

Jack Pine *Warbler*

FALL: Protecting the Migratory Bird Treaty Act ■ Continuing Conflicts Facing the Double-crested Cormorant ■ Piping Plover Continue to Prosper at Point ■ Owl Banding Breaks Seasonal Record ■ Perspectives From Young Adult Birders ■ Community Spotlights: Juliet Berger, Washtenaw Audubon Society, and Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary



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Cover Photo ■ Bald Eagle

Photographer: William McHale

Discovering the joy of nature photography several years ago was transformational for William McHale, a lifelong resident of Southeastern Michigan. A camera feels at home in his hands, and he feels at home in the woods. He captured this Bald Eagle with a gar at Belle Isle in Detroit. Although his passion for photography started with birds, he has recently expanded to other targets with dragonflies being his most recent addition.

Thank you to William McHale for submitting this image to the 2020 Michigan Audubon Photography Awards for which he was awarded an honorable mention. If you have photographs you would like considered for inclusion in future issues of the *Jack Pine Warbler*, please contact Communications & Marketing Coordinator Molly Keenan at mkeenam@michiganaudubon.org or (517) 580-7364.

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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 4,000 acres of land within 18 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 Michigan Audubon on social media.



From the Executive Director

Dear friend of birds,

An exceptional volunteer found Michigan Audubon last year and has since become an insightful, energetic, productive, and generous staple of a volunteer in our work to protect birds. Her name is Elizabeth Heys, and she shared an article with me at the end of the summer titled, "Birds are keeping me sane in lockdown: When this is over, we must do more to protect them." This opinion piece for The Guardian, written by Suzy Freeman-Greene, gave me pause because it so eloquently details the experience of a self-proclaimed "non-birder" during the pandemic, and how "when I feel chewed up or stir crazy or an aching, panicky sadness about the state of the world, I go looking for birds."

Suzy writes from Melbourne, Australia, not Michigan, but her experience is relevant and resonates with many of us nonetheless. I have heard so many accounts of this deepening appreciation of birds in our backyards and our communities. Birdwatching is all the rage in the pandemic, it seems. And while this is a fantastic thing, something to celebrate, I so appreciated where Suzy took her newfound appreciation for how birds positively impact her life, her mental health, her experience.

While acknowledging that bird watching is getting her through this lockdown, Suzy's awareness of birds being in crisis translates to a personal call to action, one that I wanted to share. As we are in the midst of fall migration, encouraging more and more citizens and households to minimize light pollution to ensure safer passage of birds during migration, her reminder to give back to birds — how much they rely on us to do so consistently — strikes a chord.

Thank you for helping us to be as impactful as we can be as a nonprofit. For choosing to be a member. For staying connected. For continuing to give, to read, to reach out, and to be involved. And for enjoying birds while balancing your joy with ways you can and do give back, even at times of great challenge, change, and newness.

In this issue of the *Jack Pine Warbler*, we share with you some hard-earned good news for birds at the federal level with the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; we update you on the management of Double-crested

Cormorants, an issue with a problematic history in our state and beyond; we celebrate our third year of hosting a (virtual) Young Birders Camp; we share a summer season recap from WPBO; and we spotlight a community member and Michigan Audubon chapter leader, Juliet Berger, who is an exceptional birder and president of Washtenaw Audubon Society. As we look ahead to 2021 and plan for programs, projects, and initiatives that serve our mission of connecting birds and people for the benefit of both, we look forward to keeping you dialed in to news that affects birds in our state as well as to the activities and accomplishments of Michigan Audubon.

On behalf of our staff and board, thank you for your ongoing support. We hope you and your dear ones are faring well through these challenging times and are finding new reasons and ways to appreciate, connect with, and conserve our birds.

With gratitude,



Heather Good
Executive Director



Welcome, New 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.

Stacey Backstrom
Deborah Baker
Joanne E. Bauer
Maia Bergman
Helen Bonzelaar
Richard Bristol
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Janis & Dave Detlefs
Anthony Di Piazza

Mary Dresbach
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Mary Eriksson
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Meghan Joseph
Paula Kaberline
Terese Koch
Carmen Kratz
Ann Krueger
Laura Leclair
Joseph Lubaway &
Barbara Roberts

Ginger Mahrle
Brian O'Connell &
Elizabeth Hengstebeck
Charles Parker
Diana Peraino &
Family
Wade Peterson
Eileen D. Resch
David Sargent

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Julie Sinclair
Kristine Squiers
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Kathleen Van Zandt
Michael Vanderwall
Emily Willoughby

Please check the expiration date above your address to ensure that you continue to enjoy the benefits of your Michigan Audubon membership. If you have any questions about your membership status, please contact Communications & Marketing Coordinator Molly Keenan at (517) 580-7364 or mkeenam@michiganaudubon.org. Thank you!



Spruce Grouse. Photo by Cari Povenz

Protecting the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

BY HEATHER GOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During and following the inaugural Black Birders Week from May 31 to June 5, 2020, you might have read a few comments online to the effect of “Don’t make my birds political!” and “Birds have NOTHING to do with politics. Keep it separate.”

(Our jaws dropped to the floor, too.)

There are no two ways about it — we depend upon healthy ecosystems as people. Whether you’re doing it “for the birds” or not, the health of birds and pollinators is a concern of human health.

And politics, for better or worse, absolutely affect birds.

This past week, a federal judge decided to invalidate rule changes in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) made by the Trump administration, which allowed industry to kill birds as long as it wasn’t intentional.

The MBTA, the most important law protecting birds in our country, has been gradually weakened under the Trump administration over the past four years. To kick it

up a notch, earlier this year, the administration proposed stripping the MBTA of its ability to protect the birds that are facing more threats to their survival than ever.

A report by the State Energy and Environmental Impact Center at New York University’s school of law published in March said the Trump administration had “set its sights on watering down or outright repealing a half-dozen health and environmental rules critical to the health and welfare of all Americans as well as the planet.”

