



THE NUTHATCH

Volume 67, Issue 1

Oakland Bird Alliance

Spring 2025

Membership Meeting Schedule

“Shorebirds 101” — Joe Kwasniewski

March 11, 2025

Shorebird identification can be a daunting challenge for birders. In this presentation, we will discuss tips and tricks for separating and identifying commonly encountered species in the Great Lakes region. *In person & Zoom.*



“Life Underfoot: A Look into Field Herping & Field Photography” — Nick Scobel

April 8, 2025

What species of reptiles & amphibians call Michigan home and how does one go about finding them? Come along to explore the world of field herpetology, the pursuit of wild reptiles and amphibians, better known as “herping.” From habitats and techniques, to photography and contributing to citizen science, discover the hidden world that hides right beneath your feet. *In person & Zoom.*



“Evening Bird Walk” — Stage Nature Center, Troy

May 13, 2025

Join us for a guided evening walk through the trails of the Stage Nature Center. There are about two miles of trails and 100 acres of varied habitat to explore. The Stage Nature Center is located at 6685 Coolidge Highway in Troy. We will meet at the main parking lot. *Walk starts at 6:30 PM and ends at dusk.*

“Michigan Birds of Prey” — Francie Krawcke

June 10, 2025

Survival at its finest. Three engaging birds of prey will reveal their remarkable survival adaptations and behaviors in this intimate, up-close visit. You will not only learn how to identify these masters of the sky but discover the why's behind their behaviors. Attendees will have the opportunity to feel feathers and explore skulls and other bird parts like feet and bones. *In person & Zoom.*



Meeting Information

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (except December, July, and August). Most meetings are at the First United Methodist Church in Birmingham ([1589 W. Maple Rd, Birmingham, MI 48009](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1589+W+Maple+Rd,+Birmingham,+MI+48009)). The May meeting is often an evening hike or a special program.

Some meetings are in person and are also transmitted on Zoom, others are on Zoom only.

Meetings open at 6:30 PM and talks begin at 7:00 PM.

Instructions, links, and updates are posted on our website and on our Facebook page prior to each meeting.

www.oaklandbirdalliance.org

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Dear Oakland Bird Alliance Members,

As the days grow longer and the first signs of spring emerge, I'm excited to write my first letter as President of the Oakland Bird Alliance. It's truly an honor to step into this role and be part of such a passionate, engaged community of bird lovers and conservationists. Whether you are a longtime member or new to OBA, I look forward to connecting with you and working together to protect and celebrate the incredible birds of Southeast Michigan!

Spring is always a season of renewal, and for many birders, it's the most thrilling time of the year. The return of migrating warblers, shorebirds, and other seasonal favorites fills our landscapes with color and song, and I can't wait to experience it with all of you. We have a busy season ahead, packed with field trips, educational programs, and community outreach events that will give us plenty of opportunities to learn, explore, and share our love of birds.

This year, we are continuing our efforts to expand our outreach and conservation work, and we would love for more members to get involved. Volunteering at events like Earth Day festivals, helping with bird surveys, or even just spreading the word about bird-friendly practices can make a big difference. If you've ever considered stepping up, now is a great time! We have board positions and committee roles available for those looking to contribute even more.

I also want to take a moment to thank our dedicated volunteers and past leadership for making OBA the strong, active organization it is today. Stepping into this role, I'm grateful for the foundation that has been built and excited to continue growing our impact together.

As we embrace another season of birding, I encourage you to take full advantage of everything OBA has to offer. Join a field trip, attend a meeting, or simply take time to observe the birds in your own backyard. Every moment spent in nature strengthens our connection to the world around us and reminds us why conservation matters.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months, whether in the field, at a meeting, or simply swapping bird stories. Let's make this a spring to remember! As always, happy birding!

George B. Harris,
President

Board Member Contacts

Elected Officers

President	George Harris	gbharrisiv@gmail.com
Secretary	Gavin Awerbuch	awerbuchgavin@gmail.com
Treasurer	Jen Benke	scubadu9900@yahoo.com
Membership	Robert Moll	OASmembershipofficer@gmail.com
Field Trips	Kayla Niner	shad0wc00kiccrumbs@gmail.com
Programs	Don Burlett	baikalteal13@netzero.net

Appointed Officers

Young Birders Club	Kathleen Dougherty	kad8186@msn.com
Hospitality	Julie Bolcato & Laurie Schubert	juliemk82@aol.com & laschuby@aol.com
Publicity & Fundraising	Karen Kessler	Karenmk@live.com
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Conservation/Environment	Carolyn Stickney & Katri Studtmann	cstick01@gmail.com & kestudtm@mtu.edu
Advocacy	Vacant	

*** Note, emails will be updated in the coming months ***



FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Field trips are free and open to the public (depending on the destination, entry fees may be required). We welcome all levels of birdwatchers. Full details, including any updates to the schedule, are posted on our [website](#) and on our [Facebook page](#). Registration is required for most trips — contact trip leader for details.

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
March 8 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Lake St. Clair Metropark	Jeff Stacey jdstacey@ameritech.net
March 15 (Saturday) 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Highland Lake State Recreation Area “ <i>Spring Awakenings Hike</i> ” (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
March 23 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Location TBD “ <i>Early Spring Wildcard</i> ”	Kayla Niner shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com
April 6 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Stage Nature Center “ <i>Spring Turkey Walk</i> ”	Kayla Niner shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com
April 12 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Lake St. Clair Metropark “ <i>All About Owls & More</i> ” (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
April 19 (Saturday) 7:30 AM – 2:00 PM	Maple River State Game Area	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
April 26 (Saturday) 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM	Point Pelee National Park & Hillman Marsh (Canada)	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
May 4 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Red Oaks County Park “ <i>Warblers in the City</i> ”	Kayla Niner shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com
May 10 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM	Belle Isle State Park “ <i>World Migratory Bird Day</i> ” (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
May 10 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Magee Marsh + (Ohio)	Jen Benke & Jim Koppin scubadu9900@yahoo.com
May 18 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Detroit International Wildlife Refuge (Humbug Marsh)	Kayla Niner shad0wc00kiecrumbs@gmail.com
May 30 – June 1 (Weekend)	Beckley, West Virginia “ <i>Swainson’s Warbler Trip</i> ”	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
June 7 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge	Jen Benke scubadu9900@yahoo.com
June 14 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Red Oaks County Park “ <i>Feathered Friends at Friendship Woods</i> ” (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
June 15 (Sunday) 7:00 AM – 2:00 PM	Lost Nation State Game Area	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net

Young Birders Club

The YBC offers age-appropriate educational experiences for youth 8 – 18 years old. Young birders 16 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult. A release form is required for participation. YBC programs and field trips are open to all birders.

Pre-registration is required — contact YBC coordinator Kathleen Dougherty at kad8186@msn.com.

Field trip details are outlined on page 13 and on our website: <http://www.oaklandbirdalliance.org/youngbirders>



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

November 23, 2024 — Belle Isle State Park

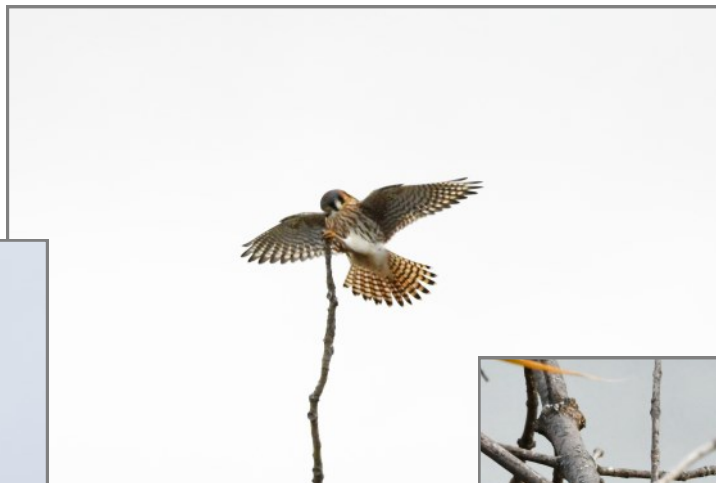
Leaders: Jeff Stacey & Kayla Niner

Joint trips with other birding groups are some of the most fun. Our annual season-end trip to Belle Isle with Washtenaw Bird and Nature Alliance (formerly Washtenaw Audubon Society) is never an exception.

