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Flyway

Winter 2011-2012

Volume 2012, Issue 1

SAVE THE DATES MAY 25-28, 2012 FOR WHAT MAY BE THE SWAN SONG FOR OUR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND NATURE GET-AWAY

by Jim Bull

As I write this, the leaves have turned brilliant red, orange, and yellow. Sandhill Cranes are gathering in numbers in the evening in preparation for their trip south. Hawks are drifting on thermals in good numbers too. I love autumn, but I know it's also time to think not just about winter, but about spring as well.

Spring brings the onslaught of warblers that birders wait for all year, along with spring wildflowers, singing frogs, and so much more. You can experience those spring wonders all over again on Memorial Day Weekend, by heading north about three hours and joining our Memorial Day Weekend Nature Get-Away (formerly known as our Spring Campout—but since we don't use tents, we felt that name was misleading).

We will again be at the Loon Lake Lutheran Retreat Center (formerly Camp Mahn-Go-Tahsee). This is home to Michigan's only state wildlife sanctuary on private land. The lake is sparsely developed, so it has a wild feel to it. We can always depend on seeing nesting Common Loons and hearing their plaintive, eerie call each night and often in the early morning. Bald Eagles come to catch fish, and occasionally we've seen fox kits playing around their den along the roadside. Trillium and yellow Lady's-slippers line the trails. Pileated Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Phoebe, Hummingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and American Redstart nests have been easy to see right near the cabins some years. And the Barred Owl often answers and even comes in close where we can observe it on owl prowls through the woods. Then there are Kirtland's Warblers, the Au Sable River Overlooks, and Tawas Point State Park, often called a miniature Point Pelee, within an hour's drive of the camp.

Combine that with good food, good company, campfires with singing and s'mores, and interesting guest speakers, and you have a weekend you won't soon forget. Unfortunately, we have been informed that the Retreat Center will be sold, and our 30-plus-year tradition may end if the purchaser does not continue to run the facility as a camp. So put the dates on your calendar and join us for what may be your last opportunity to participate in our annual get-away at Loon Lake.

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Flyway

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Michigan Important Bird Areas: The Next Phase

By Leonard Weber

As we approach the end of 2011, it seems a good time to review what is happening in the Detroit Audubon Society. Rather than reviewing the variety of our activities, I want to highlight one project that represents a most significant opportunity and responsibility for us: the next phase of the Michigan Important Bird Areas project.

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) program is a worldwide effort to identify and conserve areas that are key to the future of specific bird species. Habitat loss and degradation are among the most serious threats to birds in this country and around the world. Once an area has been identified as an IBA, steps can be taken to develop and implement conservation strategies that will allow the targeted species to thrive in that locale.

The IBA program is designed to focus conservation efforts where they will do the most good to species of concern. Two examples in Southeast Michigan:

- Up to 7 percent of all Canvasbacks in the world spend up to six months of the nonbreeding season in the Detroit River area, many coming from nesting areas in the far north of Canada. Ensuring the long-term health and suitability of this habitat can go a long way toward protecting Canvasbacks.
- St. Clair Flats, a marsh area at the northeast edge of Lake St. Clair, is one of the key nesting locations in Michigan for Forster's Terns and Black Terns. Abating threats to the nesting success of terns at St. Clair Flats is enormously important to the future of these terns in Southeast Michigan.

During the past several years, Detroit Audubon Society, in partnership with other organizations, has supported the Michigan IBA program in the identification and mapping of IBA sites in Michigan.

Now we are embarking on what is likely to be a multiyear process of identifying the specific threats to the species of concern in one or two selected IBAs and developing the conservation strategies most likely to be successful. Again we will be working in partnership with other organizations, each doing what we can.

This is both an exciting and an important project. We can do our part to ensure that future generations can also come to know the diversity of birds that we have enjoyed. ***Volunteers who would like to assist are most welcome. Please contact Detroit Audubon if you would like to be part of the IBA project.***

Change in Flyway Staff

With this issue, we bid farewell to lead editor Sue Beattie and layout editor Don Tinson. These marvelous volunteers have been publishing Flyways for over 10 years. Detroit Audubon is very grateful for their loyal service.

Replacing Sue as lead editor is Emily Simon of Allen Park.

Emily has over 20 years of editing experience. She is also an avid birder.

Replacing Don as layout editor will be Michelle Rubarth. Michelle is a recent graduate of Madonna College with a degree in graphic design. She hopes one day to work in animation.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Annual Cottage & Lakefront Living Show will be February 23–26, 2012, at the Suburban Collection Showplace (formerly Rock Financial Showplace) in Novi. We're looking for volunteers to staff our booth.

