



BIRDTRACKS

Newsletter of the Jackson Audubon Society

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Waterloo Recreation Area 49th Annual Christmas Bird Count 2017

Gary Siegrist - Compiler, Waterloo Area CBC

The 49th annual Jackson Audubon Christmas Bird Count was held this year on December 16th. Cloudy conditions and a chilly wind greeted the thirty participants as they split up into the ten areas that make up the Waterloo Recreation Area Count. With temperatures reaching into the mid-thirties by afternoon the counters amassed a total of 95.25 hours in the field with 567.5 miles driven or walked. The fifteen hearty souls that went “owling” were treated to a cool wind blowing and temperatures in the mid-to-high twenties. Their efforts were rewarded with 10 Eastern Screech Owls, 10 Great Horned Owls, and 1 Barred Owl being heard.

With very few waterfowl found, 63 bird species were recorded for the count day this year with another four-bird species seen in count week but not on count day. This is a very respectable total considering that all water was frozen other than moving water. The record total for a Waterloo Recreation Area CBC happened in 2001 when we found a total of 71 bird species.

A total of **7,232** birds were counted, with Canada Goose (1,333) and European Starling (722) the most numerous bird species seen. The first ever recorded Peregrine Falcon showed up this year, not surprising with Peregrine’s staying all year round the City of Jackson. Continued rising numbers for Bald Eagles (8) is very satisfying as this regal bird species comes back from the brink of chemical poisoning in Michigan. Two other species, Pileated Woodpecker (12) and Carolina Wren (8) were found in good numbers. Lastly, Turkey Vultures (2) appeared this year and why is this unusual for the count? Well, most years this species has left for parts warmer a month prior, but not this year despite our cold temperatures.

Remember to save the 2018 CBC date, Saturday December 15th. Thank you to all for helping this CBC become one of the most successful counts we have recorded.



Wild Turkeys



Northern Cardinal



Dark Eyed Junco



Cedar Wax Wing



American Tree Sparrow

Haehnle /Smith Property Purchase Plan

A twenty five acre parcel owned by George Smith and bordering the southwest corner of the Haehnle Sanctuary is up for sale. It is adjacent to Eagle Lake and would be a prime target for developers. The parcel has long been on our watch list and is part of the Sanctuary's conservation plan to protect Eagle Lake from further development.

Ownership of this parcel would help protect a wetland and maintain the water level in Eagle Lake. A drainage ditch forming the south boundary of the parcel has lowered water levels in the wetland west of Eagle Lake. Having control of this ditch will enable Audubon to protect both the wetland and the lake from further drainage.

It would also make a significant addition to the adjacent 16 acres of the sanctuary's native grassland. Numerous studies have shown that grassland birds prefer larger areas than the current size of the adjacent sanctuary grassland.

Mr. Smith is asking \$90,000 for the parcel. We already have pledges of \$53,000, leaving \$38,000 to reach our goal. In addition to the asking price, there would be expenses such as title insurance, transfer fees, attorney fees, etc. Mr. Smith says the land has been surveyed so that would not be an added expense.



Eagle Lake



What is This?

Connie Spotts

This poor creature was attempting to get to a roosting downy when he became entangled in fishing line. I have been using this halo with line and weights on my bluebird houses for years to keep the sparrows out. Well, I won't be doing that anymore!

It happened at daybreak, I found him by listening to the loud warning signs of the Blue Jays. It took me about 15 minutes to cut the lines around his feet and wings. I used a rag over his beak but he didn't try to bite or grab me with his claws. I placed him in a wood duck box for the day. The next morning he was gone. So if you guessed a Screech Owl, you are correct. What a lucky owl.

HAEHNLE HAPPENINGS

A Year in Review -2017

Gary Siegrist, Haehnle Committee Chair

2017 was a transitional year for the sanctuary as Lathe Claflin, sanctuary committee chair, stepped down and new chair, Gary Siegrist took over the reins in midsummer. Lathe served as chair of the committee for the last ten years and his thoughtful steady leadership will be missed. The good news, he is not leaving the committee and will still head our efforts with grassland management. Haehnle has been blessed with good, sound leadership as Ron Hoffman led for many years before Lathe and is still active on the committee leading efforts in habitat restoration.

