



capitalareaaudubon.org

The Call Note

December 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 Message

Countdown to Christmas ... bird counts

Although the retail stores would have you think that the holidays have been here since October, December is now finally upon us. And that can mean only one thing: Christmas Bird Count time!

Many of you may know the history behind this annual event. Started in 1900 by Frank Chapman, the bird count was an alternative to the old holiday tradition of the "side hunt" in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds during the day.

That first Christmas bird count consisted of 27 intrepid birders. Last year 72,653 people participated. This is truly a testament to the impact that a handful of dedicated conservationists can have.



Today, we have well-regulated hunting seasons, which are important wildlife management tools, and the days of wanton shooting are behind us. But the tradition of counting birds at Christmastime — now defined as a three-week period from mid-

December to early January — remains.

This year's CBC in Ingham county will be on December 19, and in Eaton county on Jan. 2. We always welcome new volunteers. If you've never participated in a Christmas bird count, consider making it a new seasonal tradition for yourself. Details are here in the *Call Note*.

Happy 116th Christmas Bird Count, Auduboners!
Barb Hosler

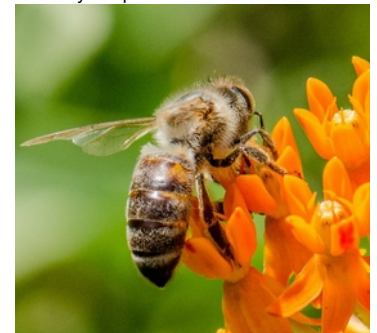
December 3 meeting & program

Pollinators in peril

On Thursday, December 3 **Meghan Milbrath** of MSU will give us a primer on Michigan pollinators, including the latest efforts to solve many of the issues currently facing the state's pollinator populations.

Honeybee photo ©Tom Conner

There is a lot at stake. Michigan is fifth in the nation in honey production, annually producing about 5 million pounds valued at more than \$7 million. In addition, more than a billion dollars of Michigan agricultural products — including apples, blueberries, cucumbers and cherries — are dependent on bees for pollination.



National efforts are underway to stem the tide of honeybee losses and protect our pollinators from further decline. The Michigan Pollinator Initiative, spearheaded by MSU, is part of a nationwide strategy for recovery of managed and wild pollinator species.

You won't want to miss this timely and important discussion. Snacks and social time begin at 7:00 p.m.; brief meeting and program follow at 7:30 at Fenner.

Thank you!

Many thanks to November snack-bringers **Connie Page** and **Leslie Charles**. It was standing room only for Dr. Jennifer Moore's wonderful presentation on the massasauga rattlesnake but there were plenty of treats to go around ... and they were delicious.

Get ready for our 69th East Lansing CBC

by Tom Wheeker

On Saturday, **December 19, 2015**, the Capital Area Audubon Society will sponsor its 69th consecutive Christmas Bird Count. We need all the eyes that we can get out into the field. So plan to participate and bring your relatives, your friends, and even your casual acquaintances.

Participation is open to people of all skill levels. Anyone who wants to help is welcome. You do not have to be a member of Capital Area Audubon.

The count circle is divided into different areas (1-11), each with its own leader. An enlarged map of the areas can be found on the CAAS website, specifically at <http://capitalareaaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/mapdoc.jpg>

Rough boundaries of the count circle are Round Lake Rd to the north, Creyts Rd to the west, Willoughby Rd to the south, and halfway between Meridian and Williamston roads to the east.

A list of Area Leaders is below. Pick an area and give the leader a call. If you can't access the map, if you can't decide, or if you just want to help where it's needed most, call **Tom Wheeker** at 517-628-3843.

This is one of the oldest Christmas Counts in Michigan. Let's keep it going.

AREA 1 **Ed Merz**: 517-230-7527
AREA 2 **Tom Wheeker**: 517-628-3843
AREA 3 **Barb Hosler**: 517- 281-6595
AREA 4 **Tom Conner**: 517-339-2704
AREA 5 **Ron Eggleston**: 517-394-1372
AREA 6 **John Baumgartner**: 517-627-5211
AREA 7 **Jim McGrath**: 517-655-5349
AREA 8 **Jerry Lisiecki**: 517-231-0935
AREA 9 **Clara Bratton**: 517-339-0271
AREA 10 **Lee and Roger Laylin**: 517-349-3249
AREA 11 **JB McCombs**: 517-641-8049

Lee and Roger Laylin will open their home once again this year and host a post-count supper. All participants are welcome. Lee and Roger live at 1770 Sandhill Rd in Okemos, off Okemos Road south of I-96. Food at 6:00 p.m. and numbers at 7:00.

