



A Detroit Audubon Publication

Fall 2022

# Flyway



Vagrant Birds

Breeding Birds of Callahan Park

Jerry Jung: Conservation Prophet

Volunteer Recognition Celebration

Turtles: Nature Plays Its Shell Game!

Summer Programs Heat Up in 2022

What's Goin' On with Detroit Bird City?

A Summer Interning with Detroit Audubon

# Flyway

A publication of Detroit Audubon

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*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 from the mass of feathers and its profile in the sunset? Photos taken at Kensington Metropark by Scott Bowdich. Check your answer on page 15.



**ON THE COVER: Male American Kestrel.** Formerly called the Sparrow Hawk, its current name is consistent with the common names of similar species in other parts of the world. It is our smallest and most common falcon, often seen perching on telephone wires or powerlines where it swoops down to catch insects, mice and other small rodents, and occasionally birds, reptiles, and amphibians. They are often confused with Mourning Doves while both perching and flying. So, look closely the next time you think you see a Mourning Dove—it could be a kestrel. If you see it hovering, it is most likely a kestrel. Both genders have the two facial stripes on either side of the head and a gray cap, which together make it look a bit like it's wearing a helmet. The male has a rusty back, spotted rusty breast, and bluish wings lacking in the female. They are year-round residents. Photo by Donna Macauley.

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# A Message from Our Executive Director



Greetings Detroit Audubon members,

I am excited and honored to begin a new chapter with Detroit Audubon in the role of Executive Director. This is an incredible opportunity to take the lead in the advocacy, conservation, and appreciation of birds and the environment we share.

In the first two months of my tenure, I've immersed myself in the daily work of Detroit Audubon. I have attended field trips and programs, participated in the Black Tern research in the St. Clair Flats, met with partners both new and old, and worked

alongside other individuals and organizations committed to conservation efforts like Detroit Bird City. While I still have much to learn, a few things have made quite an impression on me thus far.

First, the work ethic, passion, and dedication of our volunteers and staff is unparalleled. Their skills, expertise, and commitment to birds and the environment is essential to the success of our small organization.

Second, the support of our membership—from those of you that are new to our organization, to those who make monthly donations, to those who give their time or have been longtime members—I am grateful for and humbled by your commitment to the mission.

Third, the collaborative efforts for conservation in the city are exciting and extensive. The grassroots efforts to maximize Detroit's green space has already achieved much momentum in the last five years, but the potential for expansion in the immediate future is immense as partnerships grow and funding is secured. One of my main priorities is to continue fostering established relationships and collaborations, while also working to expand our partnerships.

This issue of the *Flyway* not only tells the story of the amazing people and partnerships mentioned above, but it is also written by many of them. I hope you find the *Flyway* an effective way to stay connected with Detroit Audubon's research, conservation, education, and advocacy work. Work we cannot do without your continued support.

Finally, I encourage you to reach out. Send us an email, call us, or tag us on social media; we enjoy hearing from you. As my favorite time of year for birding approaches, I look forward to meeting you all on the trails.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Abrams  
Executive Director

Our new Executive Director, Gretchen Abrams, brings more than 20 years of leadership experience in environmental education and 15 years of management experience at local, national, and international nonprofits to Detroit Audubon. Gretchen has a proven record of creating and growing programs that are not only beneficial for physical and mental well-being, but essential to nurturing future advocates, conservationists, and stewards of birds and the environment we share. We are excited to have her at the helm, leading Detroit Audubon into a new era.

## SHORTS:

**BRUCE SZCZECZOWSKI'S PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE WILL BE HIS LAST FOR A WHILE.** Bruce gave his camera with his telephoto lens, and his binoculars, to colleagues in Kenya before he departed back to Michigan late this summer; he believed they needed them more than he does. For now, he is borrowing Detroit Audubon binoculars as he continues to help lead field trips. Because it will be some time before he is able to purchase another camera and telephoto lens, there will no new photos from him going forward. We may pull an old photo or two of his if we need a specific species for an article, but he will not be submitting any new ones. Since we first went to our full-color magazine format, Bruce's photography has been our mainstay. We look forward to more of his photos when he has a camera in his hands once again! (Kind of hard to picture him not holding a camera, isn't it?)

**GLARING ERROR OF OMISSION ON THE VOLUNTEER LIST IN THE SUMMER ISSUE:** In the long list of volunteer contributors to the *Flyway* published in our last issue, we inadvertently left out one of our most important players, Tana Moore. She is the artist who takes all the well-written articles and amazing photographs from our volunteers and staff, and designs the beautiful masterpiece you find in your mailboxes four times per year! We are so lucky to have her weaving her magic issue after issue. We are deeply grateful!

*Dunlin marching through (or is it trying to walk on top of the water?) at Pointe Mouillee by Dongfan Chen.*



# Breeding Birds of Callahan Park

by Kyle Schanta, Detroit Audubon bird census volunteer

During this past breeding season, at least seven species of native bird successfully bred in Callahan Park, either in the prairie or in the bordering tree networks and winding tangles. American Goldfinches were observed almost daily gathering nesting material, carrying seed, and singing from the block's tallest trees. A pair of Gray Catbirds successfully fledged two fuzzy-looking young along the south shrubby border. They seemed to favor a variety of insects but used the Box Elder, Wild Cherry, and Mulberry trees throughout. American Robins nested above the park's east-side bench, in a girdled *Ailanthus* tree (also known as Tree of Heaven). House Wrens took up residency in opposing corners, one near the south-side bench and one near the east-side bench. To my great delight, I commonly ran into fledglings along the path right up until the day I wrote this article.

Callahan Park, Detroit Audubon's first Detroit Bird City native wildflower meadow, planted in 2019, supports a multitude of species throughout the year, avian and other taxa as well, providing birds the resources they've evolved to depend on in a stopover and breeding habitat.

Common Grackles, a common but declining species, showed up in the first week of March and quickly staked themselves out in a tall Norway Spruce tree on the east side of the park along Sheffer Place, a shrubby alley that dead-ends at the park's (thankfully) only *Phragmites* colony (*Phragmites* is an aggressive invasive species). The spruce is a beacon to these beauties; both the cones and cover are irresistible to many migrants arriving at Callahan. As the weeks and months progressed, baby grackles, screeching shrilly from the top third of the tree, were joined by Red-breasted Nuthatches, goldfinches, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Another spruce-top regular, the Northern Flicker (Yellow Shafted), appeared a couple weeks after the grackles and let all of Poletown know of its arrival. Flickers drum on gutters, greenhouse support poles, and good old trees, among other sweet-sounding surfaces. These large, charismatic woodpeckers can be seen commonly foraging on the ground or heard from the tops of the tallest trees, but at Callahan Park they seemed to prefer the old Red Pine telephone poles and adjoining network of wires and cables in the prairie's south-side alley. Their elaborate courtship behaviors, ranging from different shrieks and squeaks to chasing, bill pointing, or elaborate tail-spreading, were displayed regularly here throughout the season. Neighborhood residents have reported seeing as many as four fledglings on the immediate three blocks, and I witnessed three together a block north of the park at Circle Forest, an Arboretum Detroit native restoration project. Northern Flicker and other grassland species such as the Indigo Bunting face a diverse group of threats in the neighborhood and elsewhere, but have found success here at Callahan.

Perhaps the most active residents of Callahan were the Indigo Buntings. Multiple pairs were observed each visit from early May through mid- to late July, and pair numbers have been steadily increasing since my first notes in 2019. The female selects the nest site, and two were indeed active at each end of the park's shrubby-tree-lined alleyway. I saw buntings carrying a variety of nesting materials from both



**Female Indigo Bunting at Callahan Park. Photo by Julie Oldani.**

native and nonnative plants, as well as carrying food items to the nest and carrying fecal sacs away from the nest for disposal.

The male's participation in parenting varies greatly within the species, and it seemed like Callahan's males weren't especially attentive. I observed as many as four fledglings at one time, all being fed or tended to by females, though I'm not positive that they are all from the same parents, or from Callahan for that matter. At least two other breeding males were regularly observed singing and displaying within a two-square-block radius from Callahan throughout the season, four in total. The males seem to have left now, but the neighborhood hosts a variety of food-filled green spaces where the brown-blue mothers and their streaky youngsters can play and forage in abundance before their long journey south.

