

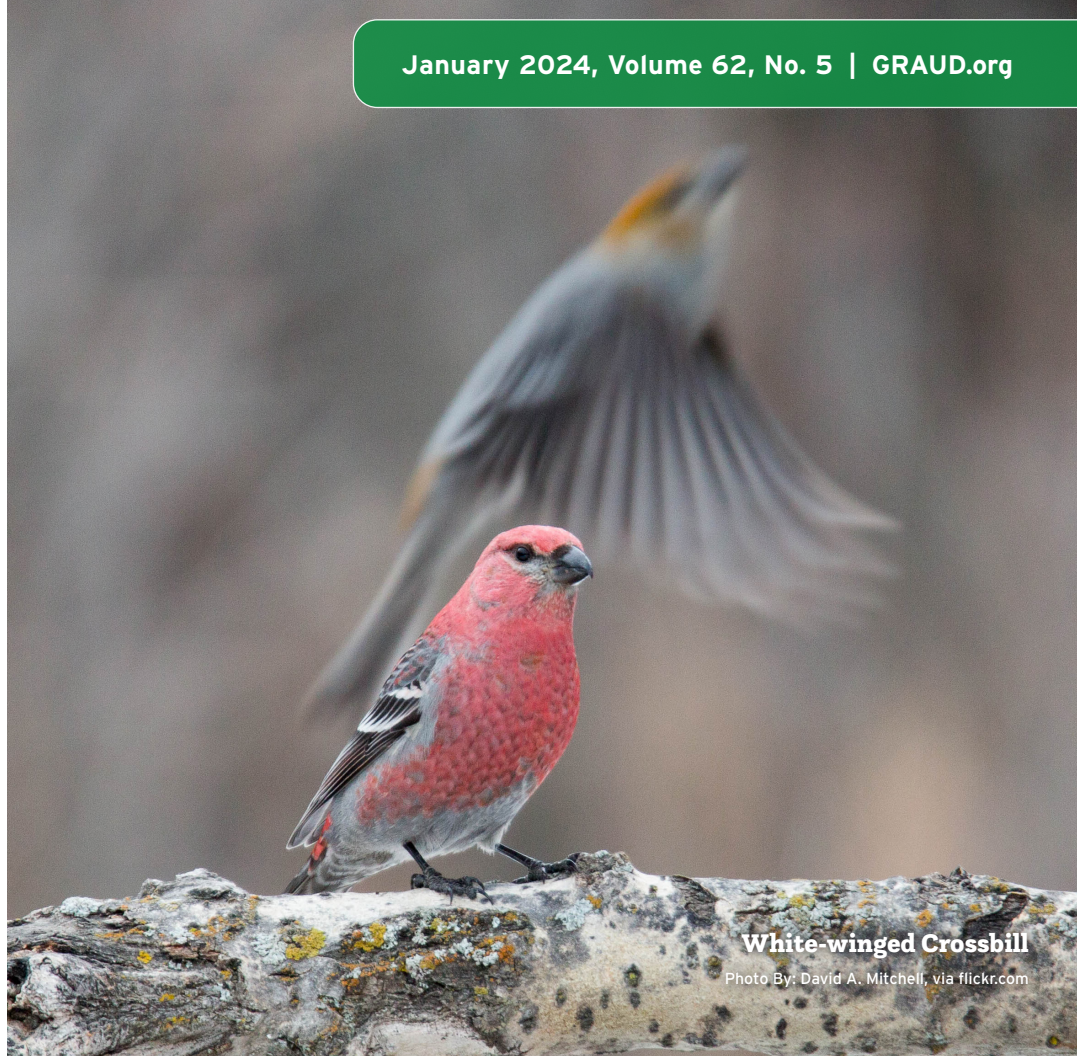


the
CALLER

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2023 Birdathon Awards
- Make Birding Resolutions
- Additional Information about adding the North Country Trail to Maher Audubon Sacturay
- Return of Classic Membership Meeting Activities

