

the Caller

November 2020, Volume 59, No. 4

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



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November Nature Program Offered Online

Because of the continued spread of COVID-19 in our community, we have canceled our in-person meeting for November. Instead, we will offer our first-ever virtual meeting/nature program. We hope you can join us for this educational and entertaining opportunity from the safety and comfort of your home!

Our November speaker is Justin Heslinga, stewardship director for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. Justin's talk is titled "Restoring Urban Nature: Lessons from The Highlands."

Time: Nov. 30, 2020 at 7:30 PM

Use this link below to join the Zoom meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/92018285571?pwd=bk8xMWJsR2d2NUZNMnVwL21pcTdyUT09>

Meeting ID: 920 1828 5571

Passcode: 1P3Z0f



President's Corner

by Scott Hutchings

Wonder

How many times have you experienced wonder? Like the sun coming up over a landscape of ice and snow on the first day of the year after searching for owls in the dark. Thousands of Sandhill cranes spiraling up from a field in a tornado of wings. A tiny hummingbird setting on a mossy eggcup of a nest. A flock of skimmers changing direction and instantly going from white to black as they turn. A flock of black-bellied plovers passing at arms reach on either side. Cerulean warblers in mating battle almost colliding with birders. A rare sighting of a fox, coyote or bobcat. A sky full of migrating nighthawks. Those are some of my wonder moments and I bet you have many of your own. One of the best things about birding is that it gets us out to experience the amazing natural world.

Field Trips for Fall and Winter 2020

Our club will continue to offer field trips within the Kent Co. area, where attendees will meet at the hike location. We may also offer trips into surrounding areas. In the past we would carpool to farther locations; as the COVID-19 pandemic persists, birders should drive separately and ONLY ride with members of their immediate household.

All field trips, led by our guides, will follow safe COVID-19 protocols. Generally, this will include social distancing and masks, as appropriate. Please continue to watch GRAC's website for field trip offerings.

If you would like to lead a field trip for GRAC please email Cate and Becky Kuhn at field.trips@graud.org or text or call Becky at (616) 437-9205.

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

Send to: newsletter@graud.org



October 2020 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 2020 for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties. This report does not include rare birds that are flyovers, unchaseable, on inaccessible private property and those with sketchy details.

The cool (temps in 50s to low 60s) and damp period continued into the first week of the month. A very dry, pleasant period followed and temperatures warmed above normal into the 70s by the 9th. A cold front with storms on the 12th brought temps back to normal. A series of cold fronts plunged us into a stretch of 40s and low 50s with occasional rain before a brief warm up into the 60s with more rain the 22nd and 23rd. Mostly dry, below normal conditions prevailed through the remaining period.

Large numbers of waterfowl continued to congregate at the Muskegon Wastewater including a few Snow and Greater White-fronted Geese, Canada Geese (thousands), Tundra Swans, teal sp, Northern Shoveler (in the thousands), Mallard, Northern Pintail, other dabblers, scaup sp, Ruddy Ducks (nearly 10,000) and other inland divers. Redhead, scaup, scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted Mergansers, other divers and loon sp began to congregate offshore in Lake Michigan mid-month.

Best finds: Two separate visuals of Northern Saw-whet Owls, a Varied Thrush and an Evening Grosbeak invasion at six separate locations after being absent from the area for years.

