



Newsletter of the Jackson Audubon Society

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www.jacksonaudubon.org

MARCH 2014

BIRD TRACKS

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT MIGHT BE GROWING IN SOMEONE'S BACK YARD

Bob Venners



Clarence Owens proudly stands
with his county champion
Shingle Oak

Imagine, if you will, walking into someone's back yard and finding six species of trees that are larger than any others in the entire county. Unlikely? Highly unlikely? Yes, and yet this happened to me just a few weeks ago when I was invited to explore the unique acreage of *Clarence Owens, Botanist Extraordinaire*.

Clarence, of course, has a storied background in Jackson's ecological history, teaching at Parkside for many years and being involved in a myriad of Audubon activities.

Former Jackson Public Schools' administrator Marv Goad, remembers:

"Clarence was a rare biology teacher in that his classroom was "alive." He always had live snakes in his classroom collection (he had poisonous and non-poisonous snakes including various rattlesnakes, a 10-ft. python, king snakes, corn snakes and rat snakes to name a few). His classroom also had live amphibians including a Gila Monster from Arizona, salamanders, and frogs; and he had a pet sparrow hawk in his bird collection.

For many years, Clarence ran a summer science program in entomology for JPS students. The emphasis was especially on butterflies and moths, having students raise them through their life cycle. Clarence led his classes and

Audubon members on many bird walks to Waterloo, Bird Haven, and surrounding lakes, especially on May Day counts and to observe early returning migratory water fowl as they passed through in the spring. He planted trees and shrubs around Parkside High School and taught students how to landscape and correctly plant these trees and shrubs."

Now retired, Clarence is now enjoying the fruits of his labors as his personal arboretum contains innumerable examples of rare and exotic trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers. Included in these are six tree species that have been recently crowned Jackson County Champions. They are: Shingle Oak (44" in girth), European Holly (17" in girth), American Hornbeam (25" in girth), Chestnut Oak (62" in girth), Chinkapin Oak (14" in girth) and Tupelo (Blackgum) (14" in girth).

Thank you Clarence for all you have contributed to our enjoyment of nature over the years!

MSU Science & Culture Museum - Turtles In Trouble Exhibit

Now through September 21, 2014 - 409 W. Circle Dr. East Lansing, MI



Turtles survived the great extinction that ended the reign of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, and they withstood the ice ages that ended just a few thousand years ago. Today though, life is tough for turtles, and that is the subject of a new MSU Museum exhibit.

"Turtles in Trouble" features turtles commonly seen in Michigan - Snapping, Softshell, Box, Wood, Painted, Slider and others. Also shown are examples from Asia and the "turtle trade," where turtle species went from "common" to "endangered" or even "extinct in the wild" (bred only in captivity) within a very few years: Yellow-headed Box, South Asian Box, Indochinese Box, Keeled Box and more.

In addition to select MSU Museum collections, life-like ceramic turtle sculptures were created by artist and environmental columnist **Mark Muhich, of Jackson, Mich.** (MSU 1972). Artists have created turtle images since Paleolithic times and this exhibit shares another artistic homage to turtles. <http://museum.msu.edu/index.php?q=node/1150>

An Audubon field trip will take place in September to visit the exhibit, led by Mark Muhich.

5 ACTIONS to Protect Birds Where YOU Live:

1. **Reduce or eliminate pesticide and herbicide use.** By using fewer chemicals in and around your house you will help keep birds, pets and your family healthy.
2. **Plant Native Plants.** Native flora provides birds with food in the form of fruit and seeds, and is home to tasty invertebrates such as bugs and spiders.
3. **Identify the non-native invasive plants in your region,** and work to remove them from your yard. And don't bring any new invasives into your backyard habitat! Invasives don't provide as much good food or habitat as natives do and can threaten healthy ecosystems.
4. **Attract hummingbirds with sugar water,** made by combining 4 parts hot water to one part white sugar, boil for one to two minutes. Never use honey, artificial sweeteners or food coloring. Clean hummingbird feeders with a solution of one part white vinegar to four parts water once per week.
5. **Make your windows visible to birds to prevent crashes.** Put up screens, close drapes and blinds when you leave the house or stick multiple decals on the glass (decals need to be no more than 2-4 inches apart to be effective.)

Find many more ideas at AudubonAtHome.org

HAEHNLE HAPPENINGS - Lathe Claflin

photos by Ron Hoffman

How Fire Improves the Sanctuary

If you visit the Sanctuary this spring you will notice immediately that the grassland below the Wing Overlook and the nearby woodlot near the parking areas were subjected recently to a controlled burned. Why do we do this? The bottom line is that prescribed burns improve the land, whether it is a native grassland, brushland, or woods. It is an ecologically sound way to improve wildlife habitat and enhance native plant communities. It is a part of the management plan at Haehnle Sanctuary.

