

Net Results

WINTER-SPRING
2005

RRBO and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service team up!

Bird work to be done at the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

On December 28, 2004 the Humbug Marsh Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was surveyed for the Rockwood Christmas Bird Count for the first time in the count's 31-year history. Julie Craves of the Rouge River Bird Observatory and her husband Darrin O'Brien spent most of the day on foot covering the area, tallying 46 species. Full results can be viewed on the RRBO web site at <http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/rouge_river/driwr.html> This survey represents the first step in a new partnership between RRBO and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The Detroit River International Wildlife

Refuge, established in 2001, is the first International Wildlife Refuge in North America. It includes islands, wetlands, and riverfront lands along 18 miles of the Lower Detroit River and the entire Michigan shoreline of the western basin of Lake Erie. In late 2003, Humbug Marsh and island, 410 acres in Gibraltar and Trenton representing the last mile of natural shoreline on the U.S. mainland of the River, became part of the Refuge after a long battle for preservation. A Visitors' Center for the refuge will be located immediately adjacent to the Humbug property on a site now owned by Wayne County. Humbug has never been regularly or adequately surveyed for birds. With the

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More about our logo on page 4

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Where do our migrants come from? Linking breeding areas with migratory stopovers

Some populations of migratory birds are in decline. Some declines are range-wide, others appear only in particular geographic locations. Good conservation and management decisions can only be made by understanding where species nest, winter, and stop during migration.

At RRBO, we have been studying the ecology of migrant songbirds for over 13 years. We now know which species use our area, which stay to rest and refuel, and which gain weight. A next step is to determine where these birds originate, which can help us answer questions such as: Are the birds that most often migrate through here from declining or stable populations? Do different populations migrate through our area at different times? Are the birds we recapture from certain regions? Which species do we need to target for site-level stopover habitat

management? Science is offering a new way to help answer these questions.

Stable isotopes are atoms of an element that have a different atomic weight than the ordinary isotope of that element. Stable isotopes of common elements such as hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon, are easily measured. The ratio of stable iso-

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Swainson's Thrushes are one of our most common migrants. They nest across a large area of Canada and the northern U.S. Where do the ones we see here each fall come from? Stable isotope analysis may help us find the answer.



RRBO and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Rockwood count survey, that situation has changed for good!

In addition to the annual Christmas Bird Count, RRBO plans to do periodic surveys during the winter months and migratory seasons. This is especially critical to understand how waterfowl and other migratory birds utilize this area. Beginning this summer, intensive surveys will be done during the nesting season for the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas project, of which Julie Craves is the Wayne County Coordinator. This will be the first comprehensive study of breeding birds on this property. Information will also be gathered on the feasibility of establishing a MAPS station. MAPS stands for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship, and is a nationwide project using bird banding to examine the population structure and dynamics of nesting birds.

Because the Refuge boundaries cover a large geographic area, a number of bird surveys include Refuge properties. These include the Rockwood, Monroe, and Detroit River Christmas Bird Counts, the annual fall hawk counts from Lake Erie Metropark conducted by Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research, Bald Eagle survey work by the USFWS and Bird Studies Canada, and various winter waterfowl counts done by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the USFWS. **Recently, RRBO was awarded a contract by the USFWS to analyze the Rockwood Christmas Bird Count data. This is likely to be the first of a number of joint projects between USFWS and RRBO.** The Rockwood Christmas Bird Count report and future ones will be available for public viewing on the Internet.

This exciting partnership broadens the reach of RRBO in the community, and provides an opportunity to apply the techniques and compare the results of the long-term research that has taken place on campus on a larger scale. You'll be hearing much more about this alliance in the months to come!

Where do our migrants come from?

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topes of hydrogen in rainfall vary by latitude. Plants, and the insects that feed on them, take up these isotopes. As baby birds are fed these insects, their new feathers also contain the unique isotopic "signature" of the place where they were grown.

