

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

*THE SPRING ISSUE:* Birding Saginaw Bay ■ Birding on a Budget ■ Giving Birds the TLC They Deserve ■  
Don & Lillian Stokes at Tawas Point Birding Festival ■ Wonders of the Water



# Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Blackburnian Warbler

Photographer: Roger Eriksson

The Great Lakes are within the breeding range of the Blackburnian Warbler, which is a solitary nester preferring conifer forests. The female lays four to five eggs, and incubation ranges from 11 to 12 days. The Blackburnian Warbler is a common visitor at Tawas Point during spring migration, and the featured bird of this year's festival. This individual was photographed in 2008 at Point Pelee National Park, Ontario, using a hand-held Canon EOS 1D Mark III. The lens was an EF 300mm f/4L IS. An extender (1.4X II) was also used with an f 5.6 setting at 1/400 second.

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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



**AS I WRITE THIS**, my Facebook wall is still riddled with questions from friends regarding the recent wildlife die-offs in the south. On New Year's Day, the residents of a small Arkansas community woke up to the sight of dead Red-winged Blackbirds on their lawns. But the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) was swift to remind everyone that the bird deaths recorded in Arkansas (and later in Louisiana), while puzzling, are only a small percentage of the total number of birds that perish each year.

According to ABC vice president Mike Parr, estimates from various studies show that up to one billion birds may be killed each year in collisions with buildings; another half a billion may die due to predation by outdoor cats; up to 50 million may die in collisions with communication towers; perhaps 15 million die annually due to pesticide poisoning; and there is growing concern about bird mortality caused by the burgeoning wind industry.

Michigan's birds face each and every one of these existing and potential threats.

While shedding your cabin fever and pursuing early spring migrants, I urge you to keep one thing in mind: bird watchers are the strongest advocates for bird conservation that exist. The gear, the list, the destinations—none of these will matter if our birds fail to complete their migrations or struggle to survive in home ranges. Studies conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that the number of recreational bird watchers is growing. Yet National Audubon reports that some of our most common birds have experienced population declines nearing 70 percent over the last four decades. These common birds in decline include the American Bittern, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Snow Bunting—all fixtures of annual bird counts in Michigan.

Birders can help secure the future of these species in our state.

**Take a young person birding.** Bird your backyard. Bird a city park. The everyday birds that you find mundane will be fascinating to a budding young naturalist. Connecting the younger generations to the natural world is critical to protecting birds and bird habitats in the future.

**Enjoy birds from a new angle.** This month's issue features an article from professional photographer Josh Haas about the opportunities that await birders on Michigan's lakes and rivers. When you see species in new habitats, you will better understand some of the struggles they face and, perhaps, be inspired to take action.

**Attend your local Michigan Audubon chapter meeting.** I've observed a wide range of activity among our chapters during the last three years. Some are very well established and active. Others could use a fresh spark. If you have special skills or energy that might benefit your local chapter, be sure to attend an upcoming meeting and see where you can help.

Finally, if you're just getting started with bird watching, then welcome! As you will soon discover, this is a community of active, friendly individuals who are engaged with the environment. Bird watching is healthy, educational, and easy (even on a budget). Your participation will be a benefit to the birds.

Best regards,

Jonathan E. Lutz, executive director



A Black-crowned Night Heron made an appearance during the 2008 and 2010 Tawas Point Birding Festivals. See what's in store for the 2011 festival on page 8. © 2007 Cory Gildersleeve.





# *Birding Saginaw Bay*

BY JANEA LITTLE

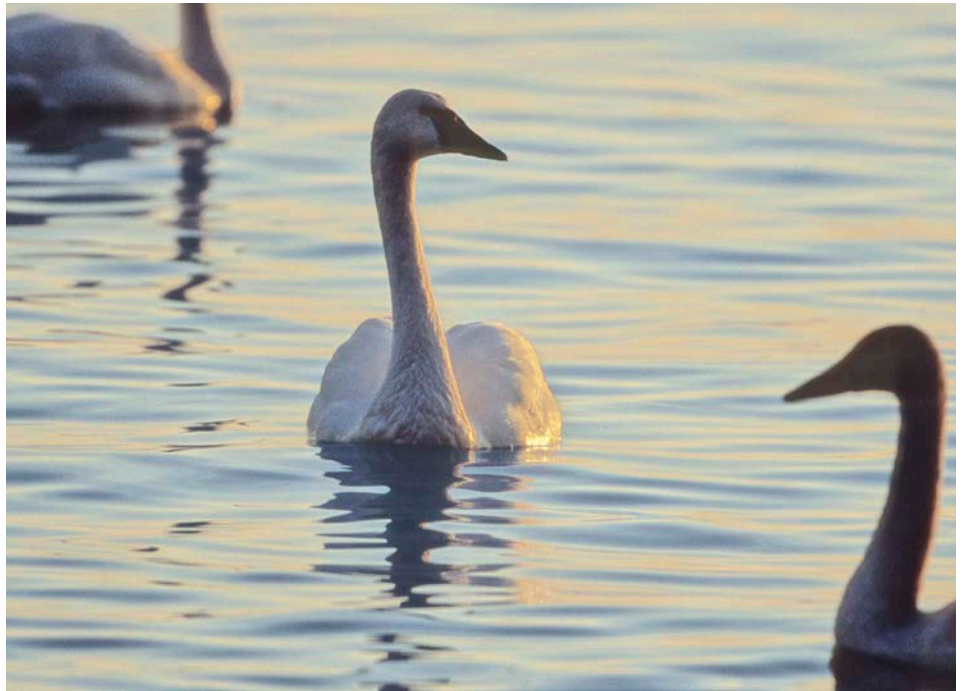
**T**HE SHALLOW WATERS of Saginaw Bay are famous in the duck hunting world for attracting thousands of migrating and nesting waterfowl. But birders are equally enthralled by the vast numbers of shorebirds, raptors, and songbirds that follow the shoreline during migration. Thanks to plentiful nature preserves, both private and public, many of these birds need go no further for the breeding season. Those same natural areas are also a boon to birders, offering dozens of locations to explore wetlands and woodlands, or to access the bay.

