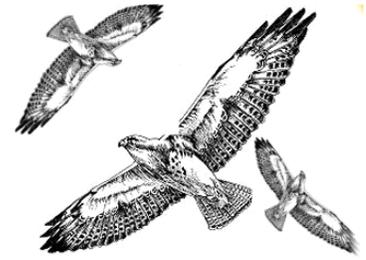


# THE KETTLE



## Straits Area Audubon Society Newsletter - Est. 1983

SAAS meetings are held at **6:00 pm.** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month September through May at the Cheboygan Area Public Library, 100 S. Bailey St. Refreshments will be provided and you may participate in door prize and raffle drawings.

The scheduling of a meeting or program in the library does not in any way constitute an endorsement by the library of the group, its activities, or of the ideas and opinions expressed during the course of meetings or programs.

SAAS thanks **Williams Office Equipment** for donating printing costs for **The Kettle**.

Straits Area Audubon Society  
c/o Rosanne Rynerson  
10490 E. US 23  
Cheboygan, MI 49721

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**Mission Statement** - The mission of the Straits Area Audubon Society is to educate the community, including it's children, about conservation and enjoyment of the natural world with emphasis on the local natural communities of wildlife. This will be accomplished through regular seasonal meetings and by sponsoring field trips, classroom studies and field studies.

### Join Straits Area Audubon Society

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY & STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ NEWS LETTER: [ E-Mail ] – or – [ US-Mail ]

Make checks payable to: **Straits Area Audubon Society**  
Single Membership: \$12  
Family Membership: \$15

Please mail checks to:  
Rosanne Rynerson – Treasurer  
10490 E. US 23  
Cheboygan, MI 49721

## January Program

### The Flora and Fauna of Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras

Wednesday, January 8, 2014 [6:00 p.m.]  
Presented by: Susan Fawcett, Botanist

"The Flora and Fauna of Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras" will be presented by Susan Fawcett, native of Petoskey, Susan currently lives in Berkeley, California, working as a botanical illustrator and volunteering at the Jepson and University of California Herbaria. She received her Masters in Biology from Northern Michigan University in Marquette and has been active in the Michigan Botanical Club.

Susan Fawcett



Photo Provided

Her thesis research focused on the unusual ecology of a neotropical savanna on Utila Island, north of mainland Honduras. The size of Manhattan, the island consists mostly of mangroves and wetlands, saw grass prairies and swamps. When not flooded by the ocean, it goes arid in the tropical sun, putting life to extreme endurance tests. Regardless, several endemic species of reptile and Utila black hawks survive. Susan's talk presents both the adaptive flora of the savanna and wildlife from other habitats and the surrounding coral reefs.

## Upcoming Programs

February, 12 2014

### Finding and Raising Native Giant Silk Moths

Presented by: Jim McGrath, Nature Discovery

March, 12 2014

### Fishy Adventures in the Caribbean

Presented by: Charlie Maltby, Craig Passeno, and Joe Lavender, Northern Michigan Dive Center

April, 9 2014

### For the Birds: Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Presented by: Ronnie Allen

May, 14 2014

### Orchids of Michigan

Presented by: Steve Baker

June, 11 2014

### Annual SAAS Hike and Potluck

[Location to be announced]

## January Field Trips

### Steve Baker Spontaneous Outings Any Day, Any Time, Anywhere

**Let's try a new approach to winter field trips.** If you are interested in participating in birding field trips this January, e-mail Steve Baker at: [steveandsuebaker@gmail.com](mailto:steveandsuebaker@gmail.com) to be added to a contact list. When the birds, weather and day look to be promising the trip will happen; hopefully getting the best results. There will be a short trip announcement lead time, so keep your gear at the ready.

### Snowshoe Lee Grande Ranch

Saturday, January 18, 2014



Internet Photo

A winter snowshoe delight led by Al and Jean Moberly through the Lee Grand Ranch located in Cheboygan County. There are over 2,000 acres of state land to explore

with its fabulous wildlife habitat which harbors elk, deer, ruffed grouse, turkeys and many other species. Bring your snowshoes, camera and cold weather apparel. Call for meeting time and place: Al at 231-268-8278 or Jean at 231-268-9726.

