

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE HOLIDAY ISSUE: Go North, Little Bird: Carolina Wren ■ Wild Birds Unlimited Revealed ■
Adventures with Nakia – The Eaglet ■ Michigan Audubon's 2013 Monitoring Projects



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Carolina Wren

Photographer: Josh Haas | www.glancesatnature.com

This Carolina Wren was photographed along a forest edge in Huntington Beach State Park, Myrtle Beach, SC on June 8, 2013. The bird popped out and onto Josh's perch where he captured the image in morning light. He used a Canon 1D Mark III body with a Canon 500mm f/4 lens. Josh's exposure settings were f8, 1/800 of a second, and ISO set at 400.

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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



NO EXCUSES

"Birds are running out of places to live and things to eat," writes National Audubon's CEO, David Yarnold.

This information is difficult to process. This winter we will fill our bird feeders, sit down with a cup of coffee, and enjoy the entertaining nuthatches, chickadees, and woodpeckers visiting the seed and suet. When spring returns, we will clean out our flower beds, visit the nursery to buy plant material, and prep our lawns for a vivid green, weed-free summer. Birds will surround us with motion and sound.

It's difficult to imagine a landscape without birds when we see them every day—at feeders, in trees, at the park, along the road, and at our favorite birdwatching destinations. What's more, we see birds pop up on emails and websites such as eBird.org. We see birds right here in the *Jack Pine Warbler* and gracing the pages of national magazines such as *Audubon* and *Birdwatching*. Birds are mentioned on public radio, on social media, and on television. Birds hit the big screen in 2011 with the debut of *The Big Year*.

Yet with all of this exposure the essential needs of birds—quality habitat and healthy forage base—are not being met.

We report often that the recreational pursuit of watching birds has surpassed hunting and fishing, *combined*, when you tally the total number of participants nationwide. As more people join the groundswell that is birding in the United States, it is imperative that the link between recreation and conservation grow stronger. Birds are our most accessible form of watchable wildlife. We must return the favor by committing to *simple, effective, everyday* actions that benefit birds:

Make sure the coffee in your cup is brewed using bird-friendly, shade-grown beans. Make the switch at home, the office, your place of worship, and your Audubon chapter meetings. Need a compelling reason



You can help birds in a number of different ways. © Mallory King

to switch brands and pay a couple of extra bucks for a bag of coffee? I'll give you three: warblers, vireos, and thrushes.

Landscape using native plants.

Bird-feeding stations benefit birds and bird lovers. A native landscape supports an entire ecology that is critical to the long-term survival of even our most common bird species. Start small: create "islands" that consist of native plants and shrubs. These reduce lawn areas and are instant magnets for birds. Hint: combine your feeding station with a native plant garden next summer. The results will knock your socks off.

Donate to an organization that is effective in protecting birds and bird habitat. Donations buy supplies. Donations fund programs. Donations pay the salaries of educators, biologists, and administrators who are working diligently to teach,

understand, and keep conservation organizations running smoothly. Please be as generous as possible when supporting a local nature center, land conservancy, national conservation organization, or our Michigan Audubon.

This is the season of giving thanks, offering gifts, and making resolutions. It's the perfect time to connect your passion for feeding and watching birds with real and necessary conservation action. We are all accountable for what happens to birds in the coming year. If we take these easy first steps at home, then we'll be ready to tackle the long-term challenges birds face on a larger scale.

Best regards,

Jonathan E. Lutz, executive director

Scott Hickman: Man about Alger County

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

Scott Hickman admits to being a rare-bird enthusiast, someone who enjoys looking for the unusual find. Rare, of course, is a relative term.

For the 62-year-old retired college biology professor and member of Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society, it means rare birds for Alger County, a wild and largely undeveloped part of the northeast Upper Peninsula and home to the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. “It’s amazing what you can find if you are diligent,” said Hickman, who considers himself a “home-county” lister, someone who focuses only on birds in their county, learning every nook and cranny where they might be seen. “Past a certain point you have all the common birds,” Hickman said. “Then, what I try to do is be in the right habitat at the right time of year when something really rare shows up.”

Take, for example, the American Avocet he spotted in 2009. Hickman found it on Au Train Beach at the mouth of the Au Train River. Avocets are long-legged shorebirds that breed in the central and western U.S. and Canada, from Minnesota to Washington to points south. Hickman spotted it on August 20 after visiting the beach for 34 days. “I needed the American Avocet for my county list and knew a local stretch of

beach with good habitat,” said Hickman, who lives in Shelter Bay with his wife, Debbie. “I went to that beach every day. One day—bang—there it was.”

Finding it there relied on more than a

state, even leaving family behind, when they get wind of a good find. But not Scott Hickman; if it’s in the next county, someone else will have to find it. “Scott has his turf marked out and doesn’t like to stray too far from it,” said Skye Haas,

chair of Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society in Marquette and a personal friend. “He’s a fantastic guy, but we will poke good-natured fun at him for being an Alger County birder and tell him he should try going somewhere else. Scott’s birding skills are amazing and he has encyclopedic knowledge about his quarries.”

Hickman’s other rare sightings include a Yellow-billed Loon he found on Munising Bay in 2012. It was only the second-ever sighting in Michigan. But his “most exciting find” was a Yellow

Rail in 2008. The diminutive marsh bird had been documented 40 to 50 years before in an area east of Shingleton. Hickman didn’t know of any viable habitat there. The Yellow Rail requires grassy, marshland, or wet meadow habitat. “I thought, where the devil would one be east of Shingleton?” Hickman said. “So I skied, hiked, and kayaked into areas and went out and played tapes at night. Eventually I found a photo atlas of the area and habitat on the south side of M-28. I bushwhacked almost a mile through a wetland area early in the morning and by God, they were calling.”



Scott Hickman scans for birds at The Face in the Rock/Scott Falls pull-off at Au Train Beach.
© Scott Hickman

hunch. Hickman had followed the online chatter within the birding community. Avocets were being seen in Upper Midwest areas, moving in larger numbers than usual. “I thought: This might be the year one of those rascals shows up,” he said.