Two of the more celebrated birds of the Saginaw Bay are Tundra Swans and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. The swans are famous for their sheer numbers, while the blackbird is well-known by Bay birders because its normal range is the Great Plains, not the Great Lakes.

Tundra Swans breed on the northern fringes of this continent, on their namesake tundra. But between their wintering grounds on the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts and those northern breeding grounds, one of their main feeding and resting stopover locations is Saginaw Bay. If you time it right, somewhere between mid-March and mid-April, you will see (and hear) many thousands of these magnificent birds congregating in the shallow bay waters or feeding in nearby fields. The peak usually hits in late March or early April, though you can usually find at least a few hundred swans during either side of those peak weeks. The best areas to look for them are Fish Point and Wildfowl Bay on the east side of the Bay (near the town of Sebawaing), and Nayanquing Point and Pinconning County Park on the west side of the Bay.

Yellow-headed Blackbirds do not descend on mid-Michigan in any notable numbers. But those that do arrive have mated on their minds, which makes them one of the most interesting and sought-after breeding birds in the Saginaw Bay area. Although they are often reported breeding on islands out in the Bay, the best and easiest place for landlubbers to find them (between April and July) is Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area, just north of Linwood.

There are several good resources for birding the Bay, including the Saginaw Bay Birding website ([www.saginawbaybirding.org](http://www.saginawbaybirding.org)), *Birds and Bird Finding in the Saginaw Bay Area* by Ron Weeks, and the ABA's *A Birder's Guide to Michigan* by Allen Chartier and Jerry Ziarno (2004). Don't let the 1995 publishing date of the Weeks book deter you: it's still a wonderful and relevant resource, with details about the phenology and distribution of Saginaw Bay birds as well as maps of regional birding areas.



I leave it to these other resources to give you specific directions, locations that are best for each bird, and details on the amenities, or lack thereof (some are little more than parking spots with views of the Bay, some are best suited to auto tours, while others contain miles of trails and even the occasional restroom). I've already mentioned my favorite locations, but other fine places to check out are Vanderbilt County Park (small, but often one of the last places of the season to see Tundra Swans), Bay City State Recreation Area (including Tobico Marsh), Tawas Point State Park, Wigwam Bay, and Wild Haven Park (at the end of Finn Road, east of Bay City). When southerly winds blow the shallow waters away from shore, large flats are exposed at Wild Haven with lots of shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Also check out the preserves owned by the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy ([www.sblc-mi.org](http://www.sblc-mi.org)).

The Saginaw Bay is a fruitful birding destination any time of year. Spend a day, a weekend, or even a week there—your life list won't regret it.

Janea Little has been a naturalist at Chippewa Nature Center for over twenty years. Birds and butterflies are her specialties, though she also leads many other programs, from full moon hikes and kayaking trips to snowshoe adventures and UP explorations. She may be contacted at [little@chippewanaturecenter.org](mailto:little@chippewanaturecenter.org).





# Birding on a Budget: How to Develop a Million Dollar Hobby for a Hundred Bucks

BY BILL SWEETMAN

**K**NOWN TO MANY for my long-time interest in birds, I get frequent queries about how to get started in birding. One of the most common questions is “what will I have to spend to get started as a birder?” This article offers some answers to this question.

Not surprisingly, the most indispensable tool with which to begin birding is a good binocular. What is surprising is that not just any binocular will do. There’s no greater turn-off for a novice birder than using a low-priced binocular that causes eye discomfort and yields a lingering headache. The answer is, of course, to buy the best binocular you can afford. So how much money gets you a decent binocular?

In the first place, don’t be afraid to buy binoculars online. The plus side is that online companies offer significant discounts compared to other retail outlets. The downside is that you don’t get to look through the binocular before you buy. Therefore, it’s imperative that you choose a company with a liberal exchange and guarantee policy. Three such companies are Amazon.com (yes, they sell binoculars), binoculars.com, and optics4birding.com. Perusing these websites, I was able to find a number of binoculars in the \$70–\$100 range, which should be regarded as the lowest you should spend to purchase a decent quality birding binocular.

When shopping for binoculars, you will have some choices to make regarding the power and lens size. Often you will see notations such as 7x35, 8x42, or 10x50. The optimum power for birding is either 7x or 8x, with x being the estimated number of times the object (bird) is magnified. I caution people about buying a higher power glass (10x, for example), because the higher the power, the more your hand motion is magnified, making it difficult to get a steady image of the bird. This is especially important if you are encouraging a child to develop the hobby of birding: 10x binoculars tend to be large and bulky, unsuitable for people with small, unsteady hands.

