

# The Kettle



Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter dating from 1983

January 2009

Vol. 9 No. 9

**President:** Kathy Bricker  
627-4830 kathyhomeaccount@hotmail.com

**Vice President:** Jim Bricker  
627-4830 pivot777777@hotmail.com

**Treasurer:** Kittie Kramer  
537-2084 kitbkramer@yahoo.com

**Ast. Treasurer:** Nancy Nowitzke  
537-0015 nowinan@yahoo.com

**Secretary:** Susan Hansen  
627-8658 shansen1000@charter.net

**Past President** Ben Lillie  
627-5128 lilliepad@nmo.net

**Executive Committee At-Large:** Mel Eno  
627-2381 eno.melanie@cheboyganlibrary.org

**MI Audubon Society Rep.:** Mike Supernault  
238-8029 msupernault@hotmail.com

**Kettle Editor:** Linda Baney  
lbaney@ncmich.edu

**Kettle Printer/Publisher:** Ann and Roger Benter  
627-3992 rogerbenter@webtv.net

**Field Trips:** Steve Baker  
238-8723 2sjb@sbcglobal.net

**Bird Reports/Counts:** Ed Pike  
758-3319 aes05@localnet.com

**Conservation:** Maureen Conklin  
625-9058 Maureen\_conklin@yahoo.com

**Raffle/Door Prize:** Alice MacFarland  
597-8173 macfarlands@charter.net

**Greeter:** Vickie Lyon  
989-370-9303 vlyon@m33access.com

**Hospitality:** Dorothy Woosley  
627-9909 dwoosley@straitsarea.com

**Audiovisual/Web Master:** Roy MacFarland  
597-8173 roymac@charter.net

**Website:** straitsareaaudubon.org

**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.

## January Meeting Announcement—Night Sky and the Cosmos

*by Jim Bricker*

At 7 pm on Wednesday January 14 at the Cheboygan Area Public Library, we will ponder mysteries of the night sky. Mary Stewart Adams, published author on astronomical and astrological insight, takes a cultural approach to understanding cosmic phenomena and its meaning in our lives. As a student and lover of star lore, Mary has spent over 20 years researching ancient astrological traditions and the historical foundations of modern astronomical thought. This Harbor Springs native will focus on what can be seen this winter, as well as discuss the cultural consequences of Galileo's discoveries 400 years ago, which are being celebrated throughout 2009 through the U.N. International Year of Astronomy.

All ages will enjoy her tales about our solar system, the Milky Way galaxy, and the universe. Stewart's popular "Fairy Tale Moons Calendars" can be purchased for 2009. Conditions permitting, we will view the night sky after the presentation.

Refreshments will be provided by Kathy Bricker, Alice MacFarland, and Dorothy Woosley. You may also participate in door prize and raffle drawings.



*Photo of snowy owl by Steve Baker*

**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

Winter birding in the Upper Peninsula can be both a raw nature experience and a lesson on avian survival. While tucked under your comforter, do you ever worry about how the birds survive the frigid nights? Lathe Claflin of Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) explained on a recent trip how chickadees build up fat reserves each day by eating almost continuously. Then at night, they reduce their metabolic rate, allowing body temperature to fall up to 20 F. The little extra they glean at feeders can literally mean the difference between life and death on some nights.

Recently, biologists discovered that redpolls, goldfinch, and crossbills have a

storage pouch in their neck, above the crop. This enables them to gather seed constantly and quickly for brief periods, afterwards flying to a dense conifer safer from predators to shell and swallow the seeds. During the night, eating the food they stored just before roosting can give them enough extra energy to survive the bitter cold. (WPBO Migrant Summer 2008). You can help them by tying your old Christmas tree near your bird feeder as a perch and safe house. While by your winter fireside, you can learn about other remarkable winter adaptations from Dick Mallery's Bird Feeding 101 and Bernd Heinrich's Winter World. Enjoy!

## Straits Christmas Bird Count

by Steve Baker

The Mackinaw Straits Christmas Bird Count was held Thursday, December 18, 2008 with 7 participants. We only counted for the morning as I had to bribe some birders with the carrot of some extra birding in the UP for the afternoon. Both the morning Christmas Count and the afternoon birding were very enjoyable.

First the CBC results. A total of 2181 individuals of 36 species were recorded. Good birds were found in each area. Jim Bricker and Jake Snider found an amazing 15 robins feeding on Michigan Holly at Dingman Marsh. Dick and Linda Taylor (and their birding dogs) picked up a snowy owl west of Mackinaw City. They also found a tufted titmouse and white-winged crossbills in their area. Ed Pike, Gerald Vork, and Steve Baker viewed white-winged scoters and long-tailed ducks in the Mackinaw Straits and cedar waxwings, purple finches, and some impressive pine siskin flocks (470 total) in the town of St. Ignace.

