



Madeline Island

Wilderness Preserve News

Summer 2020

“WHAT BINDS US IN COMMON PURPOSE”

By Steve Mueller, President

I have had the privilege of being elected as the new president of this great organization for the next three years. My wife, Cynthia, and I have a home on the North End and we look forward to spending a good part of the year on the Island. During my 10 years on the board, I have been impressed with the energy and commitment of the board members and our membership, so I look forward to leading us into the new decade.

On behalf of the Board, I want to offer a big thank you to the outgoing president, Fred Koerschner, who has led the organization with abundant enthusiasm and skilled leadership since 2017.

As I write, it is clear that the year 2020 is going to be one of challenges for the world, the nation and our island community. The COVID-19 virus has made us reevaluate what is important in our lives and recognize what binds us in common purpose.

The Wilderness Preserve is part of the Madeline Island community, and plays an important role in the island’s identity, by preserving a large portion of the island in its natural state. It is a commitment that was made by the founding members of this organization and one that the current board and our membership carry forward. This is a special place!

We are a land trust that encompasses lands only on Madeline Island, but we are an extension of the sanctuary provided by the 50 years old Apostle Island National Lakeshore, and the many other protected areas of the Bayfield Peninsula. All of this beauty is embedded in the clean waters of our Lake Superior

Education to promote conservation Our education programs promoting conservation concepts and practices are among the most important contributions we make each year to our island community. This year, because of the coronavirus and with respect for Islanders and sadness, we need to cancel our May and June lectures and hikes – including our treasured annual meeting and spring reception. Please check our website, www.miwp.org, for updates on the status of all summer events, and any changes we might need to make.

Combating invasive species Many of you are familiar with our history of combating invasive species. Starting in 2019, we focused on controlling buckthorn and barberry through mapping, foliar spraying and additional removal. Our strategy tackles the perimeter of the invasion and moves inward to address heavier infestations. Our efforts seem to be working.

(President’s letter, continued on page 2)



We will adjust our strategy each upcoming year based on the data that we gather and we are committed to continue this strategy as long as results trend in a positive direction. These efforts have been supported with Wilderness Preserve funds and several generous donations.

Trails - pathways to the heart Our miles of trails provide pathways to the heart of our more than 2600 acres, containing a variety of ecosystems from the towering Eastern Hemlock groves to the gracious sedge meadows, all home to a multitude of plants and animals. We are committed to maintaining our beautiful trails for year-round enjoyment of Island residents and visitors who love to hike, hunt in the fall, snowshoe, and ski. We hope you will put on a pair of boots, grab some skis, or put some binoculars up to your eyes and enjoy the abundance our lands have to offer.

Our work continues and we continue to invite your contributions to keep it going. Please know I look forward to getting to know you and to inviting your

further support of the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve so, together, we can preserve and enjoy our very special Island's lands well into the future.

On behalf of the Board, please stay safe as you shelter at home.

With my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to work with you, *Steve Mueller, Board President*

E-MAIL IN THE TIME OF COVID

We desperately need your current email addresses to keep you updated on MIWP events and schedules as well as for future communications.

Please send to: info@miwp.org

We will never share our membership information with any other organization or group ... Promise!

MADELINE'S BIRDS

By *Victoria Erhart*

It was heartbreaking. If you love and watch birds, a 2019 Science article reporting a decrease of 3 billion North American birds since 1970 was not so much a surprise as a confirmation of your worst fears. I've been a regular birder for over thirty years, and every spring in recent years have seen a lot of communal commiseration over the lack of birds, warblers in particular. I have a message from Tom George, former executive director of Madeline Island Chamber Music and a warbler aficionado: "I want to cry when I see the loss of three billion birds since 1970. But we've observed this over the years, haven't we?". Yes we have, but seeing a label like three billion applied to a general sense of unease is devastating.

Birders have always loved to count birds. "Decline of the North American Avifauna" (Science, Oct 2019) took advantage of this fact and examined standardized bird-monitoring records for North American breeding species over the last fifty years, finding steep declines in populations across a wide variety of birds, common as well as rare. A different approach, looking at weather-radar networks that incidentally provide an estimate of the biomass of migrating birds, confirmed these results. The apparent total loss was huge, almost one third of the measured 1970 bird population

If you look further, certain groups of birds are maintaining their numbers better or worse than others. Grassland birds, like meadowlarks, bobolinks, and clay-colored sparrows, fare the worst, with a population decrease of about 50%, almost certainly due to habitat loss and probably to new pesticides like neonicotinoids which impede the weight gain necessary for migration. Boreal forest birds, ones we see in Madeline, like warblers, kinglets, and thrushes, have the second largest drop, about 33%.



