

Grand Traverse Audubon Club Newsletter

March 2008
Issue #120

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Bird Notes

Spring Fling at Whitefish Point April 26-27 by Tom Ford

Upcoming Events

- ◆ **Beginning Birders' Workshop. Cancelled**
- ◆ **March 27 Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m.** "NW Michigan Eco Systems & Unique Plants," Greg LaCross, Great Lakes Campus, Rm. 211
- ◆ **March 29 Bird for Owls and Woodcocks,** Nate Crane, 499.5460
- ◆ **April 12 Saturday - Adopt-a-Highway & Trail cleanup.** Elise Brooks, 269-4343*
- ◆ **April 19 Field Trip:** Arcadia Marsh. Meet at Tom's Market, 14th & Division at 7 a.m. Tom Ford, 922-9490*

*Indicates article

Birders planning on the Whitefish Point Spring Fling Fieldtrip will meet in the large parking lot at the point by the lighthouse at 8 a.m. on Saturday.

We will begin our weekend with an easy hike down the "owl road" in search of Long-eared Owls, Saw-whet Owls and many other spring migrants. We may hit the jackpot and find something good like a Spruce Grouse or Black-backed Woodpecker.

As the day warms up, the hawks will begin to move, at which time we will set up on the lawn by the lighthouse for viewing. Bring a portable folding chair and refreshments as we sit and identify raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds on their trek overhead to northern breeding habitats.

Some time will be spent watching the bird feeding area for sparrows and other migrating feeder birds.

As always, spring at Whitefish Point isn't quite as warm as spring in Traverse City. It can be windy and cold, so dress appropriately.

Some people camp. Others stay at one or two motels in Paradise. Members' stays have included the Paradise Inn and Curleys.

Tom's number: 922-9490

Whitefish Point Observatory
16914 N. Whitefish Point Road
Paradise, MI 49768, 906-492-3596,

Crane Creek and Magee Marsh May 9-11 by John Mesch

This will be our 13th annual pilgrimage to southwest Lake Erie. I can't remember ever not seeing tons of birds on this trip. Last year we found 139 species, including 23 species of warblers. Magnolias and Bay-breasteds were everywhere. The American Golden Plovers were in their usual place in full breeding plumage. Those birds just about blow out the optics in your scope when the sun is shining on them.

There is no food service available in the area so bring picnic food for supper on Friday and lunches on Saturday and Sunday.

We will gather around the west boardwalk entrance at 6 p.m. on Friday for our supper on the picnic tables that the state park provides. Shirley & I will be staying at the Comfort Inn on Navarre Ave. a.k.a SR2, in Oregon, Ohio. Reservations at 800-533-2100. My cell phone will be on during the trip 231-499-1439. For any queries before departure, call me at 946-3624.

Bring your CBs for keeping in touch.

June 16th field trip in club brochure is a misprint. Remove from schedule!

Upcoming Events, Cont.

- ◆ **April 24**
Regular meeting
7:30 p.m. Great
Lakes Campus,
Rm. 211, Spring
Warbler ID. Tom
Ford
- ◆ **April 26-27**
Spring Fling at
Whitefish Point,
Tom Ford, 922-
9490*
- ◆ **May 9-10**
Field Trip to
Crane Creek &
Magee Marsh.
John Mesch,
946-3624*
- ◆ **May 10**
G.T. County
Migratory Bird
Count. Bob
Carstens, 938-
5976*
- ◆ **May 16-18**
Field Trip to
Tawas State
Park and Tuttle
Marsh. Cindee
DuBey 231-839-
2758*
- ◆ **May 22 -**
Potluck and
Birding. NMC's
Appel Property,
River Road, 5:30
p.m. *
- ◆ **May 25**
Field Trip to
Skegemog
Wildlife Area,
Flowers and
Birds Tom Ford
and Bob
Carstens, 938-
5976
- ◆ **May 31**
Grass River
Natural Area.
Shirley Mesch
946-3624

May 22 Meeting at Appel Property on River Road

The regular Thursday meeting will be a pot luck dinner at NMC's Appel Property on River Road. We will meet at 5:30 p.m. Make sure to bring your own table service and a dish to pass. Also, get good directions. Don't miss this. If you are new to the club - it is so much fun and a beautiful location. Leonard Graf has even banded birds

and given us all something special to remember. Talk to someone about how to find the location. Don't go too early as you'll miss the Audubon sign.



