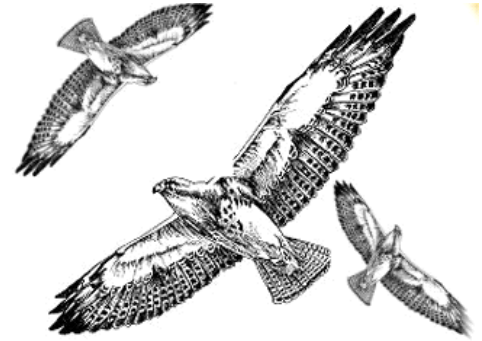


The Kettle

Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter dating from 1983



February 2010

Vol. II No. 2

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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.

February Meeting – Bird Watching for Beginners

by Jim Bricker

Both at meetings and field trips, people often ask basic questions about birds: what they eat, how to tell them apart, whether binoculars help in seeing them better. One person even wondered if you can identify birds by their silhouettes (answer, YES for many species!). The February program is designed for these people, plus will teach a thing or two even to accomplished birders. Join us for "Bird watching for Beginners" by Jeff Dykehouse, local bird expert and Curator of Natural History, Mackinac State Historic Parks. Our former SAAS president and past nominee for Educator of the Year with the Chamber of Commerce awards program, Jeff will give a humorous and kid-friendly talk about the basics of bird watching. Jeff will discuss using field marks when trying to identify birds as well as studying bird shapes, habitats, patterns, and bird size. Join him on Wednesday, February 10 at 6:30 pm at the Cheboygan Area Public Library. All attendees are eligible for the door prize, plus a raffle will be conducted by Judy Vanderhart. Alice MacFarland will make the premier offering of 'Just Ducky' quilt raffle tickets. Refreshments will follow the program, thanks to Ann Benter, Marilee Lillie and Dorothy Woosley.



Photo of snowy owl by Steve Baker

Schedule It and Nature Lovers Will Come

by Kathy Bricker

The final figures are in, comparing attendance during the last several calendar years at SAAS events. Thank you to EVERYONE who came or helped in any way with our outreach efforts.

	2007	2008	2009
Program attendance	251 (9 meetings)	475 (9 meetings)	496 (8 meetings)
Field trip attendance	19 (2 trips)	96 (9 trips)	207 (14 trips)

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.

Upcoming Field Trips

by Steve Baker

SAAS does not have any field trips planned for February but our members can join any of these field trips sponsored by the Little Traverse Conservancy by registering at the number in the trip description.

Saturday, February 6, 2 pm Sturgeon Bay Winter Hike Northern Emmet County

You love Sturgeon Bay in the summer, but have you ever walked the beaches in the winter? Join Conservancy staff on an exploration of this wonderful protected region to discover how its beauty remains stunning all year round. Some snowshoes are available through the Conservancy. Ask when you register.

Friday, February 12, 2 pm Explore the Birge Preserve Near Hessel, Mackinac County

A visit to the beautiful Les Cheneaux region in the winter is a treat. Take an afternoon off from the office, grab your skis or snowshoes and join us on the trail loops of this 435-acre preserve. Pre-registration required by calling 231.347.0991.

Saturday, February 20, 10 am Rogers Family Homestead Preserve Outing

Just outside of East Jordan

The lower Jordan River is a special area, much different from the area upstream that is most often visited by paddlers and anglers. Before ending its journey in Lake Charlevoix, the river slows, widens, and develops marshy banks. The river never freezes, and the open water of the lower river attracts lots of wildlife including waterfowl, Bald Eagle, mink, and otter. Winter is actually one of the best times to explore the marshy stream banks on skis or snowshoes. In recent years, LTC has protected large areas of the lower Jordan. Conservancy staff will lead a winter exploration of the marshes and forests along the Lower Jordan on the Rogers Family Homestead Preserve. Pre-registration required by calling 231.347.0991.

Little Traverse Conservancy
3264 Powell Road
Harbor Springs, MI 49740
231.347.0991
www.landtrust.org

NEW—SAAS Bookmark

By Kathy Bricker

Thanks to grants that SAAS members approved for field trip and cleanup supplies and saving starlight, we just purchased bookmarks that tell about our chapter's activities. These will be given to everyone who joins or renews in SAAS; every guest at meetings, field trips or cleanups; guests at special programs such as *Superior: Land of the Woodland Drummer*; and people who buy SAAS "Just Ducky" quilt raffle tickets. A bookmark will also be inserted into welcome packets distributed by the Cheboygan Chamber of Commerce. Thank you, Roy MacFarland, for your expertise with design and layout.



