

# Oakland Bird Alliance

## THE NUTHATCH

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

### **“All About Owls”**

**Christina Funk**

**Tuesday, June 11, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.**

Meet Cristina Funk and the Stage Nature Center’s owl ambassadors. Participants will discover the nighttime world of the owl and meet native Michigan owls up close and personal! We will investigate the mysterious lives of owls, their adaptations for survival, and what humans can do to help them.

This children’s program is open to everyone.



Follow us on



### **“MOTUS Antenna System at Kensington Metropark”**

**Kathleen Hansen**

**Tuesday, September 10, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.**

Kathleen Hansen from Huron Valley Audubon Society will share the fascinating results of the MOTUS system hosted at Kensington Metropark and the next innovations in the future of this technology. The MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System is a global network of automated telemetry receiving stations coordinated by Birds Canada. This network of antennae picks up signals from transmitters (i.e., nanotags) affixed to a variety of animals, including birds, bats, and large insects.



### **“So You Want to Bird Internationally?”**

**Don Burlett**

**Tuesday, October 8, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.**

Sometimes, people who have become fascinated with birds decide that they’d like to see more than just “our birds.” To do so means traveling to another country or continent to go birding. How do you do that? Don Burlett will provide some ideas on how to go about this process. It’s slightly more complicated but not that difficult when compared to birding here. Join us to see how it is done.



### **Inside This Issue**

President’s Column	2
Board Members & Open Board Positions	3
Upcoming Field Trips	4
Field Trip Reports	5-21
YBC Field Trip Reports	22-23
YBC Upcoming Field Trips	24-25
Board Meeting Highlights	25
Nature Notes	26-27
Oakland Bird Alliance Around Town	28
Bird Quiz	29
Bird Briefs	30
Membership Information & Upcoming Meetings Schedule	31
Membership Form	32

Photos: Banner, G. Cummins; Programs, Stage Nature Center, Kathleen Hansen, Don Burlett.

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### Summer 2024

It finally happened – we changed our name! We are now Oakland Bird Alliance. This happens to be the fourth name in our 66-year history. I'm sure not everyone is happy with the change, but change is the only constant in our lives. Change happens to improve the circumstances of our lives and the purpose of organizations. I am sure with time, most people will forget the turbulence and settle into the new pattern. Imagine changing our name from Pontiac Audubon to Oakland Audubon! The Horror! Well, it's a done deal. I hope that everyone settles in and stays with the program of enjoying the birds and conserving the world where we both exist. That is our purpose and we will stay dedicated to that.

At the same time, we have been going through an incredible amount of change inside the organization. In the past year, we have changed our Secretary, recruited our next Field Trip Officer, changed Treasurers, and added a new Membership Officer. We also lost our new Secretary and our Conservation/Environment Officer, and look forward to having a new Program Officer and President. If that doesn't have some impact on the organization, nothing will. However, I am fully confident that the board will rise to the challenge and continue to provide a quality set of programs, field trips, and other activities to be proud of.

We have also been very busy with community outreach this past spring. We participated in a large number of events, some associated with Earth Day and others of different types. We always have a board member at each event, which makes the spring run of events and programs and field trips a taxing time. But we carried on with gusto.

By the time you read this, a large portion of the spring migration will be over. I hope you had time to get out and enjoy some of our field trips. We just came back from the Hocking Hills in Ohio and had a great field trip weekend. It's not every day that you see a Worm-eating Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Prairie Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, and a total of 102 species in one weekend. Our field trips are usually very entertaining and a great experience. Try one sometime if you haven't been to one.

Finally, I am beginning to reflect on my 18-year span as President of this group. It's been very rewarding to see the group grow and change its face. Since I have been here, many changes have occurred and I hope most of them have added benefits for our members. Most importantly, I have to thank all the folks that have held positions on our board over the years and do so currently. They have done a fabulous job and have been the heart of the organization. I feel like an orchestra conductor who can only be great if all the folks in the orchestra pit are great. And that's what I think of them – great!

So, as my term as President winds toward the end, I hope to see many of you at one event or another so I can enjoy being with all my friends during this tour through the years. I won't disappear but I will be able to relax a bit more soon. We'll talk real soon.

Don Burlett  
President

# OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE BOARD MEMBERS

## Elected Officers

President	Don Burlett	(330) 697 - 7735	<a href="mailto:baikalteal13@netzero.net">baikalteal13@netzero.net</a>
Secretary	<i>Vacant</i>		
Treasurer	Jen Benke	(734) 657 - 7498	<a href="mailto:scubadu9900@yahoo.com">scubadu9900@yahoo.com</a>
Membership Officer	Robert Moll		<a href="mailto:OASmembershipofficer@gmail.com">OASmembershipofficer@gmail.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	Kathleen Dougherty		<a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
Hospitality	Julie Wineman		<a href="mailto:juliewineman13@yahoo.com">juliewineman13@yahoo.com</a>
Publicity & Fundraising	Karen Kessler		<a href="mailto:Karenmk@live.com">Karenmk@live.com</a>
Website Editor	Hannah Dunbar		<a href="mailto:oddbirdstoonest@gmail.com">oddbirdstoonest@gmail.com</a>
Social Media Administrator	Dan Gertiser	(248) 762 - 4354	<a href="mailto:dangertiser@comcast.net">dangertiser@comcast.net</a>
Nuthatch Editor	Guadalupe Cummins		<a href="mailto:cummins.guadalupe@gmail.com">cummins.guadalupe@gmail.com</a>
Seven Ponds Rep.	Dr. Greg Gossick		<a href="mailto:ggossickdds@sbcglobal.net">ggossickdds@sbcglobal.net</a>
Conservation/Environment	<i>Vacant</i>		
Advocacy	George Harris		<a href="mailto:gbharrisiv@gmail.com">gbharrisiv@gmail.com</a>

*\*\* Note, we will update our email addresses in the coming months\*\**

## Volunteer With Us!

Do you want to get involved with us? Consider contributing your talents and skills as a Board Member to help us realize our mission. Contact Don Burlett at (330) 697-7735 if you are interested in any of the following positions:

### Secretary

The OBA Secretary prepares minutes of the board of directors meetings and minutes of the business portion of the membership meetings. The Secretary also provides highlights of board of directors meetings to include in the quarterly newsletter, maintains business records for the organization that are not kept by the President or the Treasurer, and writes correspondence to members or partners as needed.

### Conservation and Environment

The OBA Conservation and Environment Officer keeps members informed about environmental conservation matters and identifies volunteer opportunities our members can participate in to protect the environment that sustains birds (e.g., invasive species work days, river clean-up events). The officer distributes volunteer opportunities information to members via email, social media, and/or birding listservers, and may organize volunteer groups to support a specific conservation cause or environmental project. This officer maintains the "Conservation Page" of our website and occasionally contributes to the Nuthatch.

### Program Officer

The Program Officer maintains the OBA's monthly program calendar, which includes in-person meetings and virtual meetings offered via *Zoom*. The officer coordinates and communicates with prospective speakers, coordinates with OBA's Treasurer to make payments as needed, and makes necessary arrangements (e.g., digital projector, technical needs, equipment/props) to accommodate each program. The Program Officer attends in-person and *Zoom* meetings to introduce speakers, and may also help moderate *Zoom* meetings. The Program Officer proactively communicates with OBA board members to facilitate publicity throughout our communication outlets, including website, newsletter, and social media.

## FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Field trip details are posted on our website. Changes to the schedule will also be posted on the website, and registered participants will receive email updates. Young Birders Club (YBC) field trip details are listed on pages 24-25.

Registration is required for most trips — contact trip leader for details.

For current information check the “Field Trips” page on our website!

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

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
June 15 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Bird Dad’s Hike at Bear Creek Nature Park (Young Birders Club)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
July 13 (Saturday) 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Butterflies & Birds at Golden Preserve (Young Birders Club)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
July 27 (Saturday) 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Butterflies at Indian Springs Metropark	Doris Applebaum & Jeff Stacey <a href="mailto:ibis4247@sbcglobal.net">ibis4247@sbcglobal.net</a> ; <a href="mailto:jdstacey@ameritech.net">jdstacey@ameritech.net</a>
August 10 (Saturday) 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Environmental Interpretive Center—UM Dearborn (Young Birders Club)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>
August 17 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Pointe Mouillee State Game Area	Jim Fowler — To register contact Kayla Niner <a href="mailto:shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com">shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com</a>
August 25 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Heritage Park (Farmington Hills)	Mike Mencotti <a href="mailto:mmencotti9@gmail.com">mmencotti9@gmail.com</a>
September 22 (Sunday) 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Hawk Watch—Raptor Migration (Young Birders Club)	Kathleen Dougherty <a href="mailto:kad8186@msn.com">kad8186@msn.com</a>

***Save the Date!***

**13<sup>th</sup> Annual Nuthatch Open - September 7, 2024**

Set up a team and join our annual competitive birding event. Teams bird all day anywhere in Oakland County — all day means 12:01 AM until 4:00 PM. The afterglow will likely be at Indian Springs Metropark (details to come).

The registration form will be available later this summer. Contact Kayla Niner at [shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com](mailto:shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com) or Jeff Stacey at [jdstacey@ameritech.net](mailto:jdstacey@ameritech.net).

## Field Trip Reports

### March 2, 2024 — Crosswinds Marsh & Grace Lake

Leaders: Mike Mencotti & Jeff Stacey

The first thing one needs for a gull trip is gulls. Thankfully, this time the landfill across the road from Crosswinds Marsh was chock full of them and we had plenty of looks at Herring and Ring-billed gulls. As for other species, they were in somewhat short supply – but we did lock onto an adult Great Black-backed Gull. The best ducks in the area were on a flooded field nearby. The highlights were many Northern Pintails and one Northern Shoveler, but there was a good mix of dabblers.

We proceeded on to Grace Lake which was full of gulls (and more were coming in all the time!). Again, it was mostly Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, but here we found a couple of Lesser Black-backed Gull for variety's sake. Despite diligent scope work by the group, no white-winged gulls were sighted. We will find some next time for sure. We estimated about 600 gulls total for the day – including three uncommon ones. Including non-gull species, we had 38 total species for the day.



Clockwise from top: “Looking for Gulls at Crosswinds Marsh,” Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (Kayla Niner).



### March 17, 2024 — Late Winter Wildcard at Kensington Metropark

Leader: Kayla Niner

Chilly temperatures greeted the six birders that met at the Kensington Metropark nature center. The birds were up and about however, and we were greeted by many hungry Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice looking for handouts. They weren't disappointed by the group's offerings of sunflower seeds and peanuts.

Our first stop was the bridge just beyond the nature center, where we hoped to find a Red-headed Woodpecker. We waited and sure enough, the Red-headed Woodpecker showed up and we got good looks at the bird. On the way back, we spotted a Red-tailed Hawk on top of a dead tree. Near the nature center there was a pair of Sandhill Cranes. They too wanted a handout, but they were disappointed...until they noticed some seed left behind by previous visitors — feeding cranes is not permitted at the park!



## Field Trip Reports (continued)

From there we went to the boardwalk at Wildwing Lake in Livingston County, where we saw many duck species including Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and Common Merganser. The Great Blue Herons were back on their nests and prepping for spring and two Bald Eagles occasionally flew over and harassed them. The group also found a Wilson's Snipe which fed on the mudflats for some time before flying away. It was the most exciting bird of the trip.



From left: Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*, and Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (Malissa Bossardet).

On the way to the next stop, we slowed down along the side of the road to briefly watch dancing Sandhill Cranes. They didn't like the audience, however, and quit dancing when we were watching.

The next stop was supposed to be the boat launch, but the parking lot was closed, so we went up the road to Maple Beach and braved a cold wind to scope for more ducks. Not much was there, but we got to see Horned Grebes and Lesser Scaup. We also saw early Tree Swallows.

Our fourth stop was the farm center. We hiked out into the farm center to check the overlook of the Osprey nesting area to look for ducks. There wasn't much on that lake, but we added Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird, and Killdeer to our list on the way to and from the overlook.



Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* (Kayla Niner).



Left: Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* (Malissa Bossardet). Right: Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (Kayla Niner).

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

We then drove from the farm center to the side of the road across from the Osprey nesting area to see if there was anything to see from that viewpoint, but the lake was just as empty. From there, we wanted to check one more beach, but the wind had picked up and on the way there the trip leader noticed whitecaps on the normally calm lake — the group decided to stay warm and call it a day.

### April 7, 2024 — Stage Nature Center

Leader: Kayla Niner

The morning was cool and clear when six birders met at Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center in Troy with hopes of finding displaying Wild Turkeys. The group headed toward the nature center where we heard some honking. Two Canada Geese were walking across the top of the nature center roof! The group stopped and enjoyed this odd sight and continued into the trails.



Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* (Kyla Niner).

Not too many birds were present in the old-growth forest, but several woodpeckers were heard, including Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Northern Flicker. Also here was the only Wild Turkey we saw — a single hen that called a few times for us. Somewhere else, a tom gobbled an answer, but we never found him. At the end of the forest path, where it lets out into the Bluebird trail, we found a male Eastern Bluebird sitting on top of the bat house.

We continued down the Blackbird Loop where we heard many Red-winged Blackbirds, including one the trip leader heard the previous year — an odd bird that doesn't trill. Perhaps he found a mate last year and returned to the same spot to try again. We visited the boardwalk tower and lurked on the observation deck for a while, but we only found a few Song Sparrows.



Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* (left Kayla Niner, right Malissa Bossardet).

Next, we climbed to the top of the hill where a stand of pines sits near the outdoor classroom, and we found Black-capped Chickadees and kinglets, both Ruby and Golden-crowned. We took a break on the benches to watch the trees for a little bit and spotted an adult Cooper's Hawk. We watched it for a little while and she flew — right up into a nest that was partially built! This was a real treat to see. We backtracked along the Bluebird Trail by the meadow and found American Goldfinches and Tree Swallows, but still no Turkeys.



