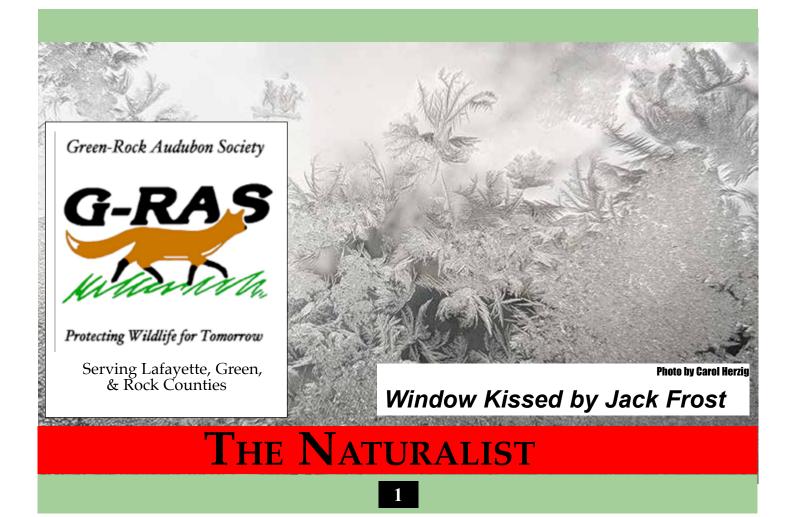
Winter 2024

P.O. Box 1986 Janesville, WI 53547-1986

Return Service Requested



Please pass me to a friend or recycle!



A Message from the President

Dear GRAS Members,

I am truly honored to have been elected as the new president of GRAS and would like to introduce myself to those that I have not had a chance to meet.

My name is Josh Erdman and my wife and I have lived in Janesville for the last 17 years. I grew up in California and have been interested in birds since I was 10 years old. I have enjoyed watching birds all over Wisconsin, the United States, and the world, including over 50 countries and all seven continents. I have a bachelor's degree in Zoology and came to Wisconsin initially to do graduate work on neotropical birds in Ecuador, though my career eventually took a different path. I previously served as the Program chair on the Board of Directors of the Yolo Audubon Society from 1995-1997 and on the Sustainable Janesville Committee from 2020-2024. I joined the GRAS board in 2023 and have served as Vice President and de facto field trips chair for the last year, shadowing Joni Denker in preparation for her eventual departure from the President seat.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Joni for her dedication and hard work over the last few years, leading the organization through the challenge of the COVID pandemic and coming out financially strong on the other side. She is graciously continuing to serve on our board as Past President to help guide me through this period of transition. I am excited to build on these efforts over the next few years and move our mission forward.

We are actively working to improve communication within the organization. Since our newsletters are only quarterly, electronic options are a much more viable way to stay connected to our members. Many of you have already chosen to migrate to the colorful, ecofriendly email version of the quarterly newsletter and we would encourage you to do so if you have not already. If you have not recently visited our website, <u>www.greenrockaudubon.org</u>, please consider doing so. Our events page is being actively maintained so that the details of all engagement activities and field trips are updated there (including some pop-up opportunities). We also have a Facebook page which also has advocacy opportunities and maintains field trip schedules as well. Please consider following us to stay acutely aware of upcoming activities.

Our organization's success relies on the generosity and commitment of our community, and each one

of you plays a vital role in helping us continue our mission. There are many ways that you can get involved. We are trying to offer field trips throughout the year where you can join other bird and nature enthusiasts. You can help us by suggesting membership in our organization to your friends and neighbors in Green, Rock, and Lafayette counties. Our board of directors is still in need of several officer positions, and we are looking for enthusiastic persons to help us with strategic planning for the future of GRAS. Our land manager, Fred Faessler, is always in need of volunteers to help us restore and maintain our properties in the Raccoon Creek watershed in Rock County. Most Friday mornings, he and a dedicated group of volunteers meet to work on our land and are always in need of assistance. More information about these opportunities can be found on the website.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I look forward to the next year and beyond.

Warm regards, Josh Erdman GRAS President



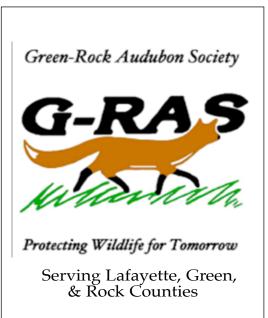
Last year's Annual Snowshoe Event trail.