Helping out takes just three hours of your time, and you can bring a friend. Your admittance fee will be covered, and after (or before) your shift, you will be free to see the rest of the show. The merchandise for sale in our booth will have the prices marked with the tax already figured in. You will meet interesting people stopping by to purchase something or maybe to share some birding experience. Please contact our office at (248) 354-5804 to choose your time slot.

DETROIT AUDUBON SOCIETY

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DETROIT AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPRING 2012 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Note: These are the field trips planned for winter, spring, and summer 2012. Please tear this out and keep for your reference. A schedule for fall 2012 will appear in the fall Flyway (out in late August).

Please call the Detroit Audubon office by the Thursday before each field trip. This is so that we can know how many to expect and so we will be able to notify you of any changes. Leave your name, the number of people coming, and your phone number and email address. Also indicate if you are interested in carpooling, and we will put you in touch with others with a similar interest in your area. Call (248) 354-5804.

Belle Isle, Detroit

February 4, 2012 (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 take this in 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, Kensington Metropark

March 3, 2012 (Saturday) 7:30 p.m.

Leaders: Bob Hotaling, Metropark naturalist, and Jim Bull

Great Horned Owls will have been nesting since early February, and Barred Owls will just be beginning to nest. 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 a beam of lantern light. We have changed parks this year.

Address: 2240 W. Buno Rd., Milford, MI 48380-4410.

Directions: From I-96, take exit 151 (Kensington Road). Enter park and follow the road past the HCMA Administrative Office to the nature center. Meet inside the nature center. You will need an annual Metroparks sticker or day pass. Space is limited, so please call the DAS office at (248) 354-5804 to make reservations.

Woodcock Watch, Oakwoods Metropark

March 30, 2012 (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.

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. Meet at the nature center. **You will need an annual Metroparks sticker or a daily pass.**

Frog Symphony, West Bloomfield Woods Nature Preserve

Cosponsored by Friends of the Rouge

April 20, 2012 (Friday) 7:30 p.m.

Leaders: Sally Petrella (Friends of the Rouge), Jim Bull, and Lauren Zoet (West Bloomfield naturalist). Join us for an evening of listening to and searching for frogs. We often see salamanders, Wood Ducks, herons, and owls. 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.

Magee Marsh, Ohio

April 21, 2012 (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.

Point Pelee, Ontario

April 28, 2012 (Saturday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Richard Quick

Pelee in the spring! It does not get better for a birder. Of course late April is before the main rush of warblers, but there will still be plenty to see, including shorebirds in the Hillman Marsh area north of the park.

Address: Point Pelee National Park, 407 Monarch Ln., RR1, Leamington, Ontario, Canada N8H 3V4.

Directions: Cross the Ambassador Bridge and follow Route 3 to Leamington. Follow signs to Point Pelee National Park (entrance fee required: about \$12). Meet in the visitor center parking area. Remember to bring passport for entry into Canada and back into the U.S.

Metro Beach Metropark

May 6, 2012 (Sunday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Joanna Pease

Metro Beach Metropark is a justly famous migrant trap.

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

Directions: Take I-94 east and exit at Metropolitan Parkway. Drive east into the park. You will need an annual Metroparks sticker or day pass. Park on the west side of the main parking lot near the nature center. Meet at the nature center.

Suburban Park Hop

May 9, 2012 (Wednesday) 8 a.m.

Leader: Karl Overman

This is a chance to explore close to home with the prospects of interesting birds in unlikely locations. We will

visit a series of parks in Southfield, Farmington Hills, and Commerce Township on this venture.

Address: Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve, 27101 W. 10 Mile Rd., Southfield, MI, 48033.

Directions: Meet at the parking lot of Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve on 10 Mile Road about a quarter mile east of Inkster Road.

Wetzel State Recreation Area, Macomb County

May 12, 2012 (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, harrier, bitterns, Forster's and Caspian Terns, Cuckoos, and Clay-colored, Savannah, Song, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Other regulars include Bobolink, 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.

Humbug Marsh

May 20, 2012 (Sunday) 2 p.m.–4 p.m.

Leader: Jim Bull

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

Address: 5437 W. Jefferson Ave., Trenton, MI, 48183.

Directions: Take I-75 to Gibraltar Road. Go east toward Gibraltar, turn left on to Jefferson, and drive north past Vreeland Road. Entrance to the Refuge Gateway Center will be on your right. Pull into the Refuge Gateway Center (fenced in) and park where designated.

Detroit Audubon Memorial Day Weekend Nature Get-Away

May 25-28, 2012 (Friday–Monday)

Don't miss this weekend with wonderful people and fine birds. Besides an array of notable breeding birds in the area, including Kirtland's Warbler, nearby Tawas Point should be hopping with migrants. A few years ago our group even found a new bird for the Michigan list—Couch's Kingbird! There will be great food, music and educational programs, and children's activities, including a challenge course, all amid beautiful surroundings. In addition to the camp, there will be trips to the scenic Rifle River area, Tawas Point, and Au Sable River Overlooks. Watch the *Flyway* and the website for registration information. **This may be the last year for this event as the camp is being sold.**

Port Huron State Game Area

June 3, 2012 (Sunday) 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Joanna Pease

An exceptional diversity of breeding birds, especially warblers, may be found in this area, including Hooded, Louisiana Waterthrush, Mourning, and Golden-winged Warblers. Insect repellent is advisable. This trip will last 5 or more hours with driving to each area.

