



Newsletter of the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society, Inc.

May 2025

Aldo Leopold Audubon Society
presents

Fishes of the Middle Wisconsin River

A Forty-year Perspective

Justin Sipiorski
speaker

Wednesday
May 21
7 p.m.

In person: Lincoln Center
1519 Water Street, Stevens Point

Zoom: <https://tinyurl.com/ALAS2024May>



Upcoming Events

May 10	ALAS field trip	<i>What's Up on the Bluff?</i>
May 14	ALAS	<i>May board meeting</i>
May 17		<i>World Migratory Bird Day</i>
May 21	ALAS program	<i>Fishes of the Middle Wisconsin River</i>
June 7	ALAS field trip	<i>Kestrel Banding at Buena Vista Grassland</i>
June 14-15	ALAS field trip	<i>Crux Meadow</i>

www.aldoleopoldaudubon.org

UPCOMING EVENTS



ALAS Field Trip *What's Up at the Bluff* Saturday, May 10 9 a.m.

Powers Bluff is a prominent high hill about two miles southwest of Arpin in Wood County. Part of the bluff is in a county park, and about 80 acres of the park have been designated as a State Natural Area. Depending on the weather, we should see hepaticas, spring beauty, trout lilies, bellworts, Dutchman's breeches, or if early May is warm, trilliums, wild geraniums, Solomon-seals,

phlox, anemones, marsh marigolds, etc.

For our field trip to Powers Bluff, meet at the parking lot near the shelter building at Powers Bluff at 9:00 a.m. Bluff Drive, the road to the Park, is one mile south of Cty Hwy N, and runs between Cty Hwys E and T. Powers Bluff is about 2 miles southwest of Arpin and about 2 miles northwest of Vesper. We expect to complete the field trip around noon.

For more information call Bob Freckmann, 715-344-0686

STEVENS POINT WEEKLY BIRD WALK SCHEDULE

Sunday, May 4 - Schmeeckle Reserve at 7:30 AM

May 10/11 - No Walk

Saturday, May 17 - Paper Mill Trail at 7:30 AM

Sunday, May 25 - Paper Mill Trail at 7:30 AM

Saturday, May 31 - Buena Vista Grassland at 9 AM

Saturday, June 8 - Buena Vista Grassland at 9 AM

Walks resume in August

Information for the Crex Meadows trip June 14-15 will be up on the website in the next week.

For specific details and location information, please visit the ALAS website <https://www.aldoleopoldaudubon.org/weeklywalks>

Dates are correct as of press time.
Always be sure to check the ALAS website before you leave!

This marks the end of another year of *the Almanac*.
The editor thanks all those whose contributions
made these newsletters possible!

FISHES OF THE MIDDLE WISCONSIN RIVER: A FORTY-YEAR PERSPECTIVE



Justin Sipiorski grew up in Stevens Point just down the street from UW-Stevens Point. As a child, he and a friend fished as many central Wisconsin waters as they could reach on their bikes—the Wisconsin River most prominently among them. He is a proud product of Stevens Point public schools (including SPASH), where excellent teachers fostered his passion for biology, chemistry, natural resources and the arts. Along the way he benefitted from myriad UWSP outreach programs in STEM and the arts. He received a BS in Fisheries and Biology from UWSP in 1997. He interned in aquaculture at Virginia Tech in 1998. He received an MS in fish stress-physiology from the University of South Dakota in 2000. He finished his Ph.D. in Zoology from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in 2011, where he studied the systematics and biogeography of gars. While a doctoral student, he also illustrated freshwater fishes for the Peterson Guidebook series, completing those illustrations as a curatorial assistant at the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida. He was hired as the ichthyologist and curator of fishes in the UWSP biology department in 2008. With Lynn Markham in the UW-Extension Land Use Office, Justin has recently illustrated a series of children's books focusing on upper Midwestern non-game fishes and freshwater ecology. He curates the Becker Ichthyological collection in the Olson Museum of Natural History. His students sample fishes from current populations, and conduct research including museum specimens, looking for similarities and differences among fish assemblages past and present. He also now teaches introductory waters and fisheries field courses at UWSP's Treehaven Field Station.

