



# the **CALLER**

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**Wild Turkey**

Photo By: Y.S., via Unsplash.com



## NOVEMBER MEETING DETAILS

**Monday, November 27 | 7:30PM**

**John Donnelly Conference Center, Aquinas College**

### *The North Country Trail*

**Kate Lemon**

The North Country National Scenic Trail spans 4,800 miles across eight states, including both peninsulas of Michigan, rendering it the longest National Scenic Trail in the country. While it's administered on a federal level by the National Park Service, efforts to build, maintain, protect, and promote it are predominantly managed by the North Country Trail Association, a nonprofit headquartered in Lowell, Michigan, with a staff of 16 and a volunteer base of hundreds. Learn more about the trail community and this treasure in your own backyard.

## GRAC Book Club is Here! | Tricia Boot

Join us for a new club-within-a-club as we launch the Grand Rapids Audubon Club's Birdy Book Club

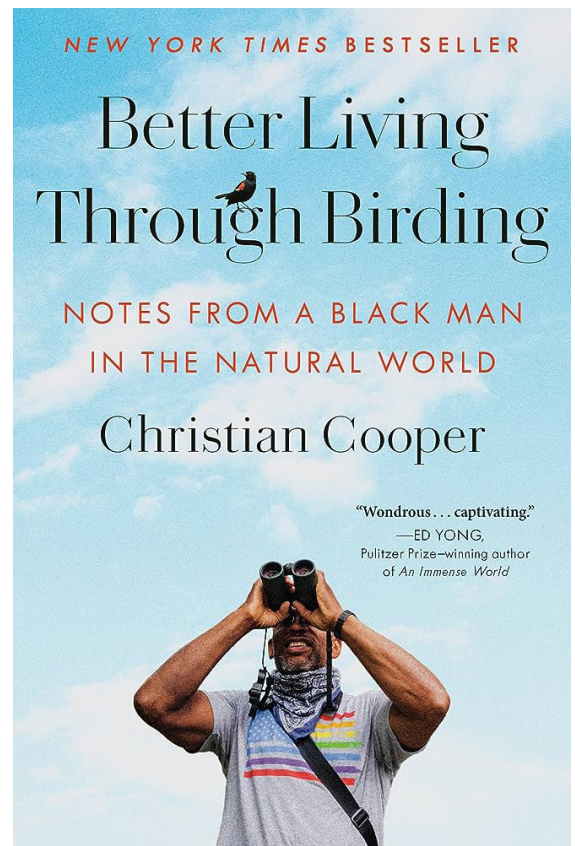
The Birdy Book Club's first meeting is Monday, January 8 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Books & Mortar (966 Cherry St. SE, Grand Rapids) when we'll discuss "Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World" by Christian Cooper.

### **About the book:**

Central Park birder Christian Cooper takes us beyond the viral video that shocked a nation and into a world of avian adventures, global excursions, and the unexpected lessons you can learn from a life spent looking up.

### **About the club:**

- Buy or borrow the book and complete the reading before the meeting. Get 10% off the price of the book if you purchase at Books & Mortar (be sure to mention it's for the GRAC Birdy Book Club!).
- There is no cost to participate (apart from any books you opt to purchase)
- Book club will meet 6 to 8 p.m. the second Monday of every other month, beginning in January 2024. Look for details on the club's website or Facebook page.
- Titles for the next book club are announced at the previous meeting (the March 2024 book will be announced in January 2024, and so on).
- Come with an open mind and ready to share your own thoughts, opinions and observations about the book, and any topics related to the reading.
- This is a space for mutually respectful, curious and sometimes challenging conversations. Happy reading!





## Major Bird Name Change Begins in 2024

On November 1, a major earthquake hit the ornithological world when the American Ornithological Society (AOS) announced that in 2024 it will begin changing the common names of North American birds named after people. This change means approximately 80 North American bird species will have a new English common name.

Some of the recorded Michigan species affected by this change would include Ross's Goose, Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Franklin's Gull, Forster's Tern, Cooper's Hawk, Say's Phoebe, Townsend's Solitaire, Swainson's Thrush, Henslow's Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, Kirtland's Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler.

