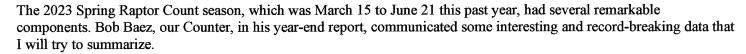
BROCKWAY LOOKOUT

Copper Country Aud. Bird Club Newsletter Volume 31, Number 1, Mar/Apr 2024

Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch News

by Debra Mues

Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch Spring 2023 Count Summary



To give us some perspective, he compares the Counts of all four active Lake Superior South Shore Hawk Watches -- West Skyline of Duluth, Brockway Mountain, Whitefish Point, and Mackinaw Straits-Mackinaw City (which is referred to as Mac-Bridge). For instance, our March Brockway Count for Bald Eagles was low -- only 44% of all of our previous 13-year average, yet Mac-Bridge was 116% of their average for Bald Eagles.

Duluth's March average for Golden Eagles was 138% while Mac-Bridge's was 97%, and we were 53%. These are interesting comparisons and may indicate what migration pathways raptors are taking.

Bob also compares the 2023 Brockway Spring count to the average of all our previous 13 years of formal counts which began in 2010. Though the 2023 season started out slow in March, the overall Count ended 17% above the average by June. This is despite the haze from western Canadian wild fires that obscured high-flying and distant raptors, and winter storms that decreased Count hours.

The Count, which usually ends June 15, was extended to June 21 because finally the winds turned southerly, temps warmed and a surge of migration happened. On June 17 the month's count was at 453. But on the 18th, 1,892 raptors were counted! On the 19th, 182, and on the 21st, 338. The majority of these raptors were juvenile Broad-winged Hawks but there was a fair number of adults mixed in which is unusual. These three days added 2,412 more birds to the Count and brought June's tally to 2,865! The Broad-winged count, which was 17% below average in May, was brought to a 16% above average in June.

Bob said in his report "The late arriving warm front boosted the June count to 100% over the average." Another season highlight was a nine-day heat wave April 7-15 in which 1,637 raptors were counted. A stand-out day in that time period was April 14 where 815 raptors were counted. On that day, there were four species with *season-high* counts, two of which were *historic record-breaking single-day counts!* These four species were Turkey Vultures at 105, Northern Harriers at 42, Rough-legged Hawks at 306 and Red-tailed Hawks at 82. It was the Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harriers that broke the historic 13-year record. They both had their highest single-day count since this formal Count began in 2010. The Rough-legged Count for that day was an exceptional 306!! Keep in mind that the season count average for Rough-legged Hawks was 212. There was a season max in 2013 of 385. But this was a *single* day count! The former single-day high for Rough-legged Hawks was 141. And the Northern Harriers had their record-breaking single-day count of 42!

An interesting note is that Bob states in his report that Joe Youngman sent him a study conducted in 1992 on Brockway Mountain by raptor researcher, Jon Peacock, who had a count of 475 Rough-legged Hawks in the 6 weeks that he was there. And when Jon Peacock came back to visit us in 2018 he told Bob that there was one day that he counted over 350 Rough-legged Hawks while up on Brockway. So we see that the migration of these magnificent hawks that breed in the Arctic beyond the Boreal forests can vary quite a bit, and Brockway has had high Counts before.

May 8 was another 2023 season highlight with the season's single-day high count for Broad-winged Hawks at 1,077. A total of 1,508 raptors were observed and counted that day. The month's count at 8,661 was slightly above the historic average. All four Hawk Watches were above their historic averages in the month of May. For Brockway's over-all season, Bob states, "All but one species, the Peregrine Falcon, were close to average, or well above. Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks set new season high records. "The final count for the year was 15,221 which is 117% above the average.

(continued next page...)

Update for the Hawk Count 2024 Season



Now, unfortunately, I have to change tunes and inform you that the Board of the Keweenaw Bird Research Group, which conducts the Brockway Mountain Hawk Watch, has reluctantly decided to take a pause in the Count on Brockway this Spring. The Count has had a good 14-year run, but life events on the part of some of our officers and organizers necessitates this pause. We want to use our time and energy this year to reorganize. This includes looking for additional Board members, re-positioning current Board members, upgrading the web site, and other things. Anyone interested in being on the KBRG Board, please contact me at my email: muesdebra@gmail.com.

