



madison
AUDUBON
society

NEWSLETTER OF THE MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY

WINTER 2016-17

Seeds of wisdom

Botany meets poetry at seed-collecting time

The landscape of botanical terms could well be a new language. Achene, caryopsis, pyrene, peryginium, samara, infructescence... one could call these names insipid (another botanical term)—lacking taste. Born of a necessity to describe, these words draw little to no common usage. Concise and efficient are umbel, umbellate, and umbelliform, reflecting tremendous variation of form and function—evolution that, like an umbel, radiates from a common point.

The hands tell more. Plumpness, an admirable trait for dropseed, is felt as hands slide up the stem. Rattling in a pod registers like fox paws on fresh snow. Stickiness, a trait of loment (seed pods of the tick trefoils) splendidly disperses seed but sprouts curses in the laundry room.

Things are learned.

Like the wearing of gloves when plucking the spiky pale purple coneflower. Like to never run the hand down a sedge, for paper cuts seem minor compared to *Carex* cuts. Like the diet of the goldfinch: native sunflowers, *Silphiums*, and thistles. Like the phenology of a flora and the unsettling trends of that phenology. Like the generosity of a fall breeze to paint known things into new worlds of October hues, or to push away mosquitoes when the frost hasn't yet come.

A hand worn through a season of seed collecting becomes not a hand but a vessel for social welfare; what foot could bring about such a redistribution of seed? A hand captures the fruits of a year's growing and disperses it into a new field making a beautiful thing, a prairie restoration. A hand becomes callused but a field becomes painted with flowers for all seasons.

One learns that the twist of a seed head plucks it clean without any stem. That the stripping of hair-like Indian grass (overhead) feels like a fresh haircut (itchy). That a steady hand makes fewer mistakes and a determined pace fills buckets. That fall days are dry and windy except when they're not.

(See "Seeds of wisdom," p. 2)



Madison Audubon
is your local
Audubon chapter

Together with our members, we work to protect and improve habitat for birds and other wildlife through land acquisition and management, education and advocacy.

TOP: Fall is a great time for spotting confusing fall warblers, like this lovely blackpoll. Photo by Kelly Colgan Azar

RIGHT: Carrying on the tradition of reaping the good things that you sow at Faville Grove. Photo by Emily Meier

DID YOU KNOW??



• Nearly 1,000 pounds of seed are collected by staff and volunteers from Faville Grove and Goose Pond Sanctuaries each year!



• In 2016 approximately 150 species of grasses and forbs were collected at Faville Grove, and over 50 species at Goose Pond.



• That represents over 300 hours of volunteer time each fall. Volunteers spend an additional 150 hours replanting those seeds in new prairie restoration projects on the sanctuaries.

.....
Want to join the fun? Visit our website to get all the info for upcoming volunteer opportunities and events at Madison Audubon sanctuaries.



ABOVE: It takes a lot of buckets, seeds, tags, and volunteers to plant a brand-new native dry-mesic prairie. MAS Photo

Seeds of wisdom

(Continued from p. 1)

That the inflated ego of a quickly filled bucket of compass plant is soon tempered with a meager bag of dropseed. That wisdom is inferred rather than empirical. That prairie dock needs picking early, before the goldfinches eat it. That dropseed forms better seed beneath the leguminous comforts of Baptisa.

Seed collecting transforms into a funneiform, shaped like a morning glory, mixing endemic botanical terms with folklore and feel, ultimately creating something new and thrilling on land that needs it.

