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Flyway

Winter 2012-2013

Volume 2013, Issue 1

CHRYSLER WHQ JOINS SAFE PASSAGE HONOR ROLL

In September, the DAS Safe Passage Great Lakes program recognized Chrysler Group World Headquarters and Technology Center in Auburn Hills as the newest addition to its honor roll of buildings turning out the lights during migration season. Birds and companies alike benefit from the program. "Preservation of the natural environment is ... a key component of our sustainability strategy," said Gregory M. Rose, Director—Environment, Health & Safety and Sustainability, Chrysler Group LLC, in the company's press release. "In addition to reducing the hazards faced by birds during migration, turning off the lights in our facilities at night helped contribute to the 17 percent reduction in energy use we achieved in 2011 compared with 2010." For a link to the entire press release, see the DAS website, www.detroitaudubon.org.

THE FLYWAY IS GOING GREEN!

As announced in previous issues, **beginning next year, only one issue of the *Flyway* (the Spring issue) will be printed and mailed annually (in March).** If you've not already provided your email address to DAS, please do so! You don't want to miss notification of subsequent issues that will be available only on the website!

Please send an email to the DAS office at detas@bignet.net or call the office at (248) 354-5804 to provide us with your email address. Rest assured that DAS will not share or sell your email address to any other person or organization.

DAS VOLUNTEERS HONORED

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC), a group of local residents dedicated to preserving natural areas and farmlands, has honored its founder and long-time DAS Board member Jack Smiley by naming its recently acquired nature preserve after him. The Jack R. Smiley Nature Preserve, 100 acres located at the corner of Prospect Road and Cherry Hill Road in Superior Township, increases the protected acreage in SMLC's Superior Greenway to over 2000 acres. The SMLC Board saluted Jack for his "vision, leadership and perseverance."

That same organization paid tribute as well to Chris Fielding, who also serves as the DAS Webmaster, by naming him SMLC Volunteer of the Year. Praised as a "handyman extraordinaire," Chris has performed tasks as varied as repairing antique furniture to fixing warped walls on old farm outbuildings. The SMLC described the award as "long overdue."

Detroit Audubon joins the applause for Jack and Chris for their contributions to the environment of Southeast Michigan. Thanks to both of you for your long and distinguished service. For further information, visit the SMLC website at www.smlcland.org.



Detroit Audubon Society presents Chrysler Group with Safe Passage Great Lakes certificate of recognition. From left to right: Frank Zaski, Doris Applebaum, and Fred Charbonneau, Detroit Audubon Society; Greg Rose, Director—Environment, Health & Safety and Sustainability, Chrysler Group LLC; Glenn Hoffrichter, Senior Manager—Facilities Planning & Business Services, Chrysler Group LLC.

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Submission of original articles and artwork is welcomed. Send articles via email to flyway_submissions@detroitaudubon.org.
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Advertising rates are available by contacting the DAS office.

Flyway Editor: Emily Simon
Flyway Layout/Design: Michelle Rubarth
DAS Webmaster: Chris Fielding

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be sure to frequently visit our website:
www.detroitaudubon.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE THANK YOU

by Leonard Weber

According to the bylaws of the Detroit Audubon Society, the president's term is for one year, and no more than two terms can be served consecutively. As I complete my second year in this position, I appreciate the wisdom of this limitation. The position requires considerable time and energy, and I am ready for someone else to have this opportunity and responsibility.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Detroit Audubon Society. I have always known this, but my awareness of this reality has increased enormously during 2012 and 2013. I can think of nothing more fitting for the last President's Message of my two terms than a deeply felt "thank you" to all the volunteers that serve so well, often without recognition:

