Kalamazoo Nature Center

Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory

Annual Report 2025

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Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory

The Kalamazoo Nature Center's (KNC) mission is to create relationships and experiences that welcome and inspire people to discover, enjoy, value, and care for nature. As anyone who has been a part of KNC's work over the years knows well, many of those crucial experiences have focused on birds.

Across the decades, KNC researchers have monitored the populations, health, and survival of birds that live in and move through our region. Working under the name of the Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory (KVBO), this team's efforts extend beyond the Kalamazoo Nature Center's own properties to include regular surveys at the Pitsfield Banding Station, Kleinstuck Preserve, Fort Custer Training Center, and other partnering locations. Very few communities are fortunate enough to have the depth and history of observations and data that is available in Kalamazoo.

Each year, we offer this Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory Annual Report to provide highlights from our last year's work and to share a snapshot of the scientific quality that is possible when a community invests in conservation and research. We welcome you to learn more about this work and to consider joining our efforts. We remain grateful for your continued support.

All banding, marking, and sampling is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Lab.

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Land Acknowledgment

KNC honors and pays respect to the land on which we stand and its traditional stewards, the Anishinaabek, the Council of the Three Fires which include Odawa, Ojibwe, and Bodewadmi, also known as Ottawa, Chippewa, and Potawatomi tribes. As the current stewards of this land, KNC is committed to healing and building relationships between people and land in our work.

2025 Year in Review

Greetings from the Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory! We've been doing this for so long that it almost felt like an uneventful year (which really sounds kind of boring). We didn't see any unusual birds in 2025, and species diversity seemed to hold steady. But unfortunately, our team felt that we have been seeing annual declines in the number of individual birds observed. Despite this, we are grateful that things continue to go so well for our team and our work.

While we all love working with birds, the real highlight is the great people who share these experiences with us. We had Kalamazoo College students and high school interns from KNC's Heronwood conservation biology program joining our banding efforts. We had visits and help from longtime birding friends, past banding interns, and visiting researchers. This year, and every year, our volunteers make life easier.

Fall banding had an amazing season. Our interns, Tara Robey and Hailey Mitchell, arrived with great training, and we really enjoyed watching their new experiences. Tara was onsite when a Barred Owl was captured, and Hailey was able to band a Broad-winged Hawk!

Our team had our own exciting new experience this year: banding two young Peregrine Falcons before they fledged from their nest on Kalamazoo's Fifth Third Bank building. Having never banded in the presence of a free-flying Peregrine, I was apprehensive and bought new safety equipment, especially given the watchful eye of the birds' mother ("Rebecca"). This preparation was warranted. I ended up getting hit twice on the head by Rebecca. (When someone disturbs their nests, they typically go for the tallest person. I was hoping that meant the lanky Michigan DNR staff member, not me...until I climbed onto a stepladder.)

We're always thinking about or traveling to our next project. We completed six more Motus projects (all in the straits) and revisited others for maintenance and connectivity issues. We also attended the Minnesota Inland Bird Banders meeting, which led to good connections and potential new research partnerships. As usual, we're working on new things behind the scenes, all the time. We hope you enjoy hearing about our adventures!

Happy Birding,

Richard S. Keith

RICH KEITH
Director, Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory

KVBO Spotlight

The Impossible Tale of a Thing too Small

By Tom Springer
Vice President of Development, Kalamazoo Nature Center
Author of "Looking for Hickories" and "The Star in the Sycamore"

A hummingbird weighs around 3 grams, the same as a standard crayon. Except that crayons can't fly from Central America and navigate to the same red plastic syrup feeder each year in southern Michigan. It is a trip that may include a treacherous 500-mile leg across open waters above the Gulf of Mexico. But this one did, and everything from his migration route odyssey to the Borg-like biological hardware that makes hummingbirds move and have their being reads like an impossible tale of a thing too small.

Allen Chartier holds this Ruby-throated Hummingbird between his thumb and forefinger. It's a wispy thing, delicate and bright as a Christmas tree ornament. Yet given its muscular tensile strength, one could almost believe that it's made of tungsten rather than flesh and blood. This one is about to receive an aluminum leg band from Chartier, the first Michigander to ever receive a hummingbird banding permit. Moments ago, Chartier retrieved the bird from a cage with a trap door, where it was lured to a syrup feeder. It's a harmless ruse that some birds fall for faster than others.

> ***Allen Chartier, the first person to receive a hummingbird banding permit in Michigan, holds a Ruby-throated Hummingbird.***

"Most often, it's young males who are the 'repeat offenders' and get caught in the traps again," Chartier said. That's the case with bird F16489 as Chartier rattles off various measurements to Lindsey Dolinski, a Kalamazoo Nature Center research biologist. On this day, Dolinski's a 'scribe' in birder's lingo. On busy summer days, the banding team can number eight to ten, with roles assigned for runners, recorders and recaptures (for banded birds that already have bands). They operate under the auspices of Brenda Keith, the KVBO's licensed bander and Senior Avian Biologist. She bends the tiny bands from stainless steel rods the diameter of a hypodermic needle.

Yet no matter who reports the data, you'll hear the same livestock auctioneer-style cadence, albeit with creatures measured in feathery grams rather than cloven tons.

"Wing 44.6, tail 26.2," says Chartier, using a caliper that denotes measurements in millimeters. He works briskly but carefully, and the bird scarcely wiggles. "See this?" says Chartier. (No, I cannot see it.) Nonetheless, he points to a tiny hummingbird beak that resembles a narwhal's tusk, albeit one that's the diameter of No. 2 pencil lead. "This corrugation or wrinkle on the upper beak tells you how old a hummingbird is. You'll only find it on a bird after their hatch year."

> *(Hummingbirds) were fighting over the feeders when I filled them once a day, so now I fill them twice a day. I'll feed them 350 pounds of Pioneer Cane Sugar each season. They don't like the cheap stuff made from beets.*
>
> **JIM SUMMERS**
> **KVBO RESEARCH VOLUNTEER**

Dolinski and Chartier have come to an 1850s farmhouse deep in the 2,126 forested acres of the Three Rivers State Game Area. It's home to Jim and Nancy Summers, who host what Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory staff call a "super site." Super, as in the 42 syrup feeders that Jim Summers tends by hand. It's not a full-time job, although for a few weeks each summer it can feel like it.

Summers uses 4 cups of sugar per gallon of water and makes the syrup in 7-gallon batches. Why all this effort and expense? "We've lived here for 51 years and like giving them a place to land, you know? We'd feel guilty if we didn't. And we love having KNC come down and having neighbors over to watch."

Researchers (and KNC) use the term community science to describe programs that involve the public in data collection. Since scientists can't be everywhere, these extra sets of eyes and ears can gather data from many, many places at once, such as the winter feeder count. Each year, from Copper Harbor to Leonidas, dozens of Michigan birdwatchers tally the number and species that alight at their feeders. They send their handwritten count sheets to KNC, where volunteers and staff key in the data at two small monitors in the KNC mail room. It is tedious, but heroically necessary. Government agencies that manage lands and habitat for wildlife can't use KVBO's findings until they've been converted from a paper record into pixels on a database.

At the Summers' home, you see where the "community" in community science comes in. A half-dozen neighbors, all retired, several in their 80s, have turned out for the show. Perched in lawn chairs, they see how science works beyond the sterile realms of laboratories and dense research journals. They see the subjects themselves – 114 birds banded – and the practical tools that turn live encounters into raw data, such as the self-styled kit that Chartier uses for the job at hand.

"I've got a 'drug dealer' scale to weigh birds [not really, it comes from Ace hardware] and lingerie [nylon footies used to gently restrain birds], Number 2 knitting needles [to open leg bands], and diaper pins [to store unopened bands]. Then I've got my special pliers [modified needle-nose] that I use to crimp on the rings."

