

# OAS 60TH ANNIVERSARY

## THE NUTHATCH

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### “A South African Adventure”

Tuesday, March 13, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

**Tom Hince**

South Africa has it all—incredible birds, stunning scenery, world-class floral displays, and superb game viewing.

Tom Hince has visited South Africa 13 times! Tonight we'll discover just what keeps him going back.

*Photo credit: Tom Hince*



### Inside This Issue

### “Mentoring The Next Generation”

Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

**Daryl Bernard**

Too many of today's young people are insulated from nature. Seven Ponds Nature Center Executive Director Daryl Bernard believes that birding can be a way to improve this situation, and he has experience in mentoring kids in this regard.

Tonight he'll give us some tips on how we can help make a difference, too.



*Photo credit: Daryl Bernard*

### Nature Walk

Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 6:30 p.m.

**Heritage Park**

Join us for our spring Nature Walk to be held at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills. Meet in the parking lot near the Nature Center and Spicer House. We have reserved the South Shelter for refreshments after the walk.



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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Spring 2018

Happy Anniversary!!! It's our Diamond Anniversary and I am happy to say we are still going strong. Whenever an organization reaches a milestone in their existence, it's time to reflect on what has happened and why. 60 years ago (1958), a group of pioneering folks formed an Audubon club in Pontiac and established a connection with Michigan Audubon. Those pioneering Charter Members had a vision for our organization to provide the community with birding, nature, conservation and other outdoor awareness. They worked hard to set up the organization for continued success. Back then, there was a President and three Vice-Presidents – one for programs, one for membership and one for field trips. Presidents served a one-year term and the parts were interchangeable. The membership grew and the organization evolved. In 1971, the Presidents began serving two-year terms and that lasted all the way until the early 21st century. Unlike those days, we recently have kept our President around for more than two years.

Along with the Presidents, there was lots of support from a board of directors and a group of committee chairs. Most people who moved through the offices of the organization served on committees or helped in other ways. Experience with the organization was always a priority for grooming future leaders. Without the support of the board of directors and committees, the President would not be able to keep everything moving forward.

By the 80's, our membership had swelled to well over 350 people. Our range of activities still centered on programs and field trips. In recent years, we fell away from the conservation side of things but we are finally back to that. Of course, our membership is and should be our focus. Without our members, we would not have support to do all the things we do. That's been a constant throughout our history. Our membership is the source of financial support, the source of future officers and committee chairs and the driving force for us. I can't thank our membership and our board of directors enough for what they do for the organization.

I have always been interested in the history of organizations I've been a part of and I enjoy going back through the records and perusing the activities. I enjoy the Field Trip forms that were used for years by trip leaders detailing weather, attendance, birds sighted and other details. The printed newsletters with all the latest news and information. The welcome packets that were sent to everyone who joined. It's an interesting evolution from hand-written notes by secretaries to printed documents to electronic communication. We have evolved much like society and we continue to make changes.

I reside in my position because the membership is happy at this time. I take this responsibility seriously and hope that we continue to provide a great product. On the shoulders of our predecessors we continue the journey toward the next milestone. Join us at the March meeting as we celebrate this diamond anniversary and toast the success that our charter members envisioned all those years ago. Thank goodness, those folks had a vision that lives on today.

Don Burlett



## 60 Year Anniversary

Oakland Audubon Society will be celebrating its 60 Year Anniversary at the March 13 membership meeting. Please come and help us celebrate!

### OAS BOARD MEMBERS

#### Elected Officers

President	Don Burlett	(248) 236-9486	baikalteal13@netzero.net
Secretary	Doris Applebaum	(248) 542-2506	ibis4247@sbcglobal.net
Treasurer	Elaine Ferguson	(248) 470-2212	fergusonelaine6@gmail.com
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Program Co-Officer	Doris Applebaum	(248) 542-2506	ibis4247@sbcglobal.net
Program Co-Officer	Margaret Moran	(248) 646-7387	marmo48009@yahoo.com

#### Appointed Officers

Young Birders Club Rep.	Kathleen Dougherty		kad8186@msn.com
Hospitality Officer	Alice Marotti	(248) 545-4165	amarotti@aol.com
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Nuthatch Editor	Mike Dougherty	(248) 972-7802	mikeodoc@comcast.net
Seven Ponds Rep.	Dr. Greg Gossick		ggossickdds@sbcglobal.net
Environment/Conservation	Jerry Rogers	(248) 310-8212	jhrogers10@sbcglobal.net

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

(Details of these outings are on the Field Trips page of our website at [www.oaklandaudubon.org](http://www.oaklandaudubon.org))

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 14, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Robert Long, Walled Lake and Heritage Park</b> Meet in the parking lot of Robert Long</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 18, 2018</b> (Sunday) 7:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Watkins Lake State Park</b> Meet at the MDOT lot in the northwest corner of the Meijer parking lot at 8 Mile and Haggerty Roads at 7:00 AM</p>	<p><b>Jim Koppin</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 28, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kensington Metropark</b> Meet at the Nature Center A Metroparks daily or annual pass required</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 6-8, 2018</b> (Friday-Sunday)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Illinois Prairie Chickens</b> Contact leader for hotel and carpooling information</p>	<p><b>Don Burlett</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 11, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Robert Long and Heritage Park</b> Meet in the parking lot of Robert Long Nature Park</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 22, 2018</b> (Sunday) 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Earth Day Evening with the Frogs</b> Rose Oaks Oakland County Park Oakland County Parks permit required</p>	<p><b>Kathleen Dougherty</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 25, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kensington Metropark</b> Meet at the Nature Center A Metroparks daily or annual pass required</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 28, 2018</b> (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Early Migrants at Drayton Plains Nature Center</b> Neighborhood entrance at Edmore St. in Waterford</p>	<p><b>Dave Frye</b></p>