- Thank you to the Detroit Audubon Board, volunteers all, many of whom have served tirelessly on the board and on committees for many years. And I mean "many years" literally. The bylaws do not limit the number of board terms.
- Thank you to the editors of the *Flyway* and to the DAS Webmaster. They facilitate our communications and make it possible for us to reach our members and the public. Thank you also to those who submit articles, information, and pictures.
- Thank you to the field trip leaders, who year after year assist others in finding and enjoying the beauties and wonders of our local birding hotspots. And thank you to those who come on the field trips and share their interest, knowledge, and often their passion.
- Thank you to all those who make financial donations to Detroit Audubon, of whatever amount. This is an essential form of volunteer support. We cannot do without it.
- Thank you to project volunteers. Whether they are part of the Safe Passage project or serve on the *Flyway* mailing committee or staff the Audubon table at events or participate in some other undertaking, these individuals provide valuable services. We thank you.
- Thank you to those who have volunteered in other ways that I have not included in this listing. The list is not complete, but the thank you extends to all.

As I become a past president, I express my sincere gratitude to all my fellow Detroit Audubon volunteers.



NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR DAS PROJECTS

Over the years, DAS has depended on members to carry out its programs and activities. Volunteers help produce and mail the *Flyway*, present programs, and staff our tables at Hawkfest, home shows, and our annual program. Our birding experts have led wonderful field trips for many years. And our Board of Directors volunteer their time at 10 meetings each year to keep the DAS running. All of our volunteers are vital to keeping DAS operating. But DAS has begun some important new conservation projects that must involve new people, willing to volunteer their time, to make them successful. Please consider becoming a much-needed volunteer.

TERN PROJECT

Our newest project will be aimed at learning about the Black Tern and Forster's Tern populations in Lake St. Clair. Detroit Audubon is the overseer of the Detroit River Important Bird Area (IBA). This IBA covers the entire length of the Detroit River but effectively includes Lake St. Clair. The Tern project is an exciting but challenging part of our work with the IBA.

The terns have been nesting in the St. Clair flats for a long time, but their populations in many areas have shown declines. Our project will involve establishing 10 to 25 artificial platforms to provide additional nesting sites for the terns. They have been used elsewhere for tern nesting, and we're optimistic that their use in Lake St. Clair will prove successful.

We need several people who are able to work from boats to observe nesting activity in order to document the current state of the colonies. This will involve identifying and counting the birds weekly, if possible, during the breeding season. We will deploy the nest platforms in early April. The platforms will require anchoring to stabilize them. Volunteers are needed to assist in this effort. The platforms are designed to prevent predation as well as maintain a certain position to encourage successful nesting by the terns.

If you think you may want to be involved in this project, please call our office at (248) 354-5408 and leave your name and number. Richard Quick will contact you to arrange for planning sessions.

BIRD MONITORING AT THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

We are also seeking volunteers to help monitor the birds found on the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR). Much of the area of the DRIWR has yet to have its flora and fauna documented. Gregg Norwood, the biologist at the DRIWR, is working to develop an inventory of plants and animals found there by doing regular monitoring in different parts of the refuge. Volunteers will receive training and will be asked to participate in several monitoring sessions during the breeding season. We would like to have one or more DAS teams participate this coming year. If you are interested in being part of this effort, call our office at (248) 354-5408 and leave your name and number, and Richard Quick will contact you.

SAFE PASSAGE GREAT LAKES

Detroit Audubon's Safe Passage Great Lakes could use your help. The Safe Passage Great Lakes project works to reduce the incidence of collisions of night-migrating birds with illuminated buildings in this area. The number of birds killed in these nighttime collisions runs into the millions. We contact managers of buildings five stories or higher to advise them of the economic and environmental benefits of turning lighting off on their top floors during migration seasons.

We maintain an honor roll of buildings that participate. To keep that honor roll current, we would like to make simple visual inspections of these buildings between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. during spring and fall migration seasons to ensure that those buildings are in compliance. In general, these buildings are found in downtown Detroit, Southfield, Troy, and Mount Clemens. If you live, work, or play in these areas, you could help Safe Passage by checking on a single building and reporting to us whether the lights above the fifth floor of that building are on or off. One visual check in spring and one in autumn would be fine—more would be better.