## Field Trip Reports (continued)

Heading back to the nature center we saw our first American red squirrel, which a member of our party had been looking forward to seeing; the cute little squirrel posed for a few pictures before scurrying off. We visited the owls briefly before deciding to call it a day. As we turned to leave, however, we saw a second Cooper's Hawk, likely the mate of the one we had seen in the pines.

We walked to the parking lot, satisfied with our 29 species, but wanting to round it up to 30. We lucked out on hearing some House Sparrows by the nature center and we left with a nice round number, despite the lack of the hoped-for displaying turkeys.



Left: American red squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* and Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* (Kayla Niner).

Right: Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* and American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (top Malissa Bossardet, bottom Andrea Niner).



## Field Trip Reports (continued)

### April 8, 2024 — Birds & Eclipse at Magee Marsh

Leader: Jen Benke

A lot of anxiety by the trip leader proved to be unfounded. Traffic going down to Magee was normal. When we arrived, the parking lot was empty. We started off by doing a “reverse Magee” beginning on the east end of the boardwalk. With our group of great birders we scoured the boardwalk for every available species. We then strolled down the Estuary Trail and picked up a few ducks in the lake and in Crane Creek beyond. We made the long walk back to the cars for picnic lunches, chillaxing, and tailgating. Some high energy birders wandered off for an after lunch walk to look for Rusty Blackbirds and came back with pictures of a Palm Warbler. While relaxing, a Brown Thrasher serenaded us.

Magee was in the path of totality. We were able to see the whole event from the parking lot. What a spectacular show! The eclipse “first contact” was around 2:15 PM and totality at approximately 3:15 PM. Words cannot explain how cool this experience was.



Photo: Don Burlett



Photo: Pat Brandon

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

Afterwards, some of us continued birding while we waited out the traffic jams. After a bit of a backup getting out of Magee, we jumped over to Ottawa NWR, where Jim Koppin led us around the wildlife drive. There were ducks, coots, eagles, a field full of snipe, and Jim put us on a nesting Great Horned Owl. Our group thinned further, but we made Howard Marsh our last stop. We saw four Black-necked Stilts, an Osprey enjoying dinner, and other ducks and shorebirds. The I-75 highway was still a problem by the time we finally headed home, but the backroads route worked great. Even with the traffic, everyone had a great time and were very happy to have been there!



Clockwise from bottom left:  
Yellow-rumped warbler *Setophaga coronata*, Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*, Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*, Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea* (Malissa Bossardet).

### April 21 — Maple River State Game Area

Leader: Don Burlett

Six birders willing to explore an interesting state game area far from home attended this field trip. The Maple River State Game Area has a river, as one would expect, and impoundments that bring in lots of birds. We visited the East Unit, which spans both sides of US-127 (Area A and B on the map [next page]). This area has been wet in the past but was very usable this time.

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

We began by walking along the dikes in Area B. There were a number of ducks and geese on this impoundment along with a few passerines. We saw both kinglets and several woodpeckers along with an Eastern Phoebe. Absence of warblers was notable throughout this entire field trip. Sparrows, ducks, and geese were the most commonly seen birds.

Map by Michigan DNR



Next we drove along East Ranger Road, just north of the impoundments, and found a number of Horned Larks in the fields. Along the way, we passed a cell tower with an active Osprey nest. We then hiked a dike along the backside of the impoundment (Area B). This allowed us to see another area of shallow water, possibly describable as a “floodle,” where a large number of Sandhill Cranes (close to 40), Canada Geese, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Shovelers were present. We also encountered a handful of Lesser Yellowlegs and Greater Yellowlegs along with a Solitary Sandpiper, Killdeer, etc. The Tree Swallows were also very numerous here, likely the result of a ditch that was protected and warm, making for a food supply worth exploiting. An Osprey flyover was also seen at that location. We encountered a leucistic Song Sparrow and Rusty Blackbirds in this area as well.



Clockwise from bottom left:

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*, Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*, Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, and Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* (Malissa Bossardet).

Then we drove back across US-127 to Area A. On our way, we spotted Eastern Meadowlark and House Sparrow. We might have seen a Savannah Sparrow too, but it was not ID'd by the leader. Things were a bit quiet here; it could have been the time of day (near noon), the wind direction, or the type of water. We did get Ring-billed Duck, Blue-winged Teal (bringing our duck species count to 13), and our first Barn Swallow of the season.



## Field Trip Reports (continued)

After a short time here, we headed to lunch to discuss our day and other adventures. The day's total was 54 species.



Top: Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* and Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (Malissa Bossardet). Right: "Exploring the dikes" (Don Burlett).



### April 26 - 28 — Hocking Hills State Park

Leaders: Don Burlett, John Watts & Heather Stehle



Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (Karen Kessler).

We last offered this trip back in 2019. This year, with the kind help of John Watts, former Director at the Columbus Metroparks, and Heather Stehle, Executive Director of the Crane Hollow Reserve, we were able to do this trip again.

Ten intrepid birders headed south early Friday morning to Pickerington Ponds Metropark, east of Columbus, Ohio. We went directly to the maintenance area and we were able to view a nesting Barn Owl sitting in the hole in a barn. Not great views because it was the middle of the day, but it was definitely present.

We continued onto Glacier Knoll within the Pickerington Ponds Metropark before heading further south to Lake Logan. There, we birded several areas of the lake (Evans Road, the beach, and the dam) adding species as we rolled along.

Later, we headed to Crane Hollow and then to dinner at *Millstone BBQ*. Before bed, we enjoyed American Woodcocks displaying in the field just below the office building. This first day, we tallied 63 species in essentially a half day of birding.

We started the glorious second day birding the road from the office to the main road. John did an amazing job helping us find all sorts of birds along the driveway. Prairie Warblers were singing when we got up, White-eyed Vireos were on territory, Blue-winged Warblers were calling from their roosts, and many other great birds were also at this spot. Another highlight here was a Yellow-breasted Chat calling and flying for all of us to see. We also had Carolina Chickadees, heard a Kentucky Warbler, Veery, Wood Thrushes calling, and more.

Afterwards we drove to Dupler Road and the Rockbridge Canal to look for Prothonotary Warbler. It was an elusive bird but we found him, and we also found a Yellow-throated Warbler. Then we headed to Clear Creek Metropark and walked the Neotoma Valley Trail and the Lower Hemlock Trail searching for other elusive species. The Neotoma Valley Trail was great and a couple of great birds were seen here, including a Louisiana Waterthrush bouncing around up in the trees and a Worm-eating Warbler. Both of these birds are not "every year kind of birds" and they were lifers for some of the folks. We added a Cerulean Warbler along the main road and later a Common Merganser, which breeds in the creek there. By the end of the day, we had notched 13 warblers for the trip and 90 species for the week-end.



## Field Trip Reports (continued)



Top: Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor* (Malissa Bossardet) and Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla* (Karen Kessler). Bottom: Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora cyanoptera* (Malissa Bossardet). Center and bottom left: Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea* (Malissa Bossardet) and birders looking for it (Dan Gertiser).

Dinner at the *Hocking Hills Lodge* was joyous that night, as we celebrated our tremendous day with warblers and life birds. After dinner, we visited Old Man's Cave and enjoyed the scenery before heading back to Crane Hollow.

