



Grand Haven, Michigan

February 21

7:00 P.M.

Volume 28, Issue 5

February, 2017

Birds & Wine of Chile & Argentina, Moai of Easter Island

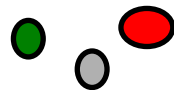
Where else but Chile and Argentina can you sample some of the world's best wines, see some great new life birds, and all the while taking in stunning mountain vistas? **JOIN CARL AND JUDI MANNING** for a review of our adventures in these breath-taking countries. Add in a "side trip" to the navel of the world, and you have the makings of an adventure of a lifetime.

From Santiago, Chile, a bustling metropolis, we sample the high mountain vistas and birds of the Yeso valley, home of Diademed Sandpiper-plover and Gray-breasted Seedsnipe. Later, down to the coast at Valparaiso, and a pelagic trip with petrels, albatrosses and shearwaters. In between, tasting visits to sample some of Chile's best wines.

Leaving Chile behind, we climb over the high Andes toward Mendoza, Argentina, and more birds and wine. Mendoza is the Malbec capital of the world, and we sample some of the best. A trip north in the Monte desert, and we find Brown Cacholote and Spotted Rail.

Back to Santiago for a "short hop" to Easter Island – only 2,500 miles from anywhere. The moai are awe-inspiring, and the history and archaeology of Rapa Nui makes an amazing story of resilience and survival. Carl and Judi, members of Owashtanong Islands Audubon Club, have enjoyed combining their passion for birding and photography for many years. Come join us for a sample of South American birds and wines.

ALSO



Pam K will give a brief talk and introduction to the **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid** that is currently moving through the Muskegon and Ottawa counties affecting Hemlock trees exclusively. Winter is the most critical season to spot them.

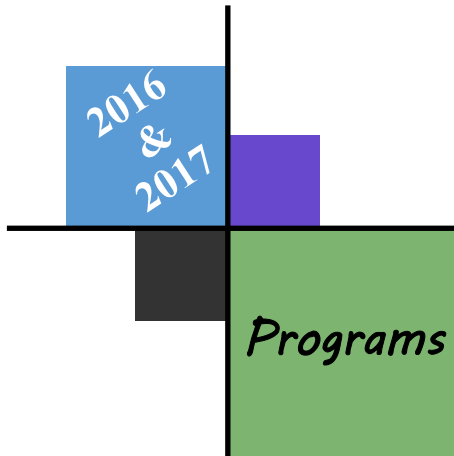
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We welcome everyone to OIAS's free programs.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
524 Washington
Grand Haven



March 21: **Vernal Pools: Coral Reefs of Michigan's Forests?** - Yu Man Lee, Michigan Natural Features Inventory

April 18: **A Life List for Fishes of the Grand River** - Daniel M. O'Keefe, Michigan Sea Grant/MSU Extension

May 16: 6:00: **Potluck, Annual Meeting, and Member Photo Festival**

The 20th annual GBBC:

February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2017

<http://www.audubon.org/content/about-great-backyard-bird-count>

Count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report your sightings online at birdcount.org. Beginning bird watchers to experts can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

May 13th Michigan Spring Migration Count

Mark your calendars now. There are many areas in Ottawa County that could be counted. Always fun to see how many new migrants you can find in one day. Let Carl know if you would like to help.

Mourning Doves

Judi Manning

Fall started out with a handful of Mourning Doves. As January morphed into February, the numbers in our yard increased to the highest number we have had in the yard. The first week in February we consistently had 60 Mourning doves, mostly on the ground, but some on the feeders. Twenty minutes before sunrise, and the ground was a dark moving mass of birds, sometimes packed six abreast.

A number of birds lounge around in the pine tree not far from the 'dinner table' until spooked by a passing car. What a sight when they are spooked. They fly off in all different directions.

Photo shows some of the birds in the trees. How many can you count?



