



November / December 2021

76th Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 18, 2021

After the one-of-a-kind 2020 edition of the Ann Arbor CBC, I hope this year's event, on December 18th, can return to its calmer, less-intense footing of years past. Needless to say, Covid restrictions played a major part in limiting the social aspect of our count last year, but to paraphrase Dutch soccer great Johan Cruyff: "Every disadvantage has its advantage." Without participants meeting up to form larger groups birding fewer places, a bunch of smaller, more spread-out groups greatly increased the amount of territory we covered. That, in turn, resulted in record numbers across the board: number of counters (107), number of feeder watchers (36), total birds observed (51,408), number of species observed (87), and record high counts for 25 (!) species. Surf Scoter and Black Vulture were new additions to the Ann Arbor CBC's cumulative list; the latter was new to the State's CBC list as well!

On the flip side, this greatly increased number of field parties and data submissions also put a (much) heavier burden on the area leaders and compiler to put it all together in a sensible and accurate manner. With some Covid precautions still in place (and sensibly so), I would like to run this year's count in a slightly toned-down version of last year's edition. I understand that many of you will still be apprehensive about car-pooling with (relative) strangers, even if masked and often fully vaccinated. Ideally, a blended version of the 2020 edition and the "normal" state of affairs is what I think we should aim for.

In real terms, what does that mean? As always, the circle will be divvied up into our regular eight areas, each with their own area leader (see below). I urge you to sign up for the area of your preference by registering on the WAS CBC page, which makes it easier for the area leaders and me to keep track of how many observers there are in any given area. It also helps me with deciding whether or not an observer may need to be reassigned.

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President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon friends,

Fall is here, winter is coming, and despite unseasonable warm weather so far, we are facing at least 4 months of pretty chilly temperatures. As I wrote in 2019, before I had ever heard of COVID-19, I won't let the winter keep me from birding-- and I'd love it if you'd join me! We have many opportunities to bird together in the colder months with WAS. November 20th we head to Belle Isle, to car bird around this gem in the Detroit River, looking for the odd gull, the rare duck and interesting birds of all feathers. Our Education Chair, Victor Chen, will be leading a family friendly bird walk around Ford Lake Boardwalk with the Ypsilanti District Library, on December 4th. Also, we hope to hold the annual Gull Trip on December 11th, and of course, the Christmas Bird Count is December 18th led again this year by Jacco Gelderloos. Field Trip Chair, Matt Spoor, and I will be leading a field trip somewhere on January 1, 2022, for a Big Day to start the New Year, and we'll invite you to the as-yet-undisclosed location, soon!! These are great ways to stay connected with the outdoors and the birds we love, as well as other birders we like to hang out with. Check our Facebook page, our newly redesigned website, www.washtenawaudubon.org and this newsletter for details. We are helping bird science every time we participate in the CBC, where long term observer data over 100+ years, has built a treasure trove to study population changes in birds. Also, using eBird keeps your data accessible to bird scientists studying trends in migration, habitat requirements and other factors, so plan to eBird your CBC data, and every time you go birding.

Don't miss our in-person programs, again occurring on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, except December, July and August. We have a great slate of programs you'll love, also available on Zoom for those who are unable or choose not to attend in person.

I hope to see many of you at the next program, on the trails, by a heap of garbage covered with gulls, along the shore of a half-frozen lake, at the next good bird sighting.

As always, I am for the birds!

