

LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



# *The Chat*



October 2023

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## CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, October 24th

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:

### Adam Birding Conservancy

By Dave Adam

The speaker will briefly go through the history of Adam Birding Conservancy, a 331 acre preserve for hiking, bird watching and prairie promenading. Purchased in 2015, the site barely cracked the top 100 sites in terms of birding species diversity in Wisconsin with 214 different species found. Unusual actions recently include a family of eight Trumpeters who have habituated one of the small ponds on the property this summer and a great raptor flyover with about 1,000 broad-winged hawks on Saturday, October 7th. The site has river otters, badgers, coyotes and a variety of bees and smaller creatures as well as over 200 different plant species.

### About the Speaker

Dave Adam is a retired community banker who spent almost 40 years in the finance field before retiring at the end of 2022. He travels extensively and is on five non-profit boards.

In addition, he is CEO (Chief Environmental Overseer) of his family's 331 acre conservancy a few miles north of Whitewater in Cold Spring. He and his wife split time between places in Franklin (southeastern Milwaukee County) and Whitewater.



Bobolink - Adam Birding Conservancy. Photo by Kevin Dickey

# A Successful 2023 Bluebird nesting season

By John Scholtz

Walworth County Bluebird Coordinator Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW)

I've been a bluebirder for about 10 years and every season I learn something new, this past season included. This time, it was the importance of monitoring nest boxes as well as **when** Bluebird nest building occurs in Walworth County.

I have a small Bluebird trail in Elkhorn with about 12 nest boxes. It's not many compared to my counterparts in other counties (some have hundreds), but it's the best I can do right now. Having such a small amount of nest boxes requires me to be diligent when attracting Bluebirds, as my goal is to increase the Bluebird population in Walworth County.

This focuses on one of my nest boxes in particular; one that was mounted late in 2022, about 6 feet above the ground (to make it difficult for feral cats to jump) as well as grease on the pole (predators don't want to climb a greasy pole). In March of 2023, House Sparrows (HOSP) moved in. I battled the Sparrows for a few weeks, eventually installing a Van Ert Trap. After the Sparrows, Wrens came. Almost daily, I would clean out the Wren's nesting materials (prior to egg laying so as not to violate the Migratory Bird Act). This went on until the middle of May 2023 until the Wrens finally moved on.

Typically, Bluebirds in Walworth County begin nest building in March/April, but by now, it was late May and no Blues in this box. I thought it was too late, but June 1st, I decided to check the box once more and lo and behold, a fully formed Bluebird nest and the first egg came a couple days later! My efforts paid off and this box had 2 successful clutches with a total of 9 baby bluebirds fledging from the nest box. The second clutch fledged August 30th right after the intense heat (nearly 100 degrees) in the region.

In addition to my own success, other Bluebirders in our area have also expressed a very good nesting season.

This past summer proves that even when it seems lost for our Blues, human assistance can help the Bluebird population increase. But our Blues in Walworth County continue to need everybody's help. Please see the figure on left from BRAW that documents Walworth County's low numbers in 2022 in comparison to Bluebird fledglings of neighboring counties.

Lets all do our part to bring back these joyful birds because Bluebirds are a sign of Happiness and we all could use plenty of that in our lives!



# Fall Garden Clean-up

By Janice Bain

Education Chair - Lakeland Audubon Society

Have you joined the growing number of gardeners who recognize the importance of converting sections of turf lawn into native garden habitat? Maybe you've planted some natives, watched them grow and prosper. Well done, take a bow! Maybe you are still on the fence. Hopefully, you'll investigate the possibilities and give it a try.



If you have such a garden, you may have the impulse to cut back and clean up your garden this fall. Check that impulse, kick up your feet and save that energy for the spring. Go ahead and eliminate any weeds, but leave the rest. Have leaves landed in your garden? Fallen leaves will act as a weed suppressant in the spring. Leaves offer nutrients to be recycled in your garden soil. They help regulate the ground temperature as they provide insulation for underground pollinators, bugs and mammals. Leaves, especially oak leaves, harbor caterpillars that need a place to safely overwinter. Leaves are beneficial in many respects, especially in shade gardens. If your leaves have any sort of disease, then be sure to rake and dispose of them.

Leaving the flower heads is essential. Flower heads produce seeds used by birds not only to subsist, but to build up necessary energy reserves for migration. Northern migrants will use these beds as replenishing pit-stops on their way south. In the spring, any leftover seeds will be utilized by northern-bound migrants. Several pollinators require soft, pithy-filled or hollow stems in which to overwinter. Cutting back these stalks in the fall reduces their options. Leaving the perennials intact through the long winter months add winter beauty to your yard. Perennials are particularly striking when blanketed with frost or after a beautiful ice storm.

In the spring, those tired natives will provide necessary materials for nest building. Plant bits, pieces and fluff are essential elements to nest-building birds. The dense habit of perennials will also provide safety and shelter for other critters that call your yard home. Once winter arrives, you can look for tracks in the snow. These tracks may lead you to discover unexpected residents.

I have enjoyed watching the birds dining on seeds, berries and pollen in my yard and look forward to expanding the buffet available to them. I hope you feel the same and encourage neighbors and friends to join in healing the land one native garden at a time.



**Right:** *Migrating Nashville Warbler happy to find a patch of asters*

# Field Trip

Tuesday, November 7th

10:00 AM – Dusk

Horicon Marsh – N7725 State Road 28, Horicon, WI

Free to attend!

Join us as we visit Horicon Marsh. The land is jointly managed by both the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Southern 1/3) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Northern 2/3). This field trip will consist of a fair amount of walking, standing and sitting outdoors. The focus will be on migrating Waterfowl. We will meet in the parking lot of the WDNR visitor center at 10:00 AM. For more information about the property, please visit one or both of the websites listed below by clicking or tapping on the links:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Lands/WildlifeAreas/horicon/education.html>

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/horicon>

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

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### **Field Trips**

(Volunteer Needed)

### **Publicity**

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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.

### **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.