

THE NUTHATCH

Volume 68, Issue 2

Summer 2026

Membership Meeting Information

Bee Is for Beneficial (Brian Peterson-Roest)

— June 9, 2026

In this presentation, Bees in the D Founder and President Brian Peterson-Roest will share an introduction to the variety of bees, the benefits of bees, and the art of beekeeping. *In person & on Zoom.*



Photo: Bees in the D

Bird Brain Battle (Brittany Laird-Lieck)

— September 8, 2026

Gather your flock and fly over for a fun game of bird jeopardy, hosted by Brittany Laird-Lieck of the Toledo Zoo Bird Club. It's time to show off those sky-high smarts and see if you have what it takes to be the ultimate bird brain. *In person for full participation; on Zoom for view-only.*



Photo: The Toledo Zoo

Saving Songbirds (Nicole Kvasnovsky)

— October 13, 2026

Each year, countless songbirds suffer injuries due to human-related causes. The Bird Center of Michigan specializes in their rehabilitation while also educating the public on ways to reduce these threats. This lecture will cover the most common reasons birds are admitted to our center, including window collisions, cat attacks, and nest disruptions. We will discuss how these birds are treated, the steps you can take to prevent such incidents, and what to do if you find an injured or orphaned bird. By understanding these challenges and implementing simple preventive measures, we can work together to protect Michigan's songbirds and support their survival in the wild. *In person and on Zoom.*

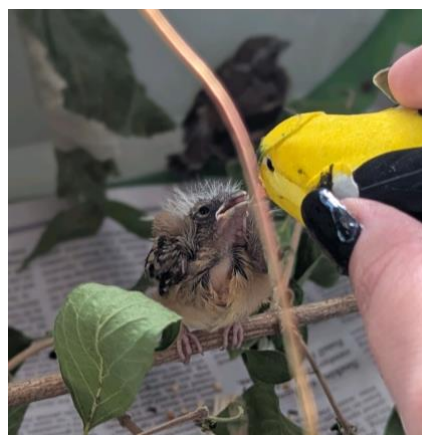


Photo: Bird Center of Michigan

Meeting Information

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (except in December, July, and August). Meetings are held at the Auburn Hills Community Center (Seyburn A Room) at [3350 E. Seyburn Drive, Auburn Hills, MI 48326](https://www.auburnhillsmi.gov/3350/E_Seyburn_Drive).

Meetings open at 6:30 PM, and talks begin at 7:00 PM. If applicable, Zoom links are posted on our website and social media before each meeting.

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THE NUTHATCH



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Earth Day has always been about possibility, but this year, it felt especially alive.

Over the past few weeks, our Oakland Bird Alliance community has been out in full force, celebrating, connecting, and sharing a love of birds and the natural world across Southeast Michigan. From tabling at Heritage Park with Oakland County Parks to a wonderful day at Riverside Park in Auburn Hills alongside our new partners in the City of Auburn Hills, it's been inspiring to see so many people come together with a shared purpose.

What stood out most wasn't the events themselves, it was the people. Families stopping by with curious kids eager to tell us about their favorite bird. Individuals just beginning their birding journeys. Seniors sharing stories and sightings from decades past. Earth Day brought out a beautiful mix of experience levels and perspectives, all connected by a simple desire to show up for Earth.

It was also a joy to reconnect with longtime friends and partners like the Toledo Zoo and Stage Nature Center. These relationships remind us that conservation work is never done in isolation, it thrives through collaboration, shared knowledge, and a sense of community that stretches well beyond any one organization.

And speaking of community, I've been especially excited about the growing role of our local libraries. These spaces are becoming incredible hubs for discovery. Libraries are lowering barriers to entry by loaning field guides and binoculars, helping more people find their way into nature. Whether it's through programs, resources, or simply providing a place to start, libraries are expanding access in ways that truly matter.

Earth Day is one day on the calendar, but the spirit behind it is something we carry forward all year long. Thank you to all the volunteers, to our community partners, and to everyone who shared a story. Every conversation, every new birder, and every partnership strengthens our collective impact.

Here's to the momentum we've built, and to continuing the work together.

See you in the field,

George Harris

President, Oakland Bird Alliance

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Field trips are free and open to the public (entry fees may be required for some destinations). We welcome birdwatchers of all experience levels. Full details, including any updates to the schedule, are posted on OBA's [website](#) and social media. Registration is required for most trips—contact trip leader for details.

Date	Event	Leader(s)
June 6 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Kirtland's Warbler Tour Huron-Manistee National Forest, Roscommon (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
June 7 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Oak Openings Preserve Metropark Swanton Township, Lucas County, OH	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
June 13 (Saturday) 7:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Proud Lake State Recreation Area Commerce Township	Jeff Stacey and Malissa Bossardet jdstacey@ameritech.net
June 14 (Sunday) 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Red, White, and Bluebird Walk Bear Creek Nature Park, Oakland Township (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
July 12 (Sunday) 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM	Hiking at Innovation Hills Park Rochester Hills (Young Birders)	Melanie Mitchell birdlikeamother@gmail.com
July 25 (Saturday) 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Butterfly Walk Indian Springs Metropark, White Lake	Doris Applebaum and Jeff Stacey ibis4247@sbcglobal.net
August 7 – 9 (Weekend Trip)	Upper Peninsula Summer Weekend Whitefish Point Bird Observatory and other locations TBD	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
August 15 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM	Birds, Seeds, Berries, & Bugs Kensington Metropark, Milford (Young Birders)	Tori Guido tori.guido@gmail.com
August 23 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Sterling State Park Monroe	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
August 30 (Sunday) 12:01 AM – 4:00 PM	Nuthatch Open Oakland County	Kayla Niner fieldtrips@oaklandbirdalliance.org
September 19 (Saturday) 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Moonbeams and Night Wings Dodge #4 State Park, Waterford Township (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
September 26 or 27 (TBD) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Magee Marsh Lucas County, OH	Jim Koppin jimmykoppin@yahoo.com

Save the Date!

Join us for the 15th annual

NUTHATCH OPEN

on
Sunday,
August 30, 2026.

