

Owls Wow Birders at Hudson Mills Field Trip

By Karen Markey and Monty Brown

About fifteen birders enjoyed a warm, sun-drenched morning at Hudson Mills on Sunday, May 23 for a hike led by Karen Markey. Without a doubt, the highlight of the day began early on when, near the southeast end of the park, a group of highly agitated crows caught the group's attention. When Karen peered into the pines trying to see why the crows were so upset, others in the group alerted her to the fact that a juvenile Great-Horned Owl was just a few feet above her head! After much searching, we eventually spotted the mobbing crows and an adult Great-Horned high in the pines, and we focused a spotting scope on its head. Some in the group thought they may have had partial glimpses of a third owl high in a nearby tree, but we were never able to confirm whether another one was there.



Che Huang photographed the young owl with Karen standing nearby to provide perspective on how close the young bird was. (*See adjacent photo.*)

Besides the owls, the group had terrific looks at Eastern Wood-Pewee, two Brown Thrashers perched in a low bush at close range, Red-Eyed Vireos, Eastern Bluebirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (males and one female), Baltimore Orioles, and Eastern Kingbirds, among other species. We heard, but did not see, a Great-crested Flycatcher, as well as a Wood Thrush and a Yellow-throated Vireo. In general, it was a disappointing day for warblers, although we did get

Warbling Vireos, which were highly vocal on this occasion. We also had a Field Sparrow, as well as two

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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:
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President's Letter

By Ray Stocking

In early June I had a chance to talk with Karen Cleveland who works for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment (MDNR&E). Karen is the All-Bird Biologist for the MDNR&E and was in Ann Arbor for the day. We discussed a few issues going on in Washtenaw County, however our primary discussion was related to the Peregrine Falcons up on the Burton Memorial Tower and attempts to relocate their desired nesting spot off the tower (due to repeated nesting failures up there). I asked Karen for an update on the tragic accident that took place last year with the Trumpeter Swan family out in Lodi Township. I was bothered by the fact that a police officer had posted on the Internet that the person who hit and killed three of the four swans was apparently identified and that no charges were filed. I wanted to know if this was true and asked her if she could look into this and get back to me.

Karen spoke with the conservation officer from the MDNR&E who investigated the swan deaths and sent an email reply back to me about her findings. Apparently, two individuals turned themselves in to local police several days after the accident. The driver was very concerned about the reaction in the community due to the fevered response that was building in the local papers, on TV, and on the Internet - basically, there was a fear of vigilante justice from some of the more excitable citizens who had weighed in on the issue. At one time, there was a \$5,000 reward offered up for the arrest and conviction of the person(s) who did this! Of course, this reward was raised under the assumption that the birds were intentionally killed.

Although tragic, I am pleased that the driver and his/her friend turned themselves in and admitted they hit the birds. They stated that visibility was poor and that they had not seen the birds. There was no intent to harm the birds. The conservation officer viewed the car and indicated that there was no physical evidence linking the driver to the swans. He eventually passed his report on to the local prosecutor who in turn decided not to press charges. The case was closed.

We now know what happened that night when our beloved Trumpeter Swans were killed. The driver came forward, and did so within days of the accident. We can take comfort in knowing that there was remorse and that the birds were not attacked and killed by thrill-seekers with guns and pipes as originally reported. It was an accident, probably caused by a careless driver who should not have been driving so fast if conditions were as poor as he/she reported to the police. The end result - No crime was committed according to the laws of Michigan.

(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)

After reading Karen's message, I asked myself how can we put a positive spin on this awful event? If you, like me, feel personally compelled to do something useful for Trumpeter Swans in our region, allow me to suggest that you consider donating your time and/or money towards the statewide survey event for all Trumpeter Swans in Michigan later this summer. Kellogg Biological Station, MDNR&E, and Michigan Audubon are coordinating this survey. Individual birds will be counted by the agency staff who are expected to cover about 85% of the state. Michigan Audubon has been tasked with filling the coverage gaps. They need volunteers.

The Survey count will take place between August 15th and September 15th this summer. Please contact Tom Funke, Director of Conservation for the Michigan Audubon at tfunke@michiganaudubon.org to volunteer or request additional information. If you would like to help out financially with this count, send your donations earmarked "Trumpeter Swan" to Michigan Audubon and your donation will be directed to the program. All checks should be sent to the following address: Michigan Audubon - Conservation 6011 West St. Joseph Hwy, Suite 403 Lansing, MI 48917.

