

Grand Traverse Audubon Club Newsletter

December 2007
Issue #119

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Bird Notes

Upcoming Events

- ◆ **December 13** - Regular Meeting 7:30 p.m. Great Lakes Campus of NMC, Room 211
- ◆ **December 15** - Christmas Bird Count - Traverse City. 946-5120
- ◆ **December 23** - Leelanau Bird Count
December 30 - Antrim Bird Count 938-5976
- ◆ **January 12** - Field Trip - Bird and ski or snowshoe, 9am YMCA 938-5976
- ◆ **January 24** - Meeting 7:30 p.m. NMC's Great Lakes Center, Room 211
- ◆ **February 16 -17** Sault Ste. Marie Trip 946-5120
- ◆ **February 28** - Meeting 7:30 p.m. NMC's Great Lakes Center, Room 211

Christmas Bird Count

by Ed Moehle

Let me introduce myself. I'm Ed Moehle. I have been a member of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club for eight years and am currently on the board. Before moving here I participated in Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) in Oakland County for ten years. Now I'm the new CBC coordinator, taking over for Leonard Graf. I'm sure you will all join me in thanking Leonard for all the years of work on the count along with all of his other contributions to our club. Hopefully, he'll still be available to share his expertise with us. The count this year is SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15TH FROM 8AM-5PM.

A few historical notes about the Christmas Bird Count in the U.S.: It was a tradition years ago to go out and shoot as many birds as possible in competitions on Christmas Day. In 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman established the Christmas Bird Census that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. Today, information gathered yearly, from Dec. 15- Jan. 5, helps researchers keep track of local bird populations all over the country. You can be part of this effort.

The count is centered at 3 Mile and Hammond Roads. It is circular, enclosing a 15 mile area and is divided into 10 segments. Each area has a count leader and helpers. If you are interested in joining one of the groups call me. I will arrange for you to contact an area leader. You may join in for any length of time in the day that you have available.

There is an optional fee of \$5. per person to participate in the count. It's to cover the cost of the booklet published by the Michigan Audubon Society listing populations of birds in the state and participants in the CBC for this year. Some of the count participants meet at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church on the corner of Garfield and Peninsula Roads at 7:45 a.m. before the count starts. We will all meet again at Mabels' restaurant at 5 p.m. for the day's tally. Fee may be paid then.

Do not feel that you must be an expert birder to do this count. You can learn as you go with someone experienced. It's a lot of fun finding those winter birds! When we meet afterward for dinner we compile the day's tally of the birds seen. There is also great storytelling of the events of the day. Come and join us.

Great Backyard Bird Count

by Cindee DuBey

"Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology." During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15-18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter

their tallies online at:

www.birdcount.org.

Last year Traverse City finished at number 5 in the state for most tallies submitted. If we all work at it, we could certainly beat out places like Howell (1st) and Oscoda (2nd). Let's get involved. For more information, see the website or contact me at (231) 839-2758.

From the President's Pen

by Cindee DuBey



"'Tis the season to count birdies."

Deck the car with lots of goodies,
Fa la la la la la la la.
'Tis the season to count birdies,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Don we now our boots and snowsuits,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Listen for chickadees and hoot hoots,
Fa la la la la la la la.

See the singing birds before us,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Count them while we join their chorus,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Follow me in Merry measure,
Fa la la la la la la la.
While I show you birding treasures,
Fa la la la la la la la.

Fast away the old year passes,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Birding now, we're all together,
Fa la la la la la la la.
Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa la la la la la la la.



Actually I was inspired by Kay's reading on the web (the Birder Pump). I do hope to see many of you on the Christmas Bird Counts. It truly is lots of fun.

I can hardly believe that it's been four years that I have been writing this column and this is my last one. Some people say that being the President is a thankless job but I'm here to tell you that it hasn't been for me. I truly appreciate all of the thank-yous that I've received over the years. It has been a pure delight to chair meetings and I have enjoyed working for and with all of you.

Since this is my last column, it's time for me to thank so many of you for all of your support through my tenure. First and foremost Kay! You have been my mentor and sounding board throughout (bet you never thought I'd last four years right?). I truly appreciate your help and friendship as well as all of the hard work you have done on the website and the newsletter and the Adopt-a-highway Program. We've come a long way and we couldn't have done it without you. Thanks to Bob for keeping me and the club informed on environmental issues and writing all of those "Whereas" in the resolutions that we have passed through the years. Also thanks to Bob for keeping us in a room and having the technology lined up for us for all of our meetings both in town and at Appel.

