

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE WINTER ISSUE: Simple Bird Feeding Solutions ■ Birding at the Wastewater ■
Wind Energy ■ David Frankel Portrays the Passion of Bird Watching



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Snowy Owl in Flight

Photographer: Josh Haas

Some North American Snowy Owls remain on their breeding grounds year-round, while others migrate in winter to southern Canada and the northern half of the contiguous United States. In Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Snowy Owls occur regularly in winter, and they are sometimes seen in the Lower Peninsula as well. This photo was taken on January 10, 2010, at 9:39 a.m. in the Lower Peninsula, using a Canon 1D Mark II with a 500mm lens, with a shutter speed of 1/1250th second and an aperture of f9.

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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.

Executive Director's Letter



THE STORY THAT BEGINS

on page 2 this month, "Cheap, cheap: Simple Bird Feeding Solutions," is about feeding birds. I know: ho hum. You've probably bought a bird feeder or two, right? Maybe you already maintain a dozen or more feeders in your yard, using a variety of feeding methods to attract a diversity of species. I understand if you're bored with the topic, but indulge me and flip to the page where Bill Stovall's article begins.

Bill is the owner of a Michigan-based company, Stovall Products, which makes some of the longest-lasting wooden bird feeders you can buy. Bill's designs and his company create products that rarely need replacing, thus minimizing the impact on the bird enthusiast's wallet. We are excited to begin 2011 with an article about the simplicity of feeding wild birds and how it can be accomplished while maintaining a tight budget for household expenses. The article kicks off a year-long effort to bring to our members inexpensive ways to start or maintain an interest in wild birds. Future pieces will focus on budget-friendly bird photography, choosing good (but inexpensive) optics, and close-to-home birding destinations.

Each issue of 2011 will also feature one of Michigan's birding hotspots. These articles will be written by local birders with local knowledge, assuring that even places you've birded before become new again. Our birding destination series will highlight access, species diversity, seasonal changes—even nearby sandwich shops. Ric Pedler, a former member of the Michigan Audubon Board of Directors, begins the series with a great perspective on the Muskegon wastewater facility in west Michigan. If you think that good birding doesn't exist in the middle of winter, you haven't been to Muskegon.

Don't skip over these stories because you think you've read everything possible about feeding wild birds, or because you've already birded the Muskegon

site. And don't read these stories thinking that you're the only one who might benefit from the information they offer. Birds and the enjoyment that comes from watching birds—out our kitchen windows or in the field—are things easily shared with a friend, neighbor, or young person.

I am delighted to introduce the American Birding Association's Young Birder of the year, Harold Eyster. An Ann Arbor resident, Harold is an inspiration to birders young and old, and I hope you enjoy his piece in this issue's Kids' Corner. Opportunities for young birders are starting to take hold in Michigan. Chapters such as the Capital Area Audubon Society (CAAS) are coming up with new ways to reach out to schools and to spark interest in birds among young people. CAAS is now in its second year of distributing backpacks overflowing with nature-related supplies to school teachers; teachers reward students with the backpack for an evening or a weekend, and the students return with all kinds of positive feedback. A Junior Audubon club has existed in Grand Rapids for years, and now a similar club is servicing Kalamazoo, Calhoun, and Barry Counties combined. If you know of a young birder (or potential young birder) in southwestern Michigan, make sure they're aware of these fun opportunities.

On behalf of the Michigan Audubon family—board, volunteers, and staff—I wish you a happy new year, full of new birding adventures. We hope the information you find in the *Jack Pine Warbler* continues to inspire you and assist you in fulfilling your passion for Michigan birds.

Best regards,

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

Jonathan E. Lutz



Snowy owl, *Bubo scandiacus*. Snowy Owls will lose their black feathers with age. 2006.

Cheap, Cheap: Simple Bird Feeding Solutions

BY BILL STOVALL

MOST OF THE elements for successful feeding are probably already in your yard. Trees, shrubs, and flowers—especially native species—attract birds because they offer shelter and food (in the form of berries or insects). Water will also attract wild birds to your yard; a feature as simple as a mud puddle formed after a soaking rain can bring your outdoor space to life with bird activity.

Are you interested in creating more habitat, adding a water feature, or increasing the food sources on your property? These simple suggestions can help prepare yards of any size for the arrival of wild birds, and at a bare minimum of expense to the bird enthusiast.



Around-the-house solutions to attracting birds

If you're starting with a clear lot or developing a landscape plan, consider seeking tree and shrub species that are native to your area. Doug Tallamy, University of Delaware professor, discusses the value of native vegetation extensively in his book, *Bringing Nature Home* (Timber Press, 2007). You may be asking yourself, "What should I plant?" In response, Tallamy writes, "Plant the species that support the most insect biodiversity." Featured in the book is a chart boasting the number of butterfly and moth species supported by families of woody plants. The family of oaks, for example, is known to support 534 species of these insects. The larvae of butterflies and moths are an important food source for wild birds, and planting an oak tree in your yard will provide both habitat and food.

A water feature can be as simple as a temporary post-rain puddle. If you are in a position to install a more permanent water source, and lack natural conditions, there are still a number of options for attracting birds. A small garden pond will go a long way towards attracting not only birds, but small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Ponds can be constructed from simple materials—an empty plastic storage bin, a shallow hole lined with plastic sheeting, or an old wheelbarrow tub (to name a few). Homemade ponds will benefit from partial shade to limit algae growth, and semi-frequent water changes if you're not planning to utilize a pump for aeration. Surround your new water feature with planted or potted plants so your avian visitors don't feel too exposed.

