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THIS MONTH

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The rise of the birds

Larger birds, predatory
birds adapting to suburban,
urban areas

By Alex Nemec
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262-513-2661

OCONOMOWOC — It is seemingly becoming less and less of a rarity to walk outside the house and see a sandhill crane strutting through the yard or a turkey vulture circling overhead.

Even a Cooper's hawk perched on an electrical wire or a highway sign seems all too common.

But why is that? Are people paying more attention to their surroundings or are the birds becoming more comfortable in people-populated places.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Conservation Biologist Ryan Brady said it is probably a combination of both.

"I think people are paying more attention and especially with COVID, they were taking trips to local parks or wetland areas and just kind of noticed more," Brady

said. "There's definitely an awareness factor, but a lot of urban and suburban bird populations are rebounding."

One of those populations on the rise is that of the Cooper's hawk, one of the most common urban raptors the state has, Brady said.

He said the Cooper's hawk population was devastated like many birds with the use of DDT — a synthetic insecticide — in the 20th century.

"Ever since we had some of the regulations put into effect to curb those things in the late '60s and early '70s, we've seen their numbers kind of building again," Brady said.

"Cooper's hawks are probably more abundant than they have been in the last 50 years and those are the ones that sit on people's deck railings and in bird baths."

Brady said people are spreading out and encroaching into birds' environment and that when habitat no



Photo by Alex Nemec/Freeman Staff

A red-tailed hawk sits on a wire at Highways P and Highway K in the Town of Oconomowoc.

longer becomes suitable, they simply leave.

"For many species the habitat becomes too fragmented or doesn't have the necessary sized woodlot they need or things like that," he said. "Then they leave and find a habitat that fits their need."

"They're what we call

adaptable and more able to adjust to human encroachment."

Charles Hagner, the director of Bird City Wisconsin, said the chief reason he thinks people are seeing more birds is the human population growing outward from the metropolitan areas.

One of the ripple effects of

the human expansion is more roads, which explains the increase in people seeing turkey vultures in their residential neighborhoods.

Turkey vultures wait until the sun has reached a high enough point in the sky to heat up roads and bodies of

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‘Feeling of true freedom’

WWII Veterans fly over county during Dream Flight experience

By Alex Nemec
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WAUKESHA — Three residents at Dousman’s Three Pillars Senior Living Communities had the opportunity to fly the skies of Waukesha County in a WWII era biplane as part of Dream Flights’ Operation September Freedom.

Dream Flights is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to honoring veterans by giving them an adventure of a lifetime and taking them on a flight in a Boeing Stearman biplane, according to its website.

Operation September Freedom is an effort by Dream Flights to honor as many WWII veterans from Aug. 1 to Sept. 30 by giving them a ride in a restored WWII era plane.

Three Pillars residents Don Simandl, Bob Teska and Chuck Hocking all took their own flight around Waukesha County on Aug. 7.

Hocking said their trip was “absolutely fantastic.” “They treated us like royalty,”

Hocking said. “They were so nice and so helpful. You couldn’t have asked for nicer people.”

Hocking was a seaman second class in the Navy in WWII and was deployed to the Philippines as the war was winding down, he said.

Simandl, a staff sergeant in the 79th division that stormed the beaches of Normandy, said the Dream Flights folks were thankful and appreciative of what WWII veterans went through, no matter their involvement.

“I don’t care what part of the service you were in, as long as you were in the service during WWII,” he said. “Everybody was behind us in WWII and that’s why we won the war.”

Teska, too, said he couldn’t believe how kind everyone was who was involved with the Operation.

“If all of the people were like those that helped us on Saturday, there would never be another war,” Teska said. “Those people were so congenial, they did anything we asked them to.”

Simandl said he enjoyed looking out over the landscape when the pilot would bank the plane.

“It felt like being in heaven,” Simandl said. “When he banked the plane I could see for miles and it was just beautiful.”

Teska said he couldn’t believe how small everything looked.

“The people and cars looked like little ants,” he said.



Submitted photo

Chuck Hocking gives a thumbs up as he sits in the biplane preparing for his flight around Waukesha County.

