

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

WINTER: Bird-Window Collisions ▪ Sustainable Investing ▪ Wildlife Rehab ▪ Wonder of Migration at the Point ▪  
Fall at Whitefish Point ▪ Fall Owl Banding at WPBO ▪ Fall Waterbird Count at WPBO



# 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 a.m.-5 p.m.

## 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  
mkeenana@michiganaudubon.org

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

## COPY EDITOR

### Molly Keenan

Communications & Marketing Coordinator  
mkeenana@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 ■ Short-eared Owl Photographer: Greg Smith

Greg Smith lives in the Lansing area and has been birding since 2011. He captured this shot in a farm field near Ashley, Mich., where Short-eared Owl roost semi-annually. As luck would have it, he visited on a day where they were flying before dark.

This image was submitted for the 2017 Jack Pine Warbler Cover Photo Contest. Michigan Audubon will be hosting a new cover photo contest in the near future. Look for the announcement on our

Facebook page at [facebook.com/michiganaudubon](https://facebook.com/michiganaudubon) or on our website at [michiganaudubon.org](https://michiganaudubon.org). Until then, 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 [mkeenana@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:mkeenana@michiganaudubon.org) or (517) 580-7364.

# Contents

## Features

2-3  
Building Hope & Monitoring  
Bird-Window Collisions

4  
Sustainable Investing

6-7  
Wildlife Rehabilitation:  
*A Conversation with  
Barb and Joe Rogers*

## Columns

5  
Witness the Wonder of  
Migration at the Point

8-9  
Fall at Whitefish Point

10  
Fall Owl Banding at  
WPBO

11-12  
Fall Waterbird Count at  
WPBO

## Departments

1  
Executive Director

13  
The Future of the MBNH

13  
CraneFest Thank Yous

14  
New Members

14  
Save the Dates



## 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](https://MichiganAudubon.org) for more updates, and follow MichiganAudubon on social media*



# From the Executive Director

## Happy New Year, Michigan Audubon community!

In looking back over the organization's activities in 2018, I am struck by the tremendous voice for birds that — on the policy front alone — is reflected in our work, in policy results, and throughout our membership regarding participation and support. I want to thank you for investing in birds and conservation, and for speaking out against proposals like the House Resolution 154 to hunt Sandhill Cranes and Senate Bill 1211, the bill that would roll back protections on wetlands. As an advocacy organization for birds and their habitats, these and other proposed legislative policies have taken front and center in our work this year, in addition to our Bird-Friendly Communities program development and outreach throughout the state. I want to take a moment to say that we could not do this without you. Thank you for your continued support, the unique gifts you offer as advocates and supporters, your involvement, and steadfast commitment to conservation.

You are invited to join us for the 2019 Michigan Audubon Annual Member Meeting. This meeting is dedicated to serving both our members and to reinforce our collaborative conservation network. There will be relevant content tailored to both chapter leaders and individual members, a special presentation on the Kirtland's Warbler from Bill Rapai, president of Grosse

Pointe Audubon and author of *The Kirtland's Warbler*, as well as opportunities to grow your advocacy network and brainstorm better ways to stay connected and supported in our passion for protecting birds.

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Ralph A. MacMullen Center on the beautiful northern shores of Higgins Lake (Roscommon, MI) on Saturday, March 16, 2019. If you have questions about the Michigan Audubon Annual Meeting, please feel free to contact Molly Keenan at [mkeenam@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:mkeenam@michiganaudubon.org) or 517.580.7364.

We are humbly proud of the continued grassroots nature of our organization, one that has been growing strong concerning people, programs, and impact since 1904. Thank you again for being a part of our work and our collective community!



Heather L. Good  
Executive Director



# Building Hope & Monitoring Bird-Window

Birds contend with an array of hazards during all stages of their life cycles, some natural (think predators, weather, food abundance, etc.) and some human-caused (habitat loss; collisions with structures; vehicles; communications towers; climate change; and competition with (or predation by) non-native, invasive species). In our urban centers, where habitat is fragmented by development (buildings, roads, infrastructure), some birds do co-exist quite well with humans, but more often than not, bird species need undisturbed or restored habitat consisting of forest lands, grasslands, wetland, open water, even airspace. Many birds that do not spend any significant length of time in urban areas still experience the hazards during their migratory periods, in spring and fall.

What can we do? Urban and suburban areas are widespread across the globe. How can we share “our” space with birds? Well, one approach is to create an area of “Safe Passage.” Safe Passage programs, similar to “Lights Out” programs, are designed to reduce urban hazards to birds, especially during spring and fall migration, when there is a considerable influx of bird movement as birds travel to their summer breeding locations in the north or wintering locations south of Michigan. In Michigan, a few Safe Passage programs are ongoing, and even expanding: Washtenaw Safe Passage (affiliated with Washtenaw Audubon Society), Detroit Audubon’s Project, Safe Passage: Great Lakes, and Michigan Audubon’s Bird-Friendly Communities program, currently implemented in the greater Lansing area.

Michigan Audubon, in partnership with Michigan State University and with many hours of volunteer support, has been piloting bird-window collision monitoring efforts in downtown Lansing and on the MSU campus in both spring and fall 2018. Through this monitoring, we have identified some key buildings that are hazardous to birds, and are in the initial stages of working with partners to mitigate the effects of window reflections in the greater Lansing area.

