



Newsletter of the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society, Inc.

March 2025

Aldo Leopold Audubon Society  
*presents*

# **Saving Our Songbirds Together**

## ***Three Ways You Can Help***

**Lisa Gaumnitz**  
*speaker*

**Wednesday**  
**Mar 19**  
**7 p.m.**

**In person: Lincoln Center**  
**1519 Water Street, Stevens Point**

**Zoom:** <https://tinyurl.com/ALAS2025Feb>



### Upcoming Events

|        |                  |                                                        |
|--------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Mar 3  | Wausau Bird Club | <i>Yellowstone Raptors...and More!</i>                 |
| Mar 12 | Birds & Beyond   | <i>Christian Cooper: Birds and People</i> zoom or live |
| Mar 13 | ALAS             | <i>March board meeting</i> <b>DATE CHANGE</b>          |
| Mar 19 | ALAS             | <i>Zen-wind Curtain Workshop</i>                       |
| Mar 22 | ALAS             | <i>Stevens Point bird walks</i> resume                 |
| Apr 16 | ALAS program     | <i>What's All the Buzz?</i>                            |

[www.aldoleopoldaubon.org](http://www.aldoleopoldaubon.org)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### WAUSAU BIRD CLUB MARCH PROGRAM

Monday, March 3 6:30 p.m.

Wausau Bird Club wants to invite you to our next meeting.

Steve and Evie Fisher will present a program entitled *Yellowstone Raptors...and More!* highlighting his beautiful photography.

The Fishers are very familiar with all sorts of raptors. They do a Golden Eagle survey for the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, MN.

Steve was an educator for REGI and was trained to handle raptors and he presented programs with the birds. They continue their work with REGI by rescuing injured birds and taking them in for care.

WHERE: Universalist Unitarian

504 S Grant Street, Wausau

Enter the building through the doors on the east side from the parking lot.

### CHRISTIAN COOPER: BIRDS AND PEOPLE ZOOM AND LIVE, MADISON

Mar 12, 2025, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

<https://www.overture.org/tickets-events/2024-25-season/birds-and-people-with-christian-cooper/>

### ALAS Workshop

*Save Our Songbirds and Make your own Zen-wind Curtains*

Mar 19, 2025, 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

before the March program

Lincoln Center, 1519 Water St, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Interested in making your windows more bird friendly? Learn how to make your windows safer for birds! The workshop is free, and all materials will be provided for attendees. *Please sign up beforehand if you plan to attend.*

Preparation info: Beforehand, identify the window with the highest chance of causing bird collisions in your home. Take length and height measurements of this window and send that information when you RSVP for the event or send an email to [aldo.leopold.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:aldo.leopold.audubon@gmail.com). This will help us provide adequate supplies for the workshop.

Can't attend the workshop? <https://www.birdsavers.com/using-paracord/>

### 2025 CRANE COUNT ON SATURDAY, APRIL 12

Each year in mid-April, over 2,000 volunteers travel to their local wetlands and favorite birding locations to participate in the crane count. This annual survey of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes spans over 150 counties in seven

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## SAVING OUR SONGBIRDS TOGETHER



For 25 years, Lisa Gaumnitz wrote about nature for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and helped reporters do the same. Her appreciation for birds and concern over their decline grew during the pandemic as she spent more time watching birds outside her home-office window. Now retired from the DNR, Lisa coordinates the SOS Save Our Songbirds action campaign, an initiative of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Partnership. Major bird and nature conservation organizations launched SOS Save Our Songbirds in March 2023 to raise awareness of birds' dire situation and spur action at home. By providing basic Wisconsin-tailored information, hands-on events, discounts, and supplies, SOS is helping people make small changes at home to give birds the habitat they need year-round and reduce window threats. Together, they're saving Wisconsin songbirds one yard, one window, and one cup of coffee at a time! In addition to Lisa's presentation, she will be giving away free native plant guides, free bird-friendly coffee sample packs, and will have Feather Friendly boxes available that people can take away for a small donation.

Join us for Lisa's presentation on Wednesday, March 19 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/ALAS2025March> Find this link on our website under the Events-Presentations tab.

If Stevens Point Public Schools are cancelled, so are ALAS programs.

Check the ALAS website for rescheduling.

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

Dates are correct as of press time.

Always be sure to check the ALAS website before you leave!

## DELIGHTFUL BIRDS I HAVE KNOWN

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*)

Alan Haney



Wilson's Snipe.

Photo by Gerry Janz.

