

Jack Pine *Warbler*

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Michigan's Best Birding Spot ■ Winter Bird Feeding ■ Michigan Chimney Swift Surveys ■ Engaging Young Birders ■ A Year in Review ■ Protecting Sandhill Cranes ■ Summer Owl Banding



Jack Pine Warbler

CONTACT US

By mail:

2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200
Okemos, MI 48864

By visiting:

2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200
Okemos, MI 48864

By Phone:

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

STAFF

Heather Good

Executive Director
hgood@michiganaudubon.org

Lindsay Cain

Education Coordinator
lcain@michiganaudubon.org

Rachelle Roake

Conservation Science Coordinator
rroake@michiganaudubon.org

Maura Villhauer

Operations Manager
mvillhauer@michiganaudubon.org

Diane Huhn

Communications & Marketing Coordinator
dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org

Molly Keenan

Administrative Specialist
mkeen@michiganaudubon.org

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

COPY EDITOR

Molly Keenan

Administrative Specialist
mkeen@michiganaudubon.org

PRODUCTION

Diane Huhn

Communications & Marketing Coordinator
dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org

ADVERTISING

Guidelines available on request.

PRINTING

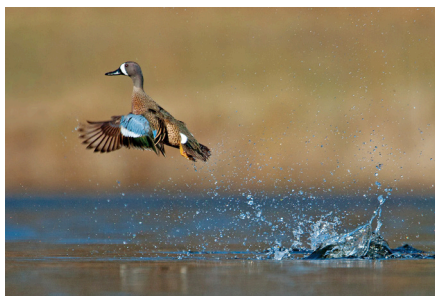
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Cover Photo ■ Blue-winged Teal
Photographer: Josh Haas

Josh Haas is the president of Battle Creek Bringham Audubon and co-owner of Glances at Nature Photography and Birding Tours. Both have expanded his love for teaching others and sharing what he loves about the natural world is at his core. Josh has a passion in all things birds and also shares this in the form of his bird photography which can be seen on-line and in numerous Michigan publications. Josh recently released a DVD titled "Hawks on the Wing" which brings an innovative new way to learning hawk ID in flight.

To view more of Josh's photography and teaching tools, visit www.glancesatnature.com and www.hawksonthewing.com.

Thank you to Josh Haas for submitting this wonderful image for the 2017 Jack Pine Warbler cover photo contest. If you have photographs you would like considered for inclusion in future issues of the Jack Pine Warbler, please contact Communications & Marketing Coordinator Diane Huhn at dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org or (517) 580-7364.

Contents

Features

2-3

Michigan's Best Birding Spot

4-5

Feeding Birds in Winter

8-9

Protecting Michigan's Sandhill Cranes

Columns

6-7

Michigan Chimney Swift Fall Roost Surveys

10-11

Focusing on the Next Generation and the Great Lakes Young Birders Camp

12-13

Summer Owl Banding at WPBO

Departments

1

Executive Director Letter

8

Events & Announcements

8

Welcome, New Members



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. More than 30 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

GIVING BACK TO BIRDS IN OUR COMMUNITIES



Dear Friends and Members,

Thank you for making 2017 yet another remarkable year for birds in Michigan! This year marked the 113th year of connecting birds and people for the benefit of both for Michigan Audubon. Our dedicated staff has done an incredible job expanding our outreach while strengthening our programs. We have been able to increase the number of on-the-ground conservation projects and species-specific work in the field, as well as outreach and education efforts related to birds and their habitat.

A few program highlights include:

- Developing a series of educational workshops designed to inspire people to give back to birds in their backyards and communities;
- Working with Senator Debbie Stabenow on the Farm Bill, focusing on best practices for farmers with birds and pollinators in mind;
- Implementing Dunkadoo software at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, where sightings are available via a live feed online;
- Offering a total of 75 Kirtland's Warbler tours in Grayling, allowing over 850 individuals to see this endangered species and understand the importance of the jack pine habitat;
- Hosting weekly stewardship workdays at our sanctuaries to maintain habitat for birds, other wildlife, and people;
- Expanding the overall size and ecological integrity of our Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary;
- Establishing our two species-specific conservation programs that focus on aerial insectivores, Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts;
- Expanding the owl adoption program at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory to support owl research at the Point;
- Increasing the number of research-driven publications from nearly four decades' worth of data at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory;
- Partnering with the American Bird Conservancy, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ducks Unlimited, and American Birding Association to communicate the priorities of migratory bird conservation programs to senators in Washington, D.C.;
- Hosting our statewide signature events, which

offered birding field trips, workshops, networking sessions, speakers and seminars to over 600 attendees;

- Receiving an Urban Bird City Treaty grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Federation for our Bird-Friendly Communities Initiative implementation in Lansing, Mich.;
- New partnerships with nature centers, schools, churches, and businesses to engage and expand our Bird-Friendly Communities Initiative;
- Installing, supporting, and maintaining native gardens for birds;
- Representing our position on opposing Sandhill Crane and Mourning Dove hunting in Michigan;
- Attending more than a dozen statewide public events to better educate and engage people in bird conservation;
- Planning the first Young Birders Camp in Michigan (Alma College, June 2018);
- Bringing back the Annual Member Meeting (Ann Arbor, April 2018), where members have the opportunity to vote on issues, learn strategies for involvement and tools for supporting bird conservation in big and small ways.

