

W Washtenaw A Audubon Soc. S NEWSLETTER

The Pileated Woodpeckers of Macomb County, Michigan

Article and photo by Alan Ryff

The Pileated Woodpecker is the source of passion within me. The world comes to a standstill when I see one. Therefore, I feel compelled to give my historical view about our local Pileateds where I reside in Macomb County.

I rode my bike the four miles to the J. L. Hudson Department Store at the Eastland Shopping Center in 1957, the year that it opened, and for the first time in my life, I entered a book store. I wasted no time and started looking at bird books. I had never seen the likes of a field guide. I opened a Peterson

and went straight to the woodpecker plate. And there it was at the center of the plate, the bird of birds, within a ring of woodpeckers of lesser pedigree. Yes, I recognized royalty. In those days the Flicker, the Downy, and the Red-headed were among the familiar backyard birds of St. Clair Shores. But this woodpecker was something else. I was instantly possessed. I just had to see this bird. Little did I know that my obsession was going to be lifelong.

Being just a kid, I innocently expected to find a Pileated in one of the remaining woodlots of St. Clair Shores. After several years of fruitless searching, I bowed to the inevitable: this was going to be a bird of "Up North," a bird of the real woods, the kind of woods you can get lost in. (My first encounter was to be a

pair on the nest in Cheboygan County, but that is another story.) For a while my Pileated Woodpecker experiences were limited to the St. Clair Shores library. I would open an old obsolete tome, Birds of America, and study a magnificent painting of a pair of Pileateds in courtship.

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May/June 2008

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President's Letter *By Ray Stocking, WAS President*

Welcome to springtime in Michigan. After a record-breaking year for snowfall accumulation in the county, the return of spring, along with our migratory friends, is a welcomed sight for us all. I write this letter having just returned from the first of four Tuesday Evening Birders field trips offered in the current 2008 season. Twenty-five plus people were treated to a special evening where the normally elusive Sora and a rare Common Moorhen came out of their hiding spaces and provided outstanding looks for everyone. A full report on this trip, along with accompanying photos, can be found on page 7. This trip is just one of many outstanding field trips we have offered so far this year.

Earlier this year fifteen lucky birders were treated to an "owl prowling triple play" with a Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl and Eastern Screech-Owl all seen in one exciting evening. Horned Grebes and Bald Eagles were highlights from the Washtenaw Waterfowl road trip in March. The One-Road Challenge produced several new players to the field, all while introducing them to winter birding in Washtenaw County. I am as excited as ever about all the good things going on within the Washtenaw Audubon Society. There are still many trips on the schedule including the remaining Spring Migration Arb Walks, Tuesday Evening Birders, and a very special trip to Port Huron State Game Area in June. Did I mention the 3rd annual Butterfly Trip in July? Come join us and bring a friend. I know you will enjoy the experience.

Birder For Hire

I recently offered my services to provide a "Family Friendly" bird walk in the Arb this spring. The event was the 3rd annual M. L. King School (Ann Arbor Public Schools) Silent Auction. Not knowing who, if anyone, might be interested, I was thrilled to see the bidding climb higher and higher as the evening progressed. Much to my surprise, the walk raised over \$150 for the school between the two winning families. Many thanks go out to the WAS Board for supplying the free birding guides and audio CDs as a part of the excursion. Not only does this walk support an outstanding PTO program, but it also exposes the great outdoors to several grade school kids. In the world of Nintendo and big screens TVs, I believe this is an opportunity where we can make a difference in our youths' understanding and appreciation of Mother Nature's gift to us all. I will post more on this walk in the next newsletter.

Update on Safe Passage

I was deeply saddened when I read about a Common Moorhen found dead in late April next to the U of M Hospital. (*continued on next page*)

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Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Statewide Bird Report (616) 471-4919
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(President's Letter continued)

I was sad not only because this rare visitor was killed, but also because we have yet to get the Safe Passage program off the ground. I first brought this important issue to your attention back in January. As a reminder why we need a Safe Passage program in Washtenaw County, here are a few key points:

- Migratory birds are drawn to the lights of buildings and can crash into the windows.
- Migratory birds circle the lighted buildings and eventually become exhausted and fall to the ground.
- In one study, researchers collected 30,000 dead birds outside a Chicago building over 3 years.
- Results from turning out the lights decreased the number of dead birds found by 80%.

In March 2007 Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed a proclamation designating dates in the spring and fall as "Safe Passage Great Lakes Days." The proclamation called attention to the threat to migratory birds posed by the lights of tall buildings. The designated "Safe Passage Great Lakes" dates in Michigan are March 15 through May 31 and August 15 through October 31.

I am asking once again for volunteers to help out with this program. We need people to observe buildings late at night to determine who has their lights on after 11 PM. Once identified, we need volunteers to approach the building owners and inform them about Safe Passage and ask for their cooperation. Our good friends from the Jackson Audubon have already contacted all building owners in their area and have had enormous success with their commitments to turn off their lights. There is no reason why we cannot do the same. Please consider joining me in this worthy cause and volunteer your time. Call me at (734) 645-8110 or send an email to president@washtenawaudubon.org for additional details. Thank you for your consideration.

I hope to see you out in the field or at one of our monthly gatherings at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens soon. Good birding!!!

Interested in seeing these birds?! (and many more...) Find out how on Page 5.



