

Jack Pine *Warbler*

THE WINTER BIRDING ISSUE: Smitten for Winter Birding in the Mitten ■ The Loon Network ■ Four Seasons of Birding Paradise ■ Christmas Bird Count ■ Haehnle Sanctuary Update ■ 2017 Birding Events ■ Spotlight On Our Chapters ■ For the Birds T-Shirt Contest Winner



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Chris Neri is an owl bander at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. This picture was taken [waiting for info from Chris]

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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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From the Executive Director

When Pilot Projects Prosper: The Loon Network

Most of us have heard the old saying that every cell in the body is changed over a period of seven years. Rudolph Steiner, the great teacher of Anthroposophy, said that seven-year cycles of development continue throughout life. It seems there is much we can learn at the 7-year evaluative point, which is where The Loon Network (TLN), a pilot project of Michigan Audubon that has been sustained by volunteers and donors for the past 7 years, currently stands. As Executive Director of this organization, I wanted to get an up-close understanding of the work of TLN in north-west Michigan so that we can begin to evaluate and determine the next stage of evolution for this project and how it can best adapt to become increasingly valuable in other parts of the state.

The Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed Loon Network is a group of volunteers committed to using a watershed approach to protect threatened common loons in Michigan. The lioness' share of volunteer coordination, networking, and on-the-ground, consistent assistance to the banding program has been carried by one woman, Peg Comfort, for the past 7 years. The spirit of Peg's dedication to this species and to the work of the Loon Network is palpable; in fact, it fills the room (or, if en route to banding, the boat).

Rachelle Roake, Michigan Audubon's Conservation Science Coordinator, and I ventured to Torch Lake in July to get witness the volunteerism, communication, coordination, and real work that goes into sustaining the Loon Network and banding of common loons on the Elk River Chain of Lakes. While Michigan Audubon started this program as a pilot project, we have steadily relied on the dedication of volunteers to educate and empower lake residents to help protect the loons, assist in coordinating conservation efforts on the lakes, sustain the project's momentum, and work with biologists and researchers to collect adequate data.

Volunteerism

At the project's inception, **Peg Comfort** stepped into and held onto this role with gusto and skill. While the Common Loon is one of the most impressive birds I've had the pleasure of admiring up-close, and has long been one of the top 3 species that bring me to a total halt, I admired the multifarious volunteerism of Peg Comfort just as well during my visit to the lakes. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge how valuable Peg has been in assisting with this project for such a long period of time; it takes a village to launch a project of this scale, and Peg has been the mayor of that village.



Collaboration

Peg, and the Loon Network as a whole, has worked very closely with Joe Kaplan, conservation biologist and director of Common Coast Research and Conservation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and study of loons and migratory birds in Michigan. Joe's colleague, Damon McCormick, has invested hundreds of hours conducting the spring survey to determine the number of banded loons returning to the watershed.

During our visit, Joe did the work of banding the birds. Joe's ethics, philosophy, approach, and attitude soar to a level above high standards; his focus and intention is on gathering what we can from these birds in the long-term so that we can study, understand, and conserve them better in our state—for their sake. Everything we do in the Loon Network is for their betterment and protection, from providing safe nesting platforms to monitoring nesting pairs to regional education efforts to data collection and research connected to banding. Joe's work is ethically on-point, distilled conservation in action.

Joe painstakingly prepped and sanded the bands so that the birds would feel them as little as possible – “kind of like wedding ring,” he noted. I so appreciated Joe's approach with the birds. Having a history with bird rehabilitation myself, I was immediately put at ease by his integrity at every step. I was also moved by his interactions with the people—visitors and volunteers at various sites, several of which were moved nearly to tears and full of stories about the nesting loons on “our lakes”—with presence



Common Loon and Chick © Brian Lasenby

and care. He gave his work pause for their sharing, and was gracious and encouraging of the ways they were able and willing to help. Loons are entrancing, mythic birds. It is no wonder or surprise that so many people are drawn to them and easily pulled into helping however they can. Thankfully, in this 500-square-mile watershed, people have had the opportunity to do just that and it has made a difference for loons.



Peg Comfort and Joe Kaplan banding loons in Elk River Chain of Lakes.

Community

So much of conservation is about people—not just our collective impact, but the individual. The conservation biologist or researcher committed to a higher, whole-hearted approach to studying and protecting birds. The volunteer field coordinator who supports the woven communal work of it all (without pay) with fire, expert touch, and heart. The volunteer who drives her motor boat out in the middle of the night to help us band two loon chicks. The retired engineer volunteering his time to build and help install nesting platforms. The folks spending their Sunday afternoon on “marine patrol,” searching for nesting pairs. The listening crowd at the nature center, taking in a presentation about the natural history of loons and making

room in themselves to care and understand. To help, even as educational ambassadors. The individual resident installing a sign so that boaters are aware and cautious of nearby nesting loons.

