



THE NUTHATCH

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“Black Tern Monitoring”

Erin Rowan

Tuesday, January 12, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Join Audubon Great Lakes’ MI Bird Program Associate, Erin Rowan, to learn about the Black Tern monitoring project in Michigan! Black Terns are in decline, listed as special concern in Michigan, and a focal species within the MDNR State Wildlife Action Plan. Audubon Great Lakes and several partners have monitored the largest remaining colony of Black Terns since 2013 and have expanded monitoring efforts to additional colonies in the state. These monitoring efforts aim at understanding the cause of the population decline and identifying management strategies that could be implemented across the Great Lakes.



The Last Butterflies

Nick Haddad

Tuesday, January 26, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Butterflies and other pollinators are in decline. Join Nick Haddad to learn about studies of the rarest butterflies in the world and discoveries that have put the butterflies on the path to recovery. Discoveries include new findings about butterfly biology and more surprising ones like disturbance of butterfly habitat with fire or floods. Decline is not limited to the rarest butterflies, but evident across large regions and also among common butterflies. These findings provide valuable lessons for all pollinators.



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“Northern Peru & the High Andes”

Allen Chartier

Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Join long-time OAS member, Allen Chartier, as he takes us on a birding and photography tour to Peru. In 2018 he took a hummingbird and photography tour to northern Peru seeking exciting specialties and endemics, including hummingbirds like the Marvelous Spatuletail and Royal Sunangel, and mythical birds like the Long-whiskered Owlet, and some of the formerly almost impossible to see antpittas. From there, this virtual tour takes us from the Pacific coast of Lima up to the high Andean grasslands and bogs at over 15,000 feet in elevation. If you know Allen's interests, you can expect to see other wildlife to feature in his presentation, as well as the spectacular scenery that Peru has to offer.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Winter 2020 - 2021

The 60,000 Foot View

Like any corporate entity, a board of directors needs to pay attention to the details of everyday life. But it is important to look at things from the “60,000 foot view” to see how things mesh with the rest of the famous “big picture.” The same goes for organizations like ours. Oakland Audubon Society (OAS) is not a huge organization, just another cog in the world of nature lovers and those interested in preserving the natural world around us. So, I occasionally stand back and think about the organization and where we fit in.

From an Audubon perspective, OAS is affiliated with Michigan Audubon but that affiliation has not had a great deal to offer. While they run festivals and have a website and publications, they do little beyond that for OAS. National Audubon and Audubon Great Lakes have proven to be much more interactive and provide a much more substantial resource for our organization. Although we have formally requested affiliation with National Audubon, the complicated process has been moving very slowly. I sincerely hope that this process moves more quickly by the time you read this.

On a local basis, we also interact with a variety of organizations. We have had relationships with Oakland County Parks and the Metroparks. These are useful as they connect us with a large source of natural areas that provide the opportunity for nature viewing. We help them out and they help us out. Obviously, opportunities abound for citizen stewardship of these areas and our group has been involved, very much to my delight. We also interact with other organizations like the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, Clinton River Watershed Council, and many others. We are often seen at events at Cranbrook, Heritage Park, Chrysler and others for Earth Day events and other educational opportunities. We are also involved with corporate entities like Chrysler and Waste Management, doing ecological surveys and helping them be better citizens in our communities.

Because we are a small group, we do not carry a lot of sway in political arenas and we are limited legally in our lobbying for candidates. However, we can affect our community and government by reaching out as citizens to advocate for positive changes in our society, especially when it comes to saving our natural world from ruin. You will notice we now have an advocacy chair on the board. My hopes are that we will all become more aware of what is happening around us – locally, inside the our state and nationally – so that we can address problems and make positive changes.

OAS, ‘the little engine that could,’ does fit into the matrix of organizations in Michigan that are busy doing their job protecting our world and facilitating the enjoyment of nature. This is what we are about. We count on everyone to pitch in, not necessarily directly as an officer (although that also helps) but as an advocate for change. The view from on high is pretty good and we will grow once we get affiliated with National Audubon.

Stay tuned as we evolve as an organization and watch for your chance to be part of the story. I have enjoyed being part of this organization for the past twelve years and hope that I can meet your expectations as President. This is a good group and I hope to stay involved for many years to come.

Don Burlett

OAS BOARD MEMBERS

Elected Officers

President	Don Burlett	(330) 697-7735	baikalteal13@netzero.net
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Advocacy Officer	Erin Parker		erinsparker@gmail.com



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WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Gregory Petrosky

Conservation / Environment Officer

After Don Burlett announced me as the OAS Conservation/Environment Officer, he asked me to provide a letter of introduction. Let me start by telling you who I am not. I am not an academic professor, student, or someone with an extensive background in conservation or the environment.

So who am I? I am someone who has great interest in protecting "Mother Earth." After all, we have but one planet, so we should not squander any of its resources unwisely. I love activities that clean up man's waste and try to return nature back to its glory and splendor. You can find me picking up trash on I-75 as part of the Adopt-A-Highway Program. Through Clinton River Watershed Council (CRWC), you will find me removing trash from local lakes on a kayak or just using trash pickers and bags to clean up lands along the Clinton River. Working with North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy (NOHLC), you will find me removing old truck tires or assisting with the removal of invasive plants at their seven public preserves.

As far as volunteerism is concerned, I love when people take the initiative to help conservation or environmental organizations protect our planet. Volunteer activities can be challenging, like digging out and disposing of old tires or less strenuous, like making seedballs from native plant seed.

I have always believed that conservation and environmental organizations need to create activities for volunteers to participate in. Especially with the number of "baby boomers" now retiring; this group (me included) represents a huge faction of people who has the time and energy and just needs to be matched to activities that fit their interests. I see the OAS Conservation/Environment Officer as someone who will find as many conservation and environment volunteer activities as possible for OAS members to participate in. After all, a clean environment with native plants promotes bird friendly landscapes!

I know that this position also involves providing articles and information about environmental issues. Although this is not my strong suit, I look forward to learning about issues and then sharing my learnings. I know that I can consult with people like Kathleen Dougherty who have a wealth of knowledge and expertise to guide me in this arena.

Thank you for the opportunity to perform the duties of this position.

Sincerely,
Gregory Petrosky

Erin Parker

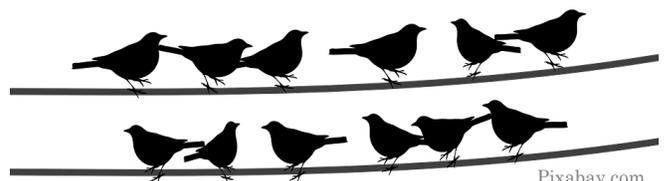
Advocacy Officer

Erin Parker's first Christmas Bird Count was with the Oakland Audubon Society in 1986 as a six-year-old. Hooked on owling since that first cold morning, she's delighted to return to OAS in the role of Advocacy Officer. Erin works as the Field Conservation Officer and Nature Centers Manager for the Detroit Zoological Society. Previously, she worked for the National Audubon Society at the Pascagoula River Audubon Center in Moss Point, Mississippi, and as a high school science teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, where she served on the board of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

Guadalupe Cummins

Nuthatch Editor

I'm happy to join OAS as the new Nuthatch editor; a huge thank you to Mike Dougherty who's leaving everything in order for me to get going! We are always looking for content for the newsletter; if you have an article or special photograph you would like to share, send it in!



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UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Covid-19 Update: OAS will adhere to the Michigan Health Department's guidelines pertaining to group gatherings, social distancing, and other recommended precautions during all field trips (see page 15).

Schedule changes will be posted on our website and members will also receive email updates. The 121st Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 19, 2020 - check the OAS website or contact Jeff Stacey for details.

Pre-Registration is required for all trips and number of participants is limited, contact trip leader for details.

Check the "Field Trips" page on our website for current information!

www.oaklandaudubon.org

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
December 19, 2020 (Saturday)	Owlets' Christmas Bird Count at Orion Oaks Park	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
January 17, 2021 (Sunday)	St. Clair River	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
January 23, 2021 (Saturday)	Winter & Woodland Birding at Proud Lake State Recreation Area	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
January 30 - 31, 2021 (Saturday - Sunday)	Weekend Trip to the Eastern UP	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
February 13, 2021 (Saturday)	Great Backyard Bird Count EL Johnson Nature Center & Beaudette Park	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
February 14, 2021 (Sunday)	Beaudette Park and other local duck winter havens	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
February 27, 2021 (Saturday)	Kensington Metropark by snowshoe (or not)	David Frye - (248) 459-6783 or kestrel11dcf@gmail.com
March 13, 2021 (Saturday)	Gulls & More Gulls	Jeff Stacey idstacey@ameritech.net
March 20, 2021 (Saturday)	Search for Spring while Birding at Stony Creek Metropark	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com

Bonus Program "Technology & Birding"

Don Burlett

Tuesday, December 8, 2020, 7:00 p.m. (via zoom)



Birding has been around for decades and the skills and tools used to pursue this hobby/avocation/vocation have changed along with the technology that supports it. This presentation is designed to provide some insight into newer technology that can be used to improve your birding skills and results in the field.

Field Trip Reports

October 25, 2020 - Bay City State Park & Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area
Leader: Don Burlett

Eight birders joined the first field trip of the season to the Bay City State Park and the Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area (SWA). Masks and social distancing were used effectively throughout the trip. We began early at the state park on a cloudy, cool day checking out the lakeside for gulls and other birds. A few Bonaparte's Gulls, a juvenile Great Black-backed Gull, and a small flock of Tundra Swans flying over the bay were among the first finds of the day. We also nabbed our first American Tree Sparrows of the season. We continued around the pond near the visitor center observing a number of regular species. At the visitor center's feeders, we got a Red-breasted Nuthatch, our own White-breasted Nuthatch, and other regulars.



