

North Country Notes

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



October 2019

Hawk Watch in Duluth Minnesota 2019

By Gary Palmer

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO), based in Duluth, regularly tallies some of the highest numbers of migrating raptors in all of North America. Over the last ten years, observers at HRBO have counted an amazing total of around 76,000 raptors each fall, on average. These migrating birds of prey are seen throughout the fall season, running from August 15-November 30 each year.

A total of sixteen diurnal raptors are spotted in a typical fall, including favorites such as Northern Goshawk, Golden Eagle, and the western-breeding Swainson's Hawk. The biggest numbers of birds are seen in mid-September, often coinciding with the annual Hawk Weekend festival, the third weekend of the month. On days with gentle northwest winds throughout the second half of September, thousands of Broad-winged Hawks can often be seen streaming through the sky. Always the most numerous migrant in a season at Hawk Ridge, Broad-winged have averaged over 27,000 each fall, with a stunning record high single-day count of over 101,000 in 2003!

Other raptors pass by Hawk Ridge in large numbers throughout the course of a fall season, and hundreds could be seen any given day of the season. Days of over 1,000 Sharp-shinned Hawks are not uncommon in September, and Red-tailed can top this total in late October. Bald Eagles, with their numbers on the rise in recent years, may be seen in the dozens or perhaps hundreds anytime, though they typically peak in late October or early November. Golden Eagles and Northern Goshawks are best seen toward the end of the season, well after the peak for species such as Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk. All three species of falcon, American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine, also peak early, seemingly timing their migrations to coincide

with the peak migration of dragonflies, which are among their favorite prey.

In addition to the raptor count conducted each fall since the start of the 1970s, HRBO boasts the world's largest raptor banding station. On average around 4,000 raptors are banded at Hawk Ridge in a fall season. Not only does the banding effort provide invaluable data about the birds migrating through and their movements, it also means fantastic opportunities to see live raptors up close! Throughout September and October, banded raptors are often able to make a public appearance prior to being released to continue their journeys. And it's not only the diurnal raptors being banded at HRBO; owl banding begins in mid-September, with public programs offered on weekends in October.

The west end of Lake Superior is a major migratory corridor for plenty of other species, as well. In mid-to-late August each year the shoreline in Duluth is the best place anywhere in the world to see Common Nighthawk migration. On warm, humid evenings with light winds thousands of these birds may be seen streaming past; on one evening in 2018 over 14,000 were tallied in just two hours! Warblers will occasionally fly by just after sunrise at a rate of over 10,000 per hour. Tens of thousands of Blue Jays can be counted across the season, and Robins, Rusty Blackbirds and Redpolls are just a few more of the many species which can be seen by the hundreds as they follow the Lake Superior shoreline to the southwest.

No two days, nor two seasons, are ever the same when it comes to bird migration, but with a little proper planning and plenty of patience, watching migrants is a rewarding way to experience an important time in the annual cycle of these marvelous birds.



2019-20 Christmas Bird Count Dates

The National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) takes place annually from December 14 – January 5 and has been in existence for 120 years, making it the longest-running wildlife census in the country. Join with other birders to collect important information that is used to assess the health of the nation's bird populations

ALL BIRDERS ARE WELCOME: Beginning birders will be paired with more experienced observers. This is a great way to learn more about the birds in your area. DRESS WARMLY!

Christmas Bird Counts in the local area:

- **December 14, 2019 (Saturday) - Marquette –**
The compiler is Melinda Stamp at mstamp@mstamp.net or 906-869-2489.
*Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at Mattson Lower Harbor Park in Marquette.
No advanced registration is necessary. Feeder forms are available by pre-registering with Melinda. The count circle covers a 7.5-mile radius centered on Old City Hall at 4th & Washington St.*
- **December 15, 2019 (Sunday) - AuTrain**
The compiler is Scott Hickman at suboscine@gmail.com or 906-892-8603.
Please use the email address for communication since count information is distributed by email. Please let Scott know at least 4 days in advance if you want to participate so that count circle coverage can be properly coordinated and communicated to all participants.
- **January 4th, 2020 (Saturday) - Gwinn**
The compiler is Brian Johnson at maxbrij@yahoo.com or 616-600-5300. Contact Brian or Beth Olson (upbirdie@gmail.com) for meeting place and time.
- **Michigamme Highlands - Peshekee Grade (Date to be determined)**
The compiler is Gary Palmer at palmerjg@gmail.com. Gary would welcome participants in this count – please email him if you are interested in participating and to discuss details.

