



October 2008

Edited  
by Carl Freeman

The Meadowlark is the newsletter of the  
Benzie Audubon Club

Dedicated To Increasing Our Knowledge Of The Natural World

Printed on Recycled Paper

# The Meadowlark



## President's Thoughts

The Secret to Seeing More Birds



## 2008 Schedule Owl Hike

Oct. 25th, 6:15 PM, River Rd & Adams Rd. BVT access site. An easy hike on the BVT to see if we can call up an owl. Dress for the weather and bring a flashlight.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Annual Meeting & Pot Luck Nov. 6th, 6 PM

After the potluck dinner and a brief business meeting,

**Jim Reynolds**

will present a program on  
**Wild Turkeys.**

Bring a dish to pass  
and your table service.

**Join us at the Tribal  
Outpost on Hoadley Road.**



\*\*\*\*\*

## Christmas Bird Count

**Sunday December 21st**

Count birds in the field (call Carl 352-4739 to join a group) for all or part of the day, or do a feeder count (call John at 325-2425. Meet at 5 PM for pot luck & tally at the Benzonia township hall.

Most Audubon clubs begin their meetings as we do, with recent sightings. At our old club in Oakland County there were always a few claimed sightings that raised eyebrows ("I had a peregrine chasing a dove in my back yard" or "I saw red crossbills at Kensington Metropark"). But there was one guy named Wayne Wilson who always came up with birds no one else had seen, and most were in his own yard! Since he was an excellent birder and hardly a braggart, I took his sightings at face value.

What was Wayne's secret? Why did he have all the "luck"? In retrospect I can see that Wayne's success was neither mysterious nor due to luck. First, he was an excellent birder. I'm sure that this began with an interest in birds and went from there. Certainly there are all sorts of resources--publications, CD's, websites, field trips, etc.-- available to help us improve our birding skills.

Second, Wayne created a great habitat to attract birds. A landscaper, he took a rather modest home site on a small suburban lake and over the years planted trees, bushes and flowers friendly to birds. He also put in a small pond. In addition he had many bird feeders, believing that some birds would stay away from a single feeder if it meant competing with more aggressive birds.

Finally, Wayne spent much time and effort on birds. In his essay in Good Birders Don't Wear White Pete Dunne says:

*To be a good birder, you have to bird a lot. How much is a lot? A lot is pretty much all the time. Being serious is called best intentions unless you combine it with lavish amounts of time in the field. The very best birders are in the field at every opportunity, and frankly, they are really never not birding.*

This advice reminds me of a story a birding friend told me about a fisherman in Ohio who always came back with a catch. Marveling at his success, others would ask him for his secret. "It's very simple," he'd say, "it's LTIW." What's that, a new electronic gadget like GPS? No, it couldn't be any more low-tech; LTIW stands for "Line Time in Water." The fisherman said he had found a direct correlation between the amount of time he was actually fishing and the number of fish he caught.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the same sort of correlation exists in birding. If you question this, consider what Alice Van Zoeren experienced this year at Platte Point. Because she was employed by the Park to monitor piping plovers, she checked the beach virtually every working day for several months. While doing this she found a red knot and several other uncommon shorebirds that would not have been seen without her daily regimen.

So there's your big secret for seeing more birds: LTIW. (But for good measure, better not overlook the part about being a good birder.)

John Ester