



The Chat

January 2025

CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, January 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:

Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

By Steven Byers

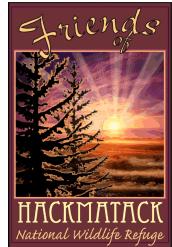
In this talk, the speaker will cover all important aspects regarding the refuge. This will include who, why and how it was started. The talk will also outline the many benefits that the refuge provides to people and wildlife.

About the Speaker



Steve, who resides in Lakewood, IL currently serves as the Chair of the Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and enjoys participating in workdays with his chainsaw. Previously, Steve was the Field Representative for the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission for 29 years where he was responsible for protection and stewardship of over 100 Nature Preserves in northeastern Illinois. Steven earned a M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from Iowa State University and has served as the President of the Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society and President of the Fox Valley Land Foundation.

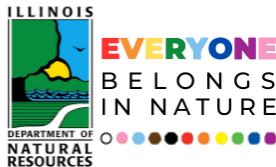
Steven retired from the U.S. Army Reserve after 37 years with the rank of Colonel and responsibilities as Chief of Staff, 330th Medical Brigade. Steven received the Cyrus Mark Conservation award from The Nature Conservancy for helping preserve Bluff Spring Fen Nature Preserve and has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Interior as a recipient of the "Partners in Conservation Award" for his role in helping establish Hackmatack NWR. Interests include fen wetlands and their management, biking, and kayaking.



McHenry County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



McHenry County Audubon Society



PRESS RELEASE

January 20, 2025

For Immediate Release

Contact:

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[\(262\) 448-3558](tel:(262)448-3558)

Celebrate Eagles along the Fox River and on Geneva Lake on Saturday, February 1, 2025

RICHMOND, IL- Celebrate the eagles of the Fox River Valley on Saturday, February 1, 2025. Winter is a perfect time to see bald eagles in the wild as they congregate to feed near open waters along the Fox River and at open spots on lakes. An **In Search of Eagles** outdoor event will be held at four sites on Saturday morning.

In Search of Eagles will be held from 8 to 10 am in Illinois at the McHenry Dam, the Algonquin Dam and the Fox River Shores Forest Preserve in Carpentersville on the Fox River and in Wisconsin at the Williams Bay Boat Launch on Geneva Lake. Attendees are asked to dress for the weather and to bring their own binoculars if they have a pair, but binoculars are not needed to enjoy seeing birds in the

wild. Detailed maps to all four locations can be found at <https://hackmatacknwr.org/in-search-of-eagles-2025/>.

There will be scopes and binoculars available for use at each location, along with guided activities for children. Visit the site closest to you or visit them all! This is a free all-ages event. Representatives from Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Moraine Hills State Park, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Lakeland Audubon Society, McHenry County Conservation District and McHenry County Audubon will help search for eagles and identify other birds using the river and the lake.

No registration is required. If you have any concerns on Saturday morning about the weather, please call the Friends of Hackmatack phone line at (262) 448-3558 where there will be a message regarding the status of the event.

WISCONSIN Master Naturalist



<https://wimasternaturalist.org/>

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist program supports a network of well-informed volunteers and instructors dedicated to conservation service, leadership, and lifelong learning. Through expert-led trainings out in nature and in the classroom, Master Naturalists are equipped to address environmental challenges facing the state. Make a positive impact through stewardship, citizen science, and educational activities. Join us today!

Learn and Serve in Nature

Supported through the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension, the Master Naturalist program promotes awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the natural environment by developing a network of well-informed volunteers dedicated to conservation service within their communities.

To become a Master Naturalist, individuals complete 40 hours of expert-led training at locations across the state. Equipped with new knowledge, experiences, and connections, Master Naturalists then go on to serve stewardship, citizen science, and education efforts in Wisconsin and continue their learning through advanced trainings.



Master Naturalists come from all walks of life – college students, retirees, teachers, farmers, hunters, nature guides, professionals, young parents – and represent all levels of knowledge about the natural world. They help monitor weather, maintain trails, teach children about pollinators, and so much more.

Do you care about nature and enjoy learning about the state's natural resources? Join us!

What do Master Naturalists Do?

A whole lot! After their training, Master Naturalists provide and support educational opportunities, gather data as citizen scientists, and help take care of Wisconsin's land and water. Many Master Naturalists are involved with multiple organizations and activities. We help find opportunities for Master Naturalists looking for new connections with organizations across the state. [Get involved!](#)

Avian Flu: Still A Serious Threat to Birds

An update from Beth Martin

I want to make all aware that Hoo's Woods Raptor Center had a Bald Eagle that needed to be put down for avian flu. And AF is thriving just to the south of us in Illinois. And just recently, I read that there were four dead Geese on Whitewater lake. That is really a bummer because there are several Eagle nests around Whitewater lake. It was called into the DNR but I just want to make people aware that any dead birds should be called into the DNR with a specific location. I just hate that we are gearing up to go through this again but there is also no way to stop it.

