

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

SUMMER: Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Spring Reports: Owl Banding, Waterbird Count, Hawk Count, and More ▪  
Our Commitment to Purple Martins ▪ Window Collisions and Birds ▪ CraneFest 2018



# 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

### Linnea Rowse

Conservation Program Coordinator  
lrowse@michiganaudubon.org

### Maura Villhauer

Operations Manager  
mvillhauer@michiganaudubon.org

### Molly Keenan

Communications & Marketing Coordinator  
mkeen@michiganaudubon.org

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ray Stocking (chair), Anne Brasie (vice-chair), Rich Bailhe (secretary), Penny Meints (treasurer), Elizabeth Abood-Carroll, Deaver Armstrong, Mike Bishop, Diane Dupuis, Derrick Kooistra, Natasha Koss, Rosann Kovalcik

## COPY EDITOR

### Molly Keenan

Communications & Marketing Coordinator  
mkeen@michiganaudubon.org

## PRODUCTION

RiverRun Press

## ADVERTISING

Guidelines available on request.

## PRINTING

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

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



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

Member of  
**EarthShare**  
Michigan



**Cover Photo ■ Red-necked Phalarope**  
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 Red-necked Phalarope at one of his favorite shooting sites, Lake St. Clair Metropark in Harrison Township. Although his passion for photography started with birds he has recently expanded to other targets with dragonflies being his most recent addition.

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 [mkeen@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:mkeen@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 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](http://MichiganAudubon.org) for more updates, and follow MichiganAudubon on social media*



# From the Executive Director

## Supporting the Purple Martin



Purple Martins © Cari Povenz

Throughout the past year, while perusing your *Jack Pine Warbler* magazine, you've probably noticed more content related to two aerial insectivore species: the Purple Martin and Chimney Swift. I wanted to share with you, from an organizational standpoint, the background, relevance, and results so far of our species-specific programs, with an emphasis on the PUMA program.

The species-specific work of Michigan Audubon is part of a long-term approach to address the needs of aerial insectivores in our state. With the rise of neonicotinoid insecticides and other pesticide use in local and international agricultural practices, the harsh realities of deforestation, climate change, building collisions, and decreases in insect populations, insect-eating birds are in serious decline around the world. Michigan's population of aerial insectivores is no exception. In response to this, in 2016, Michigan Audubon established two species-specific programs, focusing on Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts.

Given our mission to connect birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research, focusing on Purple Martins as a specific species is not only imperative from a conservation standpoint, but it makes perfect sense for a statewide organization like Michigan Audubon to adopt. Purple Martins rely so heavily on not only human-made nest boxes but also human commitment to provide and monitor their housing, track their numbers, and better understand how we can better support this species in decline. I felt the Purple Martin species, in particular, presented an obviously compelling case for how people in Michigan can – individually and collectively – step forward and make a real difference in understanding and providing much-needed habitat for colony-nesting birds in decline. Our Purple Martin work is part of Mi Bird-Friendly

Communities, a statewide program Michigan Audubon launched in 2016.

Purple Martins help us meet our organization's mission and we acknowledge with dedication that they rely on us – not only people, but organizations and institutions – to work on their behalf, evolve to better meet their changing needs, and be a force of support for their survival.

It's imperative to act now for Purple Martin conservation, but we must act with the right knowledge, particularly in terms of being “good landlords” for martins and in understanding where they are in our state.

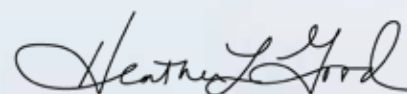
With the help of some incredibly dedicated volunteers and staff members, we've been able to get this species-specific program off the ground swiftly. It is thrilling, hopeful, and inspiring to witness the momentum of interest, networking, and on-the-ground conservation happening for martins in our state in just a few years.

The interest and involvement with this program has progressed more quickly than I had hoped, producing results we can continue to build upon as this program grows in an effort to meet the needs of Purple Martins in a changing, challenging world.

I've been most impressed by the community-building aspect of this program, and how quickly a committed, positive network of people surfaced with an enthusiastic response to our call out for increased purple martin conservation. It really does take a village to respond to the decline in PUMA numbers, and in a way that requires us to work together, communicate well, educate one another, and be consistent in our efforts. It's a citizen science commitment and exemplifies really showing up for the birds.

Many of the program's volunteers and “landlords” not only manage nest boxes, but they do so with high integrity and true investment in seeing this bird survive. That has made the biggest impression on me, and it's exactly what this program, and these birds, need.