We will resume the Count in the Spring of 2025. Tim Baerwald, one of our former Counters, will be doing a banding project this Spring on Brockway Mountain of both nocturnal and diurnal raptors. KBRG is providing him with housing and transportation. He plans on starting April 1 and going through mid-May and possibly longer if he can find additional funding. And of course, the birds are not taking a pause and the Drive might even open early this Spring, so I hope you find many times to get up on Brockway Mountain to enjoy watching the Raptors, Ravens and Passerines flying above, below and around you. Pick a warm south wind day and witness again this amazing migration phenomenon up on Brockway Mountain!

Christmas Bird Count - Houghton County, Michigan -- 16 December 2023

Seven birdwatchers covered a 15-mile diameter circle centered in the middle of Portage Lake from dawn to dusk for our **47**th **Christmas Bird Count**. Three more folks contributed feeder surveys. All together **41 species**, **40 on count day and 1 on count week, were seen.** Only 7 other times since 1976 have we reported more than 40 species.

Open water: Unlike last year when most water was frozen over, this year most all the large water areas were open, which allowed sightings of 4 Swan sp., 82 Canada Geese, 1 Common Loon, 121 Common Goldeneyes, 72 Mallards, 2 Lesser Scaup, 2 White-winged Scoters, 1 Long-tailed Duck (Count Week), 166 Common Mergansers, 8 Red-breasted Mergansers, 65 Herring Gulls, 1 Ring-billed and 40 Gull sp.

Inland birds included: 23 Bald Eagles, 7 Ruffed Grouse, 56 Wild Turkeys, 115 Rock Pigeons, 36 Mourning Doves, 1 Great Horned Owl, 10 Downy and 13 Hairy Woodpeckers, 11 Pileated Woodpeckers, 3 Northern Shrikes, 59 Blue Jays, 105 American Crows, 58 Common Ravens, 291 Black-Capped Chickadees, 11 Red and 21 White-Breasted Nuthatches, 2 Golden Crowned Kinglets, 4 Brown Creepers, 203 European Starlings, 2 Northern Cardinals, 2 Tree Sparrows, 22 Snow Buntings, 5 Red Crossbills, 22 White-winged Crossbills, 57 Common Redpolls, 97 American Goldfinches, and 15 House Sparrows.

Most unusual birds and high counts: 3 Northern Shrikes, 5 Red Crossbills, 4 Brown Creepers and 21 White Breasted Nuthatches. In 2022 we had 11 Northern Cardinals and this year only 2 were found.

Many thanks to field and feeder birders: Andrew Meyer, Brendan Leddy and Matt Moore, Reese Redeye-Desposito, Joseph Youngman, Lynn Murphy, Valorie and Keith Troesch, Gina Nicholas and Nancy Auer, compiler.

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.

Lake Watch at Chippewa Harbor on Isle Royale -- May 2024 by Joseph Youngman

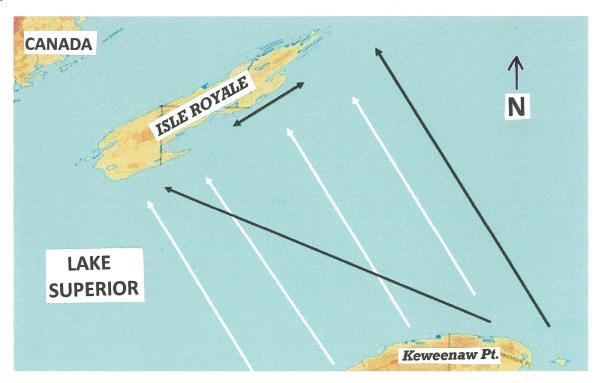
From 2009 to 2018 Copper Country Audubon has funded five lake watch counts on Isle Royale. We discovered a significant waterbird movement past both ends of the island and some movement along the south shore in the spring. During those counts that were mainly focused on detecting and counting waterbirds, we couldn't help but notice a few diurnal raptors (those that hunt during the day) that sure looked like they had just crossed Lake Superior from the Keweenaw to Isle Royale. We never saw large numbers but on any south wind day we did see incoming raptors.

