



capitalareaaudubon.org

The Call Note

June 2015

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.

President's Corner

Disappointing outcome of eagles' efforts

Previously, I wrote about bald eagles nesting along the Red Cedar River near Potter Park Zoo. This event was covered extensively by the local media as well. This was the first known bald eagle nesting in Ingham county in a very long time, possibly over a century.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) had done a helicopter flyover to confirm that there were eggs in the nest. Unfortunately, it now appears that the nest has failed. FWS did a helicopter aerial survey on May 14 and found the nest empty and no adults visible in the vicinity.

Exactly why the nest failed remains uncertain. It could have been some type of disturbance, defective eggs, or some other unknown cause.

Let's hope that these eagles or another pair attempt to nest in the area next year, perhaps in a more secluded location. It would be fantastic to actually have bald eagles fledge in Ingham county after such a long absence.

~ Bruce Cohen

We salute our volunteer leaders

Our Saturday morning bird walks at Fenner in April and May were hugely popular, enjoyable, and well attended. These walks could not have taken place without dedicated members to lead them, namely **Doug McWhirter, Bob Kingsbury, Clara Bratton, Jim Hewitt, and Bruce Cohen.**

We are grateful to them for volunteering their time, ►

▼ (continued from previous column)

talent, and energy to guides folks who want to see birds, learn more about them, and have fun while doing it. After all, isn't that what birding is all about?

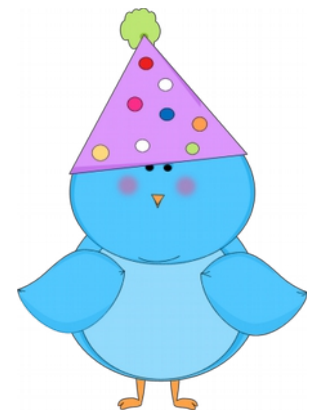
Thank you Doug, Bob, Clara, Jim, and Bruce.

June 4 meeting/program

Celebrate our club turning 80!

Please join us at 7:00 pm for our last meeting of the year on **Thursday, June 4** as we celebrate our club's 80th birthday with cake, ice cream, and a member photo-fest.

A quick election will take place during our short business meeting. **Doug McWhirter, Barb Hosler, and Tom Conner** are running for the three open board positions.



If you have bird or nature photos to share with the group, put them on a flash drive, bring them to the meeting, and be ready to use the computer and projector that will be set up to show your slides.

If you do plan on showing photos, please see Bruce when you arrive and he will let you know how much time you are allotted. Time will vary depending on how many members bring photos, but historically it's been about 5 minutes per person.

Why not bring a friend and introduce them to CAAS?

Special note of thanks

by Ann Hancock and Debbie Wolf

In terms of our club's leadership, June marks an ending, and a beginning. Board members **Sally Garrod** and **Bruce Cohen** wrap up their terms and new board members **Doug McWhirter** and **Tom Conner** begin theirs. **Barb Hosler**, who volunteered to finish out the term of departing board member **Daniel Weiferich** last year, has now volunteered to serve a term in her own right (thank you, Barb).

Sally quietly and ably served as Treasurer and as Recording Secretary during her two terms on the Board, and for that we say thank you, and well done!

In his role as President, the steady and unflappable Bruce Cohen became the face of CAAS and played ►

Pines for warblers

TRAVERSE CITY (AP) — The Arbor Day Foundation says it will pay for 800,000 trees this spring for planting in northern Michigan to provide nesting areas for the Kirtland's warbler.

Forest restoration manager Bradley Brandt says the nonprofit group has donated more than \$1 million since 1990 to create habitat for the endangered songbird. This year, the foundation is giving about \$140,000.

The money will be divided between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Huron National Forest for tree planting projects.

