

Jack Pine *Warbler*

MAY-JUNE: Hawk Identification ■ Kirtland's Warbler Alliance ■ Ivory Gull ■ Managing Purple Martins ■ Michigan Birds and Natural History ■ Dunkadoo at WPBO ■ Cerulean Warbler Weekend



Jack Pine Warbler

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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.



Thank you to Alan Jones for submitting this stunning image for the 2017 Jack Pine Warbler cover photo contest. You can view more of his work at: www.flickr.com/photos/40652830@N05

Cover Photo ■ Defending Territory

Photographer: Alan Jones

For many years, Great Blue Herons were the dominant species at the rookery in Kensington Metropark near Brighton, Mich. Then, the population of Great Egrets gradually increased until, in 2016, egrets outnumbered herons. Here a pair of Great Blue Herons defend their territory when a Great Egret lands too close.

Alan Jones has traveled widely to view and capture nature's beauty with his camera. After retiring from Michigan State University, he has concentrated on photographing wildlife and has visited incredible locations on numerous wildlife photography tours.

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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 MichiganAudubon on social media



From the Executive Director

When I returned to Michigan after living in Oregon and working for the Audubon Society of Portland, I noticed a few remarkable things: 1) it is actually incredibly sunny in Michigan compared to the Pacific Northwest; 2) we have an abundance of incredible hiking trails and nature preserves to boast; and 3) there is no shortage of volunteer opportunities with numerous non-profits dedicated to conservation in Michigan.

I lived in Ann Arbor and volunteered for the Leslie Science and Nature Center's education bird program and Natural Areas Preservation's Breeding Bird Survey, but I also felt a strong pull to serve and support Michigan Audubon. The organization's mission, its pillars of conservation, education and research, the focus on bird conservation and the statewide reach of its work deeply appealed to me.

I joined the Board of Directors and consider it one of the best, most rewarding volunteer experiences. My introduction to Michigan Audubon's Board of Directors was startlingly positive — here was a group of people who not only efficiently, effectively and thoughtfully tended to the over arching governing of the organization, but were also "true believers" in the mission, committed volunteers, non-anthropomorphic avian devotees, and generous professionals.

Alec Lindsay, now the Immediate Past Board Chair, was absolutely instrumental in transitioning a new director to the organization and in supporting the process of



Whitefish Point Bird Observatory shifting to an official program of Michigan Audubon. Alec's support, expertise, philosophy, steady communication, and exemplary volunteerism that bordered on hyperextension at times during his tenure as Board Chair have

made substantial, lasting impacts on our organization's work, the enthusiasm of our staff, the structure and function of our board, and strides at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory in terms of monitoring and research goals. In his own words:

"Being a part of the Michigan Audubon Board has been an inspiring experience, and serving as Chair for the last three years has been especially meaningful. The organization has been growing and developing in meaningful ways — from expanding our advisory roles across the state to improving outreach on behalf of birds and habitats to invigorating research and conservation efforts — the volunteers, staff, and members of Michigan Audubon have been making a difference. Our leadership and staff transition in the last year has been an arduous process, but I think the organization is in tremendously capable hands, and I am honored to have been a part of a team that helped oversee the transition. And in similar fashion, I am really excited for the energy and passion that our new Chair, Ray Stocking, will bring to the leadership of the Board, and I am pleased to support him and the rest of the Board in whatever way I can."

—Dr. Alec Lindsay, Immediate Past Board Chair

Board Chair Ray Stocking is a former president of the Washtenaw Audubon Society and a passionate bird watcher. Ray has served on the Michigan Audubon board since 2012, previously serving in the capacity as Board Secretary and Board Vice-Chair. Ray lives in Ann Arbor and birds there—and everywhere.



Ray brings a quality of leadership to our board that is focused on the details but consistently incorporates the big picture of what our work means for



birds. His values shine through his approach to relating to others, considering important issues, and strategic planning for our future, and I am very pleased to welcome Ray to his new role as Board Chair.

"In my 10+ years of association with Michigan Audubon, I have never been as excited about the outlook for the organization as I am today. Our Executive Director, and her team, are poised more than ever to drive our mission of 'connecting birds and people, for the benefit of both.' Much of the recent success in rebuilding this outstanding team comes from the capable leadership of our former Board Chair, Alec Lindsay. I would like to thank Alec for leading the board, and the organization through such a transformational time. In partnership with our current board of directors, I look forward to supporting and guiding Michigan Audubon as we continue to focus on our core value of education, conservation, and research."

—Ray Stocking, Board Chair

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

Heather Good, Executive Director

To view our current board members, please see page 13.

Red-tailed, Sharp-shinned, and Rough-legged Oh My!

BY KIRBY ADAMS



Bald Eagle © Josh Haas

If someone tells you hawk identification is easy, they're either lying to you or you're talking to a seasoned veteran at a hawkwatch. There's no sugarcoating it; hawks are hard. Luckily you live and bird in the information age when the body of identification aids is massive and growing by the hour. These days, you also benefit from the wisdom of years of hawkwatching by birders and field ornithologists who have struggled with the same identification challenges and come up with a plethora of helpful tips.