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Then we headed to Tobico Marsh to check for ducks. On the way to the marsh, we ran into a group of birds including both kinglets, Eastern Phoebe, and juncos. House Finches were also added to the list on the way to the marsh. There were lots of ducks to be seen; we spotted 12 species of ducks along with geese, Mute Swans, and a Pied-billed Grebe. There was also a Belted Kingfisher chattering in the background.

We had a quick lunch and then headed to the campgrounds for a quick look. We were rewarded with our lone warbler, a Yellow-rumped Warbler. American Robins and juncos were numerous here.



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)

At Nayanquing SWA we were immediately rewarded with large numbers of Rusty Blackbirds. Scanning from the viewing tower produced Common Gallinule, American Coot, Ruddy Duck, American Black Duck, Swamp Sparrow, Bald Eagle, flyover Greater Yellowlegs, a calling Killdeer, a pair of fast-flying Blue-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, and several other species.

The last stop of the day was the other side of Tower Beach Road, where an American Bittern was spotted as we were finishing up. A photo (not great) was obtained as proof of our find.

All-in-all, it was a good day. No rain, slightly windy and cool, but the sun shone through. We tallied a total of 60 species.

Field Trip Reports (continued)

November 7, 2020 - Muskegon

Leader: Don Burlett

An unseasonably warm spell descended on Michigan this fall—we headed to Muskegon with temperatures ranging from the 50's to almost 70 degrees. After meeting near Lansing, a group of 10 birders first stopped in Coopersville to find a disappointing “goose field” with just a few Canada Geese. Next stop was the Coopersville Wastewater Treatment facility where not much was happening (this location is also known as the Coopersville Sewage Ponds). Flyover Horned Larks, a few geese, and a calling Red-tailed Hawk were about it. This was the usual “no pain, no gain” fall day unfolding.

Then we went to the Muskegon Wastewater Treatment facility. The impoundments north of the big water areas were amazingly dry and empty of birds. One impoundment had water, but it was “mallard country.” We found a Northern Harrier patrolling the impoundment looking for a meal and a light-morph Rough-legged Hawk hovering over the fields looking for breakfast. Horned Larks flew through this area as well.

We headed up to the water and found it quieter than usual; the warm weather probably had a role in that. We circled clockwise around the impoundments and saw lots of Ruddy Ducks, Mallards, Buffleheads, and Northern Shovelers. Near the landfills on the southeast corner, a Peregrine Falcon swooped over the hill and across the water having a quick spin. Soon after, we discovered both a Ross's Goose and a Snow Goose amid the Canada Goose crowd.



Ross's Goose (*Rhodostethia rosea*) and Snow Goose (*Anser caerulescens*) in a crowd



Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

Nice looks showed the specific differences between the two species. A couple of funky domestics or hybrids also entertained. As we proceeded along, an Eared Grebe was found, showing the basic plumage nicely.

As we moved across the dike between the two ponds, we stumbled on a flock of Snow Buntings. We approached carefully and got excellent views of these winter visitors.

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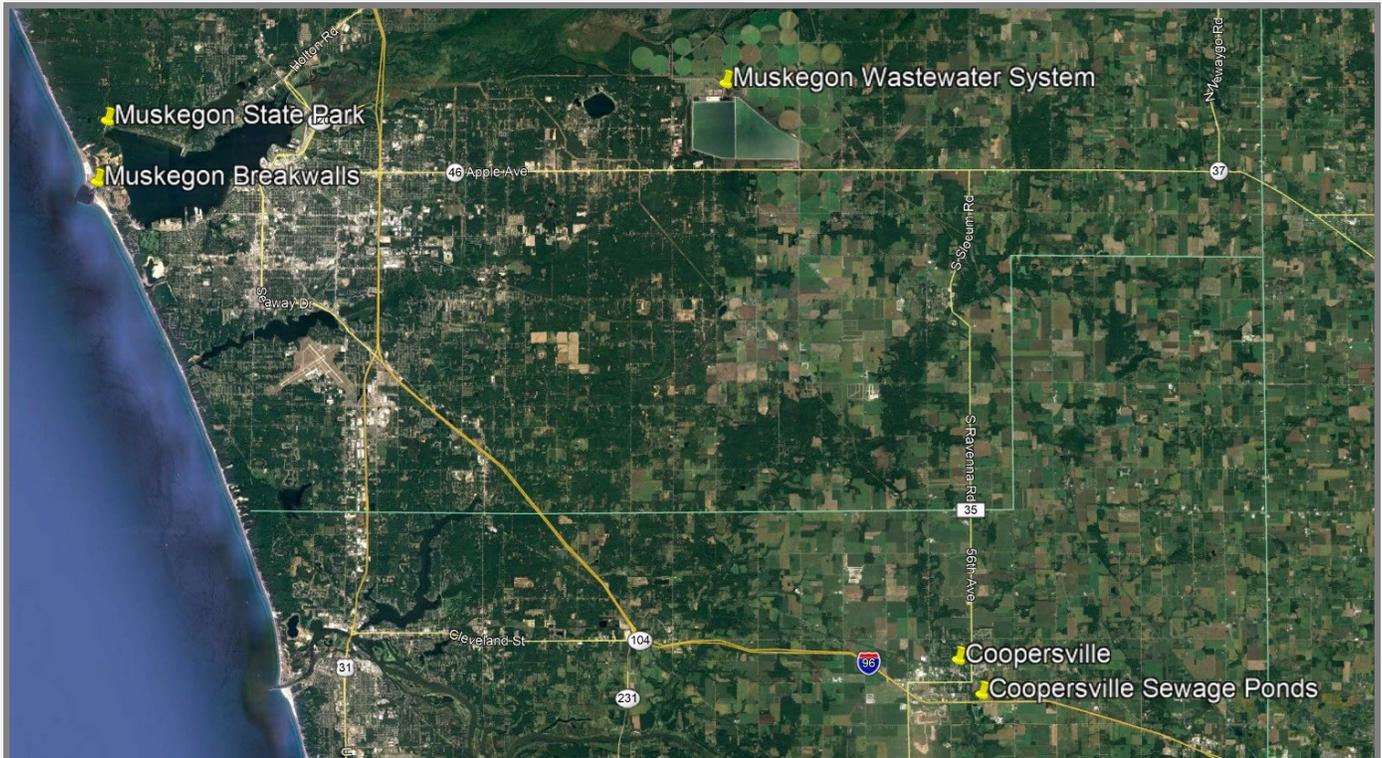
Field Trip Reports (continued)

We toured the settling/aeration ponds and found a few more duck species before we headed out. We saw an immature Bald Eagle fly by and two more Rough-legged Hawks, including a dark morph.

After lunch, we headed to the Muskegon State Park. First, we hiked through the woods and found it extremely quiet. We saw a couple of Golden-crowned Kinglets, some chickadees, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. The quiet woods allowed for a soothing stroll.

Finally, we walked out to the pier to look over the breakwall for friends. A Common Loon was spotted outside the breakwall, but not too much else. A mystery bird was seen crouching on the breakwall and the group spent a few minutes looking at it. Even with pictures it was not easy to ID, so it remains a mystery.

All-in-all, it was a fun day with a handful of good birds. The group tallied a total of 44 species. We will have to go back when it is 10 degrees, windy and snowy, and see how that compares!



Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports

September 19, 2020 - Drayton Plains Nature Center

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

On a cool, clear late September evening, six families and friends of the Oakland Audubon Young Birders' Club gathered for a twilight hike at the Drayton Plains Nature Center in Waterford. Terri Chapdelaine, director of bird studies at the center, greeted everyone. Terri, who has extraordinary knowledge of the site, led the hike. The Drayton Plains Nature Center is a 138-acre property along the Clinton River. The center is owned and operated by Waterford Township. Ian Ableson, Stewardship Manager at Six Rivers Land Conservancy, also joined the hike to share his expertise of Michigan bats. The Six Rivers Land Conservancy holds a conservation easement on this property.



The group immediately encountered the large flocks of waterfowl that reside at the property. This site is a former fish hatchery with multiple ponds for fish rearing, which now provide ideal habitat for many waterbirds. A young Great Blue Heron was disturbed from hunting along the river and flew overhead to a tree. While watching the Great Blue Heron, a Belted Kingfisher speeded by in full view sounding its distinctive rattling call. Thirty species of birds plus one unspecified warbler were seen during the hike.

The Drayton Plains Nature Center offers spots along the trails to stop and view the ponds. During the fall, wetlands provide great stopover habitat for migrating birds to rest and refuel. At one point during the hike, the group stopped to listen to the multiple songs of blackbirds roosting at sunset. After their breeding seasons Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and other blackbirds roost in huge flocks at night. These roosts can contain hundreds or even millions of birds.



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Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Ian periodically tracked bat activity during the hike. As the light faded, he detected more bats. Ian is involved with bat monitoring in Southeast Michigan, assessing bat species and their presence. Ian used a bat locator on his cell phone that detects echolocations of bats in flight, which are 'bat sounds' beyond the range of human hearing. The pattern of the calls allowed Ian to identify the bat species present; near the end of the hike he had tracked two species of bats, Hoary Bat and Big Brown Bat. Ian shared the biology and natural history of these bats, plus information about white-nose syndrome, a fungal disease that impacts bats. The bat locator was very impressive and everyone was amazed by the technology. All of the participants received a bat poster from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) at the conclusion of the hike.