All the best, stay safe, stay well and good birding—

Juliet Berger, President

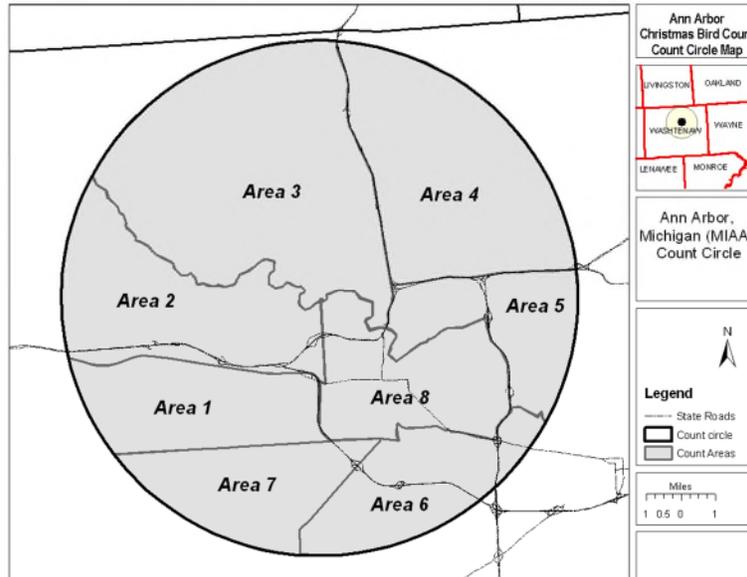
Washtenaw Audubon Society



*Enjoying Fall Migration on the
9/30/21 Arb Walk (Bill VanderMolen)*

If you don't have a preferred area, you can indicate that on the form as well – that will then allow me to assign you where you are most needed to ensure good coverage of our circle. Of course, you can also still contact the area leader or me directly to sign up - check out the detailed maps on the [WAS website](#) to see which of the eight count areas suits you best.

For those of you who would rather not brave the weather (who knows what it may be like on count day), or don't want to take any chances with Covid, you can stay indoors and participate as a feeder watcher. Please use the sign-up form on the WAS website to participate, from one hour to all day. Contact feeder watch coordinator Kurt Hagemeister for more information, to sign up, or to get feeder watch forms. Note that your feeder MUST be within the count circle, otherwise the data is invalid for our count. To find out, type your address into Google Maps or check with me. In case you're not sure what geographical portion of our circle is covered by each of the eight count areas, check out the maps on our CBC page.



Due to ongoing restrictions at the two locations we asked about hosting our tally, as well as safety concerns among the WAS board members, we have opted to err on the side of caution and, once again, run our CBC tally remotely, via Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://umich.zoom.us/j/99959530793>

Meeting ID: 999 5953 0793

Passcode: 289387 (NOTE: UMICH Zoom now requires us to use passcodes for security)

Or dial-in: 312-626-6799

Tune in at 6:30 p.m. to hear about what birds were found by our counters - personally, I thoroughly enjoy the “oohs” and “aahs” associated with a rare bird or with an impressive tally for a given species!

At writing (i.e. the last week of October), fall weather has arrived at long last, after an unusually warm period in September and early October. That said, the amount of green that continues to be visible out my window is quite discombobulating – there should certainly be a lot more in the way of yellows and reds out there. However, that delayed onset of proper fall hasn't kept away some of our fall and winter birds, like Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows, but I have a feeling that quite a few others are still farther north. Hopefully, they will make their way down by the time our count takes place. Whether they do or not, the Ann Arbor CBC will continue to contribute its piece to the overall picture of winter bird distribution in the western hemisphere. To check out historical CBC results for yourself, visit The National Audubon Society's website (<http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>). This page is a bonanza for anything and everything CBC-related – check out the historical trends for your favorite bird or find out what species' range has expanded and which ones are contracting.

Historically, the Ann Arbor count always takes place on the 3rd Saturday in December, which means this year's CBC will be on the 18th. That prevents 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. It 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 – the [map](#) accompanying this article shows the count circle in immaculate detail. Our objective is to identify all bird species present in this circle and count how many individuals of each species are present. In addition to the daylight bird census, several hardy observers will conduct a pre-dawn search for owls. If you're interested in getting up really early and encounter some nocturnal birds, make sure to indicate so on the sign up form!

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Board Members

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Newsletter

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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.

Summary Report for 2020-2021

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Year ended June 30, 2021

REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT	
Member dues	\$ 4,370
Gifts, unrestricted	2,014
Interest earned	109
Sales of merchandise	120
TOTAL REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT	\$ 6,613
EXPENSES	
Newsletter and brochure costs	\$ 1,197
Cost of Merchandise	715
Grants made	1,000
Insurance	525
Recognitions and Awards	
Program expenses	1,613
Searle property expenses	38
Other Conservation Expenses	170
Other operating expenses	450
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 5,708
RESULTS FROM OPERATIONS	\$ 905
Additions to Property and Equipment	1,399
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 2,304
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NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 162,229
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$ 164,533

