

November 2025

# Bird Notes

## Newsletter of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club

grandtraverseaudubon.org

find us on Facebook and Instagram #gtaudubon

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Four years ago, I took over the editorial helm of *Bird Notes*. It's been a wonderful ride, but now it's time to hand it over. Please help your new editor, Jenny Barnes, make this newsletter a continued joy to receive. Thanks to all those who contributed and provided feedback!

## On the Calendar

For the rest of the year, 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. 20 – Monthly Program: Birds of India

Member Sharon Benjey, whom you know from the world of insects, will be speaking about her adventures with birds in the exotic subcontinent of India.

### Dec. 18 – Monthly Program: 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 Kathy Flegel ([flegels@centurytel.net](mailto:flegels@centurytel.net)).



Official GTA club logo by Tom Ford

## Upcoming Field Trips

### December 17 – 20

Christmas Bird Counts – see page 2

## Upcoming Field Trips and Birding Opportunities

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!



### Christmas Bird Counts are coming!

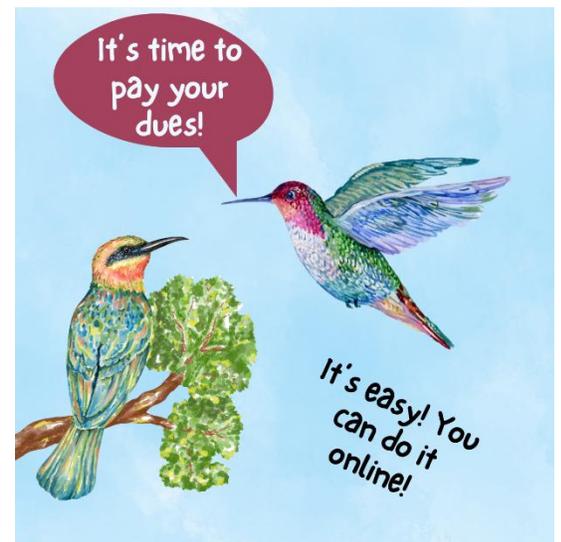
What better way to spend a day in December than counting birds? Want to participate in the field? Want to count at your feeder? Here are the dates and compiler contact info:

Lake Leelanau CBC – Dec. 17 (Wednesday), contact Kirk Waterstripe at [4walkinglightly@gmail.com](mailto:4walkinglightly@gmail.com) or (231)883-2858

Antrim Co. – Dec. 19 (Friday), contact Curt Hofer at [curthofer1@gmail.com](mailto:curthofer1@gmail.com).

Grand Traverse – Dec. 20 (Saturday), contact Nate Crane at [nmcrane@gmail.com](mailto:nmcrane@gmail.com)

Benzie Co. – Dec. 20 (Saturday), contact [nedthebirder@gmail.com](mailto:nedthebirder@gmail.com)



### Meeting Night Change!!

The results are in: by a considerable margin, you prefer to meet on the second Thursday of the month. **Starting in January 2026, the club will meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month**, January through April and September through December. Thanks to all those who responded to the poll. Rockhounds, we'll expect to see you **January 8<sup>th</sup>!**

## Board Members for 2026

At the meeting in October, the following slate of officers was elected:

President: John Imboden

Vice-President: Ron McCullick

Secretary: Jared Gugnitz

Treasurer: Kathie Wiley

Publicist/ Newsletter: Jenny Barnes

Past-President: Kathy Flegel

Member-at-large: Kirk Waterstripe



## Editor's Perch

### Mindfulness

I confess I've been spending a lot of time with rocks this year. My ears are always open, though, taking in the mutterings and songs of birds around me. I'll never be able to turn that off, nor would I want to. Paying attention to the geological aspect of the world around me has helped my understand mindfulness. And appreciate its benefits.

The terms mindful birding and slow birding have been heard more and more in the last few years. I was a little puzzled by what it all meant, but I'm a little thick. Focusing on rocks has shown me what it really means to be present at a given time and place. If I'm scouring a favorite beach, or walking slowly through a favorite patch, I try to just be there. Take in what's around me and let the other thoughts about past and future slide right on by. I think the best part is, when my hands are full of rocks, my phone stays in my pocket! I don't see the irrelevant and distracting notifications, or the calendar alerts about things coming up tomorrow. I'm just there. In that moment. Such peace!

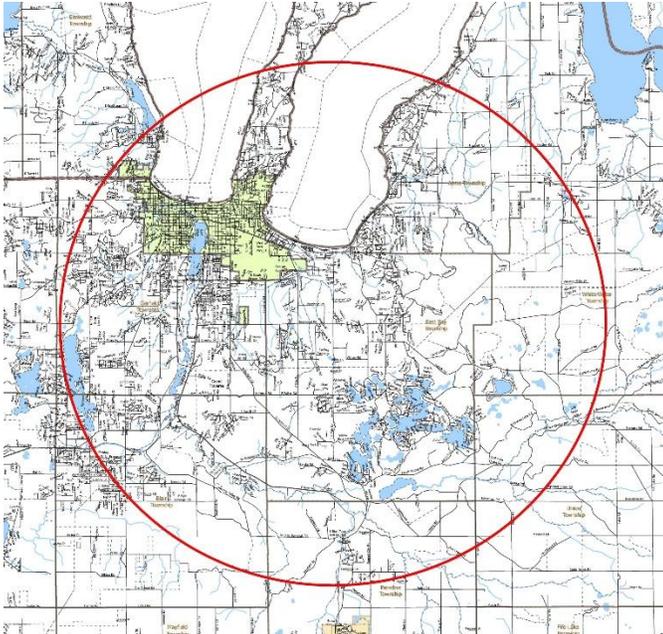
Yes, eBird is a wonderful tool, and maybe checklists are a big part of the game for you. But I would encourage each of us to take a device holiday once in a while. Treat yourself to a few minutes without the electronic intrusion. If it's hard for you, go birding in a place with no cell coverage! A great excuse to leave it in a pocket or pack.

