

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

*THE WINTER ISSUE:* Social Networking, High-Tech Gadgets & Bird Watching ■ Lingerers in Michigan ■ Michigan Audubon Education Programs, Connecting Birds & People in 2010 ■ Photographing Winter Birds ■



# Jack Pine Warbler

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## PRINTING

*Jack Pine Warbler* (ISSN 0021-3845)  
is published six times per year and  
is received by all Michigan Audubon  
members. It is printed by Millbrook  
Printing Co., 3540 West Jefferson,  
Grand Ledge, MI 48837. Contact  
Millbrook at 517-627-4078 or  
www.MillbrookPrinting.com.



Printed on recycled  
paper made from 100%  
post-consumer waste.



Cover Photo ■ Black-capped Chickadee  
Photographer: Skye Christopher G. Haas

Most species of birds leave the north woods for winter, but the energetic Black-capped Chickadee has the fortitude to handle sub-zero temperatures and can find enough food to survive for the winter. This bright-eyed fellow kept me company as I was photographing winter finches on a cold but sunny day in western Marquette County. There are, however, years when not enough resources are available, and chickadees will stage irruption flights southward. Such irruptions often concentrate flocks of chickadees along the Great Lakes shoreline during migration, and places like Whitefish Point can be an excellent location to observe these flocks. The joyful experience of a rolling flock of more than a

hundred chickadees moving past you in the scrub jack pine, in continuous vocal contact with each other, is unforgettable. This Black-capped Chickadee was photographed on January 18, 2009, with a Nikon D80 with a Nikon 300mm at f/8, 1/640s, ISO 400.

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## MICHIGAN AUDUBON CONNECTS BIRDS AND PEOPLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH ...

... through conservation, education, and research efforts in the state of Michigan. Formed and incorporated in 1904, it is Michigan's oldest conservation organization. Michigan Audubon supports bird surveys throughout the state, publishes survey data, provides educational opportunities, and preserves nearly 5,000 acres of land within 19 sanctuaries as habitat for birds and other wildlife. The 41 chapters of Michigan Audubon focus on local conservation issues and provide educational programs within their communities. Contributions to Michigan Audubon are tax-deductible.

## 2010 Member Benefits

BENEFITS & GIFT LEVELS	\$30	\$50	\$100	\$500	\$1K+
Michigan Audubon membership, including a one-year subscription to the <i>Jack Pine Warbler</i> (6 issues)	■	■	■	■	■
10% discount in the Michigan Audubon bookstore	■	■	■	■	■
Discounts at selected Michigan Audubon events	■	■	■	■	■
Recognition in our Annual Report	■	■	■	■	■
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One night of lodging at the Lake Bluff or the Otis Sanctuary			■	■	■
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Nameplate at a Michigan Audubon bird sanctuary					■
Invitation to a donor recognition luncheon					■

\*Applies to new members only

## We welcome new Michigan Audubon members

We thank you—our newest members as well as our renewing members—for your support of Michigan Audubon's bird conservation efforts.

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Please remember to check your expiration date and renew early. If you share your *Jack Pine Warbler* with friends, family, and neighbors, please encourage them to use the enclosed remittance envelope to join you in your support of Michigan Audubon. Members moving or changing to a seasonal residence should contact the office by phone, post, or email so that we can update your address in our database.

## Calendar

### January

- 15 **Owl Prowl**  
Otis Sanctuary, 5:00 p.m.
- 16 **Sledding Day**  
Otis Sanctuary, noon–dusk
- 16-17 **Sault Birding Hot Spots Tour**
- 23 **Owl Prowl**  
Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary,  
5:30 p.m.
- 23 **Owl Prowl**  
Baker Sanctuary, 5:30 p.m.

### February

- 13-14 **Sault Birding Hot Spots Tour**
- 20 **Tracking the Critters of Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary,**  
9:00 a.m.
- 28 **Full Moon Hike**  
Otis Sanctuary, 6:00–8:00 p.m.

### March

- 5 **Homeschool Workshop**  
Michigan State University Pavilion,  
12:30–4:00 p.m.
- 20 **Marsh Madness**  
Baker Sanctuary, 9:00 a.m.
- 27 **Creating a Wildlife Habitat**  
Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary, 9:00 a.m.
- 27 **Marsh Madness**  
Otis Sanctuary, 9:00 a.m.

A full listing of upcoming events can be found on the events calendar at [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org).

# Executive Director's Letter

A NEW YEAR OF CELEBRATING MICHIGAN'S BIRDS



**MANY PEOPLE** make New Year's resolutions. Personal promises to lose a few pounds or read more books are common this time of year. Of course, we often feel better when we know our New Year's resolutions benefit other people or a specific entity, like a relative, a community group—or Michigan Audubon.

There's no shortage of ways you can resolve to "do better" in 2010 that will also benefit birds and the organization. For some, simply keeping feeders full throughout the year can result in enjoyment while providing a benefit to migratory and resident species. Many will schedule times to go bird watching during the upcoming migration or breeding seasons, perhaps signing up for a specialty tour or attending an open house at a Michigan Audubon sanctuary.

Throughout January and February, we encourage you to virtually explore and learn about Michigan birds by visiting Michigan Audubon online. Visit our website, [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org), where you can peruse the image gallery or read about our statewide network of bird sanctuaries. Join our Facebook group and enjoy daily updates about Michigan Audubon events, chapters, and news while drinking your morning coffee. Follow us on Twitter and have rare bird sightings sent directly to your email or mobile device.

