

Bird Notes

Upcoming Events

- ◆ **December 14** - Regular Meeting 7:30 p.m. Great Lakes Campus of NMC, Room 211
- ◆ **December 16** - Christmas Bird Count - Traverse City. 946-5120
- ◆ **December 23** - Leelanau Bird Count
December 30 - Antrim Bird Count 938-5976
- ◆ **January 13** - Field Trip - Birding and ski/snowshoe, meet 9 a.m. YMCA
- ◆ **January 25** - Meeting 7:30 p.m. Great Lakes Campus, Rm.211
- ◆ **February 17** - Sault Ste. Marie Trip 264-9345
- ◆ **February 22** - Meeting 7:30 p.m. Great Lakes Campus, Rm.211

Christmas Bird Count

by Leonard Graf

Birds within a 7 ½ mile radius of the intersection of Four Mile and Hammond Roads will be counted on Saturday, December 16, in the annual Christmas Bird Count. All who are interested in birds are invited to come. Participants will meet at 7:45 a.m. at the west parking lot of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church which is on Garfield, just north of Front Street. Dress warmly. We will divide into small groups. Each group will be assigned a section of the count circle to cover. New birders are encouraged to come. Those birders who have not been on counts before will be paired with experienced counters.

At noon we will meet back at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, eat our sack lunch and discuss the morning bird sightings. After lunch we will again take to the field to complete the count.

All participants are invited to a bird-count tally get-together at Mables Restaurant, 472 Munson Ave. at 5:00 p.m. You are welcome to join us even

though you did not participate in the count. After eating we will compile the species and numbers of birds seen by each group.

If you are unable to go into the field, but live within the count area and have bird feeders, you can count the birds at your feeders that day. You can record your count by either e-mail at bluethroat@coslink.net or by mailing it to Leonard Graf at 7429 Fouch, Traverse City, Mi 49684.

If you wish to participate or would like further information, call Leonard Graf at 946-5120.

NOTE: There is a \$5.00 fee for all field participants, which goes toward the publishing of all Christmas Bird Counts.

For those of you who would be interested in other Christmas Bird Counts, here are other area CBCs: LEELANAU COUNTY CBC will be on December 23. ANTRIM COUNTY CBC will be on December 30th. Contact Bob Carstens at 231-938-5976 for both counts.

Sault Ste. Marie Trip

by Jerry Kolak

Leonard Graf has asked me if I would guide the Sault trip this year. He will be on a long birding trip south of the Border.

On Saturday, February 17th, we will depart for the day to find some great birds around the Sault Ste. Marie area. We will leave the parking lot at the Super 8 Motel at 7:30 a.m. The Plaza Motor Motel is across the road. Their phone number is 906-635-

1881. If you are interested in staying at the Super 8, e-mail me at: dovekie@torchlake.com or call me at 231-264-9345 for information and approximate rates. They do offer a continental breakfast starting at 6 a.m. The Super 8 phone number is 906-632-8882.

If you are planning on this trip please let me know.

From the President's Pen

by Cindee DuBey



"Our Christmas Photo Fest is always great fun."

It's December already. Along with all of your holiday shopping and decorating, don't forget to come and party with us on December 14, Room 211 in the Maritime building. Our Christmas Photo fest is always great fun. Bring a few pictures from the past year and some Christmas goodies and come have a great time.

Then on to the Christmas Bird Counts. If you have never done a CBC, you owe it to yourself to come out and give it a try. You will be partnered with someone that has done it before so don't worry about not knowing what to do. Just dress warm, bring your binoculars and a pencil and be prepared for a great day of birding and fun. For those of us that have done this before, we just keep coming back and doing more counts. It's great for the birds and really does put you in the holiday spirit of things.

Don't forget to put the Sault Ste. Marie field trip on your calendar this year too. This is always a great trip and we usually find some great birds too. We will miss Leonard and Barb this year but Jerry and Robbie have been their understudies for several years now so the birding will be just as great, as well as the company.

Speaking of Leonard, we will truly miss him at board meetings next year but do wish him a wonderful adventure as he heads for Central America and will look forward to hearing about all of those great birds. Thanks for all of your hard work as treasurer these past several years, Leonard.

