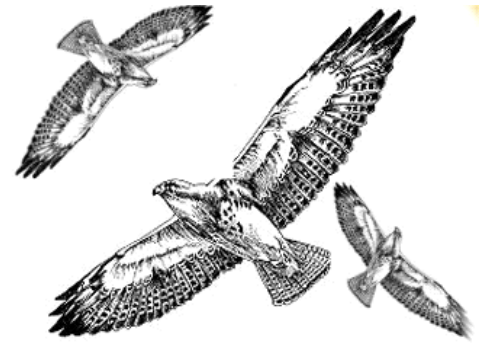


The Kettle

Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter dating from 1983



April 2010

Vol. 11 No. 4

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Meetings: PLEASE NOTE that SAAS meetings are held at the Cheboygan Area Public Library, **starting at 6:30 pm.** We thank the Library for providing this space at 100 S. Bailey St.

April Meeting – “The Weather Machine Shifts Gears ”

by Jim Bricker



On Wednesday, April 14, at the Cheboygan Area Public Library will be the premiere event of Earth Week Cheboygan County. See the enclosed or attached Earth Week file for other events that week.

When I first became SAAS vice-president, several people advised, if there's any way you can get Dave Barrons to speak, do it. Now at last, he is coming, thanks to an anonymous supporter who will pay most of Dave's travel costs from Traverse City.

Dave Barrons retired a few years back as the weatherman for television Channel 9 and 10. His program, “The Weather Machine Shifts Gears,” will tell about weather change, the driving forces behind it, and what we can do about it.

As he explains, and we all know from the light winter and the premature spring in Michigan, weather patterns are increasingly topsy-turvy. You will be entertained as well as educated, so please plan to join us.

All attendees are eligible to win the door prize. Raffle ticket sales will support SAAS nature education activities. After the program, refreshments will be served thanks to Steve and Sue Baker, Eloise Davis, and Will Mandrick.

Saving Starlight Education

by Kathy Bricker

On March 2, SAAS members Jim Bricker and Mark Stormzand assisted me in presenting a 12-minute, localized version of the talk given to SAAS in November 2009 by Mary Lou Tanton of the Outdoor Lighting Forum. We spoke before the Inverness Township board of trustees and a small audience of citizens. Besides giving the PowerPoint, we passed out pamphlets from the International Dark-Sky Association on light pollution and its effects on human health, safety, energy, and wildlife. Trustee Tim Borowicz agreed to research how the township could improve its night lighting and educate people about this issue. Non-member volunteer Jolie Hile now is approaching Aloha Township to offer the program. Anyone else could share this material or talk to your township, church, or other organization. I would be happy to help with the presentation and provide handouts from the stock obtained by SAAS. These materials also will be distributed during Earth Week.



Mission Statement: The mission of the Straits Area Audubon Society is to educate the community, including its children, about conservation and enjoyment of the natural world with emphasis on the local natural communities of wildlife. This will be accomplished through regular seasonal meetings and by sponsoring fieldtrips, classroom studies and field studies.

What you missed at the March meeting

by Gary Lee Williams - substitute secretary

Jim Bricker introduced the evening program: Monty and Ollie Najar, father and son team that had taken a snake study trip to Kenya.

In April of 2009 when Ollie was 10 years old his father, Monty, decided it was his turn (Ollie is one of 3 kids) for a learning adventure. Monty believes that what you learn during 5 minutes with an animal is better than 50 hours at the library.

Monty and Ollie spent 3 weeks in Africa; part of that time was spent at Bio-Ken Snake Park and Research Centre (www.bio-ken.com). Bio-Ken is part tourist attraction, part snake farm, and part venom research center. Ollie learned that Bio-Ken maintains an antivenin trust, does education and seminars on snakebite for people from around the world, and provides free consultation to local snakebite victims when needed. He believes that Bio-Ken has saved hundreds of lives around the world through their research, work and consultation services.

