



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
January/February 2009

The 62nd Ann Arbor CBC – December 20, 2008

By Jacco Gelderloos

What a difference a day makes! On the Friday preceding this year's count much of southern Michigan, including the Ann Arbor area, was blanketed by some 10 inches of fresh snow. On the day after, our area was struck by vicious winds that blew the snow around (seriously reducing visibility) and made for wind chills in the -25F degree range! By comparison, count day was downright pleasant: temperatures hovered around the 20-degree mark, winds were light, and the sun even peeked through on occasion! The winter weather leading up to the count likely did affect the count in a number of other ways. A cold spell that started mid-November had left most standing water frozen solid and the thick layer of snow made food sources difficult to access for many bird species (not to mention the driving headaches it caused for many counters!). As always, the intrepid owling contingent was out and about in the pre-dawn hours – the reward was 46 owls of three species, both right about average for our count. In the day-time portion of the count, 58 counters and 8 feeder watchers tallied an additional 74 full species, 1 hybrid, and 1 sp. (a *buteo*), for a count day species total of 77, breaking the all-time record set back in 1976! Moreover, an additional 4 species were tallied during the count week, for a grand total of 81 species, also an all-time high! By all appearances, it seems the cold and snowy weather may have been helpful by concentrating birds in the few areas where food and cover were available. The total number of birds counted was 42,854, which was well above the 10-year average, by a margin of about 6,500 – as always, the bulk of this number was counted at the city's crow roost near Pioneer High, where almost 26,000 American Crows congregated!

In spite of the cold, this year's count racked up a pretty amazing variety of birds tied to water: 13 species of waterfowl, 2 gulls, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, American Coot, and Belted Kingfisher were tallied. It seems fair to say that the



extensive ice cover forced waterfowl in the few locations with open water: as always, the Huron River came through, but the relatively small body of water at Little Lake in the Jackson Ave. corridor certainly made its claim to being named waterfowl hot-spot of the count! That said, almost every single species was present in numbers well below the 10-year average, with many birds having departed for warmer climes farther south. Notable exception was Trumpeter Swan, which posted an all-time high count of 28 this year – this species has been showing a very promising upward trend in its Ann Arbor CBC counts and appears to be competing well with Mute Swans (25 this year). *(continued on pg. 4)*

Varied Thrush

Photo by Soon Hotaling (count week) 1

Contact

President

Ray Stocking
(734) 973-3155
President@washtenawaudubon.org

Vice President & Programs

Mike Sefton
(734) 677-3275
Vp-programs@washtenawaudubon.org

Treasurer

Ellie Shappirio
(734) 665-6613
Treasurer@washtenawaudubon.org

Secretary

Dana Novak
(734) 424-9305
Danacnovak13@yahoo.com

Field Trips

Cathy Carroll
(313) 595-4562 (after 7pm)
Fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org

Membership

Sherri Smith
(734) 994-6287
Membership@washtenawaudubon.org

Newsletter

Bryn Martin
(734) 454-0439
Brynmartin@sbcglobal.net

Education

Dea Armstrong
(734) 668-2513
Ddarm@umich.edu

Stewardship

Open

Representative to Michigan Audubon Society

Lathe Clafflin
masrep@washtenawaudubon.org

Publication

WAS Newsletter is published in Jan., March, May, July, Sept. and Nov. Email or send submissions by the 15th of the month prior to publication to:
Bryn Martin
6241 Runnymede
Canton, MI 48187

President's Letter *By Ray Stocking, WAS President*

Happy New Year! Since our last publication in November we have enjoyed a Thanksgiving holiday, visited the Salem Township Landfill for the annual "gull-fest," hosted the 62nd annual Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count, seen the winter solstice come and go, enjoyed some rare visitors including a Varied Thrush and Black Scoter, and celebrated the many wonderful holidays that embraced us in December. I wish each and every one of you a prosperous New Year with many new check marks on your bird lists.

One additional new item since our last issue is the creation of an official executive committee for the Safe Passage program here in Washtenaw County. I have often discussed my desire to have such a program in place, and I am pleased to announce that the wheels are now in motion to "turn out the lights" for our migratory friends, starting this March. Please join me in thanking Will Weber of Ann Arbor for agreeing to serve as Safe Passage Program Director for WAS.

Project Safe Passage will help birds-in-flight when owners and managers of five-story or higher buildings turn off their lights (or close curtains and blinds) above the fifth floor between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. during the spring and fall migrations. The dates designated for the spring and fall migrations are March 15 through May 31 and August 15 through October 31. Studies indicate that the lights on tall buildings confuse the navigation systems of birds. Birds unlucky enough to have such buildings in their flight path will circle the buildings repeatedly, and frequently die either of exhaustion or from direct collision with the illuminated building. According to scientists at the Field Museum in Chicago, this mortality could be reduced by 80% if the building lights were turned off.

Our initial plan of action, as presented by Will Weber to the WAS Executive Committee earlier this month, will embrace the concept of "Safe Passage" that facilitates minimizing human-influenced avian mortality in Washtenaw County during the designated migration periods. Based on the commitment we receive from volunteers, the Safe Passage program may also address issues such as habitat management in public locations (e.g., the Ann Arbor Airport Wheeler Service Center Landfill, city parks), backyards, and other landscapes. Additional goals include wind turbine monitoring and the reduction of avian mortality caused by unleashed pets such as dogs and cats. And, at some point, we would like to incorporate into this program the general problem of avian window collisions.

I am thrilled that Will is taking on this very important role and I commit to him Washtenaw Audubon's complete support as he moves forward quickly.

(continued on next page)

Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Bird Report

<http://birdingonthe.net/birdmail.html>

Scroll down to Michigan, Mich-listers, and SE Michigan

(continued from previous page)

Special thanks also goes out to members of the new executive committee of the Safe Passage Washtenaw County program: Will Weber, Tim McKay, Sherri Smith, Dea Armstrong, and Mike Sefton.

If you have questions about Safe Passage or would like to volunteer your time to this important initiative, please contact Will Weber directly by email at will@journeys-intl.com.

Finally, please consider joining us for two very exciting programs in January and February. I cannot think of a better way to beat the winter blues than hearing about “Wanderings in Mexico” on a cold January night. Details are listed on the back page. I hope to see you there.

Good birding!

