Flyway

A Detroit Audubon Publication
Summer 2020

Black Lives Matter!

2020 Art Contest Winners

Detroit Audubon Photography Contest

Bryant Vermont: Detroit Bird City's Littlest Park

Dragonflies and Damselflies Merit a Look Too!

Summer Woodland Birds You'll Probably Never See

Flyway

A publication of Detroit Audubon

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Original articles, photos and art welcome at **Flyway@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.

Mystery Bird

Can you identify this bird species simply by its flying silhouette?

Check your answer on page 9.

Photo by Jim Bull

Contents

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Cover Photo: Male Baltimore Oriole in flight by Paul Stenquist. A favorite summer resident of Michigan with a loud flutey whistle, this member of the blackbird family (Icteridae) is really more a denizen of Central American rainforests where it spends eight months of the year, while it visits us for three to four months for the purposes of nesting. It builds the masterpiece of nests, weaving a pendulous sack-like nest that hangs down 6-8 inches from a forked branch. It aggressively drives away cowbirds that might try to parasitize its nest. In migration they are attracted to feeders by half oranges and grape jelly. Females have a brown back and head, with a light yellow to light orange breast and belly, while the male has a deep black head and back and a bright orange breast and belly.

Field Trips and Virtual Programming

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and an abundance of caution, Detroit Audubon field trips were cancelled through the spring, and events have shifted to a digital format. We will continue to assess the situation and update our website and Facebook page accordingly. Going outside and enjoying nature is a great way to relieve stress and pass these trying times. We encourage you to do that while practicing responsible social distancing. We look forward to birding with you again in person once it is safe to do so.

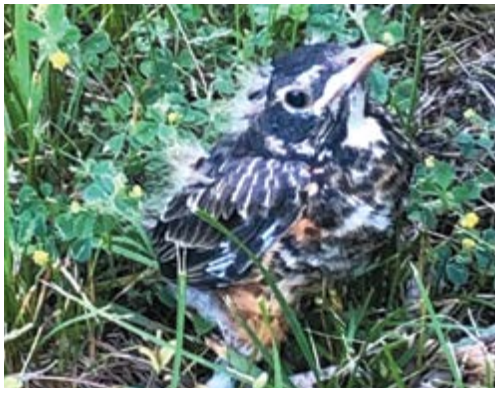
Please continue to follow our Facebook page, the Detroit Audubon website, and the weekly Flyway Express for updated calendar information on virtual programming and recordings of past webinars.

From Egg to Fledgling, a Robin Family Grows

Photos by Jim Bull and Bruce Szczechowski





Detroit Audubon Photography Contest

To promote interest and concern for preserving the native species of Michigan, and to encourage nature photography and enjoyment of our natural wonders, Detroit Audubon will host a photography competition for its members and friends this year.

Submit your favorite bird photographs for the First Annual Detroit Audubon Photography Contest 2020! Winners will receive a complimentary membership with Detroit Audubon for a year and will also have their photos showcased in the fall issue of the *Flyway* as well as on the Detroit Audubon website for a month.

Deadline: Friday, September 11, 2020

Detroit Audubon members and friends who are 18 and over and youth up to age 17 can submit up to three photos for the Photography Contest. Some ideas for photos include bird portraits, bird action shots, groups of birds, birds and native plants and humorous shots.

We can't wait to see what you send!

Entry:

By email only.
Send photos to staff@detroitaudubon.org
with DIVISON_YOUR LAST NAME in subject line. Example: ADULT _SMITH

Your photo must be sent as an attachment with the following information in body of email:

Entry Must Include:

1. Entrant's first and last name
2. Division (Adult or Youth)
3. Bird Species, and Plant Species if known
4. City, Park or Wildlife Refuge where photo was taken (must be taken in Michigan)
5. Date Photo was Taken
6. Contact information: full mailing address, phone number, and email address

Photo Eligibility:

Photos must be at least 28 MB, be close to 3,000 pixels wide (for horizontal photographs), or 3,000 pixels tall (for vertical photographs) with at least 300 dpi, saved in RGB mode and in JPEG format.

Some normal processing of original file is acceptable.

Examples of ineligible photographs include frame stacking, stitched panoramics, photos that have been heavily manipulated, photos with borders/signatures/watermarks.

Important Considerations:

Ethical Bird Photography: Official entry rules will include description of ethical bird photography. These rules also help to build awareness around such things as not getting close to nests/nesting birds or chicks, not using flashes (especially when photographing nocturnal birds), no baiting, and no drones.

By entering, photographers are:

Representing that they are the sole and exclusive author and owner of the photograph.

Irrevocably granting Detroit Audubon non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual license to use the photograph in any manner, including all associated uses, reproduction, distribution, etc.

Winners of Detroit Audubon's Artwork Contest 2020

Thank you for all of the submissions for the first annual Detroit Audubon Artwork Contest from young artists in Metro Detroit!

The goal of this contest was to create a greater awareness and appreciation for birds while fostering the development of young artists and sharing their work with the public.

All of the submissions were beautiful, and it was hard to choose, but the winners are:

Top right: *Untitled*, First-grader Mya Branch

Middle right: *Scarlet Tanager*, First-grader ParaDice Clark

Bottom right: *Owl*, 11-year-old Dairo Duran

Below: *White-breasted Nuthatch*, 11-year-old Evelyn Marie Wybenga

We are so honored to include their artwork in the summer issue of the *Flyway*!

We look forward to seeing more of your creative artwork next year for the Second Annual Artwork Contest!

Bird Safe Window Options

by Ava Landgraf, Research Coordinator

With everyone being home due to COVID-19, many more people are noticing the birds colliding with the windows of their homes. In many cases, we don't see these birds because they fly away after a collision, but studies are showing that even the birds that fly away often end up dying from their collision injuries. Similarly, if a bird immediately dies from a collision, they are often eaten by a scavenger and never seen by us.

Staying at home is helping us to see the extent of this issue. Window collisions are the number two (after cats) direct human-caused factor for bird population decline, killing 998 million birds in the United States and Canada every year. Roughly half of all these collisions occur at residential homes.

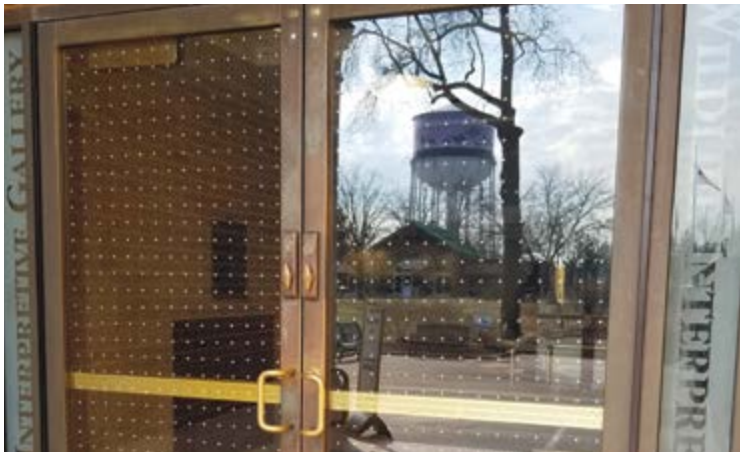
If you have been considering making your windows bird safe but aren't sure where to start, here are some of the easiest options. If you need help, email me at alandgraf@detroitaudubon.org.

Acopian BirdSavers

These hanging "Zen Curtains" are cost effective and very easy to install. Besides saving birds they are elegant and aesthetically pleasing. At birdsavers.com you can order the product or learn how to make your own.

Feather Friendly Window Markers

Feather Friendly Window Markers are adhesive dots applied with tape strips at two-inch intervals to the exterior surface of glass. These dots are used at several exhibits and buildings at the Detroit Zoo, but you barely notice them.



CollidEscape

CollidEscape is sold as perforated sheets that completely eliminate bird collisions by covering the outside of the window (also increasing privacy and energy savings) but still allowing clear views from the inside. These are a great option for businesses or public buildings because they can be printed with images for visitors to view from the outside.

American Bird Conservancy Tape

Simple and affordable, ABC BirdTape is easy to install and can be bought at most Wild Birds Unlimited shops. This translucent tape allows light through but is also highly effective at preventing bird strikes.

