

THE NUTHATCH

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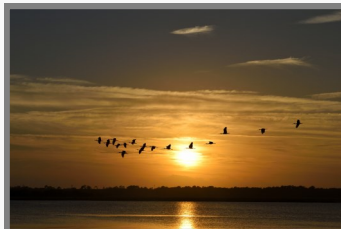
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“Climate Change is Not for the Birds”

Erin Parker & Pete Blank

Tuesday, March 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Join wife and husband team Erin Parker (environmental educator) and Pete Blank (restoration ecologist) to hear about the science of climate’s effects on birds, the stories behind the science, and what’s predicted in the future. They will also discuss ways you can participate in community-science projects studying how birds will be impacted by climate change.



“NOHLC’s Poweshiek Preserve”

Sue Julian

Tuesday, March 23, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

The North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy (NOHLC) is working on acquiring the Poweshiek Preserve in Davisburg, Michigan. The land is part of the same wildlife corridor as Davis Lake Overlook and is home to just under 100 critically endangered Poweshiek Skipperlings. The protection of this natural land is just one small action in a global effort to address biodiversity decline. Join Executive Director, Sue Julian, as she provides updates on the health of this little butterfly and how it is setting an example of pollinator preservation around the nation.



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“Hawkwatching: A Novice-Friendly Hawk ID Experience”

Bob Pettit

Tuesday, April 13, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Trying to improve your hawk identification skills?

Robert Pettit will share his expertise and teach the foundations of hawkwatching. Join us to learn how to identify hawks in flight, recognize hawk types and flight characters, discover migration mechanics, and learn about the role of birds of prey in all ecosystems. A handout with ID tips will be posted on the OAS website for participants to use during the presentation.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Spring 2021

As the pandemic rolls along, it does not give us much of a chance to see each other than via *Zoom*. We have persisted with “safe” field trips, but these restrictions limit the availability of these trips to OAS members. Understandably, many of our members prefer not taking the risk. I still encourage everyone to get out and do some birding or take a walk in the woods to stay connected with nature. It is in our blood and it needs to be kept up.

That said, I must commend our Board for continuing work to improve the Society on all fronts. We recently shifted to a new newsletter editor, and the quality has remained high. We now offer a way to pay dues and make contributions electronically on our website – no more only checks or cash!! We have also streamlined and updated our operations in many ways.

Our program meetings were maintained through the summer and fall of 2020 and will continue through at least June 2021. To provide additional nature programming, a second program was added each month. New technology like *Zoom* opened the door to speakers from farther away than usual, just to spice things up. I hope you appreciate the programs that have been offered recently.

We hope that things will be better by the fall. We don't know if the church will allow us back by then, but we remain hopeful. The chance to gather once again, and to eat delicious cookies, will certainly be a boon to our spirits.

As you know, I will be stepping down for a period beginning in October 2021. I have another big task to undertake and focus on. The organization, with its fine Board, will undoubtedly be efficient in continuing the work we have started. But that is still months away and not a worry right now.

What more can I say? Not much. The organization is dynamic and will do fine no matter what happens. The organization relies on all of you to attend meetings, join field trips, and support efforts to teach youngsters about nature, birding, and our planet. We cannot do it without you, so I look forward to seeing many of you soon in one capacity or another. Your continued membership in the Society supports all the activities we provide.

Also, 2021 offers a new light to our day, with a new administration that has already shown its interest in protecting nature and the environment. Stay tuned to learn what else we can do to help them accomplish their goals.

See you soon and enjoy the end of the pandemic!

Don Burlett

OAS BOARD MEMBERS

Elected Officers

President	Don Burrett	(330) 697-7735	baikalteal13@netzero.net
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Appointed Officers

Young Birders Club Rep.	Kathleen Dougherty		kad8186@msn.com
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Environment/Conservation	Greg Petrosky		gpetrosky06@gmail.com
Advocacy Officer	Erin Parker		erinsparker@gmail.com

Getting ready for Spring?

Check out the interactive map & list of favorite OAS birding locations on [our website](#) and get outside to explore!!

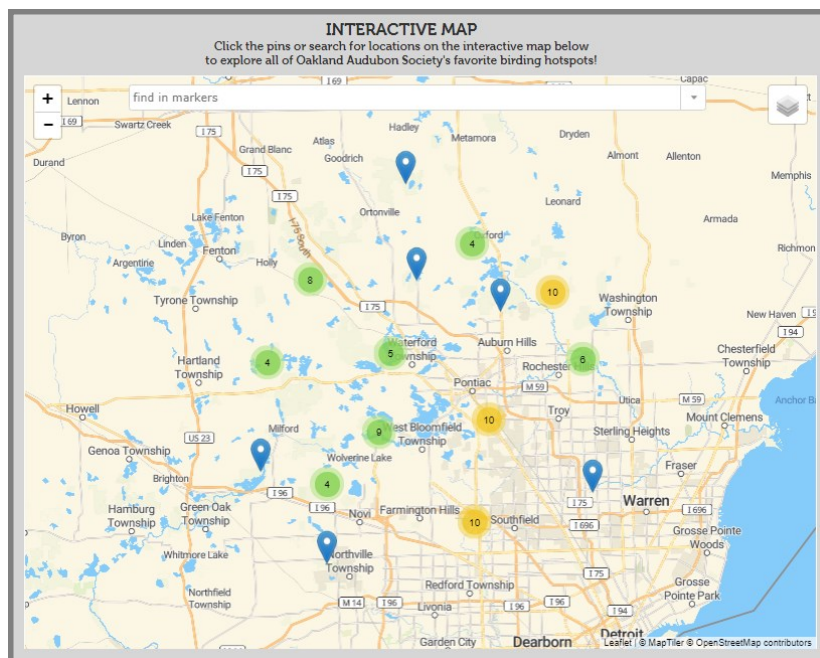


Photo Credits: Cover Page Banner, G. Cummins. Program Photos: Pixabay, NOHLC, and OAS Gallery.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Covid-19 Update: OAS will adhere to the Michigan Health Department’s guidelines pertaining to group gatherings, social distancing, and other recommended precautions during all field trips (see page 15).