Hickman’s friends refer to him as focused, deliberate, and methodical—and “an animal” when it comes to finding birds in his county. His dedication to home-county listing occasionally makes him the target of friendly ribbing. Rare-bird chasers more typically jump on the highway at any hour to cross the

Hickman grew up in southern Illinois. As a child he spent a lot of time in the woods. Neither of his parents was into nature or the outdoors. His father was fascinated by airplanes and flight and took to building hand-launched gliders for fun.

How things fly, and in particular how the shape of wings helps them, remains an interest for Hickman, but his love of birds and bird watching grew out of an experience in graduate school, while working as a teaching assistant at Illinois State University. His professor, Dale Birkenholz, invited him out bird watching one day. The two of them found a large assortment of warblers. The experience opened his eyes. “I thought: I am an idiot. I didn’t realize that this huge diversity of birds existed. I was taking a course in evolutionary ecology, and there was a lot of theoretical work done with birds. It was so aesthetically pleasing to be birding, and the course was so intellectually challenging, that the combination rang my bells. I just stayed with it and got very interested.”

Hickman went on to get his Ph.D. in biology at the University of Illinois and taught college biology, ecology, and human anatomy at community colleges in Illinois until 2002. Then the lure of retirement beckoned, and he and his wife moved to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The U.P., he said, is an excellent place for bird watching, something he does for several hours every day.

Hickman maintained his birding interests, also getting involved with



Hickman spotted American Avocets (above) on August 20, 2009 after visiting the Au Train Beach for 34 days.
© Steve Byland / 123RF

the Michigan Bird Records Committee and consulting for natural resources agencies in Illinois and Michigan by doing bird population surveys. Hickman also authored two sections of the second edition of the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas, writing the discussions about the Boreal Chickadee and Gray Jay.

“I really like northern species,” Hickman said. “They scream out North Woods.”

This is why he and his wife settled in the Upper Peninsula surrounded by the natural environs of Lake Superior, the Hiawatha National Forest, and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. “We’re here

for three reasons,” Hickman said. “There is more snow, fewer people, and good birding—and we’re within a day’s drive of the kids and grandkids in Illinois.

“I love being out by myself, in the middle of nowhere looking for birds. I love the feel of that solitude. It’s a real thrill to do it day after day.”

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

Calendar

December

- 7 **Chickadee Christmas**
Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary, Manistee
- 14-Jan. 5 **Christmas Bird Count**
2014 Check with your local chapter for exact date and time

January

- 11 **Photography Workshop: Learning to Use Your New Camera**
Bengel Wildlife Center, Bath
- 17-18 **Stewardship Network Conference**
Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, East Lansing
- 18-19 **Michigan Audubon's Birding the Soo Field Trip**
Sault Ste. Marie

February

- 14-17 **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)**
- 15-16 **Michigan Audubon's Birding the Soo Field Trip**
Sault Ste. Marie

Go North, Little Bird

BY TORREY WENGER

The Carolina Wren is a very wren-y wren. It's mostly brown with a distinct eye-stripe, plump and active and hard to spot. The largest wren in Michigan (about the same length as a titmouse), it has the voice of a much bigger bird, musically shouting "Tea-kettle tea-kettle!" from the undergrowth. Unusual for the genus, only the male sings—no duets or counter-singing for *Thryothorus ludovicianus*.

Like its more widespread cousin the House Wren, the Carolina Wren has especially entertaining nesting habits. All wrens prefer cavities, hence the family name Troglodytidae (for "cave"), and the Carolina Wren makes great use of cavities it finds in brushy suburban backyards. Its bulky, often domed nest has been found in flowerpots, mailboxes, and even old boots. The pair builds the nest together, using bark strips, dried grasses, string, feathers, and nearly everything else they can carry back to their chosen spot. The female adds a grassy lining before she lays three to seven eggs, colored cream with rusty speckles. Most nests are less than six feet off the ground, but other than the conspicuous backyard locations, they are well camouflaged and difficult to find.

Another unusual thing about the Carolina Wren is that it doesn't migrate. The pair stays bonded the whole year, defending their territory from intruders no matter the season. This stay-at-home tendency causes problems when harsh weather rolls in. Winter mortality will cause this species to disappear from an area after severe cold and deep snow. Luckily, new birds are always looking for new habitat, and recolonization generally occurs within a few years.

Despite this winter vulnerability, Carolina Wrens have been expanding northward in Michigan. During the first *Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas* (1983–1988), most of the townships with Carolina Wrens were in the southern two tiers of counties and the furthest north in Leelanau County. Just 20 years later, during the field work for the second *Atlas* (2002–2008), the number of occupied townships increased by over 750%, with the northernmost bird found in Marquette County. Volunteer observers with the Winter Feeder Survey have yet to report this species in the U.P., which probably just means there aren't enough participants north of the bridge: just a year ago, a Carolina Wren successfully overwintered in the city of Marquette, relying on a bird feeding station.

Breeding Bird Survey data are a little less clear. Survey-wide, this species has been increasing at an annual rate of 1.4%, which says nothing about the rate or direction of range expansion. In



The gradual increase in winter temperatures over the last century may have been responsible for the northward range expansion of the Carolina Wren seen in the mid-1900s. © 2011 Steve Byland / 123RF

Michigan, Carolina Wrens don't occur on enough routes to show a really good trend, but the numbers are definitely increasing.

Like the proverbial canary in the coal mine, the Carolina Wren is a bird to watch for clues about what's happening in our environment. Birders generally pay more attention to the out-of-doors than most people; we have to, because that's where the birds are. Is a storm front pushing migrants down from the north? Can we see the spring migrants on radar? Did the trees leaf out early, making all the warblers invisible? How will this cold snap affect the babies in the nest box? What does the Winter Finch Forecast say? What's the status on our favorite nest cam? This loud-mouthed wren, though, says something different, something slow and long-term. Twenty years ago, a Carolina Wren in Marquette would have been unheard of, a marvel. Twenty years from now, it may be a commonplace occurrence, no more special than a chickadee. Let the doubters doubt; the birds are clearly saying that winters are getting milder. The Carolina Wren is more trustworthy and reliable than any politician.

The Carolina Wren is just one of over 200 species featured in the two editions of the *Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas*, available online at mibirdatlas.org. Each species is accompanied by a map showing the results of both *Atlases*, so changes over the intervening two decades can be seen easily.

