

Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance



May / June 2026 Newsletter

The Results Are In! **The 2025 Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count**

As my first official year of being the Ann Arbor Area Christmas Bird Count compiler, I am in awe of the effort that past compilers Jacco Gelderloos and, Nancy & Rob French have put in to make this wonderful event happen. In retrospect, I have frequently felt daunted by the entire process but learned a lot about the nuances of compiling. As a result, with the experience of my first year as the compiler, I feel better prepared for December 2026. I would like to thank Jacco for his reminders, his patience, and his broad wisdom. Jacco has guided this herculean effort for 16 years with aplomb.

December 20, 2025's frigid weather dominated this year's Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count. In the days leading up to the count, snowfall had blanketed the ground. The morning brought sustained 10 mph winds that occasionally gusted above 35 mph in the early afternoon, making the entire day feel like a typical Michigan cold winter day. Ironically, the southerly winds would bring in balmy temperatures into the high thirties as potluck participants left Matthaei Botanical Gardens in the evening. The crowd attending the potluck was greeted with a calm evening sky, which was quite different from the morning's winter grip.



Scanning in vain for waterfowl (Angela Moloney)

Early risers brave enough for owling felt cold 21F temperatures, wind, and frigid conditions that were not ideal for listening for owls. Eventually, 86 participants would join in the birding effort whether taking long walks, birding from their cars, setting up scopes along the Huron River, or simply by enjoying the warmth of their home and watching their home feeders.

In the weeks leading up to our Christmas Bird Count, Washtenaw County experienced many days of subfreezing temperatures. While I was out with my birding party, on our first daylight stop at the entrance of Independence Lake, we were shocked to see the entire body of water completely frozen with only half a dozen

>>Continued on page 3<<

President's Letter

Dear Members,

As spring migration gives way to breeding season, I find myself reflecting on what an incredible few months it has been for WBNA. Our spring calendar was one of the busiest and most diverse I can remember, bringing people together through bird walks, educational programs, stewardship activities, and shared experiences in nature. Along the way, we celebrated Black Birders Week through programming organized by Victor Chen, welcomed new birders through Gaia Stanley's Beginning Birders series, explored migration hotspots both locally and at destinations such as Magee Marsh, and launched our first conservation fundraising trip, Birding the Pinky, thanks to the leadership of James Weir. At Searles Nature Preserve, Dana Novak and a dedicated team of volunteers continued the important work of ecological restoration, and we recently welcomed Annika Moran as our first Volunteer Restoration Steward, helping expand our stewardship efforts on the ground. Thank you to everyone who participated, volunteered, led events, or simply joined us outdoors.

As migration winds down, nature begins another transition. The warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other migrants that filled our forests over the past several weeks are settling onto breeding territories and beginning the work of raising the next generation. Likewise, our events calendar is shifting with the seasons. While some of our busiest migration activities are behind us, there is still much to look forward to. Stay tuned for announcements about upcoming Moth Nights, butterfly walks, stewardship events, and other opportunities to explore the natural world together.

And that brings me to something I hope will become a recurring theme in these letters.

The birds, butterflies, wildflowers, dragonflies, and other wildlife we enjoy are not separate from conservation and restoration. They are the result of it. Every morning filled with birdsong, every butterfly drifting across a prairie, and every sheet covered with moths on a summer night depends on healthy, functioning ecosystems. Biodiversity makes these experiences possible. Ecological restoration helps make biodiversity possible.

So what can you do?

I am not one for doom-and-gloom messaging. The challenges facing birds and biodiversity are real, but I believe conservation begins with connection.

Get outside. Enjoy it. Listen to the birds. Watch the butterflies. Attend a moth night. Walk through a prairie in bloom. Bring a friend, a partner, a child, or a neighbor. Share these experiences with others.

People protect what they know and love.

The remarkable diversity of life around us exists because generations before us chose to conserve, restore, and steward the land. The next generation of conservationists, volunteers, advocates, and supporters will come from those who first fall in love with nature.

If we want a future filled with birdsong, wildflowers, butterflies, and healthy natural areas, the first step is surprisingly simple: spend time outside and invite others to join you.

