

President's Message

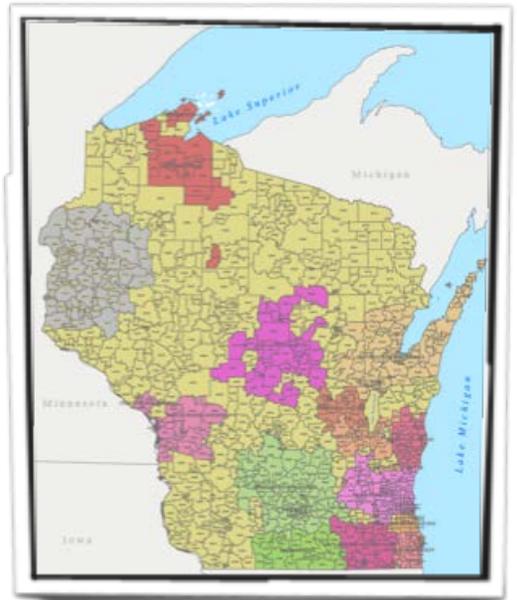
I am pleased to announce that Gaylord Nelson Audubon is now an official permanent chapter of the National Audubon Society! Reaching this designation involved a series of steps including: drafting a chapter constitution and bylaws, appointing a steering committee, holding a public meeting, recruiting 35 new members over a two year period, and maintaining 50 members for a year.

Now that we are a permanent chapter we are continuing regular features such as this publication, our annual meeting and the Luck Christmas Bird Count. We are developing even more field trips for children and adults.

If you have any ideas, suggestions, or even complaints that will help make this chapter work better for you, please email them to me at curiouscaribou@hotmail.com. Please include GNAS in the subject line. Or, write us at Gaylord Nelson Audubon; PO Box 1; St. Croix Falls, WI 54024. We strive to make sure this chapter offers something for everyone and we appreciate your input!

Lastly, I would like to extend an invitation for you to join us at our annual meeting on Sunday, February 17. We will have door prizes, less business, and more socializing this year. I hope to see you there!

Michelle Carlisle, President, GNAS



Gaylord Nelson Audubon Society becomes the 15th state chapter of the Audubon Society, with members in Barron, Burnett, Dunn, Polk, St. Croix, and Washburn Counties.



Northern Shrike © Ryan Brady 2013



Pine Grosbeak in St. Croix Falls © Brian Collins



Winter Wings

by Brian M. Collins

Check out Brian's blog: *One Thousand Days in Nature*, at <http://saintcroixbirds.blogspot.com/>.

With last summer's drought many species of northern finches have run into a food shortage in

Canada and have come south to spend the winter in our region. This is a great year to see Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and the increasingly rare Evening Grosbeak. These species are here in unusual abundance this year! Many large flocks have been seen, with flocks of more than a hundred redpolls and more than twenty-five Pine Grosbeaks. Most of the Pine Grosbeaks have been females and immature birds, but a few people have lucked out upon the bright, rosy pink males.

These flocks are desperate for food, but poorly maintained feeders can spread disease. Be sure to maintain your feeders for good health! For best results, feed from a combination of tube feeders and platform feeders, offering black oil sunflower in some and thistle seed in others.

(continued on next page)



Snow Buntings © Rob Mueller 2013

(continued)

Floating among the falling flakes of snow and cruising low over snow-rippled landscapes, three birds stand out as true harbingers of winter. All of them arrive in October, and all stay with us through the harshest of icy days--the Northern Shrike, Rough-legged Hawk, and Snow Bunting.

Northern Shrike

A flash of black, gray and white darts across drifting snow and alights atop an alder bush. A black mask and sharply hooked beak adorn this shy, flighty songbird. About the size of a Blue Jay, the Northern Shrike is an agile hunter, a predator of voles and songbirds during the cold of winter. Its habit of impaling prey upon thorns and storing larger meals within the forks of shrubs has earned it the nickname "Butcher Bird." The Northern Shrike arrives in Wisconsin's Northwest counties in late October and remains throughout the winter. Wisconsin's uncommon summer resident, the Loggerhead Shrike, heads south for the winter. The Northern Shrike, a somewhat larger, lighter colored shrike, becomes fairly common where open, brushy habitats and wild roadside thickets abound. Its flight is low and swift, and white patches on black wings and tail clinch positive identification when it rises to perch on a low shrub or upon a utility wire.