Torrey Wenger, a volunteer with the Kalamazoo Nature Center's Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory, has been a birder since college. Right now she is counting birds at her feeders for the Winter Feeder Survey. Contact her at torrey.canyon@gmail.com.

Caring for Carolina Wrens in Winter

BY WENDY TATAR

Providing food and shelter for Carolina Wrens can make the winter months a little more tolerable for these southern friends. The birds eat primarily insects in the warm months, although they will also eat fruits and some seeds. This can make it tough for them to make it through a Michigan winter.

A good way to attract Carolinas to your yard is to create a brush pile close to your feeders. This will provide them with a secure location to which to escape if avian predators are common visitors. Other birds—such as the Dark-eyed Junco and American Tree Sparrow—will also use a brush pile for refuge and as an overnight roost.

During the winter months, insect-eaters need food that contains a lot of protein. Hanging suet, especially pre-made blocks that also contain peanut butter, is a great way to help the wrens. Feeders for shelled peanuts will also attract wrens.

You can make your own peanut butter suet. Recipes that include a variety of ingredients are available online at food.com or from

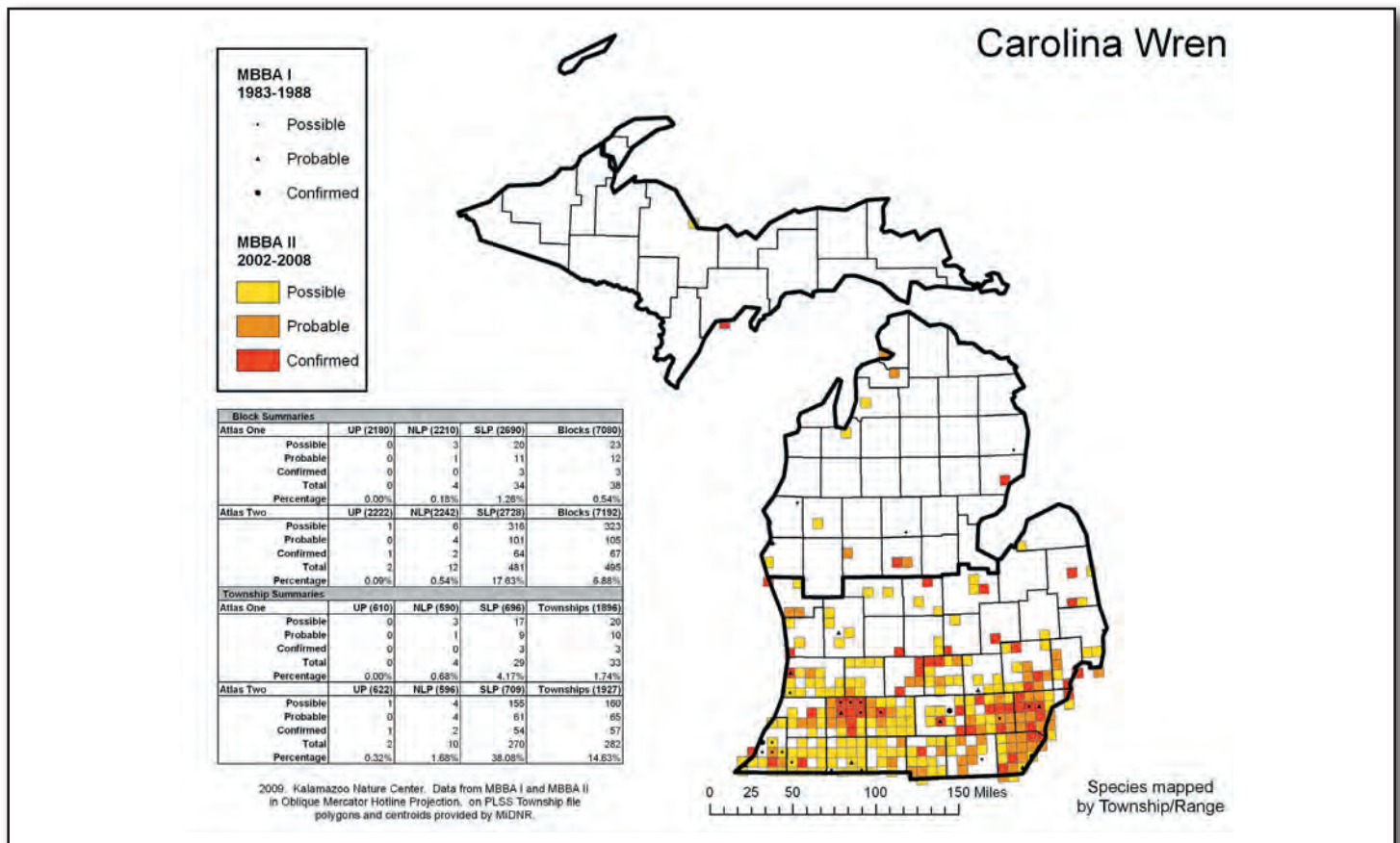
Bird Watcher's Digest (birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/). Here's an easy recipe from ehow.com:

1 cup crunchy peanut butter
1 cup lard
2 cups quick oats

Melt peanut butter and lard together. Stir in oats. Press into suet forms or bread or cake pan. Allow to cool, then cut into squares to fit your suet holder. You can store suet in the freezer or a cool place until ready to use.

Providing winter nourishment and a secure location for Carolina Wrens will ensure that they'll greet spring and the breeding season as healthy birds. The wren boxes in your yard will also provide a location for them to raise a family, so you'll be entertained with their antics year-round.

Wendy Tatar is the program coordinator for Michigan Audubon.



Carolina Wren comparison of MBBA I and MBBA II. © 2012 Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas.

A Friend of the Environment: Rosann Kovalcik

BY MALLORY KING

It's not work if you like what you're doing!" explained Rosann Kovalcik, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) in Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan. Rosann opened the nature shop on August 21, 1992, after discovering the company at a Southfield wildlife art exhibit. "It intrigued me. I visited the booth, then became a regular customer; I fell in love with the concept and thought, let's do it!"

