



WASHTENAW AUDUBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

November /December 2018

72nd Annual Christmas Bird Count **Saturday, December 15, 2018** **by Jacco Gelderloos**

During a particularly soggy stretch on the day of this spring's May Count, I ended up giving my neighbor a ride. As we were driving along, he asked me what would possess me and so many others to spend an entire day out and about in such horrid conditions, just to look for birds (truth be told, he asked it in a much kinder manner). I explained to him the joy of watching and listening to such a broad array of avian life (I had seen well over 70 species by then) and the wonder at the amazing feats of survival involved with the migratory travails of so many of the species present around town. Add to that the value of the data collected to ongoing research, I said, and there is a pretty good set of reasons to participate in a bird count, regardless of the weather. Although he clearly appreciated the first two points, he, as a researcher at U of M, was particularly convinced by that last motivation.

Some of you may have an inkling as to where I'm going with this; when I tell you I'm typing this on the eve of a rather pivotal election, I'm sure you will all have figured it out. In the current political climate, the valuing of facts, of research, of science, and of well-reasoned thought seems to be diminished (non-existent in some quarters), which it is safe to say will end up harming us all, not just the people that happen to abide by those pesky facts and inconvenient truths (to borrow Al Gore's phrase). It's hard to not lose faith in the face of the near-constant barrage of "alternate facts" or outright lies, but I believe it is essential that we persevere in the face of it all.

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President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon,

Early snow this November, and a pair of Pine Siskins at home, bring me thoughts of the winter finches that may come to our feeders. Other backyard birders have already seen Siskins, and Purple Finches and we all hope for Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks, as well. Maybe a Crossbill type will make an appearance in Washtenaw County. See Ron Pittaway's Winter Finch Forecast for more info on what to look for (<http://jeaniron.ca/2018/wff18.htm>). If the squirrels don't win the battle for my feeders, maybe a rarity will show up. I can hope!

One way to help the birds we all cherish is to participate in the Christmas Bird Count. The Ann Arbor count takes place on December 15, 2018, and we need all hands on deck. Jacco Gelderloos leads the count again this year, as Compiler and organizer, and we thank him for his many years of service in this role. The Christmas Bird Count has taken place for over a century across North America, and long-term trends about bird species seen on the count are used for scientific study and to help support declining bird species. Do your part if you can, count your feeder birds, or participate as a field observer. See our Christmas Bird Count page on the WAS website (<http://washtenawaudubon.org/events/christmas-bird-count>), and the excellent information in this newsletter. I hope to see many of you at the potluck at Matthaei Botanical Gardens following the CBC.

Winter is still a great time to bird, especially when we bird together.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger

President, Washtenaw Audubon Society



Pine Siskin, Sylvan Township, Benjamin Hack



Common Redpoll, Upper Peninsula, Benjamin Hack

Washtenaw County Fall Rarities

by Benjamin Hack

Fall 2018 proved itself to be a productive season for rarities in Washtenaw County, with birders locating two all-time firsts for the county. The first was a pair of Eurasian Collared-Doves. The birds were first located by Carrie Gawne on September 10th outside Thompson's Pizzeria in Chelsea. These doves, which have rapidly expanded their range in the last few decades and are now starting to occur in Michigan with increasing regularity, represent an exciting (if somewhat expected) first county record. One is still being seen in Chelsea near the Sunoco and the Chevrolet dealership by I-94. [Photo credit: Eurasian Collared-Dove, Chelsea, Michigan, Matty Hack]



The Eurasian Collared-Dove was overshadowed by Washtenaw County's other first this fall, though. On November 2nd, Maggie Jewett and Alan Ryff found a Spotted Redshank at the Scio Church and Parker Road ponds. It is difficult to overstate the rarity of this shorebird. Normally found in the Old World, no Spotted Redshanks had been found in the Americas since April 2015. Further, this bird represented only the second-ever record for Michigan. The redshank was relocated by Adam Byrne and Scott Terry on the 3rd and was subsequently seen by well over five hundred birders, with some traveling from as far as Arizona and Washington state. Distinguished from the similar Greater Yellowlegs by its red legs, red bill base, strong eye-line, white rump, and distinct call, the redshank was observed until the 7th, when it was seen flying south. Certainly the rarest bird ever spotted in Washtenaw County, the Spotted Redshank capped off an excellent fall rarity season. [Photo credit: Spotted Redshank, Benjamin Hack]



72nd Annual Christmas Bird Count

(Continued from page 1)

Which is where, in my humble opinion, citizen science work, such as breeding bird surveys, the May Count, and the Christmas Bird Count comes in. By participating in these events, we can all make meaningful contributions to the continued collection of data. These data points will then go to support ongoing research into avian population trends and into the beneficial or adverse effects of climate change or other environmental factors (think emerald ash borer, for example). I, for one, get great satisfaction out of my participation in these counts and I am convinced that many of you do, too. But it is time for me to step off my soap box and get to the main reason for my writing this article.

