



November/December 2012

One Road Challenge Returns!

Please participate in the return of this friendly competition.

The Drill and Rules (subject to revision up to a week before the event):

- Form a team of at least three people and select a **public** road in Washtenaw County that is likely to yield a wide variety of species in late February. For the sake of safety, roads with steady traffic (for example, North Territorial) should be avoided. As a rule of thumb, if at least part of your road is unpaved, it's probably an appropriate one.
- You will not "own" your road; more than one team will be allowed to use a road.
- Start searching this road as early as you like on the morning of Saturday, February 23 for as many bird species as possible, stopping at 11 a.m.
- Species count if they are identified positively by either sound or sight.
- All birding must be done from within fifteen feet of the road. Any birds seen or heard from beyond that range will not count.
- Species found by no other team will receive a bonus point in your team's species count.
- Teams that include people who have never participated in a WAS event before will receive an additional two points for each newcomer, but with a maximum of six of these bonus points per team.

The official tally will begin at 11:30 a.m. at a (heated!) site to be determined. If the weather on this Saturday looks like it may not be appropriate for this event, we may postpone the Challenge to the following day. In that event, a notice would be posted to the WAS website and sent to the birders@umich.edu listserv.

If you are interested in participating and need teammates, or if you have any questions or comments, contact Monty Brown at fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org.

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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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Dear Friends,

As I write today, hopefully many of you are enjoying a late fall day outside with the birds. Watching the cranes come in over Haehnle Sanctuary is always a highlight this time of year, and a wonderful adventure for birders of all ages.

One of the wonderful things about this passion for birding and the outdoors that we all share is that there are no age requirements or limits. Just witness the wonderful photo on the front of one of our recent issues of Roger Wykes, one of our experienced guides on the Butterfly Trip, taking full pleasure in the wonder of Bryn Martin's four-year old twins, enthralled with the new creatures they've discovered. Nature has a way of captivating all of us, and Washtenaw Audubon can be very proud of how we have welcomed and nurtured young birders and naturalists over the years.

At our October meeting, young birder Sarah Toner shared with the group how she is working to establish a Michigan Young Birders' Club. As part of her application for the ABA's Young Birder of the Year competition, Sarah has stepped to the plate to launch a new group, especially geared for the young birders among us. In September, Sarah received word from Michigan Audubon that the Michigan Young Birders' Club was approved to operate under their auspices, and as youth would have it, their facebook page is up and running. So don't delay...go to: <http://www.facebook.com/MiYoungBirders> and "Like" them today! It is fitting that "one of our own" should step out in this way, reaching beyond the borders of Washtenaw County to bring young birders together. Congratulations Sarah.

On December 19th, my favorite young-ish birder (no apologies for the bias), Andy Johnson, will be speaking about his research which he began last summer in the Canadian sub-arctic. Andy has recently produced a short film that he will share with us as part of his presentation on the migratory patterns of Whimbrels. Washtenaw Audubon made a small grant to support some of Andy's travel expenses for the past summer, so mark your calendars and come join us for a presentation that was directly impacted by your membership dollars.

And what better occasion to bring all ages together than by closing out 2012 with the Christmas Bird Count. This year's CBC is on Saturday, December 15th. You can read more about the Count in this newsletter and on our website. Be sure to connect with an area leader or with Jacco Gelderloos as soon as possible. All are welcome. And don't even think about missing the post-count Potluck!

Happy Birding,

Sue Johnson

Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Bird Report

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

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

Help us purchase this key property for Haehnle Sanctuary

A remarkable opportunity has materialized for the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary Committee to acquire the only remaining private land projecting into the Sanctuary. The Edward Klee property includes 48 acres of wetlands and uplands, and its purchase would ensure protection of the marsh where thousands of Sandhill Cranes normally gather in the fall. About one-third of the property is in the marsh and one-third is wet woodlands and fen, and the remainder is uplands bordering Seymour Road. The uplands have the potential for residential development, but Mr. Klee hoped that his land would be sold to a conservation organization.

