



SETTING A BOLD COURSE

by Matt Reetz, executive director

It's April 1967. The Madison Audubon board of directors is gathered for a regular monthly meeting at the home of one of its members. The main discussion is 62 acres of land that includes a small, rural pond well-known as an important resting place for migratory birds, especially geese and ducks. A motion is made and passes. The decision: buy the land.

There is \$1,200.18 in the treasury. The board accepts the onerous task of raising the funds (later determined to be about \$30,000) and, more importantly, the enormous responsibility to protect, restore, and manage that land—in perpetuity. This will forever change the course of our organization's work.

You may recognize that rural pond as the beating heart of Madison Audubon's Goose Pond Sanctuary—a prairie pothole teeming with wildlife, now surrounded by hundreds more acres of protected land. Between Goose Pond Sanctuary and Faville Grove Sanctuary (established in 1998), nearly 2,000 acres of conserved and wonderfully restored habitats provide myriad benefits to birds, wildlife, and people.

We are proud of this work, but it is not an easy path. It requires so much time, resources, and commitment that similar organizations rarely take it. Indeed, Madison Audubon is a nationally accredited land trust, and among only three bird conservation organizations to have earned that distinction.

Over the years, our land protection has grown, thanks to a LOT of hard work, generosity, and planning by countless donors, volunteers, board, staff, and members. Our organization owes a debt to those contributions that can only be paid by building on a commitment to the land that is strategic, effective, and sustainable.

We were awestruck when we met Penny and Gary Shackelford and learned about Fair Meadows State Natural Area. Through decades of their work, diverse native habitats were restored, providing refuge for wildlife in an increasingly developed landscape. The property hosts outstanding natural communities and critical habitat for rare species. In 2023, Penny and Gary donated Fair Meadows to Madison Audubon to become its newest sanctuary, with the shared vision of protecting birds (and all wildlife) through restoration and preservation of habitats and through research and education.

I like to say we are in the joy business, but we take this work seriously. We are grateful for all you make possible for land, for birds, for people—like this exciting addition of our newest sanctuary (more on the next page). . . and all that is to come down the path!

INTRODUCING FAIR MEADOWS SANCTUARY 2

by Penny and Gary Shackelford, Fair Meadows resident managers

It all started with birds.

We were both attending medical school in St. Louis. On an early spring day in 1966, one of our professors took us on a “warbler walk.” Soon, we owned binoculars, Gary purchased a camera, and we were birders.

During vacation and holiday visits to Penny’s family in Fort Atkinson, we enjoyed pursuing our interests: watching and photographing birds. In 1985, with the help of Penny’s father, Al, we found a beautiful 180-acre property in Rock County close to the southern shores of Lake Koshkonong. It was a bit more than the ten acres we had in mind, but we couldn’t resist the mosaic of apple orchards, wet meadows, and oak-hickory woods. We looked forward to many leisure hours with our binoculars and camera.

Within a few months of the purchase, a DNR forester contacted us to arrange a tour. Afterwards, she said that the woods were very nice, but warned, “You’ll never get any oak regeneration without removing this buckthorn!”

Our walks with binoculars and camera now included gloves, clippers, hand saws, and herbicide. There was also garlic mustard, reed canary grass, and more. Fortunately, Al became our local manager while we continued practicing radiology and pediatrics in St. Louis.

In 1992, we purchased 200 acres of adjacent wetland from a neighbor. It was an excellent home for ducks, rails, cranes, wrens, bitterns, and terns. This expanded the property, now called Fair Meadows, to 380 acres. The name inspiration came from a hymn that Penny learned in childhood: “Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands, robed in the blooming garb of spring.”

Meanwhile, we were on a learning curve about land, habitats, ecology, restoration, and diversity. After a major offensive against buckthorn, a shelterwood harvest was accomplished. Next, we planted the first prairie in a former cornfield. A botanical survey performed by Dr. Galen Smith from the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater revealed sedge meadows and marshes filled with native plants.

In 2002, we retired from our medical careers, moved to Wisconsin, and became full-time land managers. Over the years, we have received advice and support from numerous organizations and individuals, including Madison Audubon—especially Mark Martin.

The property was designated a State Natural Area in 2005. Instead of straight



fence rows, habitats now merge gradually. Invasive plants are on the run. The bird list stands at 196 species.

