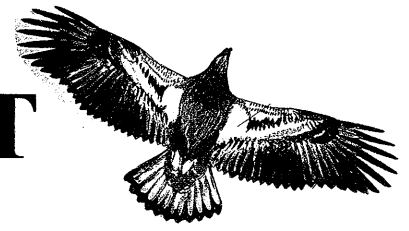


BROCKWAY LOOKOUT



Copper Country Audubon Newsletter Volume 28, Number 1, Mar/Apr 2021

Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch 2021 – the 12th Year!

— by Debra Mues

The Spring Raptor Migration count on Brockway Mountain is beginning its 12th season of a formal three-month count! Tim Baerwald is our Counter this year--his 5th season. Joe Youngman and myself are volunteer sub-counters, giving Tim a day off once a week. Joe takes the early part of the season and I take the later part. Last year was the lowest of the counts, with only 5,013 eastbound raptors of 16 species tallied. Usually 20,000 or more raptors are counted during the season.

The count begins March 15. During the month of March it is a six-hour-long day. For the rest of the Count, it is eight hours starting at 9:00 AM EDT. You might say it is the most unusual and unpredictable nine-to-five job one might have. The day's results can be found on the web site hawkcount.org, run by the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) who collects data from all over the country and beyond. Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch is one of three formal Spring Migration count sites along the south shore of Lake Superior, and another count is at the straits between Lakes Huron and Michigan.

West Skyline Hawk Count above Duluth is to the West. Whitefish Point and the Mackinac Straits counts are to the East. The Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch is the primary research project of the Keweenaw Bird Research Group (KBRG), a local nonprofit organization funded by donations from individuals, local groups, and each year by a very important and generous contribution from our own Copper Country Audubon Club. CCA began this formal raptor count on Brockway Mountain in 2010 partnering with Laughing Whitefish Audubon of Marquette -- running it for five years under the auspices of the Keweenaw Raptor Survey. CCA then partnered with Copper Harbor Birding for another 3 years re-naming it Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch. Now KBRG is beginning its 4th year running the Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch.

Brockway Mountain Drive is generally impassable or closed (barricaded) in March and much of April. Mother's Day often marks the general time that the road opens. But if you are on foot, a bicycle, or snowshoes, you can find some good viewing spots, and on a day with a south wind you may be well rewarded for your effort.

Most often seen in the early part of the count are Bald and Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Goshawks and Rough-legged Hawks headed to the arctic, maybe a Sharp-shinned Hawk or a Northern Harrier, also. I think of March as the month of Eagles! Overall, 16 species of raptors are seen throughout the migration season. And there are of course many other birds of interest, including the Ravens that nest nearby and who are often our constant companions and definitely alert us when a Golden Eagle is migrating through! Last year I witnessed an immature Golden Eagle held hostage in a tree for hours by two protective Raven parents.

The Count is a Copper Harbor community endeavor. Don and Peggy Kauppi of the Mariner North Motel and Restaurant, and Ken and Vicky Stigers of the Pines Resort are generously donating housing to Tim this year. Some restaurants in the area are donating meals. Tom Gemignani is the creator of our new counter shack--a crucial part of this endeavor when the weather gets bad on the mountain. Now in its 2nd year, Tom and Tim both add-to and re-engineer the shack to meet the needs of the counter during the extremes of wind, cold and black flies! Eagle Harbor Township is forever thanked for acquiring Brockway Mountain with a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant, together with the help of Copper Country Audubon and several other organizations for the enjoyment of all of the people of Michigan.

You can find more information on the Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch website www.thekbrg.org. Tim often writes and posts his wonderful photographs. You can also make a donation on the website or write a check to: Keweenaw Bird Research Group, P.O. Box 144, Copper Harbor Michigan, 49918.

Have a wonderful birding Spring and hopefully we will see you on the Mountain top on a beautiful day when the hawks are soaring!

Newsletter Note! Submit bird news and nature notes for next newsletter to dlichte@mtu.edu or call 906-482-3361. **THANK YOU!** for your **MEMBERSHIP!** and **EXTRA SUPPORT!** that funds our **PROJECTS** to help the birds of the Copper Country!

