

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE MIGRATION ISSUE: Oil and Birds Don't Mix: Potential Risks at the Straits of Mackinac ▪ WPBO 2015 Owl Count ▪
▪ Birding the Parks during National Park Service Centennial ▪ Michigan Audubon Acquires Mabelle Isham Shagbark Trails▪



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Golden Eagle

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This photo is of an education Golden Eagle housed at the Outdoor Discovery Center Nature Preserve in Holland, MI, and is one of 18 birds at the facility. Suffering from a fractured rear talon that resulted in amputation of the talon, the Golden Eagle, originally rescued from the Whitefish Point area, has been housed at the facility since 2007.

"Grand Haven Artwalk" winner (2012) and Michigan-based photographer John Dykstra organized a "Birds of Prey" photoshoot last February to capture this photo of the education bird. John can be contacted at johndykstra@yahoo.com for nature and landscape photography questions.

Photo Details:

Camera: Canon 60D, Canon 100-400mm lens (photo shot at 400 mm). Aperture: f7.1 1/2000. ISO 500.

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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

GOOD CHANGES COMING

BY ALEC LINDSAY, CHAIR, MICHIGAN AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Yellow-rumped Warbler. © Roger Eriksson

Change is on the wing in Michigan—rivers are swelling with summer's anticipation, spring is poking its green nose up through the leaf litter, and politicians are kissing babies more fervently than ever. Changing perspectives are exciting. A few winters ago, my perspective on Michigan's neotropical migrants changed when I was fortunate enough to visit Panama for a professional workshop. While the indoor discussions at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute were meaningful, at every scheduled coffee break (and maybe one or two that weren't scheduled) I would sneak out with my binoculars to see what was flying, gleaning, squawking, and scraping in the jungle around the station. The Panamanian birds were exciting and exotic, but regularly I was captivated by some old feathered friends that I was surprised to also see visiting Panama—Yellow-rumped Warblers (YRWA). At first I was comforted by them, thinking how sweet it was to see some of my northern compatriots down there in Central America. And yet, as I watched them more and more, I realized that maybe I didn't know these old friends as well as I thought I did.

For starters, unlike the breeding YRWA I know from Michigan's UP, these butterbutts were foraging in small groups, almost loose flocks, and doing so with hardly a gruff word to one another. That was refreshing. More surprising was that they were foraging on the ground, walking and probing through the grass like a gang of punk-rock miniature grackles. It suddenly struck me that these warblers, who I ignorantly thought of as singing their songs in "English" back at home in the UP, were perhaps more appropriately thought of as native Spanish singers. These Panamanian yellow-rumps spend nearly as many days each year "south of the border" as they do in the north during the breeding season. When I returned to Michigan that spring, I looked at many species of neotropical migrants with a changed perspective, and the new perspective was thrilling.

With that in mind, let me encourage you to approach this coming spring migration season with an eye to changing perspectives, with a renewed curiosity inspired by our transient feathered wanderers. Where has that migrating Red-necked Grebe out in Whitefish Bay been foraging for the past three months, and what is her

final destination now? What inner restlessness became so strong that a Palm Warbler could no longer endure the sandy beaches of the Florida Keys, and has now stopped briefly in the healthy scrublands outside of Kalamazoo?

Spring is a great time for changed perspectives. As true as that is for our birds and our members, it is also true for Michigan Audubon. Our passionate and insightful staff is making a special review of our sanctuaries, updating and growing our slate of annual programs, and looking for various creative ways to continue fulfilling our mission. Our partnerships with local chapters and state and regional cooperators continue to develop to our mutual benefit. The board has been working diligently to recruit a new executive director to take the helm of our organization. On that last front, we are confident that in your next issue of the JPW you will be hearing from that new leader, and we think our members will be as inspired and refreshed as we were during our recruiting process. Until then, I hope you embrace the changed perspectives around you, avian and otherwise.

Cheers,

Alec Lindsay



Oil and Birds Don't Mix: Potential Risks at the Straits of Mackinac

BY HOWARD MEYERSON



A view of the Mackinac Bridge and the Straits of Mackinac as seen from Mackinaw City, Michigan. © Michael Barera

Darrell Lawson loves birding at the Straits of Mackinac. There are miles of open water and the Michigan lakeshore is gorgeous. Thousands of birds fly along Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsula shorelines and funnel through the Straits during annual spring and fall migrations. There are waterbirds, waterfowl, raptors and warblers, woodpeckers and plovers, to name just a few. More than 200 bird species have been observed at Pointe La Barbe, just west of St. Ignace. Those listings appear on eBird, the Internet site by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society.

"I lead all kinds of trips for Audubon and spend quite a bit of time up there," notes Lawson, a software engineer and president of Petoskey Regional Audubon Society. "I go there 25 to 30 times in the spring and the fall. On one of my best days we saw 40-some Great Egrets. We might normally see a couple in a year. To see that many is incredible."

Given the abundant and diverse bird life found at the Straits, Lawson and other Petoskey Audubon members have grown increasingly concerned about the 63-year-old Enbridge Inc. oil pipeline, known as Line 5. It runs along the lake bottom between the peninsulas. Should either of the two 20-inch-wide, five-mile-long pipes rupture, the impact on birds could be devastating. Endangered Piping Plovers are known to nest in the area, to say nothing of the thousands of eagles, hawks, falcons, and turkey vultures that migrate across the Straits annually and the untold damage that could occur to fisheries, recreation, boating, and tourism.

Petoskey Audubon sent Governor Rick Snyder a letter in December 2015 requesting that the line be shut down until its safety and integrity can be verified, Lawson said. "If we have an oil spill there, that oil could end up in a lot of places like Waugoshance Point (at Wilderness State Park), which is a huge birding area," Lawson elaborated. "There is a nesting tern colony on the Coast Guard pier that is worrisome.... A huge raft of redheads also hangs out in the Straits area every fall."

