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BIRDING THE HMBC REGION:

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles detailing individual birding hot-spots in the greater Capital Area. The articles will discuss topics including strategies for birding each area, what birds to look for and when to look. Well-known birding areas as well as little-investigated areas which appear to have good birding potential will be covered. Unsolicited contributions to the series are encouraged!!

Five Rivers is regarded by many as the best place to begin birding in the Capital District. It is centrally located, hosts a wide variety of bird species and offers a sight-specific bird checklist. The Center is operated by the Department of Environmental Conservation and is staffed by people knowledgeable about birds and birding.

Educational programs for the public are offered all year including bird walks, bird identification courses and workshops on various bird-related subjects. Stop at the Interpretive Building for a schedule of programs and a copy of the bird checklist. You can get these items through the mail by calling the Center office at (518)475-0291.

The Five Rivers grounds are birded extensively and you will find good "intelligence" available about the birds at Five Rivers. A "Birder's Board" exhibit can be found in the bird watching room of the Interpretive Building. It has a list of recent sightings and an annual list of "first sighting

dates" for each species. The bird watching area is nicely arranged for bird observation, with large windows overlooking an active feeding station. The Center feeds birds year-round and a heated bird bath provides water. During winter, 12-15 species are regulars at the feeding station.

Directions:

From the center of Delmar travel south-west on Route 443 (Delaware Avenue) and watch for signs to Five Rivers. The turn is just over one mile past the Bethlehem High School. Turn right onto Orchard Street and left on Game Farm Road, which brings you to the main parking area and the Interpretive Building (see Figure 1).

Inside This Issue....

Birding the Pribilofs

*The Federation of New York State
Bird Clubs*

Birding Cape May

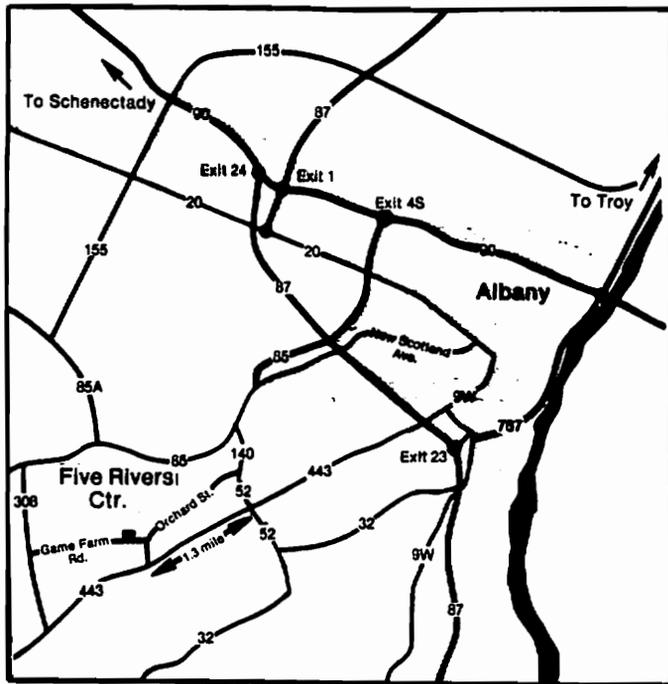


Figure 1.

The Site:

Set on gently rolling terrain and cut by a wide stream valley, the Center's 328 acres present a good variety of habitats for birds. In the course of a two or three hour walk you can cover forest (both conifer and deciduous), field, brushland, stream, pond, marsh (a small amount), and lawn habitats. The grounds are open during daylight hours every day of the year. Hours for the Interpretive Building are 9:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Saturday, and 1-5:00 pm on Sunday. The building is closed on some major holidays.

Over 60 nesting species are present on the grounds. The Center's composite list of bird sightings (1973-1992) numbers 207 species. Over 140 species are recorded each year.

What to Look For:

Birding at Five Rivers is interesting at any time of year, so each season is discussed here.

Spring:

Migration starts with the returning Red-winged Blackbirds in late February or early March, and continues on through late May, when Willow Flycatchers finally make an appearance. Canada Geese, Mallards and American Black Ducks frequent the ponds as soon as the ice goes out. Other waterfowl stop at the Center's ponds through March and April, but only Wood Ducks, Mallards, and the Geese stay to nest. A migrating Osprey is usually seen fishing the ponds for a day or two in mid-April.

Through March and April the early-returning birds appear - Eastern Phoebe, Winter Wren (along the Vlomankill), Swallows (Barn, Tree and Northern Rough-winged stay to nest), American Woodcock, Common Snipe, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers, and Louisiana Waterthrush (along the Vlomankill Trail).

The Center can be good for warblers in early May. Check the Norway Spruce trees that border the lawns and paths near the Interpretive Building. Nesting warbler species include Yellow, Blue-winged, Prairie (suspected), Chestnut-sided (declining), Ovenbird and American Redstart. The nesting vireos are Red-eyed, Warbling and Yellow-throated (not every year).

Two of the favorite nesting species at the Center are Eastern Bluebird (three or four pair) and Canada Goose (up to 7 pairs hatch their broods during the first week in May). Nest boxes for bluebirds are widely scattered around the grounds - ask at the office for the locations of active bluebird nests. Tree Swallows and House Wrens also use these nest boxes.

Other breeders of note include Green-backed Heron, Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Crested Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. American Woodcock make their dusk and dawn mating flights from early



Feathers

March through June. The traditional locations for their courting are grassy areas along the Old Field Trail. However, no Woodcocks were found displaying on the grounds during 1990 and 1991. They were back in 1992, doing their "sky dance" over the large field east of the Old Field Trail.

Bobolinks make their way back from Argentina in early May and patrol their nesting territories in the fields. Northern Rough-winged Swallows nest under the Game Farm Road bridge near the Beaver Tree Trail. Last to return, in most years, are Willow Flycatchers that nest in the brush-covered fields.

Summer

Nesting continues for some species, with Bluebirds bringing off second broods in late June and early July. Canada Geese leave the Center with their newly-airborne young in late July, but will make occasional appearances through freeze-up in late fall. American Goldfinches start their broods in July, when thistle down is available for nest building. Look for Wood Duck families which are easily seen in the Beaver and Heron Ponds during the last half of summer.

