



# The Chat

March 2023

---

## CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, March 28  
7:00 PM

Lions Field House - 270 Elkhorn Road (Hwy 67), Williams Bay, WI

Free and open to the public.

Featuring the following educational talk:

### ***"All About the Duck Lake Nature Trail"***

By Alice Brockman

Have you ever wondered about the Duck Lake Nature Trail? The trail, which runs through the Duck Lake Nature Area on the South side of Lake Como (formerly called Duck Lake) spans two miles and is open to the public. Located in the Town of Geneva just West of the City of Lake Geneva. It has a reputation as being a local hotspot for birders and nature lovers but is used by bicycling and jogging enthusiasts as well. The talk will cover the trail's history, current usage and also provide some insight with regards to future planning.

#### **About the Speaker**

Alice Brockman grew up in central Missouri, a real nature girl. A retired journalist and high school educator, Alice lives with husband Don and dog Oakley on Wildwood Drive just three blocks from the Duck Lake Nature Trail. She is a member of the Park Commission for the Town of Geneva, and her responsibilities include monitoring the trail after storm damage. Alice believes the trail is also a park and she's always thinking up plans for beautification. After all this time it's still hard to believe it took her seven years to find this hidden gem twenty years ago.





# SAX-ZIM BOG

## DESTINATION BIRDING

BY JANICE BAIN



*"Owl Jam"*

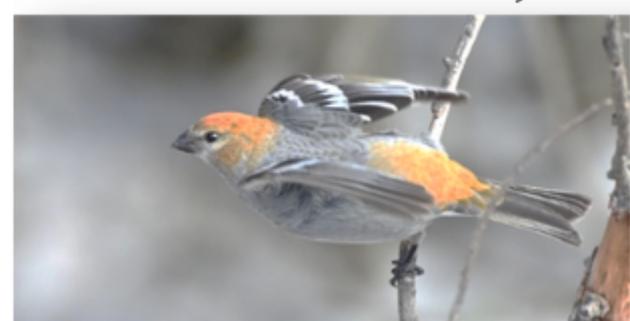


Pine Grosbeak

Birds are fun to watch wherever you live. Eventually, you may want to find species that don't reside in your neck of the woods, let's say, find birds in someone else's forest. The Sax-Zim Bog, with its diverse habitats, is such a place. Located about an hour northwest of Duluth, the Bog is truly "up north". The size is unexpected; it's over 300 square miles of wilderness. It is nestled between Hibbing to the north and Meadowlands to the South.

The west side of the Bog is where you will find the Sax-Zim Bog visitor center. It is the hub of the Bog with helpful staff and detailed maps. The workers will help you navigate the large area and keep you updated on the latest finds and locations shared by fellow birders, photographers and nature lovers.

Outside the visitor center there are multiple bird feeders and some short trails. In fact, there are "bird feeders" throughout the bog. Sometimes that means they have dumped a whole bag of birdseed on the ground, spread peanut butter on the tree trunks and/or filled traditional birdfeeders; all simply to help you find that "lifer" you so desperately seek.



Pine Grosbeak (female)

The main draw for many species found here is the Black Spruce-Tamarack Bog. Great Gray Owls, Boreal Chickadees, Black-backed and 3-toed woodpeckers are bog specialists. It is a wintering habitat for the Northern Hawk Owl, Great Gray Owl, White-winged Crossbill, Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, and both the Common and Hoary Redpolls.

Pasturelands and other grassland type habitats attract Sharp-tailed Grouse, Ruffed Grouse, Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrike and Black-billed Magpies. Other winter species that frequent the bog include Canada Jays, Pine Siskins, and everyone's favorite, the owls (9 recorded species). In addition to the Great-Gray and Northern Hawk owls, there are Barred Owls, Snowy Owls, Northern Saw-whet Owls, Great-horned owls and both the Long- and Short-eared owls. Very rare visits from the Boreal Owl occur; this owl is found primarily in Canada, into Alaska and in some of the western United States. The bog is filled with Aspen uplands, willow flats, meadows, lakes and rivers.

Birding isn't the only draw to this special place, mammals are too. The occasional moose pass through. The pine marten is especially fond of the provided peanut butter and the early risers, patient enough to wait, are often rewarded with a sighting. Snow-shoe hare, porcupine and even ermine thrive in the Bog. The Red-backed and Meadow voles are plentiful and in return supply food for the dependent owls' survival.

The Sax-Zim Bog is the whole package. The roads are dirt, the people are friendly, and the birds/animals are plentiful. It's no wonder that nature enthusiasts, photographers and, of course, birders come from all over the United States to see what the Bog has to offer. When you get those winter blues, try to find time for a long weekend exploring someone else's neck of the woods. You'll like what you find!



Evening Grosbeak



Canada Jay

For a visual feast and all Bog updates, join the Facebook group: [Friends of Sax-Zim Bog](#).

