark Smith  
FAMILY FOUNDATION



It's pretty amazing how much our education program has grown over the last year. We love interacting with the thousands of curious kids we meet throughout the seasons, but that volume takes a lot of planning. We doubled-down in 2019 to streamline much of what happens behind the scenes to make our work more efficient. In the end, better efficiency means less time in the office and more time getting kiddos outside!

Some of that behind-the-scenes work is not all that flashy, but it's incredibly important. For example, we formalized the education department's Standard Operating Procedures, upgraded our request forms and program evaluations, and improved our partner, program, and

lending kit agreements. We standardized our procedures for hiring and training new education staff, and the way we track impact of our programming. We launched our new Lesson Sampler: a quick-and-easy way to get our educators into classrooms. Finally, our new Education Handbook is *aaaalmost* complete too. It's been a busy year!

Fortunately, we carved out lots of time for making memories with community kids in nature, and those all involve small hands and big smiles. Here are some of my favorites.

**Exploring with from Bayview Neighborhood Center kids:** We went exploring with the kids from Bayview during an all-day field trip to Devil's Lake. They swam, they picnicked,



they hiked, and laughed A LOT. We walked between the tallest trees they'd ever seen, found an inch worm hanging in mid-air (not magic, science!) and saw a brand new baby heron fresh out of the rookery.

### Finding feathers with Muir

**Elementary:** We were out hiking at "their" park, Owen Woods, when one sharp-eyed youngster spotted a feather. We all stopped to examine it, and the kids learned it was a primary feather from a common nighthawk. As we passed the feather around, more and more kids found feathers on the ground. It turned out that a nighthawk had been predated, and the feathers had been scattered. The kids were brimming with excitement over each new feather they discovered and with curiosity about what happened. They were such amazing scientists that day!

### Making new friends at Mendota

**Elementary:** It's easy to be a fan of the weekly Gratitude Circles held by the Mendota kids and teachers. One day this November was a particularly

lovely day for a circle, underneath the snow-covered branches bouncing with berry-eating birds.

As our director, Matt, likes to say, "We're in the joy business." It doesn't take too much digging to see evidence of that in the faces of the kids in these classrooms and after school programs. That joy is ours too.

Thank you for your role in making this rewarding work possible!



Carolyn Byers

OPPOSITE: There's nothing quite like a prairie and pack of kids during the golden hour of sunset. ABOVE: The cheery chirps of robins and goldfinches narrated this November's gratitude circle at Mendota Elementary. *Madison Audubon photos*

## A Few of Our Accomplishments in 2019

1. Improved and formalized important documents that guide our professional practices and improve our many partnerships.
2. Helped four amazing interns grow as environmental educators. They spent approximately 125 hours teaching kids and many more studying and learning.

3. Built a new, strong partnership with classrooms at Midvale Elementary. We meet weekly with the Earth Explorers kids!

## Education Goals for 2020

1. Expand the quality and reach of the program by growing our education team. Check back this summer for our job announcement.
2. Finish the Madison Audubon Outdoor Education Handbook, providing more than 130 lessons to anyone

who wants to share nature education with kids!

3. Build new weekly partnerships with more classrooms and community centers.





# RANGE EXPANSION

BRENNA MARSICEK, director of communications

Citizen scientists are incredible. Intrepid, persistent, selfless, and clever. We are fortunate enough to have hundreds—yes, hundreds—of citizen scientists involved in Madison Audubon projects, each one as dedicated and delightful as the next. The August 2019 newsletter displayed the variety of programs that rely on dedicated volunteers. Below are two programs that are expanding by leaps and bounds.

**Bald Eagle Nest Watch** was launched in 2018 with the intent of monitoring the dozen bald eagle nests in Dane County and gauge success of nesting pairs. The program is coordinated in partnership with the WDNR. They provide nest locations each winter. In turn, we observe, record, and share valuable nesting data each summer.

It's a beautiful partnership, made possible by the scores of volunteers who are willing to spend 25+ hours each nesting season (Feb-July) in the cold, wind, sun, and heat tracking how the eaglets are doing. It often becomes very personal. Some volunteers end up naming the birds in their nesting families. Others know the triumph of the chicks' first successful flights or the heartbreak of a failed nest after a big spring storm. These volunteers are watchdogs to disturbance and educators to the curious passers-by.