Thanks to all of our treasurers (Joyce, Leonard and John) and both of our secretaries (John and Tom) for keeping the records (and me) straight. Thanks to the Annual dinner chairs (Kay and Shirley) and all of their helpers for having a fun filled evening of fellowship every year. Thanks to our Program chairs (Ed and Nate) for lining up some terrific programs and to all of you that have shared your experiences with us at meetings. Thanks to Robbie and Jerry Kolak for making sure we are always fed and "watered" every month. And most importantly, thanks to all of you for making this a treasured experience for me. I've made so many new friends in this group and I truly appreciate all of you. You have all made my job very easy. Thanks for the Memories... O.K. one song for this column is enough. Have a wonderful holiday season.

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, Wild Birds Unlimited, Wild Flowers of Glen Arbor, Community Drugs of Interlochen,

Benzonia, and Frankfort. Also thanks to those individuals who provided door prizes: John & Shirley Mesch, Ed Moehle, Sheila Rogulsky, Tom & Steffi Podolan.

Not So Fast!

by Gerri Erickson

A Birder's Journal: October 23, 2007

Since late summer, I have made a point of visiting the Lake Dubonnet area at least once a week. Early on, the backwaters were absolutely brimming with all sorts of exciting species---Wood Ducks, Great Blue Herons, Sandhill Cranes, Purple Martins, Merlins, Bald Eagles, Snipes, the Trumpeter Swan pair, and on and on.

Every week I was delighted with some spectacular sighting. That is, until hunting season began. Then, it seemed, that much of the activity was abruptly hushed. Yesterday, it had been three weeks since I'd even seen the Trumpeter Swans, and any ducks I'd ever encounter were too skittish to approach. I was slowly accepting the fact that all good times must come to an end, and as fun as it had been, the best times were over for this year. The area's wild things were making their winter arrangements and I would be left behind in the snow and ice.

Somehow, however, I felt I should go for one more look around. It seemed I should try one more time before "closing the book". I drove over there yesterday, and sure enough immediately upon arriving, the first birds I encountered were the Trumpeter Swans. They were drifting in the same sunny cove where I had seen them many times before. When I lifted my binoculars to look more closely, they were both looking straight at me with a "where have YOU been?" sort of look. I enjoyed the beautiful birds while I thought about how little man knows of nature's goings on. How,

just when you think you've got it figured out, you're proven wrong.

So anyway after awhile, I took a couple of parting photos and felt I probably should move along. It seemed that just to make my trip complete, however, I should swing by the southern end of the lake. I took a little time en route to enjoy numerous Dark-eyed Juncos, Hermit Thrushes, Yellow-Rumps, and a Brown Creeper. When I arrived and pulled up to scan the lake from the boat launch I could see that something on the island looked askew. I lifted my binoculars and indeed, there perched together on one of the branches near the nest were two mature Bald Eagles. I eventually got the spotting scope out to get a better look. A few minutes into that, one of the birds lifted off and flew away. I thought, "That was very cool," and I continued to enjoy the sight of the remaining Eagle. But then, it wasn't five minutes later that the first bird arrived back, with a huge branch in its talons. It laid the gigantic stick on the nest, hopping up and down and re-positioning it a few times. The other Eagle stretched its neck as it watched. Then it moved a little closer. The deliverer eventually lifted off into flight again. The second Eagle hopped on to the nest, poked a little at the new branch and then it also flew off. The experience for me was totally amazing. I could not believe my luck. On a day when I thought I was "closing the book" on sightings at Lake Dubonnet, I see that the birds' response to that was "Not so fast !"



"I lifted my binoculars and indeed, there....were two mature Bald Eagles."

-photo by Gerri Erickson

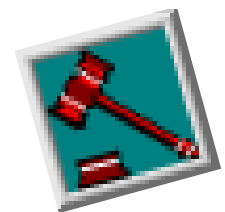
Board Members 2008

by Tom Ford, Nominations Chair

President: Nate Crane
 V.P. Program: Tom Ford
 V.P. Environment: Bob Carstens
 Secretary: Deb Harp
 Treasurer: John Mesch
 Newsletter Editor: OPEN
 Elected Members: Shirley Mesch
 Ed Moehle
 MAS Representative: Elise Brooks
 Past President: Cindee DuBey

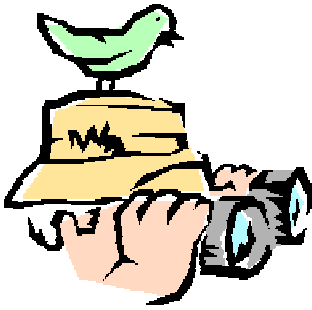
New board members, who were elected at the annual dinner, will take office January 1, 2008.

