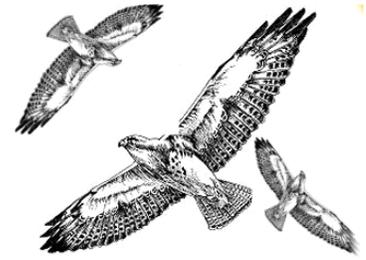


THE KETTLE



Straits Area Audubon Society Newsletter - Est. 1983

SAAS meetings are held at **6:00 pm.** on the **2nd 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.

To reach us by mail - **Straits Area Audubon Society**; c/o Rosanne Rynerson, 10490 E. US 23, Cheboygan, MI 49721

Mission Statement - The mission of the Straits Area Audubon Society is to educate the community, including its 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

November Program

Bicycling with Lewis and Clark: The Katy Trail

Wednesday, November 12 (6:00 pm)

Presented by Dale and Connie Rieger

When not on SAAS field trips, Cheboygan residents Dale and Connie Rieger can often be found kayaking the Great Lakes or bicycling their shorelines. In 2013, however, the Rieger team undertook a bicycle expedition on Missouri's Katy Trail, the country's longest recreational rail trail. It runs 240 miles in the right-of-way of the former Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad, whose abbreviation MKT, led to the nickname "KT" or "Katy."

Dale and Connie Rieger



Dale and Connie will show pictures from the wild and scenic route along the northern bank of the Missouri River. Besides the rails-to-trails corridor, the route is further protected by Missouri's Katy Trail State Park. The passage of the trail through Jefferson City, Missouri's state capitol, allows for some sight-seeing, while many historic sites along the way explain what happened at these sites during the western explorations of Lewis and Clark. After the program and a sharing of nature sightings and upcoming field trips, refreshments will be served. Door and raffle prizes will be available to all attendees.

December Program

SAAS Member's Potluck and Slide Fest

Wednesday, December 10 (6:00 pm)

Presented by the SAAS membership

November Field Trips

From **Donna Mittlestat**

There are NO field trips planned for November. This means each of us can still venture out on our own to view the birds. Keep in mind the many waterfowl to be seen on the Great Lakes.

From **Steve Baker**

Greetings Birders; I saw my first Snow Buntings this week so winter must be near. I feel that Polar Vortex wobbling again so it's time to plan the **Christmas Bird Counts**. Here are the dates as known for now (they are not set in stone but nearly so).

Petoskey CBC - Sunday, December 14

Cheboygan CBC - Tuesday, December 16

Mackinac Straits CBC - Thursday, December 18

Cedarville CBC - Friday, December 19

Hopefully many of you can help out by participating in one or all of these counts. Block that calendar off now, do your Christmas shopping early, and come join the largest citizen science project out there.

Field Trip Reports

Owl Banding with Ed Pike and Selena Creed

Saturday, October 11, 2014.

Submitted by Bev Kirby

Northern Saw-whet Owl



Photo by Jack Kirby

This field trip was originally scheduled for Friday, October 3, 2014 with a rain date of October 4, 2014, but since it rained on both of those days, we were rescheduled for this owl research demonstration on Saturday, October 11, 2014. Participants from the Straits Area Audubon Society and guests met at the Bridge View Visitor Center in St. Ignace

at 7 p.m. and proceeded with Ed to the owl banding site where Selena had the nets set up and ready. The nets are checked each half hour. Ed has been banding Northern Saw-whet owls for many years as they migrate south across the Straits of Mackinac.

Selena Creed banding owl



Photo by Bev Kirby

When an owl is captured, it is weighed, the wing cord and tail are measured and then a numbered aluminum band is placed on the owl's leg. Using a special graph, the weight and measurements of the particular bird will specify if the bird is male or female. The bird is then set on a branch in a nearby conifer to allow it to get used to the dark before flying away. In between net checks, we sat around a bonfire and enjoyed cider, donuts and blueberry chocolate chip bars while Ed gave us information on these small owls and answered many questions. Unfortunately, while we were there, no owls were captured but we learned that later throughout the night, 10 Saw-whets and 1 Barred Owl were caught and banded. Thanks to Ed and Selena for all the work they put into this project. Participants: Ed Pike, Selena Creed, Jack and Bev Kirby, Steve Baker, Janet Trudeau, Jim, John and Kathy Bricker, Darrell Lawson, Cathy Freebairn, Cynthia Mnich, Tony Dunaske, Tory Cooney, Skylar Doomis, Francie, Tom and Matt Dwyers, James Pollard.