Teams bird anywhere in
Oakland County from
12:01 AM to 4:00 PM.

Register via [Google Form](#)
or contact Kayla Niner at fieldtrips@oaklandbirdalliance.org.



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

April 12, 2026 — Turkeys and Woodpeckers at Stage Nature Center

Leaders: Kayla Niner and Malissa Bossardet



Despite the chance of rain, 12 birders still showed up to the Wild Turkey and Woodpecker Walk at [Stage Nature Center](#), in Troy. From the parking lot, we enjoyed seeing Wood Ducks arrive to check out the treetops and a Red-Bellied Woodpecker viewing the area from the top of a pine.

We didn't have to go far to see the turkeys, as they were displaying right out in front of the Nature Center, with the toms fanning their tails and gobbling. We also found a Yellow-Rumped Warbler right in the bushes by the Nature Center.

Moving into the trails, it was fairly quiet. We didn't see many of the woodpeckers we expected, possibly on account of the weather. We could hear Northern Flickers and Redbellies calling in the woods, but not much else.



A Red-Bellied Woodpecker surveys the scene. (Kayla Niner)



At the rear bridge, we found two Ruby-Crowned Kinglets hopping around in the bushes. When we reached the marsh tower, the rain decided to make a brief appearance. One person peeled off at the bridge, leaving 11 damp birders. After the rain stopped, we saw a handful of Tufted Titmice, a Black-Capped Chickadee, and a few more Ruby-Crowned Kinglets.

Our last destination for the trip was the center feeders, where we saw White-Throated Sparrows, a Chipping Sparrow, a Red-Breasted Nuthatch, a Brown-headed Cowbird, and other feeder species, bringing our total up to 28 species.

Above: Wild Turkey; Below: Ruby-Crowned Kinglet (Kayla Niner)



The group at Stage Nature Center (Rod Niner)



At the bridge (Kayla Niner)

FIELD TRIP REPORTS, continued

April 24–26, 2026 — Berrien County in Spring

Leader: Don Burlett

When you reflect on a birding trip, it's useful to consider what you planned versus what actually happened. Such a reflection would indicate that this year's trip to Berrien County was a little earlier than the last trip and the weather was not what we expected. Though the weather was supposed to be sunny on Saturday and Sunday, a cold front came through and turned the days cloudy (and sometimes foggy) and windy. Because we visited earlier than last year, we didn't get the warblers we hoped for. However, all's well that ends well.

The group started out extra early on Friday and headed directly to the Avery and Buffalo Roads area near [Three Oaks](#) to search for Brewer's Blackbirds. We weren't disappointed, as the birds were present and active. Our hopes for a longspur were quickly dashed, but we did find snipe and several other species there.

Next, we headed to the Three Oaks sewage ponds to look for swallows, ducks and shorebirds. As expected, several duck species were there, along with three swallow species.



Yellow-Throated Warbler (Jeff Stacey)

Yellow-Throated Warblers being the first of several we expected. We then entered [Kesling Nature Preserve](#), where we heard a Louisiana Waterthrush chipping away but failed to spot him in the trees.

After visiting some additional spots in the area with little to show for the effort, we headed to the [Galien River County Park](#), with its elevated boardwalk. However, it was windy, cloudy, and cool and there was little there to see—though we did hear Sora and Virginia Rail. Another visit to Warren Dunes State Park to check around the Mt. Randall Hawk Watch area didn't pan out.

We then resorted to chasing a few fluddles in search of reported species. We found lots of Pectoral Sandpipers and at least one Dunlin. The problem was that each fluddle was a fog generator, which reduced visibility at each site. We ended the day by visiting [Grand Mere State Park](#) and found the main path flooded again so we did a little hiking but with little to show for it.

We drove on to [Warren Dunes State Park](#) near Floral Lane to look for woodland species. The trails were waterlogged, so we did some roadside birding. The biggest surprise of the weekend was a White-Eyed Vireo we spotted here, along with an Orange-Crowned Warbler and several other nice spring arrivals. We ended the day visiting the [New Buffalo Beach](#) and were rewarded with a pair of Fish Crows squawking their usual call.

On Saturday, the wind and cold made birding a bit more difficult. We started walking the Forest Lawn Road near Three Oaks and we found several nice birds,



Above: Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher; Below: White-Eyed Vireo (Malissa Bossardet)

On Sunday, we started out at the lake in [Tiscornia Park](#) but didn't see much. We then headed to [Brown Sanctuary](#), where we were greeted by a Wood Thrush. Next, we headed to [Sarett Nature Center](#), where our greeter was a Baltimore Oriole. We wrapped up by heading to [Andrews University](#) to check out a flooded field that turned out to be not so flooded. At that point, not having seen the sun for more than a few minutes at a stretch, it was time to head home.

Despite the tough conditions, we did bird hard and totaled 111 species for the weekend. If we had visited a week later, the number would have been higher. Nonetheless, we spotted all the main species that we needed from the area and had a good time.



Birding hard in tough conditions
(Don Burlett)

May 9, 2026 — Magee Marsh Crazy Day

Leader: Don Burlett



Seven determined birders, with the eighth behind the camera
(Don Burlett)

Eight determined birders came along for the day, in search of spring migrants. The day was sunny, with modest temperatures—ranging from the low 50s to near 70. The wind was mild early in the day but grew into a vengeful force late in the day.

As is common, each spring migration is slightly different from the last. That said, the general trend for fewer birds and the continued loss of larger trees at the [Magee Marsh Wildlife Area](#) have added to the difficulty of seeing birds as easily as in the past.

Another aspect of this trip was the apparent separation of different groups in their migration. On this day, it was apparent that the ducks and shorebirds had already passed through the area. Added to the apparent late arrival of many of

the migrants, we had a challenging time getting many birds from our list.

We began the day at the Magee Marsh boardwalk, which sometimes grew crowded (not surprising, during the birding festival), but the crowds eased at other times. We spent much of the morning here before breaking for lunch. After lunch, we headed to [Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge](#) to take the “auto drive” route in search of more birds. This segment was light on species, with just a few birds here and there.