SOME SPECIAL COPPER COUNTRY BIRDS: November 2020 -March 2021

Red-headed Woodpecker – 27 Oct, Baraga, landed on feeder & on a maple tree, also pair of Pileated WPs, and Hairy, Downy & Red Bellied Woodpeckers. Diana and Duane Lyon

Golden Plover – 2 Nov, Lake Linden park, seen on Torch Lake shoreline, a large shorebird. Bruce MacDonald
(Note: on 7 Nov, D. Richter reported Black-bellied Plover nearby at water treatment ponds; the two species are difficult to distinguish in fall non-breeding plumage, going south in migration from Arctic.)

Meadowlark species – 6 Nov, Eagle Harbor Marina, it could be an Eastern or a Western. Nancy Leonard

Arctic Terns – 14 Nov, two birds along Lake Superior shore near Lake Glazon. Zach Gayk

Hooded Mergansers – 15 Nov, 95 Hooded Mergansers at Rice Lake, highest number seen. David Flaspohler

Varied Thrush – 15 Nov, a rare bird from the Pacific Northwest, Pequaming area near L'Anse. Gary and Laura Willis

Great Gray Owl – mid-Nov, Thayer Lake area in Keweenaw County, got good photos to confirm. Andy Johnson

Snowy Owl – 22 Nov, Houghton, injured bird in Portage Canal near bridge, rescued by police and picked up by UP Wildlife Rehabbers. Lynn Hietala

Greater White-fronted Geese – 22-25 Nov, two on Torch Lake near the Lake Linden Village Park. Bruce MacDonald

Cassin's Finch – 22-28 Nov, first state record, a western bird, Copper Harbor at feeder. Cherri Allen, Nancy Auer, Oliver Kew, Joe Block, Phil Chu, Skye Haas, Zach Gayk, Gary Palmer

Snowy Owl – 25 Nov, Calumet wastewater ponds, (bird saw me and flew up before I saw it, twice). Dana Richter

Sage Thrasher – 26-28 Nov & 1 Dec, a western bird with broken bill tip, near Mariner Restaurant in Copper Harbor.

Brendan Klick, Joe Block, Phil Chu, Skye Haas, Zach Gayk, Gary Palmer, Lisa Nelson, Terry Dreves, Nancy Auer

Meadowlark species – 6 Dec, probing ground around foundations of houses, Laurium. Amalia Anderson

Snowy Owl – 10 Dec, Twin Lakes on the ice, dark bird probably first-year bird. Bob and Pam Hiltunen

White-throated Sparrow – 15 Dec, Elo. Unusual to have one spend the winter here. Marj Krumm

Meadowlark species – 18 Dec, Lake Linden swimming beach. Bruce MacDonald

Rough-legged Hawk – 19 Dec, seen on Christmas Bird Count, a rare bird report was submitted. Nancy Auer

Snowy Owl – 23-25 Dec, Osprey Avenue in Tamarack City, a dark probably first-year bird. Drew Meyer and Zach Gayk

Varied Thrush – 25 Dec, A Christmas bird, Copper Harbor. Cherri Allen, Nancy Auer

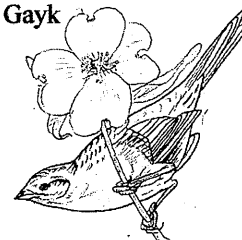
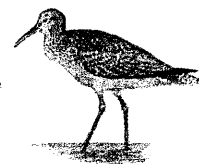
Spruce Grouse – 9 Jan, 23 birds congregating on the Prison Camp Road at the Baraga Plains. Joseph Youngman

Fox Sparrow – Stayed all winter, Superior Location. Terry Dreves

Fox Sparrow – 25 March, early spring date, 6 miles southeast of Chassell. Joseph Youngman

Leucistic Common Redpoll – 25 March, leucistic (partial albino) bird at feeder, Superior Location. Terry Dreves

American Pipit – 26 March, early spring date, Ojibwa Beach, Baraga. Joseph Youngman



HOW TO JOIN THE COPPER COUNTRY BIRDING EMAIL LIST

If you would like to join the *Copper Country Birding* Email hot-line list, go to groups.google.com and search for: **Copper Country Birding**. Follow the prompts to send a join request to the list owner, and within a day or so, you should be approved and ready to participate. The purpose of this list is for local birders to discuss local birds. Please give location of your bird sightings. We discourage a lot of chatter that is off subject. Also, you must be a member of the list to post to it. Postings from outside the list are discarded. For information about the list contact Ted Soldan, tjsold@gmail.com.

