



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May/June 2021

**Washtenaw Audubon Annual Picnic will be
Sunday, July 18, 2021 – Save the Date!**



*2018 Wingnut Award winner Ben Hack
(Cathy Theisen)*

Save the Date! On Sunday, July 18, 12:00 p.m. the WAS picnic will take place at Dexter-Huron Metropark, 6535 Huron River Dr, Dexter. The event will include the celebration of the annual Wingnut Awards, which are given to birders who have seen the most birds in the county in the previous year (or two). All are welcome. Bring a dish to pass, or your own meal, if you prefer. We will be riverfront under a picnic pavilion, with no electricity, but with modern bathrooms nearby. Bring the kids, the water toys, and plan to spend the day with old and new friends! More details will soon be published on the WAS website and Facebook pages.

President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon members and friends,

Spring Migration has come and gone, leaving that hungover feeling from the rush of adrenaline for weeks on end, chasing warblers and other migrating birds. We have some great news! Yay!! WAS is back to holding limited field trips, (with fully vaccinated participants only). Thanks for your patience and understanding during this difficult time, when we had to cancel all in person events for safety reasons. WAS Programs remain in the online Zoom format only, because Matthaei Botanical Gardens Conservatory is still closed, where we hold our program meetings. We hope and trust that we will be able to hold in-person programs in September, if it is safe to do so. And we're going to try to keep recording programs, so that folks near and far can watch our presentations. Thanks to the many, many members and friends who have joined us on Zoom since the State locked down in March 2020. Watch our website, www.washtenawaudubon.org, and Washtenaw Audubon's Facebook page for more upcoming events, and to view recordings of our past programs. It has been emotionally overwhelming to see so many of you on our restarted Thursday morning walks at the Arb. I've missed you all so much. Those who attended know I've been verklempt every time!!

Our WAS May Count results will be coming out in the next issue of this newsletter. I know a couple of things about our results, like we saw a lot of bird species, and had the most volunteers ever, over 100, but I'll save the details for later. There will be a township comparison chart with the whole list of 20 TWPs compiled in it, as well as a whole county list with numbers of each species. For now, here's a hint. Sharon Twp. and Ann Arbor tied this year at 121 species apiece. So, Ann Arbor defends its title from last year, and Sharon regains a share of the title they've held for many years, with the most bird species on the May Count.

In keeping with our new excitement about getting out and seeing birds and bird programs, we have a survey coming to all members, asking what kinds of programming, trips, and conservation emphasis you are interested in pursuing with WAS. You'll find a description of the member survey on page 3 of this newsletter. Please take the time to complete the survey, so we can go forward with your needs in mind.

On a final note, Jessica Adamczyk will be affirmed as our new WAS Board Secretary at the June 16th program, so I encourage everyone to attend to help us officially welcome her to her new WAS Board officer position. And, thanks to Dana Novak for her many years of service in that role and looking forward to her help as our new Stewardship Chair. Please contact me if you are interested in taking on the role of membership chair!

I am looking forward to seeing you all at the next good bird.

As always, I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger, President

Washtenaw Audubon Society

*Scenes from the June 1
Embury Rd walk (Ray
Stocking)*



Field Trips are Back!

We have resumed field trips! We could not be happier to be getting out there and seeing you all in person again. The camaraderie and birds are food for the soul so let's get out there and soak it up! With some tweaks to our normal process, we are able to enjoy birding like we did in the before times. We are requiring everyone to pre-register (free) and ask that those eligible for the vaccine are fully vaccinated before attending. Those ineligible for the vaccine, children under twelve, for example, may attend masked. We will continue to discuss our precautions and adjust them as needed.

Please check the website or Facebook for more details and to register.

Ongoing Walks

Thursdays at Nichols Arboretum

Every Thursday at 8:00 AM

Meet at the southeastern corner of Dow Prairie.

We have decided to continue this May tradition through the summer.

Beginning Birders

Every Thursday at 6:00 PM

Argo Park Livery

Don't know a hairy from a downy or a chipping from a house? Bird curious? Then this is for you. Join us for a weekly focus on the identification details of our resident, breeding birds. No binoculars? No problem, we will have extra, quality bins for those without.

Weekend Birds

Prothonotary Paddle Down the Huron River

Saturday, June 12th - 8:00 AM

This one has a lot of moving parts. Please see the website for details. One of the best field trips of the year!

Weekend Walk for Birds at Furstenberg Nature Area

Saturday, June 19th - 8:00 AM

Meet in the parking lot near the building.