My grandfather enjoyed a good prank. As my male cousins and I became old enough to spend evening hours playing outside until well after dark, we were introduced by Grandad to a snipe hunt. This prank originated in rural America in the mid-nineteenth century. Novices were told that the mysterious

snipe could be snared in an open bag if one were patient enough and didn't mind sitting in the dark on the edge of a marsh or creek without movement. The lucky person offered the "privilege" of holding the bag, of course, was the novice. The others would "traipse off into the surrounding woods to round up and move the snipe to the waiting bag-holder," who was instructed to remain very still until the elusive snipe entered the bag, when he should close it quickly and bring it to the house. Of course, as the novice sat patiently waiting in the dark, the rest of the group would be enjoying a good laugh, and perhaps some popcorn and hot chocolate back at the house.

Anyone who has ever happened onto a snipe knows that they sit tight, usually in good cover, relying on their excellent cryptic plumage to hide them until pressed too closely, at which time they explode from the ground, uttering their hard *scaipe* call, and zigzagging off at high speed. The idea they might be driven along the ground like a stray sheep and into a bag is, of course, preposterous. Young boys wishing to become heroes, however, know little about Wilson's Snipe, and many of my generation have spent a lonely hour or two in the dark, thus the expression, "left holding the bag."

The preferred habitat of Wilson's Snipe is a wetland, not too overgrown with tall emergent vegetation, but with sedges, or willow or alder shrubs, and similar vegetation enough to provide good cover. Stream or lake edges, even pastureland around water, may be used. Snipe use their remarkably long bills with a sensitive tip to probe damp soil and shallow water for insects, worms, crustaceans, snails, even small invertebrates such as frogs or fish. They can ingest small food items without taking their bills from the soil. They tend to remain inactive during daylight hours, preferring the twilight periods of dawn and dusk, or darkness.

Wilson's Snipe are moderate- to long-distance migrants. Breeding populations are found from Alaska to the Canadian Maritime Provinces

south of the Arctic coastal plain, and through the northern tier of U.S. states. They occur year-round in the Pacific Northwest. Beginning in late August, and continuing into late October, snipe move south to overwinter anywhere from the mid-Atlantic states and the Ohio River Valley, central states, and California through Central America to Venezuela, seeking wetland habitat with cover where they can obtain food. Males return north, reaching southern Wisconsin in late March, with peak migration the last week of April.

Should you get a chance to see a Wilson's Snipe, its long beak and squat appearance will jump out. It is the large breast muscles that give them the squatty shape, but they provide the birds with great flying ability. During migration, or if flushed from cover, they can fly over 60 mph, as fast as the fastest duck, the Green-winged Teal.

It is the return of the male Wilson's Snipe when this species is most easily observed, or, at least, heard. Similar to their cousin, the woodcock, male snipe fly into the air over their selected wetland habitat, and dive toward earth. The wind passing through their expanded outer tail feathers makes a distinct "winnowing" sound that, to me, sounds like a rapid *whu-whu-whu-whu-whu...*, with a rising pitch as he approaches the ground. The sound has been likened to the call of a screech or boreal owl. This can be heard from a quarter-mile away on a quiet evening. It is intended to attract the attention of a potential mate, and warn other males that the territory is taken. Winnowing may continue off and on through the day and much of the night for many days, or until a female is attracted. Especially, if a female arrives and shows interest, he, or both, may utter some vocalizations, described as a sharp *jick* or a softer *chip-per*.

If the courtship is successful, the female will choose a spot and make a shallow scrape, or more often, several shallow scrapes. As she does, the male follows her closely to ensure his lineage is not compromised. Scrapes are typically hidden in vegetation, often under an overhanging shrub, sometimes on an emergent hummock in shallow water. Choosing one scrape, she lines it with coarse grass and within the large cup adds finer grass to complete the nest. Her clutch is two to four eggs, laid over as many days. She begins incubating only after the last egg is laid so that they hatch, more or less synchronously, in 18 to 20 days. Like many other sandpipers, to which they are distantly related, either or both parents may feign injury to draw potential predators away from the nest. Chicks grow remarkably rapidly. They leave the nest within a few days and begin probing for their own food. They can fly a short distance within two weeks, and reach adult size within three to four weeks.

Wilson's Snipe are considered a game species. In the last decade or so, an estimated 93,000 were shot each year, down from a greater number in earlier years. Hunting, however, is not considered a threat to the

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## AVIAN KIDS' CORNER

Susan Schuller

Last month, *Avian Kids' Corner* talked about stratification, the process needed by many native seeds to germinate. This cold-snap period “ignites” the germination process in spring. We mimic this process by starting seeds indoors, so they are ready to plant soon after the ground warms up mid- to late spring. This month, we will prepare seeds in a “nursery tray.” We create a nice comfortable space, full of nutrients, to help the seeds “wake up” and grow.

