

WAS's 3rd International Field Trip: Dominican Republic!

In April of 2011 WAS will be embarking on its 3rd international field trip, this time to the beautiful Caribbean island-nation of Dominican Republic! Compared to the last international trip (to South Africa), this one will be much more manageable for people with a tighter budget and/or time constraint. The birds will be just as fabulous! The biggest draw to birding the Caribbean are the number of endemics on each island and the main focus of this trip will be to see as many of these specialties as possible (although we will not leave out some of the more widespread goodies, such as the Northern Potoo!) DR has the highest number of endemics of any Caribbean island (around 30) and these include a trogon, 2 todies (a family of birds *only* found in the Caribbean), 2 parrots, an owl, 2 crows, 2 warblers, 4 tanagers and a crossbill. Ridgway's Hawk, another endemic, is one of the world's rarest birds (around 100 breeding pairs) and we will be visiting one of its last strongholds during nesting season, so we will hopefully be able to find a pair on territory. DR also has the Palmchat, a species of bird that is so unique that it has been classified into its own Family. For birders interested in seeing all of the bird Families of the world, DR is a must. In addition to the island endemics, DR has over 20 other species that are endemic or near-endemic to the Caribbean alone.

We will be birding a variety of habitats from dry thorn-scrub to mountain pine forest (DR has the highest mountains in the Caribbean) to cactus forest to cloud rain forest to the coast. The majority of our time will be spent in the SW corner of the country where most of the endemics make their home with a jaunt up to the NE corner for the Ridgway's Hawk. Plan on seeing 110-125 species of birds on this trip.

Trip details can be found at the bottom of pg. 3. For additional information, a detailed trip itinerary, or list of birds, please 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 great trip!



Palmchat (left)

*Narrow-billed
Tody (right)*

*Additional photos
of birds to be seen
on the trip can be
found on pg. 4.*

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President's Letter

By Ray Stocking

It is with great excitement that I announce to you here that the Washtenaw Audubon board recently made the decision to change the way membership and their due dates are processed. Effective immediately, all membership fees moving forward will come due in one of two segments each year. All new and existing memberships that come due between January and June will now be due on June 30th. New and existing memberships that fall between July and December will come due on December 31st.

The board decided to implement this (not so) new membership renewal format for the sole purpose of eliminating the complexities of managing our current renewals. Lack of time commitments and human resources are the dominating factors for this decision. Taking the lead from Michigan Audubon's recent decision to move to this format was also key in our decision. I appreciate their willingness to help explain to me how they moved forward with this new system. I believe this is very good for Washtenaw Audubon.

My one concern with this change was members thinking they were being short-changed because their initial or existing dues would provide them with less than a full year. I believe this format, where dues that are collected today would actually provide the member 14 months of membership, is the best way to re-transition the membership back to a manageable process.

In the short term, we may see a slight dip in annual dues considering some members will receive up to 18 months of membership for the price of 12. But in the long run, Washtenaw Audubon will come out ahead as we will be able to manage our renewal notices and collections twice a year versus 12 times a year.

I welcome your feedback on this new process we are implementing. Of course, if you have additional thoughts about how we can make membership with the Washtenaw Audubon Society a better experience for all, I welcome that feedback too!

Finally, I would like to encourage all members who are still receiving the printed newsletter to consider receiving the online edition only. The savings we have experienced over the past 18 months is starting to show. 45+ members now foregoing the paper newsletter is saving us almost \$60 each time we send this out. That totals \$360 a year, or almost two full scholarships we provide to up-and-coming birders. The savings only goes up as more and more members switch to the online only newsletter. Please contact me at president@washtenawaudubon.org if you would like to stop receiving the paper edition.
(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

I hope to see you out in the field or at one of the monthly programs coming up out at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens soon. It's always a delight to see new members at these events. Seeing long-time members who have not been to Washtenaw Audubon events in the recent past really excites me. I hope you come again soon.