Ray

Cerulean Warbler Monitoring ***Waterloo/Pinckney/Sharonville Important Bird Area (IBA)***

Members of Washtenaw Audubon Society are invited to help monitor the Waterloo/Pinckney/Sharonville Important Bird Area (IBA) for Cerulean Warblers this coming spring. All volunteers will be trained free of charge and will be assigned to at least one pre-determined route. The volunteers will be required to survey the site(s) at least two times between May 20th and June 20th. Those interested should contact Thomas Funke, Director of Conservation at the Michigan Audubon Society at 517.886.9144 or by email at tfubke@michiganaudubon.org.

Training will take place at 6:00 PM on Wednesday April 15th prior to the start of the WAS monthly gathering at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 North Dixboro Rd., Ann Arbor.

Washtenaw Audubon Society thanks you in advance for your consideration in helping Michigan Audubon with this important survey.



Cerulean Warbler
Photo by Phil Swanson

Are you subscribed to Facebook on the web? If so, please consider joining the Washtenaw Audubon Society's Facebook site. We offer rare sightings, unusual photos and stories not normally seen in the newsletter or at the Birders Listserve. All are welcome to join!

(Ann Arbor CBC continued from pg. 1)

In any case, based on our recent count data, it is certainly holding its own against its more aggressive Old World relative.

An impressive number of diurnal raptors was found on the count: 9 species on count day, 1 more during count week. Some species were present in numbers below average (Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk), even way below average (American Kestrel, continuing a serious downward slide). On the other hand, the positive post-DDT population trends for Bald Eagle (now almost annual on the count) and Peregrine Falcon (4th consecutive year seen, with a high count of 3 this year) continued, and the 9 Turkey Vultures (another high) can perhaps be considered indicative of that species' well-documented trend to winter farther north in recent years.

Galliforms continued two divergent trends: on the one hand, the 3 'traditional' species (pheasant, bobwhite, and Ruffed Grouse) have become uncommon to the point where only pheasants are still expected on our count, and in single-digit numbers at that. On the other hand, Wild Turkey posted a very respectable total of 29 – snow cover likely helped the effort here by forcing the birds out into the open.

Woodpeckers posted some remarkable results this year. The total number counted was well above the 10-year average (though shy of the 400-mark of a few years ago), and this year was the first time ever that all 7 of the local picids were found during the count period. The count week Red-headed Woodpecker at Wayne Fisher's feeders was the first since

1998, but the clear highlight in this category was our CBC's long-awaited first Pileated Woodpecker, found by Andy Johnson and Kathy & Tom Stephens in the far western end of the count circle.

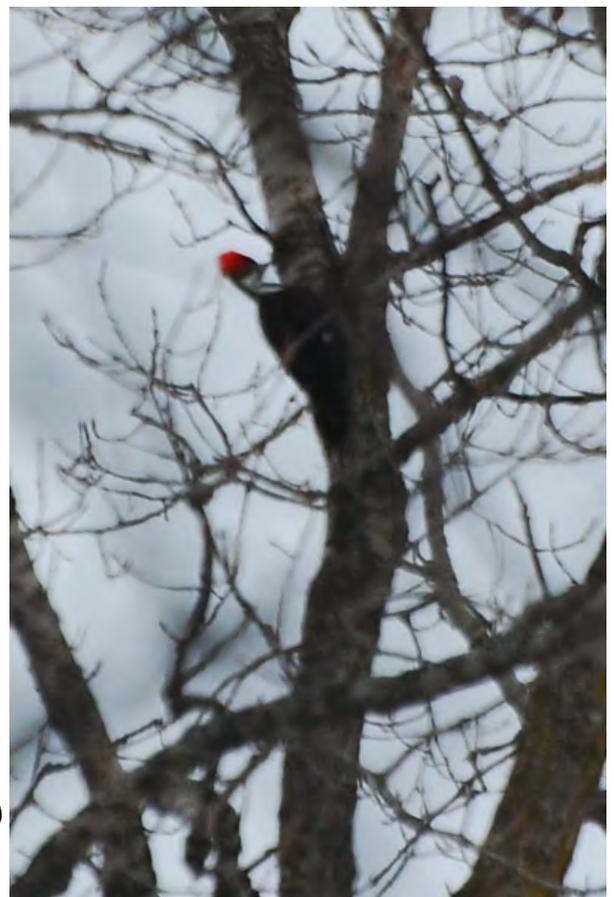
To be expected in a year with a high species count, birders found a number of unusual songbirds. Clearly, the cold and snow depressed numbers of a few species, but this deficiency in numbers was probably made up for by the fact that many were now concentrated at feeders. As a result, most passerines were tallied in average numbers, with a few extremes on either side of the trend. Frugivores put in a good showing due to a good berry crop in the area – this category also featured two of the biggest highlights of the count. Last recorded in 1985, a Brown Thrasher was a great find for our count and provided for the lone mimid of this year's CBC. However, this very impressive record was overshadowed by the count's first ever Varied Thrush, seen by Paula Hotaling at their feeders during count week. Though present for almost a month at the time of the count, this very elusive bird was missed on count day - it had/had been exceedingly difficult to locate, even in its rather small stomping grounds on the city's northwest side. Likely indicative of the concentration of birds at feeders, Tufted Titmice posted the best year ever, with a whopping 268 reported.

(Continued on next page)



Red-headed Woodpecker (Above)

Photo by Wayne Fisher



Pileated Woodpecker (Right)

Photo by Andy Johnson

(Continued from previous page)

Emberizids were found in unprecedented variety (if not total numbers), 11 species in all! Highlights include: 2 Eastern Towhees (with several more reported from just outside the count circle), 1 Field Sparrow (last seen in 1998), 1 Fox Sparrow, 4 White-crowned Sparrows (high count), and 1 Lapland Longspur. The latter was associating with a flock of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings, both of which were present in surprisingly small numbers in the count circle. Tantalizingly, shortly after Christmas a flock of hundreds of longspurs was found just west of our count circle, along M-52 near Manchester, reminding counters of what could have been....

This year's count turned out to be unremarkable for irruptive species. For one, Red-breasted Nuthatches were back down to a single-digit tally, after last year's (very conservative) 34 birds. The only northern finch species found was Pine Siskin, although they were present in near-record numbers (262) and found in 6 out of 8 count areas. Since the count, other species have trickled into the region with reports of White-winged Crossbill, Purple Finch, and Common Redpoll – perhaps these will be recorded next year!

