

Feathers

BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB, INC.

BIRDS IN PARKS, REFUGES AND REST STOPS: ACROSS THE MIDDLE OF AMERICA FROM A RENTED TRUCK.

By Alison Van Keuren

For many of us, birding opportunities come as events peripheral to family and other activities. So it was for this birder in late May, 2007. This trip took place Memorial Day weekend and the week following. It had become necessary to move my aging mother into an assisted-living facility. The small detail that is important to this birding adventure is that Mother lived in Denver, Colorado, and the assisted-living facility is in Ann Arbor, Michigan. My part of the move was volunteering to pack up and drive a fourteen-foot rented truck across the middle of America. Jane Graves, former member of HMBC, volunteered to help with this process and in return wanted to visit a few parks and refuges for birding.

Denver offered many birding opportunities. We decided to bird early in the day, while packing and preparing for the drive in the afternoon. The first morning we visited Cherry Creek State Park, an out-of-the-way flood-control project when I was growing up in Denver. Now it is an oasis of prairie, recreation, reservoir and riparian areas in the midst of a sprawling mass of humanity. The reservoir hosted a flock of over thirty White Pelicans. The well-marked trails through the riparian areas with many large cottonwood trees offered Western Kingbirds, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Bullock's Orioles and more. Just beyond the treed areas Western Meadowlarks were calling from the grassland.

The second morning found us at Red Rocks Park, a Jefferson County facility best known for live-entertainment productions in its natural amphitheater, located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains west of Denver. The birds of the day were a pair of Prairie Falcons sunning while perched on the rocks. While this facility is not one of the better-known birding destinations in Colorado, it offers a 1.8 mile trail through the red sandstone formations tilted to amazing inclines offering great scenery and birding in an area transitioning from flat lands to the mountains. Black-

headed Grosbeaks and Violet-green Swallows along with the only Western Scrub-Jay of the trip offered visual delights.

After leaving Denver, we drove east on I-76 to get in some mileage for the day. Departing the interstate, as birding at seventy miles per hour is a bit limiting; we took the road less-traveled toward the Colorado-Nebraska state line. Late May is a wonderful time to see this part of the country, as the grass is green and there are flowers in bloom. On this leg of the trip we visited the Brush Prairie Pond Preserve. The water birds were nesting, yet we were able to observe American Coot, Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler, with Swainson's Hawk and Lark Sparrow out in the grasslands.

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P R E S I D E N T ' S C O R N E R



We spent two weeks in mid-February providing grandchild-care in both the Berkeley, CA, and southern Maryland areas and were fortunate to have some time to do some birding in each place. The two coasts offer differing suites of species, and the more temperate west provided good shore bird watching. It was exciting to see both Western and Clark's Grebes, a prairie falcon, Bewick's wren, long-bill curlew, Steller's and western scrub jay, and chestnut-backed chickadee. If an easy sighting of winter wren is wanted, there is no better place than Muir Woods.

The other week was spent in St. Mary's County, Maryland, on the Chesapeake Bay. No shore birds were seen, but there were large rafts of long-tail duck and surf scoter. I had made a contact in the area through the Yahoo group MDOSprey (via birdingonthe.net) who directed us to spots to easily see brown-headed nuthatch and Carolina chickadee. The most interesting spot was right behind the Lexington Park, MD, library where a small wood supported a big black and turkey vulture roost.



Please remember to renew your membership, if not already done.

— Bernie Grossman 

HMBC Contact Information
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Email: contact@hmbc.net
HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>
HMBC Board Meetings

HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months.

Newsletter Contributions Desired

- Have anything you think other birders would be interested in?
- Have a favorite birding spot you want to share?
- Are there any stories or photos that would inspire others?

Share them with the HMBC membership by submitting them to the addresses below:
Please send all **electronic** submissions **via e-mail** to: Chris Grossman at bgrossman@nycap.rr.com
Send **all** paper submissions to:

Chris Grossman
7 Nott Rd.
Rexford, NY 12148

After crossing the Nebraska state line we traveled through its far-southwest corner along the Republican River which draws a line of water and cottonwood trees across the rolling hills of the Great American Semi-Desert. A bridge across the river just a few miles into Nebraska provided a nesting foundation for hundreds of Cliff Swallows. This river bottom afforded view of one of the few Eastern Bluebirds of the trip and the first Eastern Kingbird. A few miles north of Highway 34 we found the Rock Creek State Recreation Area. This jewel in the prairie is a small reservoir surrounded by small to mid-size trees. We took time for a picnic lunch there to the sounds of Bell's Vireos. A real treat were the many Orchard Orioles taking advantage of the vertical interruption in the vastness of the prairie. This area has a significant marsh at the north end of the reservoir, but we would have to have been there at dawn to discover what birds were present. A short distance from the area we were delighted to observe a Common Nighthawk spending the day at the top of a wooden fence post.