From the U.S. pulling out of the Paris Agreement (pending this November) to the Environmental Protection Agency finalizing plans to dismantle the Clean Power Plan to cutting clean water protections to the shrinking national monuments and removal of animal and wildlife protections. . . we have hit a rock bottom in failing to be stewards of the environment like never before in this country.

We have not witnessed an administration attack the environment like this before.

We’ve not ever seen birds at this much risk before.

We’ve also never heard a federal judge quote classical literature in her vehement ruling in protection of our native birds.

“It is not only a sin to kill a mockingbird, it is also a crime,” wrote federal Judge Valerie Caproni in her ruling on Aug. 11. “That has been the letter of the law for the past century. But if the Department of the Interior has its way, many mockingbirds and other migratory birds that delight people and support ecosystems throughout the country will be killed without legal consequence.”

The clarity through which this federal judge speaks is, ironically, at odds with the very agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that is tasked to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife,



plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

This ruling is not the end, it's not enough, but it's important — and it's got momentum behind it.

The backlash of voices for birds, conservation, science, and environmental protection built a chorus of resistance to the proposed stripping of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Give industry a free pass to harm birds and the environment without consequence?

No.

What does this mean for Michigan birds, Michigan Audubon, all of us? It means we have to keep our finger on the pulse, so to speak, of these issues as a collaborative community, and it doesn't mean we stop the work, individually and collectively, that we must do as advocates for birds and the native ecosystems we all depend on.

It can be hard to find and feel uplifting news when you're tuned into the health and protection of the natural world and wildlife. This moment is one that is symbolic of a tide change, one that mirrors the efforts of our advocacy back to us from time to time, encouraging us to be a part of the work and the sustainable solutions that benefit people and birds.

I urge you to read the original Washington Post coverage¹ yourself — it's not only important information that will help you stay connected, but it's important symbolically to take note of this small victory of voices: for Judge Valerie saying no, industry cannot and will not be permitted to dissipate migratory bird populations and their critical, ever-fragmented habitats throughout the United States.

It's important to celebrate, take note, and keep this momentum growing.

On behalf of Michigan birds, who know no political bounds, we are one voice of that chorus that fought to see this law protected.

Thank you to that collection of voices who said no, who helped usher this powerful decision onto the national stage at a critical time.

Thank you, Judge Valerie Caproni, for protecting the law that helps us continue to protect the birds we need, value, and love.

If you're reading this, thank you for doing your part, whatever that looks like on a given day. Keep looking up. Keep waking up.



Michigan Audubon Supports Proposal 1

It has been a tumultuous time recently, and many of us have turned to our love of the outdoors to find solace, looking for peace while walking through a park or gazing in wonderment at birds feasting on berries and seeds while preparing for migration. It has helped many of us remember why it is essential to protect wildlife and the habitats they depend on right here in Michigan.

You can make your voice heard this fall by joining Michigan Audubon and more than 30 environmental and conservation organizations in support of Proposal 1.

Through Proposal 1, Michigan voters will be given a historic opportunity to expand the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and help protect our drinking water sources, wildlife and native bird habitats, and parks and natural areas for future generations. For decades, the MNRTF has been protecting our natural resources in Michigan by directing royalties from the oil and gas industry to fund land conservation and public recreation across Michigan. The amendment will safeguard a constitutionally protected revenue source for conservation and recreation for future generations, keeping it insulated from partisan gridlock while updating and expanding the MNRTF so that it can continue supporting greenspaces that make Michigan unique and rich for birds, wildlife, and people.

While many of you may have already cast your ballot, we urge those of you who have yet to do so to vote yes on Proposal 1 — for our waters, public lands, wildlife, and, of course, our birds.

You can learn more at miwaterwildlifeparks.com.



¹Quoting 'To Kill a Mockingbird,' judge strikes down Trump administration rollback of historic law protecting birds'

Continuing Conflicts Facing the Double-crested Cormorant

BY ELIZABETH THROCKMORTON, OPERATIONS MANAGER

In a continuation of the ongoing human dimensions conflict between the Double-crested Cormorant (hereafter referred to as cormorants) and localized fish populations in regions across the United States, an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) earlier this year.

Although cormorants are technically protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, individuals can already obtain permits on a case-by-case basis to lethally "take" birds deemed a nuisance. At various times throughout the last few decades, the USFWS has also implemented "depredation orders," which constitute larger measures of lethal control. This year's notice outlines various options for managing this federally protected and native species for the purpose of appeasing stakeholders (namely, fisheries biologists, other natural resource managers, and those who recreationally fish) who feel that cormorant numbers have increased to a level that inhibits sportfish populations from thriving.

A Cormorant Persecutory Primer

This is a perceived clash between predator and prey that has been recognized for decades. Cormorants faced fierce persecution by humans into the twentieth century and then faced a serious decline in the 1970s. With an acknowledgement of the problems associated with overhunting and contaminants such as DDT, cormorant numbers then began to increase.

By the 1990s, cormorants had successfully rebounded to numbers that unfortunately implicated them as a major threat to wild and stocked fisheries. The seemingly now-permanent rhetoric surrounding this species as being overpopulated is ironic, considering that historic records demonstrate that it has existed in large numbers across its native range of North America for as long as we can tell.

Yet, the battle against cormorants continues even after the rollercoaster of regulations and decisions surrounding their management. In the early 2000s, a depredation order was issued that allowed cormorants to be culled by way of egg and nest destruction, cervical dislocation, and firearms. From 2007 to 2012, the depredation actions by USDA Wildlife Services reduced cormorant nests in Michigan by nearly 60 percent. Also during this time, scientists were conducting research to determine the magnitude of harm that cormorants inflicted on fish populations with mixed results, partially due to the complex nature of studying fish population dynamics. A federal court ruling in 2016 found that the USFWS failed to fully examine the consequences of their large-scale cormorant cull on the population long-term, and that they did not consider a sufficient range of non-lethal alternatives. As a result, the depredation orders were halted.

