



BIRD TRACKS

Newsletter of the Jackson Audubon Society

517.787.3453

www.jacksonaudubon.org

Birding Through the Pandemic Year

Becky Mehall

When the pandemic lockdown kept us all at home I started keeping track of the birds seen in my own backyard. Having a pond brought extra interest and birds, as well as turtles and frogs. I logged more than 52 different birds over the past year. We welcomed back the migrants this spring: Wood Ducks, Great Blue Heron, Orioles, Hummingbirds, House Wrens, Bluebirds - hard to believe an entire year has passed! A few warblers pass through each year, Yellow Rump and Yellow along with a variety of sparrows - Chipping, Field, White Crowned and White Throated.

The pond gives us much enjoyment over the spring and summer - Wood Ducks and their ducklings, Hooded Mergansers, there was even a pair of Blue Winged Teals this spring. Constant entertainment is from the Great Blue Heron who comes in each day to fish the goldfish my neighbor stocked in the pond - unwittingly I assume, as they have reproduced prolifically. A Kingfisher also has enjoyed the goldfish, an Osprey came in to take a few. We cheer each catch! We have counted up to 35 painted turtles basking on the logs along with several very large Snapping Turtles, who unfortunately enjoy the baby Wood Ducks.

A Coopers Hawk enjoyed hunting at the feeders and there is a pair of Red Tailed Hawks that frequent the area. The usual woodpeckers along with a Pileated. We love seeing the Goldfinch turn to "gold" in the spring and the House Finches enjoying the jelly put out for the Orioles. A few Pine Siskins visited over the winter and a Common Red Poll and one Evening Grosbeak when the fallout occurred in the area. Although not in our yard, we were able to see the Long Eared Owl at Ella Sharp Park - found by Jann Krupa and her brother while on a walk. They located it when seeing the whitewash and owl pellets underneath the tree it was roosting in.

Thank goodness for birds and nature that made our stay at home/work at home time tolerable and enjoyable!



Long Eared Owl
Whitewash & Owl Pellets
Dissection by Dr. Shaun Huang & his daughter



Green Heron



Kingfisher with large goldfish



Hooded Merganser & Wood Duck



Pileated Woodpecker



Great Blue Heron
"sun salutation"

dining on goldfish



Biography of Kate Palmer (1858 - 1918)

Jann Krupa



Ella “Kate” Palmer was a quiet but driving force during her lifetime (1858 – 1918) in Jackson County. We associate Palmer with the sanctuary named after her but her influence and community building went far beyond her involvement on the early Jackson Audubon Society Board and her \$1,000 bequest (\$31,000 in today’s dollars) that later supported the sanctuary.

My curiosity about Palmer was nudged about a year ago when we were well into the pandemic and I was walking in the Mt. Evergreen Cemetery for social distancing and somehow my attention was drawn to a flat grave marker with the simple inscription “Kate Palmer.” Coincidentally, I was planning to visit the sanctuary the following day and I wondered if it could possibly be “our Kate.”

As an amateur, I went as far as I could with Ancestry.com and fortunately was able to get validation and much more information from local librarians and volunteers. The research was problematic for all involved until we realized that Ella L. Palmer was Kate’s legal name. Another problem was that all known Jackson newspapers issues from July 1904 thru June 1912 were destroyed in a fire.

Eventually articles regarding Palmer’s will were located and thus we learned that she had left sizeable gifts to Associated Charities of Jackson, First Church of Christ Scientist, Jackson Friendly Home, Y.W.C.A., Y.M.C.A., Jackson County Humane Society, Audubon Society, Leland Powers School of Boston and many friends and relatives. As one article reported, “...the public bequests made by this highly esteemed Jackson woman have a special local interest. Always shrinking from publicity and interested in the higher life and the better things of this city, its schools, churches and benevolent institutions, this woman ...gives generously...”

Throughout her life, Palmer gave much of her time in founding and supporting organizations that were considered benevolent such as the local YWCA of which she served as its first president.

She also was on the founding board of the Free Kindergarten established in 1892 to serve needy children, some quite destitute. The Free Kindergarten was initiated by Mrs. L.H. (Allathena) Field and the Mechanic Street building was designed by Leonard H. Field Jr. During the 1918 Flu Pandemic the organization shifted to more of a hospital function. A 1896 local article stated, “A large measure of the success of this organization is due to Miss Kate Palmer, who ever since the starting of the the free kindergarten has been a most faithful worker.”

