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March 2022

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# Bird Notes

## Newsletter of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club

grandtraverseaudubon.org

find us on Facebook and Instagram #gtaudubon

Editor: Kirk Waterstripe (4walkinglightly@gmail.com)

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Greetings!

March 8<sup>th</sup> is International Women's Day! This issue features contributions by women to bird conservation, birding, and local knowledge. If you have been influenced by a female birder, thank them!

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## On The Calendar

Our regular meetings are usually the fourth Thursday of the month at the Boardman River Nature Center on Cass Road at 7:00 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend!

**March 24, 2022 (Thursday)** – Award-winning photographer Evan Reister will tell us about the Michigan Young Birders Network. Come find out what these young folks (ages 13-18) are up to, and how you, or a young person you know, can get involved. Most likely, Evan will bring some amazing photographs too.

**April 21, 2022 (Thursday)** – Come meet the folks from North Sky Raptor Sanctuary, a new local rehabilitation and education organization. Learn about birds of prey from some experts, including a couple that have feathers!

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*Official GTA club logo by Tom Ford*

## Upcoming Field Trips

### March 27

Weekly Sunday Morning Bird Outings start for the season. Contact Kirk Waterstripe ([4walkinglightly@gmail.com](mailto:4walkinglightly@gmail.com)) or watch BirdAlert for weekly locations.

### April 2

Sky Dance of the Woodcocks (see page 2)

### April 23

Field Trip to Arcadia Marsh (see page 2)

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## Travel opportunities this spring!

Club members are hosting informal trips to Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in Ohio (May 13-15), and to Tawas Point State Park in Michigan (May 20-22). Both of these locations are extremely popular hotspots for watching migration birds. They can be incredible experiences. If you're interested, *make your lodging arrangements now!* Hotels and campgrounds will fill up quickly!

## Upcoming Field Trips

**March 27, 2022 (Sunday)**– Sunday Morning Bird Outings start!

Every Sunday from now through June, Kirk Waterstripe will lead a group at a location around Traverse City. If you're a beginning birder, or if you want to polish your skills, these trips are for you! This year, Kirk has a couple special trips in mind, like a morning focused on bird song, and an early trip to Leelanau State Park!

Locations and times will be announced in BirdAlert emails, so watch your inbox.



**April 2, 2022 (Saturday)** – Sky Dance of the Woodcocks

Come celebrate an annual spring ritual: the mating flights of the American Woodcock. Meet at 7:15 pm at Veronica Valley County Park. To reach it, take M-72 west from Traverse City, heading toward Empire. Turn north at the light at Bugai Rd. (Co. Rd. 641) and proceed 10 miles north to the intersection of South Maple Valley Rd. The parking area will be on the left. Note that there are no public restroom facilities in the area. Wear footwear for damp meadows, and a small flashlight might be useful.

lat & long: 44°55'10.1"N 85°41'38.2"W

## Birding Calendar

### March

Early spring migrants like blackbirds, Horned Larks and American Woodcock are returning.

The urgent flocks of waterfowl are coming back as waterways open up, first the bays of Lake Michigan, then the inland lakes.

### April

Migration is beginning to heat up! Waterfowl are moving though in numbers, especially dabbling ducks. Loons and grebes, hawks, blackbirds, kinglets, phoebes, and the early warblers (Pine, Palm, Yellow-rumped) are in the area by the end of the month.

### May

It's on! The High Holy Days of birding! New migrant species arrive every night it seems, especially when the wind blows from the south. Warblers usually peak in mid-May, and flycatchers come in soon after. Get out there as often as you can!

## April 23, 2022 (Saturday) – Birding at Arcadia Marsh

This trip is an annual favorite. Leonard and Barb Graf will guide our exploration of this extensive wetland and the surrounding fields. They will meet at Meijer on U.S. 31 South in Traverse City at 7:00 am, and lead a caravan to the marsh. Contact them at (231)946-5120, or [bluethroat@charter.net](mailto:bluethroat@charter.net). Bring your lunch! Most of this trip will be roadside birding, and an accessible gravel trail.

