

# Jack Pine *Warbler*

**CRITICAL SPECIES:** Kirtland's Warbler Recovery: What Now? ■ Think Like a Warbler ■ Sandhill Crane Surveys  
■ 2014 Cerulean Warbler Weekend ■ Michigan Audubon Supports Bird Diet Research



# Jack Pine Warbler

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Cover Photo ■ American Redstart

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Daniel Behm captured this American Redstart in May 2012, in the Hiawatha National Forest of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. There were active forest fires in the area and lots of smoke. The fires extended shooting, because the light was diffused by the smoke. The image was taken in late morning, with a Canon 1D4 using the following settings: 600F/4 lens, at ISO400/F/7.1 @ 1/800th.

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## MICHIGAN AUDUBON CONNECTS BIRDS AND PEOPLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH ...

... through conservation, education, and research efforts in the state of Michigan. Formed and incorporated in 1904, it is Michigan's oldest conservation organization. Michigan Audubon supports bird surveys throughout the state, publishes survey data, provides educational opportunities, and preserves nearly 5,000 acres of land within 19 sanctuaries as habitat for birds and other wildlife. The 41 chapters of Michigan Audubon focus on local conservation issues and provide educational programs within their communities. Contributions to Michigan Audubon are tax-deductible.



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# Executive Director's Letter



## BIRDERS' RESPONSIBILITY: WELFARE OF BIRDS

Animal welfare is usually defined in the context of animals kept in captivity or dependent on the care of human caregivers. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) defines animal welfare as follows:

Animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behavior, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress.

This definition also applies to wild birds. We steward habitat to create, restore, and maintain safe havens for wild birds. Healthy grasslands, wetlands, and forests provide the essentials that wild birds need to survive. Likewise, we advocate for policies and best practices that prevent or minimize conditions that would cause wild birds harm. Turning out lights in tall buildings during migration periods, keeping cats indoors, and making sure our feeder stations are clean—there is a broad spectrum of actions we take to reduce mortality and distress for both resident and migrant species.

By the AVMA's definition, efforts to defend the welfare of wild birds are also efforts to conserve and protect them.

Birders play a critical role in the welfare of wild birds. The arrival of migrant and summer breeding species means that birders will be out in full force growing their checklists, taking photographs, and enjoying the beauty of birds in breeding plumage. More than 300 registered participants will attend the Tawas Point Birding Festival ([www.tawasbirdfest.com](http://www.tawasbirdfest.com)) from May 15–18; an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 birders visit Tawas Point State Park during peak migration and other times of year. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that there are more than two million birders in Michigan, a quarter of our state's population. As a community of people who cherish birds, we must act to



Top: Kirtland's Warbler © Josh Haas. Middle: Common Loon © Josh Haas. Bottom: Piping Plover © Roger Eriksson.

conserve and advocate for their continued welfare

As you venture into the field this spring and summer, consider your individual impact on the welfare of iconic species like the Kirtland's Warbler, the Great Lakes Piping Plover, and the Common Loon. Breeding birds like Kirtland's, Cerulean, and Connecticut Warblers are sensitive to the repeated playing of bird song recordings. Great Lakes Piping Plovers require a wide berth at the beach to successfully care for and protect their young. Common Loons, likewise, require lake users to maintain a respectful distance from adults and young. The same cautions apply to species we consider common: House Finches, Killdeer, and Great Blue Herons. The welfare of these species is in our hands as we venture out to populate a day list, go for a stroll on the beach, or paddle a kayak through a wetland.

Michigan Audubon supports the birding code of ethics published and promoted by the American Birding Association. You can find a link to the document via our website, [www.michiganaudubon.org](http://www.michiganaudubon.org). I hope you are as excited as I am by the arrival of spring and the birds that follow. I've been enjoying a pair of Carolina Wrens all winter, and it's good to finally hear them in full song. Please remember that these birds—the ones at our feeders and the ones in the field—depend on us for their continued welfare.

Happy spring birding!

Best regards,

Jonathan E. Lutz, executive director



# Endangered Kirtland's Warbler Recovery: What Now?

BY HOWARD MEYERSON

**M**ichigan's endangered Kirtland's Warbler appears to be well down the road to recovery. More than 2,000 singing males were reported in Michigan's 2013 Kirtland's Warbler census. That was the second consecutive year that the population was double the federal recovery goal of 1,000 singing males (breeding pairs)—a world away from 1967 when the bird was added to the federal Endangered Species list, or when its populations reached record lows in 1974 and 1987, and only 167 were found.

While the warbler's rebound is reason for celebration, federal and state wildlife officials and Michigan's conservation community remain concerned about its future. Successful recovery brings talk of removing it from the Endangered Species list, a decision that places the gray-blue and yellow warbler at a crossroad with respect to its future survival.

"This is a conservation-reliant species that continues to depend on our future action," says Dan Kennedy the endangered-species coordinator for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "That's why having a plan is so important."

Kennedy is one of several who are working on a Kirtland's Warbler conservation plan. He is coordinating that cooperative effort between his agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Huron-Manistee National Forest. The plan is to be released for public review this summer. It will guide future management and replace the federal recovery plan once the bird is delisted.

Delisting, however, is not an automatic step, according to federal officials. Known threats have to be addressed before that will be proposed. "We have two issues ahead," notes Scott Hicks, the USFWS field supervisor in the East Lansing field office. "One is to assure an adequate supply of appropriate-aged habitat, and making sure there are commitments to manage for that. The second is cowbird control."

The USFWS pays for cowbird control, an annual effort

to trap thousands of the parasitic birds, which threaten the warblers by laying eggs in their nests. Studies show the presence of cowbird chicks, which are larger, more aggressive, and outcompete for food, results in poorer warbler survival. The cost for trapping is approximately \$100,000 a year. "It is paid for by endangered species recovery funding," Hicks said. "If we delist the Kirtland's Warbler, that funding will be redirected to other species. We will need another way to cover the costs."