August brings the southerly migration of warblers - expect any of the northerly-nesting species. Great Blue Herons appear at the ponds in August, their nesting completed at

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

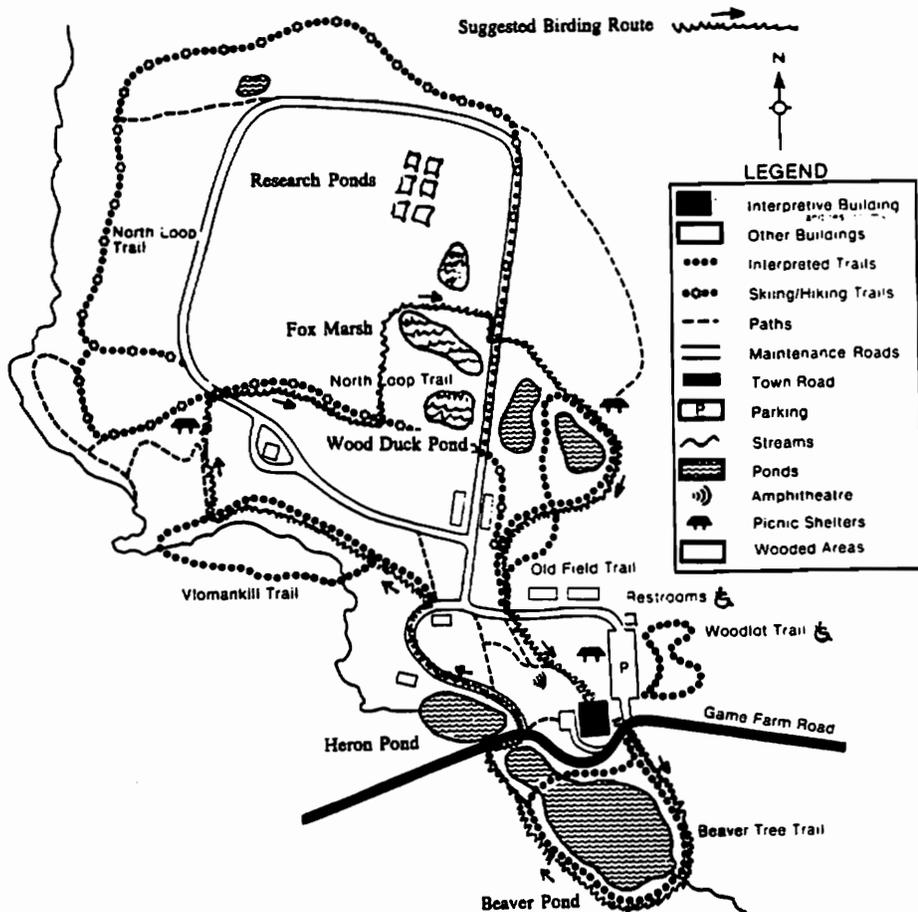


Figure 2



rookeries elsewhere in the Capital District.

Swallows gather on wires and feed over the fields in preparation for migration. The local nesters are sometimes joined by Bank and Cliff Swallows from elsewhere in the region. Cedar Waxwings are very much in evidence along the Beaver Tree Trail, feeding on insects over the pond. Migrant shorebirds should be looked for at the research ponds and at Fox Marsh, which often has exposed mud flats.

Autumn

Migration continues, with some species leaving for points south and others arriving to spend the winter. White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco come to stay - White-crowned Sparrow, Winter Wren and late-moving warblers pass through. Migrants like Lincoln's Sparrow and Rusty Blackbird should be watched for. Check the ponds early in the morning during October and November for migrating waterfowl like Hooded Merganser, Green-winged Teal or an occasional diving duck.

Northern Harrier becomes a fairly common sight in fall, coursing low over the fields. Great Blue Heron, Mallard, and American Black Duck will feed in the ponds through freeze-up.

Winter

The Center's feeding station becomes a focal point as winter sets in. Most outings begin and end at the windows overlooking the feeders. All the expected feeder birds of the area are there, with several Northern Cardinals and a group of Blue Jays splashing their colors against a drab background.

Winter finches are, of course, erratic in their occurrence, but during flight years Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls dine on niger seed at the feeding station. Pine Grosbeak and either Crossbill are possible; the

grosbeaks are found only one out of 8 years, Red or White-winged Crossbills appear one out of four years. American Goldfinches are regulars at the feeders, along with assorted wintering sparrows. White-throated and American Tree Sparrows are found in good numbers and several wintering Song Sparrows are usually present. You might find a late-lingering White-crowned, Field or Fox Sparrow.

Birders afield on the northern part of the grounds can expect hunting Northern Harrier (found in any season but summer) and Red-tailed Hawk. Occasionally a Rough-legged Hawk or Northern Shrike can be found. Surprisingly, Northern Shrike was present in the fields during 5 of the 6 years from 1987-92.

A highlight of winter birding at Five Rivers is the New Year's Day Count. The event is open to the public and serves to start the year's bird sighting list.

How To Work The Area

The Interpretive Building is the place to begin, of course. Pick up a trail map and a checklist, and look at the recent sightings on the Birders' Board. If you arrive before opening time, look around the corner of the building at the feeding area on the south side.

You can find the best variety of birds by visiting each of the habitat types on the grounds. With that goal in mind, the staff has established a standardized route of travel for bird walks. Beginning on the Beaver Tree Trail and returning by way of the Old Field Trail, the route is shown on the accompanying map. At a leisurely pace, this walk will take about three hours and covers 2.5 miles or so. For the ambitious, this route can be stretched at several points to visit the far reaches of the property. Please note: no dogs or other pets are allowed at the Center.

see 5 Rivers on page 12



Feathers

V.55N1

Page 5

Birding the Pribilofs

Alaska - a vast and rugged land that offers some of the greatest birding adventures in North America! One such destination is St. Paul Island, one of Alaska's Pribilofs, a remote 7x14 mile island in the Bering Sea. This author visit there in June of 1992 on a tour lead by Dave Stejskal and Chris Benesh of Field Guides, Inc.

The weather was crisp and clear as we departed Anchorage for St. Paul on an old 4-engine turboprop Lockheed Electra L-188. The plane was 35 years old. There are only a few of these still in service in the U.S., but they are well-suited for the 1500 foot unpaved runway at St. Paul and we were confident given the reputation of Reeve Aleutian pilots. The flight west from Anchorage was smooth, and offered an excellent view of the massive mountains of interior Alaska. After a while we passed over the edge of the land mass and headed out across the Bering Sea. Approaching the St. Paul area, about 800 miles from Anchorage, the weather deteriorated. The pilot informed us that an aircraft ahead of us had "gone around" on its first landing attempt and that we would be holding with the hope that conditions would improve!



I don't know if that other plane managed to land or if it had to turn back, but after a while we began our descent. We crossed over

the edge of the island and seemed close to touchdown when they suddenly increased power, retracted the flaps and pulled up. Soon after this missed approach came an announcement that we would go back into a holding pattern and try again if conditions sufficiently improved!



After another wait, and close to the point of having to leave for fuel, we made a second attempt and this time landed to a cheer of relief from the passengers! There is no terminal at St. Paul nor any control tower. We were met by a local guide who would drive us around the island for the next three days.