# "Who" Knew?

BY JANICE BAIN

## GREAT GRAY OWL

- Tallest owl in North America at 30"
- 3rd heaviest owl (Snowy and Great Horned are heavier)
- Can hear a vole under 2 feet of snow from 100 yards away.
- Nests in Sax-Zim Bog and occasionally large irruptions from Canada and far northern Minnesota bring huge numbers to the area.

## BARRED OWL

- Barred owls mostly eat small mammals like mice and voles, but sometimes they go fishing for crayfish and crabs. If a Barred Owl eats enough crayfish, the feathers under its wings can turn pink —just like a flamingo, which gets its hue from the high volume of shrimp in its diet. **1**
- Historians believe that Harriet Tubman, an avid naturalist, used the Barred Owl's call as a signal for people seeking to use the Underground Railroad. Depending on the call she used, freedom-seekers would know whether it was okay to come out of hiding. **2**

## NORTHERN HAWK OWL

- Its long tail gives this owl its "Hawk" name.
- The Hawk Owl only hunts during the daytime.
- Size of a football and similarly shaped.
- Circumboreal – Found in the boreal forests of North America, Europe and Siberian Russia.
- Unlike many owls, it often hunts and nests in disturbed landscapes such as logged land.

## SNOWY OWL

- Have bristles on their beaks to help them sense nearby objects.
- Their wingspan is 4-5' on average. These large powerful wings enable them to silently accelerate and sneak up on their prey.
- Because they spend significant time in the Arctic, they are forced to hunt by daylight. Snowy owls are diurnal.



Barred Owl

## LONG-EARED OWL

- If disturbed during its daytime roost, the long-eared owl raises its ear tufts, flattens its feathers, and freezes like a statue, thus resembling tree bark. Due to this statue-like pose with erect ear tufts, the bird was once known as the "cat owl." **5**
- The long-eared owl has a pattern of communal roosting during winter. It is typically a solitary bird by nature, making this a unique characteristic.
- The average lifespan of a long-eared owl is 25-30 years. **6**

## NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL

- A Saw-whet owl will often catch a mouse during the night, carry the prey to its daytime roost, and stand on the prey until the following evening before eating it. **3**
- They cache extra food – They may kill as many as 6 mice, one after the other without eating any of them during the hunt. In the winter, the cached prey may freeze. When retrieved, it will be carried to a roosting area where the owl will thaw the prey by lying down on it as they do when incubating eggs. **4**

1, 2 Obtained from: <https://www.audubon.org/news/10-fun-facts-about-barred-owl>

3, 4 Obtained from: <https://centerofthewest.org/2016/06/08/my-favorite-interesting-facts-about-northern-saw-whet-owls/>

5, 6 Obtained from: <https://birdeden.com/fascinating-facts-about-long-eared-owl>

# Planting for Wildlife

## Native Plant Spotlight

By Mariette Nowak

### SKUNK CABBAGE

*Symplocarpus foetidus*

#### First Flower of Spring!

The Skunk Cabbage is the first bold adventurer among plants in spring, blooming in late winter or very early spring before any other native wildflowers in Wisconsin. Pinch and smell the leaves and the skunk-like odor will tell you why it's called "Skunk" cabbage. The name "Cabbage" comes from the huge elephant-ear-sized leaves that grow in bunches like giant cabbages. These leaves come out later in spring, after the plant flowers.

Skunk Cabbage is amazing in many more ways. It's like a little tropical island in late winter because it is able to heat itself up and melt the snow around it. In this, it's more like a warm-blooded skunk than a "cold-blooded" cabbage. Also, the hood (spathe) has many small air spaces inside, like Styrofoam, which helps keep the plant warm. A thick stem, called the spadix, is protected under the hood. Many tiny flowers bloom on the spadix.

**Look Who's Coming for Dinner:** When the plant heats up in spring and the flowers bloom, bees are among the first to come for the pollen and warmth. The flowers smell a like rotting meat which brings flies and beetles that love the stink! Spiders lurk under the hood to catch the flies. Mourning cloak butterflies also visit.

In late April or early May, when the leaves grow big, frogs come to ambush the bugs. Snapping turtles eat the leaves. And in September, when the fruit is ripe, hungry mice and voles eat the pulp around the seeds, leaving the seeds for birds like wood ducks and ruffed grouse.

#### POISONOUS: Eating the leaves causes an intense burning in the mouth.

**Do You Know?** The skunk cabbage is in the same Arum family as many favorite houseplants, which come from the tropics, and cannot live outside in the north. One of the reasons the skunk cabbage has been able to do so is that it can heat itself up to warm tropic-like temperatures.



Skunk Cabbage in late winter (first emergence)



Skunk Cabbage in spring (nearing full growth)

**Mariette Nowak** is an avid native plant gardener and current President of the Kettle Moraine Wild Ones Chapter. She has a Master's degree in Botany and Zoology. Was also the Director of Wehr Nature Center for many years; former WSO Education Chair; former Editor of Lakeland Audubon's newsletter and author of *Birdscaping in the Midwest: A Guide to Gardening with Native Plants to Attract Birds*.