In summary, this year's count was wildly successful: a record number of species (81), two new species (Pileated Woodpecker and Varied Thrush), numerous uncommon species, and a very respectable total number of individuals. For a detailed list of this year's results, please see the spreadsheet below; for local, regional, or national population trends and historical Christmas count data, please visit the National Audubon Society's website at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>.

On an administrative note, I would like to solicit some input and assistance from you, WAS members and CBC participants. Although throughout the years it has enjoyed one of the highest participation rates and can boast one of the longest running histories in the state, this is not accomplished without the efforts of a large number of people. To ensure continued success, there are a couple of aspects of our count for which I would like your help.

First of all, the potluck has been the fitting culmination of the count since its inception, and a lot of work goes into its organization and execution. This year, the event rather got away from me, with quite a bit of last-minute scrambling. Clearly, this does not do the event justice and only due to a small number of people who stepped in to pick up the slack (you know who you are – thank you all very much!), did the event go off without a problem this year. I would like to nail down a number of items on the potluck to-do list, starting with the selection of a designated potluck coordinator. This person would be in charge of the event (room preparation, and keeping the CBC dinner supplies), assisted by volunteers. If you would like to sign up as a prep volunteer or as the coordinator, please contact me so we can sit down and get the new situation worked out in detail for the next count.

Secondly, I would like to start work on the creation of a pool of back-up area leaders for the count. This to ensure that there is always somebody available to step in if one of our current area leaders is unable to make it to the count. To build experience, I would like to implement something akin to an internship system in which prospective area leaders are brought up to speed on all of the requirements of the function. In most cases, tagging along with an experienced area leader will be sufficient, along with a brief walk-through of the record-keeping aspect of things. On my end, I will be compiling a record of must-visit locations for each count area, so that there is a ready source of information for each area and fill-in area leaders can hit the ground running. Should you be interested in participating in this pilot project, please send me an email at JGelderloos@yahoo.com.

Thank you all for your help with this year's count – I hope to see all of you back next year, for the 63rd edition!
(Spreadsheet on next page)



Varied Thrush (seen earlier than Count Week) Photo by Mike Sefton

62nd Ann Arbor CBC Results Spreadsheet

Canada Goose	2829	Peregrine Falcon	3 (HC)	Winter Wren	1
Mute Swan	25	American Coot	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	23
Trumpeter Swan	28 (HC)	Sandhill Crane	25 (CW, US)	Eastern Bluebird	102
Wood Duck	2	Ring-billed Gull	22	Hermit Thrush	6
Gadwall	5	American Herring Gull	1	American Robin	1601
American Wigeon	2	Rock Pigeon	550	Varied Thrush	1 (CW)
American Black Duck	13	Mourning Dove	482	Brown Thrasher	1 (US)
Mallard	862	Eastern Screech-Owl	38	European Starling	3928
Am. Black Duck x Mallard	1	Great Horned Owl	7	Cedar Waxwing	396
Bufflehead	5	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	Eastern Towhee	2 (US)
Common Goldeneye	9	Belted Kingfisher	5	American Tree Sparrow	470
Hooded Merganser	21	Red-headed Woodpecker	1 (CW, US)	Field Sparrow	1 (US)
Common Merganser	12	Red-bellied Woodpecker	112	Fox Sparrow	1 (US)
Ruddy Duck	3	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	Song Sparrow	29
Ring-necked Pheasant	4	Downy Woodpecker	191	Swamp Sparrow	3
Wild Turkey	29	Hairy Woodpecker	31	White-throated Sparrow	105
Pied-billed Grebe	2	Northern Flicker	29	White-crowned Sparrow	4 (HC)
Great Blue Heron	4	Pileated Woodpecker	1 (HC, US)	Dark-eyed Junco	726
Turkey Vulture	9 (HC)	Northern Shrike	1	Lapland Longspur	1 (US)
Bald Eagle	1	Blue Jay	628	Snow Bunting	13
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	American Crow	25630	Northern Cardinal	425
Cooper's Hawk	18	Horned Lark	27	Common Grackle	1 (US)
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	Black-capped Chickadee	664	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Red-tailed Hawk	60	Tufted Titmouse	268 (HC)	House Finch	241
Rough-legged Hawk	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	Pine Siskin	262
Buteo sp.	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	227	American Goldfinch	709
American Kestrel	1	Brown Creeper	6	House Sparrow	880
Merlin	1 (CW)	Carolina Wren	37	Total	42855

CW = count week only

HC = high count

US = unusual species

Magee Marsh with Pete Dunne *By Harold Eyster*

On November 15th Mike Sefton, Lathe Claflin, my sister and I drove to the Toledo Zoo for the Toledo Naturalists Association's 75th anniversary dinner and program. When we arrived at the Zoo (after getting slightly lost) we were driven by Zoo van to "the Lodge" where we ate dinner. When everyone had eaten their fill, we walked to the auditorium where the guest speaker, Pete Dunne, would be speaking. Pete is the Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory and founder of the World Series of birding, and a well-known author of numerous books and essays. The title of his speech was "Hello Al."

All week I had been wondering what the title could possibly mean. It turned out to be a fictional conversation between Pete Dunne and Alexander Wilson, often considered the founder of American ornithology. Pete's talk showed what birding used to be like in the early eighteen hundreds, when there were no field guides, no House Finches, and when there were no people who would call themselves "birders." Contrasting with the birding of yore, there are now numerous books on the subject of birds and millions of "birders." The talk was creative, and very interesting. It was a great speech. You can find out more about the Toledo Naturalists' Association and their future programs at www.toledonaturalist.org.

The next morning my father drove my sister and me back down to Toledo, arriving at the Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO), near the entrance to Magee Marsh, for a birding field trip led by Pete Dunne, and Kenn Kaufman, as well as his wife, Kim. We were driven down the long driveway to Magee Marsh in BSBO's "birding bus", the perfect birder transport. We passed a very dark Great Horned Owl sitting atop a snag not twenty feet from the road. We saw many Bonaparte's Gulls, sifting tern-style through the turbulent air. There wasn't much to see on Lake Erie, just a couple of Ruddy Ducks and scaup. At 9:30 we drove to Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge where we saw huge flocks of Pintail, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, and Green-winged Teal, but unlike in the spring when you can drive along a dike and the ducks show no fear, feeding not ten feet away. Today, with hunting season upon them, as soon as ducks see the van, they flew into the air in a well articulated, but frenzied flight. We saw a large flock of gulls circling quite a way off, one gull was especially light, maybe a Glaucous. We drove closer, arrived at a bridge, got out of the van and into the swirling snow. It was cold, but we were kept warm with Pete's stories and jokes. We saw the flock of gulls, closer now but we could see no Glaucous, however there was a Swamp Sparrow calling, a couple of Great Egrets, and some Hooded Mergansers parading in the frigid water, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves.