Since the south shoreline of Isle Royale and the north shoreline of the Keweenaw are basically straight parallel lines, there is no reason for lake crossing raptors to funnel in to one specific spot on Isle Royale. There is nothing like Pt. Pelee on Lake Erie – an obviously shorter crossing. So I believe it's possible, even likely, that small numbers of raptors are coming in all along the south shore of Isle Royale on south wind days. If small numbers are coming in all along the south shore they could add up to over 100 each south wind day. That's still a pretty small movement, but since we at CCA are keen to study all bird migration in the Keweenaw we want to get a counter out there to see what they see.

It is my belief that the vast majority of spring raptors in the Keweenaw end up following the shoreline around the west end of Lake Superior, but maybe hundreds of our Brockway Mountain and Keweenaw raptors are actually crossing to Isle Royale each year.

This May we hope to place experienced counter Alison Vilag on the south shore of Isle Royale at Chippewa Harbor for two weeks to watch for those possible incoming raptors. She'll also be counting the modest numbers of waterbirds that we believe are moving both NE and SW along that shoreline, seeking to go around the island as they head north into Canada.

The map below gives an approximation of what I think is happening between the Keweenaw and Isle Royale in spring. The black arrows crudely portray the movement, previously detected, of waterbirds. The white arrows portray the previously detected and suspected movement of diurnal raptors. Of course, the "diurnal raptors" will consist mostly of Sharp-shinned Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, Merlins, Kestrels and Rough-legged Hawks. Those species are known to sometimes tackle longer water crossings. And those species are the ones we've detected at each end of Isle Royale in past counts.



Breaking news! On April 2nd, Isle Royale National Park informed us that they have denied our research permit for the Chippewa Harbor count. In the past Isle Royale has approved other CCA projects and this time they had indicated on the phone that our project was worthy of approval. But suddenly it was denied.



Member Input: The Name for Our Bird Club by Dana Richter



Over thirty comments have come from CCA members about the name for our bird club since input was requested in last fall's newsletter. Overwhelmingly members are in favor of simplifying the name of our club, mainly to avoid confusion with any other Audubon group or society. Some people are already using the name Copper County Bird Club on their checks and in their mailings! Here are some of the written comments.

"When I first learned about CCA, I think at a UPEC celebration, I thought there was a connection to Audubon as an affiliate. It was when I realized you weren't that I knew I wanted to support a local club. So I support changing the name to CC Bird Club." -from member and extra donor.

"No question, you're picking the best name (Bird Club) to represent what Copper Country birding really is. Audubon Society has long ago stopped relating to smaller, original chapters. Hurrah for you to assist with the name change." -from life member.

"I think the name change is a good idea. I like Keweenaw Birders or CC Birders. Birders feels more modern to me than Birdwatchers," -from life member.

"I agree with your reasoning to drop Audubon. It is very true. It was interesting during the Circle Power (wind tower) controversary, Michigan Audubon did not even respond to invitations to participate in the stakeholder meeting we held." --from life member.

"I first thought you were part of National Audubon. I favor Bird Club to avoid that confusion." -from life member.

"I am in favor of changing the name to Copper Country Bird Club. It would be a great name! I am especially concerned with keeping the name 'Audubon' having recently learned that he was a racist." -from regular member.

"I think Bird Club is a great idea!" -from life member.



The members that commented about a name change were almost all in favor of dropping Audubon and some provided suggestions of other names. Some members expressed the need for a name change without saving what it should be. Only two members were against a name change and one member expressed mixed feelings (see below). Here are some of the suggestions. Copper Country Bird Club is most popular (17 members); Copper Country Birders (4 members); Keweenaw Birders (4 members); Keweenaw Bird Club, Copper Country Bird Watchers, Copper Country Birding Alliance, Western UP Bird Club, were each suggested once and several variations.

Opposition to a name change came from only two people. One person stated that the name Audubon is firmly associated with birds and they are against a name change under any circumstances. One member expressed that dropping the name Audubon is like getting rid of Confederate symbols in the south; that history should be left alone. One life member wrote that they have mixed feelings; the name should not be changed just because of past history, because it is like digging up dirt on someone; but they were not opposed to a name change for other reasons.

