



BENJAMIN F. GOSS BIRD CLUB

THE GOSS HAWK

November 18, 2019

Volume 3, Issue 2

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Take Five with....

Larry Kascht

Until this past spring when he retired, Larry was the director of Retzer Nature Center. His years as a naturalist educator allowed him to teach countless children and adults about the natural world. In his newly found free time he has officially become a member of the Goss Bird Club. So naturally we gave him an assignment to answer some questions so we can know him better!



The Benjamin F. Goss Bird Club was founded to increase knowledge and appreciation of birds through education, research, preservation and conservation, and to provide public awareness of birds and their role in the environment - all of which remains our goal and purpose to this day.

Unless otherwise noted, events are held at Retzer Nature Center, located about 4 miles west of Waukesha, near the end of Madison Street.

S14 W28167 Madison St,
Waukesha, WI 53188



What was your 'spark' bird that got you interested in bird watching?

When I started birding as a kid of about 7 years old, I thought the Barn Swallow was about the coolest bird there was. They were so beautiful and graceful, such great fliers, looked like a fighter plane. I used to collect the plastic bird model kits, glue them together, and paint them - I was so proud of my Barn Swallow model, but I was also ticked-off because the paint color they provided for it looked black, not iridescent dark blue.

Besides birds, what aspect of nature and the outdoors do you most enjoy?

I especially love forests and trees, spring wildflowers, mountainous landscapes, and the tropical rainforest and paramo of Costa Rica.

How did you come to join the Goss Bird Club?

It's something I always wanted to do, but really did not have available time for during my career as Naturalist at Retzer Nature Center.

Do you have a most enjoyable birding memory?

During my college years I was on an Easter retreat at a monastery in the hills of Kentucky. I went walking in the woods, and somehow managed to sneak up on a Pileated Woodpecker taking apart a stump. He did not see me, and I watched him for about 15 minutes, basically reducing the stump to a pile of sawdust, with splinters flying out in every direction. I didn't know what the bird was, I thought I'd seen an Ivory-billed Woodpecker which I knew was supposed to be extinct—so I kept my sighting secret for years, till I finally found out what I had seen!

What other nature organizations do you belong to?

In the past I have been a member of National Audubon Society, Friends of the Earth, Association of Nature Center Administrators, National Association for Interpretation, the Arbor Day Foundation, WSO, and Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, among others. Since my retirement 3 months ago, I am in the process of deciding what memberships to continue.

What's the craziest bird you've found?

The Resplendent Quetzal in Costa Rica was an unbelievable experience. This bird was considered a deity by the Mayan people, and it is a quest bird for many birders. When we were in Costa Rica, we were able to stay at the world-renowned Monteverde Cloud Forest - and at dawn we were fortunate enough to actually see Quetzals (actually, they had come into the trees right next to the parking lot!). Apparently the naturalist guides with the day's visiting tour groups (who could not enter the property till 7am) were angry about this, as they usually have to work so hard to find Quetzals for their tour groups to observe.

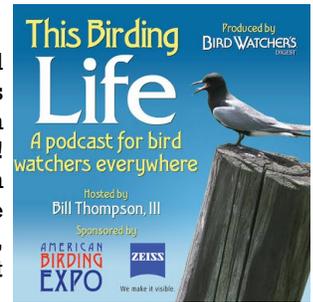
Where is your favorite nature spot?

Retzer Nature Center (of course), also our old family farm property in Sheboygan County near Elkhart Lake, also Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, also the Monteverde Cloud Forest in Costa Rica.

American Birding Podcast

CAN'T GET ENOUGH BIRDS IN YOUR LIFE?

Do you need more birdiness in your soul? Me too! Many folks will turn to reading about birds when we need more birds, but sometimes that isn't enough! Well if you're like me, and just can't get enough about birds, perhaps a birding podcast can fill the void! Podcasts are regularly produced audio "shows" published through various venues. Most can be played from a website, but many can be downloaded or streamed from providers such as Apple iTunes, Google Play, and other podcast services. Two of the best and most popular are *This Birding Life* and the *American Birding Podcast*.



Well known as a clearing house for listing, the American Birding Association has expanded its reach in recent years, including the addition of a podcast. Host Nate Swick entertains and educates listeners about birds, birding, travel, and conservation. Listeners receive updates of rare birds around the ABA area, hear from well known and respected experts, and receive other birding news, along with Swick's dry, slight wit. If you're looking to stay in touch with what's happening in birding, the *American Birding Podcast* will keep you as up to date as any source available.

Bill Thompson III, or *Bill of the Birds* as he goes by on Twitter, is the current caretaker of the Bird Watchers Digest franchise, a publication his father started in 1978. Birder, writer, musician, and sometimes comedian, BT3 hosts a thoroughly enjoyable show highlighting some of the most interesting and transformative naturalists in the birding world. Topics range from travel to optics to writing to simple enjoyment of birds. Be sure to tune in to episode 80 to hear Bill's conversation with Pewaukee's own **Erik Bruhnke** - "**World's Happiest Birdman**".