Eaton Rapids CBC set for Jan. 2

by Tom Wheeker

The Eaton Rapids Christmas Bird Count is relatively new. It was started a few years ago by **Mike Sanders** as a "Michigan only" count. Eventually, after seeing that there was a sufficient level of participation, Mike did the heavy lifting of turning the count into a

(cont. from previous column)

"national" count, where the results are reported to the National Audubon Society.

The Eaton Rapids count circle actually bumps up to the East Lansing circle. It includes the cities of Eaton Rapids and Dimondale, as well as the State Secondary Complex and large portions of both Eaton and Ingham counties. The center of the circle is Canal Rd. and Columbia Rd. There is a lot more farmland and open areas than in the East Lansing count circle, which means that there is the potential for a different species mix.

There is plenty of room for more counters, so come on board. The 2015 Eaton Rapids count will be conducted on Saturday, January 2, 2016. Anyone who wants to participate is welcome. Contact **Tom Wheeker** at 517-628-3843.

CAAS scholarships available in 2016 to young birders

In keeping with the goals of Audubon and of our local chapter, CAAS is making scholarship money available to candidates who seek to further their knowledge of the natural world through birding camps or formal study programs.

Candidates will need to fill out a simple application form that will be submitted for review and evaluation by the CAAS board, who will award scholarship dollars based on a number of weighted factors.



Preference will be given to students who are CAAS members. The maximum scholarship awarded to a single recipient will be \$250. A determination will be made by February and funds disbursed for 2016 study programs.

Potential applicants should contact **Barb Hosler** or another board member for further details and an application form.

Another use for mealworms

Many birds devour mealworms, but did you know that mealworms can devour Styrofoam?

Mealworms, the larvae of darkling beetles, can apparently subsist on a diet of foamed polystyrene (Styrofoam) with no ill effects to their system, thanks to special bacteria in their guts. This discovery resulted from collaborative research studies at Stanford University in California and Beihang University in Beijing, China, which were published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology.

Researchers hope this discovery can help alleviate the global plastic pollution problem. Americans alone throw away 15 billion plastic foam cups yearly, cups that takethousands of years to decompose.

CAAS 2015-16 membership roster

Thank you to the following members who have renewed their CAAS membership for the current year (Sept 2015 – Aug 2016):

Alderman, Tom
 Allen, Jane
 Baltzer, Betty
 Belyea, Maryanne & Glenn
 Beiler, Stacey & Tom
 Bjornson, Vee
 Bratton, Clara
 Boyce, Nancy & Mike
 Brown/Sonea, Chris/Ioana
 Burgis, Kathy
 Caterina, Martha & Michael
 Charles, Leslie
 Cheney, Peggy
 Christopherson, Deborah
 Chung, Jenny
 Clark, Susan
 Cohen, Bruce
 Curry, Georgia
 Davis, Susan
 Debar, Sharon
 Deventer, Patricia
 Eggleston, Ron
 Febba, Liz & Sam
 Fox, Dan
 Gallick, Harry
 Hammond, Nancy
 Hancock, Ann & Jim
 Harvey, Joanne & Ken
 Hayes, Daniel
 Hewitt, Jim
 Hosler, Barb
 Howe/Ording, Chris/Mary
 Houston, Eileen
 Less, Sharon & Dave
 Lisiecki, Jerry
 Jolin, Norm
 Kacos, Jeff
 Kendall, Susan
 Kingsbury, Bob

Macdowell, Mary
 Mahon, Zsa
 Martineau, Cindi & Joseph
 Marvin, David
 McCallum, Gary
 McCombs/Menzel, J.B./Grace
 McWhirter, Marianne & Doug
 Murphy, Peggy
 Nott, Sherrill & Judy
 Olson, Jennifer
 Plotkin/Schuur, Jacob/Susan
 Steve Sage
 Saheli, Joan & Habib
 Schmidt, Barbara
 Skriba, Dennis
 Smith/Benedict, Horace/Deborah
 Thornbury, Barb
 Tropp, Carolyn
 Turner, Don & Lyn
 Walker, Bruce
 Weaver, Betty & Harold
 Wheeler, Tom
 Witcombe/Marion, Alexia & Parks
 Wolf, Debra & Roger

If your name is incorrectly absent from this list, please email **Cindi Martineau** right away at cindimartineau@gmail.com (or phone 887-9342). If you intended to renew your membership, but forgot, please let us hear from you soon. Every member counts. Thank you!