Schedule changes and updates will be posted on our website and members will also receive email updates. Owlets trip details are listed on page 15.

Pre-Registration is required for all trips and number of participants is limited, contact trip leader for details.

Check the “Field Trips” page on our website for current information!

www.oaklandaudubon.org

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
March 20, 2021 (Saturday)	Stony Creek Metropark (Owlets Trip)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
April 17, 2021 (Saturday)	Rose Oaks County Park (Owlets Trip)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
April 18, 2021 (Sunday)	Maple River SGA	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
April 21, 2021 (Wednesday)	Kensington Metropark	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
April 24, 2021 (Saturday)	Detroit International Wildlife Refuge	Jim Koppin jimmykoppin@yahoo.com
April 28, 2021 (Wednesday)	Robert H. Long Nature Park	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 5, 2021 (Wednesday)	Bear Creek Township Park	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 12, 2021 (Wednesday)	Cranberry Lake Township Park	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 16, 2021 (Sunday)	Magee Marsh (Ohio)	Jim Koppin jimmykoppin@yahoo.com
May 22, 2021 (Saturday)	Kensington Metropark (Owlets Trip)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
May 23, 2021 (Sunday)	Passerines at Pointe Mouillee	Jeff Stacey jdstacey@ameritech.net
June 19, 2021 (Saturday)	Lake St. Clair Metropark (Owlets Trip)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com

Field Trip Reports

January 17, 2021 - St. Clair River Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

A group of 12 birders began a morning-long quest to see ducks and other birds along the St. Clair River. It was a cloudy day with temperatures near 30 °F and very little wind. We began at the St. Clair Metropark Nature Center, checking on the Great Horned Owl that resides at the park. After observing him and a few other birds in the woods and parking lot, we headed north. Birding along the St. Clair River was very quiet; the warm winter and lack of ice translated to very few birds on the river. This did not force a concentration of birds elsewhere either. We stopped at a small park near Selfridge Air Force Base and saw large flotillas of ducks, including mostly Canvasbacks, Common and Redbreasted Mergansers, and a few Redheads. Along the river, it was quiet. We reached Port Huron and found a few gulls near the yacht club, with a Glaucous Gull amongst the Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. At Lighthouse Park, we found additional Long-tailed Ducks and a personal record of 26 White-winged Scoters.



Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

We did not see the resident Peregrine Falcon at the train trestle bridge or the Blue Water Bridge, but he redeemed himself by doing a flyover over the beach at the park right before we headed home. Nice finish to a quiet day. The group enjoyed some life birds, which is always a nice thing for a leader to know. We saw 30 species on this trip. Maybe next year will be better?!

(continued on next page)

Field Trip Reports (continued)

January 29 - 31, 2021 - Upper Peninsula Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

Six intrepid explorers of the snowy north left southeast Michigan on Friday morning to explore the eastern Upper Peninsula. Cold temperatures for the entire weekend ranged from about 8 °F to 23 °F, with skies varying from partly cloudy to sunny. Snow cover in the UP was about 6 to 12 inches in many areas and slightly more in others.

We began our day searching for Snowy Owls in the traditional areas of Rudyard (around Centerline and Hantz Roads) with no success. This seemed unusual but we moved on in search of other species. We soon saw a flock of Sharp-tailed Grouse fly nearby but our first break was Evening Grosbeaks at a feeder along with Common Redpolls. The Redpolls were “bathing” in a gutter on the side of the house; it seemed a bit cold for a bath but they were happy. We also found a group of Snow Buntings, which had eluded me for several seasons in the UP.

We continued and worked our way to the Dafter Dump. Vantage points were limited, but the birds there were incredible. We probably observed 40 Bald Eagles either winter roosting in the nearby trees, flying over us, or sitting on the landfill. The gulls were numerous also, including Herring Gull, at least one Ring-billed Gull, and four Glaucous Gulls (one adult and three juveniles). Common Ravens, American Crows, and European Starlings made up the rest of the landfill contingent.



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)



Photo Credit: Larry Urbansky

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

(continued on next page)

Field Trip Reports (continued)

We later stopped by the Kinross feeders, aka Ravenstone Haven Wildlife Sanctuary. Here, we added a few common birds and 31 Wild Turkeys that had stopped for a late snack before roosting time.

On Saturday morning, we headed out looking for Sharp-tailed Grouse and Snowy Owls but were not successful in the early hours. When we stopped at the Dafter Post Office a second time, an American Robin and Pine Grosbeaks were the only birds around. The food supply there was meager, probably used-up earlier in the winter.

We headed to Dunbar Forest to find “winter finch heaven”! We found large flocks of both Pine Grosbeaks and Evening Grosbeaks along with a good number of Common Redpolls. The trees were buzzing with birds calling and chirping as they fed on the trees. We also found three American Goldfinch despite warnings about them being gone from the UP, along with Pine Siskins. We also found an American Tree Sparrow on the ground with several other foraging species. Blue Jays and Common Ravens abounded in this area. Unfortunately, we could not find a Hoary Redpoll in the group.



Photo Credit: Larry Urbansky

Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertinus*)



Photo Credit: Larry Urbansky



Photo Credit: Larry Urbansky

Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*)



Photo Credit: Bill Johnson

Common Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*)

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Field Trip Reports (continued)

We continued our way and stumbled upon an uncooperative Ermine at someone's front porch before heading to Sault Ste. Marie to check other sightings. Our first stop was at the campus of Lake Superior State University, where fruiting trees often draw Bohemian Waxwings. As advertised, we found a large flock of about 120 Waxwings feasting on the fruit in front of the library. Everyone had great views of the Waxwings chattering away and stuffing themselves with fruit.



