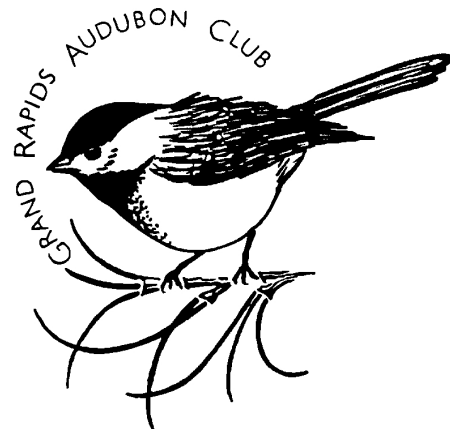


the Caller

April 2018, Volume 56, No. 8

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by GRAC, 6152 Georgeann Ct., Belmont, MI 49506-9783



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www.facebook.com/grandrapidsaudubonclub/

April Meeting Notes

Date: Monday, April 30
Time: 7:00 PM social; 7:30 PM program
Location: John Donnelly Conference Center
Aquinas College
Speaker: Penny Briscoe
Topic: Purple Martins: True Backyard Pets

Purple Martins, the largest of the swallows, have been experiencing serious declines since the mid-1950s. Graceful in flight and full of aerial acrobatics, these friendly birds with their cheerful song now depend solely on human-provided housing to raise their young.

No longer simply a matter of erecting housing in appropriate locations, caring Purple Martin landlords have taken many measures to assist with the success of these vulnerable birds that have been known by many as a welcome part of the American landscape.

Penny Briscoe has been a Purple Martin landlord for 33 years, hosting the same long-standing colony on Barton Lake just south of Vicksburg. During that time, Penny has made many changes to the housing to increase the success rate of nesting pairs. She is a Purple Martin mentor for the nationwide Purple Martin Conservation Association and has earned Master Naturalist designation through the Michigan Conservation Stewards Program, MSU Extension Services.

Leaders Needed: You Can Help Shape the Club's Future

by Scott Hutchings, Nomination Committee
Chairperson

Members are stepping up to help the club in the upcoming year. Tom Leggett volunteered as Secretary, Landon Bell and Jan Lewis for Board Members at Large, Cynthia Davidek will be Assistant Treasurer, Mary Austin is taking over Audubon Adventures, and Peggy Falk will be our *Caller* Publisher.

Opportunities remain for important leadership roles. Most pressing are the offices of President and Vice President. These roles provide an exciting chance to help shape the future of our club. Don't let the titles intimidate you, either! The President primarily runs the meetings, and the Vice President books our speakers. Past Presidents and Board Members are able and willing to lend a hand in the transition. A full listing of openings is on the website, with a link to my email. You also can call me at (616) 340-9071.

2018 Birdathon

The Birdathon is almost here. Counting can be done any time between 12:01 AM on April 15 and 11:59 PM on May 31.

Teams must have at least two members and can bird for up to six hours. If six hours is not enough, you can form a new team (in the field) and go again!

If you haven't previously participated, this would be a great year to get involved with this fun fundraiser, which last year raised \$1,300.

Check www.graud.org for official rules, pledge forms and reporting forms.

Questions and feedback can be directed to Jill Goodell – jillgoodell@yahoo.com or Rob Peters – lrp003@aquinas.edu.

Deadline for May/June newsletter articles: **June 1**

(send to Tricia Boot)



GRAC Field Trips

Visit www.graud.org for the complete 2018 list. Contact Becky Kuhn with field trip suggestions/ideas.

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 winter months. Hazardous weather may cancel a trip.

**Thursdays, April 5, 12, 19 and 26, 9:00 AM;
May 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, 8:00 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.

Saturday, April 7, 7:30 AM

Leaders: Lizzy Kibbey and Steve Minard

Muskegon County Duck Trip

This trip will focus on ducks. Some winter ducks may be around and most of the spring ducks will have arrived. Stops are planned for Pere Marquette Park where bay ducks, scoters, scaup and mergansers are possible as are loons, grebes and gulls. If it's safe and dry, plan to walk on the breakwater. A stop at the Muskegon Channel is planned, where we should see similar species, depending on weather. Time permitting, we'll squeeze in a stop at the gravel pits on Winnetaska Road. A rest stop is planned before Muskegon Wastewater. If the large lagoons are ice-free, they attract divers and puddle ducks. Smaller ponds attract puddle ducks. We will probably run a bit past noon. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the Boy Scout Headquarters on Walker (north of I-96) at 7:30 AM. Bring a drink or snack to keep you going until lunch. Bring your CB or family radio if you have one and we'll try to keep in touch between cars.