Waterfowl Extravaganza with Steve Baker and Ed Pike

Thursday, October 30, 2014

Submitted by Bev Kirby

With inclement weather imminent, 13 members of the Straits Area Audubon Society met at 8:00 a.m. at the Mackinaw City Welcome Center and hurried to begin our search for migrating waterfowl. Redhead ducks were the star of the day with thousands in rafts on either side of the Mackinac Bridge at St. Ignace, and they were found

throughout the day on small and big lakes and with skeins in the sky along the waterfront.

Waterfowl Birders



Photo by Steve Baker

Long-tailed ducks, White-winged Scoters, Hooded, Red-breasted and Common Mergansers were seen along with Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Greater Scaup, Gadwall, Red-necked Grebe, Green-winged Teal, American Coot, Pied-billed Grebe and American Wigeon. Five Bald Eagles were counted for the day, and 3 different sightings of Snow Buntings made us aware that winter was coming. A late Common Grackle was seen at a feeder. At Brevort Lake, 17 Loons and 24 Horned Grebes, along with 11 Tundra Swans and 3 Canvasback were some of the highlights of the day. Four Sharp-tailed Grouse flew up out of the grass to get us excited and a lone Eastern Bluebird flew across the road. To find our birds we stopped at Chain Lake, Hay Lake, Round Lake, Brevort Lake, an airport, two different sewage lagoons, a State Park, the State dock at Mackinaw City and numerous stops along the St. Ignace waterfront. A total of 40 species of birds was counted of which 22 species were water birds. After lunch in early afternoon, the rain moved in but we continued on with wet scopes, binoculars, raincoats, umbrellas and enthusiasm. Thanks to Steve and Ed for another great trip. Birding rules! Participants were Dave and Carol Bricker, Beth Ensor, Jack and Bev Kirby, Don and Donna Mittlestat, Jean and Al Moberly, Darryl Parish, and Sharon Sczcesny.

Field Report

Migration Day

by Doug Reeves, assistant chief, DNR Wildlife Division

Nov. 12, 2012 was the Veteran's Day holiday but it was also a spectacular migration day. A strong cold front came across the continent, with the northern portion arriving in

Mid-Michigan during the early morning hours accompanied by rain. The rain had ended by about noon, and the temperature dropped from the low 50's to the upper 30's. There was a strong westerly wind, sometimes with significant shifts to the north or northwest. Conditions were just right for tundra swans to migrate, and migrate they did! I wish I knew how many flew overhead within earshot of me that afternoon. I was outside much of the day, and I saw the first flock at about 11:30. From then until nearly dark, there were only a few minutes when I could not hear or see tundra swans. Flocks varying in size from about a dozen to nearly 80 flew all afternoon. It was truly spectacular.

Tundra Swans



DNR photo

The autumn tundra swan migration route takes many of these birds diagonally across North America. One of the most substantial breeding areas for tundra swans is in western Alaska. Many of those birds migrate southeast all the way to the Atlantic coast, where they spend the winter from Chesapeake Bay south to about the northern border of Georgia. That route takes them directly over central Michigan, where thousands stop over on Saginaw Bay before resuming the journey when things get cold enough and the weather again sends them to their wintering grounds. A quick call to the Fish Point Wildlife Area on Nov. 13 confirmed that there were at least 3,000 tundra swans that had arrived in the area the previous afternoon. The temperatures on the national weather map told the story. In North Dakota things were freezing up, as temperature readings were in the upper teens. In Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin, thermometers reported readings in the 20's. Strong westerly winds meant once the birds were aloft, they didn't have to expend a lot of energy to fly long distances. That was evident, because many of the birds glided at least part of the distance that I could see them. They were traveling at high rates of speed.

