

The Kettle

Straits Area Audubon Society Newsletter

SAAS meetings are held at **6:00 p.m.** on the **2nd Wednesday** of each month September through May at the Cheboygan Area Public Library, 100 S. Bailey Street. Refreshments will be served and you may participate in the 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.



While the SAAS meetings are temporarily on hold, we are sharing our mutual interest in birds and appreciation for the great out-of-doors through our Zoom programs, our SAAS Facebook page and the Kettle, as we look forward to gathering once again.

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 and classroom and field studies.

Join Straits Area Audubon Society

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

STATE/ZIP CODE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

NEWSLETTER BY: Email: ___ or US Mail: ___

Make checks payable to:

Straits Area Audubon Society

Single Membership: \$15

Family Membership: \$15

Mail Checks to:

Rose Rynerson, Treasurer

10490 East US 23

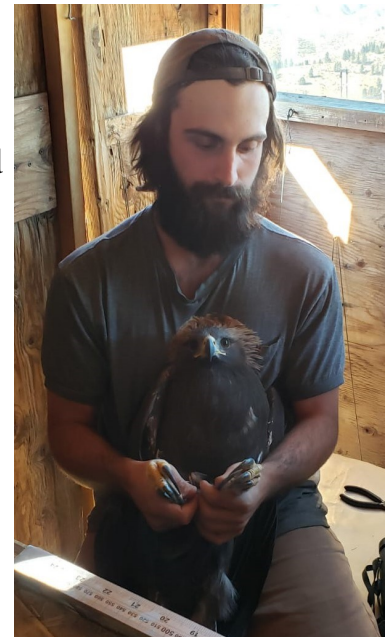
Cheboygan, MI 49721

Virtual Program on “Raptors of Northern Michigan”

Wednesday, January 13th at 7:00 pm

For our next meeting via Zoom, Nick Alioto will present a program on the characteristics and life stories of raptors. The program will also cover some of the work of Mackinac Straits Raptor Watch. Nick is well known to Straits Area Audubon Society, having led field trips to Cheboygan State Park. He gave the talk on ‘Owls of Michigan’ to SAAS in November, 2017 and has spoken about raptors at the Onaway Friends of the Library, the St. Ignace Library and elsewhere.

Photo: Nick with a Golden Eagle



After graduating from Bishops University, he was trained in bird banding at Thunder Cape Bird Observatory in Canada. He has spent three seasons as an owl bander with MSRW. He has also helped with diurnal raptor trapping and American kestrel nestling banding with MSRW. He spent all of 2018 in Northern Ontario working at the Hilliardton Marsh Research and Education Center working with passerine and owl monitoring projects. The past year he spent time working for the University of Illinois on an Eastern Whip-poor-will project involving GPS and vhf transmitters. The last two fall seasons, he was in western Idaho as the main hawk trapper for Boise State’s Intermountain Bird Observatory.

How the Zoom Program Will Work

You will receive an email invitation to the program in an e-Blast within the next week.

On Wednesday, the 13th, a few minutes before 7:00 pm, open the Zoom email invitation and touch the meeting link to join. You may be asked for the ‘password’, which will be included in the email.

You can see and hear our program speaker and even have an opportunity to ask questions.

If your computer doesn’t have a camera, you will not be seen by other viewers, but could otherwise view, listen and ask questions.

Zoom is Working for SAAS by Kathy Bricker

Using the Zoom option has been better than not meeting at all. On September 11, Ms. Chris Zimmel presented on Humpback Whales attracting 23 people. October was skipped as we determined whether to continue with Zoom. We decided to do so with the November 10 program, featuring Don Drife on Life on Milkweed Plants. Attendees numbered 25.

Although many local people cannot access Zoom or the internet, it has afforded a chance for some members to attend programs from southern Michigan, Virginia and Arizona. Coming up in February, Dr. Palazzolo will present from California. While Zoom has its downs, there also are some ups. At any rate, it seems the best choice for now to keep SAAS members and presenters healthy and safe. We appreciate members understanding the situation.

Mark Your Calendars

by Kathy Bricker

Below are the upcoming Zoom programs for SAAS. If and when it is safe for the Cheboygan Area Public Library to reopen, the Kettle will announce the change.

