

GRAND RAPIDS AUDUBON CLUB



the **CALLER**

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Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

Photo By: Andy Reago, via flickr.com

President's Corner | Tricia Boot *President*

In case you're like me (deeply entrenched in your summer reading list) I'll keep this month's update short and sweet, and focused on two important club items.

Save the Date: The Grand Rapids Audubon Club will partner this fall with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks for a free, family-friendly "Explore Your Parks" event from 8 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 23 at Huff Park. The morning will include guided bird walks, educational/hands-on activities and coffee/hot drinks for purchase. More details to come!

Due to technology issues beyond our control, we're unable to access our website to make updates. However, the website is still usable to access some information and make secure membership payments through the Cheddar Up link. For the time being, please refer to the club's [Facebook page](#) for timely club updates and news. You can also message club leadership via that platform. We will also use email to contact members for any time-sensitive news. Club leadership is exploring options for a new website--more information to come as soon as it's available.



Mahe Update

Where Have Our Birds Gone?

Tracking the Birds at Maher Sanctuary | by Chris Baer

Records of birds seen or heard at Maher reveal gains and losses over the years. Some records (1979-1999) were tallied by members who volunteered to spend an hour or two at Maher each month. Others turned in lists of birds to the Maher chairperson during visits. From 2000 to 2022, lists of birds came mostly from Maher stewards, visiting birders i.e. Doug Klein and others.

Loss of habitat and poor habitat suggests why we do not see certain birds. The Sanctuary has lost open space to shrubs and invasive plants discouraging some birds. Better habitat in particular includes larger trees for pileated woodpeckers and open water for bittern, great blue heron, and green heron. These are just some examples.

A number of our missing birds are absent because we are not there often enough to see or hear them, especially when they are passing through - occasional visitors such as red-headed woodpeckers and quite a few warblers. The sound of water from the creek will bring them in but they do not stay. Most of these birds are headed for parts north at certain times of the year. Every day I visit to walk the trails and board walk, a list is made no matter how common the bird is. This past week a family of crows were encouraging their young to leave the nest. A real ruckus. There are always interesting things happening.

Please visit Maher and make a list!

To view the bird list visit [this link](#).

Jan Lewis Wins 2023 Michigan Audubon Photography Awards



Sharp-tailed Grouse

Photo By: Jan Lewis

The Michigan Audubon Photography Awards is an annual contest celebrating the incredible images of Michigan birds captured by photographers, both amateur and professional. Winners are announced on July 1 each year and the winning photographer's image appears in the Michigan Audubon member magazine, the Jack Pine Warbler. Congratulations to GRAC member Jan Lewis on this achievement!

"The Sharp-tailed Grouse battle was captured this past March on a 2-day private workshop in the Upper Peninsula near Pickford. The grouse lek is on private land which they had permission to set up a photography blind on. We were on the lek 30 minutes prior to sunrise. The birds flew in at sunrise. The males paraded around the lek, stamping their feet, puffing out their purple air sacs. They would face off, then eventually lunge at each other. The fights generally lasted only a few seconds, but occasionally a little longer. Capturing the action required a great deal of patience, total silence, high shutter speeds, and plenty of hand and foot warmers to fight the cold temperatures!" -Jan Lewis

Lewis has had several of her images published and has won numerous competitions, including an honorable mention in the 2021 Michigan Audubon Photography Awards. Check out the winners and honorable mentions at michiganaudubon.org



Jan Lewis

Pleasant Peninsula Returns in 2023



The Pleasant Peninsula: Art & Activism Fair will be taking place in conjunction with the Return to the River event on August 26 & 27 to celebrate our state's biodiversity, our Grand River ecosystem, and the collective power of art and activism. Canal Park will be transformed into an interactive art & activism fair featuring a variety of local nature preserves, animal conservancies, parks departments, environmental organizations, and Michigan artists. While guests wander between info booths and activity stations, the riverside will be activated by speakers, musicians, animal ambassadors, live painting, family activities, body art, and demonstrations. Stop by the GRAC booth on Saturday, you won't want to miss this!

