



# THE NUTHATCH

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## “Adventures Down Under”

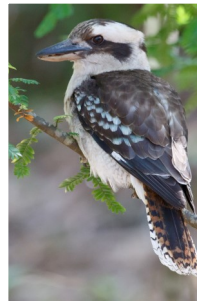
Tuesday, January 9, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

Jeff Stacey

OAS Field Trip Officer Jeff Stacey visited Australia, loved it, and ended up going back there again the same year.

Anyone who has seen Jeff’s photos knows that he is a terrific photographer, so we can expect some great views of Australia’s special birds, mammals, and scenery. You won’t want to miss it!

*Photo Credit: Jeff Stacey*



### Inside This Issue

## “Owls of Michigan”

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

Holly Vaughn-Joswick

More likely to be heard than seen, owls are some of Michigan’s most fascinating birds.

Join us this evening for interesting facts about all of them, from the biggest to the smallest and all those in between.

*Photo Credit: Holly Vaughn-Joswick*



## “A South African Adventure”

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

Tom Hince

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

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

*Photo Credit: Tom Hince*



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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Winter 2017

Writing a President's column every quarter for over 9 years calls for some persistence and some inspiration. I try very hard not to write about the same thing every column. This time, I think I'll try some personal reflections of both my experience at Oakland Audubon and as a birder. Maybe this will be boring but I hope it provides greater insight into the ticking time-bomb (just kidding) that is your President.

Now that I am retired, I have plenty of time to think about my experience with Oakland Audubon. Certainly, it has been a pleasant experience. I try to bring some enthusiasm to the job along with an interest in doing things! I have been a member (and still am) of a number of organizations and I don't believe in being a member and not participating at a high level. I volunteer and get involved. I also believe that I shouldn't volunteer without actually doing what I committed to do. As such, when I work as President, I look for others of the same ilk and use them to populate the board and other spots that we need to keep the organization moving forward. I feel I've been successful because the board of this organization has been filled with committed people that do a great job. Can't thank them enough. I hope that I also instill a little enthusiasm for birding and getting out into nature in the bulk of the group. I live for this type of stuff and hope that you enjoy it also. As you know, I can't help getting out, everywhere on the planet, to enjoy birds and nature, cultures and landscapes, all that good stuff just waiting for us. It doesn't have to be the entire world to be enjoyed to the fullest. I also enjoy meeting people and developing relationships that help all of us. The Oakland Audubon family has always been warm and welcoming, just the kind of situation that I need. I have enjoyed all the time I have been involved with this society and hope for many more years of friendship and comradery.

As I push the organization to take on even more challenging activities (environment, climate change, dealing with government issues), I hope that you will take the time to understand why I do this and why I think it is important. It's part of our world and it has an impact on those things that I enjoy doing. Those things are always worth fighting for. If you're not interested in those things, that's fine. Stay interested in the rest of what we do. And always feel free to approach me and let me know what your interests are and how we can help enrich them.

I can't write this column and not say that I am happy that a couple of volunteers have stepped forward to help with our society's activities. Jerry Rogers has accepted the position of Environment/Conservation Officer for the organization. As such, he will keep us posted on important issues and opportunities in these areas and lead efforts to support actions necessary to preserve our natural areas. Kathleen Dougherty has accepted the position of Young Birders Club Coordinator. Kathleen will work with our organization as well as Detroit Audubon, Michigan Audubon and other local organizations to foster more activities amongst younger folks in our area. Both of these additions to our Board will help us move forward in several key areas. Be sure to welcome them when you get a chance.

Finally, I hope to see some of you out during the Christmas Bird Count. This is our keystone activity to kick off our winter activities. We need all the help we can get. Some of our territories are frightfully low on participants. It's a great deal of fun and a learning experience for those who are just beginning their birding careers. And the rest of the winter schedule is full of fun outings and great programs. Make my day and be part of the activities.

Don Burlett

*Page one banner credit: Mike Dougherty*

## OFFICER/CHAIR POSITION AVAILABLE

**Program Officer** – This job involves scouting out speakers for programs and working with a small committee to assure that our monthly program schedule is flush with good programs. Our current schedule is complete for the next several months so the pressure is low when this position is filled.

### **OAS BOARD MEMBERS**

#### **Elected Officers**

President	Don Burlett	(248) 236-9486	baikalteal13@netzero.net
Secretary	Doris Applebaum	(248) 542-2506	ibis4247@sbcglobal.net
Treasurer	Elaine Ferguson	(248) 470-2212	fergusonelaine6@gmail.com
Membership Officer	Dave Frye	(248) 627-5650	kestrel11dcf@gmail.com
Field Trip Officer	Jeff Stacey	(248)798-0508	jdstacey@ameritech.net
Program Co-Officer	Doris Applebaum	(248) 542-2506	ibis4247@sbcglobal.net
Program Co-Officer	Margaret Moran	(248) 646-7387	marmo48009@yahoo.com

#### **Appointed Officers**

Young Birders Club Rep.	Kathleen Dougherty		kad8186@msn.com
Hospitality Officer	Alice Marotti	(248) 545-4165	amarotti@aol.com
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## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

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

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
December 2, 2017 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM	<b>U-M Museum of Natural History – Bird Collection</b> Contact Don Burlett for details	Don Burlett
December 6, 2017 (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<b>Robert Long and Walled Lake</b> Meet at the parking lot of Robert Long Nature Park.	Mike Mencotti
December 16, 2017 (Saturday) 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM (earlier if owling)	<b>Christmas Bird Count</b> Contact Jeff Stacey for details	Jeff Stacey
January 6, 2018 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<b>Kensington Bird Count</b> Meet at the Nature Center Metroparks daily or annual pass required	Dave Frye
January 14, 2018 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM	<b>St. Clair River</b> Meet in the parking lot of Harley Ensign boat launch at the end of South River Road	Don Burlett
January 27, 2018 (Saturday) 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<b>Snowshoeing at Heritage Park</b> Meet in the car park at the Nature Center	Dave Frye
February 7, 2018 (Wednesday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<b>Winter Waterfowl</b> Meet in the parking lot of Beaudette Park	Mike Mencotti
February 9-11, 2018 (Friday—Sunday)	<b>Eastern Upper Peninsula</b> Contact Don Burlett for Details	Don Burlett

