



capitalareaaudubon.org

The Call Note

May 2016

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

Enjoy the beauty of spring migration

Spring migration—that glorious, all too fleeting time of year—is upon us!

Yellow-rumped warbler (Wikipedia)



I remember being a little overwhelmed as a beginning birder, with trying to learn all the warbler species that were moving through in a rather short period of

time. And that was just trying to recognize them by sight, to say nothing of sound. Indeed, I still need to re-learn some of those warbler songs every spring, except I now do this by listening to bird song recordings on my smartphone instead of the cassette tapes I originally used.

Although the birding technology has evolved over the years, what hasn't changed is the joy of being outside on a cool, damp spring morning with tiny warblers dazzling overhead and bird song filling the air.

The Capital Area Audubon spring walks at Fenner Nature Center will continue every Saturday morning through May 21. (Remember that they shift to 8:00 a.m. in May.) [See related story page 2]

These walks are a great way to take advantage of birding with multiple sets of eyes and ears to help find and learn our spring migrants. I hope everyone is able to enjoy the wonders of spring migration!

Good birding,
Barb Hosler

May 5 meeting & program

How well do you know Fenner's story?

We meet every month in the basement of Fenner Nature Center, but how much do you *really* know about Fenner? For instance, did you know that Fenner once had its own prairie dog town and a bison named Elvis?

How exactly did Fenner Arboretum, as it was once known, come to be the place we know today? What was it like in its early days, what's going on now, and what's its future?

Ron Eggleston



Learn more by joining us on Thursday, **May 5** when our own **Ron Eggleston** shares the story of Fenner Nature Center, and how and why its support group has evolved into today's Fenner Conservancy.

Note: This program was originally presented in January 2015, but was attended by only a handful of folks due to a winter storm. Don't miss it a second time!

Snacks at 7 p.m., meeting/program at 7:30.

Thank you to **Madeline Mertz** for the delicious cookies at the April meeting.

More bird walks on Sundays in May

In addition to our Saturday morning bird walks, the Capital City Bird Sanctuary will host a bird walk each Sunday morning in May. Details on page 4.

April 9 bird walk chilly but satisfying

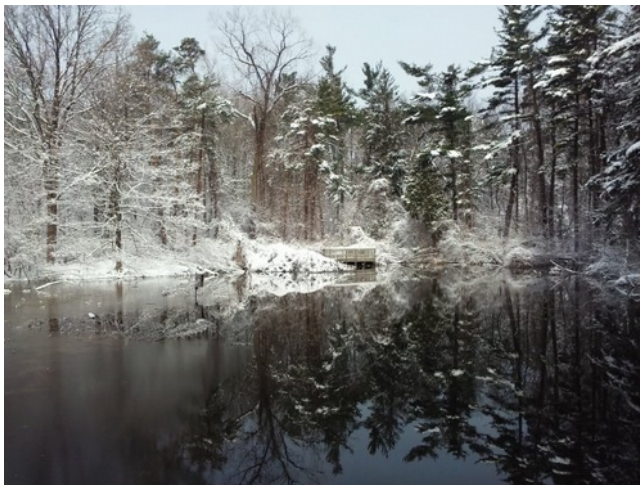
The weather was more reminiscent of Christmas Bird Count conditions than an April morning bird walk. But despite 4 inches of new snow and brisk temps, four birders scoured Fenner most of the morning in search of hardy spring migrants.



Bob Kingsbury led three bundled-up birders on snow-covered trails through a varying mix of snow showers, wind, blue skies, and sun to discover what they could.

Nearly 30 bird species were observed, including several yellow-bellied sapsuckers, Lincoln's and white-throated sparrows, a hermit

thrush, Eastern bluebirds, and a few golden-crowned kinglets. Definitely worth a trudge in the snow.



A thin layer of ice (left) covers half the woodland pond at Fenner on April 9 (photo by D. Wolf)

Meet the candidates for CAAS Board

There will be three open positions on the Board of Directors come June and, happily, we have three candidates who are running:

Eileen Houston is completing her first term on the Board and will seek a second term. Eileen is a former music teacher and avid nature photographer. She is actively involved in hospitality and publicity for CAAS.

