

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

*THE SUMMER ISSUE:* Climate Change: Shifting Climate, Shifting Blrds ■ Tales of Tanagers ■ Birding Without Ears ■ Why You Should Attend the Midwest Birding Symposium ■ 2014 Waterbird Reports from Whitefish Point





# Jack Pine Warbler

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## ADVERTISING

Guidelines available on request.

## PRINTING

*Jack Pine Warbler* (ISSN 0021-3845)  
is published six times per year and  
is received by all Michigan Audubon  
members. It is printed by

**Foresight Group**  
2822 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Lansing, MI 48906  
www.foresightgroup.net



Printed on recycled  
paper made from 100%  
post-consumer waste.

Member of  
**EarthShare**  
Michigan



Cover Photo ■ Western Tanager

Photographer: Skye Haas ■ [www.flickr.com/photos/theowlranch/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/theowlranch/)

Skye Haas caught a photo of this rare Michigan visitor at Peninsula Point, Delta County on May 15, 2014. He used a Nikon D80. Shutter speed: 1/180 seconds. Aperture: f/5.6, ISO: 500.

# Contents

## Features

2  
Climate Change: Shifting  
Climate, Shifting Birds

4  
Tales of Tanagers

6  
Why You Should Attend  
the Midwest Birding  
Symposium

## Columns

8  
New Homes for Cavity-  
Nesting Birds at Capital  
City Bird Sanctuary

9  
Chapter Spotlight: Grand  
Traverse Audubon Club

10  
Birding Without Ears

11  
2014 Waterbird Reports  
from Whitefish Point

## Departments

1  
Executive Director's Letter

6  
New Members

13  
Calendar  
Announcements



## 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



## EVERYTHING RETURNS

"The dream of establishing the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) became a reality in 1979. By-laws were approved and a board of directors ratified by the parent organization, the Michigan Audubon Society. This was the culmination of long-term planning by many people to ensure the future natural history use of the Coast Guard property on Whitefish Point, a historical migratory point of land on Lake Superior."

—John Baumgartner, Chairman, WPBO Board of Directors, from the first Annual Report, 1978-1979, of the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory

On April 25, 2015, the WPBO Board chair, Mike Bishop, announced that WPBO will become a formal program of Michigan Audubon beginning in 2016. After reviewing the successful model of New Jersey Audubon and its well-known Cape May Bird Observatory, the boards of both WPBO and Michigan Audubon believe this to be the best path forward. As executive director, I've participated in WPBO board meetings since 2008, and I've attended six of the last seven annual Spring Fling events. Michigan Audubon owns the three-acre parcel and the Owl's Roost building at Whitefish Point and two additional 40-acre parcels on the peninsula. I've visited and enjoyed Whitefish Point in all seasons, and I am proud to be part of leading this transition on our members' behalf.

Because of the long-standing relationship between WPBO and Michigan Audubon, we have significant overlap in our membership and donor bases. We will work hard to make sure that all current WPBO Annual and Life Memberships are honored appropriately following the transition. In order to grow and improve its research and monitoring endeavors, WPBO will require continued financial support from Observatory and Audubon members alike. Please consider making



Michigan Audubon board member Rosann Kovalcik birding Whitefish Point with birder-author Kevin Karlson and birding friend Debbie Graffius.  
© Jonathan Lutz.

an annual restricted gift to WPBO this year—a vital need if we are to succeed in growing Michigan's longest-running bird observatory. Over the next seven months I will be working with members of the WPBO board to complete all of the transition details. Our collaborations are already bearing fruit: a joint effort to market and improve the Observatory's signature event, the late-April Spring Fling, resulted in new programs, increased revenue, and record attendance.

Over 300 birders are registered for the upcoming Tawas Point Birding Festival being held May 14 through May 17 in Iosco County. Tawas was featured in the November 2014 issue of *Audubon Magazine*, and I was interviewed about the economic impact the festival has on the local communities. Tawas has since been featured in the American Birding Association's "Birders' Guide to Travel" (March 2015) and elsewhere online. Thanks to the grassroots support of the AuSable Valley Audubon Society and over three dozen local businesses and agencies, we've truly put the Tawas event on the map as the "Biggest Little Birding Festival in the Midwest."

The success of birding events like the WPBO Spring Fling and the Tawas Point Birding Festival is critical to the Michigan Audubon mission of connecting birds and people for the benefit of both. These events celebrate bird migration

and natural history, they teach birding ethics, and the funds generated through registration and event fundraisers help fund bird conservation across the state. Each event supports a local economy in between busy seasons for winter recreation and summer travel. When birders attend one of these events, they contribute to over one billion dollars in economic activity that wildlife watching in Michigan generates each year.

If you haven't attended a birding event in Michigan, please consider doing so. As the popularity of recreational birding trails grows throughout the state and the pursuit of birding grows nationwide, there will be more opportunities to attend Michigan birding events in the future. My thanks go to John Baumgartner and the WPBO founders for fulfilling the dream of establishing a bird observatory at Whitefish Point. We look forward to continuing your legacy and growing WPBO's suite of research endeavors and outreach programs in the years to come, including the annual Spring Fling.

Best regards,

Jonathan E. Lutz, executive director



# Climate Change: Shifting Climate, Shifting Birds

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

were only three confirmed and only one since the 1980s. [Now,] one shows up in Jackson County every year. It was an incredibly hard bird for anyone to hope to see in the state, and now we have them and can rely on them coming back.”

