



Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

Short Ears, Long Tales

Migration Nation

A Powerful New Way to See Where Birds Go

By Allison Slavick

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring

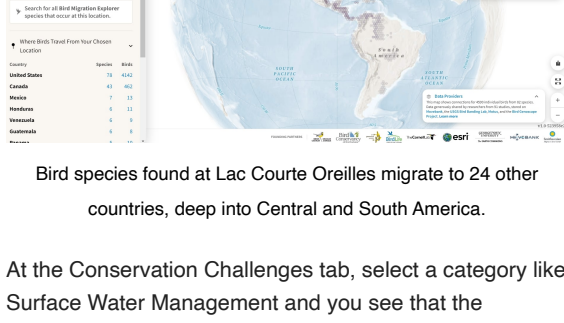
In September of 2019 there was news of the staggering loss of bird populations in North America: 29% of birds were lost in fifty years, or about three billion birds since 1970. First published in [Science](#) (you can log in for free to read the whole article), the research stunned bird lovers around the country. Scientists attribute the decline to many factors, with loss of habitat first and foremost. Particularly in peril are shorebirds and birds that nest in grasslands.

Now, a free mapping tool from the National Audubon Society, the [Bird Migration Explorer](#) tracks the migration of more than 450 bird species that breed in the U.S. and Canada and migrate south as far as the Caribbean, Central, and South America. The project's ultimate goal is to protect more birds and their habitat and, armed with facts and science, they present a powerful case.

A tracking tool from the National Audubon Society follows the migration of more than 450 species of birds.

To develop the web-based program (it's not an app), a team of scientists from Audubon, the Cornell Bird Lab, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, and the U.S. Geological Survey, among others, collected and analyzed data on bird populations and movement. Using birds outfitted with GPS transmitters, radio telemetry, data from the North American Breeding Bird Atlas, bird banding records, Christmas Bird Counts, shorebird surveys, and weather radar data, we can for the first time see the big picture of bird migration and the importance of habitat protection for survival. In all, four million bits of data went into the system, which is updated regularly. A Spanish language version is also available.

At the home page for the [site](#), three tabs across the top are key to learning more. The Bird Species tab allows you to explore the migration patterns of species and even specific birds, with yellow dots indicating the movements of birds with transmitters from south to north and back again. With a sliding bar at the bottom of the screen you can select a month to see, for example, where American Bitterns are found at any time of the year. You can turn on map layers to see routes of migrating birds and overall abundance. At the Locations tab you can see where birds in a chosen area travel to and from. In the case of Lac Courte Oreilles, species found here migrate to 24 other countries, deep into Central and South America.



Bird species found at Lac Courte Oreilles migrate to 24 other countries, deep into Central and South America.

At the Conservation Challenges tab, select a category like Surface Water Management and you see that the American Bittern is one of the birds that is exposed to this challenge, and in northern Wisconsin the "footprint" of the challenge is rated high or very high. Other categories include light pollution, water quality, and agriculture — all causes for concern when protecting the American Bittern.



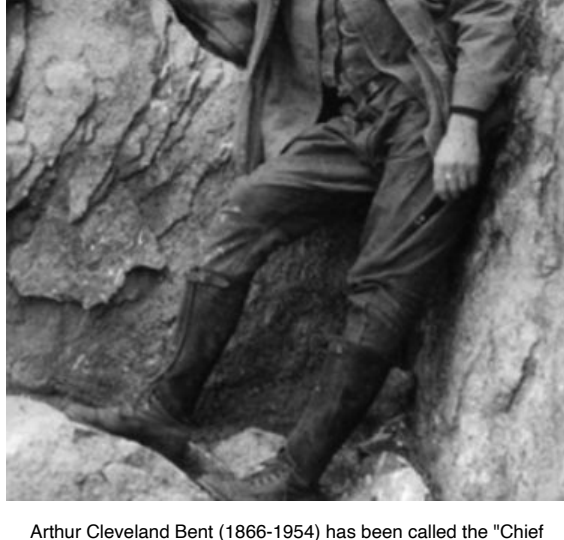
Individual Bitterns outfitted with tracking devices can be followed year-round.