Contact them if you would like to meet them at the marsh. Meeting spot: 44.489058, -86.231795

More information: <https://sleepingbearbirdingtrail.org/birding-sites/arcadia-marsh-preserve/>

## Your Favorite Patch

Here's a place to share your treasures! In each issue, we'll feature a user-submitted favorite birding spot.

The wastewater treatment plant at Interlochen Center for the Arts is a great spot (44.6406393, -85.7747269). There is a two track around the actual WWTP, and I am available to show up and open the gates. I've got 55 spp there. Shorebirds and ducks in and around the ponds, frequent Red-shouldered Hawks, lots of cedar waxwings at the end of the summer, and a nice safe walk. We are building a boardwalk and small observation deck on the north side of bridge lake, as well. About two miles round trip.

Directions: From the north: from M-137, go west for less than a mile on Riley Road; cross a creek and look for the drive / cabin on the left / south side of the road. Park, and proceed down the path. At the fork\*, go left / east. This will take you over a lovely iron bridge and around the wastewater treatment plant. Continue around the plant to a bridge over the Little Betsie. Cross the bridge, and there is a path heading east on the south side of the Little Betsie.

From the south: from 137, go west on Diamond Park Road. Pull into the first drive on the right / north, across from the gated Sawmill Rd. (If you come to Interlochen Maintenance, you've gone too far.) Park and proceed north on the path. Across the Little Betsie, around the WWTP, over the iron bridge, into what is called Riley Woods\*.

\*On both walks, one can approach Bridge Lake from the north. As the path leaves the woods into wetland, it is full of poison ivy and the water table is at the surface. But Bridge Lake has loons, swans, mergansers, and lots of warblers in the spring. Construction on a boardwalk will begin sometime in 2022.

- Maryellen Newport ([maryellen.newport@gmail.com](mailto:maryellen.newport@gmail.com))

To tell us about your favorite patch, preferably a little-known, seldom-birded local spot, email the editor!

## Are you playing Brdl?

Do you like puzzles? Here's a variation of Wrld where you figure out the four-letter code that birders and bird-banders use for each species. (For instance, Northern Cardinal's code is NOCA.) There's a new puzzle every day! <https://brdl.alex.gd/?=21>

## Coffee Drinkers!



Do you like a cup of coffee or hot chocolate at the Club meetings? Bring your own mug, enjoy your cuppa, then stash your mug at the Nature Center! Let's try to reduce or eliminate our single-use beverage containers!

## Editor's Perch

Contributions of women to the world of birding

In honor of International Women's Day, I would like to use this space to honor a few lesser-known contributions to birding and bird conservation by women. You've heard of Rachel Carson and Marjorie Stoneman-Douglas, but here are a few other names you might not recognize. I've included a link or search suggestion for each person, but there is often much more to their stories. (Keep in mind that Roger Tory Peterson's field guide came out in 1934.)

Rosalie Edge - Described as "the most honest, unselfish, indomitable hellcat in the history of conservation", she was incensed by the shooting of hawks on a ridge in the Appalachian mountains of Pennsylvania. In order to stop the slaughter, in 1934, she bought the property and hired a young ranger to turn back the shooters. Such was the beginning of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. This was only one of her accomplishments. In 1929, she founded the Emergency Conservation Committee, which promoted the conservation of *all* species, before they became rare.

[The Woman Who Saved the Hawks: Redeeming an Overlooked Pioneer of Conservation – Brain Pickings](#)

Florence Merriam Bailey - took her fellow female students at Smith College outdoors to watch birds in an effort to persuade them to forgo the practice of wearing feathers on their hats. She wrote *Birds Through an Opera-Glass*, considered to be the first field guide to birds, in 1889. "When going to watch birds," [she wrote](#), "proceed to some good birdy place — the bushy bank of a stream or an old juniper pasture — and sit down in the undergrowth or against a concealing tree-trunk, with your back to the sun, to look and listen in silence." In a way, she was the first proponent of the Big Sit!

