

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE WINTER ISSUE: Michigan Audubon: Birds Are Big Bucks ■ The Blue and the Gray ■ 2015 Keynote Speakers ■ Bird Sanctuaries in the UP ■ In Pursuit of an LBJ



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Cover Photo ■ Blue Jay

Photographer: Josh Haas | www.glancesatnature.com
Josh Haas captured this stunning image of a landing
Blue Jay as the bird was coming into Algonquin
Provincial Park where Josh was targeting for songbirds.
Surrounded by birds—including some brave Chickadees
even willing to land on his knit hat—Josh sat and
waited all day. This sit-and-wait technique is one of his
preferred methods in the field. Josh used a Canon 1D
Mark II, 500mm f4 lens with shutter speed: 1/1600th,
Aperture: f6.3, ISO: 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.

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Executive Director's Letter



HOWDY, PARTNERS.

The New Year begins with good news: Michigan Governor Rick Snyder vetoed Senate Bill 78, nicknamed the anti-biodiversity bill, on January 14, 2015. As you probably know, the legislation, which passed both the Senate and the House, would have prevented our state's natural resource professionals from managing specifically for biodiversity. The close-call victory of Snyder's veto was possible because of the strength of partnerships within the academic and non-profit communities. Thank you to everyone who wrote emails, made calls, and shared the calls for action against this bill. Our members extend Michigan Audubon's capacity to achieve conservation success.

We will look to strong partnerships to achieve additional conservation advocacy goals in 2015. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and National Audubon are currently active in supporting efforts to oppose a wind energy project in Huron County. If approved, the project will place up to 50 wind turbines within a globally significant Important Bird Area. Twenty of these turbines would fall within the critical three-mile shoreline buffer zone that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service (USFWS) recommends be free of turbine development. Both the USFWS and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources lack the authority to prevent wind turbine construction in sensitive wildlife areas. The partnership value of the two national leaders in bird conservation—ABC and National Audubon—is a huge asset for Michigan Audubon and our state's birds.

Birds will also benefit from the strengthening of one of our longest-active partnerships—the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO). WPBO staff and volunteers have collaborated with Michigan Audubon to deploy satellite transmitters on two Snowy Owls in the eastern Upper Peninsula. If successful, the transmitters will provide the research team behind Project SNOWstorm with vital information about Snowy Owl movements. Project SNOWstorm co-founder Scott Weidensaul will be giving the keynote presentation at the annual WPBO Spring Fling during the last full weekend in April (registration via www.wpbo.org).

If you visit Whitefish Point between May 1 and August 31, you may run into our new seasonal employee. A grant from

the Seney Natural History Association will provide two years of funding for a summer position focused on Piping Plover protection. Additional duties will include natural and cultural history interpretation, and assisting with day-to-day operations at Whitefish Point. Supervised by Michigan Audubon, the employee will serve the three property owners at the tip of Whitefish Point—the USFWS, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, and Michigan Audubon-WPBO. The strength of the partnership between these three entities allowed for the funding for this position and enhanced protection for endangered species at the Point.

The greatest partnership that exists for our organization is the one that we maintain with our members. You respond to important action alerts. You maintain bird-friendly landscapes at your homes and businesses. Your generosity allows us to expand our influence even further in the Great Lakes region. Your support throughout 2015 will be vital to achieving our Mission of “connecting birds and people for the benefit of both.” We will be reaching out to you throughout the year—via direct mail, social media, and email, and during events—asking you to support new initiatives to benefit Michigan's birds and their habitats. I hope you will embrace these opportunities and extend the capacity of Michigan's longest-active conservation organization even further.

See you on the birding trail!

Best regards,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Jonathan E. Lutz.

Jonathan E. Lutz, executive director



This Snowy Owl, dubbed “Chippewa” by the Project SNOWstorm team, was captured, fitted with a satellite transmitter, and released in Chippewa County, Michigan. Pictured left to right: Brenda Keith, Chris Neri, Nova MacKentley, David Brinker, and Rich Keith. Photo © Raean McClean.

Michigan Audubon: Birds Are Big Bucks

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

Kay Charter recalls her epiphany, the moment she knew she wanted to do something for birds. It was 1992. She was poking around the lot behind her Northport home. A family of Winter Wrens emerged from under a brush pile. Charter found herself deeply moved.

“They are one of my favorite birds,” explains Charter, who started bird watching 30 years ago. “Not many get to see Winter Wrens come out of a nest. I was saddened to realize that we are losing these little birds to people who are developing their habitat. I felt an uncontrollable urge to do something to make a positive difference for birds.”

She and her husband, Jim, decided as a result of the experience to sell the house and buy 47 acres of mixed habitat near Omena. The property would become Charter Sanctuary, home to 60 nesting bird species and a stopover spot for many others. It would also become the eventual base for a non-profit she helped form in 2001 called Saving Birds Thru Habitat.

That organization today, with its dedicated nature center and three-acre parcel deeded to the non-profit by the Charters, attracts more than 1,500 human visitors each year. What began as a personal endeavor to protect birds has since become a popular travel destination for birding enthusiasts around the country. They come from as far away as Washington, DC and the state of Washington, according to Charter. Some arrive in the area for the Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival every May, but others visit the sanctuary for nature photography

workshops or birding walks, or to tour the property and learn how they can manage land for the good of birds. School groups also regularly visit to learn about bird conservation.

“Our reach goes from California to Connecticut,” said Charter, the executive director for Saving Birds Thru Habitat. “We have member support from all over the country.”

Money talks in the world of bird conservation and bird watching. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) estimates 47 million people, 20 percent of the U.S. population, are birdwatchers. Eighty eight percent (41 million) are backyard birdwatchers; 38 percent (18 million) travel to watch birds. Those findings were reported in the agency’s 2011 report “Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis.” It is an addendum to the USFWS National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, produced every five years.