It makes for great theater, and Chartier plays his part well. Even on an overcast day that threatens rain, the swirl of green and red hummingbirds and the pursuit of scientific inquiry brings people together.

For a nation that faces an isolation epidemic, that's good medicine for birds and people alike. In 2025, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued a rare advisory on the impact of loneliness and isolation. He claimed that 67 percent of U.S. adults aren't part of a meaningful group or community. "Lacking social connection," Murthy said, "is as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day."

At KVBO birding events, the social connections attract like-minded people and keep them coming back for more. Here, they can indulge their wonky passions for the natural world that family and friends may not share as deeply. On this day, that includes learning about Jeopardy-worthy terms such as gorget and brood patch.

"With males," said Dolinski, "we call the iridescent patch of red feathers on their throat a gorget. We give a rating for how present or absent they are. We check females for brood patches, bare spots on the chest that allow direct contact with the skin to keep eggs warm."

^ Brenda Keith, KVBO Senior Avian Biologist, holds a hummingbird at a KNC fall banding event.

< A hummingbird being weighed in a nylon footie to gently restrain the bird.

2025 Fall Hummingbird Banding

Fall migration banding for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds began on August 23 and ended on September 26, 2025. Hummingbirds were mostly caught at the Pitsfield Banding Station in mist nets or in specially made traps. Two mornings were spent at KNC where a few birds were caught in traps as well.

Throughout the season's surveys, 177 new birds were captured and banded with the standard-issued U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands. Twenty-six birds were recaptured and already banded. Five of the recaptured birds had initially been banded during surveys in previous years, with three birds from 2024, one from 2023, and one from 2022.

More specifics follow, such as the amazing extremes of hummingbird anatomy. They have a huge heart, both literally and figuratively. This pea-sized organ accounts for 3 percent of their body weight, compared with 0.3-.05 percent for humans. During courtship dives, all this vascular horsepower can propel their wings to beat as many as 200 times per second and at speeds that may reach 55 mph. "If we worked as hard as a hummingbird," says Chartier, "we'd have to eat like 1,300 sandwiches per day."

It's unclear if that was fact or hyperbole. But a flying crayon that can stare down the Gulf of Mexico, and fashion a gossamer nest for their pea-sized eggs from lichen and spider webs? Such labors boggle the mind. Their nectar intake must nearly slurp the Summers out of house and home. Imagine lugging home 350 lbs. of sugar, in 10 lb. bags, from the Meijer store in Three Rivers.

Whether out of gratitude or necessity, the hummingbirds return the favor. "When the hummingbirds are here, we can sit on the patio at dusk and not be bothered because they eat mosquitoes," Nancy Summers said. "Once the birds leave, you can't sit out there without getting eaten alive. So, they're also beneficial that way."

The Summers' hospitality also extends to people. Around noon, Nancy invites everyone inside for a buffet lunch of sandwiches, chips, potato salad, and cookies. Outside, the feeders still swarm with hummingbirds and a startling amount of bees.

"I like it that we can make this a fun opportunity to share with the public," said Dolinski around a big oak table in the farmhouse kitchen. "So often, peoples' only interactions with hummingbirds is when they fly in and fly off. When we can see so many this close, it's unforgettable."

Banding Report

Yellow-Rumped Warbler
(*Setophaga coronata*)

Peregrine Falcon Banding

By Gail Walter
Audubon Society of Kalamazoo

In 2024, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources reclassified Peregrine Falcons from endangered to threatened, halting their banding efforts due to limited resources. Although the Peregrine population has improved enough in Michigan to justify this change, the species remains at risk due to avian influenza, with many states reporting steep declines based on monitoring data. Banding young falcons in Kalamazoo began in 2015, with statewide records dating back further. Banding data are essential for tracking population numbers and active sites, so we were disappointed and concerned about losing this valuable tool for monitoring the statewide population. The Audubon Society of Kalamazoo (ASK) reached out to the Kalamazoo Nature Center's banding team to see if they would be able to step in. ASK greatly appreciates the efforts in obtaining the necessary licenses and bands for the task, and the support from the DNR in getting all the permits and paperwork in order.

Banding the Kalamazoo falcons requires climbing out a window into a window well on the 13th floor of the Fifth Third Bank. The process also involves dealing with upset chicks and very protective parents, especially the mother, Rebecca. The adult falcons have strong instincts to defend their family, which is great for the chicks but makes things difficult for the people involved. Because of this, hard hats are essential!

So, on May 28, the intrepid team of Rich Keith and John Brenneman bravely donned their hard hats and ventured into unknown territory, supported by Brenda Keith and Laurel Ridgway inside who handled the record-keeping. Since female raptors are bigger than males, it was clear there was one female and one male chick—both looked healthy and active. The chicks were weighed then fitted with state and federal leg bands. Rebecca was relatively cordial (for her) but eventually ran out of patience. During cleanup and as the chicks were returned to the nest box, she struck Rich hard enough to knock his hard hat's shell loose from the internal straps (Was this hat OSHA-approved?!). Fortunately, Rich was unharmed and now has a great story to tell.

Based on suggestions from falcon fans, the chicks were named Dot (female) and Dash (male).

Learn more about the Kalamazoo Falcons and watch the live Falcon Cam at: kalamazoofalcons.com

Audubon Society of Kalamazoo

Below, left: Laurel Ridgway, Rich Keith, John Brenneman, Brenda Keith and Gail Walter.

Bald Eagle Banding

For over 40 years, Dr. William Bowerman of the University of Maryland has been banding and collecting data on Bald Eagles in Michigan. A significant portion of Dr. Bowerman's research on raptors has focused on how stressors like environmental contaminants affect wildlife populations. Birds, like the Bald Eagle, are incredibly sensitive and can indicate to researchers, through various sampling methods, a decline in environmental health from factors such as habitat degradation, pollution, climate change, disease, and other human impacts.

If you are familiar with the natural history of Kalamazoo, you may be aware of numerous unfortunate recurrences of injuries to the watershed. Throughout the 1900s, the Kalamazoo River was used as a convenient way to remove waste from commercial businesses along the waterway, resulting in heavy PCB contamination and wildlife decline. In July of 2010, the Enbridge Oil pipeline near Marshall broke, releasing over 800,000 gallons of crude tar sands oil into Talmadge Creek, a tributary of the Kalamazoo River. Actions to remedy the devastating impacts of these events have been ongoing since the 1990s. Measuring the effectiveness of these remedies is where Dr. Bowerman's research has been critical.

In 2025, Dr. Bowerman and his dedicated team of researchers, despite the loss of project funding, continued their quest as volunteers to track the health of Bald Eagles and their habitats throughout Michigan. The Kalamazoo Nature Center is fortunate to host a nesting pair of Bald Eagles annually on the property, and by May 2025, surveys detected one eaglet in the nest. Dr. Bowerman's team carefully banded and collected data on the young raptor, getting them back in the nest quickly and safely with a great crew of scientific observers looking on. We look forward to our continued partnership with Dr. Bowerman and his team, and we hope for many more eaglets in the future!

For more information about Dr. Bowerman's research please visit: agnr.umd.edu/about/directory/william-bowerman/

MAPS Banding Photo Album

RECYCLED PAPER

Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) Banding at Fort Custer

KNC began the MAPS banding program at Fort Custer Training Center (FCTC) in 2009. MAPS is a standardized, continent-wide effort to study breeding bird demographics in hopes of informing the ecology, conservation, and management of North American landbird populations. Started by the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) in 1989, over 1,200 stations have participated in the program since its establishment, with over 400 MAPS banding stations currently operating in North America. Michigan has just two stations – Fort Custer and Pitsfield Banding Station – both of which are run by KVBO.