American Bittern

Technological advances, big data, algorithms, global positioning systems, and creative thinking have brought us this powerful tool that fills gaps in our knowledge about where birds go. Complex resources like Bird Explorer are proliferating as apps and on the web. [The Merlin app](#) for bird identification, especially helpful for bird calls and songs, was featured last year in this [newsletter](#). There's also iNaturalist, BirdCast, Seek, Project Icarus, and PI@ntNet. Records submitted by "ordinary" people — citizen scientists, another way of saying "people who care" — help make these services robust, and participating is rewarding and important.

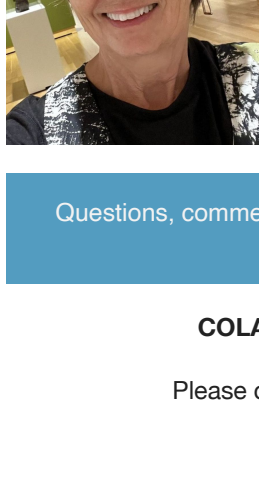
If this feels like technology-overload, complement what you learn online from data-focused sites with the writing of Arthur Cleveland Bent (1866-1954), who has been called the "chief biographer" of birds. His "Life Histories of North American Birds" was published in a twenty- one volume series by the U.S. Government Printing Office between 1919-1968, and were published individually by Dover. These are classic works written with tremendous enthusiasm by an amateur ornithologist; they are an inspiring treasure trove of bird life and field observations and are available [online](#). If you [read](#) Mr. Bent's tales of the American Bittern from the 1920s, for example, you'll learn that he found as many of five Bittern nests in one day, concealed among dried cattails in marshes, and that one of the Bittern's nicknames is Plum Pudd'n'.



Arthur Cleveland Bent (1866-1954) has been called the "Chief Biographer of Birds."

Once you've explored the migration patterns and life histories of your favorite birds, seek out the best antidote of all. Leave your phone on the kitchen counter and walk down to the lakeshore. Take a chair with you or sit on the ground or dock. Tip your head back, close your eyes and listen to bird calls and songs. Scan the treetops, shore, and lake for birds. Breathe in the scent of fresh water. Your spirit now refreshed, think about what you can [do](#) to protect and help birds on their migratory routes and in their breeding grounds in northern Wisconsin. With shorebirds showing some of the greatest decline, maintaining your lakeshore in its natural state becomes more important than ever. Healthy wetlands are the home of the Bittern. Pesticide use is another culprit, as exposure to even low doses can cause weight loss in birds, weakening them on their long flight south.

Take the opportunity by participating in your local [Christmas Bird Count](#) or other citizen science projects, where you can help document, with attending hope, the populations of migratory birds. [Support policies](#) that protect birds, and tell everyone you know how important birds are to our individual and collective well-being.



Allison Slavick watches birds in Chequamegon National Forest

Contact Allison at allison.slavick@gmail.com

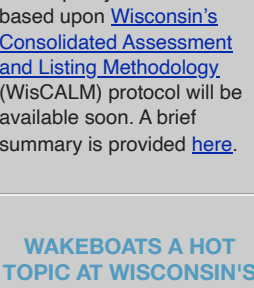
Issue #59 May 3, 2023

MARK YOUR CALENDERS: ANNUAL COLA MEETING

Saturday, June 24th
8:30am - Coffee
9:00am- 10:30am- Meeting

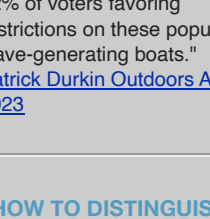
St. Francis Solanus Mission
133885 Mission RD
Stone Lake, WI

LCO's WATER QUALITY 2022



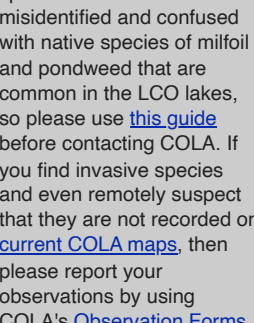
The complete 2022 LCO water-quality assessment based upon [Wisconsin's Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology](#) (WisCALM) protocol will be available soon. A brief summary is provided [here](#).

