

Jack Pine *Warbler*

MARCH-APRIL: Project SNOWstorm Update ▪ Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery ▪ Purple Martin Conservation ▪ Spring at WPBO ▪ Sunset Coast Birding Trail ▪ Tawas Point Birding Festival



Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ Snowy Owl Photographer: Mary Pecar

Thanks to Mary Pecar of Bellaire, Mich. for this submission to our recent *Jack Pine Warbler* cover photo contest. Pecar snapped this Snowy Owl lift off in Grand Traverse County. Pecar is a freelance photographer who has a special interest in wildlife and nature. She is a grandmother of five young children and enjoys taking them on adventures while teaching them about photography and nature. In 2016, Mary wrote *Snowy Owls*, a full-color book of owls she has photographed along with educational information. She has lived in Antrim County for over 40 years. Congratulations to Mary for being chosen as the first of our cover photo contest winners.



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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.

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



From the Executive Director

Happy spring!

As we delight in spring and welcome an abundance of migratory birds to Michigan, opportunities for learning, involvement, and giving back to birds abound. Of course, our sanctuary work increases and there is always a need for driven, dedicated volunteers to be nest box monitors and stewards of our bird sanctuaries throughout the state. As you'll see on the back cover of this issue and on our web calendar at michiganaudubon.org, we have made it an annual tradition to showcase a few of our sanctuaries with spring open houses. These are free and open to the public. On May 13, the open house at Capital City Bird Sanctuary in Lansing coincides with International Migratory Bird Day, and will serve as a celebration of birds at a sanctuary that is local to Michigan Audubon's headquarters. What I find most exciting about these open houses is how they offer the local community a chance to engage with the land. They also offer novice birders fuel for their fire, and serve as an event families can attend on a Saturday morning that connects them with nature and the joy and wonder of the avian world. We even provide custom bird checklists for kids that feature both the species names in words as well as in pictures so that pre-literate children can complete a species checklist on a guided walk through the sanctuary if they choose.

In addition to a flurry of sanctuary activities, our programs are gearing up — from species-specific programs to statewide events to a workshop series to young birders programs. We take our commitment to conservation, education, and research seriously and aim to offer a potential niche for as many individuals as we can in order to support birds and their habitat.



House Wren nest

We have a strong team at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory this spring, and as we embark on our second year of formally managing WPBO, we hope you will see the results of our planning and preparation to increase opportunities for learning from our staff, to increase the number of guided bird walks offered regularly at the Point, to increase the accessibility of data, and to introduce a new line of merchandise to the Owl's Roost Gift Shop. You can read all about our talented team this season on page 13. The blogs at wpbo.org are updated twice weekly by our counters and banders at the Point; bookmark the Blogs page in your internet browser to stay plugged in to WPBO happenings! Our owl banders offer public programs on Friday and Saturday evenings, and we hope that publicizing these more consistently will result in more people learning about and appreciating the owls of Whitefish Point.

To get more involved with volunteering or to learn about citizen science efforts you can contribute to, write to us at birds@michiganaudubon.org. Enjoy the sights and sounds of spring and keep your conservation commitment strong through the season!

For the birds,

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

Heather Good, Executive Director

Project SNOWstorm

An Update

BY SCOTT WEIDENSAUL

Almost every year, Michigan sees an invasion from the north — Snowy Owls coming down from the Arctic to the farmland and Great Lakes shorelines of the Wolverine State.

The number of Snowy Owls varies from year to year, surging some winters and ebbing in others. Regardless of the magnitude of the flight in any given year, Michigan remains one of the most reliable places in the lower-48 to see these charismatic raptors.

However, there's still a lot of mystery, and many misconceptions, about Snowy Owls. Many birders think they are largely diurnal hunters, driven south by starvation. In fact, they are primarily nocturnal (at least in the winter, when it gets dark at night) and the biggest invasions of Snowy Owls, known as irruptions, are actually the result of a highly productive breeding season in the Arctic the previous summer. Far from a sign of privation, such epic flights, like one in 2013-14, are the result of plenty — plenty of prey, plenty of baby owls that fledge and become plenty of plump migrants the following winter.

We still have much to learn about exactly how they live their lives down here in winter. For the past several years, Michigan Audubon has been a partner in the largest research effort ever conducted of the winter ecology of Snowy Owls — Project SNOWstorm. This collaborative, crowd-funded undertaking involves more than 40 scientists, banders, wildlife veterinarians, and pathologists in more than a dozen states, using techniques that range from high-tech Global Positioning System/Global System for Mobile Communications (GPS/GSM) transmitters to laboratory analysis, to understand how Snowy Owls live and what threats they face when they come south from the Arctic.