*Drew Harry, Faville Grove Sanctuary land steward
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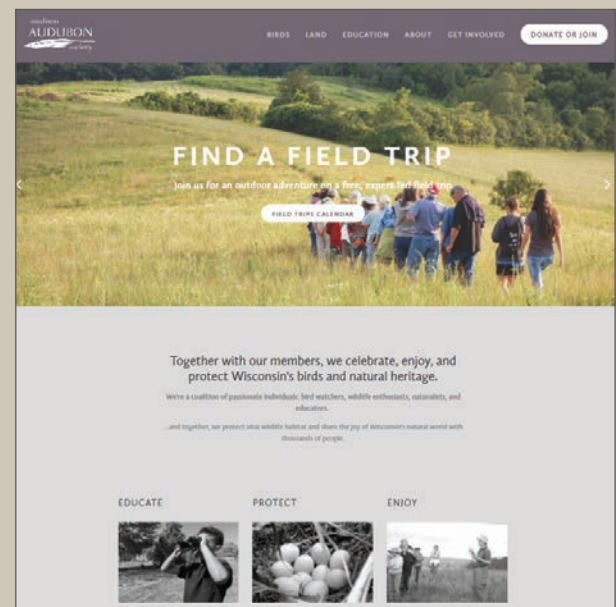
Our new website has hatched!

Clean, beautiful, and easier for you to use

You asked, and we listened! The new Madison Audubon website, with the same link and the same high-quality information you're used to seeing from us, has a new look and feel to make it easier for you to use.

You can now easily find information about birding, our sanctuaries, education programs, field trips, and upcoming events, while enjoying beautiful images of the birds, lands, and kids you support. Explore and enjoy!

Be sure to check out our new online store as well, connecting you with all sorts of Madison Audubon gear and resources. Great for holiday shopping (for your loved ones... or yourself!).



Visit the website at madisonaudubon.org

Climate on the front burner

It's time for action, despite uncertainties

Just 25 years ago, it was commonly thought that only ten percent of organisms that live in soil were known to science. With the advent of rapid DNA sequencing and fatty acid analysis to estimate the number of species present in soil samples, it is now believed that the number of species so far identified in fact makes up only 0.1% of soil organisms! The living world is so stunningly complex and diverse that every time we learn something new, we realize how much more we don't know.

Unfortunately, ignorance makes a great excuse. Atmospheric scientists have devised powerful computer models to predict future climates under various emissions scenarios. But the fact that meteorologists have trouble predicting tomorrow's weather provides cover for anyone inclined toward climate denial.

We know that humans are radically altering the fundamental chemistry of the atmosphere that sustains life on the planet. The best available science indicates that this change in chemistry is affecting and will increasingly affect climate, even if the exact magnitude and timing of the effects are uncertain. And we know that changes in climate will affect life on earth and human society along with it. While we can't be certain what those changes will be, we can make educated guesses, as National Audubon did last year in its landmark study modeling changes in the ranges of North American birds under various climate scenarios (the results weren't pretty).

Having just come through Wisconsin's muggiest summer and early fall in living memory; having watched as another superstorm ravaged the east coast and California's drought enters its sixth year; seeing that carbon dioxide levels atop Mauna Loa now routinely surpass 400 parts per million—levels never before experienced by any hominid species—we cannot sit back and pretend that the problem of climate change will manifest only in a minor way in some far distant future and far from home.