A birder since the age of 16, Rosann has always had a love for nature, especially birds: "It opens up a whole new world for people." One of her favorite aspects about WBU is doing just that, opening up new ways of looking, interacting with, and appreciating nature. "The best part of my job is taking a group of people out birding at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford house." The property is a haven for birds and is a great place to teach people about birding, using binoculars and indentifying prime bird habitat.

Rosann doesn't just run a store—she makes a positive impact on her community on a daily basis, and she has earned a handful of awards for her excellence in the field. Her most humbling award was the Friend to the Environment Award given by the Wild Birds Unlimited franchise in 2008.

Each year, the franchise honors one franchisee for its efforts in benefiting the community environmentally. Rosann has done this in a number of ways through partnering with, supporting, and donating to numerous conservation-based organizations. Her contributions come in many forms, such as on-the-ground restoration projects, local community fundraising events, and of course bird education through her WBU store.



As part of a community fundraising event, organizations purchased a plaster fish to decorate and auction off. Rosann (left) and artist Kristin McGinnis (right) chose to paint the fish as a Wood Duck, naming it Woodroe. Woodroe was adopted by Milne Ford and now resides on Harsen's Island. © John F. Martin Photography

Other achievements include the Excellence in Business Pointer of Distinction Award from the Grosse Pointe Chambers of Commerce and for the last five years running, first place in the Grosse Pointe Birding Challenge.

Rosann is a true birder; she has years of knowledge about all aspects of birding. Her favorite items about which to educate customers are optics, the WBU one-of-a-kind Hummingbird feeder, Seed Cylinder Feeders ("the perfect feeding station for bird watchers" according to Rosann), and bird-friendly, shade-grown coffee.

Stop in to the store to see Rosann. She will certainly brighten your day and help you on your next birding adventure. The Grosse Pointe Woods store is located at 20381 Mack Avenue, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI 48236. You can also check out their website at grossepointewoods.wbu.com or call the store at 313-881-1410.

Mallory King is Michigan Audubon's marketing and communications coordinator.

Chickadee Christmas at Lake Bluff

December 7 is the date set for Chickadee Christmas at the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary in Manistee. The event runs from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

During the event you can enjoy nature walks and other activities that highlight this beautiful sanctuary on the shores of Lake Michigan. The manor house will be decked out for the holidays and is a great location to stay warm while watching the birds at the feeders. If you're looking for field guides or nature related gifts this holiday season, the Lake Bluff Nature Gift Store can help you with your shopping list. A silent auction of various nature related items also occurs during the event.

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

Chickadee Christmas is just one of the activities held during Manistee's Victorian Sleighbell Parade & Old Christmas Weekend, December 5 – 8. For more information on the activities taking place in Manistee that weekend visit the event page at visitmanisteemichigan.com.

Book Review

Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching

BY KEN BEHRENS AND CAMERON COX

REVIEWED BY KIRBY ADAMS

From time to time I start to get the idea that I'm becoming a pretty good birder. When that happens, all it takes is a quick trip to the fall lake-watch at Whitefish Point to set me straight. Watching the counters as they scan Lake Superior from the shack at the point is a good lesson in what I don't know about birding. See those black specks a few hundred yards out? Red-necked Grebes. At least that's what the seasoned lake-watchers tell me. At this distance, plumage isn't visible. The counters are relying on a bag of tricks that seems like magic to quickly identify these waterfowl.

But as with most magical notions, someone comes along and pulls back the curtain, revealing that lake-watchers are actually just normal human beings with a highly refined skill set. That's what Ken Behrens and Cameron Cox have done with the new *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching: Eastern Waterbirds in Flight*.

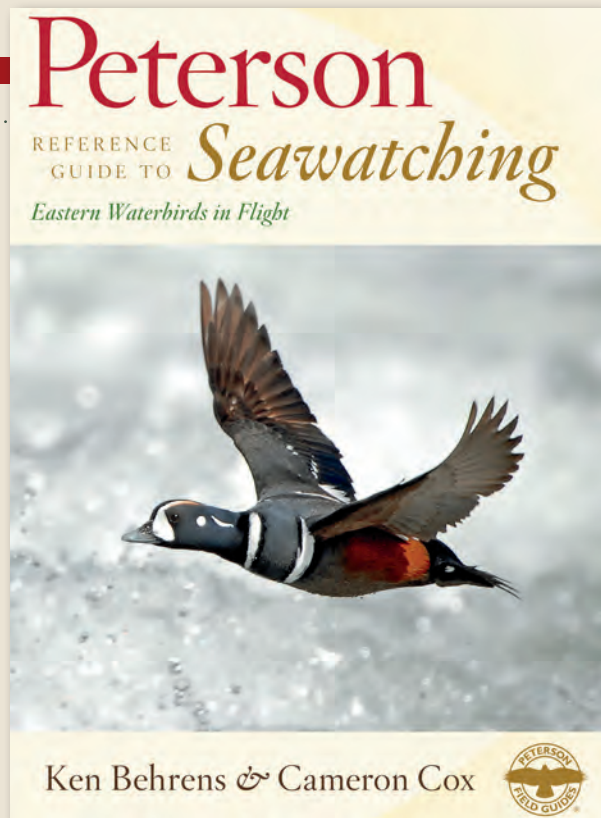
We're short on actual "seas" here in Michigan, but for the purpose of this guide, "seawatching" refers to observation and identification of migrating waterbirds wherever they happen to be flying. In these parts, that often means the shores of the Great Lakes, but it could just as easily be a ridge in the Upper Peninsula or a plowed field outside Lansing.

The book opens with an introduction that explains some of the mechanics unique to identification of waterbirds in flight. Plumage, the old standard of every field guide, takes a backseat in this endeavor. Size and shape are of paramount importance. Factors like the structure of a flock and fidelity to flight lines, things you'll rarely think about in regular birding, suddenly become critical. By the time you get to the individual species accounts, you're keenly aware that this is as different from any other birding as shorebirding is from warblering.

The species accounts are the heart of *Seawatching*. Each species is treated with anywhere from two to several pages. Stunning photographs appear throughout each account, some illustrating important identification points and others serving merely as eye candy. Range maps tailored specifically to seawatching accompany each species account. The maps include details listing pelagic migration and other factors of particular interest to an observer at typical seawatch sites.