“Birders spent an estimated \$15 billion on their trips and \$26 billion on equipment in 2011,” the report states, later adding that those expenditures resulted in \$107 billion in direct and indirect economic impacts. They supported 666,000 part-time and full-time jobs, creating \$31 billion in employment income, which generated \$6 billion in state tax revenue and \$7 billion in federal tax revenue.

Approximately two million people, residents and non-residents, watched birds in Michigan in 2011, the same survey reports. Most (1.6 million) watch birds around the home. They spend money on feeders, seed, and binoculars along with other bird watching gear, magazines, and memberships. Approximately 818,000 traveled away from home to see birds.



Birders at Tawas Point Birding Festival © Brad Slaughter.

Wildlife watching, the broader category tracked by USFWS, includes bird watching along with feeding, photographing, and traveling to see other wildlife. It accounted for \$1.2 billion spent in Michigan. Trip-related expenses amounted to \$417 million and an average away-from-home trip expense of \$425 per person.

Adam Byrne is not your typical traveling bird watcher. The highly dedicated bird chaser from DeWitt has been known to hop in his car at any hour if he sees an online posting about an unusual bird. On one spontaneous road trip last summer, having driven to Grand Marais to observe a rare Berylline Hummingbird, Byrne noticed 38 others had also come to the shores of Lake Superior. They drove in from Detroit, Traverse City, Flint, and Lansing, even Wisconsin and Ontario, as well as other Upper Peninsula locales.

“I will bet at least 50 people went to see that bird,” said Byrne, Michigan’s eBird reviewer. “At minimum they had gas expenses, but I know some got hotels in St. Ignace and went back the next day. It’s very common to pay for lodging on a weekend trip. [Last fall] there was a Scissortail Flycatcher near Ludington. Someone posted it. At least 30 people went to see it. A ton of people downstate chased it. The majority of those are not spending a lot of money, but when I go somewhere to see a bird, I try to visit the local bakery and contribute. I tell people that when they visit a town, let them know you are there for the birds.”

Chuck Allen knows all too well the economic impact that birders have. He is the manager for Tawas Point State Park in East Tawas, where thousands of bird watchers converge each May for the Tawas Point Birding Festival. Visitors observed 187 bird species at the 2014 event. The influx of bird watchers filled empty campsites, hotel rooms, and restaurants.

“We fill 80 to 90 campsites because of the festival, at a time when we might otherwise fill 15,” Allen said. “We calculate the average state park visitor spends \$120 a day in the local community. I don’t think people realize the economic impact that birding has on the state. I know the local hotels do very well. It’s the same with the restaurants. And it’s not just here in Tawas. Oscoda benefits as well. Some of the birding tours go to Oscoda.”

Beaver Island businesses also got a taste of that bounty last May when the new Beaver Island Birding Trail was dedicated on the island. Pam Grassmick, who co-founded the trail with Kay Charter, said the event drew 100 people, many from the mainland. They bought ferry tickets and paid for lodging and food during a “shoulder-season” when business is typically light, and island restaurants and motels are often closed.

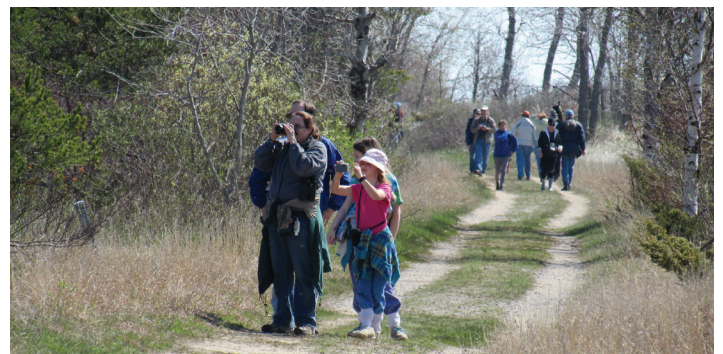
Grassmick predicts that birding traffic to the island will increase substantially in future years because of the trail. The trail website, at beaverislandbirdingtrail.org, registered 300,000 hits in its first seven months. Visitors to the island, she said, often stay in motels on the mainland. They may visit towns like Petoskey and Charlevoix on the way home after the event.

“We have had hundreds visit so far this year,” Grassmick said. “We’ve gone through 600 rack cards, 1,000 maps, and 1,000 bird checklists. The island is an IBA [Important Bird Area]; we’re expecting to see a lot of growth. We’re located in the middle of the lake, and it’s a critical stop-over point for birds. We have had tons of people ask when the next event will be. We’re planning one for Memorial Weekend in 2015. That will be called Warblers on the Water.”

A pelagic bird trip organized last fall sold out in three days, according to Grassmick. Thirty-seven bird watchers arrived from around the state to observe fall water birds from the decks of the Beaver Island ferry. The group ate on the island and stayed overnight. Many businesses were closed for the season, but some were willing to accommodate the group.

“The restaurants were packed and had to put on extra help,” Grassmick said. “They were thrilled with the experience. The Emerald Isle motel owner was totally booked and asked ‘Can’t you do this every weekend?’”

Howard Meyerson (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.



Birders at Tawas Point Birding Festival © Brad Slaughter.

The Blue and the Gray

BY KIRBY ADAMS

Birds of the corvid family are easily recognized by even the most casual of nature enthusiasts. American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) are ubiquitous across most of the country and Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) equally so everywhere east of the Rockies. In Michigan we also have the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) from the northern Lower Peninsula on up. The fourth and final resident corvid in Michigan, the Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), is far less well known except to birders and those campers who encounter the birds' antics in the Upper Peninsula.

At a glance, Michigan's two jays have little in common other than a name. The familiar Blue Jay is a frequent and oft-maligned visitor to backyard feeders from Detroit to Ironwood, while the Gray Jay is a coniferous forest dweller found exclusively north of the Mackinac Bridge. Blue Jays are bold and boisterous, but not particularly trusting of humans. Gray Jays readily perch on humans to ask for handouts. The Gray Jay looks like an over-sized chickadee. The Blue Jay needs no introduction, being the classic jay shape and size, crested, and long-billed.