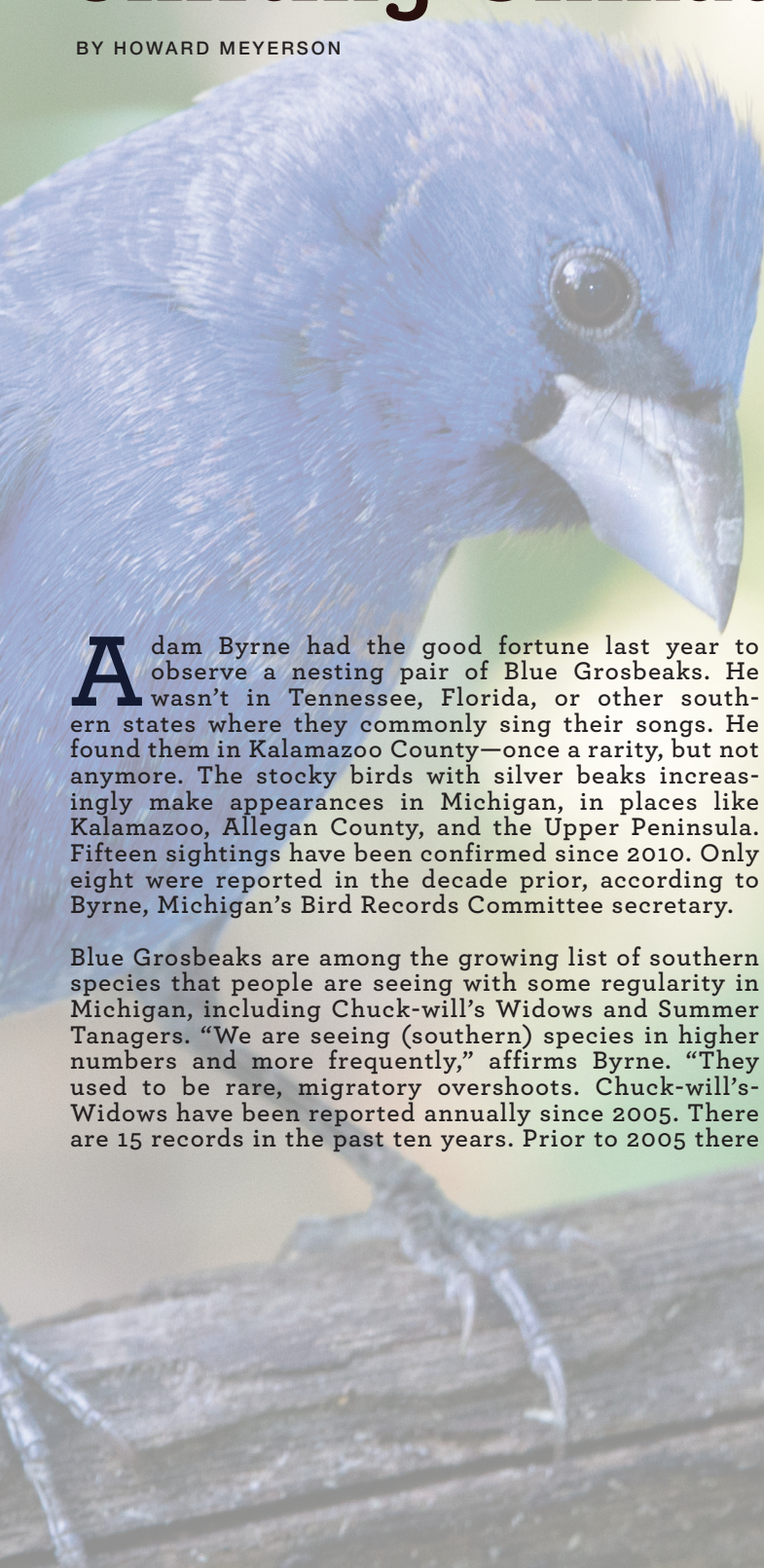
## Shifting Climate, Shifting Species

Scientists studying the effects of climate change suggest Michigan’s long-established mix of breeding birds will shift over time as climate conditions change across North America, affecting what food and habitat is available in different regions. Common southern birds are expected to breed more frequently in Michigan, while some common to Michigan will move north and out of state.

“There is going to be a lot of change in Michigan,” notes Dr. Chad Wilsey, research manager for National Audubon Society’s Climate Initiative and co-author of the organization’s 2014 “Birds and Climate Change Report.” “We predict by 2020 there may be 13 new species in Michigan and 13 species lost. By 2050, there will be 20 new ones—and 26 lost. By 2080, compared to today, Michigan will add 30 new species and have lost 34 species. Michigan is projected to gain quite a few in winter compared to those it loses. It’s an interesting story about species turnover. Climate change isn’t all bad or all good, but it is a story of change.”

National Audubon Society’s “Birds and Climate Change Report” is subtitled “314 Species on the Brink” and is an in-depth examination of how changing climate conditions may affect North American bird species. It classifies “314 species—nearly half of all North American birds—as severely threatened by global warming.”

What that means, Wilsey says, is that climate conditions are shifting geographically. Areas with suitable habitat for bird species today may not have the climate needed to foster that habitat in 50 years. Will Ontario’s boreal forests shift geographically as climate changes, or the sweeping Great Plains prairies? What isn’t known



**A**dam Byrne had the good fortune last year to observe a nesting pair of Blue Grosbeaks. He wasn’t in Tennessee, Florida, or other southern states where they commonly sing their songs. He found them in Kalamazoo County—once a rarity, but not anymore. The stocky birds with silver beaks increasingly make appearances in Michigan, in places like Kalamazoo, Allegan County, and the Upper Peninsula. Fifteen sightings have been confirmed since 2010. Only eight were reported in the decade prior, according to Byrne, Michigan’s Bird Records Committee secretary.

Blue Grosbeaks are among the growing list of southern species that people are seeing with some regularity in Michigan, including Chuck-will’s Widows and Summer Tanagers. “We are seeing (southern) species in higher numbers and more frequently,” affirms Byrne. “They used to be rare, migratory overshoots. Chuck-will’s-Widows have been reported annually since 2005. There are 15 records in the past ten years. Prior to 2005 there

Blue Grosbeak © Dan Pancamo.



is just how habitats will shift, how fast, or the degree to which birds can adapt. In some cases birds could face significantly smaller areas of suitable habitat.

“Generally speaking, most species across the U.S. are shifting north,” Wilsey explained. “The centers of (bird) abundance since the 1960s have moved 40 miles north. These findings suggest there will be reduced areas with that climate. For some species the climatically suitable space is shrinking. We don’t know, for instance, if boreal habitat will shift at the same rate that the climate is shifting north.”