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Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 5, 2018</b> (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Wild Card Trip</b></p> <p>The trip leader will publish details on the location and meeting time approximately one week prior</p>	<p><b>Jeff Stacey</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 6, 2018</b> (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Indian Springs Property Survey</b></p> <p>Meet in the parking lot of the Park Office at the end of the main road</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Metropark pass or entry fee required</p>	<p><b>Don Burlett</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 9, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kensington Metropark</b></p> <p>Meet at the Nature Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Metroparks daily or annual pass required</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 12, 2018</b> (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Magee Marsh and Environs</b></p> <p>Meet at the west end of parking lot along the lake at Magee Marsh</p>	<p><b>Don Burlett and Jim Koppin</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 16, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 7:30 AM – 11:00 AM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>All Saints Cemetery and Preserve</b></p> <p>Meet near the administration building near the Nelsey Rd. entrance</p>	<p><b>Don Burlett</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 20, 2018</b> (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Algonac State Park and Harsen's Island</b></p> <p>Meet in the parking lot of Algonac State Park on Route 29 north of Algonac</p>	<p><b>Don Burlett</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 23, 2018</b> (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Robert Long and Walled Lake</b></p> <p>Meet in the parking lot of Robert Long Nature Park</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>June 2, 2018</b> (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lapeer SGA</b></p> <p>Meet in the car park at the main headquarters building on Vernon Rd.</p>	<p><b>Dave Frye</b></p>

## Field Trip Reports

### December 2, 2017 - University of Michigan Research Museum Center Leader - Don Burlett

Oakland Audubon has made trips to the museum about every two years but this was our first trip since the bird collection was moved to the Research Center on Varsity Drive. A hearty group of 15 people came for this visit, hosted by Janet Hinshaw, Bird Collection Manager.



We began with a general tour of the new facility, seeing where liquid-based samples (fish, snakes, some birds, etc.) are kept in alcohol. We also visited areas where other types

of mammals were kept along with both sample preparation areas and other work areas in the building.

We eventually moved into the area where the bird skins, nests, eggs and other items like skeletons are kept. They have an incredible 175,000 bird skins in their collection, one of the largest in the world. Janet had a table set up to view a few species for easy comparisons. The table (shown below) shows Cooper's Hawks (male and female) compared to Sharp-shinned Hawks (male and female). She also had Gray-cheeked Thrush and Swainson's Thrushes on display.



## Field Trip Reports - continued

After those species were discussed and examined in detail, we moved on to a display of specimens of extinct species, always a special treat. One of the first out was the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (below) and then the Passenger Pigeon (below). We also saw Carolina Parakeet and many others.



Eventually, we moved on to selected species such as Kirtland's Warbler and the Redpolls. We also were shown the difference in samples collected back in the late 1800's and early 1900's to show how different the "atmosphere" was when coal was the main source of fuel. The darker skins, covered with soot from that era, were very obvious.

Janet also showed us a drawer of "species" samples, the one specimen used to establish what a new species was. This collection has some very good specimens. These are specially tagged to make sure that nothing happens to them.

We also met the new Bird Collection Curator, Ben Winger. He described some of his research and how the collection will be used in the future. We also met a group from St. Mary's College working on Red-bellied Woodpecker specimens, measuring them to study growth and population variation with time and range.



After a variety of questions and some discussion, we then departed the facility. Many thanks to Janet Hinshaw for so graciously hosting this event. Since we do this trip about every two years, this will be Janet's last time hosting as she will be retiring in about a year. If you missed this trip, watch for a future trip to this wonderful research museum.

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

### January 14, 2018 – St. Clair River Leader – Don Burlett

The trip began at the Harley Ensign boat launch with the skies clear and the temperature cold – 5°F. Calm weather was the only relief. The sun came up and we checked out the local Mute Swans, Common Goldeneyes and Mergansers. We quickly gathered ourselves and started driving along the lake and then the river. The ice was impressive, with jagged piles of ice jammed together as far north as St. Clair. Just south of Port Huron, the river began to open up and diving ducks appeared in numbers. Lots of canvasbacks and Redheads, Long-tailed Ducks and Buffleheads dotted the river at several stops along the way. As we hit the open water, Mergansers also became more common, especially those fishing (below).

