

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

*THE SUMMER ISSUE:* Avian Botulism Takes its Toll ■ Michigan's Fisher King ■ Grassland Conservation  
■ Michigan Butterfly Network ■ Remembrance, Three Great Champions of Michigan Birds



# Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Belted Kingfisher

Photographer: Euan Reid | ereid@rogers.com

It was the end of the season and I happened upon two Belted Kingfishers fighting over a lucrative feeding pond. They would take turns dive-bombing and chasing each other around in an effort to secure the best perch. The pair were so busy with one another that they paid little attention to me as I set up a small blind and took the shots. I used a Canon DS1 400 5.6F/1.4x converter and shot out of a blind.

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# Executive Director's Letter



## SHARING SUMMER BIRDS

To this day, I maintain my childhood fascination for sharks. As a college freshman, I decorated the walls of my dorm room with shark posters and nearly transferred to the University of Miami to study shark biology. Sharks are among a handful of taxonomic groups that continue to challenge humans in the way we interpret their behavior and co-exist with wild populations. Wolves are another of these groups, sparking controversy between conservationists, wildlife managers, and landowners throughout their North American range.

Birds—our most watchable and accessible form of wildlife—are also divisive as they relate to personal property, human health, and business. Birds are on the frontlines of debates between conservationists and cat-owners. Birds are vectors for diseases that can affect human health. Birds are also threatened by the rapid development of industrial wind farms.

A quarter of Michigan's residents identify as bird enthusiasts in one form or another, which means that there are seven to eight million Michigan residents who may need

our help understanding and appreciating the state's avian ecology. The summer months may seem like the doldrums to birders who have just enjoyed the spectacle of spring migration. July and August, though, are the ideal months to interface with Michigan's "non-birder" community.

When I close my eyes and imagine summer life in Michigan I picture people working in their gardens, boaters cruising the inland lakes, and parks alive with ballgames and family picnics. The outdoor summer rituals of Michiganders span a broad spectrum, from weekends at the family cottage to afternoons at urban parks like Belle Isle. The birds are always present, and they present us with a unique opportunity to share the benefits birds bring to our Michigan communities.

Bird author Scott Weidensaul wrote a marvelous article for *Audubon* magazine last year. He writes, "Even the smallest bird is a miracle that needs no further vindication or defense—which by its very existence demands our attention and respect." The more we engage our family members, neighbors, and co-workers with bird life in Michigan, the greater respect and understanding birds will gain. We do need to be aware of birds as disease vectors, and there are times that birds can cause damage or discomfort to personal property. Showing people a Red-bellied Woodpecker returning to a nest hole, or pointing out a delicate Spotted Sandpiper can broaden perspectives and change attitudes towards birds as a whole.

Please take advantage of this Michigan summer to share birds with others. Your spring search for migrants and the fevered pace of growing your life list is on pause for now. Take the opportunity to help a young person begin his or her own list, point out your neighborhood



Did you know? The Red-bellied Woodpecker can stick its tongue out nearly two inches past the tip of its beak. © 2012 Daniel Behm



The Spotted Sandpiper is a common shorebird of North America. It's known for its intriguing social life, characteristic teetering motion and showy courtship display. © 2011 Daniel Behm

birds to the couple next door, and show your buddies Common Nighthawks feeding under the lights at the ballpark. Birds and our community of birders will be better for it.

Happy summer!

Best regards,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Jonathan E. Lutz, Executive Director



Beginning birders learning tricks on how to identify birds in the field.  
© 2014 Mallory King/Michigan Audubon

# Avian Botulism Takes its Toll: Scientists Continue to Look for Clues

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

**J**oe Kaplan didn't have to look far to find dead birds in 2007. Thousands had washed up on the northern Lake Michigan shoreline, from Sleeping Bear Dunes north across the Upper Peninsula. Carcasses littered the light-colored sands. It was a big year for avian mortality due to botulism, a potent toxin that causes paralysis and death.

"We wouldn't know about these botulism outbreaks if it weren't for birds washing up on the shore," said Kaplan, a Michigan Audubon field representative and co-founder of Common Coast Research and Conservation, a Hancock-based nonprofit that studies Common Loons and helps in the cooperative effort to tally dead birds.

A lesser outbreak occurred in 2006, an incident that signaled significant change: botulism had not been seen on Lake Michigan since the 1980s, though outbreaks had occurred on Lakes Erie, Ontario, and Huron. The toxin has surfaced annually on Lake Michigan since then to greater or lesser extents. And scientists with the U.S. Department of Interior are now diligently working to locate the source and identify the chain of events that kill off birds by the thousands.

The 2007 toll was high. Staff and volunteers at Sleeping Bear discovered 1,135 dead birds along the park's shoreline; there were 63 Common Loons. The lake-wide toll was 4,158 birds. Five years later, in 2012, the death toll was even higher. Beach monitors around Lake Michigan reported 4,386 dead birds, according to National Park Service regional staff in Ashland, Wisconsin. At Sleeping Bear that year, 580 dead loons were collected.

"That was awful. It was devastating," laments Sue Jennings, a wildlife biologist for the national lakeshore. "We have 64 breeding pair of (endangered) Piping Plovers here. We provide nesting habitat for one-third of the entire population. So far, we know six chicks or adults have succumbed to botulism. It may be as high as eight. That's a huge concern."

Infected birds that die and wash up on a beach present a danger to other birds and animals that may feed upon their carcasses. National lakeshore volunteers that monitor beaches and collect carcasses wear protective clothing and gloves when handling them.