Tuesday, April 17, 8:30 PM

Leader: Ray Gates

Woodcock "Display" at Luton Park

Carpool or meet in the south-end parking lot of Luton Park (Rockford area) off Kies Street. We will wait until we hear the birds' "peenting" call and then dash a short distance to watch their sky dance. We should be done by 9:30 PM. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather.

Saturday, April 21, 7:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Spring Marsh Birds and Hawks

Join us to look for marsh birds at Lane's Landing in the Muskegon State Game Area. Rails should be in the marsh and Swamp Sparrows should be on territory. We'll see how the winds blow and either head over to the Muskegon Wastewater for waterfowl or head to Grand Haven to check Harbor Island and hawk-watch locations. At the Wastewater, Northern Shoveler and Ruddy Duck are likely; in Grand Haven, we could see Caspian Tern on Lake Michigan or a Peregrine Falcon at the power plant. Rails also can be seen in Grand Haven. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the Boy Scout Headquarters west off Walker Road just north of I-96 at 7:00 AM. We plan to bird until noon. You may want to bring a snack to hold you over until lunch.

Tuesday, May 1, 6:30 PM

Leader: Steve Minard

Tuesday Evening at Reeds Lake

This trip is an evening walk to the Hodenpyl Woods area at the west end of Reeds Lake. Varied woodland, marsh and lake habitat provides a variety of birds. We will concentrate on waterbirds and early warblers. The boardwalk provides good views of the lake and marsh areas. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the East Grand Rapids Utility Building parking lot on Reeds Lake Blvd north of Gaslight Village. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful.

Saturday, May 5, 8:00 AM

Leader: Larry Burke

Paul Henry Thornapple Trail in Middleville

This trail is the site of the annual Woodpecker Festival, and is a great place to find Red-headed Woodpeckers and most of the other resident Michigan woodpeckers. Many other species should be present, including early migrating warblers and possibly summering Prothonotary Warblers. The paved, flat trail makes for an easy, safe, wheelchair-accessible walk. The trail more or less follows the Thornapple River and is bordered by bayous that invite many ducks and other waterbirds. The variety and number of birds should make this enjoyable.

Essentials: We will meet at the Arby's at M-37 (Broadmoor Avenue) and 44th Street (northeast corner of the intersection) in Kentwood at 7:30 AM and carpool from there to Middleville. Alternatively, you can meet us at the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail behind Village Hall (100 Main St.) in Middleville at 8:00 AM. This will be a morning trip and we will be finished no later than noon. Be prepared for insects.

Continued on page 3



Continued from page 2

Tuesday, May 8, 6:30 PM

Leader: Steve Minard

Tuesday Evening at Reeds Lake

This is an evening walk to the Hodenpyl Woods area at the west end of Reeds Lake. Varied woodland, marsh and lake habitat provides a variety of birds. The second week of May should be near the peak of spring migration and just about anything is possible here. Steve will be looking for migrants. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the East Grand Rapids Utility Building parking lot on Reeds Lake Blvd north of Gaslight Village. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful.

Wednesday, May 16, 8:00 AM

Leader: Mark Moerdyk

Lamoreaux Park Birding

Join us as we explore this wonderful park's various microhabitats in search of warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers and many other spring migrants. The park has wide and well-groomed paths that wind through woodland swamps, along the Grand River and across a prairie as well as a marsh and mature forest. The abundance and wide variety of birds will make this trip enjoyable for birders of all skill levels. If the Grand River is quite high, a very small section of the trail may be slightly flooded.

Essentials: We will meet at the main parking lot off Coit Avenue, which is a third of a mile north of the intersection of Woodworth Street. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful.