In this issue, you'll learn more about what Michigan Audubon has planned for the coming year. In the article from freelance journalist Bill Rapai, you can learn about finding migratory birds that call Michigan home during winter months. A complementary piece by photography instructor Wayne Pope gives you pointers on taking better photographs of winter birds at your feeder.

Our perennially popular annual conference is scheduled for May 13–15, and for the first time we will be holding the conference during the Tawas Point Birding Festival, [www.tawasbirdfest.com](http://www.tawasbirdfest.com). Begin planning your visit to the shore of Lake Huron by viewing conference and festival details on our website or by calling 517-886-9144. Attendees will enjoy a weekend of great spring birding, guest speakers, and educational opportunities.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that Michigan Audubon will have a new home in summer 2010: Hawk Valley Farm. The 63-acre bird sanctuary and former residence of Michigan Audubon benefactor Carl Haussman will be converted to our state office, with meeting rooms, classrooms, interpretive trails, and more. I look forward to sharing details about this transition in upcoming issues. Stay tuned.

In the meantime, grab your snowshoes or cross-country skis and visit a bird sanctuary or local park. Take your field guide along and take care of your New Year's resolutions in one, simple activity: watching winter birds.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Jonathan E. Lutz.

Jonathan E. Lutz, Executive Director



Pine Siskins at a backyard feeder in Lansing, Michigan.  
Winter 2009. Susan Clark.



# Book Corner

## National Geographic Birding Essentials: All the Tools, Techniques, and Tips You Need to Begin and Become a Better Birder

BY JONATHAN ALDERFER & JON L. DUNN  
(NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, 2007. 224 PP.)

REVIEWED BY WENDY TATAR

I consider myself an intermediate birder. I know more than the “average joe” about birds and can identify a good number of the species seen in the eastern half of the United States, and even a few that reside elsewhere in the world. Some give me trouble, especially the gulls and LBJs. I picked up *Birding Essentials* to help me with those parts of birding.

I’ve been birding for about 20 years now—more seriously for the last ten—but for most of that time I’ve been doing it alone, trying to teach myself as I went along. Alderfer and Dunn explain that this might not be the best or easiest way to learn. Leave it to me to go about things the hard way! It seems that many beginning birders start out the same way; the authors, through gentle persuasion and explanation, have convinced me that going on bird outings with others can be the faster way to learn.

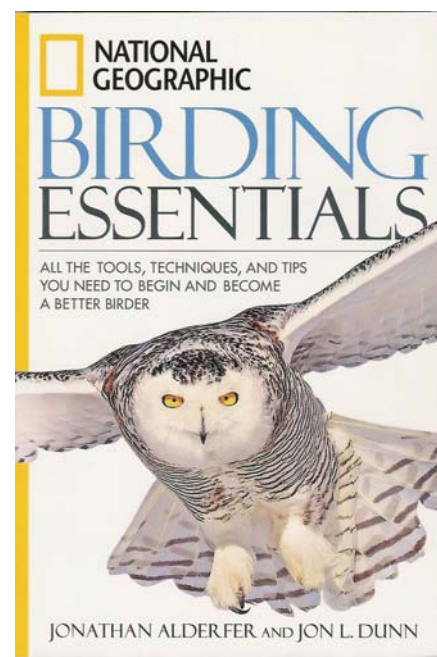
In their chapter entitled “Getting Started,” the authors do a great job discussing binoculars and field guides clearly and concisely. That chapter is followed by ones on status and distribution, the parts of a bird, identification techniques, variations in birds, identification challenges, fieldcraft, and taxonomy and nomenclature. Throughout the book are exceptional photographs to help

explain what the authors are discussing. The photographs in the chapter on bird parts are fantastic, showing all the individual wing feathers as a bird strikes a pose. To these photographs the authors have added lines to point out the parts being discussed. The chapter on identification challenges is fun. Take the challenge yourself: cover the photo description and see if you can figure out the different birds of similar-looking species before checking to see if you’re correct.

Do you watch the birds that come to your feeders and wish you knew a little more to help you identify casual visitors? Then this is the book you need to get started. Do you already bird but want to know the tips and tricks to make identification quicker? Then this book is for you. Are you leading birding trips and can identify all the species in North America by sight and sound? Then you probably don’t need this book, but you never know—you just might learn something. If nothing else the photographs should intrigue you. This book was written to provide the reader with the skills to become a better birder. Does it work? I believe so.

---

Wendy Tatar ([wendy@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:wendy@michiganaudubon.org)) is Michigan Audubon’s program coordinator.



**\$15.95 (paperback)**  
Available at the Michigan  
Audubon Bookstore

# *Social Networking, High-tech Gadgets and Bird Watching: A Match Made in Heaven?*

BY RAY STOCKING

Twitter and Facebook are the two most popular websites on the Internet today, and they are leading a social networking craze. Millions of people are sharing the intricate details of their daily lives. It is madness like this that makes me appreciate the simplicity of bird watching. A good set of binoculars, a field guide, and some water on a sunny day are all you need. I, for one, believe that this is the way it should be.

So, then, why am I the lynchpin for the Twitter and Facebook accounts of my local (Washtenaw County) Audubon Society chapter? Simply put, it makes perfect sense. Allow me to explain.

