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www.benzieaudubon.org



Edited by Doug and Sally Cook



Dedicated to Increasing our Knowledge of the Natural World

From the President By Doug Cook

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Now that most of us have survived the Great Blizzard of 2012 it is time to get down to some serious birding. I love this time of year for many reasons, but keeping up with the spring bird migration is at the top of the list. Back in our Ionia County days I always looked for the first Red-winged Blackbirds to show up around March 6. As it happens, that is the very day I heard my first one this year. I assume it came in by snow coach. Robins have been showing up in larger numbers even as frenetic flocks of Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins clean out our feeders a couple of times each day. How about the price of sunflowers seeds this year?

Board members have been working diligently to line up a great schedule full of the kinds of birding and other nature related topics members tell us they enjoy. Dave Lean has arranged for series of informative programs and is still looking for something in November. Let us know if you have an idea. Bryce Dreeszen has put together another packed schedule of field trips including something for just about everyone, from the novice to the expert. Don't see anything you like? Let us know and we'll try to fix that. We've changed newsletter crews, and you are reading their first effort—let us know what you think.

that it is time to get outside, so whether you tag along on one of our many activities, all of which can be found listed on our website, or you simply wander around on your own, be sure to get outside everyday, and let us know what you see.

The important thing is



COMMON REDPOLL

Photo by Carl Freeman

Keep Track of Spring Migration on eBird

In January Brian Allen presented a very interesting program on using an on-line based program called eBird to keep track of individual birding sightings.

The amount of information available to anyone on eBird is phenomenal. For the

coming migration season we suggest you use eBird to keep track of the birds migrating into and through the state of Michigan and Benzie County. All you have to do is go to any web browser and type in www.ebird.org. This will bring you to the home page. Under the photo in the masthead of

the site, select the tab "View and Explore Data." Under the box on the right click on "Arrivals and Departures," then when the next page comes up select Michigan and Benzie County. This will get you to a screen showing what has been seen, by whom, and the dates. Enjoy!

THANK YOU!

- To everyone who provides tasty treats at our programs.
- To those who provide great photos for the website and our other publications.
- To those who have renewed their memberships for another year.
- To those giving their time to lead field trips and cover other club events for the benefit of all members.

What is BPG? By Bryce Dreeszen



Photo by Carl Freeman

The growing trend for birders is finding ways to be more "green," which means raising your BPG. What's BPG? It stands for bird species per gallon of gas. This is the opposite motivation of the three birders in "The Big Year" who each spared no expense in travelling to the far reaches of North America in search of the greatest number of bird species observed in one year. They chartered planes, boats and even helicopters in their quest, and their BPG was immeasurably small.

We need to be mindful of our own BPG as we run around the region, whether it's chasing Prairie Warblers in the spring, Piping Plovers in the summer, Purple Sandpipers in the fall, or Snowy Owls in the winter. Birders should always look for carpools, or combining trips with errands.

In an effort to improve the Benzie Audubon Club's BPG, here are some suggestions for your Big Day count on May 19th. Try a Big Sit. Pick a prime habitat, and sit in a lawn chair to observe birds

for your entire time. Some rulebooks even allow you to move within a 17 foot diameter circle. Or, try a Big Bike, and see how many species you can log while biking your birding route, rather than driving. Maybe you could try a Big Hike, or Big Paddle, or Big Hang-glide (best for Turkey Vultures along the shore); get creative. Keep track of your BPG on May 19th, and the winner at the tally at the Cook's will receive a copy of Audubon's "Birds of North America."

2012 Field Trip Schedule—*Full details of each trip on our website*

Early Spring Arrivals—March 31

Frog Chorus and Woodcock Display—April 13

Arcadia Marsh Trip—April 21

Wildflowers at Pete's Woods—May 2

Wildflowers at Pete's Woods—May 9

Warblers Along the Coast—May 11

Warblers Along the Coast—May 18

Beginning Birding—May 26

Dune Wildflowers—June 13

Birding by Ear - June 16

Fall Birding at Platte Point—September 8

Fall Birding: Grassland and Migrant Birds—September 15

Birding by Bike on the Betsie Valley Trail—September 22

Fall Birding on Lake Michigan—November 3

To keep up with everything happening with Benzie Audubon, see our website at:
benzieaudubon.org

Recent Bird Sightings *By Carl Freeman*

This winter has been a Pine Siskin and Redpoll year with many of each reported by feeder watchers. This is the second year in a row Redpolls have been around in numbers, somewhat unusual for an "irruptive" species that normally only is around every few years. A number of White-winged Crossbills have been around also. A good number of Robins have been seen in Blaine Twp along with Cedar Waxwings and one Bluebird.

Manistee has had more than its share of "good" gulls this winter, with Thayer's, Black-backed, Lesser Black-

backed, and Iceland all being seen. What Benzie needs is a good dump to attract thousands of gulls for us to sort through. Horned Grebes have continued to hang around the Frankfort pier all winter, and occasionally White-winged Scoters have wandered in, but with the mild, ice free conditions most have stayed out on the big lake. Ludington harbor has had a least one Harlequin duck in residence this winter.

Boardman Lake in TC has had a blue phase Snow Goose and a few Pintails, not a usual winter duck for our area. Also in TC, a few Snowy Owls have

been sighted but not the number one might expect from an invasion year. Early in the winter and fall there were many reports of snowies from all over the state and the US, one making it all the way to the Dallas area in TX. I hear a rumor that several have been hanging around the airport in TC. Here in the first week of March flocks of Robins are showing up and I have seen one Grackle back. Think Spring!

Tell us about your bird sightings for inclusion in our regular reports by emailing them to Doug Cook at dcook@wmibt.com

Bird Sighting Email Blast To Start *By Doug Cook*

In a former life I used to come into the office each day in the spring and list on a white board in the entryway all of the new bird species I had seen since the last report. There were a few people who had expressed an interest in how I was spending my free time, and they were always surprised to learn what birds were in the area.

In these days of electronic media I thought I would do a similar thing only replace the old white board technology with an email. Each Monday morning I will write up a listing of all the birds observed since the last report and send it to the membership distribution list for the club. Not only will

this serve to alert those members living in the area of which species they need to get out and see, but it will also allow those who will be coming later to see what they are missing.

Please feel free to send me a short note of what you are seeing each week. Ideally, you will send it over the weekend so that it is waiting for me Monday morning. I will do my best to get the reports compiled and into some sort of logical format for distribution no later than Tuesday morning. Please send your reports to me at dcook@wmibt.com.

Don't limit yourself to birds. I will be happy to include any quirk of nature you

happen to note so long as I can get it all done in a reasonable period of time. I will send the first email April 2nd and continue through the end of May. After that, we'll see.....



PINE SISKIN

Photo by Carl Freeman

BENZIE Audubon Club

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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 (see map). Field trips are taken throughout the year.

PLEASE JOIN US

Thursday, May 3, 7:00 p.m. at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia

"Plants and Habitats for Attracting Birds to Your Feeders"

Tom Ford of Wild Birds Unlimited and Four Seasons Nursery will be at our May meeting to tell us how to attract more birds to our yards.