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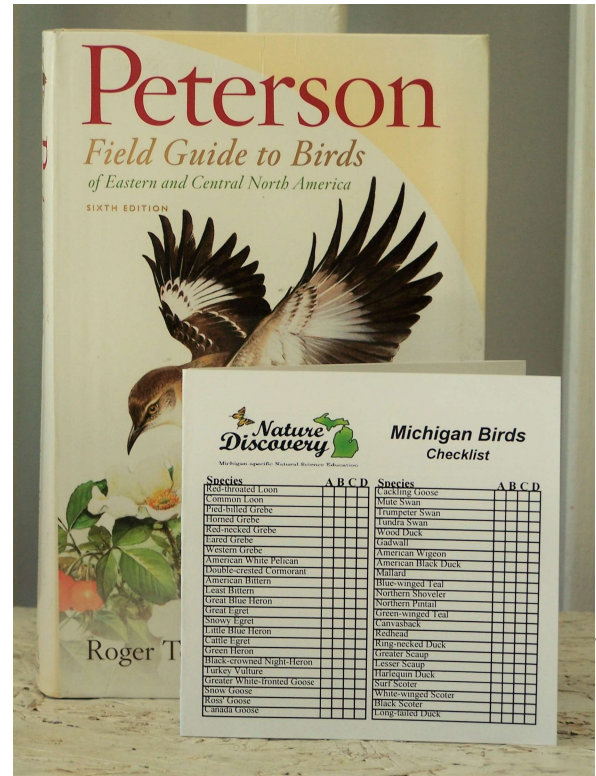
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## Checklist Touts the “Avian Slice” of Michigan’s Biodiversity Pie



Freshly-graduated from MSU with an eye toward building what was to become Nature Discovery I was aware that to make the biggest impressions in this field, especially with kids, a live element is essential to capturing and holding their attention. Thus began the quest to acquire an array of Michigan-native reptiles and amphibians. Now we present and exhibit in a slew of venues across the state over the course of each year. By far, most of the requests surround some aspect of this huge menagerie. However, like an actor desiring a variety of roles, we find ourselves actively guarding against being type-cast as “The Reptile People,” “The Frog Guy,” or “The Snake Lady.” We value all natural diversity as part of a healthy, sustainable environment and teach audiences to recognize and ultimately desire to preserve it where they live.



White-crowned Sparrows are passing through area yards now. Watch and listen for them.

Photo © Steve Sage

No school children may know this better than those who attend Montessori Children’s House, Stepping Stones Montessori or Okemos Nursery School, where they receive weekly lessons on Michigan-specific wildlife topics. The snakes, turtles and frogs are just a portion of the diversity to which they are exposed. Inevitably, a student will ask me what my favorite type of animal is. Assuming the student is referring to vertebrate animal life, I’ll say *birds*. I’ll explain that my choice is less about the structure or demeanor of the animal and more about the diversity that exists within the taxonomic class or order. I prefer birds over snakes because there are seventeen species of snakes to study in Michigan. There are *four hundred* species of birds. There are thirteen

species of frogs in Michigan. There are *four hundred* species of birds. There are ten species of turtles. There are *four hundred* species of birds! There are sixty-two mammals in Michigan...

We have no live Michigan birds to show, so Powerpoint images, audio recordings and other props are used for lessons. The Michigan Birds checklist is another. About ten years ago I developed our own. Now, just in time for the biggest birding month of the year I finished revising and reprinting it with our logo in color on the front page. Even kids who are not old enough to read can open it and understand the sheer volume of birds here by scanning column after column of print throughout the pages.



