



# WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## NEWSLETTER

November/December 2016

## 70th Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 17, 2016

By Jacco Gelderloos

As I sit here behind my computer, I cannot help but chuckle at the somewhat surreal circumstance of writing this year's CBC article after an (almost) 80-degree day! Then again, temperatures are forecast to drop this weekend, and the first of the season's Dark-eyed Juncos have been reported. In short, winter is irrevocably on its way!

Of course, we can already start wondering about how the weather will affect this year's tally, which no doubt it will, one way or another. Bad weather will lower bird activity and make observers more likely to call it a day early; good weather will most likely have the opposite effect, while at the same time allowing birds to spread out more, making them more difficult to count. No matter what, though, we are sure to turn up a variety of goodies (and miss some expected species), and will continue to flesh out trends that may only become fully clear years or even decades from now! How high will the Wild Turkey count go this year? How low will Ring-necked Pheasant or American Kestrel go? The best way to find out and to contribute your piece to these puzzles is to join us for the 70<sup>th</sup> edition of the Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count!

This year the event will be held on **Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**—as always, sponsored by the Washtenaw Audubon Society. The event brings out both advanced, intermediate, and beginning birders, and it is a wonderful occasion for volunteers new to the area, or to birding itself, to meet the local birding community and become part of the Ann Arbor area's extensive birding network. As a former newbie, I can attest to the warm and knowledgeable welcome WAS birders will give! *(continued on page 4)*

# President's Letter

Hello Washtenaw Audubon,

The surprising results of the recent Presidential election remind me that our mission here at Washtenaw Audubon is now even more imperative. Our new President-elect openly disdains environmental protection and has voiced his wish to curtail the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Our mission is “to promote the conservation of wildlife and natural beauty in all possible ways, with a particular focus on birds; to cooperate with other organizations whose aims correspond (to our own); and to develop and maintain a conservation program for the youth and adults of the community.” In the years to come, we’ll be called upon to cooperate more with regional and national environmental groups, such as Michigan Audubon and National Audubon, to voice our disapproval of attempts to cut environmental programs and protections, and generally be more active in our approach, in order to protect the birds, other wildlife, and natural areas that we love. We will move forward together as an organization; stronger than each one of us feeling helpless and alone to keep our world safe in this changing climate. Let’s keep in touch with each other about ways we can all help preserve birds and our natural environment in the years to come.

This winter, join with other birders in helping us survey on the Christmas Bird Count, December 17, 2016, and then come to the Tally Potluck to find out how our birds are doing here in Washtenaw County, and connect with other birding community members. Jacco Gelderloos leads this effort, which has taken place in our county for many, many years, and nationwide for over 100 years. Read more about how you can volunteer, in this newsletter, on our website, [www.washtenawaudubon.org](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org), and on our Facebook page.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger



*Northern Parula, Four Mile Lake, Benjamin Hack*

## The KIWA Diary, Part 1

### Karen Markey's adventures with the 2016 Kirtland's Warbler Census

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I am reporting my participation in the Kirtland's Warbler (KW) Census. This is my 14th year as a volunteer on the Mio, Michigan team that is made up of United States Forest Service (USFS) staff, United States Fish and Wildlife (USFW) staff, and dedicated citizen volunteers. Every year in early June, the team surveys federal and (sometimes) state Jack Pine forests. Some people volunteer for a few days; others, like me, volunteer for the full work-week. Following is a daily account of my experiences on the 2016 KW Census:

#### Day 0 (Sunday, June 5), Drive to Mio

I leave cloudy Ann Arbor at 5:40 a.m. for my usual visit to Hartwick Pines State Park, northeast of Grayling. As soon as I get out of the car, mosquitoes feed on me. I bathe in insect repellent, and as I stroll through the Old Growth Forest Trail, I think that the swarm of mosquitoes surrounding me must resemble the dust cloud that trails Pig-Pen in the Peanuts cartoon. I continue on the nearby Au Sable River Trail, thrilled to catch sight of two singing Canada Warblers and one Northern Waterthrush, while practicing differentiating between the pervasive Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireo songs. Reaching the end of the adjacent Mertz Grade Trail, I make a mental note on how few birds I typically hear on this trail; however, it yields a far-off Hermit Thrush, a much welcome reminder that I'm "up north."