USFWS Proposed Strategies for Management: The 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Adding to the current tumultuous year, the USFWS has rolled out a new set of proposed management tactics in an effort to, yet again, gain access to their quick-fix fisheries management strategy. The five alternatives for the management of cormorants, according to the agency, are:

- Alternative A (preferred alternative) - Special Permit for States and Tribes
- Alternative B - New Aquaculture Depredation Order
- Alternative C - Combination of a Special Permit for States and Tribes and a New Aquaculture Depredation Order
- Alternative D - New General Depredation Order
- Alternative E - No Action (current process)

According to the USFWS's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in March of 2020, Alternative A would allow states and tribal wildlife agencies to "conduct lethal take of cormorants on lands within their respective jurisdictions," for reasons involving perceived threats to aquaculture facilities, health and human safety, federally threatened and endangered species, state or tribal property, and publicly or wild-stocked fisheries.

As its name suggests, Alternative B grants anyone engaged in the production of aquaculture stocks to kill a



cormorant even if it crosses into the invisible boundaries of that facility. For example, if a fish hatchery employee sees a cormorant merely flying overhead on hatchery premises, that employee would have full permission to shoot it.

Alternative C simply combines Alternatives A and B such that both orders would be in effect.

Alternative D just creates a new general depredation order, which is “used to address depredations at a broad scale, when the risk to bird populations from large-scale take is low, and *there is a desire to reduce the administrative burdens of applying for and issuing individual depredation permits* [our emphasis].”

Lastly, Alternative E is a continuation of the current process in which the procedures from the MBTA Depredation Permit Regulation and the Issuance of Permits Regulation are in effect.

Public Comment Period

The public comment period regarding the agency’s draft EIS began on June 5 and ended on July 20, 2020. Over 1,000 comments were submitted. While the full range of opinions were expressed, countless individuals and organizations decried the USFWS-preferred Alternative A and continue to press the agency to uphold its mission to protect wildlife.

Michigan Audubon submitted a clear letter in opposition to Alternative A and in support of Alternative E, with the strong position of a “no action alternative” to the agency’s proposal.

The final decision is set to be made in November of this year.

Our Position

Michigan Audubon’s stances on issues related to bird conservation, education, research, and advocacy are formed by first analyzing if and how individual issues align with our mission.

“In the case of the Double-crested Cormorant, our mission couldn’t be more relevant. Our voice at the table couldn’t be more needed,” said Executive Director Heather Good. “We have an undeniable role to play in advocating for sound wildlife management and also, as a conservation organization, doing what we can to ensure the whistleblowing on mismanagement of our protected birds continues. This species is one of the most over-hunted and poorly-managed species in U.S. history.”

And we are at a point in history where the federal government can help the hundreds of other organizations and institutions willing to work toward a no-action alternative for the management of cormorants.



Double-crested Cormorant.

Photo by Hrishikesh Nulkar | Audubon Photography Awards

When taking a holistic view of this complicated and heated matter, we feel the solution involves a combined, collaborative approach of both increasing our understanding of human-caused threats to fisheries declines while also fulfilling our obligations as conservationists, wildlife managers, professionals, and advocates for truly ethical, effective, and humane wildlife management.

Our Plan

Michigan Audubon and a number of conservation and animal welfare organizations and individuals have submitted statements opposing the agency’s approach, urging them to reexamine the potential risks that lie ahead if mismanagement of cormorants continues. If you submitted your comments and have been involved with this fight, thank you.

From this point forward, Michigan Audubon will be closely monitoring this situation, will continue to oppose this plan to the best of our ability, and will keep you — our chapters, friends, supporters, members, partners, and community — aware of changes and news related to the Double-crested Cormorant status and management in Michigan.



Liz’s passion for animals and nature led her to a variety of positions related to conservation and administration, including assisting in the planning of the largest ornithology conference in North America in 2017 and contributing to a diversity of research projects and publications.

Piping Plover Continue to Prosper at Point

BY ALISON VILAG, WPBO OUTREACH & EDUCATION SPECIALIST AND PIPING PLOVER MONITOR

The ephemerality of the shoreline at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory is subtle, except to those who spend significant time there. Every windy day takes away some beach in exchange for new driftwood deposits — but if you did not walk here regularly, this would be difficult to discern. Attention is the crux of the work at WPBO, and attention comes through observation — for example, estimating a kettle of Broad-winged Hawk, swirling on a thermal, or catching the wing flash from a teal flock twisting south down the wave troughs. Mary Oliver writes that attention is the beginning of devotion; I've come to regard those words as more aptly describing my relationship with the Point than any of my own.

This past summer ushered a change of pace for me. Though I worked just a few hundred yards from my previous station at the waterbird shack, I now spent a good portion of my time intently looking at just two birds when, before, I spent my time looking intently for all birds. That's because this summer, the bulk of my duties revolved around Whitefish Point's nesting Piping Plover.

In 2020, we hosted just one nesting pair of this endangered species. Our male was a bit of a celebrity in the Great Lakes Piping Plover sphere: known as the Zombie Chick, he came from an abandoned 2019 nest on North Manitou Island. The eggs from this nest were thought to be beyond salvage, but after a few days in the incubator, the egg housing Zombie Chick showed signs of life. He was raised in captivity, released at Whitefish Point in July 2019, and wintered along the Georgia coast. He is a great testament to the success of the Great Lakes Piping Plover captive-rear program, and I think it's super neat that he came back to WPBO to nest. Our female, RGB (named for her color-band sequence), was hatched in 2018 on a Grand Marais, Mich., beach. Between May 31 and June 5, the pair laid four eggs.

