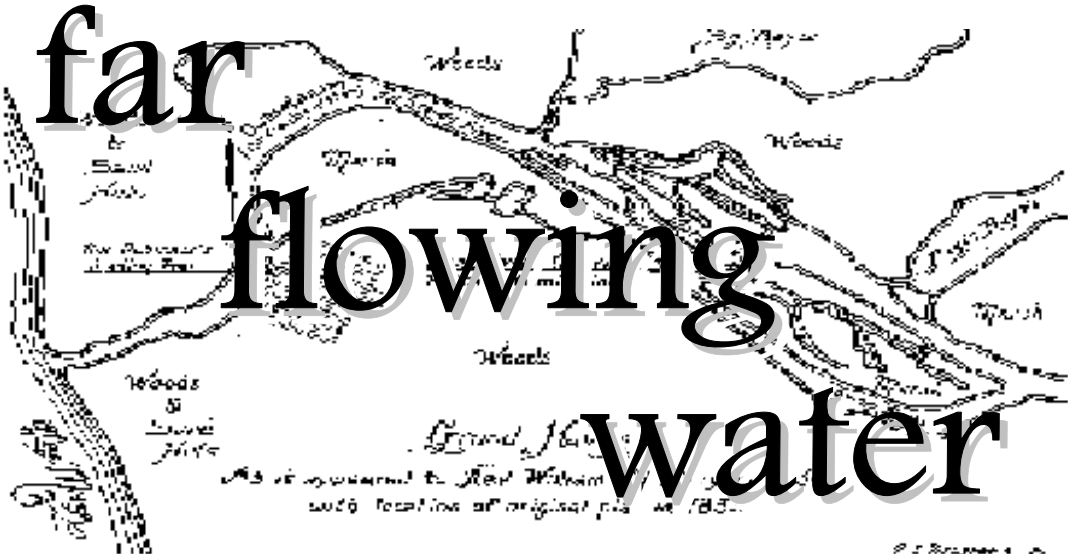
Volume 36, Issue 7 April, 2025

Grand Haven, Michigan

far flowing water



April 15 6:30 P.M.

Neotropical Migrants: Birding in the Americas

Presented by **Nahuel Medina**, Ottawa County Parks Naturalist

The Americas are renowned for their abundant and breathtaking biodiversity, and I have been fortunate to visit several countries in the Western Hemisphere, including Costa Rica, Mexico, and Argentina. Originally from Miami, Florida, I had Central and South America just a hop and skip away, which gave me plenty of opportunities to explore the region's natural beauty. Even though I now reside in Michigan, this move has only fueled my ambitions to visit more countries in the tropics.

In this presentation, I will share my experiences with Neotropical migrants during their stopover in Miami, as well as insights into the lives of local birds that thrive in tropical regions. I invite you to join me as I discuss my travels, birdwatching, and wildlife photography throughout the Americas.

CONTENTS:

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From the President's Desk – April 2025

Spring migration is starting to ramp up as more and more birds appear in Ottawa County. However, long-time birders have often remarked that "there does not seem to be as many birds as in the past." Their casual observations and records are correct. There are fewer birds than in the past. In 2019 Rosenberg et al. (Science 366:120-124; DOI: 10.1126/science.aww1313) estimated that the number of birds in North American had declined by three billion since 1970. Sadly, the most recent edition of the State of the Birds Report United States of America (www.stateofthebirds.org/2025) reports that for most groups of birds the declines are continuing. The populations of grassland birds, arid land birds, and shore birds have declined by over 30%. A few groups (e.g., waterbirds and dabbling and diving duck, but not sea ducks) have gained in numbers since 1970. More disturbing is the number of species that have lost 50% or their populations since 1970. These are called Tipping Point species and are characterized as Red, Orange, and Yellow Alert Species. Red Alert Species have very low populations and steep declining trends. The birds on this list with records for Ottawa County are the Black Rail (1988 sighting) and Hudsonian Godwit (1985 sighting). Orange Alert Species have shown long-term population declines and accelerated declines including some familiar to us in Ottawa County birds like Long-tailed Ducks, Chimney Swifts, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Great Black-backed Gulls, and Eastern Towhees. Yellow Alert Species have long-term population losses but relatively stable recent trends. However, they require continued conservation efforts to sustain their recovery. Yellow Alert Species familiar to us in Ottawa County include the Black Scoter, Northern Pintail, Horned Grebe, Henslow's Sparrow, Wood Thrush, and Field Sparrow.

