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Roseate spoonbill

What is it and why are birders calling its stop in state 'huge'?

A roseate spoonbill visits Ken Euers Nature Area in Green Bay. The bird, common in Florida, Texas and South America, hasn't been seen in Wisconsin in 178 years.

PHOTOS BY SARAH KLOEPPING/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Jeff Bollier Green Bay Press-Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY – Northeastern Wisconsin bird watchers have flocked to a Green Bay nature area for a gander at a bird not seen in Wisconsin for almost 180 years. • A roseate spoonbill (pronounced “ro-see-ate”) arrived on the shores of Green Bay on July 26 and continues to draw Wisconsin bird watchers and curious onlookers almost a week later. The bird’s light pink feathers and flattened, spoon-shaped bill help it stand out among the egrets and other shoreline birds that populate the Cat Island restoration area and Ken Euers Nature Area, on Green Bay’s northwest side.



A group of bird enthusiasts take photos of the roseate spoonbill at Ken Euers Nature Area on Monday in Green Bay.

Roseate spoonbills are a shoreline bird that sweeps their uniquely shaped bills through fresh- or saltwater to feed on crustaceans or fish. They are one of six spoonbill species in the world and the only one found in the Americas, according to All About Birds. Juveniles tend to have lighter pink plumage that turns a much more striking color of pink as they age.

While common in parts of Florida, Texas, Central America and South America, Wisconsin birdwatchers say this is the first time a living roseate spoonbill has been spotted in Wisconsin.

Ever. Observations indicate a dead roseate spoonbill was spotted in Rock County in 1845 — 178 years ago.

See ROSEATE SPOONBILL, Page 5A

When is the first day of school?

Rebecca Loroff

Green Bay Press-Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

As training camp begins at Ray Nitschke Field, it's time to start thinking about back-to-school season. Even though a number of Green Bay-area districts begin school after Labor Day weekend, some start earlier than that.

Here's a list of area school districts and when they plan to reopen for the 2023-24 school year:

Ashwaubenon School District

- Aug. 31

De Pere School District

- Aug. 31

See **FIRST DAY**, Page 5A

Wisconsin woman worked on atomic bomb

AnnMarie Hilton

Appleton Post-Crescent
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Elda Anderson wasn't a big personality; she did her work and looked out for the people around her.

“That sounds so Midwestern to me,” said Megan Pickett, a Lawrence University professor. “That really is perfect Scennie.”

Movies aren't usually made about the hard-workers who keep their heads down.

More often, movies are about the people who earn titles like “father of the atomic bomb.”

Christopher Nolan's new film, “Oppenheimer,” has been drawing people to theaters, including Pickett, to see the story of a lead scientist for the Manhattan Project during World War II. The project led to the creation of nuclear weapons.

See **ANDERSON**, Page 9A

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Roseate spoonbill

Continued from Page 1A

'I've been on cloud nine for days now'

Green Bay-area resident Logan Lasee first spotted the roseate spoonbill July 26 while working a volunteer shift monitoring endangered piping plovers in the Cat Island restoration area. He drove past another piping plover monitoring area, saw the pink plumage and knew he'd spotted something unique.

He called others, including U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Jade Arneson and his fellow bird watcher Tom Prestby, to confirm what he saw. In between following the spoonbill and poring through records, Lasee said it became clear he landed his first "mega-rarity," in his time as a bird watcher.

"I've been on cloud nine for days now," Lasee said. "I check almost every day now to see if it's still around. I've had people who knew I'm the guy who found it come up to me. I felt kind of like a celebrity the last few days."

The roseate spoonbill flew away as storms approached Wednesday morning. Lasee, Prestby and others said the bird did not reappear on Thursday or Friday, leading them to worry it had already moved on. But early Saturday morning, another person spotted it in Ken Euers Nature Area and word quickly spread through the tight-knit birding community.

Lasee estimates 100 to 150 people visited the nature area on Saturday to get a look at the roseate spoonbill, including visitors from Eau Claire, Madison, Milwaukee and Appleton.

Prestby became the third person to see the roseate spoonbill last week and said it was his 300th species seen in Brown County and an instant addition to his top five rare birds.

