



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

May/June 2012

Salamandering (4/28/12) *By Bryn Martin*

According to our guide Eddie Sanchez, the Americas are the epicenter of salamander diversity! And to think I'd yet to see a wild one. So, for me, this field trip had a two-fold purpose: 1. to add new lifers to my animal life-list and 2. to allow my twin 4-year-old girls the chance to get messy in an organized nature trek. This field trip was perfect for kids. My girls can't yet use binoculars (though they try) but they can roll over logs and stones and enjoy the slow-moving docile amphibians found beneath. They loved it! And apparently, I wasn't the only person that thought that this would make the perfect field trip for kids. Of the 30 or so people who participated, about 1/3 of them were



children, ranging from 2 years old to teens. This was a very participatory field trip. On many birding trips, it's going to be the "crack" adult birders who find the goodies for the others to enjoy. Here, any kid pushing over a log can be a hero making a great find for the group. Eddie really knows his stuff and he has found that the corner of Hudson Mills that he took us to seems to be very productive for salamanders. I was surprised at how successful we were. It was a chilly, drizzly day and many of us worried that this would lessen our chances at finding anything. Eddie assured us that, in fact, this was perfect weather for our endeavor! After a short lesson at a picnic spot where we were taught the basics about the 10 species of salamanders in Michigan and a hands-on display of many of the species he had brought with him, including the largest terrestrial salamander in the world, the Tiger Salamander, we hit the field. Many of Michigan's salamanders are aquatic, such as the famous Mud Puppy, so we weren't searching them out. Our quarry were in a group called "mole salamanders" because of their typically subterranean behavior. It was this time of year that the salamanders came above ground to mate and lay their eggs and, thus, this was the perfect time of the year to look for them. All in all, we were able to find individuals representing 4 species: Four-toed, Blue-spotted, Red-backed and Spotted (*photo above*). I really didn't know



what to expect and I found this amazing! I'd gotten my girls pumped all week to go on this field trip and I really didn't know how well we would do. It couldn't have been better! Great thanks to Eddie for his expertise and a big thanks to all of the others on the field trip who went out of their way to help kids not their own--whether it was to get a better look at a creature or pick them up when they tripped in the woods. Maybe I'm only speaking as a parent, but exposing the youth and passing on the love of nature is really what it's all about. The next week, my girls took their amphibian book to school every day and shared the pictures of what they'd seen.

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Dear Birders,

I ended my last letter commenting on Don Chalfant's fabulous find of a Kirtland's Warbler last May, as well as my poor luck for never getting a glimpse of it.

My luck hasn't changed. I didn't see the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher because I was responsible and stayed at work too long, nor did I see this year's Kirtland's Warbler at Dolph, found and reported by Mike Sefton on May 5th. My misfortune aside, Mike's Kirtland's is, of course a very strong candidate for this year's "Bird of the Year." Congratulations, Mike!

But then, in many respects I am lucky. I am lucky because on my recent visit to Magee Marsh, I was treated to all my favorite warblers, ending the day with the prettiest Prothonotary Warbler I've ever seen (though I think I say that whenever I encounter this species). But maybe this one was prettier because I heard it first. As many of you know, I am not one of Washtenaw Audubon's star birders, and becoming more adept at birding by ear is a goal of mine. A year ago, I didn't think it was possible, but with the help of some CDs in the car and the gentle tutelage of friends in the field, I am making progress, albeit slowly. I am lucky because I work three minutes from Dolph Park and can take in little snippets of birding to and from work to help get my ears in shape.

Rethinking my Scissor-tailed Flycatcher quest, I suppose I could say I was lucky because misery loves company, and there were plenty of hopeful birders when I arrived too late at Lower Huron Metro Park. I was not alone in my unsuccessful pursuit, and I am confident that eventually the law of averages will kick in.

I hope you have taken the opportunity to enjoy this migration season close to home, or on trips to other birding hot spots. When I arrived at Magee Marsh last week, after the short 90 minute drive, I was quickly reminded that many birders come from all over the world to experience what is in our back yard. We are lucky indeed.

