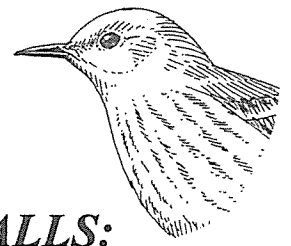


# BROCKWAY LOOKOUT

Copper Country Audubon Newsletter Volume 29, Number 1, Mar/Apr 2022



## *STUDYING SONGBIRD MIGRATION WITH FLIGHT CALLS:*

### *A Migration-Monitoring Network in the Keweenaw* by Zach G. Gayk

Billions of birds migrate each year between northern breeding grounds and southern wintering areas. As they fly under the cover of darkness, many songbirds produce quiet sounds known as “flight calls.” Orin Libby, in 1899, wrote one of the first descriptions of flight calls in North America:

*“The air seemed at times fairly alive with invisible birds as the calls rang out... Almost human many of them seemed, too, and it was not difficult to imagine that they expressed a whole range of emotions from anxiety and fear up to good-fellowship and joy. It was a marvel and a mystery enacted under the cover of night, and of which only fugitive tidings reached the listeners below.”*

Can we use the flight calls of songbirds to understand what species are flying overhead during migration? Birders have long recorded flight calls in their backyards with homemade microphones and recording gear, but few people have actually harnessed the recording of flight calls on a large scale to understand migration patterns of songbirds. Instead, most researchers have focused on radar, which is more easily analyzed from existing stations, but cannot yield species level information on the identities of migrants passing overhead. However, the only way to understand which species are migrating is by recording flight calls.

Devices to record the flight calls of songbirds are becoming less expensive, and this opens up a whole realm of possibilities for using flight calls to understand what species are actually passing overhead during songbird migrations through the Keweenaw. Collaborating with Copper Country Audubon, and the Keweenaw Community Forest Company, I plan to do just that: to record the flight calls of migratory songbirds at 12 sites spread throughout the tip of the Keweenaw. In past years, we have determined that thousands of songbirds regularly make landfall at Manitou Island in fall and appear to continue west along the south shore to Bete Grise. However, we have never conducted systematic counts at locations between Manitou Island and Bete Grise. Using recorders positioned at 12 different sites, we will deploy a migration monitoring network of flight call stations throughout the Keweenaw Peninsula, targeting areas suspected to be migratory pathways, including Keweenaw Point, Bete Grise, Mount Houghton, Bare Bluff, Keystone Bay, High Rock Bay, Horseshoe Harbor, Agate Harbor, Gratiot Lake, Point Isabelle, and Cliff Drive. The project is headed by me and Joseph Youngman with possible assistance from others depending on the migration season and what the field work requires.

Using flight call recorders to tally the birds passing overhead during migration will allow us to answer questions we can't with solely human observers: How does the geography of the Keweenaw Peninsula influence the route these birds take, and the numbers passing at each site? By analyzing the numbers of species, and estimates of the total numbers of birds passing at each migration site, we can compare how these estimates vary at each recording site. From this, we can put together a picture of the route the birds take on their migration pathway, where they make landfall off of Lake Superior, and how weather influences the movements of these songbirds. The recorder network will also allow us, for the first time, to characterize the size of the Keweenaw songbird migrations, and to understand how regionally significant these migration are. Large morning flights of songbirds are rare, and this project will help us to understand why we get large numbers in the Keweenaw. We also plan to extend monitoring efforts late into the fall, when migration is traditionally considered to be over, because we think that thousands of finches may also fly along the Keweenaw pathway.

We will be building a website where we can visualize the results of each recording station. Copper Country Audubon members interested in songbird migration can help out by birding in the spring migration season, and, looking for large numbers of songbirds flying along the Lake Superior shoreline. Let us know if you observe such events, as this will help us to find even more places to record songbirds in the future.

Imagine a small songbird travelling thousands of kilometers through the night sky, every few seconds uttering an inconspicuous call. As technology advances, it appears that the unique signature of each species flight call can be used as a window into the migrations of each species passing overhead in the dark.