The best advice I've ever received about identifying hawks, particularly spotting rare ones, was to become intimately familiar with the Red-tailed Hawk. I was indignant at first, wondering how spending

time watching a hawk that was obviously a Red-tailed was going to help me find that more exciting Red-shouldered. Red-tailed Hawks are everywhere in most of Michigan outside of the heavy forests of the Upper Peninsula. That, it turns out, was exactly the point. When you become so familiar with the most common hawk around that you can identify it on your periphery, in the rear-view mirror, at 70 mph, then you no longer have to spend any time on more than 90 percent of the hawks you see. When there's a Red-shouldered Hawk perched on a pole or a Rough-legged Hawk gliding over a distant field, it'll stick out like a sore thumb. You train yourself for the rarities by knowing the commoners.



Red-tailed Hawk © Josh Haas



and stare at some Red-tailed Hawks to imprint that shape in your mind.

By far the best way to hone your skills with raptors in flight is to attend a hawkwatch. There are several across Michigan from Whitefish Point to Brockway Mountain to the Detroit River. Barry County birder and hawkwatching fanatic Josh Haas suggests a few days at the Detroit River hawkwatch as the best training around. The fall migration of hawks at that site is spectacular, but they tend to be higher aloft than other popular locations. “The birds are often too high to see the typical field marks,” says Haas, “which forces you to do it right.” By that he means studying flight cadence, shape, behavior, and wing orientation. A Bald Eagle and a Golden Eagle don’t look much different 5,000 feet in the air riding a thermal from Ontario unless you know how they flap their wings. A Golden Eagle has floppy, undulating wings while the Bald Eagle holds them rigidly and locked.

How do you go about truly knowing a hawk? Don’t get hung up on field marks, for starters. A red patch here and a dark band there are not going to be visible on many of the hawks you see, particularly at a hawkwatch when they’re migrating high above. The birders who seem possessed of some sorcery that allows them to quickly tell a Sharp-shinned Hawk from a Cooper’s Hawk a half-mile away aren’t looking at streaks on the breast or color of the nape. They’re noticing that one hawk is prone to bursts of frantic, shallow flapping that boost it up, while the other flaps less urgently, more deeply, and less often. The former is the Sharpie, the latter is the Coop. Is it really that easy? Not at first, but spend one afternoon at a hawkwatch and you’ll have it down pat.

Shape is another trait that hawkwatchers rely upon. Quickly describe a Red-tailed Hawk. Did you start with words that refer to color or shading? If so, you missed the most distinguishing features of the bird. It’s a thick-bodied hawk with broad wings that looks heavier than the other hawks in the air. Perched, it has a unique plump shape that immediately tells you it isn’t an Accipiter, a Rough-legged, or a falcon. Stop



Rough-legged Hawks © Josh Haas

Haas debuted a new video identification tool at this year's Spring Fling at Whitefish Point. *Hawks on the Wing* features 16 common North American raptors and focuses on identification of the birds in flight. It even allows side-by-side video comparisons for the tough identifications.



Sharp-shinned Hawk © Josh Haas

Some of the other resources available to help with in-flight raptor identification include the classic book *Hawks in Flight* by Sibley, Dunne, and Sutton. Two other manuals, *Hawks From Every Angle* and *Hawks at a Distance* were written by Jerry Liguori, arguably the most prominent and vocal North American hawkwatcher across all media today. Liguori can sometimes be found on the hawkwatch platform at Whitefish Point in the spring, always looking for one more facet of Rough-legged Hawk flight he hadn't noticed before.

Are hawks easy? Nope. Can any Michigan birder become a wizard at hawk identification with some practice? Absolutely! Michigan is perfectly placed for hawkwatching in the spring and fall.

Here's your three step plan:

First, learn your most common hawks. That will be the Red-tailed and Cooper's for most of you. Be able to pick them out and use them for comparison. This is your benchmark for hawks above your yard and on your commute to work. When a Northern Goshawk flies over, you'll know you have something special.

Second, train at home with *Hawks on the Wing* (available at www.hawksonthewing.com and The Owl's Roost Gift Shop at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory). It's not a field guide, so much as a training video. Think of it like a pilot's flight simulator (with the pun

fully acknowledged), and that you're practicing the skills before you do it for real.

Finally, go to www.hawkcount.org and find a hawkwatch you'd like to visit. Take binoculars, Liguori's books, and a lawn chair and absorb the knowledge. Don't be afraid to ask questions. The only thing hawkwatchers love more than spotting hawks is answering "how in the world could you tell that speck was a Broad-winged?" Everyone on the hawk platform at Whitefish Point was once the person who didn't see anything but specks with wings. A couple autumns from now it may be you who's answering those questions.



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



Peregrine Falcon © Josh Haas

Ivory Gull

BY ELLIOT NELSON

On the evening of March 9, 2017, Lauren LaFave, 16, was walking across a bridge over the Flint River on the campus of the University of Michigan-Flint. LaFave noticed an unusually white bird resting on the bridge and was able to snap a few quick pictures on her phone. After those photos were shared among a number of Facebook groups it was confirmed that the bird photographed was, in fact, one of the rarest birds in all of North America, an Ivory Gull.



