



the **CALLER**

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Wilson's Snipe

Photo By: Mallary Webb

APRIL MEETING DETAILS

Monday, April 24 | 7:30PM | John Donnelly Conference Center, Aquinas College

Stacy Bare | *The Power of Nature*

Stacy Bare is the Executive Director of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks. He, his wife and daughter moved to West Michigan from Utah for the easy access to the Great Lakes and to be closer to the call of the loon. Stacy has also served as the Director of Sierra Club Outdoors, been recognized as a National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, has been a brand ambassador for The North Face, and has skied, climbed and made adventure films in Angola, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. He really hopes he can learn how to surf and foil on the Great Lakes this year.

Stacy will be speaking on the power of nature and the impact of awe in our everyday lives and what role time outdoors played in his transition home from Iraq where he served as a Captain in the United States Army. He will also discuss what role city parks and urban forestry play in promoting adventure and health near and far.

A Note from the Club President | Tricia Boot Vice President, acting President

Sports fans have March Madness, and those of us who love birds get spring migration. Like many of you, I'm gearing up for those five to six weeks of seemingly endless birding, full of surprises and opportunity. As part of this year's fun, perhaps try a club or community activity, such as the Birdathon, a Thursday morning hike at Millennium Park or an event at Blandford Nature Center or Hemlock Crossing.

This month, I'd like to give a shoutout to more of our wonderful volunteers, including Jeff Neumann, who does double duty as club treasurer and membership. This year, he's also led the charge to update our club bylaws (a much-needed task), in addition to streamlining and updating our membership process, particularly exciting given the huge growth we've experienced in new members! And thank you to Spencer High for stepping up last month to help me co-host a presentation to the Alto Branch of the Kent District Library. That's in addition to the many (many) other contributions he quietly makes to the club, including designing this beautiful Caller. Speaking of--HUGE thanks to Cynthia Maas for editing and distributing this publication each month. And finally, thanks to Cynthia, Jon Garbini, and Kathy Haase for joining me to represent GRAC at last month's Spring Bluebird Festival. That ambassadorship is vital to drawing new people to our club!

2023-24 Board Candidates

Here is the list of nominees for next year's Board. 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 2023/2024:

President: Tricia Boot

Vice President: Spencer High

Secretary: Cynthia Maas

Board Members at Large: John Garbini (*1 position remains open*)

Cynthia Maas and Mary Austin will continue in their second year as Board Members at Large.

Thank you to Jeni Taheri (outgoing Board Member) and Shawn Taheri (outgoing Secretary) for serving the club these last few years. All board and committee chairs not listed here will continue in their roles.

We still have one position to be filled to have a full ballot prior to the year-end meeting where the club will vote to approve these positions. If you are interested in joining the board of the Grand Rapids Audubon Club, please contact Tricia Boot: president@graud.org



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Photo By: Joshua J. Cotten, via Unsplash.com

2023 Birdathon

Birdathon for 2023 will be held April 15 through May 31. For those who have participated in the past, you know that it is perhaps the most fun way to raise money for the Club. It is our hope that, with a few more teams and a non-Covid outlook, we can bring in over \$1,000 for the Club, as we have done pre-Covid.

Little has changed for this year. Basically, you -

- 1) Form or join a team of fellow birders
- 2) Solicit pledges
- 3) Compete for the various prizes while birdwatching.

Birdathon prize categories are as follows:

Rock Dove - Most species in 6 hours. (Use your favorite 6 hour data bracket)

Wild Card - Most sightings of this year's Target Bird - Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Charity's Rarities - Rarest bird spotted

Fledgling - Youngest average age of a team

Big Fun Funders - Most money raised by a team

Big Fun Funder Individual - Most money raised by an individual

Big Sit / Feeder - prize similar to 'Rock Dove' for number of species.

Big Sit / No Feeder - Ditto

Wall Plaques will be awarded after May 31, which winners may take home for 1 year.

During the Birdathon time, the time segment you choose must be of a planned time total of no more than 6 hours (see website for further elaboration). If you have done nothing to date, despair not - you can still join a team, or form a team (2 people or more) anytime during the Birdathon period. Regarding soliciting pledges, know that the key to easy fundraising is simply to ask! (Also remember, some people who have no interest in your cause may still give you \$20 just because birding is cool).

More detailed information can be found on the entry forms. To get your official forms for Birdathon, go to the GRAC website (www.graud.org). If you have questions, or don't 'do computers', contact Birdathon Committee members Ed Bolt, Tom Leggett, or Jill Goodell - we can help. Do try it!

Marsh Bird Survey Volunteers Needed

Izabel Grobelna

Engagement Manager for Audubon Great Lakes

Marsh Bird Survey volunteers are needed at Harbor Island this upcoming summer!