Pining for Spring Break

By Alex Dopp

Every year, more than 400 University of Michigan students plan a rather unorthodox spring break trip with their friends: while classmates debate the relative merits of partying in Cancun or Aruba and try on new bathing suits, this unusual group collects donations in the winter cold on Main Street and attend educational meetings. These are the participants in Alternative Spring Break (ASB), a program dedicated to organizing productive, educational projects that allow college students to contribute to social change during our week-long break from the grind of school. ASB is not a program unique to U of M, but the Michigan branch of the program boasts an impressive membership and a variety of sites for students to choose from. One issue that students can indicate interest in on their application is Environmental Issues. As a longtime Washtenaw Audubon Society member, birder, and amateur naturalist, I was immediately drawn to this issue both because it has been personally meaningful, and because I have not been involved enough in my environmental and natural interests since starting college. Even better, upon attending the first meeting for Environmental Issues, I learned that one of the sites – working with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in North Carolina – was dedicated to reestablishing Longleaf Pine forest, an important and heavily damaged habitat for a number of endangered species, especially the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker. I was sold!

After months of fundraising (to pay for gas, food and other expenses that we would incur on the trip) and education on site-relevant issues (including my brandishing [The Sibley Guide to Birds](#) at a meeting, discussing the finer points of Red-Cockaded Woodpecker identification), myself and 13 other volunteers set out for North Carolina. We departed on February 25th at 9:00 a.m. in order to make the entire 12-hour drive in one day, with a huge cheer erupting when our van realized there was no longer any snow on the ground. The accommodations waiting for us defied all expectations: we were actually housed in a former Rockefeller mansion, which was left to TNC in his will. Though close to the town of Spring Lake (bustling with gun shops and tattoo parlors at every intersection), the mansion was located among the Longleaf Pines themselves, with a beautiful lake out back and a great view of the Milky Way when it got dark. Although TNC staff warned us that we shouldn't expect to see any Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers during our stay, our location seemed so wild and untouched that a sighting seemed almost inevitable to me. Plus, how many ASB volunteers bring their Nikon Monarchs?

The volunteer work we performed in North Carolina was both intensely exhausting and intensely rewarding. We spent a total of three days planting Longleaf Pine saplings in a desolate field; formerly an invasive hardwood stand. The trees had been cut down and bulldozed, leaving plenty of room to plant saplings and plenty of debris to get in our way. Although we clearly were not in



One of several obliging Pine Warblers, on the suet feeder at the nature center where we spent some of our time.

woodpecker habitat, I kept a sharp eye and ear out anyway and was rewarded with several Red-shouldered Hawks calling and circling over a distant stand of trees. Northern Mockingbirds were also ubiquitous, giving the birdlife a definite southern flavor. Planting involved filling up a bucket with tiny saplings, fanning out and advancing across the field, using our “dibbles” (bright orange spades with pointed tips) to dig out holes for the young trees. Overall, we planted nearly 9,000 trees (640 per person), completely filling our designated area faster than expected and forcing TNC staff to find some other tasks for us. We spent Thursday chopping down invasive hardwoods that first invaded the Longleaf habitat when natural brushfires were suppressed due to fire management policies. Now that some of the

(continued on the next page)

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trees have reached several inches in thickness and 10 feet in height, it was necessary to use brush axes and saws to clear them out – an afternoon of this work left us sore for days! At the nature center where we worked, the bird feeders drew in the best birds of the trip, including my life Brown-headed Nuthatches and multiple Pine Warblers (which were tame enough for me to photograph), but still no woodpeckers. The final day of the trip was spent maintaining trees with Red-cockaded nests, including raking needles away from the base (to prevent fire from getting too intense around the trees during controlled burns) and marking the trees with paint bands.

In the end, despite the 7 a.m. wakeup times and days of long work, the group returned just as refreshed and energized as anyone who spent their week off lounging on the beach. The fresh air, warm weather and productive work left us with a sense of accomplishment and newfound strength. It was a welcome change from long days sitting in classrooms, bedrooms and libraries to be out in nature, doing work that produced real, visible results with a long-term impact. Furthermore, all of the staff we worked with were incredibly grateful, even though our week there only lifted a small burden from their job. I felt reconnected to everything that I love and revere about the natural world...even if I never did find any Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers!

WAS 2nd International Field Trip: South Africa!

Imagine a WAS birding trip that includes albatrosses, sunbirds, hornbills, parrots, turacos, flamingos, elephants, giraffes and great white sharks! Well, imagine no longer.

In August of 2009, WAS will once again be taking another international field trip; this time to South Africa! While the main focus will be on seeing as many birds as we can (especially the endemic species special to southern Africa and South Africa in particular) we will also be attempting to view as many species of Africa's famous mammals as well. One can not go to Africa and ignore the lions, cheetahs, monkeys, etc... Compared to the last WAS international trip (to Peru) this one will be far less strenuous. Owing to the differences between South Africa and Peru, accommodations will be a lot nicer, as will be the roads, vehicles, etc... (As a result, the price will also be a bit higher.) An example of one of the lodges we will be staying at (as well as many of the birds we will see) can be viewed at www.aftongrove.co.za.

The trip will be about 2 weeks at the beginning of August 2009. It will be limited to about 10 people. Further details will be forthcoming and will be in the next WAS Newsletter.

If you are interested in being put on an email list for early information regarding this trip (as soon as it becomes available), please email Bryn Martin at brynmartin@sbcglobal.net. People on the email list will be the first to hear when the trip is open for participants to enroll. There is a limit on how many people can go and it will be on a first come, first served basis. When it fills up, it fills up. We hope that you will have the opportunity to share with us in this amazing experience.

Birds seen on page 3 (and by you if you participate in the trip): Southern Bald Ibis, African Penguin, Cape Sugarbird, Blue Crane, Drakensberg Rockjumper (all endemics).