I sharpen my focus on the individual because of what we can learn when we study one another; we can be moved to act and grow from that study and reflection. There is always much to learn about birds, we will thankfully never be done learning about them and better the world we share with them. But the path of community-building bird conservation is rooted in good, humble learning on a social level. After all, “environmental problems are really social problems anyway” (Edmund Hillary). I was motivated to write this because it really is worth paying attention to those instances, experiences, and programs that really do work, that contribute to the betterment of the lives of birds.

Once in awhile, in the world of conservation, the magic of the right people fit into place and tangible, meaningful progress is made. I can soundly say that has been the case with our pilot project in The Loon Network. As we stand in this evaluative place, considering how TLN will evolve and continue to contribute to conservation, education, and research of the Common Loon, I want to take pause and give thanks to the individual and the collective—for caring about loons in Michigan and helping us do what we can for them over the past seven years and well into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Heather Good'.

Heather Good, Executive Director

Resources

Learn more about the Loon Network at:
<http://commonloon.org>

Learn more about one year in the life of a loon at:
<http://commoncoast.org/commoncoast/one.html>

Learn more about botulism and common loons at:
<http://www.audubon.org/news/avian-botulism-plaguing-lake-michigan-common-loons-suffering>



Learn More, Do More for Common Loons

BY RACHELLE ROAKE

Although considered an icon of Michigan wilderness, the common loon is a threatened species in the state. Both loons and humans share a love of quiet inland lakes, but unfortunately our desire to live and recreate on lakes has negatively impacted our wild neighbors. Threats to loon populations are many, but whether you live on a lake with loons or not, there are ways we can each conserve and protect common loons.

Watercraft use

Motorized watercraft pose a significant threat to disturbing loons, in many cases causing abandonment of nests, physical injury, or even death in chicks, which are inexperienced divers for many months.

What you can do:

- Stay far away from any Loon Nesting Area signs or buoys. • Respect no wake zones as wave action can wash out nests or eggs.
- When observing loons, even from canoes or kayaks, keep a minimum distance of 200 feet. If you see a loon lift up out of the water with wings pinned to the side (called the “penguin dance”) this is a sign of extreme agitation; leave the area immediately, but slowly to avoid injuring loon adults or chicks.
- If you see anyone harassing loons, report the situation to your local Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officer. If there are recurring issues with high boat traffic and nesting loons, the area may qualify for Loon Nesting Area Buoys, which are also obtained through the Department of Natural Resources.
- Help educate others by asking to post educational materials and signs at public boat launches.

Habitat loss

Shoreline development has significantly reduced the amount of available nesting, nursery, and foraging habitat for loons. Dense stands of invasive emergent plants like phragmites or non-native cattails significantly decrease habitat quality as well. Human-free, small islands or floating mats of vegetation

provide a safe place for loons to nest, but these are increasingly difficult to find.

What you can do:

- If you live on a lake, leave a buffer strip of native vegetation along your shoreline and encourage your neighbors to do the same. The next time a tree falls in the water, leave it for fish and aquatic insects to use. Loons will often look for sheltered areas with vegetation and woody debris to forage and use as a chick nursery.
- Contact your local Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) for guidance on best methods of invasive plant control.
- For otherwise suitable lakes, Artificial Nesting Platforms can provide a safe, floating substrate for loons to nest on. These platforms require a dedicated volunteer to monitor nesting activity and maintain.

Fishing line and lead tackle

Entanglement in fishing line and ingestion of lead tackle are significant causes of mortality for loons. Loons become poisoned by eating a fish that has ingested lead tackle or by ingesting lead sinkers from the lake bottom in their search for pebbles that aid in digestion. Lead poisoning is lethal and can occur from ingesting just one lead sinker.

What can you do:

- If you fish, use only lead-free tackle and encourage friends and neighbors to do the same. If you see loons, avoid fishing nearby as loons may mistake your lure for a prey item.
- Ask about lead-free options at tackle shops; if they don't stock any, your interest may inspire them to offer lead-free tackle in the future.
- Clean up any discarded fishing line or tackle in or near the water.
- Join efforts to enact laws that prohibit the sale and use of lead tackle in Michigan.

Water quality

Just like humans, loons like to live on healthy lakes with clean water. Invasive aquatic plants, agricultural runoff, lawn chemical runoff, removal of shoreline vegetation, and sewage may all impact lakes with heavy human use. Pollutants lead to changes in water clarity, loss of aquatic insects, and declines in fish populations that make it difficult for loons to find enough food to raise young chicks. In the Great Lakes where loons migrate and overwinter, botulism, a neurological illness, can cause mass die-offs of loons and other diving waterbirds.

