



WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

March/April 2015

Meet the Flock

Cathy Theisen, Education Chair

Washtenaw Audubon Society's new Education Chair, Cathy Theisen, is on a mission to help WAS birders get to know each other better. Her new column, "Meet the Flock," is designed to introduce you to all kinds of WAS birders, from young birders to Arb walkers to past and present board members, and more. This month Cathy is introducing herself as well as former Education Chair Dea Armstrong. Read on to learn more about these amazing women and birders.

Meet Cathy Theisen

Cathy Theisen is a veterinarian with over 30 years experience in small animal medicine and surgery. She lives in Dexter with a lively human and animal family! Cathy owned her own practice in north Oakland County for 20 years, and currently is the Medical Director at Baker College of Jackson's Veterinary Technology program. When not doing surgery at Baker, she keeps busy doing veterinary house calls in the greater Ann Arbor area. Cathy is also a federal first responder under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS), and is a veteran of multiple disaster deployments throughout the country. She is a two-time volunteer *(cont. on page 3)*

Meet Dea Armstrong

Dea Armstrong will be retiring from her post as Director of Education for WAS after many years. WAS has been blessed with her capable leadership and participation for over 20 years(!), first as Field Trip Chairperson and then as Education Chair. Dea was in the first class of undergraduate women at the University of Virginia in 1972 where she took a double major in biology and chemistry. Although she has loved birds since childhood, she was formally introduced to birding when she took an Ann Arbor Rec & Ed class from Dorothy Blanchard in the early 90s after a move to Ann Arbor with her family. *(cont. on page 3)*

President's Letter

Dear Birders and friends,

These are my thoughts on March 16, a few days shy of the vernal equinox.

Spring is coming at last. After a season harsh enough to rival last winter's record-setting cold and snow, we finally have a spring thaw. It might not last, but we have a thaw nonetheless. Today the temperature topped out at 60° F, a far cry from the -25° F we saw here in Ann Arbor just a few weeks ago. It gives a birder hope. Hope, that the first Gnatcatchers will arrive soon to build their lichen-covered nest in Furstenberg, hope that the Warbler flocks will return to the Arb, hope that a Scarlet Tanager will sing in my yard again this year. I know it will snow again this spring. But, I can't help being hopeful this time of year. I hope the House Wrens will find the new house I put up for them. I hope the Bluebird family I saw inspecting an abandoned Downy Woodpecker nest hole in my yard decides to move in and raise their brood here.

We have a great spread of field trips coming up in the next two months, so get ready to get out and see some birds. Check out the field trips listed in this newsletter and on our website and attend our great line-up of programs (www.washtenawaudubon.org). All this long winter I have been pining away for our Spring Migration Walks in the Arb. On the first Thursday of April our walks begin. Join me and other exuberant birders as we walk our familiar trails, on our treasure hunt for who knows what bird.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger



Red-winged Blackbird (Benjamin Hack)



Red-winged Blackbird (Matty Hack)

Meet the Flock: Cathy Theisen (*cont. from page 1*)
veterinarian for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Alaska, and has volunteered on third world spay/neuter campaigns in Nicaragua, Samoa, Mexico, and Kenya.

Her birding mentors in Washtenaw are the many leaders of WAS trips, especially Tuesday Evening Birders in May. These are the folks who scout out spots and then lead the rest of us to them, teaching us not only about the birds we saw, but giving us a map of our local birding areas. Many thanks to Dea Armstrong, Mike Sefton, Lathe Claflin, Dan Sparks-



Jackson, Don Chalfant, Ray Stocking, Monty Brown, and Rob French. She also owes a huge debt of gratitude to one of our fine young birders, Ben Lucking, whose incredible eyes and ears have led her to some amazing habitat and bird sightings! She blames eBird for infecting her with the listing disease, and has come to consider birding to be a spiritual experience, wherein one learns to see and hear a parallel universe that has existed all along.

Her favorite birding memory involves a trip to Jasper Provincial Park, to scope for waterfowl on a small rise overlooking a slough. As she was setting up her spotting scope, she heard the magical call of the Sora for the first time ever...and, noticed there was a movement on the far side of the hill. Up the hill came a young Grizzly bear, and all parties were quite surprised to see the other! Fortunately, the bear sniffed the air, determined that the quaking mass in front of it was human, and made a wide circle around the birding party and went on its way. The call of the Sora will forever mean wilderness in this birders' mind!

Cathy's most wanted birding experiences now involve comfortable lodges in remote wilderness areas. She is a strong supporter of ecotourism around the world, and believes the best way to conserve habitat is to make it economically advantageous for local people to do so. She hopes there is a trip to Madagascar in her future. Cathy has gratefully accepted Dea Armstrong's hallowed position on the WAS board as Education Chair. Contact Cathy at cathythetvet@comcast.net, especially if you are a new birder who is willing to share your bio for future editions of "Meet The Flock!"