Yours in nature,
Matt Spoor
President, Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance

Board Members

President – Matthew Spoor
president@washtenawbna.org

Vice President – James Weir
vicepresident@washtenawbna.org

Treasurer - Keith Dickey
treasurer@washtenawbna.org

Secretary - Jessica Adamczyk
secretary@washtenawbna.org

Membership - Diana Miller
membership@washtenawbna.org

Field Trips – James Weir
fieldtrips@washtenawbna.org

Conservation - Timothy McKay
conservation@washtenawbna.org

Education - Victor Chen
education@washtenawbna.org

Stewardship - Dana Novak
stewardship@washtenawbna.org

Webmaster/Technology and Social Media - Rob French
webmaster@washtenawbna.org

Communications - Karrie Clapp
communications@washtenawbna.org

Board Member/Bird Rescue - Sherri Smith
birdrescue@washtenawbna.org

Newsletter - Jacco Gelderloos
newsletter@washtenawbna.org

Programs – Kate Jackman
programs@washtenawbna.org

Past President - Juliet Berger
pastpresident@washtenawbna.org

Board Member at Large
 Karl Brenner
karlbrenner@washtenawbna.org

The Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance 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.

>>Continued from page 1<<

Canada Geese sitting on the cold ice. As we birded the snow-covered, and windy park, the conditions were not conducive to finding large quantities of species or flocks. Overall, our CBC's efforts gave us a total of 77 species that were officially accepted.

This year we were graced to have three species of owls, Eastern Screech (17), Great Horned (7), and we did have one Northern Saw Whet Owl located in Area 3, north of the Huron River (no Barred Owls). All owl numbers were below our historical average, most likely from the wind conditions.

Waterfowl also had low numbers in comparison to earlier years. Canada Geese (2,871) were 983 below average. Mute Swans (32) were below the average of 59.5; however, native Trumpeter Swans (57) were very close to 2024's all-time high of 63, making it a continued strong presence for the second year in a row after the species reintroduction to Michigan in the 1980s. Mallards (1,478) were above the historic average of 1,216 and American Black Ducks (13) were just under the average of 15.5. Ring-necked Ducks (3) were way below their 33 average.

Wild Turkeys (299) were well above the historical average of 198. Only 1 Ring-necked Pheasant was observed, well below the maximum of 170 seen decades ago. Only 23 Sandhill Cranes were observed, which is a big drop from last year's record high count. Since 2019 Sandhill Cranes have increased in number from 0 in 2020 to 165 in 58 in 2021, 149 in 2022, 186 in 2023, 163 in 2023, 1626 in 2024. The drop-off of numbers of Sandhill Cranes from 2024 to 2025 can, without a doubt, be attributed to frozen wetlands. The number of Great Blue Herons (13) was only one short of the 14.3 average.

Sharp-shinned Hawks (6) were close to an all-time high (8) and were well above the 2.2 average. Cooper's Hawks (28) were above the average of 24. Bald Eagles (16) were above the count average of 13, but below 2023's all-time high of 27. Red-shouldered Hawks (3) was a repeat number from 2024's count. Red-tailed Hawks (88) equaled the historic average of 88. We did have 2 Rough-legged Hawks.



Red-headed Woodpecker at the Whitmore Lake High School Marsh
 (Angela Moloney)

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (17) obliterated the 1967 record of 6! The presence of Sapsuckers has been consistent over the past 6 of 7 Christmas Bird Counts varying between 0-5. In 2026 it will be likely that their presence will continue for a fifth year in a row. Red-bellied Woodpeckers (242) almost eclipsed the all-time high of 247 observed in 2023. It is fascinating that this species was only recorded three times between 1940 and 1950 for the Christmas Bird Count in Ann Arbor. Northern Flickers (54) almost had an all-time high, coming just short of 58 in 2005.

We had an all-time high of 872 American Goldfinches, surpassing 2020's record of 797. We were graced by 55 Pine Siskins, just 5 short of the annual average. We also had Purple Finch (3), Snow Bunting (65), American Tree Sparrow (317), and a record



Scenes from the crow roost near Central Campus (Jacco Gelderloos)

Finally, THANK YOU to the 86 volunteers who helped observe, participate, and partake in this annual tradition. I would also like to thank Kate Jackman for stepping up to make the potluck happen and make the reservation at the Botanical Gardens. A big thank you to Rob French for helping set up our website, he makes the work seamless and fast. Kudos to our tireless and steadfast area leaders; Kate Jackman, Nancy French, Rob French, Tim McKay, Jessica Adamczyk, Victor Chen, Jacco Gelderloos, Kurt Hagemeister, and our Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance president, Matthew Spoor. We attribute the success of our Christmas Bird Count to everyone who volunteers.

