



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
January/February 2010

Birding at Night: No Longer Just Owls

By Andy Johnson

John James Audubon brought the world a new approach to the study of birds. He ushered in an era of scientific applications for the union of art and the hobby of bird-watching. Many would follow his path and soon develop the scientific pursuit into a popular pastime for the educated and adventurous. Along came Roger Tory Peterson, who, with the momentous publication of his *Field Guide to the Birds* in 1934, again revolutionized the sport of bird-watching, making it something universally enjoyable. No longer did you have to shoot birds and identify them in the hand—it was now possible to use “field marks” to identify living birds to species. This was awesome—but we’ve known all of this. Now we have the *modern* birder, one who watches the Weather Channel to predict fall-outs of those confusing fall warblers; identifies even silent *Empidonax* flycatchers by analyzing primary projections, eye-rings and bill structure; submits his or her sightings to eBird, and preaches birding by *giss* (General Impressions of Size and Shape)—the “new” approach that makes modern birders sound cooler and feel cooler than oldies such as, say, that Roger Tory guy.

But wait, there’s more! Pioneers in a new field are working to make their unique and highly impressive skill available to the public. There are those birding fiends out there who can identify a migrating warbler by its specialized, nocturnal flight call. I have been lucky enough to bird with some of these experts in the field, and watching them work is truly inspiring. Most recently, I spent a few days at the Midwest Birding Symposium birding with Jim McCormac, President of the Ohio Ornithological Society. We walked the silent streets at night near the shores of Lake Erie and listened as waves of migrants poured over the lake. He would hear a “seet” note I couldn’t even pick up, and say “Did

you hear that? I’m pretty sure it was a Nashville, but with the wind and waves I didn’t hear it too clearly—could have been a Tennessee. What do you think?” “Yeah, I thought that was a pretty big wave too, Jim.”

But the cool thing is that this stuff is actually learnable. A Cornell Lab of Ornithology researcher, Andy Farnsworth, has recently compiled the “Rosetta Stone” of warbler nocturnal flight calls—a set of hard-earned recordings of thirty-some warblers—and Michael O’Brien released a multimedia CD-Rom of 211 eastern land birds titled “Flight Calls of Migratory Birds,” published by Old Bird, Inc. There is also a listserv run by Cornell staff, nfc-l@cornell.edu, which discusses methods for recording and listening to nocturnal migrants, utilizes Doppler radar images to show waves of migrants over a particular area, and shares recordings and ID questions. Merely observing the list is a great way to start learning how to approach nocturnal migrants—it is admittedly a steep learning curve. However, the resources are growing, as is the community of knowledgeable people willing to teach. You can now go to a Meijer parking lot at midnight and ear-witness the greatest of avian phenomena (this is actually one of the best places, because the disorienting parking lot lights induce frequent contact calls between birds migrating in loose flocks).

Migration has always struck fascination into the hearts of birders and non-birders alike, but aside from seeing different species at different times of year, this phenomenon has remained largely an invisible one.

(Continued on pg. 11)

Contact

President

Ray Stocking
(734) 973-3155
President@washtenawaudubon.org

Vice President & Programs

Mike Sefton
(734) 677-3275
Vp-programs@washtenawaudubon.org

Treasurer

Ellie Shappirio
(734) 665-6613
Treasurer@washtenawaudubon.org

Secretary

Dana Novak
(734) 424-9305
Danacnovak13@yahoo.com

Field Trips

Monty Brown
Fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org

Membership

Sherri Smith
(734) 994-6287
Membership@washtenawaudubon.org

Newsletter

Bryn Martin
(734) 454-0439
Brynmartin@sbcglobal.net

Education

Dea Armstrong
(734) 668-2513
Ddarm@umich.edu



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Bryn Martin
6241 Runnymede
Canton, MI 48187

President's Letter

By Ray Stocking

This past fall I reviewed with the Washtenaw Audubon Society (WAS) board members the costs associated with our newsletter. Before that meeting, I had done some preliminary number crunching to verify what I had suspected over the past year. We were losing money with members who continued to receive the paper version of our newsletter. I built a case to prove my point, and then offered a solution.

