

southern wisconsin  
**BIRD ALLIANCE**



*formerly Madison Audubon*



## SOUTHERN WISCONSIN BIRD ALLIANCE

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



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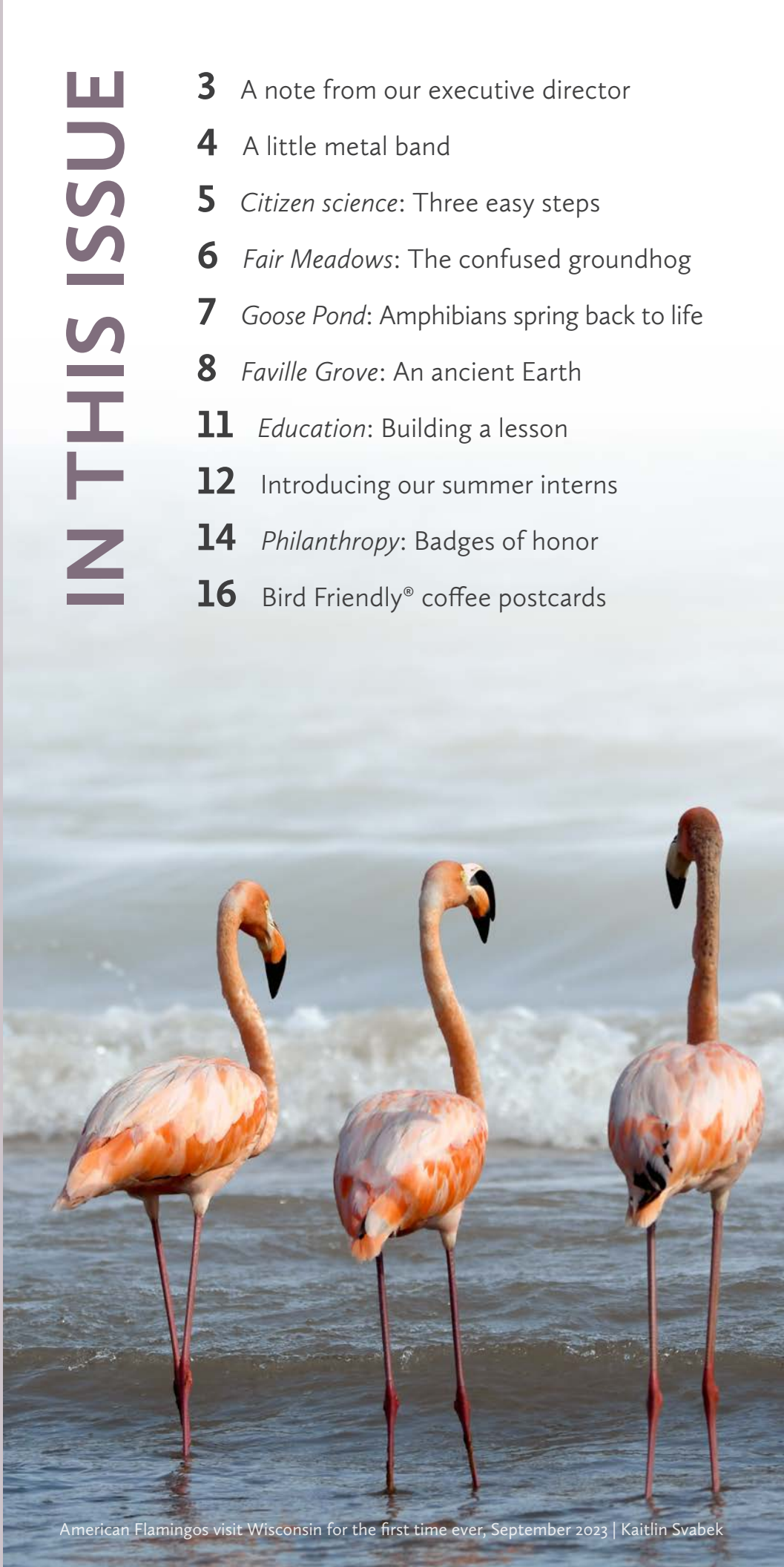
Mark Martin & Susan Foote-Martin  
*Sanctuary managers*

Emma Raasch  
*Ecological restoration technician*

Graham Steinhauer  
*Land steward*

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# When warm isn't so cool

by Matt Reetz, executive director

What a winter that was. Or should I say, “What? A winter, that was?” From December through February, it was more than 10 degrees above average and the warmest winter on record in Wisconsin. There was a lot less snow to push around. Some of this was due to the strongest El Niño since 1950. Some of it, and perhaps not separate from El Niño, was a result of global climate change.

