



the Call Note

CAPITAL AREA AUDUBON
MARCH 2021

Join Us

AT OUR MARCH ZOOM MEETING!

Join us at our next meeting Thursday, March 4th at 7:00pm via Zoom.

Travels in Florida with Allison Vilag

In Florida, large tracts of wilderness abut dense population centers. Gritty conservation complexities are also embedded in the state's past and present: In 1905, Guy Bradley, one of the U.S.'s first game wardens, was killed while defending rookery birds from plume hunters. At Lake Okeechobee, a drastic water control project - 1600 miles of canals and levees - tamed and dried the Everglades, which still suffer. Today, exotic pythons devastate native bird and mammal populations. And yet, time spent in Florida's wild lands is rewarding.

This March, join our speaker, Allison Vilag as she shares her experiences canoe camping in the mangrove labyrinth, searching for endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Florida Scrub-Jays in national forests and paddling gator-lined waterways in pursuit of Snail Kites!

This meeting will be held on the Zoom platform. Please visit - <https://zoom.us> or open your Zoom app and enter Meeting ID - 927 8022 5507 Password - CAAS2020

Social time will take place from 7-7:10 followed by brief announcements and our speaker at 7:15pm. If you would like to try Zoom before the meeting, please email Kristy at caascallnote@gmail.com

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 OUR PRESIDENT

It may not seem like it from here in the snowy north, but breeding cycles and spring migration are already underway for many Michigan birds.

Great Horned Owls may already have nestlings, and many owls are out hunting to feed their young. This month, Snowy Owls are heading north, back to their breeding grounds in the arctic tundra. Dark-eyed Juncos, and the winter finches will follow soon after to find a mate and start the nesting cycle.

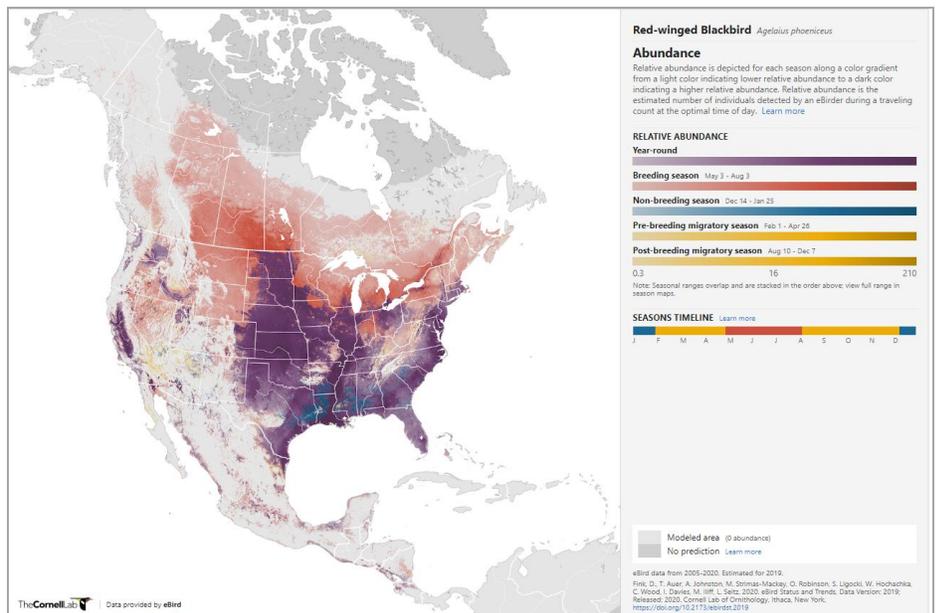
You may notice the American Goldfinches at your feeders are displaying brighter and bolder black caps this time of year, gearing up for full breeding plumage in the spring.

Warblers and many other songbirds will also started their journey north in March. eBird offers beautiful ways to view the migratory journey of over 800 different bird species.

