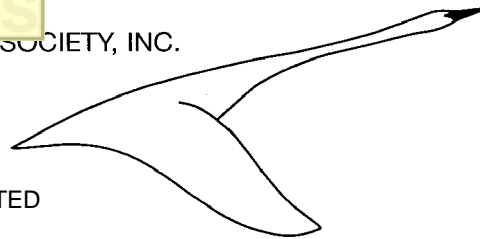


WINNEBAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
 P.O. BOX 184
 OSHKOSH, WI 54903



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RENEWALS: Your mailing label includes your membership expiration date above your name. If you are a "Chapter Only" member the word CHAPTER will appear before the expiration date. Please renew your chapter membership by filling out the application form below. Thank you for helping us save on the cost of renewal reminders.
 If you are a member of National Audubon, you will receive renewal notices from National or you may renew by using the form below.
TEMPORARILY AWAY? Please notify us of your address change. The post office will not forward your newsletter and we pay for the returned newsletter. Contact Pat Nichols with any questions regarding your subscription: jvnichols@earthlink or 920-426-0261.

Winnebago Audubon Society Mission Statement: Advance the mission of the National Audubon Society to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity through grassroots efforts of community outreach and advocacy.

**AUDUBON SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

YES, I want to become a member at the **chapter level** and receive the Winnebago Audubon newsletter. I've enclosed a \$20.00 check payable to Winnebago Audubon.

YES, I want to become a member of the National Audubon Society, and the Winnebago Audubon Chapter. My membership dues entitle me to *Audubon* magazine, and all chapter benefits. I am enclosing a \$20.00 check payable to National Audubon Society.

I do not wish to receive correspondence or solicitations from National Audubon Society.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Chapter Code: Z12 7XCH

Mail this form with payment to:
 Pat Nichols, Membership Chair
 P.O. Box 184, Oshkosh, WI 54903

Operation: Take Back Medications

Tuesday, April 22 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
 Oshkosh Senior Center Annex

Keep pills in original bottles. Blacken out name/address only.
 Collection includes pills, liquids, drops, inhalers, pet meds,
 over-the-counter meds, and mercury thermometers.

Welcome New Audubon Members

The Binder Family	Nancy Brewer
David Conover	Fay & Charles Drayna
Bill Hammond	Veronica & Zach Hansen
Cindy Herman	Jean Kimber
Dennis Krueger	Mrs. Shirley Mattox
Carmen & Evelyn Meuret	Ken & Audrey Ruedinger
Helen Shenefield	L Wallace
Peter Westort	Mary & Joe Wiedenmeier

We welcome you to take part in Winnebago Audubon Society events. As a member of National Audubon you receive membership in the local chapter. We hope that you find new opportunities for supporting the environment through your membership. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding membership or interest in becoming more involved with the chapter.

Pat Nichols, VP, Membership Chair
(email me at: jvnichols@earthlink.net)

The Lake Flyer

Winnebago Audubon Society, Inc.

APRIL 2008

All programs and activities are open to the public

VOL. 28, NO. 7

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 Editor: Janet Wissink, 7035 Mountain Rd., Pickett, WI 54964 | 920-589-2602 | wiss@centurytel.net

Check our website for up-to-date information: www.winaudubon.org

What's all the Woof about Wolves?

Sunday, April 13 - 2:00 pm

Oshkosh Seniors Center, 200 N. Campbell Rd., Oshkosh

Everyone is invited to attend—bring your family and friends.
 Refreshments will be served.

Cost: Audubon Members - Free
 Non-members - Adults \$5.00; Children (6-17) \$3.00

Most people will never see a wolf in the wild in their lifetime. But what happens when a wolf becomes an unlikely visitor to your back forty or your backyard? The recent occurrences of wolf sightings in the Fox Valley have some residents concerned.

Join naturalist, Cindy Mueller, aka Lady Timber Wolf Tracker, to learn about wolves, their history on the landscape, what makes them tick and what motivates them to travel outside of places we think they should live. Discover how to correctly identify a wolf by sight and by the tracks and traces they leave behind.

About Cynthia R. Mueller: A native of the Fox Valley area, Cindy worked as a naturalist for the Department of Natural Resources at High Cliff State Park for 11 years before recently being appointed the new Executive Director for the Bubolz Nature Preserve in Appleton.

Cindy has been involved with Wisconsin's Timber Wolf Recovery Program as a volunteer since the late 1980's. Her interest was firmly planted after participating in a successful "howling demonstration" led by a wolf biologist in 1987. At that time there were only 20-30 wolves in the entire state, compared to a current population reaching over 600 animals. Hearing an entire wolf pack sing got her "hooked on wolves!"

Having traveled with and learned from professional wolf biologists from the Midwest to the Middle East, she continues as a volunteer tracker and howls to locate wolves in order to help provide information for annual Wisconsin state population surveys. She has added local farms, woodlots and other interesting places to her list of study areas.

Would you like to help us out by bringing cookies or bars to this program? Just let Janet know that you can bring something or for more information about the program, contact Janet at 920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net.