Hocking said if someone hasn’t had the opportunity to ride in an uncovered cockpit like the biplane was, they’ve never flown.

“It’s a feeling of true freedom that you don’t get in a closed-in cockpit,” Hocking said.

Riding in the biplane caused Simandl to reminisce and thought of all the men that rode in that seat before him all those years ago.

“You think of the young men who sat in this cockpit,” Simandl said.

“Some of them are still around, some aren’t, it was honor to take us up there and show us the world. I loved it.”



Submitted photo

Bob Teska points to where he wrote his name of the tail of the biplane he got to ride in over the weekend as part of the Dream Flight trip.

Bell Tower Memorial holds annual Veterans Oral History Project

PEWAUKEE — The 2021 Bell Tower Memorial Veterans Oral History Project reception was held Aug. 3 at the Pewaukee VFW for local students to meet the veterans and enjoy live time together. This year’s interviews were conducted via Zoom. Students are selected by their history teacher each year to participate. They do research regarding their veterans and then conduct an interview with them, which is recorded and filed with the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

This year featured 11 veterans from World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam, along with 11 students from Pewaukee, Waukesha South and Lake Country Lutheran high schools.



Veterans Dale Stark, Dean Larson, Ron Sowinski, Dennis Ziebell, Howard Hadley, Lee Murry and Craig Arellano at the annual Bell Tower Memorial Veterans Oral History event Aug. 3.



Submitted photos

Pewaukee High School student Tiara Tran with veteran Craig Arellano.

Arrowhead H.S. student wins Red Cross scholarship

DELAFIELD — Jesus “Junny” Hernandez of Delafield helped save lives by hosting an American Red Cross blood drive at his church and earned a \$1,000 scholarship as a result of his lifesaving efforts.

As part of the Red Cross Leaders Save Lives program, the student at Arrowhead High School hosted a blood drive at First Congregational Church in Hartland on May 28, which collected 44 blood donations. As a result, Hernandez was eligible to be entered into a drawing for a scholarship and was chosen as a winner. He was also awarded a gift card.

Hernandez intends to study medicine after graduating high school in 2023. He said organizing this blood drive gave him the chance to “feel empowered” in his community and with his passion for health care.

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Tentative County Board maps released

Growth spurs some changes to district boundaries

By **Jake Ekdahl**
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WAUKESHA — The tentative maps for Waukesha County Board Supervisor districts have been released, and growth has spurred change for some.

County staff had to work faster than usual this time around, due to the delay with Census data brought on by COVID-19.

The map has relatively minimal change, but some districts’ lines had to be updated due to population change over the last decade, said Waukesha County Board Office Chief of Staff Sarah Spaeth.

In particular, the Oconomowoc area districts, District 1 and District 2, will change due to growth of the

city. District 1, which represents the city, will no longer do so exclusively because that would exceed the acceptable target population per county supervisor seat. Now, part of the city will be represented by District 2, if the maps are approved as is.

District 13 in the Delafield and Hartland areas will now include part of Chenequa. District 10 in Waukesha isn’t as geographically large as it used to be, also due to growth.

All 25 county seats each will represent a target population of 16,279 and none will deviate more than 3% from that number. Spaeth noted that other than Milwaukee County, Waukesha County Board members represent more people per seat than any in Wisconsin. The number of constituents per

seat will be slightly higher than it was last time around, at 15,596. Spaeth said there is consensus that 25 is an optimal number of seats for the board to ensure committee efficiency.

County staff did not take supervisors’ residence locations into account when drafting the new maps. They also sought to keep districts as contiguous as possible, geographically compact, relatively equal in size, with boundaries defined along major streets, railroads and other natural features, keeping neighborhoods together whenever possible.

Those seeking to run for county office in the spring can file papers Dec. 1 and will need to get signatures to turn in during January. The new maps will apply to the spring elections.



