



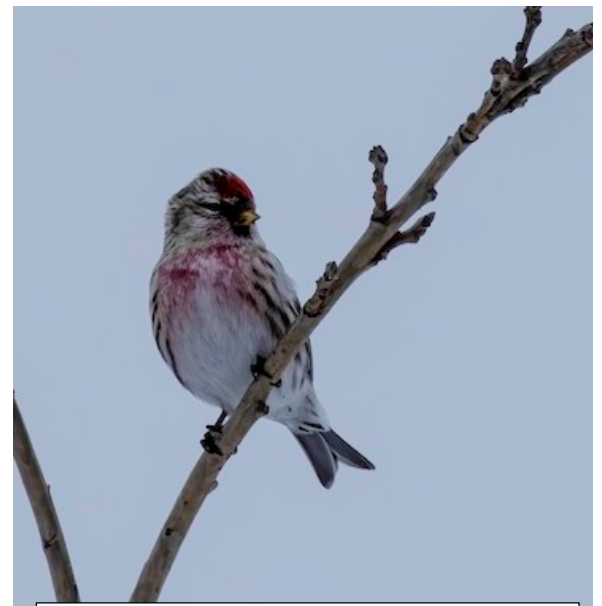
November / December 2023

## 78th Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 16, 2023

Although the Covid-virus is still very much among us, as of this writing the National Audubon Society has not yet announced any major restrictions on how the 2023-2024 CBCs have to be run. Of course, that is not to say that they won't come out with any such announcements in the weeks to come, but for now, we look to be all set to have a "normal" CBC, for lack of a better term. In any case, please keep an eye on the [Washtenaw Audubon CBC page](#) for the latest updates.

On that page, you can find all of our CBC's info: [maps the count circle as a whole as well as each of the eight count areas](#), a list of each area and its area leader's contact information (also see below), and feeder watch information and forms. Please sign up for the area of your preference by registering there - doing so makes it very convenient for the area leaders and me to gauge how many observers there are for each area. If you don't have a preferred area, you can indicate that on the form as well - I will then allocate volunteers where they are most needed. Of course, you can also still contact the area leader or me directly to sign up - check out the detailed maps on the [WAS website](#) to see which of the eight count areas suits you best.

>>continued on page 4<<



Common Redpoll, seen on the 2020 CBC  
(Keith Dickey)

# President's Letter

Dear Washtenaw Audubon Society,

As most of us know already, our membership voted in person: 61 in favor, 4 opposed and 2 abstained, to the Board's proposal to drop the name Audubon and pursue a new, more inclusive name for our organization. If you were unable to attend the vote, we're sorry you missed it! It was a real celebration of the diversity of opinion of our organization, and our enthusiasm to make a positive change.

I want to share with you some of the correspondence we received in advance of the meeting, both from some of our members who couldn't attend, and a member of our local birding community who deliberately did not join WAS because of our name.

"I consider the appalling history of John James Audubon's ownership of humans and killing of thousands of birds reason enough to change our group's name. Beyond that, I also wanted to provide two secondary reasons I find compelling.

1. Audubon is not a universal, descriptive branding for our group. People who have recently begun birding will not know to look up the name "Audubon" for birding groups, let alone people who have immigrated here and have no reference for Audubon. To attract the greatest number of people, we need a clear, descriptive name. The more people are involved, the more passionate people become to conserve our natural world.

2. Young people have little tolerance for honorifics of any sort, especially ones tied to horrific practices like Audubon's. If we want to pass the love of birding on to the next generation, we need a name that is inviting to a multitude of demographics. I know people who have chosen not to join our group or renew their membership on the name alone." G.S.

"Perhaps everyone already knows that the very first purchase for the University of Michigan library—by the Regents in 1838—was the "double-elephant folio" edition of *Birds of America*. For years, whenever I'm in Hatcher and have time, I've been going to look at it in the Exhibit Room; the librarians open it to a different page each week.

I still do that and I don't plan to stop. It's a beautiful, important book. But naming ourselves after Audubon is different. When we honor a figure from the past, we make a choice about who we are in the present. He wasn't just a man of his time—there were lots of people then who opposed slavery and he actively supported it. I appreciate the thoughtful care the Board has put into considering this issue and informing the members about it. If I were able to be there, I would 100% vote to change the name." J.H.

