

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE HOLIDAY ISSUE: Wild Turkeys: Size Matters ■ Achieving Flyway Scale Success ■
Mentoring a Young Birder ■ Buying the Right DSLR Camera



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Turkey In Flight

Photographer: Monte Loomis

The cover image was pulled from stock photography and details about the photographer's camera settings are unknown. The image was simply too beautiful to pass up for our year-end cover. If you would like to see your images featured in the *Jack Pine Warbler*, please email Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Mallory King via mallory@michiganaudubon.org. We would love to see your work!

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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



EYING A HIGHER LEVEL OF CONSERVATION SUCCESS

Michigan Audubon's Conservation Director, Tom Funke, Program Coordinator, Wendy Tatar, and I were all hired as full-time employees during the first half of 2008. After a vigorous effort to improve Michigan Audubon's finances—relieving the organization of an operating deficit—I asked the staff to do more with less.

I'm proud to say that the “doing more” approach was not a problem for this team. Tom cut back on travel and began taking unpaid leave days during the summer months. Wendy reduced the amount of print and postage expenses related to our annual programs. I reduced the organization's overhead by eliminating a staff position and contracting with a local certified public accountant. Together we whittled down Michigan Audubon's expenses and focused our spending on fulfilling the Michigan Audubon mission: *Connecting birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research programs.*

Since then we've challenged ourselves to bring the highest-level birders and conservation professionals to Michigan. Shorebird guru Kevin Karlson, warbler expert Jon Dunn, and the author-photographer duo Don and Lillian Stokes have all been presenters at the Tawas Point Birding Festival, one of Michigan Audubon's Signature Events. Likewise, we've made the most of funding opportunities to expand habitat for the Michigan-endangered Henslow's Sparrow. In 2011, with funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Landowner Incentive Program, we restored 60 acres of grassland habitat at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary. Now, similar work is under way at the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary, thanks to strong volunteer leadership.

Michigan Audubon continues to be at the forefront of avian research efforts in the



MAS board member Shelley Martinez and *The Big Year* birder Greg Miller with Jonathan during CraneFest. © 2012 Michigan Audubon.

state. And research will be a major focus of the strategic planning work that staff, board members, chapter members, and organizational partners will be completing before the end of this year. By reducing our expenses and maintaining a balanced operating budget, we've been able to contribute financially to projects like the chapter-led Keweenaw Raptor Survey, the grassroots Loon Network, and a unique study of seed consumption at the Rouge River Bird Observatory. Our 2013 budget will include an even greater discretionary fund for avian research projects, but we are eager to identify and fund additional emerging research. The results of our strategic planning will provide us with greater direction.

Since the latter half of 2009, Michigan Audubon's output in the areas of bird-related conservation, education, and research has increased. Now, however, we're at a critical point; in order for us to continue on the current trajectory of success, we need to increase our capacity.

I ask that as you prepare your year-end gifts, consider giving just a little bit more to Michigan Audubon, as we are now an organization that is poised to make a big impact on recreational birding and bird conservation in the years to come. At the center of this issue, I've written an article with greater detail about our successes in 2012. I want you to be the judge: Are we doing a good job? Are you satisfied with Michigan Audubon's work? Do you believe we can set and achieve new goals? If you answer yes to any of these, please consider using the enclosed envelope to make your year-end gift. I promise that we will use your donation wisely and do everything we can to connect birds and people for the benefit of both.

Best regards,

Jonathan E. Lutz, Executive Director

The Wild Turkey: Why Size Counts

BY WILLIAM F. PORTER, PhD

When we think of the holidays, we envision a gathering of relatives and lots of food. The main course for those big dinners is often turkey. We associate turkey with the feasts held by the early colonists, and our tables at Thanksgiving are often festooned with ceramic turkeys and likenesses of colonists carrying blunderbusses. Why are turkeys so prominent?

For early colonists, there were two turkeys. Europeans were acquainted with turkeys long before anyone thought of Plymouth Rock. The Wild Turkey is among the few species native to North America to be effectively domesticated and Native Americans living in Mexico were especially successful. In 1520, Spanish explorers took some of these domestic turkeys back to Europe. This domestic race of turkeys spread rapidly throughout Europe. Ironically, among the livestock arriving in the New World with the early colonists were turkeys. The colonists were surprised to find that there were already turkeys in the woods. Hence the name: Wild Turkey. And, of course, this is the reason that we have two turkeys as well.

Turkeys, both domestic and wild, became central to American culture because of their size. A turkey was large enough to feed a big family, and it was just small enough to be easily killed and carried by a young hunter. This led to enormous hunting pressure on Wild Turkey populations by Native Americans, and later by the European settlers. As a consequence

of all this hunting pressure, Wild Turkeys became scarce.

By the time John James Audubon was traveling through eastern North America in the early 19th century, Wild Turkeys were so numerous that he reported seeing flocks numbering in the hundreds. There were a couple of reasons for this remarkable difference in abundance. First, European diseases like small pox resulted in dramatic declines in Native American populations, thereby releasing Wild Turkeys from heavy hunting pressure. Second, Wild Turkeys generally lay clutches of a dozen eggs and if the weather is favorable, their populations can double every year. For several decades between the loss of Native American populations and before the expansion of early colonies westward, Wild Turkey numbers increased to the flock sizes that Audubon witnessed.

The rebound in Wild Turkey populations was short-lived, though. As settlements expanded, Wild Turkeys once again became a dinner staple. Market hunters exploited Wild Turkey populations and by the dawn of the 20th century, Wild Turkeys were once again scarce. By the 1930s, the only remaining Wild Turkeys lived in the deepest oak swamps of the southeastern United States, in places that were largely inaccessible to humans.

Once again, though, Wild Turkey populations rebounded, this time as a result of the emergence of the conservation movement. Seeded by people like Theodore Roosevelt, George Bird Grinnell and Aldo

Leopold, the conservation movement in America built effective wildlife management agencies. These agencies established and enforced hunting seasons and bag limits. They also worked hard to restore wildlife populations that had been decimated by earlier unregulated hunting.

