

Flyway

Fall 2018

A Detroit Audubon publication

www.detroitaudubon.org

The mission of Detroit Audubon is to foster the appreciation and conservation of birds and the environment we share. Our three mission areas are: Education, Research, and Action.

**Wilson's
Phalarope at
Pointe Mouillée
by Bruce
Szczechowski**



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A publication of Detroit Audubon

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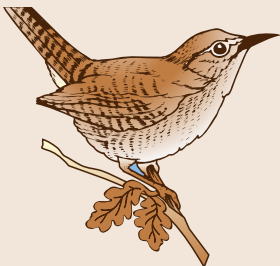
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*Wintering Bald Eagles
hunting on Belle Isle.
Bruce Szczechowski photo*

We Made a Difference

The Grand Prix And Our Bald Eagle Monitoring

Detroit Audubon spoke out against extending the Grand Prix lease to use Belle Isle for almost three months per year.

The lease is going forward despite our efforts, but there is some consolation: our monitoring showed that the eaglets were quite disturbed by the noise of

the low-flying aircraft with their trailing signs, so the DNR at least will prohibit the planes from flying over that end of the island in the future.

We'd rather have seen the Grand Prix move to another location, but we can be proud that our monitoring did make a difference.

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Bald Eagles Nest for First Time on Belle Isle

By Rebecca Minardi, Detroit Audubon Board Member

For my birthday I decided I'd do what I like doing best – go birding. It had been a long winter (balancing my first pregnancy and a PhD program was a slog I'd not wish on anyone), and I hadn't been in the field in months. So I called my friend and fellow Detroit Audubon Board member, Diane Cheklich, to hit the trails with me on Belle Isle on a very cold Saturday morning. Early February can be a pretty slow month for birds (I mean, who doesn't want to just curl up and sleep through the entire month?) so I wasn't too sure what we'd be able to spot. Regardless, I knew we'd have a good time scoping the scene and at the very least counting cardinals. Diane, always the planner, brought an extra pair of hand warmers along, so I am happy to report I didn't lose any fingers.

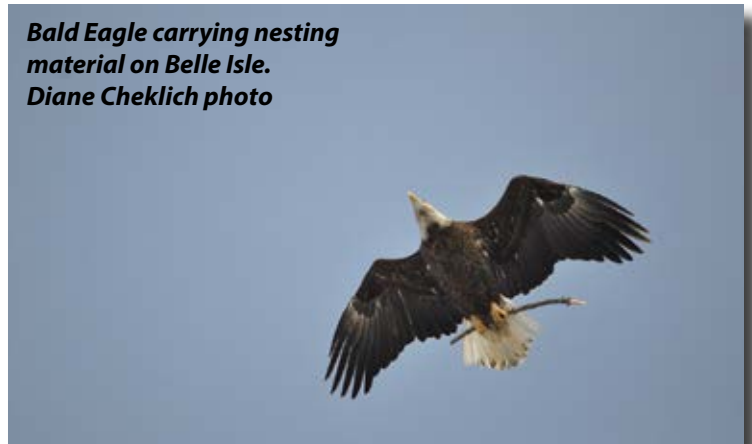
We clocked some fun finds such as a boisterous flock of American Tree Sparrows along with many mergansers, Bufflehead, and Redheads in the river.

We were just winding down the walk when we saw a Bald Eagle swoop through the trees. SNAP! Oh my gosh, we both said, did that Bald Eagle just slam into a branch!? We followed the bird with our eyes and saw it land near another eagle. Two eagles, cool! But wait, they were sitting on what looked like the world's smallest eagle nest. The eagle didn't hit a branch by accident—it broke a piece off for the brand-new nest they were building! I can't be certain, but we may have both jumped up and down with glee. We had never heard about Bald Eagles nesting on Belle Isle, and here we had found a pair with what looked like a day-old nest! We hung out for a while, watching intently as each bird took turns swooping into the forest to break off branches to layer onto their growing home.

After we both got back home, we alerted the Detroit Audubon board to see if anyone had heard about a Bald Eagles' nest in this location. As word got around, we heard back that, no, no one could remember there ever being a Bald Eagle nest on the island. We were elated!

In the coming weeks and months, we both went back to check on the progress (Diane more than me, as I was getting closer and closer to my due date). We are happy to report that two eagles hatched and successfully

Bald Eagle carrying nesting material on Belle Isle.
Diane Cheklich photo



fledged. We had an official Belle Isle Eagle Family.

We hope this is the start of many years of eagle nests to come; Bald Eagles typically come back to the same nest year after year if they were able to raise a successful brood.

So next time you're birding on Belle Isle, keep your eyes peeled. Maybe you'll be the one to spot the next new nesting pair of Bald Eagles on the island.

Editor's note: We did not report this nest until now on the recommendation of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Eagles are most likely to abandon a nest if disturbed early in the nesting period and during their first nesting season, after which they are more committed to the site. We monitored the nest periodically throughout the year, including during the Grand Prix, but we didn't want to release information that might lead to the nest being disturbed and potentially abandoned. Now that the nesting season is over, we are

now at liberty to report this amazing milestone in Detroit's avifauna history. Remember, it is still important next year and in subsequent years to observe the nest from a distance so the eagles will feel comfortable staying in their new Motor City home.



Bald Eagle nest on Belle Isle.
Bruce Szczechowski photo

Bully Pulpit: Being Green Is Good Business

Article and Photos by James N. (Jim) Bull, Ph.D., President

In the environmental movement we often have come to think of business and industry as the enemy, and often with good reason. It was disgust with the poisons released by industry that polluted our streams leaving them not only cesspools but so polluted that many actually caught on fire and air pollutants released into the atmosphere that left the air we breathe acrid and dangerous. Many days it was impossible to see the opposite side of the Grand Canyon due to smog. We fought long and hard to win approval of landmark environmental legislation in the wake of the uprising of activism of the original Earth Day including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Protection Act modeled after a law first enacted in Michigan and which gave us the EPA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, The Endangered Species Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Wilderness Act to name a few. For several years Detroit Audubon was part of an active lawsuit against the Detroit Incinerator. While we did not stop the incinerator, we did win important concessions that lessened the plant's environmental impact. That said, the plant still produces and continues to produce pollution that we believe is unacceptable.