Any sick or dead raptors should also be reported to the DNR. If alive, also call Hoo's Woods or Fellow Mortals Wildlife Hospital. The CDC says that the risk of transmission to a human from wild birds is very low, as there are only two known cases of that occurring. Wisconsin DNR Sick Bird Reporting email: DNRWildlifeSwitchboard@wisconsin.gov

Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources - Madison, WI - (608)-267-0866 <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/disease/Avianinfluenza>

Hoo's Wood Raptor Center - Milton, WI - (608) 883-2795 <https://hooswoods.org/>

Fellow Mortals Wildlife Hospital - Lake Geneva, WI - (262) 248-5055 <https://fellowmortals.org/>

Snow Buntings

By Janice Bain



Found just south of Jones Bus Co, Hwy 67, Elkhorn. Janice Bain

Snow buntings are a tundra breeder. They spend their summers in the Arctic. Their summer plumage is a beautiful crisp white to help them blend in with the Arctic snow. They spend their winters basking in the more favorable temperatures of the northern half of the U.S. and in Canada. In the winter season, they acquire rusty tones that help them blend in with the colors of sand, dirt and the stubble of crops and grasses. Interestingly, the switch of plumage from winter/rusty to summer/white is not done by molting. To rid themselves of the browns, the males will rub their bellies and heads on the snow until they wear down the brown feather tips and reveal the pure white underneath.

Males make their spring trip to the Arctic about 4 weeks before the females in order to secure a prime nesting spot. In the weeks they arrive, temperatures may plummet as low as -22°F. If they have an established nest from previous years, they may reuse it, changing out the lining for the next brood. Nesting options are limited in the Arctic, late comers may have to settle for barrels, metal cans, construction rubble or any other spot they can find. Rocks are the favored nesting spots, they construct their nests as far back in holes or crevices as possible, even between rocks. This provides reasonable protection from predators, but not the low temperatures of the rocks or the air. To combat the frigidity, snow buntings build their bulky cup nest with mosses and grass. Next, they create a thick nest lining using components such as fur, feathers, rootlets and wispy grasses. This construction helps them incubate the eggs and warm the nestlings. The extreme arctic conditions require the females to remain in the nest for most of the incubation period leaving no time to find food. The males deliver food to their partners about every 15 minutes.

Snow buntings are ground dwellers, making the fields, beaches and road edges likely habitat. Their diet consists of insects and spiders as well as seeds from both flowers and grasses. These items are picked from the ground or they may leap up to grab their meal. If you were to try to attract them to your yard, scattering an array of seeds on the ground would be a smart start. Snow buntings are often found with other ground dwellers such as lapland longspurs and horned larks. After heavy snows, all three of these species are often found closer to the road, foraging in the roadside gravel. Be sure to check out your local backroads, it's your best bet to find them. Snow buntings are fun to watch as they seem to blow as a group, up and around like a flurry of snow. The small flock that I watched would circle back and land together in very spot they just left.

Happy winter birding to all!

Sources

All About Birds

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/snow-bunting/overview>

Audubon Bird Guide/Longspurs and snow buntings

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/snow-bunting>

Great Backyard Bird Count

28th Annual • February 14–17, 2025

Count birds in your
backyard, local park,
or wherever you spot a
bird, and submit your
observations online.
birdcount.org

Dark-eyed Junco/Junco hyemalis
Photo: Alex Martin/Macaulay Library



Sponsored in part by:



Each year our participation grows as more people of all ages around the world spend their weekend counting, learning about, and celebrating birds. See [results from past years](#) highlighting the data and trends from the Great Backyard Bird Counts.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an inter-organizational effort between the **Cornell Lab of Ornithology**, **National Audubon Society**, and **Birds Canada**. We work together to bring the joys of birdwatching to our members.

Whether you count one bird or hundreds, participating is easy and fun for all ages! Let birds bring you closer to nature and to each other by spending four days in February with us!

How to Participate

Great Backyard Bird Count at Kishwauketoe

Friday, February 14, 2025

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (Noon)

Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy 251 Elkhorn Road, Williams Bay, WI

Join members of our chapter as we participate in the 28th annual Great Backyard Bird Count at the Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy. We will hike the trails and count birds to provide data that will help scientists who work in the field of bird conservation. Weather permitting, we'll enjoy a morning of birding being outside at the beautiful KNC. Meet at the pavilion on the west side of the property, which is located just across the street (Hwy 67) from the Lions Field House.

Please contact us if you would like to attend this outing. lakelaudubon.com/contact

About The Count

Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days we invite people to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them to us. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations.

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was the first online participatory-science project (also referred to as community science or citizen science) to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, we became a global project when we began entering data into eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related participatory science (community science or citizen science) project.

Field Trip

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Noon)

Burlington School Forest – 2175 312 Ave/S English Settlement Ave (Highway J), Burlington, WI

Free and open to the public!

Join us as we visit the Burlington School Forest. We will hike the numerous trails that are throughout the property. The focus will be finding winter finches and resident songbirds. The terrain can be somewhat hilly and uneven, so please wear appropriate boots or shoes. Hiking poles are recommended. Meet in the parking area (off of Highway J) prior to 9:00 AM. Learn more about the property by clicking/taping the link below.

<https://aweahlofnature.org/parks/burlington-school-forest/>

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

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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 and let us know that 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.