Ed Merz is a past vice president of the CAAS Board and a member for over 25 years. He's an avid birder,

Spring weather favors the April 16 bird walk

What a difference a week makes!

Birders were more abundant, but not necessarily birds, as **Bob Kingsbury** led about a dozen birders through Fenner trails searching for elusive spring migrants. Still, the absence of snow and cold weather was a decidedly welcome change from the previous week.

Many of the same species seen the previous week were still present on this pleasant spring morning, with many more hermit thrushes in evidence. The sweet song of the white-throated sparrow was heard often, one of the pure delights of April in mid-Michigan.



And in the absence of snow, spring flowers could once again make their appearance. This bright blue flower (left), dotted a portion of one of the woodland trails. It was later identified as a *Scilla sibirica* (thanks, Ann), a non-native bulb, but very eye-catching against the dun leaf litter. (photo by D. Wolf)



The same shot with a more springtime look on April 16 (photo by D. Wolf)

hiker, kayaker and former wildlife biologist for the state of Wisconsin.

Michael Caterino is a retired computer programmer who is rediscovering his early love of nature in retirement. He is fairly new to CAAS and would like to become more involved.

The term of office for each is 2016-2019. Elections will take place at our June 2 meeting. It is folks like these who keep our club going. Many thanks to each of you.

Weekday nature walks continue in May

Looking for an opportunity to get out and enjoy spring? Try a weekday spring nature walk at local natural areas led by **Jim Hewitt**. Dates/times/places are:

- ◆ **Wednesday, May 4 at Rose Lake State Wildlife Area.** Meet in the parking lot on Peacock Rd. between Stoll Rd. and Clark Rd. across from the shooting range at **9:00 a.m.**
- ◆ **Friday, May 13 at Sanford Natural Area, MSU.** Meet in the parking circle between McDonel and Owen halls on East Shaw Lane at **9:00 a.m.**



Bloodroot in bloom at Legg Park on April 22 (photo by D. Wolf)

If you are reading this before **Friday, April 29**, the walk on that date is at Lansing's **Scott Woods Park**. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the south end of Clifton St., adjacent to the park. ►

Message from NAMC Ingham county coordinator

The North American Migration Count (NAMC) is fast approaching – **Saturday, May 14**, to be exact. For those of you that have counted in the past, please continue to do so. Many of you have particular areas that you have covered for many years. I am hoping you will do so again this year.

A few birders have contacted me with areas they are counting. Areas covered so far include: Fox-Davis Natural Area, Lake Lansing/Abbot Road Park, and Dansville SGA. If you want to count an area and don't know where to go, please contact me and I can point you in the right direction. The more counters the better.

Whoever leads the Saturday morning bird walk at Fenner Nature Center should submit that count to me too.

Please turn in count information as soon as possible, as I have to compile and send the information to the state compiler.

If you eBird, you can send me a link to your information via email. Thank you and good birding!

Jeff Pavlik
michbirds@yahoo.com
517.449.9662



Jim Hewitt (second from left) talks about the blossoming serviceberry tree at Legg Park on the April 22 nature walk (photo by D. Wolf)

These walks are open to everyone and focus on birds, flora, and herps (amphibians and reptiles). Bring binoculars and dress for the weather.

DNR offers tour of Shiawassee River SGA May 14

As if bird walks, migratory counts, and plant sales (Wild Ones) weren't enough to choose from, here's yet another option.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources invites wildlife watchers to celebrate spring and explore Michigan's Wetland Wonders with a birding tour at Shiawassee River State Game Area on **May 14 at 9 a.m.**

This tour was postponed from the original April 16 date because of widespread flooding and poor road conditions on the game area.

