

MAY 2023



FLYING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

by Jeff Galligan, secretary of the board of directors

When I was invited to join the Madison Audubon board of directors in 2019, what most drew me in was the organization's advocacy and educational work. As a person of color who works in higher education, I value teaching students of all ages about nature, and knew I could bring new perspectives to the education and advocacy work, too.

I also feel strongly about the land stewardship and preservation mission of the organization. The amazing work by all involved with Madison Audubon has lasting and meaningful impact for so many species of wildlife and for people too. One of my favorite restorative moments was helping to return an old farm field to prairie at Faville Grove Sanctuary. It was a cold and windy day. As I lugged a 5-gallon pail full of seeds around as I spread them, it felt pure and real to me. I love to interact with members and the public at some of our wonderful events, like monarch tagging and kestrel banding, and through teaching Birding 101 and Fall Warbler Identification.

It is clear to me that Madison Audubon is not just resting on its laurels. All staff, volunteers, and board members are passionate about the mission to protect and improve habitat for birds and other wildlife. Directly addressing the "Audubon" name issue shows that Madison Audubon is backing up words with action. The board's unanimous decision to change the name signifies a transparent approach to acknowledging the past and an intentional move to make necessary changes going forward. This creates a space where inclusion, diversity, and access are not just talk or window dressing, but rather, concrete and demonstrable actions.

We are grateful for all of our members, and we appreciate the wisdom that comes from us middle-aged or older folks who support this organization. But attracting a younger, more diverse membership will help the organization continue to fulfill our mission. This is critically important, as today's young adults are going to be tomorrow's leaders. When it comes to conservation and the preservation of land, habitat, and resources, all of us should have a seat at the table. Our decision to change the name reflects that commitment.

Madison Audubon is doing essential work while being willing to have those crucial conversations about what is right for all people in south-central Wisconsin. I am proud to be a member of the Madison Audubon board and executive committee.



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

by Matt Reetz, executive director

One of the most common questions we get is “Can you tell me what bird this is? It looks like...” Another is “Aren’t Madison Audubon and National Audubon the same?”

Answers to the first question vary—Wisconsin has a lot of wonderful birds! The short answer to the second is no, we are two separate organizations. Following recent news about the “Audubon” name, let’s take a deeper dive.

The relationship between chapters, like Madison Audubon, and National Audubon Society (NAS) is voluntary, based on furthering a shared goal to protect birds.

But each is an entirely independent nonprofit with separate programming, communications, and funding. Our local work in youth education, habitat restoration, citizen science, and more is made possible by direct donations to Madison Audubon from folks like you. Thank you!

Those living in our service area who join NAS become local chapter members of Madison Audubon for a time. That gives them the chance to learn about and be a part of our meaningful on-the-ground conservation activities here in Wisconsin. NAS provides us a small share of those membership dues (about 0.8% of our budget), access to grants, and other support resources in return.

We have also shared the “Audubon” brand. Our organization has worked hard to make it a known and trusted name in Wisconsin. But, because of the harm we now know the name causes, that brand no longer aligns with our values. I am so grateful for the overwhelming support from our members and the public on our decision to seek a new name that will better represent our work.

While we can continue to affiliate with NAS, there are many reasons why we, other chapters, and many in the birding community deeply disagree with the NAS decision to keep the Audubon name. But, that was their choice to make. And it doesn’t affect our path.

Before us is a wonderful opportunity to shape the future of bird conservation and be more effective, sustainable, and equitable. The network of chapters also choosing to rename continues to grow—creating an environment of synergy, new ideas, and inclusivity.

“What will the new name be?” has quickly risen to the top of the list of most common questions, and for good reason. Our board and staff recently outlined a thoughtful and creative process for finding our new name—and it all starts with you!



We'd like to invite you to complete a short survey so we can learn about our community's values and connection to birds and our mission. It can be filled out online at madisonaudubon.org/name-change-survey or by sending in the tear-out sheet after page 7. We also plan to host in-person listening sessions and continue collaborating with chapters around the country. This process will generate name ideas that will be carefully reviewed. When all goes to plan, we'll be able to continue our work under our new name before year's end.

All of us are very excited about teaming with you to make sure this process is efficient, inclusive, and fruitful. And we are even more excited to grow our work for birds under a new banner that moves us forward—together!

SUMMER 2023 EVENTS

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 funding from the Henry A. Anderson III Fund.