Cowbird control isn't the only expense. Habitat management takes place on approximately 150,000 acres of state and federal land. Habitat and threat management is estimated to cost \$1.7 million each year in northern Michigan breeding zones. Those costs are borne mostly by the DNR and the Huron-Manistee National Forest.

State and federal officials are beginning to consider new management approaches which might reduce the expense and increase plant and animal diversity. The current approach involves planting dense stands of jack pine and scheduling cut rotations. The new approaches would include, among other things, a greater use of prescribed burning rather than tree planting and cutting, the inclusion of red pine in jack pine stands (which will generate additional revenues to pay for the program), and exploring alternatives to conducting a full-scale Kirtland's Warbler census each year.

"This is the first year the DNR does not have the



Female Kirtland's Warblers are not as brightly colored as the males. © 2005 Roger Eriksson



As a conservation-reliant species, the Kirtland's Warbler relies heavily on human habitat cultivation. You can see these signs around the Huron-Manistee National Forest. © Roger Eriksson



funding to do the census on state lands,” Kennedy said, adding that the cost of the census now approaches \$75,000 annually. It has grown as the Kirtland’s Warbler population has grown. “We will follow up with a very detailed report in 2015,” Kennedy said. “We aren’t saying we won’t do a census, but we are evaluating whether there are other ways we can. It may be every other year.” Huron-Manistee National Forest officials say they will continue to conduct the census on federal lands. Volunteers are used (rather than paid staff) and the cost is lower.

Government funding for Kirtland’s Warbler management is not currently in jeopardy, but state and federal officials raise questions about its certainty in the long run. Kennedy maintains that the DNR will continue to provide right-age habitat in the foreseeable future. The same is true for Huron-Manistee National Forest.

“My concern is that once the species is delisted, no one is required to provide habitat,” offered Phil Huber, the forest biologist for the Huron-Manistee National Forest. “We signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that said we will continue to provide habitat indefinitely, but those MOUs are for five years. They have to be renewed. It’s not a huge concern, but it weighs on my mind. Everyone will become less familiar with the need over time. I’ve seen that attitude already.”

Future funding concerns Abby Ertel as well. She is the Kirtland’s Warbler Initiative coordinator at Huron Pines, a Gaylord-based conservation nonprofit working to create a \$4 million private endowment to fund future Kirtland’s Warbler management.

Huron Pines received a \$200,000 grant in 2013 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to pay for the development of the Kirtland’s Warbler Alliance, a broad-based support network created to help with fundraising and public outreach. Ertel’s organization also received a \$171,000 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

grant. “We’re looking to raise \$4 million over the next three years, with the understanding that the endowment would have to grow,” Ertel said. “The Alliance would be the manager. Having the fund would allow management to continue: maybe some cowbird trapping or habitat work along with education and outreach.”

The Alliance has 13 members with varied backgrounds and much of its first year was spent getting organized and focused on its goals. As of February 2014, the group had raised \$4,300 using a crowd sourcing tool called CrowdRise. The results were less than Ertel had hoped for, but she was pleased to see some initial support and said Huron Pines has other fund raising efforts planned in the future.

“We are now at a point where we can go to folks and say we have something,” Ertel said. “We set a \$10,000 goal to start and raised \$4,300. The take-home message for us is there is support there. A lot of it came from within the family, but a good percentage wasn’t from them.”

Grosse Pointe Audubon president Bill Rapai, a Kirtland’s Warbler Alliance member, said he is confident that state and federal officials will do the right thing and he supports investigating alternative management techniques. “We have the luxury of having a healthy population, and a really good group of scientists have put together a conservation plan,” Rapai said. “This isn’t a crisis, but it is a time for action. We can take a step back and give some good thought to what needs to be done for Kirtland’s Warblers.”

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Howard Meyerson ([howardmeyerson@gmail.com](mailto:howardmeyerson@gmail.com)) has been writing about birds, nature, the environment, and outdoor recreation for 30 years. He lives in Grand Rapids. His work appears in a variety of publications.



The Kirtland’s Warbler requires a dense stand of 80-plus acres of young jack pines between five and twenty years old, interspersed with several small grassy openings, sedges, ferns, and low shrubs, as seen above in the Kirtland’s Warbler Wildlife Management Area in Michigan’s northern Lower Peninsula. © USFWSmidwest

# Think Like a Warbler

BY KIRBY ADAMS

**T**rivia time: which unit of the U.S. National Park system boasts the most nesting species of wood warbler (family Parulidae)?

If you said Michigan's own Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, you'd be correct. (Credit would also be given for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which has now tied Pictured Rocks). Twenty-three species of warbler spend their summer on the south shore of Lake Superior, and every one of those spends part of every May migrating through the Mitten. Then we have pockets of southerners like the Worm-eating and Yellow-throated Warblers nesting in southeastern Michigan, as well as an isolated group of Prairie Warblers taking advantage of scrubby beach habitat in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. In all, 43 warbler species have shown up here at one time or another. Michigan is simply one of the best places in North America to watch warblers.

With a kaleidoscope of colors and an eclectic mix of charming songs, the warblers are the birds everyone wants to see once the first week of May arrives. If you get on a birding listserv around that time, you'll see birders reporting 15 or 16 species in one afternoon at one location. How do they do that? Is it magic or just years of practice? The latter might



The Blackburnian Warbler is unique and vibrantly colored. No other North American warbler displays an orange throat.  
© 2008 Roger Eriksson



Prairie Warblers can be spotted in a small habitat in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. © 2013 Daniel Behm Photography

have a little to do with it, but having a double-digit warbler day in May is really just a walk in the park. Literally.

The first thing you have to do to find a bunch of warblers is to think like a migrating songbird. You've just flown dozens, if not a hundred or more miles overnight, nonstop. You're thirsty and starving. A bunch of Cooper's Hawks want to eat you. And on top of that, all you can think about is making babies.

