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Fai Chan
2016

Join Us

AT OUR MARCH MEETING!

Join us at our next meeting Thursday, March 3, 7:00 - 8:30pm on Zoom!

Notes from a Field Biologist in the Pacific Northwest (PNW)

Presenter: Keke Ann Ray

Keke Ann Ray is a biological sciences master's student who recently joined Dr. Sharon Gill's Sound Ecology Lab at Western Michigan. Her current work is focused on communication systems, specifically within redwing blackbirds. This work will help inform the evolutionary mechanisms for the generative nature of language as well as the promotion of acoustic considerations within conservation.

Although a Michigan native (Yoooper), before entering grad school she worked for 8 years as a seasonal field biologist. For six of those years Keke lived and worked in the PNW on a variety of studies: marbled murrelet ecology, plant diversity in clear-cuts, spotted owl prey (small mammals), and general avian biodiversity in the National Parks of Washington. Her favorite bird is the common raven, and beyond birds, Keke loves baking, backpacking, and running up hills.

Our February meeting will begin at 7:00pm with recent sightings, member information and brief announcements. Our speaker will begin at 7:15.

Please visit our Zoom link - <https://msu.zoom.us/j/94720211954> or open your Zoom app and enter Meeting ID: 947 2021 1954 Password - CAAS

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

This February I was able to have quite the adventure! Early in the month, I had the opportunity to travel to California to celebrate my sister-in-law's birthday in wine country and escape to do a little birding and hiking near the central coast.

After arriving, I realized how excited I was to hear all the bird song again (and what an early riser I am with a three hour time change). I drove about an hour and a half north from our rental in Paso Robles to visit Pinnacles National Park. Pinnacles became a National Park in 2013, and is part of the California Condor Recovery Program. I was hoping to spot California Condors that breed in the area and are also frequently seen from the top of the High Peaks Trail (and aptly named Condor Gulch Trail). Though I am very passionate about birds and birding, I have not had many chances to travel west so I have not seen many of the western species before, including the California Condor.

My trek started by navigating a couple of caves formed by falling rock over the last couple of thousand years. The temperature was right around 34 degrees, so I was thankful that I remembered to bring along a hat and gloves. There were many birds singing during this early morning coolness, including California Towee, Oak Titmouse, Golden-crowned Sparrows and Dark-eyed Junco. (It also made me realize that there are quite a few 'California' common names; California Condor, California Quail, California Scrub Jay, California Towee, California Gull, California Thrasher and California Gnatcatcher.

After navigating the cave trail, the sun was up and so was the trek. I headed up hill for the next two hours and was rewarded with some absolutely

brehtaking views, a Prairie Falcon on the hunt, but sadly, no condors.

The Turkey Vultures looked completely at ease among the pinnacles and the nice warm updraft of the morning. I could see what made this place such a great site for the release of captive-bred condors and what kept them coming back each year.

On my way back down to the parking area, I got to see an amazing stash of acorns and a stunning Acorn Woodpecker. I met a local couple who shared my love of birds and commented on how wonderful it was to see California Condors at the park. They shared with me how sad they were when they heard that the last wild condors were captured, but how beautiful and encouraging it is to see their return some 40 years later.

They also mentioned that the fires near Big Sur had affected a nesting family, and directed me to the site - ventanaws.org/condors.html to learn more about the condors of Central California and how climate change may threaten their recovery.

The rest of my trip was fantastic and since I wasn't able to glimpse a condor this time, it gives me a great excuse for a return trip! Hope you are all ready for the adventure of spring!

- Kristy Taylor, CAAS Board President



CAAS EVENTS

April Monthly Meeting
Birds and Wildlife of Uganda
Wednesday, April 7th at 7pm via Zoom
Presenter: Alexia Witcombe

Alexia Witcombe is a former CAAS board member and enjoys being involved with local birding organizations, including as a volunteer with the Michigan State Bird Observatory. While conducting agroecological research in Uganda, Alexia had the opportunity to see and photograph some of the incredible birds and wildlife found in "the pearl of Africa." She is currently an assistant professor at MSU in the Department of Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences.

