far flowing water

OWASHTANONG ISLANDS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Grand Haven, Michigan

November 18 - 7:30

Volume 19 ❖ Number 3
November, 2008

MAS Bird Conservation Projects in Michigan

Tom Funke

Tom is Conservation Director for Michigan Audubon Society. Among his responsibilities are coordinating MAS' sanctuaries and working with the National Audubon Society to administer the Important Bird Areas program.

He has hiked over 1,250 miles of the North Country Trail including all of Michigan and Wisconsin.

Everyone is invited.
Our programs are free.

Table of Contents

Butterflies 2008	6
Chickadee Nest Tubes	7
Fall Yard Warblers	2
Fishermen to the Rescue	3
Join Audubon's Citizen Science Team	8
Peregrine Project	2
Programs 2008-2009	2
Snowy Owl	4

United Methodist
Church of the Dunes
717 Sheldon, Grand Haven, MI

Visit the OIAS homepage at
http://www.oias.org

More Directors are needed!!!
If you would like to be a Director, let Michael L know.
OIAS can have up to nine Directors.

Programs 2008 - 2009

JANUARY 20 — **Ottawa County Parks Update** Chip Francke - Ottawa County Parks Naturalist

FEBRUARY 17 — **From the Cutover to the Coast Guard City: A visual history of land cover change in Grand Haven, Michigan,** Erik Nordman - Department of Biology, GVSU

MARCH 17 — **Gray Wolves in the Upper Great Lakes Region:** History, Ecology, and Current Status Paul Keenlance - Department of Biology, GVSU

APRIL 21— **Michigan's Important Birding Areas and Update on the Search for the Ivory Billed Woodpecker** Caleb Putnam, Michigan IBA Coordinator

MAY 19 — **Annual Potluck & Members'** "Show-and-Tell" Slide Show

Grand Valley State University Peregrine Project

Submitted by Michael L

Grand Valley State University Peregrine Project seeks to build and install a nest box on the top of GVSU's Eberhard Center in downtown Grand Rapids in an effort to increase public awareness on the plight of the Peregrine Falcon in Michigan while also increasing the local population of Peregrines. Additional goals include the installation of a web-based camera to support research and education initiatives at GVSU.

In order to raise funds for GVSU's Peregrine Project, Joe Rogers of the Wildlife Recovery Association will be giving presentations which feature live birds of prey. Two shows are planned for Sunday, November 16th at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. in Loutit Lecture Hall (in Henry Hall) at Grand Valley State University in Allendale. Admission is free, however, donations are encouraged.

For more information on GVSU's Peregrine Project, please contact Todd Aschenbach (aschenbt@gvsu.edu) or Michael Lombardo (lombardm@gvsu.edu)

Fall Yard Warblers . . . . .

This fall we had more warblers at one time and at numerous times. The numbers of birds seen at one time as well as the number of species in the fall .. more than we have ever had before in our yard. At one point we had 10 Nashville Warblers and two Tennessee Warblers in our little pond and at least 15 other birds flittering around because there was no room in the pond. We were glued to the kitchen window beginning August 23 and ending about a month later. Juvenile Hooded Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Mourning Warbler, Orange-crown Warbler, Blackpolls, Black-throated Green Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Golden-crowned Kinglet, to name a few.

To reduce Newsletter costs, avoid mail delay, **save OIAS $$$,** see colored pictures — receive your Newsletter by email in Adobe Acrobat format.

☑ The "Send via email" box when you renew.

Our programs are made possible, in part, by an Emilie Baker Fund for the Environment grant from the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation.

Christmas Bird Count: December 20

Contact Fred B at 895-6127 if you are interested. We need as many people as possible to get the best coverage of the circle.