Common Coast reported finding 865 dead birds in 2012; all were found along a seven-mile stretch of an Upper Peninsula beach. They were all waterbirds, Kaplan said. Loons were hit hardest, but the finds included mixed grebe, scoter, and merganser species along with Long-tailed Ducks, Ring-billed Gulls, and Double-crested Cormorants.



The Common Loon was hit the hardest during the 2012 avian botulism outbreak.  
© 2007 Josh Haas

"We don't know how many just sank to the bottom and will be part of the fossil bed 600 million years from now," Kaplan mused. "But it's surreal being out there. You don't have to look for them—you're going from carcass to carcass. It's obvious something is really wrong."

Scientists are looking for the common thread. Finding out what is wrong has become a matter of scientific inquiry. Researchers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Service, and

National Park Service all see a pattern: outbreaks are more severe when lake levels are low and water temperatures are high. Both occurred on Lake Michigan in 2012, an unusually warm spring and summer that followed record low lake levels in January.

Scientists think they know the answer, but the evidence to support it has been hard to come by. Researchers theorize that botulism moves up through the food chain.

Zebra and quagga mussel colonies that live on the lake bottom filter water, making it clearer. That in turn allows light to penetrate deeper, which fosters cladophora algae growth. This growth is accelerated by the phosphorus-rich



## Birds affected by avian botulism

excrement of mussel colonies.

Botulism requires low oxygen conditions to form, which are the conditions that occur late in summer when waters warm and algae mats decay. Tests of the lake bottom near Sleeping Bear confirm that botulism is widely present, but goby diet studies have been inconclusive, and most mussels tested for botulism did not have it.

“The answer is more complicated than eating mussels, but we think gobies are a critical factor in moving it from the environment to the bird,” explains Brenda Moraska Lafrancois, the regional aquatic ecologist at the National Park Service office in Ashland, Wisconsin. “They are getting it in their food. They eat other invertebrates, fresh water shrimp, midges, and more. Those are all tangled up in the cladophora.”

“We looked at tissue samples [from mussels] and did not find evidence of the bacteria [that creates botulism] in the mussel. If you take the whole, including what is on the shell, we do find it sometimes. We’ve looked at 800 to 1,000 samples, and analyzed them for the toxin gene, but it’s been difficult to find a pattern,” says Lafrancois. “Our search for the bacterium has been more of a treasure hunt. It’s hard to pinpoint where things are happening.”

Stephen Riley, a fish research biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, said studies are ongoing. Researchers continue to sample the lake bottom sediment near Sleeping Bear, along with rotting algae and mussel-bed detritus, hoping to uncover clear exposure routes. But the verdict is still out.

“We thought it would be more common in rotting cladophora—that it would be a good hotspot—but so far it’s not there,” Riley said. “We need more data. We haven’t found exactly where it is being produced and what makes it suitable to grow. The problem is that this problem is really complicated.”

Water levels on Lake Michigan this year are expected to be higher than 2013, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Water temperatures are also expected to be cooler due to the deep winter snowpack and cooler seasonal temperatures. Kaplan and others say those conditions are likely to result in a smaller botulism outbreak this year, if there’s one at all. But Jennings, at Sleeping Bear Dunes, said volunteer beach monitors will be combing the lakeshore sands looking for any of its devastating results.

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Howard Meyerson ([howardmeyerson@gmail.com](mailto:howardmeyerson@gmail.com)) has been writing about birds, nature, the environment, and outdoor recreation for 30 years. He lives in Grand Rapids. His work appears in a variety of publications.



Hooded Merganser © 2012 Daniel Behm



Pied-billed Grebe © 2012 Daniel Behm



Long-tailed Duck © 2008 Roger Eriksson



Ring-billed Gull © 2010 Flickr Creative Commons

# Michigan's Fisher King

BY KIRBY ADAMS

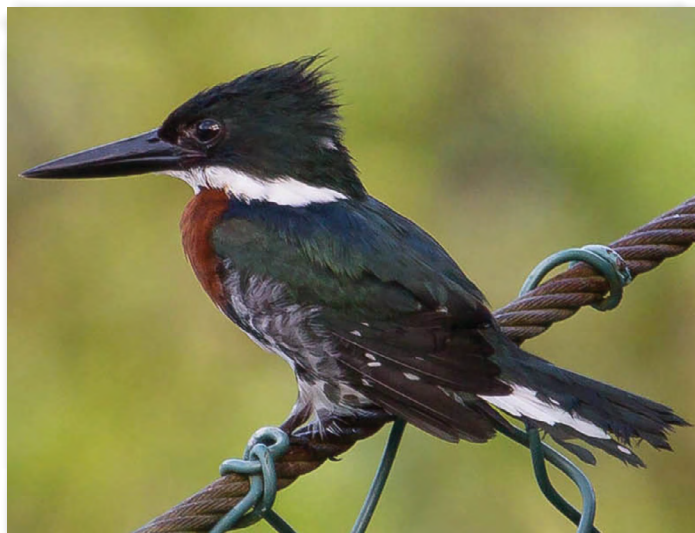
**H**ere in the Great Lakes area, we're blessed with some of the world's best birds in some of the most popular bird families. It's hard to beat the collection of ducks that spend roughly half of their year here, and our spring migration of wood warblers is the envy of the world every May. But sometimes we get the short end of the bio-geographical stick. Such is the case with kingfishers.