On a beautiful Saturday morning this past November, I was driving from Ann Arbor to Jackson, with two Washtenaw Audubon Society board members, headed to the annual meeting of the Michigan Audubon Central Region. Less than five minutes into our trip, we received a call from a birder on the western side of the state. He alerted us that an Ancient Murrelet had been spotted and was providing outstanding views. We knew this was a special bird and, using our cell phones, we immediately started calling our birding friends about the sighting. In the 30 to 40 minutes we spent driving to the meeting, each of us was on the phone at least 20 minutes. That's one hour of personal time we spent alerting other birders. One would think there would be an easier way—and in fact, there is.

## Twitter

I'm not the first to say I find the Twitter social networking site downright annoying. It's a place where anyone can post messages about almost anything, in 140 or fewer characters. Twitter is everywhere, and people all over the world are obsessed. A typical Twitter post (a "tweet") can be as simple as "Off to get a new set of tires [Tweet!]" or "Cleaning the house before guests arrive tonight [Tweet!]" or even "In bed sick with the flu [Tweet!]." Why post so many

pointless details about your life to your followers, much less to the entire world?

But imagine on that November Saturday morning that we had received a tweet saying, "Confirmed sighting of Ancient Murrelet this AM. Located at St. Joseph along Tisconia Beach, North Pier area, Lake Michigan." And then what if this tweet were sent to your cell phone?

This is possible. If I had had a phone with Internet connectivity that morning while driving to Jackson, I could have sent that message to all the people we'd called. It would have taken me less than two minutes to transmit. The best part is that the total number of people to whom I could have sent this message is unlimited. Of course, before any of this high-tech messaging about bird sightings can work, fellow birders must subscribe to Twitter and have a text-capable cell phone. They also need a little encouragement to venture into the world of social networking. But if you're someone who loves to share (both send and receive) rare bird alerts, then Twitter just might be for you.

## Facebook

Another very popular social networking site that has made its way into the world of birding is Facebook. With over 350 million users worldwide, Facebook is the largest and most popular social networking site on the Internet. Like Twitter, Facebook is a place where you can post almost anything you want. It includes the capability to add photos, videos, and web links, all to be shared with friends. Facebook also is an efficient and effective way to reach out to fellow users who are interested in birding—especially in Michigan.

Many of you may already know that Michigan Audubon has a Facebook page. Executive director Jonathan Lutz updates the site almost daily. The goal is not to

create social networking chat, but rather to inform the membership about Michigan Audubon activities and issues. Examples of recent postings include:

"Great birding throughout the state. Be sure to make your reservation for one of our upcoming "Winter Birding in Michigan's Upper Peninsula trips."

"There's still time to plan your New Year's trip to South Texas with Michigan Audubon!"

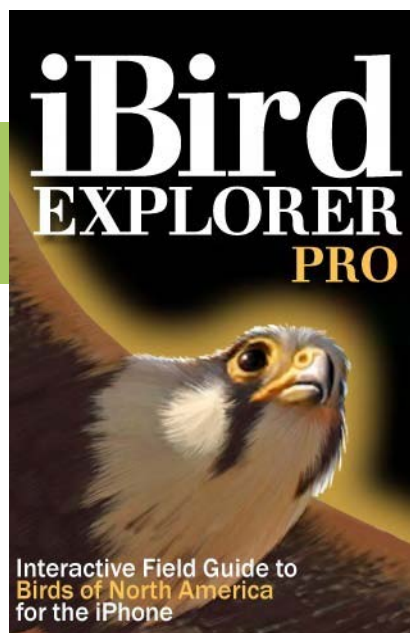
"If you're visiting the Traverse City area for wine tasting or winter sports, be sure to bring your binoculars or spotting scope. To get the scoop on bird activity in the area, visit the website of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club."

Each posting included a link to follow. I enjoy reading Jonathan's updates, and it's likely that I'll attend those events that are within an hour's drive of my home.

Marketing experts have recently noted that, if used correctly, Facebook can be of tremendous value. It allows nonprofits like Michigan Audubon to inform members about activities, creating a personal connection with organizations while giving them more exposure. If you do have a Facebook account and would like to follow Michigan Audubon, look it up and join the group. I'm confident you'll enjoy the postings, and might learn a thing or two about Michigan Audubon that you may not otherwise have known.

## iBird Pro and the iPhone/iTouch

If the above two items, designed to enhance the way we communicate with each other, are not enough for you to think that bird watching has gone high-tech, then I'm confident you'll appreciate a new phone application that could change the way we identify birds in the field. Earlier this year, upon my recommendation, my



birding mentor purchased iBird Pro for her iPhone. After exploring the tool, she told me this application could actually replace a field guide when out bird watching. While it's unlikely that a mobile phone application will ever replace a printed field guide, it is wonderful to see such applications being developed. Still, why should birders be interested in this high-tech gadget and software?

iBird Explorer Pro is an application for the iPhone or iPod Touch. It's an interactive field guide with exhaustive reference material for 914 different species of birds found in North America. One online review calls this application "the most unique and useful field accessory for bird watching you are ever likely to see." For each bird, iBird Explorer Pro provides instant access to illustrations, audio of songs and calls, range maps, identifying features and habitats, detailed descriptions of body parts, habit, feeding, nesting, conservation status, and links to websites which provide even more detail.

Using iBird is easy. If you're stumped with an identification out in the field, iBird Pro has a visual interface made up of icons for the field marks. There are icons for colors, shape, family, and more. Each visual selection step narrows the search results to help locate the bird you saw.

For the purpose of this article, I took my iBird Pro application and did a search for a bird I had seen at my feeder this past spring. First, I selected the search feature easily found on the home page. I was then prompted to add as little or as much information as possible. In this case, I entered only three pieces of information, and selected "search." With one click, I was looking at the Indigo Bunting page, where I compared real photos with outstanding illustrations. Indeed, that was the bird I had seen at my feeder.