Fishermen to the Rescue

Steve • Jason • Dave

WHERE: Holland State Park
WHEN: Sunday morning, 11/2

Tom, Carl, and I were walking toward Lake Michigan from the parking lot when John C. approached from the pier and asked "where were you when we needed you?". Three blank looks and "Why?" was our response. John said an 18" white owl had gotten tangled in fishing lines at the pier. Three fishermen, Dave, Steve, and Jason, netted the owl, brought it to the pier, and proceeded to untangle the fishing line from around the owl. Fortunately, the hook did not connect with the owl. The fishermen cut the line, grabbed the swivel and unwound the line from around the bird. They used some heavy gloves they had with them to hold the bird, but it was very calm and only did some beak clicking.

When we later saw the owl, it was on a little bluff to the north of the park sitting in the sun behind some large tufts of grass, probably considering how lucky was to have escaped the fishing line and to have found such helpful fishermen.

The owl had apparently been hunting along the north side of the pier and became entangled in some fishing lines. Because of the quick action of Dave, Steve, and Jason, the owl was quickly released. John was on hand to document the work on this juvenile Snowy Owl.

A true conservationist
is a man who knows that the
work is not given
by his fathers but
borrowed from his children.

John James Audubon

FAR FLOWING WATER
is a publication of the Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society, Grand Haven, MI All articles are copyrighted; permission is granted to copy any article in its entirety with references attached. Please contact Editor for other arrangements.

SNOWY OWL *Bubo scandiacus*

Judi Manning

The Snowy Owl was first classified in 1758 by Carolus Linnacus, the Swedish naturalist who developed binomial nomenclature to classify and organize animals and plants. "Scandiacus" is a Latinized word referring to Scandinavia as this owl was first observed in the northern parts of Europe. It is the official bird of Quebec.

This owl is the northernmost, heaviest, and most distinctively marked owl in North America. Females are 26 inches long, males 23 inches long and weigh 4 to 6 pounds. The male has nearly pure white feathers, except in flight when dark spots are seen along his wings. The female and young are streaked more heavily with dark spots and bands of color to enable them to blend in while on the nest. Big yellow eyes expand or contract, depending on the light and how clearly it wants to see. Owl's eyes do not move. They must move the whole head to see in different directions by turning their head 270 degrees each way. They are active from dawn to dusk.

Its large, curved black bill and clawed feet are almost completely covered with feathers. Talons are withdrawn into well padded feet when it walks on the ground and are extended to perch with two toes forward and two toes back. One back toe is very flexible so they can have three toes forward and one toe back to use the foot like a hand when grabbing a mouse or other small animal.

They have a direct, strong, steady flight with deliberate, powerful downstrokes and quick upstrokes. They have very long wings (45" to 64") to carry their light-boned bodies so they do not need to flap their wings very fast. The primary flight feathers are covered with a soft, velvet-like fringe to soften the noise of flight. They tolerate the cold as well as a polar bear with plumage as thick as that of an Antarctic penguin.

Hardly moving the wings they make short flights from perch to perch close to the ground. Most of the time is spent on a favorite perch, sitting still for hours waiting for prey which is located visually or by sound. Ears are behind the eyes from the top of the skull and down both sides of the face and usually hidden by feathers. When listening, it raises its facial feathers. It can hear movement beneath thick layers of snow and in dense grass, detecting where it is coming from, silently gliding over the field, landing within striking distance of the victim, and snatching it with its foot. Prey is captured on the ground, in the air, or snatched off the surface of water with their talons. They swallow small prey whole, but carry larger prey away to be torn in chunks.

Snowy's must eat the equivalent of its body weight each day. It gulps down the food without chewing - in goes the fur, feathers, beak, toes, nails and bones. They expel large, rough-looking cylindrical pellets with numerous bones, feathers, and fur after every meal. The owl's favorite spot becomes covered with the pellets.

A bird of the Arctic tundra or open grasslands and fields, they rarely venture into forests.
The Snowy's breeding range is a narrow band in the high arctic from Eastern Canada to Alaska and at the same latitudes in the Old World.

