



NEWSLETTER

May / June 2019

Birding Washtenaw (and a bit beyond) in Spring Field Trip Reports

The Washtenaw Audubon Society was incredibly busy celebrating Spring Migration this year. From Thursday morning weekly Arb walks to May's Tuesday evening birder outings, from Hudson Mills to Magee Marsh, from the side of the road to Dolph Park and more, birders were out in force enjoying the return of favorite birds and the re-appearance of favorite migrants. Thank you to everyone who led field trips this spring, with a particular shoutout to Karen Markey and Juliet Berger. They plan and scout and work unbelievably hard to get all participants on the birds. We are lucky to be part of such a vibrant and generous birding community.



*Tuesday
Evening
Birders at
Embury Rd.*

*Photo: Mike
Bowen*

*Baltimore
Oriole*

*Photo: Ben
Hack*



President's Letter

Hello Washtenaw Audubon,

In June, we say farewell to spring migration and hello to breeding birds! The Stinchfield Woods Count (a breeding bird survey) is a wrap, with more than 18 participants counting a whopping 69 bird species. Highlights included Broad-winged Hawk, Barred Owl, many Hooded Warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, and Wood Thrushes. A flyover of three Green Herons was fun for the group in area C, which includes N. Territorial Road, Toma Road, and Peach Mountain Road. A breeding White-eyed Vireo near the intersection of Toma and Stinchfield Woods Road was a treat, continuing there for several years already. Stinchfield is a great place to bird in the breeding season with Black-throated Green Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets nesting. Thank you to Mary Wise for taking over the Count, and for organizing and baking so well! And kudos to Karen Markey for her many years compiling this survey.

Ann Arbor's Breeding Bird Survey, run through my Birds program at Natural Area Preservation (NAP) in City of Ann Arbor parks, began May 25 and runs through the first few weeks of July. Many WAS members volunteer for these surveys, and we couldn't keep track of the birds in our parks without all of you. If you are interested in participating, it is not too late for that! I have a few really birdy parks that still need a good volunteer. Message me at NAPbirds@a2gov.org for more information. The end of spring migration doesn't mean we can't enjoy breeding birds throughout the summer months in our area. Cuckoos seem to be having a good year, with many of both the Black-billed and Yellow-billed species seemingly everywhere, munching on numerous tent and gypsy moth caterpillars. The Bluebirds in my yard have begun investigating nest cavities for their second brood, for the second year running.

The May Count tally is in at 173 species. Watch for all the details in the Summer edition of the WAS Newsletter!

I hope to see many of you at the Searles Nature Preserve Work Day, on June 11, from 6-8 p.m. We'll be trimming trails, so we can enjoy fall migration in this Washtenaw Audubon- owned preserve. See our website for more details on this event, and the 2nd Annual Prothonotary Paddle on the Huron River, June 15.

I hope to see you there, with a pair of loppers in hand, or in a canoe, listening to cooing Cuckoos, plaintive Prothonotaries, and a Carolina Wren's emphatic song.

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger

Stinchfield Woods 2019 Breeding Bird Census

A new record!

by Mary Wise

The annual Stinchfield Woods Breeding Bird Census was conducted on Saturday, June 1. Despite the forecast being iffy all week, the weather was beautiful in the morning, and we wrapped up before all heck broke loose weather wise. We had 15 participants helping out this year. As usual, when there is a leadership change, there were a few snafus, but in the end things turned out fine.

It's official—we had 69 species (not counting the 1 thrush sp.), breaking the previous record of 64 set last year. This amazes me, because when we were tallying I didn't feel like we had that much that was unusual for this patch. The complete list is available on the WAS web site.

Looking at Karen Markey's web site from her past leadership of this count, I have a few things I want to call attention to for this year's count:

White-eyed Vireo was a new bird, although when Sarah went back looking for it, it was across the road. During the count Michael heard it (and Sarah had thought she'd heard it earlier) solidly in Area D.

Chimney Swifts, Hummingbirds, Acadian Flycatchers, Great-crested Flycatchers, Brown Creepers, Catbird and Robin (see what I did there!), Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Barn Swallow, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Grackles, and sadly, Brown-headed Cowbirds were at all-time highs.

Green Heron was probably the rarest bird for this particular count after the White-eyed Vireo. Area C had three.

Broad-winged Hawk was back for the first time since 2015, but Cooper's Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk were absent. Osprey was also not seen for the first time in several years (although I had one here on the May count). The Red-shouldered Hawk from last year, alas, appeared to be a one-year wonder.

Both cuckoo species were seen or heard.

Woodpeckers in general are doing well: They all were either near their average or close to the highs.

Least Flycatcher was recorded in two areas, for the first time in many years. In both cases it was a lone "chebek" that was heard.

Red-breasted Nuthatch was down compared to past years. Hopefully they were just being unusually silent.

Bluebird (one) made an appearance for the first time in several years.

Warblers seem to be holding steady for the past few years.

