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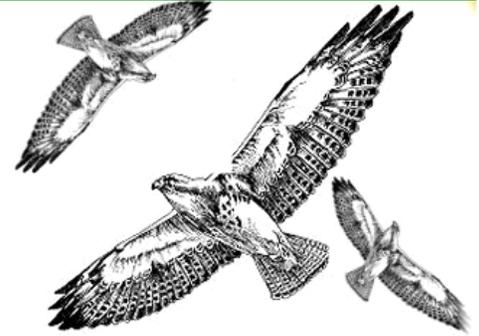
Website: straitsareaaudubon.org

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.

The Kettle

Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter



October 2008

Vol. 9 No. 5

October Meeting—Birdfeeding 101

by Jim Bricker

On October 8, 7 pm at the Cheboygan Area Public Library, come enjoy a humorous and educational program about how to feed birds and attract them to your neighborhood. The program " Birdfeeding 101 and Nuts About Squirrels" features Richard Mallery, author, speaker, humorist, and long-distance hiker. He is the editor of quarterly magazine Dick E. Bird News and author of Birdfeeding 101, Nuts about Squirrels, and a hiking saga, Crossing the Divide, about trekking from Mexico to Canada.

Mallery will explore the fun and frustrations of backyard bird feeding and squirrel defense. You will learn the pros and cons of the many types of bird feeders, seed, and other factors that attract local wildlife, and what to do about four-legged guests such as squirrels, including the famous Hairy Houdini. Check out the website at www.dickebird.com.

Refreshments after the meeting will be provided by Ann Benter, Judy and Art Frock, and Bev Kirby. In addition, we will offer a doorprize and a raffle. ✈

Field Trips

by Susan Hansen

Saturday, October 4, 8 PM Owl banding with Ed Pike at Point Labarbe, St. Ignace. Join Ed in his efforts to learn more about the migration of Saw-whet Owls through the straits area. To reach Ed's banding location, head north to the UP, exit on US 2 west, turn left(south) at the Quality Inn (there is life size American flag moose on the corner) onto Boulevard Dr. Go south to the Bridgeview Park and then follow the road west along the lakeshore for 1.8 miles where there is powerline complex of many poles and transformers. Take the right fork for a block or so and the banding area will be on your right. The mist nets are first checked about an hour after dark. If the weather is rainy, this outing is cancelled.

Friday, October 24, 9 am UP Waterfowl with Steve Baker and Ed Pike. Join Steve and Ed exploring the St. Ignace area for fall waterbirds and migrating raptors. This

is the season when large rafts of Redheads gather in the straits along with many other duck species. Meet at the Bridge View Park at the north west end of the Mackinaw Bridge. We will stop for lunch in St. Ignace and will be out all day, but participants can leave anytime. Rain or shine, no registration needed.

Saturday, November 15, 1 pm. Carp Creek Gorge Geology and Trees with Jim and Kathy Bricker. Learn a bit about landscape ecology in our region on this beautiful and rugged excursion from Riggsville Road to Burt Lake through Reese's Swamp. Depending on snow conditions and participant preference, we will either hike, snowshoe, or ski. Please register and let us know your favorite mode of travel. A potluck supper will follow the trip at Brickers' house. Contact kathyhomeaccount@hotmail.com or 627-4830.

Mushrooming with Marry Maid Marilynn

by Alice MacFarland

1 p.m. Saturday was rainy and cool, with sudden downpours. Noses dripped rain and glasses spotted with humidity. Still, the hunters roamed the woods in seek of prey. "There's an Amanita!" "What's this one called?" "This one you don't eat!" "Notice the annulus?" Spores, stipes, gills, fairy rings, mycelium, mycorrhizals - all once foreign vocabulary, now somewhat



absorbed by the amateurs. Marilynn Smith led 17 mushroom seekers in a damp but profitable, walk in the woods at Colonial Point near Burt Lake. It was an exuberant way to spend a rainy day in a beautiful hardwood forest in the Fall. Mushrooms, both poisonous and non-poisonous, their necessary habitat, and the interdependence of mushrooms, trees and some non-chlorophyll plants were all explored in

the 2 -1/2 hour expedition.