Valentine's Day Candlelight Skiing at Cheboygan State Park

by Steve Baker

On Sunday, February 14, Cheboygan State Park will be hosting a lantern light ski to Fourteen Foot Shoal Cabin. All romantic skiers are invited to come anytime between 5:30 and 9 PM and ski the groomed trail to the cabin where there will be a bon-

fire with cookies and hot chocolate. An annual state park pass is required to enter the park and stickers will be for sale that evening. If you would like to volunteer to help with this event, call Paul at 231-420-5170.

Program! "Superior: Land of the Woodland Drummer"

by Jim Bricker

This classic film is packed with wildlife behavior, from wolves to bears to fishers to pike, and of course ruffed grouse. It will be narrated in person by Tom Sterling, a Windows Travelogue and National Geographic Speaker. Pure enjoyment for all who attend, it will be shown by SAAS as a community benefit at the Cheboygan High School, 7:00 pm. A small admission charge will raise money, half to benefit Cheboygan Schools. Mark your calendars!



Photo from Google.

Eastern UP Field Trip

by Steve Baker



Attendees included members Tom and Gloria Cadwalader, Art and Judy Frock, Ben and Marilee Lillie, and guests Joey Arbaugh, Terry Riegler, Marilyn Smith, and Dick and Linda Taylor. Photo by Terry Riegler

January 8 was a beautiful crisp and clear day that saw 13 birders tour about the eastern UP in search of winter birds. We visited the St. Ignace waterfront (Goldeneye, Redhead, and White-winged Scoter), the Ruyard flats (5 Snowy Owls, Northern Hawk Owl, Bald Eagle, and Snow Buntings), Barbeau area (Rough-legged Hawk, Pine Grosbeak, and Northern Shrike), and Dunbar.

The Dunbar area and the feeders at the MSU Forestry Station were very birdy, and here we saw Purple Finch, gorgeous Bohemian Waxwings feasting on cherries, and Wild Turkey. A most curious site was a Pileated Woodpecker joining the waxwings foraging on the cherries. A lingering Red-shouldered Hawk was also noted near Dunbar. A total of 27 species were tallied on the day and all enjoyed the outing, especially the great looks at the winter owls. The feeders at Dunbar are maintained by the family living at the MSU station and they have generously shared their yard with birders for years. A passing of the hat yielded \$37 which was donated for bird seed purchase, for which they were very grateful. A very enjoyable lunch was shared at Piccadilly's in Pickford. The soup and pasties are recommended.

Ski/Snowshoe Trip Report

by Kathy and Jim Bricker



Millions of springtail insects (also known as snow fleas), looking like spilled pepper on the snow, greeted the January 14 skiers at the University of Michigan Bio-

logical Station. Besides them and spiders, we identified trees by their bark and buds, and scouted animal tracks of white-tailed deer, black squirrel, red fox, coyote, and mice. The day was nearly perfect, cloudy and warmish. In all, 12 people enjoyed skiing, snowshoeing, potluck, and/or learning about the circumpolar constellations. Besides people photographed here, other attendees were members Maureen Conklin, Harvey Rocheleau, and Darrell Schwalm, and guest Martha Orloff.

Snowshoe adventurers Doris Buxton, Connie and Dale Rieger, Jim and Connie Boyer, Jim Wilk, photo by Kathy Bricker

Easy Access to Audubon News

by Kathy Bricker

Member Trish Woollcott recently wrote: "That is one REALLY NICE website!"

If you want to quickly get information, the SAAS website deserves to be on your Favorites list. It features several new things, including a link to birdwatch.com, a site linking birders to groups in places where they travel. I already got two contacts from people planning to vacation near Cheboygan, wondering where they

can find mourning warblers and Kirtland's warblers. You can use it too, whether you are heading to Utah or Florida. All of the *Kettle* issues are there, for handy reference. Thank you to Roy MacFarland for keeping this website up-to-date and current! Visit us at www.straitsareaudubon.org.

What you missed in January

by Amy Durant

More than 110 people enjoyed the first 2010 SAAS meeting. After Kathy Bricker welcomed everyone, Maureen Conklin's conservation report let us know that SAAS is the lead sponsor for Earth Week 2010. Between April 14 and 22, we and others are arranging county-wide family events. They will focus on local foods, recycling, nature appreciation, energy conservation, and community action. SAAS needs volunteers and sponsors to implement, publicize and financially support Earth Week 2010.