"My name is R. H., and I am, among other things, a wildlife photographer based in Dexter; I volunteer as a photo ambassador for the Washtenaw County Parks & Rec Commission, am a board member for Avalon Housing and am active in our community as a DEI Specialist and community organizer. I have loved the interactions I've had with WAS members and enjoyed meeting members at walks and scheduled outings; however, many would be surprised that I am not an official member of the organization - that choice was made explicitly because of the attachment of the Audubon name. I'm truly grateful that the local chapter is looking to sever this connection, as it is something that keeps other Black bird lovers like myself away from the wonderful camaraderie and community that I believe is possible in this space. It continues to be a decision with consequences - many of the most prestigious photo contests require membership in either a local, state or national chapter - but I've made the quiet calculation that it wasn't something I could stomach doing, knowing my abstention was not without principle. Though I have no formal right to ask, I hope that members consider the presence of people like me, or the views of our avian friends seen through my eyes and lens, as something that will be diminished by keeping this name - thank you for holding the conversation, and I hope that a more just and welcoming name awaits in the future." R.H.

After reading the letters, you'll know why the vast majority of us decided to vote for the name change. Even leaving out the reprehensible behavior of Audubon in his lifetime, and despite his artistic contributions, the word Audubon is now synonymous with being a bad actor towards people of color. To welcome the most diverse group of birders to care about birds and the environment, we must move forward with a name that represents the values we hold at this time, striving to welcome all people into our group.

>>Continued on page 3<<

## Board Members

### President

Juliet Berger  
[president@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:president@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Vice President & Programs

Mike Sefton  
[vp-programs@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:vp-programs@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Treasurer

Keith Dickey  
[treasurer@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:treasurer@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Secretary

Jessica Adamczyk  
[secretary@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:secretary@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Membership

Diana Miller  
[membership@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:membership@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Field Trips

Matthew Spoor  
[fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Conservation

Cathy Theisen  
[cathythetvet@comcast.net](mailto:cathythetvet@comcast.net)

### Education

Victor Chen  
[education@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:education@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Stewardship

Dana Novak  
[stewardship@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:stewardship@washtenawaudubon.org)

### Webmaster/Technology and Social Media

Rob French  
[rwfrenchjr@comcast.net](mailto:rwfrenchjr@comcast.net)

### Past President

Sue Johnson  
[Suejohn62@gmail.com](mailto:Suejohn62@gmail.com)

### Board Member/Bird Rescue

Sherri Smith  
[grackle@umich.edu](mailto:grackle@umich.edu)

### Newsletter

Jacco Gelderloos  
[newsletter@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto: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.

If you are interested in being part of a committee of community members helping to choose some options for a new name, contact me at [president@washtenawaudubon.org](mailto:president@washtenawaudubon.org) A vote on a new name will be taken at the April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 program.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing many of you by a lake scoping a rare goose or partaking of the breathtaking fall beauty. And don't forget to save the date (December 16) and register on the website for the 2023 Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count.

As always, I am for the birds!

Juliet Berger, President

Washtenaw Audubon Society, your Bird Group!!



Sedge Wren (*Matt Bennink*)



### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The birds Washtenaw Audubon pledges to protect differ in color, size, behavior, geographical preference, and countless other ways. As we honor and celebrate the equally remarkable diversity of the human species, Washtenaw Audubon considers the work of inclusion, diversity, and equity a top priority moving forward. We hope that, in doing so, we can bring creativity and energy to our work in Washtenaw County and beyond for birds and people alike.

[Read our full statement at washtenawaudubon.org](http://washtenawaudubon.org)

>>continued from page 1<<

Feeder watches are a great way to contribute for those among you who would rather not brave potentially inclement weather (it is mid-December, after all) or who have only a limited amount of time available on count day. As with field observers, I would ask that you please use the sign-up form on the WAS website to participate. Navigate to the web page or contact feeder watch coordinator Kurt Hagemeister for more information, to sign up, or to get feeder watch forms. Note that your feeder MUST be within the count circle, otherwise the data is invalid for our count. To find out, type your address into Google Maps or check with me. In case you're not sure what geographical portion of our circle is covered by each of the eight count areas, check out the maps on our CBC page.

New this year will be the introduction of [eBird](#) as the compilation tool. The main set-up will be along the lines of the May Count, with which many of you will be familiar. Observers should track their checklists through the [eBird](#) app or website, then share those lists with the area leader's account. Area leaders can then review each checklist and in turn share them to the overall Ann Arbor CBC eBird account. If need be, they will follow up with observers if any more details are needed. Specific details and instructions about this process will be posted to the WAS CBC page soon.

Now that it is safe again to gather in large groups again, we will once again be enjoying the post-count potluck and tally event at the main meeting room at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens, at 1800 N Dixboro Rd. Access to the room will open at 5:00 p.m., with dinner starting closer to 6:00 p.m. – if you plan to attend, please indicate that on the sign-up form and let us know what kind of dish you plan on bringing (or reach out to the potluck coordinator to see what type of dish is needed). In order to reduce our carbon footprint, please consider bringing your own dinnerware; there is room on the sign-up form to indicate more details about this as well. After the potluck dinner, we will run through the birds we observed, saving the excitement for last, when we find out what rarities we found during the day.