The second number listed with the power rating refers to the size of the objective lenses (the large lenses) and is related to light-gathering capacity. An ideal combination of power and light gathering capacity is around 8X40, although 7X35 works well also. A useful generalization is that you can purchase a better quality porro prism (the typical old style) binocular than a roof prism (straight tubes) binocular for about the same price.

Once you purchase your binocular, use it as much as possible as soon as possible. Be sure first to adjust the diopter setting (the individual eye adjustment) to your vision. If after using it for a time, you feel uncomfortable eye strain, return it to the retailer and suggest that the binocular might be out of alignment. You won’t enjoy birding if you get a headache while you do so.



Birders on a birding tour in Barry County during Michigan Audubon's annual Cerulean Warbler Weekend. Tours are a great way to learn new skills and share knowledge with novice birders. © 2009 Wendy Tatar.



The Rose-breasted Grosbeak is a highlight at any backyard feeder in Michigan. © 2010 Josh Haas.

Another essential tool for getting started is a good field guide. There's a plethora of fine guides on the market. Choose a simple guide specific to your region. This is especially important if there's a young person involved. Why start out with a guide that covers all 700+ birds of North America if you want to develop your birding skills here in Michigan? I recommend two user-friendly guides for beginning birding in Michigan: *Birds of Eastern and Central North America*, by Peterson, and *The Sibley Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America*. Both are available from Amazon.com for less than \$15. You might pay slightly more at the Michigan Audubon store, but you will be advancing the cause of birds in Michigan if you purchase there.

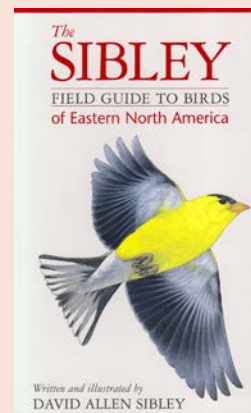
Start simple: if you aren't doing so already, begin feeding birds. Use your binoculars and field guide to identify all the birds you see in your yard. Consider offering both black oil sunflower seed and suet in order to attract a good diversity of birds. As the weather warms, expand to orange halves and/or grape jelly to increase diversity further. Use your binoculars regularly. It's a bit like learning to play an instrument: the more you practice, the more skill you develop. To pique your interest even more, keep a list. You might start with a yard list, gradually expand to county and state lists, and finally to a life list that includes all species you have ever seen wherever you bird.

Birding with children is especially fun. Not only is it a great outdoor pastime, but also an excellent learning experience. Think of all the concepts (such as habitat, seasonal change, and migration) and skills (such as identification skills and range map reading skills) that you can introduce to a young person while afield birding—not to mention the camaraderie.

As your hobby grows, travel may become an objective. A trip to the forests of the UP will yield a different species list than will most of the lower peninsula. A trip to a migration hotspot such as Crane Creek, Ohio, or Point Pelee, Ontario, will stimulate an entirely other layer of interest. Consider engaging in citizen science efforts such as the annual Audubon Christmas Counts in your area or a backyard feeder count, and submitting your data to Cornell University online. You don't have to be an expert to assist in expanding the knowledge database about birds.

To my way of thinking, there are few hobbies that are as engaging or as budget-friendly as birding. For a mere \$100 or so, you can open yourself, and perhaps a child you love, to a new world, one which blossoms in your own backyard and extends from there to habitats across the world. I'll tell you one thing: you will never look at a spring morning the same way again. Birds are on the move—let's get out there.

**The following books are recommended by author Bill Sweetman and are available for purchase from the Michigan Audubon Bookstore:**



### **The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America**

by David Allen Sibley

**\$19.95**

Possibly the best bird illustrator alive, Sibley uses his talent and knowledge of birds to create a great, pocket-sized regional guide. Considered a must-have field guide by many birders, this guide was published in 2003.

### **Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America, 6th edition**

by Roger Tory Peterson, with a forward by Lee Allen Peterson

**\$19.95**

Published in 2010, this updated version of the original regional field guide has been a hit with birders. All taxonomy and range maps have been updated. Small range maps are included with the species details while detailed range maps and a life list are included in the back of the book.



Bill Sweetman is a mostly retired teacher (currently adjunct professor of biology at Calvin College), having taught forty-three years in junior high, high school, and college. He enjoys participating in birding projects such as Birds in Forested Landscapes for Cornell University, gathering data for the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas, and conducting a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Breeding Bird Survey route in Lake and Wexford County. He leads field trips for Grand Rapids and Michigan Audubon including semi-annual trips to Kirtland's Warbler country. In 2001, he started Bswettours LLC, a small ecotourism business, leading several tours a year to birding hotspots throughout the U.S. Bill is a member of the American Birding Assn., National, Michigan and Grand Rapids Audubon.



# Websitings

## Giving Birds the TLC They Deserve

BY DANIELLE SHARP

**T**he following scenario is common during the spring season: an injured, winged creature shows up on your doorstep in need of care. Would you know what to do? Would you know whom to call? Michigan Audubon is a major advocate of wildlife rehabilitation, but we do not rehabilitate injured animals. In the event that you encounter a desperate bird, we want you to know how to come to its rescue.