Gail Gruenwald, executive director for Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council in Petoskey, wants to see the line shut down eventually. Shipping oil by barge is also unacceptable. The Straits, she said, should be considered "a high-consequence" area.

"Enbridge says the pipeline is safe and in as good a shape as it was 60 years ago," Gruenwald notes. "They put in automatic shut-off valves and now have staff in the Straits. But there is still potential for a (spill). Wind, waves, and ice can complicate or help with cleanup, but the risk to the environment is huge. We don't want to see crude oil shipped on barges or pipelines in the Great Lakes. It's just not worth it."

Enbridge Inc. did not provide a representative who was authorized to discuss the subject, despite three requests over a two-week period, but Steve Keck, the U.S. Coast Guard Contingency Preparedness Specialist in Sault Ste. Marie, said, "We are worried about any spill."

Keck is the lead planner who orchestrates oil spill cleanup exercises on those waters, the most recent in September 2015. He sits on a risk-analysis committee that meets several times a year. Its membership is comprised of state, federal, tribal, academic, and industry representatives. Together they examine facts and prioritize what would need to be done.

"We've determined that in the Straits there is a very low probability (of an oil leak) but a high impact (if one occurs)," Keck said. "Water quality, tourism, fishing, state parks, historic landmarks, and protected flora and fauna—the implications are huge. If a (leak) goes west, we expect it could impact (the waters and shoreline) at Brevort or Waugoshance Point. If east, then Dunkin Bay at Cheboygan and Boblo (Bois Blanc) Island, or a combination of it all."

Wind direction, wave-height, and currents all complicate matters. Oil can be carried in one direction on the surface



Redhead Ducks. © Skye Haas

and a different direction below. Two computer modeled simulations (found on YouTube) by David Schwab at the University of Michigan Water Center show where a 12-hour oil release could travel, given wind and water currents. The simulations show it spreading as far south as Beaver Island in Lake Michigan and Rogers City in Lake Huron.

Neither is realistic, according to Keck, who said they depict a one-million-gallon spill left untouched for 20 days.

Because of the shut-off valves, “the oil loss would be limited to what’s in five miles of pipeline,” Keck said, “far less than the U of M million-gallon scenario. We consider 100,000 to 200,000 gallons more realistic. How far it spreads depends on how quickly we can get contractors on the water to mitigate a spill. We would have people out there within an hour. The Coast Guard is the federal on-scene coordinator. At the state level, it’s the Department of Environmental Quality.”

Caleb Putnam, National Audubon’s Michigan Important Bird Area coordinator, said the Straits are a huge staging area for Redhead Ducks in the fall. Many thousands gather on the water and stick around until ice-up. The Mackinac Straits IBA for Redhead Ducks extends from the Straits to St. Martins Bay, north of St. Ignace on Lake Huron. A summer oil spill, he added, would affect colonial waterbirds like Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, and Black-crowned Night Herons.

“I’d put Common Terns at the top of the list in summertime,” Putnam said. “They nest just west of the (Mackinac) bridge on Green Island and in downtown St. Ignace on the Coast Guard pier. Those birds all forage in the area. They could be affected directly from getting oiled or indirectly by having their food supply (fish) affected by oil in the water. I don’t see any of the birds in the area being untouched by this.”

Ed Pike largely agrees. He is chair of the Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch (MSRW), a nonprofit that tracks raptor migration through the Straits. MSRW counters observed more than 50,000 raptors flying across the Straits in the spring of 2015, according to Pike. Counted were eagles, hawks, falcons, and turkey vultures, all daytime flyers. Raptors, he said, are less likely to be affected by a pipeline leak, but they are not immune. Most converge on the Straits because it offers the shortest flying distance between points of land. They feed, however, on other small mammals, fish, and birds that could be contaminated by an oil spill.

“I have concerns about raptors, but more concern about the waterbirds that use the area,” Pike said. “A rupture in the fall would be devastating. Between 5,000 and 10,000 redheads spend about two months there. Enbridge says they haven’t had a problem (with Line 5) and that’s true. But they didn’t have a problem on the Kalamazoo River either—until they did.”

Keck said the emergency response protocol calls for protecting water intakes, state parks, bird nesting areas, and protected species first. They are the top priority.

“We have identified where there are endangered species. These are where we would place protective booms first,” Keck said. “We have only so many. We don’t want oil getting into the marshes along the shoreline and bird nesting areas.”

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.

Birding the Parks during the National Park Service Centennial

BY KIRBY ADAMS



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Public Domain

One hundred years ago this coming August President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act, creating a federal agency to manage national parks, monuments, historic sites, trails, and other natural and cultural treasures of the United States. A century later, the National Park Service (NPS) oversees more than 400 units, including 59 officially designated “national parks,” although all units are managed equally without prejudice and can rightly be called parks.

Michigan claims seven NPS units: Isle Royale National Park, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, North Country National Scenic Trail, Keweenaw National Historic Park, River Raisin National Battlefield Park, and Motor Cities National Heritage Area.

Protection of birds and bird habitat is not typically the primary mandate of a national park as it often is at national wildlife refuges, but some of Michigan’s best birding spots can be found in our national parks. Do you know which of the 409 NPS units boasts the most species of nesting warbler? That would be Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, with 23, tying for first with Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Where’s one of the best places in the world to see the endangered Great Lakes population of Piping Plover? Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, of course!

The bigger parks and lakeshores get most of the fame, and certainly most of the birding visitors, but the smaller units deserve a look as well. River Raisin National Battlefield Park isn’t focused on, or dedicated to nature in any way, but sitting adjacent to Sterling State Park near undeveloped Lake Erie shore, it’s a tiny patch of excellent bird habitat. Were the park not there to commemorate a brutal defeat

during the War of 1812, the property would likely be developed with homes, marinas, or shopping centers. As it is, the battlefield is a patch of green field and trees along one of the busiest migration highways on the continent.

