



THE NUTHATCH

www.oaklandaudubon.org

“WM Landfills—Important Wildlife Habitats”

Kathleen Klein

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

Kathleen Klein, Community Relations Representative for WM, will present findings of the last 10+ years of bird observations for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) at the Eagle Valley Disposal & Recycling Facility and other efforts implemented at WM facilities to maintain certifications with the Wildlife Habitat Council.



Follow us on 

“The Biggest Year in Michigan Birding History”

Daniel Bernard

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

Join birder Danny Bernard as he shares his story of battling a limited budget and the time constraint of a fulltime job on his initially unplanned journey to break the Michigan Big Year record. Danny met dozens of people and learned loads about birding, himself, and life in general as he traveled over 45,000 miles and spent nearly every waking minute of 2022 on his quest to see more birds in a single year than anyone in Michigan history.



Inside This Issue

President's Column	2
Board Members	3
Upcoming Field Trips	4
Field Trip Reports	5 - 10
Owlets Field Trip Reports	11 - 12
Owlets Upcoming Field Trips	13 - 14
The Magic of the Luna Moths	15
I Like Dandelions (and I'm not the Only One)	16
A Tale of a Trio of Flycatchers	17
Spring Bluebird Festival (announcement)	18
Bird Briefs & Highlights of OAS's Christmas Bird Count	19
Bird Quiz	20
Board of Directors Meeting Highlights	21
Financial Statement	22
Membership Information, Book Sale Flyer & link to Conservation Articles on our website	23
Upcoming Meeting Schedule	24
Membership Form	25

“Twilight Hike at the Stage!”

Stage Nature Center, Troy

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.

Join us for a guided evening hike through the trails of the Stage Nature Center. There are up to 2 miles of trails and 100 acres of varied habitat to explore. Picnic tables and benches are plentiful and perfect for enjoying refreshments after the birding fun. The Stage Nature Center is located at 6685 Coolidge Highway. We will meet at the main parking lot.



Photos: Banner, Pixaby; Programs, WM, Daniel Bernard, Stage Nature Center.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Spring 2024

Coming down the home stretch! That's a standard line used when someone or something is approaching a goal or deadline. Obviously, that applies to me at this point. I am just a handful of birds from reaching a personal birding goal of 6,000 species on my world list. A trip to China might do it, or it might happen when I head to Indonesia later this year. That's one home stretch I am headed for.

The other involves my term as President of the Oakland Audubon Society (OAS). My term ends next October and I have mixed feelings about it. Having been president since 2006 I will miss that level of involvement, but I will be relieved to have gotten this far and to have helped the organization make many improvements, both in work and operations. Obviously, you won't get rid of me that easily—I plan to be involved with lots of things as we move forward.

All that said, there is still work to do this year as we make ready for a whole new contingent of officers. After the OAS elections, which will be held in October, all six elected board member positions will have changed. That's enough change for anyone, let alone an active organization like ours—with emphasis on active. We are still doing a great deal of outreach in the community and our normal collection of program meetings and field trips. We hope to incorporate a few more events this spring that will broaden our reach and we'll continue to be active on many fronts.

All this exciting organizational activity cannot overshadow our spring birding!! Spring is just around the corner and I expect we will be going crazy with field trips. I suspect everyone is busy brushing up their birding skills—studying the field guides and listening to tapes of bird calls. As always, I hope that both experienced and beginner birders take advantage of the opportunity to learn from our experienced field trip leaders. We are always happy to help everyone polish their skills and make sure they get the most out of every time in nature. That's our goal. So, plan to take advantage of these opportunities.

I also want to encourage our members to consider joining the OAS team at outreach events. These events typically involve a display table at other organizations' events (e.g., Earth Day, regional water festivals). Volunteering at these events lets you meet all kinds of interesting people and it helps us reach the community and teach them about birds, nature, and conservation of natural areas. The OAS board does a great job of handling the arrangements, but we need and can use your help!

Finally, as we round the corner and try to escape winter, it's time to reconnect with nature. Just getting out and enjoying the landscape without snow and cold weather is so refreshing. Even if you do it on your own, it's a great way to get ready for the rest of the year. I hope to meet many of you at our meetings and field trips, and possibly, at one of our outreach events. Meeting our members has always been a delight for me. Don't be afraid to come up to me and ask a question, suggest a new event for us to consider, or suggest a new way to do things. We listen, believe it or not. Talk to you soon.

Don Burlett
President

OAS BOARD MEMBERS

Elected Officers

President	Don Burlett	(330) 697 - 7735	baikalteal13@netzero.net
Secretary	Tiffany Vojnovski	(646) 265 - 3996	tiffany.vojnovski@gmail.com
Treasurer	Jen Benke	(734) 657 - 7498	scubadu9900@yahoo.com
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Field Trip Officer	Jeff Stacey	(248) 798 - 0508	jdstacey@ameritech.net
Program Officer	Dave Hoch	(248) 808 - 3696	hochdavid1@gmail.com

Appointed Officers

Young Birders Club Rep.	Kathleen Dougherty		kad8186@msn.com
Hospitality Officer	Julie Wineman		juliewineman13@yahoo.com
Publicity & Fundraising	Karen Kessler		Karenmk@live.com
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Conservation/Environment	Greg Petrosky		gpetrosky06@gmail.com
Advocacy Officer	Greg Harris		gbharrisiv@gmail.com



Photo by Guadalupe Cummins

Spring is coming...