### Climate threatened or endangered

National Audubon’s report lists 126 species as “climate endangered,” which means they are predicted to lose more than 50% of their current range by 2050. Another 188 species are “climate threatened,” meaning they are expected to lose 50% by 2080.

Fifty common Michigan species are listed in the report. Those include the Bohemian Waxwing—predicted to lose 100% of its summer climate range and 52% of its winter climate range. The Baltimore Oriole is predicted to lose only 25% of its summer range but 68% of its winter climate range.

There will be winners and losers, according to Wilsey. Baltimore Orioles, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Hairy Woodpeckers will shift north but still be found in Michigan at the end of the century. Common Loons are projected to shift north and no longer breed in Michigan. The same is predicted for Red-breasted Mergansers.

Neo-tropical migrants such as the Scarlet Tanager and Connecticut Warbler, both of which breed in Michigan, are likely to breed further north. That’s the prognosis for boreal species too, such as Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, and Red-breasted Nuthatches, which currently breed in Michigan.

### What’s to be done?

Chris Hoving, the Michigan Department of Natural Resource’s (DNR) adaptation specialist, called some of the Audubon findings disturbing and said his agency may need to revise how it goes about planning for wildlife.

“Some of those species listed with 100% (range loss), or the high 90s like the Blackburnian Warbler and Evening Grosbeak—those are alarming,” Hoving said. “If the climate envelope for those decreases that much, it’s worrisome. We’ll want to keep tabs on them and put them on an (unofficial) watch list. Right now their vulnerability (in the Audubon report) is projected for mid- or late-century, but our planning documents look out only five years. What I’ll work on for the next couple of years is linking that far future with our (current) planning process.”

Hoving continued, “In the short term what we need to be doing is reversing declines where we can have some impact so we have a population surplus that can adapt. That means creating healthy habitat and getting more species off the endangered species list. Those are things we would do anyway, but now we have a new urgency because of climate change.”

Kimberly Hall, the climate change ecologist for The Nature Conservancy, North America, is currently tackling the problem. She is working to identify “resilient” ecosystems called “climate strongholds,” areas that can retain biodiversity as climatic changes alter the landscape. She recently began a three-year study, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. It will produce data and maps that identify the strongholds in the Great Lakes and Great Plains region.

“One of the things that tend to come out highly ranked (as a climate stronghold) in Michigan is river corridors,” Hall explains. “They usually have a little topography which leads to differences in how warm they are. They offer some climatic buffering. And that leads to more potential places for creatures to find a place that works for them.”

Having an inventory of climate strongholds can help determine future land-conservation priorities for the Conservancy and land managing agencies, Hall said.

National Audubon currently uses climate stronghold information to prioritize Important Bird Areas, according to Wilsey. It has an Eastern Forest and Eastern Grassland priority project and is now engaged in a Midwest pilot program with the Minnesota DNR to incorporate those strongholds as priorities in state wildlife action plans, the documents that specify what the agency will do for wildlife species.

Rachelle Roake, conservation science coordinator for Michigan Audubon, called the Audubon report findings “extremely concerning.” Michigan Audubon, she says, is now working locally to restore habitat at some of its properties, particularly the Bernard W. Baker, Phyllis Haehnle Memorial, Otis Farm, and Capital City sanctuaries.

“It’s difficult to comprehend what the bird population will look like around here in the future,” Roake said. “Feeder birds like Baltimore Orioles might shift, but we might get an expansion of Orchard Orioles. We’ve already seen reports of Northern Mockingbirds in Michigan and that is likely to increase. What Michigan Audubon is doing is working to reduce the background risk for these birds. Habitat loss is a big threat. We want to protect more habitats and restore habitat that has been degraded. That work is now taking place on a few of our 19 sanctuaries.”

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.



Baltimore Oriole © William Norton.



# Tales of Tanagers

BY KIRBY ADAMS

**M**ichigan's tanagers are many things: colorful, vibrant, sought-after, beloved by birders and nature enthusiasts alike. One thing they definitely are not, however, is tanagers.

The true tanagers are a new-world family of well over 200 species and are restricted to the tropics, aside from a few vagrants in the extreme southern United States. The tanagers of Michigan are considered part of the cardinal family, akin to our well-known Northern Cardinal. Regardless of taxonomy, they're arguably the most stunningly colored birds on our state checklist.

Three birds of the genus *Piranga* either nest in, or pay fairly regular visits to Michigan. Our familiar summer resident is the Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), with the males of the species sporting one of the most striking red plumages in the bird world. Far less common, but a regular visitor from the south is the solid orange-red Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). The rarest of the three in Michigan is the Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*), a casual vagrant and multi-colored treat rare this far east.

Summer Tanager sightings tend to be clustered in the far southern portion of Michigan, as would be expected with a

predominantly southeastern species, but they have made it as far as the top of the Keweenaw Peninsula, and the Upper Peninsula has its fair share of records. North of a line from Muskegon to Bay City, Summer Tanagers are mostly relegated to coastal counties, which is typical of vagrants in the Great Lakes. One of this bird's claims to fame is its taste for bees and hornets. They are so adept at raiding bee colonies that hornets have been known to abandon nests shortly after a pair of Summer Tanagers nests nearby. Having had one or two encounters with disgruntled hornets, I must tip my hat to a bird that willingly antagonizes and attacks the stinging insects.

Western Tanager records are scattered throughout the state. In May 2014, a young male and adult female simultaneously delighted birders at Peninsula Point in Delta County. Finding one of the less-common tanagers in Michigan can be a gateway to appreciating rare birds in our state. With good ears, some experience in assessing proper habitat, and a little bit of luck, birders looking for a challenge will find the Summer Tanager a great target. The Western Tanager might require a more hefty dose of luck, but checking on recent sightings may point to a trend. It certainly can't hurt to be at Peninsula Point in May.



Summer Tanager © William Norton.





Scarlet Tanager © William Norton.