One species who seems to announce the arrival of spring is the Red-winged Blackbird. Males will head north first to find and defend territory, followed later by the females. If you have a moment, take a look at the amazing animated data migration maps on eBird. These maps use eBird data to show the abundance and movement of birds throughout the year. ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/species

I hope you will be able to join us this spring at one of our bird walks to experience this amazing natural cycle in person. Our aim is to include new and experienced birders in all we do and to provide a safe and inclusive experience for all of those involved.

Please reach out if you ever have any concerns or helpful ways to make the outdoors more accessible for all. See you in the spring!
Kristy Taylor



CAAS EVENTS

April Monthly Meeting - Love for Birds, Light and Composition April 1st - 7:00pm via Zoom

This program will feature Josh Haas' finest images as he shares how bird knowledge is vital to creating more pleasing and artistic photographs. Josh will also share some of his favorite stories in the field including unique experiences with birds out in nature. Additionally, he will share simple non-technical tips on bringing birds closer, how to get birds away from non-natural elements like feeders and ways to create artistry in images creating better photographs. During these tough times of not being together, Josh's hope is to inspire people through his imagery and stories to get outside and enjoy birds to the greatest extent possible.

May Monthly Meeting - May 6th - 7:00 pm via Zoom

Details and speaker information will be posted in the March Call Note.

Spring Bird Walks -

This spring, we will hold our Saturday bird walks each Saturday in May at Fenner Nature Center. Walks will begin at 8am from the parking lot. Dress for the weather and be aware that trails may be muddy.

Monday Morning Migration Walks -

Join us at a local birding locations Mondays in May! Sites will include the Harris Nature Center, Capital City Bird Sanctuary, Sleepy Hollow State Park, and Cooley Gardens and the Capital Lawn. These walks will be lead by a CAAS member and will be socially distanced. Masks are required. More details will be provided in April.

If you would like to lead a walk, or have a place in mind for a spring walk, please email us at caasCallnote@gmail.com.

June Monthly Meeting - June 3rd 7:00pm at Fenner Nature Center Join us for a socially distanced evening nature walk. This will be our last meeting for the 2020-21 program year.

Native Plant Sales -

This spring, check our Facebook page as we share local native plant sales and tree sales.

WINTER WATERFOWL

This winter, take time to hone your waterfowl identification skills with these great online learning resources!

Audubon's Leslie Nemo offers 'Ten Tips for Waterfowl Beginners' at - www.audubon.org/news/ten-tips-waterfowl-beginners

One of her first suggestions is to **Learn what qualifies as waterfowl.** She states 'Even if a bird isn't swimming circles in a lake or pond, it still might count as waterfowl. There are a few other details that will clue you in to its identity. Its bill, for example, should be flat, wide, and long, like a small gardening spade. All species have at least partially webbed feet as well to paddle around. And their necks and heads should be compact and stocky, unlike those of loons or grebes.'

Another funny suggestion by the author is to accept that the medium-sized ducks are probably Mallards. Like Audubon's Birdist, Nick Lund's Rule # 79, assume that Mallards are everywhere. For the full article, visit - [Birdist Rule # 79: Think of Something Nice to Say About Mallards | Audubon](#)

For those looking for a more in-depth identification guide, Great Lakes Audubon hosted a Winter Waterfowl ID webinar which can be viewed on YouTube at - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PnoYFqvUUU>

This webinar is hosted by MI Birds, Detroit Audubon, Ducks Unlimited and the River Raisin Institute. They share the best places to spot waterfowl in Michigan, how to identify them by species and ways that we can help conserve birds and the places they need to thrive.



EXCITING SIGHTINGS

This February many exciting sightings were reported in the area!

- Common Redpoll were reported in Clinton and Ingham counties February 21st.
- Lapland Longspur were spotted along with Horned Lark at MSU and in Eaton Rapids.
- A Cackling Goose was reported at the MSU Dairy Cattle Research Farm on February 17th with a mixed flock of Canada Geese.
- A Snowy Owl was spotted in Leslie on February 14th near Walker Road.