In this way, scientists can analyze the ratio of stable isotopes in feathers taken from birds along their migratory path (or their wintering areas) and determine where the bird grew those feathers. For species that grow those feathers on their breeding grounds, the isotopic signature can be used to connect breeding areas with migratory stopover sites.

Our focal species include Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, and American Tree Sparrow. These species are either

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Summary of Birds Banded by RRBO fall 1992 through fall 2004

Sharp-shinned Hawk	10
Virginia Rail	1
Killdeer	1
American Woodcock	10
Mourning Dove	23
Black-billed Cuckoo	7
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1
Eastern Screech-owl	8
Northern Saw-whet Owl	34
Common Nighthawk	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3
Downy Woodpecker	151
Hairy Woodpecker	23
Yellow-shafted Flicker	100
Eastern Wood-Pewee	12
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	46
"Traill's" Flycatcher	249
Least Flycatcher	170
Eastern Phoebe	13
Great Crested Flycatcher	21
Eastern Kingbird	25
White-eyed Vireo	6
Blue-headed Vireo	14
Yellow-throated Vireo	2
Warbling Vireo	85
Philadelphia Vireo	57
Red-eyed Vireo	291
Blue Jay	155
Barn Swallow	1
Black-capped Chickadee	341
Tufted Titmouse	57
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8
White-breasted Nuthatch	15
Brown Creeper	24
Carolina Wren	51
House Wren	299
Winter Wren	29
Marsh Wren	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	198
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	363
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	11
Veery	123
Gray-cheeked Thrush	210
Swainson's Thrush	1303
Hermit Thrush	730
Wood Thrush	144
American Robin	2227
Gray Catbird	2697
Brown Thrasher	35
Cedar Waxwing	271
Blue-winged Warbler	17
Golden-winged Warbler	7
"Brewster's" Warbler	4
"Lawrence's" Warbler	1
Tennessee Warbler	191
Orange-crowned Warbler	106
Nashville Warbler	478

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Virginia's Warbler	1
Northern Parula	6
Yellow Warbler	275
Chestnut-sided Warbler	133
Magnolia Warbler	642
Cape May Warbler	21
Black-throated Blue Warbler	133
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1017
Black-thr. Green Warbler	62
Blackburnian Warbler	16
Palm Warbler	217
Bay-breasted Warbler	54
Blackpoll Warbler	295
Black-and-white Warbler	129
American Redstart	460
Prothonotary Warbler	1
Ovenbird	388
Northern Waterthrush	171
Louisiana Waterthrush	1
Kentucky Warbler	1
Connecticut Warbler	26
Mourning Warbler	76
Common Yellowthroat	349
Hooded Warbler	2
Wilson's Warbler	233
Canada Warbler	92
Yellow-breasted Chat	7
Summer Tanager	2
Scarlet Tanager	15
Eastern Towhee	11
American Tree Sparrow	94
Chipping Sparrow	64
Clay-colored Sparrow	4
Field Sparrow	48
Savannah Sparrow	16
Fox Sparrow	103
Song Sparrow	934
Lincoln's Sparrow	240
Swamp Sparrow	323
White-throated Sparrow	1473
White-crowned Sparrow	451
Dark-eyed Junco	558
Northern Cardinal	427
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	57
Indigo Bunting	186
Red-winged Blackbird	217
Rusty Blackbird	1
Common Grackle	153
Brown-headed Cowbird	77
Orchard Oriole	1
Baltimore Oriole	98
Purple Finch	36
House Finch	159
Common Redpoll	1
Pine Siskin	4
American Goldfinch	1705

Total: 23,782*(Continued from page 2)*

of high conservation concern, have had other studies done with which we can compare, are poorly monitored on their far northern breeding areas, and/or species in which we have substantial stopover ecology data from our site. Feather sampling (two feathers per bird) began in the fall of 2004. More sampling will need to be done in 2005.

