



WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2017

71st Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 16, 2017

by Jacco Gelderloos

As I prepare to write this year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) announcement, I am struck by a feeling of déjà vu—a quick check of the 2016 article confirms it: that, too, was largely written on an unseasonably warm October day, with temperatures hovering near, or even hitting, the 80-degree mark! Bizarre stuff, but perhaps a sign of things to come? Or perhaps, a fluky Indian Summer weekend ahead of cooler, more normal fall weather (whatever that may mean these days)? We'll see....

No matter—what we can be reasonably sure of, is that winter is coming (not just in Westeros). And with that, the CBC season will be upon us before we know it. Although the count window stretches from mid-December into early January, the Ann Arbor CBC has traditionally been held on the third Saturday of December. In short, mark **Saturday, December 16th**, on your calendars, folks!

In my write-up for last season's CBC, I described my elevated levels of anxiety with regard to the weather conditions on count day, and I sincerely hope that I (and you all) will be spared any and all such worries. I don't mind winter weather, but I prefer my winter weather with a degree of moderation, to be honest. Of course, the birds are more seriously affected by the weather, and it will be a factor to contend with, no matter what. All we have to do is wait and see just how it's going to impact our count results. Remember, the different long-term trends with regard to our resident and winter birds are the most important data points we collect, if not necessarily the most exciting (let's face it, we all hope to find that crazy rarity!). Still, I, for one, am exceedingly curious if the upward trends of Wild Turkey

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President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon,

This fall's migration pageant showed a wide spectrum of diverse species of birds. We were delighted by the first County record of LeConte's Sparrow found by Ben Hack on October 28th. Ben not only found our first Washtenaw LeConte's, but he deliberately went to LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve that day to search for one. Now that's prescience and a lot of diligent study, combined with excellent birding skills, and a piece of good luck! Fortunately, many other birders were able to view the bird the day after Ben's find. The LeConte's Sparrow will undoubtedly be the Washtenaw bird of the year! Thanks, Ben! See Ben's fine checklist complete with excellent photos.

<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40168937>

I stumbled upon a third County record American Avocet at South Pond, where my office is located, on November 2, which many birders came out to see. Here is my eBird checklist from November 3rd with my best photo (also, see page 3). <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40283388>

Another majestic migrant, the Sandhill Crane, needs our support, to thwart a proposed statewide hunt. There is nascent legislation to legalize an annual hunt of these gorgeous birds, that may be acted on as soon as January 2018. We invited leadership from the Songbird Protection Coalition to table at our November program at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, and many WAS members signed their petitions and wrote postcards to the State rejecting the idea of a Sandhill Crane hunt. Please see SongbirdProtection.com for more information about how you can support the preservation of this vulnerable species. Sandhill Cranes can now be seen in many locations in Washtenaw, thanks to regulations now in place, at the Federal and State level.

Other great sightings this fall included a record 11 Golden Eagles seen migrating over the Torrey Road Hawk Watch hotspot, a Surf Scoter at Whitmore Lake, and, also at Whitmore Lake, a very interesting Loon species. Many observers thought it looked a lot like a Pacific Loon, though eBird moderators ultimately decided it probably was a small juvenile Common Loon. This is a frustrating one we'll probably never definitively identify. And, a female King Eider has been parked at Belle Isle, in the Detroit River, for more than a week. Members of Washtenaw Audubon attending the joint Washtenaw and Oakland Audubon Society's field trip on Saturday, November 18th, were treated to amazingly close views of this species. There have been some stellar rare bird sightings all over the state, keeping things interesting, long after most migrant songbirds have completed their annual treks.

Stay tuned to this newsletter, the WAS website, and our Facebook page for more info on the 71st annual Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count on December 16th. Registration is live, online this year.

I hope to see many of you on the trails, by a heap of garbage covered with gulls, along the shore of a half frozen lake, and at the next great bird sighting. Until then,

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger

Fall Rarities

October and November can be two of the best months to find rare birds in Michigan, and in 2017 they did not disappoint. On October 28, Benjamin Hack discovered a LeConte's Sparrow at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, a first record for Washtenaw County. This colorful, secretive sparrow is normally found in the Great Plains, with some breeding in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan; in the southeastern part of the state, though, this species is very rare. Surprisingly, it was found in dry, scrubby habitat, very different from the marshes that they usually prefer. The bird disappeared soon after its initial discovery, but it was seen and enjoyed by many on the next day, after which it left for good.