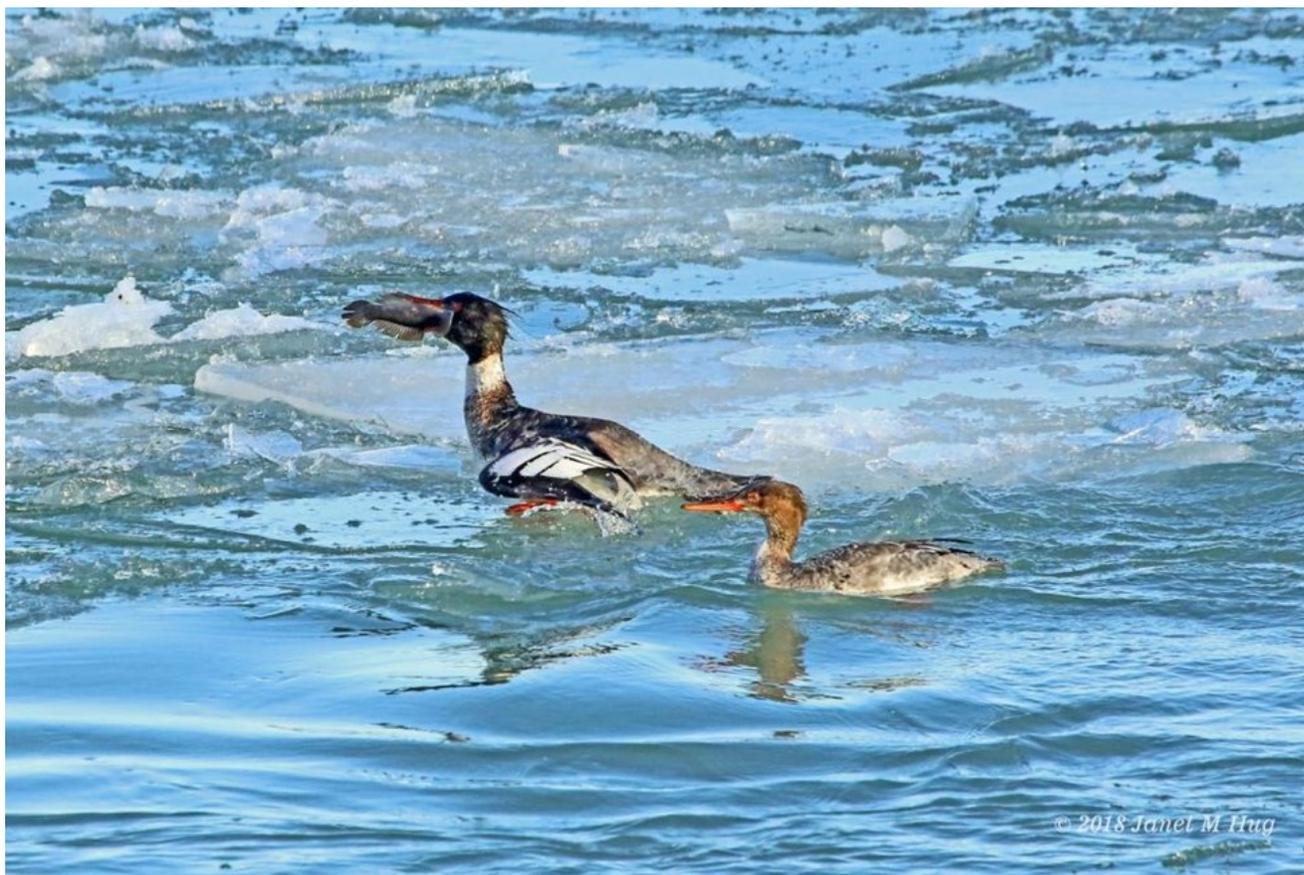


Photo credit: Janet Hug

When we reached the small park near the Coast Guard vessel (at Lincoln Ave. and Michigan St.), we found both a collection of ducks sitting on the edge of the parking area and a group of ducks in the water just south of the boat. There were Black Ducks, Mallards, Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneyes and others. A male Wood Duck was cozied up to a female Mallard and an American Wigeon was hanging out.

From there, we went to the Blue Water Bridge and quickly spotted a Peregrine Falcon on the bridge. We also had a beautiful flyover of a Glaucous Gull, with wonderful white wingtips.

## Field Trip Reports - continued

Then we headed to the Lighthouse Park where we set up the scopes to check out the ducks in the mouth of the river. Unfortunately, no scoters or eiders were present but there were lots of Long-tailed Ducks (thousands). The lack of clouds, winds and precipitation doomed us from getting closer looks. A couple of Bald Eagles added to the flavor of the site.

We then headed to the Blackfish restaurant for a nice lunch, enjoying the warmth of the indoors and our friends. Another good trip with 32 species. See the website for the entire list of species seen.



Photo credit: Janet Hug

## Field Trip Reports - continued

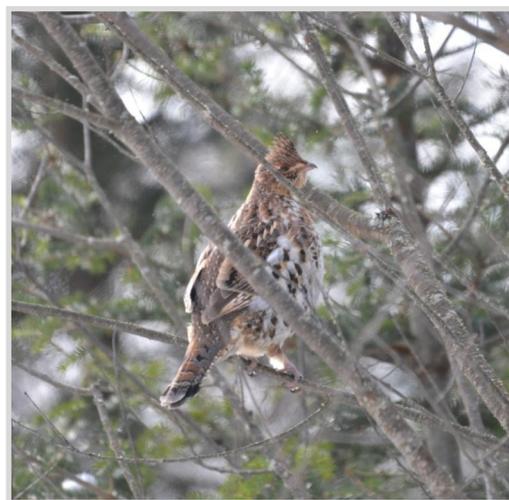
### February 7-11, 2018 - Upper Peninsula Leader—Don Burlett

The trip began with five intrepid birders heading up to Marquette on Wednesday, hoping to find a Boreal Chickadee on the Peshekee Grade Road. On the way north, we stopped east of St. Ignace looking for a recently reported Great Gray Owl (to no avail) and in Hulbert Bog looking for Gray Jays (to no avail). On Thursday morning, the five headed out with the temperature at -10°F and sunny skies. After three trips up and back on the road, only 10 individual birds were seen and no Boreal Chickadees. However, we were rewarded with a Black-backed Woodpecker, a Ruffed Grouse and a couple of Common Redpolls. So far, it felt like the “Voyage of the Damned”, hitting none of our targets.