Blue Jays are well documented as year-round residents across Michigan, but they are actually the one jay in the Western Hemisphere considered to be latitudinally migratory. Blue Jay migration is poorly understood despite attempts over the years to form a picture of how many of them migrate, where they go, and which birds choose to go. It's believed less than a quarter of most populations migrate in any given year, with many of the birds being apparent second-year individuals. During the

peaks of spring and fall songbird migration in the Great Lakes region, flocks of up to a hundred jays are a common sight. Jays are diurnal migrants, flying mostly in the morning and sometimes in the late afternoon.

Blue Jays leaving areas of Michigan in the fall will generally follow a southeasterly route, though some of the northern individuals may go no farther than the Lower Peninsula to replace other departing migrants. Despite visible documented migration, the population of jays in the winter at many locations appears similar to that of the summer.

Although exhibiting some nomadic and irruptive behavior occasionally, Gray Jays are non-migratory. These birds that cause many first-time viewers to exclaim, "Look at the size of that chickadee!" remain in their sub-boreal forest haunts year-round.

Gray Jays are the bird of a thousand common names: Whiskey Jack, Camp Robber, Canada Jay, Gorby Bird, Lumberjack, Moose Bird, and the alternately spelled Grey Jay, among the frequently encountered names. Camp Robber, a term variously applied to other birds including the Steller's Jay, a western corvid, is well earned by the Gray Jay. They are fearless visitors to any campsite with food or with the potential for food in the birds' minds.

A popular camping photo from the north woods will show a person in knit cap with an inquisitive Gray Jay perched on his head. A small morsel of food in the hand or on the cap will almost assuredly bring a bird in, while those who have gotten handouts before will willingly perch on an empty outstretched



Gray Jay
© Don Henise.



Blue Jay

© Roger Eriksson.

hand. Enjoying a sandwich at a picnic table in Gray Jay territory may result in a bird nibbling the other end of your meal while you try to eat.

Whiskey Jack is a charming moniker with its roots in Algonquian legend. Whiskey Jack is an anglicized transcription of a mythological prankster called Wisakedjak, undoubtedly a nod to the jay's food habits at camps.

Blue Jays and Gray Jays both show aggressive, omnivorous feeding behavior that often runs them afoul of sensitive bird observers. Raiding nests to feed on nestlings and eggs is common practice for both birds: Blue Jays are notorious egg-stealers, and Gray Jays feast on actual young birds. Both are also fond of carrion and whatever else happens to be available. Corvids are noted for their generalist approach to eating, and our resident jays are no exception.

Corvids are also habitat generalists and fairly adaptable in most ways, making them some of the birds least likely to be impacted by development and habitat degradation, although it undoubtedly has some effect on even these birds. Blue Jays have adapted well to urban and suburban environments, readily breeding in parks and yards and visiting feeders. Gray Jays are likely equally adaptable, but haven't been required to adapt to urban encroachment since such development is rare in their far northern range.

A far more pressing concern for Gray Jays is climate change. A warming climate causes coniferous forests at the southern ends of their range to retreat northwards, removing the jays' favored nesting and foraging habitat. This will be particularly noticeable in the Upper Peninsula where Gray Jay populations could become sparse as the preferred habitat retreats to the north shore of Lake Superior. How Gray Jays will react is anyone's guess. They are unafraid of foraging in both treeless and deciduous habitat, but whether they would adopt trees other than conifers for nesting and food-caching is a question.



Common Raven

© Dan Marsh.



American Crow

© Daniel Behm.

A discussion of corvids and climate change would be incomplete without a mention of Common Ravens. The southern extent of the raven's range is the common and climatically fragile line that stretches across roughly the center of the Lower Peninsula. As the climate warms, this tension line and its associated habitat could waver and retreat rapidly to the north, leaving Common Ravens (among many other species) without valued breeding habitat.

Corvids are classic generalists and highly adaptable, but they aren't invincible. Even the Blue Jay, still considered a pest in some areas, could face unknown threats from the two-pronged attack of climate warming and habitat destruction. If we've learned anything in the century since the last Passenger Pigeon expired, it's that no species is ever truly safe.

Kirby Adams (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.

2015 Keynote Speakers

BY WENDY TATAR

Each year, Michigan Audubon and its partners strive to offer a top-flight schedule of keynote presentations for the state's birding and conservation community. In 2015 there will be a great opportunity for bird enthusiasts to learn more about natural history, conservation efforts, and recreational birding, with perhaps the strongest line-up of keynote speakers in recent history. Please mark the following dates on your birding calendar. We suggest subscribing to our email distribution list via www.michiganaudubon.org or liking Michigan Audubon on Facebook to receive the latest updates on each event. We look forward to seeing you at a Michigan Audubon event in 2015.

Michigan Bird Conservation Workshop, March 19–21

Keynote speaker: Erik Nordman, Ph.D.

"Asserting ornithological findings about wind energy from an informed scientific perspective"

Dr. Norman's presentation will continue the conversation about potential conflicts between alternative energy and bird life in Michigan. The Michigan Bird Conservation Workshop is intended to inform and connect members of Michigan's bird conservation community, and to provide a forum for learning about the most current grassroots, academic, non-profit, and agency-led bird conservation work happening in the state. All are welcome to attend the workshop taking place at the Kettunen Center near Cadillac.

For registration information, please visit www.mibci.org.



Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Spring Fling, April 24–26

Keynote speaker: Scott Weidensaul

"Caught in the SNOWstorm"

Those of you who followed last winter's Snowy Owl irruption on projectSNOWstorm.org will know the name of Scott Weidensaul as the project's co-founder. He is the author of over two dozen natural history books, including his widely acclaimed *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*. Weidensaul is also an active field researcher whose work focuses on bird migration. Besides banding hawks each fall he directs a major effort to study the movements of Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Scott will talk about Project SNOWstorm, one of the largest collaborative studies of Snowy Owls anywhere, involving dozens of researchers across much of the Midwest and east. Next generation GPS tags were used to track the movements of the owls from Minnesota to New England, funded in large part by crowd-funding donations. He'll also have the latest information on the continuing work this winter as we see another major invasion taking place.

Be sure to visit www.wpbo.org or subscribe to WPBO on Facebook to know when Spring Fling registration opens, as we anticipate that his presentation will sell out quickly.



Tawas Point Birding Festival, May 14–17

Keynote speaker: Bill Thompson III

"The Perils and Pitfalls of Birding"

Bill Thompson III is the co-publisher and editor at *Bird Watcher's Digest*, a founding director of the Ohio Ornithological Society, and Michigan Audubon's co-host for the 2015 Midwest Birding Symposium. Bill will get us charged up to bird all of the sites in Iosco County with many participants having the opportunity to bird with him, as he will be taking part in several of the trips offered at the event.

For registration information on the Tawas Point Birding Festival, please visit www.tawasbirdfest.com.



The world's friendliest birding event comes to Bay City

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- Kevin Karlson
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- Brian Allen
- Gary Siegrist
- Rick Brigham
- Joe Soehnel
- Josh Haas
- Amelia Hansen
- Penny Briscoe
- Dr. Pamela Rasmussen



Keynote speaker: Doug Tallamy, Ph.D.
“Rebuilding Nature’s Relationships”

Author of *Bringing Nature Home* and more recently *The Living Landscape*, Tallamy advises creating home landscapes that promote biodiversity through the use of native plants. Doug Tallamy is currently professor and chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware.

We’re bringing the world’s friendliest birding event to Bay City. This bi-annual event has not been hosted in Michigan since the 1990s, and we’re excited to have you experience the revival of Bay City and the awesome birding offered in the Saginaw Bay area. The DoubleTree Hotel will act as the headquarters for the event that draws not only birders, but all of the vendors for your birding needs. The top names in optics and travel will be there, as well as artists, book publishers, wild bird supply companies, and more. A full slate of birding trips (including some on the water), educational sessions, and social opportunities await you. Many Michigan bird experts will be on hand to make this the birding event of the year.

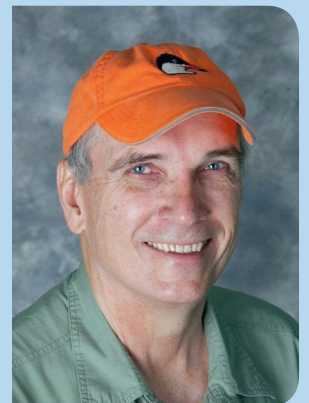
CraneFest Birders’ Soiree, October 9

Keynote speaker: Al Batt
“A Life Gone to the Birds”

Rounding out this powerhouse year of featured keynote speakers is Al Batt. Al is well known for his lively and humorous presentations about birding. Al is the author of *A Life Gone to the Birds*, contributing author to newspapers, *Bird Watcher’s Digest*, and other magazines, radio show host, and creator of several nationally syndicated popular cartoon strips.

Soirée attendees will listen to stories from Al, a storyteller from Minnesota and, as he says, just a guy who loves birds.

For registration information, please visit www.cranefest.org.



Birding Michigan: A Hotspot Guide to 750+ Parks, Preserves, and Sanctuaries

BY MICHAEL AND ANDREA HAUS
REVIEWED BY SARAH TONER

A

lthough birding in new areas is enjoyable, it can also be confusing. Without a good guide, people unfamiliar with an area can miss birds that could have been easy to find. *A Birder's Guide to Michigan* by Allen Chartier and Jerry Ziarno, revered for its complete, detailed accounts,

has expertly guided birders for ten years. The newer *Birding Michigan: A Hotspot Guide to 750+ Parks, Preserves, and Sanctuaries* by Michael Haus and Andrea Haus is compact and simple, but it does not measure up to Chartier and Ziarno's definitive guide.

Birding Michigan's abundance of hotspots makes it easy to look up a nearby preserve, especially useful if you don't want to drive far. The authors use a star system to compare them, based on the amount of time it takes to bird each hotspot, the number of amenities present, and the number of birds reported on eBird. This is useful when budgeting travel time, especially if one does not have internet access.

Although *Birding Michigan* is concise, which makes it easy to read, the result is a crippling lack of detail—barely enough to describe the habitat and a few species. For example, Nan Weston Preserve is famous for its Louisiana Waterthrushes, but they are not mentioned in the single sentence of text. Some one-star hotspots have as much detail as three-star hotspots. Pointe Mouillee, a sprawling five-thousand acre reserve with miles of trails, receives a scant two paragraphs, which note only that the park contains “wetland dikes [that] are useful for walking on during birding expeditions,” with no other directions. Chartier and Ziarno, on the other hand, provide six pages of information about Pte. Mouillee, including a full-page map and very specific directions to the best spots.

Chartier and Ziarno's detailed directions to the birding locations might seem obsolete in the days of Google Maps, but the detail is full of helpful tips and good birding spots along the way. In contrast, the single GPS points in *Birding Michigan* are useful for getting to the parking lot, but not much else—useless if the parking lot is hard to find, if you don't have a cell connection (recalculating...welcome to the Upper Peninsula), or if there are many trails at the location and no on-site place to get maps, as is true of Pte. Mouillee.

