A Detroit Audubon Publication
Summer 2021

Flyway

Common Nighthawks—Phantoms of the Night

Beavers Getting Busy in Southeast Michigan!

Snakes Alive! Michigan's Slithery Creatures

Phalaropes Elope at Pointe Mouillee?

Supporter Spotlight: Drew Peslar

Summer Birds and Animals 2021

Flyway

A publication of Detroit Audubon

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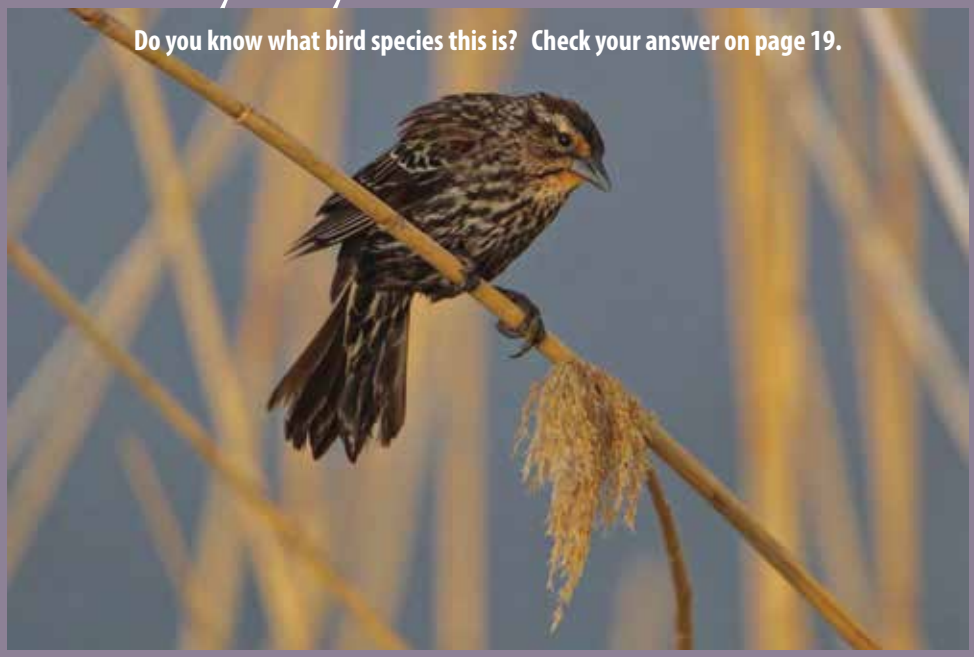
Flyway is published four times a year for Detroit Audubon members with at least basic membership status. Back issues are uploaded to our website.

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 Summer 2021



Do you know what bird species this is? Check your answer on page 19.

Contents

On the Cover:

Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak
by Bruce Szczechowski

Port Huron State Game Area Field Trip participants by Gerald Hasspacher.

2021 Summer Field Trips

How about joining us for a field trip this summer? We welcome birders of all abilities and expertise on our trips, and even have binoculars to borrow if you don't have your own. Any field trip with a ($) next to it has a fee, otherwise they are free of charge. Go to **www.detroitaudubon.org/field-trips** to learn more and sign up! Detroit Audubon Chapter Members will receive priority registration. Please email us at **staff@detroitaudubon.org** if you have questions regarding these field trips or your membership status. In order for us to notify you about a field trip prior to the public announcement, make sure we have your email address! Here are the field trips scheduled so far, but there could be a pop-up field trip or two as well.

June

5: Eliza Howell Park Nests ($)

5: Young Birders Palmer Park

12: Pointe Mouillee ($)

19: Oak Openings (Ohio) ($)

July

3: Young Birders Palmer Park

21: Crosswinds Marsh ($)

31: Eliza Howell Park Wildflowers ($)

August

7: Pointe Mouillee ($) Driving? We don't know yet if we will be able to get a permit to drive the dikes. We'll let you know as soon as we know.

28: Pointe Mouillee Bird Walk ($)

A Mourning Warbler at the Port Huron State Game Area. Photo by Margaret Weber.

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Beavers Getting Busy in Southeast Michigan!

by Jim Bull

These photos of beaver were taken at Pointe Mouillee by Bruce Szczechowski. Since Pointe Mouillee is mostly marsh with very few trees, Bruce hypothesizes that this was a young beaver looking for an area to set up territory. It likely didn't stay due to lack of trees, but its cousin the muskrat is ubiquitous in that marsh.

Why did the Frenchman Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac (pronounced CAD-EE-YAK in French) decide to build Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit and the settlement that became the great city of Detroit in 1701? It was all about beaver. Beaver fur was in huge demand by the fashion industry in Paris, so it was important to the French to have a fort and settlement at the entrance to the upper Great Lakes to protect one of their chief economic engines. By the way, the furs were not used for ladies' accoutrements, but for men's beaver felt hats!

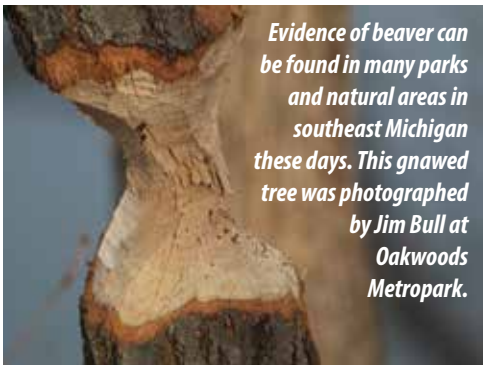
Robert Thom's illustration from History of Michigan in Paintings shows an Indian trading beaver pelts, courtesy of the Archives of Michigan.

The district of the settlement where voyageurs and native Americans came to redeem their beaver furs for needed goods (clothes, blankets, food, household items, muskets, etc.) was called Trapper's Alley. That area was enclosed and turned into an indoor mall with historic exhibits for a short while in the 1980s, but that was cleared away for what is now the Greektown Casino.

Beaver are North America's largest rodent (31-47 inches long, standing 12-24 inches high, with a flat paddle-like tail from 10-19 inches long). It is often confused with the much more common and much smaller muskrat, which is 8-10 inches long with a slender tail that is as long as its body. Beaver make their lodges out of trees they fell by gnawing through with their powerful chisel-like teeth. Like most rodents, their incisors grow continually, so gnawing is important to keep them from becoming malformed or even piercing the skull. Muskrats make their much smaller lodges out of cattails. Entrances to both lodges are under the water, protecting them from predators.

Castor glands secrete a strong-smelling substance called "castoreum," which beaver use to mark their territories. Anal glands secrete an oil, much like the uropygial gland in waterbirds, that they use to coat their fur to make it water repellent. Their broad paddle-like tails can be slapped on the water as a loud warning sign to other members of the beaver family that danger is approaching.

Beaver are considered a keystone species by ecologists because of their landscape engineering skills. A keystone species is one whose presence is crucial for the health or well-being of an entire ecosystem. What activity makes them so important? Dam building. In addition to building lodges out of branches, they use branches and trees that they cut down to dam up small streams, making beaver ponds that benefit a host of other species, including Wood Ducks, frogs, salamanders, Green Herons, and shorebirds. In the Upper Peninsula beaver ponds are favorite feeding spots for moose, both because they can feed out of danger from wolves and because the aquatic vegetation is much more nutritious than terrestrial vegetation, with the high salt concentration in them particularly important. In fact, I saw my first bull moose feeding in a beaver pond in Isle Royale National Park in northern Lake Superior.



Evidence of beaver can be found in many parks and natural areas in southeast Michigan these days. This gnawed tree was photographed by Jim Bull at Oakwoods Metropark.

In the northern Lower Peninsula where beaver have survived and thrived, some rivers are kept beaver-free in order to maintain the fast cold-flowing current essential for trout. On other streams beaver are free to do their thing.

