

GRAND RAPIDS AUDUBON CLUB



# the **CALLER**

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**American Woodcock**

Photo By: Doug Greenberg, via Flickr.com



Photo by: Kailie Meyer

## APRIL MEETING DETAILS

Monday, April 29 | 7:30PM

John Donnelly Conference Center, Aquinas College

### *Wild Stories from the History of Bird Migration Research*

**Rebecca Heisman**

We've all heard amazing facts about bird migration—the long distances that birds travel, the ways that they navigate, etc. But did you ever wonder how we figured all of this out? While working for the American Ornithological Society, Rebecca Heisman became fascinated with the varied and creative techniques that scientists have used to study bird migration, and this eventually became the basis for her book *Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration*. In her talk, she'll share some surprising stories from the history of bird migration research and discuss why understanding migration is so crucial for bird conservation.

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### President's Corner | Tricia Boot

Birding, for me, is often a solo pursuit. When I venture out into nature by myself, I can go at my own pace and spend as much time as I want staring into various, unremarkable thickets, or craning my neck at the treetops. I don't have to worry about slowing anyone else down as I stop to identify a new-to-me plant, or inspect the forest floor for signs of owl poop. I can silently ponder the intricacies and magnitude of the universe, or simply zone out and think about the latest Netflix show I'm binging. The quiet and solitude are restorative. But as much as I value having the freedom to be alone in nature, there is something special about sharing those experiences with others.

A desire for shared curiosity, discovery and awe is what drew me to join the Grand Rapids Audubon Club nearly a decade ago. The sense of an engaged, always-ready-to-learn community is what has kept me coming back. It's also part of why I raised my hand to help lead the club over the last few years, and why I'll continue to remain active even as the role of President transitions to our incredibly capable (and ever-curious!) candidate.

Over the decades, dozens upon dozens of folks have stepped forward, offering to serve as board members, event volunteers, trip leaders, committee members or in any number of ways. This year was no different, with a mix of new and seasoned club members offering and agreeing to serve the club in some capacity. I'm so grateful for every person who volunteered during the 2023/2024 season as a board member, committee chair/member, ambassador or other support; thank you! The gratitude continues as I consider all of the returning and new faces who will lead us in the upcoming 2024/2025 season (a roster of nominees for elected positions can be found in this Caller). And certainly, our members, community partners and guest speakers continue to show up for the club -- literally and physically -- every month, ensuring this community can carry on into the future.

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### 2024/2025 Board Candidates

Club members will vote at our May 20 meeting to elect leaders for our upcoming year. Thank you to all who have served and have volunteered to serve! This club could not function without you. The following are our candidates for the elected board positions for 2024/2025:

**President:** Spencer High

**Vice President:** Cynthia Maas

**Secretary:** Matt Harris

**Asst' Treasurer:** Mary Austin

**Board Members at Large:** Enya deFeijter and Cliff Hodge

Alex Field and John Garbini will continue in their second year as Board Members at Large. Tricia Boot will remain on the board as Immediate Past President, in addition to serving on various committees. Additionally, we are pleased to welcome other new members to several committees and club Ambassadorship. More to come in a future Caller. All board members not listed here will continue in their roles.

## Thank You

To the Grand Rapids Audubon Club,

The Muskegon County Resource Recovery Center (MCRRC) would like to extend a BIG thank you to all those who braved the rain and cold weather Saturday, March 30th, to clean/repair/replace hundreds of nest boxes at the facility. We appreciate your time as well as the birdhouse and predator guard donations! Everyone's time is documented and helps the MCRRC maintain its certification through the Wildlife Habitat Council. Your support is appreciated!

A subset of nest boxes (80 nest boxes along 3 trails) are monitored during the nesting season. The data collected is entered into the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Nest Watch website and submitted to the Michigan Bluebird Society. In 2023, 61 Eastern Bluebird young successfully fledged; 335 Tree Swallow young successfully fledged; 58 House Wrens successfully fledged; and 7 Black-capped chickadee young successfully fledged.