ABC Bird Tape.

Drawn Window Art

Window art with designs that provide coverage at two-inch intervals are a cheap and fun way to prevent window collisions. Chalk markers, china pencils, and tempera paint are all easy-to-use products to make your windows visible to birds.

BLACK LIVES MATTER!
Birding and Conservation Are for Everyone! *By Jim Bull, editor*

With all the events swirling around us these last few weeks, Detroit Audubon wants to make it clear that we are committed to making birding and conservation fully open to everybody. And African Americans and other people of color who are involved in those pursuits deserve to feel safe while doing so. It pains us to know that a white woman called the police to report that African American birder Christian Cooper, one of the leaders of one of our big-city sister chapters, New York City Audubon, who simply asked her to obey the rules and put her dog on a leash, was threatening her. Thank goodness he was not physically harmed and she has since apologized. She was also fired from her job and charged with filing a false report. Being perceived as a threat simply because one happens to be "Birding While Black" unfortunately is not something new but a reality faced by many African Americans who take up this pursuit every day. It is an added burden that I, for one, never have to worry about. That has to change!

While Detroit Audubon's commitment to inclusiveness and environmental justice is solid, we've still got a long way to go. We have chosen to focus our efforts in education on Detroit schools, which serve mostly people of color, but our field trips for the public are not as diverse as we'd like. Although we have had a very few board members of color in the past, currently neither our board nor our staff reflect racial diversity. We know that diverse ecosystems and diverse human communities are stronger and more resilient. So, we are a work in progress.

It has been gratifying to see a movement growing for racial justice that reflects all the colors of the rainbow. I attended once such rally in Grosse Ile (one of my favorite places to bird but which in the past would probably not have topped anybody's list for the most likely place for a protest rally). Detroit Audubon friend Rep. Debbie Dingell was one of the speakers. A sign held by a white woman really spoke to me and hit the nail on the head: "White Silence is Violence!" While that is definitely true, what we most need to pay attention to right now and always are African American voices, which have too often not been heard.

So, below, we present messages from three African American leaders in the environmental movement pertinent to this moment, which is both fraught and pregnant with opportunities for real systemic change. One is an interview with national leader (Drew Lanham) from 2017 but still relevant, while the other two are local Detroit leaders who wrote especially for this feature, Ventra Asana and Owolabi William Copeland. They represent a range of perspectives, and as always, the views of the writers are not necessarily the views of Detroit Audubon. What is most important is that we pay attention to the wisdom, the stories, and the feelings that they share, and respond with actions that help us heal and together create the more inclusive, more just community we are meant to be, in our life as birders and environmentalists, and as partners in our larger society. None of us can do everything, but we can all do something. And it all matters and matters a lot. As that old Pete Seeger song goes:

Step by step, the longest march
Can be won, can be won
Many stones can form an arch
Singly none, singly none
And by union what we will
Can be accomplished still
Drops of water turn a mill
Singly none, singly none

BIRDING, HABITAT, AND BEING BLACK: An Interview with J. Drew Lanham, Ecology and Ornithology Professor at Clemson University, former National Audubon Board Member, avid birder, and author of *Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*

By Purbita Saha *(originally published on Audubon.org in July 2017. It is reprinted here with permission of National Audubon)*

Whenever Drew Lanham brings up the "Home Place," he's reaching back to his roots in Edgefield, South Carolina. Perched near the border of Georgia, this rural town of nearly 5,000 is where Lanham's history begins—time and time again. It starts in 1790 with his ancestor Harry being brought to the state by slave owners as a child. It starts a century ago with his grandfather Joe buying dozens of acres of Piedmont wood to carve out a life in an unstable world. It starts in the 1960s and '70s with a young Lanham exploring the cow paths and creeks and dreaming about flight. And it starts just a few years ago with his father's death, prompting a return to the decaying "Home Place."

Seeing his family's farm and land in ruins reminded Lanham of something he'd long recognized: that his range map is always changing. And while this is true for

continued on page 7

The Quest to Reclaim Natural Spaces as an African American Urban Environmentalist

By Rev. Dr. Ventra Asana

Rev. Dr. Ventra Asana is a retired pastor in both the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the African American Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), and currently considers herself an ecominister and ecotheologian. We became acquainted with her when she helped with community outreach for our Detroit Bird City project. She wrote an article for our last issue reflecting on that work.

Our nation is in a calamitous situation right now. Not only are we experiencing the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic killing thousands all over the world and *especially* virulent in the United States, we are also undergoing seismic social upheaval in the form of protests as yet more African Americans are being killed by the police. Yet in an unparalleled moment of domestic and global solidarity, people of every class, race, and gender are marching with African Americans to demand that the lives of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and most recently, Elijah McClain, do not join the ghosts of countless black bodies who have disappeared and

continued on page 7

Drew Lanham in Beidler Forest, 2003
by Mike Fernandez

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What's Going On?

By Owolabi William Copeland

Owolabi is a Detroit grassroots organizer and cultural worker, and Orisha priest of Sango, with a passion for bringing the liberation lessons of Detroit, Michigan, to global audiences. He formerly worked as East Michigan Environmental Action Council's Co-Executive Director and its Climate Justice Director. He served as one of the local coordinators for the 2010 US Social Forum in Detroit. He was the head coordinator of the 2014 Our Power Detroit Gathering for young climate justice activists and convened the 2016 Detroit Just Transition Peoples Movement Assembly. He holds a BS from Stanford University and an MS from the University of Michigan. As Will See, his solo hip-hop CD "The Basics" is available at http://willseemusic.bandcamp.com/, which includes EJ anthems. He is also a member of the Long Hairz Collective, which includes Detroit Audubon friend and Native American singer/songwwriter and spiritual leader, Joe Reilly-Radell.

This article is written to be read after "Breaking America's Law".

continued on page 8

J. Drew Lanham continued from page 5

most humans and organisms, it's an extremely limiting factor for Lanham and other marginalized people. The ornithologist, Clemson professor, prize-winning writer, and self-described Black Birder strongly believes that his community has something in common with endangered birds: They're both rare because their habitat is threatened.

Lanham covered this parallel between birds and humans during his keynote speech at the 2017 Audubon Convention in Park City, Utah (you can listen to that speech at https://vimeo.com/226061875). Here are more of his thoughts on conservation and diversity from a conversation with Audubon.

Audubon: How did you discover this relationship between avian range maps and your own?

Drew Lanham: I love maps and am constantly reading them to see why the species I also love aren't in certain places. As ornithologists, we look at what birds need in their habitat: clean water, shelter, prey to forage, others of their species. Now what sort of habitat requirements are needed for humans? We want clean water, security, fresh food, and a good education. But when you look at where all these elements are available, and pair that with the distribution of people across the country, you see that we're limited by where we go. There are the generalists that can tolerate and are tolerated everywhere; then there are the specialists that can't tolerate and aren't tolerated by all. Being black, my habitat is further compromised by these social situations. The space is there physically, but I don't feel welcome. And so I'm playing this constant calculus of suitability to stay out of danger.

A: Does this mean we should be looking at conservation in a more humane way?

DL: I've come to this conclusion that conservation can be broken down into simple components: care and love. Yet as simple as these elements are, they're often elusive. This field gives a lot of importance to biological diversity, but not on the human level; we're guilty of not integrating eco-social tools enough. Research on land ethic, ethnicity, and race can affect perceptions of a place and how it's used, especially in the South. We need to consider the landscape more holistically by understanding it better. How do we come to a place and appreciate who the people are, where they've been, and where they want to go? If we develop the empathy, we can start to think about inclusion and diversity in different ways.

A: What about birders? What should their mission be as they try to encompass more underrepresented communities?

DL: First of all, understand the mission. The point is not to create black birders; it's to realize the diversity of thoughts to nature. Just because I love birds doesn't mean the next person will love them in the same way. But I still want to meet them where they are.

To all the young birders out there, BE YOU. As much as other people may have dreams for you, they can't create them. They can help you, and you can accept that graciously. But you need to find yourself.

A: You talk and write about home a lot. Why is that?

DL: It's kind of crazy, but I think the soil has something to do with it. These superlatives of the "Home Place"—there was always survival on the land, and that's become ingrained. For instance, after I lost the [Edgefield] land, I went to visit it. There was a Prairie Warbler buzzing on a fence post; it became my guide as I learned to love other places.