Monty said that as a father he loves the fact that he can do "fantastic, supernatural, and impossible things" in the eyes of his kids. He said that when he travels he likes to support local causes and to help his kids develop a sense of responsibility by helping the world just a little bit. On this trip they donated a large quantity of snake handling and safety equipment, some of which was provided by U S manufacturers.

One of the fascinating things Ollie displayed to the SAAS audience of 54 people (24 members and 30 guests) was the speed of the strike of the Gaboon Viper. This snake can strike faster than the human eyeball can record. They showed a close up video of the viper striking a rat. In slow motion, we saw only the start and

end positions of the strike.

It was noted that a lot of people do die from snakebite but the bites are not always a death sentence, especially when with proper treatment. For example, although the black mamba venom attacks the nervous system controlling muscles, it does not affect the heart and the effects wear off after a couple days. There is a story of a whole village taking turns using a squeeze bag manual ventilator to keep a patient alive for four days. The patient survived.

Monty and Ollie also told about several other snakes, including the spitting cobra, pythons, puff adder, and the green mambas.

Monty compared amateur herpetology to bird watching. He said, "Everybody should have some hobby or outside interest. For my son and me it is herpetology. A big part of this trip was to get some first-person, hands on skills and see things with our own eyes. People don't do this enough. Go see and smell and touch the things that you've studied or seen on TV. Scrape together some time and money to go explore the real world. Get out there!"

Monty lives in southeast Michigan with his wife and three children. He travels for work as well as for play, and chases snakes wherever possible. His next big trip is planned to Brazil with a younger son. He invites contact at yTomRajan@hotmail.com. As he likes to say, "I Smell . . . ADVENTURE!"

SAAS President, Kathy Bricker opened

(Continued on page 4)



Attendees gather around Ollie and Monty Najar Photo by Marilee Lillie

www.straitsareaaudubon.org

by Roy MacFarland

Some people have had trouble getting to our website. If so, try going to Google and typing in Straits Area Audubon Society. Or complete the following steps on your computer.

Press green start key in lower left. Click on Control Panel. Select Delete Cookies.

OR

1. Go into Control Panel.
2. Click on Internet Options
3. Click on Browsing history

A new window will come up...Under Browsing History, click on Delete. Select any or all of the files to delete.

Then click on Delete again.

Feel free to contact me for additional help if needed.

Especially with Earth Week coming up, you will want to know the latest news on all the events, since the Earth Week website is part of the SAAS website.

SAAS Nominating Committee Seeks Input

by Dorothy Woosley

The nominating committee is accepting candidates for leadership and volunteer roles in the SAAS. If you are a member of SAAS you can nominate someone, or volunteer yourself, for any of the roles listed on the front page of "The Kettle." We will nominate people for the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer posi-

tions, and pass along recommendations for other volunteer posts to the new President replacing Kathy Bricker, who has reached the end of her term limit time of three years. Contact Jim Bricker (627-4830) or Dorothy Woosley (627-9909) by April 18th. We look forward to hearing from you.

Presidential Chirpings

by Kathy Bricker

Rare Bird Sighting

by Darlene and Gary Nordberg



Photo by Gary Nordberg

A strikingly beautiful partridge-like bird with orange legs arrived at our home on Long Point, Mullett Lake on March 19. It left 2 days later, after feeding on sunflower and other seeds from the ground below the feeder. Looking into my bird book, I was surprised to see it was a chukar, native to the far western states. It was quite tame, and when it moved, it walked or ran along the ground rather than flying. We assume it escaped from some farm or game ranch and wonder if Audubon members have seen others in the area? (Note – please alert Kathy Bricker if you have seen a chukar in the wild.)

When someone recommends a book or a movie, I try to pay attention. Luckily, the book about climate change recommended by Richard Riker of Mackinaw City was available through the library. Richard, an Earth Week presenter on home energy conservation and savings (see separate schedule or visit www.earthweekcheboygancounty.com), is an avid and critical reader, so I launched into *The Two-Mile Time Machine* by Richard Alley. I found it dense reading, but with the Audubon climate change program coming in April, it seemed important to better understand the extensive studies of past climate. Dr. Alley explained how quickly the earth can both cool and heat, and how rarely it stays as stable as this period that humans have enjoyed. In the last chapter the author opined what humans might do either to forestall or adapt to the coming

climate changes.

