



# THE NUTHATCH

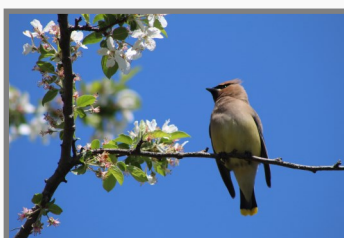
[www.oaklandaudubon.org](http://www.oaklandaudubon.org)

## “Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE)”

**Erin Parker**

**Tuesday, January 11, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

Join us to learn about one of the newest *Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE)* programs and the many ways this initiative supports indigenous North American songbirds. Work by North American Songbird SAFE focuses on citizen science, habitats and contaminants, education, keeping cats indoors, and trafficking of wild birds. There are many ways the public can support this work and initiatives, including at our local Detroit Zoo.



Follow us on 

## “Climate Change in the Great Lakes”

**Omar Gates**

**Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

This presentation will provide an overview of temperature and precipitation trends throughout the Great Lakes region, and provide examples of how climate change is impacting different sectors and environments. A Q & A session will follow.



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## “Monty and Rose: Chicago’s Piping Plovers”

**Bob Dolgan**

**Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

Join us for a screening of "Monty and Rose II" a documentary that tells the story of a pair of endangered Piping Plovers attempting to nest on a busy beach in Chicago. The film chronicles these special birds and the unpredictable series of events that propelled them to national headlines. Monty and Rose became the first Piping Plovers to successfully nest within the city limits of Chicago since 1948. A Q & A session will follow.



# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## Winter 2021

If you weren't at the Oakland Audubon Society (OAS) general meeting in October, then you might not be aware that Don Burlett needs to take a year off as president to deal with another major event that he is in charge of. My name is Sue Wright and I was elected and agreed to stand in his place. I was OAS president for 4 ½ years before Don took over 13 years ago. I will do my best to help this wonderful organization continue going strong, along with an active Board that works very hard to keep everything running smoothly.

As summer turns into fall and winter approaches, we continue to deal with a new normal for all of our activities. Our meetings are still via Zoom, but the hope is to be able to get back to in-person meetings at the First United Methodist Church in Birmingham come April. We are continuing with field trips and have our Christmas Bird Count (CBC) coming up in December. We would love to see you at some of these events. As most of us have learned, being out in nature can really help in difficult times!

Since the last Nuthatch came out, OAS has officially become an affiliate of National Audubon Society. We are one of only two affiliates in Michigan, with Detroit Audubon being the other. Michigan is part of the Great Lakes Region, along with Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. There are several benefits that this affiliation will bring to OAS, including the ability to work with them on priorities National Audubon works on across the Great Lakes Region. This is exciting and additional information will be shared as we learn more.

OAS is an organization run by and dependent on volunteers. We have our CBC coming up on December 18<sup>th</sup>. Jeff Stacey can always use help with that important annual event. If you can help for that day, please contact him and he will find a count area that needs additional people. Also, if you live in the count circle that encompasses the Oxford/Lake Orion/Auburn Hills area, he is in desperate need of feeder watchers for the day. Again, contact Jeff and he will go over everything with you.

Another volunteer is needed to fill the Publicity and Fundraising Officer position. Phil Bugosh has been doing a wonderful job for 7+ years, but is stepping down effective 12/31/21. Please consider helping out if you can.

I hope to meet everyone when we can get back together or possibly at an outing this year. Enjoy the fall and winter and get out to see what birds are in your special patch or yard!

Sue Wright

## OAS BOARD MEMBERS

### Elected Officers

President	Sue Wright	(248) 330-6861	<a href="mailto:suzwriht2@aol.com">suzwriht2@aol.com</a>
Secretary	Doris Applebaum	(248) 542-2506	<a href="mailto:ibis4247@sbcglobal.net">ibis4247@sbcglobal.net</a>
Treasurer	Elaine Ferguson	(248) 470-2212	<a href="mailto:fergusonelaine6@gmail.com">fergusonelaine6@gmail.com</a>
Membership Officer	Jen Benke	(734) 657-7498	<a href="mailto:scubadu9900@yahoo.com">scubadu9900@yahoo.com</a>
Field Trip Officer	Jeff Stacey	(248) 798-0508	<a href="mailto:jdstacey@ameritech.net">jdstacey@ameritech.net</a>
Program Officer	Dave Hoch	(248) 808-3696	<a href="mailto:hochdavid1@gmail.com">hochdavid1@gmail.com</a>

### Appointed Officers

Young Birders Club Rep.	Kathleen Dougherty		<a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
Hospitality Officer	Alice Marotti	(248) 545-4165	<a href="mailto:amarotti@aol.com">amarotti@aol.com</a>
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Seven Ponds Rep.	Dr. Greg Gossick		<a href="mailto:ggossickdds@sbcglobal.net">ggossickdds@sbcglobal.net</a>
Conservation/Environment	Greg Petrosky		<a href="mailto:gpetrosky06@gmail.com">gpetrosky06@gmail.com</a>
Advocacy Officer	Vacant		

*"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."*

*Jane Goodall*

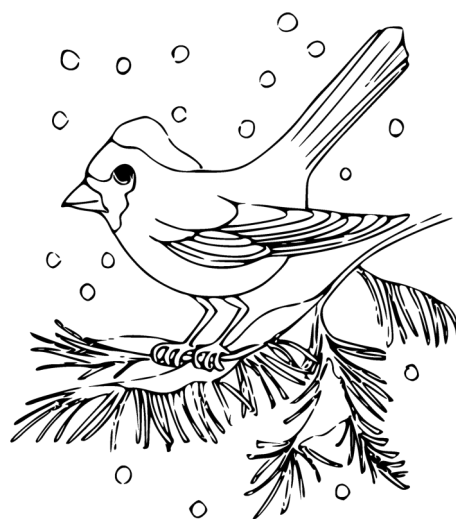


Photo Credits: Cover Page Banner, G. Cummins. Program Photos, Erin Parker, Omar Gates, and Bob Dolgan.

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

**Covid-19 Update:** OAS continues to adhere to the Michigan Health Department’s guidelines and recommended precautions during all field trips (see page 16).

Schedule changes and updates will be posted on our website and members will also receive email updates. Owllet trip details are listed on pages 15-16.

Pre-Registration is required for all trips —contact trip leader to register.

Check the “Field Trips” page on our website often for current information and more details!  
[www.oaklandaudubon.org](http://www.oaklandaudubon.org)

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
December 18, 2021 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Christmas Bird Count (Owlets) Orion Oaks Park	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
January 15, 2022 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	St. Clair River	Jim Koppin <a href="mailto:jimmykoppin@yahoo.com">jimmykoppin@yahoo.com</a>
January 29, 2022 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Lake St. Clair Metropark—Winter Waterfowl & Woodland Birds (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
February 13, 2022 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Beaudette Park & other winter spots	Don Burlett <a href="mailto:baikalteal13@netzero.net">baikalteal13@netzero.net</a>
February 19, 2022 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Great Backyard Bird Count & Bird Banding Demonstration—EL Johnson NC (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
March 6, 2022 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Kensington Metropark	Jeff Stacey <a href="mailto:jdstacey@ameritech.net">jdstacey@ameritech.net</a>
March 19, 2022 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Lake Erie Metropark	Mike Mencotti <a href="mailto:mmencotti9@gmail.com">mmencotti9@gmail.com</a>
March 26, 2022 (Saturday) 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Highland State Recreation Area — Early Spring Migrants (Owlets)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>

**OAS participation in the 122<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is scheduled for Saturday, December 18, 2021.**

— Contact Jeff Stacey for details —

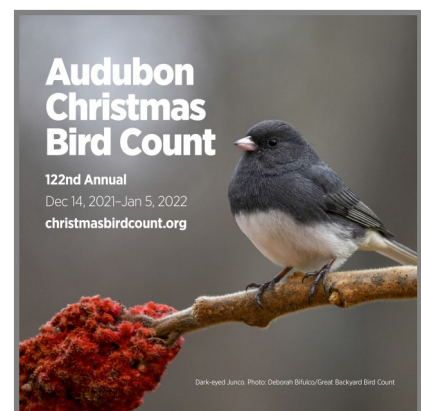


Photo: National Audubon Society

# Field Trip Reports

## September 5, 2021 - Lake St. Clair Metropark

Leader: Jim Koppin

Eleven participants were greeted with a pleasant (high 60's to start) day at Lake St. Clair Metropark. We found a nice patch of migrating warblers soon after starting. We had our best birds of the day shortly after—a juvenile Olive-sided Flycatcher and a juvenile Merlin.

We were invited to stop at Allen Chartier's banding station—we were not disappointed! The crew had just netted a Connecticut Warbler. Allen was very gracious with his time and knowledge. We all learned a lot. A special thanks to Karen Kessler who provided the species list (47), which includes banded birds.



Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) and Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) [in hand]

Photo Credits: Jim Koppin

## September 19, 2021 - Robert H. Long Nature Park & Heritage Park

Leaders: Mike Mencotti and Manny Salas

On a mid-September Sunday a group of 12 birders were greeted at Heritage Park by a family of Wild Turkeys. It got even better as the morning progressed. We hit a couple of pockets of warblers, the best of which was a Canada Warbler, but the other nine species of “confusing fall warblers” were just as satisfying. Although the expected sparrow species were “MIA,” we got quite a show from raptors.



Photo Credits: Manny Salas

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Setophaga caerulescens*)



Photo Credits: Manny Salas

Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*)

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## Field Trip Reports (continued)

We headed to Robert H. Long Nature Park in hopes of shorebirds, waterfowl, waders, and other stuff. Shorebirds continued to be absent, but we got great looks at herons and waterfowl. The trip ended with a Gadwall circling into the pond —what was this bird doing here so early in the season? All told, we observed more than 62 species.



Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)



Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*)

### October 16, 2021 - Watkins Lake State Park

Leader: Jeff Stacey

What started out as a cold, windy, and rainy day ended up with very comfortable weather and an impressive species list (52). Our small group of six birders headed west to Watkins Lake State Park (just barely into Jackson County). The rain had passed when we arrived and the sun was just breaking through the clouds. While scenic, this proved difficult for us because most of the waterfowl were on the east side of the road, and we had to look into the bright sky.

With a little bit of effort, we were able to find some early migrant waterfowl. Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks were plentiful. There were a pair of Northern Shovelers and singletons of Hooded Merganser, Redhead, and Canvasback. The Redhead and Canvasback were cooperatively right next to each other. Alas, no “weird” geese were sighted.

Just before the trailhead parking lot, we found a tree with six Eastern Bluebirds and as many Northern Mockingbirds (common species in the area). We vowed to walk the trail until we found our White-breasted Nuthatch mascot. It didn't take THAT long to find one, but enroute we also sighted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. On the return hike, the last bird we saw at the park was a very late Eastern Meadowlark.

While driving home we spotted an American Kestrel hovering over a farm field. After a not-so-quick U-turn and a bit of effort, we found it again, sitting on a fence post enjoying a meal.

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## Field Trip Reports (continued)

### November 5 -7, 2021 - Muskegon Area Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

The trip began on Friday morning with a group of 10 birders. We met near Lansing and drove to the Coopersville area. The first stop was the Coopersville Goose field where we had several hundred Canada Geese along with 4 or 5 Cackling Geese. There were a couple of Red-tailed Hawks nearby and Bald Eagles along with a couple of Killdeer. We then moved on to the Coopersville Waste Treatment Plant and found both Mute and Trumpeter Swans and a couple of ducks. Nothing remarkable but a decent start.

We drove to the Muskegon Wastewater Treatment Facility and began searching for a number of specific birds. The first was the Red Phalarope, which had been seen previously and was hanging out at the same pipe in the east pool. He was delightfully dancing on the water doing his thing. While scoping hundreds of Northern Shovelers, Ruddy Ducks, and Mallards, we discovered an Eared Grebe nearby. He had also been seen previously. We then proceeded to do a tour of the two ponds, beginning on the east pond. We saw a couple of Rough-legged Hawks and an American Kestrel dining on something good.



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

We soon discovered another nice bird that had been seen previously, a Harlequin Duck. This one may have been a female or immature bird. Shortly after that, we arrived near the dump and began looking at gulls. There were lots of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, but no sign of the Iceland Gull reported earlier. We did get a Lesser Black-backed Gull at this spot. A few sparrows spiced up the back edge as we moved along and eventually got a group of Wild Turkeys added to the party. The impoundments were full of many Ruddy Ducks and Northern Shovelers among other species.

From the waste treatment plant we headed to Black Lake Park and found it very quiet, so we headed to the hotel and then to the Texas Steak House to party over our day's rewards.

The next morning, our group included 16 birders. We began our day by visiting the Muskegon State Game Area's (SGA) Lane's Landing site. This is a very nice location with lots of good habitat and good birds. We began by getting a Fox Sparrow, a couple of other sparrows, and some other birds. When we emerged into the marshy area, we were rewarded with a number of nice birds, including: Merlin, Northern Harrier, Northern Shrike, and Northern Mockingbird. Our list was swelling and it was great fun. This second day, temperatures were in the 50's and it was a bit windy, but it was well worth the visit. We then headed back to the Muskegon Wastewater Treatment Facility.

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## Field Trip Reports (continued)



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)

At the Muskegon Wastewater Treatment Facility, we scanned a group of geese in the grassy impoundments up front and found two rather odd geese. We had seen one of them the day before, the second was new. The group felt they were hybrids with Snow Geese, but there was no solid conclusion. One had a fairly white body with gray on the back and an orange bill, while the other had a gray body and white head and neck with a black bill. Pictures are below —judge for yourself.



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Hybrid Goose #1 (left) and #2 (Right)



Photo Credit: Don Burlett



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*)

Next, we scanned more grassy impoundments to see if we could catch up with the reported American Pipits. We eventually did and found 30-50 of them. That was a nice observation. We then headed back to the two big ponds to find what we had seen the day before without the entire crew.

Afterwards, headed south to Ottawa Sands County Park in hopes of finding Red-headed Woodpeckers but the park was mostly silent and barren of birds. Then, off to dinner at Capone's Speakeasy and Pizzeria. A good time ensued for most of the group.

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## Field Trip Reports (continued)

On Sunday morning, we drove south to Hemlock Crossings Nature Park and found a fair number of passerines to fill-in our list. After that, we drove to Holland Sate Park and looked for ducks at the end of the north pier. We added a variety of ducks and gulls —White-winged Scoter, Northern Pintail, Red-breasted Merganser, Bonaparte's Gull, and Greater Black-backed Gull. Some interesting gulls led us to scan Lake Macatawa from two locations, but nothing unusual was spotted. We ended the trip at the Windows on the Waterfront area with a group of American Coots.

We ended the long weekend with 75 species. It was a nice variety of common and not so common birds; there were also lifebirds for a number of folks. It turned out to be a great trip. Maybe you can join us next time.



OAS group at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing

# *Oakland Owlets*

## Field Trip Reports

### August 21, 2021 - Bear Creek Nature Park

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

Oakland Owlets families and friends wandered the trails at Bear Creek Nature Park in Oakland Township on a very hot day in August searching for insects.

Two local insect experts, Sue Greenlee and Doris Applebaum, joined the group. Both are veteran butterfly counters and conduct field surveys for the Michigan Butterfly Network and the North American Butterfly Association. Sue provided a quick orientation and instructed everyone on common insects that could be expected in August. Sue worked for the Nature Conservancy in the Midwest surveying grasshoppers and shared some collections. She also identified the call of the snowy tree cricket, which is also known as the “temperature cricket.” This insect is part of the background sounds of summer and can be used to estimate temperature.



Debbie Jackson, regional Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist, also joined the field trip. She brought two Monarch butterflies that emerged from the chrysalids or “eclosed” during the field trip! Everyone was surprised to see how quickly the butterflies changed —by the end of the field trip they were released. Sue provided nets and demonstrated how to safely capture insects for identification and release them without harm. Attendees grabbed nets and started finding bugs. We did not get far down the trails before stopping —we captured and released many species. Sue placed specimens in jars, identified them, and allowed the group to look at the various insects that were abundant along the pathway. In a short time, the group found more than 24 different species of insects, including several species of bumblebees. Pollinators and insect predators were abundant at Bear Creek. Sue pointed out that it was National Honeybee Day.



Doris kept a butterfly list for the Michigan Butterfly Survey, while Blanche Wicke and I tracked birds the group encountered. Although insect activity was high, bird activity was low. The heat and the time-of-day lessened bird observations.

Turkey Vultures floated over the fields while Chimney Swifts darted across the sky. Nearby, Cedar Waxwings were capturing insects in midair. The link between the insects and birds was evident. The grassland restoration at Bear Creek is an ideal place to spot aerial insectivores. A checklist submitted to eBird reported 19 species.

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# *Oakland Owlets*

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

A special thanks to **Oakland Township Parks and Recreation** for allowing the Young Birders' Club to use the shelter for orientation. Also thank you to the experts, **Doris Applebaum** and **Sue Greenlee**, for donating their time and expertise for this field trip. Lastly, thank you to **Debbie Jackson** for bringing monarch butterflies so everyone could see this amazing transformation of the pupae into adults.



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty and OAS Gallery.

### September 18, 2021 - Lake Erie Metropark

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

On Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup> Oakland Owlets families and friends met at Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown to view hawk migration. Mark Hainen, from the Detroit River Hawk Watch (DRHW), and wildlife biologist Jessica Fletcher from the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) met with participants.