With gratitude,
Andrew Pawuk
Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count Compiler

number of Fox Sparrow (4) breaking 1976's and 2022's record of 3. Dark-eyed Juncos (1,112) were close to 2024's record of 1,188. We also had a record number of White-throated Sparrow (322) which broke 2020's record of 245. Song Sparrow (27) were below the average of 30.5. We had only one list with one Red-winged Blackbird for the count circle. Brown-headed Cowbird (10) was well below the average of 61.5.

The infamous Ann Arbor winter evening American Crow roost was located around Central Campus. The murder of crows numbered 7,992. (N.B. no actual crows were culled or murdered while counting).

The biggest note of summary were four historic all-time highs for our count circle in 2025; Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (17), Fox Sparrow (4), White-throated Sparrow (322), and American Goldfinch (872).

For a full and detailed 2025 list of all of the Ann Arbor (or any other historic) Christmas Bird Count numbers, please visit the National Audubon website and search the following webpage:

<https://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/CurrentYear/ResultsByCount.aspx>.

Before the 2026 count begins, I will be asking area leaders to consider proposed changes to the count areas, especially along the Huron River and access points near the new Border to Border Trail.

Please save the date! Saturday, December 19, 2026 is the next scheduled Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count. Registration will be live online in the fall.



A small selection of our volunteers at the potluck event (Andrew Pawuk)

Canada Goose	2,871	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	498	Golden-crowned Kinglet	20
Mute Swan	32	Mourning Dove	346	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
Trumpeter Swan	57	Eastern Screech-Owl	17	Northern Mockingbird	CW
Tundra Swan	CW	Great Horned Owl	7	Eastern Bluebird	140
Wood Duck	3	Barred Owl	CW	Hermit Thrush	8
Gadwall	19	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	American Robin	2,396
American Black Duck	13	Belted Kingfisher	7	European Starling	3,009
Mallard	1,478	Red-headed Woodpecker	3	Cedar Waxwing	92
Green-winged Teal	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	242	Snow Bunting	65
Ring-necked Duck	3	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	17 (HC)	Yellow-rumped Warbler	11
Bufflehead	1	Downy Woodpecker	253	American Tree Sparrow	317
Common Goldeneye	27	Hairy Woodpecker	49	Fox Sparrow	4 (HC)
Hooded Merganser	39	Northern Flicker	54	Dark-eyed Junco	1,112
Common Merganser	46	Pileated Woodpecker	8	White-crowned Sparrow	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	woodpecker sp.	1	White-throated Sparrow	322 (HC)
Wild Turkey	299	American Kestrel	2	Song Sparrow	27
Great Blue Heron	13	Merlin	4	Eastern Towhee	1
Turkey Vulture	1 (US)	Peregrine Falcon	2	Northern Cardinal	432
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	Blue Jay	667	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Cooper's Hawk	28	American Crow	7,992	Brown-headed Cowbird	10
Bald Eagle	16	Black-capped Chickadee	659	Common Grackle	CW
Red-shouldered Hawk	3	Tufted Titmouse	284	House Finch	329
Red-tailed Hawk	88	Red-breasted Nuthatch	24	Purple Finch	3
Rough-legged Hawk	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	394	Redpoll	CW
Sandhill Crane	23	Brown Creeper	23	Pine Siskin	55
Ring-billed Gull	15	Winter Wren	4	American Goldfinch	872 (HC)
American Herring Gull	2	Carolina Wren	72	House Sparrow	680
				Total Individuals	26,627
CW = count week only		HC = high count		US = unusual species	

5-Mile Radius (5MR) Update

In the 5MR update as of the end of February, it was a closely run contest between Victor and Jacco (72 vs. 66), but as things stand at the end of April, it looks like Victor is running away with the game. He's opened up an advantage of almost 25 species with the new number 2 in the rankings, Michael Appel, now in second and Jacco dropping off to a rather distant third place. Several of the other participants made small progress or did not turn in an update for April.

Current 5 MR standings (as of 4/30):

Victor Chen	119	Bill VanderMolen	42
Michael Appel	95	Dan Ezekiel	40
Jacco Gelderloos	75	Juliet Berger	28
Ruth Kraut	50	Bob Maddox	18

Obviously, the bulk of spring migration is still yet to come (not to mention fall migration!), so major changes will no doubt be coming to these rankings in the months ahead! And, if you're still looking for some winter birds, there's always that second bite of the cherry in November-December. So get out there, go biking or hiking, and add to those tallies!

