

# WIMGA



November 2021

WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION  
Serving its members since 1992

## WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

### Inside this Issue

President's Message . . . . .	1
Face to Face Meeting . . . . .	2
New Committee Structure . . . . .	3
The Deer Ate My Blueberry Bush! . . . . .	4
Heart Of the Garden 2021 . . . . .	6
Screeching to a Halt! . . . . .	7
Ft. Crawford Historical Gardens . . . . .	8
Learning the about Woolly Bears . . . . .	10
NJ's Bits and Bobs . . . . .	11
WIMGA Notes . . . . .	14

**WIMGA Vision** - The Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association will be the collective voice for the local Master Gardener Associations and individual members in active support for their horticultural projects and services; build networks to enhance outreach, share ideas and promote projects; and help extend University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension's educational role to the public. The opinions reflected in this publication are expressions from individual master gardeners or associations and not necessarily the view point of the UW-Madison Department of Extension Master Gardener Program Office.

### President's Message

*Marilyn Gorhan, St Croix Valley MGV*



The garlic is planted. The tomato plants are pulled from my garden and the roses are resting quietly under the soil of a "Minnesota Tip". Each year as I put my roses to bed for another winter, I wonder what will change before I see them again in April. This year, I quietly wished for fewer changes than we've recently experienced in our lives but thought about the changes coming to WIMGA and the Master Gardener Program.

I am part of those changes as I assume the Presidency for WIMGA. I am following in the capable footsteps of Jackie Shaffer, who led us through another challenging year. I want to thank Jackie for her continued service and her support of WIMGA over this past year.

Changes in technology will help us to connect without weather challenges as we "Zoom" our WIMGA Annual Meeting in early December for the second year. Additional information regarding the meeting will be available soon. Please plan on attending this year to learn of our accomplishments for the year and plans for the future.

The Master Gardener Program Office has provided preliminary information about the changes we will experience in 2022. While change can be challenging, it can also be energizing. I ask that you remain flexible and open as the Program Office works to improve and strengthen the program.

Confusion and misinformation can happen with change. Please rely on the direct communications from the Program Office as your best information source and direct any questions to the Office by using the link in the email announcement you received on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

Due to the expected changes in the Program that will impact the WIMGA bylaws, please pause your efforts to revise your bylaws at this time. We will advise you further when we have more specific information available.

Gardening is a constant in my life. It requires creativity, lifelong learning and open mindedness to finding new ways to counter diseases, pests, and climates. It's not unlike what change will mean for WIMGA and its Member Associations. I know in spring 2022 as I uncover my roses and think of changes in the MG Program and their effect on WIMGA I'll see many bright spots of renewed energy and purpose for both.

See you in December!

Marilyn Gorham, WIMGA President

*Editor's Note: Marilyn's term, [Minnesota Tip](#), was new to me, so I had to look it up (not an Extension article, but a good description of the process of winterizing roses for cold winters).*

## **WIMGA Face-to-Face Meeting Highlights**

October 9, 2021

It was an enjoyable day to see everyone in person – 32 in attendance representing 25 of the 45 WIMGA Associations. We heard from Mike Maddox, Outreach Program Manager and Jay Dampier, Horticulture Outreach Manager. The Horticulture Program is a new program under Extension and the Master Gardener Program will fall under this umbrella. Along with this change, Mike brought us updates on the Program and how it affects volunteers and associations. The full outline can be found in the “Updates to the Master Gardener Program” email sent on October 11 and WIMGA will hear more from Mike and Jay at our Annual Meeting.

Changes to our volunteering reflected a need for associations to have liability insurance to adequately cover our volunteers performing projects outside of the scope of Extension. Liability will be through the organization where you volunteer. Since associations are no longer under Extension, each association should look at getting liability coverage for those projects that are not associated to an organization. Some companies that offer liability insurance to non-profits include SECURA Insurance or West Bend Mutual Insurance. WIMGA will gather more information for future updates.