One recommendation in particular struck me, since it underlays our SAAS work to protect places like the Red Rock Wilderness in Utah, the dark night sky over our heads, and species like eagles and coyotes. Page 188: "Saving some excess capacity is an insurance policy. Nature gives us fossil fuels, land, water, air, plants, animals, nutrients, and more. If we use everything that nature gives us, and then nature takes some back, we will have nowhere else to go. If we leave some excess capacity out there, then we will have additional resources on which to draw if we need them. And those resources can be used by the other species with which we share this globe and on which we often rely." Hmmm – setting aside a "rainy day fund" for our planet and ourselves – makes sense!

Reminder: 2010 Ornithological Congress in Petoskey

by Thomas Funke, Director of Conservation, Michigan Audubon Society

The 2010 Ornithological Congress is April 7 to 10 at North Central Michigan College in Petoskey. Topics include:

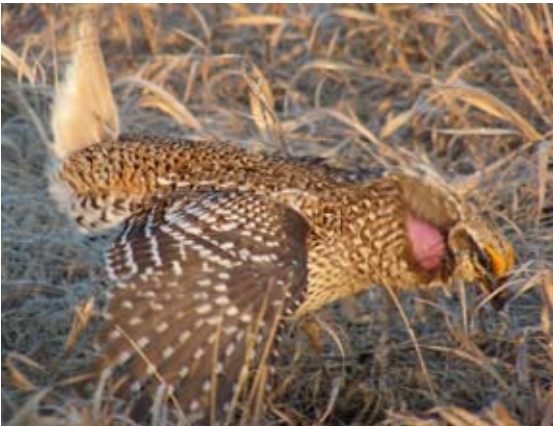
- monitoring for nocturnal birds and pest species of insects and plants
- how to recruit "non-traditional" audiences into wildlife conservation
- falconry and raptor rehabilitation
- impacts of non-native insects on Michigan's forests

A Bird Monitoring Orientation on Saturday April 10 will help birders interested in helping monitor birds and/or coordinate regional monitoring volunteers.

Call 517-886-9144 for more information about the conference. A single day registration costs \$30; full registration costs \$75. Both include lunch and dinner on-site.

Superior: Land of the Woodland Drummer by Tom Sterling

by Jim Bricker



Sharp-tailed grouse on lek, Photo by Kathy Bricker

Straits Area Audubon Society thanks Tom Sterling for presenting *Superior: Land of the Woodland Drummer* to 600 Cheboygan Middle School students and 104 members of the public on March 18. Because of Tom's gracious offer of a discounted rate of \$300, we raised enough in ticket sales to cover bringing this classic nature education program to Cheboygan. Tom taught us not only about ruffed

grouse, the woodland drummer, but about sharp-tailed grouse that court by gathering in leks, and many other amazing creatures of Superior country. We appreciate everyone who attended and brought friends. Many people helped to make the event a success, including Roger Benter, Jim and Connie Boyer, Kathy Bricker, Gloria and Tom Cadwalader, Linda Chase, Mark Dombroski, Cyndi Kress, Ben Lillie, Alice and Roy MacFarland, and Rose Rynerson.

Field Trips

by Steve Baker

Friday, April 9

SECOND ANNUAL Headlands Park potluck, owl banding, stargazing

At 6:30 pm on April 9, SAAS members and guests will gather at the Guest House at the Headlands Park for a potluck dinner. Afterward, we will help Ed Pike set up mist nests and an owl calling station nearby. Saw-whet owls will be the main target, with boreal and long-eared owls also possible. The first net check will be about 30 minutes after sunset. Any captured owls will be measured, aged, sexed, banded and released. Ed will demonstrate techniques that biologists use to learn more about these nocturnal hunters. In between checking the nets, star-gazing and constellation identification will take place. Stay as late as you like. A limited number of people can spend the night dormitory-style. The Emmet County Headlands Park is located just west of Mackinaw City. From the entrance, follow the signs to the Guest House.