I motor to Mio, check into the Mio Holiday Motor-In, and unpack. Longtime census-taker Dave pulls into the motel's lot in a brand-new Ford truck. He shows me its fancy features as we drive to dinner at the Sky Ranch, a sports bar west of Mio, north of MI-72 on Mapes Road—not my favorite restaurant genre, but one of the few nearby places that features more variety than pizza, burgers, and beer.

#### Day 1 (Monday, June 6), Pine River

The alarm clock goes off at 3:25 a.m. I'm always in a haze the first day, getting up early, preparing for the outside elements, and making sure I've put everything in my pack. Dawn is barely breaking as I motor south to the Mio Ranger Station where I join fellow volunteers and Forest Service staff. We pile into vehicles for the 50-minute drive to Pine River, expecting a cool and dry start and warming into the mid 70s by noon.

Immediately upon exiting the vehicle, I hear a singing KW. This moment completes my annual goal of hearing and/or seeing all 37 northeastern U.S. warblers. On one hand, I've heard and seen dozens, if not hundreds of Yellow-rumped, Palm, Yellow, and Black-throated Green Warblers, and on the other, I've had nanosecond-long looks at Orange-crowned, Golden-winged, and Connecticut Warblers. I wonder if other birders have the same experience. The thought quickly passes because it's time for business. Summer intern Jasmine is in charge of navigating our transect and I am triangulating singing KWs. *(continued on page 6)*



*Kirtland's Warbler, Benjamin Hack*

## 70th Annual Christmas Bird Count

*Continued from page 1*

Since the CBC is an effort undertaken on a continent-wide scale, our results are a small part of the much larger picture that shows the winter distribution of birds across North and South America (and, increasingly, beyond). In keeping with general trends to make most, if not all, information available online, The National Audubon Society has been posting annual results on its website, instead of a paper journal. Doing so has allowed NAS to run the CBC without a participation fee, although monetary donations are definitely still welcome! Data from all CBCs, including the 2015-16 count season, is now available through the NAS website <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>. This is an amazing resource, allowing you to check historical results for every count circle!

For those of you unfamiliar with the CBC format, some general information about our count is in order. All CBCs are conducted during a three-week period from December 14 to January 5, all over the Western (and even a small part of the Eastern) Hemisphere. As a rule, the Ann Arbor count always takes place on the 3rd Saturday in December, to prevent scheduling conflicts with other nearby counts. Each count circle covers an area 15 miles in diameter; the Ann Arbor circle is centered on the Foster Road bridge, near the intersection of Maple Road and Huron River Drive and extends roughly from Dexter in the west to Dixboro in the east, and from Whitmore Lake in the north to the Ann Arbor Airport in the south. Go to [http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/images/CBC/AA-CBC-Map\\_full.pdf](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/images/CBC/AA-CBC-Map_full.pdf) to see the count circle in immaculate detail. The object is to identify all bird species present in this circle and count the number in which they are present. In addition to the daylight bird census, several observers will conduct a pre-dawn search for owls.

There are a number of ways to participate in this count—the main one being to serve as a field observer. The Ann Arbor CBC circle is comprised of eight areas, all run by a so-called area leader, who coordinates the census in that region. If you wish to be a field observer, select one of the eight regions (for more information on the specific count areas, please check out the detailed maps on the WAS website) and sign up with the area leader of that region. If you are not sure where you might best help census, or if you are flexible in where you can be assigned, email or call me (CBC Compiler Jacco Gelderloos) at [JJGelderloos@yahoo.com](mailto:JJGelderloos@yahoo.com) or (734) 973-9422, and I will direct you to an area based on need. If you sign up through the NAS web site, please contact me by phone or email me to let me know you have done so, as I will need to place you into an area within the count circle.

There is also the option of staying indoors and pitching in as a feeder watcher. If you have a feeder within the count circle, this is a fun and easy way to participate. (Remember: the feeder **MUST** be within the count circle, otherwise the data is invalid for our count—simply type your address into Google Maps to make sure, or check with me). Like field observers, you may sign up to participate for any length of time—from one hour to all day. Contact feeder watch coordinator Kurt Hagemeister (contact info below) for more information, to sign up, or to get feeder watch forms.