Historically, the Ann Arbor count always takes place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in December, which means this year's CBC will be on the 16<sup>th</sup>. That prevents scheduling conflicts with other nearby counts. The count circle covers an area 15 miles in diameter; our circle is centered on the Foster Road bridge, near the intersection of Maple Road and Huron River Drive. It 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 shows the count circle in immaculate 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. If you're interested in getting up really early and encountering some nocturnal birds, make sure to indicate so on the sign-up form!

As always, information regarding the count will be updated immediately if any of the above changes – keep an eye on <https://washtenawaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count/> where any new information will be posted as count day approaches.

Area	Leaders	Phone	E-mail	EBird User Name
1	Andrew Pawuk	(740) 590-6596	<a href="mailto:andrewpawuk@gmail.com">andrewpawuk@gmail.com</a>	A2CBCArea1A
2	Rob & Nancy French	(734) 645-2547	<a href="mailto:rwfrenchjr@comcast.net">rwfrenchjr@comcast.net</a>	A2CBCArea2B
3	Ben Hack		<a href="mailto:bhack0121@gmail.com">bhack0121@gmail.com</a>	A2CBCArea3C
4	Tim McKay	(734) 657-6401	<a href="mailto:tamckay@umich.edu">tamckay@umich.edu</a>	A2CBCArea4D
5	Jessica Adamczyk	(847) 308-4975	<a href="mailto:jessica.adamczyk13@gmail.com">jessica.adamczyk13@gmail.com</a>	A2CBCArea5E
	Victor Chen		<a href="mailto:dr.vjchen@gmail.com">dr.vjchen@gmail.com</a>	
6	Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	<a href="mailto:jjgelderloos@yahoo.com">jjgelderloos@yahoo.com</a>	A2CBCArea6F
7	Kurt Hagemeister	(734) 663-9746	<a href="mailto:kurt.liz.h@gmail.com">kurt.liz.h@gmail.com</a>	A2CBCArea7G
8	Matt Spoor	(701) 610-1203	<a href="mailto:matthew.spoor@gmail.com">matthew.spoor@gmail.com</a>	A2CBCArea8H

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

**Feeder Watch Coordinator:** Kurt Hagemeister (734) 663-9746 [kurt.liz.h@gmail.com](mailto:kurt.liz.h@gmail.com)

**Potluck Coordinator:** Nancy French [nfrench@umich.edu](mailto:nfrench@umich.edu)

**Ann Arbor CBC Web Site:** <https://washtenawaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count/>

**National Audubon Society:** <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

## September-October 2023: Fall Highlights

### The Highlight

Sometimes a bad thing can have pleasant consequences. A great example is how the spread of an invasive snail species, the Chinese Mystery Snail, combined with drought conditions in much of its U.S. range, continues to spur Limpkins to venture widely all over the eastern states and the Midwest. Michigan recorded its first and second cases in 2022 and added a whopping seven more (including a duo in Tuscola County in the Thumb!) during 2023. In a nutshell, then, it stood to reason that eventually one of these tropical marsh birds would appear in Washtenaw County. And, around 3:00 p.m. on 10/26, that is exactly what happened. A checklist from Nichols Arboretum was posted to eBird, accompanied by photos that unmistakably showed a **LIMPKIN!** Needless to say, many birders rushed to the Arb where a little after 4:00 the bird was relocated and subsequently enjoyed by dozens. The last sightings of this southern visitor were around 7:00 that day; subsequent searches the next day remained fruitless, unfortunately.



Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*, and some of its admirers, October 26, 2023 (left: Bonnie Penet, right: Bill VanderMolen)

Perhaps not as high profile of a sighting, but still highly unusual for Washtenaw County, was a light morph juvenile **SWAINSON'S HAWK** seen migrating from west to east over Saline on 9/22. Unfortunately, as is often the case with migrating raptors, this bird could not be picked up by any birders other than the lone observer (a former counter at the Lake Erie Metopark hawk watch site). Apart from a record from May 1996 (per the Michigan Bird Record Committee's website), there are no other accepted county record of this western hawk. With this sighting, Washtenaw County has recorded a mind-blowing six *buteo* species this year!

