On behalf of the Local Organizing Committee, we welcome you to the 135th meeting of American Ornithology. We are excited to have all of you here on the Michigan State University campus for this historic inaugural meeting of the American Ornithological Society and the 35th meeting of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des ornithologistes du Canada.

Our conference theme ‘Birds in the Anthropocene’, was chosen because it covers an expanding field of research being conducted here in Michigan, the Great Lakes region, and around the world. In addition to talks dedicated to this topic, we have a rich scientific program with something for everyone. There are talks on all aspects of avian biology from the microbes that inhabit birds to climate change and its impact on avian populations. You can learn about new tools and innovative approaches to answering questions, and find out about the recent advances and conservation for some of our nation’s most sensitive species, Kirtland’s Warbler and Sage Grouse. Spanning taxonomic boundaries we have symposia that highlight important issues in science today - how we promote diversity in STEM disciplines and how we communicate our science more effectively to a broader audience.

Building on green initiatives at recent meetings, we made great efforts to push the boundary of hosting a sustainable, low-carbon footprint meeting. We are significantly reducing waste by excluding disposable utensils and dishes, food in wrappers, flyer inserts in registration materials, and bottled water. Additionally we are reducing the carbon footprint, while supporting our local economy, by using local Michigan growers and brewers for food and beer. And, we went another step further and carefully selected vendors that engage in sustainable practices in their production, and implement policies and technologies that reduce their environmental impacts on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Feel free to ask us about the other things we are doing to be GREEN!

We continue to work toward improving our diversity, equity, and inclusion at our annual meetings. There is a symposium dedicated to diversity in science, we will continue our tradition of the “Women Rocking Science” panel, and we will host our first annual LGBTQA social. **As a community, we ask that you join us to make a welcoming and supportive environment for all our attendees**. Please take time to read our Code of Conduct Statement on page ## in this program and the full Code of Conduct on our website. Also, let us know how we are doing, what you like, and what we may want to consider for future meetings.

We also give a special welcome to students, they are the future our societies and our discipline. Try to think back to some of your first scientific conferences as a student and how hard it was to approach the senior scientists – let’s try to make that easier and actively reach out and engage with students. Remember they probably know more than you about recent advances in technology, social media, and statistical software.

Alright, it is that time to go gather with your fellow ornithologists, embrace being a bird nerd, talk science, eat local food, drink MI beer, dance, and be merry! And, do not forget to make sure you communicate your science and make everyone feel welcome and included in this annual gathering.

Jen Owen, Chair

On behalf of the Organizing Committee

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