



May/June 2015

Wha Gwan, Doctorbird?

or, WAS Goes to Jamaica

by Bryn Martin

When I told people I went to Jamaica during Spring Break, they assumed I had been tanning on a beach after a day of hiking up Dunn's River Falls, the sound of Reggae music playing in the background. In reality, I was up really early every day, arms and legs fully covered to avoid bugs, absolutely off the tourist-track. I did not get a tan. I did not touch a beach. It was not relaxing, in the typical sense of the word. But it was great, and I think I can speak for all of the other nine participants on this tour.

For Washtenaw Audubon Society's fourth international trip, we spent a little under a week on the beautiful Caribbean island of Jamaica (April 5–11, 2015). We toured with the local Arrowhead Birding Company and its owner/guide Ricardo Miller. I love using local guides and tour companies because I believe it adds just the right amount of cultural exchange to the experience. It's one thing to learn about people and places from the outside and another to actually get to talk with them firsthand. I'd read a Jamaican-set novel prior to traveling there and picked up a little bit of the local slang and it was fun to learn more. (*Wha gwan* means "How's it goin'?") We share the same language, but the Jamaicans have their own unique way of speaking it. In addition, the Jamaicans also have their own local names for the birds we were seeing, and it was fun to learn some of these colorful pseudonyms. For example, we know their national bird as the beautiful Red-billed Streamertail Hummingbird, but they call it the "Doctorbird." (No one can agree why.) The red and green Jamaican Tody is the *(continued on page 6)*

President's Letter

Dear Birders and Friends,

The migrants have arrived and in many cases have passed on through Washtenaw County now that spring is in full swing. We have seen warblers all over the county, especially in the Arb and at Dolph Park, including a Golden-winged Warbler in both locations on the same day in early May. Prothonotary Warblers popped up in several locales, echoing last spring when the Huron River boasted nearly a dozen. A Summer Tanager stopped briefly at Dolph, and Cape May Warblers showed up everywhere, including my yard. The Prairie Warbler sings on Hankerd Road, just as he has for several years in a row. An Eastern Whip-poor-will announced his presence in a new location in Lodi Township, just in time to be counted on our May Count (North American Migratory Count), on May 9th. We tallied over 170 species on the count, including 36 rare or unusual ones not included on our standard list. I'll have a full report on the May Count in the summer issue of our Newsletter.

With the changing seasons come other changes and transitions in our community. Our beloved young birder, Sarah Toner, graduates from Community High School in May, and heads to Seney National Wildlife Refuge to work for the summer, and then on to college at Cornell University to study birds, of course. I know I'll miss her on our field trips, lending a hand to help everyone get on a bird that only she can hear. Best wishes to Sarah for the bright future I know she has ahead of her.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming field trips and programs. Check this issue for all the latest news or visit our website, www.washtenawaudubon.org, to stay up to date on what is happening with birds in and around our area.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet



Golden-winged Warbler (Benjamin Hack)

Spring Arb Walk by Karen Markey

On Saturday, April 11, our group of about twenty birders enjoyed a warm spring morning birding Nichols Arboretum. We had a good look at a lone Fox Sparrow (thanks to a tip from Brandon who joined us in mid-trip), several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers on the west north-south trail, and a Brown Creeper here and there. Joe caught sight of a Winter Wren zipping atop and through downed trees. Both Kinglets were singing and numerous as the morning warmed up. Juliet Berger spotted the Peregrine Falcon and got a few others on it. We heard a singing Hermit Thrush at the Warbler Hotspot, and later saw two at the “second inlet” on the south side of Dow Prairie.

The bird of the day was a Louisiana Waterthrush, photographed and identified by a photographer (whose name I didn't get, my apologies), along the babbling brook just north of the boardwalk (a perfect spot for this bird). I believe everyone saw this uncommon spring migrant hop in low branches, bobbing his tail, along the brook that passes through the boardwalk.