This ivory gull was present along the Flint River from March 9-13, 2017. The gull died on March 13. © Andrew Simon

To understand the rarity of finding an Ivory Gull in downtown Flint, one must understand a bit about the species. The Ivory Gull is a bird rarely found south of the Arctic Circle. In North America, Ivory Gulls breed in the high arctic regions of Canada on bare rocks exposed only during the summer months. Unlike most arctic birds that head south for the winter, the Ivory Gull spends its winters remaining in the arctic. It can be found foraging on pack ice in the Bering Sea as well as the ice edge region between 50°-65° north latitude around Labrador and Greenland. The bird research database Birds of North American Online notes that only 2,000-3,000 of these birds breed in North America. It is listed in the 2014 State of the Birds report as being a species that will most likely become threatened or endangered unless conservation actions are taken. The species decline is due in part to declining sea ice associated with climate change as well as high mercury levels that accumulate in their tissue.

The bird found in Flint is only the second Ivory Gull on record in Michigan, and one of only a relatively small number from the lower 48 states. Once the word got out of the bird's presence, birders from several states and Canadian provinces flocked to see it, with some traveling in from Connecticut and Florida. The birding community was abuzz, and Flint certainly saw a small influx of tourism dollars as a result. Michigan Sea Grant and Michigan



Ivory Gull in flight over the Flint River. © Darlene Friedman

Audubon recently hosted a workshop which included highlights on the economic impacts of birding. Birding events like this and other bird-related travel and equipment expenditures are estimated to generate \$40 billion a year in the United States.

To the anguish of many, the Ivory Gull was only around for a few short days. Despite its apparent health on March 9-12, the bird fell ill and died on March 13. Wayward birds from the high arctic are often disoriented and malnourished. Many become prey to local predators or succumb to local diseases. While many birders were heartbroken over the loss, some were consoled with the fate of the bird's body. A few individuals collected the bird and it was quickly preserved and sent to the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology in Ann Arbor. Collection staff from the museum will be performing a full necropsy and will send off tissue samples for analysis to help determine the cause of death. After the necropsy, the museum will add the bird to their collection of bird specimens.

Their collection of Ivory Gulls from around the globe has already been used in a variety of studies, including a recent study documenting the dramatic increase in mercury levels in Ivory Gulls. In general, there is still much to learn about the Ivory Gull as it is one of the least studied gull species in the world. It's high arctic range makes comprehensive studies of the bird hard to perform. This is, in part, why museum specimens, such as the Flint Ivory Gull, are extremely important. Thanks to the action of those on the scene of the bird's death, the Flint Ivory Gull's legacy will continue on with the scientific studies it will generate for years to come.



Elliot Nelson is an extension educator with MI Sea Grant based in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. MI Sea Grant works with local partners around the state to promote the protection and sustainable use of coastal resources through research, education, and outreach.

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Female Kirtland's Warbler © Roger Eriksson

For decades, uncertainty has been the Kirtland's Warbler's constant companion as it teetered on the edge of extinction. But now, as it faces removal from the Endangered Species List, the Kirtland's Warbler has a new companion—a “friends” group called the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance.

Formed in 2013, the mission of the Alliance is to raise money to support conservation efforts necessary for the health of the species and the northern Michigan jack pine forests where it nests. Over the past four years, while the Alliance has begun to raise money for long-term conservation, it has also worked to educate the public on future conservation plans by helping to revive the Kirtland's Warbler Festival in Roscommon, hosting an annual June Kirtland's Warbler celebration, the “Home Opener,” and co-sponsoring a north-eastern Michigan economic summit to talk about the warbler's impact on the regional economy. Members also make regular treks to Lansing to educate state legislators on the bird's history as a conservation success story and its importance to the economies of Grayling, Mio, Tawas, and other northern Michigan towns.

The Alliance is working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources as members of the new Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team. This team replaces the Recovery Team due to the fact that the warbler's population is now

considered at a level where recovery is no longer the focus.

Although the future of the Kirtland's Warbler is bright, these government agencies need assistance from the Alliance because the endangered species funds from the federal government will soon be halted. Over the past 40 years, that funding has been used to create new nesting habitat and protect the warbler from threats such as the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird. State and federal agencies have vowed to continue their Kirtland's Warbler conservation work into the future, but their efforts will be hampered without continued federal government money. If the threat posed by the Brown-headed Cowbird is not controlled, it's possible the warbler could go into a downward population spiral.



Under the Endangered Species Act, Kirtland's Warbler areas have been closed to the public to prevent human disturbance during the nesting season.

“This is a new model for conservation,” said Jerry Rucker, chair of the Kirtland’s Warbler Alliance. “Nobody has ever tried anything like this before. We have a tremendous challenge ahead of us.” Delisting is necessary because the Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Plan, written in 1976, stated that the population would be considered recovered when it reached 1,000 singing males. Assuming each singing male has a mate, the total population would be considered recovered at 2,000 birds. With the population now twice that, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was left with little choice but to delist.

The concept for a friends group was developed by Dr. Carol Bocetti, a professor at California University of Pennsylvania. Bocetti is the former chair of the Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Team, which was an organization of government agencies and non-governmental organizations that have designed and coordinated Kirtland’s Warbler conservation work since 1976. Recently, Bocetti led the effort to get the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to commit themselves to continue their conservation work. But Bocetti also understood that there was a need for a new organization that could help to fill the funding gap.