Beaver were extirpated from southeast Michigan and from much of the southern Great Lakes starting with the arrival of the French, but they are making a comeback. A friend of mine, Marie Marek, with whom I worked at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, took a job at Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in northeast Ohio and was the first to report that beaver had come back to the once polluted Cuyahoga River in 1980! They were even in the flats areas of downtown

Cleveland, making their dens in holes in the banks rather than in the usual lodges made of branches situated more in the middle of a beaver pond.

I have long presented a PowerPoint program titled The Biodiversity of the Detroit River. (I presented it as one of Detroit Audubon's webinars, so it is recorded and can be viewed on our YouTube channel.) The last slide for most of that time has shown a swimming beaver, and my parting comment has been that when we see beaver back in the Detroit River, we will know that it has truly been revitalized. Well, that day is here!

Beaver repopulated some of the more remote metroparks like Stony Creek and local natural areas like Dodge Park and the Sterling Heights Nature Center. Beaver first showed up in the Detroit River at DTE's Conner Creek plant and didn't stay long, but a few years ago they reached Belle Isle. It was great to see them back, but they did fell some beautiful Weeping Willows along the roadway. A log lodge can be seen in Nashua Creek.

In the last couple of years, beaver have chewed numerous trees along the Huron River in Oakwoods Metropark and at the Gibraltar Bay Unit on Grosse Ile and Humbug Marsh, both part of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. I have spent a few nights watching beaver do their work, the first time at what was known as Camp Mahn-Go-Tahsee on Loon Lake north of Hale, where Detroit Audubon held its Spring Campout for over 40 years. Because they are nocturnal, chewed trees reveal their presence; seeing them work is mostly a nighttime activity.

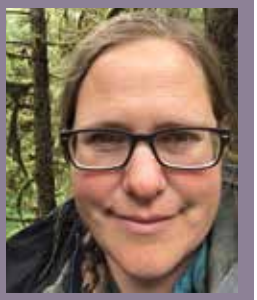
Beaver put Detroit on the map economically and were the main reason Detroit was founded in the first place. They are now helping to build Detroit's image as a comeback city for wildlife, one felled tree at a time!

An adult muskrat at Pointe Mouillee by Jim Bull. Note the long skinny tail.

A baby muskrat found on top of a muskrat hut in the St. Clair Flats area during a search for Black Tern nests. The lodge had been flooded, so the female muskrat carried her babies to a place above the waterline. Photo by Jim Bull.

So Long, Detroit Audubon!

By Sarah Halson



As birders, we know that migration and change are an essential part of the natural world, including our human world! The time has come for me to leave Detroit Audubon. June 25 was my last day as the Program Coordinator after almost two years in the position. I have moved on, but I will miss the Detroit Audubon community and am truly grateful for the experience I have had here over the last two years.

During my tenure as Program Coordinator, Detroit Audubon has done a lot of great work even during this global pandemic. We have successfully moved programming to the virtual format with over 30 webinars and will continue to provide this format in the future. We got our environmental education project off the ground, which started in fall 2019, and is providing long-term, meaningful environmental education programming to over 100 Detroit 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. This is all funded by a generous grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. Instead of the field trips we had planned, we pivoted and were able to provide each student with the opportunity to bird from home with birdfeeders and birdseed, binoculars and field guides, and native plants to create bird habitat in their own community.

We partnered with the Belle Isle Nature Center on many nature programs and summer camps, and served folks from all walks of life by connecting people to nature right in their city. We led dozens of public field trips, taking hundreds of people on nature walks and birding trips throughout the metro Detroit area, Ohio, and Canada.

It has been a labor of love to be the Program Coordinator, and I am so grateful to have had the experience. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of my journey with Detroit Audubon!

Native flowers for students in the B.I.R.D.S. program to start their own bird habitat in their back yards.

Common Nighthawks—Phantoms of the Night—

Perform Their Aerial Dances and Love Songs Most Summer Nights

by Rebecca Minardi

Common Nighthawk in flight by Kenneth Cole Schneider, courtesy of Creative Commons.

The first time I heard a Common Nighthawk, I was standing in the parking lot of an old nightclub in Dayton, Ohio. My dad was in between sets where he had been playing trombone in a big band. As I milled around crunching broken glass underfoot, I heard a sharp *peent*! I looked up to see a bird with wings like scythes, flying erratically like an oversized swallow. Of course I'm sure I had seen nighthawks before, but I had recently become a birder so this was the first time I really saw one. I was enthralled. More joined the first, and I watched in the fading light as they swooped and dove for insects buzzing above the streetlights.

The Common Nighthawk is an enigma. It looks swift- and swallow-like, but rests much of the day. It's not a hawk, but it dive-bombs out of the sky like a rocket. It seems to prefer older urban areas where gravel roofs are still common. The Common Nighthawk is unmistakable. Though it can be seen in all the mainland states, many people don't notice this strange bird in the half-light of summer's dusk. But they are often there, twirling and almost manically batting their long bent brown wings with white bars.

The Common Nighthawk winters in southern South America. In fact, few birds migrate further in our hemisphere than this species. Because of this, they are often the last migrants to arrive in the spring. For me, spring migration is bookended by the first Eastern Phoebe (I know it's not the very first species on the move, but it has a special spot in my heart) and ends with the first Common Nighthawk. When I hear that first *peent*!, I declare that summer has arrived.

Chicks: Courtesy of Overlooked Nature, https://overlookednature.com/2015/09/14/common-nighthawk/

The species eats insects on the wing mostly at dawn and dusk. Though their beaks are tiny, their mouths are giant, perfect for scooping up winged things like flies,wasps, and moths. They love to spend time around bright lights where bugs congregate en masse on hot summer nights. Common Nighthawks can forage up to 500 feet in the air.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this species is their courtship display. The male appears above the trees, seemingly hovering still in the sky for a moment before rocketing to the earth. Just before the ground, he will force his wings down, creating a loud boom, and then start his display again. I saw my first display in Des Moines as I was biking home to my apartment one warm June night. It was a spectacle that I felt privileged to watch, and I remained, rooted to the sidewalk, until I could no longer see the birds in the darkening sky.

Common Nighthawks are not picky. They will nest in almost any habitat, including "coastal sand dunes and beaches, logged forest, recently burned forest, woodland clearings, prairies, plains, sagebrush, grasslands, open forests, and rock outcrops," according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. They also nest on gravel roofs, though most newer buildings have smooth and rubber roofs. They lay their eggs almost anywhere, including on "gravel, sand, bare rock, wood chips, leaves, needles, slag, tar paper, cinders, or living vegetation, such as moss, dandelion rosettes, and lichens." Despite their seemingly endless options for nest sites, this species is in what is considered a steep decline for a common bird (at a whopping 61% population loss since 1966). This is most likely due to loss of mosquitoes from heavy pesticide use, decrease in gravel roofs, and reduction of forest habitat throughout the country. It's a bird we would be loath to lose, as its graceful and frenetic flights and displays are a beautiful reminder of why many of us were drawn to birds in the first place; their vitality motivates us to learn more about them.

One of the most recent times I saw Common Nighthawks was this fall at my new home in Peoria, Illinois. I saw the most I have ever seen in one spot, 22, gliding and flapping together as they began their long journey south, thousands of miles away. I stood on my deck with my son and daughter as we waved to them and wished them well on their travels. I called out to them to come back in the spring as we would miss them in the winter. And now we wait for them again to usher in the long, languid days of summer.

Common Nighthawk perching by Sharon Korte, Detroit Audubon volunteer.

Female Wilson's Phalarope at Pointe Mouillee by Bruce Szczechowski.

Phalaropes Elope at Pointe Mouillee?

by Jim Bull

Female phalaropes are as liberated as they get. Reversing the gender roles common in most bird species, this whole group does things differently. For one, the female is more brightly colored while the male sports drab and camouflaged coloration. This makes sense because after mating and egg laying, it is solely the male that incubates the eggs and raises the young. Blending into its grassy surroundings while on the nest helps protect it from discovery by predators. The female's brighter colors help her attract mates, and once she has laid one clutch of eggs, she may go on to mate with other males as well.