Those familiar with the popular *Shorebird Guide* by O'Brien, Crossley, and Karlson will find the photographs and captions in this guide similar. Photos often have some bullet points listing relevant identification clues, and all are tagged with a location and month. Many photos include more than one species of bird for comparison, one of the selling points that made *The Shorebird Guide* so popular. The authors' sense of humor is sprinkled throughout.

The book closes with a section titled "Where to Watch." This



\$35 (hardcover)

This book can be ordered through the Michigan Audubon bookstore, and thereby helps raise funds for education programs.

includes short blurbs about 47 seawatching sites in eastern North America, from one of my favorite birding spots (L'anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland) to spots you'd never think of as watch sites (the Mississippi River). Whitefish Point has a nice write-up, including a photograph of the (in)famous shack that (sometimes) shields the intrepid counters from Lake Superior's weather. Some of the locations have tables of record and average counts for various species.

The *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching* is something most intermediate and advanced birders will want to have. It has a somewhat high sticker price (\$35) for a field guide, but it's worth every penny. One caveat that should accompany it, though, is that it is not for beginners. While it demystifies what might seem like magic at first, it is still a very technical volume and presumes a good working knowledge of birding. The amount of information can be overwhelming. I'd say it should be labeled for intermediate to advanced birders, though beginners will certainly benefit from it if they keep from being discouraged by the identification minutiae discussed at length.

Behrens and Cox, both professional birding guides and sometimes seawatchers, say their goal is to spur an interest in waterfowl watching similar to the explosion in raptor watching that came out of the migratory hawkwatches. I think they've succeeded. Your next trip to the lakeshore will be immediately more rewarding with *Seawatching* as a reference in hand. This book—and years of intense practice on windy shores—might make you the next occupant of the shack at Whitefish Point.

Kirby Adams didn't take up birding until his 30s, but he's making up for lost time. He writes the birding column for the online travel blog National Parks Traveler. Kirby and his wife, Sarah, live in Lansing on breaks between birding trips. Kirby can be reached at kirby.adams@gmail.com.

Adventures with Nakia

The Eaglet at Baker Sanctuary

BY D. ERIC JOHNSON

A friend and I were driving down the road last spring when he pointed at a large, dark object in a far-away tree and asked if I thought it could be an eagle nest. There was no question in my mind. He stopped the truck at my urging, and as I got out for a better view, I could make out what I thought had to be an adult Bald Eagle in the nest. This turned out to be the start of an incredible, once-in-a-lifetime experience with a local eagle family.

I returned a few days later to Baker Sanctuary with my wife and camera gear in hand. One adult Bald Eagle was in the nest; another left its perch and flew in our direction, loudly letting us know that we were not welcome and not to come any closer. We settled in to a spot on the edge of the swamp where we had a clear view. It wasn't long before we could see a little gray ball of down and an oversized beak pop up and begin to wobble around.

I started visiting the nest at least once each week, receiving a greeting from mom and dad that was both aggressive and intimidating. They would do a couple of fly-bys, then one would perch

on the top of a dead tree only 50 yards or so from my location—as if posing for my camera. It would look me over carefully from the safety of the perch, all the while loudly announcing to the world there was an intruder.

As I started visiting more often, the alarm calls subdued but the brief fly-bys by mom and dad continued. I like to think they got used to my visits and decided I was okay.

During this time the eaglet was growing at an amazing pace—a pound per week, according to the National Eagle Center. The feathers grew in and the down disappeared. At feeding time, mom ripped away a morsel of meat, then gently fed it to the eaglet.

Each week found the feathers filling in and the eaglet more active in the nest. It became very curious, fascinated with anything that moved, especially the butterflies gliding past the nest. The eaglet also started learning about its wings, at first flapping them cautiously, and then discovering that if it flapped hard enough, it could elevate itself above

the nest. It became a game. The eaglet would start at one end of the nest, then run to the other while flapping its wings, becoming more and more airborne.

I decided to step up my visits to daily as the eaglet came closer to fledging. Often I was there for eight or nine hours observing and taking pictures and notes. My wife said the eaglet should have a name since I was spending more time at the nest than at home, so it became known as Nakia.

Feeding time was especially interesting. Nakia had a special, not-so-little cry when food was on the way. It would squawk non-stop and attack the food as soon as it hit the nest—and sometimes sooner. Its appearance and actions at feeding time became ominous—completely different from the cute eaglet it had been only moments before.

I was making daily visits when it seemed ready to fledge, but I missed the morning of July 3. When I arrived in the early afternoon, the eaglet was not in the nest, and my heart sank. I began scanning the area with my binoculars, then heard



2 weeks old, Baker Sanctuary, Bellevue, MI.



6 ½ weeks old in the nest, observing her surroundings.



8 ½ weeks old, learning about her wings.

its now-familiar cry, spotting it on a branch close to the ground, surrounded by branches and bushes—too thick for a young eagle to navigate. As darkness approached I became concerned, since it was well within the reach of predators. Just before all the light was gone, both mom and dad finally flew in, landing on nearby perches, and began talking to Nakia. I was pretty sure they were reassuring it. I reluctantly left when it was too dark to see.

The following morning I found Nakia perched on a very small branch of a conifer—being buzzed by a small group of Great Crested Flycatchers. I was lying in the swamp with just my head and camera above the grass. Still, it noticed me right away and looked at me with almost pitiful eyes, wondering what it had done wrong to attract this attention. It was almost comical—these small birds buzzing this great big eagle. Nakia was finally persuaded to leave and clumsily left the branch almost backwards, but successfully recovered and flew in the direction of the nest. I wasn't able to follow, but was fortunate to document it coming back to the nest.

I made five more visits to the nest, and enjoyed watching Nakia leave and return to the nest several times. I was also fortunate on one of these return visits to see Nakia soar, I believe for the first time. Up until this visit, its flights had been low and clumsy, but on this occasion it had been watching mom and dad soar high above, studying their moves. When it left the nest this time, it flew differently, more in control. It was the first time I'd seen it fly above the nest, and I was able to see when it flew into an afternoon air current that quickly lifted it up. It was in the air

soaring for 26 minutes that day, which was July 24. I left a short time later.