Left: Black-Necked Stilt; Center: Common Tern; Top right: Female Cape May Warbler; Bottom right: Lesser Yellowlegs (Kim Johnson)

Our next stop was [Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area](#), where we added a couple of ducks and numerous Trumpeter Swans. Finally, we headed to [Howard Marsh Metropark](#) where we were nearly blown away by the winds but added a few more species to our meager list of 76.

May 16–17, 2026 — Bay City State Park, Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area, Au Gres, and Tawas Point State Park

Leaders: Jen Benke and Terri Chapledeine

The morning started with ominous skies and lightning on the trip up to [Bay City State Park](#). Fortunately, by the time we got there, the sky had cleared, and the rain had stopped. The rest of the day was beautiful. The trip leaders started scouting before the rest of the group arrived and saw three Snowy Egrets that unfortunately disappeared before anyone else could see them. Once the group arrived, we scanned the beach and walked the trails. A Bald Eagle flew over with a fish flapping in its talons.

We moved up to [Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area](#) and were surprised to find quite a variety of ducks, a Yellow-Headed Blackbird, Soras calling all around, and a surprise Pheasant. After a tailgate lunch, we followed instructions from other birders to a fluddle, where we found a bunch of shrobs, including Short-Billed Dowitchers. Adjacent to



Birders under bright skies (Amber Piotter)



Eastern Towhee (Malissa Bossardet)

that area, we heard a King Rail calling—a very special bird indeed. An Osprey flew over, demonstrating the correct way to hold a fish. By noon, we had already amassed 99 species. (Some birders returned after our trip ended and picked up a Wilson's Phalarope the group had missed.)

At Big Creek Road, we added a couple of species, including a Golden-Winged Warbler and a Yellow-Throated Vireo. A nearby grassland on Noggle Road yielded Sedge Wrens, a Bobolink, and a high-flying Northern Harrier.

After dinner at Mangos in Tawas City, we ventured to [Tuttle Marsh Wildlife Area](#), where we added American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Ring-Necked Duck, Green Herons, some additional warblers, and all the

woodpeckers in the area. We ended our first day with 123 species!

On Sunday morning, we met early at [Tawas Point State Park](#). Within three hours, we found 75 species. Highlights included a Piping Plover, Hooded Warbler, and Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher. We were treated to five Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds working on a single pussy willow bush and a rather vocal group of Bobolinks hanging out in the trees. We were wrapping up when a report of a Common Nighthawk perched on a branch came in, and off we went again. We finished our trip with afterglow and lunch at Augie's on the Bay in Tawas City. This trip yielded 24 warbler species and 141 species overall! We are claiming that as a record for an OBA weekend field trip until proven wrong.



Piping Plover (Karen Kessler)

Young Birders Club

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

February 14, 2026 — Great Backyard Bird Count at Johnson Nature Center

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty



This year, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) celebrated its 29th anniversary. This global birding event is sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada. The GBBC has been an annual field trip for Oakland Owlets and their families and friends for the past nine years.

The [Johnson Nature Center](#) in Bloomfield Hills has been the home base for the Oakland Owlets during the GBBC for several years. Nestled close to businesses and bustling commerce, it offers a quiet retreat and remarkable educational opportunities for the community. Cass Arsenault, Educational Specialist at the Center, spent the morning sharing insights and history with our group on the trail. Blanche Wicke, a birding expert and longtime Nature Center guide, assisted.



Above: Owlets and friends on the trail:

Below: A perching Red-Tailed Hawk (Kathleen Dougherty)

It was a wintry morning, and the trails were covered with snow. Dressed for the weather, we headed onto the trails. Our first stop was the Peregrine Falcon enclosure. The Johnson Nature Center has an endangered species permit through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to shelter and rehabilitate Wildlife Ambassadors, who cannot be released into the wild. The wildlife ambassadors offer visitors a chance to see native Michigan species up close, including the Peregrine Falcon.

Cass shared the story

about Peregrine Falcon while the group noticed a Red-Tailed Hawk perched on a tree nearby. Cass noted that the hawk was eating leftover meals offered to the falcon. The hawk did not move from its perch.

The group then walked toward the Rouge River. The water was frozen, but we hoped to find some ducks and woodpeckers. We heard and saw both the Red-Bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, along with most of the forest regulars, including Black-Capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-Breasted Nuthatches.

We meandered to the pond in the center of the property, where a small aerator created an open patch of water in which two Ring-Necked Ducks were feeding. Seeing these ducks was an unexpected treat, but they flew away as we approached.

On the trails, we listened intently and eventually heard the nasal “yank, yank” call of the Red-Breasted Nuthatch. Three birds of these birds were moving up and down the utility pole near the Nature Center Parking Lot.



Above: Male (left) and female (right) Ring-Necked Ducks (Richard Griffin for National Audubon Society); *Below:* Red-Breasted Nuthatch (OBA gallery)

FIELD TRIP REPORTS, continued

We all stopped for several minutes to watch these little upside-down cousins of the White-Breasted Nuthatch communicate with each other. The Red-Breasted Nuthatch is smaller than the White-Breasted Nuthatch and has a blush of red on its chest and white stripes above its eye. Closer to the parking lot, we stopped to see the Great Horned Owl Ambassador. Nearby, the loud, clear song of the Carolina Wren caused us to pause and listen. Everyone enjoyed seeing this bird that has become more familiar because of climate change.

As we returned to the Nature Center entrance, we were greeted by a large flock of Wild Turkeys. Several turkeys were attempting to dine at the center's feeders but were too large for the tube and platform feeders. The Wild Turkeys were loudly



calling to each other. One was separated from the group on the opposite side of the fence; we tried to reunite the lost member with the flock without success.

Our group then moved inside for hot cocoa and tea. Everyone had a chance to observe the Nature Center's feeding station while watching Cornell Lab of Ornithology videos. Homemade, heart-shaped suet treats were distributed to all attendees to celebrate Valentine's Day at their home feeders.

The group reported an eBird checklist with 14 species. It was nice to hike and be outdoors while watching the antics of the Red-Breasted Nuthatches and the Wild Turkeys. Everyone thanked Cass and Blanche for their hospitality and for sharing her knowledge of the property.