January 2024, Volume 62, No. 5 | GRAUD.org



White-winged Crossbill

Photo By: David A. Mitchell, via flickr.com



Community Science in West Michigan

JANUARY MEETING DETAILS

Monday, January 29 | 7:30PM

John Donnelly Conference Center, Aquinas College

Community Science in West Michigan

Travis Kurtz - Community Science Coordinator, John Ball Zoo

Throughout the presentation we will learn about the different community science projects that the John Ball Zoo is spearheading locally. Public participation within projects like these help protect and conserve our local biodiversity, and are extremely important for helping conservation scientists gather data to make fact-driven decisions within their management of our natural landscapes. One of the projects we will learn about, the City Nature Challenge, is a part of a worldwide bioblitz hosted by iNaturalist the last weekend of April. Join us as we learn about the importance of all of the projects that are led by the John Ball Zoo in 2024, and discover how members of the Grand Rapids Audubon Club can become more involved with community science locally.

President's Corner | Tricia Boot

Happy New Year! It's already time to think ahead to the club's 2024/2025 year; specifically, who will lead us in our "new year." Club bylaws--and general good practice--wisely place limits on how long any one person can serve in any particular position. This ensures no one gets burned out on that role, and that we have a steady flow of new ideas and input.

Our board is strongest when we have a mix of seasoned board/club members and newbies. This formula means a blend of expertise, experience, knowledge, excitement, novelty and fresh energy.

Most of our board positions will be up for vote at our May 20 season-ending meeting, and while we've got a great candidate lined up for President, many other roles will need solid folks to step up or raise a hand to help. If you've taken a few years off of leadership, this is a wonderful time to return!

New to the club and/or never served in a club leadership role? This opportunity is for you! In addition to helping your club/community/birds, serving on the board is a great opportunity to build those coveted "soft skills" (such as interpersonal communication, leadership and organization) that benefit our careers. The Vice President role in particular is a fun way to shape club programming, improve networking skills and practice public speaking (in a very warm and receptive environment). Board members at large also are needed. This role is ideal for those who want to steer the future of the club, but may have only an hour or two (tops) to devote monthly to the cause (with December and summer months off!).

The board and I will reach out to prospective candidates in the next few months; don't be surprised if you hear from one of us at a meeting or via phone/email! Interested? Don't hesitate to email president@graud.org to ask questions or throw your hat in the ring.

The club has great momentum heading into 2024, and I'm excited to see where the next set of leaders can take us!

Return of Classic Membership Meeting Activities

Thanks to Rita Neumann for volunteering to lead the return of two "classic" meeting activities; door prizes and refreshments. We'll debut these in the early part of the year. If you have any bird- or nature-related items you'd like to donate to the door prize efforts (examples include framed bird art, bird books, nature-related coasters, etc.) please bring them to an upcoming meeting! We already have a small stash of goodies to give away at our January meeting.

Climate Watch is Around the Corner

The 2024 season of Climate Watch is about to kick off, with the winter count period running from January 15, 2024 to February 15, 2024. Climate Watch helps Audubon scientists understand how climate change is affecting birds in your area and the data you collect is absolutely vital. Learn more about Climate Watch and how to participate here.

We hope that you are enjoying winter wherever you are and have been able to continue to enjoy the birds! We continue to survey for bluebirds, nuthatches or goldfinches. The dates of the winter Climate Watch survey period will take place **January 15 - February 15, 2024.**

As you start to plan your Climate Watch surveys,

We ask all participants to submit data through the Audubon mobile app, or into eBird and then submit the eBird checklist through the portal, rather than through email. A link to video instructions on how to use the portal can be found in #3 on this page: <https://www.audubon.org/news/how-submit-your-data-climate-watch>. If you or your participants encounter any issues—we are here to help and will work with you to process your data.

