

the Caller

November/December 2018, Volume 57, No. 4

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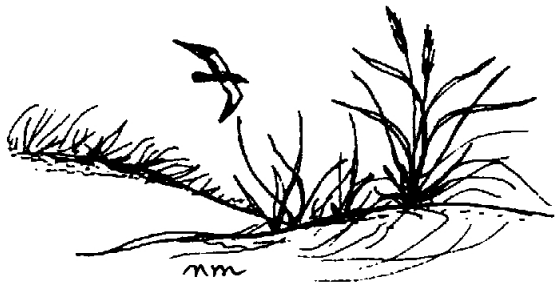


November Meeting Notes

Date: Monday, Nov. 26
Time: 7:00 PM social; 7:30 PM program
Location: John Donnelly Conference Center
Aquinas College
Speaker: Shaun Howard
Topic: Just Dune It!

Lake Michigan's dunes are part of the largest freshwater dune system in the world, providing critical habitat for migratory birds, federally endangered plants and rare insects.

Hear from Eastern Lake Michigan project manager Shaun Howard as he shares how we're protecting this extraordinary habitat for people and nature.



Deadline for January newsletter articles: **Jan. 1**

Send to: newsletter@graud.org

President's Corner

by Sheryl Helmus

All of us with an appreciation for wild birds have some exciting opportunities available during the winter season. We can help scientists collect data to make informed decisions that may help birds now and in the future.

One long-running study of the National Audubon Society is the Christmas Bird Count. It's a census of birds in the western hemisphere conducted each year around Christmas Day. Many club members and others from the community will survey in Kent County on Dec. 29. Results collected across the hemisphere for over 100 years have documented many happenings. A few things count information showed were falling numbers of raptors during years of high DDT pesticide use, severe declines in crow and blue jay numbers when West Nile virus first appeared in an area, and expanding northern ranges for northern cardinals and tufted titmice. Data you collect this year will add to that already available for future study. Details on page 8 of this *Caller*.

Climate Watch is a more recent citizen science project of the National Audubon Society. It gathers information about birds' winter and summer ranges. As years of sightings are reported by individuals like us, there will be data to determine how bird species are affected by changing climate conditions. Find more information on page 8 of this *Caller*.

From the comfort of a chair by a birdfeeder you can gather data for another study. Project FeederWatch is a Cornell Lab of Ornithology program. It helps scientists track long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. FeederWatch is a birding activity you can do alone. Or you can join with others and sit near your feeders or theirs and collect valuable scientific data...maybe even enjoy coffee and cookies together while you make observations. Sign up at feederwatch.org/join-or-renew

I encourage each of you to participate in at least one citizen science project. It's a great feeling knowing that your birding time not only brought joy to you but also contributed data that could make a positive difference for birds.



GRAC Field Trips

Contact Becky Kuhn with field trip suggestions/ideas. Watch the *Caller* for future trip announcements. Visit www.graud.org for the most up-to-date trip list. Safety hazards: Driving in a caravan can be hazardous. Get directions from the leader and exercise caution on the road at all times. Have a passenger handle all radio or phone communications. Dress and drive for the weather, particularly in the event of hazardous winter weather. Particularly bad weather may cancel a trip.

Thursdays, Nov. 8, 15 and 29, 9:00 AM

Leader: Katie Bolt, Jeanne Griffin or Kathy Haase
Recurring Millennium Park Hikes

Hike Millennium Park to see what's hanging around (route varies). A good variety of birds have been reported from this diverse habitat near the river, which includes open and swampy ponds, lowland forest and various secondary growth.

Essentials: Meet at the east end of Veterans Memorial Drive parking area.

Sunday, Nov. 11, 2:00 PM

Leader: Sheryl Helmus

Lowell Indoor/Outdoor Bird ID, Migration Activity, Bird Hike

Everyone is welcome. This is a good outing for families with children. The indoor portion is fully accessible, and the outdoor portion is on hard-packed dirt trails with little elevation change.

We'll observe and identify live feeder birds while indoors. We'll review ID of other species using the nature center's extensive displays of life-like mounts of songbirds, hawks, owls, etc.

The group will head outside for a migration learning activity. We'll then hike the trails to spot and identify local birds of the field, forest and wetland.

Meet at the Wittenbach/Wege Agriscience and Environmental Education Center, 11715 Vergennes Rd., Lowell, across the road from Lowell High School.

