



www.detroitaudubon.org

Flyway

Fall 2009

Volume 2009, Issue 4

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER POPULATION ON THE RISE AGAIN

By Jim Bull

I recently participated in the annual Kirtland's Warbler census for the 29th time since 1978. My father, a former Detroit Audubon board member, helped start the census when he worked for the then Michigan Department of Conservation in 1951.

In the beginning years of the census, 1951 through 1961 the warblers had a small but stable population of about 500 singing males. Since every singing male is assumed to have a mate, the population was about 1000 birds. In 1971, the population had plummeted to about 200 singing males. They were on the brink of extinction and were added to the both the federal and state endangered species lists. An interagency recovery team was created to oversee the efforts to bring this little jackpine songster back from its precarious position to a stable population again. The recovery goal was 1,000 singing males.

The Kirtland's Warbler habitat, extensive areas of 4-18 foot jackpine trees, was historically created by fire. The jackpine cones, when seared by fire, drop their seeds on the sandy soil enriched by the ashes of the mature trees. A controlled burn, that escaped when the wind changed in 1980, burned 26,000 acres, destroyed homes and took the life of a young wildlife biologist. Researchers from the University of Michigan led by Dr. Burton Barnes, studied the area and determined what comprised the best habitat for the Kirtland's. Using that knowledge managers have been able to effectively mimic fire in jackpine plantations that are now created after jackpine are harvested for pulpwood. Trapping the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird which uses Kirtland nests for its eggs, has also been critical to the success of the Kirtland's Warbler recovery effort. Without these two management tools, the Kirtland's would be extinct.

Last year the total singing male count was over 1,700 including several in the Upper Peninsula and a couple confirmed nestings in Wisconsin and Ontario. About 90% of the warblers are now found on plantations. The other 10% still find nesting sites in areas where wild fires have come through and burned enough acreage to create habitat before they were brought under control by fire fighters.

I just got word from Phil Huber, the Mio District Wildlife Biologist, who also coordinated the US Forest Service census effort, that after covering 16,500 acres in 6 days the results were 589 singing males on US Forest Service land. According to Phil, this is a record number of Kirtland's Warblers for the Huron National Forest and the 7th consecutive year they have been above their objective of 420 pairs.

In Your

Flyway

Kirtland's Warbler on the Rise Again	1
Safe Passage Great Lakes Honor Role	2
President's Message	3
Switching Tower Lights Saves Birds	3
Great Field Trips	4
DAS Donation Form	4
Wild Spectacles	5
DAS Has New Phone Number	6
The <i>Flyway</i> Online?	7
Please E-Mail Us!	7
Cats In and Out	8

Flyway

A publication of the Detroit Audubon Society,
26080 Berg Rd, Southfield, MI, 48033

Telephone: (248) 990-1316
Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. -
Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Website – detroitaudubon.org

Flyway is published four times a year and is mailed
to over 6,500 local members of the National
Audubon Society in Southeastern Michigan.

The opinions expressed by the authors and editors
do not necessarily reflect the policy of the DAS.

Articles that appear in the *Flyway* may be
reproduced freely as long as credit is given to
Detroit Audubon Society.

Submission of original articles and artwork is
welcomed. Deadline for the Winter '09/'10 Issue is
October 1, 2009.

Advertising rates are available by contacting the
DAS office.

Flyway Lead Editor: Sue Beattie
Flyway Photo Editor: Rob Duchene
Flyway Layout/Design: Don Tinson II
DAS Webmaster: Chris Fielding

Safe Passage Great Lakes Honor Roll

The following buildings have agreed to implement Project
Safe Passage Great Lakes by turning out their lights between
the hours of 11:00 P.M. and dawn during the fall and spring
migration periods. The governments and organizations listed
have endorsed Safe Passage and urged their members and
constituents to participate. It should be noted that certain
lights may not be turned off due to circumstances beyond the
control of the operators, such as code requirements or tenant
rights.

