



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

Upcoming Club Events:

2/3 - Nocturnal Owling!

Rain Date: Sunday 2/11

2/18 - Club Meeting

Presenter - Diane Robinson
Wildlife Management in WI

3/18 - Club Meeting

Presenter - Ellen Censky
Bio Blitz - 24 hr. Nature Party



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The 118th Christmas Bird Count

Begun as an alternative to a Christmas "side hunt", the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) began in 1900 as a tool for ornithologists, professional and amateur, to track population trends of birds in their local areas. Twenty-five counts were held the first year, and it has since grown into a North American ecological phenomenon that generates data used by the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Audubon Society, and other agencies to determine the courses of action they will take in the years to come.

Locally, for over 70,000 birders in more than 2,500 locations in North America, the CBC is a highlight of their birding year. Keeping track of their birds from year to year, and sharing their results with other birders in their circle, it is one of the most fun days of the year. So much fun, in fact, that birders from the Goss Club participated in 6! different counts including Oconomowoc, Burlington, Palmyra, Hustisford, and Hartford, as well as our own count.

In Waukesha, the CBC began in 1916 and has been conducted by the Goss Bird Club

for nearly 80 years. Conditions often dictate the results a bird count. Notably, last year's large snowfall on count day pushed the count back one day, when brutally cold temps resulted in low numbers for species and overall birds present. But this year's weather was very enjoyable by comparison.

Each year, the birds seen that day are compared to past records to look for high counts, misses of usual birds, or new species that can be added to the list. This edition of the Waukesha CBC had some notable sightings and misses. A CHIPPING SPARROW was seen by



one of our "feeder watchers", and while the records committee is still reviewing the sighting, this is the first record of this species in our count circle since the Waukesha CBC began!

Other notable sightings were a No. SAW-WHET OWL, a GREEN-WINGED TEAL, only the second record for our CBC, and a WINTER WREN, only the 3rd sighting of a bird that doesn't actually stay around often during its namesake's season. A MERLIN was spotted by our youngest counter - Eagle Eyes Sammy. This was only the 4th record of a Merlin for this count.

Way to go Sammy!

Record high counts were tallied for a number of species including TRUMPETER SWAN, Com. GOLDENEYE and MERGANSER, GREAT BLUE HERON, COOPER'S HAWK, RED-BELLIED and PILEATED WOODPECKERS, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (4th record), and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (4th record).

As interesting as the birds we saw are the birds we missed, but there were few to speak of this year. Given the conditions of a light snow cover, it's not surprising that the trio of field birds (Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, & Horned Lark) were not seen on count day. When there is ample snow cover, these birds are often seen "gritting" and feeding along roadsides. But this year, they were likely all out in fields, making them difficult to locate. And while longspurs and buntings are often "bonus birds", Horned Larks are expected to be seen throughout the count circle. As a mini consolation, Larks were reported during the count week however (3 days prior and 3 days after count day).

Thanks to Wally Hahn for his hard work as count compiler the past years. It's a tougher job than it looks! And thanks to Don Reel for filling Wally's shoes. See you in 2018!

Take Five (plus one) With Spence Stehno

Spence Stehno is in his 3rd year as the club's intrepid president. He's seen a lot of birds in his day, and to better get to know him, we asked him a few questions.



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

While living on Lake Keesus in the 1970's in a cottage and heating with wood, my neighbors had a bird feeder. While at their house, I enjoyed seeing the birds coming to the feeder. As Tim would say, "little brown jobs" were all they mostly were. But what really got me going was that they had a Screech Owl that would respond to the owner imitating the "trill" monotone with his mouth. The owl would fly in close and call back. Boom! I was fascinated, and then started my own series of feeders for learning the local birds!

2. Where is your favorite nature spot?

I've had the privilege to be in some remarkable spaces in Montana – woods, mountains, marshes, the Missoula River... and the uniqueness of the birds on the west side of the Rockies... I just love those Magpies! While staying in the woods with some friends, waking up to the calls of many Varied Thrushes singing, in the snow... remarkable. Walking along the Missoula River and watching an American Dipper prancing, diving, and coming up on and under ice shelves. Finding Canada Geese nesting in the trees just like hawks. Stopping along a stream and seeing bunches of Barrow's Goldeneyes feeding. Watching Mountain Bluebirds.

3. Besides birds, what aspect of nature do you most enjoy?

A favorite location for me in this area has been Paradise Valley State Wildlife Area. It's offered easy access, and the sunrises and sunsets are spectacular. There's a wooden hunting blind out in the middle of this area that I've often just sat there and listened and watched until long after the burnt reds & orange & pinks of sunset are gone, and the stars or clouds cover the start of night. The "barking" of the Short-eared owls was something that I got to enjoy in years past, and I hope that they return sometime (soon). I so enjoy the wailing of the coyotes in different packs in different sections of the marsh, with their evening rituals starting. There was one winter night when I was out there over an hour after sunset sitting in the blind, and it was quite dark, and the water was frozen. I could hear something in front of me, and then there in the lighter hues of darkness was a coyote on the ice tiptoeing towards me and then stopping as I just sat there quietly... waiting... waiting... I made the softest little "knick" call like you would for a horse, and swoosh, like a fleeing phantom the coyote was off back into the brush.

