



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

March/April 2013

Winter Weekend in Western Washtenaw *By Monty Brown*

In January, after the holidays had passed and in the proverbial dead of winter, Dan Sparks-Jackson led nineteen birders on a delightful Saturday outing through parts of Sylvan, Sharon, Freedom, and Lima townships in search of whatever birds might be available. It was, of course, cold and windier than optimal (both for comfort and for birding), but there was also abundant sunshine most of the morning.

The group traveled first to Waltrous Road, just east of M-52, where we viewed a herd of more than forty Sandhill Cranes pecking their way through a farm field. Next, we traveled south on M-52 to the United Producers parking lot, where we had nice, scoped looks at Horned Larks. We had hoped for Snow Buntings there as well, but none were present while we were there. A consolation was that we did see our first Turkey Vulture of the day (and for most of us, our first one of the year) soaring to the south.

The group then headed to the area of Sylvan Road and Trolz Road to search for a Red-shouldered Hawk that had been spending time in that vicinity. Although that bird and its kind could not be found, some of the birders did get good views of one or two American Kestrels over there. It was a surprise to see a Guinea Fowl in a front yard with some domestic geese on the way over there as well.

Heading back to the northeast, Dan led the group of four vehicles to Jerusalem Road, where we had the pleasure of seeing three Red-Headed Woodpeckers. Everyone in the group was able to see one or both of the adults, and some saw an immature specimen as well.



The group swung down to Scio Church Road, and at least one carload of birders saw Wild Turkeys south of the road near Lima Center Road. Driving by Sutton Lake, Doug Jackson spotted an adult Bald Eagle perched over the water, which the whole group was eventually able to observe.

The final stop was the Trinkle Marsh Preserve. For most of the birders, this was our first opportunity to see the improvements there, which include a parking lot, signage, and a fine new observation deck looking out over the marsh. There the group enjoyed the sight of Eastern Bluebirds and Song Sparrows.

I don't have a count of how many total (wild) species the group as a whole observed. My car companions and I had eighteen. This was definitely a trip where the species count understated the level of enjoyment and interest of the birders though.

Dan Sparks-Jackson in action. Photo by Nat Siddell.

Additional photo on pg. 3.

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Dear Friends,

When I wrote for last year's March/April newsletter, we had already experienced unseasonably warm temperatures. Apparently, this year the groundhog saw his shadow and retreated for six more weeks of winter. But rest assured, the snow will melt and April will come. Then, once again, we will be treated to one of the most thrilling times of the year for Michigan birders- spring migration.

With spring around the corner it's not only time to step outside and get back to your favorite birding spots, but it's also time to pull out your calendars and plan to take advantage of the wonderful outings offered by Washtenaw Audubon. For starters, our weekly spring migration walks in Nichol's Arboretum take place every Thursday in April and May, beginning April 4th. These are leaderless walks that offer a great way to meet new birding friends -both experienced and beginner birders are welcome. This year we will continue with some weekend leaderless walks as well. These walks were introduced last year for those of us unable to get away on Thursday mornings! So check out the details on all these informal walks in this newsletter and on our website.

Also in April, we are very excited to have Dave Stimac joining us as our guest speaker on Wednesday, April 17th at the Botanical Gardens. Dave is a professional photographer whose work has appeared in National Geographic Books, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *Living Bird*. He will speak to us about the fabulous birds that can be found along the Detroit River. The Detroit River remains an important corridor for migratory birds that many of us have perhaps written off as a go-to birding hotspot. Join us for what promises to be a fabulous April program.

In closing, I'll repeat what I've written in many of my previous letters: We have many experienced birders among our readership. If that's you, consider taking a friend or new Washtenaw Audubon member under your wing for a walk in the woods this spring. It's quite a thrill to watch someone enjoying their first Scarlet Tanager!

Happy Spring,

Sue

Washtenaw Audubon MASTER BIRDER Certification

Washtenaw Audubon will offer those who wish to pursue a rigorous bird education program an opportunity to obtain a Washtenaw Audubon Master Birder certification. Like the similar Master Gardner program, applicants are asked to participate in an approved ornithological course (similar to the Leslie Science Center Course or Cornell's at home study program) and complete 40 hours of service in a bird-related activity such as leading birding field trips for a local Audubon Society, working with breeding bird surveys, doing bird related volunteer work at Leslie Science and Nature Center or the Bird Center of Washtenaw County or other similar activities. Interested individuals should contact Dea Armstrong, at ddarm@umich.edu.

Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Bird Report

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

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

The group from the Winter Weekend in Western Washtenaw at the observation platform at Trinkle Marsh. Photo by Nat Siddell.



National Butterfly Association Official Counts 2013

The National Butterfly Association is requesting volunteers for this year. All interested parties should contact the compilers listed below. Last year's 4th July SW Washtenaw count tallied 59 species, a county record and quite possibly a state record, as well. The Milan count is new and partly designed to take advantage of the Draper-Houston Preserve.

Time Date Name Compiler/Contact person

Spring May 26 SW Washtenaw Martin Bialecki (kilnfired@gmail.com)
4th July June 30 SW Washtenaw John Swales (jmswales@umich.edu)
4th July July 2 Chelsea Roger Wykes (769-6482)
4th July July 6 Ann Arbor John Swales (jmswales@umich.edu)
4th July July 13 Milan Mary Mathias (mathiamr@gmail.com)
Fall August 24 SW Washtenaw John Swales (jmswales@umich.edu)

The Return of the One-Road Challenge *By Monty Brown*

On the morning of Saturday, February 23, twenty-four birders who were organized into seven teams birded a county road of their choice, seeking to see or hear as many distinct species as possible. Two teams birded Vreeland, two chose Sharon Hollow, and single teams birded Liberty, Trinkle, and Maple. (Huron River Drive and North Territorial were both excluded from the competition.)

The teams were allowed to start searching their chosen roads as early as they pleased that morning, and three groups took the opportunity to search for owls before dawn. The birding deadline was 11 a.m. Species could be counted if they were identified positively by either sound or sight and as long as at least half of the team saw or heard a specimen. Species found by no other team received a bonus point, and team members who had never participated in a previous WAS event before earned two additional points for their teams. A half-hour after the birding ended, participants gathered at the Songbird Cafe on Plymouth Road to tally the results.

Photos by Matty Hack of birds his team saw. Matty and his brother Benjamin birded the One-Road Challenge with Ellie Shappirio and Sherri Smith, and their road was Liberty.



Congratulations to the team of Jacco Gelderloos, Mike Sefton, and Russell and Whitney Conard. They birded Maple Road and found a total of 39 species, nine of them found by none of the other six teams. Although there was open water on other roads, Maple proved to be the only one that yielded significant numbers and variety of waterfowl that morning. Other than Canada Goose and Sandhill Crane, most groups either had no waterfowl (not even Mallard!) or just additional one species, whereas the Maple team had eight others.

(Continued on the next page)

A total of 54 species were found by all groups. Among the most exciting finds were an American Pipit on Trinkle Road, Red-headed Woodpecker and Swamp Sparrow on Maple, and Fox Sparrow on Sharon Hollow Road. Ten species were found by all seven teams: Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and American Goldfinch. Six of the seven teams had at least one unique species.

Thanks to all twenty-four birders who participated and to the drivers. We owe a special thanks as well to the Songbird Cafe for accommodating our large and noisy group.



Matty Hack's group had a shrike (2 photos on this page) just west of the DeVine Preserve.



Upcoming WAS Field Trips (April--June, 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.

Every Thursday in April and May **Weekly Spring Migration Walks at Nichols Arboretum:** These leaderless walks are a great opportunity to join with other birders of all skill levels. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road. The walks go from 8AM--11:00AM, but participants can leave whenever they'd like.

Weekend Walks at Nichols Arboretum: Same as the above, but held on the weekends! Saturday 4/6, Sunday 4/14, Saturday 4/20, Sunday 4/28, and Saturday 5/18, all at 8:00 AM

Saturday, April 27 **Woodcock Walk at Barton Nature Area:** Leader: Ray Stocking. The American Woodcock is known for its unusual flying pattern during courtship, which can be seen at dawn and dusk in the spring. Park at the Barton Dam lot on Huron River Drive and follow the trail to the foot bridge. We will meet right on the other side (the dam side) of the bridge at 8 PM. Bring a small flashlight to assist you in exiting the park after the program ends. Plan on returning to your car around 9:15 if all goes well.

Every Tuesday in May **Tuesday Evening Birders:** Leaders: Dea Armstrong; Lathe Claflin, and Mike Sefton
Dea, Lathe, and Mike will take turns leading and co-leading these outings. They will scout locations and scan bird reports during the day, and then in the evening take the group to where the action is. This is a carpool event with multiple stops. Meet at 6:00 p.m. at the Miller Road/M-14 park-and-ride lot, where everyone will consolidate for a 6:15 sharp departure. These outings end at dusk.