Two features alone make the iBird Pro worth its \$29.99 cost: the audio recordings for each bird, plus the ability to instantly look at "similar" birds with the touch of the screen. The price for iBird Pro is the same as for the *Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs* audio CD, in which you get only the eastern or western U.S. birds, not both. It's hard to believe so much valuable information can fit into one phone and be so affordable. This is where birding and high-tech complement each other best.

### Remember, Keep it Simple

I'm not out to change the birding world, nor do I suggest that everyone go out and get a Twitter and Facebook account tomorrow. And please do not go out and buy a \$200 iPhone so you can have the iBird Pro application. What I am suggesting is that there are many new and helpful high-tech products and services designed to make your birding experience more enjoyable. Some are free like Facebook and Twitter; others are not. As a traditionalist, I still believe effective bird watching starts with a good field guide and an ability to study it. It also requires a nice pair of binoculars and the ability to get out in the field as often as you can. Then and only then, if you must have the iBird Pro application on your iPhone while walking the trails in search of birds, please take my most important advise—turn the cell phone function off when using your iBird Pro. You and everyone else around you on the trails will thank you for it.

Ray Stocking (rstocking@gmail.com) is president of the Washtenaw Audubon Society.

## Inquiring Birders Want to Know

**Q:** My wife and I are curious if we can re-purpose our kitchen grease from cooking meats in a way that will benefit our backyard birds. Do you know of any lard-based mixtures that we can use to feed birds this winter? We especially enjoy seeing woodpeckers from our kitchen window. Thanks, in advance, for your help!

Submitted via the Michigan Audubon website, [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org).

**A:** Try the Lake Bluff Bird Mix. During winter, it's used at Michigan Audubon's Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary, located on the shore of Lake Michigan near Manistee. The mixture attracts a variety of winter birds, including Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Chickadees, and Nuthatches.

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup lard  
(or re-purposed kitchen fat)
- 3 tablespoons peanut butter
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar  
(for winter feeding only)

### Directions:

Mix lard and peanut butter over low heat until it reaches uniform consistency. Next, mix cornmeal, oats, flour, and sugar (only during winter months) in a large mixing bowl. Combine dry mixture with lard-peanut-butter mixture. This homemade bird food is ideally suited for plug-style feeders—those with small cavities that are typically filled with suet mixes or plain peanut butter.

Let the birds enjoy!

**Jonathan Lutz, Michigan Audubon's executive director, answered this question.**

Send questions to [MAS@MichiganAudubon.org](mailto:MAS@MichiganAudubon.org).



A photograph of a bright yellow Pine Warbler perched on a wire mesh bird feeder. The feeder is filled with peanuts and has a green base. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown.

# *Lingerers in Michigan*

BY WILLIAM RAPAI

**I**t happens every winter: A birder drops his binoculars in disbelief, rubs his eyes, raises his binoculars to his eyes again to double-check field marks, and then asks, “What the heck is that doing here?”

Sitting in front of him on a snow-covered branch or on a backyard feeder is a bird that by all rights should be in Florida, or on a palm-covered island in the Caribbean, or in a Central American rainforest. Ornithologists refer to these individuals as “lingerers,” but their off-season presence will make them into a cause célèbre for birders as word spreads by e-mail and rare bird alerts. Recent examples of lingerers in Michigan have included an Orange-crowned Warbler in January and February of 2009, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in early November 2007, and an Indigo Bunting in December 2006. All three of those species were found in Marquette, in the Upper Peninsula, where a single snow-fall is often measured in feet, not inches.



What makes the presence of these birds even more unusual is that they were found at a time of year when there is essentially nothing for them to eat; both the warbler and the bunting eat insects and other invertebrates, while the hummingbird seeks nectar from blooming flowers and also consumes insects. It is safe to say that these birds wouldn't find many insects or flowers in sub-freezing temperatures.

So why do these few individuals decide to stick it out when every other right-minded member of its species is basking in sunshine and warmth? More importantly, are these lingerers able to survive the extreme cold with a substitute source of food?

Ray Adams, former senior biologist at the Kalamazoo Nature Center and member of the board of directors of Michigan Audubon, believes there are three reasons why lingerers do not migrate. The first is they have found a plentiful and dependable food source; since they have food they may not think that migration is necessary. For birds, even those that spend their winters in tropical climates, the absence of food is far more important than the temperature.

The second and much more likely reason that these birds do not migrate, Adams says, is that they are either injured or lack adequate fat reserves to sustain a 200-mile flight in one night. In some cases, it's obvious that a bird is injured. In most cases, however, it's not so obvious. Wing sprains or torn pectoral muscles can occur when a bird hurriedly tries to flee a predator and accidentally flies into a tree, a building, or other stationary object. That kind of injury isn't usually apparent to an observer, but it's enough to keep the bird from moving on.

And finally, Adams suspects that some of the birds that linger may be hatch-year birds born with a cognitive defect, although there is no way to confirm this. Adams believes that the brains of these birds just aren't programmed to say, "Everybody else is going—perhaps I should be going too."

David Bonter, project leader for Project FeederWatch and assistant director of citizen science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, NY, says it seems that with each passing year his organization receives more reports of birds wintering well beyond their normal ranges. Project FeederWatch asks birders to periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and then submit their sightings via the Internet. The data from those observations is helping scientists at Cornell and elsewhere to track the movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. The data may also have the effect of forcing scientists to rethink the winter ranges of several bird spe-

cies. Bonter admits the Internet has made it much easier for an observer to report a mid winter sighting of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Michigan, Wisconsin, or Minnesota. Yes, a sapsucker in Michigan in January is outside of what is considered its normal range, but, Bonter argues, these new observations may force ornithologists to reconsider the sapsucker's "normal" winter range.

