

The Manitou Island Bird Survey funded by the CCAC and MDNR Non-game fund made its first visit to the island in the evening of May 4th and returned on the evening of May 7th. We observed 61 species. Our main objective was to watch the raptor migration as it encountered Manitou. We had people at each end of the island. I was the main observer at the west end and as such, was sort of the toll-taker for raptor migrants for those three days. The geography of the island was such that it was very hard for any raptors to get to or from the island without being seen by me. Over the three days I recorded 238 raptors arriving on Manitou from the mainland Keweenaw and saw 468 raptors leaving Manitou for the Keweenaw. Of the 468 that I saw heading for the Keweenaw about 320 of those were in one massive flock of buteos (probably Broadwings) that left the island on the 5th. I suspect that those birds probably arrived on the island on the day we got there which had moderate west winds and very large numbers of raptors were reported passing east by Brockway Mtn. The crew at the east end did see raptors leaving the island heading east, northeast and north. We are by no means sure that those birds actually crossed Lake Superior. Those birds were actually fighting a head wind most days we were there. On the 6th for instance, I saw 164 raptors (90% Sharpshins) fly into a 10 mile per hour NE wind for three miles to get to Manitou from the Keweenaw and only 16 raptors were seen flying towards the Keweenaw that day. Raptor migration in this area is looking a little more complicated than our "common sense" might indicate. Back in the 1930's Dr. Norman Wood spent some time on Manitou and collected a Swainson's Hawk. Our East end observers also saw a single Swainson's Hawk. We saw almost 100 Loons (common and some Red-throated) passing by the island and one odd thing was the 72 Flickers that passed my spot heading for the Keweenaw. They left in little convoys of 2 to 6 birds spread out over the three days. How did all those Flickers get to Manitou in the first place? As expected our short little jaunt has raised more questions than it has answered. But, it has shown Manitou Island to be a very interesting piece of ground during spring migration. Our project will send people back to Manitou in mid-June and mid-July and hopefully in September.

June 2002

Our Manitou Island Bird Survey project has made the first of two trips out to check on breeding birds there. We were out there from the evening of the 17th till late afternoon of the 20th. I have by no means digested all our data but here's some highlights: we had two singing male Blackpoll Warblers (If we can prove breeding it would be a first for the state), a singing male Wilson's Warbler, we confirmed

found Winter Wrens and Nashville Warblers running neck and neck for the most common bird on that island. On the last day as the morning rain cleared off and the west wind and sunshine came on, an astounding 500 raptors began soaring over the north central part of the island. The birds were quite a ways from our perch on the east end lighthouse tower so identifying wasn't so easy. But from what we saw we believe that the great majority were immature Broadwings with a few Sharpshins and Redtails thrown in. I had been hiking through that north central part of the island in the morning hours and had not noticed a single perched hawk. I suspect that most of those raptors came over from the Keweenaw on the west wind not long before we watched them soaring. We hope to return in mid-July to confirm more breeding species – if our funding holds up.

July 2002

Jake Musser and myself just spent parts of four days on Manitou Island in Lake Superior, completing the breeding bird work of our yearlong survey project. We confirmed breeding for Red-breasted Merganser, Belted Kingfisher, Black-capped Chickadee, Swainson's Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, A. Redstart and White-throated Sparrow. Unfortunately, we found no trace of the Blackpoll and Wilson's Warblers that we found singing during our June trip. At 4:00PM on Tuesday the 16th I was paddling out with the first load of gear to transfer to the charter boat – we were going home. We had seen a number of immature Broadwings and TV's soaring overhead but then I noticed something rather black with white on the topside of some of its primaries. It turned out to be a Black Vulture! We got a real good look for several minutes as it turned this way and that and it indulged in some fast flapping – so different from the TV's that it was with. I had to meet the boat and transfer gear but as I did the Black flew right over Jake on the beach. Who knows where that bird may go but birders in the Keweenaw should keep an eye out.

September 2002

Our Manitou Island Bird Survey crew, sponsored by the Copper Country Audubon Club and a MDNR Non-Game Heritage Grant, made its last trip for 2002 on the 8th, 9th and 10th of September. The rarest birds seen were a Red-headed Woodpecker and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and a single Rock Dove. After a front passed through at midday on the 10th, a significant movement of waterbirds passed by our site at the eastern tip of the island. We saw over 200 Red-necked Grebes, 8 White-winged Scoters, 6 C. Loons and 55 unidentified waterbirds moving SSE past us. On the 9th is a moderate north wind a Great

over the lighthouse yard and kept on flying south – I followed it with the scope until it disappeared into the distance. Was that a GBH that left, Isle Royale perhaps, and flew directly across Lake Superior to the Huron Mountains or Marquette area?? On the morning of the 9th we saw dozens of smallish passerines flying into the eastern tip of Manitou. Many of those birds were coming from the NE and many were met by a welcoming committee of two Merlins and one Peregrine Falcon. One chase we witnessed was a Cuckoo (species unknown) that narrowly missed being Merlin food.

