

November 2022

Bird Notes

Newsletter of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club

grandtraverseaudubon.org

find us on Facebook and Instagram #gtaudubon

Editor: Kirk Waterstripe newsletter@grandtraverseaudubon.org

Migration is nearing its end, and the winter residents are arriving. It's time to gather, share stories, give thanks for the year that was, and dream of the year to come.

On the Calendar

For the next two months, our meetings are on the third Thursday of the month at the Boardman River Nature Center on Cass Road at 7:00 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend!

Nov. 17, 2022 – Monthly Meeting: Bird Photography

Club member Lauren Vaughn will regale us with stories and photos from his trip last Spring to the northeastern U.S., including Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

Dec. 15, 2022 – Monthly Meeting: Annual Member's Sharing Night

Take a break from your busy Christmas Bird Count schedule and warm up with us! It's the evening when members share photos and videos of their adventures during the year. If you'd like to share, please contact Vice-President Jerry Freels (jfreels@hotmail.com).



Official GTA club logo by Tom Ford

Upcoming Field Trips

November 5

Bluebird nest box building workshop – see page 2

December 14 – 17

Christmas Bird Counts – see page 2

Time to renew your membership!

Visit the [website](#) to find where to send your dues!

Upcoming Field Trips and Birding Opportunities

No trips are scheduled until 2023, but the Board is working on next year's calendar! Anyone who would like to host a trip is encouraged to contact the nearest board member!

Sunday Morning Bird Outings

As we enter the months of darkness, we rest. We'll be back at the beginning of April!



Nov. 5th – Bluebird Nest Box Workshop

We're hosting a nest box building workshop at the Boardman River Nature Center on Nov. 5th at 10 am. There will be a short program by Greg Miller of the MI Bluebird Society about providing housing for bluebirds. After that we'll assemble nest box kits for those who would like to take one home. If you'd like to attend, please RSVP to gtac.board@grandtraverseaudubon.org. The number of kits is limited!

Christmas Bird Counts are coming!

What better way to spend a day in December than counting birds? Want to participate in the field? Want to count at your feeder? Here are the dates and compiler contact info:

Lake Leelanau CBC – Dec. 14 (Wednesday), contact Kirk Waterstripe at 4walkinglightly@gmail.com or (231)883-2858

Antrim Co. – Dec. 16 (Friday), contact Curt Hofer at curthofer1@gmail.com.

Grand Traverse – Dec. 17 (Saturday), contact Nate Crane at nmcrane@gmail.com

Benzie Co. – Dec. 18 (Sunday), contact nedthebirder@gmail.com

There's more about Christmas Bird Counting below!

Birding Calendar

November

Early November has been called Rarity Week, so keep your eyes open for anything. Some rare flycatchers are being seen around the state. Rafts of ducks and grebes frequent the Lake Michigan bays. Late raptors like Red-tails and Rough-legs are in the fields. Dark-eyed Juncos are moving from the woods and fields to the feeders. You might find an early Snowy Owl by the end of the month.

December

Ducks are concentrating on areas of open water. Finches are foraging in weedy fields and fruit trees. A few Snowy Owls might be settling in to winter hunting grounds. Birders are eagerly anticipating Christmas Bird Counts!

January

The cycle begins again. Listers restart their annual record-keeping. Want to give it a try?

What are your birding goals for 2023?

Your Favorite Patch

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

Buffalo Ridge Trail (44.736166, -85.651961)

This area has started to get more birding attention lately, but is still visited less frequently than it deserves. Part of the TART system, this paved trail gives access to a strip of grassland in the middle of urban and suburban development as it passes through the fields of the former Oleson Buffalo Farm on the southwest side of Traverse City. South of the YMCA, the trail loops around a wet field and the Y's soccer fields for about 0.5 mile. During spring and summer, typical grassland species like Eastern Meadowlark are easy to find. This is a good place to observe the display flights of American Woodcock on early spring evenings. To the north, the trail follows the edge of the fields, bordering on a condominium development. Thus, grassland birds are right next to species typical of human activity and feeders. Turn from a family of House Finches to see an Upland Sandpiper. Near the Y parking lot, some springs combine to form a small wetland, with willows and cattails. In recent years, ten species of raptors have been reported here, from Snowy Owls and Rough-legged Hawk that you would expect in fields, to flyover surprises like Northern Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon.