WIMGA business noted that the newsletter and other communications will now be coming from [news@wimga.org](mailto:news@wimga.org) and we are working on a database to include all WIMGA members. The 2022 Annual Budget was presented and accepted. The Annual Meeting is being planned. It was decided to hold the meeting virtually again this year. WIMGA Directors elected a new executive committee:  
President - Marilyn Gorham, Vice President - Hali Dessecker,  
Secretary - Diane Kachel and Treasurer - Byron Hacker.

The highlight of the afternoon was breaking into small groups by District. A few of our Districts meet twice a year either virtually or in person to stay on top of changes to the MG Program. They encouraged more districts to meet regularly. The break-out groups also discussed recommendations for WIMGA to pursue in the future. Some ideas included:

- Education Opportunities: Improve Speaker's Bureau, District Presentations for the whole membership and Zoom education
- WIMGA Annual Conference - three counties are discussing for 2023
- Information on Liability Insurance
- Start a WIMGA Scholarship instead of funding the Foundation
- Increase WIMGA Communication: put Agendas and Minutes on the website, clarify relationship with the Program Office

### **New WIMGA Committee Structure**

*By Diane Thieme, At-Large Director*

The WIMGA Executive Board recently approved the revision of its committee structure. Obsolete committees were removed and existing committees were updated and reorganized to better serve WIMGA needs. There are now six standing committees.

The Partnership Committee with UW Madison Division of Extension will deal with matters which link WIMGA and the Extension . The Executive Committee will review bylaws, Standard Operating Procedures and operational business of WIMGA. The Continuing Education Committee will be responsible for organizing leadership seminars and recruiting hosts for the Annual Conference. The Finance Committee will handle the budget, educational grants and WIMGA finances. The Strategic Planning Committee will develop a process for annual review of WIMGA goals, projects and strategies of operation. The final committee is the Communications Committee. Its responsibilities include the development of the newsletter, website, social media platforms and a speaker's bureau.

At the discretion of the committee chairpersons, interested WIMGA members may join the Continuing Education Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, or the Communications Committee. We are especially looking for members to join the Communications Committee to help with the development of the website and social media platforms. For more complete descriptions of each committee's responsibilities, please go to our website, [wimga.org](http://wimga.org). To volunteer for a committee, contact President Marilyn Gorham at [magorham87@gmail.com](mailto:magorham87@gmail.com) or [news@wimga.org](mailto:news@wimga.org).

### **Coming in December – WIMGA Annual Meeting**

The meeting will be held virtually by Zoom  
Early in December from 6:30-9:00 pm

The meeting will highlight the latest news from WIMGA and Program Office Updates from Mike Maddox and Jay Dampier  
We will also feature a Special Guest to be announced soon!

# The Deer Ate My Blueberry Bush!

By Annie Klodd, University of Minnesota Extension Educator – Fruit and Vegetable Production



*Deer frequent my backyard hoping to find tasty garden treats.*

If the wildlife scene in your neighborhood is anything like mine, the only way to keep deer and rabbits off of your fruit plants is some sort of physical protection.

If I don't imprison my newly-planted blueberries, cherry trees, and blackberries in wire fencing, they get eaten to the ground multiple times and never have a chance to grow big and strong.

In fact, deer can be so destructive to fruit trees that almost all apple orchards and vineyards in Minnesota have built 8-10-foot-tall deer fences around their entire fields. Expensive? Yes. Necessary for a commercial farm? Also, yes.

Fall is a great time to protect your plants from winter foraging. You can build exclusion structures at any time of the year as long as the ground is not frozen.

## Small Plants Are Most at Risk

Prioritize protecting newly-planted, small fruit trees and shrubs first. If a deer eats one limb off of a new, 2-foot-tall tart cherry bush, it will distort or stunt that bush for a long time. The impact of one damaged limb on a large, mature bush is less severe.

