



**WASHTENAW**  
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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**NEWSLETTER**  
**July/August 2009**

**Southeast Arizona Trip Report** *Article and photos by Andy Johnson*

In mid-July of last year I was birding the hotspots of southeastern Arizona with thirteen other young birders at Camp Chiricahua, led by an incredible local guide, Dave Jasper. I had 87 lifers in ten days, and then it was over. I had no time to absorb the sheer number of new birds, and even less time to become familiar with the birds' behavior and vocalizations. So when I heard that a friend from Camp Chiricahua, Chris West, was staying in Dave Jasper's house and guiding for the summer, I had to take up the offer to visit.

I flew into Tucson early on Saturday, June 27th, and when Chris arrived, we drove immediately (and quite "efficiently") to the "Twin Lakes"—a romanticized name for the sewage ponds in Willcox, AZ—to chase down the second state record Pacific Golden-plover. And there she sat, just as the sun was setting, orange across the sky, purple across the Santa Ritas. After a Mexican dinner (the first of many) in Willcox, we headed to our first destination: Portal. A tiny town of just a few houses and a general store, nestled into the mouth of the legendary Cave Creek Canyon, Portal has become a mecca for birders. We would spend three days birding the Chihuahuan mesquite desert surrounding the mountains, the cool, riparian canyons, and the coniferous woodlands near the peaks before moving on towards the Huachucas.

On the first day, we drove State-line Road along the AZ-NM border, picking up Curve-billed Thrashers, Scaled



Quail, Cassin's and Botteri's Sparrows, Chihuahuan Ravens, Scott's and Hooded Orioles, and the pale "Lillian's" Eastern Meadowlark. Back at Jasper's feeders, we had Pyrrhuloxia, brilliant Yellow-breasted Chats, an incessantly babbling Bell's Vireo, Canyon Towhees, and the ever-handsome Black-throated Sparrows, to name a few. We stopped at the Cave Creek Ranch where a couple joined us to see trogons in the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon. In the canyon it was cool and humid, which was very unusual (we had just had an early monsoon storm that turned the dry creek bed into a roaring river within a few hours). Canyon and Rock wrens sang from the golden spires that loomed over the trees on both sides. We glimpsed Zone-tailed Hawks through the trees before they vanished behind the canyon walls. Several Cordilleran Flycatchers called, reminiscent of an Acadian Flycatcher talking to a baby; finicky Band-tailed Pigeons clapped their wings loudly as they retreated through the sycamores and oaks.

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*Photo: White-eared Hummingbird*

## 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

**Open**  
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



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Bryn Martin  
6241 Runnymede  
Canton, MI 48187

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

### To Feed or Not To Feed, That Is the Question

I am not sure where I first heard this, or even how long ago it was, but I have always been under the assumption that you should not feed birds in the late spring and summer seasons. I have actually told others that food is plentiful during the summertime and birds will not learn how to survive on their own if you feed them. My "conventional wisdom" always has been that you should feed wild birds in winter because their normal source of food is dramatically diminished. This wisdom also recognizes that feeding birds in the late spring and summer attracts other problems – critters of all kinds, including aggressive raccoons and skunks.

My original goal for this article was to talk about why feeding birds in the summer is bad. Bad not only for the birds, but bad as well because of the nuisance created by all the critters that converge around the feeder once the sun goes down. However, after doing some research, I quickly learned that I had it all wrong. Well, not the part about the critters, but about the harmful impact on the birds.

According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), approximately 54 million residents of the United States feed wild birds at backyard feeders. These feeders provide a *supplement* to natural food supplies, and only rarely provide the bulk of a bird's diet. The USFWS states that wild birds depend on the foods they find away from bird feeders, and they find those foods with incredible efficiency. If all of our supplemental feeding stopped overnight, there would probably be no noticeable decline in bird populations.

OK, so the "expert" advice I had previously given to my family, neighbors and friends over the years was incorrect. This is not the first time I have been wrong, nor will it be the last. But I will continue not to maintain bird feeders in the summer. For me, there are still some very good reasons not to feed birds in the summer.

The first reason, already mentioned, is that the raccoons and skunks in my northeast Ann Arbor neighborhood love my feeders. Raccoons can empty one large feeder in a single night, whether they knock it on the ground or not. This is expensive! And then there are the skunks. Admittedly, they are cute and my kids truly enjoy watching them out their bedroom windows. But the very reason we fear skunks is the same reason why I do not want them around my house. Having once been "skunked" in the middle of the night, I want nothing more to do with these critters. So, I take the food away and, like magic, the skunks disappear.

