

# the Caller

September 2022, Volume 61, No. 2

published monthly September – April, bi-monthly May – August, November – December  
by GRAC, 1417 Pine Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504



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www.facebook.com/grandrapidsaudubonclub

## September Meeting Details

- Date:** Monday, September 26  
**Time:** 7:30 PM program  
**Location:** John Donnelly Conference Center  
Aquinas College  
**Speaker:** Clayton Daughenbaugh  
**Topic:** America's Red Rock Wilderness –  
Fighting Climate Change and Saving  
Wilderness in Utah

The red rock country of southern Utah is among the most spectacular landscapes in the world. It's also the largest network of unprotected wilderness remaining in the lower 48 states. National Audubon has declared a significant portion of it an Important Bird Area primarily due to the habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl. Protecting it would make a vital contribution to the fight against climate change and securing Earth's biodiversity from the accelerating loss of species.

The region is the ancestral homeland for Native Americans who have become important advocates for its protection. Recent years have seen the loss and return of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments as well as the passage of the largest wilderness bill in two decades. But much more needs to be done. Clayton's presentation will include a 14-minute film with imagery of this spectacular region.



**The public is invited to attend this interesting program as a guest of the Grand Rapids Audubon Club. There is no charge for admission.**

## Leadership and Club Update

**By Tricia Boot, Vice President, acting President**

Change is the only constant in life, and something we've all become particularly attuned to these last few years. As we gear up for another Grand Rapids Audubon Club season, I want to welcome all our new and returning members, as well as our board and heads of committee. I also want to be transparent about some of the changes we can expect to see over the coming months and year.

As some may know, our club president, Scott Hutchings, has been coping with serious health issues this summer. For the time being, Scott and his family must focus on his health. Our board supports Scott wholeheartedly and wishes him a speedy recovery. Per GRAC bylaws, as vice president, I will act as president until Scott can return. These are big shoes to fill, and I'm grateful to our entire GRAC board for stepping up to help me fulfill those duties in addition to my role as VP. Additionally, we've seen shifts in some of our committee leader roles over the last few months, as long-time member-volunteers step back from their roles to enjoy their much-deserved retirements. We will work to ensure all gaps are covered.

Also ahead: Expect changes in the way we communicate, including a new look and feel for the *Caller*, as well as a subtle refresh of the GRAC brand. As we focus on recruiting new members and keeping our roster strong and sustainable for years to come, we'll also look at ways to simplify what we do to run the club, and hone in on those things that matter most to our members and community. We certainly have challenges to navigate in the months ahead. This is the case for all small, volunteer-driven organizations of our size, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.

That said, I have much hope and enthusiasm for what's next. We return to in-person programming this month and look forward to another season of educational presentations on a variety of topics. We will find creative ways to partner with like-minded organizations in our communities to help strengthen our own mission and can expect to see a more diverse lineup of offerings and activities for our current and prospective members.



## Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Reminder: It's time once again to renew annual memberships for the Grand Rapids Audubon Club. Please use the membership application on page 7 or visit <http://www.graud.org/membership.html> to renew online. Thank you! Your participation and support ensure a vibrant club.

## Great Lakes Piping Plover Update

Way to go, Great Lakes Piping Plovers! Michigan Audubon Society reports that the Great Lakes population of Piping Plovers had a record-breaking 2022 breeding season!

Piping Plovers are endangered shorebirds that breed along the coastline of all five Great Lakes. This plover is a small, sparrow-sized bird with a sand-colored back, white breast and very short orange, black-tipped bill that nests and feeds along coastal sand and gravel beaches. The adult has yellow-orange legs, a black band across its forehead and a single black stripe running along its breast line. Chicks grow quickly and are able to fly at 21 to 35 days, after an incubation averaging 26 to 28 days.

During the 2022 breeding season, 150 chicks fledged in the wild (from 72 unique breeding pairs) along Great Lakes beaches. This is the greatest number of chicks fledged since the population was listed as federally endangered in 1986!

Hopes are high that there will be a return of even more breeding adults in 2023. Because of the steady increase in pairs since 1986, the Great Lakes population is about halfway to the recovery goal of 150 breeding pairs.

Hundreds of dedicated plover partners and volunteers in Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio have guarded plover nests and monitored the small birds' struggles and successes. Because of these efforts, the future is looking very bright for Great Lakes Piping Plovers. Anticipation is that with a successful fall migration and a restful winter along the coasts of some southern states, Cuba and Mexico, the plovers will return to Great Lakes beaches next spring. For more information about Piping Plovers, check out <https://www.audubon.org>.