Photo credit: Don Burlett

Intrepid Birders



Ruffed Grouse

On Friday, we headed east and stopped in Hulbert Bog again and were left with an empty checklist once again. So we headed back to the area south of Sault Ste. Marie. Dafter Landfill had little but a few Herring Gulls, a bunch of Common Ravens, a flock of European Starlings and some Bald Eagles. We did get a Red-tailed Hawk, a rarity in the UP at this time of year. The area around Rudyard yielded 6 Snowy Owls and the feeders in Kinross had Wild Turkeys, deer and some other species including Red-breasted Nuthatch and Common Redpoll. The rest of the group arrived during the afternoon and we headed out to dinner together hoping for more good birds.

Snowy Owl

Photo credit: Spencer Vanderhoof  
(Rouffed Grouse, Snowy Owl)



## Field Trip Reports - continued

On Saturday morning, we headed out to work the area south of Sault Ste. Marie. We visited a common site for Sharp-tailed Grouse and were rewarded with great looks. We then headed to Dunbar Forest to check out the feeders. There were Pine Grosbeaks there along with American Goldfinch, some Common Redpolls, Blue Jays, American Crows and a few other birds. Another resident suddenly started darting around – an Ermine. This cutie moved so quickly, photos were difficult but he was captured on film.



Sharp-tailed Grouse



Ermine



Pine Grosbeak

Photo credit: Spencer Vanderhoof

## Field Trip Reports - continued

We drove around in Pickford and found a Rough-legged Hawk and also got a Northern Shrike as we headed to Rudyard. More Snowy Owls were found before we headed back to Kinross to check the feeders. Among the Redpolls was at least one, maybe two, Hoary Redpolls. After birding we headed out for dinner at a Greek restaurant, Zorba's.



Northern Shrike

Sunday morning, we headed out to Kinross as part of a mop-up campaign. Since there were no Waxwings around, no Siskins and very few Crossbills were being seen, we wanted to check out a few spots and go back to the Sault to look for the Barrow's Goldeneye seen on the River during the week (which we missed). Upon arriving at the Kinross feeders, we got a Brown Creeper, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, the collection of Redpolls and a few other species. We ran into the Michigan Audubon outing in the UP and their leader said the Gray Jays had been seen Saturday at Hulbert Bog. We immediately headed out for the Bog and it just began to snow a little. Spreading seed and Doritos, we ran into another vehicle looking for the Jays and eventually, they were spotted. One came to the edge of the road to check out the food and posed nicely for the group.

All-in-all, it was a good trip. Frustrating for missing some targets but most people added birds to their life lists and we all had a good time. Including birds in transit, the leader's checklist had 39 species. Maybe next time, we'll get all our target birds. We'll have to wait until next year to see.



Gray Jay

Photo credit: Spencer Vanderhoof

# Field Trip Reports - continued

## February 17, 2018 - Great Backyard Bird Count Leader—Kathleen Dougherty

On a chilly Saturday morning, seven Oakland Audubon members braved the weather and potholes to travel to nearby birding locations in Oakland County as part of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). The GBBC is a major global birding event that takes place for four days in February annually. Birders across the world report sightings to eBird. The United States is by far the biggest contributor, but other countries also participate. As of the end of February 170,759 checklists have been submitted and 6,183 species were seen. GBBC was started in 1998 by National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It is the first on line real time citizen science project that tracks birds worldwide. Participation has grown over the years. <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

Oakland Audubon visited two local nature centers – the E.L. Johnson Nature Center in Bloomfield Hills and the Lloyd Stage Nature Center in Troy. A small party of hardy birders also stopped at Beaudette Park to view waterfowl. The group saw 28 species and 1 subspecies totaling 292 birds. The highlight of the tour was the spotting of a Great-horned Owl which was revealed by mobbing crows. Thanks to the staff at the Lloyd Stage Nature Center and the E.L. Johnson Nature Center for hosting facility tours. The group was greeted on the trail hike by friendly deer.



Photo credit: Kathleen Dougherty

## AN INVASIVE SPECIES WITH AN UNEXPECTED EFFECT

Submitted by Doris Applebaum

Invasive species are not usually welcome; they are blamed for the extinction or at least extirpation of many native species. However, there is one invasive in Florida that has had a positive effect on a certain endangered species. In fact, it has been the catalyst for a noticeable example of evolution in action.

The invasive in question is the island apple snail, a South American species that is believed to have appeared in Florida when it was released from aquariums. It is a larger relative of the native aquatic apple snail that experienced a population collapse when water was diverted from the Everglades in favor of farms and cities. As the native apple snail declined, the Snail Kite, which fed entirely on that species, also suffered a population collapse in Florida, to the point where there were only a few hundred of them there as the 21<sup>st</sup> century began.