*(Continued on the next page)*

### Rare Bird Alerts

#### Michigan Bird Report

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

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

*(President's Letter continued)*

Another important reason for me not to feed the birds in the summer is the presence of neighborhood cats. Feeders actually put birds at greater risk because of cats. Both domestic and feral cats kill millions of birds every year and, in Michigan, cats roam outdoors more in the summertime. There are ways to help prevent cat kills, such as placing the feeder away from areas where cats can lie in wait to attack. But I find that I attract fewer birds if I have my feeders out in the open (the hawk factor!). While my own cat is strictly an indoor cat, I can not say the same for at least two or three other neighborhood cats whose wanderings are beyond my control.

So, I continue my summer tradition of not feeding the birds. Come October, I will put out the bird seed and suet and enjoy watching the birds all winter long. I do feel good about this decision.

The joy of introducing children and adults to bird watching is reason enough to attract wild birds to backyard feeders, regardless of the time of year. This is why bird feeding has become the second most popular "passive" hobby in the United States, surpassed only by gardening. The truth is that it is never *necessary* for us to feed wild birds at any time of year. Birds have survived for thousands of years without our help. It is only for our pleasure and curiosity that we lure them to our yards with bird feeders. You do not need to debate the question "To Feed or Not To Feed." Enjoy the birds. That is what matters most.

Good birding!!!

Ray

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## Tuesday Evening Birders

**May 19**      *By Andy Johnson*

The WAS Tuesday Evening Birders, led by Mike Sefton and Lathe Clafin, had an excellent turn out with more than 25 birders. Our first stop was the heron rookery on the north side of Ellsworth Rd., just east of Schneider Rd where birders had a great opportunity to watch several herons tending to their nests. The convoy continued south down Schneider Rd., where birders had the opportunity to enjoy kingfisher behavior such as beating their catch against a perch and nest-building. Also on the Schneider pond were Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Pied-billed Grebe, two pairs of nesting Mute Swans, and elegantly foraging Great Egrets. The group moved on to the farm ponds on the east side of Fletcher Rd., about a mile south of Jackson. Here, we found the day's only Dunlin, as well as at least 7 Semi-palmated Plovers (with a raccoon in their midst), several Least Sandpipers, a Lesser Yellowlegs, and more Spotted Sandpipers. Our group's final stop was at a pond on the south side of Park Rd., just west of the Park-Staebler intersection. Here, birders had an excellent opportunity to study a flock of Least Sandpipers at close proximity. It was a very nice evening with a great group of birders.

**May 26**      *By Sarah Toner*

The TEB had a great time on May 26 along Meyers Rd. One of our target birds, Horned Lark, eventually showed well, with more than a dozen larks seen. Some highlights along Meyers Rd. were a nest-building ORCHARD ORIOLE, a GRASSHOPPER SPARROW, a male and female Bobolink, 3-4 NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS, Eastern Meadowlarks (heard but not seen), a COMMON NIGHTHAWK, and a possible Bobwhite calling. (Most thought it mostly likely was not a Bobwhite as its song was too short and a slightly different pitch). The full list of birds: Canada Goose, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Killdeer, Cooper's Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Chimney swift, Common Nighthawk, Eastern Kingbirds, Blue Jay, American Crow, Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Yellow Warbler, (en route) Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark (heard only), Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole (nest-building, with both sexes seen), House Finch. Not to mention the tame Muscovy Ducks and the Peacock that walked across the road. The light failed at the end, and the wind cut down on the number of grassland birds singing. Still, it was a nice evening. Thanks to all who spotted some great birds!

## Thursday Nichols Arboretum Spring Migration (Leaderless) Walks

May 21

By Sarah Toner

Around 20 people attended the warm, sunny and nice bird walk. The group went down by the railroad tracks, following the river, and then went through the boardwalk and into Heathdale. Highlights included: Indigo Bunting males chasing each other, a Red-breasted Nuthatch heard, a gray-phase Eastern Screech-owl in his hole, a Connecticut Warbler, and a Wilson's Warbler. Additional birds: American Robin, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow Warbler, Blackpoll W., Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, American Redstart, Northern Flicker, Baltimore Oriole, Warbling Vireo, Tree Swallow, Chimney Swift, Red-eyed Vireo, American Crow, European Starling, Brown Headed Cowbird, Common Yellowthroat, Swainson's Thrush, Eastern Wood-pewee, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-tailed Hawk, Downy Woodpecker, and Cedar Waxwing. Of note is the American Copper and Pearl Crescent butterflies we came upon. The previously reported Hooded Warbler was not seen or heard, nor was the possible Golden-winged or Blue-winged warblers.

