



Flyway

Spring 2018

A Detroit Audubon publication

www.detroitaudubon.org

*Detroit Audubon fosters the appreciation and conservation of birds
and the environment we share through education, research and action.*

One of the Snowy Owls
to visit Metro Detroit this
year, by Bruce Szczechowski.



Flyway

A publication of Detroit Audubon

4605 Cass Avenue
Detroit, MI 48201-1256

Phone: 313-960-3399

Email: staff@DetroitAudubon.org

Web: www.detroitaudubon.org

James N. Bull, Ph.D. President
jbull@detroitaudubon.org

Bailey Lininger

Program Coordinator
blininger@detroitaudubon.org

Erin Rowan

Research Coordinator
and Office Administrator
erowan@detroitaudubon.org

*Staff are part-time but will return
calls/emails as soon as possible.*

Flyway Editors:

Jim Bull and Erin Rowan

Layout: Tana Moore

Flyway is published four times per
year for Detroit Audubon members.

*Opinions expressed by the authors
and editors do not necessarily reflect
the policy of Detroit Audubon.*

Articles that appear in the *Flyway*
may be reproduced freely as long as
Detroit Audubon is credited.

Your original articles, photos and art
welcome at staff@DetroitAudubon.org

Follow us on



**Four Snowy Owls in one shot at Pointe Mouillee during this year's
amazing irruption, by Bruce Szczechowski.**



Contents

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|--|
| 2 | Memorial Day Nature Get-Away | 7 | Snowy Owls Descend upon
Detroit, Causing Quite a Stir |
| | 2018 Monthly Nature Programs | 9 | Belle Isle: A Birding Hotspot
with History |
| 3 | Bully Pulpit: Love and Action | 11 | 2018: The Year of the Bird |
| 5 | Detroit Zoological Society Works
to Reduce Bird Collisions | 12 | 2018 Field Trips |
| 6 | Detroit River International
Important Bird Area Waterfowl
Count | 13 | Announcements |
| | | 14 | Mystery Bird |



Mystery Bird

Can you guess the
identity of this well-
camouflaged songbird?
See page 15 to check
your answer.

**Mystery Bird by
Bruce Szczechowski.**

Memorial Day Nature Get-Away May 25-28

One Last Time at Loon Lake Lutheran Retreat Center!

While it's still chilly here in Metro Detroit, spring is officially here and warmer days are ahead. Now is the time to think about your plans for Memorial Day weekend. We'd love for you to join us at our annual Memorial Day Weekend Nature Get-Away Friday, May 25th to Monday, May 28th, 2018.

"But," you say, "We were told the camp was sold to a developer and will be closed!" The camp has tentatively been sold to a developer, but it will take time for the deal to actually close. Meantime, we were invited to enjoy one last year at the lovely facility just 3 miles north of Hale, MI.

The camp sits on a high bluff with spectacular views of Loon Lake, especially at sunset. You'll be lulled to sleep by the plaintive call of the Common Loon—the ethereal sound of the north country that you feel in your bones as much as hear. Barred Owls serenade us and

sometimes come close enough to see—a jaw-dropping sight.

Bald Eagles can be seen swooping over the lake catching fish for their young.



You can take out a canoe or paddle boat on the lake for no additional charge. You can also enjoy excursions to great birding meccas nearby including Tawas Point State Park, the Rifle River State Recreation Area, Kirtland's Warbler breeding grounds, and the Au Sable River. You can rent a canoe at a local canoe livery and take a trip down the famous AuSable or Rifle Rivers.

Moreover, you'll enjoy great food, and the friendliest people you could ever want to meet. Register now at <http://www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/memorialday/> and join us for a fun, relaxing, and bird-filled weekend up north!

A Loon Lake campfire by David Martin.

A pair of Northern Pintails
by Sharon Korte.



2018 Monthly Nature Programs

2017 saw the return of our Monthly Nature Program series to the Belle Isle Nature Center.

In 2018 we'll see these programs shift in response to what you, our members, want more of.

We heard from lots of folks that they would love to see our Monthly Nature Programs feature more experiences and education for beginning birders and young birders.

We're excited to be able to provide that!

Our Monthly Nature Programs will now be a blend of a traditional speaker series and hands-on, naturalist-led experiences in the forest and shore surrounding the Belle Isle Nature Center.

Join us this spring and summer for one of these fantastic programs!

Upcoming topics and themes can be found on our website, www.detroitaudubon.org or our Facebook page.

Above, Tree Sparrow at the Belle Isle Nature Center by Bruce Szczechowski

BULLY PULPIT: LOVE AND ACTION!

By James N. Bull, Ph.D., Detroit Audubon President

In March, I led an Owl Prowl on Grosse Ile, during which we called in five Eastern Screech Owls, and possibly heard one Long-eared Owl. Over 60 people enjoyed that field trip. We turned away another 35 folks who were on a waiting list, and who knows how many who wanted to come but gave up when they saw the trip marked, "Sold Out." (By the way, we will be offering additional Owl Prowls this summer for those who missed out.)