Of course, you can always make a donation to Washtenaw Audubon Society. We will gladly put your funds to use that will help support education and conservation of birds and their habitat right here locally.

For now, please enjoy the sight of any Trumpeter Swan you may see in Washtenaw County. We are very lucky to still have them here, and there appears to be no signs of them going away any time soon. And should you see Trumpeter Swans back out at the intersection of Parker and Scio Church Roads, please remind people not to feed them and make attempts to keep them off the side of the road. Should another pair of swans take up residence right next to the side of the road again, we are certain to have the same results. And I for one, do not want to see that ever happen again.

Good birding!
Ray

Five recently fledged Eastern Bluebirds wait as an adult parent picks up a yummy meal worm for them.

Photo by David Berger.





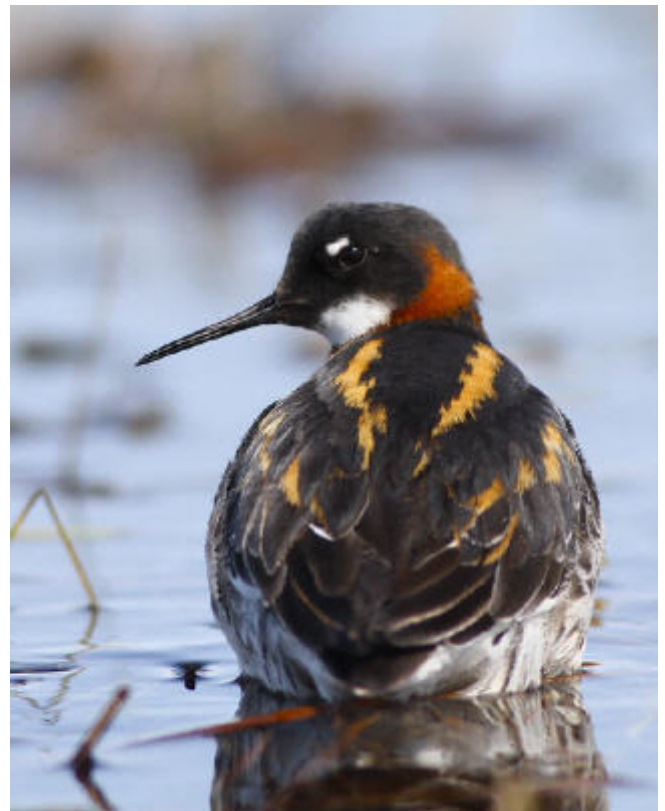
WAS Member, Mark O'Keefe took these beautiful pictures near his summer residence in Lincoln, MI in early July. Two baby loons were born a full day apart. Here you can see the older sibling waiting patiently as momma loon continues to tend to the unhatched egg.





(Right: American Golden Plover)

These photos were taken by WAS ace-birder, Andy Johnson, up in Churchill, Manitoba. Andy is currently on assignment in Canada helping with the study of Hudsonian Godwits in the region. Andy will be back in Ann Arbor in August and will share his adventures with the Washtenaw Audubon Society in a special (and rare!) August gathering. See our program schedule on the back page for more details.



*(Left: Parasitic Jaegers)
(Above: Red-necked Phalarope)*

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (July--August)

By Monty Brown, Field Trip Coordinator (fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

Washtenaw Audubon field trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise indicated. For more information, go to our webpage. Changes and updates will be made via our Twitter service, the birders@umich.edu listserv and/or our web page at www.washtenawaudubon.org/fieldtrips.php with updates as needed. If you have a suggestion for a field trip, please send an e-mail.

- Sat., July 17** **In Search of Spiders** (Leader: Cara Shillington) Cara Shillington, an associate professor of Biology at Eastern Michigan University who lectured on spiders at our monthly program in May 2009, will lead this trip at Matthaei Botanical Garden to find and observe them. (9 AM--Noon)
- Sat., July 24** **Butterfly Trip** (Leaders: Roger Kuhlman, John Swales, Roger Wykes) Our three leaders have a terrific knack for finding a variety of butterflies. The location of this event is Matthaei Botanical Gardens. (9 AM)
- Sat., Aug. 14** **Migrating Shorebirds and Waders at Pointe Mouillee** (Leader: Jim Fowler) Point Mouillee, on Lake Erie near the mouth of the Huron River, is one of the premier destinations in the Midwest for viewing shorebirds and waders, but access is limited. Jim Fowler, who knows this territory like the back of his hand, has led numerous field trips to this location. PLEASE NOTE: This trip will be limited to 20 participants. Priority will be given to members of Washtenaw Audubon and to people who did not get to go last year. Registered participants will meet at the Pointe Mouillee SGA parking lot on Sigler Road at 8:00 a.m., and from there will consolidate into four vehicles. Bring insect repellent, wear a hat, and dress for warm weather. There is no shade or shelter at Point Mouillee. Bring all the food and fluids you think you will need to sustain you for approximately five hours of birding. If you are interested in going on this trip, please send your name, e-mail address, and phone number to fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org.