What does this mean for birds? Many effects of climate change have already been seen through range shifts, early spring arrivals, changes in nesting dates, and more. Scientific studies support these trends, and the consequences are problematic. According to National Audubon Society’s “Survival by Degrees” research report, under the minimum (and optimistic) predicted warming scenario of 1.5°C, at least 61 of Wisconsin’s migrant bird species are moderately or highly vulnerable to being lost in the state within 50 years. That’s a best-case scenario too, and the clock is ticking.

So, what to do? Each of us can take personal steps that mitigate warming (find out how at

the link on the right) and reduce threats to birds. But, your support of our work also delivers crucial lift in the face of a changing world. Our wildlife sanctuaries provide restored, diverse, and climate-resilient habitats where birds can—and will—find what they need to live and reproduce. Our advocacy efforts will continue to seek and foster climate- and bird-friendly policies and solutions. Our citizen science programs help us better understand our birds and how to mitigate the many threats they face (e.g., window strikes) to keep populations healthy. And our education program strives to inform and inspire people of all ages about the importance of birds and the many threats they face, including climate change.

It sure was an unusual winter, but likely a sample of what’s to come. Knowing this made it harder for me to enjoy those warm days. But knowing that so many folks like you care so deeply and are working to make a difference for birds, and for all of us, provides an even better, more hopeful kind of warmth.

*To learn more about climate change and what you can do, visit [epa.gov/climate-change](http://epa.gov/climate-change).*



## A little metal band

by Kaitlin Svabek, director of communications

“There are still many unsolved problems about bird life,” wrote Dr. Paul Bartsch in 1904. Seeking to learn about their behaviors and migration patterns, he marked 23 Black-crowned Night Herons with serially-numbered bands that contained instructions to return them, if found, to the Smithsonian Institution. In the end, only a single bird was recovered by a hunter just 55 miles northeast of Washington, DC. And so went the first systematic, scientific bird banding effort in the US—but it laid important groundwork for a process that profoundly impacted the study of birds.

In 1920, Frederick C. Lincoln founded a federal bird banding office (now the US Geological

Survey Bird Banding Laboratory), establishing some of the principles, procedures, and policies that still stand today. Since bird banding is a key part of ornithological research, it is subject to rigorous standards and must be conducted under a federally authorized permit. Banders must undergo serious training and commit to renew their USGS permits every few years.

Because of these regulations, banding itself is quite safe for birds. A lightweight metal band—which comes in 25 different sizes, for all species from hummingbirds to swans—is fitted around their leg using special pliers. Measurements are often taken, recorded, and submitted (along with the band number) to the federal database.

Data gathered from banding tell us so much about individual birds and populations—beyond what Dr. Bartsch could have even imagined. Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance is proud to be involved in local banding efforts to better understand the lives and patterns of many species, like declining American Kestrels and Purple Martins. We hope to offer opportunities this summer for folks to join us in the field, learn more about banding, and experience it firsthand!

*If you observe a banded bird, you can play a crucial role in bird research by reporting information to [www.reportband.gov](http://www.reportband.gov).*



## Three easy steps: small changes that support birds

by Brenna Marsicek, director of outreach

This spring, I had the privilege of co-hosting a workshop with SOS Save Our Songbirds, Holy Wisdom Monastery, and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. The workshop was about people helping birds in three big and wonderful ways: gardening with native plants, buying bird-friendly coffee, and preventing window collisions.

Native plants are living, natural bird feeders. They support many, many times more insects and arachnids than ornamental plants. Approximately 96% of terrestrial bird species in North America only feed their chicks insects and other types of arthropods, and it takes between 5,000 and 9,000 insects to raise just one brood of chickadees. ONE! For recommendations on which native plants to select for your garden, check out [sossaveoursongbirds.org/add-plants-for-birds](https://sossaveoursongbirds.org/add-plants-for-birds).



Magnolia Warbler |  
Arlene Koziol

Coffee production overlaps in geography with winter habitat for many of our neotropical migrants like warblers and tanagers, and deforestation for traditional coffee plantations is huge. The Bird Friendly® certification is the gold standard for coffee production that supports birds, biodiversity, and growers. Not many coffee retailers or shops carry this type of coffee yet, so there are two things you can do: visit [swibirds.org/bird-friendly-coffee](https://swibirds.org/bird-friendly-coffee) to purchase coffee online, and cut out the postcard

on the back cover of the newsletter and bring it to a local coffee shop or vendor.