These sightings were reported 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](https://www.facebook.com/capitalareaaudubon)

VIRTUAL EVENTS

MSU Science Festival

April 1-30

Virtual Event

The 2021 Science Fest will host over 200 different virtual presenters ready to dazzle, delight, educate and inform! Full event details will be available online at sciencefestival.msu.edu

Cornell Bird Academy Open Lectures

Join The Cornell Lab for an open lecture this March. Archived events are also available to watch online at any time!

Backyard Bird Nest and Egg ID March 2

This lecture is free to attend. For more information and to register, visit academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-events/

Mi Bird-Friendly Communities Lunch and Learn Webinar Series

This free webinar series will feature topics related to Michigan Audubon's Mi Bird-Friendly Communities program — a suite of urban bird conservation projects focused on reconnecting communities with birds and the environment for the benefit of all! Join them on the second Tuesday of each month at noon for a 45-minute presentation. The series will feature various expert speakers and will be available through Zoom or as a Facebook Live stream.

March 9 - Purple Martins

April 13 - Bird-Window Collisions

Find out more at michiganaudubon.org

Webinars from Audubon Great Lakes

Explore Audubon Great Lakes' free virtual webinars exploring the latest in bird conservation science, research, bird ID, best practices and more!

Visit - <https://gl.audubon.org/get-involved/explore-past-webinars>

Washtenaw Audubon Society The Delisting of the Gray Wolf

Wednesday, March 17 - 7:00pm

Gray Wolves were delisted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services in the entire lower 48 states, effective January 4, 2021. Join Washtenaw Audubon's Conservation Chair, Cathy Theisen, DVM, to examine why this unusual and scientifically unsound interpretation of the Endangered Species Act should be of concern to conservationists, birders and wildlife watchers everywhere. <https://umich.zoom.us/j/99877609593>
Meeting ID: 998 7760 9593 (No password)

Do you have an event to share? Email us at caascallnote@gmail.com.

ESCAPE TO PANAMA, RIGHT FROM HOME

Last month, the Cornell Lab enlisted volunteers on Zooniverse to help record data from their fruit feeder cameras in Panama. This research focused on the interactions between different species frequenting the fruit feeders.

Since the pandemic began, I have really missed travelling and know many of you canceled trips and stuck close to home in 2020. For me, these far away webcams were a great way to challenge my birding skills with new-to-me birds and I really enjoyed reporting the interactions I witnessed. It was especially nice to see the brightly colored birds during the dreary, quiet days of winter when I am missing our summer birds!

Although the Battling Birds: Panama Edition has wrapped up, you can

enjoy The Cornell Lab Panama fruit feeder webcams anytime!

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/panama-fruit-feeders/>

In the early morning, you can watch as bats visit the hummingbird feeders, and then learn to identify some of the tropical birds visiting the feeders. Below each live stream, Cornell offers pictures and links to the most common bird species you are likely to encounter.

If you would like to hone your hummingbird ID skills, spend some time with nesting owls, osprey or eagles or even investigate Spoonbills and gators in Florida, check out explore.org for livecams from all around the country!

PANDEMIC BIRDING CHANGES DATA

by Team eBird, February 17, 2021

Newly published research in the journal [Biological Conservation](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bioco.2021.108974) finds that changes in human behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic can have major consequences for community data-gathering projects such as eBird. Researchers must take into account that when human behaviors change, so do the data being collected.

The study focused on eBird reports from New York State, California, Spain, and Portugal. "We examined eBird data submitted during April 2020 and compared them to data from April of prior years," explains lead author Wesley Hochachka, a researcher at the Cornell Lab. "The outbreak of COVID-19 followed by stay-at-home orders have definitely affected the quantity and quality of data collected by participants."

