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**TWO NEW SIGHTINGS HIGHLIGHT 1987 SOUTHERN RENSSELAER COUNT**

Mike Kuhrt, compiler

The twenty-second annual Southern Rensselaer County Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 26, 1987. The total species count for the day was 56 (avg. of 54.1 for 22 years) Two first-time sightings helped raise the all-time list of species to 111.

(continued on page 5)

**RECORD NUMBERS OF BIRDS SEEN ON TROY CHRISTMAS COUNT**

William W. Shuster, compiler

A new high total of 22,594 birds representing 62 species were seen on the annual Troy Christmas Count held Saturday, January 2, 1988. Record numbers of Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, Cooper's Hawks, Iceland Gulls, Glaucous Gulls, Herring Gulls, American Crows, Chickadees and Brown Creepers were recorded. A Woodcock was seen for the first time, and a Vesper Sparrow was seen for only the second time. Notable with their absence were Pine Grosbeaks, Redpolls, Snow Buntings, and Horned Larks. Very few Bluebirds and only one Robin was seen this year, due perhaps to limited wild food-crop.

(continued on next page)

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**MAY 3, 1989 -- KEEP THAT DATE OPEN**

**HMBC WILL CELEBRATE 50 YEARS AS A BIRD CLUB ON THAT EVENING**

**IT WILL BE A NIGHT TO REMEMBER, AND THAT'S JUST WHAT WE'LL DO!**

Volunteers are needed for all sorts of activities for this celebration. Please call Bob Yunick, who is chairing the 50th committee, at 377-0146 to join in. Take an active part in HMBC - it's really more fun that way.

**WATCH FOR MORE DETAILS AS THE DAY DRAWS NEARER (AND OUR PLANS DRAW CLEARER!)**

There will be a dinner, that's for sure. And lots of reminiscences about birding and the club. Most of all, we will be honoring those people that made it all possible. Steve Fitz will be Master of Ceremonies. **SAVE THIS DATE.**

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RECORD NUMBERS OF BIRDS SEEN ON TROY CHRISTMAS COUNT  
continued from front page

The recent cold weather caused most small streams and ponds to be ice covered, while large streams and bodies of water were partly open. Such conditions appeared to be largely responsible for the high concentrations of waterfowl on the limited open water. Hawks were fairly common with sightings of both Cooper's Hawk and Goshawk being notable.

The Troy Christmas Count covered a 15 mile diameter circle centered at Turner and River Roads in Melrose ( 42° 50' N, 73° 40' W ) and includes portions of Center Brunswick, Clifton Park, Cohoes, the Hudson River from near Troy to near Stillwater, Melrose, Schaghticoke, Valley Falls, Speigletown, Tomhannock Reservoir, Waterford-Half Moon, and parts of Troy.

Seven field groups took part in the count that included 24 participants. The count this year was held from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. About 1-2 inches of snow covered the ground, with a light wind varying from 0-10 mph. The total party-hours were 68.5 of which 20 were on foot and 48.25 were by car. Total party miles were 440.5 of which 19.5 were on foot and 421 were by car. The efforts of both field observers and feeder watchers were much appreciated.

Following the count some sixteen participants gathered at the Shuster residence for good food and good conversation while the results of the day's work was compiled.

## TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

January 2, 1988

SPECIES	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	X	TOTALS
Snow Goose		8		70					78
Canada Goose	5000	959	401		175		11		6546
Wood Duck			2						2
Am. Black Duck	40		61	188	280	35			604
Mallard	80		46	737	250	17			1130
Gadwall			1						1
Lesser Scaup			1						1
Com. Goldeneye			51	1	15				67
Hooded Merg.			7						7
Com. Merg.	1		104	188	113				406
Red-brstd. Merg.			2						2
Sharp-shnd. Hk.			2		1				3
Cooper's Hawk	1		2	1	1				5
Goshawk					1				1
Red-tailed Hawk	6	5	13	17	12	8	4		65
Rough-lgd. Hawk		1			1				2
Amer. Kestrel			1	2	3	1			7
Ruffed Grouse	2		4	1	3		3		13
Amer. Coot	1								1
Amer. Woodcock			1						1
Ring-billed Gull	1		6	18	20	2			47

## TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT continued

January 2, 1988

SPECIES	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	X	TOTALS
Herring Gull	9		107	1950	490	23			2579
Iceland Gull				3	1				4
Glaucous Gull				3	1				4
Gr. Blk-bkd. Gull	3		25	60	55	3			146
Rock Dove	170	275	79	650	450	230	492	6	2352
Mourn. Dove	10	81	138	47	82	148	9	1	516
Screech-owl		2	1						3
Gr. Horned Owl	4			2	1				7
Blt. Kingfisher	1		1		1				3
Downy Wdpckr.	20	7	13	7	12	7	9	4	79
Hairy Wdpckr.	10		2	4	3	1	3	4	27
North. Flicker	1		3	2	1		3		10
Pileated Wdpckr.	1								1
Blue Jay	35	12	13	14	22	23	13	3	135
American Crow	100	69	52	214	138	70	61		704
Fish Crow					1				1
Bl.-cap. Chick.	120	68	77	55	90	61	111	11	593
Tftd. Titmouse	4	4	13	17	8	16	6	4	72
Red-brstd. Nut.	10		2		3	1			16
Wht.-brstd. Nut.	9	4	17	9	9		10	4	71
Br. Creeper	14				1				15
Gldn-crwnd. King.	8		1		3				12
Estrn. Bluebird					4				4
Amer. Robin			1						1
Nrthn. Mockingbrd.	1	2		5	2	5			15
Cedar Waxwing			6						6
Eur. Starling	80	122	281	882	2880	228	48	30	4551
Nor. Cardinal	18	6	8	22	19	5	2	4	84
Tree Sparrow	30	24	13	24	36	6	5	6	144
Vesper Sparrow						1			1
Song Sparrow	1		3	3	2	2			11
Wht-Thrted. Sparrow	1	1	1	8	5				16
Dark-eyed Junco	38	26		8	12	1	3	6	94
Com. Grackle				1					1
Brn-hded Cowbird		20			4	1			25
Purple Finch	1	16						1	18
House Finch	65	18	27	64	116	71	19	22	402
Pine Siskin	7		20		18	14			59
Amer. Goldfinch	7	16	14	6	20	4	24	21	112
Evening Grosbeak	32		3		1		25	6	67
House Sparrow	60	53	170	13	80	155	20	93	644
TOTAL COUNT	6002		1796		5446		881		22594
		1799		5296		1148		226	
TOTAL SPECIES	40	24	46	36	47	30	21	17	62

## TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT continued

## KEY TO GROUPS

- Group A: Tomhannock area. William Gorman, Monte Gruett, Michael & Mathew Kuhrt, Eric Molho, Kevin McGrath. 6:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. 4.75 hours afoot, 4 hours by car. 5 miles afoot, 40 miles by car. Cooper's Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, American Coot, Belted Kingfisher.
- Group B: Melrose, Schaghticoke, Speigletown. William Shuster, Pat Canavan, Sister Marion Zimmerman, Ruthanna Worrell, Jack and Marylou McCall. 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 1 hour afoot, 8 hours by car. 1 mile afoot, 74 miles by car. Snow Geese, Screech Owl, Cowbirds.
- Group C: East and West Sides of the Hudson River. Richard Guthrie, Bill Cook, Elliott Adams. 7:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. 2 miles afoot, 25 miles by car. 2 hours afoot, 8 hours by car. Wood Duck, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, Cooper's Hawk, American Woodcock.
- Group D: Mohawk River, Cohoes, Green Island. Ken Able, Rebecca Holberton, William Johnson. 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. 2 hours afoot, 9 hours by car. 1.5 miles afoot, 68 miles by car. Snow Geese, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Great Horned Owl.
- Group E: Waterford. Halfmoon. Robert Budliger, William Lee. 6:45 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. 4 hours afoot, 6.5 hours by car. 3 miles afoot, 80 miles by car. Northern Goshawk, Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Eastern Bluebird, Fish Crow (during count week).

## TROY CHRISTMAS COUNT - KEY TO GROUPS continued

- Group F: Lower Saratoga County. Walton Sabin, Gil Banner. 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 1.5 hours afoot, 8 hours by car. 2 miles afoot, 78.5 miles by car. Vesper Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Pine Siskin.
- Group G: Center Brunswick and Eagle Mills. Marilyn and Norm Fancher. 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. 5 hours afoot, 3.5 hours by car. 5 miles afoot, 55.7 miles by car. Ruffed Grouse, Northern Flicker.
- Group X: Feeder Reports. Paula Auclair, Maren Stine, Mrs. McGrath, Nancy Shuster. Tufted Titmouse, Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak.

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## NEW HIGH EXPECTED FOR "RETURN A GIFT TO WILDLIFE"

In late summer, the donations for New York State's "Return A Gift To Wildlife" program had reached over 1.67 million dollars, with a total for 1987 expected of between 1.7 and 1.8 million. The highest total so far occurred in 1982 (the first year) when \$1,748,373 was contributed. Average donations were \$7.32, way up from an average of \$4.89 the previous year. Since 1982, over 10 million dollars have been raised for species protection and environmental education.

--information from the Albany Times Union

## TWO NEW SIGHTINGS HIGHLIGHT 1987 SOUTHERN RENSSELAER COUNT continued

After a surprise blockbuster snow storm in October, the late autumn of 1987 was quite moderate and the Christmas season passed without significant snow cover or cold. The temperature on count day ranged from 30°F to 39° in the morning, depending upon location. An intermittent snow, mixed with light rain in some areas, fell in the morning. These conditions caused visibility to be impaired and binoculars and telescopes to become hopelessly fogged. Winds were very light to calm. Most bodies of water were open with the exception of some ponds in outlying areas which were ice-covered.

In spite of, and in some cases because of, these conditions, some interesting trends were noted. Obviously, all of the open water promoted a record-setting array of waterfowl sightings. Canada Geese were counted by groups throughout the count circle and the total of 2529 individuals was more than 40 times the previous maximum for the species. Mallards and American black ducks were also present in record numbers. A wood duck was sighted for the second time in count history. The sightings of an American wigeon by Bill Lee's group and 2 American Coot by Bob Budliger's group marked the first records for these species.

Five species of hawks were reported. Red-tailed hawks and American kestrels were reported in numbers well below average for these species, but the weather and observation conditions must be taken into account before attempting to make any interpretation of these data. No doubt due to the mildness of the late autumn, field parties failed to locate a rough-legged hawk for only the third time in count history. Owls were present in average numbers. The snowy owl sighted in downtown Albany on the SUNY headquarters building represented a second sighting. Several other reports of snowy owls in the count area were received for some time after the count day.

It is interesting to note population trends among three predominantly southern species that have established a strong presence in the area in the last 25 years. The northern cardinal appears to have almost regained its steady level of population after significant set-backs about 5 years ago. The tufted titmouse appears to have reached a plateau in population locally after steadily increasing in numbers since 1966. The northern mockingbird population seems not only to have peaked, but could be in somewhat of a decline. It will bear watching.

After several years of encouraging observations, it is disheartening to report that there were no sightings of eastern bluebirds in the count circle for the 1987 count. Again this year, dramatic changes in land use patterns were noted as development of lands within the count circle proceeded at a brisk pace. It is getting increasingly difficult to locate an open field in large portions of the area.

White-throated sparrows were below average in number, and the number of song sparrows sighted represented an all-time low. In contrast, with the exception of meadowlarks, which have all but disappeared from the area, wintering icterids were relatively well represented. A huge flock of cowbirds was present at a feeder in the village of Brookview. Winter finches were largely absent, although pine siskins were reported in substantial numbers in highly localized sightings. Evening grosbeaks were present in average numbers for the count.

## SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 26, 1987

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Feeder	TOTAL
Canada Goose	178		162	180	125		1884			2529
Wood Duck							1			1
Am. Black Duck	11			10	27	17	36			101
Mallard	7		8	32	57	86	34			224
American Wigeon							1			1
Common Merganser					7		3			10
Sharp-shnd. Hawk									1	1
Cooper's Hawk				1						1
Goshawk									1	1
Red-tailed Hawk	10		2	2	1	6	2			23
Amer. Kestrel		1		1		1				3
Rg-neck. Pheasant	1	2							2	5
Ruffed Grouse				1	1				1	3
Wild Turkey				7						7
Amer. Coot						2				2
Ring-billed Gull	35		3	34	58	274	4			408
Herring Gull	2	15	1	7	17	71	2			115
Gr. Blk-bkd. Gull				1	2	2				5
Rock Dove	255	75	100	300	30	130	43		12	945
Mourn. Dove	144	7	1	23	115	7	83		27	407
Screech-owl				1	1	1				3
Gr. Horned Owl		2					2			4
Snowy Owl					1					1
Blt. Kingfisher							1			1
Downy Wdpckr.	10	8	4	9	15	6	8	5	11	76
Hairy Wdpckr.	2	3	1	1	2	3	5		4	21
North. Flicker				4		1	1			6
Pileated Wdpckr				1			1			2
Horned Lark	5						26			31
Blue Jay	45	21	15	17	10	22	55		27	212
American Crow	86	224	13	37	10	90	236	7	9	712
Bl.-cap. Chick.	80	79	65	54	73	84	135	37	91	698
Tftd. Titmouse	8	14		7	10	2	11	2	20	74
Red-brstd. Nuth.			1	2	1					4
Wht.-brstd. Nut.	9	18	10	4	15	4	25	1	13	99
Br. Creeper	2	3	1	2	3			1		12
Winter Wren					1					1
Gldn-crwnd. King.	3	4		1	3					11
Amer. Robin	1				1	8			3	13
Nrthn. Mockingbird	2	1		1	1	2	2		1	10
Cedar Waxwing	2					2				4
Eur. Starling	655	140	110	2000	70	290	210		55	3530
Nor. Cardinal	17	4	9	9	12	17	12		10	90
Tree Sparrow	67	10	15	2	19	25	24		4	166
Song Sparrow	2		1	1	2	1			1	8
Wt-Thrtd. Sparrow	1				4				1	6
Dark-eyed Junco	4	13	8	7	3	17	12	6	14	84
Red-wng. Blackbrd	2									2

## SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT continued

December 26, 1987

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Feeder	TOTAL
Com. Grackle									3	3
Brn-hded Cowbird	270									270
Purple Finch				1						1
House Finch	91	4	36	250	80	42	147	4	52	706
Pine Siskin	5	3			3				57	68
Amer. Goldfinch	23	10	3	14	6	22	45		27	150
Evening Grosbeak	5	58	68			40	13	156	69	409
House Sparrow	260	60	25	4	100	22	10	6	81	568
TOTAL COUNT	2300	779	662	3028	886	1297	3074	225	597	12848
TOTAL SPECIES	35	25	24	36	36	31	32	10	27	56

## FIELD PARTIES

- 1 Paul Connor, Mike Kuhrt and Matt Kuhrt (Schodack and East shore of Hudson)
- 2 Monte Gruett and Julie Abramson (East Greenbush)
- 3 Dick Phillion and Franklyn Gubitz (Averill Park)
- 4 Bill Gorman and Dave Gorman (Rensselaer and North Greenbush)
- 5 Dick Guthrie and Sam Madison (Glenmont and West shore of Hudson)
- 6 Bob Budliger and Alice Ross (Menands and North Greenbush)
- 7 Bill Lee, Joseph Swertinski and Tom Palmer (Schodack and Nassau)
- 8 Jim Covert and Don Bermas (Poestenkill)

Feeder watchers included: Noel Albertson, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Don, Dave Messer, Ruth Vanderbuilt, Richard Pearce and Becky Holberton.

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ATLAS OF WINTERING NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS  
(A review without seeing the book)

Recently your editor received advertising information on "Atlas of Wintering North American Birds, An Analysis of Christmas Bird Count data" by Terry Root, University of Chicago Press, softcover \$35 (prepublication discount), hardcover \$60. The Author has used data from 1963 to 1972 and up to 1282 sites to produce range and abundance maps for 253 species, with added information for a total of over 500 species. The sample three-dimensional abundance maps are a good try, but hard to read. They are unique, however, as far as I am aware, so must be looked at in that light. He used a computer grid type three dimensional hilling effect which has the usual problem of hiding information behind mountains, etc. The contoured range maps are REALLY hard to read. Since these are getting pretty standard and good, this is less easy to forgive. Still, I found myself staring at the maps for the sample birds! Another concern and bewilderment is the elderliness of the years studied. 1972 was quite a while ago! Why was such old data used? Enough quibbling. Only the appearance of the book on the bookshelves of area bookstores will really tell the tale. With apologies for an unseen book review... Ann B'Rells

## BALD EAGLE TRIP

February 6, 1988

OK, so it was early. And it was frigid. So what does one expect on a bird trip at this time of year?

There was great excitement during the days before the planned Bald Eagle trip, since this winter turned up the greatest number of bald eagle sightings in New York State in recent years. This year, instead of the traditional trip to the Catskills, the objective was the Conklinville dam on the northeast corner of the Sacandaga Reservoir. This is considered part of the local area covered by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, and recent trips by other birders had yielded many sightings of bald eagles.

We were a small group, all fitting into one van. We arrived at the dam a little after 8 a.m. and spotted our first eagle immediately. It was an adult and was perched on what seemed to be a dead tree in the Sacandaga River, just below the power station.

After spending two and a half hours searching for additional eagles at various locations nearby and tallying three adults (we assumed that it was the same individual three different times) and one immature, we completed the trip by birding the Mohawk River at Cohoes and with a side trip to the Tomhannock Reservoir.

SPECIES SEEN (28): American Black Duck, Mallard, Black Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Iceland Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow. -- Jory Langner

## LOWER HUDSON

April 9, 1988

Our group of 16 birders traveled down the east side of the Hudson River this morning as far as Stockport. A cold north wind and cloudiness accompanied us, a backward turn from a period of mild spring weather. The waterfowl migration peaked about the third week of March here, with generally low counts of ducks today. Productive stops included Schodack Landing and Poolsburg on Schodack Creek, and Stuyvesant, Newton Hook, Judson Point, and Stockport Station on the river.

We observed nine cormorants at Newton Hook and Poolsburg, and found several fish crows at Castleton and Stuyvesant. From route 9J we watched a flock of 25 or more tree swallows circling over a small pond, a promising sight. Near the end of the trip Bill Lee and Ray Perry walked across Stockport Creek along railroad tracks to reach extensive river marshes, where they added green-winged teal, pintail, wigeon, and coot to the list. Also at the end of the trip a Carolina wren sang near the historical (17th century) house at Stockport Station. (species on next page) --Paul Connor

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NEWS BRIEF

## HMBC BUYS SUPER SCOPE

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, Inc. is the proud new owner of a powerful Questar spotting 'scope for use by the club. A special committee is currently meeting to set up the rules for its use. As soon as these rules have been approved by the Board, we will all be notified of them. Meanwhile, the 'scope has been used successfully on several club field trips.

This is a great and exciting change for our birding. The scope is set up especially for birdwatching, and is supposed to be reasonably easy to use. This should be wonderful for waterfowl and shore birding, and for introducing newcomers with a really spectacular view of sitting birds. It should enhance club field trips which make use of it. Watch for more information on this great new way to bird.

-- Ann E. B'Rells

NEWS BRIEF

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## LOWER HUDSON continued

SPECIES SEEN (49): Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Whitebreasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

--Paul Connor

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## SOME TIPS FOR BIRDING WHILE TRAVELING WITHOUT A CAR

It happens all the time in the business traveling world -- you are in some large city without a car, and suddenly realize you have a half-day to spare but can't get to where the birding is. Of course, you DO have your binoculars, since you were birding Albany Airport up to the last minute, so that's no problem. But how nice it would be if someone would do a guide to business city birding spots within 1/2 hour from downtown or airport!

Anyway, the Audubon Naturalist News of the Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States, reminds us that if caught in Washington, D.C., the metro will take you to Rock Creek Park, Roosevelt Island, the Georgetown Reservoir, and the Tidal Basin. For detailed instructions on how to get there, try your concierge (ha! let me tell you about trying to find a National Wildlife Refuge some time!) or local contacts. The News recommends Claudia Wild's "Finding Birds in the National Capitol Area." (continued on page 14)

## 1985 VACATION REPORT

by  
Chet Vanderbilt

A ten-day vacation in late August in southern New Jersey allowing access to my favorite birding spot, Brigantine Wild Life Refuge, and Cape May Point produced several incidents worth sharing with birding friends.

The first was on the way down to Ocean City where we stayed. On a "quick" (wife, Ruth, is not a confirmed birder) swing around the refuge on Saturday, August 17 we came upon a young couple with a scope set up on the left side of the road. As I pulled over to check with them the young man approached inquiring if I were a birder. At my reply, "of a sort," he invited me to check on a bird that they had been observing for some time as it rested on the right side of the road. Centered in the scope's sight was a bird with a sparrow-sized body but long tail, red finch-like bill, black and white coloring - a dazzler. Neither the Peterson or Golden guides held any hint as to its identity. The sad conclusion was that it was an escapee. The discoverer, one Blais Brancheau, Scotch Plains, N.J. promised to inform me of its identity if he were successful in checking it out.

On a visit to Higbee Beach the following Tuesday I learned from a visiting English family that there were nesting Blue Grosbeaks there and that Pete Dunne of the Cape May Bird Observatory could provide information as to their location. After an unsuccessful attempt at finding what was for me a life bird, I dropped in on Pete for more specific directions. Upon telling him of my Brigantine experience he reported that Brancheau had called him earlier that morning and that the answer to the mystery was an African escapee, a Pintail Wydah. Pete showed me a picture of the bird in an African Field Guide depicting exactly the field marks noted.

As interesting as birds are they still can't top people. I met two new acquaintances, one a birder, the other not, with names identical to friends back home. The name of the non-birder, irony of ironies, was Bob Marx. The birder, Dick Turner, I had met at the cow pasture Tuesday morning and had the benefit of his company and expertise around the circuit. He had mentioned he had participated in the New Jersey "madness," the World Series of Birding the latter part of 1984. In preparing this piece I dug out of my files a feature story from the June 10 New York magazine that Ted Marx, Bob's son and good friend of my son-in-law, Dan Maloney, had sent up to Dan, reporting on the event. To my great delight it included a photo of Turner whom it noted as one of the top participants. It described him as looking like "a happy version of Ernest Hemingway." Turner, 52, dean and art historian at NYU, the story said, prepared for the Series with two martinis and a three-hour nap.

But one of the rarest of the species, homo sapiens, birder sub-species, was found on my return to Higbee Beach in search of the Blue Grosbeak. I had exhausted the areas Pete had pointed out, without success, and was returning to the parking area when I ran into another birder. Upon hearing of my frustration, and in the gracious manner of all the birders I've ever met, John offered help. We were joined by Catherine, an apparent long-time friend of John's. Soon after, John heard the bird, and pointed to the top of a tree, where sat my grosbeak. The lighting did not permit a most perfect view, but I had my bird.

(continued on next page)

## CHET'S 1985 VACATION REPORT continued

There followed a delightful couple of hours with my new-found friends, John and Catherine, whose conversations revealed they were birders with extensive world-wide experience. John had reported just having returned from Africa where beginning birders on the tour had added 600 species to their life lists in Kenya alone. Toward the end of our time together I inquired of my guide, John Danzenbaker of Lynwood, N.J., how many species he had collected. His answer was 5,583!!

Checking with Alan Mapes and Walt Sabin on where Danzenbaker might stand in the listing of world birders produced the following from the 1984 listings:

New Jersey	2nd	367
South America	3rd	1,774
World List	5th	5,115
AOU List	7th	1,281
ABA List	27th	702

Other events of the trip included an extended observation of a Clapper Rail bathing and a Hudsonian Godwit mixed in with a bunch of Yellowlegs, both at Brigantine. The pro at the hawk-watch pointed out a Least Bittern, a bird I haven't seen in years, flying into the reeds. Also at Higbee I saw an infrequently seen bird, a yellow-billed cuckoo. And a first-time visit to botanical gardens on Route 9 somewhat north of the road to Avalon was highlighted by one of their sections alive with Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

Each re-visit to South Jersey recalls the impetus provided an early such trip by club member Beverly Waite, who, in one of her excellent bird columns for the Albany Knickerbocker News years ago wrote extolling the birding (and dining) virtues of the area.

Finally, club members visiting Cape May need to be aware of a new specialty shop recently opened named "For the Birds." It's located at 221 Jackson St., just around the corner from the end of Lafayette Street. It sits practically at the head of the street that becomes Sunset Boulevard.

I logged a total of 93 species in our neighboring state, 45 year birds including the single life bird, bringing my "on-again, off-again" birding to 136 for 1985.

Good birding, y'all! See you at the hawk-watch!

