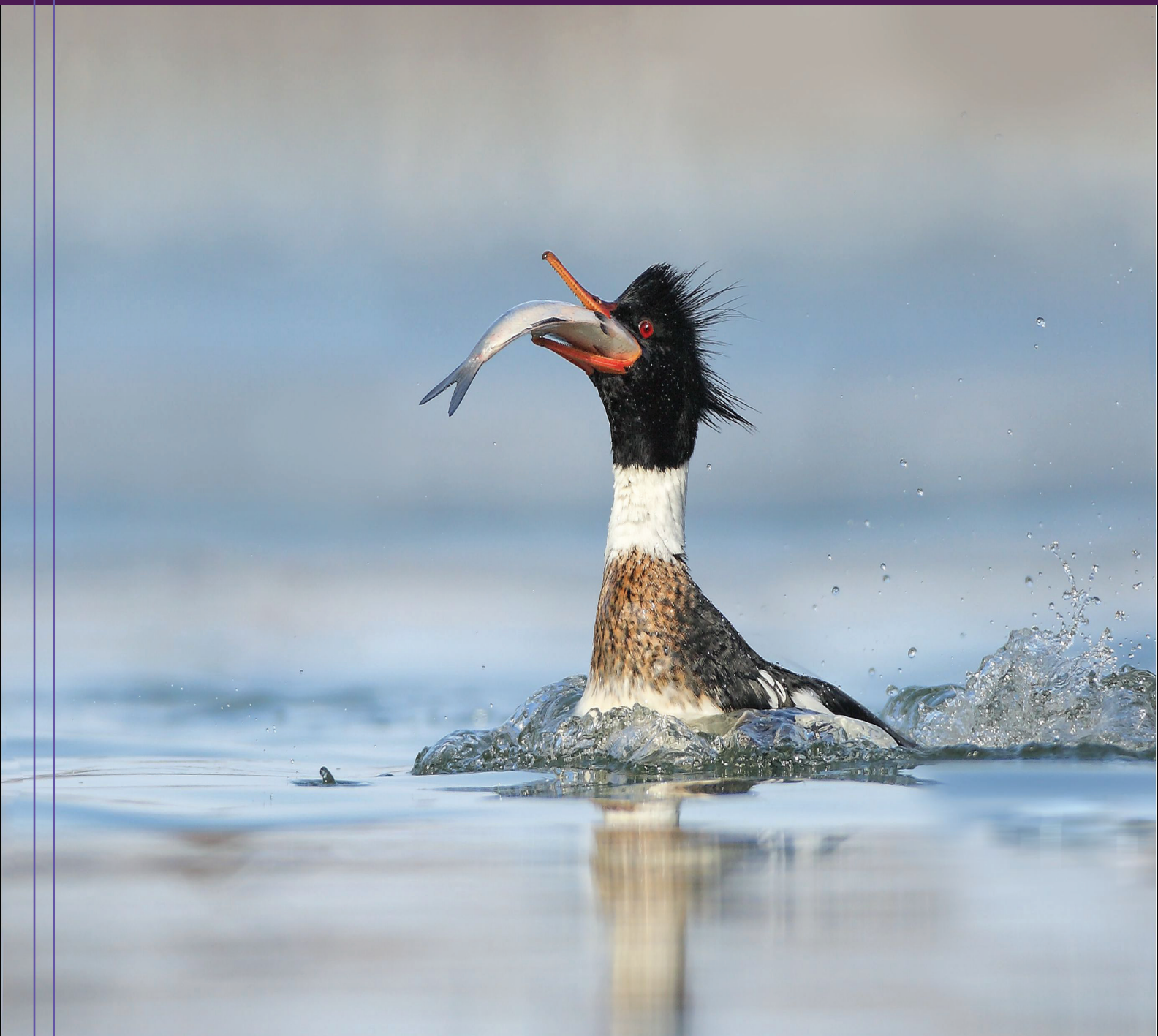


Jack Pine *Warbler*

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Conservation Commitments ■ Cats and Birds ■ Rarity Roundup ■ WPBO Season Wrap-up ■
Songbird Messages ■ Cover Photo Contest



Jack Pine Warbler

CONTACT US

By mail:

2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200
Okemos, MI 48864

By visiting:

2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200
Okemos, MI 48864

By Phone:

517-580-7364
Mon.-Fri. 9AM-5PM

STAFF

Heather Good

Executive Director
hgood@michiganaudubon.org

Lindsay Cain

Education Coordinator
lcain@michiganaudubon.org

Rachelle Roake

Conservation Science Coordinator
rroake@michiganaudubon.org

Lyn Scrimger

Operations Manager
lscrimger@michiganaudubon.org

Diane Huhn

Communications & Marketing Coordinator
dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org

Molly Keenan

Administrative Specialist
mkeenana@michiganaudubon.org

Carrie Nowlin

Membership Coordinator
cnowlin@michiganaudubon.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alec Lindsay (chair), Ray Stocking (vice-chair), Mike Bishop (secretary), Penny Meints (treasurer), Elizabeth Abood-Carroll, Deaver Armstrong, Rich Bailhe, John Baumgartner, Anne Brasie, Rosann Kovalcik, Gregory Nelson

EDITOR

Diane Huhn

Communications & Marketing Coordinator
dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org

PRODUCTION

Diane Huhn

Communications & Marketing Coordinator
dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org

ADVERTISING

Guidelines available on request.

PRINTING

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

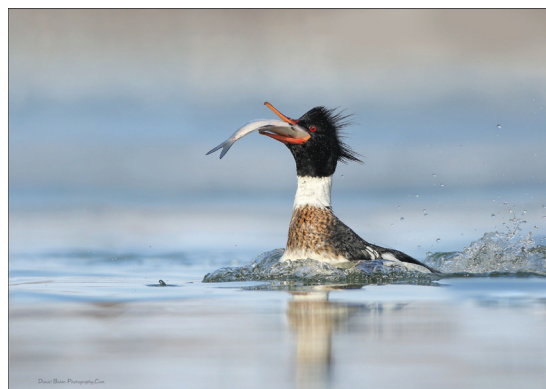
RiverRun Press
600 Shoppers Lane
Parchment, MI 49004
www.riverrunpress.com



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

Cover Photo ■ Common Merganser Photographer: Daniel Behm

A recent outbreak of type E botulism this fall has impacted a number of birds along the shore of Northern Lake Michigan. This serious illness is caused by a bacterial toxin, and it's come and gone for decades in the Great Lakes region. Diving ducks and fish-eating birds such as this Common Merganser, photographed by Daniel Behm, are especially susceptible to botulism. Anyone venturing to local beaches should keep their eyes peeled and report dead or diseased birds. If you should encounter dead or diseased specimens, please contact your local Michigan Department of Natural Resources office.