Our ongoing goal is to keep our overhead low while increasing on-the-ground conservation and programs, as well as robust, mission-centered education, outreach, and research. Our hope for 2018 is to make Michigan Audubon stronger than ever due to our continually-expanding community who come together to donate time, resources, and talent in support of our important mission. Thank you for wholeheartedly being a part of Michigan Audubon. We welcome your ideas, feedback, and involvement. Become a volunteer, give what you can, and trust that our board and staff is putting that support to work for birds.

Sincerely,

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

Heather Good, Executive Director



Michigan's Best Birding Spot Finally Revealed

BY KIRBY ADAMS

Birders gather at the waterbird shack at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory during Spring Fling.

After years of painstaking research, the results are finally in and we can say with certainty what the best birding spot in Michigan is. The winner is: There isn't one! Sure, there are countless great birding spots in this state, but there is no "best." Ranking them is a fool's errand that makes identifying silent Empidonax flycatchers in the fall look like child's play.

You'd think it would be an easy task. The outcomes of birding are entirely quantifiable. That's a big part of the game for many birders — the lists of birds. Tawas Point State Park has 284 species and Tiscornia Park has 264. Tawas wins by a beak, right? Maybe in May, but not in January. Maybe for woodpeckers, but not for gulls. It's a short trip to Kirtland's Warblers from Tawas, but a short trip to Smith's Longspurs from Tiscornia. Does St. Joseph or East Tawas have better restaurants?

Therein lies the problem. As Jeffrey Gordon, president of the American Birding Association, is fond of reminding everyone, there are literally a million ways to enjoy birding. Even the people who keep detailed lists of birds all have different pleasures they extract from birding, making a tally of species only one metric of hundreds to consider when looking for the best spot.

Do you like birding in scenic locales? Sleeping Bear is probably a better choice than Pointe Mouillee, unless you really like power plants on the horizon. Is aural birding difficult for you because of hearing problems? Pictured Rocks might not be a great choice in the summer. At least 23 species of warbler nest there, but you only find them by ear. Are Evening Grosbeaks your favorite bird? Hartwick Pines State Park is probably among your favorites for the near-guaranteed close views of that species, although there isn't a ton of diversity. Do you like boreal birds? The Peshekee Grade is the place to go for Boreal Chickadees and Gray Jays.

We could ask birders around the country (or even the world!) what the best birding spot in Michigan is. Run into a birder in Oregon and mention Michigan and the likely response is "Oh, Whitefish Point!" Others will talk about "Grayling," which is a nebulous term for the several counties where Kirtland's Warblers can be seen with relative ease. A raptor enthusiast might immediately think of the Detroit River hawk-watch at Lake Erie Metropark.

Some spots get much more attention, and rack up higher species counts, because there are more birders around. The southeastern corner of Michigan has some fabulous birding spots, but many are so popular simply because they're accessible to so many people. Birders in Detroit have a shorter trip to look at Red Knots on Chesapeake Bay than they do to look at loons on Lake Gogebic. A rare bird has an astronomically better chance of being noticed in Macomb County than it does in the far western UP. Does that make the Macomb spots better?



Lighthouse at Tawas Point State Park, a favorite destination for birders especially during the spring and fall migration seasons.

Speaking of access, not all birders enjoy a strenuous hike to get to the birds. Places like Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge have an auto-tour that allows for birding from a seated position for the summer, but winter birding there requires some boots and stamina. Skegamog Swamp in Kalkaska has some great migrant habitat along the way to the observation tower, but a birder needing a wheelchair or walker isn't going to be able to navigate that trail. They'll much more likely enjoy the Lansing River Trail that follows three rivers through the state capital, is full of migrants, and is fully accessible.

We also must consider that some birders develop an affinity for a spot that's akin to a human friendship. For me, one of the best birding spots in Michigan is an intersection of two dirt roads in Eaton County. I know every tree there and can tell you which the Cedar Waxwings prefer as a roost in the fall as opposed to the spring. I know exactly which vernal pool to watch closely in March for the first Rusty Blackbird. When a Willow Flycatcher set up territory in my local patch this summer it was like a new neighbor moving into the house next door. If you told me I could only bird one spot in Michigan for the rest of my life, I might pick this nondescript spot a half-mile from my house. I drive past it every day, and if there's one Belted Kingfisher out of place, I'm going to notice!

I've littered this article with great birding spots in Michigan and haven't even mentioned Muskegon Wastewater or Seney NWR, which are on almost everyone's top ten list. Nayanquing Point has the guaranteed Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Haehnle Sanctuary has the gathering of the Sandhill Cranes, and Peninsula Point has wacky migrants every May. Birders in Marquette routinely find fascinating birds in town at the Bog Walk and right down the road at the mouth of the Dead River. There's the rafts of Long-tailed Ducks in February at Port Huron, the Bohemian Waxwings behind the post office in Dafer, and a little bit of everything at Maple River.