Saturday, May 19, 9:30 AM

Leader: Nick Keller

Goodrich Lake Trail and Buck Tale Farm Hike

Spend a Michigan spring morning hiking the trails of Goodrich Lake to see many spring species such as Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Bluebird, Yellow Warbler, Eastern Towhee and many others. A stand of birch trees offers great viewpoints of birds and deer. An open meadow also provides great bird viewing. In the middle of the property is a fen that has great overlooks for viewing birds. One of my favorite parts, however, is the cathedral of pines where people can enjoy the majestic scenery and even have a chance to see a variety of woodpeckers such as the Pileated and if we're lucky, the Red-headed Woodpecker.

Lunch will be provided at Buck Tale Farm before touring a completely refurbished barn and learning its history. Trails around the farm's perimeter allow us to look for different birds such as the Indigo Bunting, Sandhill Cranes and a nesting pair of Red-tailed Hawks. Deer and other interesting wildlife abound.

Essentials: Meet at 1250 Goodrich Lake Dr. Colon, MI 49040 (The farm is located about ten miles away: 585 Lindley Road, Bronson, Michigan)

Safety Hazards: Be sure to dress for the weather and have bug spray if needed. The trails are well groomed. There may be poison ivy off the trails.

Saturday, May 26, 7:30 AM

Leader: Zach DeBruine

Southern Kent County Specialty Birds

Join us on a special-access visit to Kent County's premier shorebird destination and a search for resident Cerulean Warblers and late-arriving neotropical migrants. We'll start with a half-mile hike among the towering cottonwood stands lining the Coldwater River looking for Cerulean Warblers staking out their territory in the canopies.

We'll also listen to the Wood Thrushes and Acadian Flycatchers leading the dawn chorus, look for Scarlet Tanagers and Indigo Buntings and enjoy the lush and tranquil spring woods. Then we'll drive down 100th Street east to the Caledonia Sewage Facility on M-37 in search of shorebirds and other passerines. Possible species include Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover, Least Sandpiper and Semipalmated Sandpiper. We will share birding access guidelines for visiting this facility at any time. A brief extension to the Gerald R. Ford Airport in search of grassland species is possible.

Essentials: Meet at the Baker Coldwater Sanctuary parking lot on the east side of Baker Avenue just north of the bridge over the Coldwater River (near Maher Sanctuary). Visit <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L612508> for GPS coordinates. Please stay with the group at Caledonia Sewage Facility, and do not visit independently unless you are aware of the stringent access protocols. Follow us by car into the facility and park at the headquarters (normally individual birders will park behind the third gate outside the lagoons and out of the way of trucks or equipment). Do NOT drive around the lagoons. Leave all gates as you find them. Stay on obvious paths. Respect private property. Your cooperation is appreciated!

Safety Hazards: Always dress for the expected weather conditions. Prepare to hike a half-mile total along potentially moist trails. Note: Caledonia Sewage Ponds access instructions can be found on page 4 of this *Caller* and on the "bird sightings" page of www.graud.org.



March 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 March 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.

March lived up to the wild side of its reputation coming in like a lion. A quick-moving, windy, rain-to-snow storm passed through the area on the 1st dumping most of the precipitation south and east of Grand Rapids. Four pleasant, dry and sunny days in the 40s followed. A wintery pattern and occasional snow showers returned by the 6th lasting through mid-month. Following a brief warm-up on the 17th and 18th, a cool and very dry pattern settled in until late month. Seasonable to below-normal temperatures and another windy, rain/snow system ended the month.

Snowy Owls continued to be seen throughout the month in the four-county area. One even showed up on the roof of a building under construction adjacent to the WOOD-TV studios on College Ave NE in Grand Rapids Mar 8 (not an eBird report). As usual, the most prolific sightings were in Ottawa Co. Refer to the “bird sightings” page of the GRAC website for locations and the eBird county links for the most recent sightings. **Great Horned Owls** were spotted nesting at Grand River Ravines Park near Grand Valley State University in Ottawa Co. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43926685> for Judi Manning’s sweet photos of mama and two owlets.

The best find was two **Red Crossbills** spotted by Curtis Dykstra on Croswell St E of Olive Shores Ave Mar 30. Visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44090544> for photos.