*Leonard Graf
and crew with
birds to band.
2007*

May 10 Migratory Bird Count by Bob Carstens

The first North American Migration Count was in 1992. The purpose was and is to increase public awareness and education concerning migratory birds and to provide an opportunity to celebrate and support migratory birds and their conservation. Moreover, it provides every birdwatcher the opportunity to enjoy a day's birding during Spring Migration with the knowledge that the result of their findings, together with the birds counted by others, would fit together like pieces of a puzzle and reveal the status of bird migration on a specified date.

The goals of the North American Migration Count are:

- To obtain a "snapshot" of the progress of Spring Migration.
- To obtain information on the abundance and distribution of each species.
- Initiate more participation among Birders within a state and between states.
- Create challenges and goals among birders while collecting useful information.
- Aid in organization and centralization of data.
- Have fun.
- Establish the second Saturday in May as "National Birding Day".

The Grand Traverse Migration Count for 2008 will be on the 2nd Saturday of May which this year will be on May 10, 2008.

All skill levels are welcome!!! Remember that some of our birders will be unable to help us because they'll be at Crane Creek.

Whereas the Christmas Bird Count is confined to a circle with a 15-mile diameter, the Migration Count covers an entire county. Participants will choose to do some portion of a county which will vary depending on a participant's time and intentions.

Count Day will last for all 24 hours of May 10. If you participate, you choose the length of time that day and the level or particular way in which you participate. You can do a stationary count and observe your feeder, yard, or some other specific single location or pick an area such as a park, portion of a township, a portion of the TART trail, VASA, or the like.

If you would like to take part, please call Bob Carstens at 938-5976. Bob will mail you a species documentation form and then provide a combined list of all the species and the number of each species observed by all the participants on the count day.

Tawas Trip - May 16-18

by Cindee DuBey

Tom Powers, author of *Great Birding in the Great Lakes*, said that if he had to pick a spot to bird, and could move no more than 15 feet (I think that was the number), his choice of places would be Tawas Point. Although my own backyard is my all-time favorite place to bird, Tawas Point State Park is a very close second.

Last year we had both a record number of species and participants. Think there is a correlation there? Anyway it was a wonderful weekend of birding and friendships. If you've never been to Tawas, you have no idea what you are missing. Someone said, you have to go to Tawas at least once in the spring so why not make this the year?

DuBeys will be there on Thursday night. We'll plan to bird the park all day on Friday. You are welcome to join us at our campsite. (#132) Bring your own picnic lunch and /or dinner. On Saturday morning, we will meet at 7:30 a.m. (this gives Leonard an opportunity to go out and check the point before we leave) at the Bambi Motel and caravan out to Tuttle Marsh. We have found American Bitterns, Virginia Rails, Sora Rails, Wilson's Snipe, and numerous other water birds out there. When we've found everything that we can at the marsh, we'll head back to the park for a picnic lunch and spend the afternoon looking for thrushes, warblers, vireos, orioles, tanagers,

thrashers, woodpeckers, and whatever else happens by. Maybe the resident fox kits will entertain us again this year. For dinner, we'll meet at the Chinese restaurant in town to do a preliminary tally and swap stories of the great birds we've found.

Sunday we will again bird the park for anything we missed on Saturday and anything that may have come in during the night. Last year, we were treated to a swallow ballet that held most of us spellbound for a very long time.

In addition to all of the fun things that we will be doing, Michigan Audubon is holding its 3rd Annual Birding Festival that weekend. There will be speakers and field trips associated with the festival as well. Check out the website: www.tawasbirdfest.com for information and costs for those.

Because the festival is going on and many Audubon groups also plan field trips to Tawas in the spring and this is probably peak migration in the area, it is recommended that you make your reservations early.