The first step in caring for an injured bird is proper identification. This will help wildlife experts provide you with specific instructions for how to act. The second step is to call the appropriate wildlife rehabilitation center or certified individual. Acting quickly and calmly is important, especially if the animal appears to be in need of urgent care. Proceeding with caution is crucial if you're dealing with an endangered species.

Michigan's Department of Natural Resources has a complete list of Michigan licensed rehabilitators **(1)** that will accept a variety of species. One such center is Wings of Wonder raptor sanctuary (WOW)**(2)**, located in Empire, Michigan. WOW has been in service for 18 years and partners with nine veterinary hospitals dedicated to caring for injured, sick, or orphaned raptors—hawks, eagles, falcons, owls, and vultures—and releasing them back into the wild. WOW accepts 25 to 72 raptors a year because of various injuries such as car or window collisions and illnesses such as bacterial or viral infections.

WOW also provides educational services to the public. Offering more than 120 presentations in Michigan annually, they strive to increase the overall knowledge of wildlife rehabilitation, conservation, ecology, and current environmental issues through fieldwork, networking, and research.

Another organization dedicated to educating the public about the needs of wildlife is the Wildlife Recovery Association (WRA)**(3)**, located in Shepherd, Michigan. WRA delivers entertaining and educational presentations to audiences of all ages. Topics include hunting habits, adaptations, and defense mechanisms of winged creatures.

The Wildlife Recovery Association's knowledgeable veterinarians, biologists, and rehabilitators work as a team to stabilize birds and observe them in caged sanctuaries to test their strength. These experts understand the behaviors of each species of raptor—including their physiology, diet, and habitat requirements—and are able to provide over-the-phone assistance to concerned callers. After finding an injured raptor, WRA suggests not giving the bird water or feeding it unless instructed to do so. These birds should be put in quiet locations, away from pets.



Captive Barred Owl wearing jesses. © 2010 Josh Haas.

Friends of Wildlife (FOW)**(4)**, an Ann Arbor-based rescue, rehabilitation, and release organization, provides care to a wider array of animals including deer, raccoons, and turtles. In addition to information about helpless animals, FOW gives callers advice on how to gently and humanely move unwanted animals from a particular location. Wearing gloves while moving these animals is required. For the most reliable advice, FOW suggests calling the specific animal hotline listed on its website.

Friends of Wildlife also suggests reading each animal's background information found on its website to determine if a creature is actually in need of help. Sometimes animals behave peculiarly while searching for food or scoping out humans; these mannerisms can be misinterpreted as cries for help.

Have you ever thought about what you might do if you found an alligator in your backyard (not a likely scenario in Michigan)? Your first instinct probably wouldn't be to try to move it yourself. Luckily, there are local reptile facilities such as Critchlow Alligator Sanctuary (CAS)**(5)** that provide care and a safe home to all reptiles and amphibians. Located in Athens, Michigan, CAS is unique in its educational work: it is an open attraction for reptile and amphibian enthusiasts. The public can observe and learn about the behavior and biology of these misunderstood animals in a semi-natural environment.

The next time you happen across an injured or orphaned animal, please call the proper rehabilitation center to administer care right away. It may only take one phone call to save an animal's life.

## Visit these sites:

- (1)** [www.michigandnr.com/dlr/](http://www.michigandnr.com/dlr/)
- (2)** [www.wingsofwonder.org](http://www.wingsofwonder.org)
- (3)** [www.wildliferecovery.org](http://www.wildliferecovery.org)
- (4)** [www.friendsofwildlife.net](http://www.friendsofwildlife.net)
- (5)** [www.alligatorsanctuary.com](http://www.alligatorsanctuary.com)

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Danielle Sharp ([sharpda2@msu.edu](mailto:sharpda2@msu.edu)), a senior professional writing major at Michigan State University, was an intern at Michigan Audubon during the fall 2010 semester. She's been involved with a multitude of projects around the MSU campus, including writing and editing content for marketing materials, newspaper ads, posters, online articles, billboards, newsletters, menus, press releases, and handbooks.



# Book Review

## *The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America*

BY DONALD AND LILLIAN STOKES  
(HACHETTE BOOK GROUP, 2010, 815 PP. + CD)

REVIEWED BY TOM FUNKE

**T**here's something about a bird field guide that tells you what kind of birder you are. My first field guide was a Golden Guide, which worked for me as a beginner. After a couple of years, I moved up to Peterson's *Guide to Eastern Birds*, which is where I have been stuck for the past fifteen years. We also have different reasons for carrying the guides we do. I bring along but do not carry with me Ehrlich's *Guide to North American Birds*. I'm on my third Peterson and fourth Ehrlich, if that tells you anything.

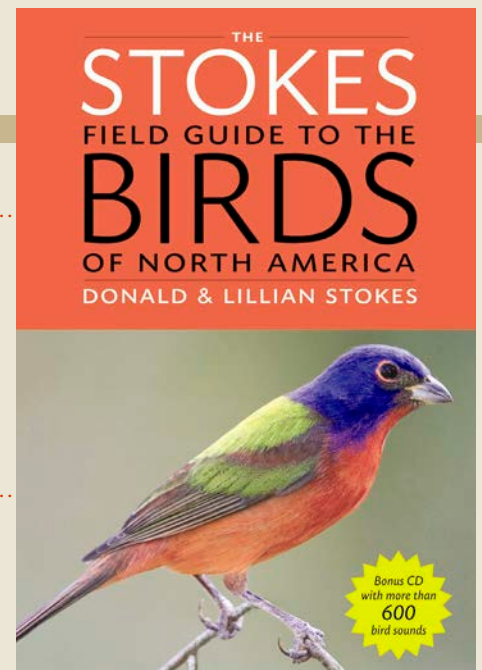
There are many different combinations of the various guides out there that you can use, and each bird watcher is different. I've never been enthusiastic about guide books that use photographs to identify animals, especially birds. Mostly I've been biased towards field guides that use drawings to make their identifications. But some of my apprehension about the photographic guides has been because, frankly, the photos aren't of the quality I expect nor are they numerous enough.