2020 HOUGHTON COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Copper Country Houghton Co. Christmas Bird Count was held December 19, 2020. Twenty-one people braved the cold, snow and worked independently or in family pods (15 parties overall) to cover a 15-mile diameter circle centered in the middle of Portage Lake. Together **35 species** were reported on count day with **4 additional** species during count week (December 16 thru 22). Some individual numbers were low but overall 39 species is about average. Besides the usual regular birds, here are some of the more unusual, less regular, species seen: Rough-legged Hawk (1), Great Horned Owl (2), Red-bellied Woodpecker (1), Northern Shrike (1), Brown Creeper (2), Golden Crowned Kinglet (1), Common Grackle (1), Evening Grosbeak (18), Ring-necked Pheasant (1). Count Week birds included: Bohemian Waxwings (37), Fox Sparrow (1), Pine Siskin (1), and Snowy Owl (1). Thank you very much to Sue Bagley & Gil Lewis, Marcia Goodrich and Bill Deephouse, David & Ingrid Flaspohler, Zach Gayk, Ruth Gleckler, Allyson Jabusch, Lisa Nelson, Drew Meyer, Joe Youngman & Lynn Murphy, Gina Nicholas, Phil & Barb Quenzi, Dana Richter, Terry Dreves, Lynne & Andrew Robertson and me the compiler, Nancy Auer.

Copper Country Audubon Website!

Check it out at: <https://www.coppercountryaudubon.org/>



Changes for Lift Bridge Peregrine Falcon Nest Boxes

by Joseph Youngman



Since 2014 a pair of Peregrine Falcons has been nesting on the Lift Bridge between Houghton and Hancock. The Michigan Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) had placed nest boxes on top of both towers to help take care of the pigeon population, and the falcons have been alternating between the two boxes. This year is different.

MDOT was worried about safety of workers climbing the stairs on each tower. Most years there were no worries since the workers used the elevators. This year the elevators are out of commission so the possibility of a Peregrine harassing a worker by zooming past them on a steep stairway led MDOT to remove the boxes. They don't plan to replace the boxes until after a painting project in 2027.

So, just one week before the average spring return date for our local falcons (March 12-19), I got a call from Brad Johnson, wildlife biologist for the Michigan DNR. He let me know about MDOT's box removal decision and asked if CCA wanted to work with MDNR to build and place one or more nest boxes in the Houghton / Hancock area. Heck yeah!

So, a very busy week followed involving CCA, MTU, MDNR and the Quincy Mine Hoist Association. Leading the charge for CCA were Phil Quenzi, myself, and David Flaspohler. Phil and I attended a Quincy Mine Hoist Association board meeting and got permission to place a box near the top of the shaft house, and Phil started the design work.

Meanwhile, David made successful inquiries at MTU. A group of us made rooftop visits to the Electrical Engineering and Chemical Engineering buildings at MTU. We picked a location on the north edge of the EERC building overlooking the canal, and within a couple more days a MDNR-built box was placed there on a support designed by Phil. It was a very pleasant experience to be involved in such a smooth operation. CCA, MDNR and MTU people all pitched in to get the project done. I was impressed with the many MTU people who made significant efforts to make the new box possible. The EERC box also has a webcam provided entirely by MTU. Its url is <https://www.mtu.edu/webcams/falcon/>

So then over at the Quincy Mine on March 19: Quenzi, Youngman and Dana Richter from CCA, and Brad Johnson and John DePue from MDNR placed a box in a high window of the shaft-house, facing SE. Phil and Pasty.net got a webcam up and running for that box.

So, what about the Peregrines during all this activity? They arrived at the bridge in the afternoon of the 16th of March, the day the MTU box was placed. Near as we can tell the Peregrines never looked at either of our crowd-sourced replacement boxes and kept tight to the bridge. We knew there was always a strong possibility that the falcons would just adapt to the loss of boxes at the bridge and find another spot on the bridge to lay their eggs. On the 21st of March I think I found that new nest spot.