So where does an Orange-crowned Warbler find food in the middle of a Marquette winter? Usually at a backyard bird feeder. Suet is essentially the only food these birds can eat because their beaks are built for catching insects and are not strong enough to crush open a sunflower seed. Many birds can supplement suet by eating berries.

Even with a consistent food source, however, survival is by no means guaranteed. That's because a northern winter presents two challenges that don't exist in more tropical climates. First, these birds need to find adequate shelter. Many northern birds, such as the Black-capped Chickadee, have adapted to winter by roosting in a cavity. Lingerers, however, roost openly, which makes them far more vulnerable to the cold. Second, because the cold forces lingerers to burn more calories simply to stay warm, they need to consume as many calories as they can during the shortened daylight hours.

Bonter says it's impossible to determine whether climate change is causing these individual birds to linger in the north. "Sure winters are getting warmer in northern areas," Bonter says. "But there's also the heat island effect around cities, which is very different than it was 30 or 40 years ago. The few degrees difference between a city and a nearby forest is the difference between a bird living and dying."

In the end, despite a good source of food and a helping hand from caring humans, the outcome for many of these lingerers is death. "The ultimate fate is that they succumb," Bonter says. "There's no good data, but it's a fairly safe assumption."

A safe assumption, yes, but death is not always assured. Ray Adams remembers a Pine Warbler some 30 years ago that spent a winter as a regular visitor to a feeder in Portage, MI. Adams says that the bird made it through the winter and finally disappeared once the weather started to warm in March. "They do survive," Adams says. "Especially if provided with the right support."

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William Rapai (brapai@aol.com) is president of Grosse Pointe Audubon. He is working on a book on the Kirtland's Warbler.



## Kid's Corner

**Editor's note:** With this issue, we begin a new feature for young birders in Michigan—our future Michigan Audubon members. We've asked some children we know to tell us about their experiences with birds, and we're asking members to talk to the children in their lives about what they see, what they know, what they wonder about when they're connecting birds. We think it's important to remember how the world out of doors looks to children. If you know children who like to write, or to tell stories, or if you can write down the stories they tell you, we'd like to print them here. Please send them to the editor ([julier@msu.edu](mailto:julier@msu.edu)).

### Throwing Food to the Ducks

BY BRYNNE WISNER

Sometimes when it's cold out and there's only an inch of snow, my family and I will go down to the river and feed the ducks—mostly mallards and once in a while a wood duck. They quack, waiting for us to throw the food out. Then the ducks will dive into the water and grab small bits of food. We throw in corn or special duck food. And sometimes, if they're quick enough, they will catch it in their mouths. And if they're very hungry, they will walk up onto the shore and quack until we throw them food. Then, when the ducks are full or lose interest and swim off, or we run out of food, we walk up the shore. And when I turn my head to see the ducks again, they are all gone.

### Feeding Birds in the Winter

BY AARON WISNER



In the winter, when most birds are gone but some stay, my daddy and I feed the birds in the backyard. There are lots of birds that eat nuts, seeds, bird food from the store—some even eat oranges. We trudge through the snow, we pour the bird food in the feeder, and trudge home.

Brynne Wisner, age 9, and Aaron Wisner, age 7, live with their parents in East Lansing, and like birds almost as much as they like cats, salamanders, and toads.

Downy Woodpeckers are common birds seen at backyard feeders during the Winter months. © 2008 Wayne Pope.



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# Feathered Lens

## Photographing Winter Birds

BY WAYNE POPE

**T**he biggest mental obstacle to winter bird photography is the numbing cold and icy wind. I agree: it's hard to push yourself out the front door when an Alberta Clipper spins you around and slam-dunks you into a snow bank. So why not stay inside and take pictures? Well, yes, you can sharpen your skills from the comforts of your home or vehicle.

Most birds at your winter feeder are small and fast. Winter migrants such as Red-breasted Nuthatches and Juncos have biorhythms set to overdrive. Their primary focus in life is day-to-day survival. Use food to lure them to a specific area. I fill my birdfeeders with sunflower seeds, suet, and peanuts for the nuthatches, chickadees and woodpeckers. Millet and cracked corn are scattered on the lawn for the ground-feeding Juncos.

If you photograph birds through the windows in your home or vehicle, clean both sides of the glass. Window glass is not made to the same optical standards as a camera lens or a pair of binoculars, therefore you can expect some loss in sharpness, especially if the surface is dirty.

Morning is the best time to photograph winter birds. They've spent all night without food. When there's enough light, they'll begin to feed in earnest. Pre-focus on a well-used landing zone such as a favorite perch or the foot rung of your bird feeder. Put your shooting mode on continuous burst. Raise your ISO so that the shutter speed is 1/250 second or faster. When a bird flies toward the perch, press the shutter and

hold it down. Use the camera like a machine gun: keep shooting throughout the feeding sequence. It will usually last only a few seconds. One of your shots should be a keeper.

Focus on the bird's eye. Try to position the bird so that sunlight will reflect in its eye.

If the bird is in the shadows, add a catch light with fill flash or a reflector.