Without any further ado, please mark your calendars: **Saturday, December 15th, 2018** is the date for this year's (the 72nd edition!) Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count, as always sponsored by the Washtenaw Audubon Society. For over 70 years now, a motley crew of advanced, intermediate, and beginning birders scour our 15-mile diameter count circle, centered on the Foster Rd. Bridge (near the intersection of Maple and Huron River Dr.). Because of the open character of the event, it is a wonderful occasion for volunteers new to the area, or to 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!

As I hinted at above, the data we collect go to support research in the winter distribution of birds across North and South America (and, increasingly, beyond). For more information, check out the National Audubon Society's CBC pages: <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>. If you're looking to get even more data, subscribe to National Audubon's Community Science portal to receive the citizen science publication *American Birds*: <https://action.audubon.org/signup/sign-citizen-science>; *American Birds* summarizes data from not only the CBC, but also the May Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and others.

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 part of the Eastern) Hemisphere. As a rule, the Ann Arbor count always takes place on the third Saturday in December, to prevent scheduling conflicts with other nearby counts—even with the likelihood of inclement conditions in December, the count has never had to be rescheduled due to weather during my decade plus of being its compiler (although we've come close). Centered where it is, the Ann Arbor circle extends roughly from Dexter in the west to Dixboro in the east, and Whitmore Lake in the north to the Ann Arbor Airport in the south—http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/images/pdf/AA-CBC-Map_full.pdf (see page 6 of this newsletter) shows the count circle in immaculate detail. The object is to identify all bird species in this circle and count how many individuals of each species are present. In addition to the daylight bird census, quite a few 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 as a field observer. The Ann Arbor CBC circle is comprised of eight areas, all run by a designated area leader who coordinates the census in that portion of the circle. If you wish to be a field observer, select one of the eight regions (for more information on specific count areas, please check out the detailed maps on the WAS website) and sign up for that region. The easiest way to do so is through the NAS web site; signing up here will let the area leader and me know you've done so. You can also sign up on the WAS web site: <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/events/christmas-bird-count/christmas-bird-count-sign-up-form>. As an added bonus, I will have a real-time tracker of how many volunteers have signed up for each area. This will help me greatly when assigning people who aren't sure where they might be best used, or who are flexible in where they can be assigned. I can then direct those prospective counters to census; you can always contact me (CBC Compiler Jacco Gelderloos) at JJGelderloos@yahoo.com or 734-973-9422.

If you're not all gungho about trudging through snow or braving sub-zero temperatures, you can still contribute—stay indoors and pitch 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 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 Hagemeister for more information, to sign up, or to get feeder watch forms.

Board Members

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Juliet Berger
president@washtenawaudubon.org

Vice President & Programs

Mike Sefton
vp-programs@washtenawaudubon.org

Treasurer

Ellie Shappirio
treasurer@washtenawaudubon.org

Secretary

Dana Novak
secretary@washtenawaudubon.org

Membership

Jessica Adamczyk
membership@washtenawaudubon.org

Field Trips

Bryn Martin
fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org

Conservation

Cathy Theisen
cathythetvet@comcast.net

Education

Open

Stewardship

Taylor Myatt
myattts@miamioh.edu

Webmaster/Technology and Social Media

Rob French
rwfrenchjr@comcast.net

Past President

Sue Johnson
Suejohn62@gmail.com

Board Member/Bird Rescue

Sherri Smith
grackle@umich.edu

Newsletter

Nancy Davis
newsletter@washtenawaudubon.org

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.

But there's more to the Count than just counting birds. I find that the potluck supper at the end of the day is a great occasion to tie it all together, with good food and great company, all topped off by the real fun and excitement, when the final results are tallied and announced after dessert! What birds did we miss? What rarities did we find? Did we post any record high or low counts? Join us and find out! For the past few years now, this potluck supper has been held at the meeting room of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens, at 1800 N. Dixboro Rd., just about one mile south of Plymouth Rd. in Ann Arbor—please consider attending! If you do, 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 premises.* (As an aside, Nicole has indicated this will be her last year as potluck coordinator, so if you're interested in taking over the torch, please let me or her know—thanks!) On an administrative note, the U of M charges a \$1.20/hour parking fee at the Botanical Gardens. Plan to gather there between 5:00-5:30 p.m.