May 28

By Sarah Toner

Around 8 people went on the last bird walk of spring. Highlights included a few glimpses of a MOURNING WARBLER and a great view of a male singing HOODED WARBLER. The full list of species: Indigo Bunting, Mourning Warbler, American Goldfinch, Eastern Wood-pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Cardinal, Rock Pigeon, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Song Sparrow, Gray Catbird, Blue Jay, Scarlet Tanager, Hairy Woodpecker, Common Yellowthroat, Swallow sp., Chimney Swift, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Baltimore Oriole, Brown-headed Cowbird, Warbling Vireo, Chipping Sparrow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Robin, White-breasted Nuthatch, Hooded Warbler, Pine Warbler. At around 9:45 am it began to rain, and that scared most of the birds and a few birders (except a certain male Hooded Warbler) into hiding.

*These Trumpeter Swans were lounging by the side of Parker Rd. with their two young ones. While we watched they ambled across the road while several cars avoided them. All of the drivers of many cars that passed by were smiling. The young ones seemed to have a little trouble walking on the asphalt. They were too incredibly beautiful.*

*Photo by Ellie Shappirio*



**SE Arizona** (continued from pg. 1)

Stunning Painted Redstarts sang from the low trees as they flared their white outer-tail feathers to flush insect prey, like our redstarts on steroids; Arizona Woodpeckers clung to the smooth white boughs of Arizona Sycamores; Acorn Woodpeckers noisily congregated on dead sycamore snags and made vertical forays for flying insect prey; Dusky-capped, Brown-crested, and Ash-throated Flycatchers performed with outlandish and varied vocalizations, and Sulfur-bellied Flycatchers squeaked noisily from the canopy. As our group moved further up the canyon in pursuit of trogons, we came across a beautiful Black-tailed Rattlesnake in the path. As we enjoyed the snake, someone said they thought they had a trogon; a large bird with a bright blue back flying away through the trees. As audio playback is not permissible in South Fork (technically a Biosphere Reserve), I did my best to imitate the soft and cryptic croaking of the Elegant Trogon, and sure enough one responded from higher up the slope of the canyon. We spent nearly an hour in the same spot, since trogons often sit very still, surprisingly difficult to find despite their brilliant red bellies. Eventually, with the help of many eyes and good fortune, we were able to get the whole group on a female before she departed to join her mate.

The following day was spent with some old friends from an Audubon camp in Maine who we chanced upon, sitting on the porch at the Portal Store in a torrential downpour. While Chris spent the morning with a client, I birded the higher elevations with Michael Hilchey and Raymond VanBuskirk, of Albuquerque. They have been birding the southwest intensively for several years now, and were able to quickly lead me to a few of my target birds. We first drove up the canyon to Herb Martyr, a road historically excellent for flycatchers, where we immediately found the relatively scarce Buff-breasted Flycatcher. While bushwhacking up the canyon along a dry riverbed in search of Greater Pewees, we chanced upon a family group of Virginia's Warblers, another high elevation species that eluded me last year. Finally, despite the pewee's reluctance to call, and after a couple hours of searching, we located a juvenile Greater Pewee perched under the nest of an "Apache" Northern Goshawk, a large and dark southwestern subspecies of this great accipiter. In the afternoon, we made the winding drive to the summit at Rustler Park, where we found singing male Olive and Red-faced Warblers, both stunning Arizona specialties. Before our descent to Portal, we hiked along a steep wooded slope around the back of Barfoot Park, on the other side of the mountain, where Mike and Ray showed me the site of a Short-tailed Hawk nest, as a beautiful adult circled above, screaming, and two juveniles perched at the tops of dead pines. As we trekked back to the truck, Ray demonstrated an eerily impeccable imitation of a Mexican Spotted Owl, and within a minute, at the heat of the afternoon, three owls started calling back, screeching, whooping, and barking.