Saturday, April 10

Hawk Watch and trail pickup at Headlands Park

At 10 am on April 10, Headlands over-nighters and any others are invited to help survey hawks as they migrate over the tip of the mitt. Drive down the dirt road into the Mackinaw City historic park opposite the entrance to the Headlands. Dress warmly, bring a lawn chair and binoculars,

and plan to enjoy the spectacle of hawks and eagles as they kettle high overhead on thermals. We may also see northern shrikes, blue jays, northern flickers, and other migrants. Around noon, join a brown-bag lunch back at the Guest House and help rake leaves or clear trails in return for the use of this fine facility. In inclement weather, instead of watching hawks, we will take a nature hike on the extensive Headlands trails. Anyone who wishes may stay overnight again on Saturday to help Ed with owl banding and do more star gazing.

Wednesday, May 19

Big Birding Day

This annual event is an all day, all out effort to see as many species of birds as we can in one day. This is a fund raiser for the Straits Area Audubon Society where members pledge an amount per species seen. Typically around 100 species are found. For those that want to participate, we will meet at 6 am in Mackinaw City at the highway rest area. More details in the May Kettle.



Photo by Kathy Bricker

(Continued from page 2)

the meeting promptly at 6:30 P.M. Alice MacFarland told about the quilt raffle and the blue bird house program and the display on it at the Cheboygan Area Public Library. She explained the Department of Environmental Quality criteria for use of wetlands relating to the proposed Cheboygan RV Park. She thanked Gloria Cadwalader, B.D. Gillig, and Rose Rynerson for providing refreshments tonight.

Ed Pike handled bird sightings; Common Grackles were noted as spring arrivals.

Steve Baker announced the March 20th maple syrup field trip by Will Mandrick. Jim Bricker urged people to attend "Superior: Land of the Woodland Drummer" at the High School on March 18th. A small admission fee will be split between Cheboygan Schools and SAAS nature edu-

cation work.

Rose Rynerson gave the finance report. Kathy announced that Jim Bricker and Dorothy Woosley are the nominating committee lining up candidates for 2010-2011 offices. For more information or suggestions, please contact them.

Thanks to Ben and Marilee Lillie for the beautiful framed print of two eagles they donated for the raffle. Guest Tammy Pawlowski selected it as her prize. Roy MacFarland won the other raffle prize of the glass painting of an artist's rendition of a bluebird. Guest Nick Dankert won his choice of the bird house and feeder door prize, while Rose Rynerson won the St. Patrick's Day kitchen mitt and hot pad door prize donated by Alice and Roy MacFarland. Special thanks go to Ed Pike for donating back one of the items which he won.



Nick Dankert with his brother Chris and door prize, Photo by Marilee Lillie

Bluebirds Help Youth

by Molly and Gary Ferguson



Gary Ferguson helps at Cheboygan Youth Center bluebird box construction, photo by Molly Ferguson

SAAS is partnering with the Cheboygan Youth Center, which provides after school activities for kids in 5th through 9th grades. When boys and girls were asked to sign up to build bird houses, Kyle wasn't sure he wanted to participate, asking "do we have to use hammers". We told him yes, you are building a bird house, decorating it, and placing it where birds can build their nests. He wasn't sure about that hammer.

We expected this project would appeal mostly to boys. Seven kids registered with a good share of girls. We had hoped for 10 kids who would work in teams of two with one person being a little older and able to help the younger one. We decorated the Center's bulletin board with photographs of bluebirds, their eggs and nests. Our goal was to make this fun and let learning follow as the kids got into the building process. As the project began, other kids started to wander into the area, became interested and asked to participate.

First, we wood burned the contact information on the bottom of each nest box. Everyone wanted a hand at wood burning with the partners alternating in the burning. Hammering began. Sean pounded nails like a carpenter. We had split the

wood on one of the box's doors and Sean pointed out how we could to fix the error. He built two boxes and was feeling confident. Kyle built a box. He started slowly and gained confidence. "This is fun" he said, and built another one. He would have built more, given the opportunity.