I would like to thank the Washtenaw Audubon Society and its members for the generous contributions they made towards our trip. Your support allowed us to meet our fundraising goal, covering the cost of gas and most food for the trip. Donations like yours allow the University of Michigan to keep ASB open to all interested students.

The entire ASB group posing with the oldest Longleaf pine in the area (about 350 years old). Author is 4th from the left, back row.

World Birding: River Islands *By Bryn Martin*



Lesser Wagtail-tyrant
(Left)

Spotted Tody-flycatcher
(Right)



There are times when I seriously, seriously consider why I do this as a hobby. I was miserably hot. Hotter than I'd ever been while birding. To say that sweat was trickling down my face would be a gross understatement. My clothes were soaked, but my feet were the worst. I was wearing thick black rubber boots and my feet were cooking inside of them. My socks were drenched as if I had dunked them in water and the heat radiating inside of the boots was incredible.

The habitat I was trudging through made things worse. I was on a sandy island out in the middle of the Napo River (a tributary of the Amazon) and the sand made the going even harder. Each step was a challenge. There was absolutely no cover from the sun as all the vegetation was barely at eye-level. (My guide Miles said that it was hotter than even he'd anticipated.) When we had to push through the vegetation it was thick and prickly, cutting and slashing at our skin. I'd brought some bottled water with me, but this was gone in no time. At points, I felt like I was a zombie-birder following where my guide would lead. No thinking. Too hot. Just one step at a time.

So, why do this? Sounds horrible, right? Well, it wasn't. Yes, it was rough, but I loved it. Many times, the harder the bird is to get, the better. I love sitting at a feeder or in a blind and seeing the beautiful tanagers and hummingbirds come in to feed, but to see the birds on this island, one had to work hard and truly earn them. Not everyone chooses to do this. Most people don't want to have to endure this torture, even if they are people who enjoy birds. So, I looked at these birds as my little gems. My precious little jewels that I only had to share with the few other people who ever took it upon themselves to visit this insane habitat.

The Amazon basin has one of the most unique and tenuous of habitats: river islands. Sandbars spring up seemingly overnight, vegetation takes hold and grows quickly and birds flock here to avoid nest predators found on the mainland. A number of species found on the mainland take advantage of the relative safety of these islands, but there are many species who have become entirely dependent on this niche. Not only do they breed exclusively on these temporary river islands, but they can only breed on them when the vegetation is at a specific point in its successional growth. These islands are only valuable to these birds for such a short amount of time, and then they must move on. These birds never have a reliable home (and birders never have a reliable location to find them). They must just simply fly (or float) down the river until they find a new island that suits their specific needs perfectly.

I was staying at Sacha Lodge in the Ecuadorian Amazon and luckily there were a few of these river islands nearby. I had a birding guide allotted to me by the lodge and I made it known to him that on one of the days I wanted to explore these islands. River Island birding is a litmus test. By expressing interest I let him know the type of birder I was. By his willingness to take me out to them, he let me know what kind of guide he was. (Continued on the next page)



Plain-crowned Spinetail
Arthur Grosset (Above)

(*World Birding continued*) *Gray-breasted Crake* (*Junglewalk.com*)

As I said earlier, the going was rough. But the going was also good. Miles said that he didn't remember a more successful venture on one of his stints to the islands. We were able to find all of the 11 island endemics from this area, as well as 5 other species that are only found on river island habitat in this part of Amazonia. There was a hummingbird, 4 spinetails, an hornero, a woodpecker, 4 flycatchers a tanager, a couple of seedeaters and a beautiful, bold Oriole Blackbird. My favorite was probably the Gray-breasted Crake. While this bird was not a river island endemic, Miles explained that they seemed to be extremely common on these islands and easier to see here than anywhere else. (As most of you know, rails in general are notoriously impossible to see.) At many locations on the two river islands we visited we heard them calling from deep in the thickest grasses, but they would go silent whenever we approached. Finally we hovered over one that peeked out and finally made a quick dash right at our feet. It was the size of a colorful little duckling. Excellent!



We eventually called it a day. We'd had success with all of the river island endemics that we were going to be able to find in this area. My body felt like a furnace. We trudged back to the boat and I immediately stripped down to my boxers (there *were* only males here) and plunged into the Napo River.

"Be careful not to let your feet touch the bottom," Miles called to me. "There are freshwater stingrays. And don't forget: don't go to the bathroom in the water, either...the Candiru fish..." (The parasitic fish that has a habit of swimming up people's urethras and lodging itself in.) Stingrays, Candiru fish...I didn't care. I had to be in the cool water at this moment. It was too refreshing to resist. I dunked my head back to let the water soak through my hair. I floated there thinking back on where I was in the world, what I was doing, what I was experiencing. *This is birding. This is living.*

FOY Tuesday Evening Birders: May 6, 2008 *By Mike Sefton*

About 25 birders joined WAS's first Tuesday Evening Birders group of the year. This field trip was led by Lathe Claflin and Mike Sefton, with the help of WAS board members Ellie Shappirio, Sherri Smith, and Ray Stocking, and pre-trip scouting by Roger Wykes. The group car-pooled to Fraleighs Nursery on Jackson Rd., where genial ace bird-finder Dan Sparks-Jackson hosted us for close views of a pair of Sandhill Cranes with two large, fuzzy chicks, a Sora, Solitary Sandpipers, and gurgling Purple Martins, as well as nesting Mourning Doves, and a fly-by Red-tailed Hawk. Our thanks to Dan and Fraleighs for allowing us to visit these birds. The next stop was Trinkle Marsh, where we managed to find the elusive not-so-Common Moorhen, playing hide and seek in the cattails.