*If there are 400 birds in Michigan why does our checklist have only 315? In fact, less than 300 have a normal range that occurs within our borders, but migrants from other parts of the continent sporadically veer off course and show up here. For instance, every now and then a White Pelican pops up on Lake Lansing or Park Lake. The checklist includes some of the more commonly-seen vagrants.*

*Photo © Steve Sage*

I lead birding field trips and a birding day camp in June for kids, elementary-aged and older. Each receives one of our Michigan Birds checklists to keep a running tally of the species encountered. While younger students are not very adept at effectively using their binoculars they love keeping the checklist! With each bird encountered I steer them through the sea of fine print to the precise page and column on which the bird is found. Knowing they probably didn't get as good of a look as me I have a field guide handy to show them the image. By trip's end they may have checked over fifty species. They review the checklist over and over to make sure they didn't miss any. While they may not be capable of identifying some of the birds they checked on their own (I tell them what that distant bird is.) they are certainly capable of naming far more Michigan birds than the vast majority of adults who have lived here their whole lives. Through personal experience in the field their awareness of Michigan's rich avian diversity is firmly embedded in their minds. With time and maturity their adeptness with binoculars will expand, and with it an appreciation for avian diversity they will harbor the rest of their lives.

Additionally, in our guided birding outings for adults each participant is given a checklist to keep a tally of the day's feathered finds. (Check out details of our May 22 and June day trips in this issue!) Checklists can also be purchased here for only a dollar each. They can be purchased from us in bulk by nature centers, museums, and other educational venues for resale in gift shops, too. Contact us if you'd like to arrange to get one, or pick one up during our open Sunday, May 6. .

*-Jim McGrath*

## ***Catch Us on LCC Radio's Coffee Break, Thursday, May 3***

Jim is scheduled to appear on Thursday, May 3 at 9:15am, discussing butterflies and stinging nettle. The show airs weekdays from 9 to 10am on 89.7 FM. Listen live online at [lcc.edu/radio/onair/](http://lcc.edu/radio/onair/) or watch it live (or later in the day at 6pm) online at [lcc.edu/tv/watch](http://lcc.edu/tv/watch). We'll post a reminder on our Facebook fan page.





# ***Sixth Annual***

# ***Biodiversity Day***

## ***Sunday, May 6***

***Doors open from 1 to 5pm;***  
***Admission: \$5/person***



*The larva of the Red Admiral is the most commonly found on area nettles IF you know its hiding trick.*

We would like to help you recognize, appreciate and work toward preserving biological or natural diversity. Identify over 100 species of Michigan-native animal and plant life in a single afternoon!

At 2pm, we invite you to sit in on the presentation, *Providing for Butterflies with Stinging Nettle?! We're out to forever alter your perception of a plant that most gardeners merely deem a noxious and irritating garden weed. See beautiful Powerpoint images of four butterfly species native to Mid-Michigan that rely on nettle as food for their larvae. Learn to identify all four as well as their larvae, life cycles and specific behaviors. Participating individuals/families can take home their own nettle to establish in their yard. If you plant it they will come!*



*See the state-threatened Spotted Turtle.*

Throughout the afternoon participate in a list of other activities offered to help you become more aware of the tremendous but underappreciated natural diversity that surrounds us. Knowledgeable staff will be on hand all day to assist in a range of highly-interactive, indoor and outdoor encounters for all ages. Take the challenge to encounter 100 species of Michigan life in a single afternoon here! Checklists will be provided to help you keep a tally of species encountered.

Stations and activities include:

- ✓ Identify "The Grand Slam of Michigan Turtles" on the premises, featuring all 10 species found in the state. Help feed them, too!
- ✓ Meet 10 of our state's 17 species of snakes. Lots of handling and feeding opportunities, too.
- ✓ Identify over 20 species of birds by sight and by sound.
- ✓ Identify a long list of wildflowers, shrubs, vines and trees.
- ✓ Identify insects encountered around the yard and trails.
- ✓ Inspect pans teeming with diverse invertebrate life from the vernal pond.
- ✓ Identify invasive species that are eroding natural diversity in our natural areas.
- ✓ More!



*Six-spotted Fishing Spider.*

## *Around the State in May*

- ❖ Saturday, May 5: 1pm & 3pm. MI Frogs Presentation; DeGraaf Nature Center, Holland.
- ❖ Saturday, May 12: 10am. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Presentation; Stubnitz Environmental Center, Adrian.
- ❖ Friday, May 18: 9am-2:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Isabella Conservation District Environmental Ed Day, Chipp-a-Waters Park, Mt. Pleasant.



