



WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

July/August 2017

May Count 2017 Results and Highlights

by Juliet Berger, Washtenaw County Compiler

The 2017 Washtenaw County May Count is finally a wrap! Our total of 171 bird species observed stands respectable among the totals of years past, with 132 expected species and 39 unusual species for the area. Last year we observed 176 species. This year we had dozens of volunteers fan out throughout the county, searching for birds, and recording everything in eBird, a citizen science project, though Cornell University. Now, instead of our results being buried in the obscure scientific journal, *Michigan Birds and Natural History*, to be published several years after the fact, scientists have access to our data in real time. Was it a light migration in mid-May for common Warbler species? Yes, it was, as we can see from our county results. If I am a scientist studying trends from this year's migration, I have the Washtenaw County data at my fingertips, right in eBird. For the complete count of species by Townships, see the list at www.washtenawaudubon.org.

Despite low bird numbers, we managed to see all of the expected Warbler species except Bay-breasted Warbler, on May 13, thanks to our army of volunteers...one Nashville Warbler here, two Blackburnian there. Since I dipped all spring on Bay-breasted, discovering that the May Count did, too, made me feel a little better. Karen Markey found a Prothonotary Warbler at Hudson Mills Metropark, where they are now breeding. Also at Hudson Mills, Karen noted a singing Louisiana Waterthrush. Louisiana Waterthrush was also observed at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve by Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy Stewardship and Outreach Specialist, Taylor Myatt, and all the field trip participants he led there on count day.

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President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon,
Happy Summer to all!

Please join me in thanking Nancy Davis, our fabulous Washtenaw Audubon Newsletter Editor. She is one of the hardest working people I know, working full time as a professional editor for a major publishing house, taking care of her kids (the famous Matty and Benjamin Hack) and family, and still she finds time to produce our newsletter with panache! Nancy, I appreciate you more than I can possibly convey.

By the time you read this note, summer will be winding down to the last Dog Days. I've been busy with the Ann Arbor Breeding Bird Survey, and supporting the many volunteers in this program at Natural Area Preservation. I am glad to count many Washtenaw Audubon members among these volunteers, who survey an Ann Arbor natural area, helping us to document what species are breeding in our parks. And speaking of breeding birds, have you noticed families of Titmice, Chickadees, or Nuthatches with newly fledged young? They are so fun to watch, so adorably incompetent at the task of finding their own food. Here in my yard, we've been fortunate to play host to two families of Carolina Wrens, and their antics are hilarious. The young creep through the bushes, begging to be fed, peeping at their parents, and then go on short, weak flights from low bush to shrub, fussing loudly the whole time, as only a Carolina Wren can. Watching birds in mid-summer can be one of the best times of all!

Our fall lineup of field trips and programs will soon be on our website, and many events will be in this newsletter. I'll be at the Arb at 8 a.m. on Thursday, August 31, for the first 2017 Fall Migration Walk of the season. I hope to see many of you there.

Until then,
As always,
I am for the birds,
Juliet Berger



Carolina Wren by Benjamin Hack.

May Count 2017 Results and Highlights

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Two Kentucky Warblers were observed in York and Augusta Townships, one singing in Draper-Houston Meadows Preserve, observed by Johanna Lentz, and the other on Gooding Rd. between Arkona and Milan-Oakville Rd., observed by Greg Jacks and Jeff Schultz. A Prairie Warbler returned to the usual spot on Hankerd Rd., for at least the fifth year running.

Matty and Benjamin Hack's crew in Lyndon and Sylvan Townships tallied 19 Cerulean Warblers, our County's only population and a modern May Count record, beating last year's record by 2 birds.