With help from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Alliance started as a project of Huron Pines, a conservation organization working to conserve the forests, lakes, and streams of northeastern Michigan. The Alliance receives only minimal support from Huron Pines and is working to become an independent organization in the near future. The Alliance is now in the process establishing of a \$1 million endowment that would help fund conservation efforts. These efforts have taken on new importance in light of the current administration’s recent budget proposals that will cut funding to

support conservation work under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s conservation programs, and the Environmental Protection Agency’s program to control pesticide use.

Many animals have come off the Endangered Species List over the past 30 years including the Gray Wolf, the Bald Eagle, and the Peregrine Falcon. There’s a difference between those species and the Kirtland’s Warbler. Other species were put on the Endangered Species List for environmental reasons or human persecution. Once threats to those species were mitigated, they were able to recover without additional help from humans. The Kirtland’s Warbler, however, will need continual human intervention to survive.

The warbler nests only under the branches of young jack pine that grow after a wildfire. Due to increased population and development throughout the jack pine habitat, wildfire is no longer allowed to run across the landscape. The result — no fire, no new Kirtland’s Warbler habitat — unless humans cut mature jack pines and replace them with young trees.

An additional threat comes from the Brown-headed Cowbird, which is what biologists call an obligate parasite. The cowbird’s nesting strategy is to lay its eggs in another bird’s nest. Because the cowbirds hatch quicker and grow faster, it is able to dominate the native young in the nest, which will eventually die from neglect. Many birds recognize the threat from the cowbird, but because the Kirtland’s Warbler did not have contact with the cowbird until the late 19th century, it does not recognize the cowbird as such. To ensure Kirtland’s Warbler nesting is successful, humans need to trap and remove cowbirds from the areas near Kirtland’s Warbler nests.



Above left: Female Kirtland’s Warbler. Above right: Singing Male Kirtland’s Warbler © Roger Eriksson



Male Kirtland's Warbler © Roger Eriksson

The future of the Kirtland's Warbler isn't entirely certain, but it's more clear than it has been in nearly a half century. It seems uncertainty will always be the warbler's companion, but now it also has a friend beside it on its journey into the future. And that's good, because a bird can never have too many friends.



William Rapai is secretary of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance. He is also the author of *The Kirtland's Warbler; The Story of a Bird's Fight Against Extinction and the People Who Saved It*, published in 2013 by University of Michigan Press. To learn more about the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, visit <https://huronpines.org/alliance>.



Kirtland's Warbler Events

June 2, 6 - 9 p.m. | Kirtland's Warbler Home Opener

Celebrate the return of the Kirtland's Warbler to its Northern Michigan nesting home! The Kirtland's Warbler Alliance hosts its 4th annual Kirtland's Warbler Home Opener to support conservation of the species.

The reception with Michigan inspired beer, wine, and food offerings, silent auction and presentation by Michigan author David Dempsey, takes place at Forest Dunes Golf Club, 6367 Forest Dunes Drive, Roscommon, Mich.



David Dempsey

Event cost is \$25; preregistration is required. Call Huron Pines Program Assistant Jill Scarzo at 989-448-2293 ext. 21 to reserve your spot today! Thank you to event sponsors the American Bird Conservancy and Kalamazoo Nature Center.

June 3 | Kirtland's Warbler Festival

Be sure to stop by the Kirtland's Warbler Festival on Saturday, June 3, to continue your Kirtland's Warbler weekend experience. Kirtland's Warbler tours, kids' activities, historic logging era model train displays, education presentations, nature photography workshop, leather leaf bog tour, and much more are happening in downtown Roscommon. Visit www.kirtlandswarblerfestival.org for more details on this important community celebration!

May 15 - July 4 | Kirtland's Warbler Tours

Michigan Audubon employs a seasonal guide to lead Kirtland's Warbler tours from Grayling, Mich., working in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Tours are based at Hartwick Pines State Park. Tours are free, but you must have a Recreation Pass to enter the State Park.

Tours are daily at 7 a.m. On weekends and holidays (Memorial Day and 4th of July), there will also be tours at 11 a.m. Reservations are only accepted for groups of more than five individuals. If you have more than 10 people in your party, you may be required to participate in the 11 a.m. tour and we will arrange a special tour if you are attending during the week. To make group reservations, please email events@michiganaudubon.org.

AuSable Valley Audubon Kirtland's Warbler Tours

Join AuSable Valley Audubon for free Kirtland's Warbler tours led by experienced guides. Tours depart from the Camp Inn Lodge on US-23 south of Oscoda and car pool to the nearby Pine River Area of the Huron National Forest. Tours are limited to 20 people and will take place on May 21, 22, June 3, 10, 17, 24, and July 1. For more information, visit <http://ausablevalleyaudubon.org>.

Dunkadoo at WPBO

BY SKYE HAAS, SPRING FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

It's a cool spring morning at Whitefish Point, and hawk counter Gary Palmer peers through his scope to study a smartly patterned Rough-legged Hawk flying over the dunes. As Palmer pans past the hawk, he observes a small flock of songbirds which he identifies as five Pine Grosbeaks and two



Hawk Counter Gary Palmer scanning the sky from the Hawk Deck at WPBO.

