

The Lake Flyer

Winnebago Audubon Society, Inc.

MARCH 2007

All programs and activities are free and open to the public

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www.winaudubon.org

Ice Cream Social and "Show & Tell"



Thursday, March 15 — 7:00 pm

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

This annual event is always fun, free and open to the public! The Audubon board will treat you to ice cream and all the toppings. We invite you to share your photos, slides, videos, DVD slide show, and stories of your outdoor adventures, flowers, birds, nature, etc. Slide projector, VCR, and LCD projector will be provided. Please join us for an enjoyable evening with friends – old and new!

For more information contact, Janet at 920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net

Sturdy, Cedar Leopold Benches

Assembled: \$75.00

Kits: \$65.00

(Pre-drilled, hardware and instructions included.)

To purchase your bench, just contact Janet at
920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net

MAY BIRDATHON FOR ALL BIRDERS

Winnebago Audubon is looking for birders and sponsors for the upcoming May Birdathon. Birders interested in spending one day looking for and recording the birds they see are needed along with those who will sponsor birders for a set amount of money per bird or a fixed sum. We usually see about 100 birds. Pledge forms will be available at all of our activities.

The Birdathon is our major fundraiser. The money is used to bring programs like John James Audubon to our schools and naturalists like Randy Korb to events like we'll have on May 12 (see inside for details) and a May 25 Frog Hike. For more information contact Carla Hansen at 920-233-1129 or carlajhansen@sbcglobal.net. Let Carla know if you want to go birding with us!

Annual Tradition: COUNTING CRANES

4:30 AM: The alarm goes off on a Saturday morning and you're trying to remember why? It's dark outside and maybe even a little bit on the chilly side. But it's the morning of the Annual Midwest Crane Count and once you realize that, you're up and dressed and on your way to your site somewhere in a wetland in Winnebago County. You've been there before and you find your way out in the quiet darkness. The pale light of dawn awakens the wetland creatures and the air begins to fill with sound. It's a perfect morning when you hear the bugle of a sandhill crane nearby, or like two of last year's counters, you may be privileged to see a whooping crane.

If you have not made this a tradition, now is the time to start. 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 14** from 5:30 am - 7:30 am. There are 45 designated sites to be counted in Winnebago County. Winnebago Audubon is the coordinator for this county and has planned an orientation meeting and materials pickup for Tuesday, **April 3** at 6:00 p.m. at the Oshkosh Seniors Center, 200 N. Campbell Rd. We will show an informational video, assign sites, and hand out the survey materials. If you would like to participate, but are unable to attend the meeting, please contact Janet at 920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net. This orientation will precede our annual meeting (see page 2).

Check out the ICF website: www.cranecount.org.

Save the date. Thursday, April 19

John James Audubon to visit Oshkosh

Winnebago Audubon invites you to meet John James Audubon, portrayed by storyteller Brian "Fox" Ellis. He will present a family program that will bring to life bird behavior, focusing on the birds you are most likely to see as you go bird watching in this area. Audubon followed the annual migrations of birds throughout North America in the 1820s and 1830s, keeping meticulous journals on the birds he saw. With lessons on field ecology, the scientific method, art history, and bird migration, the audience is invited to imitate birds and discuss the life histories of their favorite feathered friends.



6:00 pm Potluck Supper
Join us for a potluck supper. Please bring a dish to pass, your own plate and silverware. Beverages will be provided.

7:00 pm John James Audubon Program
You are welcome to attend the program, even if you are unable to join us for supper. The program is free.

First Congregational Church, 137 Algoma Blvd.
Everyone is welcome!

Winnebago Audubon Society is sponsoring John James Audubon's appearance at Oakwood Environmental Charter School during the day. He will make four presentations allowing all of the classes to attend one. He is a storyteller that will cover Adventures in Nature, French Explorers Journals, and other topics that fit into the literacy and social studies curriculum.

Contact Janet at 920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net for additional information.

Great Backyard Bird Count 2007

As of Feb. 26, 2007, here are the results from the GBBC. Oshkosh had submitted 54 checklists with 50 species (the highest number of species in the state!), with Milwaukee the number one spot for participation at 56 checklists and 47 species. Madison trailed Oshkosh with 42 checklists and 45 species.