Callahan provided resources to other birds nesting in the neighborhood as well. Baltimore Orioles sang from the Sycamores and bought their young to glean insects high on the tops of new leaves. Eastern Kingbirds used the habitat during spring migration, and though they nested a block west, some returned with young in early to mid-August, and numbers will build during fall migration. They favor certain powerlines and can often be seen flycatching along Elmwood Street. Multiple Mourning Doves nested around the hilly tree line at Fungi Freights on Moran Street and are a fixture in the American Elms and Box Elder trees at this countrified

community education and work space.

Lastly, the Ring-necked Pheasant, Detroit Bird City poster bird and neighborhood favorite, were heard and seen almost daily from April through August. Though I did not find evidence of their nesting in the park, one male had territory a block east from Callahan and another had territory a block west of Elmwood Street. The two were observed together at times throughout the season, and the pathways and edges were their preferred hangout. This introduced yet iconic prairie species, along with the Northern Flicker and Indigo Bunting, were target species for the Detroit Bird City grasslands initiative, and their continued success is proof that "if you plant it, they will come."



**Goldenrod Crab Spider on false sunflower eating an Eastern Bumblebee at Callahan Park. Photo by Kyle Schanta.**



# A Summer Interning with Detroit Audubon

By Anne Cao

I did an internship with Detroit Audubon from May to July 2022 through Semester in Detroit, a program at the University of Michigan that allows students to live, learn, and work in the city while engaging with local community organizations.

Because my major was not directly related to sustainability or the environment, I wanted an internship that would give me hands-on experience in that area. Before interning here, I had never gone bird watching or attempted to remember any of the vast array of bird names. However, I had always been curious about birds and liked the idea of having specialized, niche knowledge on a topic, so when Audubon came up as an option, I quickly chose it, just like it chose me.

My three goals from the initial action plan I created were to help provide resources for other birders, foster appreciation for birds and nature, and learn the basics of working in a nonprofit.

So, what did I actually do?

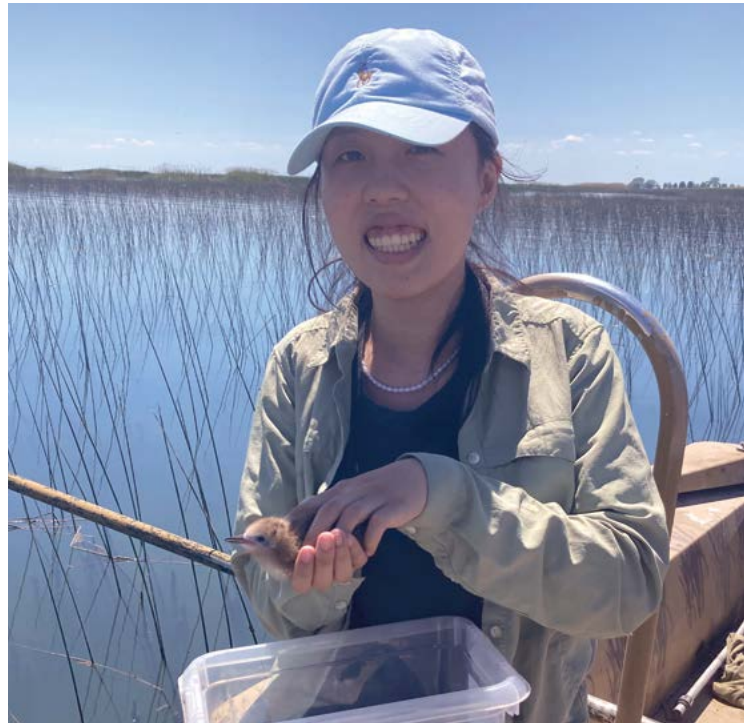
**Bird Surveys:** For four weeks in June, I assisted our Research Coordinator Ava with bird surveys in Detroit Parks twice every week. We would meet at Cass Commons at 5:40 AM, then visit different parks until about 8 AM. Climbing out of bed was surprisingly easy for me, despite the fact that I'm typically a night owl. However, this routine did take some getting used to. My bird identification skills grew the most during this time. By helping Ava recognize city birds both by sight and by ear, I familiarized myself with the common birds, and even found my favorite bird (the Cedar Waxwing).

**Black Terns.** One of the most fun and unique experiences I had during my internship was seeing the Black Terns. On a hot Thursday, I went with Ava and David to St. Clair Flats where we monitored Black Terns and banded a tern baby. I also got to see the nest cameras installed in the marshes, which was super cool.

**Social Media.** A big part of my goal to help foster appreciation for birds was to expose more young people to birds and birdwatching, and a key factor in this process was fully utilizing social media. To that end, I created TikTok videos on a wide variety of topics from field trips to emergency bird care. There's an active community of naturalists and birdwatchers on TikTok. It almost became a habit that no matter where I went, I'd take short video clips for later use on TikTok. (To view Detroit Audubon's TikTok posts go to: <https://www.tiktok.com/@detroit.audubon>)

**Events.** Aside from regular office work, I also attended many of the weekend field trips held by Detroit Audubon. One of my most memorable experiences was the Black Birders Week event (Blacks, Browns & Birds) on June 4th at Palmer Park with April Campbell from BIPOC Birders of Michigan. April emphasized that we shouldn't think of ourselves as an entity separate from nature (like the expression "go out to nature"). We are all part of nature, but some people do not have the resources to appreciate it, although they deserve to do so. Everyone there had a different experience level, but we all helped answer each other's questions. As April pointed out, we were from different communities walking together, supporting each other, and getting back in tune with nature's rhythms. I loved that.

**So, what did I learn?** This internship taught me a lot about how a nonprofit operates from daily office work to donations to holding public events. Beyond that, I've gained so much more of an appreciation for the natural world. I've been more of an indoors person since I was young, and COVID-19 made spending time outside especially challenging. Getting thrown into outdoor spaces during the internship



*Anne Cao holding a Black Tern chick while assisting with Black Tern research at St. Clair Flats. Photo by Ava Landgraf.*

truly enabled me to closely examine nature and picture myself as part of it.

**Going forward:** I think my biggest takeaway from these three months of interning with Detroit Audubon (again, besides the huge leap in bird-related knowledge) is that I too, as a young college student, can easily create bonds with birds, feel a sense of belonging in nature, and through that, form a reciprocal relationship with our lovely planet.

My internship ended on July 29th. After that date, I plan on bringing my bird-related knowledge forward by continuing to help Detroit Audubon with its social media and volunteering with the Bird Center of Michigan in Saline.



*Hummingbird Clearwing Moth on Wild Bergamot. Taken at Eliza Howell Park. Photo by Evan Deutsch.*

# Belle Isle Nature Center *Celebrating Neighborhood Nature and the Spaces We Share*

Article and photos by Amy Greene, Detroit Audubon board member and Director of Nature Centers for the Detroit Zoo

Located on historic Belle Isle in Detroit, the Belle Isle Nature Center offers unique environmental experiences that connect people with wildlife and nature. Operated by the Detroit Zoological Society, the Belle Isle Nature Center celebrates how many species of wildlife live alongside people in cities and suburbs.

While the Nature Center closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, planning for transformative updates continued. Outdoors-only programming returned in summer 2021, and autumn 2022 heralds the long-awaited reopening of the renovated indoor space.

Programming and new exhibits at the Nature Center are designed to support people's belonging and significance in being part of nature right where they already are. You don't need to have special gear, be part of a certain group, or go to a wild, protected, or greener destination to have a valid and meaningful experience in the natural world. Balconies, backyards, vacant



*Beehive: The observation beehive has significantly expanded theming around the existing casework.*

- The expanded Pollinators area offers fun interactive elements—including the opportunity to closely observe an active beehive. Guests can investigate the relationship between many types of pollinators and flowers and explore the world through the perspective of Bee Vision with a larger-than-life interactive.

