



# EARTHSTAR

NEWSLETTER OF THE MACOMB AUDUBON SOCIETY

<http://www.macombaudubon.org>

Volume 45, Number 2, March – April 2018

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## Programs

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*Monthly programs are held at Sterling Heights Nature Center unless otherwise noted.*

### **Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 7:00 p.m.** **Movie Night – “The Big Year”**

If you haven't yet seen this fun blockbuster, be sure to join us! In this comedy, Steve Martin and Jack Black star as two bird enthusiasts who try to defeat the cocky, cut-throat world record holder (Owen Wilson) in a year-long bird-spotting competition. This film is based on the book *The Big Year* by Mark Obmascik. Bring your Junior Mints and Milk Duds and enjoy the show!

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### **Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, 7:00 p.m.** **Randy Baker - “Kenyan Wildlife”**

Lions and Rhinos and Giraffes and Elephants... and lots of cool birds too! Randy Baker will be here to speak to us about the wildlife and the cultures that make Kenya unique. Randy just recently led a trip to Kenya (this past January/February) and we look forward to hearing all about his adventures!

**About Randy Baker:** Most of you already know Randy. He's a fun, engaging speaker, and former president of the Macomb Audubon Society. We're very happy to host Randy as he shares information and stories from Kenya. Randy is a naturalist and owner of Naturalist Endeavors (click the link to visit his website <http://www.naturalistendeavors.com/>).

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## Field Trips

### **Tundra Swan Trek (Date TBD)**

A trek to Canada to see the migrating Tundra Swans will be spur-of-the-moment, as their arrival is not easy to predict, especially with climate change effecting migration habits. Stay tuned... we'll send out email updates via our yahoo group site once we choose a date and time. Visit the [Macomb Audubon website](http://www.macombaudubon.org) to subscribe if you haven't already.

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### **Birding by Kayak**

#### **Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am – 12 noon**

Let's go kayaking at the Black Marsh at Lake St. Clair Metropark (LSCMP) in Harrison Township, near the Voyageur Canoe Launch. The water here is very calm and great for beginners.

Bring your binoculars and/or walkie talkies if you have them! We'll kayak for a couple of hours, have lunch behind the Nature Center, then walk the trails afterward. Please bring a dish to pass. Kayaking rates are \$15/hr. per kayak. Visit <http://www.simpleadventures.net/lake-st-clair-metropark-1/> for more info. about the facility and pricing. Call Micki Special if you have questions about this particular field trip (586)291-9881.

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## **Stony Creek Bird Walks**

**with Ruth Glass** \*4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month at 8:30am

### **Early Spring Waterfowl and ...**

**Saturday March 24, 8:30am**

Meet at 8:30am in the Lakeview parking lot at Stony Creek Metropark. We will scan the open waters of the

north end of Stony Creek Lake for waterfowl, and hike the short distance over to Oakgrove for Barred Owls. Depending on weather, lake conditions, and recent bird sightings, we may drive to another vantage point on the lake, or the Inwood Road area for Northern Shrike / Rough-legged Hawk.

### **Early Warblers and Other Spring Migrants** **Saturday April 28, 8:30am**

Meet at 8:30am on Kennebunk Road off of Sheldon Road. We will walk the SW corner of the park. Target species include Pine Warbler, Black-throated Green and a few other warblers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pine Siskin, and other species of northern Michigan.

*Optional / tentative:* After the walk, some of us might go back to our cars to don our rubber boots and grab our walking sticks, in order to slog into Shelden Pond. This is a challenging walk. The last time we did this, we lost at least two in the deep mud, but saw beaver, Hooded Mergansers and Ring-necked Ducks up close. Virginia Rail and other marsh birds are possible. (Maybe bring a change of clothes, if you plan to attempt the pond.