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/17/obituaries/florence-merriam-bailey-overlooked.html>

Mabel Osgood Wright - produced *Birdcraft: A Field Book of Two Hundred Song, Game, and Water Birds* in 1895. She was a Director of the American Assoc. Of Audubon Societies, and established Birdcraft Sanctuary near Fairfield, CT. Her Wikipedia page lists several other nature-related publications.

Margaret Morse Nice - Born in 1883, she obtained her first bird guide at age 7, and published a guide to birds in fruit orchards at age 12. In 1924, she and her husband published *The Birds of Oklahoma*. Her best-known work is an eight-year study culminating in the publication of a two-volume work entitled *Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow*.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Margaret-Morse-Nice>

Phoebe Snetsinger – She took up birding as an adult, and credits it with helping her survive a case of melanoma. Throughout her worldwide travels, she took copious field notes, some of which helped promote subspecies to full species status. She became the first person to see over 8,000 species of birds. Her memoir, *Birding on Borrowed Time*, was published in 2003.  
<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/may-june-2009/the-endless-race>

Podcasts featuring women birders and researchers:

<https://www.aba.org/more-than-a-lawn-thrush-with-emily-williams/>

<https://www.aba.org/skyglow-and-community-science-with-lauren-pharr/>

<https://www.aba.org/american-birding-podcast-the-feminist-bird-club-story-with-molly-adams/>

<https://www.alieward.com/ologies/wildlifeecology>

There is one other woman who made a small contribution to birding. I would like to thank my mom. After seeing my interest in birds, and the fact that I was serious enough to separate White-throated Sparrows from White-crowned Sparrows, she signed up for an adult education class called Birdwatching for Beginners, mostly so I could take it. That was 1975. The class opened my eyes to a whole new world of birds beyond the feeders in the backyard. With some cheap binoculars, I was off. We met the ornithology professor at the local college, and he took me on my first Big Day in 1976. I saw an unbelievable-to-me total of 97 species that day! Mom asked if he used a book to identify birds, and I replied with a great deal of awe in my voice, "He is the book!" Another off-repeated practice in our house was going birding on Mother's Day. Mom started out as a good sport, but after a few years, we couldn't have kept her home. They did put the holiday on the best weekend for watching migrating birds, after all!

Hopefully, these stories are not a complete surprise to you. Our pastime and passion has had many influences over the years, and those by women don't get repeated as often as those of men. Share their stories. Keep an eye and an ear for new contributions by women in science and birding; they can be found everywhere. Most of all, women, don't be shy about making your own contribution. Everyone's voice is welcome, and let's all work to amplify them. Birds and birding will be better off if we do.

## Readers' Recommendations

In this space, you'll find recommendations for videos, websites, podcasts, books and other media goodies. If you have a recommendation, email the editor!

Lucy Hammett's Bingo series includes Bug Bingo, Bird Bingo, & about 20 other topics based on pictures. The "caller's" card has a picture and name on it. The box says "Ages 3 to adult, Fun Family Educational". Our children, grandchildren, & a small nature class I had love them. About \$14 - 21.

Lake Michigan (or any Great Lake) Rock Picker's Guide by Bruce Mueller & Kevin Gauthier is \$15.99 at Brainstorm in Sutton's Bay.

Waterford Press Pocket Guides offers a number of plastic folding guides such as Michigan Nature Set of Trees & Wildflowers, Birds, & Wildlife for 16 - \$20. Other states & topics are available. I just received one as a gift!