Common Redpolls. In the distance, a Sandhill Crane migrates up the shoreline while a small kettle of Red-tailed Hawks circles in the sky, and from the jack pines below, a pair of chickadees counter-sing their cheery whistles at each other. But as Palmer turns to record the observations, something is different this year.

In the past, hawk counters would have used a tally clicker, pencils and paper to track the number of birds flying by. At the end of the day, the counter would then head home and manually enter the data from their tally sheet into a finalized paper copy and a few different computerized databases. This season, counters have added Android tablet computers to their field gear and are using a new tool that speeds up this cumbersome data collection and archival process. That tool is an app and integrated online data management platform created by the non-profit Dunkadoo.

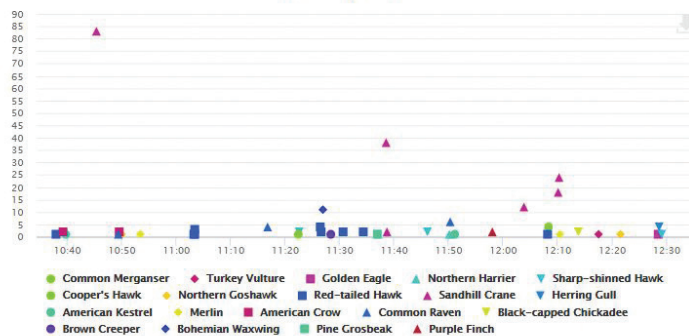


Gary Palmer entering sightings in the Dunkadoo app.

The app has a count interface featuring rows of buttons with species' names that are similar to cell counters biologists have used for decades. Counters tap buttons to input data into the tablet. With just a couple of finger strokes, the hawks, finches, chickadees and cranes are all quickly recorded once and transcribing at a later time is not needed. In addition to species counts, weather, flight information and other data can be entered on a separate metadata page. If cellular reception is available at a count site, the tablet can be connected to the internet to provide live data broadcasts and integrate with other data collection systems.

WPBO Spring 2017 Hawk Count

Live Updates



Screenshot of the live data feed from the Hawk Deck on April 12, 2017 at 12:30 p.m.

Dunkadoo. Goodman, current chair of the organization who spent 20 years building software for the automotive industry, explained that they wanted something that was intentionally different, easily remembered and something that one birder could recommend to another on the boardwalk without having to write it down. Hundreds of possible names later, they landed on the old New England name for the American Bittern based on the "dunk-a-doo" sound the bird makes from its secretive place in the marsh.

I first met Goodman and Conard at Cape May Bird Observatory a couple of years ago when I was conducting the Avalon Seawatch. An earlier iteration of the app was tried out at Cape May Bird Observatory, and after leaving Cape May, I was intrigued by the potential of the app. I helped the Dunkadoo team first by giving critical feedback of what worked and didn't work at Avalon, and later by field testing the app. The next logical step was to bring the proven app to Whitefish Point.

For the WPBO team, Dunkadoo is an exciting new tool that helps modernize migration research and data collection. The one-time entry relieves counters from the tedious task of data crunching, reducing transcription errors, and the data can be easily and in some cases, automatically exported into other databases like HawkCount.org and eBird. Another feature of Dunkadoo is the live data feed. This fantastic outreach tool allows interested birders from around the globe to simultaneously access data in real-time. Users can search the interactive charts and graphs that provide additional details related to the count data. Researchers looking at bird migration can see how migration at Whitefish Point fits into a larger scale, or birders can use it to plan a weekend up to the Point. Given the remote location of Whitefish Point, the ability to share live updates of sightings with the public is an exciting way of connecting them with the dynamic passage of birds in the Great Lakes region.



Skye Haas is the Spring Ornithologist at WPBO. An avid birder and naturalist, Skye landed his first waterbird counting position at Whitefish Point over a decade ago. Since then, Skye has worked as a contract biologist for numerous organizations across the US and has his own guide service, Borealis Birding.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend

June 10 - 11



BY LINDSAY CAIN, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

© Roger Eriksson

Cerulean Warbler Weekend (CWW) celebrates the fastest declining songbird in North America in Michigan's top spot to observe this rare bird. CWW takes place at the Michigan Audubon's Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary just outside of Hastings, Mich. Otis Farm sits amid the Barry State Game Area, home to vast mature hardwood forests, the favorite habitat of the Cerulean Warbler. This small songbird has been rapidly declining due to the mining practices in their favored home in the Appalachian Mountains and destruction of their winter habitat in Colombia.

The fields at Otis Farm are also often the nesting grounds of Henslow's Sparrow, a threatened grassland species sought after by birders across the globe. Numerous fields in Barry County meet the specifications for nesting for this picky sparrow.

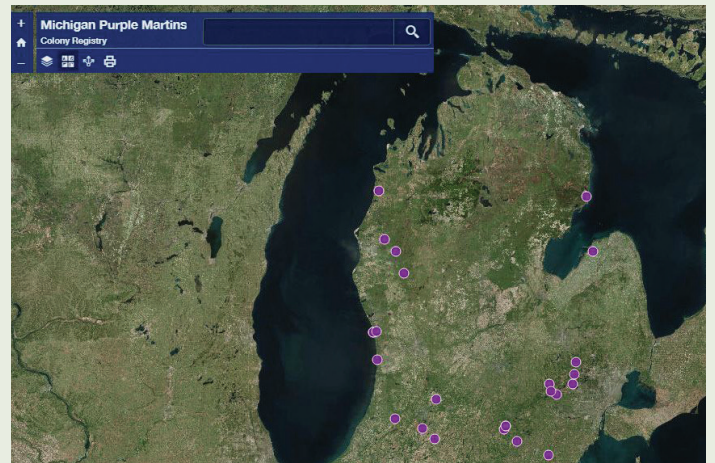
In addition to these two special birds, Otis Farm and the surrounding areas of Barry County are also home to many other interesting birds. These species include Grasshopper Sparrow, Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers, and the threatened Massasauga Rattlesnake.