Kirtland's warblers breed almost entirely in young jack pine forests of northern Michigan. Dan Kennedy of the DNR says the agency plants about 2 million jack pine seedlings a year in the region.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend June 5-7

Sponsored by Michigan Audubon, this event features guided walks throughout southwest Michigan's best birding hot spots, programs and talks by local wildlife experts, and time to enjoy the camaraderie of your fellow birders.

Attendees will visit areas where they can find cerulean warblers, a songbird whose numbers are in serious decline. Otis Sanctuary, event headquarters, is also home to the elusive Henslow's sparrow.

For additional information, contact **Wendy Tatar** at 517-580-7364 or check www.michiganaudubon.org.

▼ (continued from previous column)

a huge role in lining up the great selection of programs presented at our monthly meetings over the past year. He has tended the flock well and we are grateful for his faithful dedication to club duties and his promotion of birding in general in mid-Michigan.

We warmly welcome Doug and Tom in their new role as CAAS board members.

Our June meeting is the final one of our 2014-15 year. Monthly meetings will resume in September. Have a great summer, everyone!



Probably just one redpoll

If you've ever agonized over the hoary redpoll vs. common redpoll identification problem, there are good reasons, and a recently published article may help explain why.

Published last month in *Molecular Ecology* is an article by Nicholas Mason and Scott Taylor showing that hoary redpolls and common redpolls have no differences across much of their genomes. The two researchers compared DNA from 77 redpolls coming from museums around the world. They found no DNA variation that distinguishes hoary redpolls from common redpolls. In fact, another redpoll species found in Europe – the lesser redpoll – also had similar DNA sequences.

While there is much variation among redpolls in the field – from highly streaked to frosty almost throughout – this does not necessarily mean there are different species. If redpolls had been separate species, then the samples would have mostly fit into two clusters, both by appearance and genetically.

On physical appearance, Mason commented, “We didn't find distinct characteristics to separate the redpoll types, but rather a continuum, or a progression, of physical traits.” Many redpolls, he said “were somewhere in the middle.”

The issue is nicely summarized by Gustave Axelson on the informative Cornell Lab of Ornithology blog at <http://tinyurl.com/RedpollsAdios>.

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Audubon club marks 80 years

by Jim Hewitt, Chapter Historian

Editor's note: This article was written for publication in local newspapers to commemorate our 80th year as mid-Michigan's Audubon club. Jim has been a CAAS member since 1996 and currently serves as our chapter's historian.

Eighty years ago next month, on June 5, the first meeting of the Lansing Audubon Society was called to order in the "Board of Education Building" by **Mr. F. Claire Hulbert**, who was then elected president. Other officers were elected, a constitution committee was formed, and the first "bird hike" was scheduled for June 29 at Chandler's Marsh. It was 1935 and depression-era dues were set at "fifty cents (\$.50) each year for adults and twenty-five cents (\$.25) for students." The objective of the new organization was "to ENJOY the pleasurable recreation of bird study and to WORK to the end that all may have the same privilege."

Lansing Audubon Society flourished well into the 1940s, with monthly meetings and programs and, during the spring and fall bird migration seasons, frequent field trips, generally to local parks, farms and natural areas. A special highlight was an annual banquet, held in January. At the 1939 banquet, held at the Episcopal Guild Hall, attendees enjoyed a meal of baked ham, creamed potatoes, Jell-O salad, string beans, and apple pie with cheese while being treated to a series of wildlife films: "The How and Why of Bird Banding," "Tree-top Concert Singers," and "Bringing up a Bear Cub."

Our core activity is unchanged.



Lansing Audubon Society sputtered out for a time after the war and needed a rejuvenation. A revival took place in 1950 when **T. L. Ingersoll**, who had been president in the

early 1940s, gathered a group together on April 12 in Room 128 of the Natural Science Building on the campus of Michigan State College. Ingersoll was re-elected president and the club again began scheduling a regular series of programs and field trips.