© Chris Neri

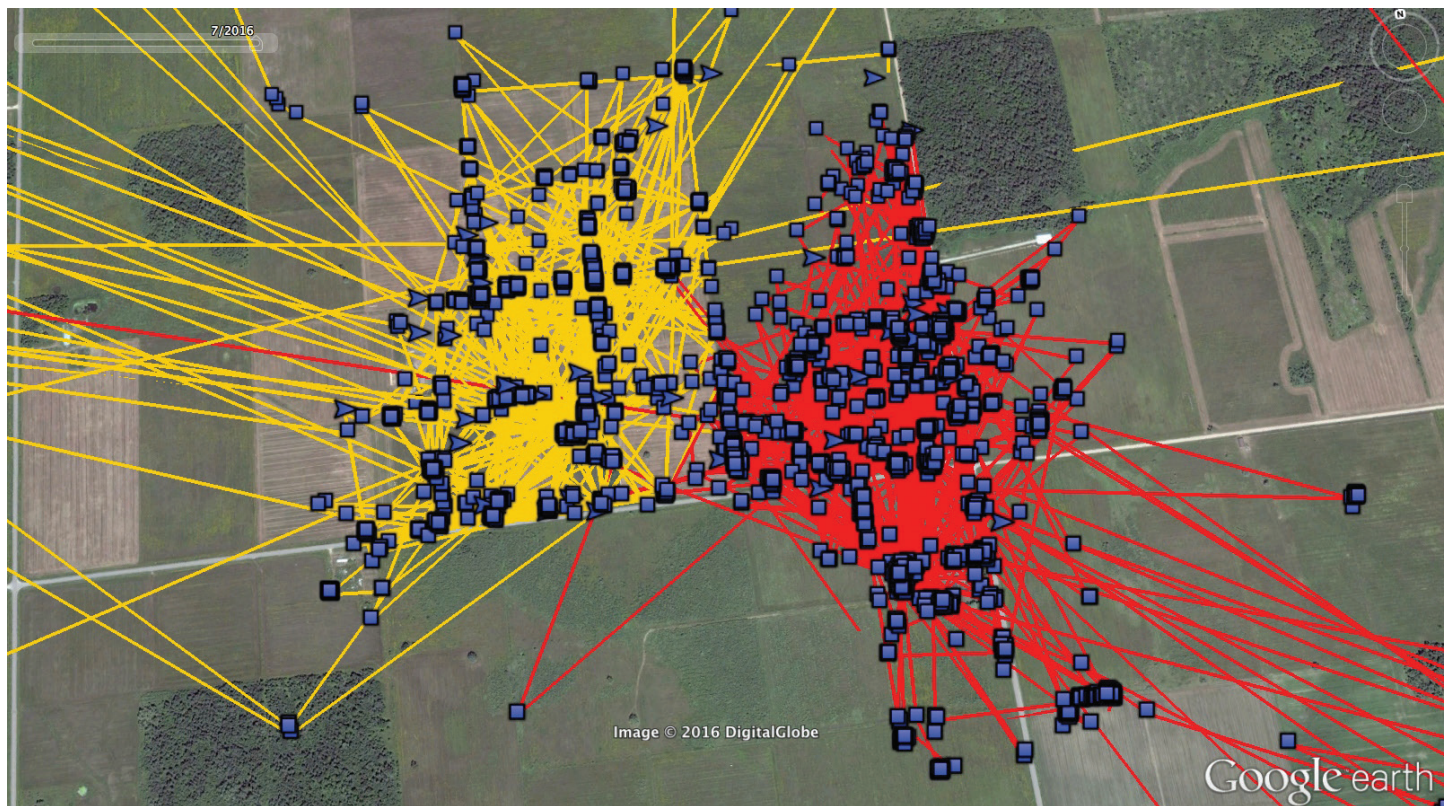


The SNOWstorm team with Chippewa. From left: Brenda Keith, Chris Neri, Nova Mackentley, David Brinker and Rich Keith.

In 2015, veteran owl researchers Nova Mackentley and Chris Neri from Michigan Audubon's Whitefish Point Bird Observatory joined the Project SNOWstorm team and tagged two adult female Snowy Owls near Pickford in the eastern Upper Peninsula. Since they occupied adjacent territories, these two birds, nicknamed Whitefish and Chippewa, provided a unique window into the behavior of Snowy Owls.



Rich Keith releasing Prairie Ronde. © Nova Mackentley



Good fences, good neighbors. The only time that Chippewa (right, in red) trespassed on the neighboring winter territory of Whitefish was after the latter owl had left the Upper Peninsula for the spring. (©Project SNOWstorm and Google Earth)

Another Michigan owl, nicknamed Alma, was trapped at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, tagged by United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) biologist Brian Washburn, and relocated to safety near Chelsea in southeastern Michigan. Because they are flat and treeless, airports are often a magnet for Snowy Owls, which pose a danger to planes, as do the planes to the owls. Another Snowy Owl, captured at the MBS International Airport, was tagged and moved to Prairie Ronde Township near Schoolcraft, and a fifth bird, nicknamed Buckeye, was moved from the Detroit Metropolitan Airport (where she'd been trapped several times previously) and released with her transmitter in northwestern Ohio.

All of these owls, and the 40 others that Project SNOWstorm has tagged since 2013, have contributed significantly to our understanding of how Snowy Owls use these southern landscapes. In some respects, we know more about Snowy Owl ecology on their breeding grounds in the Arctic than we do about how they live down here, and each one has offered surprises. Some have wandered hundreds of miles over the winter, ranging across three or four states in a short time. Others moved out onto the frozen surfaces of the Great Lakes for weeks at a time. Some hunt only for rodents or rabbits at inland sites, while others specialize in picking off ducks and other waterbirds — some as big as Snow Geese and loons — far from shore.

Interestingly, Chippewa and Whitefish proved to be the ultimate home bodies. All through the winter of 2015-16,

they barely budged from the UP farmland where they were caught and tagged. Chippewa spent almost all of her time in an area encompassing just 160 acres or so, while Whitefish, just to her east along the same gravel section of road west of Pickford, used just 115 acres. What's more, these two never, ever trespassed on the other's territory —



David Brinker preparing to release Chippewa. © Nova Mackentley

which may make sense. After all, would you, if your neighbor had a prickly temper and eight needle-sharp knives at the ends of her powerful feet?

The GPS/GSM transmitters we use to follow these owls record incredibly precise, 3-D locations (latitude, longitude, and altitude, along with flight speed) every 30 minutes. Once a week, they dial us up through the cell phone network to send us their accumulated data. Once the owls start migrating north, usually in late March or

April, we eventually lose contact with them when they pass beyond the southern Canadian cell network. But the transmitters keep recording data, able to store many years' worth in their memory. If the owl returns south in subsequent winters, we can retrieve that backlogged record of their northern travels.



