

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE CRITICAL SPECIES: The Real Sky-blue Bird ■ Saving Urban Birds: Julie Graves ■
Collecting Rare Bird Data ■ Beyond the Recycling Bin



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Cerulean Warbler

Photographer: Daniel Behm
www.danielbehmphotography.com

This is Daniel's favorite Cerulean Warbler shot. It was taken two years ago at Shawnee State Forest, OH, the winds were high that day; the bird was hunkered down. "At close range it was very difficult to keep the bird composed in the image as it was blowing so hard the bird was in and out of the frame. I got fortunate with this one." said Behm. If you would like to see your image featured in the Jack Pine Warbler, please email 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



ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF MICHIGAN'S BIRDS

"Michigan Audubon maintains a sharp focus on birds and their habitats. Our Mission remains *Connecting birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research*. At this time our resources do not allow us to waiver from this focus and mission."

That was my response to multiple inquiries the past several months regarding a campaign to gather signatures and overturn a Michigan law that makes it legal to hunt wolves in the state. The inquiries came from the campaign's managers, from Michigan Audubon chapter leaders looking for guidance, from the media, and in letters from passionate conservationists throughout Michigan.

Michigan Audubon neither opposes nor endorses the campaign to overturn the Michigan wolf hunt.

The campaign managers were disappointed. Chapter leaders were grateful for the information, and some went on to support the campaign while others did not. The media listened and reported our position accurately, for the most part.

The letter-writers were a little bit different, though. The majority of letters I received—all addressed to me personally, as Executive Director—expressed disappointment that ranged from "you are not a true conservationist, please cancel my membership" to "you and (your collaborators) continue an assault on hunters in our state and my right to own a gun." These writers were responding to articles and the list of campaign supporters, keying on the name "Audubon," and assuming that all Audubon groups are the same. The truth is that Audubon entities Detroit, National, and Michigan, while we work together on many projects and have similar missions, are independent non-profit organizations with separate operations, budgets, and membership lists. Even greater diversity occurs at the local level; at last count there are 38 active local



Legislation introduced in January 2013 could threaten the biodiversity necessary for supporting state-threatened species like the Cerulean Warbler. More than 25 local chapters of Michigan Audubon signed-on to a letter opposing Senate Bill 78 in April. © 2012 AVISion Photography | Photographed by John Longhenry

chapters of Michigan Audubon, and two-thirds of these are incorporated entities.

I am proud to represent the name, "Audubon." I understand that doing so means I will have to explain the complexities of what it means to be an Audubon member in Michigan. Furthermore, I accept the responsibility of maintaining firm, scientifically-sound, mission-based positions on behalf of Michigan Audubon, while fairly supporting local chapters and partners that don't always hold the same view. As Michigan Audubon increases its capacity to respond to legislative actions that threaten birds or compromise habitat in the state, I expect there will be opportunities where more explaining needs to be done. We will do our part, and I am hopeful that when called upon, you will do yours.

To start, please visit www.michiganaudubon.org, and sign up for Michigan Audubon Conservation Action Alerts. Subscribers to this new direct email effort will receive periodic messages prompting requests to contact decision-makers, spread the word to fellow birders, and engage in volunteer opportunities. We appreciate any opportunity to advocate to you on behalf of Michigan's birds and the places they call home.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Lutz", written in a cursive style.

Jonathan E. Lutz, Executive Director

Coffee, Conservation and Urban Birds

Julie Craves

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

DEARBORN – Julie Craves is picky about her coffee, about its taste and where it's grown. Given a choice, she'll take light roast over dark, but only one choice exists when it comes to sun-grown or shade.

Shade-grown coffee is better for birds, biodiversity and the environment, said Craves. She is not one to mince words.

"Folgers is one of the worst coffees you can buy," proclaims Craves in typical no-nonsense style. "They are owned by Smuckers, one of the top three leading coffee buyers in the world and they buy virtually no certified coffee."

Certified as "bird-friendly," that is. That's what Craves recommends. She is the supervisor of avian research at the Rouge River Bird Observatory (RRBO) on the University of Michigan Dearborn campus and the author of *Coffee and Conservation*, an online blog at coffeehabitat.com, about coffee growing and harvesting practices and their effect on the environment.

If Craves isn't blogging about the caffeine-industrial complex, she may be studying dragonflies, another serious interest. But most likely she will be immersed in the study of urban birds, the resident or migratory species visiting the 290-acre natural area on campus located in the heart of a developed metropolitan area.

Craves' research into migratory birds and how they use urban areas has shown

that natural habitats like this one on the Rouge River can hold and feed a significant number of bird species.

"My hope has been to inspire people

to look at urban areas a different way. It's not a wasteland, nor is it worthless to wildlife and birds. That we were able to find 140 (bird) species in little postage stamp backyards in Dearborn



Julie Craves among the coffee in Nicaragua at El Jaguar, a farm/bird reserve. © 2011 Darrin O'Brien.

was astonishing to people,” said Craves, a Detroit native who lives just outside of Ann Arbor with her husband Darrin O’Brien, an engineer, who shares her love of coffee, dragonflies and birds.

Craves’ unique scientific work combined with her dedication to educating city students about bird ecology and publishing related technical papers has earned her the respect of scientists all over the state.

RRBO was founded by Craves in 1992. It is the research arm of the Environmental Interpretative Center, where it is housed on campus, just down the road from Fairlane, the historic home of Henry Ford. Craves is RRBO’s only paid staff, though she recruits volunteers for research projects and finds grants and other funds to keep the observatory going.

“Her work is very important and, as far as I know, it is the only long-term study that has looked at these stop-over urban habitats,” said Kimberly Hall, a personal friend and the Great Lakes Climate Change Ecologist for the Nature Conservancy Michigan Chapter. Hall came to know Craves while working on her Ph.D. in bird ecology. She arrived at RRBO as a volunteer bird-bander while starting research for her degree.