In 2018 the Great Horned Owls nested within a square beam with a hole in it up high on the north facing side of the South Tower. This square beam provided a secure little box for nesting and on the 21st I saw the female Peregrine perched down in that nest hole in the beam with only her head poking out. The next day I saw her again down in that hole. In all the years of watching the falcons I've never seen the female hiding in holes like that. I suspect she'll lay her eggs there. Since there are no more webcams on the bridge, we will have very little knowledge of what is actually going on with the nesting Peregrines this year.

While the square beam provides a very protected spot for laying and hatching eggs, it does not provide a good spot to fledged falcons from. It has no flat area for young falcons to stand on and test their wings. The only space they have for that is the sloping rim of the hole in the beam. If the falcons do indeed nest there, I expect we will see more young falling from the nest site than we've seen in other years. I realize that many of us will be upset if that happens but we need to let these wild birds make their own decisions.

And those two new nest boxes we put up? It's quite possible that a new pair of Peregrines will find and use one of those two boxes within a year or two. Peregrines are coming back strong, and more and more young Peregrines are looking for nest sites. The distance between the lift bridge and MTU EERC building and the Quincy Mine shaft-house is great enough that a 2nd pair of falcons could nest without significant conflict with our original bridge pair. Stay tuned!

NATURE OSERVATION: The Gypsy Moth is a non-native insect that eats tree leaves. Caterpillars and egg masses were found in several places this past summer in Houghton and Keweenaw Counties. Will there be an outbreak? Watch for them: a large, black, blue and red caterpillar with long spines. Cuckoos eat the caterpillars when they are small, but not many other birds will – too prickly! –DR



JUTILA NEST BOX and WEB CAM UPDATE



You may have noticed a recurring theme regarding CCA nest boxes and webcams: we cannot make it through a full season without problems with one or more nest boxes or webcams. The problems also have a habit of occurring at pretty inopportune times. Joe Youngman described this season's problems and solutions regarding the bridge boxes and cameras in his newsletter article. Out of the three boxes and cameras we are running, the Jutila setup is the only one to make it through this season trouble free so far; at least, let's hope so.

The Great-horned Owls returned again this season to raise their usual two chicks. They are a couple of incredible parents with the male keeping the female and young in a steady supply of rabbits and other prey. Who knew there were so many rabbits around! As I write this at the end of March, the two young are maybe half grown and getting their adult feathers and will probably fledge in another month or so. They are great fun to watch. I wish there were some way to identify the individual owls in some non-invasive way to track them from one season to the next.

The new camera we installed there after last year's season ended is doing well and has stayed moisture free so far. The web interface provided by Finlandia is also going strong. We cleaned out the box last summer which had a pretty thick layer of small bones, fur and feathers. We added some new gravel and gifted David Flaspohler with the debris for possible analysis by his students. You can view the Jutila box and the two new boxes on the home page at coppercountryaudubon.org

I would like to thank all of those who helped out with our new nest boxes and cameras including the various folks at MTU, the DNR, Quincy Mine Hoist Assoc., Pasty and CCA members. The boxes and cameras got built, installed and operational in record time. You can donate to our efforts to maintain the nest boxes and webcams on the CCA web site "about us/donate" page or at the end of this newsletter. Thank you! – *Phil Quenzi*

NEST BOXES FOR SMALLER COPPER COUNTRY BIRDS

by Dana Richter



November 19 last fall was a wonderful summery kind of day. What a good day to walk around and clean out the 18 nest boxes on the stumpsands along Portage Lake east of the Houghton water treatment plant. A few boxes always need repairs as well. Who knows what one might find -- just an eggshell or a feather is exciting!

Fifteen boxes had the remains of tree swallow nests in them. You can tell by the feathers and grasses used to make the nest -- usually duck and goose feathers. Two of those boxes had 3 and 4 unhatched tree swallow eggs in them -- they are white and about a half-inch long -- likely a late clutch that never made it. One of the boxes had its post broke at ground level and was laying on the ground -- the box had an empty nest in it so it hopefully broke after the birds fledged. Those landscape timbers we used for posts just don't last as long as the 4x4 in. treated posts, but the latter cost about three times more. Six or eight years is all the landscape timbers last -- some last longer, depends on the site. Some of our treated 4x4s have been up about twenty years.

