

October 2017



Edited by John Ester

The Newsletter of the Benzie Audubon Club



# The Meadowlark

Dedicated to Increasing our Knowledge of the Natural World

## President's Message *By Sally Cook*

### Inside this issue:

- President's Message* 1
- Annual Meeting* 2
- Looking Ahead* 2
- Blue Bird Boxes* 3

Not long ago, Doug and I joined leader Brian Allen for a Benzie Audubon field trip to the Conservancy's grassland on Keillor Road. In the process of restoration, this rolling preserve showcases a landscape that has mostly disappeared from the Midwest. Besides being great for birds, it's the place to see native grasses and wildflowers dancing in the breeze for almost as far as the eye can see.

The field trip reminded me again why Benzie Audubon matters and why I have been a member (and a board member) since we moved to Benzie County eleven years ago. A few days earlier, at Benzie Audubon's September program, Foresters Josh Shields and Kama Ross taught us how to recognize common species of fungi. Since then Doug and I have been testing our knowledge whenever we go for walks, looking for Tinder conks and Chaga mushrooms. I even found a minute Chanterelle. Benzie Audubon field trips and programs help me to appreciate this beautiful corner of the world.

### TIME TO RENEW!

It is time to renew your Benzie Audubon membership. Just fill out the enclosed envelope, include your check and either mail it in or bring it to the annual meeting.

Besides participating in and leading club activities, our members lend their expertise to the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, participating in point counts of nesting birds in the grasslands and beach patrols along the lakeshore to monitor avian botulism levels. Our ongoing mini-grant program helps teachers and others to make their educational or conservation related projects a reality.

To me, all this makes Benzie Audubon an important organization. However, no organization can operate without a dedicated board working behind the scenes. The Benzie Audubon Board does what is necessary to make sure we can continue to meet at the beautiful Tribal Center, that we have interesting programs every other month, and that we continue to offer those wonderful field trips.

You can help by staying up-to-date on and participating in club activities. If you are interested in lending your expertise to the Board, please let one of us know (for contact information see [benzieaudubon.org](http://benzieaudubon.org)). Finally, be sure to tell your nature-loving friends about the club and invite them to events. All are welcome.

---

## *Don't Miss the Annual Meeting!*

Once again there are compelling reasons to attend our annual meeting at **6:00 p.m.** on **Thursday, November 2nd** at the **Tribal Outpost** at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia:

- Commencing at 6:00 will be our **potluck dinner**, so bring a dish to share, table service and your appetite.
- Following dinner there will be a **brief business meeting** at which we will elect five of our ten Board members. The positions and nominees are Vice President (Tom Jackson), Treasurer (John Ester), Membership (Greg Miller), Field Trips (Doug Cook) and Conservation (Carl Freeman). In addition Emily Cook will replace Doug Cook as Publicity Chair.
- After the election we will have our **program**—our annual **Members' Photo Show**. This year's program will include not only bird photos, but also photos of animals, plants and mushrooms.

---

## *Looking Ahead*



The fun will not end with our annual meeting. On December 17th we will participate in National Audubon Society's **Christmas Bird Count**. This event has been conducted nationally for more than 100 years and locally for more than 50 years. Local participants can count birds in the field with experienced leaders or at home looking at their own feeders. At the end of the day everyone gathers at the Benzonia Township Hall for a supper and tally. Almost always an unexpected bird or two will have been counted.

Program Chair Char Ester has a fine slate of programs lined up for 2018. On Thursday, January 4th **Brian Allen** will be returning to the Tribal Outpost to present a program on "Birding in Borneo." On March 1st **Doug and Sally Cook** will tell us everything we want to know about "Hiking the Appalachian Trail."

Dragonflies will be the subject of **Carl Freeman's** presentation on May 3rd. Carl no doubt will include many of his fine dragonfly photographs, such as the one of the Twelve-spotted Skimmer to the right.

On July 5th **Charles St. Charles** will present "Flora and Fauna of the National Parks." **Dave Dister** will present "Waterfowl 101" on September 6th, and November 1st will be time for another **Members' Photo Show**.



Clearly it will be another busy year for Benzie Audubon!

## *What's Up with Those Bird Boxes?* By Greg Miller

After the creation of the Betsie Valley Trail, Benzie Audubon and the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail came up with the idea of placing bird boxes along the Trail to form what is called a Bluebird Trail—a collection of nesting boxes along a specified route. The project was overseen by club member Keith Westphal and began with the building of the boxes in Keith's workshop by a group of boys assigned to the After School Incentive Program. Benzie Audubon donated all the building materials and mounting stakes, and the first boxes were installed in 2002.

Over the years some of the boxes have needed replacement, and the Boy Scouts from Troop 10 in Frankfort have addressed that need. As their service project in 2010 the scouts built 30 new boxes to replace some that were getting tired from the elements. These boxes were installed in May of 2011 at Trail locations selected by representatives of the Benzie Audubon and the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail.



*Bluebirds by Joe Brooks*

Each fall members of the Audubon Club have been going through the boxes, cleaning them out and determining which species have used the boxes that nesting season. The most common species using the boxes have been Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees and House Wrens.

In 2014 the idea of monitoring the boxes throughout the nesting season was proposed to the Audubon Club along with a request for volunteers. Monitoring nesting boxes helps to produce a significantly higher number of fledged young than unmonitored boxes. Cleaning out the boxes after each nesting increases the chance of a second nesting by the bluebirds and allows the volunteer to look for insect infestations, predation or the need for repairs to the box itself.



*Terry Smith checking box*

Starting in the spring of 2015, the boxes were monitored throughout the season by Audubon Club members. In both 2015 and 2016, the boxes fledged 93 young. In 2017 the boxes introduced 138 Eastern Bluebirds into Benzie County. These results were submitted to the Michigan Bluebird Society to be compiled with other reports from around the state. In the 15 years since the boxes were installed they have fledged approximately 1,150 bluebirds.

If any Club members or other trail users would like to “adopt” any of the boxes along their riding or jogging route, they should contact Greg Miller at Benzie Audubon Club for further information.

# BENZIE Audubon Club

P. O. Box 804  
Frankfort, MI 49635



Dedicated to  
Increasing Our Knowledge  
of the Natural World

Check us out on Facebook  
and on the web at  
[www.benzieaudubon.org](http://www.benzieaudubon.org)

Our major objectives are promoting an appreciation for and a better understanding of the plants and animals of northern Michigan, preserving our natural environment, and preventing any activities that may pose a threat to our natural ecology.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Benzie Audubon Club is a tax-exempt charitable organization and a chapter of the Michigan Audubon Society. All of our meetings and field trips are open to the public without charge. Meetings are usually held the first Thursday of each odd month (January, March, etc.) at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia. Field trips are taken throughout the year.

## **PLEASE JOIN US**

**Thursday, November 2, 6:00 p.m. at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia for a Potluck Dinner and Annual Meeting. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Following a very brief business meeting we will have our annual Members' Photo Show.**