Notables for the month: Thirteen **Greater White-fronted Geese** (found by Joe Malott) at the Wastewater Oct 13, two (found by Tim Cornish) at 116th Ave/8th St wetland in Allegan Co Oct 17-24, six (found by Caleb Putnam) at 84th St/Kalamazoo SE flooded field in Kent Co Oct 23, one (found by Joey Hausler) at Sierrafield Lake in Kent Co Oct 24. Two **Snow Geese** at the Wastewater Oct 3 and 10 and up to five there Oct 13-15, three along 114th Ave E of 8th St in Allegan Co Oct 27. Up to two **Cackling Geese** at the Wastewater Oct 10-14 and one Oct 31. At least **100 Gadwall** at Harbor Island Grand Haven the end of the month. A **Surf Scoter** at Holland SP Oct 15 – first report, nine at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Oct 21, two at Kalamazoo River mouth Oct 25, three at Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co Oct 26, two at Grand Haven south pier Oct 27. Two **White-winged Scoters** at Holland SP – first report, 15 at Hoffmaster SP in Muskegon Co Oct 26, five at Kirk Park in Ottawa Co Oct 30. Two **Black Scoters** on pelagic trip to 5 mi W of Kalamazoo River mouth Oct 5 –

first report, up to two at Holland SP Oct 17-21, one at Pere Marquette Park Oct 19. A **Long-tailed Duck** at Pere Marquette Park Oct 5 – first report; large numbers reported offshore with a high count of **1,250** at Kirk Park in Ottawa Co Oct 30. A **Red-throated Loon** at Holland SP Oct 15 – first report, one on pelagic trip 5 mi W of Kalamazoo River mouth Oct 19, one at Grand Haven SP Oct 30. A **RED-NECKED GREBE** (found by Caleb Putnam/Julie Pedreros) at Millennium Park Oct 26, one (found by Ethan Kibbey) at Cottage Grove launch ramp in Muskegon Oct 31. Up to three **Eared Grebes** continued at the Wastewater Oct 31. A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Mill Point in Spring Lake Oct 4 – late. A **Rough-legged Hawk** at Black Lake Park in Muskegon Co Oct 10 – first report. A **Sora** at Riley Trails Park in Ottawa Co Oct 14 – late. A **Common Gallinule** at 11th St lake in Allegan Co Oct 19-23 – late. Up to eight **Black-bellied Plover** continued since Sep at the Wastewater Oct 26, one at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Oct 4, two at Grand Haven north pier Oct 24, two at Grand Haven south pier Oct 27. Seven **American Golden-Plover** in field along 120th Ave S of Bingham St in Ottawa Co Oct 5, eleven continued since Sep at 116th Ave/8th St wetland Oct 7, up to 21 at 118th Ave/23rd St fields in Allegan Co Oct 23-24. A **Solitary Sandpiper** at Fennessy Lake in Ottawa Co Oct 17-28 – late. A **HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (found by Beth Miller/John VanOrman – both were at the Wastewater during same time period) at the Wastewater Oct 14 continued Oct 15 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S74824475> to view Chip Francke's photos). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Wastewater Oct 3. A **Baird's Sandpiper** continued at the Wastewater Oct 2 and 25-29, one at 116th Ave/8th St wetland in Allegan Co Oct 22-26 – late. A **Stilt Sandpiper** (found by Ty Wagenmaker) at Coopersville Sewage Ponds Oct 4-10. Two **LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS** (found by Matthew Haverkamp) at the Wastewater Oct 15 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S74866639> to view Judi Manning's photos), one (found by Tim Cornish) at 116th Ave/8th St wetland in Ottawa Co Oct 25-30. Two **Red-necked Phalaropes** continued since Sep at the Wastewater Oct 3. An **Iceland Gull (Thayer's)** at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Oct 17 and two there Oct 21. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Wastewater Oct 3-11, one at Kalamazoo River mouth Oct 12 and 17, one at Holland SP Oct 15-22, five at Gun Lake Park in Allegan Co Oct 21, two at South Kent Recycling and Waste Center Oct 23-26. A **Short-eared Owl** (found by Ethan Kibbey) at the Wastewater Oct 31. It's unusual to physically locate one **Northern Saw-whet Owl** during the month, but two is really a rare occurrence;

