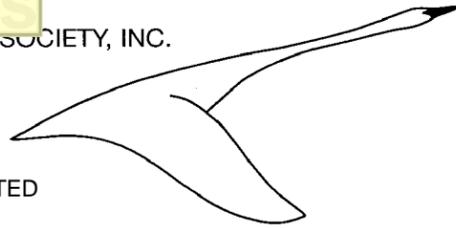


WINNEBAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
P.O. BOX 184
OSHKOSH, WI 54903



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OFFICERS

President:

Janet Wissink
920-589-2602
wiss@centurytel.net

Vice President:

Pat Nichols
920-426-0261
jvnichols@earthlink.net

Secretary: Zaiga Freivalds

920-233-5914
zaigam@charter.net

Treasurer: Dave Moon

920-235-4429
djmoon@northnet.net

DIRECTORS

Carla Hansen
920-233-1129
carlajhansen@sbcglobal.net

Tom Underwood
920-426-0349
thomasj335@sbcglobal.net

RENEWALS: Your mailing label includes your membership expiration date above your name. If you are a "Chapter Only" member the word CHAPTER will appear after 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

Welcome New Audubon Members

Doug Akey
Louise Aylward
Mike Boyce
The Clarks
Claudia Coats
Lois Cox
Ann Drayman
Nancy Flanagan
Jan Hanke
Richard Hansen
Joyce Helz
Karen Kuhr
Bryan Leinweber
Grace Lett

Kathy Mayer
Timothy McKeon
Charlene Mier
Cecelia Ostertag
G M Perschbacher
Psychiatric Consultants
Thomas Rogstad
Ken & Audrey Ruedinger
Carol Seibold
Terry Seifert
Donald Snowhook
Lawrence Weidner
Norman Whitford
James Wolff

Be sure to take part in the Winnebago Audubon Society events that appeal to you. As a member of National Audubon you receive membership in the local chapter. We are happy to have you and 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.

JANUARY 2008

All programs and activities are open to the public

VOL. 28, NO. 5

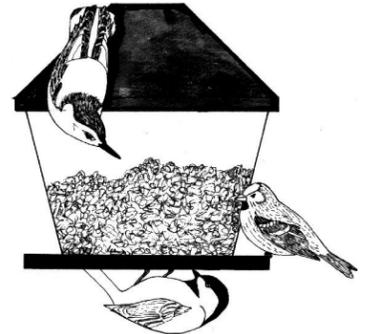
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Editor: Janet Wissink, 7035 Mountain Rd., Pickett, WI 54964 | 920-589-2602 | wiss@centurytel.net

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

Bird Watching & Great Backyard Bird Count Workshop

Saturday, February 9: 10:00 am—Noon, Meeting Room on Lower Level at the Oshkosh Public Library, 106 Washington Ave., Oshkosh

Learn about common birds in our area, bird feeding tips, some great birding areas and how to participate in a citizen science program called the Great Backyard Bird Count. All ages and skill levels are welcome to attend this workshop on Saturday, February 9 at the Oshkosh Public Library from 10:00 am – Noon, in the meeting room on the lower level. The workshop is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is not necessary, but would be helpful in planning handouts. To register, or for more information, contact Janet Wissink, 920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net.



"Count for fun, count for the future!"

The 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), led by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, provides an opportunity for people of all ages and birding skill levels to enjoy learning about their backyard birds while collecting important data for conservation. Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future.

To find out more about the GBBC, come to our workshop. We'll show you how easy it is for the whole family to be a part of this nationwide count which takes place February 15-18. Participation in the GBBC is open to everyone. You do not need to pre-register and there is no fee required. Count anywhere – in your backyard, balcony, school yard, park, or refuge.

If you don't have access to a computer to send in your bird counts between February 15 and 18, Janet Wissink will submit your results for you. You will need to give her the total number of each species you see at one time, the location, and the date. Only count each bird once. You can call her at 920-589-2602.

To learn about the results for the 2007 count, and to see the GBBC photo gallery featuring images taken from across the continent, visit www.birdcount.org.

Upcoming Audubon Events

Watch for more details in future newsletters

Saturday, January 26: Toward Harmony with Nature 12th annual natural landscaping conference presented by Wild Ones at the Oshkosh Hilton. For more information or to register on-line visit www.for-wild.org/chapters/foxvalley. Or contact Karen Syverson at 920-987-5587 or ksyve@core.com.

February 9: Bird Watching & GBBC Workshop

March 2: Ice Cream Social / Members Show & Tell
Salamander Survey

April 19: Annual Midwest Crane Count

White River Marsh and Woodcocks

Frogs

May 10: Birds and Wild Flowers at Waukau Creek

Birdathon

July: Bats

Bluebirds, Trails and Monitoring

August: Monarch Tagging

George Curtis receives Environmental Award

The Winnebago Audubon Society has chosen George W. Curtis as the first recipient of its Katherine D. Rill Environmental Award.