Thank you again,

**Anita Friend**  
*Laboratory Supervisor*  
Muskegon County Resource Recovery Center  
(formerly the Muskegon Wastewater)



**Eastern Bluebird**

Photo By: David Martin, via flickr.com



Volunteers from the Grand Rapids Audubon Club cleaning out one of the Eastern Bluebird nest boxes at the Muskegon County Resource Recovery Center

## Visit Stu Visser Trails | Cynthia Maas

This beginner friendly birdwatching hotspot is great place to visit during Spring migration season. The 1.5 mile out and back trail is accessible with neat and even gravel and boardwalk. With plenty of overlook spots, photography and birdwatching is convenient. This wetland habitat supports a wide variety of wildlife and birds, with mornings full of activity. Wood ducks, mallards, and blue-winged teal dominate the water, and herons hide on the banks. The treetops are noisy with many different sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, and the usual cast of woodpeckers. Golden-crowned kinglets delicately bounce about. Keep ears open to hear the pretty, lengthy song of the winter wren. Look to the skies for juvenile eagles and hawks, and to the water for a glimpse of a sora or rail. Other Spring visitors include warblers, vireos, and orioles - as well as many birdwatchers!

## May Book Club

A reminder for the Grand Rapids Audubon Club's upcoming May meeting of the Birdy Book Club

**Monday, May 13 - 6-7pm at Books & Mortar**  
966 Cherry St SE Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

**What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds** by Jennifer Ackerman.



## Birdathon 2024!

Birdathon is a friendly birding competition and fundraiser. It is intended to be fun for everyone, friendly to beginners and help you prioritize getting outside with friends **between April 20 and June 1, 2024**. Funds raised are used to help the Grand Rapids Audubon Club continue to provide environmental education throughout West Michigan.

Form a team of 2-5 people to see as many bird species as you can in 24 hours!

Your team will help raise funds for our club and try to take home one of the awards in the following categories:

**Rock Dove** - Most species in 6 hours

**Wild Card** - Most sightings of a target bird species. This year's target bird is the Pileated Woodpecker

**Charity's Rarities** - Rarest bird spotted

**Fledgling** - Youngest average age team

**Big Fun Funders** - Most team money raised for the club by a team

**Big Fun Funder Individual** - Most team money raised for the club by an individual

**Big Sit / Feeder** - Most species sitting near a feeder.

**Big Sit / No Feeder** - Most species sitting without a feeder nearby.

This year we are hoping to raise over \$1,000 for the club to help fund our monthly membership meetings and educational programming. Pledge forms can be found [here](#). Team registration costs \$35. You can register and find out more information by visiting the [Birdathon Page](#).



2024 Wild Card Bird: Pileated Woodpecker

Photo By: Ricky NJ, via flickr.com

A colorful poster for the Spring Migration Bird Bonanza 2024. At the top, it says "SATURDAY, MAY 18 - 9AM-1:30PM" in a blue banner. Below that, "Spring Migration" is written in a stylized, green font on a yellow background. The word "BIRD" is in large, white, outlined letters on a blue background. Below that, "BONANZA!" is in large, white, outlined letters on a green background. At the bottom, there are two banners: "CELEBRATING BIRDS AND THE WONDERS OF OUR NATURAL WORLD" in white on an orange background, and "VISIT BLANDFORDNATURECENTER.ORG/EVENTS FOR MORE INFO" in white on a blue background. The poster features several small images of birds, including a robin, a duck, and a falcon.

## Spring Migration Bird Bonanza

Saturday, May 18 - 9am-1:30pm

**Blandford Nature Center**

1715 Hillburn Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Mark your calendars for the Third Annual Spring Migration Bird Bonanza! We will again be partnering with Blandford Nature Center to host a birding festival where experienced birders from the Grand Rapids Audubon Club will be guiding community members along 4 different routes.

There will be a wildlife presentation, a wildlife photography course from Steve Jessmore, activities for kids and booths from 10 different partner organizations.

For more information visit [our website](#) or [blandfordnaturecenter.org/events](http://blandfordnaturecenter.org/events)

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are still looking for 2-4 volunteers to help guide groups of birders and run the GRAC booth. If you would like to help, contact Spencer High: [spencer@querkuscreative.com](mailto:spencer@querkuscreative.com)

## 2024/2025 Budget | Jeff Neumann - GRAC Treasurer

This is the proposed Grand Rapids Audubon Club 2024-25 budget that was voted on and approved by the Board to be formally adopted by the GRAC membership at the general May 20th meeting. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Jeff Neumann at: [treasurer@graud.org](mailto:treasurer@graud.org)

