



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Amazing Opportunities By Artemis Eyster

As an avid nature enthusiast I have been a member of Washtenaw Audubon Society for as long as I can remember, attending lectures, Tuesday evening adventures, and field trips to the landfill and beyond. This year I had the great opportunity to join environmental educators in the region and nationally due to the financial support from WAS.

In October, environmentalists converged at Belle Isle at the MAEOE (Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education) Conference. During the conference, in-between attending inspiring sessions, I also presented a session; *Designing an Environmental Literature unit for English Classes*, a combination of providing my own personal experience as student in public education and facilitating discussions among the participants. Seated on the casino porch, I included all the participants in a rich dialogue on nature based books and poems that could introduce students to the wonder of nature and environmental issues. My presentation was well received. Later highlights included meeting Tim Grant, the founder of Green Teacher Magazine and attending the Keynote address by Margaret Holtschlag, the Director of the Annie's BIG Lessons.

Also this fall, I presented at the North American Association of Environmental Educators (NAAEE) Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. While attending a diverse mix of Panels, Sessions and Roundtables I met a multitude of other environmental educators from across the country from organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Harmony foundation. This caused me to gain a new appreciation of expansiveness and promise of environmental education. In co-leading a Roundtable: *Intergenerational Dialogue: How to raise More Environmental Educators* with Johanna Jackson (from Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, PA) we directed an exchange of wisdom, on getting children excited and interested in nature, between ourselves and prominent environmental leaders from across the country.

I had my last presentation opportunity at the Stewardship Network conference, Restoring Native Ecosystems 2014. Lead by Lisa Brush, there were many members of Washtenaw Audubon and HVC attending, as well as leaders of NAP and other Michigan organizations. The keynote presentations were by activist Winona LaDuke of the Anishinaabe and
(Continued on pg. 3)

January/February 2014

The 67th Ann Arbor CBC –

December 21, 2013

By Jacco Gelderloos

What a difference a year makes! In 2012, the weeks leading up to our count had been very mild and fall-like, with winter weather arriving only days ahead of count day. By contrast, this year winter kicked in at the end of the first week of December, and with our count taking place at the latest possible date of the 21st, those weeks of temperatures well below freezing severely reduced the amount of open water in our count circle (and brought an influx of Snowy Owls into the Great Lakes area and the Northeast). Then, one week before our count, winter storm Electra dumped some 7-8 inches of snow on southeastern Michigan, prompting the cancellation of at least one CBC in our neighborhood. At the time, I remember thinking that we were lucky to not have had our count on the 14th, because conditions would have been challenging, to say the least. Well, as it turned out, Mother Nature had a trick up her sleeve...

The 10-day streak of below freezing days and nights ended on the 19th, when winds took on a southerly component and the daytime high almost hit 40 degrees, which caused significant snowmelt. The next day, the 20th, the approach of another winter storm, Gemini, brought a strengthening of this southerly airflow, and with it came light rains that further aided snowmelt. Unfortunately, Gemini also brought with it a very real threat of icy precipitation: as count day approached winter weather warnings were issued. The forecast called for ice to start replacing light rain around 3:00 p.m. (which would be a problem for the potluck);
(Continued on pg. 3)

Borneo/Malaysia! Many spots still open on the WAS international field trip to Borneo this upcoming June. Please consider joining us for this amazing opportunity! Rockjumper Tours will be our guides and they did a fantastic job for us in South Africa a few years ago. Accommodations are excellent. (Additional information on pg. 8) 1

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Dear Friends,

By the time you read this newsletter, hopefully the cold spell that has gripped us this January will be behind us. Even so, this month's snow and cold has been one for the record books and I am guessing that even as hearty as we Michigan birders can be, the cold has put a damper on some of our winter outings.

That being said, the excitement over this winter's relative abundance of Snowy Owls is tangible. As one who has not yet sited a Snowy, I was heartened to learn at our January meeting that I am in good company. I've never promised to be an expert in anything ornithological, so I did what we all do when faced with questions, I went to Google. I found a blog site *10,000Birds.com* that offered some interesting information (and photos) on this year's Snowies, both here in Michigan and beyond Washtenaw.

