



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

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The Meadowlark



President's Thoughts

The Secret to Seeing More Birds



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

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.

Another Great Year On the Bluebird Trail

This year saw the greatest use of the bluebird boxes ever along the Betsie Valley Trail. Forty of the fifty boxes were used and 27 of these were used by bluebirds. Another 11 were used by tree swallows, one by a house wren and one by a chickadee. Tree swallows enjoyed an 82% nest success rate fledging an estimated 36 young. The bluebird nest success rate was only 54%, but as there were 27 nests they still managed to produce an estimated 58 young bluebirds. The lone wren nest was successful, but the only chickadee nest was not.

One house was removed as being beyond repair while 2 others were still repairable. Hopefully all three of these houses will be back in action again next year.

Keith Westphal



Frankfort Elementary School



House Wren

Wren House Project

Benzie Audubon awarded the Frankfort Elementary School a \$500 mini-grant for a creative ceramics project designed to inspire environmental awareness. Forty-eight students participated in this project, each designing and constructing a wren house at the high school ceramics studio.

Wes Blizzard, Chair of Benzie Audubon's Mini-Grant Committee, instructed the students as to the proper dimensions and particular needs of nesting wrens, as well as the best locations for wren houses.

With the guidance of Wes and art teacher Eileen Millard, the students used clay and various stains and glazes to waterproof their creations. Their wren houses were creative and interesting, and their parents were also thrilled with them! And, of course, all the wrens in Benzie County were happy with their new homes.

-- Wes Blizzard

I believe this is a Wood Turtle (if wrong, please let me know). They spend the summer away from water and return in the fall. This one was basking along the Betsie River on the last warm sunny day of the fall.

Nominating Committee Report

According to its bylaws, Benzie Audubon Club's board is made up of ten members, and the term for each board position is two years. Half of the positions become open each year, and new board members are elected at the Annual Meeting. This year's nominating committee was made up of board members Sally Cook (Publicity) and Char Ester (Membership). Their job was easy because the persons now holding the five open positions were all willing to sign on for another term.

The open positions and current office holders:

President – John Ester

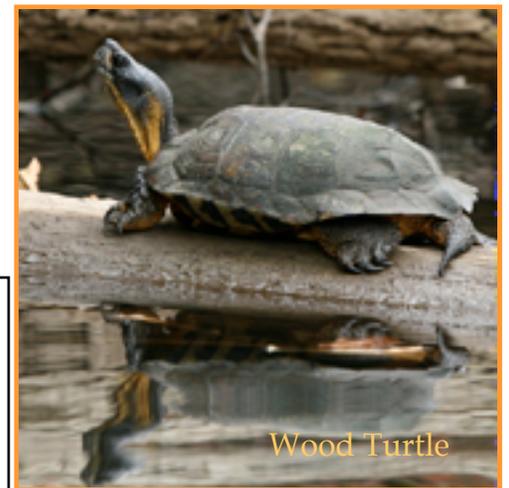
Secretary – Paula Dreeszen

Programs – Judy Macey (Judy has served one year in this position.)

Publicity – Sally Cook

Mini-Grants – Wes Blizzard (Wes has served one year in this position.)

Additional nominations from the floor to fill these five positions will be very welcome. The Board meets every two months to discuss club business and to plan programs and activities. If you have an interest in serving on the Benzie Audubon Board, please tell one of the board members. The other five positions (Vice President, Membership, Treasurer, Field Trips, and Conservation) will be open next fall at the Annual meeting.



Wood Turtle

TIME TO RENEW!

Membership dues at Benzie Audubon run from annual meeting to annual meeting. That means it's time to renew your membership! For everyone's convenience we have enclosed a self-addressed return envelope that also serves as a renewal form. Just complete the form, enclose your check, stamp the envelope and drop it in the mail.

--Char Ester, Membership Chair

2009 SCHEDULE

When you renew your membership you will be supporting programs like the two already scheduled for 2009, receive our newsletter and e-mail notices of programs and field trips.

2009 Programs Scheduled so far

January Meeting - Bats

March Meeting- Purple Martins



Fork-tailed Bush Katydid

When you are out and about remember there are other insects besides dragonflies to discover.

Field Trip Planning Meeting

Saturday Nov. 1st - 10 AM at Carl Freeman's (352-4739).

Anyone interested in helping to plan field trips is welcome to come and put in your 2 ¢ worth about field trips for next year.

Mini-Grants

Benzie Audubon offers Mini grants to anyone in Benzie Co. with a natural history related project that needs funding. Go to <http://www.benzieaudubon.org/mini-grants.html>

to get an application form.

Our Mini-grants are supported by donations. Benzie Audubon recently received a donation in the name of Virginia Weadock. We are very grateful for this generous donation. The people of Benzie County will benefit through activities supported by donations like this.

Examples of Mini-Grants funded this year are Wings of Wonder Raptor Program, Platte River Elementary School; Wren House building (see article p. 2); Crystal Lake Elementary 2nd grade field trip to a bog; Bird Seed for the feeders at the Maples (in progress).



Frigatebird

Be sure to call the Editor (that's Carl at 352-4739) first if you see one of these.

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.

MOST IMPORTANT NUMBER IN THE WORLD ?

No, it is not your computer password. It is the safe line for parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere to stabilize the Earth's climate. Go to

www.350.org

and become informed about the most important issue of our time. Right now you might think that is the current financial crisis but if global climate change continues on the present path it will make any problems we have now seem trivial.

Recent Sightings

It has been a good fall for sparrows, especially White-crowns. Brian Allen spotted an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull on the beach in Manistee. There was one there last year for a while and sometimes gulls have been known to return to the same place for years. A true vagrant was a Frigatebird reported over Lake Leelanau. This is a bird of tropical seas and was probably forced off course by a hurricane. Oct. is a good time for waterfowl in Lake MI with Cm. Loons, Horned Grebes, Red-necked Grebes, and White-winged Scoters being seen off Pt. Betsie.



White-crowned Sparrow - Adult Complete with sunflower seed in its bill (not a field mark!)