The group was part of a community of over 1.1 million participants worldwide. (Kathleen Dougherty)

The Owlets were part of a community of 1,146,284 participants at one of 435 public events that identified 8,257 species of bird around the world. View the results of the 2026 GBBC [here](#).

March 28, 2026 — Seeking Signs of Spring at Bald Mountain Recreation Area

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty



Oakland Bird Alliance joined with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for a special evening hike at [Bald Mountain Recreation Area](#) in search of signs of spring. The park is composed of three separate tracts of land near Lake Orion and encompasses 4,637 acres of woodlands, wetlands, lakes, fields, and streams. It has an extensive multiuse trail system and is said to be one of the most rugged terrains in southeast Michigan.

Oakland Owlets' families and friends were greeted by Jessica Ableson, DNR Naturalist, and Kathleen Dougherty, OBA Young Birders' Club Coordinator. It was a cool but pleasant evening with sunshine and blue skies. Being early spring, mosquitoes were not a problem.

Looking and listening for signs of spring (Kathleen Dougherty)

Once everyone arrived, the group ventured to the edge of Heart Lake to search for waterfowl. We could hear Canada Geese honking but also saw a small group of diving male and female Ring-Necked Ducks across the lake.

Young Birders Club
FIELD TRIP REPORTS, continued

The group continued onto the trail and spotted a group of Black-Capped Chickadees moving about the branches and calling in the shrubbery near the lake while a nearby Mourning Dove cooed. Crossing a waterway along the trail on a boardwalk, we heard the call of Wood Ducks as they took flight and watched two Mallards swimming in the wetland.

From this low point, we ascended uphill into a forest. Throughout the forest, small wetlands known as vernal ponds were loud with the calls of Michigan frogs, including the Western Chorus Frog, Northern Spring Peeper, and Wood Frog. These small frogs breed in vernal ponds in early spring. Each frog species' call is unique, and their songs are a sure sign of spring. We paused a few times to listen to the sounds of the vernal ponds. These wetlands do not support fish, which are predators of tadpoles and small frogs.

The group eventually reached one of the highest points on the trail: Looking north through the leafless trees, a string of small lakes could be seen. In the distance, we heard the ancient calls of Sandhill Cranes and the ever-present honking of Canada Geese. The 17 inland undeveloped lakes at Bald Mountain provide rich wetland habitats for birds.

As we hiked, the sun began to set, and the quality of light changed. The group stopped for a photo near the halfway point of the hike. Along the woodland trail, we heard and saw a Downy Woodpecker and the OBA logo bird, the White-Breasted Nuthatch. Jessica explained that it is common to see Pileated Woodpeckers, which need large, forested areas with dead trees for their habitat; however, the group was not lucky enough to encounter this bird.

As the sun was setting, we encountered a Barred Owl. The hikers in front saw the bird first as it flew into another tree. However, it stayed in one place, and everyone was able to see it. Barred Owls live in large, mature, and mixed forests that are near wetlands. They have brown and white feathers and striking dark brown eyes but, overall, they are perfectly camouflaged in the forest. Everyone stopped and watched the owl at a distance until it flew away and left the group in awed silence.

As the light was dimming, it became harder to see details in the distance. However, a few birders stopped to see some new birds, including an Eastern Bluebird and a Wild Turkey that flew into a tree to roost for the night.

Back in the parking lot, Jessica provided MDNR posters to everyone. A few participants stayed to enjoy the sky dance of the American Woodcock in an open field across the road that provided a dance floor for this bird to display. As the light dimmed to almost dark, male woodcocks started their romantic displays, and several flew overhead.

The group listened to the different sounds of the sky dance and the nasal “*peents*” as the birds strutted on the ground, then the twittering whoosh as the birds jet upwards almost 300 feet in a widening circle. When they finally stop, they drift back to the ground like a falling leaf while making musical chortling calls.

Everyone thanked Jessica for the posters and co-hosting the walk. Although the birding checklist was not extensive, everyone went home dreaming of Barred Owls and American Woodcocks.



Left: Wood Frog (OBA gallery); Center: Barred Owl (Patrick Morgan); Right: American Woodcock (Chris Wood for Macaulay Library)

FIELD TRIP REPORTS, continued

May 9, 2026 — World Migratory Bird Day on Belle Isle

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

The Oakland Owlets and their families and friends gathered to observe World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), an initiative that seeks to raise awareness of migratory birds and encourage public participation in their conservation. This initiative began in 1993 with the [Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center](#). Today, WMBD is celebrated internationally by many organizations.

Every year since 2018, [Environment for the Americas](#) (EFTA) has been selecting a theme for WMBD that focuses on bird migration and conservation messaging. This year's theme, "Every Bird Counts," highlights the importance of public participation in community science work. This work provides data about bird populations and migratory stopover sites and informs conservation management. EFTA recruits an artist to highlight the annual theme. This year's [WMBD art](#) was created by Brazilian artist Luísa Lacerda.



Oakland Owlets, friends, and family celebrate World Migratory Bird Day (Kathleen Dougherty)



Observing the banding process (Kathleen Dougherty)

The group was invited to learn about bird banding with longtime OBA member and veteran bird bander, Allen Chartier. Allen has been banding birds for several decades at numerous locations and now works at [Belle Isle Park](#) for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Belle Isle Park is a large urban park in the city of Detroit and is Michigan's 102nd state park. Allen's work provides vital information about the birds using this island park. The study site has been impacted by the loss of mature trees.

It was a beautiful day when everyone arrived at the banding site near the Nature Center. Allen and his crew were away at the time and retrieving the birds from the nets. Allen returned with several small drawstring bags, each containing a bird. Allen greeted our group, explained the process, and introduced the crew. He carefully handled each bird collected, taking specific measurements, applying

bands if not already banded, and showing us each bird before releasing it. Bird banding is highly regulated through the Migratory Bird Act, and all bird banders are required to be licensed.