Curtis, an Oshkosh attorney, is being recognized for raising community awareness of environmental issues as host of "It's Your Environment" aired on Oshkosh Cable Access Television. First telecast as a sporting program in 2001, four years ago Curtis decided to slant the program toward the environment. "Not many of the new generation are raised in rural areas," he said. "I felt there was a critical need for the public to learn more about the environment."

"It's Your Environment" has probed a broad range of environmental issues. During the program, through congenial and knowledgeable discussion with one or two guests, Curtis highlights such issues as land stewardship, water quality protection, hunting safety, habitat preservation, urban forestry, and preservation of scenic beauty. Over the years more than 250 programs have been telecast.

When asked what topic is of most interest to him today, Curtis said the emergence of land trusts. "By working with a land trust, people can still own their property, still pay taxes on it and still can sell it. But they're assured the land will never be developed, so we'll always have those special places."

Curtis has made his own contribution to preserving special places. The Audubon award also recognizes this. As a boy growing up on a farm, Curtis said he spent many hours hunting, fishing and watching wildlife. As a result, he has a close affinity to wild land, purchasing hundreds of acres at various times in his life. Almost all of this acreage is now held in some form of preservation program: forest cropland, glacial habitat, easements restricting development, or now owned by the DNR or Fish & Wildlife Service.

In the Rush Lake area alone, where he has lived on various properties for over 40 years, about 1000 of his acres now have been preserved. "Rush Lake is one of the most productive wildlife areas in the state," he said. "This entire environment needs to be protected." A portion of his former land is now the Anne and Owen Gromme Preserve, a 439 acre parcel owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy on the west side of Rush Lake.

Janet Wissink, current Audubon president, presented the award to Curtis during taping of "It's Your Environment," featuring Wissink and board member David Moon discussing goals and activities of the Audubon Society. The program is being aired this month.

Although this is the second year Winnebago Audubon has given its environmental award to a community leader, Curtis is the first recipient since it has been renamed as a memorial to Katherine D. Rill. Rill was one of the founders of the Winnebago Audubon Society.

Wissink said Curtis is a fitting first recipient, espousing the values of the award's namesake. "Katherine Rill was a well-known local botanist who spent most of her life promoting community environmental education and preservation of quality natural areas," Wissink said. "She also did botanical research in the Rush Lake area and was acquainted with Anne and Owen Gromme."

Winnebago Audubon's mission is 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. For further information check the Web site www.winaudubon.org. - *Jan Scalpone*

Wish List

Winnebago Audubon is looking for:

- people interested in serving on our board; no experience necessary, but a willingness to help with events and share ideas with like-minded people
- crane count coordinator; will train; short term commitment

Contact any of our board members for more information (see back page with names and numbers).

Salamander Survey

In our last newsletter we asked for your help as citizen monitors for the first state salamander survey, and three of our member families volunteered. The survey will take place in late March/early April and possibly for another five days in early May. The sites are being assessed yet and the actual dates need to be decided upon. We'll let you know the details when they become available.

It's not too late to volunteer. Just contact Janet Wissink.

HEARTFELT THANKS!

The Winnebago Audubon Board would like to thank all of you who responded so generously to our end of the year letter. The \$1,485.00 that we received will allow us to continue to bring you fun, educational, nature-oriented family events in 2008. Your contributions are always appreciated.

www.youtube.com

You can catch board members David Moon and Janet Wissink on youtube.com! Just search by our names or "It's Your Environment" to watch the George Curtis program about Winnebago Audubon.

Winnebago Audubon Benefits from 4imprint's One by One Program

4imprint of Oshkosh, WI supports a charitable giving program called "one by one" indicating that one person can make a difference in the community. Each day they award \$500.00 in promotional products to community service organizations from all over the country.

In 2007, Winnebago Audubon applied for and received 105 green frog bean bag animals with red shirts emblazoned with Winnebago Audubon and our tundra swan logo. These frogs will be given to children who participate in various Audubon sponsored programs throughout the year.

A BIG THANK YOU to 4imprint. Their generosity will enable us to give local children a fun reminder of Winnebago Audubon activities and hopefully will be a reminder of the importance of the environment and their place in it. - *Carla Hansen*



BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Whispers of snow dance across the country road between fields covered with six inches of sparkling white snow. I'm out on this crisp January day searching for winter birds that like wide-open, windswept places. With miles of travel already behind me, it is becoming a slow birding day. Many pyramid-shaped, snow-covered clods catch my attention. I check each one hoping to find a sleepy-eyed snowy owl. Today, snowy owls prove to be elusive.