Join our flock on Facebook and Instagram! @MadisonAudubon

THE LANDSCAPE MOSAIC

by Drew Harry, Faville Grove Sanctuary land steward

A thicket ripe with plums must be nearly paradise for fruit-inclined birds. Spring willow clumps soft with catkins, and weeks later berries and fruits of all kinds—elderberry, sumac, currant, nannyberry—delight the senses. These are the unruly worlds of shrub thickets; appealing to humans for sweet berries and appealing to wildlife for the same reason. Historically, these pockets of shrubbery existed within the shifting mosaic of prairie, savanna, woodland, and wetland—a piece of the puzzle of old Wisconsin.

Shrub communities are often small and temporary, either succeeding to stunted resprouts after a burn or to woodland after a period of 10-15 years without fire. Even still, these rugged patches harbor a wide diversity of life, especially plants and birds.

The issue with native shrubs today is that they often harbor invasive species like buckthorn, honeysuckle, mulberry, and multiflora rose, often spread about through the digestive tract of Cedar Waxwings or starlings. We try to cut and treat all invasive shrubs, but to restore a species-rich herbaceous layer it's often necessary



to cut native shrubs as well. This is sometimes done halfheartedly, like on the west end of Faville Woods, where we've left scatterings of dogwood, sumac, plum, and raspberries to benefit the birds. In other areas, willow has taken over, like in the Ledge Uplands North, and trees like aspen and boxelder have sprouted through on their way to becoming a fully-fledged forest. Full measures of cutting and treating are called for here.

On the west side of the woods, where savanna gives way to shrubland that transitions to grassland, the shrub interface shows a rich and rare assemblage of birds: Yellow-breasted Chats, Field Sparrows, Brown Thrashers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos, even an occasional Bell's Vireo. Rare plants include small sundrops and violet wood sorrel.

Other birds have different relationships to shrubs. Grasshopper Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Henslow's Sparrows generally avoid them in favor of sky, grass, and space. Ovenbirds, Wood Thrushes, and Veery nest on or near the ground in forests, where they require a small but not overwhelming shrub coverage. With their habit of plucking insects on the wing, birds like Red-headed Woodpeckers and Common Nighthawks prefer an open savanna with a limited shrub layer.

This winter and spring, we've been cutting non-native shrubs with a vengeance, and the native ones with a more forgiving blade. In many cases, we're watching and listening for cues from the plant and bird life. Our management hopefully restores the herbaceous layer, eliminates invasive species, and frees up habitat for those grassland, forest, and savanna birds. It's all a part of the biodiversity puzzle, especially those wild and sweet plums with their dusty bloom—beckoning sweet-toothed birds and people alike.

WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER 2023 INTERNS!

Madison Audubon's sanctuaries get a huge boost through our paid ecological restoration internship programs each summer. Six interns will be based at Faville Grove Sanctuary; five Prairie Partners interns rotate between Goose Pond Sanctuary, Cherokee Marsh, Empire Prairies State Natural Area, Lakeshore Nature Preserve, Patrick Marsh Wildlife Area, and Pheasant Branch Conservancy. We are excited (and grateful) for them to join us in this important work!

To learn more about our interns, visit madisonaudubon.org/2023-interns.

LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER

by Graham Steinhauer, Goose Pond Sanctuary land steward

Early spring is a time of subtle but meaningful change at Goose Pond Sanctuary. The first cardinal sings on a sunny morning. Opossums criss-cross trails, leaving perfect indentations in impressionable, warming snow. And following the arrival of Canada Geese in late February, visitors arrive en masse to view and photograph waterfowl.

While the sanctuary provides an important space to learn about nature independently, our team is also very involved in creating tailored learning opportunities of all kinds.

Educating our community is a crucial component of what we do. We offer numerous bird and habitat outings at the sanctuary and surrounding area, including custom field trips for many of our local conservation partners. At Olbrich Botanical Gardens, we recently provided a demonstration of how to clean wild-gathered seeds with our fanning mill, and we helped prepare a thousand free milkweed seed packets for attendees to take home.

Through conference presentations and speaking engagements, we can share our research and work with the larger conservation community in our area, around the state, and across the region. At Wisconsin Wetland Association's conference in February, I summarized our three-year dragonfly and damselfly survey project and provided recommendations to those pursuing similar projects. Our sanctuary staff, alongside key volunteers, presented findings from seven raptor research projects we have been involved with for the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy, and detailed how volunteers can get involved too. Emma Raasch, our ecological restoration technician, created an accessible virtual presentation on fire ecology, safety, and logistics for people to learn more about this crucial tool and its importance in southern Wisconsin.

And of course, we thoroughly enjoy hosting curious students and school groups. In 2022, we hosted 26 school groups (over 500 students)! In the past month, two groups of university students visited to learn about conservation, stewardship, and more. Mark Martin guided a UW-Stevens Point Waterfowl Ecology class through the sanctuary before touring Erstad Prairie and four other local wetland habitats. The UW-Madison Wildlife Society Chapter joined us to learn about volunteer opportunities and careers. Gregg the education salamander was a hit as usual.