Providing simple bird-feeding stations is also a simple task, using items from around the yard. Logs cut into sections and pitted with small cavities can be suspended or placed throughout your yard and periodically filled with peanut butter and seed. So that your feathered friends feel more comfortable, create some small brush piles near your feeding stations where birds can dash back and forth.

Investing in equipment, seed

Many people who enjoy feeding birds have cut back on their seed purchases due to recent economic conditions. To limit the impact of your bird-feeding hobby on the household budget, consider cutting back on the number of times you fill your feeder. Black oil sunflower seed is a universal bird-friendly seed. A fifty-pound bag costs approximately \$16; three pounds of this seed in a five-pound feeder is enough for one day. If your feeder runs out of seed, there's food in nature and the birds know how to find it. No need to feel bad if your feeder is empty for a few days. About 80% of a wild bird's diet comes from sources other than feeders. A steel garbage can with a secure lid is suggested for storing seed and preventing pests from chowing down on your investment.

Investing in a quality bird feeder and caring for it through the year will help limit how much you spend on bird-feeding equipment. A simple model of a feeder made from cedar wood will run about \$40 and can last 15 years; plastic tube-type feeders with metal ports (holes) last a decade or more, and many of these more modern feeders come equipped with lifetime warranties.

Suet feeders are another category to attract insect-eating birds. Suet is protein similar to the kind birds get from feeding on invertebrates. A suet basket takes cakes of suet and seed; high-quality suet cakes are available at most grocery stores, and pure suet can be purchased from a local butcher.

Regardless of how you choose to attract wild birds to your yard, there's one thing that's for certain: simple techniques and savvy selection of feeders and seed will stretch your dollar a long way.

Bill Stovall is the owner of Stovall Products, a bird house and bird feeder manufacturer located in Delton, MI, and may be reached at stovall_products@mei.net. He is an avid birdwatcher and enjoys the return of Common Loons to his lake each summer—one of the southern-most breeding pairs of loons in North America.

Nottawa Wild Bird Supply

A new vendor at CraneFest XVI was Jim Brandon, owner of Nottawa Wild Bird Supply. Jim's stores, located in Tekonsha and Nottawa, Michigan, feature products made by author Bill Stovall of Stovall Products. Many of Bill's designs are available for purchase at www.nottawawildbirdsupply.com.



Birding at the Wastewater

BY RIC PEDLER

LOCALS JUST CALL IT “the Wastewater,” an unappealing name for a wonderful birding area.

Admirably performing the job for which it was named, the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System also acts as a nature area, with over seventeen square miles of various habitats supporting a surprising diversity of animals and plants.

For many reasons—of both natural and human origin—the MCWMS attracts birds like a magnet. Situated on Lake Michigan’s north-south migration corridor and along the imaginary east-west overlap of northern and southern bird breeding ranges, the Wastewater’s two large lagoons are also visible to birds flying more than a hundred miles away. Unlike inland lakes encircled by trees, the Wastewater lagoons are surrounded by miles of open fields.

Obviously the lagoons attract waterbirds and shorebirds, but the Wastewater is not just lagoons. It’s farm fields, grasslands, woodlots, mini-marshes, small ponds, abandoned orchards, feeders by the office, and more. The most notable bird attracted was a passerine, the White Wagtail of April 1985.

Annual breeders include Orchard Oriole and Upland Sandpiper, not to mention gulls (there were over 13,000 Ring-billed or Herring Gull eggs on the center dike last spring). During migration, the number of shorebird species (not individuals) rivals any other site in Michigan.

But now it’s winter, and all the common birds are here, from ducks to raptors, woodpeckers to sparrows. How might you find some special ones?

When Snowy Owls invade, they’re usually well camouflaged on the white ground. However, they sometimes perch on the spray rigs in the circular fields. They also like the rocks along the lagoon edges, especially on the center dike.



Orchard Oriole. © Mike Boyce.

Horned Larks forage on the gravel roads when the fields are snow-covered. They also peck at the spilled grain around the silos of the granary on the east side of Swanson, north of White. When the farm fields display stubble, stop frequently along Swanson to check them thoroughly and to listen carefully. Your efforts may lead to Snow Buntings or Lapland Longspurs.

A Golden Eagle or two usually spend the winter at the Wastewater. Look especially anywhere along White Road and on the pylons north of the East Lagoon. They’re seen less often south of the lagoons. Dark eagles on the lagoon ice are probably non-adult Balds.

Late in the evening, look for Short-eared Owls near the intersection of Swanson and Laketon by the model airplane airport. Historically, there is no better place

to find this owl, which is an endangered species in Michigan. During the last half hour of daylight, slowly pan your binoculars around those fields. As the light diminishes, your chances increase. You might also see a late-flying Rough-legged Hawk or Northern Harrier this way. Before leaving the intersection, use your high-beam car headlights to scan the nearby fields for glimpses of night-flying raptors. In daylight, the fields west of that intersection to the Laketon dead end are good for Northern Shrike and American Kestrel.

The lagoons are waterbird smorgasbords. Amid the regular customers (American Black Duck, Gadwall, etc.) and not-so-regular (Green-winged Teal, American Coot, etc.) you will sometimes find the proverbial “odd duck” (or grebe, or goose, or gull). Set up your scope at either end of the main dike and check all open water



Ring-billed Gull. © Cory Gildersleeve.

and ice. Pay attention to any individual isolated from the others.