*(Continued on the next page)*



*a monsoon building  
over Cave Creek  
Canyon*

**SE Arizona** (continued from previous page)

After Chris and I awoke from our last night in Jasper's one-room, solar-powered house, we packed a few things and headed towards the Huachucas for three days of birding and three nights of car camping. Our first stop outside of the Chiricahuas was Miller Canyon. There, the famous "Beatty's Birders' Haven" provides public access to nearly twenty hummingbird feeders set up in front of sheltered benches—and although they're all in the same spot, all the feeders are occupied, all of the time. It's a new kind of birding, especially to us hummingbird-deprived easterners; you hear things like "Violet-crowned at 9," "the White-eared's back at C," and "Ooh, the Berylline is fencing with that Magnificent." In less than half an hour, we had tallied 9 species of hummingbirds: the aforementioned, plus Broad-tailed, Anna's, Black-chinned, Blue-throated, and an early migrant Rufous. Later that afternoon, when we continued to Ash Canyon and visited a similar feeder setup at MaryJo's B&B, we picked up the rare Lucifer Hummingbird for our day total of 10 species. Late that evening, we made a brief stop at Patagonia Lake State Park in an unsuccessful attempt for Black-capped Gnatcatchers and Northern Beardless-tyrannulets, but picked up several Verdin, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and Neotropic Cormorants. A quick stop at the Patagonia Rest Stop yielded resident Thick-billed Kingbirds and Phainopepla.

After sleeping on the side of Ramsey Canyon Road (unfortunately, while the windows were down for air, the mosquitoes from the adjacent marsh enjoyed our delectable flesh), we rose before the sun to take full advantage of our last full day. We headed out of Sierra Vista towards the San Pedro River Inn to pick up the resident Tropical Kingbird and some missing riparian species. It was a beautiful, clear morning on the ranch, and across the large fields, before the mountains on the horizon, snaked the San Pedro River Valley, essentially a rich, isolated band of sycamores and oaks. Although alive with birdsong, the San Pedro offered no new trip species. However, the ever reliable Tropical Kingbirds on the front lawn didn't disappoint. We immediately drove to Patagonia, and stopped on the side of Highway 82 just south of town. We crossed the road and disappeared into the phragmites that skirted the shoulder. The grasses were clearly beaten into the mud by hundreds of feet before us—a seemingly strange place to be so popular. Not 50 yards off the highway, there was a barbed wire fence with a red ribbon tied next to a "No Trespassing" sign. On the sign was scrawled "Kneel here; 50' back, 45 degrees left; ball of dried grass in front of poplars leaning to the right." We had arrived at the nest of the first North

American record Sinaloa Wren, a west Mexican endemic that is gradually expanding its range northward. Although still invisible to us, he burst into glorious song; a very loud, clear sequence of ascending introductory notes and slow, liquid trills. While we were there, this male returned to the same perch every 10 minutes to sing, visible only by lining up a million little gaps in the vegetation just so. He resembles a gray-brown Carolina Wren with a narrow white supercilium, white throat, rufous tail, and fine, black-and-white streaking on the sides of the nape. After a meal and a nap, we made a quick roadside stop at Rio Rico and picked up my lifer Black-bellied Whistling Duck. (Continued on the next page)



We continued to the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, where the naturalist walked with us in search of Rufous-capped Warblers (the preserve was technically closed because of several Mountain Lion sightings. Although our search for the rare Mexican warblers was unsuccessful, we found several of the previously elusive Northern Beardless-tyrannulets, diminutive tropical flycatchers with a clear, high-pitched call. Our last stop was Florida Canyon, adjacent to the famed Madera Canyon. We were again in search of the desirable Rufous-capped Warblers, and we again searched in vain (and ended up falling asleep by the creek until a monsoon woke us). Luckily, our efforts were repaid with a male Varied Bunting and an unexpected Five-striped Sparrow that responded to our recording. U.S. representatives of this unique, large, Mexican species are only found in the California Gulch which is directly adjacent to the Border. However, far from the Gulch, we found this lone adult bird, a beautiful brown and gray sparrow with five white lines streaking its black face.

With 167 trip birds and 10 lifers, I reluctantly boarded my plane in Tucson early on Saturday (after a quick roadside Burrowing Owl stop, of course). Although I had a lot of sleep to catch up on, it was a beautiful flight through Salt Lake City, arriving in Detroit late on the 4<sup>th</sup>. I could see fireworks sparkling over what seemed like the whole country; a truly universal celebration.