Why are we so interested? This is a keystone parcel for the Sanctuary, because it will:

- Ensure that 100% of Mud Lake marsh will stay natural, forever.
- Provide added protection for Sandhill Cranes in the event Michigan follows suit with other states in opening a crane hunting season.
- Protect a threatened ecosystem, a prairie fen of more than 29 acres.
- Protect a spring that flows from the property to Mud Lake Marsh.
- Offer additional wildlife viewing and photographic opportunities for the Sanctuary's visitors.

Michigan Audubon, our parent organization, and Jackson Audubon Society, stewards of Haehnle Sanctuary, have enthusiastically endorsed this venture. Both Audubon societies are established conservation organizations, each with a long history in education, leadership and the preservation of natural areas. Together they have acquired 466 acres at Haehnle through gifts or purchases since the initial gift of 497 acres in 1955. They have restored more than 150 acres of degraded wetland and established 40 acres of native grasses and wildflowers in the upland. Haehnle Sanctuary has become a refuge for a variety of wildlife, including some rare species of plants and animals. The hill overlooking the marsh has a kiosk with informational displays and benches for viewing the large number of cranes that come to the marsh in October and November. Additional activities and restorations have helped establish Haehnle Sanctuary as one of the premier sanctuaries of Michigan Audubon.

Our goal is to raise \$200,000, and we are off to a good start. Through the efforts of Michigan Audubon, Jackson Audubon Society, and Washtenaw we have already raised over \$90,000. We are now seeking funds from other conservation organizations, foundations, and individual donors.

You can help enrich the quality of life in our community and protect vital crane habitat by enlarging the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary. Gifts should be made payable to either Jackson Audubon Society, P.O. Box 6453, Jackson, MI 49204 or Michigan Audubon, c/o Ronald Hoffman, 6142 E Territorial Rd., Pleasant Lake, 49272. In each case place Haehnle Land Acquisition Fund in the memo line. Both are tax-exempt 501(c) (3) organizations. For gifts other than cash (such as stock, bequests, trusts) or for more information, please call Latham Claflin at 517-522-3949. We welcome donations both large and small.

UPDATE! 66th Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count: Sat., December 15, 2012

Most of you, kind readers, will have seen my annual announcement of the upcoming Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count, which, as announced, will take place on Saturday, December 15, 2012. In that announcement, I also mentioned that participation in the event will, from here on out, be free to all observers. However, apart from saving birders \$5.00, at the time it was not quite clear what this shift to free participation would mean.

Well, quite a bit more has since been published by the CBC organizers at the National Audubon Society (NAS). The biggest impact is, in my opinion, that the CBC summary, *American Birds*, will no longer be printed and mailed to participants, but will, instead, be made available through an online delivery system. In a letter posted on its CBC pages, NAS further clarifies its decision, largely based on participants' feedback, which highlighted a couple of important points:

a) the \$5.00 fee was an obstacle for quite a few prospective observers and, as such, an impediment for the maintenance of many existing circles and the creation of new circles. This, in turn, is limiting the amount of data collected by CBCs.

b) the printed publication is simply unable to capture and display all of the intricacies of the data gathered during each CBC season. An online format will be significantly more versatile in its delivery of the data and summaries, not to mention cheaper.

Obviously, NAS will still need funding to run the annual CBC, so instead of charging participants the flat \$5.00 fee, they have moved to a voluntary donation system. In short, if you want to contribute financially to the CBC, just submit your contribution to your area leader. When our CBC data is submitted to NAS, your contribution will be passed on.

Personally, I can imagine that using this new digital and online-only format is unfamiliar (even daunting) to some of you. Unfortunately, it is unclear what exactly the new format is going to look like; my best guess is that NAS will publish a CBC summary along the lines of *American Birds*, with all of the bells and whistles and versatility that an online platform allows them. At this point, though, that is pure speculation on my part and we'll simply have to wait and see. If you'd like to read more about this topic, please turn to the NAS CBC web pages at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>; a link is available to the letter that I summarized above. As always, information specific to our count will be available on the Ann Arbor CBC web page, <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/aacbc>; updates will be posted as the count day approaches. Speaking of updates, Sarah Toner has kindly agreed to step in as the interim area leader for Area 1 – please see below for the most up-to-date Area Leader listing:

Area Leaders

	Phone	E-mail
1 Sarah Toner	(734) 973-9422	strix09@gmail.com
2 Rob & Nancy French	(734) 994-8418	rwfrenchjr@comcast.net
3 Roger Wykes	(734) 769-6482	
4 Cathy Carroll	(313) 595-4562	songsparrow@wowway.com
5 Mike & Susan Kielb	(734) 239-6064	makielb@comcast.net
6 Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
7 Don Chalfant	(734) 665-3120	screech-owl@comcast.net
8 Mike Sefton		mseft@yahoo.com

CBC Compiler:

Jacco Gelderloos
(734) 973-9422 or jjgelderloos@yahoo.com

Feeder Watch Coordinator:

Kurt Hagemeister
(734) 663-9746 or khagemeister@sbcglobal.net

Potluck Coordinator:

Nicole Sefton seftonn1344@yahoo.com

Ann Arbor CBC Web Site:

<http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/aacbc/>

National Audubon Society:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

A few pics of my (and other WAS members') kids enjoying the Sandhill Crane migration at Haehnle Sanctuary--Bryn Martin



Exciting class about birds to be offered in Ann Arbor February 26-April 27, 2013

When two individuals who love birds and love to teach folks about birds get an opportunity to work together to offer an in-depth bird course, those who enroll should be ready for an excellent learning experience. Instructors **Francie Krawcke**, Leslie Science and Nature Center (LSNC) raptor program specialist and an enthusiastic environmental educator, and **Deaver Armstrong**, Ann Arbor's City Ornithologist and experienced Washtenaw Audubon Field trip guide, have designed a two-month class that looks like a great way to learn about birds and bird-watching. Novice bird watchers, educators and environmental consultants will all find this course useful.

The class will cover basic bird anatomy and physiology, behavior, taxonomy, reproduction, vocalizations, and bird identification in a relaxed, interactive atmosphere. These topics will be covered in the "lecture" component on Tuesdays from 7-8:30 PM. The Saturday morning field trip meetings to various local sites (usually starting around 9 am and finishing by noon) will introduce participants to the local birds and provide some details about how the birds interact with each other and their various habitats. Because we are fortunate enough to be having classes at Leslie Science and Nature Center, the class component will often use live birds in demonstrations. The field component will focus more on groups of birds as they migrate into our area, moving from winter resident species, to waterfowl, to water birds, etc. From time to time other experienced field trip leaders will join us. Dea and Francie recognize that not everyone in the class may be able to make it to every event but reference materials will be provided so that "catching-up" will never be a problem. Educators should contact LSNC regarding continuing education credits. \$295 for 7 lectures and 7 field trips.

Unlike most of the Leslie Science and Nature Center programs, this course is geared towards adults but interested adolescents should inquire. Because class size will be limited, early registration is suggested. To register please call **734-531-6052** or log on to <http://www.lesliesnc.org/programs-friends-families/birds-prey-all-ages>

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (December, 2012--Feb., 2013)

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

Washtenaw Audubon field trips are free of charge and open to the public unless otherwise indicated. For trips with constraints on the number of participants, WAS members are sometimes given priority in registering (again, as indicated). *For trips that require carpooling, minors attending without a parent must bring a written permission statement signed by a parent.* To receive a standard form for this, contact me at the e-mail address above. Also, if you have a suggestion for a field trip, please send it to me at that e-mail address.

**Saturday,
December 8**

Gull Trip to Salem Landfill: Leader: Rob French

Because access to the landfill is highly restricted, we rent a van for the trip and have to limit the number of participants. As of the end of October, registration has been full. We do have a waiting list; if you wish to be added to it, please e-mail your name and a contact phone number to fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org.

**Saturday,
January 19**

Winter Birds of Washtenaw: Leader: Dan Sparks-Jackson

Come join us for what we hope will be an invigorating morning in search of birds spending the winter in our county. Target birds will probably include Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, both Red and White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins, and Redpolls.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the park-n-ride lot just northeast of the I-94 and M-52 interchange (on the southern outskirts of Chelsea). We will plan to return no later than noon.

