

North Country Notes

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



March 2017

Sax-Zim Bog 3/28/2017

by Alec Olivier

On the weekend of February 24, 25 and the 26th, I led a field trip for the Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society at the Sax-Zim bog in Northern Minnesota. The highlights were 2 Great Gray Owls, a very cooperative Northern Hawk Owl, Black Billed Magpies, Gray Jays and a moose!

On the 24th we got to the bog at 1:50 PM. We saw a Black Billed Magpie, 3 Rough-legged Hawks, 2 Northern Shrikes and other usual winter birds like siskins, redpolls, chickadees and a Red-Breasted Nuthatch. As it was getting closer to dusk, we ran into another birder who just saw a wolf. We were unfortunately, a few minutes late and did not see it. He told us he saw a Northern Hawk Owl a few minutes before and kindly showed us where it was. We did not see it at first but after a few minutes of looking I found it on the top of a tamarack tree.

The birder then brought us to where he had previously seen Great Gray Owls. We were there for about 10 minutes when we saw a car down the road with its flashers on. We headed towards the car and when we got to them they told us they just saw a Great Gray. As we were talking to them a Great Gray flew onto a snag behind us! We got good looks at it even though it was pretty dark by this time. The owl flew across the road. I walked down the road to where the owl was and my dad turned the car around. As I was watching the owl a second Great Gray flew in. For a few seconds one owl

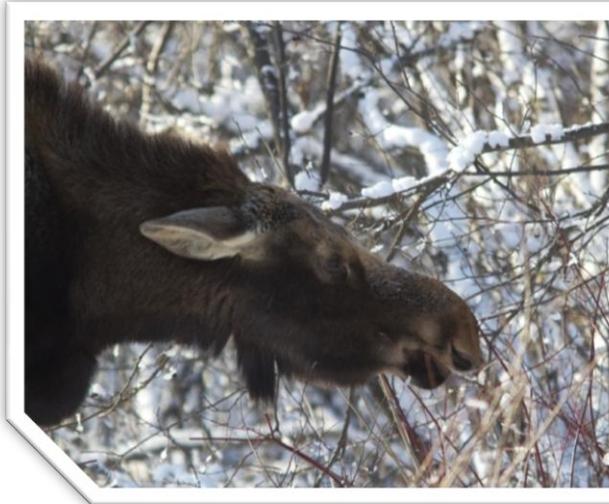
landed on top of the other owl. We were able to watch them for a few more minutes before it got too dark.



Great Gray Owl by Alec Olivier

On Saturday, we got to the bog at 8:30 AM. At about 10 AM we found a moose on the side of the road in the southern part of the bog. The moose was very tolerant of the people watching it. We watched the moose for about 10 minutes before we moved on to look for Sharp-tailed Grouse. We found 4 Sharp-tails near some bird feeders. Our group then headed to the Sax-Zim bog welcome center. On the way to the welcome

center there was a porcupine just off the road. At the welcome center there were siskins, redpolls, chickadees and 2 Gray Jays.



Moose by Alec Olivier

The next stop was to look for the Hawk Owl from the previous day. We soon found the owl thanks to a small crowd that was

watching it. We then headed to a bird feeding station that was close to the owl. Highlights there were Evening and Pine Grosbeaks along with many redpolls. For the rest of the day we pretty much drove up and down McDavitt and Admiral roads, in search of Great Gray Owls, Black-backed woodpeckers and Boreal Chickadees. Although we found none of the listed species, we were looking from about 2 PM to dusk. As it was getting closer to dusk, we found a Bald Eagle perched in a snag off of McDavitt road and that may have been a reason why we did not see a great gray. On our way back to Duluth, a Snowy Owl flew across the road but, unfortunately, no one else in the group saw it.

On Sunday we saw some Gray Jays and Rough Legged Hawks but not much else. We saw a total of 24 bird species, a Moose, a Porcupine and Wolf tracks on the trip.



Northern Hawk Owl by Alec Olivier



Gray Jay by Alec Olivier



White-Winged Crossbills by Alec Olivier

Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society Announces 2017 Grant Awardee

In 2014, the LWAS Executive Board voted to sponsor a competitive grant of \$500 for research and/or conservation work that would benefit the avian population in the Upper Peninsula. In previous years, the grant has helped fund research on the Spruce Grouse population of the Yellow Dog Plains, and documentation of spring migration species at Peninsula Point. Our 2017

grant has been awarded to Zach Gayk to help fund his research and analysis of flight-calling in wood-warblers in the Bete Grise area of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

At our evening program on March 8th, Zach presented the results of his surveys of warbler-migration in the Keweenaw from 2013-2016. For this year's research, Zach will record and analyze flight-calls as well as other data. The money from the LWAS grant will be used to purchase computer software for data recording and analysis of these flight calls. We are pleased to be able to offer this grant to Zach and are looking forward to learning more about the results of his research.