Darrell Schwalm discussed SAAS's help to Cheboygan's After-School Youth center. We received donations of lumber from Cheboygan Lumber (thanks to Alice MacFarland) and Rick Gillig. Then Darrell, Rick, and Bob Nissley cut the forms in Rick's workshop for ten bluebird boxes. Other volunteers were requested to help the youth construct the bird houses, and design, create, and monitor a blue bird trail.

With a quorum of members present, a motion was made and seconded to pur-

chase the Ken Burns documentary on the national parks as the SAAS 2010 donation to the Cheboygan Area Public Library. All members voted in favor, with none opposed.

The group then enjoyed Glen Matthews' presentation: "Predators! – and our troubled relationships with them." Glen's informative program discussed predator/prey stereotypes and past use of bounties on predators. Then he answered many questions from the audience. The raffle of a CD and book entitled "Bird Songs" was won by member Judy Frock. The doorprize of a painted ceramic hummingbird feeder was won by member Roger Benter. Thanks to Jim Bricker and Bev and Jack Kirby for providing treats.



Coyote, the predator some people love to hate, image submitted by Glen Matthews

Dining on Pileated Woodpecker

by Glen Matthews

Of interest to your members and guests at the January meeting may be the February *Outdoor Life* magazine. Billed as the 'predator issue,' it's mostly a long how-to article on hunting coyotes.

On a recent walk, I found a fresh

pileated woodpecker kill site, by an avian predator. It was kind of ironic that at last week's meeting a woman described watching a hawk chase a pileated woodpecker and then I run across the first one I've seen that had been killed.

Junior Birders of Northern Michigan

by Alison Falldin

SEE-North explores the wonders of winter with family-oriented hikes, hands-on activities, journaling, and stories. Call 231.348.9700 or visit www.seenorth.org to register.

SAAS is a partner with the popular "Junior Birders of Northern Michigan." This club leads children on field trips around northern Michigan to learn about birds, birding and much more! Our next bird outing is Feb. 13 for owl prowling.

Photo by of hawk owl by Steve Baker



The Owl Prowl

2/13 marks Junior Birders first Owl Prowl! We will do an evening hike looking and listening for owls at Boyne Highlands from 5:30-7:30. The owls should be selecting mates and setting up territories so, we hope it's the ideal time to look for owl activity!

For more details, email Mary M. Trout, Jr. Birder volunteer at marytrout@voyager.net

Presidential Chirpings

by Kathy Bricker



"John James Audubon,
1785 to 1851

"Ah, so you are more than feathers." I often hear this from people who are pleased that SAAS programs and field trips cover the entire natural world, not just birds. Yes, Vice President Jim Bricker tries hard to diversify our program topics.

The fact is, John James Audubon studied, drew, and painted plants and other creatures besides birds. Who was this man, and why was a non-profit conservation organization named for him 54 years after he died? According to Wikipedia:

'John James Audubon was born in Haiti, the illegitimate son of a French privateer and a chambermaid. Growing up in France, John roamed the woods, bringing home and drawing birds' eggs and nests. At age 18, his father obtained a false passport so John could go to the U. S. to avoid conscription in the Napoleonic Wars.

Near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, John began the first known bird-banding on the continent. He tied yarn to the legs of Eastern Phoebes and determined that they returned to the same nesting spots year after year. He created his own nature museum, a room brimming with birds' eggs, stuffed raccoons and opossums, fish, snakes, and other creatures.

Later, John James Audubon frequently hunted and fished to feed his wife and four children. He often joined Shawnee and Osage hunting parties, learning their methods and drawing specimens by the campfire. John had great respect for native Americans: "Whenever I meet Indians, I feel the greatness of our Creator in all its splendor."

John dreamed of painting all the species of birds in North America, hired hunters to gather specimens he did not have, and painted one page each day, while his wife earned money by teaching. But his bird publication was rebuffed by the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. He spent his last resources to take it to England, where fortunately the British lionized him as "the American woodsman." John was able to raise enough money there to publish a book of 435 hand-colored, life-size prints of birds.