Bogus Lake Fen restoration project continued with USFWS grant money, For the second straight year the use of a hydro hoe with cutting unit, and spraying with a helicopter were put to good use. If you have visited the sanctuary recently you have witnessed a dramatic transformation from acres of glossy buckthorn to restored wet meadow and fen. Our goal for the future is continuing to push back the glossy buckthorn, all the way to Bogus Lake. A prescribed burn is scheduled this year (2018) for the area we have reclaimed.

With a USDA Pollinator Program grant, we are working to enhance our grasslands by injecting more forbs (wildflowers) into the system for our native pollinator insects to use as a source of nectar, food, and homes. We have mowed, sprayed and resprayed three different areas in our grassland and will add another spraying and prescribed burn in the near future. After assessing if our efforts are successful, the planting of wildflowers will begin using a no-till-drill and possible hand seeding in the fall/winter of 2018/2019. This coupled with planting four flats of whorled milkweed (*Asclepias Verticillate*) will add much needed diversity to our grasslands.

Another note worthy project is the mapping of our wild rice colony. Steve Allen, biologist for the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi is mapping our wild rice that occurs in Mud Lake Marsh. After a site visit that included walking into the marsh, it was determined that our colony was Southern Wild Rice, *Zizania aquatica*. Steve also used a drone to see the extent of the colony in Mud Lake Marsh.

The "Cranes, Color, Cabernet, and Cider Too Festival" was a huge success with over two hundred and fifty visitors using the sanctuary on festival day. Date for next year's festival is October 27, 2018.

Lastly, Haehnle has started a habitat restoration work crew that meets on Wednesdays from 9 to 12. We meet at the main parking lot at 9 a.m. and go over assignments for the morning. Work is weather dependent and a notice is sent out if not working that day. If you are interested and not already on the email list please send me (gwsiegrist@gmail.com) an email stating that you would like to be added.

I would like to thank all the volunteers that gave time out of their busy schedules to help the sanctuary in 2017. I would also like to thank the donors who help with the Haehnle budget by giving unrestricted funds to help run the sanctuary. If any of these habitat restoration projects has piqued your interest, please either contact me or send your check to Jackson Audubon and note it is for Haehnle Sanctuary.



Eagle Lake From Air



Spraying the Fen

2017 Jackson County Fall Sandhill Crane Survey

Ron Hoffman



Cranaics in Jackson County this past autumn participated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sandhill Crane population survey. This count has been used to monitor crane numbers in the eastern United States since 1979. It was conducted between October 30 and November 3.

During the 2017 survey 3,874 cranes were counted at 12 locations in the county. None were found at four other traditional roosting areas. Most of the cranes, 71%, were at two wetlands in the lower portion of the Portage River Watershed on prison property near Dalton and Hawkins Roads. Again this year, very few cranes spent the night at the Haehnle Sanctuary because of high water. About 23% of the 16,900 cranes counted in Michigan this past fall were tallied in Jackson County.

Above normal rainfall and warm temperatures affected crane numbers and distribution. Cranes prefer to roost in shallow water only 4-10 inches deep. Water levels were too deep in many of the traditional areas, but flooded pastures near Dalton and Wooster Roads were ideal for roosting. During the previous several years, two counts were made - one in late October and another in mid-November. Last year 5,700 cranes were reported in Jackson County during the second count period. It appears that many cranes remained further north during the single, lower count made earlier this year than the survey conducted last year in mid-November .

One More Crane At Haehnle

Ron Hoffman

Why is one more crane at the Haehnle Sanctuary noteworthy, after all there were several hundred Sandhill Cranes at the sanctuary early in October. This was a special crane because it was going to be released by two state licensed wildlife rehabilitators from Romulus.

Early in June a foot-tall young crane showed up in a dooryard at Cass Lake without its parents. After several days and still no parents, Kelly LeBonte was called to get the orphaned crane. She cared for it along with a variety of other wildlife including ducks, geese, owls and a fox at her farm. During the day the rapidly growing crane socialized with waterfowl and even followed them into a shed at night for protection. By late summer the crane was able to fly but always returned to the safety of the facility.