Finally, up to a billion birds die every year in the US due to hitting windows, and almost half of those deaths happen at homes. Find ideas for how you can make your windows bird-safe at [swibirds.org/prevent-collisions](https://swibirds.org/prevent-collisions). Many of these projects can be done yourselves, but the webpage also features a new and growing list of companies in southern Wisconsin that you can hire to apply window treatments at your house.

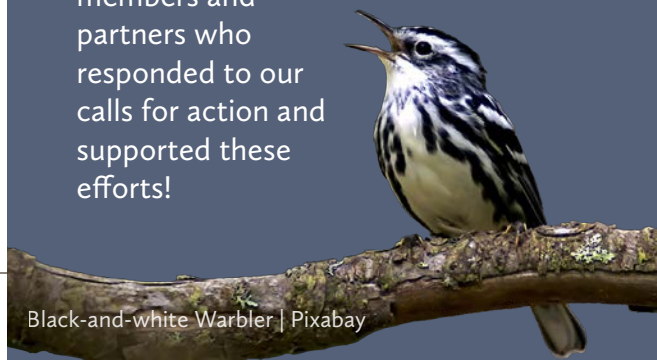
Whether you're planting a serviceberry shrub (my favorite), drinking a cup of Birds & Beans coffee (tasty and certified Bird Friendly®), or adding dots to your window to allow birds safer travel, you're doing a lot of good for our feathered friends. Thank you!



Yellow-rumped Warbler |  
Mick Thompson

### BIG WINS FOR BIRDS!

In fall 2023, a Wisconsin appellate court upheld Madison's bird-safe glass ordinance, which has been in place since 2020. The ordinance requires new buildings over 10,000 square feet to use patterned glass or bird-friendly design. Look for dots on glass in large, new buildings in Madison! In February 2024, Middleton passed a matching ordinance. Thank you to all of our members and partners who responded to our calls for action and supported these efforts!



Black-and-white Warbler | Pixabay



A young groundhog asleep on moss | Gary Shackelford

## The confused groundhog

by Penny Shackelford, Fair Meadows volunteer sanctuary manager

Many of us know the groundhog legend: if he sees his shadow on February 2, there will be six more weeks of winter. If not, spring will come early.

However, groundhogs don't usually come out of their burrows until March or April, and it's not polite to wake them up a month early. This year, even a naturally awakening groundhog would have had a difficult time telling when winter was over. On February 8, it was 55 degrees Fahrenheit. A week later, snow fell, and a few days after that, the nighttime temperature was 9 degrees. On February 27, the high was 74 degrees; on February 28, it was 34 degrees. There was more of the same in March.

We worry about the effects of these wild fluctuations on the natural world. Groundhogs are true hibernators. Unlike their close relatives in the squirrel family—chipmunks and tree squirrels—groundhogs eat primarily grass and leafy plants that cannot be stored. Thus, they must rely on hibernation to make it through the

winter, and they can lose up to 30 percent of their body mass before spring. Chipmunks and tree squirrels have access to stashes of seeds and nuts and can remain active or go into a state of torpor during severe weather. For groundhogs, early warm weather may bring them out of hibernation before enough food is available. A similar problem faces other hibernating wildlife, like bats. This winter, we also lacked snow cover, which leads to colder temperatures underground and may cause groundhogs to use their energy reserves faster.

We have a new, imposing groundhog den at Fair Meadows easily viewed from our house. It has a lovely fresh subsoil mound around it. On warmer days this spring, we have spotted the tenant basking on their front porch, then running along the rock border next to the nearby prairie.

We were relieved when the final warm-up arrived, so that our groundhog neighbors had an ample feast of fresh spring vegetables.

### LOOKING FOR A WAY TO EXPLORE FAIR MEADOWS SANCTUARY?

Take a virtual tour with our newest storymap! Learn all about the beautiful landscapes, unique habitats, and native species that call this place home at [swibirds.org/storymaps](https://swibirds.org/storymaps)

# Amphibians spring back to life

by Emma Raasch, Goose Pond ecological restoration technician



American toad

Each spring, Goose Pond Sanctuary welcomes thousands of migratory birds back from their long journey south. However, another

arrival to look forward to is from creatures who never really left: the amphibians. While salamanders quietly leave their upland burrows to return to breeding ponds, frogs and toads emerge from their winter hiding spots with a fervor.

Since 1984, Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin have participated in the DNR Frog and Toad Survey on a route that includes Goose Pond Sanctuary, Schoeneberg Marsh Waterfowl Production Area, and Otsego Marsh. At Goose Pond, boreal chorus frogs are usually the first to break the long winter silence.