Species Spotlight:

SOLITARY SANDPIPER

Relative to most shorebirds that travel in larger groups, the Solitary Sandpiper (SOSA) can regularly be found playing the introvert, comfortably spending time alone along the shore of mudflats and rivers.

Generally nervous while foraging, the SOSA bobs its head, especially when alarmed. Blackish underwings contrast strongly with white belly when seen in flight overhead. When flushed it will commonly fly high into the air (towering) before coming down again to the pond's edge.

Despite being a regular migrant through the upper Midwest, there are no modern breeding records of Solitary Sandpipers in Wisconsin, and very few in the lower 48 - only Oregon and Minnesota have verified records.

Of the 85 shorebird species in the world, the Solitary Sandpiper is one of only two species known to nest in trees. Their nesting habits are poorly known due to the ex-



While superficially similar to Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpipers are differentiated by their smaller size, speckled back, and white orbital (eye) ring. The wide base of their beak and horizontal posture are markers that experienced *shorebirders* use to differentiate the two.



treme remoteness of their location, and the dense wet habitat in which they place their nests. The only other shorebird known to nest in trees is the Green Sandpiper, a very similarly built bird from the Old World.

Although the Solitary Sandpiper was first described by ornithologist Alexander Wilson in 1813, its nest was not discovered until 1903. Until that time, eggs and young of the Spotted Sandpiper were misidentified as those of the Solitary Sandpiper. As it turns out, Solitary Sandpipers do not build their own nests. Solitaries use the abandoned nest sites of boreal passerines such as American Robin, Rusty Blackbird, Canada Jay, and Cedar Waxwings.

Due to the remoteness of their nesting locations in bogs and muskegs, their nesting habits are poorly known. Interestingly, despite nesting in trees, SOSA nestlings are precocial - ready to leave the nest shortly after hatching.

Moment from the Archives w/ Jennifer Tyskiewicz

Dig Deep Enough and You'll Find Artifacts!

While most of the items that comprise the B.F. Goss Bird Club Archives are old photos, yellowed newspaper articles, and reams of faded minutes from 90 years of meetings, there are a few 3-dimensional objects that our club has inherited over the years.

Several birdhouse table decorations from the 1976 WSO Convention that our club hosted in Waukesha, and a boxful of a former member's carved linoleum blocks of bird art used to decorate meeting reminder postcards, are several of those types of objects.

Another 3-dimensional object that has been in the archives is shown in the accompanying photo, and was presented to the archives by club founder, Bob Adams.

The object is a pair of Radio Shack "Realistic 2-Channel Solid State CB Transceivers, Model TRC - 25A," also known as "walkie - talkies."

These "walkie talkies" featured a volume control, a "call signal" switch, a battery meter, a "mike and speaker," and a 3-foot telescopic antenna.....all powered by a single 9V battery!

They were advertised as being able to reach a 1-mile range, while most other models only had a ½ - mile range. These transceivers were sold in the early 1970's.

From what I remember, Bob Adams used these during club field trips where "car caravans" were involved, with his car in the lead with one of the transceiver units on board, and the other unit in a car that was further back.



The two radios (left) were housed in the archives inside the two hospital "booties" (right). At a recent meeting of the executive committee Spence and Tim attempted to use the walkie talkies. While we did get them to crackle a bit, and a bit of Tim's voice was audible through one end, the radios wouldn't do much good in the field, and thus have been relegated to status of "museum pieces".



It was widely believed at the time, that only Bob knew how the transceivers truly worked. And though he did offer them to any club member to use, I'm not certain that anyone ever took him up on the offer!

With the invention and popularity of the cell phone, these "radio transmitters" soon went the way of the cassette tape and the VCR, and thus ended up in the archives, neatly encased in, of all things, a pair of tan "hospital booties!" (See photo below).

After years of these radios sitting in their booties in the archives, and knowing that there wouldn't be much interest in anyone actually using them again, I brought their existence to the attention of the present Executive Committee.

Tim expressed interest in trying them out. He was intrigued by the knowledge that many good birders had used these "walkie-talkies" to transmit many exciting bird sightings.....and maybe even a couple of "come help me, I'm stuck" situations over the years.

My thanks to Tim for the Internet research that he did on the specifications of these units that was included in my description above. Tim also found out that these radio units can still be purchased "used" on Internet sites for anywhere from \$13.40 - \$49.99 per pair.

Tim was interested in trying out the transceivers, but I couldn't convince him to make use of the "hospital booties" that came with them!

("Artifacts" continued on page 4)

(Artifacts cont....) Another 3-dimensional archival object is a very heavy and cumbersome 16mm film reel. (See photo).

For members who are of a "younger age," this type of technology was the precursor to videotapes and DVD's. The film was threaded through an equally cumbersome and large projector.

For the rest of us members who are of a "certain age," we will all recall the flickering images that this technology produced, with the film often becoming unthreaded in mid-showing, or breaking into several pieces and needing to be spliced (taped) back together to continue the showing!