Most of those I talked with at this event had never attended a Detroit Audubon field trip or program before. This is encouraging—folks are eager for experiences with birds and nature. That is where it all starts. You have experiences that whet your appetite for more contact with nature, and you also want to learn more about the creatures that drew your attention—kind of like falling in love.

Our hope is that people who "fall in love" with birds and birding will also become more and more committed to protecting those birds and the quality habitat they need to survive and thrive. After all, we can't enjoy birding if there are no birds or places that provide what birds need. We know, however, that the one (love) does not always lead to the other (action to protect birds and their environment) and research has demonstrated that it rarely happens automatically. The "love" is the important motivator, the necessary beginning point, but action requires more knowledge about specific issues. But even that is not enough. Beyond that, folks need to feel a sense of efficacy—that they have the tools to take action and that those actions will be effective.

Several years ago, I gave a speech at the City Club of Cleveland, giving my philosophy of environmental education to introduce the curriculum for a new

Eastern Screech Owl
by Sharon Korte.



"world-class" environmental education center in Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (now National Park) which I was spearheading. One of the points I made was that we would involve students not just in nature study (although that is critically important) but we would go beyond that to open the student's eyes to environmental issues, and help them connect to their home environments and issues in their home communities, as well as provide experiences with strategies to address them. The key word is "experiences." I cited the poor track record of civics classes in our K-12 schools that have resulted in abysmal voting turnouts—50% if we are lucky in presidential election years, and percentages in the 20s and 30s in off-election years.

What I have argued is that students need opportunities to practice participation in the political arena. We do a much better job of teaching skills in sports and music. Just think what it would be like if we treated those pursuits the way we often treat civics education: read

textbooks about the rules of football and how to execute certain plays, or about the physics of how a musical instrument works, with fingering charts and notes, then test on those concepts and hope that the students will be effective football players or musicians. Absurd, right? Schools and environmental education non-profits like ours need to provide training and experience in how to take effective political action. Without tools and practice, effective actions and activists are unlikely.

We are not quite ready to do that in our school programs, but as we develop a more comprehensive year-long curriculum at different grade levels for in-school visits, field trips, and workshops to provide teachers with the skills to teach environmental action, we will get there. You can't start too young, either—in the past, I helped a class of 3rd-5th graders become effective lobbyists for issues they cared about, even visiting their state legislators and testifying in legislative hearings. Anybody can learn these tools.

Regardless whether you are for or against the policies they espouse, who can have anything but admiration for the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida? They are learning about effective participation in democracy by immersing themselves in the process, with students all across the country joining them in this experience—and they've already had some success. While the way they became motivated is tragic, I think these students will not only be consistent voters as they grow older, but also effective participants in political decision-making in their communities. Did you know that their high school's namesake, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, was a very effective and tenacious environmental citizen activist who

tirelessly fought to preserve the Everglades? Activism is baked into that school's very name! (Google her name to find out more about that amazing woman!)

One student from Parkland, when asked if she thought she could make a difference on the issues she was concerned about, said, "No, not by myself, but together with other students I think we are a force that will bring about change." Now, that is the kind of empowered future generation we need.

From 7-9 p.m. on Thursday, May 17, Detroit Audubon will offer a free environmental action-taking workshop at the Belle Isle Nature Center with the aid of the very effective policy activists in our parent organization, National Audubon (go to <https://goo.gl/jDpfcj> to register). We will offer another one in the fall, to be announced on our website and Facebook page, so stay tuned. These workshops will be designed for our members and the general public—anybody motivated to learn how to effectively advocate for our feathered friends. High school students will certainly be welcome. Who knows? They may have some lessons to teach us older folks, as well.

I'll end with a poem I wrote several years ago, which uses the analogy of a feather to illustrate the power of working together:

FEATHER

by Jim Bull © 1996

A feather

each silken strand
so delicate and weak;
wisps waving in the wind.
But standing together
they are strong enough
to carry a bird aloft,
but only if they are
connected
and coordinated.
Each strand is critical;
each strand plays a part
in the larger aerial scheme.
Light though it is,
this feather has inspired
some weighty thoughts,
teaching me about
the featheriness of life.



Notice Anything Different?