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. Park near the baseball diamond in the park on the northeast corner of Wildcat and M-136. Bring a lunch.

Eliza Howell Park *New trip*

June 9 (Saturday) 9 a.m.

Leader: Leonard Weber

Over 30 species of songbirds breed in Eliza Howell Park, and this is the peak of the breeding season. We will look for nests of orioles, bluebirds, Barn Swallows, and others. We can expect to watch birds feeding their young.

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

Sunrise Serenade at LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve

Cosponsored by the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy

Friday, June 22, 2012, 7 p.m., for camping, or Saturday, June 23, 4:30 a.m., for Sunrise Serenade; breakfast to follow.

In the tradition of Aldo Leopold, take some time to listen to the beautiful songs of a summer morning. Birding experts will be on hand to help us document the progression of bird song, keeping track of when each species first begins to sing. Join friends for a campout on Friday night or arrive by 4:30 a.m. on Saturday if you don't wish to camp. By 7 a.m. we will provide a hearty breakfast for everyone. Bring friends, family, blankets, chairs, and a tent if you'd like to camp—please, no pets. Please also bring plates, cups, and utensils for breakfast. Attendance is limited, and a \$5 donation is suggested to cover the cost of breakfast. Contact the DAS office at (248) 354-5804 by Thursday, June 21, for reservations.

Address: 2252 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Township, MI 48198.

Directions: Entrance is on Prospect Road half way between Geddes and Vreeland Roads.

IHM Campus, Monroe

July 21, 2012 (Saturday) 8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Leaders: Jim Bull and IHM staff

We will start out with a tour of the rare oak savannah, the native prairies and wetlands on the property. We will then tour the Motherhouse and the campus with an IHM tour guide. The campus of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, has won national and international awards for its environmentally sustainable design, including a gray water system, a created wetland to treat the gray water, geothermal heating and cooling, pervious pavement, recreated native prairies, green lighting and materials, and more. The story is truly inspiring and may give you ideas to try at home. The tour cost is \$12, and lunch (sustainable and delicious) is available for an extra \$8. Send checks made out to Detroit Audubon Society to 24433 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48033.

Address: 610 W. Elm Ave., Monroe, MI, 48162. IHM phone is (734) 241-3660.

Directions: Take I-75 South to exit 14, Elm Avenue. Go west towards Monroe and cross over Monroe Street (M-125). Look for the Motherhouse entrance on the right. Park in the west lot, where Jim Bull will meet the group.

Board of Directors Election: Class of 2014 Candidates

The Board of Directors of the Detroit Audubon Society is made up of three classes of up to eight directors each. A director serves a term of three years, and each year an election is held for one of the three classes. Any paid-up member of the Society is eligible to submit his or her name to be elected or to be appointed (if an empty space occurs). This year the election is for the class of 2014.

All members of the Detroit Audubon Society are eligible to vote. Please submit your vote by December 31, 2011. Thank you. *To view the entire list of current Board members, please go to the DAS website.*

The following members are seeking election for the class of 2014:

Rochelle Breitenbach: current Board member and past president of the Board (2005-2006); chair of the Annual Program Committee.

Jim Bull: current Board member and past president of the Board (2003-2004); chair of the Fund-Raising Committee and co-coordinator of field trips.

John Makris: current Board member and past president of the Board (two terms); legal counsel for the Board.

Jack Smiley: current Board member and past president of the Board (2009-2010); chair of the Sanctuary Committee.

Leonard Weber: current Board member and current president of the Board; coordinator of the annual Birdathon.

Board of Directors Class of 2014 Election Form

Please place an "X" next to the name(s) of the candidate(s) of your choice.

Class of 2011 Candidates

Rochelle Breitenbach

Jim Bull

John Makris

Jack Smiley

Leonard Weber

Please contact me about becoming a member of the Board of Directors. (Please provide the following information. We will contact you to arrange a follow up.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

ONE PARK, 500 BIRD WALKS

By Leonard Weber

Soon, probably shortly before January 1, 2012, I will record the 500th bird walk that I have taken in Eliza Howell Park since January 1, 2005.

In getting started on this project, I was influenced by the advice attributed to different naturalists: if you really want to get to know nature well, take the same walk repeatedly. That made sense to me. Repeated visits to the same area should lead to a much better knowledge of the flora and fauna and a clearer recognition of how things change with the seasons. I was also growing convinced that keeping more detailed records of what I see on my walks would focus my attention and contribute to my knowledge. I decided to pick my spot.