It was around that time that the island apple snail was first seen, but conservationists did not think that the Snail Kite could cope with it as a food item because of its large size. (While the native snail is about the size of a golf ball, the newcomer can get as big as a baseball.) They also worried that the invader would outcompete the native snail and send it further toward extinction, taking the Snail Kite in Florida with it.

Things have turned out differently. The Snail Kite is an example of phenotypic plasticity, which allows individuals to respond positively to environmental changes. The kite responded to the newly arrived snail by increasing in body and beak size by about 10% in just two generations—strikingly fast evolution. The result is a bird that can use the large island apple snail as a new food source and not be adversely affected by the loss of the native species.

Some conservationists consider invasive species an unmitigated disaster. Others, however, contend that invasives can help the cause of biodiversity as native species are lost. The island apple snail is one example that the champions of invasives can point to.

(Information for this item was found in the “Anthropocene Weekly Science Dispatch” transmitted on the Internet on January 3, 2018, based on an article that appeared in 2017 in *Nature Ecology and Evolution*.)



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## Bird Ornament Boost

Thanks to everyone who purchased a bird ornament at the November Oakland Audubon membership meeting. Good news - Oakland Audubon received a check for \$102 from this sale. The beautiful hand painted glass ornaments, designed by Clarkston artist Margaret Cobane, were part of a fund-raising effort in collaboration with the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy (NOHLC). Anyone who purchased an ornament also received a membership to the NOHLC, a non-profit land conservancy that protects natural areas in North Oakland County. The ornament sales help NOHLC protect more than 1500 acres of preserves and supports activities and events at Oakland Audubon. If you purchased an ornament, thanks again for this boost to both conservation organizations.



### **Michigan Bluebird Society will hold its Spring Bluebird Festival on March 24<sup>th</sup> at the Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor.**

The event is free and open to the public, and will feature educational exhibits, programs, and products that help bluebird “landlords,” bluebirds and native cavity nesting birds. Presenters include bluebird experts, “Nature of the Wild” videos, Purple Martin Conservation Association, Michigan Avian Experience (with live raptors!), and Master Gardeners on “Smart Gardening”.

Lunch (sandwich, chips, cookie, fruit and beverage) is available for \$10. A bluebird nestbox-building workshop for up to 20 young people costs \$20. Participants are encouraged to pre-register for either lunch or workshop.

The Michigan Bluebird Society is a non-profit group of volunteers dedicated to bluebird conservation. For more information, go to [www.michiganbluebirds.org/springfestival](http://www.michiganbluebirds.org/springfestival).

# Helping Bluebirds In Michigan

By Kurt Hagemeister

The Eastern Bluebird has had an up and down history in Michigan over the last 200 years. This popular member of the thrush family was once widespread in Michigan before industrial farming took hold. After peaking in the later 1800's, bluebird numbers steadily declined for the next 50 years due to habitat loss, widespread use of farming chemicals, and intense competition from two alien bird species – European Starling and House Sparrow. Fortunately, starting in the 1960's, bluebirds started their comeback when it was discovered that large numbers of actively-managed nesting boxes drastically improved their nesting success. Banning of the farm insecticide DDT in the 1970's also accelerated their recovery.



Today, the easiest way to bring these colorful, sweet-singing birds into the yard is a well-designed nesting box. This is because bluebirds are cavity nesting birds, originally building nests in the hollowed-out cavities in trees. Nest boxes simulate these cavities, which have become in much shorter supply over the years. Bluebirds start claiming nesting sites in March in Michigan, with nest building usually starting as early as late March or early April. Bluebirds can have 2 or even 3 broods of young in a nesting season that can last into August.



How do you know if you can attract bluebirds to your yard? If you live in a generally open neighborhood and see bluebirds on a regular basis, you have an excellent chance. Bluebirds prefer open, grassy habitats like farm fields, open subdivisions, golf courses, office parks, meadows, and metro parks.

The first thing you'll need is a quality-made nesting box of the correct dimensions. You can buy a bluebird nesting box at a store or make it yourself. Boxes should be made of 3/4" thick wood – either cedar or pine, and requires an entrance hole of at least 1 1/2" in diameter. Of absolute importance is the ability to open up the box easily via a hinged side or top for easy nest checks and box cleaning.

Next, mount your nest box on a sturdy, metal pole so the entrance hole is about 5 feet off the ground. Locate the pole/box in a wide open spot with short grass below. The box should be as far away from dense cover, large trees, and buildings as you can. Finally, it's a very good idea to wax the pole or install some kind of guard to make it more difficult for climbing predators like raccoons, cats or snakes.

Once your nesting box is up, it's critically important to monitor it for the rest of the season. This involves going out and opening the box to see what is happening once or twice a week and recording your observations. Why do this? Being a bluebird "landlord" entails taking the responsibility of ensuring the housing you have provided is safe and that the birds are OK. Research has shown that actively-monitored bluebird boxes fledge far more birds than those left up un-monitored. For example, you need to make sure that parasites haven't invaded the box or that invasive species like House Sparrows haven't taken over, among other potential problems. Go to [www.michiganbluebirds.org](http://www.michiganbluebirds.org) for more information.

