



# THE GOSS HAWK

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## Benjamin F. Goss Bird Club

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, located about 4 miles west of Waukesha, near the end of Madison Street.  
514 W28167 Madison St, Waukesha, WI

Our club photo showing many of the members who participated in the “unusual Christmas Bird Count” described. Notice that some of us are sporting new sweatshirts with our club logo that had been designed by Raymond Strong, a senior in high school in Waukesha at the time.

## 24 Years Ago – A Most Unusual Christmas Count A Moment from the Archives by Jennifer Tyskiewicz, Historian

*In anticipation of the our Christmas Bird Count, Jennifer recounts an unusual bird count....*

Recently, while doing some reorganizing of the folders in the archives, I came across an article that I had written in January 1994, and which appeared on the entire front page of The Badger Birder. (They must not have had many contributors in those days and were desperate for articles!). With our planning of the Christmas Bird Count 2017 at our November meet-

ing, I thought it might be interesting to look back on what I had written about in the aforementioned article.....the very unusual Christmas Count of December 18th, 1993.

In the article, I had described how my husband, Michael, and I had “stumbled sleepily” into our “truck,” (now called an SUV), in the dark, pre-dawn hours (okay.....we used to get up earlier in those days!), to go owling in Area 10 of the B.F. Goss CBC circle, and we passed a flashing time and temperature sign that was

indicating 37 degrees at 5:30 AM in mid-December. The “unusualness” of this Count Day was not only the mild temperature, but the fact that the day would be marked with mist, spring-like showers, soaking rain and “billowing fog.” I commented, on our way, that we probably wouldn’t need to put on our snowmobile suits or have to worry about tripping over our long, knit neck scarves when walking at Retzer Nature Center later in the morning, but I mused that neither of us had (.....continued on page 2)



**Bottom Row L to R:** Joan Olson, Jennifer Tyskiewicz, Michael Tyskiewicz, Pearl Griffen, Carl Hayssen. **2nd Row L to R:** Doris Sheldon, Ruth Adams, Doris Gorton, Jim Gorton, Russ Zoschke, Barb Kranich, Vern Aune. **3rd Row L to R:** Olive Blake, Anne Moretti, Barb Klein, Dwain Olson, Cathy Chybowski, Sandy Blake. **Top Row L to R:** Jim Blake, Ed Szczepanski, Mike Fort, Harry Dean Spencer, Harry Auchter, Harry Leeman, Don Reel, Christine Reel, Lee Kranich, Bob Adams, Walter Hahn, Marilyn Luehman, Nancy Auchter. **Photo By Lee Kranich. Taken September, 1996.**

(.....continued from page 1)  
thought to prepare for a Christmas Count by throwing umbrellas and rain-gear into the "truck" before leaving home!

We listened at wooded areas along the way with the windows wide open, enjoying the earthy spring smells wafting in, but being entirely unable to hear anything but the drumming of rain on the "truck" roof and on leaves and branches in the nearby woods.

When we finally completed traipsing around Retzer, we were totally soaked, including field guides, my "recording" notebook, and probably, our binoculars! My mom, who was being dropped off at our house while we were at the Count Dinner that evening, said that she laughed when she walked in and saw all of our hiking clothes hanging here, there, and on every chair.....drying out!

I went on to mention in the article that all of the birds must have been "laying low" and "hunkered down" in the heavy air, as our Area 10 yielded only 15 species for us that day. (Our average in that area for the CBC is 25!). Highlights that I notated were 6 Great Horned Owls, 5 American Kestrels, (where are they now?), with the most numerous species of the day being Mourning Doves, with 193 individuals.

In the 1980's and up until the mid-1990's, our Count Dinner was not held at a restaurant, but was a "potluck dinner" graciously held at the festively-decorated home of members Dwain and Joan Olson, in Waukesha. The Olson's provided the entrée and beverages, with club members bringing side dishes and deserts.

After everyone's tally was totaled that evening, it appeared that all counters had experienced somewhat of the same low numbers of birds in all areas of the Count Circle, with the club total being 49 species for the day. (The club average for our CBC is 54). Members mentioned their highlights as being Trumpeter Swans at Henrietta Lake, a Northern Harrier and a Northern Shrike.

Club members enjoy a compilation dinner in the early 90s. Harry Auchter totals his results, while Bob Adams, (in plaid) and Jennifer & Michael Tyskiewicz line up for food. Bill Downham is in back, in front of white curtain.