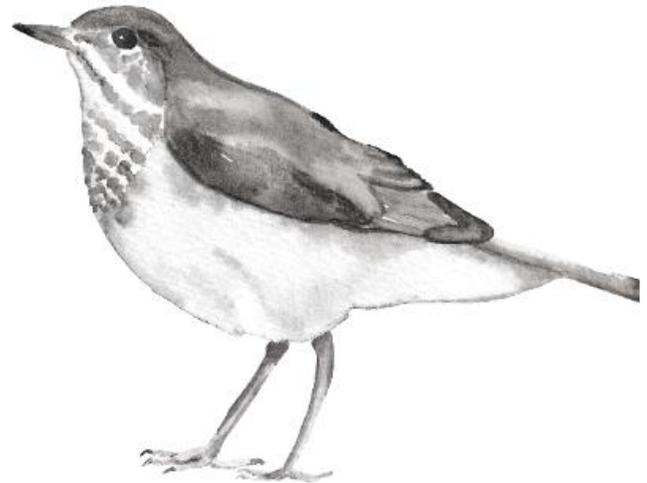
(Article adapted by Mary Austin from a September 1, 2022 Michigan Audubon email (birds@michiganaudubon.org) and [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org))

## Species Spotlight

by Mallery Webb

The Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*), like most thrushes, is an exceptional singer, which is quite fortunate for us birders considering how difficult it can be to actually see one! Cornell Lab's Merlin app describes their song as a "cascading spiral of flute-like notes." In my attempt to point one out (by sound) to my non-birder husband, I described it as sounding like a friendly bird character in an old 8-bit video game (not as eloquent as the Merlin app description perhaps, but it did the trick). Fun fact on Veery sounds—Cornell's Birds of the World website says that Veeries are able to differentiate the vocalizations of other individuals of their species and will behave aggressively towards an unfamiliar Veery (versus a "neighbor" individual).

From late April to the end of September in North America, your best bet to find one of these ethereal vocalists is to head for the woods - especially if there's a river or stream running through it, or better yet, a beaver-supported wetland. Here in the Grand Rapids area, a quick check of eBird Hotspots with Veery observations in 2022 bears this out, with sites like Cascade Peace Park, Ball Perkins Park, and Blandford Nature Center, among others. Another fun fact here, regarding habitat—Birds of the World reports, "in Michigan, adults took young to mulberry trees," so if you know of a good stand of mulberries, keep an eye out in late summer and early fall!



While the decline of beaver hunting over the past century may be a good portent for the Veery's preferred breeding habitat, they are still affected by habitat fragmentation here in North America as well as the drastic transformation of their South American wintering habitat to farmland. The North American Breeding Bird Survey reports a cumulative population decrease of 28% from 1966 to 2019.

*Continued on page 5*



## Ten Reasons to Support Your Local Audubon Club

1. While birdwatching is free, your donation supports to maintenance and programming GRAC offers the community, including monthly meetings, field trips, and resources.
2. Anyone can do it - any age, demographic, or skillset can enjoy. Birding can be family friendly, a first date, or a solitary walk in the park.
3. There are always new birds to discover.
4. Birding is a lifelong hobby that builds knowledge of the ecosystem around us.
5. Each season brings new species and plumage to look out for. Keep observing all year round.
6. The anticipating prospect to explore different habitats both local and far is fun.
7. Birds can be spotted from the comfort of your window at home or when you are on the move, it is accessible to all abilities.
8. The opportunity to connect with a community of likeminded individuals and meet new people.
9. Birding will sharpen your observational skillset in nature by using both hearing and seeing.
10. It's relaxing! Discover the thrill of success and surprise when you spot a new lifer!

Florida, the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts and the Rio Grande Valley. According to the eBird range map for the species, they have been seen as far north as Minneapolis. For those interested in more information or are unfamiliar with the Limpkin, visit Cornell Labs' webpage <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Limpkin/overview>.

## Little Brown Joys

by Emily Tornga

Have you ever been out birding and heard someone refer to a bird as a "Little Brown Job"? The phrase is often used in situations where a birder might be looking at a streaky brown bird and wants to communicate, often dismissively, that identification of it is too difficult or a chore. Generally, what the birder is looking at is a sparrow. New world sparrows are a group of birds that are mostly brown and gray, but when observed closer, their features reveal a whole new and exciting world of observation in this diverse family of birds.