Learn & remember what to do if you find a baby bird, a fledgling, or an injured adult.

[Bird Help | Bird Center of Michigan
\(birdcentermi.org\)](http://birdcentermi.org)

The story behind the picture — last spring I checked on my resident American Robin family (single chick) and found the baby on the ground. It was very alert, hungry, uninjured, and mom was nearby. I quickly found chicken wire and a string and propped up the nest, which was just low enough for me to reach. The mom supervised impatiently (I'm sure dad was nearby too). With the baby settled back on the nest things went back to normal. The baby fledged several days later and the family stayed in my yard a fair amount of time (I recognized the mom because she had only one tail feather, probably courtesy of Carl the charismatic neighborhood cat). I was so proud! It was a good reminder to remember what to do.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Schedule changes and updates will be posted on our website and members will also receive email updates. Owlets trip details are listed on pages 13 - 14.

Pre-Registration is required for most trips — contact trip leader for details.

Check the “Field Trips” page on our website often for current information and more details!

www.oaklandaudubon.org

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
March 2 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Crosswinds Marsh & Grace Lake	Mike Mencotti and Jeff Stacey mmencotti9@gmail.com ; jdstacey@ameritech.net
March 16 (Saturday) 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Pondering Penguins — Detroit Zoo (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
April 7 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Turkeys at Stage Nature Center	Kayla Niner shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com
April 8 (Monday) 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM	Birds & Eclipse at Magee Marsh (Ohio) <i>** this trip is dependent on weather**</i>	Jen Benke scubadu9900@yahoo.com
April 12 (Friday) 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Twilight Time & Sky Dance at Highland Recreation Area (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
April 21 (Sunday) 7:30 AM – 2:00 PM	Maple River State Game Area	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
April 26 – 28 (Weekend)	Hocking Hills State Park (Ohio)	Don Burlett & John Watts baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 3 – 5 (Weekend)	Berrien County	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 5 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Warblers in the City (Red Oaks County Park)	Kayla Niner shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com
May 11 (Saturday) 6:30 AM or 8:00 AM – late PM	Crazy Day at Magee Marsh (Ohio)	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 11 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM	World Migratory Bird Day, Lake St. Clair Metropark (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
May 18 – 19 (Weekend)	Bay City State Park, Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area, and Tawas State Park	Jen Benke and Terri Chapdelaine scubadu9900@yahoo.com
June 8 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Breeding Birds of Oakland County (Proud Lake Recreation Area & Lyon Oaks County Park)	Mike Mencotti and Jeff Stacey mmencotti9@gmail.com ; jdstacey@ameritech.net
June 15 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Bird Dad’s Hike at Bear Creek Nature Park (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com

Field Trip Reports

January 21, 2024 — St. Clair River

Leaders: Don Burlett and Jim Koppin

It was a sunny day when 11 birders joined this field trip. We met at 8 AM at Lake St. Clair Metropark and began the day by checking out the feeders at the nature center. There were the usual suspects in addition to a few Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds. We walked along the trails hoping to catch a view of the Great Horned Owl, which we did as it flew from the woods across the channel to the far woods. It was a pretty good start.

We drove to the Harley Ensign site and found Trumpeter Swans, and a handful of geese and ducks tucked in a small amount of open water. A flight of Snow Buntings passed us on their way to another spot.



Left to right: Red-tail Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*); White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*); Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)—banded.

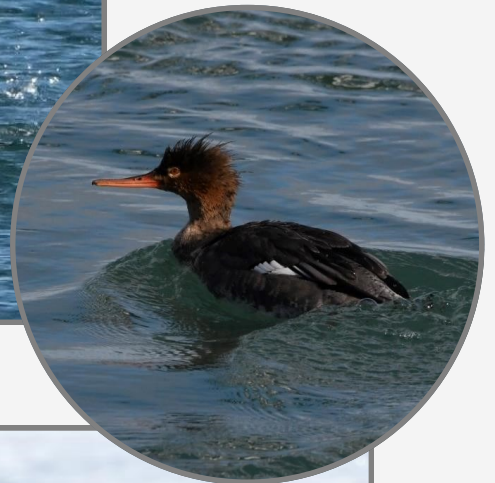
Photo Credits: Malissa Bossardet

We then began the drive along the St. Clair River, but did not stop because it was completely frozen over. As we moved north, we stopped at the Harsen's Island ferry (nothing there), in Algonac (a few ducks including Long-tailed Ducks and Mallards), in Marine City (not much activity aside from a few ducks and some Tundra Swans), at Lake St. Clair (lots more Long-tailed Ducks along with Common Goldeneye, Redheads, Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, and others), in Marysville (more Long-tailed Ducks), and finally we rolled into Port Huron. We stopped at Desmond Landing to look for gulls (mostly Herring), the USCG boat, Edison Parkway, and Lighthouse Park. We added Red-breasted Merganser along the way, but the most common ducks were the Long-tailed Ducks by far—in the 1000's. Our total was 41 species.

Field Trip Reports (continued)

It's been a bit of a weird winter with warm temperatures for a long period followed by very cold temperatures. For the most part, the river was open with very little ice. The temperature was relatively mild with a solid west wind.