Saturday, Nov. 17, 7:30 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Lakeshore Migrants

We'll plan to look for the best reported late shorebirds and winter ducks, gulls and finches along the lakeshore. Winter ducks should be in the area, and the other late migrants should still be moving south. We're likely to start on the lakeshore with Holland State Park, Oval Beach or Douglas Beach as possible targets. From Lake Michigan, we're likely to work inland with stops possible along Lake Macatawa, the Kalamazoo River or the Todd Farm Unit of the Allegan State Game Area. If we're lucky, a mega-rarity will be chaseable and we may travel further afield. This is planned as a morning trip, but we could extend it with a lunch stop.

Essentials: Meet at the McDonald's in Hudsonville, and carpool from there. Be ready to head out at 7:30 AM. You may want a drink or snack to keep you going until lunch. Come prepared for cold weather. A spotting scope could come in handy on this trip.

Tuesday, Jan. 1, 6:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

New Year's Day in Kent County

Get your bird list for 2019 started in Kent County. We'll try to track down some of the birds seen on the Christmas Count (see page 8 for details) and look for whatever sounds good. We'll start at 6:00 AM to look for owls in the Cannonsburg State Game Area and vicinity. At dawn, we'll shift to looking for winter passerines, waterfowl and hawks. Birders of all skills are welcome to join us and start their bird list for 2019.

Essentials: Meet at the Ada McDonald's on M-21 at the Citgo Gas Station by 6:00 AM. This is across M-21 from Amway and near the post office. We plan to be back at McDonald's at 8:00 AM for a break and in case anyone wants to join us. We plan to finish around 11:30 AM. Dress for cold weather, and bring a snack or warm beverage to keep you fueled up.

Saturday, Jan. 19, 8:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Winter Field Birding

This winter trip will search for winter birds such as Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike and Snow Bunting. These can be quite nomadic and hard to find, so we'll try to cover lots of territory. We'll search fields in northern Ottawa County and Muskegon County northwest of Grand Rapids. We'll probably check some of the Crockery Creek bottomlands looking for Red-shouldered Hawk. If conditions permit, we'll try to include the Muskegon Wastewater in our search. Expect to spend most of the time in the car searching the fields for anything different. Bring your CB or Family radio if you have one and we'll try to keep in touch between cars. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the Boy Scout Headquarters west off Walker Road just north of I-96 at 8:00 AM. We plan to bird until noon. You may want to bring a snack to hold you over until lunch.

Saturday, Feb. 9, 7:30 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Allegan State Game Area Winter Trip

Explore the Allegan State Game Area, including the Swan Creek Highbanks and the Todd Farm Unit, for winter birds. Full details available on GRAC's website and in upcoming issues of the *Caller*.



Theresa's Membership News and Thought for the Day

by Theresa Dykhius, Membership Chairperson

First of all, I am so pleased to welcome our new members: **Marylynn Lower, Caren Roberts, Charyl Wallace and Darlene Walquist.**

If you happen to see them at one of the meetings, please share your thoughts about what makes you keep coming back to the GRAC meetings and/or special events.

When November and December roll around, it may seem like a cliché but nevertheless I inevitably stop and think about all the things I have to be thankful for – especially in light of the hurricanes, shootings and all the other bad news that seems to bombard me every day. While I could list many things I am thankful for, let me list a couple that are relevant to this audience: I thank nature for all the beauty that awaits me every day, I thank our members for their generosity and choosing to support GRAC, and I thank my peers in this organization who give so freely of their personal time and expertise. To continue with the thankfulness motif, here are a couple of quotes I found from people who have said it so well:

“Be thankful for what you have; you’ll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don’t have, you will never, ever have enough.” Oprah Winfrey

“Often people ask how I manage to be happy despite having no arms and no legs. The quick answer is that I have a choice. I can be angry about not having limbs, or I can be thankful that I have a purpose. I chose gratitude.” Nick Vujicic

“We still do not know one thousandth of one percent of what nature has revealed to us.” Albert Einstein

If you aren’t currently a member and enjoy attending the meetings and other activities, please consider becoming a member. The cost of an annual membership is very reasonable. Please feel free to stop by the membership table at the monthly meetings and we will be happy to help you. Applications for membership are also available online and on page 9 of this *Caller*.

Thank you once again to those of you who renewed their membership. GRAC relies upon memberships and fundraisers to finance GRAC’s operations.

