

LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



# ***The Chat***



**November 2024**

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## **CHAPTER MEETING**

Tuesday, November 26th

7:00 PM

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

Free and open to the public!

### ***Wintering Raptors of Wisconsin and Illinois***

By Vic Berardi

Vic Berardi, founder of the all volunteer Illinois Beach State Park Hawkwatch and well known raptor photographer, will discuss wintering raptors of Wisconsin and neighboring Illinois. Emphasis will be raptor descriptions and possible locations to find these birds in the winter months. Vic spends a great deal of time in the winter searching for raptors and photographing them. His photographs have been used by several conservation organizations and in raptor field guides. He is also the Chair of the Winter Raptor Survey program for the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) and has been conducting a survey the past few winters in southeastern Wisconsin.

#### **About the Speaker**

Vic Berardi is the founder of the all-volunteer Illinois Beach State Park Hawk Watch which has conducted twenty-four complete seasons of full time hawk migration monitoring which began in the fall of the year 2000. In 2013, he and a few others conducted several spot counts at a new hawkwatch site at the Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve on the shore of Lake Michigan in Highland Park, IL. The Fort Sheridan Hawkwatch has now completed seven seasons of hawk watching and is now close to having full time coverage.

Vic is currently serving on the Board of Directors for the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), a position he previously held several years ago. He also serves on several HMANA Committees including being the Chair of the Winter Raptor Survey Committee. He also served for several years as the Central Continental Flyway Editor for Hawk Migration Studies which is HMANA's biannual publication. In 2014 he was the recipient of HMANA's Appreciation Award for his outstanding service to further hawk migration studies and conservation. In 2009 he was awarded the Service to Chicago Area Birders by the Chicago Audubon Society. And in 2007 he was awarded the Grassroots Conservation Leadership Award for his leadership in raptor education and research.



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In addition to Vic's dedication to the hawk watches in northeastern Illinois and HMANA, he also finds time to write articles on hawk watching, give hawk identification seminars and raptor conservation related talks. Vic is also an accomplished photographer and many of his photos are published in several magazines, including several cover photos for Hawk Migration Studies and Bird Watching Magazine and Outdoor Illinois.

His book contributions include, "Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America" by Donald & Lillian Stokes, "Hawks From Every Angle" and "Hawks At A Distance" by Jerry Liguori, "Birds of Prey: Hawks, Eagles, Falcons, and Vultures of North America" by Pete Dunne with Kevin Carlson, "The Crossley Guide: Raptors" by Richard Crossley, Jerry Liguori and Brian Sullivan and the "Pembina Valley Raptor Field Guide." Most recently he has contributed many photos for the new HawkWatch International, HWI Raptor ID app co-authored by Jerry Liguori and Brian Sullivan and has made contributions to the latest raptor book by Brian Wheeler, "Birds of Prey of the East: A Field Guide." He also regularly donates his photos for use in raptor conservation efforts.

Vic is also a member of the Raptor Research Foundation, HawkWatch International and several other birding organizations including the Illinois Ornithological Society in which he served as a Board member for 4 years and Field Trip Chair for 3 years.

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## Lakeland Audubon's Christmas Bird Count

Annual count will be held next month.

By Kyle Cudworth, Citizen Science Chair - Lakeland Audubon Society

What is the Christmas Bird Count? It is a day, or a few hours of birding, keeping careful track of numbers of birds of which species, all with a purpose beyond just the enjoyment of birding. From a researcher's perspective it is the longest running Citizen Science survey in the world. Counts are done on a chosen day between Dec. 14 and Jan. 5 in well-defined 15-mile diameter circles, of which there are now over 2000. Wisconsin probably has the richest and most in-depth Audubon count data of any place in the world.

On Sat. Dec. 21, 2024, local birders will have our opportunity to extend this wonderful legacy by joining in this year's Christmas Bird Count. Our Lake Geneva circle is centered at the Ridge Hotel on highway 50, near the southwest end of Lake Como. We divide the circle into several zones and typically one or two birders cover each zone by car and hiking, with a few of us hiking small areas.

Those who live within the count circle can also participate by watching feeders in their yards. The Lakeland Audubon Society count will be coordinated by Lisa Granbur, with data compiled after the count by Kyle Cudworth. All birders are welcome to participate, and we especially encourage those who haven't done so before to join the effort. You don't have to be a candidate for best birder in the county. If you know the common birds of the area in this season and can use your guide book (and binoculars or a spotting scope) to identify others, you can help.

