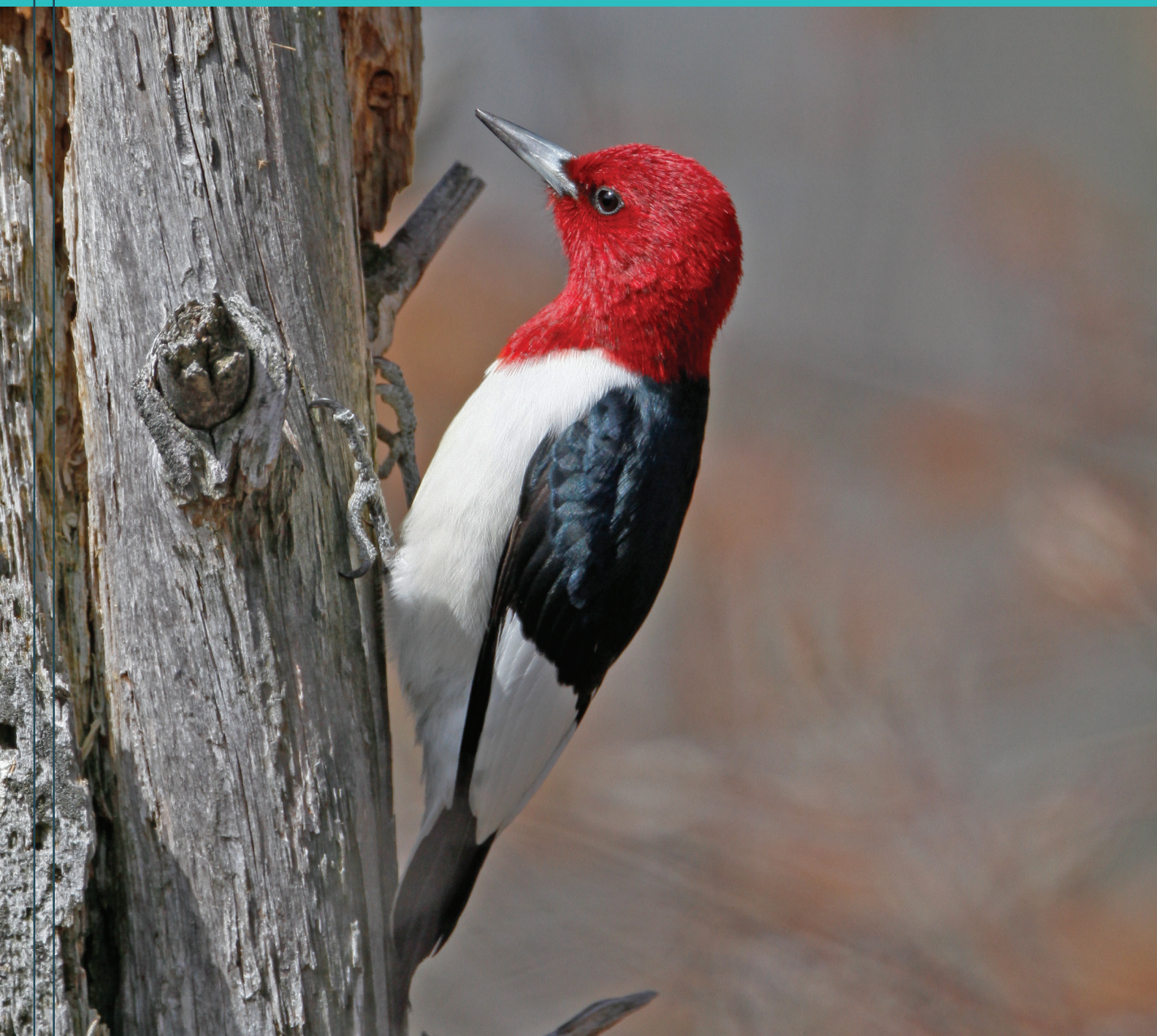


Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE SUMMER ISSUE: Lead and Loons ■ Red, White, and Black ■ 2015 Piping Plover Activity at Whitefish Point
Biological Surveys ■ Explore Breeding Birds and Habitat at Michigan Audubon Sanctuaries



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Red-headed Woodpecker
Photographer: Roger Eriksson

The photo was taken from Roger's vehicle on May 3, 2013 at Tawas Point State Park. Iosco County is a great place to observe this beautiful woodpecker throughout the year. One day this past winter, 54 Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen all around Sand Lake, making Iosco County the Red-headed Woodpecker capital of Michigan.

The camera body was a Canon EOS-7D attached to a Canon EF 800mm f5.6L IS lens. Shutter speed: 1/1250 seconds. Aperture: f 6.3. ISO: 400, +2/3 Exposure compensation.

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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



FOR THE LOVE OF BIRDS

On the eve of International Migratory Bird Day and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's inaugural Global Big Day (May 9, 2015), an Internet article titled "Birdfeeding favors non-native species" appeared in my social media feed. The study concluded that bird-feeding altered the species composition observed in urban areas, where non-native species were the big winners at the expense of native birds. The article cited research that was conducted in New Zealand, which many commenters noted in their responses to the post.

A study of bird-feeding in New Zealand may not yield the same results if conducted in the United States. The overall composition of species, both native and non-native, is quite different in the two countries. However, the doctoral candidate who led the study noted, "We do need to consider how we might feed in such a way that encourages a diversity of birds, minimizes the risks to other natives that don't visit feeders, and certainly avoid practices that benefit non-native, invasive, or pest species." This statement should resonate with everyone who feeds birds in Michigan. Keeping feeding stations clean, first and foremost, and adjusted to minimize use by non-native species will benefit native birds and increase diversity at your feeding station.