### Waterfowl

The first **Snow Goose** of the season was a blue morph bird on Silver Lake on 10/24. A week before that, a pair of **Greater White-fronted Geese** was associating with a flock of Canada Geese near Willis. Both proved to be one-day wonders, unfortunately. A very early **Cackling Goose** was over LeFurge Woods on 9/15, making for a first ever September record. More in line with expectations timewise, was a bird in Saline's Mill Pond Park on 10/18. Notable among dabbling ducks was the presence of **Northern Pintails** at half a dozen sites throughout the fall months – the highest number was 26 on 10/8 at Four Mile Lake.

**Canvasbacks** started trickling into the area from 10/18; a group of five birds on Whitmore Lake on 10/19 was the maximum among the five lakes hosting them. Mid-October saw the arrival of **Greater Scaup**, with one on Portage Lake (10/14), five on Cavanaugh Lake (10/16), and 3 more on Barton Pond (10/17). The scoter trifecta was accomplished this October, which is certainly of note for an inland county in Michigan. Up to three **Surf Scoters** hung out on Joslin Lake from 10/16 – 10/23, with 3 more on Barton Pond on 10/17. A record-setting flock of 10 **White-winged Scoters** was present briefly on Whitmore Lake on 10/15; the prior high count for Washtenaw County was a mere four birds! Rounding out the trio of *Melanittas* was a female-type **Black Scoter** on Four Mile Lake on 10/12. Arguably one of the best-looking duck species in the world, **Long-tailed Ducks** are much a sought-after prize for County birders and are usually found as singletons or in groups of two or three. With that in mind, the flock of 38 birds on Whitmore Lake on 10/21 beggared belief and re-set the species' high count by some margin! Early-ish **Red-breasted Mergansers** visited Washtenaw County from 10/8 on, in three locations, maxing out at ten birds on Whitmore Lake on 10/21.



Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*, Mill Pond Park, October 18 2023 (Ben Lucking)



Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, Whitmore Lake, October 21 2023 (Bill Nolting)

A few **Ring-necked Pheasants**, all involving one or two birds, were seen in about half a dozen locations spread around the County. Although Silver Lake is not renowned for the abundance of waterfowl that can be found there, especially when compared to nearby Portage Lake, several lucky observers witnessed a rather extraordinary gathering of **Red-necked Grebes** there on 10/16 – the group of seven birds more than the previous high count of three! Both cuckoo species were noted into the final week of September, with the last of the **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** seen on 9/26 and the last **Black-billed Cuckoo** noted a few days later on 9/29.

Migrating **Common Nighthawks** were widely reported during September; the largest number was a group of 12 seen over a residential area just south of Ford Lake on 9/5. The (likely) final nighthawk of 2023 departed on 10/2. **Chimney Swifts** put on a stunning display over the area near Washington and First on 9/27, when three flocks estimated at a total of 2,100 birds swirled overhead – after the stunning show over Ann Arbor Open in August (see the Education Chair Update in the September-October newsletter), this spectacle further reminds us that we have a role to play helping out this vulnerable species by providing roosting and nesting habitat. Mid-October saw the last of our **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** depart the area; although many birders will continue to keep up their feeders for at least a little while, from here on out any hummingbird that shows up will need to be scrutinized very closely – who knows what rarity might show up yet!

### Shorebirds through Falcons

Finding either of the two *Pluvialis* plovers involves scouring harvested and plowed agricultural fields, often with a relatively limited return on time investment. It did, however, pay off on 9/11 when a **Black-bellied Plover** was found among the masses of Killdeer at Reno & Hieber. This bird continued in this field until the next day, but then moved on. That day, 9/12, a pair of **American Golden-Plovers** was found among the plowed furrows in a field along Braun, near Lima Center. Subsequently, another Golden-Plover was seen at Four Mile Lake on 9/19 and yet another one was at Judd & Stony Creek. A wetland on Vreeland Rd hosted up to eight **Semipalmated Plovers** from 9/14 – 9/10, with an additional two at Four Mile Lake from 9/8 – 9/12. A good fall for plovers, all in all.



Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Hieber & Reno, September 12 2023 (Michael Bowen)



American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Braun & Lima Center, September 12 2023 (Bill Nolting)

A surprising number of **American Woodcocks** was present locally throughout September and October – several sites hosted as many as three birds, which proved to be quite active and noticeable. A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** put in an all too brief appearance at Reno & Hieber where it was seen at the time of the discovery of the Black-bellied Plover on 9/11 – it is likely this bird flew off in a flock of Killdeer without the observers noticing. **Dunlins** are always the last of the *Calidris* sandpipers to move through, which was borne out by the presence of one bird at Four Mile Lake from 10/6 – 10/13, followed by a small flock of 14 on 10/31. A lone **Semipalmated Sandpiper** spent a good amount of time on the mudflats at Domino's Farms, from 9/1 – 9/10.