Concern has been expressed about how complicated it would be to change the legal name for the club, like on the web site, banking, IRS, etc. CCA, being the foremost local bird club for so long, will always have an association with the Audubon name. One reason is that we worked in the 90s and early 2000s to obtain the two large Keweenaw Sanctuaries at Lake Bailey and on Brockway Mountain Drive. CCA got these properties for Michigan Audubon with the understanding that we will always be stewards of the sanctuaries. Agreements were made with MAS to be sanctuary partners and to be involved with the sanctuaries in perpetuity.

More name background. The first discussion about a possible name change for Copper Country Audubon was at a board meeting in spring 2022. It was learned that John James Audubon perpetrated a scientific fraud, attempting to name a new species of eagle in North America. A recent scientific paper was passed around that described his fabrication of records and descriptions of specimens. The bird he was trying to name as a new species turned out to be an immature bald eagle.

It was also learned that many smaller Audubon clubs were changing their name because the Audubon family had slaves and J.J. Audubon wrote negatively about the Negro race. But those are not the main reasons to adopt an alternative name for CCA.

When it is explained to members that the main reason to adopt a new name is not to dig up dirt on somebody or to erase history – even though the discussion started this way – the change is to simplify our name and to have a name that more clearly says what the club is about, <u>birds</u>, their appreciation and conservation. Having the name Audubon causes confusion because CCA has no real connection to the larger Audubon groups even though people think we do. Bird Club says it all, is simpler and is more inclusive and inviting to new birders. To many, the Audubon name represents an elitist kind of bird-watching conducted mostly by well-to-do people that can afford to belong to an exclusive "society."

For over 30 years I have enjoyed promoting birdwatching and the love of birds in the area. Here are some experiences where the name **CC Bird Club** will work better and avoid confusion.



I have given many programs about birds in the local schools. It was easier to say I was from the bird club to the kids. If I said I was from the Audubon club, the kids would ask, "what's that"? And they wanted to know why it was called "Audubon" and who that was. It would take time explaining the that connection, and that there are a bunch of different Audubon clubs, etc., etc. I'd rather spend the time telling about birds.

Not long ago I was at a gathering and a bird watcher was expressing their excitement watching the Great-horned Owls raising their young in the nest box on top of the Jutila Center. Wanting to see if she knew who makes that available, I said "It's great that they put up a nest box and a web cam, who does that anyway?" The person said, "It's the Audubon Society." I asked, what Audubon Society?" And the person said, "I thought there is only one Audubon Society."

Once, when I went to pay a bill for some work that CCA had contracted, I asked the contractor if he could give us a cut rate because we are just an all-volunteer local club. The man said, "Oh, Audubon's got lots of money, I see their magazine." I explain that National Audubon is not us. It didn't do any good.

This next experience or some version of it has happened many times. I meet someone who is enthusiastic about birds so I give them a CCA newsletter and tell them there is a membership form in there if they are interested. Then the person says, "I am already a member, I get the magazine," meaning National Audubon. Or they tell me that they already give enough to National Audubon. Or they ask, "I am already a member of National Audubon, why don't I get the CCA newsletter?" I have to explain that being a member of National Audubon or Michigan Audubon is of no benefit to CCA.

CCA is not the only group that deals with birds in this area, so other names need to be considered There is Keweenaw Bird Research Group of Copper Harbor – they continue the Brockway Hawk Count that was started by CCA in 2010 (Laughing Whitefish Audubon of Marquette was a partner). There is UP Wildlife Rehabilitation Keweenaw. There is Keweenaw Wild Bird – REC that also does bird rehab. And there is the Copper Country Birding Group that hosts the email bird alert list. Officially CCA is already a "club", not a "society", so the simplest change to make is to drop the "Audubon" and insert "Bird": **Copper Country Bird Club!**

Trumpeter Swan Researcher Joseph Youngman Continues Survey 2024. Joseph will monitor over 30 nests in the Copper Country region, trapesing through remote swamps and around rugged beaver ponds with wiggly shorelines. He is volunteering all of his time and the use of his drone. Copper Country Audubon will cover part of his mileage, but he'll drive a lot more than that.