Also present were Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, a kingfisher, a Warbling Vireo, and a pair of Pied-billed Grebes. The nesting Trumpeter Swans at Scio Church and Parker were hiding when we arrived, though one of them had been snoozing two feet from the road at 5:00 pm. We heard several calling Soras, and had good views of Blue-winged Teal and Eastern Kingbird. We decided not to stop for the Great Blue Heron rookery on Ellsworth Rd., as the light was waning. The cow pond on Schneider Rd. had 20+ Solitary Sandpipers, 4+ Lesser Yellowlegs, and a couple of Least Sandpipers. After a quick drive-by of the other two ponds on Schneider Rd., we returned to the parking lot, noting that one of the Trumpeter Swans was on the nest at Scio Church and Parker as we drove past.

Sandhill Crane and chicks
Photo by Rich Miller

WAS Field Trip Reports

Washtenaw Waterfowl Field Trip Report

By Andy Johnson

Our freezing Tour de Washtenaw led by Dea Armstrong and Cathy Carroll, on Sunday, March 9th, began at Little Lake off Jackson Rd. The small lake provided great close-ups of many species, including Redheads, Black Ducks, Bufflehead, wigeons, and a lone Sandhill Crane for everyone in our group of fifteen. We proceeded along Huron River Drive, picking up Wood Ducks and Trumpeter and Mute Swans. At Foster Bridge, Dea found a single Horned Grebe, which was a lifer for many, and enjoyed by all. Also along the river were our only goldeneyes for the day, as well as Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaup, and Common Mergansers. We made our final stop at West Belleville Lake, and this made for quite a good finale. We spotted our last target bird for the day, a pair of beautiful Gadwalls. Here we also saw our only Pied-billed Grebes for the morning, and enjoyed four Bald Eagles, including one magnificent adult. Before leaving, we had great opportunities to study the scaup, and finally determined that we could not identify it to species. All in all, it was a great day, with 34 species in only half that number of degrees Fahrenheit.



Our last frozen stop, searching successfully for Gadwall and Bald Eagle at West Belleville Lake. (Above)

Near Foster Bridge along Huron River Drive; here not looking at waterfowl at all, but rather a freshly plumaged, vocalizing Red-bellied Woodpecker. (Below)



One Road Challenge *By Cathy Carroll*

Five teams made up of 13 birders participated in the One Road Challenge. The combined effort produced a very respectable 71 species found on five different roads of varying length and habitat. No rarities were seen, but some very nice birds were found. Common Loon, Horned Grebe, fly-over Cackling Geese, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, woodcock, screech-owl, Tree Swallows, Eastern Phoebe, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Swamp, White-crowned and Field Sparrow and Rusty Blackbird are examples of just some of the birds. The Grebeous Errors (Roger Wykes and Andy Johnson) birded Maple Road and ran away with the victory. Our breakfast at the Flim Flam Restaurant served us well again this year. We all warmed up with coffee, hot chocolate and a hearty breakfast for the tally. The One Road Challenge is a good-natured and fun excuse to team up for some birding when it's generally still very quiet.

Washtenaw Audubon's Owl Prowl 2008

By Dea Armstrong

16 Washtenaw Audubon Society birders successfully managed a hat trick for owls in spite of the windy conditions. We viewed the Great Horned Owl on nest at the M-14 west bound exit ramp onto Miller, a pair of howling Barred Owls in western Washtenaw County and were buzzed by (several?) Eastern Screech-owls in Lodi Township. Nice evening in spite of the cold.

Florida in February *Article and photos by Cathy Carroll*

Limpkin (Below)



WAS members Don Brooks, Dana Novak, Randy Messing and I had the opportunity to travel to Florida this past February to visit and bird with Don and Loree Chalfant. Even on the shuttle in the Orlando Airport terminal we began to see birds, such as Wood Storks, along the banks of a little airport pond. We drove to the Dixie Crossroads restaurant in Titusville where we met Don, Loree and Roger Wykes. We feasted on rock shrimp here and, as Don told us, it tastes like lobster. After this, we all piled in the van to go to Merritt Island NWR. Merritt Island can be closed to visitors if there is a space shuttle landing or take off. As it happens, Don arranged for the shuttle to land at 8:30 am that morning so our birding timetable would not be disturbed. In this one afternoon, we saw 82 species which seemed unbelievable. While birds were great, I think we all just

enjoyed feeling the warmth. Day two required quite a lot of driving, but it was well worth every mile. At Three Sisters NWR, the Florida white-eyed subspecies of Eastern Towhee was well seen. Bachman's Sparrows were singing and finally one popped up on a nearby branch for all to see. We searched in this same habitat for Red-cockaded Woodpecker without luck. We saw Snail Kites, a Crested Caracara, and a Whooping Crane amongst many others at Joe Overstreet. For our last stop of the day, and our last chance for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, we waited an hour at a suggested spot, all ears and eyes on full alert. Finally, the woodpecker made its appearance. There were actually two birds present and we all saw them both well. Rain began to fall and we reluctantly left the birds and walked back to the van in a downpour, arriving soaked and chilled, but in great spirits. Life birds for at least two of us. Day three led us to a backyard that hosted a Black-chinned Hummingbird and Painted Buntings. A bit of waiting was required, but we got great looks at both. Day four began gloomy and wet. We set off for Orlando Wetlands for Purple Gallinule and Black-bellied Whistling Ducks anyway. On the expressway the stormy weather really came down. We pulled off and took a vote about whether to continue on or not. Naturally we voted to continue and thank goodness. Upon arrival at Orlando Wetlands a few sprinkles continued. This is the most beautiful wastewater treatment location I will probably ever see - Don describes it as Point Mouillee with palm trees - but it's even much more beautiful. Undeterred by the weather, we continued on and had the most beautiful two hour walk with Purple Gallinule and Black-bellied Whistling Duck both found.