The site states, "The midwestern and northeastern United States, especially coastal regions and areas along the Great Lakes, are currently experiencing an invasion of *Bubo scandiacus*. **Snowy Owls** have been sighted as far south as North Carolina" (and now Florida, I believe). "Birders in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, West Virginia, Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Maryland, and Virginia are all enjoying **Snowy Owls**, but none as much as the North Carolina birders, who are enjoying their first and second **Snowy Owls** in thirteen years. (Though the birders in Bermuda who spotted one over the weekend are probably pretty happy too – it is their third record in thirty years!)"

Given our record breaking cold, I wanted to highlight our record breaking owl sightings as well- and encourage you to seek out a Snowy, if you've not yet been so fortunate. There's no guarantee we'll have these opportunities next year.

And while I am not an ornithological expert, we're fortunate to have several in our midst. Before I close this letter, I want to highlight a fabulous opportunity to improve your bird knowledge. For the second year, Dea Armstrong will be co-teaching an 8-week course on ornithology with Francie Krawcke of the Leslie Science & Nature Center. The Class is a combination of Tuesday evening lectures and Saturday morning field trips that will be perfect for the beginning or intermediate birder. Topics such as anatomy, physiology, behavior, vocalizations, identification and more will be covered. Registration is required, so check out our website, or the Leslie Science Center website (lesliesnc.org) for more information. It gets started in early March, so don't miss out!

Stay warm,

Sue Johnson
President

Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Bird Report

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

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



(*Amazing Opportunities continued from pg. 1*)

teacher David Haskell, the author of *The Forest Unseen*, I don't know if you have had the opportunity to hear either of these people speak, but I highly recommend it, they were inspirational and knowledgeable individuals. My role in the conference was very thrilling. On Friday afternoon, I spoke on a student panel for David Haskell's *Field-based Education for the Next Generation*, providing an insight and dream for field based education. In my presentation, *Is Michigan's Constitutional duty to Conserve Natural Resources under Attack?* I discussed the background of Michigan's legislature's involvement in conservation with a focus on the climactic "Anti-biodiversity" Senate Bill 78, providing insights into both sides, and discussing the future implications. Making connections and seeing old friends the conference was a rare and fulfilling experience.

I would like to thank all the members of the Washtenaw Audubon Society for fostering and teaching me knowledge and appreciation of nature, and especially the board of WAS for helping me to attend these one-of-a-kind conferences.

Successful Ornithology Class Scheduled. (March)

Instructors Francie Krawcke, Leslie Science and Nature Center (LSNC) Raptor Program Director 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 is a great way to learn about birds and bird-watching. Novice bird watchers, educators, and environmental consultants will all find this course useful. Class size is limited. Please join us! <http://www.lesliesnc.org/events/raptors> for sign up information

Washtenaw Audubon Library

If you are thinking about a birding trip to either a distant land, or some specific place in the USA, remember that we have a library that may have just the book you want to see or borrow for the trip. This offer is normally for members only. A list of our books should always be up on our website. Call or email Sherri Smith, 734 994-6287 or grackle@umich.edu.

(*CBC continued from pg. 1*)

later that evening, the timing of the changeover was pushed forward to 12:00 noon (which would be a problem for our count, period). Needless to say, I was very apprehensive about the weather's potential impact and communicated my concerns in an email to the area leaders before I left to go owling.

In spite of overcast skies, there was not a whole lot of precipitation during the pre-dawn hours and the lack of wind made for very decent owling conditions, which allowed the six or so owling groups to locate good numbers of Eastern Screech-Owls, but a somewhat disappointing total of only 10 Great Horned Owls. Much like last year, my area F produced a surprising tally of 6 Screech and 5 Great Horned Owls, which, given the urban location, seems almost counter-intuitive. All in all, the total number of owls was more or less in line with the recent average; no unusual owl species were found during the hours of darkness, and Barred Owl continues to elude us – perhaps next year?

