



March/April 2016

## Washtenaw Audubon Society Hosts Screening of Award-Winning Documentary “The Messenger”

Please join Washtenaw Audubon Society as we host an exclusive, one-night screening of the award-winning documentary “The Messenger” at the Michigan Theater on Wednesday, April 27, at 7:00 p.m. “The Messenger” examines the challenges facing songbirds in the face of global warming and habit loss. Michigan Audubon is co-sponsoring the event and we have invited neighboring Audubon societies to attend. Seating is limited in the screening room, so get your tickets soon! Follow the links on the WAS website to learn more and to get your tickets. This promises to be *the* non-field birding event of the year! For more about the evening, see Juliet’s President’s Letter on page 2.



# President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon Society,

Happy Spring to all Birders!!! As migrating birds return to our area, here are several ways you can show your support for our birds.

I hope you are all planning to join us at the Ann Arbor premiere of the award-winning documentary, "The Messenger." Seating is limited, so get your tickets soon! We are hoping to sell out the 180-seat screening room, so they may be sold out by the time of the publication of this newsletter. This film explores the plight of songbirds worldwide and has been recognized for its stunning bird photography. Washtenaw Audubon and Michigan Audubon proudly welcome you to a screening of the insightful documentary "The Messenger" at the Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor, on Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Buy tickets and watch previews at <https://www.tugg.com/events/93344>.

Before the show, join a gathering of county and state birders from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. at HopCat for a Happy Hour social time with the chance to enjoy dinner and drink specials. HopCat is at 311 Maynard, across from the parking structure and half a block from the theater. If you're new to birding, but want to find the flock at HopCat, look for Audubon members wearing bird-themed shirts or hats—we'd love to welcome you!

After the show, stay for a short Q&A with local experts, featuring:

- Dr. Ivette Perfecto, University of Michigan, on coffee and migratory birds
- Heidi Trudell, Bird Collision Monitor, on ways to retrofit windows to keep birds safe
- Rachelle Roake, Conservation Science Coordinator for Michigan Audubon, on climate change and habitat loss
- Dr. Cathy Theisen, DVM, on transitioning outdoor cats to indoors

And, please join me and fellow Washtenaw Audubon Birders at our many upcoming field trips and programs. Our Thursday morning walks at the Arb resume March 31. We have so many other great field trips and programs to look forward to as well, and more are being added all the time. I look forward to seeing you all on the trails. Check this newsletter and our website, [www.washtenawaudubon.org](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org), for more details.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger

Front cover credits:

*American Robin, Black-throated Blue Warbler by Matty Hack*  
*Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart by Benjamin Hack*



*Pine Warbler, Benjamin Hack*



## Meet the Flock: Linda Ar

Linda Ar has an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts, but she developed a passion for learning/teaching about medicinal herbs, which brought her to work in the alternative medicine field for over 15 years. She later became very interested in mental health and its effects on the body/spirit, and she went back to school and received her Master's of Social Work at University of Michigan in 2010. She's been practicing as a clinical therapist since then and really enjoys her work.

Her recently deceased mother was a biologist who encouraged and taught Linda to explore and really appreciate all the wonders of nature. Although her mom, an avid birder, gave Linda her first pair of binoculars when she was a teenager, it wasn't until her early 20s that she developed her own passion for birding. She lived in an apartment near Eastern Michigan University and there was a small wetland surrounded by forest just beyond her back door. She soon came to call it "my wildlife refuge" and would spend countless hours in this little oasis. She remembers studying her first American Kestrel there. After seeing—really seeing—that gorgeous bird, she was hooked! She feels she owes the experience of birding to her mother and is so grateful for that gift.