For the next four weeks, my primary duties centered on watching the plover pair switch incubation. This ensured that both male and female were accounted for: It would be impossible for one plover to both incubate and care for itself. During the month of incubation, other Piping Plover did visit Whitefish Point. In fact, within this period, I observed seven different adult plovers here! I hoped some of these would stick around to nest, but the female chased all the new birds away. Zombie Chick joined valiantly — when it was the imposter males being chased. He preferred instead to court the new females, sometimes even deserting his incubation stints for short periods to do so. Cheeky guy, this Zombie Chick...

As we neared the projected date of hatch, the locally-nesting Merlin continued to stoop over the beach every morning, reminding me of life's fragility. I promised myself that I wouldn't become too attached to the chicks. Though shorebird chicks, precocious, are less fragile than most young birds, their early days are still fraught with danger from an array of predators. Of course, when the plovers did hatch, this whole plan to avoid attachment was immediately abandoned: I fell in love. With shorebird chicks, this is quite easy to do. They hatched on July 3. Hannah Toutonghi, WPBO's summer assistant owl bander, and I were enjoying one of those rare times of day when we both were awake. As we walked along the beach, we noticed that the female seemed unusually fluffed-out on the nest. Moments later, a chick popped out from under her wing, and soon, a second followed!

These two chicks (two of the eggs did not hatch) touched my heart in a way most things don't — maternal instinct, provoked? Of course, it probably helps that my wards hatched ready to run and feed themselves, which is definitely my style of parenting. Zombie Chick and RGB were outstanding. They stove off aggressive Killdeer, alerted, with fluting call, when danger approached, and



A female Piping Plover and her chick at the Point. Photo by Alison Vilag



— though Zombie, a captive chick who himself would have never been brooded, was a little awkward at first — they brooded the chicks, providing shelter when it was cold, windy, or wet.

The chicks grew quickly. Some days, in fact, it seemed like when I left, the chicks were bigger than when I'd arrived. Acknowledging that all the chicks' changes were built from the invertebrates they'd consumed still boggles my mind, a little. The days I spent out on the beach with them were days well-loved: There are much worse ways to fill the time than watching plover chicks, reading books on the beach, and swimming in Lake Superior. The lake was very warm this summer, which was a bit providential — after four seasons, the staff house shower and I have had a permanent falling-out.

As Whitefish Point's chicks neared fledging, our beach was the fortunate recipient of six juvenile captive-reared Piping Plover! Since 1992, eggs from plover nests compromised by storm surge, parent plover mortality, or "side chick" situations (yes, that's exactly what you think it is!) have been salvaged, incubated, and raised at the University of Michigan Biological Station near Pellston. This is a joint project with the Detroit Zoo (and this year, due to COVID-19 implications, the captive-rearing process happened entirely at the zoo). High lake levels, extenuated by Tropical Storm Cristobal's seiche in early June, compromised many Piping Plover nests. Fortunately, the captive-rear program was able to save some of these, and a record number of chicks (39!) were raised in this manner. I'd be delighted if some of the captive plover releases return to the Point to nest; our beach is far too nice to host just one pair!

Officially, Piping Plover are classified as fledged 23 days after they hatch. Right on schedule, the chicks were flying — sort of! They weren't getting much height, and landings and steerings were charmingly haphazard. The chicks seemed both incredulous and a little anxious about their new abilities. Watching it all, I was surprisingly overwhelmed. At hatch, they looked like thistledown on chopstick legs — when I last saw them, they'd become fairly rotund juvenile plovers that were just subtly different from the adults.

Whitefish Point is a place that, for me, evokes deep emotion. I felt the same way watching our plover chicks fly for the first time as I have when I've counted myriad skeins of geese riding the north wind south, or when I've witnessed a landward Snowy Owl coming in off the lake. But a new suite of emotions emerged with my summer work — ones not nearly so transcendental. A systemic brokenness that's long been festering under the surface has erupted this year. It is so pervasive that it makes hope feel foolish; so pervasive that I believe that we've all sensed it by now. I don't know if thoughtless consumption is symptom, disease, or coping mechanism, but the record numbers of vacationers that descended on the Upper Peninsula this summer have not treated it well. Instead of counting birds, it felt at times like I was counting violations. The notebook where I usually record eBird lists read something like "Dogs off leash: 8. People inside closed area: 11. Drones: 2." There were moments when I wondered if this season might break me.

It takes tact — probably more than I've got — to describe, politely, the anger and frustration of stewarding a Piping Plover beach. I'm not sure if I've ever despised anyone as much as I did the couple who let their two large dogs charge through the closed area toward day-old Piping Plover chicks, then excused their behavior by admitting that, though they saw the signs, they just didn't feel like reading them.

Attention is the beginning of devotion. For the bulk of the past two years, Whitefish Point has been the focus of my attention. Through this experience, I've realized the importance of caring, intentionally, for the space I occupy — physical and spiritual; tangible and figurative; both the human and the non-human elements of my surroundings. The space I occupied this past season was a little patch of beach adjacent two Piping Plover chicks. Caring for it was not always comfortable: biting flies and unpleasant confrontations were both abundant. Yet still, the work was rewarding. It provided a poignant situation to ruminate again on how important the work we do at WPBO is.



The pursuit of birds has taken Alison to exotic places and gigs closer afield her Great Lakes upbringing including Michigan Audubon's Kirtland's Warbler tours. She has a strong affinity for Michigan's Upper Peninsula and, in particular, Whitefish Point.

Owl Banding Breaks Seasonal Record

BY CHRIS NERI, WPBO SUMMER LEAD OWL BANDER

The summer of 2020 marked the 15th year of summer owl research at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO). The aspect of Northern Saw-whet Owl (NSWO) that we document every July and August remains unique to Whitefish Point. We're not saying that significant summer movements of NSWO do not occur anywhere else, but WPBO remains the only site where these movements have been documented. We've learned a lot over the years, but as in the case of many long-term studies, we are also regularly reminded that we don't always know what we think we know.