The DRHW takes place at Lake Erie Metropark's boat launch, just north of where the Detroit River flows into Lake Erie. The location is one of the premier fall hawk sites in North America –hundreds of thousands of hawks migrate over this site in the fall. Data from the DRHW has helped understand this natural spectacle since 1983. Mark and Jessica explained the importance and history of the DRHW at this site.



Broad-winged Hawks, along with an assortment of other raptors, were flying south in large numbers on 9/18/2021. Jessica discussed the timing of hawk migration with the group. Hawk migration spans the entire fall, but the timing of particular hawk species moving through changes over the season. Broad-winged Hawks migrate early en masse, while others, like the Rough-legged Hawk, migrate later. DRHW observers count at this site from September to the end of November.

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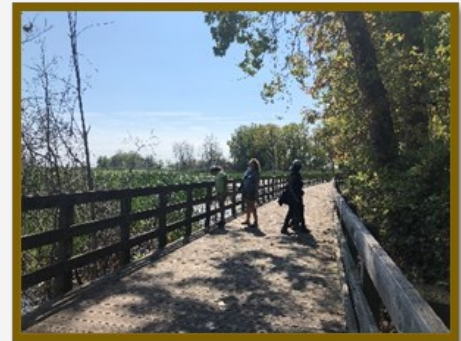
# *Oakland Owlets*

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

Counting hawks is a serious undertaking; DRHW counters follow specific protocols for counting migrating hawks. Mark explained how observers count hawks avoiding duplication to assure the accuracy of the data.

After a brief introduction, the group settled in and waited for the hawks. It was not long before we saw the first group of Broad-winged Hawks. Because hawks appear at a distance, hawk watching requires concentration and knowledge of raptor profiles. Young birders were taught how to recognize hawk profiles. The group learned to look for the small buteo shape and the bands on the tails as hawks streamed out of kettles and flew overhead. Other raptors seen during the field trip included: Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, Northern Harrier, and Bald Eagle, a species that nests near the DRHW site. DRHW counters only count migrating hawks, so they differentiate between migrating and resident eagles.

After about an hour of hawk watching, some participants walked to the Marshland Museum, the park's Nature Center, to take a short hike along the boardwalk. Here, they saw ducks, herons, and other birds not found along the Detroit River. A captive Bald Eagle, which is unable to survive on its own, lives in a flight cage outside of the Nature Center. The museum is a wonderful place to visit and learn about the Lake Erie Metropark.



The bird checklist for the field trip included 32 species. On September 18<sup>th</sup> the official count at the DRHW was 8,738 hawks, of which 8,491 were Broad-winged Hawks. In addition to counting hawks, DRHW counters also record migrating Monarch butterflies. That day, 2,068 Monarchs were recorded.



This amazing migration through our area every fall is stunning to see. A special thanks to **Mark Hainen** from DRHW and **Jessica Fletcher** from the DRIWR for sharing their expertise with the Oakland Owlets.

Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty and OAS Gallery.

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# *Oakland Owlets*

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

**October 24, 2021 - Stage Nature Center**

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

Oakland Owlets families and friends spent the evening of October 24<sup>th</sup> at the Stage Nature Center in Troy. The Stage Nature Center houses five rehabilitated owls adopted from another educational facility in 2018. These owls are unable survive in the wild due to injuries and/or disabilities and serve as educational animal ambassadors. The group briefly visited the center's exhibit area before the Owl Informational Program at the Nature Center's classroom.

Naturalist Christina Funk shared facts and dispelled myths about owls during an interactive talk. Participants helped with demonstrations and learned several amazing owl adaptations. Features highlighted included the distinct shape of an owl's talons and the anatomy of their eye sockets. Owl eyes are so large that special bony sockets (sclerotic rings) hold the eyes in place and prevent eye movement. However, extra vertebrae in the owl's neck allow owls to rotate their heads about 270 degrees and move up and down to focus. Owls have amazing eyesight, specially adapted for low light.



Christina also covered the natural history of owls. Owls digest their prey and regurgitate undigested food in the form of pellets, which include bones and fur of prey animals. The group was also introduced to other educational animal ambassadors — rats. Christina explained that when people control rat populations with poisons like rodenticides, owls and other predators are harmed. Poisoned rats are consumed by owls, which ends up killing owls as well.

The group met two of the owl ambassadors at the Nature Center —Mortimer and Sam. Mortimer is a gray Eastern Screech Owl. Christina held Mortimer on a tether and took him around the room while playing the calls of the Eastern Screech Owl. Everyone was silent and frozen in place as Mortimer and Christina approached them. Mortimer lost vision in one eye, making it impossible for him to survive in the wild. Christina patiently answered everyone's questions. When Mortimer was returned to his travel cage, Christina introduced Sam.

Sam, the Barred Owl, was rehabilitated as a juvenile and now has imprinted on people, especially Christina. Christina explained their relationship —Sam knows her voice and communicates with her when she is nearby.

# *Oakland Owlets*

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

Barred Owls are large owls with mottled colors of brown and white, large, rounded head and dark eyes. Barred Owls have distinctive calls. The mnemonics sounds like “*Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?*” Sam called, so there was no need to use a recording. Barred Owls live in forested areas often near water.

After an amazing presentation, the group was invited to venture outdoors to listen for owls —Eastern Screech Owls and Great Horned Owls live on the property. Christina explained the importance of being quiet and listening, and played the calls of the Screech Owl and then the Great Horned Owl. Everyone listened intently while scanning the treetops nearby and imagined owls were watching. After a time with no activity, Christina took the group to the newly dedicated owl housing. Here, we met another educational ambassador, a Great Horned Owl named Autumn. We heard stories about Great Horned Owls regularly visiting Autumn.

Participants were grateful for the new knowledge and appreciation gained during this evening with the owls. Thanks to **Christina Funk** and Nature Center volunteer **Jody** for their time and the outstanding presentation.

The Stage Nature Center is supported by the Troy Nature Society, a non-profit organization that supports community outreach and educational programs at the Stage Nature Center. The Troy Nature Society is supported by memberships and donations. There is a special fund for the owls that accepts donations for their care.

To learn more, visit the following link:  
[Support Our Owls – Stage Nature Center \(troynaturesociety.org\)](https://troynaturesociety.org)



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty and Mary Korde.

# Oakland Owlets Field Trips

## December 2021 - March 2022

### **Christmas Bird Count - Saturday, December 18, 8:00 am - 10:00 am** **Orion Oaks County Park, Lake Orion**

Join OAS on a hike at Orion Oaks County Park during the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The CBC is one of the oldest Citizen Science activities in the country —this is the 122<sup>nd</sup> year of this national event. Orion Oaks County Park has many natural communities to explore. Dress for being outdoors and plan to hike about 1.5 miles. OAS YBC leaders, Kathleen Dougherty and Greg Petrosky, will meet participants at the Orion Oaks Dog Park Parking Lot. An Oakland County Park permit is required for park entry.



### **Winter Waterfowl & Woodland Birds – Sunday, January 29, 8:30 am - 11:00 am** **Lake St. Clair Metropark - Harrison Township near Mt. Clemens**



Great Horned Owls nest early and select nest sites and territories by January. Lake St. Clair Metropark has a famous Great Horned Owl nest. In addition, the open waters in the park provide overwintering spots for a variety of waterfowl. We will explore the park by hiking trails and driving to locations in the park to view waterfowl. We will also stop at the nature center to check the feeders. Bring your binoculars and spotting scopes if you have them. Plan to hike about 1.5 miles and dress for walking in the snow. A 2022 Metroparks vehicle permit or a daily pass purchased upon entry is required for park entry.

### **Great Backyard Bird Count/Bird Banding – Saturday, February 19, 8:30 am - 11:00 am** **EL Johnson Nature Center - Bloomfield Hills**

A special program is scheduled for YBC at the EL Johnson Nature Center. Licensed bird bander, Allen Chartier, will be banding birds during the morning. This field trip takes place during the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). GBBC is a global event where observers report birds over a four-day period beginning on February 18<sup>th</sup>. Learn about bird banding and venture onto the trails for a hike. The EL Johnson Nature Center will also offer family friendly activities about birds during the morning. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars. OAS is sponsoring Allen Chartier for this event.

