



## NEWSLETTER

July/August 2016

### May Count 2016 Results and Highlights

by Juliet Berger, Spring Migration Count Compiler

■ Saturday, May 14, the second Saturday of the month, dawned cold and wet. There were freezing conditions forecast, with gale force winds, and it was nearly so at 5 a.m. when my husband, Scott, and I set out from home to begin our Spring Migration count in Lodi Township. All over the county, birders were up early, insanely early, to count birds. We had 91 birders this year, to be exact, which is 20 more than last year. Everyone pitched in for a massive volunteer effort to count all the birds and all the species in our county. All told, we had 72 parties of birders, fanning out throughout Washtenaw, bearing binoculars and a passion for birds. I am right in the middle of it as the county compiler, and I drag Scott along for the ride. Actually, he's the driver. (And he packs a mean picnic. Ask me about the warm lobster bisque...)

We have area leaders who take charge of one township or two or even three. Most of them have done this for years and are old hands at it. Some, like me, are relatively new. We recruit and organize volunteers and get our territories covered. We bird, ourselves, all day, and then crunch the data and get it over to the compiler for tallying. Volunteers hunt down rare species we know of that are on territory, such as the Prairie Warbler on Hankerd Rd for at least the fourth year, and find new ones we are all surprised about, like the Franklin's Gull at Ford Lake. Our volunteers are the best in the state, no doubt about it, because we consistently rank as one of the top counties in the state, in numbers of birds, volunteers, hours and miles birded, and numbers of parties year after year. And we are usually in the top two to three counties for numbers of species. And we have no Great Lakes shoreline.

*(continued on page 4)*

# President's Letter

*This month the President's Letter is the bio Juliet submitted to eBird when she was selected as the April 2016 eBirder of the Month. Enjoy!*



Hi, I'm Juliet Berger. eBird is so integral to me, my life and work, now, that it is hard to know where to begin. I live, work, and bird in the Ann Arbor, Michigan area, with my husband and our two teens. I am the Ornithologist for Natural Area Preservation (NAP), a division of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation. I work with a great crew of biologists, biological inventory specialists, botanists, volunteer and outreach coordinators and conservation specialists. Our mission at NAP is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic among its

citizens. My role in that mission is to recruit, train, and support volunteers to conduct breeding bird surveys in our parks, conduct my own surveys at various natural areas and city managed sites, lead bird walks and educational events about birds, and answer bird related questions for the city. All of this activity generates a lot of bird lists, and every list created gets entered into eBird, including all of our volunteers' breeding bird survey data. In 2013-14 our recently retired Ornithologist, Dea Armstrong, along with her intern, Chris McCreedy, entered all of our City of Ann Arbor breeding bird survey archives into the eBird database. Now, anyone in the world can find out what is happening with the birds in our parks!

As a lifelong birder, eBird helps me to address one nagging regret. I have a life list of birds that is extensive, but most of these birds are just a check mark in the back of my old Golden Field Guide to the Birds of North America. I have neither the location nor the dates these birds were seen, and no observational details, no photos, no anecdotes, no field notes. My father, who was my birding mentor, remembered everything, and when he passed away unexpectedly, all I had were the Xs in my book, and the memories of our birding adventures together when I was a teenager. No memory of where we saw the Whimbrel, nor the Least Bittern, nor the Wilson's Phalarope, nor the Golden-winged Warbler. I began eBirding in earnest in 2012 when I started teaching a birding class, called Feathered Friends, at my children's elementary school with a group of other dedicated parents. Since there was need to document what we were seeing as a class, I began eBirding our data, and became focused on this citizen science project. Now eBird keeps my life list, my field notes, and my memories of the birds I have seen by myself, and in groups. The eBird "Explore Data" feature lets me see where I am ranked in the top 100 in my county and state, as well, which I pay more attention to than I probably

should. I receive “Rare Bird Alerts” and “Year Needs Alerts” regularly. And, you can bet I am working on recapturing all the mystery life birds from my bygone list!

As my children grew older and I had more time to bird, I joined Washtenaw Audubon Society (WAS), our local county chapter. In 2014 I was asked to serve as president of WAS, an office I still hold today. The WAS Board is an impressive group of birders who donate their time to make decisions about and for Washtenaw Audubon Society, and to influence birding across the county and region. We offer many field trips and bird-related programs throughout the year, and work on other issues, such as making building windows more bird-friendly, and preserving Chimney Swift roosts in our urban areas. Many of my closest friends



are WAS birders and we bird together often. Within the last year, as we all put eBird Mobile onto our smartphones, we began sharing our eBird checklists for each group birding trip. So whether it is a WAS-sponsored field trip, or just a birding excursion with friends, we always appoint one of the group to make the bird list, we review it at the end of our adventure, and we share it with each individual in the group who uses eBird. eBird’s “Share w/ others in Your Party” feature makes this easy. We generally have several skilled photographers in our group, and they agree to populate the checklist with their great shots. Now that

eBird has made adding media a snap, we all get to see these photos in our personal lists. Here’s a good example of what sharing eBird checklists looks like: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S29317409>.

