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Thunder Bay Exchange

On Tuesday October 15 ten members of Au Sable Valley Audubon joined the Thunder Bay Audubon members for lunch at Jimmy Chen's Hunan Chinese Restaurant in Alpena before our annual fall exchange meeting.

The guest speaker was Sue Tangora, Program Coordinator for Invasive Species and Private Lands of the Wildlife Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, who spoke about "Mounting a Response to a New Aquatic Invader; Early Detection and Rapid Response to European Frogbit."

European frogbit is a small floating plant with smooth, kidney-shaped leaves 1-2" wide and small three-petalled white flowers. It forms a huge biomass and thrives in coastal wetlands and calm or stagnant fresh water during the summer. In the fall before it dies it produces seeds called turions which sink to the bottom. The dead vegetation forms a floating mass which also eventually sinks to the bottom. The turion forms a new plant in spring and begins a new season. Frogbit is tolerant of cold weather but does not do well in turbulent water. It quickly fills small ponds and canals crowding out all other vegetation.

Controlling its growth is a problem. In small areas, harvesting with a rake and pulling the biomass to shore is most effective. The plant dies within two days. However, the effort required to bring the plant to shore is intense. There are many areas where it is already found around Alpena's Thunder Bay, Saginaw Bay, and Lake St. Clair. We were encouraged to report any locations where it is observed to the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network. MISIN at:

<http://www.misin.msu.edu/>



Sandhills and Supper

Twelve AVA members met at Sage Lake and M-55 on the windy and chilly evening of Friday, Oct 25 about an hour before sunset. They carpooled and drove south on Sage Lake road to the harvested corn fields and found hundreds of cranes foraging there. They continued two more miles south to Mills road and the Mitigation pond and parked at the top of the hill near the fire station. Here, over the course of the next 30 minutes, until sunset, they watched as hundreds of cranes flew in from the north to land in the ponds in front of them. The leader, Larry Van Wagoner, said they didn't count during the birds this viewing opportunity but with counts on days before and soon afterward he felt confident there were at least 1425 cranes there this year. He added that the cranes were still present in this area as late as November 9. On October 29 he reported the sandhill crane count there at the Mitigation Pond to Ron Hoffman for the Annual Michigan Sandhill Crane Survey before also sharing the data with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Soon after the sun set, they left the ponds to share dinner and a warming and welcome wood stove at the Cafe International in nearby Prescott.

Fur the Love of It



At our regular November meeting we enjoyed a presentation by member Ed Wojahn on the subject of trapping of furbearing animals in the Tawas Marsh area. He, his father and his sons have been harvesting muskrat, beaver and other mammals there since he was a youth. His display included a stuffed mink, a coyote, a curing beaver pelt and other marsh animals in several stages of preservation.

Trumpeter Bonanza



Swans Landing at Alcona Pond *Courtesy of Deb Wirth*

On Wednesday November 13 nine members met in Glennie to travel to Alcona Dam Pond with Maggie Berch to see if the trumpeter swans had returned from their northern breeding grounds. Were they ever lucky! There must have been close to two hundred when we arrived. They were difficult to count because they were flying around and many more seemed to be coming in from the north. Of the two hundred about thirty were cygnets.



December Meeting

Our December meeting will be at Robert J Parks Library on Skeel Street of the old Air Force Base on Tuesday, the 10th. It will be at 1:00 p.m. so we will not have to drive home after dark. There will be a preview of the birds we might expect to see on our Christmas Bird Counts this year. You will also have an opportunity to share bird-related Christmas gift ideas with others. Perhaps we can meet for lunch somewhere before the meeting.

Christmas Bird Count

This year will be the One-hundred Fourteenth Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Why Christmas? It's a tradition. It's a time to celebrate. For us at Au Sable Valley Audubon it's a time to celebrate birds. It's close to the shortest daylight hour day. We know they will lengthen soon. We know it's getting closer to the time our summer birds return. It's a time to celebrate.

So what do we do to celebrate? We go out and count the birds we do have this time of year. And we rejoice in that. We get together to celebrate the birds and each other. It's party time.

We don't have to be good birders to celebrate. We can just go along and marvel at how the good birders identify birds. Some of them are exceptionally talented at it. We can learn a little about how they do it. We can celebrate that. We can learn where to go to find birds. They don't hang out everywhere; just where there's food and shelter. We can celebrate that.

So, come and join us this year, especially if you've never done a Christmas Bird Count before. It's a celebration. It's a party. But dress warmly; some of it is outdoors.

The first count will be held in Tawas on Monday, December 16 where we will meet at 7:00 a.m. at Big Boy Restaurant. Lunch will be at Hsing's at noon.

The second will be conducted in the Oscoda/Au Sable area. We will meet at Mama's Kitchen in Au Sable just north of the US-23 bridge at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, December 20. Lunch will be at Wiltse's Restaurant on F-41 near Wurtsmith at 12:00.

Website Content Needed

We are looking for more content for our AVA web site. Please send us pictures and/or short narratives which we can post on the site: <http://ausablevalleyaudubon.com>. We need the help of you, our members, to keep our web site fresh and topical. Remember that our programs cover many subjects including birds, plants, wildlife, advocacy and environmental issues.

Send any items to our web site content mailbox at avasubmissions@gmail.com. We may or may not use all of what you send. Remember that if you send a photo, it should be yours. We will add a copy prevention watermark to it before posting. Also, please include some basic information with your photos: what is it, when did you take it, where you were, who else was with you, and perhaps what you were doing.

Did you know there are four classifications of eagles in the world? Our bald eagle is a sea eagle. Although there are sea eagles on all continents except South America the bald eagle is indigenous only to North America. Alaska is as close as it gets to Asia.

The Wojahn Team Photo *Courtesy of Larry Van Wagoner*