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

Date	Event	Trip Leader(s)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February 17, 2018</b> <b>(Saturday)</b> 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Great Backyard Bird Count</b> Meet at the E.L. Johnson Nature Center</p>	<p><b>Kathleen Dougherty</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February 25, 2018</b> <b>(Sunday)</b> 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shiawassee NWR</b> Meet in the parking lot at the end of Curtis Road</p>	<p><b>Don Burlett</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 3, 2018</b> <b>(Saturday)</b> 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>St. Clair Metropark and Harley Ensign</b> Meet in the car park at the Nature Center A Metroparks daily or annual pass required as well as a state recreational passport</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 14, 2018</b> <b>(Wednesday)</b> 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Robert Long, Walled Lake and Heritage Park</b> Meet in the parking lot of Robert Long Nature Park</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 18, 2018</b> <b>(Sunday)</b> 7:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Watkins Lake State Park</b> Meet at the MDOT lot in the northwest corner of the Meijer parking lot at 8 Mile and Haggerty Roads at 7:00 AM</p>	<p><b>Jim Koppin</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 28, 2018</b> <b>(Wednesday)</b> 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kensington Metropark</b> Meet at the Nature Center A Metroparks daily or annual pass required</p>	<p><b>Mike Mencotti</b></p>

# Field Trip Reports

## **September 9, 2017 – Lake St. Clair Metropark**

**Leader: Mike Mencotti**

The calendar said “summer,” but the weather – and the bird life – screamed “autumn,” as 13 observers enjoyed a morning of cool sunshine and lots of birds at Lake St. Clair Metropark on September 9. We all had “warbler neck” from trying to identify individuals of the pockets of warblers and vireos. We ended up with about 16 species of warblers, and an awesome variety of other species made the morning special. It was great to hear the discussions about a confusing raptor, finally settling on a Red-shouldered Hawk. True to form with group birding, not everyone was able to see every bird; but everyone enjoyed the show. A great way to kick off fall migration.

## **September 27, 2017 – Kensington Metropark**

**Leader – Mike Mencotti**

We continued our Wednesday workshop series at Kensington Metropark on Sept. 27, and the emphasis was on WORK. Although the four attendees had to dig out the birds, we experienced a different - albeit related -- experience: We felt a cold front come through. The day started warm and still. Then the bird activity stopped, and drizzle ensued. Sure enough, the wind picked up, the temperature cooled, and the birds enjoyed the sunshine (we did, too). A few of the highlights were an adult Bald Eagle perched atop an island snag, a Sora scoting across the trail, two Pileated Woodpeckers, and a couple of Brown Thrashers. In all, we tallied 48 species.

## **October 11, 2017 - Robert Long Park**

**Leader: Mike Mencotti**

The Wednesday workshop/field trip series continued -- sort of - at Robert Long Park on Oct. 11. One adventurous birder (thanks, Jerry) joined me on a day that was raining heavily with 20-30 MPH east winds. Miserable weather, indeed. Nonetheless, we were rewarded with a quick look at a Snow Goose, ducks, an egret, a shorebird or two. By mutual consent, we ended the trip after 40 minutes. We had 17 species, and earned every one of them!

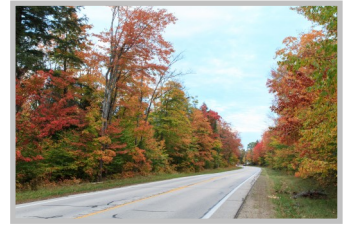


# Field Trip Reports - continued

## October 13-15, 2017 - Whitefish Point

Leader: Jeff Stacey

Whitefish Point is one of the premier birding spots for fall migration, so a small group of 3 birders drove to the top of the UP to experience it. While the official group was only three people, we met up with several friends from southeast Michigan while we were there.



While the drive up on Friday was long, we enjoyed the peak fall colors on the way. Upon arrival, the first place we checked was the bird feeders. Purple Finches, Rusty Blackbirds, and White-crowned Sparrows were feasting out in the open for us to see.

A short hike to the point led to the waterbird shack where the migration count occurs. Unfortunately, it was pretty slow that day. Some Horned Grebes were hanging around just off the shore and a Peregrine Falcon made a close pass to spice up the afternoon. We ended the abbreviated day with an unsuccessful trip to look for Red Crossbills on Vermilion Road.



Lark Sparrow

We arrived back at the waterbird shack before dawn on Saturday (motivated by the desire to get parking spots before a bunch of runners showed up). Birds were migrating by throughout the day, with many Scaup, White-winged Scoters, and Red-breasted Mergansers. Other waterbirds seen in volume included Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebes, Redheads, and Long-tailed Ducks.



Lapland Longspur

A group of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs kept us company all day as did a pair of Black-bellied Plovers. A couple of Sanderlings and an American Pipit flew in later in the day.

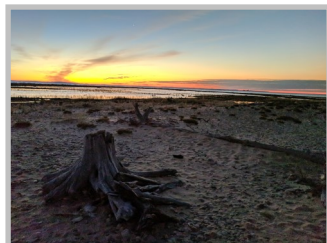


Northern Goshawk

Raptors were also visiting the point – Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagles, and a Merlin. The star of that group was easily a Northern Goshawk that flew close by affording great looks and photo ops.

Once the count was over, we drove some of the back roads looking for grouse. Ruffed Grouse were happy to comply, but the Spruce Grouse decided to stay hidden. The biggest surprise was a Lark Sparrow that we turned up near the Shelldrake dam. That was quite unexpected and generated a lot of excitement!

Sunday was a completely different story. We had planned to brave the heavy rain and high winds, but that idea lasted about two minutes after we went outside.



Ruffed Grouse

Photos Credit: Jeff Stacey

## Field Trip Reports - continued

October 29, 2017 - Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Jim Koppin



*American White Pelicans*  
Photo Credit: Jeff Stacey

Fourteen enthusiastic birders went to Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge on a cool and breezy morning. We were met by Jimmy from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who acted as our driver and guide on the refuge bus. The waterfowl was in good supply but skittish because of the ongoing hunting season. The diving ducks had not arrived yet but we did have a fair number of late shorebirds. Eagles were carrying sticks to expand their nests and a nice flock of 46 White Pelicans was a welcome sighting. Best bird of the day was a rare Cattle Egret found by eagle eye Jeff Stacey. Species count was 66.