Thanks to the rest of the board as well. We've had a great year and accomplished a lot. I appreciate all that each of you does for the club and I am looking forward to working with each of you again next year.

Upcoming Programs

by Nate Crane, V.P. Program

Our December meeting will be the annual Christmas Party. During the meeting will be a special program called "Photo Fest". We will be treated to photos of birds and other interesting wildlife members of our club have taken. The meeting will be held at NMC's Great Lakes Center, Front and Barlow Streets, Room 211, at 7:30 P.M.

The January meeting will feature Cindee and Larry DuBey's trip to the Great Salt Lake. This nationally renowned birding location is a major

stop over for water birds migrating through the Pacific Flyway. It also hosts some of the largest concentrations of wintering shorebirds in North America. The meeting will be held at NMC's Great Lakes Center at 7:30 p.m.

The February meeting will have a presentation by NMC biology professor Greg Lacross. He will focus on the unique ecosystems of Northwest Lower Michigan and descriptions of the plants and animals found in each one. The meeting will be held at NMC's Great Lakes Center at 7:30 p.m.

Annual Dinner Donations

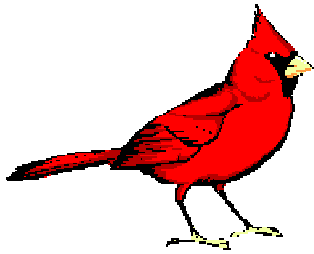
by Stephany Podolan

We would like to thank those businesses who donated items for our prize drawing at the October annual dinner. Square Deal Country Store donated an electric bird bath. Wild

Birds Unlimited Nature Shop donated three \$25 gift certificates. Also thanks to Wildflowers of Glen Arbor for donating a ceramic bird feeder and some spring flowering bulbs.



Clark's Nutcracker by
Larry DuBey
"One of our favorite birds on the Great Salt Lake trip"



Northern Cardinal
-A favorite at
backyard bird
feeders.

Great Backyard Bird Count

by Cindee DuBey

“The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all levels in counting birds and reporting their results to create a mid-winter snapshot of the numbers, kinds, and distribution of birds across the continent.” -

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

This year the count takes place February 16 through the 19, 2007. The count takes place all over North and Central America so not being at home is no excuse to not participate. This is a “Citizen Science Project” that has gathered an amazing amount of data about where birds are wintering. It is a joint project of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society.

In 2006 over 60,000 checklists were submitted. Michigan ranked number 10 with 2,071 checklists submitted. The

Traverse City Area tied for 8th place with 25 checklists submitted. I think we can do better than that this year. How about giving it a try. It’s easy and fun. Just count the birds, wherever you are and submit the list to Cornell via the birdsource.com Website. It just takes a few minutes to submit the list and we all love to sit and watch birds. What a great excuse to just sit and enjoy the birds. Better yet, take a drive or a walk and enjoy the birds around you. Let’s see if we can move Michigan up on the list of states and Traverse City up on number of lists submitted. If you have questions, check out the Website or give me a call. We can all do something fun to help the birds this winter.

There is also a photo contest for all of you photographers too, so keep those cameras ready.

A Delightful December Day

by Barb Graf



**You know
you’re a birder
when you get
up at 3 a.m. to
search for
owls!**

The National Audubon Society (NAS) began sponsoring the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in 1900. Grand Traverse Audubon Club joined in 1957. The CBC occurs annually within two weeks of December 25. What image does the Christmas Bird Count conjure up in your mind? I like to imagine thousands of people across the nation doing what they love to do; bird watchers uniting for a common purpose. Over 50,000 birdwatchers participated in the 106th Christmas Bird Count last year.