Contents

Features

- 2
Committing to Conservation
- 4
Cats and Birds
- 6
2016 Rarities

Columns

- 5
Spring Fling Keynote
Announced
- 8
Chapters
- 9
In Memoriam: Dr. Wm. L.
Thompson
- 10
WPBO Field Notes: Waterbird
Count
- 11
WPBO Field Notes: Owl
Banding Report
- 13
Film Review: The Messenger

Departments

- 1
Executive Director's Letter
- 12
Calendar
- 13
New Members
- 14
Cover Photo Contest



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.

*Visit MichiganAudubon.org for more updates, and follow
Michigan Audubon on social media*



From the Executive Director

Friends,

2016 was an exciting and meaningful year of real growth, changes, and progress for Michigan Audubon. I want to take this opportunity to share with you some of our accomplishments, initiatives, and plans for the future.

CONSERVATION

We continued extensive restoration work at our signature bird sanctuaries and pursued grant funding for invasive species management and habitat improvements at more than three of our core, and largest, sanctuaries.

Working with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), we employed a Piping Plover Monitor and Habitat Technician intern at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory to educate the public about this bird and its habitat, and to monitor the birds' activity throughout the (successful!) breeding season.

Conservation Biologist Joe Kaplan continues to provide thoughtful, strategic plans for habitat management and conservation at the Point, for which we, and the wildlife depending on that land, are grateful.

We launched a multi-faceted native plants outreach and education effort as part of our vision for a statewide Bird-Friendly Communities program, encouraging communities and plant nurseries to go native. We offered several native plant workshops throughout the year and developed user-friendly guides and tools to teach and encourage people to convert their backyards into bird- (and pollinator-) friendly habitat.

In 2017, we will institute pilot programs for both Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts, two important insectivore species facing threats due to climate change, habitat loss, and human interference. Our aim with pilot programs in the Lansing area is to establish a strong program base that we can share with our chapters to adopt in their communities in the future.

We are working hard to establish partnerships to make the city of Lansing an Urban Bird Treaty City. Part of this work involves providing suitable habitat for birds declining in our state and monitor them appropriately to support larger research and conservation efforts

for these birds. Stay tuned for more on this in future issues of the JPW, as there is much to share. We are excited to promote these programs to our chapters throughout the state and other groups interested in learning how they can do more for birds.

As the Kirtland's Warbler faces potential delisting in the near future, we will work with the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance to contribute to their conservation efforts and strategic planning. Michigan Audubon will also offer seasonal tours to view the Kirtland's Warbler out of Grayling in 2017.

EDUCATION

Birds are an entry point for people to more deeply connect with, understand, and value ecology as a whole. The love of birds can transform a person into a conservationist for life. We wholly recognize and work from that premise. In 2016, we made a pronounced effort to include opportunities for young people to learn more about birds and their habitat.

We included kid-tailored species checklists, contests, activities, education materials, and "swag" at all of our signature events. Our intention is to make birding events as family-friendly as possible and prove to kids that we see them, include them, and value them as participants in our fight to save habitat and protect birds.

For the first time in 2016, Michigan Audubon held Vulture Day, a day-long celebration of vultures around the world.

Our education team is working with local schools and summer camp programs to offer extended programs for nature and bird education, as well as continued, expanded curriculum at our sanctuary open houses for kids to learn and participate in.

With a few core partners, we are excited about the growing possibility of a 4-day Young Birders Camp in northern Michigan this summer. Keep your eyes peeled for more details in the next issue!

RESEARCH

Last January, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory officially became one of Michigan Audubon's programs. The monitoring efforts and banding work conducted at the Point has a rich,



valuable history, and we stand by this work with a deep commitment.

Working with Common Coast, we hope to collectively create and maintain a database for loons in Michigan, as well as provide resources and support for lake residents who share their lakes with loons.

We promote citizen science efforts through workshops and trainings, education and outreach, the Christmas Bird Count, seasonal bird counts, Swift Night Out, Birdathon at WPBO, and nestbox monitoring and point counts at various bird sanctuaries managed by Michigan Audubon.

Our Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary continues to attract research teams and academic groups who are studying species such as the Cerulean Warbler and Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake. We are very proud of the work happening to maintain habitat at Otis Sanctuary with our new resident manager, Sarah Nelson, and acknowledge the rich research, conservation, and education potential of this site.

There is much more to share, but I hope you will continue your readership and membership throughout the year to stay posted on the work and the issues facing birds in our great state.

Thank you for being a member of Michigan Audubon. We can't say it enough, and we hope you reach out to us if we can support you in your commitments to conservation in 2017!

For the birds,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Heather Good". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'H' and 'G'.

Heather Good, Executive Director

Committing to Conservation

Make a conservation commitment to birds in 2017

BY RACHELLE ROAKE, CONSERVATION SCIENCE COORDINATOR

A shiny new year is upon us; welcome to 2017! Have you made your New Year's resolutions? Are you resolving to take on self-improvement? Are you promising to get organized? How about really (I mean really) sticking to your budget this year? These are common resolutions that often fade in a few months' time. What if instead of making the same, forgettable resolutions year after year, we each pledge to make a genuine, tangible difference for birds?

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

—Edward Everett Hale

The threats to birds are many and the trajectory for some of our most beloved Michigan species is not positive. Nearly everything that threatens our birds is human-driven: urbanization; invasive species; windows; lights; unsustainable consumerism; and, perhaps worst of all, nature deficit disorder. These human-driven threats have human-driven solutions. No matter your background, interests, or experience, there is an action you can take to make the world better for birds. Your action may inspire

a friend, a family member, or your neighbor to take action as well. We at Michigan Audubon invite you to make 2017 a year for conservation action – let's each make a pledge for birds!

You won't be alone in your conservation-minded pursuits; we'll help you. We've put together 5 broad categories of pledges for you to explore, each containing a variety of actions for every type of bird aficionado. Get inspired by our suggestions or feel

free to customize your own pledge for birds. Be sure to make your conservation pledge known via our website to encourage others to pledge as well. By pledging online, you will receive a virtual list of resources to guide and inspire your efforts. It's a new year for birds; we hope you'll join us with a commitment to conservation in 2017.