Among the many men and women who helped Lansing Audubon Society thrive over the next two decades were **Dr. Miles Pirnie**, Director of Kellogg Bird Sanctuary; **Dr. George Wallace**, Professor at Michigan State College; **Dr. Charles (Ted) Black**, Director of Rose Lake Wildlife Area; and **Carl**

Haussman, a Lansing businessman. All served terms as president in the 1950s and 1960s. (It was Professor Wallace who won acclaim for his work in establishing a link between the pesticide DDT, which had been heavily sprayed on the Michigan State campus in the latter half of the 1950s, and the resultant death of robins.)

Carl Haussman, a member and benefactor for over 50 years, bequeathed his home and 68-acre property along the Grand River to the Michigan Audubon Society in 1997. Today it is open to the public as Capital City Bird Sanctuary and can be reached from Delta Township's Hawk Meadow Park on Delta River Drive.

By the mid-70s, 165 members were on board and they came from all across mid-Michigan. **Joan Brigham**, then chief naturalist at Fenner Arboretum, was president in 1974, when the membership voted unanimously to change the name of Lansing Audubon Society to Capital Area Audubon Society. The name change did not change the appetites of these birders, who continued to arrange four to five potlucks each year, indoors and out. They called them "Bohemians," a name of unknown derivation.

In the last quarter of the 20th century members of Capital Area Audubon Society (CAAS), in addition to their core activity of observing (and sometimes counting) birds both near and far, picked up litter from highways, made quilts to raffle for environmental causes, and established a Junior Audubon program for young people. Today its 140 members carry on by providing nature backpacks to area schools and scholarships to young birders for nature camps, and by looking after the Capital City Bird Sanctuary.

Eighty years is a good length of time for any relatively small volunteer organization to keep plugging away. The original objective has been reworded but the intent is the same: enjoy birds and nature, work to preserve them, and help others experience the same enjoyment and rewards.

Meetings are held monthly on the first Thursday of every month (except July and August) at Fenner Nature Center. Learn more at www.capitalareaaudubon.org.



Native Plants for Wildlife

Buttonbush is a well-rounded plant

by Ann Hancock

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) is an odd common name for a plant. Perhaps buttons were a different shape back when this name came into the vernacular. The flower heads of buttonbush are perfect little globes, more like little pompoms. But perhaps pompom bush was already in use for another species. In any case this is another instance of the Latin name revealing much more about the plant. *Cephalanthus*, the genus name, can be translated from the Greek root to mean "head-flower," which captures the flowering aspect of this shrub more precisely than button does. Did you know that buttonbush is in the coffee family (Rubiaceae)?



Image of buttonbush courtesy of: Natural Landscapes Nursery, www.naturallandscapesnursery.com/

This plant is a superb nectar source and highly attractive to pollinators. The individual flowers are white and said to have a strong, sweet and slightly musky scent. It is a host plant for the promethea silkworm and hydrangea sphinx moth, among other species. Passerines, as well as seven species of waterfowl (particularly wood ducks), eat the seeds, and hummingbirds also visit the flowers for the abundant nectar. And buttonbush's late bloom period (late July and August) provides food at a time when most woody plants are no longer in flower.

I have seen this plant many times in wetlands but have never ventured close enough to smell it since it was always growing in standing water. This brings us to another strength of this plant: it is highly tolerant of water and is most often found at the edges of ponds, rivers, and streams. It does not *require* standing water, so it can be grown in the garden but it absolutely will not tolerate dry soil. If you have a wildlife pond or a wet area on your property, this would be an ideal plant for the edge of the water.

Buttonbush is hardy in our zone and even into zone 4, but will sometimes freeze to the ground after a harsh winter. It will re-sprout from the roots so you should not worry if this happens to your plant. In fact, some gardeners will cut their plants back hard in the spring to keep them bushy and compact, knowing that flowering occurs on new growth.

