

WHITEFISH POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY

PARADISE MICHIGAN

Executive Director/Naturalist

About the organization and position

For over thirty years the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) has been documenting the distribution and abundance of birds in the Great Lakes region, with special emphasis on migration. The organization is a non-profit, environmental research and education organization based in the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan on the southern shore of Lake Superior. Information acquired is used to encourage public awareness of birds and their environment, and to further the conservation of birds.

Current programs include a spring raptor count, spring and fall waterbird count, spring, summer and fall owl banding operation and educational programs. WPBO is a member of the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) and submits seasonal reports to them. WPBO has become an internationally known monitoring site and has gained status as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society. Additional insight about the organization can be found at the end of this announcement.

WPBO desires to reestablish on-site management capabilities and to significantly expand its current educational and outreach programs. Through these efforts, the goal is to improve our overall operations, increase the public's knowledge of our natural world and promote the importance and support of the research programs conducted by WPBO.

This Executive Director/Naturalist position is an outstanding opportunity for an energetic and committed individual to lead an organization with unique programs and educational offerings, all centered around the environment and natural world; an organization ready to move to the next level of success.

POSITION SUMMARY

This position serves as the Director for research, education and conservation programs established to meet the organization's direction, vision and mission, as defined by the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Board of Directors. The position directly manages all staff functions; develops and participates in fundraising activities; site maintenance and management; and works with the Board and staff to establish short term goals and to accomplish annual and long term plans. The position is responsible for the development and delivery of nature related events; external communications; and works with and represents WPBO with related organizations and the community. The position reports to the WPBO Chairperson; works with Board members on specific program areas; and submits periodic reports and attends Board meetings.

Primary Responsibilities

Supervision

- Directly supervise up to 6 seasonal counters/banders, 1 part time gift shop employee and other part-time helpers
- Work closely with Board committees in the development, implementation and delivery of committee functions
- Hire, supervise, evaluate, and effectively communicate with all employees and volunteers to provide consistent delivery, enhancement and the growth of programs
- Establish and maintain clear lines of authority, responsibility, supervision and communication.

- Oversee coverage of all functions and insure proper methodology, recording and reporting
- Facilitate and oversee the timely and accurate conduct of administrative services, i.e. ordering supplies, hiring services, billings, mail, phone, e-mail correspondence, timekeeping, revenue accountability and bank deposits.
- Expand volunteer opportunities and seek community/area support for the delivery of programs and support services
- Evaluate and oversee the Owl's Roost Nature Center/gift shop with a focus on expanding nature related displays, information and sale items. Operate the gift shop so that it positively contributes financially to the organization.

Finance

- Prepare and manage annual and long range budgets in concert with the Board
- Work with the Board and staff to establish an annual work plan based on the long term strategic plan and short term goals. Participate in an annual review of the work plan with the Board
- Develop, oversee and administrator fundraising activities in coordination with the Board i.e. Spring Fling, Bird-a-thon, Quilt Raffle, Sponsor Research, Adopt an Owl, memberships
- Provide active leadership to identify and cultivate financial support from individuals, corporations, foundations, government agencies and other revenue sources. Develop/write proposals, as appropriate. Work with the Board and volunteers to develop activities which will build and maintain strong relationships with funders and partners.
- Oversee building and ground maintenance; utilization of facilities; develop grounds and facility improvement and maintenance plans; work cooperatively with local entities on joint endeavors
- Participate in Board meetings and provide reports and information as requested.

Educational Programs and Outreach:

- Develop and expand nature related educational programs for schools, community groups, businesses and the general public, working with staff and volunteers.
- Conduct on-site educational programs, i.e. bird observation/ID; night hikes; rock hounding; pond ecology; tree and plant identification; butterflies; owls
- Recruit and coordinate volunteers to assist in promoting and conducting programs
- Coordinate and partner with other organizations to promote and conduct programs
- Evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs
- Seek to increase the organization's visibility, support and partnerships by outreach to local and beyond schools, colleges, nature/historical entities. Represent WPBO by attending and speaking at various events and functions.
- Develop and publish print and electronic information to promote programs and events
- Expand the public relations programs through print and electronic medium. Develop articles, web-based campaigns, advertising and related initiatives.
- Maintain timely information on the WPBO website. Learn the basics of website management.