Best of all (in my humble opinion), the real fun and excitement happens at the end of the day at the potluck supper, when the final results are tallied and announced after dessert. For the past few years now, the potluck supper has been held at the meeting room of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens—all participants are invited! If you plan to attend, please contact the potluck coordinator Nicole Sefton to let us know you are coming and to coordinate dishes—please note that alcohol is not permitted on the premises. The MBG are located at 1800 N. Dixboro Rd., just about one mile south of Plymouth Rd. in Ann Arbor. Please note that the University of Michigan has recently instituted a \$1.20/hour fee at the Botanical Gardens. Area leaders can give directions if you need them; plan to gather there around 5:30-6:00 p.m.

## Board Members

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president@washtenawaudubon.org

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vp-programs@washtenawaudubon.org

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treasurer@washtenawaudubon.org

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secretary@washtenawaudubon.org

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Jessica Adamczyk  
membership@washtenawaudubon.org

### Field Trips

Bryn Martin  
fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org

### Education

Cathy Theisen  
cathythevet@comcast.net

### Webmaster/Technology and Social Media

Rob French  
rwfrenchjr@comcast.net

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Suejohn62@gmail.com

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Sherr Smith  
grackle@umich.edu

### Newsletter

Nancy Davis  
newsletter@washtenawaudubon.org

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.

Please remember that the CBC is run entirely by volunteers and can always use your help. Consider helping out with the potluck set-up and clean-up: it is exceedingly helpful to arrive early at the potluck site, lend a hand setting up tables and chairs, and help prepare for the arrival and arrangement of food. This may also entail getting supplies such as tablecloths, plates, etc. (costs will be reimbursed by WAS). After the supper, we will need to clean up as well. Remember: many hands make light work!

Information regarding the count will also be available on the Ann Arbor CBC web page where any updates will be posted as the count day approaches. Please keep an eye on <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/> for news and updates regarding the event.

	Area Leaders	Phone	E-mail
1	Sarah Toner	(734) 973-9422	strix09@gmail.com
2	Rob & Nancy French	(734) 994-8418	rwfrenchjr@comcast.net
3	Benjamin Hack	(734) 845-2634	bdhbirdman@gmail.com
4	To be announced	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
5	Mike & Susan Kielb	(734) 239-6064	makielb@comcast.net
6	Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
7	To be announced	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
8	Mike Sefton		mseft@yahoo.com
	CBC Compiler: Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422 or	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
	Feeder Watch Coordinator: Kurt Hagemester		(734) 663-9746 or khagemester@sbcglobal.net
	Potluck Coordinator: Nicole Sefton		seftonn1344@yahoo.com
	Ann Arbor CBC Web Site:	<a href="http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/annarborcbc.php">http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/annarborcbc.php</a>	
	National Audubon Society:	<a href="https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count">https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count</a>	

## The KIWA Diary, Part 1

*(continued from page 3)*

The first KW we hear on our transect is really close. I pish, and he responds immediately, perching in a nearby tree and inspecting us. We resume our pace, and a second KW sings. I pish, and it's déjà vu all over again. Wow! This is so easy! Plus, the Jack Pine is hardly five feet high, the footing is flat and almost free of debris, our transect is a simple east-to-west line, and the weather is warm and pleasant with a light breeze that blows the bugs away. This first transect is appropriately named "Ant Hill" because the ant hills are immense, varying from tight, round, cone-shaped mounds to flat, splatter-shaped heaps that are as big as my living room at home!

KWs are plentiful, and at the end of this first transect, we've heard 23 KWs and seen five of them, the third atop a high snag, the fourth showing off his bright yellow breast while preening in the middle of a young Jack Pine, and the fifth a mere feathery blur flying in between the short Jack Pines. Except for occasional unyielding Pin Oaks, the first transect has been a "walk in the park." We continue onto our second transect where the Jack Pine is much older and taller. I doubt this transect will yield KWs, and I'm right; however, we are buoyed by the experience of our first transect and quickly polish the second one off.

We meet the rest of the KW census crew at the Chat 'N Chew in Glennie, where almost nothing on the menu is healthy. I order a lumberman's sandwich and gobble it down.

I hitch a ride back to Mio with Eric. This is his last week at the Mio Ranger Station. He begins his new biologist position at Huron Shores on Monday. He gives me a quick GPS refresher course. One of the earliest models, the GPS requires a series of menus, selections, and button presses to accomplish simple navigation tasks. In the thickest Jack Pine, I must pair it with my compass to make sure I navigate in the right direction.