## Field Trip Reports

### Eastern U.P. Northern Wintering Birds

Thursday, December 5, 2013,

Submitted by Bev Kirby

Again led by Steve Baker on another cold, windy but fun birding trip, 11 birders began searching along the shores of Mackinaw City for waterfowl. Here Common, Hooded and Red-Breasted Mergansers were seen. Our first really good sighting was of an adult Great Black-backed Gull just off the Shepler dock. At the Gary Williams Memorial Park we found 2 Black Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks and 1 Snow Bunting. As we crossed the Mackinaw Bridge we saw rafts of Redheads fighting the winds as waves were blowing over their heads. A White-winged Scoter and Greater Scaup were also seen from the bridge. Along the St. Ignace waterfront we found Bufflehead, American Black Duck, Common Goldeneye, more Long-tailed Ducks and Redheads. At the Mackinaw County Sewage Lagoons we added Lesser Scaup, Gadwall and Northern Shrike to our list. From the front of a couple of waterfront motels we saw Bald Eagle, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. After stopping for lunch where we were finally able to warm up, we drove to Dafter to the landfill. There among the hundreds of gulls we found six Glaucous Gulls, and an immature Bald Eagle was seen in the trees behind the landfill. At feeders on S. Kinross we had Downy, Hairy, American Tree Sparrow, American Goldfinch and Red-breasted Nuthatch. We made 19 stops, found 36 species but try as we might we could not find one raptor on this trip. A grand time was had by all and we thank Steve Baker for his knowledge and expertise on where to go, when to go and why. ☺

Great Windbreak



Photo by Steve Baker

Participants were Steve Baker, Jack and Bev Kirby, Jim and Kathy Bricker, Mike and Chris Grant, Darryl Parish, Dale Giddings, Joey Arbaugh, Marilyn Smith, Tom Cadwalader.

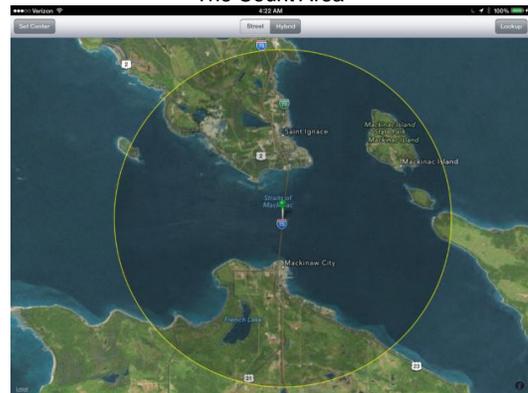
### Mackinac Straits Christmas Bird Count

Thursday, December 5, 2013,

Submitted by Steve Baker

Every Christmas season birders all over North and South America take to the field to census the birds within a circle of 15 miles across known as the count circle. This year marks the 114th Christmas Bird Count or CBC. This is the largest citizen science project of its kind involving over 70,000 birders within 2,300 count circles.

The Count Area



Provided by Steve Baker

The 10th annual Mackinac Straits Christmas Bird Count was held on December 18 this year. Fourteen people divided into 6 groups spread out within the count circle centered at mid-span of the Mackinac Bridge. This CBC is one of the most unique counts anywhere as the count circle includes two Great Lakes, the greatest bridge in the world, portions of each of Michigan's two Peninsulas, and the one of a kind Mackinac Island. Birders this year rode the Arnold Line ferry Huron as it traveled through the ice to survey the ducks.

The Huron



Photo by Steve Baker

Other birders surveyed from the Mackinac Bridge while the remainder of the counters traveled the roads of the Mackinaw City, Mackinac Island, and St. Ignace areas. The ice came early this year greatly reducing the waterfowl numbers, but the birders still managed to find 2399 individual birds of 43 species. Unusual birds that were seen this year include a very late Great Blue Heron, a Belted Kingfisher, a Northern Goshawk, a White-throated Sparrow, and a Snowy Owl. Christmas bird counts are valuable in learning bird population trends and latitude shifts.

Great Blue Heron



Photo by Steve Baker

Data from Christmas Bird Counts have shown a northward shift of 60% of the species that winter in North America. Due to the early ice up this year, several species normally present were noticeably reduced or absent. In 2012, there were 4200 Redhead ducks tallied, but only 6 were found this season. Other regular occurring species absent in 2013 include Gadwall, Tufted Titmouse, and Robin.

The Mackinac Straits CBC is sponsored by the Straits Area Audubon Society and the birders extend a big **Thank You** to Mackinac Bridge Authority, and the St. Ignace city manager for allowing access to protected areas. Again this year, Arnold Line Ferry donated ferry tickets to Mackinac Island so that seabirds could be counted on the Straits Christmas Bird Count. Kathy and Jim Bricker and Darryl Parish rode back and forth twice. They had a dicey ride, breaking through considerable ice at St. Ignace. They counted redheads, long-tail ducks, mergansers, and a lone snowy owl sitting on the ice. Their counts were complemented by Laura Eiseler, who covered Mackinac Island. We greatly appreciate the donation of tickets from Arnold Line.

Straits Area Audubon Society birders also precipitated in two additional Christmas Bird Counts during the old fashioned winter weather conditions of December.