The *Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America* has changed my opinion of photograph-based field guides. The photos are of superior quality. Most of them show birds in habitat, and for those species with variation (such as hawks) or that are difficult to identify (such as shorebirds), there seem to be plenty of photos associated with each species. Most species have four photographs, some as many as nineteen.

This field guide is excellent for anyone who travels extensively throughout North America, as the guide is comprehensive, covering 854 species while listing various subspecies and hybrids. It also contains a CD of over 600 bird sounds for 150 species of common backyard birds.

I field-tested the book using an uncommon winter visitor to my feeder station: upon first glance with my naked eye, I decided it was either a White-crowned Sparrow or White-throated Sparrow. My first thought was to wonder whether Stokes would have a photo clearly showing the throat of both species, which would absolutely confirm the identification as one or the other. The photograph of the White-crowned did show the throat and the absence of a white throat patch, and the photo of the White-throated clearly showed a white patch. Through my binoculars, the white throat patch jumped out at me, confirming that it was a White-throated Sparrow.

We also have a resident Red-tailed Hawk that cruises the neighborhood with regularity. On occasion, though, a Rough-legged will come through and stir things up. Stokes has a plethora of photos—multiple pages, in fact—of both these birds of prey. I have come to understand that this is because there's great variation in both species. In this book, the birds are shown perching, flying in different poses, all illustrating the various color patterns and morphs. It was refreshing to see so



many pictorial representations of two birds that can be difficult to identify.

If you have a healthy relationship with another birder, in which one of you reads the field marks from the field guide while the other calls them out through the binoculars, your relationship will remain good. These descriptions are comprehensive and detailed, more so than most other field guides. But while it is comprehensive, it tends towards a larger size (5.5" x 8.5") and weight (3 lbs.) than others. In addition, the range maps are on the small side.

However, Stokes will be along for all my future trips. I'm the type of nature lover that will carry the basic guide in the field while having several books in reserve for reference. While this is not a coffee table book, it won't fit in a back pants pocket. When doing some serious birding—which is any time I'm not in my own backyard—I lug my field guides in my daypack.

If you like crisp, high-quality photographs of birds in habitat to make your ID, this is for you, especially if you want an all-in-one photographic field guide for North American birds.

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Tom Funke is the conservation director for Michigan Audubon. He can be reached at [tfunke@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:tfunke@michiganaudubon.org).

# Spring Migration at Tawas Point

BY WENDY TATAR



A Purple Gallinule stole the show during the 2010 Tawas Point Birding Festival. © 2010 Josh Haas.

**H**AVE YOU SEEN the signs? There have been a few recently—signs that spring is not too far off. That seasonal excitement has hit the Michigan Audubon office, as not only does spring bring migrating birds, but this year it will also bring some familiar names to the Tawas Point Birding Festival (TPBF). I am happy to announce that long-time birders and authors Don and Lillian Stokes will be presenting the keynote program at the Friday evening banquet.

If you are new to birding, you may not have heard the name Stokes before. But check any shelf in the nature section of the local library or bookstore, and you'll find their names popping out at you. Don and Lillian have written over 32 bird and nature books, which have sold over 4.5 million copies. They include titles that you need with you to bird at TPBF, such as the newly released *Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (see book review on page 7), *Stokes Field Guide to Warblers*, and *Stokes Beginner's Guide to Shorebirds*. Don and Lillian are also authors of the best-selling bird song audiobook, *Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs* (in both eastern and western regional versions).

Tawas Point State Park, or the Point as the locals call it, is an amazing place to be when the phenomenon known as fall-out occurs. When a weather front slows the progression of the migrating birds, the birds are forced to use up their stored energy, and when the weather clears, they land at the first point of land available after crossing water, exhausted from the flight. Typically, fallout occurs each year at Tawas Point, but we never know exactly when it will happen. Kevin Karlson, one of the best bird photographers in the country, came to the festival last year and afterwards wondered why anyone would go to Crane Creek when there's everything except the crowds right here at the Point. Often at the festival, rare species show up, and last year it was the Purple Gallinule. In all, 173 species were recorded at the 2010 event.

When you're planning your spring migration birding trips, I hope you'll include plans to come to TPBF. In addition to Don and Lillian Stokes, we have a great line-up of programs (see sidebar), and the warm welcome that birders always get from the Tawas community. Please join us.