I've never had the good fortune to spot a Western Tanager here in my home state, but I can say the Scarlet Tanager has given me a few profound moments among the many times I've encountered them. The first Scarlet Tanager I ever saw in Michigan was flitting high in the canopy on the forested side of the dunes at Rosy Mound Natural Area in Ottawa County. It was Memorial Day weekend, and I was a neophyte birder. The guide for my botany field trip happened to be a birder who stopped when the tanager's song caught his ear. That experience convinced me I wanted to become a good birder: I wanted to be the guy who stops dead in his tracks at a few notes of song, looks to the canopy, and sees a streak of unimaginable red that looks like it belongs in a rainforest documentary.

Several years and many birds later, I found myself at Iargo Springs Interpretive Site in Iosco County. A platform overlooks Cooke Dam Pond on the AuSable River far below. A series of steps winds through the forested slope to the riverbank, and along the way you pass right through the crowns of trees that tower above the water. It's the closest thing Michigan has to a canopy tower. On this June trip I got eye-level views of two male Scarlet Tanagers just a few feet away from me. I was in the canopy now, in their home. I was also a better birder and managed to pick out a more cryptic female. More of a subtle greenish than the gaudy red of their masculine counterparts, the female is why these birds carry the specific epithet "*olivacea*."

This past May, a Scarlet Tanager once again marked my progress and passage as a birder. For reasons I no longer remember, I was in a sour mood and was stopping at a gas

station in the urban northside of Lansing—not the best spot for a naturalist to rejuvenate his spirit. A song caught my attention from the scraggly trees in the ditch behind the building. It sounded like an American Robin with a head cold, which is the traditional description of the song of the Scarlet Tanager. I didn't have time to look for the bird for more than a few seconds, and it never appeared, but I knew it was in there somewhere, and that's all that mattered.

The Audubon Birds and Climate Report lists Scarlet Tanagers as a climate-endangered bird in Michigan. Estimates from the study suggest nearly 95% of their breeding habitat could be gone by 2080. I won't be around in 2080, but I'd like to know that the Scarlet Tanagers will be. As with the bird behind the gas station, it will be enough just to know they're out there. In a world of rapidly changing climate and habitat degradation both here and in the tropical wintering grounds, this is far from certain.

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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 lives in Lansing on breaks between birding trips.



# Why You Should Attend the Midwest Birding Symposium



The Midwest Birding Symposium (MBS) has been held in the Midwest every other fall since the late 1980s. Each time there is an MBS, many previous attendees return, but more importantly, many new birders and nature enthusiasts are made, the positive economic impact of birding tourism is felt locally, and money is raised for bird conservation in the area. The symposium has always been a blend of great programs, workshops, and presentations combined with some wonderful birding field trips and an array of birding-oriented vendors. But I think it's the socializing among attendees, speakers, vendors, sponsors, and staff that makes the MBS so special. Some of my most enduring friendships and professional connections have been made during the three days of the Midwest Birding Symposium. With the move to Bay City, Michigan in September 2015, the Midwest Birding Symposium will enjoy a new vibrancy in its special feeling of community. There's simply nothing else like the Midwest Birding Symposium, which is why it's often been called "The World's Friendliest Birding Event."

—Bill Thompson III

BY WENDY TATAR

Michigan Audubon is pleased to be working with local partners the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy and the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau and with *Bird Watcher's Digest* to bring MBS to Bay City on September 10–13, 2015.

## Preview of vendors

At the Midwest Birding Symposium, birders can purchase a wide variety of optics equipment, as most of the brands will be represented here including Swarovski Optik, Carl Zeiss Sports Optics, Nikon, Opticron, Vanguard USA, and Celestron. Also available will be a variety of goods from wildlife and bird-friendly vendors like Wild Birds Unlimited, Birds & Beans, and the Charley Harper Studio. Three of the Expo hosts—Michigan Audubon, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, will also be present. And don't forget your Midwest Birding Symposium branded merchandise.

Artists, providing a variety of art mediums—mostly avian based—will be available and awaiting your purchases. Many Michigan bird-centric organizations will also be on hand; some selling items and all providing information on bird species and conservation efforts. The Vendor Marketplace will be hard to resist.

## We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon members:

Mary Allison  
Chris Barden  
Juliet Berger  
James Booth  
Michael Chaffee  
Wayne and Kris Determan  
Jennifer Faber  
Bill and Sarah Gittlen  
Richard Glosenger  
Jim and Beth Gourley  
Marilyn Keigley  
Michael LeValley

Karen McLeod Hill  
Rick Meyer  
Toni S. Nelligan  
Chris Neri  
Catherine Green and Pat Sharp  
Amanda Sandler  
Carolyn and Gary Tolliver  
Renee Urbanski  
Joyce Wagner  
Lee Western  
Christine Williams

## Symposium Headquarters

The MBS headquarters will be the DoubleTree Bay City Riverfront Hotel, regarded as one of the finer hotels in the area. Located in the heart of downtown Bay City on the banks of the Saginaw River, it offers proximity to many specialty shops, antique stores, restaurants and pubs. Discover top tourist attractions with ease, and feel valued and cared for from the moment you arrive at this Hilton Hotel partner. After a long day of birding, work out in the fitness center, refresh in the indoor pool, visit the riverfront restaurant or lounge, or retire to a comfortable guest room with complimentary WiFi and room service.

Want to join in the fun September 10–13? MBS registration is open and all the details of the event can be found at [midwestbirding.org](http://midwestbirding.org). Have a question? Contact Wendy Tatar at [wendy@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:wendy@michiganaudubon.org) or call our office at 517-580-7364.



# MBS Birding Hotspots



Just one of the exciting aspects of the 2015 Midwest Birding Symposium is the many birding hotspots and field trips included in the schedule. Here is a sneak peek of some of this year's birding opportunities.

## The Appledore IV

Travel down the Saginaw River to the Bay on the Appledore schooner to bird on the lake in style. There is an additional fee for the trip that will be held daily each morning, Friday through Sunday.



## Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

With 10,000 acres of varied marsh, grassland, and bottomland hardwood forest, the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge is a sanctuary for birds that provides an important migratory stopover habitat. Bus trips on the Wildlife Drive will be offered both Friday and Saturday mornings for an additional fee.