*Cattle Egret*  
Photo Credit: Jeff Stacey



## Field Trip Reports - continued

### **November 4, 2017 – Sterling State Park**

**Leader: Mike Mencotti**

Eleven birders greeting the dawn at Sterling SP on Nov. 4, to a steady stream of Cormorants heading from the marsh to the lake. They must have totaled 200. As we scoped into a cool headwind, we found the waterfowl sparse, but the real show was up over the beach: A Common Loon and many Bonaparte's Gulls cruised overhead. We then walked the 3-mile trail loop and were rewarded by a wide assortment of waders and waterfowl; the prize had to be the Pintails, but the Black-crowned Night Heron and Harriers were delightful as well. A few observers saw a group of late Dunlin fly by. By the end of the field trip, we tallied 52 species. Not a bad way to usher in November!

### **November 8, 2017 – Robert Long Park and Walled Lake**

**Leader – Mike Mencotti**

The Wednesday workshop/field trip series continued on Nov. 8, on a crisp, cloudless, windless morning at Robert Long Park. The fall colors were still spectacular, but the birds weren't shabby, either. We were greeted by a line of about 40+ Tundra Swans migrating way overhead, the first of many of that species we would see. The first pond had Green-winged Teal, and the back pond yielded lots of puddle ducks, some Ring-necked Ducks, and Pied-billed Grebes in perfect viewing light. Two late Black-crowned Night-Herons were a treat. On to Walled Lake, where the waterfowl and gulls were starting to congregate. We could clearly see the difference between the Mute and Tundra swans. A loon, more grebes, and a ton of Bufflehead delighted all. A cruising adult Bald Eagle made the Coots quite nervous! Funny thing about Walled Lake: No matter where you stand to view the birds, they seem to be on the other side of lake! We tallied about 43 species.



# Photographs and Recordings by Oakland County Birders on eBird

Submitted by: **Robert Bochenek**

This Summer, eBird rolled out its latest Birding Tool, the "Illustrated Checklist". There is an Illustrated Checklist for every Hotspot, County, State / Province and Country.

Based on region, the Illustrated Checklist shows a monthly bar chart for species occurrence in that region, a photograph and/or song recording. The photographs and recordings are all from birders' checklist submissions. The Illustrated Checklist is dynamic, changing for better rated photos and recordings.

Four Michiganders from Oakland County had their Photographs and Recordings used in the first Roll-out of eBird's "USA Illustrated Checklists"!!!

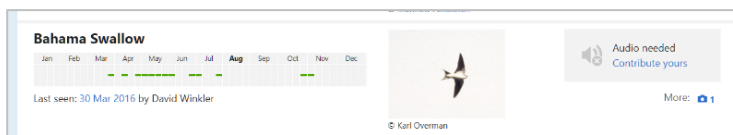
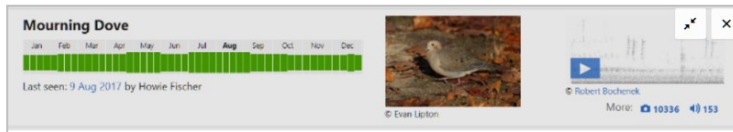
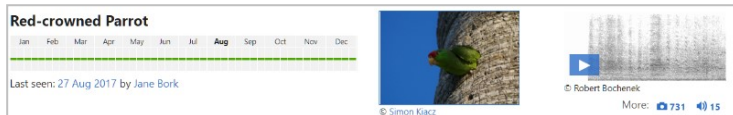
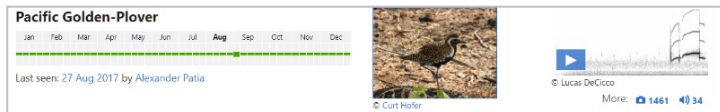
Curt Hofer - Pacific Golden Plover Photo

Jeff Stacey - Upland Sandpiper Photo

Karl Overman - Parasitic Jaeger Photo

Karl Overman - Bahama Swallow Photo

Robert Bochenek - Red-Crowned Parrot Recording and Mourning Dove Recording.



## Welcome New Board Members!

### Jerry Rogers—Environment/Conservation

Hello, I am Jerry Rogers, your newly minted Environment/Conservation Board Member. I am excited to help our organization to become more involved, and learn more about the areas of bird conservation & connections to the environment.

My environmental activist experience is limited to a degree in biology, and teaching Environmental Science, at the community college level.

Please let me know about your concerns about conservation & the environment, so that so we may move forward on a plan for membership action.



*Photo Credit: Mike Dougherty*

### Kathleen Dougherty—Young Birders Club



Kathleen has been an active member of Oakland Audubon for many years. She worked as a naturalist and educator for Oakland County Parks for over 30 years. Please see the article about the Young Birders Club on the following page.



## Young Birders Club – Re-start

In an ongoing to commitment to nurture the next generation of birders Oakland Audubon will again offer programs for young birders beginning in 2018. Kathleen Dougherty, long time Oakland Audubon member, has volunteered to lead this effort.

Oakland Audubon has always advocated for youth birding programs since its inception. In 2013, Lisa MacArthur acted as the coordinator of the young birder's program. Due to multiple circumstances, the Young Birder's program has been inactive for a few years.



Oakland Audubon plans to collaborate with other local Audubon Clubs to coordinate programming and build capacity in restarting this initiative. Young birders will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian to attend field trips and provide their own transportation. Family OAS memberships are encouraged, but field trips are open to all participants. That being said – OAS membership has its advantages. To learn more about the **Oakland Owlets** – visit the OAS website for updates and details. A listing of upcoming field trips will be posted.

Kathleen Dougherty worked at Oakland County Parks as a naturalist and informal educator for more than 30 years. She possessed a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Master's of Teaching degree in education. Currently retired, Dougherty helps other educators incorporate wildlife and the outdoors into their lessons. Dougherty is a certified facilitator in many of the supplementary curricula including Project Flying WILD, Project WET, BirdSleuth and Project WILD. She is an outdoor emergency care technician and volunteers for the Clinton River Watershed Council, the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy, the National Ski Patrol and the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education.

Dougherty said, "It is a privilege to engage youth and help them establish a lifelong connection with nature." Kathleen welcomes input and assistance from the OAS membership. If you are willing to lead a field trip or would just like to lend a helping hand, please contact Kathleen.



