



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
May/June 2010

The Great Texas Birding Classic *By Andy Johnson and Harold Eyster*

We woke groggily after only three hours of sleep the past two nights. The five of us headed out into the night, the wind screaming insults at us for waking so early. We heard nothing but gusts loudly tearing at the trees of the Boy Scout Woods Sanctuary, but we finally all picked out a Northern Mockingbird singing from down the road. The first bird for the Tropicbirds Team in the Great Texas Birding Classic! 1 ½ hours later: still only one bird on our list as the wind relentlessly buffeted everything, drowning out all memory of any other sound.

It was 3:30AM. Chip Clouse, the outreach, conservation, and education coordinator for the American Birding Association, as well as our driver and cook for the weekend, finally awoke, and the five of us, Chip, and Charley Hesse, a tour guide for Tropical Birding, headed out to begin our Big Day in earnest, after a few fruitless attempts for owls. We drove north to the Piney Woods area, arriving around 6:00AM. As we jumped from the van, the roadside still cloaked in darkness, we were immediately serenaded by the rolling call of a Chuck-will's-widow. Neil whistles a Screech-Owl call; we cupped our ears and listened. The distant Chucks seemed almost painfully loud, as we desperately strained to hear an owl's response. Then came the hard, descending *meer!* of a Common Nighthawk splitting the air. Then we heard it, the soft and distant tremolo of an Eastern Screech-Owl.

"Got it?" "Yep." "Yep." "Yep." "Yep. Let's go!"

All of us needed to see or hear 95% of the species on our list (and at least two members had to get on a bird for it to count at all), so we had to make sure we got everyone on every bird. A couple minutes later we stopped again to listen for nocturnal migrants. We immediately checked off a Swainson's Thrush flying overhead, only to hear about a half dozen more giving their flight calls from the woods around us. "If there are so many migrants dropping down this far north, with these winds," Neil mused, "we could have some real difficulty later

on at High Island." We were all silent, hoping he was wrong; a Pine Warbler began the dawn chorus. Suddenly the monotony of thrush calls was covered by the distinct and eerie song of an Upland Sandpiper as it flew overhead. We were all quite surprised to hear this bird in full song, at night, miles from any suitable habitat—truly a special glimpse at the wonder of migration.

As the sky began to brighten we stopped in a pine forest. No sooner had we stopped, however, it began to pour. We all ate a hurried breakfast of cereal in the van, then jumped out into the deluge of water.

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Painted Bunting by Andy Johnson

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President's Letter

By Ray Stocking

It is with great pride that I announce here in this president's letter that one of Washtenaw Audubon's youngest and brightest birders, Harold Eyster, was recently named the American Birding Association Young Birder of the Year! Harold entered the challenge that put him up against some of the best young birders across the United States. He took first place in three of four different categories, including Field Book Module, Writing Module and Illustration Module. He also tallied a second place finish in the Photography Module. This was the third year Harold participated in the ABA Young Birder of the Year contest, but this year he took it all home. I cannot express how thrilled I am for Harold and his family for this outstanding accomplishment. We should all be proud.

There are many of us "older folks" who have watched Harold grow over the years. We have personally driven him from site to site on a Tuesday Evening Birders trip or one of the many Washtenaw Audubon field trips over the years. And now, we are watching him be rewarded for his hard work he has put into this passion of his – bird watching. I asked some of our other notable birders from Washtenaw Audubon who have experienced Harold's growth over the years to comment on their experiences in watching him grow from a young boy to young adult. Below is a sampling of their words:

"It wasn't too many years ago that Harold sought advice about birding from us. Now many of us are seeking advice from him! The abilities and the quiet enthusiasm of this delightful young man are a true blessing."

- Don Chalfant, former WAS President

"Harold, from White-breasted Nuthatch in 2005 until now I cannot think of a more deserving young man to be awarded this prestigious ABA distinction. Congratulations on the recognition of your life long pursuit and body of work."

- Cathy Carroll, former WAS Field Trip Coordinator and family friend

"As a field trip leader, I especially appreciate Harold's help in quickly locating birds and helping other field trip participants find the bird."

