

October 2012



Edited by John Ester

The Newsletter of the Benzie Audubon Club

# The Meadowlark

Dedicated to Increasing our Knowledge of the Natural World

## *From the President By Doug Cook*

I am glad to report that the Benzie Audubon Club is alive and well. In fact, I think it is safe to say we are thriving. In this year alone we will have conducted 15 field trips, participated in 4 bird counts, and hosted 6 programs. Our programs have all been very well attended thanks to the outstanding efforts of outgoing Program Chairman David Lean. Dave has held down this demanding post for the past two years, working tirelessly to bring our members interesting and informative programs every two months. Dave is leaving the board to pursue other interests, and we wish to thank him for a great job. Replacing Dave will be Bill Gittlen, who is already hard at work lining up another great program schedule for 2013.

In tough economic times like those we have been going through environmental issues seem to take a back seat, as people understandably concern themselves with more personal issues. Yet it is at these very times when we must be at our most vigilant. Otherwise gains made through hard work and extraordinary effort in the past will be cast aside as attempts are made to find legitimate ways to balance budgets and cover ever-rising costs, or to illegitimately further causes less friendly to the environment than they should be. It is our hope, and part of our mission, to help educate people to the interconnectedness of the natural world around us.

This is the time of year when we remind our members to consider renewing their membership for another year. We really do only two things with the funds we take in, pay for programs and fund mini-grants to groups undertaking activities which further our mission. Occasionally, we buy a few stamps or a ream of paper, but most of the material and all of the time it takes to carry on the work of the club is donated by board members, club members, or visitors who appreciate what we are doing. We also need to acknowledge and thank the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians for the use of their magnificent Tribal Center for our program meetings. Their generosity has provided us with a consistent meeting location that serves our needs very well.

Finally, thanks for your participation, encouragement and appreciation for what we are trying to do. We hope you will continue to join with us as we move into another exciting year of exploring, understanding and appreciating the living world.

American Pipit by Joe Brooks



## *Don't Miss the Annual Meeting!*

Once again there are compelling reasons to attend our annual meeting at **6:00 p.m.** on **Thursday, November 1st** at the **Tribal Outpost** at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia:

- Beginning at 6:00 there will be a **silent auction** of books and other items of interest to birders, so bring your checkbook!
- Also commencing at 6:00 will be our **potluck dinner**, so bring a dish to share, table service and your appetite.
- Following dinner there will be a **brief business meeting** at which we will elect five of our ten Board members. The positions and nominees are President (Doug Cook), Secretary (Paula Dreeszen), Program Chair (Bill Gittlen), Publicity Chair (Sally Cook) and Mini-Grant Chair (Wes Blizzard).
- After the election we will have our **program**: SBDNL Ranger Amie Lipscomb on “The Impact of Invasive Species on Birds in the Park.” Learn what role exotic species play in spreading Botulism E that can kill ducks and other migrants.



Redhead at Platte Bay



## *Looking Ahead*

The fun will not end with our annual meeting. On November 3rd Carl Freeman will lead another fall birding trip along the shores of Lake Michigan. This will be followed on December 16th by our participation in National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. This event has been conducted nationally for more than 100 years and locally for 50 years or so. Local participants can count birds in the field with experienced leaders or at home looking at their own feeders. At the end of the day everyone gathers at the Benzonia Township Hall for a supper and tally. Almost always an unexpected bird or two will have been counted, such as a Virginia Rail last year.

Our first program of the new year will be on Thursday, January 3rd. It will feature Brian Allen, who will be returning to the Tribal Outpost to present a program on his Michigan Big Year. On March 7 retired DNR wildlife biologist Jerry Weinrich will give a PowerPoint program on “Michigan Eagles and Ospreys—An Overview.”

Kirtland Warblers will be the subject of our May 2 meeting, and the Board hopes to arrange a field trip shortly thereafter to the Kirtland Warbler breeding grounds near Roscommon. Finally, Jim McGrath of Nature Discoveries will return in July . . . with live snakes! Clearly it will be another busy Benzie Audubon year.



Hog-nosed Snake by Carl Freeman

## *Recent Bird Sightings* By Carl Freeman

Dickcissels were “the” bird of the summer and were recorded in every county in Michigan except Keweenaw (where there are no fields). Locally they were at traditional areas near Esch Road and in several sites in northern Manistee County. Several singing Hooded Warblers were again in the Watervale area, and I saw my first evidence of breeding for this species. There were up to four singing male Prairie Warblers along the lakeshore in Good Harbor Bay where there has been only one in recent years. Two Merlin nests were found near Bear Lake, firsts for there.

Shorebirds of note were several sightings of Stilt Sandpipers on the mudflats in Betsie Bay. Golden Plovers were also seen, and one was still present on October 7th. But fewer shorebirds were seen than last year, probably because they were spread out with suitable habitat available in many places. Up to 100 Turkey Vultures—a high local count—have been feasting on the stranded salmon in Betsie Bay. The mudflats also have hosted large flocks of American Pipits.



American Golden-Plover

Carl Freeman

Fall has brought the largest numbers of White-crowned Sparrows I can remember, and reports indicate that it will be a large invasion year for Pine Siskins, with many reports in Michigan and all over the East. Maybe it will be a good finch year to liven up the winter.



Greater Shearwater by Alice Van Zoeren

Without a doubt the sighting of the year was the bird spotted by member Alice VanZoeren on her shoreline count at Platte Point September 7th. Realizing that she was dealing with a rarity, Alice sent photos of the bird to Michigan’s birding elite, who identified the bird as Michigan’s first-ever Greater Shearwater! She also was kind enough to alert those of us on a nearby field trip. The word quickly spread, and birders came from near and far to look for the bird, which appeared unhealthy after being blown miles off course by Hurricane Isaac. Unfortunately the bird died that night before others could see it, leaving Alice as the only one to have seen this pelagic bird in Michigan.

### *Time to Renew!*

Our membership dues run from annual meeting to annual meeting, so it’s time to renew! For your convenience we have enclosed a self-addressed return envelope that’s also a renewal form. Just complete the form, enclose your check, stamp the envelope and drop it in the mail. Or bring your envelope to the annual meeting and save the stamp!

# BENZIE Audubon Club

P. O. Box 804  
Frankfort, MI 49635



Dedicated to  
Increasing Our Knowledge  
of the Natural World

We are on the Web at  
[www.benzieaudubon.org](http://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.

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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, November 1, 6:00 p.m. at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia  
Silent Auction, Potluck Dinner, Election of Officers, and Program**  
Park Ranger Amie Lipscombe will tell us about "The Impact of Invasive Species on Birds in the Park."