Relocated from the Detroit Metropolitan Airport to Ohio, Buckeye headed north from Michigan in spring 2015, migrating more than 1,700 miles to northern Nunavut above the Arctic Circle, then returned south to Ontario the winter of 2015-16. (©Project SNOWstorm and Google Earth)

That is what happened with Buckeye. She reappeared in late February 2016 in southern Ontario, and her transmitter began to unspool a fascinating account of her journey over the previous 10 months. Buckeye had migrated north from Michigan, crossing just east of the Straits of Mackinac, then moved along the west side of Hudson Bay more than 1,700 miles to the Boothia Peninsula in northern Nunavut, well above the Arctic Circle. There she wandered hundreds of miles more over the summer, never settling down or nesting. This is perhaps an indication that lemming numbers in that part of the Arctic were poor that summer, since a cyclical peak in the population of these small rodents is essential for Snowy Owls to breed successfully.

We've also been working hard in the lab to tease out some of the possible threats facing Snowy Owls. Project SNOWstorm has cooperated with dozens of institutions and state agencies, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, to salvage dead Snowy Owls for necropsy and toxicology tests. We've found that most of the Snowy Owls that come down south are actually in good health and they are rarely thin and starving, as is often assumed. Most often, they get in trouble with vehicles and planes, as collisions account for the large majority of Snowy Owl deaths.

But under the surface, there are more worrisome signs. We've been surprised, for instance, by the high levels of mercury that we've found in the feathers, tissues, and blood of many Snowy Owls, a pollutant generated primarily by coal-fired power plants, among other sources. Mercury bioaccumulates up the food chain like DDT and other similar pesticides. At high enough concentrations, mercury can interfere with reproduction and behavior. We're not sure where the owls are picking it up as mercury has become globally pervasive, even in the Arctic. But because it accumulates most significantly in aquatic (especially freshwater) ecosystems, we're now using our tracking data to see if owls in coastal sites, especially in the Great Lakes, may be facing a higher threat.

We at Project SNOWstorm are pleased to continue our partnership with Michigan Audubon on this exciting work. As I write this in February, Chris Neri and Nova Mackentley are back out in the field again, hoping to tag additional Michigan snowies. You can follow all of our work, in Michigan and elsewhere, at: www.projectsnowstorm.org.



Scott Weidensaul

Author and researcher Scott Weidensaul lives in Pennsylvania, and is one of the directors of Project SNOWstorm. Weidensaul has written more than two dozen books on natural history, including *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*, a Pulitzer Prize finalist; *The Ghost with Trembling Wings*, about the search for species that may or may not be extinct; and *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding*. *The First Frontier: The Forgotten History of Struggle, Savagery and Endurance in Early America*, was published in 2012.



Prairie Ronde was trapped by USDA Wildlife Services at the MBS International Airport in Saginaw, Mich. She was banded, tagged and relocated Feb. 11, 2015, to Prairie Ronde Township near Schoolcraft, Mich. Her transmitter was paid for by donations to Project SNOWstorm. © Chris Neri

From the Field: Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery Effort

BY VINCE CAVALIERI



Piping Plover at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore © Vince Cavalieri, USFWS

Light slowly filtered through the canopy of a small glade near the shoreline on Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore's North Manitou Island. I stirred in my sleeping bag as the sounds of distant foghorns, lapping waves, and calling Herring Gulls vied for my groggy attention. Although it was June, the chilly dawn air reminded me that the cool waters of Lake Michigan completely surrounded me. I slowly prepared for the day, grabbing my spotting scope, binoculars, clipboard, and data sheets as I headed out of "plover camp" to trek down the shoreline to Dimmick's Point, a stronghold of one of Michigan's rarest birds, Piping Plovers.

In 2016, Dimmick's Point had 20 nesting pairs of plovers — four more pairs than had existed in the entire Great Lakes population when the birds were added to the endangered species list in 1986. This positive turn is due mainly to the diligent efforts of numerous biologists, volunteers, and researchers who have worked tirelessly to protect these birds over the years. Each spring, biologists, plover monitors, and volunteers from the myriad agencies and groups that make up our informal Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team search miles of Great Lakes shoreline looking for the presence of plovers. We try to find each and every nest, though undoubtedly a few slip by unnoticed each season. Once found, plover

nests are protected with small beach closures to protect them from beachgoers, and nesting exclosures to protect the nests from predators. Nests are monitored throughout the season and if one is abandoned for any reason, the eggs are taken into captivity to be hatched and cared for as part of a salvage captive rearing effort led by the Detroit Zoo. At the end of the summer, all of the captive-raised

chicks are released back into the wild. These efforts, some of the most intense for any endangered species, have helped the plovers slowly climb from 16 pairs at the time they went on the endangered species list, to 75 pairs today. Once limited to a handful of breeding sites in northern Michigan in the 1980s, Piping Plovers have begun to recolonize nesting beaches farther south in Michigan, as well as in Wisconsin, Illinois, New York, and Ontario, Canada.



© Vince Cavalieri, USFWS

Once out amongst the dunes and wide beach at Dimmick's Point, I set up my spotting scope and started scanning the beach. By this point in the season, most nests had been located and nesting exclosures had been set up by monitors working for the National Lakeshore. I was looking for any additional nesting pairs that may have been missed and to make sure that everything was going well with the current nests. I scanned each nest to make sure an adult was incubating the eggs and I searched the nearby shorelines to ensure their mates

were also present. Both male and female plovers incubate the eggs and regularly take turns throughout the day and night. Sometimes you have to wait an hour or more to witness an incubation switch. During the early part of the nesting season, plover monitoring can be a lengthy game of sitting tight and watching, but it is a critical time for the monitors. If a nest is abandoned, it is crucial to recognize it quickly. The sooner abandoned eggs get to the captive rearing facility, the better chance they have to survive. Later in the season, once the chicks hatch, monitoring grows in intensity as the number of plovers rise. During the past two seasons on North Manitou Island, by mid-July there were over 100 individual adults and chicks to keep track of.

