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May 2025

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# Bird Notes

## Newsletter of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club

[grandtraverseaudubon.org](http://grandtraverseaudubon.org)

find us on Facebook and Instagram #gtaudubon

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Migration is heating up! Thanks for taking the time to read this in the quiet moments between flurries of birding. Remember to lower your binoculars and just enjoy these wonderful days!

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*Official GTA club logo by Tom Ford*

## On the Calendar

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!

**Note: we don't meet in May because we're all too busy birding! See you in September!**

Watch the website for dates and information about our meetings coming up in the fall.

## Special program on June 19th! Mark your calendars!

### Friends of Whitefish Point

Nova Mackentley and Chris Neri will be presenting on the programs and work of FoWP, including owl banding, nest box monitoring, and studying the movements of Northern Saw-whet Owls. They will also discuss the need for support to continue their efforts.

We're still securing the venue, so stay tuned to BirdAlert for details.



## Upcoming Field Trips

**May 3, 2025 (Saturday)**– Sportsman's Park in Charlevoix County, 8:00 AM

Join member Curt Hofer for a pleasant morning of birding. There is a large marsh that attracts a variety of ducks, waders, and seasonal shorebirds. Interesting raptors such as Merlins and Northern Harriers often show up as well as more common Bald Eagles and Ospreys. There are several good areas to find passerines that like wet areas. New last year is a nature trail / board walk through part of the marsh that is an easy hike. Contact leader Curt Hofer ([curthofer1@gmail.com](mailto:curthofer1@gmail.com)) with any questions. Map link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/VsXoV787H1sZ5vuW8>

**May 4, 2025 (Sunday)**– Sunday Morning Bird Outings

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! Like last year, on the last Sunday of each month, the walk will take place in the evening.



Locations and times are listed on the website so check them out!

NOTE! The walk on Sunday May 4<sup>th</sup> will be a Community Partner event with Traverse Area District Library. Come out and help introduce some new folks to the wonders of birds!

**May 10 (Saturday)**– Lighthouse West Natural Area, 7:00 am

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day and explore the wonders of spring migration on this property maintained by the Leelanau Conservancy. We'll find a variety of birds in the different habitats as we make our way over to Lake Michigan. Meet at the parking area on Cathead Bay Drive, just south of Leelanau State Park. Walking surfaces are natural, and not always level. You might just fall in love with this place! Contact leader and coordinator Kirk Waterstripe ([4walkinglightly@gmail.com](mailto:4walkinglightly@gmail.com)) with any questions. Map link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/QD45UwJ8ixYZ66zu8>

**May 24 (Saturday)** – Birding by Kayak on Bridge Lake, Interlochen

This trip is full. Watch for another one next year!

## May 31 (Saturday) – Birding Southeast Grand Traverse County

Tim Webb and Kirk Waterstripe will team up to show you some great birding in this off-neglected corner of the county. Meet at Fife Lake Roadside Park, and we'll caravan to nearby spots like Headquarters Lake and Walton Marsh. Walking surfaces are dirt roads. Contact leader and coordinator Tim Webb ([tlwebb166@gmail.com](mailto:tlwebb166@gmail.com)) with any questions. Map link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/He2aPPprLymvN97N7>

## June 7 (Saturday)– Kirtland Warbler Trip

Member Tim Webb has some favorite spots for Kirtland's Warblers that he's willing to share. This will be a caravan trip. Watch the BirdAlert for details in the next couple weeks!

## Editor's Perch

I'm a beginner again!

After fifty years, from time to time, I consider starting over. Resetting the life list to zero and heading out the door. But why throw out all those adventures? Every bird on my list brings to mind places and friends, many of whom I'll never see again. The verdict? I'll keep my list.

Fortunately, I recently found a way to experience the thrill of newness and discovery all over again: rocks! They're everywhere! The best part is I can look down while still birding by ear! There is new nomenclature to learn, fun words like metaconglomerate and porphyry, and the difference between mafic and felsic. And names like phyllite, gabbro, epidote, and schist.

Long ago, I found an impression of a trilobite in a rock in the ditch in front of our new house. Across the road was a small gully with slabs of sandstone filled with brachiopod fossils. I was off, spending time outside, wearing out at least two copies of the Golden Guide to Fossils. Then birds captured my burgeoning observational skills, and you know where that has led.

This year, while helping my daughter with some rock and mineral identification, I remembered how fascinating these things are. It's said there are only 4000 kinds of rocks, but distinctions are challenging. Rocks are hard (pun intended)! Very quickly, I realized most rocks you find, especially around here, are not just one kind. One "rock" or rock formation often has more than one kind of rock in it. A little round stone on the beach might be part granite, and part gneiss ("nice"), which is granite that has been subjected to enormous heat and pressure. On a local Lake Michigan beach, I found a piece of limestone with a nodule of chert embedded in it. That's how chert forms!