### **Future Bird Walks**

**(details to follow in next issue):**

- Lake St. Clair Metropark Big Day Count, Saturday May 12, 7:00am-12:00pm. Birders of all levels are needed to help. Call Julie at (586)463-4332 for information.
- Bonus Walk at Sterling Heights Nature Center, Sunday May 13<sup>th</sup>, 8:00am
- Not-so-common Grasslands Birds at Inwood, Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am
- Tentative Bonus Walk – MDEQ Wetland Mitigation Bank, 29 Mile Road, Sometime in May/June

### **A Note from Ruth Glass:** **(from 1/30/18)**

Our primary eagle observer, Joan Bonin, has captured pictures of what appears to be fish line in the top of the Bald Eagle nest. As evident in photos taken, the line seems to be caught in the right talon. This could develop into a dangerous situation for the pair and/or their

future nestlings. Both the male and female have had potentially life-threatening entanglements in the past.

We are asking for your help in the following ways:

-If you notice either of the adult eagles with fish line around any part of their body, at the nest or otherwise, please notify park staff, preferably the Nature Center (or security, or administration).

-If you are near a park shoreline, glance for any wayward fish line on the ground or in bushes. Please dispose of it in the fish line disposal receptacles in the park, or cut it up into tiny pieces prior to disposal.

-Share this message with your friends!

Thank you all!

Ruth Glass

Stony Creek Nature Center Volunteer

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## **In Other Bird News...**

### **Project FeederWatch Continues**

Please consider participating in Project FeederWatch, which can be scheduled at your convenience any time through April 13<sup>th</sup>. Sign up through the FeederWatch website ([feederwatch.org](http://feederwatch.org)).

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### **2017 Western Macomb County** **Christmas Bird Count Results Are In!**

**From Barb Baldinger, Area Compiler, & Tom Heatley, Co-compiler**

Macomb Audubon Society's participation in the 118th Annual Christmas Bird Count took place December 16, 2017, with 39 people in the field and 2 at feeders.

The weather was cold with light snow and freezing rain in the morning and cloudy conditions all day. The temperature ranged from 25 to 29. There was a base of 6-14" of snow, making walking difficult in some areas. We recorded 64 species and 13,000 individual birds. Gray Catbird was seen on the Count for the first time. New high counts were set for four species: 4 for Merlin, 30 for Eastern Screech Owl, 5 for Pileated Woodpecker and 3 for Fox Sparrow. A high count was tied for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at one. Count Week birds that were added after the Tally were: Herring Gull, Glaucous Gull, Eastern Phoebe and Northern Shrike.

The complete results can be found on our Macomb Audubon Website or the National Audubon website at [birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count](http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count). Go to Results, Data & Research, continue to Results: Current & Historical. Next choose Current Year, then Results by Count and enter Western Macomb County, County Code MIWM. Click enter and click the circle under the # sign.

If you would like to make a donation to the National Audubon Society to help support the maintaining of a master database of all Christmas Bird Count data as well as bird conservation efforts go to:

<http://www.christmasbirdcount.org>

We would like to thank all of the citizen science participants for the time and effort you volunteer each year to make this count a success. Thank you to the people who set up the room and hot beverages, contributed soups, chili, snacks and desserts. We would also like Julie Champion, Karen Blake and the rest of the staff at Stony Creek Nature Center to know how much we appreciate them hosting the Tally. This year's count will be on Saturday, Dec. 15th. Please mark your calendar now and plan to help out!

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## **Michigan Bluebird Society's Spring Bluebird Festival** **March 24<sup>th</sup> at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor**

This event is free and open to the public, and features educational exhibits, programs, and products that help bluebird landlords, bluebirds and native cavity nesting birds. Presenters include bluebird experts, "Nature of the Wild" videos, Purple Martin Conservation Association, Michigan Avian Experience (with live raptors!), and Master Gardeners on "Smart Gardening".

Lunch (sandwich, chips, cookie, fruit and beverage) is available for \$10. A bluebird nestbox-building workshop for up to 20 young people costs \$20. Participants are encouraged to pre-register for either lunch or workshop.

The Michigan Bluebird Society is a non-profit group of volunteers dedicated to bluebird conservation. For more information, [click here](#).

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## **Helping Bluebirds In Michigan** **Adapted from Kurt Hagemeister**

The Eastern Bluebird has had an up and down history in Michigan over the last 200 years. After peaking in the later 1800's, bluebird numbers steadily declined for the next 50 years due to habitat loss, widespread use of farming chemicals, and intense competition from two alien bird species – European Starling and House Sparrow. Fortunately, starting in the 1960's, bluebirds started their comeback when it was discovered that large numbers of actively-managed nesting boxes drastically improved their nesting success. Banning of the farm insecticide DDT in the 1970's also accelerated their recovery.

