



the **CALLER**

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Green Heron

Photo By: Mallery Webb

SEPTEMBER MEETING DETAILS

Monday, September 25 | 7:30PM

John Donnelly Conference Center, Aquinas College

Cultivating a Community of Conservationists

Spencer High

Join us as we welcome our very own vice-president, Spencer High, as we hear about some of the lessons he has learned about building communities from observing the resilient ecosystems found in nature. By observing these naturally occurring relationships and adaptations, we can apply them to our human ecosystems to create communities invested both in our natural world and in one another.

We will hear about some of his experiences building communities, some mutually beneficial symbiotic relationships found in some of the most interesting ecosystems in Michigan, and analyze some of the qualities that make them important case-studies for our own lives.



A Note from the Club President | Tricia Boot *President*

Kids are back to school, birds are well on their migratory paths and the Grand Rapids Audubon Club has started another season—welcome back!

We've got a good year of interesting programming ahead, plus lots of fun, new and creative events and ways we'll engage with the community.

Speaking of new: Be sure to check out our new website, launching soon. Thank you to Spencer High, Vice President, for his time, talents and expertise in designing and developing the site.

I look forward to seeing you all and connecting at our meetings and other community events this year. It's gonna be great! Until then, good birding.

2023 Membership Meetings | Spencer High *Vice-President*

As I was putting together the lineup of speakers for the upcoming season, I began to think a lot about how much I have grown to love West Michigan over the past two years. As a kid, I had always liked West Michigan, simply because it was familiar - but reflecting on that feeling now, I realized something had changed within me to make me actively love it.

I think a large part of that transformation is because of the relationships that I've made with the people, places, and species in our own backyards. These relationships I've formed have helped me feel like I am a part of our community and am someone who has a role to play in helping this place thrive. It's through my own experiences with the communities around us that I've realized that West Michigan is a very special place worth preserving and helping make even better.

The diversity of life and the perspectives of the people that thrive here are incredibly interesting to be a part of, and I hope that through the lineup of presentations that I have planned, we can all take a closer look at our own relationships with the land, and leave with a deeper sense of belonging with the people and places we call home.

Mark Your Calendars for all of the 2023 Membership Meetings

All Meetings Begin at 7:30PM at the John Donnelly Conference Center

Details to Be Announced at a Later Date

September 25 - Spencer High

October 30 - Maddie Chaffer / Son Visual

November 27 - North Country Trail

January 29 - Jesse Lincoln / Michigan Natural Features Inventory

February 26

March 25

April 29

May 27

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.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you are able to volunteer for to represent the club at this event, please contact Spencer High by emailing him at spencer@querkuscreative.com

Michigan Young Birders Network Fall Meet-Ups

September 17 | Detroit River Hawk Watch | 10 a.m.

November 4 | Muskegon Wastewater | 9 a.m.

Join us on Sept. 17 at the Detroit River Hawk Watch or Nov. 4 at the Muskegon Wastewater birding hotspots. From raptors to ducks, young birders can expect to see exciting birds and learn new tips and tricks in bird watching and identification.

The young birder meet-ups are for those 18 years old and younger and their families. Young birders will be responsible for transportation to and from the meet-ups. An adult must accompany any young birder under the age of 13. Meet-ups will last approximately three hours. There is no cost to attend, but a suggested donation of \$10 per young birder or family will help cover expenses associated with hosting these events. Pre-registration is required. Events will be canceled if fewer than six young birders are registered one week in advance. Visit the Michigan Audubon online calendar for more details, including links to register.



Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk

Photo By: Joe deSousa, via unsplash.com

Grand River Adventure

Saturday, September 16 10-3pm

Price: Free with GRPM general admission

The Grand River Adventure is a one-day interactive event hosted at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, highlighting the past, present, and future of the Grand River. The program's goal is to bring community members together and showcase the work being done to research the Grand River and challenge participants to take action to protect and preserve the Grand River.

The Grand Rapids Audubon Club will be there with a booth highlighting the wonderful birding opportunities that are available within the Grand River watershed.

Guest Activities

Interact: with local organizations whose mission is to protect and preserve the Grand River Watershed

Learn: from local clubs and organizations sharing hobbies and activities to enjoy in and around the Grand River

Visit: the artist's market featuring local art inspired by nature or created with natural materials

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you are able to volunteer for to represent the club at this event, please contact Spencer High by emailing him at spencer@querkuscreative.com



Great Blue Heron

Photo By: Tom Wilson, via unsplash.com



The Spectacle of Fall Migration: Birds on the Move in Michigan | Cynthia Maas

Each autumn, there is a natural phenomenon occurring in Michigan's skies and woodlands: the fall bird migration. Fall bird migration is the seasonal movement of birds from their breeding grounds in the northern regions to their wintering grounds in the south. In Michigan, this migration typically takes place from late August through November. This is a staggeringly large spectacle and a testament to the remarkable instincts of our feathered friends. To truly appreciate this annual event, it helps to understand the what, why, and how of fall bird migration in Michigan.