What can you do:

- If you live on a lake, reduce or eliminate the use of lawn fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Have your septic tank checked regularly to catch any issues early. Leave a buffer strip of native vegetation along the shoreline to filter water and reduce erosion.
- When you remove your boat from any water body, check for invasive aquatic plant “hitchhikers” and thoroughly clean the boat before entering another water body.
- Contact your local Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) for guidance on best methods of invasive plant control.
- Follow environmentally-friendly practices to reduce the impacts of climate change (warming waters, the spread of invasive species, etc.). Try using refillable water bottles; walking, biking, or carpooling to work; or bringing reusable totes to the grocery store.



Common Loons Feeding Chick Pano © Josh Haas

Smitten for Winter Birding in the Mitten

BY KIRBY ADAMS

Winter might be the best birding season in Michigan. That sounds like heresy in a state with fantastic songbird migrations twice a year, but winter provides opportunities unique to this region. There are plenty of gulls around, but there's so much more to do in February than looking for the one gull that's a little bit grayer than the others. Of course, there are birders who love the hunt for the oddball gull, and they come here in droves when the weather turns nasty. Gull watching can be a test of perseverance, identification skill, and resistance to frostbite. It can also reward you with stunning rarities. Landfills, wastewater lagoons, and shoreline gathering spots often provide Iceland, Thayer's, and Glaucous Gulls, the trio of arctic visitors most likely to be teased out of a group of Herring Gulls. Great Black-backed Gulls, the monstrosities of the family, stand out with their dark mantles and hulking size. The best way to learn how to find an odd gull is to go out with experienced gull watchers. The process is deceptively simple. You point your spotting scope at a group of gulls and check them one-by-one. The problem arises with knowing what to look for and how to confirm it's really something different. The dominant gull here in winter is the Herring Gull, which is remarkably variable. Add to that the four life cycles most of our gulls go through – each with a distinctly different look – and you have an identification nightmare... or a thrilling challenge. It's all in how you look at gulls, literally.

Ducks and waterfowl haunt many of the same areas as the gulls, but provide a little more color for the birder who needs a break from five hundred shades of gray. Birders from around the world admire North America's stunning collection of ducks, and the Great Lakes host almost all of them at some point over the winter. Massive flotillas of ducks rank among the most impressive spectacles in winter birding. The numbers can be hard to imagine until you see them in person. A thousand Long-tailed Ducks patrolling the St. Clair River at Port Huron in February and four thousand Northern Shovelers floating at the Muskegon Wastewater System in December should be on the Michigan birding bucket list. A trip to Lake Erie Metropark can lead to a sighting of 50,000 Canvasback.

Sometimes the gathering s of ducks happen at unexpected places. A night roost of several hundred Common Goldeneye was discovered on a secluded bend on the Grand River right in Lansing two winters ago. Other times, it's the duck themselves



Michigan Audubon's Warren Sanctuary in winter. © Laura Christensen

that are unexpected. When the Great Lakes froze solid that same winter, a Barrow's Goldeneye and a King Eider delighted birders with close views in the Muskegon River channel, which was some of the only open water for many miles.



Long-tailed Duck © Steve Byland

Away from the water, winter birding can be even more interesting for the traveler willing to head north. Eastern Chippewa County is legendary for late winter finch birding, although owls, raptors, and grouse are liberally sprinkled into the mix. Pine Grosbeaks raid any roadside trees with fruit while flocks of Common Redpolls swarm to the front yard feeders. Red Crossbills patrol the pines and spruce, but often descend to roads to pick at salt, making them much easier to spot. While not a finch, Bohemian Waxwings are usually on the most wanted list for a trip to the UP in winter. In many years they camp at regular spots like the



Male Red Crossbill © Ben Lucking

crabapple trees behind the post office in Dafer, an obscure spot well known to local birders.

Of course, no discussion of winter birds in Michigan would be complete without mentioning the Snowy Owl. Irruptions of Snowy Owls are traditionally cyclical, with a large incursion every four to five winters with sparse sightings in between. For the past four winters, there seems to be an ongoing irruption making the Snowy Owl an easy bird to find all over Michigan. One even spent this entire summer near Gaylord. An afternoon drive in Chippewa County on the famous “Rudyard Loop” can produce almost enough owls to make a birder tired of them, but then again, who wouldn’t be happy with one more of these beauties after seeing 18 of them in four hours?

We haven’t even mentioned the Rough-legged Hawks in open areas across the state, or flocks of Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, and Lapland Longspurs in farm fields everywhere. There’s no end to the avian treasures in a Michigan winter, perhaps the best of all being the chickadees, titmice,

woodpeckers, and goldfinches in your backyard. Feeders attract all manner of birds into an area that allows you to bird from the comfort of your recliner. The birds linger longer than in summer, and the lack of foliage makes them easier to follow when they take seeds back to a perch. Feeder watching is often maligned as not being “real birding,” but it’s as much a part of winter in Michigan as college football, hot pasties, and icy windshields. Dedicated feeder watchers will snag Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, and even the occasional Common Redpoll all the way down in Detroit. If that’s not birding, nothing is.