A second way you could help is to do visual inspections on an entire area like, for instance, downtown Detroit. We would provide the addresses, and you would do one drive-by survey in the spring and one in the fall and report your findings to us. If a building is out of compliance, we will politely remind the manager of their commitment and hopefully that will solve the problem.

A third way to help would be to actually collect and compile information on dead and injured birds that have collided with tall buildings. Collecting would generally occur mornings after foggy and rainy nights, which are particularly deadly for migrating birds. This is already being done in Toronto and Indianapolis. We very much want to initiate such a program in southeast Michigan. Training will be provided. The information gathered will be instrumental in improving the Safe Passage Great Lakes project.

If you think you might be interested, contact Rob Duchene at (248) 549-6328. We'd love to have your assistance, and you would be making a very real contribution to ending the needless slaughter of migrating birds.

We look forward to hearing from our members who want to be a part of these important bird conservation projects.

BURNS PARK ELEMENTARY HOSTS VISITORS FROM PERU

by Greg Munson

The first of them started showing up just before sunset, announcing their presence with “chittering” calls as they circled their nightly “digs.” In 10 minutes there were at least 100 more that joined in the circle, probably letting each other know where they had eaten for the day. Before the skies had darkened, more than 1,000 had shown up and dropped into the historic chimney at Burns Park Elementary School.

Often mistaken as bats, these little birds with 10-inch wingspans and cigar-shaped bodies are Chimney Swifts. On a recent August trip from Minnesota to visit grandchildren in Ann Arbor, I was treated to views of these summer visitors who spend most of their lives in the Amazon Basin of Peru.

Undoubtedly Chimney Swifts have been using the almost 90-year-old Burns Park Elementary chimney for most of those years, probably starting shortly after it was constructed as a junior high school in 1925. They would come each year thousands of miles from the Amazon, probably arriving around mid-April and staying until early fall, when cooler temperatures or activated chimney boilers would send them south.

Chimneys Swifts, formerly called American Swifts, originally nested in large trees with tops that had been opened up due to forces of wind or lightning. When settlers moved across the country and removed many of these swift homes, the birds readily adapted to the brick or block chimneys left in the wake of westward expansion.

While these little birds are amazing for a variety of reasons, to me the most notable is the fact that they essentially are on the wing all day long—flying hundreds of miles and scouring the air of mosquitoes, flies, gnats, and many other insects. Unable to perch on branches, wires, or even the ground, these birds are only able to hang vertically—grasping the insides of trees or chimneys when they roost for the night.

The large chimneys, like the one at Burns Park Elementary, are called roosting chimneys and usually house the nonbreeding birds in early summer, to be joined by the breeders and their young in late summer. Smaller residential chimneys, mostly in older homes, serve as breeding sites for one mated pair and possibly a couple helpers. Four to seven young are hatched out and develop in small, half-cup-shaped nests made of sticks glued by the parents to the sides of the chimney.

While Chimney Swift numbers are on the decline, probably due to destroyed or capped chimneys, many communities welcome them with open arms. The most famous swift chimney is the Chapman Elementary School in Portland, Oregon. There on many late summer nights, hundreds of people gather on the school lawn to watch more than 30,000 swifts enter their roost for the night.

Hopefully the Burns Park Elementary chimney will serve as a roosting site for the swifts for many more decades, and more area residents will come to appreciate these amazing little “flying cigars.”

For more information on Chimney Swifts, email The Nature Nut at naturenutgm@gmail.com, search YouTube for “Chapman Swifts,” or visit www.chimneyswifts.org.

Greg Munson is a former nature center director and freelance writer from Rochester, MN. Greg writes a weekly “Nature Nut” column for the Rochester Post Bulletin when he is not visiting his grandchildren in Ann Arbor. Greg has been studying Chimney Swifts for the past 15 years.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 16th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be held February 15-18, 2013. The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are across the U.S. and Canada.

Each checklist submitted by citizen scientists helps researchers learn more about how birds are doing – and how to protect them. Anyone can take part in the GBBC, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online. Please visit the official website at www.birdcount.org for more information.