Please note that the board position for Newsletter Editor is open. Let Tom Ford, or other members of the nominations committee (Shirley Mesch, Nate Crane) know if you are interested.



You Must Be a Birder If....

by Our Members



- late one spring evening you wander out to the neighboring field in your pj's and slippers - and binoculars - because you're sure you heard the "peent" of a woodcock. - Elise Brooks
- after spotting a Booby or a Tit, you tick it on your life list and you're not interested in seeing any more of them. - Jim Turner
- ketchup reminds you of House Finches, and red wine reminds you of Purple Finches. - Tom Ford
- your car doesn't go in a straight line and you aren't on a cell phone or inebriated, you can't pass up an opportunity (women) to buy a "bird" pair of earrings, or you begin to understand why people act weird when they are just adding another bird to their bird list. - Carole Groves
- Even after finding yourself sinking up over your knees in very cold, smelly muck because what you thought was a bridge was really just a floating log, your only concern is hoping that the yelp you let out didn't scare away the birds you were pursuing. -Gerri Erickson.
- you drive up stinking mounds of garbage in Brownsville, Texas just to find some kind of CROW. - Kay Beerthuis
- you get so focused on finding a bird that you stand on a hill of fire ants. - Marlys Bandy
- you bring your binoculars with you to Guantanamo. - H. Candace Gorman
- you'll risk looking totally ridiculous trying to keep the squirrels from eating the bird seed. In the middle of a nice conversation with a visiting son, I suddenly pushed past him, ran out the french doors, grabbed a rock from my collection in a lovely wicker basket, and threw it at the squirrel. Needless to say, my son convulsed with laughter. "You've gone nuts." was his comment. - Heather Peyton
- you get up at 3 A.M., drive 50 miles out into the desert, with temperatures in the 40's to watch some chickens sing and dance. - Cindee DuBey

Upcoming Programs

by Nate Crane, V.P. Programs

This December (13th) will be one of our favorite programs, the annual Photo Fest presented by our talented member photographers. The range of photos will be from backyards to locales all over the country. This is a special program not to be missed. Digital equipment will be available, but bring your own for slides. We will have the program after a short business meeting and festive refreshments. We will be meeting at our usual location, NMC Great Lakes Center, Front and Barlow Streets, Room 211, 7:30pm.

Once again our president Cindee Dubey and her husband Larry will be doing our January presentation (24th). Their recent trip took them to Texas where they encountered some very interesting

birds. The photos and variety will be terrific as usual. **Please note change from previously printed copy: NMC Great Lakes Center, Front and Barlow Streets, Room 211, 7:30pm.**

The February (28th) program will be presented by member Ed Kaminski. Ed is a dedicated photographer who always finds the best birds in our area. I for one have wanted to see his photos noted in his Bird Alert posts. The variety of locations will not only include the Traverse City area, but some of the best spots noted in "The Birders Guide to Michigan". **Please note Change from previously printed copy: NMC Great Lakes Center, Front and Barlow Streets, Room 211, 7:30pm.**



**Come
and bring
YOUR pictures
to show.**

The Soo in Winter

by Barb Graf

Most people from northern Michigan head south for the winter. They dream of places like Florida, Texas, and Arizona. These people have earned the nickname of "snowbirds." But there is another group of northern Michigan people who head north in the winter; they go to the "Soo!"

We bird by caravan, spending a fair amount of time in the warm cars. We've seen wildlife, such as, wolf or fox. Birds that might be seen include Evening Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill, Snow Bunting, Gray Jay, Ruffed Grouse, Cedar and/or Bohemian Waxwings, Ravens (or Cravens!- a cross between a Crow and Raven - when we aren't certain.), White and Red-breasted Nuthatches, Common and Hoary Redpolls. This list goes on . . .

But birding is not the only activity we do at the Soo. We also like to eat! Lunch is usually a quick affair.

However, dinner is a time to get together and visit and share the day's sightings. A few, after dinner, may decide to visit the local casino; but they still need to remember that we will be leaving early the next morning to locate the birds we didn't find on Saturday! Bring plenty of warm clothes and be ready for life birds, fun, and food. We meet on Saturday at 7:30 a.m. at the Plaza Motor Motel, across from the State Police Post and start our weekend. Come and join us on February 16 & 17, for a weekend at the **Soo in Winter** for a little history, birding, food, and fun.

P.S. We will be scouting on Friday the 15th, if anyone wants to join us let us know that you're going up early also. We abide at the Plaza Motor Motel but there are many other motels in the area.