### Grand Rapids Audubon Club

#### Proposed 2024/25 Budget Worksheet

Expenses	2022-23	2023-24 Budget	7/1/23-3/25/24	2024-25 Expenses	Proposed
Birdathon	\$0.00	\$100	\$0.00	Book Club	\$300
Caller	\$458.99	\$500	\$224.72	Caller	\$500
Christmas Bird Count	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	Hospitality	\$400
Club Expenses	\$824.3	\$1,000	\$357.93	Insurance/Registration	\$1,000
Fundraising/Sponsorships	\$0.00	\$500	\$250.00	Library	\$150
Library Materials	\$138.40	\$150	\$113.28	Maher Sanctuary	\$1,500
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$0.00	\$100	\$54.98	Miscellaneous Expenses	\$200
Program Speakers	\$725.00	\$1,200	\$0.00	Program Speakers	\$1,200
Publicity	\$319.24	\$500	\$384.52	Publicity	\$500
Room Rental	\$2,679.00	\$2,500	\$2,508.17	Room Rental	\$3,500
Junior Audubon	\$0.00	\$0	\$0.00	Scholarships	\$200
Maher Sanctuary	\$400.00	\$1,500	\$261.06	Sponsorships	\$400
Scholarships	\$244.97	\$200	\$0.00		
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,789.90</b>	<b>\$8,250</b>	<b>\$4,154.66</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$9,850</b>

Income	2022-23	2023-24 Budget	7/1/23-3/25/24	2024-25 Income	Estimated
Birdathon	\$1,680.00	\$500	\$5.00	Birdathon	\$1,200
Fundraising/Misc Income	\$2,147.59	\$1,000	\$1,133.21	General Fund Donations	\$1,000
General Fund Donations	\$1,648.10	\$1,500	\$974.67	Interest	\$1,500
Membership Dues	\$3,036.18	\$2,000	\$2,169.96	Membership Dues	\$2,500
Transfer from Cash Reserves	\$0.00	\$3,250	\$0.00	Misc. Fundraising	\$200
				Transfer from Cash Reserves	\$3,450
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$8,511.87</b>	<b>\$8,250</b>	<b>\$4,282.84</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$9,850</b>

## A LOT of Amazing Field Trips Coming Up!

There are so many field trips coming up, that we weren't able to fit them all within the field trips section! We hope you make it out to a few of these in the next few weeks. For more information about these field trips, visit [graud.org/fieldtrips](http://graud.org/fieldtrips).

**Tuesday, April 30 & May 7 - 6pm**  
**Tuesday Evenings at Reeds Lake**  
 Led By: Steve Minard

**Sunday, May 5 - 7am**  
**Wahlfeld Park**  
 Led By: Becky Kuhn

**Saturday, May 11 - 7:30am**  
**Spring Birding and Flowers at Aman Park**  
 Led By: Becky Kuhn

**Tuesday, May 14 & 21 - 6pm**  
**Tuesday Evenings at Roselle Park**  
 Led By: Steve Minard

**Saturday, May 18 - 9:30pm**  
**Spring Migration Bird Bonanza**  
 Led By: Grand Rapids Audubon Club

**Tuesday, May 28 - 5:30pm**  
**Woodcocks at Luton Park and the Rockford Rogue River Dam Boardwalk**  
 Led By: Becky Kuhn

## The Bird Memory Phrases Quiz! | Mary Austin

As more of our spring birds migrate northward, we'll be hearing their songs and calls. Recently a GRAC member asked if I might create a quiz using bird memory phrases. I thought he had a great idea, so here is the quiz.

Many birders use memory phrases to help remember the sounds of different species. Memory phrases are comprised of English words that imitate a bird's song or call. The quiz is based on the United States Department of Agriculture chart, "Bird Songs: Putting Words to What You Hear!" ([https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd728060.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd728060.pdf)). In this quiz, match the bird species with the USDA's suggested bird songs. (Note: To keep things challenging, there are more bird songs than birds listed.)