Not surprisingly, the weather (forecast) likely affected our turnout, but 63 field observers (7 of them under 18 years old) and 3 feeder watchers still signed on. As groups gathered between 7 and 8, they were greeted by overcast skies, light drizzle, and temperatures hovering in the mid-30s. The clouds never departed, but the rain eased here and there during the day. Most importantly, we never went below freezing, which meant that the precipitation did not switch over to ice as forecast – phew! Still, the wet and muddy conditions due to rain and snow melt made for a challenging day out in the field. And combined with so-so scouting reports, I was still quite worried about how the day would turn out for us.

Well, it turned out one of the highlights of the day was one of the first daytime bird encounters my group had. As we were standing around in the parking area of the Ann Arbor Airport terminal building, I noticed that the white pick-up truck of the maintenance guy we were supposed to meet up with came to an abrupt stop. Next thing I knew, I saw a large white bird flapping low over the runway and I blurted out "Snowy Owl!" Everything unfolded quickly from there:

Laurent Fournier sprinted over to the fence to try and find the bird and I ran back to my car to grab my scope, while trying to convey the magnitude of this find to the other members of our group. When we met up at the fence, Laurent had relocated the bird and everybody (airport staff included) got fantastic looks at this impressive visitor from the far North.

Needless to say, a find like this had our group on cloud nine for the rest of the day, but throughout the day we continued to find a good variety of birds, albeit in what felt like lower numbers. The weather most likely played a role in that last phenomenon, and was clearly expected. As counters started trickling in for the potluck and tally the excitement started building as to how our (*Continued on pg. 4*)

(CBC continued from the previous page)

count ended up doing, especially keeping in mind the weather and the difficult circumstances due to the cold snap and the snow melt. When it was all said and done, I need not have worried: 68 species were recorded on count day, plus 4 additional during count week. That total of 72 is right on the 10-year average species count of 71.8, so quite respectable for our CBC. Now, the number of individual birds we found was definitely on the low end of our recent counts, but not unprecedentedly so. Essentially, the cause was that great variable of our count, the crow roost. Our crow crew was unable to establish the whereabouts of the main roost and had to settle for a small staging location, where they found “only” 4,000 American Crows. For reference, in past years they have found as many as 29,000 – a big difference, indeed!

Clearly, the cold leading up to the count severely limited the availability of open water, which was reflected in the relatively low number of waterfowl species, if not their individual numbers. Of note were the high numbers of the so-called puddle ducks, with a record high of 17 Gadwall, the highest tally of Am. Black Ducks in over a decade (20), and an unexpected pair of Green-winged Teal clearly highlights for the day. Diving duck numbers were low, as were gull numbers, but Great Blue Herons and Belted Kingfishers were present in average numbers. Oddly, Chris McCreedy found a Killdeer in the southwestern corner of our circle, the first since 2006 – how this bird survived until the count is a mystery to me!

As in past years, raptors put on an average showing: 8 species and 2 sp. on count day, and two additional species during count week. Although not unprecedented, Turkey Vulture was a good find by Nancy French’s group in area B, as was the Bald Eagle along the Huron River there. It was a good year for accipiters: half a dozen of Sharp-shinned Hawks was a very respectable tally and Cooper’s Hawk tied the all-time high. We managed to record all three falcons yet again, for the third year in a row (Kestrels are still hanging on...). Clearly, though, the winter of 2013-14 was to be the winter of the Snowy Owl. With Snowies apparently everywhere (check out the December 2013 eBird map for the species!), many of us hoped to find one, and in addition to the bird at the Ann Arbor Airport, a second bird was seen over Independence Lake by Roger Wykes. Of note, Roger was also involved with the only prior record for Snowy Owl on our CBC, back in 1993!

Over the past few years, I have commented on the dearth of galliforms on our count, and I cannot avoid mentioning them once more. After a three-year absence, a lone Ring-necked Pheasant was located in Barton Park; contrast that with the record tally of 114 Wild Turkeys, 50% higher than the previous high of 77 (from 2010). With the dramatic increase in this species’ number, it can only be a matter of time before Wild Turkeys are found in all eight of our count areas (four areas recorded it this year).

Closing out the non-passerines, woodpeckers, too, were present in to-be-expected (i.e. average) variety and numbers. Still of note, though, two Pileated Woodpeckers confirmed that species’ presence on our count’s roster. Maturing woodlots and a flourishing source population in the western part of the county will certainly help sustain that trend.