The call of migrating tundra swans is unmistakable and always makes me look up. It's kind of a haunting ow-oh-oh-oh that I hear, very distinct from the Canada geese and sandhill cranes that are also in the area at the time. Tundra swans are vocal birds too, seeming to call as much during their autumn migration as Canada geese do during spring.

Beginning about Nov. 1, I had anticipated hearing tundra swans. I have observed significant swan migrations as early

as the Nov. 4-5 and as late as Thanksgiving weekend. When the first flock came into earshot on Nov. 12, I stopped what I was doing, looked up and watched from when I could first see the birds until they were out of sight. I wondered if they had seen moose last week and whether their most recent stop had been somewhere in Wisconsin, Minnesota or even North Dakota. I recalled times in the past when the sun had shone on swan wings and flashed a brilliant white, almost silver, color. A flock of sunlit tundra swans flying in the V formation is a beautiful sight, especially if the background is a cloudy sky and the sun is coming from an open hole in the clouds.

I have come to think of tundra swans as the bringers of winter. They migrate overhead just before things turn very cold and snow starts to appear. Sure enough, on the morning of Nov. 13, the top and windshield of the car were snow-covered. Soon the ponds will be covered with ice. But the swans will return again in March. At some point shortly after ice-out, several thousand will stop over at Saginaw Bay on their way back northwest. You might want to make a visit to the east side of the bay about then to see and hear a true natural spectacle.

Field Report

Wetland Birds of Michigan: The Trumpeter Swan **The world's largest waterfowl**

by the MAS Bird Crew

Breeding/Year-round Ranges: In Michigan there are three locations that are well known Trumpeter Swan breeding areas. Schoolcraft County/Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the Upper Peninsula is home to half of the Trumpeter Swan population in the state. The four-county region of Oscoda, Alcona, Ogemaw and Iosco counties in the Northern Lower Peninsula and several counties in southwest Michigan have good population numbers as well. See the distribution map to the right of the most current sightings of Trumpeter Swans in Michigan during the 2014 breeding season.

Size & Shape: As the world's largest waterfowl the Trumpeter Swan measures an impressive 54.3 to 62.2 inches in length with a wingspan of 80 inches (over 6.5 feet) and weighs 17 to 30 pounds.

Coloring: The Trumpeter Swan is an all white waterfowl with a black bill and face. The color of the bill and face is what helps identify it from the invasive Mute Swan which has an orange bill and black face.

Habitat: The swan can be found breeding in shallow freshwater wetlands with irregular shorelines and a good

diversity of plants, especially emergent vegetation. The bird prefers sites with little human disturbance. Trumpeter Swans require a large unobstructed runway for takeoff, around 320 feet.

Trumpeter Swan



Photo by Jack Kirby

Food: Submerged and emergent vegetation makes up the majority of the swan's diet along with incidental and occasional invertebrates, small fish and fish eggs.

Behavior: The Trumpeter Swan is often observed sharing breeding areas with geese and dabbling ducks. Although the swan shares the same diet with these waterfowl they co-exist well because the Trumpeter Swan has a much longer neck and can reach food that the geese and ducks cannot. An adult Trumpeter Swan can consume half of its body weight in one day, which is 8 to 15 pounds of food in a day!

Sound: The call of the swan is a resonating hollow, nasal honking. Additionally the swan's wings make a raspy sound during flight.

Nests: Nest's are large and slightly elevated from the water's edge. Trumpeter Swans often place their nest on muskrat mounds, beaver lodges or small islands. Nests are made of vegetation, grasses and sedges, lined with down.

Conservation Status: Nationally Least Concern but is a Michigan Threatened Species. Up until the late 19th century, Trumpeter Swans were excessively hunted for their skin and long flight feathers. Additionally, the boom of the Industrial Revolution and the consumption of wetland habitats caused a large decline in population numbers. It was widely believed that by 1900 the species had become extinct. However, a small population survived in remote parts of the Rocky Mountains and Alaska. In the 1980's, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources along with like-minded conservation groups started a swan reintroduction program as part of the North American Restoration Plan. The goal was to have three self-sustaining populations in Michigan of at least 200 swans by the year 2000. The program was a success, in 2000 over 400 individual Trumpeter Swans were counted in Michigan and today's numbers have reached more than 500.