(continued on next page)



*Harold Eyster with
Pete Dunne (right)
Photo by Mike Sefton*

(Continued from previous page)

The air was broken by beautiful calls, the calls were Trumpeter Swans floating not far off, six adults and five juveniles. One juvenile still had profuse amounts of pink on its bill. Farther away were about one hundred drifting Tundra Swans, but they were silent.

At the conclusion of the outing, we ate lunch at Blackberry Corners, a small restaurant near Magee Marsh. My father and sister were waiting there; they had gone birding in a different part of Ottawa, and had seen a Northern Mockingbird which, according to Kenn, was more uncommon than any bird that we had seen. Their discovery highlighted the magic and democracy of birding. Even though my group had two of the best birders in the country searching the sky, it was my eleven year old sister who saw the day's "best bird!"

WAS field trip to the Salem Landfill *Article and photo by Harold Eyster*

On December 13th about fourteen people braved the cold, wind-ravaged dump. But the gulls seemed to have slept late, for there were only about two hundred, flying over the top of the landfill, and they all seemed to be either Herring or Ring-billed. Other birds included Horned Larks, a small flock of American Pipits and a lone Snow Bunting. We were getting back into the van to leave, when Rob French, the leader, who had not climbed into the vehicle yelled "Lesser Black-backed!" We all jumped out and watched as the Lesser Black-backed Gull, a lifer for some, soared amidst the other gulls. It was easy to pick out, with the dark trailing edge of its wing, slaty mantle and upper wing. It provided good views for everyone. We then headed to Gotfredson Road where we saw a beautiful dark phase Rough-legged Hawk. Next, we saw a Merlin sitting no more than twenty feet up in a tree, right on the side of the road. We watched as it ate the leg of a bird in one gulp.

Merlin



Celebrating The Art of John James Audubon

The name John James Audubon is synonymous with the study and preservation of American wildlife. His artistic masterpiece, *The Birds of America* folio, and his lifetime of written journals stand as an unsurpassed contribution to the world of fine art, natural science, and American history and literature.

John James Audubon's art and aesthetic legacy continue to amaze and inspire new generations.

Plan to see the nationally traveling exhibition, John James Audubon: American Artist and Naturalist, at the **Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History** from June 6 through August 29, 2009. The exhibition traces Audubon's life and development as an artist (1785-1851) and features 60 Double Elephant Folio-sized, hand colored engravings from his masterwork, *The Birds of America*. Also included in the exhibition are original oil paintings, personal letters, documents, photographs and personal artifacts from Audubon's life.

This nationally touring exhibition makes only one stop in Michigan.

It will capture the attention of visitors interested in conservation, the environment, history and art. This exciting exhibition will also feature elegant wood carvings from the Andy Andrews Collection and decorative taxidermy mounts from the Museum's collections.

This traveling exhibition is from the John James Audubon Museum and State Park in Henderson, Kentucky. It was organized and is being circulated by Art Services 2000 Ltd., based in Florida.



The Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History is located in the Ella W. Sharp Park at 3225 Fourth St. in Jackson, Michigan. The Museum hours are 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Museum can be reached by phone at (517) 787-2320 or via the Museum website at www.ellasharp.org



Harold Eyster, Mike Sefton and Andy Johnson on Clinton Road looking at a mixed flock of Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs. The three "boys" and I did a Big Day on Jan 11 (the day after the big snow) and we were looking at what would turn out to be the final new species for the day (Lapland Longspur). I thought the sun looked pretty neat and snapped the shot. BTW, we broke the old record(55) by 7 species!

Photo by Dea Armstrong

January Big Day Results *By Harold Eyster and Andy Johnson*

Dea Armstrong, Mike Sefton, Andy Johnson and Harold Eyster did a Big Day on Jan 11th, hoping to break the Washtenaw county record of 55 species for January. It turned out to be a beautiful, snowy day, and we ended with a new record of 62 species, opening and closing with Eastern Screech-Owls.

We started at Portage Lake, lucky to glimpse a fly-by Red-shouldered Hawk. Later, at the Discovery Center, we picked up two pairs of Purple Finches frequenting the feeders. We stopped at the Cedar Lake campground off Pierce Rd. and got about 50 White-winged Crossbills, as well as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

We went to Little Lake (off Jackson Rd.) to fill waterfowl gaps, but we took a wrong exit and in doing so, picked up an American Kestrel and Turkey Vulture. When we finally got to Little Lake we found 3 Ruddy Ducks and a pair of Wood Ducks along the far shore (east end).

We circled Burton Tower unsuccessfully for the Peregrines, and moved to the Arb, which yielded our only Carolina Wren and Hermit Thrush, as well as Trumpeter Swans and a Hooded Merganser. We then went along in search of liquid Huron, and finally added Golden-eyes, Buffleheads, Ring-billed Gulls, Common Mergansers, and a Pied-billed Grebe on Superior Rd (although we missed kingfisher, Great Blue Heron and Lesser Scaup).

We spent most of the remaining afternoon in search of field birds along Bethel Church and surrounding roads. At a small pond just east of 13360 Bethel Church Rd., we were surprised to find an EASTERN PHOEBE, our only Song Sparrows, along with a single SWAMP Sparrow, and about 10 bluebirds. We found a Rough-legged Hawk along the west side of Clinton Rd., just south of the Ervin-Stucki Preserve, as well as our final species, two Lapland Longspurs in a mixed flock of about 300 Horned Larks and Snow Buntings.

We missed Great Horned Owl, turkey, pheasant, and Brown Creeper, as well as the afore-mentioned birds.