Other passerine species also showed good diversity, if not numbers. Though we missed any Alder Flycatchers, a late migrator, Willow Flycatchers put up a significant 25 individuals. The Scio Township crew of Tim Gacioch and Andrew Pawuk, birding Dolph Park, had our county's only Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, a species not seen every year on the Count, as it tends to migrate later in the month. Eastern Kingbirds showed up in force, with 116 individuals, nearly 50 birds more than last year's 69. Sparrow species made a good appearance, with good numbers of Towhees (104) and Vespers (6). Notable Sparrows included two Henslow's in Sharon Township, and a Lincoln's Sparrow at Draper-Houston. Grasshopper Sparrow, not always present by count day, showed up in good numbers in Sharon, Manchester, Lodi, and York/Augusta Townships. No Marsh Wrens were recorded, but two observers found Sedge Wrens, doing well in the county this year. They were not present yet at the Conservancy Farm, but were singing there from late May through this writing. John Mills noted Sedge Wrens in Lima Township, and the Sharon crew observed two, as well. A White-eyed Vireo on Lindley Rd., and Gray-cheeked Thrush in Manchester and Sharon, were welcome additions. Perhaps our most exciting passerine was the Western Meadowlark, found by Maggie Jewett, on Dexter Town Hall Rd. Many birders were able to relocate him and see or hear him in the ensuing weeks, as he sang in the long grass of a Michigan hayfield. Thanks, Maggie!!

Water loving birds were some of this year's highlights. Semipalmated Sandpiper and Plover were both observed, unusual birds for the count. The fluddle on Morgan Road hosted several sandpiper species. Forster's Terns showed up both at Four Mile Lake and on Barton Pond. A pair of Common Gallinule appeared to be breeding at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, a new location for them. And, the two Black-crowned Night-Herons observed in two different locations, were spectacular, one at North Bay Park/Ford Lake Boardwalk and one at Oakwoods Nature Area in Ann Arbor. We even have a photo of one in this checklist from Alex Sin (<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S36812255>). Ducks unusual for this time of year showed up all over, with Ruddy Ducks, Bufflehead, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, and American Black Duck among the notables.

Non-passerines such as Woodpeckers and Raptors, put on a good showing. A record setting 21 Pileated Woodpeckers, from 10 of 12 Township areas, will push the species onto our expected list for next year's count. They are making a big comeback throughout the county. Two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were still hanging around on count day, in both Scio and Ann Arbor. For raptors, Lyndon and Sylvan Townships tallied 3 Red-shouldered Hawks and a Merlin. We observed 6 Bald Eagles this year, coming close to our record of 9 from last year's



Henslow's Sparrow by Benjamin Hack.

count. We have several Bald Eagle nests in our townships, including notable ones at Chelsea State Game Area Four Mile Lake, and at Milan Nature Park, so the actual numbers of individual birds are sure to be higher. Three Osprey were also observed, down just one from last year. And this observer in Lodi Township saw a Northern Harrier fly across Waters Road. Scio observer, Tim Gacioch also noted a Harrier on Park Rd.

Game birds made a strong showing on our count, including the first Northern Bobwhite in recent years at a Sharon Hollow wetland north of Trolz Rd., observed by Dave Borneman's crew. They also had an airborne Ruffed Grouse in Sharon Township. Ring-necked Pheasant showed a massive uptick in numbers at 72, as we only noted 29 in 2016.

Noted omissions from this year's tally: Peregrine Falcon. We know they nested in downtown, and had two chicks that have both lived to fledge, so it is not a concern. I stepped in at the last minute to try to cover Ann Arbor with volunteers, and did not remember to send someone to count the Peregrines. I've checked eBird and there are no observations from that day, but there are plenty the day after! I'll hope to have an Ann Arbor Area Leader lined up well before next year's count, to take care of all these details. (If you know anyone who is interested in this position, please contact me!)

Our breeding population of Yellow-throated Warblers on the Saline River were silent on May 13, but they continue to breed there, so there are no worries about the well-being of the species in our county. Greater Yellowlegs, usually noted in the county, had departed by May 13. No Golden-crowned Kinglets were found, though they are expected to be here every year, since they have historically bred at Stinchfield Woods. We were not surprised to find none there on the Stinchfield Woods census later this spring, either, then. For unknown reasons, they have not returned this year.

My most heartfelt thanks go out to all of the marvelous Area Leaders (Greg Jacks, John Mills, Roger Wykes, Ellie Shappirio, Martin Bialecki, Dave Borneman, Dan Thiry and Susan Falcone, Matty and Benjamin Hack, Tim Gacioch, and Mike Sefton and me, Juliet Berger) and their dedicated cadre of volunteers. It wouldn't be the May Count without ALL your help. I'm looking forward to working again with all of you on May 12, 2018!!! Until then,

Good Birding to all!!!