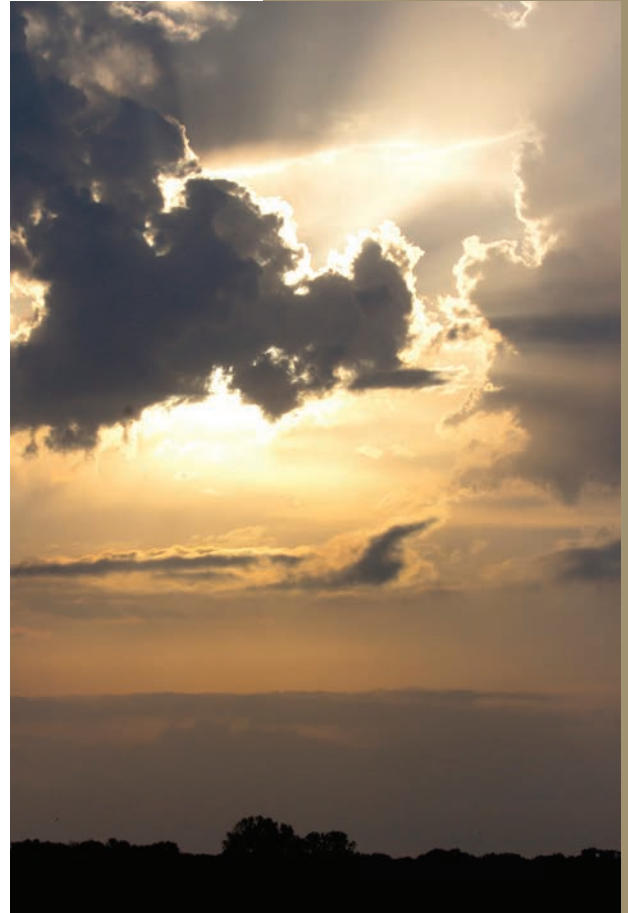
At risk is everything we hold dear about the natural world: its awesome diversity, seasonal changes, migration patterns, synchrony between plant and animal life-cycles and balance of ecological systems generally. Indeed, it's no exaggeration to say that the potential disruptions associated with climate change threaten the very fabric of human civilization.

A conservative approach to this situation demands immediate attention to avert disaster. Not so in today's topsy-turvy world. In this election year, we heard precious little discussion of climate change. When the subject did come up, we saw too many political candidates exploit uncertainty to justify inaction. By the time you read this, we should know the outcome of the elections. Even if it turns out that voters unseated every climate-change denier on the ballot, we will have our work cut out for us to assure the future habitability of the planet.

As individuals, we need to keep climate change in the front of our minds in every decision we make involving energy use, including what we purchase (or don't purchase) and what we do. And we also must hold to the fire the feet of every official we have elected to act on climate change. By the time of the next election cycle two years from now, it needs to be crystal clear to every political hopeful that denial of climate change is not a winning position.



Roger Packard, board president
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ABOVE: A dramatic sunset over Faville Grove Sanctuary. Photo by Jeff Pieterick



LEFT: Synchrony between plant and animal life-cycles is an amazing and imperiled process in the face of climate change. Photo by Pat Ready



Goose Pond Sanctuary fall sampler

Fall is an exciting time of year for Goose Pond Sanctuary. Even though the first light frost has hit, butterflies of different types can still be seen floating over the last of the fall asters and late blooming goldenrods. Monarch butterflies have now left the area for Mexico—but not before around 200 Goose Pond volunteers and our partnering organizations tagged 968 of them for monitoring (849 tagged at Goose Pond, and 119 tagged by partners)! Can you believe that we ran out of supplies after tagging 240 monarchs, and could have tagged over 400 that day?

As a result of the frequent rain and warm temperatures this year, and aided by good numbers of pollinating insects, the prairie responded with great flowering and seed production. Prairie seed collecting is an ongoing summer and fall activity and we have gathered bountiful amounts of seed this year. Thanks to our many volunteers for assisting with this fun activity!

The bird activity has been exceptional this fall as well. Maia Persche, a recent graduate of UW-Madison, is conducting weekly counts of songbirds at the sanctuary, using a food plot that contains grain and forage sorghum, buckwheat, giant sunflowers, and corn. By early October, high counts included 240 mourning

doves, 500 red-winged blackbirds, 700 American goldfinches, and 40 song sparrows.

Cooper's hawks, northern harriers, and American kestrels are frequently seen hunting around the food plot as well. Brand Smith, the Goose Pond kestrel nest box coordinator, set up 135 kestrel boxes in seven counties, including 40 at Goose Pond. Boxes produced 30 kestrel fledglings at Goose Pond Sanctuary in late summer. In addition and much to our delight,

we learned that "Island Girl," a female peregrine carrying a satellite transmitter that was banded in Chile in March 2015, passed over Goose Pond on Sept. 28 on her way south. She flew at least 230 miles that day starting northwest of Green Bay!

