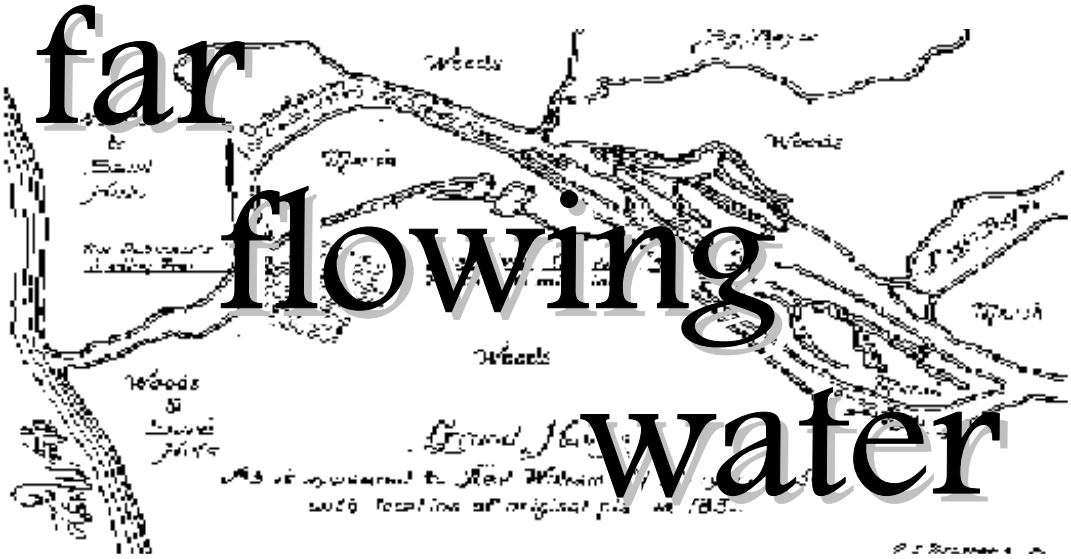
Volume 36, Issue 6 March, 2025

Grand Haven, Michigan

far flowing water



March 18 6:30 P.M.

Storm Chasing and Birding Adventures

Presented by **Isaac Polanski**, a birder since the winter of 2021 and a storm chaser since 2015.

Birds and weather share an important relationship with each other. Weather influences migration routes and fallouts, brings in vagrants, and impacts habitat from year to year. This program will review my Michigan big years of 2023 and 2024 as well as my storm chasing adventures of the same years. The relationship between birds and the weather will be discussed and how the weather has helped me find multiple rare birds.

Isaac has seen over 140 tornadoes across the United States. Both 2023 and 2024 he had over 315 bird species in Michigan. He is a graduate of Central Michigan University with a degree in Integrated Sciences for Secondary Education. He works for the City of Royal Oak in the Water Maintenance Department.

CONTENTS:

LOUTIT DISTRICT LIBRARY
407 Columbus Avenue, Grand Haven

Everyone is welcome to OIAS's programs

Visit OIAS:
- Website: http://www.oias.org
- Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/oias.org/

From the President's Desk – March 2025

Some of you may have noticed this granite bird bath in Grand Haven's Central Park and wondered about its origins. The bird bath was erected in 1917 by the Grand Haven Bird Club. I spent an afternoon in early February at Loutit District Library searching online for information about the Grand Haven Bird Club in old issues of the *Grand Haven Tribune*. The Grand Haven Bird Club was established by the naturalist Harold Baynes in 1916 during a Chautauqua Week in Grand Haven City. According to Wikipedia, Chautauqua was an adult education and social movement in the USA during the late 19th and early 20th Century that originated near Chautauqua Lake in western New York State in the late 1870s. Chautauquas brought together "… speakers, teachers, musicians, showmen, preachers, and specialists of the day." Dr. Edward Hofma (1859-1936) was made the temporary chairman of the Grand Haven Bird Club. His name is familiar because Dr. Hofma was a very prominent citizen of the Tri-Cities practicing medicine in Grand Haven and Spring Lake. He was the physician on Walter Wellman's 1898-1899 expedition to the North Pole, but unfortunately they fell 565 miles short of the Pole. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Hofma, a graduate Hope College and the University of Michigan Medical School, was a founder of the Ottawa County Medical Society, one of the original members of the Duncan Park Board of Trustees, served as a State Senator from 1914-1916, and a founder of Peoples Savings Bank and served as its President from 1910 until his death. In late May 1934, Dr. Hofma his wife Dr. Elizabeth Hofma deeded 40 acres on Ferris Street to Grand Haven Township. That land became Hofma Park. Mrs. R. W. Duncan was named secretary and Charles N. Dickinson was named treasurer of the Grand Haven Bird Club. About 100 people indicated their interest in the Club. The Club was established to encourage "wild birds and the protection of their haunts," a mission that parallels the mission of OIAS. The Club had regular meetings in the Grand Haven Library auditorium in 1916 and 1917. The Grand Haven Chamber of Commerce endorsed the Club in September 1916. Members of the Club encouraged the building of bird houses by Grand Haven Boy Scouts in March 1917 and the Boy Scouts assisted the Club in protecting native birds. W. G. Sinclair of Spring Lake presented the Club with a martin house in 1917, and the colony house was erected in Central Park. Unfortunately, the information about the Club disappears from the *Grand Haven Tribune* after 1917 and I can only assume the Club may have disbanded after that date.