- The Backyard Planner enables guests to play with different choices and consider how small changes can support wildlife and increase their own enjoyment of the outdoors.

- The Frog and Toad Crawl-through provides exciting views of Gray Treefrogs and American Toads from see-through domes inside their habitat.

- Local conservation work is highlighted at the Mudpuppy Habitat, which is designed to showcase the Detroit Riverfront and how these unique species are indicators of a healthy ecosystem.

- Perhaps of particular interest to *Flyway* readers, an expanded and extended Bird Viewing Bay creates a serene and immersive space to pause and observe the backyard birds—and those migrating through—who visit the city.

Detroit is particularly special as a space to celebrate urban nature. The city offers opportunities to catch a glimpse of Detroit's famous pheasants (see if you can find them in a mural at the Nature Center); to observe how falcons make their homes in the high-rise buildings, demonstrating the true grit of their fellow Detroiters; to notice how dandelions persevere and keep climbing up through the cracks in the sidewalks and delighting both observant children and bees passing by; and how pollinators of all kinds are finding their ways to the native flowers growing in vacant lots, medians, and reclaimed patches along the river. While it can be wonderful to travel to untouched natural spaces, it is important to recognize that nature is not just a destination. The nature that is found in the places where we spend most of our time is just as valid—and just as necessary to notice, protect, and preserve.



*Sewer: Explore a space where local animals have adapted to human infrastructure.*

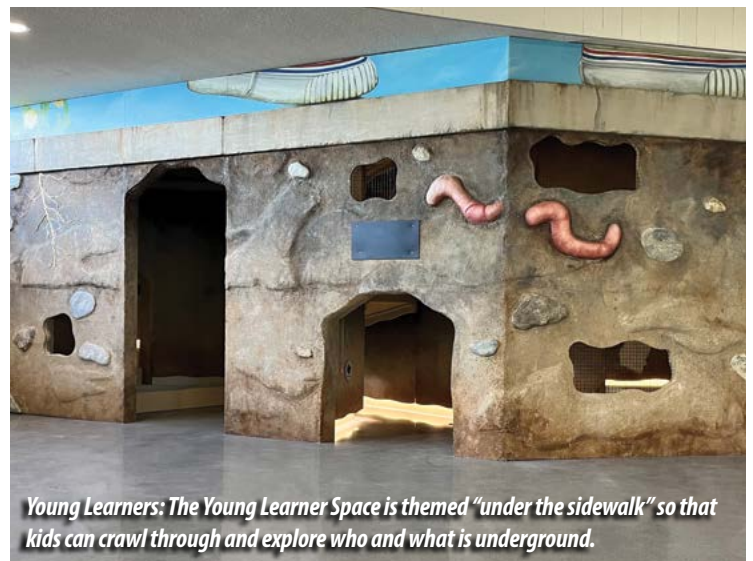
lots, and cracks in the sidewalk demonstrate places where nature perseveres and where people's connections, memories, and experiences can make a positive impact.

The renovations offer many new opportunities to explore how wildlife interacts with human infrastructure—and

how we can make everyday choices that support a healthier environment. The location of Belle Isle in a migratory flyway, on an ever-healthier river between two countries, and right downtown, directly reinforces this notion.

The mission of celebrating neighborhood nature and the spaces we share is evident throughout the newly renovated facility.

- Animal habitats are greatly expanded to provide excellent welfare for these animals and close-up views for visitors. Take a moment to notice how each habitat highlights a Detroit locale from where these animals naturally reside!
- Children will take on the roles of ants and worms exploring under the cracks of the sidewalk in a brand new and exciting Young Learners Space.
- The Sewer Tunnel Walk-Through transforms the main hallway entrance into a full-sized sewer tunnel, immersing guests in exploration of how city wildlife and infrastructure intersect.
- A Trail Camera Interactive demonstrates how wildlife shares space with humans in ways we may not recognize. An activity station will highlight images from trail cameras in Detroit.



*Young Learners: The Young Learner Space is themed "under the sidewalk" so that kids can crawl through and explore who and what is underground.*



# What's Goin' On with Detroit Bird City?

by *Ava Landgraf, Research Coordinator*

I remember visiting the potential Detroit Bird City park sites in 2016 with Diane Cheklich, Rebecca Minardi, Erin Rowan, and other Detroit Audubon Conservation Committee members. I was an intern for Detroit Audubon back then, and the Conservation Committee had already been working for a year on Detroit Bird City, Detroit Audubon's flagship project to create native wildflower and grassland meadows in local under-used city parks.

In 2019, we planted the first park, Callahan Park, with our native flower seed mix; I could hardly wait the three years for the tall prairie flowers and grasses to become established. We planted the Palmer Park meadow in 2020, and meadows at Bryant-Vermont, McKinley-Merrick, and Lifitz Parks in 2021. In the spring of 2022, we expanded Callahan Park by two acres and, in the summer of 2022, planted three acres of meadow at Riverside Park. Detroit Audubon and our partners have successfully planted meadows at six Detroit parks totaling 13 acres of native flower meadows. The City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department has 37 more acres of park land selected for possible meadow development in the next phase.

Because it takes a couple years for these meadows to establish, it takes time before we see an increase in the number of birds. But as new birds discover the abundance of resources at each Detroit Bird City park, they decide to stick around. Callahan Park seems to have reached this point, since we are seeing more and more new species at the park. Detroit Audubon volunteer and Conservation Award winner Kyle Schanta has been recording birds seen at Callahan Park since 2019. As of August 2022, Schanta had recorded 106 species of birds at the park. Some of the most exciting species include Cedar Waxwing, Baltimore Oriole, Common Nighthawk, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Alder Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Lincoln's Sparrow, Wilson's Snipe, and Canada, Wilson's, Cape May, Blackburnian, Pine, and Northern Parula warblers. Anyone can check out the list of species on eBird for Callahan Park to see more.

This summer we confirmed several species successfully breeding and raising their young at Callahan Park. We have seen Indigo Buntings at Callahan since 2019, but this year we had confirmed fledglings! This August we saw the female bunting racing back and forth carrying food to her two fledglings, who were vibrating their wings and begging for food (signs of healthy young birds). We believe there were two pairs of Indigo Buntings at Callahan this summer because we saw two different males singing at the same time. We also observed fledgling House Wrens, Gray Catbirds, and Northern Flickers. Over at Lifitz Park, our partner Derek Sederlund, who provides tilling and seeding at the DBC parks, saw a Ring-necked Pheasant family with chicks. It is amazing to see that even a small pocket of greenspace can support these species, many of which are facing population declines. As Detroit Bird City parks continue to develop and more are planted, it is clear we will continue to have a significant impact on the success of breeding and migrating birds.

I have long felt that a huge sign of success for Detroit Bird City would be when the local community groups around the parks sponsor programs such as bird walks and kids' nature events. We already have two communities around Detroit Bird City parks that have requested birding walks and workshops from Detroit Audubon. Arboretum Detroit is a community organization that started with the mission to spread trees and greenspace around Detroit. As a part of their Circle Forest project (a block from Callahan Park), they funded Detroit Audubon for multiple years of programming in their neighborhood. Similarly, Woodbridge Neighborhood Development, the

community group for the area around Bryant-Vermont Park, also funded programs. For both groups we have conducted introductory birding lessons, volunteer events, and several bird-, flower-, and pollinator-focused walks. The Ferndale Garden Club visited Callahan Park to learn about the meadow and embrace bringing native plants home. Detroit Audubon also partnered with the Greening of Detroit's Green Corps, a program that trains high school students in different types of environmental work. The Green Corps students spent two days visiting both Callahan and Lifitz Park to learn about native plants, meadows, invasive species, birds, pollinators, and the importance of creating community greenspace and habitat in Detroit.