In planning for the future, we looked for an organization that shared our vision—to protect and enjoy birds through restoration and preservation of habitats and through research and education. We found that in Madison Audubon. We are thrilled that this organization will nurture Fair Meadows for years to come.

FALL 2023 FIELD TRIPS!

To register and find detailed information about upcoming field trips, events, and adult education offerings visit madisonaudubon.org/events

Madison Audubon's field trip program is made possible, in part, through support from the Henry A. Anderson III Fund.

Want to get involved in local bird and habitat conservation?

Join us as a volunteer!

- Bird Collision Corps: learn more and register at madisonaudubon.org/bcc
- Seed collection projects: learn more at madisonaudubon.org/seed-collecting

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram! @MadisonAudubon

CONTINUING ON THE PATH FORWARD

by Matt Fortney, president of the board of directors

If you read the story about how Madison Audubon began land protection work (page 1), you know that our organization has a strong history of hard-workers and forward-thinkers who aren't afraid to blaze a trail that promises a better future for birds and people alike.

Those big, important decisions made this the organization it is today. With the dedication and continued support of our members, we are positioned to keep restoring more habitats, protecting more birds, educating more kids, and welcoming more bird lovers to join us.

Last December, when Madison Audubon's board of directors voted to seek a new name, Seattle was the only other chapter (and the first) that had also committed to doing so. Over the past months, a significant number of the country's largest chapters have too: Chicago; Portland, OR; Washington, DC; New York City; Golden Gate; and Detroit; to name a few. Many more chapters of all sizes are committed to changing their names, too.

Since announcing the board's decision, we've been met with a great deal of kindness and encouragement from our members—thank you. Every time we've asked, you have shared feedback, suggested name ideas, and motivated us along this path to find a new, and better, name to ensure the future of our crucial conservation work.

We've taken that to heart. We continue to meet with numerous chapters around the country and in our region, seeking a shared name to unite us and strengthen the work we collectively do.

Between your input, the work of our name selection committee, and the board of directors, there has been incredible discussion around what the new name will be. I'm thrilled to report that we're just steps away from presenting a new name to our members, and that you'll be able to vote on it soon (see next page).

We can't wait to blaze this trail with all of you—with a new name, together.



MORE NEWS ABOUT OUR NEW NAME

MEMBERS: JOIN US FOR A MEETING IN SEPTEMBER

When Madison Audubon's board of directors voted to change our name last December, we were overwhelmed by the support of our members. You emailed, called, chatted with us, sent in surveys. Your feedback was incredibly helpful.

Our name selection committee, made up of board, staff, community partners, and members, was formed to take on the challenging and exciting task of reviewing and narrowing down name selections. They prepared a detailed report with recommended name options, based on their research, for the board to review at their August meeting.



We are excited to share the news that the board has selected a new name to recommend to you, our membership! We wish we could share it right away, but important due diligence must be completed beforehand. To learn more about the process and see updates about the name change, visit our website at madisonaudubon.org/new-name.

At the September meeting, our board and staff will discuss the proposed new name with the membership, and hold a vote of approval.

Meeting for our membership: Moving forward with a new name!

Date: Tuesday, September 26, 7–8:30 PM

Location: Madison College Mitby Theater, 3550 Anderson St., Madison, WI

RSVP: Required. Members may register at madisonaudubon.org/name-meeting or by calling (608) 255-2473 x2 and leaving a message.



Madison Audubon is your local Audubon chapter, serving 10 counties in southern Wisconsin.