We reverted to the traditional date for this trip, but waterfowl migration has become increasingly difficult to predict. Instead of huge rafts of diving ducks, we had to work hard to find just a few. But find them we did, and while the numbers weren't high, most of the target species were around. This included Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers, and last but not least, Ruddy Ducks.

We were also lucky enough to find all three of the local falcon species (Peregrine, Kestrel, and Merlin). A lone Snow Bunting flyover at the beach was a fun surprise.

Much work has been done on Belle Isle State Park in the past few years, so at the end of the trip we explored a new trail that starts at the nature center. There, we found the only Bald Eagles of the trip, as well as White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows.



Left to right: Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*, and White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (Kayla Niner).

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

(continued)

December 6 - 8, 2024 — Niagara Falls
Leader: Don Burlett

Five intrepid birders met just after the Canadian customs stop and began our journey across Ontario to Niagara Falls. It was a cloudy and brisk Friday, but we were undaunted. Our first stop was Hillman Marsh where we hoped to find shorebirds or other birds. We were greeted by a lone Killdeer and 45 American Pipits, quietly working a frozen muddy shoreline. A good start! We then headed to Erieau (just west of Rondeau) in search of ducks, gulls, anything. We had a few duck species and there were tons of Tundra Swans to our east near Rondeau. As we navigated the backroads on our way to the next stop, we saw at least five Northern Harriers (a couple were the fabulous gray ghosts!). We also saw an American Kestrel floating on air, working along the edge of a dirt road.

Our next stop was Fanshawe Lake, just northeast of London. There we had Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler, and also got very cold (what a wind it was)! The lake was frozen but below the dam was decent, with lots of Canada Geese and Mallards. From here, we headed east and didn't stop until we reached Hamilton. We tried to find a spot where Red Phalaropes had been seen, but the local waters were frozen. We relented and headed straight to Niagara Falls to the hotel and dinner. A couple of us went down to the falls to a short but exciting fireworks show.

Saturday morning began the traditional days' route: Fort Erie first. There, we had lots of Goldeneye, Red-breasted Mergansers, both Surf and White-winged Scoters, a Peregrine Falcon, and tons of Bufflehead. Long-tailed ducks and others were added to the menu. We proceeded to drive along the Niagara Parkway heading to Lake Ontario. We found a Common Loon, loads of Tundra Swans, Hooded Mergansers, and other waterfowl. When we got closer to the falls (just upstream), we scanned the gulls and found Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, and Bonaparte's Gulls. We then headed to the whirlpool but were unsuccessful in finding a Little Gull. Next we stopped at the power plant and added a Glaucous Gull. At the lookout we had terrible views of both Turkey and Black Vultures—on a church on the American side. At the lookout we also got details for our next chase.

We drove to Malcomson Eco Park in St. Catherine's and found a rare bird hanging out—a Black-throated Gray Warbler. It had been at the park since November 30th and was very nice to hang around for us to see. Moments like this make these trips special, unexpected gems! Amazingly, both people that had cameras didn't bring them along because of some flurries, and the only pictures of the bird were from a phone. Our apologies.

Next, we drove along the parkway to the mouth of the Niagara River at Niagara-on-the-Lake. We checked out the gulls and ducks, and later went to a local park to watch the Bonaparte's Gulls leave the river for the lake. Alas, no Little Gull before it was too dark to continue. On to dinner, time to lick our wounds and plan for Sunday.



Photo: Carolyn Stickney

Sunday morning we decided to take a moment to go back to Dufferin Park to look things over. We added Brown Creeper and Golden-crowned Kinglet before finding a hawk that a woman in the park mentioned seeing but couldn't re-find. We found the Merlin, feasting on a House Sparrow. And, of course, every Mallard in that park was drawn to us expecting to be fed wherever we stopped.

We returned to the whirlpool on our route home. We finally found the Little Gull there (with some hard work). We stopped at the power plant again and added Iceland Gull to our list. Later we visited a sewage plant without adding anything new to our list. Then at a small park just west of that, we added Carolina Wren and Eastern Bluebird. We also stopped at a couple of more parks along the shore of Lake Ontario, adding Wood Duck and a better looks at the scoters.

Then we drove back to the Rondeau area looking for anything new. Unfortunately, we did not find a crane, a blackbird, or a Cackling Goose, but it was a fine day. Everyone had fun, a few lifers were added to lists, and we felt it was worth the trip.



Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (left) and Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* (right) [Carolyn Stickney].



Tundra Swans *Cygnus columbianus* (Carolyn Stickney).

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

(continued)

January 11, 2025 — Baudette Park+

Leader: Don Burlett

Fourteen birders braved the cold weather and snow to venture forth in search of birds. Temperatures were in the 20s and it was mostly cloudy with a gentle breeze. We began at Beaudette Park. Surprisingly, most of the water in the ponded areas of the river were frozen. We had to venture to the far northwestern end of the park to get open water with ducks. As we walked along the river to this spot, a number of typical winter birds were observed. When we reached the open water we saw a large number of Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, and Swan. All three swans species were there, plus a single Common Goldeneye and some Buffleheads.

Then drove to Dodge #4 State Park searching for other waterfowl. The lake was largely frozen except for a small section in the middle. Visibility got iffy when it began to snow, but a large number of Mute Swans were there along with Redhead, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Bufflehead, and possibly the previously reported Long-tailed Duck—this sighting was not reported for the trip because only the leader got a brief glimpse of the bird. We had a flyover Bald Eagle (immature) and a flyover of a large number of Lesser Scaup.

Later, part of the group drove to the Johnson Nature Center to check out the mostly non-attended feeders, and walk a little around the nature center. Several American Crows and a group of American Robins feeding on berries in the bushes made their presence known. We were surprised when a group of Tundra Swans flew overhead, calling loudly.

All totaled, we saw 26 species on this cold, cloudy day. A few birds were surprises, but it was a typical local winter field trip. The cold weather up to this date had frozen most of the lakes and small streams, leaving just a few spots for us to check out.

January 18, 2025 — St. Clair River Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

A scant group of three “serious” birders ventured out on this cold and wet day, which started at the Harley Ensign boat ramp in the rain. There were some ducks and a flock of Tundra Swans out in the water; there were also hundreds of ducks farther out, but they couldn’t be positively identified.

From there we headed north along Anchor Bay to the St. Clair River and drove along the river up to Port Huron. The river was wide open and the groups of ducks were distributed along its entire length. Long-tailed Ducks were numerous and dominated the middle of the river; flocks of Canvasbacks and Redhead were common, mostly close to shore. We caught a Northern Harrier migrating to Canada early in the trip. A wide variety of ducks were observed, but when we got to Port Huron they thinned out a bit. We spotted an Iceland Gull sitting on a rail at the Edison Park below the bridge. At Lighthouse Park and Lakeside Park, we had numbers of ducks out in the water, but by then the rain had switched to snow and visibility was low. No scoters, no eiders, and very few gulls at that point. We had a combined total of 24 species for the two stretches of the trip.

February 2, 2025 — Downriver Ducks Tour (Elizabeth Park, Bishop Park, and Dingell Park)

Leader: Kayla Niner



Photo: Kayla Niner

It was a cold morning despite Woody the groundhog’s prediction of an early spring, and the group of 13 birders that met at Elizabeth Park was more inclined to believe Phil’s prediction of a long winter. Our first sightings of the day included Downy Woodpeckers, many squirrels, and a coyote! Everyone enjoyed watching the coyote chasing squirrels before he ran off into the woods. The group moved on to the bridge to survey the waterfowl below. We found Canada Goose, Mallards, a handful of American Black Duck, and an odd duck that was sitting weird with its feet stuck up. Several birders made guesses as to what it was. Those who guessed Canvasback were rewarded when the duck stopped stretching and slid into the water. We were also treated to a Belted Kingfisher that flew over our heads and then lightened its load; luckily, no one was hit. Further down the river we received a report of a Canada Goose that had been sighted the previous day with an apparent illness. All were