To see Zach's complete research-proposal go to the LWAS website under "Research Grant" or visit

<https://laughingwhitefishaudubon.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/reoriented-warbler-migration-at-the-bete-grise-and-bare-bluff-preserves.pdf>

Saturday, May 20: Field Trip to Peninsula Point- Spring Migration and Picnic!

Peninsula Point Lighthouse at the tip of the Stonington Peninsula is one of the best locations in the UP to witness spring migration. This year, LWAS will host an all-day birding event on Saturday, May 20. (NOTE: *previously*, this event was held on Sunday)

Time: All day (arriving around dawn will give you the best views)

Carpooling: Please make your own arrangements for rides.

Picnic: mid-day cookout in the picnic area – bring your own food and beverages

Driving Instructions: From US Highway 2 proceed 2.8 miles east from Rapid River; take the exit towards Stonington and travel south on County Road 513. Follow CR 513 for 17.7 miles to the tip of the peninsula, where you will find the Peninsula Point Lighthouse.

Information: Contact Beth Olson (phone: 906-360-4366 or email tolson@chartermi.net)

Hundreds of neo-tropical songbirds like warblers, tanagers, orioles, grosbeaks, vireos, buntings and thrushes are readily found each year along with shorter distance migrants like sparrows, jays, woodpeckers, chickadees and finches. On a good day, a birder can easily tally over 100 species including over 20 species of warblers. Some highlights from past field trips include both Summer and Western Tanagers, Hooded Warblers, Connecticut Warblers, Rose Breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, egrets, swans, terns, yellowlegs, and hundreds of Whimbrels.

Join us for some of the spring's best birding. *A bonus of this gathering is that there will be plenty of expert birders available to help with spotting and bird-identification.*

LWAS Dues will Expire Yearly on October 1

In order to facilitate record keeping for the treasurer, the LWAS Executive Board voted to change our fiscal year to extend from October 1 to September 30 of the following year. All dues will now expire on September 30. If your current dues expiration date is anytime in 2017, your dues will now expire on September 30, 2017. If your dues expire anytime in 2018, they will now expire on September 30, 2018. Your revised due date is published on your address label for your reference. Thanks for your patience. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the treasurer, Ann Joyal, at ajoyal@nmu.edu.

New Chocolay Bayou Nature Preserve Trails and Boardwalk

by Bruce Ventura

Laughing Whitefish Audubon has been a supporter and contributor to the Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy in that organization's acquisition and development of the 12 acre Chocolay Bayou Nature Preserve. The property was purchased in 2016 from conservation-minded neighbors, with the assistance of multiple organizations, foundations, and individuals. UPLC holds the property for the protection of the wildlife that inhabit the area, for its historical value, and for the quiet enjoyment of nature by local neighbors and visitors from afar.

The Nature Preserve is located at the north edge of Harvey, just south of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail/North Country Trail. Those of you who wish to access the Preserve via the Iron Ore trail will find a trailhead and information kiosk at the northeast corner of the Preserve, between the two bridges that the Iron Ore trail uses to cross the Chocolay River and its backwater bayou. Parking for access via the Iron Ore trail is conveniently located about a quarter mile northwest of the Preserve at the Michigan Department of Transportation Welcome Center on US 41.

The Preserve can also be accessed at its southeast corner where a short driveway off Main Street leads to a second trailhead and kiosk. The Chocolay Bayou Restaurant allows parking in their lot; please park at the east end of their lot away from the restaurant building. Walk west along Main Street from the restaurant parking about 100 feet, cross Main Street to the driveway, and enter the preserve. Both of these access points are labeled on the map below.

The map shows three trails that are currently open for the public to use for

passive recreational activities such as bird watching, hiking/walking, snow-shoeing, and quiet contemplation of nature. The trail shown in yellow is located on an old two track road, which provides a relatively level walkway into the north side of the Preserve. The trail marked in red is a single track that winds through the woods. This track is not as level as the yellow trail, and is likely to have some slippery spots when the ground is wet. On the south side of the preserve, you will find a second single track trail that wanders in a loop through a maturing pine forest. Look for all three pine species that are common in the UP along this trail. This trail is more open, with gentler slopes than the red trail.