Consider cleaning your binoculars and scope this winter, not to pack them away until warbler season, but to use them every weekend to see who’s visiting the mitten. You might just be surprised at what you answer the next time someone asks what the best birding season is.

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



American Goldfinch winter colors © Dave Herman



Four Seasons of Birding Paradise along Michigan's North Huron Coast

BY ELLIOT NELSON



Bohemian Waxing in Crabapple Tree © Paul Rossi Birds

The Eastern Upper Peninsula (EUP) is known for a handful of wonderful birding locations. Spring migration at Whitefish Point or winter birding in Sault Ste. Marie attract birders from near and far. But many do not think of the EUP as a four-seasons birding wonderland with habitat ranging from rocky shoreline to sprawling sedge meadows. The newly-established North Huron Birding Trail seeks to help exploring birders navigate this birding paradise in all four seasons.

Spring

As the ice thaws along the Straits of Mackinac, the birds who spent their winters south begin to return. A number of peninsulas jut out into Lake Huron acting as landing pads for birds crossing the Great Lakes. Places like Search Bay in Cedarville or Point LaBarbe in St. Ignace are spectacular migration concentration points on par with places like Tawas Point. Over 27 species of warblers, along with vireos, flycatchers and tanagers regularly land in large numbers along these points. Despite the cooling effect of the lake and delayed leaf out along the shoreline, most birds stay right near the shore where they are easy to see. This is due to the fact that throughout May various species of midge (a small insect) hatch from the water and live as adults on the shoreline for less than a week. Warblers and other songbirds have amazingly timed their arrival to directly line up with the midge hatch, allowing them to refuel before completing their journey.

Summer

Often overlooked by birders, Summer is one of the best times of year to track down a plethora of difficult to see species. One of the best areas to do this is the Munuscong Wildlife Management Area, a sprawling complex of forests, coastal wetland and sedge meadow. The coastal wetland here provides breeding habitat to birds like the Sedge Wren, American Bittern and Black Tern. For those dedicated enough to explore the wetland before dawn, one will be rewarded with the distinct tapping call of the elusive Yellow Rail. Head out to the pothole region of the management area in the morning and you will hear the subtle call of the sulking Le Conte's sparrow. Continue to explore the hayfields and grasslands of Pickford and you will find Upland Sandpiper, Bobolink and a number of sparrow species. Bring your bug spray and don't miss out on summer birding adventures!

Fall

Some spectacular congregations of migrating birds make the EUP a great place to enjoy the fall colors. From September to early October you can find Sandhill Cranes staging in the hundreds in the fields of Pickford and Rudyard. In those fields the numbers of American Kestrels and Northern Harriers increases dramatically as more birds move in from the north. Check the plowed fields for flocks of Black-bellied and American Goldenplover as well as the occasional Buff-breasted Sandpiper. If you're up for a challenge, scan the woods and shrub lines wherever you go and you will most certainly run into a flock of fall warblers in their non-breeding plumage. Break out that field guide and start working on your fall warbler ID skills!



Sharp-Tailed Grouse Dancing in Snow © Paul Rossi Birds

Winter

Many make the trek in January and February to scan the open fields of Pickford and Rudyard despite the often bone chilling temperatures. Nothing quite warms a birder's heart like the site of a Snowy Owl perched atop a fence post. Centerline Road in Rudyard is nearly always a guarantee for a Snowy or two, but the open fields of Pickford have also garnered large numbers of Snowies. Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Shrike are common finds in the winter along with Pine Grosbeak, Bohemian Waxwing and Redpolls wherever there are feeders or fruit trees. Ask any Yooper and they'll be sure to tell you winter lasts more than two months. Snow begins to fall as early as November and continues well into March. November and December are must-bird months for those in the St. Ignace area. Looking out over

the Mackinac Bridge you will see large flocks of Long-tailed ducks, Scaup, and a massive congregation of Redhead, often reaching over 10,000 birds. March is another must visit month for the grouse lover. This time of year scan the fields of Pickford to find a Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. These birds work themselves into quite a tizzy with males stomping their feet in an elaborate "dance" in hopes of attracting a mate. While the winters are long, they bring some excellent birds well worth the cold and snow.

Elliot Nelson is a Michigan Sea Grant Extension Educator in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. MI Sea Grant works to promote coastal economies and protect Great Lakes coastal resources through research, education and outreach.

There's never a season where you don't want to be birding in the EUP. Check out the resources below and plan your trip today!

