



**WASHTENAW**  
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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**NEWSLETTER**

**September/October 2011**

**WAS Trip to Pointe Mouillee**

*By Sarah Toner*

WAS took a great trip to Pointe Mouillee State Game Area on August 28<sup>th</sup>. The highlights were Hudsonian Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers, and Wilson's Phalaropes. When we arrived, we funneled into four cars and raced to the action at Cell 3. The number of shorebirds was astounding, and we quickly found a Dunlin, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and a flock of Pectoral Sandpipers on the western side of Cell 3. With the sun in our eyes and the Hudsonian Godwit across the cell, we moved to the eastern, lakeside dike, stopping briefly for a beginner's shorebird course comparing Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. As we rounded the corner, we noticed several photographers lying in the mud, twenty feet from the godwit.

The godwit flushed and the muddy photographers left as we turned our attention to masses of peeps: extremely photogenic Baird's Sandpipers, as well as plentiful Semipalmated Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers, and Sanderlings. We kept moving up the dike towards the godwit, which had returned to its original position, chuckling to see the photographers washing the mud off their clothes in Lake Erie. Then the birds called, and we continued, finding White-rumped Sandpipers that kept moving out of the scope view, a pair of Stilt Sandpipers, and a Wilson's Phalarope on land.

Finally reaching the godwit, which offered us good views next to dowitchers and Pectoral Sandpipers, we also noted a Canvasback, a flock of Ruddy Ducks and a Lesser Scaup in the water at Cell 3. After studying the

shorebirds, we returned to the cars, noting a Greater Scaup in Cell 4. We walked and drove further up the eastern side of Cell 3, some of us seeing a Merlin hunting in the Humphries Unit. After the excitement of Cell 3, we drove to the Bloody Run Unit, where flocks of yellowlegs were flying in. A few Stilt Sandpipers mixed in amongst Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs provided great opportunities to compare the three, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew over. As we drove back to the parking lot, we stopped to look at a large flock of Bobolinks landing in the Long Pond Unit, the perfect ending to a good day of birding that totaled 52 species in five hours. Many thanks to Jim Fowler for leading this trip!



*Hudsonian Godwit*

*Photo by Don Chalfont (with more on pg. 3!)*

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## Letter from the President, Sue Johnson

### *Looking Back*

During the first several months of serving as Washtenaw Audubon's president, I've been honest that I am only an intermediate birder, with much still to learn in the field. It's my hope that my transparency is encouraging to the other non-experts among us. As for the expert WAS birders, I continue to appreciate all you do to inspire, and the many ways you offer wonderful learning opportunities for the rest of us. Thank you!

Of late, I have been working on studying birdsongs, including some of the ones that are very, very familiar to many of you. So while I feel comfortable identifying the song of the Common Yellowthroat and the Black-throated Green Warbler (which I couldn't manage a year ago), other songs I hear far more regularly leave me stumped. As we spent time at our family cottage in Interlochen this summer, a very familiar song sang for two days in a poplar near the water's edge. I am convinced it was this bird's job to teach me, because he remained hidden as I tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get my eye on him. When you can't see- you have to listen. So listen I did- to the point of frustration, even sketching out the pattern of the song I was hearing. I have rarely found the bird song descriptions helpful in bird guides, but by the time I'd listened for two days, when I finally read Sibley's description of the Song Sparrow- I knew I had my bird. A Song Sparrow? How embarrassing-but trust me, I've got this one down now. Progress.

A little more encouraging was the experience of a new life-bird this summer. Of course the longer you bird, life-birds are harder and harder to come by. We spent a day exploring Parc National des Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Riviere-Malbaie in Quebec, Canada. Andy was off on his bike, and I was left to wander near the visitor center, without my trusted guide. I was encouraged that several of the songs in these boreal woods were familiar to me- Chickadees, a Northern Parula, and Cedar Waxwings. And then I heard what I thought was a rather raspy sounding chickadee. So I pushed into the swath of evergreens and into clear view popped a lovely, brown-capped bird with pinkish flanks: I had my first Boreal Chickadee (eat your heart out Harold!). Heard, pushed, and identified...I have decided I earned my Intermediate Birder badge. Onward and upward.