I can't help but constantly compare where I go to with where I'm from—it's the mental landscape I've formed. As a migratory being, when I get back home now, it's all about comfort and care. The book really brought that out as I wrote. (I call it my literary selfie.) Overall, our personal stories are important because it allows us to see commonalities and differences. It lets us move forward in our lives and move forward as a society.

Rev. Dr. Ventra Asana, continued from page 5

been unavenged for centuries within the American landscape.

In the midst of all this turmoil, I have had to revisit the crux of pain that situates itself in how it signifies to be an urban environmentalist at the intersection of my calling as an African American woman who is an ecological minister. Though I am "officially" retired from the professional pulpit as an ordained clergywoman in two mainstream denominations—one predominately European American (United Methodist Church) and the other, African American (African Methodist Episcopal)—and have not served a local parish since 2014, I still continue in ministry as I tend my community in urban green spaces of environmental awareness. And while I am passionately devoted to partnering with other environmental sojourners in urban spaces in this vein, I admit that this current surge of Black protest is severely traumatizing, reopening many old wounds in several ways.

Primarily, the urban landscape is again deemed abjectly unsafe, not just because one could become infected by someone with COVID-19, but also having to decide whether I should stay close to home (and psychologically and culturally safe) in my own neighborhood or if I dare to venture to spaces within which I will certainly be subject to the "white gaze." This phenomenon is what sociologists define as the anxiety that whites feel when they subjectively surmise that black people do not belong anywhere that is overwhelmingly a white racial enclave. Should I find myself in such an area, I must immediately adopt a certain demeanor so as not to call attention to my blackness in any way that might be perceived as a threat to white sensibilities. Because I was reared to be a confident, self-actualized woman, this has sometimes been dangerously problematic. For I'm of the mind, like John Wesley, that *"the world is my parish."*

It is not unusual that I have experienced this problem, for it has and continues to happen to many black people. This need to adopt benign, unthreatening behaviors requires an exhaustive array of patterns that must be momentarily ascertained so that white people can be made to feel "safe" around me and other black folks.

But my driving question is: when do I get to feel safe? I can recall countless incidents wherein I felt imperiled in environments outside the city that were considered "white" and prayed to get away unscathed.

Once my family went on a community field trip to Niagara Falls organized by the block club, of which my mother was the president. While my mother and the other parents were setting up the picnic area for our refreshments and games, my sister and I decided to take one of the tours from the picnic site to observe the falls up close. The excursion started off well. Laughing excitedly, we boarded the cute little trolley and settled into a seat. We were having fun trading jabs, oblivious to how the landscape began to change. The trolley slowly ambled deeper into the woods, as sunlight playfully splashed mottled green hues off the leaves. It began to rain, and the sunny sky turned to dark clouds. Soon the mist of the falls was in view, a lovely sight to behold. But my pleasure fled as many on the trolley started staring at us, the only two black girls on the little train. We were without adult protection, as our mother was back at the picnic site. I could not enjoy the rushing spectacle of the falls because I was afraid to get back on the trolley. Tightly grasping my sister's hand, I pulled her close to me as we boarded to travel back through all that lush vegetation, now growing dark, presenting itself as something sinister. No one spoke to us, and many just stared in an unfriendly manner. When we finally got back to our picnic area, my mom swept us up into her arms, relieved to see that no harm had befallen her babies.

Was this an isolated, exaggerated happenstance? I wonder. For my own paternal grandfather, who had the audacity to rise above his "station," bought the cotton plantation on which he and the family were sharecroppers. In his industriousness, he made his own charcoal, had a little lean-to general store, and lent money to many regardless of race. One day, a white farmer came to the house and asked my

grandfather if he could speak to him about a personal matter. The man, claiming that he didn't want the "women folks" to overhear the conversation, persuaded my grandfather to walk with him to a clearing in the woods. When they arrived, the Ku Klux Klan was there to greet him. They accused him of being uppity, not knowing his place. They doused him with kerosene and set him ablaze. While that was enough to traumatize anyone, my father had followed him to the woods, and he witnessed the entire thing. This kind of trauma is not unusual for black folks in the United States, and there are myriad stories of our people being terrorized, burned out of our properties, killed and disrespected, in both rural and urban settings.

Finally, this trauma that is deeply rooted in the generational psyche of African American culture is even more severely problematic when one considers how to invite our people into environmental spaces, persuasively convincing them that it is safe to enjoy nature. The recent incident between the African American birder Christian Cooper and a white woman, Amy Cooper (no relation) serves as a modern-day prime example that we must consistently be guarded in natural spaces that should be available to all. Many may already know that Ms. Cooper was incensed when Christian Cooper asked her to leash her dog because it was wildly tearing through a Central Park area specifically set aside for watching birds. Had Mr. Cooper not been wise enough to record this woman's racist antics, claiming that he was assaulting her, he could have wound up as another black person killed by police. This incident, and so many others of black bodies in so-called "spaces of nature"—like the woods where my grandfather perished—gives many African American people deeply introspective pause, to consider where they will walk, camp out, picnic, jog, or bike. Until these assaults on black bodies are assuaged it will remain difficult for my people to *freely* access natural spaces, wherever our whims take us.

Even so, there is nothing that can dissuade me from continuing my quest to cajole, persuade, implore, and teach people that the call to environmental justice is needed as never before. As I have often said, we only inhabit this one earth, home to us all. I will not deprive myself of the song of the Chickadee, the sheer pleasure to feel the soft mist of spring rain on my cheeks, or the thrill of catching a Monarch butterfly hovering in my garden. I will continue to embody the full measure of my calling as a tenacious, African American woman who is committed to engaging critical care of God's earth, for myself and everyone who will listen to work for its betterment. The price of earth's destruction is too high not to do so. In whatever ways you are moved, I invite you to join me in this eco-ministry challenge.

Owolabi William Copeland, continued from page 6

https://geezmagazine.org/magazine/article/breaking-americas-law-on-being-suspect

1. I was asked by the Detroit Chapter of the Audubon Society to write an article on what time it is today, on what is going on in the streets. My first response is that it's the same time it's been for the last 500 years on this continent, an era of unending war. There are others in our community who have been working for years on prison abolition and the criminal justice system. I will speak from my own experience of 20 years of work in Detroit movement building, environmental justice, and Black/New Afrikan liberation and not pretend to be an expert in specific topics in which I am not.

My next response is that more white people are starting to wake up to the reality of this war and some of them want to stop it and a few of them are willing to take risks to do so. A smaller few are even willing to help us win the war and defeat the forces of murder, deception, exploitation, and theft that maintain and operate this society.

2. What's going on in the streets? You can see many things depending on which streets you are in or which social media feed you are tuned into.

These range from public demands to shift resources from police departments to community safety initiatives—publicity events with police officials and agents posing to demonstrate their friendliness—social awakening of white citizens—marches in suburbs to raise awareness of the structural racism involved in forming and maintaining these municipalities—grief in the streets, mourning in the streets—tears and sweat shed in the streets—Ancestors in the streets—organizing to raise awareness that white wealth is legalized theft from those kept as "minorities" in the United States and shifting resources back into our communities—creating autonomous police no-go zones where community takes its own responsibilities for keeping safety—knocking down monuments to slaveowners and colonizers as municipalities keep these American statues stowed away safely for unknown purposes—white nationalists attacking local businesses in order to spark a Boogaloo or race war—white protesters observing police walk past them in order to harass and accost Afrikan protesters—but we need police to keep us safe—angry Southerners burning down a business where an Afrikan was killed sleeping in a driveway—white musicians handing over their concerts to Afrikan musicians so their networks can learn to support Afrikan creativity—people picking up trash in the streets to ensure public spaces are left better than before we entered them—grassroots organizers teaching people how to protest while keeping public health awareness in a time of pandemic—multinational corporations giving "Black Lives Matter" and "Juneteenth" discounts to American customers—people feeding each other and making sure that everyone who participates can get something to eat and drink—people setting up free "take me" tables for their community—grief in the streets—mourning in the streets—tears and sweat offered in the streets—transformation of trauma in the streets—Ancestors in the streets

Phew! A lot is taking place this hot summer, can you feel it?