Use your vehicle as a photo blind. I have used mine to park near bird feeders at nature areas and rest stops. The cushy seats and warm heater of a car provide more comfort than a hard plastic bucket in a drafty deer blind. During a lull in activity, read a book, take notes or listen to your iPod. Recharge your extra set of batteries.

Above all, have fun. And realize that winter is a blessing. You're not hot and sweaty, fighting off deer flies and mosquitoes. The birds aren't scattered far and wide. They're thronging to your doorstep, enjoying free seed.

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Wayne Pope (popew@lcc.edu) is a professional photographer who teaches at Lansing Community College, and is a regular contributor to the photography column in the *JPW*.



Top: Red-bellied Woodpecker. © 2009 Al Menk,  
Bottom: Red-breasted Nuthatch. © 2009 Wayne Pope.



# Michigan Audubon Education Programs: Connecting Birds and People in 2010

BY WENDY TATAR



**M**ichigan Audubon's mission—"connecting birds and people for the benefit of both"—is made real through our annual line-up of education programs. The Tawas Point Birding Festival, now in its fifth year, kicks off our calendar of high-profile birding events on the weekend of May 14-16, followed by Cerulean Warbler Weekend (June) and CraneFest (October). In between, birders and nature lovers alike will find dozens of opportunities to get outdoors and learn more about our feathered friends.

In 2009, birders discovered more about Michigan Audubon's network of 19 bird sanctuaries through a year-long series of open houses. Open houses will continue in 2010: mark your calendar for the first open house of the year on Saturday April 17 at the Harris Sanctuary near Kalamazoo. Michigan Audubon staff and volunteers will welcome visitors throughout the day, offer light refreshments and literature about Michigan Audubon, and lead short tours through the sanctuary.

If you're looking for multi-day birding tours, then you're in luck. We're offering two guided trips to birding hot spots in Michigan's Upper Peninsula during January and February. Long-time birders Colleen and Chuck MacDonald will guide participants to areas near Sault Ste. Marie in search of these winter birds: Northern Hawk Owl, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Pine Grosbeak, and Boreal Chickadee. Birding tours will continue throughout the year, including an all-new exploration of Drummond Island in late May. Be sure to visit the events calendar at [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org) or join the Michigan Audubon group on Facebook for more details.

In an effort to link the recreational side of bird appreciation (i.e., bird watching) with the conservation required to keep bird populations healthy, we are hosting the Michigan Audubon Annual Conference concurrently with the Tawas Point Birding Festival. Tawas Point was a beacon for migrating birds long before ship captains used the lighthouse to negotiate the waters of Lake Huron. Birders from around the country and the world now make Tawas Point their destination for spring birding. Conference participants will be able to take advantage of some of the best birding in Michigan while learning from experts about bird conservation efforts throughout the state. Each morning will be spent at various birding locations in the vicinity of Tawas Point; each afternoon there will be conference sessions in Tawas.

We invite you to join Michigan Audubon the first weekend in June for Cerulean Warbler Weekend. Specialty tours will take place all three days beginning Friday June 4. Guided tours will highlight Cerulean Warblers, Henslow's Sparrows, Flycatchers, and more. We'll also test our birdwatching skills from the water: canoe tours on the Otis Sanctuary's Glass Creek will take place on both Friday and Saturday.

Our year of headline birding events concludes with the 16th annual CraneFest. The 2009 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service census count of Greater Sandhill Cranes at Big Marsh Lake was 9,382 birds—a new record for Michigan. Be sure to include CraneFest—a combined art festival and bird watching exposition—on your calendar for October 2010.

Michigan Audubon's commitment to educating about both the recreation and conservation side of bird appreciation is strong. Each issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler* includes a calendar and a description of upcoming events. As noted throughout this issue, you can also find us on the Internet via our website and social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. However you come by your bird-related news, we encourage you to visit us during an upcoming event. As always, feel free to call or e-mail if you have questions.

Happy birding!

Michigan Audubon's program coordinator, Wendy Tatar, can be reached at [wendy@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:wendy@michiganaudubon.org) or 517-886-9144.



Pine Grosbeak at Whitefish Point, Michigan. © 2007 Chris Neri.

# Websitings

## Winter Birding in Michigan

BY ANNE DORSHIMER



Winters in Michigan are some of the most beautiful you will find in any state, and if you decide to put on snow gear and brave the

freezing temperatures, you'll certainly not be disappointed. It's no different whether you're a nature lover or a birder. Although it is well known that many birds use Michigan as a stopover during their spring and fall migrations, there are a variety of birds to view who actually migrate here to spend their winter. Below are some places to visit that are both naturally beautiful and excellent places to watch wintering bird species.

The first is the Coastal Saginaw Bay area from Nayanquing Point to Wildfowl Bay. This National Audubon Society IBA (Important Bird Area) is well known as a "migratory stopover site, wintering ground, and breeding ground." Large congregations of Tundra Swans can be found here, as well as Mallards and American Black Ducks. To learn more about a visit to Nayanquing Point, with its "1400 acres of coastal wetland and protected natural area that are perfect for birding, hiking, bank fishing and bay watching," visit [michigan.org](http://michigan.org) and type Nayanquing Point into the site search engine. To learn more about how to visit to Wildfowl Bay, go to [stateparks.com/wild\\_fowl\\_bay.html](http://stateparks.com/wild_fowl_bay.html). Both Nayanquing Point and Wildfowl Bay are spotlighted in the National Audubon's IBA website, [Audubon.org/bird/iba](http://Audubon.org/bird/iba). Type Michigan into its search engine.