Tour will meet at the area's headquarters building. Please dress for the weather and bring binoculars. Spotting scopes also are helpful for long-range viewing. The ground may be quite muddy and wet, so plan on wearing boots. For further questions about this tour call 989-865-6211.

This birding tour is part of the Michigan Waterfowl Legacy, a 10-year cooperative partnership to restore, conserve, and celebrate Michigan's waterfowl, wetland, and waterfowl hunting community. The initiative is a "call to action" to honor yesterday, engage in today, and build for tomorrow.

To learn more about Michigan's Wetland Wonders, visit www.mi.gov/wetlandwonders.

Editor's note: Depending on conditions, this tour may include a "sneak peek" driving tour into refuge areas that are normally closed.

Capital City Bird Sanctuary events welcomes spring

Want to get better acquainted with the local Audubon bird sanctuary?

Capital City Bird Sanctuary (CCBS) is a new public nature sanctuary that protects 65 acres of forest, meadow, and riverside habitats right here in Lansing. Nearly 2 miles of unpaved trails offer visitors a chance to get close to nature and observe birds, flowers, and wildlife.

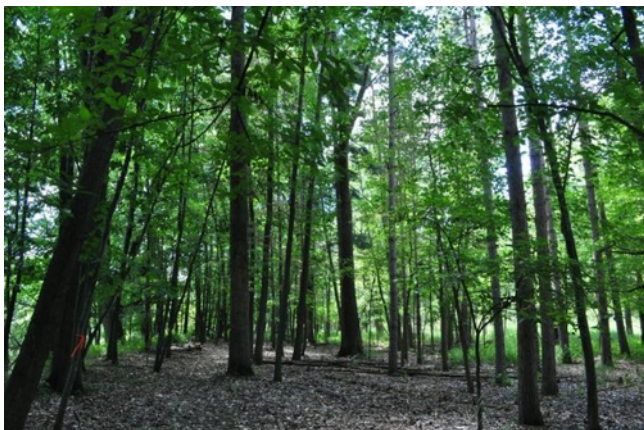
Events to welcome spring include an open house, Sunday bird walks, and old-fashioned garlic mustard pulls.

Open house. Michigan Audubon Society and Delta Township Parks & Recreation will host a spring open house on **Saturday, May 7 from 9 a.m. to noon**, which features a variety of nature walks and activities.

This family-friendly event includes activities for adults and children to learn about birds, plants, and frogs that can be found in your own backyard. The event will also feature info on Michigan Audubon volunteer opportunities, and helpful demonstrations on how to create native habitat and care for bird nest boxes.

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

Spring migration bird walks. Join local birder **Marc North** for free **Sunday morning** bird walks at Capital City Bird Sanctuary (CCBS) during May. **Time: 8–10 a.m.** Walks are open to all experience levels.



Floodplain forest at Capital City Bird Sanctuary (MAS photo)

Located on the banks of the Grand River, CCBS is a magnet for migrating warblers and other songbirds. Marc will show you the best spots to find migrants and teach you how to identify birds by sight and sound. Please bring binoculars. (cont. next column)

Garlic mustard pulls. Each Wednesday 9 a.m.--

noon. Invasive garlic mustard is an aggressive plant that pushes out native flora and provides little habitat for birds. Help protect the sanctuary by removing invasive garlic mustard and encouraging native habitats to thrive. Please come prepared for outdoor work: long pants, long sleeves, close-toed shoes, and a hat. Bring work gloves, water, a snack, insect repellent, and sunscreen, although we will have extras on hand. These events are weather dependent.

Directions: Capital City Bird Sanctuary at Hawk Valley Farm is located northwest of downtown Lansing, on Delta River Drive. Parking is available at Hawk Meadow Park, 6160 Delta River Drive. The sanctuary entrance is south of the Hawk Meadow Park parking area, marked by a wooden kiosk.

Delay pruning your oak trees

If you have an oak tree that needs pruning, experts advise you to procrastinate. Pruning from now through July 15 could foster the spread of deadly oak wilt among oak trees.

