

THE NUTHATCH

Volume 68, Issue 3

Fall 2026

Membership Meetings

eBird/MBRC Review Process (Scott Terry)

— September 8, 2026

Anybody who uses eBird knows that the records are reviewed by individuals who check the validity of sightings, likelihood, and the numbers recorded. The Michigan Bird Records Committee also gets to weigh in on the evidence provided to support rare bird sightings. But how do these processes work, and how do they affect you and your bird sighting records? This question and others will be answered in this presentation by Oakland County reviewer Scott Terry. *In person and on Zoom.*



Logo: Cornell Lab of Ornithology

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, including window collisions, cat attacks, and nest disruptions. We will discuss how birds are treated, the steps you can take to prevent such incidents, and what to do if you find an injured or orphaned bird. *In person and on Zoom.*

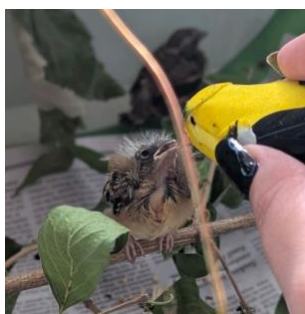


Photo: Bird Center of Michigan

Critters of Cochise County (George Harris)

— November 10, 2026

Join OBA President George Harris as he recounts his adventures with his wife, Amy, at Cave Creek Ranch in Southeast Arizona. Its location makes it one of the most biodiverse places in the U.S. The Chiricahua Mountains boast seven life zones, creating unique ecosystems for flora and fauna. It's one of the only two U.S. spots where the Elegant Trogon nests and hosts 16 varieties of hummingbirds. If that isn't enough, Portal also boasts some of the darkest skies in the US, making it a hot spot for observing the night sky. *In person and on Zoom.*



Photo: Amy Beaulac-Harris

Meeting Information

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (except December, July, and August) at the Auburn Hills Community Center (Seyburn A Room) at 3350 E. Seyburn Drive, Auburn Hills, MI 48326. The May meeting is often an evening hike or special program.

Meetings open at 6:30 PM, and talks begin at 7:00 PM. Zoom links are posted on our website and social media beforehand.

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THE NUTHATCH



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

One of the things I've learned during my time with Oakland Bird Alliance is that organizations, like trees, are healthiest when there's a little renewal from time to time. New branches grow, older ones eventually step aside, and the whole tree is stronger because of it. OBA has always benefited from that natural cycle, with new volunteers bringing fresh ideas while building on the work of those who came before.

Volunteerism has always been at the heart of our organization. Every bird walk, educational program, conservation project, festival booth, and issue of The Nuthatch happens because members decide to pitch in. Just as important, volunteering creates community. Many of us first met one another while helping at an event or serving on a committee, and those shared experiences often turn into lasting friendships. Giving a little of your time is one of the best ways to become part of the fabric of OBA.

As we look ahead, we have several opportunities for members to get involved on the Board of Directors. We're currently looking for volunteers to serve as Website Editor, Advocacy Chair, and Publicity & Fundraising Chair. If one of those roles sounds interesting, or if you'd simply like to learn more, please reach out! We'd love to have you join us. You don't have to know everything on day one; enthusiasm and a willingness to help go a long way.

I'd also like to thank our current board members, who quietly devote countless hours to keeping OBA running smoothly. Their dedication makes all of our programs possible. And to everyone who has served on the board in years past, thank you for leaving the organization a little better than you found it. We all benefit from the time, talent, and passion you've shared over the years.

This fall also brings a terrific lineup of membership meetings, and I hope you'll make plans to attend. These evenings are about much more than the presentations—they're a chance to catch up with fellow birders, meet new members, and enjoy being part of a community that shares your enthusiasm for birds and conservation.

In September, Scott Terry will pull back the curtain on the eBird review process and the work of the Michigan Bird Records Committee, giving us a better understanding of what happens after we submit our sightings. October brings Nicole Kvasnovsky from the Bird Center of Michigan, who will discuss the challenges facing our songbirds, how injured birds are rehabilitated, and what each of us can do to help reduce the threats they face. In November, I'll have the pleasure of sharing stories and photographs from Amy's and my travels to the incredible birding hotspots of Cochise County, Arizona, home to Elegant Trogons, hummingbirds, and an amazing diversity of wildlife.

Whether you join us in Auburn Hills or on Zoom, I hope you'll come to one (or all!) of our upcoming meetings. Bring a friend, introduce yourself to someone new, and enjoy spending an evening with people who understand why getting excited over a warbler or a rarity report is perfectly normal.

I look forward to seeing you this fall.

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)
September 13 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Fall Warblers Heritage Park, Farmington Hills	Mike Mencotti mmencotti9@gmail.com
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 20 (Sunday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM	September Bird Walk Hawk Woods, Auburn Hills	George Harris admin@oaklandbirdalliance.org
October 10 (Saturday) 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Fall Migratory Bird Day Lake Erie Metropark, Brownstown Township (Young Birders)	Tori Guido tori.guido@gmail.com
October 18 (Sunday) 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	October Bird Walk Kensington Metropark, Milford	Mike Mencotti mmencotti9@gmail.com
October 31 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM	Spooky Bird Walk Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Southfield	George Harris admin@oaklandbirdalliance.org
November 7 (Saturday) 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Sandhill Cranes Haehnle Sanctuary, Jackson County (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
November 13 – 15 (Friday, Saturday, & Sunday) 3 days, all day	Jasper-Pulaski and Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Areas Medaryville and Sandborn, IN	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
November 21 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM	November Bird Walk Indian Springs Metropark, White Lake	George Harris admin@oaklandbirdalliance.org
December 4 – 6 (Friday, Saturday, & Sunday) 3 days, all day	Niagara Falls Ontario, Canada	Don Burlett baikalteal13@netzero.net
December 5 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Belle Isle State Park Detroit, MI	Tori Guido tori.guido@gmail.com
December 19 (Saturday) 12:00 AM – 4:00 PM	127 th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Pontiac CBC Circle	Scott Jennex and Kayla Niner fieldtrips@oaklandbirdalliance.org
December 19 (Saturday) 6:30 AM – 8:00 AM	CBC Owl Prowl Camp Agawam, Orion Charter Township (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com
December 19 (Saturday) 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM	CBC Winter Birds Walk Orion Oaks County Park (Young Birders)	Kathleen Dougherty kad8186@msn.com