Birding Information:

North Huron Birding Trail

www.northhuronbirding.com

Printed brochures available at various locations

ABA Birder's Guide to Michigan

Online book retailers including Michigan Audubon online bookstore

Breeding birds of the Eastern UP

www.paulrossibirds.wordpress.com

Dinning and Lodging:

St. Ignace

tel: 888-338-6660

www.stignace.com

Les Cheneaux area

tel: 888-364-7526

www.lescheneaux.org

Drummond Island

tel: 800-737-8666

www.drummondislandchamber.com



Snowy Owl © Rick Arbuckle

Your First Christmas Bird Count

BY RACHELLE ROAKE

This year marks the 117th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), an annual winter census of birds across the Western hemisphere. This survey is one of the two largest long-term data sets used to estimate bird population trends (the other data set is the Breeding Bird Survey). More generally, the CBC is an event of camaraderie. The CBC is a chance for birders (and non-birders) to come together in the doldrums of winter in search of every titmouse and snowy owl. Many groups uphold traditions of pre-dawn breakfasts and spirited luncheons where teams converge to compare lists in good-natured competition. Many Michigan birders are loyal participants, but signing up can seem daunting for first-timers. We've gathered basic information and compiled answers to frequently asked questions to get new volunteers ready for their first CBC!

What is it?

The CBC is an annual census of birds across the US, Canada, Central and South America. The survey gathers data on the number and distribution of wintering species.

Why should I participate?

You'll be contributing to local and international bird conservation, all while reconnecting with old friends or meeting new ones.

I'm not an expert birder – is that okay?

The CBC welcomes birders of all ages and experience levels. Even if you know nothing about birds, if you can see movement or hear a bird making noise you can be an excellent spotter.

The CBC also appreciates non-birders who are willing to drive back-seat birders or keep a tally of observations.

How much does it cost?

In the past, there was a small participant fee but now the survey is completely free; however donations are accepted by the National Audubon Society to maintain the CBC database. If you carpool with others during your survey, you may consider chipping in for gas money.

Where is it?

Surveys take place within established "circles," each with a

15-mile diameter. While the entire state isn't covered, Michigan has 74 CBC circles.

When is it?

The CBC takes place between December 14th and January 5th. However, each circle will select one, 24-hour period on one calendar day to survey. Many surveys take place during the weekend to attract the most participants.

What can I expect on my first CBC day?

Some hardcore birders begin early to search for owls pre-dawn, but most groups meet in the early morning at a café, diner, or other breakfast-bearing location to assign teams and locations.

Each team will survey a designated area within the circle. Teams may walk trails, check bird feeders, or observe from the vehicle as long as they are within the designated circle. Some teams may rally at a favorite lunch hotspot, while others gather for a potluck dinner to compile data and wrap up the event.

How do I get involved?

You can find a map of CBC circles and leader (or "compiler") contact information on the National Audubon website. Locate the nearest CBC circle and contact the official compiler to sign up.

How can I prepare?

While no preparation is necessary, you may practice your winter bird ID skills or scout survey areas ahead of time to locate potential hotspots.

Pack a supply bag the night before. Some good items to pack include: binoculars, scopes, cameras, gloves, scarves, hats, extra layers, hand-warmers, tissues, water, snacks, and a thermos of your favorite hot beverage (packed the day of!).

Is it fun?

Owl say!

Rachelle Roake is the Conservation Science Coordinator for Michigan Audubon and can be reached at rroake@michiganaudubon.org.

Spotlight: Michigan Audubon's Chapters

If you're a regular reader of the Jack Pine Warbler, you've noticed and read the Chapter Spotlight section, a portion of the magazine dedicated to delving into the unique attributes of one of our nearly-40 individual chapters across the state. In this issue, we want to reach out to you if you are a member of a chapter... and if you aren't, there's something here for you, too.

What's the difference between a chapter, the state-wide organization (Michigan Audubon), and National Audubon Society?

Good question. If you can drum up any recollection of your high school Government class, some of the same qualities actually apply to the various levels of non-profit organizations and how their work is developed, shared, funded, and implemented. Your support of Michigan Audubon keeps our work at the state-level strong as we sustain a 100+ year legacy as the state's oldest conservation organization. Your donations and membership support our work of connecting birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research efforts in the State of Michigan. What's in it for you? You get this magazine, the *Jack Pine Warbler*, six times a year, our monthly eNews, discounts on events and purchases at the Owl's Roost Gift Shop at WPBO and Michigan Audubon merchandise, and, most of all: the satisfaction of knowing you're a part of a valuable team working to protect birds and wildlife habitat in Michigan.

I'm already a member of Michigan Audubon. Why should I consider joining at the chapter (community) level?

One of the biggest reasons people join a chapter at the community level is networking. Membership in a chapter can provide you with opportunities to meet like-minded people, attend regular birding field trips, monthly educational programs, and special events to nurture your interest in birds and conservation in Michigan. In general, there tends to be more "doing" at the chapter level for you: more things to attend and volunteer for, which can be fun, rewarding, and meaningful.

