



# WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## NEWSLETTER

September / October 2018

### Birding Borneo by Bryn Martin

There are not too many locations seemingly as exotic as Borneo, so I was beyond excited to be able to explore this part of the world—a place I'd imagined in my dreams, but never thought I'd get the chance to visit someday. Yet, here we were. A land of unusual birds, charismatic mammals, and flying reptiles! We got to experience it all and Borneo did not disappoint.

Six participants from Washtenaw Audubon Society visited the Malaysian section of Borneo from July 21-31, 2018. The trip was run through the company Rockjumper and we had a Rockjumper guide from South Africa with us as well as a local Malaysian guide. Both were excellent and made the trip incredibly rewarding. Our tour took us from the city of Kota Kinabalu to some higher elevation locations and then down into the lowland rainforest that typifies this part of the world. We ended with over 230 species of birds, many mammals, and a few other interesting and memorable creatures.



# President's Letter

Reflections on autumn from a birder

Chimney Swifts continue to be on the minds of Washtenaw Audubon Society members. These birds gather in late summer and fall in chimney roosts, sometimes in vast numbers, and are a wonder to behold as they swirl into a chimney at dusk. A popular chimney roost at 415 W. Washington (in Ann Arbor) is under threat, and we hope to be able to preserve this structure despite the probable demolition of the building. Please follow events on our Facebook page and at [www.washtenawaudubon.org](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org) for the latest in our efforts to preserve this chimney. Cathy Theisen, our Conservation Chair, has taken the lead in efforts to present a motion to Ann Arbor City Council to preserve the structure for the Swifts, a Near Threatened species. We will need your strong support in the days and weeks to come to preserve important habitat for these birds.

Autumn is a time to watch fall plumage warblers and other migrants as they pass through our state. Later we'll see large numbers of waterfowl come through Washtenaw County, and possibly winter on any open bodies of water they may find, such as the Huron River. We have many events throughout the autumn to experience this spectacle, so check out this newsletter for more info on programs and field trips, such as our popular Thursday morning Fall Migration walks at the Arb.

Fall brings an end to our spring and summer breeding bird season, so for me, there is a sadness in the crisp air. Fall also brings hope, as the cycle of nature continues, without end. Find a new park to explore or join a volunteer work crew to help restore a local nature area. We've scheduled an autumn trail work day at Washtenaw Audubon's own Searles Preserve, so please come help out on October 14th, from 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Details are in this newsletter and in WAS social media.

I hope to see you on the trail, enjoying fall color and birds, in beautiful Washtenaw County.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger



*Fox Sparrow, Sharon Short Hills, Benjamin Hack*

## Birding Borneo

*(Continued from page 1)*

The trip started with the higher elevations, specifically the Crocker Range and Mount Kinabalu, the highest point between the Himalayas and New Guinea. Three things stood out here. First, while the quality of good endemic birds was quite high here, generally it was relatively quiet and slow on the ground. We had to work to find birds. Second, it was quite cool here. Every day here I was bundled in layers that included a jacket and a fleece. Third, the number and diversity of squirrels was huge! We laughed that it was almost like we were squirrel-ing as much as birding here, from tiny tufted-ear pygmy squirrels all of the way to enormous Giant Squirrels. It's hard to name only a few of the birding highlights here, but I'll try: multiple, colorful endemic Barbets, a striking Bornean Forktail, Red-breasted and Crimson-headed Partridges called into a feeding station, Chestnut-hooded Laughingthrush, Giant/Waterfall Swiftlet (a lifer bird for any Rockjumper tour anywhere!), Bornean Green Magpie, and point-blank views of the rare Whitehead's Spiderhunter (below, photo by Tom Pavlik).



After a few days on Mt. Kinabalu, we descended to the lowland rainforest and the temperature heated up. It was humid every day and we were a sweaty mess. The pains we birders go through for new creatures. And did I mention the leeches? Unlike leeches here in Michigan, they have terrestrial leeches that sneak up on you while hiking the trails. We wore leech-guard socks supplied by Rockjumper, but most of us still had a few critters hitchhike for a meal on us by the end of the tour.