Northern Rough-legged Hawk

Hovering high above open fields and sedge meadows, the Rough-legged Hawk brings the Arctic to Wisconsin as it follows the seasons in pursuit of meadow voles and other small mammals. The Rough-legged Hawk's superb adaptations as a mouse-hunting specialist are much different from our resident Red-tailed Hawks. Rough-legged Hawks earn their name from the protective, feathered insulation that covers the legs all the way to the feet. Because the Rough-legged Hawk's prey is composed almost completely of small voles and lemmings, this raptor is much lighter in weight than a Red-tail and has much smaller feet. With an impressive wingspan, the Rough-legged Hawk has very little wing loading and hovers above vast openings in search of prey with minimal effort. Identifying a Rough-legged Hawk may be confusing at first, because no two seem to have the same markings. With a little practice, it

becomes very easy to see the patterns that help you to identify this Arctic visitor. In general, the tail is white with a broad, black strip along the terminal ends of the tail feathers. Looking upward at a flying Rough-legged Hawk, the wrists of the wings and the belly of the bird are almost always black, even when the bird is very light in color. Wonderfully diverse in plumage, this buteo hawk varies from a dark chocolate brown to a pale bird with a beige head. Almost always, the belly is dark and appears as a formal cumber-bun on the paler birds.

Snow Bunting

Like drifting, feathered flakes of snow, a flock of Snow Buntings bounces across the sky, flying over frozen, windswept marshes and congregating upon the open gravel of a backcountry road. When visiting Wisconsin, the Snow Bunting has molted its black-and-white breeding finery and replaced it with a winter plumage of rich character. The black and white wings are now complemented with tawny patches of caramel mixed in with the black of the back and the white of the belly. The yellow and black, finch-like beak is similar to other sparrows and buntings and specializes in seed cracking. In Wisconsin, Snow Buntings favor the mowed edges of gravel roads, overturned soils of agricultural fields, and frozen wetlands where small seeds are available. Usually, their camouflage is so perfect for the grassy, snow-covered landscape mosaic that they are not detected until flushed where they sail skyward in a dazzling dance of flashing white wings. □



Northern Rough-legged Hawk © Bill Heim 2013

GNAS Annual Meeting

Sunday, February 17, 2013, 1-3pm

St. Croix River Visitor Center
401 North Hamilton Street
St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

1:00 Social

1:30 Announcements, Business, Elections,

2:00 Speaker-Brian Collins-Travels and Travails of a Bird Surveyor

Brian M. Collins is a contract ornithologist for the Wisconsin DNR's Natural Heritage Inventory. In the last five field seasons he has walked over 600 miles pursuing bird community data. In over 1000 surveys he has detected over 26,000 individual birds of 158 species on 31 different public lands. Brian has photographed nature and birds for 25 years- his camera goes with him everywhere! Point count work is full of unexpected adventures and exciting discoveries and it presents a unique and rugged lifestyle far removed from the routines written into research protocol. He can't wait to tell us about it!

2012 Christmas Bird Count

by Robin Maercklein

It looked like we would have no snow for the Luck Christmas Bird Count until the week before when a foot of snow dumped on the area. Then it rained all day during the Grantsburg count - the day before the Luck count. Still, the fifteen participants who gathered on the morning of December 16th had no trouble getting out and setting new records for this 28 year old count.

The weather was not the only cooperative factor. The birds were active with reports of lots of birds in the morning hours. By lunch time the teams had reported 39 species, three more than the previous record set in 1997 and 1999. Three additional species, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Belted Kingfisher and Brown Creeper were found during the count week and are reportable as such. By the end of the day, a total of 43 species were found.