GREAT-HORNED OWLS IN THE BOX AGAIN ON TOP OF THE JUTILA CENTER!

The Jutila owl has hatched two young again this year, a little earlier than previous years. You can view the owl box and the parents feeding the young at the web site **coppercountryaudubon.org**, at the bottom of the Home page.

Update on Acoustic Monitoring of Songbird Migration in the Keweenaw Peninsula by Zach G. Gayk

In my past research supported by CCA and the Keweenaw Community Forest Company, we used passive acoustic recorders throughout the Keweenaw to document the short, high-frequency flight calls that migratory songbirds produce while on the wing. We documented that the tip of the Keweenaw is a large migratory flyway during spring and fall migrations, with approximately 500,000 to 800,000 flight call detections of songbirds migrating through the peninsula each season during diurnal movements. I am currently analyzing data from three seasons spanning 2022–2023, comprising 1.7 million total detections of 110 different kinds of migratory birds. Many of these are warblers. I am investigating the exact size of these annual movements, the influence of geography, weather, and species' natural history on the size of these migrations, and the time of peak migration for each species.

One of the things I have uncovered is that there is a difference between the route of songbirds through the peninsula in spring versus fall migration. I detected more songbirds migrating along the north shore of the Keweenaw in the spring, and more migrants along the south shore in the fall. I suspect that this may be an effort by songbirds to avoid the prevailing wind direction, by sheltering from southerly winds by migrating along the north shore in the spring, and north winds by migrating along the south shore in the fall. I have also uncovered some species-specific patterns that may mean different species have different migratory routes through the peninsula.

In 2024, I plan to continue monitoring diurnal migration with sound recorders at multiple sites across the Keweenaw region simultaneously. I have proposed a new project, that expands the existing array of coastal recorders with six new units focused on inland ridges of the Keweenaw. By simultaneously covering the coast and inland ridges, we can determine whether migrant songbirds engage in broad front migration along ridges parallel to the Lake Superior shorelines, or only migrate along coastlines. I will be finished with the data analysis this summer, so I will have further details then.



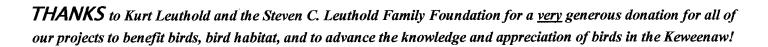
THANKS!

THANKS to New Life Members Patricia and Gerald Primeau of rural Calumet

Jane and Rich Jamsen of Marquette



Dennis Gast of St. Joseph, Michigan Frederick Jamsen of Oceanside, California



THANKS to Joe Kirkish for a fantastic donation though Copper Shores Community Health Foundation

THANKS to EVERYONE for your membership in Copper Country Audubon, and especially for the <u>extra</u> donations with your renewals that make our projects possible. We couldn't do it without you!



New Keweenaw Hiking Trails Group Helps with Trails

A new hiking group has been formed in the Keweenaw! Last summer the Keweenaw Hiking Trails Association helped with trail work on the 405-acre Lake Bailey Audubon Sanctuary. This trail starts on Hwy M-26 near the Silver River Bridge and climbs about a mile south to the ridge. This is the same ridge where about a mile to the west is Lookout Mountain, also called Mt. Baldy. The Nature Conservancy now owns the land in between the Lake Bailey Sanctuary and Lookout Mountain, so it is an easy stroll along the ridge through open pine-oak woods to get to the Mt. Baldy Preserve.

The Brockway Mountain Drive Audubon Sanctuary is approximately two miles farther east of the Lake Bailey Sanctuary. It is also about 400 acres. This property is separate from the Brockway Mountain summit, which is about another mile and a half farther east on Brockway Mountain Drive. The Brockway Mountain summit property is owned by Eagle Harbor Township, purchased with a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant with matching funds help from Copper Country Audubon and other partners. The Brockway Mountain Drive Sanctuary also has a trail that is maintained by Marj and Ray Krumm, since their son, Oren Krumm, developed the trail as his Eagle Scout project.

Spring is Here! New Beginnings! Swan Song! by Dana Richter

What joy to see the birds return in spring and share that joy with others! Copper Country Audubon is as much about people who love the birds as it is about birds! Birds are everywhere and noticed by everybody. Everything about the birds is exciting to observe. I used to tell the school kids, you don't need to belong to a club or a society to be a birdwatcher. Everyone's a birdwatcher! You can do it all life long at any level. And that goes for other nature observations, too.