I proposed to the board, and the board agreed, that we limit the paper edition of the newsletter to eight pages. Part of our rationale was that this was the previous size of the newsletter, so there really should not be any major concern. However, before agreeing to this restriction, we made sure all of the critical pieces that members enjoyed so much would still be included. Therefore, rare bird alerts, field trip reports, program listings, feature stories and, yes, even the president's letter would still be included in the eight-page newsletter. The email version will continue to include the extra photos and articles that have resulted in the growth of our newsletter to sixteen pages.

Perhaps I should explain here how we are losing money when we send out a paper version of the newsletter. One of the first things I did when I took over as president more than four years ago was to increase the content of the newsletter. Photos quickly became standard with every edition. More stories and more information about other Audubon chapters appeared. The end result was a larger newsletter. Our typical newsletter used to be eight to twelve pages in length. Over the past four years, the length has grown to sixteen pages! Doubling the number of pages has doubled the cost of the newsletter. And, this does not factor in the cost of paper, which also has increased over the same period of time.

The typical cost of printing a sixteen-page newsletter on recycled paper is \$2.25 per issue. Throw in postage and it is \$2.80 per newsletter. We publish the newsletter six times each year, which would cost us \$16.80 per member annually if everyone received a paper version. This leaves us with \$3.20 out of every \$20 annual membership. However, many of our members only pay \$10 in membership dues because they are either students or seniors – an amount that does not even cover the cost of a newsletter. There were other factors as well that played a part in losing money on the newsletter. We were providing free copies to many outside organizations and individuals, including local libraries, radio stations, and other Audubon chapters. Each organization or individual on this list cost Washtenaw Audubon \$16.80 per year.

At first, it seemed that the easiest and most economical way to resolve the draining of funds was to eliminate the paper edition of the newsletter and offer it only online. Several local chapters in Michigan have already done this. But, I heard from many members that they enjoyed reading the paper edition. Additionally, not everybody has a computer, or an internet connection with the bandwidth required to download such a large newsletter. (Think western Washtenaw county where there are no broadband options.)

As a result, we are not eliminating the paper edition of the newsletter altogether and still provide a paper version for those who want it. We have, however, eliminated all free newsletters, except for those delivered to the local libraries. Organizations and individuals impacted by this decision were notified in advance and have, for the most part, provided positive feedback.

I am pleased with all of these changes.. All of our members still get the newsletter in the form they prefer, and our overall costs are being reduced. Membership dues not consumed by the newsletter can be used for educational programs, scholarships, and field trips. At the same time, WAS can increase its savings account for future projects on the horizon. And, that is good!
(Continued on the next page)

Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Bird Report

<http://birdingonthe.net/birdmail.html>

Scroll down to Michigan, Mich-listers, and SE Michigan

(President's Letter continued)

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about these changes. Also, please allow me to encourage you once again to consider eliminating the paper edition of the newsletter and enjoy the online version moving forward. Just send me a note at president@washtenawaudubon.org and I will remove your name from the paper distribution list and make sure you are on the online distribution list.

Thank you.

Good birding!
Ray

Winter Gull Trip, Veolia Arbor Hills Landfill – Dec. 5, 2009

By Rob French

On what was the most bitterly cold day of the year at the time, about a dozen enthusiastic and hopeful birders showed up at Huron High School for the van ride to one of our local gull hotspots. This annual trip, open only to members of the Washtenaw Audubon Society, is now the only access for birders to the landfill. Last year some birders allegedly irritated the landfill management, causing them to close the facility to birders. The trip frequently produces one or two rarities, and almost always presents some good opportunities for gull study. (A great way to learn how to identify some of the unusual gulls is to become very familiar with the usual gulls first; once you have a grasp on what the different ages of Herring Gulls look like and the variation in Herring Gull plumage you will find it much easier to notice something that doesn't fit the Herring Gull profile.)

The group started out at a high pull-off within the vast square mile landfill site, overlooking the active dumping area (which is only moderately active on Saturdays). With the morning sun at our backs and good viewing conditions, it didn't take too long for the dark back of an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull to pop out from among the pale gray Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. It was cooperative and everyone was able to see it well. It kept reappearing throughout the morning allowing multiple views from different angles and conditions.