That last part makes you want to sing, so the single most important thing a birder can do to see a lot of warblers is to learn how to hear a lot of warblers. Recordings of songs are available online and come with most of the identification apps for mobile devices. Larkwire ([www.larkwire.com](http://www.larkwire.com)) is an app that makes a game out of learning songs of common birds. The best method of imprinting a song in your mind is hearing it in the field, tracking it down, and watching the bird sing. The combination of the visual and auditory cues makes a bigger impact on memory, which is part of Larkwire's appeal.

The Cooper's Hawk problem means you're going to want to stay close to cover. Tangles, hedgerows, and forest edges are warbler traps during migration. Beyond the immediate need for cover, warblers have a wide range of preferred habitat. Field guides can illustrate the type of habitat that different warblers frequent, but during migration it's unwise to rely on that information for finding or identifying the birds. Blackburnian Warblers are said to be found in the highest



treetops of mature forests, and that's almost always true of the nesting individuals you'll find in the U.P. in June. But during migration, it's not out of the question for a Blackburnian to be found in low shrubbery. Likewise with Magnolia Warblers, essentially inseparable from conifer stands during nesting, but found just about anywhere in May. Typical ground-dwellers like the Northern Waterthrush and Ovenbird are often seen in trees during migration. Habitat guides can be a good starting point for warbler searching, but remember these birds are on a mission and not always inclined to read the books.

Continue to think like a warbler: you're thirsty and starving, so you'll want to find some cover that's near a water source and full of tasty insects. The wise birder will look for the same things. Edges of ponds, lakeshores, streams, and lingering vernal pools are irresistible to migrating songbirds. The insects are a little harder to spot. On a cool early morning, the insect action is along the forest or brush edges first hit by the



The Black-and-white Warbler acts more like a nuthatch than a warbler using its extra-long hind claw to forage up and down tree trunks in search of hidden insects. © 2013 Daniel Behm Photography

## Calendar

### May

- 6–15 **The Biggest Week in American Birding**  
Magee Marsh, Ohio
- 10 **International Migratory Bird Day**
- 15 **Kirtland's Warbler tours begin**  
Grayling and Mio
- 15–18 **Tawas Point Birding Festival**  
Iosco County
- 28–June 1 **Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival**  
South Lake Leelanau

### June

- 6–8 **Cerulean Warbler Weekend**  
Hastings
- 20 **Last day of Forest Service Kirtland's Warbler tours**  
Mio

### July

- 4 **Last day of Michigan Audubon Kirtland's Warbler tours**  
Grayling

rising sun. The sun stirs the insects and the clusters of birds aren't far behind. A tree-line that faces east or southeast is a great sunrise warbler trap. Likewise, in the evening, a west- or southwest-facing edge habitat that soaks up the last of the day's sun will be where all the birds are. Don't bother searching the shade on the bookends of the day.

Putting yourself in the warbler's shoes for a while helps to find the birds and also to appreciate the peril they face during migration. Providing cover and a water source in your yard is a great way to help them out. You can also take extra effort to not disturb the birds while enjoying the show they put on every May. It can be tempting to play recordings of their songs to lure them into the open. It works, but at a cost to the bird: it undoubtedly causes at least some stress, and certainly distracts it from foraging. It can also expose the bird to danger. Falcons and Accipiters pay close attention to migrant gathering areas, and more than one birder has called a warbler into the open only to see it snatched by a hawk.

With these tricks and a little patience, it's easy to find the birds without disturbing their routine. Try it and see how quickly you have your first double-digit warbler morning.

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Kirby Adams ([kirby.adams@gmail.com](mailto:kirby.adams@gmail.com)) didn't take up birding until his 30s, but he's making up for lost time. He writes the birding column for the online travel blog, National Parks Traveler. Kirby and his wife, Sarah, live in Lansing on breaks between birding trips.

# More Than Just a Little Blue Bird

BY WENDY TATAR

**F**ew birds are more beautiful than the Cerulean Warbler. But Michigan Audubon's Cerulean Warbler Weekend on June 6-8 is about so much more than this small, brilliantly blue warbler.

The event at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary in Barry County is also about other species. Car caravan tours through the Barry State Game Area (BSGA) should provide views of the Hooded Warbler, four of the Empidonax flycatchers (Least, Willow, Acadian, and Alder), and the opportunity to see many species on their nests, including the southernmost nesting pair of Common Loons in North America. There are also opportunities to watch female Cerulean Warblers building their nests, which has occurred at the last three events.

Although the Cerulean Warbler doesn't nest at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary, another increasingly rare and very elusive species does: the Henslow's Sparrow. At least we hope it does. In 2012, some major habitat restoration occurred at Otis Farm, which meant that conditions at the site in 2013 weren't ideal for the Henslow's, and it did not turn up. Luckily there are several locations not far from Otis Farm where the bird does nest, so our tour participants usually aren't disappointed. The Otis Farm prairie was in fine form last summer, and we are hopeful that the thatch



The Cerulean Warbler prefers a breeding habitat of 3,000 hectares or greater of mature deciduous trees situated near a river system. © 2010 Roger Eriksson

from 2013's grass will meet the needs of the bird, and it will return to nest this spring.

Cerulean Warbler Weekend is also about wetland species. Barry County is rich with a variety of wetlands, and the birding tours will visit many of them, including the lake on which the aforementioned Common Loon nests. Paddle tours will take participants on the Glass Creek, which runs through Otis Farm and the BSGA. This tour provides opportunities to see Least and American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, and Marsh Wren.

## THE BIRDS OF CERULEAN WARBLER WEEKEND ...



Grasshopper Sparrow © Roger Eriksson



Henslow's Sparrow © Daniel Behm Photography



Blue-winged Warbler © Daniel Behm Photography



Occasionally the event has a break-out star, a bird that normally isn't here. Every so often, the Dickcissel—a grassland species considered uncommon in Michigan—decides to nest in the farm fields of Barry County. This beautiful songbird has delighted participants on the Barry County Bus Full of Birders tour at two of the previous five events.