Places to Stay:

**Beatty's Guest Ranch-** <http://www.beattysgustranch.com/> Hereford, AZ (520) 378-2728

**Cave Creek Ranch-** <http://www.cavecreekranch.com/> Portal, AZ (520) 558-2334

**Ash Canyon B&B-** <http://ashcanyonbandb.com/> Hereford, AZ (520) 378-0773



*Photos:  
Female Berylline Hummingbird and  
Black-tailed Rattlesnake*

## In Remembrance of Maxine Miles (1907—2009) *By Martha Agnew*

“There was one thing missing from the count that was universally noted by the participants, and that was the presence of Maxine Miles (and her home) at the post-count potluck supper” (from Nancy and Rob French’s report of the Christmas Bird Count, 2003). Maxine had opened her home for the CBC tally dinner between 1972 and 2002, and we can see this as being a prime example of her generous and loving dedication to the world of birds and the society of birders that was her life. She was an avid hiker in Washtenaw County and birded constantly in Nichols Arboretum, walking back and forth from her home. My introduction to Maxine and birding occurred when I saw her netting and banding birds in our garden. At this time she was finishing a banding permit, restricted to 2000 nationwide, in place of Dr. Tordoff who had moved away. And when I released my freezer to her as I moved from living next door it soon became filled with birds to be transferred to the University of Michigan collection.

Her intense feelings for the natural world are understandable as she had grown up an only child, isolated on farmland in north-central Illinois near Rochelle. This orientation guided her life. She decisively channeled it to studying at the University of Wisconsin, finishing there with a master’s degree in Zoology, and then taught high school Biology in Rockford, Illinois.

While teaching she continued to broaden her knowledge in summer classes. In the 1930s she took Beginning and Advanced Bird Courses at the University of Michigan’s Biological Station at Douglas Lake, under the tutelage of Professor Frank N. Blanchard. At the “bug camp” she continued helping with research or attending programs and encountered her future husband. Maxine and Vaden settled in Ann Arbor in 1948 where she immediately connected with ornithologists, took part in the year’s Christmas Bird Count, and was introduced to motherhood.

When Washtenaw Audubon began in 1950, Maxine, the younger Dorothy Blanchard, daughter of her former professor, and Vaden were involved with bird specialists, teachers, students and others who initially formed the Club. In this way, they shared their interests and field trips with the public. In 1952 the Club, backed by the Mileses, began to sponsor the “Audubon Screen Tours,” presentations that went on for over 20 years, bringing a very popular series of illustrated lectures to Ann Arbor annually. Lecturers frequently stayed with Maxine and her family; her daughter Neesa still remembers as a child sharing their space with one of the speakers who was accompanied by a pet Bobcat.

*(Continued on the next page)*

*U of M Biological Station Advanced Birders Class taught by Professor Blanchard. Photo taken by him, 1936. At ground level, second from left is Maxine Miles. Third and fourth from left are Grace Blanchard and Dorothy Blanchard.*





For decades, Maxine continued invigorating participation in the Washtenaw Audubon Society. She served on the Board many times. She and her husband were interested in natural habitat preservation and so activated the Chapter's Land Acquisition Committee to consider offers of acreage donations to Audubon, fairly numerous in the 1970s. After Vaden's passing (1974) Maxine assumed responsibility in this effort as committee chairwoman. Much land surveying, negotiation, and fundraising were involved, ultimately resulting in the acquisition of Osborne Mill Riverland Preserve (later deeded to the County), Fuller Searles Preserve, and Wing Preserve, to which she remained Stewardship Coordinator for many years. In the year 2000 she was honored with our chapter's creation of the "Maxine Miles Lifetime Achievement Award" to recognize those who have, as she had done, incorporated Audubon service into their life; the Sutherlands were the first recipients.

Maxine's personal passion and profound interests throughout her 60 years in Ann Arbor have benefited so many of us, and extend beyond Audubon. For instance she guided school children into woods and farmland for many years. And when hearing birds and using binoculars began to be difficult she volunteered weekly at the UM Botanical Gardens which has now merged with her favored birding spot, Nichols Arboretum. A memorial bench at this location is envisioned. There are many memories: I still picture her in her kitchen with binoculars, a yellow telephone and blooming African violets always at hand. Maxine's 100 years make a history and I thank everyone who has shared their recollections to outline it.



