

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE WINTER ISSUE: Species Spotlight: Great Gray Owl ■ Forestry and Birds ■ 2012 Programming ■
Prepare for that Great Shot in 2012 ■ Webcams: Online Tropical Escapes



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Great Gray Owl

Photographer: Rick Baetsen

From the Cornell Lab of Ornithology: "Although the Great Gray Owl is the tallest American owl with the largest wingspan, it is just a ball of feathers. It preys on small mammals and has relatively small feet. Both the Great Horned and Snowy Owls weigh half again as much, and have larger feet and talons." Photographer Rick Baetsen captured this image in 2001 while birding Chippewa County. The handheld shot was taken using a Canon EO-1N, with Canon 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 IS telephoto lens, Fujichrome 100 Slide film.

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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



MICHIGAN AUDUBON HAS A NEW HOME!

As of January 1, 2012, Michigan Audubon's state offices are located at the Bengel Wildlife Center in Bath, Michigan. We will still maintain a Lansing mailing address, which you can find at the bottom of my letter and on the return address field on the back of the magazine. We are thrilled to occupy the third floor space of the center and be co-residents with the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.

What does the move mean for Michigan Audubon?

First, I want to offer a tremendous "thank you" to everyone who contributed to the campaign in the November–December 2011 issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler*. If you recall, we asked each member to give just ten dollars to one or both of the projects highlighted on page 6. One of the projects—development of a state headquarters in Lansing—continues to challenge our board and staff. We hope to share more news on our fundraising progress related to both Hawk Valley and Brockway Mountain throughout the coming year. In total, the *Jack Pine Warbler* "yellow envelope" campaign, as we refer to it in the office, raised \$3,300 in the month of November.

While we press forward with fundraising related to an Audubon headquarters and learning center at Hawk Valley Farm, our interim home at the Bengel Center offers a brand-new set of resources to Michigan Audubon's members and partners.

Here are a few highlights of where we're currently roosting:

- Michigan Audubon's new landlord, the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, was founded in 1982 with a mission to "restore and improve wildlife habitat through cost-effective projects."
- At least 100 species of birds have been recorded at the Bengel Center, including Greater Sandhill Cranes, Eastern Bluebirds, and Wood Ducks.
- Two hundred fifty nine acres of wetlands and uplands are accessible via easy walking trails and will create new opportunities for on-site educational programming.
- Five different meeting spaces are now available to Michigan Audubon to host a variety of indoor programs.

We are thrilled to begin 2012 with a new home and a brand-new slate of bird-related programming. Refer to page 6 for a preview of the Michigan Audubon signature events and mark your calendars for these perennial favorites: Tawas Point Birding Festival (May 17–20), Cerulean Warbler Weekend (June 1–3), and the Sandhill Crane and Art Festival, "CraneFest" (October 13 & 14). I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying all of the winter birding that Michigan has to offer. Whether you're enjoying birds at your backyard feeder or making the trek to Michigan's eastern Upper Peninsula, you're sure to find some winged wonders.

For the birds,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan E. Lutz".

Jonathan E. Lutz, Executive Director



Michigan Audubon's new home is the Bengel Wildlife Center in Bath, Michigan. 2011
© Michigan Wildlife Conservancy.

NEW LOCATION:
Bengel Wildlife Center
6380 Drumheller Road
Bath, Michigan

NEW MAILING ADDRESS:
PO Box 15249
Lansing, Michigan 48901



Great Gray Owl Nests IN MICHIGAN

BY RICK BAETSEN

In North America, the bulk of the Great Gray Owl's range is the boreal forests of northern Canada. In northern Michigan, the owl is best known for its irregular winter invasions. Populations of voles, the owl's primary prey species, often crash, causing the owls to move south in search of more abundant food sources. Major invasions with large numbers of owls observed in the eastern Upper Peninsula occurred during three winters in the 1990s. In the early 1980s and again in the mid-1990s, possible breeding evidence was found on Neebish Island in Chippewa County, Michigan. Immature Great Gray Owls were observed in mid-summer being tended to by adult birds.



A pair of Great Gray Owl owlets in a nest at Seney National Wildlife Refuge, Schoolcraft County, Michigan. © 2004 Rick Baetsen.

Late in the night of April 29, 2004 at Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Schoolcraft County, I heard the low-pitched but booming “who, who, who,” call of an owl. The call was repeated about twenty seconds later. I recognized the vocalization as that of the territorial call of the Great Gray, though it was not one I had previously heard in the wild. From 1985 to 2004, I conducted nocturnal auditory surveys using taped callback methods on five study sites in northern Michigan. The project collected a relatively abundant amount of information, including breeding habitat preferences and breeding biology of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in Michigan. This Great Gray Owl I heard was responding to a broadcasted territorial call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl.

On April 30, I returned to the survey station where I had heard the call and began to search for a Great Gray Owl. Within sight of the survey station, I observed a large stick nest high in a large-toothed aspen tree. Sitting in the middle of the nest was a bird with a large round head without ear tufts, a distinctive facial disk, and yellow eyes. That morning I took and observed photographs to confirm what turned out to be Michigan’s first nest of the Great Gray Owl. Not far from the nest tree, I noted a dark silhouette—the male owl that I had heard calling the previous night.

After discovering the nest, my spouse, Bonnie Heuvelhorst, and I visited the nest site 18 times between April 30 and June 26, using a blind to observe and photograph the nesting behavior of the owls. With Great Gray Owls, only the female incubates the eggs. It appeared that this female owl was sitting on eggs through May 13. On May 19, the female was brooding an owlet; two days later, we observed two owlets in the nest. The owlets doubled their size in two weeks, and feathers replaced their down. The first owlet left the nest by June 4, and the sec-

ond owlet was on the ground a week later. The young owlets were excellent climbers, using both their feet and bills to pull themselves up into the lower branches of conifer trees. They continued to climb higher into the trees, and on each visit, we found them further from the nest tree. The young owls were capable of limited flight by June 26, and by July, the family of owls had dispersed into the forest.

