*Be a locavore at the AOU/COS/SCO 2017 meeting at Michigan State University*

**Conference Theme**: For the 2017 meeting, we propose the prevailing theme of “Birds in the Anthropocene”. With the increasing pace of transformation of natural landscapes to human-dominated ecosystems, many bird species worldwide will live in and depend on novel environments for their long-term persistence. A major challenge is to understand how individuals, populations and communities respond to novel environments and what conservation strategies to implement in a rapidly evolving world. We envision a broad discussion of avian biology and conservation within human-dominated environments.

**Scientific Program**

Here is a short list of ideas for symposium topics that would enhance the theme of Birds in the Anthropocene and reflect important trends in the history and changing landscapes of the Great Lakes region. These are in addition to the planned solicitation of symposium proposals.

1. **A symposium on Agriculture and avian conservation**. Agriculture in the Great Lakes basin generates $15 billion a year in products, with an about one-third of the total land area in use. To reflect the importance of agriculture to region and the region’s bird populations, we propose a symposium on agriculture and avian conservation. Possible subtopics including birds and urban agriculture, ecosystem services offered by birds in fruit-growing regions, and effects of agricultural practices on bird populations. The symposium will not be limited to speakers from the Great Lakes region but will highlight relevant research throughout the Western Hemisphere. Dr. Catherine Lindell, a member of the local organizing committee, has offered to help organize this symposium.
2. **A symposium and plenary on the Ecology of urban birds.**  Michigan, of course, is also home to Detroit, a sprawling city that has suffered a tremendous economic downturn. But it is also home to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, the only international refuge in North America. Given recent attention to urban ecology, we propose a symposium and plenary exploring birds in cities. Potential subtopics include Peregrine Falcons and cities, stress and urbanization, and birdsong and urbanization.
   1. **Plenary:** Wepropose Dr. Amanda Rodewald (Cornell University) as a potential plenary speaker. Dr. Rodewald’s research explores the responses of birds to land-use change and informs policy, management and conservation of birds.
3. **A symposium and plenary on Kirtland’s Warblers.** In addition to focusing on *the* iconic Michigan species, this symposium would reflect the challenges and successes of conservation within a changing landscape. This symposium would discuss the most recent work on Kirtland’s Warblers incorporating research from breeding and non-breeding areas, as well as during migration.
   1. **Plenary:** We propose Dr. Carol Bocetti (California University, Pennsylvania) as a potential plenary speaker. Dr. Bocetti wrote her dissertation on the demography of Kirtland’s Warblers and currently chairs the Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Team. She has a broad knowledge of Kirtland’s Warblers and has co-led efforts to develop mechanisms toward developing sustained funding sources for Kirtland’s Warbler management should the species be de-listed, as anticipated. Dr. Dave Ewert, a member of the local organizing committee has volunteered to organize this symposium.

Additional Plenary Speakers

In addition to the individuals listed above, we propose one additional plenary speaker:

1. **Scott Edwards (Harvard University)**. Dr. Edwards is a Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and Curator of Ornithology in the Museum of Comparative Zoology. His research spans molecular and behavioral evolution, systematics and comparative genomics, and he was part of the consortium that recently sequenced the genomes of 48 birds from each major order.

**Also, we will leave one slot for the COS Young Professional Awards** in keeping with past meeting format; each award winners will have 30 minutes to present their research.

We also propose several initiatives to improve dialogue among diverse stakeholders about the science of ornithology.

1. **Tools in Ornithology**. With the use of so many new tools/techniques in the study of birds, it can be difficult for audience members to grasp the science due to lack of underlying knowledge of the techniques being used. We propose having talks that provide an overview of some of the newest techniques/tools, how we use them, what questions can and cannot be answered, common pitfalls, for example. Preliminary ideas on this include inviting people that are good speakers and experts in the area, even if not ornithologists, to give keynote talks (30minutes) on a given topic. The keynote would be **a “tools talk” at the beginning of a regular session on that topic** – this would then highlight the technique(s) before people hear research talks. For example, a radar ornithology overview would give explain how radar data are analyzed to inform us about migration. This talk would then be followed by series of research talks on migration and radar. Potential tools talks include: RNA-seq approaches; Stable Isotopes; Geolocators; Satellite telemetry; Automatic Bird Classifiers and Machine Learning for sound recordings, with the option for participants to suggest additional tools talks as well.
2. **Sessions targeted at undergraduate and graduate students.** We plan to work with the Early Professionals Committee and Student Affairs Committees (and equivalent in societies) to develop sessions for students and early professionals. Possibilities include **Ignite Sessions** held at OK in 2015 and proposed for the NAOC in 2016. Ignite presenters have 5 minutes and 20 slides, with slides advancing every 15 seconds. The idea is to have fun focusing on big ideas and communicating science. An alternative is **Three-minute theses**. Graduate student organizations have encouraged students to convey their research and its importance within three minutes as a way to develop “elevator speeches” and practice science communication.

Finally, building on green initiatives at recent meetings and tying in with our scientific theme and location, the local organizing committee proposes to use many locally grown foods and local breweries and wineries, and encourage eating at local restaurants during the 2017 meeting. Michigan is the ideal location for this initiative, as plenty of options exist to source local foods and beverages. Michigan farmers grow over 300 food crops, many farms have pasture-raised animals, and local microbreweries and wineries are abundant. To facilitate meals at local restaurants, we propose to work with the Greater Lansing Authority to arrange meeting discounts at locally owned and operated restaurants. This locavore theme may also provide means for additional sponsorship from Michigan Tourism (Pure Michigan), and regional farms, wineries, and breweries.