Unusual gulls are generally associated with winter months, but an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** put in a local appearance on 9/24, when it was observed flying over the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and subsequently found roosting among its relatives at North Bay Park. **Caspian Terns** at North Bay Park never built to levels anywhere near those present in years past and their presence rather fizzled out with a single bird there on 9/8. Three more of the world's largest tern species were seen over Four Mile Lake on 9/9. On the same day, a **Forster's Tern** was observed over Four Mile Lake as well. Rounding out the tern bonanza at Four Mile Lake was a group of six **Common Terns** on 9/12 – these birds stuck around long enough to allow a few more birders the chance to enjoy them.

The fact that large groups of **Double-crested Cormorants** congregate on Ford Lake in the early fall months is nothing new, but a group of over 200 birds most definitely is noteworthy – on 10/3, 206 of them were counted from Loonfeather Point Park, establishing a new record high count for Washtenaw County. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** were quite widespread this fall. Single birds were at North Bay Park (9/1 – 9/24), the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (9/6), Wilderness Park (9/30), and Ford Lake (10/16). Not surprisingly, given the location's go-to status for observing this species, the largest concentration was at Mary Beth Doyle Park, where a record high group of six birds of varying ages were observed on 9/13. Some of these birds persisted through at least 10/21.



Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, North Bay Park, September 24 2023 (Nui Moreland)



Double-crested Cormorant *Nannopterum auritum*, Loonfeather Point Park, October 3 2023 (Bill Nolting)

October is peak migration season for **Turkey Vultures**; although the bulk of southbound vultures move through at the hawk watching sites on Lake Erie, some impressive numbers can be observed locally as well. On 10/22, steady stream was seen over LeFurge Woods, adding up to at least 262 individuals, which set a new record high tally. The next day, on 10/23, the Torrey Rd hawk watch site lived up to its growing reputation as the best place to see **Golden Eagles** in Washtenaw County, when four of them were seen on their way south. Migrating **Northern Harriers** moved through throughout the fall, but reports persisted of birds in the Vreeland & Prospect area, lending further fodder to the idea that this species may have attempted nesting there. October 23 was clearly a great day to be at Torrey Rd, because in addition to the Golden Eagles mentioned above, a record number of 37 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** moved by. In addition to our more or less resident population, migrating **Red-shouldered Hawks** moved through in good numbers – between 1 and 3 were seen at or over some dozen and half spots. Similarly, **Broad-winged Hawks** were present widely, although in most of these cases observations involved southbound birds. Most reports involved singles or small numbers, but there was a rather staggering tally of 1,200 birds over Hewitt & Clark on 9/16. Early-ish **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen over the DeVine Preserve on 10/22 and the Cedar Lake Campground on 10/24.

After having dropped off slightly over the summer, **Barred Owl** sightings picked back up this fall – between one and three were reported from a dozen locations throughout the county. Two **Short-eared Owls** were over the sedge associated with the Chelsea SGA (Four Mile Lake) from 10/15 – 10/22; given the difficulty getting to this site, this site may have been overlooked as a regular location for this species. Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were found this fall: one was at Toma &

Stinchfield Woods on 9/16 and another at the DeVine Preserve on 10/8.

**Red-headed Woodpeckers** extended their excellent run of form from the summer and continued at more than 20 locations – the summertime high of nine was beaten out by a record number of ten birds at the Leonard Preserve on 9/9. The seven **Hairy Woodpeckers** at the Cedar Lake Campground on 9/12 established a new high count. Participants in this year's Big Sit event at Independence Lake on 10/7, saw four **Merlins** migrating south, which established yet another high count for this fall. Away from downtown Ann Arbor, **Peregrine Falcons** were at Textile & Zeeb (9/8), over Independence Lake (10/7), and at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (10/8).



Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Torrey Rd Hawk Watch, October 23 2023 (Ben Lucking)



Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Chelsea SGA, October 22 2023 (Ben Lucking)

### Passerines: Tyrannid Flycatchers through Snow Bunting

**Olive-sided Flycatchers** continued to move through until 9/22 – although they were not common by any stretch of the imagination, there were several reports away from the typical spots (like the Arb). A rather tardy **Eastern Wood-Pewee** hung around through 10/10. Single **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were present in five scattered locations through 9/28, continuing the relative paucity of this *empid* during this fall season's migration window.