Photo: Kayla Niner

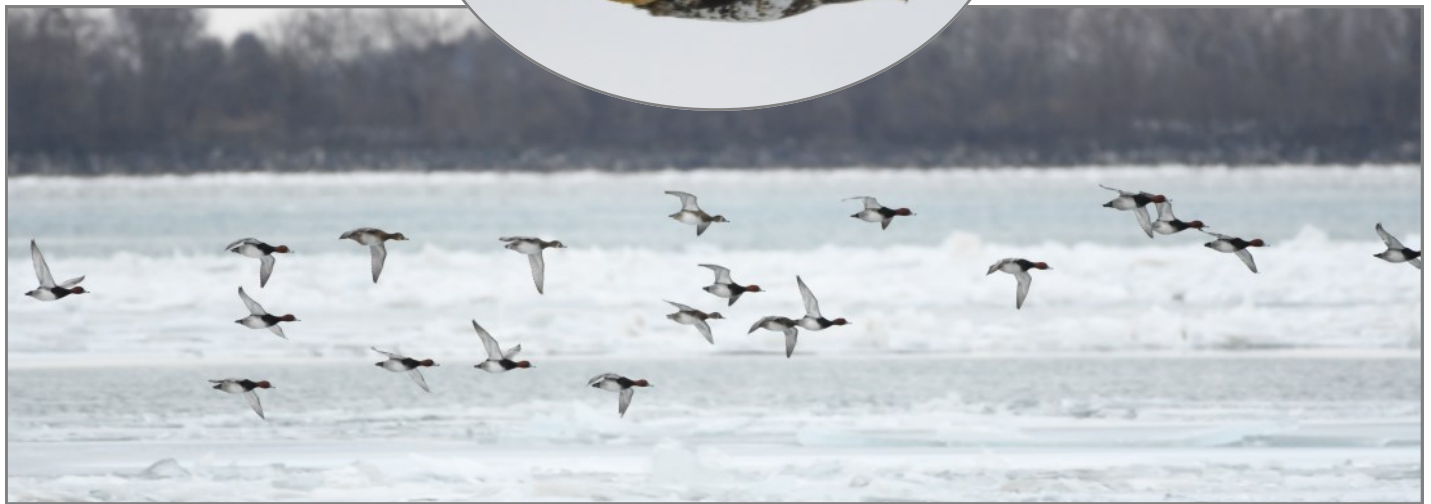
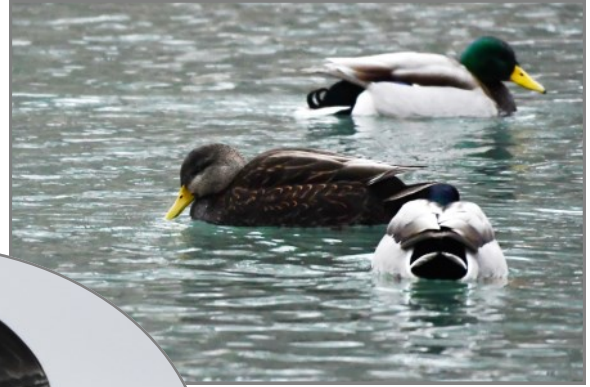
FIELD TRIP REPORTS

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advised to spray our shoe soles and floor mats with alcohol as a precaution for possible bird flu.

Out on the Detroit River more ducks were present, and we added Common Merganser, Canvasback, Redhead, and Mute Swan to the list. Also of note were a Great Blue Heron and a Bald Eagle. The group also tallied Blue Jays, American Robins, Dark-eyed Juncos, and House Finches at the park.

The second stop of the day was Bishop Park. A stark contrast to last year's open water, this year we had a very frozen section of river. The resident falcon was nowhere to be found, but the group sighted a flock of Redheads, a few Common Goldeneyes, and a Bufflehead. Four Bald Eagles were also out on the ice. We didn't spend a lot of time there as there wasn't much to see and the weather seemed to be coming in sooner than predicted.



Top: Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* and American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, in center. Center: Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*.
Bottom: Redhead *Aythya americana* (Kayla Niner).

We arrived at Dingell Park just as snowflakes were beginning to fly. We spent only 22 minutes watching the birds here as visibility was quickly declining and several members of the group had lengthy drives home. No new ducks were added; Dingell Park was also largely frozen. The few patches of open water were home to mostly Canada Geese and a few Mallards. One Canvasback was swimming by itself in a patch of open water. The highlights of this park were a raft of about 350 Mute Swans (counted by Don) and eleven Bald Eagles. The total species count for the day was 25, including nine species of waterfowl.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

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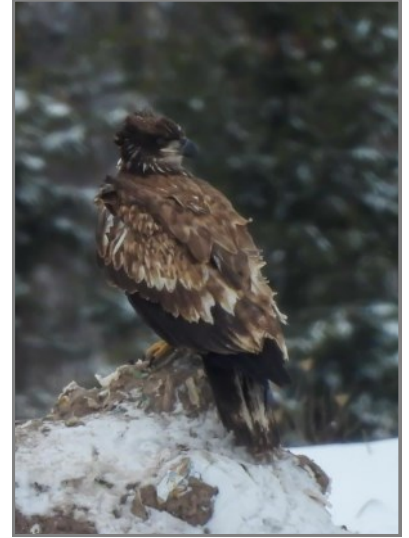
February 7-9, 2025 — Upper Peninsula Weekend Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

A group of nine birders headed north on Friday managing to avoid disaster as we drove through the upper Lower Peninsula's snow belt. Once in the Upper Peninsula, our first stop was the Rudyard Loop, site of most Snowy Owl sightings. We managed to see four Snowy Owls the first afternoon. We moved on to the Kinross feeders and enjoyed views of Wild Turkeys, Chickadees, American Goldfinch, and American Crows—wedged in the group of crows was a Common Grackle, which is not often seen here this time of year. Then we headed to the Dafter Dump where Bald Eagles, Common Ravens, American Crows, and European Starlings abounded. The only gulls we noted were Herring Gulls. After a quick stop at the Dafter Post Office, it was obvious that many of the typical sites were not going to be very productive this year. With few reports of Siskins, Redpolls, and other birds usually found here, we had our work cut out for us.

Saturday, we were out early and drove south in search of Sharp-tailed Grouse. After trying a couple of roads near Pickford, we found them near 23 Mile Road. We ran into three groups, in one of them we watched males strutting their stuff. Always a fun bird to find, we enjoyed that very much. We also nabbed a Northern Shrike on the drive to the first site visited.

After the "grouse viewing" we continued in Pickford looking for other birds. We found a feeder there where Evening Grosbeaks, a typical winter species, had joined a large group of American Goldfinch.



Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
(Kim Johnson).



Northern Shrike *Lanius borealis*
(Karen Kessler).



Sharp-tailed Grouse *Tympanuchus phasianellus*
(Karen Kessler).



Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*
(left, Karen Kessler; right, Kim Johnson).

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

(continued)

Then we drove north to the Dunbar Forest to see if any other birds were around. Feeders are not maintained there anymore, so expectations were low. We were surprised by a single male Pine Grosbeak singing at the top of a tree next to the road, and by three Ruffed Grouse hanging out in the evergreens along the road. Such a nice surprise!

After a few more stops, we had some ducks and other species typical of the area at the Sugar Island Ferry. It snowed lightly all afternoon, putting a damper on bird activity.

The next morning we drove around to a number of locations, but the snowy weather made it rather unlikely that additional species would be found.



Left: Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus*, in foreground.
Right: Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus* (Karen Kessler).

After a long weekend of dealing with snow/ice covered roads and with many species being very difficult to find, we headed home. The one thing about weekend trips that is always satisfying is the camaraderie of the group, exhibited at dinner Saturday night.



Young Birders Club Field Trip Reports

November 16, 2025 — Cranbrook Institute of Science “Feathery Functions”

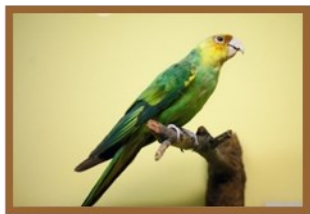
Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

The young birders visited the Cranbrook Institute of Science (CIS) for a special program about birds and dinosaurs. Paleontologists have discovered several Cretaceous fossil specimens with feathers. Scientists now know more details about these ancient creatures that were previously unimagined—some of these fossils are recognized as ancient birds, a discovery that has led to the realization that birds are living relatives of some dinosaurs.

We started in a classroom filled with skeletons and models of ancient creatures. Our instructor showed us a model impression of a famous ancient bird, *Archaeopteryx*, one of the most important fossils ever discovered. *Archaeopteryx* was about the size of an American Crow, but with a much longer tail and a mouth full of teeth. This fossil helped people understand that a new group of animals, unlike any other animals at the time, was emerging. *Archaeopteryx* represented a transition between non-avian dinosaurs and birds, and signaled changes that would result in the birds we see today were taking place.