In some instances, the star of the event isn't even a bird. In 2012 a spotted turtle, listed on the Michigan Threatened Species list, took center stage. Not many participants had the opportunity to see the turtle at Otis Farm except in the photos that were taken, but speaking as the person who found the turtle, I can tell you that it was quite a thrill. Otis Farm is home to a wide array of mammal, insect, reptile, and amphibian species, and you never know when an unfeathered species might catch your eye.

CWW, as we in the Michigan Audubon office affectionately refer to the event, is also about conservation. The 16,755 acres of the BSGA, consisting mostly of mature forest, is the perfect location for Cerulean Warblers to nest. About the size of a chickadee, this bird requires thousands of acres of unbroken mature forest. Without the protection provided by the state for the BSGA land, I'm certain nesting conditions required by Cerulean Warblers wouldn't exist. The beautiful, abundant woods would be long gone, replaced by housing developments.

We will learn more about the requirements of Cerulean Warblers from this year's keynoter, Katie Fallon. Katie will

present two programs. On Friday, she'll be talking about Cerulean Warblers during nesting season in "Spiderwebs, Caterpillars, and Coal Mines: Cerulean Warblers in the Spring and Summer." On Saturday, she'll tell us about the bird's time in South America in "Coffee and Cooperation: Conserving the Cerulean Warbler in the Non-Breeding Season." If we aren't able to conserve the habitat in both North and South America, the chances for this bird's survival are bleak.

Any profit made from Cerulean Warbler Weekend goes to conservation efforts at Otis Farm. We hope you'll join us for this great little birding event in southwestern Michigan. We can't provide a 100% guarantee that you will see a Cerulean Warbler, although the chances are good, but we can guarantee that you will have a good time in Barry County.



Katie Fallon, courtesy of Katie Fallon.

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Wendy Tatar ([wendy@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:wendy@michiganaudubon.org)) is Michigan Audubon's program coordinator.



Scarlet Tanager © Daniel Behm Photography



Red-headed Woodpecker © Charles Brutlag



Pileated Woodpecker © Rachid H

# Michigan Audubon Supports Bird Diet Research at Rouge River Bird Observatory

BY JULIE CRAVES

In 2009, the Rouge River Bird Observatory (RRBO) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn published an analysis of the condition of over 2,000 individual thrushes—Swainson's, Hermit, and Gray-cheeked—banded by RRBO on campus during the fall seasons 1992 to 2006. This study, published in the peer-reviewed *Wilson Journal of Ornithology*, was the first long-term study of its kind on urban stopover ecology in North America. We found that the majority of these birds gained significant fat and weight during their fall migratory stopover on campus.

Many migrant bird species, even those that typically eat insects, also incorporate fruit into their fall diets. Our findings of mass gain at our urban site was important because fruiting plants in urban areas like ours are dominated by non-native species. Our results prompted us to examine exactly what fruits were being consumed.

Fruit is usually processed by birds quickly, as anybody who has parked under a fruiting tree soon finds out. Often misinterpreted as diarrhea, this speedy passage is normal and quite adaptive. Among other things, it allows birds to rapidly get rid of bulky seeds so they can continue to consume more fruit and other foods. This fast processing also makes it likely that seeds found in fecal samples of the birds captured for banding represent fruit consumed onsite. RRBO began collecting samples from thrushes in 2007, and all other species in 2009. For the past two years, this



Cedar Waxwings feed mainly on fruits year-round and derive their name from their huge appetite of cedar berries in the winter. They supplement their fruit diet with high-protein insects. © 2013 Beth Olson

work has been supported by Michigan Audubon.

As of this writing, we have more than 1,500 samples from 19 bird species. Over half are from American Robins, and other large percentages come from Gray Catbirds, Cedar Waxwings, and Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes. At least 22 plant genera are represented. The majority of the samples (over 60%) contained either common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) or amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), or both. These are non-native invasive species that are abundant in urban areas. The two most common native species are American pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) and grapes (*Vitis* spp.). Crabapples (*Malus* spp.) round out the top five; while there are native crabapples, most of our samples are from non-native ornamental trees both planted and escaped from cultivation.

Part of Michigan Audubon's support has also gone to the development of a seed identification website, Fruit Seeds of Southern Michigan ([seedguide.blogspot.com](http://seedguide.blogspot.com)). This site is based on our compilation of many photos and resources on seeds and seed identification, as well as our own large collection of reference seeds collected in the region. These efforts have enabled us to identify all but around 20 seeds of the nearly 3,900 collected.

A paper based on our seed research—"Birds that Eat Non-native Buckthorn Fruit (*Rhamnus cathartica* and *Frangula alnus*, *Rhamnaceae*) in Northeastern North America"—has been accepted for publication in *Natural Areas Journal*.

As urbanization transforms native ecosystems, understanding how birds use urban habitat as migratory stopover sites is becoming more critical to bird conservation. RRBO is dedicated to contributing meaningful data and expanding our knowledge to help migratory birds. The Rouge River Bird Observatory's research is donor-funded. To learn more, visit the RRBO website at [rrbo.org](http://rrbo.org), and our blog Net Results ([net-results.blogspot.com](http://net-results.blogspot.com)). We're also on Facebook and Twitter.



In spring, Hermit Thrushes eat mainly insects and occasionally small amphibians and reptiles. In the winter, they change their diet to eat more fruit, including wild berries. © 2012 Daniel Behm Photography

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Urban ecologist Julie Craves is the director of the Rouge River Bird Observatory, contributing editor to *BirdWatching Magazine*, and on the editorial board of the new international journal *Urban Naturalist*. She is a lifelong Michigan resident; she and her husband, Darrin O'Brien, live outside Ann Arbor.



