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## WHAT BIRDING HAS MEANT TO ME

Cliff Lamere

Birding has changed my life. I can say that even though I have been involved for little more than two years. By April '88, casual birdwatching at the feeder had progressed to the point of taking notes on behavior and making detailed descriptions of my feathered visitors. Then, while visiting friends in Maryland who were working during the day, I went to a bookstore to buy one of Stokes' "Bird Behavior" books.

As luck would have it, the sales clerk was secretary of the local bird club. She inquired if I would like to do some birding during my stay, and then proceeded to phone some friends who might have time. One of them did not answer because she was, at that moment, on the way to the shop. Thirty minutes later we were on the shore of Centennial Lake. Thus began a birding adventure that will continue a lifetime.

Three days later we returned to the same lake where we had the good fortune to meet a tall gentleman from South Africa. After birding together the following day and finding that we were quite compatible, Bob surprised me with an invitation to visit his country for five weeks in the summer. He promised to show me many beautiful birds.

To insure that I benefited from the trip, it was necessary to learn as much about birds as possible and in only three months.... bird shapes, habits, flight patterns, how to look at a bird and see important features, etc. I began observing birds almost every day, including a trip to Cape May, NJ. It was an intense beginning, but it paid off in Africa. Bob promised me 140 species; we identified 287. Not bad for birding during their winter.

Birding has done much for me. Fortunately, there are so many kinds of birds with so many different habits and lifestyles that my life has been filled with entertainment. Birding never ceases to be interesting; there is no end to new things to be seen. That is why so many of you have been at it for so long.

Birding has increased my powers of observation manyfold (it's nice to be able to distinguish between male and female American Robins or White-breasted Nuthatches) and it has given me an appreciation for the complexity of nature. I never knew that birds might migrate to reduce competition for food or nest sites; or to be in a prime location when insects were abundant as a food supply for their young. I was surprised to learn of the multitude of nesting styles that birds have (including the fact that Killdeer may just lay their eggs among the stones of a driveway).

I was unaware of how many ways wildlife uses trees. It was a surprise to see finches and squirrels feed on emerging buds. And I had thought only leaves were in a squirrel's leaf nest. Instead, I watched a gray squirrel cut oak twigs with the leaves still attached (many oak leaves don't drop until Spring). They can interweave the twigs; single leaves would not hold together well.

We have all sorts of incidental nature experiences while looking for birds. Imagine the shock of seeing a woodchuck about fifteen feet up a tree (1989 sparrow trip to Saratoga Battlefield led by Al Mapes). It was clinging to the main stem, silently watching us. What ever possessed it to climb to this lofty observation post? Searching for a special food? Evading a predator when it wandered too far from its burrow? Who would have thought that it could even accomplish such a feat?

Birding has introduced me to many new friends. It is obvious that experienced birders in the club and elsewhere love to help a beginner; and they greatly enjoy discussing their favorite pastime. But, also, people at work all have had experiences with birds, and they, too, love to tell how a crow flew off with a squirming baby rabbit or a hawk swooped down on their bird feeder.

Like most birders, I have kept a life list during this brief period. While it gave me considerable satisfaction to identify my 500th life bird (worldwide) on the anniversary date of the beginning of this most enjoyable of endeavors, it is not the list itself which is so important to me. As I see more bird species or bird families, it helps me to better understand and remember what is said about them in books or magazines or on TV.

Unexpectedly, birding has become the reason for U.S. and world travel. Africa was only the start. Since then, my trips include Colorado and Pt. Pelee with members of the bird club, as well as Oregon, Maine, Texas, Florida, southern California and Costa Rica on my own. I've seen a lot of beautiful scenery in these two years - and I've had some marvelous experiences. Birding really has changed my life.

#### COLD WEATHER AND LIGHT SNOW MARK 1989 TROY CHRISTMAS COUNT

William V. Shuster

Some 64 species were tallied this year. While not a record, this was quite respectable for the Troy Christmas Count. A total of 19,174 birds were seen. Rough-legged Hawks, Glaucous Gulls, Mourning Doves, Horned Larks, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, Dark-Eyed Juncos and Snow Buntings were seen in record numbers.

On the other hand, a number of species were in short supply. only a few Evening Grosbeaks, Robins and Bluebirds were seen while no Pine Grosbeaks, Cedar Waxwings or Purple Finches were noted.

Among the more interesting sightings were a Mute Swan, a Great Blue Heron, a Thayer's Gull, a Short-eared Owl, a Hermit Thrush and an Eastern Meadowlark.

The very cold weather of December resulted in all small streams and ponds being solidly frozen with only portions of the larger bodies of water such as the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers and the Tomhannock Reservoir being partially open. This resulted in high concentrations of waterfowl and some other birds in the few open spots on these bodies. With about 4-5 inches of new snow on the ground, light snow continued falling during the day.

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

Seven field parties that included 20 individuals took part in the Count this year. One feeder observer also reported. The Count was held from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.. The weather was cold ranging from 8 degrees Fahrenheit to only 14 degrees Fahrenheit with just a very light wind and light snow. Total party-hours were 66.5 with 23.25 hours afoot and 43.25 hours by car. The total party-miles were 443.5 with 22.5 miles afoot and 421 miles by car.

#### KEY TO GROUPS

- Group A: Tomhannock area. William Gorman, Monte Gruett. 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 5 hours afoot, 5 hours by car. 5 miles afoot, 40 miles by car. Northern Goshawk, Great Horned Owl, Pine Siskins.
- Group B: Melrose to Schaghticoke, Speigletown. William Shuster, Pat Canavan, Claire Sack, Ned and Ruthanna Worrell. 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.. 1.5 hours afoot, 6 hours by car. 2 miles afoot, 45 miles by car. Great Blue Heron, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Eastern Meadowlark.
- Group C: Hudson River area. Samuel Madison, Richard Guthrie, Betsy Franz. 7:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.. 3 miles afoot, 41 miles by car. Short-eared Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker.
- Group D: Mohawk River, Cohoes, Green Island. Kenneth Able, Rebecca Holberton, Scott Terrill. 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.. 3 hours afoot, 7 hours by car, 0.5 hours owling. 4 miles afoot, 70 miles by car,

0.25 miles owling. Mute Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull.

Group E: Waterford, Half Moon. Robert Budliger, William Lee, Kurt Boluch. 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 4 hours afoot, 5.5 hours by car. 3 miles afoot, 85 miles by car. Ring-billed Gull, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, Savannah Sparrow.

Group F: Lower Saratoga County. Walton Sabin, Gilbert Banner. 1.25 hours afoot, 8 hours by car. 0.5 miles afoot, 80 miles by car. Norther Harrier, Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush.

Group G: Center Brunswick and Eagle Mills. Marilyn and Norman Fancher. 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 3 hours afoot, 7 hours by car. 5 miles afoot, 60 miles by car. Norther Harrier, Ruffed Grouse, American Robin.

Group X: Feeder Report. Nancy Shuster. Red-breasted Nuthatch, Common Redpoll.

TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 30, 1989

\* \* \* \* \* G R O U P S \* \* \* \* \*

| SPECIES             | A     | B   | C     | D   | E   | F  | G     | X | TOTAL |
|---------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-----|----|-------|---|-------|
| Great Blue Heron    |       | 1   |       |     |     |    |       |   | 1     |
| Mute Swan           |       |     |       | 1   |     |    |       |   | 1     |
| Canada Goose        | 5,000 | 282 | 1,656 | 2   | 33  |    | 2,048 |   | 9,021 |
| American Black Duck | 7     |     | 188   | 188 | 121 |    |       |   | 504   |
| Mallard             | 110   |     | 69    | 283 | 52  |    |       |   | 514   |
| Ring-necked Duck    |       |     |       | 1   |     |    |       |   | 1     |
| Lesser Scaup        |       |     |       | 1   |     |    |       |   | 1     |
| Common Goldeneye    |       |     | 9     | 23  | 26  |    |       |   | 58    |
| Common Merganser    | 1     |     | 88    | 200 | 114 |    |       |   | 403   |
| Northern Harrier    |       |     |       |     |     | 1  | 1     |   | 2     |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk  |       | 1   |       |     | 1   |    |       |   | 2     |
| Cooper's Hawk       |       |     |       | 2   | 1   | 1  |       |   | 4     |
| Northern Goshawk    | 1     |     |       |     |     |    |       |   | 1     |
| Red-tailed Hawk     | 10    | 4   | 11    | 19  | 22  | 9  | 5     |   | 80    |
| Rough-legged Hawk   | 4     | 10  | 1     | 1   | 4   | 1  |       |   | 21    |
| American Kestrel    |       |     |       | 1   | 1   |    |       |   | 2     |
| Ruffed Grouse       |       | 1   |       |     |     | 1  | 3     |   | 5     |
| Wild Turkey         |       |     |       |     |     | 11 |       |   | 11    |
| Ring-billed Gull    |       |     |       |     | 3   |    |       |   | 3     |

## TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (continued)

December 30, 1989

\* \* \* \* \* G R O U P S \* \* \* \* \*

| SPECIES                 | A   | B   | C   | D   | E   | F   | G   | X | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|-------|
| Herring Gull            | 4   |     | 37  | 700 | 580 | 2   |     |   | 1,323 |
| Thayer's Gull           |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |   | 1     |
| Iceland Gull            |     |     |     | 9   |     |     |     |   | 9     |
| Glaucous Gull           |     |     |     | 2   |     |     |     |   | 2     |
| Great Black-backed Gull |     |     | 17  | 208 | 214 |     |     |   | 439   |
| Rock Dove               | 100 | 18  | 14  | 96  | 41  | 60  | 107 |   | 436   |
| Mourning Dove           | 54  | 113 | 101 | 59  | 50  | 98  | 38  | 8 | 521   |
| Eastern Screech-Owl     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |   | 1     |
| Great Horned Owl        | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |     |   | 2     |
| Short-eared Owl         |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |   | 1     |
| Downy Woodpecker        | 18  | 9   | 11  | 12  | 8   | 4   | 14  | 2 | 78    |
| Hairy Woodpecker        | 5   | 2   | 8   | 3   | 4   | 1   | 5   |   | 28    |
| Northern Flicker        |     |     | 1   | 1   | 2   |     | 1   |   | 5     |
| Pileated Woodpecker     | 1   |     | 1   | 1   |     |     |     |   | 3     |
| Horned Lark             | 250 | 51  |     | 12  | 10  | 26  |     |   | 349   |
| Blue Jay                | 65  | 21  | 23  | 17  | 24  | 45  | 17  | 3 | 215   |
| American Crow           | 44  | 35  | 28  | 210 | 246 | 37  | 50  |   | 650   |
| Black-capped Chickadee  | 105 | 50  | 83  | 57  | 72  | 64  | 107 | 4 | 542   |
| Tufted Titmouse         | 16  | 9   | 9   | 9   | 5   | 21  | 9   | 3 | 81    |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch   | 2   |     | 3   |     | 3   |     |     | 1 | 9     |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 28  | 5   | 14  | 8   | 7   | 12  | 13  | 2 | 89    |
| Brown Creeper           | 1   |     |     | 2   | 1   |     |     |   | 4     |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet  | 2   |     | 1   |     | 2   |     |     |   | 5     |
| Eastern Bluebird        |     |     |     |     |     | 2   |     |   | 2     |
| Hermit Thrush           |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |   | 1     |
| American Robin          |     |     |     |     |     |     | 3   |   | 3     |
| Northern Mockingbird    | 1   | 2   | 1   | 4   | 2   | 1   |     |   | 11    |
| European Starling       | 59  | 39  | 513 | 535 | 230 | 54  | 63  | 2 | 1,495 |
| Northern Cardinal       | 14  | 13  | 17  | 16  | 10  | 19  | 9   | 6 | 104   |
| American Tree Sparrow   | 18  | 10  | 23  | 23  | 32  | 32  | 25  | 2 | 165   |
| Savannah Sparrow        |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |   | 1     |
| Song Sparrow            |     |     | 5   | 14  | 9   | 2   |     |   | 30    |
| Swamp Sparrow           |     |     |     | 1   |     |     |     |   | 1     |
| White-throated Sparrow  | 9   | 4   | 9   | 2   | 5   |     | 3   | 6 | 38    |
| Dark-eyed Junco         | 68  | 62  | 83  | 2   | 7   | 61  | 26  | 2 | 311   |
| Lapland Longspur        | 1   |     |     | 3   |     |     |     |   | 4     |
| Snow Bunting            | 3   |     | 5   | 9   | 204 | 250 |     |   | 471   |
| Eastern Meadowlark      |     | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |   | 1     |
| Brown-headed Cowbird    | 46  |     |     |     |     | 3   |     |   | 49    |

## TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (continued)

December 30, 1989

\* \* \* \* \* G R O U P S \* \* \* \* \*

| SPECIES            | A     | B   | C     | D     | E     | F   | G     | X  | TOTAL  |
|--------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|----|--------|
| House Finch        | 48    | 39  | 100   | 27    | 50    | 60  | 25    | 6  | 355    |
| Common Redpoll     |       | 20  |       |       |       |     |       | 2  | 22     |
| Pine Siskin        | 4     |     | 4     |       |       |     | 7     |    | 15     |
| American Goldfinch | 26    | 12  | 5     |       | 6     | 32  | 32    | 3  | 116    |
| Evening Grosbeak   | 20    |     |       | 1     | 2     |     | 11    |    | 34     |
| House Sparrow      | 95    | 27  | 198   | 91    | 46    | 31  | 6     | 22 | 517    |
| TOTAL COUNT:       | 6,242 | 841 | 3,337 | 2,858 | 2,251 | 942 | 2,628 | 74 | 19,174 |
| TOTAL SPECIES:     | 37    | 27  | 35    | 44    | 40    | 29  | 26    | 16 | 64     |

**ANNUAL REPORT  
of the  
Henry G. Reist Wildlife Sanctuary Committee**

This past year, the activities of the Henry G. Reist Wildlife Sanctuary committee have been mainly concerned with protecting the boundaries and the wetlands from encroachment by planned developments.

The committee followed closely Planning Board meetings at the Town Hall of Niskayuna, where plans for development on abutting property were introduced and reviewed. These plans threatened the wetlands by proposing to build closer to the boundary than permitted under New York State Department of Environmental Conservation regulations. Pressure was put on the Planning Board by the Committee, and reinforced by the Niskayuna Conservation Advisory Board, which agreed that no special variance should be accorded to the developer.

A show of strength and support was provided at meetings which covered a six-month period by members of the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club who live in the area, as well as members from outside the immediate area.

As a direct result of this vigilance and refusal to compromise on the part of the representatives of the HMBC, the developer withdrew the original plans, and replaced them with new ones, under the terms of which HMBC was deeded additional property which measured over 2 acres. Previously, the Sanctuary measured 108 acres; by latest survey, it measures over 110 acres. This provides a much-needed buffer zone and thereby protects the wetlands. This was definitely a victory for the HMBC, which as a result of these hearings is now in the enviable position of having acquired additional land at no cost to the members.

An interesting development has been the dramatic increase in the financial support of the Reist Sanctuary by members of HMBC in voluntarily making donations to the Sanctuary when renewing their annual dues.

The Niskayuna Boy Scout Troop continues to offer its time and effort in clearing the paths and posting the signs as part of its community involvement for the Eagle Scout program.

The Henry G. Reist Wildlife Sanctuary has received excellent publicity as a result of being included in the Capital District Insert in the new NYNEX Yellow pages of the telephone directory. This also has provided good public relations for the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club.

April 4, 1990

Co-Chairmen: Betty Ann Callanan  
Bette Moon

^ ^ ^ FIELD TRIP REPORT ^ ^ ^

Round and Saratoga Lakes and  
Vischer Ferry National and Historic Area

April 22, 1990

Bernard Grossman

Thirteen birders enjoyed a sunny, warm morning looking for ducks, grebes and other waterfowl as well as Spring migrants. Not much was at Round Lake except for a Green-backed Heron overhead.

We visited the southwest side of Saratoga Lake. A good variety was seen at Silver Bay including loons, a Ruddy Duck, Bufflehead and Scaup. A Horned Grebe and a Gadwall were at Manning's Cove.

We then went to Vischer Ferry and arrived in time to experience a wave of Yellow-rumped Warblers passing through. There was also a good number of

Kinglets. We also had a good look at a perched Osprey on one of the east ponds. Total: 47 species.

Added note: My wife, Chris, heard an American Bittern at Vischer Ferry later in the day.

**THE GENESIS**

I knew there were things missing in  
my life - like birds without  
wings; nights without stars  
and the sun a dark blue from  
the cold.

You came to me with a seed and in my  
voice came the genesis !

ELIZABETH I. ROBERTS

1988

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Marcia Middleton  
Ann B'Rells

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS: Please send name, address, or telephone corrections to:  
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Delmar, NY 12054

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

D I A L - A - B I R D 4 3 9 - 8 0 8 0





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**FRANKLIN'S GULL HEADS LIST OF THREE SPECIES ADDED  
TO CENTURY RUN COMPOSITE LIST**

Robert P. Yunick

Despite unfavorable weather on May 19, 1990, 26 observers in seven groups tallied 177 species on the Club's 45th Guy Bartlett Century Run. This list ties for third place with 1987, behind a record 188 in 1986, and this year's best group effort of 132 species ranks eighth to a record 156. The same group that tallied 132 species also took honors in having the most species seen by one one group, 16, and in adding two new species to the composite list: Snow Goose (shared with another group), and the very extraordinary Spring record of an adult Franklin's Gull at Saratoga Lake--far from its normal prairie haunts of the West. A third new species, White-winged Crossbill, was seen along Irish Hill Road in East Berne. These new species bring the composite list to 249 plus two hybrids.