We have updated the look and content of the Flyway transforming it into Detroit Audubon's signature magazine with a stronger focus on local natural history and conservation. Keep your eyes peeled as we get more of our website and published materials updated to match this more modern look! Have any feedback on the Spring 2018 Flyway? Please go to this link to a brief online questionnaire, goo.gl/EB9NQP

Above, Great Blue Heron by
Bruce Szczechowski



Gull, walking on water, by Bruce Szczechowski

Detroit Zoological Society Works to Reduce Bird Collisions

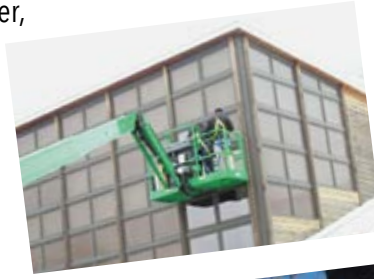
By Bonnie Van Dam

Spring migration has started for millions of birds as they fly north to their breeding grounds. However, many will meet an untimely death by colliding with glass or man-made structures. It has been estimated that up to 1 billion bird-building collision deaths occur in the United States every year (abcbirds.org). As humans continue to build structures that contain glass, the threat of bird collisions will remain.

Many people aren't aware that birds and humans have different visual systems, which means they see the world differently. It is very hard for birds to see glass; glass appears invisible to them, it becomes a barrier they can't see, and as a result they fly right into it. Sometimes, a bird will fly away after a collision but will likely die elsewhere and become food for cats and other scavengers (abcbirds.org).

The good news is that there are many things that you can do to prevent collisions from happening! Windows that have blinds on them can be made safer to birds by keeping them partially or fully closed. Moving plants away from windows without blinds can prevent birds from thinking they can land on them. Moving bird feeders to within three feet or more than 30 feet away from windows can also help prevent collisions.

Additionally, American Bird Conservancy's BirdTape and a variety of other window films can reduce reflection on the outside of windows, which has been shown to decrease the number of collisions at problem building by 80% and greater (flap.org). BirdTape can be hung vertically – 4 inches apart, or horizontally – 2 inches apart. Custom designed window film created by CollidEscape (www.collidescape.org) or Feather Friendly dots (www.conveniencegroup.com) can also be applied to glass to prevent collisions. One of the most common preventative measures that people use is decals, however, decals will not work if they aren't applied using the 4 x 2-inch rule above. Companies and homeowners can also build Bird-friendly Buildings by incorporating reduced visibility of glass, incorporating designs in or on glass and minimizing the use of glass (abcbirds.org).



The Detroit Zoological Society (DZS) believes it's important to take care of all birds, not just those that live at the Zoo. DZS has been committed to tracking and preventing bird collisions on zoo grounds since 2013. All newly hired employees and volunteers receive training and learn how to recognize and report bird collisions to their supervisors. Bird department personnel

have since installed ABC BirdTape and

CollidEscape window film to reduce collisions on zoo grounds in areas where bird strikes have been detected. Additionally, Feather Friendly dots, a product available in 4 x 4, 4 x 2, and 2 x 2-inch spacing, was recently installed on several glass viewing areas throughout the Zoo as well as at the Belle Isle Nature Center.

Some examples of bird-friendly building design on DZS grounds include the Polk Penguin Conservation Center, which has specially designed "fritted" glass, and the DZS giraffe building, which has custom ORNILUX Bird Protection Glassa glass that contains a patterned UV coating making it visible to birds but transparent to the human eye (ornilux-bird-safety-glass). Detroit Zoo visitors have access to educational flyers and displays about bird collisions at various locations throughout the Zoo. The ABC BirdTape is also available for purchase at the Zoofari Market located at the main entrance to the Zoo.

The Detroit Zoo encourages the community to take preventative measures to protect wild birds from colliding with windows in their homes, schools and businesses. You can also help by participating in Detroit Audubon's Project Safe Passage Great Lakes (www.detroitaudubon.org). Members of the community and property managers of high-rise buildings, apartments, and condominiums can join the Great Lakes Safe Passage Honor Roll by turning off all building lights at night on unoccupied floors and spaces during migration (March 15 – May 31, and August 15 – October 31). Since lights left on in buildings overnight are a major cause of nighttime collisions that kill millions of birds, turning off building lights during Spring and Fall migration can reduce building collisions by 80%.

For more information, please visit detroitzoo.org, detroitaudubon.org, or abcbirds.org.

Detroit River International Important Bird Area Waterfowl Count

By Erin Rowan

The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Program is a global initiative of BirdLife International in which 120 countries participate. It is a science-based program to identify, monitor, and protect a network of sites that provide essential habitat for bird populations (Bird Studies Canada, 2017). National Audubon Society is one of the leading U.S. partners of the IBA Program, spearheading an ambitious effort collaborating with 19 international partners to extend a web of protection throughout the Western Hemisphere.

To date, National Audubon has identified 2,758 IBAs covering 417 million acres of public and private lands in the United States (Audubon.org). Among them are high-priority Global IBAs—places like New York City's Jamaica Bay, areas within Alaska's Arctic Slope, and even the Detroit River, which acts as an important staging area for migrating birds during the Fall and Winter! The Detroit River is also where the Atlantic and Mississippi migration flyways, or paths, intersect, making it a biodiversity hotspot where over 350 species can be seen!