Happy Birding,

Sue Johnson, President

Dolph Park Trip Report (5/5) *By Karen Markey*

Despite the cool, overcast start, almost 40 birders gathered this morning to tour Dolph Park on Ann Arbor's far west side. Thanks to Don Chalfant for leading half of the group because Dolph is a difficult place to get all birders on one bird due to its thick vegetation and narrow trails. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were plentiful and in love. Seeing a male meant a female was nearby. A sharp-eyed birder located one female grosbeak on the nest for all in my group to see. We had simultaneous Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers on adjacent trees where my group could compare sizes of birds and bills. Of the warblers, my group had great looks at buckets of Yellow-rumped Warblers, Palm Warblers, and Magnolia Warblers. We worked the Northern Parula until everyone saw this conspicuous singer. A few birders in Don's group spotted an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER. Also we had great looks at two Blue-headed Vireos. Unexpected was a flyover of about four dozen Double-crested Cormorants. Thanks to all for great spotting and for helping others find rapidly-moving birds. Special thanks to Don Chalfant who came to Dolph to photograph birds this morning but ended up leading half our group today.

Rare Bird Alerts

Michigan Bird Report

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

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

Help us purchase this key property for Haehnle Sanctuary

A remarkable opportunity has materialized for the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary Committee to acquire the only remaining private land projecting into the Sanctuary. The Edward Klee property (see maps) includes 48 acres of wetlands and uplands, and its purchase would ensure protection of the marsh where thousands of Sandhill Cranes normally gather in the fall. About one-third of the property is in the marsh and one-third is wet woodlands and fen, and the remainder is uplands bordering Seymour Road. The uplands have the potential for residential development, but Mr. Klee hoped that his land would be sold to a conservation organization.

Why are we so interested? This is a keystone parcel for the Sanctuary, because it will:

- Ensure that 100% of Mud Lake marsh will stay natural, forever.
- Provide added protection for Sandhill Cranes in the event Michigan follows suit with other states in opening a crane hunting season.
- Protect a threatened ecosystem, a prairie fen of more than 29 acres.
- Protect a spring that flows from the property to Mud Lake Marsh.
- Offer additional wildlife viewing and photographic opportunities for the Sanctuary's visitors.

Michigan Audubon, our parent organization, and Jackson Audubon Society, stewards of Haehnle Sanctuary, have enthusiastically endorsed this venture. Both Audubon societies are established conservation organizations, each with a long history in education, leadership and the preservation of natural areas. Together they have acquired 466 acres at Haehnle through gifts or purchases since the initial gift of 497 acres in 1955. They have restored more than 150 acres of degraded wetland and established 40 acres of native grasses and wildflowers in the upland. Haehnle Sanctuary has become a refuge for a variety of wildlife, including some rare species of plants and animals. The hill overlooking the marsh has a kiosk with informational displays and benches for viewing the large number of cranes that come to the marsh in October and November. Additional activities and restorations have helped establish Haehnle Sanctuary as one of the premier sanctuaries of Michigan Audubon.

Our goal is to raise \$200,000, and we are off to a good start. Through the efforts of Michigan Audubon, Jackson Audubon Society, and Washtenaw we have already raised over \$90,000. We are now seeking funds from other conservation organizations, foundations, and individual donors.

You can help enrich the quality of life in our community and protect vital crane habitat by enlarging the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary. Gifts should be made payable to either Jackson Audubon Society, P.O. Box 6453, Jackson, MI 49204 or Michigan Audubon, c/o Ronald Hoffman, 6142 E Territorial Rd., Pleasant Lake, 49272. In each case place Haehnle Land Acquisition Fund in the memo line. Both are tax-exempt 501(c) (3) organizations. For gifts other than cash (such as stock, bequests, trusts) or for more information, please call Latham Claflin at 517-522-3949. We welcome donations both large and small.

(Map included on pg. 7)

Tuesday Evening Birders *By Dea Armstrong*

What a fabulous evening out! In scouting the various county hotspots, it was pretty clear that a trip to Bridgewater township for shorebirds was destined to be the theme of the night. However, we had some great surprises as well. Because I had found two SEMI-PALMATED PLOVERS at Schneider in the early afternoon, that was to be our first stop. Unfortunately, the plovers were not there at 6:30 pm. However, as we drove on Burmeister towards our first planned Bridgewater stop, I caught a distinctive black and white wing pattern flying along the side of the road. Carefully screeching to a halt (possible?), all trip participants were able to get super looks at a pair of RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS. Even the gentleman who owned the property and stopped by to see what the fuss was all about was quite taken with these fabulous looking birds. And they were my second pair that day! We stopped at ponds on Lima Center near Hoelzer, on Fisk Road, east of Lima Center and on Hoelzer, west of Lima Center. Side-by-side Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs provided great studies, breeding-plumage Dunlins were great, and the Pectoral Sandpipers showed us what a range of sizes they come in. We were also treated to some nice looks at swallows, included Purple Martins and some mudding Barn Swallows. An Orchard Oriole pair showed up on Lima Center as well. While not countable, we did find a tree with at least 8 Peacocks in it. A rather spectacular sight. Thanks to all the sharp eyes and ears who helped out and to Aspen Ellis for submitting the location lists to eBird.