## ***HOW TO JOIN THE COPPER COUNTRY HOTLINE BIRDING EMAIL LIST***

If you would like to join the *Copper Country Birding* Email hot-line list, go to [groups.google.com](https://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](mailto:tjsold@gmail.com).

## ***2021 HOUGHTON COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT***

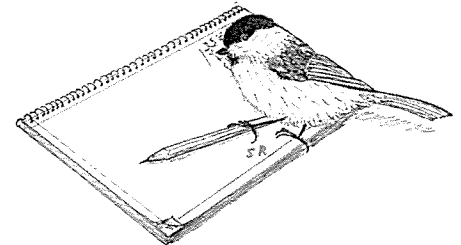
For the December 18, 2021 CBC 15 people braved the cold and snow to cover a 15-mile diameter circle centered in the middle of Portage Lake. **39 species of birds** were reported.

**Open water** on Lake Superior provided sightings of: Common Loon 1, Canada Geese 35, Mallards 2, Scaup – 5 Greater, 1 Lesser and 2?, Longtail Duck 1, Common Goldeneye 78, Buffleheads 7, Common Merganser 114, Red-breasted Merganser 3, Herring Gull 42.

**Common inland birds** observed included: Bald Eagle 18, Ruffed Grouse 13, Rock Pigeon 229, Mourning Dove 20, Downy WP 26, Hairy WP 27, Pileated Woodpecker 6, Red-Bellied Woodpecker 2, Northern Shrike 1, Blue Jay 55, American Crow 52, Common Raven 50, Black-Capped Chickadee 279, Red-Breasted Nuthatch 12, White-Breasted Nuthatch 15, Golden-Crowned Kinglet 12, European Starling 188, Northern Cardinal 5, Dark-eyed Junco 2, Blackbird species 1, Pine Grosbeak 52, White-winged Crossbill 33, Common Redpoll 278, Hoary Redpoll 2, American Goldfinch 211, House Sparrow 6, Wild Turkey 47, Ring-neck Pheasant 4.

### **Some of the more unusual or irregular sightings included**

- Red-Bellied Woodpecker 2, both males, always fun to have these birds.
- Golden Crowned Kinglet 12, many years since such a high count.
- Ring-necked pheasant 4.
- Scaup (8) have not been seen on counts since 2006.
- No count-week additions this year.

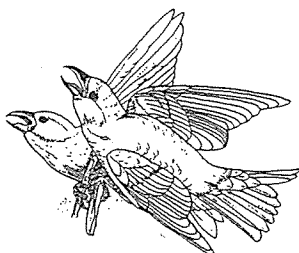


Many thanks to some pretty hardy and diligent people: Ruth Gleckler, Drew Meyer, Brendan Leddy, Joe Youngman, Lynn Murphy, Gina Nicholas, Phil Quenz, Dana Richter, Ryne Rutherford, Kristine Bradof, Valorie Troesch, Dave Fehringer, Lynnette Borree, Matt Kiilunen and me. Compiler of data from the 5 sections of bird numbers, weather, time, distance and mode of search by all these folks. Thanks to all from Nancy Auer.

## ***FEEDING BIRDS ALL WINTER AT CALUMET LAKE PARK***

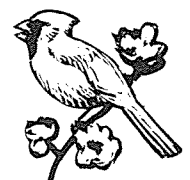
For the past several years I have had a bird feeder at Calumet Lake Park on the north end of Calumet. Since I do not live far away, I walk or snowshoe in two or three times a week to fill the feeder. It is only a ten-minute walk in, and sometimes a friend comes along. The feeder is a wooden tube-type feeder enclosed in a coarse metal cage to discourage squirrels from emptying the feeder. I use black-oil sunflower seeds. The feeder attracts chickadees mostly, but also the two kinds of nuthatches, goldfinches, blue-jays and, this year, many redpolls. The feeder is about eight feet up in a spruce tree, which I have to climb to get to early in the season, but later with the snow, it can be filled from the ground. I also put up suet blocks which attract the woodpeckers, and other birds feed on it, too. I have even seen a Pileated Woodpecker at the park in years past. Crows and Ravens are also heard when I visit the feeder. I have been told by snowshoers and hikers who use the park, how enjoyable it is to see the feeder and to watch the birds. –*Bernice Smith*

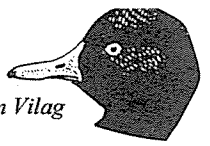
(PS. Bernice is a long-time, dedicated CCA member who also helps with the bird houses at the park and at the Calumet Wastewater Ponds. Thank you, Bernice!)