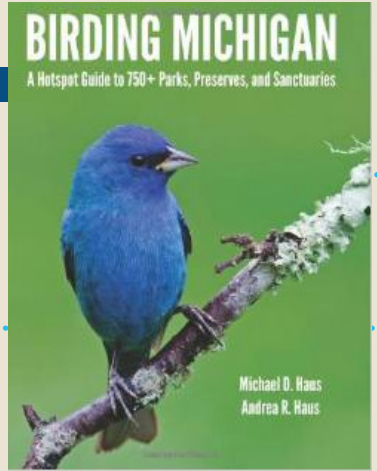
Birding Michigan's dedication to parks, preserves, and sanctuaries means that it neglects some amazing hotspots not designated as such. While good birding spots often have interpretive signs, birding trails, or nature centers, some of the best birding is found along random side roads. Chartier and Ziarno direct birders to many of these sites. *Birding Michigan*

does direct the reader to more sanctuaries and well-known hotspots, but it lacks the intimate local knowledge that Chartier and Ziarno provide.

While *Birding Michigan's* slim, easy-to-use format and extra hotspots are appealing, the book sacrifices too much specific information to be as practicable as *A Birder's Guide to Michigan*. For instance, when the reader is advised to obtain permission prior to visiting a spot, the Haus guide fails to explain how to do so.

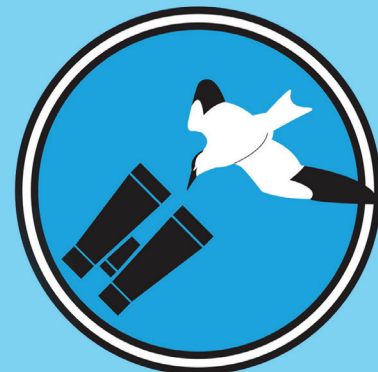
In summary, while *Birding Michigan* would be useful for casual birding on a non-birding trip (and even includes a fair amount of non-birding trivia), and is an interesting supplement to existing sources, it is by no means a comprehensive guide to birding Michigan. *A Birder's Guide to Michigan* by Chartier and Ziarno is still the gold standard.

Sarah Toner is a 17-year-old birder from Ann Arbor, Michigan who has been birding for eight years. She enjoys sharing about her birding experiences through her posts on The Eyrie blog, her participation in the Young Birder of the Year Contest, and her work with the Michigan Young Birders Club.



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Chapter Spotlight: Chippewa Valley Audubon Club

BY KRISTIN PHILLIPS

Founded in 1951, the Chippewa Valley Audubon Club (CVAC) was established “to promote the appreciation of nature and the responsible use of our natural resources.” With over 50 members, the chapter, located in Mt. Pleasant, has begun to expand its vision beyond birds. According to chapter president Gary Kramer, “Our presentations and outings vary from birds, varieties of insects such as butterflies and moths, reptiles, trees, shrubs, wildflowers, nature gardening, and geology. We try to incorporate live species in at least one of our monthly presentations to attract youth. One presentation a year may be devoted to an environmental issue such as invasive species or climate change.”

Many of the chapter’s regular events also involve more than birds. The Moths at Night program, held at Mt. Pleasant Park, promotes awareness of Michigan’s native moths. The reestablished Frog and Reptile Walk happens in the spring, with a focus on youth attendance. The Monarch Butterfly Celebration and Wildflower Walk, held at the Ziibiwing Cultural Center, focuses on the unique migration, challenges, and life cycle of Monarchs.

CVAC’s Wildflower Walk, led by vice president Mike LeValley, takes place in Mission Creek Park and seeks out some of the wildflower species native to Mt. Pleasant. CVAC is also a staunch supporter of birding in its community. It has partnered with the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy and donated funds for land acquisition, including CVAC’s own 40-acre parcel, the Florence Maxwell Nature Preserve. Additional funding was provided to build an osprey platform at Hall’s Lake Nature Preserve, and CVAC partners with the conservancy for various nature outings at its nature preserves. Another important community partner for the chapter is the Isabella Conservation District Environmental Education Program. CVAC regularly



Monarch Butterfly Celebration © CVAC.

supports the elementary education program by funding some supplies and by participating in its educational programs, such as the Environmental Education Day for third-graders. The chapter has also sponsored children’s nature activities at the Ziibiwing Cultural Center near Mt. Pleasant in conjunction with the Isabella Conservation District Environmental Education Program.

Kristin Phillips is the marketing and communications coordinator for Michigan Audubon, and can be reached at kphillips@michiganaudubon.org.



Mt. Pleasant Park, sheet and light setting used to attract moths at Moth Night © CVAC.



Polyphemus Moth © CVAC.

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month from 7–9 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Library, 301 S. University, in Mt. Pleasant. All meetings and outings are open to the public, and refreshments are served. Club minutes and activities are distributed to all members via email each month.

Contact information: info@cvacmi.org
website: www.cvacmi.org/cvac

Bird Sanctuaries in the UP

BY SKYE HAAS

I have been conducting bird surveys in the UP for the last 13 years, primarily for The Nature Conservancy and the *Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas*. In 2014, I was contracted by Michigan Audubon to survey four bird sanctuaries, located in Schoolcraft, Luce, and Chippewa Counties. The goal was to visit and document the myriad species that occur on the four properties, only one of which has public access and a vague trail. Tell the story of each sanctuary in ecological terms, was the direction I was given. This is why I love my job. I set off with enthusiasm and glee to once more explore the wild UP. And then there were mosquitoes.

Riverbanks Sanctuary

The Riverbanks Sanctuary could be also called Anywhere in the UP. The thing is that most everywhere in the UP is a delightful place to take a walk in the woods. This unassuming small sanctuary in southern Schoolcraft County is one of Michigan Audubon's oldest preserves. It provides contiguous habitat along the Indian River in what has been a relatively undisturbed patch of riparian forest. One of the ways I describe the UP is as a baby bird factory and this area sure is one of the production lines. Ovenbirds, White-throated Sparrows, and Blackburnian Warblers were all busy churning out the next generation of songbirds here. The preserve is comprised

primarily of two habitats: an upland, mature, mixed pine forest and semi-forested, conifer lowland, both of which abut the banks of the Indian River. Pink Lady Slippers and Rattlesnake Plantain orchids are plentiful, and owing to the riverine corridor, several species of odenates are found, including the formidable Dragonhunter, a large species of gompid dragonfly that (as you guessed) hunts and eats other species of dragonfly.



