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GBBC Biggest Yet

The 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count went world-wide for the first time with over 103 countries participating around the globe. New records were set with over 25.5 million birds observed from over 120,000 checklists submitted by participants. Nearly one third of the world's total species were counted which amounted to 3,144 species.

Locally, Iosco County again ranked in the top ten Michigan counties with 61 species. An unusual number of red-headed woodpeckers were recorded in Iosco. Six were sighted in the Sand Lake area, while 3 were sighted off Bissonette Rd. near Lorenz, and one in Lakewood Shores.

Other uncommon sightings included a horned lark, snow buntings, dark-eyed juncos, a brown thrasher, and a belted kingfisher. Numerous waterfowl were also observed such as long-tailed ducks, goldeneyes, buffleheads, mergansers, and redheads.

As of March 28 of this year the final results of the 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count are still not available. GBBC indicates a final survey is forthcoming. It's no wonder. Almost 135,000 checklists were submitted from 110 countries in three languages over a four day period. Can you imagine the difficulty in sorting all that out and verifying that ten red-headed woodpeckers in Oscoda County, Michigan in February were not red-bellied woodpeckers?

Butterflies and Insects

US Forest Service Biologist Paul Thompson's Power Point presentation at our February 12 meeting at the Robert Parks Library was well attended with over forty members present. Here in Iosco County we are fortunate to have the right geographic conditions to be able to observe butterflies and dragonflies in their fall migration. Paul made us aware of the Karner's blue butterfly and its dependence on lupine in the same way the monarchs are dependent on milk weed. We have lots of milkweed here and lots of monarchs. If we had some wild lupine growing here perhaps we could be part of the endangered Karner's blue butterfly conservation project. Wild lupine grows naturally on the west side of our state where the Karner's blue is holding on. We have never found it here. It might be interesting to find out why.

Bluebird Workshops

AVA members helped Emily and Bob Kemnitz put on bluebird box assembly workshops for sixth graders at Hale and Oscoda Richardson Elementary Schools on Wednesday, March 20 and Tuesday, March 26 respectively. Twenty-eight students learned to assemble the pre-cut wooden parts at Hale and ninety at Oscoda. This is always fun for us and the students take a real interest in doing it right.

The bluebird workshop project was started in local schools many years ago by Homer Roberts, a man who wanted to get children involved in understanding the natural world. He was the driving force behind the popularity of the YMCA Camp Mahn-go-tah-see on Loon Lake near Hale, Michigan during the Twentieth Century.



Hale Elementary student workshop photo courtesy Ruth Glom

Next Up

At our next regular meeting on Tuesday, April 9 at Tawas High School library again, Roger Eriksson will tell us almost everything he knows about wood ducks. He recently took a photo of two eastern screech-owls at one of his wood duck boxes. He apologizes because the photo was not as sharply focused as is his custom, but, even a little fuzzy, it is a gem. I'm sure it will be one of the slides you will see as part of his talk. (OK, Roger?) We will all want to be there to see it. It can be guaranteed it will be just one of many you will remember for a long time.

May Meeting

Since this will be the last newsletter before the Festival, you will want to be reminded that the regular May meeting before the Festival will be held at the Trinity Lutheran Church on the west side of US-23 along church row north of the F-41 intersection in Oscoda, not at Sprinkler Lake, as indicated on your program schedule. It will be a pot luck dinner meeting and will start at 6:00 p.m. Bring your most delicious casserole or dessert. Coffee will be available.

All board members are already committed to a second year so there will not be an election at the meeting this year.

There is bound to be a lot of information about getting ready for the Festival.

It is a very important meeting.

More Trivia

Have you ever seen a “dole of doves” or, a “charm of goldfinches” or, a “scold of jays” or, a “sord of mallards” or, a “lamentation of swans”? I guess we do lament mute swans here in North America. According to the 2012 Christmas Bird Count 5,158, a 21% increase, were seen here in Michigan.



Paul Thompson, February 2013

Courtesy Photo



Tawas Point State Park Beach, March 25, 2013

Courtesy Photo