North of Omaha on the eastern edge of Nebraska are located two National Wildlife Refuges, Boyer Chute and Desoto. At Boyer Chute a couple of species behaved in ways totally unexpected by us eastern birders. Male Orchard Orioles would leave the cover of the forest and fly out into saplings that emerge from the grassland edges of the prairie areas. They would sing and be very visible. The other species that let itself be entirely visible was the numerous Brown Thrashers. The Thrashers would perch at the very end of branches in shrub clumps and practice vocal exercises. Here in New York Brown Thrashers are never that easy to see.


Desoto NWR has an odd bit of geography. The refuge is on the east side of the Missouri River, with the entrance and visitor center in Iowa, yet part of the property is in Nebraska. This is due to the ever-changing Missouri River leaving the state line behind as it changes its flow. The person at the desk of the Visitor Center said this anomaly presents law enforcement challenges, such as a different fishing license

for each side of the chute. Both Wildlife Refuges offered a pleasant break in our travels with well marked trails and access to the river bank. We suspect that migration must offer a spectacular show.

The middle of Iowa offers an exceptional treat. Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge is part of a prairie reclamation project and the home of small herds of American Bison and Elk. At the Visitor Center, a paved two-mile trail offers an up-close view of the tall grass prairie. Male Ring-necked Pheasants were being very vocal the morning we visited and the call of Dickcissel resounded across the grasslands. The elusive Henslow's Sparrow was calling in one corner of the refuge.

The last important birding opportunity before we got to Ann Arbor was the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Big sand dunes and sand plains offer a different view of the Midwest environment. Indiana Dunes is also the location of a population of Karner blue butterflies. This area has protected land side-by-side with industry and residential areas. Lake Michigan funnels migrants, and this area is a significant rest stop for many species. The big surprise for us was an American Pipit.

Birding from a fourteen-foot truck is not the same as from a car. Part of the difference is good as the windshield is large and mostly flat with the passenger area much larger than an automobile. The downside of a truck of this magnitude is that one does not easily pull off to the side of the road leaving room for passing cars or spotting a bird flying into the underbrush. The gas mileage and noise are also on the negative side of the list.

The parks, refuges and rest stops across the middle of America offer a great opportunity to see the transition from western species to our more familiar eastern ones with the added bonus of seeing landscape changes from mountain to hardwood forests. 

Twenty-one birders in seven field parties took part in the 108th Christmas Bird Count, held on Saturday, December 29, 2007. The Troy CBC has been held every year since the winter of 1949-50.

Warmer weather in the week before the count opened up the area rivers after extensive ice build-up in early December. Above-freezing temperatures and rain immediately prior to the count melted much of the snow cover and increased flow in the rivers. There was no ice at all on the Hudson River, though the Tomhannock Reservoir had only a small open portion on the north end.

The morning of the count before sunup was rainy and windy, but the rain ended by 8:00 a.m. and the wind died down so it was not an issue for the count. The temperature ranged from a low of 35 to a high of 43 degrees and it was mostly cloudy with some sun.

Bird numbers seemed to be down, perhaps due to the warm weather and lack of snow. Field effort was about normal, though only two teams did any owling - and only one was successful.

We had record numbers of Bald Eagles, particularly at the Cohoes Falls area. Also of note were record numbers of

Carolina Wrens and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers - half-hardies to keep an eye on in coming years. We also exceeded or tied the previous records for Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Common Raven, and American Robin. Watch the Merlin numbers in coming years; this species is being reported more frequently on this count.

It was very good to see the reappearance of Pine Grosbeaks after an absence of over 20 years, though only four individuals were counted. Redpoll numbers were lower than expected, possibly because they did not make it this far south in good numbers (yet?) Horned Grebe has only been seen on this count three times prior to this one and was last seen 12 years ago.

The big miss had to be Northern Harrier. Though not seen in large numbers any more, we usually have at least one. This is the second year in a row that we've missed Ruffed Grouse. This could be due to several factors related to weather and effort, but it appears that this species has significantly declined.

The total of 67 species was about average for the last ten years.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
SNOW GOOSE	1		3					4
CANADA GOOSE	291	148	478		74	4		995
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	25		15	7	4	3	1	55
MALLARD	205	40	95	69	80	51	2	542
RING-NECKED DUCK			2					2
COMMON GOLDENEYE	9		7	20	1			37
HOODED MERGANSER	16		7		1			24
COMMON MERGANSER	16	37	16	152	94	40	80	435
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER				1				1
RUDDY DUCK	12							12
WILD TURKEY	36					50	41	127
HORNED GREBE						1		1
GREAT BLUE HERON				1				1
BALD EAGLE*	4	2	2	12	10	1		31
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK				2	2		1	5
COOPER'S HAWK		1			1	3	1	6
NORTHERN GOSHAWK		1	1					2
RED-TAILED HAWK	19	19	11	23	25	17	7	121
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK							1	1
AMERICAN KESTREL	1							1
MERLIN			1	1	1			3
PEREGRINE FALCON			1			1		2
RING-BILLED GULL		39	9	39	66	200	375	728

TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT CONT.