## Preferred Materials for Wildlife Exclusion

### Small Mammals

To exclude low-feeding small mammals like rabbits, use a loop of sturdy small-gauge wire mesh at least 1.5 feet tall. If you get a lot of snow, you may want it to be even taller to exclude rabbits that feed atop the snow. The cage should be wider than the tree or shrub inside it, to give the plant growing space. If any leaves or twigs grow outside of their confines, assume they will get eaten.



*Use tight-gauge wire mesh to protect tree trunks and small fruit shrubs from rabbits.*

There are a couple of ways to secure your small mesh cages to the ground. You can hold the bottoms down with 3 landscape staples. You can also install 1-2 short rebar poles or stakes per cage, and use zip ties or wire to secure the cage to the stakes.



*Use tall, sturdy metal cages like rebar to keep deer from chewing on fruit plants as they grow.*

### **Large Mammals**

Obviously, deer feed higher than rabbits, so the exclusion material should be taller while the gauge of the wire can be wider.

I recommend constructing a wide-diameter, 5-6-foot-tall metal cage around young fruit plants. It should be sturdy enough that deer do not trample or get caught in it. A 5-foot-long sheet of wire mesh fencing makes a cage that is about 1.5 feet in diameter. That size is ideal for young fruit shrubs like blueberry, blackberry and honeyberry; or for young (1–2-year-old) newly planted fruit trees.

There are many affordable options for tall wildlife fencing to make cages for individual plants. My family uses bendable rebar wire frames called remesh. They come in sheets or rolls and are sold at home improvement stores. They are typically used in construction to stabilize poured concrete but also work great for keeping deer off of plants. You will need wire cutters to cut it, and 1 metal stake per cage to keep it from blowing over. Extra tip: Remesh makes fantastic tomato cages.

It is wise to use both the short, small mesh and the taller cage to prevent feeding by both squirrels and deer.

### **A Caution Against Plastic Grow Tubes in Winter**

When it comes to protecting plants in the winter, I advise against the use of plastic grow tubes. They wrap snugly around the trunk of a tree or grapevine, creating an unwanted greenhouse effect in the winter. These types of guards effectively keep small mammals away from the trunks at the expense of the plant's winter hardiness.

Plastic grow tubes trap in heat during the winter, increasing the daytime temperature at the trunk of the tree. But at night, the temperature plummets again once the sunlight disappears. This creates repeating cycles of warm-to-cold temperatures throughout the winter that actually de-acclimate the tree to winter temperatures. Unless the entire tree guard is under the snow for the whole winter, this phenomenon creates severe winter injury and cracking on the tree's trunk. If you have used these in the winter without issue, that is great, but consider yourself lucky.

I hope you enjoy building protective cages around your young fruit plants and experimenting to find out what materials you like best.



## Heart Of the Garden 2021

*By Cheryl Frazier, Crawford County MGV*

At the beginning of the year, Crawford County Master Gardeners were struggling to come up with a project we could all get behind yet still meet all the requirements imposed due to Covid-19. At one of our earlier meetings, we talked about the strain on the food banks and the stress on seniors and invalids isolated due to the pandemic.

Out of this discussion grew our new project...growing extra produce to donate to our local food pantries. As master gardeners, we are in a unique position to help our neighbors in time of need and what better time than now?

Our first step was to contact food pantries in our county, and all of them were thrilled with the idea of fresh produce. Our second step was to make sure everyone had enough seeds to plant extra this year. Every year, we get donations of seed from the local stores as they clear their stock from the summer. We usually donate these seeds to school lunch programs or give them away during different events throughout the year. This year, we cataloged and sent a list to the membership to let them know what was available for the project. After that, we still had thousands of seed packets for the schools!

Some of our members do not have extra garden space for vegetable so we added another part to the project—bouquets for senior residences, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers.

This tri-fold displayed at the county fair and Oktoberfest include photos from all our gardens and bouquets.



To date, we have donated over 530 pounds of produce and 51 bouquets. There will be more coming as we close out the season on tomatoes, cucumbers and squash. The bouquets will transition from fresh to dried.