Perhaps no effort to re-establish a species has been more successful than that of the Wild Turkey. In partnership with university researchers, state wildlife biologists learned to live-trap and transplant Wild Turkeys to areas that appeared to be suitable habitat. Initially, wildlife biologists were pretty conservative in what they considered suitable habitat because their only experience with Wild Turkey populations was in large tracts of mature oak forest. This definition of suitable Wild Turkey habitat meant that the upper Midwest was not likely to be a candidate for transplanting Wild Turkeys. The cold, snowy winters and the extensive agriculture just didn't look like southern oak swamps.

However, fate stepped in just at the right moment. In the 1970s, southern states began seeking to restore Ruffed Grouse and Black Bear populations. They began negotiating with northern states about swapping wildlife, and Wild Turkeys entered the conversation. Trial releases of Wild Turkeys in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan were paired with research projects. Not only could Wild Turkeys survive the cold and snow, they thrived. The research showed that the waste grain left on the farm fields after fall harvest, and undigested grain found in manure spread



Turkey Feather.
© 2012 Melinda Fawver.

on the fields through the winter provided an important food resource. Today, Wild Turkey populations number nearly 7 million birds and are found throughout the United States, and in parts of Mexico and Canada.

Michigan has benefitted from this dramatic population expansion. Numbers of Wild Turkeys in Michigan fluctuate between 100,000 and 200,000. These wide fluctuations are common for species such as Wild Turkeys that produce a clutch of as many as 12 eggs each year. Historical evidence suggests that populations ebbed and flowed in southern Michigan below the transition zone probably in response to winter weather as well as May rainfall. As best we can tell, it's likely the bird did not occur in the northern Lower Peninsula or the Upper Peninsula. Of course, today the species is widespread in Michigan.

Research we have done shows that we can predict fall populations with better than 90 percent accuracy based on the amount of rainfall in May. Wild Turkey eggs are vulnerable to predation by skunks, raccoons and foxes because turkeys nest on the ground. In wet weather, predators are better able to detect hens on nests by smell. Think about how we can smell a dog when it's wet and then consider that while skunks, raccoons and foxes are several orders of magnitude more sensitive, wet conditions make it easier still. When we experience a drought in May, turkey populations can grow dramatically because predators have a harder time finding nests and consequently many more eggs hatch successfully. This year's May rainfall was about a half an inch below normal, so turkeys should be much more abundant this fall.

Why has the turkey done so well? Once again, at least part of the answer has to do with body size. For a Wild Turkey of adult



Aldo Leopold and like-minded conservationists helped restore wild game populations in North America. © 2012 Aldo Leopold Foundation.

size – about 10 pounds for a female and 20 pounds for a male, there are few predators large enough to be efficient at killing them. Wolves, coyotes and bobcats certainly seem like good candidates, but humans represent the most serious predator.

This Thanksgiving, when you gaze on a beautiful roast turkey that is about to

feed all the relatives who have gathered, remember, the rich history of this magnificent bird has arisen mostly due to its size.

William F. Porter PhD is the Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation at Michigan State University. He can be reached at porter@anr.msu.edu.

Franklin's Opinion on Turkeys

You've probably heard the story of Benjamin Franklin wanting the national symbol of the United States to be a Wild Turkey. His comments actually came a few years after the Great Seal was adopted by Congress and referred to a newly formed society of Revolutionary War officers, the Society of the Cincinnati. The insignia of the society had a rather poorly drawn eagle within it; one that many thought looked more like a turkey.

In a letter to his daughter dated January 26, 1784, Franklin, who was in France at the time, wrote:

"For my own part I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of bad moral Character. He does not get his Living honestly. You may have seen him perched on some dead Tree near the River, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the Labour of the Fishing Hawk (Osprey); and when that diligent Bird has at length taken a Fish, and is bearing it to his Nest for the Support of his Mate and young Ones, the

Bald Eagle pursues him and takes it from him.

"With all this Injustice, he is never in good Case but like those among Men who live by Sharping & Robbing he is generally poor and often very lousy. Besides he is a rank Coward: The little King Bird not bigger than a Sparrow attacks him boldly and drives him out of the District. He is therefore by no means a proper Emblem for the brave and honest Cincinnati of America who have driven all the King birds from our Country...

"I am on this account not displeased that the Figure is not known as a Bald Eagle, but looks more like a Turkey. For the Truth the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America... He is besides, though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on."

Excerpt of Franklin letter from the website greatseal.com.

Michigan Audubon

Achieving Flyway-Scale Success

BY JONATHAN E. LUTZ

Michigan Audubon was formed in Detroit in 1904 by a group consisting of professional ornithologists and civic leaders that included a future governor of Michigan. The goal of these founders was to establish a responsible approach to protecting birds in the Great Lakes State. Twelve years later, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act was passed, in part, due to the efforts of Michigan Audubon's early leaders. Michigan Audubon's legacy of conserving birds in Michigan and beyond continues today as the organization continues to build capacity and plans for a new strategic direction.

Michigan is on the Mississippi Flyway—the portion of the United States where nearly half of North America's bird species, and about 40 percent of its waterfowl, spend at least part of their lives. The flyway extends northward to the Canadian tundra and southward to the Patagonia region of South America. Michigan is at its heart. Michigan Audubon will be networking with National Audubon, Audubon state chapters, and other partners within the flyway to weave a seamless web of bird conservation in the Great Lakes. Our year-end strategic planning process will help our staff and board answer the questions, "How will we do it?" and "What role does Michigan Audubon play?" We are looking forward to sharing the results of those discussions with you when we roll out a new three-year strategic plan in early 2013.

2012 Education Notes

Michigan Audubon's Signature Event series ended on a high note in 2012, with an estimated 6,000 people attending the Sandhill Crane & Art Festival, "CraneFest," on a tropical weather weekend in October. The trend of record attendance continued this spring. Both the Tawas Point Birding Festival (May) and

Cerulean Warbler Weekend (June) benefitted from new highs for registered attendees. Weather limited the attendance for the 18th Annual CraneFest to less than 2,000, but still more than 6,000 bird enthusiasts took part in Michigan Audubon programs in 2012.