Northern Hawk Owl
-photo by Margaret Platner

Secretary's Report

by Tom Ford

Recent Board Actions Include:

- Donation of \$100 to each of the following organizations:

Grass River Nature Center
Whitefish Pt. Bird Observatory
Wings of Wonder

- The board recommended and the membership approved a resolution advocating for a moratorium on all sulfide mining operations in the State of Michigan.

- Programs - A New schedule of monthly programs and field trips for January 2008 - January 2009 will be available soon.

Dues Increase

by John Mesch, Treasurer

In spite of what the government has been telling us, inflation is real. For the past few years, our club has been spending more than our annual income. We could do this because of a surplus that had been built up over previous years, before I became a member. When the expenses started exceeding income, the board decided to cash in the CDs and live off the surplus for a while. Dues have remained the same for 15 years. Now the board has decided on a dues increase. This is

necessary because of increased rent at NMC, a desire to move meetings back to the Oleson Center, increased postage rates, and a desire to attract speakers with honoraria. Members who pay their dues before December 31, 2007 can renew at the old rate. Starting January 1, 2008, dues will be as follows: Family - \$20, Single - \$15, Student (under 25) \$8. I think you will find that membership in Grand Traverse Audubon continues to be a substantial value.

- Birding Trips \$
- Binoculars & Scopes \$
- Birdfeeders & Feed \$
- Audubon Dues \$
- Getting a new bird on your life list Priceless!

Birding Texas

by Cindee DuBey



Green Jay
-photo by Larry DuBey



Great Kiskadee
-photo by Cindee DuBey

Everything is BIG in Texas (except maybe the White-tailed Deer) and the bird list is one of the largest in the United States. Larry and I had an opportunity to spend six days at four different ranches in south Texas that are set up exclusively for photography, in April of this year. Each of the ranches offered different habitat, hence different wildlife opportunities to photograph. Imagine sitting in a comfortable chair, with your favorite cold beverage and snacks, and having birds sit and watch you less than 10 feet away. Or better yet, watch them come in for a drink and a bath while you sit there in your comfy chair, camera ready, and just snap away.

While we did not photograph all of them, we saw 90 species of birds on this trip including all of the south Texas specialties: Green Jay, Great Kiskadee, Green Kingfisher, Audubon's Oriole, Clay-colored Robin, and Olive Sparrow. We also got to see (and shoot) many birds as they first entered the United States on their migration north. The variety was amazing and at times we really didn't know which direction to aim the camera. Once, while Larry and I were in a blind together (which didn't happen much), he had to stop shooting a Mockingbird that he had been "working" for several minutes in order to get some shots of a Yellow-breasted Chat that was a life bird for both of us.

As the only female photographer in the group, I was the only one that really wasn't terribly interested in photographing snakes. I was also the one that saw more snakes than anyone else in the group. One day, while alone in the blind, I had two Coachwhip snakes come in to the watering hole at the same time. Initially I was ready to abandon my position before I realized that my best option was to start shooting, besides they were between me and where I wanted to go. I got some pretty amazing pictures of a courtship dance of these snakes. I was also the only member of the group that got to see a Diamond-backed Rattlesnake up close and personal. I was too shaken to take pictures but the image is still burned into my brain. They are pretty amazing creatures and since they are pretty much at the top of the food chain, they are not aggressive and don't move really fast so I got a great look.

In addition to the ranches, we visited several of the World Birding Centers in the area and the Santa Anna Wildlife Refuge (considered "The jewel of the Wildlife Refuge System"). In January, we will share our photos and experiences with you in hopes that you too will want to visit this amazing part of the country to see some of the most colorful birds that nature has to offer.

New Members 2008

Welcome To:

Carol & Jerry Liszewski
22147 Harsdale Dr.
Farmington Hills, MI 48335

Kathy & Mark Primo
10561 Bluff Rd.
Traverse City, MI 49686

Yvonne Rolandson
614 E. Maple St.
Mason, MI 48854

Don & Bev Shankwiler
6441 Bluesprings Trail
Falmouth, MI 49632

Mary Siladke
220 S. Spruce St.
Traverse City, MI 49684

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





**Grand Traverse Audubon Club
Board Members:**

President: Cindee DuBey,
(231) 839-2758

Vice Pres: Nate Crane

Vice Pres: Bob Carstens

Treasurer: John Mesch

Secretary: Tom Ford

Newsletter: Kay Beerthuis

Elected: Shirley Mesch

Ed Moehle

M.A.S. Rep: Elise Brooks



Common Redpoll

This winter is shaping up to be one of an invasion of northern species. Common Redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks are showing up in our area. Some Bohemian Waxwing flocks have been seen at fruit trees. We are still awaiting reports of Snowy Owls, however.

Grand Traverse Audubon Club
Kay Beerthuis, Newsletter Editor
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