

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology began in 1939 with approximately 80 charter members and a purpose to “stimulate interest and promote the study of the birds of Wisconsin, especially in the field, and to bring together and permanently record accurate and authentic data relative thereto.” Our membership has since expanded to more than 1,500 people and our focus now extends well beyond the research halls. Through our publications, conservation projects, education efforts, grant opportunities, and events, WSO has become a recognized leader in the Wisconsin birding community.

Enclosed you will find some highlights from our work in 2015, which are organized according to our strategic goals. As you can see in the following pages, we continue to make great strides in pursuing our mission to promote the enjoyment, study and conservation of Wisconsin’s birds. Our Board of Directors and committee members dedicate a significant amount of time to our organization and I salute them for their efforts.

While we celebrate the success of 2015, 2016 promises to be another year of growth for the organization. WSO will be coordinating the Wisconsin Green Birding Challenge, a carbon neutral approach to birdwatching that relies on human-powered transportation, such as walking, biking or canoeing/kayaking. We will be launching the peer-reviewed section of our Passenger Pigeon journal and we hope to strengthen our partnership with the state’s bird clubs.

Our success would not be possible without your support. Your membership and volunteer contributions allow us to continue our important programs that benefit Wisconsin’s birds. With your help, WSO is helping to ensure a bright future for Wisconsin’s birds and birdwatchers.



With Sincere Appreciation,

Kim Kreitinger

WSO BY THE NUMBERS

1559

of members

148

of Passenger Pigeon Awards given since WSO’s inception

4600

\$ awarded through the WSO Grant’s Program

1,700,000

of individual birds recorded during Year 1 of Atlas



WISCONSIN
SOCIETY *for*
ORNITHOLOGY

2015 HIGHLIGHTS



Honey Creek Birdathon. Photo courtesy of Todd Persche.

ADVANCE BIRD CONSERVATION

The Conservation Committee has been very active over the last year. WSO provided comments on the Draft Master Plans for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area and Horicon Marsh, testified against the proposed golf course near Kohler-Andrae State Park and continues to monitor the situation with Highway 49 near Horicon Marsh. In early 2015, the committee identified areas of concern in the proposed state budget and urged WSO members to voice their support for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, the Natural Resources Board and research positions within the DNR's Bureau of Sciences Services. The activism of WSO and many other conservation partners paid off. The proposed freeze on the Stewardship Fund was not approved and the Natural Resources Board retained its decision-making capacity.

PROMOTE BIRD RESEARCH IN WISCONSIN

WSO continues to be a major partner in the second Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas. WSO serves on the steering committee, administers contracts and project finances, and provides website support. WSO also funded the unique atlas data entry system developed by eBird. During this first year of atlasing, 700 volunteers confirmed 212 breeding bird species in Wisconsin, including 8 that were not confirmed during the first atlas!

WSO awarded seven \$500 grants to support ornithological research in Wisconsin by professionals, students and amateurs. The research topics included migratory connectivity, long-term impacts of wind development on raptor abundance and behavior, ecoimmunology of songbirds with differing reactivity to West Nile Virus assays, Osprey and Bald Eagle competition for nest platforms, migratory and wintering behavior of Snow Buntings, Wisconsin hummingbird banding and nesting behavior of urban Cooper's Hawks.



COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Through our social media page, website, publications and eBlasts, WSO has become a central source of information for Wisconsin birds and birding. We now have nearly 1,700 followers on our Facebook page and 1,300 subscribers to WSO eAlerts. In 2015 the WSO website hosted more than 62,000 visitors from 75 different countries!

Our communications have also extended beyond our own boundaries. WSO published an article in the Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine pertaining to the ethics of observing owls. With the help of Steve Betchkal, WSO also developed a 10-minute educational video that discusses the man-made hazards that northern owls face during irruption years as well as considerations that we all should take when viewing these amazing animals. The video is posted to Vimeo, a video sharing website that is used by millions of people.