### *Looking Forward*

With summer winding down, it's easy to move into "new school year" mode. But for the birds, and for Washtenaw Audubon, fall migration is already underway. Be sure to check out the rest of this newsletter (and our website) for details on upcoming programs on Chile, Black-backed Woodpeckers, and the Netherlands, as well as Weekly Fall Migration Walks in the Arb, The Big Sit on October 9<sup>th</sup>, and the ever-popular Gull Trip to the Salem Landfill in December. On our home page, there are also many helpful links (listed under our Field Trip and Program updates) that offer information on the ABA, Michigan Audubon, various birding sites, and other bird-friendly organizations. Take a look!

Happy Birding,

Sue

## Rare Bird Alerts

### Michigan Bird Report

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

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

## Use the Online "Birds of North America" through the Ann Arbor District Library

By Karen Markey

Ann Arbor District Library (AADL) users can now use the online Birds of North America (BNA). BNA is a publishing project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. BNA Online provides comprehensive life histories for over 700 species of birds breeding in the USA and includes Hawaii, Alaska, and Canada.

For example, entering "golden winged warbler" into the search box results in a detailed species account that includes many photos, audio gallery, and video gallery. The photos of the Golden-wings and hybrids are awesome. Search for Whimbrels, Peregrines, Clay-colored sparrows, and your favorite BNAs.

If you already have an Ann Arbor District Library Card and patron number, you can log onto the BNA Online 24 hours a day from a personal computer that has an Internet connection. Type <http://www.aadl.org/research/a-z/#A>, scroll down to and select "Birds of North America Online," and enter your AADL username and password to connect to BNA Online. Anyone can use BNA Online at the downtown library or one of the lovely new AADL branches.

If you do not have an AADL library card, apply for one at the AADL. Cards are issued free to residents of the Ann Arbor School district. See <http://www.aadl.org/> for more information. Those who live out of the library district can subscribe to BNA Online for a fee. See <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/> for sample accounts and subscription information. You can also request your library subscribe to BNA Online by putting requests into your library's suggestion box.

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### Arb Walk report, Thurs. Sept. 8 *By Eric Huston*

About a half-dozen intrepid birders turned up for this Thursday morning Arb walk in Ann Arbor. Shortly after setting off, we were treated to views of an Olive-sided Flycatcher in a snag across the railroad tracks near the northeast end of Dow Prairie. Just as the rain was beginning to set in, we finally encountered a small pocket of migrants near the southern end of the boardwalk area. In addition to a Pewee and several Red-eyed Vireos, a few warbler species appeared, including American Redstart, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, and Black-and-white. By the time we were finished looking at those birds, the precipitation had become heavy enough to deter even the most die-hards in the group, so we decided to call it a morning. But it was good to confirm that there are indeed migrants in the area...perhaps after this rain lifts, the birding will pick up!



*Photos by Don Chalfont from Point Mouillee field trip (pg. 1)*

# Washtenaw Audubon Society

## 2010-11 Financial Report

submitted by Elvera Shappirio

<u>Description</u>	<u>Checking</u>	<u>Savings</u>
Balances as of July 1, 2009	1,417.99	13,359.98
Checking Receipts	2,170.08	
Checking Expenditures	3,039.38	
delayed deposit	285.00	
error		
Savings Interest		13.45
Transfers: CD interest to savings		143.40
Balances as of June 30, 2010 plus delayed deposit	833.69	13,516.83

### Checking Account Receipts

Member Dues	1,455.00
memorial donations	50.00
Paypal=dues	610.08
members dues, delayed deposit	285.00
Donations	55.00

