



WASHTENAW
AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May/June 2017

Spring Migration Field Trip Reports

Karen Markey leads multiple spring trips

We want to thank Karen Markey for leading several great spring birding trips in April and May. Following are highlights from three of those trips. You can find more details and complete lists of birds seen at www.washtenawaudubon.org.

Early spring (April 8) field trip report to the Arb: Winter wrens galore!

Our group of about two dozen birders began today's field trip with two pairs of Wood Ducks perched in the trees at the end of Riverview, including one of the females investigating a hole in a thick, bulky branch. Golden-crowned Kinglets were seen from the trip's beginning to end. Almost everyone in the group got good looks at target species: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Brown Creeper, both Kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Pine Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Eluding us was Fox Sparrow until the very end when we returned to our cars —Alex caught sight of a Fox Sparrow in the dense brush paralleling Pineview Court.

The star of today's field trip was WINTER WREN. A couple of us caught sight of Old Faithful, that is, the Winter Wren who has been seen and heard for over a week and a half in the downed timber lining the wood margins at the third inlet of Dow Prairie's southwest corner. We relocated to the second inlet where three Winter Wrens came into view and at least one sang repeatedly his complex and lengthy sound. Looping the Arb, our group caught sight of another three Winter Wrens here and there, resulting in a grand total of eight Winter Wrens today! What a treat! Many thanks to all birders who located birds and gave directions to their fellow birders so they could also see them. A big heap of gratitude to Norka Saldana who kept a running list of today's sightings.

Nichols Arboretum, April 8, 2017 8:00 AM - 1:03 PM, 3.5 miles, 42 species

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President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon,

It's been a rainy, cool, spring migration season, with birds hard to find at times. I have worked hard to find warblers in ones and twos, missing those great flocks I remember at the Boardwalk or at Dolph. We had rain, sometimes a continuous downpour, for the first seven (!) Thursday Morning Spring Migration Walks at the Arb. Sometimes birding, like life, is this way. We enjoy the struggle, even as we gripe about the difficulty of the endeavor. I'm getting out to watch and count birds every chance I can, for work and pleasure, whether I find that warbler flock or not. We're birders—and that's what we do!

Our May Count was a great success, light on individual warbler numbers, but still good for species diversity. Many of you volunteered to help with this count, and as the compiler, I am so grateful! I'll have a report on the May Count in the summer issue of this newsletter, as I'm still crunching the data.

Tuesday Evening Birders had a great May. Thanks to everyone who led the trips, and to everyone who came out to join us. A special thank you to our membership chair, Jessica Adamczyk, who organized a great series of Tuesday Evening Birders this year! The Stinchfield Woods Survey is now in the record books with a great turnout of volunteers and birds. We'll include a summary of the survey in the July/August newsletter.

If you are an Ann Arbor Breeding Bird Survey Volunteer, and I am grateful to the many Washtenaw Audubon members who are, your season is just beginning! We start Point Counts for our BBS on May 25th or later. And, check out our other field trips and programs on the Washtenaw Audubon Society web site. We'll be posting a date soon for the annual August trip to Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, which is geared to seeing southerly migrating shorebirds, and there will be other field trips as well. If your membership has lapsed and you're interested in going to Pte. Mou, make sure to renew, as members receive first priority, especially members who haven't attended in a few years.

I hope to see many of you on the trails, in the woods, or by a fluddle on a rural road somewhere...

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger



Scarlet Tanager by Matty Hack.

The KIWA Diary, Part 4

Karen Markey's adventures with the 2016 Kirtland's Warbler Census

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You can read previous installments of *The KIWA Diary* in the November/December 2016, January/February 2017, and March/April 2017 newsletters. You can also find an archive of past newsletters at www.washtenawaudubon.org.

Day 5 (Friday, June 10), MACK LAKE and MCKINLEY

It is still dark when I pack up the car but it's warmer than the three previous days. We've not been bothered by bugs at all, and I wonder whether today's warmer weather will encourage them. I'm paired with John, a new volunteer who also censuses Golden-Cheeked Warblers in Texas. We are assigned a zigzag-like transect on a Mack Lake jack pine plantation. The hiking is easy with lots of open areas. This plantation has rolling hills that display the full majesty of a KW-ready jack pine forest. Initially we have great luck, getting long looks at two KWs perched high in trees. We also flush two Ruffed Grouse. Although John is a first-timer, he has quickly caught onto the triangulation process, so I delegate that to him, taking charge of navigation.