I want to give special recognition to the following people who not only paid for memberships but also made additional contributions to support our general fund or specific programs: **General Fund:** Ruth Fridsma, Marylynn Lower, Steve Minard and family, Fidencio and Alice Paredez, Rosemary Radius, Dud and Marty Smith, Henry Veldman; **Junior Audubon and Maher Sanctuary:** Ruth Fridsma; **Patron:** Nick Keller; and **Sustaining:** Norm Sevensma.

Volunteer Opportunities

by Scott Hutchings

A number of opportunities are available:

Lending Library: The librarians who run our lending library are retiring. Basic duties include helping people sign out and check in books. There are three boxes of extra books to store, but the actual cart is stored in the backroom at the Donnelly Center and the college even pushes it out for us.

Publicity: Our publicity team could use assistance with planning and executing initiatives and distributing materials. Enthusiastic people to contribute ideas for a publicity committee would be great as well. Interested in one day taking over the *Caller*? Publisher Tricia Boot would like to transition the job to someone in the next two-three years and could start showing you the ropes.

Field Trips: Becky is always looking for people to lead field trips. She also would like a person to oversee the Woodpecker Festival, working with the volunteers, festival founders the Lamareauxs, and the Kleins from the Barry County Bird Club. We will be able to use volunteers on the day of the festival as well. Also helpful would be someone to oversee our part of the Climate Watch research project.

Maher Sanctuary: We have work days in the fall for invasive species control and may need help with improvements in the future.

Peoplefeeders: We can always use volunteers to bring snacks to meetings.

Christmas Bird Count: We can use all the counters we can get. Contact Tom Leggett if you want to be more involved.

Audubon Adventures: One or two committee members are needed to help. The busiest time is August through October with time spent researching the latest Audubon Adventures program developments and similar programs, contacting educators and following up either by e-mail or in person. In the spring, help is needed to contact participating educators for feedback and recommendations. Since the committee is less active in the winter, those who spend the snowy months somewhere warmer could help.

Leadership: Two positions are available in leadership.

Fund Development Chairperson: Fund Development involves fundraising and building the endowment fund.

Special Events Coordinator: This is a new position that will handle special events and coordinate members who serve as docents and speakers.

If you see any other area you’d like to help, please ask through the Nomination Committee link on our website, or at the volunteer table at our meetings.



Bluebird Nest Boxes at Millennium Park

by Linda Damstra

In the 2013/2014 season, the Conservation Committee under the leadership of Jim Bradley met to plan projects for the year. One that was decided upon was to install a Bluebird Trail at Millennium Park. The park, with its expansive network of trails and diverse habitats, seemed a good fit for a Bluebird Trail and bluebirds had been sighted in the park. When the Kent County Parks department approved the idea Jim set about building twelve nest boxes and assembling the poles, baffles and hardware needed.

Next, committee members met at the park and twelve sites were chosen - six in the recreation core of the park and six more across the pond along Veterans Memorial Drive. The poles and nest boxes were installed the same day. The first season of monitoring was the year of flooding at the park along some of the paved trails and a few of the boxes could not be reached for that reason. When the water finally receded, some adjustments were made and boxes relocated.

During the first two years, bluebirds nested in three-four of the nest boxes. Tree swallows took up residence in many of the others. In 2015 we recorded three bluebird broods in the same box over the summer! It was pretty exciting. Following seasons were not as successful, however. House sparrows had moved in and monitoring involved constantly removing their nests.

Saturday, Oct. 27, was Volunteer Day at Millennium Park. Virginia Sines, who is the Volunteer Coordinator for the parks, assigned a small group of hearty volunteers to assist me in installing six nest boxes in the meadows section of the park. The nest boxes near the recreation core of Millennium Park that were attracting the house sparrows had been removed the week before and cleaned for re-use along with several new boxes that were donated for the project.

The drive for the meadows is located directly across from the main park entrance. This newly developed area seems like ideal bluebird habitat – nice meadows with a few small trees. When you visit the park, check out the houses and let me know when you see bluebirds.

Field Trip Report: Maher Audubon Sanctuary

by Chris Baer

Saturday, Oct. 27, found nine GRAC members walking the trails at Maher Sanctuary. The light rain soon stopped as we approached the marle pond where the water lilies showed their green, smiling faces. Red-winged blackbirds were evident all morning singing from the cattail marsh and west near Caine Creek.

The cattail marsh was tall with vegetation including its namesake, plus New England aster and thimble weed. The thimble weed seed-heads were puffing out, appearing as cotton balls along the edge of the boardwalk. Blue jays and cardinals made themselves known as we approached the edge of the woods and upland areas where the boardwalk ends and the trail begins. At the artesian rivulet bridge, we started to hear bluebirds calling and found them in the oak savannah at the tops of the trees. Without the sun shining it was difficult to determine male from female. Goldfinches also made an appearance high up along this part of the trail as well as a few chickadees.