Unfortunately, Michigan Audubon does not have exciting recovery stories to tell, where an injured bird (from a window collision) has been brought to a wildlife rehabilitation clinic and recovered enough to be re-released into nature. A local wildlife rehabber has agreed to be on call for injured birds that our window collision monitors may call in, but thus far, the reality is that the birds found by our monitors have already perished.

While the monitoring process and finding deceased birds on the sidewalks below windows can feel depressing, there is hope. The hope lies in that people in communities



Black-capped Chickadee © Kristy Taylor



White-breasted Nuthatch © Kristy Taylor



Red-breasted Nuthatch © Hope Meyers



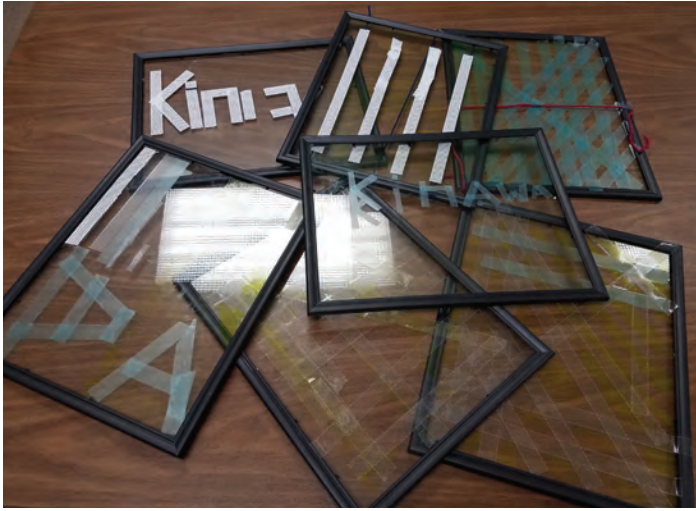
Black-and-white Warbler © Kristy Taylor

(including yours, I’d bet!) are more and more interested in making changes to protect our birds from collisions better. Here’s one story:

In rural southeast Michigan, in Washtenaw County,

# Collisions

BY LINNEA ROWSE, MICHIGAN AUDUBON CONSERVATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Students at Kinawa Middle School practiced applying tape to windows to deter collisions as part of the Bird by Bird program. Tape should be applied vertically and up to 4 inches apart.

Katherine Kelly is designing her new orthodontic office building (which will have lots of windows), to be as bird-friendly as possible. She has observed many great birds nearby (Bald Eagle, Wild Turkey, Sandhill Crane, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Black-capped Chickadee, and more!), as well as a diverse array of butterflies and pollinators. Katherine wants to include bird-friendly design components in the new building because she loves nature and wildlife, and wants to mitigate the impact of building a new structure that will disrupt some critters and habitat. After reaching out to Michigan Audubon for advice, she plans to reduce the window hazards by using bird-friendly window tape or window stickers, spaced at 2x4 inches apart and on the outside of windows, to discourage birds from flying into the windows. When properly spaced, window clings, or stickers give the illusion to birds that the remaining spaces are too small to fly through, and they also break up reflections of vegetation that may look enticing as a resting spot or as cover from predators. Besides careful planning for the windows, Katherine's plans include native plant landscaping, which not only benefits birds and pollinators but also will bring a touch of nature to her patients as they look out the windows, thus connecting birds and people.

Michigan Audubon is in the process of developing template materials and plans for our statewide chapters or other community-based organizations to follow, for people to make their communities more bird-friendly. We are looking for leaders in other communities (this can be you!) to take on this challenge of incorporating bird-friendly components into your township, city, or even as localized as within your neighborhood.

## Resources:

Easy ways to reduce window collisions, at home or your office:

- Dots, decals, or lines of bird-friendly tape can make a big difference. Apply tape or decals to the outside of windows to break up the reflection of sky or vegetation. Apply in vertical stripes that are four inches apart (maximum) or horizontal stripes that are two inches apart. These dimensions create the illusion to birds that the gaps between the tape are too small for them to fly through.
- Highlighter marker ink reflects UV light and is invisible to the human eye; draw on the outside of glass windows, following the same spacing requirements as stickers. This will wash off the window with rain, and so it is a good solution for sheltered windows only. Liquid chalk markers are a fun way for children to draw designs on the outside of windows; again, these will wash away with rain.
- Window screens (only if outside of the glass window) reduce collisions and injuries. Mini-blinds can help, but do not break reflections on the outside of windows.
- Turn off outside lights at night (or use a motion-activated light), and close blinds or curtains at night. This is especially important during spring and fall migration periods.
- A more permanent solution is to use frosted or etched glass, which can be a beautiful and artistic way to break reflections and increase glass visibility.
- If you notice a specific office window or area of windows that is particularly prone to bird collisions, talk to your building manager about using bird-friendly tape. This is a relatively cheap and easy solution and can be removed if needed.

