

# The Loonapalooza Lectures



David Flaspohler, PhD – Dean, College of Forest Resources and Environmental Science, Michigan Technological University

## **Stories from a Quarter Century of Taking Students Across the UP from Houghton to Whitefish Point, Seney Included** 2:40pm

**Synopsis:** This talk will review 25 years of Flaspohler teaching a 1-credit weekend field ornithology class which involved driving from Houghton to Seney and Whitefish Point, stopping at various birding sites and camping along the way. I will share experiences and anecdotes related to sighting rare species such as Lark Bunting, Black-billed Magpie, Gargany, and Golden-crowned Sparrow, and some adventures with stuck vans and keys locked in cars. Several hundred students have taken this class over the years and for many of them, it marked their introduction to birds and birding.

**Bio:** As a researcher in conservation biology, Dr. Flaspohler has studied the influence of a variety of human activities on natural ecosystems, including key contemporary issues, such as the effects of forest fragmentation on songbird demography, the influence of riparian forest management on bird, fish, and aquatic invertebrate communities, the ecological role of overabundant deer in island national parks, and how to best facilitate the transfer of basic and applied scientific research to management. His background in conservation biology has emphasized multidisciplinary approaches to solving scientific and societal problems.



Alec R. Lindsay, PhD – Professor of Biology, Northern Michigan University

## **Patterns of Migration & Dispersal of Loons in the Seney Metropolitan Area** 3:25pm

**Synopsis:** Dr. Lindsay will share research on the genetic evidence for sex-biase in the dispersal of Seney chicks as well as the genetic evidence of the importance of the Great Lakes continental loon migration. He'll also discuss the changing patterns of Common Loon and Red-Throated Loon migration at Whitefish Point, an important wing of Seney National Wildlife Refuge.

**Bio:** Dr. Lindsay's research interests are broadly focused on studies of evolution, animal behavior and conservation, incorporating data gathered from molecular genetic methods, behavior and detailed field studies. He is interested in evolutionary theory and its application to animal behavior, molecular evolution and conservation. Dr. Lindsay's research work is predominantly focused on studies of genetics and behavior of Holarctic birds, but students and collaborators work on varied taxa like deer, ticks, black flies and parasites. Dr. Lindsay teaches introductory courses (Intro to Biology-Principles), mid-level courses for majors (Intro to Cell and Molecular Biology, Conservation Biology) and non-majors (Ecology of the Northern Forest), advanced courses for majors (Evolution, Genetics, Ornithology) and graduate students (Systematics, Conservation Genetics, Graduate Seminar). He also regularly mentors students in courses of individualized content (Field Experience, Lab Experience, Directed Studies, Research) and leads students on an intensive course in Africa (Field Studies of Zambia.)



Jared Wolfe, PhD – Assistant Professor, College of Forest Resources & Environmental Science, MI Tech. University

## **Navigating the Impact of Light Pollution on Migratory Songbirds** 4:15pm

**Synopsis:** Dr. Wolfe will explore the complex interplay between migratory birds' navigation mechanisms, including their use of the Earth's magnetic fields and celestial cues, and the challenges posed by human-induced light pollution. Recent research reveals that these natural navigational aids are disrupted by artificial lighting, leading to disorientation and potential risks during nocturnal migration. This disturbance is increasingly implicated in the broader context of declines in migratory songbird populations across the hemisphere, highlighting an urgent need for conservation strategies that mitigate light pollution and protect these critical avian pathways

**Bio:** Dr. Jared Wolfe is an ornithologist and Assistant Professor at Michigan Technological University, specializing in avian ecology and conservation. His research focuses on understanding the factors affecting avian survival in both temperate and tropical forests. Dr. Wolfe is co-founder of the Louisiana Bird Observatory, the Biodiversity Initiative, and has conducted extensive fieldwork across the Americas and Africa. His work aims to bridge the gap between empirical research and practical conservation efforts, contributing to the preservation of avian biodiversity.



Joe Kaplan – Director, Common Coast Research and Conservation

## **Sharing the Commons: A Natural History of Loons in Michigan** 5:00pm

**Synopsis:** This talk will explore the iconic Common Loon from the perspective of a color-marked population in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where loons have been monitored for over 25 years. This research has provided some of the most detailed life histories for the species.

**Bio:** Joe Kaplan is a director of Common Coast Research & Conservation, a non-profit that specializes in migratory bird conservation. For over 30-years Joe and colleagues have monitored color-marked Common Loons to understand this iconic species' life history, population dynamics, and conservation challenges. As a former director of the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory he was instrumental in securing an extension of Seney National Wildlife Refuge at the Point. Joe is also responsible for establishing and stabilizing the 93-acre Manitou Island Light Station Preserve (Whitefish Point's sister light) through the Keweenaw Land Trust. Joe lives in Delta County with his wife Chris where he coordinates the Escanaba Migratory Bird Enhancement Initiative to create stopover habitat and recover a dwindling Purple Martin population in the City's waterfront parks. He also leads an agency partnership with Audubon Great Lakes and the Michigan DNR to conserve populations of Black Terns in the Bay de Noc and the US Forest Service to improve stopover habitat at Peninsula Point for migratory birds and butterflies.