Some of us had lunch to top off the day. As always, field trips are different from year to year. Not suffering from the weather too much was welcomed, in spite of the lack of some of the species we hoped for. Maybe next year.



Top: Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*); **Right:** Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*). Photo Credits: Kayla Niner



Photo Credit: Malissa Bossardet

Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)

Field Trip Reports

February 3, 2024 — Downriver Ducks Tour

Leader: Kayla Niner

Despite the forecast for sun, a cloudy sky and fog greeted the 11 birders who gathered at Elizabeth Park in Trenton. There was a decided lack of ice despite the early February date and the Detroit River was flowing freely. Our first waterfowl of the morning were Canada Geese and Mallards. We looked for sparrows in the scrubby section along the interior river, but did not turn up anything. We then lugged our scopes over to the main part of the river to check for ducks. On the way, an American Black Duck was spotted amongst the Mallards, so we got our second duck species for the day, and one of the local pair of Belted Kingfishers put on a show for us, posing on top of a lamppost by the river. There were no ducks in the main part of the river, but some Mute Swans flew by. We also spotted an immature Bald Eagle sitting in a tree. A member of our group who frequents the park in all seasons led us inside the island's trails to where a Great Horned Owl pair had been seen hanging out, but we did not find them. However, we did have a Red-tailed Hawk fly by and we saw some Dark-eyed Juncos foraging high in a tree. Other birds seen at Elizabeth Park included Northern Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and Starlings.



Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

Our second stop was Bishop Park in Wyandotte where the ducks were mostly lacking again, but we did see some Common Mergansers and Common Goldeneyes and another very distant Bald Eagle. There is a Peregrine Falcon that likes to hang around this spot, but like the owls, it was absent. Our only close-up birds at this park were Canada Geese and a lone Mute Swan. The Canada Geese were quite noisy honking at each other, and the group witnessed one of the geese chase a fox squirrel away.



Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

The third and final stop was Dingell Park in Ecorse where we finally found the ducks. We first found a group of Ruddy Ducks, some Buffleheads, Goldeneyes, and a pair of Hooded Mergansers along with a large group of Mute Swans on the south side of Mud Island (part of Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge). We then walked and drove down to the pavilion by the restaurant at the north end of the park. On the north side of Mud Island, we found a raft of Redheads, more Hooded Mergansers, a few more Goldeneyes, and another Ruddy Duck along with Mallards and Canada Geese. Our total duck count for the day was seven species, which is low for these parks at this time of year, but better than hoped for during the abnormally warm conditions.

Field Trip Reports (continued)



Left: Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*); Top: American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*).
Photo Credits: Kayla Niner

February 9 - 11, 2024 — Upper Peninsula Weekend Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

This year's UP trip had the traditional schedule, leave Friday morning, head north to reach the Dafter landfill before too late in the day. This year's trip took place during one of the weirdest winters I can remember — warm temperatures, no snow, and a very odd selection of birds, present and absent, all made for quite a different trip.

We began with a stop at Hartwick Pines, but the place was closed and the feeders were empty. Zip-zero – no birds. We then proceeded to St. Ignace where we checked the waterfront and found just a handful of ducks and a few Ring-billed Gulls. No Bohemians like last year. So, we moved on farther north and stopped at the Rudyard Snowy Owl loop. We were depressed to find no apparent owls. So, we moved on to Kinross to check out the traditional feeders. Here, we finally got some birds – Common Redpoll, Pine Siskins, both nuthatches, a woodpecker, and the first batch of many Purple Finches.



Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*)



Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*)

Field Trip Reports (continued)

We then headed to the Dafter landfill and found loads of Herring Gulls, one Glaucous Gull, lots of Bald Eagles, ravens, crows, Eurasian Starlings, and one Red-tailed Hawk. At that point, it was time to head to the hotel and get ready for dinner at the Antlers Restaurant (always an enjoyable time).

Saturday morning we started by driving part of the Ruddyard Snowy Owl loop without success and then headed to Pickford, the UP's hotspot this year. We found a large flock of Bohemian Waxwings immediately after arriving. Then we combed the neighborhood and eventually found a couple of Pine Grosbeaks, a flock of Evening Grosbeaks, and loads of Purple Finches.



Photo Credit: Kayla Niner

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)



Clockwise from top left: Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*); Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*); Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*).

Photo Credits: Karen Kessler

Field Trip Reports (continued)

As we moved on, we ran into the group from Michigan Audubon and consulted on birds they had seen. We tried a spot for Sharp-tailed Grouse but they had left the fields by then. We also backtracked to the Rudyard Snowy Owl loop and eventually found an immature Snowy sitting in a field. Seeing that bird was a challenge. As a leader, it's always particularly important and gratifying to get some of the bigger target birds on a trip (yes, that is a candy cigarette!). At that point, we headed to bird along the St. Mary's River and eventually checked for ducks at the Sugar Island Ferry, and also at the Aune Osborn Campground. No Harlequin Duck and only a stray Ring-necked Duck as reward for dealing with the stiff wind in our faces. We adjourned to get ready for dinner at the Palace Mexican Restaurant.



Snowy Owl sighting location —challenging! (photo by Julie Kroll) & self-portrait of a satisfied trip leader.