CREATE better habitat

The greatest threat to birds is habitat loss. While we often look to preserves and protected lands to support wildlife, there are millions of acres with great potential that we consistently overlook—urban spaces. Backyards, curbsides, ditches, urban parks, and suburban lawns are bursting with opportunity; but we must terminate our love affair with turf. Put on your habitat-tinted glasses and re-imagine that “hellstrip” between the curb and sidewalk. Replace that swath of manicured lawn with a strip of sunset orange butterfly milkweed, swaying little bluestem grass, and delicate foxglove. Think of that ditch you awkwardly mow (when it isn't sopping wet) and imagine dark purple asters, pink swamp milkweed, or a burst of red cardinal flower. Imagine your workplace, church, or school—is there a place where butterflies flit and birds find refuge?

Pledge to maintain healthy habitats:

- Plant native plants
- Remove invasive plants
- Create a brush pile
- Provide clean bird feeders
- Add a water feature
- Reduce lawn chemical use
- Prevent bird window strikes
- Keep cats indoors and dogs leashed
- Volunteer to improve your local nature preserve

SHARE knowledge + time

We each have experience, knowledge, and passion to share with others. At a time when nature deficit disorder is a concern for both children and adults, it is more important than ever to share our appreciation for nature and engage others to explore the natural world with us. If you have children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or other young people in your life, introduce them to birds. Whether through coloring books, stories, feeder watching, or nature walks, there are many ways to engage young people in birding. Even if you aren't an expert birder, just sharing your appreciation for nature with others is incredibly valuable. Organize casual bird walks at a local park, start a coffee or book club for bird and nature lovers, gather a volunteer group to adopt a native garden or nest box trail, or offer your skills as a writer, illustrator, orator, or filmmaker to a nonprofit. We each can make a unique contribution to bird conservation.

Pledge to engage your community in birds:

- Mentor a new young birder
- Get your local school, scout troop, or youth group involved in birds
- Organize bird walks at your local nature preserve
- Contribute to a birding trail
- Write an article for your local Audubon chapter newsletter or local news source
- Organize a team to adopt a native garden or nest box trail

OBSERVE

for citizen science

Citizen science has opened up a world of science and discovery to millions of observant people. Our curious nature drives us to take note of which birds we are seeing, where, when, and how many. These local observations piece together to form a full, landscape-wide picture of the status of bird species. The opportunities to contribute to research and conservation by gathering data from the world around us are endless. No matter the season, location, age or experience level, there is a type of citizen science project fit for everyone. Researchers have utilized results from these citizen science projects to detect long-term population declines, range expansions, migration shifts, and much more. Your contributions are valuable for bird conservation locally, regionally, and worldwide.

Pledge to bird for conservation science:

- Adopt a Breeding Bird Survey route
- Report feeder observations to Project FeederWatch
- Count winter birds for the Great Backyard Bird Count
- Count roosting chimney swifts during fall migration
- Monitor your “patch” with eBird
- Participate in the Christmas Bird Count
- Install and monitor a nest box in your yard or a local natural area with NestWatch
- Report invasives via the Michigan Invasive Species Network
- Map your bird-friendly yard via YardMap



CONSUME WISELY

choose bird-friendly products

As consumers, we make a statement with our wallets. Where we choose to invest money reflects our personal values. We focus many of our conservation efforts on issues here in Michigan, mostly regarding breeding birds, but many of our actions as consumers impact migratory birds on the wintering grounds or birds that we may never interact with, but also need our help. Shade-grown coffee plantations support a significantly greater diversity and number of birds compared with aggressive sun-grown plantations. Pelagic species are consuming bits of algae-scented plastic and filling the bellies of their young with indigestible refuse. Making well-informed purchasing decisions sends a clear economic message – birders are willing to invest in sustainable, bird-friendly products and markets.

Pledge to consume wisely and support conservation:

- Purchase shade-grown coffee
- Buy sustainable wood products
- Purchase sustainable seafood, grass-fed beef
- Buy local
- Bring reusable bags to the grocery store
- Shop at nurseries registered with the Michigan Native Plant Producers Association
- Purchase a duck stamp



BE A VOICE

for change

We live in an ever-changing world where many of the governing bodies are out of touch with nature and the needs of the environment. It is our responsibility to inform decision makers that we as constituents value birds, nature, and the environment and their protection is important to us. The birds cannot write to their congressmen and women; we must speak up for them. There is no need to grab a sign and picket, but it's important to be informed about the issues at hand. Get involved with policy at the local, state, and federal level and be an informed voter or write letters, op-eds, or statements to present at planning commission meetings. Give a voice to birds in a respectful, engaging way to be a successful advocate for birds.

Pledge to be a voice for birds, for change:

- Be aware of climate issues
- Advocate for renewable energy
- Learn about properly-sited wind energy
- Support bills for habitat conservation, preservation, and restoration
- Promote implementation of Great Lakes Safe Passage
- Support bans on selling invasive plants in nurseries



Rachelle Roake (rroake@michiganaudubon.org) is the Conservation Science Coordinator for Michigan Audubon.

Cats and Birds: How to Love Them Both

BY CATHY THEISEN, DVM

As a young veterinarian 30 some years ago, I lived on a 10 -acre horse farm, and had indoor/outdoor cats that helped keep rodent populations down in the barn. Unfortunately, those well-fed cats also killed lots of songbirds from the surrounding fields, some of which I'd never even seen before. I was a nature lover, not really a birder at that time, but I always felt guilt when my cats killed. I justified it by saying that this was the natural order of things, not realizing that some of those birds might be from struggling populations. When research came out confirming that domestic cats were a major predator of vulnerable songbirds, killing more than a billion annually, I found myself in a moral bind. I loved my cats and wanted them to have happy, fulfilled lives. But I also realized that my cats were nonnative, prime-condition predators in an ecosystem that was designed to be in balance without them in it.

I saw a lot of cats in my veterinary practice with injuries, infections, diseases, and toxicity that were a direct result of roaming freely outdoors. In addition, there are many people out there who profess to "hating cats," and use this as a justification to shoot, poison, run over, and otherwise brutalize a feline who wanders unsuspectingly into their yard. To you, your indoor/outdoor cat is an affectionate, beloved family member. But to others, cats can present real concerns.