- |                                 |       |  |
|---------------------------------|-------|--|
| 1. Black-capped Chickadee       | _____ | A. Chebek  |
| 2. White-breasted Nuthatch      | _____ | B. Cheerio cheerio cheerio                                 |
| 3. American Robin               | _____ | C. Chickburr (Sore throat robin)                           |
| 4. Black-throated Green Warbler | _____ | D. Deer deer deer deer deer                                |
| 5. Chestnut-sided Warbler       | _____ | E. feeeeeee-beeeeeeee (or chick-a-dee-dee-dee)             |
| 6. Hermit Thrush                | _____ | F. fire fire where where here here                         |
| 7. Red-eyed Vireo               | _____ | G. Flute-like, down the drain                              |
| 8. Ovenbird                     | _____ | H. Flute-like, eee-oh-lay                                  |
| 9. White-throated Sparrow       | _____ | I. Konk-la-ree   |
| 10. Yellowthroat Warbler        | _____ | J. Look at me, here I am, look at me, here I am            |
| 11. Red-winged Blackbird        | _____ | K. Maids Maid put on your tea kettle-lettle-lettle         |
| 12. Alder Flycatcher            | _____ | L. mew mew mew (nasally)                                   |
| 13. Wood Duck                   | _____ | M. Palmmmm-up (going up the scale)                         |
| 14. Least Flycatcher            | _____ | N. Poor Sam Peabody Peabody Peabody                        |
| 15. Killdeer                    | _____ | O. Quick! Free beer!                                       |
| 16. Barred Owl                  | _____ | P. Sweet Sweet Sweeter than Sweet                          |
| 17. Eastern Phoebe              | _____ | Q. Teacher teacher teacher teacher teacher (soft to loud)  |
| 18. Song Sparrow                | _____ | R. tip tupa teepo tupa teepo                               |
| 19. Scarlet Tanager             | _____ | S. Very plain "feebee"                                     |
| 20. Wood Thrush                 | _____ | T. Very very very pleased to meet ya                       |
| 21. Connecticut Warbler         | _____ | U. Weezy weezy weezy                                       |
| 22. Black-and-White Warbler     | _____ | V. What? What? What?                                       |
| 23. Parula Warbler              | _____ | W. Who Cooks For You? Who Cooks For You All?               |
| 24. Yellow Warbler              | _____ | X. Why don't you come to me? Here I am right near you (x2) |
|                                 | _____ | Y. Witchity Witchity Witchity                              |
|                                 | _____ | Z. zee zee zee zoo zee (the "zoo" sound goes down)         |
|                                 | _____ | AA. zee zee zee ziti zee                                   |

**Special Note:** Veery-G. Flute-like, down the drain; Indigo Bunting-F. Fire fire where here here here; Blackburnian Warbler-A. zee zee zee ziti zee

**SOLUTION:** 1.E; 2.L; 3.B; 4.Z; 5.T; 6.X; 7.J; 8.Q; 9.N; 10.Y; 11.I; 12.O; 13.V; 14.A; 15.D; 16.W; 17.S; 18.K; 19.C; 20.H; 21.R; 22.U; 23.M; 24.P

## American Woodcock

The American Woodcock is a fascinating bird beloved for its appearance and unique habits. Early Spring is when woodcocks enter their mating season, and the bizarre way they behave to attract attention is on multiple fronts. Using a distinct call, sky dances, and ground displays, the behavior is even more striking and surprising than their unique appearance.

At first glance, the American Woodcock is equal parts silly and endearing. Related to sandpipers, this short-legged bird is about the size of a robin. A comically long bill with a flexible tip is useful for probing the earth for a diet of worms and insects. Eyes sit back far on its head, so even while looking for food they can be aware of predators. Sporting a short tail and round belly, the woodcock famously struts his stuff by puffing out their feathers to appear bigger to potential mates or rivals. Ground displays include confident steps and head bobs.

A few years ago, I began birdwatching as an avenue to learn about nature around me. After moving to a new home, I noticed a distinctive bird call routinely around the twilight hours of dawn and dusk. This crepuscular curiosity to discover who made that sound led to many evenings staring into binoculars in the backyard. My encounters observing this species have always left me entertained and looking forward to Spring when I hear the recognizable “peent” call in succession.

Usually in a series separated with brief pauses, the buzzy “peent” call serves as a way for males to attract females or to establish territory. The nasally sound is loud, and acoustically can carry very far in open fields or clearings. This “peent” call is usually a prelude to the male’s aerial sky dance. This display of zigzagging flight patterns are meant to impress potential mates. As it ascends, the woodcock emits a twittering sound caused by the air rushing through specialized outer wing feathers.