Here's what you need to know about this volunteer effort:

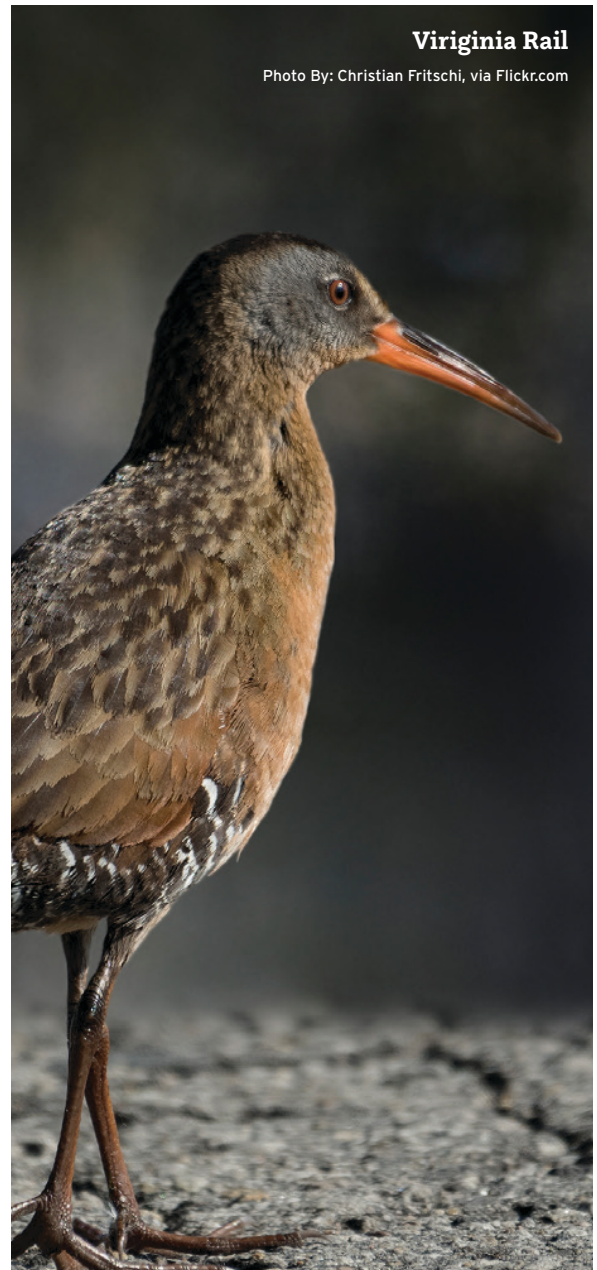
- Training will be provided, including online training materials, virtual office hours, an in-person orientation day, and online quiz
- 1 site visit is required before you conduct your first survey, to familiarize yourself with your survey route
- 3 marsh bird surveys are required between May 1st and June 15th
- Marsh bird surveys must begin 30 minutes before sunrise, so a headlamp or flashlight will be needed
- One survey route is available on foot, and the other is via kayak (Ottawa County Parks and Recreation can provide a kayak and life vest, if needed)
- All needed equipment will be provided (portable Bluetooth speaker, clipboard, data forms, volunteer vest, etc.)

Learn about the Great Lakes wide marsh bird monitoring program at gl.audubon.org/news/monitoring-secretive-marsh-birds-great-lakes-region

If you are interested in joining our corps of marsh bird volunteers, you can get more information or sign-up at: act.audubon.org/a/michigan-marsh-bird-survey-1

Or, if you have questions, please reach out to Izabela at: Izabela.Grobelna@audubon.org.

Thank you for all you do for birds and the places they need!



May Meeting Details

We will close out the 2022/2023 season with our GRAC Annual May Meeting with a special presentation focused on the habitats and birds of Costa Rica. Our presenters are familiar favorites of the club: Bill Sweetman and Larry Burke.

Please note that the location for our May meeting has changed this year to be at Blandford Nature Center.

Monday, May 22 | 7:30PM

Mary Jane Dockeray Visitor Center

Blandford Nature Center 1715 Hillburn Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Bill Sweetman and Larry Burke | *Costa Rica, Pura Vida*

Bill has been a birder most of his 80-plus years. After retirement, he started Bswettours LLC, leading birding tours throughout the US (including Alaska) and Central America. Larry has been a recreational birder for nearly a half century and discovered the fun of bird photography six years ago.



2023-24 Budget

Jeff Neuman
GRAC Treasurer

Please review the budget below and reach out to Jeff Neuman with any questions or concerns prior to the year-end meeting where the club will vote to approve the budget for next year.

