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The Call Note

May 2017

Dedicated to creating a greater awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the interrelatedness of all Michigan's wild places and wildlife and the need for stewardship.

Presidents Note

Spring has sprung! And with it comes that great variety of warblers, thrushes, flycatchers and other songbirds that will stay with us for only a short period to rest before continuing their journey north. Spring migration won't last long, so be sure to enjoy it while you can. Capital Area Audubon's spring bird walks at Fenner are a great way to take advantage of birding with like-minded folks to help find and learn our spring migrants.

The spring bird walks will continue every Saturday morning through May 20. Remember that they shift to 8:00 am in May. I hope everyone is able to enjoy the wonders of spring migration!

Good birding,

First spring bird walk a beauty

Saturday, April 1 was a perfect morning for CAAS's first spring migration bird walk of 2017 – clear, windless, and sunny with temps in the 40s.

The favorable weather brought out more than a dozen eager birders looking for surprises on Fenner's trails. Leader **Bob Kingsbury** reported a tally of 29 bird species, including fox sparrow, tree sparrow, bluebird, tree swallow, and golden-crowned kinglet.

Bob added: "A low flyover of Sandhill cranes obliged us with a loud chortling call. An accipiter had us guessing between sharpie or Cooper's. After reviewing my photos and field guides at home, I'm convinced it was a sharp-shinned hawk. **Clara Bratton** called it right. It was a great start to the season at Fenner."

A big thank-you to Bob for volunteering to lead the

walk.

Spring bird walks continue each Saturday morning through April (9:00 am.) and May (8:00 a.m.). Meet in the parking lot of Fenner Nature Center.

May 4 Meeting & Program

How are ospreys faring in Michigan?

How did ospreys come back from the brink in Michigan and how are they faring now? You will learn the whole story from **Barb Jensen**, Michigan Osprey Program coordinator, who has been involved with recovery efforts as a volunteer since the 1990s. The Osprey Program, which Barb now helps lead, began at southeast Michigan's Kensington Metropark in 1998.

Join us to hear more about this success story right in our own back yard on Thursday, **May 4**, at Fenner Nature Center. Social time with refreshments begins at 7:00 pm followed by announcements and the program at 7:30.

Bring a friend, or introduce a young person to Capital Area Audubon!



Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day

May 13 open house at Capital City Bird Sanctuary

Capital City Bird Sanctuary (CCBS) will celebrate International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) by hosting a spring open house from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 13, featuring a variety of nature walks and family-friendly activities.

The theme for this year's IMBD focuses on migratory stopover sites that help birds along their migratory routes. CCBS is an excellent stopover site for many migratory birds that pass through our region during spring and fall.

Many other species utilize the 65 acres of forest, meadow, and riverside habitats protected by this public nature sanctuary for nesting and foraging activities. Nearly two miles of unpaved trails offer visitors a chance to get close to nature and observe birds, flowers, and wildlife.

This celebration will include activities for adults and children to learn about birds, plants, and other creatures that can be found in your own back yard. Attendees will have the opportunity to see migratory birds up-close during bird banding demonstrations by the team from the Burke Lake Banding Station. The event will also feature helpful demonstrations on how to care for bird nest boxes, create native habitat, and volunteer with Michigan Audubon.

Please wear sturdy walking shoes or waterproof boots for unpaved, grassy, or muddy trails. Bring binoculars if you have them.

Directions: CCBS at Hawk Valley Farm is located northwest of downtown Lansing on Delta River Drive. Parking is available at Hawk Meadow Park, 160 Delta River Drive. The sanctuary entrance is south of the Hawk Meadow Park parking area, marked by a wooden kiosk.

Hidden Lake Gardens now open daily

If you're looking for a change of pace this spring, look no further than Tipton, Mich., home to Michigan State University's Hidden Lake Gardens. Billed as "a natural paradise, a place to escape from everyday life and connect with the world of nature," it can provide respite to the world-weary.