Oh no! I mistakenly veer us onto Curtisville Road. We hypothesize that I'm holding my compass too close to the GPS. Whatever the reason, we have to backtrack to a previous waypoint, then resume our trek. Instead of a leisurely pace, we hurry, hearing 11 KWs, and when we correctly arrive on Curtisville Road, another team is finishing up our transect's eastern end.

I don't want the census to end in such a lackluster way. My spirits rise when Phil motors us to a second transect in the McKinley Area. John and I are adjacent to Jasmine and her team in new-growth jack pine, barely three- to four-foot tall. I am skeptical about finding KWs but sure enough, we hear five of which two are so close that we take long, hard looks, knowing that these are our final precious minutes enjoying KWs. Both sightings are classic: these KWs are perching near the jack pine's crown, leaning backward, pumping out their chests, and bursting forth their resounding "choo-choo-chee-chee-wee-wee" song!

Total Kirtland's Warblers Seen and/or Heard

My personal subtotal A (male KWs heard only) = 80

My personal subtotal B (male KWs seen) = 18

My personal KW TOTAL = 98

Here is a complete list of the birds I saw or heard during my trip north. KEY:

KW = birds that share the jack pine forests with KWs; kw = birds on the wood or field margins of jack pine forests; W = Wakeley Lake; H = Hartwick Pines; A = Aspen forest area in Huron National Forest; L = Luzerne Boardwalk; V = Valley Road Prairie; r = roadside

Common loons W Canada geese W Ring-billed gulls KW Great blue herons kw,r Great egret r Killdeer kw Wild turkeys r Ruffed grouse KW Red-tailed hawk r Turkey vultures r,KW

Mourning doves KW,r,H Common nighthawk KW,V Belted kingfisher W Ruby-throated hummingbird r,W Red-bellied woodpeckers r Hairy woodpeckers r,W,kw Downy woodpeckers r Yellow-bellied sapsuckers W Northern flickers A,KW Eastern kingbirds kw, V

Eastern phoebe r,H Eastern wood-pewee W,A Great-crested flycatcher kw,W,H Tree swallows W,r American crows r, kw Northern ravens r,KW Blue jays KW,H, W Black-capped chickadees H,W,KW Brown creeper H Red-breasted nuthatches kw,H,W

House wren r Winter wren H, L Brown thrashers (KW, very common in jack pines) Grey catbird r,H American robins r,H,W Hermit thrushes (KW, very common in jack pines, H,W) Eastern bluebirds KW Red-eyed vireos kw,W,H Blue-headed vireos H Black-throated green warblers H,W Black-and-white warbler H Yellow-rumped warblers kw, W

KIRTLAND'S WARBLERS KW Canada warblers H, L Chestnut-sided warblers A American redstarts A Pine warblers W,kw,H Nashville warblers W,A,KW,H (just about everywhere) Mourning warblers A (heard only) Common yellowthroat H

Ovenbirds (W,A,RP,kw,H, typical in older jack pines)

Brewer's blackbird kw, V Red-winged blackbird kw,W Grackle r,kw European starling r Baltimore oriole W Scarlet tanagers kw,W,H Dark-eyed junco kw American goldfinches kw,W,H Indigo buntings kw,A

Rose-breasted grosbeaks kw,W,H Evening grosbeaks H Eastern towhee kw White-throated sparrow H,W Chipping sparrows W,kw,H Vesper sparrow V Song sparrow kw,W Lincoln's sparrows KW Field sparrow KW

Clay-colored sparrow KW (in young jack pine forests)

Meet the Flock: Tex Wells

Tex Wells grew up as the oldest child in a family of three boys and one girl in Texas. Sadly, all of his siblings have pre-deceased him. He attended the University of Minnesota for both an undergraduate and a master's degree in fisheries biology. He went on to study fish in the Great Lakes region, under the employ of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where he served for 36 years. He retired in 1998.

He first became interested in birding after taking an Ornithology class at the University of Minnesota. He was an avid hunter, especially grouse, and made the natural transition into birding. He became active in Washtenaw Audubon Society over 50 years ago, upon the encouragement of a former Junior High School teacher (Vaden Miles). Vaden and University of Minnesota retired professor Dwayne Warner were his early mentors. At that time, birding was not yet a major hobby, so he is primarily self-taught—just heading out into the field with a guide to listen and learn. Pointe Pelee was a frequent destination for him then.