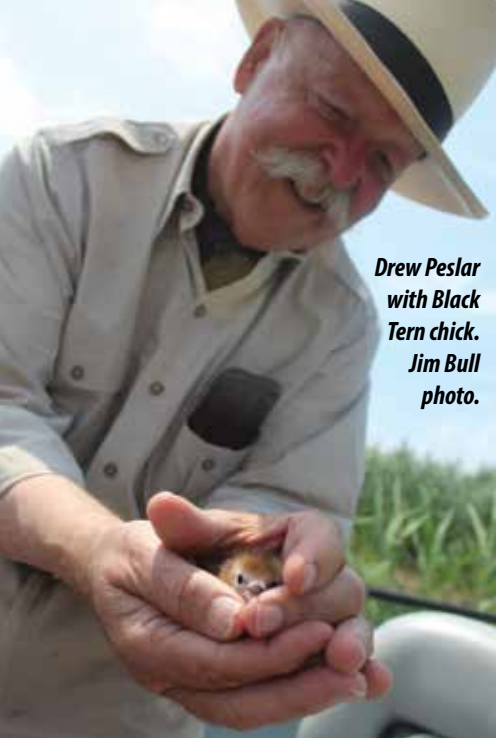
This notable role reversal may be happening at Pointe Mouillee these days! Two of the species in this genus, Phalaropus, the Red-necked and the Red Phalarope, breed in far northern Canada and Alaska. The Red Phalarope breeds only in the high Arctic. They do not come anywhere close to Michigan in their travels. Wilson's Phalaropes, the remaining species in this quirky genus of shorebirds, traditionally breeds through the western United States excluding California, through mid- and western Canada, and as far east as Wisconsin. Accidentals have been seen in Michigan and southern Ontario for years, but recent observations indicate that six individuals at Pointe Mouillee may be looking to set up more permanent housekeeping here.

While conducting our annual Bird-a-Thon, my team consisting of Bruce Szczechowski, Emily Simon, and Larry Urbanski watched several Wilson's Phalaropes of both sexes near the edge of the marsh in one of the many units at this state wildlife area. One male and one female kept coming closer to us affording incredible views and photos, until they were in the grass almost at the edge of the dirt road along the dike. A dull-colored male kept settling in the same place in the grass, sidling down until flat on the ground and fairly disappearing in the grass (they are about 9 inches long and 7 inches tall). Talk about camouflage! Was this male sitting on a nest? Or preparing a nesting spot? Or just practicing behavior for when it migrates on to its breeding spot? We don't know for sure, but the question lingers. If young ones are found this summer, that would clinch it. We quickly and quietly walked back to our cars so as not disturb a possible nest.

Before moving on, it is worth noting another strange behavior of Phalaropes that I have seen before in members of this group in migration and in Alaska: they wade into shallow water and then spin in circles. Ornithologists think this may serve to stir up the bottom sediment, causing invertebrates to come to the surface while at the same time confusing them and making them easier prey.

Visitor or breeder, in either case they are delightful to watch and are far from typical birding fare! Viva la femme!

Male Wilson's Phalarope. Photo by Jim Bull.



Drew Peslar with Black Tern chick. Jim Bull photo.

Supporter Spotlight: Drew Peslar

by Jim Bull

I first met Drew Peslar when he invited me to lunch at the Detroit Athletic Club several years ago. With his handlebar mustache, wide smile, twinkling eyes, and jovial nature, he made an indelible impression. It was like meeting Sherlock Holmes in person! He is a Renaissance man conversant with a broad variety of topics that kept me engaged and intrigued the whole time. I learned that he and his brother were the chief executives of a family automotive parts supply business who stayed on in their roles for several years after selling it. I also learned he has a law degree and has been a college professor as well. He taught in the MBA program at the University of Michigan–Dearborn. He told his students, "The most important thing is to treat people right and reward them well. Everybody in the organization is a customer who must be treated well because ultimately these folks will either touch external customers directly or would be affected by others in the organization."

If those accomplishments weren't enough, Drew is also a published novelist, having penned a tale titled ***Snake Bit,*** a detective story that not only kept me on the edge of my seat trying to anticipate the next twist or turn, but also intrigued me with his artful descriptions of familiar places in Detroit, Ann Arbor, and environs.

On the way out he gave me a tour of the paintings and sculptures at the Detroit Athletic Club—it's a veritable art museum—and with Drew I had a knowledgeable art historian as my guide. More apropos to Detroit Audubon, he is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys upland game hunting. From a very young age he regularly went wilderness camping with his parents, then when they bought a cottage up north he spent his days roaming the woods and fields, as he said, "enjoying the blueberries and frogs." When he was 12 years old, his grandfather took him pheasant hunting for the first time on his farm and he's been hooked ever since. What is most important is the experience of being in the great outdoors, he told me. For 25 years he was also was part of a winter camping group that eschewed the use of tents. He cares deeply about passing on this country's natural heritage to future generations.

The Drew and Karen Peslar Foundation, which Drew chairs, has been a strong supporter of Detroit Audubon for the past several years. Other organizations his family foundation has donated to include Forgotten Harvest, the Detroit Historical Society, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Michigan Humane Society, Gleaners, the Detroit Institute for Children, and the Edison Institute (Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village). But more than just a donor, he is an appreciated source of advice. I always come away from a phone call or meeting with Drew feeling enriched by the conversation and looking forward to the next. When our research coordinator, Ava Landgraf, and two of our Michigan DNR partners took Drew and a friend of his out to witness our Black Tern research firsthand, his glee at being on the adventure, and especially holding one of the chicks in his hands while Ava prepared to band it, was palpable.

We are thrilled to have the Drew and Karen Peslar Foundation, and Drew himself, as part of the Detroit Audubon family!

National Audubon Announces Plan to Restore the Great Lakes for Birds and People

Securing a bright future for the birds and people of the Great Lakes region has never been more important. As the largest freshwater ecosystem on the planet, the Great Lakes provide clean drinking water to 40 million people, and its habitats support more than 350 bird species. Climate change, coastal development, and invasive species continue to threaten these communities and habitats—as a result, many marsh bird species are in steep decline. Audubon is ready with a bold plan.

On March 22, 2021, Audubon Great Lakes (a National Audubon regional office) released a new report entitled "Restoring the Great Lakes for Birds and People," which uses science to pinpoint the highest-priority coastal regions for birds, water quality, and coastal resiliency—focusing conservation where it's needed the most. The report includes 42 projects to restore or protect nearly 300,000 acres of coastal habitat across eight states in the Great Lakes region.

Successful restoration of the Great Lakes for birds depends on a vast network that includes everyday citizens, passionate birders, conservationists, nature lovers and many more just like YOU.

This report not only illustrates how threats to the Great Lakes will affect the birds we all love, like the Piping Plover, Least Bittern, and Black Tern, but also shows us that if we act now, there is still time to create a brighter future for birds and people. Now we have the science and tools we need to restore the Great Lakes region for birds and people—join us on this journey!

IMPORTANT LINKS

Website with Report:
https://www.audubon.org/conservation/great-lakes-restoration

Great Lakes Video: Protecting Birds in the Great Lakes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbaTxnMRATg

SANDHILL CRANE COLT. Although adults have been seen at Pointe Mouillee for years, this colt (above and below right) may represent the first recorded nesting of this species there. Photos by Bruce Szczechowski.

Sandhill Cranes

by Jim Bull

When I was growing up it was accepted in birding circles that you were unlikely to see Sandhill Cranes, let alone have them nesting, anywhere east of Jackson, Michigan. That has changed dramatically—I have seen large flocks on Harsens Island and at the Detroit Zoo. At Kensington Metropark, where they've been nesting for years, they can get really close. As tempting as it may be, it is not a good idea to feed them. They have also been frequenting Pointe Mouillee for a long time, but now we have documented that they are also nesting there!

Older Sandhill Crane colt with adult at Kensington Metropark by Sixling Wen.