For more information, check out these links: [English Bird Names Project](#) and [Ornithological Society to Rename Dozens of Birds](#).



**Cooper's Hawk**

Photo By: Albert Stoykov, via unsplash.com

## Grand Rapids Audubon Club Christmas Bird Count Guidelines Are More Open

**Tom Leggett**

The Grand Rapids Audubon Club Christmas Bird Count will be held this year on Saturday, December 30, 2023. Once again (after several years of no indoor meetings during Covid-19) the count will open with a meet and greet! The opening will be at the Wittenbach Wege Nature center at 11715 Vergennes Se., Lowell, MI 49331 at 7:30am, and wearing of masks is suggested indoors.

All area leaders are urged to be represented at the opening so all volunteers can be assigned and get needed forms or instructions. This return of the meet and greet is a great way for birding teams to get excited and pumped up for the day!

Compilation of bird data and lists will be delivered primarily by email to compiler Tom Leggett at [tomleggett@hotmail.com](mailto:tomleggett@hotmail.com). The nature center will be open all day for a break center if needed, but unfortunately, we can still not provide a hot lunch.

The following is a list of guidelines for the general information of the Christmas Bird Count counters: We urge wearing masks when in indoor gatherings; Carpooling should only occur within existing familiar or social "pod" groups; Allow for flexibility as it is not possible to know individual or family situations with respect to their home or family risks.

I hope to see many of you at the count, but the key priority this year is safety of you and others. This will be a great opportunity to spend time birding with friends and family.



**Snowy Owl**

Photo By: Tom Leggett

## Proposal to the Grand Rapids Audubon Club to Add North Country Trail Section in Maher Sanctuary

The goal of the North Country National Scenic Trail is to incorporate significant scenic, cultural and natural points of interest to allow day hikers and long-distance hikers alike a chance to explore and learn about the locales through which the trail traverses. The Maher Sanctuary offers a wonderful array of plant and bird life that can only be seen from inside the sanctuary.

The local Chief Noonday Chapter of the North Country National Scenic Trail seeks to partner with the Grand Rapids Audubon Club to allow access for the North Country Trail in the Maher Sanctuary. The ultimate decision as to where the trail runs will lie with the GRAC.

The Maher Sanctuary will accrue benefits through a partnership with the North Country Trail. We believe that visitation to the sanctuary will increase. Both the NCTA and the CND chapter sponsor hiker challenges to get hikers onto the North Country Trail. Those hikers who currently must walk down 108th Street to complete their challenge would go through the sanctuary if the NCT runs through it. The same is true for the long-distance hikers on the NCT.

The CND chapter currently has over 500 members. Many of which are active volunteers who love to build and maintain trails. The CND will be committed to helping maintain whatever trails we are allowed to use within the sanctuary. This would include maintenance of board walk and bridges, as well as trimming of encroaching vegetation. The CND chapter would work closely with GRAC to perform any trail maintenance and construction to the satisfaction of both groups. CND would also help fund construction and maintenance activities when appropriate.

CND would help advertise the Maher Sanctuary as part of the North Country Trail during the many outreach activities each year to promote the NCT in the Barry County area.

We ask that GRAC consider this proposal and read in its entirety [here](#): Proposal to Add North Country Trail Section in Maher Sanctuary. The board is reviewing, and membership will have the opportunity to provide input. More details will be available soon.







## **New Birdhouses and a Bench at Maher Sanctuary | Chris Baer**

In early summer of this year I was contacted by a Hastings Boy Scout Troop to add some bird houses to Maher Sanctuary. What timing! Our two wood duck boxes by the Marle Pond were in a state of disrepair or worse.

An Eagle Scout wannabe, Caden Smelker, was eager to build a wood duck box, take down the two dilapidated boxes and rotten posts and also wanted to build and place a barred owl box. Several plans were provided to choose from for both houses and two were selected. The barred owl box needed to be mounted on a big tree in the woods. Several places were suggested and in the end, I think the best place was chosen by Caden.