But you won't really know what's happening on the streets and all the complex confusing joy of it until you join in, not merely to show up and watch but to actively help make a new world happen.

3. Audubon readers may also wonder: What's going on off the beaten path?

Unfortunately as spaces within the United States, "nature" is dominated by the construct of whiteness which inflicts violence upon Afrikans and people considered to be "different." Let's remember that getting in touch with non-human beings is a powerful, liberating, and healthy experience. Also let's acknowledge that this social system via private property and public privilege makes white people feel that they "own" the land and they can "police" who can enter these sacred spaces.

Drew Costley describes this in his recent article "Racism Gets to Determine Who Enjoys Nature": "Last week, Emily Taylor, another Black climber based in the Bay Area, said in a video posted to Instagram that a white Berkeley resident shouted the word "nigger" at two Black girls. The girls, ages seven and ten, were part of Taylor's climbing camp for girls of color. A month ago, a white woman named Amy Cooper threatened to call the New York Police Department on Christian Cooper, a Black man, after he reminded her of the dog-leashing rules in Central Park's Ramble while he was bird-watching. And in February, Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed in Georgia while he was out for a run."

I do have a visceral reaction to being surrounded by white people. There are layers of work I must do—emotional labor, let's call it—to be able to relax in Michigan's remote areas. I notice the number of Confederate Flags and Trump stickers (for many, the 21st-century Confederate emblem) I pass to get to "nature," and the presence of whiteness can be a barrier between myself and the natural world.

My blood is full of the ancestral memory of the violence that can happen when a dignified Afrikan is surrounded by white peoples. I asked my father why he never took us camping like some of my white-skinned friends. He said "It's not fun to pretend to sleep on the ground when you had to sleep on the ground for real." From forced agricultural labor to inadequate housing, poverty, exploitation, and oppression have mediated Afrikans' experience with the outdoors. The indoors represented comfort and safety, a place that we could secure (somewhat) and be secure (sometimes). For Afrikans, re-establishing relations with Mother Earth is a process of individual, communal, and societal healing.

Owolabi William Copeland, continued from page 8

The intersection of gender and race is a complicated beast. We see in the example of Amy Cooper that the white American police state is ready to jump to the "aid" for white women's safety. A primary function of the police is to protect white families from me and my kind, even if it means that blood is to be shed to provide that feeling of safety.

As economic inequality increases, the number of murders by police officers leaps higher. As gentrification destroys Black American communities, the security industry swells, drunk on blood and subsidized wealth.

It is time to question if and how we still feel allegiances to a society that is structured to exploit those who are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).

We are tired of white environmentalists who only talk about "communing with nature" with no regard for who is here and for who is excluded. The health of all people is sacrificed by the willingness of white "environmentalists" to avert their gaze from these murderous consequences.

Protected natural areas are often nestled within mostly white and wealthy housing developments, rendering access to "nature" a privilege afforded to white people who live in mansions and wear tactical gear made of patented synthetic fibers as they exercise through the forest.

Now is also time for organizational healing. Organizations that are historically led by white executives and that cater to white memberships can do so much more than just re-tweeting "Black Lives Matter" and come to understand their roles in white supremacist culture. Environmental organizations must decide if they will make the changes necessary to help facilitate the healing and safety that Afrikans need to connect with nature in the context of this violent, sexist culture. Environmental leaders who are conversant in modern science may have to face a difficult humility that they don't have the social and historical context to bridge relationships with our communities.

The bond between the natural world and Afrikan communities has never been severed completely. We are scientists, farmers, priestesses, and healers with decades of personal experience. Often these folks are continuing legacies of centuries of relationship with our Mama the Earth and nonhuman friends.

"Environmental" organizations will have to redefine who is lifted up as "experts" and who is paid as consultants, teachers, and presenters. Here are just a few organizations you can support, hire, and donate to that will help you get deeper into the energy of this moment:

EarthSeed Detroit
Outdoor Afro
GirlTrek
People of the Global Majority in the Outdoors, Nature, and the Environment
[b]reach: adventures in heterotopia
Sidewalk Detroit

5. These times are way bigger than police. We literally live in a sick society. This is a time for us all to assess how we have been infected by this sickness, what we do to continue and nurture it, and what risks we are willing to take to embody the healing the earth is calling forth.

Yes, this struggle for right relations and this transformation of the violent domination of one small group of humans over the worlds' majority is what the earth is calling for. Time for us all to get aligned!

Let us say goodbye with words from a famous 19th century nature guide who led dozens of Afrikans on expeditions underneath the stars, carefully observing the animals surrounding her teams, silently teaching the ways the winds blew and how the trees spoke a language that pointed out the directions we should head toward.

"Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

I had reasoned this out in my mind, there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other.

I grew up like a neglected weed—ignorant of liberty, having no experience of it."

—Harriet Tubman

Mystery Bird Revealed

If you guessed Turkey Vulture, you were right. Flying Turkey Vultures can be easily identified by their dihedral wing shape ("V" shape). In northern Michigan, only the Common Raven sometimes flies with wings in a similar position. In better light you can also often see that the leading edge of the wings is black, but the flight feathers are whitish. Close up you will note that their head is red because it is unfeathered, which is thought to be an adaptation for feeding on carrion. The bare head keeps it clean when it is poked into a carcass. Anything that might stick on will quickly dry out and fall away, whereas a feathered head would tend to hold blood and flesh, creating conditions for infections to occur. Turkey Vultures nest on the ground and eggs require 41 days of incubation. Young are fed by regurgitation. One of its characteristic defenses if it feels threatened is projectile vomiting! They often ride thermals and feed in groups. Thank these avian sanitation workers for their cleaning and recycling services.

(National Audubon photo by Michelle Maani. Used with permission. May not be reproduced without permission of National Audubon.)

Global Big Day May 9, 2020

Tree Swallow by Bruce Szczechowski

This year, for the first time ever, Detroit Audubon participated in eBird's Global Big Day, an annual celebration of the birds around you. Last year's Global Big Day set a new record at eBird, with 92,284 checklists of birds collected on one day. Detroit Audubon was excited to participate this year to hopefully help raise that number to over 100,000 checklists. At Detroit Audubon, our goal was to encourage birders to get out and bird on the same day across Metro Detroit and we were so excited about the response to this first year! We had 40 people pledge to go birding, and 44 checklists submitted to eBird from 39 locations across Metro Detroit, tallying 104 species and a total of 3,817 birds. Way to go!

A large percentage of birders stayed within their own backyards and neighborhoods from South Rockwood to Waterford and Ann Arbor to Harper Woods. In addition, people ventured out to parks close to their homes across the region, including Belle Isle, Elmwood Cemetery, Palmer Park, and Wayne State University in Detroit. Many went to popular spots like Kensington Metropark, U-M Dearborn's Environmental Interpretive Center, Sterling Heights Nature Center, and Heritage Park. Others frequented hotspots that you may not be as familiar with included Douglas Evans Nature Preserve, Heritage Park, Robert H. Long Park, Tenhave Woods, and Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary.

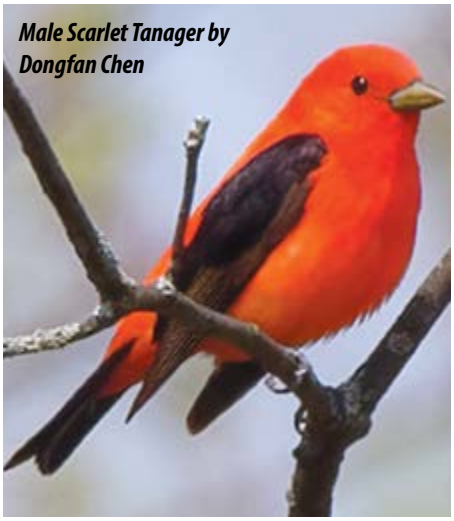
Over 100 species were counted, from water birds and shorebirds to warblers and raptors in the diverse habitats across Metro Detroit. In addition to hundreds of the many common species, swallows were out in big numbers, especially on Belle Isle, including Tree Swallows, Cliff Swallows, and Barn Swallows. Raptors seen across the region included Peregrine Falcons, Red-tailed Hawks, Great Horned Owls, and Eastern Screech Owls. Many of the favorite warblers seen even during the wet and cold weather were Black-and-white, Nashville, Northern Parula, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Green. Those who live closer to our many lakes or wetlands were able to see Wood Ducks, Redheads, Soras, Killdeer, and Green Herons.

