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# The Chat

Lakeland Audubon Society

February 2022

## CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, February 22  
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM  
Lions Field House  
270 Elkhorn Road, Williams Bay, WI

The event is free and open to the public.

Our February meeting will feature the following educational talk:

### *Animal Tracks and Signs*

By Beth Goeppinger

Years ago, track was an essential skill needed to clothe and feed yourself. A good tracker was invaluable in a tribe or on an expedition. While people do still hunt for food, tracking is more often a great way to get outside and to peek into your animal neighbors' lives. Join us for this program to learn the skills to do just that.



Beth Goeppinger on the trail (Photo Provided by Beth Goeppinger)

Beth Goeppinger is an avid birder and animal tracker, having recently retired from Richard Bong State Recreation Area as their naturalist she has had even more time to hone her tracking skills.

**Nature Hike - Chapter Outing**  
Sunday, February 27  
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Kishwauketo Nature Conservancy  
251 Elkhorn Road, Williams Bay, WI

Join us for a hike at the Kishwauketo Nature Conservancy. We will walk the trails and look for animal tracks and other signs. Hike leaders will be Beth Goeppinger and Jim Killian. Meet at the KNC pavilion (across the road from the Lions Field House) prior to 10:00 AM. This event will be a follow up to the educational talk that Beth will give at our chapter meeting.

## Of Red-capped Redpolls and Red-breasted Nuthatches

By: Wayne Rohde

Although I tend to do the majority of my birding during spring (while birds are migrating) and summer (while they are nesting), I also relish the winter months – especially for the species which visit our feeders to brighten our days. (Fall often finds me otherwise occupied, photographing Northwoods waterfalls against the backdrop of colorful leaves.)

Why winter? Because during cold and snowy December, January and February days, I enjoy getting even closer looks at several of our **permanent residents**, such as Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, Northern Cardinals and a host of other common species, when they're attracted to suet cakes and black oil sunflower seeds. And because I'm also eager to see our regular **winter visitors**, such as Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows, which scratch for mixed seed and cracked corn scattered on the ground. I welcome back these "snowbirds" each winter, glad to greet them again after their lengthy absence throughout the summer months, as well as during much of the spring and fall.

Yet the real thrill, at least for me, is spotting one of those less common and generally unexpected **winter finches**, such as Purple Finches, or Red or White-winged Crossbills, or Pine Siskins, or (to a much lesser extent) Evening or Pine Grosbeaks - birds which show up only periodically in southern Wisconsin during what's known as irruption years, when their favorite seeds are in short supply Up North. Common and Hoary Redpolls, now considered to be a single species, fall into this same category. What a pleasant surprise to look out the window and notice --like I did this past January-- a lone Common Redpoll - one of these "here one year/gone the next" species among the other feeder birds.

Redpolls derive their common name from their red caps (or crowns or foreheads, if you prefer) – even as the Blackpoll Warbler is known for its black cap ("poll" means head). Furthermore, their scientific name, *Acanthis flammea*, alludes to the brightness of their caps (*flammea* means flame). These "Red-capped" Redpolls are putting in quite an appearance across the state this winter, and a few Lakeland Audubon members have been treated to sizeable flocks of these relatively tame and fearless little beauties at their feeders. Amazingly, despite weighing only half an ounce, these summer-time inhabitants of the Far North tundra (could they be Packers fans?) manage to avoid hypothermia by means of the insulation value of their fluffy feathers and habit of feeding almost non-stop.



Of course a few other songbirds may visit our area during winter too, including Northern Shrikes, Bohemian Waxwings, Varied Thrushes, and --more frequently-- that friendly and feisty cousin of our White-breasted Nuthatch: namely, the acrobatic Red-breasted Nuthatch. I've had at least two of them at our feeders since late August, and I'm almost daily entertained and amused by their pure spunk. They don't hesitate to compete for seed with much larger birds, and they've even been known to fly at me and land on me while I'm filling our feeders ...as if they share my impatience!



So are you seeing any particularly interesting winter birds these days? Any Brown Creepers or Golden-crowned Kinglets or Snow Buntings or Lapland Longspurs? Any lingering Fox, White-throated or White-crowned Sparrows? Keep your feeders filled and your eyes opened. Who knows what might show up next...

# Resources for All Things "Nature"

Compiled by the Lakeland Audubon Society Board and Members

## Gardening:

- **Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region**  
by Merel R. Black and Emmet J Judziewicz
  - this is a comprehensive field guide
- **Native Plant Gardening for Birds, Bees and Butterflies (Upper Midwest)**  
by Jaret C. Daniels
  - An array of information about plants, pollinators and Midwest native plants.
- **Native Plants of the Midwest**  
by Alan Branhagen
  - Extensive information about natives of the Midwest, from flowers to bushes and trees. This is a go-to book
- **Landscaping with Native Plants of Wisconsin**  
by Lynn M. Steiner
  - An excellent book of the Natives of Wisconsin. All the information you need about a plant is included here. This is a go-to book



## Nature, and how we can help it:

- **Bringing Nature Home**  
by Douglas W. Tallamy
- **Nature's Best Hope - A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard**  
by Douglas W. Tallamy
- **The Nature of Oaks - The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees**  
by Douglas W. Tallamy



## Birding:

- **Birds of Minnesota and Wisconsin**  
by Janssen, Tessen and Kennedy Lone Star Publishing

The book is color coded at the top of the page and at the edges indicating different bird families. It has a nice "reference guide" at the beginning of the book with a picture of the bird, name and on what page it is found. Each page covers one bird and has appealing layout. The bottom half of the page is broken down into features such as "ID", size, habitat, nesting, voice etc. The info on each bird is clear and concise and includes a nice drawing of the bird with a map of its range in Minnesota and/or Wisconsin.

## Local Groups to Join, Help Make a Difference:

- Wild Ones (Kettle Moraine Chapter)
- Geneva Lake Conservancy
- National Audubon Society (Lakeland Audubon Chapter)
- Ice Age Trail Alliance (Walworth/Jefferson County Chapter)
- Friends of Kishwauketoe
- Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge
- Kettle Moraine Land Trust
- Lake Geneva Avian Committee
- Geneva Lake Environmental Agency



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| <i>Field Trips</i>          | (Volunteer Needed)              |
| <i>Publicity</i>            | (Volunteer Needed)              |

## Bird Count

As part of the Great Backyard Bird Count our organization will be conducting a bird count at the Kishwauketo Nature Conservancy on Sunday, February 20, 2022 from 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM. Contact us if you wish to participate.

## Bird Walks

### **Wednesdays: Big Foot Beach State Park**

10:00 AM - Noon  
N1550 S Lakeshore Drive, Lake Geneva, WI

Meet in the main parking area to the right of the entrance station a little before 10:00 AM. A state park sticker (\$28, \$13 if age 65 or older) or daily pass (\$8, \$3 if age 65 or older) is required to enter Big Foot Beach State Park.

<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact/>



**Footprints in the snow (Photo Provided by Beth Goeppinger)**

**The Chat** is the newsletter of the Lakeland Audubon Chapter of the National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 473, Elkhorn, WI 53121. Subscription is \$15 per year for printed copies sent by US mail.