I really think that July 26 was my top birding day anywhere ever! It started out on the Canopy Walkway in Sepilok. Great views of lifers flying here and there, while we comfortably stood and took it in. Up here, in the morning, the weather was perfect. There were no bugs. No leeches! When the birding would die down slightly, you could always watch the mother and baby Orangutan climbing about in a tree near us. We were then graced by a group of at least 5 Bornean Bristleheads, a top target of this trip, as this bird is so unique that it is classified in its own Family. Once we finally tore ourselves from the walkway, we walked some of the trails, adding a habituated, endemic Black-crowned Pitta which stood still for numerous photos. The hike was rounded out by a gorgeous Rufous-backed Kingfisher and Diard's Trogon.

This day would be excellent enough, but it was only half-done. From here, we drove on to the Kinabatangan River where we would be staying at a lodge along the river for the next couple of days. As we had time in the late afternoon, we boated along, adding more dynamic species: Buffy Fish Owl, many species of Hornbill (including the gigantic Rhinoceros and tough White-crowned), the rare Abdim's Stork and Lesser Adjutant and more. Mammals also guested: 3 species of monkey, including Proboscis, and a herd of Bornean Pygmy Elephants! *(cont. on p. 4)*

## Birding Borneo

*(Continued from page 3)*

We ended the day with a Large Frogmouth behind our lodge, a lifer even for our Rockjumper guide. Again, I'm not sure if I've had a more excellent day of birding than this.

We birded along the Kinabatangan River over the next couple of days and this was a nice change of pace. We just sat in a boat and were taken along various waterways to watch the local birds, mammals, and enormous eight-foot saltwater crocodiles (one glided alongside side us for an uncomfortable amount of time). We added Broadbills, many species of raptor, Scarlet-rumped Trogon, Hooded Pitta, Bearded Pig, a Smooth-coated Otter, a Palm Civet (on a night ride) and many more enjoyable views of Proboscis Monkey troops.

After Kinabatangan, we visited the unreal Gomantang Cave. The birding reason to come here is to see the nesting swiftlets. There are three species nearly identical in the air, but their nests are entirely different. So, the trick is to come to this cave and see them on their diagnostic nest to identify them. Beyond the swiftlets, though, the place was otherworldly. A few brave souls circumnavigated it, stepping over (and onto) giant cockroaches while scanning with our headlamps over rats, giant centipedes, cave crabs, and other creatures. There was bat guano everywhere giving food to this ghoulish assemblage. When evening approached, the bats exited en masse by the thousands. This exodus was attended by diving Bat Hawks that we were able to observe frequently snagging bats right out of the air.

Our final destination for our trip to Borneo was the Danum Valley, a pristine protected habitat, and we stayed at a beautiful lodge in the heart of the jungle. Bird highlights were Whiskered Treeswift (see photo below by Tom Pavlik), White-fronted Falconet, Blyth's Paradise-flycatcher, Crested Fireback, and a raucous group of Dusky Broadbills. We had glimpses of a few more Pittas and heard some that seemed tantalizingly close. We saw more elephants and orangutans, heard but never saw gibbons, and took night drives that afforded us looks at giant flying squirrels and the usually secretive Marbled Cat.



Expectedly, the trip was a little challenging, but really not that bad. I am continuously amazed at how accessible the world is. We had excellent food, great guides, the participants in the group were wonderful, and the lodgings very nice. Please attend the program I'm giving in October about our trip to hear more details and see more excellent photos of the things we saw. (These amazing photos of the birds on the trip are courtesy of Tom Pavlik. That's Tom's Stork-billed Kingfisher and Buffy Fish Owl on page 1. Thank you for sharing these photos, Tom!)

*And if you found all of this exciting, please consider joining Bryn as he leads a trip to Ghana in 2019. From August 12-22, 2019 members of Washtenaw Audubon Society will be traveling on a birding trip to the African country of Ghana! If you would be interested in more details (pricing, detailed itinerary, checklist of birds we hope to see, etc.), please contact Bryn Martin ([brynmartin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:brynmartin@sbcglobal.net)). Space is limited to 8 participants and spots are already filling up, so if you know that you would like to participate, don't hesitate. Hope you can join us.*

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### Newsletter

Nancy Davis  
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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.

Ottawa-Crane Creek - March 22: Although the field trip to Ottawa Refuge-Crane Creek could not be classified as a smashing success even by the most liberal of standards, it perhaps did not come off too badly considering the weather and the caliber of leadership. The day began with the greatest deluge since the Ark was launched. At the height of the downpour a lengthy discussion was held at the departure point relative to whether or not we should make the trip at all under such conditions. Several less hardy (and more intelligent) individuals arrived at independent decisions early in the proceedings, and were not seen again. Twenty-three rain-drenched fanatics eventually decided to give it a try - more out of a desire to make use of their already-packed lunches than in any real hope of experiencing an enjoyable day afield.