We look forward to continuing this tradition, and hope many more of you will join us next May for Global Big Day!

American Coot	2	Cliff Swallow	250	House Wren	13	Ring-billed Gull	69
American Crow	12	Common Grackle	127	Killdeer	28	Rock Pigeon	11
American Goldfinch	67	Common Tern	4	Least Flycatcher	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	14
American Kestrel	1	Common Yellowthroat	3	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	10
American Robin	455	Cooper's Hawk	3	Magnolia Warbler	3	Sandhill Crane	6
Bald Eagle	6	Double-crested Cormorant	22	Mallard	175	Savannah Sparrow	1
Baltimore Oriole	37	Downy Woodpecker	28	Mourning Dove	53	Solitary Sandpiper	4
Bank Swallow	23	Easter Towhee	2	Mute Swan	53	Song Sparrow	37
Barn Swallow	127	Eastern Bluebird	5	Nashville Warbler	15	Sora	2
Belted Kingfisher	2	Eastern Kingbird	1	Northern Cardinal	71	Spotted Sandpiper	2
Black-and-white Warbler	9	Eastern Phoebe	6	Northern Flicker	19	Swamp Sparrow	2
Black-capped Chickadee	47	Eastern Screech Owl	1	Northern Parula	1	Tree Swallow	172
Black-crowned Night Heron	1	European Starling	257	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	65	Tufted Titmouse	17
Black-throated Green Warbler	19	Forster's Tern	8	Orchard Oriole	2	Turkey Vulture	19
Blackburnian Warbler	3	Gray Catbird	20	Osprey	5	Veery	1
Blue Jay	83	Great Blue Heron	10	Ovenbird	7	Virginia Rail	1
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	21	Great Egret	8	Palm Warbler	26	Warbling Vireo	7
Blue-headed Vireo	2	Great Horned Owl	1	Peregrine Falcon	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	35
Blue-winged Warbler	1	Great-crested Flycatcher	3	Pied-billed Grebe	2	White-crowned Sparrow	33
Bonaparte's Gull	1	Greater Yellowlegs	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	39	White-throated Sparrow	131
Brown Thrasher	1	Green Heron	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	Wild Turkey	9
Brown-headed Cowbird	27	Hairy Woodpecker	7	Red-eyed Vireo	1	Wood Duck	23
Canada Goose	328	Hermit Thrush	7	Red-headed Woodpecker	2	Wood Thrush	2
Carolina Wren	5	Herring Gull	12	Red-tailed Hawk	15	Yellow Warbler	22
Chimney Swift	1	House Finch	36	Red-winged Blackbird	218	Yellow-rumped Warbler	77
Chipping Sparrow	8	House Sparrow	168	Redhead	3		

Common Summer Woodland Birds You'll Probably Never See

But you'll know they are there if you listen (You might call them "ear"-ly birds) by Jim Bull



Male Scarlet Tanager by Dongfan Chen

Summer can be glorious for many outdoor activities, like canoeing, boating, swimming, playing baseball, picnics, and barbecues, but birding is another story. It is true that birding in meadows and marshes can be outstanding in late spring and summer—a bonus often is being able to see young birds being fed and cared for by the adults. Binoculars are useful for watching summer sporting events, but taking them into a forest to bird is practically useless, especially for trying to find these common birds: Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Eastern Wood Pewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, and Wood Thrush. Why?

Leaves! The trees are covered with them and most of these birds like to sing from high up in the treetops. Learn their songs and you'll be able to document their presence, but good luck trying to get a look at them! The Wood Thrush often sings lower down, but there still are a lot of leaves in the way making it difficult to see him (if the bird is singing, it is likely a male).His deep brown color, with all the browns in the woods, makes it doubly difficult.

The Pewee, Ovenbird, and Red-eyed Vireo sing so constantly it is amazing they can go so long without running out of breath!

On top of the fact that the Red-eyed Vireo (Vireo olivaceus) sings from near the tops of forest trees most of the time, so that leaves hide him from view, his olive-green color helps to conceal him even during those rare few seconds when he might come into the open. But all summer long you'll hear his choppy robin-like song that naturalists for years have put these words to: "See me? Here, I am! Way up here. See me? Here, I am!" The "See me?" would seem to be a cruel mocking question to the eager birder who tries to get a visual of this species in summer.

If you should get a glimpse of this persistent singer, you will discover that he has an olive-greenish brown back, a cream-colored breast, and a gray cap separated from the white supercilium (white eye-brow) by a dark black line, and, if you should happen to see him close enough and with the sun at the right angle, you will see his bright red eye.

The female, which looks exactly like the male, spends most of her time on the nest, which is much lower down—eye level or just above but seldom over 15 feet up. One of the most exquisite nests of the bird world, it dangles down between the fork of a tree branch somewhat like a smaller and shallower version of the pendulous oriole nest. However, this nest is a much tighter cup of grasses and bark strips often decorated with spider silk and lichens. The female does all the incubation, but at rare interludes during the day, according to the ***Stokes Guide to Bird Behavior, Volume 1,*** the male briefly stops singing and comes down close to the nest, but rarely to the nest itself. The female leaves the nest and joins her mate, when she may quiver her wings a bit and give a call similar to begging young, which prompts him to feed her. That done she returns to the nest to continue her duties. This momentary interlude is about your only chance to spot the birds or their nest. I have seen, I think, three Red-eyed Vireo nests that were active—all found by somebody else. Two of them were pointed out to me by Homer Roberts, the former Detroit Audubon president and resident naturalist for 60 years at Camp Mahn-Go-Tahsee, the site of our spring campout for over 40 years. Both of those times it was on the edge of the woods, near a road that ran along his property, which was just around the corner from the camp.

June 15-19, while visiting my friend and Detroit Audubon photographer extraordinaire Bruce Szczechowski at his cottage on Grand Lake, just north of Alpena, we heard a Red-eyed Vireo singing from tree perches around his cottage all day every day, but so high up and hidden by leaves we gave up getting a look at him, until Friday morning as I was loading my car for the trip home. The male started singing low in an apple tree next to the driveway. My camera was still in the house, but Bruce got some very nice shots. By the time I retrieved my camera, the bird had flown back to a customary, treetop perch obscured from view as usual. But we both got to see it—a rare sighting of this common bird this time of year. In migration they are often much easier to see but not so during the summer!

Like most flycatchers, the Eastern Wood Pewee (Contopus virens) is most easily identified by its distinctive eponymous song that has been transcribed into English as, "Pe-ah-wee, Pe-ah-wee, Pee-oo," repeated over and over again all day long, much like the Red-eyed Vireo. It is a late migrant so its song is not heard even in migration until late May or early June. Their "dawn song" is continuous and may go on for 30 minutes or more with no break between phrases. During the rest of the day, the song is continuous but with short pauses between phrases.

If you should happen to see this bird, you should note that it has a brown head, back, and tail, a dirty white to grayish throat and breast, gray washed flanks, two distinctive white wing bars, and no eye-ring, which the Empidonax family of flycatchers all have. Although it is difficult to see them other than in migration, they do take breaks between songs to perch on an open branch and sally out to catch insects. They are much more likely to be seen then than when they are singing!

The nest is usually very high—up to 65 feet up, way out on a branch, which can be dead or leafless, anyway. The nest is a small cup (a maximum of 1.5 inches in diameter) of finely woven grasses at the fork of a branch, and like the Red-eyed Vireo's is often covered in lichens. It is often built on a branch that already has lichen on it as well. Along with the Red-eyed Vireo's nest, it is one of THE most exquisite of our arboreal bird nests. This one is put on top of the branch unlike the vireo's hanging nest. The height of this nest makes nesting behavior of this species very difficult to study. Most observations indicate it is probably the female who does all the nest building, however.

Our third heard but not seen summer bird is the Ovenbird (Seiurus aurocapilla), which is one of the Wood Warblers, despite the fact that the word "warbler" is not part of its name. Only six inches long, it has a deep reddish-brown back, an orange cap bordered by a dark brown line, and a breast with very large brown spots. As with the other two species, males and females are monomorphic, which means they look exactly the same (mono = one, morphic = form, so "one form").