The trail part of the loop was in fine shape and as we walked little “windows” would open to our right with views of cattail marsh and patches of shrubby cinquefoil. As we walked into what used to be a small prairie remnant, robins began flying over in twos, threes and more headed north. This went on for several minutes. We had a short discussion on whether they were flying in the wrong direction. Scolding robins had been with us for most of the walk as we interrupted their feeding on the variety of foods in the sanctuary.

Not far from the Bridge to Nowhere we were visited by a pair of fox sparrows which was particularly delightful: fat striped cheeping birds of brushy habitat.

We ended our stroll with expansive views of Caine Creek and crossed a bridge over the artesian rivulet for the last time.

Some of us extended our bird search at the Michigan Nature Association Dolan Preserve along nearby Coldwater Creek off of Baker Street where we saw more fox sparrows and tweedling yellow-rumped warblers.

Trail walkers included: Jeni and Shawn Taheri, Jan Lewis, Jim and Norine Shea, Ruth Fridsma, Sheryl and Keith Helmus.

Thank you Ruth Fridsma for meeting fellow birders at the Arby's carpooling location.



Ranger Steve's Nature Niche

Hidden Towhee Beauty

by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

Two male Eastern Towhees stopped by for a visit at Ody Brook. We offer special treats but that is not why they come. They do not make secretive stops to play tricks on us either - well maybe one that I will discuss in the conclusion. Perhaps they simply discovered other bird species and too many squirrels find the yard inviting. Now with trick-or-treat over, I can contemplate a nature niche reason they visit on their journey south.

Some will rarely be found in the region during the winter months. It can be hazardous for males that stay here where winters are more moderate than farther north. There are benefits and hazards. As much as we would like to think they can predict the severity of winter, they are not fortune tellers and cannot. If severe winter conditions occur, their survival is challenged. An advantage of staying farther north than those wintering to the south provides a head start in spring for securing the best breeding sites before rivals arrive.

Those leaving our area to claim choice breeding habitat farther north, arrive earlier than males that departed from farther south. Once a male claims a territory, it is likely it will be able to protect it from intruding males that arrive later. From secluded and even exposed tree branches during breeding season, it will sing a phrase referred to as "drink your teeeeeee." The phrase is frequently repeated so we can follow the sound to discover the bird's stunning beauty. Rarely do they make themselves obvious in the yard like robins.

Wintering farther south where snow does not persist on the ground enhances winter survival. A primary feeding strategy is to scratch through fallen leaves and they particularly like to hunt under shrubs and branches that conceal them. They prefer the seclusion of evergreen trees and shrub thickets.

We get to observe their amazing beauty when they show themselves. We planted a balsam fir when the girls were young. The tree is about their age and now stands 30 feet tall. The girls did not keep pace with tree growth and we are pleased. It is difficult enough to raise children without having to deal with giants. The purpose for planting the evergreen tree was to provide a location where birds can hide when coming for a feeder meal.

The towhees are appreciative and spend time when traveling to stop in or under that tree. They scratch through the deciduous leaves blown under the fir to look for choice food. Sometimes one will be seen under the bird feeder throwing seeds in every direction while looking for tasty morsels other birds ignore.

I watched one preen on a fir tree branch and ready itself for the continued journey south.

It used its beak to clean and straighten feathers. It wears a sleek black hood that trails black on the back all the way to the tip of its tail. Under its chin, the black hood extends midway on the chest and stops abruptly at a clear line where white contrasting feathers grow. The belly is white with robin orange feathers that cover its sides and somewhat obscure the white underside. One could mistake a towhee for an American Robin at a glance. Robins are gray on top instead of brilliant black and their orange covers the entire belly.

The towhee has white markings accenting a black back and white on tail feathers that can be seen when the bird spreads its feathers or most easily when it flies. You might rarely have the opportunity to see one during winter. If evergreens are part of the landscape, viewing chances are improved when leaves are allowed to remain under them, so don't over-rake. Even better are thickets of shrubs where they hide among clustered branches during the winter. Wet lowlands are often wild, not mowed or cleared so towhees find them good dining accommodations. Allow unmanicured areas to establish in the yard and more wildlife will treat your eyes during the trick-or-treat season and throughout the growing season. Landscape to support bird biodiversity.