- February 10 “Wild Bird Stories from a Veterinarian & Photographer” by Dr. Carl Palazzolo
 March 10 “Great Lakes Hummingbirds” by Allen Chartier
 April 13 “Nesting Cycle of Songbirds” by Susan Kielb
 May 12 To be Announced

[SNAKES ALIVE - Program Threatened](#) by Herm Boatin The NATURE DISCOVERY owner, Jim McGrath, who conducted Snakes Alive school programs supported by SAAS has fallen on hard times this year due to school cancellations. Expenses for care and feeding the animals used in the program continues while financial support for the program has been drastically reduced. The SAAS executive board is proposing creation of a grant for Nature Discovery to help his business survive and continue its education outreach into the coming school year.

If you wish to learn more about Nature Discovery, visit the website: naturediscovery.net. If you wish to contribute to the grant, please send your donation to SAAS Treasurer, Rose Rynerson: 10490 East US 23, Cheboygan, MI 49721. The donation should be made to Straits Area Audubon Society and include the notation “Snakes Alive”.

[5th Annual Rudyard Christmas Bird Count December 29, 2020](#) by Steve Baker

Greetings. On Tuesday, December 29th, the 5th annual Rudyard Christmas Bird Count was held on a day the sun actually made an appearance. A few of the 12 participants began the day in the predawn hours and heard Saw-whet, Barred, and Great Horned owls. A spectacular sunrise with a dramatic fire-like spire greeted the 5 field parties and 8 feeder counters. Feeder counters contribute mightily to the data and they are a valuable part of this count.

Several new species for the count were seen including Hoary Redpoll, Northern Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow, Great Horned Owl, and Ring-billed Gull. New high counts were established for Wild Turkey (38), Rock Pigeon (353), Red-bellied Woodpecker (3), Blue Jay (115), Common Raven (149), Black-capped Chickadee (397), Snow Bunting (307), Dark-eyed Junco (4), Pine Grosbeak (183), Evening Grosbeak (110) and Common Redpoll (197). The count’s signature species, the Snowy Owl, had a disappointing total of only 3, but that is the nature of cyclic and irruptive species. Some expected species were absent this year, including Rough-legged Hawk, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Pine Siskin. Five gull species were a highlight for one group of birders, while all field counters noted an almost total lack of raptors other than Bald Eagles (39). The day ended with a stunning full moon briefly peeking out below the clouds, while a few counters searched for Short-eared Owls (nope).

The not-yet-final numbers are 3076 individual birds and 42 species. Most numerous species were European Starling (571), Black-capped Chickadee (397), Rock Pigeon (352), Snow Bunting (307), Common Redpoll (197), Pine Grosbeak (183), Common Raven (149), and Evening Grosbeak (110).

Mackinac Straits Christmas Bird Count December 16, 2020

by Steve Baker

On December 16, 2020, fifteen dedicated birders took to the field in the early morning for the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) under typical cloudy and chilly winter weather. All CBC areas are a circle of 7.5 mile radius and this count is one of the more unique in that the count circle is centered on the greatest bridge and includes portions of both Michigan peninsulas, two of the Great Lakes, the historic towns of St. Ignace and Mackinaw City, and unique Mackinac Island. Counters traveled by car, foot, ferry and bicycle.

This year the diversity was above average with 45 species seen but the total count of 2043 individual birds was way down, entirely due to the absence of the large rafts of Redheads that are typically present in the thousands in the Straits. There were only 10 this year. No rare sightings this year, but new record high numbers for this count were established for Bufflehead (3) and Bohemian Waxwings (363). The most numerous birds tallied were European Starling (381) and Bohemian Waxwing (363), Black-capped Chickadee (285), Common Goldeneye (161), Mallard (152) and Rock Pigeon (123).



Bert Ebbers had the most unique encounter of the day when he found a Snowy Owl perched on the Nativity Scene at Church of the Straits. Special thanks to Star Line Mackinac Island Ferry, the Mackinac Bridge Authority and the city of St. Ignace, each of which aided counters with special access cooperation.

Photo: by Jim Bricker of Bohemian Waxwings

Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count December 20, 2020

by Ed Pike

The 36th annual Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the Straits Area Audubon Society, was conducted on December 20, 2020. There was a light rain and drizzle for the first half of the morning, then cloudy the rest of the day. The temperature was around 35 all day, with 3 to 5 inches of snow on the ground and southern winds of 8 to 12 mph. The small ponds were frozen. Mullet Lake and most of the Cheboygan River were open.