Photo Credit: Bill Johnson

Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

After enjoying that sight, we drove a few blocks away to where a Northern Mockingbird was hiding in an evergreen bush between a couple of fruit trees. He appeared quickly, flying to one tree to gobble a few berries then to the apple tree to peck on an apple; the bird disappeared just as quickly back into the bush. Stories emerged of the bird chasing a Starling from one of the trees and defending his fruit and territory (in character as always).

We worked the St. Mary's River near the Soo Locks, looking for ducks. A report of Harlequin Ducks had been posted saying birds were staying near the Canadian side most of the time and we were without luck. Common Goldeneye was the most common species at this location, along with Common Merganser and Mallard. Near the Sugar Island Ferry we found the four Tundra Swans being reported in that area. We headed back south looking for Snowy Owls and other birds, but no owls were to be found. We cashed out for the day and headed back to the hotel to lick our wounds.

(continued on next page)

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Sunday morning arrived with a sense of desperation. We still needed to get the Snowy Owl we had been trying to find, but also Sharp-tailed Grouse, Northern Shrike, and Rough-legged Hawk. Otherwise, we would have a less than desirable slate of birds. We checked listings and found that a Snowy Owl had been reported nearby; we headed to that location but saw nothing. As we proceeded to a major road to head south, we spotted a Snowy Owl on a power pole, a pure white male. Finally, we had our owl. Larry Urbanski then spotted Sharp-tailed Grouse flying and landing in a tree in the field beyond; we all watched as they proceeded to fly to a house just around the corner from us. We went there and found them coming to a feeder. Cool birds. After this sighting, we found them at a variety of places. As we turned to head south again, the male Snowy Owl flew over us...he had been replaced by a female Snowy Owl on the same power pole. We now knew who rules the roost!!



Photo Credit: Don Burlett



Photo Credit: Bill Johnson

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) — female (right) and male (left)



Photo Credit: Don Burlett

Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

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Field Trip Reports (continued)

We headed back south in search of our last two birds. Driving along Rt. 48, a Northern Shrike was spotted on a small tree along the road. Good luck was with us that morning. We moved further south to try for the Rough-legged Hawk and succeeded.



Northern Shrike (*Lanius borealis*)

At this point, we had seen just about everything we expected to be able to find. Adding up a few birds seen along the way and those at our last location, we totaled 39 species for the weekend. It truly was a finch year in the UP. Sadly, not a good year for owls, but we were lucky to see a couple of these magnificent birds. Maybe next year will be different...it always is!!

Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports

December 19, 2020 - Young Birders CBC at Orion Oaks County Park

Leaders: Pete Blank and Erin Parker

The Oakland Owlets participated in the Oakland Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 19, 2020. This special hike was held within the CBC Circle surveyed by Oakland Audubon so young birders could participate in the 121st year of the CBC. The CBC is one of the oldest conservation activities in North America. The count was started in 1900 by Frank Chapman, an ornithologist and curator at the Museum of Natural History, who proposed a Christmas Bird Census as an alternative to traditional Christmas side hunts. At the turn of the 20th century, side hunts involved groups of hunters competing to shoot as many animals as possible. The team with the biggest take won everything. Chapman suggested an activity that was less consumptive, a census to count rather than take birds. Over the years the CBC has grown from a humble start of 27 people to thousands of people at thousands of count locations throughout North America.



The group gathered at the Baldwin Road parking lot and hiked to Lake Sixteen crossing open fields and woodlands. The trails were covered in snow but walkable. There were a number of other outdoor enthusiasts using the park that morning. Along the pathway the group stopped to observe and listen.

Pete occasionally ventured off trail to flush birds feeding or resting in the fields.



Orion Oaks County Park has numerous nest boxes making it a great place to see Eastern Bluebirds. A small flock of these colorful birds appeared near the edge of a field; the flock was eating berries growing in low wetlands pockets, which are common throughout the park. As the group walked towards Lake Sixteen, two swans flew overhead. We were startled to hear the swooshing sound of their wings. The lake was mostly frozen, but small openings attracted birds like Mute Swans as well as numerous gulls that were too distant to identify.

Seventeen bird species and two taxa were observed during the two-hour hike with a total of 648 individuals. The most abundant species seen was Ring-billed Gull. Everyone attending the program was included on the official OAS CBC field observer list.

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Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Oakland Owlets' CBC checklist:

Mute Swan
swan sp.
Mourning Dove
Sandhill Crane
Ring-billed Gull
gull sp.
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Blue Jay
American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
European Starling
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
American Goldfinch
Northern Cardinal



A special thank you to volunteers **Erin Parker** and **Pete Blank** for leading this hike. It was a great day to be outdoors.

Watch this inspiring video from National Audubon Society and Kids participating in the CBC: [*"Kids Who Bird on Audubon's Christmas Bird Count."*](#)

Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty and OAS Photo Gallery.

January 3, 2021 - Proud Lake State Recreation Area

Leaders: Kathleen Dougherty and Blanche Wicke



On a cold, but sunny January morning a hardy bunch of young birders and friends met at Proud Lake State Recreation Area (SRA) in Commerce Township for a brisk morning hike. Everyone was bundled in layers and prepared for the weather. It was so cold that several photos of the group that morning show a condensation haze resulting from the difference between air temperature and that of a coat pocket! The birds were slow to appear, waiting until the sun was higher in the sky before showing up.

Proud Lake SRA is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The 4,700-acre park has over 20 miles of trails and is a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts. It is also one of the top 10 birding spots in Oakland County.

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Oakland Owlets

Field Trip Reports (continued)



The scenic Huron River courses through Proud Lake SRA and its rapidly moving water remains open even during the winter. Spots along the trail provide nice views of the water. The group encountered waterfowl, but also enjoyed the beautiful vistas. At the bridge where Proud Lake empties into the river, one young birder spotted a lone Redhead. The group paused there for a moment.

