



BENJAMIN F. GOSS BIRD CLUB

THE GOSS HAWK

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Volume 3, Issue 1

Tropical Storms

-- Spence Speaks

I'll Huff and I'll Puff and I'll Blow Your House In

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

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Waukesha, WI 53188**

"To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is useless waste; to others, the most valuable part."

— Aldo Leopold



With Hurricane Florence finishing its path in the southeastern shore states, one has to wonder what the effect of such weather has on the Animal Kingdom, let alone the aves, our birding friends. Recently Hawaii has withstood effects of high winds and heavy rains, and a bit closer to home, Texas, Puerto Rico, and the Gulf of Mexico have been hosting tropical storms and other low pressure events.

These past few weeks we birders have been watching large numbers of Chimney Swifts roosting in Okauchee, Wisconsin. These birds are on their way to South America's Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador. Our flock of swifts, along with others from east coast states, are heading to these stormy areas (as well as millions of other migrating bird species of all kinds). How do they survive?

It's believed that the birds have some innate qualities of survival that allow them some defense or awareness of protection. It's thought that birds can sense the barometric pressure changes that may be generated in the atmosphere by changing or approaching storms.

If they are staying in the storm area, their toes can lock onto a branch or perch, and the tendons in their legs also help to lock them se-

curely to anchor them against the wind. They don't seek the high branches during storms. Many seek hedges and other thick microhabitats where often they will locate on the leeward side of the tree or bush to have some protection from the wind, even in the vegetation behind houses out of the wind. But as Bob Adams said "birds are where you find them", and a Cooper's hawk was found in an abandoned cab that's window was open.

Birds have pretty good thermal control to stay warm particularly in the circulation to their legs. And some feathers are waterproofed from oil glands that they rub their beaks against, and then spread oil by preening. This helps to repel the water.

Many birds that are cavity roosters or nesters will seek these openings for shelter, but their structures are subject to the same pressures that people staying in their homes have, if the trees break or fall, sometimes into the water.

Again, as birds become aware of the impending rough weather, they can also "fatten" up and sort of binge-eat to gain extra energy. How this would work in a storm particularly like the current hurricane is hard to guess. Many storms last only a day or two, but with more days of rain, rising water, and wind, survival becomes harder. Plants, flowers, and their associated insects are all stripped away. The birds that

sift through leaf-litter have to find areas not flooded. There are lulls in the storm, and there are insects that are present, so there might be some opportunity to eat airborne or other water-borne arthropods, and other insects trapped by the stormy weather. However, for a flying insectivore, like the Chimney Swifts, if they are seen on the ground seeking food, this is their last gasp to not starve.

At this time of year, we have the issue of fall migration to the winter grounds. Many of these grounds are near or across the large bodies of water between the US, Caribbean Islands, and Central & South America. Some birds may be encouraged to leave early. Some birds have flown "into" the storm. Storms have bands with a variation of wind speeds from double up to triple digit miles-per-hour. Numbers of birds will not survive being caught up in these wind currents and may just wind up in the ocean, and some have been pushed back to where they started from. Birders have witnessed birds arriving from rough weather in what is called a "Fall-Out", where the birds make it through the storm, or back to land, but are just sitting there so fatigued that they may not be able to move or eat ...or survive. (*Tropical Storms continued on page 4*)

Moment from the Archives w/ Jennifer Tyskiewicz

A “Bird Sanctuary” in Waukesha County

Emma “Em” Hoffman says that she first became interested in birds when she became interested in Mr. Hoffman. She was speaking about her husband, Paul Hoffman, who had been interested in bird-watching since he was a boy. Paul never told his friends about his love of birds in those days; he says that he would have been considered a “sissy.” “All guys thought about was having a chaw of tobacco to look like a he-man,” Paul said in a 1969 Waukesha Freeman article. “I didn’t have any binoculars, and there weren’t any bird books, so I just gave birds a name of my own until I learned the right one!”

Both of the Hoffmans, members of the B.F. Goss Bird Club and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, mentioned how glad they were that the “sissy” designation no longer existed, and that by 1969, birdwatching had become a respected and widespread hobby, with an estimated 200 birdwatch-

ers in Waukesha County alone!

The Hoffmans started their life together in Milwaukee; Paul Hoffman worked as a foreman for the Allis Chalmers Company. However, they found that they spent most of their free time at Big Muskego Lake, studying birds, wildflowers and trees. They longed to spend more time in the “country,” and finally found their ideal spot at 3172 Highway C in the Town of Genesee in the Kettle Moraine. In 1948, they purchased a 30 acre run-down farm with a little stone house, built in 1945, that sat atop a hill, and they proceeded to make the land into a “bird sanctuary.”