Nine other rare species were recorded for the tenth or fewer times as follows:

- 10th time Red Crossbill, near East Berne, last in 1985. Fish Crow, first in 1978 and consecutively since 1983, and probably now a permanent local fixture due to recent range expansion.
- 9th time White-rumped Sandpiper at Basic Reservoir.
- 7th time Great Egret at Vischer Ferry, last in 1978. Rough-legged Hawk near Berne, last in 1985. Wild Turkey in Saratoga County, last in 1987.
- 6th time Mute Swan, first in 1966 and three times since 1987 and probably also becoming a regular, based on expanding populations along the Hudson River south of Albany. Black-bellied Plover, last in 1986.
- 5th time Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Another good find, recorded for only the 12th time on the Century Run was a nesting pair of Northern Goshawks near Greenfield, Saratoga County. Last year I erroneously reported this as a 10th time record when really it was for the 11th time. Some of the misses, conspicuous and otherwise, were Red-Shouldered Hawk (believed nesting and seen numerously at Jenny Lake, but not on the date of the count), Eastern Screech-Owl, Horned Lark, Common Raven (after four consecutive years and increasing reports), and Henslow's Sparrow.

Common Nighthawk, Purple Martin and Whip-poor-will were near misses, as each was found by only one group, and in previous times enjoyed more widespread reporting.

The Franklin's Gull was near shore at the south end of Saratoga Lake and was seen in the company of Bonaparte's Gulls by observers familiar with it at other locations. The black head, size, black wingtips with white marks, and side-by-side comparison to the Bonaparte's Gull, Black Tern and common Tern were noted. Single Snow Geese appeared at two distant locations: Fish Creek at the north end of Saratoga Lake and Sutherland Pond on Rock City Road in Columbia county. While the Franklin's Gull was geographically well displaced, these geese were well displaced in time from the normal, local migrational passage of this species in March and early April. Both species of crossbill appeared at the same location, and the behavior of the White-winged suggested possible local breeding.

It was not an ideal, nor even a pleasant, birding day. Leadен grey, overcast sky, and winds gusting to over 30 mph from the W and NW made hearing bird song difficult. Trees were well leafed, creating wind noise. Albany Airport reported a temperature range of 47 to 63 degrees Fahrenheit, and 0.01 inches of precipitation. A cold front swept through the area the day before the count, and rather than bring clearing, it brought unstable air from a low over Quebec that looked and felt more like a September or October frontal passage. That weather pattern persisted in Sunday, bringing rain.

Local waterways were full due to heavy rain earlier in the month. Great Sacandaga Lake filled with seven inches of rain in three weeks, and for only the second time in its sixty year history, overflowed the dam at Conklinville (last occurrence in May 1983) in the week following the Century Run. The excessive rain created wet-meadow habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds, and may have aided in contributing slightly higher species counts for both groups. In some years, moderate excesses of rain flood the normal shorebird flats; but when the rain is persistently excessive, it begins to create habitat in pastures and meadows. The 13 species of waterfowl and 14 species of shorebirds were slightly above the previous six-year averages of 10.5 and 11.3, respectively. The shorebird count was double last year's when rain flooded the normal mud-flat habitat. Similarly, the hearing interference caused by the wind may have lessened the warbler species count which was 24 versus a previous six-year average of 26.5. An indicator of how difficult birds were to find was the extraordinary list of 43 species that were reported by only one group compared to 30 last year. All groups had species ranging in number from two to sixteen that only one group reported. There were 36 species seen by all groups and 25 seen by all but one group.

Nevertheless, the Century Run continues to produce surprises--a not uncommon attribute of field birding. In recent years, new species on the composite list have become scarce, as one would expect after many years of intensive combing of local habitats. Thus, this year's three new species were a mild surprise. That many new species were added in 1986, when the diverse assemblage of Common Raven, Caspian Tern and Yellow-throated Warbler was

added; and then not again until way back to 1962 when the equally unique combination of Red-throated Loon, Western Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper and Tufted Titmouse were first recorded. How times change, yet stay the same! Prior to that, one had to reach back to 1956 when six new species were added.

In the listings that follow, the name with the asterisk represents the group compiler, and the species listed by group are those reported only by that group.

#### KEY TO GROUPS

- Group A: Becky Halberton\* and Michael Scannell. 110 species, midnight to 20:00. Stuyvesant, McKnight Bridge, SUNYA, Knox, Meadowdale, Black Creek Marsh, Hennessey Road, Thacher Park, East Berne, Bear Swamp, Basic Creek Reservoir, Alcove Reservoir, Schodack Landing, Newton Hook, Hudson, and Kinderhook. Greater Yellowlegs, White-rumped Sandpiper, Common Nighthawk, Orchard Oriole, Red Crossbill and White-winged Crossbill.
- Group B: W. Gorman\*, M. Gruett, M. Kuhrt and P. Connor. 132 species, 04:00 to 21:00. Black Creek, Cherry Plain, Castleton and Saratoga. American Bittern, Mute Swan, White-winged Scoter, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Pectoral Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Franklin's Gull, Common Tern, Whip-poor-will, Purple Martin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cape May Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird.
- Group C: Ron Calkins, Christine Cameron, and Jocelyn Cole-Calkins\*. 94 species, 04:30 to 22:00. Alcove Reservoir, Black Creek Marsh, Five Rivers, Columbia County, Thacher Park, Berne, Cohoes, Bear Swamp, and Kenrose Preserve. Rough-legged Hawk, and Lincoln's Sparrow.
- Group D: Bill Graham, Ronald Hanover\* and Ray Perry. 108 species, 03:30 to 21:40. Saratoga County. Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Harrier, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Fish Crow, and Pine Warbler.
- Group E: Robert P. Yunick\*, Robert J. Pantle and James C. Covert III. 65 species, 04:30 to 21:30. Schenectady, banding at Vischer Ferry, and later RPY alone en route to and at Jenny Lake. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Evening Grosbeak.
- Group F: Carl George, C.W. Huntley\*, R. McCullough, N. Slack, H. Stebbins, G. Shaw, D. Wechtel, C. Parker and C. Wheeler (last two persons in morning only). 113 species, 04:00 to 21:00. Black Creek, Thacher Park, Alcove Reservoir, 4-Mile Point, Pine Bush, Cohoes, Tomhannock Reservoir, Saratoga Battlefield, Saratoga Lake, and Glenville hills. Horned Grebe, Bufflehead, Cooper's Hawk, American Coot, Black-bellied Plover, Carolina Wren, and Worm-eating Warbler.

Group G: Craig\* and Clarence Fosdick. 84 species, midnight to 2:45 and 07:00 to 21:00. Greenfield, Saratoga Battlefield, and Vischer Ferry. Great Egret, Northern Goshawk, and Ring-necked Pheasant.

## 1990 GUY BARTLETT CENTURY RUN

May 19, 1990

|                          |         |                           |         |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| Common Loon              | abcd f  | American Coot             | f       |
| Pied-billed Grebe        | c f     | Black-bellied Plover      | f       |
| Horned Grebe             | f       | Semi-palmated Plover      | a c f   |
| Double-crested Cormorant | ab d f  | Killdeer                  | abcd fg |
| American Bittern         | b       | Greater Yellowlegs        | a       |
| Least Bittern            | bc fg   | Lesser Yellowlegs         | a cd    |
| Great Blue Heron         | abc efg | Solitary Sandpiper        | ab def  |
| Great Egret              | g       | Spotted Sandpiper         | abcdef  |
| Green-backed Heron       | b d f   | Semipalmated Sandpiper    | d       |
| Mute Swan                | b       | Least Sandpiper           | a cd f  |
| Snow Goose               | bc      | White-rumped Sandpiper    | a       |
| Canada Goose             | abcdefg | Pectoral Sandpiper        | b       |
| Wood Duck                | abcdefg | Dunlin                    | a f     |
| Green-winged Teal        | a f     | Common Snipe              | b       |
| American Black Duck      | ab def  | American Woodcock         | ab d g  |
| Mallard                  | abcdefg | Franklin's Gull           | b       |
| Blue-winged Teal         | abc f   | Bonaparte's Gull          | b d     |
| White-winged Scoter      | b       | Ring-billed Gull          | ab def  |
| Bufflehead               | f       | Herring Gull              | abcdef  |
| Hooded Merganser         | d       | Great Black-backed Gull   | abcd f  |
| Common Merganser         | def     | Common Tern               | b       |
| Red-breasted Merganser   | d       | Black Tern                | b f     |
| Turkey Vulture           | abc f   | Rock Dove                 | abcdefg |
| Osprey                   | b d f   | Mourning Dove             | abcdefg |
| Bald Eagle               | b       | Black-billed Cuckoo       | b f     |
| Northern Harrier         | d       | Great Horned Owl          | b d     |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk       | b       | Barred Owl                | e g     |
| Cooper's Hawk            | f       | Common Nighthawk          | a       |
| Northern Goshawk         | g       | Whip-poor-will            | b       |
| Broad-winged Hawk        | bcd     | Chimney Swift             | abcdef  |
| Red-tailed Hawk          | abcd fg | Ruby-throated Hummingbird | abc e   |
| Rough-legged Hawk        | c       | Belted Kingfisher         | bcd f   |
| American Kestrel         | abcd f  | Red-headed Woodpecker     | d       |
| Ring-necked Pheasant     | g       | Red-bellied Woodpecker    | a f     |
| Ruffed Grouse            | ab d fg | Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  | c f     |
| Wild Turkey              | d g     | Downy Woodpecker          | abcdefg |
| Virginia Rail            | abc f   | Hairy Woodpecker          | ab defg |
| Sora                     | ab f    | Northern Flicker          | abcdefg |
| Common Moorhen           | abc f   | Pileated Woodpecker       | c g     |