*Photo (above, left) Maxine Miles, 1981*



*Photo (above, right) Maxine Miles in her garden, 1990*

## Field Trip Report - Port Huron SGA, June 7 *By Allen T. Chartier*

We intended to get an earlier start this year (but only 30 minutes earlier) to allow more sites to be visited while birds were still active and singing. But the early start was thwarted because there was a snafu with the e-mail pre-trip posting which in addition to including incorrect directions in the body of the message also included an erroneous link to a google map (not my idea!) which sent people 3.8 miles away from our meeting site. We waited until 8 a.m. just in case there were lost birders out there, but none turned up. I hope nobody was inconvenienced by this error.

Two WAS members, Jerry Herman from Ann Arbor and Rodolfo Palma from Canton, plus a friend of mine from Oakland County, Diana Dugall, made up the entire field trip contingent this year. The first destination was the trail along the Black River south of M-136, where we got views, not great, of a male Golden-winged Warbler singing up higher than they usually do, and very good looks at a singing Alder Flycatcher. American Redstarts proved fairly easy to see, including one in apparent female plumage that was singing, and turned out to have some black on the throat making it a second-year male. Not one, but two pairs of Cedar Waxwings were observed building nests

along this trail. We heard at least a couple Mourning Warblers singing, including one that was very close, but the only view was brief by Diana before he flew deeper into the undergrowth. A couple of Cerulean Warblers singing from the vicinity of the big cement bridge on M-136 over the Black River lured us over that way. As would become a theme for the day, when we got closer they stopped singing. A loud Mourning Warbler on the north side of the road drew us over there but try as we might we couldn't locate it, and it wasn't coming out.

As we were walking back to the cars, Rodolfo glanced over at one of the piles of rocks over the guardrail, and I naturally asked if he'd seen anything. His answer was "no". Diana commented that maybe he'd seen a Rock Wren, and my sarcastic reply was "we're as likely to see a Rock Ptarmigan there as a Rock Wren". No sooner were those words out of my mouth when a sandy-brown bird flitted onto a rock about 30-feet away. My immediate thought was "that's a strange place for a Horned Lark". Once in the binoculars, though, my sarcasm was immediately struck down. IT'S A ROCK WREN!!!

*(Continued on the next page)*





We watched the bird hop around on pretty much every rock in the area for 45 minutes, all of us taking many photos, while he gave a soft song once in a while and even approached to less than 10-feet of us at one point. I also attempted telephoning as many people as I could from my limited phone list with the poor reception at this spot.

It was hard to tear ourselves away from such a great bird (a lifer for two, and a new state bird for all), but we did and headed for the hemlock grove area of the game area. We had lunch here, then headed out on the trails. There were lots of interesting insects, including the Midland Clubtail dragonflies that are usually along this trail, and a rare Arrowhead Spiketail dragonfly flew by while we watched a female Eastern Pondhawk eat a moth, and saw a couple other dragonfly species. We had several species of butterfly through the day, including Tiger Swallowtail, Red-spotted Purple, Northern Crescent, Little Wood Satyr, Wood Nymph, Silver-spotted Skipper, Hobomok Skipper, Juvenal's Duskywing, and others. We flushed about five smallish game birds off the trail, and when we got a good look at them found that they were downy young Wild Turkeys just able to fly off at our approach. An adult turkey also ran down the path ahead of us and

flew off, apparently abandoning the young. Warblers continued to sing at us from the tangles, including new species; Hooded, Magnolia, Pine, and Ovenbird, but only the redstarts and a couple Chestnut-sideds cooperated. Inside the hemlocks we eventually got good looks at an Acadian Flycatcher.

From here we headed to a more northern area of the game area where several Henslow's Sparrows were confirmed breeding for the Breeding Bird Atlas over the past couple of years. We walked through the fields to the edge of a pine row where we had great and prolonged looks at a Clay-colored Sparrow while several Bobolinks performed all around us, and quite close. But the Henslow's field was a sad sight, mowed down to almost bare dirt. So, no Henslow's.

In all, 82 bird species were recorded, including 13 species of warbler. It was a much better day to learn bird songs than to see the birds themselves, but then again, there was that Rock Wren...

## Upcoming WAS Field Trips (July - October 2009)

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](mailto: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!

**July 12**      **Matthaei Botanical Gardens for Butterflies** Leaders: Roger Kuhlman, John Swales and Roger Wykes. As the date gets closer details will be announced on the Washtenaw Audubon Society website and on [birders@umich.edu](mailto:birders@umich.edu).