© Steve Sage  
*Black-throated Blue Warbler. Photo by Steve Sage*

## *Spring Birding: Meridian Township*

*Tuesday, May 22; 7am to 1pm*

Join this small group of adults on a guided May morning of local birding. The group will bird Legg Park, Van Atta Natural Area and North Meridian Road Park. Weather-permitting, over 70 species should be tallied. All participants will receive a Michigan Birds Checklist to keep track of the day's finds. Participants can arrange to meet at Nature Discovery or at one of the parks where the group will start birding. COST: \$50.

## *Breeding Season Birding June 12 & 14*

Join our small group of adults on one or both days of guided birding trips during peak breeding season to choice locations within a 90-minute drive of the Lansing Area. Tuesday, June 12 – Yankee Springs Recreation Area (Cerulean Warblers & more); Thursday, June 14 – Saginaw Bay (Yellow-headed Blackbirds & more). We will depart Nature Discovery @ 6am and return by mid-afternoon each day. All participants will receive a Michigan Birds checklist to keep track of the days' tallies. COST: \$80/day. Maximum 5 participants per day. Contact us to reserve a space.



© Steve Sage  
*Black-throated Green Warbler. Photo by Steve Sage*



# 2018 Summer Camp Notes

*Openings still remain in...*

**Michigan Field Birding for students 10 yrs & older,  
June 18-21.**

**Budding Naturalists for students 5-6 yrs, August 13-16.**

**For details...**

**<http://www.naturediscovery.net/pdf/summercamps.pdf>**

*Tree Swallow. Photo by Steve Sage*



## Volunteers Needed

**If you have some time to spare AND you like working outside AND you like working in the soil AND you would like to do something that's good for the environment AND you'd like to do something to help our overworked and understaffed business, please contact us! During the growing season it is difficult for us to keep up all our appointments, plus all the animal care, in addition to rampant plant growth. Can you help us clear invasives out of our woods, help with our organic vegetable gardens or help to beautify our flower beds? Choose any days or hours that are convenient for you. Contact us!**

## Thank you, CEDAR CREEK VETS!

***Our almost-five-year-old rat snake suffered through some impacted eggs earlier in April. Cedar Creek Vets helped push them through. Now she's back in the education game.***

***Learn more about Cedar Creek Veterinary Clinic at [www.cedarcreekvet.com](http://www.cedarcreekvet.com).***

*Cedar Creek Vet technician, Jake Bradley, shows off our rat snake and four newly-removed eggs.*





*As long as trash cans at gas stations look like this (everything recyclable) we have no hope of curtailing the growing garbage dumps that our oceans, Great Lakes and local waterways have become.*

“Decoding the Weather Machine.” Taking personal responsibility to shrink your carbon footprint and accounting for every single item of trash generated needs to be central to the daily thoughts of every individual in the world, and most of all in citizens of those countries that consume the most. Knowledge leads to concern, concern to action.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/earth/decoding-weather-machine.html>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/04/19/sea-ice-near-alaska-lowest-level-since-least-1850/531549002/>

<http://usatoday.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

*The next generation would be justified in looking back at us and asking, “What were you thinking? Couldn’t you hear what the scientists were saying? Couldn’t you hear what Mother Nature was screaming at you?” -Al Gore*

## ***Solving Our Gravest Environmental Issues Needs to Get Personal... and Fast***

The media has its hands and time so full covering the ever- raging dumpster fire burning in today’s White House, our most pressing issues have become dangerously buried in the fray.

Here are links to a few you easily could have missed. It is almost two hours in length, but settle in to watch *Nova*’s



*What personal responsibility for your trash looks like: Two weeks-worth of garbage generated by the McGrath household and Nature Discovery. Ten times this amount was delivered to MSU recycling center.*

**[ Union of  
Concerned Scientists**  
Science for a healthy planet and safer world

**350.org**

Become a fan of ***Nature Discovery*** on Facebook!

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