Fire in the landscape has a long history. For the past 10,000 years, man-made or natural fires have rejuvenated grasslands and wooded areas in the region. Native Americans used fire to keep prairies free of woody plants and set back woody plants that were encroaching on prairies. Fire maintains prairies to provide open nesting areas for waterfowl, multiple species of sparrows (some are threatened), bluebirds, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and turtles. Historically, fires were used to open up areas for plantings in both grasslands and forests. Fires in forests can encourage oak and pine regeneration, boost acorn production, and in some cases, help control invasive alien species; deer, squirrels, wild turkeys, and grouse benefit.

How is this seemingly destructive force beneficial? Because of their long history with fire, grasses and forbs in native grasslands have become fire resistant in part because their roots extend many feet into the ground. Seeds of prairie plants can survive for years, even a decade or two. The blackened soil absorbs sunlight and the warmed earth encourages new growth and seed germination. Charred plant remains supply nutrients. Species that have been dormant spring up. Where only one half of one of our grasslands has been burned the height and quality of plants in the burned area easily exceeds that in the unburned area.

Fires at Haehnle are normally conducted by an outside contractor, a burn specialist, who is specifically trained to do a prescribed burn. We rotate through our grasslands so that each is burned every three to five years. We have only burned one wooded area so far, the one burned this year. That area was infested with alien species most of which were removed over the past two years. One idea we are discussing is to turn this area into a habitat improvement site for birds and small animals, a source for food and cover and perhaps nesting sites.



Kate Palmer Sanctuary Alive

Pegg Clevenger - Steward

Kate's clean-up day brought a few surprises in the way of new "Audubon Allies". The 30 tires that new member Kim Leedom's family had found discarded there and neatly stacked, were mysteriously picked up after Steve Shotwell heard about our problem.

A Kate Palmer neighbor found bags and bags of dumped trash. He loves the place so much that he went through the trash and turned in the name he found on envelopes to the Spring Arbor Police. Spring Arbor prosecuted. A fine was paid and the perpetrator cleaned up the mess.

The amateur botanists attending Audubon's "Clean-up and Identify Day", Lorraine Hampton and Jim Rossman, found Prickly Oak, the larval food plant for Michigan's largest butterfly, the handsome giant swallowtail. Jim volunteered to continue the pathway project deeper into the sanctuary with his chainsaw.

The Shingle Oak search continues. Lorraine informed us that there are Shingle Oak saplings growing near her house near the Kate. Bob Venners has confirmed a Jackson County award winner, Big Tree Shingle Oak at the home of Clarence Owens. Clarence called upon reading of our search in the Jackson Audubon newsletter.

Gary Mason led us to the east side of the sanctuary and showed us a bubbling spring spreading down to another interesting part of the Kate. Gary has spotted Barred Owls at this spot. If you go birding at the Kate Palmer Sanctuary, you can win two Audubon prizes: a two-night stay at the Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary in Hastings and two nights at the Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary Bed and Breakfast in Manistee.

JAS Birding the Kate Palmer Sanctuary Contest

Here are the contest rules:

1. Be a member of Jackson or Michigan Audubon.
2. The person who posts on **eBird** the most visits to the Kate by the end of the year in 2014 will win the two-night stay at the cabin at the Otis Farm Sanctuary.
3. Persons posting on **eBird** 100 Checklists with 100 total species seen at the Kate during 2014 will be put into a drawing for the free stay at Audubon's Lake Bluff Bed & Breakfast.

The sanctuary is located at the corner of McCain and O'Brien Roads, in Spring Arbor Township. **eBird** is a program of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<http://ebird.org>).

bumblebeewatch.org

Do your bit for bumblebees

by Bethany Brookshire

<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/do-your-bit-bumblebees>

Bumblebee populations are in decline, but scientists lack data on which bee species live in what locations in order to target conservation efforts. People throughout North America, armed with smartphones and cameras, can now help find the bumblebees.

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and its partners have launched the Bumble Bee Watch website to track sightings. When you see a bee bumbling around, snap a photo. Head to bumblebeewatch.org and create a free account, then upload your photo and click the map to log your sighting. After that, the website will lead you through questions to help ID your bee. The data will be open to anyone and will help conservationists and scientists in the Xerces Society, Wildlife Preservation Canada, the University of Ottawa and other groups target local efforts and study bee decline.

TWO GREAT SITES FOR MICHIGAN BUTTERFLY INFORMATION

Wisconsinbutterflies.org

gardenswithwings.com

Great Horned Owl Research - Help Wanted

Have you seen or heard any Great-horned Owls lately? Craig Perdue, Ph.D., who has been doing great-horned owl research, has recently been awarded a small grant to examine their communication. He is currently attempting to identify locations of owls or their nests in order to record their vocalizations. Any assistance you could provide would be greatly appreciated. Opportunities to participate in the project are available to those who are interested.

Contact cperdue@shadowspeak.org or call 734-262-0998 if you have

Honoring Nancy Lapinski - Memorial Grove Ella Sharp Park

In honor and memory of Nancy Lapinski, who served on the Jackson Audubon Society board and as steward of the Kate Palmer Wildlife Sanctuary, Jackson Audubon is seeking donations to help create a grove of trees in her name. The grove will be planted in Ella Sharp Park and will be a joint effort by the outdoor and environmental organizations that Nancy's efforts touched. The trees will stand for the many organizations that Nancy served and be a reminder of Nancy's courage and mentoring to those of us interested in environmental action.