If a flock suddenly rises or begins to squawk, quack, or honk for no apparent reason, look quickly for the reason. It's sometimes a Snowy or a Peregrine. A falcon flying over the lagoons is most likely a Peregrine, and more likely a Merlin than a Kestrel.

If it's a Redpoll year, the center dike is the place to look. As with all birds pursued there, they may fly from your car and land further ahead, repeating this behavior each time you approach, until they run out of dike. Their final flight will usually be away from the dike to circle back behind you. Be prepared for that and you'll get an excellent view of them flying by.

Don't assume that all of the geese you see are Canada Geese. If you're patient, there is a good chance you might see Snow, Greater White-Fronted, or Cackling Geese. Don't be surprised if you see a Domestic Goose (*Anser anser*), too.

There's no guarantee what species you'll see, but you *will* see birds at the Wastewater.

Ric Pedler (oakridge35@yahoo.com) is a former board member of Michigan Audubon and a current board member of the Muskegon Nature Club. His interests include birding, spending time with his grandchildren, exploring the world of computers, and sports.

Tips for Birding the Wastewater



Enter the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System off Maple Island Road (B-31) 2.1 miles north of Apple Avenue (M-46). Drive east 1.5 miles and turn right to the Administration building.

Birders are always welcome at MCWMS, but they need permission. Get a daily or yearly pass at the office (weekdays 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.) or call ahead (231-724-3440) for weekend birding instructions. Tours are available.

A spotting scope is highly recommended. Typically you drive, stop, grab your scope and tripod, hop out for a look, pile back into your car, and repeat that process over and over. Plan your itinerary with the sun's position in mind; good lighting beats silhouettes for making identifications at the Wastewater.

MCWMS vehicles occasionally need right-of-way. Check your rearview mirror often. Stay to the right as you drive and when you stop. Never drive around barricades or into unplowed snow.

Assuming good weather and surface conditions, any passenger car will do. Most driving is on regular roads: 4 miles of White Road, paved east-to-west; 4.5 miles of Swanson, improved gravel north-to-south; and 1/2 mile of Laketon (unmarked), improved gravel west from Swanson a mile south of M-46.

The rest is on dikes surrounding and bisecting the 1,700 acres of lagoons. Accessible from behind the Administration building or off Swanson north of Apple, these are improved gravel and wide enough for two cars (except, perhaps, the center dike in winter, so take a long look ahead before driving that if you're not comfortable backing up long distances).

There's plenty of additional birding information about MCWMS at www.muskegon-countywastewater.com/birding.shtml.



Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*. 2007.

Websitings

Weighing the Benefits: The Effects of Wind Turbines on Wildlife

BY DANIELLE SHARP



Lower Michigan wind energy development. © 2008 Caleb Putnam

Wind turbines are a relatively new concept for Michigan's landscape, and with the introduction of new construction, there are concerns and issues that need to be addressed. While wind turbines help the environment by creating a form of energy that is both clean and renewable, they may have negative effects on wildlife if installed near critical habitats.

Wind turbines—also known as windmills or wind power units—use wind to generate energy, which can directly fuel activities such as pumping water and cutting lumber. The wind power can also be converted to electricity for homes and businesses. Turbines are favorable when they are cost-effective, and are perceived to have a positive impact on the environment, as they do not require the burning of fossil fuels to operate.

There are high hopes for using wind power as a permanent, renewable energy source in Michigan. One proposed development is the Gail Windpower Project (1) in Manistee and Benzie Counties. Headed by Duke Energy, this project involves building 56 wind turbines on approximately 8,000 acres of land. Duke claims that the combined energy from its turbines will create enough electricity to power nearly 30,000 homes. Benefits of this project may eventually include lower energy costs, tax revenues for the community, and construction jobs.

According to the Gail project website, Duke Energy is checking with appropriate state, county, and local agencies to evaluate the potential impacts of construction and wind power operations on wildlife. Wind turbines are a potential threat to wildlife, particularly winged creatures. Collision is a concern for raptors—hawks, eagles, falcons, owls, and vultures—and other large birds such as ducks, geese, swans, and cranes. Many birds are known to fly near turbines on their migratory routes. Thus, wind power may pose a significant threat to birds, especially threatened and endangered species with already small populations.

Bats are also affected by wind turbines and can suffer from collisions (2). For this reason, coalitions such as the Bats and Wind Energy Cooperative (BWEC) (3) are actively seeking solutions to such problems. The BWEC is an alliance of private industry, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations that works to develop ways to minimize or prevent the mortality of bats caused by wind turbines.

In order to protect bats, BWEC focuses on three areas of research that will resolve issues and shape future research. Pre-construction monitoring assesses bat activity levels at proposed wind turbine

sites. Post-construction fatality searches produce estimates of fatalities, compare fatality estimates among facilities, and determine patterns of fatality in relation to weather and habitat variables. Additional research tests the effectiveness of seasonal low-wind shut-downs and deterrent devices on reducing bat fatalities.

A second wind-energy project that's gained attention from bird enthusiasts is located in Muskegon County (4). The county's public works board and staff members are considering an installation of commercial-sized wind turbines that will cover an 11,000-acre wastewater space. One of the many concerns with this project was mentioned in a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (5): harm to birds. According to one report, county officials have performed studies to show that birds would not be severely affected.

Location is a key element in wind turbine development. Muskegon County officials are working with a biologist who specializes in threats to habitats, and hope to demonstrate for federal and state officials that the proposed wind turbines will have an insignificant effect on birds.