April / May 2003

Here is a summary of the first trip of 2003 to survey the birds of Manitou Island off the tip of the Keweenaw peninsula in Lake Superior. Our first crew went out on Tuesday the 29th of April and our second crew relieved them on Thursday the 1st of May and came back on the 4th of May. We had intended to have a third shift stay out till the 7th of May but that shift was canceled due to rough weather. We saw 72 species of birds. We added three new species to the Manitou list.

They were White Pelican, Golden Eagle and Pileated Woodpecker. On the first day of the survey our west end observer saw over 500 raptors leaving Manitou and returning to the Keweenaw. Several days later, on the 3rd of May our east end observers saw an estimated 300 raptors soaring over the north central part of the island. On that day we had one large kettle of over 100 raptors. In general those soaring raptors seemed to stay in the friendly airspace over Manitou. But on the 3rd I saw a group of 76 buteos (they seemed to be Broad-wings) head east after their kettle broke up. I watched them go out of sight to the east. A few minutes later about 20 returned to Manitou. Each morning we were there, the observer at the east end watched Sharpshin Hawks rise up from the forest of Manitou and fly east across Lake Superior out of sight. On my shift I saw 42 Sharpies go in the early morning of May 2nd and 47 go on the 3rd. Other species seem to cross Superior by going ENE from the east end of Manitou. We saw Red-tails, Rough-legs, Northern Harriers, A. Kestrels all flying out over the lake to the east or northeast from Manitou without apparent returns. We even saw a group of Turkey Vultures make their move - but they came back after about 5 minutes. I judged the direction that most Sharpshins took from the east end of Manitou as East/Northeast. That direction would take them to the Michipicoten Island area of the NE shore of Lake Superior. In 1931 Dr. Norman Wood of the U of Michigan spent some time on Manitou and in a subsequent article spoke of "thousands" of raptors on Manitou and some crossing to Canada "without a stop". No notes can be found giving details of his statements: which species? , which direction did they fly? ,in what winds? Our project is giving some details to Dr. Woods' statements. It's clear from our two short visits in the spring of 2002 and 2003 that

shinned Hawks and lesser numbers of other raptors seem to cross Lake Superior flying east and northeast from Manitou Island.

June / July 2003

Five observers went over on the 28th of June and returned on the 1st of July. We were split into two camps – each covering separate areas of the island. We confirmed a total of 8 species – though all of those species had been confirmed in 2002. We did add 8 new species to the total list of possible breeding birds for Manitou. We did find three singing Tennessee Warblers but we spent enough time with those birds to conclude that they were unmated males. We saw a single White Pelican flying by on our last day – rather unusual for the 1st of July in the middle of Lake Superior. As during our June visit in 2002, we saw hundreds of raptors soaring over the island. Those raptors were mostly immature Broadwings but included some Redtails and a couple Sharpshins.

October 2003

The Manitou Island Bird Survey made its last trip of 2003. Brian Johnson and myself went out on Oct 5th and returned on the 8th. We enjoyed nice warm weather and generally SW winds. We had 60 species and added 9 new ones to the Manitou list. We didn't have any real exciting birds - just ones you would expect to be seen there eventually. The total species list for Manitou is now at 152. We observed a lot of movement over the three days. We were stationed at the eastern tip and saw 2,998 waterbirds pass by moving generally from NW to SE. Those birds included C. Loon, Rednecked Grebes, Redheads, White-Winged Scoters and the largest numbers were Scaup. We also saw large numbers of passerines coming in to Manitou. A total of 225 passerines were seen running the gauntlet of Merlins and one Peregrine. 164 of those came in a three hour period on the 7th. These birds are coming from the east, north and northeast across Lake Superior and finding a rest and refueling stop at Manitou. Those incoming passerines included Downy Woodpeckers, Juncos, Yellowrumped and Palm warblers, N. Flicker, Robins, N. Harrier, Kinglet Species and an Asio owl. On the island we spotted a N. Shrike and a Am. Tree Sparrow and a couple late birds. Brian found a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and seven warbler species. I watched three Roughlegged Hawks circling for a minute over the eastmost tip of Manitou and then head off across the lake heading ESE. In 2004 the Manitou survey will concentrate on the spring raptor migration. I hope to have observers on both ends of Manitou beginning on about April 15th and continuing as far into May as we can. The Copper Country Audubon Club will be backing our survey again next year and any persons or groups who can help financially

do have costs in transporting the observers to and from Manitou.