

Washtenaw Audubon Soc. NEWSLETTER

Washtenaw Audubon's Second International Field Trip: South Africa!

In August of 2009 the Washtenaw Audubon Society (WAS) will be embarking on its 2nd international field trip, this time to the beautiful country of South Africa! For most people interested in wildlife, Africa is at the top of their places to visit. So many of the first animals we ever knew as children are there, quite confidently, on display. Lions, elephants, zebras, giraffes... 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.

For this 17 day trip, you can plan on seeing 450-480 species of birds (over 100 of these birds are endemic to southern Africa!) and 40-50 species of mammal! Besides the large number of endemics, South Africa is an ideal location within Africa to go birding with its superb infrastructure for tourists (excellent accommodations, food, roads, etc...) It is the only true First World country in Africa. An example of a lodge we will be staying at (as well as many of the birds we will see) can be viewed at: www.aftongrove.co.za. The accommodations will be a lot nicer than the last WAS international field trip (to Peru) and the trip a lot less strenuous over all.

The first 6 days of the trip will be based out of coastal Cape Town (widely considered one of the world's most beautiful cities) in the southwestern part of the country. From here we will range out to explore the varied ecosystems conveniently accessible from our comfortable base. Time will be spent exploring the breathtaking Peninsula (and its resident penguin colony), the succulent desert-like Karoo (an ecosystem endemic to South Africa), enjoying a fantastic pelagic and having the chance to get up-close and personal with one of the most magnificent predators on Earth: the Great White Shark! From here, we will take an internal flight to the eastern side of the country. The provinces of Kwa-Zulu-Natal and Mpumalanga boast some of the country's finest birding, with a combined birdlist of well over 750 species. This impressive total is a reflection of the incredible natural diversity of the region, a factor that makes birding the area a delight. Habitats change quickly here and this birding tour will cover all important areas.



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Drakensberg Rockjumper

July/August 2008

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

Recently I was asked by a friend about my role as President of the Washtenaw Audubon Society (WAS), and if I enjoyed volunteering my time here. My first thought was a question – what does she mean when she says “volunteering”? Honestly, I have never looked at it that way. I think of my role as more of an honor than as a volunteer activity. Sure, sometimes it is hard work. For example, this letter that I write for every newsletter takes more time and effort than I care to admit.

But, my friend's query led me on a search for a definition of “volunteering.” As it turns out, the number and variety of such definitions are endless. Those that seem most straight forward come out of the dictionary (*American Heritage*, fourth edition), as part of several definitions deriving from the word “voluntary.”

Voluntary: Done or undertaken of one's own free will; done willingly and without constraint or expectation of reward.

Volunteer: A person who performs or offers to perform a service voluntarily; to perform or offer to perform a service of one's own free will; to do charitable or helpful work without pay. From the Latin *voluntarius, voluntas*, meaning “choice.”

Apparently the most common definition of volunteering confirms that what I do is, in fact, volunteering. And it is exactly what so many others among our members do as well. Simply put, the Washtenaw Audubon Society would not and could not exist without volunteers. Their hard work and dedication keep us flying (yes, pun intended). Examples include our Board members, who devote time, energy, and serious thought to quality programming, and our field trip leaders, who dedicate much of their weekends and drive extended distances, often on their own gas money, to provide our group with the best birding trips anywhere in the region. Most of our guest speakers at the monthly gatherings offer their presentations free-of-charge as well.

The question I must ask of everyone, myself included, is this: Is there more you can do as a member of WAS to help this organization reach its potential? The answer, I hope, is Yes! We do have people and resources to provide outstanding experiences for many of the WAS events scheduled throughout the year. However we need more *volunteers* from among our members. We have many challenges that must be addressed, including the implementation of a Safe Passage program for Washtenaw County. We also need volunteers to work the exhibit booths for events we traditionally sponsor (e.g. Earth Day, Green Fair, and Huron River Day). We are always in need of help, and no offer to assist is too small. I encourage you to contact me directly if you have any questions or would like to volunteer for any of our many activities.

Thank you for your continued support of the Washtenaw Audubon Society and for the good things we do. Thank you as well for considering increasing your role in our organization above and beyond your membership.

Good birding!
Ray

WAS Field trip: South Africa (continued from pg. 1)

From the classic African savanna of the world-renowned Kruger National Park, to the teeming Zululand game reserves, the endemic-rich mist-belt forests of the Natal Midlands, the mangroves and mudflats along the coast to the lofty peaks of the magnificent Drakensberg (Africa's second largest mountain range), this eastern portion of the South Africa tour offers the very best of African birding and game watching. The timing of the trip works in our favor as well: mammal-watching is at its best as foliage is less dense and they are more concentrated around watering holes, sea bird diversity is at its highest as many of the birds are escaping the harshness of the Antarctic winter, Southern Right Whales are lounging offshore and it is "high season" for Great White Sharks.

Some additional highlights: Ostriches, 8 species of stork, Southern Bald Ibis, Hamerkop, Taita Falcon (extremely rare world-wide), Secretarybird, over 35 species of raptors, 10 species of bustards, 3 species of crane, 4 species of turacos, 11 species of owl, mousebirds, trogons, rollers, bee-eaters, 6 species of hornbills, 7 species of barbet, drongos, 2 species of rockjumpers, 15 species of lark (most endemic), 2 species of sugarbirds, 10 species of starling, oxpeckers, 14 species of sunbirds, 14 species of weaverbirds, monkeys, bushbabies, African Wild Dogs, Cheetahs, Leopards, Hyenas, Meerkats, Hippos, Rhinos, Buffalos, and over 20 species of antelope!