CWW is a small event that offers participants a chance to experience the habitat and wildlife of Otis Farm Sanctuary and the surrounding area. This year's event will be held June 10-11 and will include guided tours, lunch, an informative talk about what makes Otis Farm unique, dinner and birding in Hastings, and the Bus Full of Birders tour. More information about the event and how to register can be found at www.michiganaudubon.org. Contact Education Coordinator Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org or 517-580-7364 with questions.

Purple Martin Management

BY RACHELLE ROAKE, CONSERVATION SCIENCE COORDINATOR

Michigan Audubon's Purple Martin conservation efforts focus on outreach, education, on-the-ground conservation, and research to increase awareness for Purple Martins and slow or reverse the population declines they have experienced across the state. While the global population is stable, Michigan's Purple Martins have been experiencing consistent, steep population declines since 1966 according to the Breeding Bird Survey. Lack of properly sited and managed nesting structures are a limiting factor for breeding Purple Martins as they rely solely on human-made structures for nesting in this region. Michigan's Purple Martins need everyone's help to thrive in our state — please join us!

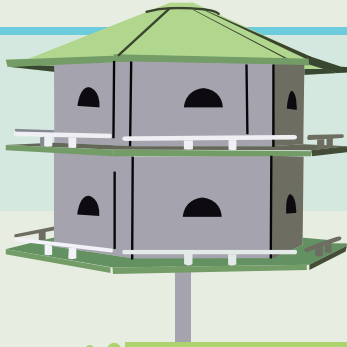


Michigan Audubon is building a map of current and historic Purple Martin colonies throughout Michigan. To date, no colonies have been registered in the Upper Peninsula.

Understanding where current Purple Martin colonies are in the state is an important step in conservation. We are building a map of these current and historic locations, which is posted on the Michigan Audubon website. If you have data to share – please go to www.michiganaudubon.org to register your colony or contact us to discuss other data upload options.

Learn more about non-native, invasive bird management or purchase traps at the Purple Martin Conservation Association website at www.purplemartin.org.

WHO IS USING YOUR PURPLE MARTIN HOUSE?



PURPLE MARTINS are social birds that nest together in apartment-style housing or clusters of gourds. Other cavity-nesting bird species, particularly non-native species, aggressively compete with Purple Martins for a place to nest. How do you know if you have a non-native competitor using your Martin housing? What can you do to prevent it?

MANAGING FOR PURPLE MARTINS

PURPLE MARTINS

IDENTIFICATION

Adult males are iridescent dark purple overall. Adult females are gray-brown overall with small patches of iridescent dark purple on head or back and a gray-brown belly. Juveniles resemble females but retain yellowish inner corners of the bill (or "gape").



EVIDENCE

Purple Martins typically build nests out of pine needles, then line the cup with green leaves just before laying pure white eggs. They live in open areas, usually near human houses, with room to swoop and catch flying insects. Often found near water where flying insects are abundant.



ENCOURAGEMENT

Provide a safe place for martins to nest by mounting houses and/or gourds on poles 15' – 18' tall and 40' – 60' away from trees. Purple Martins are attracted to people, so placing housing 30' - 120' from a residence is very important.

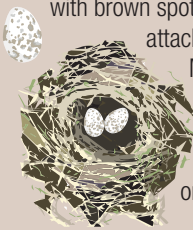
HOUSE SPARROWS

PREVENTION

There is no special opening that will deter House Sparrows since they are close in size to Purple Martins. Take down Purple Martin housing during the winter to prevent non-migratory House Sparrows from moving in. Only open a few compartments just before Purple Martins arrive in spring and open the others once Martins begin using the house. The most effective removal method is trap and removal.

EVIDENCE

They build grassy, messy nests that often include bits of trash. Their eggs are white with brown spots. House Sparrows often attack adult or young Purple Martins, usually by pecking the head. Purple Martin eggs may be roughly pecked or removed.



IDENTIFICATION

Male House Sparrows have a distinctive black bib, while females are overall a dull brown. House Sparrows are the only species of sparrow that will use a man-made house.



EUROPEAN STARLINGS

IDENTIFICATION

In breeding plumage, both male and female European Starlings are iridescent green-blue and black, with a distinctive yellow, pointed bill.



EVIDENCE

They are strong competitors that easily remove Purple Martin eggs or nestlings. These birds will use their needle-like bill to jab at young or adult Purple Martins, causing bruising, swelling, or lesions. Their nests are sprawling and grassy. Eggs are blue and much larger than Purple Martin eggs.



