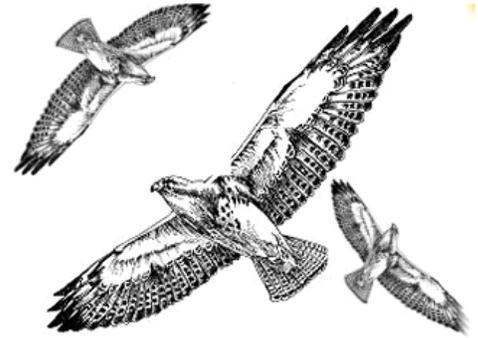


The Kettle



Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter dating from 1983

February 2009

Vol. 10 No. 2

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Meetings: PLEASE NOTE that SAAS meetings are held at the Cheboygan Area Public Library. We thank the Library for providing this space at 100 S. Bailey St.

February Meeting Announcement—Bobcats of Pigeon River County

by Jim Bricker

At 7 pm on Wednesday February 11 at the Cheboygan Area Public Library, Archie Reeves will astound us with video footage he has taken of bobcats in the Pigeon River County State Forest just south of Cheboygan. Many years ago, this avid woodsman and hunter from Wolverine switched from shooting bobcats for sport to studying them. I will never forget the thrill of my first wild bobcat, seen around 1979 on a snowshoe outing with Archie and his hunting dog, Chief. Bobcats are excellent climbers, so the dogs would chase the agile animals until they leapt into trees. For nearly five decades, Archie worked closely with biologists to track, capture, tag and film this rare nocturnal animal. Along the way, they have learned much of value about bobcat population size and fluctuations, distribution, and behavior.

Mr. Reeves is now retired from a career with the Department of Natural Resources and only rarely shares these images of his experiences with this elusive North American cat. From his talk, you will learn many facts about bobcats in northern Michigan. For instance, they are generally solitary hunters that eat small mammals and try to stay far away from human interaction, living in large areas of mixed woods and meadows. Few outdoorsmen know and can share as much about bobcats as does Archie Reeves, and we are lucky to have this evening with him.

Refreshments will be provided by Ann Benter, Laurie Dykehouse, and Marilee Lillie. You may also participate in door prize and raffle drawings.



Photo of Bobcat downloaded from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources web-site

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 fieldtrips, classroom studies and field studies.

Presidential Chirpings

by Kathy Bricker

Memory Lane is a fun place to travel, and I find myself going there more often lately. On the Christmas Bird Count in the Upper Peninsula, Steve Baker showed us an Iceland gull, my very first. I knew it was new because of the life list that my parents had me start 45 years ago, on May 5, 1963.

On that auspicious day, we went on a nature hike sponsored by the Toledo Naturalists Association. I already knew a lot about birds, so didn't pay much attention when the leader aimed his spotting scope high into a tree, claiming to see a duck. After all, ducks live on lakes, not in trees, I thought smugly. Looking through that scope proved to be the first of many servings of humble pie over the years. Kathy meet wood duck, wood duck meet Kathy.

Now a believer and following the leader much more attentively, I learned his rule of writing down everything seen on the trip. He explained how a life list records those birds whose distinguishing features we saw really well. So after the hike he helped me make checkmarks by ten other species besides wood duck. These were the birds that hooked me on bird-watching: grey catbird, American robin, ruby-crowned kinglet, black and white warbler, yellow warbler, Baltimore oriole, northern cardinal, American goldfinch, chipping sparrow, white-throated sparrow, and white-crowned sparrow. Readers who

know these beautiful birds can understand my euphoria at seeing them for the first time.

Fast forward to December 18, 2008, when the Iceland gull at the Dempster Dump became my 514th life bird. However, that is according to the 5th edition of the American Ornithologists' Union's Checklist of North American Birds, dated 1957, my dog-eared, hand-scribbled version kept from my youth. Nowadays fancy computer software helps you more easily record and compare dates, places, plumages, and automatically stay up-to-date with the occasional species splitting and lumping that biologists do as genetic fingerprinting teaches them more about how groups of birds have evolved into different species.

Pondering the young people of Cheboygan County, our upcoming SAAS field trips, and five pairs of new binoculars available for anyone to use, fills me with hope that more life lists will soon begin. It's not too late even for adults to start recording sightings because, in case you haven't noticed, 45 years can pass in a flash.

So you may as well scatter some feathers along your memory lane.

Addendum
Articles in the January *Kettle* accidentally omitted Janet Trudeau as a field counter and Mark Stormzand as a feeder counter for the Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count, and Bill and Pat Bray as slide contributors at the December meeting. Sorry, and thank you for your participation!

Field Trips

by Steve Baker

Sat. Feb. 14, 5 to 7 pm. Cross-country Ski with your Valentine. Join us at Cheboygan State Park as we ski to the 14-Foot Shoals Cabin for a bonfire, cookies and hot chocolate. This outing is timed with a public event sponsored by the Cheboygan State Park staff and volunteers. Jim and Kathy Bricker will lead the Audubon contingent, taking a path less traveled to search for animal tracks and birds such as owls and eagles. A State Park entry sticker can be bought for \$6 at the parking lot. Bring your driver's license and car registration. Lanterns lit along the woodsy trail by Roger Benter will guide us back to our vehicles at night, with the roadway as an

other option.