### ***Some Nice Winter Bird Sightings***

- 23 Nov 21 Common Eider, female. Copper Harbor. Nancy Leonard
- 23 Nov 21 Townsend Solitaire. Eagle Harbor. Nancy Leonard
- 8 Dec 21 Gray Catbird. Eagle River. Marcy Erikson
- 8 Dec 21 Snowy Owl. Lake Linden. Bruce MacDonald
- 29 Dec 21 Gray Catbird. Chassell. Matt Kiilunen
- 6 Mar 22 Snowy Owl, female. Hancock. Evan Kane





As a migration counter, I've often wondered what a land-dependent bird feels when it reaches a great water crossing. Last October, I looked down from a floatplane window at the meeting of Lake Superior and Ontario's mainland. We were on route to Michipicoten Island, and I understood, then, the feeling.

The slimmest span of water separating Michipicoten from Ontario is about 9.5 miles. The ice is infrequent; passage by boat often treacherous. Aside from unprofitable copper mines and a small fishery, both long defunct, human presence on the island—Lake Superior's second-largest—has been spotty, always. Today, most of Michipicoten is a provincial park, but *HawkAir* operates a private fly-in camp on the island's west side. We landed there, on Michi Lake, transferred our provisions from the plane to our backs. The Otter rose again, and Rhoda and I waved. For the next 11 days, it would be just her and I.

I've counted for Youngman's Copper Country Audubon projects at other Lake Superior points. Manitou Island off the Keweenaw; Au Sable Point near Grand Marais. All his gigs deliver the things that beckon me most: solitude and adventure, and at least one spectacular bird flight. Rhoda Johnson is my longtime friend. She can identify ducks, pitch a tent, and laugh through tribulations, so she's an ideal partner for endeavors like this. When I'd first asked if she'd join, her response was something like, "I don't even know what that [Michipicoten] is, but I'm in!"

Now, we were in, facing a wall of birch and spruce that most people would describe as impenetrable. But there was one little problem: we needed to penetrate it. Youngman's instructions read something like "We never made it to Cotton Cove – I wimped out. You won't." So Rhoda and I donned safety glasses and pushed forward into the wall. Youngman suspected that Cotton Cove would provide the best vantage on waterbirds migrating southeast. As the raven flies, Cotton Cove is not that far from Michi Lake—less than 3 miles. But we did not fly. We hiked, and it took 7 hours. Hiking is generous terminology: Michipicoten's interior is trailless, rugged terrain never timbered. Walking isn't really walking. It's grabbing branches, crawling under blowdowns, and recovering from footholds that failed. Blunder, perhaps, is the best description of overland travel, and the word applies to both physical and mental navigations. Rhoda and I blundered along the bases of sheer granite faces, blundered through glades of dreadlocked yew, and blundered into soggy, beaver-engineered hells. But chickadee and kinglet flocks were always present, cheerful and encouraging. And even through foggy safety glasses, our surroundings were lush and primeval, the closest thing I've seen to a rainforest in the east. Moss carpeted everything; mushrooms diverse in color and texture sprang forth from the ground and the trees; delicate springs were ringed with stones and ferns. When, finally at Cotton Cove, I freed my body from the pack—which weighed at least half as much as I did—physical relief was profound.

Our camp at Cotton Cove was top-shelf, one of the prettiest I've ever had. We pitched the tent on the beach, anchoring the tarp to a weathered log that had been previously used by both beavers and sapsuckers. A clear brook tumbled into Superior; most the noise came from Red, the squirrel, who launched lengthy tirades about our intrusion. We did have use of the project's *Inreach* radio, which allowed us to tell Youngman what we were seeing, find out from *HawkAir* when we'd be extracted, and keep tabs on the weather. But otherwise, the rest of the world and its concerns felt very far away—we were even beyond the reach of foghorns. This was nice.