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

June 7, 2026 — Oak Openings Preserve Metropark, Swanton Township, Lucas County, OH

Leader: Don Burlett



The group birding near the road (Don Burlett)

It's always good to get back to previous locations for field trips. The last trip to [Oak Openings Preserve Metropark](#) took place several years ago. Of course, June is a tough month for field trips because the birds have quieted down and settled into their breeding routine. However, there are always a few birds worth looking for—and Oak Openings had several that we really wanted to see.

We began the day by birding near Girdham Road in the park and were greeted immediately by an abundance of Eastern Bluebirds. Field Sparrows, Indigo Buntings, and other species were obvious in the open fields. The known breeding area for the Lark Sparrows did not disappoint, and we viewed both a male and female near the road.

A surprise was the flight of two Yellow-Billed Cuckoos along a tree line on Reed Road near the intersection. As usual, Red-Headed Woodpeckers were also present in good numbers, bouncing amongst the trees. As we made our

way back to our cars, a Blue Grosbeak was calling from the trees just south of Reed Road. It was very persistent but remained buried in the trees, making no effort to put in a personal appearance.

We then returned to the Buehner Center and hiked a couple of trails north of the parking lot. The woods had good numbers of Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, and Great Crested Flycatcher along with Gray Catbird, Veery, and Eastern Bluebird. We did get some warblers (Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, and Chestnut-Sided Warbler) before we located and saw a nice male Hooded Warbler.

After lunch, we headed north to Wiregrass Lake Metropark to check it out. We didn't find many birds, but it was an interesting spot. While we were there, a Yellow-Breasted Chat called from the brush near the parking lot. Again, it was a typical chat in that it wanted to torture us with calls but no visual sign of the bird.

Finally, two of us visited Irwin Prairie and walked a little of the boardwalk there. There wasn't much there, but we did hear a Summer Tanager call from the woods. However, being midday, bird activity had diminished notably. Overall, we had 54 species that day, and several were good looks.

June 13, 2026 — Proud Lake Recreation Area

Leaders: Jeff Stacey and Malissa Bossardet

During nesting season, [Proud Lake Recreation Area](#) is the best birding location in southern Oakland County. Many species that are regularly found “up north”—including the Pine Warbler, Ovenbird, Veery, Red-Breasted Nuthatch, and Acadian Flycatcher—find this spot to be a summer haven. Our group of eight birders was lucky enough to find all of those and more on our June trip to this under-birded recreation area.

While the full leaf cover did not make things easy for us, there were plenty of sounds to be heard in addition to the few good looks (and many bad ones) we got at these birds. We started on the eastern side of the park where the majority of the targets were more likely. One of the first birds that we found was a Veery hopping along on the ground in the parking lot.



Eastern Bluebird (Malissa Bossardet)



Acadian Flycatcher (Malissa Bossardet)

Mosquitoes are a nuisance to humans but food for many birds; luckily, there was a good balance this visit, because they can make birding *very* uncomfortable. We can credit the many Acadian and Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, and Eastern Wood-Pewees in the area for keeping the mosquito population in check.

We heard a Scarlet Tanager singing its raspy song but were unable to see it despite our best efforts. Some Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers were much more obliging near the dam.

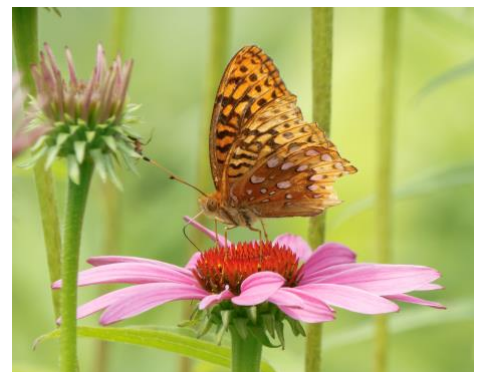
The west side of the park is drier and more open and hosted an entirely different roster of birds. Here, we had an Eastern Towhee drinking its tea, some Sandhill Cranes, and a distant Yellow-Billed Cuckoo singing off in the forest. We were hoping to find our last target, Blue-Winged Warbler, here as well. Alas, this year they were not present. All told, our group ended up with a total of 51 species on a very pleasant morning.

July 25, 2026 — Butterfly Walk at Indian Springs Metropark

Leaders: Doris Applebaum and Jeff Stacey

On a day with excellent weather for looking at butterflies, 9 people met at [Indian Springs Metropark](#). A couple of participants were teenagers who, unfortunately, decided that looking at butterflies wasn't all that exciting, and they left the group halfway through the walk. Perhaps not surprising, because they didn't have binoculars. Some of the other participants also lacked binoculars but did have a camera, and they enjoyed photographing some very cooperative butterflies.

Our walk started off with a Spicebush Swallowtail, which gave everyone a terrific look, allowing them to know how this species differs from the similar-looking Black Swallowtail when one of those showed up later. Several Eastern



Above: Clearwing Hummingbird Moth; Below: Great Spangled Fritillary (Jeff Stacey)



Above: Female Eastern Tailed-Blue; Below: Viceroy (Jeff Stacey)

Tiger Swallowtails were also seen during the walk.