Complaints you may not realize your neighbors have:

- Eliminating in their gardens or childrens' sand-boxes
- Aggravating their indoor cat, causing it to spray as it defends its territory from inside the patio door
- Fear of stray animals biting or scratching children, and the possibility of having to face rabies prophylaxis, due to the unknown vaccination status of the animal
- Anger over predation at bird feeders or nestboxes
- Anger over killing, or stressing, small livestock or pets (chickens, rabbits, etc.)

The acceptance of allowing cats to roam freely regardless of their impact on others is waning. In one horrifying incident in 2015, a rural Texas veterinarian killed her neighbors' roaming pet cat believing herself to have done a good deed by removing a feral animal. As a result, her license to practice veterinary medicine has been suspended and a legal battle has ensued. While I in no way condone killing cats, whether feral or pets, the wise cat owner will realize that there is growing animosity against free-roaming cats, and you may be putting your cat in mortal danger by letting it outdoors.



© Dennis Skley

If you make the decision to make your cat an indoor pet, there are useful tips to ease the process. The coldest winter months are the times when most cats preferentially become indoor cats; the trick will be to not begin letting them out again in the spring. Providing indoor enrichment and interaction of many sorts, such as using food puzzles that keep your cat busy hunting while you are away, can help ease this transition. For some cats, you may find that continuing to allow confined access to the outdoors is a better option. Enclosures called "catios" allow the cat a compromise—an outdoor environment that keeps birds, small mammals, and the cat itself safe.

There are a variety of do it yourself plans and products available on the internet. A simple web search will provide a whole host

of designs and ideas for a safe outdoor space. You can also buy pre-made catios that can be assembled in an afternoon and move with you to new housing. Or, if you're like me, you can "give yourself" a screened porch, justifying the expense by knowing you're doing something good for the environment, your cat, and you!



© Fabien Agon

If you are adopting a new kitten (or better yet a pair!), never allowing them to go outdoors is key. In fact, most humane societies or shelters will not let you adopt a cat if you plan to let it roam outdoors. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), of the cats entering shelters, approximately 37% are

adopted, 41% are euthanized, and less than 5% of cats who came in as strays are returned to their owners. Unfortunately, many cat owners opt not to put ID on their pets, and, worse, don't check local shelters if their pet goes missing. According to current estimates, approximately 70 million stray cats roam the United States. Given that cats can have 1-2 litters per year, with average litter size of 4-6 kittens, it's easy to see why we have a serious cat overpopulation problem.

One controversial approach taken by many humane organizations are Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs. This scheme traps stray cats, neuters and vaccinates them, and then sets them free in the area in which they were trapped. On the surface, this appears to be a workable solution by stemming the tide of unlimited reproduction, and giving the cats a chance at



Catios allow cats to enjoy the outdoors while, at the same time, protecting birds and other wildlife.

a life, no matter how difficult, as opposed to euthanasia. On the flip side however, TNR programs do nothing to protect native wildlife, and therein lies the controversy.

As a veterinarian, I can see both sides of the argument. I love cats and am sickened by the number of healthy animals killed every year simply because there are no homes for them. As a birder and naturalist, I cannot ignore the impact feral cat colonies have on wildlife, especially declining songbird populations. I think solutions will unfold over time as we continue to educate each other and develop new ways to tackle this problem. One thing I am sure of... the loving cat owner bears the sole responsibility of keeping their pet contained and safe. Please love your cat enough to keep it home!



Dr. Cathy Theisen has practiced small animal medicine for 30 years; she is at present a house call veterinarian and the Medical Director at Baker College of Veterinary Technology in Jackson, Michigan. She is a two time Iditarod Sled Dog Race veterinarian, a veteran of several third world volunteer spay/neuter missions, and has been deployed several times as a federal first responder on the National Veterinary Response Team (NVRT). She is an avid birder and naturalist, and is happily owned by 3 cats, 2 dogs, and a horse.

Spring Fling Keynote Announced

The weekend of April 29-30, 2017, will mark the 29th Annual Spring Fling: WPBO's Celebration of Bird Migration, when members and their guests "migrate" to Paradise, Michigan, and the Whitefish Point area to visit with old friends, both human and avian. Many activities are being planned for another refreshing weekend of birding experiences.

This year's keynote will feature Josh Haas presenting "Hawks on the Wing: Seeing beyond the field marks." Hawks in flight bring a sense of wonder and a struggle to birders, especially



when it comes to identifying them at a distance. Field marks are not enough when back-lit conditions and birds miles out lack any color. Flight ID has long been the best way to identify hawks at a distance, however books only take it so far. Join hawk watcher Josh Haas for an informative and innovative new way of identifying hawks as he releases a brand new DVD titled "Hawks on the Wing" at Spring Fling 2017. This DVD brings an innovative new way to learning hawk ID in flight. Instead of only hearing descriptive narratives on the subject, Josh's program and DVD feature side-by-side videos of hawks in flight, making conquering the technique much faster and easier. He will also share the principles of how hawks migrate



Josh Haas will be the 2017 Spring Fling keynote speaker. so efficiently and why Michigan is a hawk watching paradise both in spring and fall.

Josh Haas is an entertaining speaker with a passion in all things birds. He has a deep love and passion for hawks, especially hawks in flight and has a background counting migrant hawks for the Detroit River Hawkwatch. He is also known for his bird photography and co-owns Glances at Nature Photography & Birding Tours (www.glancesatnature.com) with his father where he sells his work, provides lessons and workshops as well as leads trips all around the Midwest.

Spring Fling registration will be opening soon. Please visit www.wpbo.org for details.



Caution: Rare Birds Ahead

BY KIRBY ADAMS

Pop quiz: How many Crested Caracaras were in Michigan last year? Think about your answer and we'll come back to that.

The summer and fall of 2016 were spectacular seasons for mega-rare birds in Michigan. The Crested Caracara that appeared in Alger County just as July arrived managed to stick around long enough to be forgotten news during a swarm of spectacular birds in October and November. Reports of a Green-tailed Towhee at Whitefish Point, a Bell's Vireo in Marquette, and a Tropical (or possibly Couch's) Kingbird in the southeast all came through in October. These were followed by the even more remarkable Sagebrush Sparrow at Whitefish Point and Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Menominee County in November. What would typically be newsworthy birds, like the Painted Bunting at Whitefish Point in November, were almost lost and forgotten in the clamor for updates on the state-firsts and mega-rarities. That list doesn't even include an earlier Bell's Vireo in Delta County, or the state-first Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Muskegon Wastewater in August.