Camp to count site was a ten-minute commute that sparkled with dew and agates. We named our lookout Chickadee Knoll to honor our frequent visitors. Chickadee Knoll is about 20 feet above Lake Superior. It's covered in lichens, junipers, and blueberries and it hosted a thriving spider population, too. These liked to rappel off our hats at inopportune moments and gave good startles. Chickadee Knoll was—as Youngman had suspected—a prime vantage for a waterbird count. The line of sight was superb, and we seemed to be at the place where birds approaching from the northwest came nearest to Michipicoten. We christened the flightline "Youngman Highway."

We named other things, too. Just offshore were a few large rocks. They became Gull, Peregrine, and Pipit. The Peregrine Falcon we called "Junior." Typically, Junior ate American Pipits and Horned Larks. One morning though, Rhoda exclaimed, "I think he's on a kingfisher!" I looked to see a Belted Kingfisher streaking from the open lake towards shore, Junior in hot pursuit. The kingfisher hit the water several times to evade Junior's stoops, rebounding well. We cheered when the kingfisher—the only one we saw on Michipicoten—made it to shore. Our cheers were not just for the kingfisher's well-being, but for Junior's, too.

Fog is common at Michipicoten, and it plagued our count before we ever left the mainland. For the first 3 days of what was supposed to be the count, Wawa was so socked-in that *HawkAir* couldn't fly. Visibility for nearly half of our count hours was severely limited. In fact, on our first day at Chickadee Knoll, the fog was so unrelenting that we saw zero migrating waterbirds the entire count. Our exhaustion from hiking in was mixed with exasperation. We'd toiled hard to reach our station—and, now finally there, we couldn't see a darn thing. Perhaps, this enhanced our appreciation of the birds we *did*

see over the next 10 days. My favorites: a flock of 25 distant Horned Larks/American Pipits migrating in a line like ducks; the occasional tidy flock of White-winged Scoters; two Northern Harriers way out over the lake, uninterested in land, just coursing south above the water like they do above marshland. Fog aside, the weather we experienced was not particularly favorable for migration. Two-thirds of the count hours the winds were from the south. The temperature ranged from 53.6-65.0 degrees Fahrenheit. Mosquitoes were an annoyance in evening, but we stayed warm at night.

As Youngman's counts dependably do, Michipicoten produced a noteworthy flight. It happened October 13<sup>th</sup>, delivering 839 loons—the most I've counted in a day, anywhere. This tally must come close to the fall Great Lakes daily high count. When this flight was at its heaviest, I counted 150 Common Loons in just 12 minutes. Most were low, scattered in loose flocks, the largest of these containing 24 individuals. Amazingly, 838 of these loons were Common. We saw only 2 Red-throated Loons during the entire Michipicoten stint. But we *did* have a Pacific/Arctic Loon\* on October 13<sup>th</sup>, close and in alternate plumage! This was the rarest species we recorded while there. (\*When seen in flight only, separating these two species is nearly impossible.)

As a standalone, this flight is exciting. Amplifying that, though, is that Whitefish Point Bird Observatory recorded *their* largest loon flight of Fall 2021 the following day, October 14<sup>th</sup>. (WPBO numbers=493 Commons, 42 Red-throateds, 1 Pacific, 9 unidentified; WPBO's Pacific Loon, not in alternate plumage, was not the one we saw at Michipicoten.) Despite the disparity between Michipicoten and WPBO's Red-throated Loon numbers, it seems plausible that some of the Common Loons passing Michipicoten on October 13 were recorded at WPBO October 14. At the very least, these days represent a period of heavy loon passage across Lake Superior. Incidentally, exactly a year prior (October 13<sup>th</sup> 2020), I tallied over 13,300 waterbirds out on Manitou.

