

# THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
[www.cdaaudubon.org](http://www.cdaaudubon.org)

Summer Break Special Edition No. 1 June 2023

## Upcoming Events

### Annual Picnic Set for June 13

The annual Chapter picnic will be held Thursday, June 13, at the Blackwell Island Recreation Site, 945 US 95 southwest of Coeur d'Alene. The picnic will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Please bring your own meal and utensils, plates, etc. and a side dish to share. Alcohol is not allowed in the park.

Parking at the site is available for small fee--\$3.00 for seniors and free to those with park passes.

Plan to attend and bring a guest!

### May 9 Meeting Recap

The May 9 Chapter dinner meeting, led by Board Member George Sayler, included a productive sharing of ideas about how to increase membership and inform area residents about our local Chapter. The meeting was attended by 21 members, all of whom had several good suggestions for future activities. Here's a sampling of the proposals:

- o Advertise about the Chapter in local news media.
- o Update and revamp the Chapter's FaceBook page and website.
- o Host low-key outdoor activities for anyone who's interested, including "neighborhood walks" on weekends. Encourage families to attend with their children.
- o Re-start the "Audubon Adventures Program" for youth.
  - o Prepare photo exhibits of birds to be displayed in local libraries and other public spaces.

- o Bring guests to chapter events and meetings.
- o Distribute copies of the newsletter to area public libraries and schools.
- o Host fundraising/awareness raising events such as a dinner, develop a bird calendar with photos by members.
- o Contact local schools about presenting birding programs for students.
- o Consider establishing a "Youth Audubon Chapter" in Coeur d'Alene.
- o Advertise and hold local birding/field trips open to the public.
- o Issue the newsletter, in a shortened version, during the summer months.

All ideas will require the sustained work, commitment and cooperation of appropriate sub-committees. Sayler told the group that he will present them for consideration and next steps to the Board.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings Coeur d'Alene Audubon Society birders.

Spring is here and I keep looking for more birds to show up. Many have already come and gone on to their nesting grounds, while the brush cover habitat dwellers seem still yet to come. The song sparrow that serenades me every morning and throughout the day provides a pleasant reminder that others will soon be coming.

Coeur d'Alene Audubon was invited to guide a assist in choosing a location and guiding a field trip of a 52 student Kindergarten Class from Hayden Canyon Charter School. (We had mentioned this at the April meeting.) The

school arranged their own transportation and supervision. Ted, Heather and I served as guides for the field trip to Saltese Flats Wetlands on Wednesday, March 3. When I think of Audubon, I don't often think of birders that young. We divided into three groups and had a great time looking for birds, helping the students find the birds with binoculars and asking them questions about birds to enjoy how much they already knew about birds. Each student had chosen a bird at school and we looked for those. While we didn't find nearly all of the chosen birds, we did see several that interested the students. The most popular subjects were Yellow-headed Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Canada Geese and various variety of ducks. Lots of excitement burst out over a pair of Redtail Hawks soaring overhead, an Osprey with a fish and the Bald Eagle chasing the Osprey trying to get the Osprey to drop the fish. We considered it a success. I hope it may have started a relationship with the school that may develop an interest in Audubon at a young age and with some of the parent supervisors.

A big, hearty thanks to the board and all who attended the June 9 planning meeting. A special thanks to George Sayler for leading out since I wasn't there because of Covid in our house. The ideas summarized in this newsletter will provide an interesting future for our chapter.

Good Birding  
Ralph Kerr

### Common Loon, Uncommonly Beautiful

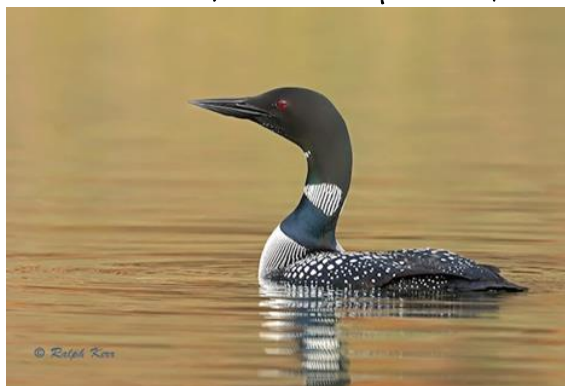


Photo by Ralph Kerr/Fernan Lake

## Brown-headed Cowbirds, "Brood Parasites" Sighted in CDA Area

Patty Byer reports sighting a flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds, a species that poses a possible threat to songbirds.

The Cowbird practices "brood parasitism," meaning that females lay eggs in other birds' nests, which are then incubated by the host species. This parasitism causes serious problems for the host songbird's chicks.



Male Cowbird

Because cowbird young are particularly aggressive and mature faster than songbird chicks, the host birds' fledglings often are deprived of food meant for the host chicks.

It's been reported that a cowbird female may lay as many as 40 eggs in other birds' nests in a season. Cowbird eggs have granulated, often mottled, shells unlike the smoother shells of most songbirds.

Cowbirds once followed buffalo herds on the Great Plains, but now have spread throughout North America. This species' parasitic brooding tactics drove the Kirtland's Warbler, almost to extinction in Michigan. Fortunately, a concerted program of trapping and removing cowbirds and controlled burns of cowbird jackpine habitat saved the warbler.

Cowbirds are a little larger than sparrows; the male is black with a brown head and the female is uniformly brown. They often follow cattle and horses in rural areas and eat grain in feedlots.

Their presence in this area could represent a potential threat to local songbird populations.