

October 2014

www.benzieaudubon.org



Edited by Doug and Sally Cook



Who Turns a Cold Shoulder to the Quiz? By Doug Cook

Inside this issue:

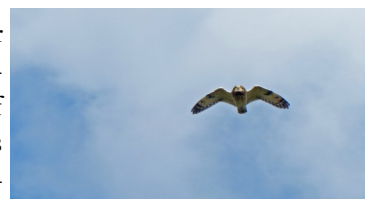
- Photo Quiz* 1
- Mini-Grants Available* 2
- Bluebird Box Clean-out* 2
- The Grey Tree Frog* 3
- Backyard Habitats* 3

Last year in this newsletter we placed several photos of unidentified birds and asked you to identify them. The results were revealed at our annual meeting, which takes place this year on November 6th (see below). I heard from several members that they enjoyed the challenge so we are repeating the exercise this year.

The photos in play are labeled 1 through 6. A couple are fairly obvious, but the others a little less so. Study them carefully, take your best guess and we will reveal the answers on November 7th.

It has been a great year for the club. We had another outstanding roster of speakers for our programs which were very well attended. Likewise, our packed offering of field trips afforded us the opportunity to see a lot of old friends and to meet many new ones. We were able to assist several local groups with mini-grants, which helped us fulfill our mission of increasing our knowledge of the natural world.

The board is already busy planning activities for 2015. Thanks for your participation and your support.



1. Photo by John Ester



2. Photo by Carl Freeman



3. Photo by John Ester

It's Election Time!
Our By-Laws call for an election of officers to be held at the Annual Meeting held each November. To that end, we will conduct a brief business meeting following the potluck in order to elect Club Officers for the coming year. The Board will present a slate of candidates, but we also welcome nominations from the floor. The positions open include, President, Secretary, and the Chairs for Public Relations, Programs and Mini-grants.

Members' Photo Show at Annual Meeting

In addition to binoculars and maybe a spotting scope, a few of our stalwart members also carry cameras, telephoto lenses and all the other accoutrements that go along with being "into" photography when they head off for a birding foray. That is very fortunate for

the rest of us and, for the second year running, John Ester and Carl Freeman have collaborated to bring together an encore performance of last year's Members' Photo Show to this year's annual meeting. Well planned and precisely timed, attendees will, once again,

be treated to the photographic skills of several of our members who will provide samples of their efforts over the past year. The meeting will be at the Tribal Outpost in Benzonia, Thursday, November 6th. A potluck dinner begins at 6:00 p.m.



4. From www.mincingmockingbird.com

Mini-Grants Available *by Sally Cook*

If you are new to Benzie Audubon, you may not be aware that the club has mini-grants available to fund small projects. Created from a bequest from the estate of Robert Lytle, the mini-grant funds have been used for many worthwhile projects. For example, schoolchildren have learned about the relationships between raptors and watersheds; injured raptors have been successfully rehabilitated; and students

have made pottery bird houses and learned about House Wrens.

The only requirement is that the funds requested must be used for environmental education or to enhance the natural environment in our area. Also, as the word 'mini' in the title implies, funding is limited, but a grant may be requested to partially pay for a larger project. Further details and the application are

available on the club website,

www.benzieaudubon.org.

Please help spread the word about Benzie Audubon mini-grants. The next time you say (or hear) "Gee, I have an idea, and I'd really like to ...", think about whether the idea fits the criteria for mini-grants and consider applying. The money isn't doing any good for our environment sitting in the bank account!

TIME TO RENEW!

It is time to renew your Benzie Audubon Membership. Just fill out the envelope enclosed, include your check, and either mail it in or bring it to the annual meeting.

Bluebirds Along the BVT *by Paula Dreeszen*

The past few Septembers, Bryce Dreeszen and I have led a Birding by Bicycle field trip from Beulah to Thompsonville to clean out the Bluebird boxes located next to the Betsie Valley Trail. We inspect each box and note which need repair, try to determine what may have used the house over the past season, and remove any material still in the boxes. Weather threatened rain on September 20 for our "Birding By Bike" field trip, so it was just Bryce and I who checked and cleaned out nesting boxes on the Betsie Valley Trail. Turns out we avoided the rain! We monitored 46 boxes between Beulah and Thompsonville from 10 am to 3:30 pm. Biggest surprise was the number of mice we evicted... 11 mice in 6 boxes... more than previous years. Our abbreviated report of what we found is as follows:

- Total Boxes Monitored = 46
- Empty boxes = 12
- Boxes with Bluebird nests = 19
- Boxes with Wren nests = 7 (5 were dummy nests with some twigs)
- Boxes with Chickadee nests = 2
- Boxes with Tree Swallow nests = 5
- Boxes with mice inside = 6 (total of 11 mice evicted)



5. Photo by Carl Freeman



The Grey Tree Frog by Sally Cook

Last week I was excited to see a Grey Tree Frog in the garden. This isn't because they are so rare – they are a species of “least concern” to the EPA, and their range seems to be expanding. I was happy to see this frog because it was in my flower garden, and I am always happy to find any toad, snake, or frog there. Also, a tree frog is an especially lucky find. These frogs are strictly nocturnal, and although they call during their spring mating season, they keep a very low profile the rest of the year. This one was the exact green shade of the Aster leaf where it was sunning itself, and when I dashed into the house to find our daughter so she could see it (and take a photo), we had a hard

time relocating it, so perfect was its camouflage. This is important because this tiny frog is a favorite food of the other garden visitors I mentioned. Luckily, it has toe pads it uses to cling, climb, and stay out of range of these predators.

I visited the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology Animal Diversity Web, and learned several interesting things about our tree frog. With the weather growing cooler, here are a few facts to ponder while you are sitting by the fire with your cocoa. The Grey Tree Frog can tolerate extremely cold temperatures because it has glycerol in its blood. When it is hibernating, it appears rigid, 80% of its body freezes solid, and its eye becomes opaque as

its breathing and heartbeat are temporarily suspended. According to U of M, this ability has allowed the frog to expand its range further north and to higher elevations. While it needs water for breeding, this ability to move and to adapt to changing temperatures definitely gives this little frog an advantage over its kin.

We humans have been through a lot of seasonal changes, and Global Climate Change is a wild card in the game. I will use my own strategies to adapt to cold weather, and later, when I am snowshoeing (I hope) in the woods, I will look at the trees and think of the Grey Tree Frogs, frozen and waiting for the chance to sing again.



Photo by Emily Cook

Tell us about your bird sightings for inclusion in our regular reports by emailing them to Carl Freeman at carljfreeman@gmail.com

A Little Help in the Backyard by Emily Cook

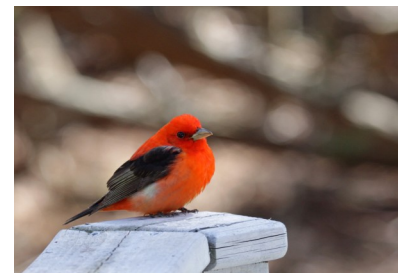
If last winter is any indication of what is to come, the next few months are going to be cold and very snowy – a test of mental endurance for those of us residing in northern Michigan. However, while we are able to tuck in under blankets and provide ourselves with a constant flow of hot drinks, the wildlife living in our yards is experiencing a real struggle. There are many things landowners can do to contribute comfort to the creatures experiencing the constant onslaught of

those bitter winter elements. **Provide water that won't freeze** – Providing water close to home can save animals from wasting valuable energy. **Build a brush pile** - Create a safe spot for ground-nesting birds, chipmunks, rabbits, and hibernating reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Put it in an out-of-the-way corner of your property, preferably close to food sources and away from buildings. Start with a layer of larger limbs and stack branches loosely, adding

grasses and leaves to create nooks and crannies.

Feed the birds – Fill your feeders with fatty seeds and food that will provide birds with the extra energy they need in winter. Black oil sunflower seeds, thistle and suet are three great choices.

Clean out nest boxes – Cleaning out nest boxes in the fall prevents the build-up of diseases and parasites. Adding a bit of fresh garden material creates an excellent (and warm) shelter for birds and small mammals in the winter.



6. Photo by Carl Freeman

BENZIE Audubon Club

P. O. Box 804
Frankfort, MI 49635



Dedicated to
Increasing Our Knowledge
of the
Natural World

We're on the Web at
www.benzieaudubon.org

Our major objectives are promoting an appreciation for and a better understanding of the plants and animals of northern Michigan, preserving our natural environment, and preventing any activities that may pose a threat to our natural ecology.

The Benzie Audubon Club is a tax-exempt charitable organization and a chapter of the Michigan Audubon Society. All of our meetings and field trips are open to the public without charge. Meetings are usually held the first Thursday of each odd month (January, March, etc.) at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia. Field trips are taken throughout the year.

PLEASE JOIN US

Thursday, November 6, 6:00 p.m. at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadly Road in Benzonia
Potluck Dinner, Annual Meeting, and Program which will feature a Member's Photo Show.
Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Following a very brief business meeting several members will share some of their favorite photos with us.