To see that we are already reaching this point of success in both supporting wildlife and building community connections to nature is amazing. Along with new programs and new species around the parks there are so many other bits of evidence that show me the scope and significance of our Detroit Bird City meadows. A neighbor by Callahan decided to stay at her renovated house instead of renting it out because she loved being near the meadow. A partner who runs the children's summer program at Palmer Park asked me about the mowing schedule for the Palmer meadow because the kids love the meadow flowers, and she needed to prepare them for when it would be cut to set back invasive plants while the native plants develop (the more vigorous native plants will out-compete the nonnatives



*Ava Landgraf showing pheasant feather to Green Corps students. Photo by Diane Cheklich.*

once fully established). Colorful meadow flowers are a prominent feature of a new mural on the Spread Art building near Bryant-Vermont Park. Recently, while I was planting some extra flowers at Callahan Park, I ran into an old friend taking her engagement photos at the meadow!

Detroit Audubon is now exploring options to create wildflower meadows at community-owned spaces and install larger meadows at larger city parks. Back in 2016, I could have never imagined the success of Detroit Bird City and the awe it has inspired in me and people all over Detroit.

In September I went by Bryant-Vermont and McKinley-Merrick Parks and counted three Monarch Butterflies at each park, an endangered species using these meadows less than an acre in size.

We just got word that an article about our Detroit Bird City project will be appearing in *Audubon* magazine sometime soon! So be on the lookout for it.



# Black-Necked Stilts Nest at Pointe Mouillee!

By Jim Bull, photos by Dongfan Chen



On our June trip to Pointe Mouillee, we watched four Black-necked Stilts right near the dike road in the Vermet Unit as they probed the muck for food, flew a very short distance, then repeated it. We also watched two adults sitting on nests not far from each other in this area. By the time our next field trip happened there on August 6, the stilts were nowhere to be found. However, we have documentation that they did in fact successfully nest at that location with these photos of the stilts and their tiny fuzzy chicks taken by our intrepid volunteer photographer, Dongfan Chen.

*Clockwise from top, Black-necked Stilt adult on nest, Black-necked Stilt chick, and adult with two tiny chicks*





# Jerry Jung: Conservation Prophet Leaves Us Much Too Soon

Article and photo by Jim Bull

I still am in shock from the phone call I received from Detroit Audubon board member Diane Cheklich, chair of our Conservation Committee and coordinator of our Detroit Bird City project, telling me our mutual friend Jerry Jung (Jerrold Mark Jung—pronounced “Young”) had died. It just didn’t seem possible.

In early 2015 our program coordinator informed me of an especially large donation. It was from Jerry Jung, which was not a name I recognized, so I gave him a call to thank him. We must have talked for an hour. He was such an endlessly fascinating person to talk with. When he told me about his passion for native prairies and the ones he created on his farms in northern Michigan and Tennessee, I immediately connected him with Diane and our Detroit Bird City project that transforms underused parks into native prairies. He not only became one of our largest financial donors, but contributed the in-kind services of Derek Sederlund, who did site prep work on his farms, to do all the site prep work on our native prairie sites, gratis. He saved us an enormous amount of money. Because of that we were able to use grant funds from National Geographic for interpretive signs and park benches.

When I asked Diane to reflect on Jerry’s impact, she told me: “Jerry was a passionate conservationist whose actions made a difference. He was instrumental in the success of Detroit Audubon’s Detroit Bird City project. He owned large tracts of grasslands himself that preserved habitat for so many threatened species. And his advocacy ranged all over the country, including at the highest levels of national nonprofits and the federal government. He was a true inspiration, and we hope to honor his legacy by continuing this important work.”

I’m so glad we got him out last summer to see our Black Tern banding and research. That seems like ages ago now. He wanted to share that experience with two friends he wanted to help cultivate as donors for Detroit Audubon. While only one could come, that one guest has turned out to be a solid supporter of Detroit Audubon as Jerry predicted. Still, we needed a boat larger than our research vessel to hold the number of people we’d be taking out. Jerry once told me he used to run fishing charters on Lake St. Clair, so I asked him if he knew anybody we could contact about renting a bigger boat. He not only found that boat but an operator and paid him for his services, too. That operator was so perfect for our needs, we later used his services to take out other VIPs, including a local congresswoman.

While Jerry and I were not close, it still feels like I lost a friend. He had a way of making you feel like you were the most important person in the world to him. I so looked forward to every time we got to talk, and loved when we could meet in person. I always was so enriched by those experiences. In his quiet way, he was a consummate teacher.

He was just so exuberant about his experiences in nature and overflowed with excitement like a little kid when he shared them with you. His enthusiasm was infectious. He’d gotten that way when he told me about a Kirtland’s Warbler that landed on his boat in the Caribbean, and when he’d come to see our native prairies, and when he got to handle a newly hatched Black Tern chick too.

He kept inviting me to come up to his farm in northern Michigan to see the native prairie he restored there. “There are nesting Bobolinks everywhere,” he told me. I was

going to visit last year, but we weren’t able to synchronize our schedules. I hoped I could get up there this year but instead I heard the sad news of his passing. He wanted Detroit Audubon to come up to his farm on a field trip and even told us that folks could stay overnight if we wanted to do that. I thought it would be best for me to see the place first so I could better plan such a trip. We would surely take him up on his offer, I told him. I am sorry now that we never got that off the ground.

When we met for lunch last summer before our Black Tern cruise, I gave both him and his guest Detroit Audubon caps. He said he already had one, so he gave his to our waitress, telling her all about this great organization. During that lunch he and his guest, both enthusiastic about birds and conservation, also talked at length about their other mutual passion—helping African American youth succeed in high school and college and providing support for them as they start successful careers. Putting that passion into action, Jerry was president of a local nonprofit that helps African American students succeed in college. He was always a doer, walking the talk.

In his professional life, he was CEO of Michigan Caterpillar for 20 years, and he founded both Oak Adaptive, a company which provides software to Caterpillar dealers, and Landfill Energy Systems, which harvests methane produced by decomposing

garbage in landfills to generate electricity. He served on the boards of the Michigan Nature Conservancy, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Michigan League of Conservation Voters. Detroit Public Television gave him an award for underwriting their programs on Great Lakes conservation (an official department at the station because of Jerry’s support).

He was a visionary who worked tirelessly to make this world a better place, and who enjoyed and reveled in our beautiful planet. He was always so full of life, excitement, and *joie de vivre*. I just can’t believe such an incredible, physically robust man who embraced life to the fullest, is no longer with us. I can still hear his voice in my mind, but I will miss hearing it in person, miss the conversations we will never have.

I am so glad he was a part of our Detroit Audubon family. The last time we talked he told me he was ready to help us turn as much of the vacant land in Detroit to native prairie as possible. And I can hear him rattling off the stats about the inefficiency and the dangers of corn ethanol (see [www.RethinkEthanol.com](http://www.RethinkEthanol.com)). Never did a cause have a such a passionate and knowledgeable champion! He spent a lot of his time lobbying Congress and state legislators about that issue. He authored an article for the *Flyway* and gave a presentation about it at one of our member programs at the Belle Isle Nature Center. I wish we had recorded that presentation.

I’m smiling through my tears as I remember our time together banding Black Tern chicks last summer and Jerry’s beaming pride at being part of helping Detroit Audubon turn underused parks into native prairies. Those are just part of his amazing legacy. He sure used his time on earth to make this planet a better place. Job well done, Jerry, job well done!

**Editor’s Note:** for more information on Jerry, see the profile we published about him on page 16 of our Fall 2021 issue.



