



BIRDTRACKS

Jackson County Winter Bird Sightings

Don Henise

Early 2016 brought some interesting birding experiences to Jackson County. The primary attractions were a pair of Golden Eagles that spent the winter months in the Dalton Road vicinity and a first year Harlequin Duck found in Michigan Center in late November. In late March, a Little Gull was discovered at Watkins Lake. Many out-of-county birders ventured into Jackson County in search of these three species.



Harlequin Duck

The Harlequin Duck was discovered on November 21st by Ross Green (see his article in the December 2015 issue of *Bird Tracks*). A single Golden Eagle was first reported by Gary Siegrist and the Dahlem Center Tuesday nature group on November 24th. In December a second Golden eagle was observed. The last Golden Eagle report from Dalton Road was on March 8th. The young male Harlequin Duck continued through the winter and is still being reported as of this writing in late April.

With such a mild winter, one would expect that a number of lingering passerines would have been found, but that has not been the rule. With the exception of reports of Winter Wrens from several locations, there have been relatively few lingering migrants. For example, there were very few winter reports of Song Sparrows and Swamp Sparrows, species which one would expect to remain in such conditions.

With droves of birders visiting Dalton Road to add the Golden Eagles to their 2016 year lists, several other raptors were reported, albeit sporadically. A Red-shouldered Hawk was reported by many observers, but missed by others. A light morph Rough-legged Hawk was even less reliable. A Northern Shrike was observed to the west and south of the sharp bend on Dalton, but again has been very unreliable for many searchers. The downtown Peregrine Falcons wintered in the area and are once again nesting on the County Tower Building.

There was a bit of open water in early January including Watkins Lake, which normally freezes by mid-December. By the end of February, 17 duck species had already been reported on eBird.org for Jackson County including a Northern Pintail on Brills Lake on January 1st and of course the famous Michigan Center Harlequin Duck. In the first days of January a few Cackling Geese were observed on Watkins Lake and Ross Green found a lone Greater White-fronted Goose at Clark Lake on January 3rd. Three more Greater White-fronted Geese were found on Grass Lake on February 28th.



White Fronted Goose

(continued on next page)

There were also sporadic reports of Snow Buntings from the Dalton Road area by birders searching that area for raptors. A flock of several hundred field birds was located in fields east of Grass Lake near the Udder Delight coffee shop on Michigan Avenue on February 13th. The flock included Horned Larks.

An exciting first county record of Little Gull was discovered on March 24th by Philip Odum at Watkins Lake in Norvell Township. The bird remained for several days, and was viewed by many birders. It moved between Watkins Lake and Wamplers Lake and was last reported on March 29th.

Non-birders always seem to be surprised that there are birds to be found in the winter months. Winter birding can be quite diverse and it is always exciting to search for the unexpected.



Little Gull
photo by Phil Odum



Golden Eagle
photo by Ross Green

Thank You to Our Partners in Kate Palmer Clean-Up

Pegg Clevenger/Steward



The Kate Palmer Sanctuary benefited from the work of Trinity Lutheran volunteer students and parents. The Ekong, Fox, Gerhard, Genthner, Goings, Hoaglin, Kremer, and Vanderwiede families along with Audubon member, Erma Turner, braved the cold but dry weather to clean the Irish Corners (McCain and O'Brien Roads). We collected 17 bags of trash, 2 bags of leaves, 4 tires, a big blue tarp and a card table.

Trinity teacher Clint Genthner, and Principal Tim Frusti provided refreshments and disposed of the trash in the school dumpster.



Erma Turner & Trinity students and Parents at Kate Clean-Up

HAEHNLE HAPPENINGS

Lathe Claflin

A Changing Face at Haehnle Sanctuary?

Haehnle Sanctuary is getting a new look. Removal of the fen-destroying glossy buckthorn continued this winter with three more acres attacked as of this writing. More acres will be affected in the coming days. The result is dramatic and quite visible from the kiosk area. The eventual outcome will be a wide expanse of open wetland most of which should be a fen. Native grasses, sedges, and wildflowers will prevail, i.e. the natural state. Associated animal life such as native bees, butterflies, other insects, marshland birds, and maybe a massasauga rattlesnake or two should also return.

In another vein, this spring we hope to plant a few hundred common and swamp milkweed at the Sanctuary. Rachelle Roake, the Conservation Science Coordinator at Michigan Audubon, has been offered, free of charge, small plants or plugs of milkweed as part of the Milkweed for Restoration program. Obviously, this is directed toward saving the Monarch butterfly from extinction. Monarch populations are declining at an alarming rate (more than 90% over the last two decades), thanks to a deadly combination of factors that includes illegal logging in Mexico, wildfires, droughts, and a drastic loss of their crucial milkweed habitat in the United States. The grant is part of a multipronged, national effort to locate appropriate habitat and then ensure they have milkweed plants. Sounds like the restoration effort to save the bluebird! Rachelle and Jackson Audubon Society president Connie Spotts will be coordinating the effort, and you will hear more from them in the near future.