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

Information regarding the count will, of course, 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. I hope to see you all out there!

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 Hagemeister	(734) 663-9746	khagemeister@sbcglobal.net
8	Mike Sefton		mseft@yahoo.com
	CBC Compiler: Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com

Feeder Watch Coordinator:

Kurt Hagemeister (734) 663-9746 khagemeister@sbcglobal.net

Potluck Coordinator:

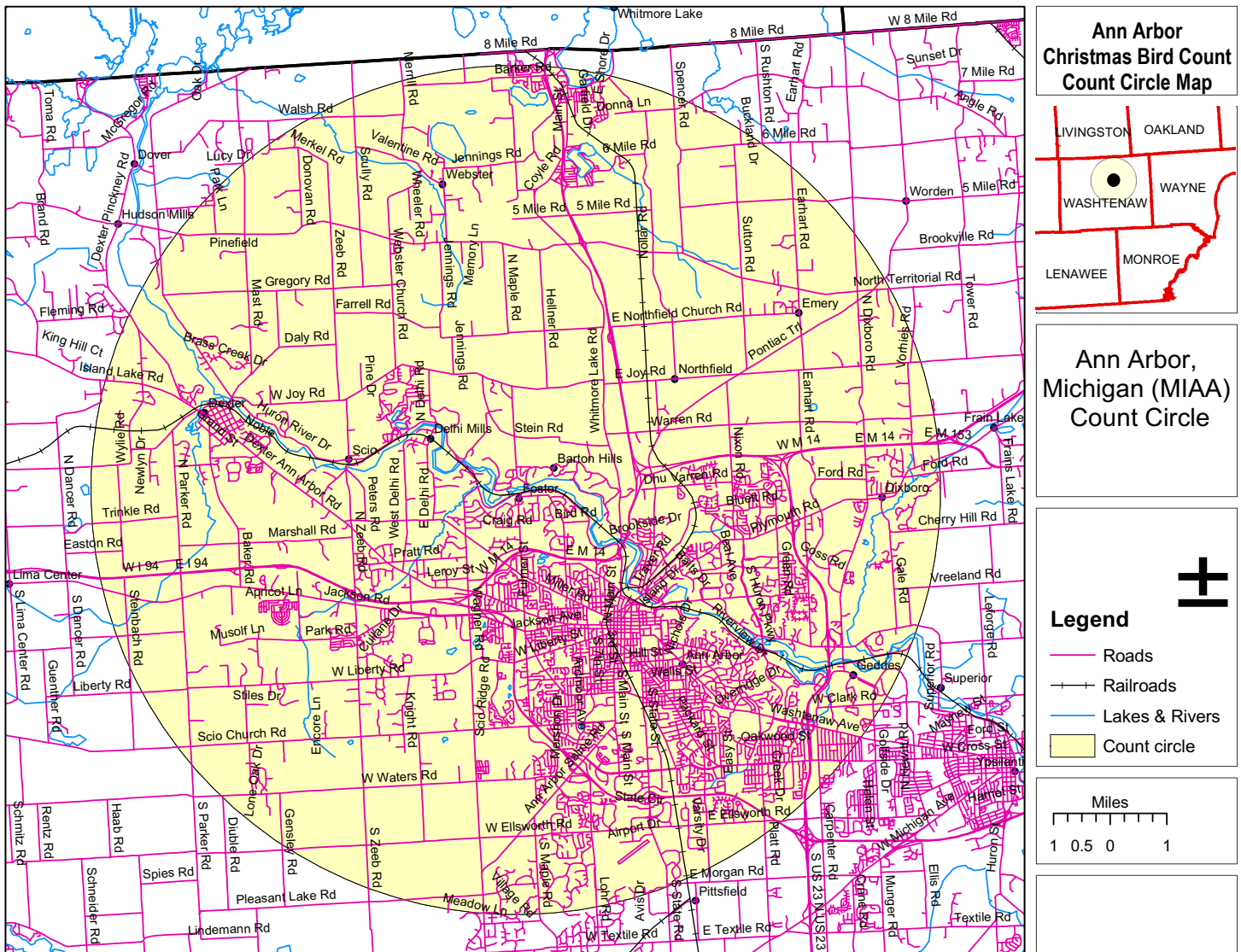
Nicole Sefton seftonn1344@yahoo.com

Ann Arbor CBC Web Site:

<http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/annarborcbc.php>

National Audubon Society:

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



Chimney Swifts in Ann Arbor

by Cathy Theisen

WAS is pleased to announce that the Ann Arbor City Council has heard your voices and voted unanimously to evaluate the chimney at 415 W. Washington for retention, even while other structures at the site are scheduled to be demolished. *If* the chimney can be salvaged, and *if* we can raise the funds to do necessary repairs, our beloved Chimney Swifts will be safe in their historic roost. We've got plenty of hurdles ahead but having the City's cooperation is huge. Many of you wrote letters, and this issue received lots of local press, even being picked up by the AP! Here's a copy of Enactment R-18-401, passed October 1, 2018: <http://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3688503&GUID=815A09AB-3886-425C-9B2D-F2911D31D0FE&Options=&Search=>.

If you'd like to read or hear more about this issue, here are links to the MLive articles and the NPR interview:

https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2018/09/group_wants_to_save_ann_arbor.html

https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2018/10/ann_arbor_to_study_saving_chim.html

<http://www.wemu.org/post/issues-environment-protecting-ann-arbors-chimney-swift-population>

At this point, we are on hold, as we await the City's chimney evaluation. Membership will be notified once we have an answer on that, and then the real work of saving the chimney can begin. Never doubt that you can change the world—you just did!

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Dec 2018 – Early 2019)

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.

Saturday, December 8, 2018

Gull Trip to Salem Landfill

Leaders: Rob French and Mike Sefton

This annual trip is a favorite for hard-core WAS members. Because access to the landfill is restricted, we rent vans for the trip and have to limit the number of participants. *Registration is required.* You can register using the form on the WAS web site. First priority goes to Washtenaw Audubon members who have not recently been on this trip. Second priority will be given to WAS members who have previously attended this trip. Non-members may be placed on a wait list on a first come, first served basis and will be admitted three days before the trip to fill any remaining spots. Due to the high cost of renting and fueling large passenger vans, we are asking for a minimum donation of \$5 from each participant. This is not required but will help us offset some of the costs and allow us to continue to provide this trip into the future. Please give your donation to the trip leader on the day of the trip. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the far south end of the Park-n-Ride lot at Plymouth Road and US 23. Please do not be late! We want to be in the vans and driving by 8:45. This trip will take about 4 hours. Please note that the weather for this outing can be extremely cold and that there is usually wind on the heights of the landfill, where participants will be spending most of the time. Dress warmly! (This means dress for temperatures at least ten degrees colder than your morning thermometer reading. This is not an active trip where you will be generating heat through movement.)

Winter Birding Field Trips TBD

Check the WAS website or social media to learn more about forthcoming winter birding field trips.

Results of the 2018 Big Sit

by Benjamin Hack

The 2018 Big Sit was a record-breaking year for the Washtenaw Wingnuts, led by Don “The Man” Chalfant. In the count’s 21st year at Independence Lake County Park, the team set a new record: 65 species on the day! Over the count’s twelve-hour span, ten birders dropped in (the first being Roger Wykes, who arrived at 5 a.m.) to search for new species. Most of the action occurred within an hour of sunrise, highlighted by two rare all-time firsts for the Wingnuts circle: Surf Scoter and Cackling Goose. In addition, the count’s first-ever House Sparrows were also spotted; with these new species, the all-time checklist for the Washtenaw County Big Sit is now 123. All observers had a great time and some great birds. Another great year for the Wingnuts, and thanks again to Don for organizing the count!

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 \$_____		_____ 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.***

December No formal Wednesday program in December

We have no Wednesday program in December, but please join us on Saturday, December 15, 2018, for the annual Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count, part of National Audubon's century old yearly winter bird census in North America and beyond. Go to www.washtenawaudubon.org for more information.

January 16 Survival of the Red Crossbill

Jamie Cornelius, Assistant Professor of Biology at Eastern Michigan University, will present her research on these unusual birds who raise their young in the challenging conditions of northern winters. Jamie and her family spent six weeks on snowshoes in winter in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, tracking radio-tagged Red Crossbills.

February 20 Michigan Hummingbirds

Join Allen Chartier for a program on his study of hummingbirds in Michigan and the Great Lakes area. Allen founded the Great Lakes HummerNet in 2001. Sightings of these birds are reported to Allen by volunteers, and Allen also catches and bands birds. Besides Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, the 15 vagrant hummingbird species are also studied. Learn how you can participate in this study, and how to attract and feed hummingbirds. Allen birds all over the world and conducts seasonal bird banding at various sites in Michigan.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

P.O. Box 130923
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923