For the birds,



Heather L. Good  
Executive Director





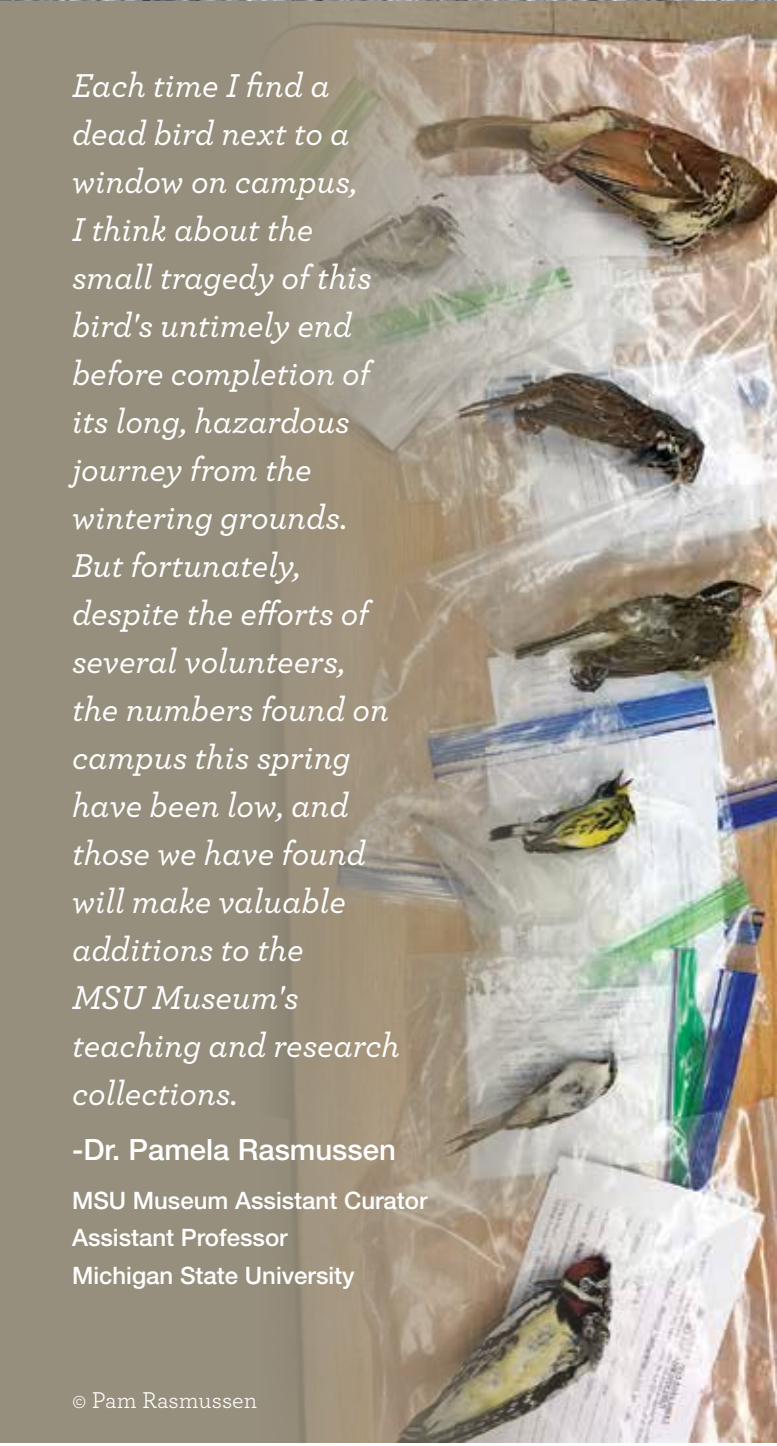


# Bird-Window Collisions

## Understanding and reducing local threats to migratory birds

BY RACHELLE ROAKE, CONSERVATION SCIENCE COORDINATOR

Brown Creeper © Kristy Taylor



*Each time I find a dead bird next to a window on campus, I think about the small tragedy of this bird's untimely end before completion of its long, hazardous journey from the wintering grounds. But fortunately, despite the efforts of several volunteers, the numbers found on campus this spring have been low, and those we have found will make valuable additions to the MSU Museum's teaching and research collections.*

**-Dr. Pamela Rasmussen**

MSU Museum Assistant Curator  
Assistant Professor  
Michigan State University

© Pam Rasmussen

One of the goals for Michigan Audubon's Mi Bird-Friendly Communities program is to better understand and reduce urban hazards to migratory birds, and our first focus is on bird-window collisions. Recent studies estimate that nationwide, between 365 and 988 million birds are killed annually by building collisions<sup>1</sup>, making building collisions the second largest threat to bird populations in the United States. Working alongside Great Lakes Safe Passage (led by Detroit Audubon) and Washtenaw Safe Passage, Michigan Audubon organized a spring trial effort to monitor for bird-window collisions in the Greater Lansing Area as a first step towards achieving our hazard reduction goal. In the coming months, the project methods and materials will be made available for local Audubon chapters interested in starting a monitoring project; we invite everyone to work towards a more bird-friendly Michigan!

The project methods and materials were modified (with permission) from a nationwide study created by Stephen B. Hager and Bradley J. Cosentino<sup>2</sup>. Volunteers attended an in-person training session and were assigned one or more buildings to survey either in the downtown capital area or on Michigan State University's campus (23 survey buildings total). Volunteers walked the building perimeter once or twice per week during the peak spring migration period (March 15 - May 31) searching for victims of window collisions. The average building survey took 20 minutes, with additional time spent entering data online after the survey. All deceased birds were safely collected and transported to the MSU Museum as collection contributions to be used in future studies or exhibits.

Of the 61 total specimens collected, the most frequently found, identifiable species were American Woodcock (6), Cedar Waxwing (6), Mourning Dove (3), and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3). Please see the sidebar for a complete list of species collected. Strike frequencies peaked from March 25 - April 2, were steady through mid-May, then dropped off as May senesced. Some species fluctuated in conjunction with early or late migratory habits: American Woodcock and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were found no later than April 23, and warbler species did not appear



until May 2. Of the 281 surveys conducted, birds were found on only 44. While this may suggest bird-window collisions aren't very frequent, "predator" carcass removal is a serious source of bias in bird-window collision monitoring efforts since mammals, birds, and people can easily remove dead or injured birds after hitting a window. One volunteer observed an American Crow swoop down and fly away with a bird that appeared to have died after hitting a window. While we feel the study was thorough, it is important to remember that the absence of evidence does not mean the building is safe.