Nayanquing Point is a favorite location for spotting Yellow-headed Blackbirds and a host of other interesting species.



Peninsula Point is an excellent Michigan birding hotspot and well-known for interesting migrants.

Somewhere, someone is trying to compile a list of the ten best birding spots in Michigan and about to disappoint 90 percent of the readers who are going to find at least one (probably several) egregious omissions. If you're reading this right now, I can guarantee you're thinking of a spot that you can't believe wasn't mentioned in this article. Which spot is best is as flawed of an argument as whether apples or cucumbers are better, and as unknowable, but just as fun to debate, as whether the '27 New York Yankees could beat the '75 Cincinnati Reds.

What we can all agree on is that Michigan is a spectacular birding state from Ironwood to Temperance. Did I fail to mention your favorite spot? After dressing me down in an email, find a couple brand new birders and take them out to see what is indisputably the best birding spot in Michigan!



Best birding locations in Michigan



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

Feeding Birds in Winter

BY ROSANN KOVALCIK, MICHIGAN AUDUBON BOARD MEMBER



Blue Jay visiting a heated bird bath.

The tradition of feeding birds in winter is one that brings us joy, providing a critical connection to the natural world when the weather keeps us inside.

In Michigan, we are fortunate to have resident birds including brilliantly colored Northern Cardinals, acrobatic Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches, as well as a fascinating variety of woodpeckers, all of which will stay with us in the cold months ahead. We may also see an influx of Blue Jays, Red-breasted Nuthatches and multiple species of sparrows visiting our yards. The finches we may look forward to include American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins and Redpolls.

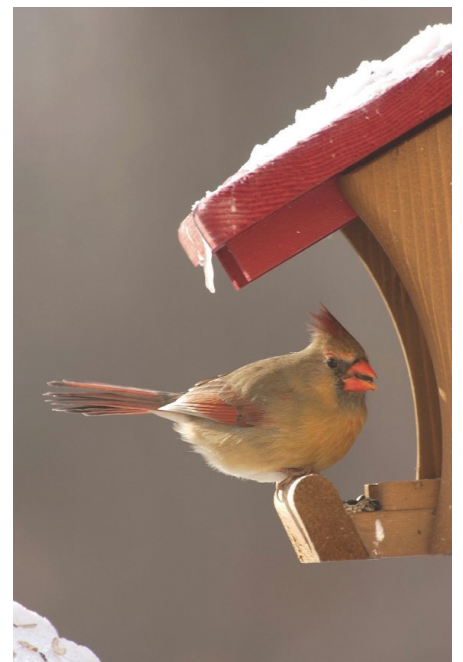
When feeding birds in winter, consider the placement of feeders — will you be able to view the feeders when sitting at your favorite spots in the house? Can you easily access them when snow has fallen?

Begin with a foundational feeder that has a large capacity, providing a reliable quantity of food when weather turns inclement. This is the cornerstone of your feeding station — a steady platform for Northern Cardinals, Mourning Doves and Dark-eyed Juncos. In this feeder, offer a blend that includes white proso millet and sunflower, the favorite seed of most birds. Add safflower and shelled peanuts and you have a winning blend! Some seed blends have no shells, leaving less mess to clean. Avoid using seed blends with red millet, wheat, milo and other grains birds do not prefer. Even robins will visit feeding stations to

eat shelled sunflower as well as dried fruits that are available in seed blends.

Perching birds including chickadees, titmice, and both species of nuthatches will welcome the option of a tube feeder. Fill it with either straight sunflower or a blend without millet, which is not their preferred seed. Finches are attracted to tube or mesh feeders which hold nyjer or a combination of nyjer and sunflower chips, a finch blend where every seed is eaten.

During winter, birds need extra fat in their diets to withstand colder temperatures. Peanuts are a great source of fat, and can be offered in or out of the shell. Woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, titmice and cardinals love peanuts. Blue Jays can't resist peanuts in the shell. It can be quite entertaining to watch them hack away at the exterior to extract the nuts inside.



Northern Cardinals are frequent backyard visitors during the winter season.

Seed cylinders are another great bird feeding option, formed of tightly packed seeds which the birds excavate individually. Cylinders take more time for birds to consume, which equates to fewer trips outside to refill the feeder.

No winter feeding station would be complete without suet, rendered beef fat placed in a specialty feeder to entice insect-eating birds. Suet is especially helpful to birds when ice and snow cover those places where insects would normally be found. Suet with added peanuts and mealworms provides extra fat and protein.



A group of American Goldfinches visit a tube feeder.

Mealworms take the place of wild insect larvae in a bird's diet. They can be offered in any feeder with smooth sides to prevent them from crawling away. In the winter, mealworms can be a life saver for American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds and Carolina Wrens.

In addition to high fat and high protein foods, birds also need water throughout the winter. Heated bird baths draw birds that might not otherwise come to feeding stations. Watching the birds drink and bathe is another way to enjoy your birds throughout the winter.