In fact, Michigan is the home of nine globally recognized Important Bird Areas! The Michigan Important Bird Areas Program was begun in 2006 by a group of managing partners that includes: National Audubon, Detroit Audubon, Kalamazoo Nature Center, and Michigan Audubon. The IBA Coordinator, Caleb Putnam, now of Audubon Great Lakes and MI Department of

Natural Resources, spearheaded the process of creating a rigorous set of criteria on how best to identify IBAs across the state. Between 2006 and 2010, 102 IBAs were identified (Audubon.org). All managing partners of the IBA program in Michigan are members of the Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (MiBCI), which works to build partnerships that will help sustain the long-term monitoring and conservation of these sites.

Birds depend on a diverse range of habitats as found by the Michigan IBA program—from sandy beaches to Boreal forests, to grasslands—and the threats that confront them are equally varied. In Canada and the U.S., eBird is helping to update population data for IBAs, either by design—as part of an IBA survey, like the annual Waterfowl Count—or incidentally, when birders enter their data, not realizing that they are within an IBA (Bird Studies Canada, 2017). In both cases, these data form a valuable resource for the IBA Program as they get incorporated into the various tools and visualizations available through the eBird portal (e.g., bar charts, high counts, species lists). Ultimately, this data will help ensure knowledgeable conservation planning by land managers for each and every IBA in North America.

This year, Detroit Audubon partnered with Bird Studies Canada in their second annual Lower Detroit River Important Bird Area Waterfowl Count to contribute to this IBA dataset, and ensured coverage along the U.S. side of the Detroit River.

A group of dedicated volunteers ventured out to Wyandotte and Grosse Ile on two days in January and February, recording all birds seen and heard at 4 points along the Detroit River following the IBA protocol. They then submitted the observations through eBird. By using the IBA protocol, participants in this count on both sides of the border helped increase the value of eBird reports to derive better bird population estimates at individual IBAs, thus contributing to their conservation.

Detroit Audubon is incredibly proud to be a partner of this international IBA Waterfowl Count and looks forward to working with Bird Studies Canada again next year!

For more information on IBAs, watch the video below or visit audubon.org, ibacanada.org, or birdscanada.org: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beGUuVeLEZg&feature=youtu.be>

To learn about how you can participate in next year's Lower Detroit River IBA Waterfowl Count, please contact Erin Rowan at erowan@detroitaudubon.org

Waterfowl count by Diane Cheklich.



Snowy Owls Descend upon Detroit, Causing Quite a Stir

By Bailey Lininger • Photos by Bruce Szczechowski

This past winter, the metro Detroit area was graced by the presence of an especially mysterious and exciting bird: the Snowy Owl. This bird, made famous in popular culture by Harry Potter's owl Hedwig, is typically a resident of very far northern Canada, and only comes down to this region during an "irruption," or an irregular migration year. Birders and non-birders alike were all aflutter over sightings of this normally very elusive owl, and sightings were recorded all over the Detroit area—Willow Run airport and the Compuware building being two especially popular spots. Here at Detroit Audubon HQ, we got an especially high influx of calls and emails, all with basically the same question: What's going on with these owls?! Well, we're here to answer your questions.

What is the Snowy Owl's life history?

Snowy Owls are one of North America's largest owls, and they spend the bulk of their lives in far northern Canada on the tundra. They hunt lemmings, voles, moles, and other rodents for food, and they nest on the ground (not too many trees up there on the tundra!). Unlike many other owls, they are diurnal, which means they're awake during daylight hours.

Why are they down here in Detroit?

The Snowy Owls that we see down here in Detroit are part of an "irruption," which is an irregular migration pattern. Unlike some birds that travel to and from the same wintering and breeding locations every year, Snowy Owls do not necessarily winter in the same location year after year. When the Snowy Owls on the tundra have an especially productive breeding season, the bumper crop of juvenile Snowy Owls that result from that all need somewhere to spend the winter. Mature Snowy Owls tend to be territorial of their tundra wintering locations, so the juveniles must head farther afield—thus resulting in a crew of Snowy Owls in our neighborhood!

Are the Detroit Snowy Owls sick or lost?

This is a common question, but the answer is no; they're just exploring! As mentioned above, the Snowy Owls we see down here in Detroit are simply juveniles who needed to explore further afield for a wintering location. Snowy Owls are curious, far-traveling birds. Snowy Owls have been seen as far as Bermuda—compared to that, Michigan is around the corner!



*What's
going
on
with
these
owls?*

How often do these irruptions happen?

Snowy Owl irruptions are a result of a "baby boom" during the most recent breeding season. A Snowy Owl "baby boom" is only possible when there is a surplus of Snow Owl food—primarily lemmings, moles, and voles. Small rodent populations generally follow a boom-and-bust cycle, so Snowy Owl populations do, as well. Generally, irruptions occur every four to seven years.

How do we know they are juveniles?

