



February 2009

Edited
by Carl Freeman

The *Meadowlark* is the newsletter of the
Benzie Audubon Club

Dedicated To Increasing Our Knowledge Of The Natural World

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The Meadowlark

President's Thoughts

Target Birding

In response to the needs of traveling birders seeking to expand their life lists, those providing guiding services now offer "target birding": You send them your list of target birds; they'll fashion your trip accordingly. Here's my version of target birding.

The year was 2003 and we were living down state but visiting here for important occasions like bird counts. In May there was the Big Day Count. At the tally following the count no one reported a goshawk, prompting Carl to say, "Didn't anyone check the usual spots?" A light bulb went off in my head: "There are usual spots for goshawks? There's my target bird for the year!"

When I subsequently e-mailed Carl, he described the two local areas where goshawks have traditionally nested. Armed with Carl's description, Char and I headed to the first location, but Carl's directions ("Take the two-track off of Trails End and head south") seemed impossibly vague. We were about ready to give up when the loud "cackling" began. It was then we learned the first secret: You don't find the goshawk, the goshawk finds you! And once he or she does, there is no mistaking the bird's malicious intent. First one and then two goshawks set upon us, driving us out of their nesting territory post haste. In departing we learned the second secret: Goshawks like to attack you from the rear as you leave their territory.

Our experience at the second location along Boekeloo Road was similar. When we returned home from our exhilarating adventures, we read up on the Northern Goshawk and its aggressive behavior while nesting (duh!). Of course at this point I should have hung the "Mission Accomplished!" banner and given it a rest. But with birding friends coming up the next week I felt compelled to check out the Deer Lake spot again, this time by mountain bike.

On the way in I almost made it through the area undetected, but one of the hawks spotted me and started the now-familiar calling. I emerged from the far end of the woods unscathed but still had to return. I figured I might get by with a high speed run, but just when I thought I had gotten by the hot area I heard the alarm call from a distance and then, to my shock, received a heavy blow to the back of my head--an aerial assault by a goshawk! Wearing a plastic biking helmet was one of the few smart things I did that day. Heading home with pulse racing I could imagine the goshawk's thoughts: "You want a target? I'll show you a target, Bicycle Boy!"

Since then I've heard several stories of run-ins people have had with nesting goshawks (including the turkey



Goshawk by John Ester

hunter 'driven to the ground and bloodied" by a goshawk near Lower Herring Lake), and I've learned that one entering the territory of a nesting goshawk should carry a stick vertically extending above one's head. And I've learned that one setting a target should be careful of what he wishes for!

March Activities

March 5th Meeting, 7PM . Attracting Purple Martins



Field Trip - Winter-Spring? birds. Meet at Pt. Betsie at 8AM led by Doug Cook.

Recent Bird Sightings

(birds with white wings)



White-winged Crossbill

The bird of the year is undoubtedly the **White-winged Crossbill**. For the first time ever they have been recorded in every county in the state in the same year. The birding web sites have been clogged with reports and they were seen by four parties on our Christmas Bird Count.

Other winter finches have also invaded with many **Pine Siskins and Redpolls** being reported. At one time there were as many as 70 Redpolls coming to Joan & Will Wolfe's feeder. **Purple Finches** are also in good numbers, we have as many as a dozen at our feeder some days.

There was a report of 600+ **White-winged Scoters** off the harbor in Frankfort the weekend of the 22nd.

Since birds have the power of flight, they are continually turning up in unexpected places. This winter brought a first ever winter swallow for the UP, a **Barn Swallow** that was observed for two days desperately trying to find insects over a creek leading into Lake Superior.

I just heard from Alice VanZoeren that **Snowy Owls** are back in the Chum's Corner area. There have been 3 in the area of Wuerful baseball park - Tile Mart.

Remember to chime in with your sightings at the March Meeting.



White-winged Scoter

Thank You !

Thanks to everyone who has renewed their memberships and double thanks to all that contributed **more than asked**. Because of your generosity we can all look forward to great programs this year.

2009 Schedule

Details on another page of this newsletter.

PLEASE NOTE

Unlike the last several years only the first half of the year is detailed with this newsletter. Another newsletter will go out before July with the rest of the year's schedule, and you can always check the updated schedule at www.benzieaudubon.org. A **tentative** second half of the year is included on the refrigerator shortened list.

This year's schedule features a series of

Birding Skills

field trips. Starting with **Winter** (or will it be early spring?) birding on March 21st, the list so far includes:

- Waterfowl - April 18th**
- Warblers - May 16th**
- Birding by Ear - June 13th**
- Beginning Birding - June 20th**
- Fall Migration - ? (Sept 6th)**
- Sparrows - Sept. 26th**
- Sea Ducks - Nov. 11th**

Everyone of any birding skill level is welcome on any field trip, kids included.

For any trip that is in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore you are responsible for your park pass.

Dress for the weather and the location !

Benzie Audubon Web Site

www.benzieaudubon.org

Our web site is being kept up to date and enhanced by John Ester. Schedule of activities, membership information, etc. Especially look at the pictures page which is updated as new photos become available. Contact John if you have a photo to share.