What does it mean to participate in a Christmas Bird Count? It could mean keeping your bird feeders filled with seed. It could mean staying in the warmth of hearth and home while checking your feeders regularly throughout the day. It could mean getting up at 3 a.m. to search for owls. It could mean snowshoeing or cross country skiing through a silent, snow-draped woods or walking along a wind-swept beach in search of waterfowl or shorebirds. It always means good fellowship, camaraderie and food for about 20 volunteer citizen scientists in the Grand Traverse area. It also means donning long johns and warm winter clothing, packing hot tea or coffee in a thermos,

and possibly adding snow shoes or cross country skis to their usual equipment of binoculars, telescopes and bird tapes or cds before heading out to their designated area within the count circle. A count circle is a designated area with a 15 mile diameter, which has been divided up into smaller, somewhat pie-shaped wedges by the count co-ordinator. In the 106th CBC, there were 2060 count circles, with about 50 in Michigan.

Citizen scientists go with clipboard and pencil, ready to record every bird seen within their area of the count circle. The Grand Traverse Count had a low of 28 species in 1959 and a high of 66 species in 1999. Nationally, the 106th CBC recorded 61,579,102 individual birds.

At the evening gathering, the coordinator compiles the data. All participants who pay a fee and submit their address receive a copy of American Birds, which contains the results of the survey. Results are also available on the internet (www.audubon.org/bird/cbc). The 104th CBC cost \$520,000, of which \$200,000 was covered by the fee.

In addition to being a citizen scientist, participation in a Christmas Bird Count is a fun and enjoyable way to spend a delightful December day!

My Magical Afternoon

by Gerri Erickson

I should have guessed that it was no ordinary afternoon when I casually stepped out towards the mailbox and discovered that our Bald Eagle friend had FINALLY, (after about a three month absence), come back to perch atop the pine next to us here on Long Lake. I admired the big beauty, and tried hard not to do anything to scare him. It wasn't long, however, before he raised his glorious self up, and off he flew.

With a soaring spirit, I decided to take a walk over to adjacent Ruth Lake. There, the surface was partially covered with a thin sheet of ice. I didn't see any birds, but stood slowly scanning with my binoculars, and enjoying the warmth of the sun. I realized I could hear a little "plinking" sound and located what I thought was perhaps the rear-end of a brown duck in a small hole in the ice. It quickly went down and out of view, but then popped back up through the ice a short distance closer. I watched the sight over and over and it got closer and closer. I eventually recognized that it was not a duck's butt, but a Northern River Otter! Actually, there were three Otters that were diving down and

"plinking" when they punched back up through the thin sheet of ice with their shelled edibles. As they came towards me, I could clearly focus on their distinctively whiskered brown and silver sliced faces. How absolutely, unbelievably, adorable!! I watched and smiled and watched and laughed. Twenty minutes or so, and they all disappeared...I slowly walked home feeling like the luckiest person in the world to have witnessed such amazing things so close to home.

Before going inside, I decided I'd fill the bird feeders and take one last look at Long Lake before nightfall. Overhead it flew, a mature Bald Eagle winging its way across the cove and out of sight. My good fortune was amazing, but still not quite over. With one foot on the step, I looked up and found that in the "Eagle pine", there was an oddly-plumaged huge bird staring down at me. Yes, believe it or not, it was another Eagle! This one was an immature that was mostly brown with a bit of splotchy white on the back of its neck. This is the first immature Eagle I have ever seen on our lake, so WOW, what a day it made!! These are the things my dreams are made of.



Bald Eagle by Gerri Erickson

"I admired the big beauty, and tried hard not to do anything to scare him."

Important Bird Areas in Michigan

by Cindee DuBey

Currently, the Michigan Audubon Society, National Audubon Society, and Fish and Wildlife Service are trying to establish the Important Bird Areas of Michigan. In our area, the following places are being considered:

Antrim County: Elk Rapids Harbor, Grass River Natural Area, Jordan River Valley/Pathway and Petobego State Game Area.

Leelanau County: Benzie-Leelanau Highlands, Cathead Bay, Fox Islands, Glen Arbor, Sleeping bear Dunes National Lakeshore, South Fox Island, Pyramid Point, Good Harbor Bay, Leelanau State Park, North Manitou Island, Solon Swamp, Suttons Bay.

Benzie county: Benzie-Leelanau Highlands, Betsie River State Game Area, Elberta Marsh, Grass Lake, Herring Lakes, Inspiration Point, Point Betsie, Sleeping Bear NLS.