We returned along the Marsh Trail and walked through the forest. Along the way, the raucous calls of four crows caught everyone's attention. Gazing skyward we found four American Crows flying overhead in relentless pursuit of a Red-tailed Hawk. This observation was a "teachable moment" to learn about "mobbing," a common behavior of smaller birds that group together and harass larger birds, usually predators. Mobbing is typically harmless...the hawk flew away without injury.



Although Proud Lake SRA is a top 10 birding spot, bird activity during this field trip was low. In total, 14 species of birds were seen during the 2-mile hike.

A special thank you to **Blanche Wicke** for helping with bird identification and assisting on the trail so the 12 participants could physically distance. Proud Lake SRA is a beautiful park to enjoy being outdoors.

Oakland Owlets Field Trips

March - June 2021

Search for Spring while Birding – Saturday, March 20, 8:30 - 11:00 am
Stony Creek Metropark – Shelby & Washington Townships

On the first day of spring, young birders and friends will gather to search for signs of spring at different locations in Stony Creek Metropark. We will stop by the nature center bird feeders and hike nearby nature trails. While early in the season, early migrants return to claim nesting territory and some birds are nesting at this time. The group will also travel to Stony Lake to view waterfowl. Bring your own binoculars. A 2021 Metroparks Vehicle Permit is required for park entry.



Earth Day Wetland Wanderings – Saturday, April 17, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm
Rose Oaks County Park – Rose Township (Near Holly, MI)



Join us for an evening hike at Rose Oaks County Park in the Shiawassee Watershed. The park has several glacial lakes and numerous wetlands that offer habitat for a variety of wetland birds. The park has a checklist of 145 species. The evening hours are a good time to see shy wetland birds, which are more active at dusk. April is a wonderful time to hear breeding frogs sing. An Oakland County Permit or pass is required for park entry. Plan to hike about 2 miles.

Awesome Ospreys – Saturday, May 22, 8:00 am - 11:00 am
Kensington Metropark – Milford

Osprey populations declined in the twentieth century due to overuse of DDT. After this harmful chemical was banned, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) created an Osprey reintroduction program in partnership with conservation groups. **Barb Jensen** from Michigan Osprey will share her work with ospreys during this field trip. We will hike to observe nesting ospreys, then take a short drive to explore other areas in the park. A Metroparks Vehicle Permit is required for park entry.



(continued on next page)

2021 Oakland Owlets Field Trips

March - June 2021 (continued)

Summer Birding Walk – Saturday, June 19, 8:00 am - 11 am
Lake St. Clair Metropark – Harrison Township near Mt. Clemens

Lake St. Clair Metropark is one of the premier birding spots in the area. Plan to see summer resident birds at the park, explore wetland habitats, and visit Lake St. Clair's shoreline. We will hike about 2 miles and drive to other locations within the park to see as many species as possible. A Metroparks Vehicle Permit is required for park entry.



Oakland Audubon follows Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines for COVID-19

1. **Pre-registration** is required and number of participants is limited.
2. **Social distancing** is practiced on the trails.
3. Participants must wear **face masks**, especially when we stop to talk.
4. Participants need to bring their **own optics**.
5. **Stay home if you are sick** or have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19.
6. **Temperature checks** will be made with a touchless thermometer before the field trip begins.
7. Travel with only people from your household. **No carpooling.**
8. 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

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

Photo Credits: OAS Photo Gallery

2020 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Summary - Oakland Audubon Society

Oakland Audubon Society (OAS) participated in the 121st Christmas Bird Count on December 19, 2020. With the pandemic going on, it was remarkable that 52 field surveyors and 2 feeder watchers participated. Despite the cold, cloudy day and light precipitation, it was a reasonably successful endeavor.

The group logged 605 miles of driving and over 39 miles were traveled on foot. Scott Jennex, OAS compiler, reported a total of 64 species for the count circle. Numbers were slightly below average, but considering the cold weather and only partially open water, it was a good result. The list of species seen and numbers recorded for each is provided below, *cw* denotes a 'count week species.'

Notable species included Iceland Gull (seen for the first time on our count), Merlin, Northern Shrike, Winter Wren, and Carolina Wren. A fine collection of Red-headed Woodpeckers was also observed.

Canada Goose (1,059)	Hairy Woodpecker (27)
Mute Swan (62)	Northern Flicker (yellow-shafted) (5)
Swan sp (4)	Pileated Woodpecker (7)
American Black Duck (2)	American Kestrel (2)
Mallard (732)	Merlin (1)
Redhead (3)	Northern Shrike (1)
Ring-necked Duck (82)	Blue Jay (378)
Bufflehead (21)	American Crow (649)
Common Goldeneye (41)	Horned Lark (12)
Hooded Merganser (20)	Black-capped Chickadee (620)
Red-breasted Merganser (2)	Tufted Titmouse (205)
Wild Turkey (43)	Red-breasted Nuthatch (19)
Great Blue Heron (3)	White-breasted Nuthatch (204)
Turkey Vulture (3)	Brown Creeper (7)
Cooper's Hawk (11)	Winter Wren (1)
Bald Eagle (8)	Carolina Wren (1)
Red-shouldered Hawk (2)	Eastern Bluebird (139)
Red-tailed Hawk (60)	American Robin (804)
Rough-legged Hawk (cw)	European Starling (3,173)
Sandhill Crane (42)	Cedar Waxwing (208)
Ring-billed Gull (2,673)	American Tree Sparrow (175)
Herring Gull (264)	Dark-eyed Junco (334)
Iceland Gull (1)	Song Sparrow (17)
Lesser Black-backed Gull (1)	Swamp Sparrow (2)
Great Black-backed Gull (15)	Northern Cardinal (253)
Gull sp (235)	Common Grackle (1)
Rock Pigeon (feral) (262)	Blackbird sp (7)
Mourning Dove (563)	Brown-headed Cowbird (1)
Eastern Screech-owl (11)	House Finch (233)
Great Horned Owl (2)	Common Redpoll (130)
Owl sp (1)	Pine Siskin (13)
Belted Kingfisher (5)	American Goldfinch (309)
Red-headed Woodpecker (9)	House Sparrow (556)
Red-bellied Woodpecker (111)	Sparrow sp (4)
Downy Woodpecker (103)	
Totals = 64 species, 14,954 individuals	