Why Do Birds Migrate?

One of the primary drivers of migration is the need for warmth and food. As Michigan's winters become colder and the food supply dwindles, many bird species migrate south to regions where these resources are more abundant. Some bird species migrate to breed and raise their young in Michigan during the summer months and then return to warmer climates for the winter. This is known as neotropical migration.

Many birds are triggered to migrate by changes in day length. As the days grow shorter in the fall, it signals to them that it's time to head south. Migration is an inherited behavior encoded in the birds' genes. Young birds often undertake their first migration without any guidance, relying solely on their instincts.

How Do Birds Migrate?

Birds have developed various strategies for migration, depending on their species and habitat. Some birds are "short-distance" migrants and may only travel a few hundred miles, while others are "long-distance" migrants, embarking on journeys of thousands of miles. Birds possess remarkable navigational abilities, including the ability to detect Earth's magnetic field and even "map" their surroundings based on visual cues.

Many birds migrate during the day, relying on visual landmarks and the sun's position for navigation. They often follow established flyways, such as the Mississippi Flyway, which passes through Michigan. These stopover sites are essential for their survival, as they replenish their energy reserves by feeding on insects and berries. Some birds, particularly songbirds, migrate at night. This is a safer time to travel since predators are less active. They use stars, the Earth's magnetic field, and the moon for navigation.

Common Migrant Species

Michigan is home to a wide variety of bird species that migrate during the fall, each with its unique migration story. There is a bustling concentration of birds in specific areas as they stop to rest and refuel. This makes it easier to spot and observe multiple species in one location. Some of the most common migrants include:

Warblers

Michigan is known as the "Warbler Capital of North America" during fall migration. Species like the Blackburnian Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Yellow Warbler pass through on their journey south. These tiny and vibrant birds are a favorite for their striking plumage and active foraging behaviors.

Hawks and Eagles

Large raptors, such as the Red-tailed Hawk and Bald Eagle, can be seen soaring overhead as they migrate to their wintering grounds.

Sandhill Cranes

These elegant birds gather in large flocks before taking to the skies in their distinctive V-shaped formations.

Waterfowl

Ducks and geese are a common sight on Michigan's lakes and wetlands as they rest and refuel before continuing their journey south.

Shorebirds

Michigan's shorelines become temporary homes to a variety of sandpipers, plovers, and other shorebirds as they make their way south.

Colorful Michigan Birds | Mary Austin

In this quiz, associate the color with the name of these bird species that can regularly be found in Michigan. For example, Thrasher would be "Brown." The colors you can choose from are Black, Blue, Brown, Green, Purple, Red, Yellow and White. On your mark, get set, GO!

Answers can be found upside down on the bottom of this page.

1. _____-headed Woodpecker
2. Great _____ Heron
3. _____-breasted and _____-breasted Nuthatch
4. Common _____throat
5. _____-winged Warbler
6. _____ Creeper
7. _____ Martin
8. _____-throated _____ and _____-throated _____ Warbler
9. _____-rumped Warbler
10. American _____ Duck
11. _____-breasted Merganser
12. _____-eyed Vireo
13. _____-bellied Sapsucker
14. _____-shouldered Hawk
15. _____ Warbler
16. _____-crowned Sparrow
17. _____-winged and _____-winged Teal
18. _____-headed Cowbird
19. _____-billed and _____-billed Cuckoo
20. _____ Jay
21. _____-tailed Hawk
22. _____-headed Vireo
23. _____-bellied Woodpecker
24. _____-and-_____ Warbler
25. Common _____poll
26. _____ Finch
27. _____-winged _____bird
28. _____-throated Sparrow
29. _____-capped Chickadee
30. Eastern _____bird
31. American _____start
32. Lesser _____legs

Answers to Colorful Birds of Michigan:

Note: Some birders might argue that some of the birds listed do not regularly occur in Michigan. Also, the answers below might inadvertently missed a regularly occurring Michigan bird of a particular color that could be included in the quiz. Kudos to you for finding that bird!