Good birding!
Ray

Harold Eyster answers questions from the audience following his well-received Washtenaw Audubon program, "Extreme Birding: the Great Texas Birding Classic" on September 15. Photo: M. Sefton



Dominican Republic Trip Details

When: Saturday, April 16 (arrival)--Saturday, April 23 (last day of birding)

Cost: 3 participants: \$2990 per person	7: \$2050 per person
4: \$2700 per person	8: \$1990 per person
5: \$2350 per person	9: \$1850 per person
6: \$2150 per person	10: \$1780 per person

What's included: Lodging in double rooms (a supplement of 15% is charged for single room accommodation), all meals, transportation within the country, guide and entrance fees for the national parks.

What's not included: International flight and departure taxes, alcoholic drinks, personal spending, tips and travel insurance (repatriation, luggage loss and flight cancellation ...)

International flights: Once we get our group together we will work out a group-flight to Dominican Republic for those interested. However, you are free to organize your own flight 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 me a **deposit of \$600**. The trip is limited to only 10 participants and it will be based on whoever gets their deposits in first. When it fills up, it fills up! First preference will be given to current WAS members, but if there are still openings, it will be opened up to non-members as well.

Washtenaw Audubon Society 2009-10 Financial Report

Submitted by Elvera Shappirio

<u>Description</u>	<u>Checking</u>	<u>Savings</u>
Balances as of July 1, 2009	1,816.97	7,722.88
Checking Receipts	3,223.00	
Checking Expenditures	3,621.92	
Transfer:Matured CD to Savings		5,283.05
Error	0.06	
Savings Interest		19.47
Transfers: CD Interest to Savings		338.52
Balances as of June 30, 2010	1,417.99	13,359.98

Checking Account Expenditures

Newsletter Printing and Postage	1,659.40	
Speakers, Program Expense	120.00	
Grant: Harold Eyster	200.00	
Telephone Service	401.52	
Earth Day Fee	20.00	
Brochures: Safe Passage	106.00	
Liability Insurance	350.00	
Banking Costs (Checkbooks)	0.00	
Corporate Filing Fee	20.00	
Grants:River Rouge Bird Observatory	350.00	(2nd of 3 yearly)
Web Site Costs	162.00	
Christmas Count Expenses	138.00	
Property Costs: Searles Drain Fee	0.00	
Trip Van Rentals (no bill received)	0.00	
Postal Box Fee	60.00	
Safe Deposit Box	35.00	

Checking Account Receipts

Member Dues	1,861.00
Memorial Donations	480.00
Paypal=Dues	432.00
Donations	450.00
<u>Total Receipts</u>	3,223.00

Savings Account Receipts

Interest on Regular Savings Account	19.47
Interest on \$15000.00 CD (Interest included in smaller CD)	338.52 0.00
Total Savings Account Interest	357.99

Investment Account

The investment account includes one CD valued at \$15,000.00

The interest is transferred to the regular savings account on a monthly basis.

The \$15,000.00 CD matures Sept. 2010, current interest rate 1.8%

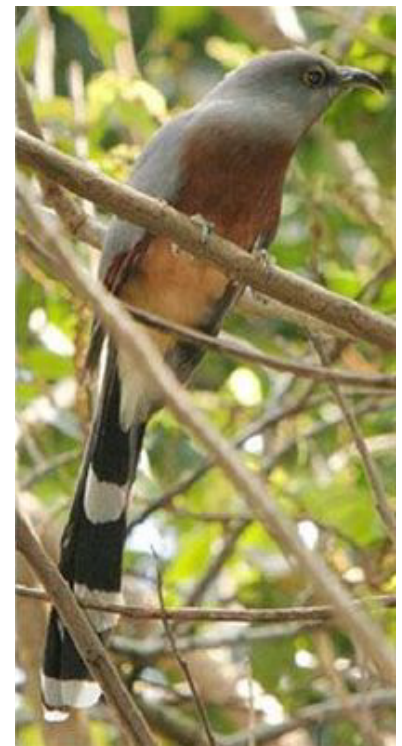
The \$5283.05 CD matured Oct. 2009, and was transferred to the Savings account