Things began to change this fall. The Mallards and Canada Geese soon joined their relatives in the wild leaving the crane alone to seek shelter in the shed at night. At this point Kelly decided it was time to find a place to release it where there were a lot of cranes. She chose Haehnle and arrangements were made for the release. The big question was if the crane was imprinted on people and would not join the other cranes?

Kelly and friend arrived at the sanctuary October 7 with a crate containing the crane. It was decided to carry the crate with crane inside, out into Mud Lake Marsh and get close to open water. This was no easy feat wading through brush and dense vegetation. After going about 200 yards a small flock of cranes flew over calling on their way to roost in the marsh. Hearing the calling the captive crane began calling and trying to get out. The door was opened and the young immediately took flight, circled the marsh before landing next to a group of cranes. Success! Well, almost so because the two LADIES who carried the crate out in the marsh were covered with stick tights, but nevertheless they thought it was worth it.

Thank You

Jackson Audubon Society would like to thank Bob and Susie Venners for the many years they have devoted to saving Big Trees in Jackson County, as the Big Trees Coordinators. Along with leading field trips, they spent many hours visiting and measuring trees in the area. Their records will be passed onto the Pegg Clevenger Family who will continue their work. Thank you Bob and Susie for your time and devotion to saving trees.

JAS also thanks Courtney and Andy Bailey of the Summit Landscape & Garden Center for plowing out the Haehnle Sanctuary parking lot on Christmas bird count day. Andy was called at the last minute and he came right over so we could get into the sanctuary to take the count. Thank you for being there when we needed you.

Welcome New Board Member ~ Courtney Bailey

Courtney is a lifelong Jackson resident, and co-owner of **Summit Landscape & Garden Center**, and **The Summit Gardens Butterfly House**. Courtney has an interest in gardening education with a special focus on native Michigan plantings, the identification and removal of invasive plant species that are threatening wildlife habitat, and pollinator friendly smart gardening practices. She is a certified Michigan Master Gardener, and thoroughly enjoys being outdoors in her gardens. She is also a leadership team member for the Jackson Area Relay For Life Program, volunteering her time and talents to finding a cure for cancer and providing support programs for survivors. Courtney is looking forward to working with the Jackson Area Audubon Society as a new member of the board.



New Kate Palmer Steward - Allen King

Allen's affiliation with Jackson Audubon Society began in 1974 with an invitation from his high school biology teacher, Ron Hoffman. That same fall he enrolled at Jackson Community College where he had the privilege of studying under Robert Whiting, affectionately called Mr. Audubon, and Myrna Berlet. Myrna recognized Allen's love of nature and interest in photography which led to her hiring Allen to work with her and her husband, Walter, making wildlife films. Allen earned a Wildlife Biology degree from MSU and a Masters of Education from Eastern Michigan. Allen began a 26-year career with East Jackson Community Schools where he established nature study areas behind two elementary buildings. Myrna's students were working to clear paths in what would become the Dahlem Environmental Education Center, and this was Allen's first trail-making experience. Here, starting in 1982, Allen transformed an old farm field into the prairie that graces the central portion of the Dahlem landscape. Since 1975, he has enjoyed working with Ron Hoffman and many other local Audubon members in caring for the Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary. Now, Allen looks forward to taking over as caretaker of the Kate Palmer Sanctuary from Pegg Clevenger who made great improvements in this Michigan Audubon property. Presently, Allen teaches as an industrial trainer at Michigan Automotive Compressor Inc., or MACI, shares his love of nature with his sons, Jordan and Aaron, and will soon celebrate 25 years with his wife, Gail.

Pegg and Kate: A Great Match!

By Gary Mason



Pegg with TLS teacher Clint Genthner, opening new trail.

Over four years ago, Pegg Clevenger became the steward of the Kate Palmer Sanctuary, also known as “The Kate.” Under her leadership, many new projects were undertaken and the sanctuary experienced a revival.

Prior to Pegg’s stewardship, most of the sanctuary experienced very limited accessibility. Many years ago, there was an extensive trail system, but it had long since been overgrown. Working with numerous volunteers, including Chris Newhouse and students from Spring Arbor University, some initial trail work was completed. Jim Rossman and Paul Rice volunteered many hours, establishing trails and building a walkway over an area that was often muddy and difficult to traverse. These two skilled workers also expanded and beautified the parking area on O’Brien Road. Pegg worked with the local Boy Scouts and some sturdy benches were added, overlooking Sandstone Creek.