While he has had many memorable birding experiences, he distinctly remembers marveling at all the tropical species on his first visit to Panama. His world life list now sits at 4237, and his ABA Area list is at 759.

Here in Michigan, Tex holds the only state record accepted by the Michigan Bird Records Committee (MBRC) for a Reddish Egret, which was seen at Pointe Mouillee on August 3, 1981. He can also claim the Greater Prairie-Chicken for his state list, which was sadly extirpated in Michigan around 1981.

When he was initially interviewed, Tex stated that he would love to get his State Bird #400, but he thought that was unlikely, due to his age (95 years young). Amazingly, in March 2017, he joined many other birders who made the journey to Flint, Michigan, for the Ivory Gull. We have only two other birders in Michigan who have achieved this 400 bird milestone. Adam Byrne was the first, and he now holds the state record of 409 species. One of Tex's best birding buddies, Glenn Belyea, is next, with 405 species seen. Predictably, Tex's most wanted birding experience is now bird #401 for his state list!

His favorite birding spots are in Monroe County, especially Pte. Mouillee. His Monroe County list sits at 308.

Tex feels the most pressing conservation issue for birds is habitat loss. He is a strong supporter of funding habitat restoration programs, and most recently contributed to the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory property expansion.

He advises new birders to join birding groups, attend as many field trips as possible, and get involved. We all know birders are friendly folk eager to welcome others and share their knowledge.

You may contact Tex at 734-355-1668 (cell).



Tex celebrating his 95th birthday with friends.



Tex (with Roger Wykes) looking at American White Pelicans.

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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.

Sherri Smith Saves a Loon!

On Monday, April 10, Washtenaw Audubon Society member (and board member) Sherri Smith saved a downed loon. Here's the story in her words. Thank you, Sherri!

Monday evening, I came home to find a phone message that there was a Loon down in the median strip of U.S. 23 south of Ann Arbor at mile 33. I gathered up my loon catching and handling stuff and fought my way through traffic toward where he was reported. I drove on the left lane and pulled over onto the wide shoulder when I spotted him in a bathtub-sized body of water, in big trouble. I put on my goggles and heavy gloves and grabbed my net. I had him hauled out of the water and was working to make him go in a big cat carrier a minute later. I bet hardly anyone even saw it. Loons are big, strong and fierce, glad to put out your eyes with their long sharp beak. On my way home I realized that he was not only dirty but probably slightly oiled from the highway. My informant (great eyes to have noticed that he wasn't just a duck) said that she saw him pulling himself through the grass with his wings. He needed a bath. I recruited Keith Taylor and his wife Kris to help me, and we headed off for one of the classrooms where I teach in the School of Art and Design. It has large sinks and doesn't run out of hot water.

It took all three of us to wash him—Kris immobilized the very dangerous head, Keith held his body, and I washed various parts of him in turn. We needed occasional help from amazed students who were there working. He did not make the loon call, but made plenty of nasty remarks about us. Then we had to rinse him at length to make him waterproof again. You can't leave any trace of Dawn, detergent of rehabbers, on them. Their feathers, when detergent free, turn dry under running water. This is true of all birds, not just water birds. It was pretty dark when we took him out to Barton Pond and poured him out of the cat carrier. We could see his pretty long legs kicking off from the shallow bottom like a frog until he got into deeper water and could swim properly.

Why was he in the median strip of the highway? We think the sudden hard rains of the day combined with one of those violent down drafts (like the one which pulled up big trees on Dexter St. a few years ago) forced him to the ground where he could be discovered by mere chance.



A rare "loonar" eclipse. Photo by Daniel Hack.

Spring Migration Field Trip Reports

(continued from page 1)

Hudson Mills field trip report, May 7, Sunday

Our intrepid band of almost 50 WAS birders braved cold temperatures and a cold wind at Hudson Mills Metropark. Several times Pileated Woodpecker calls echoed through the woods until finally, one came into view for one or two birders, then motored farther into the woods, coming into view for the rest of us. We paced the Huron River, listening for Prothonotary Warbler and were delighted to hear one calling on the southwest corner of the park. Randy caught sight of this brilliant orange-yellow gem, described the bird's location, and everyone watched the Prothonotary prowl the opposite shore, weaving in and out of the thicket. Cristy heard a Blue-winged Warbler, and we lingered where the bird frolicked in a short, hardly leafed-out tree.