This particular film reel contains the photographic work of Paul and Emma Hoffman, the former club members who were featured in "A Moment from the Archives" in the September and October 2018 The Goss Hawk Newsletter.



The Hoffmans traveled the country to film birds, as well as filming on their land in Waukesha County. They would take this film reel to various venues in the Milwaukee area to give presentations to interested groups.

Emma Hoffman had written narrative scripts to read along as Paul manned the film projector during these programs. We have the copies of all of Emma's scripts in the archives.

Also, copies of the film's segments were transferred to videotapes in the 1990's, and are in the archives, as well.

Maybe, we'll find someone who knows how to convert them to CD's or memory sticks or some other technology of which I am not aware. Our 3-dimensional objects keep getting smaller and smaller, which is a good thing for archival storage!

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II

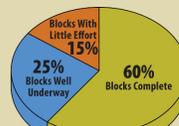
SEASON 4 SUMMARY



TUFTED TITMOUSE SUCCESS

Atlas Reveals Range Expansion

Twenty years ago, Tufted Titmouse could be found from Milwaukee to La Crosse, with a small population around Eau Claire. Current surveys reveal that these mostly southern birds have increased in numbers and range. The gap to Eau Claire has filled in and birds have pushed farther north, with breeding confirmations to Rice Lake, Mosinee, and Green Bay.



Progress on 1,283 Priority Survey Blocks (blocks are 3 x 3 miles)

12 NEW BREEDING SPECIES

Not Confirmed Breeding During Atlas I

- ◆ King Rail
- ◆ White-eyed Vireo
- ◆ Canvasback
- ◆ Great Tit
- ◆ Bufflehead
- ◆ Kirtland's Warbler
- ◆ Whooping Crane
- ◆ Yellow-throated Warbler
- ◆ Mississippi Kite
- ◆ Blue Grosbeak
- ◆ Eurasian Collared-Dove
- ◆ European Goldfinch

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

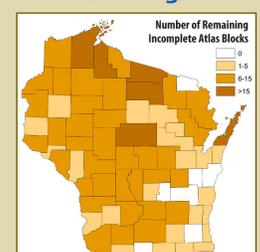
4 New Species Added in 2018

- ◆ A pair of **Eared Grebes** overwintered in Columbia County and courtship behaviors were observed. This waterbird primarily occurs in western North America.
- ◆ A pair of **American Three-toed Woodpeckers** was seen in April and May in a spruce swamp in Bayfield County. This species is rarely seen in Wisconsin, preferring the boreal forests of Canada.
- ◆ Several **Barn Owls** were located in southwestern Wisconsin this summer. This species is rarely seen north of Illinois in the eastern U.S., but may be pushing north. Check your barns!
- ◆ A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was observed in June in Jefferson County. This stocky heron generally prefers wooded bottomland swamps in the Southeast, as well as coastal marshes.

MOVING UP THE RANKS

How Some Familiar Species are Faring

We ranked species by the number of atlas blocks occupied during each atlas. Ranks are remarkably similar for some, while others have moved up or down the standings significantly. These shifts provide a glimpse of how bird populations have changed since the first atlas was completed nearly 20 years ago.



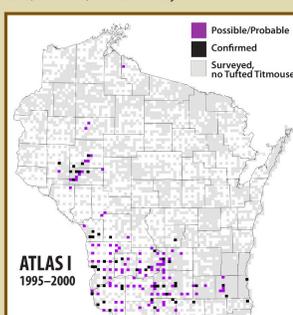
Survey Effort by County
Darker colors indicate counties that need the most help.

FOUR OF FIVE SEASONS COMPLETE

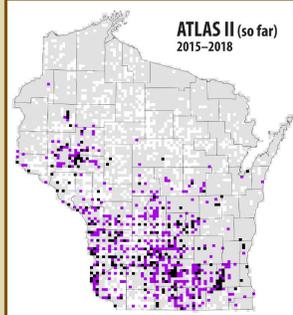
Let's Take a Look at the Numbers

1,700 Volunteers
118,600 Checklists
242 Bird Species
6.6 Million Birds

ATLAS I 1995-2000



ATLAS II (so far) 2015-2018



| Atlas I Rank | Species | Change in Rank |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | American Robin | 0 (No change) |
| 4. | Black-capped Chickadee | ↑1 |
| 7. | American Goldfinch | ↓1 |
| 11. | Eastern Kingbird | ↓11 |
| 18. | Tree Swallow | ↓11 |
| 23. | Red-eyed Vireo | ↑14 |
| 24. | Rose-breasted Grosbeak | ↑11 |
| 26. | Baltimore Oriole | ↑1 |
| 45. | Eastern Meadowlark | ↓22 |
| 47. | American Redstart | ↑17 |
| 48. | Wood Duck | ↑3 |
| 50. | Bobolink | ↓26 |
| 65. | Pileated Woodpecker | ↑24 |
| 86. | Golden-winged Warbler | ↓16 |
| 142. | Tufted Titmouse | ↑30 |