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July 2022

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# Bird Notes

## Newsletter of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club

grandtraverseaudubon.org

find us on Facebook and Instagram #gtaudubon

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Greetings!

The dog days of summer, filled with baby birds begging for food, molting ducks, and that one Red-eyed Vireo still singing.

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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!

### Sept. 22, 2022 – Monthly Meeting: Bird Migration

We return to our schedule of monthly meetings with a program about bird migration. Members Maryellen Newport and Kirk Waterstripe will discuss some of the new information about migration in a slide show, and then proceed outside to listen with a parabolic microphone for migrants passing overhead! Watch your email for the adjusted start time, because migrants start flying about an hour after sunset.

## Upcoming Field Trips

No trips are scheduled for the fall, but anyone who would like to host one is encouraged to contact the nearest board member!

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*Official GTA club logo by Tom Ford*

## Upcoming Field Trips

### September ?

Bird box building workshop – details to be worked out. Stay tuned!

## Sunday Morning Bird Outings

We're taking a break while the birds are quiet, but starting sometime in August, 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! Shorebirds at Boardman lake will be featured!

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



## Birding Calendar

### July

Southbound shorebirds will be passing through this month. Keep an eye on a wetland or mudflat near you. Watch the babies coming to your feeder grow up. Herons and egrets are prone to wandering this month and next.

### August

Shorebird migration continues, and the adult songbirds that are finished breeding start to move south quietly. Make note of the last date you see various species around your home or feeders.

### September

Migration intensity picks up this month, with more songbirds drifting through. Watch for more warblers in "confusing" fall plumages. The first of the migrating raptors come south too, with Osprey and Broad-winged Hawks among the early migrants.

## Birding Backpack Update



Thanks so much to those who have donated! We have enough for one backpack, and we're close to enough for a second. Remember, your donation doesn't have to be big to have a huge impact! Even a few bucks might help us turn someone on to birding! Send your donations to Treasurer Ann Kennedy (address on the Club's website).

Help us provide these to local libraries!  
Contact [newsletter@grandtraverseaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@grandtraverseaudubon.org) to donate!

## Your Favorite Patch

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

One of my favorites little birding spots is Platte River State Fish Hatchery on US-31 about halfway between Interlochen and Honor. I have recorded 72 species there with 70 of them taking place during the years 2017 to 2020. There are several habitat types there including ponds, river, wooded areas (both pines and hardwoods), open areas around buildings and the buildings themselves. It is a reliable location for Cliff Swallows during nesting season, in their mud nests under the eaves of a couple of small buildings in the northwest corner of the hatchery. There is a trail around the large pond where you can observe several of the habitats and a walk around the building portion of the property usually produces several species.

The hatchery is located at 15210 Honor Highway (aka US-31), 8 miles west of the stoplight at Interlochen Corner. The entrance is a right turn if heading west, immediately past Maple City Highway.

The property is open to the public during daylight hours 7 days a week, 365 days a year, except for a few areas that are posted. According to their web page and Facebook page, the visitor center and certain hatchery buildings are open from 8 am to 4 pm, 7 days a week. Restroom facilities are in the visitor center. a few hatchery buildings have self-guided tour signs that explains what happens in the building. You can observe young salmon in various stages of growth.

Lauren Vaughn

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

## Birding a la Thoreau

"If I wished to see a mountain or other scenery under the most favorable auspices, I would go to it in foul weather, so as to be there when it cleared up; we are then in the most suitable mood, and nature is most fresh and inspiring. There is no serenity so fair as that which is just established in a tearful eye." (from *The Maine Woods*)

Have you noticed how sometimes, when rain is moving in, bird feeders get very busy for a time, then it's quiet when the rain hits, and busy again after the rain stops? You can use this pattern in your birding away from the feeders too. If you see some showers in the forecast, don't stay home. Get to your chosen location, even if it's raining. Stay dry until the rain stops, then you'll be treated to a half-hour or so of intense bird activity!

## Improve access to your Christmas Bird Count area

If you participate in a Christmas Bird Count, summer is a great time to get to know your area better. If you have tracts of land owned by seasonal residents, knock on their door while they're here! Explain your purpose, and the Count, and get written or email permission. If you can get the owner to give you a tour, even better. That increases their interest in the whole project!

### Be-a-Better-Birder Tip

Concentrate on habitat edges. You'll find species of both habitats plus ones that like the edge. If you cross habitat edges slowly, you might surprise something out in the new habitat. Think of it as tip-toeing from one room into another.