Up to 15 **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued since Feb 22 at S Swanson Rd potholes in Muskegon Co Mar 17; a good number of **Cackling Geese** (17) were observed at the 116th Ave and 8th St wetland in Allegan Co Mar 2, up to 21 continued there through Mar 20 (eight of the original group continued in a wet field about a half-mile east along 116th Ave Mar 25-30) and three at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Mar 15; a **Red-throated Loon** at Holland SP Mar 6 and one at Douglas Beach Park in Allegan Co Mar 11; a **Golden Eagle** continued since Jan at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Mar 25 and one continued since Jan at Muskegon Wastewater Mar 4; a very early **Virginia Rail** at Allegan SGA 44th St wetland Mar 4 was joined by another Mar 9, both continuing through the month; at least one **Eurasian Collared-Dove** of the original nine spotted Feb 23 continued at the dairy farm on 20th St S of 144th Ave in Allegan Co Mar 11;

a **Common Raven** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Mar 21 – range expanding southward; a very early **Veery** calling at Van Raalte Farm Park in Ottawa Co Mar 29; a low est of **200 Lapland Longspurs** were spotted in a cornfield along 8th Ave N of Truman Rd in Ottawa Co Mar 8 – largest number seen in Ottawa Co this winter; **Yellow-rumped Warblers** wintered at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access in Ottawa Co with eight still there Mar 2; a **Western Meadowlark** (originally found by Rick Brigham) along 58th St between 116th and 117th Aves at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Mar 19-30 – visit <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43845684> for photos; five **Rusty Blackbirds** at Allegan SGA Todd Farm Mar 2 – first report with 150 there Mar 8; a few **Common Redpolls** reported at feeders in Allegan and Ottawa cos; and **Pine Siskins** continued to be widespread and in good numbers throughout the four-county area.

New Caledonia Sewage Ponds Access Instructions

For those who bird the Caledonia Sewage Ponds, Caleb Putnam informs us of new access instructions from plant manager Aaron Zimmerman.

1) Please park in front of the third gate instead of along M-37. This is the final gate before you hit the lagoon. He is concerned about safety. The M-37 gate, if closed by staff at 4:30 or 5:00 PM, is always unlocked so you won’t get locked in the facility.

2) All birders are invited to use the indoor bathroom and get bottled water from the main facility – it’s the door at the southwest corner of the building.

3) Please park out of the way of all traffic and leave the gates as you find them. Be mindful of the workers and vehicles at all times. The gates will apparently be left open most of the time.

4) Do not drive into the lagoon area! If you see someone doing this, please ask them to park at the third gate and walk the dikes.

5) Do not walk down into the cells – he doesn’t want people getting the sludge on their feet, as it presents a liability to the plant.

Access to this site is a privilege, and Aaron’s personal willingness to let us all bird the site is the main reason we still have access. Please thank him and his staff if you interact with them, and let’s be on our best behavior!

A copy of this list and a map of the facility are posted on the “bird sightings” page of the GRAC website.



Mary's Membership Musings

by Mary Austin

Here are my musings for this month.

Are you a hatch-year birder? Twitcher? Dipper?

I recently stumbled across these words and decided to find out what they meant.

A hatch-year birder is a person with no birding experience who suddenly discovers the thrill of birding and becomes so involved with birding that he or she begins chasing uncommon birds and traveling to obscure locations to log rare sightings.

A twitcher is a person who is twitching (that is, can't wait to get out) to see a rare bird.

A dipper is a person who attempts to see an unusual bird (and may travel great distances to see the bird) but totally misses seeing (or hearing) the bird. That person can be described as having "dipped out" by missing the rare bird.

Now that I've given those definitions, I'll center on more customary GRAC membership information and say "welcome" to our newest members: **Rosemary Conlin** of Grand Rapids and **Ken Ward** of Cedar Springs. Hope to see you on some of GRAC's spring field trips and at the April 30 general membership meeting.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) is having a number of spring birding tours in wetland areas. One that might be of interest to GRAC members is Saturday, April 14 at the Muskegon County Wastewater System. The tour begins at 9:00 AM at the Muskegon State Game Area Office, 7600 E. Messinger Rd., Twin Lake. Dress for the weather, wear boots and bring binoculars (and a spotting scope, if possible). For more information, call (231) 788-5055. For other spring birding tours throughout Michigan, visit michigan.gov/wetlandwonders.

