

Grand Traverse Audubon Club Newsletter

September 2008
Issue #122

www.grandtraverseaudubon.org
email: info2@grandtraverseaudubon.org



Bird Notes

Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming Events

- ❖ Sept. 25
Regular Meeting,
7:30 p.m., Great
Lakes Campus,
Rm. 211,
Botulism.*
- ❖ Oct. 10
Dinner
Reservations
Due.*
- ❖ Oct. 11
Field Trip -
Jordan River
Valley, Larry &
Cindy DuBey.
231.839.2758*
- ❖ Oct. 18
Dinner Meeting 6
p.m. Twin Lakes.
Loon Watch, John
Mesch.
231.946.3624*
- ❖ Nov. 20
Regular Meeting,
7:30 p.m., Great
Lakes Campus,
Rm. 211, Grand
Traverse Regional
Land
Conservancy.*
- ❖ Dec. 14
Grand Traverse
Christmas Bird
Count. Ed
Moehle, 231.947-
8821.*

Thursday, Sept. 25, 7:30:

"Avian Botulism Outbreaks at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore," will be the topic presented by Mark Breederland. Mark is a Michigan Sea Grant Extension Educator. He will update us on a serious botulism E outbreak which has been responsible for as many as 3,000 dead birds along the beautiful beaches of Lake Michigan in Benzie and Leelanau Counties. Dead loons and grebes have even been found on the shores of East Grand Traverse Bay. Invasive species are seen as a cause for this fish and bird die-off. Come and learn more about the status of this problem, its root cause, and what needs to be done about it. Our meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a short business meeting, followed by refreshments and the program. We will meet in our usual place, Northwestern Michigan College's Great Lakes Campus on Front Street at Barlow Street, Room 211. Come and join us for the start of our fall meetings.

Saturday, Oct. 18, 6:00:

Gilbert Lodge at Twin Lakes.

The popular menu from last year will be repeated again this year: Lean Roast Beef with rosemary glaze, Turkey w/dressing, mashed potatoes w/gravy, California Blend veggies, tossed salad w/dressings, dinner rolls - Decaf coffee and Fruit punch, a variety of desserts and fresh fruit, cheese & crackers for the start.

Jeff Lange, Loon Watch Coordinator, with a DVD documentary, *The Uncommon Loon*, filmed in Northern Michigan will be our guest presenter. He will depict a seasonal journey filmed over two years of one loon family, its wetland habitat and other wildlife that share it. Lange began working as a volunteer in 1986 for the Michigan Loon Preservation Association, an affiliate of the Audubon Society. He continues as a coordinator with Michigan Loonwatch. This statewide organization enlists volunteer Loon Rangers to monitor and report on the breeding success of nesting loons (a threatened species in Michigan). Videotaping began in 1990 when the loon population started to decline on Round Lake, near Petoskey. He lives in Alanson.

Call John or Shirley Mesch, 231.946.3624. Reservation sheet on Page 7.
Reservations due by October 10.

Thursday, November 20 (See sidebar):

Vic Lane, Stewardship Specialist, for the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy will tell us about the various land holdings and programs. His work tracking radio-collared moose in the UP, Little Traverse Conservancy, and managing the GTRLC's sustainable forestry program at Arcadia Dunes should provide an interesting evening.

Upcoming Events, Cont.

- ❖ Dec. 21
Leelanau Bird
Count, Bob
Dec. 28 Carstens,
231.938.5976.
- ❖ Antrim Bird
Count, Bob
Carstens,
231.938.5976.

*Indicates article in
newsletter

Michigan Audubon
announced this year's
Crane Fest on
Saturday and Sunday,
October 11 & 12, at
Baker Sanctuary near
Bellevue, MI (Battle
Creek area)
<http://www.cranefest.org/> -- Elise Brooks,
MAS Representative

The Grand Traverse
Conservation District
is having programs in
Sept. and Oct. Most
start at 6:00 (not all).
Some areas: Greg
LaCross, MI Eagles, a
hike, and a
Spooktacular!
<http://www.gtcd.org/>

The Nature Center
(on Cass, 1.5 miles
south of Airport Rd.)
will be open until 8
p.m. every
Wednesday night this
fall offering
opportunities to
explore the exhibit
gallery, make nature
crafts, and watch
nature films in the
theater.

