



The Chat

January 2026

CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, January 27

7:00 PM

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

Free and open to the public!

American Kestrels in Wisconsin

By Dan Erickson

Join the Lakeland Audubon Society at their January 2026 chapter meeting. This meeting will feature a guest speaker (Dan Erickson) that will give a talk about American Kestrels in Wisconsin. He will go over life history, habitat needs, and the conservation efforts that are being made to slow the decline of this beautiful little falcon.



*American Kestrel (Male) using a "Hovering" hunting technique.
Photo by Janice Bain.*



Dan Erickson seen conducting banding operations at the Cedar Grove Ornithological Research Station.

About the speaker: Danny is a birder from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin where his life-long interest in nature and biology led him to study wildlife ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Since then, he has been fortunate to learn from many skilled raptor researchers at HawkWatch International, The Peregrine Fund, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, and Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch honing his raptor banding abilities. Since 2021, Danny oversees the raptor count and banding operations each fall at Cedar Grove Ornithological Research Station continuing its mission monitoring long-term avian migration trends in the western Great Lakes. He is currently a graduate student at UW-Green Bay studying disease in migrating hawks.

Climate Watch

Help Track the Effects of Climate Change—and Help the Birds You Love

Audubon's Survival by Degrees study shows that two-thirds (64%) (389 out of 604) of North American bird species are at risk of extinction from climate change. The good news is that our science also shows that if we take action now we can help improve the changes for 76% of species at risk. Join [your organization's name] as we participate in Audubon's community science program, Climate Watch.

If you can identify bluebirds, nuthatches, goldfinches, towhees, or Painted Bunting by sight and sound, or are eager to learn, put your bird knowledge to use and help us conduct surveys to see how these species are already responding to climate change in our area.

The next season of Climate Watch is January 15 — February 15, 2026.

Check out the [Climate Watch](#) website to learn more about participating in this program including guidance on conducting a safe survey.



[Two-page Info PDF](#)

[\(for Climate Watch participants\)](#)

Audubon Photography Awards

The 2026 Audubon Photography Awards are now open

The contest will close on March 4th 2026 at 11:00 AM



About the Contest

One of the most respected nature photography competitions in the world, the Audubon Photography Awards celebrates the beauty and diversity of birds by honoring the best photos and videos of birdlife. The winning images, chosen from thousands of entries, capture a dazzling array of bird species and behaviors. They also illustrate the essential relationship between birds and the habitats they need to thrive.

The Audubon Photography Awards now spans the Western Hemisphere just as birds do, connecting vibrant cultures and vital ecosystems. Entrants from the United States and Canada in North America, and from Chile and Colombia in South America, will each be eligible for cash prizes and a chance to have their images featured in Audubon magazine. This year, in addition to \$5,000, the Grand Prize winners will receive a voyage to Antarctica with [HX Expeditions](#) to combine birding, conservation, and exploration on a one-of-a-kind trip.

Explore the information below to learn about the contest for U.S. and Canada residents, including expert judges, rules, and prizes. This year we aim to showcase not only how birds connect us, but also how photography inspires action to protect them.

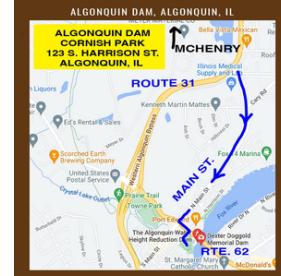
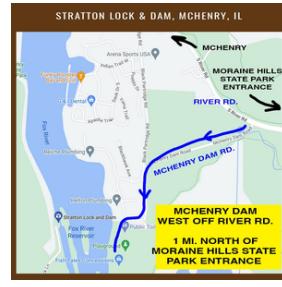
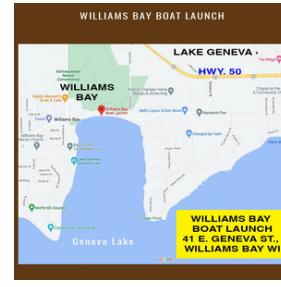
Entry Fee

The entry fee is \$15 per image or video for individuals in the U.S. and Canada (excluding Quebec). No payment is required for submissions to the Youth division for entrants who are 13 to 17 years of age.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Contest begins January 15, 2026. Must be at least 13 years of age and a legal resident of the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, or Canada (excluding Quebec) to enter. Entrants under the age of majority must get permission from their parent or legal guardian to enter. Rules [here](#).

[Enter Here](#)

In Search of Eagles 2026



In Search of Eagles

Saturday, February 7, 2026

7:30 AM – 9:30 AM

Free Event, Drop In

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.

Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Moraine Hills State Park, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, McHenry County Audubon, McHenry County Conservation District and Lakeland Audubon Society will be on hand at the McHenry, Algonquin, and former Carpenter dam (meet at Fox River Shores Forest Preserve) sites along the Fox River in Illinois and at the Williams Bay boat launch on Lake Geneva in Wisconsin to help you search for eagles. 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!

No registration is required. 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.

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.

Eagle Hike

Saturday, February 7, 2026

8:30 – 9:30 AM

Prairieview Education Center

Crystal Lake, IL

The Eagle Hike is free to residents, and \$5 for non-residents. Bring your binoculars and hike with us to the Fox River to listen and look for bald eagles. Registration is required. [**REGISTER HERE**](#)

Raptors of Illinois

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Prairieview Education Center

Crystal Lake, IL

This FREE presentation features Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education. They will bring several live raptors (sorry, no eagles), to teach about the amazing traits all raptors have in common. Learn how we can protect them now and into the future. Registration is required. [**REGISTER HERE**](#)

Great Backyard Bird Count

29th Annual • February 13-16, 2026

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

birdcount.org



Northern Cardinal / *Cardinalis cardinalis*
Photo: Seth Konner / Macaulay Library



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.

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 Kishwauketo

Friday, February 13, 2026

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Kishwauketo Nature Conservancy - 251 Elkhorn Road, Williams Bay, WI

Join members of our chapter as we participate in the 29th annual Great Backyard Bird Count at the Kishwauketo 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 some time 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. lakelandaudubon.com/contact

Winter Wildlife Mistakes to Avoid!

✗ Salt-Based Ice Melt



Burns paws, poisons birds
-use pet-safe or sand

✗ Cutting Dead Stems



Hollow stems house
overwintering bees

✗ Raking All Leaf Litter



Leaf litter is
winter shelter

✗ Cutting Branches With Nests



Birds reuse winter shelter spots

✗ Frozen Bird Baths



Refresh daily with warm water

✗ Feeding Bread



Bread harms -use seed & suet

✗ Outdoor Sticky Traps



Deadly to birds + small mammals

Field Trip

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

2:30 PM – 5:30 PM (Dusk)

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

Open to the public! (State Park Sticker Required)



Northern Shrike, by Janice Bain

Join us for an afternoon of birding at [Bong SRA](#). We will go hiking and also conduct stationary bird scanning 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 has been officially recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by both the Audubon Society and the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership. For more information about this, visit the following website: [Wisconsinbirds/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.

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<https://lakelandaudubon.com/contact> Call or Text: +1 (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.

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.