Thanks to all our volunteers. Thanks to Karen Markey for her wonderful leadership in the past gazillion years, for excellent training of the new leader, and guidance this year when I had questions. Thanks also to Juliet Berger for poking me occasionally, which I need.

The Arb in Early April

by Juliet Berger

The April 11 spring migration walk at the Arb in Ann Arbor was rewarding, if cold. The high winds made finding birds difficult, but sheltered spots like the Boardwalk and the little stream that runs through it, produced some good birds. We saw and heard uncountable numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets, and we managed to see several Ruby-crowned Kinglets in full display. We saw quite a few Yellow-rumped Warblers high in the trees and heard them singing. We found Fox Sparrows in the most reliable spot next to the cemetery, on the narrow path. Hermit Thrushes remained elusive and none were observed at the Arb by our group. One Winter Wren sang near the end of the morning's birding, in the old Warbler Way, which has been largely cleared of invasive shrubs and is now visible! The highlight of the trip for me were the first of year singing Pine Warblers, three of them, at various piney locations. We also had good looks at a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and several Brown Creepers.

Thanks to Karen, Hannah, Astrid and Joe, for helping get others on the birds. And, thanks to everyone for birding with me each Thursday morning!

Here's the link to our eBird checklist, which is full of beautiful photos of the birds we saw, courtesy of our excellent photographers, Bruce and Karen: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S54831388>

Photo: Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Karen Markey



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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.

Terrific Tuesday Evening Birders 2019 by Benjamin Hack

Another year of Tuesday Evening Birders is in the books. Though there were only four TEB field trips this May (as the month featured only four Tuesdays), there was no shortage of memorable sightings across the various trips. As always, the month of May met our collective expectations—and, in a few instances, vastly exceeded them!

TEB participants were treated to the whole spectrum of May birding in Washtenaw County. First, leader Jim Law showed the group a suite of warblers at Ford Lake on May 7. A few birders were also lucky to spot a quick flyover Common Tern on this outing. On the 14th, Andy Dettling brought the birders to a few hotspots in eastern Washtenaw County which held Bobolinks, a Sora, and both Great Horned and Barred Owls. Next, co-leaders Juliet Berger and Matt and Ben Hack directed a walk at Embury Road on the 21st, where a pair of Eastern Whip-poor-wills calling back and forth after sunset stole the show. Finally, Dan Sparks-Jackson—regarded as the “King of the West” in Washtenaw—led the Tuesday Evening Birders to a private Christmas tree farm and other hotspots on the 28th to search for Clay-colored and Henslow’s Sparrows. While we succeeded in finding these birds, the night will be remembered for a stunning rarity: a flyover flock of 94 Whimbrels! Only the third or fourth record for the county and a new county bird for almost everyone present, it was a breathtaking finale to a fantastic season of Tuesday Evening Birders.

Thank you to all of the trip leaders named above and to the many birders who participated in TEB this spring. Keep an eye out for other Washtenaw Audubon field trips over the next few months; as evidenced by our walks this May, there’s no telling what could appear. See you on May 5th, 2020!

WAS Alumni Andy Johnson in *Living Bird*

If you haven’t seen the Spring 2019 issue of *Living Bird*, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s magazine, be sure to get a copy because WAS alumni Andy Johnson’s photography is highlighted in an amazing story about the birds of St. Matthew Island, “The Most Remote Place in the United States” according to the magazine.

Andy was one of two Cornell Lab researchers who camped out on St. Matthew last summer to film and record the wildlife there.

You can also see Andy’s extraordinary videography on the Cornell Lab site. Please go to: www.birds.cornell.edu and search “St. Matthew Island.”

Congratulations to Andy! We are lucky to see this remarkable place through his eyes.

Magee & Howard Marshes Field Trip Report

by Karen Markey

The May 19 Magee & Howard Marshes Field Trip was awesome, producing no big numbers but especially desirable species. Let's start with Magee.

A Yellow-Billed Cuckoo did wheelies in a nearby tree. A Great Horned Owllet peered down at human visitors taking pictures. The silence of Empidonax Flycatchers kept their identity a secret. Our binoculars settled on a close-up of a Swainson's Thrush followed minutes later by a Grey-cheeked Thrush. A pair of Philadelphia Vireos traveled together. A trio of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher sightings was a treat. A stunning male Prothonotary Warbler posed for our cameras, and a much less distinctive female Prothonotary snatched moss from a log and transported into her nesting hole. A female MOURNING WARBLER was particularly shy, popping in and out of view atop downed timber at water's edge, but a male CONNECTICUT WARBLER gave us generous glimpses, also at water's edge on downed timber and singing on occasion.

Threatening grey clouds loomed in the distance as we traveled to Howard Marsh. Scanning the first two ponds, we got quick looks at Ruddy Ducks, Dunlin (in breeding plumage), Blue-Winged Teal, Least Sandpiper, and more. Then the heavens opened up, delivering a torrent of rain, debris, and wind and forcing us to quit.

