

LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



The Chat



December 2022

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 17, 2022

12:00 AM - 11:59 PM

Lake Geneva, WI

Free to participate and open to the public.

Would you like to help guide bird conservation? If so, then you should think about joining America's oldest citizen science project. Participants count birds during a 24-hour period in one or more of the territories that are part of our count circle (Lake Geneva CBC). Doing a feeder watch at your home is also an option if you live somewhere within the circle. Our count circle, which is divided into nine sections (also called territories), is a fifteen-mile radius around Lake Como, which is located just north of Geneva Lake.

This year is the 123rd year of the count, so let's join in the fun and keep the tradition going.

Lisa Granbur is the coordinator for this count. Please contact her for further details.

Call: (312) 354-0199 or Email: parula13@sbcglobal.net



Canada Geese, Photo by Kevin Dickey

Bald Eagle Nest Watch

Madison Audubon is looking for volunteers to survey nests in our area.

By Beth Martin

If you enjoy watching eagles, we have a volunteer position that you may enjoy!

In 2017, a few friends started watching Bald Eagle nests in Walworth County together. We reported our findings directly to the WDNR. In 2020, the WDNR asked us to take the training Madison Audubon offered to Bald Eagle Nest Watch volunteers so that we understood better what might be happening in the nests we were observing. We were to continue reporting to the WDNR. After meeting Brenna and Drew, and seeing how they reported everything electronically, we decided we should just roll our group into theirs!

What do we do? Here is a statement from the Madison Audubon website:

'Madison Audubon began a new citizen science program in 2018 in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that seeks to better understand how Bald Eagles are doing in Wisconsin. Participants are matched with a Bald Eagle nest and visit it once per week for an hour each time, starting in February when adults begin repairing or building nests. During that hour, volunteers will observe and document the presence of young and what the family is doing. Weekly visits continue until the young fledge. All volunteers will receive training that teaches them everything they'd need to know about Bald Eagles and the program.

So, from February 1 - July 1, you would spend an hour at your nest observing their behavior and then reporting it electronically to Madison Audubon. Throughout the season and especially after fledging, the data is shared with the WDNR. It is important that you have a spotting scope, binoculars, or a long lens camera that allows you to see what is happening in the nest. I find it easiest to take photos so that I can zoom in and see some more detail in some of the nests that are particularly far from the road. And of course, you need a car to get to the nest as well as warm winter clothing in case your nest is not viewable from the road.

There are a number of nests in or near Walworth County that would benefit from additional volunteers. If you're interested, visit madisonaudubon.org/benw to fill out the volunteer form and get matched with a nearby nest! All volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure the protection of the eagle nests. Additionally, if you know of a Bald Eagle nest in the area, we would appreciate that information. If it is a nest that we are not aware of, you could be the watcher of that new nest if you wanted to be. Please provide nest information only to me and Brenna at Madison Audubon. I will list our contact information below.



Male Bald Eagle working on nest. Photo by Beth Martin



Bald Eagle nestlings. Photo by Beth Martin

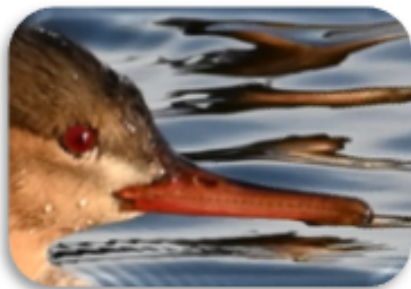
2022 was a difficult year for watching nests given how Avian Flu appeared to have killed many eaglets in the nest. But that information, even though it is difficult to witness, is important to collect and document to show what is happening to our eagles. It is clear that nests will stop expanding as dramatically as they have been since 2017 given the slowdown in their population growth. On the plus side, you do get to understand eagles better and sometimes manage to catch some pretty outstanding photographs!

If you would like to join us when nests are available, please fill out the form at madisonaudubon.org/benw. And if you are aware of an eagle's nest, email both me at bethbmartin@gmail.com and Brenna Marsicek at Madison Audubon bmarsicek@madisonaudubon.org

We appreciate any and all help you can give us to help us keep a good eye on these beautiful raptors.