The diversity of Michigan's breeding bird species is remarkable. The second *Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas*, published in 2011, indicates that 221 species of birds are confirmed to breed in the state. Breeding season is now in full swing for many of these species, but bird-finding this time of year can be challenging. Heat, mosquitoes, and thick vegetation—all of these conditions create challenges for birders seeking difficult-to-find birds. Drawing birds into view using playback is becoming increasingly common due to the widespread use of smartphones. Repeated and continuous playback is stressful to birds, though, and may leave



Chickadee hanging on a suet feeder. © James Schumacher.

nests and young more vulnerable to predators. I encourage you to heed this advice from our friends at the American Birding Association:

"Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area."

The bird-sighting information shared via listservs, social media, and eBird motivates birders more than ever to leave home in hopes of seeing a new or rare species. National Audubon reports the biggest threat to North American birds is climate change, a topic we've covered with the help of journalist Howard Meyerson. Birding close to home and "green birding" (e.g., birding by bicycle) are simple strategies birders can employ to avoid contributing to the threat of climate change. Carpooling and driving energy-efficient vehicles are bird-friendly

choices when a rare hummingbird shows up on the shoreline of Lake Superior.

Bird feeding, birding ethics, and green birding will all be part of the program during the upcoming Midwest Birding Symposium. A goal of the event is to bridge the gap that exists between recreational birding and bird conservation. If you haven't already, please visit www.midwestbirding.org and consider making plans to join us in Bay City, September 10–13. I look forward to promoting the welfare of birds in Michigan, while supporting the birding interests of our members and other attendees.

Happy summer!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely of Jonathan E. Lutz.

Jonathan E. Lutz, executive director

Lead and Loons

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

Tom Cooley has examined a lot of dead loons during the past 27 years. They appear every year, dead on beaches and inland lakes where cottage owners, researchers, national park volunteers, or Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) staffers pick them up. The carcasses eventually find their way to the sterile confines of Cooley's necropsy room.

Cooley is the MDNR pathologist at the agency's wildlife disease laboratory. His job is to determine why the long-lived birds died, why their haunting calls no longer fill quiet evenings on northern Michigan waters. Cooley has been documenting the cases for nearly three decades. What he's found is that Common Loons, a Michigan threatened species, die regularly from lead poisoning after ingesting lead fishing tackle. Lead is the third-largest cause of loon mortality in Michigan.

"We've looked at 376 [dead] loons over 27 years, not many each year, maybe 11 or 12," Cooley said. "With lead poisoning, you deal with a sick animal which may go and hide. They may not be as visible as one caught in a fishing net or that flies into something. The numbers may under-represent the [lead] problem, but these are the birds we see."

Cooley's records show that 60 loons—16 percent of those examined—died from lead poisoning. Somewhere in the course of their lives they swallowed a lead fishing sinker, a lead jig head or split-shot, all commonly used by anglers. Loons pick up lead fragments and sinkers in the course of normal feeding. They may swallow a fish with a hook, line, and sinker attached or pick up lead on the bottom while eating gravel to help with digestion.



Common Loons © William Norton.



Ninety loons, or 24 percent, died from trauma, the leading category for loon mortality in Michigan. Type E botulism killed 63 loons, 17 percent of the total. A variety of causes killed the rest, including fungal disease, drowning, and mercury. For some dead loons there are no answers, Cooley said. “When I first started [tracking loon deaths] trauma, lead, or drowning in fishing nets were the main causes, but net designs have changed, and so we don’t see that anymore,” Cooley explains. “Lead poisoning has also dropped a bit, but we pretty much get it every year. Last year, four of 15 loons [seen in the lab] died from lead, five from trauma, and one from botulism.”

Concern about the hazards lead sinkers pose to loons is widespread around the world. Restrictions on the sale and use of lead weights for fishing are in place in the U.K., Canada, and several other countries, according to the Wildlife Society, the professional organization for wildlife biologists. Six U.S. states—New Hampshire, New York, Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington—have laws that ban the sale and/or use of lead sinkers to protect loons and other birds like eagles. Some have also banned lead fishing jigs.

A 2013 report by Maine Audubon, titled “Maine Loon Mortality 1987 to 2012,” examined the cause of death for 450 loons there. It states, “Lead poisoning from lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs was the leading cause of death for adult loons, responsible for 28 percent of deaths (97 out of 352 adult mortalities) between 1987 and 2012.” The report indicates that other studies show lead poisoning rates from 22 percent for loons in New England states and 44 percent for those breeding adults, to 33 percent in Canada, 36 percent in New York, and 50 percent for adult loons in New Hampshire.

Maine is now phasing in stiffer rules for the use and sale of lead fishing tackle. The sale of lead sinkers .5 ounce or smaller has been banned there since 2002. The new 2013 law bans both sale and use of lead sinkers up to 1.0 ounce and phases in a two-step ban on the sale of unpainted lead jig heads that are 2.5 inches long or less. The ban on jig-head sale begins in 2016, followed by a ban on jig-head use in 2017.

Tougher rules were needed, according to wildlife managers with Maine’s Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (DIFW); the .5 ounce sinker ban didn’t do the job. “We determined, based on many years of data where we collected loon carcasses and tested them for lead and

opened them up to see if there were any lead objects inside, that it wasn’t just the real small sinkers that were a problem,” explains Danielle D’Auria, a wildlife biologist and loon specialist with Maine’s DIFW. “They were swallowing sinkers close to an ounce in size. And we included jigs because the necropsies by Tufts University were finding them.”