Summer Birds 2021

(L) MALE BALTIMORE ORIOLE. Is there anything more brilliant against a blue sky than the bright orange of a Baltimore Oriole? Despite its bright color it is in the blackbird family (Icteridae). As bright as it is, it is amazing how it can often seem to disappear in the leaves of a tree, but its loud song betrays its presence every time. They can be attracted by orange halves and grape jelly. Photo taken at Southgate Anderson High School Nature Area by Bruce Szczechowski.

(Below L-R) YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD. These are western birds, but a colony has been nesting at Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area north of Bay City for years. In the last few years one or more have hung out at Pointe Mouillee, where they are quite skittish. We are not sure whether breeding occurs there. Photo taken at Pointe Mouillee by Dongfan Chen.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER. Here perched on a green Box Elder tree branch, it is by far our most colorful and largest flycatcher, with brown wings and cap, and bright yellow breast. In summer they can be hard to spot, but if they are around, you'll hear their loud, almost screaming call, "Purreep, purreep, purreep!" Photo by Sharon Korte.

YELLOW WARBLER SINGING. Our most common warbler, they are ubiquitous in shrubs near the edges of fields, streams, or wetlands, where they also nest. The male has red streaks on his breast and seems to be saying, "Sweet, sweet, sweet, I am so sweet!" Photo by Tracy Wyman.

(L) BLACK-NECKED STILTS. A bird of the western and southern United States and a Michigan visitor, seemingly off track, in migration for years, the Black-necked Stilt's first nesting at Pointe Mouillee was documented by Allen Chartier in 2003. For more information see the cover story in the Fall 2020 issue. Photo taken at Pointe Mouillee by Bruce Szczechowski.

(Below, L-R) EASTERN KINGBIRD. This flycatcher is a ubiquitous bird of summer in overgrown fields. See if you can spot the streak of red down the middle of the top of the male's head (very hard to see). Also look for what my dad called its "white petticoat ruffle" on the end of its tail. Photo taken at Pointe Mouillee by Robert Irwin.

GRAY CATBIRD. Often heard before they are seen, they are known and named for their cat-like call. They also have a long jumbled song, which may incorporate partial songs of other species, as members of its family of mimic thrushes (Mimidae) often do. They nest and hang out in dense shrubs and thickets, often by the edge of a field or a stream. Photo taken at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge by Robert Irwin.

AMERICAN AVOCET. This western bird has been showing up in small numbers at Pointe Mouillee and the Lake Erie marshes in the last couple of years, and some stay around into summer. Are they expanding their breeding range? Aren't they striking with their light tan necks and heads and that long up-turned bill? I'll never forget seeing my first avocets—eight of them that landed in Lake Michigan along a beach when I worked at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. I didn't have my camera, so I wound up drawing them to fix them in my memory! Photo taken at Pointe Mouillee by Bruce Szczechowski.

The Animals of Summer

(Clockwise from top)

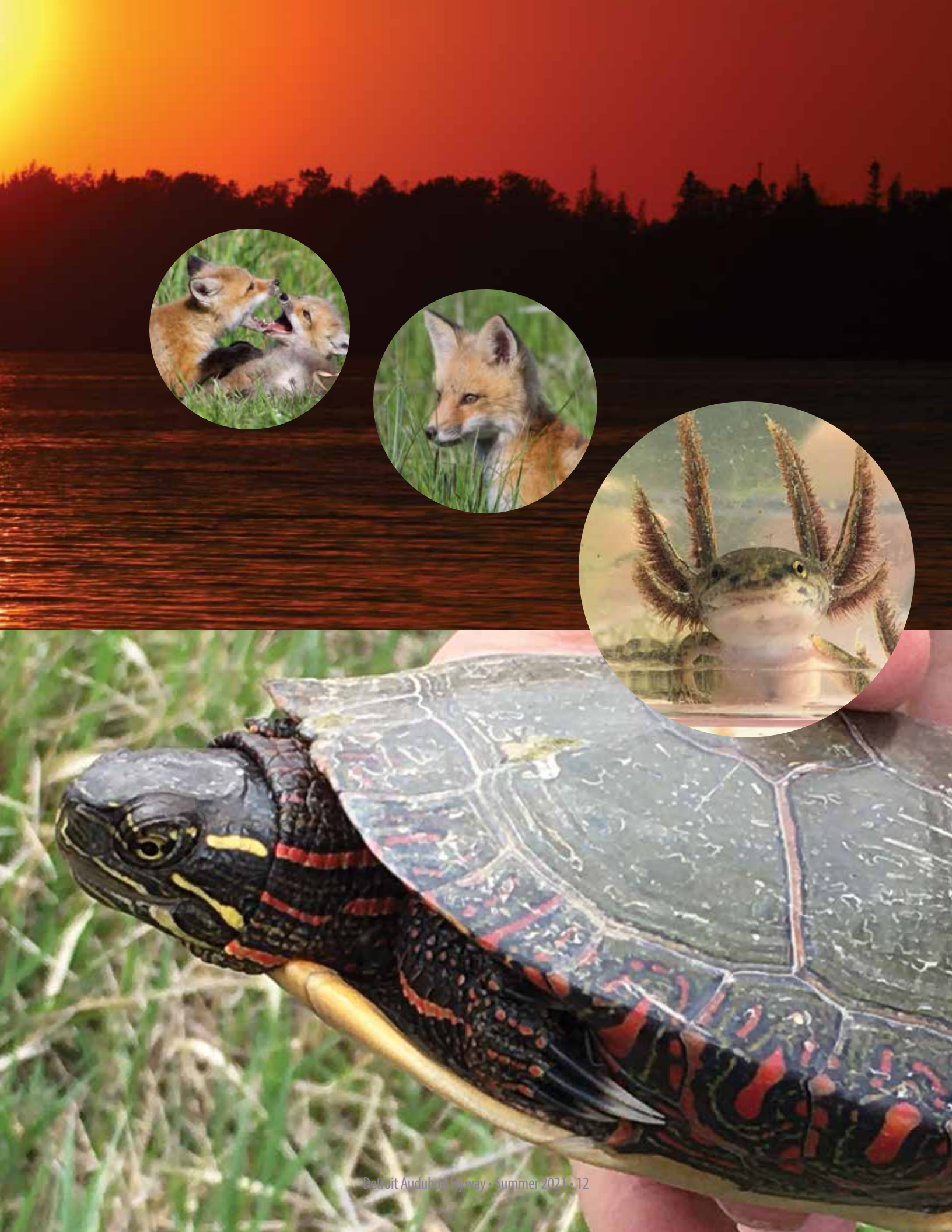
SUNSET ON GRAND LAKE, PRESQUE ILE COUNTY. Photo by Jim Bull.

RED FOX KITS PLAY FIGHTING and RED FOX KIT ALERT IN THE GRASS. Red Foxes, while common, are good at hiding as adults, but their kits are sometimes too preoccupied with play to remember to hide! Cute just doesn't seem adequate to describe them. Photos taken at Tawas Point State Park by Tracy Wyman.

SALAMANDER LARVAE in a vernal pool at the Southgate Anderson High School Nature Area. The species is uncertain. Note the fan-like external gills. Hope the water remains long enough for them to emerge into adults! Photo by Bruce Szczechowski.

PAINTED TURTLE. This individual was found on an April field trip to Pointe Mouillee. Well named for the colorful red design on its shell, it is our most common turtle and can be found in the spring, summer, and fall sunbathing on logs in ponds or rivers. In winter they burrow into the shallow mud at the bottom of a pond and hibernate. Photo by Jim Bull.

BULLFROG. The size of this frog (up to 8 inches long!) and its deep loud bass "jug-a-rum," call are unmistakable. The tadpoles can be up to 6 inches long and can stay in that stage for two to three years before transforming into adult frogs. Photo taken at Pointe Mouillee by Bruce Szczechowski.



Great Blue Heron—Lunchtime!

Great Blue Heron starts swallowing a fish and (lower right) continues to work on it at Pointe Mouillee. Photos by Bruce Szczechowski.

Puff the Fearless Hognose

Parody of the song, "Puff the Magic Dragon." Words by Jim Bull and based on a true story. Dedicated to Tess Scheske, who taught it to her friends on her schoolbus!

