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The Call Note

October, 2011

Dedicated to creating a greater awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the interrelatedness of all Michigan's wild places and wildlife and the need for stewardship.

President's Note

Those of you that did not attend our first monthly meeting missed an excellent presentation by four bright, poised sixth-graders about the backpack program sponsored by the CAAS. They were students in Zsa Mahon's class last year at Murphy Elementary in Haslett. Mrs. Mahon involves her students in a number of environmental/nature projects. While her classroom does much more than just the backpack program, it is a good feeling to know that we are contributing to getting young people involved in these types of experiences.



Students from Murphy Elementary School giving a presentation on the CAAS backpack program

The September Saturday bird walks at Fenner Nature Center, led by Bob Kingsbury, had about six participants each at the first two and a large group of 22 at the last one on September 24th.

There was a good selection of migrants to see that made for enjoyable outings. Bob works hard to get birders to find the bird and helps them with the tough IDs. On the Sept 17th walk there were lots of nice views of Warblers- to name a few, Tennessee, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Wilson's, Nashville, Magnolia and Northern Parula. There was an abundance of Black and Whites, Redstarts, Red-eyed Vireos and a Least Flycatcher. The appearance of a Green Heron at one of the ponds was a treat for some. Not as many migrants on the 24th but good looks at two Cooper's Hawks were noteworthy. This is the second year Bob has led fall bird walks at Fenner and we are grateful to him for doing so.



Saturday morning birdwalk participants

Ed Merz photo

There are no organized field trips or bird walks in October. However, we do have what should be a very interesting program on sharks at our monthly meeting on October 6th. Hope to see you there.

Bruce Cohen

**“Sharks in Deep Time”
October 6, 2011**

Dr. Michael Gottfried
MSU Department of Zoology

Please join us Thursday, October 6 when our speaker will be Dr. Michael Gottfried, Professor of Zoology and Director of the Center for Integrative Studies in General Science at Michigan State University. Dr. Gottfried will present "Sharks in Deep Time," based upon his study of shark evolution.

Food and Socializing at 7:00; program begins at 7:30

Hospitality Committee Request

Liz Febba and Lee Laylin, Hospitality Co-chairs, need some help with refreshments at upcoming meetings. If you are able to bring something, please contact Liz at 646-0240, or sfebba@broadstripe.net. Select from these dates: November 3, Dec 1, January 5, Feb 2, March 1, April 5 or May 3rd.

Thank You! Liz Febba

Book Review: “Bringing Nature Home” by Douglas Tallamy, PhD.

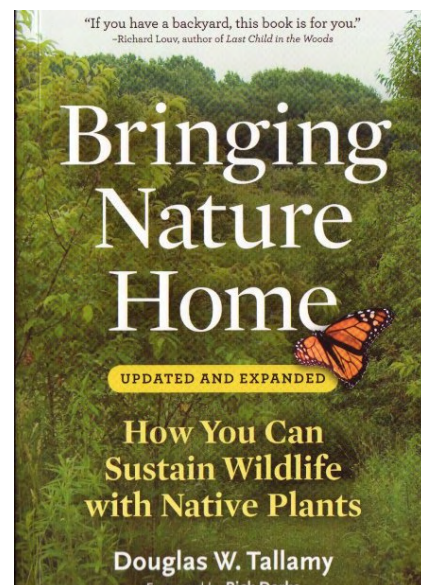
Among the many books on landscaping for wildlife, a recent title stands out both for the information it contains and the message it is trying to deliver. “Bringing Nature Home; How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants” by Dr Douglas Tallamy is truly a ground breaking volume, as it makes the case for using native plants to landscape our gardens. For birders, it is a landmark title, and I highly recommend the book.

In my prior life as a horticulturist, my emphasis was on maintaining ornamental plantings that looked good for the public, 24/7. The scales really dropped from my eyes after I read this book. Now insect holes in plant leaves means there are larvae around for birds to eat. This is an absolute necessity if we want our birds to successfully raise young.

The book’s first seven chapters outline the challenges we are facing with invasive plants, explain the concept of biodiversity, what insects do and do not eat, what is and is not an alien species, and what happens when alien ornamentals “escape”. The next seven chapters explain how to create habitat with native plants. There are also very useful appendix tables of natives for each part of the US, as well as which species are host plants for butterflies and moths. Dr Tallamy also includes a chapter on “Making It Happen” which outlines excellent suggestions on what to plant, as well as cautions about making a garden that will not create any conflicts with neighbors. It also contains many inspiring stories about his own efforts to plant native trees and the success he has experienced in attracting bird and butterfly species as a result.