**Jerry Jung holding a Black Tern chick.**



# Fall Nature Gallery

*American Bittern taking off at Pointe Mouillee. Note how its striping helps it blend in with the brown cattail stalks. Photo by Dongfan Chen.*



*Pipevine Swallowtail, a southern butterfly that only occasionally shows up in Michigan. In its normal haunts it feeds on Pipevine or Dutchman's Pipe, a characteristic plant of Appalachian hardwood forests with flowers that look like pipes of a Leprechaun. Edsel Ford House, Grosse Pointe Shores. Photo by Evan Deutsch.*



*Swamp Sparrow doing the splits at Pointe Mouillee. Photo by Dongfan Chen.*



*Brown Thrasher at Tawas Point State Park. One of our mimic thrushes, it repeats each note twice, making the bird easy to recognize by song. Brown Thrashers nest on the ground or in low shrubs. They winter in southern states from Kentucky to the tip of Florida, and from Virginia to east Texas. Photo by Scott Bowdich*





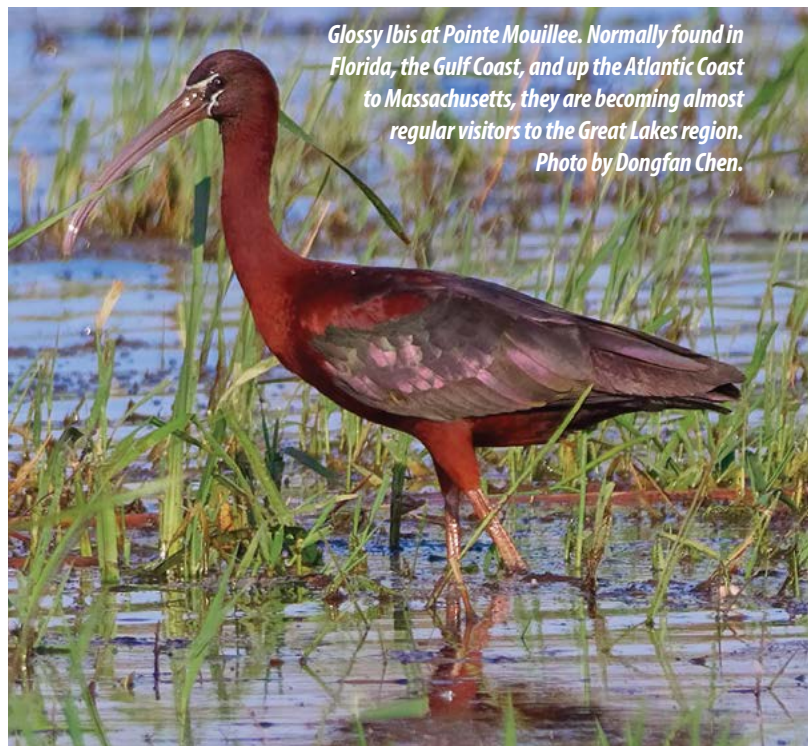
that  
ts



*Killdeer chick. Isn't it just the definition of cute?  
Photo by Emily Phillips.*



*Lesser Yellowlegs at Pointe Mouillee.  
You've heard of walking on the water?  
Photo by Dongfan Chen.*



*Glossy Ibis at Pointe Mouillee. Normally found in  
Florida, the Gulf Coast, and up the Atlantic Coast  
to Massachusetts, they are becoming almost  
regular visitors to the Great Lakes region.  
Photo by Dongfan Chen.*



*L-R: Female African Lion,  
young Yellow Baboon with a feather*



## Images from Detroit Audubon's Summer 2022 Kenya Safaris

*Photos by Bruce Szczechowski*



*L-R: Pearl-spotted Owlet, Masai Giraffes gathering at  
the waterhole for a drink, and Rüppell's Griffon*



*L-R: African Elephant adult and young one,  
and Lesser Flamingo feeding young*





# Vagrant Birds

by Scott Bowdich

Finding a vagrant bird can be one of the most exciting moments in a birder's day. There are many factors that can drive a bird to leave its normal range: changing climate, human interference, or just bad weather can drive a bird to travel to new and unusual places. No matter the reason, these out-of-place birds become instant birding destinations, and 2022 has been a banner year for vagrant birds in Michigan.

The term "vagrant" describes a bird that has strayed well

beyond its natural range. Whether it took spring migration a little too far, took a wrong turn on its first trip to wintering grounds, or was simply blown off-course by bad weather, a bird considered commonplace in New Mexico, Argentina, or England can cause a great deal of excitement when found in Michigan. While some vagrants may only be cross-country, others might be so rare as to not even appear in a North American field guide. Fortunately for birders, the birds can't read field guides, nor do they pay attention to maps.

Michigan's most famous foreign visitor in 2022 might be the Southern Lapwing. Arriving sometime in May at the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport, it seemed perfectly content to stay, making occasional forays across the road to visit local parks. Birders flocked to the airport in the early dawn hours throughout July to try catching a glimpse of the lapwing through gates and fences, enjoying its iridescent gray plumage and loud calls. By early August it had moved northeast to the Cedar Lake area, where it was visible via kayak over Labor Day weekend. The appearance of the lapwing hasn't been free of controversy, though. Since it isn't clear how and why the bird arrived, the possibility exists that it escaped from captivity or hitchhiked aboard a cargo plane from South America, disqualifying it as a true vagrant. The Michigan Bird Records Committee will have to decide whether to accept the sighting and add the bird to the official state bird checklist. The American Birding Association may conduct a similar review subsequent to the state committee's decision.

Other vagrants can be a bit more local, and more accessible. In Muskegon, a Lewis's Woodpecker (normally only found west of the Mississippi) made a notable appearance, drawing birders from across the state. During its 10-day stint as a Michigan backyard bird, several homes played host to the charismatic woodpecker, allowing easy views from local streets. In the same area, a Red-Cockaded Woodpecker proved far more elusive, appearing for only one evening on a local golf

course before disappearing for weeks, then visiting Ludington before vanishing for good. Normally native to pine forests of the southeastern United States, the bird may have found Michigan's golf courses a pleasant reminder of its more temperate home.

The appearance of such a rare bird can be a significant community event. When a Common Redshank (native to Europe, Africa, and Asia) was found at Pointe Mouillee at about noon on July 4, local birders were initially perplexed. Appearing superficially like a Greater Yellowlegs, the redshank's reddish bill, dark orange legs, and bright white underwing marked it as extraordinary. The identification of the redshank through photos, the first and only one ever officially recorded in the United States, triggered a rush on the normally quiet marsh, drawing over 100 birders from across the state for a once-in-a-lifetime birding opportunity. Observers traded stories and information, offered looks through spotting scopes, and helped newcomers spot the redshank as it strutted back and forth across the marshy mudflat throughout the afternoon and evening. Only fading light and a nasty weather forecast drove the contingent of birders back home, and in the morning, the Common Redshank was nowhere to be found. Perhaps it wandered into Canada or managed to find its way back to Europe, but birders in Michigan will be scrutinizing shorebirds more closely for years to come.



Modern technology has made the identification and tracking of vagrant birds far easier than it was in the past. With digital cameras and GPS-enabled phones, what would have been a tall tale years ago can now be an Internet sensation. Apps such as eBird and Merlin allow these migrants to be quickly identified, and online communities on Facebook or Discord can turn a singular experience into a shared one.

Some birders, though, may choose not to share unique sightings with the world at large, and for good reason. Groups of visiting birders crowding into a normally quiet natural area may disrupt the local habitat, both for the vagrant and for local species.

When chasing a rare sighting, birders should always be mindful of the local environment, take care not to litter or cause other

disturbance, and resist the temptation to trespass for a better view.

No matter why a vagrant bird might choose to cross states or oceans to visit Michigan, finding one is always a rewarding experience. Paying close attention to birds, no matter how common they might seem, can offer unexpected prizes, and may leave a birder with memories (and a spot filled on their checklist) that will last a lifetime.



**Photos from top:**

**Lewis's Woodpecker in Muskegon by David Bratt**

**Southern Lapwing at the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport by Castin Cousino**

**Common Redshank in its normal haunts taken in Sri Lanka by Charles J. Sharp, courtesy of Wikimedia**



# Turtles: Nature Plays Its Shell Game!

By Jim Bull

When it comes to reptiles, snakes are only sporadically seen on nature hikes. When they are seen, they often elicit some degree of fear or at least healthy respect. Spying Michigan's only lizard, the Five-line Skink, is an exceedingly rare occurrence. But when I spot the first turtle of spring basking on a log in a pond or river, a pretty common sight, my natural reflex is to break into a smile that permeates my whole being. You too? With one notable exception, the Snapping Turtle, turtles are usually experienced as a friendly presence. And once you've seen one, often you begin to spot more and more of them..