KNC established three banding sites at FCTC in 2009, based on the abundance of breeding birds, structure of vegetation, and accessibility. Across the three survey sites, many habitat types are represented or nearby: wetlands, mature forests, dry uplands, old fields, and prairies. MAPS surveys from these sites not only have supplied data to the IBP database, but they have also provided information for other projects with external collaborators. Current collaborations include a tick study with Dr. Jean Tsao from Michigan State University and hummingbird banding with Great Lakes HummerNet.

During the 19 days of surveys (from May 31 – August 8), 235 new birds were banded, and 80 birds were recaptured. Commonly banded species included: Common Yellowthroat, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, Trail's Flycatcher, Blue-winged Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Swamp Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, and Northern Cardinal.

Birds recaptured from previous breeding seasons provide information on age, longevity, site fidelity and productivity. In 2025, there were 46 returning individuals of 13 species and 1 hybrid. Among the interesting observations this year, one returning White-eyed Vireo was banded in 2021 as an After Hatch Year, making it at least 6 years old. Also interesting was the returning Lawrence's/ Brewster's Warbler banded in 2022. This bird was reported originally as Lawrence's but is now believed to be an introgressed Blue-winged Warbler. An introgressed Blue-winged Warbler is a bird that appears to be Blue-winged but possesses genetic material from the Golden-winged Warbler. These birds often show intermediate plumage traits of both species.

At left: Blue-winged Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Female Red-winged Blackbird, Wood Thrush, & Great crested Flycatcher

2025 Fall Banding Highlights

Ten Most Commonly Banded Species

KNC Banding Station

1.	White-throated Sparrow	180
2.	American Goldfinch	179
3.	Magnolia Warbler	121
4.	Swainson's Thrush	115
5.	Tennessee Warbler	98
6.	Gray Catbird	78
7.	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	75
8.	Common Yellowthroat	74
9.	Field Sparrow	70
10.	Cedar Waxwing	65

Pitsfield Banding Station

1.	White-throated Sparrow	354
2.	Tennessee Warbler	185
3.	Magnolia Warbler	180
4.	Gray Catbird	173
5.	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	160
6.	Swainson's Thrush	148
7.	Myrtle Warbler	118
8.	Ovenbird	106
9.	Hermit Thrush	102
10.	American Redstart	100

KNC Banding Station

Banding Season: 8/25/2025 - 10/31/2025
Total Days in Operation: 53

Largest Daily Catch: 90 on 9/4/2025
Most species on any day: 27
Most Species Banded: 9/30/25 & 10/1/25
Total birds banded: 1,968
Species banded: 78

Pitsfield Banding Station

Banding Season: 8/23/2025 - 10/31/2025
Total Days in Operation: 60

Largest Daily Catch: 130 on 10/24/2025
Most species on any day: 28
Most Species Banded: 9/20/25
Total birds banded: 2,597
Total species banded: 84

Winter Banding at Pitsfield

The 2025-2026 winter season was a rough one for winter banding at Pitsfield Banding Station. The surprisingly severe weather, full of high winds, extreme cold, and above-average snowfall, dramatically limited the opportunities for the team's regular surveys.

Banding in the single digits is doable with experience and caution, but it is tough work. Even when the winds are calm enough to put out nets, frigid temperatures mean that the team must complete survey rounds more quickly to ease the stress placed on the birds.

As a result, the team only banded eight times over this winter, far fewer than in a typical season. Altogether, winter sessions resulted in 276 new birds banded, plus another 250 recaptures. Many of the recaps were tree sparrows and juncos that had been previously banded at Pitsfield. Several were up to five years old.

Seasonal Bird Banding Staff

Each year, the Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory welcomes seasonal bird banders to work and learn alongside our team. These assistants practice bird identification skills, improve their banding techniques, and engage with visitors to KNC's banding station. Along the way, they also keep a journal to document their experiences through the season. We've shared some excerpts below:

Hailey Mitchell

Tara Robey

Field Notes:

August 25 – September 18, 2025

Fall banding has been off to a great start at both the Nature Center and the Pitsfield station! We have banded over 1,000 birds at Pitsfield and over 600 at the Nature Center. At the Nature Center, Common Yellowthroats and American Goldfinches are putting on quite the show, zooming around the prairie and making up large numbers of our banded birds.

Rich and Brenda have kept busy banding Hummingbirds, mostly at the Pitsfield Station, but also holding Hummingbird banding demonstrations at the Nature Center. Brenda has also deployed the last Motus tag of the season, allowing another tagged Wood Thrush to be tracked!

Highlights of the early season have included catching a Barred Owl and Broad-winged Hawk at Pitsfield. Dusting off our box of larger bands left us with hope for more raptor captures this season!

A mid-September heatwave has caused us to close nets early some days, but the arrival of our first Ruby-crowned Kinglet and White-throated Sparrow reminds us that winter is coming and to appreciate every species before they head south for the year.

October 1 – 31, 2025

In early October, we parted with the last of many species of warblers, and banded larger numbers of seed-eating, short-distant migrants. White-throated Sparrows made up most of our captures. While October banding was slow overall, we had one day with 72 newly banded White-throated Sparrows (130 total new captures for the day).

Hermit Thrushes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets also arrived in large numbers. We were excited to capture several Fox and Savannah Sparrows, as well as Brown Creepers. In late October, we caught our first few American Tree Sparrows of the season.

Both Pitsfield and KNC banding stations captured around 2,000 birds this season. While some days were slow, we also had days with over 100 birds banded. Surprise flocks of Cedar Waxwings and Goldfinches kept us on our toes.

The end of the season means all the warblers have left except the Myrtle Warblers, or as they are affectionately called "Butter Butts." These little guys are fun to have in the hand, but it is tricky to sex them as they are so variable in their winter plumage. The sparrows also came out to play with White-throated Sparrows being our most abundant bird of late fall. We had one day where we caught 72 new ones!

Overall, we had a wonderful season of banding and wish the birds all the best in their wintering grounds.

Volunteer Highlight: Lily Hendershot

This year's Volunteer Spotlight features a special person who is near and dear to all Kalamazoo Nature Center staff. For the last year and a half, during regular business hours, Lily Hendershot has worked as a Cleaning Technician who cares for the KNC's facilities. But Lily actually got her start with KNC six months earlier, quickly becoming one of the most devoted and committed volunteers for the bird banding team.

Here's a Q&A with Lily!

How did you get into birding?

When I was really young, I loved to draw, and my favorite thing to draw was birds. I kind of fell away from it over the years, until I was in college at Northern Michigan University, and I took an ornithology class from Alec Lindsay that was really inspiring. It really got me back into birding, especially after we took a trip to Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. I first heard about their banding program, and it made me seek out banding opportunities when I moved back to Kalamazoo. I never would have considered myself a morning person until I got into bird banding!

> *Being able to do bird banding has meant so much to me. I hope that one day I'll be able to work as a bird bander.*
>
> **LILY HENDERSHOT**
> KVBO VOLUNTEER

What makes banding birds with the KVBO team interesting? Do you have any favorites? And, what keeps you coming back?

I love seeing the birds that we get in the nets. There are so many species living here that I probably wouldn't have seen otherwise. I really love woodpeckers... they are my favorite bird that we get during banding. (Though penguins are my favorite bird in the world!)

It's something that is a real hobby for me now. I enjoy being outside with Rich and Brenda. They are

so knowledgeable and tell me so many fun facts. And, I've become close friends with a lot of the other volunteers.

Being able to do bird banding has meant so much to me. I hope that one day I'll be able to work as a bird bander.

And now, a question for Rich Keith, KVBO Director:

What makes Lily such a special volunteer?