Eliza Howell Park, east of Telegraph between Fenkell and Schoolcraft, is close to home and convenient for visiting even when time is limited. It is large, as city parks go, and has a diversity of habitats, including a river with bottomland that is flooded on occasion, forested areas both large and small, and a more open area spotted with mature trees. It has many fruit-bearing trees and shrubs. A Detroit city park, it provides an opportunity to improve my understanding of birds in the heart of a major urban area.

Eliza Howell Park has proven to be an excellent location for my more systematic approach to birding and nature study. I typically take at least 70 walks there a year, usually lasting about two to three hours. I have not missed a month in the seven years, the lowest number of walks in a single month being two.

The number of bird species is considerably greater than I had originally expected, especially since the park does not get many water birds. Over the last seven years, the average number of species observed per year is 106; the total for seven years is 135. Sixteen species have been observed in every month of the year. I have found more species in September than any other month, an average of 64. May is very similar, with an average of 62 species. It is no surprise that these, key months for warbler migration, are the highest. It is also no surprise that February, the heart of winter, has the lowest average, just 12 species.

While the numbers are worth noting, many of my memories as I reach 500 walks are mental pictures of specific occasions. As I write this, I am thinking of

- watching a Blue Jay maneuver around the branches of a tree to keep 15 feet between itself and the Cooper's Hawk that was pursuing it,
- finding nine Baltimore Oriole nests in one season,
- being totally surprised to see a Summer Tanager on a May morning walk,
- watching a Great Horned Owl nest with two nestlings on several April visits one year,

- finding both a Purple Finch and a Fox Sparrow on the very day in October when I thought they were due to arrive,
- watching an adult Chipping Sparrow feed a Brown-headed Cowbird fledgling that was bigger than it was one July morning,
- being warmed by the bright color and loud call of the Red-bellied Woodpecker on cold February days,
- watching a Merlin consume a Black-capped Chickadee during a January snowfall,
- observing a flock of about 50 Mourning Doves forage for seeds on the ground in early October,
- finding “pockets” of migrating warblers every September,
- watching dozens of Cedar Waxwings and American Robins enjoy the wild black cherries in August,
- watching a Red-headed Woodpecker visit oak trees one August afternoon,
- finding Black-capped Chickadees looking for seeds in a sumac patch in late winter,
- watching the fascinating feeding flights of Barn Swallows over the fields in visit after visit every year,
- watching the Red-tailed Hawk soar overhead and perch in trees many times and never—at least not yet—finding its nest,
- seeing the increased presence of Eastern Bluebirds as the years go by, and
- frequently watching the male Ruby-throated Hummingbird as it watched over its territory from its favorite tree-top perches.

While I have been mostly watching birds on my walks, I have of course observed much more. Eliza Howell Park is a good urban location for mammals, butterflies and dragonflies, wildflowers, and other wildlife. My memories include

- watching a Red Fox bounding toward me through snowdrifts, stopping when it saw me, and then rapidly crossing the frozen river to disappear on the other side;
- checking butterfly bushes and finding Tiger Swallowtails nectaring there, just as I had hoped;
- surprising a Coyote as it was sunning itself on a cool June day;
- learning to know just where in the park I can find a Silver-spotted Skipper much of the summer; and
- discovering some of the best patches of wild black raspberries I have ever seen.

Five hundred walks in the same park and no two have been the same. The walks will continue. I am eager to know what I will see next time.

NOTE: If you would like to know more about the birds of Eliza Howell Park or would like to be part of an Eliza Howell Park bird walk, please contact Leonard Weber at daspres@detroitaudubon.org or by contacting the Detroit Audubon Society.



FEATHERED TALES

By Bev Stevenson

In our last issue of the newsletter, the Cooper's Hawks story on page 3 spurred a few of our members to relate their own "hawk tales."

Michael Dobosenski of Birmingham relates the story of a couple of Cooper's Hawks that nested on Hazel Street in a locust tree, like the downtown pair. Hazel Street is south of Maple and east of Adams. The pair had three offspring, which the neighborhood residents saw in their yards during July and August.

Rita Casey sent a photo of a Cooper's Hawk (taken by Dana Nevedal with her phone 10 feet from the bird) devouring a pigeon near the entrance to the Rackham Building across from the south entrance to the Detroit Institute of Arts on July 10. The bird had no qualms about eating while people walked up to watch.

Leslie Littell was rather surprised to hear that Cooper's Hawks are not considered common here. She's seen them in her Auburn Hills neighborhood for years. In fact, this year she had a nesting pair that successfully hatched and raised two young, and she saw all four of them at the end of August while walking her dog around South Boulevard.