## Charity Island

The largest island in Saginaw Bay, Charity Island is notable for rare plants and a wide variety of bird species. This resting stop for migrating birds can host everything from waterbirds and shorebirds to warblers and raptors. This Sunday trip has an additional fee. The boat will board in Caseville to head to the island for the morning. Lunch is included and will be eaten at the lighthouse before leaving the island.



## Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area

One of the most-visited areas for waterbirds, the Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area is a haven for rare species, and is one of the few places in the Midwest where you can find Yellow-headed Blackbirds, as there is a breeding colony here.



## Bay City State Recreation Area

With one of the largest freshwater coastal wetlands, Tobico Marsh is located in the Bay City State Recreation Area. Featuring five miles of trails, this area is home to many waterbirds.

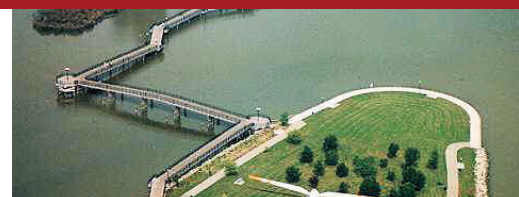


## Chippewa Nature Center

Travel by bus to Midland for a visit to one of Michigan's best nature centers. Guided birding walks on the over 15 miles of trails that explore a variety of ecosystems will be awaiting your arrival.

## Bigelow Park

This Bay City riverfront park is located on land once occupied by a sawmill during Michigan's lumbering boom. Today there is an extensive footbridge which goes over the river channel to connect to Veteran's Memorial Park.





# New Homes for Cavity-Nesting Birds at Capital City Bird Sanctuary

BY RACHELLE ROAKE

Located along the meandering Grand River in Lansing, Michigan, Capital City Bird Sanctuary provides a variety of habitats for birds and other wildlife in an otherwise suburban landscape. From open meadow to floodplain forest, this sanctuary features diverse niches that attract migrating warblers and resident sparrows, woodpeckers, songbirds, turkeys, and a beloved Red-tailed Hawk for which the sanctuary was nicknamed “Hawk Valley.” The donor of this unique property, Carl Haussman, strived to create wildlife habitat on the property and passed the sanctuary on to Michigan Audubon to continue this admirable work.



Flicker Nesting Box © Rachelle Roake.

This past March, Michigan Audubon board member Tom Comfort and I (as conservation science coordinator) teamed up to revamp Carl’s extensive nest box trail at the sanctuary. Carl provided dozens of nest boxes throughout the property, but after many years of providing safe homes for birds, these boxes were in need of a little TLC. I mapped out a dream trail that goes beyond the typical bluebird trail and features 31 nest boxes for a range of species. I sought help from Tom, a Michigan nest box expert, who stepped in to build boxes, network with other experts for additional boxes, and provide placement advice.

The Capital City Bird Sanctuary Nest Box Trail currently features 20 nest boxes, each one custom-designed for a specific species. But these aren’t your typical nest boxes. Tom spent long hours in the workshop creating Allen Bower’s Flicker Box. Bower, a Michigan native, began watching nesting Northern Flickers in 1988 and spent years tweaking nest box designs to meet the needs of such a large woodpecker. The nest box walls are two inches thick to withstand a beating from these powerful drummers, and the inside features dozens of hand-carved ladder steps for the nestlings to climb. Bower’s Flicker Box illustrates that many of these box designs are a labor of love; designers have spent years watching birds and modifying boxes for greater nest success.

This nest box trail highlights the work of devoted nest box aficionados and Michigan Audubon is excited for the opportunity to tap into the vast knowledge and experience behind these boxes. From American Kestrels to Prothonotary Warblers, the trail aims to provide safe shelter for a wide array of cavity-nesting birds, but the work doesn’t end with installing the boxes. Monitoring is a crucial element of being a responsible nest box landlord, and Michigan Audubon staff and volunteers will be keeping a watchful eye on these boxes throughout the spring and summer months. Preventative measures have been taken to deter predators, but regular monitoring remains essential to

## Capital City Bird Sanctuary Nest Box Trail



Map © Rachelle Roake.

protect native nesting birds from raccoons, squirrels, European Starlings, and House Sparrows.

Michigan Audubon envisions Capital City Bird Sanctuary as a place for birds and wildlife to thrive, but also for humans to observe safely and to learn about bird-habitat relationships. Plans for the nest box trail expansion in 2016 include adding 11 new nest boxes (several for Wood Ducks) and educational signage near each box to show visitors how to provide safe nest boxes for birds on their own properties. This suburban sanctuary on the outskirts of Lansing is an ideal location to bring birds and people together—and that’s what Michigan Audubon is all about.

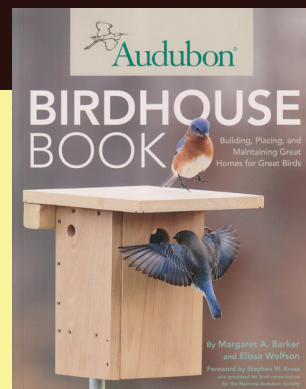
Rachelle Roake is the conservation science coordinator for Michigan Audubon and can be reached at [roake@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:roake@michiganaudubon.org).

## *Audubon Birdhouse Book: Building, Placing, and Maintaining Great Homes for Great Birds*

By Margaret A. Barker and Elissa Wolfson

\$24.99 available in the Michigan Audubon Bookstore

This guide provides the information needed to attract most of the North American species that use nestboxes, including food preference, details on their nesting habits, and where and how to install the box. There are design plans for 15 nestboxes or shelves that accommodate most of the species discussed. The xbox nestbox design created by Tom Comfort is included, as is information on Stovall Products, creators of bird houses located in Delton. Stovall Products was founded by longtime Michigan Audubon friend, Bill Stovall.