Meet the Flock: Dea Armstrong (*cont. from page 1*)
She then decided to return to school to do more serious studies of birds and avian ecology and went on to achieve a Master's degree at the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources in 1998. Before graduating, she began volunteering with Ann Arbor's Natural Area Preservation (NAP) Breeding Bird Survey Program, working under Mike Kielb, and eventually was named Ann Arbor's City Ornithologist. She has held that position for the last 17 years. During that time she also served for six years on Scio Township's Land Preservation commission. While the graduate degree was important to her, she credits her birding success to patient mentoring by WAS members Mike Kielb, Don Chalfant, Mike Sefton, Lathe Claflin, Don Brooks, and Jacco Gelderloos.

Her most memorable birding experience was on a chilly Washtenaw County Big Day in December, with teammates Mike Sefton, Andy Johnson, and Harold Eyster. She found it magical and amazing to witness the skill and prowess of two of our finer young birders, and it was icing on the cake when she and Mike could add a gem of wisdom here and there! Another peak memory is the successful hunt for a Great Gray Owl at Whitefish Point's Spring Fling, with Don Chalfant...anyone who has seen one of these beauties can attest to the awesome spectacle of this much sought-after owl.



She has a hard time pinning down a most wanted birding experience, but put her name on the list if you are planning a birding trip to Alaska, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Nova Scotia...and other points afield she hasn't thought of yet! She is toying with the idea of combining a new activity, bicycling, with her love of birding. Look for Dea on the trails all over Washtenaw County, or as the instructor for an Introduction to Birds class at Leslie Science and Nature Center in the spring months. Contact Dea by email at ddarm@umich.edu.

Christmas Bird Count 2014 Species Count Totals

As promised, here is the total species count data from the 2014 Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count. For 2014 totals by area within the count circle, please go to www.washtenawaudubon.org and download the PDF or Excel spreadsheet.

Canada Goose 4,390
 Dom. Graylag Goose 4
 Mute Swan 31
 Trumpeter Swan 18
 Northern Pintail 3
 Northern Shoveler 1
 American Black Duck 18
 Mallard 1,432
 Am. Black Duck x Mallard hybrid 3
 Green-winged Teal 1
 Lesser Scaup 1
 Common Goldeneye 10
 Bufflehead 3
 Hooded Merganser 49
 Common Merganser 87
 Ruddy Duck 1
 Dom. Muscovy Duck 1
 Pied-billed Grebe 1
 Ring-necked Pheasant 2
 Wild Turkey 101
 Great Blue Heron 8
 Turkey Vulture 5
 Bald Eagle 1
 Sharp-shinned Hawk 2
 Cooper's Hawk 23
 accipiter sp. 1
 Red-tailed Hawk 91
 American Kestrel 2
 Peregrine Falcon 1
 American Coot 2
 Ring-billed Gull 122
 American Herring Gull 16
 gull sp. 9
 Rock Pigeon 519
 "white" Rock Pigeon 4
 Mourning Dove 624
 Barred Owl 2
 Eastern Screech-Owl 43
 Great Horned Owl 26
 Belted Kingfisher 3
 Red-bellied Woodpecker 156

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1
 Downy Woodpecker 240
 Hairy Woodpecker 31
 Northern Flicker 30
 Pileated Woodpecker 2
 woodpecker sp. 4
 Blue Jay 427
 American Crow 17,000
 Black-capped Chickadee 903
 Tufted Titmouse 228
 Red-breasted Nuthatch 1
 White-breasted Nuthatch 299
 Brown Creeper 14
 Winter Wren 3
 Carolina Wren 31
 Golden-crowned Kinglet 15
 Eastern Bluebird 122
 Hermit Thrush 1
 American Robin 484
 European Starling 4,189
 Cedar Waxwing 12
 Yellow-rumped Warbler 2
 Eastern Towhee 1
 American Tree Sparrow 319
 Song Sparrow 15
 Swamp Sparrow 1
 White-throated Sparrow 64
 White-crowned Sparrow 1
 Dark-eyed Junco 477
 Lapland Longspur 1
 Northern Cardinal 491
 Rusty Blackbird 1
 Brown-headed Cowbird 302
 House Finch 473
 Purple Finch 2
 Common Redpoll 12
 Pine Siskin 174
 American Goldfinch 753
 House Sparrow 1,296

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The Washtenaw Audubon Society is an active chapter of Michigan Audubon formed in the early 1950s. Monthly programs feature guest speakers on a wide variety of natural history and birding topics. We conduct field trips to places in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and beyond.