Meet “Sawbill”

by Janice Bain



Serrated bill of female

This first-year male is a red-breasted merganser. When he turns two, he will be showing off his breeding plumage. Red-breasted mergansers earned the nickname “Sawbill” because of their thin serrated bills. You’ve probably guessed by now that those serrations would come in handy when dealing with slippery fish – and you’d be right. Maybe you didn’t guess how often each needs to forage for these fish.

Red-breasted mergansers need to eat 15-20 small fish (4-6”) per day. Mergansers are diving ducks and if you’ve been lucky enough to observe them, you see them dive way more than 15-20 times. In fact, researchers believe that they must dive 250-300 times per day or do a solid 4-5 hours of foraging to meet their energy needs. During foraging, they may also eat crustaceans, insects, and tadpoles. Red-breasted mergansers dive for their dinner, but they also swim with their eyes just below the surface as if they were snorkeling to look for prey.

In the winter, these ducks are found on all of the U.S.’s coastal waters and our large inland lakes. They also like to spend the winters on the coastal waters of Mexico.

If you want to seek out a red-breasted merganser this winter, look for them in the ocean, sheltered estuaries and bays. What, you don’t live on the coast? Me neither! Lucky for us, during the winter they also use lakes and rivers. My favorite place to find them is on Lake Michigan. Look for a duck that rides low in the water (not to be confused with a loon). They are usually found in small groups or by themselves.



Diving for his dinner.

One last tidbit about these awesome ducks: they are FAST! They have been clocked doing speeds up to 81 mph. If you want to get a photo, do it before they use their legs to run across the water in preparation for flight. Once they’re in the air, they will be gone before you can push that shutter button.

I hope you find some red-breasted mergansers this winter. Happy winter birding.

Photos by Janice Bain (Lake Michigan)

Information researched on the TheCornellLab, All About Birds website: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/>

TRAIL REPORT

Birding update from the Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy.

By Jim Killian

- At the interface with the Geneva Lake shore, large numbers of Canada geese and coots in the lake; also, quite a few buffleheads.
 - Birding is slower inland.
 - Juncos, chickadees, white breasted nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers, blue jays, red tail hawks, robins and crows are readily present.
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Winter Finch Forecast 2022-2023

Project predicts the movements of irruptive boreal finches.

Have you ever wondered what makes birds like Redpolls, Siskins and Crossbills migrate to our area in some winters but not others? Or maybe why some years are better than others for certain species. If so, then the Winter Finch Forecast should be of interest to you. This project predicts the movements and also the likelihood of an irruption of boreal finches into the lower 48 states.

The predictions are made based on annual seed crops of various species of trees that are present in the far north. With Finches being seed eaters, their movements are heavily influenced by the availability of such food sources. The project, which is led by Tyler Hoar of the Finch Research Network, predicts that there will be fair number of finches that will move into our area this winter. For mor information about the project visit the following website: [WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2022-2023 - FINCH RESEARCH NETWORK \(finchnetwork.org\)](https://finchnetwork.org)



Pine Siskin



Purple Finch



White-winged Crossbill



Common Redpoll



Evening Grosbeak



Red Crossbill

Chapter Field Trip

Tuesday, January 17, 2023

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Kettle Moraine State Forest - Southern Unit, Scuppernong Prairie State Natural Area
7920 County Road N, Eagle, WI

This event is free to attend, but 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 the property.

Join us for a visit to the Scuppernong Prairie State Natural Area in Southwest Waukesha County. This field trip will consist of a significant amount of walking and standing in winter weather, so please dress appropriately. Short-eared Owls and possibly a Snowy Owl will be the target species. We will meet along County Road N just south of Wilton Road shortly before 11:00 AM. If you are interested in going, please contact us.

[Contact - Lakeland Audubon Society](#) Call or Text: (262) 729-9702

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Bird Walks

Saturdays

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Big Foot Beach State Park

N1550 S Lakeshore Drive, Lake Geneva, WI

Meet in the main parking area to the right of the entrance station a little before 11:00 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.

Please contact us to let us know you are interested in attending a walk.

<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact>

Call or Text: (262) 729-9702



Adult Bald Eagle with nestling. Photo by Beth Martin

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.