Chorus:

Puff the fearless hognose
lived in the sand and
frolicked in the state called
Mich-ich-ich-igan.
Toads were his secret passion,
he ate one every day.
Swallowed them whole you see-eee,
he was no gourmet.

One gray day it happened,
some boys got in his way.
So Puff that fearless hognose
tried to scare them all away.
Hissing and puffing,
neck flattened cobra-style,
Puff, that fearless hognose
thought that would send them running miles.

(chorus)

The boys just stayed and taunted
and they also teased,
but Puff that fearless hognose
had a last trick up his sleeve.
That fearless snake rolled over,
till he was belly up,
back and forth he writhed,
stuck his tongue out and gave up.

(chorus)

Although Puff looked dead,
his acting mighty cool,
those boys just turned him over,
they could not be fooled.
Puff was getting desperate, so
he played dead one more time.
The boys continued to beat him but
he committed no crime.

(chorus)

Puff cringed in terror,
blood squirted everywhere,
until a ranger found him and got him medical care.
Puff was really lucky,
this time he'd be alright.
He still doesn't understand why they beat him,
he never even bites.

(final chorus)

Puff that fearless hognose, is back out off the road,
a-slithering through the dunes just lookin' for a toad.
So if you see him won't you please take care;
you see he is important, nature put him there!

Eastern Hognose displaying by Jim Bull.

In Defense of Snakes *By Wilbur T. Bull**

***Reprinted from the July-August 1952 issue of* Michigan Conservation *magazine published by the Michigan Department of Conservation with permission from its successor, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources*.**

A small boy was going through a trailside type of nature museum where I was supervisor for several seasons when he suddenly stopped before a snake cage containing a five-foot Blue Racer. The boy's eyes were fairly popping out of his head as he turned and addressed me.

"Mister, what do you call that snake?"

"Blue Racer," I replied.

The boy promptly glued his still-popping eyes back on the cage and the snake as he exclaimed, "Racer! Man, it ain't goin' to race me!"

Eastern Hognose Snake close up image by sipa at Pixabay

Such was the reaction of the boy who was evidently greatly impressed by the appearance of the snake. No doubt he had heard many stories about snakes, including myths and superstitions told by older children and adults.

However, superstitions, prejudiced ideas, and fears regarding snakes are not limited to young persons. Many adults react with an even greater show of fear when being shown a perfectly harmless Michigan snake. The fact of the matter is, I have tried to induce a Blue Racer to follow me, but after walking in front of it a number of times, I still had difficulty in heading it off from its original course. Having had the opportunity to observe the reactions to snakes of thousands of persons, both young and old, who visited the nature museum, I have been pretty thoroughly convinced that fear of snakes is acquired, not inherited.

Most persons, unfamiliar with reptiles, have the false idea that a snake is cold and slimy. Actually, a snake is no colder than the air down next to the ground. Snakes, except probably when burrowing, are clean and feel smooth like plastic or ivory.

The reptiles, including the snakes with which we are dealing in this article, have a definite place in the natural balance of wildlife. Many snakes, including the Massasauga or Swamp Rattlesnake, eat large quantities of rats and mice, which destroy large quantities of grain, probably amounting to millions of bushels for the entire country. Based on figures from the Department of Agriculture for the depression years of the early 1930s with prices now being doubled and tripled, the value of the average snake to the farmer is conservatively estimated to be somewhere between $50 and $75 (that would be $545-$820 in 2021 dollars). Hawks and owls, in turn, help to keep snakes from becoming too plentiful.

It is difficult for most persons to believe that the rattlesnake of Michigan is shy and will not strike unless provoked. It usually will lie quietly, hoping it won't be detected. Once cornered it will stand its ground. In Michigan we have only one venomous snake, the Massasauga, which is only mildly so. Nevertheless, if bitten, one should apply first aid promptly. Actually, there have been less than 15 percent fatalities from rattlesnake bites throughout the United States, and most of the fatal cases received improper first aid.

Over a period of 30 years, I have done a lot of camping over most of the United States, probably a good deal more than the average individual, and I have yet to see the first snake of any kind around my camp. I have slept out on the desert, camped in the mountains east and west, north and south, and slept on the prairies, and I have seldom used a tent, particularly in good weather.

Last spring while assisting a Michigan school group with a group camping program, I had an unusual experience.

I was conducting a general nature hike for approximately 30 fifth- and sixth-grade students in a burned-over area to see what wildlife might have perished in the fire, which occurred the day before.

Where the long swamp grass had caved in from being charred by the fire, it exposed literally dozens of runs of meadow mice. We found a small live Garter Snake that had just crawled into the burned area. I picked it up and immediately there was a great deal of interest shown. Many questions were asked and practically every student handled the Garter Snake. In concluding my remarks, I cautioned the students never to pick up a snake unless they were positive it was a harmless one; that there was just one snake in Michigan that could hurt them, the Massasauga or Swamp Rattlesnake. I further mentioned that this was a natural habitat for them and that it just might be possible that we would see one. Why I said that I don't know; I hadn't seen a rattlesnake in 30 years outside of a cage, but I've always believed that youngsters should be alert.

Imagine the start I got when two minutes later a girl calmly addressed me: "Mr. Bull, will you come and look? I think we have found a live rattlesnake." I nearly jumped out of my boots I was wearing at her next matter-of-fact statement: "I was just about to pick it up when I remembered what you told us about being sure. I looked again and decided it wasn't a Garter Snake and that it could be a rattlesnake." It was a rattlesnake, and I was thankful I had given instruction and that it had evidently registered. Naturally, I took advantage of the opportunity to point out the differences between venomous and nonvenomous snakes.

I think the above illustration is the best reason I can give for teaching boys and girls not to be afraid of the harmless snakes, but to respect the venomous ones and to know what to expect and how to take care of themselves. My whole philosophy with regard to snakes and the out-of-doors is that "no snake in the grass," either literally or figuratively, should keep boys and girls from enjoying Michigan's out-of-doors.

***Editor's note:** This is my father who was working as an Education Consultant for the then Michigan Department of Conservation out of the Roscommon field office. Prior to that he was a teacher in the Detroit area and coordinated Detroit Audubon's nature cabin at the Detroit Zoo, which featured live native Michigan snakes. He also served on the board of directors of Detroit Audubon and was very active in conservation advocacy, including speaking all around southeast Michigan in support of the "Bottle Bill." My mother was a volunteer at the nature cabin, and they met on a Detroit Audubon birding field trip led by the late Dr. Walter P. Nickell, naturalist at Cranbrook Institute of Science and an early president of Detroit Audubon.*

Snakes Alive! Michigan's Slithery Creatures

by Jim Bull

Snakes have no ears, but they can detect vibrations. They smell with their forked tongues, essentially tasting the air. They then insert each prong of their tongue into one of the paired Jacobson's organs inside their mouths to analyze the chemicals present. Prior to winter, snakes of various species may seek out and inhabit the same hibernaculum (place to hibernate) such as an old groundhog or badger den below the freeze line. These hibernacula can harbor a dozen or more snakes of different species intertwined and hibernating together over the winter. Their metabolism slows way down so that little energy is required to keep them alive. Since they are cold-blooded, they are often encountered when they are basking in the sun working to raise their body temperatures.

Here is a catalogue of Michigan snakes, with an emphasis on those found in the southeastern part of the state.