Bluebirds are one of the easiest birds to attract to nesting boxes, and arguably one of the most pleasant backyard birds to have around. Both adults are dedicated parents and seem to like being helped by people. So, if you live in a good habitat for bluebirds, try putting up a nesting box this spring. You'll be helping one of America's favorite birds while learning a lot about how birds raise their young in the process!

For those interested in learning more about bluebirds, the **Spring Bluebird Festival** will be held on **March 24<sup>th</sup>** at the **Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor**. The event is free and open to the public, and will feature a variety of educational programs, displays, and products related to bluebird "landlords", bluebirds and native cavity nesting birds. The event is organized by the Michigan Bluebird Society – a non-profit group of volunteers dedicated to bluebird conservation. For more information, go to [www.michiganbluebirds.org/springfestival](http://www.michiganbluebirds.org/springfestival).

*Kurt Hagemeister is President of the Michigan Bluebird Society and has been a bluebird landlord for 19 years in the Ann Arbor area.*



Photo credit: Mike Dougherty

## NATURE NOTES *by Allen Chartier*

With spring just around the corner, or at least we hope so, thoughts of birders are turning to the colorful migrants that will be arriving, to be seen, photographed, heard, and enjoyed in many ways. For some of us engaged on long-term studies, the spring bird banding season is much anticipated after a long, cold winter. Many questions have been asked about various aspects of bird banding, including the efforts that I have been undertaking at Lake St. Clair Metropark since 2004, a continuation of the bird banding that long-time Oakland Audubon member, Ellie Cox, began there in 1989. One of these questions is below.

*Can you discuss bird bands, like how you make the hummingbird bands, why are the sizes odd (OA, 0, 1C, 1, 1B, 1P, 1A, etc, not in an order), have you ever caught a bird that had a non-US band?*

Aluminum bands with unique numbers on them have been used to study birds for well over a century, under specialized permits from the USFWS and state DNR. Initially ducks were banded, with the resulting band “recoveries” helping map out the “flyways” we all know today. More recently, but still many decades ago, songbird banding was begun. The safety of the bird has always been of primary concern, as well as making sure that the bands did not somehow come off. So, over the years, it was determined that intermediate sizes had to be added to the original sizes of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4. In between 1 and 2 was obviously designated size 1a. But further work showed that some of the sparrows and thrushes would do better with a band that was in between size 1 and 1a, so that had to be designated size 1b, even though it is smaller than 1a. Other birds, like Tree Swallows and some smaller sparrows like Lincoln’s and Swamp, did better with yet another intermediate size, slightly larger than size 1, but smaller than 1b, which was designated size 1c. The sizes stabilized for quite some time, but in the late 1980s it was found that some size 0 bands being put on kinglets were starting to come off, potentially harming them. So, a new size was eventually created, size 0a. I remember helping Ellie Cox file down size 0 bands so they were smaller, which was the instruction from the Bird Banding Lab until they were able to get size 0a bands into production in the early 1990s.

Hummingbird bands are a bit different, and were developed only about 30 years ago. With such tiny legs, the bands needed to be thinner and lighter, so the numbers are “printed” onto thin aluminum sheets, and the banders must cut them out and form them to the appropriate size. This is one reason why a permit to band hummingbirds requires extra training. Hummingbird bands need to be cut in strips of 10 (numbered sequentially), no taller than 1.4 mm since hummingbird legs are so short. Then they are cut precisely with special tools to the right length: 5.40 mm for male Ruby-throats and 5.60 mm for females. Rufous Hummingbirds of both sexes take 5.60 mm bands, and the smaller size for male Ruby-throats was recently changed as some banders, including me, were recapturing color marked males whose bands had apparently fallen off. Luckily, since the banders can make hummingbird bands themselves, we did not have to wait for a manufacturer to make them, and this has improved the recapture rate.

## NATURE NOTES *by Allen Chartier*

*(continued)*

Recaptures are what banders look forward to the most. On any given day at Lake St. Clair Metropark, we will recapture at least a few previously banded birds. After looking up their numbers, almost all of them will be individuals banded by me at that site, sometimes only a day or two before, sometimes a year or two, or more previously. This gives us good information on how long they live, mainly for resident and breeding species, and with migrants give us some idea of weight gain or loss during stopovers in migration, which translates to the quality of habitat they are using to rest and feed before continuing their flights. A much rarer occurrence is what banders call a “foreign recapture”, which is when one of our banded birds is recaptured (or sometimes found dead), by someone else at a location away from where it was banded, or when we capture someone else’s banded bird. This occurs perhaps only once for every 1000 or 2000 birds banded, so the more birds that are banded, the more we learn. Some of the foreign recaptures of birds banded at Lake St. Clair Metropark have included Brown-headed Cowbirds found in central Michigan and northern Ohio, Common Grackles in southern Ohio and Kentucky, and a White-throated Sparrow found in southwestern Mississippi. I have also captured a Magnolia Warbler in the park that was banded by Bird Banding Lab staff near Patuxent, Maryland two years before, and a Baltimore Oriole that was banded the previous year at Long Point Bird Observatory, Ontario, Canada.