Herpetological Paleontologists (scientists who study fossilized reptiles and amphibians) say that turtles first appeared on earth about 300 million years ago, and when they did, they looked very much like modern turtles we know and love, shells and all. Some 100 million years later, turtles swimming around could have poked their heads above the water, gazed toward land, and seen dinosaurs, those giant lizards which were their distant cousins, sauntering about munching leaves or bringing down prey. They also would have seen the emergence of birds, those feathered and flying modern dinosaurs 40 million years after that, and the rise of mammals at about the same time.

Evolution gifted these ancient reptiles with an amazing feature that has helped them survive all these millennia: body armor! With their shells, turtles can pull their head and feet in and curl their tail around themselves, making it very difficult for a predator to get to their soft parts (the only edible parts). Two of our native turtles have hinges that can close so that their head, feet, and tail are completely hidden, but more on that later.

The shell comes in two parts: the carapace, the top part, and the plastron, the bottom piece. Both are made of bone usually covered with hard scales. As the bone grows, turtles shed the old scales and grow new ones, resulting in concentric rings on some that give herpetologists an estimate of their age. The older a turtle gets, however, the more obscure and less dependable these aging lines are; they wear down with time.

While many turtles spend lots of time in the water, they lay their eggs, which have a leathery shell, on land. They often dig a hole first, deposit the eggs, and then cover them up with soil. The young hatch a few weeks later, never seeing either of their parents. They are on their own from the moment of hatching. As adults they are fairly well protected from most predators, but they have softer shells right after they hatch, making this the most vulnerable time of their lives. Their one worst enemy once full grown: the automobile. As strong as their shell is, it is of little use against these metal behemoths. So, if you do see a turtle in the middle of the road, if it safe to do so, it would be a kindness to stop and move them physically to the side of the road they are headed for. I always do that. Such good turns could save their lives!

Why do turtles bask in the sun, often crowding together on the portion of a log that protrudes above the water? They are poikilotherms or ectotherms, two scientific terms applied to the same phenomenon most of know us know as "cold-bloodedness." This does not mean they are "calculatingly cruel." What it means is that unlike mammals and birds which maintain a steady internal temperature ideal for enzymes to catalyze all the chemical reactions necessary for life, turtles, like other reptiles and amphibians, are about the same temperature inside and outside. The only way to get their temperatures up so that their enzymes can speed up their metabolism, is to situate themselves where they can soak up the sun's rays to raise their temperatures.

Most turtles head to the bottom of a pond, lake, or stream, for the winter. They dig themselves into the soft mud, sometimes covering themselves with a very thin layer of wet soil, slow down their metabolism for the winter months, and hibernate.

Let's take a look at the nine turtles we are likely to encounter in southeastern Michigan (Michigan does have a tenth species, the Wood Turtle, which is only found in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula, so it is not covered here).

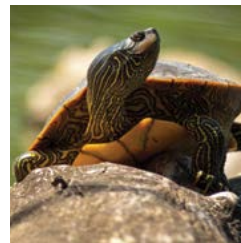
**Painted Turtle.** Our most common turtle, this is the one we are most likely to see basking on logs, sometimes almost on top of each other as they crowd in so much. The bright red markings along the side and back of its shell are distinctive. An omnivore, it eats a variety of invertebrates, fish, and aquatic plants. We have two subspecies in Michigan, the Western and Midland. The Midland has a dark pattern in the middle of its plastron. They eat invertebrates, fish, tadpoles, and aquatic plants. While they do hibernate, they wake up periodically, and will swim, catch prey, and eat under the ice. Photo by Jim Bull.



**Red-eared Slider.** In years gone by it was the most common pet turtle. The red patch on the side of its head is diagnostic (turtles do not have ears). I remember having a pet Red-eared Slider as a child. Ours died when it was two years old or less, but well-cared for, they can live 30 years or more, which is why many were released to the "wild" when owners grew tired of them—one good reason not to keep them as pets. They are a southern turtle, so in Michigan

they are most likely an introduced species. Since their range does extend into Ohio, there is a very slight chance that some could have made it here on their own. Photo by Nicholas Hinnant.

Another reason to eschew turtles as pets is that they often harbor Salmonella bacteria, which can cause serious gastrointestinal problems in humans. The small Red-eared Sliders that many dime stores used to sell are no longer sold because federal law prohibits selling turtles that are less than 4 inches in size, a law passed to protect eggs and hatchlings. While legally obtained turtles can be kept as pets in Michigan (though not recommended), it is illegal to release turtles to the wild. Try taking them back to a pet store if you can no longer keep them. Better yet, just enjoy them in the wild!



**Map Turtle.** Their name comes from the prominent thin yellow lines on their carapace that some thought resembled contour lines on a topographic map. The edge of the carapace also flares upwards, a characteristic unique to this species. It also has yellow lines on its dark green head and legs with a bright yellow spot behind its eye. While it eats a variety of invertebrates and aquatic plants, its specialty is clams and snails which it cracks open with its especially

powerful jaws (only surpassed by the Snapping Turtle). Photo by Nicholas Hinnant.



**Spotted Turtle.** With bright yellow spots on a very dark, almost black shell as well as often on its head, it is well-named. A threatened species in Michigan, it usually inhabits small ponds. Years ago, some residents of Southfield contacted us because a beautiful pond in their neighborhood was about to be destroyed by a housing development. They told us it was home to this species. We visited the site and verified that this species was present.

Due to our efforts and those of those neighbors, the pond was saved. I hope it is still home to Spotted Turtles today! This is one of four turtle species that it is illegal to possess in Michigan. Photo by Todd Pierson courtesy of Creative Commons.



**Musk Turtle (Stinkpot).** Its oval shape, making it look like a small, dark olive colored football, sets it apart from other species. It has a pointed head with two light stripes on its neck. It is named for its habit of deterring predators by exuding a foul-smelling liquid from glands along its sides. Photo by Jim Bull.



#### **Blanding's Turtle.**

Named in honor of American naturalist and physician William Blanding (1773-1857), this turtle has a dark, almost black shell with tiny yellow flecks (quite different from the larger distinct yellow dots on the Spotted Turtle). Its most distinctive feature, however, is its bright yellow chin and throat. I have fond memories of seeing and capturing several of these turtles

as a child. Among the other times, but probably the most memorable, was catching them for a turtle race held each June. It is now a Species of Special Concern in Michigan and illegal to possess. Photo by Jim Bull.



**Eastern Box Turtle.** I love all our Michigan turtles, but this one is easily my favorite. Unfortunately, I haven't seen one in the wild for years. Our only fully terrestrial turtle, it lives in the woods and stays on land its whole life. It has a brownish high domed carapace with bright yellow markings and yellow on its head and legs too, big brown eyes, and a slightly curved beak. An omnivore, it eats invertebrates of all sorts, and lots of plants, but has a

real penchant for fruit—a sweet tooth...er, beak! When I worked at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, we had a Box Turtle we kept for use in educational programs. I remember she really loved it when we gave her raspberries (in the wild they will feed on wild raspberries as well). After she dined on them, she would look like she had put on red lipstick—just so comical. Photo by Jim Bull.

The most amazing thing about Box Turtles, and what gives them their name, is that they not only can pull their head, legs, and tail in, but their plastron is hinged and can thus completely close so that no appendages are exposed. This foils predators pretty effectively; soon the hungry hunters leave frustrated.

I can't think about Box Turtles without calling to mind Malvina Reynold's children's song. "You Can't Make a Turtle Come Out." Box Turtles do really have to decide to "come out" for us to see anything other than their closed shell very like a box. Here are a few excerpts from that song (look it up on YouTube!):

*You can't make a turtle come out,  
You can call him or coax him or shake him or shout,  
But you can't make a turtle come out, come out, you can't make a turtle come out. . .*

*So, you'll have to patiently wait,  
And when he gets ready, he'll open the gate,  
But you can't make a turtle come out. . .*



**Spiny Softshell Turtle.** Unlike other turtle species, it has no horny scales covering its carapace, but only greenish skin, so its shell is as its name suggests, quite soft in texture and very flexible around the edges. It has a very pointy snout. Its usual habit is to settle down into the mud at the bottom of a pond, with only its pointy snout poking out. To a fish swimming by it might look a tasty invertebrate, but when the fish comes closer to investigate, the Spiny

Softshell grabs it for a tasty piscine dinner! Along with the Snapping Turtles, these are not friendly at all. They are quite aggressive and prone to bite (same reason too—they don't have the same shell protection that most other species of turtles have). Picking them up is not advised! Photo by Jim Bull.