During the first survey period from April 8 to 30, we can expect to hear a roar of boreal chorus frogs and spring peepers, with the occasional croak of a leopard frog or quack of a wood frog. In the second period (May 20–June 5), gray and cope’s gray treefrogs steal the show, while trills of American toads and deep strums of green frogs play in the background. The third period (July 1–15) features many of the singers of the second period, but green frogs take center stage at deeper wetlands.



Leopard frog



Green frog



Eastern tiger salamander

Unlike the boisterous frogs and toads, eastern tiger salamanders make a silent return. After overwintering below the frost line in Goose Pond’s restored prairies, these large, black and yellow amphibians wriggle their way to the pond in late winter to early spring. Upon their return, they will court, and females will lay up to a hundred eggs, which will hatch about four weeks later. The

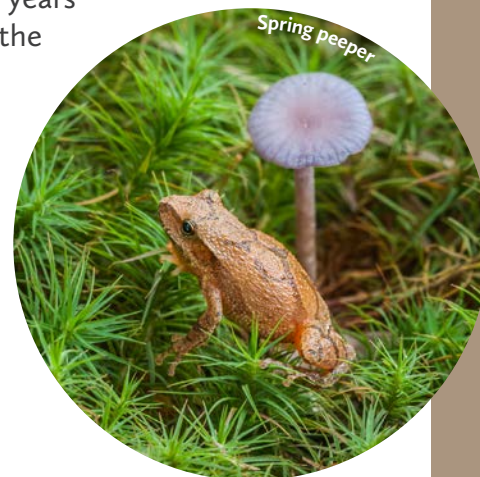
larvae will remain in the pond for approximately two and a half to five months until reaching adulthood, usually in mid-August.

Prairie potholes like Goose Pond provide excellent breeding habitat for salamanders, frogs, and toads. Similar to their fluctuating water levels, amphibian populations vary from year to year. Drought years are particularly hard on them, especially when they occur two or more years in a row (which may be the case this year). While there is sheet water on the ponds and a few of our wetland scrapes, the Jackson Wildlife Unit is likely the only area that will hold water long enough to produce amphibians this year.

Luckily, these resilient creatures live several years, and Mark and Sue have found that they are typically able to bounce back. When the water returns, so do they.



Boreal chorus frog



Spring peeper



Treefrog

Photos: Leopard frog | Arlene Koziol; treefrog | Jim Otto; American toad, boreal chorus frog, green frog, spring peeper | Gary Shackelford; eastern tiger salamander | Graham Steinhauer/SoWBA.

## An ancient Earth

by Roger Packard, Faville Grove volunteer sanctuary manager



David Musolf and 2023 Faville Grove interns on the Lake Mills Ledge | Roger Packard

In 1874, Thomas C. Chamberlin, a young professor of geology at Beloit College—who would soon become Wisconsin’s chief geologist, then president of the University of Wisconsin, and later head of geology at the University of Chicago—was studying southeast Wisconsin as part of the comprehensive Geologic Survey of Wisconsin. Given the nature of his study area, Chamberlin focused heavily on glacial geology, and he would make major contributions to the field. But he also investigated several outcrops of much older quartzite bedrock lying east of Waterloo.

He noted gouges in the rocks that indicated the direction of advance of the latest ice sheet of 15 to 20 degrees west of south. In that direction, quartzite “boulders appear in great

force,” gradually fanning and thinning away from the known outcrops as far as 50 miles into Illinois. Yet he also observed scattered quartzite boulders up to three miles to the east with no known source. He found a promising “boulder train” along the south edge of the Town of Waterloo and followed it to its source at Faville Grove that came to be known as the Lake Mills Ledge.

“The relations of these quartzites to the surrounding formations is exceedingly interesting,” he wrote. “The lower layers of the Trenton limestone, reposing upon the St. Peters sandstone, occur *at the same level* as the quartzite, with no indication of disturbance.” (emphasis in original). “In the intermediate space are boulders of conglomerate, the

### THANKS FOR HELPING US PIECE TOGETHER THE LANDSCAPE!

Faville Grove Sanctuary just grew in a small but important way with the recent acquisition of a two-acre residential lot. Carved out of the corner of the southernmost parcel in the sanctuary before it was acquired, SoWBA held a right-of-first-refusal on the lot and was able to act quickly when it came up for sale, thanks to earlier donations to our land acquisition fund.



pebbles of which are of quartzite, precisely similar to that of the outliers, while the matrix is of white sand similar to that of the St. Peters sandstone.”