There are all sorts of techniques that ornithologists use to determine the age of a bird, but the easiest way with Snowy Owls is to look at the brown stripes on their chest (also called "bars" or "barring"). Younger Snowy Owls have more barring, which fades as they get older. Mature male Snowy Owls will be almost completely

white, and mature females will have slight barring. The owls we tend to see down here have significant barring, which indicates that they are juvenile owls.

Where are they most likely to be found during an irruption?

When trying to predict where you might see a Snowy Owl, it's helpful to think about where they're coming from. The tundra is a largely treeless expanse, dotted with the occasional tree, shrub, boulder, or hill. During irruption years, Snowy Owls are frequently seen at airports, farm fields, shorelines of the Great Lakes, and in the middle of urban or suburban settings. Unlike other owls, they're not forest-dwellers, so they're unlikely to be found in trees, and more likely to be found perching on a telephone pole, light post, or simply standing on the ground!

Where were they seen in the Detroit area?

The most famous sighting of the 2017-2018 irruption was when a Snowy Owl landed on a car in front of a Post Office in Detroit! This sighting is a great example of how Snowy Owls are not accustomed to being around humans, let alone the cars, crowds, and tall buildings that they find in cities. While some other birds might stay more incognito when visiting a city, Snowy Owls aren't bothered by the hustle and bustle of city life. Six sightings were recorded at Detroit Metro Airport, and another seven at Willow Run Airport. Two sightings were recorded at the Compuware Building, one in the Central United Methodist Church parking

lot, and another at the Z Parking Lot, all downtown. The Eleanor and Edsel Ford House had one recorded sighting, and the GM Tech Center in Warren had two. The city of Wyandotte was lucky enough to have a sighting in March; and in previous years, Belle Isle and Lake St. Clair Metropark have also been likely sighting locations. This year, though, Pointe Mouillee State Game Area has definitely taken the cake for sightings—there has been a group of seven to ten Snowy Owls down there all winter!

If I still want to see Snowy Owls, where's a good spot to go?

As mentioned above, Pointe Mouillee State Game Area has been an incredible Snowy Owl hotspot this winter. A group of seven or so have been hanging out at Pointe Mouillee all winter, and were seen as recently as April 1st. If you want to learn more about seeing Snowy Owls at Pte. Mouillee, check out Detroit Audubon's Facebook page for more information.

How can I learn more?

If you just can't get enough of these beautiful and mysterious owls, we recommend checking out Project Snowstorm (www.projectsnowstorm.org), which seeks to better understand the behavior and migration patterns of wintering Snowy Owls. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's website All About Birds (www.allaboutbirds.org) has plenty of information about the natural history and biology of these birds. If you want to hear a Detroit

Audubon talk about Snowy Owls on WDET, go here: <https://wdet.org/posts/2018/02/01/86350-why-do-snowy-owls-give-a-hoot-about-detroit/>. If you want to read our interview in Metro Times, go here: <https://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/detroit-is-being-invaded-by-arctic-snowy-owls/Content?oid=8672725>.



Belle Isle: A Birding Hotspot with History

By Bailey Lininger

Over the past few years, Belle Isle has become a second home to me. This island in the Detroit River seems to bring people from all walks of life and all neighborhoods of the city and suburbs together in pursuit of a few simple goals: to slow down, to connect to the natural world, and to celebrate a unique part of our region. For birders, however, Belle Isle has something else going for it—it's a fantastic birding location! For all of us who visit the island regularly, and especially for those who haven't been, we present a brief history of Belle Isle:

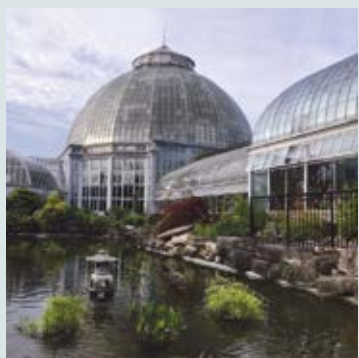
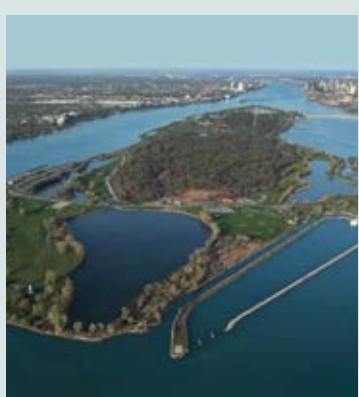
Belle Isle was originally named "Wahnabezze," meaning "White Swan," by the Chippewa and Ottawa Native Americans that call this region home. In the 1700s, the island was colonized by the French, who named it "Hog Island" after the pigs that were allowed to roam freely on the island. The French settlers used the island largely for farming, and it became—like so much of the Detroit area—a point of conflict between the French and the British. Possession of the island changed many times in the 1700s and 1800s, going from French to British and eventually, to the City of Detroit in 1879. While it's easy to assume that the name "Belle Isle" was coined by the French, there's a rumor that it was actually named in honor of Isabelle Cass, the beloved daughter of former Michigan Governor Lewis Cass.