Proposed Updates to WAS Constitution

The board is recommending some changes and updates to the bylaws of the Washtenaw Audubon Society Constitution. The bylaws were last revised in June 1988. The proposed changes have been emailed to members and posted to the Washtenaw Audubon Web site, and a vote of the members will take place at the June program of the Washtenaw Audubon Society, on Wednesday, June 17, 7:30 p.m., at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor.

One-Road Challenge by Monty Brown

Four official teams with a total of 19 birders participated in the One-Road Challenge on Saturday, April 4, searching for birds on one Washtenaw County road of their choosing until 11:00 a.m. As a bonus for getting up and out, birders had excellent views of the partial eclipse. Each team was eligible to get one bonus point for

any bird species found only by their team, as well as bonus points for having newcomers to Washtenaw Audubon outings on their team. Every team found at least one species that no other group had, and two of the four teams received the points for newcomers.

The team that chose Fletcher Rd.—and that named itself “The Last Ten Minutes” after rallying late in the competition—was the only one that had a Great-Horned Owl. The team on Maple Rd. was the only one to record a Bald Eagle, Eastern Screech Owl, Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker or—surprisingly—Ring-Billed Gull. The group on Sharon Hollow Rd. had good luck with waterfowl, finding the only Gadwall, American Wigeon, and Northern Pintail, and the only Ring-Necked Pheasant and Barred Owl. The winning team, named “Things That Go Peent in the Dark,” found 59 species of birds on Waterloo Rd. Twelve of their birds were found only by them including Tundra Swan, Blue-Winged Teal, Red-Breasted Merganser, Belted Kingfisher, and Pileated Woodpecker. Congratulations to Benjamin and Matty Hack, Sarah Toner, and Nancy Davis. In aggregate, the four groups found 79 species, a nice count for early April. Special thanks to the generous soul who hosted our gathering to tally the results.



Intrepid Arb Walkers (Norka Saldana)

Kensington Birdwatching for Beginners a huge hit!

On March 28, we had over 70 young and old birders from Washtenaw Elementary Science Olympiad Feathered Friends groups and Washtenaw Audubon for our trip to Kensington Metropark. It was a madhouse! We split into smaller groups and explored the nature trails, fed the chickadees and titmice, and had a great view of waterfowl on Wildwing Lake. The Great Blue Herons were at their rookery, as well as numerous Sandhill Cranes all over the park.

Most groups saw at least one Bald Eagle, and Bryn Martin's group was treated to a display of an eagle breaking off dead branches from a tree to bring back to its nest. Ducks out on the lake included American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck and Common Merganser. The Wild Turkey toms were on full display. Thanks to David Amamoto for his help with my students and taking great photos. [story by Juliet Berger]

Meet the Flock: Norka Saldana

Norka Saldana is a Puerto Rican native, married to her childhood sweetheart, Luis Martinez, for 38 years. She has two lovely daughters in California, one of whom has been instrumental in introducing her to birding. She has a Ph.D. in Industrial and Operations Engineering from U of M, as well as a Natural Sciences degree from the University of Puerto Rico. After working as a professor in Puerto Rico, she joined Johnson & Johnson, where she worked for twenty years, including a worldwide consulting role. She feels honored to have dedicated her life to a goal of making health care better and more accessible for patients in need. She retired a year ago, and is enjoying having the time for birding and exploring the natural world.

Her oldest daughter, Katina, took an ornithology class at U of M in 2005, and also took a job skinning birds for the Museum of Natural History. Norka was inspired by her daughter's enthusiasm, and began to learn the basic Michigan birds, which are all very different from her Puerto Rican homeland. She thought she was doing pretty good, until she realized there were warblers and waterfowl, too!

She joined WAS a year ago, and has enjoyed meeting many new friends and sharing in eBird listing. She feels birding has taught her a lot about patience, and she is delighted to be the kind of observer who can wait for the bird to reveal itself. Since retirement, birding has grown into a full-blown passion, and she treasures every moment she spends in natural settings and viewing of birds of all kinds. Being in WAS is a way to share that passion and wonder with other like-minded individuals.