This Crested Caracara in Munising delighted many a Michigan birder this summer and in to the fall. © Nova Mackentley

It was truly a year for the record books, particularly in the Upper Peninsula. It can't be forgotten that the previous two falls saw a Hepatic Tanager at Whitefish Point and a Berylline Hummingbird in Grand Marais, both state-firsts. Looking at all these reports brings up an interesting question: Is there



Tropical Kingbird, Chippewa County© Chris Neri

something special about the UP that attracts rare birds? The answer to that is yes...and no...and maybe.

If an alien biogeographer looked at a physical map of North America, she'd immediately point to Michigan's two peninsulas as being worthy of further study. Nestled into the middle of an out-of-place collection of massive continental lakes, there's bound to be interesting things going on here. If you know that birds fly and the predominant winds are westerly, the UP starts to look even more interesting. It's the bottom of a funnel that opens up into Wisconsin. Draw the lines of the edges out further and you can picture it draining stray birds from most of the western two-thirds of the United States. Chippewa County and Whitefish Point are the bottleneck of the funnel. Although there aren't any major migration flyways that take birds from California to Quebec through the UP, it still acts as a migrant trap for western and southern vagrants that decide to just keep flying the wrong direction, but are deterred by Lakes Michigan and Superior. The Sagebrush Sparrow could have been programmed for a migration from western Colorado to Baja California, but somehow it's wiring went haywire and it headed in the opposite direction, a phenomenon known as mirror migration. When it got to the Sea of Cortez, it settled down for a rest. Except it wasn't the Sea of Cortez, it was actually Lake Superior.

All of that makes the UP a great place to find rare vagrants, but there's something else at play. Whitefish Point is obviously a perfectly positioned spot for all kinds of birding, but the number of mega-rarities found there might make it seem even more special than it actually is. During the fall migration season, the point is monitored by highly skilled birders and field ornithologists for essentially every hour of the day. (Yes, they're even banding owls there at night!) A rare bird doesn't stand a chance of going unnoticed there. Last year's Hepatic Tanager stood out like a sore thumb to birders at the point, but would it have been noticed at a nature center where only a few casual birders pop in on weekends? Likely not. And it certainly wouldn't be on the state list if it had stopped just a few miles away on a stretch of unpatrolled beach.

Marquette, Delta, and Chippewa counties are full of skilled and active birders who keep a close eye on hotspots around the UP, and there's no denying that that's one reason the region is so well known for rarities – because they get found. It's a



First recorded Sagebrush Sparrow at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory © Nova Mackentley

chicken-and-the-egg scenario. Which came first, the birders or the onslaught of rare birds? Birders call this the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect. Back in 1971, some birders stopped for lunch at a random rest stop in Patagonia, Arizona because it just happened to have a picnic table. While there they found the country's first Black-capped Gnatcatcher. The influx of birders looking for that bird immediately found the first Yellow Grosbeak. A rest stop that wasn't any more special than other spots along that highway became famous as a rare-bird hotspot. Had that many keen eyes focused on a small patch anywhere else, it's possible the same thing might have happened.



Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Menominee © Chris Neri

Do you think the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Muskegon would have been noticed in a muddy field in countless other spots in Michigan? Probably not. Even seasoned birders wouldn't pick it out of a crowd of Pectoral Sandpipers with ease. It was noticed because it was at a heavily birded location during a season when birders were there actively searching for rare shorebirds. None of this should diminish the value of spots like Whitefish Point and Muskegon Wastewater. On the contrary, it should be a call to arms to remain vigilant at every birding patch in the



Second recorded Painted Bunting at WPBO © Nova Mackentley

state. If all of the birders that were at Whitefish Point last fall spent the same amount of time at Cheboygan Point on Lake Huron, what would they have found? Probably not as many rarities, but we can't really know, because only a handful of birders stopped there for a few hours all year.

That brings us back to the Crested Caracara quiz. Unless you're an omniscient birder, the only correct answer was "at least one." Could there have been two or three? Could there have been one that hung out somewhere for a couple months in 2015? That's a large, conspicuous bird to miss. On the other hand, there's a lot of habitat in Michigan that's never seen the footprints of even a casual birder. Keep your eyes open, and make time to go down that road you've never visited before.

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

Michigan Audubon Chapters



Michigan Audubon Chapters

Michigan Audubon's network of local chapters offer community programs and field trips, participate in local, state and national bird counts, and serve as sanctuary stewardship groups. Many chapters are also leaders in local grassroots conservation efforts. We recommend becoming a member of your local chapter to develop your birding skills or to just enjoy the camaraderie of like-minded bird enthusiasts. If you are interested in starting a chapter in your area, please call Michigan Audubon at (517) 580-7364.

Audubon Society of Kalamazoo (3)
AuSable Valley Audubon (28)
Battle Creek Brigham Audubon (4)
Benzie Audubon Club (25)
Blue Water Audubon Society (9)
Capital Area Audubon Society (15)
Cass County Audubon Society (2)
Chappee Rapids Audubon Society (34)
Chippewa Valley Audubon Club (20)
Copper Country Audubon Club (37)
Genesee Audubon Society (14)
Grand Rapids Audubon Club (17)
Grand Traverse Audubon Club (26)

Grosse Pointe Audubon Club (7)
Hartland Audubon Club (13)
Holland Audubon Club (16)
Huron Valley Audubon Society (12)
Jackson Audubon Society (5)
Kirtland's Warbler Audubon Society (27)
Lapeer County Audubon Society (10)
Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society (36)
Lee Le Blanc Audubon Society (35)
Macomb Audubon Society (8)
Manistee Audubon Society (24)
Michiana Audubon Club (1)
Mid-Michigan Audubon Society (18)

Muskegon County Nature Club (22)
Oakland Audubon Society (11)
Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society (21)
Petoskey Regional Audubon Society (31)
Pine River Audubon (30)
Sable Dunes Audubon Society (23)
Saginaw Valley Audubon Society (19)
Sault Naturalists Club (33)
Straits Area Audubon Society (32)
Thunder Bay Audubon Society (29)
Washtenaw Audubon Society (6)

The staff, board and members of Michigan Audubon offer our sincere condolences to the family of Dr. William L. Thompson. Dr. Thompson was a dedicated member of Michigan Audubon and served as President of the organization during the 1970s. He also served as editor of the Jack Pine Warbler.