Of the 23 buildings surveyed, Erickson Hall on MSU's campus had the most recorded collisions (11) followed by Brody Square (8; also on campus). No collisions were observed at 10 buildings and there were between 1 and 4 collision victims found at the remaining 11 buildings. Michigan Audubon, the MSU Museum, and many of this season's volunteers will repeat the monitoring project this fall, between August 15 and October 31, when similar studies have reported higher collision numbers. During this upcoming second season, volunteers will be asked to gather building and landscape data to be used in understanding specific conditions that influence these collisions.

This project would not be possible without the dedicated collision monitoring volunteers who gave over 100 hours to surveying buildings for birds. Thank you to all of our volunteers: Ahmad Anani, Alexia Witcombe, Ally Brown, Cam McAuliffe, Carolyn Miller, Cassandra Jordon, Chris Colvin, Hannah Hipkiss, Kristy Taylor, Lindsay Ross, Maggie Brown, Mary Leys, Dr. Pamela Rasmussen, Sarah Dibbet, and Sarah Johnson. Special thanks to the MSU Museum staff and faculty, who graciously provided a private freezer for specimens, confirmed identifications, processed the specimens, and assisted students. Thank you to Steve Mueller (Ranger Steve) for coordinating the collection permits.



Rachelle Roake was the Conservation Science Coordinator for Michigan Audubon for the past four years. Rachelle built the MI Bird-Friendly Communities program and helped to initiate endeavors such as bird-window collision monitoring in the Greater Lansing Area to make Michigan a safer space for birds.

Species	Count
Unknown bird	15
American Woodcock	6
Cedar Waxwing	6
Mourning Dove	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3
Gray Catbird	2
Northern Cardinal	2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2
American Robin	1
Black-throated Green Warbler	1
Blue-winged Warbler	1
Brown Creeper	1
Brown Thrasher	1
Chimney Swift	1
Common Yellowthroat	1
Dark-eyed Junco	1
Fox Sparrow	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Horned Grebe	1
House Finch	1
House Sparrow	1
Magnolia Warbler	1
Mallard Duck	1
Pine Siskin	1
Red-winged Blackbird	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1
Song Sparrow	1
White-crowned Sparrow	1
White-throated Sparrow	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>



Golden-crowned Kinglet © Alexandra Brown



Chimney Swift © Cam McAuliffe



Cedar Waxwing © Maggie Brown



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker © Mary Leys

## LEARN MORE:

1: Scott R. Loss, Tom Will, Sara S. Loss, and Peter P. Marra (2014) Bird-building collisions in the United States: Estimates of annual mortality and species vulnerability. *The Condor*: February 2014, Vol. 116, No. 1, pp. 8-23.

2: Stephen B. Hager and Bradley J. Cosentino. Bird-window Collisions across North America  
<https://sites.google.com/a/augustana.edu/eren-bird-window-collisions-project/home>

American Bird Conservancy [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)

Michigan Audubon <https://www.michiganaudubon.org/bfc/bird-window-collisions/>

# Spring 2018: Maybe Tomorrow the Birds Will Arrive

BY SKYE HAAS, WPBO FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

Winter arrived late to the North Woods in 2017, and held on tight to Whitefish Point well into our 2018 Spring Season. When the staff started this year's Hawk Count and Owl Banding programs, there was still three to four feet of snow that didn't melt to the ground until early May with a few snow piles lingering to May 29! Lake Superior was nearly completely frozen when we began as well, with a 40-foot tall, 200-foot long ice wall that sat on the tip until the middle of May when a blasting north wind (also a near constant companion of ours!), blew the ice wall off the tip and out into Whitefish Bay. But when you are documenting a migration season, patience is a must, as is endurance and a good sense of absurdist humor, so we stood on the hawk deck, strapped on skis in the dark to check the owl nets, and wandered over the snow and ice looking for migrants heading their way north. And eventually the birds began to arrive.



White-eyed Vireo © Alec Olivier

Over the last few years, we have been attempting to spend more time documenting the early morning flight of songbirds and other smaller species (as opposed to waterbirds and raptors), and we really made an effort to continue this trend of counting passerines from the hawk deck at or shortly after sunrise. And, as in the previous two seasons, there were some outstanding flights of birds.

One of the big ticket items we observed this year was a massive flight of Common Redpolls early in the season. Accounting for 11% of all recorded birds on the hawk watch (including raptors), we tallied in 6,198 Common Redpolls with an amazing peak of 1,537 on March 19! Unlike the previous two springs however, few redpolls used the feeders and were primarily just observed in large flocks bounding over the Point and quickly heading north over Superior. Also, unlike the previous two seasons, only two Hoary Redpolls were observed as opposed to 16 in 2017. Even more surprising than the redpoll migrations recorded this season, was an unexpected flight of White-winged Crossbills in late March. I say unexpected because as opposed to the Common Redpolls, very few White-wings were observed migrating south in the Great Lakes in the previous fall, nor were there large wintering flocks that materialized during the winter. None the less, 1,706 White-winged Crossbills poured through, with over 95% of them occurring in a 10-day window in late March!

