

# Grand Traverse Audubon Club Newsletter

September 2007  
Issue #118

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## Bird Notes

### Upcoming Events

- ◆ **September 9** - Skegemog Trip, Flowers and Birds. Leaders: Tom Ford and Bob Carstens. Call 938-5976
- ◆ **September 15** - Adopt-a-Highway & Trail clean up. 9:30 a.m. Windy Moraine Trailhead. M-109. 947-8432
- ◆ **September 22** - Pigeon River Elk Trip. Call John Mesch, 946-3624
- ◆ **September 27**- Meeting 7:30 p.m. Great Lakes Campus, Rm. 211
- ◆ **October 6**- Trip to Jordan River Valley Larry DuBey, 231 839-2758
- ◆ **October 20** - Annual Dinner Meeting, Twin Lakes Camp 6:00 p.m. 946-3624
- ◆ **November 15** - Meeting 7:30 p.m., NMC's **Beckett Building**, Room 136

### Annual Dinner

October 20

by Shirley Mesch

It is time for the Annual Dinner Meeting for our Audubon Club. This annual event is open to members and all who are interested in sharing an evening with friends new and old. You will be meeting Rick Baetsen, our guest speaker. Rick will be presenting us with his program on "The Northern Saw-whet Owl and other Northern Forest Owls of Michigan." With his array of awesome photos (see some of his work at his website [www.rickbaetsen.com](http://www.rickbaetsen.com)) and an impressive list of places, wildlife and wildlife organizations he has worked with, the evening will be fun, interesting and informative.

The gathering and mixing will begin at 6:00 p.m., at the Grand Traverse County Twin Lakes Park, in Gilbert Lodge, located just West of Traverse City, on North Long Lake Road. Please contact Shirley Mesch at 946-3624 if you are in need of directions. (If I am not immediately available, please leave your name and telephone number on the answering machine and I will get back to you)

The dinner is being catered by Canteen Catering. From 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. fresh fruit along with cheese and crackers will be available. Be prepared to I.D. that bird, locate a

favorite birding place or? The Buffet Style Dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a menu as follows: Roast Beef with rosemary/garlic demi glaze, Roast Turkey with dressing, mashed potatoes with gravy, California medley of vegetables, tossed salad with the works, dinner rolls with butter, choice of decaf coffee and/or fruit punch and a variety of desserts to choose from. For a great dinner, program and an evening out, the cost is \$15.50 per meal.

After the dinner, there will be a short, not more than 15 minute, business meeting for the election of the 2008 slate of officers. Rick's Owl program is scheduled to start by 8:00 p.m.

So get that calendar out, use the form for reservations in this newsletter, and mail it in. Reservations should be made no later than October 14, 2007.

P.S. - Have you heard about the ONLY documented observation of a nesting pair of Great Gray Owls in Michigan? In 2004, Rick found them in the Seney National Wildlife Refuge! Wow! Hear, directly from him, the story of his find, along with some amazing pictures.

### Skegemog Field Trip

Sunday, Sept.9

by Tom Ford

We will meet at the Skegemog parking lot off of Rapid City Road at the southeast corner of the lake at 9:00 a.m. We should see a few CFWs (confusing fall warblers) and lots of CFAs (confusing fall asters). Bring

appropriate field guides, and footwear that can handle getting wet. Expect a couple hours hike as we work our way through challenging fall fauna and flora ID.

## From the President's Pen

by Cindee DuBey



*"A great summer of bird watching"*

What a summer, hot one day and cold the next. It's hard to believe that it is really over. I spent much of my summer filling bird feeders. We had Red-bellied Woodpeckers nest nearby and raise a family for the first time ever in our yard. We also had several families of Downy Woodpeckers and a family of Hairy Woodpeckers. We resorted to spreading peanut butter on some hanging logs so that there were enough places for the birds to feed. We also had four suet feeders hanging and they needed to be refilled twice a week. And that was just to keep woodpeckers happy. I also found myself refilling the hummingbird feeders several times a week in August because we had so many hummers. The Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were also very prolific this year. I know that we had at least four families and I believe that there could have been as many as six. Many times I would look out and see all of the sunflower feeders covered with grosbeaks.