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one at the Rowell residence in NE Grand Rapids Oct 5 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S74478936> for Al's photos and comments) and one (found by Brennen Beyer) at DeGraaf NC in Ottawa Co Oct 19 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S75102766> to view his photos) – they both are so cute, they almost appear to be toys. An **Eastern Whip-poor-will** at the Aurich residence in Cutlerville Oct 21 – late. At least **160 Chimney Swifts** entering chimney roost at Allegan United Methodist Church in Allegan at dusk Oct 4 – this impressive sight was observed by Tim Cornish. A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** continued at the Manning residence in W Ottawa Co Oct 11 – late. A **Northern Shrike** at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing Oct 23 – first report, one at Millennium Park Oct 29-30. A **Red-eyed Vireo** at Millennium Park Oct 26 – late. **85 Blue Jays** on southward movement over 118th Ave bog W of 8th St in Allegan Co Oct 1, **582** counted at Wau-Ke-Na, William Erby Smith Preserve south tract in Allegan Co Oct 11; large numbers migrating at various locations near and along the lakeshore during the month. Irruptive year for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. A **House Wren** at Ball Perkins Park in Kent Co Oct 9 – late. A **Sedge Wren** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access Oct 3 – late. Good movements of **Golden- and Ruby-crowned kinglets** throughout the month; high counts of 36 and 30 respectively in 1 hr 21 min at Muskegon SP channel campground Oct 16. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at DeGraaf NC in Ottawa Co Oct 20 – late. A **Swainson's Thrush** at Riley Trails Park in Ottawa Co Oct 22 – late. A **VARIED THRUSH** at the Holaday residence near Cascade Oct 23 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S75264867> to view Mike Holaday's photos) unfortunately did not linger in the area. A **Brown Thrasher** at Millennium Park Oct 26 – late. **50 American Pipits** at the Wastewater Oct 2 and 5, **60** there Oct 18, at least **100** at 118th Ave/23rd St fields in Allegan Co Oct 24. Up to two **Lapland Longspurs** at 118th Ave/23rd St fields in Allegan Co Oct 23-24 and up to **60** there Oct 26-31. A **Snow Bunting** at 118th Ave/23rd St fields in Allegan Co Oct 23 – first report; at various locations in Allegan, Muskegon and Ottawa cos with a high count of **223** at the Wastewater Oct 31. **Warblers:** A **Northern Waterthrush** at Muskegon SP Snug Harbor Oct 10 – late. A **Tennessee** at Window-on-the-Waterfront in Holland Oct 31 – very late. A **Nashville** at the Bend Area in Ottawa Co Oct 31 – very late. A **CONNECTICUT** (found by Samuel Moerdyk) at Donald Lamoreaux Park in Kent Co Oct 4 – unusual and late. A **Common Yellowthroat** at the Manning residence in W Ottawa Co Oct 25 – late. One **Northern Parula** at Plaster Creek Park in Grand Rapids Oct 18 and at VanRaalte Farm in Ottawa Co Oct 20 – both very late.