Photo by Cindy Mueller

Crane Count April 19; Orientation Meeting April 9

The Annual Midwest Crane Count is a citizen science tradition created by the International Crane Foundation (ICF) of Baraboo, WI and will be held Saturday, **April 19** from 5:30 am - 7:30 am. We invite you to help gather valuable data to further ICF research. Volunteer counters of all ages can enjoy this early morning activity. Winnebago Audubon coordinates the count in Winnebago county which has 45 designated sites to be surveyed. We will have an orientation meeting and materials pickup on **April 9**, 6:00 pm, Oshkosh Public Library, Rm. A (lower level). An informational video will be shown, sites will be assigned, and survey materials distributed. If you cannot attend the orientation meeting, but wish to count, please contact Janet at wiss@centurytel.net or 920-589-2602.

Woodcock at White River Marsh

Saturday, May 3 - 5:00 pm

Please join us to view the elaborate evening flight display of the American Woodcock on Saturday, May 3rd. Meet in the J.C. Penney parking lot (Koeller St. and South Park Ave., Oshkosh) in the area farthest from the doors. We will depart for White River Marsh Wildlife Area, west of Berlin, at 5:00 PM. If it is more convenient to join the group in Berlin, meet us near the H&R Block office at the Greentree Mall on the west side of town at 5:30 PM.

We will stop once or twice to observe the birds, frogs, and other wildlife of the marsh as we work our way toward typical woodcock habitat. The woodcock performs its aerial display in the twilight hours of sunrise and sunset. With sunset at 8:00 PM, we will position ourselves in likely territory by 7:30 or 7:45. We should be on our way back to Oshkosh by 9:00 PM.

Dress for the weather which is usually cool. Waterproof footwear, while not essential, will likely be advantageous. Binoculars are highly recommended and you may wish to bring a camera. A flashlight may prove invaluable if you choose to search for calling frogs.

For additional information call the trip leader, Tom Underwood, at (920) 410-9703.

Frogs, Frogs, Frogs

Were you one of the lucky ones who enjoyed that great frog program last year presented by Randy Korb? We were so delighted with the excitement of the children and their parents as they learned about, touched, fed, listened to and looked at polliwogs, little frogs, bigger frogs and great big frogs, that we just had to share the experience

with more kids.

Janet Wissink wrote a grant for funds to sponsor Randy and his Frogs at two elementary schools in Oshkosh. Winnebago Audubon received a grant from Wisconsin Audubon Council which is a pass through grant from National Audubon to sponsor those programs.

Randy will be in Oshkosh April 22nd at Webster Stanley Elementary School and April 23rd at Oaklawn school. We'll have a story and pictures about the programs in a future newsletter.

And mark your calendars for Saturday, May 24, when Randy will be back for a repeat of the Frog Night Hike that we can all attend! - *Carla Hansen*

Calling All Birdwatchers

The first two weeks of May are the perfect time for the warblers to be warbling their way through Wisconsin and the perfect time for us to count them and other birds, migrating or not, for the Winnebago Audubon Birdathon.

I'm counting on you to help me count. So if you were part of a team last year, we'll be calling on you again. And if this is the year that you would like to lead a team or be part of a team let me know.

The Birdathon would not be a success without the generous contributions of our members and friends. So when you see a pledge sheet please sign up for a per bird amount and a fixed dollar amount. Your contributions allow us to put on the great programs you enjoy. If you don't see a pledge sheet, contact me with your pledge. You'll get a list of the birds that were seen and the satisfaction of contributing to a good cause.

Carla Hansen, 233-1129 or carlahansen@sbcglobal.net

2008-09 SLATE OF OFFICERS AND PROPOSED BUDGET

The Winnebago Audubon Society will hold its annual meeting for the election of officers and board members and to approve the proposed budget for 2008-09 immediately prior to the Wolf Program on Sunday, April 13.

The board presents the following 2008-09 slate of officers:

President: Janet Wissink
Vice President: Pat Nichols
Secretary: Zaiga Freivalds
Treasurer: Dave Moon

Board of Directors: Dave Hanke, Evelyn Meuret

Carla Hansen and Tom Underwood will each serve another year as directors to fulfill their 2-year term.

If you would like to nominate someone, or know of someone who might be interested in serving on the board, please contact one of the officers listed on page 4. We would very much like to have more members take an active role in our chapter. Janet, Pat, Zaiga and Dave have all served beyond their terms as outlined by our bylaws, but are willing to continue until new officers are found.

The following budget has been approved by the WAS Board. Please take this opportunity to review it. If you have any questions, please call Dave Moon, 235-4429, prior to the April 13 annual meeting. The membership will be asked to approve this budget at the meeting.