Paleontologists are great storytellers who can reconstruct organisms from small features and incomplete skeletons. Feathers were one new feature found in ancient bird fossils. Modern high magnification instruments have helped scientists better understand bird evolution by examining feathers. *Archaeopteryx* was not the only ancient bird found in fossil beds. In the last thirty years, other bird fossils have been discovered in China. Our instructor shared some of these discoveries using skeletons, slides, and skulls. Researchers can now determine a lot about ancient birds by looking at fossilized feathers, including feather colors and the ecological niches occupied by the specimens. However, there are still unanswered questions about feathers. Feathers and other adaptations unique to birds are essential to birds' survival. For example, large cavities in the skulls of birds make them lightweight in comparison to other animals, and hollow bones are a characteristic of modern birds.



From the classroom, our group entered the museum to explore. Our first stop was the “Life Changes Over Time” exhibit, which focuses on dinosaurs and is a wonderful place to see a *Tyrannosaurus rex* cast skeleton along with examples of dinosaurs that paleontologists believe are bird ancestors, including *Deinonychus*.

CIS has specimens of other extinct animals including birds; we focused on these unique bird exhibits. One bird exhibited in a glass case was the Carolina Parakeet. This colorful bird is now extinct, but it once lived in old growth forests along rivers in the southern United States. The Carolina Parakeet was the only Parakeet native to the United States. The last captive Carolina Parakeet died at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1918.

Our next stop was the “Woodlands Den” where dioramas of Michigan natural communities display the assemblage of animals and plants unique to these natural places, which are in some cases threatened. Then we moved on to the “Every Rock Has a Story” exhibit, which has a large model of planet earth. It is a good place to consider bird migration and its challenges. The earth is changing. We paused and discussed the vast features of our planet.

Our guided museum tour ended at the display of the Passenger Pigeon. The Passenger Pigeon, which was once common in the United States, became extinct in 1914. An egg of the Dodo, another extinct bird species, was also on display. The group was encouraged to explore CIS independently.

This field trip was made possible by a generous grant from Audubon Great Lakes. It was a wonderful firsthand learning opportunity to explore extinction, bird ancestors, and life on earth.



Photos: Kathleen Dougherty & Cranbrook Institute of Science.

Young Birders Club Field Trip Reports *(continued)*

December 14, 2024 — YBC Christmas Bird Count at Eagle Valley

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

The YBC was invited to Eagle Valley Landfill in Orion Township to help the Oakland Bird Alliance with the 125th Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Eagle Valley Landfill, which is owned and operated by WM, serves the community with recycling and waste disposal services. This was the fifth year that the YBC joined this historical bird count. Since Eagle Valley is a restricted area, arrangements were made to tour the site with Community Representative Kathleen Klein. Ms. Klein is a wonderful educator and works tirelessly to share the story of Eagle Valley with the community.



Eagle Valley maintains wildlife habitats at the site that are recognized/certified by the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), an organization that certifies corporate lands that develop areas specifically to support wildlife. The site attracts a large concentration of birds. Birds flock to the site to feed, including birds of prey. Bald Eagles can be seen often.



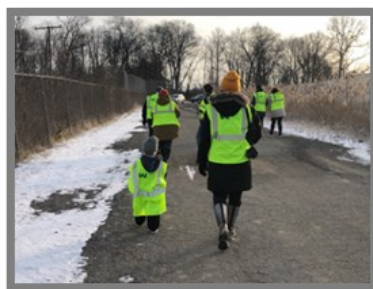
We began with a brief orientation. Ms. Klein showed maps of the wildlife habitat areas and discussed habitat management that WM conducts on the site. We then carpooled to key points to view birds. Just before we arrived, Ms. Klein had seen a gang of Wild Turkeys roosting in the trees near the entrance.

The eastern boundary of Eagle Valley is composed of mixed habitats including wetland pockets, a hardwood forest edge, and open hillsides. The group occasionally walked along the road to hear and see the small birds moving in the trees. Along this part of the property, songbirds seen included Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, House Finch, and Mourning Dove. American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos moved along the road, flitting in and out of sight.

Deeper into the property near the active landfill cells, larger flocks of birds were observed. Along the open hillsides of the landfill, a flock of Snow Buntings moved in and out of view. The car caravan traveled to the top of the landfill where European Starlings, gulls, and American Crows were foraging. Alongside these active flocks of birds, Red-tailed Hawks posed like statues (several were seen during the tour). Although Eagle Valley is aptly named, this year's CBC was one of the few years in which Bald Eagles were not observed.

Although the concentration of birds was lower than in past years, there were still thousands of birds at Eagle Valley. The most numerous were the European Starlings. We witnessed the phenomenon known as "murmuration," which happens when a flock takes flight all at once and appears as a dense pulsing mass of birds swirling into the air. The birds seem to move in unison. This behavior helps them avoid predation since it is hard to single out one bird from the whirling black mass.

After reaching the top of the landfill we returned to lower elevations and later to the office building, concluding the CBC at Eagle Valley. The most abundant species seen by the young birders during our visit were European Starling, American Crow, and Snow Bunting. The total number of species seen was 16 (2,199 individuals), which was lower than in 2023. A special thank you to the YBC's families and friends for helping with this count, and to Kathleen Klein and WM staff at Eagle Valley for making this tour possible. Observers for this area of OBA's count circle continued to bird nearby the rest of the day.



Photos: Kathleen Dougherty & All About Birds Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

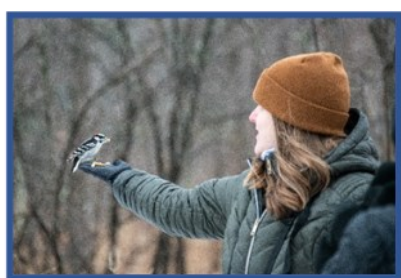
Young Birders Club Field Trip Reports (continued)

January 18, 2025 —Kensington Metropark “Winter Birding”

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

Early morning precipitation left a thin coating of ice crystals on the roadways and trails; however, this snowy glaze did not detour our dedicated birders. Kathleen Hansen, President of the Huron Valley Audubon Society (HVAS), joined the group. The HVAS regularly conducts bird surveys at Kensington and supports a MOTUS tower at the park. Kathleen shared information about HVAS and tips about hand feeding birds. She provided participants with a small bag of raw peanuts and walnuts, explaining this mixture is the best for the birds.

Black-capped Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers, and many other birds watched us walk down the trails, knowing that soon they would be the beneficiaries of nutritious treats. Kensington Metropark has a reputation as a place where you can handfeed songbirds. The park is usually bustling with people year-round; however, the weather may have kept park visitors away. We were the biggest group out on the trail and had limited competition to see birds. Right away, birds were actively taking handouts.



Just outside of the nature center, we could hear and see woodpeckers on bare trees nearby. A Red-tailed Hawk, also perched on a bare tree near the building, was scanning the area for a meal like a statue. An Eastern Bluebird was dining nearby on a nannyberry, a native shrub, just outside of the nature center.

Along the trail beyond the nature center, the group heard the gurgling call of the Red-bellied Woodpecker. This beautiful colored bird kept its distance, but its woodpecker behavior was easy to spot. Downy Woodpeckers were not shy and landed on several outstretched palms for peanuts. For many of the young birders, this was their first experience with this type of activity. Everyone was patient and calm, but excited with the thrill of seeing these birds so closely and with the sensation of birds landing on their hands.

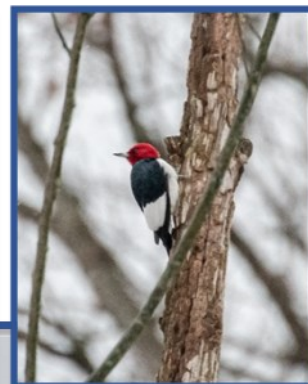
We moved slowly down the trail and stopped along the way looking for new birds. We eventually reached a bridge over a wetland where we began to see and hear another woodpecker species—the Red-headed Woodpecker. This striking woodpecker is not commonly seen in the area. Red-headed Woodpeckers have specific habitat requirements; the open swampy wetland along the trail proved to be a good place for this bird. Several dead or dying trees in this area provide the vital nesting cavities and bug meals they need. Red-headed Woodpecker populations have declined by 54% since 1966, which makes seeing this bird even more rewarding. At least three birds were present, including an immature bird, which was drab and not as colorful as the flying checkerboard adults.