The most common birds recorded by Oshkosh observers were: House Sparrow 618, Mallard 651, European Starling 584, and Mourning Dove 192. We had one individual of each of these species recorded in Oshkosh: Common Goldeneye, Rough legged Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Tufted Titmouse, Red Winged Blackbird. We recorded 50 species so there was a lot of variety in the numbers of the various species seen.

Other checklists submitted from locations near Oshkosh included: Green Lake (10 checklists for 34 species!), Omro (10 checklists for 20 species), Pickett (5 checklists for 18 species), Rosendale (4 checklists for 20 species), Berlin (1 checklist for 13 species), Neenah (1 checklist for 3 species) and Wild Rose (1 checklist for 13 species).

Wisconsin state totals are: 1,344 checklists, 122 species, 114,526 individual birds. The largest number of birds recorded: Canada Geese at 21,362 and American Goldfinch at 10,681.

Even though Oshkosh isn't in the top ten states or locations for checklists or species, we can feel very proud of the information we gathered for this national database. Be sure to go to the website (www.birdsource.org/ggbc) to see distribution maps, some of which are animated over the last six years.

Thank you to everyone who participated. If you didn't participate this year pencil in President's Day weekend next year for the GBBC! - Pat Nichols

Plan to attend the WINNEBAGO AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING on APRIL 3 7:00 pm - Oshkosh Seniors Center, 200 N. Campbell Rd. (immediately following the Crane Count Orientation meeting)

The Winnebago Audubon Society will hold its annual meeting for the election of officers and board members and to approve the proposed budget for 2007-08. All members are encouraged to attend to cast your vote.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 3 at 7:00 p.m. at the Oshkosh Seniors Center, 200 N. Campbell Rd.

The board presents the 2007-08 slate of officers:

President: Janet Wissink

Vice President: Pat Nichols

Secretary: Zaiga Freivalds

Treasurer: Dave Moon

Board of Directors: Carla Hansen, Tom Underwood

If you would like to nominate someone, or know of someone who might be interested in serving on the board, please contact Janet Wissink, 920-589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.net. We would very much like to have more members take an active role in our chapter.

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 3 annual business meeting. The membership will be asked to approve this budget at the meeting.

Income:

Audubon Adventures Sponsors	\$1,000.00
Audubon Membership Shares	771.00
New Member Dues	50.00
Birdathon Pledges	750.00
Activities	100.00
Donations	13.00
Fundraisers.....	1,500.00
Interest	6.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,190.00

Expenses:

Annual Report.....	\$ 10.00
Audubon Adventures Classrooms	1,000.00
Sullivan's Woods	200.00
Dues	105.00
Donations	100.00
Fundraisers.....	600.00
Newsletter Postage.....	260.00
Newsletter Paper and Printing	400.00
P.O. Box Rental.....	80.00
Programs	525.00
Rental (Meeting Place)	200.00
Activities	600.00
Website	110.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,190.00



Badger Tracks

by Anita Carpenter



LITTLE BLUE EYES

It is a delicate, slender plant growing among the shooting stars and prairie smoke. With its narrow, grasslike leaves and short stature, it could easily be crushed under an errant footfall. Even when the eight-inch plant presents its one-half-inch wide sparkling blue flowers, it is often overshadowed by the taller, showier plants and lost in the riot of a May-blooming prairie.

I'm always thrilled to discover prairie blue-eyed grass with its tiny blue flowers smiling at me. Its common name is a fitting description for this perennial plant that features grasslike leaves. But this plant is not what it appears to be. Although blue-eyed grass looks like a tuft of grass, it is not a grass but a member of the Iris family, Iridaceae. Although it shares similar taxonomic characteristics such as leaf and flower structure with the eye-popping irises, the blue-eyed grasses are grouped in their own genus, *Sisyrinchium*. *Sisyrinchium* is derived from Greek meaning an iris-like plant.

Like the irises, prairie blue-eyed grass sends up many flattened, narrow leaves from its base. The smooth, leafless flowering stem looks like just another leaf except it has a pronounced ridge running its entire length. The flowering stem grows taller than the regular leaves and is topped with two leafy bracts, one longer than the other (two inches compared to one inch). The bracts part and inside is a solitary spathe which opens to reveal a six-petaled, star-like blue (sometimes white) flower. However, the six petals are not really six petals but rather three sepals and three petals. Because the sepals and petals all look identical, botanists refer to them as tepals. The tip of each tepal is adorned with a minute prickle.

