

the Call Note

CAPITAL AREA AUDUBON
MARCH 2018

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Join Us

AT OUR MARCH MEETING!

American Kestrels and Ecosystem Services in Michigan's Fruit Growing Regions

**Presenter : Dr. Catherine Lindell,
Associate Professor
Department of Integrative Biology
Center for Global Change and Earth Observations
Michigan State University**

Dr. Lindell will discuss how to attract kestrels to particular places, how kestrel nesting in orchards deters fruit-eating birds, and related economic benefits for farmers and the state of Michigan. She also will describe consumer responses to bird management techniques and why some techniques are preferred over others



The meeting will begin with refreshments at 7:00p.m. The program will begin at 7:30p.m. Our meetings are free and open to the public.

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.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The groundhog would appear to have been right about more winter—at least for the first couple of weeks after its namesake day. But as we enter March, the Vernal Equinox appears on the horizon, and we know that the first wave of migratory birds can't be too far away.

March also brings us St. Patrick's Day, which led me to ponder green birds. We don't get too many of them in Michigan. Parrots, green jay, green kingfisher—all birds that occur far south of us. Then, deep in my philosophical reverie, I

thought of the tree swallow, one of our early spring migrants. Now I know some people see more of an iridescent blue or greenish-blue on a male tree swallow, but I have always pictured them squarely in the green category so that I consider it a great stroke of luck to see my first tree swallow of the year on March 17. If you're wondering about spring arrival dates for other birds—not just the green ones—in our area, you can find that by exploring data in eBird.

Good birding,
Barb Hosler

SPRING MIGRATION IS ON THE WAY

As we say goodbye to our sweet winter visitors from the north, the change in weather brings our summer birds back from their long journeys south.

Spring opportunities may seem endless, but here are a few options to help you plan your migration, near or far and get out to view some exciting spring migrants!

CAAS SPRING BIRD WALKS -
Join Capital Area Audubon Members for a walk right here in our own backyard. Walks are hosted every Saturday morning in April and May. We begin at the Fenner Nature Center Parking Lot and seek out spring visitors to the Lansing area.

BIGGEST WEEK IN AMERICAN BIRDING - May 4-13, 2018
Just to our south, on the edge of Lake Erie, The Biggest Week in American Birding attracts birders from around the country to view

the spring warbler migration. Up to 30 different warbler species have been spotted during past festivals. The Week offers many different vendors, workshops, fieldtrips and speakers covering topics from youth birding, warbler identification to birding by ear. There are also many free activities and walks in the area during the festival. For more information, visit - www.biggestweekinamericanbirding.com

WPBO SPRING FLING -
April 28-29, 2018
Whitefish Point Bird Observatory will host the 30th Spring Fling this April in Paradise, MI. This weekend is filled with speakers, presentations, tours and activities that will highlight the uniqueness of the Point, the achievements of the observatory's past and explore exciting new developments in its future. For more information or to register for the event, please visit - <https://wpbo.org/events/spring-fling/>

MI AUDUBON BIRD FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

As the populations of many bird species throughout Michigan continue to dwindle, Michigan Audubon is enlisting the help of numerous groups throughout the greater Lansing region to improve the outlook for urban birds. With funds from a grant recently awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program, Michigan Audubon will collaborate with diverse partners including units of local government, businesses, nonprofits, schools, and community groups to launch a new Bird-friendly Communities Initiative. The program will engage the local community in urban bird conservation programs designed to connect these communities with birds and the environment for the benefit of all.

Michigan Audubon Conservation Science Coordinator Rachelle Roake said, "The Mi Bird-Friendly Communities Initiative will encompass a suite of programs to engage citizens in urban conservation education, species-specific conservation, native landscaping, and hazard reduction for migratory birds. Our goal is to create a community-wide, landscape-scale impact for birds and people."

Outreach, education, and publicly-accessible habitat improvements will play an important role in the success of the program. "We believe the Mi Bird-Friendly Communities program will inspire environmental wonder and stewardship among city residents, community members, and local businesses, and we envision this program to be the start of a statewide change for Michigan to improve urban areas for birds and people alike," said Heather Good, Executive Director of Michigan Audubon.

Partners in the program include Ingham County Parks, City of Lansing Parks and Recreation, Capital Area Audubon, Old Town Commercial Association, Michigan Environmental Council, Sierra Club Central Michigan Chapter, Woldumar Nature Center, Wild Ones Red Cedar Chapter, Okemos Public Library, Wildtype Native Plant Nursery, Designs By Nature, Hammond Farms, Montessori Radmoor School, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing. As the program grows, Michigan Audubon plans to continue to build partnerships with additional entities.

Habitat improvement projects will take place at a number of locations throughout the greater Lansing region. Volunteers will work to remove invasive plants and to restore a wet meadow area at Michigan Audubon's Capital City Bird Sanctuary, a 65-acre public urban bird sanctuary located in Delta Township that includes over a half mile of frontage along the Grand River.