The Hoffmans began planting 2000 red and white pines and white cedar, adding to the oaks, aspen, black cherry, wild plum, elms and maples that were already on their land. They had help from botany students from Carroll College and Marquette University in this task! It was Paul and Em’s wish to have the colleges use their land as an outdoor classroom where the students could study bird and plant life.

For 10+ years, the Hoffmans and the students planted and transplanted trees and bushes to establish cover. Then they found that they had to prune, cut brush and remove seedlings to establish some open areas again! Paul stated, “If you want to attract a variety of birds, you must have open, bushy, and wooded areas, and you must have both marshy and hilly areas.” He added that all of these various habitats could be found on their 30 acres of land.

The Hoffmans established and mowed grassy trails through the property, and labeled trees and wildflowers to help the students in their research.

Bird houses scattered throughout their acreage were cleaned and disinfected each spring, and the couple began providing corn, sunflower seeds and suet all year long. They invited anyone interested in nature study to come out and walk the trails, cautioned that high heels were not recommended!

Paul and Em’s attention to all of their habitat areas soon brought success! In one year they tallied 40 nesting species, their requirement being that they actually had to see the nest to count the bird as a resident. (Very strict at-lasing before at-lasing was organized!). Some of their residents were tanagers, woodcock, sora, Virginia rail, green heron, up-land plover, and gallinule. In one year’s time, the Hoffmans observed 150 bird species on their land.

When the weather was too wet or too cold for birding, Paul Hoffman began the hobby of oil painting birds. Since he and Emma had travelled to Europe, Paul was intrigued by European birds as well and made them his primary subject matter.

The Hoffmans were also licensed bird-banders and kept two “government-approved” traps near their home. They banded and released many birds, reporting results to the National Fish and Wildlife Service. They received reports back from Alabama and Mississippi when some of their banded birds were found there!

All of this bird observation eventually led Paul and Em to begin another hobby: bird photography! Paul started with a still cam-



Paul and Emma Hoffman at the door of their little stone house that was situated on their 30-acre bird sanctuary in Genesee, Wisconsin.

era, changing over to a "movie camera" in 1940 when that technology became available and affordable for personal use. His early work was of course in black-and-white film, but he soon adopted color film upon its invention. These films known as 16mm and were stored on large, heavy metal reels.

First, the Hoffmans filmed birds on their property, but once retired, were soon on the road to Texas, Arizona, Utah, the Dakotas, and Michigan, taking 30 reels of "colored moving pictures."

In 1968, Paul and Emma filmed Kirtland's Warblers in lower Michigan, and loons at the Seney Wildlife Area in the UP. It was noted at the time that Paul was "apparently the only photographer ever to photograph a loon on its nest." His tip for unique bird photography was to always use a blind and a tripod. Paul and

Em constructed a portable blind to carry with them, along with their camera equipment, tripod, binoculars and bird books!

When the couple discovered a nesting bird that they wanted to film, as in the case of the loon, they would set up their blind about 30 feet away from the nest, and then move the blind a few feet closer each day, until they were about 12 feet away. They would wait until the adult birds were away from the nest, then hide themselves in the blind, and begin filming.

The Hoffmans used their films to educate and entertain groups throughout the Milwaukee area. These films were eventually transferred from the film reels to Super-Beta VHS, and from that format Mike Tyskiewicz, (current member) transferred them to VCR format.

These 6 tapes are kept in the B.F. Goss Bird Club Archives, the titles being: "Birds at Home - Southeastern Wisconsin;" "Birds at Home - 1950's and

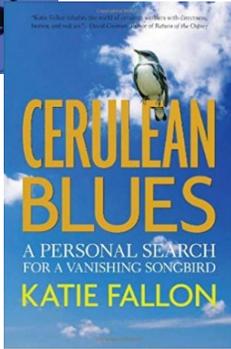
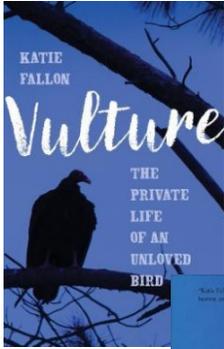
1960's;" "Seney Refuge - Canada Geese;" "Introduction to Ocean Birds: Puffins, Gannets;" "Bison Range: Kildeer, Ruddy Coot;" and "Birds on Parade." Emma wrote scripts which she read during their presentation of these films, and those scripts are kept in our archives, as well.