To keep track of the plovers, each season a team of researchers led by Dr. Francie Cuthbert from the University of Minnesota bands nearly all of the chicks. As a result, over 90 percent of Great Lakes Piping Plovers are color banded and most of the adults can be identified as an individual in the field. This is a tremendous resource that helps answer many scientific questions about the birds and aids with conservation efforts. Whenever I think about bird banding, my thoughts often stray to legendary conservationist Aldo Leopold's beloved *A Sand County Almanac*, specifically the chapter titled "65290", which focuses on the individual Black-capped Chickadee given the corresponding band number. The life of "65290," a bird that somehow managed to significantly outlive the rest of its cohorts, allowed Leopold to ponder the harsh conditions faced by chickadees.

In "65290," Leopold wrote, "To band a bird is to hold a ticket in a great lottery." I suspect all of us involved in the Great Lakes Piping Plover recovery effort often feel the same way. All of us watch the birds' lives go by,

their comings and goings, how long they live, how many chicks they manage to fledge each season, how many of those chicks come back the following year. The banding program helps us monitor the progress of our recovery goals; including how many pairs we have in the Great Lakes each season, how many chicks fledge per pair, and where our plovers spend the winter. All of this information assists us in adapting our management techniques to improve survival and speed recovery.

Back out on Dimmick's Point I focused my spotting scope on a Piping Plover foraging along the water's edge. I quickly read the band combination. On the left leg, an orange flag on top with red and black bands underneath. On the right leg, metal on top and nothing below. I recognized this particular plover, not only because I had seen her several times before, but because she made some minor headlines the previous winter, making her a bit of our own "65290." Named for her band combination, "Of,RLX,[b]" had been spotted by biologists working on the Piping



"Of,RLX,[b]" at Dimmick's Point. © Alice Van Zoeren



Piping Plover flying at wintering grounds near Grand Isle, Louisiana © Vince Cavalieri, USFWS

Plover International Census in Cuba, making her the first Great Lakes Piping Plover ever located there. I also knew some of her life story. At nine years of age, she was one of the older plovers in the population and was a successful mother, having fledged 18 chicks already. By the end of the summer, with the help of the beach closure, nesting enclosure and the plover monitors on North Manitou Island, “Of,RL:X,[b]” had fledged an additional four chicks, pushing her total to 22 and bringing the Great Lakes Piping Plover population one step closer to recovery.

Piping Plovers at Whitefish Point

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

While plovers have been breeding at nearby Vermillion Point and Grand Marais for decades, the first nest documented at Whitefish Point since listing did not occur until 2009. Since that time Whitefish Point has seen nesting plovers each year, reaching a high of five pairs in 2013. With its wide beaches, ample cobble to provide shelter and camouflage for plover chicks, and cooperation from conservation partners Whitefish Point has been remarkably successful at fledging plover chicks.

During this time frame the Great Lakes population as a whole has averaged 1.72 chicks fledged per pair; Whitefish Point has averaged 2.67 — almost an entire chick higher. With continued cooperation, Whitefish Point can continue to be an important nesting site for one of Michigan’s most endangered birds.



Vince Cavalieri

Originally from Iron Mountain in the Upper Peninsula, Vince has been birding since the age of seven. He has a bachelor’s degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University and a masters in Wildlife Ecology from Oklahoma State University. He is currently an endangered species biologist and lead biologist for the Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery Program with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Piping Plover with day-old chicks. © Alan Jones

Lesson Learned

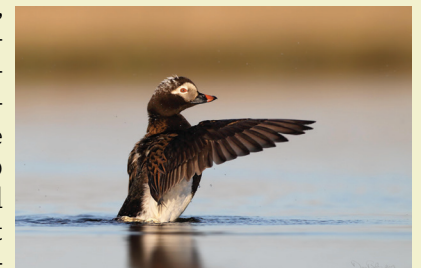
You may have noticed the stunning photograph of a Red-breasted Merganser gracing the cover of the January-February issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler*. This beautiful photograph was generously provided to us by a superb



Red-breasted Merganser © Daniel Behm

nature photographer, Daniel Behm. Unfortunately, we inadvertently identified it as a Common Merganser on the inside cover in a short informational piece regarding an outbreak of type E botulism in northern Michigan.

To make matters worse, we also misidentified another wonderful photograph provided by Mr. Behm. The photograph on p. 10 was mistakenly labeled as a Greater Scaup, but it is clearly a magnificent photograph of a



Long-tailed Duck © Daniel Behm

Long-tailed Duck. We take full responsibility for these errors, apologize profusely to Mr. Behm and our readers, and vow to do everything possible to make sure we avoid such errors in the future.

Michigan Purple Martin Conservation

Building a Community

BY RACHELLE ROAKE, CONSERVATION SCIENCE COORDINATOR

Though summer seems far away, now is the time to prepare for some of our favorite summer birds – Purple Martins. Gregarious and iridescently beautiful, these birds are a familiar sight near lake-side cottages where their preferred apartment-style housing is a quintessential piece of outdoor decor. Although these houses are numerous, studies suggest the Michigan Purple Martin population is in a long-term decline.



Purple Martin © Josh Haas

What is happening to our Purple Martins and what can we do to help? Starting this year, Michigan Audubon is partnering with the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) and local Purple Martin landlords to gain a better understanding of Michigan's Purple Martin population, educate the next generation of landlords, and foster unity among conservationists. This program will help Michigan's Purple Martins by:

1. Gathering information. Where are the locations of past, current, and potential new colonies? To help the Purple Martins, we must build on our knowledge of colony locations and current status. Unfortunately, the PMCA has just a handful of records from colonies in Michigan. Cornell Lab of Ornithology's popular citizen science project, NestWatch, has just one record of Purple Martins nesting in Michigan. If you manage a colony of Purple Martins, please reach out and add your colony to our Michigan Martin Map. If you don't already, start collecting data from your Purple Martin colony and share it with the biologists at PMCA.

2. Encouraging management. Invasive species, predators, disease, and severe weather can devastate even the most robust Purple Martin colonies. Establishing and caring for a Purple Martin colony can seem daunting, but there are many resources available to guide landlords. Michigan Audubon will be promoting active management techniques and troubleshooting via web resources, printed materials, and training workshops. Stay tuned as we release these materials and opportunities.