Victor Chen & Jacco Gelderloos

Field Trip Calendar

Monday Evening Migration at Matthaei

Monday, June 1, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Join us for a walk through the trails at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens to look and listen for birds during their northern migration. This leisurely stroll will wind through the woods on the Botanical Gardens' well-maintained dirt paths and will involve ~2 miles of walking or less.

The pond often hosts waterfowl and shorebirds, and the trails will take us through excellent habitat to look for warblers, thrushes, flycatchers, the occasional cuckoo, and other birds that briefly pass through Washtenaw County as they head north to their breeding grounds (and we'll be sure to take notice of our local birds, too!).

All are welcome to attend, and please note that it is perfectly appropriate to attend for only a portion of the walk and depart as needed. New birders are especially encouraged to come along—the very best way to learn more about birds and birding is to spend time in the field. Please join us!

Visit [Matthaei's eBird hotspot page](#) to see what species have been recently seen at the Botanical Gardens.

Directions: Meet in front of the main entrance to the Matthaei Botanical Gardens building at [1800 N. Dixboro Rd.](#)

Leader: James Weir

Prothonotary Paddle

Saturday, June 13, 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

It has not been long since the beautiful Prothonotary Warbler began breeding along this stretch of the Huron River from Hudson Mills through Delhi Metropark and beyond. They sing their cheery song from close to their cavity nests along the river and are best viewed from the water. There are always a large variety of other birds to see on this great float.

The trip is eight miles long, and usually takes about 3 ½ hours to complete, but we'll stop for good birds, a picnic, etc., and your car will be waiting for you at the other end. 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.

Book your own boat(s) for the "Hudson Mills to Delhi Metropark Long Trip" directly from Skip's Canoe Livery at [paddlethehuron.com](#) and review the details on their site. Make sure to select the 9am option on June 13th. 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.

Paddlers with their own boats, meet at Hudson Mills, Rapids View area ([map here](#)) to launch by 9:00 a.m. The crew from Skips depart at 9 a.m. and arrive at the Hudson Mills launch at 9:30 a.m. The two groups will connect on the water with the Skips crew waiting for the boat owners that should see us as they float downriver at 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Juliet Berger

Ecological Restoration Workday at Searles Nature Preserve

Sunday, June 28, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Sunday, July 26, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Sunday, August 30, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Did you know Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance owns a nature preserve? We do! Searles Nature Preserve is a 50-acre natural area that hosts the headwaters of Stony Creek. Did you also know that Ninety-seven percent of North American land birds require animal, primarily insect, protein to raise their young? Most insects require specific, native, host plants for successful reproduction and this is why supporting a biodiverse ecosystem of native plants is so important. More on this here: <https://tiny1.io/93Ka>

Join us as we work to remove invasive species and improve biodiversity to support the birds we love. 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. ([map here](#)).



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The birds Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance 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 B&NA 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 washtenawbna.org](https://washtenawbna.org)

March-April 2026: Early Spring Highlights

The Highlights

Although the presence of an ["old, headless skin"](#) among the Peregrine Falcons' prey remnants on Burton Tower in the fall of 2008, hinted at the species passing through Washtenaw County, the first record of a living **YELLOW RAIL** was of the long-staying bird that was territorial for two weeks in the sedge marsh around Little Portage Lake in early May 2024. None were found there in 2025, but on 4/24 another bird was heard ticking away in the marsh, where it was enjoyed by many and remained until at least the end of the month.

Starting in mid-April, a whole slew of rare shorebirds appeared in Washtenaw County. On 4/9, the county's first modern spring record of **AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** was observed flying over Dow Prairie in Nichols Arboretum during a WBNA walk there. The next day, the third ever Washtenaw County record of **BLACK-NECKED STILT** was found in a small wetland along Hack Rd on the border of Washtenaw and Lenawee counties. It was briefly seen on the next day but could not be relocated after that.



Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*, Hack & Britton, April 10 2026 (Bonnie Penet)



Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Mary Beth Doyle Park, April 28 2026 (Nui Moreland)

Just under two weeks later, on 4/25, the first of a veritable irruption of **LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS** appeared at the Arkona Rd fluddle, just west of Lindsley Rd. On the back of this duo, the floodgates opened on 4/28: one bird spent some time at Mary Beth Doyle Park, a quintet stopped over at the Hack & Britton wetland (establishing a Washtenaw County record high in the process), and three more were (back) at the Arkona Rd fluddle. The last time there were anywhere near this many individuals of this species present in Washtenaw County was during the last week of April 2020, when there was a grand total of five spread over three sites. The LB Dowitcher at Mary Beth Doyle Park was joined by a lone **WILLET** for an all too brief spell – unfortunately, this bird vanished before the observer was able to get a photograph of the earliest spring record of this rare migrant (all local records are from the period between 4/28 and 5/20).

Non-Passerines

The excellent start of the year for finding geese continued into the March-April period, with multiple individuals of all five species found in several spots. A white morph **Snow Goose** spent some time at Furstenberg Park on 3/7; the next day a pair of them hung out with a large group of Canadas at the marsh along Notten Rd. Lastly, three blue morph birds were photographed at the Stonebridge Ponds on 3/21. What was likely one and the same **Ross's Goose** moved around a string of locations on the south side of Ann Arbor. The first observations were at the Avis Farms ponds (3/13 – 3/15), then it was spotted at the Costco ponds (3/14), after which it may have stopped over at Ford Lake on 3/19. Things then went quiet for a week or two, when a **Ross's Goose** was spotted in the small ponds at the Amazon facility off Carpenter Rd on 4/4. Subsequently, it stopped over at the Stonebridge Ponds (4/6), settled in at the Avis Farms Ponds for some time (4/7 – 4/13), and then moved on, back to the Costco ponds (4/13 – 4/17). A lone **Greater White-fronted Goose** hung out at Gallup Park for a few hours on 3/3. Even if it was not the highest total number ever encountered in Washtenaw County, a northbound flock of 25 Greater White-fronts first noted over the Hickory Woods subdivision on 3/7, made for quite the spectacle. It was subsequently observed over Gallup Park – the flock's size ranks fifth all-time. Gallup Park was the place to check for **Cackling Geese** – one was picked out among the multitudes of Canadas on 3/1, and another was there on 4/21.

What was likely the last bird of the season was at North Bay Park on 4/26. **Tundra Swans** moved through in decent numbers, stopping over here and there. Over the course of March and April, the highest number reported from the 15 or so location was a flock of 66 over the Devine Preserve on 3/21.



Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*, Avis Farms, March 14 2026 (Chase Zobl)



Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*, Gallup Park, March 3 2026 (Rebeka Miller)

The early spring period is, without a doubt, the best time of year to find and observe a wide variety and large numbers of ducks. March-April 2026 proved to be no exception to that rule, even if no major rarities were turned up. Out of the total of 19 species observed, several established new record high counts. Among dabbling ducks, 36 **Blue-winged Teal** at North Bay Park on 4/11 must have been quite the sight, but the whopping 131 **American Wigeons** at Four Mile Lake on 3/12 had previously set quite the marker to surpass. That same day and place also featured a stunning gathering of *Aythya* diving ducks: 1,250 **Redheads** were impressive enough, but they were outdone by their congener, the **Ring-necked Duck**, whose total came out to be 2,500 individuals!

Right on time, the first **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** returned to their usual haunts at the Green Lake Access site off M-52 on 4/24, where as many as three were heard on 4/29. Another Whip-poor-will was heard in the area of Warner & Judd on 4/26. Equally punctual, the first of the year's **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** appeared at four locations from 4/28 on. The only **Common Gallinules** of the period was a quartet at Trinkle Marsh on 4/30 – this is arguably the most reliable spot for this species in Washtenaw County and has been for decades now. Pretty much all of the expected shorebird species were found in appropriate habitat – the highlights section above described the outstanding finds of the period.