During the Michipicoten count, we tallied a total 1,796 migrating waterbirds representing 25 species. In comparison, WPBO tallied 5,104 migrating waterbirds during the same period (October 5-14). However, we were unable to pack all our food in on the first trip to Cotton Cove and resupplied at Michi Lake mid-hitch. This shortened our counts on October 7-8. While the results from our time at Michipicoten don't suggest a huge duck flight passes by, any 2-week sample is a gamble. Perhaps, we just didn't receive the conditions that push ducks south.

Most numerous waterbirds recorded during Michipicoten count:

1. Common Loon (1,109)
2. Herring Gull (143)
3. Red-breasted Merganser (120)
4. Canada Goose (83)
5. White-winged Scoter (78)



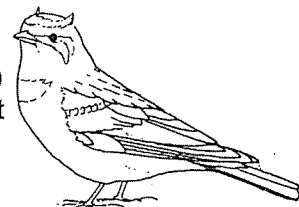
Raptors at Cotton Cove exhibiting migratory behavior:

- Northern Harrier (6)
- Sharp-shinned Hawk (7)
- Bald Eagle (3)
- Rough-legged Hawk (7)

- Peregrine Falcon (3)
- American Kestrel (4)

Other landbirds at Cotton Cove exhibiting migratory behavior:

- Belted Kingfisher (1)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet (2)
- Horned Lark/American Pipit (25 – 1 flock)
- Dark-eyed Junco (1)
- Myrtle Warbler (1)
- Rusty Blackbird (1)
- Unidentified passerine (2)



During our time on Michipicoten Island, we saw a total of 70 species. The most interesting of these were a Bohemian Waxwing and good numbers of White-winged Crossbills. Our most surprising mammal sighting was a wolf, which Rhoda saw while thrashing through Michipicoten's interior.

The night before we had to hike back to Michi Lake to meet *HawkAir*, the wind picked up and shifted west. Lake Superior, unusually calm for most of the count, built swells that threatened our camp—as well as a safe passage back, for the first leg of the hike is along the coast. It's always bittersweet to close out a count, particularly on a west wind in mid-October. But, thanks again to the Chickadee-Kinglet cheerleaders, we persevered back to Michi Lake. I had a shin gash and we both had beavies of bruises, but we felt very lucky, with all that blundering, to come out with only minimal wounds.

Youngman's Copper Country Audubon projects are dedicated to collecting data from sites many folks would write off as inaccessible. It's exciting to compare the results with places more conventionally studied—like Whitefish Point—and imagine the paths waterbirds travel when navigating Lake Superior. And it's exciting, too, to contribute to these gigs. Migration hits different in a place without roads, where comings and goings require rigorous effort. Rhoda and I loved Michipicoten and consider it an honor to have been tasked with this count.



## ENHANCE YOUR YARD FOR BIRD WATCHING

by Matt Kiilunen

Should you have an area outside your bird watching window that is a barren grassy back yard like mine, that doesn't have shrubbery or things to attract birds, here are some suggestions that I have found useful.



Start by planting some "instant composite trees." Make the tree trunks out of pipe about one-inch diameter by about 5-6 ft long. Ram the pipe into the ground about 18 inches. Then attach branches to the top of the pipe by sticking one into the pipe, and drilling holes in the pipe to attach more smaller branches on the side. Put about four of the "composite trees" in your yard and you have perches for whatever flock of birds that come to your bird feeders.

I put a wind-direction bird feeder mounted on a steel pipe in the middle of my instant orchard, which I made in the shape of a Viking ship, with a cover to keep the whole-corn dry that Blue-jays, Grackles, and other birds feed on.

Should you be so fortunate to have an artesian overflow like me, make a bird water fountain out of it. Determine how high to make the fountain depending on how high the natural flow will lift the water. I made a support out of a tamarack log about 6 in diameter by 5 ft long. Just slice the full length of the log with a chain saw, and run half-inch plastic tubing in it with a shallow plastic bowl on top, pre-drilled for the half-inch pipe. I set the post in concrete and used a piece of 3/16 in diameter brass rod coming out of the top inside the tubing to form a nice question-mark shape so the water can fall back into the bowl. A piece of garden hose can be put in the side of the bowl as a drain to keep the water about 3 in deep. Pack the joints with a sealing compound, add some rocks, and you are all set! Other ways to provide water for birds in winter such as a heated bird-bath will also attract birds.