3. Sharing experience. Helping Michigan's Purple Martins requires a statewide approach and unity among conservationists. While actions taken in one's own backyard are critically important, sharing knowledge, skills, and time is perhaps of even greater importance. If you're an active Purple Martin Landlord, consider mentoring new landlords in your area. Please contact Michigan Audubon if you're interested in becoming a mentor.

Building effective conservation communities is essential to long-term success for this human-dependent species. Through this new program focused on educating the public, collecting colony data, and uniting landlords across the state, we can paint a more complete picture of Michigan Purple Martins and target future conservation efforts where they will have the greatest impact. Anyone with experience in managing Purple Martins or a willingness to learn can play a role in Michigan martin conservation.

Almost every country tavern has a martin box on the upper part of its sign-board; and I have observed that the handsomer the box, the better does the inn generally prove to be. - John James Audubon (1831)

Can we reignite the sense of pride we once had about Purple Martin conservation? Where we build Purple Martin communities, stronger human communities rise around them. Purple Martins bring a joy that should be shared; not just on Facebook or via tweet, but outside, passing a gourd, and squealing, "Look what hatched!"



Rachelle Roake

Rachelle is the Conservation Science Coordinator for Michigan Audubon.

Do you have a Purple Martin colony? Are you, or have you been, involved in Michigan Purple Martin conservation? We would love to hear about your experience! Please contact Rachelle Roake, Michigan Audubon's conservation science coordinator, at rroake@michiganaudubon.org or by calling (517) 580-7364.



© Eric Vogt

Tawas Point Birding Festival

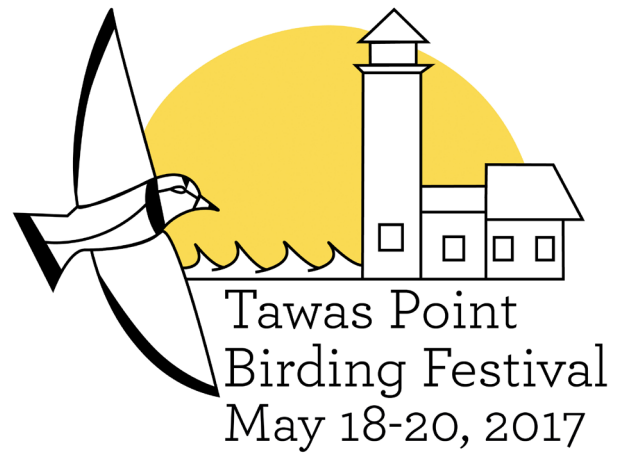
BY LINDSAY CAIN, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

2017 will mark the 12th Annual Tawas Point Birding Festival. This year's event will kick off on the evening of Thursday, May 18, and continue through the evening of Saturday, May 20. Tawas Point Birding Festival is well known for its spectacular birding, but this year there's even more to be excited about!

In an effort to encourage people to commit to conservation, our focus for the 2017 Tawas Point Birding Festival is our Bird-Friendly Communities initiative. Topics for this year's seminars will help participants gain valuable skills and knowledge to make their communities a better place for our feathered friends. In addition to a warbler ID seminar and a special presentation on Kirtland's Warbler recovery, topics will also include native plants, Purple Martins, birding trails, bird-friendly backyards, and making windows safer for birds.

The festival will conclude with keynote speaker Joanna Eckles presenting "Essential Elements of a Bird-Friendly Community." Birds need food, water, and shelter to safely survive and thrive in all parts of their life cycle - breeding season, winter, and migration. By creating bird-friendly communities, we can support the needs of birds while making our own communities stronger, more vibrant, connected, and healthy for people and all wildlife. This program will explore best practices for improving habitat, reducing threats, and engaging people in conservation and outdoor recreation to benefit birds and their habitats.

Eckles has watched, studied, and worked with birds all her life. She is currently a conservation program manager at Audubon Minnesota where she leads the Bird-Friendly Communities program and two projects central to its mission of transforming the places people live and work into habitats where birds thrive. Project BirdSafe focuses on studying bird-window collisions and promoting solutions, and Bird City Minnesota is a municipal recognition and education program. Bird City guides communities and recognizes them for the positive actions



they take on behalf of birds, including steps to reduce bird-window collisions and other threats, improve habitat, and getting citizens involved in birding and conservation.

While we have a new theme for this year's festival,

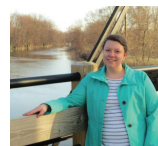


Volunteer banding birds at Tawas Point Birding Festival, 2014. © Steve Baker

participants can still expect the field trips they've come to know and love. These include tours to the Pine River Kirtland's Warbler Management Area, Eagle Run Trail, Sandy Hook Trail, Tuttle Marsh, and more! Bird banding demonstrations and birding stations at Tawas Point State Park will be available as well.

New this year will be a Family Day Activities Tent at the festival headquarters, Tawas Bay Beach Resort, on Saturday, May 20, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Wings of Wonder will join us with their raptors and activities will be available for children of all ages.

More information about the event, including a full schedule and registration information, can be found at www.tawasbirdfest.com.



Lindsay Cain

Lindsay is the Education Coordinator for Michigan Audubon.

Sunset Coast Birding Trail

Millions of migratory birds pass through the Great Lakes region during their spring and fall migrations, making Michigan uniquely positioned as a birding destination. Over the last few years, many regions in Michigan have developed birding trails to highlight places to see birds and to attract birders to their area. A group of individuals and organizations in Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet counties are working to join this growing network by developing the Sunset Coast Birding Trail (SCBT).

The three counties, located in the northwest area of the lower peninsula, host a wide variety of protected areas and habitats that attract a large number of Michigan's 400-plus bird species. The region offers exciting birding opportunities at local parks, nature preserves, and natural areas where prime birding locations are easily accessible and also accentuate local conservation efforts.