The houses were built with the help of the entire troop and Caden was called upon to supervise all the details. The houses were put up in July with everyone participating. A bonus bench made of cedar (as was the houses at my request) was placed north of the Bridge to Nowhere at the edge of Caine Creek with a view of the barred owl box.

Next time you are at Maher Sanctuary, sit on the lovely bench and see if you can find the barred owl box.





## Aloha! – Endemic Hawaiian Birds | Mary Austin

Many Hawaiian birds (both endemic and introduced) are beautiful and unique, some with distinctive Hawaiian names. Get to know some of the amazing endemic birds of Hawaii described below.

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### 'ua'u - a/k/a (also known as) Hawaiian Petrel

A large, dark grey-brown and white seabird.

### nunulu - a/k/a Bonin Petrel

A small seabird with remote breeding colonies, almost all of which are believed to be in the Hawaiian Islands.

### nene - a/k/a Hawaiian Goose

A water bird designated as the state bird of Hawaii which is found on the islands of Oahu, Maui, Kauai, Molokai and the Big Island of Hawaii.

### koloa - a/k/a Hawaiian Duck

A non-migratory waterfowl that is similar to a Mallard but both the males and females are basically monochromatic.

### 'io - a/k/a Hawaiian Hawk

A raptor in the genus Buteo that breeds on the Big Island.

### 'alae ke'oke'o - a/k/a Hawaiian Coot

A bird in the rail family that has black plumage and a white frontal shield.

### ae'o - a/k/a Hawaiian Stilt

A subspecies of the Black-necked Stilt that is a long-legged, slender shorebird with a long, thin beak.

### pueo - a/k/a Hawaiian Short-eared Owl

A subspecies of the Short-eared Owl which is most common in open habitats such as grasslands and which primarily consumes small mammals.

### 'alala - a/k/a Hawaiian Crow

A bird in the crow family with rounded wings; a thick bill; soft, brownish-black plumage; and long, bristly throat feathers.

### Hawai'i 'elepaio

A native monarch flycatcher with a white underside, rusty-red breast, and rust-colored upperside found on the Big Island.

### 'oma'o - a/k/a Hawaiian Thrush

A robin-like bird with a grayish-brown head transitioning to a pale gray below and dull olive brown back and primaries that is found only on the Big Island.

### Hawai'i 'amakihi - a/k/a Common 'amakihi

A small yellow-green bird with a black curved bill and brown eyes with black pupils that is among the most common native songbirds in Hawaii.

### 'alawi - a/k/a Hawaii Creeper

A small, overall olive-green plumage honeycreeper with a white throat and dark gray mask that picks insects underneath the bark of trees that is endemic to the Big Island.

### 'akiapola'au

A rare honeycreeper of native forests above 5,000 feet elevation on the Big Island. The bird appears to be bigger-headed and shorter-tailed than other honeycreepers.

### Maui 'alauahio - a/k/a Maui Creeper

A type of honeycreeper which is endemic to Maui that has a bright yellow color and a minimal curved bill.

### 'akeke'e - a/k/a Kaua'i 'akepa

An extremely threatened honeycreeper endemic to Kauai that is greenish-yellow with a black mask around the eyes and a bluish bill.

### Hawai'i 'akepa

A four-inch long bird with coloration usually red, canary-yellow or orange with a small cross bill and a slight quivering whistle ending with a long trill found on the Big Island.

### 'i'iwi - a/k/a Scarlet Honeycreeper

A mostly scarlet-colored bird with black wings and tail and a long, curved, salmon-colored bill that is used primarily for drinking nectar.

### 'akohekohe - a/k/a Crested Honeycreeper

A large honeycreeper located on Maui with a whitish gold colored feather crest on its head.

### 'apapane

A small, crimson bird that is the most abundant and widely distributed honeycreeper found on the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Lanai, Kauai, Molokai, and Oahu.



'i'iwi – Scarlet Honeycreeper

Photo By: Gregory Smith, via Wikimedia Commons

### Wild Turkey

Thanksgiving is the time of year when the turkey takes center stage in American homes from coast to coast. While we're all familiar with the tradition of roasting these noble birds to a golden crisp, let's take a moment to explore some fascinating historical facts about our feathered friends that you might not have known!