The most numerous species of the day was the handsome Red-Spotted Purple, with eight individuals spotted. During the course of the walk, we were able to see how the little Eastern Tailed-Blue differs from the also small and blue Summer Azure. We also saw how white female sulphurs differ from the Cabbage White. Our two local sulphurs—the Clouded and the Orange—are yellow, but each species has some females that are white. Even experts have difficulty determining whether a white female is a Clouded Sulphur or an Orange Sulphur.

Throughout the walk we were hoping a Viceroy would come by so we could see how it looks just slightly different from the better-known Monarch. Finally, near the end of the walk, a couple of Viceroys were seen, providing an excellent end to our day.

Most of the participants were new to butterflying, so it was nice that, in addition to seeing the butterflies, they were able to learn how to ID some lookalikes. A total of 16 species were seen (plus one “form”—the white female sulphur), which was a very good result on a lovely summer day.

August 7–9, 2026 — Upper Peninsula (UP) Summer Weekend

Leader: Don Burlett



Summer trips to the UP are different in that the species density in the UP is slightly lower than in southern Michigan, and the hotspots are more widely separated, which means a fair amount of driving is needed to see more birds. Also, the birding is more like collecting stones at the beach—you look at a lot of areas and enjoy the rarer finds.

The trip started at 8 AM on Friday, meeting at Birch Run. We drove to the bridge and had lunch before heading to [Munuscong Potholes](#) to look for birds. Here, we enjoyed very close looks at a couple of Sedge Wrens before we were surprised by a pair of American Bitterns that had wandered to the edge of the road in the open. We got to watch them at a distance before they headed back into the high grass. A few cranes, vultures and a Bald Eagle rounded out the birds at this location.



Above: The happy birders; Below: Juvenile Saw-Whet Owl (Don Burlett)

We then headed to the Tahquamenon River mouth to continue our day. A few warblers greeted us, and we began to understand things would be a bit more complicated because we were beginning to see juvenile birds, making some IDs more challenging. After that stop, we visited both Upper and Lower Tahquamenon Falls before we headed to our hotel and dinner.

The day wasn't over, as we had arranged to visit the [Whitefish Point Bird Observatory](#) at 10:30 PM to watch the owl banding. With a storm approaching, we were fortunate that a juvenile Saw-Whet Owl was captured before the rain hit. It's odd that this bird observatory is one of the only ones in the US-Canada area that gets the numbers of these birds. It was delightful to watch the process and the interaction of the owl with the folks there. The owl even sat on a young man's hands for almost 3 minutes before he decided it was okay to leave. We then headed back to the hotel, arriving at 12:30 AM.

Up early the next morning, we headed up to Grand Marais, hoping to hit the beach and find some shorebirds. Shortly before we reached the shore, we stumbled upon a group of Red Crossbills on the wires and road. It's always fun to find them, especially in the summer. At the shore, there were only gulls, as no shorebirds wanted to be seen here. We added some ducks and an Osprey while there. We then drove to Grand Sable Lake, where we added some more warblers. We wound our way through the Northwoods to Munising and visited a nice spot called Cox Pond. It had nice boardwalks but was summer-quiet.

After lunch, we drove to Marquette to visit a couple of nice parks. The first stop was [Chocoday Bayou](#), a UP land conservancy park, which was very nice and full of interesting birds. Then we drove to Presque Isle and walked the [Bog Walk](#). This habitat was fun, and we added a few birds to the list here. Dinner at El Santo topped off the day; then we drove back to our hotels in Newberry.



Above: Female Red Crossbill; Below: Female American Redstart (Malissa Bossardet)



Left: Merlin; Right: Loons (Malissa Bossardet)

On Sunday morning, it was up and out early to visit [Seney National Wildlife Refuge](#). On the drive there, we spotted a falcon on a power line. Upon further examination, it was not only one, but *three*, Merlins. It was great to watch them interact as they flew around that spot.

We got to Seney and began adding species right away. The drive was fun, with multiple stops for swans and loons. We saw about 13

loons on this trip—more than I had encountered previously—and got to watch a group of five loons swimming together and interacting. We ended this section by spotting our third American Bittern.

At this point, we headed home and found summer traffic matched the overcrowded status of the UP. Because gas prices are up, many more than usual appeared to be headed north. The northbound traffic on the Mackinac Bridge was backed up halfway across the bridge, and we took over a half hour to get on the bridge southbound from Rt. 2: terrible, but just a hint of what I-75 was like going home.

Overall, it was a fun trip and enjoyed by all. We observed a total of 72 species.

Highlights from [Decade of Discovery: Ten Years of Audubon's Climate Watch](#), published by National Audubon Society (NAS)

Climate Watch is NAS's innovative community science program tracking birds' responses to climate change. Since January 2016, a nationwide network spanning all lower 48 states and Alaska has been mobilizing volunteers to monitor specific bird species precisely where climate models predict changes.

Climate Watch's scientific impact was validated in a 2020 peer-reviewed study confirming that bluebirds and nuthatches are indeed moving into areas that climate models predict are climatically suitable during breeding and non-breeding seasons. This research demonstrates how community science can document climate impacts while validating predictive models. With a decade of data now available, Climate Watch is poised to inform conservation planning, habitat prioritization, and policy advocacy where birds need protection most.



Pygmy Nuthatch (Evan Barrientos for National Audubon Society)

A burgeoning insight: Ongoing analysis is revealing two stories of adaptation among bluebirds: Western Bluebirds are flexible climate followers, inhabiting areas wherever climate conditions suit them in both summer and winter. Eastern Bluebirds, however, show a seasonal twist—while they readily breed in suitable climates, they are hesitant to expand into newly warming winter regions, where habitat and resources may not yet catch up to the changing climate. Together, they highlight how species' responses to a warming world depend not just on temperature, but on history and habitat.