*More information about birds and window collisions:* [www.michiganaudubon.org/bfc/bird-window-collisions/](http://www.michiganaudubon.org/bfc/bird-window-collisions/) or [www.abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions/bird-friendly-window-solutions/](http://www.abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions/bird-friendly-window-solutions/)

*Contact Linnea Rowse for more information and to discuss ideas to create safer shared spaces for birds in our urban areas.*



Linnea Rowse is Michigan Audubon's Conservation Program Coordinator. An avid birder who grew up in Minnesota, Linnea looks forward to becoming a part of the conservation community in Michigan. You can contact her at [lrowse@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:lrowse@michiganaudubon.org).

# Michigan Audubon and Socially-Responsible Investments

BY HEATHER GOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our organization's history, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, owes great credit to a number of volunteer members of the Board of Directors who worked hard to develop an endowment for the organization's fiscal sustainability and capacity to develop an investment portfolio as an extension of this work. So many individuals have dedicated themselves to ensuring Michigan's oldest conservation organization can continue statewide programs and outreach in its three pillar areas of conservation, education, and research, with the mission of connecting birds and people for the benefit of both.

At this time, our investments are managed by Wayne T. Olivier of Marquette, Mich., a financial advisor, and investment officer affiliated with Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC. As a governing body, Michigan Audubon's Board oversees the organization and ensures it remains in alignment with the mission, vision, and strategic plan of the organization as a whole.

In 2016, our Board of Directors raised the question, "How socially responsible are our investments?" This conversation began with consulting Wayne, our financial advisor, who conducted extensive research on behalf of the organization and the Board's intention to both remain aligned with its investment policy, proceed wisely for the sake of preserving the organization, but also to "put its money where its mouth is" in terms of its fiduciary activities.

I asked Wayne to present on this topic in 2018 at our Spring Fling event — a celebration of migration at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory — that takes place annually on the last weekend of April. We'd moved fully into sustainable investments and wanted to share this exciting development with our members and supporters.

It is worth noting that Wayne, his wife, Julie, and their children consistently and enthusiastically attend our Spring Fling event every year and Whitefish Point Bird Observatory is a site near and dear to their hearts. Their son, Alec, boasts impressive bird knowledge and if you're fortunate to meet him near the waterbird shack during Spring Fling, you will see just what I mean. It's been a great service to the organization to have the professional reinforcement of a financial advisor, and to also witness the grassroots nature of our organization's culture manifest in our relationship with the Olivier family. They understand just how vital bird conservation is and we

know that they have our back in terms of our mission and our statewide efforts. I wanted to share a bit of this story from Wayne's perspective, as he took the lead on researching, reporting, and converting these investments into a fully-sustainable portfolio:



"In July 2017, the board reviewed the research, and it was decided to begin a tiered approach to transitioning the portfolios by July 2018, to a fully socially responsible investment portfolio. This allows the organization to align their investments with their objectives and values. After working closely with Heather through the course of that year, I am pleased to announce that this strategy was fully implemented by the July 2018 target date. To Michigan Audubon, investing is about more than dollars and cents. It's about a moral obligation to protect the environment, do social good, and support responsible corporate governance. By doing this, they are ensuring a truly holistic approach in every aspect of their business."

Special thanks to our Board of Directors, the Olivier family and Wells Fargo Advisors, and to you — supporters of Michigan Audubon who are a key component of the continued extension of our work, the expansion of our community, and the reflection of our mission and values in everything we do. As supporters and donors to our cause, if you have expressed interest in contributing to a particular program (education, conservation, research, WPBO, etc.) or to give a gift to the organization's endowment, you can specify exactly how you'd like your gift to be utilized. Feel free to contact us at 517-580-7364 or write to [birds@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:birds@michiganaudubon.org) if you have questions about giving to specific programs within our broader scope of statewide work.

Spotted Sandpiper © Daniel Behm



# Witness the wonder of migration in Paradise!

## **SPRING FLING AT WHITEFISH POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY:**

A Celebration of Migration in Paradise, Michigan

# April 27-28, 2019

If you love birds, this event promises one-of-a-kind birding opportunities, like-minded people, and a chance to learn, connect, and grow your knowledge and love of birds.

Spring Fling includes bird walks, informative sessions for birders and conservationists, a banquet with a keynote speaker, pre- and post-event birding field trips, family-friendly activities, and more! Life-listers, photographers, and novice birders alike and of all ages enjoy this weekend at the premier birding spot in Michigan.

### **The full event includes:**

- Friday Pre-event "Birding in Paradise" tour;
- Guided bird walks with experienced birders around the Point;
- Northern Owls presentation with long-term WPBO Owl Banders, Chris Neri and Nova Mackentley;
- Presentations from hawkwatch sites around the state of Michigan;
- Saturday evening banquet and keynote speaker presentation with Pam Repp, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge Manager;
- Evening owl flight program with interpretive guides (Saturday night);
- Post-event "Searching for the Spruce Grouse" tour

More information about Spring Fling, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, and this year's specific program highlights, as well as information on lodging and registration, can be found at: [wpbo.org/events/spring-fling](http://wpbo.org/events/spring-fling).



Ruddy Turnstone © Daniel Behm



The boardwalk to the waterbird shack was extended in 2018.