WAKEBOATS A HOT TOPIC AT WISCONSIN'S CONSERVATION CONGRESS HEARINGS



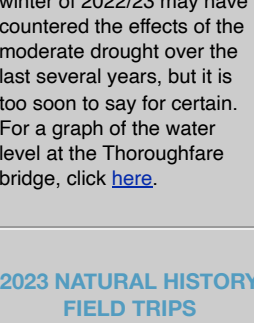
"A tsunami of opposition to wakeboard boats swept through Wisconsin's statewide conservation hearings in mid-April, with 62% of voters favoring restrictions on these popular wave-generating boats." [Patrick Durkin Outdoors April 2023](#)

HOW TO DISTINGUISH NATIVE FROM INVASIVE WATERMILFOIL AND PONDWEED



Please help COLA map areas with invasive Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed. These invasive species are often misidentified and confused with native species of milfoil and pondweed that are common in the LCO lakes, so please use [this guide](#) before contacting COLA. If you find invasive species and even remotely suspect that they are not recorded on [current COLA maps](#), then please report your observations by using COLA's [Observation Forms](#) or send COLA an [email](#).

WATER LEVEL IN THE LCO LAKES



Heavy snowfall during the winter of 2022/23 may have countered the effects of the moderate drought over the last several years, but it is too soon to say for certain. For a graph of the water level at the Thoroughfare bridge, click [here](#).

2023 NATURAL HISTORY FIELD TRIPS

The Extension Program at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University is once again sponsoring natural history field trips led by Mike Heim. The [upcoming May trips](#) are:

Saturday May 13 - Nature's Salad Bar: The Hardwood Forest

Wednesday May 31 - Juniper Bluff

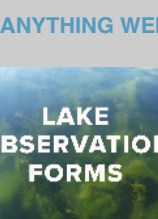
More information [here](#).

COLA AWARDED \$150,000 for AIS MANAGEMENT



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources awarded COLA a \$150,000 grant for management of aquatic invasive species in the LCO lakes for the years 2023 and 2024. Stay tuned for updates.

I-LIDS ON THE LOOKOUT



The Internet [Landing Installed Device Sensor \(I-LIDS\)](#) will be operational in 2023 at the DNR landing in Chicago Bay to monitor boats and trailers for aquatic invasive plants. The Clean Boat/Clean Water boat launch inspections are funded, in part, with a \$4,000 WDNR grant, along with a \$1,400 grant for video cameras.

SEE ANYTHING WEIRD?



If you observe green water, algal mats on the surface or floating or dying fish - anything out of the ordinary - please take pictures and report this using COLA's [observation forms](#) immediately! COLA will alert the WDNR, the LCO Tribe, collect water samples, etc.

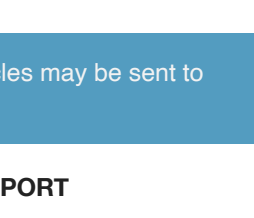
TALES OF LAC COURTE OREILLES



This book, edited by Tom and Sue Burgess, together with COLA's history committee, provides a detailed history of Lac Courte Oreilles.

Copies are available at the St. Francis Solanus Mission in Reserve, or contact [COLA](#).

LCO NEEDS YOUR HELP



COLA is a **volunteer organization**. That means essential jobs don't get done unless someone steps up to help out. Contact communications@cola-wi.org if interested or you need more information.

Short Ears, Long Tales

[ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS](#)

Questions, comments or suggestions for future articles may be sent to communications@cola-wi.org

COLA NEEDS YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Please consider a tax-deductible donation today!

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COLA Mission: 1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, their shorelands and surrounding areas, while respecting the interests of property owners and the rights of the general public; and 2) to consider, study, survey and respond to issues deemed relevant by COLA's membership.

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