Breeding season observations of this species have continued in the eastern Upper Peninsula. In late April 2010, we received a call from our good friend Joe Nault of Kinross, Michigan, who told us that on several occasions he had observed a Great Gray Owl carrying prey in Chippewa County. On May 7, in a forest not far from the location of these observations, Joe located a Great Gray brooding three owlets in a large stick nest.

The nest was found in a woods dominated by aspen with a mix of white cedar and balsam fir in the understory. The female continued brooding the three owlets in the nest through May 10, and the male, a very dark plumaged individual, brought prey to the nest for both the female and developing owlets. Joe observed that from May 11 through May 15, all three of the owlets left the nest and were found on the ground. The male bird was an excel-

lent food provider, and during its peak hunting periods of early morning and late evening, we observed it bringing in several voles per hour. The male owl would often give the prey to the female. She would then rip the vole into smaller pieces before feeding it to the young, but later, both adult birds would bring and feed entire voles to awaiting and begging young.

Bonnie and I were able to make several trips in late May and through the middle of June to watch the feeding behavior and observe the young owls as they grew from small, gray-colored fuzz balls into immature plumaged owls. It was a unique experience to witness this in Michigan, and we would like to thank Joe for sharing this find. Joe dedicated a great deal of time to this nest, subsequently learning a great deal about the nesting behavior of this family of Great Gray Owls.

Female Great Gray Owl with Prey for owlet, Chippewa County, Michigan. © 2010 Rick Baetsen.



Given the past breeding evidence and these two nests, it is possible that the Great Gray Owl is no longer just a winter visitor—Michigan may have a new breeding resident.

Rick Baetsen is a biologist and nature photographer. He and his wife, Bonnie Heuvelhorst, live in Walloon Lake, Michigan. His interests include the study and photography of boreal forest flora and fauna, especially grouse, northern forest owls, and orchids. His photography can be found on his website, www.rickbaetsen.com.

Creative Forestry Creates Bird Habitat at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary

BY TOM FUNKE

Cutting trees in a Michigan Audubon sanctuary may seem counterintuitive, and in most cases, it would be. Under what situation would you remove a tree? Wouldn't that disrupt the balance of the ecosystem? When at all possible, our sanctuaries should be representative of the original natural ecosystem found on site before European settlement. Since Europeans arrived on the scene, our natural communities have been dramatically changed by the notable absence of fire and the overwhelming presence of invasive species. To restore the balanced original natural community of our sanctuary before European imperialism, we're going to have to remove some trees—and that's okay.

Let's flash back to 200 years ago, when Native Americans roamed the Glass Creek watershed on hunting forays in search of elk, deer, moose, ducks, and turkeys. To maximize their efficiency, the natives would burn the marshes, forests, and savannas, not necessarily to drive game but to keep the areas open so they could see game better. This activity was commonplace and regular in the area and accounted for many of the oak savannas in Barry County. Due to the prevailing winds, the marshes would burn up into the forests as small ground fires, killing off fire-intolerant shrubs and trees like black walnut, black cherry, and red maple. What remained were fire-resistant trees such as hickories

and oaks. Today, several 300–400-year-old white and black oaks remain. Unfortunately for these native habitats, fire has been suppressed for over 150 years. When there is a lack of fire, red maple and black cherry invade, competing for sunlight and nutrients. Black walnuts poison the soil with juglone, an organic compound that is toxic to many types of plants.

An ecological variable now present that was absent 150 years ago is invasive species. In the project area at Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary, we have about 200 non-native black locusts. Along with autumn olive, honeysuckle, and Tartarian honeysuckle, these sunlight-filtering invasive species are generally of minimal benefit to wildlife.

We've accepted that removing trees via forestry is a conservation practice that helps us restore the oak savanna and enhance the prairie. Using a \$10,000 matching Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), this restoration complements a former LIP project. In 2007, we prescribed a fire in the marsh, restoring many long-dormant forbs and reducing shrub cover. This project also benefits a 2005 North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant project, during which we turned a 30-acre fallow field into a restored prairie dominated by big bluestem. Part of the purpose of the restoration was to provide breeding habitat for water-

fowl and grassland birds. The U.S. Fisheries and Wildlife biologists lamented that there was a wall of non-native and non-conforming trees between this prairie and the adjoining wetland. Removing some of this barrier and opening up other parts provides an easy egress for this area.

A certified forester found that about sixty trees, mostly black walnut, had commercial value. These trees were harvested for timber products, which can be considered carbon sequestration (nearly 132,000 lb. of carbon dioxide). The majority of the remaining small trees were removed for firewood by those interested in volunteering to remove them. Shrubs and small trees, along with the tops and brush from woodcutting, were pushed into large piles by a small bulldozer. We left nearly all the snags as potential Red-headed Woodpecker nest sites.

The enhancement calls for near-zero canopy coverage at the north end of the area with coverage increasing toward the south. These areas with heavier coverage will have the red maple, red pine, and black cherry thinned out, and a prescribed fire will burn off the brush and leaves, exposing the soil to sunlight. It's possible that a long-dormant seed base will come to life next spring. We'll seed the entire area with a mix of native grasses and wildflowers, along with planting various native shrubs.



Except for large oaks, this hillside was mostly cleared to make way for a controlled burn and subsequent prairie plant and shrub plantings. © 2011 Tom Funke.