After lunch we all headed to Rudyard where a quick loop through the flats produced 7 snowy owls! We then spent about 30 minutes at the Dafter Dump where we were able to sort through the hundreds of herring gulls to find 3 great black-backed gulls and 3 iceland gulls.

We also witnessed some aerobic flight maneuvers as 2 bald eagles battled over some treasure from Waste Management.

We then wandered toward Pickford where we watched a perched rough-legged hawk being swooped on by a northern hawk owl. After this interaction the hawk owl settled down and we all enjoyed great views of this beautiful northern visitor. As dusk settled we headed back to Rudyard area in hopes of finding a short-eared owl but this was not to be. We were treated to the sight of a snowy owl silhouetted at the peak of a drafty old barn as the sun set. Other interesting afternoon sightings include a red-tailed hawk, a northern shrike, snow buntings, and 2 rooster ring-necked pheasants. Thanks to all who helped out with the count and the pleasant afternoon of bright sunshine and great winter birds.



Photo of northern hawk owl by Steve Baker

## Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count

by Ed Pike

The Straits Area Audubon Society sponsored the 24th annual Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count on Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2008. Seven observers spent most of the day driving around the count area to

locate as many birds as possible. The count area was a circle 7.5 miles in diameter centered at the junction of M-33 and old 27. Another 10 people counted the birds at their bird feeders. The

weather was fair with light winds and occasional snow showers.

A record number of 49 species were counted from dawn till dusk, with a total of 3546 individual birds. For the first time a northern mockingbird was observed. Other uncommon birds seen were snowy owl, northern shrike, and white-winged crossbill.

Thanks to everyone who helped. Field observers were Steve Baker, Jim and Kathy Bricker, Roy and Alice MacFarland, Ed Pike, Jake Snider, and Dick Taylor.

Feeder counters were: Jackie Andrzejewski Lenny Blaszkowski, Eugene Elsenheimer, Faye Johnston, Karen Martin, Dick Peterson, Gordie Stratton, Gerry and Judy VanderHart and James Veller.

Ed Pike, count compiler

Mute Swan	125	N. Cardinal	27
Blue Jay	135	Merlin	1
Am. Blk. Duck	4	Pine Grosbeak	4
Am. Crow	12	Herring Gull	3
Mallard	502	Purple Finch	10
C. Raven	13	Gull Sp.	8
Redhead	1	House Finch	34
Blk-capped Chickadee	370	Rock Pigeon	42
C. Goldeneye	160	White-winged Crossbill	26
R.B. Nuthatch	21	Mourning Dove	309
Hooded Merganser	2	C. Redpoll	7
W.B. Nuthatch	16	Great Horned Owl	1
C. Merganser	20	Pine Siskin	564
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	Snowy Owl	7
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Am. Goldfinch	337
Am. Robin	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	2
Ruffed Grouse	8	Finch sp.	90
European Starling	383	Downy Woodpecker	28
Wild Turkey	38	Evening Grosbeak	1
Cedar Waxwing	43	Hairy Woodpecker	15
Bald Eagle	6	House Sparrow	2
Am. Tree Sparrow	20	Pileated Woodpecker	3
N. Goshawk	1		
Dark-eyed Junco	20	Other species:	
Red-tailed Hawk	1	N. Shrike	3
Snow Bunting	115	Mockingbird	1
Rough-legged Hawk	1		



Photo by Jim Bricker

## Questions From Readers

In late October, a large owl swooped in front of my car as I was crossing the Mackinac Bridge late one night. What might it have been?

*Submitted by member Ann Benter*

Steve Baker explains that snowy owls occasionally perch on bridges, fences, or other perches that look out over open country where they hunt. Several were seen on both the Cheboygan and Mackinac Christmas Bird Counts. Interestingly, Torrey Wenger of Kalamazoo Nature Center says that in contrast to these winter visitors, forest-dwelling owls tend to stay on their territories all year. Knowing the trees in an

area increases safety and success for these owls. In great horned owls, adults without established territories are called "floaters." During times with abundant prey, there may be as many floaters as owls with territories. When prey numbers decline, the floaters suffer first. Floaters do not vocalize and are sometimes killed by owls defending territory.