An amusing photo - Wood Storks and egrets on top of Oceans Restaurant waiting for their handouts. (Above)

We also heard many Soras and a couple of King Rails. A Red-shouldered Hawk (of which there is no shortage of in Florida) dried its wings on a tree branch over the marsh. We then drove back to New Symna Beach to look for Purple Sandpipers, Sandwich Terns and a Great Cormorant that had been hanging around the jetty. The cormorant would be a life bird for Don Brooks and we had missed all three on an earlier morning trip to the beach. A Purple Sandpiper was the first to be found. After much searching, the Great Cormorant was spotted out on the jetty. Later, the Sandwich Terns also made a brief appearance. Evenings were spent eating at casual and very fun seafood restaurants, followed by a swim in the pool and a soak in the hot tub. I felt very sad saying goodbye. This Florida trip will be remembered as a place for terrific birding, warmth and green foliage in February, great food, and most of all our great hosts, Don and Loree.

Pileated Woodpeckers of Macomb (Continued from pg. 1)

Fuertes, the genius bird artist, had captured the vibrant energy of their heads and the majestic flash of their outstretched wings. This painting still haunts my eyes. But I was restless. Why do you have to wait for a chance to go Up North? Luckily, I had the support of three seasoned naturalists. I went to Thelma Sonnenberg, a lifetime resident of Mt. Clemens. She was one of the three founders of the Michigan Nature Association. (Initially known as the Macomb Nature Association.) She was old enough to be my grandmother. "Thelma, where are the nearest Pileateds?" She told me. So I hitch-hiked up Gratiot Avenue to the Belle River bridge in St. Clair County and started walking downstream on river ice until I could see the big white pines. Then I knew I was on McGary's Farm. When I encountered Mr. McGary, he was hauling some big oak logs up a slope with a team of horses. He was easily in his seventies. It turned out that Thelma and McGary knew each other for quite some time. He said that ever since he was a kid he saw Pileateds in the Belle River bottom. He gave me permission to wander his land whenever I wished. And I did. His property had beautiful timber. The feeding holes and ensuing wood chips on top of the fresh snow were evident. But, to actually see the birds--that was easier said than done. It took a little more than one year. These birds were shy.

In February 1964 I told Alice Kelley that Pileateds are still in the Belle River bottom. She was the second of the three seasoned naturalists who took an interest in me as a kid bird-watcher. Alice introduced me to the world of bird-book dealers, the history of bird art, the accurate taking of field notes, bird banding, and the Cranbrook Institute of Science with its eminent naturalist Walter Nickell. Alice was one of the authors of Birds of the Detroit-Windsor Area: A Ten-Year Survey (1963). She had incorporated into this work Thelma's 1953 Pileated sightings of Columbus Twp., St. Clair County. Evidently, Alice told some birders from Ann Arbor about my sightings. Consequently I guided them into the Belle River bottom and they saw a Pileated Woodpecker. It turned out to be a life bird for one of them. (I was amazed. There actually were university people who had never seen a Pileated Woodpecker? Something was wrong. Higher education could do better than that.) My sightings are the basis for Alice's continuing inclusion of Columbus Twp., St. Clair County, in her update: Birds of Southeastern Michigan and Southwestern Ontario (1978).

Thereafter I have seen Pileated Woodpecker in Columbus Township in sections 20, 21, 22, 27, 28 and 33. My most recent sightings in that general area were on 10 December 2005 in sections 20 and 21, as well as on 21 December 2006 in section 2 of adjoining Casco Township. (I no longer roam this area like I used to.)

There is a story behind the Pileated Woodpeckers of New Baltimore, Macomb County, which brings me to the third naturalist mentor of my youth--my Uncle Clarence. He knew nature. He grew up at the tail end of an era that belonged to Ernest Thompson Seton, not to Peterson. He was at his best while tracking, trapping, fishing, and hunting. His father grew up in the 1880s and was the last of the big market hunters who brought in the cans, bluebills, redheads and butterballs. He took them down to the *rich-man's* restaurants in Detroit. The family, on the other hand, had to put up with the fishy-taste of sauteed saw-bills. In my uncle's world there also was high art--the carving of duck decoys--as well as the carving of any other kind of bird.

And yes, my Uncle Clarence had firsthand knowledge of many of our birds. Around 1966, he moved to Elsey Street on Lake St. Clair in New Baltimore, about one-half mile from the St. Clair County line. Whenever he wanted to wander through good woods, he just walked up the street and across State Highway 29. In 1968 he gave me the good news, "There are Pileated Woodpeckers in the woods." It did not take him long to show me one. And this was our little secret to enjoy: the New Baltimore Pileateds.

Sometime around 1950, Bertha Daubendiek, a close friend of Thelma and a co-founder of the Michigan Nature Association started the Anchor Bay Christmas Bird Count. After Bertha and Thelma had switched from bird-watching to habitat preservation, the Christmas Count died. That was too bad. It is one of the top two or three counts in our state. Then along came Martin Blagdurn in 1977. He revived the count. He asked me to help out on a pre-count survey.