Today, the easiest way to bring these colorful, sweet-singing birds into the yard is a well-designed nesting box. This is because bluebirds are cavity nesting birds, originally building nests in the hollowed-out cavities in trees. Nest boxes simulate these cavities, which have become in much shorter supply over the years. Bluebirds start claiming nesting sites in March in Michigan, with nest building usually starting as early as late March or early April. Bluebirds can have 2 or even 3 broods of young in a nesting season that can last into August.

How do you know if you can attract bluebirds to your yard? If you live in a generally open neighborhood and see bluebirds on a regular basis, you have an excellent chance. Bluebirds prefer open, grassy habitats like farm fields, open subdivisions, golf courses, office parks, meadows, and metro parks.

The first thing you'll need is a quality-made nesting box of the correct dimensions. You can buy a bluebird nesting box at a store (like Wild Birds Unlimited) or make it yourself. Boxes should be made of 3/4" thick wood – either cedar or pine, and requires an entrance hole of at least 1 1/2" in diameter. Of absolute importance is the ability to open up the box easily via a hinged side or top for easy nest checks and box cleaning.

Next, mount your nest box on a sturdy, metal pole so the entrance hole is about 5 feet off the ground. Locate the pole/box in a wide-open spot with short grass below. The box should be as far away from dense cover, large trees, and buildings as you can. Finally, it's a very good idea to wax the pole or install some kind of baffle to make it more difficult for climbing predators like raccoons, cats or snakes.

Once your nest box is up, it's critically important to monitor it for the rest of the season. This involves going out and opening the box to see what is happening once or twice a week and recording your observations. Why do this? Being a bluebird landlord entails taking the responsibility of ensuring the housing you have provided is safe and that the birds are OK. Research has shown that actively-monitored bluebird boxes fledge far more birds than those left up un-monitored. For example, you need to make sure that parasites haven't invaded the box or that invasive species like House Sparrows haven't taken over, among other potential problems. [Click here](#) for more information.

Bluebirds are one of the easiest birds to attract to nesting boxes. Both adults are dedicated parents and seem to like being helped by people. So, if you live in a good habitat for bluebirds, try putting up a nesting box this spring. You'll be helping one of America's favorite birds while learning a lot about how birds raise their young in the process!

*Kurt Hagemester is President of the Michigan Bluebird Society and has been a bluebird landlord for 19 years in the Ann Arbor area.*

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## **Book Review**

**By Wade Leonard**

I was looking at the childrens' books in the Nature section at Barnes and Noble, and came across a book entitled *Just Like Us Birds* by Bridget Heos and illustrated by David Clarke.

The theme of the book is that in many ways birds are very much like us. Each topic is one to two pages in length, and profusely illustrated in color with the illustrations done in cartoon form. For example, one topic deals with how birds learn to sing in the same way babies learn to talk. The chicks

babble like babies' *goo goo*. One page is entitled "Eggcellent Parenting" and once the baby birds hatch, the parents are kept busy feeding them just like human parents do.

At the end of the book, there is a page which includes a glossary of bird-related words, followed by a page of outside resources for anyone wanting more bird information.

The book sells for \$14.99, and while it is a childrens' book, I found it to be very interesting and well-written/illustrated - a welcome addition to my library. [Click here](#) to view this book online.

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## **Recognition**

**We appreciate those who brought refreshments to recent meetings, including:** Beverlee Babcock, Barb Baldinger, Brandy Ciaciuch, Betty Ebert, Alice Forton, Jill Messing, Kathy Muscillo, Heather Slayton, Micki Smith, Ramona Van Tol, (and anyone else we may have forgotten to mention)!