Fall migration is well underway. In early October we counted 1,750 Canada geese, 4 snow geese, 89

sandhill cranes, and 10 species of ducks. You're invited out to the sanctuary this fall to see the tundra swan migration—we are always open to visitors and bird enthusiasts.

Sue Foote-Martin and Mark Martin, Goose Pond Sanctuary resident managers, and Maddie Dumas, Goose Pond Sanctuary land steward
goosep@madisonaudubon.org



Madison Audubon is a proud member of the following organizations:



TOP: Birds of a feather stick together at Goose Pond. *Photo by Arlene Koziol*

CENTER: An American kestrel chick stretches its wings. *Photo by Phil Brown*

BOTTOM: A young monarch tagging volunteer focuses entirely on the task at hand. *Photo by Jim Stewart*



Winter brrrrrrd facts

Cool tactics birds use to stay warm in chilly weather

Surviving cold nights

When faced with surviving cold weather, birds seek small pockets of habitat that reduce their heat loss. Chickadees may choose to overwinter in cavities or evergreen trees, while grouse can burrow into the snow to help insulate themselves from the cold night air.

Keeping extremities warm: countercurrent circulation

The next time you see a gull standing on ice, consider this: birds have special networks of blood vessels in their legs that help them conserve heat. Warm arterial blood leaving the body core passes next to veins filled with cool blood returning to the core—a natural heat-exchanger!

Shivering

Birds shiver when they are cold just like mammals. Birds living in colder climates will begin shivering at lower temperatures than species in warmer climates. Northern cardinals start shivering at 64°F, but snow buntings won't shiver until air temperatures are below 50°F.

Fluffing up

Have you ever seen a bird that looks extra fat? It's probably just trying to warm up! Birds are able to raise their feathers, trapping air close to their bodies, which is warmed by their body heat. If a bird wants to cool off it can press its feathers close to its body, removing that layer of air.

These and other cool facts are stored online, in books, and in the brain of Carolyn Byers, director of education at Madison Audubon.



BACKGROUND IMAGE: Winter ice on Lake Mendota. MAS Photo

ABOVE: A puffed-up horned lark works hard on staying warm. Photo by David Inman

Change is in the air

Meet our two newest staff members



MIKHAIL FERNANDES,
communications and outreach
assistant
mfernandes@madisonaudubon.org

For the past two years, Emily Meier led the Madison Audubon communications work, raising the organization's standard for beautiful design, clear and compelling communication, and strategic engagement with social media. As of mid-September, Emily left the nest to explore the world of free-lancing and educational pursuits. We wish Emily well in her adventures!

We are delighted to introduce you to two new members of the Madison Audubon team! **Mikhail Fernandes, communications and outreach assistant**, has landed in Madison after traveling the world on a one-year work program through the Mennonite Volunteer Service. He holds an interdisciplinary degree in music, sustainability, and communications from Goshen College in Indiana. Beyond his environmental initiatives, Mikhail is also known for his musical talent. He performs as a low-brass musician and produces electronic music. One of his goals is to produce a piece that utilizes natural sounds, for example birds chirping, waves crashing, and wind blowing to better understand melodies and harmonies in the natural world.

We are also pleased to welcome back **Brenna Marsicek, director of communications**. Brenna is a UW-Madison graduate, as well as a graduate of the Madison Audubon internship program, having spent the summer of 2007 pulling yellow sweet clover, dueling wild parsnip, and hand-pollinating eastern white-fringed orchids at Faville Grove Sanctuary. She was most recently at the University of Wyoming's Biodiversity Institute coordinating statewide citizen science programs and communications work.

Mikhail and Brenna look forward to meeting and working with you!



BRENNA MARSICEK,
director of communications
bmarsicek@madisonaudubon.org

Turning a new leaf

Introducing children to the wonders of the outdoors



WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS?

