

The Kettle

Straits Area Audubon Society newsletter dating from 1983



January 2010

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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.

January Meeting

by Jim Bricker

"Predators - and our Troubled Relationship with Them" will be presented by Glen Matthews, retired Michigan DNR Wildlife Chief, Gaylord Office. Join us on January 13 at 6:30 pm at the Cheboygan Area Public Library to learn about northern Michigan predators and their role in our ecosystem. Glen will provide a little historical context of our relationship with predators, especially those that inspired fear or were economically important. He will show photos, discuss some myths and misperceptions about predation, and relate stories of his personal experiences of handling situations with coyotes, bobcats, gray wolves, and other predators. Jack and Bev Kirby will provide the refreshments. In addition, we will offer a door prize and a raffle.



Photo of red fox by Jim Bricker

What You Missed at the November Meeting

by Kathy Bricker

You missed nothing. A blizzard canceled the potluck and slide show. Members who planned to attend raved by phone about their lasagna, deviled eggs, chicken-broccoli casserole and other tasty treats, as well as pictures of North Lake Superior parks. We cannot reschedule this, so please bring your food creations to the annual June potluck and save your images for next December's slide fest.

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.

Safeguarding Michigan's Natural Resources

by Brenda Archambo, MI Outreach Consultant, National Wildlife Federation

On January 15, 2010 from 1 – 3:30 pm, the public is invited to a free educational afternoon at the Tuscarora Township Hall in Indian River. Presentations include David Lorenz from Travel Michigan, on "Michigan's Tourism Economy." Sarah Nicholls, Ph.D. from Michigan State University will speak on "Climate Change and Tourism," Sherry Martine MacKinnon from Michigan Department of Natural Resources will address "Climate Change and Wildlife Habitat," Eric Clark from Sault Ste. Marie

Tribe of Chippewa Indians will give "Climate Impacts from a Native American Perspective," and Melinda Koslow from National Wildlife Federation will talk about "Wildlife Adaptation." Please RSVP to archambo@src-milp.com or 231-625-2776.



Photo by Kathy Bricker

Upcoming Field Trips

by Steve Baker

Friday, January 8

Winter Birding in the Eastern UP

This will be a road birding trip to St. Ignace, Rudyard, Dafter, and Dunbar. Please meet at 8:30 am at the Mackinaw City Burger King. From there we will car pool across the bridge in search of Snowy Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrikes, Snow Buntings, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and other winter birds. If weather is too wintry the trip will not go. Please call Steve Baker to register or with questions. 231-238-8723

Thursday, January 14

Ski, Dine, and/or Star-gaze

Jim and Kathy Bricker will lead a ski of the University of Michigan Biological Station trails. We will look for animal tracks, birds, and trees of the winter woods. After, an optional potluck dinner will take place at the nearby Bricker residence, followed by viewing constellations in the lovely dark sky of the new moon. Indoors or outdoors, we will find at least two bears and a dragon in the sky. Come at 3:30 pm to ski, 5:30 pm to eat, and 7 pm to star-gaze, or any combination. Call 627-4830 to register.

Lighthouse Adventures

By Roger Bender

A dream could come true for some of us next summer as Mary Ann Moore, Caretaker at St. Helena Lighthouse, advertises for volunteer keepers. For 5 days or all summer, you can stay at the Lighthouse near Mackinac Bridge and greet visitors, watch birds, learn flowers, or hike on the Little Traverse Conservancy preserve that protects the island. Transportation and food are covered, for only \$125 base fee plus \$12 per day. Call 231-436-5580 for more information.

Presidential Chirpings

by Kathy Bricker

*"The fox went out on a chilly night;
he prayed to the moon to give him light,
for he'd many a mile to go that night
before he reached the town-o."*

So began a Girl Scout camp song that I was eager to share with my favorite Uncle Woodrow, a farmer who worked 40 acres near Lake Erie. As it turned out, a real fox had beaten me there. It hung dead from the barn door when we pulled up in our Plymouth.