## HUMMINGBIRD NIGHTMARES

Submitted by: Doris Applebaum

Imagine that you're a hummingbird weighing about 3-6 grams. You're flying to a nectar-filled flower, expecting a nice meal. But lurking among the flowers is a praying mantis; it weighs as much as 7 grams and is also looking for a meal. The end result is often a happy mantis and a dead hummingbird.

Research into reports of the prey of praying mantises worldwide found 147 instances when these insects preyed on birds. Though some reports dated from before 1920, most were from 2000-2015. There were 12 species of mantises represented, and predation was found on 24 species of birds in 13 families. Although they included reports from many countries, most (113 of the 147) were from the United States; and of those, 110 involved hummingbirds. (One victim was a Blue-headed Vireo—perhaps the biggest surprise in the research.)



Photo Credit: Gunjan Pandey

The U.S. is home to native and nonnative praying mantises. The latter were sometimes deliberately introduced to control pest insects, but the large Chinese mantis was accidentally introduced in 1896, and in 2006 it was recognized as an invasive species.

Curiously, predation on birds by mantises in the eastern U.S. seems to be mainly by introduced species, while predation on birds in the western U.S. involves mainly native species. Turnabout sometimes occurs, as there are records of small birds of prey eating large mantises.

The impact of praying mantises on birds is not considered particularly serious, especially compared to the numbers killed by raptors and cats. Large orb-weaver spiders have also been recorded preying on small birds.

However, the release of praying mantis egg cases in urban and suburban areas could have negative impacts not only on hummingbirds but also on beneficial pollinators like bees. So the release of praying mantises in such areas as an insect-control effort, especially nonnative species, may not be a good idea. No doubt hummingbirds would agree.

(An article titled "Birds as Prey for Praying Mantises" in the November 2017 issue of *Natural History* magazine provided the information for this item.)



## NATURE NOTES *by Allen Chartier*

It's hard to believe that in March 2018 this column will be four years old. Keep those questions coming!

*Shorebirds are difficult to learn, as I don't see them too often. Can you give me some tips for learning our shorebirds?*

The most obvious tip is to see them more often! Oakland County is a notoriously difficult place to find shorebirds, so you must travel a bit farther to visit more dependable sites. From Pontiac, it is about 60 miles south to the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area, and it is 75 miles north to the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge. Both are consistently good sites for shorebirds. Access for each site is different. Shiawassee has an auto tour road that is usually open from April through September, when most shorebirds are likely to be seen. Mouillee is only closed during the duck hunting season (September 1 – December 15), but there is no vehicle access, so many birders use bicycles to get around the many miles of dikes here. The precise locations of shorebirds at these sites is often reported on chat groups, and on eBird checklists, as the location of suitable habitat changes depending on what management at these sites is doing in any given year.

A telescope is extremely useful for studying shorebirds, as they are often far out on inaccessible mudflats, and it is important to be able to study the patterns on individual feathers for identification. Markings and coloration of the back feathers, scapulars, wing coverts, and tertials are often important, and patterns on the underparts and tail are also sometimes useful. Learn where these feathers are on shorebirds, so that you can key in on them. Just as important, bill shape and color, leg color, overall proportions of the bird, feeding style, and even vocalizations can assist in identifying that mystery shorebird. Understanding that in spring many shorebirds will be adults in breeding plumage, with some still in winter plumage, and a few in transition, will help you focus on which illustrations in your field guide are most relevant. In fall, it is helpful to know that juveniles are often more intricately marked, and that their feathers will be very clean, fresh, and bright. Adults in fall can be in worn breeding plumage, full winter plumage, or anything in between, depending on when they molt. Distinguishing adult Short-billed and Long-billed dowitchers in fall can be assisted by noting if they're molting. Short-billed will not appear to be molting in Michigan, while Long-billed often will be.

A couple good books that provide more detailed information on shorebird identification are *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide* by Hayman, Marchant, and Prater, published by Houghton-Mifflin in 1986, and *The Shorebird Guide* by O'Brien, Crossley, and Karlson, published by Houghton-Mifflin in 2006. Two other good shorebird sites in Monroe County are the Erie Marsh Preserve, which is closed for the duck hunting season like Pte. Mouillee, and only allows access on foot, and Sterling State Park which is in the process of improving two lagoons to attract shorebirds, which will be much easier to access than the other sites. In addition, random wet fields in places like Washtenaw and Oakland counties will have a few shorebirds at close range, which is good practice for visiting sites where there are greater numbers.

**NATURE NOTES** by Allen Chartier  
(continued)

*How many different hummingbird species have shown up in Michigan and when? What's the most unexpected one?*

As most Oakland Audubon members may know, the only breeding species of hummingbird in Michigan, and throughout eastern North America, is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Other species have been documented, and these have been referred to as “vagrants” in the past, but the regularity of species like Rufous Hummingbird actually qualifies them as very rare migrants instead because some banded Rufous (in Ohio) have actually returned in subsequent years to the same home. Up through 2014, Michigan has had 47 confirmed Rufous and an additional 9 that were either Rufous or Allen’s Hummingbird (Allen’s has only been confirmed once in Ohio, and not yet in Michigan). Rufous Hummingbirds have arrived in Michigan as early as late July, and often linger into December, with the latest until mid-January. Other species show up here much less often. Between 1996 and 2014, Michigan has had 9 confirmed records of Mexican Violetear! This is more than any other state except for Texas. Violetears usually show up in July or August, and are often on-site for a day or two before moving on. Our first one in 1996 was an exception as it stayed for 6 weeks in Cass County! There are two confirmed Michigan records of Broad-billed Hummingbird (June 1996, July 2000), and one confirmed record (2 individuals) of Anna’s Hummingbird (Oct-Dec 2010). There are three more species that have been confirmed in Michigan only once, for a total of 8 species, each of which would qualify as unexpected as all of them are essentially the ONLY reports in the eastern U.S. They are White-eared Hummingbird (August 2005), Costa’s Hummingbird (Oct-Nov 2014), and Berylline Hummingbird (Sep 2014). Three additional species are, in my opinion, long overdue for an appearance in Michigan since they have been confirmed in nearby states: Black-chinned Hummingbird (confirmed once in Indiana), Calliope Hummingbird (confirmed twice in Indiana and twice in Ohio), and Allen’s Hummingbird (confirmed once in Ohio). But wait, there’s more! Magnificent Hummingbird has been confirmed in Minnesota, Green-breasted Mango and recently Buff-bellied Hummingbird have been confirmed in Wisconsin, and perhaps strangest of all, a Bahama Woodstar was confirmed in Pennsylvania a couple years ago. So, as far as hummingbirds go, with 15 species confirmed so far in our region, anything goes! Keep your eyes open, your feeders up, and your camera (and my contact information) handy!