On Sunday morning our mission was to get to the Pickford fields where there were supposed to be Sharp-tailed Grouse. Hoping to avoid a Snowy Owl encounter, we took a road where they hadn't been observed but we found an adult Snowy—we didn't stop. When we arrived to the Pickford fields, we saw some Sharp-tailed Grouse leaving a tree and some flying to a spot in the field. They were present and hiding in deeper grass, but a few displaying males and others scurrying in the grass were visible. We went back to the Snowy Owl loop and re-found the adult male sitting on the ground. It was a nice ending to the trip. We headed home after that.

Amazingly, we saw 40 species of birds and found some that had been scarce all winter long. It was a fun trip with 12 people aboard. We look forward to trying it again next year, when undoubtedly, we will encounter 8-foot snow drifts and sub-zero temperatures. Sounds like fun!!



Photo Credit: Karen Kessler

Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)



Photo Credit: Karen Kessler

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*)

Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)

December 16, 2023 — Christmas Bird Count at WM Eagle Valley

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

On December 16, 2023 the Oakland Owlets families and friends participated in the 124th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) at Eagle Valley in Orion Township. This was the fourth year that the young birders' club joined this historical bird count. The CBC is one of the oldest conservation activities in North America. The Owlets were invited to Eagle Valley, which is a landfill owned and operated by WM. Aside from being an operational landfill, the property also maintains wildlife habitat areas. Eagle Valley is a magnet for many species of birds. Scavengers visit the site for food scraps, which in turn attract predators that prey on the large concentrations of birds that it attracts. Eagle Valley is a wonderful place for young birders to see large birds of prey hunting and hanging out. The group was not disappointed.



Eagle Valley is a restricted facility that provides recycling and waste disposal services to the community. Arrangements were made in advance with WM Community Representative, Kathleen Klein. Ms. Klein is a wonderful educator who tirelessly works to share the story of the site to the community. In addition, Eagle Valley is a certified wildlife habitat recognized through the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC). The Owlets are grateful to WM for making this field trip possible.

Our group gathered in the office before birding. Ms. Klein shared a brief presentation about the site and described WM's work to protect the environment and set aside wildlife habitat at Eagle Valley. The group then drove to key points on the property to view birds. In a brief time, we found two adult Bald Eagles and an immature Bald Eagle along with a small flock of Wild Turkeys. These large birds were easy to see even at a distance –the eagles perched on the branches of the tall tree while the turkeys foraged on the ground under the trees. Everyone learned quickly that Eagle Valley is appropriately named.



Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)



After viewing these magnificent birds, we caravanned to a higher elevation deeper into the landfill. Although the landfill was closed, birds were actively gathering near exposed areas in search of a meal. The number of birds concentrated in some locations was phenomenal. These gatherings included several species of gulls and numerous European Starlings. These birds are known for their scavenging skills.

We stopped again to watch the Bald Eagles soaring overhead. While watching, someone noticed another large bird perched nearby on a light post. This bird was watching stealthily and waiting for an opportunity to snatch a bird in flight. Its shape and profile were distinctive of a large falcon. We were all amazed to see a Peregrine Falcon.

Peregrine Falcons are rare; this was the only Peregrine Falcon seen by OAS on this year's CBC. Peregrine Falcons are one of the birds that benefited from the Endangered Species Act. Extirpated throughout the area, captive bred Peregrine Falcons were successfully fledged from hacking boxes in the Northeast in the 1970's and the results of these reintroduction efforts can be seen today.

On the way to another part of the landfill at a lower elevation, we stopped and watched a Bald Eagle harass a flock of Canada Geese along the hillside. The geese were unmoved by the eagle diving at them. Two other members of the CBC field team joined the group as we drove to wetlands on the east side of the property. WM maintains mitigated wetland areas.



The group walked along the edge of these wetlands, which are bordered by trees and surrounded by vegetation, and encountered several songbirds not found on the open faces of the landfill. Our checklist increased with American Robins, Mourning Doves, and American Tree Sparrows along with a few other species. The final tally at Eagle Valley was 22 species and 1,545 individual birds.



A special thank you to Kathleen Klein and WM staff at Eagle Valley for making this field trip possible. CBC observers for this count area continued to bird nearby through the day. Thanks to OAS's CBC observers – Kathleen Dougherty, Mike Dougherty, Dan Badgley, and Ed O'Brien. OAS's CBC count circle results tallied a total of 73 species.

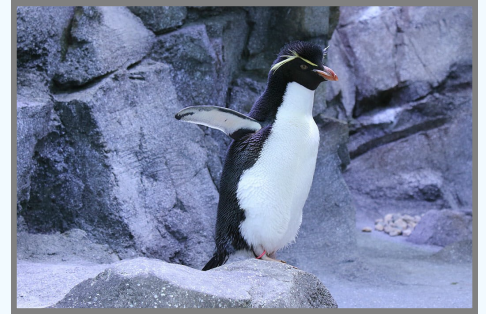
Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty, Heather Klish, Kathleen Klein, and OAS Gallery

Oakland Owlets Field Trips

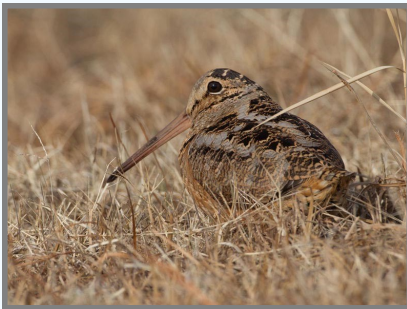
March 2024 - June 2024

Pondering Penguins – Saturday, March 16, 2024; 10:00 am - 1:00 pm **Detroit Zoo, Royal Oak**

A field trip to see penguins would require extensive travel south of the Equator. However, the Oakland Owlets can explore these amazing birds locally at the Detroit Zoo's Polk Penguin Conservation Center (PPCC). The PPCC is an impressive facility that provides the opportunity to view five species of penguins. A 326,000-gallon underwater gallery allows guests to see penguins moving through the water. Owlets will complete a workbook to test their Penguin IQ during the visit and explore the free-flight aviary. Admission and parking fees are applicable. Space is limited.