In its tundra home the lemming, a member of the rodent family, is the principal food. When lemmings become scarce, the owls become opportunistic feeders, catching a wide range of birds, mammals, fish and carrion. Mammals include: mice, hares, muskrats, marmots, squirrels, rabbits, rats, and moles. Birds include: geese, shorebirds, Ring-necked Pheasants, grouse, American coots, grebes, gulls, songbirds, and Short-eared Owls. Owls with young require two lemmings a day and a family of Snowy Owls may eat up to 1,500 lemmings before the young scatter. Owl numbers widely fluctuate depending on the lemming and vole population.

Lemmings are scarce when there is little snow cover and the winter temperatures drop to -50 deg. F. affecting the owls. Looking for winter food owls become very nomadic moving further south and are found along lakeshores, marshes, agricultural areas, and roost on buildings in cities. Immature males go the farthest south, followed by immature females, then adult males. Adult females stay as far north as possible. This highly irregular invasion or eruption occurs every three to five years. During one of these invasions, a bird will eat whatever is widely available where it is wintering.

The Snowy is a loner at least six months each year and are virtually silent during nonbreeding seasons. The male's typical call is a loud, harsh, grating bark and the female has a similar higher pitched call. During breeding season he makes a loud booming "hoo, hoo" to mark his territory and to let a female know she should join him. The attack call is a guttural "kruff-guh-ghh-guk". They also make dog-like barks, rattling cackles, shrieks, hissing, and bill snapping.

Courtship begins midwinter into April with the male flying in an undulating, moth-like flight. On the ground he will bow deeply, fluff feathers, and strut around with his wings spread and dragging the ground. Spotting a female up to one mile away, he will quickly grab a lemming, fly to the her, and place his prize near her. To further impress her, he displays the prey in caches to show he is a capable provider.

The female selects the nest sight. She makes a shallow hollow with her talons on the ground on a snow-free elevated rise, mound or boulder near good hunting areas, so she can see in all directions from low valley floors up to mountain slopes and plateaus over 3,000 feet. Sometimes the nest is lined with scraps of vegetation and owl feathers.

She lays between 5 and 8 pure white eggs, one every two days in the depression. The clutch and brood sizes are heavily dependent on the food supply. The male protects the nest site and brings food to the incubating female. One month later, hatching one egg at a time, youngsters emerge blind, wet and appearing naked with white down appearing in a few hours. In a few more hours they begin to eat. By the age of three days, it has doubled in size and its sibling appears. At 10 days of age, the white down is replaced by gray down and feathers, making them very hard to see in the brownish colored earth and mosses. They run around the tundra and fly at two months and white feathers begin to appear. During this time, they are vulnerable to other predators. Both parents feed the young and are fiercely protective until they learn to catch their own food. They attack all intruders that threaten the eggs or young and are docile in their winter range. The young owlets are easy targets for black-backed gulls and other birds of prey, arctic foxes, wolves and bears.

Starvation is the most serious natural threat. Natural enemies are few: arctic foxes and wolves on the tundra breeding ground; skuas and jaegers may take eggs or chicks. Threats are: collisions with automobiles, utility lines and other objects, and gunshot wounds.

Population numbers are difficult to estimate because of the size and remoteness of their arctic habitat. There is no information on long-term population changes, except there is an apparent decline in northern Europe. They can live up to 9.5 years in the wild.

Throughout history, owls were thought to be evil spirits that flitted silently through the night and were companions of witches. On the other hand, other cultures thought the owl was a very wise bird. Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, was often seen with an owl on her shield. Merlin, the wise and magical friend of King Arthur often appeared to the king with an owl on his shoulder that nibbled on his ear and told him wise things.

Also known as Snow Owl, Arctic Owl, Great White Owl, Ghost Owl, Ermine Owl, Tundra Ghost, Ookpik, Scandinavian Nightbird, White Terror, of the North, and Highland Tundra Owl.