While business and industry have been implicated in degrading the environment, and there are some unscrupulous industries that are still doing so, there is another important story that needs to be told and too often goes

unnoticed—business and industry leading the way to a greener, more environmentally sustainable future. We need to acknowledge and praise business and industry when they undertake pioneering efforts to lessen their environmental impacts, and more importantly when they take the lead to improve the world as well. Detroit Audubon long ago recognized the importance not only of calling out the bad actors in business and industry, but praising those corporations who are doing good things for the environment, by annually bestowing on them our Conservation Business of the Year Award.

Some examples of businesses and industries doing the right thing for the environment in southeast Michigan include DTE providing wildlife habitat at several of its power plant sites. The Conner Creek power plant in Detroit has long hosted a variety of birds and other wildlife and was THE first place where beaver returned to the Detroit River after being extirpated by the French fur trade in the 1700s and 1800s. Whatever you might think of nuclear power, it is undeniable that DTE has done wonderful work in the land around its Fermi nuclear plant in Monroe, creating a mosaic of wetlands, prairie, and woodlands in the buffer zone that now hosts a plethora of waterfowl, songbird and wildlife species now managed in cooperation with the Detroit International Wildlife Refuge. They even sponsor a lottery for members of the general

public to come on tours to see the nesting Bald Eagles on this property.

General Motors has nurtured valuable habitat around the GM Tech Center in Warren.

The grounds of Chrysler's World Headquarters in Auburn Hills includes a 100-acre natural area with ponds, wetlands, grasslands, and woods which support a diverse fauna including herons, Wood Ducks, Monarch Butterflies, and the rare Blanding's Turtle.

BASF, which bought the old Wyandotte Chemical Company, has restored Fighting Island on the Canadian side of the Detroit River, which once was a wasteland of soft white chemical slurry that was piped from Wyandotte and which looked like a glaring white moonscape in satellite photos to what is now a wildlife sanctuary of wetlands, woods and fields that host a variety of birds and other wildlife, an environmental education and conference center that hosts environmental conferences, and regular visits by Windsor, Ontario area school children. I have been to Fighting Island several times and am more impressed with what they've done each time I go.

The Ford Rouge Plant is probably the crown jewel for industrial environmental stewardship in southeast Michigan. This plant is arguably THE greenest industrial plant in the world. A few months before it opened we gave its architect William McDonough our Conservationist of the Year Award. A video of his acceptance speech can be found on our YouTube Channel and there is a link on our website. McDonough made several important points in that speech that make the new Ford Rouge a model for environmentally-friendly industrial development: 1) Ford declared itself native to Dearborn—they did not sully an area and then move on and let others clear it up, but decided to stay and 2) The environment improved because they stayed. "Being less bad is not being good," McDonough asserted but,



**Beehives
in the
orchard**



Ford Rouge solar panels and orchard

will soon follow the lead of Bill Ford's model of green manufacturing. (By the way, The Henry Ford of museum fame offers tours of this plant for schools and the general public as well. I take my college Environmental Science students there, which always wows them and inspires them.

Last year Detroit Audubon gave Green Safe, which produces compostable and sustainably manufactured tableware for restaurants and other eateries, our Business Conservationist of the Year Award. My church and Detroit Audubon often buy their products for our social functions. The Grosse Pointe Woods Wild Birds Unlimited store received the business award in 2016.

The examples of good environmental practices by business and industry in this article only scratch the surface of all the efforts SE Michigan businesses are making to have greener operations, to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, and help create a more environmentally sustainable world.

One organization whose whole purpose is to work with business and industry to encourage greener practices is the Wildlife Habitat Council, truly an unsung hero in bringing together business and environmentalists for common purposes. Largely behind the scenes, they have provided technical expertise to corporations that agree to create wildlife habitat on their grounds, and they have rewarded them with different levels of certification commensurate with the amount and quality of the habitat they provide. Many get extra credit for providing on-site environmental education programs for schoolchildren, youth groups, and the general public. Elsewhere in this issue, an article by Sara Srinivasan, Manager of Conservation Planning for the Council's Detroit office, gives more details of their activities. (Sara was our first Program Coordinator and continues on our Board of Directors.)

Continued

in their case, Ford was being good, and 3) All this accrued as benefit at the same time that these design features not only came in on-time and on or under budget, but are immensely profitable which is good news for stockholders as well. And the workers have a clean, beautiful place to work!

How has Ford been "doing good" at this manufacturing plant?

- The air both inside and outside the plant is cleaner
- There are more wetlands, grasslands, and shrub habitat supporting more birds and other wildlife
- Clean water delivered to the Rouge River after filtering through a created wetland not only so clean you can drink it, but at a rate that does not lead to erosion of the streambanks as happens with the flash flooding from most other industrial sites.
 - Buildings cooled by native vines clinging to nets lining the exterior walls
 - Solar panels provide some of the power
 - A living roof, the largest in the world at the time, lasting twice as long as a conventional roof, providing insulation for energy efficiency, controlling stormwater runoff, and providing habitat for insects and birds
 - A unique whole building ventilation system provides an exchange of fresh air

every 30 minutes, and thermal comfort year-round, cooling and warming the air with the use of a water tower on the green roof

- Skylights enable the plant to use 50% less electricity on sunny days and provides more pleasing light than one gets from artificial lighting.
- An orchard of native Hawthorns (Henry Ford's favorite tree), crab apples, and dogwoods
- honeybee hives maintained by some of the factory workers
- Permeable pavement in parking lots which lets water infiltrate into the soil below, curbing runoff, clearing the water naturally, while eliminating icy conditions
- Paint fumes are used to generate electricity and paint residue was used to produce plastic guard rails and park benches
- In the summer when the weather is nice, workers can be seen taking their lunch at outdoor picnic tables that overlook the green landscape around the plant and can even bird watch while they are doing so.