As I identified the carcass, my throat went dry and I climbed to the hayloft so noone would see me cry. He proudly showed off his trophy to others, explaining: "Been getting into my chickens for a month." The Oak Harbor newspaper ran Woodrow's picture with it and hailed him as a local hero for shooting the varmint.

My feelings remain the same, 50-some

years later: Can we not spare a few chickens to enjoy an occasional glimpse of the sleekness of a fox dashing across a field, or a weasel leaping white against the snow? Cannot we build better fences to defend our food from wild creatures, rather than use guns and poisons? At least, how about targeting individual animals instead of condemning entire species?

My school biology texts usually ended with a chapter titled Ecology – the chapter that teachers never reached because we ran out of time. Reading it anyway, I learned that predators only catch prey about 10% of the time, that predators and prey maintain a see-saw balance, and that predators keep prey species healthy by catching individuals too old or sick to

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Update on Red Rock Wilderness Act, Utah

by Kathy Bricker

On December 21, several of us met with Roger Srigley in the Petoskey regional office for U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak, to explain why Hon. Stupak should co-sponsor the Red Rock Wilderness Act. Thanks to Linn Williams and Doug Fuller from Petoskey Regional Audubon Society, and Jim Bricker and Gary Williams from SAAS for joining me to make the case. If you want to help protect 9 million acres of beautiful and fragile canyons and mesas in southern Utah, please contact Hon. Stupak at 202-

225 4735, 800-950-7371, or <http://www.house.gov/stupak/IMA/issue2.htm> as soon as possible. We hope that he decides to become a co-sponsor by mid January. Once protected, off-road vehicles will be banned, benefiting Utah wildlife and tourism and Colorado's water supply, downhill ski industry, and agriculture.

Unfortunately, Senator Carl Levin has not responded to the SAAS request for him to co-sponsor. We thank Senator Debbie Stabenow for her co-sponsorship.



Photo by Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Osprey Nesting in Michigan 2009

by Sergej Postupalsky

Ospreys didn't do all that well in Michigan this year, probably owing to the late spring and continued cold weather. Osprey reproduction was spotty, ranging from very good in the southern Lower Peninsula, to good in the Houghton Lake area and on the navigational aids below the Soo, to poor over much of the Upper Peninsula, where few pairs managed to raise more than one young. The southern Lower Peninsula population has become established

only during the past decade. Of 28 pairs this year, 17 were nesting on cell-phone towers, and that habit appears to be spreading north.

The Osprey nest on the utility pole at Duncan Bay produced one young to fledging age, but the tripod platform in the marsh west of the river mouth and marina at Cheboygan was not occupied this year. The pair at the O'Neil Lake flooding raised 2 young.

Saving StarLight

by Maureen Conklin

Several people have taken action on this conservation topic. Kathy Bricker introduced the issue to the Inverness Township board and has been invited to present a short program to them at their February meeting. Judy Vanderhart has spoken with her fellow church members about their glaring parking lot lights, which are needed only a few times a year. I have written to

ask Mackinac Bridge to lower or shield their new very high lights at the north plaza. Please consider a quick contact with the same message to Bob Sweeney, Administrator, Mackinac Bridge, sweeneyb@michigan.gov, 906-643-7600. Let me know if you would like to see the list of other possible actions that many volunteers will be taking.

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breed. Today though, Cheboygan neighbors tell me that coyotes are too abundant here and should be killed. Many people and dog teams are skilled at doing exactly that.

Fox, wolves, mountain lions, bears – predators arouse deep emotions, whether for their destruction or salvation. One side blames them for all manner of evil, while the other thrills to find and trace their trails in the snow.

At our January program, Glen Matthews will share his insights and stories from 30+ years in the wildlife division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Although some questions cannot be settled, Glen will give both demoters and protectors of predators some food for thought. See you there...and bring a neighbor!

