



WISCONSIN
SOCIETY *for*
ORNITHOLOGY

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

YEAR IN REVIEW



PHOTO BY MATT KLEMMER

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**PROMOTING THE ENJOYMENT,
STUDY, AND CONSERVATION
OF WISCONSIN'S BIRDS**

**A WORLD IN WHICH PEOPLE
SHARE AN APPRECIATION FOR
BIRDS AND ADVOCATE ON
THEIR BEHALF**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Throughout 2025 the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology continued to work on the Strategic Framework fulfilling the mission of promoting the enjoyment, study, and conservation of Wisconsin's birds.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, started in 1939, has decades of avian education, research, and conservation practices. In late 2021, the Society hired an executive director and began the journey of growing the organization. In 2025, I was hired as an interim executive director.

As you will see in this annual report, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology has had a busy year. We increased our membership, increased our engagement in events and speaking opportunities, and we initiated a number of education and outreach materials. We recognize the value and continued contributions of our volunteers and with our volunteers and our members, we can fulfill our mission and live our vision — a world in which people share an appreciation for birds and advocate on their behalf.

As we move into next year and the next chapter of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, we are planning some fun activities and great ways for you to engage.

Together and for the love of birds, we can enjoy, study, and conserve Wisconsin's birds.

ALICIA FRANCES KING

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2025 AREAS OF FOCUS



Diversity, Education, and Outreach

- Focus on reaching diverse audiences and non-traditional organizations
- Support Lights Out, Cats Indoors, Bird Safe glass, etc.
- Host/co-host meeting(s) to bring orgs from around the state together

Recommit to Honey Creek

- Host more education programs/walks
- Organize volunteer workdays
- Collaborate w/other organizations on events

Grassland Bird Conservation

- Highlight efforts for grassland bird awareness and conservation

Diversifying funding streams

- Develop Clear Fundraising plan and coordination
- Work to establish relationships with potential donors
- Grants – expand reach/focus on priorities (Honey Creek Preserve management, supporting diversity in birding and bird conservation, grassland bird conservation)



Photo credits: WSO Archives, Alicia King, Getty Images



OPERATIONS – OUTREACH

Speaking and Educational Outreach

Prairie Chicken Festival – exhibit

Green Lake Bird & Nature Club – speaker

Milwaukee Air & Space Museum – exhibit

Lights Out Wisconsin – collaborative work

Save Our Songbirds – collaborative work

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology

Field Trips – Monthly field trips throughout the state supporting public land awareness and bird education



Photo credits: Alicia King



OPERATIONS – COMMITTEES



Awards Committee – selects award recipients

Communication Team – coordinate communication, key messages, and issues

Conservation Committee – conservation issue coordination

Convention Planning Committee – Annual Convention, UnConvention, meetings,

Development Committee – development of the organization to grow our organization

Field Trip Committee – support field trips

Finance Committee – share financial skills for the love of birds

Governance Committee – helps find talent for the organization

Honey Creek Committee – habitat management planning and educational

Diversity Committee – focus on diversity, inclusion, equity in birding

Records Committee – validate records of birds found in the State of Wisconsin

Publications – contributing writers to Badger Birder, Passenger Pigeon, and WSO website

Nominating Committee – appointed by WSO President

Photo credits: Alicia King

OPERATIONS – ISSUES

Proposed Sandhill Crane Hunts – The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology has testified and actively opposes the hunting of Sandhill Cranes



Lights Out Wisconsin – The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology has joined other organizations in Wisconsin to promote the importance of lights out for birds especially during migration

Lead – Wisconsin Society for Ornithology supports no-lead ammunition and fishing tackle, and supports the ban of lead ammo and tackle on national and state wildlife refuges and public lands



Bird-safe Glass – support building codes and ordinances requiring use of bird-safe glass in new construction and voluntary use practices making glass safer to birds



Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund -The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology supports reactivating the program that provides funds for cities, counties, non-profit groups, and the state to purchase land for conservation. Funding is essential for upkeep and maintenance of our waterways, parks, forests, and trail systems.

Greater Prairie-chicken – support State Greater Prairie-chicken management plan

Support Wisconsin Bird Conservation

Partnership - serving on the Steering Committee to conserve and restore birds and their habitats and engage Wisconsin citizens in bird conservation

Sponsored speaker Dr. Peter Marra, Dean, Earth Commons Institute for the Environment and Sustainability at Georgetown University



OPERATIONS – COLLABORATIVE WORK

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology works with organizations throughout Wisconsin, regionally, and nationally to ensure we are collaborating on issues that are important for the research, enjoyment, and conservation of birds.