The map also shows a dashed gray line connecting the north and south trails. This is the location of a boardwalk that will be constructed this spring and summer across the wetland that lies between the north and south portions of the preserve. It will allow easier access between the trails and, more importantly, it will allow visitors to stroll through and study the flora and fauna of a northern alder/cedar/tamarack swamp without the need for hip waders! Volunteers will be needed when construction of the boardwalk begins. If you are interested in helping with this project, watch the UPLC website or its Facebook page for information on what and when activities will be occurring. The main UPLC website can be found at www.uplandconservancy.org. You could also contact UPLC (Andrea or Chris) at (906) 225- 8067 for more information or updates on this project or other volunteer opportunities with the conservancy.



Saturday, June 10: Field trip to Kate's Grade, south of Gwinn

Kate's Grade is located about 10 miles southwest of Gwinn, on a mixed habitat of wetlands and wooded areas. It is a well-known birding site, with a variety of hard-to-see birds. Several years have passed since LWAS has sponsored a field trip to this area, and members have asked to visit the location this year.

Date: Saturday, June 10

Time: 6:00 a.m. (to allow best birding)

Car pool: meet at the parking lot on the corner of Spring and 4th Streets in Marquette.

Information: Contact Beth Olson (phone: 906-360-4366 or email tolson@chartermi.net)

Birds you may see at Kate's grade include Golden-winged Warblers, Canada Warblers, Mourning Warblers, Cape May Warblers, Tennessee Warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Blackburnian Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Sedge Wrens, Gray Jays, Indigo Buntings, and many more! Join us for a delightful morning of birding!

Spring Fling at Whitefish Point – Michigan Audubon’s Celebration of Bird Migration (April 29-30)

Spring Fling is held each year to celebrate one of Michigan’s best spring migration spots. This year’s “Fling” will take place from Saturday, April 29 to Sunday, April 30, with early registration and a pre-event field trip on Friday, April 28. Birders of all abilities will enjoy the variety of activities available at “Spring Fling.”

Full registration includes:

- Two guided bird walks
- Northern Owls presentation with WPBO Owl Banders
- Two Saturday Workshops: "Piping Plovers at WPBO" and "Birdsongs & Vocalizations"
- Tickets to Saturday evening banquet and keynote speaker presentation
- Evening owl flight programs with interpretive guides

Saturday evening’s keynote address will be “Hawks on the Wing: Seeing beyond field marks” by hawk specialist, Josh Haas. His talk stresses ways to identify hawks in flight, and includes illustrative videos. In addition to hawk identification, he will also discuss ways that hawks migrate so efficiently.

Information and registration forms can be found at <http://wpbo.org/events/spring-fling/>

Spring Fling volunteers are needed for various tasks from taking registrations to leading guided bird walks. To learn more or to volunteer contact Lindsay Cain at lcain@michiganaudubon.org.

Evening Programs for April 2017 and for Fall 2017

Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society meetings are held in the Community Room of Peter White Library, beginning at 7:00 p.m. and ending around 8:30. For information call 226-6749.

April 12, 2017 (Wednesday) “*Tips on Identifying Warblers*”

Presenter: Dr. Tom Noren

Tom will discuss tips for identifying the many warblers that can be seen in the Upper Peninsula during the spring. In addition, he will talk about the various habitats in which warblers can be found.

NOTE: There will be no evening programs from May – August.

September 6, 2017 (FIRST Wednesday) “*The Grace of Birds*”

Presenter: Scot Stewart

This program will feature a look at the beauty of birds as they go about their anything-but-routine daily activities. Most of photographs were taken in the Upper Peninsula.

October 11, 2017 (Wednesday) *Program to be determined*

November 8, 2017 (Wednesday) “*Annual Membership Meeting*”

The program will begin with a SHORT business meeting and an opportunity to meet Board members and to ask questions. The remainder of the evening will be a social event with refreshments and a viewing of bird and nature-oriented photographs taken by our members. Please bring your photos on a CD, DVD, or small jump-drive. A computer & digital projector will be available. All photos are welcome and we look forward to seeing the wonderful pictures our members provide.

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 Olsson
5 Arrowhead Dr.
Marquette, MI 49855