Also avoid climbing oaks while wearing spikes, nailing signs on oak trees, or otherwise penetrating the bark.

During the next few months, beetles moving between trees that have died of the fungus can carry spores to healthy trees. Wounds left by pruning are prime spots for infection.

The fungus affects mainly the red oak family, including northern red oak, black oak, and pin oak. Trees can die within a few weeks of being infected. White oaks are more resistant, but also can be affected.



Photo shows afflicted oak. (Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org)

It is also important not to move oak firewood from place to place during the infection season. Oaks that have died of wilt and are being used as firewood can move spores wherever they are carried. Once bark loosens on firewood, the disease can no longer be spread.

If you do prune or injure a tree during this time, cover the wound immediately with tree-wound paint or latex paint to keep beetles away. Learn more about oak wilt and other forest health issues in Michigan at www.michigan.gov/foresthealth.

Invasive plants – America's most unwanted

Chapter 3: Autumn olive offers little substance for wildlife

by Ann Hancock

Like so many of its invasive brethren, autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) was invited to the United States, propagated, and planted widely. It was touted as a handy solution for stabilizing soil along road banks, in mine reclamation, as a windbreak, as an ornamental, and also as a game bird food source.

Indeed, it succeeded beyond the introducer's wildest dreams; in many parts of the country autumn olive now exists as a monoculture, having taken over entire fields. When this happens, local bird diversity and numbers drop because of the exclusion of native plants that furnish insect food for birds. This makes it a five-star candidate for America's Most Unwanted list.

Let's examine why autumn olive is such a successful competitor. Its drought tolerance and adaptability to a wide range of soils give it distinct advantage in the landscape. This shrub develops a massive root system which does an outstanding job of stabilizing soil and holding it in place. However, these dense roots make it very difficult to remove mechanically. The shrub forms a dense spiky mound (more on this below) that not only functions very well as a windbreak but also is very unpleasant to walk through. Since no native insects feed on its leaves, its vegetative growth is unchecked and it offers no larval food for native birds.

Its other use for soil reclamation (for mine tailings, etc.) is accomplished by its roots' ability to fix nitrogen in symbiosis with the bacteria *Frankia*. The plant fixes nitrogen to such an extent that it can alter local soil chemistry. If not already excluded by the massive root system and dense shading of autumn olive, desirable native plants often cannot tolerate the overly nitrogen-rich soil created in the root zone. This is a double whammy for natives.



Elaeagnus umbellata

Autumn olive is indeed a striking ornamental plant if you can turn a blind eye to its thuggish tendencies. The alternate, ovate leaves are a deep green above with shimmering silver-white scales below. The flowers are yellowish white and are amazingly fragrant though, as with paperwhites, some people find their fragrance overpowering.

Each flower produces a berry that when ripe turns a deep red color and is spangled with silvery-gold scales. Regrettably, these berries are borne in incredible profusion which of course leads to further spread of the plant.

Autumn olive grows to be a large shrub or small tree, up to 20 feet high, with an almost equal spread. The bark is a smooth pale gray to tan in color. The twigs sport many short, pointed spurs, making it a thorny shrub; when they grow close together they form an impenetrable barrier, as mentioned previously. As with other alien plants, they are not eaten by any native insects, although Japanese beetles (another invasive species) love the fruit, as do birds.

This leads us to another reason the plant was introduced: as a wildlife/game bird food source. Ironically, the berries are a nutritionally poor food for birds, a source of empty calories. Migrating birds need fat and protein to fuel them for their journey, not the equivalent of a Snickers bar.



Unfortunately the birds' fondness for the berries leads to even further spread of autumn olive. I can certainly vouch first-hand for the berries' attractiveness to birds. One morning while driving past a large autumn olive shrub on our road in Maine, I caught a movement out of the corner of my eye. I slowed the car, and counted *five* ruffed grouse feeding on the berries. I've also observed a wide variety of other fruit-loving birds feasting on them as well. This is actually a serious concern along highways where autumn olive was planted as a screen. Birds attracted to the fruit and flying back and forth across the road are often hit and killed by fast-moving cars.