Alex Nemecek/Freeman Staff

DockHounds introduce two former Brewers as part of coaching staff

OCONOMOWOC — The Lake County DockHounds introduced the first parts of its coaching staff at a press conference as it ramps up for the beginning of the season next year. DockHounds Managing partner, left, shook hands with and introduced the DockHounds first manager, Jim Bennett. Bennett was named the American Association Manager of the Year in 2019.

On his staff so far is Bullpen Coach Paul Wagner, right, and Bench and Hitting Coach David Nillson. Wagner pitched for three major league teams in his career including his hometown Milwaukee Brewers in 1997-98. Nillson spent his entire eight-year career in Milwaukee, even making the All-Star game in 1999, his last year.

DELAFIELD

Preliminary work on planned Olive Garden continues

By **Dave Fidlin**
Special to The Freeman

DELAFIELD — The smell of Italian cuisine wafting through a high-profile Lake County thoroughfare is still a likely prospect, but firm details on when exactly it will happen are still off on the horizon.

This spring, Darden Restaurants, operator of multiple chain eateries, announced plans of opening an Olive Garden in Delafield at the former Perkins Restaurant and Bakery site, 2440 Milwaukee St.

The parcel encompasses 1.88 acres of land on one of Delafield’s most visible corridors along Interstate 94, next to the famous Smiley Barn building.

As the year has marched on, city staffers and multiple municipal panels have reviewed various components of Olive Garden’s plans for the site, including the

Plan Commission and Public Works Committee.

Darden’s plans include razing the existing 7,300-square-foot Perkins building and replacing it with a 6,500-square-foot facility that closely mirrors some of Olive Garden’s newer prototype restaurants, including one that opened several years ago in Menomonee Falls.

When asked about a timeline for Olive Garden’s opening in Delafield, Meagan Bernstein, a spokeswoman with Darden, declined to comment.

“Unfortunately, we don’t have specifics to share at the moment,” Bernstein wrote in an email, responding to a reporter’s questions. “Feel free to reach back out in a month or two.”

Delafield City Planner Amy Barrows said a number of technical components associated with Olive Garden’s plans have been green lit within City Hall.

“The city Plan Commission and Public Works Committee have approved the site and civil plans for site improvements, subject to a few conditions,” Barrows wrote in an email. “The Plan Commission also approved signage for the site.”

Barrows said several additional pieces of the puzzle still need to come together before heavy lifting at the site can begin.

“The applicant is working on meeting these conditions, along with addressing engineering comments, prior to building permit issuance,” Barrows wrote. “I would anticipate compliance with conditions and permit issuance in the near future.”

The restaurant is expected to offer 198 seats and include an area for pick-up orders.

The proposed hours of operation are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday to Thursday and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.



Photos by Rebecca Seymour/Special to The Freeman

Celebrating the Arts – Rain or Shine

OCONOMOWOC — Taylor Hein, 2, of Lisbon had fun trying to catch raindrops on her tongue during the Oconomowoc Festival of the Arts. The 50th annual event took place Aug. 21-22. At right, John and Holly Whitcomb of Elm Grove have a difficult time choosing their favorite piece of handblown glass garden art during the Oconomowoc Festival of the Arts at Fowler Park. The couple enjoys coming every year to add to their colorful collection “one piece at a time.”

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Pewaukee PD nets top honor for supporting National Guard and Reserve employees

By Cara Spoto
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262-513-2653

PEWAUKEE — The Pewaukee Police Department has received the U.S. Defense Department's top honor for employer support of National Guard and Reserve members — the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

The police department is among three Wisconsin employers to receive the award this year.

The other Wisconsin award recipients are Associated Bank and INNIO Waukesha Gas Engine.

The police department was named a semi-finalist in March and received the award at a ceremony on Aug. 13, at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake. Both Gov. Tony Evers and Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, Wisconsin's adjutant general, were on hand to honor the department and the other Wisconsin award winners.

The Pewaukee Police Department was nominated for the award by Officer Brett Markut, an 11-year vet-



Submitted photo

Pewaukee Police Officer Brett Markut, (left), Pewaukee Police Chief Timothy Heier (center) and Gov. Tony Evers pose recently with the 2021 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The Pewaukee Police Department received the award from U.S. Defense Department for its support of National Guard and Reserve members like Markut.

eran with the National Guard who completed a one-year deployment in Ukraine as a brigade operations advisor last October.