**Snapping Turtle.** This turtle is different in one key respect from all the other Michigan turtles: it has very small, almost non-existent lower shell or plastron, so it cannot retreat into its shell for protection. It has another effective defense to make up for that—its powerful jaw and beak which can easily snap off a finger or, as my vertebrate biology professor claimed, they can even snap a steel cable in two! This is one turtle that if found in the road, I would not recommend picking up and taking to the other side. You might be able to coax it with a long stick.

Snapping Turtles eat fish, frogs, crayfish, salamanders, dead carcasses, and something else no other turtle eats that might surprise you—ducklings.

My father once led a group at our church camp on a nature hike around a lake. The highlight was seeing a female Snapping Turtle laying her eggs in a large hole she had dug in the ground. I was astounded at the large number of eggs she laid—they just kept coming out. We waited until she was done, then watched her cover the hole with soil and saunter away. She seemed oblivious to our presence—she had one thing on her mind and focused on nothing else! And apparently, she was confident she could defend herself if need be.

Snapping Turtles in Michigan can weigh up to 50 pounds and grow up to 20 inches in length! (The Alligator Snapper down south, a different species, can grow to even greater size—249 pounds and 30 inches long!) Photo by Dongfan Chen.







Cartoon by Lauren Milia

## Mystery Bird Revealed

If you guessed Sandhill Crane, you are correct. Standing three to four feet tall, their gurgling, loud bugle call, made possible by their unusually long and coiled trachea, is the music of the fall. They feed on waste grain and insects in agricultural fields during the day, then head in large numbers to the protection of marshland to roost for the night. As they converge on these marshes, sometimes they come in large phalanxes, creating an amazingly loud ruckus. As graceful as they are when they fly with outstretched necks and legs (in contrast to herons which all bend their necks back in an "s" shape in flight), they take on a comical air as they dangle their feet downward and apart, like lowered landing gear, swaying to and fro, until they finally settle into the marsh.

They mate for life, reinforcing their pair bond, as many humans do, by dancing, which looks a lot like watching huge popcorn kernels popping up and down in a wet field. Omnivores, they feed on seeds, plant tubers, and shoots; insects and other invertebrates; as well as frogs and other small vertebrates. They are mostly gray in color but often take on a reddish-brown tinge from preening with mud and water in their bills laden with oxidized iron (better known as rust). They once were on the verge of extinction in Michigan, but they are coming back and extending their range from the central and western parts of the state (including the Upper Peninsula) to cover not only our whole southeast Michigan territory but ranging well into Canada too. In fact, we heard them bugling at Point Pelee, Labor Day weekend! Their gangly-looking young are called "colts." The red patch on the head of adults is evident in this stunning closeup taken at Kensington Metropark by Scott Bowdich.





# Volunteer Recognition Celebration Held August 27

by *Brittany Leick and Gretchen Abrams*

Detroit Audubon was founded by volunteers in 1939 and although it now boasts a small staff, we continue to rely on the energy, time, and talents of our many volunteers and partners every year to sustain our outreach and conservation efforts. We truly could not do the work we do without our wonderful partners and volunteers.

2022 has been a BIG year for Detroit Audubon, all because of YOU!

In 2021, our dedicated volunteers committed **over 600 hours** to helping us, from leading field trips, helping support our research projects, presenting during webinars, and much more.

In 2022, our volunteers had already committed **over 1150 hours** by the end of August. We are able to accomplish all that we do because we are a bird- and nature-loving community that all strive to help.

## 2020 PROGRAMS

**21 field trips with 383 attendees** (160 after COVID outbreak)

**20 webinars with 1127 attendees**

## 2021 PROGRAMS

**53 field trips with 880 attendees**

**15 webinars with 3000 attendees**

## 2022 PROGRAMS

**90 field trips and 3055 attendees** by the end of August  
**8 webinars and 960 attendees** by the end of August

## 2022 COMMUNITY OUTREACH CHILDREN'S EVENTS

**404 children** reached through public events

On Saturday, August 27, volunteers gathered at Palmer Park for a well-deserved celebration, including a bird hike (of course), a delightful luncheon, and a few guest speakers, and several awards were bestowed on some of our most dedicated volunteers.

## VOLUNTEER AND PARTNER HONOREES

### **David Fuller, Black Tern Leadership**

**Award:** David began assisting with Black Tern monitoring efforts in 2019. Using his engineering and construction experience, he designed and built nest camera poles and housing that could handle St. Clair Flats lake levels and heavy storms, and he designed and printed a far more cost-effective rechargeable battery system. His knowledge and research into nest camera options and settings have allowed us to make the most of the nest camera system and record predators, water level changes, and boat disturbance at the Black Tern nests. David implemented new technologies and increased the efficiency of day-to-day tasks with his ideas, assistance, and willingness to help.

**Kyle Schanta, Conservation Award:** Kyle has been an essential part of two of Detroit Audubon's conservation programs: Safe Passage and Detroit Bird City. Kyle first got involved reporting bird collisions for Safe Passage in midtown and downtown Detroit. His several seasons of monitoring buildings allowed Detroit Audubon to determine the buildings causing the most window collisions and prioritize those for treatment. Kyle also dedicated himself to Callahan Park, the first Detroit Bird City Park, by providing countless volunteer hours spreading wood chips, picking up trash, removing invasive plants, planting extra flowers, and monitoring birds at the park. His love of the park keeps him visiting and recording new species all the time.

**Diane Cheklich, Presidents Award:** Diane plays several roles for Detroit Audubon by serving as a board member, chair of our Conservation Committee, leader of Detroit Bird City, Safe Passage ambassador, webinar presenter, field trip leader, grant and report writer, photographer, and videographer. Diane was essential in getting Detroit declared an Urban Bird Treaty City in 2017. She began spearheading the Detroit Bird City project in 2016. Under Diane's guidance, we installed a total

of 13 acres of native flower meadows and plan to install another 40 acres of meadow at Detroit city parks in upcoming years. Diane also received Detroit Audubon's Jim Bull Award for Outstanding Service as a Volunteer at the Volunteer and Partner Recognition brunch at the Belle Isle Nature Center on Nov. 23, 2019.

**Sandy Novacek, Outstanding Service Award:** Over the past several years she has channeled her energy toward opposing the Grand Prix on Belle Isle. She formed a group called Belle Isle Concern, and they actively spoke out against the race to the media, at Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee meetings, and on social media. They engaged community members and encouraged them to sign petitions and attend protests that opposed the Grand Prix on Belle Isle. Last year the Grand Prix organizers announced that they would be moving the race to the streets of downtown Detroit starting in 2023.

**Jim Bull, Volunteer of the Century:** Jim has donated a lifetime's worth of volunteerism to Detroit Audubon. See the Summer 2022 issue for more on Jim's contributions to Detroit Audubon.

*From top, Detroit Audubon Executive Director Gretchen Abrams presents the Black Tern Leadership Award to David Fuller. Photo by Brittany Leick.*

*Kyle Schanta receives the Conservation Award from Executive Director Gretchen Abrams. Photo by Brittany Leick.*



*Group shot of folks attending the volunteer celebration. Photo by Gerald Hasspacher.*



# Summer Programs Heat Up in 2022

By Brittany Leick, Program Coordinator and Office Manager



April Campbell of BIPOC Birders of Michigan leads a birding trip for the Black, Browns, and Birds event at Palmer Park June 4, 2022. Photo by Jim Bull.