In winter, don't forget to put up some deer rib cages or suet for a winter fat supply for the birds. All of these things will attract birds to your yard and enhance your bird watching experience. This last winter I had a Red-bellied Woodpecker and a Catbird visit my yard. It is very important to keep birds from hitting the windows, so I got some of that reflective Bird-Scare tape to put on my windows, too.



## *Peregrine Falcons, Great-Horned Owls and CCA Webcams Update*

The Peregrine Falcons on the Houghton-Hancock lift bridge are using the same place as last year in a steel beam to make their nest and raise their young. It is not possible to put a web cam there. The nest box on top of the EERC building at Michigan Tech has a web cam, but the box is not used by any birds. The nest box on the east side of the Quincy Mine Shaft House has a web cam, but the box is not being used – a Great Horned Owl was seen once in late winter exploring the box – let's keep our fingers crossed. The nest box on the south side of the Jutila Center overlooking Portage Lake is not being used by owls this year; it is suspected one of the owls of the pair that used to use the box has perished. Rock Pigeons were seen using the box in late winter – maybe they will nest there. More food for the falcons, so there's plus side to everything.



## *A Seaplane Hanger on the Houghton Side of Portage Lake?*



The following letter was sent to Portage Township from Copper Country Audubon on 8 January 2022.

Dear Portage Township Board,

It has come to our attention that a developer wants to create a seaplane hanger and service station near the mouth of the Pilgrim River south of Houghton where there is an active eagle nest. Please see attached photo. This would undoubtedly not be good for the eagles and other wildlife in this area.

The mouth of the Pilgrim River and its wetlands is a rich wildlife area. Nearby are Nara Nature Trail boardwalks along each side of the Pilgrim River. Many people use this area for bird watching and nature observation. Sandhill Cranes, Northern Harriers (Marsh Hawk), Trumpeter Swans and numerous migrating waterfowl frequent the mouth of the Pilgrim River and adjacent Portage Lake shoreline.

The presence of a seaplane operation would be an obvious disturbance to wildlife. The acoustic impact on both wildlife and humans wanting to enjoy the Nara trails would be quite negative. Copper Country Audubon feels the area should be protected to the fullest extent for the benefit of birds and other wildlife.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.



## *A Doctor Would Never Counsel His Patients Like Bird Organizations Advise Homeowners* by Jim Cubie\*



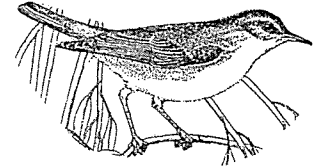
A two-packs-per-day smoker visits his doctor. The patient asks, “What can I do to extend my life?” His doctor will tell him that he should eat right, exercise, and take his blood pressure medicine, but “**if you don’t stop smoking nothing else you do will really matter.** The other good things cannot make up for the deadly consequences of smoking.”

Bird organizations do the opposite. They give homeowners a list of “ten good things to do for birds.” They should say “**stop killing birds in your yard – control cats and prevent window collisions.** All the other ‘good things for birds’ cannot make up for 1.25 billion bird deaths caused by cats and home windows.” (2-6 per home annually.)

The typical advice to homeowners listing “good things for birds”— such as installing a nest box, providing water and cover, counting birds, buying shade grown coffee - will do little or nothing to increase bird populations as long as the yard is killing birds.

There are only two steps we can take in our backyards that really will save birds.

1. control cats
2. prevent window collisions (a yard includes the home’s windows)



Even if the list of “good things for birds” includes “prevent window collisions,” a list delivers the false message that all of these “good things for birds” are equally effective. In fact only two, controlling cats and preventing window collisions, will prevent bird deaths. Very few lists even mention controlling cats and preventing window collisions.

Doing something is not better than nothing. Promoting “participation” instead of preventing bird deaths undermines the very mission of bird organizations. If bird clubs offer easy options to their members, they will choose them -- instead of controlling their beloved cats and or spending \$50 to prevent window collisions. It is infinitely more important to save birds than to make members happy.