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
HERRING GULL	3			1700	271	10	850	2834
ICELAND GULL				4	1			5
GLAUCOUS GULL				2				2
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL		1		285	197	35	450	968
ROCK PIGEON	50	320	472	237	70	130	115	1394
MOURNING DOVE	21	118	35	18	85	68	119	464
EASTERN SCREECH-OWL		1						1
GREAT HORNED OWL		2						2
BELTED KINGFISHER		1	2		1	1	1	5
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	1	8	5	2	1	2	1	20
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER	1				1	2		4
DOWNY WOODPECKER	6	24	8	13	6	12	2	71
HAIRY WOODPECKER	1	8	8	8	2		3	30
NORTHERN FLICKER	3	6	4	6	2	3		24
PILEATED WOODPECKER	1	3		1				5
BLUE JAY	31	61	50	20	27	17	38	244
AMERICAN CROW	500	472	105	260	117	2204	31	3689
FISH CROW		12		6	5			23
COMMON RAVEN	2		2					4
HORNED LARK		10						10
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	45	158	88	49	13	69	35	457
TUFTED TITMOUSE	4	34	30	20	10	19	10	127
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	1	1	2					4
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	8	30	16	7	8	7	3	79
BROWN CREEPER	1	1		1				3
CAROLINA WREN	1	2	1	4	1			9
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	4							4
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	13	37	14		7	21		92
HERMIT THRUSH		1						1
AMERICAN ROBIN	45	111	23	35	274	587	4	1079
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD		1		2	2	3	2	10
EUROPEAN STARLING	170	755	45	239	212	410	118	1949
CEDAR WAXWING	7				20			27
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	16	36	14	8	15	4	7	100
SONG SPARROW	1	11	2	4	3	2		23
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	13	49	4	10	8	4		88
DARK-EYED JUNCO	27	153	90	17	91	52	46	476
NORTHERN CARDINAL	7	18	5	15	12	9	8	74
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD		6			1			7
PINE GROSBEAK	4							4
HOUSE FINCH	6	75	11		32	7	12	143
COMMON REDPOLL	4	3	4					11
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	6	41	25	16	11	57	11	167
HOUSE SPARROW	16	66	29	105	87	21	9	333
Total Birds	1654	2923	1742	3421	1952	4126	2384	18202
Total Species	45	44	41	39	44	37	31	67

* BALD EAGLES - 15 adults, 16 immatures

Bold = record number or tied record for the count



Sector	Assigned Water Bodies
A	Tomhannock Reservoir
B	Hudson River from Route 4 bridge north to Lock 1
C	Hudson River north of Route 67, Hoosic River
D	Mohawk River east of Route 9, Hudson River south to northern tip of Green Island
E	Hudson River north of Lock 1 and south of Route 67
F	Hudson River south from north tip of Green Island (south of 103 rd Street in Troy)
G	Mohawk River west of Route 9


- Group A:** Will Raup, Brad Walker, Eric Winders. 7:15 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
(1 hour, 2 mile on foot; 53 hours, 80 miles by car.)
- Group B:** Larry Alden, Jackie Bogardus, Steve Chorvas. 5:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
(1 hour, 2 mile on foot; 8: hours, 63 miles by car. Also 12 hours, 9 miles owling.)
- Group C:** Rich Guthrie, Jocelyn Cole, Leroy Suess. 7:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
(3 hours, 2 miles on foot; 6: hours, 34 miles by car.)
- Group D:** Sue Adair, John Adair, George Steele. 7:45 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
(3 hours, 5 miles on foot; 53 hours, 33 miles by car.)
- Group E:** Bill Lee, Lin Fagan, Jaimie Taft. 8:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
(22 hours, 2 miles on foot; 63 hours, 57 miles by car.)
- Group F:** Norton Miller, Jeremy Kirchman, Kathy Schneider, Joel Ralston.
5:30 a.m. - 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
(2 hours, 4 miles by foot; 7: hours, 84 miles by car. Also 1 hour, 5 miles owling.)
- Group G:** Joan Cipriani, Peggy Rudis. 7:15 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
(1: hours, 1 mile by foot, 72 hours, 84 miles by car.)

Notes:

John Hershey added Red-Breasted Merganser to the count during incidental birding at the Crescent power plant.