Thanks to Marilynn, the attendees can now distinguish deadly Amanitas from edible boletes, bear teeth and puffballs. They know that eating aged mushrooms is dangerous even if they are of the edible variety. They know that alcohol and wild mushrooms is not a good mix and that all wild mushrooms should be cooked before eating. But most of all, they know that identification is a complicated art that involves noting the size, shape, color, smell, habitat, spore color, and time of year. For instance, one should be wary of white mushrooms with caps in the fall as they may be Amanitas. Identification also involves time, as spore color determination takes at least a few hours but is an invaluable tool. Some tests such as pinching the boletes to observe color change can be performed immediately, allowing the picker to feel assured of their edibility.

A day spent in nature is always interesting. A day spent with Marilynn can also get you good eats! ✈

Merry Maid Marilynn
Marshaled her minions
Marching 'mong mush-
rooms
'mid misty milieu.

Manic, madcap mummies,
Mumbling of munchies,
Monitored muck
Marveling mightily.

Mycology run amok!

Photos by Darrell Schwalm



SAAS Field Trips

by Steve Baker

Wilderness State Park, Sept. 24

Twelve enthusiastic folks hiked out Waugashaunce Point to try and find the elusive Golden Plover. We experienced a plover bonanza with over 20 Golden Plovers, 10 Black-bellied Plovers, and 6 Semi-palmated Plovers all together on the same beach! Everyone had beautiful views of all 3 plovers which made the long hike well worth the effort. Other birding highlights were a Merlin, a Harrier, and an unexpected Pheasant. On the return hike the group identified many fall blooming flowers while trying to avoid the hundreds of Leopard Frogs hopping about the point. The combination of perfect weather, great birds, and great companions made this a memorable outing.

Sandhill Cranes and Monkeyflowers, Sept. 19

Nine folks travelled to the UP, visiting the Rudyard hayfields to view the gathering of the migrating Sandhill Cranes. We were treated to views of over 400 cranes foraging in the fields and flying about the area. Other bird highlights include Pipets,

Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, and a Rusty Blackbird. We then worked our way to Epoufette Bay on the northern Lake Michigan shore. We first had a great lunch at the Bay View Inn (what a view!) where they have binoculars and bird books on the tables. Following lunch we walked the beach along Epoufette Bay, discovering several still blooming Michigan Monkeyflowers along the spring fed creek. Other botanical treats were beautiful Fringed Gentians and Nodding Lady's-tresses. A Merlin buzzed the beach and a Snipe was flushed from the meadow. A final stop was the Hog Island View campground where the Lady's-tresses were carpeting the beach swales by the thousands and a few Bottle Gentians were found hiding in the sedges. A beautiful breezy day, amazing Cranes, rare and special flowers, and an enthusiastic group made this a great field trip for all. ✈



Presidential Chirpings

by Kathy Bricker



© Michael J. Hopiak/CLO

Like clockwork, Mr. and Mrs. Eastern Phoebe appeared in our yard this spring, the male announcing their arrival with his urgent two-noted call. To me, it says 'hurry up, no time to waste,' embodying the Protestant work ethic. In contrast, the eastern wood pewee in the adjacent maple woodlot crooned a lazy southern drawl of a song, 'hey, you're retired, what's the rush?' Both fly-catcher species delighted Jim and me, glad to have them back from their dangerous winter travels.

The phoebes quickly selected a nest site from among the six platforms we had installed under roof overhangs and other spots that seemed phoebe-ish. A pair of phoebes has raised two broods a summer for at least the three years we have occupied this house.