Forestry for the Birds – UW Forestry Extension (quarterly discussions)

Forestry for Wisconsin (Great Lakes Joint Adventure)

Greater Prairie-chicken Advisory Committee (engagement in planning and management)

Joint Venture Urban Bird Conservation Delivery Network (monthly meeting/discussions)

Wisconsin Environmental/Nature Advocacy Coalition (monthly meetings/discussions)

Chimney Swift Committee Working Group (regular discussions)

The Prairie Enthusiasts (grassland bird and habitat conservation)

Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership (serving on Steering Committee)

Wisconsin's Green Fire (webinar participation and advocacy engagement)

Baraboo Range Preservation Association (Honey Creek Nature Preserve)

Environment for the Americas (webinars, World Migratory Bird Day)

Wisconsin Conservation Community of Practice (Natural Resources Foundation)

American Bird Conservancy/Bird Conservation Alliance (webinars and advocacy)



SUPPORT – CONSERVATION

The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II

The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II (WBBA II) is a comprehensive field survey that documents the distribution and abundance of birds breeding in an area.

The atlas provides a baseline dataset from which we can measure future changes in bird populations as we help identify the conservation needs of breeding birds.

Coordinated jointly by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Lake Michigan Bird Observatory, and Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative.

In 2025, the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas team unveiled the WBBA II cover art drawn by artist Luke Seitz – pictured below.



Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II



THANKS TO OUR 2,000+ VOLUNTEERS

Look what we've accomplished

All 1,283 atlas blocks surveyed

161,000 bird checklists reported

243 bird species found

2.2 million observations submitted

SUPPORT – DIVERSITY & EDUCATION

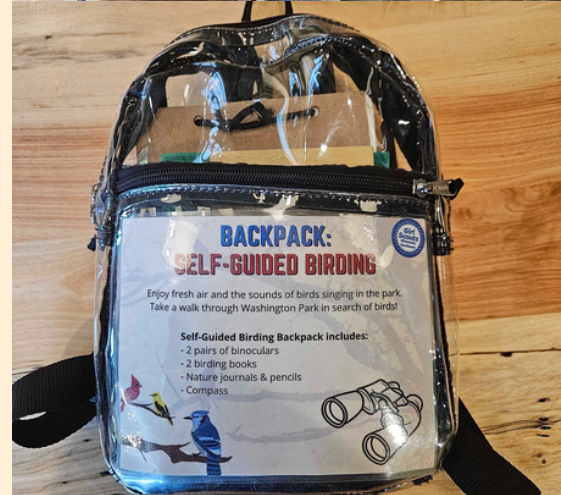
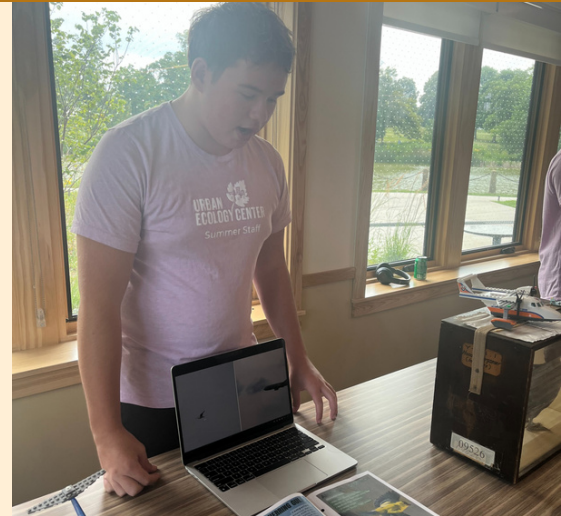
The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is committed to working collaboratively with other groups to encourage the enjoyment, study, and conservation of birds across diverse demographics and communities.

Urban Ecology Center Programs

- Family birdwatching backpacks – birding-focused activity backpacks to increase birding access
- Outdoor Leader Program – part of the Green Career Pathway that engages people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests in ecology, volunteerism, environmental justice, and more
- High School Outdoor Leadership – engaging youth, learning professional and environmental skills and hands-on work and education.

The Nature Place Programs

- We are supporting The Nature Place, a La Crosse nature center. The center offers a Basic Birding program for La Crosse Community Schools 6th graders.
- WSO's financial support enables bird-focused activity to seven community events. Each event includes fabricated life-sized birds and birding identification guide interpreted into Spanish, Hmong, and Ho-Chunk.



2025 SOCIETY MEETINGS

WSO ANNUAL CONVENTION 2025 – LA CROSSE

The 83rd annual convention was held May 15-18 in La Crosse - Onalaska. It included the features attendees have all come to love: field trips, first-day social gathering, our awards ceremony, important discussions, and a banquet followed by an engaging keynote address.

Birders of all experience levels are welcome to come to the convention to greet friends old and new, and enjoy spring migration in the Driftless Region along the Mississippi River.

Convention goers participated in the Conservation Conversation, a guided discussion about important issues for the birding community in Wisconsin. Our annual member meeting followed. The banquet dinner keynote speakers, George Archibald and Anne Lacey from the world-renowned International Crane Foundation in Baraboo provided an update on the cranes of Wisconsin.