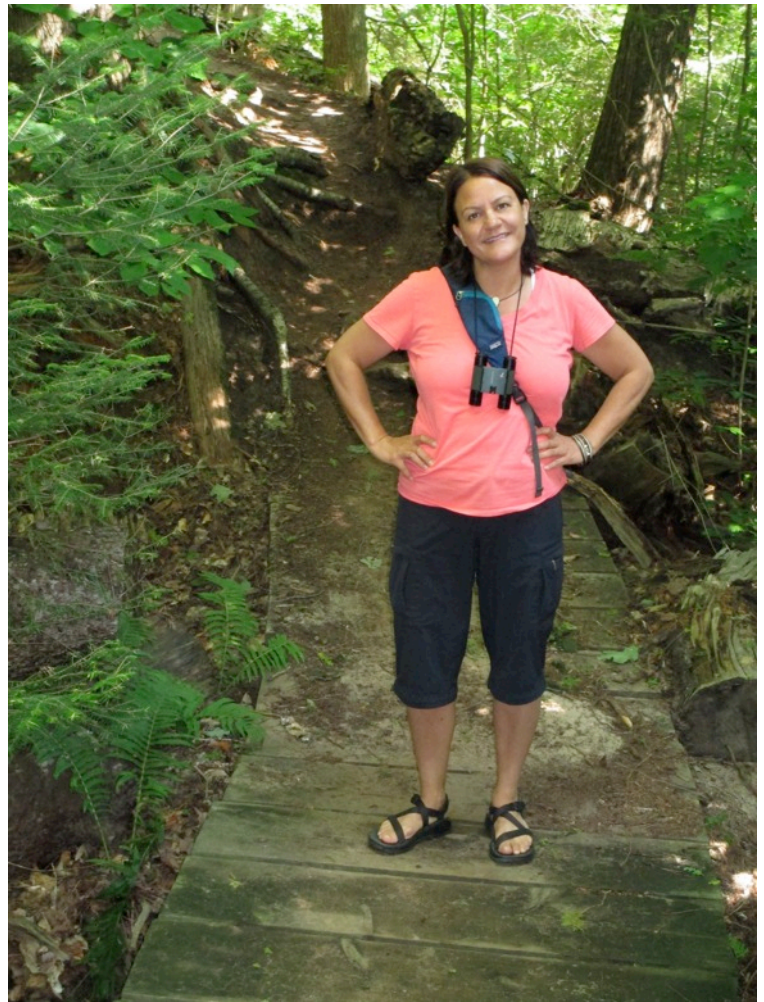
Her most memorable birding experience was in Costa Rica. She went with a non-birding friend after finishing grad school, so she had no bird guides, but she prepared ahead for the trip and the birds she wanted to see. She ended up with 125 species in a little over a week's time including the Three-wattled Bellbird and the Resplendent Quetzal. She rates Monte Verde as a favorite birding destination. She lived in California for two years, which provided her with some really great birds, including the Yellow-billed Magpie. But the crafty Black-billed Magpie remains one of her very favorite birds to this day.

She would love to bird most of Central and South America, and really wants to get to the Galapagos Islands. Besides the striking birds found there she would love to see some, if not all, of Darwin's 13 finches.

Her favorite birding spot in Washtenaw is Lillie Park. This reclaimed gravel pit was acquired and developed into a park in 1983. It used to be a little known gem but thanks to a handful of birders—most recently Norka Saldana of Little Blue Heron fame—more and more birders are discovering this park. She's had 125 species in that park due to its diverse environment, which includes a small reedy lake, a swampy lake (where you can find some of the earliest, if not *the* earliest, Green Heron in the spring), a small swamp in the adjacent Johnson Preserve (which is a great spot for birding during spring migration), hardwood forest, and a prairie. It doesn't get much better than that for an urban park.

She feels the most pressing conservation issue is worldwide habitat loss, complicated by invasive flora/fauna and loss of native species.

Her best advice to new birders is to get out there and get involved with other birders. After doing a lot of solo birding, she has found that making friends and going on outings with fellow birders is the best way to see and learn about birds. Linda is known for having a great ear for birdsong, but she still consults her Sibley Guide often, especially in the fall when those darn "confusing fall warblers" are moving through. She spends a lot of her free



*(continued on page 4)*

## Meet the Flock: Linda Ar

*Continued from page 3*

time birding and has a great passion for birds—for finding them and really enjoying their beauty and behavior. She shares this experience from a recent excursion in the Arb: “I ran into someone I consider to be an excellent birder (John Lowry) and he shared a call he recorded after chasing an unknown bird for sometime in another county. When he played the call and told me it was a Song Sparrow I was as shocked as he was when he finally found the bird. We both marveled at the idea that you can always learn something new, even about a species that you hear and see all the time. It just shows that you can have a new experience no matter how experienced you are. That’s the beauty of birding!”