The season for “winter gulls” often extends into March and 2026 was no exception to that truism. A **Great Black-backed Gull** passed over the Torrey Rd Hawk Watch site on 3/4 and that same day another (or possibly the same) individual of the world's largest gull species was seen at Gallup Park. Away from the Salem Landfill, **Glaucous Gull** is a very good find, so the adult that was present among a large group of gulls at Vreeland & Gotfredson on 3/7 drew a lot of attention. Interestingly, nearly a month later, another (or the same?) adult was found in nearly the same spot on 4/5. The days that **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was considered a mind-blowing rarity are long gone, and they can now be found reliably each winter. A duo spent most of March (3/5 – 3/29) moving around various parks lining Ford Lake, as did varying numbers of them associating with the large mixed gull flock at Vreeland & Gotfredson during the period from 3/7 – 4/5. On that last day, a careful count revealed a staggering 27



Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, Vreeland & Gotfredson, March 7 2026 (Bill Nolting)



Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*, Vreeland & Gotfredson, March 7 2026 (Bill Nolting)

of them, which blew away the record high tally for Washtenaw County by some margin. Away from these two spots, there were three in a field off Bemis & Platt on 3/7 and single adults at Portage Lake (3/16) and the Platt Rd fluddle (3/22). On 3/7, the whirling mass of gulls over the Salem Landfill an **Iceland Gull**. Given the presence of several other unusual species, it should come as no surprise that careful scanning of the gull flock at Vreeland & Gotfredson on 3/7 turned up an Iceland Gull – however, different observers found different individuals, and although no eBird checklist listed more than one (all of the *Kumlien's* variety), these observations involved an adult and two verifiably different first year birds, which in a roundabout way tied the county's high count! The next day a *Kumlien's* Iceland Gull was among the gulls at the BirdSong Preserve, and on 4/5 another *Kumlien's* was back at Vreeland & Gotfredson.

Starting in the second week of April, small numbers of **Caspian Terns** trickled into Washtenaw County: on 4/9, one was at Nichols Arboretum, two were at Ford Lake Park, and one more was at North Bay Park. After that, singletons were at South Pond on 4/13 and Whitmore Lake on 4/17. Rounding out the period's Caspian Tern observations was a pair at North Bay Park from 4/23 – 4/29. On that last day, they were joined by the only **Forster's Tern** of April 2026, allowing for some nice side-by-side size comparisons. A very distant **Red-necked Grebe** on Four Mile Lake on 3/12 proved to be a single-observer record, unfortunately. By contrast, the basic-plumaged **Red-throated Loon** at appropriately named Loonfeather Point Park on 3/14 was much more cooperative and provided many with good looks – interestingly, this is now the third spring in a row that a Red-throated Loon has been found at this spot!

On 4/28, a very brave observer ventured into the sedge marsh at Four Mile Lake SGA and was rewarded with a booming **American Bittern**. **Black-crowned Night Herons** returned to Mary Beth Doyle Park as of 4/15; one or two of them could be more or less reliably seen in the ponds there most nights. A **Western Cattle-Egret** stopped over in a backyard near Bemis & Ernst on 4/14, but the property owners preferred not to have visitors. This dapper little heron occurs in Washtenaw County roughly once every other year. A now annual visitor, an **American White Pelican** soared over Gooding Rd on 3/15. A proper flock of between 24-30 birds was over North Bay Park on 4/12. Ten more were seen over US-23 near Joy on 4/17, and a group of six stopped over at Four Mile Lake on 4/27.



Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* & Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, North Bay Park, April 29 2026 (Nui Moreland)

Western Cattle-Egret *Ardea ibis*, Bemis & Ernst, April 14 2026 (Michelle Hagans)

Hot on the heels of the February record, a **Black Vulture** was seen flying over Washtenaw & Hewitt on 3/14. The Torrey Rd Hawk Watch site bolstered its reputation as Washtenaw County's prime spot for rare raptors when an **American Goshawk** passed over on 3/16 – this was only the sixth record since 2015 of this very rare migrant. The only record for **Rough-legged Hawk** was a bird over Gallup Park on 3/1 – the Vreeland Rd bird(s) left sometime in February, since they were not reported into March.

Reversing their near-absence during the winter month, **Barred Owls** were almost common in March and April. Birds were seen and heard from a dozen locations in the western tier of townships, but also from as many as ten different spots in the greater Ann Arbor area. Another **Long-eared Owl** was eBirded, this one during the final week of March – however, due to the sensitive nature of this species this record was suppressed in eBird, so details of the observation are lacking. One **Short-eared Owl** was seen over the fields at Vreeland & Gotfredson on 3/31. Odds are they were present in the weeks leading up to that record, but since most people likely saw them at this site earlier in the year, not many observers staked out the spot during March.