Our manmade creek was also a very popular attraction all summer long. I had Cedar Waxwings almost everyday. They came for a drink and a bath. The male Scarlet Tanager and the male oriole also made daily trips for a drink and bath. The Indigo Bunting was also semi-regular. Robins were the most

fun to watch. I don't think any bird gets into its bath with more exuberance than a robin. A Yellow-rumped Warbler made a few appearances but was terribly unpredictable. We also had countless blue jays, nuthatches, chickadees, and several species of sparrows show up daily for food and/or water. I guess what I'm trying to say is, I had a great summer of bird watching and I'm going to miss many of these birds as summer winds down and fall closes in.

Since I'm sure you are all having the same withdrawal symptoms too, let's get together and see what we can do to cheer each other up. How about the fall field trips to Elk Country and the Jordan River Valley? That should be fun. Then there is our September meeting with an update on the Botanic Gardens and a chance to share our summer sightings. Don't forget the Annual Dinner in October. Rick Baetsen is an excellent photographer so his pictures should be wonderful and his stories even better. The Graf's trip to Belize should make for very exciting viewing in November. Gosh, I feel better just thinking about seeing all of you again this fall and all of the great programs and fun that we are going to have. Birders are the best so be sure to bring your friends and introduce them to the wonderful world of birders and bird watching.

## Our August 25 Breakfast

by Cindee DuBey



Sixteen Club members gathered at the NMC Appel property on the Boardman River for our annual potluck breakfast. The rain was a little disappointing, however badly needed, so we didn't complain too much. The food and company was great and we all enjoyed visiting and swapping stories of our recent travels. In fact we all enjoyed visiting so much that it was 10:00 before we realized that the rain had quit so we decided to go out and do some birding.

We saw a "family" of Wilson's Warblers, a couple of young redstarts, a flycatcher that we assumed was the alder (since we heard one singing there in May) and another that we were pretty sure was a Least Flycatcher. We had a beautiful flyover by a Red-tailed Hawk followed by a Red-Shouldered

Hawk chased by a Cooper's (or maybe sharpie it was a bit high up to tell for sure). There were lots of very friendly chickadees and several sparrows, probably Song and Chipping Sparrows but again, not a very long look and the sun was pretty bright by then. We also saw some goldfinches. Some in the group heard the Golden-winged Warbler's buzzing but we were never able to locate it. Some also saw a Pileated Woodpecker flyover and later we heard it calling. There were quite a few birds flitting in the large trees too. It was truly a lovely day. We got the much needed rain, had a leisurely breakfast with lots of goodies and we still had the opportunity to do some birding and lots of socializing. It doesn't get any better.

## Birding Cape May

by Andy Spencer

As part of an 11 state driving trip, we arranged a too-short stop at renowned Cape May during spring migration May 15-17, 2007. The World Series of Birding competition had just ended with something like 265 total species seen by these professional and amateur teams. So there were birds to be seen.

First, you should know that "Cape May", the birding area, is the southernmost end of New Jersey, and much like Pt. Pelee, ON, Crane Creek / Ottawa NWR in Ohio, both on Lake Erie, and Whitefish Point on Lake Superior, it is a natural concentration point for migrating birds as they approach a major water crossing going south, or the first land they reach after a successful water crossing going north. This birding area centers around the Cape May Point State Park (CMSP) and Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge (CMMBR), but includes over 30 other named sites in an area about 30 by 40 miles in size; parts of 3 counties bounded by Delaware Bay on the West and the Atlantic Ocean on the East.

As you can imagine, people want to live and play in these coastal areas, but amazingly, significant areas have been set aside for wildlife. To effectively bird all of these sites is not feasible on a short trip. So we high-spotted. Since we are over 80 we tend to bird from the car or close to it. Our longest hike was a mile or so at CMSP.