(Continued on the next page)

(Pileated Woodpeckers continued)

Well, I knew that competitive Martin wanted every species that he could get. So, on December 3, I took him on a walk through the New Baltimore woods and the rest became Pileated history. That is how the word got out about the Pileated Woodpeckers of New Baltimore.

One of my best Pileated Woodpecker finds in Macomb County was the bird that spent December 1973 in the woods along Metropolitan Parkway just before Metropolitan Beach Metropark. My other Macomb County records are for Armada, Bruce, Richmond and Washington Townships, spanning from the late 60s to the present.

Yes, they are around, but they seem to prefer privacy. The best way to enter their strongholds is by canoe or on the ice in winter.

First Nichols Arboretum Spring Migration walk

(Thursday, April 10) *By Andy Johnson*

The first Thursday of viewing spring migration in the Arb was very well attended with over 15 participants, despite the cold, gray weather. The Arb was also well-attended by new migrants. Forty-two species to be exact. Working our way from Dow Prairie towards the Heathdale Valley area, the group enjoyed a fabulous, close-up encounter with a Red-tailed Hawk perched just over the trail. Other highlights included numerous Pine Warblers among many Yellow-rumped Warblers. Hermit Thrushes (especially prevalent by the tracks and pine groves adjacent to Dow), Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, singing Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Phoebes and Field Sparrows rounded out the highlights. The die-hards were rewarded with a Merlin, a Hairy Woodpecker, Fox Sparrows and a Pine Siskin (all around Dow, except for the Hairy) towards the end of the morning. All in all, it was a productive visit, despite the dreary and surprisingly cold weather.

Young Birder of the Year *By Cathy Carroll*

ABA/Leica Young Birder of the Year 2007

Contest Winners:

(10-to-13-year-old category)

First Place:

*John Garrett
Pasadena, CA*

Second Place:

*Harold Eyster
Chelsea, MI*

The name in the 2nd Place category should be very familiar to all readers of the WAS Newsletter. For those who attend the monthly WAS Wednesday evening programs, he sits in the front row with his father and sister for most programs. Many of us have also had the pleasure to page through his field journal.

I remember my very first meeting with Harold as though it was yesterday. I had just moved back to Michigan and was attending my first WAS field trip in August, 2004 for fall migrants in Nichols Arboretum led by Jacco Gelderloos. (I was so impressed by the birds we found in the Arb that morning that it remains a prominent destination in our field trip offerings. I've said it many times: our very own Central Park right in the middle of Ann Arbor.) There were many participants on that Sunday morning Arb walk. At one point, a White-breasted Nuthatch was working a tree trunk and I pointed it out to the young birder standing next to me.

Little could I have known that the young birder was Harold Eyster and that he had probably drawn and painted more White-breasted Nuthatches than I had ever even seen. Harold gave me a look that let me know this. That was an important learning moment for me. Until then I had not had much experience birding with many very young birders. The next time I birded with Harold in the Arb was on a field trip I was leading for spring migrants. The birding was slow and we were beating the bushes pretty hard. Harold commented that a Black-throated Green Warbler was singing. I asked Harold to find the bird so that everyone could see it. Soon everyone had their bins on this beautiful singing bird. I swear it was that bird that saved the trip and made it all worthwhile for those who attended.

Since these early meetings, I have had the pleasure to bird with Harold and his sister, Artemis, many times. In fact, a WAS field trip is not the quite the same if they are not present. So, when you next see Harold, please offer congratulations on his very distinguished recognition by the ABA as a Young Birder of the Year.

To win this award, Harold had to complete and submit 4 modules: 1. Five essays, 2. Five or six photographs, 3. Six finished bird paintings and six sketches, 4. His field journal from April-September. In addition to the distinction, Harold won 8X32 Leica binoculars, \$500 toward a conference attendance (he plans to go to a Young Birders conference in Minot, North Dakota this June) and several books. You can preview a sampling of all of the recognized YB winners at <http://www.americanbirding.org/yb/yby/win.html>.

WAS Field Trip Schedule

May-July 2008

Every
Thursday:
Apr. 10-
May 29

Nichols Arboretum for Spring Migration. Meet at 8:00 am at the Riverview Drive cul-de-sac off Geddes Road. Bird the Arb from start to finish of spring migration. This is our second season of leaderless spring migration walks through the Arb and this field activity is well on the way to being an annual birding success. As with the fall migration walks, they are well-attended and you will have the opportunity to meet and enjoy birding with others. The Arb is fantastic for spring migration and should not be missed. Everyone will also have an opportunity to enjoy the spectacular trillium that bloom throughout the Arb's wooded hillsides.

Every Tuesday
May 6-May 27

Tuesday Evening Birders. Leaders: Dea Armstrong May 13th and 27th. This field activity is back by popular demand. Meet at 6:00 pm for a 6:15 pm sharp (!) departure. Meeting spot will again be the Miller Road Park & Ride off M-14. (Look for birders with binoculars and spotting scopes). Of course, details will be posted on the website and on birders@umich.edu.

Sun., May 18

Magee Marsh, Crane Creek State Park, Ohio. Leader: Karen Markey. Meet at Busch's in the Plymouth Road Mall at 6:00 am sharp (!) to arrange for carpooling. Alternatively, meet at the warbler sign near the boardwalk in the park at 7:30 am. This trip will go until mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, snacks, and beverages. Insect repellent may be found to come in handy. If you have never visited this world-renowned migrant trap for spring songbirds, this is your chance to see what all the fuss is about. You won't be disappointed!