Bird banding has been practiced for centuries and is a cornerstone for bird research and conservation. This practice allows scientists to track individual birds and provides information about bird migration, site fidelity, lifespan, reproductive success, and population changes—information that supports bird conservation and long-term ecological planning. Everyone gathered around Allen and listened as he processed the birds. Many people brought chairs, since this field trip involved watching and waiting. One of the first birds that Allen showed the group was an Ovenbird, a long-distance migrant known to breed in our area if the proper habitat exists. Ovenbirds are part of the wave of warblers that are migrating north during the spring. These small, camouflaged birds spend most of their time on the ground and need mature dense forests, where they forage in the leaf

Young Birders Club

FIELD TRIP REPORTS, continued



Banding a surprisingly calm Ovenbird (Kathleen Dougherty)

process of capturing and removing the birds from the nets. As Allen and the team worked, we were also listening and looking for birds nearby. While they checked the nets, we walked to the nearby lake, where we watched three Ospreys fly over. There was a lot of activity on the lake, including a patrolling Caspian Tern. The nearby forested area was filled with the songs from Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and with the constant songs of Red-Winged Blackbirds and American Robins. The bird checklists from the parking lot and nearby walks to Lake Muskoday produced

litter on the forest floor. Seeing an Ovenbird this closely is rare for most birders—and amazingly, the Ovenbird was calm and cooperative.

Allen continued to band and record data about the captured birds. Most were larger than the Ovenbird, but all were interesting to see. Gray Catbirds were netted in large numbers, and we watched Allen measure and release five of them. Other birds that we were able to see included Brown-Headed Cowbird, Red-Winged Blackbird, male and female Northern Yellow Warblers, American Robin, Blue Jay, Common Yellowthroat, and Wood Thrush.

Allen took the group along the trail to show us where the nets were placed and explain the



Caspian Tern (Sasha Cahill for the Macaulay Library)

32 species.

By late morning, the group had the opportunity to visit the Nature Center. Mike Reed, Curator of Education and naturalist from the Detroit Zoo, showed us some of the new exhibits at the facility, which highlight native Michigan species, including some unique ones like mudpuppies. Mike works with young people in the city to explore the outdoors. He showed our group some of the outdoor features on the Nature Center's grounds, including a children's natural play area and a giant megaphone listening area.



Checking out the new exhibits at the Belle Isle Nature Center (Kathleen Dougherty)

Allen invited everyone to follow his work on his blog, [Michigan Hummingbird Guy: Belle Isle Birding](#).

The Owlets also had the privilege of hosting two birders from China on this trip (pictured at right).



International birders join the Owlets (Kathleen Dougherty)

Young Birders Club

Field Trip Details – June to September

Kirtland's Warbler Tour — June 6 (Saturday), 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM Huron-Manistee National Forest, Roscommon

Journey to northern Michigan to see Michigan's famous Kirtland's Warbler (KW), which nests almost exclusively in the Jack Pine forest in northern Michigan. Once endangered, its comeback is a remarkable conservation success story. Many organizations, including the U.S. Forest Service, have partnered for more than 50 years to increase the KW population. Removed from the federal endangered species list in 2019, the KW remains a conservation-dependent species. Visit the nesting grounds of the KW with U.S. Forest biologist Dana Meder to see the KW and other resident birds. Plan to stay afterwards for the Kirtland's Warbler Festival in Roscommon, Michigan's first Bird City. A list of lodging options will be available in advance for interested tour participants.



Red, White, and Bluebird Walk — June 14 (Sunday), 8:30 AM – 11:00 AM Bear Creek Nature Park, Oakland Township



Celebrate the birds that display the colors of the American flag with a Flag Day morning hike. Bear Creek Nature Park, a 107-acre natural area, offers easily accessible trails and a variety of habitats. Oakland Township Parks and Recreation staff maintain nest boxes at the park for cavity-nesting birds like Eastern Bluebirds, and the natural resource stewardship team also manages the natural areas. The park has an extensive grassland habitat, along with hardwood forests, wetlands, and ponds—and a bird checklist featuring 152 species observed thus far. Plan to hike and view birds. There is no park entry fee.

Hiking at Innovation Hills — July 12 (Sunday), 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM Innovation Hills Park, Rochester Hills

Explore the natural beauty of Innovation Hills Park, a 110-acre outdoor space in Rochester Hills, that features scenic trails, wetlands, and diverse ecosystems. The park's accessible pathways and boardwalks wind through forests, ponds, and along the Clinton River. It is a great place to observe local wildlife. Plan to walk one to two miles. Guest field trip leader Melanie Mitchell will share her interest in this park with the group. There is a nominal parking fee of \$1.50/hour, payable via the ParkMobile app. Free parking is available across the street in the overflow lot.



Birds, Seeds, Berries, & Bugs — August 15 (Saturday), 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM Kensington Metropark, Milford

Kensington Metropark is a well-known birding hot spot in Oakland County with an eBird checklist of 242 species, thanks to amazing natural areas that provide excellent habitat for birds. At the end of summer, nature's bounty peaks with abundant natural foods for insects, birds, and other animals. Enjoy a morning hike along the trails with Master Gardener and Conservation Steward Tori Guido to see the multiple sources of food that support birds at this park. We will also stop by the park's heronry, track birds, and visit the Nature Center. Park entry fees apply.



Photo credits: *Top right:* Kirtland's Warbler; *Top left:* Eastern Bluebird (OBA photo gallery); *Bottom right:* Innovation Hills Park (Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc.); *Bottom left:* Halloween Pennant (OBA photo gallery)

Young Birders Club

Field Trip Details – June to September (continued)

Moonbeams & Night Wings — September 19 (Saturday), 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM Dodge #4 State Park, Waterford Township



Barn Swallow (Macaulay Library)

Stroll along the shoreline of Cass Lake, the largest inland lake in southeast Michigan, during an evening walk. The lake is a great place to see waterfowl, marsh birds, and insectivores like Barn Swallows catching the insect hatches over the water. Dodge Park #4 is a 70-acre park at the north end of the lake that provides good habitat for wildlife. Its bird checklists have tracked 176 species. Birds are not the only night wings using the moon and other astronomical cues to navigate during the night. Jessica Ableson, of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, will accompany the group and track bats as we hike. Plan to walk 1.5 miles. A Michigan State Park Passport is required for park entry.