Jordan River Valley by Cindee DuBey

The Second Annual Jordan River Valley Field Trip (now doesn't that sound impressive?) will be October 11. We'll meet at McDonald's (off to an impressive start right?) in Mancelona at 7:30 A.M. We can car pool from there. We'll visit the National Fish Hatchery (bathrooms are there), Deadman's Hill and many other out-of-the-way places in the area while driving through the river valley that only Larry (DuBey) knows. Last year we saw 40 species of birds and lots of beautiful color. Bring a lunch or at least a lot of snacks. We'll plan our lunch stop where appropriate and it may be in the middle of nowhere depending on birds and color. Plan for all day and weather conditions. Unless it is an all-day rain, we'll go rain or shine. Last year it started out looking "not so good" but cleared off and we had an excellent day. Please let DuBeys know if you are coming so that we don't leave without you. 231. 839.2758.
(Editor's Note: It was a fantastic color tour. Don't miss out on this!)

From the President's Perch by Cindee DuBey

Where did our summer go? Last I remember, it was the first of August and I was looking forward to a trip to Colorado. Now it's the first of September. I have unpacked, done the laundry and the bird list (first things first right?) but, as I filled the feeders yet again, I realized that I haven't seen my Rose-breasted Grosbeaks since we got home. That's sad since they are some of my favorites. Oh well, we'll soon be seeing White-crowned Sparrows, American Tree Sparrows, and with any luck at all, another invasion of Pine Grosbeaks, Bohemian Waxwings, and Common Redpolls.

It will be great to see everyone this fall. In thinking back, I don't think I've been to a gathering since April and that seems like forever ago. Hope everyone had a great and birdie summer. It appears, from the birdalerts, that many of you have had some great birds both in your yard and nearby. Summer birding is TOUGH with all of the foliage to contend with. Besides, many of them stop singing and that makes them all the more difficult to find, so having them in the yard is always a plus. Remember, if you took a trip this summer, send your summary to Kay and she will post it on the website. (You can read about our Colorado trip there.) That way we can all share in your excitement of new birds and old friends.

Our fall meetings have a great line-up of speakers so we will have some interesting facts to digest and talk about. The repeating Fall field trip to the Jordan River Valley was great last year. We saw a nice mix of birds including a late oriole and lots of kinglets and yellow-rumps. The leaves were pretty, too. Bring your cameras, bird books (fall warblers are tough) and a sense of fun and we'll have a great time.

Speaking of programs and field trips, the board is currently working on programs for next year. If you have suggestions for either field trips or programs, please let Tom Ford know. Even with a full line-up of speakers, we are always looking for next year (or substitutions).

The nominating committee is busily getting ready a slate of officers for next year. If you are at all interested in helping, please contact Tom Ford, Shirley Mesch, or Ed Moehle. ALSO, we are looking for committee people to lead a bird walk at the new nature center, help with the web page, bring cookies to the next meeting, or anything else that the club does. Please let me know and I'll pass it along to the appropriate person.

A club is only as good as its volunteers. This is a GREAT club and we have WONDERFUL volunteers so please jump on the bandwagon and get more involved.

Cindee: Cindee DuBey <dubeyc@hotmail.com>

Silver Lake Survey by Bob Carstens

Last September, I was approached by Gary Harsch, Garfield Township Planner, with the request that our club do an avian survey of a north Silver Lake wetland parcel to assess its wildlife supporting potential in their efforts to apply for Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund reserves to preserve it as a "Natural Area" adjunct to their township park/recreational facility located immediately east of this wetland.

Margaret Platner and Gerri Erickson agreed to help me because they live near the wetland and had mentioned noticing species there previously. They made 14 of the 18 site visits for the avian survey for this parcel. The result of their fine avian fieldwork is the observation of 60 avian species and 12 non-avian species between September 7, 2007 and June 12, 2008.

Based on the survey, my letter to Garfield Township, on behalf of GT Audubon, supported the efforts of Garfield Township to preserve this essential wetland:

"In addition to supporting the above-named species, this wetland parcel is essential to maintaining area groundwater quality, the water quality of Silver Lake, and the viability of this lake's fish supporting potential."

"As stewards of this area of Northwest Michigan, we have been called upon to support the efforts of those attempting to ensure that the biodiversity supporting capacity of this special wetland remains intact, that another beautiful place that defines our area will be preserved, while providing opportunities for quality, quiet recreation for present and future generations."

"The stated objectives of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club, founded by Ford Kellum, retired Michigan DNR biologist, are: The welfare and preservation of the bird life and other fauna, the flora, the resources and the beauty of our environment, especially in the Grand Traverse area. We shall cooperate with any individual, organization, or governmental unit that shares these objectives."