Annual membership Dues (tax deductible)

Individual	\$15
Family	20
Contributing	30
Sustaining	50
Donor	100 or more



Mailing address

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 Lansing MI 48909-2206

Magee Marsh boardwalk repairs still needed

Birders familiar with well-known Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in northwestern Ohio know that the very core of its famous “boardwalk,” extending over 3,000 feet through the site’s moist woodland in an area which is a veritable migrant magnet on the edge of Lake Erie. Without the boardwalk there would be no easy access to the migrant-loving woodlot.



A fundraising campaign to repair large parts of the boardwalk is ongoing. The third phase of the effort was completed last summer. The original assessment for the boardwalk repair,

however, was made in February 2014 when the site was piled with snow. The original cost estimate was off, and a serious recalculation was recently made. The remaining 60 percent of the boardwalk still needs renovation, thus adding an additional \$294,000 to the original estimate.

This “phase-four” campaign is now under way. You can find more details here, including ways to help with access at this vital birding site:

<http://www.friendsofmageemarsh.org/renovarian.php> and here <http://www.friendsofmageemarsh.org/bwupdate.php>

Text reprinted with permission from Birding Community E-bulletin, Nov 2015, Wayne R. Petersen and Paul J. Baicich, eds. Archives at <http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

Door County wetlands now globally significant

The Door Peninsula Coastal Wetlands in northeastern Wisconsin, with its 11,440 acres of pristine sedge meadows, lowland forests, marshes, groundwater springs, and fens has been designated globally significant for protection under an international treaty. The Nature Conservancy applied for the designation under the Ramsar Convention. It is one of only 37 such sites in the U.S. to receive this designation.

The site occupies a major section of the eastern Lake Michigan shoreline of northern Door County. It encompasses public and private properties in the towns of Liberty Grove, Baileys Harbor, and Gibraltar and includes more than 22 miles of protected Lake Michigan shoreline.

More than 150 species of birds use the wetlands for nesting or as a migratory stopover point. Twenty-three species of warblers are known to use the site. It contains the largest known population of the endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly, as well as a significant population of the rare dwarf lake iris.

Compiled from various news sources.

Endangered golden-cheeked warbler's status threatened

A tiny songbird is messing with Texas.

In the U.S. the golden-cheeked warbler breeds and raises its young in *only* 33 counties along Texas Hill Country in central-south Texas. They come to Texas in March to nest and raise their young, and leave at the end of August to winter in Mexico and Central America. The bird is famous for creating its nests from mature junipers and nesting in junipers and oaks. But it is not the only one who wants to build in this commercially valuable area.

Photo courtesy of USFWS via Wikipedia



An influential coalition in Texas is attempting to persuade the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to delist the warbler, which has been listed as endangered

since 1990. They maintain that the protections are based on inadequate and inaccurate data and no longer necessary. Recent USFWS studies have shown the bird is still in jeopardy due to habitat loss.

Time will tell which side will prevail in this ongoing dispute.

Crane counts at Haehnle

Two premier Sandhill crane viewing sites in mid-Michigan are Baker Sanctuary in Calhoun county and Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary in Jackson county.

At Haehnle, volunteers from the Jackson Audubon Society are on hand weekends in October and November to assist birders with crane viewing, and on Mondays they count cranes. Here are crane count totals thus far. Find more detail at their website

www.haehnellesanctuary.org/cranecountcurrent.html.

Nov 16	-1839	Oct 12	- 555
Nov 09	-1450	Oct 05	- 162
Nov 02	- 1615	Sep 27	- 88
Oct 25	- 2516	Sep 20	- 68
Oct 19	- 1707		

Redpolls on the move

A bird report from Louis Bevier in Fairfield, Maine on October 27 shows a lot of redpolls on the move:

Quebec's Tadoussac Bird Observatory (Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac) reported on Oct 26 that a record number of redpolls flew over their observation point: 15,790 redpolls in 7 hours. Tadoussac is only 50+ miles (83 km) north of the northern tip of Maine.

More recent reports on November 19 describe hundreds of redpolls in northern Maine.

