

June 2026

Bird Notes

Newsletter of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club

grandtraverseaudubon.org

find us on Facebook and Instagram #gtaudubon

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In spite of a cool spring, the birds still made their annual migration and May was a flurry of different migrants making their way through the Traverse City area. With summer upon us, the resident birds have been busy nesting, so you may see some juveniles following their parents begging for one more meal. Enjoy seeing this new generation!

- Jenny Young



Official GTA club logo by Tom Ford

Be sure to bookmark the calendar to keep up with all of our events:

[Events 2026 – Grand Traverse Audubon Club](#)

Program Events

Our program meetings are taking a summer hiatus and will return on Thursday, September 10; once finalized, details will be included on our events page of our website and the next newsletter.

Upcoming Field Trips and Partnered Events (see website for more details)

- No additional field trips or partnered events are scheduled this summer
- **Sunday bird hikes will take a break in July, but there are still 2 more planned in June:**
 - **June 21 (7:30 am):** S. Popp Rd & E. Bodus Rd (meet at Cedar Hardware Store at 7:30 am to carpool). Leader Kathie Wiley dujour1@gmail.com
 - **June 29 (8:00 am):** DeYoung Nature Area (Park in lot by the farmhouse). Leader Kathie Wiley dujour1@gmail.com
 - See website for August bird hikes

Bird-a-thon Results

Three teams took on the Bird-a-thon challenge to raise money for the Long-Eared Owl GPS tag project (sponsored by Friends of White Fish Point). The teams picked one day in May to find as many species as possible in 24 hours; they also obtained pledges per bird species. In total the 3 groups raised over \$1,700; getting us halfway to the funds needed for a GPS tag!



*Red-throated Loon in Clinch Marina
Photo by Jenny Young*

- **Bubbie's Bay-Gulls** (Kirk & Lauren Waterstripe) took top honors for number of species at 100; see summary of bird species here [Bubbies Trip Report](#)
- **Bird-hers** (Maryellen Newport, Althea Olds, Kathie Wiley, Jenny Young) took top honors for amount raised at \$776; see summary of bird species here [Bird-her Trip Report](#)
- **Cackling Googs** (Eli & Jared Gugnitz) were runner up for amount raised at \$540; see summary of bird species here [Cackling Googs Trip Report](#)

Sunday Morning Bird Hike Craziest by Board Member Kathie Wiley

Sunday morning bird hikes often involve much more than seeing some birds, but the hike on May 14th at Shumsky Road was a bit crazier than normal!

- James hit a deer on the way in (both the deer and James' car seemed to fare ok).
- Cody accidentally left his camera at home.
- It rained for the first half hour.
- There was a Sapsucker that was missing a tail (boy did he look peculiar in flight!)
- Lydia, one of our new birders with brand new binoculars, spied the Mourning Warbler for us. In addition, she had several lifers added to her list.
- About halfway through the walk, a bear cub was seen crossing the road south of us.
- A bit later, crows began cawing frantically; a few Piliated Woodpeckers were darting around. We began looking up into the sky to see if a raptor was causing the commotion, ultimately a few in the group were shocked to see a bobcat cross the trail north of us!
- On the way home, Jenny was involved in a car accident. She was fine, but her car was thumped hard enough to bend the wheel axel.

A total of 41 species were identified, despite the rainy start. Highlights were the Purple Finch, the Mourning Warbler, Golden Winged, and the look on Lydia's face (the newbie) when we all heard the Ruffed Grouse and she learned the sound was from a bird. See link for more details [Checklist](#) Just gotta love these Sunday Bird Walks!

Meet a Member – John and Shirley Mesch

Over the years, John and Shirley Mesch have held Board positions of; Treasurer, President, Vice President, Member-at-Large (Annual meeting and dinner Organizing) Newsletter editor, field trip leaders, Christmas Bird Count (25+Years) or whatever was needed. Shirley shared some interesting information about their background and birding history.

Tell us a little about yourself. Family? Where do you live and what were your careers? John and I moved to Empire in July of 1969; after ten years, we moved to the Northwest corner of Long Lake Township in Grand Traverse County and have lived here ever since. John is retired from his dental practice in Empire. I was a dental assistant, stay-at-home mom, and then retired from being a Zoning Administrator for Long Lake Township.

How did you first get into birdwatching? While we still lived in Empire, we had Evening Grosbeaks and White-winged Crossbills coming to our feeders in winter. We bought our first field guide, The Golden Field Guide "The Guide to Field Identification of Birds of North America". Then, in the mid-1970s, we saw an ad in the Record Eagle about a meeting of the Walter Hastings Audubon Club, at the Arts Center on NWMC campus. And our birding adventures began!

Where is your favorite place to bird around the Traverse City area? There are many fun birding places in the Grand Traverse Area, but the one that stands out to us is the DNR Shumsky Road Boat Landing on the Boardman River. We usually see something unexpected there. We have seen Mourning Warblers, nesting Chestnut-sided Warblers, Green Heron, Golden-Winged Warblers, Redstarts, etc.

What has been one of your favorite birding experiences? One of my favorite birding experiences was on a GTAC field trip to Tawas State Park. A group of us were standing together looking toward a bushy tree and everyone seemed to be calling out a different type of warbler. After more careful observation, we realized that all those warblers were in the same tree - Palm, Magnolia, Green-throated, Blue-throated, Magnolia, Canada, Cape May, Chestnut-sided, and more! Another surprising experience was on a GTAC field trip to Omena when we were very surprised to see a Virginia Rail hop into our van through the open sliding door. And then one time when at the Florida Everglades visitors center, we saw a Great Blue Heron swallow a whole baby alligator, as nonchalant as you can imagine!

What other hobbies do you enjoy besides birdwatching? John enjoys fishing, snow skiing, travel, and being outdoors. I like quilting/sewing, knitting, reading (mysteries, historical fiction and non-fiction), travel, and being outdoors.

Editor's Perch – Spring Birding

One of my favorite things about spring is not only the opportunity to see migrants passing through, but also the comradery that birding brings. Whether it's going out birding with a friend or a group, helping a new birder see that lifer, or sharing those rare finds on Discord to help others have a chance to see it too; birding seems to build a community. And Grand Traverse Audubon Club helps contribute to that community. I was blown away by the number and quality of field trips our members helped pull together this spring; thought you all may enjoy highlights from some of those.

Two birding by kayak trips were completed in May:



Platte River Field Trip led by Kathie Wiley and Jenny Young [Platte Checklist](#)



Bridge Lake Kayak led by Maryellen Newport [Bridge Lake Checklist](#)

In June, two field trips were conducted in search of warblers that are pretty rare in Northern Michigan. Curt Hofer led a trip down to Mason County in search of Cerulean Warblers. Although the group was not able to locate any Ceruleans, they did see 60 other species birds at 3 different locations. [Mason Co Trip Report](#)

Then Tim Webb led a trip to a known area for Kirtland Warblers in Kalkaska County; the group was able to dodge most of the rain and were successful in finding not just one Kirtland Warbler, but 8 in total (seen and heard). [Kirtland Checklist](#)



Kirtland Warbler (photo by J.P. Panter)