Finally, several small, slender, seven-inch birds run nervously along the road, darting here and there, pausing often to pick up seeds. A few fly up, circle low around the field and return to the road. Horned larks, *Eremiphila alpestris*, are always a delight to see with their tiny black "horns", yellow chins and black breast bands. As I linger to enjoy the birds, more horned larks magically appear. The flock eventually grows to include an incredible 200 individuals. This is the largest flock of horned larks I've ever seen. These birds should be farther south but nature is always full of surprises.

A kestrel flies over causing the birds to scatter and quickly disappear. I rediscover the flock around the next corner and stop to look once again. The horned larks are skittish, as usual, and as individuals fly before me, I notice three seven-inch, chunky white birds with black wingtips - snow buntings.

Snow buntings, *Plectrophenax nivalis*, are always a special winter sighting. These arctic visitors, sporting their winter plumage of earth-toned backs, forage on the ground for seed. Like horned larks, snow buntings are jumpy and will quickly retreat to the fields to escape. There they are impossible to find as they run among the clods. But if they fly, the white and black wing pattern easily identifies them. To see a large flock flying, turning, tipping as one as the black wingtips flash against the white background or blue sky is a gift of winter. Snow buntings will remain with us into March or April. Later in winter look for males that have exchanged their brown backs for black ones in preparation for summer on the tundra.

Horned larks. Snow buntings. Whenever I see them, I always look closely for the third species, the one I find most challenging to locate - lapland longspurs. I'm enjoying watching this large mixed flock when I discover three birds which look like snow buntings but not exactly. Aha! No black wingtips. Lapland longspurs I shout! It's been a few years since I've seen them.

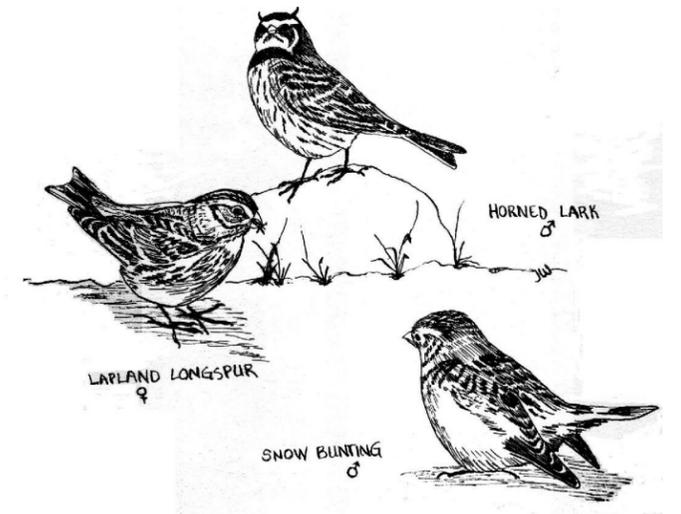
Lapland longspurs look like fat house sparrows but with buffier colors and a subtle rufous face patch. This is their winter plumage which we normally see. An adult male in

breeding plumage is stunning with his yellow conical bill, yellow eyeline, black cap, face, chin and breast and rufous nape of the neck. We rarely see these boldly colored birds as they often depart for the arctic before their feathers change.

Members of a lapland longspur flock don't fly in as tight a formation as do snow buntings. Each bird moves on its own undulating flight path. Collectively, the flock looks like popping corn as it bounces along, up and down. When migrating, lapland longspurs fly high over head and many birdwatchers hear their mechanical rattle flight calls rather than see the birds.

Lapland longspur, *Calcarius lapponicus*, is one of four longspur species found in the United States but the only one likely to visit Wisconsin. Its name, longspur, refers to the long spur or nail on the hind toe. Lapland was a name given by early European taxonomists as it is a common bird nesting in the arctic (Lapland).

Like horned larks and snow buntings, lapland longspurs wander about in winter frequently in the company of the other two species. Discovering them is serendipitous but search for them in open fields, beaches and airports -



wherever flat, exposed land might resemble their arctic home. Always check manure-covered fields which regularly attracts them. Each winter is different. Some years these arctic wanderers are numerous while other years they may be devilishly difficult to find.

What a day this turned out to be. The largest horned lark flock I've ever seen. Then snow buntings. Then, unbelievably, close looks at lapland longspurs. Later I'd find a flock of 400 snow buntings and three rough-legged hawks. What a great way to start the birding new year on a day that began oh so slowly.

UW Oshkosh Division of Continuing Education and Extension & The Grand Opera House will present Al Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth" on Thursday, March 6, 7:00 pm at the Grand Opera House. Cost: \$4.00