“It is pretty amazing to see her ability to keep the work she is doing supported. She has really had to work hard to maintain it. That’s a testament to her commitment to understanding bird habitat in urban areas.”

Dick Wolinski, a wildlife ecologist with the Michigan Department of Transportation echoes the same. He is the go-between from MDOT that works with natural resource agencies and non-governmental organizations on issues pertaining principally to threatened and endangered species.

“She’s made lemonade out of lemons,” said Wolinski who worked with Craves on projects like the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas and Michigan Birds and Natural History, the ornithological journal published by Michigan Audubon. “She has done some wonderful work under particularly trying circumstances.

Our featured bird experts
together (left) Dea
Armstrong featured in
the Jan/Feb 2013 issue
and (right) Julie Craves
© 2013 Darrin O’Brien.



And it is work that no one else does.”

Craves’ bird interest blossomed as a young, city girl. Her parents were fond of backyard bird feeding and her mother regularly took her on nature walks.

“My mom glommed on to me. She’d inherited her love of birds from her father who’d grown up in Ontario,” Craves said. “There were still fields and woodlots that we could fart around in. I spent a lot of time doing that as a child.”

Craves graduated from the University of Michigan-Dearborn in 1992 with a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies. She entered school thinking she wanted to be a journalist, but found too many J-School alumni were “flipping burgers,” for a living. Craves maintains her journalistic interests today by blogging about coffee and writing for BirdWatching, formerly Birder’s World Magazine, where she is a contributing editor.

RRBO grew out of Craves’ senior-year bird banding internship at UM-D where she developed a powerful interest in urban birds. Her adviser, Dr. Orin Gelderloos, the former director of the EIC, hired her to continue the research that she had started. That also led eventually to conducting bird surveys for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

“I came to realize there is a tremendous abundance of migratory birds here,” Craves said. “It was something no one was doing; the impact of stopover locations on birds was an idea still in its infancy.”

Craves considers herself a “contrarian,” one unafraid to challenge popular wisdom. She is known to be outspoken on issues, but people who know her say her work is always grounded in good science. “She questions, for instance, whether Michigan’s endangered Kirtland’s Warbler might be able to adapt without human assistance or whether certain non-native plants found on the campus’ natural area might be valuable to birds, despite the popular credo that non-native plants are bad.”

The “anti-science” attitude that has permeated politics and public discourse in recent years sets Craves’ teeth on edge. The public needs more ecological literacy, not less, she says. But Craves is not beyond laughing at herself or telling a racy joke.

“That’s why we love her,” says Hall. “She will engage on issues where other scientists are afraid because they are controversial, but she has a great sense of humor. She can tell a joke that gets everyone pretty red-faced and then go talk to second graders completely appropriately and get them totally engaged.”

Howard Meyerson is a lifelong outdoor enthusiast, a freelance writer and photographer in Michigan, and the outdoors columnist for MLive Media Group. His work also appears in *Michigan Outdoor News* and other outdoor publications. He can be reached at howardmeyerson@gmail.com

The *Real* Sky-Blue Bird

BY TORREY WENGER

The bluebird carries the sky on his back,” goes a famous quote by Henry David Thoreau. Of course, there are other blue-colored birds, but the Eastern Bluebird was immortalized over its competition because it was a common bird of farmlands and had a “friendly” disposition. Perhaps Thoreau, living outside the species’ typical range and before the era of high-powered optics, never saw a Cerulean Warbler. Flitting through the upper canopy of an old forest, the male Cerulean is a sliver of summer sky, detached and dancing among the green leaves. Actually *seeing* this beauty is another matter – more than one birder has complained of “warbler neck” while trying to add this species to their life list.

The Cerulean Warbler is not an easy bird to survey. Its preferred habitats are extensive tracts of mature forests; it forages and nests in the mid to upper canopy; when it can, it’ll be in the mountains. None of these factors make it easy for humans to track this species. Luckily, the male’s voice is strong and can be heard a fair distance. For more intensive studies during the breeding season, the territorial male can be lured into mist nets with just a recorded song and a fake Cerulean. Examining the nest contents or following this bird during migration requires a great deal of work.

As far as we can tell, Cerulean Warbler populations have been declining for years. According to the Breeding Bird



The first Cerulean Warbler observed in Michigan according to eBird was on May 26, 1962 in Mundy Township. © Daniel Behm | www.danielbehmphotography.com

Survey, performed along roadsides since 1966, the Cerulean has declined by 4.3 percent annually in Michigan and by 3 percent rangewide. This trend is not as evident in the Breeding Bird Atlas data. Ceruleans were documented in 8.2 percent of all townships during the first atlas, conducted during the 1980’s, and in 7.1 percent during the second atlas, conducted during the 2000’s. A drop of 18 townships occurred despite a slight range expansion into the northern Lower Peninsula. (The tension zone has historically been the edge of the breeding range, with few birds venturing out of the broadleaved forests.) Atlas data, however, only signify presence, not the numbers of individuals.

One reason for the decline is easy to identify. Landscape-level forests, small woodlots and fragmented forests are simply not suitable for this bird. Several of Michigan’s 102 Important Bird Areas center around the Cerulean, and they are the large areas, such as Allegan State Game Area. In the core of the species’ summer range, the mountaintop forests are being removed, along with the mountaintops, for coal mining. On

the wintering grounds, the montane forests are being clear cut and replaced with coffee plantations. Species that are habitat specialists often face the most difficulties.

