

Nature Program

Grand Rapids Audubon Club



An Overview of Monitoring Methods, Capture Techniques and Population Status for North American Rails

Date: Monday, May 21, 2018

Time: 7:30 PM program*

Location: Roselle Park, 1010 Grand River Drive NE, Ada

Six species of rail occur in North America. Many of these species currently are listed as endangered or threatened in areas throughout the United States, and others have shown population declines. These secretive marsh birds rely extensively on wetlands containing areas of emergent vegetation for breeding and wintering habitat, as well as during migration. The loss of these wetlands is thought to be the main threat to all rail species. However, due to their elusive habits, rails are not well studied and their population status is unknown in most regions. Recent concerns about population declines have resulted in increased rail research in an effort to answer questions essential to habitat management and rail conservation. This research has led researchers and land managers to develop new methods for monitoring and capturing rails and resulted in a better understanding of rail habitat use, migration patterns, and productivity and density. Current rail research aims to better understand population declines and ultimately improve land management practices to provide breeding, wintering, and migratory habitat for rails.

Presenter Dr. Marie Perkins works as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University where she aims to improve methods for using birds as indicators of contaminants in the environment. She developed a passion for the outdoors and wildlife while running around Michigan's jack pine forests as a child. It was a summer internship at Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan's Upper Peninsula that instilled in her a love for birds and wetlands. Marie completed her undergraduate degree in biology at Central Michigan University. After spending several years catching birds around the country, she went on to earn a master's degree in wildlife from Louisiana State University. Marie's thesis work at LSU focused on wetland ecology and wetland birds, specifically rails, a group of secretive marsh birds. Marie recently completed her Ph.D. at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. For her dissertation research, Marie moved away from the field and into the laboratory, where she analyzed the blood and feathers of Arctic-breeding shorebirds for mercury.

**This nature program is preceded by the GRAC's Annual May Meeting and member potluck.*

Public welcome – Free event

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