The Great Lakes flyways are migratory routes and could become a real danger zone if turbines are sited without sufficient data collection. Careful consideration of the placement of new wind turbines in Michigan is one step in the right direction: giving our wildlife the protection it deserves.

Visit these sites:

- (1) www.duke-energy.com/gailwind/
- (2) www.batsandwind.org/default.asp
- (3) www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/index.ssf/2010/10/muskegon_county_hires_consulta.html
- (4) www.fort.usgs.gov/batswindmills/
- (5) www.fws.gov/

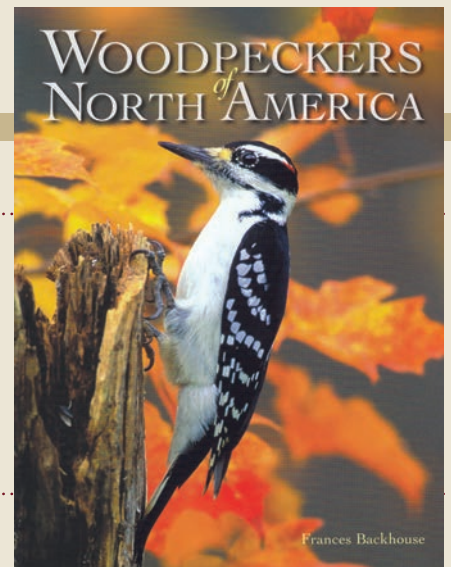
Danielle Sharp (sharpda2@msu.edu), a senior professional writing major at Michigan State University, is an intern at both Michigan Audubon and MSU's Residential and Hospitality Services in Marketing Communications. She's been involved with a multitude of projects including writing and editing content for marketing materials used around campus, newspaper ads, posters, online articles, billboards, newsletters, menus, press releases, handbooks, and more.

Book Corner

Woodpeckers of North America

BY FRANCES BACKHOUSE
(FIREFLY BOOKS, 2005. 232 PP.)

REVIEWED BY JOHN BAUMGARTNER



There are few birds as interesting as the woodpeckers. I have long been fascinated by this group. Since many are non-migratory, they can be observed throughout the year. Some, such as the Pileated and Pale-billed, are extraordinarily spectacular. Their ability to chisel out protective nesting and roosting sites and their effect on trees and other wildlife render them unique in the bird world. No other bird is so anatomically built to deal with the hammering and excavating that these birds do, either in foraging or making a nest site. While they do not compare vocally with warblers or thrushes, few other birds are drummers. And what would old Hollywood movie jungle scenes be without the call of a Pileated Woodpecker? There is a distinctive mystique about them. All these unique features are well covered in this useful book by Frances Backhouse.

While it may be difficult to determine where the geographical line for North American woodpeckers is drawn, as Backhouse herself admits, designating

the area north of the Tropic of Cancer makes ecological sense. Within this area are 28 species in seven genera. Thus, included in the book are the Golden Olive, Lineated, Gray-crowned, Imperial and Pale-billed even though these woodpeckers are not found within the United States. Several other woodpeckers share a common ecosystem in both Mexico and the United States. A companion book which covers a larger geographical area would be Alexander Skutch's *Life of the Woodpecker*.

More than half of the book deals with the general ecology of North American woodpeckers including anatomy, communication, nesting, reproduction, mortality, feeding habits, relationship between other species, and human interaction. In these chapters there is a vast amount of information on behavior and other aspects of the life of a woodpecker. The last part of the book contains profiles of the various species, including the Ivory-billed, whose existence is in question, and the larger Imperial Woodpecker, which is believed to be extinct.

While this book is not a field guide for identification, there are detailed descriptions of all the birds in the profile section. Included is a range map for each species, packed with great photographs of the birds as well as line drawings of certain anatomical features. The writing style, steeped in scientific understanding, is readable and accessible to anyone interested in birds. For a more complete scientific approach one would need to look for individual species accounts in *The Birds of North America* found in most university libraries. As a general work on the woodpeckers of North America, this is a valuable and attractive book.

John Baumgartner is a retired UCC clergy person who in early childhood developed an interest in the natural world, especially birds. Over the years he has served as president of two Audubon chapters, was part of the organizing group for the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, and served on that board for over ten years. He currently serves as secretary of Michigan Audubon's Board of Directors. John can be reached at jeb1015@comcast.net.

Wind Energy: Still Running against the Wind

BY TOM FUNKE



North American wind farm. 2007.

IT SEEMS LIKE every time I read the news, another wind farm is being proposed. This is evident in our office, as I receive e-mails and phone calls on a fairly regular basis regarding the most recent wind farm rumored to be going up somewhere in Michigan.

As with the Internet, there is little federal or state regulation of wind energy. It's every agency for itself, as about the only way federal or state regulators can impact a wind farm is if it triggers an existing regulation that's unrelated to wind energy. For example, one regulation is the Michigan's Endangered Species Act.

"For anyone concerned about wind farms that may be planned in their area, the best thing that can be done is to connect with your township and county supervisors, commissioners, and planning or zoning boards to learn what is being proposed and to voice your concerns," says Karen Cleveland, All-Bird Biologist for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

Lacking a framework to reference, it is township and county governments that are pressured into quickly writing ordinances that determine siting of windmills. Michigan has over one thousand townships and 83 counties, which means a vari-

ety of ordinances that may or may not take into consideration Michigan Audubon's main concern: the impact on birds.

The recent surge of interest in wind energy is due to moves by the state of Michigan to encourage utilities to provide renewable energy. Large-scale utilities are mandated to provide no less than 10% of their energy portfolio as renewable energy by 2015 and 20% by 2025. Before this mandate was enacted in 2007, there were only two places with large-scale windmills: one in Traverse City and two in Mackinaw City.