If you have questions or need more information email us at: climatewatch@audubon.org, or Becky with GRCC at bexrecky@gmail.com

Enjoy your birding and we look forward to winter Climate Watch with you!

GRAC'S 63rd Christmas Bird Count in the 124 Year History Was a Well Attended Success on Saturday, December 30, 2023

Tom Leggett

The Grand Rapids Audubon Club's 63rd Christmas Bird Count had 63 field counters, one for every year we counted, and 3 more at feeders. These observers in 27 parties produced the magical number of 63 species, and 9,552 individual birds.

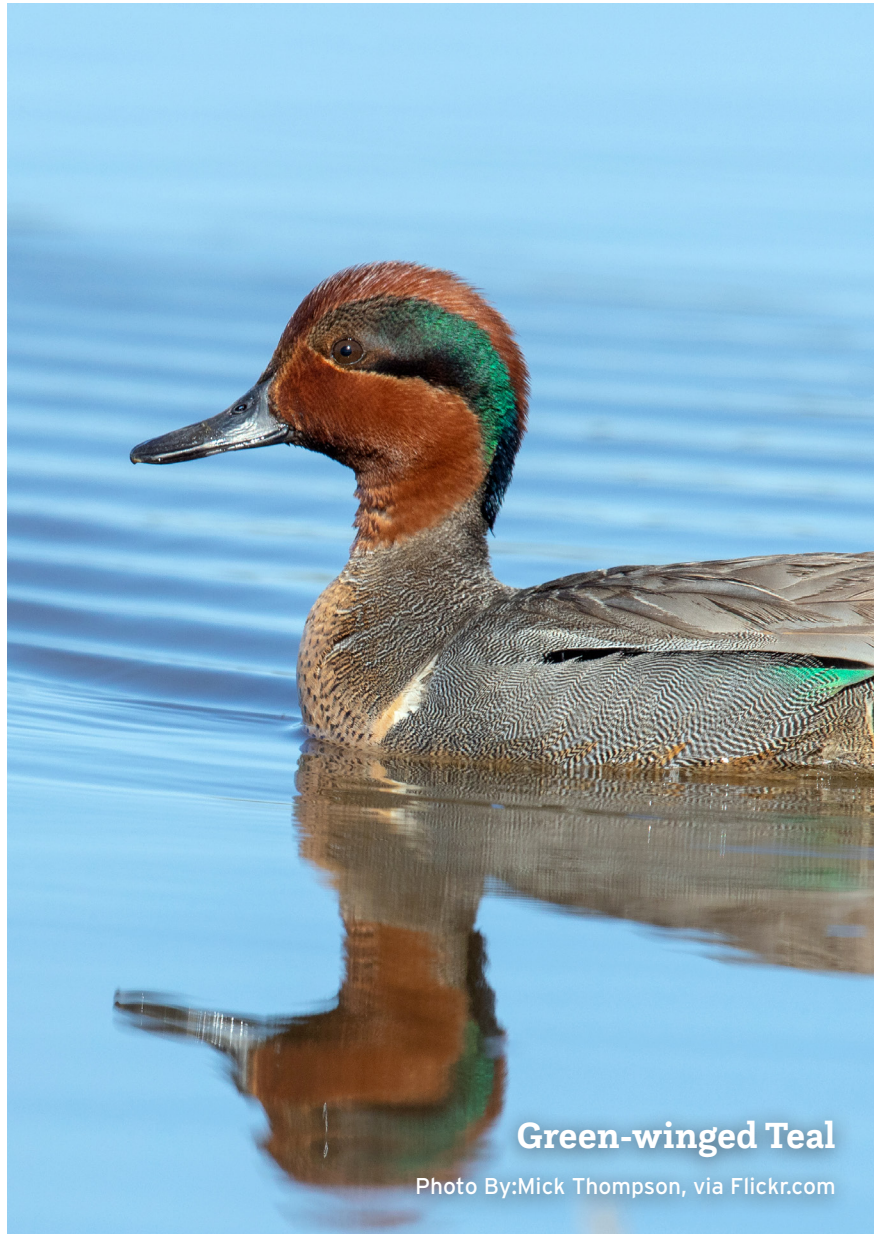
The mild winter year was probably a factor, but Meijer with their support at Meijer Gardens added dozens of counters with +24 over last year. Many of these observers enjoyed the Eastern Towhee pictured at the Meijer Gardens trails in the morning.

