

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In 2014, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) celebrated a major milestone – our 75th anniversary as an organization. For 75 years, WSO has been one of the largest and most active ornithological organizations in the nation and our accomplishments have been impressive. Throughout our history, we have sponsored birding field trips, hosted annual conventions, published a quarterly journal and monthly newsletter, sponsored research grants, supported the conservation of bird populations and habitats, documented and evaluated rare bird records and provided countless opportunities for people to enjoy Wisconsin's birds.

This year found our organization planning for the next 75 years. We completed our strategic plan and identified six overarching goals on which we will focus in the years to come: 1) advance bird conservation, 2) promote bird research in Wisconsin, 3) communicate effectively, 4) engage members and non-members, 5) keep official Wisconsin bird records, and 6) strengthen the organization. As I think you will see from the 2014 highlights, we made significant progress towards these goals and accomplishing our mission of promoting the enjoyment, study and conservation of Wisconsin's birds.

We look forward to many more exciting projects in 2015. WSO will be one of the key leaders for the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas, scheduled to begin fieldwork this spring. We will become the main coordinator for the Great Wisconsin Oriole Count, a fun birding event aimed to engage youth in bird conservation. We will be adding several new field trips to our already stellar line-up. We will continue to develop new content for our upgraded website, making it one of the best informational resource centers for Wisconsin birds. We will also be partnering with the Wisconsin Young Birders Club to expand their outreach efforts. As President of WSO, I am proud of the direction the organization is headed.

We are deeply grateful to you, our members, volunteers and partners, for your support of our mission. Thank you for helping us to be a leading steward and ambassador for Wisconsin's birds. Together, we will ensure that birds and bird watchers thrive in our great state.



With Sincere Appreciation,

Kim Kreitinger

2014 HIGHLIGHTS



Honey Creek Nature Preserve by Steve Meyer

HONEY CREEK INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

Thanks to the generous donors to our Honey Creek Birdathon/Bandathon, we were able to update the interpretive signage at the Cox Nature Center. WSO worked with Signature Signs of Madison to develop four new interior signs with the following titles: Welcome to the Harold and Carla Kruse Honey Creek Nature Center; History of the Harold and Carla Kruse Honey Creek Nature Preserve; Ecological Diversity at Honey Creek; and Importance of the Baraboo Range. Thanks to Steve Meyer, Tom Schultz, and Eric Preston for donating the beautiful images used on the signs.

WEBSITE UPGRADE

A generous bequest from a long-time member of WSO enabled us to complete a major upgrade to our website. WSO worked with GreenLeaf Media of Madison to redesign and upgrade the way we communicate with both our members and the world at large. The new site has improved content, better navigation with drop-down menus, a footer menu, a calendar function on our home page, direct access to our Facebook and Twitter accounts and stunning photographs. We are very grateful to Eric Preston, Sunil Gopalan, Michael Huebschen, and Dennis Malueg for donating the use of their images! We have also added Bird TV to our website – a series of educational videos produced by Steve Betchkal that highlight the amazing life of birds with ideas on how we can help conserve them. Check out our new website at wsobirds.org!

PROPOSED GOLF COURSE CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED

WSO identified major concerns with a proposal to develop an ecologically valuable 247-acre parcel of land bordering Lake Michigan just north of Kohler-Andrae State Park in Sheboygan County. WSO representatives testified at a July 16 hearing to the Town of Wilson Plan Commission and emphasized: 1) the role of the existing forest as migrant stopover habitat; 2) the significance of migratory stopover habitat; and 3) the historic great loss of this type of habitat along the Lake Michigan shoreline. After much opposition to the proposal, the Plan Commission has deferred action on the request for a conditional use permit.

PROJECT SNOWSTORM

WSO participated in an exciting research project known as Project SNOWstorm. As part of this project, a team of researchers deployed a series of cellular tracking devices on Snowy Owls from the Upper Midwest to the Atlantic coast to learn more about their winter activity and movements. WSO funded one of the first two transmitters for this project, which received much national recognition. The WSO-sponsored owls are “Buena Vista” and “Kewaunee.” We also sponsored a special fundraising field trip for our members to observe the Snowy Owls at Buena Vista Wildlife Area and raised \$750 for Snowy Owl research.