The ecology of all birds requires more research coupled with fast action to help their populations. We can help birds by promoting habitat restoration and conservation, monitoring bird populations, and reducing the risks to birds. OIAS has made inroads in most of these areas by providing advice to local governments about habitat restoration (e.g. Park Township Airport), supporting the purchase of park properties containing bird habitats (e.g., Rosy Mound Natural Area), monitoring Purple Martin nesting and Chimney Swift fall roosts, providing educational programs, and involving Spring Lake students in nature study. However, much more work is needed to help struggling bird populations and that is one of the reasons why OIAS is exploring the possibility of securing a Bird City Michigan (www.birdcity.org) designation in the Tri-Cities area. If you are interested in helping OIAS's efforts in this area, please let me or another Board member know how you would like to help.

Please join us on 15 April at Loutit District Library to hear about some of the birds at the greatest risk during Nahuel Medina's program "Neotropical Migrants: Birding in the Americas." Nahuel is an Ottawa County Parks naturalist and has made numerous birding trips to the Neotropics. 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

Hummingbirds are on their way! Map as of 4/5/25

https://www.hummingbirdcentral.com/hummingbird-migration-spring-2025-map.htm

2024 - 2025 PROGRAM

May 20: **Business Meeting** and sharing of members images

Nominations

THE CANDIDATES FOR POSITIONS on the OIAS Board of Directors for the terms 2026-2029 are:

- Michael Lombardo
- Bruce Ostrow
- Lucas Timmer

Please also note that the election will be during the May Business Meeting. We will also accept nominations for the positions on the Board from the floor.

Bird Word Scramble

Questions	Answers
1. IGWN	1. WING
2. ASRROPW	2. SPARROW
3. EGEAL	3. EAGLE
4. BKEA	4. BEAK
5. WAKH	5. HAWK
6. GGE	6. EGG
7. CORW	7. CROW
8. EUNNIPG	8. PENGUIN
9. DOEV	9. DOVE
10. TAPROR	10. PARROT
11. TFHRAEE	11. FEATHER
12. BORIN	12. ROBIN
13. LOW	13. OWL
14. ESDSE	14. SEEDS
15. REVNA	15. RAVEN
16. YACANR	16. CANARY
17. STNE	17. NEST
18. IEKCHNC	18. CHICKEN
19. EPNOGI	19. PIGEON
20. AGFIMLON	20. FLAMINGO

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

Absenteeism in the 125th CBC in MI

Compilers:
A total of 73 species went missing from count circles where otherwise expected based on historic rates of occurrence, with the median absentee rate being 10%. The following 16 species stand out because of their high rates of absenteeism:

American Black Duck*—absentee rate of **21% (absent from 12 of 57 circles with a known historic occurrence of the species of 50% or more): historic frequency of occurrence on counts where absent in CBC 125 – 80%
Ring-necked Pheasant*—56%** (20 of 56): 71%
Ruffed Grouse*—36%** (16 of 44): 64%
Sharp-shinned Hawk*—30%** (13 of 44): 64%
American Coot*—35%** (6 of 17): 65%
Snowy Owl*—23%** (3 of 13): 60%
Northern Shrike*—30%** (14 of 47): 70%
Horned Lark*—26%** (10 of 38): 65%
Snow Bunting*—30%** (17 of 56): 69%
Common Grackle*—24%** (5 of 21): 53%
Brown-headed Cowbird*—50%** (8 of 16): 67%
Pine Grosbeak*—57%** (8 of 14): 67%
Purple Finch*—25%** (14 of 57): 63%
Common Redpoll*—69%** (18 of 26): 58%
Pine Siskin*—51%** (21 of 41): 61%
Evening Grosbeak*—57%** (8 of 14): 68%

John T., Michigan Regional CBC Editor

2024-2025 MCNC/OIAS Field Trips

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

April 19, 2025	**Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve**
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

April 19th Field Trip:

LOCATION CHANGE

A Law Protects Milkweed in Michigan

Judi Manning

In March, 2024, Michigan passed a law to help eradicate certain noxious weeds. It gives townships, villages, and cities a lien for expenses to control weeds. The law lists the plants that are considered noxious weeds. The list includes: Canada thistle, dodders, mustards, wild carrot, bindweed, perennial sow thistle, hoary alyssum, giant hogweed, ragweed, poison ivy, poison sumac, and any other plants "regarded as a common nuisance" by governing bodies.