Making a Successful Wood Duck Hatch

By Linn Duesterbeck

So you either purchased a wood duck box or want to construct one? That's great but there are a lot of pitfalls to watch out for.

First, let's start with the box. It should be constructed of a long-term duration material such as cedar plank or treated lumber. Many commercial boxes I see are unfortunately screwed shut all together which will simply not produce one wood duck. The reason is simply the box needs to have fresh sawdust installed annually. The wintertime is a great time of the year to do this when everything is frozen including small ponds or wetlands. If your box is totally screwed shut, you need to do one or both of the following. 1) unscrew the top and create another inside wood plate that will fit along the inside perimeter of the box. Screw that to the top. Then drill a hole on each side of the box through this new plate and insert a plastic drywall plug. This makes removal of the top easy and secures the top. The top also should have a light metal roof for two reasons. One, to maintain the longevity of the box and second, it prevents predators and squirrels from entering the box and 2) you can remove the bottom plate and do same thing by drilling at least one hole on each side and inserting the plastic drywall plug. Many boxes I see also do not have any drain holes on the



bottom so drill 4-6 ¼" holes in the bottom.

Second is installation. Installing the box in the wrong location can cause more harm than good to a wood duck and become a coffin for predators. Try and select a perimeter woody edge as this is native habitat to the cavity nesting wood duck. Boxes can also be installed on metal poles in ponds or wetlands. But do not simply fasten it to a tree. I suggest using a metal bracket preferably with a stainless steel extension from the tree to prevent predation. If not, a predator guard made from metal skirting needs to be installed on the tree perimeter to prevent raccoons, opossum and mink from scaling the tree to the box. Raccoons can easily trap a hen wood duck in the box and kill her and grab all of the eggs. If pole mounted, you can use either stainless steel 1 ¹/₂" piping or more cheaper conduit. I suggest using $\hat{8}'$ lengths so you can pound at least 2' into the bottom. If on land, I suggest using a PVC sleeve over the pipe, again to prevent raccoon predation.

A major predator of wood duck nests is however the starling, being cavity nesters as well. They tend to be very aggressive and will often remove the down from the nest when the hen is not present and take over the box. If you have starling issues, it is best to monitor the box by removing the top when the hen is not present and remove any starling nesting material, usually a bunch of grass and rubble similar to a house sparrow nest. You can also build a starling trap but it must be removed when the wood duck is not present.

This should get you started on an extremely interesting and exciting hobby to not only improve the wood duck population but also selfachievement.

If I can be of any help or questions, please feel free to email me at <u>linduesterbeck@gmail.com</u> or visit the FB page, "Wood Duck and Artificial Nesting Boxes," <u>https://www.facebook.com/</u> <u>groups/867081767424533</u>, where I have a tried and true nesting box I have constructed and have hatched thousands of baby wood ducks in the last 35 years.

Wetlands and Biodiversity: Globally, and in the State of Wisconsin

By Susan Amber Johnson

According to the first world-wide convention on wetlands occurring on February 2, 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, "wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peat land, or water, whether natural or artificial, permanentor temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters." Examples of artificial human made wetlands are fish ponds, rice paddies, and stabilization ponds.

Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rainforests and coral reefs. An estimated 40 percent of the world's biodiversity are found in wetlands. More than a million threatened species of plants and animals depend on wetlands for their survival. Hundreds of millions of migrating birds rely on networks of wetlands to rest and feed on their journeys along intercontinental flyways.

Despite their critical role in sustaining healthy ecosystems to millions of plant and animal species, wetlands have been continuously drained for commercial crop production, or industrial development over the past two hundred years. Between 1970 and 2015, 35% of all wetlands worldwide were lost to development. To make matters worse, the rate of loss has been everaccelerating since 2000, in part, due to the effects of climate change. The world is losing its wetlands three times faster than its forests! This loss has been concentrated in Europe, the United States, and China, and a recent study suggests that as of February 2023 more wetlands have been lost in the United States than in any other country.