Bald Eagle numbers in Sectors D and E were adjusted to account for birds seen in other sectors. I assumed that the birds seen in Sectors A (4 immatures) and C (2 immatures) were not seen in any other sector. I assumed the birds seen in Sectors B (2 adults) and F (1 adult) were seen in Sectors D and E, but assigned them to the B and F. Using results reported by others, I assumed there were at least 17 eagles in the Cohoes-Crescent vicinity and tried to account for double counting between Sectors D and E. Therefore, my adjustment to Sector D went from 6 immatures and 10 adults to 4 immatures and 8 adults; the adjustment to Sector E went from 8 immatures and 5 adults to 6 immatures and 4 adults. This is about as scientific as I can make it!

Iceland Gull number in Sector D was adjusted to account for the bird seen in Sector E.

— Larry Alden - Compiler 

H M B C F I E L D T R I P R E P O R T S

Waterfowl of the Hudson South

Sunday, March 2, 2008

Eagles? Oh more than a dozen. We don't bother to count them anymore. It's the ducks that are hard to find these days. Besides a few MALLARDS, BLACK DUCKS and COMMON MERGANSERS we had eight COMMON GOLDENEYES and a brace of BUFFLEHEADS. The single GREATER SCAUP in Athens was a life bird for John and Denise, her #550 in fact. So we took that as a cue to go across the street to Ursula's where Denise treated us all to a cup of coffee. At least the river was open unlike last year. In fact the river did not freeze at all in Catskill this year. I think the most amazing sight was the small group of BLUEBIRDS that tried to perch on the tiny ornamental shrub at the Coxsackie landing in the fierce arctic wind blowing down on us from the north. We ended the day with a PEREGRINE FALCON perched on the Rip Van Winkle Bridge thanks to the keen eyes of Rich Nord.

— Bill Cook 

Monthly programs are open to the public and are held at 7:00 PM at William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library or Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar.

HMBC Annual Meeting and Banquet

The Birds of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket - Vagrants and Visitors

Vern Laux of Martha's Vineyard.

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Italian-American Community Center

Members will receive a special mailing to sign up for the dinner (\$25); business meeting is at 7:00 PM and the program starts at 8:15 PM. There is no cost to attend the meeting and/or program. E. Vernon Laux will show us some of the wonders that have occurred in this bird rich region. From a hybrid between a Black-capped Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse, a Chickmouse, to the Americas' First Red-footed Falcon, Vern has a lot to show us.

E. Vernon Laux has been birding the Cape and Islands for over 40 years. He has birded on all 7 continents, writes weekly birding columns in the Martha's Vineyard and Cape Cod Times, does a weekly National Public Radio commentary on birds and is author of "Bird News - Vagrants and Visitors on a Peculiar Island". He currently resides on Nantucket where he is the Resident Naturalist for the Linda Loring Nature Foundation.

A virtual tour of the amazing bird life of the

Albany Pine Bush Preserve

Neil Gifford

Monday, May 5, 2008, 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Tucked amongst the hustle and bustle of New York's capital city, the Albany Pine Bush supports the best remaining worldwide example of an inland pitch pine scrub oak barrens. While insects have been studied exhaustively here for more than a century, until recently we knew surprisingly little about the Pine Bush bird community. Recent research has revealed a diverse assemblage of breeding season and migratory birds, and that the Pine Bush is especially important for several declining shrubland species.

Neil Gifford is the Conservation Director for the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission. As the Conservation Director he is the Commission's lead conservation scientist, directing monitoring, research and management activities, within the 3,010 acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve. He is a graduate of Paul Smith's College and Plattsburgh State University.

America's National Parks

Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Monday, June 2, 2008, 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

From Maine's rocky coast to Florida's Everglades, across great plains, badlands, mountains and deserts, to the Pacific coast and on to Hawaii and Alaska, we'll highlight the scenic wonders and diverse habitats and wildlife preserved through our National Park System. From the depths of Death Valley to the heights of the Rockies, delicate flowers to giant sequoias, and a wide variety of birds, the park system preserves much of the best of the American outdoors. In our photographic journey, we'll visit both popular and lesser-known park sites, and discuss both park history and current issues. Come join us to learn about our national parks!

Scott Stoner is past president of both the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and the Audubon Society of the Capital Region. His work has been published in *Birder's World Magazine* and he addresses many bird-related letters to the *NYS Conservationist*. Denise is a past officer and director of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. Scott and Denise write a monthly nature column in the *Chatham Courier*, and recently co-authored a feature article on Christmas Bird Counts in the December 2007 *NYS Conservationist*. Together they have birded, explored, and photographed America from Maine to Hawaii.

Birding at Tropical Lodges

Gregg Recer

Monday, September 8, 2008, 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Joint Program with Audubon Society of the Capital Region

Tropical birding holds a fascination for many birders from temperate regions, if for no other reason than the remarkably high species diversity compared to higher latitudes. For North American birders, birding the nearby neotropics is also a way to begin gaining familiarity with entire new bird families. Self-contained lodges located in the heart of even the most remote tropical forests are making exploring these complex habitats easier. Many combine spectacular natural history observation with unexpected creature comforts. Gregg Recer will share slides and stories of recent birding adventures at lodges in Belize, Costa Rica and Trinidad and Tobago and consider ideas for touring tropical lodges as a way to see representatives of all (or, at least, most) of the world's bird families. Gregg is past president of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and a frequent speaker at the Club's meetings.