On still another front, Michigan Audubon and Haehnle Sanctuary will be applying for a government grant this year to dramatically increase the density of native wildflowers in two of our native grassland plantings. This grant will cover site preparation and planting of a mixture of native wildflowers that will cover the blooming seasons from spring to fall. The purpose of this grant, part of a national effort initiated by President Obama in June 2014, is to increase foraging habitat for pollinators, the so-called Pollinator Initiative. Pollinators are declining rapidly nationwide because of a loss of habitat generally and near agricultural settings specifically, and due to the heavy use of insecticides. In addition, honey bees are suffering from colony collapse disease. Honey bees, native bees, and other insects are responsible for “\$3 billion worth of crop pollination annually in the U.S.”

So will Haehnle look different in the future? We sure hope so. But has our mission changed? Not at all. Haehnle is a wildlife preserve, with emphasis on Sandhill Cranes and other birds. Haehnle is about improving and protecting habitat for wildlife. Through selective restoration and planting we can expand the existing base of native plants which will then help recruit more native insects and eventually more native birds and other wildlife. At the same time we provide foraging habitat for critical insect species that we, as humans, need to survive. A bonus will be the spectacle of flowers and gorgeous views of Mud Lake Marsh and our fen.

Volunteers Needed

Haehnle will receive roughly 500 seedlings to plant in the two main restored meadows as well as the meadow off Wooster Road. However, we can't do it alone; we need volunteers to make this planting happen! Please donate a few hours of your time to give Haehnle a milkweed boost. We will have a limited supply of planting tools and gloves to borrow, so please bring your own if you have them. If you are willing to bring a watering can to help transport water for the new seedlings, we would greatly appreciate it. Snacks and drinks will be provided. We plan to schedule the planting day for early June, but we do not yet know when the seedling delivery will arrive. Please email Rachelle Roake at RRoake@michiganaudubon.org if you are interested in volunteering for the planting day and she will send you an announcement when the planting day is set.

Hummingbird Friendly Plants

Michigan Audubon

No native plant instructional would be complete without a mention of hummingbird-friendly plants! We've picked out five native plants that hummingbirds love that you can include in your native landscaping, and some resources you can use to plan a hummingbird-friendly yard.

Feeding Hummingbirds

You may already have put out a hummingbird feeder, but the best way to bring hummingbirds to your yard is to plant native plants that will attract them. Hummingbirds visit between 1,000 and 2,000 flowers per day*! Planting a variety of flowers that bloom throughout the spring and summer can help keep them fed during their stay in Michigan. *Statistic via National Audubon Society.

Why natives?

Hummingbirds have evolved alongside native plants, as they are specially equipped for drinking from plants with long, tubelike flowers that other nectar-feeding creatures cannot reach. Although they are attracted to the color red, not all flowers that are red provide the nutritional value they need.

Our list

We've compiled a list of five native plants that hummingbirds will love, but there are many native plants that hummingbirds will appreciate.

Cardinal Flower

The *Lobelia cardinalis* is a plant with tall stalks of red, spine-like flowers that hummingbirds love. They can make an attractive border for a garden, and can grow in sun, partial shade, or shade. They do require moist soil to thrive. Overpicking of this native plant has led to scarcities, so be sure to ask your native plant provider how they acquire the seeds or plants they sell. Responsible sellers will have growing programs or sustainable practices that do not diminish wild populations of native plants.

Beebalm

Also called Wild Bergamont, the *Monarda fistulosa* is a lavender, late-flowering plant that is hardy in droughts and very attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies. Beebalm can be planted in semi-dry sunny or lightly shaded areas. Growing 2-4 feet tall, it makes an excellent plant for layering your garden.

Hairy Penstemon

Also called Hairy Beardtongue, *Penstemon hirsutus* is a plant with slender, pale violet flowers and a hairy stem that gives it its name. Hairy Penstemon grows in sun, shade, or partial shade, but requires thin, well drained soils. The tube-shaped flowers bloom in June or July, which when planted as part of a varied garden, can provide hummingbirds with a continual and varied source of food throughout their stay in Michigan.

Jewelweed

Also referred to as Spotted Touch-me-not, *Impatiens capensis* grows in dense stands in moist, shady areas. The stem juice is said to treat rashes from poison ivy or fungus like athlete's foot. With bright golden-orange flowers, this plant is especially adapted to pollination by hummingbirds. Plant in shady areas with moist soil.

Red Columbine

The *Aquilegia canadensis* is a favored plant for attracting hummingbirds as the plants begin to bloom just when Ruby-throated Hummingbirds begin to arrive in Michigan. The drooping flowers have adapted specifically for hummingbirds, who can hover underneath the flower to drink the nectar. Plant Red Columbine in well-drained soils in partial or total shade. These plants are an excellent choice for

Spring Waterfowl Trip

Steve Jerant

The Jackson Audubon Society sponsored the annual Spring Wildfowl Trip on Saturday, March 26. Connie Spotts and Joyce Peterson led a group of 14 birders around Jackson County searching for these earliest of spring migrants. In all, we checked off 53 species.