- Brewery Park
- Detroit Opera Company
- Ford Motor Company
- State of Michigan Government Buildings
- Macomb County Board of Commissioners
- City of Southfield
- Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA)
- Buhl Building
- DTE Energy
- Coleman A. Young Municipal Building
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan
- City of Mt. Clemens
- Chrysler World Headquarters and Technology Center
- National City Center, Troy MI

- Jackson, Michigan Buildings:
- The Blake Building
 - First Baptist Church
 - Elaine Apartments
 - Nelson Towers
 - Jackson City Hall
 - Jackson County Tower Building
 - Consumers Energy, One Energy Plaza
 - Consumers Energy Environmental Laboratory Services
 - Foot Hospital Buildings, North East Ave. and One Jackson
Square

For the Latest News and Views from Detroit Audubon

be sure to frequently visit our website:
<http://www.detroitaudubon.org/>

DAS Board of Directors

- President:** Jack Smiley
- Vice President:** Rosemarie Fielding
- Treasurer:** Richard Quick
- Secretary:** Beth Johnson

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Rosemarie Attilio | John Makris |
| Rochelle Breitenbach | Eugene Perrin |
| James N. Bull | Richard Quick |
| Fred Charbonneau | Joan Seymour |
| Rosemarie Fielding | Jack Smiley |
| Andrew Howell | Jonathan Walton |
| Beth Johnson | Leonard Weber |
| Gisela Lendle-King | |



President's Message

By Jack Smiley

Aldo Leopold reportedly took great pleasure in getting up before daybreak, wandering out to a field with his trusty dog by his side, and simply sitting in a chair to listen to the progression of bird songs as each species awoke for the day. There was some scientific purpose to his observations, but I'm sure that the main reason was for pure pleasure. It's a wonderful experience.

If you've never taken the time to emulate this procedure, I would highly recommend that you do so. The chorus of birds at sunrise is truly amazing. At first, you only hear sporadic notes, then the calls become increasingly frequent and intense as darkness cedes to day.

For the last several years, I have made this into a new-found tradition, enjoying a "Sunrise Serenade" at the LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve in Washtenaw County. On each weekend closest to the summer solstice, a group of friends have gathered for this event hosted by the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy. It always helps to have an experienced birder on hand, and for the past two years Greg Norwood of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has filled that role. His keen ear has been able to pick out birds that otherwise would be lost amongst the cacophony of sound.

The LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve is a special place. It has a mix of wetland, grassland, forest and shrub habitats which are in close proximity to our listening point. That way, we get to hear a full complement of

the bird chorus. Over the years we have noted that certain birds tend to be the early risers. By 4 a.m., Marsh Wrens, Song Sparrows, Field Sparrows and Robins have usually made their presence known. Their infrequent calls are punctuated by the "fitz-bwew" call of the Willow Flycatcher. At this early hour, we will also sometimes hear the call of a Screech Owl or a Great-horned Owl.

As the dawning light approaches 5 a.m., we usually hear Common Yellowthroat, Indigo Bunting, Northern Cardinal and Catbird. By this time, the bird songs are getting louder and louder. Soon thereafter, Scarlet Tanagers, Savannah Sparrows and House Wrens join in. The flute-like call of the Wood Thrush adds yet another dimension, and a bit of percussion is added by the Ring-necked Pheasant.

By the time the sun begins to peek over the trees at 6:30 a.m., about 40 species will have called, including Black-billed Cuckoo, Cedar Waxwing, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great-crested Flycatcher and Sandhill Crane. But when the sun illuminates the landscape, we note that the crescendo of sound begins to subside. A Green Heron may add some of the last few notes to the daybreak.

By 7 a.m. we consider our "Sunrise Serenade" complete. Some birds will continue to sing, but the great chorus has run its course. It is now time for breakfast--for human and bird alike. Again, if you haven't listened to a bird chorus before sunrise, I highly recommend that you do so. It is the ultimate in "birding by ear".

Switching Tower Lights Could Save Birds

Emily Sohn, Discovery News

April 15, 2009 -- Millions of birds die every year from nighttime collisions with communication towers. But there may be a simple way to save tons of avian lives -- without tearing down towers or sacrificing airplane safety.

All we have to do, a new study suggests, is change some light bulbs so that steady lights become blinking lights.

"The potential is that all the communication towers in the world could potentially be changed to be better,"

said Terry Rich, director of Partners in Flight, a bird conservation group, in Boise, Idaho. He was not involved with the new study. "That would save millions and millions of birds," Rich said. "It's hugely important. It's hard to overemphasize what the potential is."

An estimated 4 or 5 million birds die each year in the United States from flying into communications towers, said Joelle Gehring, lead author of the new study, though some estimates range as high as 50 million birds a year. Migratory songbirds are the most common victims of tower collisions. And most run-ins happen at night, which is when these birds tend to travel.