Passerines were clearly affected by the weather. Although just about every expected species was turned up, quite a few of them had decidedly average to slightly below average showings. Always rare, Northern Shrike was absent, and after last year’s record showing of 82 birds, this year’s tally of 6 Red-breasted Nuthatches was indicative of our circle’s small resident population (and the complete lack of an irruption in 2013). Counter to the general trend, a total of 19 Brown Creepers was the highest tally since 1968, and in spite of the harsh weather conditions in December, 42 Carolina Wrens were found, almost 30% above the recent 10-year average. The same was true for Golden-crowned Kinglet, whose tally of 55 was some 40% over the 10-year average.

Six sparrow species were found, best among them a Field Sparrow visiting a feeder in area B – during the past 15 years, this species has been found only three times! After last year’s sorry turn-out, Dark-eyed Juncoes were back to their normal numbers, and a flock of Snow Buntings photographed at the Ann Arbor Airport turned out to contain a whopping 101 birds! (see Ben Lucking’s photo)

Icterids (blackbirds) are always of note on our count, so two Red-winged Blackbirds (last seen in 2006) and a massive 180 Brown-headed Cowbirds (more than double the total for the previous 20 years!) were welcome surprises in area G.

Conversely, and in sharp contrast to last year’s bonanza, unusual finches were, in a word, absent. Apart from American Gold- and House Finch, only Purple Finch was added to our 2013 results, and that was a count week addition to boot.

I believe it is appropriate to say that the weather conspired to create an “average” count. Now, that is not to imply that the 2013 edition was a bad count – I think it is safe to say that, yes, average means just that, average, but that average can still have some goodies on offer. After all, the average Ann Arbor CBC has high counts (we had six this year), low/lowish counts (diving ducks, several passerines), unusual species (Snowy Owls!), and many just plain cool encounters. I know I greatly enjoyed being out there in the drizzle – birding with nice people will do that for you. Surely, this is an experience shared by all of us and it is what continues to make our count such a successful one!

Please take a look at the attached results and if that whets your appetite for more, check out the amazing array of data, stats, and Lord knows what else at the National Audubon Society’s CBC portal at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>. This is where our snapshot of Ann Arbor area birdlife is put into a nation-, even hemisphere-wide context.

(Final word on pg. 6)

Canada Goose	4,183	American Kestrel	4	Red-breasted Nuthatch	6
Mute Swan	40	Peregrine Falcon	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	191
Trumpeter Swan	26	Merlin	2 (tied HC)	Brown Creeper	19
American Wigeon	2	American Coot	3	Carolina Wren	42
Gadwall	17 (HC)	Killdeer	1 (US)	Golden-crowned Kinglet	55
American Black Duck	20	Ring-billed Gull	35	Eastern Bluebird	96
Mallard	1,925	American Herring Gull	18	Hermit Thrush	2
Green-winged Teal	2 (US,tied HC)	gull sp.	2	American Robin	1,038
Common Goldeneye	5	Rock Pigeon	463	European Starling	2,235
Bufflehead	2	Mourning Dove	1,078	Cedar Waxwing	99
Hooded Merganser	37	Snowy Owl	2 (US, HC)	Yellow-rumped Warbler	2
Common Merganser	9	Eastern Screech-Owl	32	American Tree Sparrow	442
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Great Horned Owl	10	Field Sparrow	1 (US)
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	Belted Kingfisher	7	Song Sparrow	18
Wild Turkey	114 (HC)	Red-bellied Woodpecker	106	White-throated Sparrow	69
Great Blue Heron	9	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Dark-eyed Junco	746
Turkey Vulture	1 (US)	Downy Woodpecker	166	Lapland Longspur	CW
Bald Eagle	1	Hairy Woodpecker	35	Snow Bunting	101
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	Northern Flicker	20	Northern Cardinal	402
Cooper's Hawk	23 (tied HC)	Pileated Woodpecker	2 (US)	Red-winged Blackbird	2 (US)
accipiter sp.	1	Blue Jay	422	Brown-headed Cowbird	180 (US)
Red-tailed Hawk	67	American Crow	3,995	House Finch	313
Red-shouldered Hawk	CW	Horned Lark	39	Purple Finch	CW
Rough-legged Hawk	CW	Black-capped Chickadee	556	American Goldfinch	464
buteo sp.	1	Tufted Titmouse	192	House Sparrow	1,027
				Total Individuals	21,235

CW = count week only

HC = high count

US = unusual species



Tally picture by Mike Sefton



Snow Bunting flocks in flight by Ben Lucking.