Further along the trail we reached a deciduous hardwood forest. Forest songbirds like Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and Downy Woodpecker tagged along with the group. We continued to stop and offer peanuts to feathered friends, and eventually returned to the nature center. Just before entering the warm building, we heard the call of Sandhill Cranes, which overwinter at Kensington Metropark, and saw a new woodpecker species, the Northern Flicker.

Everyone thanked Kathleen Hansen for sharing her time, expertise, and the treats enjoyed by the birds. Nature center staff were not available to speak to the group, but participants had a chance to explore the educational exhibits before heading home. The group’s eBird checklist reported a total of 19 species. Although the number of species was lower than expected, it was a wonderful experience to hold the birds in the palm of our hands. One of the biggest birds landing on Uday’s hand was a Mourning Dove. Something to always remember.

Although the weather was chilly and dreary, everyone left with a smile and happy for a morning spent in the woods along the trails and immersed in nature. The birds helped relieve some of the stresses of modern-day life.

Photos: Kathleen Dougherty & Mary Zednik



Young Birders Club March to July — Field Trip Details

Spring Awakenings Hike – March 15 (Saturday), 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM **Highland State Recreation Area, White Lake**



In March bird migration is underway, and some birds are returning to their summer homes. Join the young birders for a twilight hike in search of early spring migrants. As the sun sets, bird activity increases and several species of birds migrate at night. If we are lucky, there is a chance to see one of the earlier returning shorebirds, the American Woodcock. Males perform a “sky dance” at dusk, which is an amazing sight. Special thanks to the Friends of Highland Recreation Area for supporting this field trip. Plan to hike and dress for the weather. Bring your binoculars. A Michigan State Parks recreation passport is required for entry.

All About Owls & More – April 12 (Saturday), 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM **Lake St. Clair Metropark, Harrison Township**

Lake St. Clair Metropark is a birding hotspot. It is also a great place to see nesting Great Horned Owls every spring—a pair has used a metal wash tub as its nest for years. Plan to observe this unique nest and explore the trails searching for early spring birds. The nature center is hosting their annual Owl Festival later in the day, participants are welcome to stay after the field trip. Park entry fees apply.



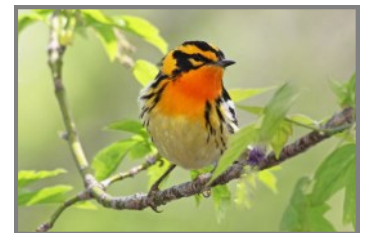
World Migratory Bird Day – May 10 (Saturday), 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM **Belle Isle State Park, Detroit**



If the weather permits, we will have a special program on this year’s spring World Migratory Bird Day. Allen Chartier, an extraordinary birder and veteran bird bander, will be banding birds at the newly established Belle Isle Bird Observatory. This is a wonderful chance to see birds up close and learn about bird banding. Allen is the co-author of the ABA’s *A Birder’s Guide to Michigan* and a life member of the Oakland Bird Alliance. This year’s WMBD theme is *Shared Spaces: Creating Bird Friendly Cities and Communities*. A Michigan State Parks recreation passport is required for entry.

Feathered Friends in Friendship Woods – June 14 (Saturday), 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM **Red Oaks Nature Center, Madison Heights**

Red Oaks Nature Center, also known as Friendship Woods, is a natural oasis in southern Oakland County, has a long history of birding, and is considered one of the top birding spots in the area. Up to 173 species of birds have been observed in this small natural area—many migratory birds use this property as a stopover site to refuel along their migratory routes. Naturalist Benjamin Prowse will discuss restoration activities taking place at Red Oaks. There is no entry fee.



Tall Grass Prairie Tour & More – July 19 (Saturday), 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM **Seven Ponds Nature Center, Dryden**



Seven Ponds is a 500-acre natural area—a sanctuary for native plants and animals. Seven Ponds also serves as an environmental education center offering classes and field experiences for the community. Greg Gossick, Oakland Bird Alliance board member, will share what is unique about Seven Ponds and guide us as we explore the tall grass prairie. A nominal per person fee may apply.

***Bird Briefs* (articles to look at online)**

from Don Burlett

[Rare bird is half-male, half-female. See the video](#)

A farmer in Colombia observed a strange bird with a weird coloration. It was bilaterally [gynandromorphic](#), a rare condition in which an organism exhibits both male and female characteristics. The bird was a Green Honeycreeper (*Chlorophanes spiza*) with one side male and one female. A video showing this very rare bird is included in the article.

[The Institute for Bird Populations 2024 Annual Report](#)

The Institute for Bird Populations' 2024 Annual Report (displayed as a *StoryMap*) showcases their work around the world. They monitor bird populations and the effects of change (both negative and positive). For those who are conservation minded, it is interesting to see how organizations like these work. The *StoryMap* shows their activities, finances, partners, etc.

[eBird in Action: The 2024 State of Canada's Birds - eBird](#)

This is a short report about the state of Canada's birds. As expected, there are declines in a number of bird populations, but a few groups have actually increased. Worth a quick look to see trends happening in Canada.

[DataZone - BirdLife International](#)

The *BirdLife DataZone* is a tool that provides decision-makers and conservation practitioners with data, knowledge, and tools to conserve birds and other biodiversity. For the rest of us, it is a tool to examine the latest in taxonomics and the status of threatened species. Most taxonomic changes are not remarkable, but they mention that most of the use of hyphens in bird names has been removed and replaced by a space. So, it's no longer a Brush-turkey. It's now a Brush Turkey. The Red List concerns species that are threatened and losing ground. It's a database, so you have to perform a query to find information.

BIRD QUIZ — Spring 2025

from Don Burlett



A) _____



B) _____



C) _____

**For answers and explanations
see Page 23**

No Peeking!



PEOPLE, PLACES, BIRDS — Spring

Guest Column by Daniel Bernard

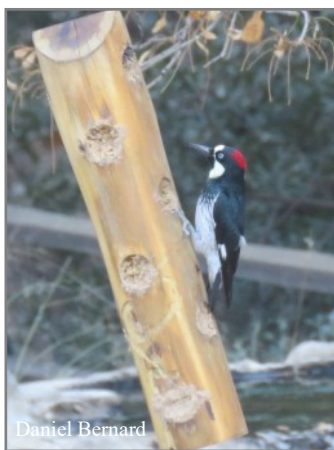
Throughout my 2022 Michigan Big Year, one thing became very clear to me: the Michigan birding community is a pretty awesome thing. All throughout Michigan I met dozens of new people, several of whom I now count amongst my closest friends. Throughout this journey I also explored so many incredible places; spots like Whitefish Point, Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, and countless more. When the year was over I knew, beyond any doubt, the experience of exploration and continuing to meet birders from all over that 2022 provided, was one I wanted to repeat. While I could have continued my adventures in Michigan, an idea formed that will no doubt shape the rest of my life: surely the excellence of the birding community isn't unique to Michigan, right?



Daniel Bernard

And so, after a year and a half of planning, on December 28th, 2024, I left home to begin the long drive to Arizona, from which I would embark on a quest that will encompass the entirety of 2025. This wouldn't be a typical "Big Year" though, as that is generally an endeavor with the sole focus of seeing as many species as possible. No, my journey would be one that will take me to every one of the Lower-48 states even if there isn't a single new bird to add. One focused as much on meeting birders as on seeing birds. A journey with the goal of getting to know the People, Places, and Birds of the United States.

I kicked off this expedition in southeast Arizona, one of the legendary Meccas of American birding. While in Arizona I totaled an incredible 173 species and met three different birders over my four days in the state, the first of whom was Timothy Burkhardt. A Tucson resident, Tim has a tradition of doing a Pima County New Year's Big Day to kick off each year, and this time I tagged along. Tim and I saw 112 species over the course of the day, with my personal highlight being my new favorite woodpecker: Acorn Woodpecker, which we saw at the incredible Madera Canyon Santa Rita Lodge.



Acorn Woodpecker
Melanerpes formicivorus

Santa Rita Lodge, Arizona

After Arizona came The Land of Enchantment, New Mexico. I spent the bulk of my time in the Albuquerque area spending time with family and birding with my dad; during this time we visited renowned birding sites like Sandia Crest, Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and Elephant Butte State Park—we also found a locally rare group of Mountain Plover! Before leaving the state I met with a group of birders from the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society for a morning of birding around Las Cruces, and by the time I crossed the state line into Texas I had seen 130 species and birded with five different birders during my week in New Mexico.