All in all, it was a successful project (even with the drought early in the season) and we'll be repeating it in 2022!

## Screeching to a Halt!



Walkers, bikers and drivers find themselves drawn to the incredible Asiatic lilies at the entrance of a driveway on a back road in Ashland County. The large sign identifying

**“Tom and Shirley’s Garden”** encourages the curious to approach the house. Shirley Long, an



Ashland/Bayfield County Certified Master Gardener and her husband, Tom, enjoy every opportunity to share their traffic stopping gardens.



Yes, gardens is the correct word. There is a fairy garden, gnome garden, hosta garden, bridge garden, and many more unique spaces each focused on a central theme.

The yard is punctuated with perennials and native plantings, ceramics, sculptures, salvaged then refurbished rocking horses, a



gnome house, and a working sauna with a history all its own complete with framed historic photographs and poetry.



Shirley recalls spending many hours in the garden with her mom learning not

only about flowers but also about making compost. She attributes her love of gardening to her mom.



The fifteen varieties of Asiatic lilies hold a special place in the various gardens.

Their fragrance, height, and colors used in combination with many other varieties of flowers make a statement throughout the landscape. The Lionhart with black



petals tipped in yellow is especially striking while other standouts include

Casa Blanca, a white lily, and the Table Dance, a pink lily.

Compost produced on the property nourish the gardens.



The mulch is produced using leaves, vegetable scrapes, and purchased bird doo. The gardens require discipline watering and any water collected in the rain barrels as runoff from the house roof lessens the strain on the local water supply.

Our tour ended with tasting several varieties of blueberries and raspberries located near an extensive vegetable garden replete with squash and pumpkins.



Why so many gardens? Shirley beamed and said, “Being able to grow so many flowers to enjoy and share with others is what makes my garden special to me. It brings much joy to my family, friends and passersby that stop and ask for a garden tour. All the hard work to keep this garden up is worth it if people enjoy them.”

## **Ft. Crawford Historical Gardens Crawford County, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin**

*By Cheryl Frazier, Crawford County MGV*

Ft. Crawford asked for help in maintaining the existing gardens. After a look at the plantings and some discussion with the curators, we decided to create something new that would be in line with the period the Fort was in operation...early 19th century. The initial challenge was to identify what didn't fit (hostas, salvia, phlox) and what could stay (echinacea, dog rose, wild asters). The curators were concerned about what would happen to the existing plants, but we were able to assure them they would be incorporated into other community gardens or moved elsewhere on the property.

After some winter research time, we were able to come up with a list of 68 plants suitable for the time period. “Putting Down Roots” by Marcia Carmichael was a good starting point for the list. After that, we did a deeper dig into on-line resources to find the provenance and use for each plant. Some of the histories were a bit convoluted, such as the grain amaranth.

Amaranth is originally from Central American and was exported to Spain during the time of the conquistadors. The grain spread throughout Europe and, 200 years later, made its way into the upper Midwest.

The renovated gardens represent the plants that would have been used by the community from 1800 to the Civil War. The local population was very diverse over that period of time—from indigenous tribes and voyageurs to Americans moving west and new European immigrants. All of these groups contributed to the plants in these gardens.

For example, the tribes and voyageurs used native plants such as blue flag iris, mullein, golden rod and common milkweed for food and medicine. They also grew flint corn, squash and beans. For next year's exhibit, we will have heirloom seeds, for all three vegetables, from that specific time period.



Settlers moving west brought “old world” plants such as asters, candytuft and snapdragons. The Germans and Irish brought cabbage, as a long storing winter vegetable, along with lavender, thyme and nasturtiums.

The plants that made the journey west needed to be more than a pretty flower. There was no room on the wagon for something that was merely a decoration. Most of the plants served multiple purposes, from edible and medicinal to dyes and aromatics.

Sourcing the plants was relatively easy as many of the common annuals/perennials came out of our gardens or local nurseries. The native plants were readily available along the roadside or in fields. I carried a shovel and boxes with me in the spring time, just in case...