Silver Lake Survey—On An Amazing Little Spot Photos and article by Gerri Erickson



Living in such a scenic region, most of us have a wild little spot of woods or wetlands that we pass on our daily commute. While driving along, we slow as much as traffic will allow and we crane our necks to check that spot for any wildlife that might be present. Perhaps we get a few glimpses, but mostly we just wonder and imagine. The thoughts transport us on an interesting expedition and provide a nice diversion from the line of cars before us. And in most instances, that's as far as the adventure goes.

But in the case of the wetlands that lie just over the grassy bank along West Silver Lake Road, when Margaret Platner and I received the go-ahead from Bob Carstens to do the avian survey, we set forth to explore--to see it all up close!

And what a surprise we had in

store...the number of bird species we encountered was much higher and more diverse than we had even imagined. And beyond the resident Green Heron babies and the showy male Wood Ducks, it became clear that in the bigger picture, this small wetlands surrounded with human development, was providing a much needed corridor for the multitude of birds that travel up and down our bays making their way on through our ever-growing county. We all will forever benefit from the preservation of this pocket of wildness. The list is on our website: <http://www.grandtraverseaudubon.org/files/resolutions/nsilverlk.html>



Skegemog September Nature Hike by Bob Carstens

The September 7 Skegemog Nature Hike for Flowers and Birds was attended by Tom Ford and I, plus eleven others, including Gerri Erickson & Margaret Platner, Carole Groves, Samantha & Bruce Bodjack, Heather Peyton, Kate Trainer, Joyce Ward, Ann Putti, Brad Boals, and Matt Winkler.

Although not many birds were observed, we did get good looks at two American Kestrels, a Bald Eagle, and a Cooper's Hawk. We identified 58 plant species. Particularly outstanding to see were the freshly blooming Bottle Gentian, Turtlehead, Great Lobelia, Grass-of-Parnassus, Ladies' Tresses, Elderberry fruit, cranberries, and Bunchberry fruit high-lighted by a ray of sunlight atop a frame of Bunchberry leaves.

The bird list included the following: Blue Jay, American Robin, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Flicker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rosebreasted Grosbeak, White-throated Sparrow, Eastern Kingbird, Common Raven, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Belted Kingfisher, American Wigeon, Virginia Rail, American Crow, Downy Woodpecker, White-throated Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Purple Finch. The total plant list is on our web site: <http://www.grandtraverseaudubon.org/files/clubtrips/skegemog.html>

Skegemog September Nature and Photo Hike by Bruce Bodjack

For you folks that missed the Skegemog trip, it was wonderful. All of the plants and critters out in the fall are truly amazing. We enjoyed hearing Tom, Bob and others explain in great detail some of the mysteries of our natural world.

I did take a few portrait shots, so you may see yourself, if you were on the hike. You will also see some in a "colorful" style new for me. I tend to like these a lot and find them visually exciting, so I hope you enjoy them as well



Bottle Gentian by B. Bodjack

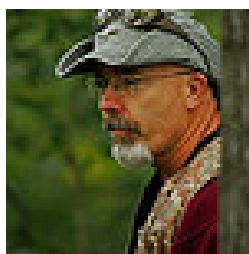
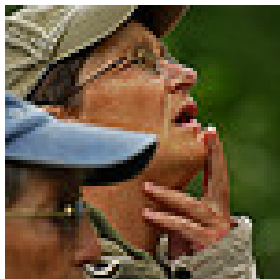
(Bruce will be presenting several workshops for photographers (even beginners, I think) October 4 through the Photography Club. Ask him about them. bbodjack@yahoo.com) The workshops are sure to be great because of Bruce's skill and willingness to help others. More photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bbodjack>



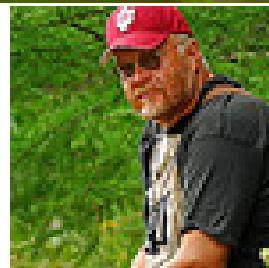
Spring Peeper



Great Blue Lobelia
Photos by B. Bodjack



Margaret Platner, Gerri Erickson,
Tom Ford, and Brad Boals



Rocky Mountain Birding in the Summer by Cindee DuBey

If you've never been to the Rocky Mountains (or even if you have), this place is a MUST. Rangers told us that birding was best at the end of June and beginning of July but crowds were far smaller in early June and late September and even into October. Ptarmigans are tough anytime but easiest to find after a summer snow storm, if you could time that. Our trip was August 13-24.