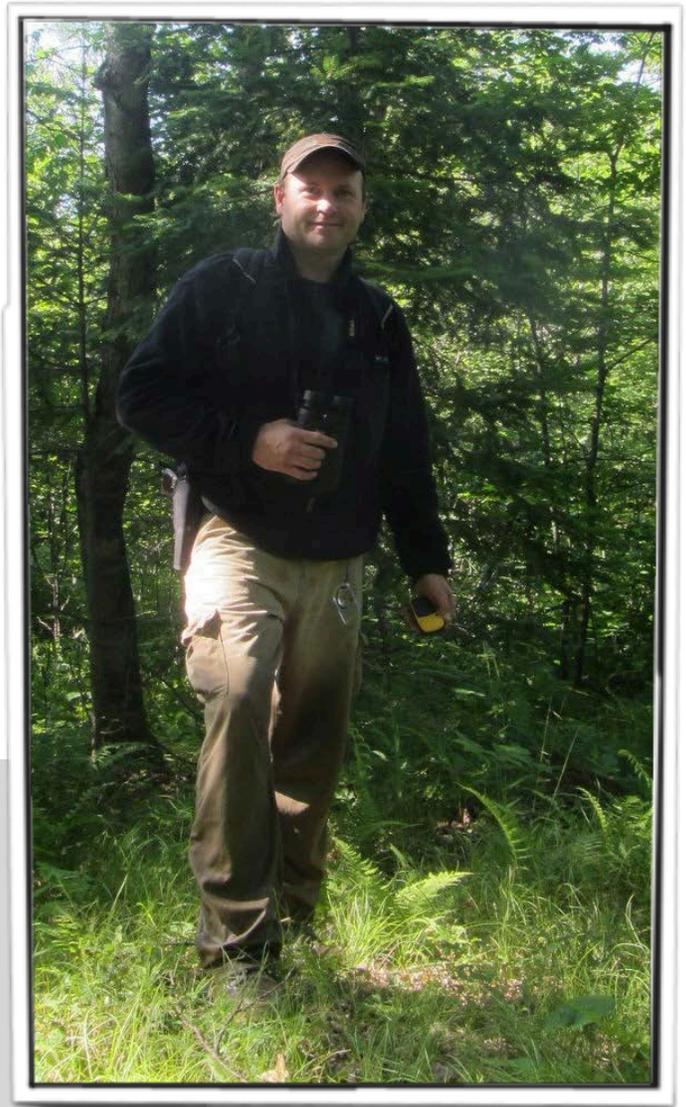
Three new species were added to the 28 year old list: A single American Kestrel, 11 Red Crossbills and a single Hoary Redpoll found in a flock of 80 Common Redpolls. A kestrel had previously been recorded during the count week in 1989.

Record numbers for individual species were broken for nine species: Trumpeter Swans (26), Ring-necked Pheasant (67), Mourning Dove (66), Tufted Titmouse (2 - previously recorded only in 1957), American Robin (3), Cedar Waxwings (10), Snow Buntings (219), American Tree Sparrow (112), and Common Redpoll (146).

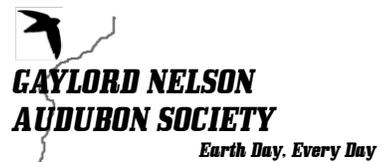
We tied the record for Rough-legged Hawk (1), Great Horned Owl (4) and White-throated Sparrow (2).

The Luck Christmas Bird Count was conducted in 1950, 1952, 1955 - 1959, 1981 - 1990, and 1992 - 2000 before the Gaylord Nelson Audubon Society resumed the count in 2010. Mark your calendars - next year's count will be on Sunday December 15, 2013.

For a complete listing of the species found, please go to our Facebook page at: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/gaylord.nelson.audubon/>



Wisconsin ornithologist Brian M. Collins.



For membership or event information or to contribute to our newsletter, contact us at gaylordnelsonaudubon@gmail.com



GNAS FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS 2013

EVENT	LOCATION	DATE	LEADER
GNAS Annual Meeting	WI Interstate Park	Sunday, February 17	Brian Collins
Elk in Wisconsin	Rice Lake, WI	Tuesday, March 26	Laine Stowell
Salamander Survey	River Falls, WI	Saturday, April 6	Randy Korb
Salamander Survey	Menomonie, WI	Sunday, April 7	Randy Korb
Spring Birds and Wildflowers	Straight Lake State Park- Luck, WI	Saturday, May 18	Brian Collins
Early Birds	Sterling Barrens SNA-Polk County	Sunday, May 19	Brian Collins
Frog Night Hike	Rice Lake, WI	Friday, May 24	Randy Korb
Turtle Talk	Osceola, WI	Sunday, May 26	Randy Korb
Elk Calf Search	Clam Lake, WI	Saturday, June 15	Laine Stowell
Elk Calf Search	Clam Lake, WI	Sunday, June 16	Laine Stowell
Wild Herb Walk	St. Croix Falls, WI	Saturday, July 20	Kelley Hagenbuch
Chimney Swifts	St Croix Falls, WI	Thursday, June 27	Michelle Carlisle
Butterfly Hike	Standing Cedars SNA- Osceola, WI	Saturday, July 27	Erik Ostrum
Monarch Butterfly Tagging	Grantsburg, WI	Saturday, August 17	Randy Korb
Monarch Butterfly Tagging	Hudson, WI	Sunday, August 18	Randy Korb
Wisconsin Whitetails	St. Croix Falls, WI	Saturday, November 16	Chris Cold
Luck Christmas Bird Count	Luck, WI	Sunday, December 15	Robin Maercklein

Gaylord Nelson Audubon Society
 PO Box 1
 St. Croix Falls, WI 54024



Field trips are free for GNAS members and their families, non-members pay a small fee. We will host additional field trips throughout the year in addition to those listed above. For details about field trips and events contact Randy Korb at rkorb@aol.com, or visit Gaylord Nelson Audubon on Facebook.