# Book Review

## *Rare Birds of North America*

(Princeton University Press, 2014, 428 PP)

BY KIRBY ADAMS



What are the rarest birds in North America? If we're talking about birds that breed on the continent, Whooping Cranes, California Condors, and Kirtland's Warblers come to mind.

But what about birds that don't call North America their home? Those are the focus of *Rare Birds of North America* from Princeton University Press. *Rare Birds* is a collaboration among three authors: Steve N.G. Howell and Will Russell of WINGS Birding Tours, and illustrator Ian Lewis. It is essentially an identification guide to all the birds you might see in North America that aren't in any of the other field guides.

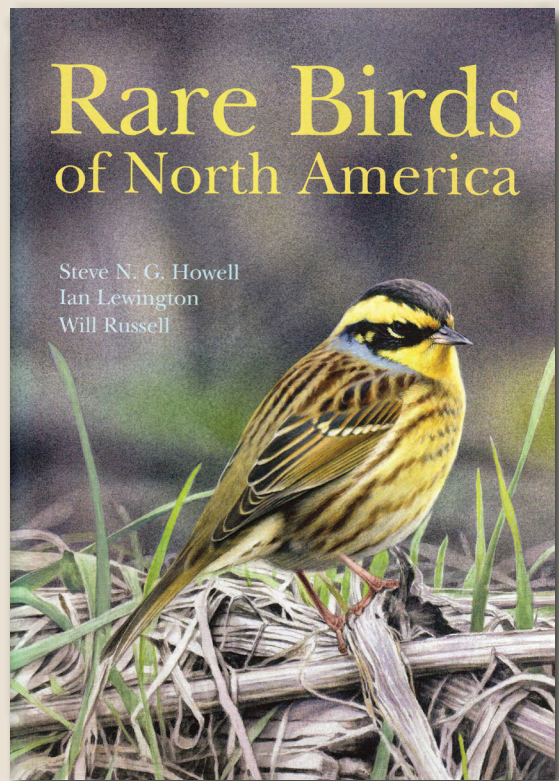
First the authors had to figure out how to define "rare" and decided on five or fewer annual records in North America since 1950. Some of the birds in the book are slightly more regular than that, but the authors have allowed themselves leeway for those additions. So why would I want a guide to birds that I am likely to never encounter?

That question is answered right in the introduction. It is surmised that most birds from outside North America showing up here are by accident and in the authors' words are "routinely overlooked."

*Rare Birds* is truly an identification guide designed to get the birder to a proper identification of a potential rarity. The introduction covers aspects of migration and vagrancy before getting into the nitty-gritty of bird topography and molt. Since most vagrant birds are juveniles unskilled in migration, being able to age the birds based on plumage and molt is important. The species accounts cover 262 species of birds from the Old World, Neotropics, and the Oceans.

The book is worth its price for the plates alone, which are exquisite, photo-like paintings of the birds. I can't attest to the accuracy of the paintings or the colors, given that I have yet to see most of these birds myself, but those I am familiar with appear to be rendered and printed perfectly.

The book is also rich in species information. Each account includes location and season of previous records, followed by identification tips and expectations for finding vagrant individuals. The introduction and species accounts can lean toward technical, but in a personal and welcoming voice. Discussions of molt are inherently and unavoidably riddled with jargon but are presented clearly and concisely.



**\$35.00**

This book can be ordered through the Michigan Audubon bookstore, which helps to raise funds for education programs.

What's missing? If I could point to one disappointment, it's the lack of natural history for the individual species. Habitat and behavior are covered in a very short, often one-sentence, addendum to each account. This is not atypical for an identification guide, of course, but with these authors' knowledge and flair for prose, I can only imagine how eloquently they'd approach the ecology and natural history of each bird.

If you're a serious birder, there should already be a slot for this book on your shelf, since no other guide has ever filled this niche. I'm going to make *Rare Birds of North America* coffee table reading material, absorbing a species here and there. It can't hurt to have the images and descriptions in my head the next time I'm in the field in the rarity-rich autumn.

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Kirby Adams (kirby.adams@gmail.com) didn't take up birding until his 30s, but he's making up for lost time. He writes the birding column for the online travel blog, National Parks Traveler. Kirby and his wife, Sarah, live in Lansing on breaks between birding trips.

# Sandhill Cranes and Non-Consumptive Recreation in Michigan

BY CLAIRE BASTILLE HAN AND DR. CHRISTINE VOGT

**A**s the fall weather starts to cool and the winter breeze sneaks in, a magical event unfolds in the marshes and fields of southern Michigan. The Sandhill Cranes begin to migrate south and thousands of local residents, other Michigan residents, out-of-state, and even international tourists are attracted to fall events and viewing days. Michigan Audubon has teamed with Michigan State University (MSU) to better understand Sandhill Crane birders. Data were collected in 2012 and 2013 at the Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary in Calhoun County and Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary in Jackson County. Visitors to the Annual Sandhill Crane & Art Festival, also known as CraneFest at Baker Sanctuary or the Cranes, Colors, & Cabernet Festival (CCCF) at Haehnle Sanctuary were likely to have been approached by MSU students or sanctuary volunteers with a clipboard survey and asked to share information about their birding and other natural resource interests, how they learned about the event, and their plans to return to the sanctuary in the future.

Fieldwork over two years provided a perfect context to show that weather plays a role in visitor turnout. In 2012, CraneFest was held with less-than-ideal weather, while the CCCF had days with optimal weather for viewing. In 2013 the situations were reversed: CraneFest had perfect fall viewing weather and CCCF saw rain and cold temperatures. MSU researchers counted cars and estimated the number of people per group to calculate visitor counts. The two-day CraneFest visitor counts were 1,270 people in 2012 and 4,728 people in 2013. The data also shows that when weather was cold and rainy, the event attracted more of a localized market. In 2012, CraneFest attracted 78% local residents, 17% non-local residents, and 5% out-of-state or international tourists; in 2013 when the weather was better, the larger crowds had a greater proportion of non-local residents (29%), compared to the 4% out-of-state or international tourist and 67% local residents. Haehnle's event is not the size of CraneFest but attracts birders from the Ann Arbor and Detroit area as well as northern Ohio. Over the two years, MSU researchers counted and collected over 300 surveys at Haehnle. The findings of these studies highlight how important events are for introducing the public to birding and bird sanctuaries.