A special thank you to **Terri Chapdelaine** and **Ian Ableson** for sharing their time and expertise with the Young Birders' Club. Along with the birds and bats, the group also witnessed a wonderful night sky; constellations, planets, and the moon added to ambience of the hike. Since it was dark when the group returned to the parking lot, Terri attempted to call owls. The few birders who lingered were treated to the call of the Eastern Screech Owl. A great ending for all.

Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty, Drayton Plains Nature Center, and University of Michigan Animal Diversity Website.

October 17, 2020 - Highland State Recreation Area Leaders: Don Burlett and Jay Fitzgerald

Twelve young birders with families and friends gathered on a sunny, chilly morning at the Highland State Recreation Area. The Friends of Highland Recreation Area (FOHRA) co-hosted this event. Jay Fitzgerald from the FOHRA co-lead the hike and interpreted the history of the property. The Highland Recreation Area is a 5,900-acre property owned and operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The group met at the Haven Hill Natural Area, a 721-acre National Natural Area Landmark within the park that was formerly part of Edsel and Eleanor Ford's estate. This small natural gem contains all of Michigan's southern forest types!

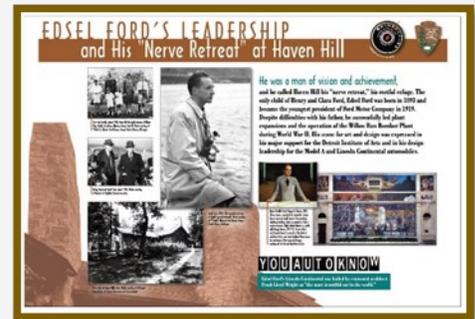


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Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Mr. Fitzgerald shared the story of the Edsel and Eleanor Ford estate at Haven Hill. Edsel was the only child of Clara and Henry Ford. Edsel and his wife Eleanor began purchasing properties in White Lake Township for this retreat. Ford wanted to establish what he called a “*nerve retreat for rest and relaxation from the hustle of the city.*” After Edsel Ford died, his wife Eleanor sold the property to the State of Michigan. The vision of Edsel Ford has blessed Oakland County with an amazing park that might have otherwise been developed.



The group started at the Goose Meadow parking lot. This spot is a short walk from Haven Hill Lake, where the group observed several species of waterbirds including Green-winged Teal and Wood Duck. Some species of ducks were too distant to identify. Haven Hill Lake was formed by the impoundment of a stream on the property. Overall, there was a mix of several waterbirds. Twenty-five species of birds were seen along the hike.



The hike continued onto the woodland trails. The fall colors were spectacular and there were plenty of chances to see picturesque forest views. Expected forest birds were found, but everyone was captivated by the loud calls of a Pileated Woodpecker. This large woodpecker is elusive and found in extensive forested areas. Highland State Recreation Area also provides habitat in the form of low, shrubby wetland pockets along the edges of lakes and forests. Shrubs including spice-bush, dogwood, and alder produce seeds and berries for several species of birds.



The late summer rains produced great mushrooms! The forest's organic decay and rotting wood offer the best substrate for these fungal fruits. Stopping to see some of the forest fungi allowed participants a chance to look down. It was beautiful day to be outdoors, looking up and down!

A special thank you to **Don Burlett** for leading this hike along with **Jay Fitzgerald**. Thanks as well to all of the young birders and friends who attended.



Photo Credits: Don Burlett, Jay Fitzgerald, Robert Moll, and Oakland Audubon Photo Gallery.

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Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)

November 7, 2020 - Stage Nature Center

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

On an unusually warm and pleasant afternoon, the Oakland Owlets met at the Stage Nature Center in Troy. The Stage Nature Center is a 100-acre nature preserve owned by the City of Troy and operated by the Troy Nature Society. The nature preserve was a popular destination for area residents on such a gorgeous, atypical sunny November day. Young birders gathered to learn about owls, but had a chance to look at the exhibits in the nature center before the presentation started.



A group of seventeen gathered under the outdoor pavilion near the nature center, which allowed physical spacing so more young birders could attend this program. Naturalist Christina Funk discussed the special adaptations of Michigan owls, using live owls, owl skulls, talons, and photographs. The Stage Nature Center maintains a collection of injured owls that cannot be released into the wild, but serve as educational ambassadors for the species. The Stage Nature Center is constructing special housing for these resident owls that were inherited from the Organization for Bat Conservation.

Christina explained the incredible features that allow owls to hunt at night, including their keen eyesight, silent flight, and powerful talons. Christina also introduced the group to two resident owls, Mortimer and Samantha. Participants were able to see each owl up close as Christina patiently brought them within a few feet of everyone. While holding each owl, Christina described the injuries that prevent them from being released into the wild.



Mortimer, a gray phase Screech Owl, obediently perched on Christina's hand. As she moved between each group, participants were able to see Mortimer's ability to rotate his head while focusing on objects. Christina played the two distinctive calls of the Screech Owl. The group asked questions while Mortimer listened intently.

Samantha or "Sam" vocalized during much of Christina's presentation. Calling "Who Cooks for you 'all," Sam let participants know she was a Barred Owl. Barred Owls have rounded heads without ear tufts and deep brown, almost black eyes centered inside of the facial disk. These features are striking. Sam was attacked by a dog before she was able to fly. The surgery to repair her injured wing was not completely successful, so she cannot be returned to the wild. Sam was raised by people from an early age, so she has imprinted on humans. Sam was also much more reactive to noise than Mortimer.

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Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)

After Christina's comprehensive presentation, darkness settled and the group readied for a night hike to look for owls. Christina mentioned that both Great Horned Owls and Eastern Screech Owls have been seen on the nature preserve. Participants learned owl prowl rules and ethics, listened to the calls of both owl species, and practiced standing still before heading out to the trail.



The group hiked a short distance and stood quietly for several minutes to listen. The clear sky and the starlight revealed the bare branches and silhouettes of trees towering overhead. Christina played the call of the Eastern Screech Owl and everything stopped—after a short time, a distant call was heard. Christina explained that this was the mating call of a female Great Horned Owl that had nested in nearby woods along another trail in the past. Christina offered to hike to the nest location, but this would extend the prowl beyond the end time. Most of the group agreed to hike further to explore this distant call.



A line of people wound through a pathway in the dark, with no objections to the lack of light. Passing by many tall trees and intently listening for sounds, the group of twelve people quietly progressed to a stop in the forest. Listening for several minutes, the group was able to hear the repeated calls of a female Great Horned Owl. The call was unlike the hooting that is associated with the Great Horned Owl. It was a unique experience to learn new night sounds. We returned to the Nature Center without actually seeing owls, but were enlightened by our time outdoors.

A special thank you to **Christina Funk** and the **Stage Nature Center** for a terrific program. Thanks as well to all the young birders and friends who attended. It was a beautiful day, and night, outdoors.

Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty

2021 Oakland Owlets Field Trips December 2020 — March 2021

Christmas Bird Count – Saturday, Dec. 19, 8 - 10 am Orion Oaks Park – Orion Township

Join the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) during a bird hike at Orion Oaks County Park. The CBC is one of the oldest citizen science activities in North America. This is the 121st year. Erin Parker and Pete Blank will share their expertise. The park's Bluebird Trail is a great place to see Eastern Bluebirds! Dress for being outdoors and plan to hike about 2 miles. Bring your own binoculars. An Oakland County Park Vehicle Permit is required for park entry.



Winter River & Woodland Birding – Saturday, January 23, 8:30 - 11 am Proud Lake State Recreation Area – Commerce Township



Proud Lake State Recreation Area is a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts and one of the top 10 birding hot spots in Oakland County. The park encompasses 4,700 acres and is bisected by the Huron River. Plan to hike about 2 miles. Bring your own binoculars, and if snow depth permits, also bring your snowshoes. A Michigan State Park pass-port is required for park entry.

Great Backyard Bird Count – Saturday, February 13, 9 - 11:30 am EL Johnson Nature Center – Bloomfield Hills & Beaudette Park – Pontiac

Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a global event that tracks birds worldwide from 2/11 to 2/15. This field trip begins at the E.L. Johnson Nature Center, observing feeder birds and birding on the trails. The Nature Center is an oasis for birds, including Wild Turkey and Great Horned Owl. Afterward, we will travel to Beaudette Park in Pontiac. Beaudette Park is along the Clinton River Trail, which makes it a hot spot for waterfowl and urban birds. Dress for the weather and bring your own binoculars.



2021 Oakland Owlets Field Trips December 2020 — March 2021

**Search for Spring while Birding – Saturday, March 20, 8:30 - 11 am
Stony Creek Metropark – Shelby & Washington Townships**

On the first day of spring, young birders and friends will gather to search for signs of spring at different locations in Stony Creek Metropark. We will stop by the nature center bird feeders and hike nearby nature trails. While early in the season, some birds are nesting at this time and early migrants return to claim nesting territory. The group will also travel to Stony Lake to view waterfowl. Bring your own binoculars. A 2021 Metroparks Vehicle Permit is required for park entry.



The Young Birders' Club ~ Oakland Owlets offers field trips for youth 8 – 18 years. Young birders 15 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult. These age appropriate programs provide educational experiences and snacks for kids. 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: Project Feederwatch and Oakland Audubon Photo Gallery



Oakland Audubon follows Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines for COVID-19

1. **Pre-registration is required and number of participants is limited.**
2. **Social distancing** is practiced on the trails.
3. Participants must wear **face masks**, especially when we stop to talk.
4. Participants need to bring their own optics.
5. **Stay home if you are sick** or have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19.
6. **Temperature checks** will be made with a touchless thermometer before the field trip begins.
7. Travel with only people from your household. **No carpooling.**
8. Directions and details are sent in advance to those that **pre-register.**



ROUGE RIVER WATER FESTIVAL 2020 - OCTOBER 20-23, 2020

Oakland Audubon shared the joy of birding with about 2,000 students and teachers at the *Rouge River Water Festival* this October. In the past, Oakland Audubon has participated in the four-day event hosted by the Cranbrook Institute of Science and the Freshwater Forum. The Rouge River Water Festival is held in collaboration with the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office and funded by Pure Oakland Water.