These observations suggested a series of events that could only have occurred on an Earth of great antiquity. Quartzite was known to form from layers of sand laid down in shallow seas. These layers were subsequently compressed into sandstone and later fused and folded into a hard, brittle, glassy material through the intense heat and pressure of an orogenic, or mountain-building, event. The sea advanced again, partially submerging the rocky peaks and depositing more layers of sand (becoming the St. Peters sandstone) up to the current level of the ledge. At this point, “the quartzite rose as a rocky island in the depositing seas,” Chamberlin concluded, “and yielded its material to the beating of the waves, by which the conglomerate was formed.” Yet another retreat and advance of the sea, this time deeper, left fine calcium deposits that settled into limestone on top of the sandstone and buried the quartzite entirely. Finally, a massive sheet of ice ground over the area, removing layers of soft lime rock, snapping off and transporting

boulders of quartzite, while exposing the solid core of the former mountain.

The Lake Mills Ledge, now protected and publicly accessible at Faville Grove Sanctuary, is currently estimated to be 1.6 billion years old, far older than anyone in Chamberlin’s day thought, but Chamberlin nonetheless understood it to be immensely old. In May of 1899, *Science* published an address by Lord Kelvin titled: “The Age of the Earth as an Abode Fitted for Life.” Based, in part, on his assumption that the sun’s heat resulted solely from its contraction as it formed and on its rate of cooling, Kelvin asserted flatly that heat from the sun could not support life on Earth for more than 40 million years and he estimated the age of the planet at closer to 20 million years. Chamberlin promptly challenged the respected mathematical physicist, suggesting, among other arguments, the possibility of an internal source of heat on the sun. As one observer noted, “Not a few British scientists expressed surprise that anyone should have the temerity even to reply to Lord Kelvin, let alone attempt to unhorse him in his own field. Yet the latter is precisely what was done.” A career of careful geologic observations, including those at Faville Grove, convinced Chamberlin that the great Lord Kelvin was flat-out wrong.



Background: quartzite outcroppings of the Lake Mills Ledge at Faville Grove Sanctuary | Roger Packard

# SOUTHERN WISCONSIN BIRD ALLIANCE SUMMER 2024 FIELD TRIPS

For more information and to register for these outings, visit [swibirds.org/events](http://swibirds.org/events)

## EXPLORE THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF INSECTS

### BUTTERFLIES & WILDFLOWERS

Date: Saturday, June 15, 10 AM–12 PM  
Location: Pleasant Valley Conservancy (Black Earth)  
Led by: Douglas Buege & Kathie Brock

### BUTTERFLIES & WILDFLOWERS

Date: Saturday, June 22, 10 AM–12 PM  
Location: Cherokee Marsh (Madison)  
Led by: Tod Highsmith & Dreux Watermolen

### BUTTERFLIES & WILDFLOWERS

Date: Sunday, July 21, 10 AM–12 PM  
Location: Fair Meadows Sanctuary (Milton)  
Led by: Mike Reese, Penny & Gary Shackelford

### DAMSELFLY & DRAGONFLY ECOLOGY

Date: Saturday, Aug. 10, 10 AM–1 PM  
Location: Goose Pond Sanctuary (Arlington)  
Led by: Bob & Maggie Honig, Mark Martin, Jim Otto

Great spangled fritillary | Arlene Kozioł



### BIRDING BY BIKE

Date: Wednesday, June 5, 5:30–7:30 PM  
Location: TBD (Madison-area)  
Led by: Sprocket Hanks, Kaitlin Svabek

### FAIR MEADOWS NIGHT HIKE

Date: Friday, June 14, 8:45–11 PM  
Location: Fair Meadows Sanctuary (Milton)  
Led by: Dave Bendlin, Penny & Gary Shackelford

### BIRDING BY BIKE

Date: Tuesday, July 9, 5:30–7:30 PM  
Location: TBD (Madison-area)  
Led by: Sprocket Hanks

### WHIP-POOR-WILL HIKE

Date: Saturday, July 13, 8–9:30 PM  
Location: Ferry Bluff SNA (Sauk City)  
Led by: Diane Schwartz

### EXPLORING OTSEGO MARSH

Date: Friday, July 19, 9:30 AM–12 PM  
Location: Goose Pond Sanctuary (Arlington)  
Led by: Mark Martin, Emma Raasch, Graham Steinhauer

### BEGINNING BIRDERS: SUNSET BIRDING

Date: Monday, July 29, 6:30–8:30 PM  
Location: Graber Pond (Middleton)  
Led by: Kaitlin Svabek

### GOOSE POND PRAIRIES

Date: Saturday, Aug. 3, 9 AM–12 PM  
Location: Goose Pond Sanctuary (Arlington)  
Led by: Susan Foote-Martin, Mark Martin, Emma Raasch, Graham Steinhauer

### NATURE STROLL

Date: Wednesday, Aug. 14, 8:30–10:30 AM  
Location: Lussier Family Heritage Center (Madison)  
Led by: Bob & Maggie Honig

*Our free field trip program is made possible, in part, through funding from the Henry A. Anderson III Fund.*

# SOUTHERN WISCONSIN BIRD ALLIANCE SUMMER 2024 EVENTS

Below are our upcoming field trips, courses, and programs. Each opens for registration six weeks prior to the event. You can find the full list of all field trips and events on our website.