Cheboygan CBC was held Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup> and the Pickford-Cedarville CBC was done on Friday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. These CBC reports will appear in the February Kettle along with a grand summary of SAAS's Christmas bird count data.

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## SAAS Chapter Notes

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### TREASURER'S REPORT

Submitted by Rose Rynerson

It seems to me that the SAAS season just started, and yet now we are half-way through our programs!!! Time flies like the birds. Watch for the 2013 yearend financial numbers in your next Kettle. On that subject, membership may soon vote on changing our financial year to reflect our season (Sept. – August) rather than the calendar yearend. The Big Bird Day Count fundraiser from May of 2013 has been wrapped up, so I am now working on membership dues that are still pending, with help from Dale Giddings. Responses have been quick and generous, often with kind comments on the work we do through SAAS. Thank you.

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### Enjoying Our Feathered Friends

Submitted by Donna Mittlestat

As you sit down with your cup of coffee to watch the birds take note of some of these fun facts. The more "Dee" notes in a chickadee's call the more threatened the bird feels. For example, one "Dee" might indicate the usual human filling their feeder. As you are observing other birds at your feeder watch the woodpeckers. Depending on the species their tongues can be up to 4 inches in length. Many of these woodpeckers have barbed tongues helping them to extract bugs from trees and holes. This year there seems to be an abundance of Blue Jays. These can be very entertaining. Watch the Blue Jays lower their crest when they are feeding peacefully with family and flock members. Also observe the black bridle across the face, nape and throat of the jays. This varies extensively and may help Blue Jays recognize one another. Now, when a Purple Finch lands on your feeder watch as it uses its big beak and tongue to crush seeds and extract the nut. There is always something to catch your eye at your feeder as the last drops of coffee disappear from your cup.

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### Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch [MSRW] Project Report

By Kathy Bricker

After three meetings during 2013 to explore our options, the SAAS ad hoc Hawk Watch Committee has finalized plans for 2014 and beyond. In order to allow large donations to be tax-deductible, we have launched the Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch as a project of U.S. Inc. Foundation, an

existing tax-exempt organization based in Petoskey, Michigan.

Our goals, in order of priority, are to:

- Survey birds of prey and associated migrants in the Straits of Mackinac region of Michigan. This will eventually expand from hawks in the spring to owls in both spring and fall;
- Educate the public about birds of prey and the importance of the Straits of Mackinac as a migratory pathway; and
- Aid as much as possible in conserving and protecting the resting and feeding stop-over habitat for birds of prey in the Straits of Mackinac region.

By March 1, 2014, we aim to raise \$6,800 in order to hire a professional hawk counter to provide coverage of the spring migration over a longer period of time than volunteers are able to commit. Volunteers will assist the paid counter as needed and also greatly expand public outreach by introducing more visitors to raptor identification, migration, and ecology.

Anyone wishing to enable this project with a tax-deductible donation will be greatly appreciated. Make checks payable to Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch and send to Kathy Bricker, MSRW, 4483 E. Dotski Rd., Cheboygan, Michigan 49721, or contact me with questions at 231-627-4830. Thanks to the following committee members: Steve Baker, Kathy Bricker, John Kafer, Aubrey Maccoux-LeDuc, Don Mittlestat, Ed Pike, Gerry VanderHart.

Raptor over the Straits - Red-shouldered Hawk



Photo by Jack Kirby

## Nature

### Michigan Audubon *Connecting birds and people*

#### Backyard Birds: Finches – House vs. Purple

##### A how-to guide on distinguishing a House Finch from a Purple Finch

Both finches will likely visit your feeder this winter and at a glance look very similar. Below are a few key points to help distinguish a House Finch from a Purple Finch.

#### Coloration

The coloration, when closely examined is a dead give away to which male finch you are observing. House Finches are a classic red or red-orange color while the Purple Finches are a rosy red-pink or raspberry color. Also the location of the red coloration helps with identification. The House Finch only has red on the forehead, brow and upper chest while the Purple Finch has the reddish hue that extends from the top of the head down the nape, back, chest and flanks.



#### Markings/Patterns

The markings are the best way to tell the difference between the female finches which display a brownish streaked pattern. The House Finch displays blurry streaks on her under parts and has a plain face. The Purple Finch on the other hand has sharply defined streaks and a distinctive face with white eyebrows.

#### Body Shape

House Finches are more slender than Purple Finches, who tend to look stocky with an oversized head.

#### Bill

The bill is another good distinguishing feature. House Finches have a slightly smaller bill with a more distinct curve on the upper mandible. Purple Finches have a larger bill with less of a curve.