Gand Rapids Audubon Club Proposed 2023-24 Budget Worksheet

Expenses	Actual 2021-22	2022-23 Budget	Actual to Date - 7/1/22 to 3/27/23	Proposed 2023-24 Budget
Birdathon	\$0.00	\$100	\$0.00	\$100
Caller	\$571.90	\$600	\$414.47	\$500
Christmas Bird Count	\$0.00	\$50	\$0.00	\$0
Club Expenses	\$814.00	\$1,000	\$824.30	\$1,000
Fundraising/Sponsorships	\$500.00	\$500	\$0.00	\$500
Library Materials	\$0.00	\$150	\$138.40	\$150
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$0.00	\$100	\$0.00	\$100
Program Speakers	\$480.00	\$2,400	\$525.00	\$1,200
Publicity	\$0.00	\$600	\$319.24	\$500
Room Rental	\$1,455.00	\$2,000	\$2,205.00	\$2,500
Junior Audubon	\$0.00	\$200	\$0.00	\$0
Maher Sanctuary	\$1,334.50	\$1,500	\$400.00	\$1,500
Scholarships	\$0.00	\$400	\$244.97	\$200
Total Expenses	\$5,155.40	\$9,600	\$5,071.38	\$8,250

Income	Actual 2021-22	2022-23 Budget	Actual to Date - 7/1/22 to 3/27/23	Proposed 2023-24 Budget
Birdathon	\$130.00	\$1,000	\$500.00	\$500
Christmas Bird Count	\$0.00	\$50	\$0.00	\$0
Fundraising/Misc Income	\$0.00	\$200	\$1,775.87	\$1,000
General Fund Donations	\$26,379.32	\$1,500	\$1,533.10	\$1,500
Membership Dues	\$1,705.64	\$2,000	\$2,664.89	\$2,000
Transfer from Cash Reserves	\$0.00	\$4,850	\$0.00	\$3,250
Total Income	\$28,214.96	\$9,600	\$6,473.86	\$8,250

A Birdy Crossword Puzzle | Mary Austin

With this crossword puzzle, list the common English bird name for each line description. If the bird name is two or more words, ignore the space between the words, (for example, AMERICAN ROBIN would become AMERICANROBIN). If you provide the correct bird names, you will have the name of the bonus bird shown in the ** column. Have fun! Solution can be found under the upcoming field trips section.

								**					
LINE 1													
LINE 2													
LINE 3													
LINE 4													
LINE 5													
LINE 6													
LINE 7													
LINE 8													
LINE 9													
LINE 10													
LINE 11													
LINE 12													

- LINE 1 Has blue-green back, rusty-colored neck and dark cap; prefers aquatic food
- LINE 2 Hitches upward on tree trunks; blends in with tree bark
- LINE 3 Large, long-legged bird with gray body and rusty staining on feathers; favors marshes and agricultural fields to primarily eat grains
- LINE 4 Glossy-black bird with wedge-shaped tail and thick bill; found in a wide variety of habitats including desert, coniferous forest and grassland
- LINE 5 Wild and feral populations throughout the world; wild birds generally pale gray with two black wing bars and iridescence on neck
- LINE 6 Gobbling often audible in spring and early summer
- LINE 7 Large, lanky, long-necked white bird found in shallow wetlands
- LINE 8 Medium-sized raptor with conspicuous white patch on rump
- LINE 9 Subtly patterned brown-and-yellow bird with constantly bobbing tail and when in breeding plumage, a rufous cap
- LINE 10 Red color of males mostly restricted to head and upper chest with distinct brown streaks on back and wings; often sings loudly in neighborhoods and often visits feeders
- LINE 11 Flies for insects over grassy fields, lakes and marshes; breeds in cavities, especially human-made nest boxes; adult males are bright blue-green above with white underparts
- LINE 12 Small, compact diving bird found in bays, estuaries, and lakes in winter and boreal forest ponds and lakes in summer; females gray-brown with white patch on cheek

Wilson's Snipe

Before we all get distracted by the colorful, candy filled Easter basket that is warbler season, I would like to shine this month's spotlight on a much more understated spring visitor - the Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*).

This somewhat goofy looking, cryptically colored shorebird loves to snack on tiny invertebrates in the mud. In fact, it is in the sandpiper family (*Scolopacidae*), sharing the highly sensitive, long, probing bills for the purpose of detecting their mud-dwelling prey. But the Wilson's snipe has an exceptionally long bill even for a sandpiper, and to be able to use it to its full extent, deep in the mud, but avoid becoming someone else's meal, it needs to have eyes in the back of its head - literally. OK, not quite literally, but close; their eyes are set extremely far back on their heads, giving them not only full vision on both sides, but also some rear vision. Take the bill length and eye position and combine them with a plump, squat body, and you get something almost Jim Henson-esque in its weird cuteness.