Join us for Justin's "Fishes of the Wisconsin River" presentation on Wednesday, May 21 at 7 pm. ALAS programs for the 2024-25 season will continue to be hybrid with the in-person presentation held at the Lincoln Center (1519 Water St., Stevens Point, Wisconsin) and available to view remotely live via Zoom. To view via Zoom, register at <https://tinyurl.com/ALAS2024May> Find this link on our website under the Events-Presentations tab.

*Aldo Leopold Audubon programs and field trips are free and
open to the public.*

DELIGHTFUL BIRDS I HAVE KNOWN

Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*)

Alan Haney



Canada Warbler. Photo by Gerry Janz.

A warbler with a conspicuous black necklace, the Canada Warbler is a true neotropical migrant. Like a favorite vacation spot you visit for a few days or weeks each year, but look forward to getting home, the Canada Warbler seems to prefer its winter range in South America. There, it spends three-quarters of the year. From Guyana to northwestern Bolivia, around the northwestern side of the Andes, Canada Warblers hang out in heavy cover, in understory, shade-grown coffee plantations, or recently disturbed forests that are growing back. Like its closest relatives, Wilson's Warbler, that nests in the taiga, and Hooded Warbler in the Southeast, nowhere is the Canada Warbler very common. Canada's are one of the last of neotropical migrant species to come north, arriving back in Wisconsin in mid- to late May; and, they are one of the first of the neotropical migrants to depart, starting south beginning in late July, peaking in August.

During migration, one might spot a Canada Warbler anywhere in Wisconsin, although they are not common and always will be shy and inclined to remain in good cover. If one can get a good look, their distinctive black necklace on a yellow throat and chest is striking and diagnostic. Both the male and female display the necklace, although the male's is bolder. Their song, sung mostly by the male on a breeding territory, is a chip-note followed by a varied trill. To my ear, the chip-note is easily missed, and the trill is varied enough that the song, like that of redstarts, which often nest in similar habitat, is not very helpful in identifying the bird.

Most Canadas we might see in central Wisconsin head farther north to nest, as far west as the Yukon and east to Nova Scotia. Some nest as far south as New England and around the Great Lakes west to northeastern Minnesota. In Wisconsin, most remain in the northeastern third of the state, but one might be found nesting as far south as the Baraboo Hills or Kettle Moraine. A small outlier population also can be found in Jackson County.

Males stake out territories in mixed broad-leaved and coniferous tree-cover with a good understory of shrubs or small trees, often with a ground-cover of moss. Young forests, becoming established after timber harvests, often dominated by aspen, are commonly used. Canadas also can be found in forested wetlands, especially in the central area of their range. Nearby

water seems to be an attractant. Territories are not large, often no more than a quarter-acre, but they rarely use small forest patches. The male declares his dominion by song, usually sung from the understory or within the canopy. Females typically arrive a few days after males. She chooses a mate, and then gets right to work constructing a nest, always near or on the ground, hidden in moss, ferns, or shrubs. She usually will find a protected spot, created by a hummock, roots, fallen tree, or a stump, and there, over three to five days, she will use grass, roots, leaves, and moss, lined with fine grass, animal hair, or similar material to complete her nest.

A clutch of four or five eggs is developed and incubated by the female for approximately 12 days. During this period, the male continues to remain nearby, but doesn't miss an opportunity to mate with another female. When eggs hatch, he will assist his mate in providing a wide variety of worms, insects, spiders, and caterpillars for the rapidly growing young. Canada Warblers are energetic in their movement through the understory where they collect their food, often leaping into the air to nab a passing fly or moth. They also will hover briefly to glean a spider or ant from a leaf or small branch. It is their frenetic movement that most easily draws one's attention to the species in thick understory.

In about ten days, the young birds are ready to leave the nest and hop around or fly short distances within the understory. The parents continue to provide food as young birds acquire the knowledge they need to forage on their own over three to four weeks. By late July, young Canada Warblers are independent, able to move around easily and find the food to support their continuing development, including mature plumage, which they must have before beginning the long migration to South America, usually through Mexico. Migration is typically at night, and often the Canada Warblers will be in mixed groups with other impatient neotropical migrants, including redstarts and other warblers.