Another big reason--apart from loving birds and wanting to share in and develop your knowledge and network further--is volunteerism. Our chapters, each with their own unique strengths, help carry out our mission. The muscle and spirit of our chapters is rooted in volunteer efforts, so if you are thinking about giving back to nature, to birds, and to your community so that more people can understand and protect native birds and habitat in Michigan, there is a place in a Michigan Audubon chapter for you.

Some chapters are dedicated to stewardship work at our various bird sanctuaries, and put a great deal of time and effort into maintaining these sanctuaries for all to enjoy, developing land management plans, managing invasive species, monitoring nest boxes, collecting data related to bird activity, writing content, creating maps, etc. If you have a love of the land and want to give in this capacity, we will work to connect you to a chapter or a grassroots-effort in your area.

Questions about chapters?

Write to us at birds@michiganaudubon.org.

I'm already a member of a chapter.

Great! Thank you for caring about birds, volunteering in your

community, and carrying out the important work of our mission locally. We so appreciate the steadfast work of our chapters and we want to get to know you better. Would you be willing to share with us some information about your chapter involvement and feedback?

We Want to Hear From You!

We've put together a survey for chapters and/or individuals belonging to Michigan Audubon chapters to complete by December 31, 2016. There is no limit to the number of surveys that can be submitted per chapter; we really do want to hear as many responses as possible so that we can work to better connect and support you and the work you're doing for the birds.

Take the survey here: <http://bit.ly/2ddWiiq>



UP Birding Trip with Jackson Audubon

We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon members:

Jessica Adamcyk
Rebecca Baucum
Beth Brown
Mary Colony
Benjamin Hack

Brandon Jex
David Mutchler
Gary O'Boyle
Laura Wong
Stacey Yost

We would like to thank our newest members as well as our renewing members for your support of Michigan Audubon's efforts to protect birds and their habitat through conservation, education and research. Please remember to check your magazine's expiration date and renew early. If you are moving or changing to a seasonal address, please contact our office by email, post, or phone so that we may stay in touch with you throughout the year.

Haehnle Sanctuary Restored Following Summer Vandalism

BY RACHELLE ROAKE



Haehnle Sanctuary Committee members Steve Jerant (left) and Bill Wells (right) repair the historic Haehnle sign. © Lathe Clafin

Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary is arguably Michigan Audubon's most beloved sanctuary. Well-known for attracting thousands of migrating sandhill cranes each fall, Haehnle Sanctuary is a hotspot of autumn activity for both birds and bird-watchers. Without a doubt, it is also Michigan Audubon's best cared for sanctuary thanks to the dedication of a core volunteer Sanctuary Committee, who have dedicated countless hours over several decades to the protection and enhancement of this property. For these reasons, a rash of vandalism at the sanctuary in late July was acutely painful and these sympathies were echoed across the birding community.

While the physical damage was mostly minor, the worst destruction cannot be repaired. The vandals ripped four bluebird nest boxes off their posts and threw them to the ground; unfortunately, two of these boxes held baby birds. "It is difficult to understand this senseless and pointless destruction," said Lathe Clafin, chair of the Haehnle Sanctuary Committee.

Though this event was heart-breaking, the response from the birding community has been impressive and inspiring. As news of the vandalism spread through media outlets and birding listservs, support began pouring in. Many people began visiting the sanctuary regularly to keep a vigilant presence on-site. Others offered financial support to begin physical repairs to the information kiosk; split rail fence; memorial observation deck; and historic, handmade Haehnle Sanctuary sign.

Thanks to the outpouring of support from the community, Haehnle Sanctuary will be fully restored just in time for the cranes to begin returning in earnest. The Haehnle Sanctuary Committee and Michigan Audubon sincerely thank all those who helped to monitor and restore the sanctuary following these malicious acts. Haehnle Sanctuary is a unique haven for birds and people because of those who care for it. The senseless acts of the few cannot outweigh the hearts of many. We thank you for your support, friends.

Ways to Help at Haehnle Sanctuary

- Be vigilant; if you see something suspicious, please report it.
- Donate your time to help repair or enhance the sanctuary.
- Join the Sanctuary Committee to have a long-term impact.
- Make a gift to the sanctuary's fund.

Nest box monitor Steve Jerant replaces a bluebird nest box that had been torn down. © Lathe Clafin



2017 Birding Events

Mark Your Calendars

Christmas Bird Count

December 14, 2016-January 5, 2017

The Christmas Bird Count is an annual census of birds across the US, Canada, Central and South America. The survey gathers data on the number and distribution of wintering species. For more information, visit www.audubon.org

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 17-20, 2017

Birders across the globe count birds to provide a real-time snapshot of where birds are. For more information, visit gbbc.birdcount.org.

Raptor Fest

April 7-9, 2017

Organized by Mackinaw Straits Raptor Watch, Raptor Fest, will feature golden eagle researcher, Mark Martell. Visit www.mackinacaptorwatch.org for updates on research, education plans and activities.