*2018 Results:* 43 volunteers, 14 nests, 2 counties, 17 fledglings, 5 failed nests

*2019 Results:* 64 volunteers, 24 nests, 6 counties, 25 fledglings, 10 failed nests, 1 rerouted snowmobile trail

ABOVE: Two bald eagle nestlings look more ready for flight with each passing day. *Photo by Gary Shackelford* | OPPOSITE TOP: A magnolia warbler sits on the pavement, stunned from a window collision, before being rescued by volunteers. *Photo by Linda Crubaugh*



2020 preview: 80 volunteers, 37 nests, 9 counties

Like a newly hatched eaglet, the program is growing fast and strong. Thank you to our volunteers, partners, and participating property owners. Fingers crossed for a successful nesting season!

Bird Collision Corps also took off in 2018, with the goal of identifying UW campus buildings and design features involved in bird window collisions. The volunteers are tough cookies. Looking for and finding dead or injured birds is no day at the beach. But, their work is yielding extremely important insights that will save birds in the future. So far, we've collected four seasons of data documenting hundreds of collisions by more than 60 bird species, and we have identified some bad collision hotspots. There's a lot of good news to report on how this work will mitigate collisions at current and future buildings.

- One especially problematic building on campus is in line for a window treatment that is known to dramatically reduce window strikes.
- A planned UW parking garage will feature bird-friendly patterning etched into the glass.
- We've had positive meetings with city officials in two major municipalities interested in



implementing bird-friendly solutions for existing and future developments.

- American Family Insurance is partnering with Madison Audubon to launch their own monitoring program on their national headquarters campus on the east side of Madison.
- A strategy team is meeting this winter to discuss how best to expand the monitoring program in the area.

See what I mean about citizen scientists? If you'd like to get involved in this type of activity, I can promise you won't be bored. Learn more and choose a program that's right for you at [madisonaudubon.org/citizen-science](http://madisonaudubon.org/citizen-science).



Brenna Marsicek

## Citizen Science Goals for 2020

1. Thoughtfully and energetically expand the Bird Collision Corps program to encompass more of the Madison area.
2. Conduct broad outreach around the work and success of these important projects.
3. Explore new citizen science initiatives and ways to enhance existing programs.

Madison Audubon is a proud member of the following organizations:





# BIRDS OF A FEATHER

JOHN MINNICH, financial manager



## Your love of birds can shape the future!

Remembering MAS in your will or estate plan honors a commitment to our natural world and provides support that will protect Wisconsin's amazing birds and share nature with our kids and grandkids forever. We invite you to become a part of our planned giving recognition group, the Legacy Society.

There are many ways to create a legacy gift. Give Matt a call at (608) 210-1441 and he will help find the perfect solution for you. Learn more at: [madisonaudubon.org/legacy-society](http://madisonaudubon.org/legacy-society)

If you have already named MAS in your estate plans, let us know. We'd love to thank you and invite you to join the Legacy Society.

Thanks to the generosity of our many members and supporters, we had a strong financial year. Using donor-restricted funds already on hand and new gifts received in 2019, we added invaluable land to our wildlife sanctuaries. Foundation support enabled the excellent work of our education program to expand and continue. The graphics on the opposite page summarize our income, expenses, and financial position. Some explanation:

**Program** expenses include those directly related to the education, advocacy, outreach, and land protection portions of our mission.

**Administration** includes necessary core expenses of general management and oversight, as well as accounting and communications expenses, that support all programs.

**Fundraising** is core mission support

involving communication with existing donors and researching and pursuing new funding opportunities.

Last year, our board carefully managed our assets to provide for long-term financial stability. They created a new designated fund for capital asset purchase and replacement. The new fund will smooth things over when it becomes necessary to repair a building or replace a vehicle or other vital asset.

We thank our members, friends, and partners for their involvement, and for helping us to fulfill our mission.