By the way, see you on Saturday, April 28 at the Thornapple Woodpecker Festival in Middleville. You can read more about the festival in the column to the right.

March 2018 Thursdays at Millennium Park

by Katie Bolt

I am happy to be able to walk the distance again and join friends and newcomers on our Thursday walks. I was able to join Ed Bolt and Kathy Haase the last two Thursdays of March. Both days we had pleasant walks in spite of somewhat threatening weather. The route looks quite altered after the flood with many more trees down and more sand than we've ever seen in many years of using this trail. The park staff does a wonderful job of clearing the trails quickly after a storm and we saw much evidence of their hard work.

We saw all of the usuals (Canada Goose, Mallard, American Robin, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Flicker, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, Downy Woodpecker, Red-winged Blackbird, Mute Swan, Mourning Dove and Hairy Woodpecker). Newer birds for the season included a Bald Eagle on a nest, Common Grackle, American Tree Sparrow, Sandhill Crane, Brown Creeper singing its spring song, Song Sparrow, Gadwall and Rusty Blackbird.

Get Ready for the April 28 Thornapple Woodpecker Festival

Expectations of a great day of birding and events abound on Saturday, April 28 at the Thornapple Woodpecker Festival in Middleville.

The Woodpecker Festival runs from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The festival is sponsored in part by GRAC, and GRAC members will offer free guided walking tours of the Paul Henry-Thornapple Trail. A golf cart is available for a small cost for those who wish to see the trail by vehicle.

Red-headed Woodpeckers already have been reported along the trail this spring. Festival-goers also are likely to observe the other five more-common Eastern U.S. woodpeckers, warblers, swallows and waterfowl.

Besides the opportunity for great birding, festival-goers will be able to attend nature-related presentations throughout the day in the Village Hall. Arts and crafts items will be offered for sale in the downtown Pavilion. Guests can learn about the history of local railroading in the historic village Train Depot.

There's still an opportunity to volunteer for leading walking tours of the Paul Henry-Thornapple Trail or answering questions from two spotting locations along the trail. Volunteers are needed between 8:45 AM to 3:15 PM for flexible shift times. Contact Becky (vice.president@graud.org) or Mary (membership@graud.org) to volunteer. Volunteers will be contacted about a week prior to the festival to confirm shift times.

Are you an artist or crafter? Contact Mary Austin at membership@graud.org to register for the April 28 Thornapple Woodpecker Festival arts and crafts show.



Spring Migration Count

by Steve Minard

*North American Migration Count in Kent County
Saturday, May 12*

Once again, I plan to compile the North American Migration Count for Kent County and put all our results on eBird. I will be sending out checklists to participants. If you have an email account and I have emailed you material in the past, I will email you the checklist as a spreadsheet. I also can email this to anyone else who would like to receive the spreadsheet.

With the spreadsheet, you can add your numbers for each bird species and send it back to me. If I have mailed you the paper checklist, I will continue to do this unless you would like to get the spreadsheet via email. I also will have copies available at the April GRAC meeting and at my Reeds Lake field trips on May 1 and May 8.

Plan on spending some time birding in Kent County on May 12 and report your birds to me. Feeder counts, stationary counts and moving counts all help.

Climate Watch Survey

by Katie Bolt

During his presentation in November, Caleb Putnam mentioned a Citizen Science Project through the National Audubon Society. It tracks specific bird species to determine if and how climate change is affecting them. Several of us were quite interested in this project and decided to give it a shot. Ideally, we would have had ten sections of Kent County selected for surveying purposes, but at the time we only had five sections. Each volunteer selected ten locations to survey between January 15 and February 15.

Most of us picked sections near where we live for convenience. We each went to our locations and listened and watched for a five-minute interval. We recorded all the birds that we heard or saw with special focus on the White-breasted Nuthatch. The bird lists were entered into eBird and shared with ClimateWatch. We made a few mistakes (my fault) such as only surveying ten locations within our squares instead of twelve, but there's a learning curve here.