The majority of lead-poisoned Michigan loons died from lead jig heads, according to Cooley. They were found in 35 loons, while lead sinkers were found in 13 others. Unidentifiable lead pieces killed four, and three died from ingesting lead split-shot, Cooley’s records show. Two loons died from ingesting lead shotgun pellets and three others had no identifiable pieces of lead left inside

“A lot of states have gone after the size of sinker and haven’t gone after jigs, but what we’ve seen is that a sinker ban (by itself) wouldn’t have much effect,” Cooley said. “A lead ban was talked about in Michigan [in 2004], but it was shot down pretty quickly.”

Banning lead fishing tackle is highly controversial. The American Sportfishing Association (ASA), a national trade organization, opposes a blanket federal ban. It does, however, support the idea of state-by-state bans where sufficient evidence exists to support it.

“ASA acknowledges that lead toxicosis can kill water birds and lead fishing tackle may contribute to this mortality,” the ASA states in its official position. “ASA recommends that before further laws are enacted to restrict lead fishing tackle on a state or national basis, sufficient data must exist to demonstrate that discarded lead tackle is an actual threat to the sustainability of loon or other waterbird populations. ASA realizes that certain waters may be ‘hot spots’ for ingestion of fishing tackle by waterbirds and encourages any restrictions of lead fishing tackle in those waters to be based on sound science that supports the appropriate action for that water body. Furthermore, ASA continues to encourage and support voluntary angler education programs for the responsible use and proper disposal of lead fishing tackle and urges state and federal fish and wildlife agencies to do the same.”

Legislative solutions are hard to come by, Cooley said. The state of Minnesota, for example, where loons are the

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Tom Cooley performing a necropsy on a dead loon. Photos courtesy of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

state bird, has not been able to get a lead ban passed. “There are too many warring factions,” Cooley notes. “We need to let sportsmen make their own decisions. A lot of states have a ‘Get the Lead Out’ campaign. We can’t do anything about trauma and botulism, but lead is one mortality factor we can do something about.”

Susan Gallo, a wildlife biologist and director of the Maine Loon Project for Maine Audubon, is working to achieve exactly that. The organization led the fight to get lead fishing tackle banned, but it also works in partnership with the DIFW to promote “Fish Lead Free,” a program to educate anglers and provide non-toxic alternatives through tackle exchanges.

Tungsten, tin, and steel alternatives to lead sinkers, split shot, and jig heads increasingly have become available in the market. One company, Loon Outdoors, specializes in non-toxic alternatives for fly anglers, but large fishing outfitters like Cabela’s, Bass Pro Shops, Orvis, and even Wal-Mart carry some.

“I am happy with the sinker ban; that will take care of 90 percent of the sinkers we see [in loons],” Gallo offers. “There is still work to be done on jigs. People think because of the law that if they paint them that is okay,

but that’s absolutely untrue. The paint doesn’t last in the gizzard. But the legislation starts moving things in the right direction.”

Maine’s lead ban presents entrepreneurs with a good opportunity, according to Gallo, particularly as the demand grows for lead-free alternatives. “Some say this will put them out of business, but it creates opportunities for a whole crop of new entrepreneurs,” Gallo said. “A lot of small shops are switching over. They [non-toxic alternatives] may not be dirt cheap like lead, but the cost is reasonable, and one local store is working with Eagle Claw (a major manufacturer) to offer deals on alternatives.”

Gallo created a “Fish Lead Free” website, blog, and logo that she hopes other states will adopt. The website at fishleadfree.org contains updates about loons, lead poisoning, and tackle exchanges in Maine and New Hampshire so far. Wisconsin, she said, is considering getting involved.

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.

We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon members:

Radcliffe Science Library	Big Bob’s Restaurant & Pizzeria	Truly Yours Signs & Shirts
Cyndi Alexander	Robert Haggard	Kyle Payne
Nancy Anna	Karen Harbach	David Poorvliet
Charlene Avery	Mary Hartz	Christopher Quarello
Nancy Baglan	Ilsy Murillo & Tim Hawkins	Tri-Coutny Agency, Inc.
Patricia Barone	Janine Hawkinson	Roger & Mary Kay Relich
Judy Beaver	Matt Hogan	Sandra Renauer
Gregg Beitler	John & Lisa Holden	Betty Robison
Amy Blair	Jack & Caroline Hummel	Theresa Ryan-Mitlyng
Blue Bear Jewelry	Mark Isken	Joanne Sackett
John Buckholz	Julia Jackson	Sue Sanford
Phillip & Gail Bugosh	Lee & Rosemary Jones	Mike and Joanne Selbee
Don Burlett	Opticron USA	Chloe Shaw
Rick Butler	Eileen Furlong & Tom Keiser	Gail Shetler
Lisa Casler	Sunrise Side Veterinary Hospital	Marc Sink
David Cavanagh	Camp Inn Lodge	Linda Southwell
Paul Chadwick	Joan & Robert Klenk	Susan Sridharan
Olga Champion	Greg Schwab & Kris Kordana	Janice Stenquist
Rebecca Crane	Sarah Krembs	Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribal Operations
Michelle Croal	Craig Lee	Peter Swearingen
Adam Dale	Kathy Lindstrom	Sharon Szczesny
Diana Dale	Marilynn Lower	Larry Urbanski
Tim & Lesley Dawson	Leigh Macaro	Elizabeth Van Ornum
Wesley & Kate DeJonge	Glenn H Marin	Lisa Lepeak & Robin Wagner
Leslie Dixwell	Judy Matsuoka	Tine Rae Walker
Julia Boland & Carol Dunn	Michael Mc Minn	Kris Warshefski
Michael Pergola & Charlene Edwards	Barb Meining	Elizabeth Whitaker
Cheryl Felix	Ross & Cathy Merchant	Michael Wille
Kenneth Fisher	Annette Messinger	Dale & Kathleen Witt
Irene Fortune	Michigan Fit Club, Inc.	Shane Wyatt
Mary Foy	Jane Murtaugh	Cheryl Zaidel
Tom & Jeni Froman	Karli Naglick	Rainbow Gardens
Dave & Bettyann Gillette	Elliot Nelson	
Heather Good	Susan Nowosad	
Tim Granger	Cate & Jason O’Connor	
William & Elizabeth Grigg		

Biological Surveys Explore Breeding Birds and Habitat at Michigan Audubon Sanctuaries

BY RACHELLE ROAKE



Bernard Baker Sanctuary Tamarack Swamp © Rachelle Roake.