The middle season songbird flights were not as consistent as the early season, and certainly below the previous two springs. Numbers of Blackbirds, Northern Flickers, and American Robins were tallied in good numbers, but due to the frequent wintry conditions in April, these mornings were few and far between. Once we got into May, we again experienced long lulls between movements of neotropical migrants such as warblers, tanagers and flycatchers.

One of two species that did have better than average recorded migrations were Belted Kingfishers; I suspect that with the inland waters frozen later into the spring than typical, that the species was forced out of the woods and became more obvious as migrants as they worked their way north, with 64 Kingfishers making for a great season total for the raptor watch. Blue Jays too were very plentiful this year—season totals are still being finalized at the time of this article completion, but somewhere in the ballpark of 15,000 jays were recorded this spring!

Of course, I would be remiss in not mentioning some of the rarities that occurred this spring. Certainly we experienced nothing like the rarity roll-in of the spring and





White-winged Crossbill © Skye Haas

fall seasons of 2017, but 2018 had some great highlights. A Townsend's Solitaire was recorded at the Point for the first spring in several years in mid-April, and what has become an annual occurrence was the appearance of Eurasian Tree Sparrows in a few different batches over the course of May. This chipper little fellow has started to expand its range up the Mississippi River valley and with that range expansion, singles and small flocks have been occurring across



Belted Kingfisher © Skye Haas

the UP. It will be interesting to see if, and for how long, this phenomenon continues. Even though warbler migration was one of the worst recorded at the Point in recent years, we were pleasantly surprised to have two different Connecticut Warblers in late May.

Finally, along with a Mississippi Kite on May 26, a White-eyed Vireo was discovered on the Saturday morning guided bird walk! Representing only the fourth Whitefish Point and sixth overall Upper Peninsula record of the species, the bird was very cooperative, observed by many birders visiting the Point over the holiday weekend.



Northern Flicker © Skye Haas



Skye Haas is the Spring Ornithologist at WPBO. An avid birder and naturalist, Skye landed his first waterbird counting position at Whitefish

Point over a decade ago. Since then, Skye has worked as a contract biologist for numerous organizations across the US and has his own guide service, Borealis Birding.

# Spring Owl Banding

BY CHRIS NERI, WPBO LEAD OWL BANDER

The 2018 spring owl banding season at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory produced somewhat mixed results. We were able to open nets on 60 nights from March 14 through May 30 and banded a total of 407 owls; 287 Northern Saw-whets, 20 Boreals, 89 Long-eareds, nine Barreds, one Great Gray and one Great Horned. Additionally, 14 previously banded Saw-whets and one previously banded Long-eared were captured. Banding six species in a migratory season is very good at any North American owl banding site. The only other species that have been banded at WPBO in previous years are Short-eared and Northern Hawk Owls, both of which are very rarely banded here. While the diversity was good this season, the low number of Saw-whets was unexpected and a bit of a disappointment.



Great Horned Owl © Chris Neri

Northern Saw-whet Owl (NSWO) numbers have proven to be quite unpredictable the last several spring and summer seasons. After starting the summer owl banding in 2006, we saw what we thought was a direct relationship between the summer and spring banding results during the first two times we went through the NSWO breeding cycle. The breeding success of NSWO is on a 4- to 5-year cycle that is affected by the abundance of the mice they prey on. In years when prey is abundant they naturally produce more young. It can be counterintuitive to think of summer preceding spring, but in this regard, summer

breeding success naturally affects the number of birds moving south in the fall and then back north during the following spring migration. It can be hard to separate our calendar year from the natural cycle of a bird's breeding and migration cycle, but they are very different things. What we saw at WPBO during the first eight seasons of summer owl banding made sense to us. When breeding success peaked, we experienced high numbers of juveniles in the summer and then high numbers of NSWO returning north in the spring. When breeding success crashed, we saw low numbers of juveniles in the summer and low numbers returning north the next spring. There also seemed to be a general correlation between the number of juveniles banded in the summer and the number of young birds that would be banded the following spring. However, in spring 2014 we began experiencing breaks in the normal cycle which caused us to reconsider what we thought we knew.

We had experienced two lows in the NSWO breeding cycle prior to 2014. These two low summers occurred in 2008 and 2013 when we banded 60 and 59 juveniles respectively. Following the low of 60 in summer 2008, we banded 548 in spring 2009. Given the very similar results in the summers of 2008 and 2013, we expected that the springs of 2009 and 2014 would also produce similar results. However, we banded just 191 NSWO in spring 2015, far fewer than the 548 that the previous low had us expecting. Then in the summer of 2015 the juvenile numbers very suddenly and unexpectedly dropped to their lowest total of 50 right in the middle of the 4- to

Boreal Owl © Chris Neri





5-year breeding cycle. To our surprise, this crash did not seem to affect the NSWOW migration the following spring, and juvenile numbers bounced back to normal numbers the following summer. The next surprise came when NSWOW numbers peaked to over 900 last spring prior to the peak in juveniles, which occurred last summer. Why did NSWOW peak last spring prior to last summer's peak in reproductive success, then crash after this spring? We simply don't know. Eight years into the summer banding, we thought we understood the relationship between the summer and spring owl banding seasons, then suddenly we experienced something that caused us to completely reevaluate what we thought we knew. This is one example among many of an experience that demonstrates the importance of long-term research.