# Wildlife Rehabilitation: A Conversation with Barb

In June of 2018, I had the pleasure of visiting Wildlife Recovery Association in Shepherd, Mich., as one of the many field trips during the Great Lakes Young Birders Camp. Myself, a few counselors, and 13 eager campers joined wildlife rehabilitators Barb and Joe Rogers as they gave a tour of their facilities and extolled stories of helping wildlife. It was nothing short of inspiring.

Curious to find out more about the rehabilitation process and what it takes to become a wildlife rehabilitator, I reached out to Barb and Joe to see what more they could share about their operation where they focus on raptors, but are licensed to take in mammals as well.

## When did you first begin wildlife rehabilitation?

Barb: That depends on how you look at it. When I was a little girl, at about the age of nine, I started taking care of animals — domestic, wild, whatever I thought needed help. I helped to organize a neighborhood club for kids called “Be Kind to Animals Club.” As far as officially, I started about 35 years ago, when I first met Joe.

## What got you interested in becoming a wildlife rehabilitator?

Joe: While working as a VCO (volunteer conservation law officer), I learned that part of the job was to get rid of “nuisance animals,” animals like fawns, raccoons, hawks, and owls that had been raised or rehabilitated incorrectly from a young age and associated people with food. The animals were often accused of attacking people when in reality they were starving and trying to be fed by people in the same way as when they were young. I thought there must be a way to do the rehabilitation correctly.

## Why is wildlife rehabilitation so important?

Joe: Nature has a system and it is important to understand nature’s balance when doing rehabilitation, but helping animals that are far below the natural population numbers (carrying capacity) is worthwhile. It also allows an outlet for the public to care for and support wildlife, and to educate people.

Barb: When I started working with Joe, I could see the larger value that rehabilitation has in teaching people about the need for wild animals to be treated differently than domestic animals and to respect those needs.

## Can you describe the rehabilitation process?

Barb: It usually begins with a phone call and figuring out whether the hawk, owl, or eagle truly needs help. With baby animals, we often ask the finder to leave them where they found it. It is normal for most young birds to come out of the nest before they can fly. If there is a problem, we rely on an extensive network of volunteers to help with the rescue and transport of the birds in need of care. These volunteers understand how to prevent shock and respect the importance of delivering the bird to us without delay. On arrival, each bird is checked for injuries, dehydration, parasites, and general condition. If needed, it is scheduled for x-rays and medical treatment by a veterinarian.

If the bird is a nestling or young, it is housed where a puppet does the feeding so that it locks on to the image of its species rather than a human. Even if it is an adult bird, human contact is limited to what is necessary to provide medication and food is administered through drop slots in their cage.

When possible, nestlings are matched with a foster parent such as Penny, an American Kestrel that has done a great job of raising nestlings in our care. This needs to be done with great caution, however, as raptors who have not bonded with the nestling will view them as a tasty meal. We place young birds in a cage next to an adult so they can see each other through a window. When the adult has bonded with the youngster, it will feed it through slots in the window.



Joe Rogers shows off one of their ambassador birds, an Eastern Screech Owl.

Joe: If you want the animal to return to the wild successfully, you must keep it wild and help it have the skills it needs to find its natural foods in its special way. Each species is different; we learn how they live in the wild, how they find food, and how they avoid their enemies. We always give rehabilitating animals a place to hide and promote

its use. However, animals must be in good shape to survive, so lots of exercise is necessary as well.

Barb: Each bird we rehabilitate must go through flight conditioning in a flight cage. They start in a small enclosure, just large enough to turn around in, and gradually move to larger cages that range from 30 to 100 feet long. As the bird gains the ability to fly well, it will commonly fly several miles each day.

Once rehabilitated, we often contact whoever found the bird so they can share in the joy and excitement of releasing them back into the wild.

This Snowy Owl was released back into the wild after its recovery.

## What are some of the things you need when becoming a wildlife rehabilitator?

Joe: The process of getting a rehab permit has changed greatly over the years and differs depending on what area you are in. Check with your homeowner’s insurance and get coverage in writing. We have known of people





A Snowy Owl enjoys its large quarters before having some time in the flight chamber to help it gain strength.

losing their coverage when their insurance company found out they were taking in wild animals. There are many parasites, diseases, and sicknesses that can come from animals so you should check with your local zoning to see if it is allowed. If you are building outdoor cages, you may need a building permit. If

you plan on asking for donations, you need a solicitor's license. You may need a permit to house syringes and medications, have lock-ups for them, and specialized disposal systems. You may need to be listed with the local police in case an animal escapes. You should also know the procedures to follow if an animal dies with certain conditions (such as rabies) and how to dispose of their remains.



Foster bird, Penny, has help to raise numerous American Kestrels at WRA over the years.

Barb: To obtain a state permit, you must take a course, usually a weekend set of classes, and periodically get it updated with additional classes. State rehabilitation only allows rehabilitators to take in mammals. To rehabilitate birds, an individual must also have a federal permit.

## Can you share a favorite memory from your time as a rehabilitator?

Barb: There are so many! Once we took in an injured bobcat kitten and we knew how vital it was to raise him to be wild. Like other animals, we fed him through food slots, gave him room to run and hide, and did our best to teach him to hunt as his mother would. I had minimal contact with him, yet when

we released him, I missed him and wished that I could see him one more time. Just once. One evening, at dusk, I stood near his former cage, looking out into the forest, focusing on an old dark stump that was almost the shape of an adult bobcat – then the stump's ear twitched. There he was, real and alive and healthy. In an instant, he was gone. This ability to hide let us know that he had remained very wild, even though raised in captivity. We occasionally would see tracks in the snow, and by spring there were two sets of tracks, side-by-side.