1. Red-headed Woodpecker 2. Great Blue Heron 3. Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatch 4. Common Yellowthroat 5. Blue-winged Warbler 6. Brown Creeper 7. Purple Martin 8. Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warbler 9. Yellow-rumped Warbler 10. American Black Duck 11. Red-breasted Merganser 12. Red-eyed Vireo 13. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 14. Red-shouldered Hawk 15. Yellow Warbler 16. White-crowned Sparrow 17. Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal 18. Brown-headed Cowbird 19. Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoo 20. Blue Jay 21. Red-tailed Hawk 22. Blue-headed Vireo 23. Red-bellied Woodpecker 24. Black-and-white Warbler 25. Common Redpoll 26. Purple Finch 27. Red-winged Blackbird 28. White-throated Sparrow 29. Black-capped Chickadee 30. Eastern Bluebird 31. American Redstart 32. Lesser Yellowlegs

Green Heron

If you've ever spent some time in a vegetation-filled wetland in the spring, summer, or fall, it's likely you've heard a loud "chew!" squawked from a single bird in flight, only for it to disappear into a dense patch of buttonbush before you could get eyes on it. Or, if you're lucky (and inconspicuous), perhaps you've noticed a stocky little wading bird decked out in rich jewel tones creeping at a snail's pace along a branch just over the water, maybe even dropping a twig or leaf onto the surface. This lovely bird would be a Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*).

For me, this is a bird I really never knew existed before I started birding, despite being relatively common. Their somewhat secretive and solitary nature is certainly a factor, but their deep teal and brownish-burgundy coloration, while incredibly striking in direct sun, is great camouflage in its preferred habitat of wetland with dense shrubs. Green Herons are also extraordinarily patient for a meal, like all members of the heron family seem to be, so if you aren't looking closely, you might easily miss one with the lack of movement and sound. I've certainly had it take a few moments to register that I was looking at one even while staring right at it!

While they are patient hunters, Green Herons do have a trick up their sleeves (er...feathers?) to make the work a bit faster - they are one of the few bird species that use tools. They will grab a twig, leaf, or even an insect and drop it on the water surface as bait for fish. Apparently humans aren't the only anglers who figured this out!

Here in West Michigan, we are graced with the Green Heron's presence from about April through October, as they return here to breed each year. They overwinter from the southern coasts of the US, throughout Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, all the way to northern South America. Some populations are non-migratory, particularly in and around the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and the coasts of North and Central America. While populations of this species are generally stable, they do face threats from wetland destruction and increased human activity along rivers, streams, and channels.

Identifying a Green Heron



Description:

Small stocky heron often seen at the edge of bodies of water. Adults have a deep shade of dark blue/green on their backs and crown with chestnut colored necks which continues in vertical streaks into a cream colored breast.

Habitat:

Wetlands, marshes & shorelines

Best Time to See:

Late April-September

Best Place to See:

Reeds Lake, Indian Mounds Drive, Ball Perkins Park

ID Tips & Tricks

- Small, stocky heron, about 1.5 feet long, but neck is often pulled in or stretched out, so length can be hard to judge - much shorter and stockier than Great Blue Heron and Great Egret, taller than Least Bittern.
- Deep, striking blue-green on upperparts and crown of head with brownish-burgundy neck & sides and vertical striations from throat down the center of breast and belly.
- Bill is generally dark on top and yellowish on bottom, legs are yellow-orange, and eyes are bright yellow.
- When not flying or perched, Green Herons generally creep along branches over water, or remain motionless for long periods, waiting for prey.
- Don't confuse with Bitterns or Night Herons - while Green Herons are much more common, there are some similarities, especially in thick vegetation or in flight.
- In flight, American and Least Bitterns probably look the most similar to Green Herons, but coloration is very different in adults - American Bitterns have great camouflage with their tan, white, and gray stripes & spots. Least Bitterns are shades of sunset.
- Another somewhat similar species is the Black-Crowned Night Heron, which is a little bigger and even stockier than the Green Heron, but is colored in shades of gray overall, with pink legs and red eyes.

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, September 7, 14, 21, 28 - 8:00AM | Meet at the end of the dead-end section of Veterans Memorial Drive

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 - 8:00AM | Meet in the Roselle Parking Lot by the building on Grand River Drive.

Pickerel Lake | Led By: Becky Kuhn

This spot offers migrating waterfowl and songbirds as well as a host of resident song birds and woodpeckers... and this year an Osprey!

Saturday, September 30 - 8:00AM | Meet in the Pickerel Lake Parking Lot 6001 Ramsdell Dr, Cannonsburg 49317

For additional information about these trips, please visit [our Facebook page](#)

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!



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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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

If you need to contact us, please message us on our Facebook page while our new website is under development.