Ford wants other industries to copy and improve on what they have done. Not many have so far, but here's hoping that many more

BULLY PULPIT continued

Government and environmental organizations alone cannot do the whole job of ensuring habitat necessary for maintaining biodiversity—it is critical to encourage private landowners of all stripes to manage some of their land for this purpose as well.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, which Detroit Audubon helped create, is unique among refuges in having a mandate to not only own and manage land, but to pursue cooperative agreements with private industry and other landowners to allow private lands to be managed as part of the refuge as well.

The upshot: let's work together with business and industry for the benefit of birds and wildlife whenever we can!

We certainly have and will continue to oppose businesses when they use environmentally destructive practices, but the more important long-term work is to befriend them, turn



The Ford Rouge plant's green roof, and vines growing up the side of the building

them into or acknowledge them as allies, and recognize them publicly for the great work they do. We cannot hope to preserve biodiversity without them!

Note: *If you know of a business that is deserving of our Conservation Business of the Year Award, please let us know.*

New Research Associate: Ava Landgraf

Hello again, Detroit Audubon! My name is Ava Landgraf and I am Detroit Audubon's new Research Associate! You might recognize me from The Flyway two years ago when I was an intern through the University of Michigan's 'Semester in Detroit.' As an intern, I helped our previous Research Coordinator, Erin Rowan, with some bird point counts several November mornings. That summer, I also joined Erin in the field banding Black Terns at St. Clair Flats.

This past summer, I was the lead volunteer for banding terns at our new site, Wigwam Bay. I cannot wait to continue this research, and I am excited to be joining the Detroit Audubon team. I grew up around Detroit, and received a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science from the University of Michigan. I spent three summers working as a songbird rehabber in Ann Arbor, which is where my obsession with birds developed! My past avian work experience includes interning at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Texas and the National Aviary in Pittsburgh. I also volunteered for the World Parrot Trust researching Blue-throated Macaws in Bolivia. I am so happy to be back in my hometown, where I know the birds best, and working on projects that affect the local community. Along with providing research to support conservation efforts, I also want to provide Metro Detroit with plenty of opportunities to engage with nature and experience the value of natural science. Looking forward to the work Detroit Audubon accomplishes ahead!

Ava Landgraf with a Blue-throated Macaw.





Mammoth Find: A Biting Discovery

Detroit Audubon volunteer and Environmental Science high school teacher Bruce Szczechowski identified and photographed the mammoth tooth at left.

It was found by his brother and brother-in-law as they made some improvements to their hunting camp in southwest Michigan. We know for sure it is from a mammoth and not from the more common mastodon, but don't know which mammoth species it is from.

The Woolly, Jeffersonian, and Columbian species all roamed Michigan in the Pleistocene Era.

The tooth tells the story. This molar has a flat surface good for grinding grasses and other herbaceous plants, as mammoths were animals of the

plains. Mastodons, on the other hand, were denizens of Michigan's forests. Their molars have sharp points (cusps) that are adapted for chewing woody twigs and branches. So, this one tooth tells us a lot about the ancient environment at the site where it was found.

Mammoths roamed North America primarily from about 15,000 years ago until about 11,000 years ago, but fossil dating indicates that two small populations survived until much later—St. Paul, MN until about 5,600 years ago, and Wrangel-St. Elias National Park in Alaska until about 4,000 years ago. Thirty other mammoth specimens have been found in Michigan, but only 2-3 nearly complete specimens. One of the most complete was found when a drainage ditch was being excavated near Chelsea, Michigan in October 2015. Paleontologists from the University of Michigan found extensive evidence that humans killed and fed on that Chelsea specimen.

Bruce prizes this ancient mammoth tooth, which he now uses in his Biology and Environmental Science classes.

Wonder what kinds of birds and other animals this mammoth might have seen or heard while munching its way across prehistoric Michigan's extensive grasslands...

My Great Lakes Young Birders' Camp Experience

By Jessica Decker

My name is Jessica Decker. I am a 10th grader at Ferndale High School. I began birding in my own backyard when I was ten, and I haven't stopped in the last four years. In June 2018 I was excited to attend the inaugural Great Lakes Young Birders' Camp. I was honored to receive a full scholarship to this camp from the Detroit Audubon Society.

The camp was based at Alma College, and there were fourteen campers joined by college counselors and various wildlife professionals. Camp activities included trips to local birding spots such as Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and Hartwick Pines State Park. We also toured the MSU ornithology collection and visited the Wildlife Recovery Association.

This was my first experience going to a birding camp, and it was awesome! Of course I enjoyed our trips, the nearly 100 different bird species we identified, and other activities, but the highlight for me was definitely the people I met. It was wonderful to meet so many teens who have the same passion for birding that I have. Previous to going to camp, I only knew one or two people my age who were active birders. It was exciting for me to spend the week surrounded by others who were interested in birds, binoculars, and life lists. I also enjoyed talking with the camp staff, and learning how they found their way into their wildlife related professions.

I am extremely grateful for the generous support of the Detroit Audubon Society. Going to camp was honestly one of the best experiences I've ever had. I look forward to attending more camps in the future to enrich not only my skills as a birder, but to also broaden my circle of birding friends.

Jessica Decker pictured with female Common Yellowthroat at Forest Hill Nature Area.