Good sources for native plants are Prairie Moon Nursery in Minnesota and Gardeners Exchange in Virginia. Seed Savers in Iowa is a great source for heirloom seeds.

As part of the project, we put together a three-ring binder with photos and a write up about each plant...where it originated, the group most likely to have brought it to the area and its use during that time period. The curators keep the book in the gift shop, readily available to visitors. This coming spring, we will install 3x5 laminated labels for each type of plant, to help the visitors identify the plants and their historical uses. Word of caution: we were very careful to label any plants with toxicity or sensitivity issues.

If you are in the Prairie du Chien area, please stop by to visit Fort Crawford...it is an interesting part of Wisconsin history and please be sure to visit our various gardens.

## A New Journey Learning the about Woolly Bears

By Michelle Hansen, Washington County Master Gardeners

In October of 2020 I received a call from Erika. She had told me that while walking her dogs on a trail near her home she ran across some caterpillars. While some of the caterpillars met their fate under a bike tire, she saved two and brought them home. Erika wanted to identify the caterpillars and what she could do to help them. So begins our journey with the Woolly Bear caterpillars.



As Master Gardeners do, in our conversation, I asked Erika to send me pictures. In doing some research I found that she had two Woolly Bear Caterpillars. These little guys lead quite a life!



Many of their caterpillars are fuzzy, earning a group name of woolly bears or woolly worms. The woolly bear du jour is the ultra-familiar rust-and-black-banded caterpillar of the Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*). The caterpillar has its own names—the generic Woolly Bear, the Black-ended Bear, and the Banded Woolly Bear. *Pyrrharctia* is a monotypic genus—there's only this single species in it (and they're only found in North America). (UW Milwaukee, 2015)

The Woolly Bears are known to hibernate in winter and have been found in little furry balls stuck in ice. Sometimes if the winter is particularly mild, they may wake up and forage and go back in hibernation. Woolly bears have been famous since colonial times for two things: 1) their habit of crossing the roads in fall and 2) their alleged ability to predict the weather. The weather lore angle was initiated by those same, road-building Colonists, who needed some forecasting done in those pre-Weather Channel days so they could figure out when to plant and harvest crops. If its rust-colored middle band is wide, says the Almanac, the winter will be a mild one; if there is lots of black, batten down the hatches. (UW Milwaukee, 2015)

So, I contacted Erika and shared the information. She was delighted and continued to care for the Woolly Bears. She tells me that she made a small space for them with sticks, leaves, mists them with water, and gently blows on them. In return, they respond to her and stand up to “see” her. I wish her the best of luck and now that I know Woolly Bears are pretty hearty caterpillars, they might live for a while.