Downy Woodpecker enjoying a winter-themed feeder.

For more information on this topic, visit Rosann's blog at wildbirdsgpw.com and search for "Bird Feeding in Winter."



Suet feeders are a helpful source of fat and protein to birds such as this Pileated Woodpecker during winter when insects are in short supply.



Pine Siskins can be delightful winter visitors. This group is working to excavate seeds from a seed cylinder.



Rosann Kovalcik has been a Michigan Audubon Board Member since 2013. She has owned Wild Birds Unlimited of Grosse Pointe Woods for 25 years. Rosann brings birds into people's lives through her store, bird walks, donations of bird feeding supplies to nature centers, and through presenting a variety of programs geared towards attracting birds and creating backyard bird habitat.

Michigan Chimney Swift Fall Roost Surveys

First Season Summary

BY RACHELLE ROAKE, CONSERVATION SCIENCE COORDINATOR

One of many aerial insectivores currently in a range-wide population decline, the Chimney Swift is in urgent need of our attention. In response to a steady long-term population decline (-2.47% annually from 1966 to 2015) that has only continued to worsen in recent years, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) has designated the Chimney Swift as a Near Threatened species since 2010. This species has not yet declined enough to be considered endangered, but we must act now to keep Chimney Swifts common.

Surprisingly little is known about Chimney Swifts; where they breed and roost is not readily available data but this information is critical to conserving the species. Search through the eBird records and you will find a handful of swifts on many checklists, but few observations of 100 or even 50 swifts have been reported in Michigan. Looking closer at these data points, most are recorded as clouds of birds in the sky and few are attached to an actual roost site. Interestingly, the folks who know about Chimney Swift roost sites and the birders who use eBird are two circles on a Venn diagram that overlap very little. Locating and surveying chimneys used as migratory stopover habitat is critical to monitoring the Chimney Swift population and conserving these rapidly disappearing sites. Our efforts are focused on reaching out to birders and non-birders alike to gather this important local data.



Michigan Audubon Conservation Science Coordinator talks with participants of the "Swifts in the City" workshop in August 2017 during a field trip to Smith Floral & Greenhouses in Lansing, Mich.

This fall, from August through September, Michiganders opened their eyes and ears for the stiff wing beats and distinct chitter-chatter of Chimney Swifts. Twenty-three observers conducted 1-hour surveys to count Chimney Swifts at local confirmed or potential roosts. An additional 15 observers submitted "potential" roost sites where either the chimney appears to be a good roost site or swifts were casually observed entering the chimney. The largest known roost in Michigan is the Swift Sanctuary in

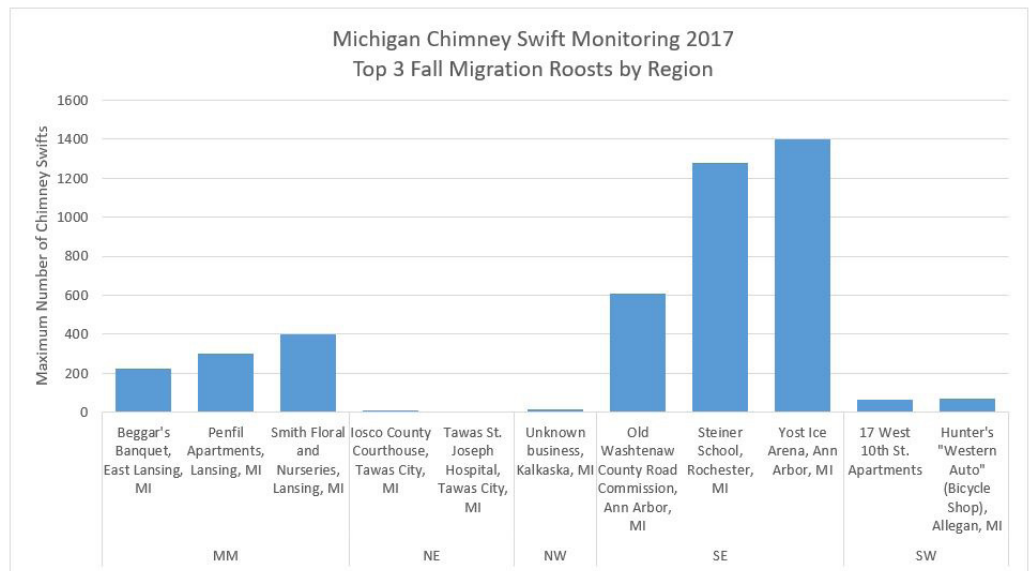


Chimney Swift roost located at Smith Floral & Greenhouses in Lansing, Mich.

Farmington, which hosts tens of thousands of Chimney Swifts each fall. Other significant reports included the University of Michigan's Yost Ice Arena in Ann Arbor, sheltering an estimated 1,400 birds. Steiner School in Rochester rounded out the top three Michigan sites at 1,280 birds.