BLACK RAT SNAKE (Elaphe obsoleta). It is well named since it is both deep black in color and feeds on rats and other rodents. Therefore it is a friend of farmers but often is not appreciated. This species does kill its prey by constriction—wrapping its body around a victim and squeezing it tighter and tighter until the victim dies of suffocation. It is our largest and longest snake and is a Michigan Species of Special Concern. ***Photo by Eileen Horbacher, USFWS.***

BLUE RACER (Coluber constrictor foxi). This is one of our most beautiful, common, but rarely seen snakes. Its species name of "constrictor" is a misnomer; they do not constrict their prey, but often press larger prey against the ground with a loop of their body, which may have led to this misconception. They can grow to six feet long. They are found in the lower two thirds of the Lower Peninsula feeding on rodents, amphibians, other snakes, birds, and bugs. The young look totally different, with reddish brown blotches on a grey to cream-colored background. ***Photo by John Fife, courtesy of Creative Commons. Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license. Taken at Solon, MI.***

BROWN SNAKE or DE KAY SNAKE (Storeria dekayi). Its species name comes from New York naturalist James Ellsworth De Kay (1792-1851), who collected the first specimen on Long Island. It could just as appropriately be called the Decay Snake, because this tiny snake (only 7 to 15 inches long) is generally found under dead logs and is often shorter and has less girth than an earthworm. We have often found them under logs at the West Bloomfield Natural Area on our Frog Symphony field trips. Their culinary fare includes earthworms and slugs. They are found throughout the whole Lower Peninsula. ***De Kay's Brown Snake (full grown) by Mike Jungen, USFWS.***

EASTERN FOX SNAKE (Pantherophis gloydi). Probably our second longest snake, it is found along the edge of the Michigan east coast from the Ohio border and around the thumb. Although it is a Michigan Threatened Species, it is seen quite regularly at Pointe Mouillee and Lake Erie Metropark. Its habitat is marshes, swamps, and shrubby or forested shorelines, where it frequently likes to rest on tree branches. They eat small mammals and amphibians, and this snake is a true constrictor, suffocating its prey before swallowing. It is sometimes mistakenly called a "copperhead" because it often has a reddish tinge to its head. It is illegal to possess or handle this snake. ***Photo taken at Lake Erie Metropark by Heidi Hargesheimer.***

Continued

EASTERN GARTER SNAKE (Thamnophis spiralis). This is probably our best known snake, but it is often mistakenly called a "Gardener Snake." Although they can be found in backyards and gardens throughout the whole state, they were named because their black and yellow stripes reminded people of the garters men wore at the time to keep their socks from falling down. They feed on earthworms, other invertebrates, frogs, and fish, and give birth live. I'll never forget working at Indiana Dunes State Park Nature Center when a young boy knocked on the staff room door all excited, saying little snakes were coming out of our big Garter Snake, and that they were. We released them all soon after. I also remember seeing this happen in the alley behind our house in Lincoln Park where I still live today. This snake often will exude a foul-smelling liquid as a defense if picked up. This species, along with the Butler's Garter Snake and the Northern Ribbon Snake, look very similar and so are lumped together for the purposes of this article. ***Photo taken on a field trip to Point Mouillee in April 2021 by Jim Bull.***

EASTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE (Heterodon platyrhinos). It is also sometimes called a "Puff Adder," and is absolutely my favorite snake! Although its specific epithet, "platyrhinos," means "flat nose" in Latin, its cute upturned snout is what led to its common name—it's not flat at all. It is non-venomous, feeds almost exclusively on toads, and frequents both woods and sand dunes, where its prey is found. If you encounter it and get too close, it will probably scare the bejeezus out of you, spreading its head like a cobra, hissing loudly, thrashing its tail, and even striking but with its mouth closed (I have never known individuals of this species to bite). It's all bluff. If that doesn't scare you away, this snake has another trick up its sleeve; it rolls over on its back, sticks its tongue out, and plays dead. Most predators are only interested in prey if they kill it, so this often protects them. However, if you turn it back over right side up, it will immediately roll right back over on its back and stick its tongue out again as if to say, "No, I'm dead!" Comical to say the least. Unfortunately, too many people do not know that this show is all bluff and try to kill it thinking that it is a rattlesnake (not that it is ever okay to kill a rattlesnake either). When I worked as a national park ranger at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, I rescued a large Hognose that had been beaten bloody by a group of boys at the developed beach area. I took it to a local vet who did a lot of wildlife rehab work and, with an infusion of antibiotics and TLC, the vet gave it back to me to release back into the wild in vigorous health! I wrote a song parody about it, "Puff, the Fearless Hognose!" to the tune of "Puff the Magic Dragon." That song with the location changed to Michigan was a favorite at our Spring Campout campfire programs! Here's a video of a hognose snake playing dead: **https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/watch-hognose-snake-fakes-death-in-most-overacted-way**. ***"Eastern Hognose Snake playing dead - South Carolina" by petechar is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.***

EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE (Sistrurus catenatus). Michigan's only rattlesnake and our only venomous snake. It is usually found in marshy or swampy areas, but in northern Michigan it can be found in older Jack Pine stands as well. Like all rattlesnakes they have pits in front of their head that help them detect prey by heat, and vertical pupils. (If you can see them, you are way too close!) I have only observed this snake species a few times. From those encounters and everything I've read or heard, I am convinced the only way to get bitten by a Massasauga Rattlesnake is to either step on one (unlikely because they are going to warn you by rattling their tail) or pick it up. I once photographed a Massasauga sunning itself on an earthen dike bordering a marsh. Its head was not in a great position for the photo, so I found a long stick and gently nudged it a few times. It never tried to strike but did eventually slither off the dike into the marsh and swim away. While they have a very potent venom, they so rarely bite and when they do, they inject so little of it, that death from a bite is almost unheard of, and even sickness is uncommon. A very young child or somebody with compromised health could be endangered, so it is best to avoid that circumstance. Just give them a wide berth, and you'll be okay. They feed on mice, other rodents, and amphibians. They are on Michigan's endangered species list so it is not only advisable to never pick them up or possess them in captivity, it is also illegal! They are found throughout the entire Lower Peninsula. ***Photo by Pauline Rosenberg, courtesy of Creative Commons.***

EASTERN MILK SNAKE (Lampropeltis triangulum). This is a colorful snake with red blotches bordered in black against a cream-colored body reaching up to three feet in length. It eats rodents and other snakes that it kills by constriction. They live and lay eggs under rotted logs throughout the Lower Peninsula, with a few records in the Upper Peninsula. It got its common name because it can be found in barns, leading to the erroneous notion that it feeds on cow's milk. Actually the Eastern Milk Snake helps farmers by ridding their barns of rats and mice. ***Photo by Trista Rada, courtesy of Creative Commons.***

EASTERN SMOOTH GREEN SNAKE (Opheodrys vernalis). What a strikingly beautiful snake with its bright green color! I used to see them quite regularly, and although they are found throughout both peninsulas, I haven't found one in years. If you see one let us know! They frequent grassy meadows, where their coloration gives them very effective camouflage. They eat insects, caterpillars, other larvae, and spiders. They are probably more affected by insecticides than other snakes because of their diet. ***Photo by Zack, Courtesy of Creative Commons.***

KIRTLAND'S SNAKE OR KIRTLAND'S WATER SNAKE (Clonophus kirtlandii). Named for the same Ohio naturalist who is the namesake for our beloved Jack Pine warbler, this species likes wet areas and is also rare. But unlike the warbler, it is still on Michigan's endangered species list. Only 12 to 18 inches long, this snake's most striking feature is its bright pink belly. It feeds on earthworms and grubs and will often curl up in crayfish chimneys. It occurs in the southern three tiers of counties in the Lower Peninsula. ***Photo by Andrew Hoffman, IN, from Wiki.***

NORTHERN RED-BELLIED SNAKE (Storeria occipitomaculata). This snake is found throughout the whole state and is known by its bright reddish-orange underside. Like a lot of snakes, it likes to rest under boards, logs, and other items. It eats earthworms and slugs and is one of our snakes that give birth live. ***Photo by Fyn Kynd***.