Dendroica cerulea is hard to find in the newest field guides, too. In 2011, after considering new studies and DNA evidence, the American Ornithologists’ Union rearranged the family Parulidae. Six genera were completely subsumed into existing genera (several others lost members but didn’t vanish) and the species order got all mixed up. All 21 species listed under *Dendroica* in the first edition of Sibley’s are now in genus *Setophaga*. (So are both parulas, meaning the family Parulidae no longer has a genus *Parula*, at least not in North America.) If you’re looking for the Cerulean, try *Setophaga cerulea*—not that the bird will come when called, whatever we call it.

The Cerulean Warbler is just one of more than 200 species featured in the two editions of the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas, available online at www.mibirdatlas.org. Each species has a

map showing the results of both atlases, so changes over the intervening two decades can be easily seen.

Torrey Wenger, volunteer at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, has been a birder since college. Her favorite summer resident is the Grasshopper Sparrow. Contact her at torrey.canyon@gmail.com.

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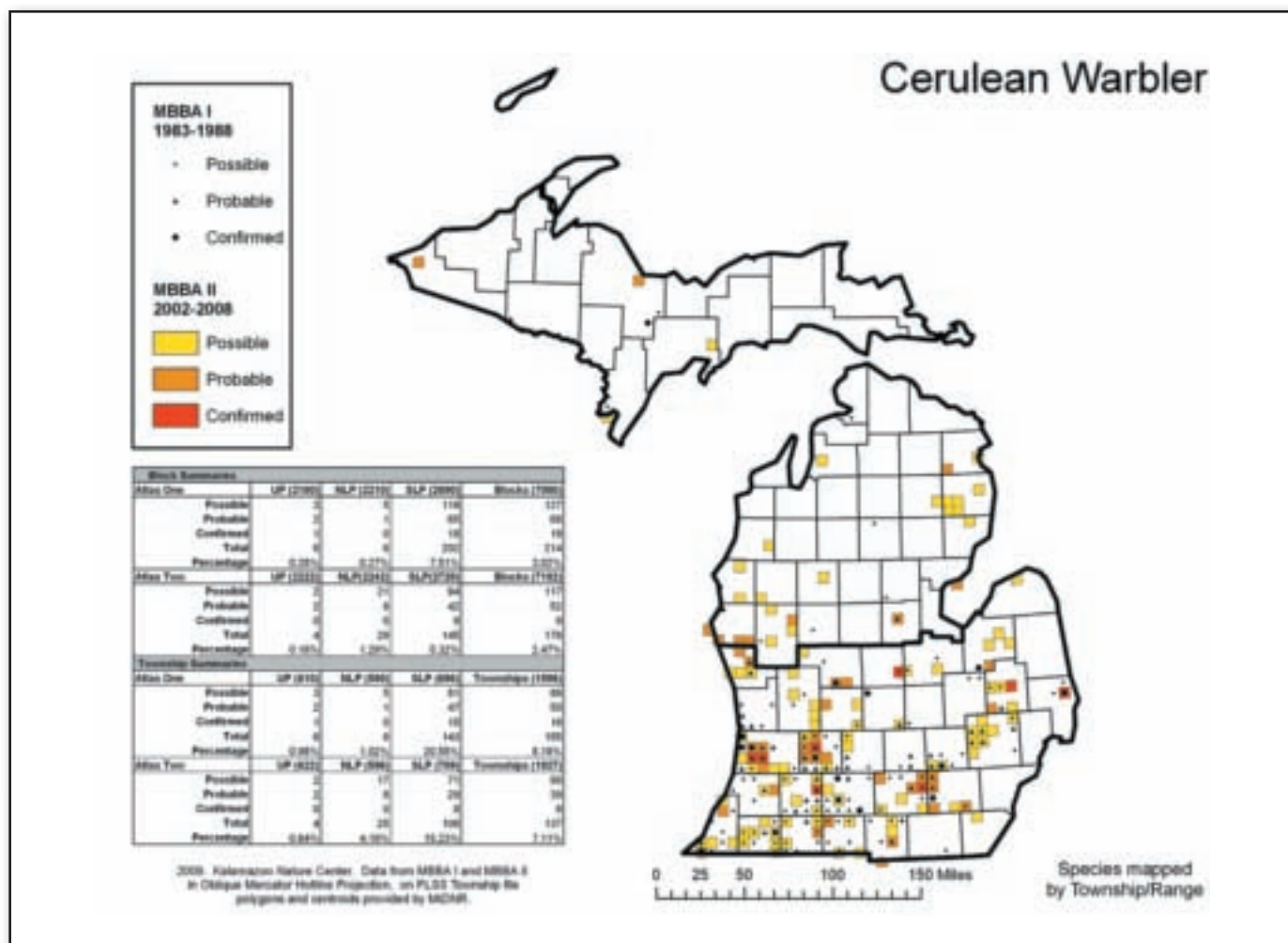
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Cerulean Warbler Comparison of MBBA I and MBBA II. © 2012 Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas.

Flushing Bars Save Grassland Birds

BY MARK LUDWIG

Grassland nesting birds have taken a beating during the 20th century. Many iconic species like the Eastern Meadowlark have declined sharply. Other species, like Henslow's Sparrow, have seen their populations drop so dramatically that it's now a challenge to add one to a birder's life list. While many factors are cited for these declines, shifts in agricultural practices are clearly having a major impact.

One of the most important shifts is that hayfields are now commonly mowed four times a year, and for birds the first cutting couldn't come at a worse time: right at the peak of nesting season.

Many changes have been suggested to lessen the damage to nesting birds—such as delaying harvest—but farmers want to harvest the hay at a specific time because that's when it's most nutritious for their grass-eating animals. There is, however, a tool that can limit the damage to grassland nesting birds: the flushing bar.