The North Country National Scenic Trail travels through myriad habitats and close to some of the best birding hotspots in the state. A thru-hiker on the trail in Michigan would visit the famed Peshekee Grade and Tahquamenon Falls in the Upper Peninsula, in addition to lakeshore spots in Marquette and Pictured Rocks, before descending through forests to farmland in the western Lower Peninsula.

Only one of Michigan’s NPS units carries the prestigious title of “national park” in its name. For no reason other than geography, Isle Royale is one of both the least visited and least birded national parks. The park is not “on the way” to any other destinations, and a dedicated effort is required to visit the islands, which are closed to all visitation in the winter. Once there, a birder will find habitat similar to some of the best spots in the Upper Peninsula. Think of the cedar swamps of Hulbert Bog and the boreal forest of the McCormick Wilderness, but even more isolated on an island in Lake Superior.

Birding a boreal forest isn’t always easy, for more reasons than simple accessibility issues. Nesting warblers are not always inclined to offer great views of themselves, but they are gracious enough to sing loudly, giving the visitor skilled at birding-by-ear a distinct advantage. The thin and high-pitched *tsi tsi tsi* of the Blackburnian Warbler may be the only indication that a bird with a throat as flaming orange as a traffic cone is patrolling the conifer canopy above. A rising, musical buzz will betray a lurking Black-throated Blue Warbler in the understory. This warbler’s song has

been memorably compared to the hopeful unzipping of a camper's tent on a fine June morning in the Northwoods.

One boreal bird more likely to introduce itself is the famous Gray Jay. Known by a host of colorful names, this "camp robber" will possibly visit you at lunchtime and, invited or not, may share your meal. Gray Jays near campgrounds are likely to be as close to tame as a truly wild bird can be. Put some granola crumbs on your hat and you'll be able to get a selfie with what looks like an overgrown chickadee on your head. On less traveled trails in the interior, the Gray Jays are far less likely to be that tame, but their inquisitiveness will still be on display as they follow you along the trail.

Isle Royale's haunting gray-green landscape complete with trees dripping with the *Usnea* lichen known as Old Man's Beard may seem ancient and static, but the island is constantly changing. Just as the populations of the island's most famous residents—the wolves and moose—have waxed and waned over the decades, the habitats themselves are dynamic. A massive wildfire burned much

of Isle Royale's forest in 1936, leaving more open area in its wake and replacing a mature forest with a successional forest for many years. Sharp-tailed Grouse took advantage of the open habitat and became quite a common bird for a while in the twentieth century. As the forest has matured again, the grouse has declined to become a less common sight. One can only imagine the influx of Black-Backed and American Three-toed Woodpeckers that must have invaded in the years after the fire.

Writer and environmentalist Wallace Stegner said, "The national park idea, the best idea we ever had, was inevitable as soon as Americans learned to confront the wild continent not with fear and cupidity, but with delight, wonder, and awe." It's good to see that a century after the christening of the National Park Service, we birders find our parks here in Michigan to be continuously delightful, wondrous, and awesome.

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



Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. © National Park Service



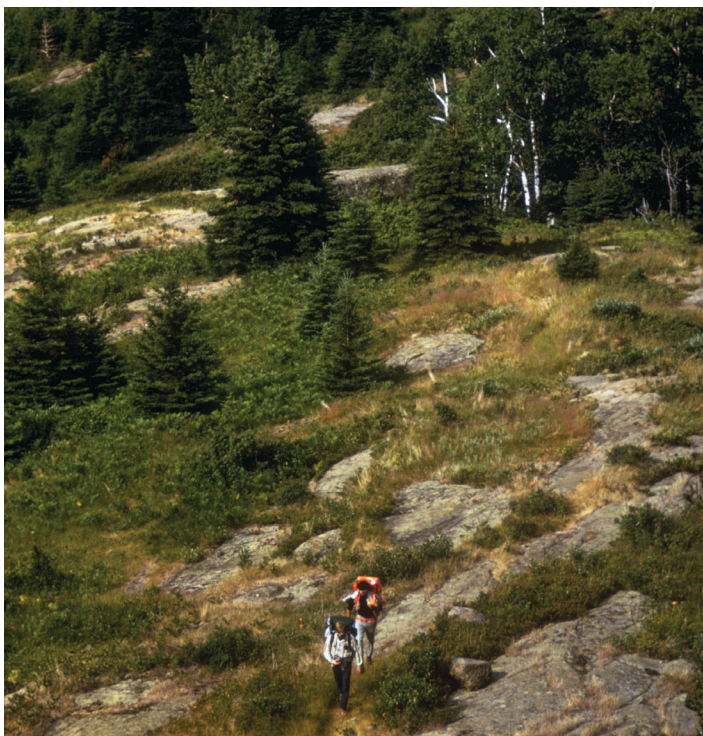
North Country National Scenic Trail. © Huron-Manistee National Forest

We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon members:

We thank you —our newest members as well as our renewing members—for your support of Michigan Audubon's bird conservation efforts. Please remember to check your magazine's expiration date and renew early (an envelope is included with this issue). Moving or changing to a seasonal address? Contact our office at birds@michiganaudubon.org or 517-580-7364 so that we can update our database.