Over the first 14 years of this study, we experienced annual fluctuations in the number of juvenile NSWO we banded that made sense to us. The breeding success of NSWO is believed to be on a four- to five-year cycle related to the four- to five-year cycle of their main prey, mice. When the mouse population explodes, male NSWO can provide enough food to fledge high numbers of young; when the mouse population crashes, few young are fledged. Over the first 14 years of summer owl research at WPBO, we experienced peak juvenile NSWO numbers in 2007, 2012, and 2017. This led us to believe that we would not experience another peak until 2022, but on the first night of the season this summer, the first sign arrived that the cycle might be off.

Hannah Toutonghi and I began the season on the night of July 1 and were very surprised to band 18 juvenile and two adult NSWO that night. This was more than the combined total of 17 juveniles banded on July 1 during all previous summer seasons, including 10 in the peak year of 2012. There had been some signs this spring that NSWO might be a bit ahead of the normal schedule, and my first thought was that this was an indication that it had been an early breeding season. If that was the case, I suspected we had missed birds that came through before our start date, and that the owls could stop moving earlier than usual this year. Thankfully, that was not the case; the owls kept coming, and we unexpectedly had the most productive summer season yet.

We banded on 54 of 56 nights from July 1 to Aug. 25, resulting in a total of 724 owls (658 NSWO and 66 Long-eared Owl (LEOW)). Of the NSWO, 624 were juveniles and 34 were adults. Juvenile NSWO are the main focus of the summer season, and it is the natural fluctuation in their numbers that is the significant factor in how productive our summer efforts are from year to year. The number of juvenile NSWO banded in a summer season has varied from 50 to 523 in previous years. That high of 523 occurred during our first full season back in 2007. There is still so much we don't know about the owls that WPBO documents every summer, and we have no insight into what caused this summer's unexpected peak in the reproductive success for NSWO.

We would love to answer the biggest question, "Where are these birds coming from?" Even in a general sense, we do



The record-setting juvenile Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo by Chris Neri

not know. We once had hopes that weather patterns would provide us with a reasonable guess. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the past, we again had very productive nights during south winds and north winds. That is to say, we had very productive nights under weather conditions that would suggest these owls were moving from north to south and those that would suggest they were moving south to north. Therefore, we have given up on looking at weather patterns to provide us with clues. Until we recapture a juvenile NSWO that was banded at the nest, it appears we will never know. One thing we do occasionally find out is where some of them go. We love following along in the fall, anticipating that we might find out where some of the juveniles we banded at WPBO end up during their first fall migration. In the past, the juveniles we have banded at WPBO in July and August have been recaptured during their first fall migration at other banding stations to our north, south, west, and east. These sites range from the north shore of Minnesota to the Atlantic coast at the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula in Virginia.

As I write this, the fall owl migration has already started. Two of this summer's juveniles have been recaptured here at the Point, and the few other owl banding stations



A black witch moth seen by the owl banders. Photo by Chris Neri

that are already running are reporting good numbers of hatch-year NSW. I'm stuck between already looking back fondly at the summer, and looking forward in hopes of hearing back from the owls that Hannah and I banded this summer during the coming fall migration season.

Conducting any field season comes with its sacrifices and its rewards. The summer season challenges us with the heat and mosquitoes. I can't thank Hannah enough for the work she did again this summer; she is an amazing banding partner. In addition to the owls, we enjoyed all that nocturnal life has to offer at the Point in the summer. She and I have become particularly obsessed with moths. Aside from the owls, this summer's random highlight was a black witch moth that unexpectedly flew at our headlamps while we were on a net check. Black witches are large, incredibly beautiful southern moths known to sometimes wander north into our region. I have always

dreamed of seeing one at the Point, and it was ridiculous to finally see one here.

This season was a mix of sweat, blood donations, frogs, salamanders, and most importantly, a record number of owls. Thank you, Hannah; thank you, owls; thank you, amazing animals that go bump in the night! But mostly, thanks to all of you who support WPBO's research projects — none of the work we do at WPBO would be possible without your generosity.



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."

News From Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary

Nestled along the shore of Lake Michigan approximately three miles north of Manistee, Michigan Audubon's Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary has served as a refuge for many of Michigan's native birds and other wildlife for decades. An estate originally acquired by Gertrude and Eddie Gray in 1936 and then gifted and entrusted to Michigan Audubon in the late '80s, the entire property now consists of a manor, several outbuildings (including a horse stable), and over 75 acres of pristine, varied habitat types. The property features wetland, shoreline, meadow, and forest environments (the 40-acre woodlot consists of dense maple, beech, hemlock, birch, and oak regrowth) and boasts a rich local history throughout which the original family was able to create a place where they could farm, recreate, and relax.

Throughout the years, as our organization continually revisits and assesses its mission of connecting birds and people for the benefit of both, we have determined that it is in the best interest of the very birds for whom we are working to protect to shift our resources more heavily toward managing the habitats at Lake Bluff and away from the management and upkeep of the manor and outbuildings. While we are working hard to make this transition phase seamless, plans are being implemented to optimize the property to create a truly beneficial experience for our visitors and wildlife.

Our volunteers and partners have been doing an extraordinary job of helping us to stay acquainted with the ever-changing ecological and structural features of this property so that we can manage the increasing impacts of invasive species, storms, and rising lake levels. Despite the many challenges faced this year alone, the trails at Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary remain open and explorable. We would like to invite you to consider making a trip to this unique destination in northern Michigan so that you can relish in its peaceful atmosphere — who couldn't use an overall feeling of calm right about now?

Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary is open to the public daily from dawn until dusk year-round. It is located at 2890 Lakeshore Rd., Manistee, MI 49660. Please stop by and explore its natural beauty on Lake Michigan's shore.