Pink Lady Slipper
© Skye Haas.

William Gillette Sleeper Lake Sanctuary

The Sleeper Lake Sanctuary is a wild and remote place, part of a greater ecosystem region that is one of the most expansive back-country areas in all of Michigan. Set in the great bog lands of northern Luce County, the sanctuary is bordered by the large Nature Conservancy property of the Two-Hearted River Forest Preserve. I've done a lot of field work in this area over the years, and this section of wildlands is just as fantastic as the rest of the region. The majority of it is a dense conifer forest perched on low dunes peppered with low boggy openings. But there are also large stretches of open sedge meadows. This sanctuary has an excellent array of taxonomic diversity stretching from sensitive orchids and rare bog land butterflies to numerous species of dragonflies and breeding birds—a total of 59 species of avians recorded, including northern specialties like Spruce Grouse and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. One of the more notable finds of the season was a Warpaint Emerald, a

dragonfly species of special concern.

Little Lake Sanctuary and Margaret Shroyer Sanctuary

While actually separate properties, these two sanctuaries are close by each other in the same forested dune/swale conifer swamps that make up the surrounding lands by Whitefish Point.

They are probably the most inaccessible sanctuaries Michigan Audubon owns: from the lack of trails leading to them to the dense vegetation, you have to practically swim through their blood-draining guardians of biting insects. But holy molies, do a lot of birds use these lands. Both full of breeding birds in the summer as well as rich in dense cover and food resources for birds during migration, these properties are populated by shrubs like serviceberry and Michigan holly, both important food sources for birds. I encountered Spruce Grouse here, and during spring migration have witnessed large numbers of raptors overhead. Previous surveys conducted by WPBO owl researchers Chris Neri and Nova Mackentley have even turned up summering Great Gray Owls. Surely this is an important location for boreal species of all taxa. However it was at the Shroyer Sanctuary that I made one of my most favorite discoveries of the summer surveys: a delicate little ring-necked snake. While not a rare species, this beautiful creature is very secretive and despite countless hours out in the woods, I have encountered just a few in my lifetime. On this momentous day, I found five—without a doubt, one of the highlights of being a field biologist living and working in the north woods of Michigan.

Oh, and did I mention the mosquitoes?

Skye Christopher G. Haas is an avid birder and author of the UP Rare Bird Report, which is distributed via listserve and can be found at UPBirders.org. Skye can be reached at theowlranch@gmail.com.



Bog Fritillary
© Skye Haas.



Ring-necked Snake
© Skye Haas.



Spruce Grouse
© Skye Haas.

In Pursuit of an LBJ

BY BILL SWEETMAN



Five-striped Sparrow © Peter Wilton.

When birders think of a good reason to go birding in southeast Arizona, bright and colorful birds come to mind. We're talking such beauties as Elegant Trogon, Varied Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, and Hepatic Tanager. But to some, little brown jobs—LBJs—rank up there as well.

I don't always seek out the Five-striped Sparrow, *Amophila quinquestriata*—one of the best of these—because of the difficulty involved in getting to its very limited U.S. habitat. In any given year, there may be fewer than 100 of these birds found in the United States. The center of their range is in the Mexican states of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango, with some breeding still further south. The bird, like me, is a lover of mountains; its range roughly approximates the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains of Mexico and gets just barely north of the border. Throughout its range, the bird is found on steep hillsides covered in thorny acacia, prickly pear, cholla, and ocotillo (desert thorn scrub) habitat, the kind you really don't want to walk into if you still have any sensation left in your legs and know a bit about the "herps" in the area. Everything here either bites, stings, or pricks.

Among the mostly drab sparrow family, it is a fairly attractive member. It is dark gray brown above, gray below, with a pronounced black stick pin on its chest. And, yes, it has five white facial stripes on its boldly patterned face: one above each eye, two sideburn stripes, and a white throat. Although some sparrows have wonderfully melodious songs, the Five-striped Sparrow is not one of them. Though distinctive, its call is best described as toneless, flat, scratchy trills. One thing going for it is that among the sparrow family it is large, a full six inches, or about the size of a Song Sparrow. It is one of the monsoon season breeders common in southeast Arizona.

Getting to this bird is the fun part. Although sometimes in a fairly accessible location, more often it is found in a remote border-hugging declivity known as California Gulch. There are two reasons I don't always include a search for this bird on my tours. First, a high clearance vehicle is an absolute necessity, and second, the hike into and out of the gulch during the summer breeding season is for the relatively fit. But those who choose to go are as geeked as any birder in hot pursuit of a really good lifer.

We are up before dawn, the wonderfully cool part of the day before the sun has its way with the desert atmosphere. We head off the interstate toward Arivaca, once described to me when I volunteered at nearby Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge as a town full of outlaws. Its location adjacent to the border ensures a strong border patrol presence. Ruby Road heads southeast out of town and soon becomes a rough dirt

road through very remote country. This is no Michigan gravel road—it's a washboard paved with two-inch cobbles, most of which are some triangular or trapezoidal shape with sharp edges. But it's a super highway compared to what comes next. After about five miles, Forest Road 217 drops off to the right and becomes a rocky two-track. No roadbed here, just two tracks over whatever terrain happens to be ahead. During the monsoon season in places it's at least equally a stream bed. I have seen over a foot of water in some of the lower spots and have only dared to proceed after observing a pickup truck negotiate the quagmire, creating a bow wave that would make the Queen Mary proud. This year we were fortunate, the "road" was mostly dry.