For more information, a detailed trip itinerary or list of birds and mammals, do not hesitate to email Bryn Martin at brynmartin@sbcglobal.net. We hope that you will have the opportunity to share with us in this amazing experience!

TRIP DETAILS:

When: July 31--Aug 16, 2009

Cost: 6 participants--\$5,500 per person sharing
8 participants--\$5,100 per person sharing
10 participants--\$4,900 per person sharing
12 participants--\$4,700 per person sharing
Single supplement--\$300

What's included: All accommodation as per the itinerary on a twin share basis, three meals (beginning with lunch on day 1 and ending with lunch on day 17), all ground transport in 17 seater, air-conditioned buses, including all costs of a driver, domestic flight from Cape Town to Durban, entry to all national parks and reserves, as well as conservation fees, activities as per itinerary, including night drives in Kruger NP and Mkhuze GR, gratuities, all costs of a professional birding guide/tour leader.

What's not included: International flights and departure taxes, optional excursions (like Shark diving and pelagic birding trips), insurance, drinks, laundry costs and other personal expenses.

International flights: Once we get our group together we will work out a group flight to South Africa, however you are free to do this on your own if you choose.

How to reserve a spot: Send an email to Bryn Martin: brynmartin@sbcglobal.net (or call him--734-454-0439). This will hold your spot temporarily. To make it permanent, send a **deposit of \$500**. The trip is limited to only 12 participants and it will be based on whoever gets their deposits in first. When it fills up, it fills up! Trip is only open to current WAS members, but if there are still openings by the end of the year, it will be opened up to non-members, as well.



(Above) Sani Pass in the Drakensbergs (many high-elevation endemics)



A Cape pelagic (15-20 species probable, including up to 6 species of albatross)

World Series of Birding, 2008 *By Andy Johnson*

At midnight on Saturday, May 10th, my teammates and I were on our own. The World Series of Birding had just begun, and our phenomenal mentors, Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis, the temporary parents of four teenage boys, were no longer allowed to point out birds, pish, or help in any way (their only contributions that day were telling us all the birds we didn't see or hear at a given spot—more painful than helpful!). My teammates were from all around the East. From Raleigh, North Carolina, was Matt Daw, who had an excellent ear, and was the only one of us to pick up the airy trill of the female Black Rail in flight (unfortunately, that meant the rail didn't count for our Big Day, because at least two members of the team need to confirm it). Jacob Drucker, our captain from New York City, called in a Screech-owl for us early on our big morning. Finally, Ted Stiritz, of Russellville, Arkansas had sharp eyes, and picked out Tricolored and Green Herons with only a quick glance at the expansive saltmarshes, as well as getting the whole team on our only Wilson's Snipe seconds before it dropped into the marsh, never to be seen again.

Three days earlier, I had arrived at the Philadelphia airport on Wednesday afternoon, eager to meet my mentors, teammates, and of course my bins that Leica contributed for the weekend. That first evening, upon arrival in Cape May, racing the quickly dropping sun, I got my first three life birds of the trip: Brant, White-rumped Sandpiper, and American Oystercatcher. At 4:00 AM the next morning, we awoke with sun streaming through the windows of the surprisingly large, Victorian home lent to us by Louise's sister. After shoveling down our cereal, and finding my lucky NASCAR in the cereal box, we crammed into the van for our first day of scouting. It would rain for the latter half of the day, so we were rushing to cover lots of ground while the weather was favorable.

Our first stop, while the sky was just beginning to grow pale, was a small field bordered by a brushy lot and, beyond that, a large oak woodlot. Whip-poor-wills were chanting incessantly from the dark tree line, when finally we heard what we had come for: *peent*. The static, nasal call was unmistakably our first American Woodcock for the trip. Moments later, we heard a soft, continuous twittering, and strained our eyes to follow the dark silhouette of the bird, winnowing against a dim, gray sky. Back in the van—no time to waste. Our next stop was Belleplain National Forest, where we hoped to stake out Kentucky Warbler, among others. Driving slowly down the dirt road, sliding doors open, we leaned from the car, straining to hear the bright *churee churee churee churee* of the Kentucky Warbler. First Worm-eating sang, and no, we had no time to even slow down, then Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager—apparently nothing of consequence, because we didn't stop.

After driving all the loops, we had come out empty-handed (well, in a relative sense). We ran into a young man, also driving slowly at 5:00 in the morning, with his bearded head hanging out the window and gazing into the trees—probably a birder, by my calculations. Michael knew him, a young man in his twenties, also scouting Cape May County for the upcoming event. "Oh, you're looking for the Kentucky," he repeated after Michael had told him, "he's been singing right down there for a couple days now," he continued, pointing down a narrow, gated road. "You just have to walk a little ways, let me show you." As we followed him further and further down the road in silence, he seemed to grow uneasy. "It should be singing right around in there," he reassured us, waving his arm to the left. As if on cue, at that very moment, the clear *churee churee* pierced the silence. All of us were pleasantly surprised.

