

DETROIT AUDUBON GIVES 2005 CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

On Saturday, April 2nd, during the luncheon at our annual Conservation Conference, Detroit Audubon presented two awards. The Rouge River Bird Observatory was designated our Conservation Organization of the Year in recognition of outstanding research efforts on migratory and breeding birds in urban natural areas, including documenting the importance of even small preserves in maintaining avian biodiversity. The Rouge River Bird Observatory at U of M Dearborn has been collecting data on urban migratory stopovers through banding and surveys for over 15 years. Those data show that there are several species of migratory birds which use the U of M Dearborn natural area for several days and gain weight during their stay, indicating that food available in this small woodlot is important for the birds to be able to continue their journey. Julie Craves, Supervisor of Avian Research at U of M Dearborn, accepted the award. Julie has written articles for the Flyway, offered a bird banding demonstration as one of our fall 2004 field trips and was the featured speaker for the March 2005 Membership meeting. Julie is also a prime mover in the coalition to Save Sibley Prairie.

The Conservationist of the Year Award went to Joe Bartell, a former board member, vice-president and President of Detroit Audubon Society. He has chaired Detroit Audubon's Conservation, Hawk and Owl Protection, Membership and Annual Meeting Committees. When Joe assumed chairmanship of the Membership Committee, we had 2,000 members and by the time he turned over the reins to a new chair, we had grown to 5,000 members. He helped establish the sister chapter relationship between Detroit Audubon and Belize Audubon Society. He is currently a member of Belize Audubon,

for the Protection of Birds and the Bird Observer's Club of Australia in addition to his continued membership in Detroit Audubon.

In the late 1960s, while a member of Michigan Audubon Society's Board of Directors, he helped raise \$5,000 to begin the cowbird control program that helped save the Kirtland's Warbler from extinction. The cowbird lays its eggs in the Kirtland's nest and its young survive at the expense of the Kirtland's young. The cowbird, a bird of the open plains, did not get to Michigan until the early 1900s so the Kirtland's had no chance to evolve a defense against this social parasitism. Nicholas Cuthbert at Central Michigan University started the program, which is now carried out by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Joe and Wilbur Bull were Detroit Audubon's liaisons to the Army Corps of Engineers and the Michigan DNR in support of creating the dikes at Point Mouille that saved those Lake Erie wetlands and their important shorebird and waterfowl habitats from being washed away forever. He convinced then Detroit City Councilman, Carl Levin, to introduce an ordinance prohibiting the sale of tiger and leopard coats in Detroit. The ban was eventually overturned but it helped build momentum for the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Bartell also proposed in the early 1970s that Detroit Audubon take the lead in promoting a tuna boycott to protest the concomitant killing of thousands of dolphins in the purse seine nets then used to catch Tuna. The boycott received national attention and eventually lead to the familiar "Dolphin Safe Tuna" labels and the passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act with the help of Sen. Carl Levin and Congressman John Conyers.

Joe Bartell also helped launch Detroit Audubon's campaign to send empty beverage containers to Governor William Millken asking for a 10-cent deposit on pop and beer containers. Joe and Wilbur Bull subsequently represented Detroit Audubon in a coalition between Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the UAW, farmer organizations and Detroit Audubon to raise funds and signatures required

to purchase Audubon, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, etc. It won with over 76% of the vote. Joe also worked to lead Detroit Audubon into a partnership with Defenders of Wildlife and Rep. Robert Green of New York to regulate importation of parrots into the U.S. (many of which died en route, carried in car hubcaps, under car floorboards etc.). The pet trade had pushed parrots and macaws to near extinction. President Clinton finally signed a bill which now regulates the parrot trade and will hopefully save these birds from extinction.

Joe Bartell could have been presented with this award for any one of these accomplishments. Detroit Audubon recognized Joe this year because of his tireless efforts collecting almost 3000 signatures for the "Restore the Mourning Dove Shooting Ban" petition drive. This represented the 5th highest total in the state. He was co-coordinator of the campaign for St. Clair, Macomb and parts of Wayne County. He richly deserves this award, the highest honor Detroit Audubon can bestow on an individual.



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