



Grand Haven, Michigan

**March 21**

**7:00 P.M.**

Volume 28, Issue 6

March, 2017

## Vernal Pools: Coral Reefs of Michigan's Forests?

**Yu Man Lee** has been a Conservation Scientist and Zoologist/Herpetologist with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), a program of MSU Extension, since 1997. Her primary responsibilities include conducting surveys, research, and monitoring for rare animal species across the state.

Vernal pools are small, seasonally-flooded bodies of water or wetlands that form in shallow depressions in forested areas throughout Michigan. They typically fill with water in the spring and dry up by late summer or early fall. Vernal pools are important to the biodiversity and health of Michigan's forests as they provide habitat for a large number of plant and animal species, particularly invertebrates and amphibians, including rare species and some species that rely on vernal pools for their survival. Many of these wetlands have been destroyed or degraded due to a number of factors, and may be further impacted by a changing climate. Vernal pools are getting increased attention with a number of state, federal, and local agencies and individuals getting involved with vernal pool mapping, monitoring, research, outreach, and protection. These efforts include developing and implementing a statewide citizen science-based vernal pool mapping and monitoring program to help inform management and protection of these unique and important wetlands in Michigan. An overview of vernal pools and recent mapping and monitoring efforts including the citizen science program and how you can get involved will be presented.

**ALSO**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

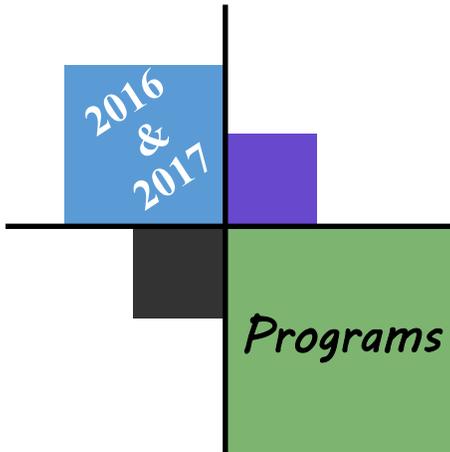
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Can you tell the difference between a Purple Finch and a House Finch? Join us for a 5 minute refresher course.

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<http://www.oias.org>



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**

Due to snow cancellation in January, Michael will present his program in May

7:00 **How do birds do it?**  
- Michael Lombardo, GVSU

### North American Migration Count Ending

Carl Manning, Ottawa County Compiler



I just received a note from the Michigan NAMC Compilers, Mike Petrucha and Jeff Buecking, that the North American Migration Count is ending. With increasing competition with eBird and International Migration Day, the decision was made to end the count with the 25<sup>th</sup> season, which was 2016. With the statewide count no longer compiled, the Ottawa County count will also end.

I appreciate all the effort made by our great team of counters over the past 11 years that I have been compiling Ottawa County. While the organized count will no longer be scheduled, I encourage all of you to get out and count on the second Saturday of May and enter your data in eBird. Continued census of the bird populations of Ottawa County will provide much needed data on trends and habitat use in our county.

### Crumpled Newsletters

I have had a few reports of newsletters crumpled or only the first page arriving by mail. I had hoped by adhering both open ends of the newsletter with round stickers it would help, but apparently it has not. Please let me know if anyone else is experiencing newsletters that are not in good condition.

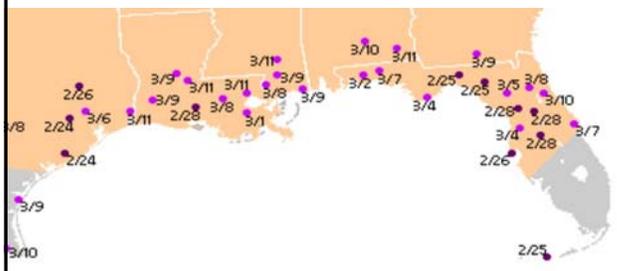
Judi

### Hummingbirds are in the US

Check this website daily to see how they are moving north:

<http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>

Here is where they were as of March 11<sup>th</sup>:



Who Am I?

Who is that?

### Mourning Doves

How many did you count in last month's photo? There were 24 in the picture. We now have between 12 and 18 foraging for breakfast at one time.