# Annual Midwest Crane Count

The International Crane Foundation Holds its annual count next month.

**Saturday, April 15, 2023**

**5:30 AM - 7:30 AM**

Each year in mid-April, over 1,800 volunteers travel to their local wetlands and favorite birding locations to participate in the crane count. This annual survey of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes spans over 150 counties in seven states of the upper Midwest, including Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Minnesota.

**To participate in the crane count**, you first need to contact your County Coordinator to be assigned a site and get more instructions.

**Kenosha and Racine:** Aszya Summers - [aszya.summers@gmail.com](mailto:aszya.summers@gmail.com) - 262-635-7959

**Rock:** Rowyn Noe - [noe.rowyna@gmail.com](mailto:noe.rowyna@gmail.com) - 608-774-4046

**Walworth and Waukesha:** Chris Schroeder - [schroecj@matc.edu](mailto:schroecj@matc.edu) - 262-525-7396

See Counter Information by clicking or tapping the "MORE INFO" button. There you will be able to download your data sheet, see instructions for entering your data and access other useful links.

**MORE INFO**

## WCC and the WDNR holds Open House Events Next Month

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will once again be holding their annual in-person open house meetings. Meetings will be held in all 72 counties of the state starting April 3 and ending April 6. The event will give members of the general public a chance to comment on and ask questions about local issues regarding the management of natural resources. All Open Houses begin at 6:00 PM.

**Waukesha County:** Monday, April 3 - Waukesha County Technical College - 800 Main Street, Pewaukee, WI

**Walworth County:** Tuesday, April 4 - Fontana Elementary School - 450 S. Main Street, Fontana, WI

**Jefferson County:** Tuesday, April 4 - Jefferson High School - 700 W. Milwaukee Street, Jefferson, WI

**Kenosha County:** Wednesday, April 5 - Richard Bong State Recreation Area - 26313 Burlington Road, Kansasville, WI

**Racine County:** Thursday, April 6 - Union Grove High School - 3433 S. Colony Avenue, Union Grove, WI

These "Open Houses" will serve as a warm-up for the "Spring Hearings" that will be held online the following week (April 10 at 12:00 PM - April 13 at 12:00 PM). Click on the link below for more information:

# Field Trip

Friday, March 24, 2023

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Noon)

Lake Como – Town of Geneva (Walworth County, WI)

Join us as we visit the shores of beautiful Lake Como. We will search the lake for both resident and migrating waterfowl. This outing will be conducted in a more stationary manner, as we bird at one spot and then drive to another. This field trip will begin at the Lake Como dam/outlet, which is located at the East end of the lake just off of Highway H. Meet in the parking area prior to 9:00 AM.

Please contact us and let us know if you are interested in attending this field trip.

<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact> Call or Text: +1 (262) 729-9702

---

## LAKELAND AUDUBON Board of Directors

---

### **President**

Kevin Dickey 262-889-4262

### **Vice-President**

Susan Seefeld 262-537-4921

### **Treasurer**

(Volunteer Needed)

### **Secretary**

Dale Jefchak 262-723-3025

### **Christmas Bird Count**

Lisa Granbur 262-275-5808

### **Newsletter**

(Volunteer Needed)

### **Education**

Janice Bain 262-215-1407

### **Bird Seed Sale**

(Volunteer Needed)

### **Conservation**

(Volunteer Needed)

### **Hospitality**

Kathy Wisniewski 262-949-4174

### **Field Trips**

(Volunteer Needed)

### **Publicity**

(Volunteer Needed)

## 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.

### **Sundays**

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

White River County Park

6503 Sheridan Springs Road, Lyons, WI

Get out and enjoy one of the best parks Walworth County has to offer. We'll walk the trails and be on the lookout for birds and other critters. We'll also watch for plant blooms and other interesting elements of nature. Meet at the kiosk by the parking lot a little before 11:00 AM.

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

<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact>

Call or Text: +1 (262) 729-9702

**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.



**LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
A chapter of the National Audubon Society  
serving Walworth County, Wisconsin and the  
surrounding areas.

LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

# Native Plant Sale

2023 Chapter Fundraiser

## Order Form

Order date:

Orders are due by May 26, 2023  
(Payment must be included)

### Customer Information

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone number:

Email:



### Quantity of Plants

### Plant Species

	Pasque Flower
	False Aster
	Sweet Flag
	Whorled Milkweed
	Tall Coreopsis
	Shorts Aster
	Pale Purple Coneflower
	Mist Flower
	Early Sunflower
	Elm-Leaved Goldenrod
	Wild Senna
	Bottlebrush Grass
	Praire Dropseed

**Total Number of Plants (minimum of 4)**

**"Buy 8 and get 2 for free"**

Total Amount Due

X 5.00 = \$

+Donation of: \$

= \$

**Order Pick-up:**

Orders need to be picked up at the Lions Field House (270 Elkhorn Road, Williams Bay, WI) on Tuesday, June 6, 2023 between 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM. "No Exceptions"