As of this writing, 143 megawatts are being generated from 93 windmills at seven Michigan locations. Three more projects will come online soon. The largest project commenced construction in November in Gratiot County, where 125 windmills should generate 200 megawatts of electricity, enough for 50,000 homes. The energy will be sold to Detroit Edison.

Once the wind energy producer has an agreement with a utility to buy the electricity, and has leases with landowners to

place windmills, the producer approaches the local government for permission. This is where Michigan Audubon becomes concerned. Wind farms have no legal obligation to conduct any sort of investigation to determine if they would have a negative impact on birds. Our position statement on wind farms clearly states that we are supportive as long as these farms are sited properly. We would like all wind farm developers to conduct background investigations to determine the sites' impact on birds.

Placing wind farms in or near Important Bird Areas is our first concern. These areas are identified as critical places for bird breeding, migration, or en masse congregating. For example, placing a wind farm next to Baker or Haehnle Sanctuary, where tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes fly each fall, probably would not be a good choice.

This is where citizen birders can help. We are very interested in this issue but need to locate and evaluate the many news articles, proposed ordinances, and rumors about all the proposed wind farms. Since there is no regulatory framework, we cannot just pick up the phone to check on the status of wind farm plans. This initiative is truly grassroots. We are asking individuals and chapters to be the eyes and ears, reporting to us the status of various projects, forwarding news articles, and interacting with local officials. With this information and involvement, Michigan Audubon can prioritize and strategize its actions.

Tom Funke is the conservation director for Michigan Audubon. He can be reached at tfunke@michiganaudubon.org.

For more information

American Wind Energy Association	www.awea.org
Michigan Important Bird Area Program	web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/michigan/
National Wind Coordinating Committee	www.windguysusa.com/Doc_ad/avian_collisions1.pdf
Michigan Renewable Portfolio Standard	www.tinyurl.com/2d742tk

Feathered Lens

Director David Frankel Portrays the Passion of Bird Watching in *The Big Year*

BY DANIELLE SHARP

Are you looking for a quirky, adventurous comedy about birding? Well, look no further. *The Big Year*, a 20th Century Fox film that captures the realities of bird watching, is set to hit theatres early next year. Official release dates, trailers, ratings, and reviews have not yet been listed.

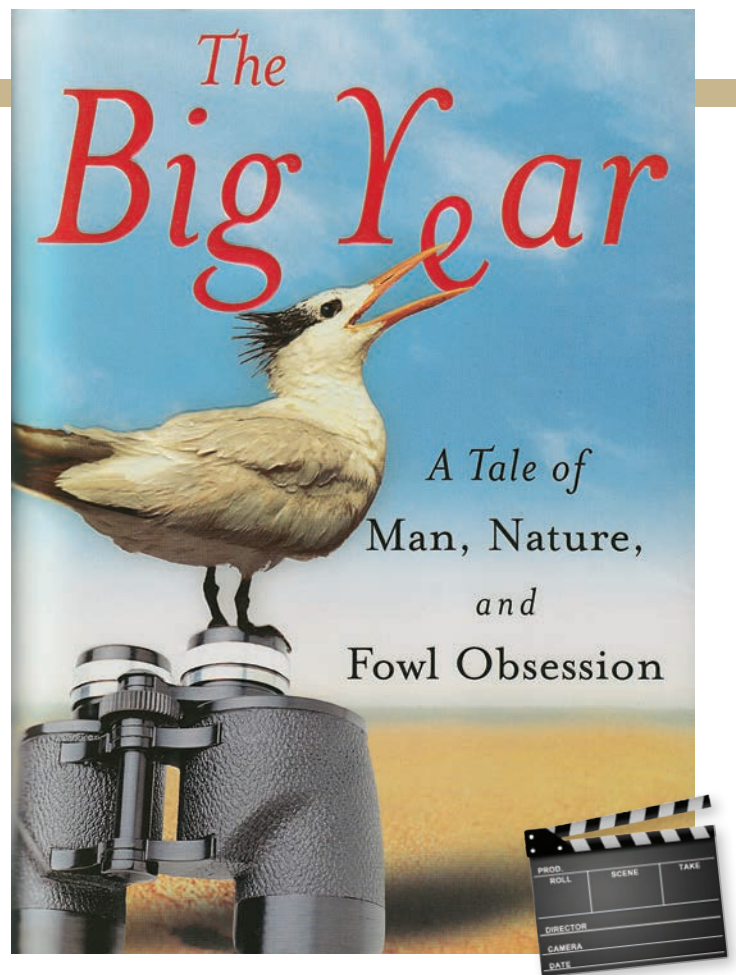
Directed by David Frankel, the director of *Marley & Me* (2008) and *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006), and produced by Ben Stillier, this movie stars a powerhouse cast, including Owen Wilson, Steve Martin, Jack Black, Rashida Jones, Angelica Huston, Jim Parsons, Rosamund Pike, JoBeth Williams, Brian Dennehy, DiAnne Wiest, Anthony Anderson, Tim Blake Nelson, Kevin Polak, and Joel McHale.

The Big Year is a story based on Mark Obmascik's 2004 book *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession*, which received enthusiastic reviews from birders everywhere. Many of the facts and locations from the book have been changed for the film, but the intent remains the same: to portray the passion of birders.