Additional endemic birds to be seen in the Dominican Republic:

Hispaniolan Trogon (left)

Bay-breasted Cuckoo (right)



Arachnophiles unite! *By Bryn Martin*

When I told their grandma that I was taking my twin 2-year old daughters Lily and Adelaide (*pictured right*) on a WAS field trip, she thought it was cute. When I told her it was to see spiders, she almost died. But my girls love spiders (and all “bugs” for that matter) as did all of the roughly 25 participants who joined Professor Cara Shillington for a very informative walk around Matthaei Botanical Gardens on July 17 looking for and learning about these often misunderstood creatures. As she pointed out, there are no venomous spiders in SE Michigan and all claims of Brown Recluses being spotted have turned



out to just be misidentifications. Even the old adage that “Daddy Longlegs are extremely venomous, but luckily their mouthparts can’t bite us” is a myth as I learned--they actually feed on detritus. (I also learned that Daddy Longlegs are properly called “Harvestmen”!) Many of the spiders were put into a magnifying jar that my girls really got into (*again, as shown in the photo*). We covered a lot of ground and visited a number of various habitats to find different species: Cellar Spiders that spun like they were caught in a mini-tornado when their webs were touched were found right next to the buildings, while Jumping and Crab Spiders had to be gleaned in a net in a field. One, the Spined Micrathena, we almost ran into, as it commonly spins its web directly across forest trails. (*Photo below*) After a while, my girls decided they’d had enough of spiders and wanted to go to the nearby Children’s Garden. Luckily, my wife was there to take them, so I could continue to enjoy the walk. I’d always



been interested in insects, but this gave me a real appreciation for spiders. All in all, we saw about 17 species and learned a lot of interesting facts. Also found with many of the spiders were their webs and these could be just as or more interesting than seeing the spiders themselves. Very diverse! Many participants even received a small field guide to the common spiders of the area with pictures and interesting facts. If this walk is offered again next year, I highly recommend it! Pull yourself away from the dull bird-days of July and you will discover a bizarre tiny world that many do not know exists. I just hope my girls are still into spiders next year!

Butterflies—and Bonuses—at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

Compiled by Monty Brown from reports by Roger Kuhlman and Cathy Carroll

Rainy weather on Saturday, July 24 prompted the postponement of WAS’s annual butterfly trip, which was led again this year by Roger Kuhlman, John Swales, and Roger Wykes. Although the outing for the 24th was postponed, the two Rogers were joined by 5 others who decided to ignore the conditions as best they could and to see what they could find. Their efforts were rewarded, as they managed to find twenty species of butterflies, as well as a Hummingbird Moth and a few different kinds of dragonflies.

A week later, the rescheduled “official” butterfly trip yielded twenty-two species of butterflies, the most noteworthy of which were Red-spotted Purple, Broad-winged Skipper, Eyed Brown and Harvester. Several dragonfly species were found, this time including Widow Skimmer, Common Whitetail, Blue Dasher, Halloween Pennant, Common Green Darner, Ruby Meadowhawk, and a possible Band-winged Meadowhawk.

Dragonflies were not the only bonus by-product of the search for butterflies, however. While the group on the 31st was in a dry field looking for butterflies, Roger Kuhlman heard a low hissing sound in the grass. “I told people to step back from the immediate area and I would investigate. It turned out to be a Massasauga rattlesnake. I think everyone on the trip got a good view of it and its tiny rattles on the end of its tail. A great treat.”

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (September--November)

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 Sept.-Oct.

Weekly Fall Migration Walks in Nichols Arboretum This is the fifth year of these popular, leaderless walks to monitor and observe spring and fall migration at The Arb. Participants will gather at the end of the Riverview Drive cul-de-sac (off Geddes Road) near the eastern edge of the arboretum at 8 AM. The assembled birders will choose a route or routes and take on the challenge of finding migrants. Along the way, participants can enjoy marvelous fall scenery and crisp weather. The walks go until roughly 11:00, but anyone can join or leave the group as his or her schedule requires.