ENGAGE MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

Thanks to our excellent field trip lineup and annual convention, WSO consistently engages the broader birding community in fun, social events. The 2015 WSO Convention drew 157 attendees to Wausau over Memorial Day weekend, and more than 500 people attend our field trips each year. In 2015 we offered 17 field trips to various locations around the state, including new trips to the Penokee Hills and Cat Island-Lower Green Bay. We also co-led trips with The Prairie Enthusiasts (Schurch-Thomson Prairie), Linwood Springs Research Station (Saw-whet Owl Banding) and the Natural Resources Foundation (Honey Creek Preserve).



Cat Island Field Trip. Photo courtesy of Tom Schultz.

In early October, WSO's Honey Creek Preserve was a featured stop on the Fermentation Fest Farm/Art D'Tour, a 50-mile self-guided drive through scenic working lands of Sauk County. The Baraboo Range Preservation Association was chosen to assemble a temporary art installation created by clearing invasive brush from our preserve. The Farm/Art D'Tour attracts more than 15,000 visitors annually. WSO also hosted a bird hike on the Honey Creek Preserve during the festival that was attended by 30 people.

KEEP OFFICIAL WISCONSIN BIRD RECORDS

The Records Committee continues to be the steward of the official list of Wisconsin bird species. The purpose of the Records Committee is to validate records of birds found in the state of Wisconsin, including rare species, rare nesting records, or unusual seasonal occurrences. These data make significant contributions to our knowledge of vagrancy patterns and other aspects of bird distribution and are permanently archived in the WSO archive room at UW-Green Bay.

STRENGTHEN THE ORGANIZATION

It is imperative to engage the younger generation in our activities in order for us to remain a vibrant organization. In 2015 the Education Committee coordinated the youth-oriented Great Wisconsin Oriole Count, funded two youth grants, provided financial support to the Urban Ecology Center's "I Spy...Birds" summer camp and provided one scholarship for a high school student to attend the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Young Birder's Event. Because of her positive experience at the event, this student subsequently applied and was accepted at Cornell University, where she will be majoring in biology.

WSO also provided financial support to the Natural Heritage Land Trust to develop a unique wildlife viewing platform at Patrick Marsh Wildlife Area in Sun Prairie. The platform is shaped like a bird, which will make it possible for an entire class of students from nearby Patrick Marsh Middle School to get a front-row view of the marsh during outdoor classroom activities.



Photo courtesy of the Urban Ecology Center.

2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Kim Kreitinger, President
Michael John Jaeger, Vice President
Jenny Wenzel, Secretary
Mickey O'Connor, Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Jeff Baughman
Andy Cassini
Ed Hahn
Matt Hayes
Charles Heikkinen
Paul Jakoubek
Jim Knickelbine
Mary Korkor
Nancy Nabak
Erin Parker
Jesse Peterson
Joe Schaufenbuel
Tom Schultz
Carl Schwartz
Dar Tiede
Delia Unson
Levi Wood
Quentin Yoerger
Christine Zimmerman

2015 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

ANNUAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions, Grants, Dues	\$ 167,437
Program Service Revenue (convention, field trips, meeting registrations)	\$ 48,740
Investment Income	\$ 496
Net Income from Sales of Inventory	\$ 5,262
TOTAL	\$ 221,935

ANNUAL EXPENSES

Grants Paid	\$ 38,505
Conventions, Meetings	\$ 25,757
Member Support	\$ 91,922
Occupancy (WSO land holdings)	\$ 7,718
Administration, General	\$ 29,010
TOTAL	\$ 192,912

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

Cash, Savings	\$ 504,475
Inventory for Sale	\$ 18,542
Land and buildings	\$ 31,895
Other Assets (investments held by another organization)	\$ 41,034
NET ASSETS DECEMBER 31, 2015	\$ 595,946

LIABILITIES

None

Our mission is to promote the enjoyment, study and conservation of Wisconsin's birds.

