

LAKELAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



The Chat



March 2026

CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, March 24

7:00 PM

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

Free and open to the public!

"Sharing Our Shore and the Return of the Piping Plover to Waukegan Shores"

By Carolyn Lueck

Join the Lakeland Audubon Society at its March 2026 chapter meeting. This meeting will feature a guest speaker (Carolyn Lueck) who will talk about the film she produced: *Sharing Our Shore and the Return of the Piping Plover to Waukegan Shores*. After an introduction and some background information, we will show the film.

The endangered Great Lakes Piping Plover population is federally protected. Habitat loss due to beach development and other causes reduced the population to less than 12 pairs in the 1980s, and all of them were in Michigan. Before then, 500 to 800 pairs of piping plovers had nested in the Great Lakes Region. The Waukegan area used to be the primary nesting area for the plovers in Illinois. Conservation efforts have helped the species rebound to 88 breeding pairs last summer, the highest number since the species was declared endangered, according to the Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team.



Sharing Our Shore and the Return of the Piping Plover to Waukegan Shores chronicles the life of Blaze and Pepper – two charismatic Great Lakes Piping Plovers who were captive-reared and released on the shores of Waukegan in 2023. Against all odds, they returned in 2024 and successfully fledged three chicks – Juniper, Sage, and Willow – marking a remarkable milestone for this endangered species and for our local conservation community.

Sharing Our Shore Movie Poster, photo provided by Carolyn Lueck.

This film showcases the dedicated efforts behind Lake County Audubon Society's conservation program, Sharing Our Shore – Waukegan, and the special role it plays in raising awareness and protecting the unique lakefront habitat vital to the plovers' survival and success. The film includes photos and videos captured by volunteer monitors and celebrates conservation, volunteerism, and community action along the Lake Michigan shore.

The film was written and produced by Carolyn Lueck, who will introduce the film and will host a Q&A after the screening. She will share firsthand experiences from the 2024 and 2025 nesting seasons and offer insights into what it takes to protect a federally endangered species right here in Lake County, Illinois.



Piping Plover - Adult "Blaze", photo provided by Carolyn Lueck



Piping Plover - Adult "Pepper", photo provided by Carolyn Lueck



Piping Plover - Brooding a Chick, photo provided by Carolyn Lueck



Piping Plover - Chick, photo provided by Carolyn Lueck



About the speaker: Carolyn Lueck is President of the Lake County Audubon Society and Committee Chair of their Sharing Our Shore – Waukegan initiative. She started monitoring the endangered Great Lakes Piping Plovers in 2023. After spending one morning on the beach monitoring four captive-reared piping plover fledglings that were released on a beach in Waukegan, IL, she knew her life would never be the same.

TIMBERDOODLE

By Janice Bain

Monikers for the American Woodcock

Most popular: Timberdoodle **Other nicknames:** Labrador twister, Bogsucker, Mudsnipe



American Woodcock, Audubon Photos.

When you think of sandpipers, a host of shore-loving waterbirds come to mind, yellowlegs, stilts, plovers etc. While the American woodcock seems to be an unlikely candidate, it does reside in the sandpiper family. Uniquely, it chooses forest floors and shrubby old fields over shorelines. Like all sandpipers, it uses its considerable beak to probe the soil for food, earthworms, snails, millipedes, spiders, flies and other invertebrates. Their upper mandible is flexible, specialized to extract earthworms. It is thought that their entertaining forward, backward body bob is a motion used to create vibrations, that in turn trick underground prey to move. Using touch or auditory senses, the woodcock is then able to hone in on that movement and locate its next meal.

The American woodcock is renowned for its dusk and dawn courtship displays. March is the perfect month to witness this in action. Just before dusk (or dawn) head to Kishwaukeeeetoe's arboretum entrance. Stroll to the bench at the corner of the arboretum and the vast field and wait. Soon you will hear - *peent, peent*, as the woodcock converse with each other. The *peent* sound carries several hundred yards. You are close. Before they *peent*, they make a gurgling note known as *tuko*. It is much softer, if you hear it, the woodcock is within 10 yards. Either sound brings excitement, they are so close, seemingly right in front of you! Yet their camouflage dares you to spot them. Careful observers will see their silhouette burst straight to the sky, 200 or 300 feet up on twittering wings, or up and over to a new location. Those with good hearing will hear liquid chirps and twittering wings as they descend. They land nearby, you witnessed the spot, again, their camouflage dares you to spot them. *Peent, peent*, they taunt you with their vocals. If you arrive early enough and sit with patience, you might witness them bob from the forest edges to the singing grounds, a special moment for sure. Up and back down, repeatedly, a joy to be savored.