Sun., Oct. 10

The Big Sit (Independence Lake County Park) Leader: Don Chalfant. 5 AM--4 PM. This is a low-key international competition that Don has participated in for a more than a dozen years running. The task is to try to see or hear as many bird species as possible while remaining in a circle of 17 feet in diameter (around 220 square feet). One of the advantages of attending The Big Sit is that the timing can suit your schedule. You can arrive before dawn to join Don for his owling, or sleep in. It is also a great outing for those with restricted mobility. We recommend that you bring food and a folding chair, in addition to your binoculars. Independence Lake County Park is in Webster Township off of Jennings Road, north of North Territorial Road and west of US 23.

Sat., Oct. 30

Cranes in Jackson County Leader: Lathe Claflin. During the fall, eastern Jackson County is a central spot for cranes preparing to migrate south. Haehnle Sanctuary and other nearby locations can have thousands of Sandhill Cranes at a time, and in many years one or two Whooping Cranes. Meet in the Sears parking lot at Briarwood Mall near sign #6 for a 3:15 PM. departure to carpool to Jackson County. Alternatively, you can meet the group at the Park-and-Ride lot near the northwest corner of Mt. Hope and I-94 (exit 150) at 4:00. Lathe will lead the group on a walk to try to see cranes (and any other interesting birds that happen to be around), and then we will go to whichever wetland has been the most active roosting spot and watch the cranes fly in for the night.

Sun., Nov. 14

Belle Isle, Detroit Leaders: Steve Santner and Fred Charbonneau. Belle Isle is a fine location for viewing migrating or wintering waterfowl. We will meet in the Sears parking lot at Briarwood Mall near sign #6 and the carpool will depart at 7:45 AM. We will return to Briarwood around 1:00 PM, so participants may want to pack snacks or a lunch. This trip is co-sponsored with Detroit Audubon.

Gull Trip to Salem Landfill (Saturday, December 4)

Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count (Saturday, December 18)

Winter Birding around Sault Ste. Marie (February 4--6, 2011)

“Green” Big Day *By Jacco Gelderloos, Laurent Fournier*

4:00 a.m. Off we go! I pick up Laurent en route to our first night-time stop, the Cherry Hill Preserve. Both of us are quite excited to finally be on our way, after months of anticipation and planning. Adrenaline flowing through our veins, we cross Washtenaw and head down Chalmers, all the while speculating what our first bird of the day might turn out to be. We do not have to wait long: in the pre-dawn darkness, an American Robin sounds off to get us going. As we pedal our way towards our true starting point, we go over our goals and expectations for the day: 80 species would be the absolute minimum, 100 the target, anything above that bonus. The first and only try at a Green Big Day, by Harold Eyster and Andy Johnson, had turned up 74 species on a 40-mile route, limited to Lima Township (see Harold’s fine report (and much more!) at <http://www.aba.org/yby/win.html>) – we had come up with a 45-mile route, though Superior Twp, Ann Arbor Twp and City, and Pittsfield Twp.

4:35 a.m. With five species tallied and a few minutes ahead of schedule (always a good thing on a Big Day), we arrive at Cherry Hill Preserve where our day is to start in earnest. After a brief walk into the preserve, we are surprised by the unmistakable ‘peent’ of an American Woodcock, shortly followed by the

odd ‘chip’ note and then the quirky song of a Yellow-breasted Chat, our main night-time target here. On the way back to the bikes, we stop in the mature wooded portion of the preserve, where we pick up several Soras, and, after considerable effort, our hoped-for Eastern Screech-Owl.

