



## Goss Bird Club's Contributes to Conservation

At the close of the last bird club meeting, we talked about our birdathon team The Goss Hawks, whose goal was to raise money for reforestation in the Waukesha County Parks. And boy did we come through! By the end of the birdathon, we raised \$2,268, half of which comes back to our local parks!

In November, Julia Robson, conservation biologist in Waukesha, will be our featured speaker. At that time we will present her with a giant check for over \$1,100. Then in April, we will plant the trees that were purchased with our funds, directly helping the wildlife we are so passionate about. Thanks to our hard

work, we will have a direct, positive impact on the natural world around us. GREAT JOB TEAM GOSS HAWKS!

Additionally, another opportunity to help conservation has presented itself. The portion of the funding for the WI Breeding Bird Atlas II that was to come from the USFWS has been decommitted. As a result, the project currently has a shortfall of about \$20,000. They are now asking for donations to cover the gap, so the vital conservation work can continue.

The Goss Bird Club has an existing Conservation Fund. Pending club approval, if members and non-members donate \$300, we will match up to \$300 to meet

the \$600 required to *adopt a block*, similarly to what we did in spring.

The WBBA II is a vital project in identifying which species are of concern in WI and how populations change. We hope you support this initiative. If you wish to donate, please make checks out to Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and forward them to Christine Reel.

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**

## How'd You Find that Bird? or Finding Asymmetry in Symmetry

A Word from Club President Spence Stehno

In finding and looking at a Bald Eagle in a far off tree recently, I shared the view with a friend, who enjoyed seeing the bird, but said, "How did you ever see that"?

There's another friend that I've been bird watching with, and she sees birds at distances that I can only find by using some mechanical support like a telescope or binoculars, but she just casually sees this within her normal eye focus. This is a bit different, though, than finding the bird in a haystack. The sort of strength she has is a person's visual acuity to focus at a distance, compared to sorting out what is out of place in the picture.

We observe the visual world during all our waking hours. In that world, we observe the living, the non-living, ...the plant, the animal, ... and we observe

the geological, meteorological, and manufactured objects of matter.

So, you are driving along... you are walking in the marsh...you are crossing the field... When you look at a landscape though, there is a "mixed" symmetry - the horizon has a definite patterns, the trees, branches, leaves, poles, wires, buildings which all have a type of patterning or symmetry, - then, as you either formally scrutinize this, or just lightly allow your vision to generally scan, VOILA! there perched is the form of some species of bird.

For bird watching, I think that we often find the birds that are perched in some remote view near or far, because we see the placement of this avian figure as breaking the symmetry that our eyes expect to see. Like anything that you repeatedly do to become better at,

bird watching becomes better as you get more used to seeing the "big picture" and in that symmetrical picture, the thing that is "out-of-place", like in the games you used to play in your grade-school magazine, that unique bird shape finally sticks out amidst the panoramic mixture.

So go out and enjoy your birding. Open your vision to the big picture, and find that bird sitting on a branch, a telephone line or pole, in the skeleton of a dead tree, and enjoy the beauty of that creature that is a bit out of place, but right where it's supposed to be.

**Happy Birding!**

## ATLAS FIELD WORK FINISHES WITH A BANG!

It would have been big news simply to be able to announce that all 1,283 priority and specialty blocks for the 2nd Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas had been marked complete. After all, there were nearly 500 blocks left to finish at the start of the fifth season, but with a phenomenal effort involving more than 2,000 people it got done. But the fifth season concluded with a real bang!

The Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) typically occurs in marshes bordering the Atlantic and eastern Gulf coasts. Glossy Ibises are not found in Wisconsin every year, but in recent years it is not unheard of to have one or more wanderers show up at Horicon Marsh, often in the company of western White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*).

And so when 2 Glossy Ibis showed up in late May of 2019, we were not overly suspicious that they were nesting. Recent atlases for surrounding states and provinces -- including Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa and Ontario -- contained no breeding records for Glossy Ibis, although one summering bird in Iowa was coded as Possible.

Review of this summer's records show consistent observations of one or two Glossy Ibis at Horicon (and occasionally a single White-faced.) So imagine our surprise when atlaser Aaron Haycraft turned up a family group in the Old Marsh Road area of Horicon Marsh! The juveniles can be identified by their lack of chestnut in the plumage, and also show white patches on the throat.

