

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 particularly in the event of hazardous winter weather. Be aware that bad weather may cancel a trip. Unique or special safety hazards for some of our field trips will be included with the trip details.

Millennium Park Hikes (*recurring*)

Leaders: Katie Bolt, Jeanne Griffin or Kathy Haase

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, 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.

Monday, January 1, 2018, 6:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

New Year's Day in Kent County

Get your bird list for 2018 started in Kent County. We'll try to track down some of the birds seen on the Christmas Count and look for whatever sounds good. We will start at 6:00 AM to look for owls in the Cannonsburg State Game Area and vicinity. At dawn, we will shift to looking for winter passerines, waterfowl and hawks. Birders of all skills are welcome to join.

Essentials: **Update! Meet at Vitale's west of Ada at 6:00 AM.** We will head out at 6:00 AM to drive by the former site of the downtown Ada McDonald's Express. That area is currently under construction. Vitale's is on the south side of M-21 west of Ada at the top of the hill. This is west of Grand River Drive. We plan to finish around 11:30 AM. Dress for cold weather and bring a snack or warm beverage to keep you fueled up.

Saturday, January 27, 2018, 8:00 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Winter Field Birding

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

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

Saturday, February 17, 2018, 7:30 AM

Leader: Steve Minard

Allegan State Game Area Winter Trip

Explore the Allegan State Game Area, including the Swan Creek Highbanks and the Todd Farm Unit, for winter birds. We are going at a time to avoid the late goose hunting season. Bald Eagle and Rough-legged Hawk are likely to be near the flocks of Canada Goose at the Todd Farm Unit. Wild Turkey, Northern Shrike and Ross's Goose have been found here in past winters. With luck, winter finches will make an appearance. Bring your CB or Family radio if you have one and we'll try to keep in touch between cars. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Essentials: Meet at the McDonald's in Hudsonville and carpool from there. A spotting scope will come in handy, as will a bit of food and a warm beverage. We plan to bird until noon. Lunch after is an option.

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.

Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 7:30 PM

Leader: Ray Gates

Woodcock "display" at Luton Park

Additional details to follow.

Essentials: Meet at Kies Road parking lot

Saturday, April 21, 2018, 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. After checking out the marsh, we'll see how the winds blow and either head over to the Muskegon Wastewater to check out the waterfowl or head to Grand Haven to check Harbor Island and hawk-watch locations to look for migrating hawks. 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 (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.

Saturday, April 28, 2018, 7:30 AM

Leader: Lizzy Kibbey

Spring Migrants at Huff Park

Details to follow.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018, 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, 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.

Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 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.

Saturday, May 12, 2018

Spring Migration Count

North American Migration Count in Kent County

Michigan will not compile the North American Migration Count. GRAC plans to compile a May 12 count for Kent County and post results on eBird. Steve Minard will send checklists to all who want to participate. If Steve has emailed you in the past, he will email you the checklist as a spreadsheet. He also can email this to anyone else who would like. You can add your numbers for each bird species and return to Steve. If he has mailed you the paper checklist, he will continue to do this unless you'd prefer email. He also will have copies available at the April GRAC meeting and at his Reeds Lake field trips on May 1 and 8. Alternatively, you can share your eBird list with user NAMC_MI_Kent to add your count to the list. Report your birds to Steve. Feeder counts, stationary counts and moving counts all help.

Wednesday, May 16, 2018, 8:00 AM

Leader: Mark Moerdyk

Lamoreaux Park Birding

Details to follow.

Saturday, May 19, 2018, 9:30 AM

Leader: Nick Keller

Goodrich Lake Trail & Buck Tale Farm Hike

Spend a Michigan spring morning hiking the trails of Goodrich Lake to see many spring species such as: the Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Bluebird, Yellow Warbler, Eastern Towhee and many others. There is a stand of birch trees that has great viewpoints for seeing birds and deer as well. There is a meadow, which is open and great for 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 hearing about its history. There are trails around the farm's perimeter that will allow for us to look for different birds such as the Indigo Bunting, Sandhill Cranes and a nesting pair of Red-tailed Hawks. There are also many opportunities to see deer and other interesting wildlife as well.

Essentials: Meet at 1250 Goodrich Lake Dr. Colon, MI 49040 (The farm is located about 10 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, 2018, 7:30 AM

Leader: Zach DeBruine

Southern Kent County Specialty Birds

Join us in search of neotropical migrants, resident Cerulean Warbler and the secretive Henslow's Sparrow with a trip to Baker Coldwater Sanctuary and the Grand Rapids Airport grasslands. We'll start out with an easy half-mile walk along the wooded banks of the Coldwater River in the early morning. There are few places in Kent County where the dawn chorus is more beautiful, resonant and undisturbed. We'll listen to the Wood Thrushes, Acadian Flycatchers, Scarlet Tanagers and Indigo Buntings before focusing our attention on Cerulean Warbler and other passerines that frequent the tall cottonwood stands flanking the river. Then we'll drive to the Gerald R. Ford Airport Kraft Avenue and work our way around the grasslands looking for Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, Wild Turkey, Eastern Meadowlark and the more elusive Henslow's Sparrow and potentially, Upland Sandpiper. Finally, if there is interest, we'll do an extension to the Caledonia Sewage Facility, Kent county's premier shorebird destination, which should be jam-packed with sandpipers of all sizes, possibly including Short-billed Dowitcher and Stilt Sandpiper. Please do not attempt to visit this facility on your own if you are not familiar with the highly restricted access policy. This is a great opportunity to walk around the lagoons without worrying about strict access or local regulations.

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. See <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L612508> for a map. If you are visiting Caledonia Sewage Ponds, park along M-37 without blocking trucks that use the entrance drive, walk in (do NOT drive in), leave all gates as you find them after passing through as they

are used to contain livestock, and stay on obvious paths. Respect private property. Help your fellow birders keep their special access privileges.

Safety Hazards: Always dress for the expected weather conditions. Prepare to hike a half-mile total along potentially moist trails.