One of the most ubiquitous sparrows here in West Michigan is the Song Sparrow. It is commonly identified by its brown streaked breast that has a central dark spot on it. Aptly named, the Song Sparrow has a jubilant song, and males can sing up to 24 variations of their classic Maids, maids, maids, put on your teakettle-ettle-ettle ettle.

Savannah Sparrows have beautiful yellow lores (the small area just from the base of a bird's bill to its eye). White-crowned sparrows have bold black and white or brown and gray striped helmets.

White-throated Sparrows sport a "snow white power beard" that partners so beautifully with its classic Oh-sweet-Canada-Canada song.

Grasshopper sparrows not only sound like grasshoppers, but they eat them too. Vesper Sparrows have a chestnut-colored patch on their shoulders that is sometimes hard to see, but the challenges in birding often make it the most fun. The list of exciting features, facts, and interesting songs of sparrows goes on and on.

Sparrows are not drab or dull. They are beautiful, brilliant, melodious, dapper, sassy, and fun. So, the next time you see a sparrow, implore yourself to dig a little deeper to find out how a little brown job suddenly can spark a little brown joy.

## Mega-Rare Limpkin Found in Ottawa County

by Carol VanOeveren

While kayaking the Dermo Bayou/Indian Channel area of the Grand River in Ottawa County on August 23, 2022, Karl and Malcom Sineath discovered a mega-rare Limpkin in a woody tangle of branches and logs searching for snails and crustaceans. This is the first state record and first Ottawa County record for this species. The rarity was seen by possibly hundreds through at least August 27 even though access was by boat, kayak or canoe only (if people didn't own one, the rentals in the area must have been very busy).

Visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S117441308> to view Karl's original checklist.

Visit <https://ebird.org/checklist/S117441026> to view the many photos by Lonny Garris and Cindy Dobrez and <https://ebird.org/checklist/S117449332> to view Matt Bennink's closeups.

According to Cornell Labs' All About Birds this tropical/subtropical wader is non-migratory, but dispersing individuals can be found far from their range, especially during severe drought conditions. In the U.S. their range encompasses shallow freshwater forest swamps, ponds, sloughs, canals, marshes and the like of



## Fall Field Trips

See the GRAC website for full field trip information.

### Millennium Park Hikes

**Leaders: Katie Bolt, Jeanne Griffin or Kathy Haase**  
**Thursdays 8:00 AM (May through September)**  
**or 9:00 AM (October through April)**

Hike Millennium Park to see what's hanging around. Flat 2.0 or 3.0 mile loops are planned to see whatever might show up. Many birds have been reported from this varied habitat near the river. There are ponds, swampy ponds, lowland forest and various secondary growth. This can lead to a good variety of birds.

**Essentials:** Meet at the end of the dead-end section of Veterans Memorial Drive east of Maynard at 8:00 AM or 9:00 AM. Take Collindale south from Lake Michigan Drive. Take a right (west) on O'Brien for about a half-mile. Go left (south) on Maynard past the beach entrance to Millennium Park. Turn left (east) on Veterans Memorial Drive and park near the end of the road.

**Safety Hazards:** Always dress for the expected weather conditions. Paved trails have bike traffic and the trail may crossroads. So, watch for auto and bike traffic. Please exercise caution on the roads driving to and from the meeting place.

### Saturday, September 10, 8:00 AM

**Leader: Steve Minard**  
**Roselle Park in September**

In case you were planning on birding on this date and need to avoid the Reeds Lake Triathlon, we have a trip at Roselle Park. Roselle has a couple of miles of paved trail around wetlands, open areas and along the Grand River. Wooded edges are present in several areas. This makes for a good variety of birds. We will hike the paved trails and possibly some of the unpaved trails if they are dry and there is interest. August has produced a number of warblers and hopefully some will continue into September. Birders of all skills are welcome.

**Essentials:** Meet in the Roselle Park parking lot by the building on Grand River Drive at 8:00 AM. The entrance to this lot is opposite Michigan Ave.

**Safety Hazards:** Watch for bicycle traffic on the trail. Poison ivy is present in places; avoid it.



### Saturday, September 17, 8:00 AM

**Leader: Steve Minard**  
**Fall Migrants at Reeds Lake**

*Note the date change due to Reeds Lake Triathlon.* Join us in birding the marshes and woods in the Hodenpyl Woods area at the west end of Reeds Lake. Varied woodland, marsh, and lake habitat provides a variety of birds right in town. On this trip, we will check the boardwalks for lake and marsh views and then head into the woods. Warblers and other fall migrants should be heading south at this time. We hope to catch good numbers of them. Eagles are reported to nest at Aquinas College and hunt this area regularly. Other raptors are also possible. 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 at 8:00 AM. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful. Poison Ivy is thick in places.