May Monthly Meeting
Thursday, May 5, 6:30pm
Walk at Corey Marsh Ecological Research Center

9422 E. Herbison Rd., Laingsburg, MI
Short program and site overview at 6:30pm, followed by a walk at 7pm.
Dress for the weather, walk will be easy, but may be wet depending on weather.

June Monthly Meeting
Thursday June 2, 7:00pm
Walk at Fenner Nature Center
Annual Meeting, welcome and comments by the board at 7pm, followed by a walk at 7:15pm.

JOIN OUR BOARD!

The CAAS Board is in need of two members to serve on the board of directors for the 2022-23 program year. If you would like to help steer the CAAS, lead field trips, engage with members or help with volunteer opportunities, we need you! Please send your interest to caascallnote@gmail.com with a brief bio and your interest in serving on the board.

LOCAL EVENTS

Check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/capitalareaaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/capitalareaaudubon) for local events, plant sales, Audubon events around the state and much more!

If you have an event to share, please email caascallnote@gmail.com with the date, a brief description and an event link if possible.

2021 EAST LANSING CBC REPORT

On December 18, 2021, 61 people participated in another socially-distanced East Lansing Christmas Bird Count. Fifty-eight species were tallied this year, just a little below our 5-year average of 60. The total number of individual birds observed increased from last year to 15,220; however, that is still well below the five- and ten-year averages for the count (17,597/17,177).

Sandhill Cranes had a big year with 233, surpassing the previous record of 140 in 2018. In addition, new highs were observed for Redhead (8), Lesser Scaup (9), Ruddy Duck (9), Bald Eagle (5), and Hermit Thrush (4). The Redhead and Lesser Scaup sightings mark only the fifth time each of these species have been observed in the last 59 years.

The top ten species were: 1) Canada Goose, 2) European Starling, 3) Mallard, 4) House Sparrow, 5) American Crow, 6) Rock Pigeon, 7) Dark-eyed Junco, 8) Mourning Dove, 9) Cedar Waxwing, and 10) Black-capped Chickadee.

Many thanks to everyone who participated safely in this year's CBC. Here's to hoping that we'll be able to gather together in person for next year's Christmas Bird Count!

2021 East Lansing CBC Species List

4d Cackling Goose
4,584d Canada Goose
7u Mute Swan
1d American Black Duck
1,034d Mallard
8uR Redhead
9uR Lesser Scaup
6d Bufflehead
1s Common Goldeneye
73u Hooded Merganser
7d Common Merganser
9uR Ruddy Duck

135d Wild Turkey
4d Great Blue Heron
1u Northern Harrier
17u Cooper's Hawk
5uR Bald Eagle
1u Red-shouldered Hawk
44u Red-tailed Hawk
233uR Sandhill Crane
151d Ring-billed Gull
16u Herring Gull
492d Rock Pigeon
427u Mourning Dove
4s Belted Kingfisher
98u Red-bellied Woodpecker
136d Downy Woodpecker
21d Hairy Woodpecker
22u Northern Flicker
14d Pileated Woodpecker
6s American Kestrel
2u Merlin
1d Peregrine Falcon
1u Northern Shrike
218u Blue Jay
544d American Crow
352d Black-capped Chickadee
50d Tufted Titmouse
12d Red-breasted Nuthatch
140d White-breasted Nuthatch
6d Brown Creeper
2u Winter Wren
19u Carolina Wren
3u Golden-crowned Kinglet
61u Eastern Bluebird
4uR Hermit Thrush
166d American Robin
3,718u European Starling
381d Cedar Waxwing
1u Yellow-rumped Warbler
108u American Tree Sparrow
483u Dark-eyed Junco
26u White-throated Sparrow
8s Song Sparrow
269d Northern Cardinal
236d House Finch
265d American Goldfinch
570d House Sparrow

Key: The number in front of the species name is the 2021 total.
R=record total; **u**=up from 2020;
d=down from 2020; **s**=same as 2020

TOP CLINTON COUNTY HOTSPOTS

Did you know that eBird lists the top hotspots for each county? The next few months, we will highlight top ten hotspots for nearby counties along with the species totals!

1. Corey Marsh Ecological Research Center (214 species),
2. Rose Lake SWA (206), 3. Sleepy Hollow State Park (198),
4. Motz County Park (174), 5. Maple River SGA (166),
6. Muskrat Lake SGA (161), 7. Park Lake (160),
8. Rose Lake SWA-Burke Lake Banding Station (146),
9. Bengel Wildlife Center (134), 10. St. Johns City Park (126).