Global biodiversity loss in plant and animal species holds existential meaning for humans, as well. Biodiversity is the web of life. One species sustains others, and once extinct, the domino effect from this loss can have dramatic consequences on the integrity, and resilience of ecosystems as a whole, risking food supplies for all species, including humans. Additionally, wetlands protect and improve water quantity and quality by providing fish and wildlife habitats, slowing the flow of floodwaters, floodwaters. storing and maintaining surface water during droughts. Wetlands also absorb up to 30% of the world's

carbon emissions and clean agricultural runoff. All of these factors make wetlands one of the most important ecosystems for the world to preserve, restore, and conserve.

For this reason, the Green-Rock Audubon Society chose Tracy Hames, Executive Director of Wisconsin Wetlands Association as Keynote Speaker at its Annual Meeting on October 13, 2024 this year. Hames told G-RAS members that before European settlers came, Wisconsin had nearly 10 million acres of wetlands. It's wetlands offered a wide variety of habitats including marshes, bogs, fens, coastal wetlands, lagoons, estuaries, meadows, and bottom land forests, and wet forests. Each offers its own rich diversity of plants, ducks, geese, cranes, song birds, and other wildlife.

Today, the number of wetlands in Wisconsin has been reduced by nearly half its previous area to approximately six million acres. Southern Wisconsin, the most populated area of the state, has lost 90% of its once rich wetlands. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as quoted in a recent Milwaukee Journal article, the remaining wetlands save the state of Wisconsin approximately \$4.6 billion every year in natural flood mitigation. Floods are the most common and expensive natural disaster in Wisconsin, and they are increasing in number and severity due to climate change.

Wisconsin has experienced four of the billion dollar flooding disasters since 1980. Just this past summer, Governor Evers had to declare a state of emergency in Northeastern Wisconsin due to another major flooding event. Because wetlands are able to store so much excess water, they are also helpful in droughts by releasing that stored water back into the water table.

The Badger State has stronger legal protections for wetlands than many other states do. In 2022, local Audubon groups, including Green-Rock Audubon Society members, lobbied their legislators in Madison over Earth Week that April. That year, we highlighted AB222/SB222, a grant program to help communities prone to severe flooding restore their wetlands and prevent future costly disasters. Our members were encouraged to write letters or call their own legislators and write

See WETLANDS Page 5

Wetlands

Continued from page 4

letters to the editors of their local

newspapers.

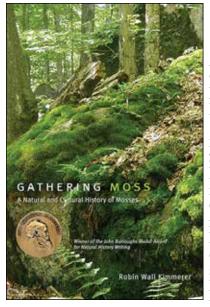
Proving that advocacy matters, that bill was signed into law on April 3, 2024. The program offers communities two types of grants; one providing up to \$300,000 for communities to assess a wetland protection effort and another that provides up to \$250,000 for implementation of restoration. The annual cost of the grant program is estimated at around \$6 million.

However, as Tracy Hames pointed out in his address at our Annual Meeting, 75% of Wisconsin's wetlands are privately owned. These wetlands no longer fall into areas likely to be restored due to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Sackett vs. EPA during the fall of 2022. The case was a dispute over a couple's efforts to build a home on their Idaho property, which was deemed

an area protected under the Clean Water Act. The Sacketts won the case with the majority of justices claiming that protection under the Clean Water Act extends only to "wetlands with a continuous surface connection to a protected water body." Apparently, the justices considered the property in this case to be "distinguishable" from the protected water area.

At any rate, let's remember the old saying, "all politics is local." Advocacy does matter! Our own communities matter! Whatever we can do in our own local communities, counties, and states is most important for our own lives, and the lives of all creatures great and small. Green-Rock Audubon advocacy, state-wide Audubon, and the entire Great Lakes Audubon efforts bring and will continue to bring results for our birds, and ourselves, as well as their/our habitats, and ecosystems.

Reading Reflections



Neil Deupree

Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses by Robin Wall Kimmerer

I hope you have read Braiding Sweet Grass – or listened to the author reading it. Gathering Moss is her earlier book. Focusing on one botanical of her specialties, Kimmerer describes many of the

thousands of moss species. She shows us how they are also specialists – preferring certain habitats – certain niches. We learn how mosses hold water and how they survive in times when the water is not there. As in Braiding Sweet Grass, the author draws on her heritage as a Potawatomi citizen to reveal the indigenous point of view about the natural world. As a PhD in Botany, she recounts studies that she and her students have conducted to learn more. The other threads woven through this book are Kimmerer's personal experiences and insights. Traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge and personal knowledge are blended to make a soft green carpet for our bare feet as we explore parts of our world that we don't normally notice, and that in some cases are too small for our naked eyes.