An aspect of the season that produced mixed feelings was the Boreal Owl (BOOW) migration. Some years we do not band a single BOOW, so banding 20 this spring was not bad. However, it was a very low total for what was expected to be a peak season. In the 80s and early 90s BOOW irruptions produced roughly 110-170 in a spring season. Then from the mid-90s through their last irruption in 2013, their numbers ranged from 64-78 in peak years. WPBO is one of only a handful of sites in North America that consistently bands significant numbers of these northern forest owls during migration. All sites, including WPBO, reported unexpectedly low numbers during what was supposed to be an irruption year. If this spring does prove to be the peak it will be the first time in the three decades that WPBO has been banding owls that fewer than 64 BOOW were banded in an irruption year. We are obviously hoping this was just a fluke, but it will likely be 4-5 years before we find out.

While we banded fewer NSWOW and BOOW than we had hoped for this spring, we were happy with the diversity this spring. Coming off of two consecutive spring seasons at WPBO that set new North American banding records for Long-eared Owls (LEOW), we really had no idea what to expect in regard to their migration this spring. As numbers often drop to their lowest point immediately after peak years, we kept our expectations low heading into the season and ended up pleasantly surprised with the 89 LEOW banded this season. The nine Barred Owls banded is around an average total for the spring. The season's one Great Gray Owl was absolutely one of the season's highlights. As it had been four years since the last Great Gray was banded here, it was extremely exciting to have the opportunity to work with one of these amazing birds again. Great Horned Owls are another species that we don't get to work with very often. The size of their eyes, feet and talons, along with their strength always impress us and the one we banded this season was no exception. It will likely surprise many of you, but it is rarer for us to



Great Gray Owl © Chris Neri

band a Great Horned at WPBO than it is to band a Great Gray. That said, we admit that we get much more excited about a Great Gray. Can you blame us?

As is the case every spring, we face challenges, learn new things, and reap many rewards during the owl banding season. The first month of the season was pretty rough. We spent many nights at the start of season snowshoeing and skiing through 12-hour nights when we were lucky to get an owl or two. Despite being slow, the NSWOW migration continued to teach us that there is still much to learn about their migration here. Outside the banding, we gave the keynote speech at Spring Fling and were greatly encouraged by the support of this year's attendees. To our great excitement, the most recent issue of *The Journal of Raptor Research* (May/June) includes our paper on the different sex-biases of NSWOW captured at different audio lures. We again thank our coauthors from Northern Michigan University, Dr. Alec Lindsay and his students Zach Dykema and Emily Bertucci, for the work they did with the data to make this possible. As always, we thank all of you who generously donate your financial support to the field research at WPBO. Without your support the owl banding would not be possible.



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."

# A Snowy Spring Waterbird Season at Whitefish Point

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Spring 2018 waterbird count began in a mid-April blizzard. Visits to the Point earlier in the year lulled me into an unwarranted sense of complacency about the nature of Lake Superior. Stopping by the Point in late January, yes, there was plenty of snow and ice, but I could see open water to the north all the way to the horizon. Visiting in March, sure, there was ice piled up along the shore, but also enough open water just beyond for a Trumpeter Swan to surprise me with its presence as it swam by nonchalantly just off the tip.

I thought the relatively mild conditions of early winter would lead to an early spring, but I was wrong. North winds in early April blew the lake ice in toward Whitefish Point, and by April 15 open water was so scarce a commodity that lone mergansers were prized discoveries. I couldn't complain: the job notice says "Those who dislike cold and windy conditions need not apply," and this was my third spring season in a row (and ninth overall!), so I knew what I was getting into.

Conditions slowly improved, but by late April, there was still a veritable mountain of ice just off the tip interrupting my hopeful scans of the horizon.

In the previous two springs, loon migration was well underway by the time Spring Fling rolled around, and it was amazing to recall that on that weekend in 2016 there

were flocks of Red-throated Loons flying over and in 2017 numerous Red-necked Grebes swimming just offshore in Whitefish Bay.

It seems that everyone who was around on the Saturday of Spring Fling weekend 2018 eventually made their way to the waterbird shack, most braving the windswept beach to get there since the boardwalk path was still snow-covered.

In 2018, the big draw at the tip during Spring Fling wasn't loons or grebes, but Snowy Owls, of which there were two perched on the ice. This species is surprisingly uncommon at Whitefish Point, and the spotting scope views of these enigmatic birds in this wild and natural setting were unforgettable, even for those who had seen many Snowy Owls before. A few Spring Fling participants commented that this was a life bird for them – I consider them lucky, as not many of us can say that our lifer Snowy Owl was perched on something other than a telephone pole or a fence post (as was mine nearly 40 years ago).

Snowy Owls remained a presence at the Point into early June, which considering there were a few individuals lingering that late elsewhere in the state, was perplexing to the point of being disturbing. Why weren't these owls continuing to migrate north?

Eventually in early May, the ice broke up and waterbird





migration got back on schedule. I expected the “ice mountain” at the tip to slowly melt away, so you can imagine my shock upon returning to the point on May 12 from a trip to Au Train to see a vagrant Wilson’s Plover and discovering that the ice mountain, once taller than a house, now was gone – it had floated away into the bay overnight, and I had to get used to using other landmarks when giving directions for locating flying birds. For a while I found myself saying things like, “The Long-tailed Ducks are flying low, just passing where the ice mountain was.”