\*\*\*\*\*SHARE IT

## UNUSUAL BIRD AT YOUR FEEDER? - SHARE IT!

Have you seen something interesting at your feeder lately? An unusual bird or a common bird doing something interesting? Have you noticed changes in the ecology of your neighborhood? Why not share it with your fellow birders? Anecdotes may be handwritten, and any length. Send them to the editor (address on the back page).

\*\*\*\*\*SHARE IT

## FIRST TIME BIRDING IN THE EVERGLADES

by Emily B. Grey

Storks, ibis, spoonbills - these and other tropical birds were an exciting sight for a Northern birder. On a March vacation in Florida, I went through the Shark Valley station of the Everglades National Park, the entrance to which is on the Tamiami Trail 30 miles west of Miami.

Visitors can explore the 15 mile loop by foot, bicycle or open tram. I took the latter on a tour which lasted about two hours. It was a cool, windy day, but that made no difference to the wildlife or the park vegetation. Our guide was a Park Ranger who was very knowledgeable about the area. She pointed out numerous interesting environmental relationships.

At first, the tram stopped for us to see alligators lying motionless at the side of the road. But they soon became so frequent, we just noted them in passing. We did stop to see baby ones, which are striped for protection, and even an alligator "nest".

At one point we saw a white-tail deer and fawn. They are smaller than our Northern ones. Although there is a great deal more animal life in the park, we saw no more that day.

Great blue herons, great white herons, snowy egrets, little blue and green herons - there were many, many of these, but no cattle egrets, probably because everything seems to be wetlands. We saw black vultures and anhingas soaring overhead and little piedbilled grebes and moor hens swimming in open water. Glossy ibis (a lifer for me) were drilling in the mud for food, and coots were abundant. Along the Trail driving to the Park I had seen many cormorants perched on telephone wires, teetering ungainly in the wind, and there were many in the Park also.

Of course one of the thrilling sights was the wood stork, in groups or singly with other birds. They are now endangered, as they are dying off faster than they can reproduce owing to the destruction of their habitat.

Midway of the tour we stopped to climb a 50' observation tower, using a circular inclined ramp. From there we could look at the Park from horizon to horizon with its "river of grass" and many hummocks of trees and undergrowth. We could also look down and see many large alligators, but no birds, along the edges of the open slough.

At one point the tram stopped so we could see a large flock of Gaspian terns on the road ahead. Our guide said that they fly in to the same spot every year. Later our driver (who winters there from Utica) stopped and pointed out several black-crowned night-herons in the trees. He knew just where they were to be found. The roseate spoonbills were beginning to arrive and join the other waders. And there were many anhingas - some fishing and others spreading their wings to dry after having gone underwater for food. One will spear a fish with its bill, surface, throw the fish into the air, and catch and swallow it headfirst. Quite a feat!

All too soon our tour ended. The two hours had passed so quickly, but I came away with a feeling of exhilaration and many beautiful memories.

FROM YOUR EDITOR...

UNTIL APRIL:

Your editor is sad to announce that due to the pressure of work she will be editing FEATHERS only until April of 1989, when the HMBC PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE will be handed into the able hands of Dick Waugh, as he steps down from the presidency. Altogether, in two times at bat, I've been your editor for ten years, and it is time for another voice to be heard.

FIELD TRIP LEADERS:

Be good to your new editor, and don't turn him into a scold! Please send in those field trip reports, so everyone can find out what happened and enjoy them at least vicariously. They are also a useful source of information on local birding areas for newcomers! If you REALLY hate to write, why not con another participant into doing your writeup for you?

DEADLINES: For VOL 50 #2 Which is marked Spring 1988 Past Due
For VOL 50 #3 Which is marked Summer 1988 December 15, 1988

Please call your editor at 355-5615 if you have a timely article, to get the REAL deadline for the next issue, and for the one after since from this issue to the end of my term, there will be almost monthly publication.

HMBC RECORDS COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR RECORDS:

LINDA ARMSTRONG IS CHAIRING the records committee as well as acting as Region-8 editor. Please send your records to:

Linda Armstrong, RD 1 Box 159, Feura Bush, New York 12067.

If this is your first time sending records to Linda, please call her to get a copy of her checklist format, which is very different from any other.

THANKS FOR YOUR MEMORIES:

Over the years, some of the most readable and enjoyable material submitted for FEATHERS has been observations of members while on birding trips. I'm sure that some of these have persuaded readers to make the trips themselves. So I would like to thank everyone who has obliged with such a manuscript.

-- Ann E. B'Rells

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\* DIAL-A-BIRD NEEDS YOUR SIGHTINGS \*
\* Chairman Bill Lee requests your bird sightings for \*
\* DIAL-A-BIRD! It is only as good as the information you \*
\* provide. Bob Yunick is now compiling the messages left on the \*
\* tape each day. However, you are reminded that this is not a \*
\* Rare Bird Alert, since it cannot act quickly enough for that \*
\* purpose. \*
\* 439-8080 \*
\*\*\*\*\*

## CALLING ALL BIRD FEEDER WATCHERS!

Have you ever wondered where the birds at your feeder come from, where they go when they leave, and why bird numbers change from year to year? Do you want to know what birds come to feeders in different parts of North America? Project FeederWatch is a new continentwide survey of bird feeders designed to help answer questions such as these, and you are invited to join.

Project FeederWatch is a cooperative research venture of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Canada's Long Point Bird Observatory, and is in the midst of a successful pilot year with 4,000 participants from all across North America. The project is modeled on a survey run successfully in Ontario for the past 11 years, which has shown that male Evening Grosbeaks winter farther south than females, Black-capped Chickadees are found in low numbers when Evening Grosbeaks are abundant, and numbers of many species at feeders parallel those found on Christmas Bird Counts.

Sound interesting? Project FeederWatch needs thousands of additional observers across the continent to help answer questions about feeder birds on a broad geographic scale. You need not be an expert birder to take part--the project concentrates on common species, and baffling rarities can be ignored. Although counts are made over a one- to two-day period of your choice every other week from November through March, you are not obliged to watch every time, nor must you watch continuously on count days. All observations are recorded on computer-readable forms so that detailed summaries can be provided to participants promptly each season and to insure that the data are readily available for further analyses.

In return for your observations, Project FeederWatch will send you an annual newsletter and report on the season's results, plus 2 issues of "Birdscope", the Laboratory of Ornithology's research newsletter. If you can't take part but would like to receive these publications anyway, you may subscribe to them separately.

Project FeederWatch requires an annual registration fee of \$9, which helps to pay for data forms, analysis and preparation and mailing of reports and newsletters. To join, write to Erica Dunn, Coordinator, Project FeederWatch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca, NY 14850. Include your name and address, state whether you wish to contribute observations from your feeder or just receive reports, and enclose your check for \$9 (made payable to 'Project FeederWatch'). Please sign up right away, to help them plan how many forms to print and to avoid mailing delays. You will receive all materials and instructions just before the season begins in mid-November, 1988. Help make Project FeederWatch a truly continental survey by representing our state!

## SOME TIPS FOR BIRDING WHILE TRAVELING WITHOUT A CAR continued from page 9

In general, a better bet is to find a club member familiar with the area you are going to ahead of time, and get ideas from them. And don't forget cabs! Remember, a couple of hours of birding in a strange place is well worth it. Preparation really pays off, too, so look up wherever you are going in all the guides you can get your hands on, even if you don't expect to have free time. Even the travel guides with their lists of refuges, parks, etc. can lead to a good birding experience.

--Ann B'Rells

## THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE BIRDER (A Thoroughly Scholarly Annalysis(sic))

It all started during an otherwise dull episode of Monty Python's Flying Circus. Prior to that moment, birders were always a thing unto themselves (an ding am sich) as far as I could see. True, there were the superficial resemblances to hunters caused by the need to be in a similar place at a similar time, but the differing levels of prey involvement (q.v. banders as intermediates) removed that possibility. Besides, both groups (except where they overlap) would tend to deny brotherhood, a telling fact though not proof. And then there were fleeting thoughts that butterfly collectors have something in common with birders, but a moment spent in the field with one, and that illusion was dispelled. During a brief phase identifying mushrooms, it did occur that such a pastime might be similar to birding, but besides the fact that any object which just sits there is unsporting, it must be noted that most people who take up mushrooms make it a brief career, while almost anyone who notices birds is hooked for life.

This then was my frame of mind when the very British souls of Monty Python intruded into consciousness with a skit depicting a married couple who had dead people landing around them in their house. Luckily for the tastefulness of this periodical, I don't remember what possible raison detrat was offered for the skit. The crucial point is what the protagonists did when faced with this absurdity. They proceeded immediately to sort the bodies out into types; politicians, military officials, etc., arguing all the while about whether they were Admiralty or Air Corps, what rank, etc. In the main, they agreed readily and quickly, but one ident gave them a good minute of serious disagreement, after which we were fortunately lost in the rest of the skit.

But there it was, the double whammy of the answer and the reason for my previous inability to see it (dare I say taboo?). Judging by the long drawn out nature of this part of the skit, the writers thought that it was very funny, and also that everyone (all English, of course) would think so. Chauvinism had prevented the fact that Great Britain is the home of the origin of birdwatching from providing the needed clue.

Once that fact is forced to mind, a vision of the British amateur at any of his/her activities makes it all clear. For classifying, the harder or more elusive the better, is at the heart of those activities. I had been on the right track with butterflies and mushrooms, but had been side-tracked because of the unfortunate abundance of the former, and personal ignorance of mushroom fanatics for the latter. Birds are just better, being of good numbers but elusive, as well as ever present.

Yet still an undercurrent of dissatisfaction, as of a questionable sighting, stirred within this discovery. If birding was just another of the identity hobbies, why is it so pervasive? So long-lived in most devotees? Avoiding the Neverending-story possibilities inherent in a Freudian answer, I looked again at the list of what originally seemed to be what birding wasn't, and the fuller and more correct answer appeared. Birding is a synthesis of the others. The hunt, the identification, the certainty of some failures (for no perfect game is of any interest, e.g. tic-tac-toe), the outdoor aspects, the touching of the natural world by the full use of senses -- birding is the ultimate identification hobby for civilized man who once was meant for hunting and gathering and still wants to keep up the skills. Or is this too wishful an identification for you?

--Ann E. B'Rells, B.S. (really)

**FEATHERS**

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ADDRESS CORRECTIONS: please send name, address, or telephone corrections to the Treasurer.

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VOL. 50  
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SPRING  
1988

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB, INC.

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**KENTUCKY WARBLER MAKES IT 246 ON CENTURY RUN LIST**

by Robert P. Yunick

Twenty-one observers in five groups went afield on a mostly overcast May 21, 1988 to tally 154 species on the Club's 43rd Guy Bartlett Century Run. All but one group exceeded the species century mark, and 128 species was the best group effort. Groups were afield 16 to 20 hours over the period 03:30 to 23:30.

A singing male **Kentucky Warbler** along Catskill Creek at East Durham, Green County, became species 246, plus one hybrid, for the composite list. This southern warbler had never previously been recorded on the Century Run. Another would-be new species to the list, Stilt Sandpiper, was reported, but on discussion with the observers about critical field marks, and a comparison with authoritative field guides, some key field marks were impossible to see because of the bird's behavior, and the recited marks were not fully consistent with this species. They were more convincingly matched with those of the Pectoral Sandpiper. The candor and cooperation of these observers in sorting out this difficult call was much appreciated.

For some observers the weather was to a degree cooperative depending on location, but to others a bane. The day was mostly overcast, thereby moderating the heat of the sun and the decline of bird song and activity that usually accompany the daily temperature rise. Albany Airport recorded a range of 59 to 72 degrees F., and light southeasterly breezes. In places there was fog and intermittent rain. But definitions can vary. Take "intermittent" for instance. One observer defined "intermittent" as "every time we got out of the car." So it goes. Leaf cover was sparser than usual due to a late spring.

(continued on next page)

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MAY 3, 1989 WILL BE A NIGHT TO REMEMBER!
DON'T FORGET TO KEEP THIS NIGHT FREE FOR OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY
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## KENTUCKY WARBLER MAKES IT 246 ON CENTURY RUN LIST continued

As testimony to the skill of the participating observers, and the intensity of their effort, there was an unusually high number of 71 species seen by every group, and another 25 species seen by all but one group. Twenty-two species were seen by only one group, and those are highlighted later by group. Among the rare sightings (birds recorded 10 or fewer times) were the previously mentioned Kentucky Warbler for the first time, third report of Common Raven in three years, the fifth Short-billed Dowitcher (last in 1980), seventh Alder Flycatcher, eighth Fish Crow (now for five consecutive years), ninth Bald Eagle, and tenth Northern Goshawk.