Part of the law says, "noxious weeds does not include milkweed." The USDA says over 450 insects feed on some portion of the plant in addition to its importance to monarch caterpillars. Milkweed is the only plant monarch caterpillars are able to eat. It is also the only plant the butterflies' lay eggs on.

The plant is toxic to most insects and animals as it contains different levels of cardiac glycoside compounds. For the insects that eat milkweed, the compounds become a defense making them inedible to other animals. Northern monarchs may not build up as much of the toxin and could probably be eaten safely by birds. Further south, they are probably toxic to birds.

Even a small area with milkweed plants is very beneficial to monarchs and other insects. They are native and are suitable for our weather and do not need care.

There are about twelve types of milkweeds native to Michigan according to the MSU Extension.

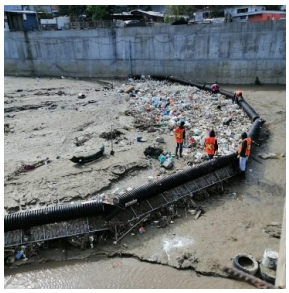
References: *New Michigan law protects milkweed: What to know, Law bans noxious weeds in Michigan*, Kayla Clarke, https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/michigan/2024/04/06/new-michigan-law-protects-milkweed-what-to-know/, *New law to protect milkweed in Michigan*, Elena Cousino, 4/4/24, https://www.woodtv.com/news/michigan/new-law-to-protect-milkweed-in-michigan/

Giant Trash Boom – Tijuana

Judi Manning

Toxic flooding devastates wetlands, estuaries, and wildlife habitats.

In January 2021, Wildcoast* installed the first ever solid waste trash boom in Los Laureles Canyon, a tributary stream of the Tijuana River in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. The boom is made up of 150 individual sections made of recycled materials, tied together and anchored by 20 tons of concrete on both sides. This boom has already intercepted over 239,000 pounds of waste since its installation.



Trash Boom Aerial Image. Photo Credit: Unknown

Photo: Wildcast

The boom sits on the bottom of the river until the water level rises and the boom then floats to the surface. By skimming the surface of the water it collects trash, including textiles, plastics and other floating debris stopping it from going through the valley and into the ocean. Heavier trash below the surface goes to landfill after the riverbed dries up.

On 10/30/24, a second 1,200-foot boom made of recycled drift net that has 360 feet of anchor lines, a galvanized steel cable and 150 rigging attachments was installed in Matadero Canyon on the Tijuana River channel just north of the U.S.-Mexico border. It is built to fluctuate from dry conditions to surges of 23,000 cubic feet per second during storms capturing floating trash allowing the river to continue to flow. When installed it was hoped it would capture over 80,000 pounds of waste annually from entering the Tijuana River and, eventually, the Pacific Ocean. After one-half inch of rain in mid-February the boom stopped 50 tons of trash from entering the U.S. and Pacific Ocean.

Courtesy of WILDCOAST

Researchers will be analyzing the composition in both booms of trapped debris, testing the structure's durability in varied conditions to refine future interventions, and tracking water quality fluctuations.

*WILDCOAST is an international team that conserves coastal and marine ecosystems and addresses climate change through natural solutions. https://wildcoast.org/

References: https://wildcoast.org/wildcoast-stops-the-tsunami-of-trash-at-the-us-mexico-border/, *20 years in the making, giant trash boom installed to keep Tijuana trash out of U.S.*, Salvador Rivera, 11/27/24, https://www.borderreport.com/news/environment/20-years-in-the-making-giant-trash-boom-installed-to-keep-tijuana-trash-out-of-u-s/, *California environmental group installs trash boom in Tijuana,* Salvador Rivera, 10/30/24, https://www.borderreport.com/news/environment/california-environmental-group-installs-trash-boom-in-tijuana/?ipid=promo-link-block2, *RCAC and Partners Deploy Trash Boom to Fight Tijuana River Pollution*, Elliott Bochstein, staff writer, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, 3/31/25, https://www.rcac.org/featured-news/rcac-and-partners-deploy-trash-boom-to-fight-tijuana-river-pollution/, *Environmental Triumph: Tijuana River Boom Halts 50 Tons of Trash from Reaching US,* 2/21/25, https://bajacaliforniapost.com/2025/02/21/environmental-triumph-tijuana-river-boom-halts-50-tons-of-trash-from-reaching-us/, *Wildcoast Stops the Tsunami of Trash at the US/Mexico Border, 4/19/22,* https://wildcoast.org/wildcoast-stops-the-tsunami-of-trash-at-the-us-mexico-border/