Although some had difficulty getting to their locations due to snow, it was an enlightening experience to discover how few of the spots actually had White-breasted Nuthatches, which seems like a fairly common bird. We will repeat our surveys between May 15 and June 15 and it will be fun to see how different our data is in the spring. Thanks to Tom Leggett, Cynthia Davidek, Marilyn and Phil Pikaart and Scott Hutchings for volunteering for this project. We would love to have more volunteers for the future. Please reach out if you are interested.

Ten Reasons to Visit Maher Audubon Sanctuary this Spring

by Chris Baer

Have you been to Maher lately? This is the time of year when Maher is eye and ear candy. So, this is your list of things to do at Maher.

1. Walk the entire route around the sanctuary. Do not be discouraged by down trees over the trail. Experience it as an adventure.
2. Note and count how many spring flowers and plants you can find along the path. Can you name them?
3. Note and count the birds that you see and hear along the route.
4. Then, walk the route again, but this time, stop at each bench and sit for 15 minutes, again counting the birds you see and hear. Is it different from #3?
5. Go to the cattail marsh along the boardwalk and carefully watch – really watch – the red-wing blackbirds. They are very entertaining. How many are there? Such a common bird that exhibits interesting behavior.
6. Visit the oak savannah (a left turn after the artesian spring creek) and see the bur oaks. They have grown up and up, and as they grow, their bark changes. Look at and feel the bark. Not many oak trees go through these changes from smooth (young trees) to deeply furrowed, scaly ridges (older trees).
7. Cross the Bridge to Nowhere (take the south boardwalk to its end) and explore the woods there. What do you find? Think of a good name for the Bridge to Nowhere.
8. View the streams from different places along the south arm of the boardwalk. What do you see? Note any fish or aquatic insects in Caine Creek (under the Bridge to Nowhere) or the artesian spring creek (right turn at the parking lot, bridge with railing).
9. Observe the marle pond for 15 minutes (left turn from the parking lot). Stand quietly on the new section of boardwalk donated by Judy McNally's family. What do you see? A muskrat was observed there last year and frequently wood ducks paddle the pond. The male wood duck is a sight to behold.
10. According to Al Batt "there is no secret to birding other than birding." So, go birding every chance you get.



GRAC Annual May Meeting

The Annual May Meeting will be held Monday, May 21 at Roselle Park, 1010 Grand River Dr., Ada, MI 49301. The entrance to the park is located directly across from Michigan Street and the park is located north of M-21 (Fulton Street).

Arrive early to enjoy a guided or solo stroll through the park. A potluck dinner is planned, so bring your favorite dish to pass. Bring your own serving utensils and table service. The only table service provided will be cups for the punch bowl, if needed. Our aim is to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

No reservations are needed and there is no cost. However, donations for the punch and cups will be accepted.

Hike – 5:00 PM – Becky Kuhn will lead a hike, or stroll the park on your own.

Punch Bowl – 6:00 PM – Time to mix and mingle.

Potluck Dinner – 6:30 PM – Self-serve dinner begins. Some suggestions for dishes to bring are: fresh fruit plate or fruit salad, fresh veggies or garden salad, specialty bread/rolls with spread, hot potato or vegetable dish, meat platter or hot casserole or meat dish, or dessert. Coffee and tea may be available depending on weather.

Meeting – 7:30 PM – Following dinner, a short business meeting will be held to vote on two important items: the Slate of Officers for 2018-2019 and the Proposed Budget for 2018-2019 (see below to review budget*).

Following the business meeting Dr. Marie Perkins, a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, will present “An Overview of Monitoring Methods, Capture Techniques and Population Status for North American Rails.”

**Proposed budget has been approved by the GRAC Board and approval by the membership is recommended. It will be discussed at the April 30 meeting and approved by membership at the May meeting.*