GREAT FIELD TRIPS

By Richard Quick

Field trips to Oak Openings and Lapeer State Game Area produced great birds.

If you have never been on one of the DAS Field Trips, you are missing one of the great experiences in birding. Going with a group led by experienced, knowledgeable leaders that have been to the area and know where to find specific birds can make your experience more enjoyable and worthwhile. Such was the case for the two trips that finished the 2008-2009 Field Trip Schedule.

On May 30, Karl Overman led a group of 18 eager birders through the **Oak Openings Metropark** west of Toledo. Meeting at the Nature Center parking lot, a possible Hooded Warbler was finally photographed. A viewing of the photo could not bring agreement on the identity. In spite of this early sputter, we were able to see over 33 species including those advertised.

While we never were able to see the Cerulean Warbler, several were heard high in the trees. Highlights were good views of the Red-headed Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager and the beautiful Lark Sparrow. Bluebirds, Indigo Buntings and goldfinches were flitting around - lending great color to our views. Later, some folks found a Yellow-breasted Chat.

The Lark Sparrows were found singing in the fields, usually sitting on the top of tall Mullin plants. They would sit for nice long views while singing their high trill. This was worth the trip alone. Species list can be seen online at www.detroitaudubon.org

On June 6, Joanna Pease led a group of 10 late season birders to the **Lapeer State Game Area** in search of field birds. A list of over 55 species made the trip great fun. After meeting at the K Mart in Lapeer, a ride-sharing caravan was formed, maps shared and route planned. The group included new and familiar faces.

Heading out to the SGA, it was clear that it would be a good day. The field sparrows showed themselves with good views. The white tail feathers of the Vesper Sparrow made identification certain and Field, Chipping, Savannah and Song were soon seen.. Meadowlark and Bobolink were enjoyed as well. The highlight was a great view of the Virginia Rail which Joanna was able to call out of the marsh (iPods are great) 15 feet in front of the group. Everyone was enthralled by this little, 9 inch, beauty looking around for the source of the call.

A member of our group, Barbara Skirmants, that lived nearby generously hosted a wonderful lunch. Thanks Barbara! Her yard gave us great views of a hummingbird and a Hairy Woodpecker. A final foray took us to an area where we were again able to not just hear but see clearly the Cerulean Warbler. It was a wonderful day of bird watching. Species list can be seen online at www.detroitaudubon.org

Take a look at the 2009-2010 schedule of Field Trips that accompanies this *FLYWAY* and plan to attend several. You won't regret it.

DETROIT AUDUBON SOCIETY

I'm enclosing or charging my tax deductible contribution of: ___ \$1000 ___ \$500 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$20 ___ OTHER

Name _____ e-mail _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

To Charge, indicate: ___ Visa ___ MasterCard Card Number: _____ Exp. Date _____

Name as Shown on Card _____ Signature _____

This gift is (circle one: 'in memory of' 'in honor of'): _____

Please send acknowledgement to: _____

Mail this completed form (your check payable to Detroit Audubon Society) to:
Detroit Audubon Society, 26080 Berg Road, Southfield, MI 48033

Thank You for your support!

WILD SPECTACLES FEAST FOR EYES AT MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND GET-AWAY

By Jim Bull: Coordinator

It's five o'clock on Friday of Memorial Day Weekend and Detroit Audubon members and friends are beginning to trickle in to the Loon Lake Lutheran Retreat. Each one gets, a nametag peruse the field trip sign-up sheets and take a copy of the weekend schedule and maps they will need. After a lot of years of wear and tear we notice is that camp (the center) has been spruced up this year.

Before unpacking many venture over to the edge of the bluff overlooking the lake, and there she is as always, a Common Loon sitting on a nest placed on a floating platform of vegetation provided for her by the Michigan Loon Association. Seeing this large, primordial black and white denizen of the northern lakes on her nest was a great way to start the weekend exploring nature. Others that walked down one of the center's nature trails were greeted by the large white blooming trillium. As night falls, the loons make their presence known in another way, through their loud, plaintive, eerie calls that echo all over the lake.