He painted most birds in their natural habitat, with smaller species on branches with berries, fruit, and flowers. He frequently depicted the birds' nests and eggs, and occasional predators, such as snakes. Audubon's final book, published posthumously, was on mammals.'

So, SAAS is named after a field naturalist who endured many hardships and achieved success through persistence and hard work. What a worthy heritage for us!

A Note from the Cheboygan Area Public Library

We have a program coming in February that might be of interest to SAAS members. Noble Odyssey Foundation will be presenting their second program on the Great Lakes. The topic of discussion is "Freshwater Invaders." Luke Clyburn will be showing a film on the invasive species that are in the Great Lakes with a question and answer period afterwards. The date is February 16th at 7:00 p.m.

SAAS 2009 Statement of Income and Expenses

by Rosanne Rynerson

INCOME:		EXPENSES:	
Dues	\$ 732.00	Postage and mailing expenses	\$ 179.70
Spring Bird Count Fundraiser	561.76	Speakers	300.00
Donations:		Printing	310.94
General Fund	239.00	Grants	
Field Trip Fund donation	84.00	Cheboygan Area Public Library	100.00 ^a
April, 2010 Speaker donation	90.00	Michigan KARST Conservancy	79.00
Raffles	154.00	Ed Pike Owl Banding Research	150.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,850.76	Raffle State Fee & Faxing expense	42.00
		Supplies	35.42
		Field Trip expenses	80.00
		Newsletter Printing	Donated*
		Website Hosting	Donated*
		TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,177.06

^a Check was dated 2008 but not delivered until January 9, 2009.

* Thanks to Benter Chiropractic

Self Feeder for Birds

by Susan Good, R.N. CWR

Out of desperation to find a decent back up feeder for the birds that I rehabilitate and release, I decided to invent one. This feeder is made out of a lid from a large plastic container. I drilled a hole in the middle and attached a metal broom holder with a nut and a bolt in the center. The feeder can hold meal worms and they can't escape due to the lip on the lid. The

feeder can be used on perches inside of cages or clipped onto tree branches. They remove easily for cleaning or relocating and are cheap and easy to make.



Photo by Susan Good

What Are Those Blue Jays Eating?

by Susan Good, R.N. CWR

Some time ago, I read an interesting piece about Blue Jays in an article from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Seems a woman complained of Jays chipping the paint off of her freshly painted house at an alarming rate and in great masses. The frenzy started during the month of December after the snow had fallen, in the state of New Hampshire.

Every morning, she would awake to the sounds of Blue Jays pounding on her house. At first she thought that the birds were cracking open seed shells or trying to get insects but by carefully observing the activity, she realized that they were actually flying to the ground, retrieving the paint chips, and to her amazement, eating them.

Because of the extensive damage to her house, she was desperate to find a solution to this unusual problem. She wondered if the birds were after something integral in their diet but couldn't find it with snow cover. She began by offering the Blue Jays other options like sand, gravel, minerals and finally egg shells. The offering of egg shells did the trick...LOTS of them! 2-3 cups of egg shells a day were necessary to keep the birds from nibbling on her house. If the egg shells became buried under snow, they would return to chipping at the house. After some research on this situation it was determined that Blue Jays in the upper Northeast seemed to have a fondness for eating house paint during the winter months and an even stronger affinity for eggshells and calcium.

Why paint? Paint manufacturers have used calcium carbonate or limestone as an extender pigment in paint for hundreds of years, making paint a source of calcium.

Why Blue Jays? A study that was done found that Blue Jays, unlike other birds, consumed more than twice as much calcium as other bird species. No scientific reason has been established for this except to say that Blue Jays may have a unique and as yet, unexplained need for extra calcium.

Why the northeast? It may be that the lack of calcium in the northeast soil is the answer. Compared to other regions, northeastern soils are naturally poor in calcium. This deficiency is further exacerbated by the relatively high amount of acid rain (the hydrogen ions in acid rain leach calcium from the soil) in these areas.

How to Provide Eggshells Safely: Unsterilized eggs may contain salmonella bacteria.

- Before providing egg shells, boil them for 10 minutes.
- Heat boiled shells in the oven at 250 degrees for 20 minutes.
- Let egg shells cool and crush them into pieces smaller than a dime.

Now, if we could only find a way to keep the woodpeckers from dining on our houses, we'd be all set!



This blue jay came to me as a nestling and is a released juvenile in this photo enjoying a back up feeding of mealworms.