While fulfilling our mission of *connecting birds and people for the benefit of both*, our staff and volunteers have taken our programming and outreach efforts to a new, nationally recognized level. In 2012, participants from more than 20 states and five foreign countries flocked to Michigan to experience everything from Kirtland's Warblers to Sandhill Cranes. The organization continues to devote time and energy into developing the Signature Event Series, which includes the Tawas Point Birding Festival, Cerulean Warbler Weekend, and CraneFest. A fresh round of the nation's best birdwatchers and biggest names in bird conservation will headline the events in 2013.

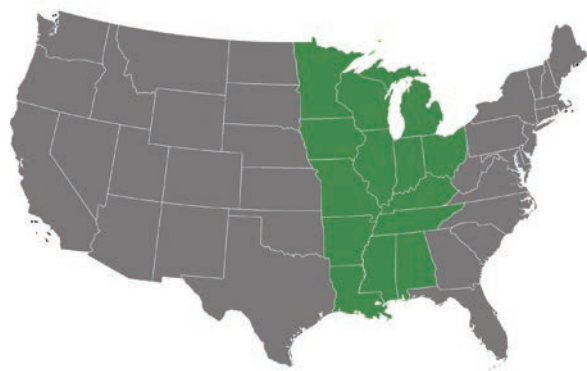
2012 Conservation Notes

Michigan Audubon owns and stewards 20 sanctuary properties across Michigan, totaling approximately 4,000 acres. The organization actively manages bird habitat at a handful of these properties, including the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary (Calhoun County), the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary (Manistee County), the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary (Barry County), and the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary (Jackson County). Michigan Audubon's affiliate organization, the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, stewards a three-acre Audubon-owned property at the tip of Whitefish Point. In 2012, renewed efforts to steward sanctuary habitat began at the Martha Mott Sanctuary (Kalamazoo County) and Hawk Valley Farm (Eaton County).



Cerulean Warbler Weekend Birding Bus Tour participants take a break from the birds to smile for the camera. © 2012 Michigan Audubon.

Michigan is part of the Mississippi Flyway, shown in green. © 2012 Michigan Audubon.



After almost two and a half years of study, the Michigan Audubon Board of Directors voted to discontinue pursuit of funds and planning that would transform Hawk Valley Farm into Michigan Audubon's state headquarters. Instead, the board and staff are working with the blessing of the donors' family to develop Hawk Valley as Michigan's first barrier-free, urban bird sanctuary. The Capital Area Bird Sanctuary at Hawk Valley Farm will honor the site's tradition of teaching, stewarding habitat, and nurturing avian life. We look forward to opening Hawk Valley's trails to the public in 2013.

Sharing Michigan Audubon's mission of *connecting birds and people* is essential for the organization to succeed. Professional partnerships allow the staff to interact with government agencies, academic institutions, businesses, non-profit organizations, and key individuals. The Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI) is one place where all of these entities gather to shape the direction of bird conservation in Michigan, and Michigan Audubon is playing a leading role in the effort. The annual Bird Conservation Workshop was held in Tustin in early March with double the participation of the previous year—mostly from students. Keeping the pulse of Michigan bird conservation efforts and cultivating more young minds with an interest in birds will be two of my goals for MiBCI next year.

2012 Research Notes

This marked the third year of Michigan Audubon's grassroots-led loon conservation project in northwest Michigan. The Chain of Lakes Loon Network operates in a watershed that covers more than 500 square miles that contains some of the highest quality waters in the world. The watershed's 14 connected lakes flow contributes 60 percent of the surface water draining into Grand Traverse Bay. Covering this territory—and supporting loon conservation activities—would not be possible without a network of volunteers and lake associations that value the presence of birds on their waterways. To date, the project leaders have banded 14 Common Loons, built and installed 13 artificial nest islands, and raised more than \$7,000 dollars to support local loon conservation.

This year also marked the third and final year of the Keweenaw Raptor Survey—a collaboration of two Michigan Audubon Chapters in the Upper Peninsula. Between March 15 and June 15, 19,907 eastbound raptors of 16 species (including 45 birds identifiable only to genus or order) and 4,078 westbound raptors of 14 species (including 23 birds identifiable only to genus or order) were observed migrating past Brockway Mountain. Worth noting was the dramatic increase in the number of Bald Eagles observed during the 2012 count. More than 1,100 eastbound Bald Eagles were recorded this year—a 211.9 percent increase over 2011's total of 545. With three years of raptor data now on file, the

team will begin to draw conclusions about raptor activity in the Keweenaw. We eagerly anticipate the chapters' final report.

Once again, Michigan Audubon led or assisted the coordination of breeding population monitoring for Cerulean Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler, Peregrine Falcon, Piping Plover, Greater Sandhill Crane, and Trumpeter Swan. Conservation staff helped facilitate the Secretive Marsh Bird Monitoring Program and the Nightjar Survey, and ran a Breeding Bird Survey route. Michigan Audubon independently coordinated the monitoring of 100,000+ acres using 50 volunteers; and assisted Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in volunteer recruitment and training.

Your Gifts Help

I wish I could share all that has happened in 2012, but it would require more than just these two pages. Please be sure to follow our progress through the year by visiting our website, following us on Twitter, liking us on Facebook, and, of course, by keeping your membership current. Your membership dues and annual contributions account for 20 percent of our budgeted revenue for 2012. Your financial gifts help us maintain the high level of success we had in 2012 and provide momentum for flyway-level conservation impact in 2013. I am thrilled by the direction our organization is heading, and I offer you my deepest appreciation for your continued support.

Jonathan E. Lutz began his tenure as Executive Director in May 2008. He is also Chair of the Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI) and will serve as the MiBCI Foundation Treasurer in 2013. Contact Jonathan by email at jlutz@michiganaudubon.org or by calling (517) 641-4277.