Chapter 13, “What Does Bird Food look Like?” is a fascinating and readable description of numerous insect families, some familiar, others not. You’ll finish this book with a deeper understanding and appreciation of insects, and a feeling of empowerment. You *can* make a difference!

Ann Hancock



Podcasts for Birders- by Sam Febba

I finally bought an iPod last year so I could listen to podcasts of my favorite NPR programs while traveling. In addition to NPR podcasts, I've discovered there are some very interesting podcasts available for birders. Here are the ones I listen to while I've driving around in the order they show up in iTunes.

The first is Bird Notes with Dwight Davis. In podcasts in the iTunes Store, search for "bird notes" under podcasts or go to <http://www.whro.org/home/publicradio/whro/localprogramming/Bird+Notes/>. These podcasts come out irregularly but usual at least once a month and are produced for his local public radio station. Davis is a birder in the Norfolk, Virginia, area and many of his podcasts reference that region. Davis is very knowledgeable and I enjoy his delivery. Most podcasts are less than 5 minutes.

Birdchick is produced by Sharon Stiteler who works for the National Parks Service in Minnesota. This podcast is not sponsored by the National Parks. When I first listened to one of these I found Sharon a little intense but her podcasts have grown on me. She is very knowledgeable. A great deal of the information on the podcast is gathered from other postings but she does have strong opinions and does not hesitate to air them. Birdchick generally runs about 30 minutes and new ones are posted about twice a week. As this is done on a totally voluntary basis from her apartment there is no regularity to length or frequency. In the iTunes Store search for Birdchick or go to <http://www.birdchick.com/wp/> and look for the link on the right.

The next is BirdNote which is produced daily by an NPR station in Washington State. All these programs are two minutes long and at one time WKAR broadcast them daily. They cover a wide variety of topics and many of the birds highlighted are more eastern than western in spite of the location of the producers.

I like to put one of these short programs between any two other podcasts in my playlists. In the iTunes Store search for "Bird Notes RSS Feed" or go to <http://birdnote.org/>.

Every Sunday morning folks in the northeast can listen to Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds. Ray's show is produced for commercial radio but the commercials that are heard in the podcast are for Birds and Beans Coffee, TNC, Bird Watcher's Digest and the like. Every thirty minute podcast includes a Featured Feathered Friend, listeners' questions answered, maybe an interview and my favorite segment, the Mystery Bird which is usually much easier than the Birding photoquiz. This is a really good program for beginning birders but more advanced folks will probably enjoy it also. In the iTunes Store search for Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds or go to [feed://www.talkinbirds.com/podcast/feed.xml](http://www.talkinbirds.com/podcast/feed.xml)

Lastly we have an irregularly produced series of podcasts from Bill Thompson, the editor of Bird Watcher's Digest. Most of these are interviews with contributors to the magazine. Many I found very intriguing. Sound quality unfortunately is not always the best. In the iTunes Store search for This Birding Life or go to <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/podcasts/>.

One final note regarding iPods and similar devices: I found it very convenient this past spring to carry around 4 North American field guides in my front pocket. I will not recommend any one field guide. Each offered a different perspective and each proved useful at various time. However, we must all use these electronic field guides wisely and carefully. The quick availability of recording of bird songs might tempt us into overuse of recordings. I would recommend that anyone with an electronic field guide read David Sibley's thoughts on the use of recordings at <http://www.sibleyguides.com/2011/04/the-proper-use-of-playback-in-birding/>.

NATIVE PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE:OAKS

When Dr Tallamy spoke at MSU's Garden Day in 2010, one audience member asked "What *one thing* can I plant that would be the best for wildlife?" His answer was "Plant an oak tree." In Chapter 12 of the book, there is a table listing woody plants and the number of Lepidopteran species they support. The oak genus, Quercus, is host to some 534 species, far and away the most species of any genus.

Here in Michigan, there are many oak species you can choose from, depending on the amount of space, drainage and light available to you. For best growth, full sun is desirable for any oak species.