References:

Snowy Owl, http://www.owlpages.com/owl; http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Snowy_Owl_dtl.html; http://www.mnh.si.ed/arcit/html/owl.html; http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/enlarge/snowy-owl_image.html; http://www.defenders.org/wildlife_and_habitat/wildlife/snowy_owl.php;
Biography of a Snowy Owl, Alice L Hope G.P., Putnam's Sons, 1979.
Snowy Owls, Patricia Hunt, Dodd, Mead &Company, 1982
Snowy OwL EirikAT. Blorn, BirdWatcher's Digest, Jan/Feb 1998, Pg. 31-39.
Super Bird, Les Line, National Wildlife, Feb/Mar,1997, Pgs. 23-30

If you receive you newsletter by mail, it is . . . . . .

A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE OF
far flowing water

Butterflies, 2008

Judi Manning

MONARCHS:

This year we did not see very many adult Monarch butterflies, not even during migration. In past years they were all over the Cup plants.

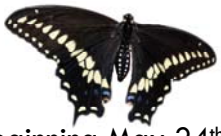
My neighbor brought the first eggs over on May 31st and the first butterfly was released was June 27th. I released 52 between June 27th and July 2nd.

July 23rd a few more eggs/caterpillars arrived. The big egg day was July 28, when I had 81 eggs and on July 31st when we gathered 44 more eggs. These butterflies began hatching on August 24th and ended on September 11th.

Milkweeds in our yard were almost nonexistent this year. A few plants last year picked up some type of virus and spread. I had to gather leaves from along the roadside at work, from friends, and the parking lot at work.

In all, I released 246 Monarchs.

BLACK SWALLOWTAILS:



I released the overwintering Black Swallowtails beginning May 24th I raised another batch of caterpillars and released them on July 26th. I then had more caterpillars to feed. Last year this batch overwintered so I assumed that would happen again. No. One day I glanced in the box and saw a hatched butterfly and released it. About half of them were released beginning 9/20. So I only have a few to release next spring. Among those released on 9/20 one was a female. All of them I had released last year and this year to this time were males. Interesting to see what I release next spring.

GIANT SWALLOWTAILS:

On day my neighbor came over with some Giant Swallowtail eggs on Hop tree leaves. We would spot the Giant Swallowtails flittering about more this year than in past years, but we had not had any caterpillars mature in our yard that I knew about. I was not sure how to go about it because the Hop tree leaves dried up quicker than the juicy milkweeds the Monarchs used or the bronze fennel the Black Swallowtails used. Many of them grew and Carl built me another overwintering box for them. We will see how they overwinter. This was a first for me.

The overall butterfly numbers in our yard was down and we did not see some species that we have seen in past years. Every year is different.

Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society Mission Statement

a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation

Provide stewardship of local Grand River island wildlife sanctuaries owned by the Michigan Audubon Society;

Achieve through education, public recognition of the value and need for protecting and preserving wildlife, plants, soil, water and other natural resources as well as an understanding of their interdependence;

Promote an interest in our native birds and as well as native flora and fauna, and their habitats because of their great economic, cultural and recreational value; and

Aid the Michigan Audubon Society in its study, conservation and research efforts.

Chickadee Nest Tubes

excerpted Judi Manning

Chickadees are fussy about house design and prefer to excavate their own cavities.

"Scientists have learned a great deal about social interactions, bird personalities, brain neuron regeneration, how ultraviolet plumage color influences mate choice, and other issues by studying Black-capped Chickadees, but there are gaps in our understanding of their basic nesting habitats. Chickadee nest cavities have such tiny entrance holes that it's difficult for researchers to get the inside story except by studying them in nest boxes.

Chickadees prefer birdhouses filled with wood shavings, giving them something to excavate." Starting in 2005, researchers Caren and David gave chickadees near the Lab of Ornithology in Sapsucker Woods a more readily available "artificial tree snag" made from PVC tube. They grouped one artificial snag and one standard nest box at 20 sites. Each was filled with wood shavings. They located eight of the sites next to existing unfilled nest boxes. Entrance holes for the structures at each site were oriented in the same direction.