In old bird guides, the bird was listed as Rufous-sided Towhee. It was discovered that instead of being one species, the bird played a trick on us and hid two species with nearly identical appearances. The towhees have now been separated into two species. The different western birds are named Spotted Towhees. Plan a trip west next summer to enjoy the similar species that has more white spotting on its back than the Eastern Towhee.

Natural history questions or topic suggestions can be directed to Ranger Steve (Mueller) at odybrook@chartermi.net - Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary, 13010 Northland Dr. Cedar Springs, MI 49319 or call (616) 696-1753.





October 2018 eBird Summary

Very Unusual and Rare Sightings by Carol VanOeveren

The following is an overview of the very unusual and rare eBird sightings for October 2018 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable and those with sketchy details. Rare and unusual eBird sightings are updated daily on the GRAC website.

The first ten days of the month were unsettled with temps all over the place (50s to low 80s) and numerous showers and thunderstorms. Below-normal weather arrived after the passage of a very strong cold front on the 11th with high temperatures only in the 40s and 50s through mid-month. Our first killing frost was Oct 18 and temperatures remained mostly below normal through the end of the month.

Waterfowl was in abundance at the Muskegon Wastewater Oct 6 (Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Oct Big Day Count). Amy Lyyski observed thirteen species with the majority **Northern Shoveler (2,400)** and **Ruddy Duck (1,600)**. Visit

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48995240> to view her checklist. Waterfowl and shorebirds continued to be seen in good numbers there throughout the month.

Finds of the month: Three **Ross's Geese** were seen at the Wastewater Oct 12 by David Whitehouse and continued Oct 13. One was also present, seen by Jess Sory, at the Coopersville Goose Field Oct 14 and two there Oct 18-19. The **Harlequin Duck** spotted at Holland SP Sep 30 continued through Oct 16. A **Red Phalarope** was seen by Kenneth Bishop and many others at the Wastewater Oct 22 and continued Oct 24. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49376163> for photos. A **Little Gull** spotted at the Wastewater Oct 20 on Steve Minard's GRAC field trip continued Oct 25. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49356534> for photos. A **Franklin's Gull** was observed at Holland SP Oct 2 by Aaron Yappert and continued Oct 3. While doing a shoreline survey by boat Oct 14, a very rare **Mew Gull** (approx. 9th state record if accepted by the Michigan Bird Records Committee) was found at the Kalamazoo River mouth in Allegan Co by Rick Brigham, MaryLou Graham, Julie Pedreros, Caleb Putnam and Chase Scholten. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49196431> to view Caleb's photos. A hatching year female **Rufous Hummingbird** (as reviewed and confirmed by Allen Chartier, Michigan's hummingbird expert) was seen by many observers visiting a feeder at the Hank Veldman residence on Fennessy Lake in Ottawa Co Oct 18-19. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49278664> for photos.

Other notables: two **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Oct 5, one at the Coopersville Goose Field Oct 6 and 19, one along 80th Ave N of Cleveland St (DeVries Meats) in Ottawa Co Oct 6, three at the Wastewater Oct 14-15; eleven **Snow Geese** (two blue morphs) in field along White Rd at the Wastewater Oct 7, up to 24 at the Coopersville Goose Field Oct 14-20; up to two **Cackling Geese** along 80th Ave N of Cleveland St (DeVries Meats) in Ottawa Co Oct 6-8, up to three at the Coopersville Goose Field Oct 22-27; nine **Surf Scoters** at Holland SP Oct 2-6, one at the Wastewater Oct 6, two at Douglas Beach Park in Allegan Co Oct 18, four at the Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Beach Park in Allegan Co Oct 21, one at Grand Haven SP Oct 27-29; 20 **White-winged Scoters** at Holland SP Oct 21; three **Black Scoters** at Douglas Beach Park Oct 18 and 12 there Oct 21, up to six at Holland SP Oct 18-21, 19 at the Lakeshore Dr guardrail S of Douglas Beach Park Oct 21, two at the Wastewater Oct 23; a **Red-throated Loon** at Holland SP Oct 2; an **Eared Grebe** at the Wastewater Oct 8-27; an **American White Pelican** at Window-on-the-Waterfront in Holland Oct 3-14 – visit