She is concerned that people in lower socioeconomic situations are far less likely to find an outdoor enthusiast let alone a birding mentor. She would love to start a program in honor of her mom where birders could donate binoculars they are no longer using and then to have some sort of “check out system,” maybe even through local public libraries. That, coupled with an education program for school kids, might be a good way to introduce kids who otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to get hooked on the great outdoors. The ripple effect could mean new stewards in areas where there is little to no outdoor/nature education. And the best part: a walk in a park or the woods is free. To donate to the Diane Bergman Fund, make checks payable to WAS and put the fund in the memo, or contact Linda directly to collaborate with her on this project. Contact Linda at [birdar1@yahoo.com](mailto:birdar1@yahoo.com).

## 2015 Gull Trip Report

*by Benjamin Hack*

It was 35 degrees. Fog blanketed the ground, making it hard to see our own noses. The air around us stunk of decaying garbage.

In short, it was one of the nicest Gull Trips on record.

On December 5, 2015, a group of about 20 hardy birders piled into two 12-person vans, ready for the Washtenaw Audubon Society’s annual field trip to the Salem Landfill. Everyone was hoping to find rare gulls, such as Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, Thayer’s, and Iceland. The landfill is the only place where there is even a chance to see these rare birds in the county, but access is restricted to one trip for birders per year.

However, the Salem Landfill is also one of the nastiest, most horrible places I know of. The landfill is always bitterly cold, made worse by standing still and scanning the gulls for hours. There is usually wind, as the gulls like to remain at the top of the landfill’s artificial hill. Many times, there is some sort of precipitation (both rain and snow have been recorded). And, of course, going on the Gull Trip is like committing a felony against your nose. But the birders weather the bad conditions in order to add to their lists.

When the vans arrived at the dump at 9:30, the fog was so dense that it was almost impossible to see anything. However, the weather was amazingly balmy, with no wind or precipitation, and the smell had been a lot worse. There was a good amount of gulls perched on the roof a building near the parking lot. We scanned the flock for about an hour, but saw no rarities—just a couple thousand Ring-billed and Herring Gulls.

After this initial scan, we drove the vans up to the top of the hill. Even though it was already 10:30, the fog showed no sign of lifting, despite the meek attempts of the sun to burn through. We set up our scopes on a long path made almost entirely out of crushed bricks and cinderblocks.

Unfortunately, the gulls were staying on the far slope of the hill, inaccessible to us birders due to the fog and all the construction vehicles. There were only a few birds close enough to be identified. Among these birds, I picked out an adult Thayer’s Gull; unfortunately, a bulldozer flushed it and the rest of the flock before I could show it to the other birders. It was frustrating for all of us.

Finally, we decided to call it quits. Despite our valiant efforts, the fog never abated and simply made it impossible to see the gulls. But before exiting the landfill, we decided to have one last look at our original spot near the roof of the building.

My van arrived slightly before the other, and we were delighted to find that the gulls had moved to a nearby hill

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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.

## 2015 Gull Trip Report

and could be seen through the thinning fog! On my first scan, I spotted a small, pale immature gull with very pale wingtips: a first-cycle Iceland Gull! I called the bird out, but at the same time trip leader Rob French spotted an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, and the Iceland was forgotten. The other van finally pulled up, and everyone on the trip got good scope views of this increasing rarity. Another two Lesser Black-backs were spotted before we left.



At this point, the fog had almost entirely retreated. With the newfound visibility, I went back to scanning—and again, I found the Iceland Gull! I quickly alerted the group that the bird was in the scope, and a few were able

to see the bird before the scope got bumped. Luckily, I was able to guide Rob to the bird, and the whole group saw the bird through his scope. After a couple more minutes of frantic scanning, we had to leave because the landfill was closing.

Though nearly a foggy catastrophe, the 2015 Salem Landfill trip was a success. Everybody on the trip—from the first-timers to the every-timers—had a good time, even if we did not see the rarest birds. I hope to see everyone on the trip again next year! *[Iceland Gull photo by Benjamin Hack]*

## May Count

Washtenaw County  
Saturday, May 14, 2016

With spring finally here, birders' thoughts turn to spring birding. As you think about the ways you will bird in the county this spring, please consider participating in the Washtenaw County May Count.