## Editor's Perch

Maybe I'm getting old, but it seems that the language of birding has changed. In ages past, when those at Audubon meetings reported noteworthy and unusual sightings, they said they "saw an Iceland Gull", or "had 25 redpolls at the feeder". Lately, my birding friends and others speak of "getting" birds. It's a trend I find a little troubling.

We know that language affects our world view. Unscrupulous and misanthropic leaders have used disparaging terms for less-favored groups of people that portray them as "other", and therefore less than human. This opens them up to ridicule and exploitation, and even genocide. I'm not saying we're doing that to birds; I'm saying that our words make a big difference. The difference between seeing and getting may seem small, but it is a reflection of a deep-set, even unconscious, attitude toward nature in our culture. "Getting" lets us collect things. Birds become tokens, trinkets, souvenirs, like the stickers I collected as a kid when we visited national parks.

"Getting" a bird also carries the connotation that you expected to see it. True, after birding for a while, you can predict what you're likely to find in a certain area. What's the fun in expecting? I do it sometimes as a challenge to my skills. Can I find what I expect in this place at this time of year? It's great fun to put yourself in a place to see migrating nighthawks, or breeding Whip-poor-wills. Beyond that, though, I'd rather be surprised. If you let go of the expectations, then every bird is a treat, a lively, colorful reward for getting yourself out of bed before dawn.

Maybe "getting" or collecting suits you and your style of birding. Maybe you're a lister. I've been there; I let myself focus on the check marks from time to time. The trouble is, I think, if we see a bird and check a box, we're too inclined to move on to the next bird. Common species have little value, and we'll do anything for a really rare one. What do we miss if we identify and move on? Do we learn anything about that bird? That species? Back in the days of shotgun ornithology, the collectors and curators learned a lot about identifying, but we didn't learn about a species' conservation status until, in a few cases, it was too late. Nobody's "getting" Carolina Parakeets these days.

In preparation for a trip to southern Texas, I joined the Rio Grande Valley Birding group on a popular social media site. The wording used by one contributor has struck me repeatedly: he says he meets birds. What an immediate difference! We meet *someone*, not *something*. Meeting a bird acknowledges it as a living being. By meeting a member of our own or another species, we accept its humanity, if you will. Try it next time you see a bird, whether a familiar species or a new one. Meet birds instead of getting them. See if it changes how you see the birds. Are they less of a collectible knick-knack and more a live being with whom you're sharing a beautiful place? Take a few minutes with each one and ask what they're doing. In the spring, welcome them back as old friends, and in the fall, wish them all a safe journey and a prosperous winter. After a little practice, I know you'll come to appreciate these spectacular feathered travelers more, and the world will be a little more wonderful. And maybe you'll meet an Iceland Gull, or be visited by 25 redpolls!

- Kirk

## Member submissions



Female Yellow-headed Blackbird at Howard Marsh (Ohio) by Larry Dubey.

## Warbler Spring

By Kevin Breen

Well, I admit it, I am somewhat obsessed with warblers. So much so that in May I want to stay around northern Michigan no matter what other offers come my way. This May was a good one. I got out quite a bit and made it to many interesting areas. My final tally came to 22 warbler species either seen or heard.

Highlights included two trips to the tip of the Leelanau Peninsula around May 10th or so. My son, a bird biologist, came along so I had help identifying the birds. On the first trip the tip was full of yellow warblers, and we also had some good sightings of Cape May warblers. One both trips we saw black and white, black-throated green, black-throated blue, Tennessee and Nashville warblers. We also managed to spot at least one northern waterthrush and had some nice looks at magnolia and chestnut-sided warblers.

On both trips, we also walked the trails of Leelanau State Park near Mud Lake. In this area we heard a lot and saw a few northern parulas and heard several common yellowthroats. We also saw at least one pine warbler and of course palm and yellow-rumped warblers, ovenbirds and American redstarts.

Starting on May 13th, I drove completely through the UP, stopping at a couple of remote wilderness areas: The McCormick Tract just west of Champion and the Sylvania Tract near



Watersmeet. These four days offered some wonderful sights of warblers, including more blackburnians than I have ever seen in one month. We also sighted several blackpoll warblers, a rarity for me.

Perhaps my best sighting, and one I am still embarrassingly excited about, was of a male bay-breasted warbler foraging in a tree. It had been several years since I got a good view of this elusive bird, so that was a nice moment.

My son pointed out the vocalization of a couple of Connecticut warblers. I heard them and agreed with his identification, but I didn't include that bird in my count just because I wasn't 100% certain and because my role in the identification was limited.