Starting your own native plants indoors allows you to get a head start on adding native plants to your yard in a more affordable manner than purchasing already grown plugs. A “plug” is a plant already mature enough to plant and grow on its own. Plugs have more success rate against competing seeds and will often bloom within weeks or months of planting. You will have more growing success when planting plugs in your yard as opposed to throwing seed down and hoping they will grow. So, for yards in town and smaller areas, this is the preferred method. Starting the process indoors allows you to know exactly which seeds will germinate, not wasting time or space on seeds that simply don't germinate or get outcompeted too quickly by weeds and other plants.

We will continue using Butterfly Weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, as an example for how to start your native seeds inside. There are two common ways to start seeds. Using a single “nursery tray” spreading seeds out then transferring seeds later to individual cups. (That is my preferred method.) Or plant seeds directly into prepared cups by sowing 1-2 seeds per cup. If your selected 1-2 seeds do not germinate, you will have an unsuccessful plug or cup. You can plant more than 1-2 seeds, but overcrowding in a cup can happen, requiring you to remove or transfer a plant after it sprouts. By using method one, it assures you only place germinated seeds in your plug or cup containers later. Let's get started.

### MATERIALS:

- Planting Trays (It is preferable to allow some drainage, so nest a tray with holes over a tray without holes to capture water without soaking seeds too much. This can be done by purchasing nested trays at the garden center, or make your own at home with plastic containers you collect in your recycling.)
- Potting Mix (It is important that you look for potting mix that will have added nutrients needed by young seeds and seedlings to grow. Purchased compost or top soil doesn't have these additive nutrients

that greatly aid in starting seeds.)

- Labels
- Water
- Sunlight Access to a south facing window is ideal.
- Fluorescent Lighting Little significant difference has been found with using “grow lights.” Save the money and just use fluorescent lighting.
- Clear cover to hold heat in over the soil (optional)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Gather your materials and seeds that you had stratifying in the refrigerator.
2. Prepare the nursery tray by spreading Potting Mix in a layer about 1-2”.
3. Spread the seeds over the Potting Mix. Lightly cover them or mix them into the top layer of soil. For most native plant seeds, they do not need to be planted deeply.
4. Using a water bottle or spray nozzle from your kitchen sink, lightly water the seeds until moist throughout the potting mix, but not soaking.
5. If you are using a clear cover, place that on top of the tray.
6. Set your nursery tray by the window or under fluorescent lights. I recommend 12-14 hours of light a day.
7. Keep your plants watered to a moist but not soaking level.
8. Then wait. Your seeds are going through germination! Some seeds will germinate within the first week, some take 2-3 weeks. Be patient.



### Feathered Friend's Book Recommend:



*What's Inside a Flower?* (2021) by Rachel Ignotofsky.

From the creator of the New York Times bestseller *Women in Science*, comes a new nonfiction picture book series ready to grow young scientists by nurturing their curiosity about the natural world--starting with what's inside a flower. Budding backyard scientists can start exploring their world with this stunning introduction to these flowery show-stoppers--from seeds to roots to blooms. Learning how flowers grow gives kids beautiful building blocks of science and inquiry. In the launch of a new nonfiction picture book series, Rachel Ignotofsky's distinctive art style and engaging, informative text clearly answers any questions a child (or adult) could have about flowers.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Karen Dostal*

I saw a Magnolia Warbler recently. I wasn't here at home though. I recognized the song and then found it on the blossoms of a palm tree. Of course, my mind traveled back to times when this tiny beauty visits my backyard. As the time for spring migration approaches, it seems a good opportunity to think about what we all can do to provide safe passage for the birds we admire!

### HOW TO CREATE A BIRD-SAFE BACKYARD

- ***Eliminate Rodenticides:*** Birds of prey (hawks, owls, eagles) often consume poisoned rodents, leading to internal bleeding, organ failure, and death. Studies show that rodenticide exposure is contributing to declines in raptor populations. Instead of using poisons, try snap traps, electronic traps, or integrated pest management like owl boxes, and non-toxic rodent control methods.
- ***Make Windows Bird-Safe:*** If a bird has collided with your home, you are not alone as up to 1 billion birds die each year following window collisions in the United States. The good news is that you can install window decals like ABC Tape, Zen-wind curtains, external screens, or bird-safe glass to reduce collisions. Each one of these are effective solutions to prevent future collisions. These products are easy to install, but if you think you need help, we recommended calling your local handyman, house painter, or window washer—every product will be a quick job for them.
- ***Provide Native Plants:*** If you have been thinking about adding more native plants to your landscape, March is a great month to make plans and shop for sources of native plants. Native flowers, shrubs, and trees attract local birds and support healthy ecosystems.
- ***Offer Water and Food Sources:*** Birdbaths, feeders, and clean water sources help sustain bird populations.
- ***Keep Cats Indoors:*** Domestic cats are a major threat to backyard birds, so keeping them inside helps protect local bird species. Across the globe, cats have been introduced into new habitats by people with terrible results. Outdoors, cats are a non-native and invasive species that threaten birds and other wildlife, disrupt ecosystems, and spread diseases. Now numbering well over 100 million in the United States, cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year in the U.S. alone, making cat predation by far the largest source of direct, human-caused mortality of birds.