The book's storyline is centered on a competition between three obsessive birders—Sandy Komito, Al Levantin, and Greg Miller, played by Wilson, Martin, and Black—who try their luck at a year-long, 275,000-mile journey across the United States to find more species of birds than Komito's record of 721 species. This contest is officially known as a Big Year: an informal competition to determine who can see or hear the most bird species within a single calendar year. The geographic region is specified, and the rules are simple: all sightings must occur between January 1 and December 31 and must be made within set boundaries. Big Year records are determined and reported by the American Birding Association (ABA).

Big Years are not limited to birds, however, and can involve any variety of species. In 2008, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco held a Big Year competition to see who could spot and save all of the national park's 33 endangered species. The winner of this competition was awarded prizes, but in any Big Year the most notable prize is receiving the winning title.

Filming for *The Big Year* started this past summer in Osoyoos, British Columbia, in a warm and dry climate similar to that of the southwestern U.S. The three birders search for species such as the Rufous-capped Warbler in Del Rio, TX, Qantus's Hummingbird in British Columbia, and the offshore Great Skua in Cape May, NJ. As if tracking down these birds weren't enough



of a challenge, they face nasty weather, agitated wild animals, and uncomfortable living situations that keep audiences pleasantly entertained. Scenes were captured at Spotted Lake and at the base of Anarchist Mountain, both in British Columbia, and in New York City, Arizona, and the Yukon.

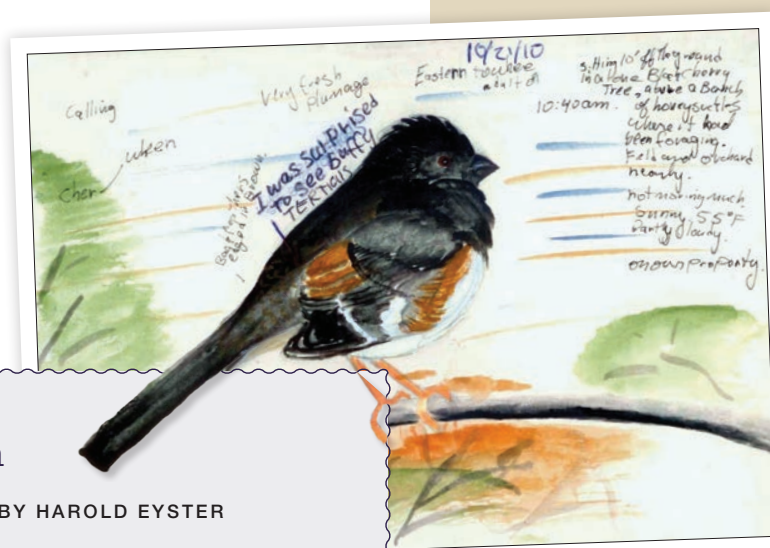
One of the admirable qualities of Obmascik's story is that it can be enjoyed by birders and non-birders alike. The *Los Angeles Times* describes it as "riveting" and goes on to say that "*The Big Year* combines the best of adventure tales, mystery writing, and nature narratives, and even readers who are not birders will soon find themselves cheering the competition on." *National Geographic Adventure* also provided an impressive review: "What a winner it is.... The writing is swift and compelling, the stories amazing."

After all is said and done, at the end of the film, one man defeats all odds to set a new record so incredible that no one will ever try to steal his glory. This classic story of perseverance, passion, and friendship will win you over, while teaching you about the sometimes strange, sometimes remarkable behaviors of humans and birds. Director David Frankel notes, "To me, this is a fascinating story about three men who are at a crucial point in their lives, caught up in an obsession. The bird watching really reveals their character."

Danielle Sharp (sharpda2@msu.edu) is a senior at Michigan State University, studying editing and publishing, and is currently working as an intern at Michigan Audubon.



Kids' Corner



Drawing by Harold Eyster

American Birding Association Young Birder Opportunities

BY HAROLD EYSTER

"Cher-wheel!" exclaimed an Eastern Towhee as he hopped up onto a cherry branch. I took out my field notebook and began sketching. He ruffled his feathers, then obligingly sat still. As I sketched, I noticed that he was in very fresh plumage, with brown edging on all of his back feathers, and, strangely, rufous tertials (see sketch), which I would not have noticed if I had not drawn him.

The date was October 21st, the day when I had to send my submissions in to the American Birding Association (ABA) for the Young Birder of the Year Competition. Since April, I had been writing essays, making illustrations, taking photographs, and keeping field notes. I now had to select which works to send—a tough process, but eventually completed. I sent in five essays, six finished illustrations, six sketches, five photographs, and five field notebooks. In completing each of these, I learned such an immense amount that I cannot even begin to put it down on paper.

Over the next few months I eagerly awaited the results. In April I heard that I had won first place, and a week later received a box containing everything I had sent in, plus prizes of excellent birding literature, and last but definitely not least, outstanding

comments from top birders, artists, writers, and photographers: Noah Strycker, Kim Kaufman, David Sibley, Laura Kammermeier, Lisa White, Jeffrey Gordon, Michael Retter, Michael O'Brien, Louise Zemaitis, Dudley Edmundson, Bill Schmoker, and Bill Maynard. The information stored in that small sheaf of judges' comments contained a whole fortune of priceless critique that has profoundly strengthened my skills.

The ABA Young Birder of the Year program not only improved my writing, drawing, sketching, and photographing skills, but also gave me opportunities that I did not even know existed. Thus I encourage all young birders to participate in this unequivocally unparalleled program. For more information, visit www.aba.org/yby. Even if you claim that you can't draw, by the end of October 2011, you will be able to. I guarantee it.