Sunday morning, we birded the road to the office again, seeing old friends before departing. We headed to Darby Creek Metropark to bird Watts Marsh (dedicated to our host leader). We added a few marsh birds, including Sora and Virginia Rail, as well as a few sparrows (Savannah, Vesper, and Henslow's). We visited Prairie Oaks Metropark to find the last birds before heading home very satisfied with our efforts.

All totaled, we managed to see a total of 102 species and there were a large number of lifers for the participants. This was such a nice trip, we are truly considering not waiting five years to go back for more!



Old Man's Cave (Dan Gertiser).

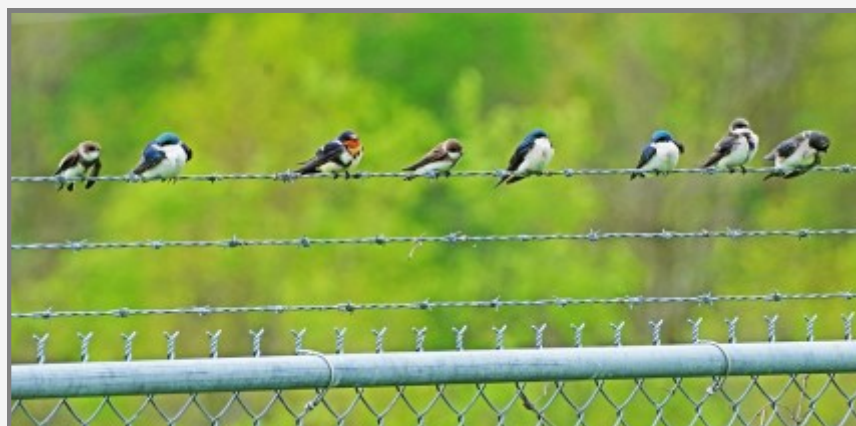
## Field Trip Reports (continued)

### May 3 – 5 — Berrien County

Leader: Don Burlett

Just last week, I led a trip to Hocking Hills, which I last led in 2019. This weekend, I led a trip to Berrien County, which I last led in 2017. Such nostalgia shows how fast time passes. Six loyal birders joined this excursion; we began early on Friday driving west to Berrien County. The weather was mostly cloudy with a breeze and temperatures in the 50s. Our first stop was the farm fields along Buffalo Road south of Three Oaks; we were searching for Brewer's Blackbird and/or Smith's Longspur. As luck would have it, we only saw Brewer's Blackbirds. But we also saw a flock of Wilson's Snipe along with an American Woodcock, Trumpeter Swans, Horned Larks, a Northern Harrier, an American Kestrel, and a few other species.

After lunch, we visited the Three Oaks water treatment ponds and nabbed some ducks (Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, and Ruddy Duck), along with Lesser Yellowlegs, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, and Spotted Sandpiper. We also added a collection of swallows at this site, including Tree, Barn, Northern Rough-winged, Bank, and Cliff swallows, and Purple Martin. After this productive stop, we headed to Warren Dunes. We parked at Floral Lane and tried to walk a few trails, but they were very wet from heavy rain the previous Thursday, so we didn't get to bird much of the Yellow Birch Trail — it was submerged and impassable. Other birds seen or heard here included Eastern Phoebe, Swainson's Thrush, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, and several warbler species (Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Bay-breasted, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Pine, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Green). We also added some sparrows (Chipping, Field, Savannah, Song, White-throated, and White-crowned). We logged 90 species on the first day! That was an amazing start to the weekend and spurred us into overdrive the rest of the weekend.



Collection of swallows, from left to right:

Bank Swallow, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Bank Swallow, 2x Tree Swallow (ad.), 2x Tree Swallow (imm.) (Mannesh Rajvanshi).

On Saturday, the weather was foggy to start but quickly cleared off and sunny skies prevailed. The temperature reached the mid-70s and the winds were minimal all day. We began at the New Buffalo beach where there wasn't much except a few Spotted Sandpipers and a couple American Pipits flyovers. From there we headed to West Forest Lawn Road, south of Three Oaks. This road is always worth walking and includes the Kesling Nature Preserve. The birding was particularly good, and we added a bunch of new birds, including the following warblers: Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue-winged, Tennessee, Cape May, and Palm. We also added Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Wood Thrush, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Ringed Kingfisher, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Great Egret, Red-headed Woodpecker, and more.

After lunch, we headed to the Galien River Township Park's canopy walk. Things were calm, but we added Eastern Kingbird and Sora to our sightings. With this stop, we added another 24 species of birds to our list, bringing our two-day total to 114 species. Outstanding!



## Field Trip Reports (continued)

Storms and more rain moved through overnight, adding to the difficulty of walking trails already submerged. The temperature had also dropped and we didn't reach the mid-50s for most of the day. Cloudy and a bit breezy made life tough. We began Sunday morning by visiting Gran Mere State Park. The one trail we tried to walk was submerged, but after a bit, we found Mute Swan, Peregrine Falcon, American Coot, Yellow-throated Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Common Loon, and a Least Flycatcher. We moved on to the Sarett Nature Center near Benton Harbor hoping to catch up with a Yellow-breasted Chat, but had no luck. We did, however, add a Virginia Rail. Then a report of a Yellow-breasted Chat at the Brown Sanctuary came in. Since that site was not far away, we traveled there and succeeded in finding the bird. After this sighting, we ended our weekend of birding with a nice round number of 124 species. We also logged a respectable number of warbler species — 22.

One thing this trip demonstrated was the value of knowing bird calls and chip notes. This was absolutely crucial for the count over the weekend. Between the use of the Merlin App. to confirm some suspicious calls, the good ears of Terri Chapdelaine, and the good eyes of everyone else, we went home satisfied that we had done an excellent job for an early spring weekend.



Left: Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens* and birders at Brown Sanctuary (Don Burlett).

Right: Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* and group looking for it (Don Burlett).

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

### May 5 — Red Oaks County Park

Leader: Kayla Niner

A group of fifteen birders gathered at the Red Oaks County Park's parking lot. The weather was sunny and it was already starting to get warm, which meant warblers were already hopping through the trees. We had several species before leaving the parking lot, including Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Nashville Warbler. Rather than entering the park immediately, the group tracked down the road along the west side of the park. We stopped at an extremely productive tree that produced a Philadelphia Vireo, a Blackburnian Warbler, a Cape May Warbler, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and a vibrant male Scarlet Tanager, which was a sort-of lifer for the trip leader who hadn't yet seen a male Scarlet Tanager in breeding plumage.



Birding Red Oaks County Park (Karen Kessler).

We finally entered the park where the birds continued to impress; we added Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, and American Redstart to the list as we made our way to the north end of the park. Unfortunately, we were unable to turn up the Northern Waterthrush that had been hanging around the area a few days before. As we made our way back south, we encountered some common species that upped our species count, including House Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and a Hairy Woodpecker checking out a nesting hole. We were starting to think we were not going to see much more when someone's Merlin said it heard a Golden-winged Warbler. Not willing to trust the app that often hears Ospreys at the park, we all stopped and looked for the bird. Two members of the group got eyes on the bird first, then the whole group got glimpses of the bird, a lifer for at least one member of the group. It was definitely the highlight of the day.