#### Tail Length

The length and display of the tail will also help to tell these two finches apart. The House Finch has a longer tail with a faint notch while the Purple Finch has a shorter tail with a deep, visible notch.

#### Calls

Listen for these finches, their calls will certainly help with identification. House Finches have a louder, longer 'chirp' call with a rising pitch, while the Purple Finch has a soft 'pik' call.

#### Interesting Facts

##### House Finch

According to Cornell Lab, "The House Finch was originally a bird of the western United States and Mexico. In 1940 a small number of finches were turned loose on Long Island, New York, after failed attempts to sell them as cage birds ("Hollywood finches"). They quickly started breeding and

spread across almost all of the eastern United States and southern Canada within the next 50 years. The total House Finch population across North America is staggering. Scientists estimate between 267 million and 1.4 billion individuals. House Finches are one of very few birds who feed their nestlings exclusively plant food from the beginning.

### Purple Finch

During disputes at food sources and in flocks, females usually win out over males.

According to Cornell Lab, "Purple Finches seem to be losing numbers in eastern North America as House Finches have moved in. One study of finch behavior found that Purple Finches lost out to House Finches more than 95% of the times the two birds encountered each other."

### Winter Feeder Visitors

Both finches will visit your winter bird feeding stations. Try offering black oil sunflower seeds, nyjer and white proso millet.

House Finches are found in established areas such as city parks, urban centers, residential backyards, farms, and forest edges. They are social birds, when food is found they may bring along 50 other finches to feast. House Finches are residential or short migrant birds.

Coniferous trees in your backyard will attract Purple Finches, who are short distance migrants. Purple Finches are erratic migrants and you may observe the finch one year and not see it at all the next year.

These finches can be hard to identify at first but once you can pinpoint the features you should be able to tell the difference from a House Finch and a Purple Finch for years to come.

## Conservation News Links

If you have concerns about which conservation issues could affect the Straits of Mackinac, this article will enlighten you.

[https://www.nwf.org/pdf/Great-Lakes/NWF\\_SunkenHazard.pdf](https://www.nwf.org/pdf/Great-Lakes/NWF_SunkenHazard.pdf)

### Birds cause \$715 million of damage to aircraft in the US every year, excluding plane crashes.

Birds cause on average \$1.2 billion of damage to commercial aircraft worldwide. Within the US, that figure is estimated to be \$715 million per year. The largest perpetrators are gulls and geese that tend to get sucked into jet engines and crash into windscreens. The collision between a bird and an aircraft is called a bird strike.

### Anatomy Pileated Woodpecker

The top of a bird's head from bill to the rear base of the skull is the pileum, emphasized on the first syllable (as in apple pie), giving PIE-leeum. Retaining this root pronunciation makes the woodpecker's name PIE-lee-ay-ted rather than PILLY-ay-ted.

## Straits Area Audubon Society 2013 - 2014 Officers and Volunteers

### Executive Committee

President: **Dale Giddings** - 231-525-8874  
[No email]

Vice President: **Jim Bricker** - 231-627-4830  
[pivot777777@hotmail.com](mailto:pivot777777@hotmail.com)

Treasurer: **Rosanne Rynerson** - 231-597-9788  
[Fiddleheadfilly4@gmail.com](mailto:Fiddleheadfilly4@gmail.com)

Secretary: **Diane Morand** - 231-627-4282  
[mdlmorand@aol.com](mailto:mdlmorand@aol.com)

Past President: **Roger Benter** - 231-627-3992  
[rogerbenter@gmail.com](mailto:rogerbenter@gmail.com)

Exe.Com. At-Large: **Ben Lillie** - 231-627-5128  
[lilliepad@hughes.net](mailto:lilliepad@hughes.net)

MAS Representative: **Donna Mittlestat** - 906-201-0285  
[ddmstat@hotmail.com](mailto:ddmstat@hotmail.com)

## Nature Links

### Michigan Audubon Society



[www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org)

### MNA (Michigan Nature Association)

[www.michigannature.org](http://www.michigannature.org)

### Little Traverse Conservancy

[www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org)

### Whitefish Point Bird Observatory

[www.wpbo.org](http://www.wpbo.org)

### Upper Peninsula Bird Listing

[www.upbird.org](http://www.upbird.org)

### Northern Michigan Conservation Network

<http://nmconservationnetwork.org>

**Note from the Editor:** All articles and photos for *THE KETTLE* should be submitted to the editor's e-mail box one week BEFORE the end of a publication month. This will allow the e-mail edition to be sent out by the first of the month and the printed edition to be mailed by the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the month.

Thank you. **Jack Kirby** [[saaskettle2011@gmail.com](mailto:saaskettle2011@gmail.com)]

**Our hope is that 2014 will  
be a banner year for you  
and yours.**