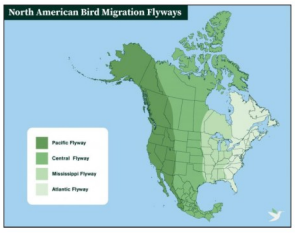
Bird Migration

Judi Manning

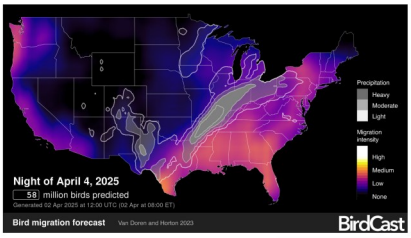
More than half of the 650+ species of breeding North American birds migrate annually from their breeding (summer) to their nonbreeding (winter) habitats. Birds migrate to the Northern Hemisphere to nest because of the flourishing insect populations, abundance of nesting locations and budding plants. As fall approaches food availability declines and birds head south.

Their arrival time varies each year. According to a NASA-led study published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, scientists linked this variability to large-scale climate patterns originating thousands of miles away. Scientists analyzed 23 years of bird migration data from NOAA's Next Generation Radar system – a network of 143 radar stations across the continental U.S. – to determine the variability in the birds' arrival times each spring.

There are four distinct flyways: two in the eastern U.S. and two in the west. The east and west regions are divided by a line that bisects North Dakota and extends down through Texas. New research shows the different environmental climate patterns, temperature and weather patterns on each side of the country influence large bird movements and a distinct variability in bird arrival times in the two regions. The science team found "*variability in the west region was strongly linked to regional air and sea surface temperature in the adjacent (Pacific) Ocean. For instance, above-average temperatures in the region in 2005 resulted in the birds arriving earlier than average." . . . They found that variability in the east region, however, was more strongly linked to large-scale atmospheric disturbances called Rossby waves. Rossby waves form due to the Earth's rotation and geography*. [NASA Study] The Rossby waves begin in the tropical Pacific before reaching the U.S. and impacts bird migration across the whole country.



Flyway graphic and lots of information not included in this article:
https://abcbirds.org/blog/north-american-bird-flyways/



Check Birdcast at the following link for bird migration forecasts and in real-time: https://birdcast.info/

Map on left for night of April 4th.

Types of Migration:
YEAR-ROUND RESIDENTS. Birds that can find food all year (Northern Cardinals, Tufted Titmouse).
SHORT-DISTANCE MIGRANTS. Some from higher to lower elevations on a mountain.
MEDIUM-DISTANCE MIGRANTS. Species that fly a few hundred miles (Blue Jays).
LONG-DISTANCE MIGRANTS. 350 species of N. American birds that breed in the U.S. and Canada overwinter in Central and South America.

Long-distance migration has evolved over thousands of years and is controlled partially by the genetic makeup of the birds. Weather, day length, geography, food sources change, lower temperatures, and genetic predisposition are involved. Generations of migrating birds have headed north for more food and longer day length to raise more young than they would if they stayed on the winter habitat. During the glacial retreat, birds continued to head south when winter approached. Many N. American flycatchers, warblers, orioles, swallows, and vireos have evolved from forms that originated in the tropics.

(Cont. on pg. 7)

Bird Migration . . . cont. from pg. 6

How Do They Do It?
Some species travel thousands of miles over the same course year after year. First year birds amazingly migrate on their own following the same migration paths. They get compass information from stars, sun, sensing the earth's magnetic field, position of the setting sun and landmarks during the day. Waterfowl and cranes follow preferred pathways while smaller birds migrate in broad fronts across the landscape. eBird data shows the small birds take different routes in spring and fall.

Hazards
The long migration takes a toll on the birds' mental and physical capabilities. Other hazards are the physical stress of the trip, bad weather, increased exposure to predators, and a lack of adequate food supplies along the way. More currently, there is a growing threat from the lights of tall buildings and communication towers. Over a million birds are killed each year from collisions.

Techniques
Birds are banded, use satellite tracking and geolocators to track migration. Scientists want to locate the important stopover and wintering locations so steps can be taken to protect and save these key locations. eBird data only from complete checklists is used by researchers for this purpose.