"Madison Audubon's educational programming is an irreplaceable addition to our children's environmental education. With my 4th/5th grade special and regular education classrooms, Madison Audubon's educational team's energetic and creative style engages all students in place-based learning. Staff bring complex topics like climate change to students, and help my class take field trips, including seed-collecting in a tall grass prairie and visits to the International Crane Foundation. I am grateful for donors who support this effort. Please continue to join me in supporting these programs."

- Laurie Solchenberger, former Lincoln Elementary teacher

"I support the program because I think it is vitally important to connect young people with the natural world. Hopefully these early experiences will lead to a lifelong involvement in enjoying and protecting our natural resources."

-John Shillinglaw, retired educator and education program donor



This year, the class is focusing on *Wonders*. At the beginning of each lesson, the kids list things they wonder about. We write down our *Wonders* when we're outside and pay special attention to questions that the kids can answer themselves through observation. And while each new lesson may focus on specific topics like animal habitats, tree identification, or climate change, we still always come back to *Wonders*.

For our education department, fall means a new batch of kids who are just beginning to put their 'scientist hats' on. This is my favorite time of year, a time when I can help bring kids out of their comfort zone and begin introducing them to nature.

Every Wednesday afternoon, I join Lincoln Elementary's 4th grade on their Day Outside. These kids are still getting into the swing of things: they need to be reminded to wear enough layers and to bring water outside, and we hear some grumbling when it's raining. But once they're outside, their incredibly observant and inquisitive young minds emerge. With science notebooks in hand, the kids disperse across the school grounds in small groups, ready to make observations and ask questions:

"What kind of bird is that?"

"These leaves have little scales on them!"

"I found poop, I think it's from a rabbit!"

"I wonder what color those leaves will change to this fall?"

I'm looking forward to watching these kids grow as scientists and helping them learn about the world they live in. I am especially excited to relive many wildlife experiences with them: the first time they identify an unknown bird or animal track by themselves, their first really cool wildlife observation, and their first time walking through tallgrass prairie. Mostly though, I can't wait to see them make the transformation into kids that LOVE to be outside!

Do you know what the best part is? There are kids all over our service area making this transformation with Madison Audubon. Our partnerships with Vera Court Neighborhood Center, Salvation Army, and Lincoln Elementary allow us to build relationships with kids over the course of a school year. Our free field trip programs are getting kids outside and exploring. I want to thank each and every one of our members for helping to support our education programs—we're changing the way kids see the world.

Carolyn Byers, director of education
carolyn.byers@madisonaudubon.org

Do you want to support Madison Audubon's educational programs? Visit our donations page to help continue this work! madisonaudubon.org/take-action

TOP: 4th Grade students at Lincoln Elementary explore the wonders of the natural world. Photo by Carolyn Byers

RIGHT: A budding naturalist cleverly uses reversed binoculars to discover tree bark up close. MAS Photo



DONOR ROLL

Thank you to those who donated August-October



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Jim and Kathy Shurts
Deborah Turski

Interested in joining the Frequent Flyers Club? Call or visit our website at madisonaudubon.org/take-action



WATCH FOR IT!

The Madison Audubon annual appeal will hit your mailboxes soon! This is our primary fund-raising activity, and your support makes all of this work possible.

THANK YOU for your role in conservation, sharing knowledge, and advocating for birds.

GIVE TODAY!

Your generosity funds important conservation and education programs throughout south-central Wisconsin*

Yes, I'd like to support Madison Audubon, my local chapter!

Gift amount: _____

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Check to Madison Audubon enclosed

Pay by Visa MasterCard

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I would like to find out more about Madison Audubon's Legacy Society. Please contact me!

MEMBERSHIPS

If you are a member of both Madison and National Audubon (One Audubon), please renew at audubon.org/take-action or call 1-844-428-3826. Thanks for your additional gift to Madison Audubon!