The second unusual gull took far more work, both to find and to eventually get seen by everyone in the group. The group of birders had eventually dispersed a little, checking out different angles and different corners of the gull population. I was standing looking down and to the west with Andy Johnson next to me, and he had just asked me about how to identify a Thayer's Gull. I was in the midst of describing reduced black in the primaries from above and the essentially all-white underwing, when a gull flew in front of us that pretty much matched what I

was describing. If I'd had the presence of mind I would have said something like "Kind of like that gull right there!" Instead, I said something like "Better look at this bird," at which point the gull quickly dropped and landed completely out of sight. Andy and I were pretty convinced that we'd just seen an adult Thayer's gull, but (1) the look was brief and not entirely satisfactory, and (2) field trip leaders never want a quick look by only two members of the group to be the end of the story.

We rounded up the troops and decided to move down to a lower overlook, both to get a little closer to where the likely Thayer's Gull was hiding and to refresh our view of the rest of the crowd of gulls. Everyone got to work looking for this relative rarity, including a very stubborn trip leader, and eventually the work paid off and the bird was relocated. The difficulty was that it was seen only in flight, and getting everyone to see it was challenging, especially since it would disappear, then be found again, then disappear, then be found, etc. "It's flying left, above the black plastic, over the green truck, circling right, above the Cat dozer, going right, going right, behind the red truck, dipped down, now left, left, above the blue pickup, left..." well, you get the idea. But the calling out and making up landmarks "on the fly" eventually paid off, and everyone was able to see it.

Both of the specialty gulls were life birds for some in the group, and for others they were notches in their annual lists, or county lists, or just cool birds that we don't get to see very often. The trip leader went home satisfied that everyone else went home satisfied, realizing that he does have a stubborn streak that emerges sometimes but that it's okay as long as he uses it for good, like finding Thayer's Gulls.

What a difference a year makes! The 62nd edition of the Ann Arbor CBC had been one for the record books, what with 77 count day and 4 count week species, and some 43,000 individual birds – not to mention the count's first ever Pileated Woodpecker and (count week) Varied Thrush. This year, in spite of rather clement weather on count day, both species and individual counts stayed far below the marks set a year ago.

Before daylight, 6 parties put in an impressive 21 hours owling, while 48 counters were in the field during the day, supplemented by 5 feeder watchers. The total species tally compiled by all observers came out to 'only' 59 species, with 4 additional species added during count week. The combined total of 63 species for the season was the lowest number since 1996, and is well below the recent 10-year average of 70.6 species. Similarly, the total number of individuals tallied also hit a low point – 2009's tally of 21,068 was the lowest since 1995, and below the recent 10-year average by a margin of over 17,000 birds! Looking at results over the past decade, however, it is clear that a large part of that difference (if not all of it) can be ascribed to the uncharacteristically low count for American Crow (see the summary listing at the end of this article). Still, in spite of these somewhat disappointing results, the weather provided for a nice day to be out, and most count areas turned up a rarity or two to keep the day's work interesting. As always, high counts were posted for some species, while others seem to be on a trend that may soon result in the species being missed altogether from our count.

The results in the waterfowl category were rather fascinating: due to the cold in the weeks leading up to the count, still water was frozen and many ducks and geese appeared to have departed. That said, counters picked out 12 species, several of them in record numbers. Only the 3rd occurrence ever on our count (but the second in the past 4 years), a trio of Cackling Geese were staked out among hundreds of Canada Geese in the small area of open water at the Stonebridge subdivision. On a disturbing note, Mute Swans posted the highest count ever, with 82 counted in all. This reverses a trend towards parity between Mutes and Trumpeters – it remains to be seen how this dynamic turns out on future counts. Clearly more positively, Hooded Mergansers and Ruddy Ducks also posted record highs, with 51 and 13 individuals, respectively. A Lesser Scaup was certainly a noteworthy find.