Ah – but Kate must have known how to have fun. She was one of the first to own an electric car in town, she hosted at least one Suffrage Tea and she was an active art patron following studies at Boston’s Leland Powers School.

It should be noted that Palmer’s maternal grandfather, William M. Mitchell had the status of Jackson Pioneer as issued by the Jackson County Genealogical Society.

Many thanks to Jackson County Genealogy Library volunteers Amy Nora and Lora Painter as well as Jackson District librarian Tim Frusti for their considerable research and assistance, especially through the limitations of this pandemic.

Some of the many wildflowers seen at the Kate Palmer Sanctuary

Photos by Gary Mason



Toad Lily



Blood Root



Trillium



Marsh Marigold

HAEHNLE HAPPENINGS 2020-21

Gary Siegrist

The year 2020 seemed to start out as any other year until COVID-19 disrupted attendance and work crew operations at the Sanctuary. With precautions, volunteers continued to keep the trails clean and mowed. In June, following Michigan's Audubon's rules regarding COVID-19, the work crew resumed by not sharing tools/herbicides, socially distancing and wearing masks when needed. Work continued to rid the Wooster Road Dike Trail of invasive plant species. Fall-2020, we began cutting invasive plants from the Seymour Road main parking lot west boundary heading north toward Eagle Lake.

Prior to COVID, winter 2020 began with chopping 5.5 acres of glossy buckthorn around the Bogus Lake Fen area. These were the remaining acres that had been sprayed via helicopter in 2018. Unfortunately, weather and COVID-19 stopped any prescribed burns from happening in 2020.

Work crew members have been busy this year with projects to help enhance visitor experience. The first was the installation of a short boardwalk and loop trail into the woods behind Eagle Lake. The second was the building and installation of benches on the Eagle Lake platform. A huge thank you goes out to all that have helped with these projects.

Work crews delivered again with the completion of the Wooster Road grassland parking lot barrier project. Using out of service utility poles donated by Consumer's Energy, the crew built the barrier and gate system on October 24, 2020. Starting at 8:30 a.m., amazingly the project was completely finished by 1 p.m. Job well done!

We continue to work with USDA – NRCS Programs for restoring grasslands and pollinator plantings. We also started work on the Schroeder Tract grassland. Returning these 5.1 acres to native grasses and wildflowers will help both the birds that nest in grasslands, as well as the native pollinators that need native plants to exist.

This last summer, the sanctuary was designated as a "Certified Bird Habitat" and awarded a plaque from Saving Birds Thru Habitat (SBTH), a nationwide organization headquartered in Omena, Michigan. SBTH is dedicated to the protection of North American birds by enhancing and restoring native habitats.

With the help of volunteer Meghan Milbrath, Haehnle Sanctuary enrolled in Project Wingspan. This collaboration seeks to increase monarch and pollinator habitat by engaging public land managers and private land stewards throughout the Midwest and Great Lakes landscape. With collected seed that was sent to Haehnle, the work crew was able to plant wildflowers in the area that lies between the eastside of back grassland and the new trail. Prior to planting, this area was cleared of non-native invasive plant species.

What's next for the Sanctuary? In mid-May the Schroeder Track is scheduled to be planted with native wildflowers and grasses. Prescribed burns are scheduled to be completed by the end of April. We will be spraying and grinding another 25 acres around Bogus Lake. We also plan to install two American Kestrel/Eastern Screech Owl nest boxes.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering opportunities at Haehnle Sanctuary, please contact Gary at gwsiegrist@gmail.com.

Stay safe and enjoy nature.

Waterloo Area Christmas Bird Count 2020

Gary Siegrist

Overcast skies greeted this year's count with temperatures staying in the mid-to-upper 30's. Even with the Covid-19 issues we had 13 parties, including three feeder watchers for a total of 25 participants. Time spent compiling in the field totaled 82.55 hours including 3.5 hours watching feeders. Start time for some was 5 a.m. with the last group heading in at 7:30 p.m. Miles traveled was a total of 447.1; by car (432 miles) and walking (15). Miles and hours recorded for owling is kept separate with a total of 7 hours and 56 miles.