It was not a good year for water birds. Only seven species of waterfowl, no grebes, only three gull species and one tern were reported. Marsh bird reports were average, however, it was a good year for shorebirds with 14 species (tying the records set in 1969 and 1981). For the first time in 43 years, no Ring-necked Pheasant was reported, marking the further demise of this introduced species. For only the second time, Horned Larks were missed. Neither kinglet was found, nor were gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrushes. Some people felt warbler numbers were low (23 species vs. 27 last year).

This year's observer participation was lower than usual. Five field groups represents the lowest number afield since 1946, while 21 observers ties sixth from the bottom, with three of those lows occurring the the past four years. This year's date of May 21 ties the latest date, last occurring in 1983. The list of 154 species is the lowest in nine years and ranks 22nd from the top among all counts recorded. The high group count of 128 species ranks a tie for seventh place among all previous Century Runs. While fewer people are presently participating compared to the 40 and 50 people who went afield in the 1960's, the overall count species total this year is typical of that of the 60's, but the individual group high is substantially above that same average of the 1960's.

A group of more experienced and more traveled birders appear to have taken over the event. But these are not reasons for persons of all birding skill levels not to participate. While for some people the hundred mark is their goal, and for other the top of the list is their goal, regardless what the number, there is still plenty of opportunity for persons of all skills to compete annually against their own previous best. In that spirit, **plan to participate in 1989.**

## KEY TO GROUPS:

## GROUP A:

Dick Guthrie, Bill Cook, and Peter Feinburg. 03:30 to 23:30. Greene Co., Albany Co., and Saratoga Lake. 121 species. Short-billed Dowitcher, Eastern Screech-owl, Barred Owl, Blackpoll Warbler, Kentucky Warbler and Orchard Oriole.

## GROUP B:

C. George, M. Habetler, W. Huntley, C. Parker, H. Stebbins, N. Slack, and D. Wachtel. 04:30 to 21:00. Black Creek, Thacher Park, Partridge Run, Basic Reservoir, Huyck Preserve, Lower Mohawk River, Colonie Landfill, Vischer Ferry, Round Lake, Saratoga Lake, and Wolf Hollow. 107 Species. American Coot, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Common Nighthawk.

(KEY TO GROUPS CONTINUED AFTER BIRDLIST)

## 1988 GUY BARTLETT CENTURY RUN

May 21, 1988

Common Loon	a de	Barred Owl	a
Double-crested Cormorant	b de	Common Nighthawk	b
American Bittern	cde	Whip-poor-will	a de
Least Bittern	ab de	Chimney Swift	abcde
Great Blue Heron	abcde	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	abcde
Green-backed Heron	abcde	Belted Kingfisher	abcde
Brant	ab	Red-headed Woodpecker	e
Canada Goose	abcde	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	cde
Wood Duck	abcde	Downy Woodpecker	abcde
American Black Duck	abcde	Hairy Woodpecker	abcd
Mallard	abcde	Northern Flicker	abcde
Blue-winged Teal	ab de	Pileated Woodpecker	abcde
Common Merganser	cd	Eastern Wood-Pewee	abcde
Turkey Vulture	ab de	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	d
Osprey	c	Alder Flycatcher	d
Bald Eagle	ab e	Willow Flycatcher	ab de
Northern Harrier	c	Least Flycatcher	abcde
Cooper's Hawk	d	Eastern Phoebe	abcde
Northern Goshawk	d	Great Crested Flycatcher	abcde
Red-shouldered Hawk	cde	Eastern Kingbird	abcde
Broad-winged Hawk	b e	Purple Martin	b e
Red-tailed Hawk	abcde	Tree Swallow	abcde
American Kestrel	abcde	Northern Rough-wng Swallow	ab de
Ruffed Grouse	ab de	Bank Swallow	ab de
Virginia Rail	ab de	Cliff Swallow	abcd
Sora	ab de	Barn Swallow	abcde
Common Moorhen	bcde	Blue Jay	abcde
American Coot	b	American Crow	abcde
Semipalmated Plover	d	Fish Crow	ab e
Killdeer	abcde	Common Raven	ab d
Greater Yellowlegs	b e	Black-capped Chickadee	abcde
Lesser Yellowlegs	a de	Tufted Titmouse	abcde
Solitary Sandpiper	a d	White-breasted Nuthatch	a cde
Spotted Sandpiper	abcde	Red-breasted Nuthatch	abcde
Upland Sandpiper	d	Brown Creeper	a de
Semipalmated Sandpiper	b	House Wren	abcde
Least Sandpiper	a de	Winter Wren	ab de
Pectoral Sandpiper	b d	Marsh Wren	ab de
Dunlin	a d	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	abcde
Short-billed Dowitcher	a	Eastern Bluebird	a cde
Common Snipe	d	Veery	abcde
American Woodcock	abcde	Hermit Thrush	a de
Ring-billed Gull	abcde	abcdeThrush	
Herring Gull	ab de	American Robin	abcde
Great Black-backed Gull	abcde	Gray Catbird	abcde
Common Tern	e	Northern Mockingbird	abcde
Rock Dove	abcde	Brown Thrasher	ab de
Mourning Dove	abcde	Cedar Waxwing	de
Black-billed Cuckoo	a	European Starling	abcde
Eastern Screech-Owl	a	Solitary Vireo	c e
Great Horned Owl	a cde	Yellow-throated Vireo	ab de

## 1988 GUY BARTLETT CENTURY RUN continued

May 21, 1988

Warbling Vireo	abcde	Northern Cardinal	abcde
Red-eyed Vireo	abcde	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	abcde
Blue-winged Warbler	abcde	Indigo Bunting	abc e
Golden-winged Warbler	a c e	Rufous-sided Towhee	abcde
Tennessee Warbler	a d	Chipping Sparrow	abcde
Nashville Warbler	de	Field Sparrow	abcde
Yellow Warbler	abcde	Vesper Sparrow	de
Chestnut-sided Warbler	abcde	Savannah Sparrow	a de
Magnolia Warbler	a e	Grasshopper Sparrow	c
Black-throated Bl. Warbler	abcde	Song Sparrow	abcde
Yellow-rumped Warbler	ab de	Swamp Sparrow	abcde
Black-throated Gr. Warbler	abcde	White-throated Sparrow	a cde
Blackburnian Warbler	abcde	Dark-eyed Junco	ab de
Pine Warbler	a cd	Bobolink	abcde
Prairie Warbler	abcde	Red-winged Blackbird	abcde
Blackpoll Warbler	a	Eastern Meadowlark	abcde
Black-and-white Warbler	abcde	Rusty Blackbird	e
American Redstart	abcde	Common Grackle	abcde
Worm-eating Warbler	b d	Brown-headed Cowbird	abcde
Ovenbird	abcde	Orchard Oriole	a
Northern Waterthrush	a de	Northern Oriole	abcde
Louisiana Waterthrush	b de	Purple Finch	ab de
Kentucky Warbler	a	House Finch	abcde
Common Yellowthroat	abcde	Pine Siskin	bcde
Canada Warbler	a de	American Goldfinch	abcde
Scarlet Tanager	abcde	House Sparrow	abcde

## KEY TO GROUPS CONTINUED

## GROUP C:

Ronald Harrower and Ray Perry. 04:30 to 20:30. Saratoga Co. and one site each in Washington and Warren Co. 91 Species. Osprey, Northern Harrier, and Grasshopper Sparrow.

## GROUP D:

Bill Lee, Kevin McGrath, Eric Mulho, and Steve Pichard. 04:00 to 23:00. Black Creek and Tygert Marshes, Thacher Park, Indian Ladder, Bear Swamp, Basic and Alcove Reservoirs, Stanton Hollow, Blossom Hill, Hudson River from Ravena to Bethlehem, Saratoga Battlefield, Saratoga Lake, Luther's Forest and Mechanicville. 128 species. Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Semi-palmated Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Alder Flycatcher.

## GROUP E:

Bill Gorman, Monte Gruett, Jory Langner, Matt and Mike Kuhrt. 04:00 to 21:00. Black Creek, Basic Reservoir, Bear Swamp, Cherry Plain, Columbiaville, Cohoes, Saratoga, and Malta. 123 species. Common Tern, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Rusty Blackbird.

Species listed above are those recorded by only one group.

LEON A. WIARD

Word has been received of the death of Leon A. Wiard in Kerrville, Texas on May 11, 1988.

Leon had been a very active member of the Schenectady Bird Club for many years prior to his move to New Mexico in the late 1950's. His wife, Betty, was also active in the club. Leon was elected a director in 1953 and served in that office with distinction.

Leon was a professional hydrologist and a devoted family man, but what I enjoyed most was his skill and zeal while birding. He was very kind and helpful to those who were new to birding. He could say "No Mourning Dove dives like that, that was a Kestrel", in the quietest manner.

Leon was a great person, a wonderful friend, a skilled birder. No man needs a greater epitaph.

-- Samuel R. Madison

HMBC DONATES BIRDING VIDEOS TO AREA LIBRARIES ONCE AGAIN

The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club has again donated birding videos to area libraries and library systems. The three titles are "Attracting Birds to Your Backyard with Roger Tory Peterson," "Techniques of Birding with Arnold Small," and "Duck Identification." These are for the benefit of club members and the general public.

Libraries receiving the videos are:

- Albany Public Library
- Bethlehem Public Library
- Saratoga Springs Public Library
- Schenectady County Public Library
- William K. Sanford Town Library (Colonie)
- Upper Hudson Library Federation

In general you may borrow tapes directly or through inter-library loan with your local library.

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*           DIAL-A-BIRD NEEDS YOUR SIGHTINGS           *
*
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*   purpose.                                           *
*
*                               439-8080                    *
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## HMBC FIELD TRIP

DELMARVA PENINSULA  
April 30 - May 1, 1988

## HMBC FIELD TRIP

This year's Delmarva trip included a tour of Brigantine and birding along the Jersey shore to Cape May. We crossed Delaware Bay via ferry on Friday evening and made Salisbury, Md. our headquarters. Saturday morning we birded Pocomoke Swamp and went to Shad Landing and Chincoteague in the afternoon and evening, enjoying a delicious seafood dinner at the Crab House. On Sunday morning we returned to Pocomoke and then headed to the Ocean at Ocean City, Md. From there we headed north birding at Indian River inlet, Cape Henlopen; Little Creek and Bombay Hook. We concluded with an unsuccessful attempt to call out a King Rain at Dragon Creek near Delaware City.

Some highlights of the trip were Swainson's, Prothonotary, Hooded and Kentucky warblers at Pocomoke, 3 Brown Pelicans at Ocean City, Gannets along the Maryland and Delaware shores, and a female Summer Tanager at Shad Landing. We also got Whimbrel and two Chuck-will's Widow at Chincoteague and at Bombay Hook two mature Bald Eagles and a Peregrine Falcon.

The late spring and cool weather over the weekend held the total species count to 137 but it didn't dampen the spirits of the 13 happy birders who enjoyed themselves immensely.

SPECIES FOUND (137): Common Loon, Northern Gannet, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Cattle Egret, Green-backed Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Mute Swan, Snow Goose, Brant, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, Clapper Rail, Black-bellied Plover, Lesser Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, American Oystercatcher, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern, Least Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chuck-will's-widow, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Marsh Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, European Starling, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Boat-tailed Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow, -- Sam Madison

----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----

POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK, LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO

May 7 - 10, 1988

The orioles almost stole the show at Point Pelee National Park. With their continuous vocalizations and brilliant colors the Orchard and Northern Orioles were a delight to hear and to see. And they kept it up on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. But they had to compete with the warblers with their spectacular greens, oranges, reds, yellows, blues, golds, whites and blacks flashing in the sunlight all over the park. Then, too, there were the flashy Red-headed Woodpeckers flying overhead incessantly. And the Tanagers! Summer and Scarlet, male and female.

One Summer Tanager feeding off the white blossoms of a cherry tree in the clear sunlight was a special delight. Plus the vireos: we saw all of them. And the Wood Thrush filling the woods with its wonderful melody. Who stole the show? Who cares! We all won it, all thirteen of us who were fortunate enough to make the trip.

Admittedly, the concentration of migrants was not as great as it can be at Point Pelee. Sometimes you had to look for a bird, instead of having it appear miraculously before your eyes. What an eye pleasing concentration of nature's beautiful songsters. It was a long ten hours drive, but well worth it. The total species count was 137.