I love Lily! She's amazing, and I can't say enough about working with her. She's so quiet that, at first, it might seem easy to overlook how much she offers. But, she's very intelligent, quick to learn, and makes life easier for the rest of the banders. Lily is so dedicated – she comes out virtually every week, nearly every time we band in the off-season, and even stops by when she's working at KNC. It's been especially rewarding to see her open up and share what she's learned with other people. We love seeing her confidence grow enough to share what she knows with others.

Partnerships

2025 KVCC Bird Species Survey List

- Canada Goose
- Mallard
- Mourning Dove
- Chimney Swift
- Virginia Rail
- Killdeer
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Green Heron
- Northern Flicker
- Least Flycatcher
- Eastern Kingbird
- Warbling Vireo
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- European Starling
- Gray Catbird
- American Robin
- House Sparrow
- American Goldfinch
- Chipping Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Common Grackle
- Common Yellowthroat
- Yellow Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Wilson's Warbler

Urban Wetland Project Improves Bird Diversity at KVCC

A decade ago, during the Spring of 2016, Kalamazoo-area birdwatchers found shorebirds feeding in a small downtown wetland on property owned by the Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC). At the time, the property (which would later become KVCC's Food Innovation Center) was little more than a flooded area with exposed mud and shallow water, creating perfect conditions for migrating shorebirds. A White-rumped Sandpiper, a species with less than 50 documented records in the county, was soon found at the site, prompting local birders to establish an eBird hotspot in the area, named after the adjacent Upjohn Park. Later, as the property was overtaken with wetland plants and cattails, it then attracted secretive wetland species like Virginia and Sora Rails, an American Bittern, and a Palm Warbler.

Altogether, 93 species of birds have been found at the Upjohn Park eBird Hotspot since 2016, and the KVCC property has been an integral part of that habitat. However, in recent years the area's abundant non-native and invasive plant species have made it less desirable for secretive wetland birds and, as a result, more populated by generalist bird species. Even though the KVCC site is small, it is a critically positioned part of a habitat corridor that cuts through town before emptying into the Kalamazoo River. Recognizing the value of this space, from 2024-2025, KVCC worked with the Kalamazoo Nature Center's Ecological Services team to implement habitat management activities, develop a long-term invasive species management plan, and provide workforce skills for students at KVCC.

KVBO's John Brenneman performed baseline bird surveys prior to the invasive species management in 2024. These surveys did not yield anything unusual or interesting beyond the usual common species found widespread in this area. Follow-up surveys were conducted again in spring 2025 after a year of habitat management had occurred, with a total of 28 species observed. These observations included two Virginia Rails that responded to playback calls, along with a Lincoln's Sparrow, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler. The reemergence of the Virginia Rails, found directly below the greenhouse building, seems to be proof positive for the benefit of recent habitat management completed on site. Over time, we expect that KVCC's commitment to restoring and maintaining this wetland area will benefit not only KVCC, but also the local hydrology, native plants, pollinators, and other local wildlife, including migrating birds.

New Study Assesses Rare and Declining Avian Species at Fort Custer

The Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory has conducted avian surveys at Fort Custer Training Center (FCTC) on nearly an annual basis since 1997. Point Count surveys have been an important method used over the years to document all birds seen or heard in 10-minute increments at 290 sampling points across the site's 7,500 acres. These surveys aid the Michigan Army National Guard in understanding how to manage natural resources stewardship effectively, while also protecting military training readiness.

Another important partner in FCTC land management is the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), which provides high-quality scientific expertise and information to conserve Michigan's biodiversity. In 2025, MNFI's Eric Branch and Ashley Cole-Wick brought their analytical expertise together with KVBO's historical data to provide Fort Custer with updated resources to manage for rare and declining bird species in an era of climate change.

Their recent report, *Status Distribution, and Adaptive Capacity of Rare and Declining Avian Species at Fort Custer Training Center*, reviewed KVBO data from 4,407 Fort Custer point counts conducted over 23 years. This research aimed to identify at-risk focal species that rely on FCTC habitats, document how their distribution and status have changed over time, and assess how well these species are likely to adapt to the stress of climate change. Taken together, this information is expected to provide critical blueprints for how Fort Custer's natural resources management team can better plan and prioritize conservation actions that will protect these species over time.

The assessment identified 22 focal species that should be the focus of future planning and management efforts, including Wood Thrush, Hooded Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Chimney Swift, among others. Many of these species are listed as Threatened or Endangered or have been noted for declining populations that could be expected to impact military training activities. This information identifies critical needs for habitat protection and enhancement that can inform future management plans and mitigate climate vulnerabilities for rare and declining birds.

Citation:
Branch, E.C. and A.A. Cole-Wick. 2025. Status, Distribution, and Adaptive Capacity of Rare and Declining Avian Species at Fort Custer Training Center. Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Report No. 2025-06, Lansing, MI

Partnership Profile: Indiana University's Ketterson Lab

By Dr. Ellen Ketterson
Retired Professor of Biology, Indiana University Bloomington

Fifty years ago, my husband Val Nolan and I were guests of Dr. Lewis Batts, founder and director of the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Val had asked Dr. Batts whether we might conduct winter field work at KNC in order to study a species of sparrow, the Dark-eyed Junco. Between net runs on cold and snowy days, I recall visiting a room with a view to catch a breath. The room was large with blue walls and no furniture, just openness. Microphones piped calls of White-breasted Nuthatches and chickadees, and the feeling was one of immense calm. I wonder what that space is like now. I loved it at the time.

My name is Ellen Ketterson, and I am a recently retired distinguished professor of biology at Indiana University Bloomington. Research conducted by my group has addressed migratory behavior in the junco, a species that breeds largely in Canada and winters in the United States. In particular, we have been interested in whether male and female juncos differ in how far they migrate and whether their migration has been affected by climate change. Kalamazoo Nature Center and the Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory have played key roles in my research, and I am writing to say thank you to Rich and Brenda Keith who have been extremely important collaborators.

> *Our research emphasizes the importance of long-term studies and collaboration if we are to document how nature, and birds in particular, are adapting to change.*
>
> **DR. ELLEN KETTERSON**
> **RETIRED PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY,**
> **INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON**

In the 1970s, Val, who was my graduate advisor at the time had learned through extensive bird banding efforts carried out in winter near his home in Indiana that, among the juncos he banded, males outnumbered females by a factor of two. Speculating that females might be more numerous elsewhere if migration distance varied by sex, he and I set out to learn whether winter population sex ratios varied geographically. If males were making shorter migrations they should predominate in the north; if females were making longer migrations, they should predominate in the south.

My first memories of the Kalamazoo Nature Center date to this time when Val and I participated in operations led by the late bird biologist Ray Adams who was a phenomenon. Ray was a tireless researcher besotted by birds. He was also a warm and generous host. We worked outdoors in the cold during December trips lasting several days, capturing and banding as many juncos as we could, typically more than 100. Over four visits between 1976 and 1980, we banded 578 juncos. We learned that for every female we caught in Michigan, we would capture 3 males. More than 75 percent of the Michigan juncos were male. In contrast, when we made similar trips to Tennessee and South Carolina, we captured many more females than males. Our speculation proved true and we later published our data on what is termed "differential migration by sex."[1]

Time passed and during the early 2000s, a student of mine named Dawn O'Neal wondered whether our changing climate might be affecting junco migrations and winter sex ratios in the eastern United States. Were juncos as a whole still migrating as far as they did in the past? Were females still making longer migrations than males?

Dawn contacted Rich and Brenda Keith at the KVBO who kindly welcomed her to their banding operations, allowing her to learn how junco populations in the early 2000s differed from the ones we had sampled 20-plus years earlier.