Using the existing infrastructure of parks and preserves, the SCBT will inspire birders to visit the area, as well as encourage local residents to visit the sites, with the addition of signage to alert guests to choice birding opportunities.

The SCBT will feature approximately 30 primary sites on a website, printed map, and with signage on location. Another 30 secondary birding sites will be identified solely on the website.

The Sunset Coast Birding Trail showcases the diverse birds and natural features of Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet counties and benefits the local communities by promoting economic development and environmental stewardship.



**SUNSET COAST
BIRDING TRAIL**

Visit www.sunsetcoastbirdingtrail.org
for more information

Other established Michigan birding trails include Saginaw Bay Birding Trail, Superior Birding Trail, Sleeping Bear Birding Trail, Beaver Island Birding Trail, Sunrise Coast Birding Trail, and North Huron Birding Trail.

The Sunset Coast Birding Trail will hold an official ribbon cutting event on June 10, 2017. Stay tuned for details.

Michigan's Birding Trail Network

Beaver Island Birding Trail

As the largest island in Lake Michigan, Beaver Island is a critical stop-over site for migratory birds flying up the lake on their way north to breeding grounds. The Beaver Island Birding Trail encompasses more than 12,000 acres of state and township lands and four Little Traverse Conservancy preserves, and more than 100 miles of roads.

Visit www.beaverislandbirdingtrail.org for more details.

North Huron Birding Trail

The North Huron Birding Trail has five unique birding zones: St. Ignace, Les Cheneaux Area, DeTour, Drummond Island, and Pickford Grassland Area. The north shoreline of Lake Huron in Michigan's Upper Peninsula has long been known as one of the most beautiful and pristine areas of wilderness in all of the Midwest.

Visit www.northhuronbirding.com for more details.

Saginaw Bay Birding Trail

The Saginaw Bay Birding Trail covers a total of 142 miles, including Michigan Highways M-25 and M-13, as well as 40 miles of the US-23 State Recreation Byway. The Trail runs from Port Crescent State Park on the eastern end to Tawas Point State Park on the western end, and largely follows the shoreline of the entire Saginaw Bay.

Visit www.saginawbaybirding.org for more details.

Sleeping Bear Birding Trail

Michigan's Sleeping Bear Birding Trail spans an exceptional migratory flyway and thousands of public acres along the Lake Michigan

coastline. The Trail is anchored by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The trail covers all 123 miles of Michigan Highway M-22 which runs from Manistee on the southern end to Traverse City at the north terminus.

Visit www.sleepingbearbirdingtrail.org for more details.

Sunrise Coast Birding Trail

The Sunrise Coast Birding Trail incorporates 145 miles along U.S. 23. The trail takes flight at the mouth of the famed AuSable River in Oscoda and wings its way north all along the Lake Huron coast to Mackinaw City.

Visit www.us23heritageroute.org/sunrise_birding.asp for more details.

Sunset Coast Birding Trail

Michigan's newest birding trail, the Sunset Coast Birding Trail. The SCBT will feature approximately 30 primary sites on a website, printed map, and with signage on location. Another 30 secondary birding sites will be identified solely on the website.

Visit www.sunsetcoastbirdingtrail.org for more details.

Superior Birding Trail

Anchored by Whitefish Point in the north and the Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the south, the 150-mile Superior Birding Trail guides visitors through the rugged and rare ecosystems of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Visit www.superiorbirdingtrail.com for more details.

Keep Calm and Save the World

BY HEATHER GOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Have you ever seen the bumper sticker, “If you aren’t outraged, you’re not paying attention”? With the information overload we find ourselves filtering through in the media, there is no shortage of outrage and it may be harder than ever to pay attention. It is painful to pay attention, at least speaking for myself from an environmentalist’s standpoint. While we can’t just stop paying attention, we will need to mindfully curate our roles as citizens who care about wildlife and the environment. In other words, we’ve got to decide how we are going to give back as individuals. I trust we all will find an intensified commitment to environmental protection — and we must.

As we deal with information overload, outrage, questionable facts, questionable realities, it takes a toll on us. We’ve got to feed our minds soul food right now — content that will balance and clarify, reignite and center us in our commitment to the natural world and all that depends on it. I want to share a list of books I feel fit the bill for meeting our current climate with strong, educated inspiration. And hope.

These first two aren’t necessarily feel-good, but they’ll get us clear and activated in our right minds. These are titles that take us back to our philosophical roots as environmentalists; conservation classics that we can, and should, return to in that they offer timeless wisdom and guidance for critical thinking and environmental activism: *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson and *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey.

The next are considered such classics that I almost don’t need to even list them. I include them not because there are critical claims that these texts helped define the environmental movement, but because of how reading them reminds us to live simply with the natural world. They are softening, quieting, refining of our attention and help us preserve that distilled connection to the movement of nature through time. *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold and *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau ground us and get us back to a clearer, purer state of being in the nature and the world.

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver.

Barbara Kingsolver is a prolific writer and her fiction always incorporates elements of the natural world or human dimensions of wildlife. Kingsolver

dropped out of a Master’s program in Wildlife Biology in order to pursue writing. This book, one of the less-common nonfiction works by Kingsolver, inspires us to make changes to our lifestyle, perspective, carbon footprint, and habits of consumption. She is bold, smart, thoughtful, and wickedly committed to conservation in the journey of this book.

Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey by Jane Goodall.

I read this book after learning about the state of the world from an environmental perspective and it was a kind of balm that didn’t sacrifice truth or the edge of activism. The wisdom and insight of this memoir has stayed with me as a guiding light and a reminder to not fall into cynicism or hopelessness. Gail Hudson writes, “Goodall shares her antidote to the poison of despair with specific examples of why she has not lost faith. For instance, she shares her spiritual epiphany during a visit to Auschwitz; her bravery in the face of chimpanzee imprisonment in medical laboratories; and devotes a whole chapter to individuals, corporations, and countries that are doing the right thing. But most of all Goodall provides a beautifully written plea for why everyone can and must find a reason for hope.” This memoir has served as a principal text for me and its message is more needed and possibly more helpful than ever.