But perhaps once in a million, banders catch birds with non-US bands. This is extremely rare for a number of reasons. First, birds don’t really wander over to North America from Europe and Asia very often. Second, there are far more bird banders in North America than in Central and South America, and many researchers there are Americans putting US bands on North American migrants only. Very few banding programs exist in the Neotropics. So it was especially exciting when, on May 31, 2014, we caught a Swainson’s Thrush with an odd looking band. All US bands have 9 digits; a 4-digit prefix and a unique 5-digit suffix, and “Bird Banding Lab” is also stamped on our bands. The number on this thrush’s band was c0015818. Also on the band was a website, <[www.Tierradeaves.com](http://www.Tierradeaves.com)>. I recognized this organization right away as that of a Mexican bander I knew via the internet. After contacting him, he sent me the news that he had banded this Swainson’s Thrush at one of his stations in southern Veracruz on May 7, 2014. So that thrush traveled at least 2900 kilometers in only 24 days! I posted about this bird on my blog, where you can read additional details (scroll down a bit) at: <<http://mihummingbirdguy.blogspot.com/2014/06/metro-beach-banding-report-may-29-31.html>>.

If you would like to volunteer to help set up nets, record data, and perhaps be trained to take birds out of mist nets, at the banding station at Lake St. Clair Metropark in spring or fall, please contact me (Allen Chartier) by email at: [amazilia3@gmail.com](mailto:amazilia3@gmail.com).

*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 it to him at:*

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

## **Bird Briefs (articles to look at on-line)**

**Submitted by Don Burlett**

### **Parrots And Politics Collide In Tasmania's Trashed Forests**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/11/17/parrots-and-politics-collide-in-tasmanias-trashed-forests/>

The Tasmanian government has exhibited sheer stupidity. The government oversees logging as well as conservation -- which works out to be a scam perpetuated upon the people of Tasmania, and Australia. Basically, the government manages logging of Tasmania's old growth forests, but ignores its own scientists and is so incompetent that it threatens to quickly push Australia's critically endangered Swift Parrot over the edge and into Extinction. Wow, and add the human factor of an introduced, "invasive" species and you've got problems.

### **What Museum Collections Of Century-Old Birds Tell Us About Our Dirty Air**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/10/31/what-museum-collections-of-century-old-birds-tell-us-about-our-dirty-air/#15ea7d4279d7>

This article addresses two issues: value of museum collections of birds and how we can evaluate climate and air quality in a unique way. The pictures tell a story without words but the inclusion of information from other types of sources provides a cool story. Future work will tell even more about the world around us and what was/is happening.

### **Why Did The Passenger Pigeon Go Extinct?**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/11/24/why-did-the-passenger-pigeon-go-extinct/#128684832a9d>

An interesting article about the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. Was it hunting or habitat or genetics that led to their demise? Obviously, hunting was a major factor but this article brings in other evidence that shows the inter-relationships that are part of the equation. Thoughtful, well written.

### **Scientists' Colorful Quest To Discover How Parrots Became Green**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/11/13/scientists-colorful-quest-to-discover-how-parrots-became-green/#3b190457446f>

This is an interesting article on bird feather coloration and some of the genetics behind it. Some cool photos show some of the interesting results of genetic issues. A bit heavy in science but a good read.

### **Why Do Wild Parrots Eat Dirt In The Amazon?**

<https://medium.com/@GrrlScientist/why-do-wild-parrots-eat-dirt-in-the-amazon-grrlscientist-e17b2f361db7>

The reason why parrots eat clay at clay licks in South America has been unclear for many years. Nutrients needs or removal of toxins from foods eaten? This article explores these and explains the reasons for this behavior, along with other interesting facts about parrots and macaws.

## Bird Briefs (continued)

### **Things Looked Bleak Until These Birds Rapidly Evolved Bigger Beaks**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/28/science/birds-beaks-evolution-snails.html?smprod=nytcore-ipad&smid=nytcore-ipad-share>

Snail kites were expected to suffer when invasive snails moved into the Everglades. However, fast evolution (and I do mean fast) has saved them and actually improved their outlook. Have a read.

### **Tweeting (Bird) Science On Twitter**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/11/27/tweeting-bird-science-on-twitter/#1dccd0c56f3b>

I know we use listservs for communication about birds. Facebook is also useful along with websites and other sources. Now Twitter!? Check out how scientists have turned to Twitter to expand our knowledge.

### **12 Best Bird Books of 2017**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/12/26/the-12-best-books-about-birds-and-birding-of-2017/#609f730b681f>

A listing and review of the best books about birds and birding published in 2017. Interesting collection of books. Worth a peek!

### **How Do Fireworks Harm Birds?**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/12/30/how-do-fireworks-harm-wild-birds/#3f534fb7118c>

An interesting look at what fireworks do to birds. The seasonal aspect to this study is very interesting and something we usually don't think about.

### **Fifty Shades of Black: These Bird Feathers Are The Darkest Never Seen**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2018/01/11/fifty-shades-of-black-these-bird-feathers-are-the-darkest-never-seen/#10fdaae0392b>

How does a feather get so black that it doesn't reflect any significant light? What does that mean in terms of bird activity? These questions arise when examining feathers of a bird-of-paradise. Read on.

### **The Delicate Politics of Chasing Owls**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/opinion/sunday/owl-watching.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region&region=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region>

Currently a hot topic among birders is birding ethics. How do you let people see birds without endangering or disturbing them? An interesting column providing viewpoints to consider. This is very topical today. This can also be extended to other rare birds. Thoughtful reading.

**OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY  
2017 FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
(unaudited)**

**Assets (as of 1-1-2017)**

Citizens Bank checking account	<b><u>\$9,674.43</u></b>
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**Income**

Dues	\$3,720.00
Donations	210.00
Bank adjustment	49.99
Knit hat sale	475.00
Young Birders Nuthatch Open	200.00

<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$4,654.99</b>
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**Expenses**

Bank Charges	\$ 61.25
Charitable contributions	1,100.00
Hospitality	172.00
Insurance	866.00
Mail fees and postage	185.73
Michigan filing fee	20.00
Printing - Nuthatch and other	195.55
Programs and field trips	787.92
Rental fees	895.00
Young Birders	31.80
Website	193.00

<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$4,508.25</b>
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<b>2017 Gain</b>	<b>\$ 146.74</b>
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<b>Net Worth as of 12-31-2017</b>	<b><u>\$ 9,821.17</u></b>
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**Prepared by Elaine Ferguson, treasurer**

## 2017 Christmas Bird Count

On December 16, 2017, observers from Oakland Audubon Society began the annual Christmas Bird Count. A total of 45 people in the field and 5 at feeders provided the necessary data. Conditions were definitely wintry, with temperatures ranging from 21-28°F, snow depths of 4-10 inches, cloudy conditions and most of our open water being smaller streams. However, we persevered and got a respectable 67 species. The list below contains all the species seen.

Canada Goose	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Mute Swan	Downy Woodpecker
Trumpeter Swan	Hairy Woodpecker
Gadwall	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)
American Black Duck	Pileated Woodpecker
Mallard	American Kestrel
Green-winged Teal	Blue Jay
Redhead	American Crow
Ring-necked Duck	Horned Lark
Lesser Scaup	Black-capped Chickadee
Greater/Lesser Scaup	Tufted Titmouse
Bufflehead	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Common Goldeneye	White-breasted Nuthatch
Hooded Merganser	Brown Creeper
Common Merganser	Carolina Wren
Wild Turkey	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Bluebird
Northern Harrier	Hermit Thrush
Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Robin
Cooper's Hawk	European Starling
Accipter sp.	Cedar Waxwing
Red-shouldered Hawk	Snow Bunting
Red-tailed Hawk	American Tree Sparrow
Sandhill Crane	Fox Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Dark-eyed Junco (slate-colored)
Herring Gull	White-throated Sparrow
Great Black-backed Gull	Song Sparrow
Rock Pigeon (Feral)	Swamp Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Northern Cardinal
Eastern Screech-owl	Brown-headed Cowbird
Great Horned Owl	House Finch
Short-eared Owl	Purple Finch
Belted Kingfisher	Pine Siskin American Goldfinch
Red-headed Woodpecker	House Sparrow

Organizer – Jeff Stacey

Compiler – Scott Jennex

**BIRD ID QUIZ (Winter 2018)**  
**Spring is Coming!!!**



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



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



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

Last (winter 2017-18) issue photo quiz answers:

Quiz #1 a) Hoary Redpoll, b) Common Redpoll and c) Pine Siskin.

Quiz #2 (bonus) a) Iceland Gull, b) Glaucous Gull and c) Herring Gull

How'd you do with the ID's of the winter birds? Keep score throughout the year to see how you do!

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

JANUARY 18, 2018

Planning has begun for our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration to be held at our March membership meeting.

OAS hat sales have provided us with a profit of \$250.

Our Facebook “likes” are up to 867.

Our new website is proving very popular, with visits from people in many states, Canada, and even some European countries.

Young Birders Club Coordinator Kathleen Dougherty has several events scheduled.

Seven Ponds Nature Center had a very successful holiday auction, generating over \$21,000.

OAS will have representatives providing information at the Chrysler Corporation World Headquarters and Heritage Park Earth Day events, as well as the City of Southfield’s Winterfest.

Doris Applebaum  
Secretary



A group of American White Pelicans gather for their meeting

Photo credit: Mike Dougherty

## UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS

Date	Time	Program	Location
Tues., March 13	7:00 p.m.	A South African Adventure	First United Methodist Church (see below)
Tues., April 10	7:00 p.m.	Mentoring The Next Generation	First United Methodist Church (see below)
Tues., May 8	6:30 p.m.	Nature Walk	Heritage Park, Farmington Hills

Monthly membership meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month (except December, May, July and August) at 7:00 p.m., at the First United Methodist Church, 1589 West Maple Road, Birmingham, in the Thomas Parlor. The facility is located on the south side of Maple Road between Southfield and Cranbrook Roads. There is plenty of lighted, free parking and barrier-free access. Our meetings are free and open to the public. For meeting cancellation information, check our website, call a board member or call the church at (248) 646-1200.

### MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

#### MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

Welcome New Members!

**Carl Drife**

**Erin and Dan Gertiser**

**Barbara and Mike McAuliffe**

**Stephanie Podolan**

**Our membership drive for 2018 is underway! Please pay your membership dues at a monthly meeting or by mailing in the membership form on page 27.**



# 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: \_\_\_\_\_)

Please 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  
2780 SCENIC MEADOWS DRIVE  
ORTONVILLE, MICHIGAN 48462

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