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As of June 30, 2021

ASSETS	
Cash in checking account	\$ 10,953
Savings in money market account	33,570
Savings in certificates of deposit	10,271
TOTAL CASH AND INVESTMENTS	\$ 54,794
Bernard Loates "After Audubon" prints	\$ 2,900
Equipment	\$ 1,399
Searles property	86,940
Wing property	18,500
TOTAL PROPERTY	\$ 109,739
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 164,533
LIABILITIES	\$ -
NET ASSETS	\$ 164,533



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](https://washtenawaudubon.org)

As always, information regarding the count will be updated immediately if any of the above changes – keep an eye on <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/> where any new information will be posted as count day approaches.

Area	Leaders	Phone	E-mail
1	Andrew Pawuk	(740) 590-6596	andrewpawuk@gmail.com
2	Rob & Nancy French	(734) 994-8418	rwfrenchjr@comcast.net
3	Matt Hack		matthewhack24@gmail.com
4	Tim McKay	(734) 657-6401	tamckay@umich.edu
5	Jessica Adamczyk	(847) 308-4975	jessica.adamczyk13@gmail.com
6	Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
7	Kurt Hagemester	(734) 663-9746	khagemester@sbcglobal.net
8	Matt Spoor	(701) 610-1203	matthew.spoor@gmail.com

CBC Compiler: Jacco Gelderloos (734) 973-9422 jjgelderloos@yahoo.com

Feeder Watch Coordinator: Kurt Hagemester (734) 663-9746 khagemester@sbcglobal.net

Potluck Coordinator: Nancy French nfrench@umich.edu
>> NO potluck this year, unfortunately<<

Ann Arbor CBC Web Site: <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/annarborecbc.php>

National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

Big Sit Report (by Don Chalfant)

A BIG “Thank You” to all participants in this year’s BIG SIT experience. The turnout of both birds and birders was notable, but the enthusiasm and expertise of the SIT’s birders was exemplary. Once the night and morning fog lifted, we experienced a wonderful sunny day, with birds and enjoyable conversation and snacks.

While the bird numbers were below our 24-year average of 52.5, we enjoyed the almost constant movement of Cedar Waxwings, among others. Notable misses? Of course, we had a few. Seen on most previous BIG SITs, but missed on this year’s were Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, Wood Duck, Rusty Blackbird, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Pleasant surprises: Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and the almost-constant looks at Cedar Waxwings.

Thanks again to all. I’m already looking forward to next year’s SIT, our 25th!!!!!!

Species experienced (seen or heard) follows:

Canada Goose	Cooper’s Hawk	Black-capped Chickadee	Cedar Waxwing
Mute Swan	Red-tailed Hawk	Tufted Titmouse	House Finch
Mallard	Eastern Screech-Owl	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	American Goldfinch
Pied-billed Grebe	Great Horned Owl	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed Junco
Sandhill Crane	Belted Kingfisher	Red-breasted Nuthatch	White-throated Sparrow
Killdeer	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	White-breasted Nuthatch	Song Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Carolina Wren	Eastern Towhee
Double-crested Cormorant	Downy Woodpecker	European Starling	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Pileated Woodpecker	Gray Catbird	Common Grackle
Great Egret	Northern Flicker	Eastern Bluebird	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Blue Jay	American Robin	Northern Cardinal
Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Crow		