While we are reviewing the history of the interest in the Tri-Cities in birds and their "haunts," I thought that you might be interested in a little of OIAS's history. Individuals interested in birds and natural history began organizing an Audubon club in the early 1990s, but it was not until January 1992 that OIAS became a named entity associated with Michigan Audubon Society, and its Bylaws adopted. The first issue of our newsletter was called the *Audubon Newsletter* and was published in January 1992 and our first OIAS program, "Birding at the Muskegon Wastewater Treatment Plant" was presented by the well-known Ottawa County birder, Jim Ponshair at First Presbyterian Church on 21 January 1992. The first issue of *Far Flowing Water* was published in April 1992. I think it is very impressive that *Far Flowing Water* has been published continuously since then under the guiding hands of Judi Manning, as Editor. The first OIAS Board of Directors consisted of Chuck Howe-President, Joe Azzarello-Vice President, Carolyn Pomarius-Treasurer, Judi Manning-Secretary, Carol Ames, Doug Knight, Betty Mattson, Jim Bullerdick, Tim Oegema. I think that we should be proud that our group is in its 33rd season as OIAS.

Please join us on 18 March at Loutit District Library to hear about birding adventures and storm chasing from Isaac Polanski. I think we will be treated to excellent images because Isaac's photo of a Redhead Duck graced the cover a recent *Living Bird* magazine. We begin with a social "hour" from 6:00-6:30 pm. The program begins at 6:30. The program is free and open to all. Invite your friends!

We continue to live-stream our programs on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/oias.org and those programs can be found on the OIAS YouTube channel at (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCg4WKwR1KqyfLoqZuoY18Jg). Please subscribe to the OIAS YouTube channel. Also, please visit our website http://www.oias.org, and, like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/oias.org. We will post birding information and information about OIAS and upcoming events there.

Good birding, Michael P. Lombardo

2024 - 2025 PROGRAMS

April 15: **Neotropical Migrants: Birding in the Americas**, Nahuel Medina
May 20: **Business Meeting**, etc.

January's cancelled program is rescheduled for April

2024-2025 MCNC/OIAS Field Trips

All field trips are from 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon

March 15, 2025	Snug Harbor and Lost Lake Trail (MSP)
April 19, 2025	Upper Macatawa Natural Area (east of Holland)
May 15, 2025	Potluck Picnic Meeting & Bird Walk (Snug Harbor)
May 17, 2025	Big Day Count
June 21, 2025	Allegan State Game Area & Crane's Orchard Rest.
July 19, 2025	Black Lake Park
August 16, 2025	Muskegon County Resource Recovery Center

SNOW POLICY:
The Board will decide and notify members via email, the website and Facebook.

Bird Word Scamble

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
1. IGWN	1.
2. ASRROPW	2.
3. EGEAL	3.
4. BKEA	4.
5. WAKH	5.
6. GGE	6.
7. CORW	7.
8. EUNNIPG	8.
9. DOEV	9.
10. TAPROR	10.
11. TFHRAEE	11.
12. BORIN	12.
13. LOW	13.
14. ESDSE	14.
15. REVNA	15.
16. YACANR	16.
17. STNE	17.
18. IEKCHNC	18.
19. EPNOGI	19.
20. AGFIMLON	20.

https://www.sciencekids.co.nz/quizzes/wordscrambles/bird.html

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Judi Manning

Polioptila caerulea

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher first described in 1766 By Linnaeus is one of the smallest songbirds only found in and native to North America. They are widespread but not abundant.

