

THE GOSS HAWK

**BENJAMIN F.
GOSS BIRD
CLUB**

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5

FEBRUARY 19, 2017

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 Retzer Nature Center, S14 W28167 Madison Street, Waukesha, WI 53188

Retzer Nature Center is located about 4 miles west of Waukesha, near the end of Madison Street.

UP-COMING EVENTS

- **March 19 - Jeff Bahls**
"A Boy Gone Fowl"
- **April 23**
Daryl Christensen:
Update - Kirtland's
Warbler Recover
- **May 13 - May Count**

For a full schedule,
see the club's web-
site.

The Story of Peter, Charles, Tom & Fred (based on the reminiscences of Peter G. Weber)

A Moment from the Archives from Club Historian Jennifer Tyskiewicz

In the first installment, we indicated that 3 of the 4 boys had earned PHD's... when actually all 4 of them have! Peter G. Weber received his Doctorate in Behavioral Biology from Michigan State, Charles Sontag received his Doctorate in Physiology from UW - Milwaukee, Tom Soulen received his Doctorate



in Biochemistry from UW - Milwaukee, and Fred Alyea received his Doctorate in Meteorology from Colorado State.

(...continued from January 8th)

On one of our outings in the "backyard," Charles and I happened upon

Tom Soulen, who, unbeknown to us, had been birding our very same neighborhood! Tom was two years

Taken on a VERY COLD day in January of the early 1950's at South Shore Yacht Club while we searched for Snowy Owls, Diving Ducks, and odd Gulls. — Pete Weber

older than we were.....but somehow, he seemed "light-years" ahead of us in birding knowledgeand sophistication.

He cautioned Charles and I to pay particular attention to sounds, and to not be too hasty in making an identification. The three of us started spending lots of birding time together, and we soon considered Tom to be our "group leader."

About this same time, Fred Alyea came into our (...continued on page 3)

WINC DONATIONS

At our November meeting, Alex Schlecht from the Wildlife In Need Center brought some avian ambassadors and told us about their organization. WINC handles thousands of animals each year and hundreds more phone calls. These are generally creatures that otherwise would likely not make it in the wild due to interaction with humans. The work that WINC does is supported entirely on private donations, and we have contributed

to that work with our "supply drive".

As a group, we collected over \$200 in donations which Paula used to purchase cleaning supplies for WINC. Additionally, members brought their own supplies to donate such as bird seed and paper towel. And to top it all off, Terry Stevens was able to make a generous \$250 donation from the Donald J. and Betty Lou Tikalsky Community Fund at the Waukesha County



Community Foundation. Donald and Betty, Terry's parents, were both bird watchers and loved the outdoors. Thank you to Terry for her generosity and thoughtfulness. The donation will go a long way towards helping the wild critters who are fortunate to find their way into WINC's helping care.



WAUKESHA COUNTY
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Take Five with.....Anne Moretti!

Anne has been a member of The Club almost as long as she's lived in Wisconsin. She's been a mentor to many-a fledgling birder and is a wealth of nature knowledge. Let's see what she has to say about spark birds, tropical herons, and Rachel Carson....



Anne prefers to be the photographer rather than the subject.



Anne at WSO Jaegerfest 2010.

1 - What was your "spark" bird, and what about it caused the "spark"?

My "Spark Bird" was a Snowy Owl seen on Feb. 25, 1985 on Plum Island (Parker River Wildlife refuge) in coastal Massachusetts. My friend, Mary, and I spent all day searching for snowies without success. As we were leaving the refuge at sunset, we turned around one last time there was a snowy owl sitting on a post, glowing pink in the slanting rays of the setting sun. It was at that moment that I finally understood the passion that is birding; it was an adventure, which included finding any number of other fascinating things, in addition to the sought after bird. To this day, the snowy owl holds a special place in my heart.

2 - Besides birds, what aspect of nature do you most enjoy?