Since our computer window overlooks the nest, we easily watched all phases of the production of new phoebes, from mid April through mid August. Frenetic nest-building was accompanied by almost non-stop "fee-bee!" declarations of territory defense and devotion, which continued during mating and egg-laying. Then came a subdued spell for about 20 days, as the four eggs were incubated day and night. After chicks hatched, the parents preened and fussed nearby, flicking their tails even more emphatically than normal and flitting to the nest occasionally as though anxious to get down to the real work.

As soon as the four sets of young eyes opened to their sheltered world, at 9 days, the mouths apparently opened too. That's when both parents frenetically hunted for insects from before-dawn to after sunset, with hardly a break to "fee-bee" in between. These parents deserve overtime pay for those four weeks!

Other tasks were tough too. I

often observed a parent feed one end of a chick, then receive a delicate package from the other end as the young bird pivoted 180 degrees, stooped, and pooped, all before you could say "wipe me, mom." The adult flew these fecal pellets far from the nest, supposedly where they would not alert predators. Then the chicks took turns practicing flapping on the edge of the nest. Last summer, one fell prematurely during such an episode. When Jim returned it topside, he found one nestmate in a wormy stage of decomposition. It was so yucky that Jim said he would have bailed out too!

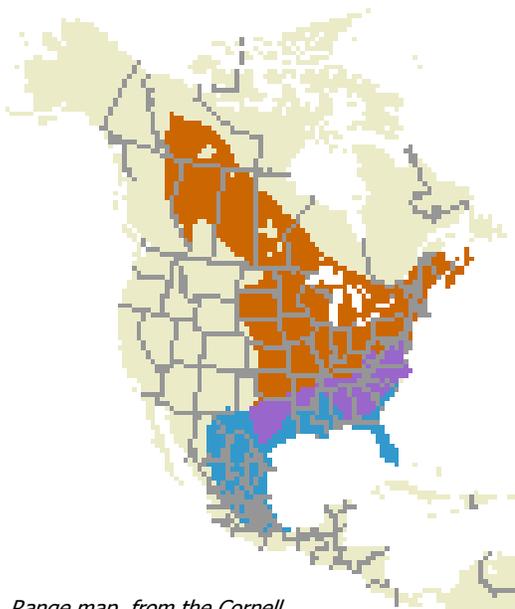
Thankfully, this year's healthy crop of insects was better for phoebes. Just 34 days after hatching, the advance chick made the jump. Over two days, the parents' insistent clucks coaxed each young out of the nest and to the woods at the far side of our house.

The next afternoon, alerted by an adult's frantic chirps, I noticed a fledgling stuck in our garage. Long in enthusiasm but short in tail and other steering apparatus, it nevertheless stumbled out when all the doors were opened. Later, the youngsters perched on our garden stakes, enjoying a shower in our sprinkler. At dawn one morning, Jim noticed movement as he was doing computer work, and spied the little ones, flitting up to briefly visit their erstwhile home as if to memorize where their lives began. Now that the phoebes have left for Mexico, we have cleaned the nest platform in hopes of a repeat performance next year.

Please come back, feathered friends! I cannot help but think of you when reading Richard Mallery in *Bird Feeding 101*: "The earliest field guide in my collection is material authored by Chester Reed, copyrighted 1906. It already warns of the destruction of habitat and loss of bird life: 'It is an undisputed fact that a great many of our birds are becoming more scarce each year, while a few are, even now, on the verge of extinction.'" Extinction can happen faster than you'd think, and we humans can and must help avert it. Hopefully giving phoebes a safe place to nest will help just a bit.

✈

Range map from the Cornell Ornithology Lab website.



**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,
Treasurer
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:

10/22/08

11/19/08

12/24/08

1/21/09

2/18/09

3/25/09

4/22/09

Send your submissions to
lbaney@ncmich.edu ✎

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. ✎

SAAS meetings are held at the Cheboygan Area Public Library. Please call 627-2381 for directions to the Library at 100 S. Bailey St. We thank the Library for providing their facilities.

Straits Area Audubon Society
c/o Mrs. Kittie Kramer, Treasurer
10260 Munro Lake Dr.
Levering, MI 49755