Pileated Woodpecker by Matty Hack.



Red-shouldered Hawk by Benjamin Hack.

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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.

Stinchfield Woods 2017 Census Report: A Second Record-Setting Year in a Row!

Saturday, June 3, 2017

by Karen Markey

Year 2017's count took place on a perfectly cool, comfortable and partly sunny Saturday, June 3, 2017, from 7:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. Special thanks go to our big crew of 22 volunteer counters: Bob Be., Bob Bo., Bob M., Carmela, Dan G., Dan S.-J., Dawn, Fred, George, Joan, Johannes, John, Juliet, Karen, Ken, Kristy, Linda, Mary, Mike, Norka, Roger, and Toni.

For the second year in a row, we hit a *trifecta*: 1) a record number of species at 62; (2) a record-breaking number of individuals at 878; and (3) a very high number of volunteers at 22!

Here are 2017's headlines: a record number of Hooded Warblers at 35; continuing reports of Pileated Woodpeckers—4 total that includes the 1 sighted while we compiled the count; a Kingfisher family of 4 flying overhead; and 1 Barred Owl adult and 2 owlets! Bank Swallows continue in a sand quarry on Toma Road's east side, visible at a metal gate about mid-way between N. Territorial and Stinchfield Woods Roads and keeping company with a first-ever Rough-winged Swallow. This year's cameo appearances include Osprey (seen previously in 2016 and 2014), Belted Kingfisher (2003 and 1998 only), Veery (in 2016 and 1998 only), Killdeer (2002 and 2000 only), and White-throated Sparrow (2001 only).

This year's high species counts are similar to previous years: Eastern Wood-Pewee (63), Blue Jay (59), Red-eyed Vireo (58), Northern Cardinal (47), and Black-capped Chickadee (38).

On the plus side are numbers of:

Eastern Wood-Pewees: winner of the highest number of individuals at 63, remarkably higher than last year's 49

Acadian Flycatchers: in the high teens and low 20s for 5 years in a row

Blue Jays: holding strong in the mid-50s (59)

Cedar Waxwings: always hit or miss, this year mostly the former at 30

Wood Thrushes: rebounding to 19 after last year's disappointing 9

Red-bellied Woodpeckers: a 20-year high of 31 this year

Red-eyed Vireos: on the rise in the upper 50s (58)

Scarlet Tanagers: a respectable 17, on the heels of three years in the 20s

On the minus side are numbers of:

Cowbirds: after three years in a row of single digits (6, 9, and 7), up to a whopping 25 this year

Golden-crowned Kinglets: zero this year

Red-breasted Nuthatches: only 10 this year after a rebound to 21 in 2016

Chipping Sparrows: another humdrum year at 28 as Stinchfield's open areas shrink

Indigo Buntings: struggling to reach 10, probably due to fewer open areas

Pine Warblers: plunging to 29 after last year's record high of 53

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Stinchfield Woods 2017 Census Report

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This year's results now make 25 years of Stinchfield data available online at eBird and 20 years at the Stinchfield web page (<http://ylime.people.si.umich.edu/stinchfield.html>).

(Please note that the web page's tally is a draft due to limited time and resources—I'll eventually finalize it.)

Thanks again to the big-time crew of 22 birders who took part in this year's count. You achieved an amazing trifecta: one broken individuals record, one broken species record, and many eyes and ears in search of Stinchfield's avian gems. Special thanks to the SNR&E facilities coordinator who met us bright and early and lingered as long as she could, giving us access to the Woods and its facilities.

Please join us for next year's count, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, June 2, 2018, same place and time.

Here is our list of birds seen and/or heard in 2017. Consult the Stinchfield Woods web page for exact numbers (that is missing the lone Red-tailed Hawk that I failed to enter).