Stilt Sandpiper. Bruce Szczechowski photo

2018 Field Trips

November

- 2: Owl Prowl**
- 9: Elmwood Cemetery**
- 10: Point Edward and Lake Huron Shore \$**
- 24: Belle Isle**

December

- 1: Elmwood Cemetery**
- 16: Christmas Bird Count**
- 22: Rockwood Christmas Bird Count**

The Business Case for Wildlife Conservation

By Sara Srinivasan, Manager of Conservation Planning, Wildlife Habitat Council

After 30 years of partnering with corporations to recognize and encourage wildlife habitat projects for conservation, education and recreation, the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) is uniquely positioned to understand how environmental stewardship benefits a company's triple bottom line. Our members are environmental leaders at local, national and global levels, voluntarily managing their lands to support sustainable ecosystems and the communities that surround them for the benefit of people, planet and profit.

What is the business case for conservation? It is something WHC has championed for thirty years in partnership with conservation practitioners, scholars, and industry leaders, which has resulted in several "win-win-win" scenarios for both business and nature in Southeast Michigan:

- DTE Energy's River Rouge Power Plant is a 100-acre site devoted to electrical generation and wildlife habitat. The plant's property is bordered on two sides by the Detroit and Rouge rivers and is primarily composed of no-mow grasslands which not only provide habitat for birds and insects but also help DTE Energy significantly save on mowing and maintenance costs. Their efforts to initiate and successfully implement a variety of projects helped the plant achieve ISO 14001 certification in environmental management.
- ITC Holdings' Headquarters in Novi manages 62 of its 92 acres for wildlife, including nesting birds and waterfowl. ITC uses an area in the adjacent right-of-way on-site as their corridor demonstration garden serving as a showcase of ITC's integrative vegetation management approach and training ground for employees and contractors.
- The General Motors Warren Technical Center habitats engage employees, their families, and the community in various environmental awareness initiatives. Their on-site habitats are a major focus of their "Earth Day" and "Bring Your Child to Work" events, when guided tours of the on-site nature trail are conducted along with wildflower plantings. A nature-themed scavenger hunt is also held to inspire children to become engaged and learn more about the natural environment.

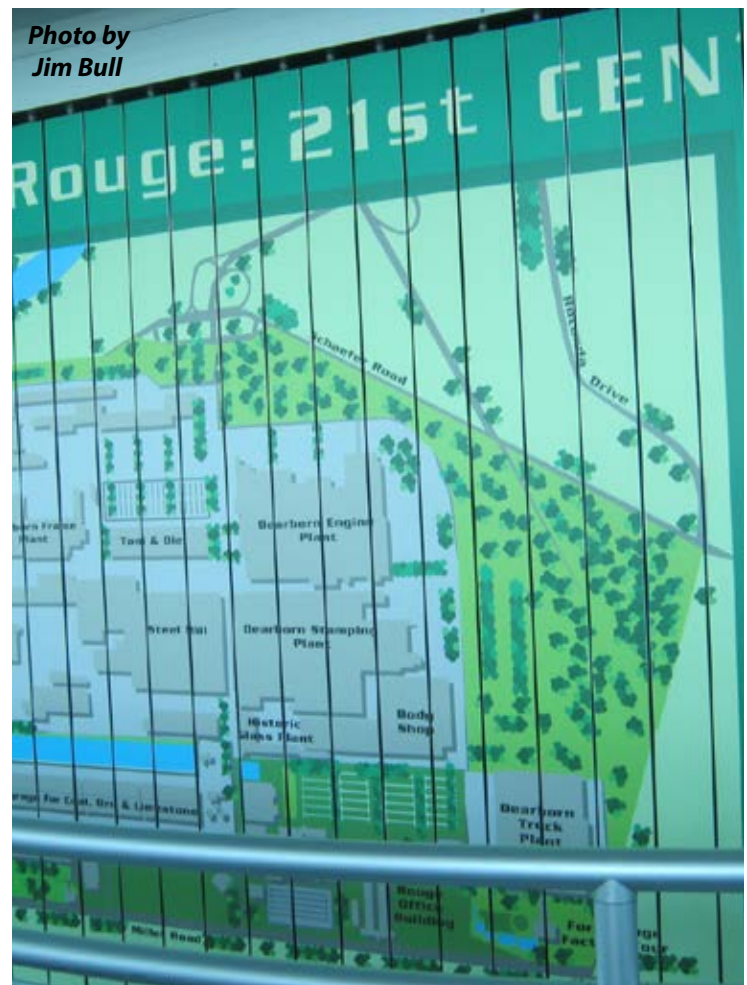
Successfully engaging companies in conservation usually starts with discussing the business needs that can be supported by strategic conservation efforts – and there are a lot. More often than not, using conservation to meet business needs just makes sense, especially in areas with the greatest environmental and community needs.

Although we still have a long way to go in terms of aligning the needs of business and nature, the 'corporate conservation' trend is luckily expected to continue because it is so closely tied to corporate sustainability initiatives, which more than 90% of today's CEOs say are vital to a company's success. Although many sustainability plans focus on energy and water conservation, more and more are recognizing the benefits of activities that benefit wildlife and ecosystems, like rain gardens and

bioswales, no-mow buffer zones, and employee nature trails. Many of these activities might have high up-front costs but pay for themselves over time, and are ultimately therefore worth the investment.

"Changing the way we do business is essential to addressing the challenges of environmental degradation," writes Dr. Andrew Hoffman in his 2018 article, *The Next Phase of Business Sustainability*. "The market is the most powerful institution on earth, and business is the most powerful entity within it. Business transcends national boundaries, and it possesses resources that exceed those of many nation-states," and is, therefore, "best positioned to bring the change we need at the scale we need it." This is why it is critical for at least some environmentalists to "reach across the aisle" and work with corporate partners – including oil, gas, utility and manufacturing companies – to make sure that wildlife conservation is strategically streamlined into business operations in ways that optimize benefits to all.

