



Grand Haven, Michigan

**6:15 P.M. October 20****BIRDING IN CHILE**Presented by: Steve Hamberg, President Holland Audubon Society

Chile, a country in South America, is situated between the Pacific Ocean and the western slopes of the Andes Mountains. It is a long, narrow country, 2700 miles north to south and, at most, 220 miles wide. Habitats of all sorts occur within this stretch: barren desert, lush grasslands, thick forests, soaring mountains, picturesque coastlines, and windswept southern steppes. It is one of South America's most stable and prosperous countries with good roads, good accommodations, good food, and it is clean and safe. There are over 500 species of birds within Chile's boundaries. Steve will take us from one end of the country to the other, showing some of its spectacular scenery while seeking out its varied and interesting birdlife. Join us to see the pictures, to hear the stories and to gain a glimpse into Chilean life.

Steve is a retired local physician who enjoys birding all over the world, and sharing his passion with others. To date, he has been to 96 countries and has accumulated a lifelist of 8300 bird species over the last 40 years. Besides birding he enjoys working in his yard at home, driving his 97 year-old car, and singing in the church choir. Most recently, he authored a book titled "Finding God in Evolution" and is starting to work on a second book on the history of North America in the 1600's.

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From the President's Desk - October 2026

Some of you may have received a recent email from Michigan Audubon Society (MAS) informing you that after much discussion MAS has decided to retain the organization's name. You may recall that several years ago there was a lot of public discussion about whether Audubon societies across the USA should retain John James Audubon's (1785-1851) name because of some of his unsavory beliefs and actions. MAS determined that they could retain its name without endorsing Audubon's history and continue to deliver "...meaningful conservation, education, and research programs..." and advance MAS's mission without incurring significant (a) financial costs rebranding and (b) lost time and effort from fulfilling its mission during the rebranding process. I agree with their decision. Consistent with MAS's mission, OIAS remains committed to providing opportunities for everyone to learn about birds and natural history and to participate in the activities of our Society.

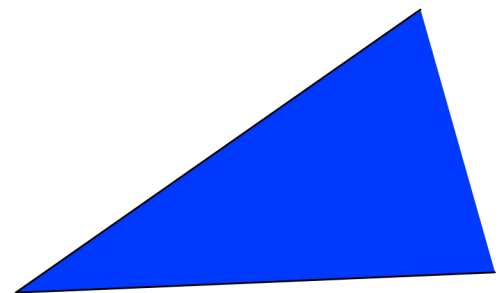
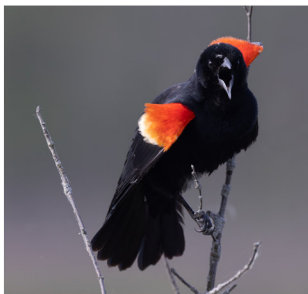
Please be sure to attend October's program "Chile Travelogue" by Dr. Steve Hamberg, President of the Holland Audubon Society. Steve's programs combine great information on birding, natural history, and the culture of the lands he visits. Invite your friends! The OIAS Board of Directors has put together an excellent set of programs for our 2026-2027 program year. The list of programs can be found in this issue of *Far Flowing Water* and on the OIAS website (www.oias.org).

Muskegon Birding Connection and the Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society (Grand Haven's chapter) have combined their resources for programs.

Please visit our website <http://www.oias.org>, and like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/oias.org. We will post birding information and information about OIAS and upcoming events there.

Good birding,
Michael P. Lombardo

OIAS welcomes the new members.



Thank you to Malcolm and Michael who contributed to this issue of the *far flowing water* newsletter.

