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# The Call Note

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**January 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.

## President's Corner



Warmest holiday wishes to every one of you, and continued good birding in the coming new year!

**Barb Hosler and your CAAS Board of Directors**



## IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to report the death of CAAS friend **Elizabeth ("Betty") Peebles** on December 10 at age 83.

**Clara Bratton**, retired naturalist at Fenner Nature Center, remembers Betty from apple-peeling days at Fenner as a very friendly and gracious woman. She loved being outdoors, looking for wildflowers, watching birds, and reading.

Sincerest condolences to Betty's husband **Charles ("Bob")**, family and friends.

## January 5 Meeting & Program

### Photographing birds becomes a journey of discovery

Please join us for our first meeting of 2017 on Thursday, **January 5** when nature photographer **Fai Chan** presents ***Little Things I Learned While Photographing Birds***. Learn more about bird behavior and photographic techniques while enjoying stunning images of many bird species.

Snacks, warm drinks, and social time begin at 7:00 p.m. followed by a short business meeting and program at 7:30. Why not bring a friend and introduce them to CAAS?



Photo ©Fai Chan 2015

**Thank you** to **Parks Marion** and **Lee Laylin** for the delicious snacks at our December meeting!

**Editor's Note: The recent blaze in Gatlinburg and Great Smoky N.P. devastated homes and burned over 11,000 acres of parkland. This report focuses on birds of the park.**

## Smoky Mountains N.P. also a designated Important Bird Area (IBA)

The most-visited of our national parks is Great Smoky Mountains National Park, attracting more than 10 million visitors annually – about twice the number of the second most popular park. Most visitors see the park from its famous scenic highway, although many also hike on the 800 miles of park trails extending across the border between North Carolina and Tennessee. The park covers over 800 square miles and is divided almost equally between these two states.

Parts of the Tennessee section of the park were subject to wildfires starting in late November. More than 17,000 people had to flee as the wildfires blazed through and around the park. The fires are said to have damaged or destroyed more than 1,600 homes and businesses, mostly around Gatlinburg, Tenn. The tragic loss of human life numbered over a dozen, with more than 130 people injured. Over 11,300 acres in the park itself were burned.

The Great Smoky Mountains N.P. is one of the largest protected areas in the eastern U.S., and approximately a fifth of the park comprises old-growth forest; it is the largest tract of old-growth forest in the southern Appalachians.

The park supports 230 species of birds, with 110 species breeding in the park. This IBA supports among the highest diversity of breeding neotropical migratory birds of any area in the U.S. It also likely holds the largest concentration of northern saw-whet owls in the southeast, and the majority of black-capped chickadees that reside in the Blue Ridge. It is also one of the best sites in the southern Appalachians for olive-sided flycatchers. In short, the park holds substantial populations of listed Watchlist species and species of concern.

For more information on this IBA that is located in both Tennessee and North Carolina, see the two web pages which describe the IBA in both states, respectively:

<http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/great-smoky-mountains-national-park-0> and  
<http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/great-smoky-mountains-national-park>

Source: *The Birding Community E-Bulletin*, December 2016, Wayne R. Petersen and Paul J. Baicich, eds. Archives at <http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

## A national bird for Canada?

Over the past two years, nearly 50,000 Canadians voted for their favorite species in the National Bird Project, an effort by Canadian Geographic, in partnership with Bird Studies Canada, to help select an appropriate species for this honor.

Gray jay (Cephas: Wikimedia Commons)



Once the voting results and thousands of comments were considered, the Royal Canadian Geographical Society made its official recommendation at its College of Fellows Annual Dinner on

November 16. A feature story about the national bird recommendation also appeared in the December issue of Canadian Geographic, and the final choice of **gray jay** appears on its magazine cover.

The Canadian Parliament might eventually address the national-bird designation of gray jay, with an official bird for Canada being selected in 2017, Canada's sesquicentennial year.

## Owls need their space

A recent post by Nova Mackentley on the U.P. bird list-serve is worth sharing:

In response to the recent news of Snowy Owls returning to the lower 48, and for photographers who follow this list specifically to find owls to photograph, please read this article, and please don't bait the owls. Even if you are currently justifying baiting owls "just till I get that one great shot" or "for my workshop participants," please take a few minutes to read this article. It is a well-written and concise article by an owl researcher [Scott Weidensaul] doing great work.

<http://www.audubon.org/news/why-you-shouldnt-feed-or-bait-owls>

## Wisdom does it again!

Wisdom, a Laysan albatross and the world's oldest known wild bird at 66 years, is incubating an egg. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced the discovery in December. Before observing Wisdom, scientists believed that the upper age limit for a Laysan albatross was 40.

The chick will hatch around the middle of March.