- Mike Sefton, WAS VP, Programs

For me personally, my first experience seeing Harold and his younger sister, Artemis, in action was back in January 2005 on a winter birding trip. I was amazed to hear the soft-spoken Harold speak so confidently about the Red-necked Grebe we were watching on the Huron River. My initial thoughts were "How does this young kid know so much about birds?" I found myself sticking close to him to see what else he had to say. Smart move on my part, as I would soon find out later.

(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 from previous page)

What was plainly obvious to me on that cold winter day was that both Harold and Artemis loved birds.

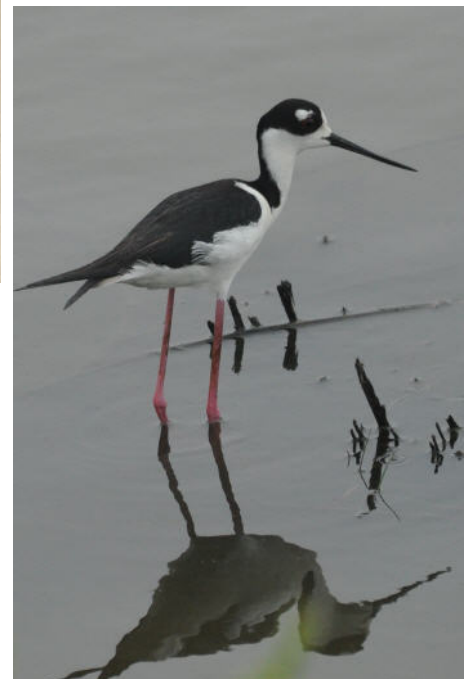
This special award is no small accomplishment when you see the work of the other contestants who competed with Harold. All of their work, Harold's included, can be view on the web at <http://www.aba.org/yby/win.html>. I know you will be impressed with Harold's submissions.

Harold's writing module that he submitted was actually an article he first presented to us here for the WAS Newsletter last year. The story "Big Day on a Bike" featured highlights of his one-day adventure with fellow young WAS birder, Andy Johnson. The two had attempted to see as many species as they could in Washtenaw County in one day, with bikes as the only means of transportation.

Hats off to Harold, his siblings and of course his parents, Jason Eyster and Diana Newman. Washtenaw Audubon is truly lucky to have such an enthusiastic family to be involved in our organization. What's next for Harold? Allow me to encourage you to personally reach out to him during the next WAS field trip or at our monthly gathering and ask for yourself. What I do know about his future is this - if Harold takes his life's challenges ahead of him with the same enthusiasm as he has shown for the birds, he will without a doubt be successful in whatever he does. Congratulations, Harold!!!

Good birding!
Ray

The Washtenaw Audubon Society board members congratulates Harold Eyster of Chelsea, MI for being named the American Birding Association Young Birder of the Year.



Here are some examples of Harold's sketching and photography. Both were produced during the Great Texas Birding Classic (pg.1).

(Texas Birding Classic Continued from pg.1)

We saw a pair of Wood Ducks fly through the trees, and a Bachman's Sparrow sang behind us, but the Red-cockaded Woodpecker that we'd seen the day before would not show itself. Finally we decided that we should not waste any more time on one species; after all, that's what beautiful, endangered species become on a Big Day: a box to be checked. Back in the van, we decided to make one *very* quick stop at another colony. We stopped the car and jumped out...possibly in that order; probably not. The colony was about an eighth of a mile off the road, and we sprinted the whole way. We stopped when we came upon a group of birders standing around and seemingly not seeing anything. Immediately we heard the high-pitched nasal call of a Red-cockaded Woodpecker!

"Everyone get it?"

Affirmations all around. Then we were running again. Upon reaching the van and jumping in, we discovered that our foray had taken less than two minutes. We thought about what the other birders must have thought when they saw 5 young birders come running at full hilt, stop for a few seconds, then turn around and sprint back.

Next we picked up Prairie Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed Vireo, and a kettle of 85 Mississippi Kites, as we passed the site of the Chucks and Screech-owl, now beginning to see full light as the skies cleared.

We drove on to Ebenezer Park in the Angelina National Preserve, where we added quite a few species, including Brown-headed Nuthatch, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, a late Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bald Eagle, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Loon, and others. Back in the van Charley tallied our species; it was 8:00AM and we had 65 species.