Judi, Editor



2026-2027 Programs

November 17: The Splendor Next Door: Finding Birds Close to Home - Steve Jessmore, Photographer, Photojournalist

January 19: Wildlife Diseases - Alynn Martin, GVSU, Biology Department

February 16: Dr. Kelly Ronald from Hope College, Bird Behaviors: How the Sensory World Shapes Behavioral Decisions

March 16: Attracting Bluebirds to Your Yard - Bernie Place, Michigan Bluebird Society, Muskegon County Coordinator

April 20: Technology for Birding & Annual Business Meeting - OIAS Board Members

Back Yard Bird Count Results

February 12 – 15, 2027

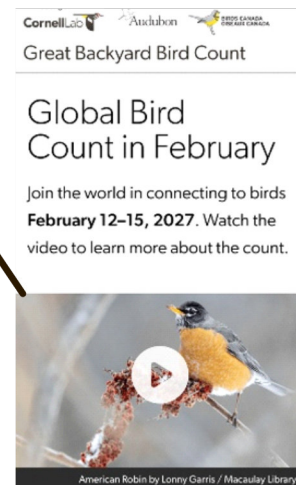
Judi Manning

On July 10th Lonny was checking out the Cornell Lab Great Backyard Bird Count website and to his surprise, when he opened the website, this is what he saw:

Soon after, the website had a different photo featured.

Cornell Lab posted the following results for the 2026 GBBC:

- “8,257 species of birds identified
- 216 countries or eBird subregions
- 467,696 eBird checklists
- 1,239,329 Saved Merlin Bird IDs (step-by-step, sound, or photo)
- 246,225 photos, videos, and sounds added to Macaulay Library
- 1,146,284 estimated global participants
- 435 reported community events”



Congratulations Lonny

Cornell Lab thanked everyone “for participating in GBBC, demonstrating once again the powerful unifying force of birds.”

<https://www.birdcount.org/>

Lessons of a Young Birder: The Humphrey-Parkes Age Classification System

Malcolm Oosting-Sineath

Over the past few OIAS newsletters, I have written pieces about how we assign age classes to birds. First, I discussed the seasonal system (breeding, nonbreeding, first winter, etc.) and its inconsistencies. As an example, an Indigo Bunting replaces its feathers in early spring into the brilliant blue that it will breed with. Breeding plumage! Seems to make sense. However, a Willow Flycatcher also replaces its feathers in early spring into the feathers it will breed in, but I've never heard this referred to as "breeding plumage," simply because the feathers look the same to the human eye. Inconsistencies just keep coming with this model. Then, I dived into the calendar-year system (hatch year, second year, third year, etc.) which has its age classes change from one human calendar year to the next. Sadly, it also has many faults. A Black-capped Chickadee born in 2024 is a second-year bird at 11:59 PM on December 31st, but one minute later, it changes to a third-year bird. The chickadee didn't undergo any notable changes itself; the calendar year just shifted. So, both of these systems are based on our human constructs and how we see birds, not how the birds age biologically. So what if there was a system that focused on the biology of the bird independent of these other constructs?

Enter ornithologists Philip Humphrey and Kenneth Parkes with their 1959 article "An Approach to the Study of Molts and Plumages." They realized that studying the way a bird looks is "obscured by making the nomenclature of plumages and molts contingent on stages of any other cycle or developmental process," such as what we have done with the seasonal and calendar-year systems (Humphrey & Parkes 1959, p. 14). Instead, these authors were trying to create an independent system that was consistent across all bird species and expressed age based on the bird's biology. This is important to understand the truth about birds.

An obvious way to create a system applicable to all bird species would be to base it off something every bird has in common, everywhere in the world: All birds have feathers. They need these feathers to survive for a variety of reasons. Feathers are not living structures. They wear out. Therefore, all birds have to replace feathers to stay alive. This molt process is homologous in that every bird alive today shares a common ancestor that also molted feathers that create plumages.

Every bird—over some period of time—must replace its feathers; however, this period of time is not always a year. Instead of using human calendar years, Humphrey and Parkes (1959) used "cycles" because different birds might replace their feathers on different dates. If a bird has one plumage per cycle, such as a Tufted Titmouse, Humphrey and Parkes suggested the term "basic plumage," which would be acquired through a prebasic molt. This term applies across the world for every bird that has a single plumage per cycle.

If a bird has two plumages per cycle, the molt where the bird replaces all its feathers (complete molt) is termed the prebasic molt—just like in the Tufted Titmouse—leading to basic plumage. If a bird has an additional molt in between these prebasic molts—such as the American Goldfinch—that molt is termed the prealternate molt, leading to the alternate plumage. Many passerines use this molting strategy, including the Willow Flycatcher mentioned above. It goes through an alternate molt in a very similar way to the American Goldfinch, and the Humphrey-Parkes system helps us understand that biological reality, even though the bird may not look obviously different to the human eye.