Flushing bars were invented shortly after the invention of mechanical mowers. It's little more than a metal bar mounted off the front of the tractor in front of the mower. Chains are



This effective invention that has been around longer than expected; now the Flushing Bar is showing promising results for grassland birds. © 2012 Mark Ludwig.



Flushing Bar attached to a tractor, Allegan County. © 2012 Mark Ludwig.

suspended from the bar, and they drag along the ground ahead of the mower. The touch and noise of the chains is generally more effective at moving wildlife out of the way of the mower than noise of the tractor and mower alone. The tractor driver can now see animals flushing and react to the presence of nests.

In 2012, the Allegan Conservation District gave five flushing bars to farmers to reintroduce these tools in West Michigan. Though the bars are an old idea, no company currently makes them. Project technician Mark Ludwig borrowed a design from Ducks Unlimited Canada, and added some improvements to make them more crash resistant. Although the 2012 haying season was abbreviated by drought, it was clear the bars were effective during the first cutting of the season. Songbirds, pheasants, turkeys, ducks and deer were all flushed and therefore spared being killed by the mower blades. Farmers noted that the scavengers that usually appeared to clean up dead animals in hay fields went hungry.

While the bars used in this test worked well with trailing mowers, new designs are needed to make flushing bars common on modern farms. Many farms now use front mounted mowers that cannot use bars made for traditional trailed mowers. So far Ludwig has been unable to interest equipment manufacturers in building the bars.

Because many farmers are interested in game animals, a second generation of bars will be deployed this spring, with two being used by the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative. Support has also come from White Tails Unlimited (WTU), which has sponsored bars for use in Allegan and Ottawa counties. WTU also provides sponsorship for a web site promoting the project at www.theflushingbarproject.net.

Mark P. Ludwig, Allegan Conservation District, 1668 Lincoln Rd., Allegan, MI 49010. He can also be reached at 616-240-7135 or mark.ludwig@macd.org.

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 others 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 e-mail, post, or phone so that we can update your address in our database.

Peter Allen @ Gundersen Lutheran
Hospital
AuSable River Canoe Marathon
Nadine Bawkey
Vanessa Birman
Sandy Bruns
Edward Chielens
Contance Colandrea
Linda Cox
Fraser Optical
Jan Giesken
Hale Drug Hometown Pharmacy
Jory Jonas
Sue Keener

Harold King
J. David Kluck
Kenneth and Kay Kuck
Randy Kursinsky
Lori Langfeldt
Judy Lessin
Dana MacDonald
Mama's Kitchen
David and Kathleen Mayo
Karen McCosky
Katrina Moilanen
Tim Nichols @ Rouge River Group LLC
Marc North
William J. Robson

Oscoda Baptist Church
Marsha Schaper
David Cole and Betty Slade
Susanne R. Stroh
Anna Walker
E. Warren Zimostrad II

A Life Well Lived

There will be a different type of celebration taking place at Cerulean Warbler Weekend this year, one of a life well lived. As the Jack Pine Warbler was going to press, we were notified that Norman Erway, a substantial contributor to the Michigan Audubon Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary, passed away on March 31, 2013.

Norm and his wife, Willie, who survives, contributed the funding necessary to convert the barn at Otis into an interpretive center, along with a boardwalk that allows sanctuary guests' access to Glass Creek.

Norm spent his childhood visiting his Uncle Bob Otis, the donor of the property, exploring the fields, woods, and wetlands of Barry County. Norm connected many of his family members to the sanctuary as well.

The family has indicated that memorials in Norm's honor can be designated to the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary. A dedication of the Otis interpretive center in honor of Norm will take place during Cerulean Warbler Weekend.

The birding festival, one of Michigan Audubon's Signature Events, brings birders from all over the world to Barry County in search of Cerulean Warbler and Henslow's Sparrow. While in Barry County they can also see North America's southern



Norm Erway enjoying his time at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary with (L to R) his sister Midge Gesmundo, and wife Willie Erway. © 2004 Tom Funke.

most nesting pair of Common Loons, and numerous warbler, flycatcher, and songbird species that call the Barry State Game Area home for the summer.

Event registration is now open and can be found at the event website www.ceruleanwarbler.org.

Book Review

Moonbird: *A year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95*

BY PHILLIP HOOSE

REVIEWED BY GARY SIEGRIST

To call *rufa* Red Knot B95 a survivor is an understatement. Phillip Hoose does a masterful job in looking into a year in the life of the longest living Red Knot in recorded history. Hoose tells his story by intertwining the natural history of red knots in general and in particular B95 the “moonbird.” This true story introduces us to one incredible shorebird that migrates 18,000 miles a year from Tierra del Fuego at the tip of South America to the Canadian Arctic, flying historical routes that red knot have been traveling for eons.

Banded as a 3 year old in 1995, B95 has been seen every year since, making him over 20 years old and his lifetime migration at around 360,000 miles flown. This works out to flying to the moon and half way back, which is truly amazing considering B95 weighs around 5 ounces. During the moonbird’s lifetime on this planet, the population of *rufa* red knots have collapsed nearly 80 percent. A quote from the book says it all “How can this one bird make it year after year when so many others fail?”

This easy to read factual account also describes the ancient phenomena of the red knot’s dependence on horseshoe crab eggs to continue migration north to Canada. The story addresses the changes brought on by human activity, including the grinding up of hundreds of thousands of horseshoe crabs for fish bait and fertilizer. The act of removing those horseshoe crabs could so diminish a crucial food source that it could wipe out this entire *rufa* sub species of the red knot.