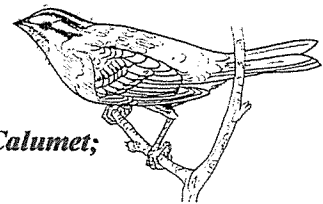
Like the smoker’s doctor we must deliver the blunt message – “**First of all, control cats and prevent window collisions. Nothing else you do will make any real difference.**”

A yard that kills birds cannot be “bird friendly” no matter what else is done in the yard. Homeowners must start by preventing bird deaths.

\* Consultant Center for Ornithology at Muhlenberg College, [jimcubie1@gmail.com](mailto:jimcubie1@gmail.com)



# **THANKS!**



**THANKS to New Life Members:** Donna Lahti of L’Anse; Rose and Bill Martel of Calumet; Janet Hewitt and John Fountain of Iola, Wisconsin.

**THANKS to Life Members Renewing their Membership!:** Valorie and Keith Troesch of Point Mills; Vera Gerhardt of Ann Arbor; Virginia Sisson and Will Maze of Houston, Texas.

**THANKS** again for a generous donation from John Van Westenburg “for Youngman’s projects”.

**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 very generous donation to Copper Country Audubon – birdwatching is a healthy, wholesome activity – especially mental health!

**THANKS** to Marilyn Cooper for a generous donation in honor of Nancy and Bill Leonard for their nature work, and for the Webcams and to help support the Brockway Mountain Hawkwatch.

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



## STRANGE CREATURES FOUND IN TREE SWALLOW NEST BOXES!



On November 6, 2021 the nest boxes around the Lake Linden wastewater treatment ponds were cleaned for the season. It was a cool, rainy day. There are 28 nest boxes at the site. Most are along the recreation trails around the ponds where many people hike, walk their dogs, and enjoy the lake, the views, and the birds. The nest boxes are on posts about six-feet off the ground. This fall, only 27 nest boxes were found – one probably broke off at the ground line and fell in the grass. It will be a spring project to find the box before the grass gets too high and hides it again – there is always good birdwatching around the ponds, too.

The nest boxes have been up for ten to 20 years now, so some of the posts are starting to decay. Two posts and boxes were found laying on the ground, and these had no nests. One of these was fastened to an existing steel fence-post surrounding one of the ponds, and the other was removed for repair. All the rest of the boxes (25) had the remains of Tree Swallow nests in them, as evidenced by abundant feathers of ducks, geese and gulls used as nesting material. No dead fledglings were found in any of the boxes, and only three unhatched eggs were found, each in a separate box. Some years many dead fledglings and unhatched eggs are found. Every season something different is learned from examining the boxes.

A most surprising thing this year was to find snail shells in almost every nest box. At the bottom of the nest among the feathers, bird droppings, fly pupae and insect parts were ten to 20 empty, conical snail shells. A curious thing – how would these snails have gotten in the nest boxes? I explained the mystery to long-time CCA member, Jim Ponshair of Allendale, Michigan, who, for many years has put up hundreds of nest boxes at the Muskegon wastewater treatment ponds. Jim was kind to reply that, years ago, when ornithologist, Dr. Olin Sewell Pettingill, was director of the University of Michigan Biological Station near Pellston, there was a woman who was studying Tree Swallows. Jim says of the study, “knowing that the birds arrive early, sometimes before there were a lot of insects to feed on, she found that they feed on snails!”