Cackling Goose, Green-winged Teal, Killdeer, Winter Wrens and Long-eared Owl which have appeared on less than 10% of counts were counted this year.

Waterfowl were seen in decent numbers widely scattered across the 100% open water. American crows at 920 and Carolina Wrens at 30 were both high counts. Also Yellow-bellied sapsuckers were reported in 2 areas of the count.

Canada Goose came up 27 birds short of catching European Starlings for the top bird seen.

Thanks for all our volunteer help this year. There will be a more in-depth story with tables in the February newsletter.

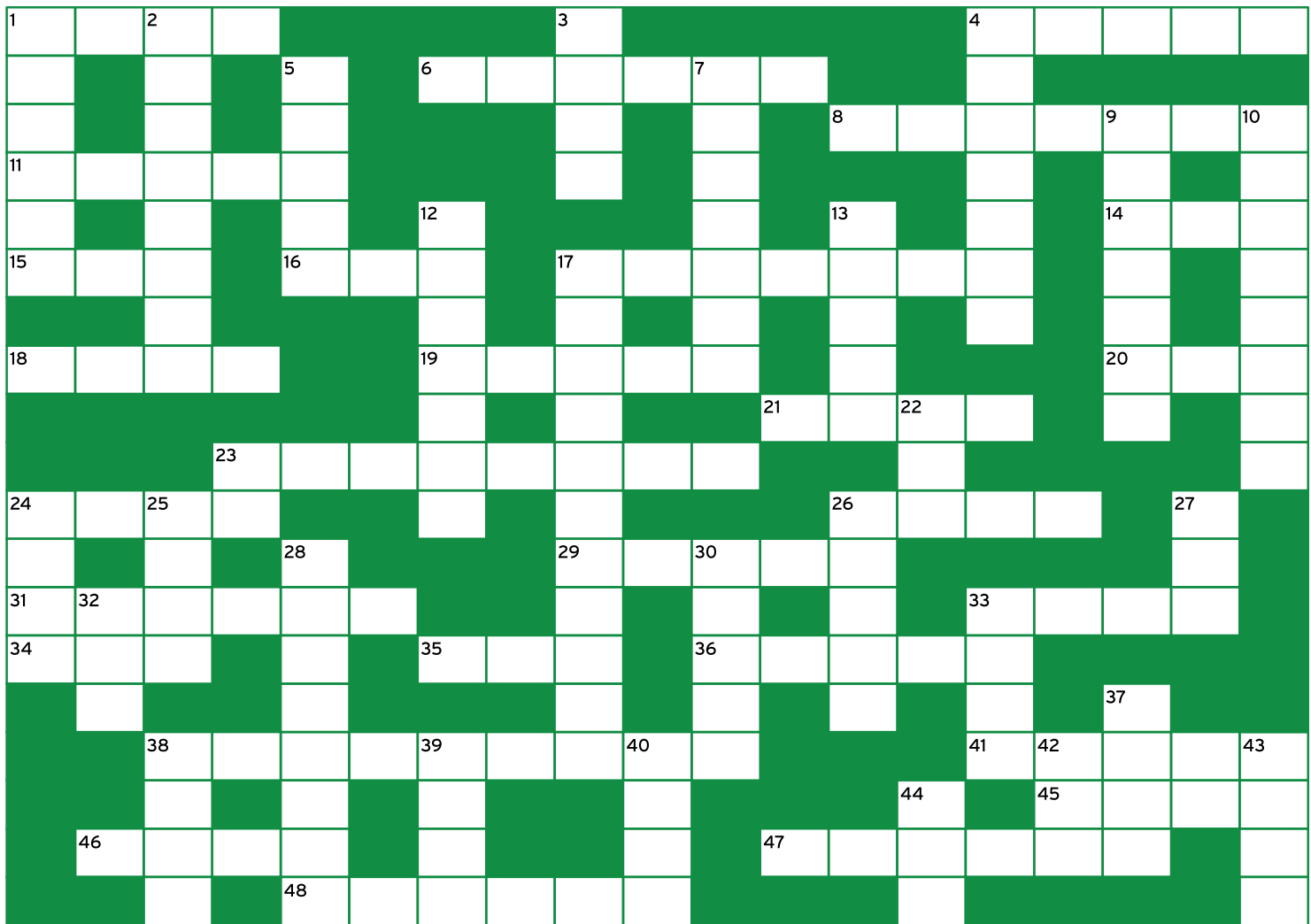


Green-winged Teal

Photo By: Mick Thompson, via Flickr.com

Birdy Crossword Puzzle | Mary Austin

Answers available under the Birdathon Awards Article.



Across

1. What some birds do to eat
4. Long-tailed, colorful rainforest parrot
6. Bird that impales its prey
8. Brown or White _____
11. Large sea duck with soft down feathers
14. Little passerine bird
15. Very long period of time (such as how long birds have existed)
16. Barred or Snowy _____
17. Marsh or grassland raptor
18. Long-winged, web-footed, raucous-call seabird
19. Animal Cattle Egrets pick insects from
20. Enemy of nesting ground birds
21. Large, flightless South American bird
23. Brightly colored song bird
24. Bird mythology
26. Bird of prey
29. Aquatic diving bird with lobed toes
31. Distinctive orange bird
33. Slender seabird with angular wings
34. Unable to find rare bird
35. Black bird with thick curved bill in the cuckoo family
36. Duck, duck, _____
38. Boreal or Carolina _____
41. Horned or Meadow _____ (plural)
45. Bird's bill
46. Bird music
47. Neotropic bird with colorful bill