Harold is a 16-year-old home-schooled student from Lima Township. He was recently named the 2010 Young Birder of the Year by the American Birding Association and was an award winner at the Big Half-Day Birding Contest in northwest Ohio's Magee Marsh.



Harold Eyster of Ann Arbor is the American Birding Association's Young Birder of the Year.
© 2010 Angela Cesere

Calendar

January

- 31 **Program: Identifying Birds Flying Over at Night, with Caleb Putnam**
Presented by Grand Rapids Audubon Club

February

- 5 **Field Trip: Winter Birding Hike in Holland**
Hosted by Holland Audubon Society
- 19 **Field Trip: Birding Grand Haven with Feller DeWitt**
Presented by the Muskegon Co. Nature Club

March

- 4-13 **ANR Week**
Michigan State University
- 26 **Field Trip: Maple River with Tom Wheeker**
Presented by the Capital Area Audubon Society

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MICHIGAN BIRDS and Natural History

June - August 2010

Volume 17 Number 3



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Inquiring Birders

Q: Dear Michigan Audubon,
I have four Peterson and four slot boxes that I pair for the season. I designed them so I could store them easily. My question is whether I should store them indoors. Is there a benefit to the birds if I leave the boxes out for the winter?

Thanks.

Submitted via the Michigan Audubon website by
acwsgarden@prodigy.net.

A: Dear acwsgarden@prodigy.net,
Thank you for your question about bluebird nesting boxes. Many birds seek overnight roosting locations in nesting boxes during the winter months. Numerous birding organizations, including the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, suggest that boxes be left up year-round and not be cleaned out until March. The leftover nesting material inside the boxes provides insulation. They also suggest that a temporary plug be used to stop up the box ventilation openings to help keep the cold air out. Many bluebirds no longer migrate south as they have been able to find food to get them through the winter. You can help them by putting shelled sunflower seeds in a platform feeder or by feeding them meal worms. The bluebirds will roost in the nest boxes, as will other small birds such as Tufted Titmouse and Chickadee.

Thank you for thinking of the birds and for providing houses.

Wendy Tatar, Michigan Audubon's program coordinator, supplied this answer.

Send questions to Birds@MichiganAudubon.org.



Eastern Bluebird © Caleb Putnam

Announcements

The beach in winter at Lake Bluff.
© 2009 Tom Funke.



Information

Follow Migrating Loons Online

A total of ten Common Loons (eight in Wisconsin and two in Minnesota) were tagged with radio transmitters this summer to allow scientists to follow their migration path. Now you too can follow their travels. The Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center has created a Common Loon Migration page on their website, which shows where each bird has been every day since it was tagged. Follow the migration yourself at umesc.usgs.gov/terrestrial/migratory_birds/loons/migrations.html.

Attention Budding Authors

Have you ever aspired to write about your love of birds and nature? Michigan Audubon suggests that you submit an article for the *Jack Pine Warbler*. We'd like to have articles about birds or bird-related topics on file in case additional content is needed. Articles should be submitted in an MS Word document. Articles can be from 350 to 800 words. High-resolution (300 dpi) photos to accompany the article are appreciated but not required. If you have questions about article submission, contact the office or *JPW* editor, Laura Julier.

We're always looking for reviewers of books we receive from publishers. If you'd like to be added to the list of reviewers, contact Wendy Tatar at the Lansing office.

Michigan Audubon is also looking for high quality, high-resolution bird photographs to use on our website or in *JPW*. Photos can be submitted electronically to birds@michiganaudubon.org. Please include information about when and where the photograph was taken, and the equipment used to photograph the bird. Photographs should be limited to those species found within Michigan.

Events



ANR Week Schedule Available

For the last 96 years, Michigan State University has held Agriculture and Natural Resources Week, previously known as Farmer's Week. The event has grown and evolved over the years and now hosts 80 programs and meetings during MSU's spring break. The event this year will begin on Friday March 4 and conclude on Sunday March 13. The complete schedule of meetings and programs is available at anrweek.canr.msu.edu.

Michigan Audubon's bookstore will be involved in two of the meetings taking place during ANR Week. The bookstore will be set up at the Quiet Water Symposium, which will be held on Saturday March 5 at the MSU Pavilion. Saturday evening the bookstore will move to the vendor area of the Wildflower Association of Michigan (WAM) Annual Conference. The WAM Conference is held on Sunday March 6 and Monday March 7 at the Kellogg Conference Center. Both events provide great educational opportunities through the sessions presented and the participants that attend. To find a detailed listing of the Quiet Water Symposium, go to quietwatersymposium.org. A complete listing of the WAM Conference activities can be found at wildflowersmich.org.

If you would like to assist Michigan Audubon with book sales at either of these events, or at other events through the year, please contact Wendy at the Lansing office.

Climate Change & the Effect on Songbird Species

Michigan Audubon has arranged a special banquet and presentation with Bill Porter, the first-ever Boone and Crockett Chair of Wildlife Conservation in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University. Join us on the evening of Friday March 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the Kellogg Conference Center on the MSU campus. After a delicious dinner, Dr. Porter will discuss how songbird species habits are changing due to the effects of climate change.

Dr. Porter is a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa and earned his doctoral degree in behavioral biology from the University of Minnesota. He began his role as the Boone and Crockett Chair in August 2010. Dr. Porter is working closely with MSU's Boone and Crockett Club and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment as well as other national organizations. According to an MSU Communications release, Dr. Porter's work "will use the most modern tools in wildlife research to inform policy makers of enhanced conservation of Michigan and the nation's wildlife resources."