Two **Magnolia** along Kalamazoo River channel on boat trip in Allegan Co Oct 12 – late. Two **Bay-breasted** at Millennium Park Oct 10 – late. Huge influxes of **52 Yellow-rumped** at Millennium Park Oct 1, **80** at Paw Paw Park east in Ottawa Co Oct 3, **55** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access Oct 3 and good numbers kept streaming through the area throughout the month. A **Black-throated Green** at Roselle Park in Kent Co Oct 15 – late. **Sparrows:** Two **Clay-colored** at West Side County Park in Allegan Co Oct 24. A **Grasshopper** at the Wastewater Oct 5 – late. At least **50 Savannah** at the Wastewater Oct 5. The scruffy-looking **LECONTE'S** found at the Caledonia Sewage Ponds Sep 28 continued Oct 2 after not being seen for three days. The **NELSON'S** found at the Caledonia Sewage Ponds Sep 29 continued Oct 1. A **Fox** at Black Lake Park in Muskegon Co Oct 5 – first report, conservative count of 20 heard and seen at Grand River Park in Ottawa Co near dusk Oct 21. Good migration of **White-throated and White-crowned**. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area in Ottawa Co Oct 24 – late. An **Indigo Bunting** at Upper Macatawa Natural Area 84th Ave access Oct 6 – late. **Rusty Blackbirds** at various locations in all four counties with a high count of 19 at Muskegon SGA Lane's Landing Oct 17. Two **Brewer's Blackbirds** at the Smythe residence W of Hopkins in Allegan Co Oct 25 – late. Huge flock of **70 House Finches** at the Caledonia Sewage Ponds Oct 2. Numerous reports of **Purple Finches** in all four counties continued. Fourteen **Common Redpolls** at Reeds Lake south Oct 18 – first report, three at Grand Isle Park in Kent Co Oct 31, one at the Wastewater Oct 31. Irruptive year for **Pine Siskins** – large numbers throughout the area; high counts of 60 at Executive Pkwy SE in Kentwood Oct 6 and at the Wastewater Oct 16. Six **EVENING GROSBEAKS** visited briefly at the DeVries residence S of Holland in Allegan Co Oct 24 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S75333923> to view Ed DeVries' photos), eight (found by Travis Stinehelfer) at Harbor Island Grand Haven Oct 24 and flock of at least 21 observed by several at nearby Linear Park later in day before they quickly left (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S75352205> to view Emily Tornga's photos and <https://ebird.org/checklist/S75348242> to view Beth Miller's photos), three at the Shavaliere residence E of Douglas Oct 25 and 13 continued Oct 28, a flock of 30-40 at the Cater residence off Lincoln St W of 168th Ave and neighborhood in Ottawa Co Oct 26-31, nine at the Heft residence along 126th Ave W of 19th St in Allegan Co Oct 28, twelve at a residence on Crestwood Ln in Norton Shores Oct 29 and 37 there Oct 30 (visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S75571355> to view Ric Pedler's photos).

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Please note: It has come to my attention that some people are under the impression that all sightings listed in the eBird summaries are from GRAC members...not true. The sightings are taken from eBird checklists from **all observers in the four-county area.**

Lisa Casler's amazing and thorough checklists from Ottawa and Muskegon counties will be greatly missed (as will she). Her uncanny knack for finding Snowy Owls in the Ottawa County farmlands was unsurpassed.

Become a Citizen Scientist: Take Part in National Audubon's Climate Watch Survey

Save the dates for the winter survey period and help us count bluebirds, nuthatches or goldfinches: Jan. 15 to Feb. 15, 2021

Understanding how birds are responding to climate change is essential to protecting them. We need your help to do just that by counting and documenting how their ranges are shifting. Audubon's Climate Watch program contributes to scientific analysis by providing vital data on how birds are faring with climate change. The more information we have on birds across the country, the better prepared we will be to help them. Read Audubon's audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch to learn how the work of Climate Watch volunteers is helping to reveal how birds are responding to climate change, as well as educate yourself on how to become involved and participate in the program. If you have previously participated in Climate Watch, THANK YOU! We value your time and help in this important effort. The program has been growing steadily. If you are new to Climate Watch, please join us. You can find out more about the program by contacting Cate Roesler at field.trips@graud.org or phone or text Becky Kuhn at (616) 437-9205

Thank you for your willingness to get involved. We welcome your efforts in counting in one or more of the "squares" in Kent County, or surrounding areas. You will choose which bird of the three to target but report to eBird all that you see or hear during your short time at each of the twelve stops within each section/square. I have a number of squares that are already assigned to volunteers and would offer first pick of the available ones to new volunteers on a first-come basis. The time commitment totals one or two mornings during the survey time period.

Since this effort is typically done on your own or with a member of your household, this is a very COVID-19-safe way to get out and bird.

