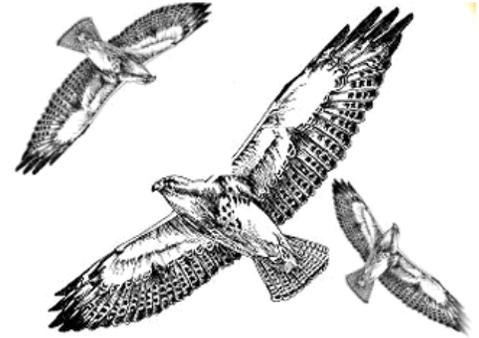


The Kettle

Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter dating from 1983



January 2008

Vol. 9 No. 1.

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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.

Meetings

Straits Area Audubon Society meets the second Wednesday of each month, September through May, 7:00 pm at the Cheboygan Area Middle School Library, unless otherwise advised. Please note that if school is closed due to snow, the meeting is cancelled. Snowline: 231-627-4141. ✎

Presidential Chirpings

by Kathy Bricker

The controversy, the victory -- Cheboygan County's January 7 ribbon-cutting of the new comprehensive recycling program feels very satisfying to me.

Of course, recycling saves natural resources, energy, and landfill space; that's why Straits Area Audubon Society advocates it. It also takes me back to childhood. It makes me remember those hand-me-down clothes from my older cousin, Caroline, each bag eagerly opened to see what "new" clothes I might don that year. My mom going around the house to turn off lights to save electricity. Dad eating brown, mushy bananas spurned by the rest of us, so they would not be wasted.

Was it frugality or was it conservation? Whatever, it's how I was raised,

along with the joy of taking family walks in Pearson Park (Toledo, Ohio), ever alert to new birds, frogs, flowers, snakes. What fun to discover a crimson cardinal-flower along a stream or a wood duck in a tree.

At SAAS, we promote stewardship for the planet and awe of its wonders. The children and young adults who attended Jeff Dykehouse's superb January program may now be pondering whether owl eyesight or hearing is more important, and will watch the shoreline this summer for teetering spotted sandpipers.

We invite you to attend meetings whether you are young and impressionable, old and wise, or any stage in between, to share the joys of nature. ✎

What You Missed in the January Meeting

by Ben Lillie

Twenty-four members and 19 guests attended the January meeting and were treated to an excellent presentation by Jeff Dykehouse. Jeff is the Curator of Natural History of Mackinaw Island. His position (Jeff acknowledges it is a "position" and not just a job), coupled with his interest in birding, provided the audience with an insightful overview of how hawks, eagles and other raptors, as well as waterfowl, travel north through Michigan from their winter resting areas to their summer breeding grounds.

Jeff said as the birds follow Michigan's shorelines north they are "funneled" across the Straits area. While ducks are naturally inclined to cross miles of open water, raptors are not, preferring to keep

sight of land. Mackinac, Round and Boise Blanc Islands become a natural and welcome place for them to travel over, sometimes stopping to rest and feed, before continuing their journey to the upper peninsula or Canada.

Jeff's slide presentation included many beautiful pictures of the various birds that visit Mackinac Island. He was also able to bring along several mounted birds that exhibited their individual unique features. For example, the structural makeup of an owl's feathers that allow it to fly silently and catch its prey; the rearward positioning of the legs of loons that allow it to dive deeply yet cause them to be clumsy on land; the placement of the ears of owls

(Continued on page 4)

Straits Area Christmas Bird Count

by Steve Baker

A rather blustery day greeted the 12 birders who searched the Mackinac Straits area for birds as participants in the 2007 Christmas Bird Count.

Birding was slow going for most of us as the birds seemed hunkered down with the cold winds. It was still an enjoyable day to be out there with friends, both human and avian. There were no rarities reported, but a grackle reported by the Kirby's was an unexpected find. The most numerous bird was the Redhead with a flock of 1500 along the bridge by St Ignace. It was great to have Mackinac Island represented this year by Trisha Martin and Laura Eisler. These two had to be tough as they did not have cars to warm up in like us mainlanders.

A total of 3556 birds were seen of 34 species.

Participants from left to right: Marilynn Smith, Joey Arbaugh, Dick Taylor, Kathy Bricker, Steve Baker (compiler), Bev Kirby, Jack Kirby, Dick Myers. Not shown

Mute Swan	77	Hairy Woodpecker	11
Black Duck	1	Northern Shrike	1
Mallard	125	Blue Jay	3
Redhead	1501	American Crow	47
Greater Scaup	40	Common Raven	70
Long-tailed Duck	1	Black-capped Chickadee	217
Bufflehead	6	Tufted Titmouse	1
Common Goldeneye	441	Red-breasted Nuthatch	10
Common Merganser	58	White-breasted Nuthatch	2
Red-breasted Merganser	4	European Starling	195
Bald Eagle	7	Northern Cardinal	7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Common Grackle	1
Ring-billed Gull	29	Pine Grosbeak	19
Herring Gull	55	House Finch	1
Rock Pigeon	258	Common Redpoll	109
Mourning Dove	57	American Goldfinch	43
Downy Woodpecker	12	House Sparrow	146

are Jim Bricker, Jake Snider, Laura Eisler, and Trish Martin. A very sincere thank you to all who helped out. Next year we'll try for better weather. ✈



A Fine Day for Birding at Holy Trinity Monastery

by Alice and Roy Macfarland

January 5, 2008, Saturday, Benson, Arizona

This complex just south of St. David's is 132 acres situated in an area of artesian springs along the San Pedro River. Luckily for us, it is open for birding and has several ecosystems. We were greeted by 4 peahens sitting on an adobe half-wall. Their peacock was roaming free, probably taking a break.