2020 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Summary - Oakland Audubon Society



Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis* (Brian Beauchene)



Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis* (Manny Salas)



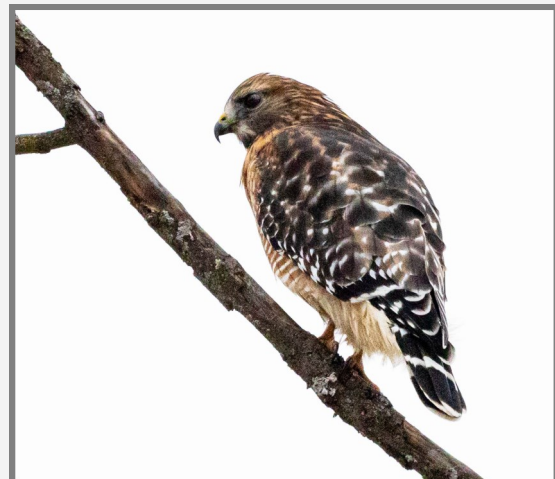
Pine Siskin, *Spinus pinus* (Brian Beauchene)



Iceland Gull, *Larus glaucooides* (Jeff Stacey)



Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*
(Robert Bochenek)



Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*
(Robert Bochenek)

2020 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Summary - Oakland Audubon Society



Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* & suitable habitat at CBC area #4 (Robert Bochenek)



Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*
(Brian Beauchene)



Sandhill Crane, *Antigone canadensis* (Kayla Niner)

2020 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Summary - Oakland Audubon Society

** Intrepid Birders at the 121st CBC **



Photo credits: Kathleen Dougherty (top right, top left);
Robert Bochenek (bottom left); G. Cummins (bottom right)

TWEETS CAN HELP BIRDS

by Doris Applebaum

Do you tweet?

If so, you may find a new piece of technology worth investigating. It is called *@Birdcrash_bot*, and it uses social media automation to learn where birds are colliding with glass windows. This Internet Robot (bot) is being used all over the world as people tweet reports about seeing a bird crash into a window. Reports go into an archive that is being analyzed to detect trends of where and when these crashes occur.

The tweeter receives detailed information from FLAP Canada (FLAP = Fatal Light Awareness Program) on the bot regarding what to do about the injured bird. This gives the tweeter access to people working to address the problem that birds face from clear glass.

Brendon Samuels is a Canadian graduate student doing the research based on these tweets. Since the bot started working in April 2020, he has come to interesting realizations. Since the bot is available to people everywhere, it has shown that many people have no idea why the bird they have found crashed into the window. Some think the bird was trying to get inside the building, some think the bird was killed by 5G technology, and a number of other incorrect ideas have shown up as well.

In some parts of the world, the human culture is at odds with proper care of injured birds; misinformation is rampant, and educational outreach is sorely needed. Language barriers are often a hindrance.

The bot is constantly searching for these tweets; when it finds one, it immediately re-tweets it to the account's followers. Brendon has this request: "Consider following *@Birdcrash_bot* on Twitter and sharing your knowledge with the people the account re-tweets from. All you need to do is reply with a link to the instructions pinned at the top of the page."

The good news is that because of this bot, virtual help for bird rescue around the world is possible through this kind of crowdsourcing, and information about the dangers of clear glass windows can be widely spread.

In a world of constantly advancing technology, some of which has very negative aspects, *@Birdcrash_bot* is an example of how technology can be a force for good.

Source: Fall 2020 issue of *Touching Down*, the newsletter of FLAP Canada.

Learn more at: <https://flap.org/>.



What's all the fuss about Bird Names?

Since the dawn of language, humans have been pointing at birds and giving them names. In 1735 a Swedish botanist/naturalist and explorer, Carolus Linnaeus, published a manuscript titled *Systema Naturae* (The System of Nature), which organized living things into a standardized system of “binomial nomenclature.” This system consists of a genus and species name, based on Latin or Greek (or “Latinized”). His manuscript also established higher levels of classification including Kingdom, Classes, and Orders. As subsequent scientists adopted and used this system, it became an excellent tool to indicate evolutionary relationships, and additional levels were added; Phylum was added under Kingdom and Family was added under Order. These so-called “scientific names” for organisms form the basis for standardizing names, including bird names, around the world to this day, although there is still a lot of flux in these names too.

The use of English names is not as well organized. Sticking just to birds, more than a century ago both the American Ornithologists Union (AOU, but now the American Ornithological Society [AOS]) and the British Ornithological Union (BOU) tried creating “standardized English names” for their respective regions. This resulted, for example, in the species known by the scientific name of *Gavia immer* being given the English name of Great Northern Diver by the BOU and Common Loon by the AOS! Additionally, beginning in the 1900s, the BOU also began establishing standardized French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese names (and perhaps others), while the AOS also began establishing standardized French names in 1998 and Spanish names after that. In the 1970s and 1980s, world bird lists that attempted to resolve regional differences in English names were published; this effort continues to this day with plenty of contentious debates.

A less scientific, but still important question is, do the names of birds make sense? Yellow-billed Cuckoos used to be called “rain crows” because they often vocalize right before it rains. While this behavior seems to be accurate, they are not closely related to crows. Worm-eating Warblers feed mostly on grasshoppers found in clumps of dead leaves near the ground, very rarely on worms. Have you ever seen the sharp shins on a Sharp-shinned Hawk? Tennessee and Nashville Warblers don't breed or winter in that state or city.