The easiest access and parking are from the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA (West). From there north to TC West Middle School access road is 0.4 mile. One can continue to Silver Lake Rd., another 0.7 mile. From the loop south of the Y, a gravel trail connects to Kid's Creek Park.

With the connection to the trails of the Grand Traverse Commons, this area is a must-visit stop for bicycling birders, or adventurous walkers.

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

Winter Finch Forecast

It's looking good for those of us in the "border states"! Several species, including Bohemian Waxwings, Evening Grosbeaks, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Purple Finches could move south in search of food.

Locate those weedy fields, box elder trees, spruces and fruit trees now! For more information, check out the whole forecast at <https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2022-2023>.

Be-a-Better-Birder Tip

Field guides make great reading at bedtime, and with a cup of bird-friendly coffee on a dark morning. There are numerous sources of information on tougher ID challenges too. Study up!

Editor's Perch

The Season of Gratitude

The sugar buzz from Halloween is just wearing off, and Thanksgiving is looming just around the corner. The holiday frenzy will be upon us before we know it! To keep it all in perspective, let's remember what our ancestors were celebrating this time of year: we made it. The harvest was a success and the larders are full. This isn't a time of year for obligations and stuff we must do; it's about gratitude.

I'd like to offer my heartfelt gratitude for some birdy moments this past year:

- the enthusiasm of people on their first bird walk
- morning light on American White Pelicans over Lake Erie
- a Sunday morning on Bodus Road, Bobolinks, and my best look at a Dickcissel ever!
- waves of migrants struggling against the wind at eye level, at the bluff north of Arcadia
- seeing the buoyant flight of a Black Tern again
- seeing 180 species this year while birding with my Best Birding Partner
- the amazing people with whom I've been spending my Sunday mornings
- the years of hard work by the dedicated folks of Project Puffin; I got to show my family Atlantic Puffins this past summer.

This holiday season, think back over the year, look through your bird pictures if you have any, and give thanks for the moments. Take a minute to share a picture or a thought with those with whom you shared the experience, or someone who might like it, and say thank you.

- Kirk W.

Reader Submissions



An October Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Joe Brooks



One Sunday morning at Boardman Lake by Kirk Waterstripe



Pileated Woodpecker by Melissa Waterstripe

Membership?

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

How to make this the Best Christmas Bird Count Yet!

Do you plan to join one of the local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs)? Are you new to birding and curious about it? Whether you are a neophyte or a veteran of counts dating back to the first one in 1900, here are a few tips to make the most out of your day in the cold:



For those new to the CBC, rest assured that the compiler (person in charge) won't send you off on your own unless you're ready. Inexperienced birders are paired with old pros who can help make the day enjoyable and productive.

If you are given a territory, know your area and boundaries. Plan a strategy that makes the most efficient use of your time.

Know who's in the neighboring areas and communicate with them about hard-to-reach areas along the edges. Also, note time and direction of travel for birds that might cover a lot of ground (raptors, finch flocks, etc.). Relay this info to counters in neighboring territories at the end of the day.

Get to know your landowners. In a world with so much land in private hands, contact the owners before the count to secure permission. In some areas, that might mean contacting summer residents about walking their lands in the winter. If you're not sure who owns a tract, check the plat map for the township. Also, be ready to get a "no", and don't take it personally.

Scout ahead of time to find the pockets of habitat that are likely to hold birds. Locate areas of food and cover that provide some shelter from the winds you're likely to experience in December. In many areas, this means finding the feeders.

If you stop at a lot of feeders, bring a bag of seed for the most popular ones. Better yet, drop off the seed a week or two before the count as an introduction and reminder that the count is coming up. You could also mention feeder counts as a way for the homeowner to participate.