We always have plenty of Canada Geese, but sometimes less common geese will be found among the large flocks if one looks carefully enough. It used to be noteworthy to see a Bald Eagle on our count, but now it would be surprising if we did not have a few of them to report. Sometimes even out-of-season birds will show up: my daughter and I were surprised by a Great Blue Heron the first year we counted.

Those interested or possibly interested in joining the count should contact Lisa Granbur

**Email:** [parula13@sbcglobal.net](mailto:parula13@sbcglobal.net) or **Cell:** 312-354-0199

At the end of the count day we will gather at the Lions Field House in Williams Bay (our usual meeting place) for food, conversation, and turning in our count forms. Count data can also be sent to me, Kyle, at my university email address: [k-cudworth@uchicago.edu](mailto:k-cudworth@uchicago.edu). I can also answer some questions, but Lisa will coordinate who counts which area.

# Surprise! Surprise!! Surprise!!!

By Wayne Rohde

*As I've often quipped, one key component of the joy of birding concerns our encounters with the unexpected. And three such unexpected bird encounters occurred during our family's recent three-week Fall Trip North in Wisconsin's Northwoods and along Minnesota's North Shore this past September and October.*

## Surprise #1: Whooping Cranes (WHCR)

Whenever camping takes us to northwestern Wisconsin in autumn, I make sure to bird the Crex Meadows State Wildlife Area in Burnette County, where, more often than not, I come across thousands of Sandhill Cranes staging for fall migration. But this year, prior to heading to Crex, we stopped at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Juneau County, where I enjoyed good looks at seven Whooping Cranes, a species which was once on the brink of extinction, but is now on the increase thanks to the well-known Operation Migration project at Necedah in the early 2000s.



## Surprise #2: Harris's Sparrows (HASP)

While enjoying a hearty breakfast at the Gunflint Lodge, along the shoreline of Gunflint Lake northwest of Grand Marais, MN, I spotted a lone Harris's Sparrow on the outdoor patio. This elegant native sparrow belongs to the same *Zonotrichia* genus of sparrows as our White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows. But unlike the other *Zonotrichias*, Harris's Sparrows are uncommon migrants in the Badger State, and only occasionally show up during migration. To increase my delight, a handful of Harris's Sparrows fed in the drive next to our campsite almost every day of our ten day stay near Tofte, MN.



## Surprise #3: Lapland Longspurs (LALO) and American Pipits (AMPI)

Throughout our time along Minnesota's North Shore, I saw and heard thousands of Horned Larks pushing south. They frequently numbered over one hundred in any given flock. During winter months in southern Wisconsin, when this species can readily be found along the gravel shoulders of country roads on snowy days, smaller flocks of larks may also contain a mix of Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs. I did see a couple Snow Buntings on our day trip to Ely, MN (the home of Sigurd Olson), but was pleasantly surprised to come across thousands of migrating Lapland Longspurs in their winter plumage. These also occurred in flocks of one hundred or more individuals, at several locations between Tofte and Grand Marais.

Not to be outdone, American Pipits, which also prefer open country (such as fields and shorelines), were present by the thousands as well. And, like the larks and longspurs, they too could be spotted in flocks of one hundred or more. This combination of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs and American Pipits, all intently focused on feeding at fairly close distances as they stocked up for their flight south, was most assuredly a first-class treat for both my eyes and my ears.

Each of the above observations, in turn, makes me wonder, "What's next?" What's next for you? What's next for me? Who knows??? But this I encourage and predict: (1) get outside, (2) be on the alert, and (3) anticipate surprises along the way ... then (4) savor the joy which comes your way whenever you encounter a dose of the unexpected!!!

# Field Trip

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

12:00 PM (Noon) – 4:00 PM

Richard Bong State Recreation Area – 26313 Burlington Road. Kansasville, WI

Open to the public! (State Park Sticker Required)

Join us for an afternoon of birding at [Bong SRA](#). We will do some hiking and also some stationary scanning for birds at one of the top bird watching locations in the state. Situated in the northwest corner of Kenosha County, the property has an interesting history and is a major destination for outdoor recreation. It also has been officially recognized as an IBA (Important Bird Area) by both Audubon and the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership. For more information about this, visit the following website: [Wisconsinbirds/IBA](https://wisconsinbirds.org/IBA)

Meet at the Molinaro Visitor Center parking lot. From there, we will proceed to various birding hotspots throughout the property. 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**

(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.