Sometimes called the "tattle-tale bird," it seems be saying "teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher," all day long, although to me the emphasis seems to be more on the second syllable, so I'd prefer to write it as, "Chur-tee, chur-tee, chur-tee," etc. Like the first two birds discussed, it too sings almost incessantly all day long, but is even more unlikely to be seen than the previous two birds.

When I was in high school, I spent the entire afternoon one day during our spring campout at Camp Mahn-Go-Tahsee trying to find a singing Ovenbird to see it, and I was determined to find its nest as well. I failed on both counts. Although the male

sings from very high perches concealed by leaves, the ovenbird nests on the ground in the middle of a woodland. The nest is made of grass, twigs, bark, and dead leaves, and often lined with mammal hair. The species gets its name from the distinctive grassy cover it builds over the nest that totally conceals it except for one side, the entrance, suggesting a similarity to a Dutch oven to those that named this bird. I have never found or even seen one of these nests, even a collected one in a museum display, but that is one of my bucket-list items, so if you find one please let me know!


Eastern Wood Pewee by Bruce Szczechowski

Great Crested Flycatchers (Myiarchus crinitus) are loud. Their raucous song sounds like a deep resonant "Preep! Puh-reep! Preep!," which lets you know they are around, although they are not often seen in summer. As with the other species, they are much more easily seen in migration and when they first return from their South American and Central American homes, where they spend more of the year, as do most of our neotropical songbirds.

They are quite striking: about nine inches long, with a 13-inch wingspan, an olive back, gray throat, a long bright rufous or reddish-brown tail, and a bright yellow belly.

Unlike the other elusive birds mentioned, Great Crested Flycatchers are cavity nesters that usually use an old Northern Flicker nest. They line the cavity with grass and often decorate the entrance to the nest hole with a draped snake skin, which may serve to deter predators (at least that's one hypothesis).

To feed, it sallies out from perches to catch insects high in the tree canopy, but it also gleans caterpillars and other insects from leaves like warblers do.

You'd think a bright red bird like the male Scarlet Tanager (Piranga olivacea) would be easy to see among green leaves, but there are just too many green leaves, and it is amazing how even when it comes into the open it can be difficult to find. They are easy to see in migration, not so easy when they are in the midst of summer nesting. The male sings a song that is quite similar to the American Robin's "cheer up cheerily" but more raucous, like a robin with a sore throat! Their call, "chick-burr," is also quite distinctive.

The male has been called the "Black-winged Red Bird," but the female is all greenish. Both have stout, fairly long sharp whitish beaks they use to catch insects by gleaning leaves or on the wing.

The nest is placed on a branch that can be anywhere from 20 to 75 feet off the ground. The nest is placed well away from the trunk, and is a rather flimsy cup made of grass and rootlets, and sometimes strips of bark and small twigs. The clutch of blue-green eggs with reddish-brown spots is incubated solely by the female.

The Scarlet Tanager is really a South and Central American rainforest bird that visits Michigan for just 3-4 months of the year to get its nesting done.

Our last woodland summer bird is the Wood Thrush (Hylocichla mustelina), easily the most musical singer not only among these woodland birds, but arguably among all of Michigan songbirds, with an ethereally beautiful flute-like song that sounds like it is saying, "Ee-o-lay." Songs are repeated several times with gaps between them, unlike the constant vocalizing of the vireo, pewee, and Ovenbird. Ted Black, the late co-author of ***Birds of Michigan*** (Lone Pine Press), writes: "the loud warbled notes of he Wood Thrush once resounded through our woodlands, but forest fragmentation and urban sprawl have eliminated much of this bird's nesting habitat." He also wrote that the male can even sing two notes at once. Henry David Thoreau, the famous Walden author and philosopher, wrote that the Wood Thrush's song "is the most beautiful of avian songs."


Red-eyed Vireo by Bruce Szczechowski

The Wood Thrush is robin-sized (they are in the same family) with a reddish-brown back, reddish-brown tail, and large dark brown splotches on its breast. A very striking bird.

They make a nest similar to a robin's with lots of mud and grass (so a very heavy nest) in the fork of a deciduous tree branch from 5 to 20 feet high. It is sometimes possible to actually observe the nest of this species if you are lucky enough to find one.

Because of forest fragmentation, which is happening at a rapid pace these days with urban sprawl, the Wood Thrush faces increasing threats and population loss. They prefer deep woods, and in years gone by they were not bothered by cats or most other field predators (such as foxes and coyotes). They were not parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds, which are birds of open grasslands. Cowbirds will go into the edge of a woods but not deep in. Now, because most woods are not very deep, the cowbird has a field day. In some areas up to 90% of Wood Thrush nests are parasitized. That means the cowbird lays its eggs in the Wood Thrush nests and its young often survive at the expense of the Wood Thrush young.

Cowbirds and predators are also problems for the Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager. The Ovenbird population has plummeted by 50% since 1970, and the Scarlet Tanager, which used to not be affected by cowbirds because it prefers deep woods, has up to 80% of its nests parasitized.

Preventing further forest fragmentation has to be a priority of any birder who wants to continue to see (or hear) Wood Thrushes, Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanagers, and other deep woodland birds or for future generations to enjoy them.


Ovenbird by Bruce Szczechowski

To learn these songs, check out the National Audubon website. Then try summer birding with your ears and give your eyes and your binoculars a rest! You'll be able to enjoy birds in summer woodlands where leaves make it almost impossible to see these hidden jewels high up in the canopy. Then you can say you "heard the bird!" and enjoy your feathered friends in a new way.

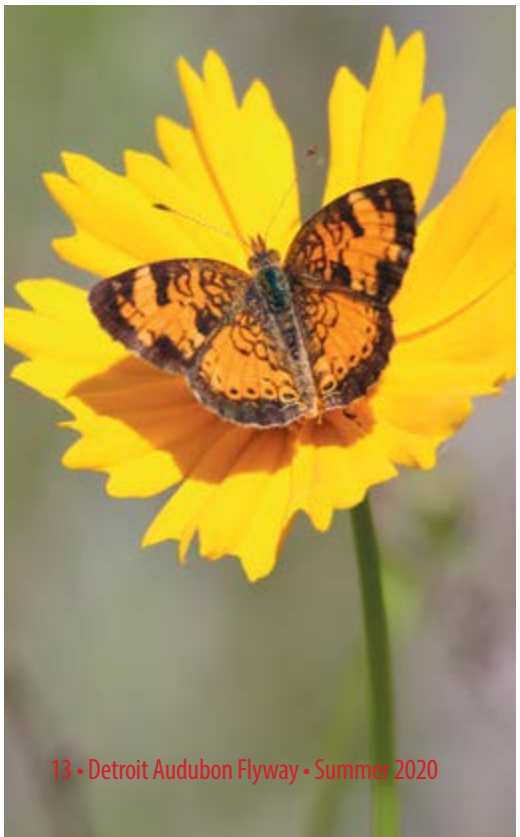

Wood Thrush by Sharon Korte

Summer 2020 in Photos

Top row (L-R):
Osprey with long stick, and Sandhill Crane in flight, by Bruce Szczechowski

Middle row:
Great Blue Heron mobbed by Red-winged Blackbird by Bruce Szczechowski; Bobolink and Yellow Warbler by Dongfan Chen; and Alder Flycatcher by Jim Bull

Bottom row:
Fringed Polygala by Bruce Szczechowski; Northern Pearl Crescent butterfly on Coreopsis by Jim Bull; Cedar Waxwing and Kirtland's Warbler by Bruce Szczechowski; Song Sparrow by Dongfan Chen; and wild Columbine by Jim Bull.



Bryant Vermont: Detroit Bird City's Littlest Park

By Noah Levinson, Detroit Audubon Office Administrator

This is the second in a series profiling the history of each of our five Detroit Bird City sites. Before European contact, the Fox, Sauk, Potawatomi, and Wyandot tribes, among others, called southeast Michigan home. Theirs was a home filled with sunflowers, milkweed, asters, and innumerable grasses. As we return these places to their native habitats, we have the opportunity to reflect on their history and the people and places that have been there.