If you want to introduce your students to the Great Backyard Bird Count and would like some assistance, please email Rochelle at rbboard@detroitaudubon.org.

On the www.birdcount.org web site, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. The site has tips to help identify birds and special materials for educators. Participants may also enter the GBBC photo contest by uploading images taken during the count. Many images will be featured in the GBBC website’s photo gallery. All participants are entered in a drawing for prizes that include bird feeders, binoculars, books, CDs, and many other great birding products.

2012 SYMPOSIUM A BIG SUCCESS!

On September 29, 2012, Detroit Audubon held its annual conference, “Migration Secrets—Not Just for Birds,” at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Point Shores. For the details on this exciting event, which featured guest speakers and a bird walk around the spectacular grounds, please visit the DAS website at www.detroitaudubon.org.

DETROIT AUDUBON SOCIETY

WINTER 2012 - SPRING 2013 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Spring is THE time to see songbirds in their breeding colors, but winter often brings some nice surprises along with those birds who consider this their "southern home." All trips are free (although some parks we visit have entrance fees), and everyone is welcome, especially beginning birders.

Please call the Detroit Audubon office at (248) 354-5804 by the Thursday before each field trip so that we'll know how many to expect and so we can contact you about any changes. Leave your name, address (helpful in hooking up folks for carpooling), number coming, phone number, and email address. If you are interested in carpooling or giving folks a ride, let us know.

Please tear out this page for future reference. The field trip schedule is also published on the Detroit Audubon website (www.detroitaudubon.org).

Detroit Christmas Bird Count

December 16, 2012 (Sunday)

This is one of the oldest Christmas Bird Counts. Birders spend the entire day counting as many birds as possible in a 15-mile circle in northern Oakland County. The count is one of many conducted across North America; the data are used to study bird populations. Meet for pizza and count wrap-up at day's end. To participate, call Tim Nowicki at (734) 525-8630 or the DAS office at (248) 354-5804.

Rockwood Christmas Bird Count

December 22, 2012 (Saturday)

Public hike: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Call Jim Bull at (313) 928-2950 to register for the morning hike. A chili lunch is provided. Donation appreciated.

Christmas Bird Count: All day. The DAS co-sponsors this annual count of the 15-mile circle that includes Grosse Ile, Lake Erie Metropark, Trenton, Rockwood, South Rockwood, Newport, and Oakwoods Metropark. A chili dinner will be provided. Donation appreciated. If you want to participate in the all-day count, contact count compiler Tom Carpenter at tcarpent1980@yahoo.com or at (734) 728-8733.

Winter waterfowl - Belle Isle, Detroit

February 2, 2013 (Saturday) 9 a.m.

Leaders: Steve Santner and Fred Charbonneau

The Detroit River is one of the key wintering areas for waterfowl in North America, and Belle Isle is a very convenient location to bird without having to go too far from your vehicle.

Address: Belle Isle Nature Zoo, 176 Lakeside, Detroit, MI 48207-6300.

Directions: Take Jefferson to the Belle Isle Bridge. Cross over and drive to the east end of the island and park in the Nature Center/Zoo parking lot.

Owl Prowl - Grosse Ile, MI

March 2, 2013 (Saturday) 7:30 p.m.

Leader: Jim Bull

Great Horned Owls will have been nesting since early February, and Screech owls will be getting ready to nest. Since they are defending

territories, playing an owl tape or imitating their calls will likely bring a response from them, and there is a good chance they will come in where we can see them in the beam of light from a lantern. We have changed locations this year because Jim has had such good success in bringing in both Screech and Great Horned Owls on Grosse Ile. Meet at St. James Episcopal Church for a brief slide program on owls. Please call the DAS office at (248) 354-5804 to make reservations.

Address: St. James Episcopal Church, 25150 East River Road, Grosse Ile Township, MI 48138.

Woodcock Watch - Oakwoods Metropark

April 5, 2013 (Friday) 7:45 p.m.