It was the 227th species confirmed for the 2nd Atlas. Since Aaron's observation, we've had additional checklists with photos showing the family group and also discovered an earlier checklist showing a juvenile that we didn't know about until Aaron's report.

Ibis are known for post-breeding dispersal, which causes us to be cautious with a record like this. However, the history of the pair at this site all summer, the distance from other known Glossy Ibis populations, and the fact this continues to be



The two juvenile Glossy Ibis (R) lack the chestnut tones that can be seen on the two adults (L). Photo by Aaron Haycraft.

the only pair of ibis seen at the marsh seems to make it unlikely these are birds that just showed up from somewhere else. To our knowledge, the closest confirmed nesting for this species is on the Atlantic coast, over 700 miles from Horicon Marsh!

Despite the heavy birder coverage at Horicon, the nest presumably escaped detection earlier in the summer because there is a large area of inaccessible marsh. Ibis tend to nest in low shrubs or rushes, often in colonies with other species like night-herons or gulls. Atlasers

by Nick Anich,  
WBBAIL Lead  
Coordinator



Daryl Christensen  
and Sumner  
Matteson reported

seeing the ibis pair heading over into the area of a night-heron colony at dusk, earlier in the summer, a possible nest site for them. After hatching, the juveniles spend their first weeks fairly close to the nest site before venturing farther to forage with their parents.

Historically in the U.S., Glossy Ibis were primarily in Florida, but a rapid range expansion occurred through the 1970s, and they now breed as far north as Maine. However, since the 1970s, population trends are less clear, with some populations in the northeast declining. Habitat quality may be an important factor — Horicon Marsh features exceptional habitat for marsh birds — and it will be interesting to see if this is a one-off or the beginning of a nesting population of Glossy Ibis in Wisconsin, as turned out with Black-necked Stilt, which first turned up as the first Atlas was winding up.

As for completing all 1,283 priority and specialty blocks, we really can't say enough about all the energy and dedication and grit on display. From the Apostle Islands of Lake Superior to the bluffs and backwaters along the Mississippi to agricultural fields of southern Wisconsin, everybody came together to complete the project.

Late season blitz events organized by Tom Prestby proved pivotal. Two Door County (continued on p. 4 "WBBAIL's Ibis Finale)

## Next Month, Our Program Will Be...

### A Moment from the Archives with Historian, Jennifer Tyskiewicz

For many months before the start of each “bird club year,” the person or persons on the Program Committee, (at this time, Tim Hahn and Mary Korkor), struggle to find interesting and available speakers to present at seven bird club meetings.

Not only do these planners have to identify and make contact with possible presenters, but they must hope that the “celebrity” is available on one of the third Sunday evenings of the seven months, that they are willing to drive to an unlit, rural area that they might not be familiar with, that their expected stipend is within the club’s budget....not to mention that there may be a blizzard that night, the speaker might “call in sick,” or the whole meeting might be shelved if the Packers make the play-offs in January!

There is much to be considered, and our hats are off to whomever has taken on this responsibility....past, present and future!

Our club didn’t always bring in “outside” speakers....in fact, it has only been since the early 2000’s that we have done this. Up to that time, a condition of membership, as stated in our club’s Constitution, was that members were required to present a program on a timely basis....or find someone to present it for them. Food/beverage responsibilities were expected to be contributed on a timely basis, as well!

Over the years, club members have used all manner of “technology” to enhance their presentations. From a simple lectern and sheets of notes and hand-drawn posters, to Victrolas, “lantern” projectors, 16mm film projectors, opaque and overhead projectors, tape recorders, slide projectors, Beta-max and videocassette players attached to TV sets....and finally, now to the ease (if

everything connects properly!) of the laptop computer and ceiling-mounted projector.

Somewhere along the way, members must have grown weary of the presentation responsibility, or perhaps felt that they had endured plenty of not-too-exciting programs put on by fellow members who were not particularly skilled or thrilled to be up in front of a crowd!

Deciding that this job should be given to the “experts,” the presentation requirement language was soon taken out of the Constitution. Likely, dues were raised along the way to cover the stipends expected to be given to an “outside” speaker....and the more “modern” era of the club programs began.

What kind of programs have club members enjoyed and learned from in our 91 years of existence? Finding the complete picture of this would have been a very daunting task! Why?



Speakers use all sorts of technology to enhance their presentations to our bird club.