Washtenaw Audubon Society President, Juliet Berger, is the Washtenaw County Coordinator/Compiler. Participation in this international event mainly occurs at the local level. The Compiler divides the county into townships, each of which has an Area Leader. Leaders recruit additional volunteers to count birds throughout their area. For names and contact information for the Compiler and the Area Leaders, visit our website, and please consider volunteering.

This event is *not* just for expert birders. It is a great way for less experienced birders who are willing to help record birds to learn from others with more advanced skills. This event occurs throughout the day, with early morning and late evening owling in some areas. Please contact an Area Leader or the Compiler to help out!



## Upcoming WAS Field Trips (April 2016 - May 2016)

*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 Bryn at the email address above.

### **Thursdays in April and May, 8:00 a.m.**

#### **Spring Migration Walks at the Arb**

Join us on Thursday mornings in April and May (April 7, 14, 21, 28; May 5, 12, 19, 26) at Nichols Arboretum to observe migrants making their way north. These leaderless walks are a great opportunity to join with other birders of all skill levels. In addition to the birds, the Arb's trees and other plants offer delights of their own. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at 8:00 a.m.; the walks will end around 11:00 a.m., but participants can leave whenever they prefer. Please see the Web site for a map and more information on how to get to the Arb during the Geddes Road construction.

### **Saturday, April 9, 8:00 a.m.**

#### **Nichols Arboretum, Early Migrants**

##### **Leader: Karen Markey**

Early springtime walks through the Arb are productive for Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, White-throated Sparrows, Winter Wrens, Fox Sparrows, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Brown Creepers. These early birds are joined by the first warblers—Yellow-rumped, Pine, Palm, and Orange-crowned. Maybe a Blue-headed Vireo will join them. We will wander the Arb's paths in search of early spring migrants. Meet at the Riverview Court entrance to the Arb at 8:00 a.m. Dress appropriately for the weather, including coat, gloves, scarf, hat, and sensible footwear. No strollers, dogs, or wagons please. Walk should end between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m.

### **Friday, April 15, 8:00 p.m.**

#### **Woodcock Walk at Barton Nature Area**

##### **Leader: Ray Stocking**

The American Woodcock, known for its unusual flying pattern during courtship, can be seen at dawn and dusk in the spring. Park at the Barton Dam lot on Huron River Drive, across the street and slightly north/upriver from Bird Road, and follow the trail around the building to the footbridge. We will meet right on the other side (the dam side) of the bridge at 8:00 p.m. PLEASE NOTE: Do not park in the Barton Nature Area lot on Huron River Drive just after Main Street, or else you will have a LONG walk back to your car in the dark. Please wear good walking shoes and dress warmly. (The temperature will drop quickly at sunset.) Bring a small flashlight to assist you in exiting the park after the program ends. Plan on returning to your car around 9:15 p.m. if all goes well.

### **Sunday, April 17, 3:00 p.m.**

#### **Weekend Afternoon Arb Walk**

Join us on at Nichols Arboretum to observe migrants making their way north. This leaderless walk is a great opportunity to join with other birders of all skill levels. In addition to the birds, the Arb's trees and other plants offer delights of their own. Park and meet at the Riverview Court cul-de-sac off Geddes Road at 3:00 p.m.; the walk will end around 5:00 p.m., but participants can leave whenever they prefer.

### **Sunday, April 24, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

#### **In Search of Salamanders at Hudson Mills Metropark**

##### **Leader: Edwin Sanchez**

Join leader Edwin Sanchez at Hudson Mills Metropark. Eddie is an expert on these amphibians and this will be a fun morning turning over rocks and logs to locate some of the six species known to reside in the park. Meet at the parking lot for the River Grove Shelter area located within the park (turn right after the entry kiosk, then next left into the lot). Expect muddy grounds. In case we end up handling any salamanders, please do not use any soaps, creams, or detergents on your hands for this morning. This fun, hands-on trip is perfect for little ones, too. This trip is free of charge, but a Metroparks Pass is required for admission to the park.