Upcoming WAS Field Trips (March--April, 2014)

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,
March 15**

One-Road Challenge: Please participate in this friendly competition sponsored by Washtenaw Audubon. 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 mid-March. Three other roads will not be usable: Huron Parkway, Huron River Drive, and North Territorial. All other roads will be allowed, but please use good judgment in considering safety in addition to bird-related considerations. Start searching this road as early as you like on the morning of the event (i.e., any time after midnight). Look and listen for as many bird species as possible, stopping no later than 11 AM. Only species observed and identified by 11 AM will count. Teams that include people who have never participated in ANY previous 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 location to be determined. If the weather on this Saturday looks like it may not be appropriate for this event, (after a lot of cursing) we may postpone the Challenge to the following day. In that event, on Friday 3/14 a notice would be posted to the WAS web site and sent to the birders@great-lakes.net 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. Also, check the web site for full details and rules.

**Thursdays
in April
and May**

Thursday Spring Migration Walks: Join us on Thursday mornings in April and May at Nichols Arboretum to observe migrants making their way north. These leaderless walks are a great opportunity to join with other birders of all skill levels. In addition to the birds, the Arb's trees and plants offer delights of their own. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at 8:00 a.m.; the walks will end around 11:00, but participants can leave whenever they prefer.

**Saturday,
April 19**

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, across the street and slightly north/upriver from Bird Road, and follow the trail around the building to the foot bridge. We will meet right on the other side (the dam side) of the bridge at 8 PM. PLEASE NOTE: Do not park in the Barton Nature Area lot on Huron River Drive just after Main Street, or else you will have a LONG walk back to your car in the dark. Please wear good walking shoes and dress warmly. (The temperature will drop quickly at sunset.) 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.

CBC final word: As always, I would like to extend a heart-felt "Thank you" to all of you, volunteers; you helped make this year's count a smoothly-run event once again – without you, counters, area leaders, and potluck/feeder watch coordinators, our count would not be as well-oiled a machine as it is. This year, a special mention is in order for Don Chalfant – after 20+ years of counting and coordinating coverage in Area G, he passed on the torch this year. Thank you, Don! And again, thank you all - see you next year!

Borneo Trip Details

When: June 20 (8AM)--June 29, 2014

Cost: 11 participants \$ 3,735 per person sharing
Single supplement \$ 325.00

What's included: All accommodation on a twin/double sharing basis, all meals, bottled water, all transportation during the tour, boating excursions on the Kinabatangan River, entry permits, gratuities for hotel staff, servers, porters, drivers and local guides, guiding services and costs of a local Malaysian guide and a Rockjumper leader

What's *not* included: Any international or domestic flights (and associated taxes), any visas, drinks

International flights: Once we get our group together, we will work out a group-flight, however, you are free to organize on your own as well.

How to reserve a spot: Send an email to Bryn Martin: brynmartin@sbcglobal.net (or call him--734-454-0439). Trip is limited to 11 participants on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Additional details: Plan to see 225-250 bird species, including 40-some endemics and many mammals.



Check the WAS web site for all upcoming field trips. Details will be posted there.



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.*

March 19

Birds of Hispaniola: Their Ecology and Conservation: Join Dr. Steven Latta for a program on the birds of Hispaniola. Steven Latta, PhD, is Director of Conservation and Field Research of the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, PA. Dr. Latta is principal author of *Birds of the Dominican Republic and Haiti* (Princeton University Press), the field guide of choice for visits to Hispaniola. Steve's program will highlight many of the 31 species endemic to Hispaniola, and will touch on research and conservation priorities that add to Hispaniola's prominence in Neotropical ornithology.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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