Situated on the northern edge of the historic Woodbridge residential neighborhood (and only a mile over from the Detroit Audubon office) sits Bryant Vermont Park, the smallest of our Detroit Bird City parks. The diminutive size make sense, though, as Woodbridge has long been known for its quaint residential charm in the heart of the city. Because it has remained such an intact neighborhood for well over 100 years, there aren't quite as many greenspaces here as in other parts of the city. However, its presence in a well-populated area is vital to our research on the effects of these parks not only on the environment, but also on people.

Bounded roughly by Grand River, I-94, Wayne State, and the Cass Corridor, this area is named for William Woodbridge, a former Michigan governor who owned a farm on what now comprises much of the neighborhood. Woodbridge has long been characterized by its many brick Victorian homes from the 19th and early 20th century, set back from the streets to create a warm, inviting feeling. At different junctures it has been an upper-class and more middle-class neighborhood, and presently is likely more socioeconomically diverse than ever, with owners, renters, Wayne State students and faculty, and more civic redevelopment projects coming forth.

Woodbridge has also been at the forefront of Detroit's contemporary renaissance. The neighborhood was among the first to see a rise in population, particularly an influx of more young and diverse new residents. It is home to many thriving community-minded organizations that seek the betterment of the neighborhood and the city at large. One of these organizations is the Woodbridge Neighborhood Development, which works with residents through its many projects designed to make strong social connections, keep streets safe, and provide guidelines to ensure construction and landscaping fit with the established themes of this historic district.

Michael Olszewski, local business owner of The Treetop Craftsman, has been at the forefront of connecting nature to the Woodbridge community. Formerly a residential carpenter and now a designer of event spaces, Michael's environmentalism goes back to his childhood. "I remember reading an article about black walnut trees being prized for lumber and I thought, 'Maybe I should plant a bunch so I can use the lumber and build houses in the city. I grew up here and wanted to contribute to the city in that way. I'll rebuild Detroit one house at a time by myself if I have to.'"

Olszewski has made good on this vision, acquiring land just south of Bryant Vermont in 2003 and planting a grove of black walnuts. He has twin goals of increasing the value of the land for all residents and providing a valuable and local source of lumber that he, or perhaps his nephews, will eventually harvest. Michael explained that Bryant Vermont was in use as a park upon his first visit, but not well maintained, so he began mowing and edging the park in addition to his arboreal land, with hopes that more people would see the benefit of this green space. "Parks are a place for people of all ilks to come together," Michael elaborated. "Not all learning happens in the classroom and you don't know what's going to inspire a kid to do great; it could be robotics, it could be nature."

Spread Art is another organization active near the park. Located right across from Bryant Vermont, Spread Art provides a space for a variety of performances, artistic presentations, and creative community discussions and collaborations. In fact, Executive Director Shiva Shamir was set to cohost a community forum at Spread Art with DA research coordinator Ava Landgraf to discuss the progress of the park and its habitat restoration and to gather input directly from the community on their hopes and desires for this greenspace before COVID-19 necessitated canceling all in-person events.

Nevertheless, we look forward to continuing to work with the community in new and creative ways to ensure the park will be a great space for all, whether winged or arm-ed.

Darwin Comes to Town: How the Urban Jungle Drives Evolution

By Menno Schilthuizen • Picador, 293 pages
Book review by Emily Simon

If you've been stuck during the pandemic birding closer to home, you've probably spent some time birding in an urban setting. Indeed, since 2007, more people worldwide live in cities than in rural areas. In the United States, that has been the case since the year 1915! What effect the explosive growth of cities around the world has had on urban wildlife is the subject of Menno Schilthuizen's 2018 book ***Darwin Comes to Town: How the Urban Jungle Drives Evolution.***

Schilthuizen, a Dutch ecologist and professor of evolutionary biology at Leiden University, The Netherlands, offers numerous examples of how urban wildlife is actually evolving in real time through the forces of natural selection in urban ecosystems. Natural selection is the process that results in the survival and reproductive success of individuals or groups best adapted to their environment.

The author begins the book with an in-depth discussion of cities as wildlife habitat. Humans, he argues, are the ultimate "ecosystem engineers." Familiar ecosystem engineers in the natural world include ants, beavers, and corals, who use materials in their environments to build their own habitats. Humans should be seen as a part of nature, not separate from it, he says; our cities should be seen as actual ecosystems in which other organisms carve niches for themselves. Often animals who survive best in cities are those best able to take advantage of human-created opportunities for food and shelter.

Species that have survived best in cities are those that were preadapted to the urban environment—those that had already evolved to deal with challenges similar to those posed by cities. For example, birds with higher pitched songs and calls are most common in cities with a low-frequency din. And our ubiquitous city pigeons, descendants of European pigeons that once lived only in areas with rocky cliffs and crags, made cities their home as humans engineered their ecosystems to include tall buildings with window sills and ledges perfect for roosting and nesting.

Building on this concept, Schilthuizen explains how the urban ecosystem puts evolutionary pressure on animals and plants. He recounts the story of the Peppered Moth, the first recorded case of human-induced rapid evolutionary change. Between 1819 and the 1950s this moth evolved from white to black as the sooty buildup in Manchester, England, from the coal-powered air pollution of its textile industry began to favor the survival of mutant black variants. White moths on the dark tree trunks were more visible to predators and developed a lower survival rate compared to their dark counterparts. Following legislation in the 1950s that curbed the pollution, the moth evolved back to white again once the countryside was no longer covered in dark soot, making the dark ones more vulnerable. This historic case proved that evolution can take place relatively quickly, as opposed to the millions of years scientists traditionally believed it took for evolution to happen.

Many urban characteristics—traffic, light, heat, noise, and roads and other barriers that create isolated habitat islands, among others—play a role in the evolution of urban species. The book presents dozens of fascinating examples of how various animals have been shown to have responded to urban conditions. A 30-year study of Cliff Swallows nesting on bridge overpasses in Nebraska revealed that the population had evolved to have short enough wings to allow them to take off vertically from the road below. Compared to longer-winged birds that died in the road (thus removing the gene for this trait from the population's gene pool), surviving birds generations later had wings nearly a half a centimeter shorter.

An even more remarkable case of changes within a species involves the widely studied Eurasian Blackbird (not actually a blackbird but a thrush related to our American Robin). Prior to the 1820s, Eurasian Blackbirds were known as extremely shy birds that nested only in deep woodlands throughout Europe and that migrated south to the Mediterranean Sea each winter. But over the next 100 years, numbers of blackbirds began living in cities year round and breeding there. Modern studies have clearly identified genetic differentiation between city and country blackbird populations as well as differences in life cycle, behavior, and appearance. City blackbirds have shorter bills, a higher-pitched song (which they often sing before sunrise, when traffic noise begins), a calmer nature, greater tolerance of human presence, and a breeding cycle that begins earlier in the year, since these birds do not migrate. The change in the city birds' breeding cycle ensures that the gene pool between city and country birds continues to remain mainly separate. Schilthuizen argues strongly that this is a case of speciation, the process by which populations of organisms evolve to become completely separate species.

This very thought-provoking book is fun to read, accessible to a general audience, and includes a notes section documenting the scientific research as well as an extensive bibliography and a good index. The book is so upbeat in its discussion of the adaptability and tenacity of urban nature that the reader might be tempted to forget, as Schilthuizen notes in a final chapter, that for every species that finds a way to survive in the urban environment, many more do not. Of course, he maintains that we must do everything we can to conserve the species that inhabit "natural" environments. But, he notes, we must also work to preserve and nurture our urban wildlife.

Birds Aren't the Only Flying Wonders to Observe:
Dragonflies and Damselflies Merit a Look Too! *By Jim Bull*

Several years ago, at the first observation tower on the Magee Marsh boardwalk in northern Ohio, there used to be a Prothonotary Warbler nest box on a pole. Each year for several years a pair nested there, offering amazing views of these striking deeply yellow warblers. One day as I watched them, the male caught a huge dragonfly and then worked for a good 15 minutes to get it down his gullet. It was no mean feat for this bird to swallow an insect that was almost as large as he was. Once he finally got it down, he just sat still for another 15 minutes or so as if in torpor. To my surprise, the next thing I witnessed was the female catching another large dragonfly and going through much the same ritual.