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48913597> for Judi Manning's photos, one on the Grand River near Martinique Island in Ottawa Co Oct 22; a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Window-on-the-Waterfront Oct 13-14; two juvenile/immature **Common Gallinules** at Covell Park in Muskegon Co Oct 6, five at Grand Haven SGA Bruce Bayou 132nd Ave access Oct 14; up to three **Black-bellied Plovers** at AAA Turf Farm Oct 3-8, one at Grand Haven SP Oct 7, one at Holland SP Oct 8, one at the Wastewater Oct 16-22; two **American Golden-Plovers** along 80th Ave N of Cleveland St (DeVries Meats) in Ottawa Co Oct 3 and 15 Oct 21, up to eight at AAA Turf Farm Oct 4-9, one at Allegan SGA Oct 9, three along 23rd St S of 118th Ave in Allegan Co Oct 28; up to four **White-rumped Sandpipers** at the Wastewater Oct 21-31, two at the Caledonia Sewage Ponds Oct 25-28; five **Baird's Sandpipers** at the Wastewater Oct 4 and up to three there Oct 26-27 – late, one at the Caledonia Sewage Ponds Oct 25-27 – late; 150 **Dunlins** at the Wastewater Oct 22; a **Red-necked Phalarope** at AAA Turf Farm Oct 3-4; a late **Black-billed Cuckoo** at Window-on-the-Waterfront Oct 13; a very late **Eastern Whip-poor-will** at VanRaalte Farm in Ottawa Co Oct 15; a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** still coming to a feeder in Comstock Park Oct 28; a rather late **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Michael McGraw Park in Kent Co Oct 9 and one at a residence near Cascade Oct 11; an est 1,600 **Blue Jays** migrating over the channel at Holland SP Oct 2;

Continued on page 7



Continued from page 6

a late **House Wren** at Medbery Park (White Lake channel) in Muskegon Co Oct 23; six **Lapland Longspurs** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Oct 15 – first report; 20 **Snow Buntings** at the Wastewater and at Holland SP Oct 21 – first reports and **300** at the Wastewater Oct 25; two **Nashville Warblers** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area Oct 26 – late; a high concentration of **Lincoln’s Sparrows** (13) at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access Oct 2; **60 White-throated Sparrows** at Muskegon SGA Lane’s Landing Oct 2; a late **Scarlet Tanager** at Lake Macatawa Boardwalk West in Ottawa Co Oct 6 and one at Plaster Creek Park in Grand Rapids Oct 7; twelve **Rusty Blackbirds** at Muskegon SGA Lane’s Landing Oct 2, 15 at Huff Park Oct 13, five at the Caledonia Sewage Ponds Oct 25, seven at Paw Paw Park east in Ottawa Co Oct 31; up to five **Brewer’s Blackbirds** at AAA Farm Oct 6,8; **Pine Siskins** observed in all four counties.

Note: Whooping Crane Lily was still being observed with Sandhill Cranes at the Schoonover WPA/M-156 and Packard Rd area in Lenawee Co Oct 27.

October Finance Report

prepared by **Jeff Neumann, Treasurer**

Checking Account Balance: \$10,235.42
Edward Jones Account: \$39,137.35
Total Assets as of 10/29/18: \$49,372.77
Restricted Funds (included in the total assets)
Maher Sanctuary Fund: \$3,733.53
Junior Audubon Fund: \$4,124.12
Audubon Adventures: - \$ 113.55

The balances in the Maher Sanctuary, Junior Audubon and Audubon Adventures Funds are restricted to expenditures for items related to the respective funds.

Finance Committee Update

by **Keith Helmus**

In mid- to late January, the Finance Committee will meet to work on the preparation of the 2019/2020 budget that outlines the use of money that we project will be available during the next fiscal year. Our fiscal year starts on July 1 and runs through June 30 of the following year. After the budget is prepared, it will later be presented to the board and the membership for review and approval. If there are any items that you would like to have us consider in next year’s budget, please contact either the treasurer, Jeff Neumann, or me, Keith Helmus. We welcome any and all suggestions and questions.

Audubon Adventures Enrollment Opportunity

by **Mary Austin**

GRAC is proud to sponsor the National Audubon Society’s Audubon Adventures program.

Audubon Adventures is an environmental education program for grades three to six. Teachers enrolling in the program receive printed materials for their classroom students about nature-related topics.

The program’s emphasis is on birds, wildlife and habitats. The Audubon Adventures program enhances Michigan’s standards-based science curriculum. Participating educators have access to a content-rich website for additional resources, interactive games and quizzes.

To learn more about Audubon Adventures, check out <http://www.audubonadventures.org/>.

It’s not too late for teachers to sign up for GRAC’s Audubon Adventures sponsorship. Interested individuals can contact me at mary.e.austin@comcast.net.