At Jasper Fish Hatchery, we saw a couple Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers, Barn Swallows, Common Grackles, and numerous Orchard Orioles and Purple Martins. While driving to our next stop we got brief looks at an American Kestrel, Black and Turkey Vultures, and a Summer Tanager while driving at 70 mph. Continuing to a small creek that we stumbled across the day before, we heard our only Louisiana Waterthrush of the day, then headed off to Martin Dies Jr. State Park, where we checked off Prothonotary, Kentucky and Yellow-throated Warblers. We drove deeper into the park and spied a lake that we hadn't seen the day before. Stopping, we

and, thanks to Spencer...three Swallow-tailed Kites gracefully winging above the lake! We longed to spend more time watching them, but time was too valuable.

Now we began the drive back to the coast, our eyes constantly raking the sky for raptors, with a vigilance that rivaled that of the raptors themselves. We saw more Swallow-tailed Kites again, this time quite close, banking in front of us over the road. We longed to take out our cameras, but we had decided not to use them on the Big Day except for documentation, so we continued. By the time we had gotten to Winney, we had seen a Loggerhead Shrike and three species of *Buteo*. In Winney, we saw American Robins (a surprisingly tough bird to come by), Great-tailed Grackles, and White-winged and Eurasian Collared Doves.

At 12:30 we arrived at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, a huge expanse of marshes, fields, and ponds. We added Fulvous Whistling Duck, Black-necked Stilt, White-faced Ibis, both gallinules, many sandpipers, a Least Bittern slinking through the cattails, a Crested Caracara, a Swainson's Hawk, and three King Rails acting very un-rail-like, walking right out in the open. Our next stop was a trailer park with a feeder where a Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen the day before. We stopped briefly and immediately saw a female, with a male Painted Bunting and Inca Dove as a bonus.

At 2:30 we jumped out of the van with scopes in hand, ran over the wet sand at Rollover Bay, on the Bolivar Peninsula. The sand bars were crawling with birds! We saw eight species of Tern, plus Black Skimmer, Brown pelicans, Red-breasted Mergansers, and Neotropic Cormorants foraging in the water. We saw Black-bellied, Semipalmated, and Wilson's Plovers, American Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstones and Marbled Godwits, but missed Snowy Plover. Continuing along the beach, we saw a few Piping Plovers, and Charley told us that a bit further on there was a pond which often has Curlews. We all jumped out and began sprinting along the beach. We passed a couple Piping Plovers.

"The pond's over there." Charley said, pointing about 100 yards inland. We continued running, leaping over and through thick patches of dunegrass, our shoes sunk into the hot, salty sand. As we approached the pond, a curlew flew over and landed before us. We noted its relatively short bill, but also saw that it lacked a white upper rump and had the distinctive cinnamon wing linings of Long-billed Curlews.

Then another curlew flew over with the same length bill, except it had barred wing linings and a striped head—a Whimbrel. Then someone spotted a small bird as it flew across a sedge meadow. We cut cross-country

(Continued on the next page)

through the sedges, stopping at the spot where he had seen it land—a Horned Lark! We began running back to the van, when Andy suddenly stopped; he had flushed a Nelson’s Sparrow, and we all encircled the area where it dropped. When it flushed again and everyone had seen it, we sprinted on towards the van, jumping in at speed, and then continued on our way.

While driving on 87, Harold spotted a Western Kingbird on a wire. We did a quick U-turn, a maneuver Chip had become skilled at by now, despite the van’s dismal turning radius, and found the Western Kingbird calmly sitting in a bush. Check! A few minutes later, Andy spotted a Magnificent Frigatebird as it circled the ocean. Check! We turned off the main road and found a Barn Owl just visible in the hole of a nest box. Check! The list was growing slowly now, each new bird a relief to have finally spotted. By a jetty we saw a huge flock of Avocets, but no American White Pelican, a species we only had one shot at.

At another pond we found a singing Seaside Sparrow, Sedge Wren and Clapper Rail. We scanned the mudflats, picking out Red Knot, Western Sandpiper and Baird’s Sandpiper, and Harold spotted a harrier coursing over the marsh as we all stared through scopes in the opposite direction; this was a bird we had missed so far, despite infinite opportunities, and her box was certainly a relief to check! On our way back, we found a small pond, where we found the gorgeous Hudsonian Godwit, where we also saw a Northern Waterthrush—looking very out of place. It was decided to make one very short stop at Rollover Bay for another shot at Snowy Plover. We were about to park, when we saw a pair of sparrows on the ground; we raised our binoculars and saw Lark Sparrows, which, Charley informed us, are quite uncommon here. Luckily, they made up for our second failed attempt at Snowy Plover.