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

*Michigan Audubon will again host its Annual Conference during this year's TPBF. Our 2011 schedule includes four days of field trips and seminars that will introduce attendees to the great birding Michigan offers.*

## 6TH ANNUAL TAWAS POINT BIRDING FESTIVAL

### Thursday May 12 Pre-festival activities

- Choose from among pre-festival trips and workshops.
- Board a bus for a birding and sightseeing tour on the Scenic River Byway.
- Register for the Birding 101 workshop, if you're new to birding or want to improve your skills.
- Learn the history of Tawas Point and climb to the top of the lighthouse for a bird's-eye view.
- Cruise out into Saginaw Bay for a day of birding on Charity Island.
- End the day with an evening field trip to Tuttle Marsh and search the cattails for American Bittern or the return of the Purple Gallinule.

### May 13–15

- Follow skilled and charismatic trip leaders on hikes around the Tawas Point State Park (in the mornings, all three days).
- Search for Kirtland's Warblers in their nesting habitat, the jack pine plantations, via bus trips into U.S. Forest Service land.
- Take a guided tour of Tuttle Marsh for the birding challenges of wetland species.
- Take a guided hike of Eagle Run Park in Oscoda.
- Join a guided carpool trip to local hotspots for birds and spring wildflowers.



## MICHIGAN AUDUBON ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### Friday May 13

The conference will get underway on Friday afternoon at the Tawas Bay Beach Resort, the festival headquarters. Concurrent sessions will help improve your birding skills and will address topical conservation issues. Some of the leading authorities in Michigan will offer sessions such as What the Future Holds for Kirtland's Warbler, Hawk Identification for Beginners, Invasive Species of Northern Michigan, Getting it Right with Warbler Identification, Journaling to Improve Your Birding Skills, and Using Today's Weather Phenomena to Predict Tomorrow's Birding Forecast.

On Friday evening, we'll head to Wiltse's Brew Pub in Oscoda for an evening with Don and Lillian Stokes. After a fantastic dinner, Don and Lillian will present "The Stokes Field Guide To The Birds of North America: You, The Birds, And Birding," in which they'll discuss how they designed their new field guide. Don and Lillian will take you behind the scenes into what's involved in producing a work of this magnitude, teach you how to fast-forward your bird identification skills, and show you favorite photos from the book.

### Saturday May 14

Morning field trips will be followed by another afternoon of presentations at the Beach Resort. Join in the fun of the Tally Rally, when all participants are invited to report their sightings and tell about their great birding experiences of the day. You may even win a prize. We'll end the conference on Saturday evening with dinner at the Beach Resort restaurant and an evening field trip to Tuttle Marsh. Registration for the festival is required and can be done at [www.tawasbirdfest.com](http://www.tawasbirdfest.com).



Keynote speakers, Don and Lillian Stokes, will teach banquet attendees how to fast-forward their bird identification skills, and show favorite photos from their new book, *The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Photo: © 2010 Peggy Howard

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

**TOP:** Tawas Point is Michigan's premiere destination for birding during spring migration. This photograph showing the south-pointing shoreline feature was taken atop the Tawas Lighthouse Station. © 2009 Wendy Tatar.



# Feathered Lens

## Wonders of the Water

BY JOSH HAAS

One of my favorite methods of photographing nature is to shoot from a kayak. A sure-fire way to find great subject matter in nature is always to remember that where there's water, there's life. I am amazed that many nature photographers refuse to take their gear on the water. Avoiding water-based locations—rivers, lakes, streams, and ponds—out of fear that your equipment might be ruined is a giant limitation to photographers attempting to capture great moments in the outdoors.



Taking photographs from the water requires careful consideration for protecting camera gear, but the rewards can be great. © 2010 Dave Haas.

Whether you shoot with a super telephoto lens or with a smaller point-and-shoot package, there are safe ways of carrying your gear on the water. My first suggestion for those just starting out is to plan for problems (even though they rarely happen). I recommend having a large dry bag that can hold all of your gear, in case the winds pick up or you find yourself in a nerve-racking situation, such as approaching a downed tree across the stream. Another essential item always to keep handy is a small towel; use this to cover your gear when paddling and your electronics will be protected from paddle splashes and hot sun damage. When floating a new river or stream, I prefer not to shoot with my long lens. In this situation, I pack a lightweight camera body and a 70–200mm lens, which allow for maneuverability and quick shots. In flat water conditions (i.e., lakes and ponds), my long lens is with me, as I primarily focus on birds and wildlife.

If you are photographing on the water, stability is everything. My preferred platform is a recreational kayak. This type of watercraft is typically wide in the middle, and the cockpit is more open. The added width allows for a less “tippy” feeling, while a larger cockpit is conducive to holding the camera lens

and tripod rig in your lap. Recreational kayaks are slower in the water, but they are also quite versatile. I can paddle up tight winding creeks and sneak through vegetation overhanging pond banks in search of the next great shot. I find some water birds more tolerable of my presence if I'm in a kayak rather than a larger boat. This is particularly helpful when shooting with smaller lenses. I recommend that paddlers stay low in the seat of the kayak, and keep the camera low as well. Following these guidelines helps keep your center of gravity low for stability, but also maintains a low point of view that will enhance your imagery of subjects on the water.

If you're new to kayaking, spend time on the water without a camera to get the hang of paddling and the feel of maneuvering a kayak. On a hot summer day, wear a swim suit and force your kayak to capsize so that you understand the limits of how far you can take the boat before the worst happens. Always wear a life jacket and remember that our lives and the lives of others are more important than your camera gear. One way to lessen the fear of losing expensive equipment is to talk with your insurance agent about a separate policy to cover your camera gear (sometimes called a personal articles policy).