GRAND RAPIDS AUDUBON CLUB Proposed Budget 2018-2019

General Fund Expenses	2016-17	2017-18 Budget	7/1/17 to 3/27/18	2018-19 Proposed
Bird-a-Thon	\$0.00	\$200	\$159.00	\$100
Caller (Printing & Postage)	\$737.44	\$435	\$457.14	\$450
Christmas Bird Count	\$82.00	\$100	\$36.00	\$50
Club Expenses (Insurance, Postage, SOM filing)	\$835.00	\$820	\$774.40	\$860
Fundraising/Sponsorships	\$0.00	\$0	\$350.00	\$300
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$706.07	\$20	\$0.00	\$200
Program Speakers	\$650.00	\$700	\$600.00	\$1,050
Publicity/Marketing/Communication	\$264.91	\$700	\$25.00	\$600
Meeting Room Rental	\$1,747.50	\$1,800	\$787.50	\$2,300
Restricted Fund Expenses				
Audubon Adventures Expenses	\$234.75	\$400	\$0.00	\$2,000
Junior Audubon Expenses	\$144.74	\$300	\$0.00	\$200
Maher Sanctuary Expenses	\$1,645.17	\$600	\$864.00	\$600
Scholarship Disbursements	\$200.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$400
Total Expenses	\$7,247.58	\$6,075	\$4,053.04	\$9,110
General Fund Income				
2016-17				
Bird-a-Thon	\$647.00	\$400	\$819.00	\$500
Christmas Bird Count	\$0.00	\$100	\$36.00	\$50
Fundraising/Miscellaneous Income	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$300
General Fund Donations	\$1,824.05	\$1,500	\$978.00	\$1,500
Membership Dues	\$2,586.00	\$2,500	\$1,942.50	\$2,500
Transfer from accumulated general cash	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$1,060
Restricted Fund Income				
Audubon Adventures Donations	\$413.00	\$400	\$300.00	\$400
Junior Audubon Donations	\$445.00	\$450	\$136.00	\$200
Maher Sanctuary Donations	\$1,650.00	\$300	\$600.00	\$600
Scholarship Donations	\$0.00	\$50	\$8.00	\$400
Transfer from accumulated restricted cash	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$1,600
Total Income	\$7,565.05	\$5,700	\$4,819.50	\$9,110



Ranger Steve's Nature Niche

Bird Nest Boxes

by Ranger Steve Mueller

It is time to clean nest boxes. Bird behavior announces they are claiming breeding territory. It is beautiful music to our ears when we hear the variety of songs in our neighborhood. In bird neighborhoods, songs announce property boundaries and call for mates.

Within a given breeding territory, appropriate nesting space is essential. Many species require cavities in hollow trees. People have a habit of removing dead and hollow trees for a variety of reasons. To maintain adequate cavity nest opportunities, install nest boxes in a variety of habitats.

Most well-known are Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallow nest boxes. If not placed well, they are taken over by House Wrens or House Sparrows that frequently kill bluebirds and swallows.

At Howard Christensen Nature Center, I made sure the nest boxes were a considerable distance from shrubbery. When placed in open areas, the House Sparrows and House Wrens usually did not interfere with the open field nesting species. Tree Swallows compete with bluebirds for nest boxes. That problem can be reduced by placing two nest boxes within 15 feet of each other. A Tree Swallow that claims one box does not allow other Tree Swallows to use the nearby box. The swallow will allow bluebirds to use it. In effect, the swallow protects the bluebirds from being driven out by swallows when two boxes are placed near one another.

Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary's field has experienced plant succession with the invasion of native shrubs and trees. The shrubs have driven swallows out and bluebirds have not used some boxes meant for them. We have begun clearing shrubs and trees from the field to create more open habitat. Hopefully we will once again entice swallows and keep the bluebirds nesting here. In one area where bluebirds stopped nesting, I cleared an area around the nest box and the next year bluebirds began using the box again.

Birds like Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches nest in cavities in wooded areas. I place houses in the woods for their consideration. Birdhouse boards often are about a half-inch thick. We have placed predator guards on the boxes. It is an additional board that makes the entrance hole about one inch deep. Animals, like raccoons, that reach in cannot bend their legs to reach the eggs or young birds.

The boxes are placed in locations away from heavy human traffic. When close to human activity, birds often are alarmed and leave the nest box when people approach. It interrupts egg incubation.

Many designs offer selection options for nesting. The entrance hole size is important to prevent unwanted species from entering. Sometimes, wrens – that are smaller than bluebirds – enter and kill bluebirds. Instead of a round or oval opening, a rectangular slit is used. It allows the bluebird to escape instead of being trapped by an invading wren. If an entrance hole is too large, European Starlings can enter and kill resident birds.