As a result of these efforts, we also heard from several people who are concerned about the future of their local roost. The large brick-and-mortar chimneys favored by migrating Chimney Swifts are often attached to historic schools, churches, or factories that are frequently at risk of being demolished, capped, or converted. East Lansing lost a robust roost that last year hosted nearly 500 birds; the chimney has been converted to a gas-burning fireplace. By collecting data and raising awareness for these important roost sites, we aim to engage the local community in advocating for mutually-beneficial solutions to urbanization and development involving important roost sites. The natural spectacle of migration can be a draw for the community — consider the Chimney Swifts at Swift Sanctuary in Rochester or the Congress Avenue Bat Bridge in Austin, Texas.

Michigan Audubon would like to thank everyone who participated in counting swifts or searching for potential roosts this year. Speaking with so many of you at events, on the phone, or via email has been truly inspirational. A special thanks goes out to



*No survey information was submitted from the Upper Peninsula

Juliet Berger, President of Washtenaw Audubon and Ann Arbor's City Ornithologist, for rallying the Washtenaw Audubon troops again this year — what an incredible effort to help the city's swifts! If your Audubon chapter or group would like to organize a Swift Night Out event next fall, please contact us — we are happy to help.

There's still time to submit your observations or potential roost sites! Please contact Rachelle Roake at roake@michiganaudubon.org or use our website's online data entry forms.



Rachelle Roake is the Conservation Science Coordinator at Michigan Audubon. Rachelle oversees conservation efforts at our bird sanctuaries and coordinates Michigan Audubon's Bird-friendly Communities program. Contact her at roake@michiganaudubon.org.

How YOU can help swifts!

- Plant native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees.
- Avoid pesticide use at home.
- Remove your brick chimney's cap from April – October.
- Encourage the preservation and restoration of existing and potential roost chimneys.
- Help build a nesting/roosting tower at a local park.
- Survey for swift nesting and roosting sites in urban areas.

Learn more at www.michiganaudubon.org/bfc/CHSW



Events and Announcements

Save the Date: Michigan Audubon Annual Member Meeting Returns

After a nearly ten year hiatus, it's time to save the date for the return of our annual Michigan Audubon member meeting. The meeting will take place on April 14, 2018, at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens in Ann Arbor. Save the date and stay tuned for more details in the next *Jack Pine Warbler*!

2018 UP Winter Birding Trips

Winter birding in the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan can be an amazing experience. Snowy Owls, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Rough-legged Hawks, and Northern Shrikes are almost always sure to please. Great Gray Owls, Northern Hawk Owls, Hoary Redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks, Evening Grosbeaks, and Bohemian Waxwings are possible! Trips take place January 20-21 and February 10-11. Join us as we explore the delightful winter birding areas around Sault Ste. Marie with expert guide Darrell Lawson. Registration opens October 27 at 9 a.m. Space is limited.

Spring Fling 2018

April 28-29 | WPBO | Paradise, MI

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for the 30th Annual Spring Fling: Whitefish Point Bird Observatory'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.

We welcome our newest Michigan Audubon Members

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.

Daniel Ahlquist
Christine Andrews
Therese and Phil Barraco
Laura Bauman
Monique Beels
Romal Bhan
Laura and Ryan
de la Rambelje

Amy Lagler
Bonnie Petersen
Denice Purves
Nicole Sudduth
Erika Taylor
Maureen Tulip
Catherine Varley
Lawrence Walters

Please check the expiration date above your address to ensure that you continue to enjoy the benefits of your Michigan Audubon membership. Thank you!

On October 18, 2017, by way of a voice vote, the Michigan House of Representatives approved House Resolution 0154 which urges the Michigan Natural Resources Commission to add Sandhill Cranes to the game species list and seek U.S. Fish and Wildlife approval to establish annual recreational Sandhill Crane hunting seasons in Michigan. This nonbinding resolution signals to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission that powerful lobbying interests support the introduction of an annual statewide Sandhill Crane hunting season. Based on the current available science, Michigan Audubon is opposed to this proposal. We ask our members and supporters to learn more about this issue and urge the commission to make decisions based on sound scientific principles and in the best interest of the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes and of all current and future Michigan residents. Please read our position statement at right.

Contact the Natural Resources Commission at:
Michigan Natural Resources Commission
525 W Allegan St.
PO Box 30028
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: (517) 284-6237 Email: NRC@michigan.gov



Sandhill Crane © Mick Thompson

Maintaining Protections for Sandhill Cranes

A hundred years ago, the Sandhill Crane population in Michigan hit an all-time low — they were hunted nearly to extinction and suffered greatly from the loss of suitable wetland habitat throughout the state. Due in large part to the passage and protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Sandhill Crane population today is strong.

Since its inception in 1904, the Michigan Audubon community has consistently supported and fought for protections for Sandhill Cranes. Michigan Audubon's Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary was established in 1941 as the first North American sanctuary dedicated to the preservation of a crane species, the Sandhill Crane. The sanctuary was founded in part by Dr. Lawrence Walkinshaw, considered to be "The Father of International Studies of Gruiformes (cranes)," at a time when the few Sandhill Cranes nesting on the property represented some of the only pairs in the state. Additional efforts by local chapters, such as Jackson Audubon, who actively manage and maintain Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary for breeding and migrating Sandhill Cranes, have also played a significant role in the population's rebound.