If you are a member of Madison Audubon only, your gift of \$20 or more above will renew your membership for one year.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE ADDRESS ON PAGE 8, OR GIVE ONLINE AT

madisonaudubon.org

*Madison Audubon serves Dane, Columbia, Sauk, Iowa, Richland, Jefferson, Dodge, and Marquette counties.

Madison Audubon Society is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

WINTER EVENTS AND TRIPS WITH AUDUBON

Explore the land and birds in your backyard with these events and trips hosted by Madison Audubon. Find the full list on our website.

LAKE MICHIGAN BIRDING

Scour the shorelines and waters of Lake Michigan to look for migrating waterfowl. A few of the species we anticipate seeing include long-tailed duck, harlequin duck, and red-throated loon.

NOV. 5 | 6:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Meet at Dutch Mill Park & Ride | 46 Collins Court | Madison

NOVEMBER EVENINGS WITH AUDUBON

"The not-so Stellar side of food hand-outs," with Elena West, UW-Madison. Stellar's jays take great advantage of discarded food in recreation areas, much to the detriment of the endangered marbled murrelet. Elena shares her work on who wins and loses when we leave behind food in campgrounds and parks.

NOV. 15 | 7:00 p.m.

Capitol Lakes | 333 W. Main St. | Madison

BIRDING MADISON'S LAKES

After other Wisconsin lakes freeze over, Madison's largest lakes become a beacon for migrating birds. We will look for waterfowl, gulls, and winter birds.

DEC. 10 | 7:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Meet at UW Parking Lot 60 | Walnut and Marsh Drive | Madison



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Join the 100+ year effort to document the birds in your area! The Wisconsin Society of Ornithology coordinates the Wisconsin Christmas Bird Count. Sign up online to start or work with a Christmas Bird Count group near you.

DEC. 14 - JAN. 5

Visit wsobirds.org/christmas-bird-count to register

NEW YEAR'S SUNRISE OVER FAVILLE GROVE

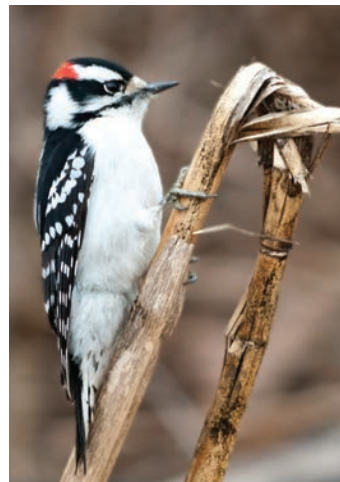
There is simply no better way to start the New Year! Enjoy the predawn light while meandering through the prairie, arriving at the marsh overlook by 7:23 a.m. to see the sun rise over Faville Grove Marsh.

JAN. 1 | 6:55 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

Meet at Buddy's Place | N7710 Wisconsin 89, Waterloo

ABOVE RIGHT: A barred owl looking particularly svelte on a fall day. *Photo by Phil Brown*

RIGHT: A male downy woodpecker perches at attention. *Photo by Kelly Colgan Azar*



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Madison Audubon annual board elections

With your recent approval of changes to the Madison Audubon bylaws to allow for a larger board of directors, the board has voted to expand from nine directors to 12 in 2017.

A six-member nominating committee has considered the many candidates you have suggested and has recommended a slate of six outstanding candidates, which the board has approved, to fill three expiring positions and three new positions.

The slate includes current directors Galen Hasler, Joanne Jones, and Jim Shurts, and new director candidates Pat Eagan,

Dave Rihn, and John Shillinglaw. Candidate statements are available on the Madison Audubon website.

The bylaws allow for members to nominate additional candidates. You may do so by submitting a brief statement from each nominee signed by at least 25 Madison Audubon members as of Nov. 1, 2016. Member nominations are due to the Madison Audubon office no later than Dec. 12, 2016.

Watch for ballots to appear in the spring newsletter, due out in early February, and please vote!