## Upcoming WAS Field Trips (April 2016 - May 2016)

Bryn Martin, Field Trip Coordinator ([fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org))

**Sunday, May 8, 7:30 a.m.**

### Hudson Mills Metropark Early Migrants

**Leader: Karen Markey**

Target birds include cuckoos, woodpeckers, vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, and tanagers. Meet at the flagpole in front of the Activity Center at 7:30 a.m. The trip will last roughly until 11:00 a.m. This field trip is free of charge, but a Metroparks Pass is required for admission to the park.

**Sunday, May 15, 8:30 a.m.**

### Magee Marsh and Metzger Marsh, NW Ohio

**Leader: Karen Markey**

Magee Marsh is an internationally renowned migrant trap where birds stop to refuel before their long flight across Lake Erie. Find more on the Web site and in the May/June newsletter.

### Local National American Butterfly Association Official Counts 2016

Time	Date	Name	Compiler/Contact person
Spring	May 28	SW Washtenaw	Martin Bialecki ( <a href="mailto:kilnfired@gmail.com">kilnfired@gmail.com</a> )
4th July	July 2	SW Washtenaw	John Swales ( <a href="mailto:jmswales@umich.edu">jmswales@umich.edu</a> )
4th July	July 4	Chelsea	Roger Wykes (769-6482)
4th July	?July 10	Ann Arbor	?John Swales ( <a href="mailto:jmswales@umich.edu">jmswales@umich.edu</a> )
4th July	July 9	Toledo	Jackie Riley ( <a href="mailto:jriley4@sbcglobal.net">jriley4@sbcglobal.net</a> )
Fall	August 6	Dundee	TBA
Fall	August 20	SW Washtenaw	John Swales ( <a href="mailto:jmswales@umich.edu">jmswales@umich.edu</a> )

Everybody is welcome to join a count for a half or full day. Counts generally run from about 9:30 a.m. to about 5:00 p.m. The various groups usually meet for a picnic lunch at a designated location. Generally on a local count 35-40 species are found, although on a few occasions we have found 50 or more. There is an official \$3 dollar fee for each adult participant, although compilers have been known to pay the fees for the group.

Most of the transects are fairly easy-going, even if sometimes wet, so that wellingtons are sometimes a good idea. The few arduous treks are through fens because of tussock grass, plus some can be hard to reach. These may not be for everybody. I am sometimes asked about butterfly field guides; I would recommend the *Butterflies of Indiana* by Jeffrey Belth, published by the University of Indiana Press in 2013. It has excellent accounts of all our local species, apart from the Common Ringlet. NABA is a good organization to join; the annual subscription is modest; it offers a quarterly journal of some quality; it has an interactive website calls "hot sees," and it produces an annual report of all the butterfly counts in North America (around 500), which is what the \$3 dollar fees support. Submitted by Count Leader, 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, P.O. Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<b>Membership Dues</b>	
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.*

### **April 20 Shorebirding Southeast Michigan by Season**

Join shorebird expert and master photographer Jerry Jourdan to learn how to identify shorebirds seen in our area in each season. Jerry has presented his popular birding programs at birding festivals around the Midwest, and has the most awesome bird feeder in southeast Michigan, simultaneously hosting such rarities as Harris's Sparrow and Golden-crowned Sparrow.

### **May 18 Invasive Species in the Great Lakes**

There are more than 180 non-native species in the Great Lakes, but only a handful of them are having an outsized impact. Come hear about how these species got here, the damage they're doing, and what can be done to control them. Bill Rapai is president of Grosse Pointe Audubon, and the author of *The Kirtland's Warbler* (University of Michigan Press, 2013) and *Lake Invaders* (Wayne State University Press, April 2016).

### **June 15 The Bird a Day Big Year**

Join popular Washtenaw Audubon speaker Don "The Man" Chalfant for his entertaining story about his latest birding game, the Bird a Day Big Year. Don is a retired Ann Arbor teacher who holds many Big Year and Big Day birding records for Washtenaw County, and who has ludicrously large lifetime bird lists for Washtenaw County and its townships, the states of Michigan and Florida, and North America.

## Washtenaw Audubon Society

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