The true highlight of the day appeared just around the corner a few minutes later, after we had returned to the car. Michael decided we should get out again, and walk over to a footbridge that ran over a dark and secluded, bubbling creek. Wood Thrushes, Hooded Warblers, and a Louisiana Waterthrush sang loudly from both sides of the bridge. Suddenly we all looked up, having heard a new song float in under the ringing songs around us. "Bicknell's Thrush!" exclaimed Michael, in an excited and hushed voice. We all glanced at him excitedly and then cupped our hands behind our ears to listen again. What we heard was a beautiful, cascading song, much softer than the Wood Thrushes, as if the bird was ashamed to be a different species. We didn't mind—the shrill yet gentle song spiraled gracefully downwards in pitch, finally alighting on a flute-like chord of steady pitch. Even Michael, the Agenda Enforcer himself, couldn't help but stay and listen to this extraordinary songster, and revel in its beauty and scarcity — too bad it



Left to right: Jacob Drucker, Andy Johnson, Ted Stiritz, Matt Daw

World Series of Birding (continued from previous page)

Much of the remaining part of the day was spent driving and walking around various stops to look for good migrant locations. There were certainly many migrants present, although the rain discouraged many from singing, and the large, deciduous trees that hosted the colorful passer(ine)-bys were few and far between in the open habitats we focused on. At one stop, we heard Blue Grosbeaks and Summer Tanagers, both life birds for me, and I was glad to hear that the grosbeaks were “everywhere” in Cape May. Sure enough, several more stops along brushy and sparsely wooded meadows were serenaded by the strong and melodious warbles of these cerulean vocalists. Fortunately, at another wet and mosquito-ridden stop, we had a chance to study the Grosbeaks visually for the first time. After walking through flooded woodland, dark from the dense canopy, where we had the chance to observe Swainson’s Thrushes and our only Chestnut-sided Warbler of the trip, we came out into a brightly lit clearing with short brush and dead snags. I spotted a brilliant blue bird as it landed on the top of a snag and quickly pointed the Indigo Bunting out to the others.

They were on it right away, or so I thought, until they began describing movements that didn’t match the bird I was on. I took down my binoculars, and saw a Blue Grosbeak perched on the top of a shrub directly adjacent to the bunting. They both began to sing, taking turns, and elegantly complementing the other’s beautiful piece. While the dainty bunting had electric blue plumage, true to its namesake, with a deep blue head, the grosbeak had a softer, almost violet, blue, evenly shaded throughout the back and head, growing slightly paler on the forehead before abruptly meeting the black at the base of the bill.

Our final major stop for our full day of scouting was Jake’s Landing, a small gravel parking lot in the middle of an expansive saltmarsh. From the edge of the gravel lot, we cupped our hands behind our ears to listen. While we waited, we watched a female Harrier coursing low over the marsh, carrying nesting material, and lazily rolling with the warm gusts of wind. Finally, a Seaside Sparrow broke the silence, uttering his short song, reminiscent of a sick Towhee who would rather die than drink tea. Then we saw another large bird, lazily gliding over the marsh, but occasionally taking deep, roller-coaster stoops toward the water—this time, a Gull-billed Tern, yet another life bird. Soon a family of Marsh Wrens joined the chorus, and then...yes! A Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow had quietly uttered its raspy, two-note “song.” It sang again, and again, and finally we found it, perfectly situated at the top of a clump of reeds at the very edge of the parking lot. For the next 5 minutes, the rapid clicks of camera shutters joined the marsh chorus as well.

This sighting was exciting for all of us, but it was especially relieving for Ted, who had been calling every Seaside Sparrow song a Nelson’s. Finally he had called it correctly, and we were all grateful for his determination. At 3:30 that afternoon, we retired for some sleep, before waking up at 10:30 that night for a pre-Big Day breakfast. Then it was go time.

Exactly 9 seconds after midnight, our first bird sang as we stood in silence in the cool night air of the saltmarshes at Jake’s Landing: the Seaside Sparrow’s harsh buzzy song rang over the black marsh, followed by a chorus of Clapper Rails. Both were two of 27 life birds for me during my 5 day absence from school. After straining our ears for the flight calls of nocturnal migrants (which Michael had desperately tried to teach us 15 minutes before midnight) we clambered back into the ABA-clad minivan with our first 7 species. All through the early morning we called for Least Bitterns in vain, although we finally heard a pair of Great Horned Owls, their bellowing hoots carrying softly yet strongly over the open landscape. At another marsh stop, we stumbled over backpacks, camera bags, and rain gear as we rushed out of the van onto the shoulder to listen. Luckily enough, our poor imitations of Virginia Rail alarm calls brought both Virginia and King rails into a calling frenzy within 30 seconds, which meant we only spent 32 seconds at that stop, leaving no time to enjoy my most recent lifers. After hooting unsuccessfully for Barred Owl, we moved onto Belleplain State Forest to listen for migrants in the first light. We arrived in time for the dawn chorus, picking Louisiana Waterthrush, Worm-eating, Kentucky, and Yellow-throated Warblers, Acadian and Great Crested Flycatchers, and Wood Thrush from the confusing din.

From here on out, we would follow our route from the previous days’ scouting, trying to pick up the same birds, just doing it a lot faster, so we could fit both days of scouting into one. With the help of food and bathroom stops at the omnipresent *Wawas*, a new store for me, and Monster Energy Drinks, we were able to duplicate the last two days’ birding successfully, recording 178 species for the day, despite scattered showers.

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We fell short of the Cornell Redheads by only 6 species for the Cape May County division, which was quite respectable, considering their 2 weeks of vigorous scouting. We placed first in the high school age group for our area, and 3rd overall. Thanks to so many friends and family, and generous members of the Washtenaw Audubon Society, I was able to raise over \$1800 for conservation and education through the American Birding Association. I raised the most out of my team, and was awarded a full scholarship for the Young Birder's Conference this past June, in Minot, ND by the ABA. I look forward to spending time there this summer with [WAS member] Harold Eyster and reconnecting with Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis.