## Any final thoughts to share?

Barb: When someone rescues an animal, the memory sticks with them, and many times they are inspired to become more involved with citizen science, local nature centers, conservation districts, and Audubon chapters.

Joe: This overview is a very small and narrow start to understanding good rehabilitation and it is important to remember that habitat protection is the first step in helping wildlife.

*Established in 1979, Wildlife Recovery Association is dedicated to promoting the understanding, appreciation, and protection of wild raptors and their connection with nature. More information about the organization can be found at [wildliferecovery.org](http://wildliferecovery.org).*

*For more information on becoming a rehabilitator, visit the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council's website at [theiwr.org](http://theiwr.org). If you are in need of a rehabilitator, visit the MDNR website for a current list of licensed rehabilitators in Michigan at [michigandnr.com/dlr/](http://michigandnr.com/dlr/).*



Lindsay Cain is Michigan Audubon's education coordinator. If you are interested in learning more about our events, workshops, presentations, or event sponsorship opportunities, please contact Lindsay at 517.580.7364 or [lcain@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:lcain@michiganaudubon.org).

# Fall at Whitefish Point

BY CHRIS NERI, WPBO FALL FIELD ORNITHOLOGIST

Every spring and fall the field staff at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) collect data, both day and night, to document the bird migration at Whitefish Point. The fall field season at WPBO runs annually from Aug. 15 to Nov. 15. The bulk of the data collected is generated by observations from the waterbird count, songbird count and the owl banding, including the tail end of the summer owl banding season. This fall nearly 120,000 birds of 211 species were documented at Whitefish Point. This species total includes 45 waterbirds, 27 shorebirds, 15 raptors, 23 warblers, and 15 sparrows.

The opportunity to be part of WPBO's field staff is always exciting and every season at the Point is different. Given the diversity of species that migrate through the Point, each season comes with a mix of surprises and disappointments, but there are always new learning experiences. The warbler migration was much better this season than it was during the last three falls, making for a productive start to the season's songbird count. We then experienced a nice thrush migration in the mid-season, including good numbers of Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes. Although sparrow numbers were not particularly good, there was a period of nice sparrow diversity. The relatively good numbers of thrushes, warblers, and sparrows made the birding very enjoyable through mid-October. The late season did produce a nice mix of winter finches, but last fall's finch flight was amazing and had me a bit spoiled in this regard. Last fall we had an incredible day of over 10,000 Common Redpolls, compared to a season total of 1,583 this fall. Pine Siskin numbers were also low in comparison, with a season total of 1,530, compared to 22,575 last fall. That said, winter finches were present most days in late October and November, and they are always a treat to see after the neotropical migrants have gone south and winter starts to settle in. Overall, the common songbird species were present in good numbers this season, making the birding at the Point delightful this fall. Of course, the fantastic list of rarities found at WPBO over the years is a big part of what makes birding the Point so exciting. Although this season did not match some of the sightings from the last three fall seasons, Say's Phoebe, Summer Tanager, Yellow-throated Warbler, American Avocet, Townsend's Solitaire, Lark Sparrow, and Harris's Sparrow were documented this fall.

In addition to the overall experience gained from spending a season at the Point, there are always specific, individual experiences that stand out. The thrushes provided one of this season's surprises. Swainson's and Gray-cheeked

Thrushes are typically fairly shy and keep to the more vegetated areas, but for some reason, they were drawn to the sandy area under the benches at the bird feeders this fall. For several days, it was possible to sit on the seats watching the feeders and have these thrushes land on the benches next to you, providing great looks and comparisons of these two often skulking species. Pine Siskins were also drawn to these sandy patches and regularly fed under the benches while we sat on them, occasionally they landed on people's heads. We also enjoyed a Pectoral Sandpiper that spent days feeding on worms around the feeders, often coming within a few feet of us as we sat at the feeders. All of these particular experiences were made more enjoyable by the fact that they were shared with visitors. I enjoyed them all personally, but it was amusing to have visitors excitedly share them with me.

The bird migration at WPBO happens regardless of whether or not any of us are here to witness it. It's gratifying for me to be able to contribute to the long-term data collected by WPBO, whether it is through the owl banding in spring and summer or as the field ornithologist in the fall. Some of my favorite experiences at WPBO are those fall days when everyone is working together to help people experience the best of what the Point has to offer. Whether it is a new visitor seeing a species that is regular at the Point for a lifer, or everyone working together to relocate a rarity so that everyone present gets to see it, there is such a good feeling when the atmosphere is a cooperative one. There were several standout days like that this fall, thanks to all of you who visited and contributed. The fall season also provides me with the opportunity to give Friday and Saturday evening programs on WPBO's owl research. Over 90 of you made the nighttime trip up to the Point for these programs, thanks to all who attended for your interest and enthusiasm. Big thanks also to owl banders Tori Steely and Ceeanna Zulla for their help with the programs. Finally, thanks to all of you who generously provide financial support to keep WPBO going!