Shooting on the water can be gratifying, but there is a learning curve. Practice is everything, and it's important to know the limits of your gear. Those who don't have long lenses shouldn't forget why we started photographing nature: amazing natural connections. Just because our camera gear can't reach an opportunity doesn't mean we can't sit back and simply enjoy it.

Josh Haas ([www.glancesatnature.com](http://www.glancesatnature.com)) specializes in bird and nature photography, trips, and workshops. His work may be seen at numerous art shows throughout Michigan as well as online.

Navigating Michigan's waterways in the spring requires extreme caution. High water caused by snow melt and runoff create dangerous conditions even for seasoned paddlers.



### OUR SUGGESTION

Join a local canoeing or kayaking club to learn more about the conditions in your area. Most clubs now communicate via Facebook and websites, so paddling conditions and group outings are continuously being updated. To learn more about paddling safety and to find a club in your area, visit the American Canoe Association at [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org).



## Kids' Corner

### Lessons Start Early, So Get that Toddler Outdoors

BY TOM FUNKE

Teaching a toddler about nature is very easy, as they are especially curious about the world around them. I am especially blessed that my two-and-a-half year old son, Nathaniel, is growing up on a Michigan Audubon bird sanctuary surrounded by 25,000 acres of state park and game area.

How do children learn about nature and come to respect and preserve it as adults? It's actually very easy, and parents, you don't have to be an expert naturalist. A child needs a natural area to explore and to play in regularly, and an adult that encourages those behaviors. Children develop a sense of place over time. Unfortunately, many parents shriek "No!" when their child is about to get dirty, step off pavement, or climb a tree. As parents, we know the safety of our children is paramount; that's why I only correct my son if he's about to hurt himself or get into a scary situation.

Children learn to follow a parent's lead. Nathaniel stays on the boardwalk at the Otis Sanctuary, only explores the edge of the marsh, and stays on the trail — because that's what I'm doing.

There's no need to feel that you must buy fancy field guides or be able to identify everything children ask about. Let them explore, and keep your attitude positive, your answers simple. Clothes come clean, which is why we have laundry detergent. Kids come clean, too.

The lessons they are learning, bonding with nature, are worth some dirty clothes. Children need to have positive experiences with nature. Adults need to provide a place for them and encourage these experiences, so that children grow up to have a positive, emotional connection with the outdoors.



Tom Funke is the conservation director for Michigan Audubon and resident manager at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary near Hastings. He can be contacted at [tfunke@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:tfunke@michiganaudubon.org).



## Calendar

### March

4–13 **ANR Week**  
Michigan State University

### April

6–9 **MiBCI Ornithological Congress**  
Petoskey

29–30 **Thornapple Woodpecker Festival**  
Middleville

Apr. 30–May 1

**Spring Fling**  
Whitefish Point Bird Observatory,  
Paradise

May (Every Weekend)

**International Migratory Bird Day Festival**  
Copper Harbor

### May

12–14 **Tawas Point Birding Festival**  
East Tawas & Oscoda

21 **Kirtland's Warbler Festival**  
Roscommon

**BOTTOM:** Child holding a bird nest found in backyard. 2009. **TOP:** Mother and daughter birdwatching. 2008.

# Announcements

## Events

### First Annual Thornapple Woodpecker Festival Is Planned

The Thornapple Trail Association will celebrate the first Thornapple Woodpecker Festival in Middleville on April 29–30, 2011. The event will feature displays, a nature photo contest, short, handicapped-accessible field trips on the blacktopped Paul Henry-Thornapple Trail, and a Woodpecker Ball.

The wooded banks of the Thornapple River are home to an established breeding population of Red-headed Woodpeckers, as well as Pileated, Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers, and Northern Flickers. As most woodpecker habitat is located along the Thornapple River, birders might want to bring a kayak or canoe for their own excursions. Kayaks will also be available for rent.

Any proceeds from the event will benefit the all-volunteer Thornapple Trail Association. For more information, contact Jean Lamoreaux at 616-293-8666 or check out the Facebook page (search for Thornapple Woodpecker Festival). Middleville is located approximately 22 miles southeast of Grand Rapids on M-37.

### Audubon Art Exhibit on Display

The Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) will host *Birds of America: Audubon Prints from the Shelburne Museum* beginning April 15 and running through August 14. The exhibit will display thirty of John James Audubon's prints that have been selected from the collection at the Shelburne Museum to demonstrate Audubon's work as both artistic composition and scientific documentation. This exhibition features some of Audubon's most desirable illustrations, admired for their life-size scale, compelling backgrounds, and often dramatic compositions. Please note that this is not the same exhibit that was hosted by the Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson in 2009.

The GRAM will provide some additional programming as part of the exhibition, including a lecture, summer kids' camp, a play, and children's art activities on Saturdays in May. For additional information on the exhibition and programs visit [www.artmuseumgr.org](http://www.artmuseumgr.org) and click on Exhibitions.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. © 2010 Josh Haas.



## Events

### Ornithological Congress in Petoskey

The Fifth Annual Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI) Ornithological Congress will be held April 6–9, 2011 at North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, MI. This year's Ornithological Congress will also be meeting jointly with the Michigan chapter of the American Fisheries Society and the Michigan Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Participants can attend any symposia, workshop, talk, or event hosted by each organization.