NON-NATIVE PLANTS BEING REMOVED

- autumn olive
- Tartarian honeysuckle
- burning bush
- multiflora rose
- black locust
- white mulberry
- smooth brome grass
- garlic mustard
- dame's rocket
- lily of the valley
- Colorado blue spruce

NON-CONFORMING PLANTS BEING REDUCED

- hackberry
- black walnut
- black cherry
- red maple
- American elm

ABOVE: White Oak Leaf. © 2011 Melinda Fawver / 123rf

RIGHT: Hickory Leaf. © 2011 Le Do / 123rf



A local contractor clears invasive autumn olive from a hillside at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary.
© 2011 Tom Funke.

WEB RESOURCES

Oaksavannas.org

Michigan Natural Features Inventory Community Abstract: Oak Openings

http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/abstracts/ecology/oak_openings.pdf

Michigan Natural Features Inventory Community Abstract: Mesic Prairie

http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/abstracts/ecology/Mesic_prairie.pdf

Landowner Incentive Program

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_36649---,00.html

In the prairie, we are enhancing our previous restoration project by removing autumn olive and a tree line, reducing non-native grasses, and introducing more forbs. First, the prairie was mowed to expose the non-native brome grass to be treated with herbicide. Once the area is clear, a prescribed burn should kill the non-native brome grass, exposing the soil to sunlight and nutrients. The area will be seeded with a mix of prairie and savanna wildflowers like black-eyed Susan, cone-

flowers, and butterfly weed. Grasses such as little bluestem, switchgrass, and Indian grass will also be planted.

The project increases the overall size of the current prairie as well as plant diversity, which should provide nesting habitat for bird species that are not currently using the sanctuary. Interestingly, Blue Jays have been quite prevalent, checking out the bare soil and piles of brush. We are trying to attract Red-

headed Woodpecker, meadowlark, bobwhite, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bobolink, none of which currently nest in the sanctuary. Henslow's Sparrows, up until recently, used the restored prairie for nesting. We hope to have all of these species present for our next Cerulean Warbler Weekend, when we can show off our restoration and enhancement work.

"Private lands management plays an important role in wildlife conservation in Michigan. The Otis Sanctuary project is a great example of how strategic land management, combined with volunteer efforts and partnering funds, can have a positive impact on our natural resources," says Ken Kesson, MDNR private lands biologist. The Blue Jays seem to agree. I hope they look forward to welcoming some new neighbors at the sanctuary in the next few years.

Tom Funke is the conservation director for Michigan Audubon.

NATIVE TREES BEING PRESERVED

- red oak
- black oak
- white oak
- sassafras
- shagbark hickory
- shellbark hickory
- pignut hickory
- flowering dogwood
- gray dogwood
- smooth shadbush (*Amelanchier laevis*)

NATIVE PLANTS BEING REINTRODUCED

- hazelnut
- purple prairie clover
- nannyberry
- smooth oxeye
- American plum
- tall blazing star
- highbush cranberry
- wild lupine
- black elderberry
- wild bergamot
- arrowwood
- foxglove beard-tongue
- Indian grass
- yellow coneflower
- little bluestem
- black-eyed Susan
- big bluestem
- compass plant
- switchgrass
- cup plant
- butterfly weed
- stiff goldenrod
- New England aster
- hoary vervain
- partridge pea
- Culver's root
- sand coreopsis
- golden alexanders



Black-eyed Susan. © Herreid / Veer

2012 Programming

BY WENDY TATAR

The list of programming scheduled by Michigan Audubon for 2012 keeps growing. We're trying some new programs and updating some past programs to bring you what we hope will be a fun and educational year.

SANCTUARY PROGRAMS

Three of our sanctuaries, Bernard W. Baker, Lake Bluff, and the Otis Farm, will host monthly nature walks. Join a naturalist on the first Saturday of each month at Baker, on the second Saturday at Lake Bluff, and on the third Saturday at Otis Farm to enjoy a guided hike on the trails. Each naturalist will be able to tell you about the flora and fauna that you see during the walks. Remember:

- **1ST SATURDAY**—Baker (located near Bellevue)
- **2ND SATURDAY**—Lake Bluff (just north of Manistee)
- **3RD SATURDAY**—Otis Farm (located southwest of Hastings)

Additional themed programs at these three sanctuaries, along with Hawk Valley Farm in Lansing, will occur four times during the year. The themed programs at Baker are planned for March (full moon hike), May (warbler migration), September (wildflowers), and we'll wrap up the year with crane viewing in October and November. Themed programs at Lake Bluff will be held in late May (spring shorebird migration), July (dunes), September (fall shorebird migration), and December (Chickadee Christmas). The first themed program at Otis Farm will occur on January 9, when we take a full



Signature event attendees participate in programs led by top local birding and naturalist guides. © 2011 John Goergen.

moon snowshoe hike. Additional programs there will occur in April (frogs), June (nesting), and August (Perseid meteor shower campout). At Hawk Valley Farm, the themed programs will occur in May (migration), July (butterflies), August (wildflowers), and September (dragonflies).

Sanctuary open house

There will be an open house held at the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary near Bellevue in June. Get to know this sanctuary better by enjoying guided hikes on the nature trails and meeting the new resident manager, Jolene Flynn. Staff from Michigan Audubon will be there to answer any questions you have about the organization.

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. Please remember to check your magazine's 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.

Henry E. Veldman
John Robert Smith
Nancy Johnson
Janice Porter
Linda Wawzysko
Stephen P. Hansen
Christine W. Walton
Jody Zamirowski

David L. Mendus
Susan Adams
Ariel Cummings
Gerald Purdy
June Cortright
Karen Kuhn
Loraine Reynolds
Jude McKay

Susan Schwaderer
Jan Nagalski
Laura Brown
Jean Riggs
Jennifer Andrews
Diya Fahs
Dorr Warner



SIGNATURE EVENT SERIES

We've been telling you the dates for our signature events for a while now, but just in case you didn't write them down, here they are again. We can now also provide a few more details.

