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The Call Note

October 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

What is your birding personality?

I borrowed this question from a presentation by Alvaro Jaramillo at the recent Midwest Birding Symposium in Bay City (Sept. 10-13). Are you a Type A, competitive birder? Or are you more laid back and just enjoy looking at pretty, colorful things? There are many ways to enjoy birds, but the point of birding is to have fun!

I've heard many talks over the years with variations on this basic theme. But I find that I have responded rather differently at various moments of my life. As a new birder, I took it as encouragement that I could learn to identify actual birds someday. Other times, I've taken it as a challenge to push myself and improve my birding skills. It's also been a helpful reminder not to become complacent, thinking I know all about our "common" birds (because there's always so much more to discover). And yet at other moments, I've soaked in this message as a relief that I can just enjoy seeing birds without having to count them or even write down my list for the day.

Whatever drives you to bird — and it may well change from day to day and year to year — I hope you are able to experience the joy of birds this autumn. Let's have fun out there!

~ Barb Hosler

Final fall bird walk September 26

Experienced birder **Bob Kingsbury** will lead the final Fenner Saturday morning bird walk on Sept. 26. Meet in the parking lot at Fenner by 9:00 am to discover which fall migrants are stopping off.

October 1 meeting and program

Explore the great migration of Kenya

Avid birder and award-winning photographer **Jerry Jourdan** will present his very well received program entitled "Birding the Great Migration of Kenya" on **Thursday, October 1** at Fenner Nature Center.

Witness the Great Migration of zebra and wildebeest across the Masai Mara National Park of southwest Kenya, as well as scores of birds native to those prairie grasslands. Jerry's 45-minute slide show, set to African instrumental music, will take you on a fantastic journey.

Socializing and snacks begins at 7:00 pm, followed by a brief business meeting and the program at 7:30. Bring a friend!



Kenya Tourism, Masai Mara N.P. @tourismplaceinfo.com

Thank you to **Zsa Mahon** for arranging the ice cream social at our September meeting!

Mid-Michigan treated to exotic visitor

Birders from mid-Michigan and beyond descended on Clinton county's St. Johns area near US-127 during the last week of August as reports of a swallow-tailed kite lit up birding networks.



Elanoides forficatus (02) by Joe Nicholson

This medium-sized hawk is typically found from Florida and the coastal southeastern U.S. deep into South America. Found by Dave Cuthrell on August 23 in Clinton County, the bird was an almost unbelievable sighting for Michigan. In fact, it is the first such sighting recorded for Clinton county.



Closeup of swallow-tailed kite by Allison Miller

One observer, photographer Robert Bochenek, noted that "the STKI flew the gusty winds today like a sailor, making abrupt turns and swoops, and mesmerized the group of watching birders."



This graceful bird was chosen as the symbol for the Great Florida Birding Trail and adorns the project's highway signs around that state. These kites are typically seen throughout

Florida soaring overhead between March and August.

But Michigan...in August? Not nearly so often.

Burke Lake Banding Station closes for season on Oct. 15

If you have not visited the banding station yet, there's still time to do so this fall.

The station is located in Bath and encourages visitors to stop by during their hours of operation. Early mornings are the best time. For more specific information and the daily schedule, check their website before you go:

www.burkelakebanding.com.

The station closes for the season on October 15, so don't delay.



And more good news – facilities are now available! A portable toilet is now located in the parking area. It is open only when the station is open.

No excuse for not visiting now!

Did you know?...

The northern wheatear is a tundra nester and a lightweight but sturdy migrant.

A little three-quarter-ounce wheatear on Ellesmere Island crosses the North Atlantic nonstop in 20 hours, moves south

through Western Europe, then braves the vast desert region of North Africa to reach the subtropical grasslands in the fall. Some even go there directly, traveling 2200 miles straight across the Atlantic to Nigeria, the longest overwater migration of any songbird.

Wheatears that nest in northwestern Canada and Alaska also winter in African grasslands, but take a different route. Some travel more than 9000 miles across Siberia and the rest of Eurasia to arrive in eastern Africa. Young wheatears begin their epic journeys just a month or so after learning to fly!