So, if you are an educator or know an educator who might be interested in scheduling an event, please let us know! Our primary job here at Goose Pond is land management, but we do our best to share the value and beauty of the sanctuary with all.

For recent presentations and the Goose Pond Webcam, visit youtube.com/MadisonAudubon

HOW TO ENJOY THE FUNNEST SEASON

by Carolyn Byers, director of education

The transition from winter through spring into summer is always a blur for us. Many of us are (understandably) ready for winter to be over at this point, and spring can feel like it takes forever to get rolling.

Checking in with nature regularly helps me stay grounded throughout the year. So much can happen in a few short weeks—here are some ways to both celebrate the seasons and enjoy these changes!

Follow phenology. Phenology is the study of how nature transforms across the seasons. You can track the phenology of anything—trees, flowers, birds, insects—and it can be as simple as writing down what you see on a piece of paper. For each observation, write the date and what happened (for example, “April 3, pasque flowers blooming”). You can do this solo, or make it a team activity. Hang your paper up where other people can help or add to your list. You can even turn it into a competition if you want! Kids (and kids-at-heart) love being the first person to find something new. You can also make a list of things you hope to see before they happen, and then go looking for them.

Start a nature journal. Drawing and writing about what’s happening in nature is a calming activity. No more “how is it already August?!” because this kind of thoughtful reflection firmly anchors you in the present. We have lots of ideas if you need help getting started, visit madisonaudubon.org/nature-journals.

Go on a scavenger hunt. Simple or complex, a hike can sometimes be more fun if there’s a mission. Make your own or find examples at madisonaudubon.org/scavenger-hunts!



CLEAR AS PATTERNED GLASS

by Brenna Marsicek, director of communications and outreach



I'll never forget the day I got my haircut and a Ring-necked Pheasant suddenly crashed through my hairdresser's picture window. In the aftermath of the explosion of glass and noise, we looked in horror at the bird dead on the floor, then at where the glass used to be and the wooded backyard beyond. It was not hard to connect the dots between how and why, but like many people, I assumed that a bird hitting a window was a rare occurrence.

That was 20 years ago, and in the time since, researchers have shown that these occurrences are anything but rare. A publication in 2014 showed that at least 600 million birds die every single year in the United States alone after hitting windows—and that's a conservative estimate. The reflection of habitat or illusion that there is clear space to fly through make windows a deadly hazard for birds.

Of course, people need windows, and I'll be the first to admit my love of natural light (hello houseplants!). But when natural light or access to a great view comes at the ultimate price to birds, what is a nature-conscious person to do?

Simple: put up a window treatment.

Many window treatments are highly effective, popular, and inexpensive. If you notice birds hitting one particular window, treat that one first. Then move to another window if you find the problem hasn't been entirely solved. It's likely just a few windows are troublesome for birds, so it won't take long to make your home—and

our community—better for them. For ideas, visit madisonaudubon.org/prevent-collisions.

Our Bird Collision Corps (BCC) launched in 2018 as a city-level study on where bird-window collisions happen. The volunteer citizen scientists that help with this work are dedicated and enthusiastic, and they have collected valuable data that have made a difference. Four of our site partners have completed or are putting up treatments on windows that were most problematic. UW-Madison has even incorporated bird-safe design into the early stages of building projects. Huge thanks to our partners there, especially Aaron Williams, for making that happen! Learn more at madisonaudubon.org/bcc.

In 2020, Madison Audubon and our members—you!—supported the city’s development and passage of Wisconsin’s first and currently only Bird-Safe Glass Ordinance using BCC data as a jumping-off point. The ordinance states that any new building or renovation in the City of Madison meeting certain requirements must use specifically bird-friendly, treated glass.

While the ordinance was a huge accomplishment for those of us who want to protect birds, it hasn’t been smooth sailing. A group of developers sued the city in 2021; we supported the city in pushing back, and in 2022, the judge ruled in favor of the ordinance. Shortly after, the developer group appealed the decision. We continue to work with our partners to uphold the ordinance. In the meantime, it is still enforceable. More about this at madisonaudubon.org/bird-safe-glass.

This tremendous collaborative advocacy effort has set the stage for a lot of additional conversation and planning. We have been talking with other municipalities about how to implement similar ordinances (when the lawsuit is over), as well as other groups interested in launching surveying efforts. The amount of public interest in preventing bird collisions is growing—and it is critical for bird conservation. Thank you all so much for being such a big part of that!