Waterfowl as a group are increasing, hopefully because of the robust conservation measures on their behalf. The apparent increase in bald eagles and other raptors, while true numerically, probably reflects how poorly they were doing fifty years ago due to DDT and not how well they are doing now. And then there are the mysteries. Vireos and warblers, both of which are neotropical migrants (birds that breed in the US or Canada, and overwinter in Central America and the Caribbean) and which share similar habitats, have opposite trajectories. Warbler population has plummeted by 617 million but vireos have increased by 89 million over the same time period. What are vireos doing that warblers are not?

We should also ask how Wisconsin birds are doing. A multi-year project of the Wisconsin DNR, the Breeding Bird Atlas, looks at all aspects of bird ecology. It is an ongoing field inventory of location, species, and abundance of all the nesting birds in all the counties in Wisconsin, a huge project. Breeding Bird Atlas I was completed between 1995-2000. A second iteration twenty years later, Breeding Bird Atlas II collected data from 2015-2019 and will be published some time in 2021. Comparisons between the two, for better or worse, will tell a story.

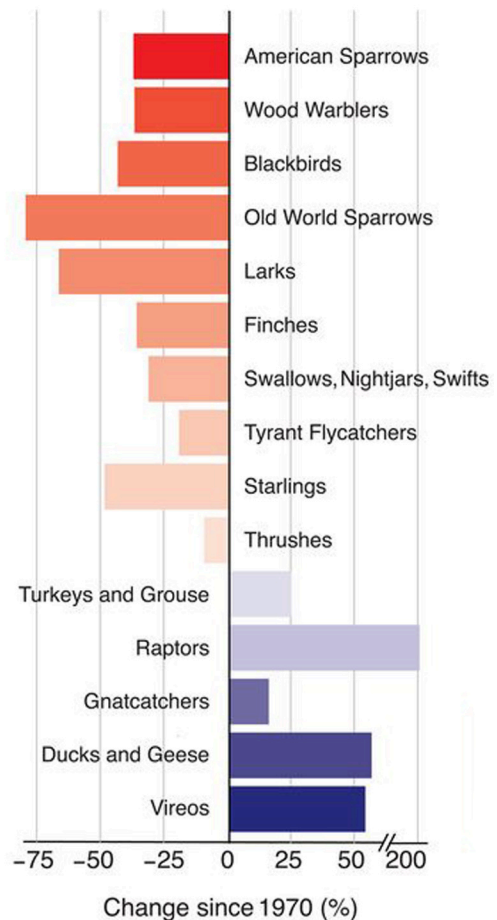
Anecdotally it sounds like Wisconsin is mirroring the rest of the country in the loss of grassland birds as well as birds that take insects from the air, like nighthawks and swallows. As in the rest of the country, waterfowl and woodpeckers are doing well. Forest bird species in Wisconsin are the one standout; they may be declining at a slower rate here than elsewhere, although it isn't exactly clear how loudly we should be celebrating. In a changing climate, cold-loving species (evening grosbeaks, crossbills) are moving out and more southerly birds (Mississippi kites, yellow-throated warblers) are moving in. More will become clear in 2021.

Because birds are easy to observe and count, and because they are sensitive to habitat changes, they are, to use a really bad metaphor, kind of the canary in the coal mine for the rest of us. And so, even though none of the studies we have talked about are powered to look at causes, we can take a guess. Habitat loss on nesting grounds, at wintering areas, and in resting places on migration (imagine what would happen to Sandhill cranes if the Platte river disappeared?). Habitat degradation and invasive species. Pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids. Window strikes, which kill between 600 million and 1 billion birds per year. Outdoor and feral cats, which kill over a billion birds per year. And, of course, climate change. Audubon estimates that if the temperature rises 3 degrees C, two thirds of North American birds will be at risk for extinction. Climate

change is way more than I can tackle here, but Audubon has an excellent webpage devoted to birds and climate change in the state of Wisconsin that you should take a look at:

<https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees/state/us/wi>

Birds have a role in agriculture, with pest control, pollination and seed dispersal, and in economic development (birders spend money). But most of all they inspire wonder. Migration is a wonder, flight is a wonder, and some birds (some would say all birds) are wonderfully beautiful. As sensitive as birds are to habitat, almost anything that we can do to improve our environment will improve their lives and survival. So go ahead and donate to conservation organizations, plant native plants grown without neonicotinoids, research bird-friendly window coverings, never use pesticides, fight the rollback of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, participate in eBird, keep your cat indoors, remove invasive species, and do all of the hundreds of other things you do for the health of our planet. We have a lot to lose.