Twilight Time & Sky Dance – Friday, April 12, 2024; 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm **Highland Recreation Area, White Lake**



The transition between day and night is a special time. Several species of birds become active at sunset because the decreasing light triggers certain activities. The American Woodcock is one bird that performs a unique aerial display known as the “sky dance” as the sun sets. It is an amazing sight to see. This is an evening hike at Highland Recreation Area to search for birds returning from migration, and also we hope to be able to see the “sky dance” of the American Woodcock. Dress for the weather and plan to hike 1.5 miles. Bring a lawn chair and binoculars. A Michigan State Park passport is required for entry.

World Migratory Bird Day – Saturday, May 11, 2024; 8:30 am - 11:30 am **Lake St. Clair Metropark, Harrison Township**

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day at Lake St. Clair Metropark. May is the peak month of bird migration in the midwest and Lake St. Clair Metropark is a perfect place to catch the wave of warblers returning to Michigan. Veteran bird bander, Allen Chartier, conducts a long-term banding project at Lake St. Clair Metropark. We may have a chance to watch birds being banded if the weather permits banding to take place that day. Plan to hike about 1.5 miles. A Metroparks permit is required for entry.



Oakland Owlets Field Trips

March 2024 - June 2024

Bird Dad's Hike – Saturday, June 15, 2024; 8:30 am - 11:00 am
Bear Creek Nature Park, Oakland Township

We will hike and search for bird dads at Bear Creek Nature Park. Male birds are more colorful in some species. This park is a wonderful place to see Eastern Bluebirds, Baltimore Orioles, and much more. As many as 145 species of birds have been observed at Bear Creek Nature Park. The Oakland Owlets will honor bird dads and dads in general for Father's Day. Plan to hike about 1.5 miles. Bear Creek Nature Park is owned and managed by Oakland Township Parks. Entry is free.



OAS is following the following field trip guidelines:

1. Pre-registration is required and number of participants is limited.
2. Stay home if you are sick.
3. Directions and details are sent in advance to those that pre-register.



The Young Birders' Club ~ Oakland Owlets offers age-appropriate educational experiences for youth 8 – 18 years old. Young birders 16 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult. All young birders must complete a release form.

Young Birders' Club programs are open to all birders.

To register for Oakland Owlets field trips contact – Kathleen Dougherty, Coordinator at kad8186@msn.com

Visit <https://www.oaklandaudubon.org/young-birders>

Photo Credits: OAS Photo Gallery and Detroit Zoo Penguin Gallery.

THE MAGIC OF THE LUNA MOTH

by Guadalupe Cummins

On June 13, 2023, I attended an OAS meeting to hear Debbie Jackson's presentation about Monarchs and other Lepidoptera. She had several species of butterflies, moths, and caterpillars on display including Luna Moths (*Actias luna*). I had no idea you could find such beautiful moths in Michigan! Debbie offered their eggs to the audience –of course I raised my hand and went home with a little container full of eggs.

The eggs hatched four days later...38 of them. I had a generous fresh supply of sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) from public parks near my house and black walnut (*Junglas nigra*) from a neighbor.

The little critters were tiny, fast, and hungry! They first lived in a Tupperware, then I moved them to a small enclosure made of tulle and a tomato cage, then a big one made of tulle and metal tubes. They ate a ton, pooped a lot (caterpillar poop is called frass), and seemed to prefer the sweet gum over the black walnut. The first caterpillars started forming cocoons on July 11. It was amazing to watch, 31 in total. When they were ready, they stopped eating and became restless, they paced around and turned a bit reddish before settling to wrap themselves in leaves and to spin a cocoon. To my surprise, most eclosed (i.e., emerged from their cocoons) between the end of July and the beginning of August. Debbie said that if Luna Moths are happy and well fed, they sometimes have two broods.

Raising these beautiful insects was fun and releasing them was a truly magical experience! Three cocoons are now hibernating in my unheated sunroom waiting for spring. I'm also waiting for the magic of spring.

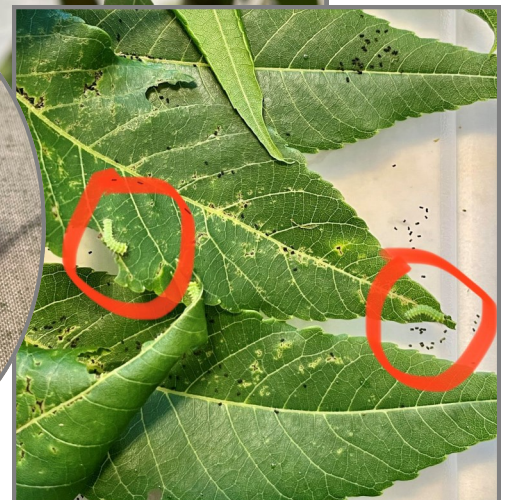


Photo Credits: LS (top); Guadalupe Cummins (right).

