



capitalareaaudubon.org

# The Call Note

September, 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.

## GREETING FROM NEW PRESIDENT BRUCE COHEN

I am pleased to announce that I am your new CAAS president. I have been a member since 1985, but only intermittently active with the club. This is my 3<sup>rd</sup> year on the board. The board and I have been busy this summer putting together a program for 2011-12 that we hope will be interesting and enjoyable.

One goal for this year is to revise our website. We are at the beginning of this project and hope to get the changes completed soon. We'll keep you informed. Look for the changes at:  
<http://www.capitalareaaudubon.org>

As we know from the member's slide fest we have each year, our club members take some really nice photos. We'd love to include some in this newsletter. If you have one you'd be willing to share, please send it to either Ann Hancock ([annhancock9@gmail.com](mailto:annhancock9@gmail.com)) or Bruce Cohen ([bcohen50@comcast.net](mailto:bcohen50@comcast.net))

We have four new board members this year. They have proven to be hard workers and are great additions for the club. The following is a short note about each.

**Ann Hancock** has been a member longer than I have. She has recently retired from her career as a horticulturist at the Michigan State University Gardens.

**Szuzannah Mahon** is a Haslett elementary school teacher who engages her students in many

environmental projects. She is not only a new board member, but this is also her first year in the CAAS.

**Debbie Wolf** is a longtime member hoping to become more active with both CAAS and Fenner Nature Center. Joining the board will certainly help her accomplish that goal.

**Jim Hewitt** has volunteered to complete a term on the board that a previous member could not complete. Jim is a past board member with good experience and we are grateful that he is willing to fill this vacant position.

Here's looking forward to a great year! I encourage you to share any suggestions or concerns regarding improvements with me or any other board member.

## VOLUNTEER HOURS AT FENNER

If you volunteer at Fenner, please record the hours that you work. This is important because CAAS volunteer hours offset rental fees for use of the facility for our monthly meetings. Last year there were enough volunteer hours that we did not have to pay any rental fees. Hopefully we can attain that goal again. Fenner will provide a sign-in sheet to track hours at all activities they hold. They also have a volunteer sign-up sheet in the building. If the building is closed and there is no staff there, simply notifying them at a later time is acceptable. You can also inform me at [brucecohen50@comcast.net](mailto:brucecohen50@comcast.net) or [517-337-0004](tel:517-337-0004).

## SEPTEMBER 8<sup>th</sup> PROGRAM: THE CAAS SCHOOL BACKPACK PROGRAM

Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>: Program begins at 7:30 pm Socializing and snacks at 7:00 pm

Haslett's Murphy Elementary School and their teacher, Zsuzsanna Mahon, had the opportunity to be a participating school in the CAAS School Backpack Program this year. They would like to express their appreciation to the CAAS membership by sharing their experiences of using these wonderful backpacks and related activities including the Great Backyard Bird Count. Mrs. Mahon will also present an overview of the backpack program and its impact on other area schools and students.

## CAPITAL AREA BIRD OBSERVATION REPORT – 2011 HIGHLIGHTS

Many rare and exciting bird sightings were reported during the first half of 2011. Wintering Towhees are always a welcome sight, so one in Williamston (with debate that it may have been a spotted Towhee) was a great way to start the year. Also in the winter season was a Northern Shoveler—a rare winter visitor for sure. Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs were present in good numbers this year. As spring migration got underway, there was no doubt that 2011 was going to be a good year. Several fantastic birds were reported this spring: Cattle Egret, Summer Tanager, Yellow-Throated Warbler, Yellow Headed Blackbird, and Least Bittern, to name a few. The Surf Scoter at Lake O the Hills was impressive as well.

As spring migration progressed and summer began reports of exciting birds just kept coming. Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows put on quite a display this year. A Northern Mockingbird also set up shop near Dansville, complementing an earlier sighting this year. A report of a White Pelican at Lake Lansing was nice to hear, and let's not forget those nesting Least Bitterns at Park Lake. More highlights included Red-Necked Grebes, Yellow-Breasted Chat, and Brewer's Blackbird. - **Jeff Pavlik**



*Summer Tanager*

*Photo by Jeff Pavlik*

## AN APOLOGY

I would like to apologize to any CAAS members who were offended by my remarks to Jim McGrath at the June meeting. I should have kept my mouth shut and just left when given the opportunity. -**Sam Febba**

## PAST PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL

This was an unusual year, as all the board members whose terms were up elected to step down. Bruce Mortimer had served for six years, so had to step down. Wendy Larson found her work-related travel limited her ability to be an active board member. I enjoyed being your president, but due to several health problems felt it best to step down.

Our new board members will bring some new ideas and fresh energy to the job of keeping CAAS informed and active in birding. The new board members are: Ann Hancock, newly retired from MSU Horticulture, will be editing the Call Note with assistance from Jim Hewitt. Debby Wolf, also newly retired will be doing several chores including mailing the Call Note. The third board member is Zsuzsannah Mahon, a teacher at Haslett's Murphy school; she will be taking on the backpack program. Jim Hewitt will finish out Jim McGrath's term and will be web master.