I am happy to loan my copy of the book. Email me at <u>deupreeneil@gmail.com</u>.

Watch for her newest book: The Serviceberry

If you have read an interesting book about birds and their environments, please let us know in a message to our FB account <u>https://www.facebook.</u> <u>com/greenrockaudubon</u>, or website <u>https://www. greenrockaudubon.org</u>. We'll be happy to pass the information onto our members. Thank you!



Audubon Great Lakes Annual Gathering at Indiana Dunes National Park

By Susan Amber Johnson

Over the weekend of October 18-20, 2024, G-RAS President Josh Erdman and Advocacy and Engagement Board Member, Susan Johnson, had the pleasure to attend the Audubon Great Lakes Annual Gathering held at the Indiana Dunes National Park. It was well-attended by local group members throughout the Great Lakes states; including Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Each local group presented highlights of their activities over the past year, or so, since the last Annual Gathering, which had occurred before the pandemic. It offered a great opportunity to share successes, and activities that may not have been so successful, and teach and learn from one another.

There were many inspiring stories shared, several of which will be shared in other newsletters throughout 2025. For this Winter 2025 newsletter, I am highlighting the story told by members of the Northeastern Wisconsin Bird Alliance (NEW). Speaking for the NEW group were Joe Torres, Tom Prestby, and Erin Gnass-Giese. Their story is one of close collaboration and alliance between and among the Oneida Nation, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay (UWGB), NEW, and their local communities.

Joe Torres is employed by UW-GB as an Oneida Bird Monitoring Outreach Specialist. He is a member of the Oneida Nation, a people who call themselves the "People of the Standing Stone." Torres recalled the history of the Oneida Nation, which originated in New York State. They are Iroquoisan-speaking people, one of the five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. At one time its members held over 8 million acres of land in the United States, but they were forced to move ever-further westward as soon as European settlers first arrived. Forced removal continued even after the Oneida fought alongside the Patriots in the American Revolution.

The Oneida ultimately reached the area in Wisconsin near Green Bay, where they are located today. By 1831, after more European settlers arrived in Wisconsin, the Oneida's landholding had already dwindled down to half a million acres. The treaty of 1838 forced the Oneida to accept a mere 65,430 acres. After the Dawes Act passed in 1887, which allowed the President of the United States to break up tribal lands into private allotments, most Oneida land was taken by the U.S. Government by 1892. It was sold to individuals, who wanted to farm it, or cut its timber.

Between then and now, the Oneida Nation was granted some of its original Wisconsin lands back, and has also purchased some of its previous lands. Today, the Oneida Reservation land occupies a total of 102.27 square miles, or 65,452.8 acres, as they had held in 1838.

Over many recent years, the Oneida have been focusing on restoring their lands to the conditionitwasin when they first arrived in the state. Oneida members, Randy Cornelius, cultural educator, and Tony Kutchma, have restored 3,000 acres of the reservation's wetlands, grasslands, prairies, and forests. They removed invasive plant species, replacing them with native plants. Was their work having a positive effect on birds and wildlife? They knew that finding answers to this question would require access to many volunteer observers.

Fortunately, Cornelius and Kutchma were not the only ones interested in knowing what effects their Oneida restoration work was having in wetland ecosystems. The Audubon Great Lakes has identified this area of Wisconsin as one of its top 12 priorities for restoring coastal wetlands for birds, and other wildlife. In addition, UW-Green Bay holds a Center for Biodiversity with a Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands Monitoring Program. The principal investigator for this program is Data Scientist, Erin Giese, who is also the founding student advisor for the UWGB Bird Club, and a board member of the Northeastern Wisconsin Bird Alliance (NEW).

In 2021, Giese was contacted about the possibility for her participation with a bird monitoring project on the Reservation, which marked the beginning of a collaboration between the Oneida Nation, Audubon Great Lakes, and the UWGB. Joe Torres first volunteered for the project as a student. Now, he is employed by UWGB as an Oneida Bird Monitoring Outreach Specialist.

volunteer bird Since then, monitors have completed hundreds of surveys, documented more than 117 bird species and counted 40,000 individual birds in the restoration sites. Significant numbers of Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Eastern Meadowlark were seen, which had been in decline before the restoration work started. Endangered birds like Henslow's Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow are making a come- back, along with Biftern, Virginia Rail, and Pied-billed Grebe. In 2022, Governor Evers' budget

included an investment of \$175,000 per year for five years to continue bird monitoring and habitat restoration. The state legislature passed it, ensuring project continuation until 2027.