Weather also seemed to play a role in the mix of return and first-time visitors. At the 2012 CraneFest when the weather was cold and raining, 63% of the visitors were return visitors compared to 37% first-timers. In 2013 under better weather conditions, first-timers were over 50% of the visitors. When asked at the event whether they were likely to return next year, 82% of 2012's first-timers indicated planning a return and 53% of 2013's first-timers. Haehnle's events also attracted many first-time visitors. In 2012, 63% were first-timers and in 2013, 74% were first-time event attendees. First-timers are learning about migratory birding and these events from a variety of information sources—including traditional media, the event's and the Michigan Audubon's



CraneFest celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, and Michigan Audubon expects a large number of first-timers, both cranes and people, at the big celebration.  
© 2012 Dave Inman

websites, and social media, which is growing, particularly for CraneFest.

Sanctuary visitors at both sites are involved in many facets of natural resource recreation and membership support. On average, 79% of Haehnle Sanctuary's event visitors purchased a Michigan Recreation Passport (state average is in the 30 percent range), 34% purchased a fishing license, and 13% purchased a deer license. Baker Sanctuary event visitors reported similar figures, with 76% purchasing a Michigan Recreation Passport, 44% a fishing license, and 25% a deer license.

Michigan Audubon is closely following a possible referendum on allowing Sandhill Crane hunting. The two years of data on non-consumptive recreation demand provides insight into how the public values the crane and also provides early polling about the levels of support. This research on birders at two southern Michigan sanctuaries shows that over three-quarters are strongly opposed to Sandhill Crane hunting; fewer than 10% of those surveyed support a hunt. There are also respondents who are unsure of their position and indicated that they need more information about species health, conflicts with human activities (such as agriculture), and management options before making a final decision in a voting situation.

For now, the Sandhill Cranes should expect visitors with binoculars watching them in 2014 as they fly through Michigan.

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Claire Bastille Han is pursuing an MSU undergraduate major in fisheries and wildlife. Recreation researcher Christine Vogt is professor in the Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. She studies natural resource recreation and tourism across the state, in all seasons. Currently, she is on a fellowship with Singapore National Parks conducting park and housing research and learning about tropical flora and fauna. For more information, contact [vogtc@msu.edu](mailto:vogtc@msu.edu).



## Benzie Audubon Club

BY MALLORY KING

**T**he Benzie Audubon Club (BAC) was originally established in 1974 as a small group of local families who wanted to help improve their natural surroundings. The group was interested in getting the Betsie River dedicated as a national river; knowing that the National Audubon Society had a similar conservation outlook, they contacted the office and became a chapter.

Three years later, on June 11, 1977, the BAC succeeded in getting the Betsie River dedicated as a national river. Now the club boasts over 100 members and has turned its primary attention to birds, with a secondary focus on preserving the natural environment and protecting it from any activities that may be harmful to the area.

The BAC hosts numerous field trips and programs, and partners with local organizations to get as many community members involved as possible. According to Doug Cook (president), Bryce Dreeszen (field trip coordinator), and Keith Westfall (one of the original club founders), one of the favorite locations to go birding is the Arcadia Marsh/Otter Creek area. In fact both Doug and Bryce each observed their most memorable bird at this location—a Little Gull and a Hooded Warbler respectively.

This year, the club will host a trip to Arcadia/Otter Creek area—named Warblers along the Coast—on Friday May 16 and Friday May 23. This trip will cover most of the hotspots along the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, a favored location along the new Sleeping Bear Birding Trail ([www.sleepingbearbirdingtrail.org](http://www.sleepingbearbirdingtrail.org)) and recently dedicated



The banding demo the club puts on annually attracts many children. The group has been banding long enough that they regularly get recaptures. © 2008 Carl Freeman

National Wildness Area. The birding trips usually spot around 20 species of warblers alone, along with many bitterns, ducks, grebes, and other migrating species.

The club also teams up with local organizations such as the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) and Friends of the Betsie Bay to host field trips such as the Warbler and Wildflowers and a canoeing trip for birds and blooms. Bryce and his wife, Paula, are also stewards to portions of the GTRLC and actively work to keep the land natural and harm-free, often recruiting fellow club members to help. Additional activities include raising over \$10,000 to construct an observation deck on the Betsie River in the late 1990s and offering club programs to local Native American tribal communities.

The Benzie Audubon Club is an active organization that hosts a wide range of birding trips and acts as effective stewards in their community. If you're ever in the area of Benzie County, make sure to stop by at least one of the nine birding hotspots. You'll revel in the number of birds you will be able to observe.

Mallory King ([mallory@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:mallory@michiganaudubon.org)) is Michigan Audubon's marketing and communications coordinator.



An observation deck that Benzie Audubon Club built overlooking the Elberta Marsh on the Betsie River. It is along the Betsie Valley Trail, a rails-to-trails path. © 2008 Carl Freeman

### Contact information

Website: [www.benzieaudubon.org](http://www.benzieaudubon.org)

Doug Cook, president: [dcook@wmibt.com](mailto:dcook@wmibt.com)

### Meeting information:

Next meetings: July 2, 2014

Time: 7:00PM

Location: Tribal Outpost, 7282 Hoadly Road, Benzonia, MI

## Birding on the Border: My Semester at Conserve School

BY SARAH TONER

Last year, I had the phenomenal opportunity to go to Conserve School for a semester in northern Wisconsin, adjacent to the Michigan border. Living at Conserve, students learn about ecology and conservation while immersed in experiences with the natural world. The classes are interactive and inspirational. A History of Wilderness Exploration class investigates famous explorations, such as Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition, and their impacts on people and the environment. The Wilderness Voices class explores perceptions of wilderness in literature, from the medieval fear of nature to the modern appreciation of it, and Ecology teaches the history of the ecosystems of northern Wisconsin and Michigan as well as general ecological principles. Field Instruction includes not only a variety of outdoor activities such as broomball, skiing, and snowshoeing but also wilderness skills such as fire-building, bear-bagging, backpacking, and winter camping. Conserve also offers numerous electives, including AP Environmental Science (a fantastic, semester-long AP course), Spanish and math classes, and several art classes. My Earth Art class featured the use of natural materials to create paper and print media, moccasins, snow sculptures, metal jewelry, and other works of art. All of Conserve's classrooms illustrate the many ways that students can view the environment and work to preserve it.