You never know what might appear at Tawas. Every year is different but every year there is always something amazing so plan to spend some or all of that weekend with us. You will not be disappointed. For questions - call 231-839-2758



Photo by Carole Groves

**Warbler Lady,
Steffi Podolan,
sharing warbler
tips with Elise
Brooks and Edith
Kopp. Tawas
2007**

Welcome to the GBBC—My First

by Edith Kopp

The Great Backyard Bird Count was so exciting!!! I started birding with my sister-in-law, Carole Groves, at Tawas. I was hooked. This is my first year for birding, and the first year I've done the GBBC. My husband, Ed, has been sharing this with me also.

My Mom has been ill and was staying with me. I had my mom watch and count birds with me. She identified the Northern Cardinal and Blue Jay from other times. This was so special and something I will always remember. With my favorite Kaufman book I looked up each bird to be sure to identify the bird correctly. I also wrote down the page number of each species. This helped me to have them in order when I charted my counts online. I had a total of nine species and 31 birds. I participated in the count through Sunday. This was such a wonderful way to end a long week with Mom.

*"Thanks to all the special people in GT Audubon who have helped Ed and I get started in birding—including the Grafts, Steffi Podolan, and Cindee Dubey."
Edith Kopp*

Bird Blitz - June 7

by Elise Brooks



Photo by Joe Brooks,
<http://public.fotki.com/JoeBrooks/birds-1/>

Mark your calendar now for a big Bird Blitz! On Saturday, June 7th, from 6 to 10 a.m. volunteers from three local Audubon clubs will cooperate in an effort to count birds in the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's new Arcadia Dunes Nature Preserve.

This is a great opportunity to meet other birders from our region, and to explore this spectacular new preserve which covers about 3,000 acres of woods, dunes, fields, and wetlands.

A Bird Blitz is similar to the annual Christmas count, with participants divided into teams, assigned to a parcel of land, and then fanning out to count both species and numbers of birds.

There's no need to be an expert, but organizers are looking for at least one person on each team who can identify birds by sight and sound. If you're a beginner, don't let that stop you. It's a great way to have fun learning more about our avian friends, and it's a beautiful place to hike. More eyes and ears always make for higher counts

Refreshments will be provided after the morning Blitz, when participants will turn in the tally sheets and share the highlights of the day. The GTRLC will use the data that we collect as they develop management plans for the property.

Participants must sign up ahead by calling the event coordinator, Paula Dreeszen, at 275-7199, or emailing dreeszen@centurytel.net. More details will be available as the date approaches. Hope to see you there.

Great Backyard Bird Count

by Tom Ford



Photo by Gerri Erickson
<http://picasaweb.google.com/greatesgrets>

I had a great time participating in the 2008 Great Backyard Bird Count on February 15-18th. I reported a checklist for each day and had a total of 35 species.

My best day was counting waterfowl at Logan's Landing. Chris, my wife, and I waited until the ice melted off the roads and then ventured out to the Boardman River and Lake We had 18 species of waterfowl that slippery Sunday afternoon. Highlights included two Tundra Swans, two Trumpeter Swans, five American Coots, many Redheads and Hooded Mergansers, and, of course 329 Mallards.

I also had a good time looking at online lists from other states. North Carolina had three species of hummingbirds, including 37 Ruby-throated. South Carolina had five species of hummers, including one Rufous Hummingbird, which showed up in many southern states, including Tennessee.

I also checked other species such as those two dozen or so species soon to return to northern Michigan. Would you believe Turkey Vultures were counted in Michigan in February? And, if you were wondering where all the goldfinches were this winter, just go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc

In 2007, Traverse City counted 49 species. This year, we tallied 56 species. My goal in 2009 is to get us to 60 species.