Bald Eagle Stamp Program

by **Henry Raad**

This is a fundraising project to help offset the cost of caring for sick and injured birds of prey at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, Florida.

Collectable stamps are collected by a local stamp club which sorts and sells the donated stamps to various buyers.

I am the point-person for our club so please give me stamps you wish to donate at any meeting or place them by the name-tag box. This is a continuous project with no deadline. If you have doubts about any stamps, bring them anyway.

Following is what collectable stamps include:

- any stamp collections
- any foreign, commemorative, airmail or special handling stamps
- any hunting and fishing license stamps
- mint plate blocks, especially older ones
- NO regular letter or Christmas stamps
- canceled or un-canceled but undamaged stamps
- leave at least one-quarter-inch margin around cut stamps
- if card or envelope is interesting, do not remove the stamp

To learn more about the Audubon Center: <http://fl.audubon.org/>.



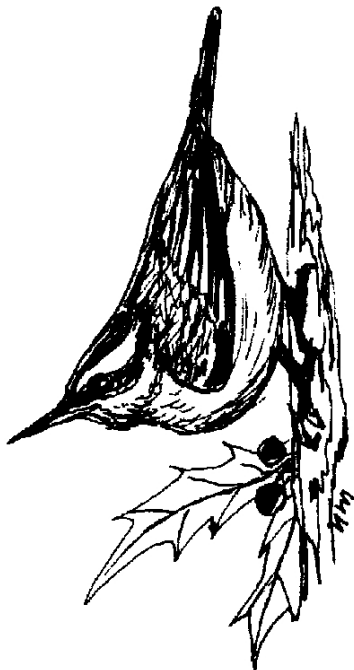
Join the 2019 Climate Watch

You're invited to get involved with the GRAC in helping Audubon to conduct meaningful research in our community via the Climate Watch program. Climate Watch is a community science program that explores how North American birds are responding to climate change. The program was launched in the wake of the birding public's overwhelming response to Audubon's 2014 report, "Audubon Birds and Climate Change Report," which highlighted the risks that climate change poses to birds across the continent.

The next Climate Watch is Jan. 15-Feb.15. Participants are asked to give a two- to four-hour time commitment. You will be tasked with choosing twelve spots within a ten-kilometer by ten-kilometer grid in Kent County. Try to select spots where Eastern Bluebirds or White- or Red-breasted Nuthatches are likely to be seen or heard. Each spot you select should be at least 200 meters away from all other spots to avoid double-counting the same areas. Count those species and report your findings to eBird.

Why those birds? Audubon's promotional materials for the initiative said "bluebirds and nuthatches are easy to identify, have an enthusiastic constituency, and Audubon's climate models for these specific species offer strong predictions for range shifts for us to test. In future years, Climate Watch will include additional target species threatened by climate change covering a broader range of habitats and regional interests."

Email climatewatch@audubon.org to request additional information. Or, contact GRAC's Becky Kuhn to get involved: bexrecky@gmail.com or (616) 437-9205.



2018 Christmas Bird Count

Kent County Center at Two Mile and Honey Creek Roads

by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

Get excited and energized for a day of great birding.

Date: Dec. 29

Location: Wittenbach/Wege Agriscience and Environmental Center (WWC), 11715 Vergennes Rd. in Lowell, MI, 49331

Time: Arrive 7:30 AM; depart for birding by 8:00 AM

Who: Anyone interested in birds, conservation and the natural world.

Lunch will be provided by Joan Heuvelhorst for \$5, or you can bring your own.

At 5:00 PM, section findings are collected. Participate part or all day. Participation is free with donations sent to support the National Audubon Society.

Owlers head out in the predawn. If you are interested let Tom know.

Have a great time enjoying birds, birders and gathering data useful for tracking bird locations and species abundance.

Feeder counters within the count circle add valuable data. It will be helpful to let Tom know if you will be a feeder counter so he can provide procedure. Some counters join a field section in the morning and count at their feeders in the afternoon.

Our family and relatives are gathering for a Christmas celebration together that day. I might be present to get the event started but will not stay for the day.

Direct inquiries to count coordinators:

Tom Leggett: (616) 249-3382 or tomleggett@hotmail.com or

Ranger Steve (Mueller): (616) 696-1753 or odybrook@chartermi.net

See the Grand Rapids Audubon Club website for maps. Additional bird count details and information about our records dating back to 1953 were presented in the October *Caller*. It is available at our website if you missed it, check our website www.graud.org for previous *Caller* Newsletters.