Canada Warblers have suffered greater losses than many species over the past 50 years, with some estimates higher than 60 percent. If the trend continues, the overall population might be reduced by another 50 percent before the end of the century, and extinction is possible. Reasons for their rarity and continuing decline are unclear, and probably the result of a combination of factors, including fragmentation of forests. Cowbird nest parasitism is one factor, but Canada Warblers nest in areas where cowbird populations are lower. Loss of winter habitat is likely, but needs further exploration. Because Canada Warblers use young forests beginning even two or three years after harvest, timber harvesting might be viewed as a positive factor. One threat certainly is increasing wildfire associated with climate change. They prefer at least some conifer component in the habitat, and these forest types are more likely to burn. For all birds, irregular and changing climate events increase mortality and successful nesting. Let's hope this beautiful warbler adapts.

AVIAN KIDS' CORNER

Susan Schuller

World Migratory Bird Day is the perfect time to get outside to enjoy birds. Officially recognized in the Americas on May 10th, World Migratory Bird Day theme in 2025 is "Shared Spaces, Creating Bird-Friendly Cities & Communities." Recognizing this event every year helps raise awareness for the nearly 4,000 migratory bird species that share the world's diverse biomes with us. In Wisconsin alone, over 400 species of birds can be found, many of these birds are migratory. Getting out to bird watch in May is a perfect time to see a great diversity of birds. Here is a Bird Behavior Bingo Card to take on your next bird adventure.

BIRD BEHAVIOR BINGO

Singing or calling	Bathing	On or building a nest	Soaring	Group of birds perched together
Swimming	Hovering in mid-air	Walking or hopping on the ground	Diving in the water	Hanging upside-down from a branch
Feeding	Flying with twigs or grasses	FREE SPACE	Climbing on a trunk or branch	Chiseling into the side of a tree
Group of small birds chasing a large bird	Wading in the water	Flock of birds	Flying	Chick following adult bird
Standing on the ground	Preening	Perched on a wire or fence	Flying with a worm or insect	Perched on a limb or branch

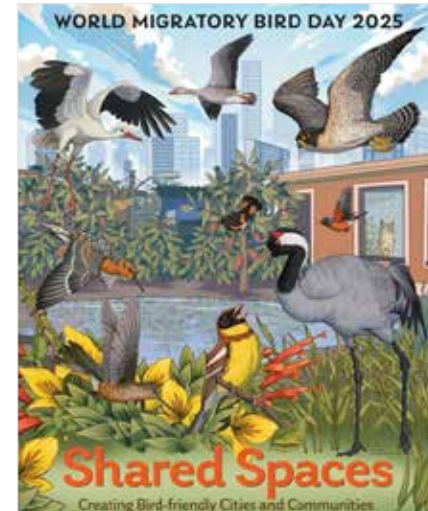
JUNIOR AUDUBON BANDING BIRDS IS BACK!

Let's celebrate World Migratory Bird Day together! Get into the field and learn about our birds. Bird-banding offers a great opportunity to get close to birds and learn about the diversity of species right in our backyard. This event is free but space is limited each hour. Sign-up is now posted online.

www.aldoleopoldaubudon.org/junior-audubon



7 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SHARE OUR SPACES WITH AVIAN FRIENDS



1. Plant Native Plants
2. Turn Off Bright Lights or Direct Them Downward at Night.
3. Avoid Pesticides
4. Combat Collisions to Windows.
5. Prevent Plastic Pollution
6. Keep Cats Indoors
7. Drink Shade-grown, Bird Friendly Coffee.
8. Form more activities and ideas to celebration World Migratory Bird Day, visit www.migratorybirdday.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT

SWAN SONG

Karen Dostal

One of my very early childhood memories of Tundra Swans during migration is a moment of terror. It must have been a mild spring evening as my sisters and I were playing outside after dark. Toys, bikes, the red wagon and other toys were scattered on the driveway. We must have heard the flock first, that lone-some-sounding call, then we saw this massive delta-shaped object, white and moving slowly across the night sky. We screamed and ran for the house. Such a sight was completely unfamiliar to us, young as we were. Don't worry, Mom and Dad greeted us at the door befuddled though by our terror. Somehow, by the time we made it to the door I figured it out and told them, "It's ok. Swans!"