This system not only addresses our Willow Flycatcher problem, it also addresses some of the weaknesses of the calendar-year system. For example, the Black-capped Chickadee is in the same plumage on either side of the New Year's Eve ball drop, so the bird is given the same age designation in the Humphrey-Parkes system. It also works in the tropics, where molts are often based on rainy and dry cycles, and in species where their molt cycle is more or less than a year.

In summary, Humphrey and Parkes used the birds' actual biological changes (molts and plumages between them) to define age classes. The system works regardless of time of year, length of molt cycle, species, or any other snafu I've mentioned. In fact, in trying to understand this system, I've learned much more about how birds work than I did when learning about the other systems. However, the Humphrey-Parkes system also isn't perfect. In my next article, I'll explore how their system needed to be modified as we learned more about how birds progress throughout their biological life cycle.

2026-2027 OIAS Membership Application/Renewal

Date _____



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Membership Type ____\$20 Family ____\$30 Contributing ____\$100 Individual Life

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(10/26)

Michigan's Official State Duck

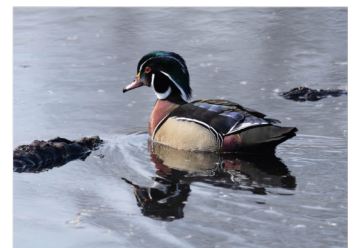
Judi Manning

Both the MI House and the Senate passed this legislation by wide bipartisan margins in March.

The Wood Duck was selected to celebrate its status as a major conservation success story. It has rebounded from near extinction in the early 20th century due to hunting and loss of nesting sites. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 was passed that help this species and many others. Since then, the Wood Duck population has been expanding to the north and west.

Other Michigan iconography: the state bird, American Robin; the state fish, Brook Trout; and the state soil, Kalkaska sand.

References: *Wood Duck Michigan's First Official State Duck*, Jessica Matthews, 3/26/26, <https://www.whmi.com/news/article/wood-duck-michigan-official-duck>, *Wood Duck named Michigan's new state symbol*, Kalloli Bhatt, 3/27/26, <https://www.michiganpublic.org/environment-climate-change/2026-03-27/wood-duck-named-michigans-new-state-symbol>



Hatchling & Overwintering Turtles Judi Manning



We were surprised on September 8, 14, and 29 to find a hatchling musk turtle. This seemed late to us. Discussing this with a group of friends the day after finding the first one, Dave H was not surprised and mentioned he did not think they ate before hibernation.



Musk Turtle

Hatchlings

- Turtles lay eggs in the spring.
- Hatchlings can sense environmental cues while in the nest cavity if they should emerge in the current year or the next year. If a hatchling senses now is the time, emerging begins at the end of summer continuing into October.
- The egg can be quite dry and crusted by the end of summer making it difficult for a hatchling to break through.
- After hatching, the young aquatic turtle's next mission is to find nearby water and find a safe spot to hibernate [brumate for all reptiles (cold blooded)] all while escaping predators.
- After hatching, young Box Turtles absorb the yolk sac, which can take several days and then begin brumation.

If you know of a turtle nest that has not hatched, leave it alone. They may be overwintering hatchlings.

Overwinter

Turtles have been around for over 200 million years. So how do they overwinter and survive the cold winter months when food becomes scarce?

It is important they have enough food and sun basking opportunities in the fall before brumation. Turtles accumulate fat in their body during warmer weather and sometimes in special pouches near their stomach. A turtle's skin detects changes in temperatures and when it starts dropping below freezing, they activate an internal mechanism that involves reducing fluid in their tissues and concentrating solutes. They also lower their metabolism and heart rate and reduce their oxygen consumption. The brain activity is minimal but sufficient to detect environmental cues. Some may not survive freezing temperatures, predation, changes in weather patterns, and habitat destruction as they survive on stored fat reserves for energy and limited oxygen use.

Before a turtle brumates the digestive tract must be empty. When the turtle becomes cold and inactive, undigested food can rot in the gut.