The Spring 2018 waterbird count totals for many species were down somewhat from average, likely related to the delayed spring. A summary of the season, including an annotated list of all waterbird species seen during the count with count totals and other highlights can be found in the “Migration Counts” blog at [wpbo.org](http://wpbo.org).



Louie Dombroski landed his first field ornithology job in 1988, when he became Waterbird Counter at Whitefish Point. Although field work has taken him to Alaska, Arizona, Mexico, and many points in between, Louie keeps returning to northern Michigan on a regular basis. Louie is currently chair of the Michigan Bird Records Committee.



Snowy Owl © Skye Haas



Horned Grebe © Skye Haas



Red-throated Loon © Skye Haas

# From the Hawk Deck

BY GARY PALMER, WPBO SPRING HAWK COUNTER

Whitefish Point is a special place. Like so many birders before me, and more in the years since, it's where my eyes were first opened to the magic I had been missing. I still remember that first trip fondly – so many White-throated Sparrows at the feeders! Yellow-rumped and Black-throated Green Warblers singing incessantly! But perhaps the most impressive were the hawks. I was introduced to the Point during the second week of May, and the Sharp-shinned Hawks were reaching a crescendo. I had never imagined I would see such a spectacle with my own eyes. Everywhere I turned the air seemed saturated with Sharpies; the scene from the hawk deck was beyond belief. I watched these agile little Accipiters do everything from soaring high overhead, buzzing low above the deck, gliding along the treetops, or exploding in a high-stakes ambush after the myriad Blue Jays. With so many Sharpies to study, I quickly cued in on their characteristic 'flap-flap-flap-glide' style of flying, and took the first small steps on my journey toward becoming a hawk counter.

Looking back upon the conclusion of my second spring season at Whitefish Point it's still so hard to believe this has become a part of my life, and that I now hold a place among the storied history of one of the longest-running ornithological studies anywhere. I never set out to be a hawk counter, and in fact, it took years of obsession over close-up views of breeding-plumaged warblers before I

first began to appreciate the subtle challenges presented by flying raptors. Back then, even Red-tailed Hawks, with their seemingly infinite variability boggled my mind and left me constantly frustrated!

But once I gave hawks an honest chance, after a while everything began to click. Where before I had hoped to see the diagnostic dark patagial bar on a distant Red-tail, the trait most emphasized in a traditional field guide, I've now developed an eye for the details the ID really required, having learned to emphasize proportions, silhouette, shape, and miniscule differences in behavior in my quest to suss out the true identity of each bird. I've learned to enjoy the rush of recognizing the powerful wingbeats, smooth flight, and bulky, torpedo-shaped body of a Northern Goshawk from a quarter-second glance as it slips through dense cover. I've learned that the notorious challenge of separating Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks thankfully just doesn't come up much around here – the ratio can reach 500 Sharpies per Coop or even higher in a season at Whitefish Point! I've learned to pay attention and watch for the day when immatures of a species begin to exceed adults in number as migration marches onward. Hawk watching is the perfect sport for the adrenaline junky with a curious mind and infinite patience, and Whitefish Point just may be the perfect place for watching hawks.

It's a special place, and not just because of the birds. A piece of advice, offered during a chat this season with a retired pipefitter who spent hard-working decades in Detroit before discovering the joys of birding, has really stuck with me. "Welcome in the things life brings you,"

