

Bird count marathon a success

■ *Cutright's 33 surveys in 33 days raised \$38,411 to preserve habitats for breeding*

By CAROL POMEDAY

Ozaukee Press staff

When Noel Cutright, an avid bird watcher from the Town of Saukville, embarked May 30 on his endeavor to complete 30 North American Breeding Bird Surveys in 30 days, his goal was to raise \$30,000 for the preservation of bird habitats.

He dubbed his effort the Quad 30 Campaign to mark his 30th year doing the counts.

He was even more successful than planned.

Cutright has raised \$38,411 so far and is still accepting donations. His new goal is \$40,000.

He completed 33 surveys in 33 days in four states — two in Ohio, five in Wisconsin, 14 in Minnesota and 12 in Michigan — and saw or heard 179 species. Cutright scheduled three extra surveys in case bad weather forced him to cancel a route.

"It rained at night and a couple of mornings there was a light rain, but not enough to keep the birds from singing or me in the motel," Cutright said.

He awoke at 3:30 a.m. most mornings — often to raucous black-bellied magpies — so he would be at the route a half hour before sunrise. Cutright would stop every half mile for three minutes, listen and peer through binocular and record the different species and number of each he heard or saw. Each 24.5-mile route took about five hours to complete. He then drove to the next route.

"I had the number of species I expected, but was over (his estimate) in Ohio and Wisconsin and under in Minnesota and Michigan," Cutright said. "If a bird isn't singing at that particular spot during those three minutes, it doesn't get counted."

One of the more unusual birds he heard was a boreal chickadee found only in northern black spruce bogs.

"To stop at the right habitat and hear one doesn't happen often," Cutright said.

He saw one black bear and two wolves, but no moose.

There were fewer butterflies than he expected, but he counted 16 species. He also saw or heard eight frog species and four snake species.

Cutright was on the road May 30 to July 1, staying in cheap motels, eating peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches and drinking bad coffee. He used computers in public libraries when he couldn't get Internet access for his laptop to keep in



Noel Cutright

touch with family and friends via e-mail and update his Web site — www.quad30campaign.org.

"The first person I saw most mornings was a waitress," Cutright said. His usual order was pancakes.

He consumed hundreds of M&M candies, eating two of the same color at a time in an attempt to finish the package by eating only matched pairs, a game he started on his first breeding bird survey.

"I cheated in Ohio and got red, white and blue ones," Cutright said. "With all the colors, it's very difficult to do. I've only done it once or twice through hundreds of packages."

Despite the candy and pancakes, Cutright said he lost weight on the trip.

He wore a bird T-shirt and the same sweatpants every day for luck — washing them occasionally.

He drove 5,525 miles and had a flat tire in a remote area. He rode on a small spare for a week until he could get to a Saturn dealership.

One of his goals was to encourage

more people to do breeding bird surveys, which provide early signals of how wildlife are faring as habitats diminish.

The surveys have been coordinated by the U.S. Geological Society since 1966. There are 4,100 routes in the United States and southern Canada.

Cutright, a senior scientist for We Energies, is president of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology and Riveredge Bird Club.

All donations will go to the state's Important Bird Areas program, which identifies, protects and monitors sites critical for breeding, migration or winter habitats.

Donations made to the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology, which is administering the Quad 30 Campaign Fund, are tax deductible. Donations made to Cutright or the Quad 30 Campaign are not deductible but will be matched by We Energies.

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