Connecticut Warblers are very rare spring and rare fall migrants in their namesake state. I have seen Cape May Warblers in magnolia trees more often than I have seen Magnolia Warblers there, and have never seen either one at Cape May!

Bird names change all the time; scientific names being most important of course. English names have always been a topic of controversy and with every change there is a wave of complaints from birders. I recall some name changes back in the 1970s that changed Marsh Hawk to Northern Harrier, Duck Hawk to Peregrine Falcon, and Pigeon Hawk to Merlin, among many others. We all wondered, how will we ever learn these new bird names? Change is hard. But now, decades on, do we even give these “new” names a second thought? In general, we get over it and move on. One source of a lot of old “colloquial” names for birds in my personal library is *Birds of America*, edited by T. Gilbert Pearson (Doubleday, 1936). While some are confusing and others are charming, it is jaw-dropping how many offensive, sexist, and racist names have been given to our birds over the past 250 years.

A recent English name change involved a species found breeding across Canada, northern Europe, northern Asia, and Alaska; the species' scientific name of *Clangula hyemalis* has remained stable over time. The English name to this bird given by the BOU is Long-tailed Duck, which was established long before it was discovered to be in the New World. In North America, this species was given the name Oldsquaw. The etymology (story behind the name) has had a variety of explanations, ranging from the idea that it was derived from a rough transcription of the bird's calls (ow-owe-let), to various comparisons to female Native Americans that were known to be both racist and sexist, but the name was kept in place regardless. When the AOS changed the name, only at the beginning of the current century, the rationale was to be consistent with other regions of the world. If we wanted to be truly consistent, we would also call our Loons Divers. Changing this name was encouraged to help with the Long-tailed Duck's conservation because much of its breeding range in the New World occurs on the lands of native peoples, and enlisting their help if the name of the bird was offensive to them was anticipated to be difficult. While most white people can understand how the name Oldsquaw would be offensive, based on our sanitized version of

NATURE NOTES (continued)

history (and old Western movies), actually asking native women about this name reveals that the meaning is even more offensive and even more vulgar; no further details needed. Even today, very few birders complain that we should still be using that old name. It is always important to ask the person who is offended how they feel, if we truly want to understand the effect that these names have on them, and if we want to expand birding to a more diverse population that will better help us conserve birds.

Why do we name birds after people anyway? Who were Lucy and Virginia? Does anyone know anything about Swainson, Hammond, Upcher, Boehm, Snethlage, Pelzeln, Jelski, Taczanowski, or Mrs. Moreau? Birds are named after all these people, and more. What do these names tell us about the bird? Nothing. These names are also typically in the possessive form (i.e., Swainson's Thrush), which is just weird from a biological perspective. Most often, these names are to honor someone, and it is considered a great honor to have a bird named after you. In 2013, the Striolated Puffbird from South America was split into two species and the [Western Striolated-Puffbird](#) was given the scientific name of *Nystalus obamai*, in honor of President Barack Obama.

In some cases, birds have been named after donors to the expeditions on which they were discovered. In 1991, in a somewhat controversial action, the discoverer of a new species decided to auction the scientific name to the highest bidder in order to raise money for conservation of the bird's habitat. The species was named *Vireo masteri* (Choco Vireo) after the winner Dr. Bernard Master, whose bid was accepted for USD \$75,000; his donation created the Pangan ProAves Reserve in Colombia, the first ProAves bird preserve in that country. In other cases, birds were simply named after people that the person doing the naming admired for some reason. Bonaparte's Gull and Bonaparte's Nightjar were not named after the French dictator, and the scientific species name of Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) is likewise not named after the Cuban dictator. If there were birds named after dictators, wouldn't there be calls to change them?

Among the ~350 species of hummingbird (Trochilidae), only 9 have been named after people. With such a colorful family, it is easy to come up with English names that are more descriptive of the appearance or behavior of the species. Tyrant Flycatchers

(Tyrannidae) are more challenging, with more than ~420 species of mostly nondescript and similar-appearing birds making it more difficult to come up with descriptive names. There are 29 species of Tyrant Flycatcher named after people. Worldwide, there are hundreds of birds named after people.

Just a quick diversion away from birds. In January 2021, it was determined that a population in the Gulf of Mexico thought to be Bryde's Whales (*Balaenoptera edeni*) (named after two people...Bryde and Eden), is actually a separate and endangered species, with a population of less than 100. The new species is Rice's Whale (*Balaenoptera ricei*), named after the researcher who determined it was a separate species. So, naming new species after people continues by taxonomists in many fields of zoology and is likely to continue. Entomologists sometimes have more fun with names, with flies having Genus names like Aha, and Ono.

Over the past few decades, the AOS has occasionally considered changing all English names of birds named after people (scientific names also contain names of people, but are likely not being considered for change), but World bird lists have not yet addressed this. Prior positions of the AOS were that "political correctness" was not sufficient grounds to change an English name. But this politically-charged term is sometimes mis-used by those who are being called out for being overtly offensive.

In 2020, following months of protests against racism, the [Bird Names for Birds campaign](#) was created to urge the AOS to address the issue of eponyms and honorific bird names with derogatory or oppressive implications. There are 149 other bird names within the AOS region (Greenland to Panama) that they consider equally problematic. The average birder, a large percentage of whom are white, has no idea who many of the people these birds are named after are. The National Audubon Society is now reckoning with the grave-robbing and other offenses against Native Americans done by its namesake ornithologist. Other conservation organizations are also facing complicated truths about their founders who may have done great conservation work, but may have also done racist and other offensive things during their lives.