It was 5:30, so we decided to high-tail it to the revered Boy Scout Woods on High Island to begin the final stage of our day; we stood at 181 species, and the success of the day hinged solely on the migrant activity on High Island—we recognized the potential of breaking 200, but at 5:30 in the evening on a Big Day, 19 new species is a tall order. As soon as the van stopped, we jumped out and ran to a huddle of birders staring into the treetops—a male Cerulean Warbler, literally our first bird of High Island (save for the Mockingbird that kick-started the day)! As beautiful as it was, we did not have the luxury to gaze at its splendor; we continued, adding four more warblers. Charley briefly checked out the sightings board and saw that it has been a great day, indeed! Someone had just reported a Scott’s Oriole coming to their yard right next to the entrance of the Sanctuary, and

we would later hear reports and see photos of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, but in vain—both would evade us. We did manage several Blue- and Golden-winged Warblers, as well as a Sapsucker and Warbling Vireo.

At 6:00 PM, we headed to Smith Oaks, a nearby migrant trap, and saw Blue-headed Vireo, Wood thrush, Canada, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Blackburnian, and Nashville Warblers. We also saw Philadelphia Vireo, Olive-sided Flycatcher and a silent Traill’s Flycatcher. At dusk, we saw an Armadillo lumbering loudly off the trail to avoid us, and then began walking back to Boy Scout Woods and the house where we were staying. We entered a small park along the way and made a Barred Owl call, and were overjoyed when one silently flew over.

Back at the house we ran a tally and came up with 206 species! We were all amazed at the success that we had. We had 26 species of warbler, and eight species of woodpecker. But it’s only 11:00! After racing past Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Swallow-tailed Kites, and soaring Frigatebirds, the extra time feels like a weight on our shoulders; what can we possibly go out and find? We review the list...Swamp Sparrow! The team, after having already showered and concluded the day, ran back out into the Boy Scout Woods Sanctuary in our boxers, to the back pond, and started pishing. A Least Bittern uttered its wooden “kokoko,” and then finally, a Swamp Sparrow sang from the reeds! The ABA Tropicbirds earned our last, 207th species at 11:30PM, standing in the cool night in our boxers, in the middle of one of the most popular birding destinations in the country, at its peak season; a feel-good moment, indeed! At 11:45PM, Chip sent in our results.

* * *

On May 2, 2010 we got the results back. We came in second in the “Gliders” division (high school birders) with 206 species (the judges presumably took out Traill’s Flycatcher). First place went to the Texas Ornithological Society “Towhees,” who had 213 species on the Lower Coast. They had been scouting for many weeks before the competition, so second place sat quite well with us, given only one day of scouting.

We all had a terrific time, and are very grateful to everyone who supported the Tropicbirds! If you’re interested, the fund-raising results are posted (although not yet up to date, as of writing this) here: <http://www.aba.org/yb/tropicbirds/progress.html>

More examples of Harold and Andy’s photos taken during the adventure can be seen on the next page.

*Loggerhead Shrike
(top right)
By Harold Eyster*



*Other 3 photos by Andy
Johnson*



Upcoming WAS Field Trips (May--July)

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.

**Thursdays,
April 8-May 27** **Spring Migration Walks in Nichols Arboretum** This will be our 5th season reveling in spring migration at the Arb. Join us as often as you like during our eight-week series of Thursday morning walks to observe migrants as they pass through on the way north to their breeding grounds. These leaderless walks are a great opportunity to meet and bird with others. In addition to the birds, the Arb's flora in spring are marvelous to behold. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at 8:00 a.m.

**Tuesdays,
May 4 -25** **Tuesday Evening Birders** (Leaders: Dea Armstrong; Lathe Claflin and Mike Sefton)
Meet at 6:00 p.m. at the Miller Road/M-14 park-and-ride lot to consolidate into fewer cars and prepare for a 6:15 sharp departure. These outings will end at dusk.