Photo credits: WSO Archives, Alicia King



2025 SOCIETY MEETINGS

UNCONVENTION 2025 – GREEN BAY

Every year the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology works with partners to present relevant information about the status, study, and conservation of birds as well as trending birdwatching opportunities. In 2025 presentations included:

Eyes on the Sky – Monitoring Raptor Migration – Daniel (Danny) Erickson

Project SOAR – Falconry and Bird Conservation – Frank Ujazdowski, Janet Wissink, and Erin Giese

Peninsula Sanctuary Bird Community – Changes across 30 years – Tony Klingert

Oneida Bird Monitoring and Craft – Erin Giese, Joe Torres, Sarah Baughman, Gweni Malokofsky

Start your eBird – Melissa Kesling

Advancing eBird – Tim Hahn

Wetlands, Waterfowl, and Wild Rice – Restoration and Outreach on the Green Bay West Shore – Amy Carrozzino-Lyon

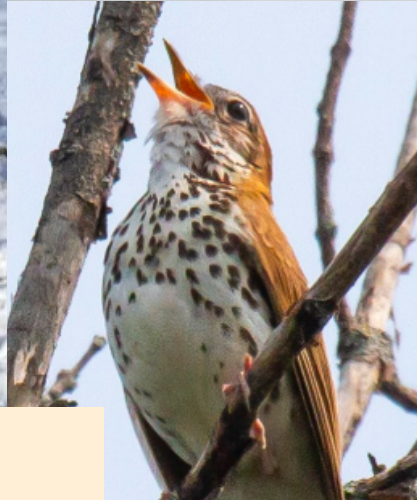
Breeding Marsh Birds – Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program – Erin Giese

Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II: Findings, Updates, and More as Publishing Nears – Tom Prestby

Bird Jeopardy - Erin Giese and team

Photo credits: Alicia King





Research Grants

Lake Michigan Bird Observatory - \$920

- Assist MOTUS tags on Purple Martins
- Fill critical Purple Martins knowledge gaps

Graduate Student Research – Danny Erickson, UW-Green Bay - \$554

- Telemetry work on Sharp-shinned Hawks
- Better understand breeding ecology, migration routes, and stopover habitat use

Eastern Wisconsin Kestrel Project - \$500

- Understand local kestrel population trends
- Banding effort and nest boxes surveys

Riveredge Nature Center - \$500

- Assist in a range-wide Wood Thrush project
- MOTUS tags deployed

Project SOAR - \$526

- Continuing relocation of Snowy Owls and other raptors from Wisconsin airports

Photo credits: Project SOAR, Riveredge Nature Center, Danny Erickson, Lake Michigan Bird Observatory



LAND MANAGEMENT

HONEY CREEK NATURE PRESERVE

The Honey Creek Nature Preserve is situated within the Baraboo Hills of Sauk County, one of the largest tracts of unfragmented forest in the Upper Midwest. Bird banding and an educational Bandathon/Birdathon are conducted every spring. The master plan for Honey Creek is now finished with goals and objectives to be completed by or under the guidance of the stewardship committee. Diversity for preserve and Baraboo Hills/Honey Creek landscape is crucial, and the master plan outlines the ecological aspects of the property.

The **Honey Creek Management Plan** goals are:

- Create and implement a **regular prescribed burn regime**
- Conduct selective thinning and understory removal in oak-dominated forest types to **promote persistence of oak ecosystems**
- Develop and begin implementing an **invasive species management plan** for area north of road within two years, and for area south of road within three years
- **Maintain wetlands** in existing state
- Protect, monitor, and restore upland conifer relicts
- **Restore prairie remnants**
- Replant existing old fields to native cover type as appropriate for the specific site (e.g. prairie vs. wetland vs. oak forest)
- Consider **land acquisition** of adjacent parcels
- Implement **long-term monitoring** to document and gauge progress of restoration goals and objectives
- Build a **volunteer base** to help attain these management goals where appropriate
- Actively build **relationships with local community**
- Encourage, guide, and regulate **human use**



Photo credits: WSO Archives, Bonnie Willison

A photograph of a prairie chicken standing in tall, dry grass. The bird has a blue and white striped pattern on its neck and head, and a blue and white striped pattern on its body. It is looking to the left.

LAND MANAGEMENT

BUENA VISTA

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology maintains a **land management agreement with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources** for our Buena Vista property. This habitat is important for Wisconsin grassland birds, such as quail and grouse.

The property harbors a healthy population of other important grassland bird species including **Henslow Sparrows** (state-threatened species), **Short-eared Owls**, **Upland sandpipers**, **Northern Harriers**, **Bobolinks**, **Eastern** and **Western meadowlarks**, and more.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Buena Vista habitat was designated an **Important Bird Area** in 2006.