NAS has been identifying data gaps across the continental U.S. to plan for and strategically implement changes to the Climate Watch program. They summarized the number of Climate Watch Squares each target species was surveyed for within Bird Conservation Regions and identified the intersecting states that need more sampling. Three target species were found to have critical observation gaps: the Mountain Bluebird, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Painted Bunting.

To get involved and help fill the gaps, see the Help Wanted listing for Climate Watch Square Apprentices on Page 15.

Young Birders Club

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

June 5 & 6, 2026 — Kirtland's Warbler Tour at Huron-Manistee National Forest

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty



Kirtland's Warbler
(OBA gallery)

The Oakland Owlets, families, and friends ventured to Roscommon for the Kirtland's Warbler Festival, where they hoped to see the rarest songbird in North America. The annual festival is organized by local groups, including the [Kirtland's Warbler Alliance](#), and kicked off on Friday with bird banding and a welcome gathering at the [Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve](#). The event featured author [Scott Harris](#), who shared his quest to chase 53 raptor species across the lower 48 states.

Most of us arrived Saturday morning and met U.S. Forest Service biologist Dana Meder along a sandy road in the [Huron Manistee National Forest](#). The U.S. Forest Service is one of the agencies that manages KW habitat in Michigan.

As we waited for everyone to arrive, we were surrounded by the song of the KW. The group drove a short distance into the managed jack pine forest and immediately were treated to a male KW perched on a dead tree branch, where he began to sing.

Our guide, Dana, shared her vast knowledge of the KW and the management of this critical habitat. Despite the many tour groups coming and going, we enjoyed plenty of quiet time in this special environment. It was an amazing experience to hear the song of the KW and watch the males perching nearby on branches, declaring their territories.

KWs prefer to breed in young jack pine forest and use the protective cover of the lower branches for their nests. Due to fire suppression over the years, the jack pine forest had aged. By 1986, KWs were in serious decline, with the breeding birds census finding only 200 breeding pairs. This decline was reversed through the conservation work of many agencies and the protection of the Endangered Species Act. Today, KWs are no longer endangered; however, they are a conservation-reliant species that depends on land management to provide appropriate breeding habitat.



Above: U.S. Forest Service biologist Dana Meder points out KW habitat; *Below:* Close-up view of young jack pine (Kathleen Dougherty)



In KW country (Kathleen Dougherty)

Surrounding us were jack pines under 15 feet tall. Dana pointed out their unique botanical qualities, showing us their developing seed cones. The cones do not open without intense heat, which makes this conifer dependent on fire for its continued survival. We also learned how this habitat is critical to KW's survival. Both the jack pine and the KW are unique in their needs and management requirements.

We spent much of the morning along a short stretch of the road, where we encountered the Field Sparrow, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-Rumped Warbler, Brown Thrasher, and Hermit Thrush. After our tour, a few folks traveled to Roscommon for the KW festival and a look at the world's largest sculpture of a KW in town.

June 14, 2026 — Red, White, and Bluebird Walk at Bear Creek Nature Park

Leader: Kathleen Dougherty

Our group gathered on Flag Day to search for birds with the colors of the American flag in their plumage. Rainy weather threatened but held off until the end of the hike. Despite the overcast skies, it turned out to be a good morning to see birds.

Everyone was anxious to get started and, on the trail, the chorus of birds singing was overwhelming. It was nesting season, and male birds were declaring their territories. One of the loudest singers initially heard was the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak. We were able to observe the brightly colored male perching despite all the foliage on the trees. This was our bird of the day, and we saw several along the trail. In this area, we were also able to see and hear several other birds, including the Eastern Warbling Vireo, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Downy Woodpecker, and Red-Bellied Woodpecker.



The group before setting off (Mary Zednik)

From the forested area, the trail opened to fields with several mature trees lining the pathway. This open habitat is where the nest boxes are located. Bear Creek has a bluebird trail with twelve nest boxes monitored by stewardship volunteers. Nest boxes offer homes for cavity-nesting birds like Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. Eastern Bluebirds are champion nesters, starting in April and continuing into August—and sometimes raising up to three broods of chicks. We spotted several bluebirds foraging on the insects that were attracted by the variety of plants in the field.

The trail eventually led to a pond with a dock where everyone gathered to look and listen. Green Frogs and Bullfrogs were calling, and we began to see and hear Common Yellowthroat and Northern Yellow Warbler. An Eastern Kingbird was hunting for dragonflies along the edge of the pond. A lone Mallard was spotted as well. Our arrival caused a Green Heron to take off, but there was still a lot to see. Benches on the dock allowed the group to stop, rest, and enjoy the space.



We continued around the pond, where we had a good look at the Common Yellowthroat. The masked male was constantly singing overhead at the edge of the pond. On the way back to the parking lot, we saw Turkey Vultures soaring effortlessly overhead on columns of rising air. A few drops of rain began to fall, but most of it held off until we returned to the parking area.

It was a good morning for birding. We saw and/or heard 35 species as we casually walked about a mile. Bear Creek is one place where you can see both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles. The Orchard Oriole is a great bird to see and not as common as its cousin, the Baltimore Oriole, and Bear Creek is a wonderful park to spend time outdoors birding.



Above left: Rose-Breasted Grosbeak (Aiden Shen); *Below left:* Eastern Bluebird; *Center:* Common Yellowthroat; *Right:* Birding on the dock (Mary Zednik)

July 12, 2026 — Hiking at Innovation Hills

Leader: Melanie Mitchell



The Oakland Owlets, their friends, and families gathered at [Innovation Hills Park](#) in Rochester Hills on a pleasant July morning for a bird walk. Owlet mom and avid birder Melanie Mitchell guided us along the trails, which are a favorite local birding spot for Melanie and her family.