Nesting/roosting structures for Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts, both human-dependent bird species, will be installed in public parks, schools, and other community hubs to not only increase available nesting and roosting locations, but to raise awareness for the conservation needs of these two species that, without widespread help of informed citizens, will continue to experience population declines. Native gardens will be installed on the properties of at least three partner organizations including schools, libraries, and places of worship. In addition, educational signage will be installed at each project site. Roake said, "This signage will be designed to teach visitors about the role each project plays in urban conservation and to increase overall awareness, understanding, and involvement in conservation. Our ultimate goal is to inspire citizens to join us in our efforts, or get involved in similar projects in their community. Most of these projects can also be scaled so that people can take action in their own backyards to create even more bird-friendly habitat in our neighborhoods."

Program elements also include the development of educational materials and a variety of citizen science opportunities, hands-on workshops, presentations, events, and celebrations designed to engage a wide and diverse audience. Youth engagement is a critical piece of conservation, and Michigan Audubon will continue its efforts to involve youth and families through several events, materials, and a unique summer camp curriculum. Woldumar Nature Association Executive Director, Kevin Wernet, said, "We are excited to strengthen scientific knowledge and environmental stewardship. With nearly 400 children enrolled in our summer camps and over 3,500 attending our school programs, our greatest outreach is to Lansing area youth and the prospect of partnering to enrich those children's experience through this project is thrilling!"

Good added, "We are grateful to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and our partner organizations for this exciting opportunity to improve the urban landscape for wildlife and to share in the learning and stewardship of this important work. We are delighted that such a diverse group is eager to make urban bird conservation a topic of conversation throughout Michigan's capital city. We look forward to working together to engage citizens, families, and youth in conservation action and advocacy and to ultimately make the Bird-friendly Communities program a source of pride for Lansing."

Through the work and accomplishments of the Mi Bird-Friendly Communities Initiative, Michigan Audubon and partner organizations hope to receive designation for Lansing as an Urban Bird Treaty City by 2019. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Urban Bird Treaty program, under which the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program falls, also conducts the Urban Bird Treaty City designation program. In order to be considered for designation, cities must work with conservation partners to conserve, protect, restore and enhance habitat, reduce bird hazards, and educate urban residents on the importance of migratory birds.



Michigan Audubon Conservation Science Coordinator Rachelle Roake works with dedicated volunteers Rick and Penny Briscoe to install a Purple Martin house at the Ingham County Parks Lake Lansing boat launch.

Article provided by Michigan Audubon.

UPCOMING CAAS EVENTS

CAAS Monthly Meetings

Talks are held the first Thursday of each month at Fenner Nature Center.

April 5 - Birds of a Feather

Presenter : Bob Tarte

Tarte is a birder and author of numerous books about birds and other animals. He writes with humor about his experiences caring for animals and his journey to becoming a birder.

April 5 - Ebird Workshop - 6pm

Join fellow members an hour before our monthly meeting for a hands on workshop using the Ebird program. Create a login, learn to record your sightings and use Ebird to plan a birding trip!

May 3 - Birds and Soundscapes

Presenter : Dr. Sharon Gill, WMU

Based at Western Michigan University, Dr. Sharon Gill studies behavioral ecology, ornithology and sound ecology. She will speak on the topic of soundscapes and how they affect bird populations.

June 7 - Member Photo Show and Ice Cream Social

Enjoy time with the CAAS while members share their favorite photos from the year. Please submit an image to the newsletter for publication as well.

*Do you have an event to share?
Email us at - caasCallNote@gmail.com
or share it on our Facebook page -
facebook.com/capitalareadubon*

HELPING MICHIGAN BLUEBIRDS

The Eastern Bluebird has had an up and down history in Michigan over the last 200 years. This popular member of the thrush family was once widespread in Michigan before industrial farming took hold. After peaking in the later 1800's, bluebird numbers steadily declined for the next 50 years due to habitat loss, widespread use of farming chemicals, and intense competition from two alien bird species – European Starling and House Sparrow. Fortunately, starting in the 1960's, bluebirds started their comeback when it was discovered that large numbers of actively-managed nesting boxes drastically improved their nesting success. Banning of the farm insecticide DDT in the 1970's also accelerated their recovery.

Today, the easiest way to bring these colorful, sweet-singing birds into the yard is a well-designed nesting box. This is because bluebirds are cavity nesting birds, originally building nests in the hollowed-out cavities in trees. Nest boxes simulate these cavities, which have become in much shorter supply over the years. Bluebirds start claiming nesting sites in March in Michigan, with nest building usually starting as early as late March or early April. Bluebirds can have 2 or even 3 broods of young in a nesting season that can last into August. How do you know if you can attract bluebirds to your yard? If you live in a generally open neighborhood and see bluebirds on a regular basis, you have an excellent chance. Bluebirds prefer open, grassy habitats like farm fields, open subdivisions, golf courses, office parks, meadows, and metro parks. The first thing you'll need is a quality-made nesting box of the correct dimensions. You can buy a bluebird nesting box at a store or make it yourself. Boxes should be made of 3/4" thick wood – either cedar or pine, and requires an entrance hole of at least 1 1/2" in diameter. Of absolute importance is the ability to open up the box easily via a hinged side or top for easy nest checks and box cleaning.