Mackinaw Christmas Bird Count

by Steve Baker, count compiler

On December 17, ten birders participated in the Christmas Bird Count around the straits of Mackinaw. The count area is a 15 mile diameter circle centered on the middle of the Mackinaw Bridge. The weather cooperated, no one became stuck or lost, and a good time was had by all involved. We counted 2889 individual birds of 39 species. Highlights included 2 Snowy Owls, 2 Northern Shrikes, 1012 Red-

heads, 250 Long-tailed Ducks, and a very late White-throated Sparrow. This count contains very little land areas (the villages of Mackinaw City and St. Ignace) so we usually just bird till lunch. The afternoon found the group wandering the UP where we saw several Snowy Owls at Rudyard and Glaucous and Iceland Gulls at the famous Dafter Dump.

Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count

by Ed Pike

On Saturday Dec. 19, 2009 the Straits Area Audubon Society sponsored the 24th annual Christmas Bird Count at Cheboygan. The count covers a circle of 7.5 miles radius centered at the junction of M-33 and M-27. The weather cooperated nicely as 5 volunteers drove around the area counting all the birds they could locate and 11 people counted birds coming to their feeders. Two of the observers started before daylight trying to locate some owls by listening for them to call. This year more red-bellied woodpeckers and tufted titmice were seen than in previous years. Lacking were last year's large numbers of northern finches

such as pine grosbeak, pine siskin and common redpoll. A total of 41 species were counted with a total of 2,714 individual birds. This is much higher than the lowest count of 31 species, but short of the 2008 record of 49 species and 3,546 individuals. Thanks to field counters Steve Baker, Lynn Evans, Dale Giddings, Diane Morand, and Ed Pike, and feeder counters Darinda Adlam, Jackie Andrzejewski, Lenny Blaszkowski, Jim and Kathy Bricker, Ben Bur, Maureen Conklin, Sue Good, Faye Johnston, Karen Martin, Dick Peterson, Gerald Rintamaki, and Mark Stormzand.



Photo by Jim Bricker

Cheboygan Christmas Bird Count Results

by Ed Pike

Canada Goose	122	Accipter unknown species	1	Tufted Titmouse	5
Mute Swan	116	Rough-legged Hawk	3	Red-breasted Nuthatch	14
American Black Duck	5	Herring Gull	34	White-breasted Nuthatch	27
Mallard	357	Gull unknown species	6	American Robin	2
Redhead	3	Rock Pigeon	139	European Starling	333
Greater Scaup	1	Mourning Dove	495	American Tree Sparrow	6
Long-tailed Duck	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	6	Dark-eyed Junco	15
Bufflehead	3	Downy Woodpecker	19	Northern Cardinal	31
Common Goldeneye	150	Hairy Woodpecker	24	Purple Finch	4
Hooded Merganser	19	Pileated Woodpecker	5	House Finch	36
Common Merganser	17	Northern Shrike	1	Pine Siskin	1
Red-breasted Merganser	14	Blue Jay	84	American Goldfinch	145
Bald Eagle	11	American Crow	11	House Sparrow	51
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Common Raven	2	Total Individuals	2714
Coopers Hawk	1	Black-capped Chickadee	389		

Kettle Condition

by Roger Benter

Just a note to ask readers about the condition of your mailed *Kettles* this month. In response to several reports of mangled copies, Ann and I will tape the sides as well as the bottom of the newsletter. Your continued feedback will help us decide whether further changes need to be made. Let us know at 231-627-3992. Thank you.

Respiratory Function in Birds

by Susan Good, R.N. CWR

Bionic Hawk

by Gerard Lillie

Recently in Portland, Oregon, a couple hit a red-tailed hawk while doing about 70 mph on I-5. They assumed it was dead and kept driving. They went another 20 miles or so to their home and when they looked at the grill of their car found the hawk still alive after smashing through the grill. It was taken to Portland Audubon and amazingly was not badly injured. It was recently released back to the wild.