Community Spotlight: Meet Juliet Berger

PRESIDENT, WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY & ORNITHOLOGIST, CITY OF ANN ARBOR NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

I have been the Washtenaw Audubon Society president since June 2014. It was the best “yes” I ever said (next to yes to my husband, Scott). I was randomly chosen as the eBirder of the month for April 2016 out of 2,000+ birders who completed that particular monthly challenge, whatever it was (probably submitting 30 complete checklists). I was even once recognized by an unknown birder from the “eBirder of the Month” article while on Michigan Audubon’s Kirtland’s Warbler tour out of Hartwick Pines!

I have been the ornithologist at the City of Ann Arbor’s Natural Area Preservation since 2016. My life is charmed because I have a master’s degree in social work from the University of Michigan — not in ornithology. I studied and briefly majored in zoology in undergrad, but I have a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (University of Michigan).

It is worth noting that I finally achieved “Washtenaw Wingnut” status with 238 species seen in Washtenaw County in 2019, the most of any birder in this county that year. I have been birding since birth with my dad, Sam Berger, who passed away in 1981 when I was 19. I have a bird-curious husband and two wonderfully intelligent children, who are not particularly interested in birds.

How would you characterize Washtenaw Audubon Society?

Washtenaw Audubon Society is a community of over 200 members who range from serious listers to casual birders to nature lovers. Our signature event is the May Count, which regularly employs over 100 volunteer birders from the Washtenaw County area to tally birds in every township in our county on the second Saturday of May. We also are serious about our Christmas Bird Count, which has been conducted here in the winter for over 75 years. We are a community that cares deeply about conservation and are engaged in local bird and habitat preservation initiatives. Our mission is “to promote the conservation of wildlife and natural beauty in all possible ways, with a particular focus on birds; to cooperate with other organizations whose aims correspond to those of this corporation; and to develop and maintain a conservation program for the youth and adults of the community.” All are welcome to bird with us, learn with us, and share our passion for birds and the environment.

How has the pandemic affected your chapter’s activities? What challenges has 2020 brought for you as a chapter and/or as an Audubon chapter leader?

When the pandemic hit, our programs and field trips were canceled immediately. Within a few months, we realized that we could stay connected with our members through Zoom programs and have been planning and running programs on this virtual platform, monthly, since early summer. Although all of our field trips are currently canceled, we have managed to continue with some of our special events, such as the May Count, which can be run as an individual or household bird tallying event, and Swift Nights Out, at which we count Chimney Swift at their roosts throughout the county. These events complied naturally with social distancing requirements. We also plan to participate in and enjoy eBird October Big Day and other backyard-type Big Sits to come, but are not planning in-person trips anytime soon. Nevertheless, our membership has increased during the pandemic lockdown, as people’s lives slowed down, and many grew to appreciate the wonders of our feathered friends in backyards and local parks anew. Birds connect our world, and we need this connection in our fragile and unsettling times.

Also, during the pandemic, our chapter worked swiftly to develop Washtenaw Audubon’s Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

The birds Washtenaw Audubon pledges to protect differ in color, size, behavior, geographical preference, and countless other ways. As we honor and celebrate



the equally remarkable diversity of the human species, Washtenaw Audubon considers the work of inclusion, diversity, and equity a top priority moving forward. We hope that, in doing so, we can bring new creativity and energy to our work in Washtenaw County and beyond for birds and people alike.

Respect, inclusion, and opportunity for people of all backgrounds, lifestyles, and perspectives will attract the best ideas and harness the greatest passion to shape a healthier, more vibrant future for all of us who share our planet. We believe that protecting and conserving nature and the environment transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries. As an organization, we are committed to increasing the diversity of our board, volunteers, members, and supporters.

As an organization, Washtenaw Audubon strives to create a sense of community where all people can feel safe to explore nature and experience the wonder of birds.

We respect the individuality of each member of our community, and welcome all without discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, national or ethnic origin, politics, veteran status, or any other status.

All are welcome to bird with us, learn with us, and to share our passion for birds and the environment.

The people and community we serve reflect the diversity of the natural world, and as an organization, we acknowledge the importance of living, breathing work on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Many other chapters look to Washtenaw Audubon as a leader in citizen science projects, like the swift watch program. Can you tell us more about how you and your chapter support Chimney Swift conservation?

This is the fifth year Washtenaw Audubon Society has organized Swift Night Out events. In 2020 we co-sponsored the event with the Natural Area Preservation, a division of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation. In this event, with volunteer help, we locate the main chimneys used as roosts in late summer and fall and engage community members to count swifts as they drop into the chimneys, as darkness falls. This year, volunteers counted thousands of swifts, and several new roosts were identified. When we know where the swifts roost, we can be more vigilant about protecting these chimneys. Last year, with Ann Arbor citizens' help, Washtenaw Audubon petitioned the City of Ann Arbor to save a local chimney on a city building slated for demolition and received an agreement from the city to preserve it. We can protect birds if we use our collective voice and engage other stakeholders for habitat preservation. At this time, we have at least 15 known active roosts in our county, and more were discovered during the three-day event.

Visit washtenawaudubon.org to learn more about Washtenaw Audubon Society's events and programs, to become a member, or to donate toward their organization. If you have questions for them, you may email them at info@washtenawaudubon.org.

Capital City Bird Sanctuary Nest Monitoring Summary

BY SEVERN HOSCHEK, CONSERVATION INTERN

In 2020, we saw an increase in the total nesting attempts compared with attempts in 2019 at Capital City Bird Sanctuary. Most of the nesting attempts were from House Wren or House Sparrow (which, the latter being an invasive species, were managed against). The total number of eggs was greater than in 2019, equal to the total from 2018. The total number of nestlings decreased from the 2019 season. The total estimated number of fledglings in 2020 was the lowest of the last five seasons.