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Isle Royale National Park. © National Park Service

Michigan Audubon Acquires Mabelle Isham Shagbark Trails

BY RACHELLE ROAKE

“Any season in Michigan is beautiful if one can seek the silences of the woods and marshes at dawn.”
—Mabelle Isham, “October Dawns at Baker Sanctuary,” *Jack Pine Warbler*, September 1959



The Shagbark Trails. © Michigan Audubon

I never met Mabelle Isham, but after hearing countless wildlife adventure stories and reading her intoxicating nature pieces, I have a strong sense that we would’ve been good friends. I’ve had the great fortune of getting to know Mabelle Isham’s legacy thanks to Michigan Audubon’s recent acquisition of her 80-acre homestead adjacent to Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary. Nestled in between the Audubon sanctuary and the Kiwanis Club property, Mabelle’s property contains the final, unprotected piece of the Big Marsh Lake wetland complex where thousands of Sandhill Cranes roost during fall migration.

Mabelle Isham dedicated her life to observing, rehabilitating, and educating others about wildlife at Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary. According to family and friends, “she was Mother Nature,” and visitors were accustomed to sharing the living room with her current rehab patient—perhaps a Sandhill Crane or box full of Wood Ducks. When Mabelle’s daughter, Marilyn Isham Robinson, inherited the property, she knew her mother would have loved for it to be a permanent part of Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary. Just before the holidays in December 2015, Michigan Audubon completed the purchase of Mabelle Isham’s property. Although formally part of Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary, the property will be referred to as the Mabelle Isham Shagbark Trails, in memory of Mabelle’s dedication to wildlife and nature.

Thanks to several grant sources and a generous bargain sale from the Robinson family, Michigan Audubon was able to purchase this property for permanent protection. A \$100,000 North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant and \$88,000 in mitigation funds from Enbridge Pipelines, LLC helped to purchase the property. In addition, Enbridge Pipelines, LLC also contributed \$80,000 towards future habitat management to remove invasive plants, establish native plants, and ensure that the property is a healthy place for birds and wildlife.

Mabelle Isham Shagbark Trails protects ten acres of mature oak hickory forest and 70 acres of tamarack swamp and emergent marsh. Each habitat is filled with unique birds, wildlife, and flora. Breeding bird surveys in 2015 suggest 43 species—including Baltimore Oriole, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Sedge

Wren, Willow Flycatcher, and Wood Thrush—breed on or near the property. Several of these species are sensitive to human disturbance and require large areas of contiguous habitat to breed, so protecting the property was crucial to preserving the unique avian community. In the interest of protecting sensitive birds, wildlife, and flora found on the property, the Mabelle Isham Shagbark Trails will be closed to the public except for special events and volunteer opportunities.



The late Mabelle Isham holding a Sandhill Crane. © Marilyn Isham Robinson

Michigan Audubon would like to thank the Robinson family, partners and donors who came together to make this conservation effort possible. The property was purchased through partnerships with The Conservation Fund and Ducks Unlimited, and with grant funds from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, as well as a donation from American 1 Credit Union in Jackson, Michigan. These lands are being conserved, in part, by funding and technical assistance made available as mitigation for habitat loss or forest fragmentation caused

by the construction and maintenance of the Enbridge Pipelines, LLC, 6B Pipeline. The Conservation Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have partnered to manage these voluntary mitigation funds and provide grants to implement local conservation measures in Indiana and Michigan to protect and restore critical habitat for migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

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



Roy Van Loo, Jr.
Wildlife Artist

May 31, 2015

Mabelle Isham: A friend of Nature

I remember that Mabelle loved nature and Baker Sanctuary. I knew her for about 35 years. During that time she had a number of different nature passions. At first, she enjoyed the families of Canada Geese that would lounge around on the bank of her pond overlooking the Big Marsh Lake. In time geese were replaced with whitetail deer fawns. For three consecutive years, the local conservation officer brought her a fawn to raise. They were all bucks. There were good, healthy bucks that roamed the sanctuary for many years. One year the officer brought her a family of 13 baby Wood Ducks. Only one chick died; the rest were released when they could fly. We put up Wood Duck boxes after that and had lots of woodies thereafter. Mabelle had a federal bird banding license and enjoyed banding many birds, from Great Horned Owls to song birds that would sometimes hit her house windows. She enjoyed the banding, but not the yearly paperwork. One year the officer brought her a baby Sandhill Crane, which she raised to release back into the wild. It remained close to her home, migrated, and returned. It took a mate when mature, and raised young in the marsh on the other side of her pond for many years.

Over the years we spent a number of hours sitting in her library room looking over the marsh, enjoying toast and beverage, with me telling her what I saw as I photographed and tramped her land, and she telling me what she had seen when I was not out there.

Mabelle is missed. I and many of her friends can say we are better people for having known her.

Roy Van Loo, Jr. is a nature photographer by trade. His work is on display every year at CraneFest.

Conservation Spotlight: Black Tern Habitat Enhancement at Ogontz Bay

BY RACHELLE ROAKE

A small, ebony bird with charcoal wings, the Black Tern is a buoyant resident of shallow, freshwater marshes—but this species is becoming increasingly harder to find in Michigan. According to the *Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas II*,¹ Black Tern populations have experienced an estimated 60 percent decrease between 1991 and 2006. Habitat loss is likely the leading cause of this decline, as Michigan has lost nearly 41,000 acres of vegetated wetlands since 1978,² and many of those that remain are degraded by invasive plant species, off-road vehicle traffic, and high levels of sediment and nutrient inputs.³ The National Audubon Society, in partnership with Common Coast Research and Conservation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Michigan Audubon, will be working to enhance habitat at the largest Black Tern colony in the Upper Peninsula, located in Ogontz Bay. Work will focus on removing invasive Phragmites, installing floating nest platforms, monitoring tern breeding success, and increasing awareness in the local community. If you're interested in supporting this project or getting involved, please contact Rachelle Roake at RRoake@michiganaudubon.org. Keep an eye out for project updates, and be sure to check out the Tawas Point Birding Festival, where the Black Tern is the 2016 signature species.