Shiawassee NWR Field Trip (Saturday, January 31) by Bryn Martin

Everyone saw at least part of a Long-eared Owl that was tucked up sleeping in extremely thick foliage. We knew that at least a few individuals had been reported in this area for the last month or so. But I also knew others had recently dipped on them, so I had my fingers crossed that we would luck out. Which we did...if by "luck out" I mean WAS's own teenage birding prodigy, Sarah Toner, found them for us. It was amazing how camouflaged they truly were and it was equally amazing that they were found! Huzzah! But even after being found, it was extremely difficult to get everyone to see the bird. We got it in the scope...and still people couldn't see it. You really had to use your imagination and just like looking at a 3-D stereogram, if you concentrated and stared long enough, the bird would pop into view and there it was!

Aside from the cryptic owls, our group of nine birders had excellent luck with other raptors. Rough-legged Hawks were a highlight. Conservatively, we had ten separate sightings. (However, some of these may have been repeat individuals.) Excellent looks at them fighting one another, perched right on the ground next to the road, and most interestingly, multiple individuals displaying their unique style of hover-hunting. We also had both dark and light morph individuals. We had a number of Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers (male and female) banking over the snow-covered fields and one regal Merlin perched at the tip-top of the branches of a distant tree.

We found a reported Snowy Owl that tricked us into thinking it was a mound of snow, before revealing that it was, in fact, the owl we originally thought it was. Huge, but distant flocks of Snow Buntings with some Horned Larks mixed in. On the drive up, I tasked Sarah with finding us a Northern Shrike. Lo and behold, as we were leaving the area, she actually found us one perched atop some distant bushes! Excellent score!

The oddest sighting, though, had to be a Savannah Sparrow tucked into a bush with a large flock of American Tree Sparrows. Very out of season and, according to eBird, the first one spotted for the year in Michigan!

All in all, the hour and a half drive up was worth it. A bit chilly, but not too bad out there. We lucked out that the huge snowstorm held off until the next day to allow us to enjoy these wintering specialties.

May Count, Washtenaw County

Saturday, May 9, 2015

With spring finally here, birders' thoughts turn to spring birding. As you think about the ways you will bird in the county this spring, please consider participating in the Washtenaw County May Count.

WAS President, Juliet Berger, is the Washtenaw County Coordinator/Compiler. Participation in this international event mainly occurs at the local level. The Compiler divides the county into townships, each of which has an Area Leader. Leaders recruit volunteers to count birds throughout their area. For names and contact information for the Compiler and the Area Leaders, visit our website, and please consider volunteering.

This event is *not* just for expert birders. It is a great way for less experienced birders who are willing to help record birds to learn from others with more advanced skills. This event occurs throughout the day, with early morning and late evening owling, as well, in some areas. Please contact an Area Leader or the Compiler to help out!

Flyaway Dinner & Benefit Bird Center of Washtenaw County

May 2, 2015, 6:30 p.m.

Weber's Restaurant, 3050 Jackson Rd., Ann Arbor

Cost: Dinner \$55/person. RSVP by Apr. 29 to keithgette@gmail.com or (734) 475-2245.

Buffet dinner followed by videos, awards for volunteers and staff, and a keynote speech by former Ann Arbor mayor John Hieftje. Proceeds support the Bird Center. Dinner includes pot roast or vegetable lasagna, appetizers, desserts, and one cocktail.

Local National American Butterfly Association Official Counts 2015

Save the date. Starting May 30 and with dates throughout the summer (until August 22), everybody is welcome to join a count for a half or full day. Find more details at www.washtenawaudubon.org or contact organizer John Swales at jmswales@umich.edu for more information.

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (April 2015 to May 2015)

Bryn Martin, 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 email address above. Also, if you have a suggestion for a field trip, please send it to me at the email address above.

Saturday, April 4, 2015

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 early April. The following roads will *not* be eligible: Huron River Drive, Michigan Avenue, North Territorial. All other roads will be allowed, but **please use good judgment in considering safety** in addition to bird-related considerations.

—You will not “own” your road; more than one team is allowed to use a road. If your road extends out of the county, only the portion in the county is usable.

—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 11:00 a.m. Only species observed by 11:00 a.m. will count.

—Many more details, and a few more rules, can be found on the Events page at www.washtenawaudubon.org.

Thursdays in April and May: 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. 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 a.m., but participants can leave whenever they prefer.