The Lonestar State truly lived up to its reputation as one of the greatest places in America for birding, but the highlight of my time in the state definitely came on January 16th when I spent essentially a full day birding the renowned Santa Margarita Ranch. On this single day alone I had 102 species, with almost too many highlights to name! The Brown Jays (which are pretty much seen exclusively on the ranch and nowhere else in the US) were incredible, especially the juveniles who went bananas over the marshmallows that were put out at their feeding station, but of course birds such as Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Red-billed Pigeon, and Morelet's Seedeater can hardly be overlooked. Oh, and who can forget the Mottled Owl—probably one of the most sought-after individual birds in all of American birding history, she has drawn hundreds of birders from across the world to Santa Margarita. Throughout my time in Texas, with visits to other legendary locations such as Big Bend National Park, Estero Llano Grande State Park, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, and the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, I managed to see an astonishing 194 species and birded with 36 different birders!



Brown Jay
Psilorhinus morio

Santa Margarita Ranch, Texas

While I'd expected Arizona and Texas to be as incredible as they were, I was totally unprepared for them to be joined by the likes of Louisiana. My first day in Louisiana was spent primarily around Cameron Parish, and what a day it was. I don't think I have ever in my life seen such an incredible mix of diversity and quantity of birds as I did on January 18th. Red-winged Blackbirds, Ring-necked Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, Greater White-fronted Geese, and Snow Geese all numbered in the thousands with another 11 species all surpassing the hundred mark! The highlight of the day, though, came in the evening when I met marshbird biologist Jonathon Leuck for a nighttime

PEOPLE, PLACES, BIRDS — Spring

(continued)

Yellow Rail banding expedition, during which we would band 11 of the incredibly elusive little rails, one of which I actually got to hold in my hand! By the time I departed Louisiana to head to Mississippi, I had seen 151 total species and spent time birding with five different birders.

During my last day in Louisiana and my first day in Mississippi I was greeted with a reminder of the weather of back home when a historic snowstorm hit much of the south. This certainly slowed down my birding a tad, but I was still able to connect with a group of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers as well as a variety of shorebirds during the time I spent along the coast. My last day in Mississippi was spent joining the Mississippi Audubon Society for their biannual tour of the Seaman Road Sewage Lagoons, a normally no-access spot which is one of the best sites for birding in the entire state! While on this tour I got to know several local birders including a couple named Sandy and Rich, who invited me to stay at their house on Dauphin Island in Alabama. After the tour was over, I left Mississippi, having seen 117 species and birded with 16 different birders!



Marbled Godwit
Limosa fedoa

Jones Park, Mississippi

The majority of my time in Alabama was spent on Dauphin Island. There I met and birded with local shorebird biologist Andrew Haffenden and a couple of other locals, Cynthia Freeman and Michelle Steber. On our way back from trying for a nearby Short-eared Owl Michelle asked me: “So, you’re from Michigan; do you know Seven Ponds Nature Center?” This question shocked me considering that not only do I know Seven Ponds, but I have lived there for the better part of the past six years! When I left Alabama I had managed to rack up 117 species there as well, having birded with three different people.

Florida was a state for which I had very high expectations, and much like Arizona and Texas, it lived up to those high expectations! From starting at the renowned St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, to working my way down the coast, to spending a day in Miami, and then finally spending two days birding with locals around the Orlando area, my time in Florida was exciting. Probably the highlights of the state came in the form of Florida Scrub-Jay, Western Flycatcher, and Shiny Cowbird—the latter seen at the legendary feeders of Larry Manfredi during my day of birding with Oakland County native Gavin Awerbuch! By the time I left The Sunshine State I had totaled 198 species and birded with five different birders!



Florida Scrub Jay
Aphelocoma
coerulescens

Oscar Scherer State
Park, Florida

Georgia truly blew me away with how incredible the birds and birding community both were. My tour through the state first took me north along the coast, where on the first day I spotted a single flock of 930 Semipalmated Plovers and on the second an incredible group of 19 Piping Plovers! After those two days I headed inland to spend three days birding around the Athens area, the third of which was spent joining the University of Georgia and Georgia Tech birding clubs on their trip to the Clayton County Water Authority’s Natural Treatment Systems, an impressive wastewater facility that uses natural means to treat wastewater and consists of dozens of marshes, ponds, and wetlands. By the time I left Georgia, I had birded with 25 different birders and tallied 152 total species.

So far this year my travels have taken me through eight states, I have seen 386 different species, and have birded with 118 birders on my adventure to get to know the People, Places, and Birds of American birding. The coming three months will see me travel back and forth across the country, exploring the northern portions of the states I have already visited on my way to California. From California I will head back east, birding in Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. During this time I hope to bird with at least another hundred birders, see hundreds of species of birds, and visit a ton of the country’s fantastic places for birding.

***Follow Daniel’s 2025
journey on his blog***

PeoplePlacesBirds.net

***The Nuthatch
will feature this guest column
through 2025.***

THE EVER EXPANDING BACKYARD

by Don Burlett

The discovery of birds in your life can occur at almost any point. Since birds are almost everywhere, it means your first encounter or the first moment of fascination could happen at any time. For many people this occurs with the birds in your own backyard, be it at a feeder just outside a window, or a bird flying across the yard at just the right moment. That flash of color, the squawking of one bird to another, or the sudden discovery of a nest in the bushes in your yard. There are many ways and reasons for a person to discover the mystery of birds. Anyone who has become a birder can recall a moment of observation that led to a lifetime of birding.

Typically, the next step is the desire to learn more about those birds that were seen or heard. Getting a field guide to figure out which birds were coming to the feeder or what the blue bird flying along the fence line was. It starts so innocently, just a yearning to understand these creatures a bit more. Then it becomes a goal to bring more birds into the yard with one or more feeders. It starts out so slowly that you hardly understand what is happening to you.

Then you discover that other people have the same interest in birds. You meet a neighbor that has several feeders and they tell you about the other birds they have visiting their feeders, so you feel a need to add these birds to your yard. Soon, you find that some of these people actually get together to compare notes and offer advice on how to improve the variety at their feeders. Again, it is a slow process that slowly builds momentum.

Next, you learn that there are other places in your neighborhood that have species of birds that you don't see at your feeders. Unless you have a pond in your backyard, you don't often see ducks waddling through. You find that hawks, other than the dastardly Cooper's Hawk that occasionally poaches small birds from near your feeders, are not common in your yard, but show up at parks and along the highway. Your sense of curiosity starts to grow when you decide to try looking at birds at other locations. You discover that binoculars are a useful tool to better see these birds. The birdwatching urge is starting to take hold.

On your first trip to a park, you meet others who are seemingly wandering lost in the woods looking for birds. It's a birding club and they're on a field trip. Purposely going somewhere other than the backyard to look for birds. How interesting! They speak another language as they describe species seen and how they know what each sighting was. This is intriguing! So, you talk with some of them and find their club does this regularly, and that you are welcome to come along and learn more.

Now, you're a member of a bird group and you find yourself drawn to a park across town, and then across the county and across the state. These clubs hold meetings and discuss the nature of birds, how to see them, and how to identify them. Then, someone gives a presentation about birding someplace out-of-state. Wow, those birds were terrific! Strange new shapes, colors, and behaviors. This is becoming fun. You like it so much that you decide to do some of this "exotic" birding around the region.

Some people remain happy to just see birds while others endeavor to see how many birds they can see in a specific area. County listing arises, state lists develop, and you've even heard of the "big year!". This is incredible. So much to learn and so many places to visit. A scope is added to your cache of tools, then it's software to keep track of birds seen and to communicate with others about birds and where they are seen. It's such a rapid change in the nature of your birding.

Finally, you find that others travel to other countries to add birds to their "life lists." A truly remarkable concept, going around the world to see exotic birds in strange new places. This can be fun but it does take a commitment beyond the average birder. But the list grows and you still seek out new birds and places to know.

And then you realize...your backyard has grown to be a very large place. The entire world is at your feet and the desire to discover new birds, new behaviors, and meet wonderful people doing what you now love has grown beyond what would have been your wildest dream. It's amazing how quickly this can occur. It's all based on the level of curiosity you have and the level of desire to quench that thirst.