**Aug. 23**      **Point Mouillee SGA for shorebirds, waders and many others**      8:00 AM  
- 1:00 PM

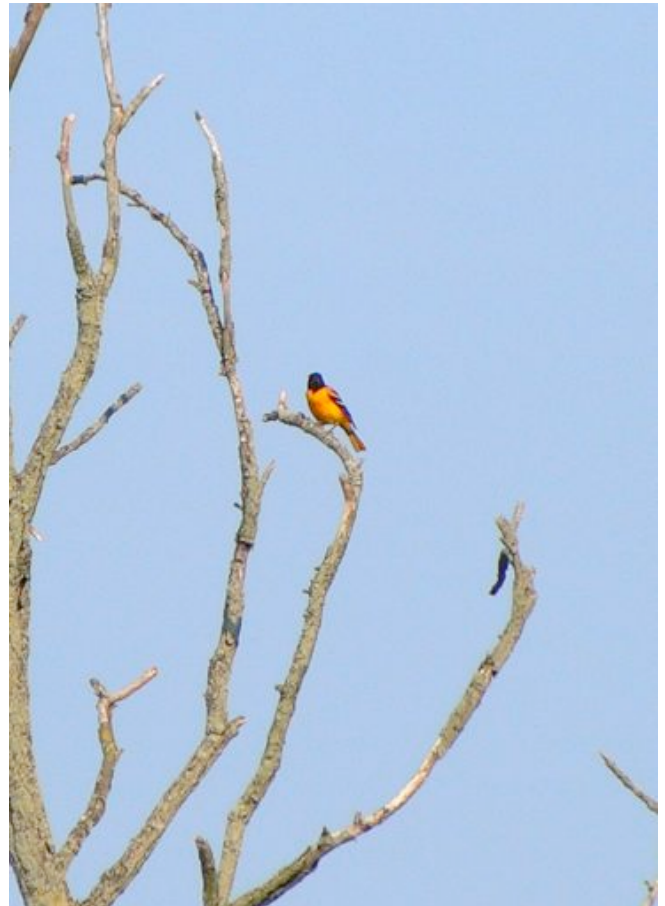
Leader: Jim Fowler. If you have ever wondered what the big deal about birding Point Mouillee is all about, this is your chance. This is a sign up trip. We will squeeze down into five vehicles. Trip is limited to 20 persons for this reason. Meet at the Sigler Road parking lot at 8:00 am. Bring insect repellent, wear a hat and dress for warm weather. There is no shade or similar shelter at Point Mouillee. Bring all the food and fluids you think you will need to sustain you for an approximately 5 hour morning of birding.

**Sept 3.-  
Oct. 29  
(Thursdays)**      **Nichols Arboretum for Fall Migration:** Please join us for one or all of this eight week series of walks through Nichols Arboretum to monitor and observe fall migration. Each Thursday morning starting September 3 through October 29 , meet at 8:00 am at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac just off Geddes Road. These are well-attended, "leaderless" walks and a terrific opportunity to meet and bird with others. This is our fourth season monitoring fall migration through the Arb. Fall migration is much different than our spring migration. Instead of hurrying through on the way to their nesting grounds, the fall migrants sort of trickle in and quietly take their time about it all. Many are in their basic or first year plumage and new identification challenges await. Additionally, the Arb is beautiful in fall. This is our opportunity to say goodbye, so to speak, to our migrant visitors until next spring and enjoy Michigan's crisp, spectacular autumn. (Walks usually last until about 11am, but you can join or leave the group as your schedule requires.)

There are many ways to develop an interest in birdwatching, but getting a great look at a beautiful or fascinating bird is probably as effective as any. The field trip that Karen Markey led at Hudson Mills Metropark north of Dexter on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend was memorable for exceptionally good views of several interesting birds—a broad spectrum, if you will. The two dozen people who attended got clear, sustained looks at two Brown Thrashers, several Baltimore Orioles (including one female), two male Scarlet Tanagers, a few Eastern Meadowlarks, Indigo Buntings (one male and one immature), and two mating pairs of Eastern Bluebirds.

Other colorful birds seen, albeit in less glorious views, were Blue-winged Warblers and one Yellow Warbler. Given the time of year, the warbler viewing was at best fair. The group had some looks at a male Blackburnian Warbler high in the trees at the southwest end of the park along the Huron River. A Mourning Warbler was pursued for about half an hour, but not seen. Common Yellowthroats were also heard but not seen.