The most recent name change confirmed by AOS is McCown's Longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*). The name was proposed and rejected in 2018, but changed in 2020 to Thick-billed Longspur. Personally, I think

NATURE NOTES (continued)

a better name could have been selected given that all the longspurs have thick bills, but I will limit my complaining about this change while realizing that Sharpshinned Hawk is just as bad. Thick-billed is apparently a literal translation of the Genus name. It would have been worse to just use the Genus name, as we have done with other species...what exactly is a Phainopepla? Translation: shining robe.

Given that [John P. McCown](#) was a Confederate general who almost nobody has ever heard of or could pick out in a lineup, it seems like this change should be a no-brainer. With all the issues this creates for African American birders, I am very happy that this name has been changed. There will be (and have been) complaints from a very few white birders who do not think this is a problem, and that we should ignore the racism inherent in many of our bird names. I strongly disagree, and I look forward to the interesting and creative English bird names that the AOS comes up with to replace names that are offensive to too many of our fellow, and future-fellow birders. It will be difficult for us to learn the new names at first, but just as Merlin, Peregrine, and Harrier are second nature to us now, so will these new names be before too long.

Allen T. Chartier

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

amazilia3@gmail.com



Bird Briefs (articles to look at online)

Submitted by Don Burlett

Learn Your Local Birds' Regional "Accents"

<https://www.audubon.org/news/learn-your-local-birds-regional-accents>

We all learn bird calls by listening. However, there are regional "accents" that each species may have. This is an article from Audubon about learning these local dialects.

Birds' genetic secrets revealed in global DNA study

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-54904806>

Here is a short article about work laying out the genome of all birds. These data contribute to understanding the evolution of birds and their unique abilities and strange colorations. An insight into how ornithologists go about this complicated process.

How bird watching may get us through the winter — and a pandemic

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/how-bird-watching-may-get-us-through-the-winter-and-a-pandemic>

This is preaching to the choir. All of you probably understand the role birding has played in getting through this pandemic. Here's a viewpoint from our friends in Canada.

Covid-19 Kept Tourists Away. Why Did These Seabirds Miss Them?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/22/science/seabirds-covid-tourism.html?auth=login-email&login=email>

This article discusses a twist on the effect of the pandemic on birds. The relationship between birds and man is explored as it adversely affected the population of this species of birds. A curious read.



THE WESTERN MONARCH: CLOSE TO EXTINCTION

by Doris Applebaum

If you participated in the January 26 OAS membership meeting, you heard [Nick Haddad talk about rare butterflies](#), based on the book he wrote titled *The Last Butterfly*. He said that after writing the book he realized there were two other butterflies that he could have included—the western population of the Monarch and the Poweshiek Skipperling.

The Poweshiek is found in only four small populations, three of which are in Michigan. Unfortunately, all of these populations are decreasing for unknown reasons, and Nick said he was worried that this species might not survive.

As for the western population of the Monarch, Nick said that the eastern population, including Michigan, still has several million individuals, but the population west of the Rockies has only a few thousand left of its original millions. Coincidentally, on January 27 the Xerces Society (named for an extinct butterfly, the Xerces Blue, which was wiped out when its habitat was destroyed by development in San Francisco) sent out an email with the alarming news that the western Monarch population is even worse off than Nick reported.

On Thanksgiving Day every year since 1997, there has been a count of Monarchs in their California wintering areas. This population has been of concern because of its known large decrease, though in 2017 there were still hundreds of thousands of them. That year some researchers said that the population would be in really serious trouble if it went down to 30,000. Shockingly, the next year, 2018, the Thanksgiving count actually found only 30,000. The year 2019 saw a similar low number.

It got much worse in 2020, when 246 locations were surveyed and only 1,914 western Monarchs were found—a decrease of 99.9% since 1980. Some locations that usually have many thousands of this butterfly in the winter had only a few hundred. At Pacific Grove, which calls itself

“Butterfly Town, USA” because tourists typically flock there to see the overwintering sites, there was not one Monarch on Thanksgiving Day, 2020.

Because of this nearly complete collapse, listing the western population of the Monarch as Endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) would seem obvious. However, it will not happen. Invertebrates like butterflies are treated differently under the ESA from vertebrates like mammals and birds. If a distinct population of a vertebrate species is in trouble, that population can be listed under the ESA even if the entire species is not, but that rule does not apply to invertebrates.

The Monarch has been considered for protection as a Threatened species under the ESA, and in 2020 the listing was found to be warranted. However, because there are about 180 species ahead of the Monarch that are eligible for listing, no action was taken. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) said that the status of the butterfly will be evaluated each year and, if nothing changes, the Monarch—as a species—is scheduled to be listed as Threatened under the ESA in 2024.

This means that there will be no federal protection for the Monarch’s western population. And a judge in California has ruled that insects are not even eligible for protection under California’s state ESA.

If you have been to California and have seen some western Monarchs, consider yourself lucky. It’s very possible you saw something that is on its way to joining the Xerces Blue as just a postscript in the history of U.S. butterflies.

Editor’s Note:

To learn more about this species, check out the [Western Monarch Conservation Plan, 2019-2069](#) published by the Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

BALLOON RELEASES = WILDLIFE DEATHS

by Doris Applebaum

For many people, releasing balloons for a variety of celebrations has become a tradition. An unfortunate result is that this causes the deaths of many animals.

Balloons can travel enormous distances. Some have been tracked from Japan to Los Angeles and from Kansas to the U.S. east coast. When they blow out to sea, animals such as sea turtles and seabirds can mistake them for prey like jellyfish or squid and ingest them. The balloons then lodge in the animal's intestines, cannot be expelled, and result in death.