Tundra Swans. Photo by Gerry Janz.

Our family went back outside, looked up, and then together experienced the wonder of these hundreds of swans moving north. Upon reflection all these years later, there was something eerie about the way the city lights reflected on their white feathers, and maybe it was how low they were flying perhaps heading to the river.

A swan song also represents the conclusion of an endeavor. This is my last article to our members as the president of ALAS. My term has expired. So, I also find myself reflecting back on the past four years of leadership with ALAS. We had all of our board and program meetings over Zoom as the Covid epidemic was still our overwhelming reality at the start of my tenure. We were pretty jazzed to finally meet in person at the May meeting! They say that time flies, but that seems like a long while ago now. There is so much that goes into running an organization like ALAS. My fellow board members have been wonderful to work with. I truly appreciate each person's contributions. We have accomplished so much! I plan to take on a different position with ALAS. I feel there is still so much that I can contribute to this organization. It has been an honor for me to work with all of the people in this organization past and present where all our efforts literally, are for the birds.

SUBCOMMITTEE FORMED TO DISCUSS CHAPTER NAME

The first meeting of the special subcommittee formed to examine our chapter name met on April 17 at the Starry Night Café in Stevens Point. Members of this committee are C. Scott Ahern, Brad Branwell, Bob Freckmann (replacing Nancy Stevenson), Susan Schuller, Janet Smith, and Sarah Wood.

The group shared their process of their own self-study leading up to this issue. The group shared information and texts they are reading or have read. This includes the following books:

- *John James Audubon*, John Burroughs, re-released in 1987.
- *The Birds Audubon Missed*, Kenn Kaufman – The book takes the reader through a study on the early years of ornithology, how birds got named by early Europeans, and segments of Audubon's life that contributed to what we know today.
- *John James Audubon - The Making of an American*, Richard Rhodes
- *Under a Wild Sky and the Making of the Birds of the Sky*, William Souder

We hosted a presentation by Matt Reetz, Executive Director of the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance. Matt shared some history on John James Audubon and how Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance, formerly Madison Audubon, reached the decision to change their chapter name. The presentation was recorded and is available online at https://youtu.be/l_NIR7PGKEM

We encourage all members to join us in this deeper dive into the readings, books, and study of this environmental issue related to our chapter.

We will continue to update our webpage to keep you informed of the upcoming information-gathering process that will take place over the summer. We plan to meet monthly. Please remain patient with this group as we formulate the process of information-gathering and critical conversations with members, non-members, and founders of our organization.

BUENA VISTA FIELD TRIP REPORT

Rob Pendergast

On Sunday, April 27, around a dozen folks gathered to explore Buena Vista Grassland. The weather was on the colder side and overcast, but we were still able to see quite a few good birds. Several Greater Prairie-chickens were still lekking and another distant, small flock in another location. The wet areas in the grassland yielded Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Trumpeter Swan, and both Blue and Green-winged Teal. Other grassland highlights were typical of late April: Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird and Clay-colored Sparrow. A Wilson's Snipe put on a show doing the flight display oddly late into the morning.

ALAS ELECTIONS 2025-2026

The nominating committee (Willow Pingel, Scott Reilly) of the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society presents the following slate of officers and members of the Board of Directors for 2025-2026. Officers serving two terms and Board members serving one-year term will be elected by members present at the May annual meeting, May 21 at Lincoln Center.

Officers:

President – Susan Schuller Vice President – Brad Branwell-Zinda
Secretary – Willow Pingel Treasurer – Janet Smith

Board of Directors:

Brad Baum, Bob Lane, Anthony Martynski, Rob Pendergast, Joe Schultz, Jan Seiler, Karen Dostal, Sarah Wood, Scott Reilly, Emily Ritter, Lora Hagen

Committee Chairs are appointed by the President, approved by the Board of Directors, and have full voting rights.

Bird Seed Sale: Midge and Steve Hall Education: Bob Lane
Conservation: Rob Pendergast Field Trips: Brad Baum
Membership: Janet Smith Publicity: Brad Branwell-Zinda
Programs: Bob Lane Newsletter: Lora Hagen
Website: Anthony Martynski
Christmas Bird Count: Gerry Janz & Karen Dostal

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE 2025 ALAS BIRD SEED SALE!