|                               |         |                              |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|
| Eastern Wood-Pewee            | abc     | Cape May Warbler             | b       |
| Yellow-bellied Flycatcher     | e       | Black-throated Blue Warbler  | ab defg |
| Willow Flycatcher             | bc ef   | Yellow-rumped Warbler        | abcd fg |
| Least Flycatcher              | abcdefg | Black-throated Green Warbler | bcd fg  |
| Eastern Phoebe                | abcdefg | Blackburnian Warbler         | bcd g   |
| Great Crested Flycatcher      | abcd fg | Pine Warbler                 | d       |
| Eastern Kingbird              | abcd fg | Prairie Warbler              | abc f   |
| Purple Martin                 | b       | Bay-breasted Warbler         | a d     |
| Tree Swallow                  | abcdefg | Blackpoll Warbler            | b       |
| Northern Rough-winged Swallow | ab d f  | Black-and-white Warbler      | abc e g |
| Bank Swallow                  | ab defg | American Redstart            | abcdefg |
| Cliff Swallow                 | abcd f  | Worm-eating Warbler          | f       |
| Barn Swallow                  | abcdefg | Ovenbird                     | abcdefg |
| Blue Jay                      | abcdefg | Northern Waterthrush         | c e g   |
| American Crow                 | abcdefg | Louisiana Waterthrush        | ab d f  |
| Fish Crow                     | d       | Common Yellowthroat          | abcdefg |
| Black-capped Chickadee        | abcdefg | Canada Warbler               | a cde   |
| Tufted Titmouse               | bcdefg  | Scarlet Tanager              | abcd fg |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch         | bcde g  | Northern Cardinal            | abcdefg |
| White-breasted Nuthatch       | ab defg | Rose-breasted Grosbeak       | abcdefg |
| Brown Creeper                 | abc e g | Indigo Bunting               | bcd fg  |
| Carolina Wren                 | f       | Rufous-sided Towhee          | abcd fg |
| House Wren                    | abcdefg | Chipping Sparrow             | abcdefg |
| Winter Wren                   | abcd f  | Field Sparrow                | abcd fg |
| Marsh Wren                    | abc f   | Vesper Sparrow               | b       |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet        | ab      | Savannah Sparrow             | ab      |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet          | b       | Grasshopper Sparrow          | d g     |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher         | ab d fg | Song Sparrow                 | abcdefg |
| Eastern Bluebird              | abcd f  | Lincoln's Sparrow            | c       |
| Veery                         | abcdefg | Swamp Sparrow                | abc efg |
| Swainson's Thrush             | b f     | White-throated Sparrow       | abcde g |
| Hermit Thrush                 | bcde g  | White-crowned Sparrow        | bc      |
| Wood Thrush                   | abcdefg | Dark-eyed Junco              | abcdefg |
| American Robin                | abcdefg | Bobolink                     | abcd fg |
| Gray Catbird                  | abcdefg | Red-winged Blackbird         | abcdefg |
| Northern Mockingbird          | ab d f  | Eastern Meadowlark           | abcd fg |
| Brown Thrasher                | cd f    | Rusty Blackbird              | b       |
| Cedar Waxwing                 | ab d fg | Common Grackle               | abcdefg |
| Eropean Starling              | abcdefg | Brown-headed Cowbird         | abcdefg |
| Solitary Vireo                | ab d g  | Orchard Oriole               | a       |
| Yellow-throated Vireo         | abc fg  | Northern Oriole              | abcdefg |
| Warbling Vireo                | ab d fg | Purple Finch                 | ab defg |
| Red-eyed Vireo                | abcd fg | House Finch                  | abcdefg |
| Blue-winged Warbler           | a cd fg | Red Crossbill                | a       |
| Tennessee Warbler             | ab      | White-winged Crossbill       | a       |
| Nashville Warbler             | b d g   | Pine Siskin                  | abcdefg |
| Northern Parula               | b d     | American Goldfinch           | abcdefg |
| Yellow Warbler                | abcdefg | Evening Grosbeak             | e       |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler        | ab d fg | House Sparrow                | ab defg |
| Magnolia Warbler              | ab defg |                              |         |

## HMBC ASSISTS THE BLUEBIRDS

Samuel R. Madison

For the past five years HMBC has been actively operating Bluebird nest-box networks at two country clubs to help the Eastern Bluebird increase its numbers. Many other groups have been doing the same thing at many other locations. This is a brief report on your club's endeavors.

In 1985, with the spirited cooperation of George F. Agor, a member of HMBC who is also a member at the Albany Country Club, we began in a modest way with a few homemade boxes. In 1986 we expanded to 21 boxes of the homemade variety. That year we had 17 successful Bluebird nests (four boxes had double broods) and 66 young Bluebirds fledged successfully.

Encouraged by our success, in 1987 we decided to add more boxes to meet the growing competition of Tree Swallows. The Trees are much more aggressive than the mild Bluebirds and can readily take over a Bluebird nesting area. HMBC purchased additional boxes when one HMBCer agreed to make up the deficit if contributions from Country Club members and HMBC members were insufficient to defray the cost. In 1987, 85 young Bluebirds were fledged.

Despite the increased competition from Tree Swallows, 67 Bluebirds were fledged in 1988 and the same number in 1989. Tree Swallows were also successful nesters, but we helped the Bluebirds by putting two boxes close together so that a Tree Swallow and a Bluebird could nest peacefully in the same area. When a lone box is used the Tree Swallows often drive the Bluebirds away. The Tree Swallow competition has continued and in 1989 thirty young were fledged.

In 1987 we expanded to Normanside Country Club in Elsmere with the splendid assistance of Jack McLean, a member of that club who has worked zealously on the project. Under the same financing arrangements, HMBC erected 28 boxes, a few of which were homemade. Most were financed by the generous contributions of non-birder Normanside Club members. That year 29 young were fledged at Normanside, which was very good for the first year. In 1988 only 23 young were fledged.

Serious tragedy struck at Normanside in 1989 in the form of raccoon predation. We lost nesting adults which were pulled out of the box and eaten by the raccoon, leaving unattended eggs or young. At the first sign of trouble we lengthened the entrance hole by attaching a piece of wood with a 1 1/2 inch hole to the front of the box, hoping that the lengthened entrance would thwart the raccoon. But it didn't work, and our losses continued. A few bluebirds may have fledged, but we were not at all certain of the results.

We solicited the advice of others who have had problems with raccoon predation and received many ideas and recommendations. We settled on the purchase of a plastic guard which affixes to the front of the box and

effectively lengthens the entrance hole to about four inches. Hopefully this is long enough to foil Mr. Raccoon. These have been installed on the Normanside boxes. Early indications are that the Bluebirds are taking to the somewhat weird looking boxes and laying eggs. We are hopeful, but wary and watchful. Incidentally, we have not had a raccoon problem at Albany.

We endeavor to monitor the boxes weekly at all locations, even when there is no known predator problem. The boxes are designed so that they can be opened readily for inspection. The Bluebirds readily tolerate an occasional inspection of their nest. It has been my experience that when opening a box with a Bluebird sitting on either eggs or young she will remain in the nest most of the time. Periodic monitoring enables us to (1) keep track of what is occurring in the box, (2) check for blowfly larvae and remove them from the body of the young (the larvae if left alone can suck a young bird to death), (3) remove the old nest once the young have fledged, thus removing any parasites residing in it and forcing the nesting adults to build a new and clean nest, which they readily do if they decide to rear a second brood.

As this is written, the Bluebirds are back in numbers at both clubs and we are hopeful for a successful season in 1990.

We would like to expand to other areas but that requires additional volunteers to assume the task of erecting the boxes and monitoring them faithfully throughout the nesting season. Anyone interested in helping with the task should contact the writer at 439-4753 or make your interest known to any active HMBC member.

The plastic guards, and a few additional boxes have been purchased under the same financing arrangement. Anyone who wishes to help in this worthwhile endeavor may do so by sending a tax deductible contribution to HMBC. Mail your welcome check to Bernard Grossman, Treasurer, 7 Nott Rd., Rexford, NY 12148, and indicate that it is for the club's Bluebird project.



## H M B C   B O A R D   F O R   1 9 9 0

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## DICK & PATSY PATRICK'S TRIP TO IDAHO

June 1990

Dick Patrick

Here we have a report on Patsy's and my trip to Idaho in June 1990 with the Goldeneye Nature Tours. We had seen the full page in *Bird Watcher's Digest* and had written to the company. The following Sunday the owner, John Shipley, called us and we had the opportunity of discussing the various tours offered. We were originally hot to go to southern Arizona, but the Idaho tour sounded bizarre enough that we signed up.