Community groups from the area are invited to share their expertise and information about their organizations with students. Fourth and fifth grade classes from schools within the Rouge River watershed visit the Cranbrook Institute of Science to learn about the importance of water. Classes participate in activities exploring how everyone has an impact on water and water resources.

Due to COVID-19, this year's Festival was held virtually on October 20 - 23, 2020. Staff from the Freshwater Forum live-streamed talks to discuss the importance of clean water for healthy ecosystems, how water shapes the geosphere, and the implications of the hydrological cycle on the environment. In addition, the Freshwater Forum staff provided teachers flash drives with educational materials and videos from community groups.

Partners were asked to provide a 10 to 20-minute presentation and supporting materials on a water related topic. The Oakland Owlets Young Birders' Club created a presentation about wading birds for this year's festival and used a Wading Bird Booklet created for Audubon Kids through the National Audubon Society.

Kathleen Dougherty and Mike Dougherty collaborated to create "*Wading About*," a video about three common wading birds. Mike is a very talented photographer and videographer –without his help this video would not have been possible. Mike combined photos and video clips to tell the story of how wading birds are adapted to watery habitats and shared other cool facts about these birds. The video focused on Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, and Sandhill Crane.

The Rouge River Water Festival is a terrific way to connect with students and support their understanding of our shared water resources. Wading birds need clean water for their survival. The Rouge River Water Festival is a chance to showcase Oakland Audubon as an important local learning resource. The Oakland Owlets, Oakland Audubon's Young Birders' Club, was highlighted.



WILDLIFE AT WORK

by Kathleen Dougherty

Oakland Audubon has long supported wildlife habitat locally through education and advocacy. In the past few years, these efforts involved assisting area businesses like Fiat Chrysler and Waste Management, Inc. with wildlife surveys on their properties to maintain certification through the Wildlife Habitat Council. The **Wildlife Habitat Council** is an organization that certifies businesses that participate in biodiversity enhancements and conservation education activities on their corporate landholdings. The Wildlife Habitat Council recognizes meaningful long-term wildlife habitat management and conservation education projects that offer employee engagement, community outreach, and benefits to wildlife. This third-party certification provides standardized metrics and credibility for businesses who demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and the environment.

This summer, Oakland Audubon butterfly enthusiast, Doris Applebaum, and Kathleen Dougherty helped with butterfly surveys at two Waste Management properties. Waste Management, in addition to operating areas' landfills, sets aside habitat for pollinators. Among the constant traffic and bustle of the landfill operations, pollinators forage in undisturbed flower patches that offer habitat and sanctuary in what is assumed to be an inhospitable place. At the Eagle Valley Landfill in Orion Township, Doris cataloged 16 butterfly species and a few dragonflies in just one afternoon. One of the Duskywing butterflies observed was hoped to be the rare Horace's Duskywing, but positive identification could not be confirmed. Although butterflies are easier than birds to view, they often do not pose long enough for the purposes of identification. The butterfly and dragonfly checklist provided below is from the Eagle Valley Landfill survey, which took place in August. In several instances, many individuals of each species were recorded.

Butterfly & Dragonfly checklist from WM's Eagle Valley Landfill:

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Black Saddlebags
Spicebush Swallowtail	Twelve-spotted Skimmer
Cabbage White	Widow Skimmer
Clouded Sulphur	
Orange Sulphur	
Eastern Tailed-Blue	
Pearl Crescent	
Viceroy	
Common Ringlet	
Common Wood-Nymph	
Monarch	
Silver-Spotted Skipper	
Wild Indigo Duskywing	
unidentified Duskywing	
Least Skipper	
Delaware Skipper	



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WILDLIFE AT WORK

(Continued)

When visiting Waste Management sites, Oakland Audubon also surveys and provides bird checklists to support Wildlife Habitat Council projects. The Eagle Valley Landfill is within OAS Christmas Bird Count (CBC) circle, so volunteers are allowed to access the site during the CBC as well. Unique birds, like unusual gull species, Bald Eagle, and Horned Lark, are seen at the Eagle Valley Landfill every year.

Many people don't realize the contributions that businesses like Waste Management make to wildlife habitat. Setting aside landholdings for wildlife habitat has multiple benefits. Habitat projects not only benefit wildlife, but also local communities and employees. Habitat enhancements indirectly provide ecosystem services to nearby communities including ground water recharge, carbon sequestration, and natural pest control. At the workplace, employee engagement increases and employees take pride in wildlife habitat projects on their sites. Creating wildlife habitat aligns with the philosophy of Douglas Tallamy. Tallamy, author and entomologist, advocates that in a rapidly developing world everyone should take steps to bring nature onto their property. Tallamy contends that efforts to support insects help other wildlife, especially birds.

Leaving fields un-mowed for pollinators is one of several wildlife projects at Waste Management landfill sites. The company also maintains and monitors nesting boxes for cavity nesting birds and has recently installed a raptor platform at the Eagle Valley Landfill site. Waste Management also conducts educational outreach on various environmental topics.

For more information about the Wildlife Habitat Council Certification activities at Waste Management, visit the Eagle Valley Landfill's Wildlife Habitat website at: <https://eaglevalleylandfill.wm.com/whc/index.jsp>

Oakland Audubon is grateful to **Kathleen Klein** from **Waste Management** who oversees this program. The model of helping wildlife at corporate landholdings is an innovative concept supported by Oakland Audubon. Oakland Audubon is excited and willing to partner with local companies to create "wildlife at work" habitat.



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty



To learn more about Wildlife Habitat Council visit: <https://www.wildlifehc.org/certification/>

Book Review

BUZZ: THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF BEES By Thor Hanson

Review (and P.S.) by Doris Applebaum

Global spending on insecticides amounts to about \$65 billion each year. People just don't like insects. But we love bees, even though they look very much like some of the insects we fear. This appreciation has been shown throughout human history in many cultures. Good thing, too, because bees are tremendously important to us.

Early on, it was the sweetness of honey that people wanted, so they robbed hives. Eventually the idea of beekeeping arose, as early as 3000 BC in Egypt. This domestication preceded the taming of animals like the horse and camel as well as many kinds of food plants.

We didn't make use of bees just for food, though. Ancient physicians had hundreds of different uses for various products from bees. Also, beeswax was the most pleasant way to obtain light because all other products that burned, like fish oil and animal fats, were smelly and smoky. The vast usefulness of bees even led them to become an important part of some religions.

Many plants depend on bees' pollination services, which of course are also very important to us. The other services bees provide for us—honey, wax, light—are available by other means, but pollination cannot be easily replaced. Pollination of plants can be done by hand, but it's extremely labor intensive and expensive, as the author explains in connection with date palms and vanilla beans, two industries that use hand pollination and result in high prices of these products because of the added expense of growing them.

While a date-palm ranch in the U.S. requires human "toil and strain" in connection with hand pollination, other fruit farmers get their pollination done by bees without all that strenuous effort, and it costs less even if the bees have to be rented. Not only is the labor cost less, the bees don't need workers' compensation.

This book isn't just about honeybees, however. There are about 20,000 species of wild bees, and several of them provide the author with reasons for interesting stories, including various solitary bees—the lifestyle of the majority of native bees. A special favorite of the author are bumblebees, and he devotes considerable space to them.

Along the way, we learn how bees evolved from predatory wasps, became vegetarians, and started their amazing relationship with plants. We also learn the parts of bee anatomy and why each is important.

There's a particular species of bird whose life is entwined with that of bees—the Greater Honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*). People seeking honey in Africa follow one of these birds, knowing that it will lead them to a hive so they can steal the honey. They repay the bird with a bit of honeycomb and scraps. This bird has actually evolved to be able to digest beeswax.

A major reason why humans have long loved honey is our big brain. Human brains require a lot of energy, food provides energy, and honey is "the most energy-rich food in nature." Our love of honey was with us even before we were hunter-gatherers, and the author makes the case that honey was a significant influence on human evolution. Nowadays, of course, most of us satisfy our sweet tooth much more easily, by eating candy and other sugary products.

When it comes to food, it's not just honey that's important to us. It is often said that every third bite we eat depends on bees because of their pollination services to the plants that we eat. However, when you consider that much of the meat and eggs that we eat comes from animals that also depend on bees pollinating the plants that they eat, the author says that instead of 1/3 of our food being dependent on bees, the total is probably closer to 3/4.

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Book Review

BUZZ: THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF BEES By Thor Hanson

(Continued)

If bees weren't here to do their pollinating for us, not only would the quantity of our food be greatly reduced, but the quality would also be poorer. In an entertaining chapter, the author looked at the variety of ingredients in his McDonald's Big Mac and removed the ones that depend on bees. The beef patties stayed; the beef cows probably lived in a feedlot, and the grains they were fed came mostly from wind-pollinated plants. However, almost every other part of the Big Mac, including the condiments, depends on bees. Those beef patties didn't taste so good without mustard or ketchup.

It is so obvious that people depend on bees that it is extremely sobering to learn that research indicates about 40% of bee species are threatened with extinction.