After about four miles of bouncing along, we arrive at a small parking area where the hike begins. Heading off down into the gulch, we begin to see dense green riparian vegetation that delineates the stream bed at the gulch's bottom. Nearby on the hillside, a gigantic saguaro cactus can't help but catch the eye. Suddenly from the opposite slope we hear a scratchy, toneless trill of a song. I love birds that are persistent and proud singers who unabashedly advertise where they are: at the top of an ocotillo stem, alternately posing and throwing his head back in song. I hope there was a nearby female sparrow as impressed as we were.

It was only an LBJ but a lifer for most nonetheless. There were high-fives all around, and the best part was we still had the whole day to go birding.

Bill Sweetman is a retired teacher, having taught forty-three years at all levels, junior high through college. His interest in birds spans more than fifty years. Upon retirement he developed Bswettours LLC, an ecotourism business leading tours to birding hotspots throughout the United States. Bill will be leading another SE Arizona tour this August—check the Michigan Audubon website calendar for more information.



Five-striped Sparrow © Dominic Sheron.

Announcements



Calendar

March

- 1 **Rusty Blackbird Blitz**
Runs March 1–May 10
- 7 **Quiet Water Symposium**
East Lansing
- 8–9 **Wildflower Association of Michigan Conference**
East Lansing
- 19–21 **Michigan Bird Conservation Workshop**
Tustin
- 28 **Spring Bluebird Festival**
Muskegon

April

- 24–25 **Spring Fling, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory**
Paradise
- 25 **Thornapple Woodpecker Festival**
Middleville



© Pegg Clevenger

Facelift for Kate Palmer

There have been many great upgrades going on at Michigan Audubon's Kate Palmer Sanctuary in Jackson. Pegg Clevenger has taken on the roll of lead steward for the sanctuary and she's getting things done. The following article, written by Pegg, is reprinted with permission of Jackson Audubon Society.

Welcome improvements at the Kate Palmer Sanctuary have been provided by Paul Rice and Jim Rossman. Volunteering over three weeks of their time, they completed work on a trail with the Michigan Nature Association. A boardwalk was constructed at the Kate by these retired Commonwealth engineers to span a mud-filled area on the new trail they had just blazed. The project was topped off by spreading gravel in the very muddy parking area. Jim and Paul also sawed down and eliminated non-native problem trees marked by Bill Sonnet.

Our friends from the Grand River Environmental Action Team, Jim Seitz and Jack Ripstra, spent an afternoon with chainsaws in the waters of Sandstone Creek to cut and clear large fallen trees. Gary Siegrist led two groups through the Kate and identified birds, ferns, and plants of interest. Lorraine Hampton found rare goldenseal habitation and regularly updates Kate's plant database.

New volunteers are welcome to do historical research and to contact neighbors to be Jackson Audubon's eyes and ears to insure that the Kate remains a protected site. Visit the Sanctuary soon to enjoy the improvements.

A Life Dedicated to Environmental Education

Many of you know or know of Mary Jane Dockery. She's a lady that was before her time, graduating from college in the 1950s, studying geology and the environment, working for National Audubon, founding the Blandford Nature Center in Grand Rapids. Now you can read about Mary Jane's life in her biography entitled *Rock On, Lady*. Not only will the book tell you about her life, it also contains a great deal of Grand Rapids history and the start of the environmental movement.

In 2012, Mary Jane was inducted to the Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame. She knew Rachel Carson. We could go on and on. She's a firecracker and her presentations, still done with slides—and not with one of those new-fangled carousel projectors but the kind you have to load slides on individually—draw the largest crowds at the Grand Rapids Audubon Club meetings.

If you'd like to purchase a book for \$20, it can be found at the Blandford Nature Center, 1715 Hillburn Ave. NW in Grand Rapids, or if you send a check for \$25 to the nature center they will send you a book. Conventional book stores can't sell the book as Mary Jane is giving 100% of the proceeds to Blandford. Even at the age of 87, she continues to work there once a week. The Energizer bunny has nothing on Mary Jane.

Ornithology Courses Offered

There are two opportunities for you to improve your birding skills this spring. Both the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary (KBS) and the Leslie Science and Nature Center are offering ornithology courses. These courses are a great way to take your birding skills to the next level and will teach valuable information about our avian friends.

For the eighth year, the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary, located in Augusta, will offer a five-week field ornithology course for adults and children aged 14+. In this engaging, hands-on learning experience you will learn more about the fascinating world of birds and improve your bird watching and identification skills. This year's course will be going back to the basics. Each two-part lecture will include a talk from a state or local scientist/expert followed by an identification lesson. Potential topics include bird anatomy and biology, bird family identification. Field trips visit local birding hot spots and are led by experienced birders. The course runs from March 17 through May 16, with lectures held on Tuesday evenings in the Sanctuary Auditorium and field trips on Saturday mornings. The fee for the full course is \$180, or \$150 if you are a member of KBS. You can also register for lectures and field trips separately. Visit <http://bit.ly/fieldornithology> for up-to-date information and a registration form. All skill levels are welcome. Pre-registration required by Friday March 13. Call 269-671-2510 or email Lisa Duke at birdsantuary@kbs.msu.edu

Adults may join expert birder and City of Ann Arbor Ornithologist Dea Armstrong, and Leslie Science and Nature Center's Raptor Program director Francie Krawcke for an eight-week ornithology class. Perfect for the beginner or intermediate birder alike, the course will delve into anatomy and physiology, behavior, taxonomy, reproduction, vocalizations, and identification. The class consists of Thursday evening lectures (7-9 PM) beginning on March 5 and continuing through April 30 and Saturday morning fieldtrips beginning March 7 through May 2. Fieldtrip start times vary due to lengthening of day and field trip destination. The fee for the course is \$295/person. To register for the course go to <http://bit.ly/1IU5kxY> or for additional information call the Leslie Science and Nature Center at 734-997-1553.