*Please register at [swibirds.org/events](https://swibirds.org/events) for upcoming events that you plan to attend so we can share trip information, weather-related adjustments, and more.*

## BLACK BIRDERS WEEK: RAPTORS & HABITATS AT FAIR MEADOWS SANCTUARY

**Free.** Co-hosted with the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin and the Feminist Bird Club of Madison.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 10 AM–2 PM

Join us for a family-friendly Black Birders Week event at Fair Meadows Sanctuary and State Natural Area! This nationwide celebration, organized by The BlackAFinSTEM Collective, takes place between May 26 and June 1 and highlights Black birders, scientists, and conservationists.

Experience an informational raptor presentation from Hoo's Woods Raptor Center in Milton and get a chance to meet their educational raptors! After lunch, take a guided walk through the beautiful prairies, woodlands, and wetlands of the sanctuary or explore on your own.

## COURSE: A BIRDER'S DOZEN—LOCAL BIRDS FOR BEGINNERS (2-PART SERIES)

**\$20/person.** Taught by Bob and Maggie Honig.

Class: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 6–8 PM

Outing: SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 8–10 AM

This course is specifically designed for beginning bird lovers who are curious about the most common summer birds found in their backyard, on their balcony, or in their neighborhood. In A Birder's Dozen, you'll get to know 13 species that you see or hear on a regular basis, diving into details about their interesting natural history, as well as how to tell them apart from other common birds. By the end of the series, you should have a little more comfort and familiarity with the birds you encounter often!

*(Field trips continued on backside of this page)*

## EXPLORE FURTHER, SAFER, AND STEADIER!

We are proud to offer a comfortable, outdoor, electric-powered wheelchair at most of our events and field trips this spring, summer, and fall—for free!

This wheelchair is wonderful for anyone with temporary or permanent mobility limitations. Whether you or a loved one has an injury or disability, is recovering from surgery, or has difficulty walking long distances, we would love for you to put this wheelchair to good use.

To request the wheelchair at an upcoming outing, complete the event registration form and select yes for borrowing the wheelchair. We will bring it to the event and show you the simple steps for using it.



Brenna demos the new wheelchair | SoWBA

Questions? Contact Brenna at 608-255-2473 or email [bmarsicek@swibirds.org](mailto:bmarsicek@swibirds.org).



Pond dipping at a family outing | Carolyn Byers/SoWBA

## SUMMER FAMILY FIELD TRIPS

Join our education team for free, fun field trips specially designed for families with kids!

Learn together through science-themed activities, educational games, and nature exploration. Suggested ages: 5–12. Adults must attend with their child participants for the duration of the event, but depending on the child, they may choose to sit off to the side and watch rather than participate.

### OH, DEER! AT WARNER PARK • THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 9:30–10:30 AM

Examine deer skulls and antlers; learn about deer tracks, scat, and signs; play a deer running game; and go on a walk to look for deer tracks and scat. Led by Mickenzee Okon.

### ALL ABOUT OWLS AT OLIN PARK • THURSDAY, JULY 18, 9:30–10:30 AM

Find out which species of owl live here, meet our taxidermied owl specimens, play the owl eyes game, then learn and practice how to sound like an owl. Led by Carolyn Byers.

### INSECT DETECTIVES AT WESTMORLAND PARK • THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 9:30–10:30 AM

Check out our bug collection (non-living), search for bugs using magnifying glasses, and discuss why insects are amazing and not always scary. Led by Mickenzee Okon.

## **NEW!** NATURE JOURNALING CLUB AT WARNER PARK

**DATES: JUNE 20, JUNE 27, JULY 19, JULY 26, AUGUST 6, AUGUST 13**

**TIME: 9:30–11 AM**

Experience nature in a new way, and grow your observation skills, with no artistic experience required! These sessions are designed for families with kids of all ages. We'll provide prompts for each age group so everyone is working at a level they are comfortable with.

You can bring your own supplies or borrow ours—we'll have paper, clipboards, pencils, erasers, colored pencils, and water color supplies—and can take your art home afterwards. Led by Carolyn Byers.