On the heels of their banner winter season, many **Merlins** remained in the area well into April. One or two of them were seen from over 20 locations, with a clear epicenter in the Ann Arbor area, most likely due to the fact that that is where most observers live. As was the case in January-February, away from the downtown Ann Arbor nesting pair, **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from half a dozen sites spread over much of Washtenaw County during early spring.



Barred Owl *Strix varia*, Cedar Lake Campground, April 3 2026 (Bonnie Penet)



Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Vreeland Rd, March 31 2026 (Nui Moreland)

Passerines

A **White-eyed Vireo** was present at the Draper-Houston Meadows Preserve near Milan on 4/25, making for the season's first. The **Northern Shrike** that was found earlier in the year continued to be detected off and on, on 3/4 and 3/24, respectively. Another shrike was seen at various spots along Vreeland Rd during most of March, where it was last noted on 3/19. The first of the season's **Sedge Wrens** showed up at a couple of spots in Lima Township: one was in the Four Mile Lake sedge marsh from 4/28, the other was at the nearby N Lima Center Marsh on 4/29. That same day, good numbers (six in all) of its congener, the **Marsh Wren**, were also noted at Four Mile Lake, with additional individuals at Prairie Park and LeFurge Woods.

After a slow start to the year (see the previous rarity report), **Northern Mockingbirds** seemed to be everywhere during March and April. They were seen and heard in well over 20 locations, scattered throughout much of Washtenaw County. The first of spring 2026's migrant thrushes appeared right on cue during the final week of April, with two reports for **Veery**, one for **Swainson's Thrush**, and a good handful for **Wood Thrush**. A rather secretive flock of **American Pipits** moved around the fields around the Torrey Rd Hawk Watch on 3/15 – observers counted at least ten, but as many as 40 could have been hiding among the stubble, mixed in with Horned Larks. A month later, one stopped by the BirdSong Preserve on 4/13, but it took until the last few days of April for something of an influx to materialize. Up to four of them stalked the edge of the wetland at Hack & Britton (from 4/28), one was (still) at the BirdSong Preserve on 4/30, and that same day a flock of as many as 15 scurried around in a recent controlled burn area at the Pittsfield Preserve.



Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Arkona Rd Fluddle, April 14 2026 (Bill Nolting)



American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, Hack & Britton, April 28 2026 (Bonnie Penet)

On 3/4, a **Redpoll** briefly visited a feeder along Brierwood St in Ann Arbor. Decent numbers of both **Pine Siskins** and **Purple Finches** were reported from quite a few places; after the rather paltry winter season locally, it seems safe to assume that quite a few of these birds were migrants from farther south on their way north. The largest concentration was 11 birds at Loch Highland on 2/14. As many as 24 **Lapland Longspurs** continued at Vreeland & Gotfredson Rd through 3/22, but number steadily declined during March. A flock of about ten of them were eBirded from the Ann Arbor Airport on 3/16, and a good-sized flock

of some 60 individuals stopped over at the BirdSong Preserve on 3/21 and 3/22. In a reversal of the situation during the first two months of the year, **Snow Buntings** were a lot harder to come by during March and April – there were two at Gallup Park (3/4), five along Vreeland Rd (3/7), and one at the BirdSong Preserve (3/8).

A very cooperative territorial **Grasshopper Sparrow** delighted many observers during its stay at the BirdSong Preserve during the final five days of April. The sparrow bonanza at that newly established preserve also included a singing **Clay-colored Sparrow** on 4/27 – unfortunately, this bird was a one-day wonder. The spread of **Vesper Sparrow** records this spring (starting 3/25) showed a clear split between the Vreeland Rd corridor in Superior Township (4 locations) and the southern tier of townships (7 locations). For birders that wanted to see or hear a **Henslow's Sparrow** during the period, a visit to the far southwestern corner of the county was required: only the Watkins Lake County Preserve (up to five) and the Sharonville SGA (2 birds) had any of them, during the final week of April only at that. Rather early **Lincoln's Sparrows** were noted in four locations throughout Washtenaw County from 4/24 on.



Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*, BirdSong Preserve, April 27 2026 (Joseph Kennedy)



Clay-colored Sparrow *Spizella pallida*, BirdSong Preserve, April 27 2026 (Kate Yates)

Outside of its more typical grassland habitat, a **Bobolink** at Mary Beth Doyle Park on 4/28 was a nice surprise. Generally arriving a little earlier than its Baltimore cousin, the season's first **Orchard Orioles** started arriving as of 4/13 and were eBirded from as many as ten locations. Several dozen sites hosted **Rusty Blackbirds** throughout March and April. Although most records did not involve large numbers, the flock of 100 at Four Mile Lake on 3/12 was quite impressive.