If you are stuck with nearby autumn olives that you are not allowed to cut or remove, you can at least eat the fruit. Autumn olive fruit is edible and makes fine tarts, pies, jams and fruit leathers.

At one Scarborough Land trust meeting 3 years ago our summer intern served us a delicious tart made of the fruit, which she said she was able to pick in 10 minutes. I found the flavor to be like raspberries, though slightly more astringent. Each fruit has one seed. These are easily removed with a food mill though locavore blogs claim that the seeds are tasty and easily eaten. (These are men and women with much younger and/or stronger teeth than mine.) The berries of autumn olives are said to contain 15 times more lycopene than tomatoes. Lycopene is claimed to be a nutraceutical that fights prostate cancer.

(See *Autumn Olive Jam recipe* on page 7)

Editor's note: Here's a personal testimony to the difficulty of eradicating invasive plant species from a natural area.

Removing invasive plant species one arduous task

Re-emergence of native species the ultimate goal

by Sam Febba

I have been a volunteer at The Nature Conservancy's Ives Road Fen Preserve since the fall of 1999. In that time I have learned that at least some invasive species can be brought under control. It is not easy, or without a learning curve.

Ives is located just south of Tecumseh, Mich., and consists of about 120 acres of prairie fen, 300 acres of floodplain forest along the River Raisin, and 280 acres of upland forest, former gravel pits, farmland and restored prairie. When I started, the focus of volunteer activities was removal of glossy buckthorn from the prairie fen, an endangered ecosystem in Michigan. At that time the majority of the fen was covered in buckthorn, some of it up to 20 years old, with stems ranging from pencil size to 6 inches in diameter. Removal required, and still requires, cutting it within about 6 inches of the ground, piling the cut plant on a brush pile for later burning and treating the stem with an appropriate solution of glyphosate. The most common brand of glyphosate is Roundup, but since that is not approved for use in wetlands we use another brand that is approved.

In 1999 there was a group of up to ten volunteers who worked one or two Saturdays each month June through October. One to two acres were being cleared each year. There was so much buckthorn that needed to be cut that I felt I was part of an exercise in futility and that we would never be able to remove it faster than it would grow back. Fortunately, about that time The Nature Conservancy (TNC) secured some grants that enabled the hiring of seasonal workers who were young and working 4-5 days each week for up to 6 months. Then in 2003 one of our volunteers, Chuck Pearson, retired and moved to Adrian just so he could work at the fen more regularly. Chuck recruited more volunteers and got us on a schedule of working every Saturday, June through November 15. Finally, in November 2010, we cut the last mature buckthorn on TNC preserve property. That really gave us a feeling of accomplishment.

This is not to say that we are done dealing with buckthorn. A tremendous buckthorn seed bank remains buried in the soil. Within the first couple of years after removal of mature buckthorn, the exposed soil can become carpeted with buckthorn seedlings. Chuck patrols and sprays these with herbicide. Eventually the seed bank of native species sprouts



Volunteers (Sam is third from left) on a workday at Ives Road Fen (photo courtesy Chuck Pearson)

and begins to crowd out these young invasives. It also helps that the fen periodically is subjected to a controlled burn, which will kill young woody invasives if done before they are well established. Some neighboring property owners have buckthorn on sections of the fen they own and have "graciously" allowed us to remove them. We expect to finish that work this year.

You may wonder why we don't start cutting buckthorn until June. In the spring when the sap is rising, it is possible that the herbicide will not be absorbed into the roots, which increases the chance that the stump will resprout. That is the reason we must use herbicides. Almost all woody invasives will resprout from their stumps, similar to the way box elder does.

Not being able to cut buckthorn in April and May actually works to our advantage because during those months we are pulling garlic mustard, another invasive plant. Once garlic mustard goes to seed in June, handling the plants will do more harm than good. When you first look at a well established plot of garlic mustard the task of removing it seems overwhelming. We have found that by going over the same ground more than once each season and then working it again in following seasons, garlic mustard can be brought under control in about 4 years. At Ives there are now swaths of spring ephemerals growing where there was once a seeming monoculture of garlic mustard. None of the natives were planted; they emerged from the seed bank that garlic mustard had been suppressing.