Thu. Feb. 19. Upper Peninsula Birds Are Like No Other Birds. Due to popular demand, Steve Baker will lead an all-day car caravan to the UP in hopes of finding more special winter birds. We will target snowy and hawk owls, and hopefully spy great gray owl, gray jay, sharp-tailed grouse, Bohemian waxwing, white-winged crossbill, Iceland and greater black-backed gulls. Dress warmly and pack a lunch. Reserve your space and learn the meeting time and place by contacting 231-238-8723, steveandsuebaker@gmail.com.



Photo of Boreal chickadee
by Kirk Zufelt

What You Missed at the December Meeting

by Susan Hansen

Celebrate Charles Darwin

On February 12, we celebrate the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin, the explorer who introduced and defended the hypothesis of natural selection. It postulates that favorable reproductive traits become more common in successive generations of a population, while unfavorable heritable traits become less common, due to differential reproduction. So, birds with bigger bills can crush thicker seeds, so were stronger and had more offspring survive than others. Darwin drew on his observations from places such as the Galapagos Islands on the ship *Beagle*. After 200 years, his theory has become a cornerstone of modern biology.

President, Kathy Bricker, welcomed a total of 51 members and guests to tonight's meeting. She introduced volunteers, reminding us they are listed on page one of *The Kettle*. Kathy also announced the raffle and prizes. She thanked Anne and Roger Benter for printing and Linda Baney for editing of *The Kettle*.

Kathy also thanked Dorothy Woosley for her work as refreshment chairperson. Dorothy thanked Kathy Bricker and Alice McFarland for providing tonight's refreshments, and asked for volunteers to sign up for the February and March meetings.

Kathy gave a short treasurer's report and announced that our treasurer, Kattie Kraemer is downstate for the winter. Nancy Nowitzke is our assistant treasurer.

Kathy then announced that the Straits Area Audubon Society had made a donation to the library. The library used the donation to buy a light for the podium that we are able to use at our meetings.

Kathy introduced Maureen Conklin, conservation chair, who talked about issues/areas and possibilities for future volunteer activities, either as a group, or as individuals.

Kathy announced that Audubon membership is open to all ages. Nancy Nowitzke has membership forms.

Alice announced raffle tickets on sale for a birdhouse and reminded us that those

who signed in were entered in the drawing for two suet feeders. We were also reminded of the re-gifting and youth tables at the back of the room.

Vice President, Jim Bricker was introduced and in turn introduced Mary Stewart Adams as the guest speaker. Her topic was "Night Sky and Cosmos".

Mary is an English literature major, and an author, published in the Smithsonian Magazine, among other publications. She promotes the dark sky, that is the night sky so unpolluted by light that the stars can be clearly seen. She has studied and continues to study ancient traditions of star lore, including Greek mythology. Mary told us that she developed her passion with her mother who first showed her the night sky. She mesmerized us with a presentation of the night sky and cosmos and reminded us not to forget the poetry, art, and stories as well as science when looking at and thinking about the night sky.

Mary brought along her 2009 calendars, *Fairy Tale Moones*, done in collaboration with her sister. She will be speaking here at the Library again in July.

Winner of tonight's drawings were: Lynn Nissley who won a *Fairy Tale Moone* calendar, Eloise Davis who won the suet feeders, and Jim MacLaren who won the birdhouse

Conservation Activities

by Kathy Bricker

If you have an email address or attended the January program, you will know that Audubon is asking for member feedback about how else we might further our mission of education and conservation of natural resources. In February we will vote on which of the following topics to select for activism this year. Please log onto our website or call Maureen Conklin, conservation chair, 231-625-9058, with your questions about and willingness to help with the following topics or others:

- Water quality work such as pulling inva-

sive species or monitoring duck mortality

- Watching over Duncan Bay osprey nest near July 4 fireworks
- Cleaning a local beach once a year
- Helping at a nearby nature preserve
- Assisting with the North Central Trail between Gaylord and Mackinaw City
- Presenting information about Earth Day
- Increase recycling/reusing
- Reduce harmful night lighting
- Helping maintain trails at a state park

Community Notice:

Come to the Cheboygan Area Public Library on February 9, 6:30 pm for a free program on Great Lakes research. A speaker from Noble Odyssey Foundation will present two films entitled "Great Lakes, Ancient Shores - Reefs and Lake Levels" and "Great Lakes, Ancient Shores - Sinkholes."

**Membership Application
For
Straits Area Audubon Society**

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

E-MAIL:

Please make checks payable to: Straits Area Audubon Society

Please mail checks to:

Mrs. Kittie Kramer, Tre.
10260 Munro Lake Dr.
Levering, MI 49755

Single Membership:
\$12.00

Family Membership:
\$15.00

**Kettle Contribution
Due Dates**

In order to deliver The Kettle in a timely matter, please submit your photos and articles by the following due dates:

2/18/09 3/25/09
4/22/09

Send your submissions to
lbaney@ncmich.edu

SAAS thanks Benter Chiropractic for its in-kind donation of the printing of the monthly *Kettle*.

Coming Programs

Mark your calanders now to be sure you can attend.

Feb. 11— Bobcats of Pigeon River Country by Archie Reeves

Mar. 11— Uncommon Loon by Jeff Lange

Apr. 8— Living with Bears in Michigan by Brian Mastenbrook

May 13— Hawks Alive! by Glen McCune

Jun. 10— Member Potluck

SAAS meetings are held at the Cheboygan Area Public Library.

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

Straits Area Audubon Society
c/o Mrs. Kittie Kramer, Treasurer
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Levering, MI 49755