"To have it be such an incredibly charismatic and really wild species was a stunner," Prestby said.

How did the roseate spoonbill end up here?

The roseate spoonbill isn't endangered or rare, but the bay of Green Bay is quite far away from its normal

habitat.

No one knows for sure what happened, but birds do fly off course or get blown off-track by a storm, especially juveniles like Green Bay's spoonbill. Jim Edlhuber, a bird watcher based west of Waukesha, said recent sightings in neighboring states like Minnesota raised his hopes he might see one in Wisconsin.

Edlhuber got the text about the rare sighting and immediately canceled his plans to help friends move into a house. His wife, Deb, packed him a quick lunch and he was en route to Green Bay in minutes. It didn't take long for him to spot it, his 374th bird in 12 years of bird watching.

"It's a huge event in Wisconsin. Huge," said Edlhuber, who shared his experience on his website Window to Wildlife.

What and where is the Ken Euers Nature Area?

The Ken Euers Nature Area is located at 1701 N. Military Ave., north of Interstate 43 near where it intersects with Interstate 41. The 116-acre area is part of the Green Bay Parks system.

The nature area has seen extensive restoration efforts since 2017 when the city, UW-Green Bay, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and several conservation groups began to clear out invasive species in the area. Since then, the project has restored coastal wetlands and marsh areas, improved public access to the nature area and enhanced fish and wildlife habitat.

"This very project is one of the things making Ken Euers (Nature Area) into better habitat which results in birds like this finding a spot like this," Prestby said. "Restoration can lead to really cool stuff showing up at a place like this."

Is there a best time to try to spot the bird?

No matter when you go, bird watchers stressed there is no guarantee you'll spot the roseate spoonbill. There also is no guarantee of how long it will stick around in Green Bay.

With that said, Prestby said the best times to spot

the roseate spoonbill are the early morning and evening hours when the sun is rising or setting. The bird might still be visible at mid-day, but might be less active since it is the warmest part of the day. He also said very bright sunlight can make it harder to spot some birds.

Birdwatchers suggest binoculars and offer tips

You don't have to be a hardcore bird watcher to go check out the roseate spoonbill, but experienced bird watchers did share a few tips that will help make your experience more enjoyable.

The roseate spoonbill often hangs out about 100 to 150 yards away from where observers gather so binoculars will be very helpful for a good look at the bird. If you want a picture, a smartphone camera might work, but bring a camera with a longer lens if you want to be sure.

Do not expect to be able to walk right up to the roseate spoonbill. Lasee and Prestby urged everyone to respect the spoonbill and the other wildlife in the nature area by giving them space. If you approach too close, birds will let you know by staring at you, shaking their heads or flying away. And that can ruin the experience for everyone.

"It's a huge privilege for us to see an awesome bird like this in Wisconsin. We don't want to put the bird in jeopardy," Prestby said. "We want others to see it."

Prestby noted the Ken Euers Nature Area is undergoing habitat restoration work right now so there are heavy construction vehicles entering and exiting the nature area. He asked visitors to keep their distance from construction equipment and avoid blocking paths.

Lasee, a member of the Bay Area Bird Club, said bird watchers will likely happily share their binoculars or spotting scope and are likely eager to answer any questions novices might have. He said learning from other birders is how many bird watchers got their start.

"It's so cool, the birding community, how welcoming it is to everyone, how much fun it is to be a part of," Lasee said.

Contact Jeff Bollier at (920) 431-8387 or jbollier@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter at @JeffBollier.

First day

Continued from Page 1A

Green Bay School District

- Sept. 5

Luxemburg-Casco School District

- Sept. 1

Syble Hopp Elem. / Secondary

- Sept. 5

Denmark School District

- Sept. 5.

Howard-Suamico School District

- Sept. 5 for grades K-9
- Sept. 6 for grades 10-12
- Sept. 7 for 4K

New Leaf Prep Academy

- Aug. 28

West De Pere School District

- Sept. 5

GRACE Schools

- Aug. 29

Pulaski School District

- Aug. 28

Rebecca Loroff is a breaking and trending news reporter for USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin.



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