

# The Goss Hawk



## Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearings - April 14-16

The **Wisconsin Conservation Congress** (WCC) is a citizen-elected board that gathers the opinions and feelings of the state's citizens on topics related to natural resource management. The WCC relays the opinions of voters to the Natural Resources Board so they can make decisions regarding rules and legislation that better align with the opinions of the state's people.

Each April, the WCC holds Spring Hearings where citizens can make their voice heard by casting a non-binding vote and give testimony. Topics range from proposed rule changes requiring legislative action to advisory questions relating to fishing, hunting and wildlife management in Wisconsin.

Many of the questions address issues such as hunting, fishing, funding, and general wildlife issues, and you're free to skip any questions for which you do not hold an opinion. But there are several questions each year that are especially important to birders, and this year is no different.

- Question 47 asks **Would you support phasing out uses of lead [ammunition and fishing tackle] so that it is not left behind on our lands and in our waters?**
- Question 56 asks **Would you support legislation establishing a \$5 annual habitat stamp to fund upland, warm water lakes and streams habitat projects?** This would allow non-consumptive nature enthusiasts to contribute financially and have a seat at the table when the time comes to make decisions about habitat management.

- Question 62 asks **Would you support legislation that creates a Sandhill Crane Stamp to help farmers reduce crane-caused crop damage?** This would hopefully provide funding for farmers to control crop damage from Sandhill Cranes, as an alternative to a potential crane hunt.

Additional questions about non-lethal wolf management, PFAS regulation, and many other topics are on the survey, so this is a great opportunity for us as nature lovers and conservationists to have a voice. And remember, you can skip any question for which you do not have an opinion. So if you don't care about walleye limits on the other side of Wisconsin, you can abstain!



While the Goss Bird Club does not have an official position on any issue, we do encourage all of our members to cast your vote for any and all issues which you feel are important.

The hearing in Waukesha is **Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup>** at Waukesha County Technical College, (800 Main

St - Building S, Pewaukee) and it starts **promptly at 6:00! Voters will not be admitted after that time, so get there early.** Doors generally open 45 minutes early.

Online participation is open from 7:00 PM April 14 through 6:00 PM April 16, so if you can not make the in-person meeting, you can still cast your vote. For more information, visit the link below. Keep in mind that voting for delegates on the WCC must be done in person at the spring hearing.

DNR Website for the WCC Spring Hearing: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/about/wcc/springhearing>

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### Upcoming Goss Club Events

- May 10 - Waukesha May Count
- May 15 - Oconomowoc May Count



### GOSS CLUB SPRING FIELD TRIPS

A printable version of our club field trip schedule with times and meeting locations is available at our website. Most field trips are on Saturday mornings, but there are a few evening and weekday events, so double check the schedule before you head out the door.

- April 19 – Fox River Sanctuary
- April 26 – Lulu Lake Preserve
- April 29 – Chimney Swifts in Okauchee
- May 3 – Monches Woods at Crow How
- May 10 – Goss May Bird Count
- May 13 – Fox River Sanctuary
- May 15 – Oconomowoc May Count
- May 18 – Whip-poor-will Walk
- May 24 – Vernon Marsh
- May 31 – Beaver Dam Lake & More
- June 7 – Horicon Marsh
- June 14 – Fox River Park

# The Honeycreeper Project

From the Finch Research Network

<https://finchnetwork.org/the-honeycreeper-project>

The iconic finches of Hawai'i are facing a conservation crisis. Non-native predators, the loss of habitat, and invasive species have negatively affected them for hundreds of years, and these issues continue to be problematic, but it's the introduced avian malaria that is the greatest threat to their survival. Climate change leading to increased temperatures has further exacerbated the situation in the high-elevation forests, facilitating the

**Hawaiian Honeycreeper Natural History and Problems Facing their Existence: (Drepanidinae):** By Dr. Gabrielle Names, UC-Davis – completed PhD working on Amakihi