Jonathan Lutz addresses General Assembly members of the Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative at the 2012 annual workshop in Tustin. © 2012 Katie Koch.

Feathered Lens

Digital SLR Cameras, Simplified

BY JOSH HAAS



White-tailed Kite photographed using high shutter speed. © 2010 Josh Haas.

So you've finally made the decision to invest in a digital single lens reflex (SLR) camera. This can both be fun and frustrating at the same time. There are several brands on the market, each with an array of models and price points ranging from \$600 to over \$6,000. Given that there are so many models and so many different features, it can be difficult to know how to decide. The following is a simple primer on the major features you need to know about for making an informed camera purchase.

In the past, everyone wanted the next camera that offered more resolution (or higher megapixels). The digital SLR cameras on today's market all offer 10 megapixels or greater, which is more than enough for amateur photographers. So, with the megapixel myth dispelled, I suggest beginning your search for the perfect camera by comparing camera body and lens combinations. I encourage anyone new to the digital camera market to buy an inexpensive body and put more money into better lenses. Even the entry-level SLRs (ex. Canon T3, Nikon D3100) have a wealth of features necessary to create great images. However, the lenses that come with them are about as cheap as possible. Economy options for lens upgrades are offered by Sigma and Tamron—both make lenses that fit the major camera body brands. Regardless if you choose to stay with the major brands, it's wise to seek the advice from your local camera shop or an experienced photographer, as there are many models from which to choose.

Another SLR feature to consider is shooting capability in low light at a high exposure rating (which is commonly referred to as the ISO setting). The higher the ISO setting is, however, the more "noise" there will be in the image. (Although you can't hear it, "noise" is an undesirable by-product of shooting at a high ISO setting. "Noise" adds spurious information to an image and can be seen as tiny specks or oddly colored pixels that can ruin an image.) The digital SLR bodies available today are increasingly better at shooting clean, noise-free images, even in low light. Keep in mind, however, that the sensor size plays a huge role in this. An entry-level SLR will have what's called a "cropped sensor," which only includes the middle

part of an image and gets rid of the outside edges. Full frame SLR cameras, on the other hand, capture essentially the same size images as a 35mm film plane from the old days. Full frame sensors shoot much cleaner at high ISO, because there is more surface area on the actual sensor for the pixels to be distributed. Buyer beware: Full-frame-capable cameras are very expensive. Unless your goals as a photographer include shooting in low light often and very close to subjects, a full frame digital SLR—and the extra expense—are probably unnecessary. For most entry-level consumers, a cropped sensor will cover most needs and some moderately-priced SLR cameras now offer on-board image-cleaning programs, which help solve noisy images.

In addition to lens quality and low-light shooting capability, I encourage new camera-buyers to consider speed as one of the most important SLR camera body features. Speed can refer to a few things: burst rate, frames per second (fps), or how fast the image is written to the memory card. This is very important for certain styles of photography. For photographers who study wild birds, speed is an important feature. Once again, though, the speed of a digital SLR camera is directly proportional to price. For example, an entry-level SLR may have a burst rate of 4 fps, whereas a pro body can offer 10 fps or more. The motion of a bird changes remarkably in a single second of time, as with the photograph of a kite that accompanies this article (captured at 10 fps). Capturing great images is possible with slower-speed cameras, though the photographer's odds of doing so are less. In the accompanying photograph of a Burrowing Owl, for example, lighting and exposure were more important than the relatively slow speed of 3.5 fps.

A first-time purchase of a digital SLR camera is significant for many people. For some, it's the opportunity to begin a new hobby, for others to expand on an existing passion for photography. This brief introduction to buying a digital SLR barely scratches the surface of available features, capabilities, and considerations one must make when selecting a camera. If you're interested in researching more online, the website dpreview.com offers in-depth reviews of mainstream camera makes and models.

Keeping money as local as possible is important and dealing with a reputable, local camera shop is recommended. I can confidently say that Michigan's local camera retailers stand behind their products and are willing to work with you to find a great camera for the money you can comfortably spend. Don't forget to share with a retailer your intended style of photography (i.e. family, wildlife, landscapes) and the direction you would like to go with your style. This information will be a benefit to selecting the most suitable digital SLR camera and lenses for you.

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

Book Review

The Kirtland's Warbler: The Story of a Bird's Fight against Extinction and the People Who Saved It

BY WILLIAM RAPAI
(UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS, 2012, 204 PP.)