Northville Park Association Night

On Friday, June 23, GRAC members Mary Austin and Jo McGavin had an enjoyable evening representing GRAC and talking about birds with children and adults at the Northview Park Association Kids Night. The event was held at the Association Park located in the Grand Rapids Northview area. Although the weather was very warm, the kid and adult audience was very attentive. GRAC received positive responses from the Kids Night planners and parents. A Great Blue Heron pipe cleaner project was a great hit with the kids. A "Look Alike" booklet on bird observation and differentiation (created by Jo) provided a nice take-home remembrance of a special summer evening.



Explore Your Parks: Discover Birds in Grand Rapids



The Grand Rapids Audubon Club and Friends of Grand Rapids Parks have partnered together for an upcoming event on Saturday, September 23rd from 8-11am!

This event will highlight the diversity of birds that can be found in Huff Park during the peak of fall migration! By creating a welcoming atmosphere, we hope to introduce other park-loving community members to the joys of birding and nature appreciation within our local Grand Rapids Parks. There will be guided bird walks led by members of the Grand Rapids Audubon Club, activities for kids and adults, coffee, pastries and more at this family friendly event. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for more information in the coming weeks.

Anyone who is interested in volunteering at this event is encouraged to reach out to our Vice-President, Spencer High, to be added to the list of helpful hands for the day. Please send him an email at spencer@querkuscreative.com

Some entertainment celebrities have names that are similar-to-bird names, such as actor Walter Pidgeon, singer Phoebe Snow, comedian Steve [Purple] Martin, and movie/television personality Robin Williams. Just thinking off the wall, what if other celebrities had bird pun names, such as Beatles drummer - Flamingo Starr?

How many of these celebrity bird-related pun names can you decipher?

1. Early Rock-and-roll Singer - Duck _____
2. Godfather Actor - Owl _____
3. French Connection Actor - _____ Quackman
4. Country Music Singer - Polly _____
5. Sophie's Choice Actress - _____ Cheep
6. White Christmas Crooner - Wing _____
7. Action Movie Actor - Goose _____
8. Television/Movie Personality - _____ Wingfrey
9. Acclaimed British Actress - Heron _____
10. American Supermodel - _____ Clawford
11. Curious Case of Benjamin Button Actor - Bird _____
12. Late-night Talk Show Host - _____ Talon
13. Mystery and Macabre Writer - _____ Crow
14. English Rock Band Musician - Chick _____
15. Home Alone Actor - Macawly _____



Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

Have you ever been in an open woodland in the summer and heard what sounded like an American Robin who was really into jazz-style improvisation? Then you've probably heard this issue's spotlight bird - the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*).

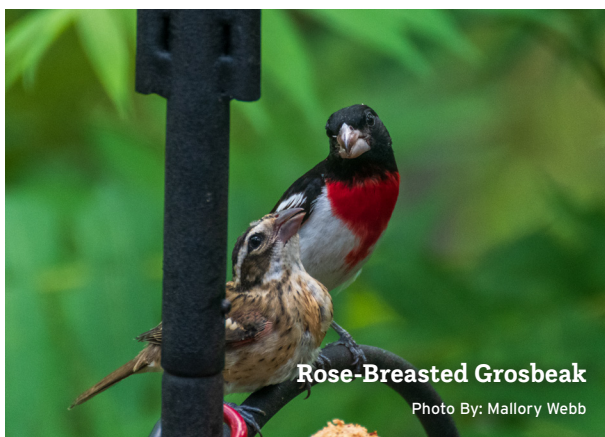
This sweet-voiced relative of cardinals and tanagers is a common summer visitor to feeders in our area, particularly those filled with sunflower seeds. Even though they are by no means rare, for me it's always such a treat to see (and hear) them. While the males are the showstoppers with their bright rose-red chest patch contrasting with stark black and white elsewhere, I find the females to have the most gentle, endearing faces of nearly any bird, with their huge, pale pink bills and pale eyebrow. Something about the female Rose-Breasted Grosbeak just triggers that "awww" factor in my brain.