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Black Tern. © Roger Eriksson



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Learning While Birding

BY WENDY TATAR

There's no doubt about it: Michigan Audubon's spring Signature Birding Events provide the opportunity to do some great birding. Our tours at Spring Fling (Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, April 30–May 1), the Tawas Point Birding Festival (East Tawas, May 19–22), and Cerulean Warbler Weekend (Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary, June 3–5) offer birding trips that will yield endangered and rare species plus a wide variety of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, and shorebirds. That alone is a good reason for you to attend one of these fantastic events. But there are other reasons to join us—namely, learning more about the birds, their natural history, and the conservation efforts to protect them.

Take for instance Spring Fling. On Saturday evening there's a banquet with a keynote presentation and fundraising silent auction held at the Whitefish Township Hall in Paradise. The keynote for 2016 is entitled "Beyond Hawk Watching: The Identification of Waterbirds in Flight." Cameron Cox, co-author of the *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching*, is our speaker and will elaborate on the process of identifying waterbirds in flight and how hawk watching techniques can be applied to this and other types of birding. There will also be workshops on hawk identification, new birding trails, and owl banding as part of the event. You can find out more about them by visiting the event website at wpbo.org.

Friday night is the big night at the Tawas Point Birding Festival (TPBF). Steven N. G. Howell, co-author of *Rare Birds of North America* and author of *Petrels, Albatrosses & Storm-Petrels of North America*, joins us as the keynote. He'll present "SHIFT HAPPENS: Rare (Vagrant) Birds in North America: Why, Where, and Whence?" Howell will discuss why rare birds show up, identify the locations that are prone to rarities, and explain where those rare birds are coming from.

At TPBF, there will also be afternoon sessions and workshops with topics that range from photography to native planting, and birding hotspots to Piping Plovers. Check out the schedule of activities on the event website, tawasbirdfest.com. We hope to see you at an upcoming Michigan Audubon event.

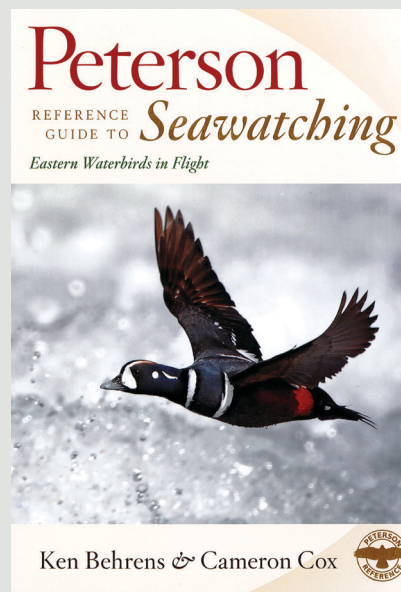
Wendy Tatar is the program coordinator for Michigan Audubon and can be reached at wendy@michiganaudubon.org.

Cameron Cox Bio

Since the age of thirteen, Cameron Cox has been an avid birder. He spent his late teens and twenties as a professional bird bum, working seasonal bird jobs from Cape May to Alaska's Pribilof Islands. He takes equal pleasure in learning more about birds and sharing his knowledge with others. Along with Ken Behrens, he is the author of the *Peterson's Reference Guide to Seawatching* as well as articles on bird identification that have appeared in *Birding* magazine. He currently works as a birding and photography guide for Tropical Birding.

Beyond Hawk Watching: The Identification of Waterbirds in Flight

Over the course of the long and storied history of hawk watching, most of its tricks and techniques have been disseminated widely among the birding community. While techniques such as judging distant wing beats, deemphasizing coloration, and focusing on structure are used without question for hawk watching, they are just as effective for identifying distant flying waterbirds, and are the primary tools for identifying distant birds of all types. This talk will elaborate on the process of identifying waterbirds in flight, and how hawk watching techniques can be applied to waterbird flight identification and other types of birding. A variety of photos, including many from the *Peterson Reference Guide to Seawatching*, will illustrate the talk.



Calendar

March

19 **Spring Bluebird Festival**
Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Hastings

April

30 **Thornapple Woodpecker Festival**
Middleville

30–
May 1 **Spring Fling**
Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, Paradise

May

6–15 **Biggest Week in American Birding**
Magee Marsh, Ohio

15 **Kirtland's Warbler Tours Begin**
Grayling

15–30 **U.S. Forest Service Kirtland's Warbler Tours**
Mio

19–22 **Tawas Point Birding Festival**
East Tawas

27–29 **Warblers on the Water**
Beaver Island

Spotlight: Erie Shores Birding Association

BY KRISTIN PHILLIPS



ESBA Patch © ESBA

The Erie Shores Birding Association (ESBA) is a community club formed in 1986 in Monroe, Michigan, for “the purpose of promoting the observation and study of birds and other related wildlife, their environment and their conservation.” Although not a chapter of Michigan Audubon, the ESBA is an active club of 44 members that regularly attend Michigan Audubon events and volunteer at sanctuaries and refuges across the state.

ESBA has strong ties to the Monroe community, and one of the founders, Bob Petit, taught bird identification classes at Monroe Community College. Due to the popularity of these classes, the club was created. Regular meetings are still held at the Monroe Community College. Because of the dedication and interests of the members, the club has stayed true to its bird identification origins. According to Anne Smith, the president of ESBA, the membership is “a varied group ranging from backyard birding amateurs to others with very sophisticated knowledge who travel the world birding.”