In Memoriam: Dr. William L. Thompson

Former Michigan Audubon President

William Lay Thompson was born on February 16, 1930, in Austin, Texas. He was the son of Dora (Lay) Thompson of Lockhart, Texas and William Henry Thompson of Brownwood, Texas. He attended the Austin public schools. After graduating from Austin High School he went to the University of Texas in Austin. As a freshman he was elected to the Phi Eta Sigma Fraternity, an honorary society. Subsequently, he received his bachelor's degree with a major in zoology and a minor in botany and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He was also elected to the Alpha Sigma Chapter of the Phi Sigma Biological Society. He continued at the University of Texas in Austin for a master's degree in zoology. This was followed by a doctorate in zoology at the University of California in Berkeley.

From 1955 to 1957 he served in the United States Army Chemical Corps, stationed in Washington D.C.

In 1958 he was married to Retta Catherine Maninger in Berkeley, California. From their marriage, there were three children: Stephen Patrick, Catherine Irene, and Mark Douglas. His family also included six grandchildren: Brent Edward and Cody Aaron Rossler, Deborah Ann and Timothy Earl Thompson, and Julian Anthony and Maya Catherine Thompson.

In 1959, Dr. Thompson was engaged to teach at Wayne State University, in Detroit, Michigan, in the Department of Biology. His teaching assignment included courses in general biology, vertebrate physiology, anatomy and physiology for nurses, comparative anatomy, vertebrate natural history, ornithology, mammalogy, and biogeography. In the University's Adult Education Program, he taught Birds of Michigan, and at the Detroit Zoo, classes on penguins, and cats. When he was a student, and



Dr. Thompson in the field, circa 1960

as a professor, he was engaged in field work which took him to Texas, California, Michigan, Nebraska, and Utah, as well as Alaska and Mexico. While at Wayne State, Dr. Thompson was President of the Wayne State chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and later, the secretary. He was also elected as a Member of AOU (The American Ornithologists' Union) and AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) in which he was elected a Fellow. He retired from Wayne State in 1993 as Professor Emeritus.

Dr. Thompson's other activities included membership in the Detroit Audubon Society, in which he served a term as vice president and also Michigan Audubon, in which he served as president for several years. He carried out his interest in music by singing in several church and community choirs. He participated in several opera productions as a chorus member in college and in a local opera company in Washington D.C.. He also served as a super (non-singing stage character) for the Metropolitan Opera when it toured in Detroit. Recreational reading was a favorite activity. He read extensively on a wide variety of topics.

Mackinaw Raptor Fest Coming in April

The second annual Mackinaw Raptor Fest, sponsored by Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch (MSRW), will take place from April 7 to 9, 2017, in Mackinaw City, Michigan. The keynote dinner speaker will be Mark Martell, Senior Ecologist with Tetra Tech Consulting in Minnesota. In "Golden Eagles of the Eastern U.S.," Martell will reveal new research on these birds that are often seen at the Straits hawk count in early spring. During several break-out sessions during the day, Martell will present an overview of raptor migration in the Midwest.

The morning plenary session features Josh Haas from Glances At Nature Photography with the debut of his new film "Raptor Migration and Conquering ID: Using Video to Make Raptor ID a Snap!" The afternoon plenary session features Rebecca Lessard of Wings of Wonder with a live raptor program using some of her rehabilitated birds.

Break-out sessions feature other excellent speakers, including Ed Pike's "Owl Research in the Straits," explanation of data from hawk counts around the country by the Hawk Migration

Association of North America, and much more.

Owl Banding and Constellation Discovery will also take place at the Guest House of Headlands Dark Sky Park in Mackinaw City on the evening of April 7.

Registration for the Mackinaw Raptor Fest opens in early January 2017. For more information, visit www.mackinawraptorfest.org.

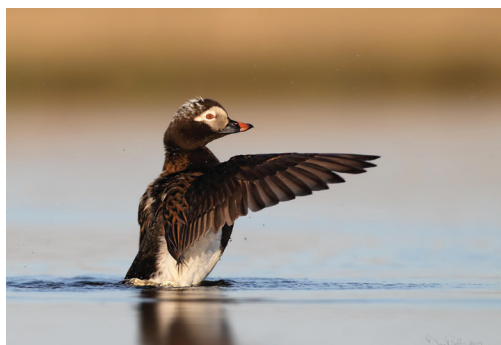


A Count to Be Remembered

BY ERIC RIPMA, FALL 2016 WPBO WATERBIRD COUNTER

Ancient Murrelet, Long-tailed Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Red Phalarope, and an eider! Does this sound like the species at your local birding hotspot? How about Mute Swan, American Coot, and Ruddy Duck? Chances are those are probably more familiar at your favorite hangout, but at Whitefish Point these are much more uncommon. All of these species and many, many more were counted this fall at Whitefish Point during the 28th Annual Waterbird Migration Census. From August 15-November 15, counts were conducted for eight hours each day beginning at sunrise.

It was a record breaking year at Whitefish Point. A total of 82 waterbird species were recorded during the standardized count, with an additional two (Forster's Tern and Snow Goose) on evening flights. The previous record, set in 2013, was 80 species. This year also produced the second highest count in terms of individuals, with a total of 111,126 individuals recorded.



Greater Scaup © Daniel Behm

A total of 75,901 ducks were counted. As is often the case, our most numerous species was the Long-tailed Duck with 29,883 individuals. We witnessed a very impressive flight of 11,861 Long-tailed Ducks on October 18.

Red-breasted Merganser (8133), Greater Scaup (7571), and Redhead (5016) rounded out the next most numerous species. The only two duck species to be recorded at a record number this fall were Northern Shoveler (267) and Ruddy Duck (2). Other duck highlights consisted of six Harlequin Ducks (the 2nd highest season total) and a single eider. Unfortunately, the eider was too far to identify with certainty, but was exciting nonetheless.

The second most numerous species for the count, Red-necked Grebe (13876) was recorded in slightly above average numbers this season. With a total of six sightings, we were also treated to Pacific Loon.

Shorebirds proved to provide many highlights over the course of the season, the most exciting of which was a Red and Red-necked Phalarope feeding together off the point on October 9. A single Purple Sandpiper on November 2 was only the 4th recorded for the waterbird count. Short-billed Dowitcher (8) and Stilt Sandpiper (7) were also both recorded in record high numbers.

Gulls and jaegers had a great showing this fall. Ten gull species were recorded overall. Highlights included many sightings of Sabine's Gulls and Black-legged Kittiwakes, both of which would be considered a treat for most birders. Both Thayer's and Iceland Gulls were recorded in the same fall which hasn't occurred since 2011. A total of 49 jaegers were recorded during the count. Of these there were 22 Parasitics, 2 Long-taileds, and 25 that weren't viewed clearly enough to be identified to species.