Cost for the evening will be \$40 per person or \$70 per couple for Michigan Audubon members, and \$50 per person or \$80 per couple for non-members. Registration for the event is required as seating is limited. Visit the event calendar at michiganaudubon.org/education/eventcalendar.

Sanctuary Programs 2011 Schedule

Our inaugural season of educational programs and walks at the sanctuaries proved very successful, so we are going to continue offering programs. We'll be adding programming at the Hawk Valley Farm in Lansing this year. Look for the complete schedule of programs on the Michigan Audubon website event calendar, or contact the office to receive a copy.

We'll start off the new year with programs that get you outdoors to enjoy the wonderful Michigan winter.

January

- | | | |
|----|------------|--|
| 2 | 1:00 p.m. | Sledding Day,
Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary
(located near Hastings) |
| 15 | 10:00 a.m. | Winter Workshop Series:
Bird Photography,
Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary,
Manistee |
| 19 | 5:30 p.m. | Full Moon Snowshoe Hike,
Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary
(located near Hastings) |
| 22 | 9:00 a.m. | Winter Wonders Walk,
Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary,
Manistee |
| 29 | 8:30 a.m. | Winter Birding Walk,
Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary
(located near Hastings) |
| 29 | 8:30 a.m. | Winter Wonders Walk,
Hawk Valley Farm, Lansing |

February

- | | | |
|----|-----------|---|
| 18 | 6:30 p.m. | Owl Prowl,
Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary,
Manistee |
| 18 | 6:30 p.m. | Owl Prowl,
Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary
(located near Hastings) |

Please register for programs, as some have an attendance limit. For more information on these programs, or to register, visit michiganaudubon.org/eventcalendar.

2011 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	■	■	■	■	■
Embroidered Michigan Audubon member patch*	■	■	■	■	■
One night of lodging at the Lake Bluff or the Otis Sanctuary			■	■	■
VIP invitation, Michigan Audubon conference				■	■
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.

Karl H. Anders
Bear Tracks Studio, LLC
Raye Bransdorfer-Polasek
Charmane Bridges
John M. Christena
Mark Cline
Diane Constable
Rev. & Mrs. Charles Darocy
Keto Gyekis
Daniel H. Haigh
Carol Harbim

George C. Jackson
Joanne Karabt
Jane Tillman & Mark Lyon
Gail Maloney
Ruth Metevier
Joe & Heidi Moloney
Diane Newman
Shirley Paris
Richard Stevenson
Tom Walker

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 e-mail so that we can update your address in our database.

Dated Material

Michigan Audubon Bookstore

Support our educational programs by shopping at the Michigan Audubon bookstore

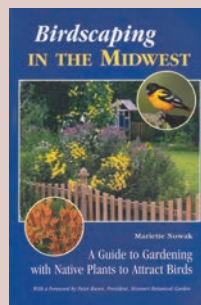
Information or phone orders **517-886-9144**



Bird Feathers

by S. David Scott and Casey McFarland
\$34.95

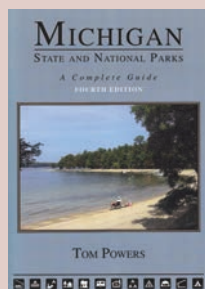
Just published, this field guide to the feathers of North American species is just what the birder ordered. Not only will it help you match a feather to the bird species from which it came, but it will also help you to understand each feather's job on the bird. The book covers 397 species and will be reviewed in an upcoming issue of *JPW*.



Birdscaping in the Midwest

by Mariette Nowak
\$27.00

It is time to start planning your gardens for spring and if you're looking to attract more birds to your yard, this is the book you need. It starts out with bird/plant relationship information, including an entire chapter titled "The Case against Exotics," then offers basic information before going into detailed habitat information for specific birds. The last portion of the book deals with maintenance of your habitat.



Michigan State and National Parks

by Tom Powers
\$15.95

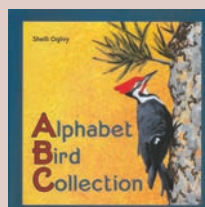
This fourth edition is a complete guide to the parks and state-owned campgrounds in Michigan. The guide covers 102 state parks and recreation areas, two national lakeshores, Fort Wilkin's National Historic Site, and Isle Royale National Park. It's time to plan your summer excursions and this is just the guide to make the job easier.



The Songs of Insects

by Lang Elliott and Wil Hershberger
\$19.95

If you miss listening to the buzz and chirps of the insects at this time of year, this is the book for you. It contains natural history and information on 77 species of crickets, katydids, locusts, and cicadas native to eastern and central North America. Included is a 70-minute CD of insect songs that are track-keyed to information in the text.



Alphabet Bird Collection

by Shelli Ogilvy
\$16.95 (hardcover)

This is a great book for bird lovers to read to the preschoolers in their life, one that children will love to look at years after they've learned their ABCs. Each alphabetical bird page includes a musical chart of the bird's call.

Order by phone, mail, or e-mail

By phone. Visa or MasterCard. Phone 517-886-9144.

By mail. Send name, address, phone number, and payment to Michigan Audubon Bookstore, 6011 W. St. Joseph Hwy., Ste. 403, Lansing, MI 48917. Prepayment includes list price + 6% sales tax + \$3.25 postage and handling for the first item + \$.85 for each additional item.

By e-mail. Wendy@MichiganAudubon.org.

10% off for all Michigan Audubon members!