In Ontario typically the Painted Turtle, Snapping Turtle, and Map Turtle hatchlings overwinter in the nest and emerge the next spring using energy reserves in the liver and other organs. They also produce higher glucose levels and glycerol that acts like self-generated antifreeze. Overwintering in the nest can be risky due to freezing temperatures penetrating the nest cavity, the young running out of energy stores or dying from depletion of energy before spring or nest flooding.

Cont. Pg. 7

Painted Turtle - Snapping Turtle - Map Turtle



Aquatic turtles find deeper water and bury themselves in the mud.

Eastern Box Turtles bury themselves 4-10 inches in the soil beneath thick layers of leaf litter to avoid frost and temperature fluctuations and to trap the heat and moisture. They often reuse the same burrow each year.

Years with cooler temperatures increases the number of turtles species to overwinter in the nest. This could be the way turtles are adapting to climate change.



Box Turtle

Arrival of Spring

Sunshine warms the ground to above 50 degrees F. and turtles feel the shift in temperature. A subtle activity begins with small movements of stretching and flexing their limbs beneath the layers of ice or under the soil. Their bodies begin to thaw, and they slowly wake up from their deep sleep by reactivating metabolic functions, rehydrating tissues, and reestablishing behavioral routines. After emerging, they begin looking for food, appear in the open and slowly their bodily functions and behaviors steadily increase.

References: Turtles *survive the cold by taking a tropical vacation!* By Andrea Fielens, 5/4/23, <https://wildlifepreservation.ca/blog/turtles-survive-the-cold-by-taking-a-tropical-vacation/>, *Should We Stay or Should We Go Now? A Painted Turtle Hatchling Dilemma*, 1/3/20, <https://www.turtleguardians.com/2020/01/should-we-stay-or-should-we-go-now-a-painted-turtle-hatchling-dilemma/>, *Turtles Hatchlings That Overwinter Amaze and Delight*, Kelly Wallace, <https://thinkturtleconservationinitiative.wordpress.com/2024/10/01/turtles-hatchlings-that-overwinter-amaze-and-delight/>, *What Do Turtles Do In Winter? Hibernation Secrets Explained*, <https://scalecompanions.com/what-do-turtles-do-in-the-winter/>, *Physiological Adaptations in North American Box Turtles During Hibernation*, <https://tortoisezone.com/north-american-box-turtle-hibernation/>

Nashville Warbler

Leiothlypis ruficapilla

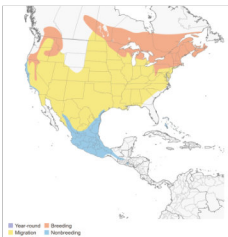


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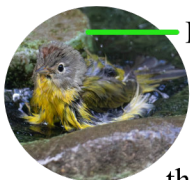


Nashville Warblers are easy to identify and look the same during spring and fall migration.

They prefer mid-level shrubby tangles in second-growth habitats and mixed with other foraging migrating warblers. This warbler does not nest in Tennessee it only migrates through and received this name because Alexander Wilson first saw it there in 1811.



The Nashville Warbler we see here during migration breeds across northeastern and north-central North America and southern Canada. A Pacific coast subspecies referred to as “Calaveras Warbler [*Leiothlypis ruficapilla ridgwayi*]” breeds in the mountains of the West coast. The western bird, once a separate species, has brighter plumage, a longer tail that often bobs while foraging and a louder, sharper call note. Eastern species sing in the middle to lower understory, and the western birds sing from high, exposed perches.



Part of its name “*ruficapilla*” refers to the small patch of seldom seen reddish feathers on its gray crown and used to communicate agitation and excitement.

Females and young birds are duller than the male. This fall I took pictures of a Nashville Warbler and noticed its yellow/orange feet. I did not recall ever noticing

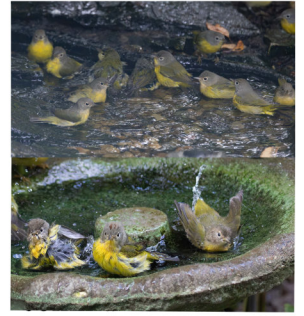


that color of feet. Research says: juveniles’ toes and claws are olive above and dull wax yellow below. Adults have blackish legs and feet are olive brown or olive gray. Most first year Nashville Warblers migrate south along the Atlantic coast and adults migrate inland.