Weekend Walk for Birds at Gallup Park

Saturday, June 26th - 8:00 AM

Meet at the east end of parking lot at the big playground

Weekend Walk for Birds at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

Saturday, July 10th - 8:00 AM

Meet near the stairs in front of the conservatory

Weekend Walk for Birds at Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area

Saturday, July 31st - 8:00 AM

Meet in the main parking lot, off Birch Hollow Dr

We Want To Hear From You!

Please visit the washtenawaudubon.org website to complete an anonymous survey (before the end of June) on how well WAS is doing in living up to our mission. This is a survey for our current and past members, and those who have signed up for our email list, written by the volunteer board. This is the first time we are surveying our direct community, and we want to hear if we are doing the things you -- as our membership group -- would like us to be doing.

We look forward to sharing the survey results with our members later this summer at our Wingnut Picnic (July 18) and onward into Fall. Thank you for your feedback!

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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.

March-April 2021: Early Spring Highlights

The Highlight

As winter (slowly) changes over to spring here in Washtenaw County, we eagerly await what exciting migrants might show up along with the nicer weather. For this year's early spring period, we had to wait until the very tail end, April 30, for the highlight to appear. This is not to say there were no other good birds to be had beforehand; far from it! But the pair of **Upland Sandpipers** that obligingly hung around for a few days in the field along Gotfredson, just south of Vreeland provided many local birders with their first real chance to see this very rare spring migrant. The most recent local record was also of a pair, in early June 2007, but those birds, and most other recent records, were one-day wonders, here one day, gone the next. By contrast, this pair not only stuck around for a few days, they were often within yards of the road, allowing for great views and plenty of photographs.



Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, Gotfredson Rd, April 30 2021 (Bill VanderMolen)

Waterfowl

Late winter can be quite productive for unusual geese, and this year was no exception. A **Snow Goose** was seen at the Schneider Rd pond on 4/4. A lone first year bird of the same species was present at Domino's Farms from 4/12 – 4/17, and, before moving on, have briefly hung out at Oakwoods Nature Area on the 17th. A single **Ross's Goose** was picked out among the multitudes of waterfowl on Jackson County's Watkins Lake; at some point on 3/21, this bird flew into Washtenaw County, providing the period's only record. Somewhat oddly given their recent upward trend, we did not turn up any **Cackling Geese** among the flocks of Canada Geese – perhaps they were overlooked? One **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Sharon Mills County Park on 3/6 was followed by a pair in the Huron River off Stark Strasse on 3/8.

Did you know you can save dozens of birds every year by fixing windows around your house or office? Visit birdsmartglass.org to see how!



Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*, Watkins Lake County Preserve, March 21 2021 (Brendan Klick)



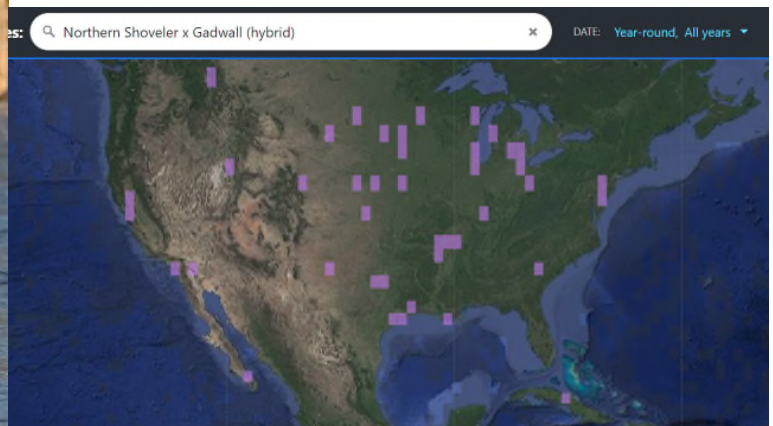
Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*, Sharon Mills County Park, March 6 2021 (Bill Nolting)

In early March, *the* place to go for **Tundra Swans** was Four Mile Lake. They were present there every day from 3/6 through 3/15, peaking at a whopping 125 individuals on the 15th. Unfortunately, the birds were often on the far northern portions of the lake, making for some challenging viewing conditions. Away from Four Mile, there were a handful of observations of fly-over flocks, from as few as nine or ten over Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor to as many as 200 over Chelsea on 3/9.