Leaders: Kevin Arnold and Jim Bull

Right at dusk this sandpiper with a long beak and huge comical eyes comes to open areas to do its spectacular aerial courtship display. This program is especially good for families with children. We will meet at the Oakwoods Nature Center.

Address: 32911 E. Willow Rd., New Boston, MI 48164.

Directions: From I-75, exit at West Road and go west. Go south on Telegraph (M-24), west on Van Horn (which becomes Huron River Drive), then west (left) on East Willow to the park entrance. Metropark entrance fee or sticker required.

Frog Symphony - West Bloomfield Nature Preserve

April 12, 2013 (Friday) 7:30 p.m.

Leaders: Sally Petrella (Friends of the Rouge) and Jim Bull

Join us for an evening of listening to and searching for frogs. We often see salamanders, Wood Ducks, herons, and owls. This field trip is co-sponsored by Friends of the Rouge. This program is especially good for children.

Address: 4655 Arrowhead Rd., West Bloomfield, MI 48323.

Directions: From Telegraph Road, go west on Long Lake Road to where it dead-ends at Orchard Lake. Turn left and go to the next traffic light. Turn right on to Pontiac Trail. Take Pontiac Trail and look for the sign "West Bloomfield Woods Nature Preserve" at Arrowhead Road. Follow signs to the preserve parking lot.

Spring migrants - Magee Marsh, Ohio

April 20, 2013 (Saturday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Richard Quick

We will get the early spring migrants without the crowds at this famous birding locale.

Address: Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, 13229 W. State Rte 2, Oak Harbor, OH 43449.

Directions: Take I-75 to Toledo; go south on I-280 to Highway 2. Follow Highway 2 east about 18 miles and turn north at the Magee Marsh entrance. Drive to the west end of the beach parking lot to the beginning of Bird Trail boardwalk.

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Spring migrants - Point Pelee, Ontario

April 27, 2013 (Saturday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Richard Quick

Pelee in the spring! It does not get better for a birder. This year we are going for the heavy spring migration, including shorebirds in the Hillman Marsh area north of the park.

Address: 1118 Point Pelee Drive, Leamington, Ontario, CA

Directions: Cross the Ambassador Bridge and follow the signs for Highway #3. You will be on Huron Church Road, which is also Highway #3. Follow Highway #3 for approximately 35-45 minutes. There are two exits for Leamington. Take the second exit for Erie Street. Turn right onto Erie Street and travel through eight stop light intersections. At the ninth intersection (Erie St. and Seacliff Dr./County Road 20), turn left. Drive approximately 1/2 mile, and you will see a large Point Pelee National Park sign indicating a right turn. After making the right turn on Bevel Line, follow this road for approximately 10 minutes to arrive at the front gates of the park. Entrance fee required: about \$8/person. Meet in the visitor center parking area. Remember to bring passport for entry into Canada and back into the U.S.

Spring birds - W. C. Wetzel State Recreation Area, Macomb County, MI

May 4, 2013 (Saturday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Richard Quick

This trip takes us to an area that provides a nice mixture of habitat. Breeding birds regularly observed include Sedge and Marsh Wrens, harriers, Forster's and Caspian Terns, and Clay-colored, Savannah, Song, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Other regulars include Bobolink, Meadowlark, Orchard Oriole, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-winged Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, Ruddy Duck, Redhead, and Pied-billed Grebe. This trip will require walking 3 to 4 miles on trails over several habitats and will last about 4 hours. Be prepared for wet trails.

Directions: Take I-94 east to exit 247, M-19/New Haven Road. Take M-19 north to 27 Mile Road. Go west on 27 Mile past Werderman Road. Meet in the parking lot at the end of 27 Mile Road.

Spring passerines - Lake St. Clair Metropark (formerly Metro Beach Metropark)

May 5, 2013 (Sunday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Joanna Pease

Lake St. Clair Metropark is a justly famous migrant trap. We will see a good number of warblers as well as many other nesting and migrant birds.

Address: 31300 Metropolitan Parkway, Harrison Township, MI 48045.

