



EARTHSTAR

NEWSLETTER OF MACOMB AUDUBON

www.macombaudubon.net

Vol. 53, No. 5 | Sep – Oct, 2026

Programs

**Our free monthly programs are held the first Monday of the month @ Sterling Heights Nature Center, 42700 Utica Rd (unless otherwise noted).*

Annual Bonfire

Mon., Sept. 14th, 6:30 p.m.



Previous Annual Bonfire at LSCMP, by Paul Messing

Join us for our annual bonfire at Lake St. Clair Metropark the Monday after Labor Day, starting around 6:30 p.m. Park in the employee lot behind the nature center building. The firepit is just adjacent to that. We'll hope for good weather, as Henry Messing plans to set up an outdoor screen to add a tech element to the evening. Metroparks sticker or daily pass required for entry.

Highlights from the Galápagos Islands

Mon., Oct. 5th, 7:00 p.m.



A glimpse at Galápagos, by Paul Messing

For our October meeting, Macomb Audubon president, Paul Messing, will present highlights of his recent trip to the Galápagos Islands. Follow along to see the sights that are found on the central and eastern side of this isolated environment. Hear stories of the unique birds, reptiles, and landscapes which make this place so special.

Social hour is at 6:30 p.m. with the meeting itself starting at 7:00 p.m. During this gathering, we will also be taking nominations and elections for

2nd Vice President – Recording Secretary and Treasurer.

Field Trips

Warbler Walk at Wilcox Warnes Nature Sanctuary

Sat., Sept. 19th, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Leader: Paul Messing

The old-growth woods of Wilcox Warnes Nature Sanctuary provides a nice stopover for warblers on their migration south. Join us as we listen and look for warblers among the tall tulip trees in this 44-acre Michigan Nature Association property. Get ready to look high up in the treetops and to listen carefully as we make our way through the 1-mile walk on the often narrow but well-marked trail loop.

For directions, search for Wilcox Warnes or 56665 Schoenherr. You'll enter on the west side of the road, 1/8 mile south of 26 Mile Rd. Meet in that small gravel parking lot. RSVP to Paul at macombaudubon@gmail.com or by phone at (586) 899-2157.

Birds & Earthstars on the Stony Creek Mt. Bike Trails

Sat., Oct. 17th, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Leader: Paul Messing

Fall should be a perfect time to look for our newsletter's namesake, the Earthstar, a star-

shaped mushroom of the genus *Geastrum*. Aside from this special mission, the trails should also offer opportunities to see late migrating warblers.

Plan to meet at the golf course parking lot on the west side of Stony Creek Metropark. Metroparks sticker or daily pass required for entry. RSVP to Paul at macombaudubon@gmail.com or (586) 899-2157.

Other Bird News...

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Before the Trees Come Down: Protect Dog Island's Cormorant Colony

The following info includes excerpts/summaries from a paper authored by Beth Noren & Mike Champine. The full paper will be available as an attachment with the email Earthstar, as well as [posted on our website](#). Please read the full article and share!



Cormorants

As of February this year, Michigan State Representative Alicia St. Germaine contacted

the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and members of Congress, advocating for increased control of cormorant populations. St. Germaine, a Harrison Township resident, has focused particular attention on the cormorant colony on Dog Island at Lake St. Clair Metropark.

In June, a highly one-sided article* published in a local newspaper portrayed cormorants as a major threat to the Lake St. Clair ecosystem and called for the removal of their nesting habitat. The article reported that the DNR planned to cut down the trees and then “track to see where the birds go from there.” As a result, DNR *may* remove the dead nesting trees on Dog Island after the cormorants migrate, potentially as early as November or December. At this time, however, we have not been able to locate a publicly available DNR plan or announced date for this work. Before this money is used to alter wildlife habitat on Dog Island, the public deserves to understand exactly what problem the proposed action is intended to solve.

Double-crested Cormorants are native North American birds, not an invasive species. Their dramatic recovery is one of the more notable wildlife conservation stories of the Great Lakes. That recovery has sometimes created conflict with fisheries and human activities, but a successful recovery does not transform a native species into an invasive one. The distinction matters.

What are cormorants actually eating? Much of the recent public discussion has focused on the

amount of fish cormorants consume. Cormorants *do* eat substantial quantities of fish, and there are circumstances in which their predation can affect particular fish populations, but their diets are opportunistic and vary greatly according to the fish available in a particular location. This does not mean that cormorants have no effect on fisheries. They can affect particular fish populations under particular circumstances, and legitimate fisheries concerns deserve to be taken seriously. It does mean, however, that the familiar image of cormorants simply “eating all the game fish” is an oversimplification. Management decisions should therefore be based on site-specific evidence about Lake St. Clair, including what the Dog Island cormorants are *actually* eating and whether they are having a measurable effect on sport-fish populations.