Comment from long-time WAS member Don Chalfant (Mr. Washtenaw Big Day himself):

[T]his team didn't just break the January Big Day record, they demolished it! For those who have never tried a Big Day, appreciate what a fine accomplishment this is. The team had an added advantage, the young eyes and ears of Harold [Eyster] and Andy [Johnson].

Common Nighthawk in December: Could it be True?

By Ray Stocking and Julie Craves

Recently there was a discussion that took place on the Birders Listserve about a Common Nighthawk that was spotted in Michigan this past December. The sighting apparently was scrutinized by others and led to apparent hard feelings by the individual who posted the sighting. For those who keep track of migratory patterns of birds in the region, you will know that there has never been a Common Nighthawk ever seen in the month of December in Michigan. Granted, rare sightings similar to this do happen, such as the White-eared Hummingbird in Hamburg Twp. in August 2005 or even the Black Scoter found on Big Portage Lake this past December. Reports of these rarities generally create immediate excitement and have birders dropping everything to catch a glimpse of these special visitors. Sometimes, however, birders will downplay a rare sighting as simply a missed ID. This Common Nighthawk sighting was one of those sightings.

Having personally, and quite unintentionally, misled many fellow birders with my false sightings over the years (and there have been many!), I was pleased to see one of our local experts, Julie Craves from the Rouge River Bird Observatory, comment on the likeliness of a Common Nighthawk in Michigan this time of year. I asked Julie for permission to republish her posting for this newsletter, which she graciously agreed to. Below are her comments:

Let's talk a little bit about the ecology of Common Nighthawks so that we can understand why there has never been a single verified report of this species in winter north of South America: They feed almost exclusively at dawn and dusk. Very rarely at night or in the day. They feed exclusively while flying. Their diet is exclusively insects, the vast majority being flying ants, beetles, and homopterans (true bugs). (Unlike tanagers or Tree Swallows, for example, which will eat fruit.) Because of their large body size and foraging strategy, they have a high energy budget. Common Nighthawks arrive later in spring and depart earlier in fall than other nightjars because of their energetic needs. As the Birds of North America account states, "...A constant supply of flying insects is required for survival, a consistency available only during warm temperatures."

Suppose a nighthawk has been spending the last several months in a warmer climate where this food

supply had been continuously available, probably southern Florida. A nighthawk seen in December in Michigan would have needed this constant supply of insects, consisting mostly of the taxa stated above, for at least 4 days, given a generous flight range of 250 miles per day going straight north. This would also assume something motivated this bird to head north. Photoperiod is what typically triggers migratory behavior in birds, yet this sighting occurred during the shortest days of the year. The only possible explanation might be that this bird was somehow transported in an international flight from the south and got deposited at Metro Airport. Given the time frame involved, it's still hard to imagine that the bird would have the energy, having somehow survived that ordeal, to fly around to Livonia.

The March 2008 "nighthawk" heard by [a local birder in Ann Arbor] is very easy to explain as an American Woodcock. Perfect habitat at the location she heard it for calling woodcocks in spring migration.

I'm not trying to dump on anybody here. I think it's important to discuss "stranger than fiction" sightings because somebody being absolutely sure of what they heard/saw should not be the end of the story. In my years at my job and a columnist for Birder's World magazine, I have had countless encounters with people who are extremely certain and adamant about what they saw, from the highly improbable to the very pedestrian (e.g., I was shown a photograph of a nuthatch as "proof" that there were baby bluebirds in December). People can believe whatever they want, of course, but I think in a forum such as [the Birders Listserve], intended at least in part to be a learning experience, that the unlikely needs to be scrutinized critically.

For more on nighthawk ecology, see this reference and citations within:

Poulin, R. G., S. D. Grindal and R. M. Brigham. 1996. Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu.bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/213>>

doi:10.2173/bna.213

Julie Craves is supervisor of avian research at the Rouge River Bird Observatory at the University of Michigan Dearborn and a research associate at the university's Environmental Interpretive Center. She is the author of the book Birds of Southeast Michigan: Dearborn: Wayne County: An Annotated Checklist

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Feb. - May 2009) *Cathy Carroll, Field Trip Coordinator*

The WAS field trips are a great opportunity for anyone interested in getting outside and reacquainting yourself with all that you share the world with. After a long week at work or school - join us to restore your awareness and faith in what we work so hard to protect. All of our activities are free and open to the public; membership in the WAS is not required. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather. We do trips in the heat and the cold, including rain and snow. When introducing a field trip schedule so far in advance, there are bound to be updates and changes as the actual dates arrive. Check with our primary communication resources: birders@umich.edu and our website (click on the field trips icon) as field trips approach. Additionally we list all of our field activities in the Ann Arbor News and the Ann Arbor Observer. Join us if you can!

Feb. 6 -- 8, 2009 **Sault Ste. Marie Winter Birding Weekend:** Leaders: Lathe Claflin and Gary Siegrist Meet Friday, February 6th at 6:00 pm at the Plaza Motor Motel. Another annual favorite, this trip is a collaboration with the Jackson Audubon Society. One might wonder why anyone would travel all the way up to the Soo in February to go birding. Well, this is your time to find out what all the fuss is about. Many come away from this trip with impressive additions to their life list. Waterfowl on the St. Mary's River, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Snowy Owl and other winter owls, Boreal Chickadee and crossbills are just a few of the target species. Sometimes we freeze, sometimes we don't, sometimes we get snowed on and other times we don't. No matter what the weather, the birds are always great. There is a limit on the number of participants and we usually stay at the Plaza Motor Motel on the I-75 business spur. As the date gets closer sign up! These two guys are the UP pros. Find out why.

Mar 29, 2009 **The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge** Leader: Greg Norwood. Meet at 9:00 am at the Humbug Marsh Unit gate which is located along Jefferson Avenue at the intersection of Vreeland Road at the Trenton/Gibraltar border. The Detroit River is one of North America's most impressive ecological recovery stories and provides some of the best birding in North America. The DRIWR was created by Congress in 2001 and encompasses over 5,000 acres. The refuge contains some of the most productive wild celery beds in the river for fish and waterfowl habitat and some of the best birding areas in southeast Michigan that include lands at Lake Erie Metropark, Erie Marsh, Plum Creek, Swan Creek as well as a few others. Greg Norwood, biological technician at the refuge, will take us to the best birding spots at the Humbug Marsh Unit which is currently closed to the public. Rusty Blackbirds will be in peak migration and the influence of the Detroit River as a navigational path for birds from waterfowl to songbirds is apparent. Many will remember Greg from the Point Mouillee trip he led for us in August, 2007. Greg has excellent birding credentials from his many years working as a field ornithologist for the Rouge River Bird Observatory and from summers spent doing shorebird research on the north slope of Alaska.