After the courtship, the female scrapes out a small depression amongst the leaves and twigs and lays 1-5 eggs, typically 4. If you stumble upon her nesting, she will lay low and assess the risk. Further disturbance and she will feign an injury to distract you as killdeer are known to do. If the intrusion is early in the incubation, she may even abandon the nest and restart the process. Should it be near the end of the incubation period, you could probably pet her before she would desert the eggs. The female wastes no time at the nest once the chicks have hatched. Woodcock chicks are *precocial*, meaning they are able to leave the nest shortly after hatching. In a mere 3-4 hours, when the chicks are dry, the new family leaves the nest. Sensing any danger, or hearing a warning from the hen, will cause the chicks to "freeze". It is a natural response which they inherit the moment they are hatched. For the first 3-4 days, the hen will brood and feed the chicks. After 2 weeks, they can fly short distances. The family will continue to travel together for about a month before they roam independently. In around 6 to 8 weeks, the family members will go their separate ways. The male woodcock plays no role in the nesting or in caring for the offspring. Aside from the courtship period, woodcocks are typically solitary, some may choose to live in small clusters of 2-4 individuals.

Woodcocks have some interesting physical features. Due to extensive probing, their nostrils are located high on the bill, close to the skull. Their eyes are large, set well back and high on the sides of their head. This positioning improves safety by enabling them to view all sides; sneaking up on a woodcock is virtually impossible. The unique location of the eyes leads one to wonder where the ears are located. Since the eyes got moved up and back on their head, the ears were moved forward and down. They are located between the eye sockets and the base of the bill. Imagine your ears located between your eye sockets and your mouth!



Credit: Ruffed Grouse Society | American Woodcock Society

Check out BirdNote's Radio Podcast about Woodcocks.

[Click Here!](#)

That's not all, the woodcock's brain is flipped upside-down compared to other birds. In most birds, the cerebellum, which controls the body balance and muscle coordination, is found in the rear of the skull. In the woodcock, the cerebellum is above the spinal cord and below the rest of the brain. It is thought that as the woodcock evolved, not only were the eyes, ears, and beak modified and streamlined, but the brain too evolved, rearranging itself to accommodate said changes and maintain efficiency.

YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and the like are rife with clips showcasing the American woodcock. If you have not seen any of these yet, you are truly missing out. Audubon considers the timberdoodle to be perhaps the most "memeable" bird on the continent! They are quirky, cartoonish looking and they have the best moves. Give these internet favorites a bit of your time. Whether it be an in-person visit to their favorite stomping grounds or a stroll through some "shorts" on the internet, take time to enjoy one of the most delightful sandpipers of all time.

Sources:

Woodcock Facts: <https://ruffedgrousesociety.org/woodcock-facts/>

American Woodcock: Life History https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Woodcock/lifehistory#behavior

10 Fun Facts About the American Woodcock: <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/10-fun-facts-about-american-woodcock>

Annual Midwest Crane Count

The 2026 Annual Midwest Crane Count is Saturday, April 18th
5:30 to 7:30 AM



Each year in mid-April, over 2,000 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. [Click here to view the listing of county coordinators](#). See [Counter Information](#) to download your data sheet, instructions for entering your data and other useful links.

If your county is not involved and you are interested in becoming a County Coordinator, contact the International Crane Foundation's [Crane Count Coordinator](#) at 608-356-9462 ext. 155.

The Annual Midwest Crane Count is sponsored by the Patti and Jack McKeithan Northwoods Fund.

THE EGGSHELL STATION

She Can't Build 6 Eggs Without Help. You Have the Fix in Your Trash.

FEMALE CHICKADEE — 11 grams total body weight. Produces a 1-gram egg every 24 hours for 6-8 days. That's 10% of her body weight. Per egg.

BAKED SHELLS — 250°F for 20 minutes. Kills salmonella. Critical step.

RICE-TO-PEA SIZE — Not powder (can't pick up). Not halves (can't swallow). Crush to this size.

ROBIN — Lays 3-5 eggs. Each needs 2-3 grams calcium. Total: 10-15 grams extracted from her skeleton.

ACID RAIN — Has reduced forest calcium 50-70% since the 1970s. Birds are calcium-starved in ways they weren't before.

95% CALCIUM CARBONATE — Same mineral as her eggshell. Direct building material.

SEPARATE FROM SEED — Place calcium in its own dish. Some birds eat calcium but not seeds.

March through July. 12 shells per week from your kitchen. The difference between 5 healthy eggs and 3 cracked ones.

Field Trip

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

10:00 AM – Noon

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

Free to attend and open to the public!



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 10:00 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

Lisa Granbur 312-354-0199

Treasurer

(Volunteer Needed)

Secretary

Dale Jefchak 262-723-3025

Citizen Science

Kyle Cudworth 262-245-6860

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)

Membership

Aleata Evans 773-853-5616

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 or daily pass (\$28, \$13) (\$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.