Hudson Mills Field Trip Report (5/13) *By Karen Markey*

Despite wet, muddy, gloomy conditions, our group of about 12 birders had great luck at Hudson Mills. We started in a new way, touring the disc golf course on the far northeast end of the park, and, thanks to Monty who brought his scope, got near-perfect scope views of Brown Thrasher, two Blue-winged Warblers, several Bluebirds and Indigo Buntings. Surprising was the unmistakable call of a Red-breasted Nuthatch from a cedar. Trudging to the far southeast side, we lingered below male and female Baltimore Orioles weaving their nest basket = very cool especially in the scope. Birding was quiet while we traveled to the far southwest end where we enjoyed a fury of warbler activity. Thanks to many in our group who heard and spotted birds and helped each other find them. Also great thanks to Monty Brown who carried his scope and positioned it on dozens of birds. The four remaining group members got terrific looks at Scarlet Tanagers and Wood Thrush. Three of us detoured to nearby Lindley Road where we saw and heard Hooded Warblers and heard the Kentucky Warbler. Experiencing this trail for the first time, it sure reminded me of Southern Ohio's special birds!

Springing Forward with Ducks *By Monty Brown*

On Sunday, March 10, the day that Daylight Savings Time resumed, Dea Armstrong led a couple dozen birders on a waterfowl tour across the eastern part of the county. We started at Ford Lake, where we found 12 species (as well as four common passerine species), but far fewer birds in total than in past springs. This was presumably due to the mild winter, which resulted in far more open water at this time than usual. The most abundant birds were Redhead and Lesser Scaup, although Common Merganser and Common Goldeneye were also well represented. Red-breasted Merganser and Horned Grebe were nice birds to find, too. We next went to the Belleville Lake boat launch, just inside Wayne County. That can be a terrific spot at this time of year. It often has abundant ducks and lots of raptors as well. One year we had Bald Eagles in about all of the annual morph stages here. This time, the only birds of interest were six Common Mergansers and two Wood Ducks. We quickly moved on. One of the ponds along Textile Road gave the best looks so far at Ring-necked Ducks and closer looks at some of the species seen at longer range at Ford Lake. We then moved several miles west and a bit north to Trinkle Marsh, where with some patience the whole group got fine, scoped looks at Northern Shoveler (about 15 specimens) and Green-winged Teal (8). These were the best and longest opportunities I can remember to watch these birds. At Trinkle we also picked up American Wigeon and American Coot. After a while, we had a number of Rusty Blackbirds in the trees just behind the road as well. Our last stop of the day was Independence Lake. The number of birds on the water there was considerably greater than it had been elsewhere. Of the ten waterfowl species observed, we saw a few dozen each of Canvasbacks and Redheads, lots of coots, and about 20 American Wigeons. Our only Gadwalls of the day (about 10) were also found here. Thanks to Dea for leading the trip and to Sarah Toner for providing an e-Bird report which I have relied on here for information on quantities of the various species we saw.

Early Spring Outing in Western Wayne and Eastern Washtenaw Counties

Adapted from a report by Ed Lewandowski

Cathy Carroll and Oakland Audubon Field Trip Coordinator Ed Lewandowski led a group of 11 birders on Saturday, March 31, by rivers, ponds, lakes, and fields in Western Wayne and Eastern Washtenaw Counties. The idea when the trip was set up was to try to catch a mix of late winter and early spring birds, but the unusually warm winter temperatures resulted in relatively few waterfowl being around by the trip date. Nevertheless, these skilled and motivated leaders managed to find about 60 species before the group called it a day. At Belleville Lake, the group had Bonaparte's Gulls, Horned Grebe, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, and Ruddy Duck, as well as Bald Eagles nearby along the Huron River. They had Black Ducks in a field near Edison Dam. At Oakwoods Metropark, they found Field Sparrows singing with Eastern Towhees—an indication of an early spring. In Superior Township, a farm field yielded two Harriers and about 60 Lapland Longspurs showing signs that they were ready to change plumage. The singing of early arriving Vesper Sparrows was an unexpected treat. A Lesser Black-backed Gull was spotted at Grace Lake before and after the trip. Unfortunately, the group as a whole did not get to see it.

