



Oshkosh Bird Fest

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CELEBRATE THE WONDER OF SPRING MIGRATION AT OSHKOSH BIRD FEST

Oshkosh Bird Fest, Oshkosh's newest event, celebrates International Migratory Bird Day on Saturday, May 7 with a variety of activities for all ages and everyone interested in birds. Most of the activities will take place in different locations at Menominee Park from 6:00 am - 2:00 pm. Visit the Kiwanis Shelter for a complete schedule and directions. In addition, there will be three yard tours hosted by Wild Ones members from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Then, visit downtown Oshkosh for Gallery Walk from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, which will feature local bird photographers and artists, an author, and live birds of prey.

The day will begin with a "Big Sit", a unique way to bird watch (founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club). Join Anita Carpenter inside the 17-foot diameter circle for the Big Sit anytime from 6:00 am until Noon for as long as you want. Bring a chair and enjoy watching, listening, counting and learning about birds that you see and hear. This is sometimes described as "a tailgate party for birders". Anita, an Oshkosh resident, is an avid birder and naturalist. She contributes articles to Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine and has a regular column in the Winnebago Audubon Lake Flyer newsletter.

From 8:00 am – 2:00 pm, you will find informative exhibits at the Kiwanis Shelter covering bird migration, landscaping with native plants, glacial habitat restoration, eagle/osprey surveys, county parks, and more. You won't want to miss the presentations with live birds of prey at 10:30 and 12:30 by Beka Weiss of Aves Wildlife Alliance. Learn all about why and how bird banding is done from a licensed bird bander. Knowledgeable birders will be stationed in different locations to view the birds on Miller's Bay and the island, plus visit the purple martin colony by the waste water treatment plant to learn about these special birds. Also scheduled is a tree planting demonstration by City Forester Bill Sturm in the Zoo from 10:00 am—Noon. And at 9:30 am attend the Bird City Wisconsin dedication ceremony near the Zoo entrance.

The Oshkosh Zoological Society will host educational and fun children's activities from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. in the zoo. Children will make their own binoculars, then go on a bird walk and learn to identify birds. We will also be "banding" kids in an exercise to show them how birds are caught, processed and banded for research. Birds have different kinds of beaks and the children will be able try to eat like a bird using different tools.

Wild Ones Fox Valley Area members will host three yard tours in Oshkosh from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Pick up a map at the Kiwanis Shelter. These yards are landscaped with native plants and the homeowners will share with you how they made their yards more bird and nature friendly.

The bird theme continues into the evening at Downtown Oshkosh Gallery Walk from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Apple Blossom Books will host Mariette Nowak, author of “Birdscaping in the Midwest”. Mariette’s book will be available for purchase and signing, plus she will have a colorful slide show of her yard and birds playing all evening. Take this opportunity to ask questions and discuss with Mariette what you can do in your yard for the birds! Winnebago Audubon and Wild Ones will also be on hand. Several other downtown stores will feature bird art including: Art Haus - Mike Briley (photographer), Bergman’s Fine Jewelry - Michael Huebschen (photographer), Christensen’s Lingerie - Pat Fischer (rehabilitator with live birds), Crescent Moon Antiques - Frank Zuern (bird carver), Gilded Lily - John Van Den Brandt (photographer), Klassy Kids - headbands for kids, Limelite Studios - Boyd Gibbs (photography), Market Street Boutique - Green Sweet Crafts (bird houses and feeders).

Oshkosh Bird Fest was planned by a committee of people who have a passion for birds and a healthy environment with affiliations to Oshkosh Bird Club, Oshkosh Zoological Society, Wild Ones Fox Valley Area, Winnebago Audubon Society, Winnebago Lakes Council, and Wisconsin DNR with support from the City of Oshkosh. The concept for a Bird Fest came from Bird City Wisconsin. Oshkosh was recently recognized as a Bird City for 2011, after submitting its application and successfully meeting the criteria outlined. Our city proved that it not only can implement sound conservation practices on their own, but it can educate its residents to play an increased role in making our community healthy for birds . . . and people.

Bird City Wisconsin is a coalition led by Milwaukee Audubon Society, the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology to ensure that Wisconsin’s city folk maintain healthy populations of birds and grow an appreciation for them. With funding from TogetherGreen, an alliance between National Audubon Society and Toyota, the program addresses an increasing problem: the decline of urban bird populations. Bird City participants will learn how to protect and manage greenspace; landscape with native plants in backyards and parks; adopt architecture and lighting systems that reduce bird collisions; and making our community hospitable to breeding, wintering, and migrating birds that seek safe places to spend time and find food. Check out the Bird City website at www.birdcitywisconsin.org.

Oshkosh Bird Fest is free and open to the public. For more information about the first annual Oshkosh Bird Fest, visit www.winaudubon.org/calendar, or contact Janet at wiss@centurytel.net or 920-589-2602. Opportunities to volunteer or provide financial support are available.