Apr 09- May 28 **Nichols Arboretum for Spring Migration** 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM
There is not an assigned leader for these walks. Eight week series Thursdays from April 9, 2009 through May 28. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at 8:00 am. All are welcome. This is our fourth season monitoring spring migration through Nichols Arboretum. Join us for one or all of the walks through the Arb to follow spring migrants as they storm northward on the way to their breeding grounds. These are well-attended, leaderless walks and a great opportunity to meet and bird with others. The Arb is beautiful as spring emerges and we shake off our winter blahs. As late April merges into early May the trillium blooming throughout the wooded hillsides are spectacular. The Arb is terrific for spring migration! Please join us if you can; you won't be disappointed.

Apr 25

Salamander Hunt 10:00 AM Leader: Eddie Sanchez. Something new in 2009! Please join us for some fun and learning on a daytime salamander hunt at Hudson Mills Metropark. Eddie is the regional expert and we will have a terrific morning turning over rocks and logs to locate these secretive little amphibians. Salamanders we hope to find include: Yellow-spotted, Blue-spotted, Red-backed, Northern Four-toed and Eastern Newt. Meet at the Oak Grove parking lot located within Hudson Mills. Depending on the weather, boots or old shoes may be best for muddy conditions. I don't know if we'll be handling the salamanders we find. Just in case, please do not use any soaps, creams, detergents (?), etc. on your hands for this morning. Unless you have an annual sticker, there is a vehicle fee to enter the metropark. Please purchase an annual sticker to help support our metroparks.

**May 05-
May 26**

Tuesday Evening Birders 6 PM, Tuesdays Leaders: Dea Armstrong, Lathe Claflin, and Mike Sefton
Back by popular demand. Arguably one of our favorite spring birding events. Meet at 6:00 pm at the Miller Road/M-14 park and ride for a 6:15 pm sharp (!) departure. Dea will alternate weeks with Lathe and Mike for leading the trip. At the park and ride we breakdown into fewer cars and then drive the back roads of Washtenaw County to see some really great birds. Over the years the good birds (Red-necked Phalarope ...) and memorable sights (Sandhill Crane with young ...) are too numerous to mention. The field trip goes until dusk.

WAS's 2nd International Field Trip: South Africa! (July 31-Aug. 15, 2009)

In August of 2009 WAS will be embarking on its 2nd international field trip, this time to the beautiful country of South Africa! While the main focus will be on seeing as many birds as we can (especially the endemic species special to southern Africa and South Africa in particular) we will also be attempting to view as many species of Africa's famous mammals, as well. For this 16-day trip, you can plan on seeing 450-480 species of birds (over 100 of these birds are endemic to southern Africa!) and 40-50 species of mammal! Besides the large number of endemics, South Africa is an ideal location within Africa to go birding with its superb infrastructure for tourists (excellent accommodations, food, roads, etc...) It is the only true First World country in Africa. An example of a lodge we will be staying at (as well as many of the birds we will see) can be viewed at: www.aftongrove.co.za. The accommodations will be a lot nicer than the last WAS international field trip (to Peru) and the trip a lot less strenuous over all.

From the beautiful coastal area around Cape Town to the classic African savanna of the world-renowned Kruger National Park, to the teeming Zululand game reserves, the endemic-rich mist-belt forests of the Natal Midlands, the mangroves and mudflats along the coast to the lofty peaks of the magnificent Drakensberg. Some highlights: Ostriches, 8 species of stork, Southern Bald Ibis, Hamerkop, Taita Falcon (extremely rare world-wide), Secretarybird, over 35 species of raptors, 10 species of bustards, 3 species of crane, 4 species of turacos, 11 species of owl, mousebirds, trogons, rollers, bee-eaters, 6 species of hornbills, 7 species of barbet, drongos, 2 species of rockjumpers, 15 species of lark (most endemic), 2 species of sugarbirds, 10 species of starling, oxpeckers, 14 species of sunbirds, 14 species of weaverbirds, lions, elephants, giraffes, monkeys, bushbabies, African Wild Dogs, Cheetahs, Leopards, Hyenas, Meerkats, Hippos, Rhinos, Buffalos, and over 20 species of antelope!
For more information such as costs and what is included, a detailed trip itinerary or list of birds and mammals, do not hesitate to email Bryn Martin at brynmartin@sbcglobal.net. We hope that you will have the opportunity to share with us in this amazing experience!



Drakensberg Rockjumper



Noteworthy Local Sightings, 1 Nov 08 to 31 Dec 08 (all in Washtenaw County, unless otherwise noted).