Don't limit your curiosity and minimize your chances to see the world of birds and their strange and beautiful nature. Join the growing crowd and explore to your heart's content. You'll find it rewarding in birds and in friends made along the way. Carry on and enjoy the world that surrounds your backyard.

WEBS OF DECEPTION

by Doris Applebaum

If you have read about fireflies, you may have learned that there are some species of fireflies that prey on others. The females of these predatory species mimic the flashing signal of females of the other species, luring amorous males to their death.

Researchers in China have discovered that it isn't only predatory fireflies that use this kind of deception to get a firefly meal; an orb-weaver spider (*Araneus ventricosus*) has its own deceptive way of capturing fireflies.

In the firefly species *Abscondita terminalis*, the flashing pattern of males is two flashes and the female pattern is one flash.

When the orb-weaver spider captures a male, it doesn't immediately kill it. Instead, it induces the firefly to change its flashing pattern from two flashes to one and continue flashing, mimicking the females of its species. This lures more males to the spider's web to be turned into dinner.

The spider apparently produces a chemical reaction in the firefly, causing it to change its flashing pattern, but it isn't yet known exactly how this is done.



Orb-weaver spider

One thing is certain, though: there is always something new in the world of nature to learn about—and be amazed.

Source: November 2024 issue of *Natural History* magazine.

Photo Credit: L. Cotch (Wikipedia)

SLENDER CHANCE

by Doris Applebaum

Is the Slender-billed Curlew on your life list? If not, you may be out of luck. No sighting of this shorebird has been reported since 2001, in Hungary.

A coordinated search for this species started in the fall of 2009, in the slender (no pun intended) hope of finding birds to which a satellite tag could be applied, so that the wanderings of the birds could be followed.

This species does wander. In the past, individuals have been known to start off in Siberia and migrate all the way through Europe to the Middle East and North Africa.

The search team is interested in any past sightings of this species, as clues to help narrow the search. If you have ever seen this species, you are asked to notify the Chair of the Slender-billed Curlew Working Group at nicola.crockford@rspb.org.uk.

If you are interested in more information click here: [Slender-billed Curlew - *Numenius tenuirostris*](#).

(Information for this summary is from an article in *World Bird-watch* magazine, December 2009, published by BirdLife International.)

Addendum

I submitted the above article for our newsletter late in 2009.

On December 23, 2024, I received an email from BirdLife International with the sad news that the efforts to prevent the extinction of the Slender-billed Curlew had failed. They cited a report dated November 18, 2024, indicating that an extensive search for this migratory shorebird, covering hundreds of thousands of square miles, had not found a single individual of this species. The Slender-billed Curlew is now considered to be extinct.

Drainage of its breeding grounds for agriculture, loss of wetlands that it used for feeding, and hunting—even when it was known that few individuals were left—are considered to be among the contributors to this unfortunate result.

Let's use this report as a reminder to do everything we can to help bird-protection organizations prevent any more such disappointing losses.

Editor's Notes:

1. BirdLife International reporting: [New publication indicates devastating extinction of the Slender-Billed Curlew - BirdLife International](#)
2. Scientific paper referenced by BirdLife International's reporting: [Global extinction of Slender-billed Curlew \(*Numenius tenuirostris*\) - Buchanan - Ibis - Wiley Online Library](#)

Highlights of the Christmas Bird Count — December 2024

by Kayla Niner

The Christmas Bird Count was a rare partly sunny day for Michigan winter, albeit a cold one. We had a great turnout and every section was out looking for every bird in their territories. Our overall total this year was 70 species, which is down from 73 last year. Notable species included a Killdeer, a Saw-whet Owl, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a Ruddy Shelduck, a probable escapee that still caused tons of excitement among the birders. Four sections also turned up a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a species that seems to favor the count circle area. Full results are posted on our website.

An afterglow was held at the Wint Nature Center at Independence Oaks and participants shared details of their best birds of the day and enjoyed the pizza bought by OBA.



Photo: Kayla Niner

CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENT CORNER

by Katri Studtmann

Native Plants for Birds (and other good things)

As spring approaches, the itch to get outside in the garden grows stronger for many gardeners including me. Since the summer of 2022, I have been working on converting my backyard into a native plant garden for the local wildlife. A native plant is one that evolved to live in the specific region you live in. Because native plants evolved in your region, they are better suited to supporting local wildlife such as birds, than introduced plants from around the U.S. or the world. Sometimes introduced plants can develop into an invasive species, meaning they can spread and take over the landscape, usually due to no natural controls in their new environment. Native plants can struggle to compete with the new invaders because they have not co-evolved with the invasive species and cannot compete with them as well. A common invasive species most people know is common buckthorn, but there are many more—some are even sold as ornamental plants/shrubs at garden stores.

A native plant garden in your yard or local community has many important benefits for wildlife! In North America, 96% of landbirds feed their chicks with insects. Native plants are a very important source of insects for birds and support four times more insect biomass than non-native and invasive plants. Therefore, by planting a native plant garden, you are supporting the local insect community which in turn supports more birds! One of the amazing parts about establishing a native plant garden is seeing what wildlife is attracted. In the first year of my garden, I only planted butterfly weed and it attracted monarch caterpillars right away! Other plants like cardinal flowers can attract Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, which many people try to attract with special feeders. Native plants like grasses, shrubs, and trees can also provide habitat for birds and other critters to take cover in. By converting even a small portion of your yard to a native plant garden, you will be surprised by the wildlife that utilizes it.

Not only are native plants good for wildlife, they have other fantastic benefits as well! Native plants are perennials, so they will come back year after year. Native plants are easier to establish in a garden because they are local to Michigan. You will find that after the first year of your native plant garden, the plants will take off and need little to no maintenance! If you have a particularly wet area in your yard, consider planting a rain garden. Rain gardens help slow and filter stormwater before reaching our waterways. There is a great program called the [“RainSmart Rebates”](#) in Oakland County—see if your home qualifies! Lastly, native plants are gorgeous and can add natural beauty to your yard.



Even if you don't have the time or resources to convert a whole bed to native plants, you can start small and expand from there. That's the approach I took to converting my backyard, and it has been a rewarding experience. The first summer I spent most of my time removing the invasives and enriching the soil with compost. In my second summer, I had a great space cleared out along the side of our garage, which I filled with native plants from a local native plant sale. In my third summer, I decided to plant some native shrubs and trees like red-osier dogwood and eastern redbud along the fence line. This summer, I am looking forward to expanding my garden even further and filling in the space between the dogwoods!

There are many excellent resources out there to help you get started with your native plant garden! Michigan Audubon has a site dedicated to [bird-friendly landscapes](#). The National Audubon website has a cool [native plant finder database](#) based on your location. The [Wild Ones North Oakland Chapter](#) also has some fantastic resources about native plants including a [list of native plant growers in Michigan](#). Additionally, there are many local native plant sales taking place in Oakland County from April to June. I hope you find joy in creating your native plant garden and seeing what comes to visit your yard this year!

Photos: Katri Studtmann

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGES



Welcome New Members!

Lisa Link, Austin Grodzicki, Krisha Howell, Mary Korde, Leslie & Brian Lenz, Khrys Mydrin, Madelyn Swan, Elizabeth Toftey, and Sarah Angus.

The *2025 Membership Drive* is underway. You can renew in one of two ways:

- 1) Use the “*Renew OBA Membership*” link on the Membership tab on our website (<http://www.oaklandbirdalliance.org>), to pay online using PayPal. [CLICK HERE](#) or
- 2) Mail a check along with a membership form (page 24)

Mail renewal forms to:

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

To check the status of your membership or if you have questions, contact OBA Membership Officer Robert Moll at: OASmembershipofficer@gmail.com. *** Note, this email will be updated in the coming months***

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

Oakland Bird Alliance Online Store

Introducing our new online store!
Your generous support helps us offer field trips,
organize monthly programs, engage young
birders, and support bird conservation.

Thank you!



Contact Karen Kessler
at Karenmk@live.com
with questions or
feedback.