Michigan Audubon's two largest sanctuaries—Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary in Bellevue and Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary in Pleasant Lake—protect nearly 2,000 acres of habitat in southern Michigan. Although both sanctuaries offer public hiking trails, much of the area is rarely trod on by human foot. In order to better understand what goes on “beyond the trail,” Michigan Audubon, with a partial grant from National Audubon, hired two biological technicians to survey bird and plant communities at the two sanctuaries this summer. Lisa Vormwald and Leiloni Wonch have strong backgrounds in bird research and are jumping into the work with both (booted) feet.

Lisa and Leiloni are conducting call playback surveys for secretive marsh birds, point counts in comparatively upland habitats, and vegetation surveys across both wetland and upland habitats. The several-hundred-acre wetland complexes at both sanctuaries are expected to contain breeding rails, herons, and other marsh birds. So far, the technicians have found many Soras, Marsh Wrens, Sedge Wrens, Green Herons, and Virginia Rails (two of which nearly clocked Lisa in the head during surveys). In addition to the marsh bird surveys, Lisa and Leiloni are also surveying the more upland communities, including oak-

hickory forests, open meadow, and scrub-shrub. Over 40 point count stations will be surveyed multiple times throughout the breeding season, but the surveys have already produced great observations, including Pileated Woodpeckers, Black-billed Cuckoos, Wood Thrushes, American Woodcocks, and Willow Flycatchers.

During these surveys, the technicians have made several important herpetological observations as well: Eastern Massasaugas, Eastern Box Turtles, and Blanding's Turtles (all Michigan Species of Special Concern) have been documented at Baker Sanctuary this summer. Reptiles, amphibians, mammals, insects, and plants are all important pieces of an ecosystem, and Michigan Audubon is thrilled to learn more about all species utilizing the sanctuaries.



May Apple Blooms © Rachelle Roake.

The importance of these biological surveys cannot be overstated. Michigan Audubon sanctuaries cannot be managed by preservation alone and require thorough surveys not only of birds but of all organisms in order to inform management decisions. The work done by Lisa and Leiloni this summer will establish baseline bird and vegetation information that we can use to gauge the effectiveness of our current and future management efforts. Michigan Audubon sends a huge thank you out to Lisa and Leiloni for all of their hard work towards a better understanding of these enigmatic sanctuaries.

Rachelle Roake is the conservation science coordinator for Michigan Audubon and can be reached at rroake@michiganaudubon.org.

Biological Technician Lisa Vormwald

Lisa has a strong interest and background in both avian conservation and geospatial sciences. She received her B.S. in wildlife conservation from the University of Delaware, her M.S. in wildlife science from Texas A&M University, and has a graduate certificate in geospatial science from the University of Maryland. Over the last 10 years she has worked as an avian biologist studying wood thrushes, willow and dusky flycatchers, waterbirds, and seabirds. She lives in Kalamazoo and enjoys hiking, kayaking, and doing Crossfit.



Biological Technician Leiloni Wonch

Leiloni graduated from Michigan State University with a B.S. in fisheries and wildlife with a concentration in pre-veterinary studies. She previously worked with migratory birds and snowshoe hare in the eastern Upper Peninsula as a wildlife biologist. There she took on the responsibility for conducting a habitat assessment of migratory birds in the St. Mary's River and a vulnerability assessment of snowshoe hare. Leiloni's career goals are to work with endangered/threatened species and climate change. In her “wild” time, Leiloni likes to cleanse her spirit by taking a walk in the woods with her dog, Birdie, while looking for tracks and scat. She also likes to paint, hang out with her family (including her fur companions), camp, and volunteer at WILDSIDE rehabilitation and education center.



Are you a naturalist looking to explore a Michigan Audubon sanctuary near you? Contact us, please. We're always looking for more information on the birds, herps, mammals, insects, plants, fungi, and all other organisms that call our sanctuaries home.

Red, White, and Black

BY KIRBY ADAMS

What's black and white and red (read) all over? That old riddle from second grade always comes to mind when spying a Red-headed Woodpecker zipping through an oak savannah. Most of our woodpeckers are painted in a black, white, and red theme, but the Red-headed takes it to an extreme. Sometimes dubbed the tricolored woodpecker, it's one of North America's most unmistakable birds.

Ironically, Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) are not doing well thanks in part to another woodpecker that is often mistakingly called "red-headed." That, of course, is the Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*). Red-bellieds have flourished in the wake of the emerald ash-borer plague, having developed a taste for the beetles. As they expand northward in Michigan, their nesting territory increasingly overlaps with the Red-headed, which already suffers from competition for cavity nest sites with European Starlings. With a limited number of good cavity snags available, the more numerous starlings and the aggressive Red-bellied Woodpeckers often win the day.

Red-headed Woodpecker populations have waxed and waned sharply and erratically over the decades. They reached an abundance after the loss of the American chestnut forests, apparently benefitting from additional nesting sites and increased open foraging habitat. At other times they've seemed to be headed toward extinction. While they don't seem destined to follow the Ivory-billed Woodpecker into oblivion any time soon, the species is listed as near-threatened by the International Union for Conservation in Nature (IUCN), indicating that it does not require immediate management intervention but has the potential to fall into a high threat of extinction in the medium-term future.