The next location is quite a bit further north, almost as far as you can go, in Paradise, Michigan. Whitefish Point offers an excellent locale for birders to spy on such rare wintering birds as the beautiful Snowy Owl, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and the majestic Great Gray Owl, in gorgeous pine forests along the coast of Lake Superior. The website

of this Michigan Audubon affiliate—[wpbo.org](http://wpbo.org)—offers driving directions, details about the park, and more information on visiting.

The Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is another place you can visit in the Saginaw Bay area to check out birds. Many wintering birds have been spotted in this refuge, including the Northern Shrike, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Bald Eagle, Tundra Swan, and Mallard. To learn more about this National Audubon IBA area in Saginaw, Michigan, go to [fws.gov/midwest/Shiawassee](http://fws.gov/midwest/Shiawassee). You should also check out the Saginaw Bay Birding Society at [saginawbaybirding.org](http://saginawbaybirding.org). This site has even more information on Saginaw Bay birding opportunities.

Another place to see wintering birds in Michigan is the lovely Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary in Manistee County, with 76 acres along the shore of Lake Michigan. Wintering birds here include the Bald Eagle, Tundra Swan, and Mallard, as well as many other non-migratory species. If you're interested in visiting this sanctuary, check the Michigan Audubon site at [michiganaudubon.org](http://michiganaudubon.org), click on Sanctuaries, then Sites, and you'll find Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary (as well as other exceptional sanctuaries in the state).

If you find Tundra Swans particularly enthralling, you can also visit the Point Mouillee State Game Area, which boasted 1000+ in their last winter census. If you're interested in hiking the trails of this 4,000-acre marsh restoration reserve in southern Michigan, go to the National Audubon site (find [Audubon.org/bird/iba](http://Audubon.org/bird/iba), then type Michigan into their IBA search engine) and learn more about this Important Bird Area. You can also go to [Michigan.gov/dnr](http://Michigan.gov/dnr), find their online wildlife viewing guide, and search in

the southern lower peninsula area. This online wildlife viewing guide "features 121 of the best places in Michigan to view wildlife," and so can prove very useful when planning a trip to see wildlife of any type, in case you are interested in viewing more than birds this winter.

So while we all enjoy watching birds of winter in our own backyards, why not try to spy a wintering bird in one of Michigan's many stunning sanctuaries or parks instead? Good luck, and stay warm out there.

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Anne Dorshimer is a bird lover and a sophomore at Michigan State University studying Chinese and international relations. She may be contacted at [dorshim1@msu.edu](mailto:dorshim1@msu.edu).



Sharp-tailed Grouse taken November 29, 2008, in Dryburg, Marquette County, Michigan by Skye Haas.

# Announcements

Northern Hawk Owl taken  
November 14, 2009 at Whitefish  
Point, Michigan, by Chris Neri.



## Tours/Celebrations

### **Birding Hot Spot Field Trips at Sault Ste. Marie**

There may still be room for you to register and participate when Chuck and Colleen MacDonald lead two birding field trips around the Sault Ste. Marie area. Chuck and Colleen, long-time Michigan Audubon members from the Sault, know where to find the birds in that area. Seeing a Northern Hawk Owl, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Pine Grosbeak, or Boreal Chickadee is possible. Everyone has a great time on these caravanning adventures.

There are two weekend trips planned: January 16–17 and February 13–14. Each trip is limited to 12 participants and fills up fast. The fee for the trip is \$60 for Michigan Audubon members and \$90 for non-members (which includes a one-year membership in Michigan Audubon). The trip fee does not include meals or lodging. To register go to [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org) or contact Wendy Tatar at 517-886-9144 or [wendy@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:wendy@michiganaudubon.org).

### **Drummond Island Adventure**

Plans for our trip to Drummond Island are further along but we decided that April might be a bit early. Our trip will take place May 20–23. The Wa-Wen Resort and R.V. Park will be our base of operation. To check out the resort ahead of time, visit [www.wa-wenresort.com](http://www.wa-wenresort.com). We hope to see the pair of nesting eagles that call the island home, along with Osprey and many spring migrants. Drummond Island is home to an alvar, which is a biological environment based on a limestone plain with thin or no soil and thus sparse vegetation. We'll explore this rare geological site. We'll also visit the Harbor Island National Wildlife Refuge, which we'll reach by boat. We're going to have a great time. For more details and the latest information, visit the Michigan Audubon website.

## Conferences & Gifts

### **Michigan Audubon Annual Meeting and Conference**

Mark your calendar with the dates of May 13–16 so you won't miss the Michigan Audubon Annual Meeting and Conference. Not only have we changed the time of year for the 2010 conference, but we've changed the location, too. We'll meet in East Tawas and take part in the 5th Tawas Point Birding Festival. There will be many opportunities to get out birding during the conference.

Thursday May 13 will be a pre-conference activity day with workshops and an evening birding trip to Tuttle Marsh. Each morning (Friday through Sunday) of the conference will be spent at various birding locations around the Iosco County area; on Friday and Saturday afternoons, sessions will be held in East Tawas. The annual meeting with a keynote speaker will take place on Friday evening and an evening birding trip will be available on Saturday night. Watch the Michigan Audubon website for the latest news on the conference and the Tawas Point Birding Festival.

### **Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative to Hold Ornithological Congress**

Are you interested in bird research and conservation? If you answered yes, then you need to attend the Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI) Ornithological Congress on April 7–11 at North Central Michigan College in Petoskey. The OC will have workshops and sessions focusing on the economics of birding, citizen science monitoring, diversity in conservation, and tree health. MiBCI is trying something new this year with a wildlife art fair on Saturday and Sunday. Join other like-minded individuals from Michigan's bird conservation and research community at this great event. Visit [www.mibci.org](http://www.mibci.org) for more information.