First we did the Cape Mays (CMSP & CMMBR) and then a sampling of outlying sites as recommended in the field guides, and currently reported on the Hot Lines and by nature center

personnel and chance contacts. Perhaps the most exciting sight for me was on Nummy's Island, viewing thousands of shorebirds and waders feeding and roosting in shallow water or on emergent vegetation in the extensive salt marsh bisected by Route 147. Generally, parking was safe on both sides of the road as I remember. Joining occasional groups of parked cars helped us locate some special sightings, such as an American Oystercatcher on the nest, seen with binoculars and scope.

Other special sightings were Least Terns, abundant Laughing Gulls every place we looked, and photos of Brant (my first), common on Nummy's I. No great rarities for me, but lots of new birds for Mary. We missed the famous horseshoe crab egg-laying—a feast for Red Knots, by only a day or two. No migrant fall-outs occurred while we were there. And we did not hike the woods for migrants. In fact much of our time was spent in just getting to know the territory.

There are lots of lodgings nearby. The Jersey Shore high season begins on Memorial Day. Before that, lodging is plentiful at off-season rates in nearby towns such as Wildwood, where we stayed.

Cape May has more or less all of the birds we see in Michigan (less Kirtland's Warbler) plus ocean birds and strays seldom seen inland. A good guide is *Birds and Birding at Cape May* by the Suttons, 550 pages of maps, photos and detailed descriptions of over 30 favorite sites.



Cape May Warbler

**"amazingly, significant areas have been set aside for wildlife"**

## Late Summer at Dubonnet

by Gerri Erickson

As I made my way along the shoreline, I was entertained time and time again by the barking of arguing Great Blue Herons, the squawking of flighty Green Herons, the rattling of attacking Kingfishers, and the ruffling of fresh feathers as dozens of young Wood Ducks jumped on and off dead logs. Ah, the wonderful sights and sounds of the season.

But less expected were the "Big White Birds" I came upon. I was ecstatic first to see a Great Egret perched in one of the dead trees, and later to spy the pair of

Trumpeter Swans new to our county this year. And while I'm giving "Big Bird" news, I'll also mention that I had a great look at an immature Bald Eagle that flew out of a tree as I walked beneath it. We had been under the impression that the Eagle nest on Dubonnet had failed, but this is the second or third time I've seen an immature, so I'm not quite sure what to think. Well, however you slice it, life can't get much better than this.



**Trumpeter Swan  
by Gerri Erickson**

## June Field Trips

by Tom Ford



**Vulture Chick**  
from BBC News

The first of two June field trips was to Pyramid Point to view dune flowering plants. Our timing was good as the dune there was in full flower. Dune lilies were about the only plants not in flower. Given the dry conditions this summer I think we did as well as we could. After surviving the climb to the top of the dune I asked the group to follow me down the other side. Those that made the trek down were treated to a large collection of Showy Lady Slipper in "prime" condition. On our return trip we finally found the ginseng that eluded us on the trip in. We did have an excellent look at a male Scarlet Tanager, a singing male Eastern Towhee and many hawks aloft in the cobalt skies that morning.

The second June adventure was a visit

to see giant trees in nearly the same location. This trip included visits to five giant deciduous trees near Narada Lake.

Although the trees were magnificent, the highlight for me had to be the "twins" in the giant oak. Two young vultures bedecked in the finest downy white suits, shiny black feet and heads, hissing and spitting, in hopes that we would all just leave them alone. Many photographers snapped many pictures and maybe a few of those pictures will turn up at one of our next meetings. Someone said Nate Crane had the best photo of the vulture chicks. The Loons on Narada Lake had two chicks that we watched from a distance as Vic and Velda Vulture kept an eye on us for "stragglers" to help feed the twins.

## Pigeon River Country Trip

September 22

by John Mesch

No, we are not going to see pigeons - we are going to see elk. Late September is breeding time for the Michigan elk herd, just as it is in the Rocky Mountains. Our leader will be our past-president, Kirk Waterstripe. Kirk is on the faculty of the biology department of NMC. He has led these elk trips several times in the previous century. Kirk has his favorite hot-spots, from which we have heard elk bugling, and on one occasion that I remember, we watched a dominant bull fending off a couple rivals for his harem.