Sun., May 25

Hudson Mills Metropark. Leader: Karen Markey. Meet at the flagpole near the Activity Center at 7:30 am for this annual field activity for spring migrants. Connecticut Warbler is always possible this time of year. The walk will go until 10:30 am. Bring a beverage. Insect repellent may also come in handy. If you do not have a 2008 Metropark sticker on your car there is a vehicle fee to enter the park.

Fri., June 6-
Sat., June 7

Bird Berrien County and Warren Dunes State Park on Lake Michigan. Leader: Matt Hysell, M.D. Many of you will know Matt from his U of M ER residency days, his digiscoping lecture for the WAS Wednesday evening gatherings, and as the winner of the 2005 Washtenaw Wingnuts award for the birder *with a job* who found the most species in the county. I have also entreated Tim Baerwald, hotshot, young Berrien County lister to help out as we drive around the county. At this time, the plan is to meet at the #4 sign near Sears at the Briarwood Mall parking lot for a Friday evening June 6th departure. We will stay at the shabby, but cheap Red Roof Inn, have dinner and then go out to hear the Chuck-will's Widow (if he returns for his 4th year) after dark. Early Saturday morning we're in Matt's hands for a birding tour of Berrien County. Berrien County, being in the most southwest corner of the state attracts different birds than in Washtenaw. Some target birds will be Yellow-throated, Prothonotary, Worm-eating and Prairie Warblers amongst others. We will return to Ann Arbor on Saturday evening and probably stop for dinner and a gas fill-up somewhere on the drive home. Details will be added to the website and on birders@umich.edu as the date gets closer.

(Field trips continued...)

Sat., June 14

Stinchfield Woods Annual Census. 7:00 am - 11:15 am. Leaders: Karen Markey and Sharon Benjey. Meet at the Stinchfield Woods Road gate, drive up to the classroom area adjacent to the caretaker's house, park and meet. Stinchfield Woods features 777 acres of conifer plantations and stands of native hardwoods. In spring and summer of 2007, Stinchfield Woods was home to a Yellow-throated Warbler.

Sun., June 15

Port Huron State Game Area. Leader: Allen Chartier. Meeting time 8:00 am at the baseball fields on the east side of Wildcat Road just north of M-136. Since this is approximately a 2 hour drive from Ann Arbor a 6:00 am sharp (!) departure is necessary. Every effort will be made to carpool from the #4 sign near Sears in Briarwood Mall parking lot. Target birds for this trip are nesting Golden-winged, Hooded and Mourning Warblers amongst others as this is terrific habitat for a large number of Michigan breeding birds. Bring lunch, beverages, sunscreen, and, of course, insect repellent. As always, details found in the usual spots as the date gets closer.

Sun., July 13

Leonard Preserve for Butterflies in July. 10:00 am--2 pm. Leaders: Roger Kuhlman, John Swales and Roger Wykes. Back by popular demand, please join us at the Leonard Preserve near Manchester to look for butterflies in July. Since there is limited parking at Leonard Preserve, we will meet first at the #4 sign near Sears in Briarwood Mall parking lot at 9:00 am. We will arrange carpools and depart at 9:15 am. From Briarwood it is approximately a 40 - 45 minute drive to Manchester and the Leonard Preserve. We will arrive in time for a 10:00 am start. Unlike birds, butterflies are late risers, so we can sleep in a little too. As with all summertime field activities, it is likely to be quite warm to downright hot. Please bring adequate fluids for hydration and dress appropriately with hat and light colored clothing. We will be in meadows and fields much of the time, so this means bright sun. Sun screen is advised. Since the trip will span lunch time, please bring snacks or other food that you will need to carry you over. We will begin our search for butterflies around the parking lot and will continue on from there. Some walking will be required, but it should be mostly level and easy. Leonard Preserve offers unusual habitat that is described as dry sand prairie. Target species include: Aphrodite, Meadow Fritillary and Little Yellow. This is one of my favorite field trips. I cannot say enough about the skill and knowledge of our leaders. Please join us if you can. You won't be disappointed.

Noteworthy Local Sightings, 3 Jan 08 to 4 May 08 (all in Washtenaw County, unless otherwise noted).