Arcadia Trip

April 19

by Tom Ford

Mid and late April finds us nearer the middle of spring bird migration, with numerous species of short distance migrants at the end of their vernal journeys. Waterfowl is abundant as lake ice is receding. The first hardy shorebirds are beginning to show and songbird numbers swell with each wave of warmer weather moving in from southerly directions. With the absence of snow cover, decreased sun angle and longer photoperiod, raptors are on the move using the mid day thermals to push them north on broad, out-stretched wings. Be prepared for a

great day of spring birding as we visit a variety of bird friendly habitats on the Arcadia field trip. Some of the birds on lakes and marshes will be viewed at long distances, so a few spotting scopes will come in handy. Dress in layers so if we get fickle spring weather that changes every five minutes, you can change with it. Anyone interested in carpooling from Traverse City meet at Toms Food Market on 14th Street parking area at 7:00 a.m. Saturday the 19th. We will meet others at Interlochen Corners between 7:30 and 8:00am and begin our birding adventures for the day.

Adopt-a-Trail

The first clean-up of the Windy Moraine Trail roadside will be Saturday, April 12. Bring your gloves, a broom, and a fan rake if you can. Call Elise Brooks for details. 269-4343. We are scheduled for future clean-ups. A volunteer who has participated before would be appreciated.



Photo by Joe Brooks, 2007 Arcadia Trip. <http://public.fotki.com/JoeBrooks/birds-1/>

Protecting Skegemog

by Bob Carstens

At a recent Regional Non-Motorized Transportation Summit held in Traverse City at the NMC Hagerty Center on February 27, 2008, in describing potential plans for Kalkaska Area Recreational Trails, it was revealed that the 3.5 mile abandoned railroad bed that serves as the main eastern access route to Skegemog's natural wonders/assets is being considered for incorporation into a recreational trail route that would extend from Kalkaska to Seven Bridges, to Rapid City, and then from Rapid City to Skegemog utilizing the 3.5 mile railroad bed within Skegemog from Schneider Rd. to reach M-72 by the Barker Creek Nursery.

In 1972, the Grand Traverse Audubon Club, then known as the Walter Hastings Audubon Club, was part of the coalition of concerned citizens (The Nature Conservancy, Elk-Skegemog

Lakes Association), that came together to preserve the lands and shoreline now known as the Skegemog Lake Wildlife Area. This, in some degree, was a landmark event that then led to the preservation of "Seven Bridges" and the formation of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.

Continued use of this "railroad bed" to access the plant and animal wildlife amenities afforded by Skegemog Lakes Wildlife Area is definitely desirable. However, excess use for mountain biking, any motorized use (such as 4 wheelers or snowmobiles), and any plans for utilization as a "transportation corridor", particularly, a paved or asphalted one, raises red flags. The latter three would likely be deemed "violations" of the understandings held by those who contributed monetarily to preservation primarily for the beauty and benefit of the varied species.

*"As an avid biker, rollerblader, and hiker, I am a strong supporter of recreational and transportation trails and "Smart Growth" principles. As G.T. Audubon Environmental VP and our club's representative on the Skegemog Wilderness Area Stewardship Committee, I am concerned that there not be a "downside" to the proposed inclusion of the "Skegemog Railroad Pathway in this new trail."
B. Carstens*

The comment window on the Draft "Northwest Michigan Regional Non-Motorized Strategy extends to March 17, 2008. Comments should be submitted to Patty O'Donnell of NWMCOG (podonnel@nwm.cog.mi.us)

From the President's Perch

by Cindee DuBey

Check out:
www.northbirding.com and
[www.birdsour
 ce.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsour.ce.org/gbbc) .
 I use the ID
 training
 center about
 this time
 every year to
 refresh myself
 on the
 warblers. -
 Cindee DuBey

We got off to a bit of a rocky start this year with board resignations and all but I think we're all set now and it's going to be a great year. First of all, we need to say a HUGE thank you to Lane Corbin for agreeing to step in as our secretary. She is embracing the job and will be a wonderful addition to the board. Next, we need to say another HUGE thank you to Carole Groves for agreeing to take on the newsletter. She has lots of new ideas both for the newsletter and for the club in general and will also be a great addition to the board. She has big shoes to fill with the newsletter but is looking forward to the challenge and Kay is there to help her get started.

