

Here is the current field trip line up for 2017-2018. We are always looking for additional field trips. Call Becky Kuhn at 616-785-7072 if you have an idea for a trip you would like to lead. Watch the **Caller** for future trip announcements.

Safety hazards for GRAC field trips

Always be aware that 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. Unique or special safety hazards for some of our field trips will be included with the trip details.

Millennium Park Hikes (*recurring*)

Leader: Katie Bolt

8:00 AM or 9:00 AM (starting time varies depending on time of year)

Wednesdays and Thursdays

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.

For the **Hansen Nature Trail** hikes meet at the corner of Butterworth St. and Riverbend Dr. Park along Riverbend Dr.

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

Saturday, September 30, 2017, 8:00 AM

Leader: Becky Kuhn

Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve (with stop at Muskegon Wastewater System)

This trip focuses on watching and learning from Brian Johnson as he bands birds at Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve (MLNP). We will stop at the Wastewater System first and then join Brian around 10:00 AM. If you wish you may skip the first part and meet us at MLNP (2500 Lake Ave, N Muskegon, 49445. (Becky's cell 616-437-9205)

Essentials: Meet at 8:00 AM in the back lot of the Boy Scout Headquarters on Walker (north of I-96). We will finish by noon.

Saturday, October 7, 2017, 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 among 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.

Saturday, October 14, 2017, 1:00 PM

Leader: Jeff Neumann

Fall Grand River Paddle

Fall colors, great scenery, nature's sounds and birds will surround us as we enjoy the warmer hours of the day for a 5.7-mile paddle on the Grand River - Ada to Knapp Street. **Cost: \$30 per person.** This is about a 2-hour paddle with a maximum of 8 paddlers.

Essentials: Meet at 1:00 PM at the I-96 and East Beltline commuter lot and head to the launch from there. RSVP needed (616-437-9205 / may also text).

Safety Hazards: Contact Becky for hazards on this trip.

Saturday, October 28, 2017, noonish (depending on what the morning brings)

Save this date! Details to follow for AM portion of trip.

Leader: Becky Kuhn with Bird Bander Brian Johnson

This trip focuses on watching and learning from Brian as he bands birds at Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve (MLNP). Check back in October for details.

Saturday, December 30, 2017, 7:30 AM

Leader: Tom Leggett and Steve Mueller

Kent County Christmas Count

Join us for the annual Kent County Christmas Count. Birders of all skills are needed to help us cover our fifteen-mile circle. This combines fun winter birding with the biggest and oldest citizen science event. Plan to arrive at the Wittenbach/Wege Center, 11715 Vergennes St SE, Lowell by 7:30 AM to join your group and be out by 8:00 AM.

Essentials: Prepare for cold weather and slippery, snow-covered roads. You may want to bring a snack and beverage along to keep you going during the day.

Saturday, March 24, 2018, 9:00 AM

Leader: Jim Ponshair

Bluebird Box Cleaning at Muskegon Wastewater

Jim has aided the birds for many years with a number of bluebird box trails at the Muskegon Wastewater. With so many boxes to clean, we need a good sized group to get the job done. This is a great way to learn your way around the Muskegon Wastewater, and to learn about bluebird boxes, how to clean them and to see how the type of box and habitat affects who uses the box. We usually see some good birds while we work and you may even get to meet mice or flying squirrels up close and personal. You'll also help the bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, wrens and other birds that use the boxes.

Meet at the Maple Island Road entrance to the Muskegon Wastewater System. There, we'll split up to clean out boxes in different areas. Bring your own lunch. After an afternoon break, some participants may bird the nearby Muskegon State Game Area to look for early migrants. This can be an all-day trip, or you can head out before or after lunch. New bluebird boxes are always needed, as they suffer damage over the year. Call Jim Ponshair (616-895-7691) if you have boxes you are willing to donate.

Essentials: Meet at the Maple Island Road entrance to the Muskegon Wastewater System at 9:00 AM. This is a bit north of White Road. Dress for the weather. Bring your spotting scope, tools (screwdrivers, pliers, scrapper, hammer and nails) and gloves for cleaning out the bluebird houses.

Saturday, April 7, 2018, 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.

Saturday, May 5, 2018, 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 at this time, including early migrating warblers and possibly summering Prothonotary Warblers. The trail is entirely paved and flat, making the walk easy and safe, as well as wheelchair accessible. The trail follows the Thornapple River and is bordered by bayous that invite many ducks and other waterbirds. The variety of birds, and the sheer number of birds that we will likely see, should make this trip enjoyable for novice and experienced birders alike.

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.