Bird species numbered 67 for the CBC. Including the additional 2 count week species, we had a total of 69 species. Individual birds totaled a healthy 12,349 birds. High numbers for species count included Sandhill Crane (5508), Bald Eagle (8), Pileated Woodpecker (5), Red-breasted Nuthatch (16), Carolina Wren (15), and Golden Crown Kinglet (10). There were low numbers recorded for a couple of species, Wild Turkey (24) and House Sparrow (235). Count week species were Northern Mockingbird (1) and Northern Harrier (1).

These next categories are always a favorite of mine. I would classify these bird species to be great finds any year. This year's group include Short-eared Owl (1), Golden Eagle (1), Trumpeter Swan (4), Red-shoulder Hawk (3), Rough-legged Hawk (3), and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Unusual for any year, sighting the following were cause for celebration Red Crossbill (7), Common Redpoll (41), Virginia Rail (1), and Merlin (1).

Disappointing was the fact that we had with no sighting of Evening Grosbeak. In late fall we had numerous sightings of them in and around the Waterloo area but none on CBC week. Another bird normally seen or heard is the Great Horned Owl, but they were silent this year for the hearty souls listening for them in the early morning. In recent years we have had no luck finding Rough Grouse around their traditional wintering areas. I wonder what has happened to them?

This year CBC is scheduled for December 18, 2021. Remember to mark it down on your calendar and join us in getting outdoors counting the birds.



Northern Mockingbird



Red-shouldered Hawk



Trumpeter Swan



Turkeys

Lime Lake Fen

Gary Mason

There is a unique plant community that is coming back to life here in Jackson County. It is known as the Lime Lake Fen, and it is located just off the Falling Waters Trail, in Spring Arbor. It is a relatively small area that lies between what are known to locals as the South Lake and the Third Lake, in the Lime Lake area. The fen can be accessed by taking a small side trail south from the Falling Waters Trail, just at the east end of the South Lake. (Note: This access trail to the area can be quite muddy after a rain, but the fen area is generally walkable.) On the south end of the fen is a small creek, fed by Peppermint Springs, which is on private property, just beyond the boundary of Lime Lake County Park. This is part of the headwaters of Sandstone Creek, that eventually flows through the Kate Palmer Sanctuary, at the corner of McCain and O'Brien Roads.

Here is a description of this unique area, from iNaturalist.org: "The Lime Lake Fen is a calcareous wetland consisting of a narrow strip of land between two lakes that were mined for marl during the early 20th century. The fen has a number of rare plant species that are unique to calcium rich wetlands. The area is part of the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department and so affords some protected status. However, the habitat has suffered considerable degradation over the years, primarily from the introduction of the invasive shrub, glossy buckthorn, and alterations to natural drainage patterns. Some restoration work has been performed, including the removal of a patch of buckthorn stems and the restoration of proper drainage patterns.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/flora-of-the-lime-lake-fen>

Many in Jackson Audubon will remember Joe Jaworski, who taught Biology for many years at Spring Arbor University. He and a colleague published an article on the Lime Lake Fen in 1986: Thompson and Jaworski, *Flora of the Lime Lake Fen*, pg 58-60 in Proceedings of the Ninth North American Prairie Conference.

Thanks to the restoration efforts, some of the unique fen plants are returning to this special area. The iNaturalist site documents species that have been observed in the Lime Lake Fen recently. Among them are Greater Fringed Gentian and Fen Grass of Parnassus.

If you are up for a little "off the main trail" adventure, you might enjoy a short hike in the Lime Lake Fen. If you are so inclined, you are invited to document your sightings on the iNaturalist Lime Lake Fen web page. It is great to see this unique area being reclaimed!



Greater Fringed Gentian



Fen Grass of Parnassus

Welcome Back!

It sure has been awhile since Jackson Audubon has been able to get together. I miss you all and the fun we have talking about wildlife.

Of course the programs are the highlight of the Tuesday evening meetings and you won't be disappointed. In September Gary Siegrist will start us off with his trip to Alaska and Doug Leffler will take us to the Western Caribbean and Central America in October. I am hopefully confident that we will see each other soon.

