



# North Country Notes

*The Newsletter of the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society*  
Marquette and Alger Counties, Michigan

May 2011

Greetings from the Chair,

Another season of LWAS program meetings concluded on May 11<sup>th</sup>, with about 60 people in attendance for the bird identification program, including lots of new faces. Some of those new people were among the 19 who attended the bird walk at Presque Isle a few days later. Could it be that we are winning some new converts? I guess we'll find out if they stick around. But even if they don't, there is something to be said for a group that brings in good numbers of new people for programs and activities. Considering that we already have a solid core of 78 members, it's clear that LWAS is well-established as a source of education about birds for anyone in our area who has an interest in nature.

As we head into the summer, I'll provide a brief update on our projects. The Keweenaw Raptor Survey is humming along quite nicely. Our hawk counter, Arthur Green, is doing an excellent job and has proven to be a very good ambassador for the project. Also, we've been lucky enough to have last year's counter, Max Henschell, involved with the project again, this time as a substitute counter. Joseph Youngman, Skye Haas, and Zach Gayk have also served as counters so Arthur can have a day off once a week.

For the second straight year, persistent north winds in April kept overall hawk numbers at lower levels than expected until the floodgates opened in early May. This year it happened on May 5<sup>th</sup>, when Skye was counting. On that day he observed the biggest raptor flight he had ever observed on Brockway Mountain, with 2,500 raptors of 13 different species headed eastward toward the tip of the Keweenaw. It was so good that he gave Arthur a call so he could come up to Brockway and join in the fun on his day off. The majority of

migrants (1,613) on that day were Broad-winged Hawks. Two days later, Arthur observed 1,104 eastbound raptors, including 1,034 Broad-wings.

As a result of that surge, the season total has now topped 7,500 and is on pace to rival last year's total of almost 10,000. This goes to show why when you count migrating raptors, you cannot take a day off; about one-third of the season total to date passed by on one day.

In early May, I spent a week helping Joe Youngman count waterbirds on Porphyry and Edward Islands in northern Lake Superior, and as I looked southeast at Isle Royale, I often thought that, at that very moment, Arthur Green might be looking at Isle Royale from the opposite direction, from atop Brockway Mountain. Joe and I counted about 800 migrating loons during the course of the week, most of them far from shore but some that zoomed right over our heads, with wings whistling. (Joe and Laurie Binford once clocked migrating loons at up to 60 mph.) And we did have a few raptors fly in from the direction of Isle Royale, in spite of unfavorable winds, which raises the question of how many might cross over on a good day.

The Moosewood Nature Center continues to proceed with the Shiras Pool project. A package has been put together that includes financial numbers and artist's renditions of what the pool area will look like when the project is completed. Moosewood has applied for a number of grants and financial support from local foundations. Scot Stewart has put a lot of time into this project for Moosewood and has been very open to input from LWAS about the design of the pond and the landscape around it. Perhaps someday soon

we can begin referring to this not as the Shiras Pool project, but as the Shiras Pond project.

We will send out emails should any volunteer opportunities arise, though it's impossible to predict how things will happen at the Shiras Pool area until a funding source has

been determined. In the meantime, best wishes to everyone for a bird-filled summer!

Greg Cleary--

### **Keweenaw Raptor Survey: Final Numbers for 2010 Season**

Here are the species-by-species numbers for last year's Keweenaw Raptor Survey, from March 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>, as reported by Max Henschell. Although both eastbound and westbound birds are counted, the official count only includes eastbound numbers, which were as follows:

Turkey Vulture	758
Osprey	47
Bald Eagle	828
Northern Harrier	145
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1584
Cooper's Hawk	23
Northern Goshawk	29
Red-shouldered Hawk	9
Broad-winged Hawk	4905
Swainson's Hawk	7
Red-tailed Hawk	748
Rough-legged Hawk	119
Golden Eagle	31
American Kestrel	92
Merlin	42
Peregrine Falcon	20
Unkown Accipiter	30
Unknown Buteo	110
Unknown Eagle	27
Unknown Falcon	2
Unknown Raptor	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>9579</b>

Other notable migrants over Brockway Mountain during the count season included over 16,000 Canada Geese (over 12,000 on one day alone—April 12<sup>th</sup>), 290 Common Loons, and 47 American White Pelicans. For daily updates on KRS during the count season be sure to visit [HawkCount.org](http://HawkCount.org), and for additional information visit [keweenawraptorsurvey.org](http://keweenawraptorsurvey.org).