It's not every year that we are able to add new species. But this fall we added not just one, but two. A pair of Ruddy Ducks on November 1 were not only new for the count, but they were a first record for the point. Increasing the already impressive list of waterbirds was a single Mute Swan on October 3. An American Coot, not a first for the count, but a second record, spent October 19 in the bay.

With all of the wonderful birds and visiting birders, this season proved to be a most enjoyable fall at Whitefish Point. We hope all of you who were able to make it out enjoyed your time at the Point, and we invite you back again next year!



Eric Ripma became interested in waterbird migration of the Great Lakes region while spending time on the southern shores of Lake Michigan. Eric has conducted the fall waterbird count at Whitefish Point since 2014.



Greater Scaup, Redhead, and American Wigeon at Whitefish Point. © Eric Ripma

Finding Enlightenment in the Dark

BY KEEGAN TRANQUILLO, FALL 2016 WPBO OWL BANDER

Working as a night-time owl bander at the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory provided many memorable experiences for me. First, and most obvious, was having the ability to band live owls. Two hundred plus birds later, and I am still humbled by the experience of each one I had the opportunity to band. All it takes is one cute Saw-whet to satisfy a crowd of curious visitors. While so many new visitors to the banding lab expect to see a large and bulky Great Horned Owl, it was fun to witness their shock at seeing the appearance of an owl the size of a soda can.



Northern Saw-whet Owl © Keegan Tranquillo

Being at the Point during the night gave me the chance to observe the Point from an amazing perspective. While it's always a bit of a hair-raising experience to work in the dark, unsure of what you may come across while walking around the station, it's also incredibly exciting. Our head lamps gave us tunnel vision, allowing us to see a only a small area of space at a time, quite the opposite of the wide-angle view you experience during the day. Benefits of this tunnel vision included

the ability to spot the eyes of the short tailed weasels that are scampering through the vegetation, watch salamanders scurrying about, and glimpsing hares hopping around the woods.



This Northern Saw-whet Owl marked a milestone. It was the 200th juvenile Saw-whet banded this summer and the 3,000th owl banded in July & August since summer owl research started at WPBO in 2006. © Chris Neri



Long-eared Owl © Keegan Tranquillo

Most of these animals would go unnoticed during the day, but the head lamp pinpointed their positions in the dark. In addition, we had the wonderful opportunity to hear the night time migrants continually call out as they flew above our heads at all hours of the night. Listening to the sound of the waves change their position and intensity several times a night is something I speculated that may easily go unnoticed during the day.

Slow nights gave me a chance to reflect on the endless efforts field biologists make to collect data for so many projects like this. In the beginning of the season, we band for about 10 hours a night, but by the end of the season we are netting nearly 13 hours of banding each evening. I thought of the spring banders as they are required to tirelessly tromp through the night in snowshoes and the waterbird counter who mans his post for hours on end in all weather conditions counting the endless stream of waterbirds. Although working these long and crazy hours leaves us with little time to do much else, we enjoy being able to fully experience the Point in the unique way that we do.

The 2016 fall owl banding season was a great success. In total we banded 254 owls; 218 Northern Saw-whet Owls, 13 Barred Owls, 7 Boreal Owls, and 16 Long-eared Owls. In addition, we were able to recapture 5 Northern Saw-whet Owls that were banded by other folks. Every year these recaptures provide us with important information about owl movements and demonstrates one of the many valuable aspects of bird banding.

I am grateful for all of the new friends I made, the many visitors interested in what we are doing at the Point, and to Boreal Owls for showing up this year!



Keegan Tranquillo grew up in southeast Pennsylvania with a great view of the Appalachian Mountains. He became addicted to banding birds and traveling in 2010. Working as a field biologist has taken Keegan all over the United States, the South Pacific, and Malaysia. He never tires of experiencing the great outdoors.



2017 Birding Events

Mark Your Calendars

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 | Mackinaw City, MI

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

Thornapple Woodpecker Festival

April 29, 2017 | Middletown, 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 | Higgins Lake and Roscommon, MI

On Friday, the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance will host the Kirtland's Warbler Home Opener at the MacMullan Conference Center. To purchase your ticket call (989) 448-2293 x21 or email rsvp@huronpines.org. On Saturday, enjoy fun for the whole family. The Kirtland's Warbler Weekend showcases the Kirtland's Warbler and other living treasures. Held in downtown Roscommon and includes several bird- and conservation-related activities. Visit www.huronpines.org for more information.

Aldo Leopold Festival

June 2-4, 2017 | Cedarville, MI

Les Cheneaux welcomes you to celebrate the legacy of Aldo Leopold— one of America's most influential naturalists— by visiting a place he spent summers at in his youth. See the woods and water that formed Leopold's early impressions of the natural world. This annual festival honors Leopold and the mark he made on conservation and the environment. Visit <http://lescheneaux.org/aldo-leopold/> for more information.

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 Annual Meeting

July 31-August 5, 2017 | East Lansing, MI

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), Cooper Ornithological Society (COS), and Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SOC) will hold their 2017 annual meetings jointly in Lansing, Michigan. This week will include many activities, events, speakers, workshops, and field trips. For more information, visit www.aoucossco2017.fw.msu.edu

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.

Save the Date: Michigan Audubon Inaugural Gala | September 16, 2017 | Jackson, MI

Help birds while you sip delectable wines, peck delicious hors d'oeuvres and chatter the night away with other fine feathered friends! Join us on September 16th at Sandhill Crane Vineyards for our inaugural gala, Michigan Audubon's newest fundraising and networking event. Stay tuned for more exciting details to be revealed soon.

* Denotes a Michigan Audubon Signature Event

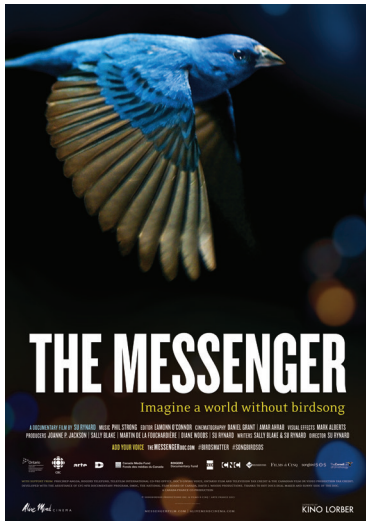
Review: *The Messenger*

BY DIANE HUHN, COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING COORDINATOR

For as long as we human beings can remember, we've been looking up. Over our heads went the birds—free as we were not, singing as we tried to.