I came back one last time on August 2. I spent the day listening and watching, but Nakia was gone.

D. Eric Johnson has been an avid photographer for nearly 50 years. In 2007, he began providing forensic photography services and is currently the only Certified Forensic Photographer in Michigan. His passion has always been wildlife photography. Recently he decided to publish his work after the National Eagle Center asked to use some of his images. His visions of wildlife can be viewed at visionsofwildlife.com.

The author of this story is a guest of the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary. Off-trail study of the eagles' nest was possible only with prior permission from the Sanctuary Manager. The author's views do not necessarily reflect the views of Michigan Audubon.



10 weeks old, figuring out how to use her wings to lift off the nest.



13 weeks old, finally leaving the nest.



14 weeks old, soaring high for the first time!

Chapter Spotlight

Petoskey Regional Audubon Society

BY MALLORY KING



The Petoskey Regional Audubon Society (PRAS) was founded in 1966 as a chapter of Michigan Audubon. Now in its 47th year, the chapter has over 200 members and is dedicated to fostering an active community of birders by sharing knowledge, experience, and birding opportunities whenever possible. The PRAS strives to create a greater awareness and understanding of wildlife and wild places. The chapter focuses heavily on birding and stewardship activities within the state and advocates for birding where you live.

PRAS is best known for getting people out birding and for educating members and non-members on species identification, birding equipment, and places to find great birds in Michigan. This is done by offering over 30 field trips and more than nine indoor birding programs each year. Another aspect that sets PRAS apart from other chapters is its newly appointed president, Darrell Lawson, who is not only fairly new to birding but is only in his mid-30s.

Darrell has been birding for only one or two years; he started because he wanted to spend more time outdoors and more time perfecting his hobby of photography. He started photographing birds but was unsure what birds he was seeing, which was when he purchased his first field guide. Shortly after that, he watched the birding movie *The Big Year* and “caught the birding bug—big time!” says Darrell.

This past September, Darrell led his first field trip as president to Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, with a primary focus on finding Black-backed Woodpeckers. Although they did not find the woodpecker, they did find

36 other species: “I had a great group of birders join me. I had a lot of fun helping them learn about some of the great birding sites available in the Whitefish Point area. It was a real joy to help many of the group members find life birds.”

PRAS hosts indoor programs in conjunction with their monthly meetings, bringing in speakers from across the state to educate its members on various conservation topics. November’s program will be given by Kevin Cronk about the Watershed Council’s stream monitoring program; December will be the end-of-the-year meeting where members can share their bird and nature photographs and stories. In January, Darrell kicks off the new year with a presentation on how to use eBird.

With a great foundation already in place, the chapter has decided this year to grow in areas it may be lacking. Darrell stated that PRAS would like to make its presence known more within the community and start working on collaborating with like-minded organizations to educate and nurture the next generation of birders and conservationists. The chapter is also striving to gain younger members to support future PRAS projects, along with educating its current members on eBird and other birding technologies. “I hope to one day start a PRAS young birders club,” said Darrell, “but that’s a ways out still.”

If you are interested in attending a birding trip, check out the PRAS website—they will surely have a field trip for birders of all levels.

Mallory King is Michigan Audubon’s marketing and communications coordinator.



Petoskey Regional Audubon members on their birding trip to Whitefish Point Bird Observatory in September of 2013. © 2013 Darrell Lawson.

Meeting Information

The Petoskey Regional Audubon Society meets on the second Tuesday of each month from September through May.

Next meetings: November 12, 2013 and December 10, 2013

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Independence Village of Petoskey
(965 Hager Dr, Petoskey, MI 49770)

Contact Information

Website: petoskeyaudubon.org

Connect on Facebook: Petoskey Audubon
Darrel Lawson, President

Email: lawsodw@gmail.com

Michigan Audubon's 2013 Monitoring Projects

BY TOM FUNKE

Monitoring is a very important aspect of bird conservation because it helps to measure and track bird populations in targeted areas. Michigan Audubon continues to make positive strides in monitoring Michigan's birds, specifically Cerulean Warblers, Henslow's Sparrows, Sandhill Cranes, Kirtland's Warblers, and Piping Plovers.

Our cornerstone monitoring program is centered around the Cerulean Warbler in four Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Since 2008, staff and trained volunteers have set out to the Allegan and Barry State Game Areas, along with Waterloo and Pinckney Recreation Areas, in order to monitor trends in populations over time. We even have a group of volunteers working at the Port Huron State Game Area hoping to document enough Cerulean Warblers to designate that area as an IBA.

Most notable about the Cerulean Warbler Monitoring Project is that we've hired a paid, seasonal staff to cover gaps in the survey coverage. Volunteers, after all, can only cover so much. This year, our seasonal bird surveyor was Jennifer Hollen, a Michigan State University fisheries and wildlife undergraduate student. Jennifer conducted over 1,000 point counts, which yielded an amazing amount of data. This is only the second year that Michigan Audubon's Cerulean Warbler Monitoring Project has collected massive amounts of data, so it's too early to determine trends in these areas.

New this year was a partnership between National Audubon, Michigan Audubon, Michigan DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Hillsdale County Conservation District, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. This multi-agency program is focusing on grassland birds, from pheasants to Henslow's Sparrows. Three volunteers—Jennifer Hollen, Annie Crary, and Teri Shiels—surveyed for grassland birds in Hillsdale County by conducting about 100 point counts. Even Caleb Putnam, Michigan's IBA Coordinator, and I joined in on the data collection.



In only its second year, the Cerulean Warbler Monitoring Project has collected a large amount of good data and should be able to piece together trends in the next 5–10 years. © Michigan Audubon



The data collected this past summer would not be possible without the help of great workers and volunteers. © 123RF

Our group was seeking to confirm historical observations while searching out appropriate Henslow's Sparrow habitat. Hillsdale County is home to the Hillsdale Henslow's Sparrow IBA. We are seeking landowners to commit to various grassland bird-friendly practices. Knowing where the birds are and identifying landowners with potential habitat allows program coordinators to choose the most effective bird sites.