Help Wanted!

Individuals interested in speaking for 30-60 minutes (for free!) at the April 28, 2019, Woodpecker Festival, at the Paul Henry Trail in The Middleville Village Hall, between 8:00 AM and noon. If you are, or you have someone to suggest, please contact bexrecky@gmail.com.



GRAC CALENDAR

November

- 8 Field Trip: Millennium Park (recurring 15 and 29)
- 11 Field Trip: Lowell Bird ID w/ Sheryl Helmus
- 17 Field Trip: Lakeshore Migrants w/ Steve Minard
- 26 GRAC Board and Membership Meetings

December

- 29 Christmas Bird Count

January

- 1 Field Trip: New Year's Day in Kent County w/ Steve Minard
- 19 Field Trip: Winter Field Birding w/ Steve Minard

Mission Statement:

The Grand Rapids Audubon Club brings together people who enjoy nature, especially wild birds. We seek to protect and improve our natural environment and to advance nature education throughout West Michigan.

Grand Rapids Audubon Club Membership Application

Name _____
 Street _____
 City _____
 State / ZIP+4 _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

(Providing your E-mail address ensures that you will receive E-mail notification when the latest edition of the *Caller* newsletter is posted on the GRAC website.)

Individual	\$ 20.00	_____
Family	25.00	_____
Senior (65+)	12.00	_____
Student (14+w/ID)	12.00	_____
Sustaining	30.00	_____
Patron	60.00	_____
Individual Life Membership	400.00	_____
Donation <i>(General Fund, Jr. Audubon, Sanctuary, Scholarship and/or Audubon Adventure)</i>		_____
Total Amount Enclosed		_____

Make checks payable to:

Grand Rapids Audubon Club, Inc.

Send application and check to:

Cynthia Davidek, Assistant Treasurer
832 Fairmount St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506-1506

Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

GRAC Board Meetings are held at 6:00 PM prior to each month's general membership meeting.

Junior Audubon Meetings are held Saturdays at various locations.

General Membership Meetings are held the last Monday of the month (Sept. – May) at 7:30 PM at the John F. Donnelly Center of Aquinas College located at 157 Woodward Lane SE. December (Christmas Bird Count) and May (Annual Banquet) meetings are held at different locations and times. Upcoming field trip information is published in each newsletter. See the GRAC website for the complete field trip list. Any additions or deletions to the above calendar will be noted in future issues of the newsletter.

Serving You

GRAC Board and Committee Chairpersons are listed below for

Grand Rapids Audubon Club Board of Directors and Special Committees

The Board of Directors consists of the Executive Council, the Immediate Past President and Chairpersons of the Standing Committees. In addition to the Board Of Directors, "Special Committees" and "Resident Agent" are also listed below.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

5 officers + 4 elected board members

- President – Sheryl Helmus
- Vice President – Scott Hutchings
- Secretary – Tom Leggett
- Treasurer – Jeff Neumann
- Ass't Treasurer – Cynthia Davidek
- Board Member – Landon Bell
- Board Member – Keith Helmus
- Board Member – Becky Kuhn
- Board Member – Jan Lewis
- Field Trips – Becky Kuhn
- Finance – Keith Helmus
- Fund Development – *open*
- Historian – Linda Damstra
- Hospitality – Bea VerBurg, Henry Raad and Rosemary Radius
- Insurance – Jill Goodell
- Junior Audubon – *open*
- Library – Norine and Jim Shea / Fidencio Paradez
- Maher Sanctuary – Chris Baer
- Membership – Theresa Dykhuis
- Nominating – Scott Hutchings
- Publicity – Tricia Boot
- Scholarship – *inactive*
- Special Events – *open*
- Website – Fred VanOeveren

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

(non-voting member)
 John Chronowski 2016-17, 2017-18

STANDING COMMITTEES

- Aud. Adventures – Mary Austin
- Audio/Visual – Robert Riepma
- Bird Reports – Carol VanOeveren
- Caller* Editor – Tricia Boot
- Caller* Publisher – Peggy Falk
- Christmas Count – Tom Leggett / Steve Mueller

SPECIAL COMMITTEES / CHAIRPERSONS

(non-members of Board of directors in this capacity)
 Aud. Adventures – Mary Austin
 Insurance – Jill Goodell

RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

Grand Rapids Audubon Club
3426 13 Mile Rd. NE
Rockford, MI 49341

Return Service Requested

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PLEASE RUSH
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Grand Rapids Audubon Club

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