October Finance Report

prepared by Jeff Neumann, Treasurer

Checking Account Balance: \$10,457.74
Edward Jones Account: \$61,141.95
Total Assets as of 10/28/20: \$71,599.69
Restricted Funds (included in the total assets)
Maher Sanctuary Fund: \$2,191.55
Junior Audubon Fund: \$4,048.55
Audubon Adventures: \$ 358.00

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

HCNC Memorial Gift and/or Membership

by Ranger Steve (Mueller) – Retired HCNC director

For those desiring to donate a memorial for naturalist and GRAC member Priscilla Johnson to the Howard Christensen Nature Center please send it to:

Howard Christensen Nature Center
PO Box 42
Kent City, MI 49330

I was informed by a donor that she sent it to the street address and the post office returned her letter.

HCNC welcomes students year-round for field trips and day camps to teach about the natural world and offers community programs. HCNC depends on your membership. Membership provides build access, discounts on events, 20% discount on rental of Camp Lily's Retreat Center and no charge for skates and snowshoes.

Many GRAC members will remember annual meetings held there, field trips and the wonderful trails in an extensive natural area. Please support HCNC by becoming a member or renewing your membership.

Contact Whitney LeBaron, membership coordinator at (616) 675-3158 or info@howardChristensen.org.





Christmas Bird Count 2020

by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

This year's Christmas Day Count is Saturday, Jan. 2 at 7:30 AM.

Our members' and community's health is of the utmost importance. Due to the continuing—and worsening—COVID-19 outbreak, this year's count will NOT involve ANY in-person meeting or counting. All planning and counting will take place via phone or online via Zoom or email. Counting will be conducted via car and foot; please plan to bird either solo or ONLY with members of your immediate household. In accordance with local and federal health care officials' guidance, the club asks that you **only** carpool with members of your household—not extended social groups. The spread of the pandemic is currently fueled by small, familiar groups and gatherings. Please follow all other Kent County Health Department and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Please watch the GRAC website for the most up-to-date information.

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

A Visit to Grand Rogue River Park

by Becky Kuhn

Plainfield Township has finished the re-development of the old RV Park by the Grand River on West River Drive. The park offers trails with access to the Grand and Rogue rivers and includes a few ponds. The park also connects to a neighboring area that used to be the golf course and is now a Frisbee park. The trails are well marked and short; this park is nice for an easy hour bird search. Between the two sections, there is a nice diversity in habitat with ample parking plus a Port-a-John.

Help Others See the World Through Your Eyes

by Becky Kuhn

I am asking all of our members and readers to share with each other those special places that you enjoy hiking and birding. Many of us are spending most of our time closer to home instead of traveling to far-off places to do our birding. We are fortunate to have so many parks and bird-friendly habitats in our area. I look forward to watching this space and seeing articles about areas that you bird and why you would suggest them for others to visit. If you would, consider including parking info, bathroom options, ease of following the trails, favorite trails or places within the location, etc.

Let me get us started.

Rogue River Park is just around the corner from me—I am lucky! This park can be entered from two ends, one off Belmont Avenue (very prominent with paved lot and bathrooms) and one off Packer (a small lot that you need to be on the lookout for). This location has a number of different habitats and many trails, some well marked and others not. I enjoy exploring but having a phone with map, to help me get back to a main trail, has come in handy! One side of the park runs alongside the White Pine Trail, so this can also be an accessible outing. There is actually a third way to enter the park off of Belshire Avenue, where there is a playground, tennis courts, ball field and picnic facilities and more bathrooms. It is not marked how to get to the trails from here, but you could figure it out. The other two lots are the easiest.

This location has holding ponds where they are raising fish for release into our rivers. These often have something interesting show up. The Rogue River runs along one side; I saw osprey there once. There is wetland, marsh, old woods, field and shrub as well as big views of sky, so many offerings for good chances to see a large number of different species. I love this location all year, though it is not an amazing warbler spot. The great diversity and ability to wander for a short time or longer always keeps me coming back.