**Adult Piping Plover**



**Piping Plover Chick**

Photos by Jude Holloway

## **Volunteers needed in protection and recovery of the endangered Great Lakes Piping Plover**

Volunteer piping plover monitors are needed at various sites throughout Michigan to help in the recovery efforts for this endangered shorebird. Opportunities vary by location, but include intensive monitoring of piping plover nest sites, reporting sightings of piping plovers, surveying historic nesting locations, interacting with beach users, and more. Please contact the following individuals for details regarding specific opportunities at each site.

### Areas in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan:

*Grand Marais, Manistique, Escanaba* – Contact: Lynnea McFadden at (906) 225-8067 or [uplc@uplandconservancy.org](mailto:uplc@uplandconservancy.org)

*Nahma (Delta County, Stonington Peninsula)* – Contact: Janet Ekstrum at (906) 474-6442 x 140 or [jekstrum@fs.fed.us](mailto:jekstrum@fs.fed.us)

*St. Ignace* – Contact: Steve Sjogren at (906) 643-7900 ext 134 or [ssjogren@fs.fed.us](mailto:ssjogren@fs.fed.us)

General piping plover sightings in Great Lakes can be reported to: Vince Cavalieri at (517)-351-5467 or [vincent\\_cavalieri@fws.gov](mailto:vincent_cavalieri@fws.gov) or Christie Deloria at (906) 226-1240 or [christie\\_deloria@fws.gov](mailto:christie_deloria@fws.gov)

## **Tawas Point Birding Festival 2011**

I had the opportunity to attend the Michigan Audubon Society Tawas Point Birding Festival on May 13th-15th. I had never attended it before so it was an exciting prospect for me. What kinds of birds would I see? How many new birds would I experience?

My first field trip was to Kirtland Warbler habitat in the Huron National Forest about a half hour drive north of Tawas. I've heard Kirtland Warblers from close proximity more than a few times, but had yet to see one. Well, our group got to see 3-4 of them as they popped up to the

top of dead snags or a taller tree above the jack pine stands to sing out their distinctive song. This was a great start to the weekend. Another stop of this tour was to a maintained oak savannah habitat to see Red-Headed Woodpeckers. We not only enjoyed the woodpeckers but one sharp-eyed birder found an unusually shaped "lump" on a horizontal tree limb. This turned out to be a napping Common Nighthawk which was a first time sighting for several birders in that group. Another stop was at a lake to see a pair of nesting Trumpeter

Swans. As we enjoyed the sight of the swans, our guide found a Long-Tailed Duck swimming off in the distance- a somewhat unusual species to see on an inland lake, I thought.

That evening was the Audubon Annual Banquet with a Keynote Presentation by Don and Lillian Stokes, prolific book and article writers and educators in the birding field for over 30 years. It was a wonderful opportunity to listen to them talk about their lives and the great experiences they've had. Their latest endeavor is a new Field Guide to the Birds of North America. The bird images are all photographs taken by Lillian herself. Each bird species is represented by several photographs at different maturity levels and each is labeled as to which month the photo was taken and the location where it was photographed. Each species is also labeled with an ABA code that signifies the ease of seeing that bird in their normal range. I was intrigued by the organization of the book, so I bought one and got it signed by the Stokes. A very nice addition to my growing collections of guides.

The next trip I enjoyed was to the Tuttle Marsh about a 20 min. drive north of Tawas. I haven't experienced many marsh birds so I was looking forward to this trip. Despite stiff winds, rain and cold temperatures, we heard at least 3 Sora Rails calling, a Virginia Rail, Pied-billed Grebes and a Common Moorhen. We also saw an Osprey, a Wilson's Snipe and a Common Loon as well as numerous other sparrows, warblers (including a Bay-breasted) and other birds.