That's not to say our resident Belted Kingfisher (*Megasceryle alcyon*) is anything but a fine bird. It's a pleasant companion to birders, anglers, and paddlers all across Michigan, even wintering on open waterways in the lower part of the Mitten. It's just that of roughly 90 species of kingfisher in the world, we got only one.

A U.S. birder hoping to spot a couple more kingfishers without leaving the country would need to head to south Texas, the northern extent of the range for both the giant Ringed Kingfisher and diminutive Green Kingfisher. The Ringed is nearly the size of a crow with a massive bill that looks remarkably oversized for the bird. The Green, which turns up in southeast Arizona as well, is the size of a Red-winged Blackbird. Its bill is again outsized for the bird, giving the impression of a large head and bill with a little-bird body attached to it for ornamentation.



The Ringed Kingfisher is the largest kingfisher species in the U.S., found only in the southern tip of Texas. © Michael Lane



The Green Kingfisher is the smallest kingfisher species in the U.S. and also lacks the grey/blue coloration typical to the species. © 2013 Quinten Questel

Sometimes a vagrant kingfisher will show up in exactly the right place at the best of all possible times. Last November, the town of Harlingen, Texas, was hosting one of North America's largest birding festivals, the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival. Hundreds of birders were gathered in the southern tip of Texas, and that's when an Amazon Kingfisher turned up right beside a busy highway not far from the festival's headquarters. It then stuck around long enough for everyone to get there to see it, flying back and forth across the road to keep things interesting. The wonderfully understanding Cameron County Sheriff's office sent a couple cars out to check on the situation as birders and their vehicles lined Texas Highway 100. Rather than dispersing the crowd, the police parked in view to ensure motorists slowed to a safe speed while passing the birders. And what happened when the bird flew across the highway? The police stopped traffic to allow dozens of birders to drag themselves and their optics to the other side. That's how seriously birding is taken in the Rio Grande Valley and how special an Amazon Kingfisher hundreds of miles out of range is.

Three kingfishers in the vastness of this continent north of the Rio Grande—that's it. Israel, which is small enough to be submerged in Lake Michigan, also has three, including the stunning and colorful White-throated Kingfisher and the stately black-and-white Pied Kingfisher. India has a baker's dozen. Malaysia beats that with fourteen. Australia has three



species of typical wetland kingfishers but adds another eight “tree-kingfishers,” a terrestrial group usually assigned its own family status. Among these are the famous kookaburras, named with an onomatopoeic representation of their cackling laugh.

Our own Belted Kingfisher is a unique bird in a few respects. It’s one of the rare birds of which the female is more colorful than male, with the female sporting a chestnut-colored belt below the blue band typical of the male. It’s also a hardy bird, having not shown a precipitous decline like that suffered by many fish-eating birds during the era of DDT use. Some attribute this to the kingfisher’s taste for prey smaller than that preferred by Bald Eagles or Osprey. Despite the resilience, the population has nevertheless slowly and steadily declined due to human disturbance, a fate shared by numerous species.

It would be a shame for the rattle of the Belted Kingfisher to become anything other than the common sound that it is today on Michigan’s rivers, streams, and lakes. I’ve nicknamed them the “canoe guides” for their unique response to intrusion from paddlers. Some bird species retreat onshore and some dart far away from an approaching canoe or kayak, but kingfishers seem to make almost a game of the event. Once a canoe slips past an invisible line that only the kingfisher can see, the bird will fly downstream a bit and still within sight, perch again and rattle loudly as if guiding the paddlers onward. Crossing the threshold again, the process is repeated. This can go on for a half mile or more down the river. I’ve paddled streams with Belted Kingfishers in every corner of the continent and their behavior is exactly the same.

Now that I think about it more, maybe we didn’t get short-changed in the kingfisher distribution game. Kookaburras are nice, and I’d love to have been in Texas when that Amazon



Our native Belted Kingfisher is unique because the female is more colorful than the male. A male is pictured above and a female is on the magazine cover. © 2012 Daniel Behm

Kingfisher took a northerly vacation, but I wouldn’t want to trade the Belted Kingfisher for any of them. He’s our guy and as much a part of Michigan waterways as lazy summer paddles and world-class fly fishing. I can always find my way to Kofiau Island someday to tick the Kofiau Paradise Kingfisher off my life list. In the meantime, I’ll be on my local lake listening to the rattles of summer.

Kirby Adams ([kirby.adams@gmail.com](mailto:kirby.adams@gmail.com)) 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.

# Calendar

July	August	September
3 & 17 <b>Evening nature walk</b> Bengel Wildlife Center, Bath	7 <b>Evening nature walk</b> Bengel Wildlife Center, Bath	20-21 <b>Hawk Fest</b> Lake Erie Metropark, Brownstown Township
19 <b>Board of Directors meeting</b> Marquette	16 <b>Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies</b> Dahlem Environ. Center, Jackson	
25 <b>Dog Days Retail Event</b> Bengel Wildlife Center, Bath	21 <b>Evening nature walk</b> Bengel Wildlife Center, Bath	
31 <b>Evening nature walk</b> Bengel Wildlife Center, Bath		

# Michigan Butterfly Network

BY ASHLEY ANNE WICK

**H**ave you noticed that you are not seeing the same suite of butterfly species in your local natural areas in the past few years? Or are you seeing fewer of them overall? Certainly you've been hearing about the devastating impacts of climate change—perhaps more aptly called “global weirding”—on our native butterfly populations? Combine this with our increasing use of neonicotinoid pesticides, Roundup Ready crops, habitat alteration, and lack of native plantings . . . and the cumulative effects are devastating on our friendly insects. Last winter (2013–2014) was the worst year for the iconic monarch butterfly, with an overwintering range in Mexico that had reached an all-time low of 0.67 hectare, down from an almost 20-year average of 6.69 hectare. On the other hand, in 2013 the number of red-spotted purple butterflies was astounding—on a single day I counted over 120 of them on a walk in Kalamazoo County. However, several species of usually common butterflies, such as the eastern comma and red admiral, were sighted in much smaller numbers in Michigan last year. It is getting more and more difficult to predict what species will be the losers and winners in our “new normal” of climate change.