Chris Neri arrived at WPBO in 1999. Chris had 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."



This young Northern Shrike spent several days hunting songbirds at the Point. Photo © Chris Neri



This young Peregrine Falcon spent more than a week terrorizing the shorebirds and gulls on the beach. Photo © Chris Neri



Flooding at the Point during the fall created lots of good foraging habitat for Rusty Blackbirds. Photo © Chris Neri



Bohemian Waxwings were present in small numbers during the fall season. Photo © Chris Neri



The Point's third Yellow-throated Warbler unexpectedly flew into the parking lot and landed on a mirror of a parked car. Photo © Chris Neri

# 2018 FALL OWL BANDING

BY TORI STEELY, 2018 FALL HEAD OWL BANDER, AND CEEANNA ZULLA, 2018 FALL ASSISTANT OWL BANDER

Full of 2018 marked the 25th season of owl banding at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. Research started on the night of Sept. 14 and continued into the morning of Oct. 31. The mist nets were able to be open 35 out of 47 nights for the target species: Northern Saw-whet Owls, Boreal Owls, and Long-eared Owls. Four separate audio lures were stationed at standardized mist net locations. In total, 63 birds were banded this season including one American Woodcock, 58 Northern Saw-whet Owls, two Long-eared Owls, and two Barred Owls. These numbers are very low for a fall season at WPBO, and it is in fact, the second slowest fall to date. Only the fall season of 1993 had lower numbers with only 44 birds total being banded. The weather seems to be the main culprit for our low numbers this season.

We were not able to open the nets 12 out of 47 nights due to the wind or rain. Of the 35 nights remaining in the season, 31 of those resulted in us either opening late or closing early. Also of note, a significant rainstorm moved through the Upper Peninsula on the nights of Oct. 7 - 10, bringing almost 8 inches of rain to the Point and resulting in massive flooding. For those of you who visited during this time, you know what we are talking about. This flooding forced us to reconfigure some of our net set-ups and impeded the ability to use some nets until the water receded. In some areas, the water was still around more than three weeks later when we closed down for the season. It seems safe to say that storms like this would

play a role in bird migration.

Also of note this season was a lack of foreign recaptures. While the fall is not known for getting a lot of these, it is always exciting when it occurs. We were both disappointed that we didn't get the opportunity to experience it this fall.



Northern Saw-whet © Tori Steely

Other excitement at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory this season included the sighting of a black bear across the street from the field house on the morning of Oct. 3. While the bear was never seen again, WPBO Field Ornithologist Chris Neri did encounter bear tracks while on his bird count walks in the morning. We also encountered three different species of bats (red bat, little brown bat, and silver-backed bat), a pine martin, and a blue-spotted salamander. Finally, a Snowy Owl (a lifer for Ceeanna) that visited the Point during the afternoon of Oct. 29 was a pleasant treat.



Barred Owl. © Tori Steely



Long-eared © Tori Steely

We couldn't do this work without everyone who supports it in the Michigan Audubon community. It was a pleasure to meet many of you during the owl programs. Thank you for your continued support of the research at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory!



Tori Steely returned for her second season of owl banding at WPBO in 2018, this time as head owl bander.



Fall of 2018 was the first season at WPBO for Ceeanna Zulla.

# The Fall Waterbird Count at Whitefish Point

BY GARY PALMER, 2018 WPBO WATERBIRD COUNTER

My year of counting migrating birds at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory ended as it began — in the snow. After a spring hawk count spent under a thick blanket of snow at the Point and a summer spent censusing breeding songbirds in the sweltering heat of southern Illinois, I entered my fall waterbird count at WPBO eager to see what the unfolding season would entail. Would it be a long, hot, dry fall, where I could keep my sandals in rotation right up to the end, on Nov. 15? Or would it be more of a classic, harsh Upper Peninsula fall, the sort where trick-or-treaters wear snow boots and parkas over their costumes?

The first weeks of the count brought the warmest weather I've ever seen at Whitefish Point. With temperatures soaring into the mid-80s and the autumnal equinox over a month away it may not have felt like fall, but plenty of birds had already embarked on their annual southbound journeys. Whitefish Point is particularly known for being the number one spot in North America to see Red-necked Grebe migration, and they were the first species to put on an incredible show this season. A whopping total of 2,954 migrated past on Aug. 22 this year, and while later days would have higher volumes of birds, this was the most non-stop day of the season. They zipped past, one, two, three, at a time, seldom more than a dozen in a flock, nearly constant right up till sunset once the flight began.

Shorebirds are also well known for beginning their southward migration as early as they can get away with, and the first weeks of the season were predictably

full of them. "Peeps" dominated the early days, with flocks of Sanderling and Baird's, Semipalmated, and Least Sandpipers scurrying along the beach seemingly constantly throughout the opening month.