Along with telling us of his own adventures with bees, the author interviewed many experts to gather information. The result is a book that is informative and a delight to read. Even many of the notes to the chapters offer fascinating information.

If you have read another of Thor Hanson's books, titled *Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle*, you know what an excellent writer he is. In *Buzz*, published in 2018, he has written another book that is well worth reading.

No doubt many Audubon members know something about bees and have some appreciation for them. However, this book provides so much new information that you can't help but be thankful that Mother Nature has given the world bees. The book also provides an understanding of what we will lose, if we don't support the researchers and organizations that are working to prevent extinctions in this tremendously important group of animals.

P.S.: Also published in 2018, a book by Norwegian ecologist Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson goes beyond bees and their buzz in *Buzz, Sting, Bite: Why We Need Insects*. She not only shows why we need insects of many kinds but does so with a great deal of humor that makes this book not just informative but also highly entertaining. The book is organized in a series of short, fascinating vignettes, covering a wide variety of insect information.

Of course, there is also unpleasant news about the ways in which humans have led some species to extinction and many others to the brink. It is impossible nowadays to write anything about nature without mentioning this kind of unfortunate reality and the need to combat it.

Buzz, Sting, Bite is an excellent companion to Thor Hanson's book. The insect world is lucky to have two such accomplished defenders.



Photo Credit: G. Cummins

WHAT A PAINT JOB CAN DO FOR BIRDS

by Doris Applebaum

Wind and solar energy are two forms of renewable energy production that many people believe must be greatly increased, so reliance on oil and gas extraction facilities can be reduced along with the pollution, carbon emissions, habitat destruction, and dangers to human health they cause.

Unfortunately, wind energy has also been shown to have a serious negative effect—the hundreds of thousands of birds and bats that wind turbines kill every year.

There have been a few efforts to try to reduce these effects, with varying success. One recent effort shows some interesting results and has the advantage that, once it is in place, nothing more needs to be done: paint one of the blades of the wind turbine black to increase visibility of the turbine to the birds flying by.

Researchers in Norway conducted an experiment in an area where a wind farm produces power for nearly 18,000 homes. Many raptors, gulls, and songbirds are attracted to the area's lakes and marshes.

The experiment consisted of pairing four sets of turbines that are near each other, painting one blade of one turbine black and leaving all blades of the others unpainted. The experiment ran for 3-1/2 years.

When comparing the number of birds killed by these turbines to the number killed by the same turbines in the years prior to the experiment, researchers found that there was more than a 70% reduction in bird fatalities at the turbines with the painted blade. They looked into the possibility that the painted turbines were causing birds to avoid them but instead were being pushed into the path of other turbines. That appeared not to happen. However, even if that was happening, it would be eliminated if all the turbines had one black blade.

Despite the promising findings, this experiment could not predict reduction in bat fatalities. Nor could it show a decrease of fatalities in birds like ptarmigans, which spend most of their time on the ground; their deaths result from a tendency to run into the base of the turbine.

Nevertheless, although this study used a very small number of turbines, the results showed definite promise. If put into practice on a larger scale, it would be relatively inexpensive and would not inhibit the benefits of the wind farm.

As a way to reduce bird mortality in an environmentally positive way, this project seems like something that could, and should, be expanded.

Sources: Information for this article was found in the September 2, 2020, Anthropocene Weekly Science Dispatch (online). Find the research article in: May, R. *et al.* (2020). "Paint it black: Efficacy of increased wind turbine rotor blade visibility to reduce avian fatalities." *Ecology and Evolution*. 10(16): 8927-35. Also online at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/ece3.6592>

NATURE NOTES *by Allen Chartier*

Let's talk hummingbirds!

Over the past several months, I have not been getting any new questions for the Nature Notes column, and since I began this column a few years ago, there have been very few questions about my favorite topic; hummingbirds. The Photo Quiz in the Fall 2020 Issue of the Nuthatch showing three hummingbirds, with the answers invoking my name, motivated me to write more about those photos, and Michigan hummingbirds in general.

First, let's visit the Photo Quiz, starting with Photo B that was said to be a Ruby-throated Hummingbird.



Nuthatch Quiz: Photo B

As someone who receives a LOT of photos of hummingbirds to identify, I have come to realize that this process requires different skills than looking at live birds in the wild. One lesson I have also learned is to NEVER provide an opinion on a photo after only looking at it on the screen of my phone, but to wait until I can look at it full-size on a computer monitor. Another lesson has been to not be shy about asking for more or better photos.

In Michigan, the default hummingbird is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, so the burden is to prove that it is something else. The quiz did not

give date or location information about the bird in Photo B, so we should not assume it was taken in Michigan.

The genus *Archilochus* has only two species; Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Black-chinned Hummingbird. The first to look for in photos is the diagnostic narrower inner primaries on the bird's folded wing, which is only shown by these two species. It might be a little difficult to see in this photo, but I am pretty sure I can see it. OK, now what? Adult males are relatively easy, with Ruby-throat having a bright ruby-red throat (and small black area on the chin), and Black-chinned having a black upper half of its throat and blue-purple lower throat. Ruby-throats in the shade can show an entirely black throat, giving rise to hopeful reports of Black-chinned. However, on females and immatures, the differences are far more subtle. The most diagnostic characteristic is the shape and width of the outermost (10th) primary feather on the wing. It is narrow and tapered in Ruby-throated and broad and blunt in Black-chinned. In Photo B, it looks broad and blunt. But we must be careful, because a Ruby-throat could, in rare cases, have lost its outer primary and we could actually be looking at the next one (9th), which is broad and blunt in both species! So, having a very sharp photo to be able to account for every primary feather is important when identifying these species out of range. An additional character of this outermost feather on a Black-chinned is that the outermost vane is broader and more curved than it is on Ruby-throated. This also appears to be the case here. Secondary characteristics of Black-chinned include a duller green coloration on the upperparts (though beware worn late summer adult female Ruby-throats), a much duller crown (though beware of lighting effects), and a longer bill on average (but with extensive overlap...Ruby-throat bills are rarely over 19 mm long, while Black-chinned bills can be as short as 16 mm and as long as 21 mm).

NATURE NOTES (continued)

So, what should we do with this photo? My first question to Don Burlett, who put this Photo Quiz together, was “where and when was this photo taken?” Data associated with this photo, taken from www.allaboutbirds.org, says: Black-chinned Hummingbird. California, 14 September 2016.

While it is tempting to embarrass Don for picking the wrong photo, I actually want to thank him for allowing me to discuss how careful we must be when identifying hummingbirds, especially in late fall when other species tend to show up in the Great Lakes. Lacking date and location data forces us to look at actual field marks, and discard our assumptions, which is an important way to discover a rarity. If Photo B had been taken in Michigan, I would definitely have asked for more photos, especially of the open wing, to assess the shape of the outermost primary, before putting it out on the rare bird alerts! Among the Great Lakes states and provinces, only Ontario and Indiana have confirmed records (1 each) of Black-chinned Hummingbird. As is often the case with hummingbirds, it can be easier to determine the age and sex than the species. The lack of any dark markings on the throat and the long bill, suggests a female; the pale buff fringes on the crown, back, tertial, and primary covert feathers, suggest this is a recently fledged young.

Now let's go back and take a closer look at Photo A from the quiz, which was identified as a Rufous Hummingbird.

As before, we have no date or location information, so if we assume this was taken in Michigan, we need to focus very carefully on field marks and what is actually visible in this photo. In the U.S. and Canada, there are four species in the genus *Selasphorus*; Rufous breeding in the Pacific Northwest from Alaska to Montana and Oregon, Allen's breeding along the southern California and Baja Mexico coast, Broad-tailed breeding in the central and southern Rocky Mountains, and Calliope breeding in the northern and central Rocky Mountains. Note that the Calliope Hummingbird was recently re-classified into this genus. Adult males of Rufous and Allen's are the most problematic and similar—a bird with an all-rufous back and orange-red gorget can confidently be identified as a Rufous, while one with a completely green back is likely an Allen's. Some adult male Rufous can have varying amounts of green on their backs, but Allen's will never have any rufous on their backs. Also, adult male Broad-tailed and Calliope are easily identified. But, we are not looking at an adult male hummingbird in Photo A! Because it lacks extensive iridescent coloration on its throat, it is a female and/or immature, so all four species must be considered.

Nuthatch Quiz: Photo A



It can be identified as a *Selasphorus* species based on the orange-buff on the flanks, which all four species share. But beware that some immature male and adult female Ruby-throats can show pale buff (not orangey) on the flanks and undertail. Also, the primaries are evenly spaced, not with narrower inner primaries as described for the genus *Archilochus* above. All four *Selasphorus* also have rufous-orange on their tail feathers to varying extents. In Calliope and Broad-tailed, it is limited and not usually visible on a perched bird.

NATURE NOTES (continued)

The bird in Photo A clearly shows some rufous in the base of the tail, so that leads us to either Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird. In the field, immatures and females of both species are nearly identical, and arriving at an identification is often not possible, even with good photos. Determining the age and sex is often helpful to get to an ID. Unlike Ruby-throats, where females never show iridescent throat feathers, all age and sex classes in Rufous and Allen's will show some orange-red feathers there. Adult females and immature females will often show a fairly large blotch of orange-red feathers in the middle of the throat, with a lot of overlap between immatures and adults in the size of this blotch, which can look black in some lighting conditions. Immature male Rufous and Allen's hummingbirds will often have a few scattered orange-red feathers around the outer rim and lower edge of the throat, and rarely in the middle, but sometimes will completely lack iridescent feathers on the throat entirely. It is clear that the bird in Photo A does not have a large central splotch on the throat, so it is not an adult female and likely not an immature female. This bird MIGHT have a single iridescent feather at the bottom center of its throat, which I have often seen on immature males but rarely also on immature females. I have seen non-iridescent throats only in immature males. The bill looks shorter, which would also support this being an immature male. There seems to also be some subtle suggestion of rufous on the rump as well as on the tail, which would support immature male.