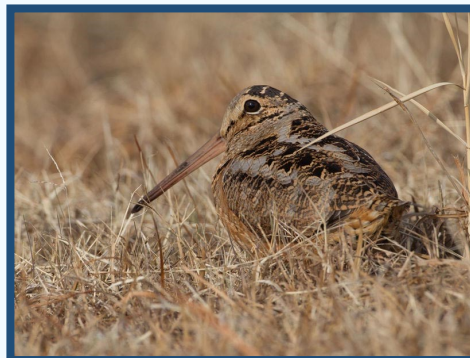


# Oakland Owlets Field Trips

## December 2021 - March 2022 (cont.)

### An Evening with Early Spring Migrants – Saturday, March 26, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm Highland State Recreation Area - White Lake

In March, birds returning to Michigan from their wintering grounds are welcome signs of spring. The Highland State Recreation Area is an excellent spot to see early migrants. The Park is over 5,000 acres and has one of the few National Natural Landmarks in Michigan. This park provides excellent stopover habitat for an unusual shorebird, the American Woodcock. In the spring, Woodcocks perform an aerial display known as the sky dance at sunset. If we are lucky, we could see the sky dance at sunset. Plan to hike about 1.5 miles. If available, a representative of the *Friends of Highland Recreation Area* will speak to the group about their support to this park. A Michigan State Parks recreation passport is required for park entry.



**OAS follows Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines for COVID-19 in effect at the time of the field trip.**

1. Pre-registration is required and number of participants is limited.
2. Face masks may be required to enter some facilities.
3. Stay home if you are sick or have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19.
4. Directions and details are sent in advance to those that pre-register.



*The Young Birders' Club ~ Oakland Owlets offers field trips for youth 8 – 18 years. Young birders 15 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult. These age appropriate programs provide educational experiences and snacks for kids. Young birders must complete a release form.*

*Young Birders' Club programs are open to all birders. To register for Oakland Owlets field trips contact – Kathleen Dougherty, Coordinator at [kad8186@msn.com](mailto:kad8186@msn.com)*

Visit <https://www.oaklandaudubon.org/young-birders>

Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty and OAS Photo Gallery



# KIRTLAND'S WARBLER CENSUS

Article for *Illinois Audubon* by Tracy Zeman

This summer on June 7<sup>th</sup> I traveled to the town of Mio in the northeastern quadrant of Michigan's lower peninsula to participate in the Kirtland's Warbler census. I began birding a dozen years ago but knew little about the Kirtland's Warbler until moving to Michigan from Illinois four years ago. After joining Michigan Audubon, I started receiving their quarterly "Jack Pine Warbler" in my mailbox and noticed their logo with the distinctive blue-gray and lemon-yellow bird with the broken white eye ring, part Magnolia Warbler, part Yellow-breasted Chat. Before the Kirtland's Warbler was "discovered," locals knew it as the "jack pine bird" because of the jack pine habitat where it spends its summer months.

The Kirtland's Warbler is North America's rarest wood warbler. A neotropical migrant, it nests and breeds in restricted areas in Michigan and overwinters in a similarly restricted range in the Bahamas. In the summer, Kirtland's are mainly insectivores and typically have one clutch of eggs per year with up to four young. The bird was named after Dr. Jared Kirtland, a physician, of Cleveland. In 1851, Charles Pease shot a Kirtland's and brought it to his father-in-law, Dr. Kirtland to identify. When he could not determine what bird it was, Kirtland gave the skin to Dr. Spencer Baird, a Smithsonian biologist, who discovered it was a previously unknown species and named the bird after Dr. Kirtland. It wasn't until 50 years later that Norman Wood, a taxidermist at University of Michigan's Museum of Natural History, found the jack pine bird's nesting grounds in Oscoda County Michigan.



Kirtland's nest in young jack pine forests, among trees typically 5 to 12 feet in height, mostly in the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula; a few also nest in the upper peninsula, northern Wisconsin, and Ontario. Jack pine barrens were historically fire-dependent eco-

systems, though now the ecosystem is managed mostly by clear-cutting mature tracts and then replanting one or two-year old seedlings in an opposing wave pattern. This "opposing wave" pattern mimics the erratic patterns created by wildfires and then subsequent regeneration, leaving periodic quarter-acre openings which increases edge habitat. Kirtland's build nests on these edges and in the furrows between tree rows.



The first census of singing Kirtland's Warbler males was in 1951, when 432 singing males were recorded. Ten years later in 1961, 502 males were recorded. However, by 1971, four years after the Kirtland's was placed on the inaugural list of 75 endangered species, only 201 were counted. They reached an all-time low three years later, in 1974, when the count dropped to 167. Kirtland's Warblers have never been abundant but habitat loss combined with parasitism from the Brown-headed Cowbird destabilized the population from the 1960's through the early 1990's when they finally began to recover because of better habitat management and a successful Brown-headed Cowbird trapping program.

On Monday morning, June 8, at 5:30 AM, I drove to a parking lot near the intersection of Miller Road and Red Oak Road to meet the other census takers and receive some additional training. When I arrived, I met a few other people like me, first-time volunteers, a number of seasoned volunteers; Keith Kintigh, forest conservation and certification specialist from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and other MDNR staff; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff; Dr. Carol Bocetti, an endangered species biologist

# KIRTLAND'S WARBLER CENSUS

(Continued)

and professor from California University of Pennsylvania; and Nathan Cooper, a conservation biologist from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. After introductions and instructions, we were grouped into twos or threes and assigned to census two-mile long transects in the Muskrat Lake management area.

The first transect I walked with Dr. Bocetti and her sister, Dottie Kelly, was easy, a sandy, straight road, where instead of using a GPS we counted our paces to pause every 200 meters to listen for singing male Kirtland's warblers. When we heard one, we listened for which direction the singing was coming from and tried to estimate how far away the bird was located, then using a compass and a map we drew a line from the transect route to the estimated location of the singing male and marked its spot with an "x." After another 1/8 mile we attempted to triangulate the locations of previous birds we heard, if possible, and record new singing males. Each group of surveyors walks a quarter mile apart, so the leaders compare maps after transects are completed to compile data and get an accurate count of how many total birds were heard without duplications.



Photo Credit: Don Doskoch

All of the censusing is done by ear. During my treks through the jack pine and its numerous large Allegheny ant mounds, I heard Field Sparrow, Ovenbird, Nashville Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Yellow-rump Warbler, Black-capped Chickadee, Hermit Thrush, Blue Jay, Eastern Towhee, and Juncos. None of the experienced participants carried binoculars, though I had mine with me in the hopes of getting a good look at a Kirtland's Warbler. During my second transect, which was through the jack pine instead of next to it, I

got the best look I was going to get during my census volunteering. I was out with Katie Kelly, a fish and wildlife biologist with USFWS, who has been participating in the survey since she was a kid with her aunt, Dr. Carol Bocetti. About half-way through the transect we heard a Kirtland's singing close and loud. When we turned around to look for it, we spotted it sitting on top of a black cherry about 20 feet away! I could see its two eye crescents and throat vibrating without my binoculars as it sang its chip-chip-chip-ee-ooow song over and over.



Photo Credit: Don Doskoch

Since 2001 the Kirtland's population has exceeded 1,000 pairs and now exceeds 2,000 pairs. Having met the minimum population requirement of 1,000 pairs, the species was delisted in 2019. The Brown-headed Cowbird trapping program was suspended in 2018 and currently only 1 to 2% of nests are parasitized. The Kirtland's is the first conservation reliant species to be removed from the endangered species list. Its on-going management is now coordinated by the Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team which is a public/private partnership. "We took the successful formula of the recovery program and rolled into this partnership to sustain the species forever," said Dr. Bocetti. Since their habitat has to be actively and intensely managed in order for them to survive, loss of funding for that management is their greatest threat going forward. Protecting the jack pine barrens habitat, as with many other keystone species, provides habitat for many other species, rare and common, plant and animal, such as Alleghany plum, Hill's thistle, secretive locust (a rare grasshopper), eastern massasauga (Michigan's only poisonous snake), rough fescue, and Upland Sandpiper.

To learn more about this charismatic bird read William Rapai's *The Kirtland's Warbler* and visit [www.kirtlandswarbler.org](http://www.kirtlandswarbler.org) or [www.kwconservation.org](http://www.kwconservation.org).

## OAS VOLUNTEER HONORED

by Kathleen Dougherty



Blanche Wicke holding a Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
(Photo Credit: Allen Chartier)

Oakland Audubon Society (OAS) has many wonderful members who volunteer for both OAS and the community. This fall, Blanche Wicke received the Volunteer Service Award from the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) at the annual

state conference held at Eastern Michigan University. Up to three people in Michigan are honored with this award annually. Volunteers contribute their time and skills to schools, colleges, camps, nature centers, zoos, and similar organizations that promote environmental and outdoor education. Blanche Wicke was nominated by Kathleen Dougherty for her contributions to Oakland Audubon's Young Birders' Club, the Oakland Owlets.

Blanche has served as a field trip assistant for the Oakland Owlets for the last two years. Blanche initially started helping organically, sharing bird identification freely with participants. When groups included more than twelve people, Blanche made sure everyone in the group could see birds on the trail. Blanche is knowledgeable, patient, and enthusiastic about birds. She genuinely wants people to know the joys of birding. Blanche pitches in as needed and has become an essential team member at Oakland Owlet field trips. She is always happy to contribute and makes field trips better for everyone.