Register and find more information at [swibirds.org/events](https://swibirds.org/events)

## Behind the scenes: building a lesson

by Carolyn Byers, director of education

Our education programming is flexible and fun—something we're proud of. Every few months, our educators meet with our partner teachers to plan the next batch of lessons. We ask them what they'll be teaching—in every subject, not just science!—and look for opportunities to connect what they're learning in their classrooms to what they're learning outside with us. Our lessons also keep pace with the seasons, so kids can observe what they're learning about in real time. We have been updating many of our lessons to share the work of scientists of color, providing another way for kids to connect with nature. Often, we're able to pull activities from our huge collection of favorites, but sometimes, we get to create a new one!

Every fall, we have a lesson about cicadas. Kids journal about exoskeletons, we teach them a bit about cicada life history, and then have a metamorphosis obstacle course that emphasizes the cicada life cycle.

This year, we decided to expand that lesson to include a Black scientist's pivotal research and a new game. We wanted the game to be a really active game, because kids learn best after they've moved their bodies! Teachers were most excited about focusing the game on the relationship between cicada killer wasps and cicadas. We came up with a brief outline for our game: a modified version of tag.

We set up a space bounded by small traffic cones, spread flat silicone mats on the ground in patches to represent trees, and placed hula hoops down to represent cicada killer wasp burrows. Most of the kids are cicadas and some of the kids are wasps, distinguished by a bandana on their arm.

Cicadas run around avoiding the wasps, and are safe when they're hiding on trees. If a wasp tags a cicada, they bring the cicada to a hula hoop and tie a bandana on the cicada's arm. This symbolizes how wasps immobilize a cicada and place them into a burrow with an egg, which will hatch, eat the cicada, and grow up into a new wasp. Voila!—that kid changes from a cicada to a wasp in the game.

After the first round or two, we noticed that the cicadas kept hanging out on the trees. One of the teachers suggested adding a bird—something that might eat a cicada and encourage them to move around more. So with all of the adults running around, flapping, and making bird noises at irregular intervals, the game fell into place.

At the end of each game, we talk with kids about it. What about the game is like real life, what is just for fun. What about the game worked, and what kinds of suggestions they have to make it better. This truly does help us create better games, and it helps kids stay invested in their learning. They're a part of how new games get created!

*Our education program is possible thanks to support from the Caerus Foundation, Theda and Tamblin Clark Smith Family Foundation, and Jenni & Kyle Foundation.*



Cicada killer wasp with prey | Bill Buchanan/USFWS



Set up for the new game | Carolyn Byers/SoWBA

# Introducing our new summer 2024 interns

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance gets a huge boost through our paid ecological restoration internship programs each summer. Six interns will be based at Faville Grove Sanctuary and three will be based at Goose Pond Sanctuary. We are look forward to them joining us in this important work!

## FAVILLE GROVE



**TYLER ATWOOD**  
(any pronouns)  
Colorado State University  
*Favorite bird: Great Blue Heron*



**SORAYA CASTLE**  
(she/her)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: White-winged Dove*



**PARKER GIMBEL**  
(he/him)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Elf Owl*



**MAXWELL HEILIG**  
(he/him)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Hummingbird*



**EMMA HOLTON**  
(she/her)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Great Blue Heron*



**SARA RIDER**  
(she/her)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Barn Swallow*

## GOOSE POND



**ANDI HOKANSON**  
(they/them)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Sanderling*



**ANDY SMITH**  
(he/him)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Chestnut-sided Warbler*



**HAILEY WEDEWER**  
(she/her)  
UW-Madison  
*Favorite bird: Indigo Bunting*

## Welcoming our first *Diversity in Conservation* intern: Helena Bello

We are thrilled to welcome an intern from the Natural Resource Foundation of Wisconsin's *Diversity in Conservation* program this summer. Helena (she/her), a rising junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will



join our staff, both in the office and in the field, to explore the many facets of conservation work four days each week, then spend one day each week learning with her intern cohort. Her favorite bird is the Prothonotary Warbler.

To learn more about our interns, visit [swibirds.org/2024-interns](https://swibirds.org/2024-interns).

# Thank you to our amazing donors!

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## Badges of honor

by Becky Abel, director of philanthropy

There are three very important badges on our newsletter and the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance website that you may have noticed and wondered about. What do all those symbols mean?

These seals mean you can trust SoWBA to use your donations responsibly and strategically. They mean that our programs are efficient and mission-focused. They mean that our finances are in order and that our board and staff are held to high professional standards. And they mean that we protect bird habitat and manage it to the highest ecological standards.

We're proud to have received the highest possible rankings from these three organizations!