\$21.99 Title is available from the Michigan Audubon Nature Bookstore

This book contains great visuals, including maps and pictures that help us trace B95’s yearly journey. And what a journey it is, over oceans, past human altered landscapes, around major weather events like hurricanes, all the while dodging raptors looking for a meal. I would recommend this book to everyone from expert to novice birders as Phillip Hoose explores the possibility of extinction through one small shorebird’s amazing life.

Influenced at an early age by his Uncle Bill and Harold Wing, Gary Siegrist developed a passionate love for birds and for the outdoors in general. He turned that passion into a job as he is employed as a naturalist and stewardship coordinator at the John and Mary Dahlem Environmental Education Center in Jackson, Michigan. Siegrist is a former president of Michigan Audubon and Jackson Audubon, and is a current board member of Saving Birds Thru Habitat and Jackson Audubon. He can be reached at gsiegrist@dahlemcenter.org.

Calendar

May

- 11 **North America Migratory Bird Count**
- 15 **Kirtland's Warbler tours begin**
Grayling and Mio
- 16 – 19 **Tawas Point Birding Festival**
Iosco County
- 29 – June 2 **Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival**
South Lake Leelanau
- 31 – June 2 **Cerulean Warbler Weekend**
Hastings

June

- 2 **Bird the Mighty Muskegon River Trip**
Newaygo
- 2 – 3 **Specialty Tours: Connecticut Warbler**
Eastern Upper Peninsula
- 16 – 17 **Specialty Tours: Connecticut Warbler**
Eastern Upper Peninsula
- 20 **Last day of Forest Service Kirtland's Warbler tours**
Mio

July

- 4 **Last day of USFWS/Michigan Audubon Kirtland's Warbler tours**
Grayling
- 27 – 28 **Birding Weekend: the Big Two-hearted Wilderness**
Newberry

Seasonal Surveyors to Collect Important Rare Bird Data for Michigan Audubon

BY THOMAS FUNKE
MICHIGAN AUDUBON CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

Michigan Audubon's commitment to bird conservation reached a new level in 2012 when we hired our first seasonal surveyor to document Cerulean Warblers in several areas in southern Michigan. The data collected opened our eyes to the number and distribution of this Michigan threatened species. This year, the seasonal surveyor will work in the Allegan and Barry State Game Areas and the State Recreation Areas at Yankee Springs, Waterloo, and Pinckney. Private lands in these areas will also be surveyed.

Michigan Audubon is adding two more seasonal surveyors as a result of the partnerships it has entered into with several agencies and non-governmental conservation organizations.

The Hillsdale County Grassland Bird Project, coordinated by National Audubon in partnership with Michigan Audubon, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Hillsdale Conservation District, is a project for private landowners to utilize conservation practices to increase grassland bird populations. Target species are Ring-necked Pheasant and Henslow's Sparrow. The Henslow's Sparrow has an identified Global Important Bird Area in Hillsdale County and the DNR has implemented its Pheasant Initiative here as well.

As part of this program, Michigan Audubon is fortunate to have a well qualified volunteer conduct regular point counts and surveys for grassland birds in Hillsdale County. The volunteer will seek out historical observations and conduct random point counts in and out of the designated IBA and Pheasant Initiative areas.

Ring-necked Pheasants are a beautifully colored bird that has responded positively to grasslands restoration projects in Michigan recently. © 2009 Roger Eriksson.



The Kirtland's Warbler is a species closely watched by Michigan Audubon and other conservation organizations. © 2010 Velma Knowles | <http://velmaforthebirds.com/>.

Michigan Audubon has also committed a paid surveyor to assist the Fish and Wildlife Service in search of Kirtland's Warblers that were fitted with geolocators in late May and early June of 2012. About 30 Kirtland's Warblers were fitted with small, lightweight monitors that will help researchers track its migratory pathway from Michigan to The Bahamas. The birds that were fitted with the geolocators will be identified by leg bands since the devices are tiny and difficult to see on a warbler's back.

Using audio recordings, birds are called into mist nets to have the geotags removed. These small scientific instruments should contain data that will show migratory pathways and perhaps even migratory stopovers for these birds. In addition, researchers might even be able to identify previously unknown wintering areas.

I will also be lending a hand to the Kirtland's Warbler Census in the Mio area and searching for Kirtland's Warblers on DNR land near mid-June.

Michigan Audubon is also training and supervising volunteers from AuSable Valley Audubon in the monitoring of Piping Plovers along the Lake Huron shoreline. Plovers have nested at Tawas Point State Park and have been regularly seen along Lake Huron for numerous years. Volunteers will be trained in the natural history of the Piping Plover so that they can talk about the plover with park guests, and assist law enforcement in protecting the nests.

Michigan Audubon's four major sanctuaries (Otis, Lake Bluff, Baker, and Haehnle) are challenging each other to a friendly bird-a-thon to raise funds to help pay for these positions and the costs associated with them. If you are interested in making a pledge, feel free to contact me.

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Chapter Spotlight

Thunder Bay Audubon Society

BY MALLORY KING

MICHIGAN AUDUBON MARKETING AND
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



This issue's spotlight features the Thunder Bay Audubon Society, which is based in Alpena and Presque Isle Counties. Chartered in 1965, this chapter of more than 100 members has been working hard to provide valuable bird data to conservation and research organizations.

Thunder Bay Audubon Society (TBAS) is highly involved in ornithological research and has completed several impressive projects. Since the society's beginning in 1965, they have continuously funded and volunteered for the Fletcher Floodwaters Osprey project. The project's goal is to increase the number of nesting Osprey at Fletcher Pond, which is connected to the Thunder Bay River. Currently, there are 19 active nesting platforms on site. In July, the TBAS will be taking a pontoon trip to visit the nests with Sergej Postupalski, the leading biologist for the project, to check on the health and number of chicks produced in the 2013 breeding season.