48. Fish-eating raptor with scales acting as barbs on its talons

Down

1. Flycatcher with a girl's name
2. Bird sharing name with a Catholic clergyman
3. Common corvid
4. Common dabbling duck
5. Small, mainly olive green/gray insect-eating songbird
7. Small falcon
9. Mewing gray bird with a dark cap
10. Red- or White-breasted _____
12. Red- or yellow-shafted woodpecker
13. House or Purple _____
17. Very small bird with rapid wing movements
22. Time period (such as when birds evolved from dinosaurs)
23. To _____, or not to _____ regarding the future of some birds
24. Yodeling water bird
25. Virginia or Yellow _____
26. Large, fish-eating wading bird
27. Female Wild Turkey
28. Distinctive pink bird
30. Bald or Golden _____
32. Raptor tearing apart its prey
33. Blue- or Green-winged _____
37. Carolina or House _____
38. Mostly black water bird with unique yellow-green feet
39. Southern Hemisphere gull
40. Swirling water some dippers like
42. Major U.S. birding organization (abbreviation)
43. Aggressive, predatory, pirate seabird
44. Northern Hemisphere seabird with short wings and webbed feet

2023 Birdathon Awards | Ed Bolt

At the November 27 GRAC General Membership meeting, wall plaque awards were given for many of the participating teams and individuals. Overall, Birdathon 2023 had slightly better participation than 2022 and 2021 (Covid). Money raised for the Club was just under \$1200. It is not too early to start thinking about Birdathon 2024, which will be held in mid-April to the end of May. Watch for details in the March 'Caller' and on the website. If you are newly-interested, know that it is easy and fun for all, so just do it!