Left to right: Jacob Drucker, Andy Johnson, Matt Daw, Ted Stiritz

WAS Sponsors Family-Friendly Bird Walk at The Arb

By Ray Stocking

On Saturday, May 18th, two lucky families from Ann Arbor's M.L. King School took a family-friendly bird walk out at the Nichols Arboretum (the Arb). This walk was sponsored by the Washtenaw Audubon Society. Both families bid on this two-hour walk, which included a personal guided tour by WAS President, Ray Stocking, a field guide with accompanying bird song CD, plus snacks and beverages. All proceeds from the walk went to the M.L. King School PTO. A total of 33 birds were seen in Dow Prairie and parts of the Riverwalk during our two hour trek. Highlights for the trip included a singing Bluebird, which was a life bird for most everyone in the group, as well as a Scarlet Tanager who entertained the entire group just before snacks by the river. The 8:30 AM Amtrak



train did not disappoint the kids as it made its way west to Chicago. A great time was had by all in attendance on what turned out to be a beautiful morning. Washtenaw Audubon will be back next year offering this trip for the King School PTO, and quite possibly more fund-raising events within the community. Stay tuned.

Left: Two families and four young birders enjoyed the beautiful weather as they walked through The Arb after placing winning bids at the M.L. King School Silent Auction to benefit the school's PTO.

WAS Field Trip Reports

Tuesday Evening Birders, May 13 *By Mike Sefton*

In contrast to the 25 birders who showed up for Tuesday Evening Birders on May 6, birders stayed away in droves for the May 13 edition. The seven birders who participated enjoyed beautiful weather, but a paucity of birds. However, they did have excellent views of some of the birds located by co-leaders Lathe Claflin and Mike Sefton. First stop was Dolph Park, where the keen-eyed/eared Eyster youngsters located Palm Warbler and American Redstarts, as well as Green Heron. A couple of cooperative Rose-breasted Grosbeaks posed for close views, as did a Baltimore Oriole. A Wood Duck pair was a big hit, but the hoped for Red-headed Woodpecker was a no show. Next stop was a field on Stone School Rd., where crippling views were had of Bobolinks in courtship flight, and Savannah Sparrows with bright yellow lores were seen. Scope views of a distant Eastern Meadowlark were also obtained. The final stop was the Ann Arbor airport, where scope views of Horned Larks and a Red-tailed Hawk were found. The last bird of the day was a very brightly plumaged singing Eastern Meadowlark that perched on top of one of the runway lights, allowing leisurely views through the scope.

Tuesday Evening Birders, May 20 *By Dea Armstrong*

A cool and breezy evening kept the birds right where they were during the day and provided some wonderful looks. First stop was at the Farrell Road farm pond off of Zeeb Road to see the just reported male WILSON'S PHALAROPE. Also present were several Least Sandpipers. Then we moved on to the Schneider Road ponds, north of Pleasant Lake. The southernmost pond was taken over by Canada Geese but a quick look showed a Belted Kingfisher. The pond just south of Luckhardt was where the birds were: Semi-palmated Plovers, RUDDY TURNSTONE, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, DUNLINS and several Least Sandpipers provided great looks. A few folks picked up a fleeting Spotted Sandpiper there as well. In the pond farther west, Trumpeter Swan and Great Blue Heron were present. Sandhill Cranes flew overhead during our visit. A check of the farm pond farther north turned up no Solitary Sandpipers for the first time in many a TEB! A lucky few also spotted a high flying NORTHERN HARRIER. We rounded out the evening enjoying the Pied-billed Grebes on the southern Schneider Road Pond as the sun set. A big THANK YOU to all who shared their scopes and helped spot birds and to Bob Arthurs who found and reported the Wilson's Phalarope just before TEB started.

Tuesday Evening Birders, May 27

By Dea Armstrong

A two-species-of-phalarope-evening! And what a Tuesday Evening Birders it was! On the way to the heron nests on Ellsworth, we were lucky enough to see the two newly hatched cygnets of the Trumpeter Swans at Parker and Scio Church. At the Ellsworth Road Great Blue Heron nests we saw what were surely recently hatched young. Should be great fun to see over the next month! While scouting, earlier in the day at the middle Schneider Road Pond, I was happy to have found a few Pectorals and Semi-palmated Sandpipers to add to the TEB 2008 shorebird list and was thrilled when we drove up to hear Cindy say: There's a phalarope! I quickly glanced at the slim bill and thought, "Ah, another Wilson's_this is great!" At a second look, what struck me was how different THIS Wilson's was from the one I had seen earlier on Hoelzer Road. Sure enough, it was: a female RED-NECKED PHALAROPE! She was quite close. Also present were Semi-palmated Plover, Killdeer, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Mallard, and Red-tailed Hawk (whose flight over the pond set all the birds in motion). The far west pond had multiple Sandhill Cranes and the cow pond provided one Lesser Yellowlegs, Killdeer with 2 youngsters and a few wing-shaking Spotted Sandpipers. We were able to pull ourselves away from the Red-necked Phalarope with the temptation of seeing two different species of phalaropes in one evening. A quick drive south to the pond at Hoelzer Road allowed us looks at the pair of WILSON'S PHALAROPES, as well as a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER, Dunlins and Least Sandpiper. What a great way to end the Tuesday Evening Birders for 2008. Thanks to all who helped spot birds and shared scopes and knowledge. It is such a pleasure birding with folks who know so much about so many things - including birds! For those who asked: *phalarope* comes from *phalaris* = coot and *lope* from lobos or lobes. That is *coot-footed* referring to the lobed feet of phalaropes which are similar to the feet of coots.