Back at the middle of the park, we checked out the nature center's pond before moving back to the parking lot, which produced for us again. We found a Blue-headed Vireo, a Red-eyed Vireo, a Black-throated Green Warbler, and we heard a Blue-winged Warbler, though we never found the bird. Some members of the trip saw and heard an Eastern Wood-Pewee, a normally common bird, but early for the date.

Heading out into the south end, we got a Black-throated Blue Warbler that put on a show for us. We continued down to the south end hoping for thrushes and woodpeckers, but we were disappointed to find this area mostly quiet. We did add two Indigo Buntings along with a Northern Flicker and a Sandhill Crane that called as it flew over the park. We also enjoyed the flowers, particularly plants such as white trilliums, golden Alexander, May apple, and Jack-in-the-pulpit. We also spotted a deer and a red-spotted purple butterfly.

We ended the trip at the nature center's parking lot, where the trip had started. We were tired and birded out, but we had an impressive list of 53 species.



Left: Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca* (Kayla Niner). Right: Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* (Kayla Niner).



## Field Trip Reports (continued)



Clockwise from bottom left:

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*, Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*, Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*, Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*, Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius* (Kayla Niner).

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

### May 11 — Magee Marsh “Crazy Day”

Leader: Don Burlett

Leading a Magee Marsh field trip usually involves "herding" a group of birders through the crowded boardwalk on one of the busiest days of the year, International Migratory Bird Day. Good luck with that! Doing it with a group of about 14 people makes it even more fun...and based on my experience "herding" is closer to reality than "leading" — that is already a challenge. Add that I typically start with a small group at 6:30 AM and then go back to the beginning to get the late arrivals at 8:00 AM. It becomes complex.

Jim Koppin and I scouted the boardwalk on Friday and were disappointed to see only seven warbler species. The plan to include the Ottawa NWR, Metzger Marsh, and Howard Marsh didn't look too bad because we saw 75 species and could hope for more on Saturday.

This time, some of us gathered at 6:30 AM and were greeted by rain, and I do mean rain. We huddled under a tent near the entrance to the boardwalk hoping it would end soon. The rain concluded at about 8:00 AM...by this time we had the whole group ready to go together.

We headed into the jungle of people that was initially reduced by the rain. We were rewarded with an improved list of species. Among them were 16 warblers, including Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler and Wilson's Warbler. We also saw Bald Eagle, Eastern Screech-Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Warbling Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Swainson's Thrush. Photos from our group of talented photographers show some of these wonders.



Photo: Don Burlett



Clockwise from bottom left:  
Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*, Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia* (Malissa Bossardet), Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia* (Sharon Korte), and Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca* (Maneesh Rajvanshi).



## Field Trip Reports (continued)



Clockwise from bottom left: American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* (Maneesh Rajvanshi), Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea* (Karen Kessler), Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens* (Malissa Bossardet), Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum* (Maneesh Rajvanshi). Center: Eastern Screech-Owl *Megascops asio* (Karen Kessler).

We broke for lunch around 12 PM and headed to the Ottawa NWR to cruise the wildlife drive. The rain had ended but the wind had picked up, which made birds hunker down and a little less easy to find. However, we saw tons of Trumpeter Swans, Great Blue Herons, and Canada Geese. Marsh Wrens were calling but stayed hidden in the reeds. We added a Northern Harrier to our raptor list as well. We saw a Great Egret seize a small snake at the edge of the water. The snake fought the good battle, but the egret fought the snake and the snake met his fate — being lunch for the egret.

On the way back to the Ottawa NWR parking lot, we drove a side road and got a pair of American Kestrels that were nesting nearby. We also heard a Northern Bobwhite calling from a tree line on the other side of a farm field; it was quite nice to hear this uncommon species.

We subsequently did a quick drive through the Metzger Marsh where we added Herring Gull and Common Tern.

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

Finally, we went to Howard Marsh where our luck held a little. One of the Black-necked Stilts made a brief visit to the open muddy shoreline before returning to the reeds to hunker down. We weren't so lucky with the Yellow-headed Blackbirds that had decided the reeds were a better place to be.

After this interesting day of herding birders and enduring rain, wind, and slightly cooler temperatures, we ended the day with 77 species of birds. It was a fun day and the group did very well under the circumstances, namely, the weather and the "clogged arteries" of the boardwalk on a busy day.

Another Magee adventure completed for our group.



Great Egret *Ardea alba* with a small snake (Sharon Korte).

### May 11 — Bay City State Park, Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area, and Tawas Point State Park

Leaders: Jen Benke and Terri Chapdelaine

We started the day at Bay City State Park with six birders. We scanned the beach and found gulls, terns, Dunlin, mallards, egrets, and cranes. An American Pipit and a Great Black-backed Gull were seen earlier by the leaders, but were gone by the time the group formed. Walking the trail near the lagoon turned up a few warblers. Crossing the road and following the path a short way towards Tobico Marsh turned up several more warblers, including Wilson's, Bay-Breasted, Blackpoll, Tennessee, and Nashville.

From there we headed to the Linwood Road terminus, which we had never been to before. The reported White-winged Tern and Little Gulls were not seen, but we picked up a Ruddy Turnstone and Common Mergansers.

Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area provided a couple of ducks, two Wilson's Phalaropes, Sedge and Marsh wrens, and among other birds, a lifer for some: White-faced Ibis.



Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* (Malissa Bossardet).

After a quick lunch we walked Big Creek Road in Au Gres and picked up several more birds, including Ovenbird, Golden-winged Warblers, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Veery, and Wood Thrush. The highlight bird there was a very cooperative Mourning Warbler, who was giving us unusual great close-up looks.

A quick stop at the Noggle Road grasslands added Bobolink and Trumpeter Swan, with lots of Sedge Wrens singing. Another quick stop at the mouth of the Au Gres River didn't yield any new birds, but we were treated to a Yellow-headed Blackbird that landed on a tree 15 feet away.

A Bald Eagle flying by as we checked into our hotel gave us the 100<sup>th</sup> bird of the day.



## Field Trip Reports (continued)

After a great dinner at *Mangos Mexican Cuisine & Tequila Bar* we decided on an early evening trip to Tuttle Marsh. We saw a Ruffed Grouse standing right beside the road, then later heard another one drumming. We also heard a few American Bitterns calling in the distance. A few other species were added for a count of 110 for the day! The mosquitoes were very intense there however, and eventually drove us away, back to our hotels for the night.

Sunday morning we met at Tawas Point State Park before the gates were opened. Not to be deterred, we walked through the campground and down the path to the lighthouse, adding more warblers, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and a Brown Thrasher. There were some Black-bellied Plovers on the lakeside beach, but Piping Plover was not seen. We were treated to three viewings of a Merlin that was stalking the point trail. Several more warblers were seen, including one hard-won Black-throated Blue Warbler. A flyover of a Common Loon was a highlight at the end of the point!

We scouted the Wurtsmith Airport after lunch and got a very brief sighting of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Then we took a short walk at Clark's Marsh to end our trip. Overall, we had 128 species of birds, including 22 warbler species.