My first love, before birds, was wildflowers. From the age of two my parents would take my brothers and me on spring wildflower walks to Rock Creek Park in Maryland near where we lived. Many of these same wildflowers also grow in Wisconsin woodlands. Later I came to know and love trees, my favorite being the majestic, gnarly Bur Oak, which can withstand fast moving prairie fires. Butterflies are also a passion.

3 - How many species have you seen?

My Waukesha County list currently stands at 246, my Wisconsin list is at 336, and my ABA list is 602.

4 - What's the craziest bird you've found?

On August 8, 1996, I was at Horicon Marsh, scoping birds along the north side of Hwy 49, when I noticed two birds of interest. One was a Tri-colored Heron and the other, a Little Blue Heron. Fortunately, I had a car phone at the time and had an address book with phone numbers. I called Tom Schultz to let him know and to have him spread the word. I felt compelled to keep track of these birds until others showed up, hoping they wouldn't take off! In time, people began to congregate and I was relieved of my vigil. I spotted Sam Robbins attempting to locate the Tri-colored Heron and was able to point it out to him. In addition, Tom spotted a Red-necked Grebe, another good bird to round out the sightings. Mostly, I'm not the one to actually find rare birds, so this was an exception.

5 - Who is a mentor that shaped you into the naturalist you are today?

As many of you know, Rachel Carson was a family friend and my Godmother when I was growing up in Maryland. She was a quiet, gentle soul who loved birds and other wildlings. We shared a love of the ocean, which she wrote eloquently about in three books prior to her ground-breaking and controversial book, *Silent Spring*. Her concern for what chemical companies were doing to the natural world with the indiscriminant use of pesticides, particularly DDT, has resonated with me over the years. I do use Round-up, a systemic herbicide, on buckthorn, but apply it very carefully at the proper time of year with good results. I pull, rather than spray garlic mustard. Nature does need our help to restore balance, but with a gentle touch, using as few chemicals as possible.

I once identified a bird by taste.

*- Bill Thompson III
(Editor of
Birdwatchers Digest)*

“Four Boys” continued from page 1 ...

birding world as the “tagging-along-younger-brother type.” Fred was two years our junior.

Thus, we were now a foursome walking to school together, often up and out before daybreak to count the blackbirds flying over our central “baseball” field. We felt it was good discipline, somehow, to rise before 6:00 AM in the dark and cold of February and March to count blackbirds every morning before school. Why did we count blackbirds?? We don’t know why! It was just fun.....sort of. And, we probably racked up some amazing blackbird numbers! We were avid listers!

An important event soon transpired in the life of us “four birding nerds.” Being the oldest of the group, Tom Soulen was the first to get his driver’s license! Our “backyard” quickly became the entire state of Wisconsin as the four of us birded together constantly throughout our high school years.

Many early May mornings, Tom would drive us all to Beck’s Mill before school to look for warblers. I saw my first Black-throated Blue Warbler there. We even kicked up a LeConte’s Sparrow there once! Tom also took us to Foster’s Woods on the Fox River, where he showed us our first King Rail. That sum-

mer, Tom became a counselor at a Boy Scout Camp in the Northern Kettle Moraine Unit, and he invited us there to see a nesting Yellow-bellied Flycatcher that he had discovered.

While all of this birding was going on, Charles, Fred and myself converted the entire spacious attic area of the Werra House, in which my family lived on the Carroll College Campus, into a nature museum complete with egg collections, butterfly collections, and wildlife murals that I painted, covering the walls. (More on that in a later installment). My “room” soon became the center of activity

for many self-generated projects that us three boys could muster up. One such project was to be the “most ultimate and complete” bird field guide ever! Charles and I could draw and paint, and Fred could write well.....and type! So, I quickly deemed Fred as the “first author” because he was stuck with the boring part! (See the accompanying page from that actual field guide of the 1950’s!)

We stayed with this project all the way through.....the herons.....before our project fizzled! So much for youthful aspirations!