The bird seed-sale coordinators (Steve and Midge Hall) will be working this summer with Jay-Mar to create the list and prices for the 2025 bird seed sale and verifying the use of the parking lot with the Pineries Bank. Based on your feedback, we plan to include 25-lb bags of safflower seeds and black-oil sunflower seeds as well as the standard 50-lb bags. If you have other requests or suggestions, please email them to us at alasbirdseedsale@gmail.com or call Midge (937-608-0865) or Steve (937-608-0864).

Starting on September 1, go to ALAS website to find links to the 2025 order form and to the online shop, which will remain open until September 30. You will also receive an order form along with the September ALAS newsletter that can be mailed to ALAS bird seed sale, c/o Steve and Midge Hall, 3188 Dans Dr., Stevens Point 54481. Please make sure you mail your order in time for it to arrive by September 30. Both online and mailed orders will be available for pickup on the third Friday (2:30-5:30 pm) and Saturday (10:00 am -1:00 pm) of October, in the parking lot of the Pineries Bank.

Updates to this information will be noted on the ALAS website and in the September ALAS newsletter.

ALDO LEOPOLD AUDUBON SOCIETY

OFFICERS

President
Karen Dostal 715-592-4706
Vice-President
Susan Schuller 715-340-4877
Secretary
Willow Pingel 715-387-1398
Treasurer
Jan Seiler 715-344-0168

Conservation
Ned Grossnickle 715-693-6095
Education
Bob Lane 715-824-3978
Field Trips
Brad Baum 715-347-4750
Membership
Janet Smith 715-630-6951
Newsletter
Lora Hagen

Susan Schwartz 715-216-0205

EMERITUS DIRECTORS
Bob Freckmann 715-344-0686
Anne Graham 715-344-0968
Larry Graham 715-344-0968
Alan Haney 715-592-6949
Bob Juracka 715-824-5339
John Munson 715-341-1208
Nancy Stevenson 715-341-0084
Jen Zach 715-252-8903

COMMITTEE CHAIRS & DIRECTORS

Bird Seed Sale
Midge & Steve Hall 937-608-0864
Christmas Bird Count
Gerald Janz
Karen Dostal 715-592-4706

Programs
Bob Lane 715-824-3978
Joe Schultz 715-341-5521
Publicity
Brad Branwell 715-570-9587
Website
Rob Pendergast 715-498-4885
Scott Reilly
Anthony Martynski 920-544-3182

Your dues support local chapter activities and environmental projects exclusively in Central Wisconsin. You will receive *The Almanac* newsletter and invitations to ALAS programs, field trips, and educational events. ALAS will notify you when your annual membership is due.

- ☐ \$25/year Supporter Local Chapter Membership. **Local membership expiration date**
- ☐ \$50/year Sustainer Local Chapter Membership. **is on the back cover!**
- ☐ **I'll help conserve resources, protect the environment, and save postage!**
Please send my newsletter via email.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Join/renew online:

Go to our secure website and click on "Ways to Give"

www.aldoleopoldaudubon.org



Join/renew by mail:

Please make check payable to:

Aldo Leopold Audubon Society

Mail this form and check to:

Aldo Leopold Audubon Society Membership

PO Box 928

Stevens Point WI 54481-0928

MORE WAYS TO GIVE

We appreciate your additional donations supporting the work of ALAS.

- ☐ \$_____ ALAS Endowment Fund.
Managed by the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin.
- ☐ \$_____ ALAS Chapter Operations Fund.

ALAS will not distribute your contact information to any other organization.

ALAS and the Community Foundation are 501(c)(3) organizations.

Your donation will be tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Please remember ALAS in your estate planning!

Aldo Leopold Audubon Society
P.O. Box 928
Stevens Point WI 54481-0928

In this issue: Wisconsin Fishes
Canada Warbler
Avian Kids' Corner
ALAS Elections!
...and more



the almanac

The mission of the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society is to foster appreciation and concern for all living things, and to protect and preserve their ecosystems.