TBAS is also involved in the construction and placement of American Kestrel boxes. The project is led by TBAS member Arnie Pokorzynski, who goes into local fifth-grade classrooms and educates the students on the bird and its habitat. He then puts the students in charge of finding a suitable site for Kestrel nesting boxes.

Over the last five years, students have put up more than 50 kestrel nesting boxes and a handful of bluebird boxes. "Our (American Kestrel) numbers in the area are doing very well now," says TBAS President Linda Klemens, who has noticed a dramatic improvement in the species' population in just a few years.

The most recently completed research project for the TBAS was on-the-ground data collection of the Mute Swan population in the Thunder Bay River area in conjunction with the Michigan DNR and the Department of Agriculture. "The data shows that the annual mean growth rate (for Mute Swans in the Thunder Bay Region) exceeds the national average," Klemens says. The project also found that the number of Common Loons, herons and Black Terns in the area have started to decrease in the past few years. Klemens says this may be due to the increase in the Mute Swan population.



Local fifth grade students with their newly constructed Kestrel nest boxes.
© 2012 TBAS

"In 2007, there were 103 Mute Swans counted (along the Thunder Bay River in Alpena County). In 2010, there were 182." Klemens, who has worked closely with DNR biologists and researchers, says the statewide breeding population has grown immensely, "It's feared the population doubles every seven to eight years!"

Klemens says the chapter isn't all work. One of the group's favorite projects was rescuing Willow, the Great Horned Owl. In September 2012, the owl was found injured in the Willow condominium complex in Alpena. The chapter sent the owl to the Wildlife Recovery Association in Oil City, Michigan, which is run by Joe and Barb Rogers and Joanne Williams. By December the owl was rehabilitated. More than 40 TBAS members attended her release back into the Pines of Alpena. Joe Rogers informed the crowd that birds usually do one of three things when released, "sit there and don't move, fly a short distance and return to the person that released them, or sense freedom and take off". Willow chose the latter of the three options, quickly returning to the pines without one backwards glance. The chapter was so pleased with the care and attention to Willow they donated \$500 to the Wildlife Recovery Association to add an extension to their flight recovery room.

Member meetings for TBAS usually include a program or field trip. On May 11th the chapter will have a meeting at Thompson's Harbor State Park for the North American Migration Count, a project the chapter has been involved in for over 40 years. To learn more about their monthly meetings visit the chapter's website at: www.thunderbayaudubon.com.

With a vast amount of members and extensive knowledge in bird conservation, Thunder Bay Audubon Society has proven to be a valuable resource for their community and a strong leader for Michigan Audubon.

Chapter Information:

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Many members showed up for Willow's release, from L-R: Jim & Gladys Mielock, LaDonna Hammond and TBAS members Debbie O'dell and Bill Grigg holding the owl. © 2012 Linda Klemens

Feathered Lens

Woodcut Woodpecker

BY GREG PEREZ



What is a woodcut? That's typically the first question asked of a printmaking artist. Basically, a woodcut is made by carving into a flat piece of wood along the grain with a sharp gouge or knife. The raised surface that is left behind becomes the printed image.

In the Pileated Woodpecker woodcut, all the black lines were created by rolling ink onto a block with a brayer (roller). The block is then pressed onto paper using a printing press. Another common question I hear is: How is color added? Several techniques are used to apply color to woodcut prints. In this particular woodcut I allowed the ink to dry and then hand painted it with watercolor. Other techniques I use include using multiple blocks or reducing the block between each color.

I started making relief prints about 15 years ago while trying to remember what I had learned in college. What I remembered most was I had a lot more space in the college studio. My small prints are a result of working in a small studio. Initially I started carving into linoleum only because I had no idea where to find good wood, but woodcutting was always the direction I was headed. When someone asks why I make woodcuts the answer is easy. I love the smell and feel of working with wood. Naturally, I love planting and caring for trees as well. I cheer for the lone oak that's growing in the middle of a soybean field.

So, why not just do wood carvings? That question is a little more complicated to answer. It has to do with a lifelong fascination with ideograms and pre-settlement Native American art. Some of my woodcuts are purely decorative, but most of them have a personal story behind them. The story is irrelevant, however. What is important is the mood or emotion created by the memory that is reflected in the cut-marks in the block.

My favorite subjects for woodcuts are birds, fly fishing, frogs, and trees. When it comes to birds, it is hard to choose a favorite because it changes with the season. Two of my favorite birds are the Pileated Woodpecker and the Sandhill Crane. I love their prehistoric characteristics. They evoke visions of the creatures in Maurice Sendak's, *"Where The Wild Things Are"*. I always think of Sendak when I'm ankle deep in muck with my binoculars fixed on a cuckoo or some other mysterious bird deep in the woods.

"Kwakwath", Woodcut (hand painted) © 2011 Greg Perez.



In my mind there can be no "civilized" society without complete sensory exposure to wilderness for comparison. So in many ways my subjects also lean toward education. Financial sustainability is important, but it doesn't appeal to me as much as seeing a child's eyes light up as they look and wonder about some of the creatures I portray. Hopefully, it will also help to inspire children and adults to reacquaint themselves with the natural world.

Perez has a BS in industrial design from Western Michigan University. He lives in Tecumseh, Mich., and teaches printmaking at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and Community Arts of Tecumseh. You can read more about his work on his blog at <http://gregorioperez.wordpress.com>



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Young Birders

Students from Cheboygan Middle School look for macro invertebrates under rocks at the riverbank.
© 2012 Maureen Stine



Beyond the Recycling Bin: Place-Based Education & Sustainability Management Systems

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world"

-Anne Frank

BY MAUREEN STINE

My friend presented the topic of place-based education as it relates to sustainable schools during a recent teachers workshop in Alpena. She reminded her audience, *"Place-based education (PBE) is not new! Environmental studies outside the walls of the schoolhouse whether through growing community gardens or exploring schoolyard habitats were once ordinarily weaved into the curriculum. In the 1900's, 100 percent of school-age children were involved in local environmental studies, in the 1960's that percentage dropped to 40 percent and in 2005, 1-5 percent of students participated in environmental studies."*

The exponential advancement in technology during the past two decades has sparked a retreat indoors, and at times it seems as if our nation's children know more about cartoon characters and corporate logos than species of bugs, trees, and birds in their own backyards.