The Sandhill Crane's history is a conservation success story. This bird's eastern population has recovered, and they are now abundant throughout the Mississippi flyway, a bird migration route that generally follows the Mississippi River in the United States and the Mackenzie River in Canada.

In response to a measure passed by hunters attending the Michigan United Conservation Clubs convention in early June 2017, Michigan Audubon opposes the proposal of a Sandhill Crane hunt. We believe these birds should continue being protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Cranes and the habitats they use are valued and supported by wildlife enthusiasts, farmers, and other landowners. Cranes evoke a strong sense of appreciation and connection for many people in Michigan and around the world. Thousands of people attend annual Sandhill Crane viewing events, including Michigan Audubon's "CraneFest" and the Cranes, Colors, and Cabernet Festival. Additional groups gather at migration staging grounds throughout October and November to view nature's spectacle of migration.

While we recognize that Sandhill Cranes inflict crop damage, an open hunting season is not the solution. Opening a

fall season to hunt Sandhill Cranes won't address farmers' concerns — a localized, site-specific issue — in the spring. Recently-seeded corn fields are an attractive food source for cranes and broadly reducing the population does not change that. Newly developed, non-toxic chemical seed coatings have the potential to redirect Sandhill Cranes to consume insect pests in corn fields and avoid the seed, resulting in a win-win for farmers.

Michigan has already established a management tool for agricultural stakeholders. Michigan farmers experiencing issues with Sandhill Cranes can receive crop damage permits from the USFWS, that allow for the legal hunting of problematic individual Sandhill Cranes. These permits allow for appropriately-timed, site-specific action for farmers that will not be addressed by a broad, open season occurring in the fall, when crop damage is not as critical.

Michigan's healthy Sandhill Crane population is likely a source population for neighboring regions where populations are still recovering. In neighboring states like Ohio, Sandhill Cranes are still considered Endangered, but Ohio's Sandhill Crane population has grown substantially in the last decade (largely concentrated on the shared state border), which may be attributable to the dispersal of Michigan's robust population.

For over 20 years, Michigan Audubon has held an annual celebration of Sandhill Crane migration in October, called CraneFest. The sole purpose of this event is to offer the public a free, family-friendly opportunity to witness these birds fly in at dusk as they pass through southwest Michigan. Appreciating, understanding, and protecting these birds and ensuring their welfare into the future is significant to Michigan Audubon's history and mission.

We are committed to continuing the Sandhill Crane's success story. Michigan Audubon encourages residents to make their voices heard in support of bird conservation and help us ensure the Sandhill Crane remains protected in our state.



Heather Good
Executive Director



Sandhill Cranes in flight. © Mick Thompson

Focusing on the Next Generation

BY LINDSAY CAIN, EDUCATION COORDINATOR



Michigan Audubon Executive Director Heather Good leads a bird walk for kids at Michigan Audubon's Capital City Bird Sanctuary.

Young birders clubs can have a profound impact on students. Experiences gained through field trips, speakers, and projects can stick with them throughout their lives, impacting career choices, future hobbies and activities, and monetary contributions. Likewise, these young birders clubs can have an even more profound affect on birds and conservation. Creating a space for these young birders to interact and bird, is crucial for the future of birding and conservation.

Michigan Audubon started the Michigan Young Birders Club (MIYBC) in 2013 with a schedule of monthly programs. Following a successful year of events and online newsletters run by young birders, club participation began to dwindle. Beginning in 2018, Michigan Audubon will be working to reinvigorate the MIYBC with several events throughout the state for young birders of all skill levels. A successful club will only be possible with the participation and cooperation of both young birders, adult mentors, and support from the Michigan birding community. We encourage anyone interested in helping to make this program a success

to please contact Education Coordinator Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org or 517-580-7364. Whether you would like to become a mentor, help plan engaging events, secure necessary equipment and materials, or recruit the next generation of birders, there are numerous ways to get involved.

The goal of the club to bring young birders together dovetails perfectly with Michigan Audubon's mission of connecting birds with people for the benefit of both. Our hope is that this club will be run by young birders, and will focus on educating participants about the importance and joy of birds and conservation. An advisory board will work to develop an engaging schedule of programs and help to determine an effective division of tasks among members. Members of the advisory board will facilitate the creation of an online newsletter and help to administer the club's social networking efforts. A list of 2018 events will be available by the close of 2017 and will be posted on the Michigan Audubon website at www.michiganaudubon.org, social media, and e-news, as well as in the next *Jack Pine Warbler*.



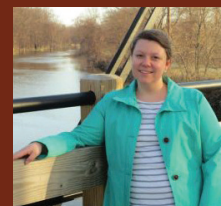
Great Lakes Young Birders Camp

In our efforts to connect young people with the diverse bird communities of the Great Lakes Region, Michigan Audubon, in partnership with Alma College, Chippewa Nature Center, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will be holding the first Great Lakes Young Birders Camp in 2018.