If you are interested in getting involved with the Wildlife Habitat Council or have questions about corporate conservation programs and projects, please visit wildlifehc.org or contact WHC's regional Conservation Manager, Sara Srinivasan, at ssrinivasan@wildlifehc.org.





New Black Tern Study Site: Wigwam Bay

By Ava Landgraf

This summer, thanks to funding from Great Lakes Audubon, we were able to expand our Black Tern Research to a second nesting site--The Wigwam Bay State Wildlife Area. Wigwam Bay State Wildlife area in Standish Michigan is already recognized as an "Important Bird Area" by National Audubon, but it is especially important to us for its nesting population of Black Terns.

My favorite part about this site, besides the abundance of birds and absence of people, was being able to compare the behavior of the terns at Wigwam vs St. Clair Flats. There were obvious differences in their nesting materials, diet, and behavior. For example, the Wigwam Bay terns seemed to be eating small fish, while the St. Clair terns appeared to eat large bugs like dragonflies and mayflies. The Wigwam Bay terns were also extra feisty; we saw them mobbing a Great Egret, Snapping Turtle, Canada Goose, and even a Bald Eagle. Birds nesting at Wigwam Bay are more removed from the human disturbances that the St. Clair Flats terns endure, but there is not such a distinction in the presence of common predators such as snakes and turtles. At Wigwam Bay we even saw a pair of River Otters, which could eat several nests very quickly.

Several previously held ideas about Black Terns were challenged. We thought the young terns moved away from the nest a couple days after hatching, but then we saw several chicks still around their nesting area two weeks after hatching. This served to remind us that there can be great variation in habits between Black Tern colonies, and we still have so much to learn about this species in general. I cannot wait for next summer to learn more about these birds and make steps towards figuring out how to improve their population numbers. Dedicated volunteers are essential for this work; anyone interested in biological research should contact me to see how they can get involved!

Above, releasing a banded tern.

Below, two just-hatched Black Tern chicks and an egg.





MYSTERY BIRD

Can you guess the identity of this common southeast Michigan bird, seen only in silhouette in this photo?

He LI took the above picture on our Lake Erie Metropark field trip on Oct. 6th.

It is good to get to know at least the group the bird is in by its shape, size, and other characteristics. Those visual cues often can be enough, as in this case, to clinch an identification.

To check if your guess is correct, go to page 14.

Detroit Audubon Adopts Five Year Strategic Plan

by Amy Greene, Co-Chair, Detroit Audubon Futures Committee

Our dedicated Detroit Audubon Board have been setting their sights on a vision and a plan for a strong and sustaining future for research, education and action in fostering appreciation of birds and the environment we share. Detroit Audubon board members and staff have not only been involved from the beginning but drove the plan by ideas generated and agreements reached at our March 2017 retreat and by approving the overall policy pieces of the plan, which are the province of the board. Staff and other leads then identified action steps needed to implement the plan, timelines for those actions, and ways to measure our success in achieving each. Those leads are now charged with implementing the plan as we go forward. This strategic plan will drive the focus of board and committee meetings for the next five years as we use it as a guidepost for discussions of progress and measurements of success. Thanks to the hard work and collective contributions to this plan, it is truly a collaborative effort of the whole board and staff of Detroit Audubon that we can all be proud of. This has been a lot of work, a tremendous achievement and a critical milestone for Detroit Audubon, particularly as we seek funds to underwrite these efforts.

Here is a summary of the journey the board and staff undertook to complete this plan:

- **Board Retreat March 2017** Fourteen of our nineteen board members participated in that retreat where the essence and ingredients of the strategic plan were agreed upon.
- **Detroit Audubon Futures Committee** was created to fine-tune the strategic plan, to take what was generated at the retreat and put it into a cohesive whole. Some board members volunteered while others were recruited. Eight board members served on that committee along with both of our staff members.
- **The board voted** to approve the new mission statement, core values, goals and objectives which really are the policy level part of the plan that need board approval.
- **Futures Committee** continued to work to identify specific actions necessary to implement the plan.
- **Leads** for each action were identified
- **The leads, including our staff**, met several times under the direction of the Futures Committee to identify measures we could use to help us ascertain if each action was successful in helping us reach our goals, and to establish a tentative timeline for each action.
- **We presented the plan** complete with these measures of success and timelines at the September 2018 Board Meeting.
- **The next step** will be stepping down these actions to yearly, quarterly and maybe even monthly work plans for each goal or mission area.

Our new mission statement, that was adopted in 2017 as a result of this strategic planning process is “to foster appreciation and conservation of birds and the environment we share.” Our mission pillars are: Education, Research, and Action.

We adopted this Vision Statement:

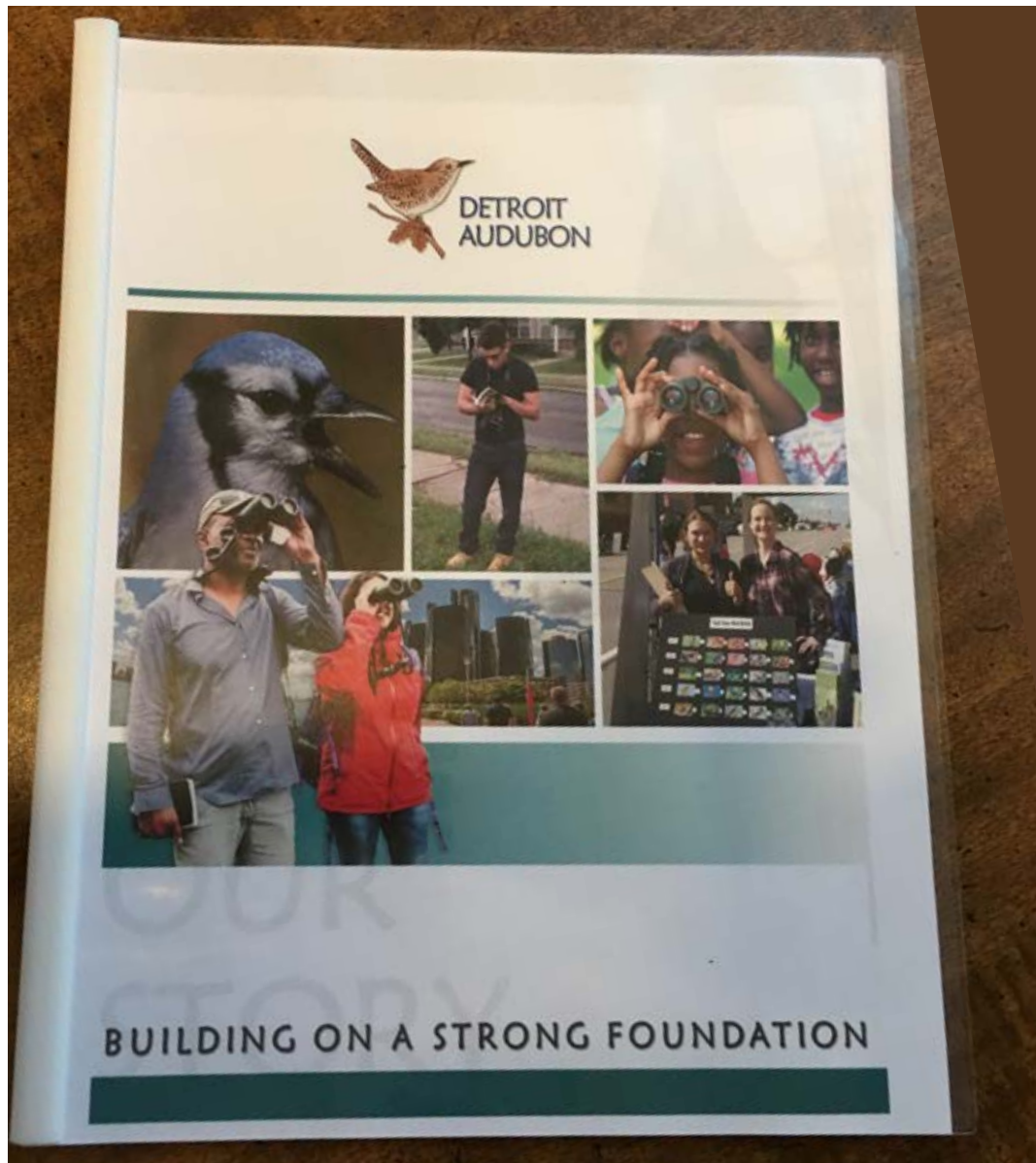
Detroit Audubon will build a culture of community engagement, inclusion and inspiration that fosters respect and appreciation for birds, for each other and the environment in which we live.

GOALS:

Here are the goals we hope to achieve through implementation of our new strategic plan:

- Goal 1** Improve financial growth and achieve sustainability
- Goal 2** Strengthen capacity and infrastructure to support excellence in administration, operations, and governance
- Goal 3** Grow Detroit Audubon's influence in SE Michigan and position Detroit Audubon as a chief source of information about birds, birding, and the environment of SE Michigan
- Goal 4** Protect and steward wildlife and their habitats within metro Detroit and the southeast Michigan region
- Goal 5** Improve and expand our education efforts
- Goal 6** Improve and expand our research efforts
- Goal 7** Improve, expand and increase the effectiveness of our advocacy efforts
- Goal 8** Become a more well-balanced organization with regard to race, socio-economic status, religion, gender identity, needs and abilities, and other demographic parameters

You can view the plan soon on our website www.detroitaudubon.org.



Red Osier Dogwood.
Jim Bull photo



Elmwood Cemetery: A Serene Birding Retreat in the Heart of the City

By Bailey Lininger

Once a month, I drive through bustling downtown Detroit over to the east side of the city and into Elmwood Cemetery.

Entering Elmwood's gates and driving down the small hill to the pond feels like taking one giant exhale—the noise of the city (mostly) gets left behind, and you become immersed in a beautiful, quiet, wooded oasis.

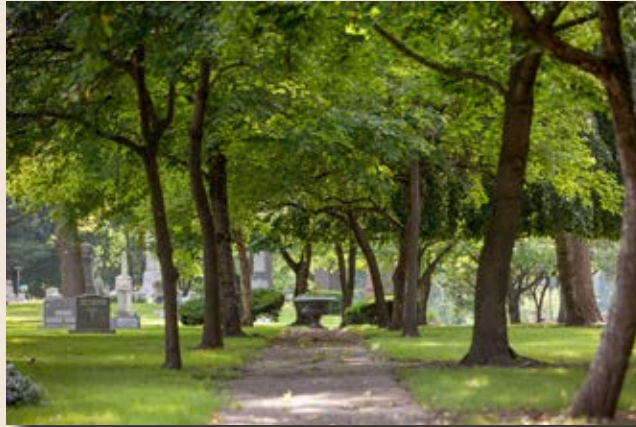
I drive to Elmwood every month because I love it there, but also because Detroit Audubon co-hosts a monthly walk with the Elmwood Cemetery Foundation. Our Elmwood walk is a classic Detroit Audubon program and, for many, is the first program they come to when they're checking out what we do and who we are. Elmwood's mix of history and natural beauty makes it a perfect introduction to city birding, and its wide diversity of bird life makes it a great spot for experienced birders, too.