It was a dramatic moment that is firmly etched in my mind's eye (I did not have my camera with me that day). It also helps make the point that if we love birds, we should love or at least be concerned with what they eat and really their whole ecosystem. Without the necessary and appropriate food to eat, there will be no birds. Likewise, for clean water, clean air, and cover (features of the environment that help conceal them and their young from danger, or shelter them from weather extremes).

Most dragonflies are big enough for birders to make the transition from one flying thing to another. And many of them emerge at about the time that most birds are harder to see because of the summer leaf cover—a way to observe nature even if many birds can't be seen.

Dragonflies and damselflies are both in the insect order Odonata and thus have many similarities. Damselflies have narrower bodies, almost like long pins, and hold their wings roof-like over their backs, whereas dragonflies have more robust bodies and usually hold their wings outstretched when at rest.

I visited my friend and Detroit Audubon photographer Bruce Szczechowski in June at his cottage on Grand Lake north of Alpena. Every day we watched dozens, sometimes hundreds, of dragonfly nymphs crawl out of the water and onto the land. On rocks, trees, and sometimes blades of grass, which they gripped firmly, an amazing thing happened—a hole in their upper back (thorax) developed and out popped first the big bulging eyes so characteristic of the adult dragonfly, and then its legs. Then using those legs and other muscles, it pulled the rest of its body free of its old aquatic skin and, if all went well, it flew away.

Some had an extra burden—a Zebra Mussel attached to the nymph's skin, usually on its underside, but sometimes it was right up against the hole the adult was attempting to squeeze through, hampering its emergence. A huge percentage of every species that was emerging seemed to get stuck coming out of their old skins—either not making it out at all, or emerging with seriously deformed wings that doomed them to death. Is this normal? Or could this be related to some environmental stressor?

There are so many different dragonfly species, it is amazing. A couple of times Bruce found a dragonfly head severed from its body on the dock. He even witnessed this grisly action once during my stay, perpetrated by the Dragon Hunter dragonfly, which specializes in preying on other species of the order Odonata. Why it left the severed head and the body behind instead of eating at least one of these parts is an unsolved mystery.

Most dragonflies mate in the air and then the female drops eggs as she flies low over the water's surface. Coming in many different sizes and shapes, the aquatic nymphs are predators, some stalking prey while others lie in wait for an unwary midge larva, diving beetle, or even a small frog to wander too close. The ones that stay in place seem to be more prone to Zebra Mussels. Adults are predators too, often referred to jokingly as "mosquito hawks!"

Above, Common Green Darner with wings partially expanded; and below, with wings fully extended. Photos by Jim Bull

One of my favorites was the Common Green Darner. I held a nymph in my hand as her head emerged, then her feet pushed on my thumb as she struggled to free herself. It took a long while. Her wings were still small and wrinkled, but as she began to pump fluid into them, they slowly expanded into full long membranous wings. Both males and females have a bright green thorax, but what books do not show is that the wings when they first emerge are brilliant light green too—strikingly beautiful. I finally set her down on a rock to let her keep pumping fluid into her wings. It took at least a half hour before the wings were fully outstretched, but they were still brilliant green. It was quite a bit longer before she flew off. At least I think this was a female because she lacked the bright blue abdomen of the male. But maybe that color takes time to develop as well. This species flies in tandem when they mate and the conjoined couple lands on a number of stems of emergent plants while the female pokes her ovipositor into the stem to lay her egg while the male exudes sperm at the same time. The Common Green Darner is also a migratory dragonfly.

At one time, I was sure that the Monarch Butterfly was unique in the insect world for its migratory habit. I couldn't have been more wrong—there are lots of migratory insects. In the fall thousands of Common Green Darners that emerged over the summer congregate en masse and fly to the southern states where they lay eggs. Their offspring emerge and are the ones that fly north to lay their eggs again in the wet areas of Michigan. They only spend a couple months as aquatic nymphs before emerging and getting ready to fly south again in early fall.

Another species we encountered at his cottage was the Common Baskettail with its black abdomen with striking yellow spots down either side. They have been called flying aces, because of the aerial acrobatic loop-de-loops they perform. Slaty Skimmers, which were also abundant, fly loop-de-loops as well.

Bruce had a rare find near his cottage, a few days before I arrived—a Subarctic Darner, a circumpolar species whose range extends from the U.P. and Canada, through Europe, Siberia, and all the way to Japan. It is rarely seen south of the U.P., and it is not common there.

Northern Bluet Damselfly by Jim Bull

On a long trek through trails at Rockport State Recreation Area, an area I worked to preserve and drafted a master plan for as my master's thesis in Michigan State's Fisheries and Wildlife Program, we photographed several Common Whitetail males lurking around temporary ponds in the middle of the trails. Males of this species defend territories, much like birds, not through singing but out-and-out aggression to other males of the species. They "brandish" their white abdomens to intimidate rival males according to Kurt Mead, author of ***Dragonflies of the North Woods***. He also reports that after mating, females lay as many as 1,000 eggs in a day and can repeat the same feat every two days. As she strikes the water in a rhythmic beat, water squirts upward as much as a foot in the air with each egg she drops. The male patrols above her as she does this, probably ready to respond to any intruding male.

Here we also observed several Chalk-fronted Corporals, with two broad white "corporal stripes" on the thorax, and white at the beginning of the abdomen, not on the tail like the Common Whitetail. They are very common and can congregate in great numbers. Field guide author Kurt Mead reports that he has often had them perch on his shoulder when he's been in the field, munching on mosquitos and deer flies. Now that's a nice field companion to have!

As we walked along the two-track with intermittent ponds, Bruce identified several other species as well—he has been studying them for longer than I have and is a font of knowledge about Odonatans.

At Thompson's Harbor State Park at the end of a trail strewn with a cacophony of wildflowers including Yellow Lady's Slippers, Dwarf Lake Iris, and Fringed Polygala, we ended up at a fen in an embayment of Lake Huron. A fen is much like a bog, but with a basic pH due to the limestone outcroppings. Like a bog, this fen sported insectivorous Pitcher Plants, Sundews, and delicate flowers like the Blue-eyed Grass. Also making this fen its home is probably THE most unusual dragonfly of all, the Elfin Skimmer, which is only 0.8 inches long at most, and which holds its wings not straight out to the side like most dragonflies, but folded forward around its head! There were a number of them, perching briefly here and there before moving on but never very far. It was not easy to photograph them, especially because with their tiny size, you can lose sight of them once they alight quite easily. But photograph them we did!

Here in this fen we also found the Western Red Damsel, which is only an inch long, just slightly longer than the Elfin Skimmer. The male has a bright red abdomen with a black tip. Females are all a light reddish-brown. According to several books they prefer springs and seepage areas at pond, stream, or bog margins. Obviously, they like fens too. Here we also found the striking Northern or Boreal Bluet which is still small at 1.4 inches long. For some reason fens and bogs seem to attract these miniature versions of Odonatans. Never knew they could be so small.

Males of the Northern and Boreal Bluet species can only be separated if you have them in hand and look at the cerci at the end of their tail –the Northern has an upturned tip. Male damselflies use these cerci during mating to clasp the female behind her head, while she acrobatically curls her abdomen back underneath him to meet his genitals which are in his upper abdomen. Once they mate the female can stay under water for up to 90 minutes while laying eggs. Another amazing fact: if a nymph loses a leg, it can grow another. The species of the brownish-colored females can only be ascertained if you examine them under a microscope (or see them mating with a male of a known species).

I am hooked. I will now look for new dragonflies and damselflies as I look and listen for birds in the summer. Getting to know other aspects of nature while you are birding can greatly enhance your fun and your understanding of the ecosystems of which our feathered friends are a part.

BOOKS THAT CAN HELP YOU IDENTIFY MICHIGAN DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES:

Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies by Blair Nikula, Jackie Sones, Lillian Stokes, and Donald Stokes (Although not in the title, it includes Damselflies as well.)

Dragonflies of the North Woods by Kurt Mead

Damselflies of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan by Robert DuBois with photos by Mike Reese

Dragonflies Through Binoculars: A Field Guide to Dragonflies of North America by Sidney W. Dunkle

Go to Detroit Audubon's website for more dragonfly photos.

Above, a Subarctic Darner, a rare find south of the Upper Peninsula. At left, a female Elfin Skimmer, just 0.8" long. Note how the wings sweep forward. Bruce Szczechowski photos

Flyway

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