Mid-afternoon approaches so I head to federal land south of Mack Lake in search of a Golden-winged Warbler. Just like last year, thunderstorms are forecast, the wind picks up, and I expect this bird's buzzing song to be lost in the rustle of leaves, branches, and tree trunks. I strike out on Golden-wingeds but hear Mourning, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided, and Nashville Warblers. Back in Mio, Tom, a West Michigan zookeeper, joins Dave and me at the Sky Ranch for dinner.

**A note from the author:** For readers unfamiliar with the KW Census, I quickly review here how we census the Jack Pine forests. The KW Census Coordinator assigns a KW Section Leader maps through which are drawn two to five parallel transects (transect = a path that cuts through the forest) separated by about a quarter mile. Route Leaders take charge of two- to three-person teams that walk these transects at the same time. When teams are done, we compare the locations of singing KWs with adjacent teams. We decide which birds are "duplicates" and one of the Route Leaders omits the "duplicate" bird from his/her map. The Section Leader then consolidates bird locations onto one map and returns it to the Census Coordinator.

A transect is not a road, trail, or two-track; it is just a line drawn on a map through the Jack Pine forest. It's easiest to navigate east to west, marking a waypoint in the GPS, walking away and maintaining a 90-degree bearing, and stopping at 200-meter (about 1/8 of a mile) intervals to listen for singing male KWs. Hearing the same KW at successive stops means that we are able to triangulate his exact location on the map, and it's neat when it happens. Minus strong winds and obstructions, singing KWs are audible a little beyond three-sixteenths of a mile.

If we catch glimpses of a singing KW, we look at its legs for bands. I resist leaving the transect to search for a singing KW because KWs nest on the ground and I do not want to step on a nest.

In forthcoming issues of the newsletter we will explore Karen's KIWA Diary, Parts 2 and 3.

### **Ornithology: An In-Depth Study of Birds to be Offered Again in 2017**

Dea Armstrong and Francie Krawcke will offer their in-depth bird class again in 2017 starting on Tuesday, February 28. To register or learn more about this class, please go to

<http://www.miavianexperience.org/ornithology.html>

## Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Dec 2016 – Feb 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.

### Saturday, December 3, 2016

#### Gull Trip to the Salem Landfill

For more information, please check the Washtenaw Audubon Society Web site.

### Saturday, December 17, 2016

#### Christmas Bird Count

For more information, please see the article in this newsletter or check the Washtenaw Audubon Society Web site.

## Results from The Big Sit 2016

Saturday, October 8

by Don Chalfant

The 2016 Big Sit, our 19th, was actually two Big Sits, one before noon, and one after. The morning featured a particularly spectacular raptor flight, as we recorded Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Barred Owl. The Barred Owl was only our third ever, and the Peregrine only our second ever. The afternoon was highlighted by the usual birder chat: past birding experiences, hoped-for trips, ID discussion, etc. The birds, however, were not part of the afternoon's activity, as they, for reasons unknown to us, produced what may be called an avian vacuum. Totals for the day: we had 54 species, over our 19-year average of 51, but under our record of 62. No new species were recorded, so our cumulative total remains at 119. Only nine birders participated this year, the lowest in the last ten years. Will we do it again? You betcha!

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 \$ _____		<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.*

### **December      No formal Wednesday program in December**

Join us on Saturday, December 17, for the Christmas Bird Count! Beginning birders are welcome to participate in the count. Visit the Washtenaw Audubon Society web site for more information.

### **January 18      Exploring the Brazilian Pantanal**

At 75,000 square miles, the Pantanal is the largest wetland in the world. About 80% of this alluvial floodplain is located in Brazil and is home to 656 bird species, including the magnificent Hyacinth and Golden-collared Macaws, iconic Jabiru Stork, and striking Helmeted Manakin. Mammal watching can be quite good, with chances for Giant Anteater, Marsh Deer, Giant River Otter, and Brazilian Tapir. During the dry season, lucky birders may also see the most elusive of forest cats, the jaguar, as it hunts the abundant prey at water's edge. Join Cathy Theisen for this exploration of the dry season Brazilian Pantanal. Cathy is a veterinarian, avid nature watcher and birder, and serves as the education chair for Washtenaw Audubon.

### **February 15      Vacation on the Riviera Maya—Birding on Family Time**

Join Jacco Gelderloos for an exploration of the bird life of the coastal Yucatan peninsula and the birding opportunities it offers. Jacco is a WAS member, served as WAS Field Trip coordinator, and is the current Ann Arbor CBC compiler.

## Washtenaw Audubon Society

P.O. Box 130923  
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923