Top: Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina* and Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea* (Karen Kessler). Center: Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* — at a buffet (Malissa Bossardet).



American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (Karen Kessler).

## Young Birders Club

### Field Trip Reports

#### February 17, 2024 — Great Backyard Bird Count (Johnson Nature Center)

Leader: Blanche Wicke

The YBC participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) at the Johnson Nature Center. This GBBC is a four-day global birding event that started in 1997 and has grown over the years. The YBC has participated in the GBBC since 2018. Several board members attended this field trip as well, including Jen Benke, Don Burlett, and George Harris.

It was a chilly, sunny morning – the group met at the nature center before hiking the trails. One of our first goals was searching for a Great Horned Owl known to reside on the property. We found the bird perfectly camouflaged; it was hard to see it perched motionless like a statue on a branch. Seeing this top predator of the forest in the wild was a treat for everyone. Great Horned Owls nest early and many incubate eggs in February. Once the first egg is laid, incubation starts, which results in owlets hatching at separate times and the first hatchling being stronger and bigger than its siblings. Here is a link to live bird cams through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology — [Great Horned Owls](#) | [Cornell Lab Bird Cams](#) [Cornell Lab Bird Cams](#) ([allaboutbirds.org](#)).



The Johnson Nature Center cares for a few injured animals that are used for educational purposes. So our next stop was the outdoor shelters to see injured animal ambassadors, including a Peregrine Falcon and a deer.

Afterwards, the group hiked the trails along a tributary of the Rouge River and the pond. The group was hoping to spot an Eastern Screech-Owl that had been seen in the area; however, only a few Mallards and Canada Geese were present. The group circled the pond and headed into the hardwood forest to find three species of woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Northern Cardinals. Young birders used the raised platform to see the property at a distance. There are several unique stops along the trail where visitors can rest and reflect. Eventually the group returned to the nature center and continued birding at the feeding station. The birds visiting the feeders were unexpected and amazing. Everyone was delighted to see a male Purple Finch eating at a feeder as well as a Brown Creeper on a tree trunk nearby. Brown Creepers blend into the bark and use their stiff tails for support as they spiral upwards on the tree looking for insects and spiders. After viewing the feeders, the group explored the nature center exhibits and interactive learning displays. The building is open to the public on weekend afternoons.

The eBird checklist for the YBC's GBBC included 21 species and over 50 individuals. The global results for the GBBC for 2024 were record-breaking. Birders reported 7,920 species of birds identified in 384,416 eBird checklists submitted. Several countries and regions participated, with the United States submitting the highest number of checklists followed by India and Canada. [2024 Final Results – Great Backyard Bird Count](#).



Thank you to Blanche Wicke for leading this field trip and Heather Klish for the photos and help with this field trip report.

Photos: Heather Klish and OBA gallery



## Young Birders Club Field Trip Reports

### March 16, 2024 — Pondering Penguins (Detroit Zoo)

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

A group of sixteen traveled to the Detroit Zoo to see penguins. We started at the Polk Penguin Conservation Center (PPCC) and met Mike Reed and Jessica Jozwiak — Jessica is the lead Penguin care staff member at the PPCC. The group initially gathered at the floor-to-ceiling window of the penguin habitat. This view is like looking at penguins at the edge of the water in the Antarctic. Several species of penguins were moving about the habitat as it was feeding time. Jessica shared information about the species of penguins, their needs, and their care. The penguins have a large aquatic area to swim, dive, and porpoise. This level of activity helps keep the penguins fit. The PPCC is a state-of-the-art facility and the wellbeing of the penguins is of foremost importance.



The group then walked to the lower level of the habitat to see the penguins swimming and thanked Jessica for sharing her knowledge. The next adventure in the PPCC involved a learning station facilitated by zoo educational staff. We felt the feathers of penguins, which are dense and compacted, and learned other penguin facts. Young birders also pondered about the complexity of penguin survival via a hands-on activity. Parents and young birders then relaxed while watching the penguins swimming. The views were remarkable.

We left the PPCC and took a short walk through the Wildlife Interpretive Gallery and the Matilda R. Wilson Free Flight Aviary. Matthew Porter, a caretaker at the aviary, welcomed us. The aviary was a completely different experience — the lush greenery and bird songs surrounded the group. As we walked, Matthew shared information about the birds in the aviary and brought mealworms to bring some of the birds into better view. At one stop, one of the birds was attracted to Stacey's nail polish (her nails looked like red berries!). The aviary was a wonderful experience for the young birders.



Upon exiting the aviary, the group witnessed a life and death struggle between a Rock Pigeon and a Cooper's Hawk. Most of the group stayed to watch the drama. The characters included the two main players and a pair of Canada Geese checking on the situation. The hawk preferred to dine alone and moved the pigeon...the Rock Pigeon eventually succumbed to the persistence of the Cooper's Hawk.

The YBC is extremely grateful to the educational staff at the Detroit Zoo, especially Mike Reed, Jessica Jozwiak, Matthew Porter, and Thomas Benson. Thomas did a lot of the behind-the-scenes arrangements. After the YBC program ended, several families stayed to see other zoo exhibits/venues. The Detroit Zoo is a wonderful asset to the area and a few people purchased family memberships for this YBC's field trip.



Photos: Kathleen Dougherty and Kayla Niner

# Young Birders Club Field Trips

## June - September 2024

### **Bird Dad's Hike – Saturday, June 15, 2024; 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM** **Bear Creek Nature Park, Oakland Township**

We will hike and search for bird dads at Bear Creek Nature Park. Male birds are more colorful in some species. This park is a wonderful place to see Eastern Bluebirds, Baltimore Orioles, and much more. As many as 145 species of birds have been observed at Bear Creek Nature Park. The Oakland Owlets will honor bird dads and dads in general for Father's Day. Plan to hike about 1.5 miles. Bear Creek Nature Park is owned and managed by Oakland Township Parks. Entry is free.



### **Butterflies & Birds – Saturday, July 13, 2024; 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM** **Golden Preserve, Springfield Township**



By July, the outdoors are humming with the sounds of insects. This month the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) holds its annual butterfly count. NABA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of butterflies. Young birders' families and friends are invited to help with NABA's butterfly survey at the Golden Preserve, which is managed by Six Rivers Land Conservancy. This preserve is also a great place for birds. Doris Applebaum and Sue Greenlee will lead this hike. Dress for walking through tall grasses and being outdoors. Bring binoculars.

### **Birding by Ear & Beyond – Saturday, August 10, 2024; 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM** **UM Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center, Dearborn**

As birds prepare for migration they eat insects to bulk up for their long journeys. Insects are abundant in August so it is a good time to examine the relationship between insects and birds. Young birders' families and friends will join a program for families of people who are blind — “*Birding By Ear and Beyond*” led by naturalist Donna Posont. We will visit the Matt Clew Butterfly Garden and explore the trails. The Environmental Interpretive Center is located at the University of Michigan Dearborn at 4901 Evergreen Road, Dearborn MI.