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<http://www.oias.org>

Scoters

Judi Manning

Excerpts/Synopsis: Scoters, Eirik A.T. Blom, Bird Watcher's Digest, Nov./Dec./ 1999, Pgs. 24-29

Scoters migrate through Michigan. They are large, dark, heavy bodied diving ducks. They are easy to spot if in a mixed flock of flying ducks because of the heavy bills and cocked up tail like a large ruddy duck.

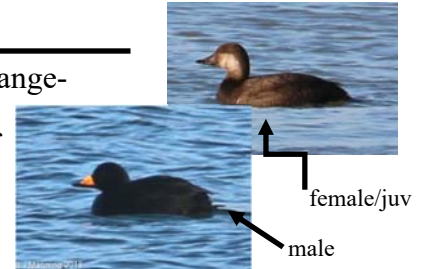
Scoters are more common on Lake Michigan rather than inland lakes. Male scoters are more obvious than the medium brown females.

Light conditions play an important part in identifying scoters as well as other species of birds.

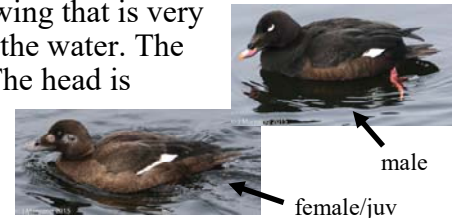
Surf Scoter – Adult males have large, bright-orange bills with black disc on both sides. A one of a kind look! Females are plain brown with white patches on the front of the face and the nape which can be seen at a distance. They have a flat forehead like a canvasback profile.



Black Scoter – The male is all black nearly nondescript except for the huge orange-yellow knob at the base of the bill. The bill is smaller and head more rounded than other scoters. She is easy to identify as the face, the front, and the sides of the neck are pale gray, almost white.



White-winged Scoter – also nearly nondescript black bird with a usually noticeable white, tear drop-shaped patch from the eye and extending back and up. It also has white in the wing that is very visible in flight but sometimes hard to see when they are just sitting on the water. The female is similar to the Surf Scoter and not easy to see the difference. The head is slightly rounded and the feathering along the bill extends to the nostril.



Flight:

The white-winged scoter is the easiest to identify in flight because of its white secondaries. Males of the other two species are not difficult in flight. The white patch at the nape on the male surf scoters is easily seen at a distance. Male black scoters are uniformly black in flight. Sometimes the orange/yellow knob on the bill can be seen.

Identifying the female black and surf scoters in flight can be difficult depending on the light conditions. The trailing edge and primaries of the underside wing of a female Black Scoter is silvery with a black leading edge, similar to a Turkey Vulture. The underwing of a female Surf Scoter is uniformly dark. Scoters fly low to the water so the underwing identification is often very difficult.



Surf Scoter



Black Scoter



White-winged Scoter

Snow Goose and Ross's Goose:

Judi Manning

- Are in the Genus *Chen*.
- Have booming populations possibly because of warming conditions in their arctic breeding grounds.
- Both migrate through west Michigan.
- Are white, with black wingtips which can be hard to see if they are sitting on the ground.
- Each have a blue phase, but Ross's are exceedingly rare.
- Mate for life.

Small numbers of Ross's Geese can be mixed in with flocks of Snow Geese. If you see a Snow and a Ross's next to each other, it is easier to identify each, but the size is not diagnostic.

Snow Goose (<i>Chen caerulescens</i>)	Ross's Goose (<i>Chen rossii</i>)
Medium sized body length: 28-32 inches	Smaller body length: 22-24 inches
Wingspan: 54 inches	Wingspan: 51 inches
Plump body	Shorter and rounder body easier seen in flight
Longer pink bill, some beveling	Shorter, triangular pink bill, much stubbier, straight looking
Noticeable dark grin patch or "black lips"	Grayish/bluish warty bumps base of upper mandible (adult). Grin patch not present
Strongly curved border of feathering at base of bill	Relatively straight border of feathering at base of bill and somewhat variable
Longer, wedge-shaped head	Rounder head, steeper forehead
	Eyes sit lower on head
Long, thick neck	Shorter neck
White plumage, sometimes rusty staining on head from minerals where eat	Typically very white plumage
Large flocks migrate together	Recognized as a different bird by explorers in 1770; not described to science until 1861
	Blue phase discovered in 1970's

There are hybrids of these two geese. Hybrids can be identified by an intermediate head and bill characteristics, line of feathering at bill base, amount of beveling or gaps.