Hopefully, by the time you are reading this, spring will be showing itself in full splendor. It has been a long winter, however, an exciting one with all of our winter visitors. I have never seen so many Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks in our part of the state. The Common Redpolls visited many areas that don't usually see them and even Evening Grosbeaks put in an

appearance now and then. Our Snowy Owls were somewhat more elusive this year but they were here if you were lucky enough to find them. Beautiful and exciting they were, but I'm ready for warblers, hummingbirds and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks to return.

Hopefully you are planning to attend some (or all) of our spring field trips. The board has put together a wide variety of opportunities from right here in Traverse City to Crane Creek, Ohio. Spring birding is my favorite time of year and I hope that many of you will come on along and enjoy it with us. Be sure to let your field trip leader know that you are planning to attend so that they know who to look for at the meeting place and don't leave you behind.

Don't forget to post those spring findings to the birdalert either. We all want to know what birds are in the area so we know what to look for in our backyards as well as when we are out and about. Happy Spring.

Bird Photography-Feb. Meeting

by Carole Groves



That's out on a limb--Ed Kaminski is taking pictures of baby Turkey Vultures on a trip lead by Tom Ford last spring. Despite the hand-held large tripod, the picture he showed us was a winner.

Our February 28 regular meeting presentation by Ed Kaminski was a mix of how-tos and photos of birds. The photos included many on the Boardman Lake and the Boardman River from Sabin Pond to the outlet on the bay. With an eye on the gas gauge, he makes the most of his trips home to Jackson, stopping at Houghton Lake, Maple River, and Watkins Lake. Although his home roots are in Jackson, he has spent the last 30 years out west where his hobby was mineral collecting and he worked as a manager for a small mapping company.

Moving to Traverse City three years ago, he decided he needed a new hobby. Living and working on the Boardman Lake, he saw that birds were plentiful, and chose to photograph them.

He sold his medium format camera and purchased a Canon EOS Digital Rebel XT (8 megapixel) which he uses with his Celestron telescope or a Canon 100-400mm telephoto lens. As a new birder, and a member of GT Audubon for only two years, he pours over his books and photos to ID birds. And, he continues to seek input from members on some of the more difficult birds.

Although he said new point-and-shoot digital cameras with a 10x optical zoom can grab some of the pictures, the focus speed can hamper bird photography.

Equipment he suggested includes a camera with image stabilization, or secondarily, a camera on a good solid tripod. Under tree canopies, a good quality flash system can work wonders.



**Grand Traverse Audubon Club
Board Members:**

President: Cindee DuBey,
231- 839-2758

Vice Pres: Tom Ford

Vice Pres: Bob Carstens

Treasurer: John Mesch

Secretary: Lane Corbin

Newsletter: Carole Groves
231-492-4567

Elected: Shirley Mesch
Ed Moehle

M.A.S. Rep: Elise Brooks

New Members 2008



Deena Barshney
2827 Holiday Pines
Traverse City, MI 49686

Alice Bushong
866 Floresta St.
Traverse City, MI 49686

Ed & Edith Kopp
26034 Fairfield Ave.
Warren, MI 48089

Don & Nancy Clover
4381 Ridgemoor Dr.
Traverse City, MI 49684

Tom & Peg Comfort
1100 E. Torch Lake Dr.
Bellaire, MI 49615

Karen Siekas
4414 Maplewood
Traverse City, MI 49686



Photo by Carole Groves

Ed Kaminiski's pictures at the February regular meeting left most of us looking forward to a warmer time and the many group-led field trips, even geese at Logan's Landing. However, the winter weather has not deterred Ed. He photographs the wintering waterfowl.

Until spring, check out the Boardman Lake, government center, and Sabin Pond. Ed Kaminski, Margaret Platner, and Tom Ford report a variety of waterfowl that may migrate later: Redheads, Buffleheads, Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Tundra Swans, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneye, scaup, American Coots, Red-breasted Mergansers, Northern Pintails, American Coots, and Horned Grebes. Bald Eagles, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks have been reported as well.

Grand Traverse Audubon Club
Carole Groves, Newsletter Editor
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