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

BLOOMING PRAIRIES, BOOMING APHIDS

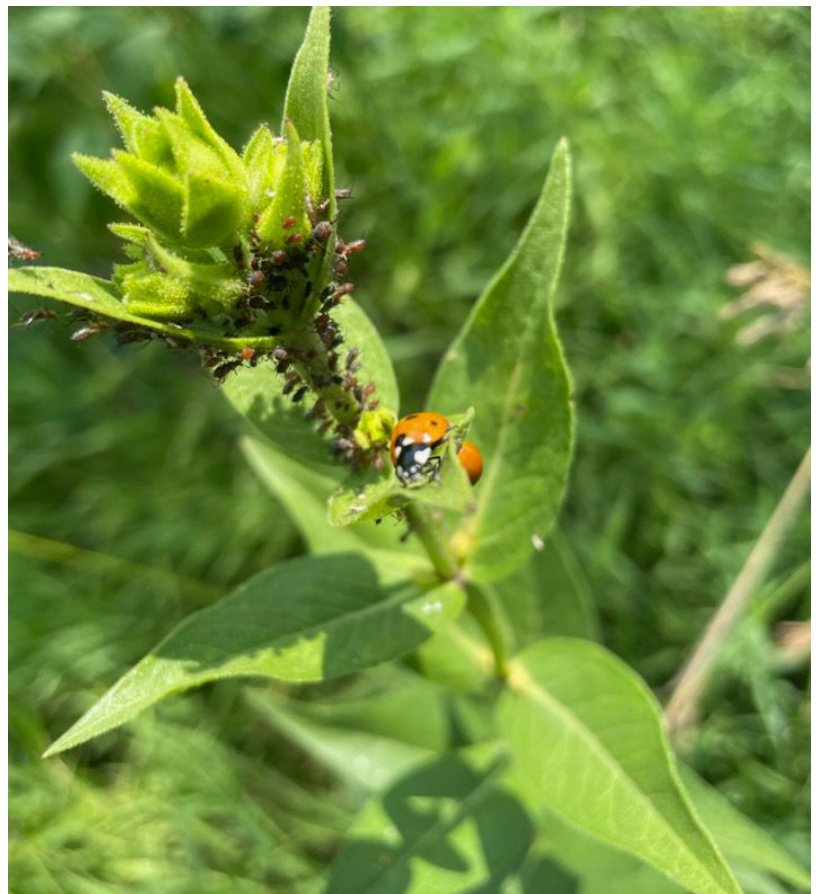
by Samuel Guerra and the 2023 Faville Grove intern crew

As the prairies at Faville Grove burst with colorful blooms each week, we can't help but notice swarms of aphids covering every other stem. The sanctuary boasts a broad collection of insects: from dragonflies to butterflies, leafhoppers to grasshoppers, spittlebugs to beetles, and many more. While we've appreciated this diversity, one thing has become clear: it's the summer of the aphid at Faville Grove.

Aphids congregate along stems and leaves, sucking out the watery sap to harness the sweet products of photosynthesis. As we've learned, ladybugs and aphids, both native insects, go hand in hand. A single ladybug is capable of eating thousands of aphids in its lifetime, so it makes sense that we have noticed the booming ladybug population in response to the unusually high number of aphids.

Once we started to notice that the stems of plants act as their own microecosystems, it was exciting to look at how aphids interact with other species. Where the aphids were filtering sap from the prairie's plants, ants followed to harvest the honeydew that the aphids excreted. We also started to see aphids emerging with wings, which usually indicates that they have overcrowded the area and are getting ready to disperse and find a new food source. The overabundance of aphids can only last so long before they deplete their resources and are removed by ladybugs. The ladybug population will also eventually crash once the aphids leave.

Insects can be just as charismatic as birds and plants, and are not only an important part of the prairie ecosystem, but also an important part of learning to enjoy that ecosystem. Variation in insect populations is not necessarily a source of concern, because the creation of optimal habitat allows predatory insects to level out pests. Learning about these interrelationships has made us realize that the summer of the aphid quickly became the summer of the ladybug, and the ant, and the insectivores, too. With tremendous habitat at Faville Grove, there's plenty of room for blooms and booms.



A LACK OF RAIN SHAPES THE LANDSCAPE

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by Mark Martin, Susan Foote-Martin, Graham Steinhauer, & Emma Raasch, Goose Pond team



In early July, Steve Ackerman and Jonathan Martin from the UW–Madison Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences wrote in an article for the Wisconsin State Journal: “The 61 days of May and June 2023 were the driest May and June ever, with a paltry 2.01 inches of total precipitation falling.” That’s 7.37 inches below normal.

At the UW Arlington Research Station, located 1.5 miles southeast of Goose Pond, the normal precipitation for both months is 9.38 inches. Only 1.92 inches were recorded. On May 1, precipitation at Goose Pond was one inch ahead of normal for the year. In July, weather conditions changed, and rainfall totaled 6.8 inches.