Cormorants can kill trees, but is removing their habitat the answer? There is no question that large cormorant colonies can damage trees, but dead trees are not necessarily an ecological disaster. Snags and fallen trees are natural components of many wetland and island ecosystems and can provide habitat for insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife.

More importantly, Dog Island is an uninhabited island. There are no plans for buildings, recreational facilities, or other changes that would require the cormorant colony to be displaced. That raises an important question: If cormorants are going to nest somewhere, isn't

an isolated island preferable to someone's backyard, marina, or other human-use area? Removing the nesting trees will not make cormorants disappear. It could simply force them to seek new nesting locations. If they establish colonies elsewhere, particularly along the mainland or in areas heavily used by people, conflicts could actually increase. Dog Island provides something increasingly rare: a place where a native wildlife colony can exist with relatively little direct conflict with humans.

What about boater safety? There may be a legitimate safety concern associated with dead trees falling into the water. That concern should not be dismissed, but if public safety is the reason for removing the trees, we should first ask whether there are alternatives that could address the hazard without eliminating the island's wildlife habitat. Could hazardous areas be marked with buoys? Could a danger zone around the island be clearly identified and kept clear of boat traffic? Could only trees presenting an immediate hazard be addressed while leaving suitable nesting habitat intact?

Before the trees on Dog Island are removed, the public should know: What specific problem is the proposed tree removal intended to solve? What scientific evidence demonstrates that removing the trees will solve it? Has a site-specific assessment of the Dog Island colony and its diet been conducted? What effect are the cormorants having on Lake St. Clair's sport-fish populations? What alternatives to removing the

nesting habitat have been considered? Where will these birds go if their existing nesting habitat disappears? These are not unreasonable questions. They are exactly the questions that should be asked whenever public funds are used to alter wildlife habitat. Before we destroy that habitat, we should be certain that doing so is necessary, effective, and better for the ecosystem than the alternatives. The goal should not be to protect cormorants at any cost. The goal should be responsible, science-based management that considers the birds, the fishery, public safety, and the ecological value of Lake St. Clair.

As birders and park visitors, we are fortunate to have the opportunity to observe these fascinating native birds at Lake St. Clair Metropark. Watching cormorants fish, raise their young, and interact with other species offers a remarkable window into the Great Lakes ecosystem. Please speak up for Dog Island's cormorants.

Contact Michigan decision-makers and ask them to:

- Protect the existing cormorant nesting habitat on Dog Island unless its removal can be demonstrated to be necessary.
- Make any DNR plans for Dog Island publicly available.
- Require site-specific scientific evidence before removing the colony's nesting habitat.
- Consider alternatives, including marking

hazardous areas with buoys if boater safety is the concern.

- Use science-based, nonlethal approaches whenever they can effectively address legitimate wildlife-management concerns.

Dog Island belongs to the Great Lakes ecosystem. Let's make sure its wildlife has a place there, too.

**"Flocks of cormorant birds wreak havoc on the ecosystem, damage historic structures", Alyssa Ochss, June 25, 2026, Mount Clemens-Clinton-Harrison Journal*

Along with the email version of the Earthstar, you'll see two more attachments – [the full version](#) of Beth and Mike's paper and a contact list for specific Michigan decision makers to reach out to with your concerns. Feel free to use the above questions as a framework for your correspondence.

Bonus Volunteer Opportunity:

To show your support in person, come join us in demonstrations for the cormorants at Lake St. Clair Metropark over Labor Day weekend. Meet at the North Marina/boat launch parking lot on Saturday, Sunday, or Monday (5th, 6th, and 7th) between the hours of 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Please note, the metropark limits rallies to 50 or fewer people, and we plan to be peaceful and informative, holding signage and passing out pamphlets to those who want to learn more.

About Us

Macomb Audubon is a subchapter of Michigan Audubon. Programs are held the first Monday of most months at **Sterling Heights Nature Center**. Our programs foster community and friendship and provide education for all ages. Macomb Audubon events are open to the public. Macomb Audubon is a non-profit organization with a mission to:

- Promote interest in the world of nature and to aid in the conservation of natural resources.
- Provide an outlet for nature activities via field trips.
- Provide an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experience through lectures, films, discussions, and newsletters.
- Aid organizations that provide people of all ages with opportunities to experience these above given objectives.

To join, complete the form included on the inside back cover and bring it to our next meeting or follow the instructions on where to send it. The Earthstar newsletter is published bi-monthly (January, March, July, September, and November). If you wish to submit content to be included in the Earthstar, please send by the 12th of the month before the next edition, to Andrea Rose at littlebirdnerd37@gmail.com. Members may receive this newsletter by mail, electronically, or both.