On 3/27, a weird-looking dabbling duck was found among the shovelers and wigeon at Trinkle Marsh – research online revealed that this oddball bird was most likely a **hybrid of Northern Shoveler x Gadwall**, a rare, but not unheard-of hybrid combination. This wonky bird appeared paired up with a female Northern Shoveler and was seen through 4/24. Generally the rarest of the dabbling ducks, **Northern Pintails** were found in more than a dozen locations throughout the county, with a maximum of 53 at Four Mile Lake on 3/9.



Northern Shoveler x Gadwall *Spatula clypeata* x *Mareca strepera*, Trinkle Marsh, March 30 2021 (Michael Bowen)



Historical records for Northern Shoveler x Gadwall hybrids in the continental United States (per eBird)

Canvasbacks were surprisingly widespread during March and April, turning up in close to two dozen locations. Even more unusual was the huge flock of some 400 of these handsome diving ducks present on Four Mile Lake (where else??) on 3/17 – surely, this constitutes an all-time high for Washtenaw County. **Greater Scaup** had an equally good spring, even if more moderately so, with up to eight birds at roughly a dozen bodies of water. Always an exciting find, a pair of winter-plumaged **Long-tailed Ducks** brought many birders out to Ford Lake on 3/3. Some two weeks later, on 3/20, another male was found on Barton Pond, making for an excellent spring for these dapper sea-ducks. Rounding out the waterfowl category, **Red-breasted Mergansers** seemed unusually common as well. Over a dozen lakes and ponds held these handsome ducks, with a very impressive 39 of them on Whitmore Lake on 4/7



Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, Ford Lake,
March 3 2021 (Bill Nolting)

Nightjars through Falcons

Only a single **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was reported; one was singing on private property in Lodi Twp from 4/24 - 4/25. Mixed in among the usual spring migrant shorebirds, a few **Dunlin** added some spice. There was one at Four Mile Lake (4/28), one along Vreeland Rd (4/29 – 4/30), and one at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (4/30). Similarly, there were a handful of **Pectoral Sandpipers** here and there: two at Mary Beth Doyle Park (4/24), one at Wildwood Lake (4/26), two at Four Mile Lake (4/28 – 4/30), and three at Domino's Farms (4/30).

Not too surprisingly, the only tern species of the early spring period was **Caspian Tern**. That said, they were relatively well represented, being noted at half a dozen locations throughout the month of April. A maximum of four was at Ford Lake on 4/25. Now becoming an annual spring migrant, **American White Pelicans** are still an exciting find in Washtenaw County. Needless to say, quite a few people jumped on the chance to see the pair that was present for a few hours at Four Mile Lake on 4/28.



Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, North Bay Park, April 25
2021 (Bill VanderMolen)



American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*, Four
Mile Lake, April 28 2021 (Linda Ar)

Another/the same **Black Vulture** from the previous period(s) was seen circling high over Ann Arbor's northeast side on 3/7. This record adds yet another data point to an impressive stay of this still very unusual species for Michigan. Just about as rare locally, a **Golden Eagle** over Sharon Valley Rd on 3/17 represents one of few recent spring records for that impressive raptor species. Somewhat unusually, no **Rough-legged Hawks** hung around their almost regular haunts along Vreeland Rd, and one bird at Four Mile Lake on 3/8 was the only record for this spring.

Barred Owls continue to expand into areas in the Huron River valley, including parts of Ann Arbor. Throughout March and April, they were noted in over a dozen locations, quite a few of those far removed from their traditional core range in the western townships. Only a single observation of Short-eared Owl was entered, of a single bird at Vreeland & Gotfredson on 4/12.

It seems **Merlins** have been on the increase in recent years, and wintering or migrating were observed in almost 15 locations, many of them clustered around the greater Ann Arbor area (likely an observer density effect). By the same token, migrating **Peregrine Falcons** also had a banner spring, with more than half a dozen reports away from the Central Campus nesting location. Most intriguingly, a probable **Prairie Falcon** was reported from the Watkins Lake County Preserve on 4/5, a bird with field marks consistent with that western rarity. If accepted, this would constitute a first county record, and one of very few records for Michigan.



Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*, NE Ann Arbor, March 7 2021 (Karen Markey)



Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Superior Rd, March 8 2021 (Robert Lyons)

Passerines: Vireos through Mimids

A generally southern species seemingly on the increase in Michigan, a **White-eyed Vireo** was seen and heard in a yard along Zeeb Rd on 4/27. Seven Blue-headed Vireos at Nichols Arboretum on 4/27 likely established an all-time high count for Washtenaw County. Continuing their relatively “abundant” status from the winter months, up to four **Northern Shrikes** hung around well into March. Single birds were observed at Independence Lake (3/1 – 3/4), at the West Lake Preserve (3/14), along Vreeland Rd (3/14 – 3/20), and at the Clark & Avis Spike Preserve (3/16). Although no longer quite as ubiquitous or numerous as they were during the peak of their irruption last fall, many, many **Red-breasted Nuthatches** remained in Washtenaw County through the end of April. Reports came in from close to 100 (!) different locations, and a still quite impressive maximum of eight was observed at the Cedar Lake Campground on 4/2.



White-eyed vireo *Vireo griseus*, Zeeb & Joy, April 27 2021 (Debi Bailey)



Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*, North Bay Park, April 24 2021 (Geoffrey Tittyung)

Winter Wrens had quite a good spring – they were seen or heard in over 20 locations, several among them hosting two of these feisty little balls of fluff. Even if Four Mile Lake is a known spot for **Sedge Wren**, a bird found there on 4/28 was quite early by that species’s standard. Two individuals of its close relative, the **Marsh Wren**, were noted there on the same day. Another **Marsh Wren** was photographed at North Bay Park on 4/24.

As is more or less the norm, half of the six **Northern Mockingbird** observations came from their Manchester area stronghold. Away from there, a long-staying and confiding individual hung around the Arb-Gallup bike trail from 3/9 – 3/24 and may have been the same that had been gracing the Ann Arbor CBC for three years in a row. Two more mockers were seen at Rolling Hills County Park on 3/24 and near Saline on 4/2.

Passerines: Finches through Sparrows

It appears Washtenaw County benefitted twice from last fall's **Purple Finch** irruption: not only did we get to enjoy the southward movement last fall, but this spring a modest return movement from wintering sites farther south took place. Up to six individuals were noted from almost ten locations, often involving feeder visitors. **Common Redpolls** continued locally until the final week of March, mostly in groups of ten or fewer, with the exception of a flocks of some 70 birds that was photographed at the intersection of Steinbach and Luckhardt Rds on 3/6. These birds frequented that area for some two weeks, from 3/6 – 3/19.

The Vreeland Rd corridor was the (only) place to go for **Lapland Longspurs** during March and April. Even then, picking them out among the Horned Larks and the corn stubble was quite the challenge! Some lucky observers got to see some decent-sized flocks, with 45 reported by birders visiting the nearby Upland Sandpipers on 4/30. Finding **Snow Buntings** proved significantly more challenging – although they were present alongside their close relatives in the Vreeland-Gotfredson area for the first two weeks of March, they were gone after that. We'll have to wait until late fall or these denizens of the far North to grace our fields again.



Purple Finch *Haemorhous purpureus*, Ashford way, March 3 2021 (Bill VanderMolen)



Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*, Steinbach & Luckhardt, March 6 2021 (Ross Green)



Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*, Nichols Arboretum, March 23 2021 (Karen Markey)



Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*, Vreeland Rd, April 18 2021 (Maggie Jewett)

Early spring is prime sparrow-watching time, and 2021 was no exception to that rule. An early **Grasshopper Sparrow** was present at Warren & Nixon on 4/26, and a **Clay-colored Sparrow** graced the Matthaei Botanical Gardens on 4/28. **Fox Sparrows** appear to have had a banner spring migration in Washtenaw County. Not only did

some 25-30 locations host these handsome birds, but in several places several of them were present (and singing quite vigorously) – a staggering maximum of ten was observed at the Cedar Lake Campground on 4/3! Generally a rare nesting species of open farmland, **Vesper Sparrows** turned up in more or less expected spots: as many as three in the Vreeland Rd corridor (3/29 – 4/30), two along Arkona Rd (4/6), one at the Pittsfield Preserve (4/10), and one at Kendall & Prospect Hill (4/10 – 4/11). Restricted to wild grassland habitat, **Henslow’s Sparrows** returned to both the Conservancy Farm (4/18) and fields along Noggles Rd (4/28). The **Lincoln’s Sparrow** at North Hydro Park in Ypsilanti was last seen on 3/7; more in line with that species’s normal migration window, but still early, another was found at the Brauer Preserve on 4/28. An unprecedented 40 (!) **Swamp Sparrows** at Four Mile Lake on 4/28 set a new all-time high count for that species in Washtenaw County.

Passerines: Blackbirds through Cardinals

Continuing a recent trend of single-observer, photographed records, a male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was noted in a yard along Jackson Rd on 4/27. Unfortunately, the bird flew off shortly after in the direction of the West Scio Preserve and could not be relocated.