In the 1880s, Belle Isle got a city-park-makeover by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted was an early pioneer in landscape architecture and an ardent conservationist who designed parks all over the country, most notably Central Park in New York City. His vision for Belle Isle is, in many ways, still intact—it was his plan that concentrated buildings and human activity on the west side of the island, keeping the east side in the more natural, undisturbed state we're so lucky to have today.

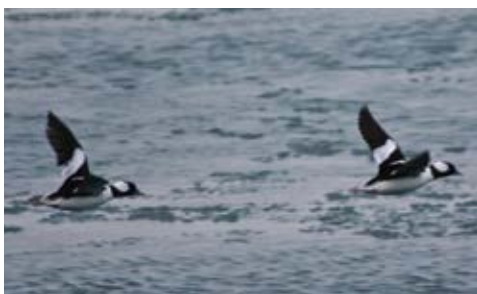
Olmsted was not the only noted architect to leave his imprint on the island, however. The architectural firm of George Mason and Albert Kahn, famous for so many Detroit landmarks, designed the stunning Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory in the early 1900s. The Conservatory is the oldest continuously operating conservatory in the United States and continues to be a lush oasis, perfect for visiting during cold Michigan winters. The Belle Isle Aquarium's interior is truly stunning, filled with interesting exhibits and animals, and also tells a unique part of Detroit's history—the basement of the Aquarium was a speakeasy during the Prohibition era!

But Belle Isle is more than a Michigan history lesson—it's also a world-class state park (run by the Michigan DNR), birding destination, and home to some of the most beautiful buildings in the city. Belle Isle is home to a rare ecosystem called "wet-mesic flatwoods." This kind of ecosystem occurs in low-lying, wet areas and is characterized by a huge variety of deciduous trees and shrubs, lots of vernal pools in the springtime, and many different animal species. This kind of ecosystem was very common in pre-industrial Detroit, but now only exists in small pockets throughout the area. Belle Isle's wet-mesic flatwoods are truly important and precious habitat in Detroit—the forest of red and white oak, silver maple, basswood, and more, is home to frogs and toads, snakes, coyotes, beaver, and more. When it comes to birds, Screech Owls, Saw-Whet Owls, Long-Eared Owls, Red-Tailed Hawks, and even a historic 2006 sighting of a Pileated Woodpecker and a rare Kirtland's Warbler in May 2017 are just a few of the 248 bird species that have been recorded on the island.

Once you emerge from the flatwoods of Belle Isle, there's more to explore. The area surrounding the William Livingstone lighthouse is home to remnants of the Lakeplain Prairie ecosystem. It attracts grassland birds like the Eastern Meadowlark, Horned Lark, Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Northern Shrike, and Eastern Bluebird.



The entire Detroit River is incredible waterbird habitat, and Belle Isle is a phenomenal place for viewing. From the shores of Belle Isle, you can see Surf Scoters and White-Winged Scoters, Canvasback Ducks by the thousands, Mergansers of all varieties, Grebes, Herons, Buffleheads, Goldeneyes, Bald Eagles (on a Detroit Audubon field trip this winter we saw NINE!) and a rare King Eider—all while taking in the beautiful Detroit skyline.



Facing page from top: Belle Isle from above; the Aquarium interior; one of the lagoons (by Diane Checklich); the Scripps Conservatory, and the Belle Isle Nature Center.

This page, L-R: Buffleheads in flight, an American Kestrel, adult and subadult Bald Eagles in flight, and Detroit Audubon President Jim Bull (red hat) and other birders braving the cold on Belle Isle, by Bruce Szczechowski.



Why is Belle Isle is such a hotspot? Islands like Belle Isle provide critical stopover habitat for migrating birds. Migration is a long and dangerous journey, and having somewhere safe like Belle Isle to stop can mean the difference between life and death for birds who are undergoing this arduous trip. Moreover, because it hosts that rare “wet-mesic flatwoods,” birds that need that characteristic mature forest can find a safe home on Belle Isle.

As residents of the metro Detroit area, we are truly lucky to have Belle Isle in our back yard. It is a birding hotspot and nature getaway that’s barely out of town, an island in the city. If you’d like to explore this island and get to know it as we have, join us! We regularly host both walking and driving field trips on Belle Isle, and we’re at the Belle Isle Nature Center on the first Thursday of every month for our Monthly Nature Programs. Come along sometime and see for yourself just how beautiful an island Belle Isle is.





2018

YEAR OF THE BIRD

By Bailey Lininger

"If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems in the world."

These prescient and inspiring words from Thomas Lovejoy are a guiding force behind an exciting new project from National Geographic, Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and BirdLife International: the Year of the Bird.