The 2018 inaugural camp will be based out of Alma College, centrally located in Michigan, in close proximity to forests, grasslands, wetlands, and even the core breeding range for the rare Kirtland's Warbler. The Great Lakes Young Birders Camp will promote the development of young birders who will be the next generation of birders, scientists, and conservation-minded citizens. Through experiences that develop expertise in avian natural history, foster connections with their birding peers, and highlight careers in bird conservation and ornithology, participants will receive a foundation upon which they can successfully grow their passion for the natural world.

Camp will run from June 24-28, 2018. The inaugural camp is being developed for high school students, and will include field trips to several birding hotspots in mid-Michigan, as well as training sessions delivered by expert guest speakers from across the state. Each day will focus on an overarching topic that will provide participants a thorough understanding of birding and conservation knowledge and principles.

The goal of this camp is to not only connect young people to the joy of birding, but also to arm potential young birders with the resources they need to become the next generation of bird conservationists. More information about this camp, including information on registering or ways to offer your support, will be posted on the Michigan Audubon website as available. Inquiries may also be directed to Education Coordinator Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org or 517-580-7364.



Lindsay Cain is Michigan Audubon's Education Coordinator. If you are interested in learning more about our events, workshops, presentations, or event sponsorship opportunities, please contact Lindsay at 517.580.7364 or lcain@michiganaudubon.org.



Caleb Putnam leads an outing for young birders in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. © Skye Haas

Another Season for the Record Books

Summer Owl Banding at WPBO

BY CHRIS NERI, WPBO HEAD OWL BANDER AND FALL ORNITHOLOGIST

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory's long term owl research got off to a flying start in 2017 when Nova Mackentley and I banded a record 1,375 owls this spring. This summer marked the twelfth year of WPBO's summer owl research, and like the spring, produced a record number of owls. Summer Owl Bander Tori Steely and I were able to band on 47 of 55 nights from July 1 – August 23. Those nights proved very productive and we banded a total of 630 owls comprised of 527 Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO) and 103 Long-eared Owls (LEOW). Additionally, we caught 12 NSWO that had been previously banded. The main focus of the summer research is the juvenile NSWO, and it appears that the reproductive cycle hit its peak this summer. Of the 527 NSWO banded, 426 were juveniles and 101 were adults. Although we banded fewer juvenile NSWO this summer than in the two previous peak years, this season's adult NSWO and LEOW numbers helped produce the overall record total. The 101 adult NSWO banded represents a new record high, just squeaking in above the 97 banded in 2007. Much more significant in comparison to previous summer results was the 103 LEOW banded.

During the previous 11 years of the summer project we have banded a combined total of 52 LEOW, with a maximum of 17 in 2012. Why the increase? In the spring of 2015 we made changes to the owl banding protocol in hopes of increasing our LEOW captures. Despite our high hopes, those changes produced poor to modest results during the first two summer seasons they were used. We simply don't know why there was such a dramatic increase this year. We did have a record spring for LEOW, but the spring of 2016 was also very good and we banded just 14 last summer. Just 24 percent of this summer's LEOW were this year's young, so we can't credit the sudden increase to a banner breeding season. Regardless of the reason, it was an amazing thing to experience and we are anxious to see if it was an anomaly, or if the changes we made in 2015 will produce similar results the next time LEOW peak at the Point.

One of the most interesting and informative aspects of the banding is getting recaptures, owls originally banded

here during previous seasons, and encounters, birds originally banded at other sites. Of the 113 adult NSWO caught this season, 12 (11 percent) had been previously banded. Surprisingly, just one of these was a recapture, with the remaining 11 being encounters from other sites. The one recapture was banded here this spring on April 27 and recaptured on July 14. The fact that we only had one recapture was particularly surprising, because six of the encounters came from the nearby Mackinaw Straits. Given the relative numbers of NSWO banded annually at WPBO and the Straits, it is somewhat unexpected that we would catch six of their birds, but only one of our own. The six encounters from the Straits were all originally banded in the last four years; one in 2014, two in 2015, two in 2016, and one this spring. The remaining five encounters came from Missouri, Ontario, and three different sites in Wisconsin. The oldest of these was the bird from Ontario. It was originally banded on September 27, 2012 as a hatch year bird. In addition to the fact that peak seasons produce a relatively large number of recaptures and encounters caught during the season, the high number of owls banded naturally also produce a relatively large number of future recaptures and encounters.

As I write this, northern banding sites have begun their fall owl banding seasons and we already have news back on five of this summer's owls, all juveniles. We absolutely love finding out where the juveniles we band at the Point in summer show up during their first fall migration. Not surprisingly, two of the early fall returns on juvenile NSWO came from a recapture here and an encounter from the Straits. The other three are a bit surprising. Literally, as I am writing this article, I just received an email alert from a bander at McGill Bird Observatory, located near Montreal on the western edge of the island of Montreal. One of our juvenile NSWO was encountered there last night, exactly three months after it was banded at WPBO. The other two came from Hilliardton Marsh Bird Observatory (HRBO) in Ontario, approximately 300 miles to our ENE. This September, Hilliardton Marsh caught one of this summer's juvenile NSWO, and then a few nights later caught one of the season's juvenile LEOW! It's always exciting to get an encounter back on an owl, but it's particularly interesting to us to find out that both a juvenile NSWO, and a juvenile LEOW banded here this summer showed up at a single site that is further north than we are. These, and other encounters, regularly remind me how much we still have to learn about owl migration. If we are lucky, a new collaboration will shed more light on the movements of the NSWO we band here.