The American Woodcock is a very unique bird and is not endangered. Found in forests, brushy areas, and farmland, edge habitats offer perfect conditions for nesting and foraging. Dense vegetation is preferred for cover. Clearings are utilized for their sky dances. Perhaps this is a bird for your Spring checklist. Observing the woodcock in person is a sight to behold!

### Identifying an American Woodcock



#### Description:

A plump short-legged and short-necked shorebird with a long straight pinkish bill. Tan, gray and brown speckled back helps it blend into the leaf litter in deciduous forests and shrubby fields. Its cryptic plumage and low-profile behavior make it hard to find except in the springtime at dawn or dusk, when the males show off for females by giving loud, nasal ‘peent’ calls and performing dazzling aerial displays.

#### Habitat:

Young thick forests and shrubby fields. They are usually seen in areas with wetlands and open areas nearby. Look for them in the transitional areas between woodlands and shrubby fields.

#### Best Time to See:

March-June around dusk

#### Best Place to See:

Roselle Park, Wahlfield Park, Luton Park, Millennium Park, Grand River Park, Calvin Ecosystem Preserve

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

### Millennium Park Birding Hikes | Led By: Katie Bolt, Jeanne Griffin or Kathy Haase

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. Please dress for the expected weather conditions.

Thursday, April 25 - 9AM May 2, 9, 16 - 8AM | Meet at the end of the dead-end section of Veterans Memorial Drive

### Tuesday Evenings at Reeds Lake | Led By: Steve Minard

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 right in town. On this trip, we will concentrate on waterbirds, and early warblers. The boardwalk provides good views of the lake and marsh areas so we will visit it. Note that we are starting a week earlier this year. Birds do seem to be migrating earlier and we hope to avoid congestion at the ballfield. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Tuesday, April 30 May 7 - 6PM | Meet at the East Grand Rapids Utility Building Parking Lot

### Wahfield Park | Led By: Becky Kuhn

This park has a wide variety of habitats and always has a good offering of resident and migrating song birds, especially by the idyllic creek, there are even bird feeders in one of the field openings! Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Bathrooms are available and if this is a family outing-there is a playground next to the parking area

Sunday, May 5 - 7AM | Wahfield Park - 6811 Alpine Ave NW, Comstock Park, MI 49321

For additional information about these trips and additional trips not listed, please visit [our Facebook page](#) or [graud.org](#)

## FOLLOW THE GRAND RAPIDS AUDUBON CLUB ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Follow our feed for the latest news in and around Grand Rapids about birdwatching, the conservation community, and events to attend. Tag @grandrapidsaudubonclub in your outdoor discoveries and let us know what you see outside!



@GRANDRAPIDSAUDUBONCLUB

## GRAND RAPIDS AUDUBON CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

5 officers + 4 elected board members

**President** - Tricia Boot

**Vice President** - Spencer High

**Secretary** - Cynthia Maas

**Treasurer** - Jeff Neumann

**Ass't Treasurer** - OPEN

**Board Member** - Mary Austin

**Board Member** - John Garbini

**Board Member** - Alex Field

### SPECIAL COMMITTEES

#### /CHAIRPERSONS

**Aud. Adventures** - Mary Austin

**Insurance** - OPEN

#### RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

### STANDING COMMITTEES

**Audio/Visual** - Robert Riepma

**Caller Editor** - Cynthia Maas

**Caller Publisher** - Brownlee Press

**Christmas Count** - Tom Leggett

**Conservation** - OPEN

**Field Trips** - Steve Minard

**Finance** - OPEN

**Historian** - Linda Damstra

**Hospitality** - Henry Raad

**Junior Audubon** - Hannah Safford

**Library** - Kathleen Haase

**Maher Sanctuary** - Chris Baer

**Membership** - Jeff Neumann

**Publicity** - Tricia Boot & Cynthia Maas

**Scholarship** - Katie Bolt

**Website** - Spencer High

## MISSION

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.

## CONTACT

Website: [graud.org](#)

General Inquiries:

[information@graud.org](mailto:information@graud.org)

Membership: [membership@graud.org](mailto:membership@graud.org)

Caller Editor: [newsletter@graud.org](mailto:newsletter@graud.org)

## INTERESTED IN SERVING ON THE BOARD OR HELPING ON A COMMITTEE?

Contact Tricia Boot:

[president@graud.org](mailto:president@graud.org)