Field Trip Schedule

- November 20, 2021** **Birding Belle Isle** **8:00 am – 12:00 pm**
Join WAS friends and Oakland Audubon Society for a tour of this State Park, a gem in the Detroit River. We'll search for waterfowl, gulls, waders, raptors and other goodies on the river and in the woods. We'll tour mostly by car but will stop and get out with scopes and binoculars. We'll have binoculars to lend if you need them. A mile-long walk in the interior is planned for migrating songbirds and other feathered friends. Meet at the Nature Center parking area at 8 a.m. sharp. We usually carpool, but COVID restrictions apply to this event. Plan to ride with your own party this time. Leader: Jeff Stacey
- December 4, 2021** **Family Duck Walk with Ypsilanti District Library** **2:00 pm – 3:30 pm**
We are putting on this family friendly walk for ducks (and other birds) partnering with the Ypsilanti District Library. Come learn about some of the migratory and resident waterfowl that we see in fall and winter. Meet at 526 S. Grove Street, Ypsilanti. We will walk down to the lake from that parking lot. Dress warmly! Binoculars will be available to lend; if you have one, bring a scope if possible. Information is also on the Ypsilanti District Library website: <https://attend.ypsilibrary.org/event/5744159>. Meet at the Grove St parking lot – additional details will be posted on the WAS website. Leader: Victor Chen
- 12/5/21 & 1/15/22** **Weekend Walk for Birds at Nichols Arboretum** **8:00 am**
The Arb, with 165 species reported to eBird, is the number one hotspot for birds in the county. The diversity of habitat provides opportunities to discover a wide variety of species. Join us as we explore this local gem. Meet at the east end of the arboretum at the Dow Prairie entrance. From Geddes Ave., turn north onto Riverview Dr. and stay right until it terminates at Riverview Ct. cul de sac. Check the website for a link to the map if you have never been there. Leader: Matthew Spoor
- December 11, 2021** **Gull Trip to the Salem Landfill (Tentative)** **8:00 am – 12:00 pm**
Hopefully, this long-running outing for local *larophiles* can go through this year after an enforced hiatus – if we cannot arrange for permission to enter the Salem Landfill property, an alternate location will be announced. The landfill is under new management (yet again!), and securing permission is not at all guaranteed. This will be a limited-space field trip, so registration will be required and may be limited to WAS members only. Please keep an eye on this space for more developments but pencil it in on your calendars if you are interested. Leader: Rob French
- December 18, 2021** **76th Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count**
Join us for our 76th year participating in the nation's longest-running community science project. The data collected by observers over the past century has allowed researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. Please see the Christmas Bird Count section of our website for more details and to register to participate. Compiler: Jacco Gelderloos
- January 1, 2022** **New Year's Bird Walk at Gallup Park** **8:00 am**
What will be the first bird you see in 2022? Get a boost to next year's list by joining the crazy birders of Washtenaw County for a refreshing New Year's morning bird walk. Meet at the Gallup Park playground parking lot at the east end of Gallup Park Rd. Leaders: Juliet Berger & Matthew Spoor
- January 23, 2022** **Weekend Walk for Birds at Matthaei Botanical Gardens** **8:00 am**
Exploring the winter woods, water, and prairie of Matthaei is always a rewarding experience. Please join us as we search for everything from bluebirds to hawks along Fleming Creek. Meet at the steps to the conservatory. Matthaei members park for free with metered parking for everyone else. Leaders: Juliet Berger & Matthew Spoor
- February 6, 2022** **Weekend Walk for Birds at Ford Lake** **8:00 am**
Ford Lake and its boardwalk provide one of the best winter birding opportunities in Washtenaw County. There have been 76 species seen in February at Ford Lake and we look forward to seeing a variety of waterfowl, gulls and local winter birds. Meet at the parking lot off South Grove Street. Lot is located south of I-94 at the northeast corner of Ford Lake, across from the Citgo Station at the intersection of Service Drive and South Grove St. Leader: Matthew Spoor
- February 18 - 20, 2022** **Birding the Upper Peninsula's Sault Ste Marie Area ("the Soo")**
We are reviving this fan favorite for 2022. Space is limited to 20 and preference will be given to Washtenaw Audubon members first. See the website for more details and registration.

September-October 2021: Early Fall Highlights

The Highlights

It's been five years since it was discovered that the (restricted access) Water Treatment Easement property at the intersection of Vreeland and Prospect hosted one or two migrating **Nelson's Sparrows** in late September – early October. Since then, largely due to restricted access to the site, there have been very few reports of this secretive species there, but this year a couple of these dapper sparrows were located there once again during a tour of that site. Certainly a treat for the observers!