They eat almost exclusively insects and other arthropods all year long. They are attracted to birdbaths, especially if there is dripping or flowing water and a native habitat. They will use porcupine quills as a nest material.



Their numbers are declining due to habitat loss, changes in land use, collisions with communications towers, and loss of riparian corridors to development. American Bird collaborating with the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures and improved 10 million acres of bird habitats from from the Chihuahuan Desert. Replacing slow flashing lights on towers with strobe lights reduces nighttime bird fatalities 70%.



References: Map and research material, https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Nashville_Warbler/id, American Bird Conservancy, <https://abcbirds.org/birds/nashville-warbler/>, How to Identify a Nashville Warbler, <https://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/bird-species/warblers/nashville-warblers/>, *Birds of the World*, <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/naswar/cur/introduction>, need to be a member.



Wandering Tattler

Far Flowing Water

is published seven times per year.

If you would like to contribute a complete article for the next issue, please have your article to me by November 1st.

far flowing water

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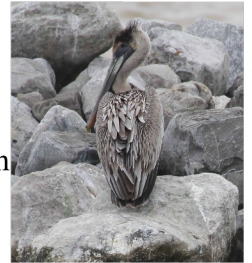
History of Wildlife Refuges

Judi Manning

Beginning in the 1800s through the early 1900s, elaborate hats were decorated with bird feathers and wings and were one of the first mass-produced fashion trends. With no regulations, millions of birds were killed for hats. Over 60 species of birds around the world faced extinction by the early 1900s.



In 1881 Paul Kroegel made his home in Sebastian, Florida. This home overlooked the last rookery for Brown Pelicans on Florida's East Coast (Pelican Island). Every year he watched thousands of them return to the island and then noticed the birds starting to disappear. He put himself between the market hunters boating up the river and the birds and spread the word about wanting to protect the birds.



A local U.S. Senator, Frank Chapman, joined his group and urged Pres. Theodore Roosevelt to save Pelican Island. In 1903 Pres. Roosevelt signed an executive order designating Pelican Island as the first Federal Bird Reserve and it eventually became the first National Wildlife Refuge to protect the nesting birds. Pres. T. Roosevelt established 50 wildlife sanctuaries while he was President.

In 1908 P. Roosevelt established the National Bison Range in Montana. This was the first time the US Congress used tax money to buy land to conserve wildlife.

Bird hats were still extremely popular when a 20th century influencer from Boston, Harriet Hemenway, used her influence in high society to bring awareness to this and started a "bird hat" boycott. This resulted in bird hats becoming unfashionable. Her group became the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

The "bird hat" campaign resulted in the Lacey Act of 1900, prohibiting spring shooting, night shooting and interstate wild game sales. This laid the groundwork for The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. This ended the plume sale.

Now the Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects over 1,000 bird species and over 1,300 species currently listed as threatened or endangered in the U.S. There are now over 570 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts to provide habitat for thousands of species, especially migratory waterfowl administered by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Services. The 500th National Wildlife Refuge System established is the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge which is ancestral lands of the Shawnee indigenous peoples in West Virginia.

Two ordinary citizens laid the entire foundation for the National Wildlife Refuges covering all 50 states and 5 U.S. territories that protects 755 million acres and 95 million acres of land.

For precise timelines from 1871 to 2020 for the establishment of wildlife refuges, go to: Historical timeline, <https://www.fws.gov/node/262619>

References: *How Two People Saved Millions of Birds*, Nicole Vidal, <https://www.fws.gov/story/how-two-people-saved-millions-birds>, *History of Wildlife Refuges*, <https://www.bigoaksconservationsociety.org/single-post/history-of-wildlife-refuges>, *Exploitation, Conservation and Misconceptions: A History of the National Wildlife Refuge System*, Alexandra Vollman, 6/12/19, <https://modernconservationist.com/exploitation-conservation-and-misconceptions-a-history-of-the-national-wildlife-refuge-system/>

Mission Statement **Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society**

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.

Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society

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