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

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

# WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2017 - 2018

by Ron Pittaway

**GENERAL FORECAST:** Cone crops in the Northeast are bumper in 2017. It is the best cone crop in a decade or more. This will be a banner winter to see boreal finches in central and northeastern Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, northern New York, and northern New England States. White-winged and Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins have moved east to areas of abundant seed crops. The Big Question is: will finches concentrate in areas of highest cone abundance (more likely) or be spread out across the Northeast? This is not an irruption year south of traditional wintering areas in the Northeast. Cone crops are generally low west of a line from Lake Superior to James Bay extending west across the Prairie Provinces, British Columbia and Alaska. See individual finch forecasts below for further details.

**PINE GROSBEAK:** Most should stay in the north because the mountain-ash berry crop is good to excellent across the boreal forest from Alaska to Newfoundland. Some should get south to Algonquin Park. At feeders they prefer black oil sunflower seeds.

**PURPLE FINCH:** Most Purple Finches east of Lake Superior should stay north this winter because of heavy seed crops on eastern conifers and mountain-ashes. They prefer black oil sunflower seeds at feeders.

**RED CROSSBILL:** There will be a good showing of Red Crossbills in Ontario and the Northeast this winter. Red Crossbills comprise about 10 "call types" in North America. Matt Young of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology reports that Eastern Type 10 is currently the most common type from the Great Lakes through Ontario into the Maritime Provinces and Northeastern United States. This year Matt also reports that Type 2, Type 3 and Type 4 and a few Type 5s from the west are moving east, the latter is a vagrant east of the Rockies. This movement started in late June/early July, presumably linked to poor or failed crops on several conifers in the western U.S. and Canada. Most types are impossible to identify without analyzing recordings of their flight calls. Recordings can be made with an iPhone and identified to call type by audio spectrographic analysis. Matt Young (may6@cornell.edu) will identify types for you if you email him your recordings or upload them to an eBird checklist. This helps his research. He is particularly interested in recordings from Maine, Vermont, Michigan, Ontario and the Maritime Provinces. Red Crossbills probably will be breeding this winter into next spring. Expect to hear them singing and to see streaked juveniles.

**WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:** This crossbill flooded into the Northeast over the summer, drawn here by the bumper cone crops. Winter trips to hotspots such as Algonquin Park, Laurentians and Adirondacks are guaranteed to see this crossbill. They probably will be breeding this fall and winter. Watch and listen for their loud trilling songs given from tree tops and during circular slow-flapping display flights. Expect to see streaked juveniles in the flocks.

**COMMON REDPOLL:** Redpolls should move south because White Birch and alder seed crops are below average in northern Ontario. However, as redpolls move south they likely will be slowed or stopped by abundant conifer seed crops and better birch crops. If they get into southern Ontario south of latitude 45, good seed crops on birches and European Black Alder, and an abundance of weedy fields this year will attract them. When redpolls discover your nyger seed feeders, feeding frenzies result. Feeders are best for studying fidgety redpolls. Watch for the larger and darker "Greater" Common Redpoll (subspecies *rostrata*) from Baffin Island (Nunavut) and Greenland.

**HOARY REDPOLL:** Watch for Hoaries in flocks of Common Redpolls. The “Southern” Hoary Redpoll (nominate subspecies *exilipes*) breeds south to northern Ontario and is the subspecies usually seen in southern Canada and northern USA. Watch for “Hornemann’s” Hoary Redpoll (nominate *hornemanni*) from northern Nunavut and Greenland. It is the largest and palest of the redpolls. Hornemann’s was formerly considered a great rarity south of the tundra, but recently it has been documented in the south more frequently with better photos. See link #2 for photos and identification of Common and Hoary Redpoll, and their subspecies.

**PINE SISKIN:** Siskins will be frequent and locally common this winter in the Northeast drawn here by abundant cone crops, particularly on White Spruce. Feisty siskins prefer nyger seeds in silo feeders. See link #3 which discusses siskin irruptions related to climate variability.

**EVENING GROSBEAK:** Most should stay in the north this winter because of abundant conifer seed crops and increasing outbreaks of spruce budworm. The most reliable spot to see this spectacular grosbeak is the feeders at the Visitor Centre in Algonquin Park. In 2016 the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assigned the “Evening Grosbeak as a species of Special Concern due to strong population declines occurring mainly in central and eastern Canada.”

**THREE IRRUPTIVE PASSERINES:** Movements of these three passerines are often linked to movements of boreal finches.

**BLUE JAY:** Expect a much smaller than usual flight of jays from mid-September to mid-October along the north shorelines of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The acorn, beechnut, hazelnut and berry crops are generally good in Ontario.

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:** This nuthatch is now in areas with high cone abundance. Its presence indicates that White-winged and Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Purple Finches will be in the same areas.

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** Only a small flight south is expected because native Mountain-ashes have good to excellent berry crops across the boreal forest from Alaska to Newfoundland. In recent times Bohemians have been coming south more frequently probably due to now reliable annual crops of introduced Buckthorn berries. When they come south, Bohemians relish European Mountain-ash berries and small ornamental crabapples. It was historically called “Bohemian Chatterer” because flocks make a continuous “buzzy ringing twittering”.