Especially precious is to show a child a bird they had never seen before. Like the Tree Swallows that come to the nest boxes around the waste-water ponds in spring. The kids would ask, "Is that a bluebird?" "Well," I would say, "It is a blue bird, but that one is called a Tree Swallow, because it flits around the sky swallowing insects, and the Bluebird catches insects on the ground."

One has to be careful correcting people's birds – not wanting to spoil their enthusiasm. Ornithologist Laurie Binford and I had a friendly disagreement one time about correcting people's bird identifications. Is it better to be right or to let things be when someone misidentifies a bird? Sometimes it is better to let the thrill and excitement remain when somebody reports a bird. There will be time later to explain that the bird was probably a different species. As long as the identification is casual and not for a formal survey, it doesn't matter if kids say they saw a Bluebird. Once someone called me to say they were pretty sure they say an Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Part of the success of our little bird club is there has been someone at the helm that loves to write letters and keep a mailing list. Not trying to take credit, because a lot of others help, but getting out a newsletter and the correspondence with the membership has been a pleasure for which I am grateful to be able to do. With every newsletter we get 50 to 100 donations and renewals, many with notes and accolades from members. Then I am able to send out a wave of thank you cards and letters and sometimes stories about the local birds, weather etc. I have made many bird-loving pen pals over the years! The newsletter and correspondence also allows me to use my collection of rubber stamps of birds I've had since the third grade. I am also thankful for working in a forestry school that encouraged keeping a bird club going.

As those of us getting older have noticed, things are not going to go on forever. Six boxes of old CCA reports, projects, records and other materials are being sorted and delivered to the Michigan Tech Archives and Historical Collections. Many organizations have gone entirely online. CCA has a web site (Thank You, Phil!), but our older members never see it and most never will. A recent note from a life member said, "If you move the newsletter online, could you at least do one once a year in print? I read the newsletter and enjoy all the goings on. It will just get lost in the shuffle online." Those older members are the ones that generously support the work of the club with their checks often well-above the basic membership level.

Is there a member out there that wants to do a mailed newsletter? It takes rounding up articles, pestering people, tending to a mailing list (no small task because it is always changing), and a myriad of other details to do before a newsletter gets out. We have about 250 people on the mailing list but not all are members. The newsletter also goes to libraries and various courtesy mailings. The newsletter is done in an old-fashioned way that could be improved immensely. I can help. This and some of the other changes ahead can be discussed at a general member meeting **Saturday May 18, 2024, 9:00 AM at the Nara Nature Chalet House**, Hwy 41 across from the boardwalk parking area near the Pilgrim River. Project updates, future plans, etc., etc. Afterwards we can walk to the mouth of the Pilgrim River to watch the Tree Swallows flit around the nest boxes and see other spring birds, too. **Copper Country Audubon, p 7**

Presentation: Wednesday May 1 2024, 7:00 PM. MTU Forestry Bldg., Hesterberg Hall, Rm. G002. Bats and Conservation in Michigan. John DePue, Wildlife Biologist, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Baraga Center. Learn important facts about the natural history of bats: Do bats make nests? How many bat species are in Michigan? Is white nose disease a serious threat? Please come to this fascinating presentation about these other animals that share the sky with the birds.

Bird Walk and Member Meeting Saturday May 18, 2024, 9:00 AM at the Nara Nature Chalet House. Hwy 41 across from the boardwalk parking area near the Pilgrim River. Project updates, future plans, etc., etc. Afterwards we can walk to the mouth of the Pilgrim River to watch the Tree Swallows flit and see other spring birds.

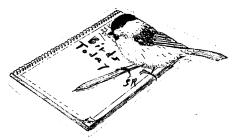
FIND A BABY BIRD? LEAVE IT BE!

Injured Birds?

Michigan DNR, Baraga 906-353-6651 Raptor Rehab: Beth Maatta, 906-370-3825

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

BIRD WATCHING
IS A HAPPY THING!



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