Last winter, the east pond was dry, and very little water remained in the west pond. Strong spring runoff conditions raised the west pond to over two feet. However, at the end of July, the west pond was very shallow and may go dry without significant rains. The east pond has been dry except for sheet water following heavy rainfall.

Even with the low water level, the west pond is dominated by dense arrowheads that provide ideal brood cover for waterfowl. It isn’t uncommon for staff to find more than wild parsnip and sweet clover when pulling invasive plants—we have been met with the sudden whoosh of frantic wingbeats as a duck flushes from her nest. In total, we located eight Mallard nests at Goose Pond and three at Erstad Prairie, plus two Blue-winged Teal nests between both properties. Flushing hens isn’t just good for an adrenaline boost! After we noted nest locations, the DNR visited and equipped four brooding female Mallards with GPS transmitters to learn more about hen movements and evaluate duck productivity across a range of priority habitats.

During drought conditions, a little bit of precipitation reminds us of the bounty of life at the sanctuary. Even the prairie plants with their deep roots were looking a little fatigued and completely crispy on our drier hilltops, but with July rains, they have been looking great. Shorebirds heading south are finding fair habitat conditions on the east pond. Young toads and tiger salamanders are emerging and benefitting from the recent rainfall. Come see for yourself!

A BIG YEAR FOR WISCONSIN'S EAGLES

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by Brenna Marsicek, director of communications & outreach



This June and July, the Bald Eagle Nest Watch (BENW) volunteers submitted their final reports of the year. The eaglets have taken flight, marking the end of a wonderful and productive nesting season for eagles in southern Wisconsin.

This year, of the nests monitored by our volunteers, 86% successfully raised young: 210 brand new eagles took to the skies! This robust number follows on the heels of 2022's disheartening nesting season, during which 65% of the nests in our program failed (likely due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza). What a marvelous turnaround.

A few highlights of the BENW season included:

Historic fledging: Our volunteers documented three eaglets fledging from two nests in Milwaukee County—the first recorded fledglings there in over 120 years!

Our biggest year yet: Through continued growth in our southern program, and partnerships with 1000 Islands Environmental Center, The Ridges Sanctuary, Woodland Dunes Nature Center, Nature's Guide Independent Naturalist Service, and Beaver Creek Reserve, we had over 400 volunteers monitor 206 active nests in 39 counties!

Eagles in the news: BENW was featured in Milwaukee Lifestyle Magazine, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (3 times), Wisconsin State Journal, Wisconsin Public Radio, and other media outlets.

Thank you to all of our volunteers, in particular Drew Cashman, for their incredible work. It is such a delight to share stories, swap photos, and learn more about Wisconsin's eagles with you!

OTHER CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM UPDATES

BIRD COLLISION CORPS

89 volunteers

50 buildings surveyed

373 volunteer hours

107 birds documented as hitting windows

Mitigation Efforts: American Family Insurance and Holy Wisdom Monastery installed window treatments at areas that BCC volunteers found to be collision hotspots, which should dramatically reduce bird deaths. Thank you, AmFam and Holy Wisdom!

KESTREL NEST BOX MONITORS

119 volunteers

228 kestrel boxes on landscape

77 boxes occupied by kestrels

296 kestrels fledged from those boxes

19 banding sessions conducted by Central Wisconsin Kestrel Research program, Kurt Reed, Brand Smith, and Emma Raasch

59 adults newly banded

295 chicks banded

Kestrel Rescue: Four kestrel chicks were rescued after a property owner accidentally tore down their nest. Brand and volunteers constructed and installed a replacement box and worked with two rehabilitation centers to transfer and re-situate the nestlings. Their parents successfully returned.

SUMMERTIME FAMILY FUN

by Carolyn Byers, director of education

After many requests for more kid-centered events, we started our summer Family Field Trip Series in June. Every Thursday morning, we gathered with families and their young kids at local parks. Eight weeks of nature-filled fun!

These field trips are structured like our lessons with classrooms. We gather together at the beginning to say “hi” and swap nature stories. We introduce our topic and learn some cool science facts. We do something to get our hands busy and then play a game! If there’s time at the end, we try to sneak in a nature walk, too.

