



capitalareaaudubon.org

The Call Note

April 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.

April 6 Meeting & Program



Above: *Fire-tailed Myzornis (Myzornis pyrrhoura)*
Photo Dibyendu Ash (Wikimedia Commons)

Protected areas for birds in China

Dr. Jen Owen (Michigan State University) and **Chris May** (The Nature Conservancy) will share their work and birding experiences in southwest China at our **April 6** meeting at Fenner.

Chris spent 2 months working with local communities, conservation groups, and government officials to develop a conservation plan for Xicaohai Wetland in Yunnan Province. The wetland provides migratory stopover and wintering habitat for over 10,000 waterbirds annually.

Jen and Chris traveled throughout Yunnan Province sightseeing and birding, including trips to

the Gaoligong Mountains (a global biodiversity hotspot), Tiger Leaping Gorge, and Shangri-La.

Refreshments and social time begin at 7:00 p.m., brief business meeting begins at 7:30 with program immediately following.

Thank you to **Georgia Curry** and **Debbie Wolf** for snacks at the March meeting.

Saturday morning bird walks begin April 8 at Fenner

Capital Area Audubon will once again lead a morning bird walk at Fenner Arboretum during spring migration.

April dates are: April 8, 15, 22, and 29

May dates are May 6, 13, 20, 27

Starting time for April walks is 9:00 a.m. May walks will begin at **8:00 a.m.**

Meet in the parking lot near the Nature Center building, and don't forget your bins. These walks are free and open to the public.



Snowy owl coloring explanations debunked

A recent post to the U.P. birding list-serve by **Alan Ryff** bears sharing. It is reprinted here with permission of the author:

Those of you who are misled to believe whiteness versus spottiness is a criteria for aging Snowy Owls ought to read Eugene Potapov and Richard Sale's *The Snowy Owl*, the definitive work on this species.

My first reading of this book was in 2012. Since then the online reports describing how white and old the males are, as well as how heavily spotted the young and females are, has become tiresome annual misinformation.

Below is a partial quote of Bortolotti and Stoffel's, "The Coloration of Snowy Owl Is Not So Black and White," an insert in *The Snowy Owl*.

"Another clear example of a bird's ability to become darker over time was provided by a female Snowy Owl marked with a satellite transmitter...[this] shows that she was much darker in the winter of 2010 than in the winter of 2008. This observation shows the futility of assigning an age class to Snowy Owls based on spottiness: on that basis in 2010 the bird could have been mistaken for a young bird and definitely not one which had bred at least twice. (p. 23)

"...When we examined birds at least three winters old, approximately a third of males displayed more wing spotting, with another third showing less and the final third staying the same. For the tail approximately half became more spotted or stayed the same, but none became less spotted...Clearly conventional wisdom is not correct – Snowy Owls do not become whiter with age: indeed we find considerably more evidence for the opposite! (p. 24)

"It is likely that as with many other birds, colour is a sexually selected trait in Snowy Owls. However, the mechanism of determining colour variation may very well be different, and could involve body condition and stress." (p. 25)



Snowy owl (Photo Wikimedia Commons)

Fenner and CAAS: a symbiosis

A symbiotic relationship is one that benefits both parties. Capital Area Audubon Society (CAAS) and Fenner Nature Center have a symbiotic relationship dating back many years, sharing intertwining histories and common goals. Fenner also is home to our monthly membership meetings and spring and fall migration bird walks.

CAAS's recent gift of financial support to Fenner Conservancy was acknowledged by past president and current stewardship chair **Ron Eggleston:**

Barb,
Thank you and the Capital Area Audubon board for continuing your support of Fenner Conservancy. As you are well aware, the close relationship between Fenner Nature Center and CAAS goes back many years, and I can say with conviction that this has been a positive for both organizations. There are many CAAS members who have been long-term volunteers or members of Friends of Fenner Nature Center and its successor, Fenner Conservancy. I am glad the CAAS still sees a positive relationship.
Ron Eggleston

Duck Stamp sales revenue increases despite price hike

Unit sales for the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, the “Duck Stamp,” did not show any decrease in 2015-16, despite a \$10 price hike. The price of the stamp is now \$25.

The average number of Duck Stamps sold during 1991-2014 was 1,512,841. Unit sales for the period June 26, 2015 (first day of sales) through October 2016 were 1,595,500 according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Duck Stamp Office.

New Duck Stamps are issued July 1 annually, with 98 percent of the purchase price going directly to help acquire and protect wetland habitat and purchase conservation easements for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Source: Wingtips, Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp, March 1, 2017



Editor's Note:

President Barb Hosler is traveling now and was not available for her usual column.

My invaluable co-editor Debbie is currently dealing with a family medical issue. If you think this month's Call Note lacks a certain something, you are correct! Debbie will return when the emergency is over. Meanwhile please forgive the formatting, and please keep Debbie and her family in your thoughts.

Ferns, continued



According to experts Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy, when creating habitat on your property you should create layers of plants; ground layer, intermediate or shrub layer, understory trees, and canopy. We've talked a lot about trees and shrubs in this space, and also discussed a few grasses. However, for understory planting nothing can beat a carpet of ferns.

Ferns are undemanding as long as their basic needs are met: shade and adequate moisture. A number of species are tolerant of fairly dry conditions once established. Watch this space in the future for a discussion of some ferns for Michigan gardens.



For an excellent book on designing and layering with native plants:

The Living Landscape: Designing for beauty and biodiversity in the home garden, by Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy. 2014, Timber Press

ICD sponsors native tree sale

Native plants can help you create an oasis of habitat that birds and other wildlife need to thrive. These plants provide food, protective cover, and larval hosting, all of which benefit birds and local mammals.

All orders (mail in or online) must be received by April 3. Pickup dates are Friday, April 21 (10am-6pm) and Saturday, April 22 (9am-noon).

Visit:

https://www.inghamconservation.com/?mc_cid=1c64f0323a&mc_eid=1b964a6b6f to order or for more information.



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