



October 2021

# The Meadowlark

The Newsletter of the Benzie Audubon Club  
www.benzieaudubon.org

## President's Letter

I had hoped that we would be able to meet together this year for our annual meeting and enjoy an updated version of our popular Members' Photo program after a potluck feast and a very short business meeting. Unfortunately, we will have to wait and try again in 2022. In the meantime, we will continue to offer a full slate of field trips providing a flexible and diversified set of options for everyone to enjoy.

We still need to see to the business of the club and so, like last year, we will be holding our annual election via email. I am happy to tell you that all of the individuals currently serving have indicated their willingness to continue in their current positions. Please consider the proposed slate of officers for 2022. The candidates for the five open positions are: Carl Freeman, Vice President; John Ester, Treasurer; Greg Miller, Membership Chair; Candy Petrick, Conservation Chair; and Doug Cook, Field Trip Chair. Please note our by-laws permit a person to serve in two positions, so I will also continue as President for the remainder of my two-year term. If you wish to nominate someone for one of these positions, please let me know by November 8 by phone or e-mail. Later that week I will send a message inviting you to vote by e-mail for next year's officers.

While we have not been able to provide indoor programs recently, it is our hope to resume an active program schedule once it is perfectly safe to do so. We are making tentative plans to resume some sort of program schedule by mid-2022. I will be in touch with you as those plans develop. We hope you will renew your membership with us. We very much appreciate the generous support our members have provided since the club's organization in the 1970s. We have enclosed a renewal envelope for your convenience.

I invite you to consider supporting Benzie Audubon by becoming a member of the board or a field trip leader. We would also appreciate assistance finding and developing future programs, technical support, or writing an article for the newsletters we plan to produce in 2022. Please contact me or any of our board members if you have an idea to express or a talent to share. We are a low-key but dedicated group and would welcome new input.

Finally, and most important of all, we encourage you to continue to get outside. Benzie County has much to offer, and all we have to do is walk out our doors and watch, listen and wonder at the beauty of it all.

Doug Cook—President nedthebirder@gmail.com 231-930-8722



Photo by Carl Freeman

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### BENZIE COUNTY BIRD FACTS

- ◆ Bird species reported in Benzie Co. 2021 240
- ◆ Bird species reported in Benzie Co. All years 282
- ◆ Last species reported for the first time: Western Kingbird, Sept. 12, 2021

Source: eBird



Photo by Char Ester

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer John Ester has provided the following financial report for the period of October 1, 2020—September 30, 2021

|                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Starting Checking Balance       | \$ 7,328.26     |
| Receipts                        | 2,735.00        |
| Disbursements                   | <u>2,096.30</u> |
| Ending Checking Balance         | \$ 7,966.96     |
| Savings Balance                 | 1,058.86        |
| Certificates of Deposit Balance | <u>7,778.07</u> |
| Total Funds                     | \$16,803.89     |

*SAVE THE DATE—This year's Benzie County Christmas Bird Count will be held Friday, December 17th. We need people in the field and at feeders. If you would like to help, send an email to [nedthebirder@gmail.com](mailto:nedthebirder@gmail.com)*

### BAC MINI-GRANTS

In 2001 the Benzie Audubon Club received a bequest from the Estate of Robert Lytle. With this gift the Club established the Robert Lytle Education and Environmental Fund. The Fund is administered by the Club to promote environmental education and to enhance the natural environment within the Benzie County area. Each year the Club offers a limited number of mini-grants to further this goal.

Past grants have been used for special school projects, Scout service projects and wildlife rehabilitation programs. Please see our website for detailed information and specific requirements and instructions on how to apply. Our Mini-Grant Chair, Wes Blizzard, is also happy to talk with anyone who has an interest.

[www.benzieaudubon.org](http://www.benzieaudubon.org)

### FIELD TRIP REPORT by Doug Cook

Maybe it's due to Covid, or possibly it's the electric personalities of our trip leaders - in any case our trips have been very well attended all year. For the first 11 trips there were 117 attendees. As many people attended more than one trip that figure is made up of 55 different individuals.