The Hoffman's names first appeared on our club's membership list in 1949, a year after they moved to their Genesee property. Paul Hoffman must have passed away between 1971 - 1976, (the archives do not contain lists for that interval), because only Emma's name appears on the 1977 list. Emma's address had been changed to Hartland by 1977, and then to Whitewater in 1984, at which time she was granted Honorary Membership by the club. Mike and I joined the club in 1988, and can remember that various club members who

knew Emma would make regular trips to Whitewater to visit her and keep her in the loop. Emma Hoffman's name disappeared from our club membership list in 1995, somewhat ending the story of Waukesha County's "Bird Sanctuary." (Until our next newsletter, in which the continuing story of the Hoffman's land and home will be revealed!).



Goss Bird Club CBC, 12/26/66. Paul and Emma Hoffman in 3rd row left of center; Emma in blue sweater, Paul's hand on her shoulder. Other notables: Bob and Ruth Adams (standing next to the Hoffmans in plaid shirts); Ted and Jean Michaud (Ted kneeling on far right, Jean behind him) and a young John Bielefeldt in the back row with glasses, long hair, and a shirt and tie!



Author
Spotlight
Katie Fallon

Katie Fallon has quickly become one of my favorite modern nature authors. An English professor from West Virginia, Fallon got into birding through her nature-loving husband. Her passion turned to obsession as she pursued her favorite bird, which she recounts in *Cerulean Blues*. She quickly became passionate about conservation, and together the Fallons started the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, a bird rehab center in West Virginia. Since then she has become an avid proponent for vultures, which inspired her book *Vulture - The Private Life of an Unloved Bird*. Fallon has also written two children's books - *Look, See the Bird!* and *Look, See the Farm!*

It is easy to relate to Fallon as she tells stories of dealing with human struggles and tragedy while also maintaining her love for nature, doing everything she can to protect it. Her stories are relatable, enjoyable, and motivating. Readers come away wanting to immerse themselves in the conservation movement, to reconsider our daily activities in the context of the movement, and to live our lives in a more ecologically friendly way.

- Tim Hahn

2018 - 2019 Club Season Schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●September 9 Knowles-Nelson Fund and Birds with WSO Past President Michael John Jaeger ●October 13 THE BIG SIT @ Retzer NC 4:00 am to mid afternoon ●October 21 Birding Ethics with Dr. Andy Cassini ●November 18 Avian Thermoregulation in Winter with Dr. Sheldon Cooper ●December 15 Waukesha Christmas Bird Count ●January 21 Recovery, Management, and Future of Wisconsin's Peregrine Falcons with Greg Septon ●February 17 Walk to Save our Great Lakes with Julia Robson and Alyssa Armbruster ●March 17 The Island Refuges of Green Bay with Sadie O'Dell, Horicon NWR ●April 14 TBA ●May 11 May Count

Vulture
The Private Life of an Unloved Bird

As a rehabber of birds in West Virginia, Fallon has become uniquely familiar with this seldom known bird. Fallon moves between scientific and personal stories easily always giving the readers interesting science tidbits as well as personal experiences she has had with the species.

Having read Fallon's story of Vultures, I have come away with a deeper appreciation for the bird and its role in the food chain. Whenever I see a vulture in the sky, I now take more time to appreciate its grace and subtle beauty

... yes *beauty*

Cerulean Blues

Appalachia, the author's home, is the heart of the breeding range of the Cerulean Warbler, and while this tiny sky-blue gem is a grail bird for many, it is an obsession for Fallon.

The struggles of migration and the habitat loss experienced on its breeding and wintering grounds are extreme. From spring migration, through the nesting season, to the cloud forests of Colombia and back, Fallon tells the story of this Cielo Azul, the Sky-blue Little Queen as it passes through every stage of life. Fallon takes the reader on a journey not many can experience. As always one can not be unmotivated having read her story.

Tropical Storms... (cont. from page 1)

But migrating ahead of or during a hurricane is a strategy that is fraught with dangers and can have unexpected consequences, especially for small birds. For example, in 2005, a large flock of migrating chimney swifts was swept up by Hurricane Wilma, and the lucky survivors relocated to Western Europe -- to the delight of bird watchers there. However, many were found dead, and there may have been thousands more dead that weren't found. These birds were identified as

coming from Quebec, Canada area. The following year's Quebec Swift population was down by almost 2/3, very likely from this weather event.

In September 2016, radar images of Hurricane Matthew as it raged across Florida, showed it had a huge flock of birds trapped in its eye. These birds were relocated by many hundreds or thousands of miles away from where they were, or wanted to be.

Many threatened and en-

dangered birds suffer the consequences, and good numbers of species are having many other known and unknown pressures, including habitat destruction. With so many threats just under normal circumstances by predators, habitat destruction, invasive plants, chemical intrusion to the food chain, climate change, hunting, mechanical intrusion to the atmosphere, --- these weather events can just be the straws that really put a lot of pressure on the camel's back.