The way I see it, I am equally required as an activist to keep things like the poetry of Mary Oliver, environmental classics, peaceful observation of nature and simple birdsong in the mix of daily life. These fine, pure truths are our fuel.



Headlands International Dark Sky Park, Emmet County, Mich.



Announcements



Michigan Audubon Workshop Series

Michigan Audubon will sponsor a workshop series on the second Tuesday of each month from March through October. Each month, the workshop will focus on a different topic related to birds and birding. Workshops will appeal to different skill levels and interests throughout the year. Workshops will be held at the Michigan Audubon office, 2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200, Okemos, MI 48864. For more information about upcoming workshops, visit www.michiganaudubon.org. For questions, please contact Michigan Audubon Education Coordinator, Lindsay Cain, at lcain@michiganaudubon.org or 517-580-7364.

March 14, 6-9 p.m. | How to Be a Good Purple Martin Landlord

Michigan Audubon is pleased to welcome Penny Briscoe to host the workshop, "How to Be a Good Purple Martin Landlord." Briscoe is a local expert with more than 25 years of experience. Learn how to acquire and install suitable housing, prepare nests for spring arrival, and perform regular nest checks to ensure the survival of young birds. Briscoe will also share useful internet resources and discuss recording and submitting data. For more information about this workshop and how to register for it, please visit www.michiganaudubon.org.

April 11, 6-8 p.m. | Nest Box Monitoring

Being a responsible bird "landlord" includes providing a safe nesting situation. This can be accomplished through regular nest checks, maintenance, and predator guards. During the April workshop, Gene Wasserman will cover the basics of nest box monitoring. Learn how to perform regular nest checks, safeguard against parasites and predators, and record monitoring data. As an added bonus, there will be an opportunity to construct and take home your very own nest box.

Michigan Science Festival Detroit Expo Day

The Michigan Science Festival Detroit Expo Day is Sunday, April 9, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Belle Isle Park, 2 Inselruhe Ave., Detroit, MI 48207. The day will feature hands-on activities, demonstrations, and talks for the whole family to enjoy! Expo activities will be located across several sites on Belle Isle Park, including: Dossin Great Lakes Museum, the Belle Isle Nature Zoo, and the Belle Isle Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory.

Spring Fling

April 29-30 will mark the 29th Annual Spring Fling: WPBO's Celebration of Bird Migration, when members and their guests "migrate" to Paradise, Mich., and the Whitefish Point area to visit with old friends, both human and avian. This year's banquet keynote will feature Josh Haas as he presents "Hawks on the Wing: Seeing beyond the field marks," and releases his brand new DVD "Hawks on the Wing." Other Spring Fling presentation topics will include Northern Owls, Piping Plovers, and Bird Songs and Vocalizations. More information about the event and how to register can be found at www.wpbo.org.

Capital City Bird Sanctuary Open House

Michigan Audubon will hold an open house at our Capital City Bird Sanctuary, 6001 Delta River Drive, Lansing, Mich., on Saturday May 13 in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. Join us from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. for conservation updates, tours of the sanctuary, and family-friendly activities.

Kirtland's Warbler Tours

Michigan Audubon will again sponsor Kirtland's Warbler Tours out of Hartwick Pines State Park. Tours will begin May 15 and are scheduled daily at 7 a.m. An additional tour at 11:00 a.m. will also be included on weekends and holidays (Memorial Day and Independence Day). The last day tours will be offered is July 4. Tours will meet at the Michigan Forest Visitor Center within Hartwick Pines State Park. Reservations are only taken for groups of more than five individuals. If you have more than 10 people in your party for a weekend tour, you may be required to participate in the 11 a.m. outing. If you have more than 10 people during the week, we will arrange a special tour. To make group reservations, email events@michiganaudubon.org.

In addition, the AuSable Valley Audubon (AVA) Chapter of Michigan Audubon, will employ experienced guides to lead free Kirtland's Warbler tours from Oscoda, Mich. Tours are scheduled for May 21-22, June 3, 10, 17, 24, and July 1 at the Pine River Management Area of the eastern third of the Huron National Forest in Oscoda. These tours are coordinated in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service, Huron Pines' Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, and Michigan Audubon. More detailed information is available at AVA's website <http://ausablevalleyaudubon.org>.



Canceled: 2017 Midwest Birding Symposium

Due to circumstances beyond our control, we regret to inform you that the 2017 Midwest Birding Symposium originally scheduled to be held in Bay City, Mich., this September has been canceled. Since the first symposium in the Chicago suburbs in 1989, the event has been held in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Managed by Bird Watcher's Digest and local birding partners, the MBS will be undergoing changes. If you are interested in being notified when details of those changes become solidified, you can visit www.midwestbirding.org to join their mailing list.

Gearing Up for the Spring Field Season at WPBO

Whitefish Point, located 11 miles north of Paradise in the Upper Peninsula, ranks among the most significant avian migration sites in North America. For over 30 years, the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) has been monitoring and documenting the migration of tens of thousands of birds that funnel to the Point every spring and fall. Over 340 species of birds have been seen at the Point.

WPBO is open to the public and is a treasured site for birders, especially during spring and fall migration. We offer regular guided bird walks, owl programs and owl banding demonstrations. We hope you will stay tuned in to events and sightings at wpbo.org and be sure to go to the "Visit" page to read our Field Ornithologist's *Observation Opportunities at Whitefish Point: A Birder's Guide to WPBO Seasons* by Skye Haas.

This spring, we are welcoming back a predominantly seasoned field crew at the Point.