Owned and managed by the City of Rochester Hills, this 110-acre park is bordered by the main branch of the Clinton River to the north. The park protects both sides of the Clinton, with 48 acres north of the river designated as Green Space. Formerly known as River Bend Park, it was renamed in 2017.



Above: The group gathers post-hike (Melanie Mitchell); *Below:* Juvenile Green Heron (OBA gallery)

Since its renaming, Innovation Hills has been designed and redeveloped to be a regional park unlike any other in southeast Michigan. The park has universal design elements on its trails that make them accessible to all visitors. [Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc.](#), a local architectural and engineering firm, incorporated plenty of green space protections and sustainability features for a design that serves the entire community with multigenerational recreation activities. Birds also benefit from these green spaces and sustainability elements.

Birding in July can be challenging, but the Owlets were able to spot 34 species in their mile-long walk under Melanie's expert guidance. Some of the notable species seen during the hike included Cedar Waxwing, Green Heron, Great Crested Flycatcher and Chimney Swift.

It was a good morning to be outdoors and a great local place to see birds. A special thank you to Melanie for leading this hike and sharing this special park with the OBA Owlets.



Michigan Young Birders Camp

by Kathleen Dougherty

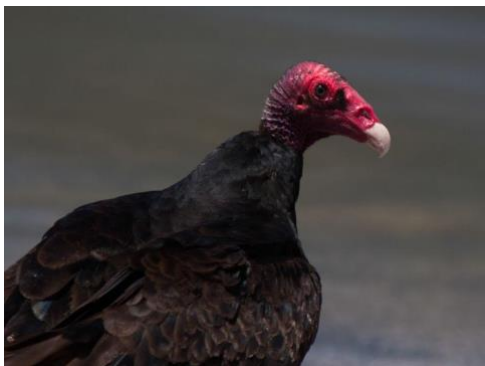
One of our Oakland Owlets successfully applied to the Michigan Audubon Young Birders Camp this year. Twelve campers are selected from the applications submitted. Sponsored by Michigan

Audubon and led by Lindsay Cain, Education Manager, the camp is now in its ninth year.

This year's camp was held at Alma College from June 21–26. Campers, counselors, and staff traveled throughout the state to learn about Michigan birds—and saw 128 different species during the week of camp. Young birders explored important bird habitats, delved into bird conservation issues, sharpened their bird identification skills, interacted with experts and guest speakers, and forged friendships with like-minded youth.



Oakland Owlet Olive Ballard discusses her spark bird at Michigan Audubon's Young Birders Camp (Kathleen Dougherty)



The Turkey Vulture, Olive's spark bird (Christopher Wood for National Audubon Society)

learn more about the vulture's life cycle and natural history. They perform important ecosystem services, such as preventing the spread of diseases by acting as nature's cleanup crew. A few of Olive's talking points included the Turkey Vulture's unusual method of self-defense: namely, vomiting. Their stomach acids are extremely strong and dissolve bone, which makes for an effective deterrent.

OBA provided a partial scholarship to Olive, who represented the Oakland Owlets well at camp. Olive will be sharing more about her camp experience at an upcoming OBA membership meeting. OBA wishes Olive all the best as she begins her studies in college.

Oakland Owlet birder Olive Ballard, who is passionate about birds and nature, attended the camp this year. Olive graduated from high school this spring and will be attending college this fall, where she plans to study biology. I was privileged to attend the final day of camp to hear Olive's presentation about how she became interested in birds. Olive shared the story of her spark bird, or bird that ignited her interest in nature and drew her to a lifelong quest to learn more about birds and the outdoors.

Olive's spark bird was the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), a bird that often suffers from negative associations. However, Olive views Turkey Vultures as birds of purpose with unique characteristics and adaptations.

This summer, she wanted to



Olive with her mom, camp counselors, and instructors (Kathleen Dougherty)

BIRD QUIZ—FALL 2026

from Don Burlett

Here's a group of cuties to figure out—not too tough, but worth noting. Enjoy!



A. _____ . B. _____ . C. _____ .

Answers are on Page 18. No peeking!

Young Birders Club

Field Trip Details – September to December

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



Barn Swallow (Macaulay)

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. Register with kad8186@msn.com.

World Migratory Bird Day Hike — Hawk Migration — October 10 (Saturday), 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM **Lake Erie Metropark, Brownstown Township**

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day at Lake Erie Metropark, one of the best places in the area to see hawk migration. Plan to meet in the morning to hike and then gather at the Detroit River Hawk Watch to check the action in the sky. Experts will be on site to help the public learn about hawks and their migration. Erika Van Kirk, Park Ranger at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will join the group and share educational resources. A park entry fee is applicable. Register with tori.guido@gmail.com.



Sharp-Shinned Hawk (Mark Hainen)

Sandhill Cranes — November 7 (Saturday), 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM **Haehnle Sanctuary, Jackson County**



Sandhill Cranes (OBA gallery)

Explore the Haehnle Sanctuary, Michigan Audubon's largest bird sanctuary. Covering over 1,000 acres, the Haehnle Sanctuary's wetlands and other habitats offer one of the best places to view large numbers of Sandhill Cranes as well as over 200 other species of birds. This is a joint Young Birders Meet-Up with [Michigan Audubon Young Birders Network](http://MichiganAudubon.org) and offers a chance for young birders to flock together. Lindsay Cain from Michigan Audubon and members of Jackson Audubon will lead a hike before sunset, where we'll watch the cranes stream into the marsh before nightfall. Visit for. Register with kad8186@msn.com.

Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Owl Prowl — December 19 (Saturday), 6:30 AM – 8:00 AM **Camp Agawam, Orion Charter Township**

CBC Winter Birds Hike — December 19 (Saturday), 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM **Orion Oaks County Park**

Oakland Owlets, families, and friends are invited to join OBA's CBC featuring two Owlet events. Jarred McPherson, Orion Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Specialist, is hosting a special early morning hike at Camp Agawam to search for owls. Plan to walk a short distance in the dark and bring your listening skills.

After the Owl Prowl, Benjamin Prowse, Oakland County Parks Naturalist, will host a hike at nearby Orion Oaks County Park. Participants' sightings will be part of the official CBC record, and all are invited to OBA's tally rally at the end of the day. The CBC, now in its 127th year, provides valuable data about bird populations and is sponsored by the National Audubon Society. Register with kad8186@msn.com.



Female Great Horned Owl (OBA gallery)

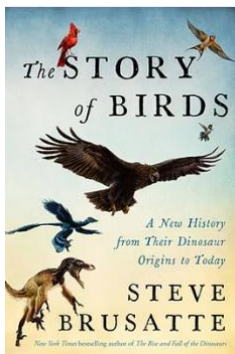
Bird Briefs (Items to look at online)

Crashing insect populations have resulted in smaller tree swallows that reproduce less, published by [Michigan News](#)
from Don Burlett

A report was issued detailing University of Michigan researchers' work alongside Long Point Bird Observatory personnel to document the decrease in size and reduced breeding proficiency for Tree Swallows over a long period of time. The reasons for these changes are related to both climate change and other environmental effects that reduce biodiversity. Climate change exacerbates the dissonance of bird breeding with insect emergence while the introduction of insecticides has reduced the insect population by as much as 60%. The birds have adapted or have suffered by being smaller and being less successful in breeding. The full article was published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2607714123).

Surviving the Asteroid, excerpted from [Natural History](#), May 2026

from Doris Applebaum



(Mariner Books)

There were several species of birds on Earth when an asteroid arrived 66 million years ago. Some of the ancient birds obviously survived, since we enjoy seeing their descendants today. An excerpt from Steve Brusatte's [most recent book](#) explains which kinds of birds survived, and why.

Some attributes helped species survive; others doomed them. For one thing, if you lived in the water, like crocodilians and turtles, your chances were pretty good. If you lived in the trees, however, depending on them for food or shelter or a place to raise young, your chances were zero. The asteroid obliterated every forest on Earth.

Another problem: if you were big, like *T. rex* and the other non-avian dinosaurs, you needed lots of food every day. Too bad, because your food was gone. If it took several years for your offspring to be able to breed, that was another strike against you. As the effects of the asteroid lingered, with its heat and fires and acid rain, there simply was not enough time to grow up.

Any animal bigger than a medium-sized dog was wiped out. For a species to survive, it had to be small, reproduce quickly, and be able to find enough food.

All birds that lived in the trees ended up extinct, so it was some of the birds that were ground dwellers that gave rise to the birds that delight us today. They were small, became adults in a short period of time, reproduced fast, and had a nutcracker beak. Having such a beak instead of teeth helped them take advantage of one of the few kinds of food available: seeds, which birds with teeth (like the tree-dwellers) were unable to crack open. And though the survivors spent much time on the ground, they were also strong fliers that could live in a variety of environments north and south.

As the years went by, the worst effects of the asteroid faded, and habitats like trees returned. The birds took full advantage of the opportunity to evolve into many new species to fill empty niches.

The main group of animals that the surviving birds had to compete with were our ancestors, the mammals. Those that survived were the size of a mouse, grew fast, could burrow to get away from the worst effects of the asteroid, and, most importantly, didn't need large amounts of food and were able to eat a variety of what was available. In that way, you could say they were generalists.

The surviving birds were the opposite. They were specialists, but their specialties—beaks instead of teeth, wings that allowed them to fly, and very fast growth and reproductive rates—were just what they needed.

People typically think of the mammals as winning the survival war, supplanting the dinosaurs with charismatic species like elephants, whales, and primates. The author provides a different way of thinking, pointing out that there are about 6,500 species of mammals today. The birds—the avian dinosaurs—have more than 11,000 species. So forget that talk about mammals supplanting the dinosaurs. They're still here!

Oakland Bird Alliance Around Town: Summer 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.

June 13: Art, Fish, and Fun Festival *by Don Burlett*



Ally Maye-Bloom at the OBA table (Don Burlett)

This interactive water festival was sponsored by WRC, Pure Oakland Water (POW), The Art Experience, Clinton River Watershed Council, The City of Pontiac, and many other organizations. Held at Beaudette Park in Pontiac, the event featured environmental education, arts and crafts, games, and other activities. Oakland Bird Alliance had a table at the event to introduce the Pontiac community to our organization. On this blustery Saturday, Don Burlett and Ally Maye-Bloom offered introductory materials, a schedule of upcoming events, and invited children to make up their own “binoculars.”

July – August: Pontiac Center for Success *by Don Burlett*

As part of our initial efforts to connect with the Pontiac community to share nature and conservation resources, OBA has arranged to provide classroom educational material to the [Center for Success](#), a local program for children in the K-4 age group. During this five-week summer program, OBA hosted three afternoon enrichment sessions.

In the first session on July 22, Don Burlett introduced a group of engaged and curious children to what birds are, where they are, and how to watch them, using pictures and videos as visuals. This session also included an introduction to binoculars and how to use them.

The second session on July 29 featured a field trip to [Beaudette Park](#) to try birdwatching and enjoy a storytelling session led by Cass Arsenault from [Johnson Nature Center](#). After arrival by Oakland County Parks bus, the



Left: At the bird drawing board; Right: A young artist proudly shares his finished work (Don Burlett)

students were outfitted with youth binoculars and distributed amongst seven OBA members. (These binoculars were purchased using funds from the National Audubon Society).