With a love of birding comes many birding trips. Club members have birded at locations across the state, from Whitefish Point Bird Observatory and River Rouge Bird Observatory to locations nationwide such as Magee Marsh, Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Members have also visited the Rio Grande Valley in Texas and Southeast Arizona, and have even gone birding abroad in Africa, South America, Australia, and Germany. One of the club’s members, Jerry Jourdan, was featured in Michigan Audubon’s recent email listserv Species Spotlight for finding two rarity sparrows, a Golden-crowned and a Harris’ Sparrow, in his own backyard. Jerry Jourdan and club leadership including Bob Petit, Anne Smith, Karen Potts, and many others, participated in the Monroe County Christmas Bird Count

(CBC). Members of the ESBA also attend the Biggest Week in Birding at Magee Marsh and have regularly attended Michigan Audubon events such as CraneFest, the Tawas Point Birding Festival, and recently, the 2015 Midwest Birding Symposium.

Club members not only regularly participate in citizen science projects like the CBC, but also often volunteer at and support their local metroparks and wildlife refuges as part of their motto of conservation. Anne Smith explains, “Some members are involved in banding, bird counts, and conservation issues. All members share a love of birding, nature, the environment, and the outdoors.” ESBA also has a strong focus on educational presentations, and has hosted speakers such as Bill Rapai, Allen Chartier, Josh Haas, Don Burlett, and Shelley Martinez. The presentation topics vary—bird, plant, and butterfly identification and conservation, habitat restoration, and birding abroad—although all focus on nature.

ESBA’s meetings are open to the public, and most information can be found on its website. Like many similar nature groups, ESBA is reaching out to new members online, seeking to gain the attention of younger birders and nature enthusiasts. Members are active on Facebook groups such as Mich-listers, and post regularly on ESBA’s own Facebook page. Further details about meetings and online presence can be found below.

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

Oak Openings Trip, April 2005. © Anne Smith



ESBA Tent at Hawkfest. © Karen Potts



Meetings

7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month, September-November and January-April in room 201 of the Life Science Building (Building L) at the Monroe County Community College, 1555 S. Raisinville Road, Monroe, Michigan 48161.

The month of December is reserved for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count and in May the Biggest Week in American Birding in Oak Harbor, OH.

Leaders

President: Anne Smith, milner100@sbcglobal.net
Vice-President: Rita Montague, rmontag2@comcast.net
Secretary: Karen Potts, ladydotts_1@netzero.net
Treasurer: Carolyn Boellner, cmbuellner@aol.com

Website

Homepage: www.esba-monroe.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/ESBAMonroe

WPBO: 2015 Fall Owl Count

EXCERPTED FROM REPORT BY TIM BAERWALD AND MIKE MCDONALD, WITH PERMISSION



Northern Saw-whet Owl. © Skye Haas

This year marked the 22nd season of fall owl banding at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. The project commenced on the night of September 15 and extended through the morning of November 1. Mist nets were open 43 of the 47 possible nights, with all of our lost hours due to wind and/or rain. Northern Saw-whet Owls, Boreal Owls, and Long-eared Owls were the target species. Three separate audio lures were stationed at standardized mist net locations. During the fall period, a total of 236 owls representing three species were banded: 214 Northern Saw-whet Owls, 20 Long-eared Owls, and two Barred Owls. Although somewhat expected as it is at the bottom of their cycle, it was still disappointing to miss Boreal Owls this season.

In addition to the 236 owls banded, we had nine foreign recaptures this season, all of which were Northern Saw-whet Owls. It's always very exciting to capture a bird that had previously been banded elsewhere. Of the ten recaptures, we have information thus far on six: one banded last fall near Hunt's Dale, PA.; one banded in fall 2012 at Hawk Ridge, MN; one banded last fall near Babcock, WI; one banded in fall 2012 near Yellowwood, IN; one banded last fall at Long Point Bird Observatory, ONT; and one banded in fall 2013 in MA. We had one recapture of a Saw-whet Owl banded at WPBO from this spring.

Long-eared Owls set a new fall high, with this season's count of 20 topping the previous record of 15 set in 2006. The first Long-eared of the season arrived on September 28 and the last on October 30. While there wasn't a noticeable peak in Long-eareds, we enjoyed multiple nights with

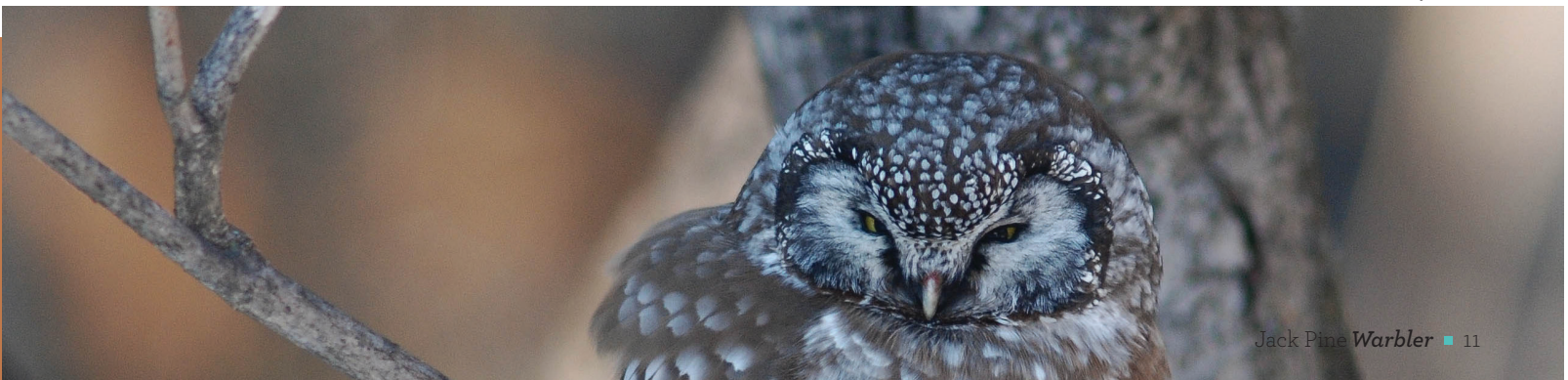
two or three individuals. For Northern Saw-whet Owls, this season's total of 214 was above the 21-year average of 188 and is the 9th highest fall on record, although still below the all-time fall high of 389 in 2010. As expected, the Northern Saw-whet Owl peak occurred between October 3 and 5, with 50 banded during that period, including a season high of 22 banded on October 4. Barred Owls occurred on September 21 and October 17.