Interesting Facts:

---Trumpeter Swans are long lived birds often reaching 20 years of age. A captive individual lived to be 32 years old.

---The male is called a cob; the female is called a pen.

---Trumpeter Swans are thought to mate for life; the bond usually forms when the swans are three to four years old. The pair usually does not build a nest during their first breeding season together.

SAAS Chapter Notes

TREASURER'S REPORT

Submitted by **Rose Rynerson**

Welcome to our newest members:

Mark & Judy McKellar – Freeland, MI

Bill Grigg & Family – Rogers City, MI

Your memberships represent tangible interest in the diverse bird populations we enjoy here each season! Members and non-members enjoy learning from the monthly programs, newsletters, and field trips provided through SAAS. A very unique opportunity is afforded locally through our knowledgeable volunteers' efforts.

Woman with Cheboygan ties wins Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch Quilt Raffle

Submitted by **Alice MacFarland**

The phone rang right at dinner time. John Socha and Beth Hoffman and their kids were ready to eat. Beth cast a glance at the caller ID and noticed the 231 area code as the call went to voice mail. It was a Cheboygan number but not one of the Cheboygan Socha. Then Beth remembered the raffle ticket. She called the number, everyone getting excited at the possible good news. When the caller introduced herself as from Audubon, they all began to cheer and clap. They had won the beautiful quilt!

Beth said she had purchased the winning ticket# 0909 from a very nice lady at K-Mart. That was on July 19th. John Socha's aunt and uncle Joe and Judy Socha, who live in Cheboygan were the recipients of the quilt as a gift. The Sochas host many family reunions in Cheboygan so John, Beth and their children will be able to see the quilt when they visit as Judy plans to use it on their bed. She said it would go beautifully in the room.

Darrell Lawson & Dale Giddings



Photo by Jim Bricker

The winning ticket was drawn on October 8 during the monthly Audubon meeting. Darrell Lawson, president of Petoskey Regional Audubon Society and the Cheboygan meeting's program presenter, drew the winning ticket after his presentation on E-Birding. Darrell is also active with the Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch (MSRW.) Approximately \$1500 in proceeds will be presented to MSRW. Special thanks go to the Rivertown Patchworkers for donating their time, talent and resources in making the quilt for the fundraiser. We also thank the Fabric Stash, Family Fare and K-Mart for providing space for ticket sales. We are grateful to the following persons for selling tickets: Kathy Bricker and Joan Rogers who outdid themselves in going far afield selling tickets. Thanks also to Mary Trout, Gerry VanderHart, Diane Morand, Peggy Gervais, Janet Trudeau, Kevin George, Ron Wallin, Jeff Dykehouse, Judy Frock, Maureen Henkel, Marilee Lillie, Karen Busch, Gloria Cadwalader, Rose Rynerson, Joann Leal, Susan Emerson, Connie Rieger, Kate Caldwell and Jean Moberly.

For Your Information

A parent albatross may fly more than 10,000 miles (16,000 km) to deliver one meal to its chick.

The large albatross seabird has been known to fly to feed its chick at distances of over 10,000 miles (16,000 km) to deliver one meal. Their main sources of food include squid and fish eggs, which they eat and digest before feeding their chicks the regurgitated solid food and stomach oils. For the first few weeks of an albatross chick's life, its parents will travel and bring back food each day. As the chicks age, parents typically return every two to three days with food.

WiseGeek

Straits Area Audubon Society 2014 - 2015 Officers and Volunteers

Executive Committee

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ddmstat@hotmail.com

Nature Links

Michigan Audubon Society



www.michiganaudubon.org

MNA (Michigan Nature Association)

www.michigannature.org

The Nature Conservancy

<http://nature.org/greatlakes>

Little Traverse Conservancy

www.landtrust.org

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory

www.wpbo.org

Upper Peninsula Bird Listing

www.upbird.org

Northern Michigan Conservation Network

<http://nmconservationnetwork.org>

HMANA Mackinaw Straits Raptor Watch

http://hawkcount.org/month_summary.php?rsite=613

Mackinaw Straits Raptor Watch

www.MackinacRaptorWatch.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 4th day of the month.

Thank you. **Jack Kirby** [saaskettle2011@gmail.com]

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

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