Most birds were summer or year-round residents. Very few migrants were present—thus, the good news is that the best of the spring migration is yet to come.

Heaps of gratitude to Craig for shouldering my scope throughout the entire 3.5 mile walk. Big-time thanks to Dea, Juliet, Norka, Jim, Randy, Cristy, and so many other birders for their wonderful spotting and helping the group find today's great birds. More special thanks to Norka who compiled today's list from the four-hour trip's beginning to end.

Let's do this again in September when the birds are migrating back to their southern homes.

Hudson Mills Metropark, May 7, 2017 7:15 AM - 11:38 AM, 3.5 miles, 49 species

Awesome WAS Magee Marsh field trip report, Sunday, May 14

Perfect weather conditions were in store for our small group of seven to ten WAS birders who toured Magee Marsh's Boardwalk and Estuary Trail. Immediately upon entering the boardwalk, it was non-stop birds. We got a tip to relocate to the Estuary Trail and were rewarded by a slew of Scarlet Tanagers and Redstarts and got long looks at an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER and PHILADELPHIA VIREO. The nesting Bald Eagle made several low flyovers over the boardwalk. Although thrushes were few and elusive, we got up close views at a Gray-cheeked Thrush and more distant looks at Swainson's Thrushes so our group could make comparisons. Four vireo species also came into view.

The highlight was the 23 warblers we saw with amazing close ups of Prothonotary Warbler, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Redstart, and Magnolia Warblers. Reports from Maumee Bay State Park and Pearson Metropark of Golden-winged and Connecticut Warblers were tempting so we left in early afternoon for Maumee Bay, finding a stunning male GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER and red morph Eastern Screech Owl on the boardwalk there.

It was an awesome day, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, Boardwalk, Lucas, Ohio, US & Maumee Bay SP, Boardwalk, Lucas, Ohio, US, May 14, 2017 7:35 AM - 1:35 PM & 3:25 PM - 4:40 PM, 64 unique species total



Northern Waterthrush by Benjamin Hack.



Prothonotary Warbler by Benjamin Hack.

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (June 2017 – August 2017)

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 Bryn 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.

Sunday, June 11, 6:30 a.m.

Dan's No-holds-barred Nature Outing

Leader/Organizer: Dan Sparks-Jackson

Starting location: Eddy Discovery Center

Meet/carpool at 6:30 a.m. at the first parking lot you come to at Waterloo State Recreation Area's Eddy Discover Center off of Bush Road. Limit: 10 adults; middle school and older kids permitted in addition to adults, but no more than 15 participants total. It will be early. There will be mosquitos and quite possibly ticks. It might rain. We will be hiking some distance, and very possibly on wet and uneven ground. If we're very lucky there might be rattlesnakes. We will start in Waterloo SRA and proceed as dictated by Dan's scouting efforts, quite possibly venturing as far as Lenawee County. Bring your camera, your water bottle, a sack lunch, and wear some old clothes. We're going to ooze into nature, seeking breeding birds, late migrants, interesting fragile habitats, and native orchids. Depending on opportunities, conditions, and interest level, we will likely be in the field until early afternoon. Whining strictly prohibited. RSVP with contact info: sparksjackson@aol.com.

Weekend in August

Driving Tour to Pointe Mouillee

This popular field trip is still being put together for a weekend day in August. Please see www.washtenawaudubon.org for more details. Once it is officially on the web site and announced, we will accept participants on a first come/first serve basis.

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 21 Creatures of the Night

Join noted birder, photographer, and raconteur Don Chalfant for a program on the mysterious creatures that are active after dark. Owls, nightjars, woodcocks, and other birds, bugs, and mammals are out and about while most humans are asleep. Don Chalfant is a retired teacher who divides his time between Michigan and Florida, where he's an active birder, field trip leader, and photographer.

No programs in July and August.

September 20 Birds of India

Join Washtenaw Audubon member Amurthur Ramamurthy for a look at some of India's 1266 bird species, among the most interesting and colorful birds on the planet. Dr. Ramamurthy is a native of India and an avid birder and photographer. He and his family live in Canton, MI.



Washtenaw Audubon Society

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