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comments
Northern Waterthrush	20 Oct - 2 Nov	Southfield, Oakland County	Mary Trombley, Karl Overman, SOBs	Bird seed aisle inside Lowe's in Southfield, along with House Sparrows.
Surf Scoter	26 Oct - 2 Nov	Cavanaugh Lake	John Swales, Roger Wykes, MOBs	Rare in county.
Barred Owl	1 Nov	MUCC campground, Waterloo RA	Matt Yawney	Uncommon resident.
Golden Eagle	1 Nov	I-94 & Ann Arbor-Saline Rd.	Matt Yawney	Flying south. A Michigan lifer for Matt.
Golden Eagle	1 Nov	Pte. Mouillee, Monroe County	Calvin Brennan, SOBs	35 birds, a near record number for the Detroit River Hawk Watch.
American Pipit	2 Nov	Grass Lake Rd. n. of Austin Rd.	Jacco Gelderloos	100+ birds. Good number of this uncommon migrant.
Pine Siskin	2 Nov	Chelsea	Matt Yawney	40 of this rare winter resident in cemetery. Looking like a good year.
Fox Sparrow	2 Nov	Gallup Park	Ray Stocking and kids	Uncommon migrant.
Wilson's Snipe	3 Nov	Cutler Rd., Jackson County	Robyn and Don Henise	142 birds flew out of vegetation at 5:45pm; a huge number.
Fox Sparrow	3 Nov	Chelsea	Dave Sing	Uncommon migrant in Dave's yard.
Barred Owl	3 Nov	Loveland & Sugarloaf Lk. Rds.	Laurent Fournier	Uncommon resident.
Bluebird of Happiness	4 Nov	Grant Park, Chicago	MOBs	First ABA record. Expelled Bushshrike from white roosting box.
Fox Sparrow	7 Nov	Jackson County, Jeff's yard	Jeff Schultz	13 birds at Jeff's feeders, a good number of this uncommon migrant.
Pine Siskin	7 Nov	Northwest Ann Arbor	Karen Markey	12 at feeder. Rare winter visitor. More this year locally than usual.
Rufous Hummingbird	7 Nov - 4 Dec	Holland, MI	Nancy Gillis, Adam Byrne, SOBs	Very rare western species at feeder at the Gillis home.
Franklin's Gull	11 Nov	Portage Lake	Mike Sefton	Very rare western bird. Several sightings around state this month.
Rufous Hummingbird	12 - 14 Nov	Saginaw County	Jerry Ziarno, SOBs	Very rare western species. At feeder.
White-winged Scoter	12 Nov	Portage Lake	Roger Wykes	Rare on inland lakes, more common on Great Lakes.
Franklin's Gull	13 Nov	Pleasant Lake	John Swales, Roger Wykes	1st winter bird. Part of an invasion of a number of birds from the west.
Surf Scoter	13 Nov	Cavanaugh Lake	John Swales, Roger Wykes	Same two as seen earlier this month
Franklin's Gull	13 Nov	Portage Lake	Dea Armstrong, Ron Gamble	Very rare western bird. Several sightings around state this month.
Pectoral Sandpiper	14 Nov	Avis Farms, Ann Arbor	Mike Sefton	Rare in November. 11 Nov is previous Washtenaw late date.
Franklin's Gull	15 Nov	Five Mile & Earhart Rd.	Maggie Jewett	In a field with Ring-billed gulls.
Whooping Crane	4 Jul - 16 Nov	Jackson County	Verl Tisch, Ron Hoffman, SOBs	Extremely rare. Leg band #516, hatched at Patuxent, released in Wisconsin, winters in FL. 2nd year at or near Haehnle Refuge.
Tundra Swans	16 Nov	Independence Lake	Faye Stoner	20 birds. Fairly rare in county.
Cackling Goose	16 Nov	US-23 & Willis Rd.	Don "The Man" Chalfant	4 birds. Rare.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	17 Nov	Arb, Ann Arbor	Mike Sefton	Female. Rare in November.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	19 Nov	Ann Arbor landfill	Mike Sefton	Adult. Rare
Snow Goose	19 Nov	Ann Arbor landfill	Mike Sefton	White morph. Uncommon to rare in November.
King Eider	21 - 22 Nov	Belle Isle, Detroit	Nathan Crawford, SOBs	Immature. Very rare in state.
Varied Thrush	22 Nov - period	Northwest Ann Arbor	Laura Woolley, Bruce Bowman, MOBs	Adult female at feeder. Extremely rare; 2nd record for Washtenaw.
Chipping Sparrow	25 Nov	Zeeb Rd. & I-94	Dan Sparks-Jackson	Very rare in November.
White-winged Crossbills	25 Nov - period	MUCC campground, Waterloo RA	Matt Yawney	20 birds. Very rare in Lower Peninsula, periodic invasions from north.
Merlin	26 Nov	Textile Rd. & Ann Arbor-Saline Rd.	Sherri Smith	3rd year at this location. Rare in November.
Red-shouldered Hawk	26 Nov	M-52 & south of Chelsea	Vince Ste.-Marie	Uncommon in November.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	28 Nov	Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne Cty.	Ryan Dziedzic	Very late.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	28 Nov	Salem Landfill	Brian Allen, Grant Weyburne	Rare.
White-winged Crossbills	30 Nov - period	Eyster yard, Lima Twp.	Harold Eyster	30 birds. Very rare in Lower Peninsula, periodic invasions from north.
White-winged Scoter	2 Dec	Portage Lake	Roger Wykes	Rare on inland lakes, more common on Great Lakes.
Red Phalarope	2 Dec	Pte. Mouillee SGA, Monroe County	Adam Byrne, Giff Beaton	Extremely rare in Michigan. Mostly an ocean-dwelling bird.
Bald Eagle	3 Dec	South Lake	Roger Wykes	A pair of immature birds.
Red-shouldered Hawk	3 Dec	M-52 south of Peckins Rd.	Vince Ste.-Marie	Rare in December.
Northern Mockingbird	4 Dec	Smyth & Pleasant Lake Rds.	Jeff Schultz	2 birds. Rare but increasing in county.
Northern Shrike	7 Dec	Waters Rd. & Fletcher Rd.	Jacco Gelderloos, Roger Wykes	Rare winter resident.
Snowy Owl	7 - 10 Dec	Walled Lake, Oakland County	Mike Mencotti, MOBs	Rare.
Snow Buntings	10 Dec	Vreeland Rd. east of Prospect Rd.	Roger Wykes	200 birds. A good number of this fairly common winter resident.
Northern Shrike	10 Dec	Willow & Mooreville Rds.	Jeff Schultz	Rare winter resident.
Black Scoter	13 - 15 Dec	Portage Lake	Will Weber, MOBs	Rare in state, extremely rare in county. 2nd county record. Female.
Merlin	13 Dec	Vreeland Rd. west of Gotfredson	Roger Kuhlman	Rare migrant.
Pine Siskin	13 Dec	MUCC campground, Waterloo RA	S. Jennex, L. Hamilton, M. Trombley	150, a high count in the county this year for this rare visitor.
Common Redpoll	13 Dec	MUCC campground, Waterloo RA	S. Jennex, L. Hamilton, M. Trombley	Only bird of this species seen in county this year.
Rough-legged Hawk	13 Dec	Gotfredson Rd. north of Vreeland	Roger Kuhlman	Dark morph. Rare winter resident.
Wilson's Snipe	16 Dec	Iron Creek Mill Pond, Manchester	Martin Bialecki	Very rare in December.
Hermit Thrush	18 Dec	MUCC campground, Waterloo RA	Ron Gamble, Faye Stoner	2 birds. Rare in December. More found Dec. 20 on AA CBC.
Eastern Towhee	19 Dec	Stoney Creek & Textile Rds.	Steve Oprsal	Rare in December. 3 more found on Ann Arbor CBC on Dec. 20.
Black Swan	20 Dec	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Exotic escape found on AA CBC. Native of Australia.
Brown Thrasher	20 Dec	Ann Arbor CBC	Jacob Job	Very rare in December.
Field Sparrow	20 Dec	Ann Arbor CBC	Allen Chartier, Will Weber	Rare in December. 3 more found on Ann Arbor CBC on Dec. 20.
Peregrine Falcon	20 Dec	Ann Arbor CBC	Mike Sefton	2 adults. A campus fixture for the past two years. Rare elsewhere.
Northern Saw-whet Owl	20 Dec	Ann Arbor CBC	Maggie Jewett	Very rare.
Sandhill Crane	22 Dec	Over downtown Ann Arbor	Sherri Smith	Several flying south. Rare this year in December.
Tree Swallow	27 Dec	Pte. Mouillee SGA, Monroe County	Karl Overman, SOBs	29 birds. Extremely rare in winter. 2 other reports earlier in month of a few birds apparently overwintering by eating seeds in lieu of insects.
Virginia Rail	27 Dec	Park Lyndon North boardwalk	Matt Yawney & wife	Very rare in December. Possibly same bird here last December.
Tree Swallow	28 Dec	Pte. Mouillee SGA, Monroe County	Adam Byrne, Phil Chu	48 birds.
Turkey Vulture	29 Dec	M-52 south of Pleasant Lake Rd.	D. Armstrong, L. Claffin, M. Sefton	7 birds on a new 2nd place record Dec. county big day. V. rare in Dec.
Red-headed Woodpecker	29 Dec	Steinbach Rd. south of Ellsworth	D. Armstrong, L. Claffin, M. Sefton	Declining resident. Rare in December.
Lapland Longspur	29 Dec	M-52 north of Bethel Church Rd.	D. Armstrong, L. Claffin, M. Sefton	c. 350 - 500 birds. Large number of this uncommon winter resident.
Green-winged Teal	29 Dec	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in December.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	29 Dec	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in December.
Winter Wren	29 Dec	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in December.