There were no dead fledglings in any of the boxes that had nests. However, in the three boxes that didn't have nests there were what appeared to be dead adults or fully grown juveniles all dried out and stuck together on the bottom of the box; three birds in one box, three in another box, and four in the other box. I wonder if the birds took shelter in those boxes during a cold stretch of weather in spring and died. The only live birds seen that day were a few gulls flying over.

Since it has probably been close to 20 years since Copper Country Audubon got permission to put bird houses on the stumpsands adjacent to the water treatment plant, I sent the current superintendent a newsletter and note saying we were responsible for the bird houses, and if there are ever any issues, please let us know. This year I had noticed cutting of the vegetation in strips across the stumpsands and between the bird houses. I got the nicest email from the superintendent of the treatment plant. He says...

"Good morning. I received your letter regarding the cutting and spreading on the grounds directly adjacent to the treatment plant. Just to let you know, we cut approximately half of the grass in the area where we typically spread the biosolids* and this is just to allow the grasses to out compete the weeds and flourish. We are not planning on doing this every year, as we have never cut the grass before. The added fertilizer value that the biosolids provide has certainly allowed that area to bloom and we want to maintain that area a little bit. The sandhill cranes and deer seemingly enjoyed the freshly cut area as they were seen foraging in that area frequently after it was cut."

“Your bird boxes are certainly not an issue for us as we can drive around them as we need to. I actually find the birds relaxing and comforting, they are a joy to watch. We actually have a lot of swallow's nesting under the eaves of our buildings. I like when they come in the spring and enjoy watching them throughout the summer months. We'll have to start controlling their nesting areas as some of the nests are above doorways where we don't want them to be but I'm sure they'll build more when they come back in the spring.” -- Zane MacKenzie, Superintendent, Portage Lake Water & Sewage Authority. *(“biosolids” is a euphemism. –the Ed.)

The swallows nesting among the buildings are either barn swallows or cliff swallows that build cup-like, mud nests in rafters and eaves. They can be messy to live around.

Twenty-eight nest boxes along the recreation trails and water treatment ponds at Lake Linden were cleaned out and repaired on Nov. 7. All boxes had remnants of tree swallow nests! One box also had the remains of six female gypsy moths and their egg-masses stuck to the walls inside.

Thirteen nest boxes at the Calumet wastewater ponds were cleaned out on Nov. 25. Seven boxes had tree swallow nests, one had a bluebird nest, and five were empty or had just the start of a nest that was not used. It is not known why this site has poorer success for tree swallows – seems like a perfect area. That was a great day, though. That's the day I saw the Snowy Owl!

Besides a box or two in a few other places scattered around the county, Copper Country Audubon also has three nest boxes in a small park along the Sturgeon River just south of Chassell. One box had a broken door, one box had wasps, and the other box was empty. Chassell Township was notified suggesting to them to keep the alder brush down there, and the guy (his initials are JY) said OK. Six boxes at Calumet Lake Lions Park on the north side of Calumet still need to be cleaned. We'll get to those boxes this spring. Thanks, Bernice! – *D. Richter*



Counting Fall Waterbirds for Copper Country Audubon

by Alison Vilag

Joseph Youngman has investigated waterbird migration from more of Lake Superior's islands and promontories than anyone I know. Last year, Youngman had an idea: to deploy simultaneous, standardized counts during October 2020 from Manitou Island (offshore the tip of the Keweenaw) and Au Sable Point (in Pictured Rocks west of Grand Marais) while WPBO's count was also in session. The goal was to develop a month's snapshot of flight-lines and species composition in regard to waterbird migration at these sites, and this would be on behalf of Copper Country Audubon, which has provided over \$70,000 for Lake Superior migratory studies since 2010. Tim Baerwald and I (with assists from Youngman, Captain Travis from Keweenaw Charter Fishing, and my partner, Tripp) would be the executors. I'd start on Manitou, Tim would start at Au Sable; two weeks in, we'd swap stations. That was the plan.