WAS Field Trip Reports *(continued)*

Hudson Mills, May 25 By Karen Markey

A chilly Sunday morning gave way to beautiful sun and warmth. Thanks to many in our group of two dozen birders who spotted birds and helped each other get on the target bird. Also thanks to Monty who helped carry the scope and alerted us to the possibility of Horned Larks. A real surprise was the Willow Flycatcher on the southeast side of the park.

Highlights: Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee (h), Great Crested Flycatcher (h), Eastern Kingbird, Horned Lark, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Meadowlark, Wood Thrush (h), Yellow-throated Vireo (h), Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat (h), Blue-winged Warbler (h), Magnolia Warbler, American Redstart, Scarlet Tanager (h), Baltimore Oriole, Field



Karen Markey putting her ears to work listening for Blue-winged Warblers



Janet Leftridge, Diana Newman and Don Chalfant enjoying the morning sun while trip leader Karen Markey attempts to find a singing Yellow-throated Vireo



From TEB May 27th: Mike Sefton alerts other birders by cell phone about the rare Red-necked Phalarope



Sherri Smith and Ellie Shappirio enjoying their looks at this TEB gem!

WAS Field Trip Reports *(continued)*

WAS Arb Walk, May 8 *By Mike Kielb*

On May 8th about twenty people took part in the WAS Thursday morning, bird walk at the Arb. While things started slowly, everything picked up by the time we reached the west end of Dow. An uncooperative (we never saw it) singing Blackpoll Warbler was the first of 15 warbler species we encountered. The group spent the better part of an hour and a half along the boardwalk and in the Rhododendron Glen area with about 100 birds. The good news was the variety and number of birds, the bad news was that they were almost entirely at the tops of the trees, 50-60 feet overhead. All this aside, most people had looks at most birds including several Cape May Warblers, some wonderfully low and cooperative Black-throated Blue Warblers, Palm Warbler, Blackburnians, Black-throated Greens, etc. There were a number of Northern Parula, but very few people saw them. I guess it was a day to learn their song.

WAS Arb Walk, May 15 *By Harold Eyster*

On May 15th, 19 birders convened for the weekly WAS Thursday morning bird walk at the Arb. We saw/heard 66 species, including 16 Warbler species:

Warbler highlights included: Yellow, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue, Canada, "Myrtle", Magnolia, Tennessee, Golden-winged, Nashville, Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart.

Other highlights included a Broad-winged Hawk, 4 species of flycatchers, a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers building a nest, and many Scarlet Tanagers.

REMINDER: This WAS Newsletter is now available online at no cost to all active members. All photos are in color and look terrific. Please contact WAS President, Ray Stocking at President@washtenawaudubon.org if you did not receive a link by email for access to this publication. Remember to also let us know if you prefer the online version only.



Above: Sharp-eyed young Artemis Eyster points out a beautiful male Bobolink to WAS Tuesday Evening Birders participants. Photo by Mike Sefton



Close views of this Red-tailed Hawk were had by WAS field trip attendees during one of the eight Thursday morning walks in the Arb this past Spring. Eight more walks are scheduled for the reverse/fall migration starting on Thursday, August 28th. More details on these Arb walks, and all other WAS field trips can be found on page 15. Photo by Mike Sefton



Thursday Morning Arb Walk WAS attendees search for migrating warblers from the boardwalk in May. Photo by Mike Sefton

WAS Field Trip Reports (*continued*)

Berrien County, June 6th and 7th *By Cathy Carroll*

The drama began in the Briarwood Mall parking lot with the weather forecast being the central character. After a review of the forecast and a telephone call from Matt Hysell, our trip leader, calling from his home in Berrien County, votes were taken whether to continue or cancel the trip. Three dropped out, but seven brave birders continued on - Jacob Armstrong, Harold and Artemis Eyster, Wayne Fisher, Isabel McKay, Dawn Swartz and me. On the drive across the state we ran into a heavy downpour around the Kalamazoo area that lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. We drove slowly with our emergency flashers on and came out to continued wind, but overall rapidly improving weather conditions. We arrived at the shabby, but cheap, Motel 6, checked in, unpacked and walked to dinner, where we met up with Matt.

Our first stop was for Sedge Wrens and we heard a close bird singing loudly and beautifully, but he never popped up to be seen. Bobolinks, meadowlarks and a male pheasant also graced these fields. From here we worked our way to where Whip-poor-wills had been about a week earlier. The whips did not make an appearance for us, but Harold picked up on a singing Orchard Oriole for a few to see. By the time we finished here it was deep dusk. We drove to the wooded home of the Chuck-will's widow for the past four years. We stopped at a variety of spots along this road and listened carefully and patiently. Alas, and not for lack of trying, we missed our Michigan Chuck. Earlier in the evening, around the time we were still milling in the Briarwood Mall parking lot, it had rained heavily in Berrien County. Was this why the Chuck remained silent on the evening of our visit? We'll never know. It was a disappointment for all of us; but that's birding.



Dickcissel in Berrien County. (Digi-scope photo by Matt Hysell)

The weather Saturday morning was deeply overcast but not raining. Enroute to the Yellow-throated Warbler spot we stopped to rescue a Box Turtle from the middle of the road. We were successful with the Yellow-throated Warbler and Matt was actually able to get this bird in his scope for all to see. From here we drove on and to found a singing Dickcissel on a utility wire. Every so often a Red-winged Blackbird would bully him from his perch, but he regained his spot and sang on determinedly. We also heard or saw Cerulean, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Black-and-White Warblers and Prairie Warblers. Vesper Sparrows were in the dune grasses. Wood Thrush were singing loudly in a couple of locations. Yellow-throated Vireos, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Scarlet Tanagers, too.