Rarely reported during the fall, **Acadian Flycatcher** reports came in from five sites, all during the first week of September. **Philadelphia Vireos** had a banner fall migration window, with birds at over 20 sites through the first week of October. Even more strikingly, a staggering 7 (!) birds were at the Cherry Hill Nature Preserve on 9/10, setting a new high mark for Washtenaw County. For the intrepid birders venturing into the Chelsea SGA during the second half of October, there was a fine reward in the form of **Northern Shrike(s)**, which was present 10/22 – 10/26. Incredibly, three different individuals were seen on 10/22, which is highly unusual for this usually solitary species. Another shrike was at much more easily accessible Domino's Farms for a couple of days, from 10/24 – 10/25. Up to four **Sedge Wrens** remained in the sedge fields of the Chelsea SGA, where they were seen through 10/19. As was the case over the summer, **Marsh Wrens** were more easily found and remained in at least eight sites through 10/15.



Northern Shrike *Lanius borealis*, Domino's Farms, October 25 2023 (Phillip Odum)



Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Nichols Arboretum, September 13 2023 (Matt Bennink)



Away from the Manchester area, good numbers of **Northern Mockingbirds** were noted throughout the fall, perhaps indicating an ever so slow expansion into new nesting territories. Birders turned up good numbers of **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**, into mid-October, with a maximum of seven at Toma & Stinchfield Woods. A few **Wood Thrushes** stuck around through 10/5, with reports coming in from a dozen+ sites. After some so-so spring and fall migration windows in recent years, there was a fair number of **American Pipits** this fall. Most of the reports involved singletons or (very) small groups, maxing out at 20 on a field at Judd & McCrone.

Tantalizingly, a report of a female **Evening Grosbeak** came in from North Bay Park on 10/16, but no further observations materialized. In a sign that winter finches were clearly on the move, starting at the tail end of September **Purple Finches** started appearing in small groups all over the county. As a happy coincidence of birders' presence at Torrey Rd on 10/23, an impressive stream of them was noted, totaling out at a new record high of 146 individuals. The same scenario played out for the other 'common' winter finch, **Pine Siskin**: they were widespread, but not abundant in most places. That said, 181 were counted moving over the Toma & Stinchfield Woods intersection on 10/10. The first **Snow Buntings** of the season were two birds at Independence Lake on 10/31.

### Passerines: New World Sparrows through Cardinals

After being absent in September, quite surprisingly four different **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found in October: one at the DeVine Preserve (10/8), two at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (10/8), and one at the Conservancy Farm (10/9). The only **Vesper Sparrow** was at Braun & Jordan on 9/4. The clear highlight in the sparrow category this fall was the presence of up to three **Nelson's Sparrows** in the sedge field of the Chelsea SGA from 10/19 – 10/23, establishing yet another count high count. Combined with their occasional presence at the restricted access property at Vreeland & Prospect, these handsome little sparrows may well be annual visitors to Washtenaw County. Perhaps because they are overlooked or dismissed as the more common Song Sparrow, **Lincoln's Sparrows** seemed unusually widely reported this fall. Not only were they present in over 30 locations, but many of them hosted multiple (up to four) birds. Rounding out the abundance of local high counts was a staggering tally of 75 **Swamp Sparrows** at, where else, the Chelsea SGA/Four Mile Lake – that site was clearly the hotspot for birding this fall!



Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*, Matthaei Botanical Gardens, September 26 2023 (Cherie F)



Nelson's Sparrow *Ammodramus nelsoni*, Chelsea SGA, October 21 2023 (Nolan Williams)

A total of 26 *parulid* warbler species were observed during fall of 2023. Single **Golden-winged Warblers** were noted in five different locations during a relatively narrow window, from 9/6 – 9/17. Roughly during that time, three **Blue-winged Warblers** passed through from 9/10 – 9/20. On 10/6 a very late male **Brewster's Warbler** hybrid was seen briefly at Four Mile Lake – this represents only the second October record for Michigan and only the fourth for the Great Lakes region.

**Mourning Warblers** were not uncommon during September (if not necessarily easy to find); however, the bird that was found at LeFurge Woods on 10/20 pushed back the State late date by a week. Equally late, though not as extraordinarily so, was the **Northern Parula** that persisted at North Bay Park through 10/21. The last **Hooded Warbler** of the year (presumably) was seen in a yard at Easudes & Prospect on 9/19. **Canada Warblers** were not terribly easy to come by - only six sites hosted these dapper little birds through the first three weeks of September.

The last time a **Blue Grosbeak** was reported from the Sharon Mills County Preserve was on 9/4 – based on recent trends, it appears this handsome bird is now at least tenuously established as a local breeding species.