On the short ride to the hotel, we got a preview of the days to come: a **Red Phalarope** and a **Black Turnstone** at the edge of a pond next to the road. Both were life birds; the first of 19 that I would see on this Island.

St. Paul is a fishing/canning community that boasts the largest population of Aleuts in Alaska. Our home for three nights was the King Eider Hotel, rustic-looking but very nice and the only hotel on the island! Meals were taken cafeteria-style at a facility two blocks away, overlooking the water. The food was excellent, and included reindeer sausage and fresh-caught fish.

One of many highlights of this small island was the seabird colony at the high cliffs at Ridgewall. It was literally jam-packed with such specialties as **Horned and Tufted Puffin, Least, Crested and Parakeet Auklet, Red-faced Cormorant, Red-legged Kittiwake and Northern Fulmar!**

There are no trees on St. Paul Island, and the tundra was still brown in early June. Passerines were few and far between, but were of great interest. **Rosy Finches** were



EDUCATION COMMITTEE REBORN - NEEDS HELP!

found near town and **Snow Buntings** were also present. The real highlight, worth every minute of an evening hike across very rocky terrain, was a great view of a **McKay's Bunting**, which is a true Bering Sea specialty. After that hike, a glance at the watch told us it was 9:00 p.m., but the sun still shone brightly and it felt like midday. The sun does set on St. Paul, but not until 12:12 a.m.!

Waterfowl were present as well, but the **Steller's Eider and Eurasian Wigeon** paled in comparison to a great, near-shore view of an **Emperor Goose**! One evening most of the group even got to see a **Bean Goose** Fly by! We spent the rest of the evening on a "wild goose chase" searching unsuccessfully for a spot it might have landed. We returned to the hotel at 11:45 p.m. with the light finally getting dim.



The next morning at breakfast, this monstrous goose appeared again, flying past the window of the dining hall! Somebody yelled out "Bean Goose"! and the room emptied.. But alas, I had only a second glimpse of a distant, departing bird!

Other birding highlights of the trip included **Arctic Loon, Bar-tailed Godwit, Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwake and Short-eared Owl**. Mammals present included **Northern Fur Seals, Arctic Fox** and a herd of **reindeer** that had long ago been brought over from Nome.

Our fabulous visit ended with an uneventful flight to Anchorage, a much-increased life list and many happy memories!



— *Scott Stoner*

The Club has recently reactivated its Education Committee and I am thrilled to be the new committee chairperson. So far, the committee consists of one person -- me. I am planning a number of bird education activities for 1993 and I need your help to make these activities a success. If you have an interest in serving on the committee or simply helping with one of the activities, please contact me at 426-4151. I look forward to hearing from you!

Our first series of bird education lectures has been scheduled for consecutive Monday nights March 22, March 29 and April 5, 1993. The lectures will be held at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar and will begin at 7:30 p.m. They will feature bird biology, behavior and ecology (see the separate flyer).

You are encouraged to attend any or all of the classes. Class size may be limited, so please call Lisa Peterson at 426-4151 to reserve your place in the classes. We hope to see you at one or all of the workshops!

— *Lisa Peterson*

Rare Bird Alert Phone Chain to Be Revised

Long-time member Bill Lee is currently the head person on HMBC's rare-bird phone chain, a club service designed to alert bird chasers of local rarities. When a member of the chain gets a rare bird report, the first step is to call Bill. He then calls the top two people on his list, each of them calls two others, etc, etc. Each member of the chain has the responsibility to make sure that word gets passed on. If one of their people can't be reached, the next two below that person must be called.

The phone chain will soon be revised. Anyone interested in being on the chain should contact Bill at 374-3426. Only people who are active chasers of rare birds need apply, but if you are, please do.



Feathers

V.55N1

Page 7

Program Reviews

The Natural Northwest - SUNYA Natural History Lecture Series

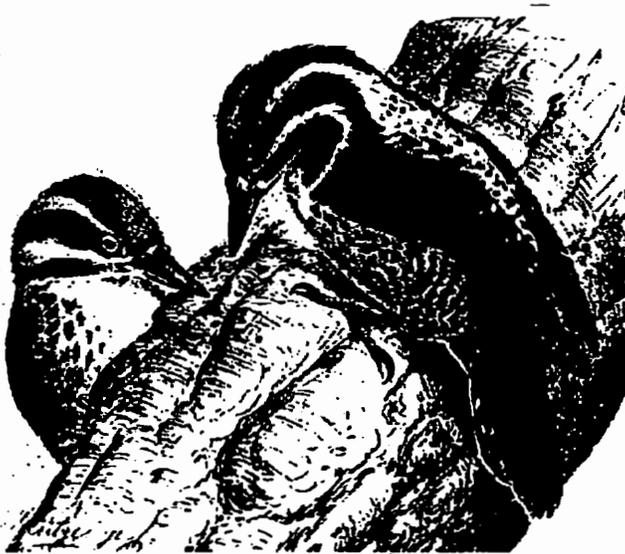
HMBC, along with the SUNYA Atmospheric Sciences Research Center and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, sponsored the October 20th installment of the Natural History Lecture Series at SUNYA. The evening's presentation started with a detailed weather briefing - a regular feature of the lecture series - clearly indicating the sponsorship. In addition to details about the current week's weather, we also learned that the past summer was the coldest season in 77 years and the 3rd coldest on record (since 1895).

The main talk was presented by Mark Garland, a former Audubon Naturalist in Washington's Olympic National Park. The description of the talk promised discussion on the Cascades, Olympic, the Pacific Ocean coast and Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. I was particularly intrigued by the presentation topic since we had visited these places in May/June of 1990.

The opening slides illustrated why the West is so spectacular, as we were shown views of mountain ranges including glaciers on Mt. Rainier. Among the scenic vistas, pictures of Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Clark's Nutcracker and friendly (unlike those in NY) Gray Jays provided some background on the species to be seen in the Cascade Ranges. Mark also described how glaciers can be studied by counting the "rings".

Some of the most spectacular slides were of the changes at Mt. St. Helens. In addition to

the photography, some of the facts are amazing - Spirit Lake, which appeared to be a substantial body of water, was MOVED several dozen yards. In addition, the forests which once covered the mountain were completely destroyed. Today, some new vegetation is developing, but there will not be forests there for a long time.