Sun., May 23 **Hudson Mills Metropark** (Leader: Karen Markey) As spring migration winds down, this outing reliably yields many delights. Target birds include cuckoos, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, and more. Please leave pets at home. If you do not have a Huron-Clinton Metropark annual sticker, there is a vehicle fee to enter the park. Meet at the flagpole in front of the Activity Center.

Sun., June 13 **Stinchfield Woods Annual Census** (Leader: Karen Markey) Stinchfield Woods comprises 777 acres and typically yields species more typical of Michigan's north, such as Pine and Black-throated Green Warblers, Solitary Vireos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. By the middle of June, you'll start wishing it was still mid-May, and the Stinchfield Woods Count is one way you can relive the great migration days without having to make an expensive, time-consuming trip up north. The count starts at 7 a.m. We will assemble at the top of the hill near the caretaker's house and the observatory, and divide into groups. After hiking the trails and recording observations, we will reassemble around 11:30 a.m. to compile a list of all birds seen or heard. Stinchfield Woods is north of Dexter. Bring insect repellent and dress appropriately.

Sat., July 17 **In Search of Spiders** (Leader: Cara Shillington) Cara Shillington, an associate professor of biology at Eastern Michigan University who lectured on spiders at our monthly program in May 2009, will lead this trip at Matthaei Botanical Garden to find and observe them.
(9 AM--Noon)

Sat., July 24 **Butterfly Trip** (Leaders: Roger Kuhlman, John Swales, Roger Wykes) Our three leaders have a terrific knack for finding a variety of butterflies. The expected location of this event is Matthaei Botanical Gardens. As more details become available, we will post them on the web page and to the birders@umich.edu listserv.

Putting Up A Nesting Box Is The Best Way To Help Bluebirds

By Kurt Hagemeister

Today, we are lucky to commonly see Eastern Bluebirds in Washtenaw County, especially if we frequent open habitats outside of town. But, this has certainly not always been the case. The plight of declining Bluebird numbers in the early and middle parts of the 1900's is well documented. Habitat loss, the use of farming pesticides, and the introduction of invasive bird species (House Sparrows and Starlings) are all reasons that Bluebirds were disappearing from many areas.

The good news is that Eastern Bluebird populations in many parts of the eastern U.S. are back to healthy levels again – largely due to the intervention of environmentally far-sighted people. In particular, it was discovered years ago that Bluebirds readily accept properly-sized & located nesting boxes in lieu of natural tree cavities or old woodpecker cavities – locations where they would naturally nest. A continent-wide movement organized in the 1970's has brought back the song, color, and charm of the Eastern Bluebird to our yards.

So, how can you bring these beautiful members of the thrush family to *your* property? First, you need to have the right habitat. Bluebirds prefer open, grassy areas to nest in. They require about 1 to 1 ½ acres of open grassy habitat for their territory. And grass lawns actually work perfectly well. This doesn't mean you require that much property to attract Bluebirds. It just means between yours and neighboring land, there is enough open space. Not everyone has Bluebirds in their neighborhood. But, if you have seen them around, you can probably get them to nest in your yard.

Second, putting up a Bluebird nesting box is the next thing you want to do. A Bluebird nesting box requires an entrance hole of exactly 1 ½" diameter, a depth from the hole to the floor of about 5 to 5 ½", and a floor area of about 3 ½" by 3 ½". You can either build the house yourself, or purchase one online or at a bird supply store. (See the end of this article for resource links.)

Important features of a well-made Bluebird nesting box are: 1. ¾" thick wood – either pine or cedar, 2. a front or side panel that can be opened to do nest-checks and clean out the box after nesting is completed, 3. Ventilation slots or holes near the top to keep the house cooler, 4. adequate drainage in the house floor to let water out, 5. wood screw construction, and 6. A wide roof with at least a 2" overhang in front to shelter the entrance hole.

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(Bluebirds continued from previous page)

It is important to mount the box on a pole out in the open that is about 5 to 6 feet high. It is also important to put some sort of a predator guard on the pole to keep climbing animals like snakes and raccoons from raiding the nest. A cylinder made of PVC or metal, about 6” in diameter, and 24” long works very well. Also, locate the box away from dense cover, woods, and buildings.

Bluebirds may nest several times during a season. So, you can attract them to your nest box any time from March to well into July in Michigan.