Get out of the car as much as possible. You won't see or hear nearly as much in the car. It takes birds 5-10 minutes to get used to your presence, so take the time. Many times, birds will fly in while you're there.

If you hand over leadership of an area, give the new leader whatever you have as far as landowner contact info, past species lists, favorite spots, and favorite strategies. However, don't be surprised if the new leader doesn't do things the same way you did.

Some more info on Christmas Bird Counts:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/everything-you-need-know-do-free-and-fun-christmas-bird-count>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/birdist-rule-25-go-join-your-local-audubon-christmas-bird-count>

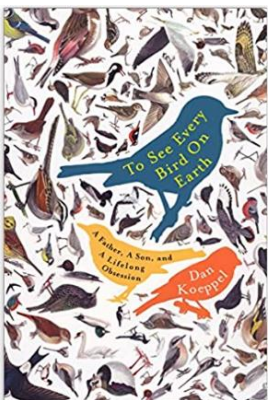
<https://www.audubon.org/news/the-christmas-bird-count-window-changing-world>

Gift ideas for birdy people

Make a contribution to the Walter Hastings Fund in their name (this is the money we use for conservation projects).

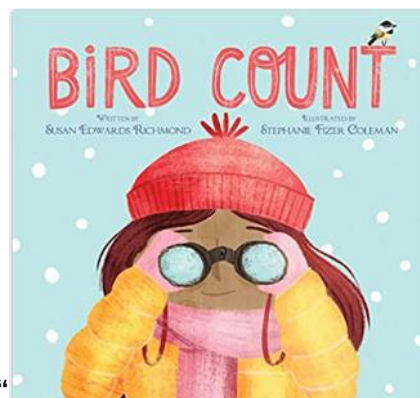
Linda Seder suggests visiting "The Noble Bird" on Etsy

(https://www.etsy.com/shop/TheNobleBird?ref=simple-shop-header-name&listing_id=1313120177)



To See Every Bird on Earth by Dan Koeppel

"Best book I've ever read" – Kathy Wiley



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For kids: A young girl and her mom participate in a Christmas Bird Count

Ways to help your Club

Help with the 4-H project! See the July issue of *Bird Notes*.

Help with website maintenance. Contact Don Flegel at (flegel8@gmail.com).

Lead a field trip!

Bring snacks to a meeting!

Volunteer Needed!

The Club gets to use the Nature Center free in exchange for a volunteer's time, and we need a volunteer! Do you have a few hours a week to help out? Email gtac.board@grandtraverseaudubon.org . Thanks!

Annual Dinner Meeting Report

October 22, 2022 – About 18 people gathered and shared a potluck dinner at Bethlehem Lutheran. After catching up and meeting some new folks, we conducted a brief business meeting, where the following slate of officers for 2023 was elected unanimously:

President – Kathy Flegel (continuing)
Vice-President – (still need to fill)
Secretary – Karen Casebeer
Treasurer – Kathy Wiley
Newsletter and Publicity – Kirk Waterstripe (continuing)
Michigan Audubon Rep – Evan Reister
Member-at-large – Sharon Benjey (continuing)
Past President – Leonard Graf (continuing)

A huge helping of gratitude to those who are leaving the Board: Mary MacDowell, Ann Kennedy, John Mesch, and Jerry Freels.

After the meeting, Kaitlyn Bohnet of North Sky Raptor Sanctuary presented a fascinating program about the Sanctuary's work with birds of prey, and her personal relationship with the Avian Ambassadors who live at the Sanctuary. The evening featured live appearances by Vega the Red-tailed Hawk, and Sprocket, the Northern Saw-whet Owl.





Project FeederWatch starts November 1st!

Do you have a bird feeder? Want to contribute to science? Sign up for Project FeederWatch! You can even report data for areas with food plants or cover. The data are used to create a picture or winter bird populations and distribution. For more information, visit the [FeederWatch website](#).

New feature in January issue!

Starting in the New Year, issues of *Bird Notes* will have a new column called Bird Brains! Watch for information on bird biology and behavior. It might even help you win a trivia contest!

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