So on a Friday afternoon we appeared at a bed and breakfast located adjacent to Caribou National Forest, which is outside Pocatello. The claim to fame of this particular lodging was the hummingbird feeders which attracted Broad-tailed, Black-chinned, Calliope, and Rufous Hummers. They also had a feeder that attracted Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings and Cassin's Finches. I don't know how cricket it is to do your birdwatching at feeders, but it is neat to stand only a yard away from the hummers and really see those purple stripes on the face of the male Calliope. It was also a good opportunity to see the difference between Cassin's and House Finches.

In the adjacent forest, which looks more like steep range land than our forests, we saw Green-tailed Towhee, Virginia's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lincoln's Sparrow (mating, no less), MacGillivray's Warbler and the Orange-crowned Warbler.

One of the big stars of the morning was--you ready?--the Catbird. This tour was composed of three women from out west who were giving their husbands' eardrums and credit cards a well-deserved week's rest, a young fellow from Philadelphia, Patsy, me, and our guide; a small group of congenial spirits. So some had never seen a Gray Catbird. Later on a stray purple Grackle in this land of Brewer's Blackbirds had hearts all aflutter. Patsy's heart was set aflutter by all the cowboys we passed. That is what she went out west to see.

The following day we went through the northern end of the Great Basin. This is one of the four deserts of the U.S.. Ever hear the term "nothing but sagebrush"? That is the Great Basin. Oh, but the smell of that sage after a rain! Maybe I'm used to the smells of the northeast; but to me the west is really a bouquet of fragrances. In the desert we saw Sage Thrashers and Sage Sparrows, Loggerhead Shrikes and a Short-eared Owl. Of course what really had us hanging out the windows was the Pronghorn Antelopes. But what I'll remember longest is having lunch in a park in Arco and visiting with the entire Parks Department. I told him his ball field looked a bit scruffy by Albany standards. He looked puzzled and said "ball field? That's the town rodeo grounds. That is the one way our kids have of going to college--rodeo scholarships." Isn't that something?

Out of the desert we traveled through Sun Valley (ski resort) to Stanley in the Sawtooth Range. Now there is a place you ought to go. Would have never known anything about the Sawtooth or teeth if it hadn't been for the guide--snow covered peaks, alpin glow, all kinds of wild flowers, cattle ranches, log cabins, elk coming down out of the hills at night, Salmon River roaring by--beauty in every direction. Stanley, Idaho. The birds weren't bad either. Ponds with all kinds of ducks. Barrow's Goldeneye, close enough that you knew you could die now you'd finally seen one. A pond full of Wilson's Phalarope spinning around. And Cinnamon Woodpeckers! Eat your heart out! Black-backed Three-toed, and not to brag, but, these eyes have also seen Lewis's Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker.

The nice thing about this tour is that the guy was more laid back than the two Victor Emanuel tours that we have been on. Here we were in paradise and the guide liked to take a nap in the afternoon, so you could explore on your own or take a nap yourself. With Victor's guys you would be in one of the vans by 6 o'clock tearing around from bird to bird all day long. This guy had us meet for breakfast at 7--a civilized hour. We really enjoyed the Victor Emanuel tours but sometimes they didn't seem like vacations. By staying three nights in Stanley we had opportunities for some very enjoyable hikes. Hiking out west is not at all like hiking in the Adirondacks. The trails aren't muddy or rocky and they don't all climb straight up. On the other hand nothing in the Adirondacks is going to eat you up. In Yellowstone (after the Goldeneye tour) we saw a number of trails closed because of BEAR HAZARD. They were talking Grizzly.

From Stanley we drove all day until 10:30 to Island Park, Montana, which is just outside Yellowstone. Huge lake there named Henry Lake. Everybody in these states is a sportsman which means hunting and fishing. We ate at a sportsmen's lodge. Filled up every morning on pancakes and syrup. A good foundation for the day. On this trip you paid for all your own meals so it was important to get the most calories for the buck. With Victor Emanuel the meals, at least some of them, were included in the cost. That meant we ate everything is sight every time we sat down and usually felt like we were still ready to explode and it would be time to start shoveling in another meal. When meals aren't included you don't eat like that, which I am sure is better for us. On Henry Lake we saw Pied-billed, Red-throated, Eared, Western and Clark's Grebes. The latter must be a new model bird 'cause it wasn't in my \$4.95 Golden Book of Birds.

Throughout the area we were privileged to see Sandhill Cranes. To me this majestic bird will symbolize the whole trip. Sandhill Cranes are reddish brown rather than the gray I expected. What a cry they have. Gives me goose pimples to recall it. Let me just mention a couple other birds of interest. We drove to the top of a mountain in the Centennial Range to see Red Crossbills, Water Pipits, and Clark's Nutcracker in the snow. What a magnificent bird. And I have to tell you about all the chestnut colors underneath the Long-billed Curlew, another guy on my 10 best-dressed list.

The trip cost us \$900 each and included the services of the leader, a comfortable van, and the lodging. We figured it would cost us about \$700 for the same car rental and motels. So we paid \$1100 to be shown places we wouldn't know about on our own. We saw 150 or so species of birds and maybe 42 that I had never seen before. This guy knew just where in a lodgepole pine forest was a nest of Great Gray Owls. You have to pay for that information of course. The guide is pressured to show us a lot of new species because this bird tour business is so competitive. But 42 in a week? I've looked at bird books almost all my life and on the three tours I have seen birds I never dreamed I would ever see. Now there are so few of the great birds left that I haven't seen. I find that depressing. Imagine if you spread the pleasure of seeing so many new birds out over several years and actually found them yourself or with our bird club. I think I would enjoy that way more. The trip was certainly outstanding; but is that the way to enjoy birds?

#### FOUR EAGLE SPECIES IN ONE BIRDING TRIP

Samuel R. Madison

This is a report on an Alaskan trip in which Jim Kuethe and I saw four species of Eagle--all four Eagles that occur in the American Birding Area, which consists of North America north of the Mexican border. Our Alaska adventure began with a flight on May 18, 1990 to Anchorage where we joined an Attour Inc. trip to spend three weeks birding on Attu. On May 28th we boarded a chartered Reeves Airline flight from Anchorage to Attu, which is halfway between Anchorage and Tokyo. A report on the Attu portion of the trip will appear in a future issue of Feathers.

On June 1 we took an all-day hike from our base at Attu to Temnac Valley in search of the White-tailed Eagle, an Eurasian species and the only individual presently in North America. A pair had been resident there for several years but only one survives.

The 18-mile round trip took us up and down several ridges, over snow drifts, bogs, and small streams. It was a beautiful hike, with snow-covered mountains all the way. Quiet. Many pretty wild flowers. We drank ice-cold water from the streams (snow-melt). We walked around many deep holes, crossed barbed wire fences and were very wary of war debris including unexploded naval shells twelve inches in diameter and four feet long, reminders of the fighting in World War II.

Late in the morning we reached George's Creek, a fast rushing stream about two feet in depth which had cut a steep canyon about 90 feet deep. We got down the almost sheer wall (and back up again!) by holding onto a rope fastened securely (we hoped) at the top and hanging down the side of the cliff.

Crossing through the swift current was difficult. Some of the party got wet, but eventually we all made it. From there we commenced our hike up Temnac Valley. We were lucky. We spotted the Eagle in a short while, soaring high up the mountains. We continued on for about two miles, getting closer looks at its beige head and white tail. We also took time to examine the wreckage of an American fighter plane which had crashed in the valley.

After returning to Anchorage on June 10th we went in search of Stellar's Sea Eagle, another Asiatic species which sometimes shows up in Alaska. It had been reported in 1989 and again this year. Like the White-tailed, it is the only one of its kind in North America. It was reported in a spruce forest along the Taku river north of Juneau. The area is surrounded by rugged mountains and the river is treacherous to travel. The practical way to try for the eagle--like getting to so many places in Alaska--is by air.

None of our Attu friends were interested in making the effort. We burned up the phone lines between Anchorage and Juneau and were told that we could probably get a helicopter flight the next morning, June 12th. Late in the afternoon we flew over the Granite, Alsek, and Tongas mountain ranges, all snow covered and with dozens of glaciers, with one larger than the state of Rhode Island. Upon arrival in Juneau, we drove directly to Temsco Air and buttoned down our flight for the next morning.

At 7:15 a.m. we took off in the little helicopter, gracefully soared over several craggy mountains, and soon spotted the Stellar's perched near the top of a spruce tree. It had a monstrous orange bill and a huge white patch on its back. We were pleased that the pilot refrained from getting too close and avoided disturbing him. We did make several passes and observed the eagle from different angles. Within about 50 minutes we were back at the landing pad, mission accomplished.

But you can't afford to rest upon your laurels or your good fortune. We had already seen Bald Eagles several times in the Anchorage area, so now the challenge was to find our fourth North American eagle, the Golden. We were advised to try Perseverance Trail, an easy 3.5 mile state-maintained trail just south of Juneau. It runs along the Gold River and the site of an abandoned gold mining operation. We saw many interesting birds, several warblers, Varied Thrush, Dipper, Blue Grouse, Rock Ptarmigan, Swainson's, Gray-cheeked and Hermit Thrushes and many other birds as we walked along.