Thanks for reading four years' worth of Perches. It's been great to have an outlet for my thoughts, and I hope you have enjoyed them. I hope maybe I have inspired your thoughts Keep a journal and record them. Paper, not electronic!

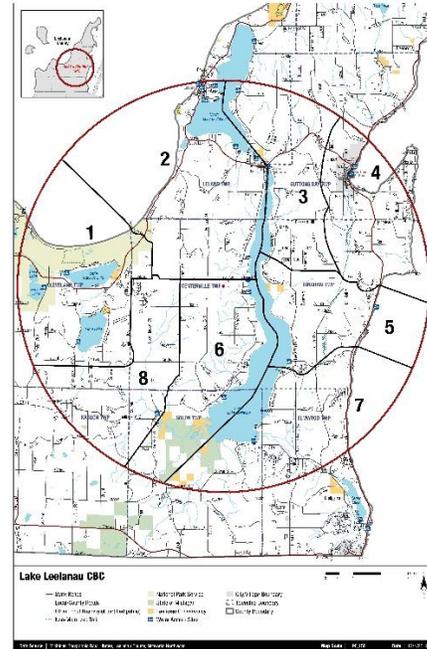
- Kirk W.

## Be a CBC Feeder counter!

If the idea of stomping around outside counting birds all day in December doesn't quite fit your style, please consider counting at your bird feeder! If you live in one of these circled areas, we'd love to have your help.



Traverse City Count Circle



Lake Leelanau Count Circle

Feeder counting is easy. Stay close to your feeders, especially at the busy times of the day, morning and late afternoon. Keep track of the high counts of each species (how many did you see at one time?) and report these numbers to the compiler. If you'd like to participate, contact the compiler listed on page 2 of this issue.

## Club accomplishments this year

As a club, we took on some major things in 2025:

- We filed for and received non-profit status! We can participate in more events, apply for grants, and your donations are tax-deductible!
- As announced in this issue, we have moved our meeting night to the second Thursday of each month to resolve a conflict with the local Rock and Mineral Club.
- Our membership reached 150!
- Our program and field trip offerings included some botany, Alison Vilag's continuing adventures in da UP, kayaking, and digiscoping.

- We offered birding tips at some new locations, including Chippewa Run, southeastern Grand Traverse County, and Sportsman's Park in Charlevoix County.
- We offered a program for new birders at the Interlochen Library; we also donated a Birding Backpack
- We began using EventBrite for some events to gauge interest and sell tickets. This seems to be working so we'll probably keep using it.
- We hosted Friends of Whitefish Point for a program in Traverse City in June *and* took a trip to watch their owl-banding operation. We got to watch them band four Northern Saw-whet Owls! Thanks, Nova and Chris!
- We staffed a table at MakerFest and the Pastime Palooza, both events organized by the Traverse Area District Library.



(Pastime Palooza)

- We helped out with field trips for the Waterbird Conference at the end of September.



Thanks to all those who helped make these efforts and events successful!

## Tips for the upcoming Christmas Bird Counts

The first Christmas Bird Count was in 1900, and the tradition continues. With these tips, you can make sure you count safely, and your data are the best you can contribute:

- Get out of the car frequently.
- Park as far off the road as you can. Or dare.
- Walk long trails (e.g. TART, Leelanau Trail sections) with a driver to pick you up.
- A little playback is justified. For science.
- Sparrows don't come to pishing, but they do show up for their call notes, so learn to imitate them. Chickadees and kinglets do respond to pishing.
- Don't risk icy hills.
- Note time and direction of travel for rare species and raptors. Someone in a neighboring territory might see it too.
- Take some food and water so you can stay out all day.
- Attend the wrap-up gathering. It can be the best part of the day.

If you can, sign up for one or more of this year's counts. It's great fun, and the data we gather really does get used for the benefit of North American birds.

## Project Feederwatch!

Do you have a bird feeder? Do you have a yard? A favorite wintertime patch? Would you like 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](#).



## Here's to 2026!

What would you like to see on the club's calendar? Want to share a favorite birding spot? Do you have a project you would like to see us pay some attention to? We're continuing discussions about siting a MODUS tower in the area. There might be another Bird-thon in 2026, so start thinking about a team! If you have suggestions, contact Kirk ([4walkinglightly@gmail.com](mailto:4walkinglightly@gmail.com)) and he'll pass them on to the board. Thanks!

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