The caravan next journeyed over to Watkins/Thorn Lake where there was a good size raft of Ruddy Ducks. In addition, we saw Common and Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads, Canvasbacks, Pie-billed Grebes, and Ring-billed Ducks. In addition, Ring-billed Gulls, Bonapart's Gull and Forster's Terns were spotted. Two lone hunters, Belted Kingfisher and Great Blue Heron, were working these now liquid lakes.

Wamplers Lake was the next stop and was to be the highlight of the tour. In addition to the usual suspects, the group was able to spot Common Loon, Common Goldeneye, and Horned Grebe. Ross Green was at the lake and was able to find the Little Gull that had been reported there earlier in the week. It was a lifer for some of us. The gull was far out in the lake, but when it rose out of the water to fly we were able to clearly see the black underwings which marked it as a Little.

The tour group stopped at Norvel Lake on Palmer road. There we spied American Black Duck, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, American Coot, and Blue-winged Teal. The view from Austin Road at the bridge was not as rewarding, but before we left, we got a nice flyover by two Bald Eagles.

We ended at Michigan Center where Connie spied the elusive Harlequin Duck. He is sporting a much better look than when I saw him last year. Much as I'd like to see him stick around, here's hoping he moves on to a place where he can put that excellent plumage to good use.

In addition to our birds, we also heard Chorus Frogs, Leopard Frogs, and of course, Spring Peepers.

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"Member Management" is Going Online!

Jackson Audubon Society is integrating member management into our new website. We will be able to:

- send program announcements to members via email
- allow membership renewal
- new member enrollment
- electronic membership payments

For current members to take full advantage and make this upgrade successful please update us with your email.

Send your email address to jacksonaudubon@gmail.com

The 2016 Peregrine Falcon Breeding Season

Big Red and Chayton began breeding in 2010 atop the Jackson County Tower Building.

During this period they have laid 22 eggs, 17 of which have fledged (not counting this year).

- Big Red and Chayton made their first Live Stream appearance on 3/7/16 at 1:22 pm
- First egg was laid the morning of March 20th
- Second egg was laid the afternoon of March 22nd
- Third egg was laid the afternoon of March 24th
- Fourth egg was laid the afternoon of March 26th
- Fifth egg was revealed the morning of March 30th

May 3rd - All five eggs hatched - 4 survive

Reclaiming the Woods

Seventeen hikers from the Dahlem Tuesday Morning nature group met at the Kate Palmer Sanctuary in mid- April to view the new trails and outdoor classroom. the result of the efforts of Trinity Lutheran science teacher, Clint Genthner, Audubon's partner in education. He brings the students outside to this former mining pit that he has fashioned into an amphitheater classroom with funding from the Jackson Community Foundation. The students have also assisted Clint with clearing trails and marking the trails with fallen logs. The group also saw the location of the bridge that Jackson and Michigan Audubon, along with Trinity, will be working on to connect the eastern "top-side" of the Kate to the lower O'Brien Road side. Gary Siegrist, Dahlem naturalist and Audubon presenter, told the group that the sanctuary is one of the oldest in the state and one of the best birding and spring wildflower sites in the county.



Amphitheater classroom at
Kate Palmer.
Funded by Jackson
Community Foundation &
used by Trinity Lutheran
students

Spring/Summer Events & Field Trips

May 28, 8:00 a.m. ~ Birding Field Trip to MSU's MacCreedy Reserve

Go in search of late migrants and local breeding species such as the Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine and Hooded Warblers. Meet in the parking lot at 8 a.m. Skiff Lake Rd. (south of Crouch and north of Jefferson). Call Don Henise (517-416-4188) for more information.

June 25, 11:00 a.m. ~ Potluck/Purple Martin Party

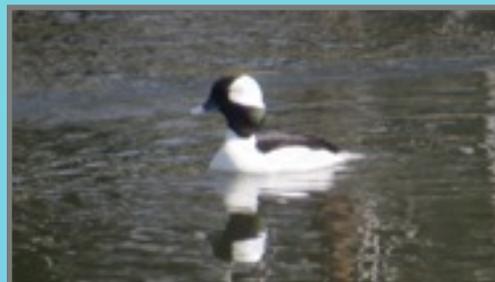
At Connie Spotts (2023 Crispell Rd). Rain or shine. Please bring a passing dish. Call 517-529-9031 for more information.

July 23, 11:00 a.m. ~ Butterfly/Dragonfly Walk at MSU's MacCreedy Reserve

Bring water and snacks and meet in the parking lot at 11 a.m. The reserve is south of Crouch and north of Jefferson. Call Don Henise (517-416-4188) or kiskadee3@att.net for more information.

August 13, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. ~ Birds Booms and Butterflies Festival

At the Dahlem Center, exhibits, activities, hikes, birds of prey, live hummingbird banding. Call Gary Siegrist (517-782-3453) for more information.



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Jackson Audubon Society is a chapter of Michigan Audubon Society

Jackson Audubon Society Mission:

To promote among the people of the Jackson Area an interest, knowledge and appreciation of birds, wildlife and the environment.



Michigan Audubon - Connecting Birds and People for the Benefit of Both