In addition to the research Dawn conducted with the Keiths in Michigan, she studied juncos in Indiana, Tennessee and Mississippi, visiting some of the same sites that Val and I had sampled decades earlier. Dawn learned three very important things. First, males still outnumbered females in Michigan and Indiana, but not to the same degree. Second, citizen science data in the form of Christmas Bird Counts revealed that the geographic distribution of wintering juncos has moved northward. And third, she learned that fewer juncos were found in the Eastern United States than had been found in the 1980s. Junco abundance had declined. As it turned out, the best predictor of a site's winter sex ratio was the mean and minimum air temperature in January along with snowfall, and Januarys were far warmer than they had been 25 years earlier. Dawn's results were published in the journal, Frontiers in Bird Science.[2] Dawn could not have accomplished what she did without the essential help provided by the Keiths!

Now nearly another 20 years have passed, and a new Indiana University student named Andrew Good is wondering as Dawn did whether the junco's migration is still in flux. Rich and Brenda were ready to help again, and I am so grateful to them for their commitment to birds and generosity toward students. This research is still underway, but it appears that female juncos have become even more abundant than they were at sites in Michigan and Indiana that used to be at the northern edge of their winter distribution.

Our research emphasizes the importance of long-term studies and collaboration if we are to document how nature, and birds in particular, are adapting to change. According to a study conducted in 2019, there are nearly 3 billion fewer birds in North America than there were in 1970 and 186 million fewer juncos.[3] The losses are dramatic and deeply troubling. Cooperation between scientists and the support of the public will be key to turning the tide. Blessings on the Keiths for the critical role they play in bird conservation.

1. Ketterson, E.D., and Nolan, V., Jr., eds. (1983). The evolution of differential bird migration. Volume 1, pp. 615-678.

2. O'Neal, D.M., Austin, S.H., and Ketterson, E.D. (2024). Impacts of a warming climate on the non-breeding distribution of a classic differential migrant. Frontiers in Bird Science 3. 10.3389/fbirs.2024.1417867.

3. Rosenberg, K.V., Dokter, A.M., Blancher, P.J., Sauer, J.R., Smith, A.C., Smith, P.A., Stanton, J.C., Panjabi, A., Helft, L., Parr, M., and Marra, P.P. (2019). Decline of the North American avifauna. Science 366, 120-124. 10.1126/science.aaw1313.

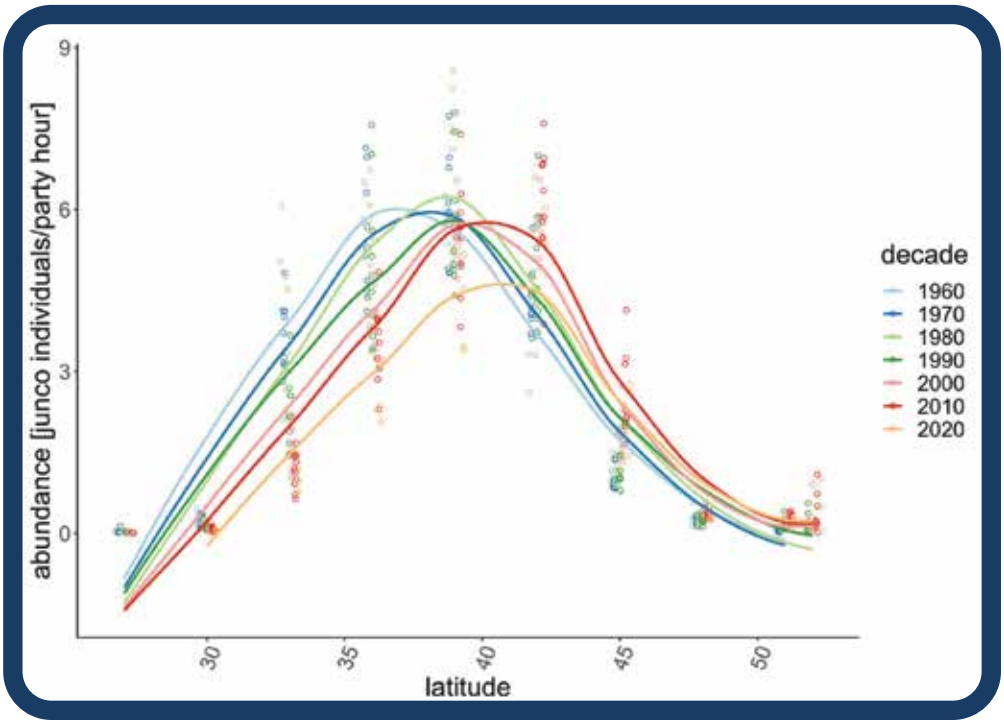


Figure comparing abundance by latitude and decade from historical 1966–2022 Christmas Bird Counts conducted by citizen scientists. The number of junco individuals reported per party hour for each count was binned across latitudinal bands of 3°. The results indicate a decline in abundance and a northward shift in junco winter range in recent decades (O'Neal et al. 2024).

Michigan Motus Array Updates

The Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory works with bird observatories around the globe to gather data on bird migration routes using the Motus Wildlife Tracking System. Led by Bird Studies Canada, this system uses networked receiving towers to detect specialized radio tracking devices on wildlife from up to 15km away and shares these reports with researchers worldwide.

The KVBO is connected with 26 statewide Motus receiving towers that make up the Michigan Motus Array. Together with other international receiving towers, this network dramatically increases researchers' abilities to track bird migration across Michigan and beyond.

We were pleased to launch six new Motus receiving towers within the Michigan Motus Array in 2025. The addition of these towers helps to expand Motus coverage across the northern half of the lower peninsula and offers the opportunity to track tagged birds and wildlife that migrate between Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas.

Six new Motus towers installed in 2025 include:

→ Wilderness State Park #15541

→ Cheboygan State Park #15542

→ Greenwood Foundation #15728

→ Little Sand Bay #15729

→ Mackinac Island #15865

→ University of Michigan Biological Station #15896

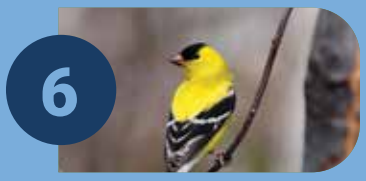
The sharing of Motus telemetry data has helped scientists better understand migration timing, stopover sites, habitat use, breeding grounds, nesting locations, survival rates, etc., among a variety of migratory wildlife, including bats, beetles, butterflies, moths, other insects, and reptiles.

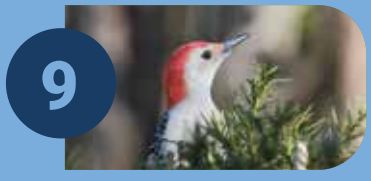
For more tools and reports from Motus Worldwide, please visit motus.org.

To explore the Michigan Motus Array directly, visit: https://motus.org/dashboard/#e=profile&d=projects&s=165

Annual Surveys

TOP TEN WINTER FEEDER COUNT SPECIES





2024-25 Winter Feeder Count

The 49th annual count took place from November 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025. A total of 201 participants conducted 975 feeder counts. Altogether, this group identified 53,905 birds and 112 species in the feeder count areas.

During the 24/25 season, the survey added three new species: the Canada Goose, Ruffed Grouse, and Fox Sparrow. Two previously documented species were not found during this year's surveys: the Bohemian Waxwing and Common Redpoll.

> Observations on the Season from John Brenneman, KVBO Senior Avian Biologist:

This last winter season was again mild. During the last half of April, the temperatures were way above average, which likely produced some interesting results. Both Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Baltimore Orioles were reported at levels three times higher than their normal averages. Record high numbers of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and House Wrens were also reported. Both the Pileated Woodpeckers and Carolina Wrens, which have been trending upwards in number over the last 10 years, were also found at new record highs.