Curiosity quickly leads beyond identification to wondering about the stories of what we find. Where did this rock start? How was it formed? With a little imagination, we can envision how it was weathered out of the parent formation, perhaps tumbled and rounded in a stream, carried by a

glacier, dropped, was covered by sediments which were, in time, turned to another kind of stone, then along you came to pick up a piece that had broken loose from the cliff.

These stories are the fun part for me. Seeing the processes in my mind, imagining how many miles that rock or mineral has traveled, and most amazingly, how long the journey has taken. Did you know that just outside Marquette, you can stand on rocks that are about 2.1 billion years old? I can't even comprehend that number, but I'm headed up there in May.

Yes, I'll stand on 2.1 billion-year-old igneous rocks called peridotite. While looking for Peregrine Falcons!

- Kirk W.

## Naturalist's Corner – Birds and their favorite trees

One question that beginning birders ask is where do you go to find birds. The Birder's Guide to the Traverse City Area was written to answer that, and eBird provides thousands of hotspots, but where do you go once you're there?

Vegetation is the key! Birds, especially warblers, follow the insects, and insects follow the blooms. Look for blooming trees, and you'll find the birds. Here's a quick seasonal summary:

- In late winter and early spring, conifers are favored. Look for spruces and firs.
- Aspens and poplars bloom in mid to late April, showing dangly bits called catkins.
- Sugar maples bloom in early May. Look up high for returning Baltimore Orioles.
- Willows are a huge hit with birds. They bloom in mid-May.

Note: all these times vary with latitude. This calendar is set for about 45 degrees north.

## Loon Nesting platform update

Remember the loon platform? There's more news. Thanks to the efforts of Kathie Wiley, we secured the necessary permission from the City of Traverse City and the permit from the DNR. Launch date was April 1<sup>st</sup>. The following volunteers gathered at the boat ramp to see the platform to its final destination:

Our Loon Nest Building Team:

Catrina Ottman  
Hunter Ottman  
Althea Olds  
Kathie Wiley  
Cheri Buchbinder

Platform transporter:  
John Imboden

Platform Team:

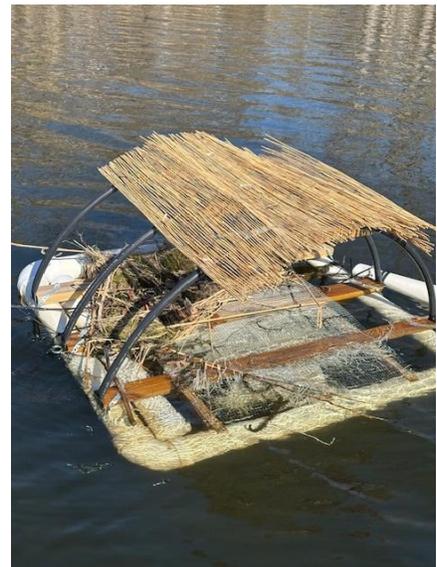
Kirk Waterstripe  
John Imboden  
Kevin Kimble (Captain)  
Pete Povola (Captain)  
Carleton Stuberg  
Mary MacDowell  
Tim Wiley



The buoys to warn boaters away:



Unfortunately, after some strong winds and choppy seas, our little loon home was not fairing well. The nesting material had all but washed off. Plans are under way to retrieve the platform and make repairs. Depending on how long that takes, we might delay the launch of Loon 2.0 until next spring.



## MakerFest Report

Hundreds of people came through MakerFest earth day event this year and our booth (particularly Mary Ellen Newport's bird pin shrink art craft table) was busy the entire duration.

The event was attended primarily by children and their parents so hopefully we planted some seeds about the extraordinary world of birding.

For our raffle, we had 4 giveaways (among other small prizes won with assorted games). The raffle prizes went to families with the habitat for the particular nesting boxes won, coupled with children demonstrating birding enthusiasm. A big win for the birds!

1. Handmade Kestrel Nesting Box built by John Imboden  
Matt Leksich of Interlochen
2. Handmade Bluebird Nesting Box built by John Imboden  
Dandan Zhu of Traverse City
3. Bluebird Nesting Box Kit  
Skyler Singleton of Greilickville
4. Bluebird Nesting Box Kit  
Zara Goitz of Grawn



~Kathie

## Volunteers needed June 8th

Our friends at the Detroit Bird Alliance are coming up for another Birds, Bikes and Brews tour on June 8<sup>th</sup>. They're going to make the loop around Boardman Lake, and would like a couple folks from our club to meet them at the south end, Medalie Park, with spotting scopes. If you can help, reply to the editor at the email address on page 1. Thanks!

**Editor's Note:** Sorry for reverting to an earlier format. What I would like to do is find one that makes it easy to read these pdf files on all devices. Still searching....

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

***This newsletter was written by a human, not by a robot!***