Elmwood comes by its serene, retreat-like atmosphere honestly—as one of Michigan's oldest continuously-operating cemeteries, it has been a space of reflection and quietude in Detroit since 1846. Since its opening over 150 years ago, Elmwood has become a resting place for some of Michigan's most famous residents, from Lewis Cass to Coleman Young.

Elmwood's residents aren't the only ones who are notable, however—the design of the cemetery is also an important part of its history. Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect of Central Park fame, visited Detroit in 1890 and created a plan for Elmwood Cemetery that focused on maintaining and enhancing the beautiful native trees, shrubs, and grasses that were in the area.

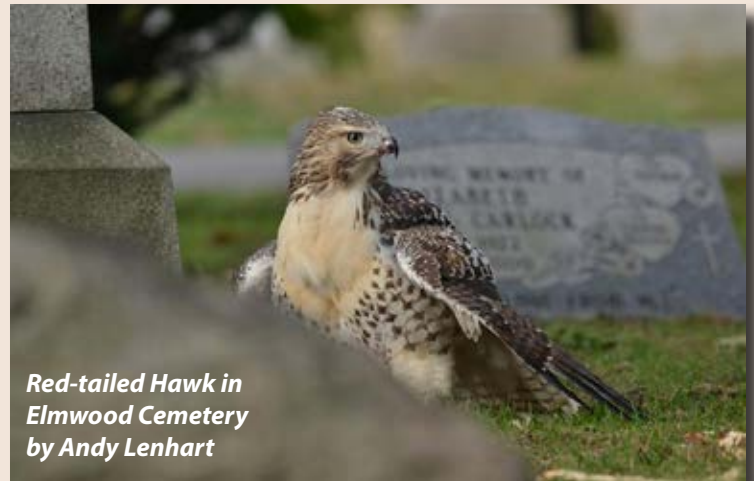
His plan also emphasized and celebrated the creek running through the property, called "Bloody Run" because of the role it played in a deadly conflict between the Native American community in Michigan and the British colonialists who were living in the area in the 1700's. The portion of Bloody Run that runs through Elmwood Cemetery is the only "unburied" (a fitting term for this location) portion of this creek in the whole city of Detroit, making it a truly special locale in the city. Elmwood's history as an Olmsted-designed park, and its lovely density and variety of trees helped it receive a designation as an official arboretum in 2015, making it Detroit's first certified arboretum.

While it is easy for us humans to appreciate how Elmwood's history has made it the unique locale it is today, none of this is lost on our avian friends. Birds of all varieties find Elmwood to be a lovely place to call home, even if just for a few days during migration. Over the last few years, a family of Red-Tailed Hawks have settled into life at Elmwood and



can be seen all throughout the spring, summer, and fall hunting for squirrels and mice among the headstones; and a Cooper's Hawk is often seen hiding in the black walnut grove right at the entrance. Woodpeckers are common sights at Elmwood, too—we've seen as many as twenty-four (at one time!) Northern Flickers roaming the grounds in search of insects, as well as many Red-Bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers. There's a family of Wood Ducks that call the pond at Elmwood home, and can be

seen nesting high up in the trees in the cemetery during the spring; an adorable sight, indeed.



Red-tailed Hawk in Elmwood Cemetery
by Andy Lenhart



Wood Duck in Elmwood Cemetery
by Bruce Szczechowski

During spring and fall migration, Elmwood is an excellent stopover for warblers, as well. In the last few autumns alone, birders have seen: Nashville, Pine, Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, and Wilson's Warblers—all within the city limits of Detroit.

Elmwood Cemetery is many things to many people: a resting place for loved ones, a repository for the history of this wonderful city, a great place for a bike ride—and here at Detroit Audubon, it's a truly special birding

location for us. We hope that one day, you can join us for a walk and see for yourself why we love it so much!

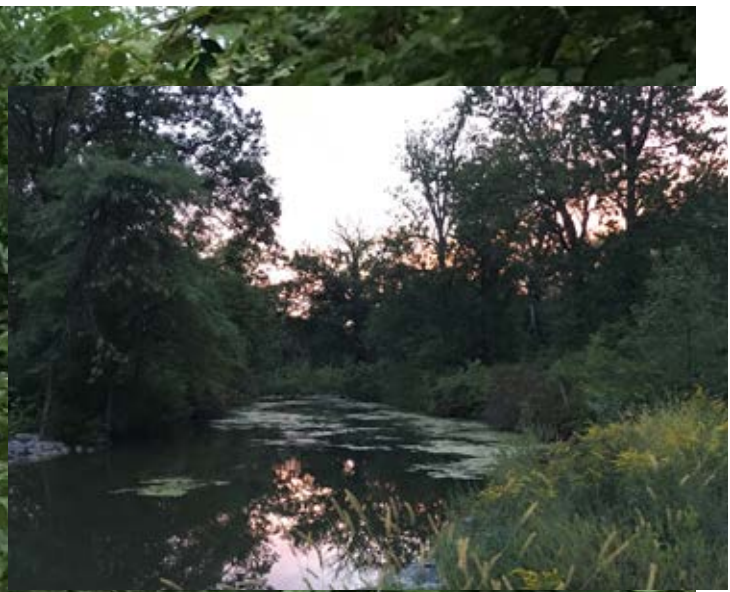
Editor's note: Both Red-Tailed Hawks and Cooper's Hawks nest in Elmwood, and one or two Eastern Phoebe usually nest behind the pillars of a couple of the cemetery's mausoleums. -