### Saturday, October 1, 7:30 AM

**Leader: Larry Burke**  
**Late Passerines and Hawks at Saugatuck Dunes State Park**

Hike Saugatuck Dunes in search of migrant warblers, thrushes, vireos, other passerines and hawks headed south. This excellent dune area generally holds a good variety of birds. When the hawks are moving, the dunes here are one of the best spots in the area to watch them sail by. They may be overhead, next to you, or low over the treetops below you. With our changing climate, warblers seem to migrate later and this could be a good time for them. Birders of all skills are welcome.

**Essentials:** Meet at the McDonald's in Hudsonville at 7:30 AM and carpool from there. Folks closer to Saugatuck Dunes may want to meet the group in the north (main) parking lot at 8:00 AM. You may want a drink and a snack to keep you going until lunch.

- Sign up for rare bird alerts to be sent to your email for any county and state page (also territory, province, country, etc.) on eBird.
- To receive notifications on what eBird considers to be rare, scroll down and click on "Rare Bird Alerts" in the blue left-hand column of the page and then click the green "Subscribe to this alert".
- The eBird links for Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa counties will remain on the "Bird Sightings" page of the GRAC website for easy access.



## Follow Migrating Fall Birds

Compiled by Mary Austin

Here are some links if you would like to find out about bird migration in general and what, where and when fall birds are migrating.

Audubon Migratory Bird Initiative:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/migratory-bird-initiative>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology Basics of Bird Migration – How, Why and Where (Originally published January 2007; updated August 2021):

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/the-basics-how-why-and-where-of-bird-migration/>

Colorado State University, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and University of Massachusetts Amherst Bird Migration Forecasts in Real-Time:

<https://dashboard.birdcast.info>

Detroit River Hawk Watch Daily Raptor Counts, Brownstown, Michigan, USA;  
Holiday Beach Hawk Watch Daily Raptor Counts, Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada; and  
Other Hawk Watch Daily Raptor Count Locations:

<https://www.hawkcount.org>

Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch (MSRW) Waterbirds Count Fall 2022:

<https://dunkadoo.org/explore/mackinac-straits-raptor-watch/waterbirds-fall-2022>

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory Waterbirds Count Fall 2022:

<https://dunkadoo.org/explore/whitefish-point-bird-observatory/wpbo-waterbirds-fall-2022>

## Editor's Corner

by Cynthia Maas

It is a joy to be in the position to take over the *Caller* editor role for this coming season of GRAC. I hope the *Caller* continues as another interesting avenue to serve the club's 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.*

I look forward to serving this community in the months ahead. Happy birding!

## Christmas Bird Count 2022

by Tom Leggett CBC coordinator

This year's Christmas Bird Count is  
**Saturday, December 31, 2022 at 7:30 AM.**

Just like last year, the Christmas bird count will follow National Audubon Guidelines. Tom will be the on the ground coordinator and will base himself at the Wittenbach/Wege Center, but we will not have an in person meet and greet or hot lunch. Again this year, we will take the COVID-19 pandemic seriously. Section leaders will coordinate their sections and gather results by email. Chris Baer is working to confirm section leaders. Section data will be sent to Tom Leggett and he will complete the NAS report and prepare the article for the *Caller*.

Direct inquiries to count coordinator:

Tom Leggett: (616) 249-3382

[tomleggett@hotmail.com](mailto:tomleggett@hotmail.com)

*Species Spotlight continued from page 2*

Veery ID Tips:

- The Veery is of a very similar shape to the American Robin, but a bit smaller.
- Look for cinnamon on top and cream underneath, with spotting from the neck down to the top of the chest (much less distinct spotting than the Wood Thrush or Swainson's Thrush).
- Don't confuse the cinnamon hue and foraging habits of the Brown Thrasher for the Veery - the Brown Thrasher has its trademark yellow eyes for one, but also has a much longer bill, and is just large, long, and lanky compared to the plump Veery - more helpful for ID from a distance than eye color!
- And while the Hermit Thrush has a lovely cinnamon tail, their back is dull brown (no offense, HETH). Hermit Thrushes also have darker spotting, a white eye-ring, and unique tail-bobbing behavior.

If you ask me on any given day, I'd probably have a different answer every time to, "what is your favorite bird vocalization?" The Carolina Wren really has my heart for sentimental reasons (it was absolutely THE primary birdsong in my backyard growing up in North Carolina), the Eastern Bluebird has so much personality in its little breathy trills, the Baltimore Oriole's songs have possibly the sweetest tone of any bird around. But when I hear a Veery, my eyes go wide every single time – a voice that never ceases to amaze me. Just wish I could get a good photo for once...