With an immature male Rufous or Allen's, the ONLY way to distinguish them is to see a photo of the spread tail because shapes and widths of certain tail feathers are the main diagnostic field mark. So, we cannot go any farther than 'likely immature male Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird' based on this photo alone. If we had an additional photo of the spread tail, we might be able to make an ID because the shape of one of the feathers (not the centrals, but the next one out) is diagnostic. In Rufous Hummingbird this feather will be slightly to noticeably pinched or tapered at the

tip, while in Allen's it is evenly tapered to a point. If we have made a mistake aging and sexing this bird, and this is an adult female (not likely), this feather shape is also (usually) diagnostic. But if this is actually an immature female, which is certainly possible, there is very little to no difference in the shape of this feather between the two species. The only way to be sure is to measure how wide the outermost tail feathers are; narrower in Allen's and broader in Rufous. This is not a character that can be assessed in a photo! There is overlap, with adult females having narrower feathers than immature females, and immature males having widths in between. In-hand, a combination of characters needs to be used to confirm most immature/female Rufous and Allen's.

Data associated with Photo A, taken from www.allaboutbirds.org, states: Rufous Hummingbird. British Columbia, 16 September 2016. So, this is out of range for Allen's Hummingbird and well within the normal expected distribution for Rufous. Date and location information tells us that Rufous Hummingbird is a good ID. In the Great Lakes, Allen's Hummingbird has been confirmed only once (in Ohio), but could turn up in the future. In Michigan, Rufous Hummingbirds have arrived as early as late July and lingered until mid-January, with most of the 50+ records being from mid-October to late November. They are much hardier than our Ruby-throat Hummingbirds.

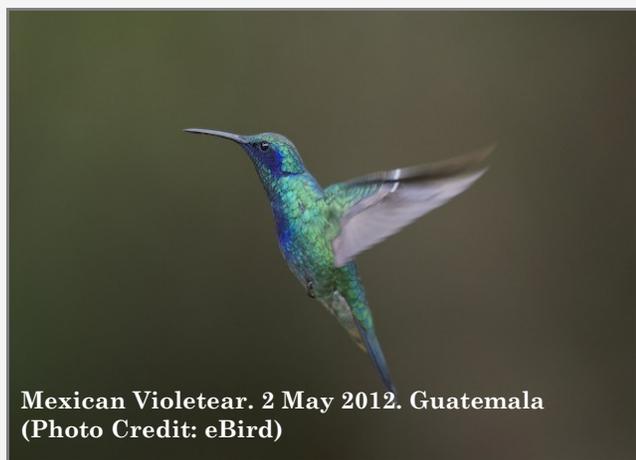
The last photo, Photo C, does not have any ID issues because adult male Broad-billed Hummingbirds have very distinctive mostly red bill, overall iridescent green and blue-green color, white undertail coverts, and forked tail. They are larger than Ruby-throats, but not exceedingly so.

NATURE NOTES (continued)



Nuthatch Quiz: Photo C

Photo C was taken from eBird, and there is no date or location information available as it is a copyrighted image. The two records of this species in Michigan have been in mid-summer, both were adult males (females do present some ID challenges). There is another mainly green and blue-green hummingbird that has also been seen in Michigan mainly in summer, with NINE confirmed records – the Mexican Violetear! The photo below, taken in Guatemala, shows the differences.

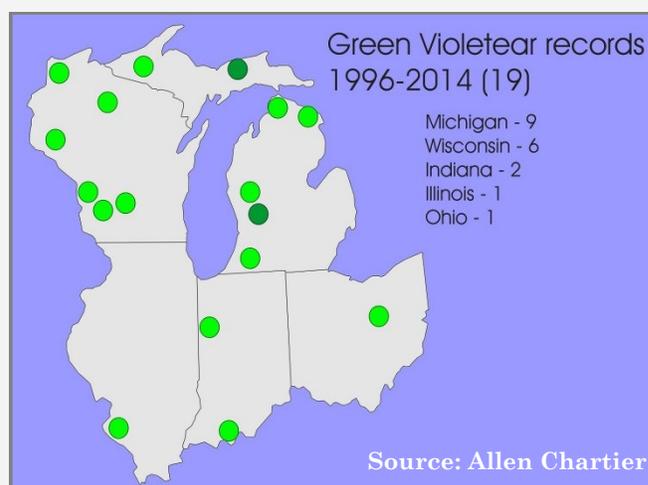


Mexican Violetear. 2 May 2012. Guatemala
(Photo Credit: eBird)

Mexican Violetears are about twice the size of Ruby-throats, with no red on their bills, and blue-violet on their cheeks and breast. Formerly, they were named Green Violetear but the more northerly ones from northern Mexico to northern Central America were split, with the southerly ones from Costa Rica into the Andes now called Lesser Violetear. They are actually non-migratory in the way that our breeding birds in Michigan

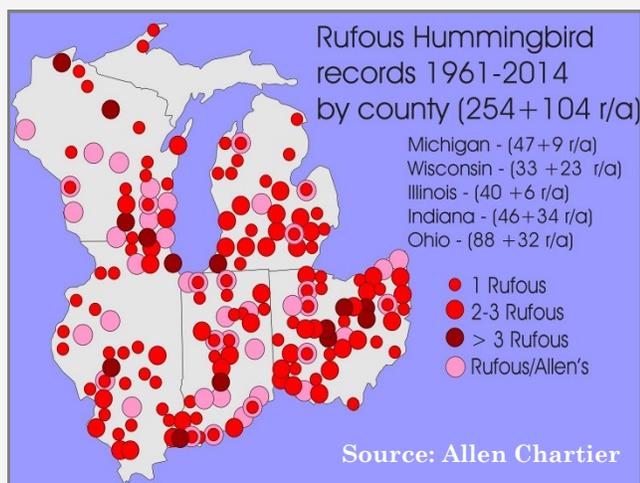
are, but instead undertake altitudinal movements that take them down into lower elevations in their non-breeding season. This takes them into nearby Texas in most years, with Michigan having more records than any other state!

The following map shows confirmed Great Lakes records of Green Violetear through 2014. Typically, Mexican Violetears are seen for only one or two days at any given location. So, if you see a BIG all-green hummingbird in the summer, TAKE A PHOTO!



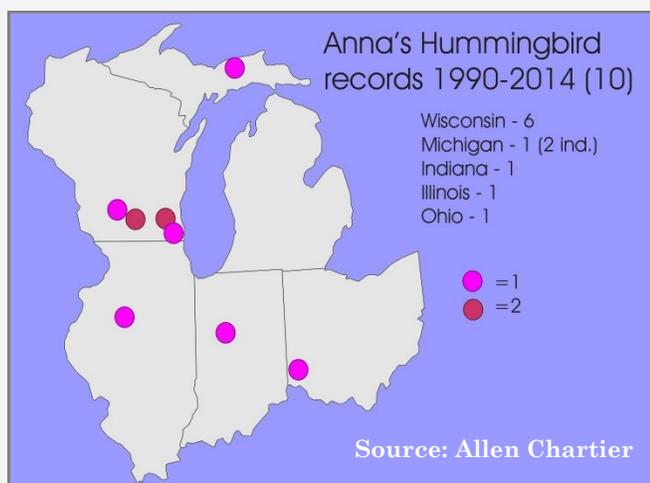
A surprising number of hummingbird species have occurred in the Great Lakes. The following maps show species that have been documented so far through 2014. Rufous is the most frequently reported “vagrant” hummingbird in the Great Lakes, but Mexican Violetear is surprisingly the next most frequent, and Anna’s the next. Since 2014 there have been several Anna’s in Wisconsin, which may move it up in the ranks soon.

NATURE NOTES (continued)



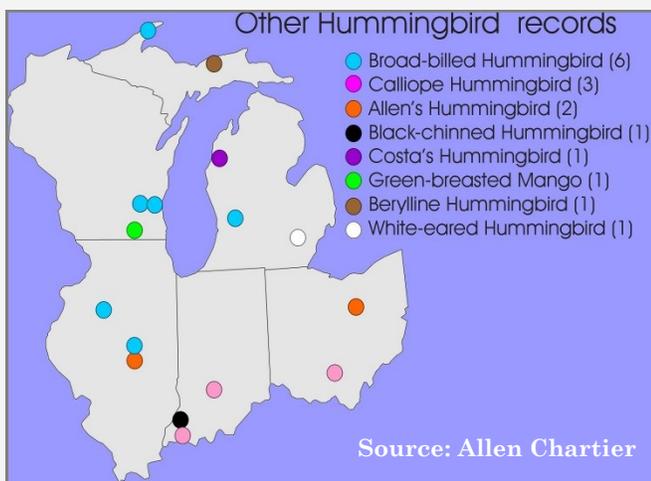
The bottom line with hummingbirds in Michigan is: if you see something unusual, look at it very carefully, and ideally take a photo (and send it to me!). So far, eight species of hummingbird have been documented in Michigan, but we are still “missing” Black-chinned, Allen’s, and Calliope; and more Anna’s seem likely to turn up.