## **FINCH INFORMATION LINKS**

1. Finch Facts, Seed Crops and Irruptions

<http://www.jeaniron.ca/2012/winterfinches.htm>

2. Subspecies of Common and Hoary Redpolls – ID Tips and Photos

<http://www.jeaniron.ca/2015/redpollsRP.htm>

3. Climatic dipoles drive two principal modes of North American boreal bird irruption

<http://bit.ly/1UrmTsI>

4. Interview with Ron Pittaway in OFO News 34(1):1-3, 2016

<http://jeaniron.ca/articles/FinchForecasterFe2016.pdf>

**Ron Pittaway, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Toronto, Ontario, 21 September 2017**

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

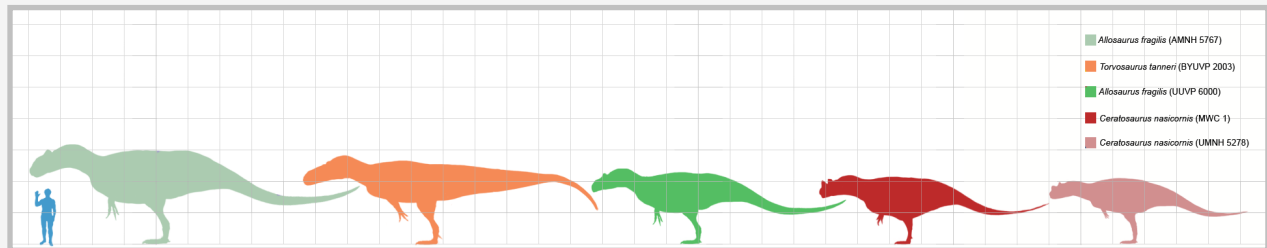
Submitted by: Don Burlett

### Dinosaur Teeth to Bird Beaks

An article from the New York Times describes work done analyzing fossils of a class of dinosaurs known as theropods. The evidence appears to indicate that these dinosaurs had teeth when they were born but later lost them, leaving them with beaks. This may point to an evolutionary transition from dinosaur to birds. Interesting reading!

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/science/dinosaurs-beaks-teeth-birds.html>

### Various Therapods



By Matt Martyniuk (Own work) [CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

### Evolution from Bird Feeders

An article in the Washington Post reports that studies of birds in the UK show increased bill length from birds that frequent feeders versus those that do not. The change in bill length is accompanied by increased fledgling numbers. The changes are small but reportable and appear to indicate “human-caused” evolutionary tendencies. Check it out!

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/animalia/wp/2017/10/20/birds-might-be-evolving-to-eat-from-bird-feeders-study-says/?utm\\_term=.cbd007679efa&wpisrc=nl\\_rainbow&wpm=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/animalia/wp/2017/10/20/birds-might-be-evolving-to-eat-from-bird-feeders-study-says/?utm_term=.cbd007679efa&wpisrc=nl_rainbow&wpm=1)

**Have an interesting article you'd like to share? Just forward the link to the editor with a brief description and why you'd like to share it!**





# Drone Research Shows Why Albatross Wings Are Black

Submitted by: Don Burlett

[GrrlScientist](#), Contributor

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2017/10/16/albatross-are-teaching-scientists-how-to-build-better-drones/#721938831951>

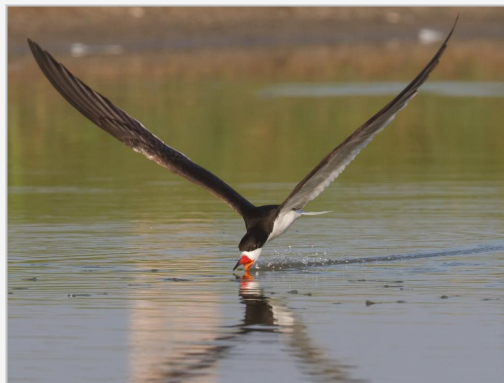
A team of aerospace engineers looking to improve marine drone design accidentally discovered why large soaring seabirds, like albatross, have wings that are black on top and white underneath.



Shy Albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*) in flight, shows off its dark upper wing and pale under wing surfaces. (Credit: [JJ Harrison](#) / CC BY-SA 3.0)

Nature is humanity's most reliable teacher. For example, I recently shared a video report about how imitating bumble bee wing structure could make drone wings less likely to become damaged by a collision ([more here](#)). And now, I stumbled across another study that explores how albatross can also help us make drones more efficient fliers: this serendipitous discovery was published by a team of aerospace engineers at New Mexico State University.

"Albatross, shearwater, black skimmer, and sooty terns [...] can fly thousands of kilometers without stopping," said drone bioengineer, Abdessattar Abdelke, an assistant professor at [New Mexico State University](#), and senior author of the study. Professor Abdelke and his graduate students study nature seeking ideas for how to design and fabricate more efficient and durable marine drones.



A black skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) skims the water's surface for its dinner. The black upper wing and contrasting white under wing surfaces are plainly visible. (Credit: [Dan Pancamo](#) / CC BY-SA 2.0)

Naturally, they looked to birds for inspiration.

Albatross are a group of very large seabirds that can soar as far as 16,000 kilometers (10,000 miles) in a single journey (ref). Albatross wings are amongst the longest for any living group of birds, with the wandering albatross's wings reaching 3.5 meters (11.5 feet) -- the longest wingspan of any living bird species.

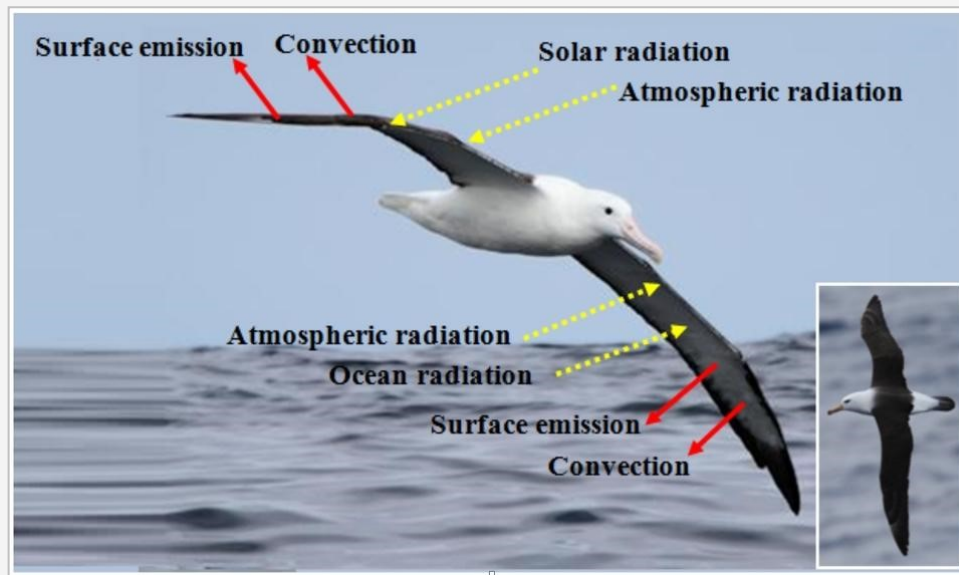
To fly such long distances, albatross rely upon soaring and gliding flight. These modes of flight are unpowered -- instead of flapping to stay aloft, the birds merely extend their wings away from their body so they can ride the wind. Similar to aircraft, soaring birds rely upon both speed and lift: speed is caused by gravity as the birds fall towards Earth, and lift is produced by the difference in air pressure flowing over the wing's upper and lower surfaces. Together, speed and lift keep soaring birds airborne with a minimal expenditure of energy.