Instead of dwelling on the decline of butterfly populations, I would like to invite you to become involved with a new initiative to help us gather data on our 150 Michigan butterfly species.

With the Michigan Butterfly Network (MiBN), we seek to assess the changing status of our state's butterfly species. One reason I'm particularly excited about the MiBN is our new partnership with Butterflies and Moths of North America (BAMONA) and other statewide butterfly monitoring

initiatives across the United States. With our new database, MiBN citizen scientists and cooperative land managers will enter their survey results at their home computers and will be able to view data summaries throughout the year. It is our goal that the MiBN's citizen science monitors can help us gather data on our butterfly populations to catch

species on decline before we see the populations reach the devastatingly low numbers of the Karner blue, Mitchell's satyr, or Poweshiek skipperling.

Our MiBN citizen science monitors are given a designated census route in a preserve or natural area near their homes, and walk this census route six or more times throughout the summer using the Pollard Walk method to count butterfly species and individuals. It is my hope that we can use this data to help inform land managers to better plan for these species, as well as let researchers paint a picture of how our butterfly populations are changing in a world in flux.

The 2014 MiBN monitoring season is under way, and we have expanded from our sites in and around Kalamazoo with our partners in Grand Rapids, Flint, Detroit, Traverse City, and Ann Arbor. If you are interested in becoming involved, contact us and we may be able to connect

you with a monitor in your area who can mentor you this summer and help prepare you to become a Butterfly Network citizen scientist for our 2015 season.



The red-spotted purple butterfly, whose larvae mimic bird droppings, had a great year in 2013 in regards to increased population numbers. © Mary Darloia



The red admiral butterfly is a common and easily recognized butterfly here in Michigan. Its population growth has been up and down. © 123RF/Satina

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Ashley Anne Wick ([awick@naturecenter.org](mailto:awick@naturecenter.org)) is the Biological Research Director at the Kalamazoo Nature Center and Director of the Michigan Butterfly Network. She's been working on climate change issues and studying common and rare butterflies for over a decade across North and South America.



# Grassland Conservation on a Michigan Important Bird Area

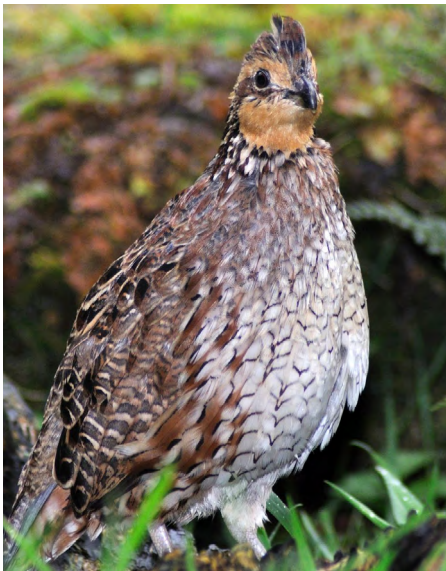
BY CALEB PUTNAM

In 2011, Audubon underwent an effort to prioritize conservation work on the 102 IBAs (Important Bird Areas) it had identified in Michigan a year earlier. One of the highest priority sites to result from this analysis was the Hillsdale County Henslow's Sparrow private lands IBA, which represents Michigan's highest known concentration of this iconic and rare grassland species, hosting as many as 50 pairs during some years. Within the IBA, sparrows are present on a variety of fallow fields and grassy habitats, but virtually all of this habitat is privately-owned and little of it is actively managed for grasslands. This unfortunate fact presents both challenges and opportunities.

In response to this, a joint project between Michigan Audubon and National Audubon was initiated to promote the restoration and management of high-quality grasslands within the IBA. The partnership was fully realized by recruiting additional members from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Partners for Fish and Wildlife program), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR Landowner Incentive Program), Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), Hillsdale Conservation District, Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), and the Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy.

Initially, work focused on mapping the IBA to determine what areas within it are best suited to Henslow's Sparrows. We wanted to know that we were working on parcels which were likely to attract Henslow's Sparrows once habitat was established. This analysis, led by MNFI staff and funded by the MDNR, looked at all known recent occurrences of this species in the county

against a number of environmental predictors (including elevation, slope, soils, and soil moisture level), and used these correlations to predict high likelihood areas for work within the IBA. The model suggests that "if you build it, they will come," down to the level of parcels of land. A list of landowners within the high likelihood areas is now in the hands of the partnership, and this will be used to steer our work toward only sites which will benefit this species.