Photo credits: WSO Archives, Wisconsin DNR



PUBLICATIONS – *THE PASSENGER PIGEON*



In January 2025, when *The Passenger Pigeon* was restarted, the journal was nine issues past due. Since then, five double issues have been published. There are four more double issues in the works which, when completed in the Spring of 2027, will put us back on a regular quarterly seasonal schedule.

Thank you to *The Passenger Pigeon* editorial team!

Editor: Carl Schroeder

Copy-Editors: Megan Heneke, Janet Speth, Kat O'Connell-Valuch, Michael Putnam

Photography Editor: John Pradarelli

Art Editor: Dr. Daniel Meinhardt

Seasonal Editors: Sunil Gopalan, Dar Tiede, Lynn Barber, Tom Klubertanz

Science Editor: Dr. Robert Jadin

Records Committee: Quentin Yoerger

Peer-Reviewers: Gary Casper, Lowell

Suring, Dr. Phillip Whitford, Bill

Mueller, Dr. Susan DeVries, Luke Fara,

Taylor Finger, Stephen Winter, and

others



PUBLICATIONS – BADGER BIRDER

The *Badger Birder* Newsletter is the organization's primary means of communication with Wisconsin Society for Ornithology members.

Thank you to our newsletter editor Carl Schwartz and regular contributors:

"Rare Birds" – Mark Korducki

"Flight Feathers" – Anita Carpenter

WSO Field Trip Leads and Reports – Tom Schultz and Jeff Baughman

Communication/Outreach – Helen Bolgrien

Design – Elise Bleyl-Ericson



FINANCIAL REPORT

Unrestricted Financials

2025 Income

Unrestricted Donations	\$48,709
Membership Dues	\$49,670
Interest/Dividends	\$15,015
Events	\$11,997
Store	\$1,133
Other Income	\$170
Total	\$126,694

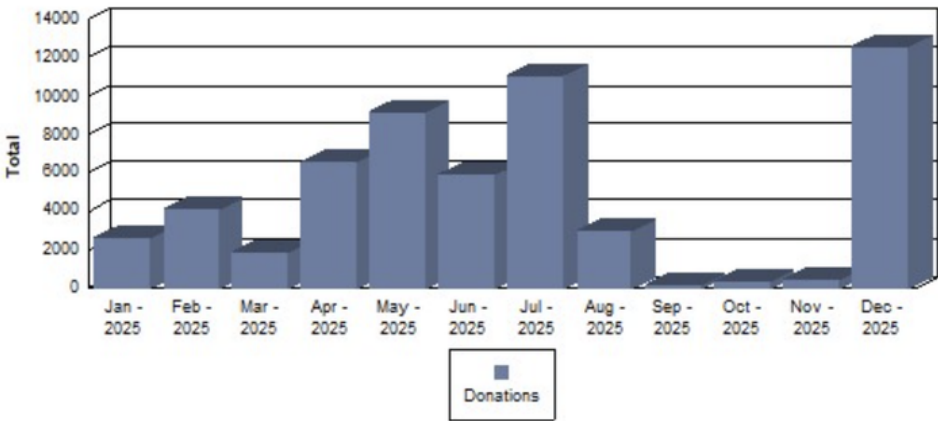
2025 Expenses

Staff	\$76,178
Administration, Financials, Prof Services	\$16,767
Publications	\$26,295
Membership & Fundraising	\$5,987
Programs, Events, Outreach	\$10,117
Strategic Priorities	\$26,000
Conservation Projects	\$10,000
Ornithology Expenses (Grants, Awards)	\$3,420
Store	\$1,411
Other	\$950.00
Total	\$177,125

DONATIONS

Donation
Snapshot
\$72,759

01/01/2025 to 12/30/2025
Donations



WELCOME – STAFF



Elise Bleyl-Ericson is the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Administrative Assistant.

Elise holds a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy from Sam Houston State University (Huntsville, Texas), a Master of Arts in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has a decade of experience in administrative roles.

Elise spent five years studying, researching, and teaching philosophy at UW-Madison. Elise cares deeply about community engagement, education, and conservation efforts.



Alicia King is the Executive Director of Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

Alicia started the position part-time at the end of May in 2025. She recently retired from the USDA Forest Products Laboratory where she was the Director of Communication & Science Delivery.

Prior to moving to Wisconsin, Alicia was the Alaska Region Public Affairs Specialist for Strategic Planning for two years. Before moving to the Alaska Regional office in Juneau, she was the Public Affairs and Partnership Staff Officer for the Chugach National Forest in Anchorage, Alaska for five years.

LOOKING AHEAD – 2026

Grow into the future with us

We look forward to a future in which we continue to enjoy, study, and conserve Wisconsin's birds – together! We hope you can join us for some of the exciting opportunities we have planned in 2026.