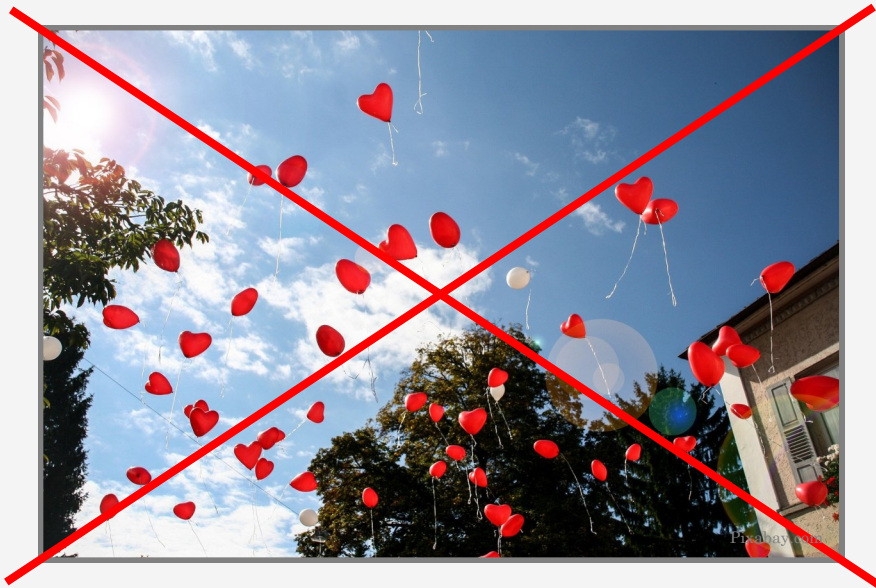
Furthermore, studies have shown that it isn't just seagoing animals that are at risk. Balloons have ribbons trailing them, which can get entangled in trees, injuring birds' wings and even strangling them. Among the reported victims are owls. There are even reports that balloons are a danger to desert tortoises in the Mojave Desert.

There are two basic types of balloons—latex and foil. The foil type never degrades and remains a constant danger to wildlife. Makers of the latex type say that their products are not dangerous because the latex decomposes in five years, as if five years of danger to wildlife is not important.

Balloon releases are a particularly nasty form of pollution. Until it becomes widely known how dangerous balloon releases are to wildlife, the carnage will continue.

There are other ways to celebrate. Why not plant some flowers or a tree? That would be a much lovelier way to express your feelings, and would help Mother Nature instead of harming her wildlife.

Source: Information for this article was found in the Winter 2021 issue of *Defenders* magazine, published by Defenders of Wildlife. Learn more at: <https://defenders.org/magazine/winter-2021/living-lightly>.



BIRD ID QUIZ

(Spring 2021)



A) _____



B) _____



C) _____

For the answers and explanation for this issue's quiz see Page 31

No Peeking!



**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
JANUARY 21, 2021**

The Board met via Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Programs for our twice-a-month Zoom membership meetings have been scheduled for the next several months. Whether we will be able to hold our usual nature walk in May is still uncertain.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on December 19, 2020 and went well, with all territories covered. There were some notable sightings, including an Iceland Gull.

Social Media Administrator Dan Gertiser is thinking about launching a bird-photo contest.

Seven Ponds Nature Center Representative Dr. Greg Gossick said they are hoping to be able to hold their annual fundraiser called "Corks and Caps" in June.

Conservation & Environment Officer Greg Petrosky has been very active doing volunteer activities and sharing information about a number of subjects on our website.

The Young Birders Club has continued holding limited-participation field trips, including on the Christmas Bird Count.

Erin Parker, our new Advocacy Officer, reported on a number of important matters, including the efforts to protect the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and those to reverse the delisting of the gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act.

OAS has been asked to help with the virtual Earth Day celebration at Chrysler's Auburn Hills facility. We also hope to do our usual wildlife surveys there this year.

We expect to do butterfly surveys for two Waste Management, Inc., facilities in 2021, as we did in 2020.

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 membership drive for 2021 is underway!

You can renew your dues by mailing the form on page 32 or renew online, on our website, using PayPal – [CLICK HERE](#)

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.

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

**OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY
2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENT
(unaudited)**

Assets (as of 1-1-2020)

Citizens Bank checking account	<u>\$ 12,981.70</u>
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Income

Dues	\$ 4,240.00
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Donations	3,216.35
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Refund	100.00
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Total Income	\$ 7,556.35
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Expenses

Bank Charges	\$ 36.00
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Charitable contributions	800.00
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Hospitality	131.13
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Insurance	924.00
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Mail fees and postage	106.00
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Michigan filing fee	20.00
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PayPal service fees	8.96
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Printing - Nuthatch and other	389.58
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Programs and field trips	861.88
--------------------------	--------

Publicity	150.00
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Rental fees	345.00
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Website	210.54
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Young Birders	124.11
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Total Expenses	\$ 4,107.20
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2020 Gain	\$ 3,449.15
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Net Worth as of 12-31-2020	<u>\$ 16,430.85</u>
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Prepared by:

Elaine Ferguson, Treasurer

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 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., March 9	7:00 p.m.	Climate Change is Not for the Birds	Via Zoom
Tues., March 23	7:00 p.m.	NOHLC’s Poweshiek Preserve	Via Zoom
Tues., April 13	7:00 p.m.	Hawkwatching: A Novice-friendly Hawk ID Experience	Via Zoom
Tues., April 27	7:00 p.m.	Extraordinary Adaptations: Bird Migration	Via Zoom
Tues., May 25	7:00 p.m.	Bluebirds	Via Zoom

Bird Quiz Answers for Spring 2021 Quiz on Page 27

This issue’s photo quiz : a) Least Sandpiper, b) Western Sandpiper, c) Semipalmated Sandpiper.

Explanation: Yes, these are a challenge.

- a) Greenish-yellow legs, fine tipped bill, brownish color, also the smallest of the peeps.
- b) Slightly larger than the other peeps, slightly longer bill that droops, this is a non-breeding plumage and lacks the rufous on the head and wing coverts.
- c) Slightly larger than Least Sandpiper, shorter and relatively blunter bill, dark legs, fairly plain gray-brown plumage, and no spotting on flanks.

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.*