Painting was something that everyone wanted to do. Here is some of the conversation that took place: Can I paint camouflage on the box? Sure, it's yours to decorate. How about the back? There's no need to since you won't see the back. No you will see the back, another student replied, because they are going on posts. OK, you'd better paint the back also. Where are you going to put these boxes? Who's Alice? (Since her name and phone number was the information burned into the bottom of each nest box.)

"Can I wood burn the front of the box since it isn't painted yet?", asked Mike. Sure, it's yours to decorate. He wrote-- "My name is Bob - Welcome birds". We don't know what it means, but Mike has established ownership of his nesting box.

The kids built 10 houses. They asked many questions about bluebirds, their eggs and where the nest boxes will be placed. The kids have started on a journey, thanks to this project, which involved improving their motor skills, their self confidence, and their knowledge of bluebird behavior.

Call for Grant-Worthy Projects

by Kathy Bricker

Once again, members are asked to submit ideas for how to best use Audubon funds we will raise on our Big Birding Day on May 19. Your vote on projects last May was honored, as we donated \$545 to projects you selected: \$150 for owl migration research, \$135 for public education materials about Saving Starlight, \$100 on field trip honoraria, and \$80 each for cleanup supplies and field trip supplies, which included buying SAAS bookmarks. Please send me or Maureen Conklin ideas for projects you would like to see us fund in the coming year. Then watch the May Kettle so you can vote even if you cannot attend the annual meeting.

Building Your Own Bluebird Boxes

by new SAAS member Jackie Andrzejewski

I love to feed and watch the birds in our yard. Attending meetings and functions may not be feasible for me – but I want to receive the Kettle and support your efforts. I've been doing the Christmas bird count in my yard for the past two years.

The blue jays and mourning doves have been chipping and eating the paint off of our garage door. Thanks to your tip re: crushed eggshells (calcium), the chipping has stopped and birds are really eating the shells. Thanks!

P.S. We would like to build bluebird nest houses for our yard as we do have bluebirds visit our birdbath – but need a design and dimensions, especially the opening size. A template would be great!...and assembly instructions.

Response: Full bluebird box instructions are available at <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxspecs.htm>. Or you may call Kathy Bricker for a mailed copy. Boxes for this year should be up by late March or early April.



Earth Week Schedule

Besides printed brochures available at libraries, please visit www.earthweekcheboygancounty for the full schedule, event descriptions, sponsor list, and registration information. Also, call 231-627-4830 for more information or to volunteer.

Join Straits Area Audubon Society

Kettle Contribution Due Dates
In order to deliver The Kettle in a timely matter, please submit your photos and articles by the following due dates: 4/26/10

Send your submissions to
saas_kettle@yahoo.com

NAME: SAAS thanks Benter Chiropractic for hosting www.straitsareaudubon.org AND to the Benters and Williams Office Supply for printing the *Kettle*.

Coming Events

TELEPHONE: Mark your calendars now to be sure you can attend.

4/10 & 11 Field trips: Headlands potluck, owl banding, stargazing, hawk watch, hike, trail cleanup

4/14 Monthly program: "The Weather Machine Shifts Gears" by Dave Barrons, Retired Channel 9 and 10 weatherman

E-MAIL: 4/15 to 4/21 Earth Week activities to be announced

Make checks payable to:

Straits Area Audubon Society

Please mail checks to:
Rosanne Rynerson,
Treasurer
10490 E. U.S. 23
Cheboygan, MI 49721

Single Membership: \$12

Family Membership: \$15

5/12 "International Lessons in Caring for Water: Great Lakes in U.S. and Africa" by John Gannon, Ph.D., Acting Director, International Joint Commission and former Chief Scientist, University of Michigan Biological Station
5/19 Field trip: Big Birding Day
6/9 Field trip: Grass Bay Nature Preserve and Member Potluck at Cordwood Shores

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