4. How did you come to join the Goss Bird Club?

In the early 1970's, I was a biology teacher in the Waukesha school system, and living in a cabin on Lake Keesus, on the edge of a marsh, I was amidst nature! It was during the spring of 1975 that looking in the mailed brochure of classes at WCTC, there was a Saturday bird watching class for beginners offered for two weekends, so I signed up for it. The class was led by Linda Safir, who I came to learn was a member of the Ben Goss Bird Club, and good friends with John Bielefeldt. Linda invited me to come to the bird club meeting, where I met Bob Adams, and took some "Bob" hikes with him around Waukesha County including the spring bird count, which included Beaver Dam Lake at dawn for least bittern and yellow-headed black birds. It seemed Bob could walk forever. When hiking, Bob would bark back to me, in his sweetest serious manner, "Common Macduff, Keep up"!

5. What is your most enjoyable birding memory?

In 2013, I drove a friend to Phoenix in their car, and then took 30 days to wander bird watching across southern Arizona near the border and into different locations and canyons and off to California. During that time, I met some great people, birders, and saw some amazing landscapes, along with unique birds that to me were previously just weird names in the bird books. I got to see at least 10 different kinds of hummingbirds, Phaenopepla, Pyrrhuloxia, Verdin, Common Poorwill, Vermillion Flycatcher, and many other birds. The most unusual location was in Tucson where they have Sweetwater Wetlands Park, a mixed function sewage treatment plant with wetlands, ponds, and desert settings to see hundreds of water fowl, shorebirds, and other species collecting together in this microcosm of Arizona habitat. Another location that was unique for me was the Fort Huachuca Army Base, a military base on the Mexican border with Arizona that includes canyons where the Elegant Trogon lives. I'd been hiking around in there for about 3 hours when I met some people, and asked them if they'd seen or heard the Trogon, and just like that, they pointed out the song of the bird and pointed at it sitting in the tree, a bird that I'd been listening to for 3 hours. While a "Duh" moment, it was still great to have identified it. Well as Bob Adams said, "Birds are where you find them"!



6. What's the craziest bird you've found? Was it out of season or range, or doing something odd?

While in Montana, I was out birding with a friend and we were going to a home that had feeders with unique birds coming to them. As we were approaching the road to the home, there was something down in the ditch, and it was a bird on top of a deer carcass, and as we stopped, the bird flew up onto a small brick substation, and perched there about 10 yards from us, a bee-yoot-tee-full adult golden eagle, waiting for us to leave and let them resume eating. Never having seen a golden eagle, let alone be that close, whoa, ... was that a special sight!

A Moment from the Archives with Goss Bird Club Historian Jennifer Tyskiewicz

The B.F. Goss Bird Club's Connection to Two Pieces of Retzer Art

You may have passed by two wildlife prints at Retzer Nature Center, but never given them much thought or notice. One of them hangs in the "large event room" where our bird club meets! The title of the print is, "Over the Tamaracks.....Sandhill Cranes," and it depicts the cranes "flying low over a north country lake." This print was painted by Wisconsin-born artist, Owen Gromme, in 1987.

The other print, "Winterfield – the Christmas Cardinal," also by Owen Gromme, images a "male Cardinal on a snow-covered corn stalk stack," and was the artist's first annual Christmas print. It usually hangs in an internal conference room at Retzer, but with the recent remodeling going on, Larry Kascht, Retzer Supervisor and Naturalist, has moved it to his office for safekeeping.

Now.....I need to explain the connection of our bird club to these two beautiful works of art.....other than

the obvious connection in that they feature birds as subjects!

In November of 1992, the B. F. Goss Bird Club was awarded these two Gromme prints for placing 8th in the "Crane-O-Thon," sponsored by the International Crane Foundation. Knowing the value and popularity of Owen Gromme's work, I can't help but wonder what treasures the top 7 teams were awarded!

Once these valuable prints were in our club's possession, Bob Adams, always a willing and very able carpenter, set about making frames for them.

Then, a discussion ensued at club meetings as to what to do with this wonderful wildlife art. Suggestions made were to present them to the Waukesha Public Library, or to Carroll College (as it was called at the time), or to Retzer Nature Center. Other options discussed were to auction them

off to add funds to our treasury, or perhaps, the prints should travel to members' homes to be displayed and enjoyed for a period of time before being delivered to the next home on the member list!

At a meeting in 1993, the club voted unanimously to present the two prints to Retzer Nature Center. (See the two photos below of the evening of the actual presentation ceremony!).