Because albatross operate so close to the structural limits for wing length and wing loading, Professor Abdelke and his students thought these birds might have some interesting lessons to teach them about flight. As they designed their studies, the team noticed that the color pattern of albatross wings was repeated across a variety of other seabirds -- all of which are also known to soar for long distances.

"They had a common feature: their wings are black on the upper side and white on the lower side," Professor Abdelke explained in email. The researchers reasoned that this color theme must be important to a soaring lifestyle because so many unrelated species of birds that soar for long distances have it -- *but why is this particular color pattern so special?*

Originally, ornithologists thought this color pattern acted as camouflage, reducing the chances that the birds' prey might spot them as they soar over the surface of the ocean, and reducing the chances that potential predators might spot these birds on their nests. But Professor Abdelke and his team suspected another explanation could be at work, too, so they investigated.

"The question was: does this coloration have any specific effect on the flight endurance? Therefore, we started investigating the color effects on the flight aerodynamics," Professor Abdelke explained in email.



Thermodynamics of why albatross wings are black on top and white underneath. (Credit: M.Hassanalian et al. / doi:10.1016/j.jtherbio.2017.03.013)

In their study, Professor Abdelke and his team examined how sunlight and wing surface color influenced each other. They found that the dark upper wing surface absorbs sunlight very efficiently -- in fact, the dark upper wing surface could become as much as 10° Celsius (18° F) warmer than the pale underside. This temperature difference lowers air pressure on the upper side of the wing, which reduces drag and generates additional lift, according to the researchers. This serves to make soaring less energetically expensive for these large seabirds, particularly over long distances.

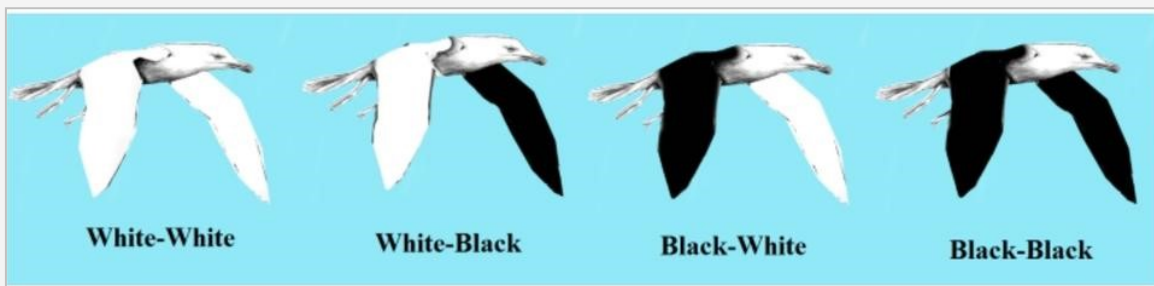
“The obtained results showed that birds with darker colors are more efficient (constant lift to drag ratio and drag reduction) and have better endurance,” Professor Abdelke said.

When the researchers tested drones, they found similar results to birds.

“Simulations on unmanned air vehicles show that these dark colors can decrease their drag,” Professor Abdelke said. “These bio-inspirations are more suitable for drones [than aircraft], since they have closer sizes to the migrating birds.”

Has Professor Abdelke and his team precisely measured the effects of sunlight on other wing color patterns?

“We are trying to compare the skin drag generated using white-white, white-black, black-white, and black-black in order to identify the best arrangement of colors from aerodynamic and thermal points of view,” Professor Abdelke said, adding that this study is already underway.



Current studies of wing color pattern and thermography. (Credit: M.Hassanalian et al. / doi:[10.1016/j.jtherbio.2017.03.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtherbio.2017.03.013))

“Preliminary results show that, overall, black on the top yields the least skin friction drag. We are still investigating whether black-black or black-white is better, trying to investigate all the intervening parameters,” Professor Abdelke said.

Professor Abdelke and his students think their study will help them design more efficient and durable drones for use at sea.

“Drag reduction means less fuel consumption,” Professor Abdelke explained. “That may also mean that the battery can persist longer, which allows longer non-stop missions.” Almost like an albatross soaring halfway around the world in one go.

#### Source:

M. Hassanalian, H. Abdelmoula, S. Ben Ayed, and A. Abdelkefi (2017). **Thermal impact of migrating birds’ wing color on their flight performance: possibility of new generation of biologically inspired drones**, *Journal of Thermal Biology*, published online on 10 October 2017 ahead of print | doi:[10.1016/j.jtherbio.2017.03.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtherbio.2017.03.013)

#### Also cited:

Daniel T. Ksepka (2014). **Flight performance of the largest volant bird**, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(29):10624–10629 | doi:[10.1073/pnas.1320297111](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320297111)

## BIRD ID QUIZ (Winter 2017-18)



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



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



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

Last (Fall 2017) issue photo quiz answers: a) Northern Rough-winged Swallow, b) Bank Swallow and c) Cliff Swallow. How'd you do with the ID's of the fall birds? Too easy?

**BONUS!!! BIRD ID QUIZ (Winter 2017-18)**



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



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



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

**Get Ready For Winter Birds!!!**



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER 21, 2017

In accord with our bylaws, the October membership meeting will have an election for Membership Officer, Treasurer, and Secretary.

The membership campaign for 2018 is under way. Our membership has been declining in recent years, and Membership Officer Dave Frye presented some ideas about how we might do better.

The Field Trip Committee will meet soon to work on scheduling for the first half of 2018.

The Funding Committee will meet to decide which organizations will receive donations from OAS in 2018.

A camera event at Seven Ponds Nature Center, sponsored by Canon, attracted 260 people, including many from outside Michigan.

OAS will provide volunteers to help out at the October 14 Hawk Woods Festival.

President Don Burlett attended a planning meeting of the Huron Clinton Metroparks Authority, at which he made some suggestions about improving the trails in the parks.