The weather remained cold, very windy and rainy for most of the weekend, but I kept repeating Skye's mantra "The rain really brings 'em down." At Tawas point the birds obliged. Birders enjoyed many close up encounters of beautiful warblers at eye level or below, several hundred White-Crowned Sparrows, Gray Catbirds and many Baltimore Orioles, an Orchard Oriole or two and a pair of Scarlet Tanagers. The last 3 species were visiting the oranges put out by the organizers of the weekend festivities and so gave everyone close up looks. The biggest surprise out on the point came when I was very intently photographing warblers and I glanced down the trail. My heart jumped when I saw a beautiful mature male Ring-necked Pheasant a few yards away strolling up the trail directly for me! He calmly approached and walked within a few feet by me up the trail! I couldn't get my camera to focus on him he was so close. What a thrill. I later found out that he is likely an escapee from a local pheasant farm. It was still a very fun sighting.

At the Tally Rally 170 species were tallied as being observed over the course of the weekend. A successful event indeed. I did add a few species to my life list but I did not keep a personal list of birds I observed over the weekend. It was more fun simply living in the moment, seeing lots of birds and in the company of others who were doing the same.

Beth Olson

## LWAS Monthly Programs:

### Spring Field Trips

Our March newsletter had a detailed description of our upcoming spring field trips, but here's another reminder.

- Saturday, May 28<sup>th</sup>—K.I. Sawyer Jack Pine Plains  
Carpool at the parking lot at 4<sup>th</sup> and Spring St. in Marquette 6:30 AM.  
Information: Greg Cleary ([g.cleary@sbcglobal.net](mailto:g.cleary@sbcglobal.net) or 228-8781)

We will spend a morning exploring one of the most productive habitat types in the U.P., looking for open-country species such as Vesper Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Palm Warbler, Brewer's Blackbird, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Sandhill Crane, Northern Harrier, and Upland Sandpiper. We should return by noon, so there is no need to pack a lunch. Plan to walk about 2-3 miles on dry ground.

- Monthly Presque Isle Bird Walk Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month from June – October  
 8:00 a.m. (ends around 10:00 or 10:30)  
 Meet in the parking lot of the Bog Walk  
 Leader: Greg Cleary  
 This is a good walk for beginners, but everyone can learn and contribute as we enjoy one of the best birding spots in the area. We walk through the bog, along the shoreline, and into the woods on Presque Isle itself.

**Fall Programs:**

Our first fall program will take place on Wednesday, September 14 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of Peter White Library. The topic will be “Lake Superior Island Bird Studies” presented by Greg Cleary or Joe Youngman.

**Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society Membership Form for 2011**

Your dues support local birding activities, bird feeding, and program costs

Name (or names) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

(E-mail addresses are used to provide you with updates and newsletters; your address is not given to other groups or commercial entities)

Membership fees (please check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular (Individual and Family) Annual - \$15.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Student - \$5.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation to support bird feeding at the Audubon supported feeding station at MooseWood Nature Center on Presque Isle \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form, along with your check (payable to LWAS), to:

***Ann Joyal***

***346 W. Crescent St.***

***Marquette, MI 49855***

***Phone 226-6749***

For you who are already members, check your mailing label on this newsletter to see when you last paid your membership dues. Dues are paid for a one year period.

If you are currently “paid – up”, consider giving this membership form to someone you know who might be interested in joining Laughing Whitefish Audubon.

# Keweenaw Raptor Survey

A joint venture of the Copper Country Audubon Club and the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society

**Yes!** I will support the Keweenaw Raptor Survey.

Enclosed with this form is a check for the following amount:

\$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$75 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_ Other (amount)



**NOTE: This contribution is made on behalf of the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Line 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 2 \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Please make checks payable to *Copper Country Audubon Club* and include in the memo line "**Keweenaw Raptor Survey.**" Copper Country Audubon Club is a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization, and so your gift is tax deductible.

Please mail this form with donation to:

**Copper Country Audubon Club**

**P.O. Box 124**

**Houghton, Michigan 49931**

Visit us online: [www.keweenawraptorsurvey.org](http://www.keweenawraptorsurvey.org)

*LWAS is committed to raising \$3000 of the required funding cost. Using this form will ensure that your contribution is credited to our organization. Thanks!*

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c/o Beth Olson

5 Arrowhead Dr.

Marquette, MI 49855