Despite this downward trend, educators and organizations everywhere have begun a homecoming to place-based education by identifying community and school needs, embracing the value of partnerships, seeking and authoring successful grant proposals, and uniting students, parents, organizations, and businesses to accomplish mutually beneficial results. We've re-learned the formula to create sustainable communities and our children and grandchildren are leading the way.

I became a practitioner of fostering sustainability management systems (SMS) within the Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Educational Service District in 2009. Sustainability management systems are designed to ignite a broader context of a plan. Although schools commonly start with steps such as recycling and wise energy use, SMS serves to take existing strategic plans from school districts and superimpose cohesive sustainability components to position the district as a platform for excellence. With SMS, we educate our youth to be stewards of the triple bottom line: people, planet, profit. In doing so, we create increased awareness to preserve our natural resources while reflecting district and community values and priorities. School districts can become a highly powerful place for showcasing change in the community. Sustainability management systems work to formulate a blueprint for transforming our worldview. They embrace a nexus of functional teamwork, and result in a powerhouse of local commitment and talent.

Effective partnerships showcase the uniqueness of an entire community. I point to a premier example of excellence in place-based education and outstanding eco-opportunity providers: The Straits Area Audubon Society (SAAS). On a recent fall day, SAAS pulled local partners together with the administration and staff at Cheboygan Middle School, to share the history and natural wonder of the Cheboygan River Watershed with

more than 125 seventh grade students. As the morning unfolded, the fog hovering over the water began to burn off, unveiling a resting Great Blue Heron, a few Double-Crested Cormorants, Herring Gulls, and Canada Geese. The students arrived one group at a time throughout the day. Most had never been to the lock and dam area and seen the anglers fishing for salmon. "This is your river!" I reminded the students.

After a brief history lesson on the human and wildlife connections with the Cheboygan River, the students were split into groups and floated through learning stations along the riverbank. The stations included, a macro invertebrate study using nets and waders, an underwater camera to view the spawning salmon up close, painting lead-free fishing jigs, water quality testing and collecting trash along the riverfront.

While collecting litter, the children found wads of improperly discarded monofilament fishing line, more than any other type of litter. The experience inspired the students to work with the salmon anglers and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to educate the public on the dangers of monofilament fishing line to birds and other wildlife.

The Cheboygan River Watershed is large (more than 1,400 square miles) and contains hundreds of individual lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands. Portions of six counties, and the towns of Gaylord, Onaway, Cheboygan, Indian River, and Alanson are all part of the watershed.

According to local environmental groups: The primary sources of stress impacting the environment in the region are:

- residential development
- roads and utilities
- dams
- increased imperviousness
- shoreline alteration

While these threats are projected to increase, numerous opportunities exist to educate young stewards of the watershed on the natural resource protection and ways to minimize the impacts of human activities. Through a focus on community, and with help and encouragement from dedicated partners like the Straits Area Audubon Society, students help cultivate a higher quality of life for all of us, one Michigan community after another.

Maureen Stine is a conservation educator and freelance naturalist in northern Michigan. She is a certified heritage interpreter through NAI and a certified professional with the National Recreation and Park Association. She has a degree in forestry from Southern Illinois University.

Announcements

Birding Tour Information

For the first time in many years Michigan Audubon has put together a schedule of birding tours that hits all areas of our great state. A select tidbit of information regarding the slate of offerings is located below. All tours are limited to 12 participants so don't delay registering. Michigan Audubon has a rating system for the tours to let you know how physically demanding the tours may be. Be sure to check this information before registering for the trip. Visit the Michigan Audubon website at http://www.michiganaudubon.org/education/field_trips_travel.html for additional information or to register.

- **Specialty Tours look for Connecticut Warbler**

One-day specialty tours to search the wilds of the Eastern Upper Peninsula for the elusive Connecticut Warbler will be offered in June. Skye Haas will lead participants to several areas on the tour that targets several species, including Spruce Grouse, Mourning Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Golden-winged Warbler, and Black-backed Woodpecker. Tours will be offered on Sundays and Mondays this season, June 2, 3, 16, and 17. The cost of the tour is \$60 for Michigan Audubon members and \$90 for non-members.

- **Birding Hotspot Tours**

Led by Caleb Putnam, Michigan's Important Bird Area Coordinator, the weekend tours to Michigan birding hotspots will knock your socks off. Birding destinations include the Two-Hearted River wilderness in the Upper Peninsula where you will be searching for Black-backed Woodpecker before heading to the Lake Superior shoreline to view Piping Plover. Alison Vilag will assist Caleb on this trip which will take place July 27 - 28. Migrating fall shorebirds and warblers will be the target species on a tour around Saginaw Bay on September 7 - 8. The tour will begin at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and end at Tawas Point State Park. A fall color/birding tour along M-22 is scheduled September 21 - 22. This leisurely birding tour will begin at the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary and end in the Leelanau Peninsula. For those of you that didn't get the opportunity to join Caleb last November for the Birding Berrien Weekend, we will again offer this tour on November 2 - 3. The Berrien tour will be looking for migratory waterbirds and also the rarities that show up with the gales of November.