Swainson's Hawk © Skye Haas



Northern Goshawk © Skye Haas



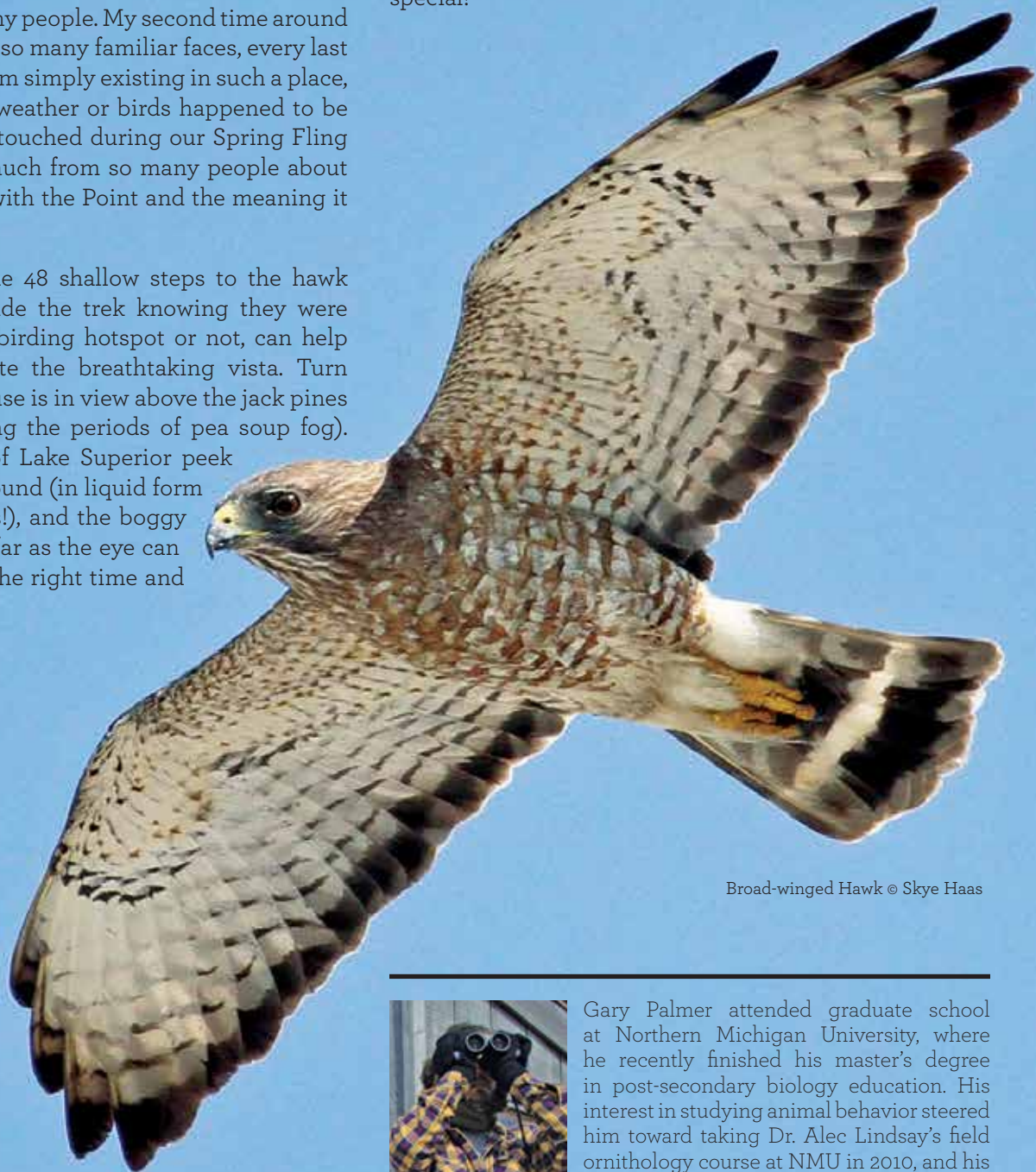


were her words, and to me they perfectly encapsulate what hawk counting is all about and how fortuitously I've arrived at such a strange occupation.

The birds are incredible and they're what I came into my days as the WPBO hawk counter expecting. I was well aware from my days of studying ornithology in grad school that the Point is a site of global significance for migrating bird populations, a crucial refuelling stop for so many different birds! What I hadn't foreseen was how much it means to so many people. My second time around it was incredible seeing so many familiar faces, every last one in a state of bliss from simply existing in such a place, regardless of what the weather or birds happened to be doing. I was especially touched during our Spring Fling weekend, learning so much from so many people about their own relationship with the Point and the meaning it has had in their lives.

Nobody who climbs the 48 shallow steps to the hawk deck, whether they made the trek knowing they were entering a world-class birding hotspot or not, can help but stop and appreciate the breathtaking vista. Turn around and the lighthouse is in view above the jack pines (except of course during the periods of pea soup fog). The sparkling waters of Lake Superior peek through the trees all around (in liquid form by mid-May most years!), and the boggy dune swales extend as far as the eye can see. Climb up there at the right time and

you could see 2,000 Broad-winged Hawks, or a thousand Sharpies zipping by in an hour. Spend a season and you could see 10,000 Sandhill Cranes migrate northward, 5,000 Common Redpolls zipping by in the frigid dawn light, Pacific Loons with a little help and lucky timing, Swainson's Hawks dancing circles around a mixed kettle of other Buteos, or this year's big highlight: a wayward Mississippi Kite. It's obvious to everyone who crests the dune I now spend my springs perched atop: this place is special!



Broad-winged Hawk © Skye Haas



Gary Palmer attended graduate school at Northern Michigan University, where he recently finished his master's degree in post-secondary biology education. His interest in studying animal behavior steered him toward taking Dr. Alec Lindsay's field ornithology course at NMU in 2010, and his life hasn't been the same since.

# Farewell, Rachelle Roake!

Michigan Audubon's Conservation Science Coordinator for the last four years, Rachelle Roake, is turning back to her alma mater, the University of Michigan to pursue a Master of Landscape Architecture degree. On behalf of the staff, board, countless volunteers, birds, and habitats throughout the state, we thank Rachelle for her excellent work, service and dedication to conservation science and programs that have advanced the work and expanded the reach of Michigan Audubon's conservation platform considerably.

"It may seem that I am leaving bird conservation, but it is far from it," Rachelle said. "My goals in pursuing this degree are to advance my habitat restoration skills and to learn how to design ecologically-functional urban

landscapes that help homeowners, businesses, and municipalities conserve birds, pollinators, and wildlife. Working with Michigan Audubon has been an invaluable experience that guided me into this next stage of my career in bird conservation."

We wish you all the best in this next chapter of bringing your caring, informed, proactive touch to the world of bird conservation, Rachelle!



# Welcome, Linnea Rowse!



Linnea Rowse recently joined Michigan Audubon as Conservation Program Coordinator. She comes to Michigan from a recent position in central Ohio, where she worked for Pheasants Forever with a primary focus on restoring and managing native grasslands for birds and wildlife through Farm Bill conservation programs.

Before Ohio, Linnea worked for Audubon New York in northern New York, where she worked with private landowners to manage habitat for Golden-winged Warblers. In the past, Linnea has also worked as a seasonal ornithologist on research and monitoring projects, ranging from banding migrating songbirds on the Gulf Coast, the East coast, in the Central Flyway, and in the Rocky Mountains, nest searching and observing behavior of various songbirds on both breeding and wintering grounds, and conducting point count bird surveys. In 2013, Linnea completed her Master of Science degree from the Ohio

State University; her research focused on the effects of environmental contaminants to Acadian Flycatchers.