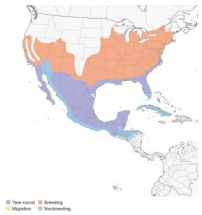
They are easily identified by the long, black tail with white edges and distinctive eye ring. The male is larger than the female and has a black stripe extending from the base of its beak, over each eye, and across each side of its head.

They are often heard before or instead of being seen. Both the female and male use high-pitched nasal calls. They also have a sharp, mewing contact call, a two-note bee-beee to show mild agitation and intense agitation causes high-pitched trills.

Male

Female

As an insectivore, it eats small insects, invertebrates, and spiders and are natural pest controllers. While foraging they are seen darting here and there and flicking their white-edged tail side to side, scaring up insects and spiders from their hiding spots or chasing them in the leaves, twigs, and bark. They also hawk insects in mid-air. Swallowing small prey alive, wings are removed from larger prey, and they beat the insect's body on a perch before eating.

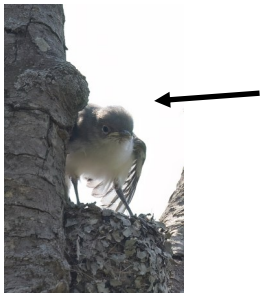


In the east they breed in deciduous forests, near habitat edges and often in moister areas. In the west, they are found in shorter woodlands and shrublands.

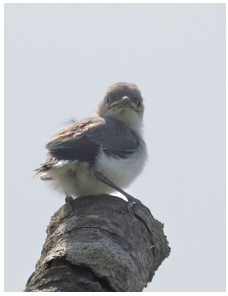
They mate for life and are monogamous. Resembling a tree knot, nests are made of spiderwebs and lichens in an attempt to camouflage it from predators. They build up to seven nests in one year re-using materials from previous nests to speed re-nesting. Their nests have frequent nest loss and brood failure due to nest parasitism, mite infestations, or predation from various bird species and mammals. Cowbirds also parasitize the nests.

Between 1966 and 2019, their population increased 0.3% per year. However, they still face deforestation and urbanization that reduce suitable foraging and breeding habitats. Altered weather patterns also affects nesting success and insect availability.

They have moved 200 miles northward since the early 20th Century due to increasing average temperatures.



Just before fledging
and right after fledging



References: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Blue-gray_Gnatcatcher/id, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Brianna Goulet, 2/28/23, https://www.birdzilla.com/birds/blue-gray-gnatcatcher/, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Jerry Jernigan, 1/25/25, https://birdingdepot.com/blue-gray-gnatcatcher/, https://a-z-animals.com/animals/blue-gray-gnatcatcher/

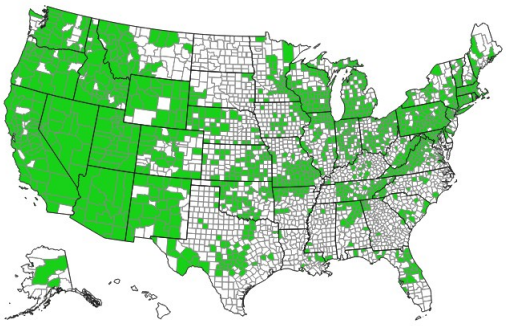
Watercress

Judi Manning

Nasturtium officinale

Watercress has bright white flowers that resemble the shape of a cross native to Eurasia. It is a perennial herb in the same family as Garlic Mustard. In N. and S. America, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand it is an introduced species.

It is aquatic or semi-aquatic and found and thrives in cold, alkaline flowing waters rapidly spreading on the surface or sprawling across mud forming dense mats choking out natives. Watercress is distributed worldwide and listed by 46 states as **noxious and invasive**.



First reported in 1831 in southern Connecticut, it is one of the oldest known leaf vegetables eaten by humans. It is the same watercress found in local grocery store and widely cultivated and used as a salad green.

Harvested leaves from the wild must be thoroughly washed to avoid accidental ingestion of toxins from polluted water, aquatic insects, spiders, and microscopic parasites, such as the protozoan *Giardia*, which may be present in untreated water. Deer, ducks, and muskrats eat the watercress leaves. The plants serve as shelter for small aquatic life.