Magee and Metzger Marshes Trip Report *By Karen Markey*

On Sunday, May 20, I led a field trip to Magee and Metzger Marshes. About 15 birders met at the park-and-ride and another half dozen or so met us at Magee. Special thanks to Cindy and Chen for driving folks who needed rides.

There were many memorable moments -- the Prothonotary Warblers perching on the (Magee) boardwalk railings or at arm's length in the tree branches, a full frontal view of an Eastern Screech-owl at rest staring down at us with eyes wide open (Magee), a baby Black-capped Chickadee peering out of its nesting hole, a half dozen or so Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlin in breeding plumage (Metzger), close up views of Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Redstart, and Black-throated Green Warblers (Magee). Not everyone saw the Virginia Rail (Metzger) (thanks Mary for spotting this and many other birds) or Mourning Warblers (Magee). Don Chalfont was the only one who heard the Connecticut Warbler, a bird who sang precious few times during our visit to Magee.

Thanks to Mary Margaret Ferraro for listing the birds and to everyone in the group who spotted birds and helped others find them including our next generation of great birders Aspen and Tanner. Let's do this again next May!

More photos from the Salamander field trip.

*My daughters holding a red-backed Salamander.
(Below)*



Ellie Cox Obituary *By Allen T. Chartier*

On March 29, 2012, Ellie T. Cox passed away peacefully at her home in Ann Arbor at the age of 92, after suffering a stroke a month before. She was a mentor to many birders over the course of her long and productive life.

I first met Ellie Cox in 1977 when I attended a Birds of Michigan class that she was teaching at Oakland Community College at the Highland Lakes campus. At that time, her accomplishments were already numerous. After an early interest in birds, when she used Arm & Hammer "bird cards" to identify birds in Virginia where she was born, Ellie became distracted with such things as college, obtaining a Master's degree from the University of Michigan, a career that included assignments as a journalist among other things, and getting married and raising a family. When her youngest son was in high school, she renewed her interest in birding. Ellie helped establish the Oakland Audubon Society as a 510c organization from the old Pontiac Audubon, and well into the 1990s served as Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Christmas Bird Count compiler, and President.

One of Ellie's greatest talents was her ability to organize people. In her position with Oakland Audubon as Field Studies Coordinator, she mobilized many volunteers, me included, into many projects. Some of these include the study of the Great Blue Heron rookery near Oxford, and annual bird counts at Bald Mountain State Game Area and Independence Oaks County Park, which both resulted in published bird checklists. Ellie was instrumental in the formation and organization of the Holiday Beach hawk watch, and enlisted many observers to participate, again, myself included. Ellie had a knack for getting people to be as over-committed to field studies as she is, and to enjoy it anyway!

Ellie also served as President of the Michigan Bird Bander's Association. Her own field studies had some interesting and significant results. She was one of the first people in Michigan to band House Finches at her long time residence in Detroit when they began expanding their range from escaped birds in the eastern U.S. Her studies of Black Terns and Least Bitterns at Metro Beach Metropark were conducted with her husband Howard, also a good friend who passed away in 1996. These studies showed an interesting relationship between the increase in Mute Swans and the local extirpation of Black Terns as a nesting species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received information on this study in 1997 as it formulated a Management Plan for Black Terns nationwide.

Another of Ellie's talents, one that affected me personally in a significant way, was her skill as a mentor. She taught bird identification classes at Oakland Community College, Cranbrook Institute of Science, and Ferndale Public Schools and had many students. Ellie introduced me to the Oakland Audubon Society and the Detroit Audubon Society, told me about the American Birding Association and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and was always willing to provide more information to anyone wanting to learn more. She allowed me to help with her songbird banding operation at Metro Beach Metropark which she initiated in 1989, and was very generous in allowing me the opportunity to learn by assisting with this important research, which I am now continuing under my own banding permit. Health considerations forced Ellie to discontinue banding at Metro Beach in 2000. In 1997 she received the Conservationist of the Year award from the Detroit Audubon Society, in which she was also active, and she personally recruited a significant number of new active stewards of the environment.



Present Sanctuary Boundary
(Red)

Boundary of property to be purchased
(Green)

Sandhill Crane roosting area
(Black)



Upcoming WAS Field Trips (May--August, 2012)

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.

Every Thursday in April and May

Spring Migration Walks in Nichols Arboretum This is an annual series of Thursday morning walks at Nichols Arboretum to observe migrants as they pass through. These leaderless walks are a great opportunity to join with other birders of all skill levels. This season's walks will start on April 5 and go through May 24. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at 8:00 AM.