Have a great summer and be safe. See you in the fall ~ Connie

Purple Martins Return

Connie Spotts

Just like clockwork, the Martins began arriving at Crispell Lake on Easter Sunday. The first two were feeding and just passing through. The males started checking out my gourds two days later so I knew they were mine. Can you imagine flying all the way from South America to my house in Michigan. I still can't believe it happens every year.

The number of adults and those that fledged was much higher in 2020. I had 90 adults and 181 that fledged. I really have missed the gatherings at the Purple Martin Parties and I hope that the summer of 2022 will have us all back together.

Please feel free to come out and view the Martins. Call me at 517-230-2707. Hope to see you soon.



Zebra Swallowtails

Connie Spotts

Yes, the Zebra Swallowtail belongs in Michigan but I have never seen one. I started investigating why. The host plant for the caterpillar is the Paw Paw tree and how many of us have that in our yards? So I thought I would purchase a few and get them started.

I could only purchase the butterfly out of state and I needed a Federal Government permit. It took two months and I am happy to say that I received it. I have ordered another screen room to raise them in because they can not be released. Hopefully in the future I will have my own to release. We are fortunate that our November program will talk about Michigan butterflies and how to help them.

Speaking of helping Michigan butterflies, my numbers were down last summer. I only released 39 Monarchs. The only butterfly that did well was the Black Swallowtail. I did raise a few Tigers and Buckeyes which was a new experience for me. The 12x12 screen room came in handy since I put different host and nectaring flowers in the room. The butterflies would then lay eggs on the host plants. This is a fun hobby and it can be done in the country or city. Please think about helping our Michigan butterflies and plant, plant, plant.

2021-22 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.

PLEASE NOTE: COVID19 PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS WILL BE OBSERVED AT ALL EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS.
MASKS WILL BE REQUIRED

Meetings ~ Programs

Tuesday, Sept. 14: Gary Siegrist presents, "North to Alaska, the Adventure is on." From Anchorage to Denali and Keno Peninsula, come explore the beauty and see some of the largest mammals as well as birds of the area.

Tuesday, Oct. 12: Doug Leffler presents, "wonders of the Western Caribbean and Central America." This program will feature the Dominican Republic, Aruba, Panama Canal, Cartagena, Columbia, Costa Rica and Grand Cayman.

Tuesday, Nov. 9: Jennifer Meilinger, Science and Butterfly Director of Kalamazoo Nature Center, will present, "Michigan Butterflies." Her talk will include our three federally endangered species and how you can help. There will be a brief annual meeting before the program begins.

2022 Programs

Tuesday, Jan. 11: Monica Day, water specialist and member of the Jackson Environmental Commission as well as JAS Big Tree Coordinator will present "Pollinator flyways and other trends in Urban Ecology." What has Jackson been doing.

Friday, Feb. 11: "Natural Beauty Close to Home." Come enjoy a pictorial celebration of the natural beauty of Jackson County. This program presented by Gary Mason, will include hotspots such as the Falling Waters Trail, Kate Palmer and Haehnle Sanctuaries. Plants, birds, animals and insects in all seasons will be featured. This program takes place at Vista Grand Villa.

Tuesday, March 8: Lynn Ward, Jackson County Michigan Bluebird Coordinator, presents "Hot off the Press", a documentary film on the life and nesting cycle of Eastern Bluebirds. The film will show never before seen footage of Bluebirds and their young.

Tuesday, April 12: Allen King, Steward of Kate Palmer Sanctuary, presents "The Kate: Jackson County's Little Treasure." We will explore the unique history and changing seasons. The 53 acres owned by Michigan Audubon has the richest wildflowers in the area.

Workbees/Activities

Saturday, September 11, 2021: Haehnle Work Bee, 9-12:00. Call Gary Siegrist at 517 522-5990 for more information. Masks required per COVID 19 protocol.

Saturday, December 18, 2021: Waterloo Recreation Area Christmas Bird Count. Contact Gary Siegrist at 517-522-5990 for more information.

Regular Tuesday morning Field Trips continue through the year. For scheduled outings, visit the JAS website: <http://jacksonaudubon.org>, email Steve Jerant - jacksonaudubon@gmail.com or call him at (734) 883-9514.

Jackson Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6453
Jackson, MI 49204

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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