That's right! 2018 is officially the Year of the Bird. As someone who likely already cares about birds, you may be saying to yourself, "In my world, every year is the Year of the Bird!" While we couldn't agree more, this project seeks to transform the love and appreciation we all have for birds into action on their behalf; and that, we think, is an admirable goal. After all, 2018 is the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), a truly impactful and important piece of legislature. Don't know much about this act? Read on.

The MBTA was originally passed in 1918 and is one of the United States' oldest wildlife protection acts. The first version of the MBTA was passed to protect migratory birds from over-hunting (often just for their feathers!), because by 1918, many species were already extinct or close to extinction. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, "the MBTA provides that it is unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, possess, sell, purchase, barter, import, export, or transport any migratory bird, or any part, nest, or egg or any such bird, unless authorized under a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior. Some regulatory exceptions apply. Take is defined in regulations as: 'pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect.'" The act has evolved and grown over the years, broadening in 1972 to include hawks, eagles, and some other birds, as well as to include treaties with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia. In the past 100 years, the MBTA has saved hundreds of millions, potentially even billions, of birds from extinction or endangerment. Its broad scope continues to protect almost all native birds in the United States.

While the MBTA is a powerful law that has done fantastic things for bird conservation in the United States, there is a lot more that we can do to protect birds, and that's where the Year of the Bird project comes in. Each month of 2018 has a different theme, and each theme gives us tangible ways that we can protect bird habitat, connect to the natural world, and get involved in the birding and conservation community.

The March theme was "Native Plants for Birds," and taught all of us about how essential native plants are for the birds that use our communities as their home. Spring planting season is right around the corner, and this year is the perfect year to transform your home into a native plant oasis. Why not put in a Serviceberry tree in your front yard to attract Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Orioles, and Jays (and provide yourself with a delicious berry snack)? Or some Black-Eyed Susans to draw in wrens, warblers, and our pollinator friends? Native plants have a huge variety of benefits to our world, so if you're excited about this project, visit www.audubon.org/native-plants for a native plant list customized for your zip code.

For April, our theme is "Bird-Friendly and Planet-Friendly." So many of the actions we might take to minimize our environmental footprint can help birds, and vice versa. Here's a great example: By mowing the lawn less frequently and avoiding the use of pesticides and fertilizers, you are not only diverting chemicals from nearby waterways, but you're also increasing habitat in your yard for local birds who need longer grass for foraging and safety.

If you'd like to learn more about this project, head to www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/year-of-the-bird/ to learn more, or follow Detroit Audubon on Facebook—we'll be posting updates about the project all year!

Red-tailed Hawk by Bruce Szczechowski.

2018 Field Trips

Get outside, see some birds, meet some new people, and enjoy the beauty of our region on a field trip with Detroit Audubon! Whether you're a brand new birder or your life list is long, we've got a field trip that's perfect for you. **New in 2018:** Please pre-register for field trips (even if they are free!) in order to help us better serve you, our members. (\$) indicates there is a fee associated with this trip. Visit www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/field-trips/ for complete program descriptions, to learn more and sign up. If you have questions about field trips, please don't hesitate to reach out to Bailey at blininger@detroitaudubon.org.

April

29th: Elmwood Cemetery

May

8th: Elmwood Cemetery

12th: Magee Marsh \$

19th: Swift Night Out

18th-20th: Point Pelee Campout \$

June

2nd: Elmwood Cemetery

9th: Eliza Howell Park

17th: Oak Openings \$

23rd: Belle Isle Walk

July

6th: Elmwood Cemetery

August

4th: Pointe Mouillee \$

September

8th: Eliza Howell Park

15th-16th: Hawkfest at Lake Erie
Metropark

22nd-23rd: Swift Night Out Festival

October

6th: Lake Erie Metropark

19th: Elmwood Cemetery

20th: Eliza Howell Park

November

2nd: Owl Prowl

9th: Elmwood Cemetery

10th: Point Edward and Lake
Huron Shore \$

17th: Sandhill Cranes at
Jasper-Pulaski FGWA \$

24th: Belle Isle

December

1st: Elmwood Cemetery

16th: Detroit Audubon
Christmas Bird Count

22nd: Rockwood Christmas
Bird Count

*Like Detroit Audubon on Facebook to stay
up-to-date with programs, field trips and
happenings, and follow us on Twitter.*



Jeepers Peepers

by Jim Bull © 1996

A piccolo note pierces the night,

then another,

and another

until the pond

is ringing in my ears with a din

of amphibious love songs.