BIRD QUIZ—SUMMER 2026

from Don Burlett



A) _____



B) _____



C) _____

BONUS QUIZ



D) _____



E) _____

For answers and explanations, see Page 19. No peeking!

Bird Briefs (Items to look at online)

from Don Burlett

“Birding in the 2020s” from *Birding*, published by the American Birding Association

I was recently reading a few articles in the March 2026 edition of *Birding* under the heading “Birding in the 2020s.” These articles covered several aspects of the current world of birding. Below is a summary of these articles (and direct links to those available online):

“Looking Up” described the latest craze in New York City: A man named Michael Lombardo began offering free bird walks at Monsignor McGolrick Park in Brooklyn. These walks started in Spring 2023 and have grown in popularity to hundreds of attendees, mostly young people who have decided to devote their Saturdays to these bird walks instead of frequenting bars and theaters. Before each walk, Lombardo starts with a whiteboard and shares some instructions, the agenda, the birds they would try to see, and some hints on techniques. The birders, of a median age of about 29, have discovered that birding provides them with community and helps them connect with the present moment. (Phones are not allowed on the bird walks.) This trend goes to show that people, when offered a chance to connect with nature and each other, find birding a wonderful way to get back to real life.

“[Saved by Birding](#)” is a story about a woman who was facing burnout and loneliness due to work and the increasing isolation of the world we currently live in. Because mental health has become more of an issue in our culture, birding has emerged as a valuable activity for connecting with the natural world. Psychologists agree that birding is therapeutic and works for most people. It’s no wonder that birding continues to be popular worldwide.

“[Seeing Further](#)” discussed how Visually Impaired birders stepped beyond their historical exclusion from birding through a variety of groups around the world that take part in the 2025 Blind Birders Bird-a-Thon. This was a worthwhile article to read and celebrates the efforts of groups who support Visually Impaired birders in getting out and enjoying birding by engaging senses that are often undeveloped in sighted birders. This year’s Bird-a-Thon took place on May 3 and 4, 2026. If you know of any birders who qualify for this event, please visit the website (www.birdability.org) and register to participate in future Bird-a-Thons.



[Marker & ink on paper](#) by artist Sal Palmero



Northern Parula ([Photo](#) credit: Peter Pyle)

“[The Devil Wears Parula](#)” discusses the experience of an older birder birding amid the Youthful Mob-taping scene. This scene involves young birders who use mob-tapes (sounds like the Tufted Titmouse mob sounds when alarmed or chasing off an owl) to draw birds. The older birder was wary of doing this because of the “ethics” of harassing birds, and thoughtfully discussed all aspects of the practice, including the results. In the end, he conceded that the use of mob-tapes has become an important part of the young birder experience, and their interest is good for birds overall. He concluded that the practice of mob-taping was acceptable in fall and winter, but not during breeding season. Something to consider!

“[Birding in the Age of AI](#)” was another discussion of the state of contemporary birding. One of the issues included situations like birders taking photos of birds and doing their identification from the photo and not the bird itself. As technology has crept into birding with the use of Merlin for field identification and other such techniques promoted by the increased use of AI, this opinion piece offers a thoughtful look into how we have come to rely on technology to do the work that used to be done in birding. It’s not all bad—but it *is* a warning that we may leave our skills behind if we let it.

Oakland Bird Alliance Around Town: Winter/Spring 2026

OBA volunteers have been highly engaged with the community, interacting with area residents, answering questions, and sharing information about bird conservation. If you would like to help with future events, look for membership email alerts.

February 15: Birding Expo

OBA was invited to be one of many exhibitors at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Birding Expo, a brand-new event hosted at the Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit during the Great Backyard Bird Count weekend. The expo recorded over 632 guests, with a designated "early bird" time for senior citizens in the morning and an afternoon featuring an open house for families. Kathleen Dougherty and Tori Guido hosted the OBA table and talked with 94 visitors, distributing information about OBA membership, programs and more.



Kathleen Dougherty and Tori Guido welcome visitors to the first-ever Birding Expo (Kathleen Dougherty)



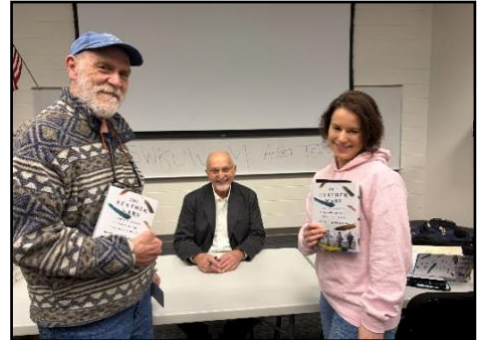
Laurie Schubert and Tiffany Vojnovski spring into science at Cranbrook (Kathleen Dougherty)

March 30 and 31: Spring into Science

OBA hosted a display and birding-themed kids' craft during Cranbrook Institute of Science's "Spring into Science" event. Several environmental and conservation groups participated and shared information about their organizations, while the younger visitors decorated cardboard binoculars. Over two days, 119 guests visited the table. Thank you to Laurie Schubert, Tiffany Vojnovski, Don Burlett, and Kathleen Dougherty for hosting the display.

April 9: Inscribe Books Author Event

A big "thank you" goes to Inscribe Books for their generous \$150 donation to the Oakland Bird Alliance following their event celebrating the release of *The Feather Wars: And the Great Crusade to Save America's Birds* by James H. McCommons, veteran journalist and professor emeritus at Northern Michigan University. Bird lovers and history buffs enjoyed an engaging presentation, lively Q&A, and book-signing—all in support of local conservation efforts. OBA is grateful to Inscribe Books and everyone who attended for helping turn a great night of storytelling into meaningful support for birds here in our community.