## Exploring the Possibilities of Little Traverse Conservancy

*by Maureen Conklin, Conservation Chair*

Want a place that stays in your memory? It's right here in Cheboygan County. LTC recently acquired property (160) acres north of Alverno. The property is mostly low swamp land, however, there are roads built up crossing the property. An article in their recent newsletter describes the nature preserve as both a wildlife and botanical haven—a treasure to protect. Supported by more than 4,100 members, LTC has worked to protect thousands of acres and miles of shoreline in Northern Michigan. It's wonderful that Cheboygan is benefiting from their work.

While I was exploring possible ways that SAAS might be involved with the Little Traverse Conservancy, I learned that the property needed a volunteer monitor. I am thrilled to be accepted as it's watchdog. Volunteering at preserves was an idea brought up by several members at the December meeting. So this is a good time for me to explain how SAAS members can help either as individuals, or as a group if we choose to partner with LTC for conservation activity. Volunteers for work days are needed from Apr. 15 through Nov. 15. I would be the contact person and convey LTC need to the group.

1. You can volunteer to be a preserve

monitor as I did. There is a need for one at another new preserve at the North end of Black Lake. It is accessible only by boat. Also the Gothier property west of town may need a new monitor. Contact Cindy Mom, steward specialist, at LTC. Her e-mail is [cindy@landtrust.org](mailto:cindy@landtrust.org) and the phone number is 231-597-8036. A preserve monitor's job is more ongoing and involves checking the property two times (spring and fall) and filling out an online form. The monitor's work is important because all observations reported go into a database and that helps LTC determine their work list.

2. Trail steward-trail maintenance varies depending on need.
3. Work day—These events vary from year to year depending on LTC need. LTC has preserves in five counties so it may be located in any one of them. The work day event could be a cleanup, building a new trail, or invasive species management.



*Photo of snowy owl by Steve Baker*

## What You Missed at the November Meeting

by Susan Hansen

.It was a cold winter evening, but spirits were high as approximately 30 members and guests gathered at the library for our annual December potluck dinner. The food was plentiful, varied and most delicious.

Following the food and conversation, President, Kathy Bricker, opened the short meeting by welcoming members and visitors. She then introduced Ed Pike who asked for bird sightings. A few of the birds seen were cardinals, red bellied woodpeckers, Pileated woodpeckers, pine siskins, juncos, Cooper's and rough leg hawks, snowy owls. Steve Baker had even seen some robins still hanging around in the cold. Ed brought the map of the area for the Christmas bird count to be held Tuesday, December 16, and encouraged anyone who is interested to join them. There is a need for feeder counters in the area also.

Kathy introduced Linda Baney, our newsletter editor who reminded us that the deadline for the January newsletter is December 24th.

Roy McFarland made a motion to give the library \$100. It was seconded by Kitty Kraemer and passed unanimously.

Kathy announced that there was some money left over from the Dingman Marsh project. Ben Lilley made a motion to contribute money from the treasury to add to it for two additional pair of binoculars. Linda Baney seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Kathy introduced Maurine Conklin, Conservation Director, who requested information from each of us on ways in which we are willing to volunteer, conservation projects that need volunteers, and any ideas we have. She was asked to generate lists for the web site and the newsletter.

Alice introduced us to the idea of re-gifting; bringing any new or in good condition things we have from home. She will have a table set up each month where members and guests can bring things and also pick up what they might be able to use that someone else has brought. I picked out some beautiful Christmas cards to send out to friends.

Jim Bricker announced the January meeting on "The Night Sky and The Cosmos" by Mary Stewart Adams. It promises to be an informative, interesting, and fun meeting. He encouraged us to bring warm clothes. If the skies are clear, we will go out to watch the stars. Jim also announced the rest of the meetings through June. Program lists are available.

Roy introduced us to the web site and demonstrated how to navigate around it, as well as interact with it on the bird-sighting portion.

Kathy and Jim Bricker showed us some of their slides, as did Ed Pike. Wonderful pictures taken by our own experts.

## Final Dues Notice

by Kittie Kramer

After the December meeting, I was pleased to see that very few people are late on 2009 dues. If you are one, you will be contacted this month by membership volunteers. Thanks to Jim and Kathy Bricker, Alice MacFarland, and Nancy Nowitzke for making these calls. We do hope that everyone decides to renew. If

you do, you will continue receiving the Kettle beyond the January issue, and most importantly, you will support Audubon projects. Dues are only \$12 for individuals and \$15 for families, and can be sent with the form on the back of the Kettle. Thank you for caring for nature in this way.

**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:

12/24/08 1/21/09  
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**

Jan. 14 – Night Sky and the Cosmos  
by Mary Stewart Adams  
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  
10260 Munro Lake Dr.  
Levering, MI 49755