**The following individuals and groups have made recent contributions to The Macomb Audubon Society:**

### **Contributor Level**

Beverlee Babcock  
Roger & Eugenia Bajorek  
David & Jacqueline Lancaster  
Frances Lautner  
Ward Randol  
Micki Special  
Terri Udvare  
Thomas & Ramona Van Tol

### **Supporter Level**

Denis & Laura Barbour  
John Bieganowski  
Raymond & Gretchen Glime  
Wild Birds Unlimited Grosse Pointe Woods / Rosann Kovalcik

### **Donor Level**

Macomb Bloomin' Sunflowers

**Thank you for your generous support!**  
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The **Macomb Audubon Society** is a chapter of Michigan Audubon. Programs are normally held the first Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the **Sterling Heights Nature Center 42700 Utica Rd. (south and east of the Van Dyke/Utica Rd. intersection, north of 19 mile Rd.). These and other Macomb Audubon events are open to the public.**

The Macomb Audubon Society is a non-profit organization with the mission to:

- Promote interest in the world of nature and to aid in the conservation of natural resources.
- Provide an outlet for nature activities via field trips.
- Provide an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experience through lectures, films, discussions and newsletters.
- Aid organizations that provide people of all ages with opportunities to experience these above given objectives.

**Support our efforts by becoming a member today! To join, complete the form included on the inside back cover and bring it to our next meeting or follow the instructions for where to send it.**

The Earthstar Newsletter is published bi-monthly (January, March, May, July, September, and November). **If you wish to submit relevant content to be included in the Earthstar, please send by the 12<sup>th</sup> of the preceding month to:**

Andrea Rose (Little Bird Nerd)  
[parchmentheart@hotmail.com](mailto:parchmentheart@hotmail.com)

**Members may receive this newsletter by mail, electronically, or both (though we encourage electronic to save trees!)**



## A letter from the President, Paul Messing:



What's your favorite part of winter? Is it the freshly lain snow or the brisk clear nights? Is it the usual visitors at the feeders or the ones you come upon out in the snowy woods? Whether you have to commute in the wintry weather or if it is a struggle to get outside, I hope you are thinking about birds. This is a great season to reflect on the terrific past and to look forward to what we will see! This weekend I saw my first Red-breasted Nuthatch of the season during my FeederWatch; it was a bit shyer and smaller than the White-breasted, so fast I didn't even catch it grabbing a snack from the feeder. Maybe it was finding plenty to eat on the honeysuckle, which in the summer has many ants finding their way through the crevices.

Whether winter finds you on the inside looking out, or you are spending lots of time outdoors, I hope you are finding birds in your daily experiences. The Peregrine Falcons are flying around in Warren, and I have seen more than a dozen birds at or near my feeders this FeederWatch count season. Note the eBird observations below, which show how certain species are much more likely to be present in Macomb County in the winter months than other times of the year. If you can find a Snow Bunting, or Common Redpoll, consider yourself a bit luckier, as well as a consistent birder. Taking a winter hiatus from birding could eliminate your chance of seeing these two species. In this cold weather, if you can find some open water, there may be a good number of water birds to see that are not so common in this area during the rest of the year. While birds like the Canada Goose and Mallard stick around here all year, there are a good number of birds you'd be lucky to see past late spring,

and they won't be back until fall.

As you look forward to all that spring has in store for us, don't forget to stop and take a peek at those winter birds that are paying their visit.

Happy Birding!

Paul Messing

Macomb Audubon President



Photos Courtesy: Paul Messing

## Editor's Note

Inspired by the recent monthly program on Kensington Metropark, I decided it was time I paid the place a visit. Though I've been to Kensington before, it never gets old, as there's something so peaceful and magical about feeding wild birds by hand.



So, stocked up with baggies full of bird seed, my Valentine and I made our way to Kensington to connect with some brave little birdies. Once we arrived, we walked the Nature Center's boardwalk trail (with the blessing of the Crow sentry, of course). Along the way, we hand-fed many Chickadees, some Titmice, a few White-breasted Nuthatches, and a single female Downy Woodpecker. A male Northern Cardinal came remarkably close, but decided it was best to feed *near* rather than *on* my hand, which was okay by me.