The six tepals join at the base to form a short tube enveloping a bright yellow center which contains the reproductive structures. Enticed in by the yellow bull's eye, insects arrive to pollinate the blossom and the May blooming flowers quickly fade. The fruit which forms is a dry brown capsule about half the size of a green pea. The

three-chambered capsule splits open and releases several round, sand-grain-sized black seeds. As tiny as the seeds are, under a microscope, one can observe a beautiful reticulated surface pattern.

Prairie blue-eyed grass, *Sisyrinchium campestra*, may be found in the southern two-thirds of Wisconsin, but it isn't the only blue-eyed grass species found in the state. Several other species have been identified although separating them can be tricky with taxonomy based in minute, subtle features. Overall general appearance is similar but different species may exhibit a single spathe (like prairie blue-eyed grass) or a few per stem. A solitary or several flowers may adorn a flowering stem. Flowers may range in color from pale blue to violet to yellow or white. To complicate matters, a species may have more than one color form. All species seem to like sunny areas such as prairies, railroad right-of-ways, savannahs or grasslands. All have beautiful little flowers but they certainly aren't the eye-grabbers like their bigger iris cousins. One must really search for them.



And if you'd like to venture beyond our state's borders, about fifty species of blue-eyed grasses can be found in the United States growing in a variety of habitats from damp open woods to the edges of salt marshes.

In our prairies, blue-eyed grass seems to fill in the spaces. It is a tiny burst of beautiful blue in a season of prairie whites. But as I gaze upon this delicate plant from a distance, I can't help but notice that the flower looks like it is "post-a-noted" on the stem — stuck unnaturally in the middle almost as an afterthought. But maybe this uniqueness is what I find so charming. I also wonder, as an appreciative prairie visitor, if I wink at blue-eyed grass, will it wink back?

Birds, Flowers & Kids Sat., May 12 h 7:30 am-Noon h Waukau Creek Nature Preserve

Winnebago Audubon is hosting a half-day community event for families and others on Saturday, May 12, 2007 at Waukau Creek Nature Preserve from 7:30 am to noon. Naturalists will walk the trails with parents, children and others on two morning hikes to identify migrant warblers, other birds, and wildflowers at 7:30 am and again at 10:30 am. We'll have 15 pairs of binoculars available for beginning birders from our birding kit that we purchased last year.

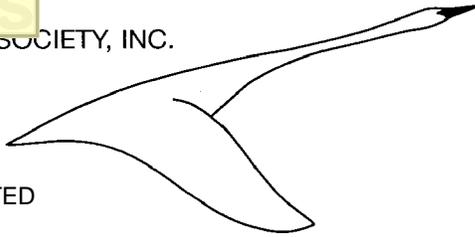
Participants will also learn about Wisconsin frogs and butterflies through hands-on experiences. At 9:30 am Randy Korb will talk about the monarch butterfly, milkweeds and other plants that butterflies love. Kids will learn about the life cycle by peering at butterfly eggs and chrysalises, watching caterpillars crawl, and holding and feeding adult monarchs. Each family will receive a free butterfly garden habitat to plant at home to attract monarchs and other butterflies this summer. At 11:00 am Randy will bring out his live bullfrogs, peepers, toads and other amphibians. Kids may feed the frogs crickets and worms and learn how to safely hold them.

Waukau Creek Nature Preserve is a Winnebago County park located at 2987 Delhi Rd., north of Waukau off County Road K, 10 miles west of Oshkosh. Free to Audubon members. An annual family membership is only \$30.00. Non-members: \$5 adult, \$3 child. For more info contact Janet, 589-2602 or wiss@centurytel.



RANDY KORB PHOTO

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



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Doris Thomas

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.

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 \$15.00 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

Mark your calendars for May 25th
Friday Night Frog Hike - The kids will love this!

Welcome to all these new
National and Winnebago Audubon members:
Oshkosh: Pat Bezella, Nanette Britton, Barbara Christl, Beatriz Contreras, Judy Debroux, James Gauger, Thomas Laudon, Anita Dahlke, Margaret Mahoney, Donna Mischler, and Ginnie Sherer;
Larsen: Helen Anderson, Joyce Castrop; **Berlin:** Phyllis Schuit; **Winneconne:** Mary Pucci; and **Omro:** Pamela Bose.

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)