LWAS Programs October 2019 – January 2020

- **October 9 (Wed.) 7:00 p.m. “Travels with Max and Gizmo: In Search of the U.P.”**
ROOM: Peter White Library Community Room
PRESENTER: Steve Lindberg
Steve will present photos selected from his “photo-a-day” on Facebook – a seasonal sampling

of the animals and scenery found around his neighborhood in Marquette. This program is repeated at the request of many people who missed it in January, but Steve adds that this presentation will be edited to include new material and deletions of some original photographs.

- **November 13 (Wed.) 7:00 p.m. Annual Membership Meeting**
ROOM CHANGE: Peter White Library's *Heritage Room* (on the library's top floor)
 This is an informal social event where members are invited to bring digital photographs of birds and other nature-oriented subjects to share with the audience. Light refreshments will be served. There will be a brief business meeting before the program.
- **THERE IS NO DECEMBER MEETING.** Consider joining a Christmas Bird Count
- **January 15, 2020 (Wed) 7:00 p.m.** (to be announced)
- **February 12, 2020 (Wed) 7:00 p.m.** "*Evaluation of West Nile Virus on the Survival and Reproduction of Loons in the U.P.*"
 ROOM: Peter White Library Community Room
 PRESENTER: Carly Paget, NMU Biology Graduate Student, winner of 2019 LWAS Research Grant
 Carly will give a presentation on her methods, results, and conclusions of her research. Learn about Loons and their status in the Upper Peninsula.
- **March 11, 2020 (Wed) 7:00 p.m.** (To be announced)
- **April 8, 2020 (Wed) 7:00 p.m.**
 ROOM: Peter White Library Community Room
 PRESENTER: J.D. Phillips
 (Program to be announced)
- **March 11, 2020 (Wed) 7:00 p.m.** (To be announced)
- **April 8, 2020 (Wed) 7:00 p.m.**
 PRESENTER: J.D. Phillips
 (Program to be announced)

The Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society Chapter Is Seeking New Board Members

Are you a bird lover and environmentalist? Do you want to have a voice in how your local Audubon Society chapter, the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society (LWAS), carries out its activities? If so, then you are encouraged to join the board of the LWAS to work with other committed board members to plan birding outings, informative and entertaining monthly programs, and to determine the best manner in which to spend the Chapter's financial assets. The only requirement to become a board member is to be a current member of the LWAS. The LWAS typically holds three board meetings per year. If you have questions or are ready to join the board, please contact any of the current board members listed in this newsletter.

Haas	Skye	theowlranch@gmail.com	
Holloway	Jude	906kayaker@gmail.com	
Joyal	Ann	ajoyal@nmu.edu	Secretary/Treasurer
Olson	Beth	upbirdie@gmail.com	Newsletter editor
Palmer	Gary	palmerjq@gmail.com	
Phillips	J.D.	phillips.jd1@gmail.com	
Skelding	Thom	thomskelding@gmail.com	
Towner	Jeff	Chielenstowner@msn.com	President

Oneill	Amanda	lifeintheyoop@gmail.com	Vice President
Martineau	Nathan	miyoungbirder@gmail.com	

At Home Wildlife

By Jude Holloway

Living in the UP we are very fortunate to be surrounded by all kinds of fascinating wildlife. For many of us these can be visitors right out our back doors and in our yards. And like many of the Laughing Whitefish Society members I love feeding the birds at my home and enjoy having them around all time. Unfortunately, we don't always get to choose who comes calling once we put out food. Critters such as skunks, raccoon, squirrels, bear and even some pesky blue jays at times are not always the most welcomed at our bird feeders. But wildlife comes in a mixed bag. Because I've had unwanted night visitors that insist on destroying my feeders I am in the habit of taking my feeders in at night during the spring, summer, & fall months.