For the time being, Red-headed Woodpeckers are not particularly easy to locate in Michigan, but with some educated searching they can be found in suitable habitat anywhere in the state during the summer. That habitat is treed area, preferably with open foraging space. Dense forest, as is typical in much of northern Michigan, is not favorable for Red-headed, although any type of disturbance that opens the canopy can create preferred habitat. Clear-cuts are particularly attractive nesting sites, provided some snags or old trees have been left behind.

The importance of snags cannot be overstated. Private landowners usually see little value in snags and timber harvesters have traditionally taken snags along with living trees or simply knocked them down. With competition from Red-bellied Woodpeckers and European Starlings

so intense, the absence of cavity-filled snags forces Red-headed Woodpeckers into closed-canopy forest where they are more vulnerable to predation and may have higher nest failure rates.

One of the habitats most favored by Red-headed Woodpeckers is oak savannah. This provides abundant hard mast in the form of acorns as well as plenty of insects for fly catching, a feeding technique uncommon to woodpeckers, but which Red-headed use frequently. They flutter out from a perch to snag an insect, returning to generally the same spot, a behavior more akin to an Eastern Kingbird than a woodpecker. The oak savannah also provides snags and large limbs with cavity sites for nesting. The Oak Openings



Red-headed Woodpecker © Roger Eriksson.

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area of northwest Ohio is a notoriously good place to look for nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers. The oak savannahs of Oak Openings Metropark in Toledo are probably the most reliable spot for the species anywhere near Michigan, with the possible exception of Indiana Dunes State Park and National Lakeshore.

Michigan Audubon is participating in oak savannah restoration in the state, most notably at the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary in Calhoun County. Within the year-round range of the woodpeckers, this restoration could eventually lead to a breeding and overwintering population. During a savannah restoration in the Oak Openings region at the Nature Conservancy's Kitty Todd preserve, Red-headed Woodpeckers arrived and began nesting immediately after a removal of 50% of the standing oak trees in the late 1990s.

Given the propensity of the Red-headed Woodpecker population to fluctuate wildly, it's difficult to determine exactly how threatening the decline of the last several decades truly is. Factors such as pesticide use, creosote treatment of utility poles, and collisions with vehicles have undoubtedly had negative impacts on the species, but none of those has been as damaging as habitat loss has been. Historically, they were also regularly killed by humans. Sport hunters prized them for their unique plumage while utility companies and farmers perceived them as pests worthy of eradication. We aren't shooting 19 off of a single pole in a single day as a utility company in Missouri did a century ago, but how many nests are failing when we harvest our snags or allow savannah habitat to turn into closed-canopy forest? That's nearly impossible to answer, but their robust repatriation of areas managed for open habitat is telling.

For the backyard birder in southern Michigan, Red-headed Woodpeckers do visit feeding stations in winter, taking both seed and suet. Summertime feeding is less successful, but they may surprise with a visit to a suet cake. Where these woodpeckers overwinter, they often stash food such as nuts and acorns, another unusual feeding trait for a woodpecker. Winter territories are defined not as much by available nesting cavities as by useful cache sites.

Juvenile Red-heads have a dark brown, unmarked head, making them unfamiliar at first glance at a feeder or along the highway. Other than that, there's not much to tell a birder about finding and identifying these gems. If you aren't sure it's a Red-headed Woodpecker, it most definitely is not. Get out there and look for these flying checkerboards of the sky. And the next time you see an oak savannah restoration or remnant snags left in a timber cut, you'll know the Red-headed Woodpeckers might be moving into town.

Kirby Adams (kirby.adams@gmail.com) writes the birding column for the online travel blog, National Parks Traveler. Kirby lives in Lansing.



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MBS: Celebrating Birders

One of the big draws for the Midwest Birding Symposium is the mix of trips led by birders of all types—paid professionals, published authors, grassroots powerhouses. For this article, we asked five grassroots birders from Michigan and the Midwest to weigh in on birding in the Great Lakes and at MBS.

We asked—

- 1) What do you think it means for Michigan to host a regional birding symposium such as the Midwest Birding Symposium? How do you feel about being part of such an event?
 - 2) What do you think makes the Great Lakes region special in terms of bird watching?
- Here's what they had to say.



Amar Ayyash

- 1) It's a real pleasure for me to have the opportunity to come up here and take part in the Midwest Birding Symposium. Despite being from Illinois, I've always thought of Michigan as holding a special place in the Great Lakes region—no other state is surrounded by as much lake water with such diverse landscapes.
- 2) The Great Lakes region has a remarkable variety of avian life. The changing seasons present something new to enjoy year-round, and fall season is truly unmatched in terms of rarities! You never know what you'll find out here.

Josh Haas

- 1) This is a wonderful opportunity to show just how special Michigan is for birds, birders, and the many important bird areas vital to our migrants and breeders alike. What Michigan has to offer birders is sure to keep locals here and out-of-staters coming back for more. I'm honored and excited to be a part of this great event. Can't wait to share with others all that Michigan has to offer, and why birding around our great state is amazing.
- 2) Just that—the Great Lakes! The sheer diversity of species that migrate through and around Michigan's Great Lakes is astounding. The Michigan birding network is vast and full of great people willing to share a wealth of knowledge, good birds, and great places to bird.