Last year's nest material should be removed from boxes so birds can start fresh with new materials that are fungus and parasite free. Cleaning nest boxes removes health hazards like mice turds or bird droppings. Wear rubber gloves and a face mask for your own protection when cleaning nests. Mice often occupy nest boxes during the winter and they can carry diseases to avoid, like Hantavirus.

One time, near the edge of an invading forest, I found Southern Flying Squirrels using one of the nest boxes. Having lots of nest boxes provides opportunities for many species to nest. It is a joy to serve nature niche needs for a diversity of animals.

Carrol Henderson wrote a book titled "Woodworking for Wildlife." It is available from the Minnesota DNR and I have seen it in bird specialty stores in the area. It provides the plans for making different wildlife nest boxes. If you haven't cleaned nest boxes this spring, I recommend completing the task now. Install more boxes to provide nesting cavities.

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.

March Finance Report

Prepared by Jeff Neumann-Treasurer

Checking Account Balance: \$ 7,883.12
Edward Jones Account: \$37,006.83
Total Assets as of 3/26/18: \$44,889.95

Restricted Funds (included in the total assets)

Maher Sanctuary Fund: \$2,979.04
Junior Audubon Fund: \$4,150.12
Life Dues Fund: \$9,103.00

The balances in the Maher Sanctuary and Junior Audubon Funds are restricted to expenditures for items related to the respective funds. The Life Dues Fund is not restricted as to what expenses may be recompensed, but the amount of such payments is limited to only the interest generated by the fund.



GRAC CALENDAR

- April
5 Field Trip: Millennium Park w/ Katie Bolt (and 12, 19, 26)
7 Field Trip: Musk. Co. Duck Trip w/ Lizzy Kibbey & Steve Minard
11 Climate Fest: Our Children's Future
12 "On Being a Rare Bird," Dr. J. Drew Lanham
15 Birdathon Starts
17 Field Trip: Woodcock Display w/ Ray Gates
21 Field Trip: Spring Marsh Birds and Hawks w/ Steve Minard
28 Thornapple Woodpecker Festival
30 GRAC Board & General Membership Meetings

- May
1 Field Trip: Reeds Lake w/ Steve Minard (and 8)
3 Field Trip: Millennium Park w/ Katie Bolt (and 10, 17, 24, 31)
5 Field Trip: Middleville w/ Larry Burke
16 Field Trip: Lamoreaux Park w/ Mark Moerdyk
19 Field Trip: Goodrich Lake Trail w/ Nick Keller
21 GRAC Annual May Membership Meeting
26 Field Trip: Southern Kent County w/ Zach DeBruine

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.

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.

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.)

Table with membership rates: 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 (General Fund, Jr. Audubon, Sanctuary, Scholarship, Audubon Adventures, etc.), Total Amount Enclosed

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 - John Chronowski
Vice President - Becky Kuhn
Secretary - Cynthia Davidek
Treasurer - Jeff Neumann
Assistant Treasurer - Mary Austin
Board Member - Howard Huisman
Board Member - Rob Peters
Board Member - Sheryl Helmus
Board Member - Keith Helmus
Field Trips - Becky Kuhn
Finance - Jill Goodell
Fund Development - open
Historian - Linda Damstra
Hospitality - Bea VerBurg
Junior Audubon - open
Library - Norine and Jim Shea / Fidencio Paradez
Maher Sanctuary - Chris Baer
Membership - Mary Austin
Nominating - Scott Hutchings
Publicity - Tricia Boot
Scholarship - inactive
Website - Fred VanOeveren

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT (non-voting member)

Scott Hutchings 2014-15, 2015-16

STANDING COMMITTEES

Per 2013 GRAC Bylaws, there are 19 Standing Committees. Each committee chairperson is a voting member of the Board. Committee names shown are per bylaws.

- Audio/Visual - Robert Riepma
Bird Reports - Carol VanOeveren
Caller Editor - Tricia Boot
Caller Publisher - Becky Kuhn
Christmas Count - Tom Leggett / Steve Mueller

SPECIAL COMMITTEES / CHAIRPERSONS

(non-members of Board of directors in this capacity)
Audubon Adventures - open
Insurance - Jill Goodell

RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

Grand Rapids Audubon Club
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Grand Rapids Audubon Club

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