Blanche worked for more than 20 years as an educator at the EL Johnson Nature Center in Bloomfield Hills. In addition, she regularly assists bird bander Allen Chartier with a long-term bird banding project at Lake St. Clair Metropark. Bird banding is arduous work that starts before daybreak setting up mist-nets and continues throughout the day. People like Blanche ensure bird conservation work is successful; this work informs science and resource management. Blanche makes a difference with everyone she meets and models the mission of OAS seeking to educate, advocate, and protect birds and the places where they live.

Congratulations to Blanche for her willingness to volunteer and for being a splendid example for everyone!

## BACKYARD SURPRISES

by Doris Applebaum

The spring bird migration of 2021 was a huge disappointment to me.

Through the pandemic lockdown in April and May of 2020, I was able to identify 55 species of birds just by looking out a window into my backyard. I had hoped to beat that number in 2021, but was shocked to count only 31 species through April and May this year, with not one Neotropical migrant passing through my yard. Even the every-year-reliable American Redstart was a no-show.

Nevertheless, it's a habit of mine to look out that window several times each day, just in case something interesting comes by. And on September 6, that's exactly what happened. As I looked out, binoculars in hand, there was movement in a large patch of vegetation. Focusing on that, I hoped that whatever it was would come out into the open. Eventually a bird moved out of that patch and onto the lawn in the yard. It was obviously a thrush.

First thing I checked was the color of its back. No reddish anywhere on the back, the head, or the tail, so it couldn't be a Veery, a Wood Thrush, or a Hermit Thrush. The back was gray. OK, is there an eye-ring? Nope, so it's not a Swainson's Thrush. WOW! It's a Gray-cheeked thrush!

I've seen a number of Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes come through my yard over the years, even occasionally a Wood Thrush. Haven't seen a Veery in the yard yet, but have seen them on field trips. However, the Gray-cheeked is by far the rarest thrush for me, as I have only seen it 2 or 3 times anywhere in my long life and certainly never in my yard.

This Gray-cheeked was very cooperative for a thrush, spending several seconds out in the open, so I got an excellent look at it through my binoculars. It was a lovely sight and made up at least somewhat for the disappointing spring migration.

Then, on October 29, looking out that window I saw a large sparrow with a reddish back, a gray head, and dark stripes on its breast, scratching at the lawn. A Fox Sparrow! Another new species for my yard!

More birds came into view: my first Dark-eyed Juncos this fall, at least two White-throated Sparrows, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, and a Brown Creeper. Some regularly seen species also joined the party to add some more color: a Northern Cardinal, some American Robins, a Blue Jay, and a Hairy Woodpecker. For about 15 minutes, I had more fun on that autumn day than on any day during the whole spring migration through my yard.

I'll keep checking the backyard through that window. You never know when Mother Nature is going to send you a delightful surprise.



# THREE BIRDS IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION AND THREE RAYS OF HOPE

By Doris Applebaum

Three kinds of birds—one small, one medium-sized, and one large—live in different parts of the world but share the same unfortunate situation: they are all critically endangered species. As is the case so much of the time, human beings have played no small part in the plight of these birds. In these three cases, however, human beings are helping to alleviate the problems.

The Fatu Hiva Monarch (*Pomarea whitneyi*) is a true *rara avis*. If it is not the rarest bird in the world, it is certainly in the running for that unfortunate distinction. There are only four breeding pairs among the 20 known individuals. In 2020, only two chicks survived.

This coal-black flycatcher of Fatu Hiva Island in French Polynesia was doing just fine until the 1980s, when rats jumped from commercial ships and landed on the island. They found a smorgasbord of food in the form of monarch eggs and chicks and, as rats do, they multiplied prodigiously. Within less than half a century, a species that was in no danger of extinction has been brought to the very brink.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, five other birds in the *Pomarea* genus were lost to extinction, and currently there are only six species surviving in this genus.

Conservationists have worked to get the rat situation under control on Fatu Hiva and have had some measure of success. However, there is another menace, in the form of feral cats, so there is also work ongoing to get that situation under control.

For the past few years, conservationists have been working on rescuing another *Pomarea* species, the Tahiti Monarch. From a low of 12 individuals, there are now more than 100, so this is a good model to follow, and a similar effort is planned for the Fatu Hiva Monarch. The odds are long, but there is hope that this species will join the Tahiti Monarch as a French Polynesia success story.



Fatu Hiva Monarch (Source: eBird S46910646 by Mike Greenfelder)



Hooded Grebe (Source: eBird S16324515 by Marshall Iliff)

The Hooded Grebe (*Podiceps gallardoi*) was not discovered until 1974 at a remote lake in the Argentina part of Patagonia. Research on the bird began, and they were found in more lakes in the region. The bird was thought to be in no danger of extinction because at that time its habitat did not have much human activity.

Unfortunately, continuing research has found that from a population of several thousand in the 1980s, the number of breeding adults is estimated to be just about 750 today.

One problem for the grebe is that non-native rainbow trout were introduced into several lakes where the grebe is found, and they are thriving, eating invertebrates that the grebes need for food and preventing the growth of the vegetation that the grebes need to build their nests.



# THREE BIRDS IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION AND THREE RAYS OF HOPE

(continued)

Another species that has harmed the grebe is the Kelp Gull. While it is a native species, it was not originally native to the grebe's habitat. It has spread there thanks to discards from fisheries and landfill sites as well as carcasses of animals killed by humans. The gulls have been recorded eating grebe eggs and chicks in large numbers.

Yet another problem for the grebe is the American mink, introduced to the area for fur production. The only natural predators of the grebe are birds of prey, and they have no instinct to avoid this mammalian danger, so they lose not only eggs and chicks but also adults to this predator and as if all the animal-related problems are not enough, climate change has reduced the number of lakes available for breeding by the grebes.

On the plus side, conservationists are determined to protect the Hooded Grebe because it has become a conservation icon in Patagonia, well known not only to the local people but also internationally. A captive-breeding program is under way, and trained observers are in the area to ward off attacks by Kelp Gulls and American mink. The grebe population has been stabilized, even slightly increased. So, even with several strikes against it, the Hooded Grebe appears to have a shot at survival.

On the other side of the world, in the Thar Desert of India, the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*) barely survives in its last remaining breeding stronghold, with only about 100 of the birds remaining there.

This bird's critical problem is not competition or predators or even loss of habitat: it's powerlines. Many Great Indian Bustards are killed each year because they collide with a powerline. Conservationists estimate that nearly 20% of the bird's remaining population dies each year this way.



Earlier this year, the Indian Supreme Court made a decision that may well be the salvation of this species. The Court decreed that all powerlines must be placed underground, not only where the bird is currently found but also in any other area that is potential habitat. And while this is being done, all above-ground powerlines must have "bird diverters" installed to warn the birds that a dangerous obstacle is there.

Energy companies are allowed to continue their activities as long as they make the necessary improvements. As might be expected, some of them complain about the cost of burying the lines, and they want the Supreme Court to review this matter. Some companies are even refusing to comply with any of the conditions that have been set down. So far, the Supreme Court has stayed firm, saying that the priority must be the survival of the species regardless of the cost.

In addition to the effort to reduce collisions, there is a captive-breeding program under way, and several chicks have been produced. They will not be released until their habitat is deemed safe, but they hold promise for the survival of this spectacular species—the world's heaviest flying bird.

Source: The October-December 2021 issue of *BirdLife* magazine, published by BirdLife International.

## Book Review

### MAMA'S LAST HUG: ANIMAL EMOTIONS AND WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES by Frans de Waal (Review by Doris Applebaum)

Frans de Waal is a world-renowned primatologist. Much of what he has written is aimed at scientists, but he has also written several books for the general public which are not only informative but also very readable. *Mama's Last Hug* is one of his best—a book that anyone who appreciates animals will find enjoyable and illuminating.

Most of the author's professional life has involved chimpanzees and other primates, and several of his books for the general public are about primate behavior. In his first such book, titled *Chimpanzee Politics*, he discussed how male chimpanzees vie for power, and the various ways they go about getting it. That 1982 book catapulted de Waal into the international spotlight.

In *Mama's Last Hug* he starts off talking about chimpanzees but expands into discussions of many other species. This time he isn't talking about power politics but rather his certainty that animals display emotions similar to those of humans. Some other recently published books also discuss this subject, sometimes referred to as animal cognition research; *When Animals Rescue* by Belinda Reicio is one such book.

The Mama of de Waal's book was a female chimpanzee who was born in captivity and lived her entire life in a zoo setting. However, the group of chimps in which she lived at the Burgers Zoo in Arnhem, the Netherlands, behaved very much like that species in the wild, which we have come to know so well from the writings of Jane Goodall.