One of the biggest changes they noted was in the type of habitat the reports were coming from. With more people at home, more people reported birds around urban areas. With urbanized areas represented more frequently, bird species that live near humans may also be disproportionately represented. Less common habitats, such as wetlands, may then be under-sampled because restrictions on human travel make it less likely that birdwatchers will go there.

"We also found subtler changes in quantity of data collected, as well as in the amount of time spent

birdwatching," Hochachka says. "The other crucial point is that changes in human behavior differed in each region, depending upon political and policy responses to the pandemic as well as the different environments in which eBird participants live." Though the focus was on four specific regions, the researchers expect that similar changes in the data have occurred on a global scale.

This is especially important for programs using eBird data to monitor for changes in distribution and abundance of bird species, including those looking for the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns on the bird species themselves. The researchers concluded there's no one-size-fits-all approach for dealing with pandemic-related changes in birding data. "Any use of the data from 2020 will require analysts to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their data and apply the necessary corrections," Hochachka says.

Reference: Wesley M. Hochachka, Hany Alonso, Carlos Gutiérrez-Expósito, Eliot Miller, Alison Johnston, Regional variation in the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quantity and quality of data collected by the project eBird, *Biological Conservation*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bioco.2021.108974>

Assistance for this article provided by Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

CAAS MEMBERSHIP

Support community programs with your CAAS Membership. Your membership supports programs in our community and monthly meetings Sept. through June.

Your membership is more important than ever! Clubs and non-profits across the state are facing hard decisions this year because funding from many sources has been drastically reduced.

SEPTEMBER 2020 - AUGUST 2021

Membership Categories

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

To sign up online, visit - capitdareaudubon.org

If you would like to mail your membership form and payment, please mail to - PO Box 22065, Lansing, MI 4890

CALL NOTE

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

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NESTBOXES AND NESTING MATERIAL

Winter is the perfect time to prepare for spring and summer nesting birds and to clean out any nest boxes you may already offer on your property.

When cleaning your nest boxes, wear gloves and eye protection. According to the Wildlife Trusts, the box should be scalded with boiling water to kill any parasites. Annual cleaning is best carried out from late September to February.

Also remember to clean bird feeders and bird baths using warm soapy water or 5% disinfectant, especially in the months between January and May. Make sure to rinse and dry thoroughly before adding food.

NestWatch offers great suggestions for species specific houses that will work in your yard! For free plans, and an interactive tool to find out the most beneficial nestboxes to provide, visit - nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house/

Be sure that your boxes are secure enough to withstand high winds and severe weather. The best way to put up small boxes is on a free-standing metal pole or PVC pipe. These can be difficult for predators to climb, can be equipped with predator guards, can be mounted at any height, and can be moved and cleaned easily.

If you live in an apartment, or are not able to maintain nest boxes, there are a few other easy ways to help nesting birds this spring. You can put out materials to help birds prepare their nests!

All About Birds recommends dead twigs, leaves, dry grass, feathers, plant fluff, moss, bark strips or pine needles. Be sure that any material is not treated with chemicals. Human hair, fabric and plastic can be hazardous to birds and endanger nestlings.

Nest material can be piled onto the ground, placed in a clean, wire-mesh suet cage, draped over vegetation, pushed into tree crevices or placed in spiral wire hangers made for this purpose.

Remember to leave your leaves in the fall and you will provide nesting material, and a food source for many different bird species!

For more information, visit nestwatch.org.

FEATURES OF A GOOD BIRDHOUSE
BUILD A SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL HOME

IT'S WELL CONSTRUCTED

- UNTREATED WOOD**
Use untreated, unspaced wood, preferably cedar, pine, cypress, or for larger boxes (ovels) non-pressure-treated C19 exterior grade plywood.
- GALVANIZED SCREWS**
Use galvanized screws for the best seal. Nails can loosen over time, allowing rain into the nest box. Screws are also easier to remove for repairs or maintenance. Do not use staples.