Next, mount your nest box on a sturdy, metal pole so the entrance hole is about 5 feet off the ground. Locate the pole/box in a wide open spot with short grass below. The box should be as far away from dense cover, large trees, and buildings as you can. Finally, it's a very good idea to wax the pole or install some kind of

guard to make it more difficult for climbing predators like raccoons, cats or snakes.

Once your nest box is up, it's critically important to monitor it for the rest of the season. This involves going out and opening the box to see what is happening once or twice a week and recording your observations. Why do this? Being a bluebird "landlord" entails taking the responsibility of ensuring the housing you have provided is safe and that the birds are OK. Research has shown that actively-monitored bluebird boxes fledge far more birds than those left up un-monitored. For example, you need to make sure that parasites haven't invaded the box or that invasive species like House Sparrows haven't taken over, among other potential problems.

Bluebirds are one of the easiest birds to attract to nesting boxes, and arguably one of the most pleasant backyard birds to have around. Both adults are dedicated parents and seem to like being helped by people. So, if you live in a good habitat for bluebirds, try putting up a nesting box this spring. You'll be helping one of America's favorite birds while learning a lot about how birds raise their young in the process!

For those interested in learning more about bluebirds, the Spring Bluebird Festival will be held on March 24th at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor. Event information is provided on the right.

The event is organized by the Michigan Bluebird Society – a non-profit group of volunteers dedicated to bluebird conservation.



Courtesy of MBS Member Robert Feldman

Article Provided by - Kurt Hagemester. Kurt is President of the Michigan Bluebird Society and has been a bluebird landlord for 19 years in the Ann Arbor area.

SPRING BLUEBIRD FEST

Michigan Bluebird Society will hold its Spring Bluebird Festival on March 24th at the Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor.

The event is free and open to the public, and will feature educational exhibits, programs, and products that help bluebird "landlords," bluebirds and native cavity nesting birds. Presenters include bluebird experts, "Nature of the Wild" videos, Purple Martin Conservation Association, Michigan Avian Experience (with live raptors!), and Master Gardeners on "Smart Gardening". Lunch (sandwich, chips, cookie, fruit and beverage) is available for \$10. A bluebird nest box-building workshop for up to 20 young people costs \$20. Participants are encouraged to pre-register for either lunch or workshop. For more information, visit -

www.michiganbluebirds.org/springfestival

CALL NOTE

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EXCITING SIGHTINGS

In February a few exciting sightings were reported in the area.

- A Snowy Owl was recorded near the corner of Jolly and College a number of times the week of February 12th. Snow Bunting and Horned Lark were also spotted in that area.

- A Horned Grebe was spotted on the MSU Campus near Beal Botanical Garden on February 19th.

These sightings were reported at our meeting or on Ebird.com or with the Ebird App.

*Do you have an exciting sighting to share?
Email us at - caasCallNote@gmail.com
or share it on our facebook page - facebook.com/capitalareaaudubon*

CAAS SPRING VOLUNTEERS

If you are interested in leading a field trip this spring, or have an idea for an outing or destination, please let us know at our next meeting, or by emailing parks.marion@gmail.com

We are also looking for leaders for our weekly bird walks at Fenner Nature Center each Saturday in April and May.

Thank You!

A huge thank you to **Judy Dunn & Georgia Curry** for supplying the wonderful snacks at our February meeting.

Big thanks to Fai Chan for allowing the CAAS to use his beautiful images on our header, website and Facebook page. To submit an image for publication, please email Kristy Taylor at caasCallNote@gmail.com

NEST BOX WORKSHOP

Join Michigan Audubon for a fun and informative Nest Box Workshop. Being a responsible bird "landlord" includes providing a safe nesting situation. This can be accomplished through regular nest checks, maintenance, and predator guards. Gene Wasserman will cover the basics of nest box monitoring. Learn how to perform regular nest checks, safeguard against parasites and predators, and record monitoring data. As an added bonus, there will be an opportunity to construct and take home your very own nest box. The cost is \$10. Please bring payment to the workshop. Saturday, March 10, 2018, from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM at the Michigan Audubon Office. If you have questions, please email events@michiganaudubon.org.

MICHIGAN WINTER EVENTS

**WPBO's SPRING FLING (APRIL 28-29th)
REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 2, 2018**

This year will mark the 30th Annual Spring Fling: WPBO's Celebration of Bird Migration when members and their guests "migrate" to Paradise, Michigan and the Whitefish Point area to visit with old friends, both human and avian. Many activities are being planned for another refreshing weekend of birding experiences. Tickets are now on sale.

Questions may be directed to events@michiganaudubon.org
wpbo.org/events/spring-fling/

MEMBERSHIP

Members of CAAS enjoy 10 monthly programs per year on a variety of natural history topics, guided field trips, a monthly newsletter, and the satisfaction of supporting initiatives to interest young people in birds and nature.

Membership Categories

Individual	\$15.00
Family	\$20.00
Contributing	\$30.00
Sustaining	\$50.00
Donor	\$100.00

For a membership form, please visit our website at capitalareaaudubon.org or pick one up at our next meeting.

Online registration and payment is now available at capitalareaaudubon.org/membership