Moving away from the mountains, we visited Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. This area is a cold desert where sage brush is the most common vegetation. It is a stark, but charming area. One of the more interesting facts was that the water that drains from the area does not reach the oceans, but simply drains into lakes. When too much precipitation occurs, then the lake expands, and in one case this caused the

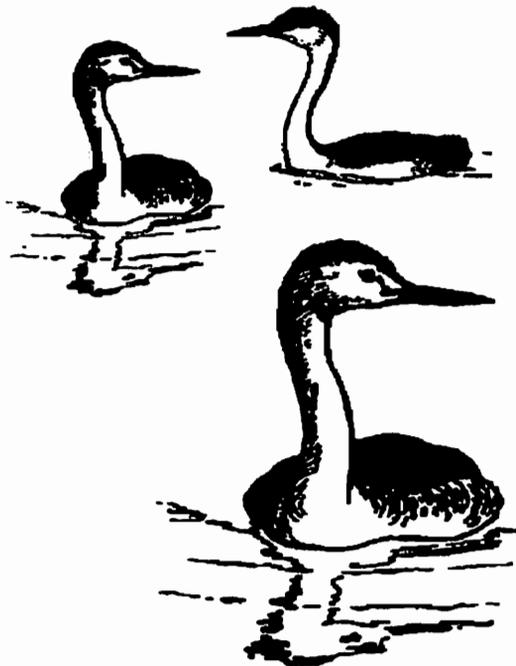
evacuation of several homes. Several bird species can be found breeding at Malheur including Great Horned Owl, bitterns, White-face Ibis, White Pelican, Trumpeter Swans and shorebirds, including Long-billed Curlew and Wilson's Phalarope.

A large portion of the talk focused on the Olympic peninsula of Washington state, in the northwest tip of the continental US. There are 60 active glaciers, even though the highest peak is less than 8000 feet. This is due primarily to the large amounts of precipitation - over 200", mostly as snow, that are received on the western slopes each year. Unlike the Cascades, these mountains are a result of oceanic sediments, not volcanic material and are relatively new mountains. In the lower elevations, we find temperate rain forests where new trees grow from fallen logs rather than competing on the ground for nutrients.

Feathers



We were shown several bird species that can be found in the mountains, at the beaches or in the rain forest, including Lewis' Woodpecker, Black Oystercatcher, Rhinoceros Auklet, Black-bellied Plover, Hutton's Vireo, Burrowing Owl, 3 different grouse species, and Red-throated Loon. A brief discussion of the logging vs. Spotted Owl controversy was mentioned pointing out that it is not simply an issue of a single species, but more the need to protect a complete ecosystem.



The Olympics are host to several wildflower species which cover the alpine meadows during the summer months. Unlike the eastern mountains where the tree line is determined by altitude, in the Olympics the tree line is determined by the snow cover. In fact, trees may reappear at the top of ridges, because the snow is blown off the top into valleys allowing trees to develop. Since our visit was too early, we were able to see a great deal of snow, but very little of the meadows covered in wildflowers - our next visit will have to be in late July.

My favorite anecdote of the evening was the

discovery of a Marbled Murrelet in the rain forest. The nesting habitat of the Marbled Murrelet was not conclusively determined until the mid-1970's (see August 1992 issue of *Birder's World*). These seabirds are dependent on the same old-growth forest as the Spotted Owl. Mark told us how a Park visitor once came into the Ranger station and described a strongly-marked black and white bird that he had seen on the trail. Mark could not identify the species from his description, so decided to investigate the sighting. Mark went out in search of the bird and discovered a Marbled Murrelet.

The evening's talk was very informative with lots of fascinating pictures. In addition to reinforcing my desire to revisit the Northwest, I also plan to attend some of the future Natural History Lectures.

— *Cathy Graichen*

Waterfowl and Gull Workshops

About 50 people enjoyed each of our fall workshops. On October 5, Bob Budliger provided an informative slide program on the identification of the waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks) of this region, both on the water and in flight. Key points to in-flight identification were reinforced by the use of a number of wing specimens. Bob also described a number of local spots that are productive for waterfowl.

On November 2, SUNY Biology Professor Ken Able gave an in-depth slide program on the identification of the large gulls of this area, including accidentals. The key to this difficult task, according to Ken, is to learn well the three common gulls of the region (Ring-Billed, Herring and Great Black-backed) in all of their plumages. Learn to tell the age of every gull you see, then look for gulls that are not one of these species. Ken listed a number of local gull hot spots and led a gull field trip to the Colonie Landfill and Mohawk River on November 7. The trip produced the common species plus several Iceland Gulls.



Feathers

VSSNI

Page 9

Hawk Watching at Cape May, New Jersey

Located at the southern tip of New Jersey, Cape May Point is a mecca for both birds and bird watchers during fall migration, when northwest winds push migrating raptors to the coast and then down to the peninsula. Each year, bird watchers converge on the hawk watching platform at Cape May Point State Park to view thousands of migrating hawks.

I was one of 16 birders to make a trip to Cape May this year to participate in a week-long workshop "Raptors at Cape May Point," sponsored by the Institute for Field Ornithology (University of Maine at Machias). Clay Sutton, a resident of Cape May and a noted authority on hawk watching and identification, was the leader.

The workshop included a series of lectures, field trips and guest presentations which drew upon the unique location of Cape May Point during fall migration, the community of bird watchers who live in the area, and the annual hawk count performed by the Cape May Bird Observatory.

From the hawk watching platform, we observed **Black Vultures** (mixed in with kettles of 20 or more **Turkey Vultures**), **Ospreys** (carrying fish in their talons), **Northern Harriers**, **Sharp-shinned**, **Cooper's Red-shouldered**, **Broad-winged** and **Red-tailed Hawks**, **Bald Eagles**, **Kestrels**, **Merlins** and **Peregrine Falcons**.

During workshop lectures we were able to compare the shapes, characteristics and field marks of these birds in flight. Demonstrations from bird banders enabled us to see close-up the markings of immature and mature Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks which we found so elusive when observing birds in the field. The abundance of several of the species gave us many opportunities to view the raptors, and to compare their sizes - especially the difficult-to-distinguish Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks.

When the migration was down, we took advantage of other birding areas: Higbee Beach, Cape May Meadows (**Virginia Rail and American Wigeon**), Cape May Point and Sunset Beach (**Red-throated and Common Loons**, **Ruddy Turnstones**, **Purple Sandpipers**, **White-winged**, **Surf and Black Scoters**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Horned Grebes**, and **Northern Gannets**), and Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge (**Northern Shoveler**, **Brant**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Tundra Swan**, **Green-winged Teal** and **Northern Pintail**).

There was also an opportunity to look for owls silhouetted in the light of the Cape May Point Lighthouse at night. Another of the field trips was to the Delaware Bay shore to view migrating **Bald Eagles** who had not crossed the open bay, but had followed the outline of the bay on their journey south.



A week spent at Cape May Point provides many opportunities for hawk watching, and is one of the highlights of fall migration in the northeast.