The count covers a circle 7.5 miles in radius centered at the junction of M-33 & Old 27. The circle was divided into 5 areas with 2 or 3 people counting in each area. Each group walked or drove around their assigned area to count all the birds they could find. Six feeder counts were also conducted. People traveling around counting birds were: Nick Alioto, Steve Baker, Herm & Darlene Boatin, Jim & Kathy Bricker, Bert Ebbers, Dale Giddings, Mark Harder, Katie Parker, Ed Pike, and Leah Rudge. Feeder counters were Gerald & Michelle Borowicz, Susan Emerson, Pat Esther, Karen Martin, Al & Jean Moberly, and Janet Trudeau.

Fifty species of birds were counted with a total of 3,567 birds. The average number of species seen is 47, which made this an above average count. The number of individuals counted was average. Some species that have appeared in the Cheboygan area since the count started are: Tufted Titmouse which first appeared in 2002 and have been recorded each year since, while Red-bellied Woodpecker have been counted each year starting in 2006. Trumpeter Swan numbers continue to increase since their reintroduction at Seney National Wildlife Refuge, a number of years ago. The first year Trumpeter Swans were counted on this CBC was 2012 with 5 counted. They have been present ever since, with this year's total of 30 being the most counted to date.

The species with the highest count this year was Common Redpoll, mostly because a field counter found a flock of several hundred in an area of open fields. Other species present this year that are irruptive species (only moving south some years) are Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, and Evening Grosbeak.

Thanks to all the people who participated to make this a successful count.

1	Canada Goose	455	26	Downy Woodpecker	32
2	Mute Swan	8	27	Hairy Woodpecker	27
3	Trumpeter Swan	30	28	Pileated Woodpecker	2
4	Am. Blk. Duck	7	29	N. Shrike	2
5	Mallard	295	30	Blue Jay	83
6	Redhead	10	31	Am. Crow	64
7	Bufflehead	6	32	Common Raven	14
8	Common Goldeneye	107	33	Blk-capped Chickadee	385
9	Hooded Merganser	42	34	Tufted Titmouse	13
10	Common Merganser	38	35	Red-breasted Nuthatch	21
11	Red-breasted Merganser	8	36	White-breasted Nuthatch	37
12	Ruffed Grouse	4	37	Brown Creeper	1
13	Wild Turkey	94	38	Am. Robin	13
14	Double-crested Cormorant	1	39	European Starling	374
15	Bald Eagle	15	40	Bohemian Waxwing	1
16	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1		Cedar Waxwing	Count Week
17	Rough-legged Hawk	3	41	Am. Tree Sparrow	11
18	Am. Kestrel	1	42	Dark-eyed Junco	39
19	Merlin	2	43	N. Cardinal	24
20	Ring-billed Gull	3	44	Pine Grosbeak	65
21	Herring Gull	56	45	House Finch	34
	Gull species	4	46	Common Redpoll	638
22	Rock Pigeon	87	47	Pine Siskin	7
23	Mourning Dove	202	48	Am. Goldfinch	126
24	Snowy Owl	1	49	Evening Grosbeak	46
25	Red-bellied Woodpecker	17	50	House Sparrow	11
					3,567

Alice MacFarland commented on the SAAS counters: *“Hardy souls, you all, who ventured out. You make us richer and poorer in one fell swoop of an owl’s wings.”*

Phone Numbers and E-Mail Addresses of Interest to SAAS Members

STRAITS AREA AUDUBON SOCIETY

2019 - 2020 OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Rose Rynerson 231-597-9788

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Secretary: Eileen Martini 231-445-1411

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Past President: Jean Moberly

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THE KETTLE EDITOR

All input for The Kettle should be submitted to: kettleeditor@gmail.com

Any questions call: Diane Matthews at

231-412-0833

ONLINE EXTRAS

If you take a bird or nature picture and think it might be of interest to our members, please send to: kettleeditor@gmail.com.

NATURE LINKS

Straits Area Audubon Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/straitsareaaudubonsociety

MAS (Michigan Audubon Society)

www.michiganaudubon.org

Mackinaw Straits Raptor Watch

www.MackinacRaptorWatch.org

Hawk Migration Assoc. of North America

www.hmana.org

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory

www.wpbo.org

MNA (Michigan Nature Association)

www.michigannature.org

The Nature Conservancy

<http://nature.org/greatlakes>

Little Traverse Conservancy www.landtrust.org

Williams Office Equipment, 312 W. Elm Street, Cheboygan, MI 49721

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