Allen Chartier



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

amazilia3@gmail.com



Bird Briefs (articles to look at online)

Submitted by Don Burlett

Birding: Feather colors are all in the eye of the beholder

<https://www.pressherald.com/2020/08/02/birding-feather-colors-are-all-in-the-eye-of-the-beholder/>

The concepts of bird feather colors are explained in terms of makeup and viewing. Most of us know some of this, but a longer look at this topic is worthwhile.

The Myth of John James Audubon

<https://www.audubon.org/news/the-myth-john-james-audubon>

This article by National Audubon is about their namesake – John James Audubon. It is part of a series about John James Audubon and the history that surrounds him. A hot topic these days because of our current revisiting of history.

Researchers find Kirtland's Warblers behave differently than thought

<https://www.michiganradio.org/post/researchers-find-kirtlands-warblers-behave-differently-thought>

A short article about using tracking devices to understand the movements of Kirtland's Warblers in Michigan; they move around more than thought. This article will add to your knowledge of Michigan's favorite warbler.

Bird deaths down 70% after painting wind turbine blades

<https://arstechnica.com/science/2020/08/black-paint-on-wind-turbines-helps-prevent-bird-massacres/>

A short article on the results of painting blades black to help avoid bird collisions. See also, the Nuthatch article on page 21.

The owl pellet economy: Meet the entrepreneurs who've devoted their lives to bird vomit

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/08/26/owl-pellet-economy-meet-entrepreneurs-who-devoted-their-lives-bird-vomit/>

Want to start a small business? Here is one idea that seems to have worked out for someone. Owl pellets are big business. Enjoy!

AI model developed to identify individual birds without tagging

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/27/ai-model-developed-to-identify-individual-birds-without-tagging>

The use of artificial intelligence is creeping into the bird world. We have seen applications to recognize bird calls. Now, researchers are looking at individual birds to support bird studies. Interesting new twist on science and birds.

New research shows that Lyrebirds move more litter and soil than any other digging animal

<https://phys.org/news/2020-09-lyrebirds-litter-soil-animal.html>

Lyrebirds are known for their songs and tail feathers. However, "ecosystem engineer" is not a phrase that comes up when you mention this bird. These birds move lots of soil and litter when searching for food. It is estimated that 155 tons per hectare is moved by a single bird. That is digging around to the max! Fun read with video.

(continued on next page)

Bird Briefs

(Continued)

A 150,000-Bird Orchestra in the Sky

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/07/opinion/a-150000-bird-orchestra-in-the-sky.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Do you think watching a couple of thousand Chimney Swifts is impressive? Try watching 150,000 Purple Martins roosting in your city. That is Nashville's story. Read about this interesting phenomenon.

In this Woodpecker Kingdom, War is a Spectator Sport

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/12/science/acorn-woodpeckers-wars.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Acorn Woodpeckers are well known for storing food and the territory they need to do it. When territory is up for grabs, war breaks out with fierce battles between groups of Acorn Woodpeckers. The dark side of bird behavior as they fight for their rights.

Birds are dropping dead in New Mexico, potentially in the 'hundreds of thousands'

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/animal-news/birds-are-dropping-dead-new-mexico-potentially-hundreds-thousands-n1240116?cid=db_npd_nn_fb_fbbot&fbclid=IwAR2X5t8CoPA84vD-1faP7xlgAPFx5Rl8Zi5BRlt4DPlzscnUWuAc2LHC2vw

Being a bird can be tough. Witness a huge die-off in New Mexico that scientists are working to understand. Climate change, wildfires, and other ideas are on the table. Nature can be tough and massive die-offs are a potential problem for many species, especially during migration.

The Surprising Reason Thousands Of Birds Dropped Dead Across The Southwest

<https://www.kut.org/post/surprising-reason-thousands-birds-dropped-dead-across-southwest>

This article (includes audio) explains the reason for bird deaths in the Southwest (follow-up to the previous article).

Newfound brain structure explains why some birds are so smart and maybe even self-aware

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/newfound-brain-structure-explains-why-some-birds-are-so-smart-and-maybe-even-self-aware#:~:text=Now%2C%20researchers%20have%20found%20a.already%20being%20hailed%20as%20groundbreaking>

"Bird Brain" is not such a bad moniker, based on the results of research on birds' brains. Researchers have found an area in birds' brains that resembles our mammalian neocortex and may work similarly. Read on for some interesting insight.

This rare bird is male on one side and female on the other

<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/bird-male-female-grosbeak-gynandromorph>

Many of you have heard or read about this; here is an article about it.

WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2020 - 2021

By Tyler Hoar

Source: Finch Research Network - <https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2020>

GENERAL FORECAST 2020-2021

It looks to be a flight year for several species in the East. Most cone crops average poor to fair from Lake Superior eastward with Eastern White Pine being the exception. Spruce crops increase west from Lake Superior from fair to excellent in Western Canada and Alaska. White-winged Crossbills and often Pine Siskins prefer to move east or west rather than go south in search of cone crops. Many crossbills and siskins may have already relocated to Northwestern Ontario and across the boreal forest to Alaska where spruce cone crops are abundant. White Birch crops are poor to fair across most of the boreal forest implying a flight of redpolls south. Extensive spruce budworm outbreaks in Quebec and scattered smaller outbreaks westward through the Great Lakes and Manitoba appear to be providing Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches with an abundant food source during breeding season. Purple Finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches in the east are currently moving south in numbers. See individual forecasts for other finches and further details.



Pine Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*)

INDIVIDUAL FORECASTS

Forecasts apply mainly to Ontario and adjacent provinces and states. Three irruptive non-finch passerines whose movements are often linked to finches are also discussed. Follow finch wanderings this fall and winter on eBird.

PINE GROSBEAK: There should not be a flight of Pine Grosbeak south this winter. There is a good crop of Mountain-ash across the boreal forest. However, the crop appears to be a mosaic of poor to bumper crops scattered across the whole boreal forest. Small movements of grosbeaks wandering from areas with a poor crop in search of areas of better berry crop may provide birders with small numbers of the species outside the boreal forest. Individuals wandering southward will look for European Mountain-ash berries and small ornamental crabapples. At feeders they prefer black oil sunflower seeds.

PURPLE FINCH: The worst kept secret, most Purple Finches will migrate south out of Eastern Canada this winter. Reports of early movement of this species into the border states have been occurring for weeks. At the same time, one of our regular contributors reported abnormally high numbers of Purple Finches in Northeastern Ontario. While east at Tadoussac Quebec, good movements of Purple Finches southwestward are being observed. With Spruce Budworm outbreaks becoming widespread in the eastern boreal forest, the Purple Finches appear to be benefiting from an abundant food source during breeding season.

(continued on next page)

WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2020 - 2021

(Continued)

RED CROSSBILL: Red Crossbills are currently fairly widespread in Central Ontario to southern Maritimes and northeastern states mainly feeding in areas of heavy white pine crop. Red Crossbills should shift southward some as the white pine crop is depleted. Don't expect to see much in the way of any irruption from the west, but expect to continue to see some numbers of Type 10 and very small numbers of types 1, 2 and 3 mixed in here and there. Type 2, and perhaps 4, should be a bit more common in the western Great Lakes States. The types are usually impossible to identify without recordings of their flight calls. Recordings can be made with a smartphone and identified to type. Matt Young (may6@cornell.edu or info@finchnetwork.org) will identify types if you email him your recordings or upload them to an eBird checklist. Recordings uploaded to eBird checklists are deposited in the Macaulay Library.

Matt Young's guide to Red Crossbill call types is provided in the links below. I'm happy to announce that Matt and his team have launched a new nonprofit organization dedicated to the study and conservation of finches: Finch Research Network (FiRN) – <https://finchnetwork.org/>.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: The Crossbill Pendulum has swung west for the winter of 2020-21. An excellent crop of White and Black Spruce from northwestern Ontario to Alaska should contain the majority of White-winged Crossbills this winter. Throughout the boreal forest from Lake Superior, eastward spruce crops are mostly poor with areas of patchy fair crops and widespread fair Tamarack crops. Crossbills remaining in the East may move south of the boreal and areas with cone-laden spruces (all species) should be watched.

COMMON AND HOARY REDPOLLS: Common and Hoary Redpoll information has been affected by the pandemic. With travel to the north highly restricted due to the pandemic, widespread information on the extent of the Swamp Birch crop is limited. The little information that was gathered was of a heavy crop in northeastern Ontario. This birch crop could stop the redpolls' movement south if it is extensive. The good news is the White and Yellow Birch crop is poor to fair throughout most of the boreal and southern Canadian forests. If the redpolls move on from the Swamp Birch crop, expect a moderate to good flight south out of the boreal forest. Watch for redpolls on birches, in weedy fields and at bird feeders offering nyger and black oil sunflower seeds. Watch for Hoaries in flocks of Common Redpolls. See link below for photos and identification marks of Common and Hoary Redpoll subspecies.

PINE SISKIN: Large numbers of siskins are currently being reported in areas with excellent spruce crops in the western boreal forest. The siskins will likely remain concentrated in Western Canada with its heavy spruce cone crops for the winter. The smaller numbers remaining in the eastern boreal forest should move southward looking for food. At feeders they prefer nyger seeds in silo feeders.

(continued on next page)

WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2020 - 2021

(Continued)

EVENING GROSBEEK: This spectacular winter finch appears to be on the move this winter. Its breeding population appears to be increasing in Eastern Canada westward to Manitoba due to increasing outbreaks of spruce budworm with large severe outbreaks in eastern Quebec. Visual count observations of grosbeaks moving primarily towards the southwest by Tadoussac Bird Observatory in Quebec, are reported to be the highest early fall numbers recorded in 25 years. Expect flights of Evening Grosbeaks into southern Ontario, southern Quebec, Maritime Provinces, New York and New England States, with some finches going farther south into the United States. At feeders they prefer black oil sunflower seeds. Away from feeders Evening Grosbeaks will look for maple and ash trees still holding keys. See link below for Evening Grosbeak Call Types.