Ornithologist and CCA member, Dr. Amber Roth of the University of Maine, pointed out that snails are listed among the foods used by Tree Swallows. Perhaps last summer, for some reason, there weren't many insects for the swallows to feed their young. Or perhaps snails were so abundant that it was easy for the adults to get them and bring to the nests for their young. However, no snails were found in the next boxes along Portage Lake near Houghton. Our own Bill Deephouse, a retired fisheries biologist, confirmed that these were native snails, and not the nasty invasive New Zealand mud snails. What I would like to know is, with their broad, insect-catching beak, how do the swallows get the snail meat out of the shells? It would be interesting to see with a camera in the nest box. Phil? --D. Richter



**BIRDWATCHING and NESTBOXES at the CALUMET WASTEWATER PONDS! Friday April 29, 2022, 10:00 AM.** There are 13 nest boxes that have not been cleaned out yet this spring and some may need repairs. It is not a lot of work, as most boxes are along the perimeter road and can be driven to. This is mostly a birdwatching event. This is also the site of the MOTUS bird tracking antenna. There are about 16 holding ponds that can be visited for waterfowl and shorebirds. If you have never been there before, the wastewater treatment facility is about one mile east of Calumet on Hwy M203, just past the cemetery, across from the turn to Calumet Waterworks Road. It is a great place to do some birding, but if you drive in be sure to be out by 3:00 PM because that's when the gate gets locked. Birdwatchers are welcome!

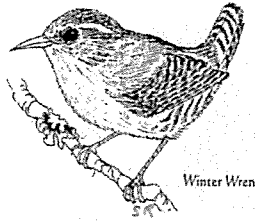
**THE 13th BROCKWAY MOUNTAIN HAWK WATCH IS UNDERWAY!** Counters this year are Tim Baerwald and Bob Baez, both of whom are experienced raptor counters that have counted hawks on Brockway in previous years. Follow the count at [https://hawkcount.org/month\\_summary.php?rsite=699](https://hawkcount.org/month_summary.php?rsite=699). Visit the mountain April, May and early June. See hawks and other raptors sailing by at eye-level. Choose a nice day with southerly winds and you may see hundreds of hawks per hour! Check with someone on the bird alert list or in Copper Harbor to find out when things are active. Watch the website [www.thebrg.org](http://www.thebrg.org). Tim and Bob post sightings and often share wonderful photographs of birds, too.



**Copper Country Audubon Website, Newsletter, Mailing List and Meeting.** Many people write to say they love to get the newsletter and show this with their support. We mail out about 250 newsletters twice a year; about 200 are supporting members. The newsletter also goes to libraries and various courtesy mailings. The newsletter is also put on the website shortly after mailing, but very few people donate that way. Most of our supporters, many who are seniors, never see the website, but it is there for everyone new to birdwatching in the Copper Country and beyond. We never trade or sell our mailing list, send junk mail, or are connected with National Audubon or Michigan Audubon. The newsletter is formatted in an old-fashioned way, but it could be improved if someone wants to put it in a more stylish format. A secretary to the board is needed, too. A general CCA meeting is set for **Saturday May 21, 2022, 10:00 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 and see other spring birds.

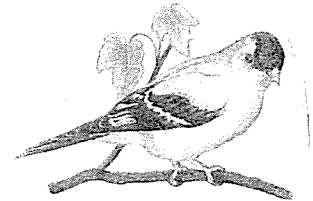


<https://www.coppercountryaudubon.org>

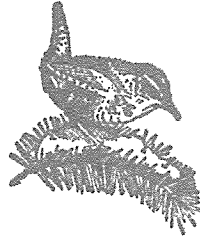


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***FIND A BABY BIRD?  
LEAVE IT BE!***



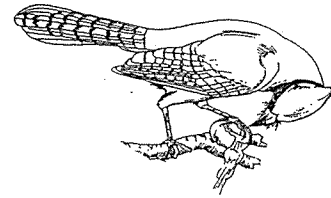
***WATCHING BIRDS  
IS A HAPPY  
THING!***

***Injured Birds?***

**Michigan DNR, Baraga 906-353-6651**

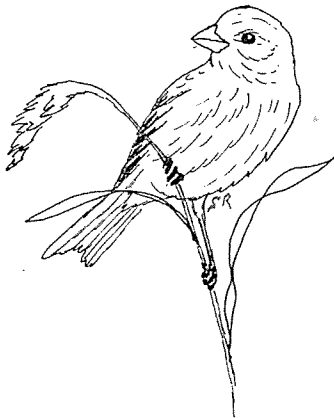
**Raptor Rehab: Beth Maatta, 906-370-3825**

**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!*