The Northern Bobwhite is the only Red List bird that is also a game species and has a hunting season in Michigan. © 2013 123RF



The Henslow's Sparrow, a Michigan Endangered species, is a shy and elusive bird that is usually heard rather than seen.  
© 2010 Daniel Behm

The Hillsdale Conservation District and Hillsdale NRCS office have been integral partners. They implement a variety of important federal conservation programs, in particular the various conservation incentives associated with the Farm Bill. These incentives provide cost-share and technical assistance to help landowners conserve habitats on their properties, and are the primary tools available to us for converting crop into grassland and managing existing grassland into higher-quality habitat. The recent passing of a new Farm Bill in February 2014 created many new pots of money, which will be used to attract landowners.

Henslow's Sparrows are very picky birds, inhabiting only a subset of available grasslands. So if we can create habitat for them, we will benefit a large number of other birds. This includes two important game species: Ring-Necked Pheasant and Northern Bobwhite. Both of these species are only conserved at the landscape not parcel level, and receive management from the MDNR.

Moving forward, we plan to engage landowners and recruit them to participate in grasslands management. We are looking for a demonstration site where we can show off the results of grasslands management, and will hold events and disseminate information via the Conservation District. With the cost of corn at historically high levels, there are real challenges to persuading landowners to switch their croplands into grass, but with some convincing we believe the grasslands of Hillsdale County can be greatly improved for our imperiled birds.

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Caleb Putnam (cputnam@audubon.org) is Michigan's Important Bird Area Coordinator.

# Book Review

## *A Feathered River Across the Sky*

by Joel Greenberg

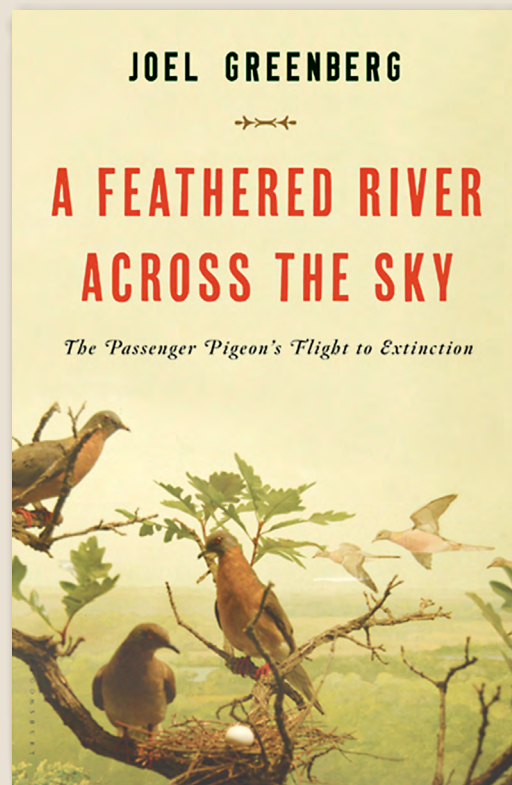
REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER HOVING

**J**oel Greenberg's *A Feathered River Across the Sky* is odd in a quirky and ultimately entertaining way. It has no plot, little thesis, and no single human character. Although the subject is historical, it is not a history—at least not as a modern historian might write one. This book is similar to a Victorian natural history: chock full of facts, short stories, and quirky anecdotes that together form a picture of the wonder that was the Passenger Pigeon. Yet it was written just recently, in memory of the centenary of the extinction of the last Passenger Pigeon in 1914.

Each chapter is a collection of Passenger Pigeon lore on a topic such as Indians and Passenger Pigeons, Passenger Pigeons in captivity, or the last great nestings. One gets a feeling that the author spent hundreds or thousands of hours combing the historical literature to write the definitive academic work on Passenger Pigeons. In doing so he came across interesting tidbits, intriguing characters, and fun coincidences. This book is not the dry academic tome but rather the collection of all the fun stories that enliven the history, natural and otherwise, of this fascinating creature. *A Feathered River Across the Sky* certainly has some of the flavor of the definitive work on Passenger Pigeon natural history, but it almost seems to be the context or background for the stories that bring the past to life.

One example is the biographical sketch of Junius Brutus Booth, a famous actor, vegetarian, and father to John Wilkes Booth, who later assassinated President Lincoln. The elder Booth once secured a gravesite and tried to organize a funeral for a bushel of dead Passenger Pigeons, which he termed “innocent victims of man’s barbarity.” In another chapter, the author re-tells some of the tall tales inspired by Passenger Pigeons, such as a horse lifted clear off the ground when the tree to which it was tied sprang back after several tons of pigeons suddenly took flight.

The Passenger Pigeon itself is quite a character, and one that we do not miss only because we have never experienced it. It’s worth considering that most mature trees in Michigan over 130 years old have experienced Passenger Pigeons, and some no doubt owe their existence to them. Many older trees in Michigan forests, especially along the coast of Lake Michigan in Van Buren, Oceana, and Emmet counties, were released from the understory when mature trees were destroyed by Passenger Pigeon nestings or roostings. There is even some evidence that the switch in dominance from white



**\$26.00** (hardcover)

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

oaks to red oaks was driven by the sudden disappearance of Passenger Pigeons.

Reading accounts in this book, especially the early accounts of explorers and early settlers, makes clear just how abundant Passenger Pigeons were: not merely a common bird, they were the most common bird on the planet, concentrated in the forests of eastern North America, with a geographic range centered on Michigan. They were a force of nature whose roostings were compared to the damage done by hurricanes.

The book is more than tall tales, forest ecology, and entertainment. The author does document quite thoroughly both the astounding abundance and the rapacious destruction of Passenger Pigeon flocks. The accounts of the many methods to kill Passenger Pigeons can be downright disturbing. The alternation between entertaining historical characters and anecdotes and macabre destruction make *A Feathered River Across the Sky* an odd, and oddly compelling, read.