Maher News

by Chris Baer

Busy times amid the discombobulations of the pandemic. We should hang in there and things will get better.

Mr. Gerald Durkee will be unable to hunt this year because of health issues. More than likely he will not be able to trim the boardwalk edges this next summer but his son helped him this past year and has agreed to do the trimming in 2021 for us.

Another neighbor just down the road on the east side of Woodschool Road will be bow hunting and has offered to cut any down trees across the trail/boardwalk. He is a conservationist and farmer and has lived nearby his entire life. We need another person with a chainsaw since Mr. Durkee is unable to help us. Our other help lives in Kentwood and uses Mr. Durkee's saw.

Mr. Dave Yoder, a close neighbor (south of the Oak Savannah), has been trimming the trail near the savannah and would like us to replace or repair the whole loop! I told him we were going to have a work day this past spring but the virus intervened. Mr. Yoder also complained about the trash that he finds. I pick up trash by the parking lot, but very little. I have found almost no trash on the trail. I think he is talking about the trash left by deer poachers out in the woods.

One board was missing along the northeast part of the boardwalk recently and was replaced and I found two more very loose boards on my way back on the south boardwalk after deer-proofing the bur oaks in the savannah. I will repair those the next time I am out there.

Ed Bolt, bless his heart, repaired the "Bridge to Nowhere" and it is solid as a rock now. He affixed, with screws, two enormous pieces of wood the full length of each side of the bridge. Wonderful! Thank you Ed. Sheryl Helmus recently wished we had some kind of trail beyond the bridge. It would be nice to have a loop trail to the drumlin, a geologic feature near the west side of the property.

There will be a crew from the Kent County Conservation District (The Strike Team!) cutting and treating with herbicide autumn olive and other invasive plants in November mostly along the wetland and the artesian stream/oak savannah. They will be working for three days, six hours each day. We will see how far they get. I will join them when I can.

When I deer-proofed the bur oaks in the oak savannah I was totally amazed at the size of the oaks that are reaching for the sky. Many of them are over 15 feet tall and look very healthy. I do not fertilize them and only remove plants from near their bases in the spring.

The new map of Maher trails, boardwalk, habitat and streams has been sent out to the board members and former Maher stewards for comment. Marie Ortenburger who works for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan is doing the map for free. Marie met me at Maher to walk the loop so that she could actually see the different features, marle pond, bridges, wetlands, benches etc. On our walk the sanctuary was glowing in the preview of fall. Flickers, chickadees, goldfinches, golden-crowned kinglets appeared to follow us as we walked. The native swamp thistle was blooming but sadly no butterflies were visiting. Marie found praying mantis a number of times just off the trail. What a treat?

A sign will be going up at the parking lot to advise people to wear orange during the firearms deer season in the sanctuary in November and most of December and part of January. The deer have not been very active lately. Mr. Durkee says they frequent the soy bean fields until the beans are harvested.

I have a mystery for us to solve. Judy McNally supposedly planted a redwood tree near the ridge where the Maher Sanctuary sign used to be. One of the girls of the Brechtings Farm Market told me that she was with Judy when they planted the redwood tree there but could not pinpoint exactly where. Her family has a few redwoods in pots that they have been growing for years. There is a very large redwood over by the lake at the Audubon Center. It would be fun to find the tree if it is there.





2020 Birdathon Results

by Ed Bolt

It seems like 100 years ago that Birdathon 2020 took place (from mid-April to end of May). In normal times, the award ceremony would have been held at a GRAC general membership meeting in September or October. Now, with no end of COVID-19 in sight, we therefore separate Publication of Results from the Awards Ceremony, the latter to be announced...whenever.

Birdathon this year had good participation, with participants equal in number to those of 2019, and we raised 25% more income for the club. Even with masking and distancing, 'Big Fun' was had by all. Our thanks go to all who participated!