# Chapter Spotlight: Grand Traverse Audubon Club

BY KRISTIN PHILLIPS

**E**stablished in 1957, Grand Traverse Audubon Club (GTAC) serves the greater Grand Traverse region and boasts a membership of 140 strong. According to its president, Ed Moehle, what makes GTAC unique is the enthusiasm of its members and the number of members who have been involved for over a decade. Because of the high membership and dedicated participation, Ed Moehle explains, GTAC contributes approximately \$600–800 every year to local conservation groups like the Grass River Natural Area. GTAC also donates to Wings of Wonder, a group that rehabilitates injured hawks, owls, and eagles for release back to the wild.

Many of the chapter's regular events also utilize the strong commitment of GTAC's members. Bird tours and walks, such as the May trip to Magee Marsh and Tawas Point State Park, are usually led by long-term members. GTAC is also a regular contributor to the annual Christmas Bird Count. With 11 areas in the Grand Traverse greater region to count, members of GTAC counted a whopping 44 species in one count area for a grand total of 59 bird species counted in 2014. This count included a record sighting of 11 Snowy Owls.

GTAC has a longstanding partnership with Boardman River Nature Center in Traverse City. The chapter meets regularly on the fourth Thursday of every month, and holds many birding events such as the upcoming Dance of the Woodcock field trip in April. GTAC members help maintain bird habitat around the nature center by buying bird seed and keeping the feeders stocked. Members also volunteer to lead hikes and recently led a Beginning Birder workshop that helped teach novice birders how to use scopes and identify waterfowl. Every year, GTAC aids with the Boardman River clean sweep as well, providing some funding and volunteers to help pick up trash along the main branch of the Boardman River.

**Contact:** [grandtraverseaudubon.org](http://grandtraverseaudubon.org)

## Leaders:

Ed Moehle, president  
Carol Towar, vice-president of programs  
Elise Brooks, vice-president of environment  
Ed Kaminski, treasurer  
Karen Crane, secretary  
Shirley Mesch, newsletter editor



Field Trip to Arcadia © Joe Brooks.



Trumpeter Swan 89E © Joe Brooks.

In addition to having highly involved, long-standing members, GTAC also offers a unique Bird Alert on its website for dues-paying members. The Bird Alert features recent bird sightings in the area, often utilizing eBird to help members pinpoint exact sightings. Although many chapters are now online and have websites or Facebook pages, Moehle believes that GTAC's Bird Alert is unique. It helps to keep members informed, and allows the chapter to monitor unofficially various bird populations. One such population is a group of Trumpeter Swans that nest in the Traverse area, with pairs frequently raising cygnets. GTAC members keep an eye out for these birds, especially a tagged Trumpeter Swan bearing the code e89. A focus on local birds is just one of the many ways GTAC members contribute to their community.

Kristin Phillips is the marketing and communications coordinator for Michigan Audubon and can be reached at [kphillips@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:kphillips@michiganaudubon.org).



# Birding Without Ears

BY RANGER STEVE (MUELLER)



Woodcock in leaves © Daniel Behm.

An American Woodcock flew over my head this spring and landed 100 feet away. It began its courtship buzz-like *pneet*. I cupped my hands around my ears to listen. Meanwhile, behind me I heard a distant cow from the Phelps farm. When I turned, I realized the sound was from a woodcock 50 feet away. Many birders would think that is ridiculous. How could one confuse a woodcock and a cow?

Tracking bird sounds has become more challenging as my hearing declines. I still hear birds and look in their direction but have discovered the sound to be closer than I thought. I have needed to recalibrate sound to distance measurements. It has also become difficult to triangulate the bird's location. It's like vision with one eye and having no depth perception.

It's been frustrating. Breeding bird surveyors stop for three minutes, identify birds by song, and move to another location. This is great for covering considerable territory in limited time. I have always depended on vision for identification. I consider myself to be 80% proficient with sound identification, at best, which is not adequate for documenting species. Birding quickly and by ear also is not how I enjoy birding: I prefer watching them, observing their behavior, and associating them with habitats.

I seldom birdwatch with others so I have not improved my auditory skills well. Many birders improve listening skills with bird tapes, but I'm unable to make them work for me. I cannot hear most of the warblers or other species on the tape. When listening to songs in nature, I often do not locate the bird, and so I leave without associating song and bird.

My nature education has progressed by fumbling my way in wild places with limited direction or help. Although I worked on a field biology degree in college, where instructors honed my skills and provided direction, it was personal time in the field developing skills that allowed me

to become a knowledgeable naturalist. I seldom associate sounds with bird songsters but I love their music and bird songs.

I first discovered the wonder and beauty of bird song as a teenager. A particular bird species became a favorite when I heard it on an annual fishing trip with my brother. We camped, fished, and explored nature niches. It was ten years before I discovered it was a Veery making that most wonderful song. That bird remains a favorite.

Empathize with those of us with little sound intelligence or those who have lost the physical ability to hear a broad range of sound. My sound range is limited and I must reduce the distances by 75% to hear what younger ears are catching at greater distance. Having poor sound intelligence does not equate to lack of appreciation.

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Natural history questions or topic suggestions can be directed to Ranger Steve (Mueller) at [odybrook@chartermi.net](mailto:odybrook@chartermi.net), or at Ody Brook, 13010 Northland Dr. Cedar Springs, MI 49319-8433, or at 616-696-1753.



Veery © Kelly Colgan Azar.

# 2014 Waterbird Reports from Whitefish Point

The Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) maintains one of the longest-active waterbird counts in North America. The following information is drawn from the reports of the Spring and Fall waterbird counts that occurred in 2014. Read expanded versions of the following reports and Kevin Welsh's daily waterbird updates at [www.wpbo.org](http://www.wpbo.org).

## Spring 2014

EXCERPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY KEVIN WELSH

**L**ake Superior was still 98% frozen on April 15th and about two feet of snow still covered the ground. I used snowshoes to hike to the waterbird shack each morning until the end of April. The only open water was the distant shipping channel that would be opened by U.S. and Canadian Coast Guards ice-breaking vessels in the morning, only to freeze again overnight. Ice mounds on the shoreline reached heights of approximately seven feet, impeding my sight until the second week in May.