Brian Allen

- 1) I am excited to participate in the Midwest birding symposium again. The last time I did was in Berrien County, I think in the mid-1990s. I remember well a field trip I was leading at the lakefront, helping birders tell the difference between Common and Forster's Terns. When I finished my mini lecture, a friend of mine who was in the group asked if I knew who that was standing at the edge of the group. No, I said. He said, "That was Ken Kaufman, the writer of the Kaufman field guides!" You never know who you'll be birding with at the Midwest Birding Symposium!
- 2) The Great Lakes area is unique nationally for birding for a couple of reasons—in addition to the fact that they host the Kirtland's Warbler. One is the extensive shoreline and migrant concentrating points like Tawas, Whitefish Point, Point La Barbe, and many others that are less intensively birded and need to be explored. Waterbirds like jaegers, rare gulls, and large groups of loons, grebes, and ducks pass by these points in numbers that rival ocean-side birding spots. We also have the dramatic change in seasons. There are not many places in the country where in the same location one month you can see a Hawk Owl, redpolls, and Pine Grosbeaks, then several months down the road in the same place see a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Parula, and LeConte's Sparrow.

Joe Soehnel

- 1) Michigan hosting the upcoming Midwest Birding Symposium in the Great Lakes Region is an excellent opportunity to showcase the birds and birding in our Great Lakes state. I'm humbled and honored to be part of MBS. The Saginaw Bay Area has been my birding focus for thirty years, and I couldn't be more pleased that MBS chose the Great Lakes Bay Region for this year's conference.
- 2) Habitat diversity makes the Great Lakes Bay Region a birding-rich area of Michigan. Birds require a specific habitat in which to live/breed. This area contains upland forests, riparian forests, grasslands, vast wetlands, and the Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron shorelines. These habitat types are what makes the Great Lakes Bay region such an avian-rich region.

Penny Briscoe

- 1) Having Michigan host a regional birding symposium adds credibility to our rich heritage of native bird species and the importance of Michigan's migratory pathways. Ultimately, I hope it will spotlight the need for conservation and environmental responsibility in the state of Michigan. Once Michiganders recognize the positive economic impact of such events, they will begin to understand the need to preserve our varied and beautiful natural landscape.
- 2) The Great Lakes region is diverse in so many ways. This diversity, which is rich in water resources, is an attractant for birds of all kinds. Therefore, bird watchers on all levels will experience a wide variety in beautiful settings that include water and marshlands, forests with a diversity of trees, grasslands and meadows, and even some mountainous areas. The location of the Great Lakes region as a migration pathway allows for even more richness during the spring and fall. Who could ask for more?

Chapter Spotlight: Grand Traverse Audubon Club

BY KRISTIN PHILLIPS

Initially established in 1982 as Oceana Audubon Society, the Sable Dunes Audubon Society (SDAS) met for the first time under its current name on the 31st of August in 1989. With 48 paying members, SDAS is working to “promote, through education, public recognition of the need for protecting and preserving wildlife, plants, soil, water, and other natural resources” in both Mason and Oceana counties. Mason County has a documented 306 bird species to date, and SDAS member and field trip leader David Dister has been documenting this plethora. He recently completed a brochure, *Bird Watching in Mason County*, which now is available at the Mason County Visitor’s Center and Ludington State Park.



Female American Redstart on nest, May 23 © Fred Allen.

Oceana County, on the other hand, is highly under-birded, according to SDAS president Jean Siesener. “One of the club’s initiatives is to try to change that,” she explained. “We hope to bird some of the documented hot spots in the county.” Between Mason

and Oceana counties,

SDAS members and birders can find a wide variety of habitats. Covering Lake Michigan shoreline, both counties include coastal dunes, dune forests, the Nordhouse Dune wilderness area, which are all habitats of the endangered Great Lakes Piping Plover. The counties also contain the Manistee National Forest, four rivers, three state parks, and four large lakes. Between these forested, wetland, and beach habitats, the counties are home to many migrant and breeding birds, making this area a birder’s paradise.

SDAS takes advantage of these many habitats by hosting regular field trips, held on select Saturdays during the periods of April through June and September through November. The most recent trip was held on May 23rd, was led by Dave Dister, and was in partnership with the Oceana Conservation District. The trip went to Gales

Levi and Benjamin Wilson with tour leader David Dister, May 23 © Gary Prosch.



Pond and focused on warblers and the Virginia Rail as well as wildflowers. SDAS also holds regular meetings with presentations and programs. This month’s meeting focused on eBird, part of the SDAS goal to increase birding participation. Member Gary Prosch explained, “We are trying to nudge [members] into utilizing the available technology for their own personal birding, but also to keep up with the news and issues presented by various bird, nature, and governmental organizations that have a Facebook page.”

In addition to its work promoting birding across Mason and Oceana counties, SDAS is increasing focus on cultivating a love of birds among youth. It is partnering with Westshore Community College, hoping to recruit younger members. Like many Michigan Audubon chapters, SDAS is also reaching out on social media and now has an active Facebook page. President Jean Siesener explains “We’d like to initiate working with youth at all three levels [elementary, middle, and high school] by offering educational opportunities and birding field trips in the future.”

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

Thanks to our generous Tawas Point Birding Festival sponsor:



Meetings:

3rd Thursday in April, May, June, September, and November. Social time begins 6:30 p.m. with program beginning at 7 p.m. Meetings are held at Friendship Center in Pentwater, located at Rush and Park Streets (310 N. Rush St., near the public library).

Facebook: facebook.com/sabledunesaudubon

Website: sabledunesaudubon.com

Leaders:

President: Jean Siesener, 231-233-3155, michbirdlady1@gmail.com
Vice president: Al Manschesky, 231-869-2102, amansch@live.com
Secretary: Joe Moloney, 231-907-2278, jmoloney99@yahoo.com
Treasurer: Gene Jankowski, 231-869-5278, genejudy2@frontier.com

Special Thanks

2015 Event Sponsors

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

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2015 Piping Plover Activity at Whitefish Point

The Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) was established as an affiliate of Michigan Audubon in 1979. Its purpose is to ensure the long-term significance of the Whitefish peninsula to migratory and breeding bird species. One of these species, the Great Lakes Piping Plover, has recently made a comeback at Whitefish Point. In 2015, the Seney Natural History Society (a friends group of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge) will provide funding for a seasonal employee to be shared by Michigan Audubon/WPBO, the refuge, and the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum. The inaugural position will be filled by Northern Michigan University student Brian Dibbern. The bulk of Brian's responsibility is monitoring the Piping Plover population at Whitefish Point and educating the public about plover natural history.