While there is a serious element of luck required to find these elusive shorebirds, you can certainly increase your chances by knowing where to go - open wetlands are the key here (think fluddles, farmland, etc.). Roselle Park, Muskegon and Caledonia Wastewater, and the flooded field at 92nd and Patterson are all great choices. My personal single encounter with one was just dumb luck - I heard a bird call I absolutely did not recognize, so I stopped in my tracks and waited for movement, then I saw it. At that point, I had a good idea of what it might be, so I took photos, recorded sounds, and looked it up on Cornell Lab's various sites and apps to confirm, and voilà! Lifer!

Identifying Wilson's Snipe



Description:

Medium-sized, plump, long-billed birds with short, stocky legs. Intricately Patterned with 3 buff stripes down back and striped head.

Habitat:

Marshes and Wetlands

Best Time to See:

Late April-September

Best Place to See:

Roselle Park, Caledonia Wastewater Treatment Plant, Muskegon Wastewater Treatment Plant

ID Tips & Tricks

- Stout, medium-sized sandpiper with very long bill and eyes set far back.
- Tends to fly erratically in a zig-zag pattern when flushed.
- Distinctive markings include buff stripes on the back & head and white underparts, otherwise cryptically colored with brown, black, gray, tan, and white mottling, barring, and streaks.
- Wilson's snipe has buff stripes on head versus woodcock's dark bands, and is white underneath versus woodcock's more rufous coloration.
- Could be mistaken for American Woodcock - Cornell's Birds of the World says "superficially similar," but you're likely not going to get a close look at a still bird in good lighting for either of these species. Don't give yourself a hard time if you aren't sure of the ID.
- These birds are generally crepuscular, but my sighting was mid-afternoon, so your mileage may vary.
- A mnemonic I always have in my mind just in case I ever luck out and see one again is that the Wilson's snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) is more delicate (less chunky) than the woodcock.

These birds are extremely well camouflaged, very shy, and stay low to the ground. If you're deliberately going on a snipe hunt - er, snipe watch - know ahead of time what you're looking AND listening for. Or, if you happen upon one like I did and you're not sure what you're seeing or hearing, it's OK to use field guides and, yes, even ID apps! Anything that helps you make the connection in your brain between what you're seeing/hearing and the species ID will help you learn, and you'll find over time that you'll need these tools less and less.

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.

Thursdays April 20, 27 - 9:00AM | May 4, 11, 18, 25 - 8:00AM (note the time change beginning in May) | 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. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Tuesday, May 2, 9 | 6:00 PM | Meet at the East Grand Rapids Utility Building parking lot on Reeds Lake Blvd north of Gaslight Village at 6:00 PM. Waterproof footwear and insect repellent may be useful. Poison Ivy is thick in places.

For additional information about these trips, please visit graud.org/field_trips.html

*Solution to A Birdy Crossword Puzzle: HSH * ** HERMITTIRUSH, LINE 10 - HOUSEFINCH, LINE 11 TREESWALLOW, LINE 12 - BUFFLEHEAD, BONUS BIRD ** HERNIMTIRUSH, LINE 1 - GREENHERON, LINE 2 - BROWNGREPPER, LINE 3 - SANDHILLCRANE, LINE 4 - COMMONRAVEN, LINE 5 - ROCKPIGEON, LINE 6 - WILDTURKEY, LINE 7 - GREATERT, LINE 8 - NORTHERNHARRIER, LINE 9 - PALMARBLER, LINE 10 - HOUSEFINCH, LINE 11 TREESWALLOW, LINE 12 - BUFFLEHEAD, BONUS BIRD ** HERNIMTIRUSH*

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

Acting President - Tricia Boot

Vice President - Tricia Boot

Secretary - Shawn Taheri

Treasurer - Jeff Neumann

Ass't Treasurer - OPEN

Board Member - Mary Austin

Board Member - Jeni Taheri

Board Member - Spencer High

Board Member - Cynthia Maas

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

/CHAIRPERSONS

Aud. Adventures - Mary Austin

Insurance - Jill Goodell

RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

STANDING COMMITTEES

Audio/Visual - Robert Riepma

Bird Reports - Carol VanOeveren

Caller Editor - Cynthia Maas

Caller Publisher - OPEN

Christmas Count - Tom Leggett

Conservation - OPEN

Field Trips - Steve Minard

Finance - OPEN

Fund Development - OPEN

Historian - Linda Damstra

Hospitality - Henry Raad

Junior Audubon - Hannah Safford

Library - Kathleen Haase

Maher Sanctuary - Chris Baer

Membership - Jeff Neumann

Nominating - OPEN

Publicity - Tricia Boot & Cynthia Maas

Scholarship - Katie Bolt

Special Events - OPEN

Website - Fred VanOeveren

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

Membership: membership@graud.org

Caller Editor: newsletter@graud.org

Librarian: librarian@graud.org

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

Contact Tricia Boot:

president@graud.org