Each of the 28 seasons that I have been fortunate enough to spend owl banding at WPBO has provided me with new and unique experiences. None more so than this spring



One of the summer's record 103 banded Long-eared Owls © Chris Neri

and summer. Going into the spring season, Nova and I could not have anticipated that we would band 423 LEOW, setting a new North American record for the second consecutive year. Having banded only 52 LEOW during the previous 11 years of summer research, there was also no way I could have anticipated that Tori and I would band 103 this summer. It's incredibly rewarding to see the changes Nova and I made in 2015 produce such amazing results, increasing our knowledge of the LEOW migration here. Although it is not the same as doing the banding, I really enjoy presenting our evening owl programs during the fall season. It is simply very cool to be able to share some of the things that WPBO's long term research has taught us about the unique role Whitefish Point plays in the annual movements of owls. The programs have been well attended so far this fall, and a special presentation was given last week to a group from the Thunder Bay Audubon Society. We also recently received a visit from the director of the owl banding program at Indiana Dunes, who made a nighttime visit to the Point to observe WPBO's owl banding program. We also received word last week that the Journal of Raptor Research accepted a paper we submitted on our spring NSWO research for publication. We owe a huge thanks to Northern Michigan University professor Dr. Alec Lindsay and his students Emily Bertucci and Zach Dykema for their role in making that possible. It truly has already been an exciting year for the owl research at WPBO.

Without this targeted research project, the vast majority of the owls documented by the banding would simply move through the Point undetected under the cover of night. Simply put, the owl banding program would not be possible without the financial support of people like you. If you are reading this, you already support Michigan Audubon's mission through your membership. Recently, Michigan Audubon sent out a fundraising email to help secure the funding for the owl banding in 2018. Whether through social media, reading our JPW articles, or actually



This juvenile Northern Saw-whet Owl was the 2,000th owl banded this year.
© Chris Neri

visiting the owl banding on a Friday or Saturday night, we know that many of you support this important program through your interest and encouragement. It is always greatly appreciated. I'd like to take this opportunity to make a personal plea to those of you who are able, but have not done so yet, to also show your support of this amazing research project by making a financial donation. To those of you who have already donated, thank you so much for your support!



Chris Neri arrived at WPBO in 1999. Chris has been fortunate 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."

Jack Pine Warbler Changes Publication Schedule

Beginning in 2018, the *Jack Pine Warbler* will be published on a quarterly basis. Changes to the production cycle will allow Michigan Audubon staff to devote more time to on-the-ground conservation and advocacy efforts in a strategic effort to broaden our constituency and maximize our conservation impact in the state of Michigan.

We are grateful for the support of our members and pledge to maintain a high level of communication and engagement through the *Jack Pine Warbler*, *Michigan Birds and Natural History*, and our other communication channels. If you do not already subscribe to our monthly e-newsletters, event announcements and action alerts, please visit www.michiganaudubon.org and click the sign-up button at the top of the page. Please also consider following Michigan Audubon and Whitefish Point Bird Observatory on social media (FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube).

Thank you for your continued support and for helping us connect birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research. If you have questions or are interested in submitting an article, photographs, or other mission-related content to the *Jack Pine Warbler*, please contact Communications and Marketing Coordinator Diane Huhn at dhuhn@michiganaudubon.org or (517) 580-7364.



Dated Material

Connecting birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research efforts in the state of Michigan.

Coming Soon Michigan Audubon Online Store

Interested in an easy way to purchase Michigan Audubon merchandise and support bird conservation efforts in our state? Want to find that perfect one of a kind gift for the upcoming holidays? Michigan Audubon will soon launch a new online store! Stay tuned to www.michiganaudubon.org for details about purchasing logo apparel, gifts, and a limited selection of guide books.



Subscribe to *Michigan Birds and Natural History*

Michigan Birds and Natural History is Michigan Audubon's peer-reviewed scientific journal, dedicated to ornithology and the natural history of Michigan. It is home to many long-running citizen science projects and surveys such as the Michigan Bird Survey, the Michigan Christmas Bird Count, the Michigan Butterfly Survey, and the North American Migration Count, the results of the annual Sandhill Crane census, and includes the actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee. Subscriptions to this quarterly journal are available at www.michiganaudubon.org or by contacting us at (517) 580-7364.



Holiday and WPBO End of Season Sale November 27-28 | 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Join us at the Michigan Audubon office in Okemos for our Holiday and Whitefish Point Bird Observatory End of Season Sale. A wide variety of Michigan Audubon and Whitefish Point Bird Observatory merchandise will be available as well as our remaining stock of books and field guides.



2310 Science Parkway, Suite 200
Okemos, MI 48864