Grand Traverse County: Boardman Lake and River, Interlochen State Park, Lake Skegemog, Petobego State Game Area, Traverse City Nature Education Preserve.

Kalkaska County: Blue Lake, Fletcher Road Sharp-tailed Grouse Area, Lake Skegemog, and Skegemog Swamp Pathway.

Data collection is the next stage in this designation process. We need to keep records of NUMBERS (or estimates) of birds of each species seen at any of these places. This data, along with the date seen then needs to be submitted to Caleb Putnam to give to the data collection committee.

If you have questions about how to submit data or other questions about this project, give me a call or email and if I don't have the information, I do know where to get it.



Board Notes

by John Mesch, Secretary

At recent board meetings, the GTAC Board accomplished the following:

- Finalized plans for the 2006 annual dinner meeting
- Decided to leave the dues structure unchanged for now
- Voted to donate \$150 to the Wings of Wonder Foundation from the Walter Hastings Fund
- Discussed local environmental issues
- Worked on scheduling programs and field trips for next year
- Scheduled next year's annual dinner meeting for October 20, 2007 at Twin Lakes Gilbert Lodge.

Environmental Action

by Bob Carstens, V.P. Environment

Issues and efforts that have environmental-conservation value or significance that our club has engaged in that have not been addressed in a Club Newsletter this year are:

Leelanau Narrows

Our club joined other environmental and concerned citizen groups protesting the erection and placement of boating facilities or docks in the Leelanau Narrows for the benefit of residents of newly erected shoreline condominiums that would diminish shoreline, habitat, and wetlands available for wildlife there. Opponents of construction and placement of boating amenities in the Narrows contend that this type of activity would also have negative impact on adjacent property acquired for preservation by the Leelanau Conservancy. We submitted a letter opposing diminishment of the Narrows to the Leelanau Twp. Planning Commission. We were represented at those meetings by Grand Traverse Audubon member and NMEAC Board Member, Bob Marshall.

Mourning Doves

Our club supported the successful effort, once again, to ensure the nongame bird, songbird status of Mourning Doves in Michigan.

Long Lake Township

With the passage of a millage to support acquisition for preservation of two large undeveloped tracts of land in Long Lake Township, the residents there have positioned themselves well to provide matching funds that will increase their chances to become recipients of DNR Trust Fund monies that will fully enable purchase of these lands. In March of 2006, in support of this, our club voted to endorse our submission to the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy a letter of support for the acquisition for preservation of the Cedar Run Creek Natural Area. This was to augment the strength of the application by GTRLC for DNR Trust Fund money in the service of Long Lake Township and its residents. The DNR decision concerning the granting of Trust Fund money to Long Lake Township will be made in December of 2006.

*Act as if
what you
do makes a
difference.*

*It does.
-William
James*

New Members 2007**Welcome To:**

James & Tisha Kartsimas
4309 Stone Ridge Dr.
Traverse City, 49684

Heather Peyton
3551 Westridge Court
Traverse City, MI 49684

Christine A. Siler
1566 Eastbriar
Traverse City, MI 49686

Need more copies of the newsletter? Print them in COLOR from our web site at:

www.grandtraverseaudubon.org/news.html

Next Newsletter Deadline: Feb. 26





**Grand Traverse Audubon Club
Board Members:**

President: Cindee DuBey,
(231) 839-2758

Vice Pres: Nate Crane

Vice Pres: Bob Carstens

Treasurer: Leonard Graf

Secretary: John Mesch

Newsletter: Kay Beerthuis

Elected: Shirley Mesch

Ed Moehle

M.A.S. Rep: Tom Ford



Our resident
Snowy Owl on
Secor Road
by Deb Harp

*"I've never seen
you here before.
You're a what? A
SNOWY Owl? I
don't suppose
then you will be
making a
reservation to fly
south with us?"*

-See more action
between these two
on our web site:
[www.grandtraverse
audubon.org/slides.
html](http://www.grandtraverse
audubon.org/slides.
html)

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