Tawas Point Birding Festival

MAY 17–20

Some of the sessions planned are birding by ear, night migration, Kirtland's Warbler and the Bahamas connection, warbler identification, and Piping Plovers. The event schedule will have several changes in 2012, including a Thursday night social with a presentation by John Dunn, editor of the bird field guides published by National Geographic. For the latest festival information, check out the event website, tawasbirdfest.com.

Registration for the Tawas Point Birding Festival will begin in February. An announcement of the opening of online registration will be sent via e-mail. If you would like to add your e-mail address to the list, you can do so on the home page of the Michigan Audubon website (michiganaudubon.org).

Cerulean Warbler Weekend

JUNE 1–3

This event is all about the birding. Of course there will be guided tours to see Cerulean Warblers. There will also be an opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes birding experience at the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary as well as tours to see Henslow's Sparrows and Empid flycatchers. Registration for this event will open in March. The event website is ceruleanwarbler.org.

Jeff Hoover will be joining us to present a special program, "What birds can tell us: conservation successes and new insights into remarkable bird behavior." Jeff is the avian ecologist at the Illinois natural history survey, which is housed within the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois. He is considered one of North America's experts on brood parasite/host interactions.

For the latest information on all of the programs listed here, visit the Events Calendar page of the Michigan Audubon website, check future issues of the *Jack Pine Warbler*, or call the Lansing office at 517-641-4277.



Birdwatching mentors are eager to share their knowledge and skills at every Michigan Audubon signature event. © 2011 John Goergen.

Sandhill Crane & Art Festival—"CraneFest"

OCTOBER 13 & 14

In 2011, we started a kids activity area at CraneFest. Watch for this programming to expand in 2012. We also plan to have more environmental groups joining us to provide some incredible educational experiences for everyone. The latest information regarding the event can be found on its website, cranefest.org.

Greg Miller, an incredible birder whose experiences were written about in *The Big Year*, will join us for a special Friday night kick-off to the event. If you happened to catch the movie of the same name, Greg was the bird consultant for the movie and the inspiration for the character played by actor Jack Black. Watch for more information on this program later in the year; registration for this special evening event will open in August.

Wendy Tatar is the program coordinator for Michigan Audubon.



Some of the 5,000 attendees of the 2011 Sandhill Crane and Art Festival, "CraneFest"—Michigan's largest birdwatching celebration. © 2011 John Goergen.

Websitings

Grab Your Binoculars, and Head to Your Computer

BY KATIE MURRAY

While we know many of our readers are dedicated to watching their favorite birds, we also know that birders can't be everywhere at once. With that said, technology has done it again, leaving us webcams with live-streaming capabilities that allow you to see video feeds in real time from all over the globe. Conservation organizations from all across the country are providing video footage of a variety of birds nesting, roosting, and laying eggs for anyone interested to view from the comfort of their computer.

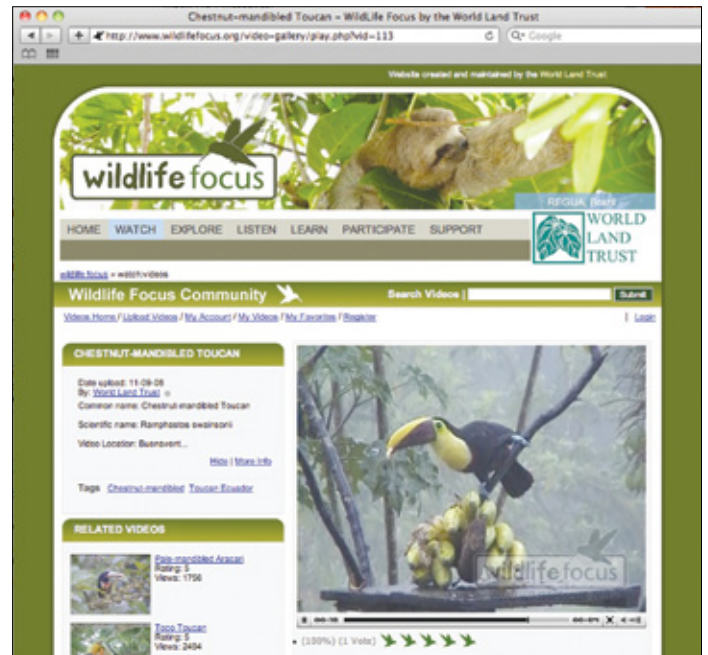
Most of these websites allow you to post comments about what you are watching as a way to bring an element of community into the mix. While most of the videos are shot with tiny, inexpensive cameras, the image and sound quality are unbelievable. The sheer idea of watching a hummingbird from Santee, CA lay eggs from your computer in Michigan takes bird watching to a new level.

Gone are the days of traveling by plane to watch the Great Blue Heron roost or to watch a Barn Owl in Ohio lay eggs. Now, thanks to the spread of webcam technology, birders everywhere can watch streaming video of native birds migrating to warmer climates.

One of the more popular webcam hosts, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (1) not only updates what they call "nest cams" daily, but also archives every video or picture they receive for recreational and research purposes. The website operates on funds from donors, as well as a grant from the National Science Foundation, which allows them to purchase and place cameras around the world. This website is particularly nice for viewing and comparing migration patterns from the northern and southern areas of the United States. Another interesting feature is the "CamClickr" section. This section recruits knowledgeable bird watchers to help them tag birds by species in archived videos.