Directions: Take I-94 east and exit at Metropolitan Parkway. Drive east into the park. Metropark entrance fee or sticker required. Park on the west side of the main parking lot near the nature center. Meet at the nature center.

Spring birds - Humbug Marsh

May 19, 2013 (Sunday) 2 - 4 p.m.

Leader: Jim Bull

See this natural gem of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in spring.

Address: 5437 West Jefferson Avenue, Trenton, MI.

Directions: Take I-75 to Gibraltar Road. Go east toward Gibraltar, turn left on Jefferson and drive north. You will see the sign for the Humbug Unit on your right. Go past that sign until you come to the sign for the Detroit International Refuge Gateway. Turn right, go through the gate, and park in the designated area. Meet in the parking lot.

Detroit Audubon Memorial Day Weekend Nature Get-Away

May 24-27, 2013 (Friday thru Monday)

Don't miss this weekend with wonderful people and fine birds. We are not sure if the Loon Lake Lutheran Retreat Center, where we have held this event for 30 years, will be open this year. If not, we will move to another venue. As always, in addition to great birds and wildflowers, there will be great food, music, educational programs, and children's activities—all amid beautiful surroundings. We will take off-site field trips to places of interest as well. Watch the *Flyway* and the website for further details and registration information.

Breeding birds - Port Huron State Game Area

June 2, 2013 (Sunday) 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Joanna Pease

An exceptional diversity of breeding birds, especially warblers, may be found in this area, including Hooded Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, and Golden-winged Warbler. Insect repellent is advisable—no, mandatory. This trip will last 5 to 7 hours. Bring a lunch.

Address: 5080 Wildcat Rd, Clyde, MI.

Directions: Take I-94 to the last exit in Port Huron (on left) before crossing into Canada. Proceed north on M-25 to M-136. Drive west on M-136 five or six miles to Wildcat Road. Turn right into Bill Bears Memorial Park and park near the baseball diamond. We will try to caravan from there.

Breeding and nesting birds - Eliza Howell Park

June 8, 2013 (Saturday) 9 a.m.

Leader: Leonard Weber

Join us for the second year of this trip to see over 30 species of songbirds that breed in Eliza Howell Park during the peak of the breeding season. We will look for nests of orioles, Eastern Bluebirds, Barn Swallows, and others. We can expect to watch birds feeding their young.

Address: 23751 Fenkell, Detroit.

Directions: Eliza Howell Park is located on Fenkell Road (Five Mile Road) in Detroit about one block east of Telegraph Road. Enter the park and drive about 1/2 mile around the road loop and park near the nature trail.

A DECEMBER VISIT TO BELLE ISLE

by Leonard Weber

It was a sunny day when I arrived on Belle Isle with my binoculars on a Sunday morning in mid-December 2011. The temperature was well below freezing, and a cold breeze was coming off the Detroit River. During the three hours I drove the perimeter of the park, stopping for bird-watching walks at four different locations, I found that I was not distracted by the cold. The sunshine definitely helped, but so did the fact that Belle Isle is a great place for a birding visit at this time of the year.

Much of my fall birding time is spent searching for migrating songbirds in another Detroit park, Eliza Howell. Sometime in November, the week-to-week change in species present in Eliza Howell has ended until March, and I turn some of my attention elsewhere. Belle Isle is a great place for early winter birding, and this was my second visit of the season.

After crossing the bridge and following the road to the right, my first stop was at the west end of the island, the end facing downriver. I immediately saw several Common Goldeneyes quite close to shore. The reason for the name was obvious on this sunny day, as I could clearly see the golden eyes in both the males and the females—a truly striking feature. The bright sunshine also made the colors of the Canvasbacks and Redheads stand out. They were both present in large numbers a little further out in the river.

As I walked along the west end, I turned my attention away from the ducks long enough to notice that there were well over 100 gulls in the water of the reflecting pool by the Scott Fountain. I looked closer. They were all Ring-billed Gulls, as far as I could tell, and they were not in the water after all. They were on new ice, ice clear enough to look like water. It looked like a cold place to roost, even in the sunshine. As I watched a few of them walk about on the ice, I wondered whether they were trying out their ice legs for the first time of the year.