Photos below by Bailey Lininger and Jim Bull



Exploring Nashua Creek on Belle Isle

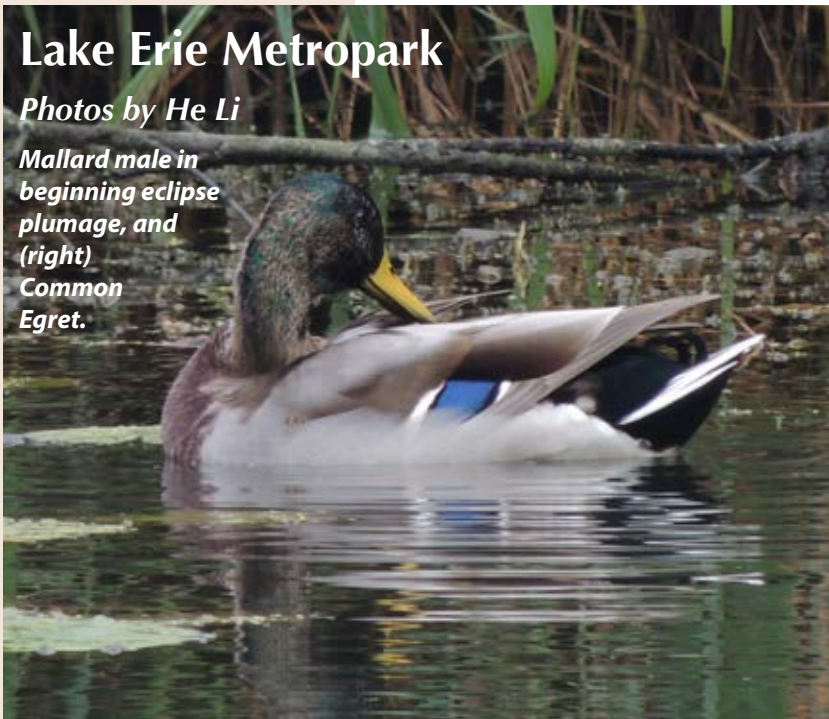
Photos by Jim Bull



Lake Erie Metropark

Photos by He Li

*Mallard male in
beginning eclipse
plumage, and
(right)
Common
Egret.*



Pointe Mouillée

Photos by Bruce Szczechowski

From top left: Snowy Egret in flight (note yellow legs); a juvenile Great Blue Heron spearing, and then swallowing a bluegill; a Tri-colored Heron among American Lotus; at lower left, a semipalmated Sandpiper; a coyote, and a Greater Yellowlegs.



Mystery Bird Revealed:

If you guessed Common Grackle, you are right! This very large native blackbird with a long, light beak and very long tail. In spring the Common Grackle combines a number of colors—a purple/dark blue head and neck with a bronze and black back, and a bright yellow eye. In the right sunlight, the purple and blue are iridescent, which led to its former (and many think more appropriate common name) of Purple Grackle. It has a loud, raucous



song, and will even dominate Blue Jays at feeders. They often roost with Brown-headed Cowbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds. They can be told from Rusty and Brewer's Blackbirds by their stout beaks and long, wedge-shaped tails. It is fun to watch the males strut back in forth with their tails held very rigidly behind them as they try to impress females in the spring. Common Grackles feed on insects, earthworms, other invertebrates, seeds (including waste grain in farmers' fields), small vertebrates, and sometimes on eggs and nestlings of other bird species.



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Natural History Book Review

The Cloud Collector's Handbook, by Gavin Pretor-Pinney

Review by Bailey Lininger

It's no secret that birders, as a group, tend to be very big fans of field guides. I cannot tell you how many field trips I have been on where I've overheard—and participated in—wonderfully enthusiastic conversations and debates about the various merits and demerits of a given field guide. Some folks are Peterson devotees, while others prefer Sibley. Some are fully into the 21st century and use an app on their phone, and some are still using the same field guide they got as a birthday present decades ago.

As a naturalist and admitted bookworm, I completely understand this love affair with field guides that so many birders share. Field guides provide an access point to the natural world that is fun, informative, and satisfying, and there's nothing I love more than discovering a new field guide that allows me to explore a new niche in nature.

It's no surprise, then, that when I stumbled upon Gavin Pretor-Pinney's *The Cloud Collector's Handbook* a few years ago, I was immediately smitten. Pretor-Pinney is the founder of The Cloud Appreciation Society, a non-profit that seeks to fight "blue-sky thinking" and promote the beauty and value of clouds in our world. With an understanding that celebrating clouds doesn't really appeal to the everyday person, Pretor-Pinney writes about clouds with levity and wit, two characteristics that are often lacking from the otherwise serious and factual world of field guides.

Additionally, as the title suggests, there is a "collection" aspect to this book, wherein you receive points for spotting various clouds. Pretor-Pinney explains in the introduction that "your points should be entered religiously on the Scorecard on page 5 and, as they mount up, they should be counted and re-counted with a greedy cackle. They'll be essential in judging

the worth of your collection, and fueling the bitter rivalry that will develop with fellow cloudspotters."

The good-humored and cheeky nature of this book keeps going when you dig into the various clouds that are covered, from the description of Altostratus clouds as "a Tupperware sky" (15 points for this cloud, 10 bonus points for "managing to persuade anyone else to take the slightest bit of interest in this cloud") to the delightful description of the Lenticularis cloud: "Lenticularis clouds are contenders for the Weirdest-Looking-Clouds-in-the-Sky awards. Their name is Latin for a lentil, on account of their very distinctive disc shapes. They often look remarkably like flying saucers. Presumably, when they were named, no one could think of the Latin word for 'shaped like a UFO.'"

Don't assume from my review, though, that this book is all jokes about clouds—Pretor-Pinney ensures that every entry has all the important scientific information you'd want to know. Each cloud entry has a few pictures, an explanation of how they're formed and where in the atmosphere they are found, what kind of precipitation may result from them, and any look-alikes to know about. This book has smarts and a sense of humor—what more can you ask for?

Next time you're out birding, I challenge you to look just past those birds up in the sky and see what lies beyond them. The world of clouds, seen through the lens of *The Cloud Collector's Handbook*, is a whimsical and delightful world waiting for us to explore.