Nelson's Sparrow *Ammodramus nelsoni*, Vreeland & Prospect, October 1 2021 (Brian Beauchene)



Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*, North Bay Park, October 23 2021 (Bruce Moorman)

Although all of us can think of major birding hotspots in Washtenaw County, there are only a handful that can boast a site list of 200 or more species. It won't surprise any of you that Four Mile Lake (226) and the Arb (216) top that list, but the number three site, Crooked Lake (201), is a bit more unexpected, and courtesy of the Hack brothers' efforts. During this past September-October period, two more sites joined this very select group. On September 16, a Philadelphia Vireo was the 200th species for Independence Lake County Park and, on October 23, an Eastern Meadowlark was number 200 for Ford Lake's North Bay Park. Several other hotspots are close to the mark, so keep birding and make it happen, folks

Waterfowl through Rails

Each fall, migrant geese start showing up at the end of October and, like clockwork, that pattern repeated itself this year. First, a lone **Snow Goose** was found on Pierce Lake on 10/28 and later that day a family group of three **Snow Geese** was mixed in with the loafing Canada Geese at Ford Lake in Milan. In that same large flock of geese, as many as six **Cackling Geese** were picked out as well. Both species remained through the end of October.



Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*, Pierce Lake, October 28 2021 (Michael Bowen)



Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*, Ford Lake - Milan, October 28 2021 (Roberto San Antonio)

Among the eight or so locations that hosted **Blue-winged Teal**, a group of 20 birds at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens on 9/4 was the largest concentration. **Northern Shovelers** were hard to come by, with a bird on Whitmore Lake (9/27) and a trio at Hewen's Creek Park (10/31) making for the only records this fall. Similarly, **American Wigeon** hadn't quite made it down-state yet either. There were three at Sharon Mills County Park (9/16 – 9/20), two at Pierce Lake (10/17), and three over the Torrey Rd hawk watch (10/31). **American Black Ducks** continued their great summer showing with reports of scattered birds coming in throughout the fall period. Early **Northern Pintails** were one-day wonders at Mary Beth Doyle Park (10/5) and along N Maple Rd (10/28).

There was a single early-ish **Redhead** at Independence Lake on 10/1; an additional quartet was mixed in with the geese at Ford Lake in Milan on 10/30. A completely odd-ball **Greater Scaup** was photographed on the pond at Olson Park on 9/26 and made for an interesting identification puzzle. The long-staying male **Common Merganser** along the Huron River in Ann Arbor continued through 10/21.



Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, Hewen's Creek Park, October 31 2021 (Bill Nolting)



Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, Olson Park, September 26 2021 (Yvonne Burch-Hartley)

After a good showing during the summer, **Ring-necked Pheasants** virtually vanished, with only three reports, all of single birds, this fall. An exceedingly early **Horned Grebe** was reported from the pond at Scio Church & Parker on 9/8; a more seasonably appropriate bird was on Independence Lake on 10/7. **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** moved through in impressive numbers this fall, with a whopping five individuals were in the Arb on 9/18. The final report for this species came in on 10/3. By contrast, only three **Black-billed Cuckoos** were sighted during September: at Nichols Arboretum (9/2 – 9/13), in Whitmore Lake (9/10), and at Independence Lake (9/17). Of course, there could have been more than one individual involved for the Arb reports, but with their more northerly nesting range, one might expect higher numbers for this species in the fall migration window.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Hudson Mills Metropark, September 6 2021 (Karen Kessler)



Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*, Ann Arbor, October 14 2021 (Nui Moreland)

A group of twenty (or more) **Common Nighthawks** over the Huron River near Maple Rd on 9/11 was this fall's highest concentration. Southbound nighthawks were noted from about a dozen sites, many of them around Ann Arbor (likely due to observer concentration) – the last one was reported on 9/26. A species of concern, **Chimney Swifts** hung around until 10/15, likely helped by the unseasonable warm fall weather. Likewise, the warmth allowed quite a few **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** to stay in our area, with a female coming to a feeder in Ann Arbor last to leave. This bird was last reported on 10/14. It will come as no surprise that a lingering **Common Gallinule** was at Trinkle Marsh (9/6), but individuals at Scio Church & Parker (9/6 – 9/8), Matthaei Botanical Gardens (9/8), and Vreeland & Prospect (10/1) were more unexpected.