After driving along the south (Canada) side of the island, I stopped for a second walk at the east end, going out to the lighthouse and more than half way around the Blue Heron Lagoon. The lagoon was also mostly iced over, and the ducks that frequent the lagoon in

November have moved elsewhere. Two Mute Swans swam in one of the small areas of open water. I scanned the open field and the shrubs and trees by the water's edge, wondering whether there might be some less common winter visitors. I was imagining a Snowy Owl or a Merlin or a flock of Snow Buntings, but I saw nothing of the sort. My one mystery bird of the day was along the golf course side of the lagoon, just a glimpse of a solitary small bird, maybe a little bigger than a typical sparrow.

Coming back along the Detroit side of the island, I stopped for a look at berry-eating birds on the inland side of the drive across from the bath house. There is a red footbridge there (a bridge I think of as a "bridge to nowhere" because there is no open path on the other side). This is the spot where a Bohemian Waxwing was spotted a few years ago, and, probably typical of birders, I never pass this location without thinking of that particular winter visitor. The berries were plentiful again this day, and the usual December berry-eating birds were present—American Robins, House Finches, Cedar Waxwings, and Starlings. A couple Blue Jays watched over the scene high in the trees above.

Since the biggest December Belle Isle attraction for me is always the presence of water birds, I had reserved a major portion of my time for the last stop, a walk along the riverfront on the north side of the island. I covered much of the shore between the beach and the boat club, including the north fishing pier. This was the highlight of my visit. I had great looks at Buffleheads, Horned Grebes, American Coots, and Gadwalls, and I spotted a lone female Hooded Merganser. Common Goldeneyes and Canvasbacks and Redheads were also on this side of the island, even more, in fact, than I had seen at my first stop. While I was on the fishing pier, a raft of Ruddy Ducks, their tails in the air, came floating right toward me.

The sun was still shining as I headed home from Detroit's best-known park that Sunday morning last December. There is no doubt that the sunshine enhanced my enjoyment significantly, but sunny days are unpredictable. Much more predictable are the birds of Belle Isle in early winter. They will be there again this year, sunshine or no sunshine. I plan to be there also.

DETROIT AUDUBON SOCIETY

I'm enclosing or charging my tax deductible contribution of: \$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 \$20 OTHER

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Thank You for your support!

JOHN MAKRIS RETIRES FROM DAS BOARD

John Makris has been a key Detroit Audubon figure for a long time. A lawyer and member of the Michigan Bar Association Environmental Law Section, John served on the DAS Board of Directors for over 30 years, including two terms as President. In addition, he has chaired the Nominating, Finance, Conservation, and Membership Committees and has been our delegate to the Earthshare of Michigan Board. John also co-chaired the Michigan Clean Air Campaign and acted as a Citizens Panel member of the International Joint Commission Study of Great Lakes Pollution. He has worked tirelessly to preserve habitat, raise funds for conservation causes, and spread the environmental ethic to a diverse populace.

John has recently retired from the DAS Board, and although this chapter in his life and ours has come to a close, his prior work on our behalf will continue to benefit the DAS. The entire membership wishes to extend our deep gratitude to John and to his family for giving him leave to help us. We are all indebted to John for his many years of service.



Feathered Tales

by Bev Stevenson

In September I was entertained watching a Green Heron take a Largemouth Bass that was almost as big as he was—and the antics he had to go through to eat it. The heron had to get this fish in a vertical position in order to swallow it. He held his head straight up, and he finally got the fish in. It took a good five minutes for the bird to get it down. This took place on our dock in Lilley, Michigan.

Bookstore Bits

by Bev Stevenson

If you've got children aged 5 through 12, we have great heavy-duty jigsaw puzzles that teach identification of North American owls and birds. The puzzles are reasonably priced at \$6.35 (including tax) and would make great Christmas gifts. We've also got the popular Audubon Songbirds calendars. They are going fast and sell for \$11.58 (tax included).