Also new this year is a Sandhill Crane monitoring program at Baker Sanctuary, which we modeled after the one that has been conducted at Haehnle Sanctuary for over 72 years. With the possibility of a wind turbine farm going up in Convis Township, we are counting the number of cranes and from which direction they fly into the marsh. We collected data on about 20 different dates and will continue this program this year with additional information on the height at which the cranes are flying into the marsh.

Our annual statewide Sandhill Crane Survey, coordinated by veteran Audubon member Ron Hoffman, was conducted for the 34th year. Last year 24,799 cranes were identified by volunteers that collected data throughout Michigan, but mostly in the southern lower peninsula.

Michigan Audubon also has an active role in helping the state and federal agencies census Kirtland's Warblers. A handful of volunteers and I scoured the Whitefish Point area and some areas around the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. For the first time I helped with the Kirtland's Warbler Census in the Mio area.

Michigan Audubon, in partnership with the Au Sable Audubon, recruited and trained volunteers for monitoring Piping Plovers at Tawas Point State Park. It was a busy summer, with three different nesting locations for plovers. The new Michigan Audubon and Au Sable Audubon partnership allowed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Piping Plover Program to be far more effective in other locations because we had everything under control at Tawas.

Michigan Audubon shares our data with all the various federal, state and local agencies. We're always seeking volunteers to help.

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



Young Birders

The puffins ran across the water to take flight.
© Matty Hack



Just Puffin' Along ... Birding Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula

BY MATTY HACK

Alcids! Seabirds! Puffins! Words like this strike wonder into the minds of inland birders—even those like me, who have ready access to the Great Lakes. Naturally, I was ecstatic when I learned that I'd be attending a family reunion in Newfoundland, and that we had a few days to go birding beforehand. Best of all, I would get to go on my very first pelagic.

For those who don't know, Newfoundland is the easternmost province of Canada (far enough east to be, confusingly, one-and-a-half hours ahead of Eastern Time). Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Newfoundland is full of shoreline and rocky cliffs that provide home to countless alcids, seabirds, gannets, gulls, terns, and much more. As we landed in the St. John's airport, I saw a highly favorable omen: a Bald Eagle, walking around a grassy area between runway strips. I couldn't ask for a much better first bird of the trip.

The first destination was Cape Spear, the easternmost point in North America. Cape Spear juts into the Atlantic Ocean, which makes it both a natural tourist destination and a great spot to look for coastal birds. My brother and I got six lifers: Northern Gannet, Black Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin, Common Murre, Black-legged Kittiwake, and Arctic Tern. We were about ready to depart, but of course deciding to leave is the perfect way to coax the rarest birds to show up. Just as we picked up the scope, a brown bird, sort of like a gull but not quite, flew directly over our heads. We glanced at each other, barely believing it: our very first jaeger! And a Pomarine, no less!



Time for a fun game: Find the Thick-billed Murre! (If you find one, please let me know!) © Matty Hack

Even so, the highlight of the trip came the next day when we traveled south to Witless Bay, an inlet that hosts pretty much every single coastal bird in the region, sometimes in huge numbers—who knew that eBird doesn't flag 50,000 kittiwakes? It was time for my first pelagic, on the highly recommended Mallowney's Puffin and Whale Tour.

The previous day, we had seen puffins through a scope. As we rode on the water, thousands of Atlantic Puffins were sitting in the water, either alone or in small groups. They darted out of the water as the boat passed by, running across the surface in a way divers can only dream of. Up close, these comical birds are absolutely adorable, and immediately skyrocketed into my top five favorite birds. Their small, round bodies, ungraceful splashing, and triangle bills were much funnier than the equally numerous and more elegant murre flocks. Along with the alcids, we enjoyed gannets, turnstones, and whales—Minkes, Humpbacks, and one Fin—wowing everybody by breaching and slapping their tails.

Eventually, we reached Gull Island—and a completely unparalleled experience. Kittiwakes, murres, and puffins crowded the cliffs of this small island where they nested. We stopped the boat to marvel at the sheer spectacle of tens of thousands of seabirds, all right next to each other. Razorbills were there, too—an awesome lifer, and the target bird of the trip for my uncle. I picked out Razorbills from among the murres, photographed kittiwakes with their chicks, admired the puffins in the water next to us, and played the excruciating game of "Find the Thick-billed Murre." We found a couple, but could never re-find them among the 25,000 Common Murres.

We left Gull Island all too soon, and I took to getting better photos of birds we had already seen and scanning for fulmars, shearwaters, and storm-petrels. Over a million Leach's Storm-Petrels nest at Gull Island, and yet are never seen on these tours because they're nocturnal. Finally we bid goodbye to the puffins and their friends, and stepped off the boat. The pelagic was one of the most exhilarating moments of my life, and I can't wait for another one.

This article is excerpted with permission from a blog post on The Eyrie (youngbirders.aba.org/2013/09/just-puffin-along-birding-newfoundlands-avalon-peninsula.html). Matty Hack is a fifteen-year-old birder from Ann Arbor. He is part of the student blog editing team for The Eyrie, the American Birding Association's Young Birder Blog. Matty has been birding since he was nine years old, has been active with the ABA and Washtenaw Audubon for two years, and is one of the founding members of the Michigan Young Birders' Club.

Announcements

New Manager at Lake Bluff

Michigan Audubon welcomes Deborah Krieger as the new, full-time manager of the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary and the Lake Bluff Bed & Breakfast. Deb is a mental health professional who works full-time in Manistee and resides at Lake Bluff. The property improved greatly during the past five years under the management of Richard Krieger and with Deb's support. The Lake Bluff Bed & Breakfast affords visitors the opportunity to stay at a historical property that's situated high on a sand bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. Lake Bluff is the southern trailhead for the Sleeping Bear Birding Trail, which debuted in the summer of 2013. Income and donations from the bed-and-breakfast operation benefit habitat restoration and bird-friendly landscaping around the Lake Bluff manor house. To make a reservation for a stay at Lake Bluff, please email lakebluff@michiganaudubon.org or call (231) 723-4042.