J Manning 2017

# Tundra or Trumpeter: That is the Question

Judi Manning

Large white swans with black beaks, legs and feet and hard to tell the difference at a distance. Both are seen in the US during migration and winter. Both can have orange-red staining on their necks from the tannin-stained marshes in the Upper Peninsula. The male is called a cob, the female a pen, and the babies are called cygnets.



Tundra Swan ( <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> )	Trumpeter Swans ( <i>Cygnus buccinator</i> )
Widespread, most numerous swan species; Species of Least Concern	Threatened in Michigan; Species of Least Concern rest of US
Length: 52"; Weight: 13-18 lbs.	Length: 60"; weight: 21-30 lbs.
1/2 size of Trumpeter – obvious if together	Largest swan in the world
72-80 inch wingspan and whistle when they fly	84-96 inch wingspan
Native to Europe, Asia and North America	Native to North America
Fly 3,725 miles round-trip, up to 9,000 feet and 50 MPH between their summer/winter habitats twice a year	Either non-migratory or migrates relatively short distances only as far as open water. Flight speed is clocked at 25 to 60 miles per hour
U-shaped forehead from eyes to center of bill	V-shaped forehead from eyes to center of bill
Head/bill Profile: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Smoothly rounded head</li> <li>2. Bill slightly concaved (dish-shaped) look</li> <li>3. Eye looks separate from bill; narrow lores</li> <li>4. Bill more curved right at the gape</li> <li>5. Shorter bill</li> <li>6. Yellow teardrop-shaped spot at base of bill in front of eye on 90% of Tundras</li> <li>7. Red border on lower mandible may be visible</li> </ol>	Head/bill Profile: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Angular head shape</li> <li>2. Forehead slope matches straight bill slope</li> <li>3. Eye is connected to the bill by dark skin</li> <li>4. Straight line edge of the bill to the cheek</li> <li>5. Longer bill, heavy in proportion to head</li> <li>6. No yellow spot</li> <li>7. Close up, a thin orange-red line can be seen on the lower mandible</li> </ol>
Neck: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hold neck more vertically when standing/floating</li> <li>➤ Neck straight entire time of takeoff and initial flight</li> </ul>	Neck: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Generally have neck kinked back at base when standing/floating</li> <li>➤ As become airborne, pulls neck into a shallow “S” curve.</li> <li>➤ Neck droops noticeably at base in flight</li> </ul>
Calls are high pitched quavering oo-oo-oo accentuated in the middle, woo-oo-woo	Calls are resonant, sonorous, loud, low-pitched and bugle-like
Take off easily from land and water	Getting airborne requires a lumbering takeoff along a 100-yard runway
Juveniles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ bill less black, pink of mid-bill more extensive</li> <li>⊙ are a bright silvery gray</li> <li>⊙ black legs and feet</li> <li>⊙ begins turning white in late December; by mid-March nearly all white</li> <li>⊙ stay with parents through first winter</li> </ul>	Juveniles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ base of bill and lores always black</li> <li>⊙ are dark sooty gray, especially the head and neck area</li> <li>⊙ leg and foot color is primarily yellow-orange mottling with some black</li> <li>⊙ remain darker gray longer than Tundras, with gray feathers on head and neck well into spring</li> <li>⊙ stay with parents until pair begins nesting</li> </ul>

Tundra Swan ( <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> )	Trumpeter Swans ( <i>Cygnus buccinator</i> )
In 2015 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated about 117,100 Tundra Swans in the eastern population and about 56,300 in the western population	The 2010 continental estimate of Trumpeters was 46,225, an increase of 33% since 2005 and highest recorded since the surveys began (1968) In 2015, 756 Trumpeters resided in Michigan according to the DNR
Parents defend the nest from many predators: foxes, weasels, wolves, and bears, Glaucous Gulls, Common Ravens, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers, and Golden Eagles. Wolves, people, and bears, however, are too big to fight. Most incubating swans leave their nests when predators are far away to make the nest harder to find.	Predators such as snapping turtles, great horned owls, raccoons, and minks which steal the eggs and attack the young. Young cygnets and adults are prey to fast predators such as bears, wolves, coyotes, bobcats, red foxes, and golden eagles.
<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ When swans ingest lead shot or lead fishing sinkers in wetlands and lakes.</li> <li>⊗ Ingesting only a few lead pellets can kill a swan.</li> <li>⊗ Loss of quality winter habitat including wetlands and loss of farm lands where crop residues have been important winter food resources</li> <li>⊗ The impact of climate change on wetland and upland habitats used throughout the year.</li> <li>⊗ Power lines</li> <li>⊗ Illegal shooting</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">References on Page 7</div>	

## Tundra Swan



U shape

Lewis and Clark provided the first written description of the Tundra Swan during the Pacific-slope phase of their expedition.