Income:

Audubon Adventures Sponsors.....	\$ 700.00
Audubon Membership Shares.....	771.00
New Member Dues.....	200.00
Birdathon Pledges.....	1,000.00
Activities.....	300.00
Donations.....	1,000.00
Fundraisers.....	745.00
Interest.....	5.00
TOTAL INCOME.....	\$4,721.00

Expenses:

Annual Report.....	\$ 10.00
Audubon Adventures Classrooms.....	1,000.00
Sullivan's Woods.....	421.00
Dues.....	120.00
Donations.....	100.00
Fundraisers.....	250.00
Newsletter Postage.....	450.00
Newsletter Paper and Printing.....	225.00
P.O. Box Rental.....	95.00
Programs.....	300.00
Rental (Meeting Place).....	200.00
Activities.....	1,200.00
Website.....	100.00
Liability Insurance.....	250.00
TOTAL EXPENSES.....	\$4,721.00



MY DUCK SEASON

I know that winter is finally losing its tenacious grip when temperatures warm, snow banks recede, rivers run free and lakes begin to open. The newly-opened patches of icy water are magnets for ducks whose internal clocks have been telling them for some time now it's spring and time to head north. Spring fever also strikes me and I'm eager to venture out and look for early migrants as *my* season has finally arrived.

One of the first ducks to appear is the common merganser. Riding low in the water and bobbing like little icebergs, male common mergansers are easy to locate and identify as their white flanks and breasts stand out against the dark water. Their black backs are not quite so noticeable. Like mallards and northern shovelers, males have iridescent dark green heads which may appear black at a distance. Seen up close, one can appreciate their distinctive long, tapered, serrated red bills which are efficient fish grabbers.

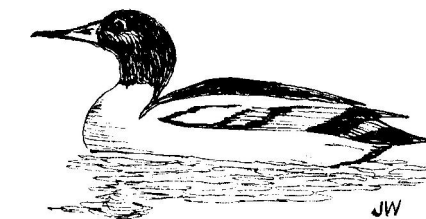
Male and female common mergansers float together. The drabber, smaller females sport grayish flanks and backs. Their reddish brown heads are accented with a shaggy crest. Female common mergansers may be easily confused with the similarly-plumaged female red-breasted mergansers but the reddish heads of common mergansers contrast sharply with the white throat and upper breast which, in red-breasted mergansers, is more diffuse. Identification is tricky. However, the best way, but not always fool proof, to separate and identify female mergansers is to look for accompanying males.

Common mergansers, *Mergus merganser* (*mergus* is from Latin meaning diver) are diving, fish-eating ducks. That is, they do not paddle along the surface and tip up to feed like mallards do, but, instead, dive underwater. From the surface, they dive quickly with a graceful, forward-arching plunge and disappear. In the instant it takes them to dive, perhaps you'll catch a glimpse of their red legs and feet. Oh how I wish I could watch them swim underwater as they deftly pursue and catch fish. Yet mergansers are opportunists and will not overlook an easy meal of crayfish, worms, leeches, tadpoles or aquatic insects.

Closely following the retreating ice line, common mergansers migrate through here from March into early

April. They're headed for the forests of extreme northern Wisconsin and Canada. Yes, the forests, for common mergansers nest in tree cavities, preferring trees near water. Imagine, the largest of the inland ducks measuring 25 inches long and weighing about three pounds flying through the woods searching for a tree hole, perhaps an old woodpecker nest. How do they find a suitable nest site and one that must be fairly large? Do they sit on three limbs like wood ducks do? A duck in the woods seems a bit surreal and out of place but nature often does the unexpected. If necessary, common mergansers will nest on the ground but they prefer trees.

Find a nesting common merganser is challenging, consequently little is known about its breeding biology. After finding a suitable cavity, the female lays an average of 10 to 12 unmarked, yellowish-white eggs which are nestled in a bowl of down plucked from her breast. She along incubates the clutch for the drake has deserted her once the eggs are laid. Incubation lasts about a month. A day or two after hatching, the chicks tumble from the nest and follow her to water. In swift-flowing rivers and deep,



open lakes, the precocial young feed and grow. She does not feed them. The young take their first flight in 60 to 70 days. Birds of the year resemble females. One clutch is raised per year.

In autumn the birds move south, seeming reluctant to leave. They migrate late, just ahead of freeze-up with the major push being in November. They overwinter on fresh water, traveling only as far as necessary. Some hardy individuals spend winter on Wisconsin's open rivers, often below dams, and on Lake Michigan.

But now it's March. Another year has cycled. Spring is coming. With the arrival of the dramatic, boldly-colored common mergansers, it must be so. As much as I like winter, I'm ready for spring and its caressing, life-giving warmth, my duck season.

Volunteer at Sullivan's Woods this Spring

Do you enjoy children and being outdoors? Friends of Sullivan's Woods is looking for volunteers to assist teachers and guide 4th grade students at Sullivan's Woods this spring - for one day, or once a week or every day. You choose what works for you. Call Louise Coumbe (920-231-4722) for details about how you can get involved with the OASD outdoor environmental program.

Spring Bird Sightings:

Michael Huebschen reported seeing double-crested cormorants, common goldeneyes, lesser scaup, hooded mergansers and canvasbacks on the Fox River last week. I saw a pair of ring-necked ducks in the pond on Campbell Rd. along with buffleheads, redheads and common mergansers. And just this morning there were tundra swans in a flooded wetland near Rush Lake. Spring is the time to have the binocs in the car with you!