Skye Haas: Field Ornithologist



Skye, an avid birder and naturalist, is excited to return to Whitefish Point this spring where he landed his first waterbird counting position over a decade ago. Since then, Skye has been working as a contract biologist for organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas, and the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas. The last two autumns, Skye has been a waterbird counter for Avalon Seawatch at the Cape May Bird Observatory in New Jersey, where in 2014 he was the lead counter of the team that set the all-time single-season record of over 1,026,000 migrating waterbirds! Skye has a degree from Northern Michigan University, and has led tours for Michigan Audubon, the Sax Zim Bog Birding Festival, and his own guide service, Borealis Birding. A returning member of the Michigan Bird Records Committee, Skye is a long-standing board member of the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society in Marquette, and is a founding member of the Keweenaw Raptor Survey.

Louie Dombroski: Waterbird Counter



Originally from Bay City, Mich., Louie landed his first field ornithology job in 1988, when he became a waterbird counter at Whitefish Point. Although field work has taken him to Alaska, Arizona, Mexico, and many points in between, Louie keeps returning to northern Michigan on a regular basis. For the last three

years, Louie has been an integral part of other Lake Superior waterbird counts. Louie worked on both Michigan Breeding Bird Atlases, authored many Summer and Fall Seasonal Bird Survey reports for the Michigan Audubon journal *Michigan Birds & Natural History*, and is currently chair of the Michigan Bird Records Committee. Louie has been the waterbird counter at Whitefish Point for several seasons over the years, including the inaugural fall waterbird count.

Chris Neri: Owl Bander



A lifelong birder, Chris became particularly fascinated with owls at the ripe old age of eight. In the mid-90s he was introduced to owl banding by Katy Duffy in Cape May, N.J. and he said he knew after the very first night of banding that his life had been changed. He has since

worked with birds of prey in Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Idaho, California, Oregon, Minnesota, and his home state of Pennsylvania. His life was again changed when he arrived for his first season of owl banding at WPBO in the spring of 1999. Chris has been fortunate enough to spend seasons at some of the premier raptor sites around the country, working on some great research projects, but as he reports, "Nothing has captured me the way the owl migration at Whitefish Point has."

Nova Mackentley: Owl Bander



Nova graduated from Oberlin College and has worked with passerines, owls, hawks, ground squirrels, and ocelots at various field sites all over the world. She landed her first owl banding job in 2003 at Hawk Ridge in Duluth, Minn. After this, it was a short drive to the other side of Lake Superior to Whitefish Point in the spring of 2005. She quickly fell in love with the owl migration at Whitefish Point and has returned every year since. Nova and Chris Neri have now made the Point their permanent residence, and its rugged wildness inspires much of their photography which can be viewed at www.nightflightimages.com.

Gary Palmer: Hawk Counter



Gary Palmer grew up in Saginaw and developed a love for the outdoors at a young age. He received a degree in biology from Saginaw Valley State University in 2007 and shortly afterward moved to the Upper Peninsula to live in Marquette. He attended graduate school at Northern Michigan University, where he recently finished his master's degree in post-secondary biology education. His interest in studying animal behavior led him to enroll in Dr. Alec Lindsay's field ornithology course at NMU in 2010. His life hasn't been the same since. After discovering the incredible rush of spring migration he was hooked, and has dedicated much of his time to birding anywhere he can, making trips to Texas, Arizona, Colorado, California, Minnesota, and New Jersey in recent years.

Count Dates

The 2017 dates for seasonal counts and owl banding taking place this year at WPBO are as follows:

Hawk Count

March 15–May 31: 8 a.m.–4 p.m. daily

Waterbird Count

April 15–May 31 and Aug. 15–Nov. 15:

Begin daily at sunrise and continue for 8 hours.

Owl Banding

March 15–May 31: Dusk to dawn.

July 1–Aug. 25: Dusk to dawn.

Sept. 15–Oct. 31: Dusk to dawn.

Note: There are owl presentations offered at the Point on select evenings.

Stay tuned to wpbo.org for regular updates.

Dated Material



We welcome our newest
Michigan Audubon Members

Gamal Abosamra	Jim Hostetler
H. Thomas Bartlett	Vince Jeevar
Kathleen Bender	Kathleen Johnson
Lisa Benic	Scott Keller
Anne Brasie	Colleen Kenny
April Campbell	John & Joanna Kernstock
Alexa Carollo	Katherine Klykylo
Barbara & Daniel Carpenter	Marilyn Lee
Blair Celano	Robert Lee
Yat Chan	Ray & Patsy Lincolnhol
John Chronowski	Rob Maxwell
Jeff Clark	Dr. John Mesch
Karen Currie	Sharon & Daniel Moore
David Dankovic	John O'Connell
Daniel Davis	Mary Orlos
Sharon Debar	Raul Pereira
John Donahue	Ed & Katherine Pikarski
Steven A. Eldred	Kenneth Pinnow
Bob & Cean Eppelheimer	Barbara Page & Roger Prior
A. Kent Evans	Ken Sapkowski
Scott Fitzgerald	Carole Stevens
Dana Garnaat	Janice Sweet
Wade Gibson	Emily Tornga
Nelson Graves	David Van Fleet
Eve Hansen	Nancy Vermerris
Daniel Hayes	Cassidy Wieschowski
Susan Holkeboer	Lynn Yendell

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.

Upcoming Events

March	
14	Purple Martin Workshop Okemos
April	
7-9	Mackinaw Raptor Fest Mackinaw City
9	Michigan Science Festival Detroit Expo Day Belle Isle Park, Detroit
11	Nest Box Monitoring Workshop Okemos
29	Thornapple Woodpecker Festival Middleville
29-30	Spring Fling Whitefish Point Bird Observatory
May	
13	Capital City Bird Sanctuary Open House Lansing
13	International Migratory Bird Day Worldwide
18-20	Tawas Point Birding Festival East Tawas
28	Backyard Bird Habitat Workshop Lansing
June	
2-4	Aldo Leopold Festival Les Cheneaux
10	Sunset Coast Birding Trail Ribbon Cutting TBD