PLEASE NOTE: (1) If seriously bad weather necessitates postponement, the announcement will be posted on the WAS Field Trip webpage, and the backup date will be the following day. (2) This will be a carpool trip, and anyone under 18 not accompanied by an adult relative or a legal guardian will need to have a completed parental consent form to participate. If this applies to you or your child, please download the form from the field trip page of www.washtenawaudubon.org and bring a signed, completed form when the child is dropped off.

**Friday,
February 1-
Sunday,
February 3**

Birding the Soo: Leaders: Lathe Claflin and Gary Siegrist

This annual winter trip to the environs of Sault Ste. Marie in the upper peninsula is co-sponsored by Jackson Audubon and Washtenaw Audubon. Snowy and Great Gray Owls, Sharp-tailed and Ruffed Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing, grosbeaks, and crossbills are some birds that make driving to the Upper Peninsula worth the effort. Naturally, the weather can be challenging, but the trip has consistently yielded excellent results whatever the conditions.

The event begins with a meeting in the Soo on Friday evening at 8 PM and the birding ends around noon on Sunday. The number of participants is limited, and reserving a space is mandatory. There is a \$20 charge for the trip, and individual participants are also responsible for their own food and lodging costs. For more information or to register, please call Lathe (517-522-3949) or Gary (517-522-5990).

**Saturday,
February 23**

One Road Challenge: See article on the first page of this newsletter.

15th Big Sit for Washtenaw Wingnuts (adapted from Don Chalfant's official report)

The Big Sit is an annual event in which groups of birders around the world try to identify by sight or sound as many bird species as possible while remaining in a circle of 17 feet in diameter. Don Chalfant and Roger Wykes have led a local effort at Independence Lake now for fifteen years. At this year's event, held on Sunday, October 14, another dozen birders--ranging from teenagers to nonagenarians--joined them at one point or another during the day.

Clouds and steady wind held down the numbers from the get-go, that is, from the pre-dawn owling, through the end of the day. The group ended up with a total of 41 species, below the average of 50 over the past decade and a half and the second lowest species total over that time. One highlight was Greater Yellowlegs, the one new species of the day, which brought Don and Roger's cumulative total to 112 species.

For more information about The Big Sit in general, see <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/bigsit>. Among other items of interest, the group names are fun to read--e.g., Grosbreasted Rosebeaks (Dassel, Minnesota).

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 \$25
(on-line only \$20)

___ Student \$10
(emailed newsletters only)

___ Senior \$15
(on-line only \$10)

___ 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 994-3569 if you have questions about the program.

Please note: *The Matthaei Botanical Gardens charges for parking at the rate of \$1.20 an hour, enforced 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm. Members of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum park for free. This fee brings the Garden's policies into alignment with other University of Michigan venues, and provides revenue to maintain the Gardens. If you arrive at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm Washtenaw Audubon program, you will only have to pay 90 cents to park for the 45 minutes before enforcement ends at 8pm. The parking kiosks accept coins, bills and credit cards.*

December 19

Whimbrels in Manitoba: Tracking a Long-distance Migrant: Join Andy Johnson for the amazing adventures of the Whimbrel, a large shorebird that makes one of the longest twice yearly journeys in migration, from its Arctic tundra breeding grounds to its wintering grounds, as far south as Tierra del Fuego in southernmost South America. Andy has been using geolocation devices to follow the Whimbrels' migration routes while studying these fascinating birds during his summers near Churchill on Hudson Bay. Andy Johnson is a graduate of Pioneer High in Ann Arbor, and a junior at Cornell University in the department of ecology and evolutionary biology.

January 16

Birding Colombia: Join globe-trotting birder and photographer Kevin Sharp for a program on Colombia. This South American country is bordered by both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and has varied habitats including Amazon jungle, the mountains of the Andes, and the plains of the Llanos, all of which contribute to Colombia having the largest avifauna of any country in the world. Kevin Sharp works at the Ann Arbor People's Food Co-op, and enjoys photographing the birds, people, and landscapes of the world.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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