Well....the “Program Topics” folder in the archives did not contain a program list for every year of our existence....and many of the program lists that were saved had items such as the listing below:

*Club Member’s Name.....April, 1942 Club Meeting.....Topic: TBA*

*Club Member’s Name.....March, 1979 Club Meeting....Topic: TBA.*

Those club members that couldn’t make up their minds as to what they wanted to present....but, knew that they had to! Even Mike and I were guilty of that in 1994 when we had TBA listed next to our names! So, of course, this wasn’t very helpful in writing this article!

I could have looked through 91 years of minutes for the “program notes” listed in them....but, hey! That would have really been a lot of work! Many years worth of minutes are handwritten (some hard to read) in spiral notebooks, and not neatly typed the way that Christine does for us now!

So, I used what I had! I was able to find the listings of about 300 programs.

The very first program of the saved program topics sheets was presented on 10/5/1937 by S. Paul Jones, entitled, “The Life History of the Ovenbird in Southern Michigan.”

Going on from there, I found that the majority of the programs dealt with specific birds as the topic! That’s a good thing for a club whose mission is to increase our knowledge and appreciation of birds! Within this “bird” group, presentations on hawks and warblers led the list, with (continued on p. 4 “Archives”)



(cont. from p. 2 “Archives”) “waterfowl” coming in third. Two of the more unusual birds presented were the Le Conte’s Sparrow and the Water Ouzel... what? That’s actually the American Dipper!

Birds of certain areas or countries were the category with the second most numerous programs. Birds of Japan, Texas, Costa Rica, Mexico, Europe, Wisconsin, Hawaii, the Galapagos, Florida and Canada were some of the programs scheduled throughout the years.

The third most-presented category was not about specific birds or their identification, but about the uniqueness of birds as a whole. Bird oddities, physiology, feathers, eggs, songs, habitat, migration, protection, types of foods needed and territory requirements were some of these topics.

Descriptions of natural areas, and how to preserve them for the benefit

of birds, were the fourth most popular program topic.

Seven programs were given on Benjamin F. Goss!

Finally, some unique programs were listed, such as “Mushrooms,” (not certain how that relates?), and “Draw and Color a Robin from Memory!”

Also popular back in the earlier days of the club was something called “Professor Quiz.” This title was apparently given to various members over the years, and when it was their time to present a pro-



Members Vern Aune and Harry Leeman prepare to give a program on the use of parabolic microphone to record bird songs in the field. 1992

gram, they came up with a photo or bird song quiz. They might even set the members up into opposing teams in a “bee” situation. We’d have to really know our stuff under pressure to keep up with what our predecessors probably knew!

Something for all of us to contribute to the club is to keep our eyes and ears open for possible ideas and speakers, and give any information to Tim Hahn and Mary Korkor, our current Program Committee.

#### Upcoming Goss Club Events

Demystifying Fall Warblers	9/15
The Big Sit! at Retzer Nature Center	10/12
The Nature Conservancy in the Mukwonago River Basin	10/20
The Walk to Sustain our Great Lakes	11/17
Waukesha Christmas Bird Count	12/14
Goss Bird Club Potluck	1/19
Birding Antarctica & South Georgia Island	2/16



Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II

(cont. from pg. 2) events attracted 6-8 atlassers and turned the tide from central and northern Door County being basically a disaster

at the start of the season to being set up very well once July rolled around. The Sandhill Wildlife Area event had about 10 participants and in two days closed nine blocks in Juneau, Wood, Jackson and Monroe Counties. The Kemp Natural Resources Station blitz, with 20 participants,

## WBBA II’s Ibis Finale

closed 16 blocks (twice the goal!) in Oneida, Vilas, Lincoln, Taylor and Forest Counties. The blitzes also set up several more blocks to be closed later.

The resulting dataset will be analyzed for years to come and will reveal so much information critical to conserving Wisconsin’s birds.

Amidst all the bad news in the world, I’m encouraged that we found over 2,000 people that care about birds and wildlife and who wanted to join us on this project. The dedication shown by everybody in the past year has been amazing. We

didn’t let on that we were worried about leaking into a mop-up year six, but I sure was, but birders statewide rose to the occasion and kicked butt in the final months! We could not have done it without you.

It will be several years before we have all the observations vetted, analyses run, and final maps made, but I’m really excited to watch all these data turn into a book. To everybody that has helped so far,

THANK YOU!