The Snow Goose, once protected, has rebounded to over 4.5 million breeding pairs. They now overgraze the feeding grounds resulting in soil erosion, water evaporation, and destruction of fragile tundra along the migration route. Thousands can be seen at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

To see more photos, go to: http://biology.eku.edu/kos/goose_id.htm

References: Identification of Snow and Ross's Goose, By Bill Schmoker and Mike Freiberg, <http://www.surfbirds.com/Features/nikonsnowgeese0210/snowrossgoose.html>; David Roemer, Kentucky Ornithological Society, http://biology.eku.edu/kos/goose_id.htm; http://sdakotabirds.com/diffids/snow_vs_ross.htm; <http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/rosss-goose>; Ross's Goose, <https://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/Infocenter/i1700id.html>; <http://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/specialfeatures/animals/birds/snow-goose.xml>

SNOW POLICY: No meeting if Grand Haven Schools are closed.

Snow Goose



More photos next page

Snow Goose



Grin patch



rounder head



Blue Phase



Bosque-sunrise



Ross's Goose

Critter Selfies

Judi Manning

In November, 2016, the University of Michigan began a three-year project lead by U of Michigan wildlife ecologist Nyeema Harris who installed 150+ research grade motion-triggered cameras in several habitats to get photos of Michigan's diverse wildlife.

The goal of this project is to determine where populations of carnivores are in Michigan and how they are coping with pressures caused by humans, such as urbanization and climate change. The animals include: badgers, weasels, minks, raccoons, badgers, skunks, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, bears, wolves and lynx and maybe even mountain lions.

By November 18th, hundreds of thousands of photos had been taken and Nyeema's team is asking for the public's help to identify the animals and catalog the images. She said "Our citizen scientists will be a huge help to us, whether that person is an elementary school student in Detroit or a retired accountant in Montana." Most images will be looked at 15 different times by different volunteers to ensure accuracy. Researchers will then evaluate the consensus. People can check out the project and help the identification process on the [Michigan ZoomIN site](#).

They are also collecting and analyzing animal waste and hair fibers from three of the sites. One is the woods at UN's Biological Station, a 10,000 acre swath of land in the northern tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula and at the Huron Mountain Club in the Upper Peninsula. They are also collecting data from the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

All collected data will help wildlife management and conservation efforts in Michigan by showing where various species can be found and how animal populations are shifting. "Nature has to do some adjusting around the things people are manipulating in the environment," she said. "We want to be able to say what changes can we anticipate in the future and how might these animals respond to them."

The cameras were shut down in December and will be used in west Africa. Next summer they will again be taking animal selfies.

Anyone interested in helping catalog animals should log on to the project's [website](#) or email michiganzoomin@umich.edu.

References on Page 7

Building Birding Skills

Judi Manning

There are over 800 species of birds in the U.S. and Canada. Many birds are similar looking. Where to begin when you see an unfamiliar bird? Look for field marks: general size and shape, color, behavior of the bird, and what habitat it is in. Watch and study the bird to learn as many details as you can. Jot down notes before looking in a field guide or online app.

Size, Shape, Color:

Silhouettes tell the size, proportions, and posture of a bird useful to narrow the species down. Some examples: blue heron / northern cardinal / American goldfinch / hummingbird / woodpecker.

The size could be difficult. The distance away, if it is fluffed up or hunkered down makes a difference. Compare a mystery bird to the size of a familiar species.

What is the type, size, color, and shape of its bill? What is the leg length and color? What tail, head, and body shape does it have? Does it have wingbars? Is the bill short and stocky or long and slender? These are important observations to narrow the bird down to its family.