We visited the embattled Jean Klock Community Park for beautiful views of two Red-headed Woodpeckers at the nest. The sadness of this is that this community park on Lake Michigan is likely to be turned into a Jack Nicklaus-approved golf course against many in the community's wishes. The community meetings for this controversial redevelopment have been widely reported on WUOM. The dead tree hosting the Red-headed Woodpeckers will undoubtedly disappear. A Prothonotary Warbler along a muddy river in Sarett Nature Center was heard and seen flying. A few were lucky enough to get a brief perched look in good light. We dipped on Chat, Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows in this same area. For our last bird of the day, we visited a subdivision development hosting a Western Meadowlark. After waiting and searching patiently, we were just about to call it quits when suddenly a meadowlark flew to a nearby low utility post (unironically, this field will also probably disappear in the next year or two with the completion of the housing development) and sang. Yes! Western Meadowlark! What a coup for our last bird of the day. It was a hot and muggy mid-afternoon, yet we still saw this bird.

By then it was time to say goodbye and thank Matt for a really great day of birding in far less than great birding conditions. Just before our departure Matt and I talked briefly about how we could improve the trip for next year, and then emailed a couple of other ideas later. This is still in the works. Thanks to Matt Hysell from all of us for leading this trip.

Western Meadowlark, Berrien County. (Digi-scope photo by Matt Hysell). Matt writes, "I finally understand the difference in the malars. I'd always had it in my mind that eastern has a white malar and western a yellow, but the actual situation is that western's is yellow with some whitish at the upper edge. Since white shows up so well it can give the impression that the whole malar is white if you don't see it well." (Right)



*Box Turtle rescued from the middle of the road.
(Photo by: Harold Eyster)*



Magee Marsh, May 18 *By Karen Markey*

Our Washtenaw Audubon Society group of about 11 birders ignored dismal weather forecasts, traveled to Northwest Ohio, and enjoyed a birdy day at Magee Marsh, Crane Creek State Park, on Sunday, May 18. We took an alternate route, driving Wales Road and Ohio 579, spotting Mockingbird and Brown Thrasher along the railroad tracks, and watching Purple Martin houses at Williston.

We parked at Magee at 7:45 am, and joined many other birders scanning the sun-warmed trees in the parking lot which were loaded with birds. When we exited the boardwalk for an early lunch, we joined a large group watching a singing CONNECTICUT WARBLER between the parking lot and wood margin. Despite mobbing by a crowd of birders, photographers, and dog, and downpour of hail and heavy rain, this warbler remained in sight for a long time. Some of us reviewed the boardwalk. Cindy spotted an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER atop a bare branch, and we joined a group watching a sleepy WHIP-POOR-WILL. We debated the identification of an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER, deciding its breast-streaking was key. Others walked the beach finding Turnstone and Sanderling. We finished the day peering through the observation window at the Black Swamp Observatory store's outdoor feeders and making purchases. We arrived in Ann Arbor at 5:45 pm, much later than anticipated due to birdy conditions. Despite brilliant sunshine and clouds, we stopped birding twice because we were pelted with mini-pea-sized hail and driving rain.

Thanks to the birders who helped everyone in our group locate and relocate the many active passerines. Extra special was our list of 22 warbler species. Here is the full list of the 75 species from the trip (h indicates "heard only"). My regrets if I failed to record here all species heard or seen.

Highlights: Black-crowned Night-Heron, Common Merganser (possibly perched in a tree), Bald Eagle, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Common Tern, Whip-poor-will, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Kingbird, OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, Least Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo (h), Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird (on Wales Road), Scarlet Tanager, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Baltimore Oriole, as well as the following warblers: Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Canada, Cape May, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Magnolia, Yellow, Tennessee, ORANGE-CROWNED, Wilson's, Nashville, CONNECTICUT, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, and Common Yellowthroat.

Port Huron, June 15

By Allen Chartier

On Sunday, June 15, I led a later-than-normal field trip to the Port Huron State Game Area for Washtenaw Audubon. Thanks to the postings of previous trip leaders, especially Mike Mencotti, and from my own scouting before the group arrived, we had a pretty good day despite the heat and reduced singing. This area is well known for its breeding birds, and the current Breeding Bird Atlas has recorded 106 species so far in this 9-square mile "block". Among those 106 species are more than 19 species of warblers, making it a great flashback to spring for birders in southern Michigan, except of course for the many mosquitos!

A wonderful group of 25 birders from Washtenaw Audubon, Blue Water Audubon, Macomb Audubon, and others, carpooled to three locations to find the area's special birds. We found 67 species, which included 14 species of warbler. This year it has been much more difficult to find some of the more unusual warblers, as they seem to be in very low numbers. We struggled to hear Cerulean Warblers and only glimpsed one, the only one that sang close enough for most to hear. We also struggled with Golden-winged Warbler.

At our first stop, Feick Road, we heard the clear song of Golden-wing, and when we slogged through a patch of woods to a field edge, there was a perfectly-plumaged Blue-wing! Hooded Warblers were heard but not seen, and surprisingly only one each of Pine and Black-throated Green was heard. But we did do well with some others, getting good looks at Chestnut-sided, Blue-winged, American Redstart, and Mourning Warblers though the last one took quite a bit of effort. Alder Flycatchers were singing in

several places and for those who insisted on seeing one, a couple of them did cooperate along the trail near the Black River.