Don Burlett and Tiffany Vojnovski with author James H. McCommons (Kathleen Dougherty)

April 11: Raptor Festival at Lake Saint Clair Metropark

Two OBA volunteers hosted an information table at this annual event, which features free activities and crafts focused on birds of prey. Participants visited the interactive displays and booths, which offered raptor-themed crafts and activities, and enjoyed guided hikes to view the resident raptors through spotting scopes. Live raptor presentations were offered by Michigan Avian Experience throughout the day. A total of 70 visitors stopped by the table and spoke with Don Burlett and Tiffany Vojnovski.

April 15: Lights Out with Oakland County

Several OBA board members met via Microsoft Teams with Oakland County officials to discuss beginning the process of incorporating "Lights Out" principles at Oakland County facilities. The Oakland County personnel were amenable to these activities and agreed to work toward reducing building lighting during migration at County buildings. They also showed interest in working toward desirable outdoor lighting options in future improvements. The group also discussed reaching out to other cities in Oakland County to encourage them to consider Lights Out recommendations for municipal and commercial buildings. A future meeting was set for further discussion.

April 22: Earth Day at Heritage Park

Farmington Hills' Earth Day Celebration at Heritage Park brought beautiful spring weather and a vibrant community turnout to this long-standing annual event. With live music filling the air and even a portable climbing wall adding to the fun, there was something for everyone to enjoy. OBA was thrilled to support the festivities, welcoming over 250 visitors to our table throughout the afternoon. Don Burlett and Kathleen Dougherty hosted the OBA table, connecting with nature enthusiasts, sharing their passion for birds, and celebrating our community's commitment to protecting the environment.



A young birder crafts a cardboard owl at Heritage Park (Kathleen Dougherty)

April 25: Earth Day in Auburn Hills

Auburn Hills Department of Recreation's Earth Month Celebration on April 25 brought the community together at Riverside Park despite a chilly turn in the weather. Even with cooler temperatures, the inaugural event drew a strong crowd eager to connect with nature and local organizations. The Oakland Bird Alliance table welcomed more than 50 visitors throughout the day, sparking conversations and new connections. From our spot, we also recorded an impressive 23 bird species, adding a fun citizen-science element to the festivities and highlighting the biodiversity right here in Auburn Hills.

May 2: Nourished by Nature Hike at Independence Oaks



Group photo (Kathleen Dougherty)

The Oakland Bird Alliance (OBA) supported the Clinton River Watershed Council's spring birding hike, "**Nourished by Nature**" at Independence Oaks County Park in Clarkston. Pronoye Kapali, Watershed Program Coordinator, has created and oversees this series of community outreach events. OBA joined other partners for the hike, including Macomb Audubon and Oakland County Parks. The group was guided by Paul Messing of Macomb Audubon Society, Benjamin Prowse of Oakland County Parks, and Kathleen Dougherty of Oakland Bird Alliance. The group visited the main park in the morning and traveled later to Independence Oaks North to see the Bald Eagle nest near Upper Bushman Lake. The nest was active, with an eagle spotted inside.



Opportunities for the OBA Community

Apprentices for Climate Watch Squares

Oakland Bird Alliance conducts semiannual surveys as part of the National Audubon Climate Watch project. Each individual surveys a 10 km X 10 km square, with 12 locations within the square. The surveys occur between January 15th and February 15th in the winter and May 15th and June 15th in the summer. The surveys focus on the White-Breasted Nuthatch but also collect data on all species observed. These surveys take 3 to 4 hours each time. We are looking for individuals who would like to learn the ropes and possibly take over existing squares or begin new squares as part of this project. Contact Kathleen Dougherty or Don Burlett if you are interested.

Volunteers for Outreach Activities

Each year, Oakland Bird Alliance attends a variety of events, including the Clinton River Water Festival, Hawkfest, and Earth Day events where we table a booth, offer presentations, or both. Typically, at least one board member is in attendance; however, without volunteers to help with the tables and display, we get stretched beyond our capabilities. We are looking for members and any individuals willing to dedicate part or all of a day to help man our table at these events. As Outreach events get scheduled, we will contact volunteers to make sure we can do the events. Please contact George Harris or Kathleen Dougherty if you are willing to help at outreach events.

Conservation & Environment Corner

by Katri Studtmann

Summer Insect Emergence: A Feast for Baby Birds

Summer is a time for warm nights, outdoor grilling, hanging out with friends and families and, of course, the inevitable bug bites. But those biting and sometimes annoying insects serve an important purpose. Perhaps most importantly in the eyes of a birder, they provide nutrient-rich food for many summer birds. In North America, 96% of all terrestrial bird species rely on insects at some point for part of their diet.

It's no wonder that birds' nesting season aligns with peak food abundance (insect emergence). Migrating birds also rely on fat- and protein-rich insects to help them rebuild muscle mass from their intensive flights. Without the influx of summer insects, most birds would not be able to sustain themselves or reproduce successfully.

Unfortunately, insect populations are in dramatic decline. Globally, 41% of all species are in decline, and one-third of all insects are at risk of extinction. In addition to their role in supporting bird life, insects also provide important ecosystem services, such as pollination, decomposition, and control of pests, that are estimated at a value of \$57 billion annually in *the U.S. alone*.



It is believed that a decline in insectivorous birds is related to the decline of insects. Although these stats are alarming, we must understand the reasons behind the declines in insect populations and what we can do to help insects and, therefore, birds.

Insects are being pressured by multiple stressors that are leading to their overall global decline. Overarching stressors include climate change, habitat loss and degradation, and agriculture. Insects have evolved to live on native plants (plants that evolved in a given region). However, monoculture crops, lawns, and other non-native plants reduce habitat for many insects. Insecticides and fertilizers used to maintain these non-native landscapes further stress insects. Additionally, climate change is increasing storm intensity and shifting weather patterns more quickly than insects can adapt.

One last stressor that I am passionate about is light pollution, which we discussed in the [Spring edition](#). Light pollution is not only bad for birds, but also insects that feed those birds. With so



many different stressors on insects, it's no surprise that we are seeing such drastic declines in their populations.