The rarities weren't done yet, though. On November 2, Washtenaw Audubon Society president Juliet Berger spotted an American Avocet at South Pond, only the third ever spotted in the county. The tall, black-and-white shorebird is an infrequent visitor to the western part of Michigan, but is much more rare in the east. The avocet waded around the eastern side of the lagoon for most of the day, showing off its distinctive upturned bill and delighting birders. It was seen again the next morning, but it flew away at around 10:15 in the morning and did not return. For many, this and the sparrow represented two new birds for the county within just one week!



*LeConte's Sparrow, LeFurge Woods
by Benjamin Hack*



*American Avocet, South Pond
by Juliet Berger*

71st Annual Christmas Bird Count

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and Pileated Woodpecker hold up, and if the downward trajectories for Ring-necked Pheasant and American Kestrel continue. Will any winter finches show up? Are we up for another Red-breasted Nuthatch irruption? What will the 2017 bird of the season be? Clearly, the best way to find out and to contribute your piece to these puzzles is to join us for the 71st edition of the Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count, as always, sponsored by the Washtenaw Audubon Society.

The event brings out advanced, intermediate, and beginning birders, and it is a wonderful occasion for volunteers new to the area, or birding itself, to meet the local birding community and become part of the Ann Arbor area's extensive birding network. As a former newbie, I can attest to the warm and knowledgeable welcome WAS birders will give—and continue to give!

Since the CBC is an effort undertaken on a continent-wide scale, our results are a small part of the much larger picture that shows the winter distribution of birds across North and South America (and, increasingly, beyond). In keeping with general trends to make most, if not all, information available online, The National Audubon Society has been posting annual results on its website at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>. This is an amazing resource, allowing you to check historical results for every count circle! In addition, you can sign up for NAS's citizen science publication *American Birds*, here: <https://action.audubon.org/signup/sign-citizen-science>; *American Birds* summarizes data not only for the Christmas Bird Count, but also the May Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and other citizen science efforts.

For those of you unfamiliar with the CBC format, some general information about our count is in order. All CBCs are conducted during a three-week period from December 14 to January 5, all over the western (and even a small and growing part of the eastern) hemisphere. As I mentioned above, the Ann Arbor count always takes place on the third Saturday in December, to prevent scheduling conflicts with other nearby counts. Each count circle covers an area 15 miles in diameter; the Ann Arbor circle is centered on the Foster Road bridge, near the intersection of Maple Road and Huron River Drive and extends roughly from Dexter in the west to Dixboro in the east, and from Whitmore Lake in the north to the Ann Arbor Airport in the south—the map accompanying this article (see the WAS website) shows the count circle in detail. Our objective is to identify all bird species present in this circle and count how many individuals of each species are present. In addition to the daylight bird census, several hardy observers will conduct a pre-dawn search for owls.

There are a number of ways to participate in this count, the main one of which is to be a field observer. The Ann Arbor CBC circle is comprised of eight areas, all run by a so-called area leader, who coordinates the census in that region. If you wish to be a field observer, select one of the eight regions (for more information on the specific count areas, please check out the detailed maps on the WAS website) and sign up with the area leader of that region. If you are not sure where you might best help census, or are flexible in where you can be assigned, email or call me (CBC Compiler Jacco Gelderloos) at JJGelderloos@yahoo.com or (734) 973-9422, and I can direct you to an area based on need. The option to sign up through the WAS CBC webpage is available, although not (yet) for specific count areas, so stay tuned for that. Lastly, you can sign up through the NAS web site—if you do so, please contact me by phone or email to let me know you have done so, as I will need to place you into an area within the count circle.

There is also the option of staying indoors and pitching in as a feeder watcher. If you have a feeder within the count circle, this is a fun and easy way to participate. (**Remember:** the feeder *must* be within the count circle, otherwise the data is invalid for our count—simply type your address into Google

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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.

Maps to make sure, or check with me). Like field observers, you may sign up to participate for any length of time— from one hour to all day. Contact feeder watch coordinator Kurt Hagemester for more information, to sign up, or to get feeder watch forms.