# Birding Puzzle

By Mary Austin

Time to wake up your brain! In this puzzle you'll be given a description of a bird and you can then fill in the name of the bird. The words in the parentheses represent a specific type of bird, for example, "Woodpecker (Downy)". Each short line represents a letter of the bird's name. All birds in this puzzle can be found in North America east of the Rockies. When you have correctly completed the puzzle, the first letter of the names of the birds will spell out a bonus bird name.

1. Small, compact diving duck with a large head and small gray bill. Smaller than the Common Goldeneye with which it is often seen. Breeding males are mostly white with a black back and a large white patch on the back of their dark heads.
2. Large shorebird with a long, thin, upturned black bill with black-and-white wings and long blue-gray legs. Breeding adults have buffy-orange on their heads and necks.
3. Large, heavy-billed water bird. Breeding adults have a black head and black-and-white body patterning.
4. Sparrow-like bird that breeds in grasslands. Breeding males have gray heads with a yellowish stripe over their eyes, yellow breasts, a black patch on their throats and rufous-colored shoulders.
5. Very large, lanky, long-necked white heron with black legs and feet that slowly stalks prey in shallow water.
6. Long-necked bird that dives underwater to spear fish with its dagger-like bill. Often swims with only its head and neck out of the water (like a snake).
7. Small, compact water bird with a thin, pointed bill and red eyes. Breeding adults are mostly black with chestnut-colored flanks, golden plumes on the back of their heads and a peaked head shape.
8. Squat field bird with short legs and low-profile body. Adult males are mostly sandy-brown with a white belly, black mask and chest band and protrusions (like horns) on their heads. Often seen in flocks with Snow Buntings in the winter.
9. Large diving sea duck with a sloping bill. Adult males have a black belly, white neck and back and green tinge on the back of the neck.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

3. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

8. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

9. \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)

*Would you like to contribute?*

Deadline for October newsletter articles: **October 1**

Send to: [newsletter@graud.org](mailto:newsletter@graud.org)

**Answers to Birding Puzzle**

1. Bufflehead  
 2. Avocet (American)  
 3. Loon (Common)  
 4. Dickcissel  
 5. Egret (Great)  
 6. Anhinga  
 7. Grebe (Eared)  
 8. Lark (Horned)  
 9. Eider (Common)  
 Bonus Bird: Bald Eagle



## UPCOMING EVENTS (visit the GRAC website for details)

### September

- 10 Field Trip: Roselle Park with Steve Minard
- 15 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike (recurring 22 & 29)
- 17 Field Trip: Fall Migrants at Reeds Lake with Steve Minard
- 26 GRAC Membership Meeting and Nature Program

### October

- 1 Field Trip: Saugatuck Dunes with Larry Burke
- 6 Field Trip: Millennium Park Hike (recurring 13, 20, & 27)
- 24 GRAC Membership Meeting and Nature Program

## 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</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.

### 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. 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**

<i>5 officers + 4 elected board members</i>	Field Trips – Steve Minard
President – Scott Hutchings	Finance – Keith Helmus
Vice President – Tricia Boot	Fund Development – <i>open</i>
Secretary – Shawn Taheri	Historian – Linda Damstra
Treasurer – Jeff Neumann	Hospitality – Henry Raad
Ass't Treasurer – <i>open</i>	Junior Audubon – Hannah Safford
Board Member – Mary Austin	Library – Kathleen Haase
Board Member – Jeni Taheri	Maher Sanctuary – Chris Baer
Board Member – Spencer High	Membership – <i>open</i>
Board Member – Cynthia Maas	Nominating – Scott Hutchings

#### **IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT**

*(non-voting member)*  
 Sheryl Helmus 2018-19, 2019-20  
 Website – Fred VanOeveren

#### **STANDING COMMITTEES**

Audio/Visual – Robert Riepma  
 Bird Reports – Carol VanOeveren  
*Caller* Editor – Tricia Boot/Cynthia Maas  
*Caller* Publisher – *open*  
 Christmas Count – Tom Leggett  
 Conservation – *open*

#### **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**  
1417 Pine Ave. NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

**Return Service Requested**

DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE RUSH  
*Nine Issues per year*  
*Published monthly except May, July*  
*and December*

## **Grand Rapids Audubon Club**

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### **OFFICERS**

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