Thornapple Woodpecker Festival

April 29, 2017 Middleville, MI

This festival celebrates the established population of the rare Red-headed Woodpecker and five other species of woodpecker found along the Paul-Henry Thornapple Trail. The event features walks and a golf cart shuttle of the woodpecker nesting area.

Spring Fling*

April 29-30, 2017 Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Paradise, MI

Spring Fling offers excellent birding and opportunities to learn about migration and Great Lakes conservation at Michigan Audubon's annual celebration of bird migration at our program site, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory.

Kirtland's Warbler Tours*

May 15-July 4, 2017 Hartwick Pines State Park

Michigan Audubon employs a seasonal guide to lead Kirtland's Warbler tours from Grayling, MI, working in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. More information about these tours can be found at www.michiganaudubon.org/kirtlands-warbler-tours



Tawas Point Birding Festival*

May 18-20, 2017 Tawas, MI

Tawas Point, a beacon for migrating birds, boasts some of the best birding in the Great Lakes region. This area is well known for high concentrations of migrating warblers during the month of May.

Kirtland's Warbler Weekend

June 2-3, 2017 Hartwick Pines State Park

A fun weekend for the whole family, the event showcases the Kirtland's Warbler and other living treasures. The event is held in downtown Roscommon and includes several activities.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend*

June 10-11, 2017 Barry County, MI

The Cerulean Warbler is the fastest declining songbird in North America. Barry County is Michigan's top spot to observe this rare bird, among others including the Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows, Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers and more!

AOU-COS-SCO Meeting

July 31-August 5, 2017 East Lansing, MI

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), the Cooper Ornithological Society (COS), and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SOC) will hold their 2017 annual meetings jointly in Lansing, Michigan on July 31-August 5. The meeting will include many activities, events, speakers, workshops, and field trips. Visit www.aoucossco2017.fw.msu.edu for more information.

Midwest Birding Symposium*

September 7-10, 2017 Bay City, MI

Michigan Audubon is happy to have the Midwest Birding Symposium back in Bay City, MI for 2017. The Midwest Birding Symposium features speakers, workshops, seminars, and great birding at nearby hotspots. There will also be a vendor area filled with companies offering the very best in products, services, and merchandise for bird enthusiasts.

Sandhill Crane & Art Festival*

October 14-15, 2017 Bellevue, MI

CraneFest features family-friendly activities such as guided nature hikes, live animal displays, kids educational activities and fine art vendors. In the evening, watch thousands of Sandhill Cranes "fly-in" to Big Marsh Lake.

* Denotes a Michigan Audubon Signature Event

Owl Be Perplexed: Summer Banding Research at WPBO

BY CHRIS NERI

This year marked the eleventh season of summer owl research at the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO). We were able to run nets on 47 of 48 nights from July 1 through August 17 and logged 3,129 equivalent net hours. A total of 271 owls were banded and four previously banded owls were recaptured. The 271 owls banded comprised 257 Northern Saw-whet Owls and 14 Long-eared Owls. The four recaptures were all Saw-whets. The main focus of the summer project is juvenile Saw-whets, and in this regard it was a successful season as 224 of the 257 Saw-whets banded were juveniles. This brings the summer project's grand total to just over 3,000 owls banded in July and August, including more than 2,400 juvenile Saw-whets!

Some of you who read the JPW may be unfamiliar with this project and will likely find it strange that this many owls would be moving through Whitefish Point, or through any site, in July and August. That is because it is strange! Prior to this study it was believed that juvenile Saw-whets remained on, or near their breeding grounds until they had molted into their adult plumage and fall migration began in late September or October. After discovering this movement in 2006, we shared our results with other owl researchers, and some of the most productive Saw-whet banding sites in North America tried summer banding without success. Currently, Whitefish Point remains the only site where significant numbers of Saw-whet Owls are known to occur during the period between the breeding season and fall migration.

Upon discovering this new aspect of Saw-whet Owl life history, two obvious questions came to mind first. Where are they coming from and where are they going? We've looked closely at weather patterns and nightly captures, but very simply still have no idea where the owls are coming from. It would be somewhat natural to think they are coming from the north, but northward movement after the breeding season has been well documented among several species of raptors. Hopefully we will eventually encounter a juvenile that was banded as a nestling and have a definitive answer to at least where one of the juveniles has



NSWO Molting Juvenile © Chris Neri

traveled from. While we remain in the dark as to where they are coming from, banding recoveries have provided insight into where they are going.