An Overview of Characteristics of the Ideal Candidate

- **Vision:** A commitment and creative approach to science and outdoor environmental education at all levels, especially for youth, families and communities. Enthusiastic about learning, exploring, and teaching.
- **Interpersonal skills:** The ability to connect with people from a variety of backgrounds. Energy and enthusiasm for meeting people, fundraising and representing the organization. A sense of humor. The ability to be firm and fair in supervision and evaluation.
- **Communication skills:** An engaging person who communicates openly, honestly and directly. Able to create a strong sense of connection among staff while maintaining a leadership role.

- **Flexibility:** Collaborative and highly adaptive to change, with a willingness to pitch in and learn new areas. Ability to live and work in a rural, somewhat remote, location
- **Strategic focus:** The ability to keep the overall goals of the organization in focus while attending to a vast array of logistical details.
- **Strong fiscal management skills:** Experience with oversight of a comparable budget. The ability to work with high-level decision makers, board members, and donors. A proven track record in donor cultivation and fund raising. Entrepreneurial skills in program development, partnerships and earned income generation.
- **Computer skills:** The ability to use software that supports the delivery of a work product, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel and databases.

Qualifications

- A Bachelors degree in an appropriate field is required. The ideal candidate has demonstrated a strong belief in the mission of nature and education focused organizations.
- A knowledge of birds, plants and animals, and experience in developing and conducting educational programs in these subject areas.
- Experience in writing, reviewing and editing informational materials for newsletters, articles, brochures and other public relations materials
- Personal vehicle for business use
- At a minimum, 4 years of executive leadership and delivering nature related programs. Alternative backgrounds could include: a leadership position in private industry or public agencies with a demonstrated commitment to and involvement with nonprofit organizations; a role as the “#2” or other senior leader at a similar/larger organization who is professionally prepared to step up to the Executive Director/Naturalist position; or a top or senior leadership position with another kind of nonprofit organization.

Salary, benefits and how to apply

- This full time position requires a flexible work schedule, with evening and weekend work routinely required.
- This position is located in a rural, lightly populated area of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula
- Salary: \$37,000-\$45,000 plus individual health insurance

Send letter of intent, resume, three letters of reference by March 15, 2011 to:

**WPBOCHAIR@gmail.com
or mail to:
WPBO BOARD OF DIRECTORS
886 E. MT. HOPE HWY
GRAND LEDGE MI 48837**

- Resumes will be considered until position is filled.
- Candidates will be subject to a background check
- Whitefish Point Bird Observatory is an equal opportunity employer

Additional Insights about Organization

The **Board:** A volunteer Board of Directors has managed the operation since its inception. Currently 14 people from across Michigan serve on the Board. **Employees:** Seasonal (part time) employees are hired to conduct bird counts, band owls and the gift shop operation. Volunteers also assist in these programs.

Membership: Presently a membership of 800 from all parts of the Great Lakes area and beyond. The primary means of communicating with the membership and the public is through the organization's website and periodic mailings.

Sources of Revenue: Sources of revenue include membership dues; gift shop sales; fundraising events, donations and grants.

Headquarters and land: Eleven miles north of Paradise, Michigan is Whitefish Point, located on the southern shore of Lake Superior. A small building serves as the Nature Center/gift shop and a banding lab. The facility shares a parking lot with the adjacent Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum. Adjacent property is owned by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Audubon. These properties are under the stewardship of WPBO and all banding and bird count activities take place on these properties on the shore of Lake Superior. Also, about 2 miles from the site is a building owned by WPBO which serves as our headquarters office and where the seasonal employees live while they are engaged in monitoring and banding birds