Although a total of 17 warbler species were observed during the period, all but three of them appeared only during the last week of April! There was an apparently territorial **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Hudson Mills from 4/28 – 4/29, but none were reported from its traditional local nesting site at the Nan Weston Preserve. A female **Prothonotary Warbler** was very nicely photographed along the Huron River in Ypsilanti’s Riverside Park on 4/29 but had moved on before other birders arrived. Four **Orange-crowned Warblers** were noted from scattered locations: at Nichols Arboretum (4/27 – 4/29), at Tubbs & Huron River Dr, at Redbud Park, and at LeFurge Woods – the latter three all date to 4/29. Quite unusually, a female **Cerulean Warbler** was photographed at the West Scio Preserve on 4/28 – it is not common for this rare local breeder to be seen away from its breeding ground in the Waterloo Recreation Area. Lastly, a few somewhat early Northern Parulas graced Dolph Park (4/28) and Vreeland Rd (4/29).



Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*, Jackson Rd, April 27 2021 (Susan Pulju)



Cerulean Warbler *Setophaga cerulea*, West Scio Preserve, April 28 2021 (Karen Markey)

Michigan Audubon’s Young Birders Camp: Participants Wanted!



July 13–28 | Tuesdays & Wednesdays

Please check out the Michigan Audubon website for more information about the revamped 2021 Michigan Young Birders Camp! This virtual experience for 13- to 18-year-olds meets on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for the last three weeks of July with independent learning opportunities in between. Our goal is to minimize our time in front of a computer while maximizing the time we spend together to provide relevant and engaging information.

Camp sessions are held for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, with optional evening sessions and occasional time for group projects. Each day focuses on a different theme related to birds and features a variety of guest speakers. Independent activities are assigned to campers to help continue our work when we aren’t together.

This virtual camp experience is open to 20 enthusiastic campers, and tuition is \$175 per participant. Campers will be mailed a packet of resources, reference materials, and other goodies before the beginning of camp. Registration is open through June 15 or until filled.

Please contact Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org if you have any questions.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The birds Washtenaw Audubon pledges to protect differ in color, size, behavior, geographical preference, and countless other ways. As we honor and celebrate the equally remarkable diversity of the human species, Washtenaw Audubon considers the work of inclusion, diversity, and equity a top priority moving forward. We hope that, in doing so, we can bring creativity and energy to our work in Washtenaw County and beyond for birds and people alike.



[Read our full statement at washtenawaudubon.org](http://washtenawaudubon.org)

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.**

____Renewal ____New Member
 Additional Donation \$ ____

Membership Dues

____Individual Household \$25 (online only \$20)
 ____Student \$15 (online only \$10)
 ____Senior \$15 (online only \$10)
 ____Patron \$50

Name: _____
 Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

Washtenaw Audubon's in-person programs at the Botanical Gardens are on hold until the University allows gatherings to take place. To view our online Zoom programs, you will need access to an internet-capable computer, phone, or similar device. An announcement of the web address to view the program will be on our web site, Facebook page, and on the Birders email list a few days before the program. We may also add more online programs for April and the future, which will be announced on the same internet platforms.

June 16, 7:10 p.m. License to Bird – with Don Chalfant

Join Washtenaw Audubon's popular speaker and field trip leader Don "The Man" Chalfant for another masterly presentation. Among the plethora of birds he has photographed, Don has put together his photos some of the birds, along with a selection of photos of the creative vanity license plates that are named for these birds that he has found on cars parked at various wildlife refuges and hotspots around the country. A past WAS president, Don held many former Washtenaw County Big Day records, and has amassed an enviable ABA area life list. Don is a retired Ann Arbor teacher, and very sensibly spends the winter months at his second home in Florida.

The Zoom link for this program is listed below:

<https://umich.zoom.us/j/96461380993>

Or dial-in: +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 964 6138 0993

No password

September 15, 7:30 p.m. Birding the Rocky Mountains - with John Mills

Join John Mills for a look at his ten week trip through the Rocky Mountains, from Montana through Arizona, with a look at the 65 life birds he saw during his odyssey, including Chestnut-collared Longspur, Baird's Sparrow, Rosy-Finches, Mountain Plovers, Eared Quetzal, and Lucifer Hummingbird, plus Grizzly Bear, and Wolf. John is a longtime Washtenaw Audubon member and an area coordinator for the May Count.

Zoom link to be announced

October 20, 7:30 p.m. Program to be announced

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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