I continued on in the article by mentioning that reports from other counts in Wisconsin "were sparse." Madison had "only" 89 species; Appleton had 60 species with 7 Double-crested Cormorants; and Poynette had "no" Golden Eagles that year. Notable sightings were 142 Bohemian Waxwings in Wausau and a Great Blue Heron in Ashland!

Before leaving the warmth of our hosts' home and of our birding friends that evening, everyone agreed that, although the Waukesha area CBC didn't yield spectacular numbers, it was certainly the mildest and wettest Christmas Count that anyone could remember up until then.....and probably since!

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: RED CROSSBILL

Every few years migrant finches such as Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls, and White-winged and Red Crossbills are known to wander in search of food when sources in their breeding grounds in Canada are scarce.

This year, these birds have already started to show up in Wisconsin in decent numbers. Locally, Red Crossbills are being seen regularly at the Emma Carlin hiking trails and Paradise Springs in the Southern Kettle Moraine State Forest. They are traditionally found eating from cones of pine, spruce, hemlock and tamarack trees.

When out birding, listen for the "kip-kip-kip-kip" flight calls. As they fly over, aggressive "pishing" by birders can often pique their curiosity and cause them to land in a nearby tree for a closer look! White-wing Crossbills behave similarly but their song sounds more like "djit-djit djit-djit".

There are 10 "types" or sub-species of Red Crossbills known to scientists, all with a unique call. Telling them apart is nearly impossible in the field, but if you can obtain a recording and send it to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, they can analyze it digitally, and let you know what type you

heard. Even a poor quality recording is often good enough to tell the type of crossbill you heard.

Due to the northern latitude of their breeding grounds, Red-Crossbills are known to breed in almost any season if food is plentiful. Thus, in late winter or early spring, birders should already keep their eyes peeled for young crossbills with streaked chest, begging for food from their parents!

We don't get a chance to see these unique birds often, so take this winter as an opportunity to hit the birding trail and witness their unusual eating style, and maybe find a rare winter breeding record!



Red Crossbills. Ryan Brady photo.

# THE TONGUE OF A WOODPECKER

SPENCE SPEAKS

On Leonardo da Vinci's 500 year old "To-Do" list was a little item:

***"Describe the tongue of a woodpecker".***

It doesn't appear that he went very far with following up on this item, but I suspect with his insatiable curiosity, that somewhere in his life he saw the local woodpeckers performing, and most likely found a "specimen" that he examined, and ergo, pondered. For me, I never stopped to think about the tongue and beak mechanism of a woodpecker, but like many folks, I suspected that the "pecking" that occurred so strongly from these birds, placed a huge pressure and impact on these birds and their head, including their brain. The drumming that occurs from the different sized woodpeckers is very distinctive, and it is possible to have an idea of which species is hammering away. And beyond that, I didn't ponder.

In our current world of events, much has been recently addressed regarding the issue of concussions of humans from assorted blows of various kinds to the head. With all the protocols that have been instituted to protect or minimize people from having their brains damaged, it causes one to pause and wonder how do the woodpeckers make it through their

Leonardo da Vinci's "to do list" ca. 1510



existence without going daffy from all their banging?

By now, a long time since Leonardo's "to-do list" woodpecker curiosity, people have come to recognize quite a unique structure and function system that woodpeckers' tongues perform. The tips of their tongues have barb-like structures that allow their tongues upon entering a tree's tasty gallery of grubs from wood boring beetles, to be speared and withdrawn for some great nourishment. Impressive. Additionally, for the Red-bellied woodpeckers, their tongues are about 3 times the length of their bills, or can extend past their beaks by about 2 inches. So these long structures are great for feeding deep into the rotting tree's dying wood.

But the other unique anatomical aspect of the tongue structure is that within the beak, going inwards, the tongue literally splits and goes further inward from the lower mandible all the way around the back of the skull, over the top, then around the eye socket, and back to the nostril where the forks rejoin. The bird's chisel-like beak is a great implement for poking and penetrating trees seeking tasty morsels in dead wood tunneling beneath the surface, sometimes several inches into the tree, but how does the bird prevent itself from getting punchy to get to its lunch?

This has led to the idea that this muscular tongue acts as a shock absorber, and that along with the thick neck, and angled perching position the bird presents for pecking, these all allow the shocks to be absorbed or distributed, reducing the impact's potential damage.