Saturday, May 11 **International Migratory Bird Count:** Washtenaw County compiler: Roger Wykes
This event, also known as "May Count," takes place every year on the second Saturday in May. Participation in this international event mainly occurs at the local level. Washtenaw County has often been the Michigan leader in number of species counted, and is usually the state leader in the number of participants counting. Roger divides the county up into sections, most consisting of two townships, and each section has a leader. To make sure that each section is adequately counted, volunteers are always needed. If you wish to volunteer, contact one of the section leaders. For more information, go to the WAS Field Trip page.

Sunday, May 12 **Hudson Mills Metropark:** Leader: Karen Markey. Both advanced and novice birders will enjoy this trip. Target birds for this trip include cuckoos, woodpeckers, vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, and tanagers. Meet at the flagpole in front of the Activity Center at 7:30 AM. The trip will last roughly until 11:00, but those who need to leave earlier can do so. PLEASE NOTE: Unless you have a Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual sticker, there is a vehicle fee to enter the park.

Sunday, May 19

Metzger and Magee Marshes, NW Ohio: Leader: Karen Markey. Magee Marsh is an internationally renowned migrant trap where birds stop to refuel before their long flight across Lake Erie. Warblers, flycatchers, sparrows, and thrushes are just some of the many types of birds you can see there during spring migration. On a good spring day there birders can see more than 100 species. Most of the day will be spent there, but the group will go to nearby Metzger Marsh beforehand and possible on the way back to Ann Arbor as well. Meet at the park-and-ride lot at Plymouth Road and US 23 in northeast Ann Arbor at 5:50 a.m. to arrange carpools for a 6:00 sharp departure. Alternatively, you can meet Karen and the rest of the group at the warbler sign near the boardwalk entrance at Magee Marsh at 8:30 a.m. Karen plans to return in late afternoon, but individual drivers and their carpools may arrange to come back sooner. Bring a hat, insect repellent, lunch, and plenty of water or fluids for hydration. There is no food or drink for sale there.

Sunday, June 2

Stinchfield Woods Annual Census: Leader: Karen Markey. Stinchfield Woods is 777 acres of conifer plantations and stands of native hardwoods--mostly oaks and hickories. This census on this property typically yields species such as Pine and Black-throated Green Warblers, Solitary Vireos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Also heard or seen are Wild Turkeys, Hooded Warblers, Ovenbirds, and Acadian Flycatchers. Taking part in this bird count is a great way to observe migration into June, when many other sites in the county have already seen most of their migrants come and go. The count starts at 7:00 a.m. Participants will assemble at the top of the hill near the caretaker's house and the observatory, and divide into groups. After hiking the trails and recording observations, everyone will reassemble late in the morning to compile a list of all birds seen or heard. Bring insect repellent and dress appropriately. NOTE: If you are interested in participating, please contact Karen at ylime@umich.edu to sign up.

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

Membership Dues:

_____ ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____

___ Individual/Household \$25
(on-line only \$20)

Name: _____

___ Student \$10
(emailed newsletters only)

Address: _____

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

Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ 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.*

April 17

A River of Birds: Exploring the Detroit River: Join Dave Stimac for a program of the amazing variety of birds that can be found along the Detroit River. The Detroit River is one of the busiest waterways in the world. It's been industrialized, urbanized and polluted, yet it remains an incredibly important corridor for migrating and nesting birds. It is North America's first international wildlife refuge, and home to one of the largest freshwater marsh restorations in the world. Join Dave in an exploration of the diversity and beauty of this often overlooked region. Dave Stimac is a professional photographer whose work has appeared in National Geographic Books, Ranger Rick, Bird Watcher's Digest, and Living Bird.

May 15

The Birds of Hawai'i: Far from the nearest continental land mass, the birds of the Hawaiian Islands evolved in an environment free of predators and disease. The unique Hawaiian Honeycreepers evolved into 50 species and subspecies from a single colonizing ancestor. As the islands were settled by humans, many of these birds became extinct, and the remaining survivors include some of the most endangered birds in the world. Join Bryn Martin for a birding tour of Hawai'i, and see some of these beautiful birds and their habitats. Bryn teaches high school in Livonia, and travels the world in search of birds.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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