You may remember Nancy by contributing to Jackson Audubon Society and indicating your donation is for the Nancy Lapinski Memorial Grove.

Remembering Nancy Lapinski

JAS extends condolences to the family of Nancy Lapinski - longtime Audubon member and champion of the environment. She will be missed.

- In remembering Nancy I recall the qualities, dedication, sincerity, arguments well researched, presented in an articulate and persuasive manner, that made her so effective in dealing with issues. Hubert Zernickow
- Barb Anderson remembers traveling around with Nancy looking for a big sycamore tree. They found it and it was a beauty, but as usual they were lost and found out they were in a neighboring county.
- Connie Spotts recalls her first field trip with Jackson Audubon when Nancy heard a bird and said "That an ovenbird"? Who knew it was possible to bird by ear?
- Without Nancy the Kate Palmer sanctuary probably would have been sold off. But her diligence in pursuing public access to this beautiful woodland and lowland creek area saved the property. Michigan Audubon gained ownership and Jackson Audubon under Nancy's leadership became permanent stewards. Pegg Clevenger
- "Way back when" I received a call from Nancy, she wanted us to come over and measure the very large Silver Maple in the side yard of her home on Audubon. We came. We measured. While very large, it couldn't quite match up to the County Champion on Mt. Hope Rd. End of story, I thought. However, every year after that Nancy called with the same request, to remeasure her Silver Maple. So this became a tradition of sorts, my wife and I would drive over and remeasure the tree. It did grow from year to year! But never enough to catch that specimen on Mt. Hope Rd. Nancy loved that tree! Bob & Suzi Venners
- A number of years ago, a pair of Red-tailed Hawks had a nest not far from the State Police shooting range north of Jackson. Nancy had been watching the nest on her way to work in Munith and was concerned how the noise from shooting would affect the young hawks. We had several phone calls comparing notes about the nest. Fortunately, the young fledged. Ron Hoffman
- I didn't know a soul when I joined Jackson Audubon in the early 1990's. Nancy was one of the first people I met. I was a novice birder with a pair of crummy binoculars. As a result, I learned to bird by ear and discovered Nancy did too. We became birding buddies. When I did get better binoculars, I got the same kind Nancy had. We birded by ear wherever we were, in her yard, while pulling garlic mustard at Kate Palmer, on field trips, on Christmas Bird Counts. Her deep commitment to our natural world is inspirational. Knowing her made me a better birder but also a better steward of our environment. Joyce Peterson
- Gary Siegrist remembers how Nancy would always be thinking how she could help the natural world, locally. Never one to back down from addressing possible threats to our environment she would call me, sometimes late at night, and start by saying "Now Gary have you heard about" and I would know that I was about to get pulled in to help on another cause that was important to our local arena. She was a true and valued friend who made Jackson a better place to live.

2014 SPRING/SUMMER ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

Field Trips

JULY 19 - SOUTHERN EXPOSURE HERB FARM AND GARDENS Located in the Battle Creek area there are wonderful surprises at every turn. Optional lunch at Win Schulers. Carpool leaves Eastside Meijer at 9:00 a.m. Call Barb Anderson at 517-563-8230 for more information.

AUGUST 30 - SHOREBIRDS AT POINT MOUILLEE View migrant shorebirds in the Wildlife Management area. Reservations are essential. Call Don Henise to register (517-795-7752).

Other Events

AUDUBON BIRDING THE KATE (ABK) This new birding contest began March 1st with opportunity to win great prizes. Bird Kate Palmer and report your sitings each time to WWW.eBird.org. Call Pegg Clevenger for more information (517-750-4299 or 517-914-5180) See details in this Newsletter.

JUNE 14 - AUDUBON/PURPLE MARTIN POTLUCK 11:00 a.m. at Connie's on the lake. Come and relax with the birds. Bring a passing dish and a nature item for the raffle. Call Connie for directions. 2023 Crispell Road Clarklake, MI. 49234 Shady Acres on Crispell Lake - (517-529-9031 or 517-230-2707).

July 12 --Work bee at Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary - 9:00 am to noon. Near final preparations for Klee Tract open house. Meet at the main parking lot on Seymour Rd. Call Lathe Claflin (522-3949) for more information.

AUGUST 16 - BIRDS, BLOOMS, AND BUTTERFLIES FESTIVAL - 9:00 - 3:00
Dahlem Center - Free programs, booths and guided birding, butterfly and dragonfly trips.

JAS is now on Facebook!

If you are a Facebook user, we invite you to "Like" and follow our page (<https://www.facebook.com/jacksonaudubon>). It is a great place to learn about upcoming programs and fieldtrips, hear what is happening at our sanctuaries or post pictures and comments about what you are observing in nature in the Jackson area. Enjoy!

Jackson Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6453
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US POSTAGE

JACKSON, MI

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Jackson Audubon Society is a chapter of Michigan Audubon Society

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