The Hawaiian Honeycreepers (subfamily Drepanidinae) are a group of over 50 finch species and subspecies endemic to Hawaii (Atkinson & LaPointe 2009). Situated within the cardueline finch clade, the Hawaiian Honeycreepers are passerine birds that evolved approximately 7.2 million years ago from a single, large, mixed-sex flock of common rosefinches that likely arrived from Asia (Lerner et al. 2011). The group represents one of the most impressive examples of adaptive radiation on earth and boasts striking morphological diversity, from their array of bill forms, some of which have never been documented in other species, as well as their coloration, which

spread of malaria into areas that were once largely free of the disease. Four Hawaiian honeycreeper species have been pushed to the edge of extinction and are in need of your help: the endangered 'akikiki (*Oreomystis bairdi*) and 'akeke'e (*Loxops caeruleirostris*) on Kaua'i Island, and kiwikiu (*Pseudonestor xanthophrys*) and 'ākohekohe (*Palmeria dolei*) on Maui Island.

include greens, yellows, and reds amid black, gray, and white (Ziegler 2002).

In addition to their biological significance, the Hawaiian Honeycreepers play an important role in the culture of the native Hawaiians. Their feathers, for example, are the defining element of many traditional Hawaiian crafts and garments. Historically, Hawaiian alii (nobility)

adorned themselves with intricate feather helmets, crowns, leis, and cloaks and displayed impressive feather standards on special occasions and/or for protection in battle. Additionally, homages to the birds' songs and vibrant colors



**Kiwikiu. Photo by Robby Kohley**

are abundant in the traditional Hawaiian stories, chants, and hulas that are performed to this day at Hawaiian celebrations and festivals (Pratt 2009).

Unfortunately, the Hawaiian Honeycreepers are in need of your help, as they have also been



known worldwide for their high rate of extinction. Of the 50+ original species and subspecies, only 17 species remain and a few of those are precariously close to the ledge. Native Hawaiian bird declines are largely related anthropogenic disturbances (Olson & James 1982). When the Polynesians first began populating the Hawaiian Islands around 800 AD, they brought with them a variety of introduced species, including rats, pigs, and dogs. Predation by these species, along with human hunting and habitat modification, led to the extinction of almost 40 bird species (Pratt 2009).

More recent declines have been linked to habitat loss (largely the result of widespread cultivation of non-native crops, such as sandalwood and sugar cane) and introduced diseases (Pratt 2009). Initial introductions of avian malaria in the early 1900s were followed closely by declines and extinctions of multiple Hawaiian Honeycreepers. Most Hawaiian Honeycreepers are highly susceptible to the disease, with experimental infections establishing mortality rates of some species as high as 90% after a single inoculation (Atkinson et al. 1995, Atkinson & LaPointe 2009). Fortunately, these impacts have largely been limited to birds living in habitats at low elevations because the malaria vector, the *Culex* mosquito, is cold intolerant, and development of malaria parasites is hampered in cold environments (LaPointe et al. 2010). However, as temperatures increase and weather patterns become more variable with climate change, avian malaria threatens to invade the high elevation refugia (Atkinson & LaPointe 2009).

Remarkably, the Hawaii Amakihi (*Hemignathus virens*) is the only Honeycreeper that has main-

tained stable populations at low elevations, where mosquitos carrying avian malaria are prevalent. A recent multi-year survey of these populations on Hawaii Island demonstrated that while almost all lowland (< 900 m) Amakihi were infected with avian malaria, lowland Amakihi mortality due to avian malaria was lower than that of highland (> 900 m) Amakihi (Samuel et al. 2015). Further, in a controlled lab study in which uninfected highland and lowland Amakihi were experimentally infected with avian malaria, all individuals experienced equally high parasite loads following infection but the mortality and weight loss of lowland individuals was significantly lower than that of highland individuals. These findings suggest that lowland Amakihi, which survive inoculation with malarial parasites but remain chronically infected for life, have evolved a form of tolerance to avian malaria (Atkinson et al. 2013). Researchers are currently working to identify the genes and mechanisms that may be responsible for this ability to cope with the disease.