After a short, unsuccessful stop at a marsh along Cherry Hill we pedal our way to the LeFurge Woods Preserve at the intersection Prospect and Vreeland. Along Cherry Hill Rd, Eastern Towhees and Field Sparrows are everywhere, along with a nice selection of other dawn chorus species. Within minutes of arriving at the LeFurge wetland, we add, among others, Pied-billed Grebe, Swamp Sparrow, and Willow Flycatcher. No Marsh Wrens, bitterns or rails here, so we decide to cut our losses and move on. Our decision to use our time gain for a quick stop at the Meyer Preserve a little farther south along Prospect proves very fortuitous, because we find not only Mute Swan and Great Egret, but a few singing Marsh Wrens as well – a hard bird for our route, for sure!

6:30 a.m. We’re still doing well for time as we bike along Vreeland Rd towards the open fields in the area of Harris Rd, and, if necessary, Gotfredson Rd.

(continued on the next page)

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
(with printed newsletter \$25)

_____ Student \$10
(emailed newsletters only)

_____ Senior \$10
(with printed newsletter \$15)

_____ Patron \$50

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.

(Green Day continued from the previous page)

Before we get there, though, a Virginia Rail sounds off in a flooded area on the south side of the road, a species we had all but discounted as a possibility after missing it at our earlier stops at several wetlands. Then, a few hundred yards down the road, we experience something that we would have missed completely had we been in a car. Near the Conservancy Farm, we hear the ‘*dip*’ of a (late?) Yellow-rumped Warbler, and stop to investigate. Soon after we locate the warbler, we find a silent White-crowned Sparrow. Not a minute after this lucky find, what turns out to be the only Ruby-throated Hummingbird zips past, followed by a first-year male Orchard Oriole! Had it not been for that single ‘*dip*’ call (which would have been inaudible from a car), we would have missed all three of the other species for the day! Ah, birding by bike....

With that experience and most of our open field target species tallied (except for American Kestrel), we head back west along Vreeland to explore the wetland area under development in the northwest corner of the Vreeland and Prospect intersection, where we arrive around 7:00 a.m., some 15 minutes ahead of schedule, with our species tally at 55. As we venture along the two-track leading to a wetland area, we pick up new species at a steady pace. However, our best species here are in the wetland proper: a drake Blue-winged Teal, a pair of Sandhill Cranes (very unexpected!), and a peep that we manage to identify as a Least Sandpiper. On the way back out, a Bobolink treats us to its thrilling display flight.

Our planned route calls for us to return to the Cherry Hill Preserve, but after we pick up Brown Thrasher (one of the target birds for Cherry Hill) along Vreeland, we opt to skip Cherry Hill and head straight for Marshall Park, thus gaining serious time. En route, along Gale Rd, we add some new species, including Wilson’s and Magnolia Warbler. We arrive at Marshall Park just after 8:00 a.m. – target birds here are Hooded Warbler (check) and Blue-winged Warbler (3 very active males – check!). Other than that, though, the park is not very birdy, so we cut our time here short as well and head towards the Botanical Gardens – in the process, we finally get a House Sparrow (species # 85). Pedaling down Dixboro Rd, we decide to change our plans yet again, and skip the Bot Gardens to try and make it to the Huron River valley parks as early as we can. On the way, we find another bird that we would have missed if we had been birding by car: a Blackpoll Warbler is singing its heart out in a lone tree along

9:15 a.m. After rushing through the South Pond and Gallup Park stops (Double-crested Cormorant, check, and Cliff Swallow, check), we make it to the Arb. Almost immediately we start finding good birds; on the east side of Dow Field we come across a small mixed flock with Chestnut-sided and Canada Warbler, American Redstart, and a Carolina Wren (missed by Laurent, unfortunately). Our list grows steadily as we venture past the beach and up the main valley, and somewhere near the cemetery we tally species # 100: Pine Warbler. Passing the century mark is great for our motivation and our spirits are high when we notice a raptor soaring overhead near the Geddes Rd entrance. “Probably one of the Red-tails, but let’s check it out anyway.” And what do you know, it’s a Broad-winged Hawk! Clearly, our stop at the Arb has been very productive, adding well over a dozen species to our tally, now at 103. Better still, we leave the Arb just shy of 11:00 a.m. almost two hours ahead of schedule!