The 2014 spring waterbird count at Whitefish Point, Michigan, tallied 22,094 individuals of 62 species during the standardized eight-hour daily count period from April 15 to May 31. The season total was close to the long-term average of 22,574, but lower than the previous two spring counts by approximately 10,000 birds. This reflects the effects of a lingering harsh winter with Lake Superior remaining frozen so late into spring.

Noteworthy was the total of 3,307 Common Loons tallied during the spring count—the fifth-lowest total since 1984, and 2,469 birds below the average from 1984–2014. With the long-term average between years 1984 to 2013 at 5,776, this suggests a return to downward trending numbers of Common Loons passing the Point, despite above-average totals from the previous year.

Other highlights from the count included all three species of Scoter, 23 species of shorebirds, 28 Red Knots (third-highest total since 1984), three jaeger species, an above-average total of Bonaparte's Gulls (1,648 compared to the long-term 1,205), and 1,630—only the third time in count history the species has exceeded 1,000 birds.

It has been an amazing experience watching the Point through the changes. I really enjoyed sharing some of the birds' struggles as I counted them, including regulating body temperature, staying dry, and navigating snowy landscapes. Thank you to all the visitors to the counter's shack for warding off boredom and for encouragement on slow days. I think Whitefish Point is a place everyone should visit in their lifetimes to witness the seasonal flights of hawks, owls, waterbirds, and songbirds.

## Fall 2014

EXCERPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY ERIC RIPMA

**T**he 26th annual Fall Waterbird Count was conducted daily between August 15 and November 15 and consisted of eight-hour counts starting at sunrise. This year's count total was above average with 98,335 waterbirds counted. The number of species was also slightly above average; 74 species were recorded.

Tundra Swan (23), Wood Duck (15), Northern Shoveler (197), and Black Scoter (379) all recorded new seasonal high counts. Red-throated Loons moved through in large numbers throughout September and ended up with a record 569 for the season. Red-necked Grebes and Long-tailed Ducks—the two most abundant migrant species at Whitefish Point—both had above-average years. A total of 17,279 Red-necked Grebes were recorded.

Five shorebird species ended up breaking records including: Black-bellied Plover (71), Lesser Yellowlegs (32), Red Knot (7), Stilt Sandpiper (4), and American Woodcock (1). Other shorebird highlights consisted of a single Willet, only the sixth fall record, and four Short-billed Dowitchers, only the third time more than one has been recorded in a season.

One of the few groups of birds that did not show up in great numbers or diversity were gulls. Only two Sabine's Gulls were seen. Terns were recorded in fairly good numbers, though, and an above-average number of Jaegers (44) were recorded. Ten Jaegers were identifiable—three Long-tailed and seven Parasitics.

I'd heard many great things about the waterbird flights at Whitefish Point, Michigan, prior to my arrival. My experience as a first-time WPBO counter surpassed expectations. I was surprised by a handful of birds, including an American Woodcock flying in off the lake, directly over the shack, and into the woods, and a Snowy Owl appearing out of a squall and coursing down the beach. I'd like to thank my relief counters and all the visiting birders that helped pass the time on slower days.



# Announcements

## Calendar

### May

- 7-10 **Indiana Dunes Birding Festival**  
Chesterton, Indiana
- 8-17 **Biggest Week in American Birding**  
Magee Marsh, NW Ohio
- 9 **International Migratory Bird Day**
- 14-17 **Tawas Point Birding Festival**  
East Tawas
- 15 **Kirtland's Warbler Tours begin**  
Grayling
- 16 **Keweenaw Migratory Bird Festival**  
Copper Harbor
- 22-24 **Warblers on the Water**  
Beaver Island
- 28-31 **Leelanau Birding Festival**  
Suttons Bay

### June

- 5-7 **Cerulean Warbler Weekend**  
Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary, Hastings
- 6 **Kirtland's Warbler Festival**  
Roscommon
- 19-21 **Aldo Leopold Festival**  
Les Cheneaux Islands/Cedarville

### July

- 4 **Last Day of Kirtland's Warbler tours**  
Hartwick Pines State Park, Grayling



#### Support Michigan Audubon When Shopping at Kroger

The Kroger Community Rewards Program (CRP) supports nonprofit organizations by contributing a percentage of receipts to the organization of the shopper's choice. Michigan Audubon is a participant in the CRP. In April and May of each year, you must re-enroll the organization that you wish to support through your shopping. If you do not re-enroll, no funds are contributed.

To re-enroll, simply go to [www.krogercommunityrewards.com](http://www.krogercommunityrewards.com). Click "sign in," enter your email and password. Click "enroll now," and enter 90227 or Michigan Audubon, which will automatically appear in a box below and which you must then check. Then click "enroll," and your grocery shopping will begin earning money for Michigan Audubon—until April 30, 2016, when you will need to re-enroll again.

If you regularly shop at Kroger, please consider enrolling to support Michigan Audubon.

#### New Birding Festivals for 2015

Several brand-new birding festivals have joined the schedule of events for 2015.

The Indiana Dunes Birding Festival is hosted by the Indiana Audubon Society and will be held at the Indiana Dunes State Park near Chesterton, Indiana on May 7 through 10. Just short of 20 miles south of the Michigan-Indiana border, it would be relatively easy for many Michigan residents to attend this event, which promises great birding on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Many experienced birders know that the tip of Lake Michigan is a great place to go birding. For additional information visit [indunesbirdingfestival.com](http://indunesbirdingfestival.com).

To showcase the Beaver Island Birding Trail, Warblers on the Water will be held May 23-24 on Beaver Island. We told you about this event in the March/April announcements. Check out [beaverislandbirdingtrail.org](http://beaverislandbirdingtrail.org) for details.

To celebrate the legacy of Aldo Leopold—one of America's most influential naturalists and a summer resident of the Les Cheneaux Islands—the Les Cheneaux Historical Association and the Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce & Tourist Association have launched the Aldo Leopold Festival to be held on the weekend of June 19-21 to help celebrate the summer solstice. Activities such as birding, boating, biking, and hiking are planned. The weekend will culminate in the unveiling of the new Aldo Leopold historical marker on Sunday. For more information contact [lcha@cedarville.net](mailto:lcha@cedarville.net) or call the Chamber at 906-484-3935.