Norka's daughter was her first mentor, and they enjoyed many days birding alone together. Now that she is in WAS, she gives special thanks to Juliet Berger, who she feels has really helped her learn so much about the sights and sounds of birds. She is taking Dea Armstrong and Francie Krawcke's Ornithology class, and feels she is learning so much about the science of birds and their behavior. She also wishes to thank the many random and often nameless birders on the trail, who have shared scope views or knowledge, each imparting some pearl of wisdom.

Her most memorable birding experiences surround the intimate experience of birding with her daughter as teacher. After an eight-year wait, she finally spotted a Pileated Woodpecker in Florida, and still relishes the long and excellent views she had of that much wanted bird. More recently, she found a Great Horned Owl family in an Ann Arbor park, and has been protectively sharing this sighting with many. For this, she has earned the nickname of Grandmother Owl.

Her most wanted birding experiences are to commune with a wild penguin, and to see all 17 endemics in her



native Puerto Rico (she has 7 so far). She is looking forward to attending Hog Island Ornithology Camp in Maine with her daughter this summer, and watches birds constantly where she travels. Her fave local sites are Gallup and Furstenberg Parks. She feels education and sharing of birding knowledge with interested bystanders is crucial to protecting birds in the future. She feels many people, like her, just don't know what's out there until someone takes the time to introduce them. She feels the best way to get involved is to join your local Audubon, and find birding pals and mentors. She is grateful and amazed by the experiences she has had on many WAS outings and field trips. Contact her at norka.saldana@gmail.com. [profile by Cathy Theisen]

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The Washtenaw Audubon Society is an active chapter of Michigan Audubon formed in the early 1950s. Monthly programs feature guest speakers on a wide variety of natural history and birding topics. We conduct field trips to places in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and beyond.

Meet the Flock: Benjamin Hack

Benjamin Hack is an eighth grader at Slauson Middle School in Ann Arbor. He will be a freshman at Pioneer High School in the fall. Benjamin lives on the West Side of Ann Arbor with his birding brother Matty, his parents, and his two cats, Piper and Callisto. Benjamin became interested in birds in first grade when he saw a group of hawks flying over the Eberwhite Woods during recess. He came home and asked for a book so he could learn more about them, and the rest is young birder history!

Benjamin's uncle, a professor and birder in Oklahoma, encouraged him to start attending local Audubon society meetings to meet fellow birders, and Benjamin's been active in Washtenaw Audubon for at least five years now. The members of WAS have been so supportive and encouraging, and he has enjoyed birding with so many of them. From Arb walks to Pte. Mouillee, he has appreciated the generosity of the birders he has met.

Benjamin and his brother are township leaders for the May Count covering Sylvan and Lyndon townships. They participate in the City of Ann Arbor Breeding Bird Survey, and in the Christmas Bird Count.

Benjamin recently placed third in his age group for his field notebook in the American Birding Association's Young Birder of the Year content. In addition, Benjamin is also a co-founder of the Michigan Young Birders Club with his brother Matty and Sarah Toner.



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Asking Benjamin to name his most memorable birding experience is challenging because he says he is lucky to have so many to choose from. But here are a few: "staring at a Spotted Owl for an hour, having a Spruce Grouse four feet from me, getting my car buzzed by a speedy Aplomado Falcon, finding the crazy-rare Key West Quail-Dove as my 500th bird... I can't choose just one!"

In Washtenaw County Benjamin's absolute favorite birding spot is Crooked Lake in Chelsea, with Sharon Short Hills a clear second. When asked where he would like to travel to for a big birding trip, it's Alaska.

Benjamin believes that one of the most pressing conversation issues that birds face is climate change, especially for tundra and mountain birds. They will have nowhere to go soon. But he also identifies habitat loss as a huge problem, including the loss of grassland and due to deforestation.

His advice for new birders? Don't get discouraged, keep working at it! He also recommends getting *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. And he says the WAS meetings and field trips are a great way for any birders to get involved. To learn more about why Benjamin loves birds and birding, you can contact him at bdhbirdman@gmail.com. [profile by Nancy Davis] [Photo credit: Daniel Hack]

Wha Gwan, Doctorbird?