Out of 3,382 nominees, the police department was one of only 140 employers nationwide to be named

semi-finalists, and among only 15 finalists to be named winners.

Police Chief Timothy Heier called the recognition a humbling achievement - one that encourages the department to do even more to support service members.

BluesFest returns



Mary Catanese/Special to The Freeman

DELAFIELD — Waukesha Rotary BluesFest returned to Naga-Waukee Park last month a year after COVID-19 forced its cancellation., with multiple blues acts leading up to headliners Robben Ford on Friday and Albert Castiglia on Saturday, Aug. 12-13. Above, Al Dorn of Big Al Dorn and the Blues Howlers performs during the band's set .

Monarch Habitat takes off in Wisconsin

DNR announces new accomplishments, funding

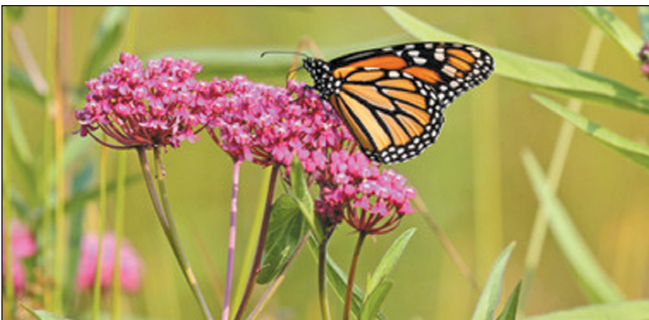
MADISON — Wisconsin monarchs looking for milkweed to lay their eggs on will now find hundreds of thousands of more acres of habitat in Wisconsin thanks to voluntary efforts by organizations and individuals statewide, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources announced.

According to a press release, the Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative formed in 2018 to voluntarily plant milkweed and wildflowers on a massive scale to help reverse an 80% decline over the last 20 years in the eastern population of monarchs that breed and migrate through Wisconsin and other states.

Participants in the Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative include DNR representatives and other state and federal agencies, as well as local groups.

The group encourages planting and maintaining native milkweed and native wildflowers.

"Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative members expect



Submitted photo

Volunteers are helping to maintain thousands of acres of habitat to help the monarch butterfly.

that the pace of milkweeds and nectar plants added to Wisconsin's landscape will pick up," Brenna Jones, DNR conservation biologist, said. "There is an unprecedented level of attention and funding now going to monarch and other pollinator habitats both nationally and in Wisconsin. Governments, nonprofits and individuals are all focusing on the task."

Some accomplishments announced from the group include 105,000 reported new or enhanced acres of

habitat, the bulk on DNR state natural areas; 205,000 acres enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program; 822 monarch-specific conservation projects assisted by Pheasants Forever Farm Bill biologists; six demonstration sites to teach and inspire; 85,000 copies of a Wisconsin plant list for monarchs sent to Wisconsin homes; and 184 Wisconsin organizations and individuals have taken the pledge to help monarchs.

Birds

From Page 1A

water, Hegner said.

"When the sun is high enough, thermals are created which are rising currents of air," Hegner said. "Turkey vultures fly into these thermals and stretch their wings and ride them like elevators up into the sky."

"As we have built more and more roads, parking lots and subdivisions with hot roofs we've created many more spots where thermals can occur. As a result, we're seeing more birds that are occupying and taking advantage of these thermals to fly up and hunt like turkey vultures do."

As for sandhill cranes — whose numbers have increased statewide — Brady said they are more "generalists" when it comes to the habitats they frequent and



Alex Nemec/Freeman Staff

A flock of sandhill cranes pecked for food at the site of the Blue Ribbon Baseball stadium.

don't need deep wilderness or undisturbed areas.

"They've kind of grown acclimated to people and human activity," Brady said. "They still need wooded lots or small wetlands here and

there. They still need good practices however."

Some of those good practices include not letting cats outside to roam, using fewer pesticides and chemicals on landscape, Brady said.

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