Halfway up the trail we saw an eagle soaring high on the 4000 foot mountain. It was difficult to get a good look at it, but finally we got him against a dark forest background and were disappointed to see it was a Bald. Ten minutes later, another eagle--but it too was a Bald. Shortly, a third eagle appeared soaring lower against the ridge in very good view and it was our Golden! We watched it for about 14 minutes as it soared back and forth. It was the most beautiful Golden Eagle I have ever seen.

We had seen three different species of eagle within less than four hours! And the Golden was our fourth eagle species of the trip! We

celebrated by having a cold drink in front of Juneau's Mendenhall Glacier and afterwards a late lunch/early dinner of fresh Pacific Halibut. That evening we flew back to Anchorage and returned home the next day.

^ ^ ^ HMBC FIELD TRIP REPORT ^ ^ ^ HMBC FIELD TRIP REPORT ^ ^ ^

POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK

Leamington, Ontario

May 6-9, 1990

Samuel R. Madison

Fifteen of us descended on Point Pelee late in the afternoon on Sunday May 6th. We returned three days later, working in a stop at Rondeau Provincial Park on the way home.

The birding at Pelee can be most satisfying and productive, even when the migration is slack, as it was during this year's visit. The total numbers of birds were noticeably down from previous trips except for some species such as Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warblers, Ruby-crowned kinglets, Herons, shorebirds and several species of sparrows and blackbirds. Red-headed Woodpeckers and Carolina Wrens were also numerous. Few Yellow-rumps were seen, although we eked out a total of 22 warblers, none in great numbers, including Hooded, Wilson's, Bay-breasted, Magnolia and Blue-winged.

The Pelee magic evidenced itself for one spectacular half hour on Wednesday morning when 50 observers witnessed a two-way parade through a "hole" in the woods about 40 feet away. In rapid succession the "hole" was occupied or visited by Black-throated Blue, Blue-winged, Yellow, Nashville and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Wood Thrush, Least and Great Crested Flycatchers, Indigo Bunting, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and White-eyed Vireo. Some were on scene for only a few seconds; others sat serenely for several minutes. All the while many other species sang and flew overhead. It was truly an unforgettable picture. The most beautiful view I had was of the Ovenbird perched in bright sunlight, three feet above the ground.

Rondeau contributed three nesters: Prothonotary Warbler, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Wild Turkey, which permitted us to approach within 10 feet without flushing. It also gave us our lone Summer Tanager.

A long drive, but well worth it!

\ / \ / \ /    BOOK REVIEW    \ / \ / \ /

Kenneth P. AbleA Parrot Without a Name, by Don Stap.

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Twenty years ago, most ornithologists would have stated confidently that virtually all of the world's birds had been discovered, named and described. Technically, they would have been correct because the number of new species described during the past two decades represents a vanishingly small percentage of the world avifauna of about 9,000 species. It is also true, however, that almost no one would have predicted the number or variety of new species discovered in that time. With over a dozen new species to his credit, John O'Neill of Louisiana State University, roaming the jungles and mountains of Peru, has made a singular contribution to the seemingly endless stream of new birds to be discovered in South America. For nearly thirty years, he and his colleagues have devoted much of their time to a systematic search for the last unknown birds on earth.

I first met John O'Neill in 1968 when we were graduate students together at L.S.U.. At that time, John was already a minor legend, having been directly involved in the discovery of the Orange-throated Tanager, a distinctive cotinga from mountains not far from Lima, and a cacique from the lowlands of eastern Peru. When I arrived, he was in the midst of describing and naming his latest new bird from Peru, an antpitta. In the years to follow there was an owl, a tanager or two, a flycatcher, a bird or two with uncertain affinities, and the parrot which is the centerpiece of this book. John O'Neill wants to go to places no white man has gone before. Year after year he has sought those places in Peru, spending months living in Indian villages that in many cases can be reached only by days of travel by dugout canoe. Like the home run hitter or the fast draw specialist in the Old West, people have come to expect John to come up with a new bird species on every expedition. A rare combination of luck and skill has produced a remarkable record of success. In the summer of 1968, I accompanied John on a collecting expedition to Peru, so the account in this book brought back lots of memories.

Ted Parker, the other main player in the book, wants to go where no man has ever gone, period. It is fair to say that Ted knows more about South American birds than anyone who has ever lived. In the most diverse avifauna on earth, he can walk through any habitat and identify virtually every sound he hears. When he hears something he doesn't immediately recognize, it's time to get excited. Ted and John are very different personalities and their approaches to ornithology also contrast. Stap's book captures the personality of both men well. John's early interest in birds was strongly rooted in his painting. Essentially self-taught, he is one of the top bird artists in the world today. He went to the University of Oklahoma to study with the great bird artist, George Sutton. An opportunity to spend a summer in Peru infected him with a passion for tropical birds and the rest is history. Ted became obsessed with birds during his teen-age years and went the 'birding bum' route

of big year lists and the rest. The two share a passion for the tropics and desire to know everything there is to know about the distribution and biology of neotropical birds. Between them, they know a staggering amount on that subject. But John, traditionally trained and more conservative, is willing to divide his time among field work, painting, and the often tedious process of analyzing, writing up and publishing the results of his collections and observations. Ted has never had much patience for conventional academia. He wants only to be out there in the forest learning everything he can about the birds before they are gone. There's something to be said for that, but there is the tragic possibility that much of what he has learned will never be preserved and passed on to others.

The thread of this book is a narrative about an L.S.U. expedition to a remote, unexplored mountain range called the Cordillera Divisor, near the Peruvian border with Brazil. Though I did not find the writing style very interesting, the book does capture the essence of an expedition like this. There are the long delays waiting for supplies to arrive, the inevitable confrontations with Latin American bureaucracy, the grimy towns on the edge of the wilderness, the daily activities of the expedition once it gets to the wilderness. The book is at its best when it explores, in part through their own words, the thoughts, aims and personalities of the main players. The day-to-day diary of the events of the expedition moved more slowly, although the account seems quite accurate and might be more entertaining to someone not familiar with what goes on during such an expedition.

This is a book about a kind of scientific exploration that largely disappeared during the early part of this century. As the book notes, O'Neill is one of the few people who can and does organize and carry off expeditions of this magnitude. Many would argue that this kind of work long ago reached a point of diminishing returns whence it is no longer worth the time and cost. There is a point to be made that while tropical habitats are going to hell in a hand-basket, documenting a few range extensions or even discovering a new species is akin to trying to hold back the tide. On the other hand, the bits and pieces of information discovered in this kind of work fit into a larger picture having to do with the evolutionary history and patterns of endemism in South America. In trying to make the difficult decisions as to what areas get priority for preservation, it is crucial to know where things are. At a recent conference in Brazil, Ted Parker and the knowledge from these anachronistic expeditions played an important role in helping to draw maps that identify those areas of highest endemism and diversity that are most critical for conservation. On an entirely different level, it is hard to imagine anything more exciting for an ornithologist than being part of the discovery of a new bird species. Those who have accompanied John O'Neill to Peru have come to almost expect that extraordinary thrill.

I will not divulge the details of the discovery of the parrot that is the centerpiece of the book. Suffice it to say, it did not come about in a predictable way. As with most of the new birds from Peru, this is no Cordilleran Flycatcher kind of discovery. The parrot is completely and strikingly different from all other known species, which makes one wonder how

many other new species that differ only in vocalization or subtle plumage characters are waiting to be discovered. Tragically, we may never know. With people now literally starving on the streets of Lima and most of the countryside under the control of guerillas or the drug cartels, it is impossible to conduct field work in much of Peru. For the present, O'Neill has put future field work on hold. In the meantime, the destruction continues apace.

## ALONG THE RIVER

A hawk dives like a fish in a  
wet sky. There is a  
splash and then the  
circles perform their  
aquatic ballet.

For a moment the river is still.

Bernard V. Finney, Jr.  
1988

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### THREE NEW SPECIES SIGHTED ON TROY CHRISTMAS COUNT

William W. Shuster

Sightings of Black Scoter, Carolina Wren and Long-eared Owl were firsts for the Troy Christmas Count, held on December 29, 1990. A record of 27,112 individuals was tallied with 11,880 Canada Geese making up the major part of the total. Some 64 species were seen on the count day. On the following day Alice Ross visited the Tomhannock area and among her sightings were 2 Ruddy Ducks, 2 Hooded Mergansers, and 1 Northern Shrike, none of which had been seen on the count day. Ruddy Ducks have not been previously recorded for the Troy Christmas Count.

The total of birds seen included record numbers of Canada Geese, Ring-necked Ducks, Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls. On the other hand, only two flocks of Evening Grosbeaks were seen, perhaps because of the mild fall and recent winter weather. Woodpeckers were in fewer numbers than usual and only one Robin was spotted. Relatively heavy rainfall in recent months has kept the water level high in reservoirs and streams resulting in few shore bird sightings.

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

Six field parties that included fifteen individuals took part in the Count this year. Two feeder observers reported sightings. The count was held during the period of 6:00 a.m. to about 4:30 p.m.. Mild weather prevailed ranging from 32 degrees Fahrenheit to 46 degrees Fahrenheit with south winds varying from 0 mph to gusts of about 15 mph. The day started with rainy drizzle and remained cloudy with occasional showers. Much of the few inches of snow cover melted during the day. Most of the streams and other bodies of water were free of ice with a few minor exceptions. Total party-hours were 51.25 with 23.0 hours afoot and 28.25 hours by car. The total party-miles were 392 with 23 miles on foot and 369 miles by car.