NORTHERN RINGNECK SNAKE (Diadophis punctatus edwardsi). This is a small, almost black snake (10 to 15 inches) with a bright yellow ring around its body just below its head. (Do snakes really have necks?) It is found throughout both peninsulas but is so secretive that it is rarely seen. Their favorite food in Michigan is reported to be the tiny Red-backed Salamander. ***Photo by Patrick Randall.***

NORTHERN WATER SNAKE (Nerodia sipedon sipedon). Unfortunately this snake is often referred to colloquially as a "water moccasin," which is a confusing moniker and best avoided because that is also a common appellation for the more southern and venomous Cottonmouth (Agkistrodon piscovorous), which does not occur in Michigan. The Northern Water Snake can be commonly seen swimming on top of the water looking for its fishy prey. They frequent waterways in all of the Lower Peninsula and the eastern half of the Upper Peninsula. While they are not venomous, they are aggressive and prone to bite (what would you do if a giant picked you up?). If I get bitten, it is usually in the flap of skin between my thumb and forefinger, and their teeth are so tiny and sharp that I usually do not know I'm bitten until I look down and see blood. My father often told the story of when he was cleaning the snake terrariums at the Detroit Audubon's nature cabin at the Detroit Zoo (see article In Defense of Snakes, in this issue). He had taken two snakes out of the terrarium to put in cloth bags while he cleaned their homes, but as he closed the lid, the Northern Water Snake slipped out over the edge and had its head pinched by the lid. Dad reached down to lift the lid slightly and nudge the snake back into its habitat and was rewarded by it "ripping his thumb open," as dad dramatized it. Again, dad said it didn't hurt, but three days later the snake died. My brother and I often accused Dad of being venomous! In truth the snake may have picked up a bacterial infection from exposure to dad's blood or tissue. So, leave them be, enjoy them from a distance, and you'll be fine! ***Photo by Sandra Domine***.

QUEEN SNAKE (Regina septemvittata). Found throughout the southern two-thirds of the Lower Peninsula, this 12- to 14-inch snake has a brown back and yellow belly. It prefers perching in trees overhanging rivers from which it can drop into the water to snare freshly molted crayfish or to slide under submerged rocks to hide from predators. It will bite if picked up, and it emits a musky odor to fend off predators. ***Photo by Cotinis, courtesy of Creative Commons.***

For more information we highly recommend ***Michigan Snakes: A Field Guide and Pocket Reference*** by J. Alan Holman, James H. Harding, Marvin M. Hensley, and Glenn R. Dudderar, published by Michigan State University Extension Service and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory website (**https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/**).

Small But Mighty: The House Wren

by Rebecca Minardi • Photo by Bruce Szczechowski

I hung up our nest box late this winter and was excited to see a pair of Black-capped Chickadees take interest. I watched them pop in and out of the house and wondered when we would get a nest. That is, until the House Wren showed up. Though smaller than the chickadees, the wren quickly made it known that the house was his.

Every day from his perch in our black cherry tree, the House Wren bubbles forth with his grand song. In fact, I'd challenge anyone to find a smaller bird with a louder song than the House Wren. When singing, the wren's entire body seems to radiate with joy, his feathers quivering from head to wing tip. All day, our resident House Wren declares this yard his. From taking baths in our mulch, to finding insects hidden under eaves, the wren is a flurry of frenetic activity.

The House Wren appears quite plain, with a mousy coat of brown and vague black barring on the wings. At just 4.3 to 5 inches long and weighing 0.3 ounces, the bird is teeny tiny. Yet the species migrates each year from Mexico and the southern states to the rest of the United States—one of the largest ranges of any songbird in North America. House Wrens will live in various habitats and nest in cavities; they have been found nesting in old woodpecker holes, crevices, and even shoes! Wrens, as you see, are not particular.

Male House Wrens will work on several nests at once in hopes of attracting a mate (so our nest box is likely just one of many possible homes for our small friend). They spend all day busily foraging for a variety of insects while stopping to sing profusely with almost deafening aplomb.

So next time you hang up a nest box, know that you may be inviting one of our smallest, and noisiest, birds to your yard. Here at Detroit Audubon, we like them so much that the House Wren has been on our logo since the 1940s!

Mystery Bird Answer

If you guessed Red-winged Blackbird you were right. It is tricky if you are only familiar with the showier male with his ebony black body feathers and his bright red epaulets that he can flare up to warn other males to stay out of his territory. To the untrained eye, the female with her brown streaking may look more like a sparrow at first, but she is much larger and has a longer, more pointed beak. There is a current emphasis in ornithology on studying female birds and their behavior because they have been traditionally neglected but are at least 50% of the story of a species. Bruce Szczechowski photo.

Detroit Audubon's Young Birders Spread Their Wings

by Sarah Halson

Detroit Audubon has been honored to have two passionate young birders committed to lead monthly Young Birder's Walks since January 2020. Jessica Decker (JD) and Travis Kaye (TK) are high school seniors and will be spreading their wings this fall and taking on new adventures. Their monthly walks at Palmer Park have been an inspiration to many fledgling birders and we wanted to take the opportunity to let you know more about them from the following interview:

When did you first become interested in birding?

JD: I first became interested in birding when I was 11 years old after watching a bird feeder sitting in my backyard.

TK: I first became interested in birding when my mom took me on a birding trip to Point Pelee National Park at the age of nine. Some cool birds I remember seeing include a Magnolia Warbler and a Yellow Warbler.

What, if any, impact has Detroit Audubon had on your life?

JD: Detroit Audubon has given me the opportunity to meet other people my age who share my passion for birds and has given me the motivation to get out and bird on a regular basis.

TK: I was awarded the scholarship to attend Hog Island Audubon Birding Camp in Maine when I was 14, so that was probably the biggest thing that has happened for me with Detroit Audubon. I had a great time at Hog Island and I am still friends with many of the young birders I attended camp with. I've also attended many Detroit Audubon events through the years. Detroit Audubon has given me the opportunity to write articles for the *Flyway*, give a presentation, and create a video showcased on their social media platform. I currently lead a young birders bird walk once a month with Jessica Decker at Palmer Park.

How has the field trip leading experience been for you? Any advice for future Young Birder field trip leaders?

JD: I've loved leading field trips for the past few years. I've gotten to meet and mentor so many amazing people, as well as get to discover how amazing Palmer Park is. My advice for future field trip leaders would be to remember that everyone is coming from a different place in terms of their experience with birds, so it's important to be able to adjust the excursion so everyone is able to learn something and have fun.

TK: The field trip leading has been great for me and has been a very good experience for my future career if it involves birds. My advice for future young birder field trip leaders is to be patient with people. There will be people that sometimes won't understand where you're pointing, so you can't lose your patience in these situations. Some good techniques for describing where birds are include describing what tree and where in the tree the bird is located as well as how far away it is, especially before it flies away!

Now that you are graduating from high school, what direction is your life taking you and will it still include birds?

JD: This fall I am attending Michigan Technological University, where I'll be majoring in wildlife ecology and conservation. I hope to make birds a large part of my studies.

TK: I am attending Rutgers University in New Jersey in the fall and plan on majoring in Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources. As it stands currently, I believe I would like to enter a career where I work with birds, like field research or bird banding. However, I'm still not completely sure exactly what I want to do later in life. I think college is a good way to discover my path.

We are so grateful to both Travis and Jessica for their dedication and combined effort of over 100 hours to bring their passion and love for birds to their generation and beyond! Their last walk will be on Saturday, July 3, at 8:00 AM at Palmer Park. Best of luck to both of you!

Don't Duck, Look Up for This Canard!

by Jim Bull

Flying 40 feet high into a tree, landing on a branch, and going into a hole to nest? Must be a large woodpecker, right? Maybe a Pileated! Nope, it's a duck. Say what? Yup, Wood Ducks like to perch high in trees.

(L-R) Male and female Wood Ducks flying, and perched on tree branch at Wayne County Community College's Downriver Campus Natural Area. Photos by Bruce Szczechowski.

You know the old saying, "if it quacks like a duck…" Well, that doesn't work with this one because this one is a duck, there perched high on tree branch with its webbed feet, but it has no quack. Their calls are more like squealing or cooing. And yes, they nest in tree cavities, sometimes a dead or partially dead tree in a swamp, but sometimes in a forest with dry land beneath. That was the case with the pair Bruce Szczechowski and I found in the natural area on the Downriver Campus of Wayne County Community College!