Lewis and Clark had the first written description of the Tundra Swan. Meriwether Lewis called them “whistling swans”. The American race of the Tundra Swan, is considered same species as the Eurasian race, the Bewick’s Swan.



Tundra

## Trumpeter Swan



V shape

In 1701 they were abundant. Their numbers plummeted in the 1800s when European settlers began clearing land, draining and filling marshes, and the swans were pursued by unregulated market hunters for meat, skins, down, and quills. By 1933, only 66 swans remained in the continental United States in remote parts of the Rocky Mountains and Alaska. By 1940, they were hunted to near extinction in the lower 48 states.

Almost 100 years passed before they were seen again in Michigan. In the 1980’s Michigan began a reintroduction program as part of the North American Restoration Plan. Eggs were collected from zoos and incubated and were reared for two years before releasing. In 1989, biologists from the DNR and Kellogg Bird Sanctuary traveled to Alaska to collect eggs from wild populations to include in the rearing program.

Michigan Audubon had an important part in their recovery also. A pair introduced in 1991 at Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary as of 2015 was still reproducing there.

If you see a Trumpeter with a neck band, note collar color and number or letters as well as date and location observed bird. Report sightings to The Trumpeter Swan Society, [www.trumpeterswansociety.org](http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org) or phone 763-694-7851.



Tundra / Trumpeter



Trumpeter

## Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* **Yes! in Michigan!**

Judi Manning

Almost always associated with drifting pack ice in the very northern reaches of the arctic. Circumpolar and found in Siberia, Canada, Greenland, and other high arctic land masses. Breeds on the coasts of Greenland and surrounding islands. Pelagic, wintering on the open Arctic Ocean from Alaska and Newfoundland and Labrador north. (whatbird.com)

- amongst the species that live the furthest north of any bird species on Earth
- only move as far south as need to in order to keep out of the near-complete darkness during the Arctic winters
- rarely ventures south of the Arctic Circle.
- adult is pure white. Young birds are mainly white with black spots on wing and tail tips that is replaced with all white feathers when they reach their second year.

It is a scavenger, eating carrion (including kills left by polar bears) and even the droppings of other animals, and aggressively fights over food. Walks on ice or beach feeding or hover and plunge down into the water to catch fish or forages by swimming or wading.

Like other species it casts up pellets of indigestible matter from its food, such as bones and fur. Pellet-casting is most frequent where lemmings are abundant and are the major prey.

Bouyant, graceful flight. and often flies with feet trailing and dangling below. It is a colony nester comprised of 5 to 60 breeding pairs.

The Ivory Gull has rapidly declined in all of its range due to climate change, pollution, and increasing human intrusion or hunting within breeding areas.

Concentrations of total mercury in eggs of this species collected from Seymour Island, Canada, have steadily increased since 1976 to levels which are now among the highest measured in seabirds (Braune *et al.* 2006), which may have had a long-term effect on breeding productivity (C. Miljeteig *in litt.* 2007). Levels of PCB and DDT are higher in eggs of this species than in all other Arctic seabirds (Braune *et al.* 2007).

First Michigan record: December 22, 1995 – January 12, 1996 in Marquette.  
(Michigan Bird Records Committee, <http://mibirdrecords.com/searchable-database/>)

A second record, a second year bird, was found in Flint on March 9, 2017 and still there as of March 12th. Over a hundred birders made the trip to Flint to see this bird. It was unbelievably tame. It sat on a piling just off from a bridge not 20 feet away while over 15 birders watched, took unknown numbers of photos and talked. Some think this bird was one previously reported on March 4, 2017 at Colchester Harbor, Essex County, Ontario.

Four other local birders were there too. Just never know how many local people and other birders around Michigan you have met somewhere will be at the same location. Always fun to talk to them.