Condor Tales: What I Learned in Twelve Years with the Big Birds

Sanford Wilber


Thursday October 9, 2008, 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Joint Program with Audubon Society of the Capital Region

Sanford R. "Sandy" Wilbur was leader of the California Condor research and recovery effort from 1969 to 1981, the period during which the current captive breeding and release program was developed. Using color slides and readings from his recent book, "Condor Tales: What I Learned in Twelve Years with the Big Birds," he describes how the condors became endangered (reaching a low point of only about fifteen birds in the early 1980s) and how the condors came to be taken from the wild for a captive breeding program. The "Tales" are a blend of biology, sociology and politics, and the presentation sheds light on what it really takes to save an endangered species.

A quote about the presentation: "Thanks so much for the fascinating insights of your contributions to the condor saga... Good reading, and an important point of view... I've reread it all and congratulate you on a very good tale. Your frank assessments were refreshing and produced several good laughs." - Roland C. Clement, Vice-president, National Audubon Society (retired)

Sandy was born in Oakland, California, in 1940 and graduated from Humboldt State College in Wildlife Management. After a short period with the California Department of Fish and Game, he spent the next 34 years with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, about half that time managing national wildlife refuges in the West and Southeast, and the other half with the Endangered Species Program. In addition to the California Condor, his endangered species work has included rails, terns, vireos, spotted owls, and Hawaiian birds. He has written many scientific papers and magazine articles and several books, including "Condor Tales," "Birds of Baja California, Mexico," and "Vulture Biology and Management." Currently, he and his wife Sally live in Oregon in the winter, and New Hampshire in the summer. 

Saving Special Places***Jill Knapp***

Thursday, May 8, 2008; 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

In the past 15 years, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy has worked with local landowners and municipalities to help protect 1700 acres of open space, special places that showcase the natural and working landscapes which define our region. Join Jill Knapp for an overview of MHLC, highlights of past projects such as Wolf Creek Falls Preserve, and a peak at exciting initiatives currently on the front burner such as the long-awaited Rails-To-Trails project.

Jill Knapp is the Executive Director of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. She has served as Agriculture Program Leader for Cornell Cooperative Extension - Orange County and as Executive Director of Conservation Districts of Iowa. She received BS and MS degrees from Cornell University and a Ph.D. from Purdue University where she studied agronomy.

Birding at Tropical Lodges***Gregg Recer***

Monday, September 8, 2008, 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Joint Program with Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club*See program description on Page 25.****Condor Tales: What I Learned in Twelve Years with the Big Birds******Sanford Wilber***

Thursday October 9, 2008, 7:00 PM

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Joint Program with Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club*See program description on Page 25.*

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

ECOS, the Environmental Clearinghouse in Niskayuna is sponsoring an Earth Day Celebration on April 19, 2008, from 11:00AM to 3:00PM at the Mabee Farm Historical Site on Route 5S in Rotterdam Junction.

The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club has an opportunity to promote itself there with an informational table about birding and the Club. Please contact Bernie Grossman at 518-399-9159 or bgrossman@nycap.rr.com if you can volunteer some time at this table.

The Hudson-Mohawk Bird club has received an inquiry from the Program Coordinator for the Peebles Island and Schodack Island State Parks for people willing to lead a beginning birding class at one or both of the parks this spring or early summer. They are looking for a single three hour or so long session covering equipment, guides, birding ethics and safety, and suggested local birding areas and ending with a short field excursion.

Contact Jamie McGinnis-Gomes at jamie.mcginis@oprhp.state.ny.us or at 518-237-7000 x219, if interested.

Al Palmer was a long-time HMBC member who passed away recently. As a memorial to him, we present one of his writings.

The Birding Game
by Alfred Palmer

There's nothing in this world I know, that I would rather do
than pack binocs and field guides and list a bird that's new!
A birder walks on many trails most every chance he gets.
This passion's shared by Pat and I and others we have met.
'Hotlines' to call, 'Hotspots' to see. This is the 'Birding Game',
But once you start the 'Feather Quest', your life won't be the same!
Birdline reports a 'rarity' a first for New York State!
Drop everything. We have to go. All other work must wait!
A 'Lifebird' added to my list is worth a drive all night.
We know the most productive time is somewhere near 'first light'.
We've gone on 'rare bird trips' before. Each time our hopes are high.
We're lucky sometime. Mostly not!
But birders never cry.
A 'fallout' of a migrant flock is Nature's grand display.
With help of serendipity, we'll catch that show someday!
I've always had this crazy wish while birding locally;
To one day find a New York 'First' and claim my rarity!
Why this obsession to see birds and tally every one?
The reason is all birders know, is that it's lots of fun!
There's just about ten thousand birds. We'll never see them all
Unless we live one hundred years, and still make 'pishing' calls!



