

BIRDING ACROSS THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

BY: *Cindy Flynn*



When I first started birding six years ago, I wanted to go out every chance I got to learn everything I could. I spent a great deal of time at the Chippewa Nature Center (CNC) in Midland, where I met many local birders. Over the years, my family spent many hours there, hiking the trails and volunteering in the programs. In fact, we loved it so much that I now have a brother employed there full time, and I worked as a substitute in their nature preschool program before moving.

In January of 2011, I moved to Mancelona, in the northwest part of Michigan. While I love the beauty of north-western Michigan, I have really missed being part of an organization

and learning from others. At the same time, I've come to enjoy the solitude of the wilderness area. Northern Michigan is one of the most beautiful areas I've ever been in and my experiences in exploring new trails without an organized group have helped me to grow as a birder. I now know more birds by sound than I ever thought I would. I still have a lot to learn though!

This year, I set a goal for myself to spot 365 species of birds in Michigan. I still have family downstate, a brother in Marquette, and a sister in Grand Rapids, so I figured I should be able to cover a good portion of the state by visiting family. What I didn't count on was the fact that Michigan doesn't have 365 species native to the state, so in order to meet the goal I would have to

native to the state, so in order to meet the goal I would have to see many accidentals. Also, my husband is a farmer and we lost most of our crop this year, which meant we weren't able to travel as much as I wanted to.

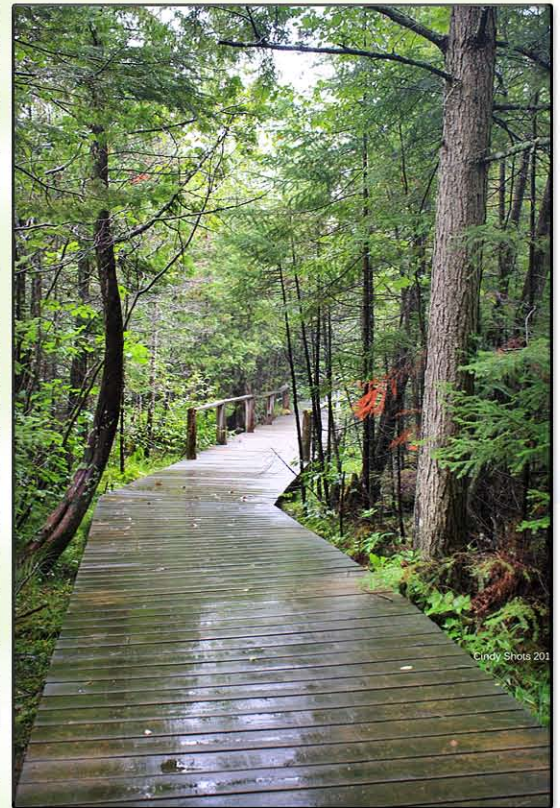
While my list of birds spotted this year is over 100, I've come to accept I most likely will not reach my goal for the year.

Instead, I'm going to set a new goal for the coming year based on whatever my final number is for this year. I've come to realize it's not always the destination that's important, but the journey. Over the past few years of birding, I've found several areas that are my favorite birding places to visit in Michigan. They include:

1. *Grass River Natural Area in Alden.*
2. *Chippewa Nature Center in Midland.*
3. *Pine Baron Trails in Gaylord.*
4. *Houghton Lakes Flat Area along Old 27 in Houghton Lake.*
5. *Seasonal Roads in Antrim and Kalkaska county.*



CNC Provides an indoor wildlife viewing area as well. It's a great place to mark off your species list while you watch for more birds to come in!



Birding in the rain at Grass River is awesome!

BIRDING ACROSS THE STATE OF MICHIGAN CONTINUED

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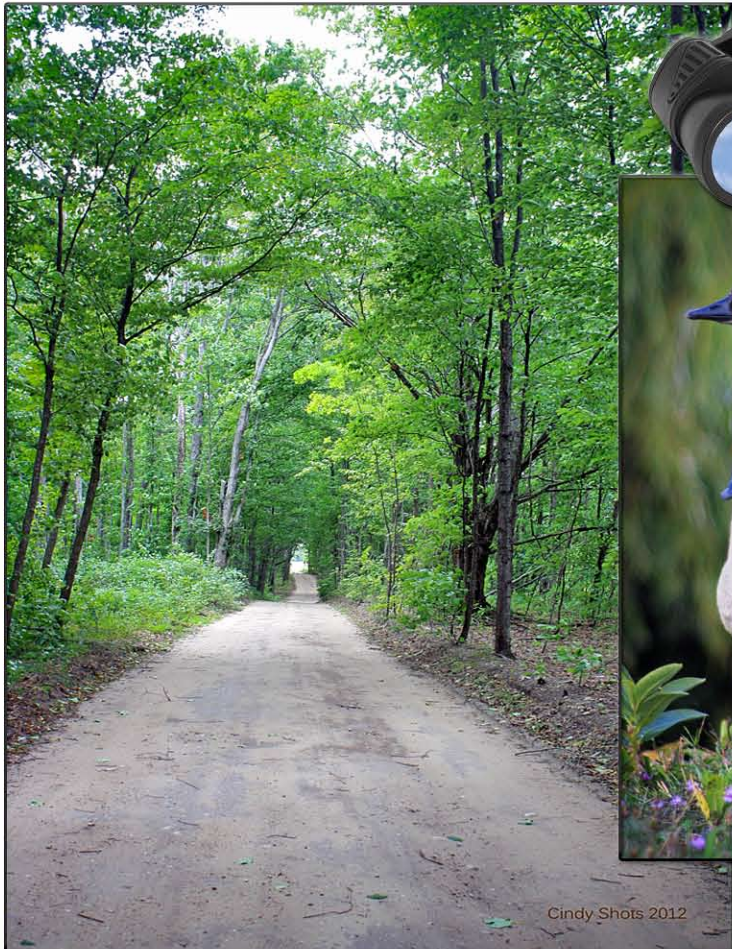
Birding places to visit in Michigan. They include:

1. Grass River Natural Area in Alden. Grass River has several trails to hike, and a new Nature Center building put in last year. They are free, although are appreciative of donations. Some of their trails take you through wetlands along the river, many of which have boardwalks for easy walking.
2. Chippewa Nature Center in Midland. With over 50,000 visitors a year, and about 1,200 acres, CNC provides many nature opportunities, including some awesome trails for hiking and birding. The trails are free, and some of the group events are free as well.
3. Pine Baron Trails in Gaylord. These trails are provided by the DNR. There are several trails that connect, running through mostly woodland area, especially pines.
4. Houghton Lakes Flat Area along Old 27 in Houghton Lake. This spot has a viewing platform over wetlands, and areas where you can walk along the dikes.
5. Seasonal Roads in Antrim and Kalkaska county. The roads are usually not open in the winter time though, and are best done mostly by car, although because they are seasonal and seldom traveled, you can get out and walk around some. I have spotted many song birds traveling slowly down seasonal roads!

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET OUTSIDE WITH YOUR BINOCULARS OUT AND READY TO GO!

TRY A NEW PLACE TODAY.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU MIGHT FIND.



Besides watching for wildlife, be sure to keep an eye out for other hidden gems along the way!

The Flats are home to many waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors. During the spring, summer, and fall months, one can often find Canada Geese, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Bald Eagles, and much more!

Forests on both sides of a seldom traveled road can be awesome places to find warblers, sparrows, finches, and more.