Soon a flock of yellow-rumped warblers in their paler, fall gray plumage crossed our path. Cactus wrens were busily eating in the open field next to the dirt road, but the prize was a male vermilion flycatcher perched on the roof of a small corrugated metal shed. He perched there and on an adjacent fence for a good 3 minutes, allowing Roy to get several telephoto shots before flying off. We were afraid of getting too close so our pictures weren't the best. I guess we were very lucky because later we talked with a camper who stays every winter at the monastery campgrounds and he had not yet seen any vermilion flycatchers this year.

At the end of this dirt road stood four very old, very large, very bare cottonwood trees. They were also very bird friendly and soon we added two different birds to our day list: a pair of cardinals and our first ever Gila woodpecker pair. All this and we hadn't even exited the car yet! Sometimes, we get so caught up in watching the birds that we forget to take pictures altogether so we have no more pictures to add.

We left the car and watched two red-tailed hawks swooping together on the light breeze. It was around 67 degrees with a mix of sun and clouds so visibility was great. At the nearby waste water pond, we spent time watching winter-colored ruddy ducks, 6 ring-necked ducks, American wigeons (the green on the male's head and neck looked more bluegreen than in the picture), and a northern shoveler family. In the trees bordering the pond sat 12 lark sparrows while ravens flew overhead. Even the gronking of the ravens did nothing to spoil the serenity of this location. We agree that birding is one

of the most rewarding of occupations partly because you get to spend time in such great outdoor places. It is uplifting to the spirits and encouraging regarding the planet.

Across the way, a Say's phoebe perched on a fencepost.



Say's phoebe photo from Wikipedia.org

We moved on into an old orchard overgrown with low bushes - trees and bushes bare now in winter.

Many small birds flitted about and we were able to identify some of them: female house finch, white-breasted nuthatch, chipping sparrow, a lark bunting in his winter gray-striped body, white-crowned sparrow (both adult and immature) and several delightful pairs of lesser goldfinches. Many of the ground feeders were too deep in the brush and leaves to be seen clearly and we could not identify even some of the birds we could see clearly. That's where more field experience with knowledgeable birders would help us.

Over in the fresh water pond, we saw (in addition to some of the same water-fowl) American coots, gadwalls, northern pintails and some raucous white geese with prominent orange humps above their noisy orange bills. All the fowl seemed to tolerate each other very well which is more than we can say for a lot of humans. A good lesson for all of us and another good reason to bird. We left the monastery grounds determined to visit again before leaving this area. Who knows what visions the Holy Trinity might have in store for us.

✈



Male and female vermilion flycatcher by [Louis Agassiz Fuyertes](#)



Male wigeon with female behind, [Seattle, Washington](#). Photo from [Wikipedia.org](#)

Questions From Readers

I noticed that 613 European Starlings were seen on the Cheboygan Christmas Count. I don't like seeing them. Is what I've heard true.....starlings will take over another bird's nest, cover up the other bird's eggs; and lay their own, thus decreasing the population of our own native species? If so, which of our native species suffer the most from this invader? Question submitted by Karen Martin.

Bev Kirby answers:
The Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas

states that starlings are adaptable when it comes to nesting sites and can use a broad range of cavities or human-built structures. Despite its beneficial food habits as one of the greatest destroyers of noxious insects, this Old World species is an unwelcome addition to the avifauna because of competition with native species for nesting sites (such as flickers, red-headed woodpeckers, great crested flycatchers, purple martins, and bluebirds) and food (especially fall and winter fruits), as well as its enormous dirty and noisy flocks and roosts. ✂



European starling. Photo from Wikipedia.org

(Continued from page 1)

just behind their eyes that allow them to hear the slightest sound of an animal, even under a foot or more of snow.



Photo by Jack Kirby

Our thanks to Jeff for an outstanding presentation, and for donating his speaker's fee back to SAAS.

In other news:

Steve Baker reported on the January

3rd Straits Area Bird Count, referred to as "the Troll/Yooper" count which is reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

SAAS President - Kathy Bricker read a letter from Kittie Kramer thanking everyone for their sympathy and support during her recent difficult times.

Treasurer Ed Pike reported a balance of \$1,000 restricted to our Dingman Marsh Educational Project enabled by the Michigan Audubon Society, and \$562 in general funds.

Ben Lillie is reviewing our Chapter By-Laws and will propose changes soon.