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Christopher Hoving is the state Adaptation Specialist for the Michigan DNR and coauthor of *Early Maine Wildlife*, a collection of historical accounts of Maine wildlife. He lives in an old farmhouse in Eagle, MI with his wife, two children, cat, and too many chickens.



# Remembrance

It is with deep sadness that we report the loss of three great champions of Michigan birds. The Michigan Audubon Board and staff extend our deepest condolences to the families of Nancy, Fred, and Bob.



## Nancy Lapinski

Nancy passed away peacefully on April 23. Nancy was a passionate conservationist and steward of Michigan Audubon's Kate Palmer Sanctuary, where she spent countless hours alone or with friends and family picking up trash or removing invasive species. Nancy was a life member of both Jackson Audubon Society and Michigan Audubon, and a co-founder of Recycling Jackson and the Grand River Environmental Action Team. She was wife to former Michigan Audubon President Jack Lapinski and mother to current Michigan Audubon Board member Natasha Koss. A memorial service for Nancy was held on Friday, May 30 at the Cascades Manor House in Jackson. Memorial donations can be made to Jackson Audubon ([www.jacksonaudubon.org](http://www.jacksonaudubon.org)).



## Fred Charbonneau

Fred also passed away on April 23. He served on the Detroit Audubon Society Board for many years, with four terms as president. Fred launched the Safe Passage Great Lakes campaign in 2006, which recruits high-rise building owners in southeast Michigan to turn out their lights at night during the spring and fall bird migration seasons. Fred's leadership undoubtedly saved the lives of countless migratory birds that pass through the region, and he drew widespread attention to the dangers faced by birds en route to their breeding grounds. Fred retired from the Detroit Audubon Society Board of Directors at the end of 2013, but remained active with the Safe Passage program right up until his death. Memorial contributions in Fred's name can be made to the Detroit Audubon Society ([www.detroitaudubon.org](http://www.detroitaudubon.org)).

## Bob Brockwell

Bob, the Sable Dunes Audubon Society President, passed away on April 16. Contributions in Bob's memory can be made to the Sable Dunes Audubon Society ([www.sabledunesaudubon.com](http://www.sabledunesaudubon.com)).



# Chapter Spotlight

## Audubon Society of Kalamazoo

BY MALLORY KING

**E**stablished in 1945 and highly active in the community ever since, the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo (ASK) is a great resource to citizens and visitors in southwestern Michigan. Now with over 360 members, ASK is the largest it has ever been and the Society is taking advantage of that by offering a wide range of activities and educational programs year-round for its community.

ASK leads over 20 birding field trips each year, including a regularly scheduled and member favored trip along the Kal-Haven Trail, led by the current president, Ilse Gebhard, who has been leading the birding trip for over 10 years. "The first couple of years we held the walks every week September through June. Evaluating the attendance over the years, we cut back to the major bird migration months [March, April, May, September and October]. While the days in the field have halved over the years, the number of species found has increased, indicating to me that as a group we have become better birders," stated Gebhard.

And the numbers back her up. The Kal-Haven Trail trip recorded a record number of birds one day in 1995 with 159 species. Over the years the group has observed 29 warblers species, five vireo species, and many other very interesting birds, including a Northern Goshawk, Sora, Virginia Rail, Pileated Woodpecker, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Swamp Sparrow, and Willow Flycatcher.

When members of ASK are not out building their birding lists, you can find them giving free classroom bird presentations (over 50 each year) to area schools, grades three through five. The Society has visited classrooms for

more than 25 years to teach students about the natural world and how each person can impact the health of the environment with fun, hands-on activities. To help increase awareness, ASK purchases and distributes over 40 National



A bright warbler attracts this group's attention in the treetops and everyone finds the best angle for viewing on this fine birding autumn morning. © Larry Wolf



ASK members take a photo break on the Kal-Haven Trail. Little did they know just down the trail they would encounter two Barred Owls, rounding off a productive day. © Larry Wolf

Audubon Society Audubon Adventure packets to area schools every year. Members also provide a great program to students at Kalamazoo College, providing more scientific evidence and in-depth information on birds and the environment.

The Society hosts monthly bird or nature programs on the fourth Monday of every month from September through April. Recently ASK hosted a "bird star" at their monthly meeting: Joel Greenburg, with a spectacular program on the 100th anniversary of the extinction of Passenger Pigeons. Over 120 people attended the meeting, and many were not ASK members.

Additionally, ASK organizes an annual Christmas Bird Count and the Kalamazoo County Spring Migration Count, maintains a local Rare Bird Alert network, monitors bluebird trails, establishes and maintains Purple Martin colonies, raises donations to help local, national, and international organizations protect birds and their habitat, and helps with stewardship efforts on two of Michigan Audubon's sanctuaries in the area.

The Audubon Society of Kalamazoo is an active and highly engaged chapter making positive changes in their community and for bird populations statewide. We urge you to connect with them when you are in the area.

Mallory King (mallory@michiganaudubon.org) is Michigan Audubon's Marketing and Communications Coordinator.