Saturday, April 11

Arb Early Migrants (Leader Karen Markey)

Early springtime walks through the Arb are productive for Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, White-throated Sparrows, Winter Wrens, Fox Sparrows, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Brown Creepers. These early birds are joined by the first warblers—Yellow-rumped, Pine, Palm, and Orange-crowned. Maybe a Blue-headed Vireo will join them. We will meet at the Riverview Court entrance to the Arb at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Dress appropriately for the weather, including coat, gloves, scarf, hat, and sensible footwear. No strollers, dogs, or wagons please. The walk should end between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 12 (10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

In Search of Salamanders (Leader Edwin Sanchez)

Join leader Edwin Sanchez at Hudson Mills Metropark. Eddie is an expert on these amphibians and this will be a fun morning turning over rocks and logs to locate some of the six species known to reside in the park. Meet at the parking lot for the River Grove Shelter area located within the park (turn right after the entry kiosk, then your next left into the lot). Expect muddy grounds. In case we end up handling any salamanders, please do not use any soaps, creams, or detergents on your hands for this morning. This hands-on field trip is perfect for little ones. The field trip is free of charge, but a Metroparks Pass is required for admission to the park.

Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz 2015!

Rusty Blackbirds are one of the fastest declining birds in North America and conservationists are looking for birders like you to help understand this commonly overlooked species. Anyone can participate and it's easy to get involved; *just go birding!* From March through April look and listen for these “squeaky-hinge” birds and report your sightings on eBird. For more information on Rusties and The Blitz, please visit www.rustyblackbird.org. Michigan Audubon will be sponsoring contests for both solo birders and teams so stay tuned for even more Rusty goodness! Contact Rachelle Roake at RRoake@michiganaudubon.org to learn more. Get ready to get Rusty!

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (April 2015 to May 2015)

Bryn Martin, Field Trip Coordinator (fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

Friday, April 17

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 footbridge. We will meet right on the other side (the dam side) of the bridge at 8:00 p.m. **Please note:** Do not park in the Barton Nature Area lot on Huron River Dr. just after Main St., or 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 p.m. if all goes well.

Sunday, April 19

Weekend Afternoon Arb Walk

Join us on at Nichols Arboretum to observe migrants making their way north. This leaderless walk is a great opportunity to join with other birders of all skill levels. In addition to the birds, the Arb's trees and other plants offer delights of their own. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at **4:00 PM**.

Sunday, April 26

Biking Point Mouillee (and surrounding area) (Leader Andy Dettling)

Pte. Mou is closed to vehicular traffic, so the only way to enjoy this amazing refuge is on foot or bike. Join Andy on a roughly 14-mile bike ride (at a very leisurely pace) searching for shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors and maybe an early migrant or two. Meet at the Sigler Rd. entrance at 8:00 a.m. Bring your own water and food. Andy will have his scope. We should be done by 1:00 p.m. For more details, please see the Events page on the Web site.

Saturday, April 25; Saturday, May 2

Weekend Arb Walk

Join us on at Nichols Arboretum to observe migrants making their way north. This leaderless walk is 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 at 8:00 a.m.; the walk will end around 11:00 a.m., but participants can leave whenever they prefer.

Tuesdays, May 5, 12, 19, 26: Tuesday Evening Birders (Leaders: Dea Armstrong and friends)

Each Tuesday, leaders 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 Rd./M-14 park-and-ride lot, where everyone will consolidate into fewer vehicles and prepare for a 6:15 sharp departure.

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, P.O. Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113**.

<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	Membership Dues	
Additional Donation \$_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Household	\$25 (online only \$20)
Name: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15 (online only \$10)
Address: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Senior	\$15 (online only \$10)
Phone: _____	Email: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 7:30 p.m. at the U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public. **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.*

April 15 My Really Big Year

Join popular Washtenaw Audubon speaker Michael Kielb for an account of his Big Year that goes beyond only seeing birds. Michael cataloged every living thing he could find during 2014, which included butterflies, moths, dragonflies, plants, fungi and the Goddess only knows what else. For the total number of species seen in his Really Big Year, and photos of some of them, don't miss this intriguing talk.

May 20 Behind the Scenes in the Museum of Zoology

Join Janet Hinshaw for a fascinating look at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology's Bird Division. Her program will include an overview of the museum and highlights of unusual, interesting, and important specimens in the Bird Division collection, the sixth largest in North America. Janet graduated from Earlham College and has been the Bird Division Collection Manager since 1974.

June 17 Bird Name Origins: Do Sapsuckers Really Suck Sap?

Join the inimitable Don "The Man" Chalfant for an interesting program on the many odd and curious names with which ornithologists have saddled our avifauna. Don is a retired elementary school teacher, an avid photographer, and a passionate birder who owns one of the largest life lists in Washtenaw County.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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