For those of you not familiar with Owen Gromme, he was born in Fond du Lac, WI in 1896, and has been called the "Dean of United States Wildlife Artists." Gromme also served as the Curator of Birds and Mammals at the Milwaukee Public Museum, but it was his visibility as a prolific wildlife artist that allowed him to bring attention to many legislative issues that would protect birds. He supported many conservation causes, crusaded against the misuse of pesticides, helped protect Horicon Marsh, and was integral in establishing the International Crane Foundation in Wisconsin. Owen Gromme passed away in 1991.



L to R: Jennifer Tyskiewicz, Nancy Auchter, Anne Moretti, Ruth Adams, Bob Adams, Nancy Frank (Naturalist), Harry Auchter, Ellen Kryzston, Harry Leeman, Larry Kascht (Retzer Nature Center Naturalist)



L to R: Harry Leeman, Larry Kascht (Retzer Nature Center Naturalist), Dean Spencer, Bob Adams

The Birds of 2017

Waukesha County Bird List

The Waukesha County Birds Seen List is a record of the bird species seen within the county by members of the Goss Bird Club. Since records began, the club has documented 304 species on this list, with the latest addition being a Rufous Hummingbird in October 2014.

Given that the Goss Bird Club is nearly 90 years old, many interesting birds are included on this list. Perhaps most surprising is Black-backed Woodpecker. While they are rarely migratory, they do move in irruptive years. Our records do not show exactly when this bird was seen, but there was certainly more suitable habitat for them in southern Wisconsin decades ago, and it's quite possible they were regular breeders this far south before European settlement. The same could be said for the Upland Sandpiper and grouse species like the Ruffed Grouse and the Greater Prairie Chicken. Suitable habitat was certainly available only decades ago, but they have since been extirpated from the area. Reductions in the amount and quality of habitat due to development give them little opportunity to nest around here.

Our record high species total was in 2011 when we saw 239 species in the county. In 2017, we nearly tied the record, spotting 238 species. Many birds were seen through our binocs on New Years day, but the last addition being the Common Redpolls visiting Pat and Anne Moretti's feeders!

Notable species in 2017:

- The "Goose Slam": Efforts in the western portion of the county netted sightings of all 5 goose species. Canada, Cackling, and Snow are generally seen each year, but Greater White-fronted and Ross's are not.
- "Big Lake Birds": Some birds tend to stick to larger bodies of water such as Lake Michigan, but a few of them do wander inland from time to time. Sanderlings are known to chase waves on sandy beaches of oceans and large lakes, but Paul Kinzer spotted one at the McMahon Road wetland on May 26th. And while Lesser Scaup is a common migratory duck to find inland, a Greater Scaup was found by Andrea Szymczak on May 14th.
- Some species are on the decline, but others are becoming found more frequently. Black-necked Stilts are a charismatic shorebird typically found west of the Mississippi, but have been expanding their range east, frequently in recent years at Paradise Valley SWA. Spence Stehno recorded the first sighting of 2017 on April 18th. Carolina Wrens are a southern species, but they are becoming more common in southern WI. One bird was seen and heard last April and May by numerous observers at Paradise Springs Nature Trail in the South Kettle Moraine.

- Finches from the north often migrate south in years of low food supply. This winter of late 2017 has been an irruptive season for nearly all finch species, but Pat Horn found Red Crossbills last winter on February 3rd! Common Redpolls trickled in this winter, and Anne Moretti had some visit her feeders as early as December 23rd. They have since become ubiquitous at nearly any reliable finch feeder in Wisconsin.
- Perhaps THE highlight of the year also came from the yard of Pat and Anne Moretti. Pat caught a glimpse of a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER at their water feature on April 18th. This species is a common summer resident of tall pine forests in the southeastern US, and only makes its way into WI in Wyalusing State Park where it has bred the past few years. To find one in our area is not unheard of, but is definitely a treat!

If you have any species to add for 2017, or new birds for 2018, (how about those redpolls?!?) please contact Don Reel. He has graciously volunteered to be the caretaker of the list, after Paula Stich filled those duties in 2016 & 2017. Thanks Paula and Don!

KEEP IN TOUCH!

...AND KNOW WHERE THE BIRDS ARE!

Want to be in-the-know about bird sightings by fellow club members? Want to stay in touch with club friends to easily plan outings? Want to share your own sightings, stories and photographs? Then check out these club sponsored forums!

Goss Bird Club Facebook Discussion Group:

This group is open to anyone with a Facebook account. A post can be comprised of text, photo(s), and even video! To join visit this link: www.facebook.com/groups/gossbirdclub

Waukesha County Bird Network:

This email forum is open to members of the Goss Bird Club. It functions by members sending emails to the forum, which are then forwarded to anyone else subscribed to the list. To sign up, email Tim Hahn (thahnbirder@gmail.com).

"Sometimes you can do better in the yard than out in the field. This is our first-ever yard Common Redpoll on 1/2/18."— Mike Tyskiewicz