I LIKE DANDELIONS (AND I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE)

by Doris Applebaum

Dandelions are native to Eurasia. In the U.S. they are typically considered to be an invasive weed that dares to defile our pristine lawns. Well, it turns out that lawns are excellent habitat for dandelions. In fact, if it weren't for our love of lawns, there wouldn't be nearly as many dandelions in this country.

Dandelions don't do well among our natural plant communities in places like old fields or native-plant gardens, and they don't fit the description of an invasive species because they don't crowd out our native plants.

Despite the negative view that many people have of dandelions, they play an important role in nature. They are the first nectar source for some butterflies in spring, and they provide early nectar and pollen for bees. They provide food for caterpillars of various moths (and those caterpillars are great food for birds), they also provide food for native mammals like deer and rabbits, and the fluff of their seeds provides nesting material for hummingbirds.

I fondly remember the only Indigo Bunting that I've ever seen in my yard. It was eating dandelion seeds.

Dandelion greens are nutritious. The leaves are rich in nutrients like beta-carotene, vitamins, potassium, calcium, and iron. Maybe we don't see dandelions on menus in this country, but you can find them on European menus. They know what we're missing.

I have not poisoned my lawn for several years, which means that I get lots of dandelions, but only in the early spring. For about a month, usually from mid-April to mid-May, my lawn is carpeted with dandelions, but after that first flush of flowers is gone, there are only a few to be seen later in the spring through the summer and into fall.

For years, my lawn was the only one in the neighborhood that had any dandelions. In the past few years, however, I've noticed that a number of lawns at other homes have been dotted with the yellow blossoms. Is there a change in store?

An article in the June 2023 issue of *Natural History* magazine titled "In Praise of Dandelions" really warmed my heart. The author is a dandelion aficionado named Allen M. Young. Along with providing considerable information for my newsletter effort, he ended with the thought that maybe people can learn to appreciate dandelions. "Perhaps we can even change our perception of what is aesthetically pleasing and see the beauty of gold sprinkled amidst the green." YES!!



Pixaby.com

A TALE OF A TRIO OF FLYCATCHERS

by Doris Applebaum

If you've been out West, you very likely saw a bird called the Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinis*). The handsome male has a bright red body and head with black wings and black mask.

If you were lucky enough to be at the Holiday Beach Conservation Area in Ontario in the fall of the year 2000, you might also have seen one of these birds, very much out of its usual range and fortunately photographed by an observant birder.

And if you've been extremely lucky, and have been able to visit the Galapagos Islands, you may also have seen a handsome bird with a bright red body and black wings and mask with the name of Vermillion Flycatcher. However, that one isn't "our" species. It's a Galapagos Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus nanus*), recognized as a different species several years ago.

Actually, the scientists looking at the genes of that species and also the genes of another Vermilion Flycatcher of the Galapagos Islands realized that they weren't looking at just one new species but two new ones. Sadly, the other species, the San Cristobal Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus dubius*) is thought to be extinct because there has not been a confirmed sighting on its home island in several decades. A little bit of hope remains because of some occasional reports, but unconfirmed so far by photos.

The Galapagos Vermilion Flycatcher can be seen on several of the islands, but its numbers have been going down in recent years because of various threats. Black rats eat the birds' eggs, and a parasitic blood-sucking fly kills many chicks. In addition, an invasive blackberry plant is overrunning a native plant that the flycatcher depends on for survival.

On one of the islands, the Galapagos Conservancy and partners have had some success in fighting the parasitic fly with insecticides, and another effort is underway to reduce the spread of the blackberry plant.

There are plans to expand these efforts to other islands where the flycatcher is found. If they are successful, then, even though the San Cristobal Flycatcher may be gone forever, future visitors to the Galapagos Islands will continue to be able to see the beautiful [Galapagos Vermilion Flycatcher](#).

Source: Winter 2023 issue of *Galapagos Post* magazine published by the [Galapagos Conservancy](#).

NATURE NOTES by Allen Chartier

Don't be shy! If you have a question you would like Allen to answer in a future *Nature Notes* column or there is a topic you are interested in hearing more about, you can email him at:

amazilia3@gmail.com

SPRING BLUEBIRD FESTIVAL

March 23, 2024 — Ann Arbor

By Kurt Hagemester



The Michigan Bluebird Society is pleased to announce its annual Spring Bluebird Festival will be held on Saturday, March 23, 2024 at the Washtenaw Community College's Morris Lawrence Building. This all-day, free educational event will include programs on bluebirds and other bird topics, a Bluebird & Nature Expo featuring products like nest boxes for sale, nature/environmental exhibits, kids' activities, and much more. The keynote program, "Captivating Bluebirds," will be presented by Stan Tekiela, a nationally known naturalist, author, wildlife photographer, and bluebird landlord. Mr. Tekiela's line of state field guides using a simpler format was pioneering and has helped bring an interest in birds to many.

To obtain more information on the event, go to: [2024 Spring Festival \(michiganbluebirds.org\)](https://michiganbluebirds.org).