My favorite shorebird experience of the season came after the count ended one warm September day. Not long after I arrived at the Point for some evening birding, I spotted veteran waterbird counter, Louie Dombroski, frantically waving his arms and motioning me toward the distant shoreline. I ran as fast as I could on the loose cobble, surely in for a real treat if Louie was that excited. The commotion proved well-warranted when I stepped up to his scope to see a Purple Sandpiper! This rare visitor from the Atlantic coast has been documented at Whitefish Point fewer than ten times and was a fantastic new addition to my Michigan list. Usually associated with colder conditions when seen here, this was the earliest "fall" record for Purple Sandpiper ever documented statewide, occurring on Sept. 8, and it proved a harbinger of an abrupt change in weather.

It seemed one day the temperature was in the 80s with the next in the 40s, and it never rebounded. Then came the rain. The second half of September and all of October were defined by rain. Entire weeks went by without a dry day. Lake Superior was reported to have gained over two trillion gallons of water and rose by nearly six inches due to the astounding amount of rain. The extra water was evident at the point, as I watched the pond between the shack and the shoreline more than double in size, and

*continued on page 12*



Sunsets at the Point offer match the beauty of the wildlife you witness there.

Fall gave way to winter weather, with snow becoming a more common scene at the waterbird shack.



*continued from page 11*

found myself walking to work on a submerged boardwalk when things were wettest.

On Oct. 16 the rain finally subsided for a bit, and the day turned into the most thrilling waterbird watching all season. It held the highest diversity of waterbirds, sweeping the expected species and turning up a few nice rarities. A flock of 50 Cackling Geese kicked off the fun, followed soon by the season's only Canvasback and Pacific Loon. However, the truly unexpected bird of the day will persist as a highlight of my time at Whitefish Point. Around midday, a pair of ducks flew into view low against the choppy water, far enough from shore to pose an identification challenge, yet close enough for spectacular views of what proved to be a White-winged Scoter led by a young King Eider. This bird was the only species all fall rare enough to require formal documentation, and an unexpected lifer, nice to get at work!

October came to a close with a set of substantial back-to-back days, the biggest of the season, during which I counted over 9,000 Long-tailed Ducks, rocketing them

past Red-necked Grebe to become the most common bird for the season. They kept coming right up till the end, ultimately totaling 24,816 and leaving Red-necked Grebe in a distant second for the season at 11,006.

I first saw snow on Sept. 29. Staring toward Canada that morning it was as if an enormous white blanket had been erected just offshore, obscuring the opposite side completely. Throughout October the near-constant rain teetered on the verge of turning to snow, and near the start of November, the temperature plunged those last few degrees, changing the precipitation to snow for the final days. Like the eerie fog that blanketed the Point at the end of this spring's hawk count, lake-effect snow came and went constantly throughout each day over the last week, at times so heavy I couldn't see the far side of the pond, much less the shore of Lake Superior.

By the time the season ended I had counted 99,523 birds representing 160 different species across three months. My fall at WPBO unfolded as an unforgettable time spent studying the movements of so many birds in response to the change of seasons I watched slowly pass by. The weather ran the gamut from the warmest, sunniest days I could hope for to the coldest, windiest days I've endured as a migration counter, with the wettest October on record. By Nov. 15 though, Whitefish Point looked much like it did when my "spring" began there on March 15 — snowy.



This Purple Sandpiper was an unexpected visitor at the Point.

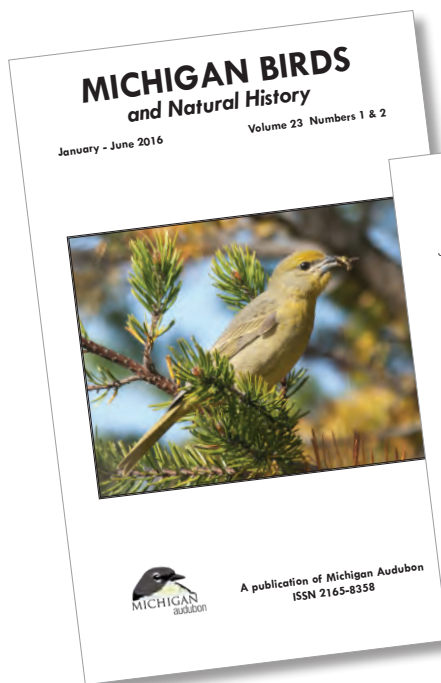


Gary Palmer attended graduate school at Northern Michigan University, where he recently finished his master's degree in post-secondary biology education. His interest in studying animal behavior steered him toward taking Dr. Alec Lindsay's field ornithology course at NMU in 2010, and his life hasn't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

# Update on the *Michigan Birds and Natural History* Journal

Established in 1994, MBNH is Michigan Audubon's scientific journal dedicated to ornithology and the natural history of Michigan. It is home to many long-running citizen science projects and surveys such as the Michigan Bird Survey (ongoing for nearly 70 years), the Michigan Christmas Bird Count, the Michigan Butterfly Survey, and the North American Migration Count, and the results of the annual Sandhill Crane census. The journal also includes the actions of the Michigan Bird Records Committee.

The Michigan Audubon Board voted to, effective January 1, 2019, share the *Michigan Birds and Natural History* journal in electronic format on the Michigan Audubon website, michiganaudubon.org. The printed version of the journal will no longer be produced, nor will there be payment required for subscriptions. The primary factor in this decision has related to subscribers not receiving goods they have purchased, which has continued since 2016 to be an issue for the publication and its subscribers. The organization's leadership wholly stands behind the data and components that have historically comprised MBNH. We hope to see the core components of it, as a coordinated volunteer effort, continue in a format that is available and accessible to all. We anticipate continuing to publish MBNH via a downloadable, printable PDF on the website if volunteer efforts continue into the future.