Shorebirds through Terns

Southbound migration of **Semipalmated Plovers** continued through mid-September with up to six birds at Four Mile Lake (9/7 – 9/23) and two more at the M-14 pond on Ann Arbor's north side (9/8 – 9/10). A one-day wonder **Upland Sandpiper** was observed near the fluddle on the western end of Vreeland Rd on 9/5. As many as three **Baird's Sandpipers** stopped over at the M-14 pond from 9/8 – 9/10; a singleton of the species was at Four Mile Lake on 9/23. Even though they are not an uncommon fall migrant in Washtenaw County, a concentration of 45 **Wilson's Snipes** along Vreeland Rd on 10/29 made for a record high count locally. Most often seen/heard during their display season in early spring, **American Woodcocks** were found in an impressive five locations this fall, almost all of them birds flushed from trail edges by hiking birders. A **Spotted Sandpiper** remained at North Bay Park through 10/30 and, in doing so, set a new late date for that species in our area.



Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, M-14 Pond, September 10 2021 (Bill Nolting)



Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*, North Bay Park, October 30 2021 (Bill Nolting)



Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, North Bay Park, September 19 2021 (Bonnie Penet)



Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, Whitmore Lake, September 23 2021 (Ben Winger)

Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** were over Four Mile Lake on 9/23; four more were at North Bay Park on 10/9 and a straggler was seen there on 10/28. An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was seen flying over Nichols Arboretum by a WAS field trip

group on 9/19; that same day, a group of three (!) was photographed at North Bay Park – these observations made for exceptional early fall records. The summer's impressive gathering of **Caspian Terns** at North Bay Park continued well into September: peaking at 21 on 9/1, numbers slowly decreased until the last bird was noted on 9/27. A group of four **Common Terns** at Whitmore Lake on 9/23 made for a fall high count. Generally, only single birds are seen in the fall, and groups are more likely in the spring. A member of the former species's look-alike congener, the **Forster's Tern**, made a very brief stop-over at North Bay Park on 9/12.

Loons through Falcons

By and large, **Common Loons** start trickling into our area around the start of November, so a bird on Four Mile Lake on 9/23 is quite extraordinary. The large number **Double-crested Cormorants** noted in the previous rarity write-up continued to build into September, culminating into a record high tally of 200 (!) birds on 9/13. Clearly things are going well in the Lake Erie basin for this species! **Black-crowned Night-Herons** continued in three of the locations they were found over the summer, with single birds at North Bay Park (9/12 – 9/26) and North Hydro Park (9/25 – 10/13). Mary Beth Doyle Park remained the hotspot (through 10/6), which five birds there on 10/1 offering a nice study in the various plumages of this dapper little heron.



Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Mary Beth Doyle Park, October 1 2021 (Nui Moreland)



Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Hewen's Creek Park, October 1 2021 (Bill Nolting)

Ospreys had a banner fall locally, with quite a few reports from numerous sites, all involving one or two birds – the final report for this migratory species was on 10/17. **Golden Eagles** are never easy to find in our county, so a bird over Whitmore Lake Rd (near Joy) on 10/23 was a nice surprise. More expected (if the right wind direction materializes) was a bird soaring over the Torrey Rd hawk watch on 10/30, delighting the observers there. Often confined to a very narrow fall migration window, **Broad-winged Hawks** came through in quite massive numbers on 9/17 (a record high 900 over the Matthaei Botanical Gardens) and 9/18 (400 over Ann Arbor's east side). A lone bird over northwestern Ann Arbor on 10/10 appears to have been the last of the fall. An impressive southbound movement of **Red-tailed Hawks** was noted over Torrey Rd on 10/28, setting a new record high of 35 birds. The first **Rough-legged Hawk** appeared right on time at Vreeland & Gotfredson on 10/26.



Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Torrey Rd, October 30 2021 (Bill VanderMolen)



Merlin *Falco columbarius*, North Bay Park, September 11 2021 (Russell Ryan)

Barred Owls went nearly AWOL in September and October; there were only two, single-bird observations, at Nichols Arboretum (10/3) and at Nan Weston Preserve (10/23). The **Short-eared Owl** spectacle over the fields at Vreeland & Gotfredson kicked off once again with the arrival of as many as three birds on 10/20 – it's always a treat to watch these handsome owls there. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** had an excellent fall period. Not only were they reported from an impressive 15 or so sites, they did so in good numbers – a total of eight birds at the Leonard Preserve on 9/5 established a new county high. Good numbers of **Merlins** moved through and/or hung around in our area throughout September-October. The same was true for their larger relative, the **Peregrine Falcon**; individuals (mostly migrants) were seen in quite a few scattered sites throughout the fall.