As important as habitat restoration and bird monitoring is to this collaboration, what makes it unique and special is the extent to which there is real trust that has developed between the participants. Erin Giese approaches her work in a highly culturally-respectful and responsive way. She and Torres maintain open communication. Giese feels comfortable to ask Torres whether or not she has made a comment that might be offensive to Indigenous People. He feels safe enough to answer her questions honestly.

As a result of creating this safe environment, collaboration has grown beyond the research, and is extending out to the communities involved. The collaboration has created Indigenous Allies to the Oneida community, and is educating the non-native people of Indigenous knowledge. The research is being conducted using scientific principles, along with Indigenous knowledge. Both are important. Torres also tables at the Oneida Youth Summer Camp and the Oneida, and the Green Bay Farmers' Markets. In this way, he educates the Oneidas and the non-Indigenous people about the need for natural restoration and conservation, and how to be better stewards of the earth.



Oneida Bird Monitoring Project discussed at the Audubon Great Lakes Annual Gathering. Here we see Joe Torres, Tom Prestby, and Erin Giese

Save the dates!

February 1 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Androne Woods, 7355 W. Cleopphas Rd.

Enjoy a winter candlelight hike in our forested preserve near Beloit. Approximately a ½ mile loop. Fire warming pit and treats provided. Donations will support restoration work on our preserves.

Upcoming birding field trips:

Sign up on our website to get email updates before the trips. Details will also be updated on website and Facebook. All levels of birders are welcome and some binoculars will be available for those without them

March 2 8:30 a.m.-11 a.m. Nygren Wetlands

Check out waterfowl migration and winter resident birds. Meet in Beloit at Armstrong Eddy Park to check the Rock River and then carpool/caravan to Nygren Wetlands in Illinois (part of the Raccoon Creek watershed). Led by Josh Erdman.

March 8 8 a.m.-11 a.m. Browntown-Cadiz Springs

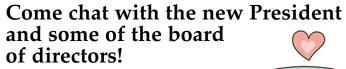
Check out waterfowl migration and winter resident / early migrant birds in western Green County. DNR vehicle admission sticker required to park – carpool options from Monroe will be arranged prior to field trip. Led by Josh Erdman.

Upcoming accessible birding excursions:

These bird trips will be on flat, even surfaces for a distance no longer than 1 mile (one way), and at a slower pace to allow for all to participate. Transportation options will be available if anyone needs a one-way return. All levels of birders are welcome.

March 16 8 am Monterey Park, Janesville

Meet at the parking lot at 814 S. Washington St where it meets the river. Led by Josh Erdman.



Open invitation to all members Come down to Havana Coffee on January 11 at 9 am 1250 Milton Ave in Janesville

We would love to hear your thoughts and talk birds and habitat restoration!



The Self-Addressed Envelope in this Newsletter

Once a year we try to make it easier for you to send your membership and contributions for our work.

The envelope is one way to be in touch with us with your thoughts and suggestions.

We appreciate the confidence that you have shown by your donations of time, effort and money.









Josh Erdman, photos Green-Rock Audubon Annual Picnic

Fun was had by all at the G-RAS Annual Picnic held this year on November 9 on G-RAS property at Androne Woods, Rock County, WI. We had a roaring campfire, which kept us all warm on a chilly fall afternoon. We cooked brats, had potato salad, and other goodies. Favorites among several members were the brats and s'mores.

Green-Rock County Audubon Annual Meeting



Andrea Short won the raffle prize

Photo right: Neil D., Josh E., Cathy E., and Fred F.