On our first pass, the Burton Tower Peregrines are not home, so we opt for a quick lunch at Panera, then try again. No luck the second time around either, so we cut our losses and head down Liberty towards our next destination, Dolph Park. In the days leading up to our Big Day, several good warbler species had been seen there (Mourning, Connecticut, and Prothonotary!), so we have high hopes for Dolph. Alas, by the time we get to the park the mid-day doldrums have hit us and we manage only one new species here (Least Flycatcher), though we come across some fellow birders we offer some advice for our afternoon birding time (thanks, Bob, Roger, and Lee!) – it seems we need to head west, yet another departure from our planned route. But with the luxury of time and a diminishing list of possible species, we decide to go for it and off we go again, down Liberty towards Saginaw Forest.

2:00 p.m. We’ve arrived at Saginaw Forest just before 2 o’clock and have started off with a new bird for the day: Hairy Woodpecker. This lifts our spirits significantly – we had tallied only **1** new species since 11:00 a.m., which is enough of a drought to challenge any birder’s commitment to a Big Day! During our walk through the park we (finally) manage the day’s only Belted Kingfisher, followed by a very vocal Red-breasted Nuthatch. It sure feels good to be picking up some species again, and we go from debating whether or not to call it a day to speculating if we could make it to 120! Ah, the ups and downs of Big Day birding....

Several miles down Liberty we cross Zeeb Rd and bird the closed section of Liberty near the DeVine Preserve in hopes of finding some additional open or brush country species. In spite of the afternoon

warmth, birds are out and about singing, but we fail to find anything new at first. Then, to our surprise, we hear the unmistakable ‘*rrrree-BEW*’ of an Alder Flycatcher – neither one of us had thought that these usually late migrants had arrived yet! A nice bonus, indeed, and given the ‘easy’ species left on our list we set off towards the stops on the south end of town with renewed hopes of making it to the rather impressive total of 120 for the day. Given the stiff easterly wind that has been picking up as the day progresses, we opt to not go any farther west, even though we have plenty of time and could pick up quite a few additional species (shorebirds at Schneider Rd pond, for example). These two arguments are rather easily dismissed by our conviction that for every mile we go west we’ll have to bike back east as well, with a stiff headwind! The miles are starting to count.....

An unanticipated downside to this unplanned part of the route is that it involves significant distances with relatively few obvious birding areas, but we make the most of it and pick up Bank Swallow (along Tessmer Rd, near Waters Rd) and Northern Mockingbird (along Ellsworth) – somehow, Laurent noticed the flash of white on its wings as it perched in the crook of a tree, what an unexpected find!

We make it to our next ‘official’ stop, the Ann Arbor Airport, almost 9 miles away from our previous stop at the DeVine Preserve – thankfully, headwinds weren’t too bad for much of the way! The wind is distorting the songs of the few birds that are singing at the airport, but none of the birds we identify are new for the day. No kestrel here either, so our chances of getting this species for the day are rapidly diminishing. Next stop, Avis Farms – just before we turn into the complex, we notice a trio of large birds in the back of a corn field: Wild Turkeys! As we stand around congratulating each other, we hear several starlings sound the alarm: Cooper’s Hawk (# 112)! Good stuff to get two new species in such quick succession, which seems to bode well for the next few stops. Unfortunately, our hopes don’t pan out and we come up empty both at Avis and at the wetland on the corner of State and Textile. Since we are now well past 5:00 p.m., our conversation centers on which species are still possible at this point. This late in the game, our hopes clearly center on the Ann Arbor Landfill complex, where we might pick up some waterfowl, shorebirds, or even passerine or two (Sedge Wren would be nice...).