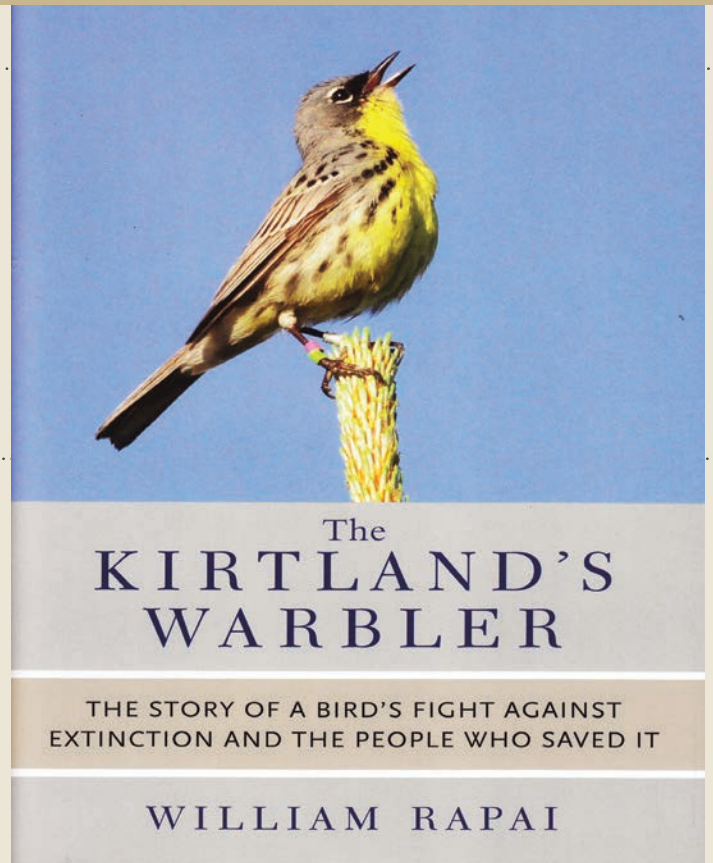
REVIEWED BY CHRIS MENSING

Each year hundreds of bird watchers from all over Michigan and around the world set out for the jack pine forests of Grayling and Mio in northern Michigan to view our nation's rarest songbird, the Kirtland's Warbler. I imagine them grabbing their go-to field guide (or all of them), opening up their laptop, and studying the bird's song, different plumages, and habitat characteristics so they can identify the bird without hesitation. They may also read up on how the bird has rebounded from the brink of extinction to record high population levels. However, there is more to the story than what appears on the surface.

In *The Kirtland's Warbler: The Story of a Bird's Fight Against Extinction and the People Who Saved It*, William Rapai reveals anecdotes about Kirtland's Warbler that until now, were mostly unknown. In order to bring you this untold story of Kirtland's Warbler, Rapai spent countless hours reading old documents, attending meeting after meeting, and conducting numerous interviews.

As with any story, Rapai starts from the beginning. Early in the book, Rapai tells the tale of Nathan Leopold Jr., a young man from Chicago. Leopold was a brilliant ornithologist in the early 1900's who, by the age when most young adults are just trying to figure out their life's passion, was one of the world's premiere experts on Kirtland's Warbler. His promising career took a dramatic turn as Leopold soon found himself on trial for the kidnapping and murder of another young man. Still, his work was invaluable to the early formation of science's knowledge about the species.

The warbler's story takes a positive turn as Rapai continues with short biographies of the ornithologists, biologists, and foresters who have directly facilitated the recovery of this endangered species. You are treated to a firsthand account of what worked, what didn't work, and what is still being learned. From the forest fires that shaped the landscape and views of the local citizens, to the silent stalking of the bird during nest searches and the



\$24.95

Title is available from the
Michigan Audubon Nature Bookstore

machete-swinging bushwhacking of the Bahamian islands, this book masterfully ties together the history, the research, and the people who have all worked together to keep Kirtland's Warbler and its habitat safe and secure.

But this story doesn't have an ending. Rapai also looks to the future and the uncertainty that it brings. What effect may climate change have on the bird or its specialized habitat? Will new partnerships set the stage for an innovative model in endangered species conservation? Will the bird ever get to a point where it no longer needs protection from the Endangered Species Act? As we work to answer those questions, this book is a perfect complement to understanding the first century of Kirtland's Warbler management. Only time will tell how the next 100 years of the Kirtland's Warbler history will be written.

Chris Mensing is a biologist who has worked with Kirtland's Warbler for more than 11 years. During that time, he has traveled to all corners of the state kicking the dirt and getting his feet wet while protecting our natural resources. He also enjoys spending time with his wife, two kids, dog, cat, and four bikes.



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

Scan this QR code to visit MichiganAudubon.org





Websitings

Doing Your Part in Winter Bird Conservation

BY MALLORY KING

Calling all backyard birders! Did you know that your winter hobby of backyard birding can be put to use by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and forever be part of history to help ornithologists throughout the North American continent? If this intrigues you check out Cornell Lab of Ornithology's, Project FeederWatch by visiting www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/.

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas and other locales in North America. They need passionate and experienced birders, like yourself, to help create a broadscale collection of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.



Your observations of backyard birds can help measure population health. © 2012 David Loomis.

The information you gather will go to support and improve bird data in your region and all over North America. Currently, Cornell Lab of Ornithology uses the information gathered in Project FeederWatch to track information such as rare bird sightings, population increases and decreases, migration patterns and bird maps. The lab also compiles the information into helpful and interactive resources that highlight rare birds in your area, top 25 feeder birds and (if you participate) your own detailed bird count summary.

Getting involved is easy; just visit the site (www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/) and click on the Join or Renew link at the top right-hand corner of the website. There is a small participation fee of \$15 (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) which goes to fund materials, staff support, web design, data analysis and a year-end report. Once you are signed up Cornell will send you a research kit consisting of instructions, a bird-identification poster, bird-feeding information, a calendar and a tally sheet. Simply choose a count site and a count day and you are on your way to make birding history!

Participation in the project can take as little or as much time as you would like. You can count bi-weekly, weekly or daily depending on time constraints and commitments. Plus, Cornell provides the opportunity to submit all of your data electronically, saving you time and money mailing it. However, you are still able to mail in tallies if you prefer.

Additionally, you can count on your own or with a group of like-minded bird lovers. Anyone is welcome to participate including children, families, classrooms, youth groups, nature centers and bird clubs. Project FeederWatch can be a great way to share your passion with others and get them involved in backyard birding.

Counting is done by selecting a well defined count site and counting the amount of each species; reporting only the highest number of individuals that you see in view at one time. The official season starts in the second week in November and lasts until the first Friday in April of the following year. Participants may join at any time of the year, noting that the last day to sign up for the season is February 28. Anyone who joins on March 1 or after will be signed up for the following season and shipped a research kit in the fall.

Project FeederWatch is the perfect opportunity to improve your bird identification while also helping scientists collect the data they desperately need. The experience will give you a sense of accomplishment knowing you helped a worthy cause. Plus, if you are already an avid backyard birder you have a great head start. And who knows, perhaps you'll spot a rare bird you've been waiting to add to your list!

Mallory King is the Marketing and Communications Coordinator at Michigan Audubon. She can be reached by emailing mallory@michiganaudubon.org.

Volunteer Spotlight



his issue finds Michigan Audubon shining their spotlight on two fairly new volunteers to the organization, Ed and Madeline Merz.