There were a couple of surprises too. Along Feick Road either Dea or Cathy, I can't remember who, spotted a White-eyed Vireo. This species has been particularly scarce in many areas of southeastern Michigan this year, and as far as I know hasn't been found at Port Huron SGA for a couple years. Along Abbotsford Road someone spotted a waterthrush, which played hide-and-seek with us for a while, not singing and calling only once (a flirtatious female?). But, it showed enough to be identified as a Louisiana. Northerns are regular breeders here, along with smaller numbers of Louisiana, but this year Northerns seem to be completely absent.

After lunch, a much reduced group made one last effort to see a Golden-winged Warbler along Shoefelt Road, the classic locale for them even though there are at least three other places they are, most years. We heard a couple of them singing distantly, then one closer, but it didn't show. At this point I must state that there is nobody better at being the "sacrificial birder" than Dea Armstrong. Thanks, Dea, for moving your car when you left us...apparently you were blocking the Golden-wings favorite singing perch! Great prolonged views of a pure-plumaged male, great audio recordings obtained. Thanks to all those who attended.



Participants listening to several birds at one time, including a very vocal, but well hidden Mourning Warbler. Photo by Ray Stocking



Field trip leader Allen Chartier, with his field recording gear, which he demonstrated for the field trip participants by recording a beautiful and close singing Golden-winged Warbler. Photo by Cathy Carroll.

Special Thanks to the Natural Area Preservation Division of the City of Ann Arbor Public Service Area

With the conclusion of the spring migration season and with most of the nesting season complete, the Washtenaw Audubon Society would like to take a moment to thank Dea Armstrong and the Natural Area Preservation (NAP) Division of the City of Ann Arbor Public Service Area. for their continued efforts to promote family-friendly birding events for young and old. This year NAP sponsored several of these birding trips including the always exciting Wheeler Service Center (former Ann Arbor Landfill) walk to the top of the landfill for Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows and Meadowlarks. Walks for beginning birders were also offered at Gallup and Furstenberg Parks. Thank you NAP!!!



Dea Armstrong (left) describing the Bobolink's unique song to the 20+ participants who joined her for the walk to the top of the landfill. Photo by Ray Stocking



Shannon and Christopher Stocking sharing their kids-size spotting scope while looking at the Savannah Sparrows. Photo by Ray Stocking

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 \$10
- 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.

Noteworthy Local Sightings, 29 April 08 to 21 June 08 (all in Washtenaw County, unless otherwise noted).

Species	Date	Location	Observer	Comments
Violet-green Swallow	Apr 27 - 29	Marquette, MI	Skye Haas, SOBs	First Michigan record of this bird from west of the Rockies.
Lapland Longspur	May 4	Vreeland w. of Gotfredson Rds.	Roger Kuhlman	27 in breeding plumage. Rare in May.
Hooded Warbler	May 5	McClure & Ridge Rds.	Roger Kuhlman	2 birds. Uncommon summer resident.
Pine Siskin	May 5	MUCC campground, Waterloo Rec.	Roger Kuhlman	Several. Rare in May.
Cerulean Warbler	May 5	McClure & Loveland Rds.	Roger Kuhlman	Several. Uncommon summer resident.
Neotropic Cormorant	May 5	Grand Haven, MI	Chip Francke, SOBs	First Michigan record of this bird of the Texas coast, Mexico, etc.
Lark Sparrow	May 6	Petersburg SGA, Monroe County	Roger Kuhlman	Very rare migrant and summer visitor.
Gray Hairstreak	May 6	Petersburg SGA, Monroe County	Roger Kuhlman	Uncommon. Record early date. □ Previous early date: June 5, 2000.
Common Moorhen	May 6	Trinkle Marsh	WAS field trip group	Uncommon. Seen on Tuesday Evening Birders field trip.
Prothonotary Warbler	May 7	Four Mile Lake	Dan Sparks-Jackson	Very rare in county.
Northern Harrier	May 7	Ann Arbor Landfill	Dave Borneman	Uncommon. Perhaps the most graceful of raptors.
Checkered Skipper	May 8	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Record early date for this southern species. Previous early: May 13
White-eyed Vireo	May 8	Dolph Park	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in county.
Prothonotary Warbler	May 9	Schwab Rd.	Jacco Gelderloos	Very rare in county. Second Prothonotary this year.
White-rumped Sandpiper	May 15	Pleasant Lk. Rd. cow ponds	John Swales, Roger Wykes	Very rare in county.
Cattle Egret	May 17	Lima Center Rd. at Hoelzer Rd.	Lyle Hamilton, SOBs	Very rare in county. 3rd Cattle Egret in last 5 years found by Lyle!
Philadelphia Vireo	May 19	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in county. Roger also had 21 warbler species in the Arb today.
Summer Tanager	May 20	Arb	Eric Arnold	First year bird. Very rare in county.
Ruddy Turnstone	May 20	Schneider Rd. south of Luckhardt	Ed Smith, MOBs	Very rare in county. Well seen by Tuesday Evening Birders group.
Wilson's Phalarope	May 20	Farrell Rd. pond	Bob Arthurs, MOBs	Very rare in county. Well seen by Tuesday Evening Birders group.
Wilson's Phalarope	May 21	Hoeltzer Rd.	Jim Fowler, MOBs	Very rare in county. Well seen by Tuesday Evening Birders group.
Red-necked Phalarope	May 21	Schneider Rd. south of Luckhardt	Dea Armstrong, MOBs	Extremely rare in county. Well seen by Tuesday Evening Birders.
Orange-crowned Warbler	May 21	Arb	Roger Kuhlman	Three of this county rarity.
Kentucky Warbler	May 24	Petersburg SGA, Monroe County	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in state.
Connecticut Warbler	May 24	Barton Park	Maggie Jewett	Rare in county
Connecticut Warbler	May 25	Dolph Park	Maggie Jewett	Rare in county
Connecticut Warbler	May 26	Dolph Park	Roger Kuhlman	Rare in county
Inornate Ringlet	May 26	Matthaei Botanical Gardens	Roger Kuhlman	New early date for this butterfly. Rare in county.
Yellow-breasted Chat	May 26	Near Little Lake	Lee Hefner, MOBs	Rare in county
Western Kingbird	Jun 11	Monroe County	Walt Polowski, SOBs	One day only for this very rare western vagrant.
Upland Sandpiper	Jun 15	Willow Run Airport	Maggie Jewett	In dismal Ypsi Twp. priority block for BBA. Adult and two chicks.
Yellow-throated Warbler	Jun 19	Stinchfield Woods	Roger Kuhlman	Very rare in county.
Black Tern	Jun 21	Notten Rd.	Dea Armstrong	Two. Rare in county.