One night this summer I heard quite a ruckus out on my back deck. When it started off as a loud bang I figured a raccoon had knocked one of the feeders onto the deck and was proceeding to destroy and empty it. I was frustrated with myself for having forgotten to take them in that night. So, I got up out of bed, stormed out the door onto the deck to find not a raccoon but three bear cubs having a party with the big now overturned container that I keep my sunflower seeds in! It is raccoon proof, but obviously not bear proof. Even though they were small enough for me to know they were cubs, they were not by any means small. Being just wakened out of sleep my brain thought "Oh, cute little cubs. Just chase them away". But when I walked towards them trying to shoo them away they just kept right on with their jockeying for the best spot on the spilled pile of seeds. So, I thought "okay, I'm going to get tough". So, I stomped back into the house and riffled

through a drawer until I found some fire crackers that I kept for just this sort of situation. I went back out onto the deck, lit two at once and tossed them over towards the cubs. They blew up plenty loud but only seemed to add to the party's fun for the cubs. At that point I didn't think there was much more I could do except accept that they would leave when they wanted to. As I turned to go back into the house, they suddenly all scurried off. Hey! I thought. Maybe they were afraid of me being there all tough and big. Ha. So, I walked over to the overturned canister and getting down on my knees proceeded to try to scoop some of the spilled seeds back into the container. That's when I caught sight of something right behind the railing that the container was up against. Mom! With nothing but a thing rail between our faces. It had obviously been her that had commanded the cubs to leave. And she was now coming up the stairs to let me know her displeasure at my in-hospitality.

Out of sheer instinct I grabbed the canister by the handle and quickly swung it between me and her. It was heavy but adrenaline really does make you strong. Keeping my eyes locked on her I shuffled backwards to the door as quickly as I could. I pulled the container up over the threshold and into the house closing the door quickly.

I stood at the double glass door and watched as mamma bear pulled herself up onto the railing. She then proceeded to walk down that three-and-a-half-inch railing as skilled as any tight rope artist. Being just twelve feet away she seemed massive to me. I was totally amazed at her agility and grace. After having displayed her dominance, she

then climbed down and moseyed off the deck.

Yes, feeding birds with bears around don't mix. And if you are not mindful of that, the bear will always win.



Photo by Jude Holloway

Thanks to Our Members for Their Extra Donations and Support

Ann Joyal, Treasurer

In September 2019 the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society had 68 active members whose dues support activities such as printing and mailing our newsletters, and program costs including room-rental, data-projector rental, and mileage reimbursement for speakers.

A number of our members made additional donations to help with extra club projects or expenses. This money was used to fund a donation to the Michigan Young Birders' Camp to help reduce attendance fees for students, and a donation of bird guides and binoculars to an Environmental Biology class at Marquette Senior High School. The guides and binoculars were used to support a new unit on birds and birding.

Member donations also funded the *LWAS Avian Research or Conservation Grant* which was awarded this year to Carly Paget. Carly is a Northern Michigan University biology graduate student, and the grant will help fund Carly's graduate research project to study the effect of diseases borne by black-flies and mosquitos on the decline of the Common Loon population at Seney National Wildlife Refuge.

We'd like to express our thanks to the following people who made extra contributions from September 2018-August 2019. Without your help our projects would not have been possible:

Ron Annelin, Priscilla Burnham and Lou Chappell, Bill and Kathy Davis, Ginny Foreman, Richard Gray, Skye Haas, Jim Hayward, Scott Hickman, Mark and Joanie Hubinger, Bill and Jan Joswiak, Ann Joyal, Keith Kepler, Alec Lindsay and Kate Teeter, Paul Marin and Betsy Little, Mary Maki, Jerry and Suzi Maynard, Joanna Mitchell, Fred and Judi Mouser, Tory Parlin, Ann Richardson, Clare and Michael Sauer, Thom Skelding, Mary and Don Snitgen, Martin Steindler, Carol Ann Stuht, Mary Turvey, Steve and Cathy Waller, Amanda Willis, and Cliff Wooten.

Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society Membership Form

Dues support the newsletter, programs, & local birding activities. Donations are tax-deductible.

Your name (or gift-recipient's name): _____

Street: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address _____

(E-mail addresses are not given to other groups or commercial entities)

Annual Membership fees (please check one)

Gift membership - \$15 Regular membership - \$15 OR Student - \$5.00

How would you like to receive your newsletter? (check one) e-mail or postal service

Additional donations:

\$ _____ General Expenses for club projects

\$ _____ Research/Conservation Grant to fund birding research/conservation in the
UP

FOR GIFT MEMBERSHIPS please supply your name and the recipient will be notified of your gift: DONOR NAME: _____

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

Ann Joyal, 346 W. Crescent St. Marquette, MI 49855 (ajoyal@nmu.edu or 906-226-6749)

c/o Beth Olson
5 Arrowhead Dr.
Marquette, MI 49855