Our thanks to Linda Baney for her excellent work compiling and editing our Newsletter. Linda said, if you have an email address she'd like to send online versions of the newsletter to save SAAS chapter resources. Just send her an email at lbaney@msu.edu to let her know you prefer the online version of the newsletter.

Our thanks to our Hospitality Director, Ann Benter, for the refreshments, and to Marilee Lillie for some last minute sweets contributions. ✂

Students Visit SEE-North Raptors

by Linda Baney

4-H Afterschool members learned about raptors recently at the SEE North Center for Outdoor Studies in Harbor Springs. During their visit they saw red-tailed hawks, barred owl, cooper's hawk, great horned owl, screech owl, golden eagle and the barn owl seen here.

This was the first time these young people, and their parents, had been so close to live raptors. The barred owl was of particular interest as it seemed to object to us trooping into it's territory and hooted at us throughout our visit. ✂



Photo by Brandon McCaully, 4-H Afterschool

February Meeting Announcement

by Jim Bricker

Come and enjoy the presentation
"...Of sailing ships and sealing wax..." by



Charlevoix dive instructor Murray Kilgour. He will narrate videotape clips that highlight the amazing array of life seen in North Sulawesi. Sulawesi is part of Indonesia and lies within the Coral Triangle - an area where the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean meet which has been selected by WWF (World Wildlife Federation) as especially significant due to its biodiversity in terms of corals and fish. Here Kilgour has observed the deadliest creature of the ocean, the blue-ringed octopus. He will also tell about a variety of unusual aquatic creatures -- colorful reef fish, hairy orangutan crabs, pygmy seahorses, and frogfish that look like the missing link between fish and amphibians. After the program, enjoy refreshments brought by Lynne Nissley and B.D. Gillig, and a raffle drawing. ✈

Recycling Update

by Kathy Bricker

All Cheboygan County residents can now recycle in our own county! Drop-off bins are conveniently located behind the County Building in Cheboygan and at Napa Auto Parts in Indian River, the two main cities for shopping. If you live in a township that accepted the program, you paid \$24 on your winter tax bill and received a postcard-sized permit to display in your

right car window. Others may obtain an individual permit by paying \$36 to the County Administrator. And if you live in Benton Township, please contact Ben Lillie to sign a petition to force a full public vote on recycling, since your board denied the County program.

Here's what you can separate from your trash and bring:

- newspapers, color inserts, magazines, catalogs, telephone books
- glass containers (divide into clear and colored either at home or at the bins)
- corrugated cardboard, boxboard, cereal boxes (no waxed produce, beverage, or frozen food packaging)
- office paper, envelopes, file folders, junk mail (no padded envelopes or boldly colored paper)
- plastic bottles, jugs and jars marked # 1 or 2 on the bottle (MUST remove lids; no wide-mouthed containers such as margarine or yogurt tubs; rinse and leave labels on)
- aluminum and steel cans, trays, and metal jar lids (MUST remove labels)

Dan O'Henley, Recycling Coordinator, is seeking volunteers. To help out or to ask questions, contact him at 625-9381 or ohenley@sbcglobal.net ✈

Count for Fun, Count for the Future!

Birdwatchers are needed for the 11th annual national Great Backyard Bird Count, wherever you are between February 15 and 18. In 2007, people submitted more than 80,000 checklists. For more information, visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Welcome New Members

Steve and Kathy Downing Family
Art and Judy Frock
Nora Kilpatrick and Harold Reckinger
Doug Kramer

**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:

Mr. Ed Pike,
6750 Island View Road,
Harbor Springs, MI
49740

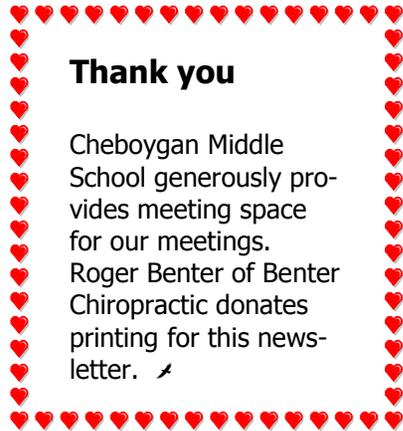
Single Membership:
\$12.00

Couple Membership:
\$15.00 ✂

In this Issue

- * Presidential Chirpings
- * What you missed in the January Meeting
- * Straits Area Christmas Bird Count
- * A Fine Day for Birding at Holy Trinity Monastery
- * Questions From Readers
- * Recycling Update
- * Students Visit SEE-North Raptors
- * February Meeting Announcement
- * From Our MAS Contact ✂

Have you had an unusual sighting, or maybe a sighting of a bird you've never seen before? Do you have a photo you want to share? Send your stories or photos to baneyl@msu.com and we'll publish it in the newsletter. ✂



Thank you

Cheboygan Middle School generously provides meeting space for our meetings. Roger Benter of Benter Chiropractic donates printing for this newsletter. ✂

Straits Area Audubon Society
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