To learn more on this topic please join us on March 19, when Lisa Gaumnitz will bring a whole host of solutions and suggestions to us in her program!

Also, check out the Zen window-curtain workshop in Upcoming Events!

## ALAS SEEKS VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE ON A SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE

The ALAS Board is forming a special sub-committee to examine and gather feedback from the membership about including “Audubon” in our chapter’s name. We seek volunteers to serve on this committee April-September this year. The nomination form can be found online at [www.aldoeopoldaudubon.org/subcommittee](http://www.aldoeopoldaudubon.org/subcommittee)

### WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

National Audubon Society did a thorough examination into the association with John James Audubon. While there can be no doubt of the impact of his life’s work and passion for birds, he was also an enslaver, whose racism and harmful attitudes toward Black and Indigenous people are now well understood. Today, more than 100 years later, we are called to re-examine John James Audubon’s legacy through a different lens. In the end, National Audubon Society decided to retain the name for now. At the same time, their process resulted into a deeper commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, Belonging. And as a result, National has committed \$25 million dollars to fund the expansion of this work over the next five years. They also allow other chapters to take on the same or similar process.

In January 2024, at a board retreat we discussed this idea. Of the twelve board members who responded to the survey or were present for discussion, nine felt we should examine this issue. We put out our commitment statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion. That was published in the April 2024 newsletter and is available online. Board members have identified over twenty chapters around the country that have examined this issue, and a resulting name change. At the same time, some chapters opted to keep the Audubon name in their chapter after exploring the issue.

ALAS will be starting the process to examine this issue and solicit feedback from its members in 2025.

### THE PROCESS WILL BE THIS:

**FEBRUARY:** Solicitation for nominations to serve on the special subcommittee was announced. Are you interested in serving? Visit our website at [www.aldoeopoldaudubon.org/subcommittee](http://www.aldoeopoldaudubon.org/subcommittee) or go to the online nomination form directly at <https://forms.gle/9YpRE56HkQAzE87A9>

**MARCH:** The ALAS Board of Directors will review and select subcommittee members at their board meeting on March 13.

**APRIL-AUGUST:** This subcommittee will meet, examine the issue more deeply, gather information, and conduct listening sessions.

**SEPTEMBER:** This subcommittee will share their recommendations to the Board of Directors.

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As the winter recedes and thoughts of spring returns, ALAS is looking for interest from our membership to join the ALAS Board. Membership is voluntary, and the board meets monthly September-May, except December (usually the second Wednesday at Schmeeckle) to discuss the direction of the organization, plan trips and speakers, engage with other area conservation groups, and strengthen our birding community here in Central Wisconsin.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining the Board as a member reach out to Scott Reilly or Willow Pingel. At the May 21 program, we will hold elections for all those who wish to run for a leadership position.

Happy Birding!

Scott scottjreilly@gmail.com 920-636-6299

Willow willowp@hotmail.com 608-387-1398

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states of the upper Midwest, including Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Minnesota.

Contact the International Crane Foundation's Crane Count Coordinator at [cranecount@savingcranes.org](mailto:cranecount@savingcranes.org) 608-356-9462.

#### STEVENS POINT WEEKLY BIRD WALK SCHEDULE

Weekly walks will resume March 22.

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

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population of this very widely distributed sandpiper, in part because they present challenging targets. What is more likely to threaten them is climate change. With less regular, but more extreme precipitation and drought events, wetlands may become flooded or dry more irregularly, reducing nesting success. With protection of wetlands and migratory birds, let's hope our children and grandchildren might have the opportunity to sit near a wetland and hear the winnowing of a snipe, perhaps while holding a bag.

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Despite what the result will be about the chapter name, our mission will remain focused and dedicated to bird conservation. If you have questions, please email [aldoleopoldaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:aldoleopoldaudubon@gmail.com)

#### 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

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Scott Reilly  
Anthony Martynski 920-544-3182

Susan Schwartz 715-216-0205  
**EMERITUS DIRECTORS**  
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Anne Graham 715-344-0968  
Larry Graham 715-344-0968  
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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](https://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: Songbirds  
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...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.*