Unlike the simple in and out breathing of mammals birds have a complex respiratory system that allows them to extend their scope of activities and engage in highly aerobic behavior such as long distance migration. Unlike mammals, birds do not have a diaphragm to power inspiration and expiration. Instead they rely on their intercostals muscles (muscles located between the ribs) and must raise their chests in order to breathe.

This should be kept in mind when restraining birds and care taken not to constrict their chest area too tightly. When a bird inhales, air actually leaves the lungs; fresh oxygenated air enters the lungs as the bird exhales. It takes two cycles of inhaling and exhaling to complete one 'breath' or respiratory cycle.

Birds have what are called 'air sacs' found in the thoracic area (chest), abdomen and bones. The number of air sacs varies by species (loons have 10; songbirds 7). Major bones are 'pneumatic', either perforated with connections to the air sacs or filled with hollow cavities. Because birds lack sweat glands, the air sacs not only aid in respiration but also help to cool the bird. As air flows over the moist surfaces of the air sacs it causes evaporation. Evaporation absorbs heat and cools the tissues that are in contact with the walls of the air sacs, shedding excess heat from the bird's body. A basic explanation of a complete respiratory cycle is as follows:

1. First Inhalation

Air flows down the trachea into the lungs. The abdomen expands on inhalation and this pulls the inhaled breath from the lungs into the posterior abdominal air sacs.

2. First Exhalation

The bird's abdomen contracts forcing the air in the abdominal sacs back into the lungs. This is when the exchange of oxygen for carbon dioxide occurs and the air is oxygenated.

3. Second Inhalation

As the bird inhales again, the air in the lungs is driven out and the stale air full of carbon dioxide now passes into the anterior thoracic air sacs.

4. Second Exhalation

The anterior air sacs contract and this drives the stale air out of the thoracic sacs into the trachea where it passes out of the nostrils completing the respiratory cycle.

Mother Nature works in strange and mysterious ways; sometimes thoughtful and kind and sometimes harsh and cruel. However, she has her plan and by all accounts it's a good one that works exceeding well. The next time you take a breath, think of our feathered friends and how convoluted an involuntary thing can be when orchestrated by Mother Nature and her wisdom in all things great and small.

Editor's Note: You can reach Susan Good, R.N. CWR at Northernaire Wildlife Rescue. Email sgood@straitsarea.com Phone 231-597-9662



Photo by Kenyon Stebbins

Rare Species Treats

by Steve Baker

Sally Stebbins reports that a northern hawk owl has been seen regularly quite close to Harbor Springs. Look for it along Emmet Heights Rd., north of Quick Rd., in the half-mile stretch before Catob Rd. The diurnal owl has been seen here every day since Dec. 14 up to Dec. 27 when the *Kettle* went to press. It perches at the top of tall deciduous trees, easily seen from the road. As far as anyone knows, this is the

first record for Emmet County, and offers an excellent chance to add this rare northern bird to your life list or just enjoy or photograph it.

Joanne Cromley reports that two dozen evening grosbeaks have visited her feeder near Alba all December. Keep putting out your sunflower seed in hopes of attracting these colorful birds that have become quite rare in recent years.

Join Straits Area Audubon Society

NAME:

Send your submissions to
saas_kettle@yahoo.com

ADDRESS:

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

TELEPHONE:

Coming Events

Mark your calendars now to be sure you can attend.

E-MAIL:

1/8/10 Baker field trip
1/13/10 Bricker field trip
2/10/10 "Birdwatching for Beginners" by Jeff Dykehouse, Curator of Natural History, Mackinac State Historic Parks

Make checks payable to:
Straits Area Audubon Society

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

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

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

Single Membership: \$12

SAAS meetings are held at the Cheboygan Area Public Library.

Family Membership: \$15

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
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