Early Saturday morning, several folks gather for a before breakfast bird hike down the hill along the lake. Kingfishers cackle at us, American Redstarts sing their hearts out to proclaim their territories, and then a large dark form with long board-like wings appears as it heads out over the lake—a bald eagle with its white head and tail gleaming in the low rising sun. After breakfast, announcements and the quote about nature that is known as the “thought for the meal,” it's time to head off for field trips. While most of the center is a state wildlife refuge (the only one on private land!) that is worth exploring, there are also other birding and scenic spots within an hour's. The most popular trip Saturday morning is the one

to Tawas Point State Park, which is often called a smaller version of Point Pelee because of the variety and number of migrants that often stop here on their way north. Karl Overman drove up from Detroit to be our guide. While there weren't large numbers of birds this year, there were some good ones. Karl points out a Mourning Warbler that loudly chirps his, “Cheery Cheery Chorry Chorry” song over and over from a dogwood thicket. Despite many good eyes, and several minutes of looking we never saw this colorful songster. A large flock of Dunlins at the point, with their rusty brown backs dabble in the sand on the distant sand spit

After a picnic lunch at the beach on Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay, some campers went to see the scenic Ausable River overlooks, and went down all those steps to the enchanting largo Springs that feed this mighty river, with its large clumps of water cress, golden marsh marigolds, skunk cabbage, white cedars.

Back at camp there is dinner, time to canoe along the lake shore for short while, then its time to gather at the fire circle to sing songs about Michigan's natural heritage (new words to old songs by Jim Bull). After almost 45 minutes, rain drops told us it was time to end the singing and finish the day with toasting marshmallows and making s'mores. The children and youth around those red coals that had been the campfire, each with a stick pointed toward the middle of the circle, all had their fill as the day ended..

Sunday morning one group drove to a spot south of Mio and met Kim Pico, a biologist from the Huron National Forest, our guide to help us find and see a Kirtland's Warbler. It is always a thrill to finally find one of these lemon breasted songsters belting out

-continued on page 6

that loud melodic song from on top of a snag. Kim set up a scope and true to form for this warbler, it stayed there for several minutes while everybody in the group got a good look. Then right in front of us, a Kirtland's made a brief appearance. A nest must have been nearby, so we carefully make our way back to the road and our cars.

For the afternoon several chose to explore the Rifle River State Recreation area with me. First we take a short hike to see Pintail Pond, a fen, rare wetlands that along with bogs are known for their sphagnum moss mats growing out over a pond. The moss gets thick enough to support tamarack and spruce trees. Down low in the midst of the moss we find what we came for—the insectivorous pitcher plants and sundew.

Piling back into our cars, we headed for Ridge Road scenic drive. This is a one-way dirt road that heads up a narrow bluff between two lakes. What draws our attention is a large mass of sticks about two thirds of the way up in a White Pine tree on the opposite shore—a bald eagle nest. With scopes we witness a young eaglet. We watch this youngster for short while when our attention is drawn to an adult bald eagle that has flown into view low over the lake, plunges into the lake and comes up with a large fish in its talons. Then it flew up to the nest and slowly began tearing pieces of that fish off and feed its young. It is a spine tingling scene. And through Jack Lutz's scope you could see every feather of the white headed adult. Under the bluff, we found the Phoebe nest that is usually in the same spot every year. A

Rose-breasted grosbeak, its red chest standing out among the green leaves sang its sweet robin-like song, while the brown-streaked female tended her nest.

Another group, primarily families with children, were led by Andy Guest to Largo Springs, Tuttle Marsh, and Lumberman's Monument where the principal attraction is an old Rollway, a bare high sandy bluff that was used to roll logs down to the river so they could be floated to saw mill. At the Monument, the adults mostly watch, while the kids full of energy keep going up and down the Rollway, now only a sand dune.

There's more fun back at camp: a challenge course set up along Lost Creek, a small stream that meanders through the center's woods and empties into Loon Lake. The course requires balancing on a long board pivoting on a rock, and best of all a rope swing which the group has to use to get everybody from one side of the creek to the other. Many of these kids have done this challenge course every year for several years but never tire of it.

Still reveling in seeing the eagle feeds its young, or the fun on the dune or on the challenge course, we all head back to camp for supper, some relaxing time, then a look at some of the camper's photos and a slide show about the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy's work by DAS President Jack Smiley. Down to the dining hall for evening snack and then a small group gathers for a "night prowling." Although

- continued on page 7

Detroit Audubon Office's Cell Phone Number (248) 990-1316

The office phone is now a cell phone. If there is no one in the office to take your call, please leave a message with voicemail.