The Eastern Bluebird used to be a very common bird across Michigan. However, habitat loss, the introduction of farming chemicals, and competition from non-native species caused their numbers to plummet dramatically in the early to mid 20th century. Fortunately, conservation efforts by people starting in the 1960's have helped bring the bluebird back to many parts of the State. The placement of large numbers of nest boxes in open habitats was one of the key actions that has contributed to their comeback.

The Eastern Bluebird prefers open, grassy habitats and naturally nests in hollow tree cavities. Nest boxes offer bluebirds nesting alternatives to tree cavities which they have a difficult time finding. Nest boxes should be put up by early March in southern Michigan when the birds are starting to establish nesting territories. Bluebirds will actively nest from April into September, and can have 2 to 3 broods of young. They are widespread throughout Washtenaw County, but are usually not seen in the dense, urban parts of Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti.

The Michigan Bluebird Society's main purpose is to educate the public about how they can help these beautiful native birds, and to help initiate projects which increase bluebird nesting habitats in Michigan. 2024 is the group's 20th anniversary and there will be special activities at the Spring Bluebird Festival to recognize this milestone.



Kurt Hagemester is President and co-founder of the Michigan Bluebird Society, a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to education and conservation of bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds. He has been a bluebird landlord for over 25 years, authored articles on bluebirds, and presented programs on them across the state.

Photos by Michigan Bluebird Society

Bird Briefs (articles to look at online, click titles below)

from Don Burlett

[Mosquitoes are driving the 'akikiki' to extinction. With only 5 birds left in the wild, scientists are racing to save the species | CNN](#)

Just to show how many different ways climate change can affect our friends the birds, here is an article about birds in Hawaii that are going extinct because of these changes. The warming planet has allowed malaria-infected mosquitoes to reach new heights in the mountains of Hawaii, allowing them to infect birds like the akikiki honeycreeper and causing bird deaths. In this case, only five exist in the wild. Another aspect of climate change that we need to pay attention to.

[Donald Kroodsma | The art and science of listening to birdsong](#)

This is a website in which Donald Kroodsma has been compiling books to encourage youngsters (and adults) to listen to birds. Learning to bird by ear is advantageous for seeing birds. Check it out...maybe one of these books should have been under the Christmas tree this past year.

[BirdForum](#)

This discussion site, *BirdForum*, is designed to allow folks to explore topics and join discussion groups on a variety of topics. Worth a quick exploration.

Highlights of OAS's Christmas Bird Count—December 2023

by Jeff Stacey



The most surprising feature of the 2023 Oakland Audubon CBC wasn't the 73 species found (although that is one of our higher totals) —it was the 51 degrees Fahrenheit during the day!

The amazing warmth led to quite a few unusual sightings of birds that don't usually linger that late into December. The best example of these was the Virginia Rail found at Independence Oaks (a count first). We also had high counts of American Wigeon and Ring-necked Ducks, plus single records of Northern Pintail and Eastern Towhee. The typical winter birds were present too, including Pine Siskins, American Tree Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos. All three local falcons (American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, and Merlin) were found as well. Lastly, we recorded four owl species including Barred Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl, both difficult to find for this count.

Special thanks go out to the 65 participants (field observers and feeder watchers). We appreciate your participation and hope to see you on the next one!

BIRD ID QUIZ

(Spring 2024)



A) _____



B) _____



C) _____

For the answers and explanation for this issue's quiz see Page 24

No Peeking!

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

December 7, 2023

Tiffany Vojnovski, our new Secretary as of January 1, 2024, was a guest this evening and was introduced to the board members. We will also have a new Hospitality Officer on January 1: Julie Wineman has accepted that position.

Publicity & Fund-raising Officer Karen Kessler plans to have another book sale at the March membership meeting.

Web-site Editor Hannah Dunbar inserted a calendar on the website for public usage, listing OAS membership meetings and field trips.

Programs have been scheduled for much of 2024. Our annual nature walk will be held in May at the Johnson Nature Center. ** The location was changed since the issuance of the meeting minutes.

President Don Burlett has a thumb drive containing all membership and board meeting minutes from our chapter's beginning in 1958. We plan to load it onto a Google drive to make all this material accessible.

The board is discussing the possibility of helping to fund a MOTUS tower at Lake St. Clair Metropark. MOTUS is a system that tracks individual migratory birds, and the metropark could fill a vacant area in the system.

Doris Applebaum
Secretary

January 18, 2024

The board welcomed our new Hospitality Officer, Julie Wineman.

Greg Petrosky, Conservation & Environment Officer, is working with Independence Oaks County Parks to sponsor a project that would improve accessibility of bird boxes so individuals with mobility needs can participate in nest box monitoring efforts. The board was supportive of OAS's involvement on this project.

There is a lot going on with the Oakland Owlets (Young Birders Club). Kathleen Dougherty is busy coordinating fieldtrips, outreach activities, and OAS's participation in community events that involve young birders.

George Harris (Advocacy Officer) and Karen Kessler (Publicity) are looking into setting up a cloud space to store OAS records that were scanned and are now saved on a thumb drive. All documents are searchable except for hand-written materials. They hope to have the cloud storage up and running soon.

The board discussed the annual report that will be submitted to National Audubon as part of our member chapter agreement.