Upcoming Native Plant Sales

[East Michigan Native Plants, LLC](#) (view link for details, some info will be posted later in the season)

- May 17 | Bowers School Farm, Bloomfield Hills
- May 24 | Salem Church of Christ, Farmington
- May 24 | Madison Heights Civic Center, Madison Heights
- June 19 | VanHoosen Farm, Rochester Hills

[Oakland Conservation District](#) (view link for details) — pre-sale is open

**** a better list will be posted on the “[Conservation Page](#)” of our website in the coming months. For questions or to request more information contact Katri Studtmann (kcstudtm@mtu.edu)****

2025 Member Survey — Your voice matters!

Oakland Bird Alliance is a community-driven organization that thrives on the input, passion, and ideas of our members—like you! This survey is a vital way for us to hear your thoughts as we shape our programs, events, and conservation efforts to better serve our shared mission of protecting birds and connecting people with nature.

Thank you for taking a few moments to share your perspective and help us make OBA the best it can be!

[Oakland Bird Alliance 2025 Member Survey](#)

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

December 5, 2024

Treasurer: Available funds in the bank and PayPal are \$29,000 and \$1,800 respectively. Received a \$600 stipend from Great Lakes Audubon to attend the Great Lakes Chapter Meeting. We are overbudget due to unexpected costs during the year.

Membership Officer: Received a \$100 donation in honor of Don's time as president. Received \$2,140 in membership dues, with 233 current paying members. The newsletter will not be distributed to those who have not paid dues since 2023. OBA can provide a note for tax deduction if requested.

Field Trip Officer: All sections of the CBC are covered and hospitality for the tally is in place. Kayla Niner will officially take over as Field Trip Officer in January; Jeff will be available to assist if needed.

Conservation & Environment Officers: The conservation update for November and December was sent to members via Facebook.

YBC Coordinator: The CBC count at WM's Eagle Valley facility is scheduled; the rest of the YBC trips are scheduled through March. Allen Chartier volunteered to lead a field trip for World Migratory Bird Day (YBC's May field trip). Attended the Great Lakes Chapter Meeting. Receipts will be sent to Treasurer to process reimbursement of funds received from Audubon.

Advocacy Officer: OBA needs to submit the annual report to National Audubon by March; the report includes an impact statement (outline what we did to be impactful in our community, grant money used, and volunteer hours from board members). Don is working on this and needs the board's information by the end of January. Audubon's next national meeting, Audubon Getaway, is tentatively scheduled for July 20, 2025, in Montreal, Canada.

Publicity/Fundraising Officer: OBA's online merchandise store is live. Looking into adding OBA tote bags, stickers, and magnets. Has not had inquiries about calendars since the November meeting. Calendars will be available at the CBC tally.

Social Media Administrator: Would like to send a survey to members regarding their social media use and preferences. The board decided to hold off so we can take the opportunity to include other questions. A committee was formed to work on a membership survey.

January 23, 2025

President: Working on setting up a Google non-profit account. A subcommittee comprised of George Harris, Dan Gertiser, and Robert Moll met and worked on the membership survey previously discussed by the board; a draft will be sent to the board for review prior to sending it to members.

Program Officer: Programs are planned through November 2025.

Membership Officer: OBA collected \$3,644 since August (start

of membership year), which is over our target and includes a \$100 donation. Ninety households comprising 125 members have paid 2025 dues. An appeal letter will be sent via email and Facebook. *Absent, update presented by President.*

Field Trip Officer: The field trip committee meeting is set for 1/27 to schedule upcoming trips.

Conservation & Environment Officers: Upcoming volunteer events will be posted monthly; information will be sent to George the 7th of each month for him to send out to members the following weekend. An article will also be published in the newsletters.

Newsletter Editor: Need content for the Spring Nuthatch by February 13 or earlier. Prepared a summary of display ideas for the board to consider and requested feedback/other ideas. *Absent, update presented by President.*

Social Media Administrator: Plan to set up an Instagram account once the Google non-profit account is set up. Photos and videos from field trips will be needed to publish on this account.

YBC Coordinator: Received a donation from WM for doing the CBC at their facility. Grant funds from Great Lakes Audubon have been exhausted.

*Highlights compiled by Newsletter Editor
from meeting minutes submitted by
Gavin Awerbuch, Secretary.*



Errata:

In our recent Winter Nuthatch, Volume 66 Issue 4 (page 17, September 19, 2024 Board Meeting Highlights), we published incorrect financial figures.

- The incorrect statement read: *“So far this calendar year, we received \$2750 in donations, \$391 in merchandise, and \$5700 in dues.”*
- The corrected statement is: *“So far this calendar year, we received \$5700 in donations, \$391 in merchandise, and \$2750 in dues.”*

We deeply regret this error and any confusion it may have caused. Thank you for your understanding and continued support of the Oakland Bird Alliance.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE 2024 INCOME STATEMENT (unaudited)

Assets (as of 12/31/2024)		
	Citizens Bank and PayPal	<u>\$27,106</u>
Income		
	Dues	\$4,570
	Donations	\$5,461
	Merchandise	\$862
	National Audubon Grant	\$1,000
	Total Income	<u>\$11,893</u>
Expenses		
	Bank Charges	\$107
	Charitable Contributions	\$1,000
	Hospitality	\$399
	Insurance	\$1,356
	Mail fees and Postage	\$250
	Michigan Filing Fee	\$30
	PayPal Fees	\$99
	Printing - Nuthatch and other	\$991
	Programs/field trips	\$967
	Publicity	\$58
	Rent	\$700
	Website	\$537
	Young Birders	\$572
	Grant Expenditures	\$551
	Expense Total	<u>\$7,617</u>
	<u>Net Income</u>	<u>\$4,276</u>
	Net Worth as of 12/31/2024	<u>\$31,540</u>

Prepared by
Jen Benke, Treasurer

Bird Quiz Answers — Spring 2025

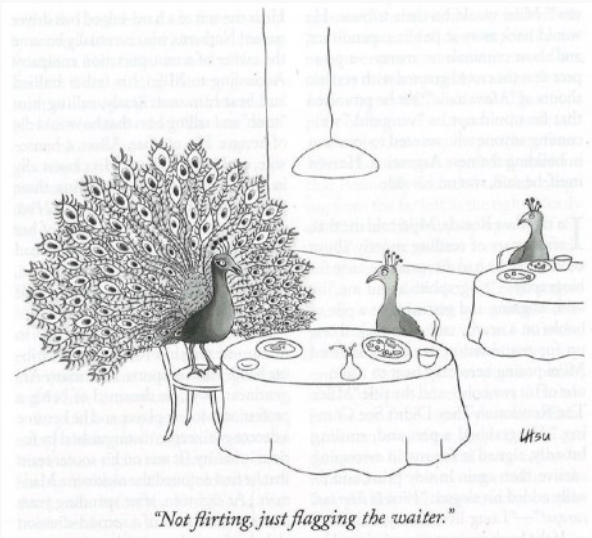
Not So Easy Bird Quiz Answers: a) Willow Flycatcher, b) Alder Flycatcher, c) Acadian Flycatcher

- a) Willow Flycatcher: Small, slender flycatcher; brownish-olive overall with a yellowish wash to belly; two whitish wing-bars and white throat that contrasts with brownish-olive breast; eye-ring is almost non-existent; head shows a slight crest; has the shortest primary projection of the group.
- b) Alder Flycatcher: Greenish-olive color with two pale wing-bars and a distinct eye ring; throat is white; head is round, no sign of a slight crest; gray chest band.
- c) Acadian Flycatcher: Olive above and yellowish below; two pale wing-bars and a thin eye ring; forehead has more slope than the others in this group; has the longest primary projection of the group.

This group of flycatchers is commonly referred to as Traill's Flycatcher when separating them by structure or look is difficult to impossible. The song of each flycatcher is the best way to separate and identify them:

- Willow Flycatcher — song is close to “fitz-bew.”
- Alder Flycatcher — song is close to “free beer” or “fee-bee-o” (close to Eastern Phoebe).
- Acadian Flycatcher — song is close to “ker chip” or “peet sah.”

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



*New Yorker Magazine
December 9, 2024*





OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Mobile: (____) _____

Email address: _____

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

Check also if you are a member of:
____ National Audubon Society
____ Michigan Audubon Society

OBA needs and welcomes volunteers — please participate if you can!

Check if you have the skills to help:
____ Become a board member
____ Lead a field trip or present a program
____ Fill an open position (Position: _____)

Check appropriate line:
____ Member renewal
____ New member
____ Change of address

Membership Fees

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

Our Mission

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

Please make checks payable to:

OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE

Mail to:

OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE
C/O ROBERT MOLL
PO BOX 796
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48012-0796

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