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (July -December 2008) *Cathy Carroll, Field Trip Coordinator*

The WAS field trips are a great opportunity for anyone interested in getting outside and reacquainting yourself with all that you share the world with. After a long week at work or school - join us to restore your awareness and faith in what we work so hard to protect. All of our activities are free and open to the public; membership in the WAS is not required. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather. We do trips in the heat and the cold, including rain and snow. When introducing a field trip schedule so far in advance, there are bound to be updates and changes as the actual dates arrive. Check with our primary communication resources: birders@umich.edu and our website (click on the field trips icon) as field trips approach. Additionally we list all of our field activities in the Ann Arbor News and the Ann Arbor Observer. Join us if you can!

**August 28-
Oct. 16**
(Thursdays)

Nichols Arboretum for Fall Migration: Please join us for one or all of this eight week series of walks through Nichols Arboretum to monitor and observe fall migration. Each Thursday morning starting August 28th through October 16th, meet at 8:00 am at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac just off Geddes Road. These are well-attended, leaderless walks and a terrific opportunity to meet and bird with others. This is our third season monitoring fall migration through the Arb. Fall migration is much different than our spring migration. Instead of hurrying through on the way to their nesting grounds, the fall migrants sort of trickle in and quietly take their time about it all. Many are in their basic or first year plumage and new identification challenges await. Additionally, the Arb is beautiful in fall. This is our opportunity to say goodbye, so to speak, to our migrant visitors until next spring and enjoy Michigan's crisp, spectacular autumn. (Walks usually last until about 11 am., but you can join or leave the group at any time.)

Sun., Oct. 12

The Big Sit (Independence Lake County Park) 5:00 am (!) - whenever. Leader: Don Chalfant Don has been doing this international competition for approximately 10 years and has the data to prove it. This is a very relaxing day of birding from within a 17 foot circle to hear and/or see the greatest number of species possible. Bring food, a folding chair and your binoculars. Typically the weather is spectacular and the day is great fun. Don usually arrives around 5:00 am to get his owls. Feel free to sleep in a little longer and arrive when you wish. Things are usually wrapping up around 3:00 pm, but you may leave whenever. This is a great field opportunity for mobility challenged birders.

Sun., Nov. 9

Belle Isle: Leader: Allen Chartier Meet at 9:00 am in the parking lot of the Nature Center on the east end of the island. This is the third year Allen is leading this trip for us. Notice that this year the trip is on the second Sunday of November. This is the only change. The rest is the same great birding that Belle Isle has to offer. Waterfowl, raptors, late migrants and early winter residents will be the focus of the trip. The weather has been very favorable the past two years. This is both good and bad as far as the birds go, but makes Belle Isle a very beautiful place for its human visitors.

Sat., Dec. 6

Salem Landfill for Gulls: This annual trip to the dump is a favorite for many WAS members. Unfortunately, as this new schedule goes to print, I cannot yet confirm that the trip will be on this year. Please look in all of the usual places, including mostly the Washtenaw Audubon website, as the date gets closer to confirm whether the trip will occur.

Sat., Dec. 20

Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count: AA CBC compiler: Jacco Gelderloos. Please join us for this national event. The Ann Arbor CBC 15 mile circle is segmented into 8 different areas, each with a coordinator. The important thing for each CBC area coordinator is to make sure the count circle is well-covered with thorough counting. As the date approaches, Jacco will post to birders@umich.edu and the website will be updated with needed information. The counting is great fun. The pot luck tally is at the end of the day.



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 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public, membership is not required. Call (734) 677-3275 for more information

Tuesday, Aug. 19

7:30 PM

Up Close and Personal With a Live Eagle: 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!**

Wednesday, Sep 17

7:30 PM

Urban Dragon Hunting

Join Julie Craves for an introduction to the fascinating world of Odonata, better known as dragonflies. Julie will discuss the diversity that can be found in these beautiful insects, even in urban areas. She and husband Darrin O'Brien have recorded nearly 50 new species for Wayne County in the last 6 years, including several new state records.

Julie Craves is the Supervisor of Avian Research at the Rouge River Bird Observatory, and a contributing editor to Birder's World magazine. She is the author of "The Birds of Dearborn, an Annotated Checklist," and has a chapter in "Good Birders Don't Wear White, 50 Tips From North America's Top Birders."

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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