If you put up a nesting box, it is critically important to monitor (or check) the box regularly. First, Bluebirds are susceptible to predation by House Sparrows – a very highly aggressive, non-native cavity nesting bird. If sparrows claim a nest box, you should remove their nests until they move on. They are persistent, so this may take a while. Go to www.michiganbluebirds.org/problem-solving for more information about sparrow control. Second, nest box parasites like blowflies can infest the nest and hurt the young. Checking the nest and removing the blowfly larva will really help the Bluebirds’ chances. Third, it’s useful to know if the nest box is successful or not at attracting Bluebirds. If not, you can consider trying a more favorable location next season.

Monitoring is simple and will not cause the birds to abandon the nest. Simply tap on the side of the box, open up the nest box, look inside to see what’s going on, count the eggs, check for problems, etc, close up the box, and walk away. Don’t spend a lot of time at the box. You should check the box several times a week. And it’s a good idea to keep a written record of what happened and when.

Putting up a Bluebird nesting box is a rewarding and educational way to learn more about these wonderful birds, and avian nesting cycles in general. Also, showing a nest full of cute nestlings to children is a great way to instill in them the wonder of nature. For more information about Bluebird nesting boxes, including downloadable building plans, go to: www.MichiganBluebirds.org. Also, for more detailed information about bluebirds, you can go to www.sialis.org.

Kurt Hagemester is a WAS member and President of the Michigan Bluebird Society. He has been an active “Bluebird landlord” for over 12 years in Lodi Township. He can be reached at: khagemester@michiganbluebirds.org.

THE WIND AND THE WARBLER

By John Baumgartner

On this day the wind was ferocious. It whistled up the ridge of oaks. It drove the tangled tops of the mighty maples into rhythmic and frightening collisions. It whipped the little saplings into wicked switches. It took hold of every leaf as a thief on the take. And it was the relentless rush of the wind which made all other sounds impossible and perhaps irrelevant. There was no room for the soft gentle whisper of a sweeping pine bough. There was no room for the near silent movement of a dead leaf or the gentle stirring of the dead weeds rubbing against each other. Everything was overpowered by this merciless wind.

Then above this force came the sweet sound, patterned and clear, of a Palm Warbler. It sang, ethereal and gentle, subtle and bold as it moved among the boughs of an enduring windswept spruce. In the face of this windy bluster it was a stunning voice creating space in a universe so crowded with noise. It was calling with a majestic indifference to the cacophony surrounding it. Yet its call was not to compete nor was it to be silenced. It mattered not who heard it and who did not. It had its own resolve. Its voice was embedded in an ancient past. Whereas the force of wind spoke of danger and destruction, the little warbler filled with the ancient mystery of a new day evoked hope and life. Its song was a declaration of a new season just as many generations of its kind had decreed before.

I watched it sing and feed. It paid no attention to me, much as it paid little attention to the wind which shook the very boughs on which it so easily moved.. It surely was a sign of the resilience of nature coming alive before my very eyes. It surely was a sign of promise for me, for it and generations to come.

John Baumgartner is on the Board of Directors for Michigan Audubon. He is a retired UCC clergy person who in early childhood developed an interest in the natural world, especially birds. Over the years he has served as president of two Audubon Chapters, was part of the organizing group for Whitefish Point Bird Observatory and served on that Board for over ten years.

Dolph Doesn't Disappoint *By Karen Markey and Monty Brown*

Our Dolph Park field trip on May 2 started just as overnight rains and early morning showers tapered off. As the birders started to gather, a couple of Gray Catbirds and Song Sparrows around the Wagner Road entrance entertained us, and a Great Blue Heron flew right over at no more than fifteen feet. Baltimore Orioles were within hearing range much of the morning, and as the hike commenced, leader Karen Markey tracked one down in no time for all the group to see. We also had good views later of a female. For most of the group, the highlight of the day came relatively early. While we searched for a Chestnut-sided Warbler flitting in the branches of a leafy, eight-foot-tall bush, a young birder named Mike realized that the brown triangular shape was not a nest but a bird--a WHIP-POOR-WILL! Although the bird was well inside the bush, everyone was able to view it before it eventually flew off. It had been perched only about a dozen feet off the trail. For many, it was their first Whip-poor-will in Washtenaw County, and for others their first anywhere.