For more information:

Institute for Field Ornithology University of
Maine at Machias 9 O'Brien Avenue
Machias, Maine 04654



- Janet Bettlejeski

Feathers



Book Review

"*God-hawk*" is the name of a paperback book of 26 nature poems by Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr. of Freeport, New York. Besides the title poem which is about a Red-tailed Hawk, there is a poem about Cedar Waxwings. Both poems won the author first place in the 1990 Poetry Contest of Appalachia, journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Other poems feature harbor seals, owls, and developers--the latter stressing what is happening to the land and waterscapes. Two poems portray an old sea-captain turned bird watcher and a Snowy Egret and a boy fishing together--but each unaware of the other.

The cover is by the well-known bird artist, Karen Lynn Allaben-Confer, winner of the first George Miksch Sutton Award for Ornithological Art of the Wilson Ornithological Society. Other illustrations are by Florence Hritzay, a nature artist from Winchester, Massachusetts, and photography by Emilie Wheat of Annandale, Virginia.

This is the fourth collection of nature poems that the author has published. He is editor of *New York Birders*, newsletter of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, and of *Ripples*, newsletter of the New York State Marine Education Association.

The book is available for \$8, plus \$1.00 for mailing from Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr. 333 Bedell Street, Freeport, New York 11520. Here is a sampling:

"LET'S GO FOR BLUEBIRDS!"

Grandfather would call on a February
morning snow sparkling in the sun
Pulling on his wool cap he'd lead me down
the cow path
Crusts of ice crackling under our boots

"Wait. Let's look around," he'd whisper

when we reached the orchard
We'd search rows of apple trees their gray
trunks gnarled their branches craggy

If I heard it the blue-backed thrush with
chestnut breast I'd wait for
Grandfather to point trying to keep his voice
to a hoarse whisper:
"There he is over there--like a bit of sky."

Even today, when I heard the warble I waited
for Grandfather

from "*God-hawk*" Maxwell Corydon Wheat,
Jr. Courtesy, New England Sampler

CEDAR WAXWING

Silent in the harvest of wild honeysuckle

The elegant soft-brown bird flies to the maple
branch

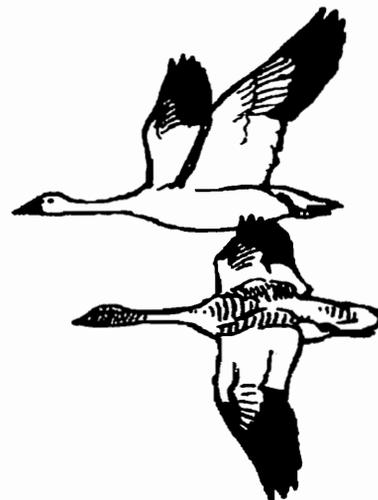
His crest flares back

His mask races across the eye

Gold edges the tail

In his bill he elevates a red jewel

from "*God-hawk*" Maxwell Corydon Wheat,
Jr. Courtesy, Appalachia Journal of the
Appalachian Mountain Club





The Least Tern Breeding Colony: A Concluding Memoir

The longer I stayed, the more eager was I to know this coast and to share its mysteries and elemental life.... Henry Beston, *The Outermost House*

A powerful thunderstorm rocked Cumberland Island National Seashore during the late afternoon of June 14th. It lashed the dunes with torrential fury, and I wondered how the **Least Tern** colony could possibly have survived (see Sotis, 1992; "Feathers" V54N1).

Surveying the breeding site that evening, I found only two solitary terns still sitting on their nests, or scrapes. That morning there had been eight sitting birds, two or three with hatchlings underwing. I had also seen several chicks lying low or wandering about awaiting the return of parents feeding them. Not a single chick or hatchling could I find after the storm.

Two days later there were four brooding terns, still with no chicks in sight. However, one of the two sitting birds that had survived the storm raised its wing briefly. Revealed in its nest was the barest hint of a downy head. But I couldn't be sure, given the protective blend of natal plumage with surrounding ground. It happened to be the nest closest to the two scopes I had just set up to conduct my early evening Tern Watch program for Island campers.. So I kept one of the scopes focused on that nest for a group of Girl Scouts due shortly.

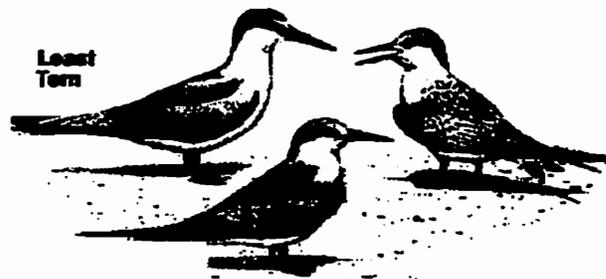
Soon after they arrived, my suspicion was confirmed. A chick's head appeared above the nest rim. It was discovered with squeals of delight by one of the girls. It was a wonderfully fortuitous moment, however, one that called for my full attention maintaining order so that each of the eighteen scouts could get a turn at a scope. The four adult leaders were no less curious, pressing the girls for a view of the chick as it took a few stops around the nest (being semi-precocial, Least Tern chicks can walk within hours of hatching). I gave up my own

binoculars to the women to satisfy their eagerness for a closer look at the little one.

The experience was a most gratifying conclusion to my National Park Service volunteer duties, which I had undertaken for the past five weeks.

The next day I was free of all obligations but that of cleaning my quarters and preparing for departure on the 10:15 boat the following morning. That being done, after supper I walked the mile-or-so trail through the Live Oak forest and the Palmetto understory to the ocean shore.

Fringed as it was by such lush greenery, the path usually served up avian delights. Among them that evening: a **Yellow-throated Warbler** probing insect-laden Spanish moss; a **White-eyed**



Vireo proclaiming its presence in a small stand of Redbay (source of the aromatic bay leaf); a family of **Northern Parulas** flitting closely about me quite unintimidated; a couple of **Great-crested Flycatchers** which swooped in low and glided into the upper foliage; a **Summer Tanager** singing in the canopy; and as I emerged, a pair of **Painted Buntings** foraging beneath shrubbery.

Out on that great beach I scanned the stretch of sand north and south as far as I could see.

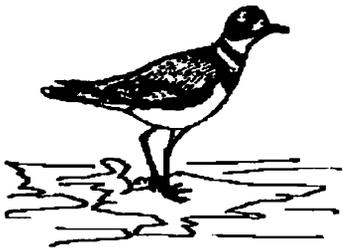
Hardly a soul about -- a couple strolling in the distant mist, a lone figure exploring the tidal exposure for seashells, a few others, dispersed and solitary.

Feathers



Shorebird life was sparse, which is normal here this time of year. A cluster of immature gulls probed the damp shore's edge about a quarter mile south of where I stood. A couple of **Willetts**, a pensive **American Oystercatcher**, a few **Least Terns**, and a dozen or so **Sanderlings** also were in view. Beyond the breakers, four **Brown Pelicans** hung suspended, skimming the swells as they glided north (their recovery from deep decline in the southeast now seems assured).