#### KEY TO GROUPS

Group A: Tomhannock area. William Gorman, Monte Gruett. 6:15 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.. 3 hours afoot. 4.75 hours by car, 0.75 hours owling. 2 miles afoot, 50 miles by car, 10 miles owling. Ring-necked Duck, Long-eared Owl, American Robin, Brown-headed Cowbird, Evening Grosbeak.

- Group B: Melrose to Schaghticoke, Speigletown. William Shuster, Patricia Canavan, Ruthanna Worrell. 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.. 1 hour afoot, 7 hours by car, 2 hours owling. 2 miles afoot, 60 miles by car, 6 miles owling. Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Common Grackle, Horned Lark.
- Group C: Hudson River Area. Samuel Madison, Clifford Lamere, LeRoy Seuss. 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 5 hours afoot, 3 hours by car. 4.5 miles afoot, 46 miles by car. Ring-necked Pheasant, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Black Scoter, Pine Siskin, Snow Bunting.
- Group D: Mohawk River, Cohoes, Green Island. Rebecca Holberton, William Cook. 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 4 hours afoot, 6 hours by car. 4 miles afoot, 85 miles by car. Brown Creeper, Greater Scaup, Merlin, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Screech Owl.
- Group E: Waterford, Half-Moon, Lower Saratoga County. Robert Budliger, William Lee, Jane Graves. 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 4 hours afoot, 5.5 hours by car. 2 miles afoot, 82 miles by car. Ruffed Grouse, Iceland Gull, Fox Sparrow, Carolina Wren.
- Group F: Center Brunswick, Eagle Mills. Marilyn and Norman Fancher. 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. 6 hours afoot, 3 hours by car. 6 miles afoot, 44 miles by car. Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Snow Goose, Red-breasted Nuthatch.
- Group X: Feeder Report. Nancy Shuster, John Delano. Downy Woodpecker, Cardinal, Evening Grosbeak.

TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 29, 1990

\* \* \* \* \* G R O U P S \* \* \* \* \*

| SPECIES             | A      | B   | C  | D   | E   | F   | X | TOTAL  |
|---------------------|--------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|---|--------|
| Great Blue Heron    | 1      |     | 1  |     |     |     |   | 2      |
| Snow Goose          | 3      |     |    |     |     | 1   |   | 4      |
| Canada Goose        | 10,900 | 750 | 54 | 22  | 18  | 136 |   | 11,880 |
| American Black Duck | 55     |     | 64 | 100 | 109 | 28  |   | 356    |
| Mallard             | 43     |     | 34 | 108 | 26  | 250 |   | 461    |
| Ring-necked Duck    | 102    |     |    |     |     |     |   | 102    |
| Greater Scaup       |        |     |    |     | 1   |     |   | 1      |
| Common Goldeneye    | 2      |     | 13 | 14  | 2   |     |   | 31     |
| Black Scoter        |        |     | 40 |     |     |     |   | 40     |
| Common Merganser    | 2      |     | 66 | 80  | 27  |     |   | 175    |

## FEATHERS

FALL 1990

|                          |     |     |      |     |      |     |    |       |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|------|-----|----|-------|
| Bald Eagle               |     | 1   |      |     |      |     |    | 1     |
| Northern Harrier         |     | 1   |      | 2   |      | 1   |    | 4     |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk       |     | 4   |      |     | 1    |     |    | 5     |
| Cooper's Hawk            |     | 1   |      |     |      | 1   |    | 2     |
| Red-tailed Hawk          | 14  | 8   | 8    | 9   | 6    | 6   |    | 51    |
| Rough-legged Hawk        |     | 4   |      |     |      |     |    | 4     |
| American Kestrel         | 1   |     | 1    |     |      | 1   |    | 3     |
| Merlin                   |     |     |      |     | 1    |     |    | 1     |
| Ring-necked Pheasant     |     |     | 1    |     |      |     |    | 1     |
| Ruffed Grouse            |     |     |      | 2   |      | 5   |    | 7     |
| Ring-billed Gull         | 17  |     | 148  | 120 | 283  |     |    | 568   |
| Herring Gull             | 42  | 452 | 1075 | 970 | 2891 |     |    | 5,430 |
| Iceland Gull             |     |     |      | 1   |      |     |    | 1     |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull |     |     |      |     | 1    |     |    | 1     |
| Great Black-backed Gull  | 10  |     | 123  | 317 | 974  |     |    | 1,424 |
| Rock Dove                | 100 | 30  | 226  | 270 | 80   | 331 |    | 1,037 |
| Mourning Dove            | 22  | 97  | 64   | 35  | 58   | 110 | 2  | 388   |
| Eastern Screech-Owl      |     |     |      |     | 1    |     |    | 1     |
| Great Horned Owl         | 8   | 1   |      |     | 1    |     |    | 10    |
| Long-eared Owl           | 1   |     |      |     |      |     |    | 1     |
| Belted Kingfisher        |     |     | 1    | 1   |      |     |    | 2     |
| Downy Woodpecker         | 4   | 7   | 2    | 16  | 10   | 8   | 4  | 51    |
| Hairy Woodpecker         | 2   | 1   | 1    | 2   | 3    |     | 1  | 10    |
| Northern Flicker         |     |     | 3    | 2   |      | 2   |    | 7     |
| Horned Lark              |     | 80  |      |     |      |     |    | 80    |
| Blue Jay                 | 53  | 10  | 39   | 24  | 12   | 16  | 4  | 158   |
| American Crow            | 252 | 69  | 23   | 110 | 78   | 244 |    | 776   |
| Black-capped Chickadee   | 51  | 46  | 19   | 123 | 79   | 69  | 16 | 403   |
| Tufted Titmouse          | 3   | 3   | 4    | 15  | 10   | 4   | 3  | 42    |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch    |     |     |      | 2   |      |     | 2  | 4     |
| White-breasted Nuthatch  | 6   | 4   | 1    | 4   | 12   | 9   | 1  | 37    |
| Brown Creeper            |     |     |      | 1   |      |     |    | 1     |
| Carolina Wren            |     |     |      | 2   |      |     |    | 2     |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet   |     |     |      |     |      | 2   |    | 2     |
| Eastern Bluebird         | 4   |     |      | 2   |      |     |    | 6     |
| American Robin           | 1   |     |      |     |      |     |    | 1     |
| Gray Catbird             |     |     |      | 1   |      |     |    | 1     |
| Northern Mockingbird     | 1   |     | 1    | 3   | 3    | 1   |    | 9     |
| Cedar Waxwing            |     |     |      |     |      | 5   |    | 5     |
| European Starling        | 102 | 264 | 417  | 390 | 370  | 628 |    | 2171  |
| Northern Cardinal        | 10  | 3   |      | 26  | 11   | 8   | 3  | 61    |
| American Tree Sparrow    | 65  | 39  | 24   | 122 | 20   | 8   | 2  | 280   |
| Fox Sparrow              |     |     |      | 1   |      |     |    | 1     |
| Song Sparrow             | 3   | 5   |      | 7   | 5    | 2   |    | 22    |
| White-throated Sparrow   |     |     | 1    | 20  | 5    | 2   |    | 28    |
| Dark-eyed Junco          | 34  | 11  | 2    | 26  | 13   | 14  | 6  | 106   |
| Snow Bunting             |     |     | 120  | 2   |      |     |    | 122   |
| Common Grackle           |     | 2   |      |     |      |     |    | 2     |
| Brown-headed Cowbird     | 52  |     |      |     |      |     |    | 52    |

**FEATHERS****FALL 1990**

|                    |    |    |    |    |    |     |   |     |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|---|-----|
| House Finch        | 4  | 6  | 19 | 90 | 24 | 32  | 1 | 176 |
| Pine Siskin        |    |    | 2  |    |    |     |   | 2   |
| American Goldfinch | 8  | 7  | 7  | 10 | 12 | 24  |   | 81  |
| Evening Grosbeak   | 31 |    |    |    |    |     |   | 31  |
| House Sparrow      | 36 | 44 | 69 | 20 | 54 | 145 |   | 368 |

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|                     |               |              |              |              |              |              |           |               |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| <b>TOTAL COUNT:</b> | <b>12,045</b> | <b>1,950</b> | <b>2,673</b> | <b>3,071</b> | <b>5,027</b> | <b>2,092</b> | <b>41</b> | <b>27,112</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|

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|                       |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>TOTAL SPECIES:</b> | <b>37</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>34</b> | <b>39</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>64</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|

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**Seen During the Week:**

- 1 Northern Shrike
- 2 Hooded Mergansers
- 2 Ruddy Ducks

**1990 SOUTHERN RENSSELAER COUNTY CHRISTMAS COUNT**

The 1990 Southern Rensselaer Christmas Bird Count was held on December 22, 1990. A total of 53 species (15,117 individuals) were sighted.