Piping Plover © Chris Neri.

It's late April on the windswept cobble beaches of Whitefish Point and winter is losing its grip. Migrant birds of many kinds are winging their way past this world-famous migrant hotspot. But one species in particular is not looking to pass by the beaches of Whitefish Point; instead it sees the wide beaches of the Point as a great place to stop and nest. This special bird is the federally endangered Piping Plover.

Piping Plovers were once widespread across the Great Lakes—so much so that Walter Barrows described their presence here in 1912 thusly: “This little plover is found everywhere along the shores of the Great Lakes during summer and probably breeds wherever conditions are suitable.” However, habitat loss and other factors had eliminated the plovers from much of their range in southern Michigan by the 1960s. By the time the plovers were listed as endangered in 1986, they were isolated to a small number of lonely beaches on Great Lakes islands, Wilderness State Park, and remote beaches between Grand Marais and Whitefish Point on Lake Superior.



Brian Dibbern.

Brian writes: “I am looking forward to my fourth season of monitoring Great Lakes Piping Plovers, a federally-listed Endangered species that holds a special place in my heart. By the end of this season, I project that I will have spent over 1500 hours surveying, protecting, and monitoring these amazing shorebirds. I’ve witnessed every aspect of their breeding cycle—from adults’ courtship to fledging of chicks—multiple times. Watching a freshly hatched Piping Plover chick take its first wobbly steps on comical, oversized legs is an incredible experience, one I hope to share with visitors to Whitefish Point. Watching the same chick take flight for the first time a month later, I can’t help but feel a strong sense of conservation success.”

Brian Dibbern is the Piping Plover monitor for Michigan Audubon, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, and the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum.

While plovers have been breeding at nearby Vermillion Point and Grand Marais for decades, the first nest documented at Whitefish Point since listing did not occur until 2009. However, since that time, Whitefish Point has seen nesting plovers each year, reaching a high of five pairs in 2013. With its wide beaches, ample cobble to provide shelter and camouflage for plover chicks, and cooperation from conservation partners to close down large segments of the beach for the plovers, Whitefish Point has been remarkably successful at fledging plover chicks. During this time frame, the Great Lakes population as a whole has averaged 1.72 chicks fledged per pair, while Whitefish Point has averaged 2.6, almost an entire chick higher! With continued cooperation, Whitefish Point can continue to be an important nesting site for one of Michigan’s most endangered birds.

Vince Cavalieri is the Great Lakes Piping Plover coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is based in the East Lansing field office. He can be reached via vincent_cavalieri@fws.gov.

Announcements

Calendar

July

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

August

- 4–11 **Second Spring in Arizona Birding Tour**
SE Arizona
- 15 **Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies**
Dahlem Environmental Center, Jackson

September

- 10–13 **Midwest Birding Symposium**
Bay City
- 12–
NOV 29 **40th Anniversary Birds in Art Exhibition**
Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI
- 19–20 **Hawkfest**
Lake Erie Metropark, Brownstown Twp.

October

- 9 **Birder's Social**
Convis Township Hall, Marshall
- 10–11 **CraneFest**
Kiwanis Youth Conservation Area, Bellevue

Al Batt



Birders' Soiree October 9 in Southern Michigan

Join Michigan Audubon at the Birders' Soiree on October 9th as part of the Sandhill Crane & Art Festival. This year's speaker is Al Batt, author of *A Life Gone to the Birds* and contributing author to multiple newspapers and magazines such as *Bird Watcher's Digest*. He also is a radio show host and creator of several nationally syndicated popular cartoon strips. Al is well known for his lively and humorous presentations about birding and calls himself "just a guy who loves birds." Soiree attendees will hear stories from Al at this fundraising event that helps pay for habitat restoration projects at the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary.

The evening will get underway at 7:00 p.m. at the Convis Township Hall located on 15 Mile Road, northwest of Marshall, with a social hour, light hors d'oeuvres and drinks, and a silent auction. Our lighthearted presentation will get underway shortly after 8:00 p.m. Tickets for the event are \$25 per Michigan Audubon member or \$40 per member couple, or \$30 for non-members and \$50 per non-member couple. They can be purchased online at cranefest.org.

The Friendliest Birding Event Comes to Bay City

The Midwest Birding Symposium (MBS), hosted every two years, is coming to Bay City on the weekend of September 10–13. The DoubleTree Bay City Riverfront Hotel is the headquarters for MBS, which will be hosting workshops, presentations, birding trips to hotspots in the Saginaw Bay Area, and vendors from optics to local artists. MBS brings together a community of birders to share experiences and love of birds and nature.

Would you like to volunteer to work at the symposium? Volunteer tasks range from assisting at the registration table to leading birding walks, and from vendor area organizers to those willing to help clean up. We have a multitude of tasks that will need to be accomplished at this event. Everyone who is interested in volunteering is asked to fill out a volunteer form located at midwestbirding.org/make-arrangements/volunteer. Once a form has been submitted, you can register for the event.

MBS registration is open; all the details can be found at midwestbirding.org.

Contact Wendy Tatar at wendy@michiganaudubon.org or call the office at 517-580-7364 if you have any questions.