### **Maximize your Gift**

Does your company have a matching gift program? A matching gift is one your employer makes to a charity that matches a gift you have made. This is a perfect way to make your donation have a greater impact. If your company currently doesn't offer a matching gift program, please recommend that it start one.

### **Cars for Cuckoos**

After more than a century in operation, we are now in need of our first fleet vehicle. It will assist in accomplishing Michigan Audubon's mission with such activities as transporting our bookstore, coordinating birding events, and visiting chapters. We are asking our friends and supporters to help us in this search. We're looking for used vehicles, particularly a fuel-efficient, light-duty truck, hatchback, or small SUV. A donation is tax-deductible to the fullest extent. For further information, please contact our state office at 517-886-9144.



## Education & Contests

### Educational Programs at a Michigan Audubon Sanctuary Near You

The new year is bringing many new opportunities to learn with Michigan Audubon. A year-long schedule of educational programs has been created, with programs at the Otis Farm Sanctuary near Hastings, at the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary in Manistee, and at the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary near Bellevue. A wide variety of programs will occur over the year. Some may be specific to the site while others may be held at all three sanctuaries. January kicks off the schedule with an Owl Prowl program. Please check [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org) for the complete schedule, or contact Wendy at 517-886-9144 to have a schedule sent to you.

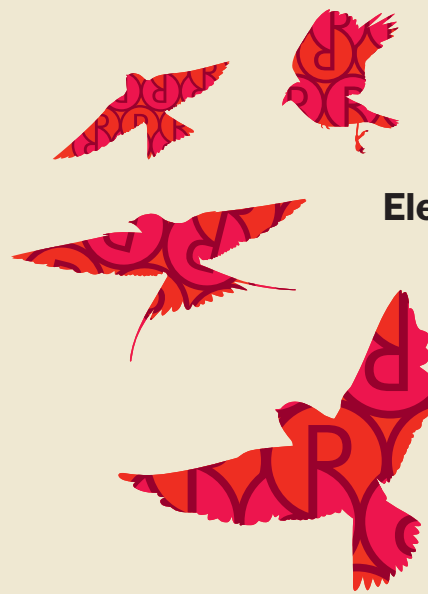
### Michigan Audubon Takes Part in ANR Week Activities

Even though we are changing the date of our annual conference this year, we will still be taking part in Michigan State University's ANR Week activities. Our bookstore will be set up at the Quiet Waters Symposium on March 6 and at the Wildflower Association of Michigan conference on March 7 & 8. Michigan Audubon will also host a Homeschool Workshop focused on animal adaptations. Our workshop will be held at the MSU Pavilion on Friday, March 5 from 12:30–4:00 p.m. The recommended age for workshop participants is 5–12. Interpreters from Lansing's Potter Park Zoo will bring animals to help teach about "Fur, Feathers, Scales and Slime," and storyteller/creative writer Jenifer Strauss will teach the children about journaling and creative writing. For more information on the workshop or to register, visit [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org).

### Coming Soon: American Wigeon Postage Stamp

Artists submitting their works to this year's prestigious Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest had five species of ducks from which to select: American Wigeon, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, and Wood Duck. Over 230 art entries were submitted; almost 60% were renditions of the Wood Duck. The winning artwork, however, depicted an American Wigeon. Robert Bealle of Waldorf, Maryland, created the winning piece. His painting of a male American Wigeon will appear on the 2010–2011 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (to be released in July), with 98% of the proceeds of the sale of the stamp going directly to secure wetland and grassland habitat for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System. Stamps can be purchased for \$15 at your local post office.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker taken April 18, 2009, at Whitefish Point, Michigan, by Chris Neri.



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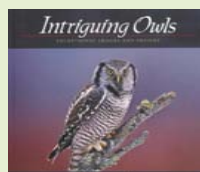


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Now is the time to start planning your landscaping work for next year. The author spotlights almost 70 genera of shrubs and trees that will bring color to the winter landscape. Photographs help to show the best characteristics of the plants, in winter and other seasons.



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One of several books released in 2009 on owls, this book covers all 19 species of owls found in the United States and Canada. Brief descriptions of behavior along with amazing photographs help to give you insight into the life of these unique birds.

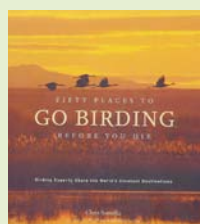


### The Essential Guide to Our Night Sky: Michigan Starwatch

by Mike Lynch

**\$26.95 (hardcover)**

The author has over 30 years experience instructing stargazing classes, and uses this knowledge to create a guide specifically for the Michigan stargazer. The book contains easy-to-use monthly star maps designed for Michigan's northern latitude, information to help you purchase a telescope and other stargazing equipment, constellation stories and mythology, and information on planets as well as other "celestial goodies."



### Fifty Places to Go Birding Before You Die: Birding Experts Share the World's Greatest Destinations

by Chris Santella

**\$24.95 (hardcover)**

The author interviewed the top names in ornithology, the director of the Cornell Lab, and the president of the Nature Conservancy to come up with the list of destinations. Michigan doesn't make the list but 24 locations in the United States do. Each location lists the person who recommended it, often quotes stories from them, includes a description of the place, names the species you may see, tells the best way to get there and the best time to visit, plus provides numbers for tours and accommodations

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