Magee and Metzger Marshes

By Karen Markey and Monty Brown

A Washtenaw Audubon Society group of about two dozen birders traveled to Northwest Ohio on Sunday, May 16 and worked hard to find 67 species—several of which were lone individuals—on a cold, windswept day at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area and Metzger Marsh.

The carpool caravan toured Metzger before 8 AM, looking unsuccessfully for American Pipits but seeing a Black-crowned Night Heron and Black Terns. A cold east wind over Lake Erie drove us onto the boardwalk where we thought the birds had gone for cover. We worked hard to spot an Eastern Phoebe and a Swainson's Thrush. Failing to find more birds, we finally realized that the few birds present and active at Magee that day were huddled on sunny and south-facing sides of the trails, away from the wind.

Prothonotary Warblers were prominent, singing on bare branches and at numerous locations, including the hollow of a hole-filled tree where a couple was busy inserting nesting materials. We also saw a Warbling Vireo nest swaying at the top of a tree. We had a few close-up looks at Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Yellow Warblers. On the whole, we saw or heard only sixteen warbler species, including several single examples, including Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Wilson's.

We returned to Metzger on the drive home, relocating the Black-crowned Night Heron, a Green Heron, and more Black Terns, as well as Caspian Terns. We also saw Moorhens and, at the eastern tip of Metzger, a female Black-throated Blue Warbler.

Juveniles Attend Thursday Morning Birding *By Teresa Huang* *Photo by Che Huang*

May 27 was the last of the Audubon Thursday morning bird-walks at the Arb for this spring. After a morning of bird-watching, a dozen or so birders continued on to the meadow to watch a Red-tailed Hawk nest there. We ran into a group of elementary students from Angel School also in the area for their birding adventure led by the fantastic teacher Dea Armstrong. Together we watched the mother hawk feed the babies, and then the mother sat on a branch next to the nest while the three babies all faced their mother seemingly begging for more food. The mother looked around and picked up a pine cone in her beak. Then she decided she couldn't fool her babies with that and flew away to get more real food. The babies all turned their heads when the mother hawk flew. After a while, the babies all stood up and got some exercise, stretching and flapping their wings. One even hopped a bit to the edge of the nest. It looked like they were getting ready to fledge. The students all had their cute little binoculars on their necks but Dea asked the adults there to share our binoculars with the kids and to help them look through the bins. What a magical moment for us and the school kids!!!



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
(with printed newsletter \$25)
- _____ Student \$10
(emailed newsletters only)
- _____ Senior \$10
(with printed newsletter \$15)
- _____ Patron \$50

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, and 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.

**Tuesday,
August 17**

Raptors in Our World: Up Close and Personal With Live Raptors (*Note Tuesday date.*) Prepare to be amazed, as well as educated, when Francie Krawcke, Raptor Specialist and Camp Director at Leslie Science and Nature Center introduces us to several live raptors. Francie will explain how these birds live in a way that even non-birders can understand, while sharing tales that reveal aspects of their behavior that even bird experts may not know. The event is co-sponsored with the Huron Valley Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Wed., Aug. 18

The Godwits of Churchill: Join Andy Johnson, Washtenaw Audubon Society member, for a program about his summer with a Cornell Lab of Ornithology team studying Hudsonian Godwits in Churchill, Manitoba. Andy will discuss the history and biological significance of the Churchill region, as well as the details of his work with the spectacular *Limosa haemastica*. Churchill is not only an exciting place to view breeding shorebirds and other arctic birds, but also a special place for other wildlife, such as Polar Bears and Beluga Whales, so expect an interesting collection of photos to accompany the talk.

Wed., Sept. 15

Extreme Birding: the Great Texas Birding Classic: Join Harold Eyster for a program on the 24 hour race to find as many species as possible on the upper Texas coast! Harold and his team of four other birders, including Washtenaw Audubon's Andy Johnson, competed with other young birding teams to raise money for the American Birding Association's education programs. Harold Eyster is a Washtenaw Audubon member, and is the winner of the American Birding Association's Young Birder of the Year award for 2009.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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