Special thanks to Cathy and Dea who kept checklists. Dea also gave great explanations of features that characterized this and that bird including comparison views of similar species. Everyone spotted birds and helped fellow birders find them. That almost everyone got glimpses of both Mourning and Connecticut made this trip especially memorable!

See the complete list of the birds seen or heard on the Washtenaw Audubon web site.

Hudson Mills Field Trip Report

by Karen Markey

A dozen and a half birders endured a rainy start at Hudson Mills on Saturday, May 18, then sailed through the morning enjoying Michigan's colorful, feathered summer residents. We got great looks at a stunning male Baltimore Oriole through a rain-drenched scope. An Eastern Bluebird came into view but was soggy and dark due to the wet and overcast. More than a couple of Indigo Buntings perched low or foraged on the ground. We got glimpses of a Scarlet Tanager pair through the branches and leaves leading up into the canopy. Not only did we see a Prothonotary Warbler perched on downed timber in the Huron River, we watched two Prothonotaries chase each other at water's edge. Norka located a Grey-cheeked Thrush low in the brush lining the bike path. A lone Osprey and Trumpeter Swan were flyovers. A pack of Cedar Waxwings stripped a flowering tree of its pink buds.

Warblers darted to and fro in the highest treetops. A Blue-winged Warbler and Northern Parula ventured closer to terra firma to give us great views. Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Yellow-throated Vireos, Northern Flickers, and many more species were loud, insistent, and boisterous but never came into view. Bummer! As we got into our cars, a Red-tailed Hawk flew by, pursued by several smaller birds.

We all benefited from the auditory abilities of Juliet and Nork—they and several others alerted the group to great birds. Several in our birding group repeatedly relocated the Prothonotary that popped in and out of view and helped us all find him. Thanks to Norka for making our eBird checklist and others for adding to it. Much gratitude to Dan, Dave, and others for helping me carry my scope and positioning it in front of me. We had a great morning—let's do this again for fall warblers in early September!

See the complete list of the birds seen or heard on the Washtenaw Audubon web site.

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (June 2019 – Fall 2019)

Bryn Martin, Field Trip Coordinator (fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

Saturday, June 15, 9:00 a.m.

Prothonotary Paddle

As many of you know, we typically have a number of singing males of the beautiful Prothonotary Warbler along a stretch of the Huron River in Hudson Mills and Delhi Metroparks. They are best viewed from the water, and there are always a large variety of other birds to see on this float trip. The trip is eight miles long, and usually takes about 3 ½ hours to complete, but you can stop for good birds, a picnic, etc., because your car will be waiting for you at the other end. A 9:00 a.m. start gives us plenty of time to bird our way along the river. We will have a picnic spot picked out that is approximately halfway, for those who wish to stay with the group. Bring your own picnic and beverages. Please let us know if you are attending and book your own boat(s) for the “Hudson Mills to Delhi Metropark Long Trip” directly from Skip’s Canoe Livery: <http://paddlethehuron.com/services-rates/> and review the details on their site, being sure to select the 9am option on June 15th. On the day of the event, if you are renting a canoe/kayak, we recommend arriving at Skip’s by 8:30 to check-in, park, and pick up the required, provided personal flotation device. See the WAS web site for more details. Join the flotilla!

July date TBD: Butterfly Walk

Please see more details on the WAS web site as the date approaches.

Saturday, August 24, 2019, 8:00 a.m., Pointe Mouillee, Sigler Road Parking Lot Shorebirds and Waders at Pointe Mouillee State Game Area

This is the annual WAS trip to Pointe Mouillee, on Lake Erie near the mouth of the Huron River. Registration is required for this trip. Please see the WAS web site for information on how to register.

Thursday, August 29, and Thursdays in September and October, 8:00 a.m.

Fall Migration Walks at the Arb

Every Thursday morning from August 29 through the last Thursday 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 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.

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.***

June 19 The Birds of Pte. Mouillee

Join the inimitable Don Chalfant for a photographic field trip to see the lovely birds of Pte. Mouillee, one of Michigan's premier birding locations. Pte. Mou, a series of dikes, impoundments, and coastal wetlands on the western shore of Lake Erie, hosts many of Michigan's rarer birds in season (though not necessarily each year), including American White Pelicans, Yellow-headed Blackbird, King Rail, Glossy Ibis, and Tricolored Heron, and the occasional mega-rarity. Don Chalfant is a retired Ann Arbor Public School teacher, who has spent many hours walking and biking the dikes at Pte. Mou and has photographed many birds there.

September 18 Program to be determined

Pamela Rasmussen, Professor of Ornithology at Michigan State, will be speaking on a subject to be announced.

October 16 Birds of Ghana

Bryn Martin will regale us with tales of the WAS field trip to Ghana.

November 20 Birds of Belize

Join Keith Dickey as he makes everyone jealous with tales of birding in Belize.

More details for each program will appear in the July/August newsletter.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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