SPECIES FOUND (137): Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, Greater Scaup, Oldsquaw, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, White-eyed Vireo, Solitary Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Palm Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler,  
 (Species list continued on next page)

----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----

POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK species list continued

Canada Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow-throated Warbler, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Northern Oriole, Purple Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow. --Sam Madison

----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

May 14, 1988

This Saturday morning field trip began with foggy and cloudy conditions. The 7 a.m. temperature was 40 degrees F. A group of thirteen participants assembled at Palmer's Ravine at 07:35. By 08:00, the fog began to lift and eventually, the skies cleared. The remainder of the morning was great with bright sunshine and a slight westerly breeze. Just right! At the conclusion of the field trip, a male Northern Harrier was seen by everyone at close range. A total of 79 species was tallied and everyone had a good time.

SPECIES SEEN (79): Great Blue Heron, Mallard, Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Winter Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Canada Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

-- Tom Palmer

SONGBIRD FEVER OUTBREAK IN THE NORTHEAST

An outbreak of "songbird fever" in the Northeast last spring has prompted Cornell University experts to warn people who feed birds to keep feeders clean and to keep cats away from birds. More than 200 cases of the disease were reported in cats last spring by the Cornell Feline Health Center, which surveyed some 800 veterinarians in the Northeast. The infection apparently spreads at crowded, unsanitary bird feeders and bird baths. *Salmonella typhimurium*, the bacterium found in dead birds and sick cats, multiplies inside animals, passes through in fecal matter, and can be ingested by other animals. Last spring, the disease mainly affected Pine Siskins, but was also reported in Black-capped Chickadees, Evening Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, American Goldfinches, Cardinals, Boat-tailed Grackles, Cowbirds, and House Sparrows by veterinarians at Tufts University.

*Salmonella* is not unheard of in birds, particularly Mourning Doves. Reports of up to 20 Pine Siskins dying around individual feeders were received from the Boston area, and progress of the disease could be traced up the Northeast's river valleys as the birds migrated north. It is believed that the salmonella infection was spread when birds ate seed and drank water contaminated by the droppings of other birds.

Cats that ate infected birds became sick in two to five days. Veterinarians responding to the Center's survey reported cats with acute depression and complete loss of appetite, vomiting, inflamed intestines, and high fever. When treated with antibiotics, the disease lasted two to seven days and recovery was usually rapid, although some cats required up to three weeks to regain weight and normal eating habits. Most cats that died had other, more serious complications, such as feline AIDS.

Songbird fever can be controlled by breaking the infection cycle in birds and preventing cats from eating birds or frequenting contaminated areas around feeders. Bird feeders should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected with bleach, and bird feeding should be discontinued for the spring and summer. Cats should be confined indoors. It is not necessary to stop feeding birds, especially during fall and winter when cold temperatures help prevent the spread of disease, lab ornithologists reported. The following three simple steps will greatly lessen the likelihood of disease spread:

-Feeders with trays that allow birds to defecate in the seed should be replaced with cylinder or hopper feeders, where birds stand on perches and eat clean seed through openings.

-Seed should not be allowed to accumulate on the ground, where it can mix with fecal matter and be eaten.

-Feeders and bird baths should be cleaned periodically with bleach and thoroughly rinsed. In addition, bird baths should not be placed adjacent to feeders.

Unusual deaths of birds should be reported to the state wildlife conservation authorities. In New York, the wildlife poisoning "hotline" number is 1-800-356-0560.

From THE GOSHAWK, Vol. 44, No. 11 from Cornell Univ. News      October 6, 1988

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## HELP

SURPRISE! THE BIRD CLUB DOES NOT RUN ITSELF. FOR EVERY SERVICE IT AFFORDS YOU, THERE IS SOMEONE BEHIND THE SCENES MAKING IT HAPPEN.

DO YOU ENJOY DIAL-A-BIRD? A FIELD TRIP A YEAR? OR TWENTY OF THEM?? TRY YOUR HAND AT A CENTURY RUN OR CHRISTMAS COUNT? PERHAPS A MEETING? USE THE BIRD CHECKLISTS OR EVEN READ FEATHERS? WE ALL HOPE THAT YOU DO. BUT WHY NOT JOIN US TO MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE AND HAVE SOME EXTRA FUN ALONG THE WAY.

JOIN THE "IN" GROUP. A QUICK LOOK AT THE BOARD LIST REVEALS THAT YOU WILL BE WELCOMED. VOLUNTEER TO LEAD A FIELD TRIP. BRING SOME REFRESHMENTS TO THE NEXT MEETING. BEST OF ALL, CALL OUR PRESIDENT DICK WAUGH AND ASK WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE!

PLEASE, SOMETIMES WE ARE TOO BUSY TO ASK YOU TO JOIN IN. DON'T THINK YOU ARE NOT WANTED. CALL OR WRITE TO A COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON TODAY. MAKE HMBC WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED IT TO BE.

**LOOK FOR MORE WORKSHOPS**

Due to the unqualified success of the Gull Workshop given by HMBC's own Professor Kenneth Able in the fall of 1988 (detailed article in upcoming FEATHERS) look for more workshops on birding in the very near future. These workshops will probably follow the formula of workshop with one or two special field trips to practice what was learned, and to offer more expertise in the field.

The next workshop being planned for April 8, 1989 will be on SPARROWS, with an emphasis on some of the sparrows found in the Northeast, how to identify them by sight and song and where to find them locally. The workshop leader will be Linda Armstrong, who is planning two extra sparrow field trips to go along with the workshop.

Most of us could certainly use this workshop! Other workshops are also being planned. Watch your mailbox for notices and call Dial-A-Bird, too.

Thanks are due to Dick Waugh, whose idea it was to start these workshops. He wasn't the only one to think of it, but did push it to fruition.

-- Ann B'Rells

**HMBCERS MAKE THE NATIONAL NEWS**

Dateline Guilderland: Great news! Birding is now officially real. USA Today carried a terrific picture of Richard Guthrie, Walton Sabin, Samuel Madison and Robert Longley on the 1988 Greene County Christmas Count. The article went on to say that about 42,000 birders will take part in 1988. In 1987, the counted 193 million birds -- mostly blackbirds, grackles, cowbirds and starlings of course. Even the radio for communication with other birders was mentioned. Should we start a clipping file?

**EDITOR'S NOTES**

Your editor is finishing up her stint in this job with a bang, doing 3 FEATHERS (this one, plus 1988 SUMMER and FALL) plus the 50th anniversary issue, which will be very special! Please start sending materials for future FEATHERS to your new (as of May, 1989) editor, Dick Waugh (see address on board listing), unless they have to be published before May 1989.

Let's give Dick Waugh all the support he richly deserves for taking on this task, by responding to his every requests quickly and neatly.

**FIELD TRIP LEADERS**, you have a especially large role here. Please send your reports to Dick promptly and for sure. Club members have consistently indicated that field trips are their favorite reading matter in FEATHERS. Don't let them down. By the way, someone is using the old (1975) small checklists to send in reports. Please make sure yours say 1984!

Please be patient during the transition. Dick and I will try to make it seamless, but some things are bound to fall between us. Please let us know if this happens.

-- Ann B'Rells



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ADDRESS CORRECTIONS: please send name, address, or telephone corrections to the Treasurer.

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*   Bill Gorman Retires                Pages 29 , 35  *
*   Field Trip Reports                Page   30      *
*   Birding in Costa Rica - N. Slack  Pages 31 - 35  *
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**THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES, BILL**

**Bill Gorman Retires after 20 years as Field Trip Committee Chairman**

Many HMBCCers never remember any other field trip committee chairman. Bill Gorman has held this post for the last 20 years, since 1969, and what wonderful years they have been! Bill made the field trip organization look easy, by thinking up the best trips and using his gentle persuasion to get leaders for them. Many of our trip leaders can probably remember the time that he talked them into leading their first trip, probably to one of their favorite haunts. And always Bill has considered whatever came up in the way of ideas, no matter how new or exotic they seemed to be. (Want to go to California, well...maybe, if there is enough interest.) (Weekday trips...let's try them.) (Owls at night...of course!) We ranged far and wide, and also discovered that Massachusetts was full of birding opportunities.

And besides new trips there were the old favorites at new seasons, and the old favorites at their old favorite seasons. And so many of them. In 1988 there were 39 trips on the field trip list, plus an added gull trip. This was not an unusual number, as Bill kept us at least in the upper 30's each year. Considering the quiet time of mid-summer, this meant a really busy rest of the year.

And the things Bill had to put up with! The last minute away cancellations, the sick field trip leaders, the deadline for the field trip lists looming up before the best trips could be scheduled. We meant to thank him for this job all along, but now we can do it for the entire period.

Thanks for all those memories, Bill! You put us on Plum Island at 10 below, and into the swamps during the mosquito season. We chased owls and rails and grouse which weren't there. We got seasick off the northern coast and other places. We peered at shorebirds three miles off, and tried to stay awake and alert for 24 hours on a Century count, which at least is warmer than the Christmas counts. All this was done under your aegis. And we wouldn't have been anywhere else! So, again we say it, thanks for all those memories, Bill!

-- Ann B'Rells for the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

(Bill is only leaving this post. See page 35.)

----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
 ----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----

FIVE RIVERS CENTER, DELMAR

Wednesday, May 18, 1988

It rained, and when it stopped raining it drizzled. Then it rained again. Three of us ventured forth and were rewarded with 32 species. We started at the pond where we identified 3 swallows, Northern rough-winged, barn and tree. The enthusiasm of our little group rose with the appearance of a green-backed heron and a Wilson's warbler.

All the expected residents showed themselves as we pushed on into the woods and then emerged into the field. The exciting finds were a blue-winged warbler, that was heard for a long time but hard to see, and a Northern oriole. We also sighted an Empidonax flycatcher but it would not identify itself by song. We closed our wet walk with an Eastern kingbird and a red-tailed hawk being mobbed by crows.

SPECIES SEEN (32): Green-backed Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Blue-winged Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Song Sparrow, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Northern Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch. -- Nancy Payne

FERD'S BOG

July 16, 1988

An earlier start this year, along with a good group of 15 birders, resulted in a very rewarding field trip. The sun came and went, and it warmed up from 70 degrees to a balmy 85 degrees. Most of the group were able to see boreal chickadee, gray jay, three-toed woodpecker and white-winged crossbill, the latter a life bird for the leaders. A side trip to Moss Lake yielded common loon and mourning warbler among others.

SPECIES SEEN (56): Common Loon, Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, Ring-billed Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Gray Jay, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Solitary Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Grackle, White-winged Crossbill, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak. -- Marilyn Fancher

## BIRDING IN COSTA RICA -- THE BEST EVER

by Nancy Slack

I became a compulsive birder at the age of ten. I never knew another such until I was sixteen, and found my birds by tracking them down one by one. I can still remember where and when I saw my first yellowthroat, chestnut-sided, crested flycatcher, orange crowned warbler. When I was sixteen I went to Audubon Camp in Maine for two weeks. There with Cruickshank (who called down all the birds without benefit of tape) and Cadbury (who was supposed to teach us plants but whose heart was with birds), I saw more birds than I'd seen my whole life!

Our trip to Costa Rica, at the end of March, reminded me of that summer in Maine. We saw over 200 birds, nearly all of them new, in just one week. And as beautiful as all the warblers of Hog Island, Maine, still seem to me when they come through here every May, the birds of Costa Rica are truly spectacular. From the resplendent quetzal with its two foot long emerald tail plumes to the tiny purple-throated mountain gem feasting on rain forest flowers, Costa Rican birds are incredibly diverse and fascinating.

I led a group of 19 people, biologists and others interested in natural history, including my husband, Glen. There were four of us from three different colleges who all miraculously had the same spring vacation week -- but a week in Costa Rica is all too short. We went to Monteverde Reserve, Manuel Antonio and Poas National Parks, to Selva Verde, and a few of us to nearby La Selva. I also did some birding right inside San Jose, and we had a number of bus stops en route. All of these locations provide excellent birding and the birds are very different in and out of the rain forest, and at different elevations. We were not in the dry forest (of Dan Janzen's Nature program) at all on this trip; it has a very different avifauna.

Our birding guide was a young Canadian named Ron Ridout who has made many trips to Costa Rica. He proved to be a very knowledgeable birder. He not only knew what birds to expect in what localities and habitats, but he knew most of their songs as well. This was a special delight for me, since I have much better ears than eyes and am always handicapped in foreign countries by not knowing the songs.