Total Receipts 2,170.08

### Checking Account Expenditures

Newsletter Printing and Postage	993.12	
Speakers, Program Expense	35.00	
Grant: Harold Eyster	300.00	
Telephone service	445.65	
King School prize	32.62	
Brochures:	0.00	
Liability Insurance	350.00	
Banking costs (checkbooks)	17.99	
Corporate Filing Fee	20.00	
Grants: River Rouge Bird Observatory	335.00	3rd of 3 yearly
Web site costs	162.00	
Christmas Count Expenses	147.00	
Property costs: Searles drain fee	0.00	
trip van rentals	109.00	
Postal box fee	60.00	
Safe Deposit box	32.00	
	3,039.38	

### Savings Account Receipts

Interest on Regular Savings Account	13.45
Interest on \$15000.00 CD	143.40
Total Savings Account Interest	156.85

### 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. 2011, current interest rate .74%

## We Had Them Feeding Out of Our Hands!

By Monty Brown

A group of about two dozen birders descended on the trails of Kensington Metropark in southwestern Oakland County on September 11 for a joint Washtenaw Audubon–Oakland Audubon field trip, led by Cathy Carroll of WAS and Don Burlett of OAS. The skies early in the day yielded difficult light, but by the end of the outing the sun was stronger and the optics much better.

Everyone was thrilled early on to see two Pileated Woodpeckers in flight and then perched at a distance. Those who stayed long enough (unlike your correspondent!) reportedly were also treated to views of Red-headed Woodpeckers, as well as a Broad-winged Hawk. Other nice birds included both Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Tennessee and Palm Warblers, an Olive-sided Flycatcher, and a few Empidonax flycatchers. A family of Sandhill Cranes walked right through the parking lot and one of the trails late in the morning too.

One of the treats of Kensington is that many birds there will eat right out of people's hands on some of the trails near the Nature Center. Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice do this reliably. This was the first time, however, that I had seen a Downy Woodpecker do it. A White-breasted Nuthatch landed on my hand a couple times too, but apparently did not like my seed offerings enough to try any.

Thanks to Cathy for bringing seed for everyone and for collaborating with Don on this trip. We hope that we will have more joint events with Oakland Audubon and other neighboring societies.



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## Good Birds Despite Poor Light at Hudson Mills

By Monty Brown

We have had tough weather on our two trips to Hudson Mills this year, both led by Karen Markey. In the spring, we had great, long looks at a Blue-winged Warbler early on and some other good birds, but steady rain eventually turned into pouring rain, and we called it a day fairly early. On Saturday, September 10, it rained again much of the morning, and the weak light and haze presented challenging conditions. Nevertheless, Karen got most of the group looks at three dozen species, and those who stayed overtime with her got another dozen or so. In addition to getting a Blue-winged Warbler again, other warbler species included Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Cape May, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Nashville, and Tennessee, as well as American Redstart. Other birds of note included Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, House Wren, Swainson's Thrush, Brown Thrasher, and Scarlet Tanager. Not bad for a crummy day!

The most abundant species was easily Cedar Waxwing. It was also a big day for woodpeckers, with Northern Flickers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers very active for much of the morning, and Downy and Hairy visible occasionally. Aside from the birds, we had excellent looks at a trail-side frog, which was identified at first as a Leopard Frog, but which Jerry Herman conclusively corrected as a Pickerel Frog.

# Upcoming WAS Field Trips (September--December, 2011)

By Monty Brown, Field Trip Coordinator ([fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto: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](mailto:birders@umich.edu) listserv and/or our web page at [www.washtenawaudubon.org/fieldtrips.php](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/fieldtrips.php) with updates as needed. If you have a suggestion for a field trip, please send an e-mail.

## Thursdays in September & October

**Weekly Fall Migration Walks in Nichols Arboretum** This will be the 6th year of these popular, leaderless walks to observe fall migration at The Arb. Every Thursday morning in September and October participants will gather at 8:00 at the end of the Riverview Drive cul-de-sac (off Geddes Road) near the eastern edge of the arboretum. The walks go until roughly 11:00, but everyone can join or leave the group as his or her schedule requires.