The couple has become a welcome regular fixture around the Lansing office. Ed got started with Michigan Audubon when he came into the office in 2010 to research a project he was working on and was talked into volunteering. Ed is interested in research and was more than willing to index *Michigan Birds and Natural History*, Michigan Audubon's scientific journal. When Madeline retired from her job in 2011 she started coming into the office with Ed to help with any miscellaneous tasks that we needed done. Madeline is an organizer and loves to be given tasks that involve alphabetizing and filing; we will be able to keep her busy for years!

In the short amount of time that Ed and Madeline have been involved with Michigan Audubon they have logged many hours. Now that Ed has the index done he helps with office tasks too. Earlier this year they learned how to operate the bookstore and have helped run that during events. They took the big leap for Cerulean Warbler Weekend this summer and volunteered to work at their first birding event. They must have enjoyed it because they volunteered for a whole day of CraneFest.

The Merzes have a son who lives overseas and a daughter living in Wisconsin. Last year it looked like we were going to lose Ed and Madeline as they considered moving back to Wisconsin to

be near their daughter and her family. Luckily for us (but not for them), a series of small catastrophes kept them from selling their house here, which made them reconsider the move. We hope they're here to stay for quite a while!



Ed and Madeline Merz at the Michigan Audubon office in Bath.
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Young Birders



Mentors made me the Birder I am today

BY ALISON VILAG

Because I'm *almost* old enough to be able to acknowledge this without shame (*and* because my parents don't read the Jack Pine Warbler), I just have to get something off my chest: My parents are cool.

Really cool.

They're the type who lift logs in search of salamanders and bake brownies for famished listers focused on a chase. Just recently, we were sitting in a restaurant in Grand Rapids when my mom opened her purse, and much to my chagrin, a jar of monarch caterpillars plummeted to the floor. So, it's probably not shocking that my parents instigated my birding journey.

It started one afternoon in late March a few years ago when they suggested we go look for ducks—a proposition I suspect they've regretted ever since. Mere weeks after benignly looking for ducks, we were bumping down a dusty road in southern Berrien County, when suddenly a lump in a tree snagged my attention. "Dad! Stop! I saw an owl!" I shouted. He threw our trusty Buick LeSabre into reverse; surprisingly, the owl didn't flush as we crunched to a stop below its perch. We spent the next half-hour reveling beneath the tawny Short-eared Owl's icy gaze, and it's just that simple: I was hooked.

Considering their responsibility for my obsession, it may come as a surprise that my parents are not birders. However, they are nature enthusiasts who know how to foster a strong love of the outdoors. When they realized my hunger for birds was something they could feed, I was introduced to the Berrien Bird Club (BBC).

The BBC is a club brimming with a diverse member body, field trips throughout Michiana and donuts, which I consider to be the strongest attraction. Kip Miller is our fearless leader, and since I've taken jobs guiding field trips, I've come to appreciate the effort, charisma, and patience it takes to lead a group while maintaining an ethical approach

to finding birds. Kip exemplifies all of these, and I'm sure the time I've spent with the Berrien Bird Club is a significant reason why I'd far rather help someone else experience a bird than to chase a new bird for a personal list. When I started birding with BBC, I always felt welcome; no one laughed about my misidentifications—at least no more than I would at myself. In fact, it would be difficult to find someone more encouraging to a new birder than Kip. Time after time, I've seen his excitement as he puts common—yet stunning—birds in the spotting scope for some keen apprentice to appreciate at close range.

However, Kip was only one sort of mentor that I was fortunate enough to have as I grew in my birding journey. Many mutualistic relationships formed when my opportunism and bird club members' driver's licenses fused. They were overjoyed to have an eager convert, and I soaked up the ample field time that had been elusive before. Because of these people, I was able to participate in the Breeding Bird Atlas, and paddle around a lake where Least Bitterns abounded. Although my chasing days are over (not counting the brief Slaty-back Gull-inspired relapse that *almost* caused me to miss my psychology final last December), there were definitely those die-hards who allowed me to burn a ride and revel in the gamble.

The variety of mentors has allowed me to develop a holistic approach to birding that I try to perpetuate in my own protégés. I can only hope that someday, I can channel the fervor of Kip, the thoughtfulness of my transit system, and the ingenuity of my parents, for it is because of all these that I have continued to bird.

Alison Világ, currently in a worldwide peregrination, has fostered a passion for nature over the last 13 years. She was Michigan Audubon's Kirtland's Warbler guide in 2011 and 2012, and considers guiding the most rewarding facet of birding. Eventually, she plans to migrate to Maine and become a conservation officer.

Calendar

December

8

Chickadee Christmas

10 AM – 2 PM

Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary, Manistee

14-Jan. 5
2013

Christmas Bird Count

Check with your local chapter for exact date and time

January

12-13

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory's Birding at the Soo Field Trip

Sault Ste. Marie

18-19

Stewardship Network Conference

Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center
East Lansing

19-20

Michigan Audubon's Birding at the Soo Field Trip

Sault Ste. Marie

February

9-10

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory's Birding at the Soo Field Trip

Sault Ste. Marie

16-17

Michigan Audubon's Birding at the Soo Field Trip

Sault Ste. Marie

CRANEFEST SPECIAL THANKS

You might think that CraneFest XVIII will be remembered as a failure due to the inclement weather we experienced this year. We don't! As a matter of fact, we consider it a success. The rain and cool temperatures of Saturday didn't completely drive visitors away, and it was a delight to watch groups walking off into the woods on nature walks despite the rain. An estimated 1,300 people attended the weekend event, which we feel was great considering the weather. And you couldn't beat the show put on by the cranes—nearly 4,000 of them—the most we've ever seen during the event.

Michigan Audubon would like to thank the following organizations, businesses, and individuals for donating funds and/or assistance to the 2012 Birder's Soiree and CraneFest:

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Ed and Madeline Merz
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Announcements

113th Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is just around the corner and the National Audubon Society (NAS) has implemented changes to the way it runs the annual event.