We owe a debt of gratitude to the wild turkey (scientific name is *meleagris gallopavo*), as it was the ancestor of the Thanksgiving superstar we know today. Native to North America, the wild turkey was a staple in the diets of Indigenous peoples long before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock. These birds were revered for their tasty meat and even featured in Indigenous ceremonies. When the Pilgrims arrived in the early 17th century, they probably hadn't heard the term "turducken" yet (a chicken stuffed inside a duck stuffed inside a turkey), but they did recognize the turkey's delicious potential. They likely incorporated turkey into the first Thanksgiving feast in 1621.

Benjamin Franklin famously expressed his admiration for the turkey as a symbol of the United States. In a letter to his daughter, he called the bald eagle a "bird of bad moral character" and suggested that the turkey would be a more suitable choice for the national emblem because it was "a little more respectable." It seems even the Founding Fathers had a sense of humor!

The annual presidential turkey pardon is a lighthearted event where the President of the United States "pardons" a turkey, sparing it from becoming the centerpiece of a Thanksgiving meal. The tradition is thought to have started with President Abraham Lincoln, who pardoned a turkey at his son Tad's request. However, it didn't become an official, regular event until President George H.W. Bush in 1989. So, the turkey pardon has become a genuine presidential tradition, reminding us that even turkeys deserve a little mercy.

You might be familiar with the turkey trot as a dance move or race, but did you know that wild turkeys are incredibly agile runners? They can sprint at speeds of up to 20-25 miles per hour and fly at about 55 miles per hour for short distances. No wonder they're so good at dodging Thanksgiving dinner plans!

Have you ever heard the expression "strutting your stuff"? Well, it's like turkeys invented it. Male turkeys, known as toms, sport flamboyant feathers and engage in elaborate courtship displays. They puff up, fan their tails, and strut around, all in the name of impressing the ladies. That's one way to ensure a great table presence!

Whether you're enjoying a turkey feast, doing the turkey trot, or simply gobbling with gratitude, remember that the turkey isn't just a delicious bird—it's a piece of traditional American history that's been strutting its stuff for centuries. Happy Thanksgiving!

### Identifying a Wild Turkey



#### Description:

Unmistakeable large game bird that is dark, iridescent tones of black, brown and tan with featherless heads that are tones of blue, red and gray. When Males are displaying in early spring, they appear spherical in shape with a large fanned tail feathers. Male Wild Turkeys also sport a 'beard' which is a series of dark brown or black feathers—more hair-like than a typical feather—that protrude from the bird's chest.

#### Habitat:

Open Woodlands

#### Best Time to See:

Early Morning all year-round, but especially active in the Spring.

#### Best Place to See:

Millenium Park, Plaster Creek Trail, Lowell State Game Area, Pickerel Lake Nature 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, Nov. 16, 30 Dec. 7, 14, 21, 28 - 9:00AM | Meet at the end of the dead-end section of Veterans Memorial Drive

### Celebrating the Christmas Bird Count | Led By: Tricia Boot and Spencer High

Audubon's 124th Christmas Bird Count is Dec. 14, 2023, through Jan. 5, 2024. The Kent County/Grand Rapids Audubon Club's Christmas Bird Count is Saturday, Dec. 30. Join us as we highlight how anyone can join in this tradition to support birds through citizen science and ways to get involved with the local birding community, year-round. There is no cost to attend the exhibition program and no pre-registration is required.

Sunday, December 3 - 2-3PM | Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park 1000 East Beltline Avenue NE, Grand Rapids

### New Year's Day in Kent County | Led By: Steve Menard

Get your bird list for 2024 started in Kent County. We'll try to track down some of the birds seen on the Christmas Count, and just look for whatever sounds good. We will start at 6:00 am to look for owls in the Cannonsburg State Game Area and vicinity. At dawn, we will shift to looking for winter passerines, waterfowl and hawks. Birders of all skills are welcome to join us and start their bird list for 2024.

Monday, January 1 - 6:00AM | Meet in the Ada McDonald's in the Citgo Gas Station at 6:00AM

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

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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](#)

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

Contact Tricia Boot:

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