Some of the songs were recognizable: the clay-colored robin is obviously one of that clan, and the wrens have diverse but often musical ringing songs, and the nightingale thrushes are reminiscent of our hermit. But there are so many unfamiliar families, and so much diversification within formerly familiar families, flycatchers and tanagers for example, that one often feels like a beginner again. It is well worth reading through the family descriptions and looking at the pictures in Ridgely's Birds of Panama, the one book you can't go birding without, before going to Costa Rica.

Colors help. "What's black with a red rump?" A scarlet rumped tanager. "What has a long yellow tail?" Montezuma's oropendola. "What's black with a red head and a short tail?" Red-capped manakin. I also saw a rare grey-headed manakin. It is endemic in the La Selva region of Costa Rica and thus is not in Ridgely. It is in the Costa Rica checklist, and the great majority of Costa Rican birds are in Ridgely, though the Mexican Peterson is helpful, too.

(continued on next page)

## BIRDING IN COSTA RICA -- THE BEST EVER by N. Slack continued

Our local Peterson is also necessary unless you know all your northern shorebirds and warblers in winter plumage cold. There were fewer wintering northern birds than I expected, but it's easier to see a Wilson's warbler or a prothonotary there than here -- and a surprise when a northern oriole or meadowlark appears among all the exotics.

We arrived at Monteverde, originally a Quaker dairy farming community in the highlands of Costa Rica, late the first night, after a 7 a.m. departure from Albany and a long bus ride from the capital, San Jose. But most of us were up at 5:30 a.m. for our first bird walk, and shortly thereafter at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, between 3500 and 5000 feet in elevation.

It is Costa Rica's most famous birding area and we were searching for the quiet reclusive quetzal and the clamoring but still elusive bellbird. The latter has favorite perches high up and out in the open, but only a few of these are visible from the trail. When we finally found one it was great fun to watch the male go through his whole vocal performance, his huge mouth open, white head shining, and his three black wattles tossing around. The Spanish call this bird "calandria" or lark, but it is a mighty harsh clanging bell, heard along with the howler monkeys, from a great distance. We saw several of the latter at Monteverde, thanks to a Costa Rican on the trail who said "mono" and a sharp-eyed member of our group who found a large black lump overhead which woke up, turned into a monkey, and leaped away.

The bird we most wanted to see at Monteverde was the mythical quetzal. The bellbird disperses after breeding and spends much of its year in the lowlands, but in March it comes to the highlands to breed. The quetzal on the other hand lives only in the highland forest, spends most of its year high in the canopy but comes down lower to the level of nest hole availability to breed, also in March. Glen decided to go off on his own while the rest of us were trying to spot the bellbird. He was rewarded with the sight of the male and the female quetzal, apparently in the process of nest building! I saw the male twice, morning and afternoon -- truly a splendid sight of iridescent green, red and white, and even iridescent blue on the back -- or so it seemed to several of us.

Another surprising Monteverde sight we all had was the turkey-like (Cracidae) black guan -- sitting in a tree. This is also found only in the highlands of Costa Rica and of western Panama. There is montane rain forest and even some elfin forest at the upper elevations at Monteverde, the elfin forest with gnarled trees dripping with liverworts, the montane forest trees covered with epiphytes -- bromeliads, orchids, ferns, philodendrons, even palms. This is the favorite habitat for the foliage-gleaners (family Furnariidae) foraging for insects among the epiphytes; we saw the lined at Monte Verde. Walking in these mountain forests one hears many beautiful songs. At Monteverde these included the slaty-backed nightingale-thrush, the black-faced solitaire, the mountain robin, and my vote for best singer, the gray-breasted wood wren.

At the entrance to the Reserve there are hummingbird feeders, and it is hard to tear oneself away from these even with bellbirds and quetzals beckoning. We saw seven species of hummingbird here, of which the most spectacular were the violet sabrewing and the curved-billed green hermit.

(continued on next page)

**BIRDING IN COSTA RICA -- THE BEST EVER by N. Slack continued**

These provided wonderful opportunities for our several bird photographers; Tom Schottman, in particular, got spectacular photos. We also saw hummingbirds feeding in the forest; we watched a tiny purple-throated mountain gem move from bush to bush at a high elevation, feeding on small white flowers, not the red long-tubed "hummingbird" flowers we saw so many of.

Another exciting bird at Monteverde was our first toucan, the emerald toucanet. Eventually we saw many others including both the keel-billed and the chestnut-mandibled toucans with their unreal bills, as well as the fiery-billed and collared aracaris.

Our next stop was Manuel Antonio National Park near Quepos on the Pacific Ocean. The trip down was notable for a river stop, where there were lots of nortamericanos: roseate spoonbills, wood stork, snowy egret, little blue heron, willet, solitary sandpiper, -- and an Amazon kingfisher, new for me. We later saw the spectacular ringed kingfisher at Selva Verde as well as our own belted at Manuel Antonio.

At this national park, the forest literally comes down to the sea. It is hard to know what to do first: snorkel for 40 kinds of multi-colored tropical fish, look for three kinds of monkeys and 3-toed sloths and other animals, look out to sea for frigatebirds and brown boobies and the diving pelicans, or go birding in the forest. We did all of these in our two day stay.

We lived at the nearby Arbolata Hotel, where we stayed in cottages nearly on the beach. The open area there was thick with colorful birds from 5 a.m. on -- blue-gray tanagers, scarlet-rumped tanagers, golden-masked tanagers, bananaquits, orange-chinned paraqueets. Flycatchers are common birds in Costa Rica. The kiskadees wake you up persistently calling their name, the social flycatchers are always in pairs, and the tropical kingbirds are on the telephone wires along with the grooved-billed anis!

Most striking of all were the flocks of scissor-tailed flycatchers migrating. A hook-billed kite sat on the tree right outside our cottage to be admired by all. The gray-necked wood rail, often heard, were seen walking on the beach trail in the sunset. In the forest along the beach we saw squirrel monkeys and an agouti, but the promised sloth eluded us all.

We flew back from Quepos and had a day for exploring San Jose. There was birding, too, at the tiny park (one very big tree) next to our hotel. It was full of clay-colored robins, colorful rufous-collared sparrows--and a male scarlet tanager, in spring plumage.

Off early in the morning to Poas National Park and its live volcano, only an hour or so from San Jose. Not early enough, however, as the fog sets in at this high elevation over 8000 feet, and we could not see into the crater. Both the atmosphere and vegetation -- blueberries, melastomes, and much more in pink and white bloom -- seemed more boreal than tropical despite all the dripping epiphytes. The birds were exciting too -- fiery throated hummingbirds on the pink melastomes, sooty robin, mountain elaenia, black and yellow sooty-flycatcher, and a beautiful song in the mist, the black-billed nightingale thrush.

(continued on next page)

## BIRDING IN COSTA RICA -- THE BEST EVER by N. Slack continued

Our next visit was to Selva Verde and La Selva in western Costa Rica, with a notable stop on the way at the spectacular La Paz waterfall. There on the adjacent rocks, sat both a north American dipper and a wonderfully-named torrent tyrranulet.

Selva Verde is a lodge and private preserve of beautiful lowland rainforest in Chilamate near Puerto Viejo, just 40 miles below the Nicaraguan border (where cease-fire negotiations had been worked out just the preceding day). This land was bought just as the forest, like so much of the rain forest in Central and South American, was about to be cut down. It was perhaps the favorite stop of our group.

There are many habitats in which to bird -- one of the best being the upper level porch. Over forty species can be seen from there, including two more new hummingbirds, the rusty-tailed and the purple-crowned fairy. Then there were the tanagers, the spectacular crimson-collared and more scarlet-rumped and blue-grays, and the even more spectacular toucans. The most exciting bird was Montezuma's oropendola, with its blue eye patch, red-tipped bill and long yellow tail. I lecture in ecology and evolution classes about oropendolas, caciques, and their brood parasites, the giant cowbirds. The latter were not present at Selva Verde, but many oropendolas with their communal nests and one yellow-billed cacique on its pendulous nest were. The oropendolas' raucous cries accompanied us on early morning roadside bird walks and one did its somersaulting courtship display as we watched. Other outstanding listening at Selva Verde was to tinamous, flightless birds akin to emu and ostrich, and to the pauraque, similar to our whippoorwill.

One day while at Selva Verde, a part of the group went off with a local guide, Paco, on a long hike deep into the forest, while the rest followed the river with Ron. We saw incredible flocks --in the thousands-- of migrating hawks, mostly broad-wings, together with vultures, Swainson's hawks, an osprey, and a peregrine falcon. Our group in the forest saw the red-capped manakin and a violaceous trogon, but Ron's group saw a 2-toed sloth, the rarer of the two sloth species, when they weren't expecting it. Sloths actually have high population densities in the remaining Costa Rican rain forest -- but they are still hard to find. They feed in many kinds of trees but are easiest to see in the open Cecropia trees...if they are there. We once thought we had found one at Monteverde -- a large dark lump high up. But the "lump" unwound and leaped to the next tree, its long tail behind it -- a howler monkey!

The parrots are easy to find, but sometimes hard to identify except by call when high overhead -- the red-lore, mealy, white crowned, brown-hooded. We missed the scarlet macaw for which either Palo Verde or Corcovado National Park is recommended. The woodcreepers, a neotropical family which act like our brown creeper though not related, are also hard to tell apart. Plate 13 in Birds of Panama shows the problem; so many very similar species. The streak-headed seemed the commonest.

The woodpeckers are much more striking. Most exciting at Selva Verde were the lineated and pale-billed, both pileated-like, 14 inches long with huge red crests. Many birds use the woodpecker holes, from the quetzals to the tityras, striking black and white birds related to cotingas.

(continued on next page)

**BIRDING IN COSTA RICA -- THE BEST EVER** by N. Slack continued

Along the roadside near Selva Verde we saw on one tree both a pair of masked tityras and a black-crowned. A pair of black-cheeked woodpeckers were interested in this hole, too, but the next day only the black-crowned tityra was there.

Three professional biologists from our group taxied to the La Selva Biological Reserve not far from Selva Verde. Some tour groups do stay there, and the new director is making arrangements for official visits for those staying at Selva Verde. Individual visitors need reservations. This preserve is magnificent lowland rainforest, with the largest trees we had seen anywhere, especially the gabilans, which have poisonous seeds, and the giant ceibas. We could not even see the canopy from below! We saw an agouti sitting on its haunches eating nuts and a spectacular squirrel cuckoo close up, red-brown with a long barred black and white tail.

We met someone making a movie of the white-collared manakin leks. This is where I saw the rarest of our bird finds, the gray-headed manakin. We also had a close-up view of the collared aracari, a spectacular toucan with its canoe-shaped bill and black and yellow plumage, before returning to Selva Verde.

It was almost time to go home. The next morning we had to leave Selva Verde, with its spectacular birding, roaring river affording exciting tubing, balsa raft crossings and excellent swimming, views of monkeys and sloths, the best cooking in Costa Rica and some of its kindest people, in a country rightly known for its hospitality. I hope to return to Costa Rica one day to see these 200 birds again, look for some more of the 800 to be found there, and do some ecological research in the rain forest. I will be happy to loan my books, including Jansen's Costa Rican Natural History with its excellent section on birds, to other Costa Rican adventurers among you, and to give advice for your travels.

\*\*\*

**BILL GORMAN PRESENTS BIRDS OF MEXICO AT ANNUAL MEETING ON APRIL 3, 1989**

Bill is not leaving active membership in HMBC, he is only leaving his post. He will still be joining in on field trips and on the field trip committee, and presenting his wonderful movies for our meetings, and in general enjoying HMBC in a carefree manner which he has certainly earned.

For example, at the annual meeting at Five Rivers on Monday, April 3rd, 1989, he presented a film on Mexican Birds.



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GULL IDENTIFICATION WITH KEN ABLE -- AN ADVENTURE

by Dick Waugh

Some forty HMBC members and friends assembled at Five Rivers on Saturday morning, November 12, 1988, for the lecture session on the identification of North American gulls sponsored by the club's Education Committee. Ken Able, a club member and faculty member at SUNYA, used slides and study skins to illustrate some of the fine points of gull identification. After reviewing North American gulls, Ken focused on gulls which may be seen in the Capitol District, especially in winter. Ken posed a quiz following his presentation; Cliff Lamere was the winner of P. J. Grant's Gulls, donated by the club.

On December 10, Ken led a field trip to the Colonie landfill and the Mohawk River above Cohoes to observe gulls first hand. In addition to the omnipresent Great Black-backed, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, a first-winter Iceland Gull and a Kumlien's Iceland Gull were seen.