### **Hawk Watch / Raptor Migration – Sunday, September 22, 2024; 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM** **Lake Erie Metropark, Brownstown Township**



Hawk watches take place throughout the country to monitor the movement of raptors during migration. Fall migration starts in September and continues through November. Lake Erie Metropark is along one of the major hawk migration routes and is the official site of the Detroit River Hawk Watch (DRHW). Counters from the DRHW monitor raptor migration daily. Learn about hawks and hawk migration from DRHW experts who will help identify birds. If time permits, we will hike a little bit and also visit the Marshland Museum's Hawk Festival. Dress for the weather. A Metroparks permit is required for park entry.

Photos: OBA Photo Gallery



# Young Birders Club Field Trips

## June - September 2024

*The Young Birders' Club offers age-appropriate educational experiences for youth 8 – 18 years old. Young birders 16 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult. All young birders must complete a release form.*

*Young Birders' Club programs are open to all birders.*

### Guidelines:

1. Pre-registration is required and number of participants is limited — To register contact YBC Coordinator Kathleen Dougherty at [kad8186@msn.com](mailto:kad8186@msn.com).
2. Stay home if you are sick.
3. Directions and details are sent to registered participants.

For more information visit: <http://www.oaklandbirdalliance.org/youngbirders>



## BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### March 21, 2024

The board discussed open positions and nominations that will be filled in the coming months, including the President position which will be vacant in October.

President Don Burlett attended the March 20 Audubon Great Lakes chapter leaders meeting. He shared insightful information from a Wisconsin chapter for OBA to consider.

Treasurer Jen Benke updated the board on the financials for the organization. The board discussed the projected 2024 contributions to organizations OBA supports. The 2024 financial audit was scheduled for March 28.

Kathleen Dougherty is working on applying to a National Audubon Great Lakes grant for YBC activities. The Board discussed funding a YBC scholarship to sponsor a young birder's attendance to a summer camp.

The next book sale is tentatively scheduled for the September 10, 2024 membership meeting.

The board discussed and planned for multiple outreach activities scheduled for the spring/summer.

### April 18, 2024

On April 9, 2024, 37 of 200 eligible members voted (in-person and via *Zoom*) on two amendments to the by-laws. Amendment 7, the name change from Oakland Audubon Society to Oakland Bird Alliance, received 31 votes for (84%) and 6 votes against; Amendment 8, correction of grammatical and tactical items, received 36 votes for (97%) and 1 vote against.

The board planned for action items needed following the April 9 membership vote.

Publicity/Fundraising Officer Karen Kessler reported on the lessons learned using *Zoom* for voting as well as on monitoring meetings to improve members' experience. OBA's purchase of a new computer and microphones was a great investment.

The Field Trip Officer and YBC Coordinator are working on the summer field trip schedule (June, July, August). The Nuthatch Open is scheduled for the first week in September.

*Highlights compiled by Newsletter Editor  
from meeting minutes submitted by  
Tiffany Vojnovski, Secretary.*

## NATURE NOTES *by Allen Chartier*

**These Nature Notes were originally published in August 2018**

My last column was at the very beginning of spring migration. Now, after a long summer, the attention of some birders turns to other things, like butterflies and dragonflies that are quite prevalent during July and August when birds have mostly stopped singing. We can enjoy these insects briefly before we must turn our attention back to the fall bird migration starting in August and September. So I'm happy to answer this insect-related question:

*What are the differences between dragonflies and damselflies? Do they both migrate? Where do they go?*

All insects are in the Class Insecta (birds are in the Class Aves). The next taxonomic level down from that is Order, and all dragonflies, damselflies, and spreadwings belong to the Order Odonata. The next major taxonomic division is the Family, and there are many families of dragonflies and damselflies across North America, including Broad-winged Damsels (Calopterygidae), Spreadwings (Lestidae), Pond Damsels (Coenagrionidae), Petaltails (Petaluridae), Darners (Aeshnidae), Clubtails (Gomphidae), Spiketails (Cordulegastridae), Cruisers (Macromiidae), Emeralds (Corduliidae), and Skimmers (Libellulidae). All these families are represented in Michigan, with 167 species recorded so far (47 damselflies, 120 dragonflies). Check out the website of the Michigan Odonata Survey — [Michigan Odonata Survey \(michodonata.org\)](http://michodonata.org).

Damselflies are generally smaller and very slender, although the Elfin Skimmer dragonfly is nearly as small as many damselflies, and the Great Spreadwing is long and slender, larger than some dragonflies. The main characteristic that separates dragonflies from damselflies is the way they hold their wings when perched. Dragonflies always hold their wings flat, while damselflies hold their wings folded over their backs (spreadwings are slender, and perch with their wings half open). Taxonomists group damselflies into a Suborder, Zygoptera, and dragonflies into the suborder Anisoptera. This taxonomic category is probably not familiar to birders, as in general bird lists are kept neat and tidy into Orders and Families. Perhaps most often we will see birds (often tropical species) of the order Passeriformes referred to as Suboscines and Oscines, which refers to two suborders of perching birds that divides the more primitive species like flycatchers, woodcreepers, antbirds, and vireos from more advanced species like thrushes, tanagers, warblers,

and sparrows, based on whether their songs are simpler, innate, and stereotyped (suboscines) or more complex, learned, and variable (oscines) as well as anatomical differences in their vocal apparatus.

The study of dragonfly migration is still in the early stages. Many of you know that Green Darners migrate, with spring arrivals noted in Michigan during April and larger numbers noted at hawkwatches and other sites during fall migration in September. It has been difficult to develop a method of marking individual dragonflies because the aerodynamics of their flight makes them very sensitive to placing anything on their wings, as is done with Monarch butterflies. There has been some success using numbered “buttons” placed on the thorax of dragonflies, similar to what is used to study honeybees. Observers have also noted that Black Saddlebags are common fall migrants in our area, and other species may undertake these movements as well. The Wandering Glider is perhaps the most widely distributed dragonfly in the world, and as its name suggests, it is known for its tendency to move around the globe. I encountered this species in the Galapagos, and it has been recorded on every continent except Antarctica. Some species undergo movements similar to what some butterflies do. That is, a northward movement in late summer. Perhaps the dragonfly that does this most often is the Red Saddlebags, a southern species which was only confirmed in Michigan about 20 years ago (I photographed one in Monroe County and another observer collected one in the northwestern Lower Peninsula the same month and year!).

Other southern species not yet recorded in Michigan may undertake northward late summer movements, and could be found by diligent searchers. Two of those searchers, OAS members Julie Craves and Darrin O'Brien, have a blog of their adventures documenting several new species for the state in recent years ([Urban Dragon Hunters \(urbanodragonhunters.blogspot.com\)](http://urbanodragonhunters.blogspot.com)). I am not aware of any evidence that damselflies migrate, but this is essentially unstudied at this time.

Some excellent references for dragonfly and damselfly identification are available, with the caution that some species are more difficult to tell apart in the field than non-singing Empidonax flycatchers, and the juveniles of some species are even difficult or impossible even in-hand!

(continued on next page)

## NATURE NOTES *by Allen Chartier*

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Rosche, Larry, Judy Semroc, and Linda Gilbert. 2008. Dragonflies and Damselflies of Northeast Ohio. Second Edition. Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

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Lam, Ed. Damselflies of the Northeast: A Guide to the species of eastern Canada and the northeastern United States. Biodiversity Books, Forest Hills, NY.