To view more, visit ebird.org/explore and enter the region you would like to explore.

CAAS MEMBERSHIP

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

Memberships run the length of the program year, September to August.

SEPTEMBER 2021 - AUGUST 2022

Membership Categories

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

To sign up and pay online, visit -
capitalareaaudubon.org

If you would like to mail your membership form and payment, please mail to -
CAAS, PO Box 22065, Lansing, MI 48910

CALL NOTE

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Deadline for submissions: 20th of the month.

2021-2022 CAAS Officers

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FINCH RESEARCH NETWORK GREAT LAKES REPORT

Back-to-Back: Western Great Lakes Host Bounty of Winter Finches for Second Straight Year: by Ryan Brady, January, 2022

After an extremely poor showing in 2019-20, winter finches invaded the western Great Lakes region in 2020-21, a flight that will be remembered most for the best influx of Evening Grosbeaks in many years. As summer days transitioned to fall, birders began to ponder what this year's finch season would look like, and frankly, the picture was unclear. Severe drought impacted many areas, fires blazed to the north and west, and fruit and seed crops were a mixed bag at best. Tyler Hoar's Winter Finch Forecast indicated this region, especially near Lake Superior, was one of uncertainty given the weather wild cards in play and resulting variation in food sources across the region. Was another year of finch fun about to unfold, or would the winter doldrums return?

Answers came quickly as Common Redpolls were spotted in several states in late September and early October, nearly a month earlier than usual. Pine Siskins moved in numbers by mid-October. White-winged Crossbills arrived in earnest around the same time, seemingly from the north and east, and poured widely into the region throughout early November. Redpolls flooded south by the thousands around then as well, quickly reaching relatively southern latitudes. Less dramatically but no less impressively, Pine Grosbeaks made a steady push to southern reaches of the north woods in November and December, a pattern echoed to some extent by a favorite "honorary winter finch" for many, the Bohemian Waxwing.

So where does that leave us today? Let's take a look at the status of each species across the region this month. Common and Hoary Redpolls Common Redpoll is the most widespread and abundant of the winter finches this year, occurring in numbers across most of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan and extending to Kansas City, St. Louis, and Indianapolis. Among them are decent numbers of Hoary Redpolls as far south as Chicago.

Look for both species in birches, alders, tamaracks, cedars, and weedy fields. As winter rolls on increasing numbers will visit feeders, where they prefer nyjer and sunflower seeds.

White-winged and Red Crossbills

Second to redpolls, White-winged Crossbills are the story of the season. Excellent numbers can be found widely across the region, including unusually far south in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Birders across Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana should be on the lookout at small-coned conifers such as spruces, hemlocks, and tamarack, and even wayward individuals at feeders are not out of the question. In core areas, birders should watch for potential nesting activity in areas of high cone concentration over the next few months.

On the other hand, Red Crossbills are notably scarce in the region this year with no apparent influx of birds from any direction. Only small numbers have been reported, most frequently from northern Minnesota but including incidental observations in central Illinois and southern Michigan.

Evening and Pine Grosbeaks

After a great showing in 2020-21, Evening Grosbeaks have returned to typically low numbers in the region this year. A few traditional areas of northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan are hosting only a few, with observation frequency highest in the east.

It's a great winter for Pine Grosbeaks in northern portions of the region, however. Outstanding numbers can be found across the north woods at tree seeds (e.g. ash), fruit sources (especially crabapple), and bird feeders with sunflower seeds. As of now, few have wandered south of their usual winter range but southern birders should keep an eye out, especially at remaining fruit sources, in the weeks ahead.

Bohemian Waxwing

Though not in the finch family, Bohemian Waxwings are similar in their boreal range and irruptive behavior. Despite a modest showing earlier in the season, this attractive frugivore has made a great push this month, yielding flocks of hundreds and in some cases thousands of birds. They're also occurring reasonably far south from southern Minnesota to central Wisconsin and Michigan. Check all fruit sources carefully, including mountain ash, crabapple, and buckthorn, especially among flocks of Cedar Waxwings.

For more information and to read the full article, visit finchnetwork.org