This oasis lies on M-50, just a few miles from the Michigan International Speedway. Hidden Lake Gardens is the home to some of the most beautiful scenery in Michigan. Situated on 755 acres with just under 10 miles of hiking trails, Hidden Lake Gardens is famous for highlighting both the natural and ornamental features found in nature.

Beginning April 1, the Gardens are open daily from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Stroll through the bonsai courtyard or the Hosta Hillside. Exotic plants boldly thrive in the arid, tropical, and temperate conservatory settings. Annuals and perennials offer bright blooms in the sun and soothing shade foliage. Trees and shrubs across acres and acres of rolling terrain demonstrate their natural and ornamental attributes.

Visitors can take it all in, from the comfort of a car or on meandering footpaths. Experience for yourself the beauty of this botanical garden and arboretum in the Irish Hills of southeast Michigan.

Open seven days a week. Admission is \$3/person; children age 2 and under, free.

Hidden Lake Gardens is located at 6214 Monroe Rd, Tipton MI 49287.

North American Migration Count ceases in Michigan after 25 years

Jeff Buecking and Mike Petrucha, compilers of bird survey results for the North American Migration Count (NAMC) for Michigan counties, announced an end to this effort in March. Last year was the 25th year this survey had been conducted in Michigan.

This count has historically taken place on the second Saturday of May, coinciding with International Migratory Bird Day.

The goal of the count was to collect records of bird species sighted by county during the height of spring migration, roughly similar to the Christmas Bird Count in winter.

Buecking and Petrucha cited disagreement within the professional community as to the value and relevance of the count, the onus of duplicate reporting to eBird, and problems with validity of reported data as reasons for ending the count in Michigan.

The 2016 Michigan NAMC results being published in an upcoming issue of Michigan Birds and Natural History (MBNH) will be the last. MBNH is a peer-reviewed scientific journal dedicated to ornithology and the natural history of Michigan. It is published by the Michigan Audubon Society



Place feeders away from hemlock trees

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responding to the potential threat of the



recommending that bird feeders be moved at least 100 feet away from hemlock trees.

Migratory birds are cited as a primary vector that allows the HWA to spread rapidly, along with storm winds and "hitchhiking" on mammals and humans.

HWA are tiny aphid-like insects that threaten the health and sustainability of hemlock species in the Eastern U.S. They secrete white wax as they feed on sap from hemlock shoots and branches. Eggs and very young adelgids can be carried by birds and can be moved on hemlock nursery trees, logs, or firewood.

To date, the hemlock woolly adelgid has been detected in four counties of Michigan's Lower Peninsula (near Lake Michigan), but it could easily spread. In Michigan there are more than 100 million



Ferns, II

Ferns are one of the most carefree and beautiful groundcovers for natural areas. They ask very little, needing only shade, soil rich in organic matter, and consistent moisture. There are species of fern that can grow in almost any situation; some grow in in dry shade, others that thrive in standing water, and others that flourish best in a mesic garden setting .



Ostrich fern, Wikimedia Commons

In the book “Green Revolution” (co-authored with Tom Christopher) Larry Weaner, a landscape designer specializing in restoration projects, describes using ferns as companion plants to discourage deer. Deer do not browse on ferns, and planting a palatable plant under, or very close to, a fern has been a successful strategy for Weaner. When I thought about this it made sense, as I haven’t observed deer or animal damage to ferns.