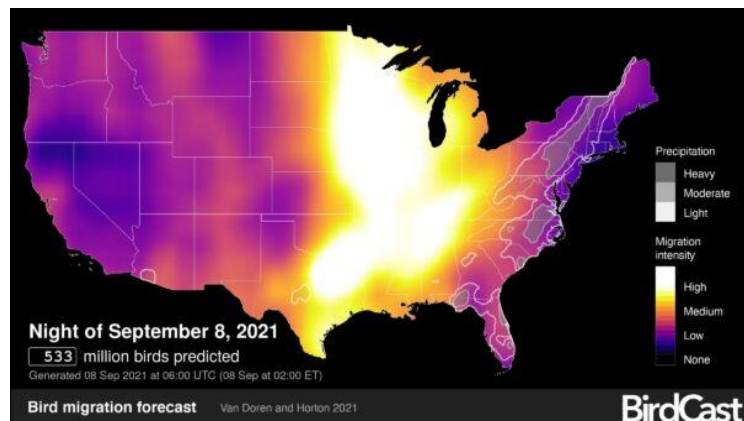
Sharon Benjey

### Be-a-Better-Birder Tip

Take your time. When you arrive at a new spot, spend 5-10 minutes. This lets the birds settle down and get used to your presence. It's amazing how quickly they forget about you and get back to their busy lives.

## Migration forecasting tool

If you haven't found it yet, check out [Birdcast!](#) This online tool has maps predicting nocturnal bird migration as well as live migration maps (see image below). They can be used to target the best times to skip work and go birding (did I say that?), and to turn off lights in urban areas to prevent nighttime collisions with buildings. Forecasts and updates will return March 15, 2022.



## Stakeouts!

There are some species that migrate through our area within a narrow window of time, species that seem almost mystical because they are difficult to find. We can increase our odds of finding them if we know those time periods and place ourselves in their preferred habitats during those times. By taking a chance on an area that seems suitable, we might learn more about the migratory habits of these hard-to-find birds, and be rewarded with an amazing sighting!

Short-eared Owls like wet grassy fields. If you see Northern Harriers in a field, you could find Short-eared Owls. Short-ears have been reported from Ashland Park in GT County. Some other local possibilities might be the open wetlands at the Grand Traverse Commons and Kid's Creek, and a field at the intersection of Schomberg Rd. and Lake Shore Drive in Leelanau County. Local reports are mostly from April and October.

Northern Saw-whet Owls are much more common in migration than we realize, according to the banding records. They are active and calling well after dark, and seem to prefer wooded areas near water. They perch in thick cover, sometimes at eye level. Such habitat is plentiful in our area. In past years, Saw-whets have been reported from late February through early April, so find that habitat and get out there now!

Whimbrels are large shorebirds with a long, decurved bill. When present, they are found on beaches, mudflats and wet grassy areas near ponds. According to eBird reports in the area, they pass through in the last week of May. Most reports are on May 24 or 25. Some reports have come from the first week of June, so don't give up at the end of May!

## Program and Field Trip Reports

The club's annual February trip to Soo, Michigan was attended by eleven hearty birders. The temperature ranged from a balmy 35 degrees to a chilly -22 on Sunday. Birding was about normal, although no owls except for a dozen or more Snowy Owls. We did have an excellent, close-up views of Sharp-tailed Grouse. We saw 4 Northern Shrike, numerous Rough-legged Hawks and a Glaucous Gull at the Daffier Dump.

Side note: Barbara and I stopped in Mackinac City on the way home and saw a Varied Thrush.

- Leonard Graf

NMC Bird Collection (Feb 24<sup>th</sup>) – The meeting was attended by 22 people, who examined specimens of 104 species in the College's collection. They compared plumages of males and females, adults and immatures. They checked out the fringe on the leading edge of an owl's wing that enables silent flight. They had a chance to compare characteristics of various sparrow species. Special thanks to NMC for making this opportunity available for free! Lots of people expressed their appreciation; we'll do it again in a few years!



- Kirk Waterstripe

## Member submissions



(L) American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin and Common Redpoll on a thistle feeder – Bert Courson

R) female White-winged Crossbills – Lauren Vaughn



Cedar Waxing – Karen Edgley

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Consider joining the Audubon  
Club and getting Bird Notes every  
other month. Membership info is  
at [grandtraverseaudubon.org](http://grandtraverseaudubon.org)*

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## Cheat sheet for Sparrow identification

Sparrows are among the area's earlier migrants, and some of the most confusing for new birders. Cornell's Lab of Ornithology has put out a quick-and-dirty [device for identifying sparrows](#). It's not all-inclusive, but it will help you get started!

***Thanks for reading! Until the next issue, keep your binoculars clean!***