Continued from page 1

Rasta Bird because it shares the same colors as the Rastafarians. The Turkey Vulture is John Crow. In addition to the language, Ricardo was able to help acquaint us with some local food. We enjoyed delicious jerk-style cooking, plantains prepared all sorts of ways, and great seafood.

But just as we didn't come here for the tan, we also didn't come just for the dialect and the food. We were here to see the birds! And we were very successful in this regard. Now, the numbers might be deceptive. In the grand scheme, 106 species seen is not a ton. (You could theoretically see more than that on one day in May at Magee Marsh!) But it was a nice, easy, manageable amount, especially when one-third to one-half of these birds were lifers for most. Jamaica has 30 species of endemic birds and by the end of the trip we were able to see every single one. Endemics include two parrots, three hummingbirds, a secretive and rare blackbird that specializes in bromeliad crabs, an oriole, the Arrowhead Warbler (after which our tour company was named), multiple types of flycatchers, two large and charismatic cuckoos, and a shy quail-dove. One of the top targets for many was the Jamaican Owl, and Ricardo had a staked-out juvenile calling for its early-evening meal. Jamaica also has 11 species with a subspecies endemic to the island. We got almost all of these, as well, which is important in the listing game because there is a decent chance that one day some of these may get elevated to full species status. (I sadly learned this in Puerto Rico when I missed the Greater Antillean Oriole—or should I now say, the Puerto Rican Oriole!) The bird-list was topped off by a number of “our” warblers getting their last fill of caterpillar before embarking on their journey north.

The weather was warm and pleasant. Ricardo and Arrowhead Birding were excellent. The participants were an extremely friendly and laid-back group to travel with. The birds and the birding were top-notch. What more could one ask for in an international birding trip? [All photos below courtesy Mike Sefton, Jamaica, April 2015.]



Washtenaw Audubon field trip



Red-billed Streamertail Hummingbird



Crested Quail-Dove



Chestnut-bellied Cuckoo

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (June 2015)

Bryn Martin, Field Trip Coordinator (fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

Washtenaw Audubon field trips are free of charge and open to the public unless otherwise indicated. For trips with constraints on the number of participants, WAS members are sometimes given priority in registering (again, as indicated). *For trips that require carpooling, minors attending without a parent must bring a written permission statement signed by a parent.* To receive a standard form for this, contact me at the email address above. Also, if you have a suggestion for a field trip, please send it to me at the email address above.

Saturday, June 20

Stinchfield Woods Annual Breeding Bird Census (Leader Karen Markey)

The Stinchfield Woods breeding bird census is an annual survey of elusive species breeding within the 777-acre Stinchfield Woods, located at 9401 Stinchfield Woods Rd., Pinckney, MI. Typical birds found at Stinchfield include Pine and Black-throated Green Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Hooded Warblers, Ovenbirds, and Acadian Flycatchers. This survey is mostly a hearing event so birders with a keen ear are especially needed, although all birders are welcome to participate. This year marks the 23rd annual census; please join us! Please email Karen Markey (ylime@umich.edu) to RSVP for this event or for more details.

Late summer and fall field trips

To Be Announced

Be sure to check the Web site regularly to learn more about late summer and fall field trips. Go to www.washtenawaudubon.org for more information.

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, P.O. Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	Membership Dues	
Additional Donation \$ _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Household	\$25 (online only \$20)
Name: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15 (online only \$10)
Address: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Senior	\$15 (online only \$10)
Phone: _____	Email: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 7:30 p.m. at the U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public. **Please note:** *The Matthaei Botanical Gardens 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 park for free.*

June 17 Bird Name Origins: Do Sapsuckers Really Suck Sap?

Join the inimitable Don "The Man" Chalfant for an interesting program on the many odd and curious names with which ornithologists have saddled our avifauna. Don is a retired elementary school teacher, an avid photographer, and a passionate birder who owns one of the largest life lists in Washtenaw County.

Fall programs To Be Announced

Be sure to check the Web site regularly to find out about the Fall programs that will begin in September. Go to www.washtenawaudubon.org for more information.



Great Crested Flycatcher
(Norka Saldana)

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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