Common Redpolls, which are now known as just the Redpoll with the lumping of the Hoary and Common into one species, were predicted to stay up north due to high birch and alder crops. This indeed was the case with well below average numbers of Redpolls reported.

I look forward to the monthly feeder counts, especially in winter. It's a chance to slow down with a hot cup of tea and watch the swirling snow and busy birds. As the seasons change, my husband and I enjoy documenting the shift in the visiting species, and I appreciate that our data contributes to furthering research on our local bird populations.

EVIE KIRKWOOD
WINTER FEEDER COUNT VOLUNTEER FOR OVER 40 YEARS

Top Ten Species, top to bottom:

Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker

Kleinstuck Surveys

The Kalamazoo Nature Center's daily spring migration surveys at Western Michigan University's Kleinstuck Preserve have continued since 1973. Using the same survey method every day allows researchers to track the movements of migrating birds as they move northward. After a total of 58 surveys were conducted from March 19 – May 26, the 2025 season ended with 130 species observed, a total exactly in line with the long-term average.

During the spring season, very warm temperatures from the end of April through early May produced a very fast leaf-out period in the forest. During that same time frame, the survey team also observed the largest movement of new migrants into the area. April 25 and 30 specifically had the largest influx of new species for this spring.

There were significantly fewer Cuckoos this spring than there have been in the past couple of years. (Not even a single Black-billed Cuckoo was observed this year!) Because Cuckoos are fuzzy caterpillar specialists, the number of Cuckoos had been higher in recent years due to recent Spongy Moth outbreaks in southwestern Michigan. Since the outbreak seems to have finished in this area, the Cuckoo numbers have gone back to normal.

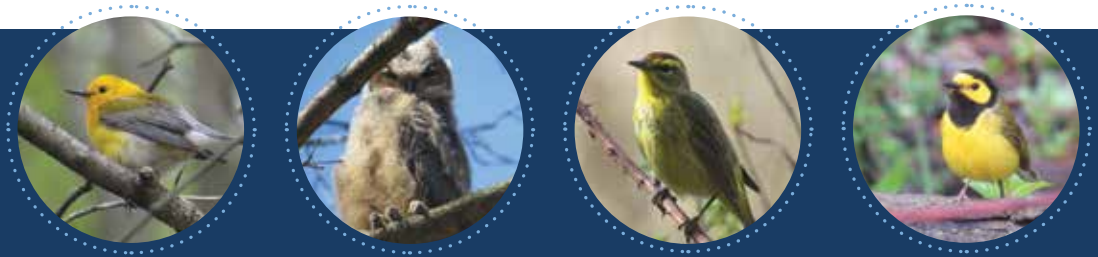
There were 29 species of Warblers found, including a rare sighting of a Prothonotary Warbler. This species does nest in Kalamazoo County but is usually found along the Kalamazoo River. Sightings of Prothonotary Warblers at Kleinstuck Preserve are quite rare. The Connecticut Warbler was another unusual find. Even though this species is an annual visitor, they pass through in a very short amount of time and are difficult to see due to their secretive nature.

The Palm Warbler, on the other hand, was not hard to find at Kleinstuck in 2025. This species had numerous sightings for many weeks and finished the season with five times higher than average numbers. However, the opposite was true for the Swainson's Thrush, which arrived a full 10 days later than usual on May 9. When the species finally arrived, they appeared in low numbers that represented only half of their seasonal average.

The Great Horned Owls successfully fledged two young this year, and it looked like the Broad-winged Hawks were setting up to nest again also. On May 2 and 7, a Red-headed Woodpecker was seen, which was only the fourth observance of this species in 25 years of surveys at Kleinstuck. Altogether, it was a great season, and the KVBO team cannot wait to see what happens next year.

2025 Kleinstuck Preserve Bird Survey Species Observed

Ducks, Geese, & Waterfowl	Kingfishers	Treecreepers	Blackbirds & Allies
Canada Goose	*Belted Kingfisher*	*Brown Creeper*	*Red-winged Blackbird*
Mute Swan	**Woodpeckers**	**Gnatcatchers**	*Rusty Blackbird*
Wood Duck	*Red-bellied Woodpecker*	*Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*	*Common Grackle*
Hooded Merganser	*Red-headed Woodpecker*	**Wrens**	*Brown-headed Cowbird*
Mallard	*Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*	*Northern House Wren*	*Baltimore Oriole*
Blue-winged Teal	*Downy Woodpecker*	*Winter Wren*	**New World Warblers**
Pheasants, Grouse, & Allies	*Hairy Woodpecker*	*Carolina Wren*	*Ovenbird*
Wild Turkey	*Northern Flicker*	**Starlings**	*Northern Waterthrush*
Grebes	*Pileated Woodpecker*	*European Starling*	*Golden-winged Warbler*
Pied-billed Grebe	**Tyrant Flycatchers**	**Mockingbirds & Thrashers**	*Blue-winged Warbler*
Pigeons & Doves	*Olive-sided Flycatcher*	*Gray Catbird*	*Black-and-white Warbler*
Mourning Dove	*Eastern Wood-Pewee*	*Brown Thrasher*	*Tennessee Warbler*
Cuckoos	*Yellow-bellied Flycatcher*	**Thrushes & Allies**	*Orange-crowned Warbler*
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*Alder Flycatcher*	*Eastern Bluebird*	*Nashville Warbler*
Swifts	*Acadian Flycatcher*	*Veery*	*Mourning Warbler*
Chimney Swift	*Least Flycatcher*	*Gray-cheeked Thrush*	*Common Yellowthroat*
Hummingbirds	*Eastern Phoebe*	*Swainson's Thrush*	*Hooded Warbler*
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	*Great Crested Flycatcher*	*Hermit Thrush*	*American Redstart*
Rails, Gallinules, Coots	*Eastern Kingbird*	*Wood Thrush*	*Cape May Warbler*
Sora	**Vireos**	*American Robin*	*Northern Parula*
Cranes	*Yellow-throated Vireo*	**Waxwings**	*Magnolia Warbler*
Sandhill Crane	*Blue-headed Vireo*	*Cedar Waxwing*	*Connecticut Warbler*
Plovers	*Warbling Vireo*	**Old World Sparrows**	*Bay-breasted Warbler*
Killdeer	*Red-eyed Vireo*	*House Sparrow*	*Blackburnian Warbler*
Cormorants	**Crows & Jays**	**Finches & Allies**	*Yellow Warbler*
Double-crested Cormorant	*Blue Jay*	*House Finch*	*Chestnut-sided Warbler*
Herons, Egrets & Bitterns	*American Crow*	*Purple Finch*	*Blackpoll Warbler*
Great Blue Heron	**Chickadees & Titmice**	*Pine Siskin*	*Black-throated Blue Warbler*
Green Heron	*Black-capped Chickadee*	*American Goldfinch*	*Prothonotary Warbler*
New World Vultures	*Tufted Titmouse*	**New World Sparrows**	*Palm Warbler*
Turkey Vulture	**Swallows**	*Eastern Towhee*	*Pine Warbler*
Hawks, Eagles, Kites	*Tree Swallow*	*Chipping Sparrow*	*Yellow-rumped Warbler*
Broad-winged Hawk	*Northern Rough-winged Swallow*	*Field Sparrow*	*Black-throated Green Warbler*
Cooper's Hawk	*Purple Martin*	*Fox Sparrow*	*Canada Warbler*
Red-shouldered Hawk	*Barn Swallow*	*Song Sparrow*	*Wilson's Warbler*
Red-tailed Hawk	**Kinglets**	*Lincoln's Sparrow*	**Cardinals & Allies**
Bald Eagle	*Golden-crowned Kinglet*	*Swamp Sparrow*	*Scarlet Tanager*
Owls	*Ruby-crowned Kinglet*	*White-throated Sparrow*	*Northern Cardinal*
Barred Owl	**Nuthatches**	*Dark-eyed Junco*	*Rose-breasted Grosbeak*
Eastern Screech-Owl	*Red-breasted Nuthatch*	*American Tree Sparrow*	*Indigo Bunting*
Great Horned Owl	*White-breasted Nuthatch*	*White-crowned Sparrow*	



Kleinstuck birds in 2025, from left: Prothonotary Warbler, Great Horned Owl fledgling, Palm Warbler, & Hooded Warbler.