Every Tuesday in May

Tuesday Evening Birders: Leaders: Dea Armstrong, Lathe Claflin, Mike Sefton The leaders scout locations and scan bird reports during the day, and then in the evening take the group to where the action is. This is a carpool event, typically with multiple stops. Meet at 6:00 p.m. at the Miller Road/M-14 park-and-ride lot, where everyone will consolidate vehicles for a 6:15 sharp departure. These outings end at dusk.

Sun., June 3

Stinchfield Woods Annual Census: Leader: Karen Markey. Stinchfield Woods is 777 acres of conifer plantations and stands of native hardwoods--mostly oaks and hickories. This census on this property typically yields species such as Pine and Black-throated Green Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Also heard or seen are Wild Turkeys, Hooded Warblers, Ovenbirds, and Acadian Flycatchers. Taking part in this bird count is a great way to observe migration into June, when many other sites in the county have already seen most of their migrants come and go. The count starts at 7:00 AM. If you are interested in participating, please contact Karen at ylime@umich.edu to sign up. Stinchfield Woods is north of Dexter. Go north on Dexter-Pinckney Road, and about 1.5 miles north of North Territorial Road, you will come to Stinchfield Woods Road. Turn left (west) onto Stinchfield Woods Road and drive about 1 mile to the north entrance of Stinchfield Woods. Turn left (south) into Stinchfield Woods and drive up the hill and bear to your right toward the top of the hill. Be sure to bring insect repellent and dress appropriately.

July

Butterfly Trip. Final details TBA on the website.

Sun., August 26

Shorebirds and Waders at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area: Leader: Jim Fowler
Pointe Mouillee, on Lake Erie near the mouth of the Huron River, is one of the premier destinations in the Midwest for viewing shorebirds and waders, but access is limited. Jim Fowler knows this territory as well as anyone and leads several field trips each year at this location. PLEASE NOTE: This trip has limited space, and registration is mandatory. To register, send your name(s) and a contact phone number to fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org. Registered participants will meet at the Pointe Mouillee SGA parking lot on Sigler Road at 8:00 AM and from there will consolidate into four vehicles. Bring insect repellent, wear a hat, and dress for warm weather--there is no shade or shelter at Pointe Mouillee. Bring all the food and fluids you think you will need to sustain you for approximately five hours of birding.

NABA (North American Butterfly Association) 2012 Counts

In 2012, we plan to run five counts in Washtenaw County and one (mostly) in Monroe. These counts record good numbers of species and individuals seen, but we could do better with more participants and more extensive coverage. (At present, we only include parts of the count circles, largely on selected tracts of public land.) With members' help we could extend coverage and thus provide improved scientific data on butterfly populations—a key environmental indicator. Beginners are always welcome. (However, it should be noted that a few sites require some fairly arduous 'trekking' and 'bushwhacking', but young-at-heart Roger Wykes always manages to do it!)

Spring Seasonal

SW Washtenaw Count, Sunday May 27th; Compiler, Martin Bialecki (kilnfired@gmail.com)

July 4th

SW Washtenaw Count, Sunday July 1st; Compiler, John Swales (jmswales@umich.edu)

Chelsea Count, Wednesday July 4th; Compiler, Roger Wykes ((734)-769-6482)

Ann Arbor Count, Saturday, July 7th; Compiler, Roger Kuhlman (rkuhlman@hotmail.com) or John Swales.

Fall Seasonal

Petersburg-Dundee Count, Saturday August 4th; Compiler, Roger Kuhlman.

SW Washtenaw Count, Sunday, August 19th; Compiler, John Swales.

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 \$25
(on-line only \$20)

___ Student \$10
(emailed newsletters only)

___ Senior \$15
(on-line only \$10)

___ 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.

Please note: *The Matthaei Botanical Gardens now charges for parking at the rate of \$1.20 an hour, enforced 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm. Members of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum will continue to park for free. This fee will bring the Garden's policies into alignment with other University of Michigan venues, and provide revenue to maintain the Gardens. If you arrive at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm Washtenaw Audubon program, you will only have to pay 90 cents to park for the 45 minutes before enforcement ends at 8pm. The parking kiosks accept coins, bills and credit cards.*

June 20 **Rock Star of the Bird World: Kirtland's Warbler** Join Bill Rapai for the fascinating account of the near-extinction of the Kirtland's Warbler, and the people who saved it. Bill Rapai is an award-winning journalist and president of the Gross Pointe Audubon Society. His first book, "The Kirtland's Warbler," was published this year by the University of Michigan Press, and copies will be available for purchase and signing.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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