Other Area Audubon offerings

Events are typically free and open to the public.
If you are interested in more information on any of these, please visit their respective websites.

Detroit Audubon www.detroitaudubon.org

- Belle Isle field trip-----Feb. 7
- Stony Creek Owl Prowl-----Feb. 28
- Woodcock watch field trip---April 10
- Frog symphony field trip----April 17

Macomb Audubon

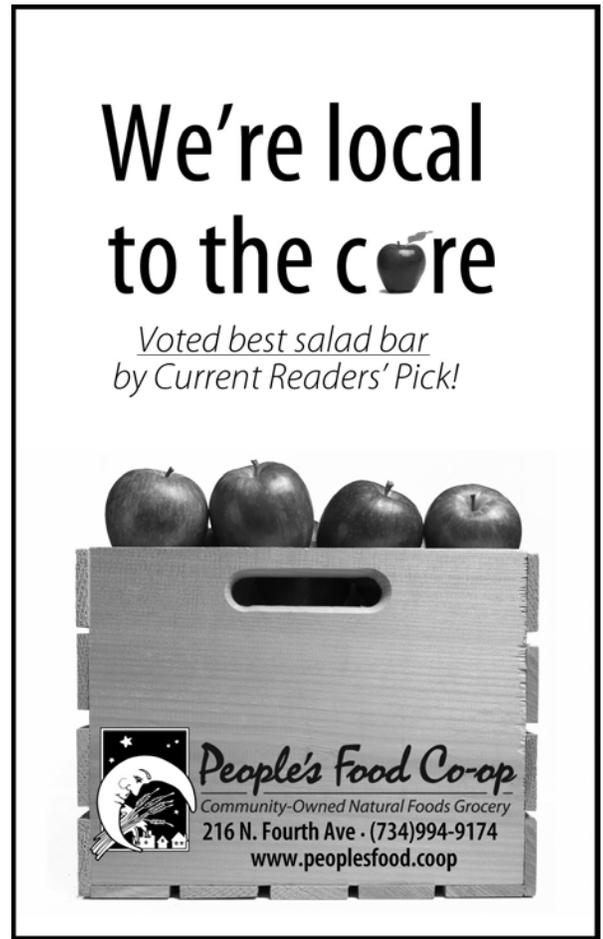
www.geocities.com/macomb_audubon

- Belle Isle field trip-----Feb. 7
- Higgins Lake Winter Campout----Feb. 13-15

Jackson Audubon

www.jacksonaudubon.org

- Understanding Falconry program-----March 12
- Early waterfowl field trip-----March 21
- Birdscaping your yard program-----April 9



To become a member of Washtenaw Audubon Society, please complete the form below (or a copy) and mail it with a check or money order payable to **Washtenaw Audubon Society - WAS Membership**
PO Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113

RENEWAL NEW MEMBER

ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Membership Dues:

- Individual/Household \$20
- Student \$10
- Senior \$10
- Patron \$50
- Life (individual) \$200

We encourage you to join at a lower rate if the suggested rates would otherwise preclude your membership, or at a higher rate if you possess the means.

Note: WAS will only use your email address to communicate with you about WAS programs, field trips, or matters of interest to you, such as membership renewal, or possibly emailed WAS newsletters (in color!). We will not give your email address to anyone else.

WAS Monthly Programs

WAS monthly events usually are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Programs begin at 7:30pm at U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public. Call (734) 677-3275 for more information

Wed., Jan. 21

Wanderings in Mexico: Noted birder, raconteur, and boulevardier Michael Kielb has made many trips to Mexico. Join him for a tour of some of the more interesting locales as he describes the flora and fauna of our neighbor to the south. Michael Kielb is the co-author of *The Birds of Washtenaw County, Michigan*, and teaches biology at Eastern Michigan University and Washtenaw Community College.

Wed., Feb. 18

Duck Identification Workshop: Join ace birder Allen Chartier for a course in duck identification, just in time for migration. Allen will help you to learn the more common species both on the water and in flight, as well as the occasional rarities that show up on our lakes and rivers. Allen Chartier is a world birder, bird bander, and hummingbird expert, and is the co-author of "A Birder's Guide to Michigan." He is the Coordinating Editor for the *Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas II*, to be published this year.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

PO Box 130923

Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923