ROCK DOVE

Most Species Seen in 6 Hours

1st Place:

Middle Yellowlegs - 78 Species

Runnerup (tie):

Birdsmiths & Raven Loon & Ticks - 45 Species

CHARITY'S RARITIES

Rarest Bird Spotted

1st Place:

Summer Sunday Birders - Hooded Warbler

Runnerup:

Middle Yellowlegs - Orange-crowned Warbler

BIG FUN FUNDERS

Most Team Money Raised

1st Place:

Raven Loon & Ticks - \$400

Runnerup:

The Old Coots - \$300

BIG SIT / FEEDER

Most Species, Seated Near a Feeder

1st Place:

The Old Coots - 39 Species

WILD CARD

Most Sightings of Target Bird (Ruby-throated Hummingbird)

1st Place:

Birdsmiths - 2

Runnerup:

Raven Loon & Ticks - 1

FLEDGLING

Youngest Average Age Team

1st Place:

Summer Sunday Birders - 32

BIG FUN FUNDER INDIVIDUAL

Most Money Raised by an Individual

1st Place (tie):

Tom Leggett & Tim Granger

Runnerup:

Jill Goodell

BIG SIT / NO FEEDER

Most Species, Seated Without a Feeder

1st Place:

Raven Loon & Ticks - 25 Species



Birdy Crossword Puzzle Solution

ACROSS: 1. peck 4. macaw 6. shrike 8. pelican 11. elder 14. tit 15. eon 16. owl 17. harrier 18. gull 19. camel 20. rat 21. rhea 23. bluebird 24. lore 26. hawk 29. grebe 31. oriole 33. tern 34. nill 35. ani 36. goose 38. chickadee 41. larks 45. beak 46. song 47. toucan 48. osprey
DOWN: 1. phoebe 2. cardinal 3. crow 4. mallard 5. vireo 7. kestrel 9. catbird 10. nuthatch 12. flicker 13. finch 17. hummingbird 22. era 23. be 24. loon 25. rail 26. heron 27. hen 28. flamingo 30. eagle 33. teal 37. wren 38. coot 39. kelp 40. eddy 42. aba 43. skua 44. auk

Make Birding Resolutions | Cynthia Maas

It can be easy to make attainable goals for your birdwatching hobby in 2024. Although birding can be a numbers game, successful outings do not necessarily mean higher bird counts. When I began to birdwatch intentionally in 2020, I was overwhelmed by the seasonal visitors, plumage variations, and tricked by a mimic call from a blue jay (after realizing that a bald eagle was not nearby!) But I have gained confidence in my growing level of bird enthusiast. Pursuing my passion of observing birds in the outdoors has led me to new locations, skillsets, and friendships.

Consider making a birding resolution to explore something about birds you've never known before. Beginner, intermediate, or advanced - everyone can still learn something new.

What helped me to grow my knowledge and understanding with birdwatching was to practice! I let go of the numbers game and explored the skillset that I had developed. It is quite alright to enjoy birdwatching and not know all the birds! In fact, the quest to identify new birds in the wild after study keeps most coming back for more. I've found that collecting field notes is helpful for my "practice" - even the grainy cell phone pictures can help an ID from shape, size, and coloration.

I found both individual excursions as well as birding with others both led me to unique discoveries on bird calls and behavior. Eventually, I became more comfortable with birding apps like Merlin and ebird. Complex songs became more recognizable when I reviewed possible visitors in the area before I embarked outside. Birding with friends in all seasons offers new perspectives.

What are your birding goals of 2024?

- **Take a Class**

[The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Bird Academy](#) is a great resource to learn about bird behavior, identification, anatomy, and conservation. Free webinars are also a great resource to engage with the material. The knowledge gained will push you to make use of it!

- **Visit a New Spot to See Migratory Birds**

Spring is the best time to see species that only pass through twice a year, so making the effort to visit a hotspot will be worthwhile. Mark your calendar to carve out an outing with family and friends.