Raptor diversity was down significantly compared to last year – only 4 species on count day, with 2 additional species, Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, during count week. Of note in this category is the continuing decline of American Kestrel, with only one observed on this season's count. Keeping in mind that the past few winters have not been very mild (thus causing our kestrels to move south before count day), this marks the second year in a row with only a single kestrel, and I imagine it may not be long before the species is missed altogether – something that has not happened since the 1952 count!

As to night-time raptors, our owlers did their part again this year, and their work was certainly productive: 58 individual owls of 3 species (incl. a Northern Saw-whet Owl).

After several years of totals in the range of 400 individuals, woodpecker numbers appear to have settled in a more 'normal' range of about 300-350 (with only the 4 regular species reported). Perhaps the peak in years past can be associated with the abundance of newly dead ash trees and woodpecker numbers leveling off can be related to the fact that most ashes are no longer suitable as food sources.

Although there were no high counts in the songbird category, a few unusual species turned up all over the count circle. As mentioned above, American Crow numbers were way down compared to recent tallies. Per crow counter Mike Kielb, the roost site was very poorly defined, and crows were staging and settling over a wide area. This resulted in an incomplete tally, so that the drop of some 15,000 crows (as compared to the recent 10-year average) is really no reason for concern. Found within half a mile of each other, a Northern Shrike and a (count week) Northern Mockingbird were certainly good birds for our count. Although not unheard of on our count (4 in the past 10 years), this year's tally of 2 separate Fox Sparrows was the first time since 1976 that multiples of this species were found. Icterids are always of note, so a Common Grackle was a good find.

Irruption species were essentially absent this year. Nine Red-breasted Nuthatches were within the expected range for our small resident population, and no northern finches put in an appearance – compare this to last year's almost record tally of 262 Pine Siskins (not to mention the White-winged Crossbills that showed up shortly after the count!).

In short, then, the 2009 Ann Arbor CBC will not go down as a record breaker by any stretch of the imagination, but as always there were goodies for all participants (even if only a day spent in the field birding!). For a detailed accounting of our results, please take a look at the summary spreadsheet on the next page. To put our results in a regional or national perspective, check out the National Audubon CBC website at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>.

On a final note, I'd like to thank all volunteers that helped make this year's count a smoothly run event – without you, counters, area leaders, and potluck/feeder watch coordinators, our count would not be as well-oiled a machine as it is. Special thanks to Nancy French who (in my absence) took on the task of count compiler one last time. See you all next year!

CBC Totals

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Canada Goose | 4,027 | Ring-billed Gull | 81 | Carolina Wren | 25 |
| Cackling Goose | 3 (HC) | American Herring Gull | 9 | Golden-crowned Kinglet | 4 |
| Mute Swan | 82 (HC) | Rock Pigeon | 372 | Eastern Bluebird | 123 |
| Trumpeter Swan | 17 | Mourning Dove | 447 | Hermit Thrush | 2 |
| Gadwall | 9 | Eastern Screech-Owl | 42 | American Robin | 1,745 |
| American Black Duck | 7 | Great Horned Owl | 15 | Northern Mockingbird | 1 (CW) |
| Mallard | 981 | Northern Saw-whet Owl | 1 | European Starling | 3,483 |
| Lesser Scaup | 1 (US) | Belted Kingfisher | 3 | Cedar Waxwing | 206 |
| Bufflehead | 1 (CW) | Red-bellied Woodpecker | 101 | Yellow-rumped Warbler | 3 |
| Common Goldeneye | 1 | Downy Woodpecker | 149 | American Tree Sparrow | 243 |
| Hooded Merganser | 51 (HC) | Hairy Woodpecker | 34 | Fox Sparrow | 2 (US) |
| Common Merganser | 15 | Northern Flicker | 32 | Song Sparrow | 9 |
| Ruddy Duck | 13 (HC) | Northern Shrike | 1 | Swamp Sparrow | 1 |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | 6 | Blue Jay | 243 | White-throated Sparrow | 77 |
| Wild Turkey | 24 | American Crow | 4,800 | Dark-eyed Junco | 355 |
| Great Blue Heron | 6 | Horned Lark | 74 | Northern Cardinal | 401 |
| Bald Eagle | 1 (CW) | Black-capped Chickadee | 648 | Common Grackle | 1 (US) |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 2 | Tufted Titmouse | 178 | House Finch | 200 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 12 | Red-breasted Nuthatch | 9 | American Goldfinch | 488 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 63 | White-breasted Nuthatch | 196 | House Sparrow | 940 |
| American Kestrel | 1 | Brown Creeper | 4 | Total | 21,068 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 1 (CW) | | | | |