—Margaret Atwood

From the ancient belief that birds were messengers between humans and the supernatural world, to the belief that bird songs and flight could foretell the future, to the use of canaries in coal mines to signal dangerous and potentially lethal atmospheric conditions, birds have long held the role of messengers in our human existence. As we continue our march through the 21st century, it is important to take stock of what messages birds are currently sending us. The film *The Messenger* aims to do just that, and it will probably come as no surprise to readers of the *Jack Pine Warbler* that the tidings we are receiving from songbirds are not so comforting nor joyful.



After noticing that many of the songbirds she enjoyed seeing and listening to seemed to have disappeared, Director Su Rynard and her film crew embarked on a year-long journey across three continents to find out why. The result is a film that, although difficult at times to watch, brings these varied causes to light for viewers everywhere and helps shed insight into possible solutions to change the current course for a healthier and more sustainable future.

The frightening reality is that songbirds have been disappearing at an alarming rate. Numerous ornithological studies have postulated that we have only half of the songbirds we had in the 1960s. From loss of habitat, window strikes, air, noise and light pollution, cat predation, systemic pesticides, climate change, and a host of other maladies, the future for songbirds, and all bird species for that matter, is perilous. As haunting a thought as it is to imagine a world without bird song, the larger and more daunting question this film leaves us with is, "Can we even survive without birds?"

There are little things we can do that would make such a difference. How often can you say you flick a switch and a problem disappears? You turn off lights, you're going to be saving birds lives.

—Michael Mesure, Founder of Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP)

Scenes of volunteers collecting hundreds of colorful dead warblers that have perished after striking the windows of urban office buildings during migration season, or watching thousands of small songbirds becoming dazed and confused as they fly into, and become trapped, in light beams at the site of the Twin Towers memorial at ground zero in New York City, or hunters in France setting traps for Ortolan Buntings to serve as a local delicacy are difficult to watch. They may fill the average bird lover with dread and a feeling of hopelessness for the

future of our feathered friends. However, woven throughout this story come moments of clarity, when the viewer realizes that we can, and must, take action to change the trajectory for birds, and by extension, for ourselves.

If you are looking for a fuzzy, feel-good film about songbirds, *The Messenger* is not that film. However, if you care about the current and future state of songbirds around the globe, this is an important and powerful must-watch documentary.

The Messenger (2015)

Length: 89 minutes

Directed by: Su Rynard

Co-writers: Su Rynard and Sally Blake

Available for purchase on DVD or Blu-ray. Also available for streaming and/or download from iTunes, Amazon Prime Instant Video, Netflix and other digital movie sites.

Host a Local Community Screening

Visit messengerfilm.com for information about how to host a community screening of *The Messenger* including press, promotional and educational resources.



Diane Huhn (dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org) is the Communications & Marketing Coordinator for Michigan Audubon.

We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon Members

Elaine Albaugh
Katherine Ascuncion
Cal Beisswanger
Jean Booth
Jeanette Bostrom-Eastham
Patrick Brown
Jason Burke
Kaitlin Chamberlain
Pam Conn
Shannon Daniels
David Dekker
Carter Dorscht
Anne Forgrave
Hannah Gabriel

John Grucelski
Sheryl Hirsch
Robert Jamieson
Kaitlin and Aaron Jaqua
Peter Koper
David McCubbrey
Diana Murphy
Robert and Julie Pardee
Cory Peters
Cornelia Schaible
David Schoolenberg
Esther Thorson
Eden Wells

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 e-mail, post, or phone so that we may stay in touch with you throughout the year.

Dated Material



Jack Pine Warbler Cover Photo Contest

Over the years, the *Jack Pine Warbler* has featured the work of a host of amazing photographers from across the Great Lakes and abroad. Michigan Audubon is committed to continuing this tradition of photographic excellence, and we are on the hunt for outstanding bird photography to grace the cover of the *Jack Pine Warbler* in 2017. Since we know that a great number of our members are outstanding photographers, we are calling on you for help!

If you have a photograph you would like to see on the cover of the *JPW*, please enter your submission in our **2017 Jack Pine Warbler Cover Photo Contest**. To enter, please email up to three (3) digital photo files to Diane Huhn, Communications & Marketing Coordinator, by **February 15, 2017** at: dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org

Photographs may not be larger than 5MB in size and must be submitted in .jpg format. Please be sure to include a caption of what it is, the location where it was taken, the date it was taken and the photographer's name with your submissions. Photographs are permitted to have had minor digital enhancements for cropping, filters, and corrective functions, but images that have been judged to be significantly altered will not be used.

The photographer retains full copyright to his or her images. However, participation in the contest requires the contestant to give Michigan Audubon permission to use the photographs without compensation on the cover of the *Jack Pine Warbler* as well as on other Michigan Audubon websites and social media and printed materials. Michigan Audubon will always include the photographer's name when using a photograph for any purpose.

As always, Michigan Audubon requests that all photographers follow ethical practices when photographing birds and other wildlife. For more information, please review Audubon's Guide to Ethical Bird Photography. <http://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubons-guide-ethical-bird-photography>

Birding Trails Workshop

Michigan Audubon Hosts Birding Trails Workshop
Friday, February 24, 2017
9:30 am-3:00 pm
Boardman River Nature Center, Traverse City



Communities across Michigan are recognizing birding as an economic driver. The US Fish and Wildlife Service indicates that wildlife-watching generates a billion dollars of economic activity in Michigan every year. Michigan's grassroots-driven birding trails are a demonstration of the commitment of citizens, businesses, non-profit organizations, and agencies to preserving natural resources and promoting bird appreciation and protection. Birding trails offer birders, naturalists, and general eco-tourism opportunities to explore diverse habitats across Michigan. Birding trails are typically driving routes linking prime birding locations.

The growth of birding trails combines Michigan residents' and visitors' passion for birding and love of the open road, creating new opportunities for connecting birds and people. We want to nurture this growth by providing resources and support for new and existing birding trail organizers and teams.

On Friday, February 24, 2017, Michigan Audubon and Michigan Sea Grant will host a birding trails workshop to support this grassroots effort throughout the state. If you are interested in attending and learning more about establishing and maintaining a successful birding trail, please contact Diane Huhn at dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org or call (517) 580-7364 to register. This event is free and open to the public.