Soon after the die-hards left Ann Arbor, the rain stopped abruptly, only to be replaced immediately by gale-force winds and falling temperatures. We arrived at Crane Creek State Park at about 10 a.m. Birds seen near the Headquarters, along the nature trail, and on Lake Erie (excluding obvious sightings) were: horned grebe, great blue heron, whistling swan, snow (and blue) goose, Canada goose, mallard, black duck, scoter (species?), coot, killdeer, woodcock, great horned owl, phoebe, tree swallow, junco, tree sparrow, fox sparrow, swamp sparrow, and song sparrow. The attendant at the Headquarters had assured us that no saw-whet owls (the prime target of the trip for some of us) had been seen at the park this year, so our search for this species was only half-hearted.

After lunch we moved over to the Ottawa Refuge. As we started around the "loop" along the dikes, our ranks thinned somewhat. Perhaps the deserters did not judge the whole operation worth the discomfort; or possibly they simply lacked the physical strength to proceed against the now-shrieking winds. In any event, they disappeared for the day. Birds added to our list were: common merganser, ruddy duck, lesser scaup, ringneck, widgeon, bufflehead, green-winged teal, pintail, and wood duck. The bald eagles which nest on the refuge were not sighted. It is likely that one of them was on the nest, but was forced by the elements to sit too low on (or maybe under) its eggs to be visible.

After we left the dikes (and incidentally after having learned from the refuge

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manager that a saw-whet owl had been seen at Crane Creek just the day before), we walked through a patch of woods near the refuge parking lot and saw: long-eared owl, winter wren, hermit thrush, and about five additional woodcock. Several participants then headed back to Ann Arbor, but a few of us visited a flooded field along Toussant Road, a few miles east of the refuge along Highway 2, where we added shovelers and gadwalls.

Finally, several of us went back to Crane Creek where we eventually discovered a saw-whet owl perched low in a tangle of vines near the nature trail, clutching a partly-eaten towhee. We were all duly thrilled, except for two children among us. Although the kids did, I believe, take note of the presence of the bird, they certainly could not be said to have been impressed by it to any great degree. They seemed much more fascinated by wading possibilities along the partially-flooded nature trail. And that was it for the day.

I would like to express my regrets for the blustery, cold winds - I'm afraid some among us did not enjoy the trip at all - and also apologize for any lack of attention on my part to the beginners. My only excuse is that I was far too miserable, particularly at Crane Creek in morning and later along the dikes at the refuge, to give much of a damn.

-Tex Wells

The above trip report is by Tex Wells, long-time Washtenaw Audubon Society member, from a March 1975 trip to Ottawa-Crane Creek in Ohio. We mourn the passing of Tex earlier this year and remember him as a friend and fellow birder. You can read more about Tex in the May/June 2017 issue of the Washtenaw Audubon Society, and you can find his obituary here:

<http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/news/63-larue-tex-wells-dean-of-michigan-birders>

<b>Washtenaw Audubon Society</b>		
<b>2017-18 Financial Report</b>		
submitted by Elvera Shappirio		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Checking</b>	<b>Money Market</b>
Balances as of July 1, 2017	4,677.76	32,768.32
Checking Receipts	6,615.78	
Checking Expenditures	4,047.28	
Rita Burke bequest= 20,000.00 in money market		
errors	1.63	
Savings Interest		24.76
Transfers: CD interest to savings		32.71
Balances as of June 30, 2018	<b>7,247.89</b>	32,825.79
<b>Checking Account Receipts</b>		
Member Dues (by check or cash)	955.00	
Member dues by paypal	2,580.78	
Donations	1,595.00	
Hat & T-shirt sales	1,360.00	
memorial donations: Ruth Segura in 2018	125.00	
Note: memorial donations: Ruth Segura last year 2017, \$190.00		
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>6,615.78</b>	
<b>Checking Account Expenditures</b>		
Newsletter Printing and Postage,	923.85	
Speakers, Program Expense	0.00	
Grant: Whitefish Point	500.00	
Grant: Rouge River Bird Observatory	500.00	
Grant: Vashni Santee	250.00	
Grant: Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy	500.00	
Sales tax on T shirt sales	19.62	
Hats and T-shirts, Note: \$1131.60 in 2017	0.00	
Liability Insurance	525.00	
Banking costs (checkbooks) and fees	24.00	
Corporate Filing Fee	20.00	
Web site costs	12.99	
Property costs: Searles drain fee	94.78	
Gull trip van rentals -125.00 fees, total=369.38	552.04	
Postal box fee	90.00	
Safe Deposit box	35.00	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>4,047.28</b>	
<b>Savings Account Receipts</b>		
Interest on Regular Savings Account	24.76	
Interest on \$10,000.00 CD	32.71	
<b>Total Savings Account Interest</b>	<b>57.47</b>	
<b>Investment Account</b>		
The investment account includes one CD	10,000.00	
The interest is transferred to the regular savings account on a monthly basis.		
The \$10,000.00 CD matures Sept. 2018		

## Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Oct 2018 – Dec 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.

### Thursdays, through October 25, 8:00 a.m.

#### Fall Migration Walks in Nichols Arboretum

Every Thursday morning through October 25, 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 to observe fall migration at the Arb. 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. 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. **NOTE:** There will be a Saturday morning Arb walk on October 20. See above for details.

### Saturday, October 13, 2018

#### The Big Sit (Independence Lake County Park)

This is a low-key international competition that Don Chalfant has organized and participated in for the past two decades. The task is to try to identify by sight or sound as many bird species as possible while remaining in a circle of 17 feet in diameter. The timing can be completely flexible. You can arrive before dawn to join in the owling or you can come after breakfast, in the afternoon—whatever works for you. It is also a great outing for those with restricted mobility since everything takes place in a fixed spot. For those staying for any significant amount of time, we recommend bringing food and a chair, in addition to your binoculars. (Rain date is Sunday, Oct. 14th. If bad weather is projected, be sure to check the WAS Facebook page. This decision will be made by 4:00 a.m.)

### Sunday, October 14, 2018, 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

#### Volunteer Stewardship Day at Searles Nature Preserve

Come help WAS clear the trail at our very own Searles Nature Preserve. We have focused recent efforts toward understanding and managing this property, and we need help keeping the trail in good shape for all to enjoy. Please bring loppers, shears, log rollers, chainsaws, and any other tools for clearing brush. Wear gloves, pants, and boots. Park along Bolla Rd. near the preserve entrance (500 ft west of Stony Creek Rd. in August Twp.)—just look for all the other cars. Many hands make light work, so come when you can and leave when you must.

### Saturday, November 17, 2018, 8:00 a.m. to noon

#### Belle Isle State Park (with Oakland Audubon Society)

We will once again join forces with Oakland Audubon for this annual trip to Belle Isle. Waterfowl abounds and other species lurk in the woods and along the shore. Meet in the parking lot at the Nature Center on the east end of the island at 8:00 a.m. It can be very cold there, so please dress for the weather. We will scope for birds in the water and end with a hike through the woods. If there is interest, we may go somewhere for lunch afterwards. A state park recreation passport is required.

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 \$_____		_____ Individual Household	\$25 (online only \$20)
Name: _____		_____ Student	\$15 (online only \$10)
Address: _____		_____ Senior	\$15 (online only \$10)
Phone: _____	Email: _____	_____ 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.***

### **October 17     Birding Borneo**

Join Bryn Martin for another fabulous WAS international field trip—this time to Borneo, the third largest island in the world, and home to one of Earth's oldest rainforests. With 688 species of birds, including 59 endemics, and such interesting mammals as Orangutan, Proboscis Monkey, and Bornean Gibbon, expect great diversity in wildlife. Bryn is an avid international birder, WAS's field trip coordinator, and teaches high school in Livonia.

### **November 14     South Africa: Birds and Game**

South Africa is a vast and diverse land with 840+ bird species of which 164 are endemics, as well as hundreds of mammals. A 23-day visit gave Rodolfo Palma the opportunity to find 450+ bird species and almost 50 mammals in all the key South African habitats. Rodolfo is a native of Chile and settled in the U.S. after getting his Ph.D. in engineering in the 1980s. In the early 2000s, after borrowing binoculars from a local park ranger and attending a Washtenaw Audubon event, Rodolfo got hooked and has been birding ever since. He has birded in 16 countries and his birds photographed list approaches 2,500 species.

### **December     No formal Wednesday program in December**

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

## Washtenaw Audubon Society

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