## CraneFest 2018 Thank You

Thank you to everyone who attended CraneFest October 13 and 14, 2018! A special thank you to our partners, Kiwanis Club of Battle Creek for helping make this event such a success! We would also like to thank all artists, vendors, and nonprofits in attendance.

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

Republic Services  
Wingspan Optics

### THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Bellevue National Honors Society  
Evan Asselin  
Patrick Fields  
Eliza Foli  
Heather and Kelly Kelb  
Wendy Reed  
Kristy Taylor  
Jack Vezmar  
Mara Wilson

### A Message from Jonathan Wuepper, Volunteer Managing Editor of *Michigan Birds and Natural History*

*Michigan Birds and Natural History* has fallen behind schedule, but I am happy to say that Volume 25, Numbers 1-2 (a double Issue) is at the printer, and Number 3 will be out soon. The editorial committee and I plan on wrapping up the current volume by early summer 2019. At the end of Volume 25, I will be stepping down as Managing Editor.

We would like to thank those who have contributed to the journal over the years in terms of content, loyal subscribers, and donors who have been the lifeblood of the publication.



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.

Rick And Tonya Lutz	Jill Engelman	Delores J Johnson	Nancy Morrison	Craig S Sparks	Patty Vance
Rick Baetsen	Joseph Ferrara	William Johnson	Elise Muffitt	Susan And Stuart	Patricia Whitlock
Barbara Anderson	Betsy Floria	Peter Jones	Otto Nemecek	Spratt	Mary Lou L
Gary Babcock	Eleanore Flowers	Nancy Justin	Judith Nott	Elizabeth B Stewart	Wickowski
Nolen Barnes	Eliza Foli	William Kalbfleisch	Sue Nutt	Alison Stroshein	Kathleen Wight
Jaclyn Beegle	Becky Fox	Anna Keenan	Mark O'keefe	Suzanne Sugden	Sandra Wilson
Jane Below	Emily Fritz	Terry And Christine	Karen Olson	Susan Tate	Wayne Wilson
Deborah Betz	Stephen Frykholm	Keenan	Kathleen Ossmann	Anne Thompson	Nancy Worrall
Victoria Blanc	Arthur Gajewski	Martin Keirnan	Susannah Parke	Kathleen And Daniel	Carol M Younes
Ruth Bloomer	Frances Gamwell	Paul Kellermann	Andrew Pawuk	Tighe	Mohammed Zafar
William And Brenda	Kathy Giffels	Ann I Kennedy	Ronald Pepper	Daniel Toft	Erin Zylstra
Boettger	Thomas Gilbert	Paul And Judith	Janet Perron	Stephanie Urban	
E Brochu	Gale Gower	Kindel	Thomas Petersen		
Jan Burns	Edward Groves	Christina Kionka	Mary Lou Petrulio		
Anita Calomeni	Patricia Hall	Barbara Kohler	Michael Phillips		
Michael Campbell	D Hansen	Gregg Landick	Ben Pinkowski		
Janice Charron	Charlotte M	Susan Leach	Richard J Ponshair		
Christie Cierlak	Harrison	Joann Leal	Rosamond		
Jane Sylvia Clifford	Heidi Hartman	Susie Lenzo	Robbert		
Nadine Cloutier	Andrea Hellstern	Bill Leonard	Joyce Root		
Susan Collins	Natalie Hesse	Emma Lindwall	Tracy Ross		
Megan Cordi	Lawrence Hipschen	Carolyn Ludwig	Mary Rosseel		
Ted Crooker	Jacob Hostetler	Richard K Lyons	Blain D Russell		
Daniel Cunningham	John Howell	Barbara Major	Marcia Seaman		
William Day	Bill Hunsberger	Carolyn Sundquist	Thomas Shears		
Colleen Dewey	Rev & Mrs Chase S.	And Kris Martin	James A Sitek		
Kathleen Dorr	Hunt	David Mayers	Sunny Sjaarda		
Martin Dugan	Gretchen Iorio	Cynthia Mazurek	Barbara Smith		
Duane Dunlap	David Jacobs	Mike Mencotti	Joyce L Smith		
William Edwards	Gerald Jehle	Georgine Mills	Marcia Smoke		

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

## Save the Date!

### 2019 WINTER & SPRING EVENTS

Winter Birding in the Soo | Jan. 19–20

Winter Birding in the Soo | Feb. 9–10

Great Backyard Bird Count | Feb. 15–18

WPBO Spring Hawk Count | Mar. 15–May 31

WPBO Spring Owl Banding | Mar. 15–May 31

WPBO Spring Waterbird Count | Apr. 15–May 31

Michigan Audubon Annual Meeting | Mar. 16

Spring Fling | Apr. 27–28

Tawas Point Birding Festival | May 16–18

MA Kirtland's Warbler Tours | May 27–June 30

Cerulean Warbler Weekend | May 31–June 2

Please check the Michigan Audubon website for additional events and more details as they become available.