Kirtland's Warbler © Roger Eriksson.



Cerulean Warbler © Roger Eriksson



### Make it a Rare Warbler Weekend

The smallest of Michigan Audubon's Signature Events, Cerulean Warbler Weekend is limited to just 100 participants. Tours to see Cerulean Warblers, the fastest declining songbird in North America, Henslow's Sparrows, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and the southern-most breeding pair of Common Loons in North America are scheduled. New this year will be a Friday bus trip to the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary. A special tour of the Perry Trust property, a privately-held, 600+ acre property rarely visited by humans, is offered on Saturday. An all-day pre-event tour of birding hotspots in Barry and Allegan Counties will be held on Thursday June 4.

Join us in rural Barry County and the beautiful Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary on June 5-7 for a weekend of birding and great fun. Visit [ceruleanwarbler.com](http://ceruleanwarbler.com) to see the complete schedule and to register.

Why not make it a rare warbler weekend by visiting Cerulean Warbler Weekend on Friday and then driving to Roscommon for the resurrected Kirtland's Warbler Festival on Saturday June 6? A committee headed by Abigail Ertel, Kirtland's Warbler coordinator for Huron Pines, has joined together to re-launch the Kirtland's Warbler Festival this year in Roscommon. This long-running festival took a hiatus after its 19th year of operation in 2012. The Festival Planning Committee consists of representatives from area conservation nonprofits, including Michigan Audubon, and community organizations, as well as local residents interested in the Kirtland's Warbler and other Michigan natural resources.

This is a family-friendly event with activities centered in downtown Roscommon, including a pancake breakfast, Kirtland's Warbler tours, community and guest speakers, fire-fighting and timber equipment programs, live birds of prey, and much more. For more information visit [kirtlandswarbler.org](http://kirtlandswarbler.org) or call Huron Pines at 989-448-2293.

If you would be interested in helping at the festival on June 6, the event could use volunteers. To learn about available volunteer positions please contact Huron Pines AmeriCorps member Deanna Staton, [deanna@huronpines.org](mailto:deanna@huronpines.org).

Monarch Butterfly from pixabay.com.



### Monitoring Butterfly Species

The Michigan Butterfly Network is a statewide citizen science initiative led by the Kalamazoo Nature Center. The Network seeks to monitor the status of Michigan's butterfly species, evaluate the quality of our ecosystems, and engage the public in significant citizen science research.

Training sessions to becoming a butterfly monitor are held in communities throughout the state, including Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, Flint, Battle Creek, Traverse City, and the Keweenaw Peninsula. In order to participate as a monitor, you must attend one of these trainings to learn the protocol tips for identifying species, and to connect with other butterfly enthusiasts. For further information on the training courses and to register, please visit [www.michiganbutterfly.org](http://www.michiganbutterfly.org).

If you are unable to make the trainings or are just curious about butterflies, skippers, and their habitats, why not consider attending one of these fieldtrips?

#### Field trip dates and locations

Saturday June 6 – Harris Prairie – hosted by Kalamazoo Nature Center

Wednesday June 24 – Wau-Ke-Na Preserve – hosted by Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

Wednesday July 8 – Sarett Nature Center – hosted by Michigan Audubon

Saturday August 1 – Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Audubon Sanctuary – hosted by Michigan Audubon

Participants should be prepared for summer heat and moving through brush. It is recommended that you wear long pants and hiking boots. Be sure to bring your binoculars, favorite guidebook, and water. This is a great opportunity to get out in nature, see some of our state's preserves, butterfly with local experts, and have fun.

### Check your Expiration Date

It's on the back of your *Jack Pine Warbler* just above your address. If it's June 30, 2015, this is your last issue of the magazine until you renew your membership. We have included a renewal envelope in the center of your magazine. Decrease the number of reminders we need to mail and save our dollars for Michigan bird conservation by sending in your renewal before May 27.

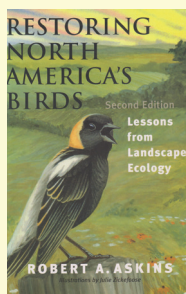


Dated Material

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## Restoring North America's Birds: Lessons from Landscape Ecology

2<sup>nd</sup> edition

by Robert A. Askins

\$26.00

This 2002 second edition contains an afterward that reviews noteworthy literature that was published after the first edition was printed. This is a great book for conservation biologists or any birder interested in preserving habitat for wildlife, and is used as a textbook for many ornithology courses.



## Bird Color

by Alison Hill Spencer

\$6.95 (boardbook)

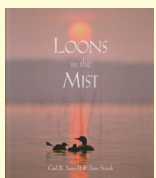
This board book is a great way to introduce very young children to birds. Each color is introduced by showing several species of birds with that color plumage. Illustrated with realistic drawings.



## Our Love of Loons

by Stan Tekiela

\$9.95 (hardcover)



## Loons in the Mist

by Carl R. Sams II & Jean Stoick

\$14.95 (hardcover)

Both of these books provide stunning photographs that take you on a journey through the spring and summer of a pair of Common Loons. The Tekiela book contains more text and natural history than the Sams and Stoick book, but the latter title is a unique story that loon lovers will appreciate.

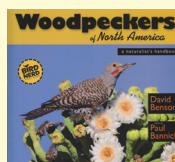


## Bird Song Ear Training Guide

by John Feith

\$14.95 (CD)

This CD refers only to species of the Midwest and Northeast, making it a very useful tool for Michigan birders. First, it gives you the bird song, followed by a short description, along with a common mnemonic helpful in remembering it, such as the well-known "Who cooks for you?" used to identify the call of a Barred Owl. The 189 species of bird songs on this CD were recorded in Wisconsin.



## Woodpeckers of North America

by David Benson

\$12.95

There are species accounts for 23 species of woodpeckers in this book, including the extinct Ivory-billed, which includes fantastic photos and tells the story of this unique family of birds, including how and where in North America they live. It's a small book (91 pages including index and bibliography) that packs a powerful punch with a multitude of interesting facts.

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