Another popular webcam provider is Wild Life Focus (WLF) (2), which specializes in webcams in the forest. They pride themselves on their high-quality feeds from cameras located in South America. Their three main webcams are the Buenaventura webcam, the Ornithos webcam, and the Regua webcam. These cameras are located in rainforests in Ecuador and Brazil and are strategically placed to film a variety of wild birds. The WLF group not only films the birds in these areas, but also plays a large part in the efforts to conserve the bird habitats there. Each video is complemented by information about the birds that often visit the area broadcasted by the webcam. This site is great for those who would like to observe and protect certain species of birds.

For more videos of birds in warm climates, South African National Parks (3) has great videos that are updated every thirty seconds. While the video quality is not extremely clear, their website is unique in the fact that the videos are streaming directly from the



Webcams can be virtual escapes for birders and can also be useful tools for planning the birding trip of a lifetime.

wilderness. Their mission is to support South African birds by preserving biodiversity, habitats, and species. This website also maintains a message forum that enables viewers to post and discuss their thoughts about the webcam footage.

While these webcam video feeds aren't interactive like sitting in a South African rainforest, they might help you feel like you've been transported from your midwestern office to a tropical paradise. The next time you grow tired of reading e-mails, check out one of these video feeds and prepare to be amazed by some of nature's most interesting creatures.

Katie Murray is a sophomore in the professional writing program at Michigan State University. Katie assists fellow students as a consultant in the MSU Writing Center. She can be reached via e-mail at murra150@msu.edu.

Visit These Sites:

- (1) <http://birds.cornell.edu/nestcams>
- (2) <http://www.wildlifefocus.org>
- (3) <http://sanparks.org>

Book Review

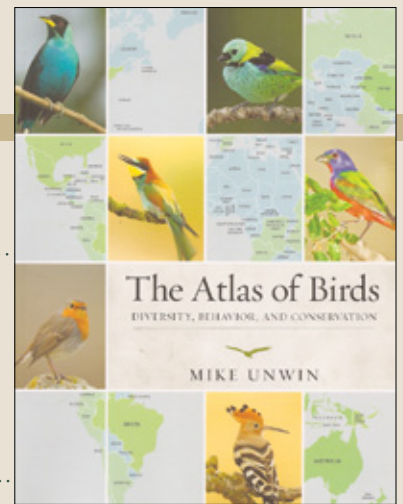
Atlas of Birds: Diversity, Behavior, and Conservation

BY MIKE UNWIN

(2011, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS) / REVIEWED BY ALEC R. LINDSAY

\$22.95

Available at the Michigan
Audubon Bookstore



In today's world, birders can store sightings in electronic databases like eBird; they can double-check bird plumages, ranges, and songs with smartphone apps; and they can record and play back bird vocalizations with handheld devices. In such a world, is there still a market for avian atlases and coffee table books? I hope so, because this new *Atlas of Birds* is the sort that serious birders will undoubtedly enjoy, non-birders will likely find compelling, and reference libraries and coffee tables alike will be pleased to display.

On first handling *The Atlas of Birds: Diversity, Behavior and Conservation* by Mike Unwin, I was startled that the book was so thin, as typical state- or province-based atlases often become multi-volume tomes. This atlas is a different animal, and its content and organization should make it a meaningful addition to any bird enthusiast's library. Although some of the British idioms will stand out to American readers, the material is unmistakably global in its coverage, and the state of birds in the New World certainly gets fair consideration.

The visual appeal of this book cannot be overstated—open to any page and find striking photos, beautiful maps, and informative figures and diagrams, all in full color. The text portions on each spread are equally informative and easy to follow. In only a few places are there factual errors (e.g., loons don't have exuberant courtship displays, as mentioned on page 47) or conceptual problems (e.g., todies aren't really exemplars of adaptive radiation, as mentioned on page 37, but are good examples of allopatric speciation), but those minor issues hardly tarnish the value of this book.

The book is divided into eight parts. The first part, "Introduction to Birds," provides a fairly brief but remarkably information-dense discussion of avian evolution, the special adaptations of birds, and that most quintessential of avian features, the feather. Part two, "Where Birds Live," has comprehensive reviews of bird life on each of the continents (and the oceans) and also has sections dedicated to bird habitats, country counts, endemic birds, and Important Bird Areas (IBAs). This second part of the atlas leans particularly heavily on the impressive resources gathered by BirdLife International (and their partners) through their IBA initiative. Part three of the atlas, "Birds in Order," is a taxonomic review of all the bird orders (nearly 30), which the author divided into nine reasonable groupings. The ever-changing landscape of avian phylogenetics is fully recognized by the author, and the presentation of the evolutionary material is accurate, interesting, and informative.

From varied foraging strategies to juvenile development, from social behavior to migration patterns, part four, "How Birds Live," has ten sections that introduce many of the amazingly diverse habits of birds. Part five, "Birds and People," has a great deal of information about humans and birds that is not typically covered in other encyclopedic works on birds. For instance, most avian enthusiasts know much of the cultural significance of birds—from ceremonial headdresses to national symbols—but how many know that vultures once symbolized motherhood or that 64 bird species are mentioned in the works of Shakespeare? This section documents lots of meaningful connections between birds and humans.

Insightful discussions of conservation issues pepper all sections of the book, but the last two parts, starting with "Birds Under Threat," provide the most forceful documentation of the current plight of many bird species. Complicated conservation issues confronting

birds are thoughtfully presented in this part, including sections on infrastructure and pollution, invasive species, climate change, and habitat loss. All is not bleak and hopeless, however; the last part of the book, "Protecting Birds," describes some of the impressive actions taken on behalf of birds and provides examples of activities that people can immediately undertake to help conserve our avifauna.