We love hopping around to different places, meeting folks from each side of town. One family found us because they bought an insect ID book the day before. They looked for insect field trips online and found our Pond Dipping trip at Lake Farm County Park the next day—it was such good timing! Another family is back in Wisconsin after living abroad for years. They’re hoping to help their kids connect with their new local wildlife.

Most of the people on the trips don’t know each other at the start of the day. It’s fun seeing a new group of kids work together to play a game for the first time. On our scat-tastic field trip (for anyone wondering, “scat” is the science word for “poop”), we played a game where kids were coyotes marking their territory. “Coyotes” who had just met were overheard strategizing (okay, plotting) about how to quickly expand their territory together. It was great!

It has been lovely spending the summer with you, and we’re looking forward to more trips this fall and winter. Keep an eye out for future family adventures and come join us!



Our education program is possible thanks to support from the Caerus Foundation, Theda and Tamblin Clark Smith Family Foundation, and Jenni & Kyle Foundation.

Registration for most courses and events opens to Madison Audubon members six weeks in advance. Remaining seats will open to the public two weeks later.

Monarch Tagging

Learn about the amazing life history, migration, and conservation needs of monarch butterflies. We will teach you how to safely catch, handle, tag, and release a monarch, all in the name of science and love of nature. Taught by Mark Martin and Graham Steinhauer, in partnership with Monarch Watch.

Visit our website for times, dates, and additional details. \$10/adult, \$5/youth.

Nature Journaling: Autumn Leaves

Learn how to create a nature journal page by observing, sketching, and writing about autumn leaves. This can be a powerful way to notice new things and to wonder more deeply about nature. Taught by Amy Schleser.

October 1, 1–3 PM. \$20/person.

Behind the Scenes at the Chicago Field Museum

Experience birds and explore the Chicago Field Museum like never before! Join us for an intimate, behind-the-scenes tour of the museum designed specifically for Madison Audubon, with special presentations and opportunities to see the specimen bird collections, the Bird Lab, and more. Transportation provided.

October 16, 7 AM–7 PM. Visit our website for additional details. \$200/person.

What the duck?! Getting Started with Waterfowl Identification (2-part series)

Late fall through winter is prime time to view dozens of waterfowl species that migrate through Wisconsin. Before you know it, you'll be picking out a Redhead hiding in a raft of Canvasbacks! Taught by Caitlyn Schuchhardt.

Class: November 2, 7–8:30 PM. Trip: November 5, 9–11 AM. \$20/person.

A Birder's Dozen: Bird Identification for Beginners, Winter Ed. (2-part series)

A great introductory class for anyone who loves to watch birds at home or in their neighborhood, and wants to learn more about the most common species seen and heard. Taught by Maggie and Bob Honig.

Class: November 9, 6–8 PM. Trip: November 11, 1–3 PM. \$20/person.

Register and find more information at: madisonaudubon.org/events

GOODBYE, DEAR FRIEND

by Becky Abel, director of philanthropy

We said “goodbye” to a very good friend of Madison Audubon this past July. The Celebration of Life for the force for good that was Marcia MacKenzie was filled with food, wine, laughter, and animals—all fitting tributes.



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When I say Marcia was a force for good, it’s an understatement. She was passionate about birds, land protection, environmental education, and Madison Audubon. She gave her time, her intellect, her service, and her heart to conservation for years. She was a very active member of the board of Madison Audubon until 2018, but she didn’t stop being involved when her term was up. She read every piece of information we sent out and followed all of our work—especially land protection and fundraising—closely and critically. Marcia believed in fundraising, and she wasn’t afraid to ask anyone and everyone to donate to the causes she cared about. Madison Audubon was at the top of her list.

She donated. She asked for donations. She asked other people to ask for donations. She donated more. She knew that fundraising for conservation is not begging for handouts—it’s asking others to join in the joy that comes from making a difference.

Madison Audubon’s current Faville Grove fundraiser is particularly meaningful to me. The land we’re raising money to protect is visible from Marcia’s dedicated spot at Faville Grove—the MacKenzie Overlook—and she was deeply interested in the success of this puzzle project. The Bobolink token in the upper corner of the puzzle was her final donation—selected just a few weeks before she passed. She was still thinking of birds, still thinking of Madison Audubon, and STILL giving money to the things she cared about.