There has also been a time or two when we completely failed to see or hear elk, but we always have a good time. We will probably carpool from a location on the east side of Traverse City, starting mid or late afternoon. We usually stop for fast food at a fast food restaurant in Gaylord, then proceed up to Vanderbilt and Kirk's hotspots. Details will be available as plans firm up. Send me an email at drjpm@hotmail.com, or call me at 946-3624 if you want to join us.

*"The Botanical Garden Society has always felt the Traverse City Commons site... would make a wonderful home for the garden."*

## September Meeting

September 27

by Bob Carstens

We will meet on Thursday, September 27, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 211 of the Great Lakes Campus of NMC located on Front Street and Barlow. The program will feature Karen Schmidt, well known for effective leadership and presently President of the Northwest Michigan Botanical Garden Society. She will present a program entitled "What a Botanical Garden Would Bring to Our Region". In the course of the evening

she will define what a "Botanical Garden" is and what it does for the community and the environment. Additionally, she will better inform us of the intentions and goals of the Northwest Michigan Botanical Garden Society, its plans and hopes for the immediate future, particularly as they may impact the Grand Traverse Commons and Grand Traverse County.

**Jordan River Valley**

October 6

by Cindee DuBey

This is a first for us so please plan to have a great time but don't come with great expectations for birds or color. That way you won't be disappointed. We plan to meet at McDonald's, just north of Mancelona at 8:00. Bring your cameras and binoculars and lots of snacks (or a picnic lunch) just in case we are in the middle of nowhere at lunch time. Bring your fall warbler books too because they sure don't look the same as they did last spring. We probably will not do a lot of hiking but you may want to throw in your boots and rain pants in case the woods are

wet. We will definitely visit Deadman's Hill and some of the scenic overlooks in the valley but where we end up is truly dependent on Mother Nature and what the color does between now and then. How long we spend will also depend on what we find and the interest of the group. I'll try to get some maps so that anyone that needs to leave early will have a map to find your way out. Very honestly, we are looking for color and hoping for birds. More information will be available as the date nears so please call if you are planning to attend: 839-2758.



*" Looking  
for color  
and hoping  
for birds"*

**Belize Notes**

by Leonard and Barb Graf

Apparently, during the Miss Teen U.S.A. contest, Miss Teen South Carolina was asked why people couldn't locate the United States on a map. She gave a rather circuitous answer which included references to Iraq and Africa. This prompted a local radio station to ask a geography question for one of its call-in quizzes. They asked people to name three countries in Central America. (O.K. how did you do? There are seven.)

Last winter, Leonard and I visited Belize, the youngest country in Central America. It also has the smallest population in Central America, about the size of Grand Rapids (315,000), Belize gained full independence from the United Kingdom in 1981, a process which took at least eleven years.

While Belize is a young country it has a long history, and we were able to see several Mayan ruins, it was for the birds that we went. And birds we saw. In the three and a half weeks that I was there, I saw 107 "lifers." As Leonard drove all the way, was on the trip for three months, saw Mexico and more of Belize, (and studied more, too!), his list of "lifers" grew to 188.

What were some of these "lifers?" Keel-billed Toucans with a bills so large

you wondered how they maneuvered in the trees; a Sungrebe that was a challenge for many of us to see hidden at the river's edge, a Northern PoToo that blended expertly in with a snag; five species of Kingfishers-Ringed, Belted, Amazon, Pygmy and Green; a Tiger-heron that hid itself as our Bitterns do. From huge raptors-Kites, Forest Falcons, Orange-breasted Falcons, White Hawks, and King Vultures to tiny birds--Hermits, Starthroats, Sabrewings, Purple Fairies, Hummingbirds--we were excited each and every time. Names new to us--Euphonias, Woodcreepers--and familiar--Woodpeckers, Owls, Wrens--abounded. Colors so vibrant--a tiny Green Shrike-Vireo high in the canopy, a Blue Ground Dove on the forest floor, Scarlet Macaws flying gracefully in pairs against a radiant blue sky--you find it difficult to believe.