We can only hope that a similar movement finds its way into Michigan.

(Submitted by Ann Hancock, who doubles as our roving reporter in Maine.)

Call Note

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Editors: Ann Hancock & Debbie Wolf

2015-16 CAAS Officers

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Cindi Martineau	517-887-9342
Susan Schuur	517-351-5272
Doug McWhirter	517-646-8151
Debbie Wolf	517-974-4852

Native Plants

Blueberries: not just for wildlife

by Ann Hancock



Michigan is a great state for blueberries and their allies! MichFlora lists 11 species of native blueberries and related species, which are found in a wide variety of habitats

throughout most of the state. Doubtless many of you have found some of these during your birding and camping trips. Few pleasures in life are as sweet as sitting in a blueberry patch and eating fruit warmed by the sun. The genus *Vaccinium* includes cranberries, bilberries, lingonberries, and cowberries as well as blueberries. In this article we'll discuss only highbush and lowbush blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum* and *V. angustifolium*), the two most widely distributed species. Both of these can be found growing wild in Ingham County.

I've been a bit hesitant to write about blueberries, fearing accusations of favoritism. However, this is groundless fear for the genus *Vaccinium* is a favored and valuable plant for Lepidoptera. The two species in this article are also extremely valuable agricultural crops here and in several other states. Highbush blueberries produced in Michigan bring in well over \$100 million annually to our state, and are also an important crop in New Jersey, Florida, Georgia and Oregon. Growers worldwide are now planting blueberries, trying to capitalize on the almost insatiable market demand for this tasty, healthful fruit. Lowbush blueberries, the species Maine is most famous for, are not planted commercially but harvested from wild stands. There are vast tracts of land with very sandy and impoverished soil where lowbush blueberries stretch to the horizon. These are the "blueberry barrens" of Maine. Growers here often burn the barrens on a rotating basis to control weeds and release nutrients. On sites that are not too rocky, they may use mowers to manage the plants.

But we are most concerned about the wildlife that blueberries support and their value in our landscape. *Vaccinium* ranks number 7 out of 20 genera of woody plants listed in Tallamy's *Bringing Nature Home* (2007) for support of lepidopterans, and there are doubtless many other yet undiscovered insects that feed upon them. The butterflies and moths that use them as host plants include the well known spring azure, huckleberry sphinx, major datana, saddleback caterpillar moth, Henry's elfin, brown elfin, and striped hairstreak. In addition, bees and pollinators of all kinds love blueberries, so they are very valuable pollinator plants. As if this were not enough, birds and mammals, including humans, love to eat blueberries. A blueberry bush loaded with fruit will not remain so for long!



Blueberry foliage is a standout in fall. Photo ©Ann Hancock

Both highbush and lowbush blueberries make outstanding landscape plants. Full sun is best for both species, as shade will reduce the amount of fruit produced. Their winter aspect is dense and twiggy; highbush blueberries are generally rounded in outline. Lowbush blueberries don't grow tall enough to have a "shape." The flowers are white to pale pink and borne in large numbers. The fall color of these species is their most outstanding characteristic. Both highbush and lowbush turn an amazing shade of red. I wonder why in the world anybody plants burning bush?! The answer is of course that burning bush will grow absolutely anywhere.

Which brings me to the cultural requirements for growing blueberries. The most basic requirement is acid soil; without low pH they will struggle and become stunted, with leaves turning a washed-out yellow color. In mid-Michigan our soil pH tends to be high, as does the pH of our well water. Rather than amending all your soil, it is far easier to create a special bed, or pocket beds, that will provide the required acidity. When planting it is also important to gently open the root ball when you pop the bush out of the nursery pot. Make sure the roots are spread out well in the planting hole. Do not add manure or compost to the backfill in the hole, as the pH of these materials is generally higher than 5.5. Peat moss is the single best amendment. You might also throw a couple inches of light mulch, such as straw or loose leaves — not lawn clippings) over the soil around the plants each year. For more detailed information on blueberries, consult the MSU Extension service website: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/pages/search_results?query=blueberry.

Valuable pollen and nectar for pollinators, fruit that attracts a wide variety of birds and wildlife, host plants for 288 species of butterflies and moths, and fall color that is second to none – who could ask for more? Blueberries may be the perfect plant for both wildlife and people. Plant blueberries, but be sure to plant enough so you'll have some for your breakfast cereal!