When I’m birding in a group in one of our parks and natural areas, I am especially attentive to breeding behavior, since breeding birds in Ann Arbor parks is my purview as Ornithologist. So, after I receive or generate the shared checklist, I add observation details and breeding codes. Eventually the checklist looks something like this:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S29356220>.

Birding is now part of the rhythm and fabric of my life. So much so, that later this summer, my husband and I will celebrate our 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Kirtland’s Warbler Tour in Northern Michigan’s jack pine barrens. If I’m lucky enough to see, or at least hear one of these rare songbirds, you’ll be sure to find I’ve listed it on eBird. Thanks to all the folks at Cornell and eBird, as well as Zeiss Optics, for allowing me to share how I use eBird personally and professionally, and for selecting me as the April 2016 eBirder of the Month.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet

*“Birding Wheeler” by David Amamoto.*

*“Juliet Photo” by Scott Huizenga.*

*“Black Tern” by Benjamin Hack.*

## May Count 2016 Results and Highlights

*(continued from page 1)*

This year was no exception. Despite the terrible birding conditions, including 40 mph winds in some areas, and sleet in most, we found, together, 178 species of birds. Among the rarities were a Short-billed Dowitcher and Willet on South Pond, a Black Tern at Scio Church and Parker, a Connecticut Warbler at 4 Mile Lake, Common and Forster's Terns, a Yellow-breasted Chat, a Yellow-throated Warbler, a Kentucky Warbler, an Eastern Whip-poor-will, and a Northern Goshawk. We saw 28,959 birds, 138 bird species on our expected list (only missing the Alder Flycatcher) and 40 species that were rare enough to be off the main list. Next year Pileated Woodpecker will make it onto the expected list as we found 20 of them this year in the county. And this year, volunteer efforts found 103 of my favorite bird, the Scarlet Tanager, up almost 20 birds from last year.

Special thanks to new Ann Arbor Area Leader Norka Saldaña, who took over for Sarah Toner, and who recruited a record number of volunteers to cover nearly all of the dozens of Ann Arbor parks, a feat never before attempted. Also, many thanks to Greg Jacks, who took over in York and Augusta townships for John Farmer. I cannot thank Roger Wykes enough—he is my birding mentor and helps me compile the stats, and he ably compiled this Count for countless years before me. Thanks to our returning area leaders, Mike Sefton, Matty and Ben Hack, Ellie Shappirio, Dave Borneman, Dan Thiry, Diana Kern, Martin Bialecki, and John Swales. And me in Lodi... we found a Black Duck. Please continue your amazing volunteer efforts, area leaders and other participants. I will need your help, as always, and I appreciate you all more than I can say.

For the exact numbers and species by township, please see our website, [www.washtenawaudubon.org](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org).

And just a note: Right as we were going to press, I received confirmation from the Southern Lower Peninsula Compiler for the May Count that all of our 178 bird species were approved, including these four—COTE, COWA, NOGO, and YBFL.

### Swift Nights Out

We are looking for volunteers for our first ever Ann Arbor citywide Chimney Swift count, August 12-14. Watching Chimney Swifts enter their roosts at dusk is a spectacular sight. Volunteers will choose a known Chimney Swift roosting location and stake it out before dusk, counting the Swifts as they enter the chimney as darkness falls. You can sign up for one night/one location at a time, or count each night of the weekend. Chimney Swifts are in steep decline across North America, so let's help find out how they are doing in our city. Bring your friends along to show them how these very cool aerial insectivores share our city with us! Watch your email or check the Web site for the sign-up form and more information.



*Chimney Swift, Benjamin Hack*

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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.

## Tuesday Evening Birders 2016

by Cathy Theisen

Dan Sparks-Jackson led a thrilling Tuesday Evening Birder's trip on the last trip of the spring migration season on May 31. TEB participants snagged Clay-colored Sparrows on private access property, a rare county Loggerhead Shrike, mockingbirds, Grasshopper Sparrow, and both the whip-poor-will and Chuck-will's widow (a lifer for many of us).

Imagine the group of us spread out along this remote rural road, listening intently, unsure of even who was standing near us, it was so dark. Whip-poor-wills are calling repeatedly on either side of the road in a surreal concert few ever get to hear. And then Dan hears the bird, points us in the right direction, and slow smiles of wonder spread across our dusty, tick-strewn faces as we realize it is, in fact, the bird of our desire. After an appropriately solemn listening interval, Dan wipes his hands and announces, "That's a wrap. This now concludes your last Tuesday Evening Birders of 2016!"