However, Lake Superior has the final say on plans like these, and early autumn 2020 was stormy. Plans changed with the Lake's decrees: Tripp and I were rushed to Manitou two days ahead-of-schedule, and Tim left Manitou early, on October 20. For the remainder of the month, he counted from Hebard Park (on the Keweenaw 3 miles west of Copper Harbor).

Though geographic distance is relatively minimal, waterbird migration disparities between these eastern and central Lake Superior sites are distinct. For example, Long-tailed Ducks traveling west pass Au Sable Point in great numbers on the same days that eastbound Long-tails peak at Whitefish Point. Redhead have seemed more numerous at Keweenaw sites than at Whitefish. Detailed descriptions of numbers and flight-lines from this project can be found at www.coppercountryaudubon.org/manitou-island. Below, I will summarize the sites and our observations.

Manitou: Manitou Island lies about 3 miles offshore the Keweenaw. It's large—roughly a thousand acres—and covered in dense boreal forest. Mammal diversity is low, with snowshoe hares (abundant) the largest species we noted; we had no human visitors. There, we stayed in a 150-year-old lighthouse that had no heat, no running water, and no electricity. What it *did* have was mice—triple digits of them, actually. And, in the scramble to catch the boat, we'd forgotten to pack mousetraps... Even so, we loved Manitou. There life was reduced to simple survival rhythms: fetching water and keeping warm and occasionally fishing for sustenance. Existence was uncomplicated, but intentional.

Manitou's weather made typical WPBO conditions seem bucolic. Gale warnings were the standard forecast, and this stalled migration for much of our time there. Several days, I struggled to tally even just 100 migrating waterbirds, which I hadn't expected—October is the month when Superior's highest-volume flights occur. At night I'd bed down (inside a tent, inside the lighthouse—it was the only way to prevent 3:00 AM mouse jaunts across my face). I'd imagine legions of ducks piling up somewhere to Manitou's northwest, waiting for the weather to break. Then I'd be awakened by various parts of the lighthouse rattling in the wind.

When I woke October 13th, I'd seen just 4,875 waterbirds the entire stint. This morning—the last before our departure—it was finally calm. The sky lightened, revealing the most intense flight I've ever counted. Tripp brought me coffee about a half-hour in, and stayed for most the day; he spotted flocks which I then deciphered as best I could. Most were *Aythya* (Scaup & Redhead), and *Aythya* identification is challenging—differences are subtle, and the birds travel in multi-species masses aptly described by *Seawatching* as “prone to disintegrate into chaos.” Attempting to keep up was mind-numbing and I never got around to drinking the coffee Tripp brought. The day's tally was 13,339—and I know I was missing birds. Tim, counting at Au Sable, had a great flight this day as well, logging around 12,000 birds, while Whitefish Point tallied around 7,000.

The morning after this incredible flight, we waited on the dock for Captain Travis. The wind was building again, and our scheduled pick-up time came, then went. A Short-eared Owl was coming off the lake, hitting first land after so many miles with just water beneath—always poignant to see. But I was uneasy. Tripp turned on the radio to hail Captain, and we caught the NOAA forecast “...by Wednesday night, seas building to 11 feet...” It was Wednesday morning. So, when Captain Travis rounded the island a few minutes later, we were quite relieved. To experience Lake Superior waterbird migration on a remote island was to experience waterbird migration in a further dimension: weather systems dictated our comings and goings in the same manner they did the birds I was there to count; the degree of separation between us lessened.

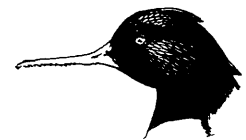
Au Sable: Au Sable Point is in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore somewhat west of Grand Marais. Relatively speaking, Au Sable is not far west of Whitefish Point—roughly 55 lake miles. Because Whitefish Point's fall migration is eastbound, it seems logical that waterbirds passing Au Sable would also be flying east. Au Sable's numbers for October were very close to WPBO's (49,493 and 55,868, respectively), but migration at Au Sable was bidirectional: 29,774 birds flew east (EB); 19,749 flew west (WB). In some species, for example Northern Pintail and Long-tailed Duck, the disparity was particularly evident: we logged 921 WB pintails at Au Sable (and 188 EB) in October—WPBO recorded just 384 (EB).