**Editor's Note:** Our November 15 meeting will feature "Birding in Belize" by Leonard and Barb. Join us for an interesting evening at 7:30 p.m. at Northwestern Michigan College's Beckett Building, Room 136.



**Bare-throated  
Tiger-Heron**  
by Barb Graf

## 2007 Breeding Bird Report

by Bob Carstens

### *Murphy's First Law of Birding:*

*The greater the  
time spent  
searching for a  
rarity, the greater  
the chances it will  
be sitting on your  
car when you  
return to the  
parking lot.*

As Vice-president for Environment of Grand Traverse Audubon Club and Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator for Region 8, because significant areas of Leelanau and Antrim had not yet been covered for 2002-2006 update of the MI Breeding Bird Atlas, it was requested of me for 2007 that I concentrate on obtaining data from unsurveyed priority blocks in Region 8. There was one unsurveyed priority block in Grand Traverse, 8 in Antrim, and 8 in Leelanau County. One of the unsurveyed blocks for Leelanau involved transportation to an island in Lake Michigan. Not having a readily available means of transportation to the island, I ended up doing all of the 17 requested blocks except the one of a Lake Michigan island area of Leelanau County.

However, because I did do an unrequested but still unsurveyed block in Leelanau County in Elmwood Township, I ended up doing 17 blocks of

Breeding Bird survey work in Region 8.

My intention is to combine my avian observations from Antrim and Leelanau counties with those of other observers from those areas and present our combined data for each of those counties in the same format as I have traditionally done in the fall for the Breeding Bird Survey of Grand Traverse County. Perhaps we can display this data on our website, as traditionally we have done with our Grand Traverse County data.

I would like to thank Tom Pierson and Peg Comfort, residents of Antrim County, for their contributions to this year's Antrim Breeding Bird Survey effort. I would also like to thank Leelanau residents, Alice Van Zoeren, Charles & Kathy Johnson, Marlin and Pat Bussey, Norm Bistodeau, Kay and Jim Charter, and Bill Scharf for their 2007 Breeding Bird Survey contributions from Leelanau County.

## Cedar Creek Addition

by Bob Carstens

In the last week of May of this year, a call was received from Matt McDonough of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy requesting of Grand Traverse Audubon Club support in the effort to obtain funds for Long Lake Township from the DNR Oil Revenue Trust Fund. This would enable preservation of close to a one mile long, narrow, environmentally significant, pristine, Cedar Run Creek stream corridor connected to the recently successfully protected land surrounding and connected to Cedar Lake in Long Lake Township. This Creek becomes Solon Creek in Leelanau County that eventually flows into Lake Leelanau.

The result of surveys by Margaret Platner, Gerri Erickson, Elise & Joe Brooks, and Bob Carstens, of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club on 5-28-07, 6-1-07, 6-3-07, 6-7-07, and

6-10-07 visits to this narrow stream corridor and the slightly broader margins at the north and south ends of the property, was the observation of 49 avian species.

A document indicating observation of these species along with a letter of support ratified by the Grand Traverse Audubon Club Board and signed by our club president and vice president for environment was presented to Matt McDonough of GTRLC the last week of June 2007.

According to Matt, "The application was submitted in July. We received confirmation that the application was administratively complete". The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund will make their decisions for this year's funding cycle (and our application) in December. If approved, closing is expected to occur in December of 2008."



**COFFEE MUGS** with the club logo are now available for \$5.00 while they last. You can buy yours at any upcoming meeting, or call Nate Crane at 231 499 - 5460.



**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



**Northern Saw-whet Owl by RH Baetsen**

Come and learn more about the owls of Michigan at our dinner on October 20. Make your reservation now!

**Grand Traverse Audubon Club**  
Kay Beerthuis, Newsletter Editor  
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