## Field Trip Calendar

### **Belle Isle State Park with Oakland Audubon**

**Saturday, November 18, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Join WAS friends and Oakland Audubon Society for a tour of this State Park, a gem on the Detroit River. We'll search for waterfowl, gulls, waders, raptors and other goodies on the river and in the woods. We'll tour mostly by car but will stop and get out with scopes and binoculars. A mile long walk in the interior is planned for migrating songbirds and other feathered friends.

**Directions:** Meet at the Nature Center parking lot (map) at 8 am sharp. For those interested in carpooling, we will meet at the Plymouth Road Park and Ride (map) for a 7:00 am departure. A State Park Recreation Passport is required to drive on the island.

**Leader:** Don Burlett & Jeff Stacy

### **BIPOC Bird Walk, Kensington Metropark**

**Saturday, November 18, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

We invite all people from the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community and our white allies to join us on this walk to feed the birds! This metropark is unique in that the local birds have learned to feed from the hands of visitors. We will be walking with folks from the Shades of the Outdoors Facebook group led by Brandan Freeman. All ages and skill levels are invited. We will have extra binoculars if you do not have any. We will provide birdseed for participants.

**Directions:** Meet outside the Nature Center at Kensington Metropark. Metropark pass required to enter the park.

**Leader:** Victor Chen

### **Natural Area Preservation Restoration Day with Washtenaw Audubon Society**

**Saturday, December 2, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

We birders enjoy access to more than 1,400 acres of natural areas managed by the City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation (NAP). Let's give back, say thank you!. Come on out to help NAP restore biodiversity and help the birds at Kuebler Langford Nature Area. Tools and know-how will be provided. Please bring leather work gloves, wear long pants, tall socks, and closed-toe shoes or boots. Let's show the city what a great group of birders can do!

Registration is required and you can do that at [birding.cityofannarbor.volunteerhub.com](http://birding.cityofannarbor.volunteerhub.com)

### **BIPOC Bird Walk, Barton Nature Area**

**Saturday, December 9, 9:30 am - 11:30 pm**

We invite all people from the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community and our white allies to join us on this walk to look for waterfowl around Barton Pond and other wintering birds in the nature area. All ages and skill levels are invited. We will have extra binoculars if you do not have any.

**Directions:** Parking will be in the Barton Nature Area Parking Lot at 1010 W. Huron River Drive.

**Leader:** Victor Chen

### **Winter Tree Identification at Kuebler Langford Nature Area**

**Saturday, December 9, 2:00 am – 4:00 pm**

Want to learn the difference between a hickory and a hackberry? How about a beech from a basswood. Join us as Isaac Smith, who teaches woody plant identification at the University of Michigan leads an interactive winter hike to learn to ID common Michigan trees with their bark, buds and twigs! Isaac is also an avid birder and does research on how climate change affects bird reproduction.

**Directions:** Meet at the Beechwood Dr. entrance. From Sunset Rd., north on Beechwood Drive, just past the M-14 underpass.

**Leader:** Isaac Smith

### **Restoration Workday at Searles Nature Preserve**

**Sunday, December 10, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

Did you know Washtenaw Audubon owns a nature preserve? We do! Located just a mile south of Rolling Hills County Park, Searles Nature Preserve is a 50 acre natural area that hosts the headwaters of Stony Creek. Join us as we work to remove woody invasive species and create habitat for native plants and insects that support the birds we all love.

With 97% of North American landbirds relying on animal protein to raise their young, it is critical that there's enough native habitat to support the populations of insects required for them to raise their young. Most of these insects, largely moth and butterfly caterpillars, have evolved to require specific, native, host plants for successful reproduction. This is why it is so important that we continue to foster the biodiversity necessary to support all the beautiful birds. Tools and know-how will be provided. Please bring leather work gloves, wear long pants, tall socks, and closed-toe shoes or boots.

**Directions:** Meet at the entrance to the preserve on Bolla Road between Crane and Stony Creek Roads.

### **124<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count; 78<sup>th</sup> Ann Arbor CBC**

**Saturday, December 16**

Join us as we contribute to the longest running citizen science survey on the planet. Maps, contacts, and registration and count forms can be found on our website. This is a fun one, so come on out and count all the birds you can then join us for our Potluck and Tally Rally at 6:00 pm at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

For more details, please check out the CBC announcement article elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Compiler:** Jacco Gelderloos

**Nature Walk at Kuebler Langford Nature Area**

**Saturday, December 30, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

Kuebler Langford is one of Ann Arbor's most biodiverse natural areas with high quality oak-hickory forest and prairie ecosystems. Join us as we explore, discover, and discuss the winter habitat of this special place. We will turn our focus towards the plants, fungi, and animals that live here. While we will be focusing on other flora and fauna, we won't ignore the birds, so please feel free to bring your binoculars. Did you know that there is another, separate nature area, tucked inside Kuebler? We'll talk about that too. Please register as the event is limited to 15 to improve everyone's experience.