Ninety-nine, or four percent, of the juveniles we've banded have been recaptured. Thirty-five of these have been recaptured at WPBO. The longest timespan between the banding and recapture date at WPBO comes from one banded on July 30, 2010 and recaptured on May 8, 2014. Sixty-four of the juveniles have been encountered away from WPBO. Perhaps the most interesting of these are 39 that were encountered during the fall migration immediately following the summer they were banded, a space of just a few months. These encounters have occurred in 12 states and Ontario. We have been surprised by how widespread the encounter locations have been. They have ranged from Minnesota to the west, coastal Virginia to our east and Tennessee to the south. We have also been amazed by how random the direction they travel after leaving the Point seems to be. A perfect example of this is provided by four juveniles that were banded between July 24 - August 4, 2007 and were then encountered about three months later on the nights of October 7 and 11. The encounters of these four birds, which were banded within two weeks of each other and then recaptured within four nights of each other occurred in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and near Boston, Massachusetts. What makes one bird chose to head west into Minnesota while another heads to the east coast is a mystery to us, but hopefully we will get some more returns off this summer's birds this fall!



NSWO Juvenile and Adult © Chris Neri

Chris Neri is field biologist and 27-year veteran of Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, a program of Michigan Audubon.

CraneFest Weekend Thanks



Michigan Audubon would like to thank our volunteers, sponsors, partners, vendors, and everyone involved with making the 22nd annual CraneFest possible. We could not do it without your support!

Volunteers:

Elizabeth Abood-Carroll
Dea Armstrong
John Baumgartner
Morgan Benham
Mike Boyce
Nancy Boyce
Kaitlin Chamberlain
Mike Clemens
Patrick Fields
Ellen Golda
Eileen Houston
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Medalist Golf Course
Michigan Avian Experience
Nature Discovery



Michigan Avian Experience's Francie Krawke and Bald Eagle



Sandhill Cranes flying in to Big Marsh Lake © Mimi Emig

For the Birds T-Shirt Contest

Congratulations to Rachel Sperber, winner of Michigan Audubon's "For the Birds" t-shirt design contest. Rachel has been interested in birds her entire life. "Anecdotally, my mother claims that when I was very young she used to play a card matching game with me with pictures of birds, and that by the age of 4 I could identify 40 bird species," says Rachel. For Rachel, the connection with birds is an artistic one. She elaborates, "For me birds are pure design, and I am fascinated by the variations of colors, patterns and shapes."

Rachel took inspiration for the design of the shirt from the National Parks stamps by Valerie Jar. "I knew that I wanted the design to feel like it could easily be a patch or a badge that you might see on a ranger shirt. I felt like that kind of visual language would lend itself to a conservation message, even if the shirt was only glanced at briefly," Rachel said.



She chose a Kirtland's Warbler to be the main focus, since they are a conservation species of significance in Michigan and also included silhouettes of swallows and a Piping Plover (a species currently listed as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act) for an added bird presence and visual interest. Rachel goes on to say that "the shape of Michigan is easily identifiable, so you know almost instantly what the focus of the design is, and I encompassed everything in a shield to communicate protection and accomplish the badge look I was after. The trees are meant to drive home a feeling of nature and being outdoors."

Rachel is a life-long resident of Michigan and currently works as a graphic designer and art director in the metro-Detroit area. She studied graphic design formally, and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with concentrations in graphic design and drawing from Wayne State University in 2010. Rachel was raised to enjoy nature and the outdoors, and over the years she has become increasingly interested in habitat conservation.

Michigan Audubon would like to thank everyone who submitted a design for our contest. Special thanks to Rachel for her excellent design and the thought and care that went in to highlighting our work to conserve Michigan birds. These special edition t-shirts are available for purchase at a cost of \$25 + tax and \$4.25 shipping and handling by calling Michigan Audubon at 517-580-7364 or emailing Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org.

Dated Material



Michigan Audubon Store: Show Your Support

Your purchase supports Michigan Audubon's educational programs.
Call 517-580-7364 or email Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org to place your order.



Michigan Audubon Beanie

You'll be sure to keep your head warm on your winter birthing adventures when you sport this beanie made by Patagonia, featuring an embroidered Michigan Audubon logo.

One size fits all.
\$20 + tax and 4.25 shipping & handling



Michigan Audubon T-Shirt

These ultra soft shirts are a great way to show your love for Michigan Audubon and support our mission to connect birds and people.

Available in XS, S, M, L, XL and XXL (unisex)
\$20 + tax and 4.25 shipping & handling



Whitefish Point Bird Observatory T-Shirt

Support WPBO, a program area of Michigan Audubon, and its important work to document the distribution and abundance of birds in the Great Lakes region.

Available in XS, S, M, L, XL and XXL (unisex)
\$20 + tax and 4.25 shipping & handling



CraneFest T-Shirt

Didn't make it to CraneFest this year or forgot to pick up a t-shirt? Available in Cranberry or Black in XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL* (unisex)

\$20 + tax and 4.25 shipping & handling
Also available in Red in Kids' S, M, and L.
\$15 + tax and 4.25 shipping & handling

*Limited quantities available