From: Rosenberg et al., *Decline of the North American avifauna*, Science 366, 120–124 (2019)

SUMMER 2020 PROGRAMS

Programs subject to cancellation because of Covid-19; Please consult the MIWP Website for updates

Saturday, May 23rd, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. *Annual MIWP Spring Bird Hike* Victoria Erhart, MIWP board member, and Peter Hudleston, Professor of Geology, University of Minnesota, will lead a hike for beginners and experts alike. Bring binoculars and wear good waterproof footgear. Big Bay State Park. Meet in the parking lot beyond the main entrance; admission will be free.

Saturday, May 23rd, 6:30 p.m. *MIWP's 33rd Annual Spring Meeting & Reception: Logging Days in the Islands* Speaker: Bob Mackreth, Apostle Island Historian. At the Madeline Island School of the Arts. (*see detailed announcement, page 6*)

Wednesday, June 17th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Madeline Island Ferry Line, 1970-2020, Fifty Years of Operation: Looking Back* Speaker: Gary Russell, Madeline Island Ferry Line, and Bob Nelson, Bayfield Heritage Association Inc. A historical perspective on water transportation between Bayfield and Madeline Island. Memories and photographs will be shared from the families who shaped the ferry line. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, July 1st, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Island Hopping: Ecological Stories of the Apostle Island Archipelago* Speaker: Erik Olson, Associate Professor of Natural Resources, Northland College. Erik will explore the factors shaping and influencing the lives of wildlife of the Apostle Islands archipelago. The talk will review recent scientific studies and explore future directions for research. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, July 8th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Ticks and Diseases, More than Lyme Disease* Speaker: Benjamin Clarke, Professor of Biomedical Sciences, University of Minnesota-Duluth Medical School. Summer is great time for exploring the woods and hiking the trails, but there are creatures that love to hitch a ride as you walk. Dr. Clarke will discuss ticks, where they are found, how to identify them, and what diseases they could share with you. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, July 22nd, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Hawk Ridge: Counting for Conservation* Speaker: Margie Menzies, Director of Education, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, Duluth. The Hawk Ridge Observatory has been counting and banding raptors along one of North America's most important flyways for nearly 50 years. This will be a fun look at everything Hawk Ridge, from comparing fall and spring migration, to bird numbers past and present, to raptor adaptation in talons and wings. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, July 29th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Loons: A Symbol of Northern Waters* Eric Lemoine, Loon Watch Program Director, Sigurd Olson Institute, Northland College. The loon is a sentinel species – a living symbol of clean water, good fisheries, and an indicator of healthy aquatic ecosystems. Learn more about the common loon: their calls, ecology, behavior, habitat, threats, the impacts of climate change, and other fascinating loon facts. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.



Wednesday, August 5th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Chequamegon Bay Birds...and How to Save Them* Speaker: Ryan Brady, Conservation Biologist, Wisconsin DNR. In this presentation, get to know the birds of the Chequamegon Bay region, how their populations are faring, why many consider this among the best birding areas in the state, and actions we can take to stem declines and attract more birds to our own backyards. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, August 12th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Meeting and Mixing the Waters: Estuaries and the Health of Lake Superior* Speaker: Deanna Erickson, Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. Home to diverse wetlands, flocks of birds, manoomin (wild rice), and rich fisheries, estuaries along the south shore of Lake Superior are one of the best kept secrets for paddling, fishing, and exploring. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, August 19th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Lake Superior Water Levels and Options to Address Coastal Hazards* Speaker: Adam Bechle, Coastal Engineering Outreach Specialist, Wisconsin Sea Grant. Lake Superior's water level has been above average for the past six years and set new monthly records in 2019 and 2020. This presentation will provide an update on the current high water conditions on the Great Lakes, discuss the processes behind water level changes and coastal erosion, and describe some of the options that coastal land owners can take to address these issues. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Wednesday, August 26th, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. *Madeline Island Ferry Line, 1970-2020, Fifty Years of Operation: Looking Forward* Speaker: Robin Trinko Russell and Mike Radtke, Madeline Island Ferry Line. This program will discuss how the MIFL is dealing with climate change, lake levels, wind, weather, and sustainability for the future. At the Madeline Island Museum, co-sponsor.

Saturday, September 5th, 9 a.m. – 12:00 noon. *Labor Day Work and Hike* Join us for a working hike on the Wilderness Preserve's North End trails. We will divide into groups to cut brush and refresh blazes on the trails. The North End forest includes stands of old-growth maple, oak, and hemlock, and an abundance of wild mushrooms. The trails are rustic, so good hiking boots and an adventuresome spirit are required. Location: Meet at the Burroughs trail head, 2.5 miles north of Benjamin Boulevard on the North Shore Road.