If you would have liked to be a part of that picture, watch Washtenaw Audubon Society's website for field trip announcements. Tuesday Evening Birders goes out every Tuesday night in May, in pursuit of birds as far-flung and diverse as our county itself. If hearing a Chuck-will's widow is a thrill, hearing it with others who are as appreciative as you is sublime.

Many, many thanks to our volunteer leaders this year: Dan Sparks-Jackson, John Lowry, Linda Ar, Norka Saldana, Benjamin Hack, and Andrew Pawuk. And, of course, to perpetual volunteer Mike Sefton for organizing it all.

Good birding!

Cathy Theisen, DVM

*Editor's Note: Our thanks to Cathy, who was also a volunteer leader this year.*

## Stinchfield Woods Census Report: An Amazing Record-Setting Year!

by Karen Markey

Sunday, June 12, 2016

The 2016 count took place on a perfectly cool, calm to lightly breezy, almost bugless, and entirely sunny Sunday, June 12, 2016, from 7:00 to 11:30 a.m. Special thanks go to our big crew of 27 volunteer counters: Alice, Barbara, Beth, Bob, Brendan, Cathy, Dan G, Dan S-J, David, Fred, Jessica, Jim, Juliet, Karen, Ken, Larry L, Larry U, Margaret, Mary, Mike, Nitu, Norka, Peggy, Roger, Rosemary, Toni, and Wayne.

We hit a trifecta: (1) a record-breaking number of individuals at 872; (2) a record-tying number of species at 61; and (3) a record-breaking number of counters at 27!

*(continued on page 6)*

## Stinchfield Woods Census Report *continued from page 5*

Here are 2016's headlines. Hooded Warblers are on the upswing again, reaching a new high of 29! For three years in a row, Pileated Woodpecker numbers are increasing, this year topping out at five. We have one first-ever sighting this year—10 Bank Swallows in a sand quarry on the east side of Toma Road, visible at a metal gate about mid-way between North Territorial and Stinchfield Woods Roads and keeping company with Belted Kingfisher, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, and Hooded Warbler. Making cameo appearances are Osprey (seen previously in 2014 only), Belted Kingfisher (2003 and 1998 only), Veery (in 1998 only), and Magnolia Warbler (2005 only).

Except for the addition of Pine Warbler, this year's high species counts are similar to last year's: Black-capped Chickadee (69), Blue Jay (64), American Crow (61), Pine Warbler (53), Eastern Wood Pewee (49), Red-eyed Vireo (47), and Ovenbird (44).

On the plus side are numbers of:

Blue Jays: holding strong in the mid-60s (64)

Cowbirds: in the single digits for three years in a row (6, 9, and this year at 7)

Eastern Wood-Pewees: almost reaching the half-century mark at 49

Golden-crowned Kinglets: two counted after a two-year absence

Red-breasted Nuthatches: on the increase for two years in a row at 21

Red-eyed Vireos: holding strong in the upper 40s (47)

Scarlet Tanagers: back up to the low 20s for three years in a row at 20

On the minus side are numbers of:

Acadian Flycatchers: dipping from the mid-20s to 16

Cedar Waxwings: always hit or miss, this year mostly the latter at 5

Chipping Sparrows: another humdrum year at 37 as Stinchfield's open areas shrink

Indigo Buntings: dipping to 7, also probably due to fewer open areas

Wood Thrushes: back to single digits (9) after two double-digit years (16 and 13)

This year's results now make 24 years of Stinchfield data available online at eBird and 19 years at this Stinchfield web page. Thanks again to our record-setting number of 27 birders who took part in this year's count. You achieved a trifecta: two broken records and one tied record. Special thanks to Norka Saldana for co-hosting this year's count, especially recruiting our record-setting volunteer force, shrinking and consolidating the checklist onto a single page, and fine-tuning logistics, details, and paperwork. We are also grateful to SNR&E facilities coordinator Sucila who met us bright and early and lingered until lunchtime, giving us access to the Woods. Please join us for next year's count, tentatively scheduled for Sunday, June 11, 2017, same place and time! Here is our list of birds seen and/or heard in 2016:

Sandhill Crane 3	Black-capped Chickadee 69
Osprey 1	Tufted Titmouse 25
Turkey Vulture 9	Red-breasted Nuthatch 21
Red-tailed Hawk 3	White-breasted Nuthatch 15
hawk sp. 1	Brown Creeper 7
Mourning Dove 12	House Wren 5
Chimney Swift 2	Golden-crowned Kinglet 2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird 3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 6
Red-bellied Woodpecker 21	Veery 1
Downy Woodpecker 9	Wood Thrush 9
Hairy Woodpecker 7	American Robin 21
Pileated Woodpecker 5	Grey Catbird 11
Northern Flicker 6	Cedar Waxwing 5
Eastern Wood-Pewee 49	European Starling 1
Acadian Flycatcher 16	Blue-headed Vireo 4
Great Crested Flycatcher 6	Yellow-throated Vireo 1
Eastern Phoebe 1	Warbling Vireo 2
Tree Swallow 2	Red-eyed Vireo 47
Barn Swallow 3	Yellow Warbler 1
Bank Swallow 10	Black-throated Green Warbler 16
Purple Martin 1	Pine Warbler 53
Belted Kingfisher 1	Ovenbird 44
Blue Jay 64	Common Yellowthroat 1
American Crow 61	Hooded Warbler 29

Magnolia Warbler 1  
Scarlet Tanager 20  
Northern Cardinal 40  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak 3

Indigo Bunting 7  
Eastern Towhee 7  
Chipping Sparrow 37  
Song Sparrow 2  
Red-winged Blackbird 14  
Common Grackle 2  
Brown-headed Cowbird 7  
Baltimore Oriole 5  
House Finch 4  
American Goldfinch 31

Total Named Species = 61  
Tying four previous records in 2006, 2005,  
2002, and 1999!

Total Individuals = 872  
Beating the previous record of 871 set in 2003!

Number of volunteer counters = 27  
Beating the previous record of 21 set in 2009!

## Upcoming WAS Field Trips (August 2016 – Sept 2016)

*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 Bryn at the email address above.

### **Sunday, August 14, 2016**

#### **Driving Tour, Shorebirds and Waders at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area**

Leader Jim Fowler

Pointe 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 knows this territory as well as anyone and leads several field trips each year at this location. For this event, we will be allowed to bring in four vehicles. As a result, this trip has limited space and *registration is mandatory*. To register, please send an email to Bryn Martin (brynmartin@sbcglobal.net). Let me know your name(s), your status as a WAS member, whether you are willing to drive others into the preserve, and how many more people you could fit into your vehicle. You will receive an email letting you know whether or not your registration has gone through or if you have been put on the waiting list. Preference will be given to current WAS members, to people who were unable to participate on this field trip last year, and to people who are willing to drive larger vehicles that can accommodate more participants (and are willing to allow others in their vehicle). 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 the four vehicles. Bring insect repellent, wear a hat, and dress for warm weather—there is no shade or shelter at Pointe Mouillee. Bring all of the food and fluids you think you will need to sustain you for approximately five hours of birding.

#### **Fall migration walks in Nichols Arboretum**

Please join one of these popular, leaderless walks to observe fall migration at the Arb. Every Thursday morning from August 25<sup>th</sup> through the end of October, participants will gather at 8:00 a.m. at the end of the Riverview Drive cul-de-sac (off Geddes Road) near the eastern edge of the Arboretum. The assembled birders will choose a route or routes and head out in search of migrants, many of which will be in their first-year plumage. The walks go until roughly 11:00 a.m., but everyone can join or leave the group as his or her schedule requires. These walks are a great, low-key way to get started in bird watching. All are welcome; it is not necessary to be a member of Washtenaw Audubon.

### **Saturday, September 10, 2016**

#### **Fall Migrants at Hudson Mills, Leader Karen Markey (Details to come. Please visit the WAS web site.)**

■ 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	<b>Membership Dues</b>	
Additional Donation \$ _____		_____ Individual Household	\$25 (online only \$20)
Name: _____		_____ Student	\$15 (online only \$10)
Address: _____		_____ Senior	\$15 (online 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 7:30 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.*

### **September 21 The Birds of Uganda**

Join Paul Tamwenya for a program on the birds and other wildlife of Uganda. Paul was born and raised in Uganda and provides guide services to Ann Arbor's ecotourism company, Journeys International. He has seen all 800 plus species of birds in Uganda, and is a trained ornithologist. Paul also founded and runs a small non-profit, Birds of a Feather, which helps orphaned and other needy children in the village of Nangaiza with school fees, books, meals, and other necessities so that they can complete their education.

### **October 19 Birding Guatemala—Washtenaw Audubon Trip Report**

Join Bryn Martin for a program on Washtenaw Audubon's most recent overseas field trip, to the Central American country of Guatemala, where there are a number of birds found nowhere else in the world. Bryn Martin is an avid world birder, a high school teacher, and Washtenaw Audubon's field trip coordinator.

### **November 16 Topic to be announced**

Join Heather Good for a program on a topic to be announced. Heather is the Executive Director of Michigan Audubon, and was a Master's student in the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment.



## Washtenaw Audubon Society

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