CW = count week only

HC = high count

US = unusual species

Winter Birding Field Trip, January 10, 2010 *Article and photo by Jacco Gelderloos*

On a frosty morning, 14 intrepid souls met up at the Sears parking lot near Briarwood for the annual WAS winter birding outing. The cold snap during the weeks leading up to the trip had frozen most bodies of water, so I had to drop the option of checking local lakes for waterfowl. As a consequence, we first set out to find some of the winter specialties associated with open areas. To this end, we drove out to Vreeland Road, just east of Prospect Road. Scouting here had turned up a large flock of sparrows in the weedy field just east of the Conservancy Farm and upon arrival we were greeted by hundreds of American Tree Sparrows feeding close to and even on the road. Everybody had great views of these spunky little birds from up north, along with quite a few Dark-eyed Juncos and Northern Cardinals, and even a pair of Tufted Titmice. The large flocks of American Robins passing overhead in the clearing skies were a nice bonus.

We hoped to top this sparrow bonanza in the more open fields farther east, near the intersection of Vreeland and Gotfredson Roads. Targets here were Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur, as well as the resident Horned Larks.

Almost as soon as we pulled over and set up our scopes, birds popped up everywhere. Snow Buntings were feeding in the open field to the south of the road and in the stubble and weedy areas to the north. Horned Larks were sitting in the road and flying overhead. To everyone's delight, we were even able to turn up some two dozen Lapland Longspurs among the more numerous other birds. The more time we spent here, the more birds flew in from farther back in the field,

culminating in an amazing show in which hundreds of Snow Bunting swirled and banked overhead. Needless to say, we spent some 15-20 minutes oohing and aahing at this spectacle!

Although we all agreed this show would be hard to top, we continued on towards Joy Rd where two similar but very different birds had been seen in the days leading up to the trip, one from the north (Northern Shrike), the other from the south (Northern Mockingbird). On the way, we made a brief stop in a woodlot, where we enjoyed many of the resident species, such as Eastern Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings, and White-breasted Nuthatches. Unfortunately, neither the shrike, nor the mockingbird put in a performance at their respective hang-outs, but we did pick up a very handsome Sharp-shinned Hawk in the process.

The final stop of the day was Delhi Overlook, in hopes of finding another shrike. Although none were found, we did enjoy some great looks at both Red-bellied Woodpecker and Northern Flicker, and a very striking Red-tailed Hawk. With winds increasing and temperatures seemingly dropping even further, we decided to call it a day. Not the greatest of winter bird outings with 'only' 28 species in all, but the quality encounters in the field more than made up for that!



I was able to open my window to photograph this Sharp-shinned Hawk sitting on my bird feeder. Surprisingly, two chickadees came to the pear tree and had a few choice words to say in chickadeese for about 5 minutes while the hawk ignored them. The hawk stayed for more than half an hour, probably digesting a meal. Blood can be seen on one of its toes. It seemed very content, standing on one leg until I spooked it by closing the window.

Photo by Ellie Shappirio (Below)



*American Goldfinches
Photo by David Berger
of A2.com
(Above)*

Dead Birds

By Steve Hinshaw

Note: The poem below previously appeared in the Washtenaw Audubon Newsletter back in May 1976. While scanning older issues of the WAS Newsletter for historical information, I came across it. The article caught my eye simply because it was long and narrow. After reading it, I was amused at how such a horrible situation could have such a funny twist to it. I asked the original author for permission to reprint it here for the sole purpose of spreading the word again about what to do when you come across a dead bird. Enjoy! ~ Ray Stocking



*Photos by Andy Johnson
(Above-Orange-crowned Warbler)
(Below-White-breasted Nuthatch)*