The email address is still the same - detas@bignet.net - but we will probably be changing it within the year.

Our mailing address also remains the same:

Detroit Audubon Society, 26080 Berg Rd., Southfield, MI 48033

we had not found an owl at the center for several years we tried playing the Barred Owl tape in the midst of a grove of old hemlocks. We waited quite awhile before these territorial owls began to call back to let the supposed intruder know that it is not welcome here. Then another responds in a higher voice—a female. And amazingly, a third chimes in as well (a helper offspring from last year?). Then Jim Bull, spies a dark form flying silently into a hemlock just above us. Quickly he turns on his lantern and shines its long beam right on the owl. The large owl looks down at us with its dark black eyes, moves its head a little but mostly just stays there for several minutes while everybody gets a good, close, long look. Another spectacle for the eyes and ears. The other two owls start their frenzied “monkey calls” that indicates they are really agitated. A last look or two and the light is turned off and we head back to our beds.

In the morning a few early birds assemble around the flagpole in front of the dining hall to sing a some patriotic songs to honor our veterans on this Memorial Day. Former DAS president and Loon Lake naturalist for 60 years, Homer Roberts would be proud as he began this practice long ago when he was our host

at the center. For the past 31 years. After packing a lunch, I lead a hike out into the old field that is now growing up with large white pines, planted by campers. Here we hear and see several Indigo Buntings, their deep blue feathers shining in the sun.

Add the last few birds to the large bird checklist on the bulletin board, pack up our belongings and its time to bid adieu to this natural wonderland, and to the wonderful people we met until next year. I know I can't wait. Maybe you'll make Loon Lake a part of your Memorial Day tradition next year. We have one family, the Guests who have been coming here since the 1970s always with three generations. This year their reunion at this Detroit Audubon event attracted 21 people!!!

THE FLYWAY ONLINE?

Are you one of our members looking to reduce the amount of mail you receive and the amount of paper you have to recycle? Are you also interested in saving DAS postage costs - over \$1.40/year currently? If so, send us an email message and we will add you to a FLYWAY notice list and stop mailing the FLYWAY to you. We will be posting it as both text and as a pdf on our DAS website, www.detroitaudubon.org for those who like reading on their computer. We will send a message the day the FLYWAY is ready to print.

Send email to: detas@bignet.net; put “FLYWAY Online” as the subject.

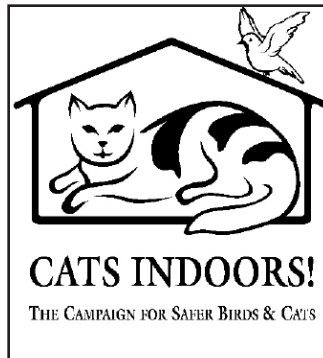
We will confirm receiving it.

PLEASE E-MAIL US!

If you would like to receive notices about membership meetings, field trips, and other time sensitive material, please send your e-mail address to detas@bignet.net. Simply type the word “subscribe” in the subject line. Please include at least your name in the message area of your e-mail. We will only send out a few e-mails a month and you can ask to be removed at any time. E-mail will help save postage and paper costs -- and will allow us to give you speedy notification of events.

CATS IN AND OUT

How can your outdoor cat become a happy indoor cat? Cats face less risk of injury and disease if they remain inside where they also can't harm birds and other wildlife. Kittens kept indoors from the start are very happy to remain there. Older cats can also be brought indoors if you follow a few steps to make the transition easier. Here are five tips that can help.



Tip 1: Begin the process gradually. Substitute play time for outdoors time. Give your cat lots of attention and feed your cat exclusively indoors.

Tip 2: Choose the right time of year to begin the transition. In colder climates, winter is better than summer.

Tip 3: Provide new toys, scratching posts, cat condos and grass for grazing. Keep the litter pan clean.

Tip 4: Provide a screened porch or outdoor enclosure so your cat can safely enjoy the outdoors.

Tip 5: Train your cat to go outside on a harness and leash on a regular basis.

Remember, indoor cats are safe cats.

Reprinted with permission of the American Bird Conservancy



*Detroit Audubon Society
26080 Berg Rd
Southfield, MI 48033*