No use talking now,

these thumb-size tree frogs

have a monopoly on

the auditory

tonight.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Erin Rowan, Detroit Audubon's Research Coordinator and Office Administrator, was recently elected Secretary of the Metro Detroit Nature Network (MDN2). Detroit Audubon is a founding member of the Metro Detroit Nature Network. It is a growing group of government agencies, non-profits, and educational institutions. This is the organization that sponsored Detroit's successful application to become an Urban Bird Treaty City. Erin and Tom Schneider (Detroit Zoological Society) also lead MDN2's Urban Bird Treaty Committee, which oversees the implementation of the Urban Bird Treaty Agenda—it is one of 6 committees that do much of the work of MDN2. Congratulations, Erin!



Black Tern Discovery Cruise: Join Detroit Audubon, Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan DNR, and your fellow birders for a fundraising event on Lake St. Clair! The Black Tern Discovery Cruise, sponsored by Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, has two dates this year: Friday, June 29th and Saturday, June 30th. This boat trip, leaving from Lake St. Clair Metropark, visits the largest nesting Black Tern Colony in Michigan! Ride along on a scenic and comfortable cruise while you enjoy refreshments, lunch, and presentations about St. Clair Flats ecology and our Black Tern Monitoring Project. We will maintain a respectful distance from the nests, but will still have excellent views. Last year we even met up with our Research Coordinator Erin Rowan, who brought aboard a recently banded adult Black Tern for all to see!



Great Lakes Young Birders Camp: Detroit Audubon is looking to sponsor two high school students to attend Michigan Audubon's Great Lakes Young Birders Camp at Alma College this summer! The inaugural Great Lakes Young Birders Camp will take place at Alma College from June 24th to June 28th, and will feature four jam-packed days of ornithology, field trips, new friends, and fun. According to Michigan Audubon, "The goal of this camp is not only to connect young birders to each other but to connect them to the resources they need to become the next generation of conservationists." If you know a high school-aged birder or two who could benefit from this scholarship opportunity, please reach out to Bailey at blininger@detroitaudubon.org. If you'd like to learn more about the program, visit <https://www.michiganaudubon.org/learn/michigan-young-birders-club/>.

Bird-A-Thon: Raise funds for Detroit Audubon while birding!

Participants in this year's Bird-A-Thon are encouraged to 1) create or join a team of 2-6 birders, 2) get sponsors to pledge a donation amount per bird species seen by the team, and 3) go birding anywhere in Southeast Michigan for a 24-hour period any day between May 1st and June 15th. For more information on how to register your team and where to get your pledge forms, visit: <http://www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/bird-a-thon/> or email Erin Rowan at erowan@detroitaudubon.org ..

Above, Erin Rowan banding a Black Tern, by Diane Cheklich; the Black Tern Discovery Cruise by Jim Bull; and a Philadelphia Vireo by Sharon Korte.

Yes, I support Detroit Audubon's conservation work!

Please accept my tax deductible contribution of: ☐ \$1000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$30* ☐ OTHER _____

**Your gift of \$30 or more entitles you to join the flock of Detroit Audubon members, including four issues of the Flyway.
Visit www.detroitaudubon.com for a full list of member benefits.*

Name _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

To Charge, indicate: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date _____ / _____ Security Code _____

Name as Shown on Card _____ Signature _____

This gift is ☐ 'in memory of' ☐ 'in honor of': _____

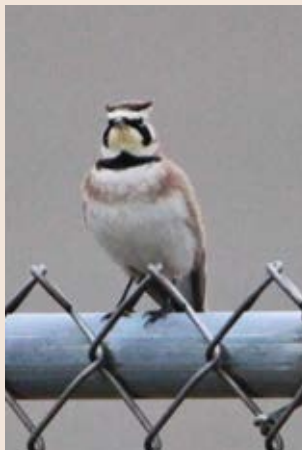
Please send acknowledgment to: _____

Mail this completed form with your contribution to: Detroit Audubon, 4605 Cass Avenue, Detroit MI 48201.
You can also contribute online by visiting detroitaudubon.org/get-involved/donate/

Mystery Bird

If you guessed Horned Lark, you are right—note the two tiny “horns” of feathers peeking out from its head. The distinctive facial pattern of yellow and black is evident in the second photo. Horned Larks can often be seen all winter, often in large numbers—in open fields, airfields, beaches, and shoulders of gravel roads. They feed on seeds, often with Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs. They have a high tinkling call. The male's courtship song flight is quite spectacular. He circles up and up, as high as 800 feet above the ground, then makes a sudden high-speed dive to the ground. Horned Larks nest in grassy areas where they catch insects to feed their young. The best places to see them include Blue Heron Pond on Belle Isle and farm fields around Pointe Mouillee. The photo on page 2 was taken at Pointe Mouillee, while those at right were taken at the Grosse Ile airport.

**Horned Lark photos
by Bruce Szczechowski.**



Flyway

A publication of Detroit Audubon

4605 Cass Avenue
Detroit, MI 48201-1256

**ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED**

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DETROIT MI
PERMIT NO. 1031



Common Mergansers and Mallards
waiting for spring at Belle Isle,
by Bruce Szechowski.