Linnea is an avid birder, and though she doesn't like to pick favorites, her unofficial favorite group of birds are warblers (maybe you can twist her arm and get a specific favorite bird someday!). Linnea grew up in Minnesota, and feels lucky to have parents who encouraged her to get outdoors and got her involved with birding (i.e., participating in Birdathons!) at an early age. Though Linnea was generally interested in birds as a young adult, her passion for bird conservation and birding grew after a college semester abroad in New Zealand, and grew again with her first seasonal bird job after she graduated; she has been working in the avian conservation field now for the past 10 years.

Linnea is very excited to join Michigan Audubon, as the core mission aligns with her own values – to connect birds and people, and to do so by employing sound conservation science, research, outreach, and education. Linnea looks forward to becoming a part of the conservation community in Michigan, and to meeting you!





## CraneFest 2018

Join us on Oct. 13-14 to celebrate Sandhill Cranes during the 24th annual CraneFest at the Kiwanis Youth Conservation Area in Bellevue, Mich. Adjacent to Michigan Audubon's Baker Sanctuary, the Kiwanis property offers an optimal view hundreds to thousands of Sandhill Cranes as they fly in to roost overnight on Big Marsh Lake.

For over two decades, crowds have gathered to celebrate Sandhill Crane migration during this fall event that also includes artwork from several nature-themed Michigan artists, informational booths from state nonprofits and organizations, merchandise and food vendors, and a family educational tent with activities for children of all ages. In addition to nature walks on the property, there will be live animal presentations throughout the weekend.

While a variety of bird activity is sure to delight visitors in and around Big Lake Marsh throughout the day, migrating flocks of Sandhill Cranes generally begin their fly-in during the afternoon with the largest number of cranes appearing near dusk. Bring a lawn chair or blanket, relax and mingle with the crowd gathered on the hillside, and enjoy the incredible spectacle of crane migration as the sun begins its descent over the marsh.

Sandhill Cranes are believed to be the oldest living bird species, having existed for more than 9 million years in their present form. Saved from the brink of extinction, they have become a true Michigan conservation success story. With its loud prehistoric call and five-foot wingspan, Sandhill Cranes are quite a sight to see.

CraneFest opens at noon and ends at dusk (approximately 7 p.m.) both Saturday and Sunday. Entrance to the festival is free, but there is a small parking fee. Please join us for this fun family-friendly fall event!

Interested in becoming an artist or vendor at this year's CraneFest? Visit [cranefest.org](http://cranefest.org) or email [events@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:events@michiganaudubon.org) for more information.

## Special Thanks: Spring Fling 2018

Thank you to everyone who joined us at Spring Fling this year! We would like to extend a special thank you to the presenters and guides: Rich and Brenda Keith, Alec Lindsay, Susan and Michael Kielb, Nova Mackentley and Chris Neri, Elliot Nelson, Darrell Lawson, Alec Olivier, Mary Wise, Skye Haas, Gary Palmer, and Louie Dombroski. Also, thank you to our sponsors Wayne Olivier Wells Fargo Advisors who made Breakfast at the Point possible and Chase Creative for supplying the audio equipment for the banquet.



## Have an event to share?

Summer is a busy time for birds and birders! Festivals, walks, trips, presentations, and more birdy events abound. Please visit the Michigan Audubon website at [michiganaudubon.org](http://michiganaudubon.org) for information about a variety of upcoming events near you!

Have an event to share? Michigan Audubon will soon be launching a new Community Calendar service on our website that will allow chapters and organizations to submit and share their events on our website. Stay tuned for more details!



Dated Material

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

## 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.

Jennifer Aiken	Versal Gann	Lisa Schaller
Larry Althouse	Derek Hall	Tyler Schaub
Kristine Ashley	Marvin Hartlaub	Douglas Scobel
Thomas & Barbara	Tanisha Hasan	Deborah Seaman
Auer	Edd Higbee	Larry & Sarah
Brittany Baker	Dale Hilliard	Slade
Sara Bolan	Debbie Howe	Debbie
Jacob Bournay	Daniel Karrick	Sommerfeldt-Neil
Nancy Breen	Arlene Kuizema	Stacy Torgerson
Donna Brosnan	Corrie Larkin	Heidi Trudell
Brianne Butler	Anne Lawrence	Denny Tryan
Joanna Cohen	Kevin Murphy	Michael Turisk
Peggy Dankert	William Paxton	Mohana Walambe
Nancy Demeter	Michelle Peregord	Geoffrey Wizgird
John Dobbs	Kathleen & Steven	Bonnie Wolf
Mary Dorr	Perria	John Zoller
Thomas Dunn	Kimberly Pillen	First Presbyterian
Diane Dupuis	Brown	Church of
Malorie Evens	Shana Lynn Popp	Birmingham
Craig Gallo	Adele Rosati	

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 [mkeenan@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:mkeenan@michiganaudubon.org) or (517) 580-7364. Thank you!

## Special Thanks: Cerulean Warbler Weekend

Thank you to everyone who joined us for Cerulean Warbler Weekend 2018! We had a wonderful experience that would not have been possible without the support of volunteers and sponsors!

### 2018 CWW Sponsors

PFCU  
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### 2018 CWW Volunteers

Frank Ballo  
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