A selection of highlights includes:

- May 8 at Lake Ann Pathway—Common Loon, Virginia Rail
- June 6 at Boekeloo Rd— Common Nighthawks
- June 5 at Arcadia Grasslands—Five species of sparrows
- June 16 at BVT off River Rd—49 species of spring birds
- July 17 at Elberta Marsh—C. Gallinule chicks, Great Egret
- August 14 at Elberta Marsh—E. Kingbird nest stuffed with chicks
- Sept 9 at Boekeloo Rd.—Am Pipit and migrating warblers

We appreciate everyone's cooperation adhering to the conditions we have had to abide by due to the pandemic. We are already thinking about next year's field trip schedule. If you or someone you know, has an interest in leading a field trip, please get in touch with Doug Cook. We would welcome the help.



Photo by Carl Freeman

## HOTSPOT HIGHLIGHT by Doug Cook

I like to bird at Elberta Marsh, and I am not alone. According to statistics pulled from eBird for all years, Elberta Marsh has the third highest species list in Benzie County at 206 after Otter Creek (215) and Platte Point (209). Its proximity to Frankfort and easy access with a trailhead right off M-22 make Elberta Marsh an easy stop for people who have just a few minutes to do a little birding. It is less than a quarter mile walk from the parking lot to the overlook platform, but it can take an hour to get there, especially in the spring when the marsh is alive with migrants. So far this year, birders have submitted 210 checklists for the marsh and have found 156 species. In addition to birds, the marsh is habitat for a variety of other forms of wildlife, so when you stop keep an open mind.

## TIPS FOR CAT LOVERS by Candy Petrick

According to the American Bird Conservancy, predation by domestic cats kills approximately 2.4 billion birds every year. This number represents the combined impact of tens of millions of outdoor cats. If you love cats but also love birds, here are some reasons why you might consider keeping your cats indoors:

- Will be safe from predators like coyotes, fox, hawks and owls
- Will have reduced exposure to insecticides and rodenticides
- Exposure to incurable viral infections will be reduced
- Can avoid internal parasites like roundworm and hookworm
- Will not be injured or killed by motor vehicles
- Can avoid getting wounded from fights with other animals

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Excerpt from the very first Club newsletter dated July 19, 1975.

*“Early in the Autumn of 1974 four couples who had previously talked about starting an Audubon Club in this area decided to get down to business and do it. In their greatest expectations they felt maybe 30 or so people might join such a club. Little did they realize what a gross underestimate this would be.*

*Today the Benzie Club is 95 strong. It is also a very active club. In addition to the regular meetings, the club has taken an active role on local environmental issues, offers numerous field trips on birding (of course), wild flower study, dunes ecology, snowshoe and cross-country skiing, and canoeing, and the club also conducts the Christmas Bird Count, the Big Day Count in the spring, the Nest Record Card Program, and a pot-luck picnic.”*

### Editor’s Note:

Doug Cook has been spending some enjoyable time reviewing the minutes, newsletters, and other documentation accumulated over the past 47 years by past club presidents. From his reading he notes that, “We are still here keeping an active eye on the welfare of the natural heritage of the county.”

## BENZIE AUDUBON CLUB

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 Tuesday of each odd month (January, March, etc.) at the Tribal Outpost at 7282 Hoadley Road in Benzonia. Field Trips are taken throughout the year.

Our major objectives are promoting an appreciation for 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.

## 2021 A GOOD YEAR FOR PIPING PLOVERS

According to information published by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 2021 was the most successful breeding season for the Piping Plover since park staff became involved in the active recovery of the species. They recorded 81 fledged chicks, an improvement over the previous best of 72 fledged in 2018. The improvement is likely due to reduced water levels in Lake Michigan which provide an increase in the beach habitat Piping Plovers prefer for nesting and rearing of their young.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has an active plover monitoring and protection program in conjunction with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan DNR, the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan Biological Station, as well as other agencies. For more information about Piping Plovers and the effort to help their population recover go to:

<https://www.nps.gov/slbe/learn/nature/pipingplover.htm>

# BENZIE Audubon Club

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Dedicated To  
Increasing Our Knowledge  
Of the Natural World