The biggest change is that the participation fee has been eliminated. In the past, the citizen science program charged a small fee of all participants and in return they got a glossy magazine, *American Birds*, that printed the results of the official CBCs in the United States and Canada.

However, state and area compilers conducted a survey last spring that showed they felt that the fee kept many people from participating. In response, NAS has eliminated the participation fee this year. But with the elimination of the fee National Audubon has had to eliminate the magazine. *American Birds* and the results of the 2012 Christmas Bird count will be available in an online version.

This year's count period will run from Dec. 14–Jan. 5. To find the count closest to you, check with your local Audubon chapter or visit Michigan Audubon's website for a list of the counts and contacts.

To support the CBC, NAS will accept voluntary donations. Please remember this when you participate. Data from the CBC is invaluable to the scientists that use it, and it would be a shame to have the event disappear after 113 years due to lack of funding.

Dates for 2013 Signature Events

Please take a moment to jot down the dates for Michigan Audubon's Signature Events on your 2013 calendar.

The Tawas Point Birding Festival will be held May 16–19. Our keynote speaker for 2013 is Alvaro Jaramillo. Alvaro is a senior biologist at the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, owns his own birding and nature tour company (Alvaro's Adventures), is a columnist for *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and is an associate editor for the American Birding Association's publication, *North American Birds*. He is the author of *Birds of Chile* and co-authored *New World Blackbirds: The Icterids*. We are very excited to bring Alvaro to Tawas Point. This will be his second visit to Tawas, and is looking forward to returning because he said the birding during the first visit was "incredible." The event's website, tawasbirdfest.com, will be updated as information becomes available and the schedule is finalized.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend will be held May 31–June 2 at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary. Birding tours to see nesting Cerulean Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, and other grassland and woodlot species are always part of this great event. During the 2012 Cerulean Warbler Weekend, a total of 100 species was seen. To check the latest information, visit ceruleanwarbler.org.

The 19th Annual Sandhill Crane and Art Festival, "CraneFest XIX," will be held Oct. 12–13 at the Kiwanis Youth Area near Bellevue. Even though the weather wasn't the greatest this year, more cranes were seen than ever before, and they put on quite a show. We can't wait to see what 2013 has in store. Event information can be found at cranefest.org.

We hope you'll be able to attend at least one event in 2013. Ask anyone who has attended one, and we're sure they will tell you that they had a great time.

Monthly nature walks are also planned at four of Michigan Audubon's sanctuaries. A schedule of these walks and other programs will be included in the January/February issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler*.

Check Your Expiration Date

On the back page of this issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler*, just above your name on the mailing label, is your membership expiration date. If it says December 31, 2012, please use the envelope stapled in the center of the magazine to renew your membership. Your prompt response now will reduce the number of renewal letters that we will need to mail later. That, in turn, will save Michigan Audubon money that can then be used toward bird conservation. Thank you for renewing now.

Chickadee Christmas at Lake Bluff

The Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary in Manistee will host a fun event in December. Chickadee Christmas will be held this year on Dec. 8; the event runs from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The event features nature walks and other activities that highlight this beautiful sanctuary on the shores of Lake Michigan. If the cold temperatures don't suit you, enjoy a cup of coffee inside while watching the birds at the feeders. The manor house will be decked out for the holidays and is a great location to while away time in a relaxing atmosphere. If you're looking for field guides or nature related books to give as gifts this holiday season, the Lake Bluff Nature Gift Store carries many titles to help you with your shopping list. A silent auction of various nature related art and items will also be included.

The Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary, a 76-acre property of Michigan Audubon, is located two miles north of Manistee at 2890 Lakeshore Road. For more information on Lake Bluff or Chickadee Christmas, visit Michigan Audubon's website at michiganaudubon.org. The home located on the property of Lake Bluff is operated as a bed & breakfast; reservations can be made by calling 231-723-4042.

Chickadee Christmas is just one of the activities held during Manistee's Victorian Sleighbell Parade and Old Christmas Weekend, Dec. 5–8. For more information on all the activities taking place in Manistee that weekend go to visitmanisteemichigan.com.



Black-capped Chickadee. © 2009 Skye Haas.

Young Birder's Club to Start



A Michigan Young Birder at CraneFest. © 2012 Michigan Audubon.

Michigan Audubon is pleased to announce that we will be starting a Michigan Young Birder's Club in January. Based on the model established by the Black Swamp Bird Observatory in 2006, the club membership will be for youth ages 12 – 18. The club schedule, meetings, newsletter, and social networking sites will be administered by the membership and overseen by Michigan Audubon's Program Coordinator.

Membership in the club will be \$15; there will be a \$10 fee for additional members from the same family. There will be an adult supporting member fee of \$20.

A Michigan Young Birder's

Facebook page has already been established. If you are interested, or know someone who is interested in birding and fits the age requirements, please "like" us at facebook.com/MIYoungBirder's. Membership forms and additional club information will be available soon.

A Star Among Us

Members of the Grand Rapids Audubon Club already know Mary Jane Dockeray, but if you are a member of Michigan Audubon, she is someone you should know.

Mary Jane is a past member of Michigan Audubon's Board of Directors (serving 18 years!) and is a star among conservationists and nature educators in Michigan. We are very happy to tell you that Mary Jane was recently honored with induction into the Michigan's Women Hall of Fame in Lansing.

Mary Jane began her working career as the Curator of the Grand Rapids Public Museum, where she also presented educational programs to the public schools and instructed summer camp programs. Mary Jane founded the Blandford Nature Center in 1965, which has grown into a gem of Grand Rapids. In 1973 she established the Blandford Environmental Education Program for gifted and talented sixth-grade students in Grand Rapids. The National Audubon Society named Mary Jane their Outstanding Member of 1985, and many other organizations, both local and nationwide, have honored her, including several that have created scholarships and awards in her name.

Mary Jane still occasionally presents her entertaining programs for the Grand Rapids Audubon Club, and they draw crowds larger than well-known authors get. You can still find Mary Jane at the Blandford Nature Center, but these days she's the volunteer working at the front desk.