PREVENTION

European Starlings are much larger than Purple Martins and can be prevented from using housing by using non-round holes, usually of a crescent shape. Templates are available to help create a wooden crescent shape to add overtop a round opening. Replacement doors of a crescent shape are also available. If European Starlings are already using the house, trap and removal is the most effective method.

IF you have or know of a Purple Martin colony near you, please visit our website and register your colony! By joining the registry, you can contribute valuable data to help conserve the declining Michigan Purple Martin population. For detailed information on Purple Martin biology, conservation, management, and equipment, please visit our partner, the Purple Martin Conservation Association at www.PurpleMartin.org.

Michigan Birds and Natural History

BY ALLEN T. CHARTIER

A publication of Michigan Audubon, *Michigan Birds and Natural History*, has been published four times a year since 1994. Its mission is to provide a forum for the publication of research on the natural history of Michigan with an emphasis on birds. It is also the home of the Michigan Bird Survey, Michigan Butterfly Survey, Michigan Christmas Bird Counts, North American Migration Count, and the proceedings of the Michigan Bird Records Committee.

I am sure many of you have seen the advertisements for *Michigan Birds and Natural History*, but based on conversations I have had with birders all around the state, the value – even the existence – of this publication is not well known. At its core is the Michigan Bird Survey, which was begun in the former *Jack Pine Warbler* journal in the 1940s, and has been published almost continuously ever since.

I will readily admit that I have been entering all my bird sightings into eBird since 2012, and am actively working on getting all my sightings entered back to the mid-1970s. For sure, eBird is a great resource, but there are many things it does not do. A huge amount of historical data is still not contained in eBird (that includes a huge amount of my own data). The vast majority of the data contained in the Michigan Bird Survey, prior to the turn of this century, is also not included. Researchers wishing to compile complete county lists often start with eBird, but cannot claim to have done their due diligence until they have scoured over the decades of useful information contained in the Michigan Bird Survey. Additionally, compilers of these quarterly reports provide context for population increases and declines, first county records, first state records, influxes of rarities, and the like, integrated with weather and climatic data that eBird does not provide.

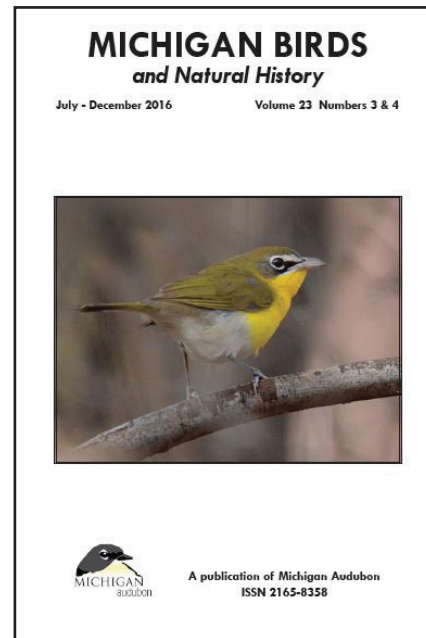
So much more is published in *Michigan Birds and Natural History* publishes so much more, including an annual butterfly survey that has served to

document range expansions and new species in the state. The opportunity for first-time authors remains an attraction even though many graduate and doctoral students now publish elsewhere. Every day birders, birders like me, can make contributions to our understanding of Michigan's birds

and other wildlife. I have compiled and published summaries of all state records of Varied Thrush and Rufous Hummingbird, and several authors have written excellent accounts of the first state records they have been involved in finding. The Christmas Bird Count data is not only published, but is analyzed in the context of weather patterns, observer effort, and historic averages, which is not available online. Over the years, Dr. Alan Kurta and some of his students, have published interesting papers on the mammals of our state, and many other topics have had occasional appearances in the journal including articles on dragonflies, reptiles, and amphibians.

I would encourage everyone interested in Michigan's birds, and other aspects of our great natural heritage, to subscribe to this journal and to tell your birding friends about it. It is a great way to support Michigan Audubon, and the hard working, all volunteer editorial board of *Michigan Birds and Natural History*, will greatly appreciate it.

Allen T. Chartier
Editorial Board member (1994-present)
Michigan Birds and Natural History



Farewells and Welcomes

BY HEATHER GOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As you might guess, it can be tough to find job applicants that are true-believers in an organization's mission. What we found when we hired Lyn Scrimger as our Membership Manager in 2015 was just that — someone dedicated, personally and professionally, to conservation. And we sure are grateful. In addition to his skillset and attitude, Lyn's values and perspective translated to a seamless fit for Michigan Audubon. Lyn was promoted to the position of Operations Manager and has been a vital member of our team over the past few years.

For many folks, supporting the work of a non-profit organization is meaningful in and of itself, but to find a non-profit that aligns with one's own core values is quite a gift. When who you are and what you believe fuels your work and your work fuels you, good things generally happen in the name of advancing the mission and accomplishing important things on the organization's behalf. I have witnessed this firsthand in managing Lyn Scrimger, who has undoubtedly been a patient, hardworking, true-believing gift to us. Thank you, Lyn — we wish you a happy, warm, birdsong-filled retirement!