We were lucky enough to have good weather for most of the season; in fact it wasn't until the 29th day of the season that the weather forced us to stay closed for the night. Noteworthy weather events this season included northern lights and a lunar eclipse on September 27. Other excitement from the net lanes included Spring Peepers, Blue-spotted Salamanders, Woodland Jumping Mouse, Little Brown Bats, Ermine, Mink, White-tailed Deer, and a Moose, which luckily avoided our nets.

Thank you to Whitefish Point Bird Observatory for continuing to support fall banding research. Special thanks to Rich and Brenda Keith, Nova Mackentley, and to Chris Neri, who answered the many questions that arose during our first season at the Point. Thanks to all who have supported research this fall, including those who adopted an owl or brought us goodies (especially Tom Wheeler), and Eric Ripma who proved to be a lucky charm throughout the season.

Excerpts from the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory owl count blog, written by Tim Baerwald and Mike McDonald (wpbo.org), are used with permission.

Boreal Owl. © Skye Haas



Announcements

Spring Bluebird Festival Heads to PCCI

The Michigan Bluebird Society (MBS) will hold its annual spring festival on Sunday March 19 at the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute (PCCI), located just south of Hastings. This free event runs from 10:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m., with expert speakers, a program on live birds of prey, and a Bluebird Expo where you can purchase all types of bluebird gear and themed gifts. A panel discussion will be held from 11:00 a.m. until noon where you can get all of your bluebird questions answered.

The complete schedule of activities is available at michiganbluebirds.org/festival. If you are planning to attend, please register by calling John Harville at 269-473-2667, and leave a message with your name, number attending, and a phone number where you can be reached. Or you can send an email containing the same information to eventreg@michiganbluebirds.org.

PCCI is located at 701 W. Cloverdale Road, Hastings. Directions are available at PCCI's website, cedarcreekinstitute.org. Allow time in your day to enjoy the over seven miles of trails on the grounds of PCCI. Great birding opportunities await.

New Festival on the Horizon

Because of the burgeoning interest in birding activities in the Straits region, the Mackinaw Straits Raptor Watch will hold its first birding festival in 2016. The Mackinaw Raptor Fest (MRF) is scheduled for April 1 and 2 in the Mackinaw City-Petoskey area. It will feature William Bowerman, Ph.D., from the University of Maryland, as its keynote speaker, discussing 55 years of bald eagle nesting research in Michigan.

MRF offers day-time hawk watching, a presentation by Wings of Wonder, and exciting and topical breakout sessions. The event concludes with a dinner and the keynote speaker address at Audie's in Mackinaw City.

Generous core funding for the festival has been received from the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation and the Petoskey Area Visitors Bureau. Complete details and registration information are available at www.MackinawRaptorFest.org.

Golden Eagle, photographed in Michigan. © Phil Odum



Open House at Capital City Bird Sanctuary at Hawk Valley Farm

Please join us from 9:00–11:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 7 for an open house at Capital City Bird Sanctuary, featuring a free tour and nature walk, co-sponsored by Delta Township Parks and Recreation and Michigan Audubon. Capital City Bird Sanctuary is a new public nature sanctuary that protects 65 acres of forest, meadow, and riverside habitats. Nearly two miles of unpaved trails offer visitors a chance to get close to nature and observe birds, flowers, and wildlife. Come for a tour and participatory nature walk where you'll learn about habitat projects at the sanctuary and observe birds, native plants, and other wildlife. Please wear sturdy walking shoes or boots for unpaved, grassy, or muddy trails. Some poison ivy and insects are on the property so please wear long pants. Bring binoculars if you have them. We hope to see you there.

Capital City Bird Sanctuary at Hawk Valley Farm is located northwest of downtown Lansing, on Delta River Drive. Parking is available at Hawk Meadow Park, 6160 Delta River Drive. The sanctuary entrance is south of the Hawk Meadow Park parking area, marked by a wooden kiosk.



Backyard Bird Habitat Workshops

Join Michigan Audubon and Saving Birds Thru Habitat's Kay Charter for an all-day workshop focused on the critical relationship between birds and native plants. Attendees will learn why birds need native plants, which native plants are "powerhouses" for birds, and how you can turn your backyard into a natural bird feeder. The workshop will feature an indoor educational session in the morning, followed by an outdoor field trip in the afternoon to visit good examples of bird-friendly yards. The Lansing workshop will include a trip to Wildtype in Mason, where owner Bill Schneider will tour us around this unique native plant nursery. Participants will have the opportunity to shop and explore during one of the few days this great resource is open to the public. They will take home a resource bag packed with helpful tips and a native shrub or packet of Michigan native wildflower seed to kick start a backyard habitat. Lunch is provided. Please dress appropriately for the outdoors, as this event will take place rain or shine. Binoculars are highly encouraged.

If you love watching birds, please join us to learn how you can support our birds by stewarding healthy, native habitat around your home, office, school, or neighborhood. Choose one of two dates available for the workshop. Registration is now open. Visit our website for details.