Birdathon

KVBO's own "Catbirders" team had another successful year at the Southwest Michigan Team Birdathon on May 10, 2025. The annual Birdathon event attracts expert birding teams from across Southwest Michigan to compete and identify as many birds in a single day as possible within Berrien County. The event's goal is to raise both funds and awareness to support local conservation efforts.

As usual, the 2025 KVBO team was made up of Rich and Brenda Keith, John Brenneman, and Todd Alfes. The Catbirders tallied 118 species, earning them the Introduced Birders Award. This award is given to a team from outside Berrien County with the highest total species observed at Birdathon.

< A few of the many species counted during Birdathon: Mallard, Killdeer, Carolina Wren, & Baltimore Oriole

Southwest Michigan Team Birdathon Checklist

SW Michigan Audubon TEAM BIRDATHON

Team Name: The Catbirders

Total Species: 118 **Total Pledges:** _____

Please check any of the below that apply to your team:
We are Introduced Birders [X] We drove 100 Miles or Less [ ]
We started at 7 am or later [X] We birded at 1 location [ ]

- [X] Canada Goose
- [X] Mute Swan
- [X] Wood Duck
- [ ] Gadwall
- [ ] American Wigeon
- [ ] Am Black Duck
- [X] Mallard
- [X] Blue-winged Teal
- [ ] Northern Shoveler
- [ ] Northern Pintail
- [ ] Green-winged Teal
- [ ] Canvasback
- [ ] Redhead
- [ ] Ring-necked Duck
- [ ] Greater Scaup
- [ ] Lesser Scaup
- [ ] Bufflehead
- [ ] Com. Goldeneye
- [ ] Hooded Merganser
- [ ] Red-br. Merganser
- [ ] Ruddy Duck
- [ ] Northern Bobwhite
- [ ] R.N. Pheasant
- [ ] Ruffed Grouse
- [ ] Wild Turkey
- [ ] Red-throated Loon
- [ ] Common Loon
- [ ] Pied-billed Grebe
- [ ] Horned Grebe
- [X] D.C. Cormorant
- [ ] American Bittern
- [ ] Least Bittern
- [X] Great Blue Heron
- [ ] Great Egret
- [ ] Cattle Egret
- [X] Green Heron
- [ ] B.C. Night-Heron
- [X] Turkey Vulture
- [ ] Osprey
- [X] Bald Eagle
- [ ] Northern Harrier
- [ ] Sharp-sh. Hawk
- [X] Cooper's Hawk
- [X] Red-sh. Hawk
- [X] Broad-wing Hawk
- [X] Red-tailed Hawk
- [ ] Rough-leg. Hawk
- [ ] Virginia Rail
- [X] Sora
- [ ] Common Gallinule
- [ ] American Coot
- [X] Sandhill Crane
- [ ] Black-bel. Plover
- [ ] Am. Golden-Plover
- [X] Semipalm. Plover
- [X] Killdeer
- [X] Spotted Sandpiper
- [X] Solitary Sandpiper
- [X] Greater Yellowlegs
- [ ] Willet
- [X] Lesser Yellowlegs
- [ ] Upland Sandpiper
- [ ] Ruddy Turnstone
- [ ] Stilt Sandpiper
- [ ] Sanderling
- [X] Dunlin
- [X] Least Sandpiper
- [ ] W.R. Sandpiper
- [ ] Pectoral Sandpiper
- [ ] Semi Sandpiper
- [ ] S.B. Dowitcher
- [ ] Wilson's Snipe
- [ ] Am. Woodcock
- [ ] Wilson's Phalarope
- [ ] Bonaparte's Gull
- [ ] Laughing Gull
- [X] Franklin's Gull
- [X] Ring-billed Gull
- [X] Herring Gull
- [ ] L. Black-back Gull
- [ ] Gr Black-back Gull
- [X] Caspian Tern
- [ ] Black Tern
- [X] Common Tern
- [ ] Forster's Tern
- [X] Rock Pigeon
- [ ] E. Collared-Dove
- [X] Mourning Dove
- [ ] Yellow-bill Cuckoo
- [ ] Black-bill Cuckoo
- [ ] E. Screech-Owl
- [ ] Great Horned Owl
- [ ] Barred Owl
- [ ] Com Nighthawk
- [ ] E. Whip-poor-will
- [X] Chimney Swift
- [X] R.Th Hummingbird
- [X] Belted Kingfisher
- [X] R.H. Woodpecker
- [X] R.B. Woodpecker
- [ ] Y.B. Sapsucker
- [X] Downy Woodpeck
- [X] Hairy Woodpecker
- [X] Northern Flicker
- [X] Pileated Woodpeck
- [ ] American Kestrel
- [ ] Merlin
- [ ] Peregrine Falcon
- [ ] O.S. Flycatcher
- [ ] E. Wood-Pewee
- [ ] Y.B. Flycatcher
- [ ] Acadian Flycatcher
- [ ] Alder Flycatcher
- [ ] Willow Flycatcher
- [X] Least Flycatcher
- [X] Eastern Phoebe
- [X] G.Cr. Flycatcher
- [X] Eastern Kingbird
- [ ] White-eyed Vireo
- [X] Yellow-thr. Vireo
- [ ] Blue-headed Vireo
- [X] Warbling Vireo
- [ ] Philadelphia Vireo
- [X] Red-eyed Vireo
- [X] Blue Jay
- [X] American Crow
- [X] Fish Crow
- [X] Horned Lark
- [X] Purple Martin
- [X] Tree Swallow
- [X] N. RW Swallow
- [X] Bank Swallow
- [X] Cliff Swallow
- [X] Barn Swallow
- [X] Blk-cap Chickadee
- [X] Tufted Titmouse
- [ ] Red-br. Nuthatch
- [X] White-br Nuthatch
- [ ] Brown Creeper
- [X] House Wren
- [ ] Winter Wren
- [ ] Sedge Wren
- [ ] Marsh Wren
- [X] Carolina Wren
- [X] B.G. Gnatcatcher
- [ ] Gold. Cr. Kinglet
- [X] Ruby Cr. Kinglet
- [X] Eastern Bluebird
- [X] Veery
- [ ] Gr-cheeked Thrush
- [ ] Swainson's Thrush
- [ ] Hermit Thrush
- [X] Wood Thrush
- [X] American Robin
- [X] Gray Catbird
- [X] Brown Thrasher
- [ ] N. Mockingbird
- [X] European Starling
- [X] American Pipit
- [ ] Cedar Waxwing
- [ ] Ovenbird
- [ ] Worm-eat. Warb
- [X] L. Waterthrush
- [X] N. Waterthrush
- [ ] Gold-winged Warb
- [X] Blue-winged Warb
- [X] Bl & White Warbler
- [ ] Prothonotary Warb
- [X] Tennessee Warbler
- [ ] Orange-cr Warbler
- [X] Nashville Warbler
- [ ] Conn. Warbler
- [ ] Mourning Warbler
- [ ] Kentucky Warbler
- [X] Com Yellowthroat
- [X] Hooded Warbler
- [X] American Redstart
- [X] Cape May Warbler
- [X] Cerulean Warbler
- [X] Northern Parula
- [ ] Magnolia Warbler
- [ ] Bay-br. Warbler
- [X] Blackburn Warbler
- [X] Yellow Warbler
- [X] Ch-sided Warbler
- [X] Blackpoll Warbler
- [X] Blk.Th. Blue Warb
- [X] Palm Warbler
- [X] Pine Warbler
- [X] Yellow-rump Warb
- [X] Yellow-thr Warbler
- [ ] Prairie Warbler
- [X] Blk.Th Green Warb
- [ ] Canada Warbler
- [X] Wilson's Warbler
- [ ] Yellow-br. Chat
- [X] Eastern Towhee
- [X] Chipping Sparrow
- [ ] Clay-col Sparrow
- [X] Field Sparrow
- [ ] Vesper Sparrow
- [X] Savannah Sparrow
- [ ] Grasshop Sparrow
- [X] Henslow's Sparrow
- [ ] Fox Sparrow
- [X] Song Sparrow
- [X] Lincoln's Sparrow
- [X] Swamp Sparrow
- [X] White-thr Sparrow
- [X] White-cr. Sparrow
- [ ] Dark-eyed Junco
- [ ] Summer Tanager
- [X] Scarlet Tanager
- [X] Northern Cardinal
- [X] Rose-br. Grosbeak
- [X] Indigo Bunting
- [ ] Dickcissel
- [X] Bobolink
- [X] R.W. Blackbird
- [X] E. Meadowlark
- [ ] W. Meadowlark
- [ ] Rusty Blackbird
- [X] Brewer's Blackbird
- [X] Common Grackle
- [X] B.H. Cowbird
- [ ] Orchard Oriole
- [X] Baltimore Oriole
- [X] House Finch
- [ ] Purple Finch
- [ ] Pine Siskin
- [X] Am Goldfinch
- [X] House Sparrow