Topics to be covered during this year's Congress include climate change, threatened and endangered species management, Kalamazoo River oil spill update, using social media, coordinated bird monitoring efforts, and several citizen scientist projects including the owl and marsh bird monitoring.

MiBCI is a coalition of agencies, organizations, universities, and individuals working together to better understand and conserve Michigan's birds. MiBCI's primary purpose is to conserve, restore, and protect bird populations. While the individual missions and goals of members may be varied, members recognize that they can be a powerful force for conservation if they work toward common objectives. Open avenues of communication enable collaboration, a sense of community, and mutual respect in advancement of a shared vision. The Congress is open to anyone interested in helping to further bird conservation. For details and registration visit [www.mibci.org](http://www.mibci.org).

### Spring Fling Just Around the Corner

Spring Fling at the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) will be a little later than usual this year. Unfortunately, the last weekend in April this year is also the weekend of a religious holiday. The WPBO board of directors decided to move the event back a weekend so as not to interfere with Easter, and so the Spring Fling will be held Saturday April 30 and Sunday May 1.

Birders can expect excellent birding and opportunities to learn more about avian migration and conservation in the Great Lakes region from fellow birders, field trip leaders, and guest speakers. Christian Voigt, tour leader with Tropical Birding, will be the keynote speaker. For additional information or to register for the event, visit [www.wpbo.org](http://www.wpbo.org).

### Sanctuary Open Houses for 2011

Our last open house of 2010, held at Voorhees Sanctuary, brought out about 40 folks, ending the year on a good note. For 2011 we will be holding three more open houses during the summer and fall. Watch for more information as details and dates are confirmed for the events at Hawk Valley Farm in Lansing, Davis Bog near Alpena, and the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary near Jackson.





Eggs in a nest. 2009. Stock Art

## Sanctuary Programs for Early Spring

Hopefully, by the time you read this, you'll have begun to see a few hints of spring's arrival. Please join us for upcoming programs at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary near Hastings, the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary in Manistee, the Bernard Baker Sanctuary near Bellevue, or the Hawk Valley Farm in Lansing. Registration for the programs is recommended, as we cancel programs that don't have a minimum number of participants. Call the office at 517-886-9144 or go to [www.michiganaudubon.org/education/eventcalendar](http://www.michiganaudubon.org/education/eventcalendar) to register.

### March

- |    |            |  |
|----|------------|--|
| 15 | 7:00 p.m.  | Bats of the World (live bats),<br>Lake Bluff |
| 19 | 6:30 p.m.  | Frogs & Toads by the Full Moon,<br>Otis Farm |
| 26 | 10:00 a.m. | Signs of Spring Hike,<br>Lake Bluff          |

### April

- |    |            |   |
|----|------------|---|
| 14 | 6:30 p.m.  | Woodcock Aerial Display Watch,<br>Otis Farm |
| 16 | 9:00 a.m.  | Spring Clean-up Day,<br>Baker Sanctuary     |
| 22 | 10:00 a.m. | Earth Day Exploration Walk,<br>Hawk Valley  |

### May

- |   |            |  |
|---|------------|--|
| 7 | 10:00 a.m. | Spring Wildflower Walk,<br>Baker Sanctuary |
|---|------------|--|

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November-December 2010

Volume 17 Number 5



A publication of Michigan Audubon



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

Every so often Michigan Audubon needs to clear some books out of the Nature Bookstore. The following books are on sale. Please note that there is only one copy of each of these titles. To request a title, please call Wendy at 517-886-9144. Member discount does not apply to items on sale.



## The Sibley Guide to Birds

by David Allen Sibley

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A comprehensive guide to all the birds of North America; many consider it the bird bible. Published in 2000, it's compiled in the old taxonomy, but would still be a great reference book for your home.

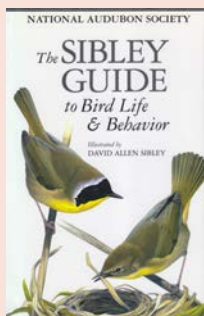


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by Paul Kerlinger

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A revised edition of this title was published in 2009; our 1995 edition carries a wealth of information on bird migration.

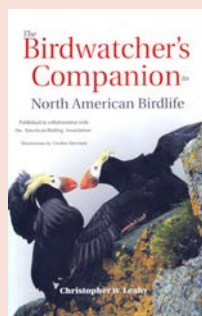


## The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior

by National Audubon Society; illustrated by David Allen Sibley

~~\$45.00~~ **SALE \$27.00** (hardcover)

This natural history of North American bird species was recently re-issued in the current taxonomy, with a flexible cover. Our book was issued in 2001, is hardcover, and follows the old taxonomy. The book contains the same great information.

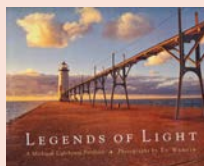


## The Birdwatcher's Companion to North American Birdlife

by Christopher W. Leahy in collaboration with the American Birding Association

~~\$19.95~~ **SALE \$14.96**

This reference encyclopedia of everything avian is still in print. Published in 2004, it's 1096 pages, including a 134-page bibliography.



## Legends of Light: A Michigan Lighthouse Portfolio

by Ed Wargin

~~\$39.95~~ **SALE \$27.96** (hardcover)

This coffee table book allows you to visit every lighthouse in the state through the author's fabulous photographs. It would make a great gift for any lighthouse lover.

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