Lansing, MI Sunday, May 15, 2016, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

East Tawas, MI (as part of the Tawas Point Birding Festival), Thursday, May 19, 2016, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Cost: \$25 for members; \$50 for non-members (includes a membership)

New Birding Trail to Be Established in Eastern Upper Peninsula

The north shoreline of Lake Huron in Michigan's Upper Peninsula has long been known as one of the most beautiful and pristine areas of wilderness in all of the Midwest. The Nature Conservancy has recognized this area of shoreline as one of "The Last Great Places" in the northern hemisphere. The rocky shorelines and protected bays in this area create excellent habitats for many species of sport fish, a multitude of rare orchids and ferns, and one of the Midwest's most diverse collections of bird species. Many local non-profits and government agencies have successfully protected large amounts of shoreline and surrounding areas through conservation easements and the creation of nature preserves. It is within these areas and along that rocky coastline that a new birding trail will be established this spring.

The North Huron Birding Trail will be launched officially during the 2nd Annual Aldo Leopold Festival in Cedarville, May 13–15. The theme of the 2016 festival will be birding. More information can be found at lescheneaux.org.

The trail will run along the Lake Huron shore from St. Ignace to Detour and will include areas in the Les Cheneaux Islands and on Drummond Island, with locations at Point Le Barbe, the Woollam Nature Preserve, and many preserves and state forest campgrounds along the way. There will also be locations in the Pickford area that will provide grassland birds in summer and raptors, longspurs, and Horned Lark in the winter. This will be an all-year birding trail as the winter birding in the Eastern UP is exceptional. A new website is being created that will be active soon, which features an interactive map of the trail. The website, northhuronbirding.com, should be complete in March.

Please Welcome Membership Manager Lyn Scrimger

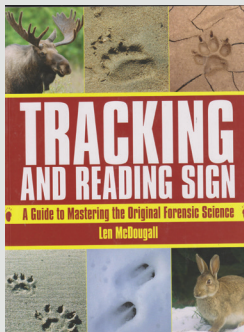
Although he has been with Michigan Audubon since July 2015, we want to officially introduce our newest team member, Lyn Scrimger. Lyn is transforming the role of part-time membership assistant to a full-time membership manager. Certified in Microsoft Excel and Word and having taught Access, Lyn brings much needed organization and efficiency to our membership services, sending renewal reminders, thank-you notes, and a special series of donation appeals. When he's not having fun with Microsoft Excel or helping members, Lyn enjoys time with his family, cycling, fly-fishing, and wildlife-watching. Prior conservation experience includes 15 years with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. He has a bachelor's degree in environmental education, and a master's degree in labor relations and human resources from Michigan State University.

Dated Material

Michigan Audubon Bookstore

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

Every so often, Michigan Audubon needs to clear some titles out of the Nature Bookstore. The following books are on sale. Please note that there may be only one copy of each of these titles. To request a title, please call Wendy at 517-580-7364. Member discount does not apply to items on sale.



Tracking and Reading Sign

by Len McDougall

\$18.95; **SALE: \$14.21**

This book bills itself as the definitive one-stop guide for any person looking for a better understanding of our animal neighbors. The book profiles 23 different mammal species, although only four are rodents (Gray Squirrel, Woodchuck, Snowshoe Hare, and Eastern Cottontail). The author introduces you to the principals of tracking and reading sign to help you analyze what you find in the field.

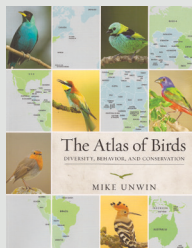


Ornithology

by Ellen Doris

\$16.95; **SALE: \$8.48 - ONLY ONE LEFT**

Produced by the Children's School of Science, this book is written for the pre-teenager (age 9-12). This is a book that any child who dreams of making birding their career should have. It includes experiments and projects and encourages children to use their own observations and discoveries to understand the natural world around them.

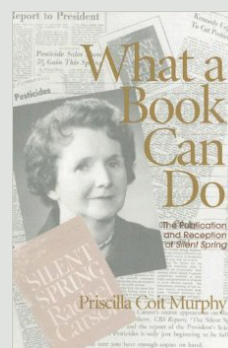


The Atlas of Birds

by Mike Unwin

\$22.95; **SALE: \$17.21**

All the families of birds are covered in this atlas, which displays the diversity of a member of each family including an illustrated range map of the world. It covers bird behavior and conservation efforts to save species. It also covers the evolution of birds and their classification. The last chapter is dedicated to protecting birds.

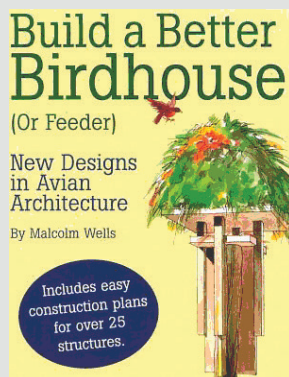


What a Book Can Do

by Priscilla Coit Murphy

\$22.95; **SALE: \$11.48 - ONLY ONE LEFT**

This book follows the story of Silent Spring, the groundbreaking book by Rachel Carson that led to the ban on DDT, and the controversy caused by the book's release. It includes information on Carson's opponents and the counter campaign they launched to try to stop its publication. Murphy also covers the media storm that followed the book's publication and the public reception of that news.



Build a Better Birdhouse (or Feeder)

by Malcolm Wells

\$9.95; **SALE: \$4.98 - ONLY ONE LEFT**

This book includes the construction plans for over 25 structures, including many unique designs. Nest boxes for a wide variety of birds and designs for birds that construct their nests on a flat surface are included. Also included are five feeder designs and the plans for making a bird bath. This book is designed for the experienced woodworker.

Order online, by phone, e-mail, or mail

Online. michiganaudubonstore.com (Discount code: MIAudubon14)

By phone. 517-580-7364

By e-mail. Wendy@michiganaudubon.org

By mail. Send name, address, phone number, and payment to Michigan Audubon Bookstore, 2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200, Okemos, MI 48864. Prepayment includes list price + 6% sales tax + \$4.25 postage and handling for the first item + \$.85 for each additional item.

Payment accepted: Visa or MasterCard