*Is there any place that you've gone that has been a particularly special birding experience- where and why?*

Pretty much everywhere, at any time, has the potential for a special birding experience, so this is difficult to answer. I have had the privilege of birding on 6 continents, with my most recent trip to Peru in July 2018, which is one of my excuses for getting this column late to the newsletter editor!

You can read about this trip, with many photos (it was a hummingbird photography trip – 55 species seen), on my blog — [Michigan Hummingbird Guy \(mihummingbirdguy.blogspot.com\)](http://mihummingbirdguy.blogspot.com)

## 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)**



# OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE AROUND TOWN

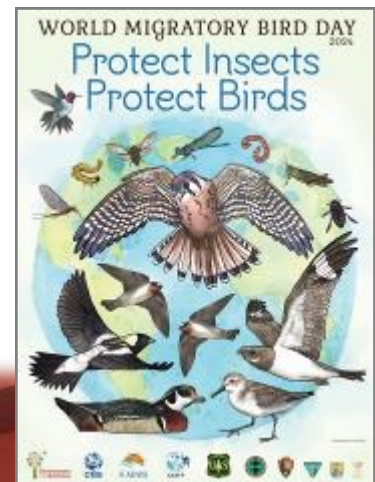
## Community Connections — March & April 2024

We were busy this spring — OBA board members and volunteers shared their knowledge of birds and the joy of birding at several community events, including:

- *Nest Box Volunteer Training* (March 20). Board members, Kathleen Dougherty and Greg Petrosky, assisted Blue Heron Headwater Conservancy train volunteers on nest box monitoring protocols by NestWatch-Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
- *Spring into Science* at the Cranbrook Institute of Science (March 27-28). This event gives visitors the opportunity to experience hands-on activities designed around exploring the environment. About 280 people stopped by our display and 150 kids created paper binoculars.
- *Owl Festival* at Lake St. Clair Metropark (April 13). This is a large festival featuring owl-themed learning activities, nature walks, and interactive displays for all ages. OBA interacted with about 70 friends who stopped at our display.
- *Earth Day Celebration* at Heritage Park (April 22). This event is hosted annually by the City of Farmington Hills to promote environmental awareness and sustainability through interactive activities and informational booths. OBA regularly participates in this event. A few dozen families stopped by to chat with us and take part in a coloring activity. Kids were polled on their favorite backyard bird — it was a tie between Northern Cardinal and Blue Jay.
- *Clinton River Water Festival* (May 17). This festival takes place at Oakland University and it is designed to help fifth-grade students learn about the importance of water and its many uses. OBA's program this year aligned with the conservation theme of the *2024 World Migratory Bird Day — Protect Birds, Protect Insects*, which focused on the importance of insects as essential food sources to migratory birds.



**Thank you for helping us further conservation, promote birding, and connect with the public!**



## National Audubon Collaborative Grant

OBA was awarded the *Spring 2024 National Audubon Collaborative Grant* (\$1,000.00) thanks to the efforts of Kathleen Dougherty, Young Birders Club (YBC) Coordinator. These funds will be used to expand the engagement of young birders and their families to support bird conservation initiatives. National Audubon provides grant opportunities to affiliated chapters.

## BIRD ID QUIZ

(Summer 2024)



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



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



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

**For the answers and explanation for this issue's quiz see Page 30**

**No Peeking!**

## ***Bird Briefs* (articles to look at online, click titles below)**

*from Don Burlett*

### **[Stunning 'Lost' Bird Species is Photographed For First Time Ever | PetaPixel](#)**

It's always amazing to find that birds are still being re-discovered around the world. This was a particularly handsome bird and was found where people likely don't get very often. You can't find what you don't look for. Enjoy.

### **[They Shoot Owls in California, Don't They? - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)**

This article is a stark reminder that preserving species of birds can be fraught with difficulties and difficult decisions. In this case, it's the Spotted Owl out west and the invasion of Barred Owls from the east. An interesting read and a very difficult question to answer.

### **[English Common Names Project FAQ - American Ornithological Society \(americanornithology.org\)](#)**

In November 2023, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) announced three commitments regarding eponymous English bird names. They put together frequently asked questions to help AOS and other interested parties understand their plans.



### **Bird Quiz Answers for Summer Quiz on Page 29**

This issue's photo quiz : a) Western Cattle Egret, b) Great Egret, c) Little Blue Heron (immature).

Explanation: For experienced birders this is not a serious challenge. But beginners really have fun trying to sort these out.

- a) This non-breeding adult can be confusing without the orange patches on the body; stout yellow bill, stocky, sort of short neck, and black legs with black toes.
- b) This adult has a very long neck and black legs. The bill is long and tapered, the cere is green on breeding birds and yellow on non-breeding adults; it is much bigger than the other two birds in this quiz but when seen alone, it can be tricky at a distance.
- c) This heron has a grayish green bill with a black tip, cere is grayish green, and the legs are dull green (not shown here); intermediate neck length and slightly larger than a Cattle Egret, but smaller than a Great Egret.

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





## MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

### Welcome New Members!

David Brooks, Marcia Cummings, Tara Douglass, Terry Herdman, Tom Kolean,  
Barbara Lucas, Carolyn Studtmann, and Julie Wineman.

**The 2024 Membership Drive is underway. You can renew in one of two ways:**

- 1) Use the “*Renew OBA Membership*” link on the Membership tab on our website (<http://www.oaklandbirdalliance.org>), to pay online using PayPal. [CLICK HERE](#) *or*
- 2) Mail a check along with a membership form (page 32)

**Mail renewal forms to:**

Oakland Bird Alliance  
C/O Robert Moll  
PO Box 796  
Birmingham, MI 48012-0796

To check the status of your membership or if you have questions, contact OBA Membership Officer Robert Moll at: [OASmembershipofficer@gmail.com](mailto:OASmembershipofficer@gmail.com). *\*\* Note, we will update our email addresses in the coming months\*\**

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

## MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS & PROGRAMS

Monthly membership meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month (except December, May, July, and August) at the First United Methodist Church in Birmingham. **Some meetings and programs will be at the Church and also transmitted online via Zoom, while others will be offered only via Zoom. Meetings open at 6:30 PM and talks begin at 7:00 PM.** If a meeting is offered via Zoom, specific instructions and links will be posted on the “meetings” page on our website at [www.oaklandbirdalliance.org](http://www.oaklandbirdalliance.org) and on OBA’s Facebook page prior to that 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
June 11, 2024	7:00 PM	All About Owls	First United Methodist Church & Zoom
September 10, 2024	7:00 PM	MOTUS Antenna System at Kensington Metropark	First United Methodist Church & Zoom
October 8, 2024	7:00 PM	So You Want to Bird Internationally?	First United Methodist Church & Zoom



## OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE 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 OBA membership directory.

Check also if you are a member of:

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

**OBA 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

### *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 BIRD ALLIANCE

**Mail to:**

OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE

C/O ROBERT MOLL

PO BOX 796

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