BIRDATHON INCOME FOR 2020

\$1,095 Raised for GRAC, by seven teams / 32 individuals.

PRIZE CATEGORIES

Rock Dove - Most Species in six Hours

Winner = Team Egret - 82 species

Runner-up = The Lovebirds - 49 species

Wild Card - Most Sightings of Target Bird: Great Blue Heron

Winner = Team Egret - 13

Runner-up (tie) = Fit to Sit, Raven Loon & Ticks - 1

Charity's Rarities - Rarest Bird Spotted

Winner = Team Egret: Snowy Egret

Runner-up = Team Egret: Least Bittern

Fledgling - Youngest Average Age Team

Winner = Nobody. (Nobody is young).

Big Fun Funders - Most Money Raised by a Team

Winner = The Old Coots - \$290

Runner-up = Team Egret - \$250

Big Fun Funder Individual - Most Money Raised by an Individual

Winner = Tim Granger - (\$200)

Big Sit / Feeder

Winner = The Old Coots - 26 species

Big Sit / No Feeder

Winner = Fit to Sit - 35 species

2020 PARTICIPATING TEAMS – *Honorable Mention to All!*

Team Captain listed first; 'Big Sit' teams noted with an asterisk.

Birdsmiths - Lynn Benson, Jill Goodell, Holly Porter, Debbie Smith

Fit to Sit* - Ed Bolt, Katie Bolt

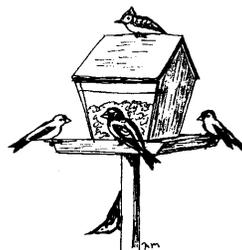
Mad Cowbirds - Sheryl Helmus, Keith Helmus

Raven Loon & Ticks - Katie Bolt, Ed Bolt, Jeanne Griffin, Kathy Haase

Team Egret - Scott Hutchings, Steve Minard, Mike Youn

The Lovebirds - Jeni Taheri, Shawn Taheri (and 17 other sponsors!)

The Old Coots* - Tom Leggett, Helen Leggett





Ranger Steve's Nature Niche

Who Would Do That?

by Ranger Steve (Mueller)

A woman drove up the drive and started to back out. I opened the door and motioned for her to return. She said she was looking for Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary but this is a private residence. I said yes on both accounts. I am Ranger Steve the sanctuary manager and ecologist who lives here. This is our private property where we allow visitors to experience nature. She said, "who would do that with their private property?"

People post property with no trespassing or keep out signs. It means this is mine and others are not welcome. People have sound reasons because people might hunt without permission, dig up plants or otherwise despoil the land instead of respecting the rights of plants, animals and the human residents.

As a young person, I decided to do good for others and share. People farm their property raising livestock and crops for a living. To support them we buy produce at the farmers market and the grocery instead of raising them here. Farmers make money from animal and plant crops to sustain families. It is my hope that each landowner will set aside at least ten percent of their property to sustain a natural healthy sustainable world.

I do not think that is adequate so at Ody Brook we leave 80 to 90% of the land wild where we manage habitat diversity to support as many species as possible. Many people own property where they allow it to thrive naturally. Periodically they might harvest timber selectively to help pay property taxes.

My naturalist career did not provide a large income but we were able to purchase 61 acres over the course of living here for 41 years by buying property from neighbors. My neighbor wanted me to protect and enhance nature by acquiring her floodplain that was not suitable for farming. She wanted to keep it until her death. In the last year of life she needed money to live in a care facility and sold me land. Her tillable land and home were sold to others. She was pleased knowing I would be a good steward caring for the land.

Seven acres are leased for tilling but the income does not cover the taxes. My pension and Social Security allow us to live simply to enhance biodiversity. College interns help manage the sanctuary to develop employment skills. High school students and volunteers assist to meet our mission of "biodiversity enhancement."