- **The Tension Zone by River**

On Sunday, June 2 you'll have the opportunity to explore one of Michigan's finest rivers: the Mighty Muskegon! Led by Caleb Putnam, participants will bird their way along the river's easygoing, flat water as the tour journeys through the lower reaches of the Manistee National Forest, observing its numerous forest-inhabiting birds. The river hosts an interesting array of northern and southern species because it occurs along Michigan's most well-known ecological boundary: the 'tension zone.' Following a brown bag lunch and takeout at the livery, participants will caravan to several local birding hotspots to finish out the day. Kayak rental included in tour fee, which is \$82 for Michigan Audubon members and \$112 for non-members.

- **Second Spring in SE Arizona**

Did you know that there are two breeding seasons in the southwest corner of the United States? The second occurs just after the areas' "wet season" and the birding is incredible. Join Michigan Audubon and tour guide Bill Sweetman as we head to SE Arizona, August 1 - 8. The tour starts in either Tucson or Phoenix, depending on the best flight prices, and we will be birding all seven days! The trip price includes ground transportation from the departure point in AZ, all lodging, breakfasts (some continental), daily picnic lunches (Aug. 2 - 8), all entry fees and leadership. The cost of the trip is \$1,100 double occupancy for Michigan Audubon members, \$1,150 for non-members, single occupancy add \$300. A \$300 deposit holds your reservation, with final payment due July 1.

Kirtland's Warbler Tours

Since 2005, Michigan Audubon has been working jointly with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to provide free guided tours to see the Kirtland's Warbler on trips heading out of Grayling. At the same time, the US Forest Service (FS) has also offered tours running out of Mio. We are pleased that these tours continue to be so popular with birders around the world.

The FWS/Michigan Audubon tours run daily at 7:00 AM. On Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays (Memorial Day and the last day of the tours, July 4) an 11:00 AM tour is also offered. The free tour meets at the Ramada Inn in Grayling. To participate in a tour, meet the tour guide a few minutes before the scheduled tour time in the Maple Room located in the Ramada Inn's Conference Center. There you will watch a short video about the conservation effort to preserve this endangered species. After the video you will caravan to the Jack Pine habitat to see the bird on its nesting ground. You should plan on spending 2.5 hours for the complete tour. If you have more than six people in your group, please notify the Michigan Audubon office (517-641-4277 or wendyt@michiganaudubon.org) at least one week in advance of your anticipated participation date.

The tours offered by FS are operated at 7:00 AM daily May 15 - June 20, require advanced reservation and have a fee that is currently \$10. Tours meet at the Mio Ranger Station. To register, call the FS at 989-826-3252 or e-mail at miokwtours@fs.fed.us.

In order to have the best chance to see the Kirtland's Warbler, the optimal time to attend a tour is May 20 - June 15. Most people attend tours during that time frame. It is still possible to see the birds up until July 4, and last year the FWS/Michigan Audubon tours saw the bird on every single tour conducted! This was the second year in a row that we hit 100% for sightings.

Birding Events

Two birding events wrap up spring in Michigan, Cerulean Warbler Weekend and the Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival. The festival on Leelanau Peninsula holds some unique birding opportunities. You can bird on a tall ship in Lake Michigan going to Gull Island, a Michigan IBA or attend a guided trip at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Because of the sequestration, the scheduled tours to Piping Plover habitat have been cancelled but organizers have rallied to fill in with other birding destinations. Find out more at the event website, www.mibirdfest.com.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend (CWW) at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary has a few new activities, including both a pre and post event tour. The all-day tour will go to hotspots located in Barry and Allegan Counties searching for Prothonotary, Hooded, Worm-eating, and Blue-winged Warblers, Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Alder and Acadian Flycatchers.

For those that come to Hastings early for the event we will also have a movie night at Otis on Thursday night. Our Birder's Barbeque will be held on Saturday night with our program, "Wood-Warblers: The Rest of the Story" presented by Jim McCormac from the Ohio Division of Wildlife. CWW is a very special small birding event where most of those attending will add a life bird or two to their list. To register for the event or see the complete schedule, visit the event website at www.ceruleanwarbler.org.



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The Naturescaping Workbook

by Beth O'Donnell Young

\$24.95

This book is billed as a step-by-step guide for bringing nature to your backyard. It contains worksheets and instructions to help you design a yard that will welcome wildlife, plus photographs

of yards that will inspire you to make the transformation.



Tracking and Reading Sign

by Len McDougall

\$18.95

This book bills itself as the definitive one-stop guide for any person looking for a better understanding of our animal neighbors. The book profiles 23 different mammal species, although only four are rodents (Gray Squirrel, Woodchuck,

Snowshoe Hare, and Eastern Cottontail). The author introduces you to the principals of tracking and reading sign to help you analyze what you find in the field.



Peterson's Field Guide to Freshwater Fishes of North America North of Mexico, 2nd Edition

by Lawrence M. Page and Brooks M. Burr

\$21.00

Since the publication of the first edition 20 years ago, 141 species of fish have been discovered in North America. The good news is only 16 of these are non-native species. This new edition

incorporates all of the new species, plus more than 1,000 other species of freshwater fish that are found in North America north of Mexico. This edition includes range maps, and plates that have been revised for a terrific new guide.



Nature Trails CD

by Solitudes

\$15.95

This CD teaches children how to identify wildlife by sound. Most of the sounds are bird calls, but a few frogs and mammals are in the mix. In all,

23 species are included, which doesn't make it overwhelming for young listeners.



What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World

by Jon Young

\$22.00

This is billed as a groundbreaking book. It unites the knowledge of Native Americans, the latest research, and the author's 40 years of experience in the field to guide the reader toward a deeper connection with wildlife. He does this through

teaching about the vocalizations and behavior of birds.

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