Several of the members taking advantage of the gull workshop also participated in a regularly-scheduled trip to the Niagara River in November, led by Bill Lee. Tens of thousands of gulls were seen, highlighted by great views of a Little Gull, in addition to Lesser Black-backed, Franklin's, and black-headed Gulls.

This was the first of what is hoped will be a continuing series of workshops, combining lab sessions and field trips, on the more difficult-to-identify birds. Linda Armstrong will be conducting a workshop on sparrows in Spring of 1989; subsequent workshops should include fall warblers, shorebirds, waterfowl, etc.

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PLEASE WELCOME AND SUPPORT YOUR NEW EDITOR

Dick Waugh has agreed to take over as the editor of FEATHERS starting with the Summer of 1989. Please welcome him to this job by sending him your field trip reports promptly and by being quick to say "Yes" when he asks for material. --AEB

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## TWO NEW HAWK GUIDES

Reviewed by Robert P. Yunick, November 11, 1988

Birders will want to acquire two newly available, refreshing offerings on hawk identification, both from Houghton-Mifflin. **"A Field Guide to Hawks"** by **W. S. Clark and B. K. Wheeler** (1987, 198pp) is available in hardcover (\$19.95) and softcover (\$13.95); and **"Hawks in Flight"** by **P. Dunne, D. Sibley and C. Sutton** (1988, 254pp) is available in hardcover (\$17.95). Both aim to improve identification skills, but employ different techniques. I recommend "Hawks" for the beginning and intermediate birder, and both for the more serious birder. Both are major advancements in the identification literature, first revolutionized by R. T. Peterson in 1934.

**"A Field Guide to Hawks"** is presented in the Peterson field guide tradition with exquisite, long-overdue, color plates (by one of North America's premier raptor artists), some black-and-white plates, distributional maps, and variable quality photographs. It is a field guide, and is intended to be carried afield for quick-fix identifications. It depicts mostly birds overhead, perched birds, and some top shots. But do not expect miracles; raptors assume many configurations not shown in the best of field guides. It covers all of North America's species.

Having worked with Bill Clark and Brian Wheeler at Cape May, I know the effort and dedication they put into creating this guide. Their skills as hawkers are top notch, their attention to detail superb. Some of Brian's measurements and photos came from birds caught in our blind.

**"Hawks in Flight"** is different, but still owes its roots to Cape May. The authors' approach is subtle, it's called "holistic". Their book is not a field guide. It requires study before and after. Find a quiet corner, and absorb its knowledge. It is pleasant, perceptive reading - a trademark of Pete Dunne. Dave Sibley's uniquely styled drawings are a combination of simplicity in the way that they represent the subject so clearly, yet so complex when examined in fine detail. The book requires concentration.

Their technique is used by hawk watchers and catchers who measure up a bird from afar, confirm its identity nearby and then place into their memory bank the field marks from afar in order to use them the next time - shape, size, proportions, wing shape and angle, flapping/sailing pattern, etc. This technique is best practiced at migration concentration points such as Cape May and Hawk Mountain where a continuous passage of large numbers of birds allow ample opportunity to repeatedly work the method until the skills are mastered. Once mastered, they allow identification at a glance for the more familiar species. It is a long-used technique, but described here for the first time in such detail.

My only complaint with "Hawks in Flight" is that some of the identification rules of thumb sound infallible, and can be misleading, especially to a beginner, and may lead to misidentification. The rules of thumb require experienced, interpretive skill. Not every Merlin (p.103) takes a shot at perched raptors it passes. I have seen more than just a few that have sped placidly by conspicuously perched hawks or falcons. The rule, as written, implies 100-percent reliability, and, while generally true, should not be interpreted by a beginner as an unequivocal field characteristic. The Goshawk rule may also be misinterpreted by a beginner. (Continued on Next Page)

## TWO NEW HAWK GUIDES continued

A lesser matter of opinion involves the Peregrine. Much has been lavished on this bird and deservedly so. This book touches on that subject. While still a much-sought bird on many people's list, recent re-introduction efforts have marvelously succeeded in increasing the bird's abundance. While not yet a junk bird at Eastern hawk watches, the numbers now passing Cape May each Autumn have increased to a point that their appearance is no longer shouted out with the excitement and vigor of 15 years ago. When up to 50 can be seen in a day, a certain ho-hum malaise sets in, lessening the bird's image just a bit.

But not so for the elusive, much rarer Goshawk. This fierce, fearless northern hunter remains eagerly sought. While these authors place it on a level with the Peregrine as a "bird to be seen," to me, it ranks a notch above. The sighting of a Gos, unpredictable as it is, remains shrouded in mystery as deep as the forest shadows whence it comes. This book captures that mystique in the brief commentary on this species.

You'll enjoy both books - but each in its own niche.

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## HAWKS ARE A FEATURE OF MANY HMBC FIELD TRIPS IN 1989

After reading the review by Dr. Yunick and one or both books, you will want to try some serious hawk identification. Many of our club field trips include hawks, of course, but some are devoted to them. Don't miss the club trips to Derby Hill in mid-April, Orange County in late August, and especially the Helderbergs trip in mid-September, which will all feature hawks. Cape May in September is also a good bet to use your new knowledge from the books reviewed above. See your field trip list for details, and make a reservation today!

Perhaps the Education committee might be talked into a workshop on hawk identification in its workshop series. Actually, several workshops might be in order.

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## IT'S BEEN FUN

After 10 years in all, it is my not-so-sad duty to bow out as your editor. Actually the winter 1989 issue, which is also the 50th anniversary issue, was the last of the series, but this is being done later. Take that, all ye librarians!

Please, please, give Dick Waugh your FULL cooperation as he takes on the editorship. Remember, if he doesn't have it, he can't print it!

It was the most fun working with you all. Thanks.

--Ann E. B'Rells

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----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
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## FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER, DELMAR

September 17, 1988

The morning started out sunny but clouded over as we walked. The first sightings were wood ducks and a great blue heron. The only warbler of the day was a Canada. A Swainson's thrush was feeding with chickadees and catbirds in a berry bush. A green-backed heron was heard but not seen.

On a pond in the old field one green-winged teal was sighted with a group of mallards. Immature goldfinches were seen and heard begging. A last stop at the bird feeder closed the list with brown-headed cowbirds, house finches and house sparrows.

SPECIES SEEN (25): Great Blue Heron, Green-backed Heron, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Swainson's Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Canada Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

--Nancy Payne

## HAWK WATCH AT THE PINNACLE, HELDERBERGS

September 18, 1988

The day did not start auspiciously, with rain still falling in Kinderhook between 7 and 7:30 a.m. But it had ceased by the time the small group of 7 arrived at the Pinnacle at 9:15. However, dense fog filled the low lands and clouds and mist surrounded us there. It took an hour of watchful waiting for the 1st broad-winged hawk to appear, then only 20 minutes for another bird.

The weather continued to improve as the wind gradually shifted from west to north west and even bits of sunshine appeared. By 3 p.m. we had clocked 40 birds with a good variety that pleased beginner and experienced birder alike, with a peregrine falcon a high spot of the day. Six more persons, both HMBCers and others, joined us as the day progressed.

## SPECIES SEEN (9) AND NUMBER SEEN:

Turkey Vulture	2	Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	American Kestrel	6
Osprey	5	Broad-winged Hawk	10	Peregrine Falcon	1
Northern Harrier	1	Red-tailed Hawk	6	Common Raven	1

-- Arthur Long leader, Dee Long recorder

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BASIC AND ALCOVE RESERVOIRS

October 8, 1988

Cold rainy weather kept most birders away from this trip. Only 7 hardy individuals came out in the 40 degree weather to bird the reservoirs. There were very few birds present on Alcovce Reservoir and not as many as usual on Basic. The northern part of Basic Reservoir had dried up and resulted in the ducks being in the southern part where they were harder to see because they were further away. There were a lot of sparrows in the shrubs on the eastern end of the causeway.

SPECIES SEEN (33): Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Greater Yellowlegs, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Solitary Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch.

-- Norman and Marilyn Fancher

----- HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIPS -----  
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If you would like to support one of the New York State teams in this year's World Series of Birding, you can contact:

Richard E. Bonney, Jr.  
 Laboratory of Ornithology  
 Cornell University  
 159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
 Ithaca, New York 14850

Alan A. Mapes  
 Five Rivers Environmental  
 Education Center  
 Game Farm Road  
 Delmar, New York 12054

The Naturalist Intern Program operated by the Department of Environmental Conservation is open to persons 18 years of age and older who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching about the environment.

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MILDRED CRARY

We note with regret the death of long time and faithful club member Mildred Crary in Summer of 1988 in Galway, where she moved from Schenectady after retirement. She joined the club in 1944, and made a difference.

Mildred's contributions to the bird club included both official positions and unofficial but extremely helpful work behind the scenes. Among her other positions, she chaired the Records committee in 1947 and 1948, the Membership committee from 1949 to 1952, and was club secretary from 1954 to 1959.

Under her aegis as secretary of the First Methodist Church of Schenectady, the club met for many years including the 1950's and 1960's in the Pine Room of the church. Further, with access to the then rare office facilities for duplication and labeling, she sent out many of the club mailings such as meeting notices.

Mildred also handled the circulation for FEATHERS for many years and several editors; this meant assembling, stapling and mailing the issues.

Whenever something needed to be done, Mildred could be counted on to do it. When the club sponsored the Federation meeting in 1957, for example, she chaired the publicity committee.

Mildred also shared her love of birds and birding as a trip leader. Many members remember her evening May trip to look for hawks and Whippoorwills.

Her love of birds extended to a general concern for conservation, and Mildred contributed in many different ways, devoted to what the bird club was doing for wildlife.

Mildred Crary was a very quiet person, who did not ask for recognition but contributed a great deal to our club. We can only hope that she would forgive us this accolade.

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 \*  
 \* DIAL-A-BIRD NEEDS YOUR SIGHTINGS \*  
 \*  
 \* Our new DAB Chairman Alan Mapes requests your bird sightings \*  
 \* for DIAL-A-BIRD! It is only as good as the information you \*  
 \* provide. Alan is also now compiling the messages left on the \*  
 \* tape each day, as well as acting as the voice of DIAL-A-BIRD! \*  
 \* You are reminded that this is not a Rare Bird Alert, since \*  
 \* it cannot act quickly enough for that purpose. \*  
 \* 439-8080 \*  
 \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

**THE WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING -OUR SECOND TRY****The Local Team Races Across New Jersey to Find 180 Species in One Day**

It was 5:00 am. Two small groups of people passed each other on a narrow bridge in deep in the middle of a huge swamp in rural New Jersey. Both groups were dressed in field cloths and binoculars hug from their necks. Each group glanced suspiciously at the other as they passed without a word.

Though they could be mistaken for a commando squad on maneuvers, they were, of course, were birders. Friendly people under normal conditions, these birders were very serious. They were on a mission. They were two of the twenty-four teams competing in New Jersey Audubon Society's "World Series of Birding".

Oddly enough, both teams in this encounter were from New York State. My three companions and I from the Capital District were there representing the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The six birders who passed us were the Sapsuckers, flying the banner of the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. It was May of 1987 and a faint scent of rivalry was in the air. DEC team-leader Bob Budliger and I are both Cornell alumni.

Just as the Cornell team disappeared behind us, a fast moving form crossed the sky on long narrow wings. We stifled the urge to yell "nighthawk", instead pointing to make sure that all four of us saw it. No reason to alert the Cornell Team, let them find their own birds. Besides, it was against the rules to give information to another team on the day of the competition.

Feathers readers will recall my account of our first year's effort. Largely ignorant of New Jersey geography and birding hot spots, we fumbled our way to a respectable score of 168 for the day.

**Our Second World Series**

The World Series of Birding (WSB) is the largest organized competitive birding event on the continent. On May 14, 1988 we were in it again. Twenty-eight teams of bird enthusiasts (120 people) raced all over the garden state from midnight to midnight in search of the best tally of birds. George Steele, Jim Suozzo, Bob and I were back to defend our agency's honor and to raise money for a good cause.

Raise money? Certainly. The World Series is a "Birdathon" as well. Each team takes pledges from its supporters (at a rate of 5 or 10 cents per bird species found) and raises funds for a worthy conservation cause. Hudson Mohawk members and other supporters generously pledged a total of over 45 cents per bird that we would find that day. The pressure was on! The money we raised would go to fund Naturalist Intern Program students at Five Rivers Center.