The pintail push at Au Sable happened late, with two dense flights (412 on Oct. 25, and 404 on Oct. 21). Most of the pintail I've observed at WPBO travel in small flocks and often mix with other dabblers, but at Au Sable, flocks were large (40-75) and typically homogenous. Neither Tim (further west) nor WPBO saw significant pintail movement, and still, I wonder: where did my birds stage? Where were they cutting inland? Where are they headed? Lake Michigan to the Mississippi to the Gulf, even?

When the Long-tailed Ducks peaked at Au Sable, they were also peaking at Whitefish; our big days happened simultaneously. However, where Long-tails at Whitefish flew east, most of Au Sable's flew west. Long-tails are much less prevalent on the Keweenaw. Tim was still on Manitou for the first of the big Au Sable Long-tail days (1,652) and Whitefish (712); while Tim had just 28. A 2014 count at Hebard Park recorded 418 Long-tails to Whitefish's 27,396. In total, this October, Au Sable had 15,292 WB (1,418 EB) Long-tailed Ducks; Whitefish had 23,158. It is evident that WPBO's Long-tails and Au Sable's Long-tails leave the Lake Superior basin in different locations. Presumably, the WB birds at Au Sable were cutting inland to do this; when Skye Haas and Gary Palmer noted, during Au Sable's peak flight days, high flocks of Long-tails coming south overland at sites near upper Green Bay, this pins a possible route on the flight-line map. Regardless, an incredible amount of Long-tailed Ducks traverse Lake Superior during these few days in late October, passing the count sites in gorgeous flocks of several hundred. It is a powerful migration event I recommend you seek.

The disparities between direction of travel at Whitefish Point, Au Sable, and Manitou left me with so many questions: where do these birds stage? Where do they cut inland? Where are they headed? Why do some birds, like Long-tailed Ducks, exhibit intra-species route differences, while others like Redhead are more prominent at Manitou (3,031) than Au Sable (977) or WPBO (834)? These are the questions that keep my fires burning.

2021 Waterbird Study Plans *—by Joseph Youngman*



This year we have modest plans to expand our knowledge of Lake Superior's migrant waterbird pathways at two islands we've been to before. In May we'll have Alison Vilag counting for two weeks at Manitou Island. She'll focus mainly on migrating waterbirds but also key in on the small but significant raptor migration that seems to leave the island heading east each spring. While Manitou gets many thousands of raptors coming out from the mainland Keweenaw each spring—most raptors seem to return to the Keweenaw. We've seen small numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks heading east. Only once before have we had a full two-week block of spring coverage at Manitou.

In October Alison Vilag and another person will be heading to Michipicoten Island in northern Lake Superior for a 2nd two-week period of waterbird counting. Copper Country Audubon has sent groups to Michipicoten's west end in spring of 2007 and fall of 2017 but we've never had a nice big block of survey work done there. Michipicoten sure seems to be on a major waterbird migration pathway and Alison's work will give us our first big block of data.



Caring for Injured and Orphaned Wild Birds -- by Michelle Anderson



I decided to leave the larger group of Upper Peninsula Wildlife Rehabilitators (UPWR), and in February of this year formed a new nonprofit called *Keweenaw Wild Bird R.E.C.* What does R.E.C. stand for? The R stands for rehabilitation. I am state and federally licensed to care for any species of bird that lives in the Keweenaw, excluding raptors. Beth Maatta with UPWR is federally permitted for raptors. The E stands for education. A big part of our mission is to offer school-aged educational programs and projects that involve kids, focusing on birds, nature preservation and conservation. The C is for conservation. We will be participating in conservation projects to help local bird populations.