A total of 63 nesting attempts were monitored this year by volunteers. Information gathered was submitted to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch as part of a citizen science program.

Nesting Activity

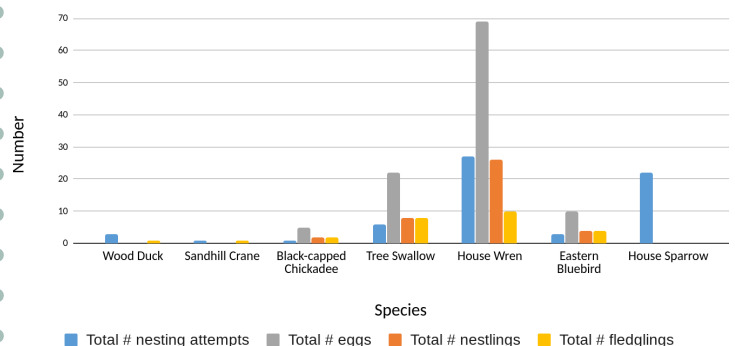
There were a total of 63 nesting attempts by the following species:

- Wood Duck (3)
- Sandhill Crane (1)
- Black-capped Chickadee (1)
- Tree Swallow (6)
- House Wren (27)
- Eastern Bluebird (3)
- House Sparrow (22; invasive species management conducted)

Annual Summary Comparison

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Total nesting attempts	63	40	26	21	42	31
Total eggs	106	100	106	94	139	137
Total young	40	73	67	73	80	72
Total fledglings	26	28	55	67	73	55
Nest attempts with at least one young fledged	8	8	12	13	14	12

Capital City Bird Sanctuary 2020 Species Summary



Severn Hoschek is a bird enthusiast and amateur bird photographer who is studying wildlife biology at the University of Michigan-Flint. Among his myriad projects as an intern and volunteer, Sev mapped invasive plant species as well as monitored nest boxes at CCBS in Lansing.

Catching the Birding Bug at Camp

BY KARINNE TENNENBAUM, 2020 MICHIGAN YOUNG BIRDERS CAMP ATTENDEE

The pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways. It has forced us to reevaluate our priorities and to reflect on what matters most. Quarantine has helped me realize what matters most to me: birding. The highlight of my birding adventures this summer was the Michigan Young Birders Camp (MYBC). Even though it was held virtually, both the staff and campers were highly engaged; their enthusiasm and passion were contagious. The atmosphere created was one of an understanding and welcoming nature, which promoted discussion and inquiry.



A Great Blue Heron. Photo by Karinne Tennenbaum

We started the camp with a creative game of "Who Am I" that, unlike the familiar game of "Twenty Questions," involved guessing bird species. It was a great way to meet the other campers while still enhancing our birding knowledge. Every morning began with a live bird banding session with expert Mike Bishop. It was exciting to identify the birds caught in the mist nets and share interesting facts about the species. Afterward, we headed out for independent birding, during which campers shared their love for bird photography, sketching, detailed field notes, and more. Since the campers birded in various locations across Michigan and Ohio, the species checklist we shared daily was highly diverse. Afternoons were devoted to exceptional guest speakers who gave insightful presentations on a wide range of topics, including living a bird-friendly lifestyle, planting native species, raptor identification, and conservation. Later, we did quizzes on the birds we learned and bird anatomy using a learning platform called "Kahoot!"

My favorite part was definitely the "Birdtopia" project. We all pitched ideas of the ideal place for birds, one either without humans or coexisting with humans. Our group was particularly drawn to an idea of a bird paradise, far from civilization and devastating window collisions. I found myself at ease with the other campers — in awe

of their birding abilities, marveling their photography and artistic talents, and simply being thankful for the opportunity to connect with other young birders who also share a deep-rooted love for our feathered friends.

Although the pandemic impacted our ability to enjoy camp in person, it's impossible to say what might have been. However, I know that the network of young birders that we created at MYBC and all of the wonderful people we met there have made this summer a memorable one. Thank you to all of the amazing individuals who made the camp possible: Mike Bishop, hands-down the coolest professor there is; Lindsay Cain, the awe-inspiring coordinator; Lauren Gonzales and Emma Kurtz, our caring counselors; Josh Haas, the only one who can tell one speck in the sky from another; Katie O'Brien, the bird-friendly coffee drinker and always-enthusiastic-regardless-of-the-time-of-day birder; Heather Good, a passionate bird activist and kindhearted individual; Alison Vilag, the girl who toughs out an array of field jobs to see the birds we all wish we could see; and so many more. You made a major impact on all eight of us this summer; there isn't anyone like you.

To those of you considering attending the Michigan Young Birders Camp, stop considering. Register as soon as you can and meet many of the people with whom you will build lifelong connections, obtain fascinating ornithological knowledge, and experience the joy of birding. A joy that means the world to me and, hopefully, to you as well. You won't find it anywhere else, and once you do, you'll be on top of the world.



Karinne Tennenbaum is a junior in Ann Arbor, Mich. Although she has many hobbies and interests, birding tops the list. She has her own birding podcast and enjoys birding at Skyline High School in Ann Arbor.

Campers observed real-time banding of 68 individual birds. Some of these individuals were recaptures, including a House Sparrow that was initially banded during the inaugural MYBC in 2018. Campers enjoyed being able to see species such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Cedar Waxwing "up close," getting a good look at feather details and more.

Between bird banding and the campers spanning geographically from the Upper Peninsula to mid-Ohio, 65 to 80 bird species were observed each day. Collectively, the group experienced 115 different species throughout the week.

A huge thank you to Mike Bishop, Heather Good, Josh Haas, Laura Kearns, Katie O'Brien, Linnea Rowse, Matt Shumar, and Alison Vilag, who all shared their expertise, and to Lauren Gonzales and Emma Kurtz, who acted as counselors for the week.