Migrant Trap
Some areas concentrate migrating birds from year to year. Many are eBird hotspots. Along the shoreline of the Gulf States is a great place in spring as birds near exhaustion stop when they reach land. Peninsulas are great. Birds that follow land pause before going over the water. Mt. Pisgah and Boardwalk West are great places to see migrating birds in both spring and fall. Further north, Whitefish Point is an excellent place.

Range Maps
To see an annual animated map of a migrating species you choose, following this link: https://science.ebird.org/en/status-and-trends. The maps are made possible by the hundreds of millions of eBird observations submitted in completed checklists birdwatchers around the world.

Check the website *EBird and A Hundred Million Points of Light* for more interesting maps: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/a-hundred-million-points-of-light/

References: *The Basics of Bird Migration: How, Why, and Where*, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Originally published 1/2007, updated 8/1/21, https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/the-basics-how-why-and-where-of-bird-migration/#, *NASA Study: Climate Patterns Thousands of Miles Away Affect US Bird Migration*, Katy Mersmann, 7 /19/22, https://www.nasa.gov/science-research/earth-science/nasa-study-climate-patterns-thousands-of-miles-away-affect-us-bird-migration/

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 May 1st.***

FAR FLOWING WATER

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

Judi Manning

Killdeer

Charadrius vociferus

Killdeer are the largest and most familiar species in the "ringed" plover group that includes the Piping and Wilson's Plovers. They are one of the least water-associated species of all shorebirds. The Killdeer can be found almost everywhere, except at feeders. They spend most of their time on the ground with little or no vegetation and often run away before flying if approached. Often the excited *kill-deer* call is heard before or instead of seeing them. This species is named after its call.

They mostly eat invertebrates but will also eat seeds left in agricultural fields. They will pat the ground with one foot to scare up prey. This proficient swimmer can swim in swift-flowering water and the chicks can swim across small streams.

The male makes the well camouflaged nest. He lowers his breast to the ground and scrapes a shallow depression with his feet. The eggs are laid into an empty nest, and they add materials later by tossing them over their shoulder. In Oklahoma, one pair added 1,500 pebbles this way. The young hatch covered in downy fluff with their eyes open. The parents do not feed their young. Soon after hatching, the young follow the parents from the nest to the feeding sites and they begin foraging on their own.

If someone approaches the nest, they try to lead the "predator" away acting as if they had a broken wing. They are known to nest on top of gravel rooftops, which can be dangerous when the adults coax the young off the roof. They also nest in parking lots and along the roadsides. One set of chicks survived a jump from a seven-story building. If a large, hoofed animal approaches the nest, the bird will fluff up to look bigger, displaying the tail over its head, and runs at the animal attempting to get it to change its path.

The Killdeer is one of the most successful shorebird nesters because they use human-modified habitats and nest close to people.

Pesticide poisoning and collisions with cars, towers, and buildings are responsible for a decline of about 26% between 1966 and 2019. The pesticides neonicotinoids (insects), chlorpyrifos and glyphosate (weed killers) are used in many poisons. Mowing equipment also damages nests and kills or injures the young.

References: Cornell Lab, https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Killdeer/id, https://abcbirds.org/bird/killdeer/, *Killdeer Nesting (All You Need To Know), 2/2/23*https://birdfact.com/articles/killdeer-nesting

Excerpts/synopsis: https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-10-may-2025

The 2025 theme underscores the urgent need for bird-friendly cities, combining scientific insights with practical steps for individuals and communities to support these remarkable creatures.

eBird observations throughout the years help researchers better understand global bird populations through products like these animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

Global Big Day 2024 collected more data about birds on a single day than ever before. More than 63,000 people gathered observations on 156,000 checklists, setting new world records for a single day of birding.

How to participate

- **Get an eBird account:** It compiles everyone's reports into a single massive Global Big Day list—while collecting data to help scientists better understand birds.
- **Enjoy birds on May 10:** Go out all or part of the day to different places or spend 5 to 10 minutes from home counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight.
- **Enter what you see and hear in eBird:** If you do not currently use eBird, you can download the **free eBird Mobile app** by clicking this link. Enter your checklists before 13 May to be included in our initial results announcement.
- **Watch the results roll in:** During May 10, follow along with bird observations from more than 200 countries in real-time at the following link: **Global Big Day page**.

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!

(4/25)

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
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