**A Tough 24 Hours**

Normally, it takes me a while to forget the strain of a big day, and to  
(WSB continued on next page)

## THE WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING -OUR SECOND TRY continued

consider doing it all again. After the '87 WSB, however, we began planning our '89 strategy on the way home to Albany. By last May, we were raring to go. New plans had been hatched and we spent two great days of scouting. Yellow-throateds and worm-eatings were pinned down. Acadians and red-headededs were staked out.

While scouting the southland, George and I ran in to the Cornell team. We got a chance to meet their "ringer", reputed to be an expert on rails and imported from LSU. Alumni pride was on the line -- could we beat them again?

**Tally Ho!**

Imagine - you are there . . .

11:30 p.m. - The team leaves the motel in Parsippany after a big supper (lots of pasta for carbohydrate loading), a shower and perhaps an hour of fitful sleep. We make the 5 minute drive to Troy Meadows marsh. Getting ready for the start, we walk by flashlight a quarter-mile out on the narrow, rickety boardwalk.

12:00 Midnight - It's a go! The first bird is a swamp sparrow which offers its sharp rattle from somewhere out in the cattails. Then come the calls of sora and marsh wren. But the site is a disappointment -- no bitterns, no moorhen, no other rails. At 12:45 we leave for Great Swamp.

1:25 am - We arrive at our first of many stops in Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Barred owl and king rail are calling. The rail gives us a great boost, as it is a hard bird to get. Stop number two yields barn owl and Virginia rail. George whistles up an Eastern Screech-Owl and hoots the barred owls into a frenzy. Another four hours of work at the refuge brings our list to 50 species.

We also get some close questioning from a local policeman, on the lookout for dark-of-the-night drug deals. Imagine four guys in scruffy clothes standing in the dark next to their old Saab trying to convince a cop that they really are listening for birds. The doubting officer is apparently convinced, for he suggests that we try for owls at a spot down the road where he sets up his radar trap. "The owls get so loud some nights that I roll up the windows and lock the doors" he claims with great sincerity.

6:00-7:00 am - New Jersey Audubon's Sherman-Hoffman Sanctuary gives us a wave of warblers and adds 27 new species. This pushes our warbler list to 18! That is the same number of warblers we got for the whole day the past year.

7:45 am - The farm fields near Beekman Lane give us an upland sandpiper, which is picked up by Bob's great ears. Also gotten are water pipit and a red-tailed hawk (which I miss while looking in the other direction). We won't see another one all day, and the 95% Rule is in effect (95% of the birds on our final list must have been seen or heard by all members of the team). Jim insists that we spend 5 more minutes to get the savannah sparrow which he had found on a scouting trip two days earlier. We humor him and spish the bird out of the hay field, even though the rest of us are sure we can get the bird

(WSB continued on next page)

**THE WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING -OUR SECOND TRY continued**

elsewhere during the day. We will appreciate Jim's tenacity at finish line, for that is the only savannah we find.

Time out! An explanation of other Big Day rules is in order. For the WSB, the following rules apply:

- All bird species count "one" on the list. A house sparrow counts one, the same as a peregrine falcon. A starling equals a bald eagle when adding up the final tally of species (well, not quite equal).

- A team must have 3-6 members and the members must stay together while birding.

- Hearing the bird is as good as seeing it. Of course, you have to know what you are hearing.

- All listed birds must be found within the State of New Jersey.

- No tape recordings may be used in the field to attract birds or to get birds to call. You can call birds by your own voice all you wish.

- Final lists must be handed in before midnight at Cape May Point State Park.

**Back to the Race**

9:26 am - We are leaving Princeton Woods with 10 new species including solitary, warbling and yellow-throated vireos. Time for our third breakfast as we speed along toward the next stop.

10:50 am - We roar out of Assunpink State Wildlife Management Area with all the birds we came for plus one! The staked-out grasshopper sparrows, ruddy ducks and Kentucky warbler were there on cue, and a hooded warbler popped up as a bonus. Now we speed ahead on the long run to Brigantine (actually the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, but everyone knows it as "Brig"). George's heavy foot on the trottle of our turbo engine (eight years old but still spry) makes for a quick run through the Jersey Pine Barrens.

12:30-2:10 p.m. - Brig seems slow. The huge east pool has been drained and there are very few ducks around. But we do get caspian tern, gull-billed tern, Louisiana heron, white-rumped sandpiper, seaside and sharp-tailed sparrows. Our progress is slowed by a crew from the TV program 20/20, taping a segment on the WSB. Thankfully, the interviews are brief and we are on our way. Jim Suozzo, our keeper of the list (and the team's sharpest eyes) informs us that Brig produced 35 new birds! We stand at 148 species so far.

2:45-5:50 p.m. - Our scouting work pays off at various locations around Cape May County. This southerly point of New Jersey yields goodies like red-headed woodpecker, black-crowned and yellow-crowned night-herons, piping plover, northern gannet, blue grosbeak, yellow-breasted chat and royal tern. Sunset Beach is checked for the female oldsquaw reputed to be lingering there. No duck is found, but George points out the best birds of the day - six brown pelicans flying out over Delaware bay (unprecedented numbers of these graceful fliers would stray to the Jersey coast and Long Island during spring and summer of 1988).

(WSB continued on next page)

**THE WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING -OUR SECOND TRY continued**

At the airport we stop to get horned lark. As we jump out of the car, Bob yells,

"There it is!"

"Where?"

"Not out there, right here!"

We shift our gaze from the runway 200 feet out to a lark sitting not 10 feet from us! Back in the car and off to Cumberland County.

7:00p.m. - Our staked out yellow-throated and prothonotary warblers sing for us on cue, but the acadian flycatchers have vanished. Must be that they pack it in well before dusk. Summer tanager, whip-poor-will and an unexpected bald eagle make up for the loss. After dark, the road to Turkey Point salt marshes is a comedy scene. One team after another races in, jumps out of the car and runs out into the marsh to listen for rails. George and I got a black rail to call several times on the scouting trip, but no suck luck when it counted. We leave on the return trip to Cape May with our total standing at 179.

10:55p.m. - A quick stop at Higby Beach produces our last bird of the day. A chuck-will's-widow is calling strongly near the parking lot. That makes 180 for the day, with 29 species of warblers!

**The Finish**

The lights of Cape May Point State Park were seen through bleary eyes as we stumbled in to the "finish line" and handed in our tally sheet. Weary birders crowded the room to watch as team scores went up on the blackboard.

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How did we place? Our team was 11th out of the 28 competing teams. In the out-of-region category we placed second, beaten only by the British Team - the Brits posted a score of 194 despite getting caught in a traffic jam on the Jersey Turnpike for over an hour. Those guys are good! Of course, they had scouted the state for a solid two weeks, carefully guided by some of the best New Jersey birders. Top honors for the 1988 World Series went to Pete Dunne's Guerrilla Birding Team with 200 species.

How about our New York rivals? Cornell came in with a 172 after getting caught in the same turnpike traffic jam.

**Other results:**

- Over \$800 was raised for the Five Rivers Intern Program.
- Funds raised by all the WSB teams totaled \$120,000.
- The sport of birding was given lots of publicity and the cause of wildlife habitat protection was advanced.

Will we put ourselves through this kind of torture again in 1989? No question. We wouldn't miss the World Series of Birding for the world!

\*\*\*\*\*  
 HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB  
 1989 FIELD TRIPS  
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FOR INFORMATION:

Please feel free to inquire about any of the field trips by calling the trip coordinator or the field trip chairman, Bob Budliger, 439-0006.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Most field trips are open to the public, and we extend a cordial invitation to non-members to attend these trips to learn and enjoy a greater appreciation of our wildlife heritage. **You must be a member or a member's guest to attend out of area trips requiring lodging or fees.** One need not be an expert or semi-expert to attend. Come along for fun or exercise.

NON-CITIZENS: Remember to bring adequate ID for trips to Canada.

RESPONSIBILITY:

While we encourage anyone interested to attend these trips, your attendance is on your own responsibility. The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club offers these trips under the expressed condition that they and the field trip coordinators shall not be in any way responsible for any injury, damage, loss, accident or irregularity occasioned from any cause whatsoever. **Likewise, children under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian with responsibility for their actions and well being.**

THE FIELD TRIP COMMITTEE:

Robert Budliger, Chairman	William Gorman	Marilyn Fancher
Norman Fancher	Jim Kuethe	Mike Kuhrt
William Lee	Alan Mapes	Sam Madison
Kevin McGrath	Alice Ross	Walt Sabin

\* RESERVATIONS NEEDED IN ADVANCE

\*\* RESERVATIONS NEEDED WAY IN ADVANCE

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AUTUMN 1989

- Aug 26 \* ORANGE COUNTY: A day trip to this southern county in search of  
 Sat shore birds and hawks. Make reservations **by AUG. 20** with the  
 coordinator. Coordinator: Bill Lee, 374-3426
- Sep 6 FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER, DELMAR: Early fall  
 Wed migrants, waterfowl. **TWO HOUR WALK BEFORE WORK 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.**  
 2 HR Coordinator: Alan Mapes, 439-4086
- Sept 9 \* JAMAICA BAY: A day trip in search of shore birds and water fowl.  
 Sat Make reservations **by SEPT. 1** with the coordinator.  
 Coordinator: Bob Budliger, 439-0006
- Sept 13 VISCHER FERRY NATURE PRESERVE: Waterfowl, shorebirds, migrants.  
 Wed **TWO HOUR WALK BEFORE WORK 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.**  
 2 HR Coordinator: Ray Perry, 877-8915
- Sept 16 HELDERBERGS: A day trip to see migrating hawks. Meet at 8:30 a.m.  
 Sat at the Key Bank, Star Plaza Shopping Center at the intersection of  
 Routes 20 and 155. Coordinator: Arthur Long, 1-758-9283
- Sept 23 FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER: A morning trip in  
 Sat search of fall migrants. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Five Rivers on Game  
 Farm Road in Delmar. Coordinator: Nancy Payne, 453-1805
- Sept \* CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY: See shore birds, hawks, and fall migrants at  
 23-24 this exceptional location. Make reservations **by SEPT. 1** with the  
 Sat-Sun coordinator. Coordinator: Bob Budliger, 439-0006
- Sept 30 \* CONNECTICUT SHORE: A day trip in search of shore birds and fall  
 Sat migrants. Make reservations **by SEPT. 23** with the coordinator.  
 Coordinator: Kevin McGrath, 272-1036
- Oct \*\* PELAGIC TRIP FROM NEWBURYPORT: A NEW club trip which should offer  
 7-9 some good birding and some whale watching. Make reservations



Sat-Sun **by AUG. 15** with the coordinator. Coordinator: Bill Lee, 374-3426  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB  
 1989 FIELD TRIPS  
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AUTUMN 1989 continued

- Oct 15      BASIC AND ALCOVE RESERVOIRS: A morning trip to see water fowl,  
 Sat              water pipits, etc. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Routes 32 and 143 near the  
                          reservoir.      Coordinators: Norman and Marilyn Fancher, 439-6385
  
- Oct 28      TOMHANNOCK RESERVOIR: A day trip around the reservoir in search of  
 Sat              ducks, geese, gulls, etc. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the junction of  
                          Route 7 and Valley Falls Road just east of the reservoir.  
                          Coordinator: Bill Shuster, 235-2479
  
- Nov 11      SARATOGA & ROUND LAKES: Morning trip for ducks, geese, grebes.  
 Sat              Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Round Lake on Route 9.  
                          Coordinator: Bernie Grossman, 882-9837
  
- Dec        \*      CAPE ANN - PLUM ISLAND, MASSACHUSETTS: Our popular winter trip in  
 2-3              search of gulls, ducks(Harlequin), eiders, grebes. Make reservations  
 Sat-Sun      **by NOV. 11** with the coordinator. Coordinator: Bill Lee, 374-3426

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FEATHERS EDITOR: Ann B'Rells, 3 Okara Dr. Apt 7, Schenectady 12303 355-5615

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS: please send name, address, or telephone corrections to the Treasurer.

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MEMBERSHIP: Life - \$250; Sustaining - \$25; Active - \$15; Student - \$6;  
 Each per year with an additional charge of \$2 per additional family member.  
 Membership Chairman: Daniel Ruge, 128 Chestnut St., Albany, N.Y. 12210  
 Write or call 518/449-1087 (evenings).

HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB, INC.  
 c/o Alan Mapes  
 Five Rivers Center  
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