Satellite telemetry has added an entirely new dimension to studying bird migration. A USGS website (<http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/shorebirds/barg.html>) presents some amazing results from the Pacific Shorebird Migration Project sponsored jointly by the USGS' Alaska Science Center and Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California.

Three species of the Pacific basin have been studied, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit and Long-billed Curlew. Based on these results, the Bar-tailed Godwit holds the world's record for the longest documented nonstop flight for a shorebird over the Pacific Ocean. One of these godwits, known as E7, recently completed the entire circuit from New Zealand to Korea (6300 mi. from March 17 to 25), then to Alaska (4500 mi. from May 1 to 6) and finally left Alaska on August 30 to arrive 7200 mi. later back in New Zealand on September 7!

This amazing feat over the vast reaches of the Pacific Ocean is displayed on the website. It makes the thought of human travel by airplane seem so insignificant by comparison.


— Bob Yunick 

R E D P O L L M O R T A L I T Y

Ward Stone, Wildlife Pathologist, for Encon, has this to say about recent redpoll mortality:

“The redpolls are suffering from a Salmonella outbreak that is transmitted by fecal contamination and feeders are easy way for this to take place. Wear gloves and take the feeder down and put it in a solution of 5% household bleach (eg. Clorox) for several hours to kill the Salmonella. Then don't feed the birds for two weeks to prevent transmission at your site. Others in your area should do the same. Cats eating birds with Salmonella may be infected and have severe enteritis. These outbreaks are hard to stop as the redpolls are moving from place to place and thousands can die in one of these outbreaks.

It is also helpful to disinfect the ground and with precautions remove the spilled seeds. Keep me posted on this outbreak. Usually these outbreaks involve several states, and I plan to talk about this on my radio show.”

Ward Stone may be contacted at 518-478-3032 or bstone@gw.dec.state.ny.us 

HMBC YOUTH MEMBER TO COMPETE IN THE GREAT TEXAS BIRDING CLASSIC

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Hope Batcheller, one of our young HMBC members has been chosen by the American Birding Assn. to be on the ABA/Leica Tropicbirds team competing in the Great Texas Birding Classic on May 3rd. Hope was chosen from young birders from all over the country who applied to be on the team.

The Great Texas Birding Classic takes place annually on the Texas coast and is similar to HMBC's Century Run. Each team competes to find the most bird species they can in a twenty-four hour period (midnight - midnight) and 200+ species can reasonably be found by each team during that time for this event. Hope's team will be birding the lower coast section of Texas which includes the lower Rio Grande Valley west to the Falcon Dam area and the southern coast north to Corpus Christi. The other members of this year's Tropicbirds' team are team captain, Saraiya Ruano (17) of Colorado Springs, CO, Neil Gilbert (15) of Orange, CA, and Nico Sarbanes (14) of Baltimore, MD. The team's leaders will be Jeffrey and Liz Gordon of Lewes DE.

Hope, 16, has been a nature lover all her life, but finding an Ovenbird nest when she was eight sparked her interest in birds and birding. She lives in Petersburg, has been a HMBC member since 2005 and was on the HMBC Merlins team that competed in the Cape May World Series of Birding in 2007. Both HMBC and the ABA sponsored Hope with a scholarship to attend Victor Emmanuel's ABA sponsored Camp Chiricahua in southeastern Arizona last year.

Hope participated in the ABA Young Birder of the Year Contest in 2007 as well. This young birder contacted the HMBC Field Trip Committee last year to start a Fall Century Run, for which she coordinated and compiled the results. She has volunteered to coordinate and compile the results for the club's Fall Century Run as well.

I have not yet met Hope, but was very excited for her when she emailed me to tell me about being chosen to be on the Tropicbirds. I suggested she send an article to Feathers or asked her if she minded me writing one. She opted for me writing the article because she did not feel comfortable bragging about the honor.

Besides wanting all HMBC members to know about Hope's being chosen for the Tropicbird's team, I would like as many of us as possible to support her. The main purpose of the Tropicbirds team is to raise money for the ABA's youth education programs. The ABA programs offer many opportunities for young birders which are made possible in part by donations. The money will go toward scholarships for camps and events, the Young Birder of the Year contest, young birder conferences and other similar programs. Hope has already benefited from a camp program and is happy to help raise support for the ABA programs so that other young birders may also benefit.

You can make a pledge in Hope's name per species (recommended) or a lump sum by logging on to <http://americanbirding.org> and clicking on the Tropicbirds box then click on the pledge page heading. You can make your pledge online or print the pledge form and mail it to ABA. Please put "Supporting Hope Batcheller" under the notes/comment section so that she can get credit for the money raised in her name. While you are there, click on team photos and learn a more about Hope and her fellow teammates.