The final section of the book is a "Bird Table," which may sound dull, but it contains country-based bird statistics that will be of interest to enthusiasts, conservationists, and scientists alike. For each country in the world, the table lists the human population size, land area, agricultural land area, coastline, number of bird species (including endemic species), and number of threatened species, among other statistics.

As advertised in its title, this atlas superbly illustrates the dazzling diversity and behavior of birds, and more impressively, it seamlessly weaves conservation issues into nearly every section. The layout and organization make topics of interest easy to find, quick to digest, and intellectually appealing to either a dedicated ornithologist or a casual browser. The list price is surprisingly low for a book of this quality, and bird enthusiasts of all stripes will likely find it a useful resource and a beautiful addition to their library or coffee table.

Alec R. Lindsay is an associate professor of biology at Northern Michigan University. His research spans from avian ecology and behavior to evolutionary and conservation genetics. He works primarily on loons and chickadees and teaches courses in genetics, evolution, conservation, general biology, and ornithology. He can be reached via e-mail at alindsay@nmu.edu

Feathered Lens

Prepare for that Great Shot in 2012

BY JOSH HAAS

Whether you go by the calendar year or have your own year based on what you shoot, there is always a time when gear needs to be re-evaluated, cleaned, and prepared for the next shooting season. Many photographers don't know what to do when it comes to maintaining their digital SLR cameras and all the lenses in their bag. Maybe you've noticed dust spots in the same place on your images or your lenses are showing signs of wear. If so, there are some simple things you can do to keep your gear in tip-top shape.

One of the first things to do is find a well-lit room with a table where you can spread your gear out. It needs to be a clean space without lots of dust moving around the room. I like to concentrate on lenses first as they tend to be easier. Begin by inspecting the outsides of the lenses carefully, and use a soft cloth to wipe them down, ensuring all dust and grime are removed. Then remove the lens caps and use electronics-grade tissue paper and/or a photographer's blow brush (both found at any camera shop) to carefully clean away any dust and grime from the glass. Don't press hard, and make a note to not wipe in circles. Use more of a back-and-forth motion. Once all of your lenses are done, get out your SLR body, and wipe down the outside in the same fashion. This is where my SLR cleaning advice ends. Some photographers, including myself, clean the sensors of their bodies themselves, but this is an "at your own risk" type of thing that can be very tricky. It requires specific cleaning swabs built for your model of camera. If your digital SLR's digital sensor is in need of cleaning, I highly recommend taking it to a reputable camera shop and let them take on the risk. This usually runs between \$40 and \$50. An easy way to figure out if your sensor needs cleaning is to go outside, point the camera with a wide-angle lens straight up at an even blue sky, and take a picture (focus doesn't matter at all). If, after the shot is taken, you review the image and find little spots all over the place, your sensor needs to be cleaned. Remember: the longer you keep lenses and/or camera caps on the body, the longer the sensor will stay clean.

Aside from cleaning and inspecting, it's also a great idea to ensure your extra batteries (whether they are flash batteries or SLR body batteries) are fresh. A simple battery meter from your local electronics store is a great tool to have in your pack, or you can simply recycle the partly used batteries into other home electron-



Simple steps to prepare for peak migration in the spring will make getting "the shot" that much easier.
© 2009 Malgorzata Slusarczyk.

ics and replace your photography-use batteries with fresh ones. All of us have stories of being in the field with dead batteries; a little prep work before hiking miles into the field will keep your sanity in check and prove useful when that special species comes in when you're ready with a full charge. Also make sure your bags are cleaned and neatly organized so finding specific pieces of gear is easy and fast.

Now that all of your gear is ready to go, what's next? Start looking at the calendar and take note of times of year when specific birds are in your area so you don't miss those key times. Preparation is the key here. Review your image inventory and take note of which species you lack images of. Rather than going to the same spots year in and year out, maybe this year it's time to go after something new. Whether you're planning the trip of a lifetime or just planning out trips to your local photo spots for the year, treat every outing as a special one and work hard to add images with interesting behaviors and poses that set your images apart from everyone else's work. By prepping your gear for the season and ensuring all of your equipment is in tip-top shape, your chances of photographic success will be that much greater.

To read more about Josh, visit www.glancesatnature.com. He specializes in bird and nature photography, trips, and workshops. His work can be seen at numerous art shows throughout Michigan as well as online.



Young Birders



An eastern cottontail rabbit can capture the imagination and interest of a budding naturalist.
© 2011 John J. Henderson.

Capital Area Audubon Society School Backpack Program

In 2009, the Capital Area Audubon Society (CAAS) chapter of Michigan Audubon created a school backpack program. Members donated money to purchase backpacks and equipment to put in them. Each backpack contained a pair of binoculars, a nature log, a copy of *Peterson Field Guide: Young Birder's Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America*, and an assortment of pocket field guides covering other species in the wild.

Backpacks were given to teachers in the greater Lansing area for use in their classrooms. One of those receiving a backpack was Zsuzsanna Mahon, a fifth grade teacher at Murphy Elementary School in Haslett. One of the ways the backpack is used in Zsuzsanna's classroom is that each student is assigned a date when they get to take the backpack home for a weekend. They then must turn in and present a report about how they used the backpack. Below is a report that student Alex Stanulis sent as a thank you to CAAS for their wonderful donation to his classroom.

"Thank you for giving us the Audubon backpacks. I was really excited to use the cool equipment in the backpacks that we had learned about in class but I hadn't had a chance to work with myself. In the backpack, there were things like binoculars and a pocket guide that explained different footprints of animals. The binoculars were really nice and they were fun to use

to watch nature from a distance. I've never actually used binoculars before, so that was a fun experience.