Pegg took a very personal interest in the Kate, including its interesting history. At one time, many years ago, the area was used for surface mining coal. Pegg also helped establish a better understanding of the sanctuary in the present, by coordinating a census of the birds, animals and plants within the boundaries of the property.

Another significant development was the partnership Pegg forged with Trinity Lutheran School (TLS), our neighbor to the east. Clint Genthner, the science teacher at TLS, took an active interest in the sanctuary, and he and his students developed some trails and an outdoor classroom on the east side of the sanctuary, adjacent to the school. Jackson Audubon sponsored a program, hosted by TLS, for families and others from the local area who wanted to learn more about the sanctuary and how we can work together to maintain and enhance it.

The Kate Palmer Sanctuary is owned by Michigan Audubon Society and managed locally by Jackson Audubon Society, under the leadership of the Kate Palmer Steward. We are so grateful for the enthusiasm and vision Pegg has shown during her tenure as steward. Now, a new chapter is beginning in the life of the Kate. Allen King, an educator and lover of nature, is taking over as steward of the sanctuary. We look forward to the good things that will continue to happen under his leadership.

The sanctuary is located five miles east of Jackson, at the corner of McCain and O’Brien Roads. It is 53 acres and is recognized as one of the best places in south central Michigan for wildflowers in the spring. Over 50 species of plants and 100 species of birds have been documented within the sanctuary. It is a wonderful place for solitude and reflection. The Kate is beautiful in all seasons, and we encourage you to visit the sanctuary often.

Although passing on the leadership of the Kate to Allen King, Pegg and her family will be taking over from Bob and Susie Venners as coordinators of JAS Big Trees, documenting and recording Jackson County trees.

2117-18 MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

Meetings and programs are held at Ella Sharp Museum, 3225 S Fourth St, Jackson, except where otherwise noted. Regular meetings will begin with a social time at 6:30 p.m. with a short meeting and program at 7:00 p.m. Bring "recyclables" (magazines, feeders, etc.) to the program.

Please note - Meetings are cancelled in the event JPS schools are closed due to inclement weather.

Meetings ~ Programs

February 9: Gary Mason of JAS presents, "Israel, Land of Wonder." Gary will share pictures and anecdotes of spring migration, including his experiences at the Eilat International Bird Festival. Israel is one of the best places on the globe to witness the spectacle of spring migration. **This annual program venue is on a Friday at Vista Grand Villa. Bring a dessert to share that does not require table service .**

March 13: Lathe Claflin presents, "Birding Eastern Panama." The program will include Harpy Eagles and Sapphire-throated Hummingbirds, along with many more birds of the area.

April 10: James O'Brien of the Department of Natural Resources presents, "Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve." James will share information on our new and exciting park, along with the news on its designation as a waterfowl refuge. A question and answer session will follow the program.

Excerpts from **The Heart's Journey Through The Seasons The Circle of Life**

Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr

Purpose of winter:

In winter, the heartbeat of the land slows to alpha pace.

The eyes of this season are drowsy.

Sleepy-limbs-of-nature fold in upon themselves, to rest, during long months of inactivity.

This is the period of dormancy, when the extravagance of summer becomes a distant memory.

Life waits, subdued in hidden mystery, humbled by the pervasive strength of winter's presence.

The lessening of light and the increase of darkness are necessary ingredients of the earth's nourishment. They enable the fallow process to happen, both in nature and in the human spirit.

All of creation needs time to pause, time to have its spent energy renewed.

Winter provides the opportunity to slow down, to refocus our direction and purpose.

It is natural to underestimate the positive value of this season. Few consider wintertime something to enjoy, yet this season is vital for spiritual growth.

As the days of light get shorter and shorter, accept the invitation to an unhurried pace.

Accept winter's gift of dormancy, rest, silence and solitude.

Rejoice in her sparkling beauty, her hushed tones.

Look within, to the great fire of the heart, find yourself and all of creation there, waiting, ready to burst forth with the first warmth of spring.

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Jackson Audubon Society Mission:

To promote among the people of the Jackson Area an interest, knowledge and appreciation of birds, wildlife and the environment.



Michigan Audubon - Connecting Birds and People for the Benefit of Both