References: https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/nasturtium_officinale.shtml; Distribution map, https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=14217, https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/watercress, http://www.misin.msu.edu/facts/detail/?project=NA&id=235

In the last couple of years, especially last year, Watercress has filled in one of the waterways at Stu Visser leaving a narrow open space.

Mallard eating Watercress at Stu Visser.

A Bird Species is being Monitored for Lead Pollution

Judi Manning

In urban environments, high levels of pollutants can occur and pose a threat in urban areas to humans and local wildlife. Irrigating with lead-contaminated water from pipe corrosion can increase lead levels in the soil.

Two graduate scientist students at Eastern Michigan University developed a new way to monitor toxic environmental exposure. Originally, they were interested in learning how pollution impacted urban birds depending on where and how they foraged. The research group initially focused on other bird species that ate seeds above the surface before picking the robin because robins prefer earthworms that have more environmental exposure.

The study took place in Flint. They netted robins at various locations, some with irrigated city water and others at non-irrigated locations. Soil samples came from open lawns. The lead in the soil and blood were similar. Soil can accumulate lead and other metals when watered with polluted water.

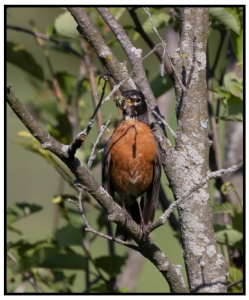
They captured and tested about 100 robins during the spring and summer breeding season from April – August from 2018 to 2020 from various locations. The robins were measured, had blood drawn and banded and immediately released. The lead levels in the robin's blood correlated with the lead in the soil samples and they concluded robins are good bioindicators for potential lead exposure. It is cheaper to sample a robin's blood instead of various places around a yard as that is what the robin does when searching for earthworms. This results in the ingestion of a large amount of soil and some that is contaminated with lead.

Researchers in Indiana also studied lead concentration trends in American Robins to identify how lead is ingested. The initial results of lead concentrations ranged from 0.85-30.9 µg/dL. One bird's lead level was toxic. The elevated lead found in American Robins raises concern for urban lead pollution and potential lead toxicity effects magnifying through the food chain.

There is not much research on the blood lead levels in songbirds, Previous research shows lead can affect a birds' weight, cognition, balance, nestling growth, reproduction, depth perception and aggressive behavior and death.

Lead found in the top layers of soil make it easy for wildlife to be exposed or children playing in the dirt or a dog digging in the soil.

References: *How robins could help monitor for lead pollution*, Jatt Jaworowski, 12/29/94, https://www.woodtv.com/news/news-8-digital-series/study-how-robins-could-help-monitor-for-lead-pollution/, *Robins may be a predictor of dangerous lead levels in soil, study finds*, Eric Freedman, 12/22/24, Capital News Freedman, https://greatlakesecho.org/2024/12/22/robins-may-be-a-predictor-of-dangerous-lead-levels-in-soil-study-finds/, *Bioaccumulation of Heavy Metals in Robins via Earthworms – Identifying Pollution Sources and Pathways,* K. Hostetler, M. Ohrberg, J. Shukle, A. Jahn, Jan. 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/35988823, Zahor, D., Glynn, K., Majestic, B. *et al. You are what you eat: urban soil lead predicts American robin (Turdus migratorius) blood lead in Flint, MI. Urban Ecosyst* **27**, 1685–1694 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11252-024-01546-w https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11252-024-01546-w (Abstract section)



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 article to me* ***by April 1st.***

FAR FLOWING WATER

is a publication of the Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society, Grand Haven, MI.

2024-2025 OIAS Membership Application/Renewal Date _____

SEND BY EMAIL _____ **Email:** _____

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ How did you hear about OIAS?_____

Check Member Type: ☐ $20 Family ☐ $30 Contributing ☐ $100 Individual Life

My contribution to speaker fees and activism projects $_____

Make checks payable to: Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society,
Post Office Box 1654, Holland, Michigan, 49422

Grand Haven, Michigan

Thank you for your support!

(3/25)

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.

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

MARCH 18, 2025
6:30 PM
LOUTIT DISTRICT LIBRARY
407 Columbus Avenue
Grand Haven