While I was looking for an animal to talk about in my backpack report, I stumbled on footprints that looked like some kind of hare. I then looked at the pocket guide to match the footprints with the kind of rabbit that I think I saw. The tracks looked like it was a cottontail rabbit. Without this backpack I wouldn't have been able to find out what kind of animal it was or learn more about that animal. When I brought the backpack into class, I got to share what I saw, wrote, and drew in the journal. It was fun to share about things that I did.

When it wasn't my turn, it was fun to listen to what other people found in their backyard or another area. Last year, we spent a lot of time outside with nature. I appreciate the ability to be able to observe and learn more about nature because of experiences like this, thanks!"

Each backpack and its contents cost \$134, and CAAS was able to place backpacks in 12 classrooms their first year. In their second year of the program, they placed an additional 24 backpacks in classrooms. CAAS is currently raising funds for its third year of the program. Four students from Zsuzsanna's class presented a program for members of CAAS on their use of the backpack in September of 2011. If you are interested in finding out more about the CAAS school backpack program, additional information is located on the CAAS website, www.capitalareaaudubon.org.



LEFT: © 2011 Konturvid / 123rf. ABOVE: © 2011 Manav Lohia / 123rf.

Calendar

January

14–15 **Winter Birding at the Soo Fieldtrip**
Hosted by Whitefish Point Bird Observatory

February

4 & 5 **Soo Birding Field Trip**
Hosted by Jackson Audubon Society

18 **Field Trip: Allegan State Game Area**
Presented by the Muskegon County Nature Club

18 & 19 **Winter Birding at the Soo Field Trip**
Hosted by Michigan Audubon

March

2–11 **Agriculture and Natural Resources Week**
Michigan State University

24 **Birding the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge**
Hosted by Whitefish Point Bird Observatory

31 **Field Trip: Maple River Waterfowl**
Presented by the Capital Area Audubon Society

Volunteer Spotlight

IN 2012, *Michigan Audubon* will be shining a light on volunteers. We'll salute the volunteers who go above and beyond the call of duty—volunteers who help us connect birds and people for the benefit of both. Without our volunteers, *Michigan Audubon* would not be able to provide much beyond the daily operations of the office. We owe them much gratitude, and we hope this column will let them know that what they do for us is greatly appreciated.



AUSABLE VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

This issue's spotlight shines on a group of volunteers: members of the AuSable Valley Audubon chapter.

AuSable Valley Audubon (AVA) has been one of our more active chapters when it comes to public education, bird advocacy, and working with state entities to protect bird species and habitat. Each year, they dedicate themselves to taking birdhouse-building workshops to the local schools, writing and submitting articles to local newspapers, holding beginning birding workshops for the public, and assisting Michigan Audubon in hosting the Tawas Point Birding Festival (TPBF).

TPBF was created by AVA in 2005 as a way of showing off the incredible birding of their area while boosting the local economy at an especially slow time of the year. After several years of hosting alone, AVA asked Michigan Audubon to get involved in the event, which now leads our signature event series and includes our annual conference. Each year, most of the AVA members turn out to volunteer at the festi-

val. From manning the registration table to leading guided hikes, they are involved in every aspect of this event.

The AVA members act as goodwill ambassadors for Iosco County and help to attract thousands of birders to their area every year. They deserve our praise, and we are deeply grateful for all that they do to support Michigan Audubon.



TOP: Chapter members on the birding trail.
© 2011 AuSable Valley Audubon

RIGHT: The Trumpeter Swan is the logo for AuSable Valley Audubon © 2010 Josh Haas.



*Use your smartphone to keep up with
the Michigan Audubon Society!*

Scan this QR code to visit MichiganAudubon.org



Announcements



Bird watching Michigan's wetlands. © 2010 Michigan Audubon.

News

Workshop and Bookstore to Be Part of Agriculture and Natural Resources Week

Each spring, Michigan State University holds Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Week on its campus during spring break. This year, the event will begin on Friday March 2 and conclude on Sunday March 11. The complete schedule of meetings and programs is available online at canr.msu.edu/anrweek/.

As part of Michigan State University's ANR Week, Michigan Audubon will hold a Beginning Birding Workshop on Saturday March 3. Join veteran birder and Dahlem Conservancy naturalist Gary Siegrist for an all-day workshop to assist you in becoming a better birder.

The class will start at 9:00 AM and run until 3:00 PM. The morning portion of this workshop will be held indoors at the Kellogg Conference Center on the MSU campus and includes use of binoculars and field guides; bird identification; habitat; and the when, the where, and the hows of finding our feathered friends. After a lunch break (lunch is not included in the fee) participants will meet with Gary to put their newfound knowledge to use on a birding walk around the campus. A \$25 participation fee will be charged. Registration can be done online by going to the Event Calendar listings on Michigan Audubon's website, michiganaudubon.org.

Michigan Audubon's Nature 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 3 at the MSU Pavilion. The bookstore will also participate in the Wildflower Association of Michigan (WAM) Conference, held on Sunday March 4 and Monday March 5 at the Kellogg Conference Center. Both of these events provide great educational opportunities that you can participate in. To find a detailed listing of the Quiet Water Symposium, go to their website at 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 to sign up as a volunteer.

News

Results of First Sharp-tailed Grouse Hunt

Results are in for the first Sharp-tailed Grouse hunt in Michigan in over a decade. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources estimates that just over 200 Sharp-tailed Grouse were harvested in October 2010. There were 2,571 hunters registered for the hunt. Approximately 25 percent of the hunters were successful in bagging at least one bird last season. According to the statistics, however, only about 15 percent of the hunters actually went to the field in pursuit of the birds. All registered hunters got a grouse stamp, which may explain why only 15 percent of those with permits actually hunted. Stamp collectors and those wishing to support bird conservation are encouraged to buy the stamps, as the monies collected go toward habitat restoration. Survey results were compiled by Brian Frawley from a random sample of hunters who received the 2010 harvest survey.