### Contact information

[kalamazooaudubon.org](http://kalamazooaudubon.org) or 269-375-7210

Facebook: Audubon Society of Kalamazoo

### Meeting information:

Next meetings: September 22, October 27

Time: 7:30PM

Location: People's Church, 1758 North 10th St., Kalamazoo



# Birding with the Michigan Young Birders Club

BY NANCY DAVIS

A shared passion has brought together a remarkable group of young people in Michigan. United by their love of birding, they have joined forces to form a club that lets them share their sightings, their art, and their research—and get together for new birding experiences. With the help of Michigan Audubon's Wendy Tatar, these young birders have founded the Michigan Young Birders Club. Working with a network of advisors throughout the state, the young birders put together a program of field trips for 2014 and released the first edition of their newsletter, *The Michigan Merlin*, in the first quarter of the year.

The MIYBC's first field trip was in January when its members met with Dr. Pamela Rasmussen at the Michigan State University Museum's Ornithology Lab. Dr. Rasmussen very generously spent several hours with the kids, explaining the purpose of the lab and the museum's work in bird conservation and ornithology. She also showed dozens of bird specimens to the slightly awed young birders and took requests so they could see examples of some of their favorites, including King Penguins, Barn, Snowy, and Northern Hawk Owls, and an incredible variety of hummingbirds.

While the wicked winter weather of February 2014 kept the birders from their planned trip to the Soo, in March they met up again at the Maple River State Game Area. According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Maple River SGA is the largest contiguous wetland complex in mid-Michigan. This made for six hours of amazing birding, with a species count of 60 for the day. Highlights included Greater White-fronted Goose and Red-necked Grebe.

Many of the young birders participated in the International Migratory Bird Count in May, with several of them acting as area leaders in their home counties. They are committed to volunteering and

helping their local chapters conduct accurate bird counts and maintain bird data.

The birders met up later in May, this time at the Tawas Point Birding Festival. Wendy organized a program just for the young birders, and they set out at 7:00 AM to explore Tawas Point on their own for several hours. Then they gathered in the afternoon to share their work with each other and other interested birders, with presentations on using eBird, birding in Seney National Wildlife Refuge, birding an underbirded patch and turning it into an eBird hotspot, and a study of the intersection of meteorology and ornithology. Afterwards they promptly headed out to continue birding, and ended the day with a species total over 90, with 23 species of warblers, including great looks at Golden-winged, Canada, Wilson's, Orange-crowned, Blue-winged, and Bay-breasted Warblers, as well as almost 500 swallows, representing all six regular Michigan species.

MIYBC has a full schedule planned through the summer and fall, with plans to meet up at the Cerulean Warbler Weekend in June, at Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies at the Dahlem Environmental Center in August, at Lake Erie Metropark in September, and at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in October. Most of the birders are planning to participate in their local Christmas Bird Counts, which offers another opportunity to hone their citizen-scientist skills.

These young people are raring to go, but they do need our support. Most of them can't even drive! There are a few things you can do to help this next generation of young birders. Be on the lookout for other young birders and encourage them to join and meet young people who share their interest. If

you have ideas for field trips or programs, or if you can lead a trip or program, please let us know. Encourage young birders to join their local Audubon Society chapter. You'll be amazed at their enthusiasm, knowledge, and commitment to birding. Help us grow the membership of the Michigan Young Birders Club.



MIYBC at the Tawas Point Birding Festival growing their bird list (from left to right): Matty Hack, Benjamin Hack, Travis Mangione  
© 2014 Daniel Hack

Nancy Davis is the mother of two avid Michigan Young Birders. While she describes herself as their bank and chauffeur, the truth is she really loves the birding adventures she and her husband share with their sons.

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Roger Eriksson  
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Denise & Bill Willis  
Ed & Mary Ann Wojahn  
Richard Wolinski  
Jim & Deb Worth  
Richard Yarsevich

## Special Thanks

We had another incredible Tawas Point Birding Festival this year. The event continues to grow due to the cooperative efforts of many people, organizations, and businesses. Michigan Audubon would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in supporting this event. Its success would not be possible without them!

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## Announcements

### Thursday Evenings at the Bengel Wildlife Center

Summer is here and Michigan Audubon will again offer evening nature walks at our home office, which is located in the Bengel Wildlife Center in Bath. The nature trails at Bengel take you through woods, prairie, and wetland, so there are many things to be seen. While the trails are open dawn to dusk for an on-your-own hike, if you'd like to have a guided hike to help you with identification of flora and fauna, Michigan Audubon is providing that opportunity on some Thursday evenings. On July 3rd, 17th and 31st and August 7th and 21st, a staff member or volunteer naturalist will lead hikes around the property beginning at 6:30 PM. You'll want to bring your binoculars, field guides (or better yet, buy a new one here), insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. Hikes will be cancelled in the event of rain.

### 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. For more information and registration visit [michiganaudubon.org/education/field\\_trips\\_travel](http://michiganaudubon.org/education/field_trips_travel). Birding destinations include the following:

- Migrating fall shorebirds and warblers will be the target species on a tour around Saginaw Bay on August 23 and 24. The tour will begin at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and end at Tawas Point State Park.
- A unique opportunity to see rare gulls and other water birds during pelagic tours of Lake Michigan on September 6th and 27th. That's right—we've chartered a boat to take you out into the lake a few miles in the hopes of getting some rare birds that you need for your Michigan lists. This year the tour will last seven hours in hopes that staying on the lake longer will attract more unique species.

### Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies

The Michigan Audubon Bookstore will again be participating in Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies, a great event hosted by the Dahlem Nature Conservancy at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center in Jackson. The event has live birds of prey, hummingbird banding (AM only), butterfly tagging, hikes, workshops, and lots of kids' craft activities. Besides the Michigan Audubon Bookstore, vendors include sellers of native plants, bird seed, and bird houses/feeders. Best of all, the event is free! The event is scheduled for Saturday, August 16, 9 AM–3 PM. To find out more about the event, visit the website of the Dahlem Center at [dahlemcenter.org](http://dahlemcenter.org) or phone 517-782-3453.

### Passenger Pigeon Exhibits

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon; two museums have opened exhibits for the bird.

"They Passed Like a Cloud: Extinction and the Passenger Pigeon" is open at the MSU Museum until January 25, 2015. The exhibit is produced in association with Project Passenger Pigeon. The exhibition was created not only to mark the anniversary, but to promote the conservation of species and habitats, strengthen the relationship between people and nature, and to foster the sustainable use of natural resources. More information on this exhibit can be found at [museum.msu.edu](http://museum.msu.edu).

"A Shadow Over the Earth: The Life and Death of the Passenger Pigeon" continues on display until May 2015 at the Harbor Springs Area Historical Museum. The museum is located at 349 East Main Street in Harbor Springs. Exhibit hours at the museum are Friday and Saturday 11 AM–3 PM. The display was created with help from the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History and contains both male and female taxidermied mounts on display courtesy of the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

## Welcome New 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. 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.

Christine Andrews	Tom Hoelscher	Win Pinet
Gretchen & Katrina Arnold	Anne & Ron Holbrook	Joseph Pomerville
Catina Sevidal & Timothy Ball	Judith Holloway	Vicki Ramsey
Laura Barbour	Helen-Marie & Paul Holmgren	Angela Rattenger
Dan Barr	Susan Holtzmann	Keith Ravel
Joseph Benenate	Dave & Lisa Hoyt	Jonathan Rea
Nancy Bernabei	Margaret Hudson	Ann Reed
Ralph Berner	Michigan Natural Features Inventory	Jim & KayMary Rettig
Pam Bigley	Karen Iler	Tara Reynolds
Angela & Dan Brouwer	Catherine Jennings	Dianne & Donald Ricky
Dan Browne	Judith Johnson	Roxanne Riggs
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Church-McHugh	Barbara Kennedy	Christopher Rutenber
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Rick Collins	Deborah Kirschman	Steven Salley
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Nancy Davis	Marcy Lakvold	Clifford Shaw
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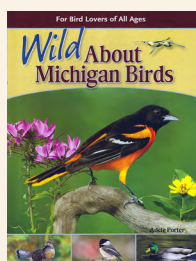
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## Michigan Audubon Bookstore

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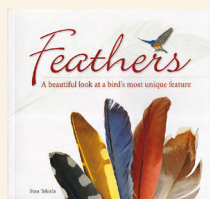
### Wild About Michigan Birds (second edition)

by Adele Porter

\$17.95

In its second edition, the book has been revamped to appeal to all ages of new birders. Birds are listed by habitat, a unique and smart approach. It does not contain all the birds that you would see in the state but covers a good range of species. What makes this book special is the species photos. A

large high resolution 8.5" x 11" photo accompanies each species account, which also includes information on diet, life cycle, and migration, and a range map for Michigan. In the back, a state map showing where to go to learn more about birds is a complete mess, but the book is valuable for what it does get right—the birds.



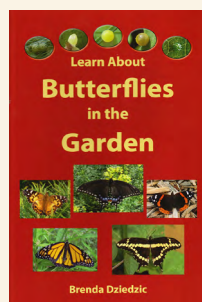
### Feathers

by Stan Tekiela

\$14.95

This is another title in the long line of books authored by Stan Tekiela. If you've been looking for a book on feathers but think the available ones are too technical, this may be the book you're looking for. Accompanied by incredible photos, the text covers the function and

types of feathers, molt and color change, color, and pigment. Feathers of backyard species, raptors, waterfowl, and game birds are covered in their own chapters. It also includes a chapter devoted to variation within species.



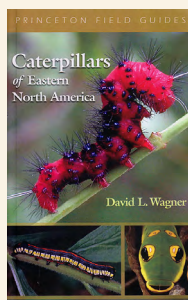
### Learn About Butterflies in the Garden

by Brenda Dziedzic

\$19.95

Michigan author and butterfly lover Brenda Dziedzic was frustrated not to be able to find a butterfly guide that provided all the information she wanted—so she created her own. Incredible photos show you the host/larval food plants, eggs (next to a ruler to show the size), caterpillars in several different stages of growth (ruler again

included), the chrysalis stage, and finally the butterfly. Although it doesn't have all the butterfly species, it more than makes up for it with the details provided for the ones you will find in your garden.



### Caterpillars of Eastern North America

by David L. Wagner

\$29.95

This 512-page field guide includes both butterfly and moth caterpillars found east of the Mississippi River—nearly 700 species in all. Most species accounts include an image of the adult Lepidoptera, and also include text on distribution, food plants, life history, and seasonal activity. A brief section on natural enemies includes photographs of the more common caterpillar parasitoids.



### A Spring Without Bees

by Michael Schacker

\$16.95

This call-for-action book is subtitled *How Colony Collapse Disorder Has Endangered Our Food Supply*. The author is an investigative science writer who melds together science and politics to piece together the story of Colony Collapse Disorder and most importantly the implications that it has on the food we eat that is pollinated by bees. Appendices provide information on how to help bees, written for everyone from novice to beekeeper.

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