Conserve encourages interaction with the natural world outside of the classroom as well. The boarding school is set on a 1,200-acre campus with eight lakes and over twenty miles of trails for students



Bald Eagles were a regular sight during Sarah's stay in northern Wisconsin. © 2011 Josh Haas

to explore in their free time. In addition, the school sponsors weekend field trips to parks, wilderness areas, and volunteer events nearby. Stewardship is a large part of the Conserve experience, generating a kind and supportive atmosphere: everybody participates as a member of a greater community, working to make it better.

Not surprisingly, the birds on Conserve's extensive campus are wonderful. My spring semester lasted through migration, from February to June, so I was able to witness the north woods bloom with new arrivals from the south. The bogs and boreal forests of Conserve host special northern birds, including Pine Grosbeaks and other irruptive winter finches, which transition to breeding birds, such as Gray Jays, Sedge Wrens, Alder Flycatchers, and breeding warblers such as Yellow-rumped, Palm, and Black-throated Blue. With its many lakes, Conserve gets good numbers of ducks in migration, and there are many Common Loon and Bald Eagle nests. Each day of birding Conserve was different—I never knew when I might find a Blue-headed Vireo, Northern Mockingbird, or another unusual bird. With so many opportunities to explore outside, the local birds were a regular part of our day. The Black-throated Blue Warbler at one trail intersection would sing sporadically, but the Ovenbird near my campsite sang more frequently. New adventures arose, too—following a warbler flock by canoe was intriguing and challenging, and showing non-birding students a Ruffed Grouse that was conveniently sitting next to the pathway was great fun. Having the opportunity to gain independence, responsibility, and greater knowledge of the environment in a beautiful natural setting was an incredible experience for me. I had a wonderful time advancing my birding skills in an environment that has become as close to my heart as the birds themselves.



Sarah was able to hear the song of the Black-throated Blue Warbler, which is a series of three to seven buzzy notes, with the last slurred upward. It sounds like "zoo, zoo, zoo, zoo, zee." © 2011 Josh Haas

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Sarah Toner is a 16-year-old birder from Ann Arbor who has been birding for eight years. She enjoys sharing her birding experiences through her posts on The Eyrie blog, participation in the Young Birder of the Year Contest, and work with the Michigan Young Birders Club.



# Announcements

## Changes for Kirtland's Warbler Tours

Several changes are taking place with the Kirtland's Warbler tours out of Grayling. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) turned over control of the Kirtland's Warbler tours to Michigan Audubon. In the past Michigan Audubon provided a guide to lead the tours for the USFWS. In 2014 the meeting location for the tours will be moving to the Interpretive Center at Hartwick Pines State Park.

Tours operate daily at 7:00 AM from May 15 through July 4. On weekends and holidays the tours are also offered at 11:00 AM. They are free of charge. A Recreation Passport is required to enter the state park. More information can be found at [michiganaudubon.org/kirtlandswarbler](http://michiganaudubon.org/kirtlandswarbler).

The U.S. Forest Service continues to offer tours in Mio. These tours are offered at 7:00 AM from May 15 through June 20 and cost \$10 per person. More information on the Forest Service tours can be found at [fs.fed.us/r9/hmfn/pages/ke\\_tours](http://fs.fed.us/r9/hmfn/pages/ke_tours).

## Check your Expiration Date

On the back of your *Jack Pine Warbler* just above your address you should see a date. If your date is June 30, 2014, this is your last issue of the magazine until you renew your membership. We have included a renewal envelope in the center of your magazine. Decrease the number of reminders we need to mail and save our dollars for Michigan bird conservation by sending in your renewal before May 23.

## Connecticut Warbler Tours

Michigan Audubon will again offer one-day specialty tours on June 7 and 14 in the eastern Upper Peninsula to see Connecticut Warblers on their breeding grounds. Other species targeted on these tours include Black-backed Woodpeckers, Spruce Grouse, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, and Golden-winged Warblers. The fee for the tour is \$70 for Michigan Audubon members and \$100 for non-members (includes a one-year membership). Tours are limited to 12 participants a day. For additional information, check the Michigan Audubon website at [michiganaudubon.org/education/field\\_trips\\_travel](http://michiganaudubon.org/education/field_trips_travel).

## Seeking Purple Martin Information

Purple Martin landlords in Michigan are in the beginning stages of forming a statewide organization dedicated to the welfare and management of this native swallow with very specialized needs. Anyone interested in becoming involved in the founding of this new group should contact Jackson Audubon president Connie Spotts at 517-529-9031 ([bflylady27@netzero.net](mailto:bflylady27@netzero.net)) or Audubon Society of Kalamazoo vice-president Penny Briscoe at 629-649-3008 ([pennybriscoe@comcast.net](mailto:pennybriscoe@comcast.net)).

One goal of the organization is to more effectively identify active Purple Martin colonies in the state, critical to improving the outlook for the species' future. Another goal is to provide readily accessible assistance in establishing and managing new colonies, and in educating the general public about this bird once so common throughout the state. Organizational discussions will take place during the coming summer, including at the shore-side colony of Connie Spotts on Crispell Lake, just south of Jackson, on June 14 at 11 AM. Additional information and another organizational meeting will follow later in the summer. For more information, to report an active Purple Martin colony, or to seek general assistance in establishing or managing a colony, contact Connie or Penny.