Saturday, October 3rd, 9 a.m. – 12:00 noon. *Guided Fall Hike on the North End Trails* Location: TBA

Our Annual Fall Potluck Picnic follows the October 3rd hike. All are welcome. Location to be determined. For updates and details see the MIWP Website: <https://www.miwp.org>.

*All Events are free (except the Spring Reception)
and open to the public*

BOB BENJAMIN, MIWP BOARD MEMBER AND PAST PRESIDENT

Long-term board member and former president of the Wilderness Preserve, Robert "Bob" Benjamin passed away April 15th of this year. Born in 1924, Bob attended medical school at the University of Minnesota, where he later taught surgery while also serving in a small group practice. He and his wife, Betty, were strong advocates of family planning. They also loved the outdoors and first built a summer cottage on Lake Superior's North Shore, which they later traded for a cabin on Madeline Island. Bob joined the Wilderness Preserve's board of directors in 1990, where he served for two decades, including as its president from 1997 to 1999. He encouraged the Preserve to expand its stewardship role on the Island and to hire for a time, an executive director. Even after stepping down from his leadership role, Bob stayed involved in Preserve activities, including its 4th of July parade entries, which put to use his good humor and sense of playful absurdity (see photo). He leaves behind four siblings, three children, eight grandchildren, and 12 great grandchildren, along with many Island friends.



33RD ANNUAL SPRING MEETING AND EVENING RECEPTION

The Wilderness Preserve will be hosting its 33rd Annual Spring Meeting this coming Memorial Day weekend, Saturday May 23rd, at the Madeline Island School of the Arts. The event will be an evening reception with an informal buffet of elegant and hearty hors d'oeuvres, choice wine service, and coffee/tea and assorted desserts. A social gathering and food service begins at 6:30 pm, with the program beginning at 7:30 pm. This year's program features:

BOB MACKRETH

HISTORIAN, APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE, RETIRED

"LOGGING DAYS IN THE ISLANDS"

Timber barons and lumberjacks left their marks throughout the Chequamegon region, while the Lake Superior environment presented loggers with challenges seldom seen elsewhere. Historian Bob Mackreth will explore the islands' unique lumbering history, from the days of oxen and ax to the era of Outer Island's flying Lumberjacks with their Cessnas and chainsaws.

The price of the Spring Reception is \$35 / person

Reservations can be made (through May 20th)
by contacting:

MIWP Treasurer, Ned Hancock

1204 Mount Curve Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55403
(952-221-7878) ktwj@aol.com



MISFORTUNE REIGNS AT 4TH OF JULY PARADE *by Victoria Erhart*

It seems very long ago, but the 2019 MIWP 4th of July parade float "Wheel of (mis)Fortune", otherwise known as "Climate Change makes Crazy Weather", brought home the coveted Community award! Crazy weather indeed, with the multitudes of Super Soakers bringing torrents of water down from the skies, the wild tornadoes, the terrifying thunder, the unforgiving lake levels endlessly rising. And above it all, Vanna White the orchestrator relentlessly turning that wheel. Pure theater. "Wheel of (mis)Fortune" was our first, but not last, float on the subject of climate change, and I am particularly pleased that it won the Community award. Getting the word out about a changing climate is part of embracing our greater community. Thank you, judges.

Anyone who regularly reads this section of the newsletter knows that frequently I have no idea what we are doing with the upcoming parade, but for 2020 I really, really haven't got a clue. Having a parade at all, with crowds shoulder to shoulder along the parade route, seems like a dicey idea. If I could conjure up a float out of nothing, this is the year I would want to honor the discipline of science: scientific thought, hypotheses, testing, insight, facts, and leaps of intuition. Yes, hard to convey on a 5' by 8' trailer, and no, not very funny, but it feels right. If a parade happens at all, our float is going to have to be a somewhat last minute affair, and of course we would want you to join us. I assume the usual time and place will apply and current information should be on the MIWP website. Or call Victoria Erhart at 715-747-2277/612-237-1318 in early July. And take care of yourselves out there.





Madeline Island
Wilderness Preserve
PO Box 28
La Pointe, WI 54850
www.miwp.org

-----*Detach here and mail today*-----

***Yes, I'd like to support the preservation and protection
of natural areas on Madeline Island!***

Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

E-mail Address _____

\$1000 Benefactor \$500 Sustaining \$100 Supporting \$50 Contributor Other

Please make my gift anonymous.

Gift in memory of: _____

Gift in honor of: _____

Send gift card to: _____

Thank you for your generous contribution!

Your dues are tax deductible. Membership is through December 31, 2020
Please make checks payable to MIWP and send to:

**Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve
P.O. Box 28 La Pointe WI 54850**