The small groups traveled around the park to find birds and watch them with binoculars. The children were enthusiastic and had a great time seeing sparrows, ducks, geese, and a surprising number of other species. Afterwards, the group gathered around Cass Arsenault, who told the story, “How Hummingbird Made the Stars,” using hand puppets.

Overall, it was an excellent outing, and students, leaders, and OBA members alike had a great time. (Special thanks to OBA members Cass

Arsenault, Blanche Wicke, Kathy McDonald-Fotouhi, Laurie Schubert, Tom Barnes and Dan Gertiser, who helped me with this program.)

The final session of this cooperative effort took place on August 5 in the classroom, where OBA shared the connection between birds and nature, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between birds and their surroundings. Afterward, the group was challenged to draw some birds and color pictures of birds. The results were fun, and the students were busy as beavers during this project. Our three-week experience had proven enjoyable for all involved.

Center for Success Literacy Program Manager Shanelle Mitchell shared, “Our students had an amazing time and, for many of them, it was their first opportunity to go birdwatching. It was exciting to see their curiosity grow as they learned about local birds and explored nature in a new way.”

We hope to return next year for another program, this time with greater emphasis on outdoor birdwatching.

Summer Pollinator Surveys *by Kathleen Dougherty*

The Oakland Bird Alliance supports local businesses interested in retaining or applying for wildlife habitat certification through the [Tandem Global Wildlife Habitat Council \(WHC\) Certification program](#). Certification is an ongoing process through which activities are offered to benefit



biodiversity and people. WHC certification programs can be found in 47 U.S. states and 19 countries.



Kathleen Dougherty and Doris Applebaum with WM staff member Joe (WM staff)

OBA volunteers Doris Applebaum and I conducted pollinator surveys at two landfills in southeast Michigan owned by waste management and recycling services company [WM](#), which maintains wildlife habitat at each of its facilities. The WHC program recognizes WM’s work to restore ecosystems on their properties. Surveys provide evidence of pollinators on the site. As volunteers, Doris and I spend two afternoons per year compiling a list of pollinators and bird checklists seen at each site. Raptors are frequently seen at each site. It is always a thrill to see the American Kestrels using the properties for hunting—and mostly likely nesting. A special thank you to the staff at WM for supporting wildlife and helping OBA navigate their properties.

Help Wanted: 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

Not “Just” a Wetland

Many birders know intuitively that they will find good birding near water. Especially during migration season, we flock to Tawas Point or Magee Marsh. But many people don't know why wetlands are so important for birds. Let's take a look at the importance of wetlands for birds and the greater ecosystem.

Michigan was once home to 10.7 million acres of wetlands pre-European settlement but, since 1978, that's dropped to 6.47 million acres. In 1979, Michigan passed the Wetland Protection Act, which dramatically slowed the rate of wetland decline.

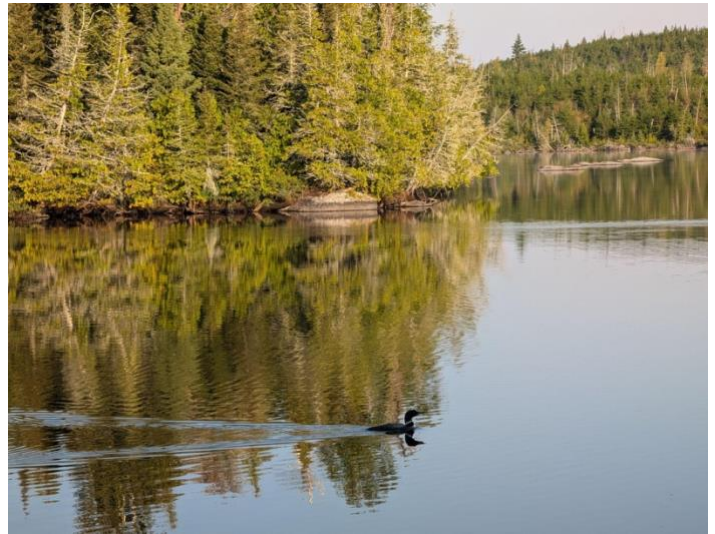
Another unique part of wetland protections in Michigan is that we are one of two states in the country that have a special regulatory jurisdiction to manage our own Section 404 Program under the Clean Water Act of 1972. This means that Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy Department (EGLE) controls the permits for any work in a regulated wetland. Under state law, a wetland is defined as land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh. To simplify, that means any wet area that supports wildlife.

Wetlands are essential for many birds' survival. More than one-third of North American bird species rely on wetlands for services such as food, water, and habitat. In addition, 80% of threatened or endangered birds need wetlands for their survival.

Wetlands are more than just habitat for waterfowl; other birds such as shorebirds, songbirds, and raptors also use wetland habitat throughout the year. During migration seasons in the spring and fall, many birds use wetlands as stopover ground to refuel and rest, hence why wetlands are so fruitful for viewing birds during migration season.

Not only are wetlands important for birds, but they provide other ecosystem services, or benefits people receive from nature. Wetlands are excellent water purifiers and can filter sediments and absorb many pollutants before they reach surface waters such as lakes and rivers.

Wetlands also help with flood mitigation by acting like giant sponges that can store excess water. This function is especially important today given the more frequent large rain events due to climate change. When rain hits an urban area, stormwater will quickly run to the river and can cause flash floods. Wetlands slow that water down and can help protect people and their property. Wetlands also provide essential habitat for fish, amphibians,



Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Minnesota (Zach Schwab)

mammals, reptiles, and insects, making them popular recreation destinations due to their abundance of wildlife.