If you don't have access to a computer, I will be happy to print the pledge form and any other information about the team from mine and mail it to you if you call me at 869-6624. Please leave your phone number so that I can call you back.

You can also contact Hope at hope.batcheller@gmail.com if you have any questions for her.

I'm sure that we as birders, would rather see our young people doing bird and nature related activities instead of sitting inside playing video games or in trouble on the streets. Please join me in supporting Hope so that she can help raise money to help ensure that more young people will have the opportunity to learn about birds and help work for their benefit and ours.

Congratulations, good luck, and GREAT BIRDING, Hope!

— Donna Zimmerman 

Since HMBC is now planning Field Trips by the quarter instead of by the year, we are omitting the colored Field Trip insert and instead placing the Upcoming Field Trips at the end of Feathers so that this section may be torn off and referenced separately, if desired.

Saturday, April 5

TWO SISTERS' BACKYARD ACRES

Coordinators: Honey Hollen
885-1202
Susan Stewart
885-8497

Join us for a "back acre" bird walk. We will cover various habitats between two roads in the back acres of suburban Burnt Hills. There will be pasture land, mature woods, overgrown fields, hedgerows and wetlands. Please wear suitable footwear and bring bug repellent. Meet in the driveway of 276 Scotch Bush Rd.

Directions: From the traffic light on Rt. 50 in Burnt Hills, go north on Rt. 50 toward Ballston Spa. At the next traffic light, turn left (west) onto Charlton Rd. Drive west to the third corner stop and turn left (south) onto Scotch Bush Rd. At approximately 1/4 of a mile, look for driveway on left (#276 or 274 or 272-all the same driveway). Go to end of driveway and arrive at Honey Hollen's house.

April 15

RESERVATIONS FOR GREAT ADIRONDACK BIRDING CELEBRATION

Sunday, April 20

VISCHER'S FERRY EVENING

Coordinator: John Hershey
371-3114

The main focus of the trip will be spring waterfowl. We will search for American Wigeon, Green and Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe. Possible songbirds include Palm Warbler and Rusty Blackbird. We will linger until a little after dark to listen for nocturnal bird sounds, too. Possibilities include American Bittern, Virginia Rail, American Woodcock or even an owl. Bring a flashlight and meet at the main entrance at 5:30 pm.

Thursday, April 24

WOODCOCK AT FIVE RIVERS

Coordinator: Craig Thompson
475-0291 (daytime)

During a meandering walk to the Woodcock site, we will look for other early spring birds. Woodcock flight time is expected around 8 pm. Bring binoculars and a flashlight. Meet at 7:00 pm at the Five Rivers Interpretive Building.

Sunday, May 4

HUDSON and NANCY WYNN PRESERVE

Coordinator: Jennifer Hamilton
861-8202

This Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy parcel in the town of Knox is rich with warblers as well as a good variety of other birds. Warblers previously seen or heard here include Ovenbirds, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Prairie, Nashville, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Green, Black and White, Chestnut-sided, and Blue-winged. Other species encountered include Veery, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Great-crested Flycatcher, Winter Wren, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Common Raven. Meet to carpool at the public parking lot on Rt. 146 in Altamont just west of the Altamont Enterprises offices on Maple Ave at 7:30 am.

Saturday, May 10

BIRDS and BREAKFAST AT FIVE RIVERS

Coordinators: Scott and Denise Hackert-Stoner
785-6760
scottjstoner@aol.com

Our annual celebration of the arrival of spring will be held at Five Rivers on Game Farm Rd. in Delmar. The center has an excellent trail system through a variety of habitats. You can expect to see and hear a number of resident species and migrants, including Canada Geese with their newly hatched goslings, Eastern Bluebirds feeding their young, and (hopefully) a number of different warblers. An early group will meet in the parking lot at 6:00 am; the building will open at 6:45 am with coffee flowing, and groups will leave at 7:00 and 8:00. You may join one of these groups or go out on your own as we try to find as many species as possible. We'll rally at 10:30 am for coffee, doughnuts, bagels, fresh fruit, (approx. \$3 donation) and a list compilation.

Sunday, May 11

VISCHER'S FERRY MIGRANTS

Coordinators: Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen
899-2678

This is one of the club's most popular spring trips. We will explore this varied site for warblers and other songbirds as well as marsh species including rails and bitterns. Meet at 7:30 am at the main entrance next to the Whipple Bridge.

Saturday, May 17**CENTURY RUN**

Compiler: Bob Yunick
1527 Myron St., Schenectady, NY 12309
377-0146

Coordinator: Larry Alden
861-6087
overlook@nycap.rr.com

See how many species you can find in 24 hours in the 11 county Hudson-Mohawk region. Join a group or form your own and cover all your favorite locations. Each group must stay together and jointly identify species reported. Reports must be mailed to the compiler by May 31 in order to be counted. Also please call or e-mail Birdline with the total species and highlights for your group.