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comments
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Thru Apr 19	All of Washtenaw County	MOBs	Large numbers of common winter resident. Last feeder bird Apr. 19.
Pine Siskins	Thru Apr 27	Most of Washtenaw County	MOBs	Good numbers of rare winter resident.
Common Redpoll	Thru May 4	Most of Washtenaw County	MOBs. May 4, Diana Dyer	Good numbers of rare winter resident.
Brown Thrasher	Jan 24	Superior Twp.	Jan Berry	Extremely rare in January. At feeder.
Black Swan	Jan 27	Huron River at Gallup Park	Mike Sefton	2. Native to Australia. Probably escapes from aviary or zoo. Rare.
Eastern Phoebe	Jan 28	Huron River Dr. near Wagner	Michael McGraw	Extremely rare in January.
Golden Eagle	Feb 3	Sharon Hollow at Sharon Valley	Maggie Jewett	Immature. Rare.
Virginia Rail	Feb 7	Embury Rd. marsh	Dan Sparks-Jackson	Extremely rare in February.
Northern Pintail	Feb 7	Little Lake	Bob Arthurs	Rare in February.
Field Sparrow	Feb 17	Ann Arbor	Lee Green	Very rare in February. At feeder.
Long-eared Owl	Feb 18	Neal & Austin Rds.	Jeff Schultz	6 birds. Good number of this very rare species.
Short-eared Owl	Feb 23	Pennington Rd., Lenawee County	Jeff Schultz	8 plus in one field. A large number of this rare bird.
Rough-legged Hawk	Feb 25	Kehoe Rd., Lenawee County	Jeff Schultz	20 in one field. A very large congregation of this uncommon bird.
Ross's Goose	Feb 28	Island Park	Brian Glass, MOBs	Possibly a hybrid with Snow Goose.
Bohemian Waxwing	Mar 7	County Farm Park	Macklin Smith	One bird in a flock of Cedar Waxwings. Very rare.
Northern Shrike	Mar 10	Steinbach near Scio Church Rd.	Dea Armstrong	Rare winter visitor. Seen swallowing a whole mouse, head first. Yum.
Gray Catbird	Mar 11	Gallup Park	Roger Kuhlman	Extremely rare in March. Probably over-wintered.
Snow Goose	Mar 12	Dexter Mill Pond	Dave Sing	Uncommon.
Iceland Gull	Mar 12	Gallup Park	Allen Chartier	Very rare.
Greater White-fronted Goose	Mar 12	Huron River w. of Maple Rd.	Joe Prochaska	Very rare.
Long-tailed Duck	Mar 12	Barton Pond	Will Weber	Female. Rare in county.
Cackling Goose	Mar 14	Barton Pond	LaRue "Tex" Wells	Rare in county.
Lapland Longspur	Mar 16	Vreeland & Gotfredson Rds.	Roger Kuhlman	100 plus of this fairly common winter visitor.
Peregrine Falcon	Mar 25	U-M Hospital	Roger Kuhlman	2 birds. Same birds formerly at Burton Tower? Nesting? Stay tuned.
Merlin	Mar 28	Parking lot of the Food Hole, A2	Laurent Fournier	A good year for this rare species. Several sightings.
Rusty Blackbirds	Mar 29?	Hudson Mills Park	Bob Arthurs	C. 12 of this formerly common, now declining species.
Trumpeter Swan	Mar 30	Parker & Scio Church Rds.	Bob Payne	Pair of this reintroduced (or introduced) species nesting again.
Golden Eagle	Mar 30	Manchester	Jeff Schultz	Rare.
Common Loon	Mar 31	Barton Pond	Charlene Campbell	10 birds; a heap o' loons. County record is 15 at one time.
Cabbage White	Apr 14	Ann Arbor	Roger Kuhlman	2nd latest 1st sighting of the year for this species of butterfly.
Fox Sparrow	Apr 15	Ann Arbor	Lee Green	A first time yard bird for Lee. Uncommon.
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Apr 18	Prospect Rd. s. of Cherry Hill	Bill Loomis	In corn stubble. Rare.
Coyote	Apr 20	Barton Park	Dick Chase	Becoming more common each year.
Whip-poor-will	Apr 21	Cherry Hill Preserve	Jan Berry	Very rare this early in year. New early date for county.
Common Moorhen	Apr 24	Trinkle Marsh	Dan Sparks-Jackson	Very rare this early in the year. New early date for county.
American Bittern	May 2	Canton, MI	Andy Dettling	Rare. A good yard bird for Andy in his small pond.
Orchard Oriole	May 2	Noggles Rd. s. of Austin Rd.	Martin Bialecki	Uncommon.
Gray-cheeked Thrush	May 4	Miller Park, Ann Arbor	Roger Wykes	Very rare this early in the year.

Other Area Audubon offerings

Events are typically free and open to the public.
If you are interested in more information on any of these, please visit their respective websites.

Detroit Audubon

www.detroitaudubon.org

May 23-26--Detroit and MI Audubon joint

Weekend Nature Get-away

May 31--Lapeer State Game Area

Oakland Audubon

www.oaklandaudubon.org

May 13--Madagascar program

Macomb Audubon

www.geocities.com/macomb_audubon

May 10--Metro Beach Big Day Count

May 16-18--Macomb Audubon Spring Camp Out

June 7--Port Huron State Game Area field trip

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by Current Readers' Pick!*



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**
PO Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113

_____ RENEWAL _____ NEW MEMBER

_____ ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Membership Dues:

___ Individual/Household \$20

___ Student/Senior \$10

___ Patron \$50

___ Life (individual) \$200

___ Life (couple) \$250

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, or possibly 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 7:30pm at U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 North Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public. Call (734) 677-3275 for more information

Wed., May 21

Antarctica and South Georgia: Penguins and Pintados: Join ace photographer Rich Miller for a photo safari to Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia. See immense penguin rookeries, testosterone-crazed 2 ton elephant seals, and adorable baby Gentoo chicks, all set among sculpted icebergs and fog-enshrouded landscapes. Richard Miller is a researcher in the Pathology Department and Geriatrics Center at the University of Michigan Medical School, the go-to guy for very, very old mice, and likes to photograph penguins because they do not fly away.

Wed., June 18

Kenya Birding Safari: Join Don and Robyn Henise on a trip to Kenya, a country known for its spectacular array of mammals, and home to a wide variety of birds. We'll visit several parks and reserves in the central and western highlands and the lakes of the Great Rift Valley. Don and Robyn Henise, natives of Pennsylvania, have been avid birders for more than 20 years. They have been living and birding in Michigan since 1998, where they serve as the librarians at New Tribes Bible Institute in Jackson.

Tuesday, Aug. 19

Up Close and Personal With a Live Eagle, Owl and Hawk: How Raptors Have Adapted To Survive In Their Habitats -- And In Ours: Join Francie Krawcke of the Leslie Science Center for this kid-friendly event co-sponsored by the Huron Valley chapter of the Sierra Club. **Note Tuesday date!**

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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