At the suggestion of National Audubon, OAS will purchase insurance to protect us in case of injuries or other negative occurrences at any of our events.

NOVEMBER 9, 2017

The board welcomed our new Young Birders Club Coordinator, Kathleen Dougherty, and the Chairman of the new Conservation & Environment Committee, Jerry Rogers.

President Don Burlett attended the Urban Bird Summit/State of the Strait event at the Detroit Zoo on November 9 and was able to network with people from Michigan Audubon, National Audubon's regional Great Lakes Audubon, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources regarding a number of interesting projects.

Don also attended a meeting at Indian Springs Metropark, learned that the park has acquired some new property, and offered to have OAS survey that property next spring.

Don also was invited to attend the recent meeting of Great Lakes Audubon, where he met with chapter representatives from other Great Lakes states.

The new OAS website is up and running, thanks to the hard work of our Website Editor, Hannah Dunbar.

Planning for the December 16 Christmas Bird Count is well under way.

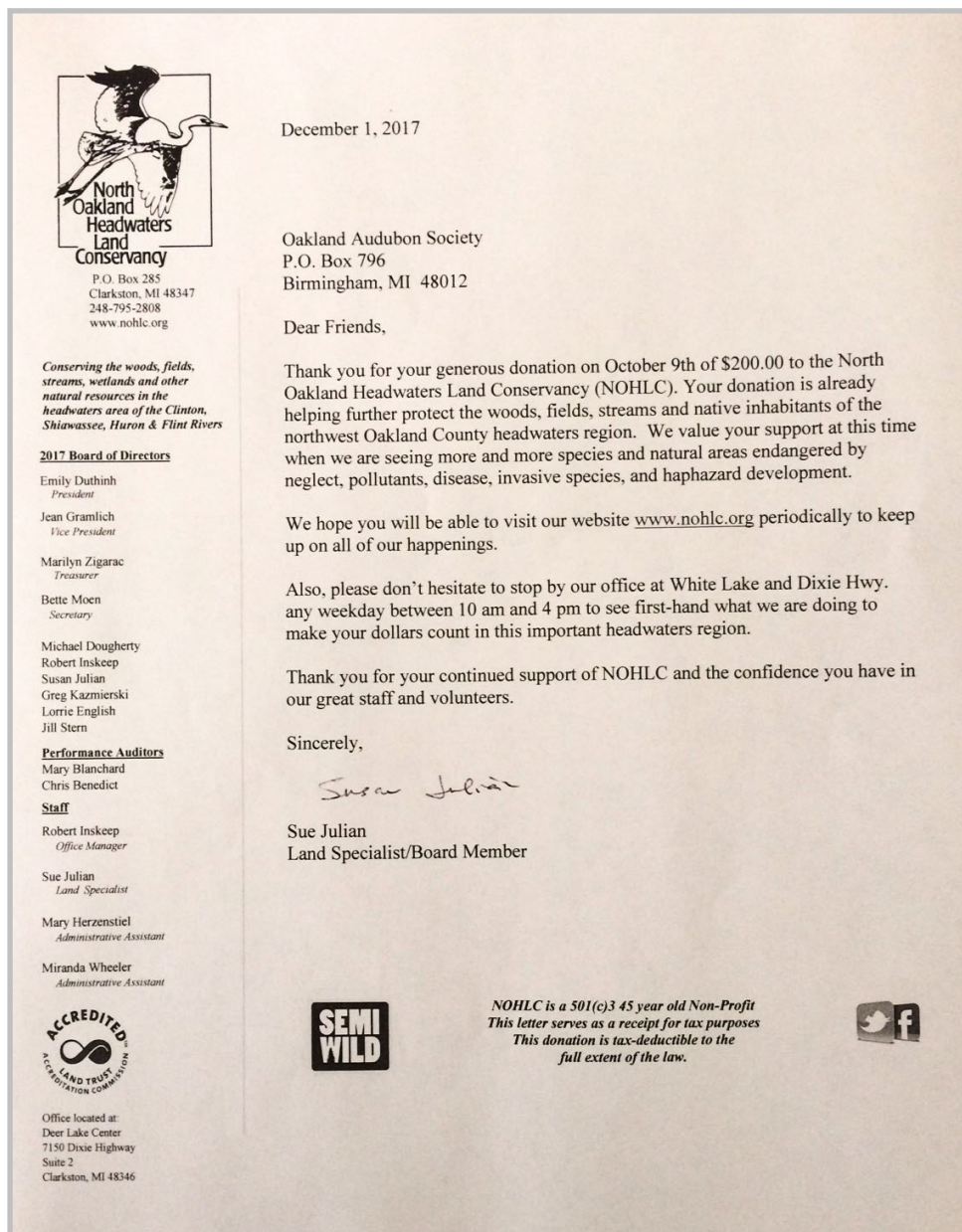
Seven Ponds Chapter Representative Dr. Greg Gossick reported that the holiday auction on December 2 will have some outstanding items available.

Membership Officer Dave Frye continues to present programs for 7<sup>th</sup>-grade Earth Science students at a Warren school as part of our efforts to connect with young people.

Doris Applebaum  
Secretary

## Your Membership At Work

North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy (NOHLC) thanks OAS for their generous donation!



## UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS

Date	Time	Program	Location
Tues., January 9	7:00 p.m.	Adventures Down Under	First United Methodist Church (see below)
Tues., February 13	7:00 p.m.	Owls of Michigan	First United Methodist Church (see below)
Tues., March 13	7:00 p.m.	A South African Adventure	First United Methodist Church (see below)

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

### MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

**Welcome New Members!**

**Brian Merlos, Tracy Zeman**

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

Thanks to everyone who helps sustain OAS with your membership contributions. We would be nowhere without you!



# OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Check also if you are a member of:

\_\_\_\_ National Audubon Society

\_\_\_\_ Michigan Audubon Society

**OAS needs and welcomes volunteers — please participate if you can!**

Check if you have the skills to help:

\_\_\_\_ Become a board member

\_\_\_\_ Lead a field trip or present a program

\_\_\_\_ Fill an open position (Position: \_\_\_\_\_)

Please check appropriate line:

\_\_\_\_ Member renewal

\_\_\_\_ New member

\_\_\_\_ Change of address

## *OAS Membership Fees*

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

## *Our Mission*

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

Please make checks payable to:  
OAKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

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