*Editor's note: Look for the sequel to appear in the January newsletter.*



*Erika's Woolly*

## NJ'S BITS AND BOBS:

Nancy Jahnell-Barnes, Kenosha-Racine MGV

### Sandhill Cranes Visit SW Kenosha County

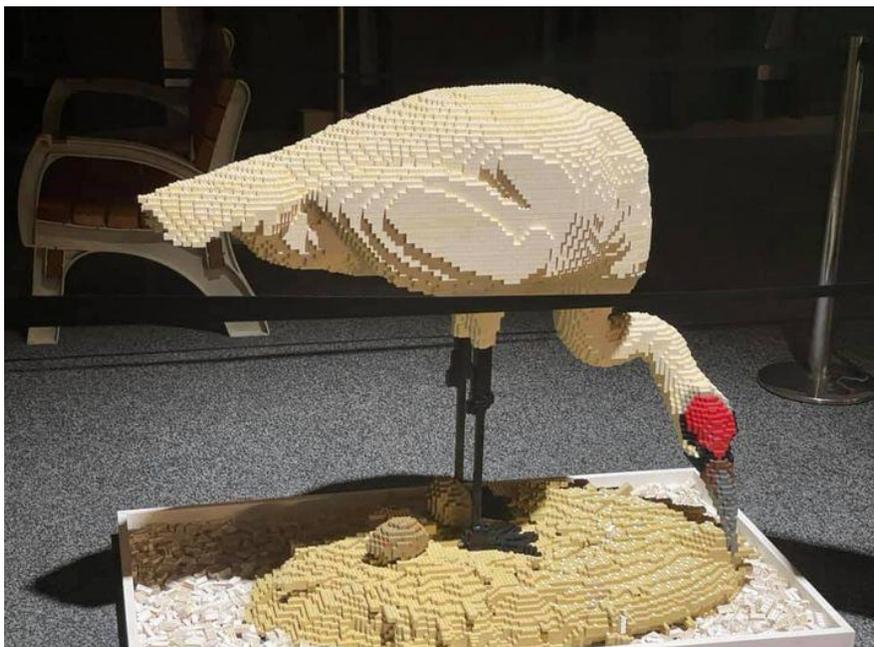
I couldn't resist using this photo, as it is so special to me. We have our sandhill cranes back spending time with us in Southwest Kenosha County. This is the second year they have lodged with us. We have several safe bog areas near us with cattails for protection. We set up two watering stations plus two feeding stations for them. We do not have any wandering dogs in our area thank goodness.

Our neighbors are respectful of them and that keeps them safe. We are very careful to renew the feed and water when they are not here. They rest in the shade of trees, visit our food/water stations and allow us so much pleasure watching them. Our visiting granddogs were out in our fenced-in garden and the cranes came down to eat. One crane walked over toward the fence and spread its wings and our wimpy granddogs almost knocked me down rushing back into our garage. They are great barkers but are learning that barking doesn't pay when you are at grandma's house.

I enjoyed going to a large sandhill crane winter station in Northeastern Indiana but had not known they come this far north. Have any of you had sandhill crane visitors? If so, please let me know and we can share some of your photos with our WIMGA members.



*Sandhill Crane in a farm field in Barron County (NW WI).  
Photo by Hali Dessecker.*



*The Indiana State Fair had a Lego Whooping Crane.  
[#bird](#) [#whoopingcrane](#) [#cranes](#)*

### BIRB BORB FLOOF

Do you know the difference between a birb, a borb and a floof? Quickly. . . All birds are birbs, a chunky bird is a borb, and a fluffed-up bird is a floof. Say wha? When in doubt go to the experts – Audubon of course. The internet meme has been around for seven years now, so it's high time we establish some ground rules. [By Asher Elbein, Reporter, Audubon Magazine](#) – edited by NJ.

Guess which is which of the three article pictures.

There are certain terms that embed themselves into your consciousness, “birb” is one of them. For those not terminally online, birb is affectionate internet-speak for birds. The word began, as near as anyone can tell from the Twitter account BirdsRightsActivist tweeted the single word “Birb,” out on November 2012; two years later, it had multiple entries in Urban Dictionary and a dedicated reddit forum.

The term is seemingly designed for the internet: one syllable, beginning and ending with “b,” connoting a pleasant roundness, a warm mouth-feel. What a good birb, you might say, or I’m so glad we went birb-watching, or I love Alfred Hitchcock’s The Birbs.



Birb is a slightly daffy word memes, and differs in function as a category rather than a stock character. It is roughly akin to “doggo,” or “snek,” yet all dogs and snakes are contained within those words; birb remains amorphous. Sit outside on a pleasant day, and many urban birds present themselves for perusal: strutting, chatting and bustling about. Which of

them are birb? Are some birds more birb-like than others? What is a birb, really?

First, let’s consider the canonized usages. The subreddit r/birbs defines a birb as any bird that’s “being funny, cute, or silly in some way.” Urban Dictionary has a more varied set of definitions, many of which allude to a generalized smallness. A video on [youtube channel Lucidchart](#) offers its own suggestions: All birds are birbs, a chunky bird is a borb, and a fluffed-up bird is a floof. Yet some tension remains: How can all birds be birbs if smallness or cuteness are in the equation? Clearly some birds get more recognition for an innate birbness.