Mama was not the most powerful individual in her group; males are physically stronger, and a male always held the top spot. However, Mama was a powerful presence, respected by all the other chimps, and no male could hope to get to the top without her support.

A man in the administrative hierarchy at the zoo had known Mama for over 40 years. Although he would never go into the enclosure with her (even a female chimpanzee is much stronger than a human), he and Mama would often groom each other through the bars. They could legitimately be considered friends.

In her 59<sup>th</sup> year, Mama became frail to the point where death was near. One night her human friend approached her night cage and, for the first time, he took a chance and entered it, wanting to say a last goodbye.

Although Mama at first seemed confused, when she realized who had entered her cage, she looked at him and smiled. She seemed to realize that he was a bit uneasy

being in the cage with her, so she put her arm around his neck and patted him gently on the back of the head and neck, as if to say "Don't worry." This is a gesture that a chimp will use when an infant appears afraid. It shows understanding and a desire to comfort.

Not long after Mama's "last hug," she died. Her last encounter with her human friend is just one of many that the author shows us in which an animal displays an emotion so similar to that of people, which scientists have often dismissed as impossible. According to de Waal, the belief that animals are merely bundles of instincts and are incapable of emotions is completely outdated.

In recent decades, many scientific research projects have shown that elephants, wolves, and other species—even rats—express emotions and behaviors that used to be thought of as confined to humans. The author says that anyone who has owned a dog or cat knows very well that animals display emotions. Once, when he discussed this with a colleague who refused to believe any of it, he said he felt like telling the man "You need to get a dog."

Various chapters in this book show examples from scientific research of animals displaying human-like behaviors, including empathy, shame, and aggression among others. Anyone who feels a kinship with the animal world will see their feelings supported in a very credible way.

That there is a continuity between humans and other species which is more than simply physical is a concept that is still rather new, but it is gaining in acceptance, and *Mama's Last Hug* is one of the reasons why.

**You can listen to Terry Gross's interview with guest Frans de Waal about his work and this book on *NPR.org***

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/03/19/704763681/sex-empathy-jealousy-how-emotions-and-behavior-of-other-primates-mirror-our-own>



Oakland Audubon's Young Birders' Club (YBC) participated in the *Virtual 2021 Rouge River Water Festival (RRWF)*. The 19<sup>th</sup> edition of this annual festival took place from October 12 -15<sup>th</sup>. The RRWF, in cooperation with the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office, hosted the Freshwater Forum at Cranbrook Institute of Science.

The RRWF is an annual event for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes to learn about the Rouge River watershed, clean water, and how pollution in the watershed can impact wildlife, water quality, and health. Schools participate free of charge through the generous sponsorship of Pure Oakland Water, a non-profit organization dedicated to water resources education.

Thirteen community partners developed and donated live educational presentations, pre-recorded video presentations, and multiple online resources to the virtual event. Community partners included the Michigan State University Extension, the Clinton River Watershed Council, the U.S. Forest Service, and Friends of the Rouge. Topics covered water quality, watershed health, wildlife, and pollution prevention.

OAS's YBC program, "*Counting Birds for Science*" focused on birds and bird identification, using eBird, and on the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The CBC video developed by Mike Dougherty in 2014 was part of the presentation. Online resources provided to students included educational materials from National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



Seventeen schools from the Rouge River Watershed participated. The Freshwater Forum distributed teacher guides to 43 teachers, which included materials kits with pre-recorded presentations and partner resources. The educational materials reached 1,062 students. Teachers' evaluations were positive overall. One teacher commented "*We cannot wait to get back to visiting the festival in person! Thank you all for the effort and materials included to give our students a virtual experience.*"

The Freshwater Forum at Cranbrook Institute of Science is a leader in Water Education in southeast Michigan. The RRWF is a wonderful way to connect with students and support their understanding of our shared water resources and the wildlife that depend on water and wetland habitats. The RRWF provides the chance to highlight OAS as an important local organization that helps the community connect with nature, especially birds. OAS's YBC was honored to be able to contribute.

Visit the Freshwater Forum at the Cranbrook Institute of Science to learn more about the RRWF - [Freshwater Forum | Cranbrook Institute of Science](#)

Submitted by: Kathleen Dougherty

# WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2021 - 2022

By Tyler Hoar

Reproduced with permission from *Finch Research Network* (<https://finchnetwork.org/>)

## GENERAL FORECAST 2021-22:

Forecasts apply mainly to Ontario and adjacent provinces and states. Three irruptive non-finch passerines whose movements are often linked to finches are also discussed. To learn more, subscribe and follow the blogs, news and updates at the [Finch Research Network](https://finchnetwork.org/), and finch wanderings this fall and winter on eBird.

The year's flight should not be an irruption year, but some southward movement should be into their normal southern wintering areas in Southeastern Canada and Northeastern United States. However, there will be movement of most finches varying by species and location in the boreal forest. So you will be able to find most species, but it won't be like last year when they came to so many people's backyards, this year you'll very likely need to go search for them.



Extreme weather this summer has played a significant part in this winter's forecast. With over 2000 forest fires stretching from Northwestern Ontario to British Columbia, record-setting high temperatures across much of western Canada (up to 49.6 Celsius/ 121 Fahrenheit in Lytton British Columbia), and severe droughts in wide areas westward from Lake Superior, food sources have been significantly impacted.

There is a cone crop this year from Lake Superior eastward in the boreal forest. It is, however, mostly a mosaic of poor to average crops. Along the southern edge of the boreal forest, a belt of good to bumper food crop is reported from Lake Superior eastward through Central Ontario, southern Quebec, Atlantic Canada to Newfoundland, southward to Northern New England, and New York state.

This should be a good winter to see finches in traditional hotspots such as Ontario's Algonquin Park, Quebec's Laurentian Mountains, New York's Adirondack Mountains, Atlantic Canada and the northern New England states.

## INDIVIDUAL FORECASTS

Pine Grosbeak: There is a widespread good to excellent crop of Mountain ash berries Lake Superior eastward. This should keep most Pine Grosbeaks closer to home this winter. Drought has most impacted Mountain ash and other berry crops west of Lake Superior, with many berries shrivelling on the stem. The Mountain ash crop in this area westward through the boreal forest generally appears poor with some areas of excellent crops. Areas in the upper Midwest states and cities in western Canada may see flocks of hungry Grosbeaks searching for fruiting ornamental trees and well-stocked feeders with black oil sunflower seeds.

White-winged Crossbill: With very poor cone crops reported from Northwestern Ontario westward into Alaska, two visible movements of White-winged Crossbills have already been seen this summer. In Western North America, White-winged Crossbills moved south into Southern British Columbia/Alberta, and Pacific Northwestern States with a few reported recently as far south as Utah.

During late June into July, there was an eastward movement into the robust spruce crop areas in eastern North America, particularly in Maine, Maritime provinces and Newfoundland. This winter, expect to see White-winged Crossbill from Central Ontario eastward to Newfoundland and southward into northern New York and New



## WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2021 - 2022

(continued)

England, visiting traditional winter finch hotspots. We may even see White-winged Crossbills away from the forests using heavy crops on planted native and ornamental spruces within urban environments.

Crossbills remaining in the boreal forest will move around in search of food, and thus, some movements may be seen this fall/winter into areas like the upper Midwest states as they look for suitable cone crops.

The crossbills in areas with good spruce crops are likely breeding this winter so expect to encounter streaked juveniles in the flocks.

Red Crossbill: There is a good spruce and hemlock crop throughout Central Ontario to southern Maritimes and northeastern states. Red Crossbills are in their usual conifer haunts, and this should continue through much of the winter. Red Crossbills will also be found south of the boreal zones where there are good Norway Spruce forests. Don't expect to see much in the way of any irruption from the west (Type 2 being maybe a wild card), but expect to continue to see some Type 10s in Great Lakes, Algonquin, Maritimes, Adirondacks, Northern New England and the usual areas of Maine, and very small numbers of Types 1, 2 and 3 mixed in here and there. Type 1 Red Crossbills are more common in western Berkshires of Massachusetts and southern New York into Pennsylvania and the Appalachians. Types 2 Red Crossbills, and maybe a few Type 4, should be slightly more common in the western Great Lakes states again.

The types are usually impossible to identify without recordings of their flight calls. Recordings can be made with a smartphone and identified to type. Matt Young ([info@finchnetwork.org](mailto:info@finchnetwork.org)) will identify types if you email him your recordings or upload them to an eBird checklist. Recordings uploaded to eBird checklists are deposited in the Macaulay Library.

Purple Finch: Most years, Purple Finches migrate south out of Canada. This year the majority of birds should leave, but we anticipate some will remain in Central Ontario to the Maritime provinces.