If the birds at your feeder,
So nice to peruse,
Into a window
Unwittingly cruise,
Or you happen upon,
Some avian prize,
Who met with some other
Untimely demise
Such as a car
Which flattened its skull,
Or the jaws of a cat
In which it was mauled.
Then pack the remains
Into a bag
And place in the freezer
Along with the Hag.
This keeps it from smelling
And turning quite rank
(My mother would have killed me
Had I pulled such a prank).
But don't fricassee it
Or place in stew,
The feathers are messy
In all that goo.
And it's rather unnerving
To look in the pot
And see floating eyeballs
Where you wish they were not.
So take my advise
And save much ado,
Just call the museum
They'll know what to do.
They'll skin it and stuff it
And tag it and more.
For when they're all done
It goes in a drawer
Where scientists, children,
And, yes, even you
Can examine and fondle it
All the day through.

If you have such a corpse and wish
to get rid of it before either the law
or the smell catches up with you,
contact the bird division of the
Natural History Museum and ask
for Janet Hinshaw. (734) 764-0457
or jhinshaw@umich.edu.



Photos by Andy Johnson (Above-Tufted Titmouse, Below-American Robin)



Upcoming WAS Field Trips (February--March)

By Monty Brown, Field Trip Coordinator (fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

Washtenaw Audubon field trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise indicated. For more information, go to our webpage. Changes and updates will be made via our Twitter service, the birders@umich.edu listserv and/or our web page at www.washtenawaudubon.org/fieldtrips.php with updates as needed. If you have a suggestion for a field trip, please send an e-mail.

**Fri.-Sun,
Feb. 5-7**

Sault Ste. Marie Winter Birding Weekend (Leaders: Lathe Claflin and Gary Siegrist) Jointly sponsored with Jackson Audubon society. Boreal Chickadee, Snowy and Great Gray Owls, grouse and crossbills are some of the target species. The weather can vary considerably, but the birding is reliably excellent. The number of participants is limited, and reserving a space is mandatory. There is a \$20 charge for the trip, and participants are also responsible for their own food and lodging costs. Call Lathe (517-522-3949) or Gary (517-522-5990) to check on availability and to get further information. The event begins on Friday evening and ends during the day on Sunday.

Sat., Feb. 13

Birdhouse Basics (Leader/Instructor: Dea Armstrong) The city of Ann Arbor's Natural Area Preservation (NAP) department and the Washtenaw Audubon Society are teaming up to cosponsor a seminar on birdhouse basics. 1pm at the Leslie Science Center. The session will run for about an hour.

**Sat., Mar. 6
(rain date
Mar. 7)**

Owl Prowl (Leaders: Ray Stocking and Andy Johnson) Join WAS President Ray Stocking and ace birder Andy Johnson for an exciting evening as they lead an owling trip through Washtenaw County. Target birds will be the county's three breeding owl species: Barred, Great Horned, and Eastern Screech. This outing will begin in the early evening (approximately 5:00 p.m.) and will go for about four hours. Final arrangements for timing and the meeting place will be decided by the leaders closer to the event date. This will be a driving trip with limited availability and **pre-registration is mandatory**. Preference will be given to members of Washtenaw Audubon Society. (For information on how to join WAS, see the opposite page.) Registration for the trip will begin on February 1. To register, send an e-mail to president@washtenawaudubon.org or leave a message at (734) 973-3155. Be sure to include the first and last name and a phone number for yourself and anyone else you wish to register.

Sun., Mar. 14

Washtenaw Waterfowl (Leader: Dea Armstrong) March is a prime waterfowl month in Michigan, and this trip will follow the open water to whichever locations have been most promising in the days preceding it. Likely sites include Barton Pond, Ford Lake, and Belleville Lake. We will meet in the Sears parking lot at Briarwood Mall near sign #6 at 8:00 a.m. We will plan to return between 12 and 2pm, depending on conditions. PLEASE NOTE: This will be the first Sunday of Daylight Savings Time! If you forget the time change, you will arrive an hour late and miss this event! If you have a spotting scope, please bring it. If you don't have one, just bring binoculars and others will share their scopes. Please also bring a drink and a snack. Dress for uncertain weather conditions; it is typically still quite cold in the first half of March. PLEASE ALSO NOTE: If there is very little open water available (i.e., if lakes and ponds are mostly still frozen), this event may be postponed. Please check the WAS web page for updates a day or two before the event.