The only available hunting for Sharp-tailed Grouse takes place in portions of Chippewa and Mackinac Counties in the eastern Upper Peninsula. Sugar and Neebish Island are included in the eligible hunting area, but Drummond Island is not. The hunt is held during a three-week period in October.

Follow Migrating Loons Online

The U. S. Geological Services' Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center is continuing its study of migrating Common Loon through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Twenty birds in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan have been banded with archival geo-locator tags and satellite transmitters, which allow scientists to track their movements during migration. The information recorded by the transmitters also includes the depth that the birds are feeding at. It is hoped that with this information it can be determined where the birds are picking up the type E botulism that has been resulting in die-offs of fish and fish-eating birds in the Great Lakes. This is the first year that birds nesting in Michigan have been included in the study. You can follow the birds' movements on the Internet at http://umesc.usgs.gov/terrestrial/migratory_birds/loons/migrations.html.

Events

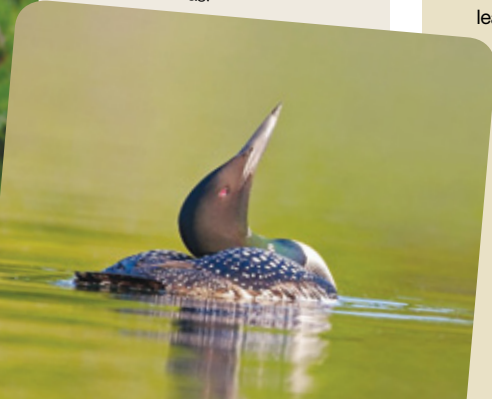
Winter Birding Hot Spot Fieldtrip

Are you anxious to see a Gray Jay? Hoping to check the Northern Hawk Owl off your list? Then join Michigan Audubon and tour leader Alison Vilag on a field trip to the eastern Upper Peninsula on February 18 and 19. This caravanning adventure will start at Sault Ste. Marie and progress through Chippewa and Mackinac Counties.

The trip is limited to 12 participants and will fill up fast. The fee for the trip is \$60 for Michigan Audubon members and \$90 for nonmembers (this fee will include a one-year membership in Michigan Audubon). The trip fee does not include meals or lodging. Registration can be done online at michiganaudubon.org or by calling the office at 517-642-4277.

Horsemint at the Mott Sanctuary.
© 2008 Jonathan Lutz.

The Common Loon, *Gavia immer*.
© 2010 Josh Haas.

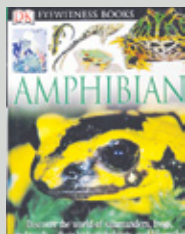


Dated Material

Michigan Audubon Bookstore

Support our educational programs by shopping at the Michigan Audubon Bookstore

Information or phone orders **517-641-4277**



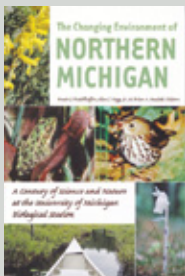
Eyewitness: Amphibian

by Dr. Barry Clark

\$15.99 (hardcover)

Published by DK Publishing, Eyewitness books are some of the best on the market, not only for children but for adults too. The amount of information and incredible photos packed into these books is amazing. This one covers frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, and caecilians of the

world. This book will help you study these currently hibernating creatures to be ready for spring thaw.

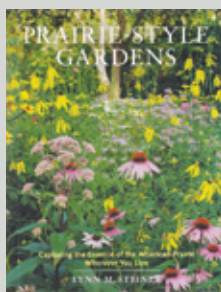


The Changing Environment of Northern Michigan

edited by Knute J. Nadelhoffer, Alan J. Hogg, Jr. & Brian A. Hazlett

\$26.95

The subtitle of this book is *A Century of Science and Nature at the University of Michigan Biological Station*. The book speaks not only to the history of the station, but also discusses changes to the ecosystems of the area. From fungi and lichen to amphibians and birds and the terrestrial communities that they all live in, this book is a complete look inside the northern Michigan environment.



Prairie Style Gardens

by Lynn M. Steiner

\$34.95 (hardcover)

From the author of *Landscaping with Native Plants of Michigan*, this book is designed to assist you with creating a prairie. Plant profiles of flowers, grasses, and sedges are included along with ideas on how to include prairie plants in your landscape, plus tips on how to maintain your plants.



Attracting Native Pollinators: Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies

A Xerces Society Guide

\$29.95

This book provides an action plan to protect the bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, moths, and beetles that pollinate 70 percent of the flowering plants in North America. It explains pollination, provides a natural history of the pollinators, and tells how you can help reverse the population decline of these insects in a number of different ways.



Remarkable Woodpeckers

by Stan Tekiela

\$14.95

In what seems to be a never-ending list of titles by this author, we have now been presented with a natural history book of all 22 species of woodpeckers living in the United States and Canada. Like his other books, it is packed full of incredible photos and easy-to-read text. This book is a "must add to the library" for anyone who loves this family of birds.

10% off for all Michigan Audubon members!

Order by phone, mail, or e-mail

By phone. Visa or MasterCard. Phone 517-641-4277.

By mail. Send name, address, phone number, and payment to Michigan Audubon Bookstore, PO Box 15249, Lansing MI 48901. Prepayment includes list price + 6% sales tax + \$3.75 postage and handling for the first item + \$.85 for each additional item.

By e-mail. Wendy@MichiganAudubon.org.