All totaled, we had 102 bird species including seven lifers (the three flycatchers and sapsucker, Three-toed Woodpecker, White-tailed Ptarmigan, MacGillivray's Warbler). We had elk, moose, mule deer, red fox, coyote, pika, marmot, least chipmunk, Colorado chipmunk, Wyoming ground squirrel, golden mantel ground squirrel, Frasier squirrel, big horn sheep, bison (at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR), muskrat and I'm sure there were more mammals. I have the book and all of the other information that you need so let me know when you are planning a trip out there. I know we are definitely going back!

We flew into Denver (elevation 5,280 feet) on Wednesday morning, and spent a couple of days there; highly recommended for us "flatlanders". We used the time to check out the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and Barr Lake State Park. It was HOT so birds were not exactly plentiful and we worked hard for some of them. On the second day a wave of Eastern Kingbirds and Orchard Orioles came through and that was fun. We also spent one morning with some "banders in training" and got great (bird-in-the-hand) looks at the birds. Nothing we hadn't seen before, but it was really fun to watch the banding operation anyway. We also got a tip on where to find "endangered" (at least in Colorado) Burrowing Owls. We drove out to check them out as well.

On Friday, we headed across Denver and over Berthed Pass and into the Frasier Valley (elevation 8,000 feet give or take a hundred). It was much cooler there (by then Denver was cooler too). On Saturday it rained, hailed, snowed and rained some more so we spent most of our time checking out the "Biker Rally" that we stumbled into. There was also a Veterans Rally happening at the same time so the two seemed to mesh together. Again, it was "interesting". We did some driving and found wildflowers but we never got back to do any photography there. We also went to a real western rodeo. Interesting again, especially since the mud was 6" or more deep. I felt sorry for the cowboys and cowgirls. They did some pretty impressive bull ridin' though.

By Monday, we were ready for the "top" (elevation 12,100+ feet) or so we thought. We got to the park early and had an opportunity to photograph a bull moose (lifer for me) and some cow and calf elk. We did make it to the Alpine Visitor's Center (11,700+ feet) and looked around but hiking was OUT OF THE QUESTION since breathing was difficult enough. Larry did a little walking and did manage to photograph some Pikas at Rock Cut but aside from them, people acting stupid in the snow were about all we saw up there. Time for some lower elevation and OXYGEN. More days and good detail on Larry & Cindy's trip on our website.

<http://www.grandtraverseaudubon.org/files/clubtrips/rockymtn.html>



July field trip on Trees and Shrubs of the Commons lead by Tom Ford.

Where have you, or will you, travel during the winter for birding? For the next newsletter, send me a few short paragraphs including place, housing, cost range, trips taken, non-birding events, best time to go, and the birds you sought. Maybe I can do a two-page round-up in December's newsletter. clgroves@yahoo.com

**December newsletter deadline:
November 19.**

Appreciation or Exploitation?

Photo and article by Gerri Erickson

This summer we, along with our neighbors, enjoyed the most honored privilege of watching daily as a pair of Loons raised their chick. Perhaps it's true however, that with privilege comes responsibility, for it was out of a sense of responsibility that I plunged into quite a difference-of-opinion with one set of neighbors.

As any of you familiar with Loons knows, they are very protective parents. The pair we had this year was particularly so. They called out each time a boat or jet ski came too near their chick. They seemed to get especially upset if anyone passed between them and their young one. After watching the Loons for weeks on end, it had even become a bit of a routine for us. We'd hear the alarming wail, look out upon the water and see a careless boater zooming right straight at the Loons.

One quiet morning, while working around the house, I suddenly heard a particularly distressing Loon call coming from out front. The screech went on and on, sounding especially upset and persistent. When I went to see what the problem was, I found it was our ten year-old-neighbor sitting in a kayak positioned between the Loon parent and its chick. The boy was holding up a camera to video tape the adult Loon's distress. The poor bird was in a frenzy trying to lift itself up and charge across the water's surface in an attempt to drive the kayak away from the chick. I shared the Loon's distress. I looked frantically towards my neighbor's house. There I found the kayaking boy's parents standing in their yard cheering their son on. Shouting out things like "Oooooo---look at the shots you're getting!" "She's going wild!" I called out to the parents, "Guys, he's upsetting that Loon terribly. He should move away." They were unresponsive. I got more worried. I



called out to the boy. "Oh please, please, move away, the mother Loon is afraid you're going to hurt her baby". I got no reply. I pleaded with the boy, and I pleaded with his parents. Finally the father signaled his son in. The boy paddled into shore, bragging about his great video. I went into my house in disgust.