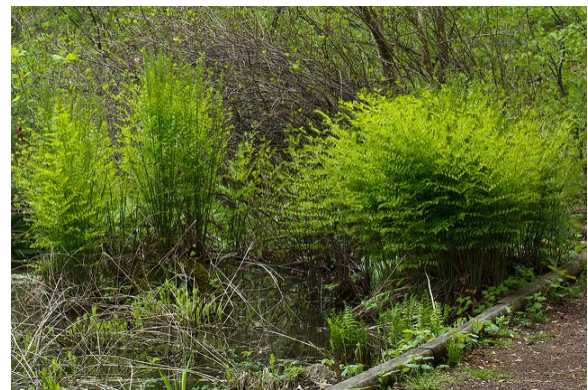
One of the drawbacks of some species of ferns is their sheer rambunctiousness. If you are looking to establish a carpet of green symmetrical fronds, those ferns are for you. If you need ferns that stay in one place, pick the species carefully! There are dozens of species of native ferns; the following is a small sample based on those that I have grown myself. These are all natives; some are also found in Europe and in the case of the royal fern, worldwide.

The Wood ferns belong in the well-behaved category. These are clumping ferns, and stay put in the landscape. Some such as *Dryopteris marginalis*, the marginal wood fern, are evergreen and so make handsome accents in the winter landscape. The male fern, *Dryopteris felix-mas*, (found in both North America and Europe) is quite similar to marginal wood fern, differing only slightly in color and height. Both species are quite tolerant of dry conditions once established. Another mannerly fern group is the Lady ferns. The Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina* is described as “one of the most reliable, and easiest ones to grow” by Allan Armitage, the respected perennial expert.

Growing up to 3 feet tall, this species needs moist soil with high organic content for success.

Two fern species that tolerate extremely wet conditions are the Sensitive fern and the Royal fern. I always think of the Sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*) as the fern a little child would draw. The leaves are very simple and pale green with no teeth. The name derives from the fact that it is the first plant to wither and die when fall frosts begin.

Royal ferns, *Osmunda regalis*, are very large and can reach up to 6 feet tall in a spot they like. The leaves are twice pinnate (divided) which gives them a very feathery appearance. Royal fern can often be found growing in standing water, and though it can survive on pond and stream banks above the water line, it only reaches its full potential with ample moisture. I found a colony of this fern near Burke Lake long ago and would be interested to know if it still exists.



Royal Fern. Wikimedia Commons

In the category of spreaders, Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) is a favorite of many gardeners. It forms impressive 3-4 foot tall feathery clumps. However it is a spreader, consistently seeking new pastures and garden beds to colonize. Moist shade is essential for this plant. You should plan on digging and giving away offsets in a couple of years after planting.

My personal favorite is the hay-scented fern, *Dennstaedtia punctiloba*. Although it does best in typical shady, moist fern habitat, it can also be found in somewhat drier locations. A big colony of these ferns is very handsome, as the growth habit is close ranks of very similar, geometrically ordered fronds. However, this fern is an aggressive spreader and belongs in an informal setting where it can be enjoyed for what it is, and allowed to spread to form a colony. One of the features I most enjoy

about this fern is its fragrance when bruised or cut; as the name implies it has the sweet smell of new mown hay.



Ferns are outstanding as companion plants in the garden, where their lacy texture serves as a pretty contrast to many other plants. One of my favorite combinations in the Beal Gardens was a mixed planting of ostrich ferns and Virginia bluebells. A May morning doesn't get much prettier than that, unless there are warblers flitting overhead!

Lost to Our Membership

By Ann Hancock

Fellow CAAS member Nancy Hammond passed away on March 10, 2017. Nancy was my neighbor on Kensington Road when I lived in East Lansing, and was a delightful and involved presence in our neighborhood. I met her for the first time as she was taking a petition door to door, and worked with her over a two year period to pass a revised parking ordinance for our street.

She and I shared cardinals, chickadees, woodpeckers and identical political viewpoints. She was a long time state employee with a distinguished past; her achievements were unknown to me until I read them in her obituary. She received a Diana Award from the state of Michigan, as well as being the founder of the Michigan Women's Political Caucus, which she went on to co-chair. She was also inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, and a delegate to the inaugural National Women's Political Conference. If she had not been so ill I am convinced she would have participated in the January Women's March.

CAAS and Michigan have lost an involved and articulate champion of birds, the environment, and human rights. Nancy will be missed.



One of our favorite shared birds