Other highlights included views of a pair of Sandhill Cranes with very young chicks. Those who stuck it out until the end were able after some effort to find another touch of color in the form of a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. That species was surprisingly elusive to the eye, but clearly audible in significant numbers. Finally, there was a fleeting view of a Swainson's Thrush in a thicket. It was identified by Karen and seen by only two or three other birders. That sighting was noteworthy inasmuch as the species does not appear on the checklist that the park keeps and makes available to the public.



*Two photos by Pat Reilly: Eastern Meadowlark and Baltimore Oriole*

## One Nest, Two Kids, Three Lessons *Article and photo by Ray Stocking*

This past June we told our two kids (ages 6 and 4) that a pair of House Finches were nesting in our front porch hanging plants again. I lifted them up on a daily basis to show them the progress of the nest. Soon after this discovery, we had our first egg in the nest. We watched daily as *momma bird* would add another egg each day. Finally, on the fourth day, the egg laying stopped and *momma* was now sitting on the nest.

**Lesson #1:** *Some birds are highly adaptable to urban settings.*

Two days into incubation, I took a peek into the nest, and much to my surprise, there were now FOUR eggs in the nest! However, this fourth egg was clearly different than the three eggs previously deposited in the nest. I knew right away that a Cowbird had raided the nest. Cowbirds are native, and I knew they are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This meant that eggs can not be removed from nests without a permit.

I wanted this to be a learning lesson for my kids, so I showed them the nest with four eggs and pointed out the larger egg. I told them how this happened and how it was part of nature's way of doing business. I also told them that Cowbirds are parasitic and that they lay their eggs in the nests of other birds and let someone else do the parenting. Finally, I explained to them that the outlook for the three baby House Finches looked bleak because of this Cowbird egg.

**Lesson #2:** *Nature works in funny ways...*

Several days after the discovery of the Cowbird egg, I took a peek into the hanging basket. I had not seen or heard the finches all day, so I was curious. I was shocked to see that all four eggs were gone! The nest was clean and there were no signs of broken egg shells anywhere. I knew there was one more lesson to be learned in all of this. So I gathered my kids and showed them the empty nest. I then explained that there are many other birds and critters out there who love to eat eggs. And these creatures, Blue Jays, Crows, Raccoons, etc....., exist all around us. Just as the Cowbird had raided the House Finch nest to lay its egg, so too had another predator.

**Lesson #3:** *Nature is blind. She does not distinguish between good eggs and bad eggs. A nest was raided and the House Finches moved on.*



*Photo caption: The three House Finch eggs and the recently deposited Cowbird egg.*

## 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.

### Oakland Audubon [www.OaklandAudubon.org](http://www.OaklandAudubon.org)

Aug. 8: Indian Springs Metropark field trip (butterflies)

Sept. 8: Mushrooms program

### Macomb Audubon [www.geocities.com/macomb\\_audubon](http://www.geocities.com/macomb_audubon)

Sept. 19: Hawkfest field trip (Lake Erie Metropark)

Oct. 3: Kensington Metropark field trip

Oct. 5: Morocco program

### Jackson Audubon

[www.jacksonaudubon.org](http://www.jacksonaudubon.org)

July 11: Butterfly field trip

Aug. 8: Point Mouille field trip

Aug. 22: Birds, Blooms and Butterflies Festival

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 677-3275 if you have questions about the program.

## No Program in July

- Tuesday, Aug. 18**     **Raptors in our World: Note date!** Get up close and personal with a live eagle, hawk, and owl, presented by Francie Krawcke, the Raptor Specialist and Camp Director at the Leslie Science and Nature Center. A kid-friendly program for all ages, co-sponsored with the Sierra Club.
- Wed., Sept. 16**     **Gardening with Native Plants:** Join Darrel Morrison for a program on using native plants in your garden. Darrel Morrison is one of the leading advocates of native gardening in the US, is a former professor of landscape architecture at the University of Wisconsin, and is retired from the University of Georgia where he was Dean of the School of Environmental Design. This is a joint program with Wild Ones, the Michigan Botanical Club, and the U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens.
- Wed., Oct. 21**     **South African Safari:** Join Bryn Martin for a program on the second WAS foreign field trip, which was to South Africa in August of this year, featuring photos of the birds, animals, people, and landscapes of this beautiful country. Bryn teaches high school in Livonia and is a world birder.

## Washtenaw Audubon Society

PO Box 130923

Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923