## Unique Birding Opportunities at Leelanau Birding Festival

The 4th annual Leelanau Birding Festival will be held at South Lake Leelanau on May 28–June 1. This is the only festival in the country that offers a birding trip by tall ship. That tour goes to see nesting Caspian Terns and other colonial nesters on Bellows Island. Tours also go to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore where participants may see Prairie Warblers, Least Bittern, and Piping Plovers. Nesting Golden-winged Warblers are possible on an all-day birding tour to the Grayling area to see Kirtland's Warbler. The Leelanau Peninsula Chamber of Commerce hosts this event. The festival committee has put together a great slate of birding options in 2014; check out the schedule and register at [mibirdfest.com](http://mibirdfest.com).

## Birding Trails are Blossoming

In 2013 we told you about the new Sleeping Bear Birding Trail and the Saginaw Bay Birding Trail. We're pleased to let you know that two more birding trails have been created.

The Superior Birding Trail currently focuses on 14 birding sites located in the eastern Upper Peninsula. On the southern end, the trail starts at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, then winds its way north for 150 miles to the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. In between are the other sites, with the trail hub in Newberry at the historic Old Bank. Additional information and a downloadable map with detailed information on each birding location can be found at [superiorbirdingtrail.com](http://superiorbirdingtrail.com).

Michigan Audubon is just one of the many conservation partners working with corporations, researchers, and residents to create the Beaver Island Birding Trail. The trail's website has already been launched ([beaverislandbirdingtrail.org](http://beaverislandbirdingtrail.org)) and the trail dedication will be held the weekend of May 23–25.

Beaver Island (the largest island in Lake Michigan) acts as a critical stopover site for migrating birds headed to or from their breeding grounds. Many also stay to make the island their summer home. The trail winds among more than 12,000 acres of state and township lands, and includes four Little Traverse Conservancy preserves.

These two trails, with the Sleeping Bear Birding Trail and the Saginaw Bay Birding Trail, help to highlight the rich birding opportunities in Michigan. They're the start of what we hope will be a growing network of birding trails across the state.

## Welcome New Members!

We thank you—our newest members as well as our renewing members—for your support of Michigan Audubon's bird conservation efforts. Please remember to check your magazine's expiration date and renew early. Members moving or changing to a seasonal residence should contact the office by e-mail, post, or phone so that we can update your address in our database.

William and Angela Aldrich	Dr. Mary D. Lagerwey
Alison Amburgey	Matthew Lantz
Nancy Beachum	Charlie Lemmink
Alexander Boone	Carol Loveland-Cherry
Danielle Boston	Leslie Mertz
Rex and Gayle Devree	William Moss
Mary Fitch	Dave and Mary Newhouse
Daniel Fraser	Bob Wolff and Barb Olson
Barothy Lodge	Jen Owen
Mary E. Hansen	Laura A. Pernice
Deb Harp	Ben and Debbie Schultz
Patrick Hogan	Anne Sipe
Cathy Hoort	Deanna F. Sobota
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Diana Kuras	Peggy Warnez
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Dated Material

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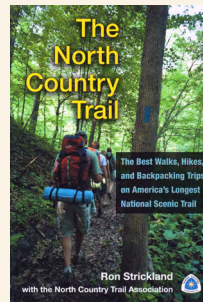
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## The Sibley Guide to Birds, 2nd Edition

by David Allen Sibley  
\$40.00 (flexibound)

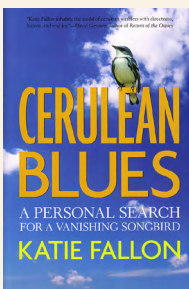
The new edition has created a lot of excitement in the birding world this spring. Everything you liked about the original guide is still here but the new edition includes so much more. The illustrations are larger and the images were re-digitized from the original artwork, not copied from the first edition images. It contains 600 new images, updated range maps, and illustrations for 85 rare species not covered in the first guide. Still hefty, it's a guide you'll study for hours.



## The North Country Trail

by Ron Strickland  
\$22.95

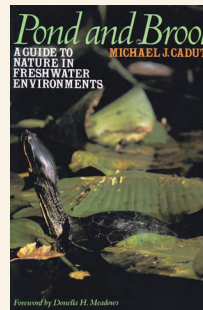
*The North Country Trail* winds through seven states and covers 4,600 miles. The book covers 40 of the North Country Trail's best hikes in detail, providing tips, highlights, maps, and the latest GPS information. An overview of the trail's complete tread is included. This book was written for hikers of any level, including seasoned backpackers.



## Cerulean Blues

by Katie Fallon  
\$17.95

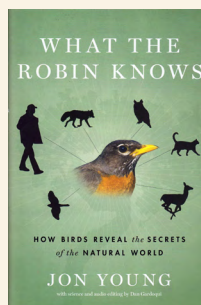
Author Katie Fallon will be the guest speaker at this year's Cerulean Warbler Weekend. Her book will take you on a journey from the forest canopy of the Appalachian Mountains to the South American coffee plantations of Columbia in a quest to inform readers about this beautiful bird's plight. She details the natural history of the species and introduces the people that are trying to save the fastest-declining warbler species in North America.



## Pond and Brook: A Guide to Nature in Freshwater Environments

by Michael J. Caduto  
\$25.95

Amateur naturalists interested in wetlands, still-water environments, or flowing-water environments will love this book. More than a guide, it also includes ideas for hands-on projects and activities, and covers both living and non-living components of freshwater environments.



## What the Robin Knows

by Jon Young  
\$14.95

Just released in paperback! The author teaches readers to listen to the avian landscape by focusing on the vocalizations and behavior of birds. He weaves Native American wisdom, the latest research, and forty years of experience in the field into the book.

**10% off** for all Michigan Audubon members!

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