Returning to the Traverse City area I heard the song of a mourning warbler at Fulton Park. I did include this bird in my count because I was the one who identified the song. I also saw and heard at least one golden-winged warbler along Shumsky Road near the Boardman River.

If you are keeping count, that's 22 warblers. Best of all, I got some really close looks at the birds. I hated to see May come to an end. I still have hopes of seeing a few more warblers and was disappointed I didn't see or hear any Wilson, Canada or hooded warblers. As they say, better luck next time.

## Purple Martin Monitoring Progress

Sadly, no Purple Martin activity has been reported at the house at the Botanic Gardens. On the bright side, no activity or nest-building by House Sparrows or European Starlings was reported either. Many thanks to Merry, Kathy, Pat, Karen, Carol and Pete for your efforts in planning and monitoring. Maybe next year we can add the battery-operated recording of Purple Martin calls to lure early arrivals in the spring.

## Field Trip Reports

Sunday Morning highlights – I must say this spring has been amazing for a number of reasons. I'm honored to have introduced several folks to birding on a couple walks organized by TADL. Let's do it again next year! Highlights for the season include Henslow's Sparrow, a great look at a Dickcissel, hearing a Western Meadowlark, getting a property tour from Jim and Judy Schuantes, comparing a loon and a cormorant, a Purple Martin in TC, and my favorite, the oohs and gasps of people getting a really good look, or seeing a species for the first time.

These trips are getting popular enough that I'm considering recruiting another lead and splitting the walks into two locations per week. Anyone want to help? I'm going to offer one trip per month as an evening walk, too. There are some who have a hard time getting out in the morning.

- Kirk

## GT Audubon collaborating with GT County 4-H

MSU Extension 4 H Coordinator, Emily Kotz, has approached the club to collaboratively develop a youth-focused birding course and to partner with MSU 4-H to provide this experience to local youth.

The Board is supportive of this collaboration to further an interest in birding, the avian world and, ideally, the environment. Sharing our interest in birds with young people can start them on a path to appreciate the world around them. Pass on your passion!

**What are we talking about?** A six-week series of sessions that are about an hour or so each. These are called 4-H Spin Classes.

We are giving our Club an opportunity to volunteer to lead these sessions. We need volunteers! Emily would work up the lesson plans with the input and help of GTAC volunteers.

**Who would be the target audience?** The current thinking is to focus on kids in middle school, grades 5-8. These are kids around 11-14. The 4-H coordinator, Emily, would use existing resources to share the information with schools, social media, 4-H rosters and other sources. Of course, our members may want to share this experience with kids that they know and bring them along.

MSU Extension would supply the resources for this class, backpack, binoculars, birding guide etc. for use as part of the Spin Class.

**When would this take place?** Right now, we would like to develop the lessons in the fall and over the winter. Ideally, we would like to have the sessions in Spring 2023.

**Where would this take place?** Emily has suggested Boardman Nature Center as the locale for the sessions. She would work with the Boardman Nature Center to make that happen.

**WHAT DO WE NEED FROM GRAND TRAVERSE AUDUBON CLUB MEMBERS???** Right now, we are trying to gauge interest from our members who would be interested in sharing their passion in birding with young birders by volunteering to lead these sessions. Consider this a legacy effort to keep birding alive and by, extension, foster an interest in the natural world in the next generation.

All volunteers would become MSU Extension Volunteer which is a process of vetting individuals working with kids. Emily would help each individual with that process. For more details on becoming a volunteer give Emily a call at the number below.

We are targeting October or November to establish the program, go through the volunteer application and review process and begin discussing ideas for curriculum. The actual Birding Sessions with the kids would be in Spring of 2023.

More information will be forthcoming once we know how many of our members would be interested in volunteering to help "seed" the future.

If you are interested in volunteering to participate in Birding sessions for kids, you may want to contact Emily Kotz for more detailed information on MSU 4-H, on becoming a volunteer or how you may be able to help this effort. Send an email to Mary MacDowell, ([gtac.board@grandtraverseaudubon.org](mailto:gtac.board@grandtraverseaudubon.org)) to express your interest and we'll get back with you.

Thank you so much!

## Ways to help your Club

Consider a position on the Executive Board! Our Annual Meeting is coming up in October, and we'll be electing officers for 2023.

Help with the 4-H project! See the article above.

Donate to be Birding Backpacks fundraiser!

Help with website maintenance. Contact Don Flegel at ([flegel8@gmail.com](mailto:flegel8@gmail.com)).

Lead a field trip!

Bring snacks to a meeting!

### Membership?

Like what you're reading?  
Consider joining the Club! More info is available at [Membership Information – Grand Traverse Audubon Club](#)

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