Another "awww" factor trigger came to me when researching for this column - the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak is one of a very few species reported to sing when sitting on their nest. Additionally, the female sings while building the nest, and both parents sing softly to each other while trading incubation duties. So sweet!

Unfortunately, their beautiful song and striking appearance means Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks are sometimes trapped to be sold as cage birds in their wintering range (Central America, northwestern South America, and the Caribbean). Fundación ProAves in Colombia, along with the American Bird Conservancy, have established protected reserves for species wintering in the area, including our sweet, jazzy, pink-beaked friend, but they still face trapping for sale in many areas, in addition the same threats all birds face - habitat loss and fragmentation, window strikes, outdoor cats, etc.

An odd thing I noticed reading up on the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak was the fact that there is very little scholarly research on such a common bird. There has been quite a bit of research into its hybridization with the closely-related Black-Headed Grosbeak in the Great Plains, which seems to be of particular interest due to the major difference in appearance of the males of the two species. The hybridization seems to be enabled by fire suppression efforts in the ecoregion, leading to expansion of open woodland into former grassland, particularly along rivers. This woodland expansion has also occurred further east, where there are no Black-Headed Grosbeaks, likely helping to keep the population stable in the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak's breeding range.

Identifying Rose-Breasted Grosbeak



Description:

A stocky, medium sized songbird with a thick triangular bill. Males have a black head and back, white wing bars and belly, and a distinctive red spot on their breast. Females have a mottled brown back, a speckled tan breast and white eyebrow.

Habitat:

Open Woodlands

Best Time to See:

May-September

Best Place to See:

Ball-Perkins Park, Crahen Valley Park, Huff Park, Millenium Park

ID Tips & Tricks

- Very stocky build, but similar shape overall to a cardinal or finch.
- Both sexes have huge, conical, pale pink bills, perfect for cracking sunflower seeds at your feeder.
- Adult males are striking and nearly impossible to confuse with other regular species in our area, with white underparts, bright reddish-pink triangle on breast, and black back with white spots and white rump.
- Females and juveniles are brown streaked with a light eyebrow - think jumbo sized female Purple Finch.
- Song is similar to American Robin, but with a sweeter tone, and more relaxed or "improvised" meter, interspersed with sneaker-on-a-basketball-court call notes.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Muskegon Wastewater Fall Shorebirds | Led By: Steve Minard

Join Steve for an August shorebird trip. The Wastewater is one of the better spots in the area for finding shorebirds. Shorebirds such as Semipalmated Plover, Sanderling, Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs are likely. Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Baird's Sandpiper, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper are possible. Ducks and field birds are also likely to be seen. A spotting scope, a drink, and snacks will be helpful.

Saturday, August 23, 2023 - 9:00AM | Meet at the main entrance to the Muskegon Wastewater, now signed as the Muskegon County Resource Recovery Center on the east side of Maple Island Rd.. This is where we meet for bluebird box cleaning in March.

Roselle Park in September | Led By: Steve Minard

Steve is planning another September field trip to Roselle Park. Roselle has a couple of miles of paved trail around wetlands, open areas and along the Grand River. Wooded edges are present in several areas. This makes for a good variety of birds. We will hike the paved trails and possibly some of the unpaved trails if they are dry and there is interest. Some warblers should be moving and hopefully some shorebirds or water birds in wet area or on the river. Birders of all skills are welcome.

Saturday, September 9, 2023 - 8:00AM | Meet in the Roselle Park parking lot by the building on Grand River Drive. The entrance to this lot is opposite Michigan Ave.

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

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

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5 officers + 4 elected board members

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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

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

Contact Tricia Boot:

president@graud.org