John Minnich

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*Our financial policies are available on our website at [madisonaudubon.org/financial-reports](http://madisonaudubon.org/financial-reports). To view the details of our financial health, check out financial tax returns from recent years on our website. A final financial audit will be available by May 1, 2020.*

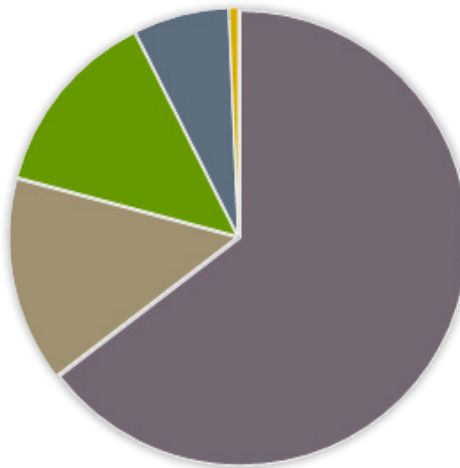
ABOVE: A group of common mergansers makes a striking flock on Lake Mendota. Photo by Arlene Koziol





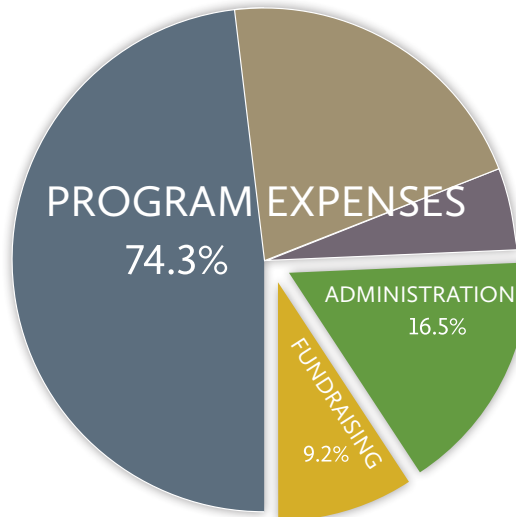
## 2019 INCOME

Contributions from Individuals.....	\$512,468
Grants & Government Contracts.....	\$115,599
Investment Distributions.....	\$106,449
Sales, Land Rent & Other.....	\$53,728
Events.....	\$5,285
<b>TOTAL OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>\$793,529</b>
Grants & Gifts for Land Purchase	\$468,300



## 2019 EXPENSES

Sanctuaries.....	\$258,456
Education.....	\$112,577
Advocacy.....	\$28,223
Administration.....	\$88,336
Fundraising.....	\$49,445
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$537,037</b>
Land & Easement Purchase .....	\$726,912



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

### ASSETS

Cash .....	\$468,064
Accounts receivable.....	\$101,169
Prepaid expenses.....	\$7,504
Investments.....	\$4,747,955
Property & equipment (net).....	\$6,153,271
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$11,477,963</b>

### LIABILITIES

Accounts payable.....	\$12,847
Accrued expenses.....	\$27,311
Notes payable.....	\$0
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$40,158</b>

### NET ASSETS

Unrestricted.....	\$6,771,147
Assets with donor restrictions.....	\$4,334,829
Board designated.....	\$331,829
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS*</b>	<b>\$11,437,805</b>

<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$11,477,963</b>
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Madison Audubon encourages planned gifts and honors donor intent. Bequests are typically placed into long-term investments that protect gift principal, or are used for land or other capital acquisitions.

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



# DONOR ROLL

*Thank you to those who donated November 2019-January 2020*

Thanks also to all of the wonderful Madison Audubon donors for your generosity over the past year. To see the full list of 2019 Donors, please visit [madisonaudubon.org/2019-donors](http://madisonaudubon.org/2019-donors)

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If you're wondering when your annual membership expires, look no further than right here, above your address label. Time to renew? That's wonderful—your generosity funds important conservation and education programs throughout south-central Wisconsin.

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RIGHT: Sing your love for birds by renewing your Audubon membership. *Photo by Mick Thompson*

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## MADISON AUDUBON BOARD BALLOTS

Madison Audubon members, we need your votes. Four current board members are up for reelection: Galen Hasler, Joanne Jones, David Rihn, and John Shillinglaw. Read about these board members by visiting the link below.

We hope you will take a moment to exercise your voting right as a member. Please return this ballot by mail or vote online. Ballots are due by Monday, March 9, 11:59 p.m. Thank you!

*[madisonaudubon.org/2020-ballot](http://madisonaudubon.org/2020-ballot)*

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Vote for all candidates

OR

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