I don’t know why she selected a Bobolink, and I regret that I never had a chance to ask her. I actually expected her to choose American Robin, because she and I share a love for the too-often-overlooked charm of robins. I like to think she knew how important this parcel would be for grassland birds, and she wanted a suitable representative for all that would be gained by restoring the 80-acre parcel to native prairie. Whatever her reason for selecting these black, yellow, and white beauties, I’ll think of Marcia when I look at the puzzle and watch the pieces fill in. I’ll think of her as we fundraise for the land she cared so much about. And I will think of her when Bobolinks increase because of the purchase and restoration of this landscape.

Bobolinks are a great reminder of Marcia. They are a joyful bird. They sing a boisterous, crazy, warbling song while fluttering over their prairie territories—yes, they sing while they fly—drawing attention in the happiest and most unexpected ways.

They’re flashy, yet uncommon.

And they ALWAYS make me think of conservation of important lands.

Add your piece to the puzzle at: madisonaudubon.org/puzzle

Featuring: Bob & Maggie Honig; Madison Audubon members since 2021, Frequent Flyers, Kestrel Legacy Circle members, and dedicated program volunteers

"After moving from Texas to Madison in 2021, we were immediately impressed with the scope, quality, and successes of Madison Audubon's work. As lifelong students of the natural world (we got to know each other while co-leading birdwatching trips and on Christmas Bird Counts!), supporting Madison Audubon was a natural fit. As volunteers, we've been able to see firsthand the positive impact on birds and their habitats, as well as in educating the public.



Managing land and supporting nonprofit staff require financial resources, and that's exactly why we're naming Madison Audubon as a beneficiary in our wills and investments. That way, we can continue supporting these critical efforts after we're gone. And while we're still around, our Frequent Flyer monthly donation makes regular contributions super simple!"

IT'S MAKE-A-WILL MONTH! IS YOUR NEST IN ORDER?

If birds and Madison Audubon are part of your legacy, we hope you'll let us know so we can celebrate you!

The Kestrel Legacy Circle is made up of dedicated supporters (like Maggie and Bob Honig, above) who have named Madison Audubon in their will or estate. Membership is not binding in any way. Your statement of intent simply allows us to thank and recognize you in your lifetime for helping secure the future of birds and land in Wisconsin. We offer special opportunities to our "Kestrels" so that you can become more familiar with the organization whose work you plan to support long-term. If you prefer not to be publicly listed, you can remain anonymous.

Madison Audubon accepts planned gifts of any amount, in the form of wills, trusts, appreciated stock or other assets, IRA rollovers, life insurance policies, and real estate. You can speak with your financial advisor about leaving a planned gift to Madison Audubon. Additional information can be found at madisonaudubon.org/legacy.

Written by Becky Abel, director of philanthropy. For more information about planned gifts or the Kestrel Legacy Circle, contact Becky (also a Kestrel Legacy Circle member!) at 608-255-2473 x5 or babel@madisonaudubon.org.

Thank you! Your commitment to birds and conservation is incredible. We are grateful to all of our supporters at all levels, but due to space constraints, donors are listed on our website: madisonaudubon.org/2023-donors

Donate on a regular basis without having to lift a finger! The Frequent Flyers Club allows for automated contributions, tailored to your schedule and amount.

Sign up: madisonaudubon.org/give

You can leave a legacy. Members of the Kestrel Legacy Circle have named Madison Audubon in their will or estate, thereby strengthening our organization and mission well beyond their lifetimes. Learn more: madisonaudubon.org/legacy



PHOTO CREDITS

P1: Marsh Wren by Gary Shackelford

P3: Crane Pond at Fair Meadows Sanctuary by Gary Shackelford

P4: Blazing star in bloom at sunset by Mike Budd/USFWS Midwest

P5: Monarch on showy goldenrod by Nydia Kien

P6: A plant covered in aphids and ladybugs by Joshua Brazee

P7: Dry conditions at the east pond by Graham Steinhauer/Madison Audubon

P8: Bald Eagle family by Arlene Koziol

P10: A child holds a drawing of an owl while posing near Hank, a taxidermied Great Horned Owl by Carolyn Byers/Madison Audubon

P12: Marcia MacKenzie by Brenna Marsicek/Madison Audubon

P13: Maggie and Bob Honig by David Veselka

P14: American Kestrel perched on wood by Mick Thompson

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