Best of all (in my humble opinion), the real fun and excitement happens at the end of the day at the potluck supper, when the final results are tallied and announced after dessert. For the past few years now, the potluck supper has been held at the meeting room of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (MBG)—all participants are invited! If you plan to attend, please contact the potluck coordinator Nicole Sefton to let us know you are coming and to coordinate dishes—*please note that alcohol is not permitted on the MBG premises*. The MBG are located at 1800 N. Dixboro Rd., about one mile south of Plymouth Rd. in Ann Arbor. Please note that the U of M has instituted a \$1.20/hour fee at the MBG. Area leaders can give directions if you need them; plan to gather there around 5:30-6:00 p.m.

Please remember that the CBC is run entirely by volunteers and can always use your help. Consider helping out with the potluck set-up and clean-up: it is exceedingly helpful to arrive early at the potluck site, lend a hand setting up tables and chairs, and help prepare for the arrival and arrangement of food. This may also entail getting supplies such as tablecloths, plates, etc. (costs will be reimbursed by WAS). After the supper, we will need to clean up as well. Remember: many hands make light work!

Information regarding the count will also be available on the Ann Arbor CBC web page where any updates will be posted as the count day approaches. Please keep an eye on <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/> for news and updates regarding the event.

Area	Leaders	Phone	E-mail
1	Andrew Pawuk	(740) 590-6596	andrewpawuk@gmail.com
2	Rob & Nancy French	(734) 994-8418	rwfrenchjr@comcast.net
3	Benjamin Hack	(734) 845-2634	bdhbirdman@gmail.com
4	Tim McKay	(734) 657-6401	tamckay@umich.edu
5	Mike Kielb	(734) 660-5329	makielb@comcast.net
	Susan Kielb	(734) 660-5320	sdkielb@comcast.net
6	Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
7	Kurt Hagemester	(734) 663-9746	khagemester@sbcglobal.net
8	Mike Sefton		mseft@yahoo.com

CBC Compiler: Jacco Gelderloos (734) 973-9422 jjgelderloos@yahoo.com

Feeder Watch Coordinator:

Kurt Hagemester (734) 663-9746 khagemester@sbcglobal.net

Potluck Coordinator: Nicole Sefton seftonn1344@yahoo.com

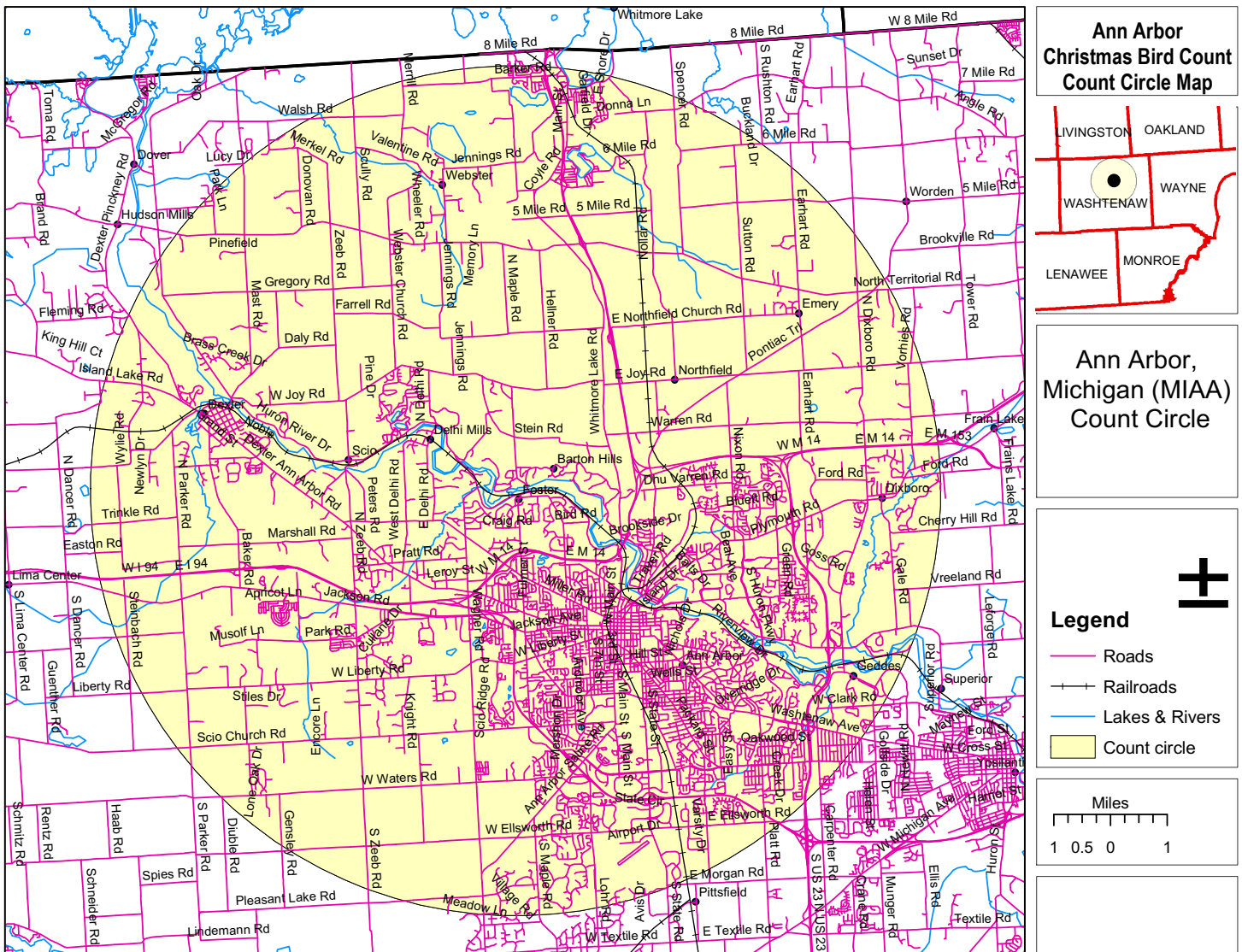
Ann Arbor CBC Web Site: <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/annarborcbc.php>