Other Species

Most species not on this form should be considered rare in Berrien County or rare at this time of year. Please consider I.D. carefully before adding as a write in species.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Christmas Bird Counts

Every year, thousands of volunteers get outside to count birds as part of the National Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Counts. These counts are held between December 14 and January 5 each year. Each of these counts takes place inside a 15-mile diameter circle where the observers identify and count all the bird species they can find in one day. The Kalamazoo Valley Bird Observatory team helps with six of these area counts each year: Allegan, Battle Creek, Dowagiac, Gobles, Kalamazoo, and South Kalamazoo.

Christmas Bird Counts first began in 1900, as an alternative to popular American Christmas "side hunts" where participants would compete to see how many birds they could kill. A concerned U.S. ornithologist, Frank Chapman, proposed counting the birds instead of killing them, and 25 counts by 27 individuals were performed that first year. Since then, that tradition has grown to include over 2,600 counts across 17 countries involving over 75,000 people annually.

Audubon

> 1,658 Sandhill Cranes were counted during the 2025 Christmas Bird Count events.

KVBO Christmas Bird Count by the Numbers

American Black Duck	23	Gadwall	150	Red-breasted Nuthatch	52
American Coot	4	Golden Eagle	5	Redhead	5
American Crow	1804	Golden-crowned Kinglet	30	Red-headed Woodpecker	74
American Goldfinch	519	Gray Catbird	1	Red-shouldered Hawk	42
American Kestrel	26	Great Blue Heron	36	Red-tailed Hawk	156
American Robin	778	Great Horned Owl	6	Red-winged Blackbird	2
American Tree Sparrow	867	Greater Scaup	4	Ring-billed Gull	258
Bald Eagle	38	Green-winged Teal	4	Ring-necked Duck	134
Barred Owl	4	Hairy Woodpecker	125	Ring-necked Pheasant	2
Belted Kingfisher	26	Hermit Thrush	15	Rock Pigeon	1144
Black-capped Chickadee	896	Herring Gull	193	Rough-legged Hawk	18
Blue Jay	1623	Hooded Merganser	135	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Blue-winged Teal	1	Horned Lark	72	Ruddy Duck	1
Brown Creeper	48	House Finch	712	Sandhill Crane	1658
Bufflehead	154	House Sparrow	1300	Sharp-shinned Hawk	4
Cackling Goose	1	Killdeer	1	Snow Bunting	67
Canada Goose	8771	Lapland Longspur	3	Song Sparrow	80
Canvasback	2	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	Swamp Sparrow	4
Carolina Wren	71	Lesser Scaup	20	Trumpeter Swan	208
Cedar Waxwing	527	Mallard	1766	Tufted Titmouse	432
Common Goldeneye	605	Merlin	3	Tundra Swan	9
Common Grackle	2	Mourning Dove	1057	Turkey Vulture	3
Common Merganser	85	Mute Swan	537	White-breasted Nuthatch	495
Cooper's Hawk	27	Northern Cardinal	1180	White-crowned Sparrow	48
Dark-eyed Junco	3252	Northern Flicker	183	White-throated Sparrow	106
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Northern Saw-whet Owl	3	White-winged Scoter	3
Downy Woodpecker	393	Peregrine Falcon	3	Wild Turkey	441
Eastern Bluebird	371	Pied-billed Grebe	2	Winter Wren	21
Eastern Screech-Owl	10	Pileated Woodpecker	76	Wood Duck	7
Eastern Towhee	6	Pine Siskin	10	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	27
European Starling	6378	Purple Finch	16	Yellow-rumped Warbler	28
Evening Grosbeak	1	Red-bellied Woodpecker	334		
Fox Sparrow	3	Red-breasted Merganser	4		

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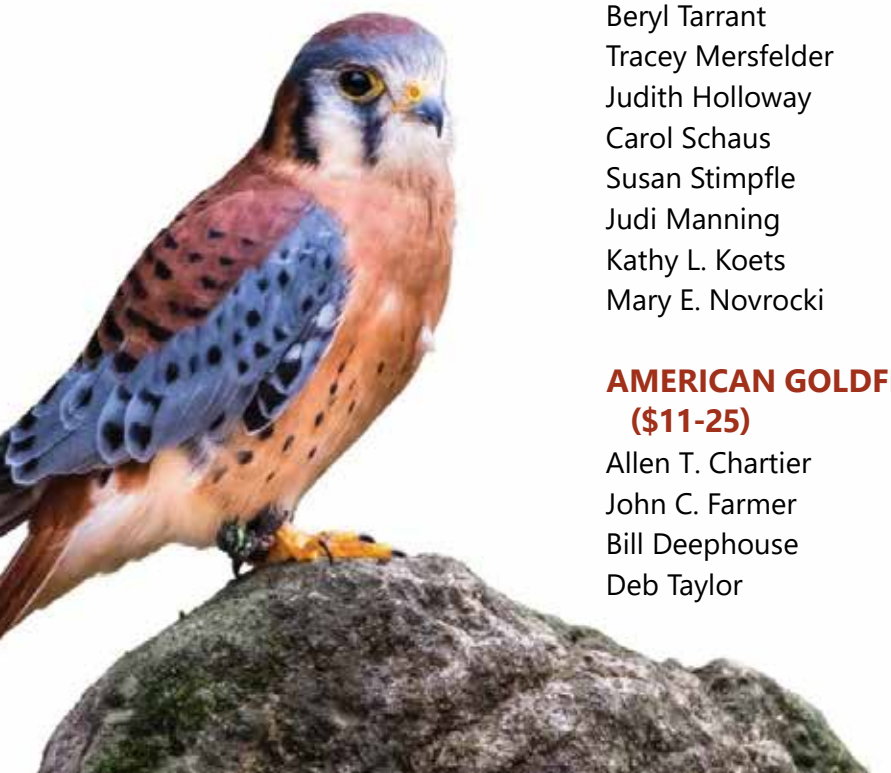

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