SPRING 2023 CITIZEN SCIENCE UPDATES

Bird Collision Corps: 47 buildings/structures monitored by 89 volunteers

Kestrel Nest Boxes: 223 nest boxes monitored by 111 volunteers

Bald Eagle Nest Watch: 250 eagle nests monitored by 437 volunteers

Featuring: Topf Wells, Madison Audubon member since 2012, Kestrel Legacy Circle member, and former member of the board of directors



"I first visited Otsego Marsh a few years ago as part of a volunteer group planting trees in the wonderful woodland there. Great woods, great volunteers, great little trees, and a great marsh. But something was missing...

The marsh should have been a great spot for young waterfowl and shorebirds, but the property lacked the grassy cover that many nesting birds need. Just a few years later, the chance arose to buy 36 cropped acres adjacent to the pond. Row crops longed to become wetlands and prairie, the nesting habitat that waterfowl, shorebirds, and grassland birds need to thrive.

As a board member at that time, I advocated for the purchase (plead might be more accurate). With great staff work and their

own conservation values, the board readily agreed to buy the land and transform it into sustainable habitat. We were piecing the puzzle of a better Otsego Marsh together. That became the theme of a wonderful fundraising campaign, to which I happily donated. To have Madison Audubon recognize an opportunity to improve the conservation value of a landscape dramatically and act so decisively was a source of joy to me.

Madison Audubon is always busy restoring conservation lands, finding fragments of their original health and splendor, and putting those pieces back together. That's a joyful enterprise and one I'm lucky and happy to support."



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.

PUZZLING TOGETHER THE LANDSCAPE

by Becky Abel, director of philanthropy

Big plans are being made for another key piece at Faville Grove Sanctuary! The pending 80-acre acquisition includes parts of Faville Marsh and Faville Woods with 55 acres of adjacent cropland. This will open scenic vistas protect water quality, and improve habitat for rare species such as Henslow’s Sparrow, Short-eared Owl, Common Nighthawk, Bobolink, Dickcissel, and many other feathered, scaly, furry and buzzy critters. The new acquisition will protect even more of the sanctuary’s beautiful, critically-important marsh. We’re fortunate to have enough funding on hand to make this wonderful new addition possible. Now we need to fundraise to replenish our land acquisition reserves—for more birds and more habitat.

Did you see the Otsego Marsh landscape puzzle that members (and possibly you!) completed for conservation in 2020? We’re ready to puzzle together and protect another landscape. When you add to the Faville Grove landscape puzzle, the image emerges of how dedicated people make a difference for Wisconsin birds looking for suitable habitat to rest, refuel, and nest—now and into the future.

How does the puzzle work?

Each donation reveals a new piece of the image. When the last piece is added, we’ll share the completed picture—meaning that we’ve reached the funds needed!

Honor your love of birds. Honor a loved one. Add a critical piece to help save valuable land and waters. To add a piece, head over to madisonaudubon.org/puzzle and track progress toward permanent habitat protection, or use the donation envelope and specify “puzzle.”

Once your piece is added, why not visit Faville Grove Sanctuary and see for yourself what you are helping support? Pick up some soil. Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you. Feel proud that you helped ensure that an important part of a beautiful landscape is protected. FOREVER.



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: Tundra Swans by Arlene Koziol

P3: Red-headed Woodpecker by Arlene Koziol

P4: Faville Grove prairie by Drew Harry/Madison Audubon

P7: A child uses a lens to examine a flower by Carolyn Byers/Madison Audubon

P8: A Blue Jay flies past a window with a series of patterned dots illustration by Brenna Marsicek/Madison Audubon

P10: Topf Wells portrait by Madison Audubon

P11: A puzzle depicting an image of land and habitat, showing some pieces that are colored in with bright greens and blues illustration by Brenna Marsicek/Madison Audubon

P12: American Kestrel perched on wood by Mick Thompson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Matt Fortney, president
Pat Clark, vice president
Jeff Galligan, secretary
Tim Norris, treasurer
Olivia Dunn
Patrick Eagan
Joanne Jones
Darcy Kind
Matt Krueger
Lisa Lepeak
Dexter Patterson
David Rihn

STAFF

Matt Reetz, executive director
Becky Abel, director of philanthropy
Carolyn Byers, education director
Drew Harry, Faville Grove land steward
Brenna Marsicek, communications director
Mark Martin & Susan Foote-Martin, Goose Pond resident managers
John Minnich, financial manager
David Musolf & Roger Packard, Faville Grove resident managers
Mickenzee Okon, educator
Emma Raasch, Goose Pond ecological restoration technician
Graham Steinhauer, Goose Pond land steward
Kaitlin Svabek, communications coordinator

We are a proud member of the following organizations:



Thank you to our major education program donors:



Theda & Tamblin Clark Smith
FAMILY FOUNDATION