Summer is running your toes through the sand, a field of flowers blowing in the wind under a clear blue sky, water splashing against your legs, and the landscape exploding with various shades of green. Most people look forward to summer for various reasons whether it's sitting in a hammock under a tree as a soft breeze flutters the leaves overhead, tubing down a river with goslings chasing after their parents, or an evening barbecue with Chimney Swifts and bats swooping down to catch the bugs mid-flight. It's the time you see waves of people, desperate to enjoy the lushness of being outside.

Most people think of summer as the best time to go out birding. While there are more birds in the area, birding is more difficult as leaves fill out and obscure the view. Birding by sight may get more difficult for most, but it's a great opportunity to work on your identification of bird calls while taking in the importance of other nearby species. Summer is the perfect time to slow down, cool off under a tree, then stop and listen to the sounds around you. It's when you slow down that you may notice a set of House Wren chicks chirping excitedly overhead as their parents swoop in with a large, juicy caterpillar mustache. A mischievous catbird imitates a cat's call to those curious enough to search for it in a nearby tree. Under the bright sun, a canvas of vibrant wildflowers twitches as dozens of little bee butts poke out of flowers, their pollen-covered legs wiggling to get deeper into them.

This summer we have connected with both new and old partner organizations. Detroit Audubon representatives offered, partnered on, or participated in 46 different programs from July through September, with a total of 118 events so far this year. By the end of August, Detroit Audubon connected with 1113 people, bringing us to a total of 4560 people we've reached through our programs since the start of the year!

We were fortunate to be able to offer programs with partners, including at Wayne State University with the Detroit Public Library, Corrado Park with SEMBA (Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association), Rouge Park with Friends of Rouge Park, Elmwood Cemetery with BIPOC Birders of Michigan, and at Holliday Nature Preserve with the Holliday Nature Preserve Association. At Scripps Parks, families from the community gathered to learn about common birds and how to use binoculars for the first time before searching for local species. At Callahan and Lifitz Parks (two of our Detroit

Bird City Parks), we partnered with the Greening of Detroit and their Green Corps Summer Youth Program to control some invasive species growing on the property, pick up trash, and help them learn about the area's native species.

As leaves filled in the surrounding trees, we extended our field trips to cover tips on summer birding by encouraging the use of Merlin and other sound ID apps to help with audio identification learning. Additionally, we increased our field trip opportunities by expanding into topics such as plants, butterflies, bees, and other insects. Outside of our regular programs, we offered or attended a handful of tabling events including Friends of the Rouge National Canoe Day, the Lake St. Clair Science Fair at Ford House, and a Buggin' Out Program at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. These events and so many others continue to allow us the chance to reach a broader range of individuals in the community and to extend our opportunities to more families. We could not have offered all these programs without our volunteer field trip leaders, partners, and members within our community.

There is no doubt that summer is the best time to see a vibrant orange Monarch Butterfly fluttering through your yard or hear a chorus of buzzing bees, beetles and other insects humming away in a wildflower prairie. And what better way to learn about our flora and fauna from leaders who are southeast Michigan environmental professionals? You'll never regret witnessing the passion of a naturalist or enthusiast in their element outside in nature. Not only that, program participants this summer had amazing opportunities to see the years of hard work put into newly restored prairie or forest habitats by

organizations such as SEMBA, Friends of the Rouge, Friends of Rouge Park, Holliday Nature Preserve, and Detroit Audubon and its partners at the Detroit Bird City parks.

We value every opportunity to connect people to nature. It is an important task for us to build a bridge of knowledge from the environmental world around us to those living in southeast Michigan and beyond. Nature is constantly changing and always offers us chances to explore; it is just waiting for us to step outside our comfort zone. We hope you participate in one of our many field trips or other outdoor programs to experience the world of nature around you.

For upcoming programs refer to our Facebook page, website, and our e-newsletter, ***The Flyway Express***.



***Birdwatcher's Garden Bird Brains.***  
Photo by Brittany Leick.





*Conan Smith, President and CEO of the Michigan Environmental Council, presents the Petoskey Prize to Diane Cheklich along with a check for \$5,000 to Detroit Audubon. MEC photo.*

*Below left, the award.*

## Cheklich Wins Petoskey Prize

### DIANE CHEKLICH RECEIVES PETOSKEY PRIZE AT THE MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL'S 24TH ANNUAL AWARD CELEBRATION

Last month we reported that Diane had been selected to receive the Michigan Environmental Council's highest honor for volunteers, the Petoskey Prize. Detroit Audubon was a founding member of the council when it formed in 1980. At a reception at Eastern Market on the very warm evening of Thursday July 21st, Diane was presented with the Petoskey Prize for Environmental Leadership.

The evening started with partaking in gourmet delectables and having conversations with folks many of us had not seen in person for almost three years (due to COVID). It was really like an environmentalists' state reunion. When the bell sounded, Dr. Michael Dorsey gave a rousing motivational call to all those present, then turned the microphone over to Detroit Audubon board member Jim Bull to introduce Diane (he and board member Rebecca Minardi made the nomination on behalf of Detroit Audubon). Diane was then presented with the actual prize, a large polished and mounted Petoskey Stone, and a \$5,000 check for Detroit Audubon. In her acceptance speech Diane emphasized the importance of our continued work to help birds, which are facing such enormous challenges right now. We need to do the work for them and for the people who want to continue to enjoy them, she told us.

The other prestigious award, the Helen and William Milliken Award (named after our former governor and his wife, both ardent environmentalists), was given to Anne and Tom Woiwode. That award goes to paid staff members of nonprofits or government agencies who have demonstrated exemplary service in protecting Michigan's natural heritage. Tom was the founding director of the Michigan Nature Conservancy and then headed the Michigan GreenWays Initiative of the Southeast Michigan Community

Foundation. Anne first served as a volunteer and then was made director of the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club for over 30 years where she oversaw truly amazing accomplishments for our state, its natural resources, and its people.



## Bird Anting

by Emily Phillips

Some birds exhibit a bizarre behavior known as anting. It is like a bird spa day in which a bird will take a "chemical bath" produced by ants. Ornithologists believe it to be a maintenance behavior in which birds rub acidic substances from the ants onto their feathers and skin. Anting has been documented in over 250 species of birds. Most of them are passerines such as the Common Grackle, Blue Jay, Robin, and Starling. It has also been observed in domesticated birds and other wild fowl. John James Audubon first recorded the behavior in 1831, when he saw wild turkeys rolling on anthills, but ornithologists did not really begin studying this behavior until the late 1930s.

There are two kinds of anting: passive and active. In passive anting, a bird lies atop an ant nest and allows the ants to crawl over its tail and wings. In active anting, the bird secures the ant in its bill and applies it all over its body. In either case, the ant sprays or secretes a liquid known as formic acid as a defense against predators. Birds have been documented using 24 different ant species for anting, primarily those belonging to the subfamily Formicine. For obvious reasons, birds avoid ants that employ a stinging defense.

Birds have been known to "ant" with other pungent smelling materials. Over 40 items have been recorded as substitutes, such as cigarette butts, beetles, mothballs, millipedes, raw onions, limes and lemons. The frequency and duration of anting depends on the species of bird. Typically, anting is more often observed in the warmer months of the year due to more access to ants and other unknown factors.

There are many theories about why birds perform anting. One popular theory is that formic acid repels ectoparasites. Some believe that there might be a medicinal effect which stimulates new feather growth during the molt. Another theory claims that the chemical formic acid removes old preening oil or may possibly intoxicate the birds—giving them an "ant high," so to speak. Throughout the years many hypotheses have been proposed but none have been proven, so it still one of the mysteries of the natural world.

The next time you go birding, take a moment to carefully observe the birds, paying attention to their actions and movements. If you are lucky, you might be able to witness rare or unusual behaviors. Anting is just one behavior that was discovered by careful observation over the course of many years. Through further observation and study, we may be able to gain a better understanding of anting in the future.



*Carrión Crow passively anting near Paris, France. Photo by Marie-Lan Tajj Pamart printed under license from Creative Commons.*



# Flyway

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*Black-crowned Night Heron taken at Pointe Mouillee.  
Photo by Dongfan Chen.*