In the rarity report for January-February, the hardiness of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was highlighted. They proved the point by being the only wood-warbler species reported during March 2026 – not until early April did the first Pine Warbler appear! Throughout April, more and more species showed up, though, so that by the end of the month the species count had increased to a very respectable 20. A very vocal **Louisiana Waterthrush** returned to the Leonard Preserve as of 4/17 and spent the rest of month singing there. A small number (five in all) of **Orange-crowned Warblers** moved through during April, starting 4/16. A **Hooded Warbler** on 4/30 was noteworthy for the Draper-Houston Meadows Preserve.



Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla*, Leonard Preserve, April 25 2026 (Alex Kim)



Orange-crowned Warbler *Leiothlypis celata*, Nichols Arboretum, April 23 2026 (Zach Kemp)

Education Update

In early April, WBNA hosted its annual walk for the Washtenaw Elementary Science Olympiad (WESO) Feathered Friends competitors. Between 70 and 80 participants from schools all across Washtenaw County joined us



at Gallup Park to look for waterfowl, early migrants, and whatever else was around. We saw Bufflehead, turtles, and lots of raptors putting on a show. The day was crisp and the participants were full of energy. One student remarked how fun it was to get outside and find so many different kinds of birds.

At Erickson Elementary, Victor once again helped coach a group of young birders as they prepared for the WESO competition. Each week we shared some of the birds we saw, and then we learned how to identify various species with our field guides. One of the highlights each year is taking a field trip to Loonfeather Point Park to see some of the birds on and around Ford Lake.

WBNA also partnered with the Ypsilanti Library for a few walks and hope to have another event with them over the summer. Keep checking our website for further information.

Victor Chen



Top: Scenes from the outing at Gallup Park.

Right: Victor pointing out a bird on the Loonfeather Point Park excursion (both pictures courtesy of Victor Chen)

To become a member of Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance, please complete the form below (or a copy) and mail it with a check or money order payable to **Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance—WBNA Membership, P.O. Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113.**

____ Renewal ____ New Member
Additional Donation \$ ____

Membership Dues

____ Individual Household	\$25 (online only \$20)
____ Student	\$15 (online only \$10)
____ Senior	\$15 (online only \$10)
____ Patron	\$50

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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:** WBNA will only use your email address to communicate with you about WBNA programs, field trips, or matters of interest to you, such as membership renewal and emailed WBNA newsletters (in color!). We will not give your email address to anyone else.

WBNA Monthly Programs

Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance has resumed in-person programs, although some of them will be viewable on YouTube as hybrid programs (or recordings), as well. Please check the website or Facebook before you come to the Downtown Ann Arbor Library for a program, as occasionally a program may be moved from in-person to Zoom only, for various reasons.

Wednesday, June 17, 6:00 p.m.

Tracking Songbird Migration Using Geolocators

We are currently living in a golden age of rapid discovery explaining the mysteries of bird migration. A variety of new technologies are currently being developed to better understand how, where, and why birds migrate. A key tool in studying the biology of migratory birds is the geolocator — a small tracking device attached to a migrating bird that can reveal the journeys and destinations the bird experiences throughout the year. As part of his University of Michigan dissertation research, presenter Matt Hack has spent the past three summers stationed at the UMich Biological Station in the northern Lower Peninsula, attaching geolocators to several species of songbirds that share their breeding grounds in the boreal forest but migrate to a wide range of destinations and climates to spend their winters. He has two primary goals behind tracking these birds — to uncover the timelines and destinations of their migration journeys, and to use that information to better understand how different migration strategies can affect the ecology of these travelers. He is excited to share what he has learned in the process!

***** NOTE: There will not be WBNA programs in July or August *****

Saturday, September 12, 9:30 a.m.

Annual WBNA Picnic & Wingnut Award Presentation

Please join us for this annual fun social event and catch up with other birders. Bring a dish to share for the picnic at Dexter Huron Metropark Shelter B.

New this year!! There will be a migration bird walk before the picnic, starting at 9:30 and ending around 11:30. Meet at Shelter B to join in. The Picnic and Wingnut Award will start at 12 pm.

Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance

P.O. Box 130923

Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0923