Sandhill Crane	Barn Swallow	Warbling Vireo
Osprey	Bank Swallow	Red-eyed Vireo
Turkey Vulture	Rough-winged Swallow	Yellow Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	Black-throated Green Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Blue Jay	Pine Warbler
Wild Turkey	American Crow	Ovenbird
Killdeer	Black-capped Chickadee	Common Yellowthroat
Mourning Dove	Tufted Titmouse	Hooded Warbler
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Scarlet Tanager
Barred Owl	White-breasted Nuthatch	Northern Cardinal
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Brown Creeper	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Red-bellied Woodpecker	House Wren	Indigo Bunting
Downy Woodpecker	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	Eastern Towhee
Hairy Woodpecker	Veery	Chipping Sparrow
Pileated Woodpecker	Wood Thrush	Song Sparrow
Northern Flicker	American Robin	Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Grey Catbird	Common Grackle
Acadian Flycatcher	Cedar Waxwing	Brown-headed Cowbird
Great Crested Flycatcher	Blue-headed Vireo	Baltimore Oriole
Tree Swallow	Yellow-throated Vireo	House Finch
		American Goldfinch
		White-throated Sparrow

Washtenaw Audubon Birders in the News!

On May 6, 2017, WAS birder Sarah Toner was part of the Cornell Redheads team that won their division in the World Series of Birding in New Jersey. They won the Urner Stone Cup, with a total of 212 species tallied. Read all about it at <https://cals.cornell.edu/news/redheads-take-world-series-birding-cup>. Congratulations to Sarah and her team!

In June we learned that a paper about a project that WAS birder Harold Eyster contributed to as an undergrad was published as the cover story in *Science*. The story was picked up by the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, NPR, the *Washington Post*, and more. The paper is about bird egg shape, and Harold was included in the acknowledgements. Read more about it at <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/356/6344/1249/tab-pdf>. Congratulations to Harold!

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Aug 2017 – Sept 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, August 20, 8:00 a.m.

Driving Tour, 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. For this event, we will be allowed to bring in four vehicles. As a result, this trip has limited space and *registration is mandatory*. To register, please send an email to Juliet Berger (juliet.berger@gmail.com). In that email, please include your name(s), your status as a WAS member (member or non-member), whether you are willing to drive others into the preserve, and how many more people you could fit into your vehicle. You will receive an email to confirm your registration or letting you know if you have been put on the waiting list. Preference will be given to current WAS members, to people who were unable to participate on this field trip last year, and to people who are willing to drive larger vehicles that can accommodate more participants (and are willing to allow others in their vehicle). Registered participants will meet at the Pointe Mouillee Sigler Road parking lot at 8:00 a.m. and from there will consolidate into the four vehicles. Bring insect repellent, wear a hat, and dress for warm weather—there is no shade or shelter at Pte. Mou. Bring all of the food and fluids you think you will need to sustain you for approximately five hours of birding.

Fall migration walks in Nichols Arboretum

Please join one of these popular, leaderless walks to observe fall migration at the Arb. Every Thursday morning from August 31st through the end of October, participants will gather at 8:00 a.m. at the end of the Riverview Drive cul-de-sac (off Geddes Road) near the eastern edge of the Arboretum. The assembled birders will choose a route or routes and head out in search of migrants, many of which will be in their first-year plumage. The walks go until roughly 11:00 a.m., but everyone can join or leave the group as his or her schedule requires. These walks are a great, low-key way to get started in bird watching. All are welcome; you do not need to be a WAS member.

Saturday, September 9, 2017

Fall Migrants at Hudson Mills, Leader Karen Markey (Details to come. Please visit the WAS web site.)

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.*

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.

October 18 Spain with Washtenaw Audubon

Join Washtenaw Audubon's field trip organizer Bryn Martin for a report on our most recent international field trip: Spain. From desert to high in the Pyrenees, we visited various habitats and saw over 200 species of birds, including the elusive Wallcreeper. Bryn teaches high school in Livonia and is an avid international birder.

November 15 Birding Panama

Join Lathe Clafin for a program on a recent trip to eastern Panama organized by former Washtenaw Audubon member Matt Hysell. With over 250 species seen, rarities included Crested Eagle, Harpy Eagle, and Streaked Xenops. Lathe is a retired U-M professor who has led many field trips for Jackson Audubon, Washtenaw Audubon, Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, and the Haehnle Audubon Sanctuary in Jackson County.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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