**Directions:** Meet at the Beechwood Dr. entrance. From Sunset Rd., north on Beechwood Drive, just past the M-14 underpass.  
**Leader:** Matthew Spoor

**New Year's Walk at Gallup Park**

**Monday, January 1, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

What will be the first bird you see in 2024? Get a boost to next year's list by joining the crazy birders of Washtenaw County for a refreshing New Year's morning bird walk.

**Directions:** Meet at the Gallup Park playground parking lot at the east end of Gallup Park Rd.  
**Leader:** Juliet Berger & Matthew Spoor

**Birding the Upper Peninsula**

**Saturday, January 13 – Sunday, January 14**

We will travel to Sault Ste. Marie on Friday, January 12th, and bird all day Saturday and Sunday morning with a goal of departing Sault Ste. Marie around noon on Sunday. Target birds include: Snowy Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, Red and White-winged Crossbills, Evening Grosbeak, Ruffed and Sharp-tailed Grouse, Purple Finch, Snow Bunting, and more! Maybe the heavens will align for a Spruce Grouse lifer for your trip leader this year finally? Space is limited to 20 and membership is required.

**Leader:** Juliet Berger & Matthew Spoor

**Winter Tree Identification at Bird Hills Nature Area**

**Saturday, January 20, 2:00 am – 4:00 pm**

Want to learn the difference between a hickory and a hackberry? How about a beech from a basswood. Join us as Isaac Smith, who teaches woody plant identification at the University of Michigan leads an interactive winter hike to learn to ID common Michigan trees with their bark, buds and twigs! Isaac is also an avid birder and does research on how climate change affects bird reproduction.

**Directions:** Meet at the Bird Hills parking lot off of Newport Rd.  
**Leader:** Isaac Smith

**Weekend Walk for Birds at Matthaei Botanical Gardens**

**Sunday, January 21, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

Exploring the winter woods, water, and prairie of Matthaei is always a rewarding experience. Seeing Bluebirds on a canvas of white snow never disappoints. Please join us as we search for everything from finches to flickers along Fleming Creek.

**Directions:** Meet at the steps to the conservatory. Matthaei members park for free with metered parking for everyone else. Free to park a bike there and it's a beautiful ride along the bike path from Geddes to the gardens.  
**Leader:** Matthew Spoor

**Restoration Workday at Searles Nature Preserve**

**Saturday, January 27, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

We will continue the good work of creating habitat and food resources for our beloved birds at Searles Nature Preserve, a 50-acre natural area that hosts the headwaters of Stony Creek. Tools and know-how will be provided. Please bring leather work gloves, wear long pants, tall socks, and closed-toe shoes or boots.

**Directions:** Meet at the entrance to the preserve on Bolla Road between Crane and Stony Creek Roads.

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 \$ <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Household	\$25 (online only \$20)
Name: <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15 (online only \$10)
Address: <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Senior	\$15 (online only \$10)
Phone: <input type="text"/>	Email: <input type="text"/>	<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

Washtenaw Audubon has resumed in-person programs, although some of them will also be viewable on Zoom as hybrid programs, as well. Please check the website or Facebook before you come to Matthaei Botanical Gardens for a program, as occasionally a program will be moved from in-person to Zoom only, for various reasons.

**December 16, 6:00 p.m.**

### **Ann Arbor CBC Potluck & Tally**

There will be no program in December, but in lieu of that we will gather at the conclusion of a day of birding for the Ann Arbor CBC. We will meet at the main meeting space at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens (1800 Dixboro Rd) to discuss the day's events and good finds and to compile the day's bird – especially the rarities at the tail end of the tally are always a treat!

**January 17, 7:30 p.m.**

### **Program to be announced**

Please stay tuned and keep an eye on our website and social media for announcements about the upcoming January program.

**February 21, 7:30 p.m.**

### **Great Lakes Piping Plovers, with Joan Kellenberg**

This will be joint meeting of the Washtenaw Audubon Society and the Sierra Club's Huron Valley Group to learn about the recovery of the Piping Plover in the Great Lakes basin. Joan Kellenberg, a local birder who volunteers with the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore's Piping Plover recovery project, will be our speaker. The event will be in-person at a to-be-announced location or via Zoom:

<https://umich.zoom.us/j/99433486554>

Meeting ID: 936 1185 7032

Passcode: 572061

Or dial-in: 312-626-6799

## Washtenaw Audubon Society

P.O. Box 130923

Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923