A few days later the boy's father came over to apologize for his son. He said the boy loved nature. He said their family had witnessed people upsetting the Loons almost every day. He thought the Loons were awfully touchy. He said his son would never hurt anything. And this was an apology? I didn't buy it, but realized that the man just didn't get it.

I "love nature" as much as the next guy, but I think that if we are to claim affection for something, we also need to accept the responsibility we have to protect it. We have to be certain that we are never so anxious to see the birds more clearly, capture their image, or "enjoy" them so much that we do anything to upset them or put them in jeopardy. They are living, breathing, sensitive beings. We just don't have the right to be like my neighbor who thought that because the boy meant no harm, it was OK to exhaust and exploit that Loon for his photographic pleasure. That's a lot more like human selfishness than "love" of nature in my personal dictionary.

Seeds for thought...

- ❖ Six members of GT Audubon attended the Invasive Plants of GT County—a three-hour presentation at the Natural Education Reserve on Sept. 18. (Emmy Lou Cholak, Cindy Clement, Heather Peyton, Paula Dreeszen, Bob Carstens, and Carole Groves.) It was great. Maybe we can work out a program for Audubon. A "Master-Invasive Species Expert class will begin Oct. 7. Eleven sessions. Cost is \$225.00. Call Pam Schmidt, 231.256.8323 www.msue.msu.edu/leeanau
- ❖ The Boardman River Dams Committee will be surveying the public soon. The next full meeting and survey is Sept. 23 at the Civic Center. A potluck dinner at 5 p.m. and meeting at 6 p.m. theboardman.org.
- ❖ **Leave feeders out until October 15**
By late September, most hummingbirds will have left. But Wild Birds Unlimited recommends that you leave your feeder out and filled with fresh nectar until October 15 for late migrants passing through from areas further north. By leaving your feeders up a bit longer, you will actually be helping migrants by providing the extra energy they will need for their long southward journey.

Grand Traverse Audubon Club Annual Dinner

Annual Dinner Reservation
Gilbert Lodge at Twin Lakes
Saturday, October 18, 2008, 6:00 p.m.

Name(s) _____

Phone Number _____

Reservation for _____ dinner & program @ \$15.00 each,
for a total of \$ _____

Reservations must
be received by
Friday, October 10.
Mail to:
John Mesch,
Treasurer
9793 Edgewood Ave.
Traverse City, MI
49684

Program: Jeff Lange, Michigan Loon Watch Coordinator, presents a documentary on the uncommon loon with documentation filmed in Michigan.

Audubon Membership Renewal 2009

Send in your renewal now, or at least by December 31, to be included in the membership booklet which will be printed in January. All memberships run the calendar year.

Family \$20, Single \$15, Student \$8.00

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

I would like to receive:

Mailed copy of the quarterly newsletter.
I'll get my newsletter online at gtaudubon.org—no mail.
GTAudubon emails (club news & other information)
birdalert emails (news of area bird sightings)

Enclosed is a check, made out
to Grand Traverse Audubon
Club, for:

Dinner Reservation \$ _____

2009 Membership \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Mail to: John Mesch, Treasurer
9793 Edgewood Ave.
Traverse City, MI 49684
231.946.3624



**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
- Past Pres:** Kay Beerthuis



Photo and story by Bruce Bodjack

On a couple of occasions our bird feeder has been torn down this summer. We found a print that looked to be a black bear. The bird baths have also been over-turned and smashed.

Having lived on this property (4 mile Road, TC, 1 mile south of Don's Drive-in) 34 years, Black Bears were stories by the older residents of our neighborhood.

This morning our feeder was torn down again. After making breakfast, I was sitting at the window watching birds fly in and out, when a black object moved in. Yep a Black Bear. I picked up my wife's camera and got a couple of shots. It came back to eat the oil sunflower seeds in the drive. I think it was somewhere between 200 - 250 lbs. in size.

I must say, we find this a bit unsettling. We have always enjoyed sharing our property with our wild friends of all sorts. This black bear is a different story. These animals seem to be vandals and not something we want to bump into taking our dog out. I'll post the photos at:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sbodjack/>

Grand Traverse Audubon Club
Carole Groves, Newsletter Editor
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Traverse City, MI 49686