Non-curable multiple myeloma cancer was expected to take me years ago. I continue to survive to write this column, maintain the sanctuary and share it with people, plants and animals to promote a sustainable environment for present and future generations. My retirement investments were used to purchase the property. Pension and Social Security make it possible to live simply.

Mostly staying home allows me a good life with my health limitations and I explore the sanctuary daily. I tire quickly and have benches along trails for resting.

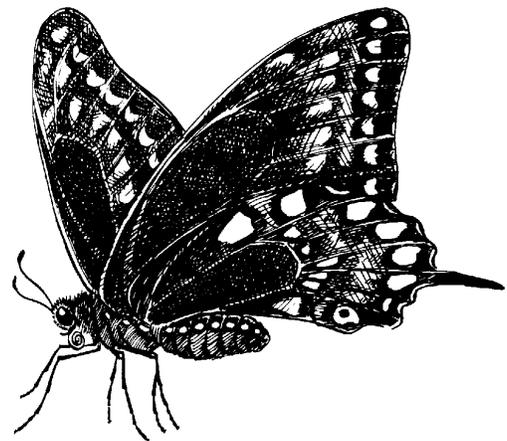
We have not charged people to explore natural wonders. Donations and volunteers are appreciated. Interpretive signs line trails. Fallen trees are cut from paths and exotic plants are removed that cause harm to native species.

Most people do not donate and it is not required for birding or access. Some volunteer time with projects. As my health and abilities decline, physical work becomes more challenging. I have a ten-pound lifting limit because of brittle cancer bones and have experienced ten fractures. The cancer and chemo require frequent naps. Being tired, weak and brittle is no different from what other seniors experience. We all keep plugging along and doing our best to stay productive for the benefit of community members and family.

For me, being productive is helping enhance living conditions for plants and animals that share the property and my being willing to allow people to come discover nature's biodiversity that sustains human life. That answers the question "who would open their private property to others?" I hope you will set aside at least ten percent for native wild species survival. It will help economic, social and environmental sustainability. Be kind and giving.

We have seen 129 species of birds here. Lack of extensive wetlands keeps wetland bird species numbers lower.

Natural history questions or topic suggestions can be directed to Ranger Steve (Mueller) at odybrook@chartermi.net or Ody Brook, 13010 Northland Dr, Cedar Springs, MI 49319-8433. Call (616) 696-1753.





UPCOMING EVENTS (visit the GRAC website for details)

November

19 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike

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:
Theresa Dykhuis
3100 Cooks Meadow Dr. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525-9401

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	Field Trips – Cate Roesler
President – Scott Hutchings	“ “ – Becky Kuhn
Vice President – Landon Bell	Finance – Keith Helmus
Secretary – Jeni Taheri	Fund Development – open
Treasurer – Jeff Neumann	Historian – Linda Damstra
Ass't Treasurer – Theresa Dykhuis	Hospitality – Henry Raad
Board Member – Felix Perdue	Junior Audubon – Hannah Safford
Board Member – Ruth Fridsma	Library – Kathleen Haase
Board Member – Tom Leggett	Maher Sanctuary – Chris Baer
Board Member – Shawn Taheri	Membership – Theresa Dykhuis

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT (non-voting member)

Sheryl Helmus 2018-19, 2019-20
Publicity – Tricia Boot
Scholarship – Katie Bolt
Special Events – open
Website – Fred VanOeveren

STANDING COMMITTEES

Audio/Visual – Robert Riepma	SPECIAL COMMITTEES / CHAIRPERSONS
Bird Reports – Carol VanOeveren	<i>(non-members of Board of directors in this capacity)</i>
<i>Caller</i> Editor – Tricia Boot	Aud. Adventures – Mary Austin
<i>Caller</i> Publisher – Theresa Dykhuis/ Peggy Falk	Insurance – Jill Goodell
Christmas Count – Tom Leggett / Steve Mueller	RESIDENT AGENT
Conservation – open	Larry Burke

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

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Grand Rapids Audubon Club

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