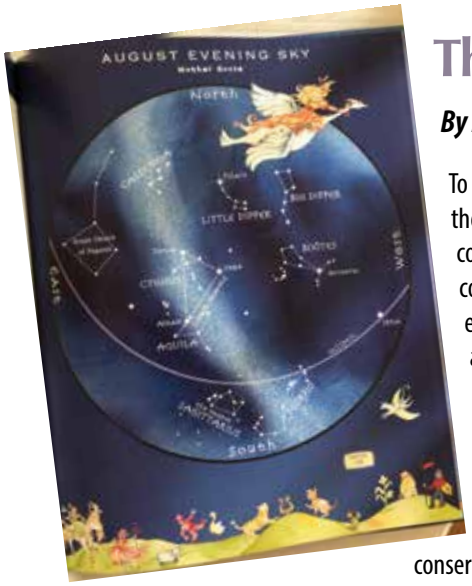
The young have to jump out of the hole which may be 20 feet off the ground in order to get to the ground. Even landing on the forest floor doesn't hurt them because they are so light they are like parachutes. But mom will have to lead them to water once they are safely on the ground.

The female has what looks like large white goggles, while the male is resplendent in almost every color of the rainbow. He is easily not only our most colorful duck, but probably one of our most colorful birds. He really looks like somebody painted him in preparation for some kind of ceremony. In a way, that's what happened—nature painted him to appeal to female Wood Ducks in a "ceremony" known as courtship and nesting. I remember watching a Wood Duck nest outside my dorm, Owens Hall, at Michigan State University. I missed seeing the young jump that time, and I missed the jump this time too. After a week and a half, the leaves were fully out, and I couldn't locate the right tree. Guess I should get a GPS coordinate next time! Still, it was quite a thrill to see this pair doing their high arboreal ritual!

Because cavities for nesting are often scarce, people can help encourage Wood Ducks by erecting nest boxes for them, which they will readily use (Eastern Screech-Owls like them too).

Cartoons by Oz Warbach from the book* Mother Nature's Michigan*, used with permission from the Michigan Department Of Natural Resources.

Male Wood Duck swimming in Duckweed on Belle Isle by Scott Jorgensen.



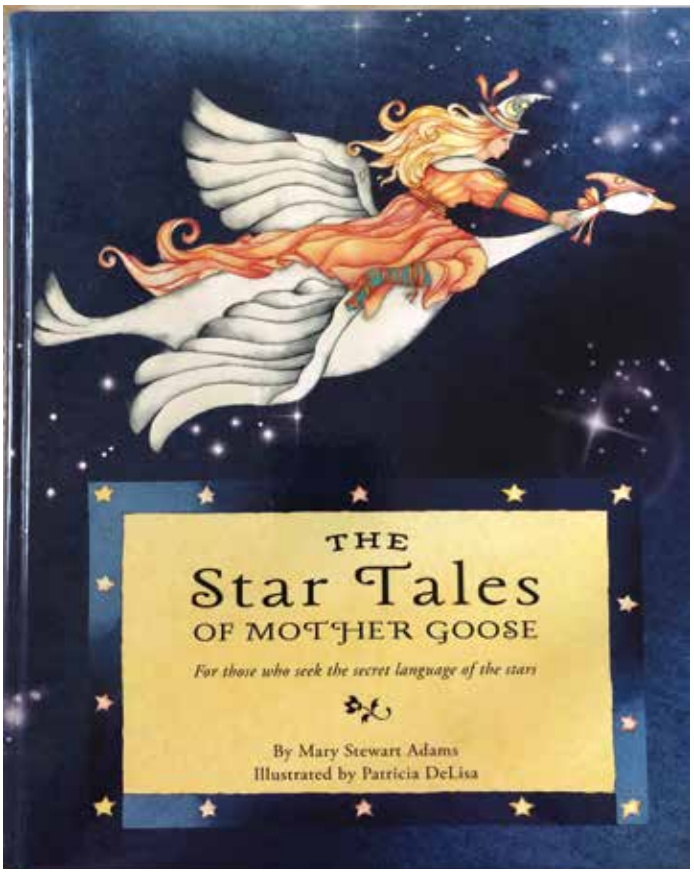
The Star Tales of Mother Goose

By Mary Stewart Adams, illustrated by Patricia DeLisa • Book review by Emily Simon

To all of us who care about the quality of life on Earth, conservation is a familiar concept. We try to conserve everything from energy, gas, and water to threatened species, fragile ecosystems, and open spaces. It was not until relatively recently, however, that people began to realize the need for conserving another dwindling resource: the night sky unobscured by light pollution.

Mary Stewart Adams is an award-winning star lore historian and conserver both of knowledge about the stars as well as of the night sky itself. A Harbor Springs, Michigan, resident, Adams led the initiative that resulted in the designation of Emmet County's Headlands Park in 2011 as the sixth International Dark Sky Park in the United States, and only the ninth such park in the world at the time. During her nine-year tenure as founding program director at the Headlands, she and the park received numerous awards for programming and stewardship. Adams travels extensively, promoting a humanities-based approach to the night sky, its stories, and the cultural consequences of losing the dark. Her radio program, "The Storyteller's Night Sky," airs every Monday on Interlochen Radio, and she also writes a blog of the same name (**https://storytellersnightsky.com/**).

In her new book, ***The Star Tales of Mother Goose***, Adams notes how King Louis XIV of France's order to light all the streets of Paris with lanterns in 1667 may have marked the beginning of our loss of the dark sky—both literally and culturally. The subsequent shift in focus to scientific reasoning and technological achievement gradually eroded our connection to the fairy tales, legends, and mythology that used to play a prevalent part in our collective imagination.



In ***The Star Tales of Mother Goose***, Adams aims to reconnect us. Calling the book her attempt "to share the joy of living in relationship with the stars through whimsy and rhyme and once upon a time," she presents 10 well-known Mother Goose nursery rhymes, each with a full-page illustration, a star map, and directions for finding in the night sky of a particular month various constellations, which are matched to characters and elements in the rhyme. It is amazing how cleverly Adams has matched the elements in the nursery rhymes to the night sky at different times of the year.

The book is illustrated by Adams's sister, Patricia DeLisa. The illustrations and star maps add much to the book's appeal and utility. A preview of the star map is inset into the larger illustration for each nursery rhyme, and the small drawings found in the inset are repeated in the full-page star map, which will help readers find things. The deep blues of the night sky are perfectly complemented by the bright, engaging drawings and fanciful borders.

An "Interlude" section for adult readers traces the history of Mother Goose from folklore to print publication. A history of each nursery rhyme is also provided. And at the back of the book is a reference section that includes a substantial glossary of stars, constellations, and astronomical terms and events; an annotated list of "people, places, and things" mentioned in the book; a bibliography; and a handy cross-reference guide for the nursery rhymes and star maps.

A lovely volume of nearly 100 pages, ***The Star Tales of Mother Goose*** is the kind of book that becomes an heirloom. Obviously, the nursery rhymes will appeal to young children, and the challenge of finding the characters and components in the night sky will keep older kids interested too. Grownups will appreciate the additional historical and cultural information and the extremely clear directions for finding the constellations. But ***The Star Tales of Mother Goose***'s value may lie most in the opportunity it offers for parents and grandparents (or teachers, camp counselors, scout troop leaders, or anyone who works with children) to spend time with youngsters tracing these tales across the night sky throughout the year. Things we absorb as young children become a part of our identity in ways no other learning does, and our earliest memories can last a lifetime. What an awesome gift of joy and learning to pass on to a young person!

But the book is more than just a means for learning constellations. Adams hopes that adults will embrace ***The Star Tales of Mother Goose*** as much for its imaginative power as for its information: "The point of this book is not to immediately unveil the mystery of the connection between nursery rhymes and the stars for the children in our lives. It is, rather, to let this knowing sink into our own thoughts, to nourish our own imaginations, so that when we approach the night sky with a child, we will be sensitive to the need for sustaining awe and wonder as long as possible."

The Star Tales of Mother Goose is available from **www.starlore.co**.

Flyway

A publication of Detroit Audubon

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A Sora on Belle Isle. Photo by Robert Irwin.