- **Grow Your Own Birdseed**

Perhaps planting a garden in your backyard with birds in mind will be beneficial to all parties! Bird feeders are great, but many birds seek out wild sources for the seeds they love.

- **Birding After Dark**

While most birds are tucked away overnight, owls come out! Try some nocturnal wildlife watching on your next camping trip or from the comfort of your backyard.

Club Business - Bylaws Review

The board is excited to propose an updated set of club bylaws. Jeff Neumann graciously led a small group weekly to review the current bylaws, which was about ten years overdue! We hope this condensed version more accurately reflects the membership engagement and relevance, and adapted changes according to the needs of the club, technology, and communication.

These proposed [updated bylaws](#) AND the [current bylaws](#) can be found on the website for membership review. Please review (a few hard copies will be made available at the January meeting). At the February Membership meeting, these proposed bylaws changes will be put to a vote.



Horned Lark

Photo By: Dave Inman, via flickr.com

North Country Trail Proposal



Additional information concerning adding the North Country Trail (NCT), Chief Noonday Chapter to Maher Audubon Sanctuary | Chris Baer

[The proposal to adding the NCT to Maher](#) was featured in the [November Caller](#). What is needed is an understanding of where the trail would enter the Maher property and connect to the Maher loop trail.

The old trail that accessed the loop came off of Wood School Road at the north edge of the wetland where our wooden sign is located. The new trail would begin here, but to avoid the wetland the trail, would follow the lower edge of the south ridge. This trail would connect to the Maher loop just west of where the loop turns away from the cattail marsh. There is also a Maher rules and regulation sign here.

This trail would be cleared, constructed and maintained by the Chief Noonday Chapter of the NCT crews. In constructing the trail cutting and treating the autumn olive, multiflora rose and honey suckle bushes will be required. When we were scouting the new trail there were a few down trees but nothing major. No live trees will be cut down. They are also committed to helping us maintain the loop trail and boardwalk to 108th Street.

In the future they/we would like to extend a trail from the Bridge to Nowhere (Drumlin Trail?) to around the Drumlin: a streamline hill consisting of drift, generally till and elongated parallel with the direction of glacial movement (Physical Geology text), and north to 108th Street west of the parking lot. This will be more complicated than the trail connecting Wood School Road to the Maher loop because of the wetland adjacent to 108th Street and crossing Caine Creek requiring board walk and a bridge.

In November the Maher Board approved the addition of the North Country Trail to Maher Sanctuary. This is a win-win proposal for GRAC and the North Country Trail. [Please read the entire proposal](#) featured in the November Caller. Visit Maher and see for yourself the changes outlined above. At the January meeting, we will inform members that the membership vote on this proposal will occur at the February meeting.

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, Jan. 18, 25 Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 - 9:00AM | Meet at the end of the dead-end section of Veterans Memorial Drive

Winter Field Birding | Led By: Steve Minard

This is planned a winter trip 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 to look for them. We'll search fields in northern Ottawa County and Muskegon County northwest of Grand Rapids. Expect to spend most of the time in the car searching the fields for anything different. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Saturday, January 20 - 8:00AM | Meet at the Boy Scout Headquarters west off Walker Road north of I-96

Allegan State Game Area Winter Trip | Led By: Steve Minard

Explore the Allegan State Game Area, including the Swan Creek Highbanks and the Todd Farm Unit, for winter birds. 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' Goose have been found here in past winters. With luck, winter finches will make an appearance. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Saturday, February 10 - 7:30AM | Meet at the McDonald's in Hudsonville - a spotting scope may be handy

For additional information about these trips, 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 - Jill Goodell

RESIDENT AGENT

Larry Burke

STANDING COMMITTEES

Audio/Visual - Robert Riepma

Bird Reports - OPEN

Caller Editor - Cynthia Maas

Caller Publisher - Brownlee Press

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 - 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

Membership: membership@graud.org

Caller Editor: newsletter@graud.org

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

Contact Tricia Boot:
president@graud.org