I leave my position knowing it is in good hands and am looking forward to a great year of programs. -**Lee Laylin**

## PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

People who love birds do much more than simply put food out for them. As natural habitat is lost to sprawl and development, our gardens and landscapes are increasingly important refuges for birds and many varieties of insects including the dragonflies, moths and butterflies we all love. Each month we'll highlight a plant species that can serve as a "super food" source for both local and migrating birds, butterflies, moths and other insects. Not all plants will work for every garden but it's my hope that this discussion will serve as a forum and start us all thinking about using native plants the next time we plan new additions to our gardens.

This month's featured species is Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*. Black Cherry is a large tree with a lot of wildlife appeal. Mature height will be 60-100 feet tall so it is a tree for the large landscape. In the spring it flowers heavily with pendulous racemes of white flowers. The resulting fruit starts red and ripens to deep purple- black. This attracts a number of fruit loving birds. I have observed Hermit, Swainson's and Wood Thrush feeding on black cherry fruit as well as Robins and Cedar Waxwings. In the spring our tree is visited by migrating wood warblers; I have seen Tennessee, Black and White, Blackpoll, Yellow, Nashville and Cape May Warblers on the tree in our yard. I am sure there are many others that I have missed. Butterfly and moth species that feed on Black Cherry include: Red-Spotted purple, Coral Hairstreak, Tiger Swallowtail, Cecropia Moth, Promethia Moth, Wild Cherry Sphinx moth, spotted apateloidea, yellow-necked caterpillar, Eastern Tent Caterpillar, and banded tussock moth. Doubtless the entomologists among you can list many other species of insects that feed on these trees.

Do you have a favorite native bird or butterfly plant? You are invited to share your knowledge about it and write a short column for the Call Note. Please send your copy to me, ([annhancock9@gmail.com](mailto:annhancock9@gmail.com)) by the 15th of the month, and include a picture if you have it. We'll all learn from each other.



Widow Skimmer on Crocosmia

Ann Hancock photo

## TO OUR DEPARTING BOARD MEMBERS:

We would like to say "Thank You!" To our former board members and highlight their service to our club. It takes a team to run a club and these board members gave a lot of service to CAAS.

**Lee Laylin:** Outgoing President. Thank you Lee, for serving as our president for the past year, as well finding a new slate of board members for the upcoming year (no small feat!). Thank you for the many other things you do behind the scenes, as well such as putting together our yearly program calendar, working with Fenner and leading bird walks. We also thank you for hosting our wonderful Christmas Count Tally parties by opening your home and making gallons of hot chili for the cold and tired counters. You are the glue that holds our club together.

**Jim McGrath** Outgoing board member Jim McGrath produced our newsletter, the Call Note. In his hands it was a lively and information packed letter. We thank Jim for all his work producing the call Note, and for his service to the club as our representative at many area nature events.

**Bruce Mortimer** Bruce served as our Vice president, and also maintained the CAAS website. Bruce was also the person behind our Highway Pickup/Clean Up program which he chaired for a number of years with his dedicated band of pickers. Thank you, Bruce, for helping maintain the website and for keeping "our" section of I-69 clean.

**Wendy Larson** Wendy was the member who helped to send out the e-version of the Call Note, as well as our other group e-mails. This saved the club a lot of money and we thank her very much.

## FEEDER TIPS

### Keeping English Sparrows Off Bird Feeders

This tip was originally published in a Saginaw area nature newsletter. After observing it in use on a friend's feeder, I tried it in my own yard. The best part about this "system" is that other birds are not affected in any way. It will only work on feeders that have a roof or overhang, though I adapted it to an area that had arching rose canes over it, and it worked there also.

Take some heavy duty monofilament fishing line, and cut it into 6 inch lengths. Tape or secure the pieces to the roof or overhang of the feeder so that they dangle over the food area; space them every 3 inches or so. I used duct tape, but my friends used scotch tape on their clear plexiglass feeder. I have not had any birds tangled or harmed by the line. Only English Sparrows avoid the lines. Be sure to use heavy weight monofilament, and don't make the pieces too long.

...Have a favorite feeder, tip, or trick? Please submit a short article to me and we'll publish it in the Call Note! [annhancock9@gmail.com](mailto:annhancock9@gmail.com)



The Laylin feeder, with monofilament lines

## HIGHWAY PICKUP – SEPTEMBER 17

Picking up a stretch of Interstate Highway is a long-standing Capital Area Service Project. We will meet **Saturday, Sept. 17, 8:00AM** at the Cracker Barrel Restaurant just west of the Saginaw Road exit off I-96/69. Due to construction we were not able to do the spring and summer dates so this will be a big one. We need all the help we can get, so please help out.

**-Stephanie Bollman and Sally Garrod,  
Highway Pickup Coordinators**

## UPCOMING EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

### Saturday Morning Bird Walks at Fenner:

Once again this fall, Bob Kingsbury will be leading bird walks at Fenner during the month of September. Walks will be each Saturday morning beginning September 3rd with the last walk being September 24th. Rain date on Sunday, the day after. Meet at the Fenner Nature Center Building at 9:00am. People can contact Bob at home 485-4813 or cell 230-2211.

### Native Plant Sale at Fenner Nature Center:

September 16 and 17. Plants can be preordered; your order must be in by Sept 9<sup>th</sup>. See the Fenner website for more details:

[www.mynaturecenter.org](http://www.mynaturecenter.org)



Doug McWhirter leading a Lepidoptera/Odonata field trip  
(with Madeline Merz) photo by Ed Merz