National Audubon Society:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>



CBC Potluck, December 17, 2016, by Mike Sefton



Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Dec 2017 – Spring 2018)

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.

Winter Birding Field Trips TBD

Check the WAS website or social media to learn more about forthcoming winter birding field trips, including a possible trip to the Soo led by Bryn Martin and Taylor Myatt, tentatively scheduled for January 20-21.

Saturday, March 3

One-Road Challenge

This fun, annual challenge will be held the first Saturday in March this year. Details will be forthcoming, but be sure to check the WAS website or the WAS Facebook pages to see the finalized details.

Thursdays in April and May (and one at the end of March)

Spring Migration Walks

Join us on Thursday morning, March 29, and Thursday mornings in April and May 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.

Results from The Big Sit 2017

Saturday, October 7

by Don Chalfant

Team Information: Washtenaw Wingnuts, Captain: Don Chalfant

Location: Independence Lake, Washtenaw County, Michigan; Time at Location: 0525-1615

Weather: Morning clouds and rain, sunny and windy afternoon with gusts up to 30 mph.

Our 20th Big Sit at this site proved to be one of the most productive, thanks to some young eyes and ears.

Morning rain did not deter the group; but afternoon winds deterred the birds. Still, a count of 60 species was rewarding. A late Blackpoll Warbler became #120 on our 20-year cumulative species list. Please see the WAS website for species details.

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.*

December No formal Wednesday program in December

Join us on Saturday, December 16, for the Christmas Bird Count! Beginning birders are welcome to participate in the count. Visit the Washtenaw Audubon Society web site for more information.

January 17 Birding at the End of the World: Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, and Isla de los Estados

Join Len Sander for an illustrated program of the wildlife and spectacular scenery at the southern tip of South America. Patagonia is a sparsely populated region of mountains, grasslands, deserts, and seacoasts shared by Chile and Argentina. Andean Condors, Darwin's Rheas, and penguins were highlights along with other birds and animals which inhabit this seldom-visited area. Len Sander is a retired U-M physics professor who is a keen bird photographer and a long-time Ann Arbor birder.

February 21 Birds and Wildlife of Ethiopia

Join seasoned traveler and birder Mecquicreuse Desoiseaux for a look at the ecologically diverse nation of Ethiopia. Though seldom visited by American birders, the country boasts 856 bird species, of which 20 are endemic, and 31 endemic mammals. A lifelong birder, Mecqui is a native of France, and a former birding tour guide for Fictif Bird Tours, S.A.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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