President's Letter

It's hard to believe that summer is already winding down. What a wonderful time to get back together, share stories, and plan for the coming months. If you haven't joined our summer field trips, I hope you can join us for our annual fall bonfire at Lake St. Clair Metropark Nature Center on September 14th. After that, we'll have our regular first-Monday-of-the-month meetings again starting in October. During both of these events, we can share our recent bird sightings, whether they were from places near or far. Before you know it, our December members slide show presentation will be right around the corner, so hopefully you are setting aside your favorite nature photos from this year to share at year's end.

There will be even more to do in the coming months. We've planned new field trips to introduce you to new places. I don't think we've yet led a hike at Wilcox Warnes Nature Sanctuary. Despite my talking it up quite a bit over the years, it seems it has only been added to the Christmas Bird Count route. This fall, I look forward to enjoying a walk through the thick woods and small open grassland to see warblers and other regular residents of the place. If you can't make the field trip day, or just want to make this part of your own birding routine, it is easily accessed along Schoenherr Road (south of 26 mile) and well-marked with blue and yellow trail loops and a purple spur that crosses a bridge in the most tranquil part of the sanctuary. Also new this year is a trip to a section of Stony Creek Metropark that I first visited on the [Huron-Clinton Metroparks Trail Challenge](#), which once got me out to all the Metroparks. I haven't started the challenge *this* year, but I hope to before it ends on October 31st.

There are so many more places we can introduce you to where you can explore, find new things, and meet new people. I'm also working to involve us in winter activities being planned around the St. Clair River, so stay tuned for more on that! We also have the usual exciting events like Christmas Bird Count before the end of the year. With all these happenings, I hope you will get connected again this year to grow as an individual and help us grow as an organization. Stay involved in nature, pursue your interests, get out to field trips, and support the organizations that share our mission!

Happy Birding,

Paul Messing, Macomb Audubon President

Partners, Contacts, Support

Organizations We Support:

Burgess Shadbush Nature Center,
Lake St. Clair Metropark Nature Center,
Michigan Nature Association,
Seven Ponds Nature Center,
Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy,
Sterling Heights Nature Center,
Stony Creek Nature Center,
Tomlinson Arboretum,
Wildlife Recovery Association

Visit your local backyard bird feeding
experts at Wild Birds Unlimited in
Macomb or Grosse Pte. Woods

Contact Macomb Audubon at:
macombaudubon@gmail.com
with questions, suggestions, or
to join our mailing list.

Board Members & Committee Chairs

President: Paul Messing - macombaudubon@gmail.com
1st VP (Programs): Mike Champine - mikechampine02@gmail.com
2nd VP (Membership): Brenda Suchenek - bks171@comcast.net
3rd VP (Field Trips): Wade Leonard - wadeleonard1922@att.net

Recording Secretary: Laura Barbour - denilaur@sbcglobal.net
Corresponding Secretary: **Vacant**
Treasurer: Brandy Ciaciuch - mamachach38@gmail.com
Facebook Rep: Barbara Baldinger - bbwren@yahoo.com

Committees

Car Pool Coordinator: **Vacant**
Christmas Bird Count: Brian McGee - brianmcgee@wowway.com
Conservation/Legislation: Beth Noren - maxgoodbird@gmail.com
Historian: Michael Ciaciuch
Hospitality (Refreshments): Michael Ciaciuch
Hospitality (Door Prizes): Denis & Laura Barbour
Newsletter Editor: Andrea Rose - littlebirdnerd37@gmail.com
Michigan Audubon Rep: **Vacant**
Newsletter Production, Mailing: Denis & Laura Barbour
Publicity Chairperson: Holly Vaughn Joswick
Seven Ponds Representative: Paul Messing
Web Editor: Henry Messing
Volunteer Coordinator: **Vacant**

Macomb Audubon Society Dues

Please make checks payable to **Macomb Audubon Society** and send to:

Brenda Suchenek, Macomb Audubon Membership, 48143 Lincoln Drive, Macomb Township, MI, 48044

Your name and the names of family members (please print)

Family membership applies to family members living at the same address

Name _____
Address _____ City _____
State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____

New Member _____ Renewal _____ (check one) _____ Family membership \$20.00
Total amount enclosed \$ _____ Individual membership \$15.00
Amount of donation over membership \$ _____ (optional) _____ Student membership \$10.00
Contributor - up to \$49.99 Supporter - \$50-\$99 Donor - \$100 and up _____ Senior (60+) single membership \$12.00
_____ Senior couple membership \$15.00

Macomb Audubon shares its membership list with members. Check if you want your phone number **left off** the list _____
Email address _____ (optional)

Check here to receive the Earthstar by email _____ hard copy _____ both versions _____

Check here if a Michigan Audubon member _____ Check here if a National Audubon member _____

I (we) are interested in becoming a Macomb Audubon volunteer. Please contact me _____

Macomb Audubon Society

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<http://www.macombaudubon.org>