Happy Trails, Richard Krieger

Richard Krieger's leadership resulted in big changes at Lake Bluff between 2007 and 2013. Rich was instrumental in making the renovations necessary to maintain the historic manor house and make several rooms available for overnight stays by guests. Rich's handiwork and connections in the conservation community resulted in three major grassland restorations that continue today. When you visit Lake Bluff next, take note of the Big Bluestem and numerous wildflowers in the north, south, and east fields. Rich cut trails, removed invasive species, and improved interpretative signage around the property. Michigan Audubon deeply appreciates Rich's time and talent, which he dedicated on a near full-time basis while at Lake Bluff. We wish him the best of luck as he leaves to pursue engineering projects abroad.

Dates for 2014 Signature Events

Please take a moment to record the dates for Michigan Audubon's Signature Events on your new 2014 calendar.

The Tawas Point Birding Festival will be held May 15–18. Our keynote speakers for 2014 are Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle. Tom and Scott are the authors of the *Warbler Guide* (to be reviewed in the January/February *Jack Pine Warbler*). We are very excited to bring Tom and Scott to Tawas, as the event is known for migrating warblers. The *Warbler Guide* will help you perfect your warbler identification abilities, and hearing the story of why the authors created the book the way they did will fascinate you. You can pre-register for the event at tawasbirdfest.com. The event's website will be updated as information becomes available and the schedule is finalized.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend comes to the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary on June 6–8, 2014. Birding tours to see Cerulean Warblers, Henslow's Sparrows, Hooded Warblers, and other grassland and woodland species highlight this small birding event. Katie Fallon, author of *Cerulean Blues*, will present the keynote program at the 7th annual event. Pre-register and find additional information at ceruleanwarbler.org.

CraneFest 2014 will be the 20th anniversary of the Sandhill Crane and Art Festival held at the Kiwanis Youth Conservation Area south of Bellevue. The event will be held on October 11–12, 2014. We are planning many special activities to commemorate this special celebration of Michigan's tallest bird. Event information can be found at cranefest.org.

Ask anyone who has attended one of these events in the past and they'll tell you that they had a great time. We hope you'll be able to join us for at least one in 2014.

Check Your Expiration Date

On the back cover of this issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler*, just above your name on the mailing label, is your membership expiration date. If yours says December 31, 2013, it's time for you to renew. Please use the envelope stapled in the center to renew your membership. Your prompt response now will reduce the number of renewal letters that we'll need to mail later. That in turn will save Michigan Audubon money that can be used toward bird conservation. Thank you for renewing now.

114th Christmas Bird Count

For the past 113 years, bird watchers of all kinds have participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This December, birders from around the globe will again join in the longest running citizen science survey in the world. The count dates are from December 14, 2013 to January 5, 2014.

Young and old, extreme birders or Barcalounger feeder watchers, all can participate in the CBC. You can find the exact date of your local count and the contact information for the compiler on Michigan Audubon's website (michiganaudubon.org/research/surveys_forms_data/christmas_count).

Each year, the scope of the CBC expands, with count circles now being established outside the original boundaries of continental North America. According to National Audubon, 2012 Count Data was collected from over 2,300 circles. National Audubon's website (Audubon.org) has made that information available to the public on the Data & Research link.

A very interesting short video on the history of the CBC can be found at National Audubon's website (birds.audubon.org/videos/audubons-christmas-bird-count-told-chan-robbins). Many amazing historical photographs make up a portion of this 3.5 minute video.

Although the CBC is now free, the work that is done compiling this information and presenting it in usable format takes funding. Please consider donating \$5 to participate in the CBC; your dollars go to a good cause.

Birding the Soo

Weekend birding trips to the eastern Upper Peninsula will again be offered by Michigan Audubon during the winter months. These popular car caravan tours fill fast so don't delay getting your reservations. Trips are scheduled for January 18–19 and February 15–16, 2014.

Birds likely to be observed near the Sault Ste. Marie area include Bohemian Waxwings, Snowy Owls, Sharp-tailed Grouse, both Red and White-winged Crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks. A stop at Hulbert Bog may get a Gray Jay or Boreal Chickadee. If 2014 is an irruption year for owls, we will hope to see 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 to register and for additional information.

Midwest Birding Symposium Coming to Michigan

The Midwest Birding Symposium is coming to Michigan September 10–13, 2015. The event is expected to draw 1,000 birders from across North America and beyond. Michigan Audubon's event partners include Bird Watcher's Digest, the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy and the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau. Michigan Audubon plans to rally Audubon chapters and members from across the state to attend, volunteer, and spread the word about the Midwest Birding Symposium. Please mark your calendars now to be part of this world-class event.

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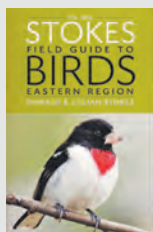
The Warbler Guide

by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle

\$29.95 (Flexi cover)

Just released in June, this is the ultimate guide to all 56 species of warblers found in the U.S. and Canada. The book contains many quick finder pages to narrow down your search. Detailed species accounts and sonograms help with the identification process. A must-have for birders

obsessed with warblers. Please include \$4 for postage and handling for this large volume.



The New Stokes Field Guide to Birds Eastern Region

by Don and Lillian Stokes

\$19.99

The new revised regional guide by the Stokes contains incredible photos, just like their *Birds of North America* guide. A color-coded contents page makes it easier to find the bird families,

trimming the time frame to identification. Identification tips presented in color boxes stand out in the text. This is a great guide for your favorite birder.



Avian Architecture

by Peter Goodfellow

\$27.95 (hard cover)

Covering the 12 different styles of nests that birds of the world create, this incredible volume uses photos and illustration to show how each is constructed. Case studies of different species are used to show how nests of the same type may differ in construction methods. If you have ever wondered how birds create their nests, this is the book that'll explain it.



Curious Critters

by David FitzSimmons

\$19.95 (hard cover)

A unique children's book that uses portrait photos of animals and text written as if the critters are speaking, teaching the reader about the 21 species covered.

A brief natural history on each animal is included in the back of the book along with a silhouette quiz. This is a great book for adults to read to young children or for readers 7-10 to read for themselves.



Curious Critters Card Game

by David FitzSimmons

\$9.95

One deck of photographic cards that allows children, ages 3-10, to play four different card games, from a memory game for the youngest to rummy for the older kids. The cards contain the same great portrait photos of the animals presented in the *Curious Critters* book. No information on the animals is provided on the cards except the name.

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