What can we do to help? Larger actions include lobbying government officials to support policies and laws that support insects, birds, and biodiverse ecosystems in general. That can be as simple as writing a letter to your congressperson or by lobbying with other groups that support ecosystems. One example of a smaller action is planting and maintaining a garden of native plants in your yard or community. Native plants support the most diverse insect communities and, as a bonus, add natural beauty to your yard. Whether you have the capacity to create a small native plant garden or transform your entire yard into a grass-free space, every little bit helps. Lastly, turn off lights at night for insects and birds, especially during the growing season.

I hope you've learned something about the importance of insects for birds and us. I encourage you to get out in your yard this summer and appreciate the little insects on your plants that help make the world go round. To learn more, check out the following scientific articles and books recommended below:

- [Are declines in insects and insectivorous birds related?](#) (Douglas W. Tallamy and W. Gregory Shriver)
- [Chasing a Moving Target: When insects accelerate, birds must try to keep pace](#) (Robyn Bailey)
- [Insect decline in the Anthropocene: Death by a thousand cuts](#) (David L. Wagner et al)
- Any of Douglas Tallamy's books: *The Nature of Oaks*, *Nature's Best Hope*, *Bringing Nature Home*

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGES



Welcome, New Members!

Kimberley Alexander, Amy Annett, Mary Ballard, McKenna Barlass,
Shawna Bartimoccia, Remylin Bruder, Marion Gunderson, Sid Kraizman, Cathy Mintz

The 2026 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](#) *or*
- 2) Mail a check along with a membership form (Page 21)

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: membership@oaklandbirdalliance.org.

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

BIRD QUIZ ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS

- a) **House Wren:** Drab gray-brown bird with a weak to almost nonexistent eyebrow and eye-ring pattern, slight / faint barring on flanks and belly; lower mandible is not yellow.
- b) **Sedge Wren:** Very small bird with short bill and overall pale sandy-buff or cinnamon color, boldly barred wings, streaked crown, and streaking on back.
- c) **Marsh Wren:** Brown crown, white supercilium, with a longer bill than other wrens, rufous-brown wings with no streaking on shoulders; reddish rump and scapulars.

BONUS QUIZ

- d) **Eastern Meadowlark:** Yellow breast with black chevron, mostly white malar, streaking on flanks with little white.
- e) **Western Meadowlark:** Yellow breast with black chevron, mostly white malar, streaking on flanks with some white.

Note: The Eastern and Western Meadowlarks are best differentiated by song, as some of these features are not dramatically different.

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

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

March 19, 2026

Programs: Three programs have been held this year, and most 2027 programs have been secured.

Membership: 38 new memberships over the past two months, for a total of 83.

Conservation and Environment: Environmental Citizens Committee to host native plant sale on May 24th.

Seven Ponds: Eco Day will be held May 9th; Native Plant Sale on May 16th; Rummage Sale on June 19th and 20th.

Young Birders Club: Kathleen shared upcoming field trips and OBA's participation in the Nourished by Nature walk.

Publicity/Fundraising: Despite light attendance at the monthly membership meeting, online presence was strong. One tote bag was sold, for a total of \$20.

Newsletter Editor: Due date for Summer issue submissions is 4/26, with a few noted exceptions.

Social Media Administrator: Inscribe Books author event to be posted.

Old Business

Outreach Calendar Updates: OBA has been represented at numerous community events.

Don: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Birding: Don is working with the city of Pontiac and local organizations about outreach programs for children and teens. He would like to assemble a subcommittee to discuss ideas.

Michigan Audubon Young Birders Camp: OBA is funding a scholarship grant for a young birder to attend.

Jen: Michigan Audubon offers chapter insurance; may be beneficial. A subcommittee will be meeting offline.

Robert will research the legalities of placing OBA funds in an interest-bearing account.

April 23, 2026

Young Birders Club: Last field trip was rained out, but a few folks still showed up. Kathleen is working on the summer schedule. Tori Guido and an Owlet parent are leading trips.

Conservation and Environment: George sent list of native plant sales. The first Oakland County World Migratory Bird Day event will be held on May 9th at Red Oaks Nature Center.

Publicity/Fundraising: Approximately \$100 in merchandise sales. Noted light attendance at the monthly membership meeting. Will be posting more to the Discord Community chat as well as through Facebook.

Newsletter Editor: Due date for Summer issue submissions is 4/26, with a few noted exceptions.

Social Media Administrator: Unable to attend. Able to help out on upcoming volunteer events, if needed.

Hospitality: Popcorn and lemonade purchased for the May meeting/walk at Stage Nature Center.

Web Editor: Board member Tori Guido has offered to update the website.

The Nuthatch Open will be held on Sunday, August 30th.

Old Business

Inscribe Books Event: We received \$150 through ticket sales. Thanks to those who were able to attend.

Outreach Calendar Updates: 2026 Volunteer Hours and Events; reviewed upcoming obligations and opportunities.

Don: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Birding: Doing a lot of outreach in Pontiac and continuing to look for community partners. Don is working with Great Lakes Audubon to submit proposals for a \$2,500 EDIB grant.

Oakland County Lights Out: Don, Tiffany, and Kathleen had a successful meeting with the county to discuss opportunities to reduce bird strikes on county properties.

A volunteer will be donating a folding photo display of area birds.

George: MAS Audubon insurance research is ongoing. Will likely need to discuss with a lawyer.

CD/Savings/Money Market/Index/Bonds for floating funds: Discussion is ongoing.

Highlights are compiled by the Newsletter Editor from meeting minutes submitted by Secretary Gavin Awerbuch.

Show off your love of birds in style!

Scan to shop the OBA online store:



Problems checking out? Contact Karen Kessler:

karenmk@live.com



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Make checks payable to:

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C/O MEMBERSHIP
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BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48012-0796

Name: _____ ☐
Address: _____ ☐
City: _____ State / Zip: _____ ☐
Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____ ☐

Please indicate with an (X) any personal information you do not want listed in our membership directory.

Check Appropriate Line:

____ Member renewal
____ New member
____ Change of address

Are you a member of:

____ Michigan Audubon
____ National Audubon

Membership Fees:

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

OBA welcomes volunteers — please join us if you can! Check below if you have the skills to help.

____ Become a board member (position: _____)
____ Lead a field trip or present a program
____ Outreach at community events
____ Other _____

*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.*