I headed north along the beach about 200 yards. Approaching my tern breeding haunt, I was reminded of the pleasant anticipation these daily visits had afforded me.



I was unprepared for what immediately caught my attention when I got there. High on the incline of a large dune toward the rear of the colony ground stood the other of the two terns that had maintained their nest positions during the storm. Evidently, one of its eggs had been dislodged and had rolled out of the shallow scrape and settled about 1 1/2 feet downslope. The tern was fretfully considering both eggs, briefly locked in indecision. It moved to the egg secure in the nest, sat on it, but continued to eye its exposed egg. Abruptly, it lifted off the nest egg and struggled to mount the errant egg, upon which it had difficulty maintaining its balance and its composure. Back again it moved to its nest egg, settled upon it, but seemed unable to find ease in either option.

Neither could I. The plight before me was not to be a memory with which I could leave Cumberland Island.

I walked directly onto the colony ground, heading straight for the separated eggs. Immediately the sitting tern flew off as others gathered above me shrieking their denunciation of my trespass. My single-minded determination held fast. Beneath menacing swoops and shrill clamor I picked up the dislodged egg, considered it briefly, and placed it back in the shallow scrape. So shallow, in fact, that about a third of each egg appeared to be above the rim. I was struck by that, beset momentarily by concern about its adequacy.

Then I wheeled and returned directly to my former position outside of the colony and waited for the terns to settle down. The brooding bird returned presently, approached its nest, eyed the eggs, mounted them, wiggled a bit, and settled into its incubating position. And there it remained.

I lingered for a while watching the flight and behavior of the Least Terns about the area. As shadows lengthened, a seamless tranquility settled over the dune and beach. It absorbed all that might have remained of the avian stress my entry had provoked. The winged life about me had no memory of my action. Existence was but the ever present Now.

I turned to leave and as I did, I thought how extraordinary these past few weeks had been.



— Jim Sotis

5 Rivers (continued from page 4)

Be sure to stop back at the Interpretive Building and report any interesting sightings. You may have found a "first of the year" bird. If so, you can have the distinction of adding a species - and your name - to the Center's annual bird list!



— Al Mapes



Feathers

V55N1
Page 13

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs

The Federation is a statewide organization comprising more than forty bird clubs with a combined membership of over twenty thousand birders. It is governed by a council of delegates representing those clubs. Membership is also available to individuals who are interested in the aims and activities of the Federation, whether or not they are members of a bird club.

The objectives of the Federation are to encourage interest in the study of birds, to spread knowledge and appreciation of birds, to protect birds and their environments, to promote development of sanctuaries and refuges, and to educate the public about birds and their conservation.

The Federation publishes two periodicals: The Kingbird and New York Birders. The former is a quarterly journal of field observations and migration and population data as reported by birders from all over New York State. New York Birders is a bi-monthly newsletter which carries news of current interest and importance about birds and birders, items from club newsletters and articles sent in by birders. The Federation has also been integrally involved in the production of the Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State and Susan Drennan's Where to Find Birds in New York State.

In the mid-1970's the Federation formed the New York State Avian Records Committee, composed of member experts, to evaluate all unusual records, whether species, date or location. Each report is carefully reviewed

and evaluated before it is accepted as part of New York State Ornithology. The Compilation of the Committee's efforts is the Checklist of the Birds of New York State, which, as of the 1991 revision, contains 438 species having acceptable sighting records in the State.

The Federation has been an effective advocate for the environment and for the protection of wildlife. It is the largest constituency group in the State for conservation issues concerning birds. The

Federation has recently taken action on expansion of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, preservation of the Adirondacks, and the Hydro-Quebec James Bay power project.

HMBC is a Federation member club. However, individuals can also become Federation members. Federation members receive the Federation publications, and help support the activities of the Federation in

conservation and furthering the knowledge of birds in New York State. For information about joining the Federation, contact Bill Lee (374-3426) or pick up a membership brochure at the next HMBC monthly meeting. Dues are \$18.00 annually on a calendar-year basis.



Bird name origins:

Phalarope -- *phalaris* (coot, Greek) + *pous* (foot, Greek)

Turkey -- After the country of Turkey, due to confusion with Old-World guinea fowl imported from Turkey to England.



Upcoming Programs

Monday, February 1:

Birding South Florida

Environmental Educator Bob Budliger will continue the "Birding North America" series with a slide presentation on the birds and birding hotspots of South Florida. Effects of the recent hurricane will be discussed.



Monday, March 1:

A Workshop on Sparrows.

Do you find sparrows hard to identify? You are not alone! This program will address the identification of all the sparrows seen in our area, and will cover hotspots for some hard to find breeders. Coordinated by Environmental Educator Ray Perry, this workshop should be useful for novice and experienced birders alike.

Monday, April 12:

HMBC Annual Meeting and program.

Following our annual business meeting Dr. Charles Smith of Cornell University will present a program entitled "Partners in Flight: A New Initiative for Bird Conservation". Note: Ken Able's program on the natural history of Australia will be re-scheduled at a later date.

HMBC Field Trips: Feb - March, 1993

Campfire and Owling at Five Rivers

February 5 (Fri): Coord. Scott Stoner, 464-0492 & Al Mapes, 439-4086

Starting at 6:30 p.m. take a winter walk with us to call for Great Horned Owl and Eastern Screech-Owl.

Winter Walk at Five Rivers (Instructional trip). February 6 (Sat): Coord. Scott Stoner, 464-0492.

This morning get-together will start indoors where instruction will be given on identifying the variety of winter residents that frequent the well-stocked Five Rivers feeders. From there we will venture forth along the trails to apply our new skills and locate other resident birds.

Cape Ann & Plum Island

February 13-15 (Sat-Mon): Coord.: Bill Lee, 374-3426.

On this popular winter trip to Gloucester, Newburyport and other points on the Massachusetts coast we will search for gulls, ducks, alcids, raptors and winter passerines. Reservations by January 29.

Partridge Run

February 27 (Sat): Coord.: Gregg Recer, Cathy Graichen, 899-2678.

On this morning trip to a SW Albany County preserve and surroundings we will search for wintering birds such as finches, raptors and open-field birds.

Waterfowl of the Hudson River (Greene Co.) March 14 (Sun): Coord.: Bill Cook, 851-2678.

We will search the Hudson from Coxsackie to Catskill, expecting to find Common Goldeneye, Canvasback and several other

HMBC BOARD FOR 1992 - 1993

V.55N1
Page 15

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Scott Stoner
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Albany, N.Y.
12203
464-0492

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15 Saradale Ave.
Loudonville, N.Y.
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462-9827

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372-8330

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Sam Madison 439-4753
Ray Perry 877-8915
Tim Colborn 356-5768
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Field Trips: Cliff Lamere 462-9827
Membership: Daniel Ruge 449-1087
PR: Tim Colborn 356-5768
Publications: Gregg Recer 899-2678
Records: Cliff Lamere 462-9827
Sanctuary: Betty Moon 372-8330
Hospitality: Laura Sommers 475-0736
Education: Lisa Peterson 426-4151

duck species. We may even see an eagle at this time of year.