WINTER RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

In an attempt to better connect the birding community with the academic community, WSO hosted a research symposium titled “The Latest Technology in Avian Research and Monitoring.” This symposium was part of the winter meeting of the Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society and was a great success. We invited seven speakers who profiled a wide range of research topics. More than 150 people attended this meeting.

PROJECT PASSENGER PIGEON

WSO played a key role in marking the centenary of the Passenger Pigeon extinction. We helped sponsor the film “From Billions to None: The Passenger Pigeon’s Flight to Extinction,” which has now been viewed by millions of people across the country. We published articles in each issue of The Passenger Pigeon, and reissued the booklet “Silent Wings – a memorial to the Passenger Pigeon” and sent copies to each of our members. Under the leadership of Dr. Stan Temple, WSO spearheaded the refurbishment and rededication of the Passenger Pigeon monument at Wyalusing State Park and funded the creation and erection of new interpretive signage at the site.



Painting by Tom Schultz

REVISED CODE OF ETHICS

Recent debates over posting rare bird locations, baiting, and the general question of harassment caused us to update the WSO Code of Ethics and address those concerns. The revised Code of Ethics now includes 1) information to help one recognize the signs of stress and suggestions on how to minimize stress while observing a bird; 2) a list of special considerations when observing or photographing raptors, owls or rare birds; 3) proper procedures for dealing with illegal activities involving wild birds; 4) suggestions for increasing goodwill amongst the birding community.

ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS

We have greatly expanded content to our Badger Birder newsletter, added new features and color photos, increased our focus on conservation issues, and made our newsletter the go-to information source on Wisconsin’s birds. We issued monthly eAlerts and birding events calendars to keep the birding community apprised of WSO activities and important birding events around the state. If you haven’t already, sign up for WSO eAlerts on our website!

PARTNER SUPPORT

WSO was an official sponsor of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association conference, the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative annual meeting and the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. We provided financial support to the Urban Ecology Center’s “I Spy Birds Summer Camp,” the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, and the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas. We donated \$4,000 from our Silent Auction proceeds to the Friends of Wyalusing State Park, Mississippi Valley Conservancy and the Natural Resources Foundation’s Bird Protection Fund. We awarded six research grants and three youth grants totaling almost \$4,000 during 2014.



Participants at the I Spy Birds Summer Camp. Photo courtesy of the Urban Ecology Center.

2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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WSO BY THE NUMBERS

OF MEMBERS: 1,422

RENEWING MEMBERS: 89%

\$ RAISED FOR HC BIRDATHON/BANDATHON: \$6,132.54

BIRD MONITORING KITS ISSUED: 40

RARE BIRD RECORDS REVIEWED IN ONE YEAR: 399

BIRD SPECIES DOCUMENTED IN WISCONSIN: 435

\$ AWARDED FROM THE WSO GRANTS PROGRAM: \$3,750

ATTENDING 2014 ANNUAL CONVENTION: 205

ATTENDING FIELD TRIPS: 680



WSO 75th Anniversary Photo by Eric Preston

2013 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

ANNUAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Contributions, Grants, Dues | \$130,829 |
| Program Service Revenue (convention, field trips, meeting registrations) | \$100,386 |
| Investment Income | \$ 5,168 |
| Net Income from Sales of Inventory | \$ 7,712 |
| TOTAL | \$244,095 |

ANNUAL EXPENSES

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Grants Paid | \$ 22,804 |
| Conventions, Meetings | \$ 26,585 |
| Field Trips | \$ 51,259 |
| Educational Support | \$ 5,825 |
| Occupancy (WSO land holdings) | \$ 8,204 |
| Administration, General | \$ 43,583 |
| Miscellaneous | \$ 5,304 |
| TOTAL | \$163,564 |

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Cash, Savings | \$ 478,225 |
| Inventory for Sale | \$ 29,006 |
| Land and buildings | \$ 31,895 |
| Other Assets (investments held by another organization) | \$ 43,810 |
| NET ASSETS DECEMBER 31, 2013 | \$ 582,936 |

LIABILITIES

None



Photo by Eric Preston



WISCONSIN
SOCIETY *for*
ORNITHOLOGY