(Birding at Night continued from pg. 1)

The numbers have always been impressive—an Arctic Tern, weighing less than 4 ounces, flying 20,000 miles, pole to pole, each year of its life, or a Bar-tailed Godwit flying for nine days and nights, non-stop over the Pacific Ocean, from the Seward Peninsula in Alaska to New Zealand—but you can't exactly run alongside these die-hard little creatures and indulge in their vigor and drive. However, thanks to recent research, there are ways to witness this power first-hand. Hearing a flight of 200 Swainson's Thrushes or a Scarlet Tanager in full song over your urban home in one September night is one such method. Another is watching the moon, although this is no recent development. By training a spotting scope on the moon and cuddling up with a pile of blankets (and sunglasses, a recommended tool), you can *see* migration taking place. You can see passerines zip across the Moon's face in a split second, or maybe a loon or merganser flying fast and direct, extremely high in the sky so that it takes a full, beautiful two seconds to traverse the moon's disc. Although these methods are not new to ornithology, I have recently enjoyed exploring yet another facet of birding. It is really an awe-inspiring thing to get even distant and brief views of birds you might never have imagined flying over your house.

Birding at night has not only become a portal to a new appreciation of migration, but also a way to understand how ubiquitous birds really are—it is possible to detect many of the birds you might find in the Arboretum, or even in secluded forests of the U.P., flying over a shopping center in the middle of a city. By getting more people to realize the magnitude of these movements, and having people physically see this momentous phenomenon occurring just over their heads, so to speak, in the middle of developed areas, we can draw more attention to the plight of migrating birds. It has become an increasing threat to all neotropical bird populations that stop-over sites are being "developed" and destroyed. Our conservation here in the States means little if only fragmented parks remain and sites along the way south are destroyed—what is the purpose of protecting breeding grounds of birds that won't be able to make it north to breed at all? The Great Plains, Texas coast, Floridian and Yucatan Peninsulas, Colombian coast, and Amazon basin are as much the home of our boreal and arboreal breeders as the northern forests in which they nest. Sharing the vision of these birds literally exerting every last ounce of their being to survive and return to the home of their ancestors is an important step towards protecting the birds we love.

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

We encourage you to join at a lower rate if the suggested rates would otherwise preclude your membership, or at a higher rate if you possess the means.

Note: WAS will only use your email address to communicate with you about WAS programs, field trips, or matters of interest to you, such as membership renewal, and emailed WAS newsletters (in color!). We will not give your email address to anyone else.

WAS Monthly Programs

WAS monthly events usually are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Programs begin at 7:30pm at U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public. Call 677-3275 if you have questions about the program.

- Wed., Jan. 20, 2010** **Of Birds and Berries:** Join Julie Craves for a program on the food sources used by migrating thrushes during their fall stopovers in our area. This presentation describes the fascinating methods used to determine food preferences, and will provide info you can use in making your yard more attractive to migrating thrushes and other birds. Julie is the Director of the Rouge River Bird Observatory at the University of Michigan – Dearborn, a contributing editor of *Birder's World Magazine*, and author of numerous books and articles.
- Wed., Feb. 17** **Journey of the Cranes:** Join Gary Siegrist, People for Wildlife Coordinator of The Dahlem Conservancy, as he tells us about the natural history of an extraordinary, adaptable bird, the Greater Sandhill Crane. These cranes gather each fall at Michigan Audubon's Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary, which is located in the northeast part of Jackson County. Cranes coming into roost areas in the evening can be counted in the thousands at the beginning of November. "When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestras of evolution." Aldo Leopold – *Marshland Elegy*
- Wed., March 17** **Exploring the Galapagos Islands:** Join Bob Pettit for a tour of the remote Galapagos Islands. Famous as Darwin's laboratory for his theory of evolution, the islands contain unique species developed in isolation from the rest of the world. Bob Pettit teaches biology at Monroe Community College, is president of the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, and is a board member of Whitefish Point Bird Observatory.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

PO Box 130923

Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923