Reflections: What It Means To Be a Naturalist

BY MOLLY ENGELMAN, CONSERVATION INTERN

This summer, I decided to let my guard down. By this, I mean allowing myself to take up space in places where it wasn't easy to picture myself. I think this could easily be contextualized by the fact that I accepted a position assisting in mosquito research in southwestern Michigan. Nothing against entomology, but if someone were to tell me back in February that I'd be spending my summer knee-deep in a bog vacuuming mosquitoes out of a box, I would have told them to tell a joke that's actually funny. Yet here I am, lassoing CDC light traps 30 feet into red maple trees and concerning my friends with stories about *Psorophora ferox* and *Coquillitidia perturbans*.

As I began navigating this unexpected identity as a summertime mosquito researcher, I embarked too on an internship with Michigan Audubon. I've had an interest in birds for some time, starting with my keen eye for the White-breasted Nuthatch, who would frequent my backyard several summers ago. I used to take my dad's camera out and sit by the feeder, squatting in the mulch until my feet went numb to get a poorly lit, half-blurry photo of a Black-capped Chickadee.

It wasn't until my first semester of college when I enthusiastically accepted a position sitting in front of a computer processing thousands of duck photos for a grad student that I started to remember how much joy these little feathered animals brought me. I learned too, this year, of the term "birder" and came to recognize birdwatching as a more established hobby than I ever previously thought. Yet, despite my pristine waterfowl identification skills, I didn't consider myself a birder. Perhaps I would say I was a birder* with the asterisk hinting at the fact of "I don't actually know what I'm talking about." I let my limited bird call recognition and songbird identification difficulties overshadow the connection I undoubtedly felt to birds and their diverse habitats. I thought that maybe once I achieved a degree in wildlife biology, or after years and years in the field, I could assume such a title. With so many highly experienced and decorated experts in the field and hobby of birding, I felt I should keep my growing knowledge in a shadow until I had a substantial repertoire of bird facts that could truly impress anyone.

I've come to realize, however, how misguided this ideology is. A person's identity in the outdoors is not validated by how many species they can identify or how many field guides they own. My inability to tell a Song Sparrow from a Wood Thrush does not hinder the smile that spreads

across my face as a troop of petite brown birds erupt from a buckthorn bush. In my time this summer exploring Baker Sanctuary alone, I've also let myself explore this concept of appreciating my pursuits of a deeper connection to nature without feeling as if I had to prove I belonged and was capable in the outdoors. Without feeling as though I had expectations to uphold, I felt my curiosity intensify, motivating me to visually untangle the multitude of prairie plants scattered through the sanctuary. I felt lighter on my feet yet more confident in my step, trusting myself enough even to brave the deer flies on a journey through the tamarack swamp. Rewarded by the elegant chime of the sanctuary's Bald Eagle, I would feel my face rise into a cheeky smile with unprecedented ease, laughing out loud as I struggled to process the emotions of seeing our nation's prized bird for the first time in the wild.

Of all the realizations I've come to this summer, perhaps the most important has been recognizing the integrity of Michigan Audubon's mission to connect birds and people for the benefit of both. I've had great fortune in my life to have had opportunities to explore places and meet people who encourage this journey of recognizing my true potential as a birder and woman in STEM. The gratitude that fills me in response to someone who extends a hand with an "I know you can do this" fuels me to believe in the power of active compassion and outreach. As the birding community continues to show strength in dedicating care to defending the persistence of our feathered neighbors, I know a synergistic strength can be found in fostering that care into our human relationships as well.

Read more about Molly's exploration of what it means to be a true naturalist, and her thoughts on removing cultural and societal barriers to participation and connection to nature, in her full blog post: michiganaudubon.org/news-events/blog/.



Molly Engelman is a sophomore at Michigan State University pursuing a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife. She is thrilled to be a part of the Michigan Audubon team as they follow their mission to conserve native birds and connect people with nature through such efforts. Although she is easily excited about waterfowl, Molly's favorite non-game bird is the Piping Plover.





Dated Material

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

2020 Christmas Bird Count Guidelines for Michigan December 14, 2020 – January 5, 2021

Christmas Bird Counts are open to the public, family-friendly, and a great way to meet local birders and begin (or continue) your birding journey! Participating in a CBC circle or team is a great way to connect, get outside, and contribute to much-needed data collection efforts for bird conservation. However, this impressive, longest-standing citizen science (now often referred to as “community science”) project must adapt and follow recommended public health practices and guidelines as related to the current pandemic and its presence in Michigan.

COVID-19 Guidelines for the 121st Christmas Bird Count in Michigan

While we will share an update on Nov. 15 with our chapters, members, and community, Michigan Audubon encourages the following practices when preparing for the count:

- **All activities must comply with all current state of Michigan and municipal COVID-19 guidelines.**
- **CBC planning meetings/gatherings:** Cancel any in-person compilation gatherings. Utilize Zoom, Google Meet, etc., for group check-ins before the chosen count day.
- **Count groups:** Please limit group sizes for the actual count day to **five** people. All CBC counts must be held during one calendar day during the period of Dec. 14 to Jan. 5.
- **Social distancing** and/or **masking** are required at all times in the field.
- **Carpooling** is encouraged only for individuals sharing a household.

Stay tuned for updates

Stay tuned for Michigan Audubon's mid-November press release and full guidelines on the Christmas Bird Count.

Reach out and find your local compiler!

There are count circles and compiler contact information available at National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count site. Click on the map, type in your zip code, and connect with your local compiler and Michigan Audubon chapter to get involved! The CBC map shows both where and when the bird counting team meets and who the count compiler is. Contact compilers by email using the information from the pop-ups on the map.

This November, you can use the ESRI Explorer app to find CBC circles:

If you download the free ESRI Explorer app for iOS or Android, you can view updated public maps of all CBC circles by state. Find CBC circles by searching your state's full name plus “Christmas Bird Count.”