Make note of the overall color pattern and any flashes of color. Warblers look different in spring and fall because of the molt. There are some species that have tricky identifications depending on how boldly or finely patterned a bird is for example House Finch vs. Purple Finch.

Behavior:

Birds act, move, sit, and fly differently. The posture and movement are helpful in identification to narrow down the number of species to look at. In the water: is it dabbling or diving? Is it sitting horizontal vs. upright? Is it skulking, hopping, flitting about or scanning the foliage? Is it at the bird feeder? Foraging on the ground? In winter and early spring, many insect eating birds are found eating suet or peanuts at a feeder.

Does it have a swooping, bouncy, or straight path flight? Buteos fly with deep, regular wingbeats. Sharp-shinned hawks do a few stiff flaps and then glide. Falcons have powerful beats with their sharply pointed wings.

Habitat:

Is the bird at the base of a tree? Wetland or woodland? Along a fencerow? This also helps to narrow down the species.

Look at the range maps that show the times of the year birds will generally be in a section of the country. Rare birds do occur in Michigan and there were many birds last year. Chipping Sparrows migrate south and are replaced by the similar looking American Tree Sparrow.

Unsure of what might be in our area. eBird is the place to go. Follow this link: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/occurrence/> Click on the bird species and watch the migration north and south based on data received by Cornell from eBird. There are bar charts and lots of useful information on the eBird website.

Most important go out and enjoy the birds and the rest of nature.

Both of the references have lots more great information. Check them both out.

Get the free Merlin App. It can help identify birds by optical recognition.

References: Building Skills: The 4 Keys to Bird Identification, April 20, 2009
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/building-skills-the-4-keys-to-bird-identification/>; Tips & Tricks to Identifying Your Backyard Birds, Compliments of Wild Birds Forever,
<http://www.birdsforever.com/bird-identification-tips.html>

The newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

While out meandering Ottawa County, it is always interesting to watch birds eating in their “natural habitats”. It also shows the importance of berries and foraging areas in our landscape and yards.



American Goldfinch & Evening Primrose along highway



Tufted Titmouse caching food in yard



Yellow-rumped Warbler eating poison ivy berries



American Robin eating native grapes

Critter Selfies References: “Critter selfies: Michigan wildlife caught on camera” Doyle Rice , USA Today, Published 1:06 p.m. ET Nov. 18, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/sciencefair/2016/11/18/wildlife-selfies-michigan/94039034/>; “UM researcher’s wildlife project is da photobomb”, [Charles E. Ramirez](http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/11/23/um-researchers-wildlife-project-da-photobomb/94367690/) , The Detroit News Published 11:59 p.m. ET Nov. 23, 2016, <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/11/23/um-researchers-wildlife-project-da-photobomb/94367690/>

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Check Member Type: \$18 Individual or Family \$30 Contributing
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Grand Haven, Michigan



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FAR FLOWING WATER

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Far Flowing Water is published eight times per year. If you would like to contribute a complete article for the next issue, please have your articles to me by March 1st

Mission Statement
Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society
 a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation

Provide stewardship of local Grand River island wildlife sanctuaries owned by the Michigan Audubon Society;
 Achieve through education, public recognition of the value and need for protecting and preserving wildlife, plants, soil, water and other natural resources as well as an understanding of their interdependence;
 Promote an interest in our native birds and as well as native flora and fauna, and their habitats because of their great economic, cultural and recreational value; and
 Aid the Michigan Audubon Society in its study, conservation and research efforts.



A Day in the Life of a Snowy Owl

We came upon this Snowy Owl in Gratiot County and watched two American Crows harass it. They walked up to it and flew over it for about five minutes. The owl just moved his head from side to side watching it. The Snowy Owl stood its ground and the crows left. We have not seen an encounter with a Snowy Owl before.



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FEBRUARY 21, 2017
7:00
CHILE, ARGENTINA &
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CARL & JUDI MANNING