Woodpeckers at Mill Creek Marsh

March 21 (Sun): Coord.: Paul Connor, 477-5824.

This new club trip is to a Nature Conservancy preserve in N Columbia County. There is a good chance of seeing five species of woodpeckers: Red-bellied, Pileated, Hairy, Downy and Northern Flicker as well as other resident or wintering species.

Derby Hill to Rochester

March 27-28 (Sat-Sun): Coord.: Kate Beale, 457-6625 (work) & Bob Boehm, 457-5210 (work).

On this early-spring trip we will visit both the Derby Hill and Braddock Bay hawkwatches along with Montezuma NWR. Possible species include Tundra Swan, Red-necked Grebe and Golden Eagle. Reservations by March 12.

President (continued from back cover)

And, as always, your help is most welcome. Anyone interested in joining a committee or becoming a member of the Board, or who

has any comments or suggestions is urged to contact me.

— *Scott Stoner*

Field Trip Report

Block Island Sept.

25-27, Oct. 2-4

Eighteen club members spent a weekend birding on beautiful Block Island this year. Fourteen came on the scheduled first weekend and four others on the second. Unfortunately, and additional four could not be accommodated.

The first weekend was cold and rainy with a strong east wind and only 67 species were seen. The weather was better on the second weekend and 83 species were tallied. Thirteen species were seen on the first weekend and not on the second; 28 species that the first group missed were seen on the second weekend. The combined total was 98, including 15 warblers and 7 hawks.

The leader was on the island during the week and got 17 additional birds, including the Northern Wheatear which remained for only two days.

— *Sam Madison*

President's Corner: As I take office to fill the void left by Kevin McGrath's departure, I want to report to you on the status and direction of our Club and my goals for its future.



The club has 311 members and is financially healthy. Dues will not be raised in the foreseeable future. The 1993 field trip schedule is done thanks to Cliff Lamere and the members of the Field Trip Committee. This ambitious offering contains 66 trips to a host of new and old favorite destinations. Congratulations, Cliff, for a great job! *Feathers* is informative, lively and on-schedule, thanks to Gregg Recer, its editor, and all who have contributed articles. Monthly meetings/programs continue to be well attended and may even be expanded into the summer. Mark Garland's lecture at SUNY, which the club co-sponsored, drew 120 people for his fabulous slides of the Pacific Northwest.

New endeavors underway include an Education Committee chaired by new member Lisa Peterson. The first product of this Committee is a series of workshops on bird biology/ecology, beginning in late March. Also under consideration are projects for children and short courses on bird identification.

My goals are many-fold. First, to continue our expanded offerings in the key areas of field trips, publications, programs and education. Second, to expand our publicity efforts to reach those many birders in our area who are not aware of the HMBC. Third, to compile and publish a guide to birding sites in the Capital Region within two years. And finally, to expand our club's role in the area of community service.

Included with this issue is a Membership Services questionnaire, seeking your input on a number of club activities. This is your Club - tell us what you want us to offer by filling out and returning this questionnaire. Also, your help, comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please call me or any of the Board Members or committee chairs with your ideas!

see President on page 15

SEND THOSE ARTICLES, FIELD TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER MATERIAL (INCLUDING CLIP ART) TO:

FEATHERS
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.
Delmar, N.Y. 12054

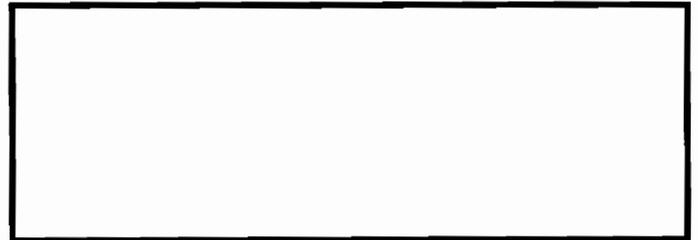
Feathers
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.
Delmar, N.Y. 12054

Note that, as part of our transition to the new format, we have returned *Feathers* to its traditional calendar-year volume schedule.
-- Gregg Recer, Pub. Cmt. Chair

Publication Schedule

V55:
No. 2 Editor: Dick Beeler Deadline: Feb. 1
No. 3 Editor: Scott Stoner Deadline: Apr. 1
No. 4 Editor: open Deadline: June 1
No. 5 Editor: open Deadline: Aug. 1
No. 6 Editor: open Deadline: Oct. 1

The publications committee meets every third Monday of odd-numbered months, 7:30 pm at Five Rivers EEC. All are welcome.





BIRDING THE HMBC REGION:

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

by Scott Stoner

The Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve (VF) is one of the premier birding sites in the Capital District. Located along the north side of the Mohawk River in the Town of Clifton Park, VF features waterfowl, rails, herons, LEAST and AMERICAN BITTERN, OSPREY, and nesting COMMON MOORHEN. Rarities such as EURASIAN WIGEON and PROTHONOTARY WARBLER have been found there. VF is also a good spot for migrant passerines and shorebirds. Perhaps most impressive is the large number of GREAT BLUE HERONS and GREAT EGRETS that congregate there in the late summer and early fall. Just such a scene was recently featured on the cover of a local telephone directory!

DIRECTIONS:

The main entrance to VF is at the intersection of Riverview Road and Van Vranken Road in the Town of Clifton Park [Figure 1].

To reach VF from the north or south, take the Northway (I-87) to exit 8. At the end of the exit ramp turn west onto Crescent Road. Continue west on Crescent Road for approximately two miles, then turn left (south) onto Van Vranken Road. Continue about one mile until the road ends in a "T" intersection with Riverview Road. The parking lot and main entrance are located on the south side of Riverview Road at this intersection.

From the west, take Riverview Road east from Route 146. After passing the Vischer Ferry firehouse, continue straight on Riverview Road for about two more miles. The parking area for the main entrance is located on the right, just before you reach Van Vranken Road.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

VF is owned by the State of New York and managed by the Town of Clifton Park. This preserve also contains the remains of the old Erie

Canal and the site of the first settlement in the Town. It is roughly bounded on the south by the Mohawk River and on the north by the Canal. Between these two waterways are shallow freshwater ponds and marshland, moist deciduous woods, and small patches of field and coniferous woodland. From the main entrance, there is a path that runs east and west along the Canal and a dirt road that leads south that provides access to the back ponds, the River, and to the extensive trails through the woodland sections.

This guide addresses only the central portion of VF; additional areas to the east and west can be explored as well. A detailed brochure on the human and natural history, along with a more

...more on next page

Inside This Issue....