Between one observer reporting "a crazy number of purple finches" in mid-August and L'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac having even stronger movements southwestward in Quebec this year than 2020, this species appears to continue to benefit from an abundant food source during the breeding season in the four large Spruce Budworm outbreaks in eastern Canada.

At feeders, they prefer black oil sunflower seeds.

Common and Hoary Redpolls: Given the seed crops on birches, alders and spruce are average to good most redpolls will likely stay in the north Lake Superior eastward. As the winter progresses, some trickling down of flocks into Southern Canada and neighboring border states may occur.

To the west, the weather has impacted the tree species preferred by redpolls in Northwestern Ontario to Alaska. Therefore, there should be some movement southward into areas with some tree seed crops and weedy fields. At feeders, redpolls prefer nyjer seeds served in silo feeders. Watch for Hoaries in flocks of Common Redpolls.

Pine Siskin: With the excellent spruce, hemlock and eastern white cedar crop across southeastern Canada and Northeastern border states, most Pine Siskins in the east should remain in this area for the winter.

Pine Siskins should move south along mountain ranges similar to the White-winged Crossbills with the poor spruce crop in western North America. There should also be a southeastward movement through the boreal forest in search of food. Expect some of this movement to bring Pine Siskins into the upper Midwestern states and possibly beyond searching for food. This entertaining species prefers nyjer seeds in silo or sock feeders.

## WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2021 - 2022

(continued)

Evening Grosbeak: In the fall of 2020, we experienced a generational irruption of Evening Grosbeaks southward. With that, we may experience an echo flight this fall. This year there is the 'belt of food' between the four large Spruce Budworm outbreaks and where they irrupted to last winter.

In the east, expect some birds to remain in the boreal forest and others to move south into Central Ontario, Southern Quebec, the Maritime provinces, New England states, New York, and maybe Pennsylvania for the winter.

Evening Grosbeaks in Northwestern Ontario westward towards Alberta should move out of the boreal forest looking for feeders in towns or suitable food sources further south. Evening Grosbeaks in the mountains of western Canada may move southward as well.

At platform feeders, Evening Grosbeaks prefer black oil sunflower seeds. Away from feeders, Evening Grosbeaks will look for maple and ash trees still holding seeds. See the link below for Evening Grosbeak call types.

### **THREE IRRUPTIVE PASSERINES:**

Movements of these three passerines are often linked to the boreal finches.

Blue Jay: There will be a moderate flight along the north shorelines of Lakes Ontario and Erie. Oak, beechnut and hazelnut crops are variable in central and southern Ontario, ranging from none to good. Insect defoliation has damaged many seed crops. A good number of Blue Jays should visit feeders this winter in Southern Canada.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: While there currently appears to be a small 'echo flight' of this species, most Red-breasted Nuthatches in the east should remain in the food belt in the northeast. Birds west of Lake Superior should be moving looking for food this fall. At feeders, this species prefers black oil seeds, suet, and peanuts.

Bohemian Waxwing: Most Bohemian Waxwings in eastern North America will remain in the boreal forest this winter because mountain-ash berry crops are good to excellent from Lake Superior to Newfoundland and Labrador. West of Lake Superior, there should be more movement of flocks in search of areas with Mountain Ash crops. If some move south, this species will forage on Buckthorn and planted European Mountain Ash berries and ornamental crabapples.

### **Finch Information Links (from original source):**

Crossbills of North America: Species and Red Crossbill Call Types.

<https://ebird.org/news/crossbills-of-north-america-species-and-red-crossbill-call-types/>

Finch Research Network with finch species information

<https://finchnetwork.org/>

Evening Grosbeak Call Types

<https://finchnetwork.org/species/grosbeaks/the-evening-grosbeak-project>. Support research and conservation for this species of conservation concern: <https://finchnetwork.org/donate>

Previous Winter 1999-2019

<http://www.jeaniron.ca/WFFindex.htm>

2020 Winter Forecast

<https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2020>

## Bird Briefs (articles to look at online)

from Don Burlett

### [Can Birds Help Us Avoid Natural Disasters? | Hakai Magazine](#)

An interesting article about researchers tracking birds and using their ability to hear infrasound to avoid storms and tsunamis. Infrasound is a low frequency sound not heard by humans that can be associated with storms and other major activities. Research indicates that tracking birds could help predict storms and other weather disturbances to help us avoid disasters.

### [The mysterious case of America's dying songbirds - CNET](#)

A look at the most recent series of bird deaths that continue to be a mystery. It is an interesting story about trying to find the cause and still not being sure.

### [Extreme Birding Competition Is a Cutthroat Test of Skill, Strategy and Endurance - Scientific American](#)

Our Nuthatch Open is a competitive birding competition but nothing like the one described here. Looking for an extreme case of birding, it's here.

### [Pandemic Bird-Watching Created a Data Boom—and a Conundrum | WIRED](#)

As you might expect, the pandemic increased the number of birders looking for birds and entering data in eBird's database. But there are other factors that confound these data. Take a look at this article to get a feel how the pandemic changed the data being received by eBird.

### [Congratulations, You're a Birder! \(nrcm.org\)](#)

You may have suspected this but it's an obvious conclusion. A quick look at what qualifies you to be a birder.

### *NATURE NOTES* by Allen Chartier

**Don't be shy! If you have a question you would like Allen to answer in a future *Nature Notes* column or there is a topic you are interested in hearing more about, you can email him at:**

[amazilia3@gmail.com](mailto:amazilia3@gmail.com)





# BIRD ID QUIZ

(Winter 2021)



A) \_\_\_\_\_



B) \_\_\_\_\_



C) \_\_\_\_\_

**For the answers and explanation for this issue's quiz see Page 32**

**No Peeking!**

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

### September 23, 2021

As President Don Burlett prepared to leave us for a year to carry out another commitment, he was awarded a Life Membership in OAS. It would be hard to find anyone more deserving.

We have heard from the First United Methodist Church that we may be able to return to “live” membership meetings there in the near future. When we do, we hope to be able to have Zoom available for those who cannot be with us for the meeting, and also to be able to have speakers from a long distance away.

We ended the September 2020-August 2021 membership year with 216 members, but so far renewals are coming in slowly for the upcoming year.

Field trips and Young Birders Club activities have been scheduled through the end of the year.

Board members were sorry to hear from Advocacy Officer Erin Parker that she will not be able to continue in that position due to time constraints.

On the other hand, we were pleased to hear that Young Birders Club Coordinator Kathleen Dougherty has volunteered to take charge of our participation in National Audubon’s Climate Watch project.

OAS merchandise is popular! All coffee mugs and baseball-type hats that were ordered have been sold, and only 4 winter hats remained as of the board meeting date.

Available new statistics indicate that our Facebook page averages about 8,000 views each month, and about 60% of the visitors to our website contact us via their computer, with the rest visiting via cell phone.

Seven Ponds Nature Center Chapter Representative Dr. Greg Gossick reported that they had a very successful Corks ‘n’ Caps fundraiser, attracting 192 people. Considerable work was done over the summer on maintenance of the boardwalks and invasive species removal, and work has begun on the new nature playscape.

Conservation/Environment Officer Greg Petrosky said that volunteering (there are many possibilities available) is a great way to meet like-minded people, and he encourages everyone to give it a try.

### November 18, 2021

The Board heard a presentation from Brooke Larm, Education Specialist at E. L. Johnson Nature Center, who described the various birding activities that the nature center is involved in. OAS is funding a bird-banding event to be held there during next February’s Great Backyard Bird Count, and Ms. Larm will provide the board with information about other ways in which we can support the nature center.

Treasurer Elaine Ferguson reported that our finances are better this year than last, mainly due to donations and merchandise sales (hats and coffee mugs).

Program Officer Dave Hoch reported that programs are scheduled through next May, with June and September almost confirmed.

Membership Officer Jen Benke reported that we had a great year in 2021, but 2022 memberships are coming in very slowly.

Field Trip Officer Jeff Stacey reported that field trips are scheduled through next March, and all Christmas Bird Count territories have leaders assigned. The CBC tally will be via Zoom due to the continuing pandemic.

Social Media Administrator Dan Gertiser reported that our Facebook page now has nearly 1,800 likes.

Young Birders Club activities are scheduled through next March. YBC Coordinator Kathleen Dougherty indicated that interest in these events has been increasing.

Phil Bugosh has been our Publicity and Fund-raising Officer for the past 7+ years. He will be leaving that position at the end of the year, and the Board members expressed their sincere thanks for the outstanding job that he has done for OAS.

Doris Applebaum  
Secretary





If you are an Amazon user and would like to help benefit OAS, simply [CLICK HERE](#), add us to your favorite charity list, and then shop!

A percentage of your purchases will be donated to OAS and will help support our organization.

If you aren't using Amazon Smile, try it out. We'll appreciate it!

## MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

### The 2022 Membership Drive is underway!

You can renew your membership in one of two ways:

- 1) Use the “Renew OAS Membership” link on the Membership tab on our website (<http://www.oaklandaudubon.org>), to pay online using PayPal. [CLICK HERE](#)
- 2) Mail a check along with a membership form (page 27)

**Mail renewal forms to:**

Oakland Audubon Society  
C/O Jenifer Benke  
2145 Colony Club Ct.  
West Bloomfield, MI 48322

If you would like to check the status of your membership or have questions, contact OAS Membership Officer Jen Benke at: 734-657-7498 or [scubadu9900@yahoo.com](mailto:scubadu9900@yahoo.com).

**Thank you for helping us sustain OAS with your membership contributions.  
We would be nowhere without you!**

## Climate Watch Volunteers Needed!

*Climate Watch* is a National Audubon Society community science program that explores how North American birds are responding to climate change. The program uses a specific protocol to monitor 12 target bird species, including OAS's own *White-breasted Nuthatch*.

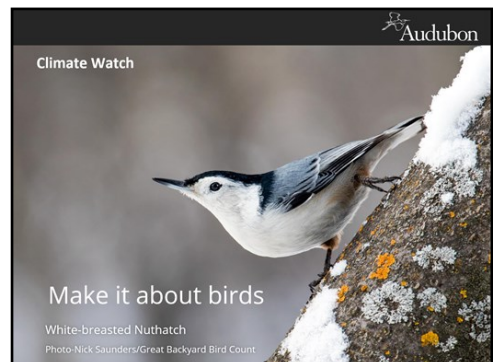
*Climate Watch* takes place during two distinct seasons each year, winter (January 15 - February 15) and summer (May 15 - June 15). Volunteers survey appropriate habitat within a specific block to conduct 12 5-minute point counts, recording all birds seen and heard within 100 meters. Surveys are started in the morning and completed before noon, or started in the afternoon and completed before sunset.

**OAS surveys 10 blocks within Oakland County located near Clarkston, Farmington, and Milford. We are looking for volunteers to participate starting in January 2022!**

If you are interested in learning more about this important citizen science project, contact Kathleen Dougherty at [kad8186@msn.com](mailto:kad8186@msn.com).

Oakland Audubon depends on the generosity of its members to continue this work to inform science and conservation.

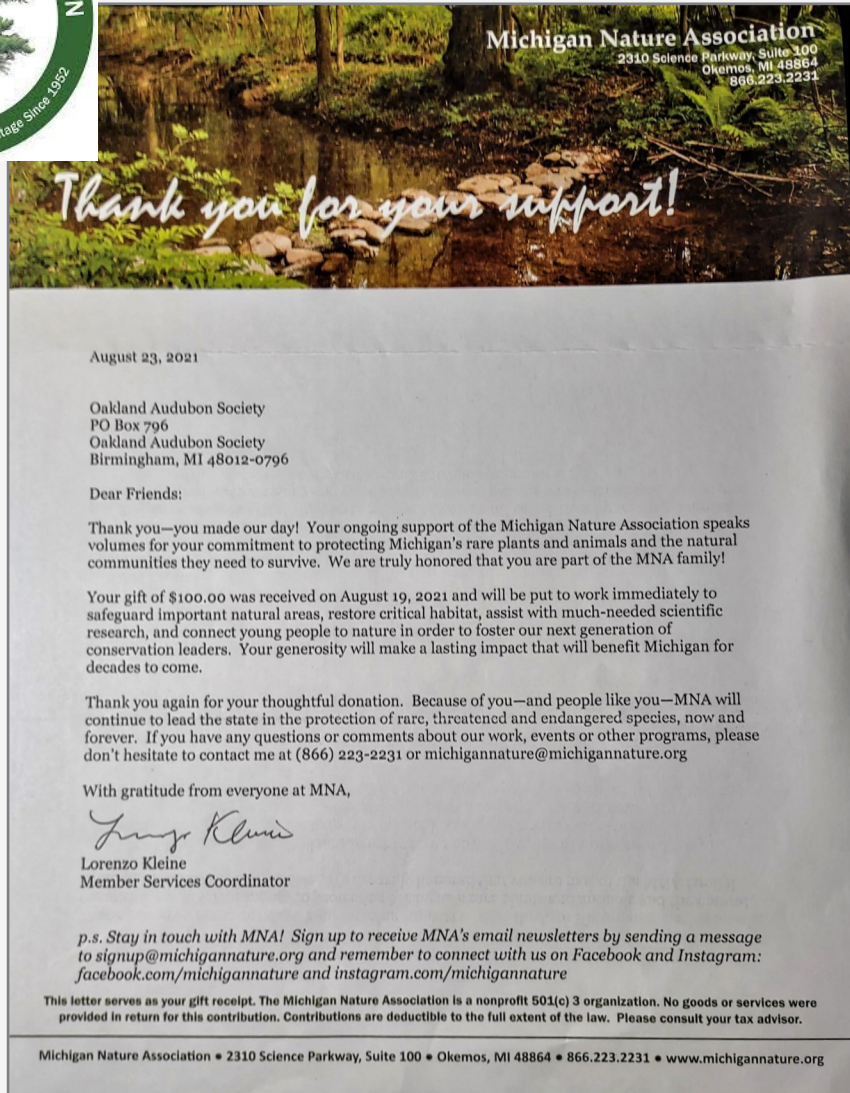
Thank you!





## Your Membership At Work

A **Thank-You** letter was received from the Michigan Nature Association (MNA) for the donation OAS provided. Thank you for helping OAS support local conservation minded organizations.



Established in 1952, the Michigan Nature Association (MNA) is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting Michigan's natural habitats and endangered plants and animals.

The purpose of the MNA is to acquire, protect and maintain natural areas that contain examples of Michigan endangered and threatened flora, fauna, and other components of the natural environment, including habitat for fish, wildlife and plants of the State of Michigan and to carry on a program of natural history study and conservation education. <https://www.michigannature.org/menus/home.html>

## MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS & PROGRAMS

Monthly membership meetings normally held on the second Tuesday of each month (except December, May, July and August) at the First United Methodist Church in Birmingham are on hold. **OAS meetings and programs continue to be offered online via Zoom. Meetings open at 6:30 PM and talks begin at 7:00 PM.** Specific instructions and links will be posted on the “meetings” page on our website at [www.oaklandaudubon.org](http://www.oaklandaudubon.org) and on OAS’s Facebook page prior to each meeting. Updates to the schedule will be posted on our website. Please contact a board member if you have questions.

### UPCOMING SCHEDULE

Date	Time	Program	Location
Tues., January 11	7:00 p.m.	Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE)	Via Zoom
Tues., February 8	7:00 p.m.	Climate Change in the Great Lakes	Via Zoom
Tues., March 8	7:00 p.m.	Monty and Rose: Chicago’s Piping Plovers	Via Zoom

### Bird Quiz Answers for Winter 2021 Quiz on Page 28

This issue’s photo quiz : a) House Finch female, b) Purple Finch female, c) Pine Siskin female

Explanation: A relatively easy set of birds to ID.

- a) Streaked breast with indistinct markings, plain brown head, pale wing bars, short and decurved finch bill, short primary projection.
- b) Stout bill with slightly curved culmen, bold brown head with white eyebrow stripe and white below brown loreal patch, short dark streaks on breast, long primary projection and distinct streaks on back.
- c) Thin and pointed bill, brown semicircle on auriculars (side of face), brown streaking overall, white wingbars and, the giveaway, yellow in primaries and edge of tail.

How did you do identifying these birds? Keep score throughout the year to see how you do!



# OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate with an ( X ) in the box any personal information above you do not want listed in the OAS membership directory.

Check also if you are a member of:

- \_\_\_\_ National Audubon Society
- \_\_\_\_ Michigan Audubon Society

**OAS needs and welcomes volunteers — please participate if you can!**

Check if you have the skills to help:

- \_\_\_\_ Become a board member
- \_\_\_\_ Lead a field trip or present a program
- \_\_\_\_ Fill an open position (Position: \_\_\_\_\_)

Check appropriate line:

- \_\_\_\_ Member renewal
- \_\_\_\_ New member
- \_\_\_\_ Change of address

## *OAS Membership Fees*

- Individual      \$15
- Family          \$20
- Contributing    \$25
- Supporting     \$50
- Benefactor     \$100

## *Our Mission*

- To provide, on a local level, access to the natural world through educational programs such as meetings and field trips.
- To advocate the preservation of wildlife habitats and endeavor to create interest in native birds, other animals and plants in Michigan.

**Please make checks payable to:**

OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

**Mail to:**

OAS MEMBERSHIP  
 C/O JENIFER BENKE  
 2145 COLONY CLUB CT.  
 WEST BLOOMFIELD, MICHIGAN 48322

*Oakland Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.  
 Your donation is 100% tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*