Depending on your soil type, there are a number of species you could choose. Red Oak, Bur Oak, Swamp White Oak, and White Oak are four species that do well in our area.

Bur Oak is an adaptable species that will do well in a variety of soil types, even dry clay soils once established. It is also pollution tolerant. The mature outline is 'craggy' but majestic. Its acorns have a thick twisted fringe, giving it another common name "mossy cup oak".



State Champion Bur Oak – Niles

Jim Hewitt photo

Swamp White Oak is found along rivers, streams and bottomlands. It will tolerate some flooding. Despite its name, it actually has excellent drought tolerance. This species will develop chlorosis if grown on high pH soil. There is a lovely specimen of Swamp White Oak near the pedestrian bridge behind the Kellogg Center.

Red Oak Is an excellent, fast growing species. It is capable of 2 feet of growth per year under ideal conditions. It performs best in well drained sandy loam of neutral or somewhat acid pH., and is able to tolerate the pollution in city air. Fall color can be an excellent russet tone.

White Oak is the aristocrat of oaks. The mature shape is a magnificent wide-spreading silhouette, with sweeping lower branches and a rounded crown. It makes best growth in a deep moist soil with a somewhat acid pH. It is considered difficult to transplant, but grows well when directly planted via acorn (as do all the oaks mentioned).

A visit to the MSU Campus will show you mature specimens of all these trees. Many trees on central campus and the Horticulture Gardens are labeled, so you will not have to guess what species you are looking at.

Do not think that oaks grow too slowly for you to enjoy the beauty of an older tree. I can vouch for the fact that the oaks planted in the MSU Perennial Garden (Bur, Red and Swamp White) grew astonishingly fast, to the point where I had to ask the campus arborist over to prune them. Dr Tallamy told me that an oak he planted from an acorn in celebration of his granddaughter's birth is now taller than he is, only 10 years later. Despite this growth rate, oak wood is strong and will not succumb to ice storms the way a Bradford Pear does.

So grab some acorns, and go plant some oaks!

Ann Hancock

If you have a favorite native species that you'd like to write about, please submit your copy to me (annhancock9@gmail.com) by the 15th of the month, and include a picture if you have it. We'll all learn from each other.

Highway Pickup Report



“Our” stretch of I-69 - CAAS maintained for over 20 years. *Ed Merz photo*

The 2011 Fall Trash pick up was a great success. With the help of 11 hard-working people, the 4 miles of adopted high way was cleaned up and is now back to looking good. Fifty-three bags of trash were collected. This included many auto parts, empty bottles, endless amounts of tire treads, and even the top to someone’s cooler. Afterwards a wonderful breakfast and good conversation was enjoyed by everyone. Thank you to everyone who volunteered. As the saying goes, “Many hands make light work.” Please remember that the next pick-up will be in the spring and will need lots of volunteers. Dates will be announced in January.

Stephanie Bollman

NEW WEBSITE

One page of the new website will be a photo gallery which will consist of photos of birds taken by members in the Capital Area, which I am defining as Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties plus Maple River SGA. If you have a photo you would like to submit, send it to me, Jim Hewitt, tz4ggm@aol.com. If you have more than a few, you may have to put them on a CD. Include the date the picture was taken and the location such as Fenner N.C. or Scott Woods Park. If it was taken in your backyard or somewhere other than a park or named natural area, identify the city, village, or township.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

October 6 Sharks in Deep Time
Speaker: Dr Michael Gottfried

November 3: Dark Skies, Light Pollution and Birds
Speaker: Robert Miller

November 13 Field trip to Allegan State Game Area and Lake Michigan.
Leader: Rick Brigham

Dec. 1 Plants to Attract Wildlife
Speaker: Ron Overton

Dec 19: Christmas Bird Count
Coordinator: Tom Wheeker FMI: 517-628-3843

MEMBERSHIP

Thanks to our new and returning members:

John Baumgartner, Stephanie Bollman, Clara Bratton, Susan Clark, Ron Eggleston, Liz and Sam Febba, Mark and Sally Garrod, Jim Hewitt and Louise Westcott, Barbara Hosler, Sue Nieland, Connie Page and Tom Connor, Bob Reynolds, Susan Schuur and Jacob Plotkin, Wendy Tatar, Tom Wheeker.

Membership dues are due now. Forms may be downloaded from www.capitalareaaudubon.org or picked up at the October meeting.