References: Ivory Gull, <http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/ivory-gull>; David Lukas, [https://identify.whatbird.com/obj/1050/overview/Ivory\\_Gull.aspx](https://identify.whatbird.com/obj/1050/overview/Ivory_Gull.aspx); BirdLife International. 2016. *Pagophila eburnea*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016: e.T22694473A90111998. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-3.RLTS.T22694473A90111998.en>. Downloaded on 12 March 2017; <https://oceanwide-expeditions.com/to-do/wildlife/ivory-gull-1>



As of 2012 Birdlife International estimated the world population of Ivory Gulls to be anywhere between 19,000 and 27,000 birds.



April 29-30, 2017, will mark the **29th Annual Spring Fling: WPBO's Celebration of Bird Migration**. Many activities are being planned for another refreshing weekend of birding experiences including guided walks and tours, workshops, presentations, and a banquet featuring keynote speaker Josh Haas debuting his new DVD, *Hawks on the Wing*, an innovative way to identify hawks in flight. Registration is open and spots for pre- and post-event field trips are filling up fast. For more information, contact Lindsay Cain at [lcain@michiganaudubon.org](mailto:lcain@michiganaudubon.org) or (517) 580-7364.



<http://www.michiganaudubon.org/news-events/signature-events/>

### Tawas Point Birding Festival

The 2017 Tawas Point Birding Festival, May 18-20, will feature guided birding walks at the area's best hotspots, programs and talks by some of Michigan's leading wildlife experts, the Michigan Audubon bookstore, and, of course, the opportunity to enjoy the company of hundreds of your fellow birders.

### Cerulean Warbler Weekend

Mark your calendar now for June 10-11, 2017 for Cerulean Warbler Weekend, which will feature guided birding walks throughout Southwest Michigan's best hotspots, programs and talks by local wildlife experts, and, of course, the opportunity to enjoy the company of your fellow birders. Attendees will visit areas where they can find Cerulean Warbler, a bird whose numbers have been declining faster than any other North American songbird. Otis Sanctuary is also home to the elusive Henslow's Sparrow.



### Pennsylvania road closing to spare mating amphibians

<http://fox17online.com/2017/03/02/pennsylvania-road-closing-to-spare-mating-amphibians/>

Posted 9:19 AM, March 2, 2017, by [Bob Brenzing](#)

EAST STROUDSBURG, Pa. (AP) — The National Park Service has been closing a road in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in Pennsylvania so mating amphibians don't get squashed by vehicles as they seek out mates.

Park Ranger Kathleen Sandt tells WNEP-TV that River Road was closed for the first time in February due to the mild, rainy weather that prompts salamanders, wood frogs and spring peepers to mate. The park service has closed part of River Road overnights during mating season since 2003 so the amphibians can safely cross the highway to breeding pools.



The newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

References: **Tundra Swans:** [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tundra\\_Swan/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tundra_Swan/id), [https://identify.whatbird.com/obj/296/ /Tundra\\_Swan.aspx](https://identify.whatbird.com/obj/296/ /Tundra_Swan.aspx), <http://www.enature.com/fieldguides/detail.asp?recnum=bd0414>,

[http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/tundra\\_swan](http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/tundra_swan); **Trumpeter Swans:** [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370\\_12145\\_12202-33030--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10370_12145_12202-33030--,00.html); Trumpeter Swans: A Conservation Success in Michigan, Posted on November 17, 2015 by Howard Meyerson, <https://howardmeyerson.com/2015/11/17/trumpeter-swans-a-conservation-success-in-michigan/>; [https://www.fws.gov/species/species\\_accounts/bio\\_swan.html](https://www.fws.gov/species/species_accounts/bio_swan.html); Swan & Goose Identification, It's Important to Know (pdf), The Trumpeter Swan Society, <http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/juvenile-swans.html>

Distinguishing Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, February 19, 2006, by David Sibley, <http://www.sibleyguides.com/2006/02/distinguishing-trumpeter-and-tundra-swans/>



Mute Swan: Introduced  
Easy to Identify

**2016-2017 OIAS Membership Application** Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Receive  
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Grand Haven, Michigan

3/17

**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 April 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.

We welcome a new member!

Spring is right around the corner



**Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society**  
 Judi Manning, Editor  
 P.O. Box 1654  
 Holland, MI 49422  
 PLEASE FORWARD  
 ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



**MARCH 21, 2017**  
**7:00 VERNAL POOLS:**  
**CORAL REEFS OF**  
**MICHIGAN'S FORESTS?**  
**YU MAN LEE, MNFI**