Near the intersection of Marton and Morgan, as we’re closing in on the landfill, Laurent spots a small bird flitting around and bobbing its tail: finally, an Eastern Phoebe! We spend some time taking in this last-minute addition to our list (see Laurent’s photo), then set off for the fields on the east side of Morgan Rd. Although Savannah and Song Sparrows are sounding off, and Eastern Meadowlarks are singing their hearts out, we are unable to

pick out anything new, much less a hoped-for Sedge Wren. Moving on to the spot where we can look out over the landfill pond, we scan the pond for birds, any birds, really. There are a few geese, some Mallards, and a few Ring-billed Gulls, but no hoped-for Hooded Merganser or Herring Gull. Although there are some Killdeer and Spotted Sandpipers along the pond’s fringes, it takes a scan with the scope to locate and identify our lone new species here: a Lesser Yellowlegs (# 114). Spending any more time here is clearly pointless, so we head off again, towards Lillie Park.

6:00 p.m. The nearly 50 miles we’ve biked at this point are clearly being felt by both of us and the limited options left as to adding species to our current tally of 114 convince us that we should call it a day, skip the final few stops and head home to our families.

In the end, we birded for 14 hours, biked 50 miles, walked several more, and tallied 114 species in the process. On average, then, that boils down to a little over 8 species/hour and slightly more than 2 species/mile. As is clear from the chart below, though, the rate of new species/hour throughout the day is rather different. The early morning hours are clearly the crucial time of day on any Big Day, as they tend to be followed by mid-day doldrums, when new species are few and far between – this is a very difficult portion of any Big Day and a test of your mental resilience, for sure. Luckily, as evening approaches, bird activity tends to pick back up and the effort becomes a little easier again.

Quite unusually for a Big Day effort, during the day we changed our planned route on the fly, skipping several sites and adding others, mostly on the west side of town. I think this is a good indication that Green Big Days are a new, untested phenomenon, with plenty of room for improvement in both route and schedule. As always, we missed some expected/hoped-for species (American Kestrel, for example), but those misses were more than made up for by the birds we did see, or the way we saw them (*à la* the encounter along Vreeland Rd related above). Moreover, our day shows that Green Big Days can conceivably be competitive in the grand scheme of Big Day birding; based on our day in the field I think it’s possible to accomplish a count of 125-130 (with some luck and a well-planned route), a top 10 tally for May Big Days in Washtenaw County. To reference, a recent bike-

(Concluded on the next page)

(Green Day continued from the previous page)

only effort during the Berrien County birdathon tallied 141 species, which ended up scoring in the top half of overall results! All of this is what, to me, constitutes and adds to the thrill and beauty of a Big Day – this effort all the more satisfying in that it had no negative environmental impact.

Finally, since our intended goal was to start a trend or tradition for Green Big Days in Washtenaw County, a few words on the rules we used. First and foremost, no cars were involved in any part of our effort. We started the day at our homes and ended it there as well; this to clarify suggestions that a vehicle could be used to drop off birder and bike the day before for the birder to then work his/her way back to town (or vice versa). In short, the no fossil fuel rule extends to the entire effort, from start to finish. Any use of a vehicle clearly goes, in our opinion, against the spirit of a Green Big Day (same goes for scouting in the days leading up to the effort). Other than that, general Big Day rules apply. Good birding - Laurent and I are already looking forward to May 2011!



*Eastern Phoebe (Left)
Killdeer (Below)
Photos by Laurent Fournier*



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., Oct. 20** **Birding in Ecuador:** Join Bryn Martin for a journey to Ecuador, which has more than 1800 species of birds, the fourth largest number of any country in the world. Bryn has made three trips to Ecuador, and he'll talk about the diversity of habitats from the high Andes to the Amazonian rain forest, and the birds that can be seen in each habitat, as well as some of the lodges that cater to birders. Bryn Martin teaches high school in Livonia and is an avid international birder.
- Wed., Nov. 17** **Florida's Birding Hotspots:** Join Betty Bishop for a tour of Florida's many birding hotspots. In addition to being a great winter getaway destination, Florida has some birds found nowhere else in the US, and boasts a unique habitat in the Everglades. Betty will talk about these sites and the interesting birds to be found there. Betty Bishop is a former Washtenaw Audubon board member and a keen birder.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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