### Charity Navigator Four Star rating



The first is our Charity Navigator rating. Charity Navigator is an independent nonprofit that assesses hundreds of thousands of US-based charitable organizations

to provide supporters with the information they need to make confident philanthropic choices. Charities are evaluated for practices

related to Finance & Accountability, Impact & Results, Leadership & Adaptability, and Culture & Community.

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance has a four-star rating, which is the highest rating possible. To earn a four-star rating, a charity must “exceed or meet best practices and industry standards across almost all areas” and is “likely to be a highly-effective charity.”

### Candid Platinum Transparency 2024

Platinum  
Transparency  
2024

**Candid.**

Candid (formerly called GuideStar) is the world's largest database of nonprofit organizations. They award seals of transparency to provide potential donors

with important information to make informed decisions about their charitable giving. Metrics evaluated include finances, goals, programming, strategies, capabilities, achievements, measures of progress, staff and board, and impact. Candid awards four levels of seals: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Less than 1% of US-based nonprofits are awarded the Platinum Seal, which is the highest attainable level, and Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance is among them. Our



Ruby-throated Hummingbirds | Monica Hall

## Two birds of a feather

Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance remains a chapter of National Audubon Society, even though we no longer have “Audubon” in our name. We share similar missions to protect birds, but as two distinct organizations, our staff, sanctuaries, programs, communications, and funding are all separate. **When you become a local member or directly support SoWBA, you make a big difference for birds right here in our southern Wisconsin community and beyond. Thank you!**

Platinum Seal indicates that SoWBA exceeds nonprofit industry standards and is an organization you can trust.

### Land Trust Accreditation Commission Seal

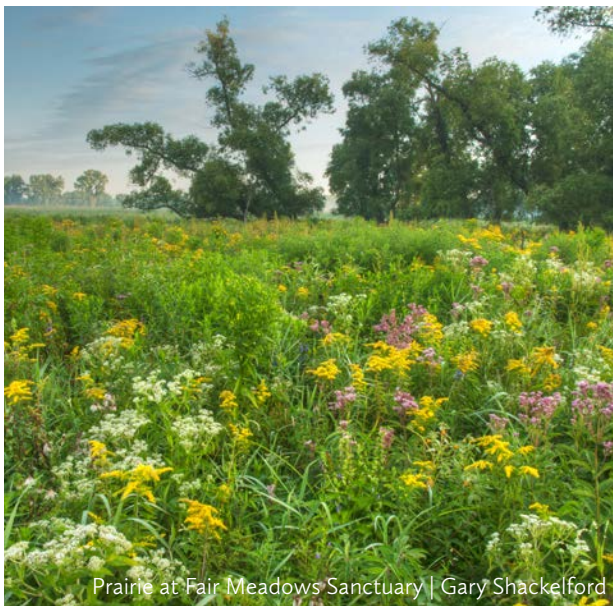


While all of our badges are important, the third one may best represent the power of Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance's work. Did you know that SoWBA is one of just a handful

of bird conservation organizations in the country that is a nationally accredited land trust? We have owned and managed land since 1968—our three sanctuaries provide permanently protected habitat for birds and rare species. The review process for national land trust accreditation is rigorous, and we are proud that this green seal affirms that SoWBA meets national standards for excellence, public trust, and permanence of our conservation efforts.

Thank you to all of the volunteers, supporters, staff, board and partners who make Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance strong and badge-worthy!

*For questions, contact Becky Abel, director of philanthropy, at 608-255-2473 x5 or [babel@swibirds.org](mailto:babel@swibirds.org).*



Prairie at Fair Meadows Sanctuary | Gary Shackelford



Liz Pelton

## *A warm welcome to our new membership and development associate!*

Over the past year, Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance has expanded our land holdings, programming, staffing and corresponding workload. To help us support the demands of our increasing conservation impact, we're excited to announce our newest staff member, Liz Pelton. Liz brings a wealth of experience working with nonprofit membership programs and fundraising (including at Groundswell Conservancy and the International Crane Foundation) that will help SoWBA increase our membership and program support.

Growing up in the Madison area, Liz spent lots of time outdoors exploring Six Mile Creek and going on family camping trips at Wisconsin State Parks. She earned a B.A. in English from the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. She started her career as a medical editor in pharmaceutical research and moved to the nonprofit world in 2015. She cares deeply about local conservation and making nature more accessible for everyone to enjoy. Liz, her husband, and daughter love getting outside together and feeding their backyard birds (and squirrels).



Cover photo: Grasshopper Sparrow in morning light | Grayson Smith/USFWS



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Read more in our article on page 5. For more postcards you can print and deliver, visit [swibirds.org/coffee-postcards](http://swibirds.org/coffee-postcards).



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