Tiffany Vojnovski
Secretary



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

2023 INCOME STATEMENT

(unaudited)

Assets (as of 1-2-2023)

Citizens Bank and Paypal \$24,144.17

Income

Dues \$3,855.00

Donations \$5,249.00

Merchandise \$361.79

Total Income **\$9,465.79**

Expenses

Bank Charges \$36.00

Charitable Contributions \$1,425.00

Insurance \$1,094.00

Mail fees and Postage \$193.00

Michigan Filing Fee \$20.00

Paypal Service Fee \$80.72

Printing - Nuthatch and other \$219.95

Programs and field trips \$1,328.62

Publicity \$0.00

Rent \$600.00

Website \$419.83

Young Birders \$441.83

Digitize Archives \$644.50

Total Expenses **\$6,503.45**

Net Income **\$2,962.34**

Net Worth as of 12-31/2023 **\$27,106.51**

Prepared by
Jenifer Benke, Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

Welcome New Members!



Mary Braun, Marcia Cummings, Terry Herdman, Barbara Lucas, Julie Wineman,
Dawn Vassel, Sheila Walters.

Our **2024 Membership Drive** is underway. You can renew your membership in one of two ways:

- 1) Use the “*Renew OAS Membership*” link on the Membership tab on our website (<http://www.oaklandaudubon.org>), to pay online using PayPal. [CLICK HERE](#) *or*
- 2) Mail a check along with a membership form (page 25)

Mail renewal forms to:

Oakland Audubon Society
C/O Robert Moll
PO Box 796
Birmingham, MI 48012-0796

If you would like to check the status of your membership or have questions, contact OAS Membership Officer Robert Moll at: OASmembershipofficer@gmail.com.

Thank you for helping us sustain OAS with your membership contributions.
We would be nowhere without you!

Oakland Audubon's Feathered Friends BOOK SALE

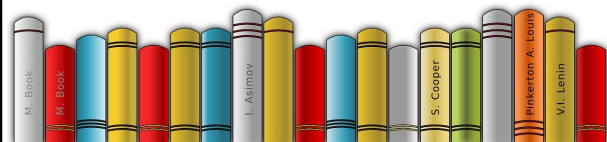


March 12, 2024 @
6:30 PM

*** before our monthly program at 7:00 PM ***

*Explore the World of Birds Through
Enchanting Books!*

First United Methodist Church
1589 W. Maple Road,
Birmingham, MI 48009



The Conservation Corner

Check out the latest articles posted by Greg Petrosky on the “conservation” [tab](#) of our website:

“CO₂ and Global Warming”

“Kirtland’s Warbler Conservation Efforts”

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS & PROGRAMS

Monthly membership meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month (except December, May, July, and August) at the First United Methodist Church in Birmingham. **Some OAS meetings and programs will be at the Church and also transmitted online via Zoom, while others will be offered only via Zoom. Meetings open at 6:30 PM and talks begin at 7:00 PM.** If a meeting is offered via Zoom, specific instructions and links will be posted on the “meetings” page on our website at www.oaklandaudubon.org and on OAS’s Facebook page prior to that meeting. **Updates to the schedule will be posted on our website.** Please contact a Board member if you have questions.

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

Date	Time	Program	Location
March 12, 2024	7:00 pm	WM Landfills –Important Wildlife Habitats	First United Methodist Church & Zoom
April 9, 2024	7:00 pm	The Biggest Year in Michigan Birding History	First United Methodist Church & Zoom
May 14, 2024	6:30 pm	Twilight Hike at the Stage! (annual spring nature walk)	In-Person

Bird Quiz Answers for Spring Quiz on Page 20

This issue’s photo quiz : a) Orange-crowned Warbler, b) Tennessee Warbler, c) Nashville Warbler.

Explanation: For experienced birders this is not a serious challenge. But beginners really have fun trying to sort these out.

- a) A small, drab warbler with a sharp bill, a broken eye-ring that is not always sharp, blurry streaks on breast, mostly yellow underneath especially on the undertail coverts. Those in the east are the drabest of the different races.
- b) A sharp bill, short tail with plain plumage. Has a thin pale eyebrow, olive back and gray head, no streaking on underparts, and white undertail coverts.
- c) Gray head, bright yellow underparts including undertail coverts, distinct eye-ring, sharp bill, and can have a rufous spot on the crown.

How did you do identifying these birds? Keep score throughout the year to see how you do!



OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Mobile: (____) _____

Email address: _____

Please indicate with an (X) in the box any personal information above you do not want listed in the OAS membership directory.

Check also if you are a member of:

- ____ National Audubon Society
- ____ Michigan Audubon Society

OAS needs and welcomes volunteers — please participate if you can!

Check if you have the skills to help:

- ____ Become a board member
- ____ Lead a field trip or present a program
- ____ Fill an open position (Position: _____)

Check appropriate line:

- ____ Member renewal
- ____ New member
- ____ Change of address

OAS Membership Fees

- Individual \$15
- Family \$20
- Contributing \$25
- Supporting \$50
- Benefactor \$100

Our Mission

- To provide, on a local level, access to the natural world through educational programs such as meetings and field trips.
- To advocate the preservation of wildlife habitats and endeavor to create interest in native birds, other animals and plants in Michigan.

Please make checks payable to:

OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Mail to:

OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

C/O ROBERT MOLL

PO BOX 796

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48012-0796

*Oakland Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Your donation is 100% tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*