Excerpted from "North of the Treeline" by Grainger Hunt, Living Bird Magazine, Summer 2015.

Birdwatchers send an average of 1.6 million observations per month to eBird. — Source: *The Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

Northern wheatear photo by Paul Hackett



Good reason to feed suet in the fall

Most warbler migration is from the end of August to early November. So don't be surprised if a warbler shows up at your suet feeder in the next few weeks. Migration can take a toll on birds and a quick high protein meal at a suet feeder helps fuel them.



Male pine warbler on suet

To choose a suet that attracts the widest variety of birds, the first ingredient should always be rendered beef fat. Some people feed straight suet only. If you want to offer more protein and flavor the next ingredient should usually be peanuts or tree nuts.

Avoid buying suet that contains milo, oats, wheat, processed grain by-products or artificial flavorings. These filler ingredients are used to make a cheaper cake but the birds have to pick around and pick out all this filler to reach a little suet.

If you have a problem with squirrels or other wildlife eating your suet, try adding some hot pepper to the rendered beef suet. The chemical in hot pepper doesn't harm but can produce a strong burning sensation in the mouth of squirrels. Most mammals find this unpleasant, but birds are unaffected by it.

Adapted from Wild Birds Unlimited online news, Sept. 10, 2015.

Boreal forest of North America quick facts:

- it contains 1.5 billion acres of conifer trees, more than 80 percent still intact
- it constitutes more than 25 percent of the world's remaining forest
- 12 percent of it is currently protected, 30 percent is slated for logging or energy development
- more than 325 bird species breed there (half the species found in the U.S. and Canada)

Source: Living Bird, Summer 2015

Project FeederWatch begins Nov. 17

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America.

FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

Anyone interested in birds can participate. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. Participants watch their feeders as much or as little as they want over two consecutive days as often as every week (less often is fine). They count birds that appear in their count site because of something that they provided (plantings, food, or water).

New participants are sent a [Research Kit](#) with complete instructions for participating, as well as a bird identification poster and more. You provide the feeder(s) and seed. Then each fall participants receive our 16-page, year-end report, [Winter Bird Highlights](#). Participants also receive the Cornell Lab newsletter.

There is a \$18 annual participation fee for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members). Canadians can participate by joining Bird Studies Canada for CAN\$35. The participation fee covers materials, staff support, web design, data analysis, and the year-end report (*Winter Bird Highlights*). Project FeederWatch is supported almost entirely by participation fees. Without the support of participants, this project wouldn't be possible.

Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

For more information and to sign up, go to www.feederwatch.org

Source: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Red-headed woodpecker (Wikipedia)

Saturday morning bird walks productive

by Debbie Wolf

Birders who have participated in the Saturday morning bird walks at Fenner in September have been rewarded with some good finds.

Leader **Bob Kingsbury** said the Sept 12 walk in particular yielded some impressive warbler totals with 11 species seen on the walk and 4 more added by him after the walk had ended. Warblers seen included:

American redstart
Nashville
Magnolia
Black-and-white
Blackburnian
Black-throated blue
Black-throated green
Canada
Chestnut-sided
Tennessee
Common yellowthroat
Golden-winged
Northern parula
Wilson's
Ovenbird



Newcomers Jan and Katie enjoying the Sept. 19 bird walk. Kirby Adams stands behind Katie.

The tally of bird species seen through September 19 totals 50 species, including an osprey circling overhead on Sept 12. Bob said that according to eBird that is a first for Fenner. Also spotted on the 12th were a scarlet tanager and brown thrasher. Bay-breasted and palm warblers were added on the 19th.

Beyond the birds, the prairie fields at Fenner are lovely this time of year as they progress into their full array of fall wildflowers. Spikes of browned mullein and grasses stand sentinel over two-toned butter-and-eggs, dependable brown-eyed Susan, and cheerful coreopsis. But the masses of spent wildflowers and fading foliage cannot fail to remind of shorter days ahead.



Fall wildflowers are another reason to visit Fenner in September.

Enjoy the delights of autumn by joining Bob for the final bird walk on Saturday, Sept 26.

Call Note

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