However I look at it, it is still impressive to me that Leonardo seemed to sense there was something unique to the tongue of a woodpecker, and now today even though we seem to know more about these birdies, it is still wonderful to be amazed by another tidbit of bird morphology. So enjoy the next time you see one of these percussive birds seeking their dinner, on the



Woody says: "ha-ha-ha-HA-ha"

tongue of a woodpecker!

Woody Woodpecker is an iconic cartoon character that has a WILD laugh-call ! If you get to hear the Pileated Woodpecker, it does have a strong wuk, wuk, wuk... call, but not quite as boisterous as the cartoon Woody!

Walter Lantz, a young animator, and his wife Gracie were on their honeymoon at June Lake in the Sierra mountains, and the woodpeckers were banging away on their cottage roof. Walter was animating animal characters, and Gracie encouraged him to create one using the woodpecker.

Where did that laughing call come from for Woody? Well you may already know that the master of cartoon voices, Mel Blanc, was the voice of Woody for years, but went to another studio with an exclusive contract. A "new" voice for Woody was needed. Audition tapes were turned in. Gracie had asked Walter if she could voice Woody, but Walter wouldn't have it. So, Gracie turned in an anonymous recording. Walter listened to the auditions, and unbeknownst to him, he picked Gracie's tape, and voila, the next 40 years of her voice



## 2018 WSO convention to be held on shore of scenic Green Lake

Christine Zimmerman WSO Convention Committee Chair

The 2018 Wisconsin Society for Ornithology convention will once again be held in May.

The 79th annual convention will run May 18-21, and be held at the Green Lake Conference Center, which will provide our primary lodging, along with being the center of activities during the convention. The GLCC is located on 900 scenic acres on the shores of Wisconsin's deepest lake in an area of abundant birding opportunities.

The WSO Convention Committee has again reserved a large block of rooms allowing members to take early advantage of special pricing. And once again the arrangement offers convention-goers a chance to stay at the site of the Friday evening awards ceremony, Saturday luncheon, annual meeting, workshops, paper sessions and Saturday evening banquet.

The GLCC is located at W2511 State Road 23 in Green Lake. The site facilitates field trip planning and allows convention organizers to take advantage of the diverse and bird-rich habitat within the region, and on-site.

### WSO Field Trip Chair Tom Schultz offers this additional convention preview:

There are a number of great birding opportunities in and around Green Lake. Field trips will visit places like White River Marsh and Grand River Marsh State Wildlife Areas, Puchyan Marsh, Mascoutin Trail Wetland, Germania Marsh as well as a number of local conservancy properties, several of which are right on the GLCC grounds.

A little farther afield, Horicon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge and the Buena Vista Grasslands are both within a reasonable driving distance – especially for the all-day field trips.

The convention should coincide with the heart of spring migration, so besides the many breeding species we expect to find in the wetlands, prairies and woodland habitats we visit, there should also be a good variety of warblers, thrushes and other migrants passing through.

### Other details:

- **Convention registration** at the hotel will begin on Friday afternoon. There again will be a picnic, included with registration, in the late afternoon.
- **The core convention schedule** will remain unchanged with registration continuing on Friday evening leading up to the annual Passenger Pigeon Awards ceremony and reception. Saturday will start early with local field trips, followed by a luncheon at the hotel, the annual business meeting, paper presentations and birding workshops
- **A Saturday evening social hour** at the hotel will precede the banquet and keynote presentation.
- **All-day field trips** will depart from the hotel on Sunday and Monday mornings, with a special “Birds and Beer” event planned for Sunday evening, tentatively to be held at Langford’s Pub at The Golf Courses of Lawsonia, adjacent to the GLCC.
- **The hotel is holding a large number of rooms** for WSO at a discounted price. Prices range from \$98 to \$105 a night, depending on room type. There is an additional \$15 fee per person when more than two people share a room.

Rooms are available in Bauer Lodge, Lawson Lodge and the Roger Williams Inn. There is no free breakfast available, but rooms have access to a microwave, refrigerator and coffee pot, so plan accordingly. For details on the accommodations and amenities in the different lodging sites, you should consult <http://glcc.org/hotels.html>

To reserve, call 1-920-294-3323 and mention WSO.



Whooping Cranes that are part of Eastern reintroduction efforts now travel to the White River Marsh in the spring

The Roger Williams Inn is a central part of the Green Lake Conference Center, site of the 2018 WSO convention, May 18-21.