IRRUPTIVE PASSERINES — Movements of these three passerines are often linked to the boreal finches.

BLUE JAY: This will be an average to good flight along the north shorelines of Lakes Ontario and Erie. Beechnut and hazelnut crops are poor. The acorn crop is widespread ranging from poor to good in volume, with areas of the Adirondacks and Algonquin Park reporting a good crop of acorns.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: This species has been irrupting south since mid-August and continues as this forecast is written. Individuals have made it as far as Oklahoma and Alabama. With cone crops in the eastern boreal forest mostly poor, expect this species to continue to move southward. At feeders, this species prefers black oil seeds, suet, and peanuts.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Most Bohemians will likely stay in the north because native Mountain-ash berry crops are good and other berry crops range from fair to good across the boreal forest. In recent winters, however, Bohemians have been coming south to forage on reliable annual crops of abundant Buckthorn (*Rhamnus*) berries. This species will also forage on planted European Mountain-ash berries and ornamental crabapples. Small numbers will probably arrive mid to late winter in traditional areas from Central Ontario eastward into the Maritime Provinces and northern New England.

Finch Information Links:

1. Subspecies of Common and Hoary Redpolls – ID Tips and Photos: <http://www.jeaniron.ca/2015/redpollsRP.htm>
2. Crossbills of North America: Species and Red Crossbill Call Types: <https://ebird.org/news/crossbills-of-north-america-species-and-red-crossbill-call-types/>
3. Finch Research Network: <https://finchnetwork.org/>
4. Finch Facts, Seed Crops, and Irruptions: <http://www.jeaniron.ca/2012/winterfinches.htm>
5. Evening Grosbeak Call Types: <https://finchnetwork.org/species/grosbeaks/the-evening-grosbeak-project>

BIRD ID QUIZ

(Winter 2020-2021)



A) _____



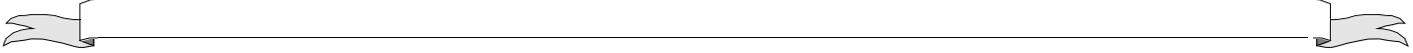
B) _____



C) _____

For the answers and explanation for this issue's quiz see Page 37

No Peeking!



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

The board met via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. President Don Burlett welcomed our new Advocacy Officer, Erin Parker, and our soon-to-be-new newsletter editor, Guadalupe Cummins.

The board discussed a couple of possibilities to run OAS officer elections in October considering that “live” membership meetings have been suspended and are being conducted via Zoom.

Our proposed affiliation with National Audubon is still in a frustrating delay.

The board members agreed that it is time to have some means for members to pay dues electronically in addition to more traditional means, such as cash or check; electronic methods will also be useful to receive donations. Changes will be implemented as soon as possible.

Because in-person membership meetings are not possible, regularly scheduled board meetings and extra membership meetings will be via Zoom until further notice. Members will be able to attend Zoom meetings and will also be able to view recorded programs on OAS’s website and the new OAS YouTube channel.

Dr. Greg Gossick, OAS’s Seven Ponds Nature Center Chapter Representative, reported that the nature center has been offering limited-participation bird walks each week; they also held their regularly scheduled butterfly count on July 4, 2020. The holiday auction scheduled for December 5 is on hold; other fund-raising possibilities are being investigated.

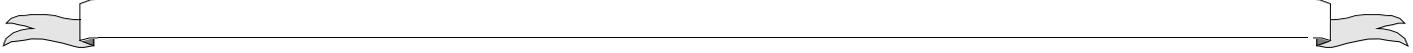
Conservation and Environment Officer Jerry Rogers conducted a summer bird survey at the request of the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy and plans to do another survey in autumn. He is also urging the local invasive-species management agency to address the excessive common reed (*Phragmites australis*) growth at the American Center marsh, which is preventing many birds from using the area.

Young Birders Club field trips were held in July and August, adhering to participation limits and other precautions due to the pandemic. YBC events will continue to be held following similar precautions.

OAS has purchased a number of posters about Wolf Awareness Week to use for educational purposes.

OAS members conducted butterfly surveys for Waste Management, Inc. (WMI) to assist them with “Wildlife at Work” certifications for two facilities: Eagle Valley facility in Oakland County and Pine Tree Acres facility in Macomb County. WMI has promised a donation to OAS as a thank-you.

Doris Applebaum
Secretary



**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
NOVEMBER 19, 2020**

The board met via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Frustratingly, our affiliation with National Audubon is still not finalized.

We have a new Conservation/Environment Officer, Greg Petrosky, and a new newsletter editor, Guadalupe Cummins. We also have a newly established board position of Advocacy Officer. This position has been filled by Erin Parker.

Programs for all “primary” membership meetings have been scheduled through July 2021. “Secondary” membership meetings, two weeks after the main meetings, are also being scheduled, to provide additional interesting programs to members during the pandemic. For the duration of the pandemic, all meetings will be held via Zoom.

OAS memberships can now be paid via PayPal on the OAS website. This change was implemented to offer convenience to our members.

The Young Birders Club held eight field trips during 2020, despite the pandemic, while observing all necessary safety measures. Unfortunately, the number of participants had to be limited and at one field trip six people were turned away.

OAS is once again holding field trips for adults, which were suspended when the pandemic started. Some field trips were held in October and November, and several more have been scheduled through the early months of 2021. Also, the 121st Christmas Bird Count will be held on December 19. All of these events require that pandemic-oriented safety measures be followed.

Though things have been rather quiet on the birding front, Social Media Administrator Dan Gertiser has been working diligently to keep our Facebook page updated and fresh.

Website Editor Hannah Dunbar reported that people from 16 different countries have visited our website in recent months. Also, membership meetings that have been held via Zoom are now available for viewing on the website.

Seven Ponds Nature Center Chapter Representative Dr. Greg Gossick reported that the annual holiday auction that usually occurs in December has been canceled. On the bright side, with schools unable to send students to the nature center, the nature center’s naturalists have been visiting the schools.

Doris Applebaum
Secretary



If you are an Amazon user and would like to help benefit OAS, simply [CLICK HERE](#) add us to your favorite charity list and then shop! A percentage of your purchases will be donated to OAS and will help support our organization.

If you aren't using Amazon Smile, try it out. We'll appreciate it!

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

Our membership drive for 2021 is underway!

You can renew your membership dues by mailing the form on page 38 or renew online, on our website, using PayPal.

Mail renewal forms to:

Oakland Audubon Society
C/O Jenifer Benke
2145 Colony Club Ct.
West Bloomfield, MI 48322

If you would like to check the status of your membership, please email Jen Benke at:
scubadu9900@yahoo.com.

Thanks to everyone who helps sustain OAS with your membership contributions. We would be nowhere without you!

Your Membership At Work

A thank-you letter was received from Seven Ponds Nature Center for donations OAS provided. Thank you for helping OAS support local conservation minded organizations.

We appreciate your interest in Seven Ponds Nature Center, and we gratefully acknowledge your contribution. The nature center serves the community as a sanctuary for plants and animals, a living classroom for environmental education, and a peaceful retreat for visitors. The center places a special emphasis on programs for young people, and serves thousands of children each year. Please visit Seven Ponds whenever you can, not only to participate in our activities but to enjoy the peaceful beauty.

Your contribution may qualify for tax deduction within the legal limits of the law.

*Seven Ponds Nature Center
Board of Directors*

"The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces."

Aldo Leopold

Dear Friends at O.A.S.,

Thank you for your generous membership contribution. Of course, as always we appreciate the steadfast support of our faithful members and donors, but even more so during this critical time.

Your generosity helps ensure our ability to continue to serve our community. We value our relationship with neighboring Audubon chapters, and we appreciate YOU!

Most sincerely,

Daryl

P.S. Bird On!



UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS & PROGRAMS

Date	Time	Program	Location *
Tues., December 8	7:00 p.m.	Technology & Birding	Via Zoom
Tues., January 12	7:00 p.m.	Black Tern Monitoring	Via Zoom
Tues., January 26	7:00 p.m.	The Last Butterflies	Via Zoom
Tues., February 9	7:00 p.m.	Northern Peru & the High Andes	Via Zoom

* Go to the “meetings” page on our website to connect to each Zoom Meeting. Meetings open at 6:30pm and talks begin at 7:00pm.

When possible, monthly membership meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month (except December, May, July and August) at 7:00 p.m., at the First United Methodist Church, 1589 West Maple Road, Birmingham, in the children’s room, Room 132. The facility is located on the south side of Maple Road between Southfield and Cranbrook Roads. There is plenty of lighted, free parking. Our meetings are free and open to the public. For meeting cancellation information, check our website, call a board member, or call the church at (248) 646-1200.

Bird Quiz Answers for Winter 2020-2021 Quiz on Page 32

This issue’s photo quiz answers are: a) Black Scoter, b) Surf Scoter, and c) White-winged Scoter.

Explanation: Yes, these are the females and always a bit more challenging than the males.

- a) Fairly small (difficult with this picture), straight bill, brownish overall, pale face, and neatly delineated dark cap.
- b) Two vertical light patches on the face, and bill more sloping than the Black Scoter.
- c) White spots on face (doesn’t have a “capped” look) and white wing patches.

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:

OAS MEMBERSHIP

C/O JENIFER BENKE

2145 COLONY CLUB CT.

WEST BLOOMFIELD, MICHIGAN 48322

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