Detroit River Project for Bird Watchers

Detroit Audubon, the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, Detroit Parks and Recreation, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service have teamed up to fund an educational birding site along the Detroit RiverWalk at Gabriel Richard Park, according to the website of Detroit Audubon. Once completed, the site will offer wildlife spotting scopes and an interpretive panel depicting bird migration by season. Quarterly educational events and programming will be offered at the site. The website states that the bird watching area "will help reconnect people with the Detroit River to inspire a stewardship ethic and help develop the next generation of conservationists."

A ribbon-cutting is planned for spring 2015. The birding spot will be dedicated to the memory of Georgia Reid, a Detroit resident and avid birder.

We welcome the following, our newest Michigan Audubon members:

Carole Bailey	Carla Monestere
George and Terri Balogh	Julia Moore
Ellen Barnes	Jon Morrison
Charles Barone II	Patrick Murphy
Dean Bedford	Victor Myers
Gretchen Bertschy	Dan Narva
Karen Blatt	Jane Nelson
Susan Bruggink	Michael Nelson
Adasyn Bullard	Laurel Oberdick
Elizabeth Calcutt	Arnold and Aggie Ochs
Clem Camp	Wanye and Julie Olivier family
Michael Cassidy	Carole Pappas
Pat Clubine	Melissa Parker-Schyll
Sharon Crone	Margaret Patulski
Melvin and Maryann Czechowski	Matt Pawenski
Peter Dewitt	Nelson Pont
Mary Donoghue Wrigley	Cari Povenz
W. Doren	Mary Predebon
Arlene Evans	Shirley Pyle
Dawn Ewald	Susan Rans
Russ Falkner	Russell Raymond
Russell Farrell	Calhoun County Chapter,
Gregory Fazzoni	Wild Ones
Nina Feirer	Dawn Remick
Christina Fenske	Roger Rittenhouse
Willow Fisher	R. Rokita
Ginger Forsell	Elizabeth Root
Ron Gamble	Heather Root
Jean Grassmick	Robert Rupchock
Gordon Green	Holly Russell
Carroll Haas	Mark, Joanne, Matthew
Rachel Hahnfeld	Salminen
Kathy Hartley	Veronica Schlosser
Dr. James S. Hayward	Angela Simpson
Gary Hermann	Nancy Spates
Judith Hocking	Ann Steiner
Jon Hoffman	Peter Stephens
Gary Hofing	Kathy Stolaruk
Shirlee and Dave Holmberg	J. S. Strait
James and Evelyn Howell	Julie Taylor
Lake Jacobson	Cathy Theisen
Andris Kazmers	John Thorlund
Linda Keilman	Toner Family
Evelyn Kirkwood	Larry Turner
Joyce Klemm	Wanda Van Hout
Beth Koning	Sally Wagle
James Kure	Ann Wheat
Barbara Kurtz	Christine Whitten
Norm Keon and L. Quinn Lincoln-Keon	Dave Willert
Velvet La Budie	Richard Willey
Laurel Lapointe	David Williamsen
Gayle Larson	Edna Wilson
Brian Lucas	Nancy Wolf
Mary Mac Gregor	Gary Wood
Marcia Maher	James Woodburne
Chocolay Nature Center	Joan Yaroch
John H. McCoy	Beth Zelten
Larry McGahey	Edward A. Zeidema
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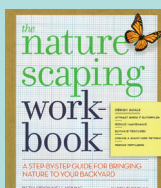


Michigan's Bicycle Trails

by Ray Hoven

\$19.95

It's a great time to start planning trips for the rest of the year and this book will help anyone looking for biking excursions in Michigan. Organized by regions, the book includes trail maps, tells you what type of surface to expect—plus the length and difficulty of the trail. Important information such as what type of biking the trail is designed for is also listed and includes other trail activities such as in-line skating, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and horseback riding. Covering 150 trails throughout the state, this is a useful tool to keep on hand..

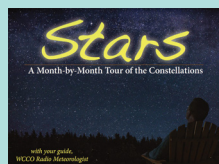


The Naturescaping Workbook: A Step-by-Step Guide for Bringing Nature to Your Backyard

by Beth O'Donnell Young

\$24.95

It is also a great time to be planning out your gardening and landscaping plan for spring and this book is a useful tool to help with that. Helpful tips and suggestions are listed throughout the book. The book teaches you how to design plantings for a successful yard and includes suggestions when something doesn't work. Recycling of materials plays a big role in the author's suggestions.

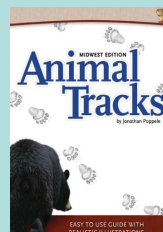


Stars: A Month-by-Month Tour of the Constellations

by Mike Lynch

\$12.95 (ring bound)

Each chapter is dedicated to a month and includes the sky chart for that month and also highlights some of the constellations, including stories and myths behind them. There are 27 constellations highlighted. The author is based in Minnesota so the sky charts should translate to the Michigan skies easily.

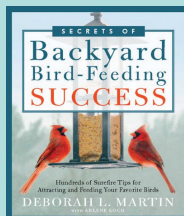


Animal Tracks Midwest Edition

by Jonathan Poppele

\$14.95

The winter months often are a great time to brush up on your track identification. Mornings with a freshly fallen layer of snow provide the perfect opportunity to get out and see who is patrolling your yard while you sleep. This guide will assist you in identifying your night visitors plus provide natural history details on the species. This is a Midwest edition limited to mammals, so there are species contained in the guide that you won't find in Michigan. The last section is dedicated to gait patterns of each species, something not all tracking guides include.



Secrets of Backyard Bird-Feeding Success

by Deborah L. Martin

\$23.99

Full of helpful tips and tricks to keep the birds coming to your backyard, this book is a handy one to have around. After an overview, chapters deal specifically with types of food, including nectars, plants, and insects. A good third of the book is dedicated to species profiles that include the natural food they eat, the foods at a feeder they will eat, the types of feeders they will visit, and what plants will attract them to your yard. These profiles also list photo/description of similar species to help you in identifying your feeder visitor. It includes a small section regarding native/non-native plant choices.

10% off for all Michigan Audubon members!

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