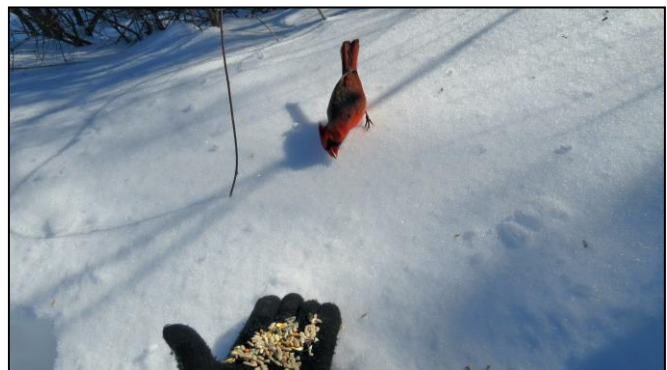
Although we didn't find anything rare, we enjoyed the chance to practice patience and communion with nature, which to me is a day well spent. Besides, it's not every day you can say a Titmouse landed on your shoe, or a Chickadee on your head! Enjoy some photos I took that day, and if you haven't been to Kensington in a while (or ever), make a day of it soon.



Visit my *Little Bird Nerd* blog and Facebook page for my personal birding adventures!

[facebook.com/littlebirdnerd](https://www.facebook.com/littlebirdnerd)

[littlebirdnerd.blogspot.com](http://littlebirdnerd.blogspot.com)



# Proud Supporters of Macomb Audubon Society

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 Michigan Nature Association,  
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2 <sup>nd</sup> VP (Membership)	Beverlee Babcock	(586)263-7666
3 <sup>rd</sup> VPs (Field Trips)	Colleen Traylor & Micki Special	<a href="mailto:grandmothenature2@gmail.com">grandmothenature2@gmail.com</a> & <a href="mailto:maxfiles1@gmail.com">maxfiles1@gmail.com</a>
Recording Secretary	Laura Barbour	(248)853-5465
Corresponding Secretary	Micki Smith	(586)791-9623
Treasurer	Brandy Ciaciuch	(810)887-1107

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**Visit your local backyard birdfeeding experts at one of our local Wild Birds Unlimited stores in -Grosse Pointe Woods or -Macomb**

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## Committees

Car Pool Coordinator	<b>Vacant</b>
Christmas Bird Count	Barb Baldinger (586) 263-6530
Environmental & Conservation	<b>Vacant</b>
Historian	Michael Mroz (586) 596-2776
Hospitality (Refreshments)	Betty Ebert & Alice Forton
Hospitality (Door Prizes)	Denis & Laura Barbour
Earthstar Newsletter Editor	Andrea Rose Meldrum <a href="mailto:parchmentheart@hotmail.com">parchmentheart@hotmail.com</a>
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Newsletter Production, Mailing	Denis & Laura Barbour
Seven Ponds Representative	Paul Messing
Web Editor	Paul Messing
Volunteer Coordinator	<b>Vacant</b>

Contact the Macomb Audubon Society via e-mail at:  
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## **Macomb Audubon Society Dues**

Please make checks payable to **Macomb Audubon Society** and send to: Beverlee Babcock  
 Macomb Audubon Membership 50229 Pepper Tree Dr. Macomb MI, 48044.

Your name and the names of family members (Please Print)

Family membership applies to family members living at the same address

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Check One \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership \$20.00

Total Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership \$15.00

Amount of donation over membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Student Membership \$10.00

Contributor----up to \$49.99 \_\_\_\_\_ Senior single Membership \$12.00

Supporter-----\$50 to \$99.99 \_\_\_\_\_ Senior couple Membership \$15.00

Donor-----\$100 and over \_\_\_\_\_ (senior is over 60)

Each year Macomb Audubon makes a membership list available to members. Check here if you wish to have your telephone number **left off** the list \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

Check here to receive the Earthstar by Email \_\_\_\_\_ By Hard Copy \_\_\_\_\_ Both Versions \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if a Michigan Audubon member \_\_\_\_\_ Check here if a National Audubon member \_\_\_\_\_

I (we) are interested in becoming a Macomb Audubon volunteer. Please contact me \_\_\_\_\_

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*Macomb Audubon Society*

C/O 1156 Avon Manor Rd.

Rochester Hills Mi. 48307-5415

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