All About Feathers

The science & beauty of feathers

Explore All About Feathers >

Red-tailed Hawk © Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife.

Hawkfest at Lake Erie Metropark

The Marshlands Museum and Nature Center located at Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown Township is home to Hawkfest. The long-running event coincides with the annual fall raptor migration as the birds cross from Ontario into Michigan over the Detroit River. Held annually on the third weekend in September, this year's event will be on Saturday, September 19 and Sunday, September 20.

This is a great event for families with many activities for children. Live birds-of-prey presentations and programs on hawk identification highlight the weekend. There is a \$2 per person entry fee for the program, as well as an additional park entry fee of \$7 for a daily pass (if not in possession of an annual Metropark pass).

Summer Birding Event in Jackson

The Michigan Audubon Bookstore will again be participating in Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies, a great event hosted by the Dahlem Nature Conservancy at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center in Jackson. The event has live birds of prey, hummingbird banding (morning only), butterfly tagging, hikes, workshops, and lots of kids' craft activities. Besides the Michigan Audubon Bookstore, vendors include sellers of native plants, bird seed, and bird houses/feeders. Best of all, the event is free. It's scheduled for Saturday, August 15, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. To find out more, visit dahlemcenter.org or phone 517-782-3453.

New Birding Website Launched

All About Feathers is a new website sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The website features interactive and self-paced sections with custom art and video, free downloadable PowerPoints that include illustrations and animations, a reference guide, and a library of over 90 videos. This website is the first of several in Cornell's new All About Bird Biology series, and is designed for users of all ages, with downloadable content that can be used in classroom or home settings. Other websites in this series include All About Fancy Males and All About Bird Song. We can't wait to see the rest of the mobile-responsive, interactive series. Check it out here: biology.allaboutbirds.org.

New Edition of *Birds of Ottawa County, Michigan: An Annotated Checklist*

Holland birders and Michigan Audubon life members Chip Francke, Carl Manning, and Judi Manning have collaborated to publish an updated copy of *Birds of Ottawa County, Michigan: An Annotated Checklist*. The original book was published in 1998 by another Michigan Audubon life member, Jim Ponshair, and the new version includes 329 species that can be seen in Ottawa County. This book is a birding checklist rather than a field guide, but it also includes a seasonal bar graph of the species mentioned, showing which birds are common or rare in Ottawa County during the different seasons. In addition to the list and graph, the authors compiled 20 of the best birding locations in Ottawa County. It may be purchased at the Hemlock Crossing Nature Center gift shop and Ottawa County area bookstores for \$14.95, with proceeds from the sale of the books going to Ottawa County Parks.

New Mailing Address

Michigan Audubon has settled into our new office and can now receive mail there. Please send all mail to Michigan Audubon at 2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200, Okemos, MI 48864. Be sure to update your address books. You can also find this address on our website at michiganaudubon.org at any time. Our office number is still 517-580-7364.

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Your purchase from the bookstore supports Michigan Audubon's educational programs.

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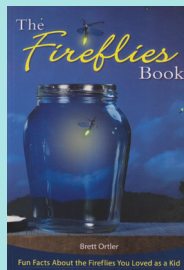


The Bluebird Effect

by Julie Zickefoose

\$28.00 (hardcover)

Illustrated with the beautiful artwork of the author, a bird rehabilitator, this book will take you inside her world of rescuing birds. Each chapter is the story of a different bird or species but with a common theme of how the single act of saving a bird sets change in motion.

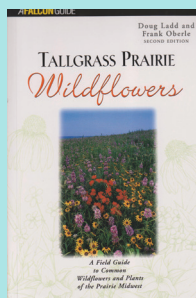


The Fireflies Book

by Brett Ortler

\$9.95

Everything you ever wanted to know about fireflies is contained in this compact guide. Who knew that there were different species of fireflies and that they have different flashing patterns? This guide explains the science behind these bioluminescent creatures and exactly how they light themselves up. It also contains projects to do on a warm summer's night to educate children and adults alike.



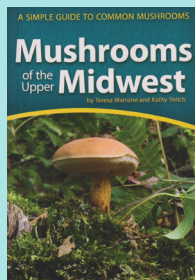
Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers: A Field Guide to Common Wildflowers and Plants of the Prairie Midwest

2nd edition

by Doug Ladd and Frank Oberle

\$22.95

Even though Michigan only had scattered prairie areas in the southwest portion of the Lower Peninsula, this is a very useful guide to the wildflowers found in our state. Arranged by color, it makes the search for the flower or plant you are looking at easier. The introduction includes a history of prairies in the United States and covers the different types of prairies that existed.

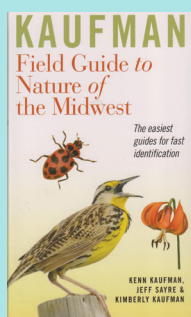


Mushrooms of the Upper Midwest

by Teresa Marrone and Kathy Yerich

\$16.95

This is a nice pocket-sized field guide to the common mushrooms found in the Midwest region of the United States. The guide is first organized by shape and then by color, and contains information and clear photos of nearly 400 common species. It is easy enough for beginners to use but useful enough for even the experienced mushroom seeker. It includes a section on the top edible mushrooms and one on the top toxic specimens.



Kaufman Field Guide to Nature of the Midwest

by Kenn Kaufman, Jeff Sayre, and Kimberly Kaufman

\$20.00 (Flexi-bound)

The most recent addition to the Kaufman field guide series, this 2015 book covers any living being found in the Midwest region of the United States. From trees and wildflowers to birds and reptiles, this guide covers it all. Although it does not show all the species found in the region, it contains as many as possible with the section on birds covering 396 species in just 67 pages. It is compact and easy to carry just like the other guides in this series.

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