Photo by Susan Good

Bluebird Nest box Project

by Darrell Schwalm



Rick Gillig and Darrell Schwalm create nestbox kits for assembly by Cheboygan students, photo by Bob Nissley

Community outreach and education are important SAAS program goals. When Debbie Turnbull of the Cheboygan Youth Center (CYC) asked for ideas for a project, Alice MacFarland responded enthusiastically for SAAS. The CYC is a non-profit, grant and donation based community organization that provides a safe, structured and interactive learning environment for youth in grades 5-9. Debbie Turnbull runs the Center's After School and Summer Program (ASSP) and seeks to partner with other community organizations to provide hands-on projects for their students.

Alice sent out an email to the SAAS membership seeking help with a bluebird nestbox project. Bluebird numbers in the East have declined due to the loss of nesting cavities in dead trees and wood fence posts, and competition and predation from alien birds such as the house sparrow and starling. Initiatives by birding organizations and concern citizens to provide nesting boxes in suitable habitats have helped to increase bluebird populations.

Three SAAS members volunteered to help. Darrell Schwalm had built bluebird boxes for similar community environmental education projects and offered to make nestbox kits for the youth. Rick Gillig volunteered his workshop and woodworking experience, and Bob Nissley became the

third helping hand. Cheboygan Lumber graciously donated the wood for the project. A nestbox design recommended by the North American Bluebird Society was used, and 12 nest boxes were cut and nail holes drilled by the three woodworkers. Assembly instructions and nails were added to provide ten kits for the students and one assembled model for the teacher. The 12th box will be used by SAAS as a template for possible future nest box projects. The students will assemble the boxes and decorate them on the outside.

Progress on the project was reported at the January SAAS meeting and a request made for additional volunteers to help establish a bluebird trail and to monitor the boxes for nesting activity. Four SAAS members responded; Molly and Gary Ferguson and Harvey Rocheleau of Cheboygan, and Randy Mikula from Long Point on Mullett Lake. These volunteers will help establish the bluebird trail and work with the ASSP students to inspect the boxes, keep records of bluebird nesting activities and provide maintenance from April to August.

Discussions with the Cheboygan town manager, Scott McNeil, and the Parks and Recreation Director, Scott Hancock, revealed that they are very supportive of the project. They offered an area with a natural habitat along the river in Major City Park as a location for the bluebird trail. Debbie Turnbull assigned two recent Cheboygan HS graduates, Josh Kimbrell and Jeff Johnson, as ASSP youth coordinators for the project. It is planned for the nest boxes to be put up in March, and, hopefully, for bluebirds to move into their new quarters in April. Nesting monitoring results will be reported at the May and June SAAS meetings.

If you are interested in information about citizen science, and bluebird trails and monitoring, a good source on the web can be found at www.loudounwildlife.org under "citizen science." If you are interested in joining the SAAS Bluebird Trail Team, please let Alice know (macfarlands@charter.net) 231-597-8173.

THANKS
to Cheboygan
Lumber for donating
wood for bluebird
boxes.

**Join Straits Area Audubon
Society**

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

E-MAIL:

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

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:

2/21/10 3/22/10 4/26/10

Send your submissions to
saas_kettle@yahoo.com

SAAS thanks Benter Chiropractic for its in-kind donation of the printing of the monthly *Kettle* and hosting of the SAAS website.

Coming Events

Mark your calendars now to be sure you can attend.

2/10/10 "Birdwatching for Beginners" by Jeff Dykehouse, Curator of Natural History, Mackinac State Historic Parks

3/10/10 "A Boy's Adventure with Poisonous Snakes in Kenya" by Ollie Najar, 10-year-old amateur herpetologist

3/18/10 "Superior: Land of the Woodland Drummer" by Tom Sterling at Cheboygan Area High School, 7 pm (small admission charge)

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

4/15 to 4/21 Earth Week activities to be announced

4/22/09 "Caribou Summer" by Jim and Kathy Bricker at Cheboygan Area High School, 7 pm (small admission charge will benefit Cheboygan County Schools)

SAAS meetings are held at the Cheboygan Area Public Library.

The scheduling of a meeting or program in the Cheboygan Area Public Library does not in any way constitute an endorsement by the library of the group or organization; its activities; or of the ideas and opinions expressed during the course of meetings or programs.

Straits Area Audubon Society
c/o Rosanne Rynerson
10490 E. U.S. 23
Cheboygan, MI 49721