"My conservation ethic began as a youth, growing up on a farm in eastern Michigan, listening to bobolinks and whistling back to Bobwhites. In my twenties I learned about backpacking and wilderness survival, and developed my sense that I need to be involved in conservation. After achieving my bachelor's degree in environmental education I began to study restoration ecology and landed with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. I have been extremely fortunate to culminate my work life here at Michigan Audubon. Sharing the value for conservation with dedicated coworkers, volunteers, members, and our board has been inspiring and rewarding. Thank you. I hope to see you all out there birding."—Lyn Scrimger



Lyn Scrimger and Maura Villhauer at Michigan Audubon headquarters in Okemos, Mich.

Welcome, Maura Villhauer!

Maura is new to the world of birding and conservation, but is a passionate Michigander and enjoys exploring and learning new things about our great state. Before joining the Michigan Audubon team, Maura developed an interest in non-profit and volunteer management as the program manager for the Mentoring to Access AmeriCorps Program, which focused on college readiness for youth across Michigan. Prior to this, she worked with a youth violence prevention program in Detroit. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in cultural anthropology. In her free time, Maura enjoys traveling, dancing to great music, and brushing up on current events.

Michigan Audubon Board of Directors



Back row (left to right): John Baumgartner, Rich Bailhe, Anne Brasie (Vice Chair), Penny Meints (Treasurer), Heather Good (Executive Director), Elizabeth Abood-Carroll, Mike Bishop (Secretary)
Front row (left to right): Ray Stocking (Board Chair), Alec Lindsay (Immediate Past Chair), Rosann Kovalcik
Not pictured: Dea Armstrong, Natasha Koss, and Gregory Nelson
For full bios of board members, visit www.michiganaudubon.org.

Dated Material



Backyard Bird Habitat Workshop | Sunday, May 28, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Woldumar Nature Center, Lansing, MI

Join Michigan Audubon and Saving Birds Thru Habitat's Kay Charter for an all-day workshop focused on the critical relationship between birds and native plants. Learn how to create a bird-friendly yard with native plants, then visit Wildtype in Mason, where owner Bill Schneider will tour us around this unique native plant nursery. Registration is now open. Visit our website for details.

Upcoming Events

May

- 5-14 Biggest Week in Birding | Northwest Ohio
- 11 Birding 101 Workshop | Okemos
- 13 Capital City Bird Sanctuary Open House | Lansing
- 13 International Migratory Bird Day | Worldwide
- 18-20 Tawas Point Birding Festival | East Tawas
- 19 Endangered Species Day | Worldwide
- 28 Backyard Bird Habitat Workshop | Lansing

June

- 2-4 Aldo Leopold Festival | Les Cheneaux
- 10 Sunset Coast Birding Trail Ribbon Cutting | Charlevoix
- 10-11 Cerulean Warbler Weekend | Barry County

July

- 11 Digiscoping Workshop | Okemos
- 14-17 National Audubon Convention | Park City, UT
- Visit www.michiganaudubon.org/calendar to stay abreast of additional birding events.

We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon Members

Paulette Attie	Linda Hall	Jerry Rogers
Deborah Andrews	Keith & Connie	Alberto Rua
Jeevak Badve	Harrison	Barbara Schipper
Amy Ball	Louise Hartung	John & Betty
John K Ball	Pat Harvey	Schoepke
Judith Barich	Susie Helfrecht	N David Scott
David Barker	Bradley Hester	Mary Anne Sgriccia
George Bennett	Barbara Hicks	Amber Shinn
Susan Berghoff	Harry Hill	Edward Sichterman
Christine Bickel	Gregg Hill	Harpreet Singh
Stephanie Bradshaw	Marie Hill	Richard Socha
Scott Brockman	Beth Holman	Peter Spaniolo
Brian Carlson	Ellie Idalski	Harvey Sparks
James Carlson	Ronald Javitch	Linda Stafford
John Carlson	Alan Jones	Mike Stefanac
Erlene Carmody	Gail Kloosterman	Paul Steinbacher
David Conklin	Gary Kolesar	Bradley & Kathy
John Daly	Lauren Lafave	Sullivan
Shiloh & Nickolas	Pamela Jo Leer	Tristan Swartout
Daum	Karen Ludwig	William Thornton
Dianne Domagalski	George Macklem	Dori Turner
Derk Duriingshoff	Lauren & Laurie	Sue Ann Vandyke
Joan Earl	Manston-Domino	Sherry Vaughn
Nancy Eckstrom	Steven Mcwethy	Samuel Vieira
Susan Finn	Linda Melville	Robert Vosters
Renee Denise Fisher	Paul Mesack	Steven Wagner
Alexandria Forsberg	Timothy Morand	Charles Walmsley
Tara Gallagher	Sally Moss	Dr Loren A Weaver
Kristen Garlock	Angie Moulton	Zelma Weisfeld
Dana Garnaat	Karen Nunheimer	Trudy Weston
Diane Garrison	Julia O Connor	Joanne Westphal
Sally Garrod	Julian Palmer	Jill Whelan
Zach Gayk	Sandra Parker	Deborah Wieber
Mike Goerge	John & Fran Parker	Bruce Wilson
Amy Gonigam	Leslie Paynter	Earl Wilson
Richard Gonzalez	Mary Pecar	Cliff Wooten
Judith Graham	Steve & Debi Peters	Patrick Wright
Deborah Haas	Mrs C J Pierce	Teresa Yoder
Debbie Habenicht	Donna Platte	Brian Ziebart

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.