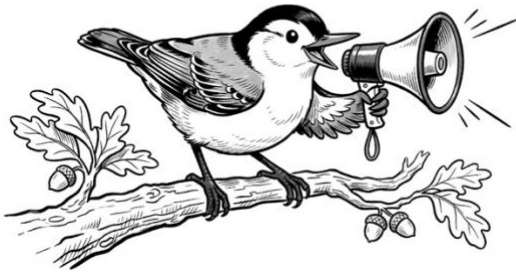
Despite stricter regulations being passed in the last 50 years in the U.S., our wetlands are still in peril. Human activities such as diking, dredging, and diverting flow still threaten wetlands today. In addition, invasive species have hit wetlands hard and are decreasing biodiversity. There are several species threatening wetlands in Michigan today, such as Phragmites, European Frog-Bit, and Narrowleaf Cattail, which hybridizes with the native variety to create monocultures. Agriculture is another threat to wetlands, given its non-point-source pollution of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus and diversion of water. Lastly, climate change continues to threaten habitats across the globe.

Fortunately, there are many ways to help conserve wetlands in Michigan. The FY27 budget earmarked \$2 million for the Michigan DNR to acquire and conserve wetlands throughout the state. By continuing to lobby for habitat protection at the state and local level, we can have a direct impact in wetland conservation for future generations. There are also several organizations in the county you can volunteer for, such as [Clinton River Watershed Council](#) and [Six Rivers Land Conservancy](#), that are working hard to protect land and improve natural resources for future generations. [Ducks Unlimited](#) also does outstanding work in helping conserve wetlands. I hope you learned a little more about wetlands today and have a greater appreciation for all that they do for the ecosystem!

For more information, visit:

- [National Audubon Rivers, Lakes, and Wetlands](#)
- [EGLE Wetlands](#)

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGES



Welcome, New Members!

Ava Armour, Emma Caprara, Olivia Dixon, Michelle Foster,
Suzanne Greeley, Anne Kuzma, Delia Niezguski,
Christine Patterson

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 19)

Mail renewal forms to:

Oakland Bird Alliance
c/o Robert Moll
PO Box 796
Birmingham, MI 48012-0796

127TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
DECEMBER 19, 2026
12 AM to 4 PM
PONTIAC CBC CIRCLE

WE'LL GATHER AT THE WINT NATURE CENTER AT INDEPENDENCE OAKS
COUNTY PARK FOR AN IN-PERSON SPECIES TALLY AT 4:30 PM ←
»→ Please arrive no later than 5:00 PM

Ⓢ CONTACT SCOTT JENNEK AND KAYLA NINER FOR DETAILS. | ✉ fieldtrips@oaklandbirdalliance.org

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

June 18, 2026

President: George led the first session of Intro to Birding for the City of Auburn Hills. OBA is looking to offer more local bird walks tailored to new birders. Don volunteered to contact local communities to schedule beginner bird walks. Efforts to offer bird walks in the southeast corner of the county were discussed.

Field Trip Officer: Discussed upcoming field trips, sharing Nuthatch Open on the OBA website and social media, and the option to advertise in local newspapers.

Programs: Programs have been secured through 2027, with the exception of the June meeting.

Conservation and Environment: Discussed inviting Oakland Township to become more active in OBA.

Seven Ponds: The exterior of the Nature Center has been painted; the pavilion has a new concrete floor; the fence around the herb garden has been replaced. A summer naturalist from MTU is in residence, and summer camps are running. A new field tour to New Mexico is listed on the website.

Young Birders Club: Kathleen discussed upcoming field trips and fall field trip co-hosted with the MI Department of Natural Resources. Update on partial scholarship for MI Audubon camp attendee, who is headed to Kalamazoo College, and will arrange either to present her experience live or write an article. The Board approved funding for certificates and books for Young Birders attending three or more field trips.

Newsletter Editor: Due date for Fall issue submissions is 8/10.

Social Media Administrator: Nuthatch Open will be placed on Discord. Dan noted that OBA gains new Facebook followers after viewers click on its pictures.

Old Business

Pontiac Youth Outreach: Don is leading youth birding classes and trips with Center for Success and MSU Extension through August 3.

Binocular Purchase: Board approved Don using up to \$1,500 of a \$2,500 outreach grant to buy 20 pairs of Vortex binoculars.

County Lights Out Initiative: Oakland County promoted Lights Out in its newsletter, turned off high-rise lights, and plans to use GIS to target tall buildings during peak migration.

Bird City Update: County Parks are renewing Bird City status, placing signs, and seeking OBA assistance for World Migratory Bird Day walks on October 10.

Survey Funding: Waste Management and Chrysler are providing funds for spring/fall bird and butterfly surveys.

Climate Watch: Team completed 2026 surveys by June 15; George will make volunteer certificates, and Don is recruiting and mentoring new members.

Fundraiser Donation: Donated a private bird walk, tote bag, and gift membership to Blue Heron Headwaters Conservancy.

Birds & Brews Collaboration: Great Lakes Audubon invited OBA to co-host a Fall 2026 event, with plans to potentially involve other local chapters to boost attendance.

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

BIRD QUIZ ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS

- a) **Field Sparrow (juvenile):** Adults have a pink, conical bill, a white eye-ring and rusty crown and eye-line. Juveniles lack the bright rusty crown and eye-line but the eye-ring and bill remain; also have streaking on chest and sides.
- b) **Chipping Sparrow (juvenile):** Adults have a bright rusty crown, black eye-line and un-streaked grayish belly. Juveniles have streaked underparts and a streaked brown crown.
- c) **Song Sparrow (juvenile):** Adults have a round head and long rounded tail; coarse streaks converge on breast into a central spot; have russet stripes on crown and through eye; broad malar or moustache stripe. Juveniles are generally drabber and buffier than adults; less distinct stripes on head.

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



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Make checks payable to:

OAKLAND BIRD ALLIANCE

C/O ROBERT MOLL

PO BOX 796

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.