If you know Mary Jane, you know that she will be embarrassed by all the attention her induction has created. She'll just pass it off with one of her jokes. But believe us, all the honors bestowed upon her are well-earned and you won't meet anyone nicer or more knowledgeable about nature than Dr. Mary Jane Dockeray. Congratulations, Mary Jane!

Mary Jane is the second Michigan Audubon Board member to be inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame. In 2010, Edith Munger, a past president of Michigan Audubon, was honored with posthumous induction.

Welcome New Staff

Did you notice the changes to the magazine's masthead when you picked up this issue of the Jack Pine Warbler? With the help of some very generous donors the staff has went from a team of three to a team of four full-time and two part-time staff! Joining us are Mallory King, Brianna Krauss (nee Huyck), and Michael Caterino.

Mallory joins the team as the Marketing and Communications Coordinator, a full-time position. Some of the many tasks Mallory will undertake will be promotion of Michigan Audubon's Signature Events, layout of the Jack Pine Warbler magazine, and creation of press releases and e-mail messages. Mallory previously worked for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and is a graduate of Ferris State University. She grew up in Grand Ledge but currently resides in Lansing.

You may remember hearing about Brianna Huyck before. Bri, as she prefers to be called, joined us as a 10 hour-a-week part-timer assisting with membership in January. We were already discussing how we could get funding to have Bri here more when she came to tell us that she was offered a full-time seasonal position with the DNR. So Bri left us for the summer, but she now returns to a different position at 30 hours-a-week. Bri is our new Stewardship Activities Coordinator and among her many tasks will be planning workbees for invasive species removal at our sanctuaries. Bri had a busy summer as she also got married, so she returns with a different last name, Krauss. She and her husband Dan live in Lansing.

Mike started out volunteering in the office last fall to help us with issues in our database. He is retired from the State of Michigan where he worked with many database programs. Mike was able to clear up the problems and he created new tables to make our work easier. The database works much more efficiently now! When Bri left this summer Mike let it be known that he would be interested in filling that 10 hour-a-week slot, so we brought him on board in September. Mike lives in East Lansing with his wife Marti.

Used Book Sale

Through some generous donations of good quality used bird & nature books, Michigan Audubon will be holding a used book sale at our Lansing office, located at the Bengel Wildlife Center. The book sale will run from 10 AM until 6 PM on Friday, November 30 and from 10 AM until 2 PM on Saturday, December 1. The Michigan Audubon Nature Bookstore will also be open for your shopping pleasure during that time. This will be a great opportunity to get those Christmas presents purchased!

Birding Sault Ste. Marie

Michigan Audubon will again be offering weekend birding trips to the Eastern Upper Peninsula. Two weekends have been scheduled; January 19 – 20 and February 16 – 17. These car caravan excursions continue to be popular with birders.

Birds likely to be seen near the Sault Ste. Marie area include Bohemian Waxwing, Sharp-tailed Grouse, both Red and White-winged Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak. A stop at Hulbert Bog might get a Boreal Chickadee and Gray Jay. If there is an owl irruption we hope to see Snowy, Northern Hawk, and Great Gray owls.

The fee for the weekend is \$70 for Michigan Audubon members and \$100 for non-members (this includes a membership). Hotel fees and meals are extra. Check the Michigan Audubon website at michiganaudubon.org for additional information about the tours.

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Reader's Digest North American Wildlife and Book of North American Birds

by Reader's Digest

\$19.99 (each)

Published this year, these illustrated guides contain a wealth of information. The wildlife book starts by detailing all the wildlife communities found in North America before launching into brief chapters listing over 2,000 plants and animals. The book is valuable for the communities chapter alone.

The bird book is designed like a field guide but is too hefty to take in the field. Species are not listed in taxonomic order, but grouped by distinguishing characteristics (ex: birds of prey, large land birds, gull-like birds, etc.). This book ends with a traveler's guide, providing a short list of birding locations in each state and Canadian province.



Journals – Lined and Unlined

\$9.49 - \$12.95 depending on size

Created by Acorn Press, these ring-bound journals make for a great gift for the birder or naturalist that keeps notes on their adventures in nature. For those who draw, an unlined journal provides high quality paper to create their artwork. If you just take notes, a lined journal provides that same high quality with lined guidance for a neat appearance. A wide variety of cover colors and designs are available in both pocket-size (4" x 6.5") and larger size (7" x 8.5"). Call the Michigan Audubon office for information on available designs and colors.



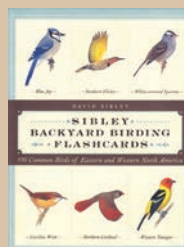
All About Birds: A Short Illustrated History of Ornithology

by Valerie Chansigaud

\$29.95 (hardcover)

This book tells the story of the evolution of ornithology, providing a chronological account from ancient times to the present. It contains some 250 images, many of which are in color. Twenty pages in the back of the book are reserved for a

detailed time-line that documents key figures and events in ornithology.

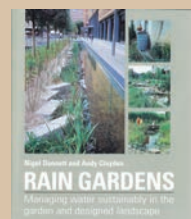


Sibley Backyard Birding Flashcards

by David Sibley

\$14.99

Using the detailed illustrations found in his field guides, David Sibley expands his repertoire into the flashcard field. Not just for children, these cards are ideal for those just learning to identify our feathered friends. The box contains cards identifying 100 common birds of North America. The front of the card has an illustration of the bird, with detailed information on the species, including range map, on the back.



Rain Gardens: Managing Water Sustainably in the Garden and Designed Landscape

by Nigel Dunnett and Andy Clayden

\$34.95 (hardcover)

The concept of rain gardens in North America has been a fairly recent occurrence. In other parts of the world where water is not as abundant, however, it is a concept that has been practiced for some time. The authors use examples from around the world that show the environmental benefits along with aesthetic considerations for installing rain gardens. The book also contains a plant directory, listing all the herbaceous plants, grasses, shrubs and trees that will do well in wet conditions.

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