Major funding for this project comes from DTE Energy.

Applying RRBO's expertise

R RBO's Julie Craves is serving on the **Michigan Endangered Bird Species Review Committee**, one of seven state bird experts chosen for this task. By law, the state's endangered species list must be reviewed on a regular basis. Each person researches up to seven species and makes recommendations regarding changes to their status on the state list. Committee members can also present data on new species to be added to the list. Members circulate the recommendations, incorporate public comment, and formulate a final document to be presented to the state legislature. Look for news on this list in a future issue of Net Results.

Julie Craves is also serving on the new Steering Committee of the **Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative**. This is the state partner of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), dedicated to promoting and advancing integrated bird conservation through a coalition of government agencies, private organizations, academic institutions, and private industry (see www.nabci-us.org). The Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative focuses on Michigan birds, but coordination of conservation efforts also takes place at the regional, continental, and even hemispheric levels, since most birds are migratory.

Finally, Julie Craves provided input on the new **Michigan Wildlife Conservation Strategy**. In order to qualify for federal State Wildlife Grants, each state must develop a strategy guiding the expenditure of these funds. The Michigan Wildlife Conservation Strategy focuses on those species, often non-game, that have received limited attention because they are not rare enough to be listed as endangered, but are not as common as they used to be. Selected species are representative of the different habitat types in Michigan and are indicative of the diversity and health of our state's wildlife, with a focus on those species determined to be in the greatest need of conservation, short of being legally protected. Julie offered detailed information on bird choices.



A major goal of the Michigan Wildlife Conservation Strategy is to keep common species, such as this Carolina Wren, common.

Rouge River Bird Observatory

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About our Logo

The University of Michigan-Dearborn is located on property that was once the home of Henry Ford. Ford was not only an industrial leader, but a great nature and bird lover -- he was instrumental in convincing Congress to pass the Migratory Bird Treaty in 1913.

Throughout Ford's estate, Fair Lane, there are carvings and other representations of birds. The bird in our logo is taken from the copper ventilator covers in the powerhouse at Fair Lane. Our logo reflects the historical nature of our location.

Recent RRBO literature contributions

Craves, J. A. 2004. Early nesting date for Eastern Screech-owl (*Megascops asio*). *Michigan Birds and Natural History* 11:60-61.

— **Wayne County Breeding Bird Atlas work is already producing interesting and noteworthy records!**

Appel, L. M., J. A. Craves, M. K. Smith, B. Weir, and J. M. Zawiskie. 2004. *Explore our Natural World: A Biodiversity Atlas of the Lake Huron to Lake Erie Corridor*. Wildlife Habitat Council, Great Lakes Regional Office, Detroit, MI.

— This beautiful publication will be distributed to schools and nature centers all over southeast Michigan as a teaching tool.

Birdwatchers have long awaited the publication of "The Birder's Guide to Michigan," a birdfinding guide in a series published by the American Birding Association (www.americanbirding.org). The birdwatching riches of UM-Dearborn are included in a section co-authored by Julie Craves!

Kudos for Craves

Julie Craves was chosen to receive the "**Best Friends of the Rouge**" award. This prestigious award is given annually to individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions towards promoting restoration and stewardship of the Rouge River Watershed. Julie was given this award because of her establishment of RRBO, and her lifetime dedication to conducting long term research in the watershed. Her research has helped to raise awareness about the importance of urban natural areas to migratory birds. The award was presented to Julie at Friends of the Rouge's Annual meeting at the Environmental Interpretive Center on Wednesday, November 10, 2004.

Yes, I/we want to support the work of the Rouge River Bird Observatory

Enclosed is my/our gift of:

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Charge gift to: Visa Discover MasterCard AmEx

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Make checks payable to the University of Michigan-Dearborn. If you/your spouse work(s) for a matching gift company, please include your matching gift form. FOR OFFICE USE EID _____ 303732