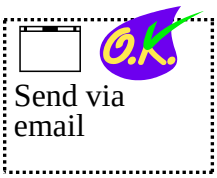
"Each year of the study, chickadees excavated 60-70% of the artificial snags, but only 40-50% of the filled nest boxes. They built nests in 25-30% of the snags in only 15% of the filled nest boxes, and seldom nested in empty boxes. The selection of artificial snags may have been influenced by the higher entrance holes in the snags and/or because the snags were less accessible to mice, but the preference was clear."

House Wrens and mice compete with chickadees for nest sites and neither wrens nor mice excavate their own cavities, but often take over after the chickadee has excavated it. The researchers found that no more likely than boxes to attract wrens, and non were taken by mice, ,suggesting that the snags may be less susceptible to other climbing predators as well.

If you are trying to interest a pair of chickadees in relocating near you, these artificial snags may be an excellent choice. The plants are available at www.birdscope.org.

Reference: Looking for the Perfect Fixer-Upper, Chickadees prefer nest tubes filled with wood shavings more than nest boxes, By Caren Cooper, David Bonter, and Laura Erickson, Birdscope, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Summer 2008, Page 1

2008-2009 OIAS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION



Name _____

Street _____ E-Mail _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ How did you hear about OIAS?_____

Check Member Type: ☐ $12 Individual or Family

☐ $100 Individual Life ☐ $15 ☐ $20 ☐ $30 Contributing

Make checks payable to: Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society,
Post Office Box 1654, Holland, Michigan, 49422

11/2008

If you change your mailing address or email address at any time, please contact me at birds02@charter.net Mailing newsletters to outdated mailing addresses costs the OIAS money.

Far Flowing Water is published eight times per year. If you would like to contribute to the next issue, **please have your articles to me by January 1st**

Join Audubon's Citizen Science Team to Tell the World Why Birds Count

From December 14, 2008 through January 5, 2009, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas will take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Grandmothers and students, soccer moms and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists will head out on an annual mission – often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house in the middle of winter.

These Citizen Scientists are taking action for conservation. By participating in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, they help scientists understand how birds are faring amid unprecedented environmental challenges. The data they collect informs the world about the State of Birds, and provides the information we need to shape their future and ours.

"Each of the citizen scientists who brave snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count make an enormous contribution to conservation," said Geoff LeBaron, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count Director.

Last year, thousands of volunteers counted nearly 60 million birds across the Americas and beyond. Each count occurs in a designated circle, 15 miles in diameter, and is led by an experienced birder, or designated "compiler".

The longest running Citizen Science program in the world, the count originally began on Christmas Day in 1900 when ornithologist and legendary birder Frank Chapman posed an alternative to an earlier traditional holiday "side hunt." Chapman proposed "hunting" birds to record their numbers. Instead of firing a shotgun, now we have an annual snapshot. Decades of data have added up to results envied by other scientists who don't enjoy such a fleet of volunteer help, or creatures as easily seen and counted as birds.

"Counting is the first step in learning how environmental threats are affecting our birds," said LeBaron. The proverbial "canaries in the coal mine," birds provide an early warning indicator of the health of the world we all share.

"Last year these birds sent us a clear message that their fate is determined by human activity more than anything else," said Audubon President John Flicker when announcing WatchList 2007. The using CBC and other data sources, WatchList identified 178 species in the continental U.S. and 39 in Hawaii that are imperiled. The report was based on the latest available research, including the Christmas Bird Count. In June of 2007, CBC results were pivotal to the Common Birds in Decline Report which revealed that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years, with some down as much as 80 percent.

TAKEN VERBATIM FROM NATIONAL AUDUBON: http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/

Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society
Judi Manning, Editor
P.O. Box 1654
Holland, MI 49422

PLEASE FORWARD
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Nov. 18
MAS Bird Conservation Projects
Dec. 20
Christmas Bird Count