NOTE: You can contact Larry Alden if you have any questions or need suggestions. Also let Larry know if you need people to fill out a group or are interested in joining a group; he may be able to make a match.

Sunday, May 18**CHRISTMAN SANCTUARY**

Coordinator: Neal Reilly
382-7802 (home)
256-9147 (cell)

Christman Sanctuary is a Nature Conservancy preserve in Schenectady County. With old field and mixed woods habitat, the preserve is good for songbirds including breeding Blue-winged and Prairie Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes. Please wear sturdy, water-resistant footwear as we may ford the Bozen Kill. We will meet in the parking lot of the Hannaford Supermarket at the corners of Rts. 20 and 146 in Guilderland at 7:00 am.

Saturday, May 24**GRAFTON LAKES STATE PARK**

Coordinators: Phil and Marjorie Whitney
477-9050

Grafton Lakes State Park and the surrounding area include deciduous and coniferous woodland, open fields, marshes, ponds, and a large bird-rich patch of highbush blueberries. Seventy or more bird species are present in summer, including as many as 12-15 warbler species. Most of these should be present in and staking out nesting sites by this time. The trip will include several short walks totaling less than 2 miles. Bring bug repellent, as black flies will be out. Meet at 7:15 am.

Directions: Take State Rt. 2 about 14 miles east from Troy to about 1/2 mile west of Grafton Village. Turn Right at the loop

that leads to the main park entrance and park off to the side before reaching the flashing light.

Sunday, June 1**WINIFRED MATTHEWS HOLT PRESERVE**

Coordinators: David and Sandy Martin
765-4982

The Holt Preserve is a small wooded preserve in the southern part of the town of New Scotland. We will be searching for Hooded Warblers that have nested there for several years and other breeding woodland birds in the preserve as well as open-country birds in the surrounding fields. Call the coordinators for meeting time and place.

Thursday, June 5 – Sunday, June 8**GREAT ADIRONDACK BIRDING CELEBRATION**

Coordinator: Donna Zimmerman
869-6624

Reservations by April 15

The Great Adirondack Birding Celebration is an annual event sponsored by Paul Smith's VIC and the High Peaks Audubon Society. Events include speakers as well as field trips and a birding challenge at the VIC among other activities. Field trips are held on Sat. and Sun. and are lead by High Peaks Audubon members. The guest speakers for 2008 are Lang Elliot and Myoko Chu, author of "Songbird Journeys". The field trips planned for this year so far are: Whiteface Mountain (Bicknell's Thrush), the boreal habitats of Madawaska Wetlands and Massawepie Mire, a canoe trip on the Osgood River and a walk around the Paul Smith's VIC grounds. Another field trip is also being planned. We will be traveling on Thurs. afternoon to Saranac Lake where we will stay in a motel. You will be able to choose your own field trips, however pre-registration is required for them to assure you a spot as group size is limited. Please call the coordinator by April 15 and she will coordinate field trip registration and motel reservations.

Saturday, June 7**PAPSCANEE ISLAND PRESERVE**

Coordinators: Don and Nancy Gresens
370-3923

This field trip will take us to the different habitats of Papscaanee Island Preserve consisting of deciduous forest, cultivated farmland and freshwater marshes where we will see a variety of bird species. Swallows, herons and Wood Ducks can be observed in the wetland areas. Chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and woodpeckers are found in the forest as well as Eastern Wood-Pee-wee and Great-crested Flycatcher. Veery, Wood Thrush, and American Redstarts are common. Other summer birds include Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Black and White, and Blue-winged Warblers, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Meet at 7:00 am in the Kmart on Rts. 9 and 20 in East Greenbush since parking at the preserve is limited.


Saturday, June 14**PEEBLES ISLAND STATE PARK**

Coordinator: Gerry Colborn
237-3898
gcolborn@nycap.rr.com

Join us for a walk along the trails of Peebles Island in search of songbirds like Great-crested Flycatcher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager and Baltimore Oriole. We may see some waterbirds as well. Meet at the state park parking lot at 7:00 am.

Saturday, June 21**CHERRY PLAINS STATE PARK**

Coordinators: Phil and Marjorie Whitney
477-9050

Cherry Plains is situated on the Rensselaer Plateau east of the Capital District. The relatively high elevation, cool climate, and a variety of forested and wetland habitats make this a good area for northern species. Nesting Species include Least Flycatcher, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Common Raven, Broad-winged Hawk, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Black and White, Yellow-rumped, and Canada Warblers, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Veery, and Hermit Thrush. An early start is important for midsummer birding, so plan to meet at 7:00 am at the parking lot at Hannaford Market on the right side of Rt. 43 just past the intersection of Rt. 150 in West Sand Lake. 

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Road
Delmar, NY 12054

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