What this question requires, therefore, are some basic operational rules.

**Rule 1:** Birbs are often (though not conclusively) small. Adult Ostriches are thus disqualified, as is any bird larger than a turkey; warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, and other songbirds are the most likely demographic. Even large birds start small, however: An ostrich or crane chick is absolutely a birb. We may understand, then, that while “birb” can be a developmental stage, some birds are birbs their whole lives.



**Rule 2:** Birbs are often (though not always) round.

People tend to regard round animals as cuter, and round objects in general to be more pleasant. (This shape factor also complements the aforementioned roundness of the word “birb” itself.) Given this, the rounder or fluffier a bird is, the more birblike it is likely to be. Here again, classic songbirds and rotund groundbirds like grouse have the advantage. They look like little balls of fluff, an important component for birbness.

Most hawks and eagles are too sharp and angular to qualify under this metric; as would gulls, cranes, crows, and grackles. If the Pileated Woodpecker didn't lose its birb status under Rule 1, it does now, though smaller and rounder woodpeckers like the Downy or Red-bellied are most certainly birbs.

**Rule 3:** Birbs appear cute. This gets into slightly dicier territory. Isn't cuteness subjective? Up to a point, but Rule 2 helps here. Humans tend to like looking at round and fluffy things. So much so, in fact, that violent or unseemly behavior doesn't



disqualify a bird from birbness: the aggression of hummingbirds, the Vlad-the-impaler antics of shrikes, brood parasitism of cuckoos, and brain-eating of Great Tits are immaterial to their round fluffiness. You could post a picture of any of these on reddit under "murder birb" and nobody would blink. Again, eagles and other large raptors are a bit too majestic and fierce looking to count under this metric.

However, silliness or absurdity also come into play: The potoo bird is large and not

particularly fluffy, but its general muppetty appearance makes it a contender for the title. Even the terrifying Shoebill stork sneaks in with this exemption.

Now that we've laid out some basic guidelines, let's test them out. The following can be unquestionably judged as birbs, hitting the natural sweet spot of round, fluffy, and small: The vast majority of songbirds. Burrowing Owls, Elf Owls, both screech-owls, American Kestrels, and other small raptors also qualify. So do prairie chickens, quail, shorebirds like sandpipers, and smaller seabirds like puffins and penguins. Parrots of all sizes are in, despite some of them being quite formidable, because culturally they scan as cute. Little waders like the Green Heron are in, but the Great Blue Heron? Sorry, not a birb. Big raptors, while incredible and fascinating creatures, are not birbs. The same goes for large seabirds like gulls and albatrosses. Swans and geese have solidified a reputation as terrors and are worryingly big besides. Most cranes, herons, and storks are too large and lanky. And then you get to birds like the Cassowary, which is perhaps the least birb-like bird on the planet. Its chicks may qualify as birbs (see Rule 1), but the adults most definitely do not.

Now, one might reasonably ask why it matters which birds qualify as birbs. Strictly speaking, of course, it doesn't. But viewed sidelong, it becomes a taxonomic game, akin to "is a hot dog a sandwich." These sorts of debates are fun partially because they reveal real fault-lines in our operational definitions. It's a chance to take stock, not just of what we think about birds, but how we think about them. Defining "birb" also means interrogating our impressions. It's not only about rating them: It's about reminding us that—regardless of birb-status—all birds are good.

*Oh, the three bird photos? The American Robin, of course, is a birb. The round exotic warbler is a borb and the third fluffed up Northern Paula in the rain is a floof. (No hate mail please! Audubon id'd them)*



We love your Master Gardener Volunteer projects, horticulture articles and grant ideas. **Send us your stories and pictures.** Some things to note about your projects: the number of volunteers and hours spent, contribution to the community whether in education or with place-making and collaboration with UW-Madison Division of Extension.

**Articles and ideas for the Newsletter may be submitted to our editors,**

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