It was not a particularly eventful day for viewing warblers. Other than the Chestnut-sided, we had Nashville, Yellow-rumped, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow, and Palm (only a fleeting look for part of the group). At two points, we had some nice views of a Red-eyed Vireo as well. Northern Waterthrush was heard for a while along Parklake Road, but never spotted. In the northern end of the park we saw a late Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a House Wren, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and an early Least Flycatcher. Other noteworthy birds included Wood Ducks, a Northern Flicker, a Hairy Woodpecker couple, a few male and at least one female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and a few White-throated Sparrows. (Swamp Sparrow was heard, but not seen. So was Belted Kingfisher, although Dea Armstrong caught a glimpse of one female.) In all, depending on the participant, we had 40-45 species seen and a couple more heard.



Whip-poor-will photo by Rodolfo Palma

Washtenaw Waterfowl Field Trip *By Dea Armstrong and Monty Brown*

About twenty hardy souls braved chilly weather, intermittent rain, and an ominous forecast on the morning of Sunday, March 14, to make stops along the Huron River in search of waterfowl. Despite the conditions, this trip yielded a nice variety of birds. The importance of arriving at field trips on time was demonstrated when a couple of Trumpeter Swans flew over the gathering place in the Briarwood Mall parking lot right at 8:00 a.m. They turned out to be the only Trumpeters the group had on this outing, and only the people who were already there, out of their cars and ready to go, saw those birds.

The first stops were at Belleville Lake and Ford Lake, both man-made lakes downriver from Ann Arbor. Neither location yielded as much as has usually been the case on similar trips in the past, but at Ford Lake we had a pair of Ruddy Ducks, several Canvasbacks, and our only Horned Grebe. The highlight at Belleville Lake was not a species of waterfowl, but two Bald Eagles, and we had terrific looks at one of them. Just north of Ford Lake, trip leader Dea Armstrong, led the group to a small clearing on a bend in the river along Factory Street in

Ypsilanti. Since Greater White-fronted Geese had been reported in Southeast Michigan in the days before the trip, participants got excited when what appeared to be one was on land beside the river. Dea quickly clarified, however, that it was in fact a Greylag Goose, a domesticated species from Eurasia that can be easy to mistake for a Greater White-fronted.

The trip ended with two stops at Gallup Park, one by the boat launch, the other by an inlet just west of the main part of the park. The latter location was probably the best all-around spot of the day. There, in addition to more common species, we had Gadwall, Pied-billed Grebe, Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck, and Northern Shoveler. Somehow Harold Eyster also spotted a Belted Kingfisher perched in a tree overhanging the water at considerable distance, and the whole group was able to view it through the several scopes people brought.

Other waterfowl seen: Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, and American Coot.

Magee Marsh Field Trip Report, Sunday, May 16 *By Karen Markey*

Our Washtenaw Audubon Society group of about 23 birders traveled to Northwest Ohio, and worked hard to find 67 species -- several of which were lone individuals -- at cold, windswept Magee Marsh Wildlife Area and Metzger Marsh.

We toured Metzger before 8 am, punting on American Pipits but seeing Black-crowned Night Heron and Black Terns. We arrived at Magee a little after 8:15 am and more than doubled our group. A cold east wind over Lake Erie drove us into the boardwalk where we thought the birds had gone for cover. We worked hard to spot a Phoebe and Swainson's Thrush. Failing to find more birds, we finally realized that the few birds left at Magee were huddled on sunny- and south-facing sides of the trails away from the wind. Prothonotary Warblers were prominent, singing on bare branches and at numerous locations including the hollow of a hole-filled tree where a pair were busy inserting nesting materials. We also saw a Warbling Vireo nest swaying at the tops of trees. Keeping inside for cover, most of us missed the flyover of a flock of White Pelicans. We had a few close-up looks at Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Yellow Warblers. From a distance, we saw a bird obscured by wind-blown leaves and trees in the direction of a bird that the crowd was calling an Orange-crowned Warbler but I couldn't say with confidence what the bird was.