Poster table

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out the <u>Birds and Beyond Series</u>: sponsored by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters; programs are free and open to the public.

https://www.wisconsinacademy.org/birds-andbeyond

"Birds and Climate Science," January 26, 2025 <u>https://www.wisconsinacademy.org/evenings/birds-</u> and-climate-science

1-3 PM; Beaver Creek Reserve, Fall Creek, WI In-person and live-streaming virtually

"Birds and Art," February 2, 2025

Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI

"Birds and People with Christian Cooper," March 12, 2025

Overture Center for the Arts, Madison, WI

Knowles-Nelson Legislative Lobby Day, March 12, 2025, Capitol, Madison, WI

Registration is required: <u>https://knowlesnelson.org/lob-byday/</u>

We will advocate for the reauthorization of the of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. We'll share success stories with legislators and demonstrate why its continued funding is essential for preserving Wisconsin's outdoor legacy.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The Green-Rock Audubon Society is grateful for the generous support it received this fall from the following donors:

Eva & Bruce Kuzmanich Susan Johnson Neil Deupree Nancy Ladwig Adrienne Massel Penny & Gary Shackelford Patricia Crabtree Mary Margaret Hosler Jane & Mark Hamel Coral Swanson Ken Marsden William & Sara Stark Yvonne & Ryan Schutte Kathryn Robinson Ed Madere Thank You!

Land Management Report Winter 2024

After a wet start this year we've had a dry summer and fall. This has produced a lot of growth, especially the prairie grasses. It has also made it easier to mow our fire breaks.



We were able to put rock on some of the wet areas of the firebreaks. We also raised the end of one of our bridges about one foot. Dave Dummer spent a half day placing some boulders and rock for a new approach.

As the growing season ended, we started working at Androne Woods, picking up and piling the downed trees. The plan is to start burning those piles soon.

Five and a half acres in the southeast corner of Gabower-Reilly were seeded recently. Both wet-mesic and mesic prairie species were planted.



Join Green-Rock Audubon Society

Your Name: _____ Your Mailing Address: ___ Your E-mail:

Would you prefer to receive the newsletter electronically?

Two Ways to Join

____ I wish to join Green-Rock Audubon Society, I understand that I will not receive the Audubon Magazine, but all dues will go to G-RAS.

Dues: 510 Senior or Student, 515 Single Membership, 520 Couple

• To pay by mail, make checks payable to G-RAS, and mail this form along with the check to this address:

Green-Rock Audubon Attn: Treasurer P.O. Box 1986 Janesville, WI 53547-1986

• To pay online visit https://www.greenrockaudubon.org/donate

____ I wish to join the National Audubon Society's normal membership. (Please http://action.audubon.org/donate/chapter-membership?chapter=Z18 to complete this membership.)

____ I wish to donate an additional \$ _____ to support GRAS's conservation efforts.

Volunteering Interests I would like to volunteer for Whatever is Needed Burning Brushing Spraying Seed Collecting	I can volunteer at: Whenever is Needed Androne Woods Cleophas Reserve Spring Creek Reserve Gabower-Reilly Reserve The Pond (Janesville)	Donate Beyond Membership I would like to donate to Whatever is Needed Purchasing Herbicides Purchasing Spray Equipment
Planting	The Pond (Janesville)	I want my densition to

Volunteer Coordinator:

Fred Faessler fred.faessler53@gmail.com

Times I can usually volunteer:

- ___ Monday
- ____ Tuesday
- ____ Wednesday
- ____ Thursday
- ____ Friday
- ____ Saturday
- ____ Sunday

I want my donation to support G-RAS's efforts to manage or maintain...

- ____ Androne Woods
- ____ Spring Creek Reserve
- ____ Gabower-Reilly Reserve

(Please mail checks according to the directions above or visit our website.)

Membership Form Inside

Green-Rock Audubon Society (G-RAS) membership for one year with quarterly newsletter Green-Rock Naturalist from Green-Rock Audubon Society (all dues go to G-RAS).

- Senior or Student membership \$10
- Single person membership \$15
- Couples membership \$20



@GRAudubon, #GreenRockAudubon www.facebook.com/greenrockaudubon www.greenrockaudubon.org

Board of Directors

To contact the directors e-mail greenrockaudubon@gmail.com Past President: Joni Rousseau Denker President: Joshua Erdman Vice President: NA (We don't have one) Secretary: NA (We don't have one) Treasurer: Neil Deupree Land Manager: Fred Faessler Advocacy/Engagement: Susan Johnson Director: Andrea Short Director: Linn Duesterbeck Director: Dela Ends Membership: Steve Reiscchel Victor Illichmannn, emeritus

We need members to become more active with us. ALL members are welcome to join us for coffee at Havana Coffee in Janesville on January 11, 2025 at 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Your Articles are needed!

It would be appreciated to receive your articles for the Spring issue as timely as possible.

Thank you very much. Carol Herzig, Editor