Having removed all the adult glossy buckthorn from the fen was not the end of woody invasives. In addition to cutting buckthorn on our neighbors' properties, we have been working on the upland areas to remove honeysuckle, privet, burning bush, autumn olive, multiflora rose and common buckthorn. All of those areas require continued monitoring to eliminate resprouts and seedlings. One of the most frustrating things about all of this is that in less enlightened times, many of these invasive species were (see *Invasives on page 7*)

Invasives (cont. from page 6)

intentionally planted in large numbers as a source of food and shelter for wildlife, especially autumn olive and honeysuckle. Some of those had been growing long enough to have trunks up to 12 inches in diameter.

Grass of Parnassus (Parnassia glauca) found at Ives Road Fen is a conservationally important native species (photo Chuck Pearson)



For the last three years I have also been working closer to home. **Capital City Bird Sanctuary** (CCBS) in Delta Township also has plantings of

autumn olive, honeysuckle and multiflora rose, plus an infestation of garlic mustard. Progress is being made but there is plenty more work to be done.

Removing invasives is not an impossible task. It does require dedication and perseverance. Progress is most easily seen with a thick growth of invasives, but the best place to start a clean-up may actually be in areas where the density is low, so as to stem the loss of further habitat to those species. Continually rechecking cleared areas will help prevent losing ground. There is a real feeling of accomplishment in looking at the pile of brush that has been cut during a workday, or the area that has been cleared of garlic mustard.

We're going to be having Saturday workdays at CCBS during June, July and August. If you want some hands-on experience, please feel free to contact me (sfebba@att.net), or Rachelle Roake at Michigan Audubon (517-580-7364). Together we can make a difference.

Reminder:

If your email address changes, please advise your newsletter editor (djwolf51@yahoo.com) of your new address so we can continue to deliver the *Call Note* right to your inbox. The *Call Note* is published monthly September through June. Thank you.



If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.

– Edward O. Wilson

Autumn olive jam recipe (cont. from page 5)

Here is a jam recipe from a Calvin College student named Rachel Hesselink, who studied autumn olive invasiveness and competitiveness while she was an undergraduate there. Enjoy it and savor your revenge on one of America's least wanted.

Autumn Olive Jam

3 c autumn olive berries
3 T pectin
2½ c sugar



Mash berries in a medium saucepan with pectin and a small splash of water.

Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently. Continue to boil and stir for 1-2 more minutes.

Cool slightly, pour into clean jars and cover tightly. Will keep 1-2 weeks in refrigerator, or may be canned or processed in a boiling water bath for longer shelf storage.

Call Note

Published monthly September through June
by the Capital Area Audubon Society
PO Box 22065, Lansing MI 48909-2206.
Deadline for submissions: 20th of the month.

Editors: Ann Hancock & Debbie Wolf

2015-16 CAAS Officers

President	Barb Hosler
V President	Doug McWhirter
Recording Secretary	Zsa Mahon
Corresponding Secretary	Debbie Wolf
Treasurer	Susan Schuur

2015-16 CAAS Board of Directors

Tom Conner	517-230-0343
Ann Hancock	517-219-7464
Barb Hosler	517-281-6595
Eileen Houston	517-323-4606
Zsa Mahon	517-285-8285
Cindi Martineau	517-887-9342
Susan Schuur	517-351-5272
Doug McWhirter	517-646-8151
Debbie Wolf	517-974-4852

capitalareaaudubon.org

Burke Lake Banding Station opens in May

This avian research, training, and educational station at Rose Lake State Wildlife Research Area in Bath will be opening in May (exact date not available at press time).

They would love to have you visit, but please check the visitor info and calendar on their website before you head out: www.burkelakebanding.com.