Thanks to our group members for their patience and perseverance on this very slow day. Everyone pitched in to locate birds. We saw or heard only 16 warbler species but several were single individuals (e.g., Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Wilson's). Sarah Toner reported seeing a couple more on her walkabouts. We returned to Metzger on the drive home relocating the Black-crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, and Black Terns, and seeing Moorhens and Black-throated Blue Warbler and hearing Horned Larks.

Additional highlights:

Double-crested Cormorants, Bald Eagle, Caspian Tern, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Wood-pewee, Eastern Kingbird, Least Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Purple Martin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Canada Warbler, White-crowed Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow

Tuesday Evening Birders: May 4 *By Harold Eyster*

A large crowd turned out for the first Tuesday Evening Birders of the season led by Mike Sefton and Lathe Clafin. After meeting at the Miller-Maple Park and Ride, we walked across Miller road to the woods on the other side and everyone got excellent looks at fledgling and adult Great-horned Owls. Our next stop was Stone School road just south of Ellsworth where we were treated to a flurry of calling Bobolinks, plus Eastern Meadowlarks showing off their gorgeous yellow bellies. Just as we were about to leave, we saw an American Kestrel fly into a hole in a nearby barn where it must be nesting. It then flew out and provided good views. At the pond at State and Textile Roads, we saw a single Dunlin with its back to us. After waiting nearly 5 minutes, it turned and began feeding and everyone could see its distinctive jet-black belly. En route to Schneider we saw 7 very un-solitary Solitary Sandpipers probing in a small pond. When we arrived a Schneider Road the sun was nearing the horizon. We saw a single Spotted Sandpiper in the first pond, then drove to Luckhardt Road, where there was a small pond with 2 Lesser Yellowlegs. Suddenly two more sandpipers flew from the surrounding field. Then three more, until there were fifteen Pectoral Sandpipers squished in a very small pond. After everyone had gotten good looks, they flew off, collecting 15 more that had been in the field. They swirled in astounding synchrony, finally landing in the field. The evening ended with a Least Sandpiper and a very cooperative Horned Lark. A big thanks to Mike and Lathe for making the FOY TEB a big success!

Tuesday Evening Birders: May 18 *By Dea Armstrong*

Well, it was a night that was cool but the skies just got better and better. So much so that we ended with a lovely sunset as we listened to the sounds of a Sora, Sandhill Cranes, Savanna Sparrows and Eastern Kingbirds. We began with a trip to see the stunning male RUDDY TURNSTONE (a code 10(!) in *Birds of Washtenaw County*). We were delayed somewhat by a Sandhill Crane and 8 WILD TURKEYs, one male displaying beautifully! At the Turnstone site, we also found 4 DUNLIN in breeding plumage, 5 Least Sandpipers, 2 Spotted Sandpipers and several Killdeer. We tried for Virginia and Sora rails at several sites but only heard one SORA at the final one. On our way to the first rail stop we quickly pulled into the Stokes-Burns Preserve at Zeeb and Huron River Drive to pick up a perched BROAD-WINGED HAWK that I thought might be a Red-shouldered at first. The earlier sighting of a Red-tailed Hawk would make this one of the first 2-Buteo TEBs ever, I think! The Great Blue Herons on nest at the Ellsworth site were not actively feeding young when we were there but 2 flyover COMMON NIGHTHAWKS were seen well by all! An odd sounding Baltimore Oriole got our attention as did some beautiful Yellow Warblers. And the birdwatchers were watched as well by some very curious young cows when we stopped at the marsh on Ellsworth Road. You'll be able to check out the photo on the WAS web site soon! A pretty nice night with some very interesting birds to say the least.

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**

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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., May 19

Wonders of Bird Biology: Popular speaker, field trip leader, and former Washtenaw Audubon president Michael Kielb will describe some of the adaptations made by birds as they have evolved into the most graceful and beautiful of flying creatures, including their unique skeletal system and feathers. Michael Kielb is the co-author of *The Birds of Washtenaw County*, available at your local bookstore, and teaches Biology at Eastern Michigan University.

Wed., June 16

Helping Bluebirds Survive and Thrive in Michigan: Join Kurt Hagemester for a program on one of America's favorite birds, the Eastern Bluebird. Kurt will talk about the history of bluebirds, methods of improving their nesting success, and how to attract them to your yard. Kurt Hagemester is president of the Michigan Bluebird Society and is the bird feeder coordinator for the annual Washtenaw Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

No Program in July

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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