IT KEEPS BIRDS DRY

- SLOPED ROOF**
A sloped roof that overhangs the front by 2" and the sides by 2" will help keep out driving rain, while also thwarting predators. Add 1/2" deep eaves under the roof on all three edges to serve as gutters that channel rain away from the box.
- RECESSED FLOOR**
A recessed floor keeps the nest from getting wet and helps the box last longer. recess the floor at least 1/4" up from the bottom.
- DRAINAGE HOLES**
Add at least 4 drainage holes (1/2" to 5/8" diameter) to the floor to allow any water that enters the box to drain away. Alternatively, you can cut away the corners of the floor board to create drainage holes.

IT HELPS REGULATE TEMPERATURE

- THICK WALLS**
Walls should be at least 3/4" thick to insulate the nest properly. (Walls sold as 2" are actually 3/4" thick.)
- VENTILATION HOLES**
For adequate ventilation, there should be two 1/2" diameter holes on each of the side walls, near the top (4 total).

IT KEEPS OUT PREDATORS

- NO PERCHES**
A perch is unnecessary for the birds and can actually help predators gain access to the box.
- COMMON NEST BOX PREDATORS**
 - SNAKES**
Many snakes are excellent climbers and can easily squeeze an unguarded pole. Snakes most likely to climb into birdhouses are generally non-venomous (such as racers and cornsneaks) and highly adaptable rodents. Avoid installing nest boxes near to brush piles.
 - RACCOONS**
Raccoons are intelligent and can remember nest boxes from year to year. They can be abundant in populated areas. Mount nest boxes on a metal pole equipped with a ball, avoid mounting them on trees or fence posts.
 - CHIPMUNKS**
Chipmunks are both a nest predator and a competitor for nest boxes. To keep chipmunks out, mount boxes away from trees on a metal pole equipped with a ball.
 - CATS**
Cats are excellent jumpers and can leap to the top of a nest box from a nearby tree or fence the ground. Mount your box high enough and far enough from trees so cats cannot spring to the top of the box in a single leap. Keep pet cats indoors for their own safety and for the safety of birds.
- COLLAR**
A metal collar of about 1/2" diameter surrounding the pole underneath the nest box.
- STOVEPIPE**
The most complex, and perhaps the most effective. These baffles are generally 4" in diameter and 12-18" long.
- NOEL GUARD**
A new mesh tube attached to the front of the nest box. The top panel is made of mesh with a wooden or metal 1/2" x 1/2" lip.

IT HAS THE RIGHT ENTRANCE SIZE FOR THE RIGHT BIRD
By providing a properly sized entrance hole, you can attract desirable species to your birdhouses while excluding predators and unwanted occupants. Below are the requirements for some common species that nest in boxes.

DON'T WANT TO GIVE A HOME TO UNDESIRABLE SPECIES?
Use the smaller hole size they can fit into, or select a smaller hole size.

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IT HELPS FLEDGLINGS LEAVE THE NEST

- ROUGH INTERIOR WALLS**
The interior wall below the entrance hole should be rough to help nestlings climb out of the box. For small boxes (wrens and chickadees), plain wood is usually rough enough, but you can roughen smooth boards with coarse sandpaper.
- FOR DUCK BOXES**
For duck boxes, staple a strip of 1/4" mesh hardware cloth from floor to hole to help ducklings escape deep boxes.

IT MAKES PLACEMENT & MAINTENANCE EASY

- EXTENDED BACK**
A few extra inches at the top and bottom of your birdhouse can make it easier to mount on a metal pole. Alternatively, you can pre-drill mounting holes in the back panel before assembly and use a short-handled screwdriver to install the box.
- HINGED DOOR WITH A STURDY CLOSING MECHANISM**
A hinged side gives you access for cleaning and monitoring your nest box, both of which are important for a successful nesting season. A latch or nail keeps the box securely closed until you are ready to open it.