GANNET

DISCR. 35-40. Goose-sized white birds with extensive black wing-tips wheeling in white circles over the ocean waves are quite certainly Gannets. They are twice the size of Herring Gulls, with much longer necks and larger bills, which are carried pointed toward the water, and pointed, not fan-shaped tails. This gives them a 'pointed at both ends' look. When fishing over the sea, they drop Kingfisher-like into the waves. Young birds are dusky all over, but actions and pointed 'cigar shape' identify them. Changing young have a piebald or 'coach-dog' look; mottled, with dark heads, or boldly splotted with brown and white. The head color of adults varies from orange-buff through various shades of yellow to white.

VOICE:- call at breeding colonies is a loud, hoarse, snoring note.

RANGE. EAST:- breeds on 3 small islands or rocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and 2 off Newfoundland. Winters from Virginia (rarely Cape Cod) to Cuba and the c. Mexican coast.

GANNET

ADULT (flying)

CHANGING IMMATURE (flying)

over

What is the WSO?



If you've attended any of our meetings, you've likely heard about the WSO. The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is essentially the "state bird club of Wisconsin". A volunteer, nonprofit organization started in 1939, the WSO's mission is similar to that of the Goss Bird Club, operating at a state-wide level. In addition to sponsoring field trips to unique areas around the state, the WSO hosts an annual birding convention, and publishes two periodicals, a quarterly journal titled *The Passenger Pigeon* and a monthly newsletter called *The Badger Birder*. Grants are offered and various levels for research and habitat preservation, and

the WSO serves as an informational resource center on bird related issues facing us throughout the state. Membership exceeds 1,400 members from across the US and around the world! All birders are welcome! Young and old, beginners, backyard enthusiasts, tourists, conservationists, and professional ornithologists are encouraged to join! Many members of the Goss Bird Club have been members of the WSO for years, and credit the organization for encouraging and educating them in their passion for nature and birds.

If you enjoy birds and would like to support our avian friends in our great state, consider joining the WSO!

Keep an eye out for future issues of the *Badger Birder*. The Benjamin F. Goss Bird Club will be featured in one of the next few issues. Join soon so you don't miss out!

www.wsobirds.org

WBBA II Sets Focus Areas as Project Reaches Midpoint

With 2017 marking the midpoint of the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas' five-year field survey, Atlas organizers have identified four focus areas that all birders can commit to in the coming year to help ensure the project stays on track.

1. Recruit more atlasers

The Atlas is a massive volunteer effort that now boasts more than 1,100 birders, but there is always room for more. With 1,200 blocks to cover, many located in remote corners of the state, there is enough work for double the current volunteer base.

2. Increase nocturnal efforts

After two years, many blocks are nearly complete, but lack the nocturnal birding hours needed to give a true picture of the block's diversity. If atlasers make a concentrated effort to commit a few hours of night birding in their blocks, the number of completed blocks will increase dramatically.

3. Complete blocks and start new ones

With so many blocks poised for completion with just a few hours of night effort, organizers are encouraging people to choose new blocks and start atlasing there at the start of the season. Whenever possible, it is strongly encouraged that atlasers look for blocks outside of densely populated areas where many blocks already have good coverage.

4. Atlas sparsely populated areas

It makes sense that Wisconsin's urban centers are showing high effort hours. On the other hand, sparsely populated areas have very low coverage, and through concerted efforts – such as group trips, "blockbuster" events and encouraging local birders in these areas to sign up to help, organizers would like to see big increases in effort hours in outlying parts of the state.

The snow may be flying, but birders are already looking ahead to spring and a series of regional one-day Atlas kickoff events. These free training events will feature field trips, a look at Season 2 results, a look-ahead to Season 3, basic and advanced training for new and returning atlasers, a chance to meet county coordinators and more!

The kickoff event in the southeast part of the state will take place April 29 11:30 am to 5:00 pm at the Kenosha Public Library. An optional nocturnal field trip from 6:30-9:00 pm will highlight owls and marsh birds in Racine and Kenosha counties.



Wisconsin
Breeding
Bird
Atlas II