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*One way we can help from afar is to support the “Birds, Not Mosquitos” initiative. This project will use the “incompatible insect technique”, planting introduced mosquitos, inoculated with a virus that causes them to be sterile when mating, to reduce the mosquito population where these birds live. The technique has been successfully used to fight diseases that affect humans in other parts of the world.*

*Unfortunately, much of the labor and funding for this project has been cut recently as part of cuts to various federal programs and departments. Non-profits are attempting to pick up the slack, but they require private funding to continue these and other projects in Hawaii. Visit this link for how you can help.*

***<https://www.birdsnotmosquitoes.org/the-partnership>***

# The Goss Hawks Fly Again in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon

The Great Wisconsin Birdathon is Wisconsin's largest fundraiser for bird conservation. It's like a walk-a-thon style fundraiser, but instead of logging miles, our participants are logging bird sightings! Each year, bird enthusiasts from across the state raise support and awareness for bird conservation by forming a team or donating to a team.

Birdathon teams can participate from April 15th to June 15th, and donations are accepted from March 15th to June 30th. Participation is free and all skill levels are welcome to join.

How, when, and where you bird is up to you. While most teams choose to compete over a 24-hour period, many teams opt to bird over the course of a weekend, a week, or even the entirety of the Birdathon! Teams can bird anywhere in Wisconsin — a backyard, a local park, or a route to hit all their favorite birding hot spots. Both novice and expert birders can have fun and make a difference in protecting birds — the Birdathon is for everyone!



The Benjamin F. Goss Bird Club is once again joining the Great Wisconsin Birdathon to raise funds for statewide and local bird conservation. Our team The Goss Hawks (get it? Goss Bird Club .... Goshawk?) gets the added benefit of being a participating organization, so we get to use some of the funds raised for local causes.

The Goss Hawks will be teaming up with Waukesha County Parks to assist their reforestation project. Places such as Fox River Park, which already contain excellent forest remnants, will be bolstered with bird-friendly trees and shrubs to expand habitats for nesting birds and other wildlife. The money we raise will be used to purchase trees and materials to expand the county forests.



**Waukesha County  
Park System**

Participation in the birdathon involves two aspects — birding and fundraising. The fun part is the birding. Just as a walk-a-thon is about walking, a bird-a-thon is about birding. Waukesha County Parks has identified a number of parks where our birding expertise can be utilized to find out what birds are and aren't there. All you have to do is sign up for one of the parks or greenways, and then visit the throughout the spring to document the birds you see and hear. Then report back to Tim Hahn, who will compile the team list.

The fundraising is simply whatever you want to put into it. If you want to donate, that's great! If you have friends and family who wish to donate, that's great too! Send them the link below, and they can donate that way. We can also accept cash or check, which can be forwarded to club treasurer Paula Stich.

If you don't feel like taking your own section, partner up! Or join a section with birders who have more advanced skills. This is a great opportunity to hone your ID skills and become more familiar with our local parks while raising funds for the birds in our state and for the bird club!

To grab a section, sign up at a club meeting or contact Tim Hahn (thahnbirder@gmail.com) Help us help our birds by pledging or donating to The Goss Hawks! You can contribute a set amount or pledge per species. You can also set up your own personal profile under our team page, so you can share it with friends and family. To donate online, go to our team page and make a tax-deductible donation:

<https://charity.pledgeit.org/WIBirdathon2025/teams/@GossHawks>

#### **Parks and Nature Areas the Goss Hawks will cover:**

Fox Brook Park	Naga-Waukee Park
Fox River Park	Nashotah Park
Menomonee Park	Ryan Park
Minooka Park	Retzer Nature Center
Monches Park	Fox River Greenway
Mukwonago Park	Pewaukee River Greenway
Muskego Park	Spring Brook Greenway