The weather was cloudy with temperatures ranging from 40 to 56 degrees Fahrenheit and winds from the southwest at 10 to 15 miles per hour. The count took place between the hours of 5:45 am and 5:30 pm. Five groups participated in the count.

**KEY TO GROUPS**

Group A: Richard Guthrie, Andrew Guthrie, Tom Williams, Betsy Franz

Group B: William Lee, Walton Sabin

Group C: Monte Gruett

Group D: David Gorman, William Gorman

Group E: Richard Phillion

## 1990 SOUTHERN RENSSELAER COUNTY CHRISTMAS COUNT

December 22, 1990

\* \* \* \* \* G R O U P S \* \* \* \* \*

| SPECIES                 | A   | B   | C   | D   | E   | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Great Blue Heron        |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1     |
| Snow Goose              |     | 1   |     |     | 1   | 2     |
| Canada Goose            | 30  | 280 | 133 | 5   | 300 | 748   |
| American Black Duck     | 2   | 2   |     | 2   |     | 6     |
| Mallard                 | 51  | 69  | 24  | 34  |     | 178   |
| Canvasback              | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1     |
| Ring-necked Duck        |     | 1   |     |     |     | 1     |
| Lesser Scaup            |     | 1   |     |     |     | 1     |
| Common Merganser        | 20  |     |     |     | 1   | 21    |
| Bald Eagle              | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1     |
| Northern Harrier        | 1   | 3   | 1   | 1   | 2   | 8     |
| Cooper's Hawk           | 1   |     | 1   | 1   |     | 3     |
| Red-tailed Hawk         | 2   | 4   | 1   | 2   | 1   | 10    |
| Rough-legged Hawk       |     |     |     | 2   |     | 2     |
| American Kestrel        | 1   | 1   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 7     |
| Ring-necked Pheasant    |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1     |
| Ruffed Grouse           | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1     |
| Ring-billed Gull        | 27  | 1   | 18  | 500 | 7   | 553   |
| Herring Gull            | 11  | 9   |     | 50  | 2   | 72    |
| Great Black-backed Gull | 8   |     |     | 50  |     | 58    |
| Rock Dove               | 20  | 107 | 16  | 100 | 80  | 323   |
| Mourning Dove           | 177 | 37  | 34  | 95  | 28  | 371   |
| Eastern Screech-Owl     | 1   |     |     |     |     | 1     |
| Great Horned Owl        |     |     | 1   | 1   |     | 2     |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker  |     |     |     | 1   |     | 1     |
| Downy Woodpecker        | 10  | 4   | 6   | 12  | 6   | 38    |
| Hairy Woodpecker        | 7   | 1   | 2   | 2   |     | 12    |
| Northern Flicker        | 1   | 1   | 1   |     |     | 3     |
| Pileated Woodpecker     |     | 1   | 1   |     |     | 2     |
| Blue Jay                | 7   | 26  | 9   | 46  | 10  | 98    |
| American Crow           | 9   | 99  | 12  | 60  | 25  | 205   |
| Black-capped Chickadee  | 65  | 100 | 39  | 43  | 36  | 283   |
| Tufted Titmouse         | 8   | 8   | 8   | 8   | 7   | 39    |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch   | 2   | 2   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 10    |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 10  | 7   | 6   | 16  | 11  | 50    |
| Brown Creeper           | 2   | 2   | 1   |     |     | 5     |
| Eastern Bluebird        |     |     |     |     | 7   | 7     |
| American Robin          |     | 1   | 2   | 2   |     | 5     |
| Northern Mockingbird    | 1   | 1   |     | 3   | 2   | 7     |

## FEATHERS

FALL 1990

|                        |     |       |     |        |       |        |
|------------------------|-----|-------|-----|--------|-------|--------|
| Cedar Waxwing          |     |       | 5   |        |       | 5      |
| European Starling      | 250 | 275   | 300 | 10000  | 450   | 11,275 |
| Northern Cardinal      | 7   |       | 1   | 8      | 2     | 18     |
| American Tree Sparrow  | 16  |       | 2   | 6      | 1     | 25     |
| Song Sparrow           | 5   |       |     | 4      |       | 9      |
| Swamp Sparrow          |     |       |     |        | 1     | 1      |
| White-throated Sparrow | 21  |       |     | 2      |       | 23     |
| Dark-eyed Junco        | 27  | 3     | 1   | 7      | 4     | 42     |
| Red-winged Blackbird   | 1   |       |     |        |       | 1      |
| Purple Finch           |     |       |     | 2      |       | 2      |
| House Finch            | 64  | 83    | 9   | 14     | 24    | 194    |
| American Goldfinch     | 9   | 6     | 5   |        | 2     | 22     |
| Evening Grosbeak       |     | 51    |     |        | 7     | 58     |
| House Sparrow          | 112 | 34    | 74  | 10     | 75    | 305    |
| -----                  |     |       |     |        |       |        |
| TOTAL COUNT:           | 989 | 1,221 | 716 | 11,095 | 1,096 | 15,117 |
| -----                  |     |       |     |        |       |        |
| TOTAL SPECIES:         | 38  | 31    | 30  | 36     | 28    | 53     |

[NOTE: This report was compiled from the field notes for this count.]

## TOMHANNOCK RESERVOIR

November 3, 1990

Very mild and pleasant weather was the order of the day for some 18 birders for the field trip around the Tomhannock Reservoir. The temperature was initially at about 60 degrees Fahrenheit and gradually rose to 75 degrees by early afternoon. The day started with essentially no wind and only light breezes developed during the day.

Due to rather heavy rainfall that occurred during the past summer and fall, the Reservoir was filled to overflowing. Consequently very little shoreline was exposed and no shore birds were seen.

Many Canada Geese and a few Snow Geese were seen on the Reservoir, with large flocks coming and going. An interesting sighting was a Blue-phase Snow Goose plainly visible to all the birders. Among the species of waterfowl seen were Ruddy Ducks, both Common and Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Common Loon, and both Pied-billed and Horned Grebe. Many American Coot were also noted. Hawks sighted included Cooper's, Red-tailed, Sharp-shinned, and Northern Harrier. In all some 40 species were seen by the group.

A big disappointment was finding that nearby Harrington's Pond had been drained and there were no birds to be seen there or in the surrounding fields. It may be that the farm is no longer being operated because of the recent death of Mr. Harrington.

Bill Shuster

### CONNECTICUT COAST

September 29, 1990

Trip Leader: Kevin McGrath  
Number in party: 6  
Weather: Warm and sunny, Wind NE 10 knots  
Species count: 72

Highlights: Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Peregrine Falcon

As usual, the Connecticut coast trip was successful in producing the difficult to get species noted in the highlights. It was a long, difficult day of birding with a poor showing in terms of individuals, as birds were sparse.

We started out the morning at Lighthouse Park in East Haven, CT. The park is the traditional Hawk watch of the New Haven Bird Club and Southern CT Audubon. The steady 10 knot wind from the NE kept a flow of hawks moving over the whole time we were there. At the banding station we arrived just in time to see a beautiful immature Red-tailed being released. We also had a Cooper's Hawk come down and buzz the pigeon (the bait), just missing the net. The passerines were very disappointing and almost non-existent.

Swinging around the harbor we picked up a few shorebirds and waterfowl and then arrived at Sandy Hook. The hook is a large split spit jutting out into the harbor a half mile and nearly enclosing a large tidal lagoon. The west side has been an excellent location over the years for Sharp-tailed Sparrows and today was no exception. Additionally, we were given an excellent show of avian antics by a pair of comical Clapper Rails, which were acting like Snowy Egret/Phalaropes. They were darting out of the grass, lunging at things, spinning around and darting back.

We left the hook for Milford Point, the estuary of the Housatonic River and a premiere Connecticut Coast birding spot. We came up empty in the woodlot on our way to the beach (I mean it was D E A D !!!). The next hour was spent struggling to pick up species here and there, accentuated by a fantastic Peregrine who, apparently sensing our frustration with the avifauna,



took a 90 degree turn and overflowed us at less than 150 feet. It was great and really cheered us up.

Returning through the woodlot to depart we were surprised and pleased by a sudden flurry of passerine activity. It started with a Carolina Wren and a Redstart that caught my attention as we were preparing to get in the cars (we had already passed through and logged out) to leave. In quick succession we picked up Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Parula, Northern Waterthrush, and the highlight of the trip, Orange-crowned Warbler.

A personal note: the Orange-crowned caps the Eastern warblers for me. I spent twenty years skulking around coastal spots in the Fall hunting for this bird and always seemed to be in the wrong spot. On one club field trip we got within 100 feet of one, another group having just spotted it, but couldn't pish-pish it up. I am delighted to have finally gotten my Orange-crowned Warbler this year. Ironically, it was in Arizona last April. This one does count for my Eastern and Connecticut lists and is still a great catch any time, but oooohh!

Heading homeward and inland we made our final stop at my in-law's farm in Easton to pad the day list with more passerines. And we did! As a rule Farms are good for Finches and today was no exception. We finished the day with 72 species which we worked very hard for. I'm very disappointed with the migration this year. Both coming and going was slow and sparse. I hope you had better luck and wish you'd call and tell me where!

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