Buttonbush can grow up to 15 feet high and wide if left unpruned, but 6-10 feet is the norm. Its leaves are opposite, or sometimes whorled, and are a pleasing dark green. There is no fall color to speak of but the seed heads are reddish and ornamental. A cultivar called 'Sputnik' with pinkish flowers exists for those willing to seek it out. Buttonbush is not widely sold outside of native plant nurseries and that's a shame because it attracts far more diverse species than the common (and invasively weedy) butterfly bush.

Michigan congressman honored for conservation efforts

In April, now retired Michigan Congressman John D. Dingell was made an Honorary Life Member of the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp to recognize his tireless work for conservation while serving in Congress for nearly 60 years.

Dingell's role in Congress and on the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) was noted for consistent vigilance and leadership in defense of wetlands, waterfowl, other birds and wildlife, and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Call Note	
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Lights extinguished to protect migratory birds

by *Debbie Wolf*

Cities across the country are turning out lights to help protect the many species of birds that migrate at night, often below 2000 feet. Guided partly by constellations, birds are often disoriented by bright lights left on overnight in urban areas, causing them to collide with buildings.

New York state is the latest to launch a Lights Out program to help minimize these bird collisions. In late April Governor Mario Cuomo directed all state-owned and -managed buildings to turn off their nonessential indoor and outdoor lighting during peak periods of bird migration in spring and fall. The program is modeled after one begun by New York City Audubon in 1997.

New York has also launched an I Love New York Birding website (www.iloveny.com/birding), an online resource to learn more about bird watching, birding destinations in the state, citizen science tools, what to do for injured birds, how to make gardens bird friendly, and how to participate in Lights Out New York.

Lights Out programs are catching on nationwide since their inception in Toronto in 1993. In Michigan, Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Jackson sponsor similar programs.

Through volunteer efforts, Lights Out programs also help to monitor which bird species are being injured or killed by flying into buildings, and assist injured birds when possible.

In addition to the obvious benefit to the birds, such programs help reduce light pollution and conserve resources.



Chicago Skyscrapers Go Dark for Migratory Birds
A Building Less Bright

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.

— Aldo Leopold

Are your windows bird safe?

Nearly everyone has experienced the sickening sound of that thud against a window only to discover a grounded bird nearby looking dazed and confused, or worse. It's estimated that up to a billion birds die from window collisions each year.

But there are measures you can take to help minimize this potential bird hazard at your own home.

The Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP), based in Toronto, has initiated some excellent reminders for homeowners looking for suggestions to make their windows bird safe. This particular project was premiered at The Cottage Life trade show in Toronto in March. And it was extremely well received by attendees.

View and download this informative brochure at the FLAP website:

http://www.flap.org/pdfs/FLAP_HomeOwnerBrochureE_2.pdf

Source: The Birding Community E-Bulletin, May 2015, editors Wayne R. Petersen and Paul J. Baicich. Archives available at <http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

New product for battling buckthorn

by *Debbie Wolf*

While scanning the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on a recent trip to the Twin Cities, I came across an article about a new way to battle this shrubby nuisance that plagues so many landowners. Untried by me, but I pass it along FYI.

Invented by a local father and son team, the Buckthorn Baggie is a heavy gauge black plastic bag that is placed over the buckthorn stump and secured with a zip tie. Starved of sunlight over the next 12 months, the shrub dies. No chemicals are used.

Ecologist Alex Roth of the Cottage Grove Parks and Recreation Department said the bags are a good idea, even though they many not work in every situation. "It's important to have multiple tools in your toolkit," he said.

The nonprofit Friends of the Mississippi River has been working with Roth and his department for over a year to clear buckthorn at River Oaks Scenic Overlook using the product. "It's an ecologically sensitive area with some native prairie, and we didn't want to use chemicals," he said.

"We're pretty happy with what we've seen out there so far," Roth said. "This is good with small infestations of buckthorn with relatively few stems, but it would be hard to apply on a big scale."

More information at www.buckthornbaggie.com. ■