Passerines: Flycatchers through Wrens

Away from the Arb, **Olive-sided Flycatchers** put in appearances at half a dozen spots; only the Arb hosted more than one bird, where two were noted on a number of occasions. Often hard to come by, **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were at nearly ten locations this fall, with the last of the main push on 9/17. However, a straggler was found at North Hydro Park at the (very) late date of 10/9 – perhaps another consequence of the warm fall? Fall 2021 (through 10/3) proved to be very good for **Philadelphia Vireos**; not only were they at more than twenty locations, but in quite a few of them more than one bird was present, with as many as three at Nichols Arboretum on 9/12.



Yellow-bellied Flycatcher *Empidonax flaviventris*, North Hydro Park, October 9 2021 (Bill Nolting)



Northern Shrike *Lanius borealis*, Vreeland Rd, October 18 2021 (Victor Chen)

In line with their regular arrival time, **Northern Shrikes** showed up at County Farm Park and along Vreeland Rd on 10/18. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** in Ann Arbor on 10/23 was exceedingly late; normally, the little sprites are all gone by mid-September! A possible **Sedge Wren** at Dolph Park on 9/10 would be the only remaining bird after a good nesting season in Washtenaw County. **Marsh Wrens** were a bit easier to come by, with up to two birds seen at seven sites well into October.

Passerines: Mimids through Blackbirds

Excellent numbers of **Brown Thrashers** remained well into October this year; although reports mostly concerned single birds, there were as many as three at the Cherry Hill Preserve on 9/19. Away from Watkins Lake County Preserve, only two locations hosted **Northern Mockingbirds**: two at Ann Arbor's Riverside Park (10/12) and two more in Superior Township (10/17 – 10/24). Quite a few **Veeries** were noted during the first three weeks of September (in six locations); similarly, **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** had a good fall period as well, extending their migration window until 10/9, which is quite late. Rounding out the thrush family, four locations hosted **Wood Thrushes**: Nichols Arboretum (9/2 – 9/27), Embury Rd (9/10), Dolph Park (9/10), and Miller Nature Area (10/16). The latter bird may well have established a new county late date. With the onset of October, scattered reports of **American Pipits** started coming in. A group of eight was along Willow Rd on 10/6 and, on 10/9, single birds scurried around in the fields along both Burmeister and Maple Rds. A further eleven were seen near the Torrey Rd hawk watch on 10/31.

Possibly an echo of last fall's irruption, there was a distinct movement of **Purple Finches** into our area during the second third of September and into October. The fact that the largest group consisted of only five birds indicates that this year's push is nowhere near the magnitude of that of 2020. A little surprisingly, only single **Pine Siskins** were noted: in Lodi Township (10/10 – 10/31), on Third St in Ann Arbor (10/14), and in Gallup Park (10/24) – the main push of this species is likely yet to come.



Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Nichols Arboretum, September 24 2021 (Russell Ryan)



American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, Willow Rd, October 6 2021 (Maggie Jewett)

Starting on 10/18, migrant **Fox Sparrows** were found at nearly a dozen locations, with a whopping eight of them at Independence Lake on 10/27. It appears **Vesper Sparrows** had by and large vacated Washtenaw County by the end of August; the only exceptions were a bird at Nichols Arboretum on 9/12 and one at Torrey Rd on 10/10. Although by no means uncommon during fall, a group of 30 **Savannah Sparrows** along Whitmore Lake Rd must have come quite to setting a high tally for that species. Not quite as large of a flock, but impressive nonetheless, ten **Lincoln's Sparrows** at the Jack Smiley Preserve on 9/30 must be close to a record as well. A handful of hardy **Baltimore Orioles** stayed well into September but had departed before the start of October. As a severely declining species, it was good to see **Rusty Blackbird** reports coming in from almost 15 locations. The highest concentration (of 14 birds) was in the wetlands of Independence Lake on 10/31. In addition to providing species number 200 for North Bay Park, a total of 35 **Eastern Meadowlarks** at Torrey Rd on 10/10 established yet another high count this fall.



Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*, Conservancy Farm, October 1 2021 (Victor Chen)



Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*, Nichols Arboretum, September 20 2021 (Ben Lucking)

Passerines: Warblers through Cardinals

Southbound fall migration for warblers extended well into October. More or less expectedly, 28 species were noted during September, but 16 species in October seems a bit more out the ordinary. Never easy to see, a surprising four individual **Northern Waterthrushes** were reported during September. **Golden-winged Warblers** had a normal fall, with birds at the Cherry Hill Preserve (9/2), Nichols Arboretum (9/13 – 9/19), and the Burns-Stokes Preserve (9/20). Indicating their continued push northward (into Golden-winged Warbler territory), migrating **Blue-winged Warblers** outnumbered their close relatives this fall, with birds noted from four locations. One representative of the previous two species' hybrid off-spring was a so-called **Brewster's Warbler** at Black Pond Woods on 9/18. Among the species that move through a little later in the fall, **Orange-crowned Warblers** appeared as of 9/26 and were reported from a dozen+ sites during October.



Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*, Dolph Park, September 15 2021 (Russell Ryan)



Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis*, Nichols Arboretum, September 9 2021 (Bill Nolting)

Hard to find during spring migration (when they sing), **Connecticut Warblers** are even harder to find during fall (when they don't sing). It was, therefore, quite exciting that two different birds were found this fall: one was at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (9/8) and, to the delight of many, another spent several days in Nichols Arboretum (9/9 – 9/13). Twice as many **Mourning Warblers** were observed, all of them one-day wonders: at Loch Highland (9/1), at the M-14 pond (9/8), at Nichols Arboretum (9/14), and on private property in Lodi Township (9/18). A few **Hooded Warblers** dallied in our area, but only one of them, a bird at the Arb from 9/6 - 9/12, hung around for more than a day. A long-staying **Canada Warbler** at that same hotspot enthralled many birders from 9/3 – 9/28. The other three observed this fall were all, more typically, one-day wonders: at the Leonard Preserve (9/5), the Bot Gardens (9/8), and at the Miller Nature Area (9/18). By contrast, **Wilson's Warblers** were almost common this fall – not only were they reported from nearly 20 locations, there were as many as four of them in the Arb (9/11)!



Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*, Nichols Arboretum, September 12 2021 (Jocelyn Anderson)



Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*, Nichols Arboretum, September 11 2021 (Russell Ryan)

Searles Preserve Workday



During the afternoon of October 16, a small group of WAS members and neighbors joined up for a few hours of clearing trails and removing invasive shrubs at Washtenaw Audubon's Searles Preserve off Bolla Rd in Augusta Township. We spent a few productive hours cutting down honeysuckle, buckthorn, autumn olive, and others and took chainsaws to several large trees that had come down near or across the trail network. After working up a bit of a sweat, we enjoyed a walk through the preserve with WAS stewardship chair Dana Novak and volunteer Rebecca pointing out interesting botanical features along the way.

With this effort, we made good progress in opening up the area along the headwaters of Stony Creek, but more work is ahead of us to further improve the habitat for native plants. So keep an eye on the WAS website for additional work dates throughout 2022 and join us!



White-throated Sparrow at Nichols Arboretum, September 2021 (Mark Myers)

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.

November 17, 7:30 p.m. Birding Costa Rica - with David Dister

Dave's fabulous photos make this a much-anticipated program. In-person at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens if the vagaries of COVID-19 permit. Hopefully, we will find it safe to conduct in person programs by this time, and the University of Michigan will re-open the Matthaei Botanical Gardens facility for our use. Dave Dister recently published A Field Guide to the Birds of Mason County, MI and Ludington State Park. Copies of this book will be available at the program.

Also available via Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://umich.zoom.us/j/99959530793>

Meeting ID: 999 5953 0793

Passcode: 289387

Or dial-in: 312-626-6799

December 15, 2021

No Program due to the Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 18, 2021

January 19, 2022, 7:30 p.m. Common and Least Terns in Chesapeake Bay – with Matt Hack

Join Washtenaw Audubon member Matt Hack for a program about his field work on an island in Chesapeake Bay monitoring breeding terns and banding chicks. Matt graduated from Yale University and is working on a PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Michigan.

This meeting will be held in-person, as well as broadcast via Zoom – please use the information above to join.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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