We have an elementary school teacher on our board and have already begun education and conservation efforts. We have partnered with Dollar Bay-Tamarack City (DBTC) school and recently built 15 tree swallow/eastern bluebird nesting boxes with the fourth and fifth grade students. Each box will come with a t-post, mounting bracket and predator guard as well as specific instructions and habitat requirements to ensure success. I also recently talked with the third graders at DBTC about wildlife rehabilitation and what they can do to help birds. It was great to see the enthusiasm and hear stories about the kid's local bird experiences. I handed out a coloring page with our new logo (a bird of course!) and also asked if they could list three things they learned during the talk to help birds. Lots of great answers! It is so important to get kids interested in wildlife and nature preservation at a young age. Hoping to inspire and nurture lots of future birders and wildlife conservationists!

We are actively preparing for another busy baby-bird season. We primarily take in songbirds throughout the summer but certainly the species vary from year to year. I have had great interest from several MTU students to volunteer this summer which will be a huge help! We are hoping to do more reuniting and re-nesting this season when possible. Wild parents are the best parents and we want to keep them in the wild whenever possible.

As a new nonprofit we are fundraising to help with medication and food costs for the birds. We get regular shipments of live insects (mealworms, crickets, waxworms) to offer as much variety as possible along with vitamin supplements to compensate for anything they are missing from the wild during this critical growth period. The live insects are available for our adult patients as well as a variety of seeds and other foods depending on species. Whoever coined the phrase "eats like a bird" meaning not eating much, never met a growing songbird, ha ha! Shipping costs for live insects can be quite costly as they often need to be shipped overnight to arrive alive in the summer heat.

Donations can be made electronically via paypal through our facebook page (@KWBREC) or by sending a check, made out to Keweenaw Wild Bird R.E.C., to 21176 Boston Crosscut Road, Hancock, Michigan. We also have some beautiful reusable cloth masks with bird patterns available for a donation.

If you have suitable habitat and are interested in putting up and being a good landlord for a tree swallow or eastern bluebird nesting box, these are available free of charge, though donations are appreciated! We can also help put the box up if you are unable. Please contact me with any questions or if you come across a bird you are concerned about, always happy to help! Thanks so much for all of the continued support. 906-299-2149, or email keweenawwildbirdrec@gmail.com

Motus Bird Tracking Antennas Update: CCA has two Motus radio receiving stations up. One is at Calumet Sewage Ponds and the other on the ridge by Phoenix. We've not recorded any passing migrants with radio tags yet. The receivers off each winter. By the time this newsletter goes out they will both be up and recording again. This time last year, we had to scrap the plans to put tags on birds due to Covid rules. August 2021 is the soonest we might be able to start up with that again. We have secured about 20 additional tags from Stu Mackenzie of Birds Canada so can potentially do more. We would like to set this up as research involving MTU students so are waiting for vaccinations and other rules to teaching in groups again. So MOTUS is delayed but still planned.

THANKS to New Life Members: David and Carrie Flaspohler of Hancock

Andrew and Graeleigh Storer of Houghton



THANKS for generous donations by John Van Westeburg (for waterbird studies) and Alan Halperin (undesignated)

THANKS to Kurt Leuthold and the Steven C. Leuthold Family Foundation for a very generous donation for all of our projects to benefit birds, bird habitat, and to advance the knowledge and appreciation of birds in the Keweenaw.

THANKS to Portage Health Foundation for a generous donation to Copper Country Audubon – birdwatching is a very healthy activity – especially mental health!

THANKS to everyone for your membership in Copper Country Audubon and especially for your extra donations that enable us to do our projects. We couldn't do all this without you!



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***FIND BABY BIRDS?
LEAVE THEM BE!***

***WATCHING BIRDS
IS A HAPPY
THING!***

Injured Birds?

Michigan DNR, Baraga 906-353-6651

Raptor Rehab: Beth Maatta, 906-370-3825

Small Birds Rehab: Michelle Anderson, 906-299-2149

Copper Country Audubon Membership: \$25 Regular, \$10 Student, \$300 Life. CC Audubon is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit Organization. *Is your Renewal Due?* After your name on the mailing label is the date your membership is due; your last donation was sent one year prior to this date. We're sorry for any mistakes; please let us know! Life members and courtesy mailings have no date. Your support for Copper Country Audubon is for the birds! **Thanks!**

Copper Country Audubon
P.O. Box 124
Houghton, MI 49931



There's Endless Birdwatching in the Keweenaw!