## Sept. 23-- 26

**Cape May! Leader: Dawn Swartz--Cancelled**

## Sunday, October 9, (5:00 AM--4:00)

**The Big Sit (Independence Lake County Park)** Leader: Don Chalfant This is a low-key international competition that Don has participated in for 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). For others who take part in this event, it will be an opportunity to observe the birds and to learn from Don about identifying a wide variety of species by eye and ear. For participants other than Don, the timing can be completely flexible. You can arrive before dawn to join in the owling, come after breakfast, after church, after lunch--whatever works for you. It is also a great outing for those with restricted mobility since everything takes place in a fixed spot. For those staying for any significant amount of time, we recommend that you bring food and a folding chair, in addition to your binoculars. The park is in Webster Township off of Jennings Road, north of North Territorial Road and west of US 23.

## Mid-October (exact date to be determined near the event date)

**Movie Night: *The Big Year*** We will schedule an outing to see the new movie based on Mark Obmascik's book *The Big Year*, which tells the story of a year-long competition to see as many bird species as possible in the ABA-area. (No, it's not about the Washtenaw Wingnuts!) The film features an impressive cast, including Owen Wilson, Steve Martin, Jack Black, Anjelica Huston, and Dianne Wiest. It is scheduled for release on Friday, October 14, and we will probably set the date for this outing soon thereafter. The final details will have to wait until closer to the date of the event when we know the area show times. We will gather at a local theater to see the film, and then repair to a nearby place to discuss it over beverages. Please check the WAS field trip page for updates.

## December 3

**Gull Trip to Salem Landfill** Leader: Rob French

## December 17

**Christmas Bird Count** Organizer: Jacco Gelderloos

## The New Michigan Recreation Passport is Great! CHECK YES!

When you renew your license plate this time around, be sure to check YES to get a \$10 recreation passport. The passport is good for the same amount of time as your license plate and the \$10 fee gets you into all 98 state parks and recreation areas (no more need to buy those annual or day passes!). As a bonus, your money helps preserve:

- 133 state forest campgrounds
- Nearly 1,000 miles of hiking, biking and skiing trails
- More than 1,000 boat launches
- Historic and cultural sites in state parks
- Parks in your own community

A few other facts:

- The Recreation Passport replaces the state park sticker.
- Motorcycle Passports are just \$5.
- Camping fees will remain in effect for state parks and in state forests.
- The Recreation Passport is valid for the duration of your license plate registration.

Questions? Call 517-241-7275

[http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365\\_55798\\_56688-234626--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10365_55798_56688-234626--,00.html)

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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\_\_\_\_\_ RENEWAL \_\_\_\_\_ NEW MEMBER

### Membership Dues:

\_\_\_\_\_ ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual/Household \$20  
(with printed newsletter \$25)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Student \$10  
(emailed newsletters only)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 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.

## 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.

- Sept. 21**      **Chile: Birding at the End of the World.** Join Rodolfo Palma for a visit to the southernmost South American country. Chile has 460 species of birds, including 12 endemics. A variety of geographic features, including grasslands, mountains, the driest desert in the world, fjords, and a long coastline make for some interesting habitats. WAS member Rodolfo Palma has visited and birded in Chile on several occasions, and has many photos. Chilean snacks will also be available.
- Oct. 19**      **Adventures with Black-backed Woodpeckers.** Join Washtenaw Audubon member and life-long birder Eric Huston for an informative program on this beautiful bird. The Black-backed Woodpecker is an inhabitant of boreal forests, often moving into areas of recent forest fires. A highly sought-after bird in northern Michigan, its range also extends into the Sierra Nevada of California, where Eric has spent the past two summers working as a field technician studying this fire-loving species, and collecting data on populations of other species that share its recently burned forest habitat.
- Nov. 16**      **Reclaiming Land for Wildlife in the Netherlands.** Join WAS member Jacco Gelderloos for a program on the history and wildlife of the Oostvaardersplassen, one of the Netherlands' most renowned nature areas. In addition to the history behind the Oostvaardersplassen's creation, and the birds to be seen there, Jacco will describe how the introduction of large herbivores affects habitat availability for resident and migrating birds. Jacco Gelderloos is the coordinator for the Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count, and an experienced field trip leader.

### Washtenaw Audubon Society

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