*Breeding Bird Surveys of The
Nature Conservancy Preserves*

1992 Christmas Bird Counts

Birding Ann Lee Pond

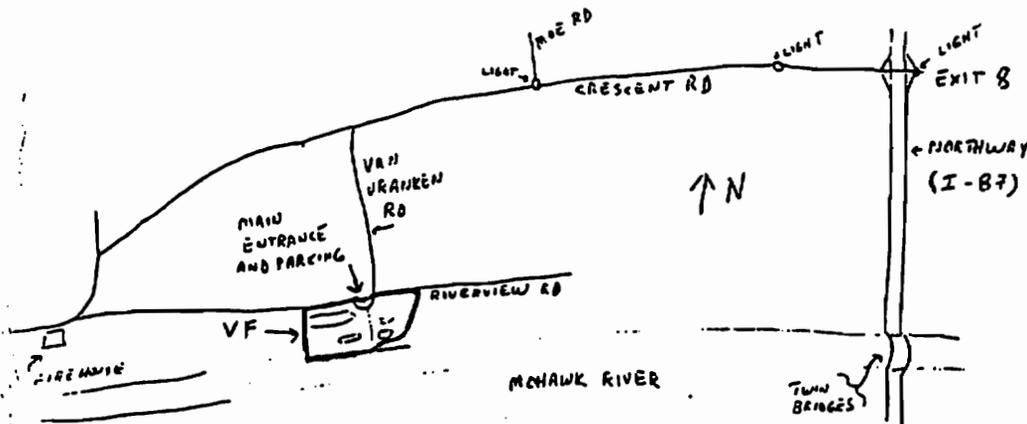


Figure 1. Sketch map of location of Vischer Ferry [not to scale]

comprehensive map is available from the Town of Clifton Park.

SEASON-BY-SEASON BIRDING GUIDE

Figure 2 contains a rough sketch map of the portions of VF described in the guidelines below. Specific water bodies are referred to as ponds and are numbered; other significant areas are denoted by letter.

In any season when the water is open, walk the paths that run east and west from the main entrance. Also walk the dirt road that goes south to the River, checking the ponds and marshes on either side. For land birds in any season, walk any of the paths, but especially those that cover the area between the River and Ponds #6 and #7.

Spring:

Birding at VF picks up dramatically in March with the thawing of the ice in the ponds and the arrival of migrant waterfowl. Ponds #1 and #6 are the most productive and typically host several dozen RING-NECKED DUCKS in March and April. Peak waterfowl migration occurs within about a one-week time span, roughly in the second week of April. Species to watch for include NORTHERN SHOVELER, NORTHERN PINTAIL, WOOD DUCK, RING-NECKED DUCK, BLUE-WINGED and GREEN-WINGED TEAL, GADWALL, MALLARD, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, CANVASBACK and REDHEAD. OSPREY pass through in April and May; look for them over any of the Ponds and on the large snag near the north side of Pond #1.

Rails and herons arrive in early Spring as well. The marshy area "A" is good for both VIRGINIA RAIL

and SORA. Listen for them early in the morning in April and early May. The marshy area "B" along Pond #6 is a great place to hear the "water pump" call of the AMERICAN BITTERN. Watch for this species in any of the marshy areas along the dirt road between the main entrance and Ponds #5 and #6. Check these areas (especially marshy area "D") for the uncommon and elusive LEAST BITTERN.

Ponds #1, #5, and #6 are good spots to check for GREAT BLUE and GREEN-BACKED HERONS. Other water birds to look for in the Spring include PIED-BILLED GREBE, GREATER YELLOWLEGS, SOLITARY and SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, KILLDEER, and COMMON SNIPLE.

Passerine migration begins in earnest in late April and peaks in mid-May. Check the wet woods (area "C") for RUSTY BLACKBIRDS in April. Good areas for migrants are the dirt road from the main entrance to the River and the several paths that traverse the area between Pond #6 and the River. The latter area is particularly productive for ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK. VF typically hosts a good variety of migrant warblers, vireos and flycatchers.

SWAMP SPARROWS arrive in the Spring and can be found into the fall. Check any of the marshy areas along the dirt road. VF is also a good place for the rare treat of hearing the song of the AMERICAN TREE SPARROW in April.

BREEDING BIRDS:

Not much information was found on the breeding birds of VF. The brochure from the Town mentions VEERY, WOOD THRUSH, HAIRY and DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, CHESTNUT-SIDED and YELLOW WARBLERS, TREE SWALLOW, MALLARD and WOOD DUCK. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER has nested near the River. An adult COMMON MOORHEN with several young was seen along the north end of Pond #6, near marshy area "B" in September of 1992. Other presumed breeders include COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, SONG SPARROW, EASTERN KINGBIRD, HOUSE WREN, NORTHERN ORIOLE, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK, GRAY CATBIRD, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH and NORTHERN CARDINAL.



Check in early summer for resident passerines and breeding water birds (see above). Shorebird migration begins in midsummer. The best area for shorebirds is often Pond #4. Check for either species of YELLOWLEGS, SOLITARY SANDPIPER and other species there from mid July through September. In August and September, post-breeding herons and egrets congregate at VF, especially in Pond #1. Most of these will be GREAT EGRETS and GREAT BLUE HERONS, but watch for SNOWY EGRET as well. Also in summer, watch for flocks of CEDAR WAXWINGS, AMERICAN ROBINS and mixed blackbirds.

Fall:

Passerine migration peaks in mid- to late-September, with waterfowl passing through from September through November. Note that VF closes for a short period during the fall for duck

hunting (check with the Town of Clifton Park for closure dates). Bird the ponds as described for Spring; a similar mix of species is expected. Watch also for CHIMNEY SWIFT, COMMON SNIPER, and raptors, including MERLIN, SHARP-SHOINED HAWK, and OSPRIY.

Winter:

With the ponds frozen, Winter is a slower birding time at VF, but check the River for RED-NECKED GREBE, BALD EAGLE, Mergansers and GULLS. PILEATED WOODPECKER is often present along with the typical mix of wintering passerines. The paths between the River and Pond #6 are good areas to bird. With snow, VF also becomes a popular cross-country ski location.

AUTHORS NOTE: This is a preliminary guide to this site, that will hopefully encourage and facilitate birding there this spring and summer.

Readers are urged to report sightings of birds to the author for inclusion in a more comprehensive guide (including areas of VF to the east and west of those described above) in the forthcoming Club book on the birding sites of the Capital Region. I would like to thank Larry Alden, Jerry and Tim Colborn, Cliff Lamere, Alan Mapes, Frank Murphy, Ray Perry, and Gregg Recer for their review comments and/or provision of bird records for this site, with special thanks to Robert Yunick for his summary of many years of banding data.

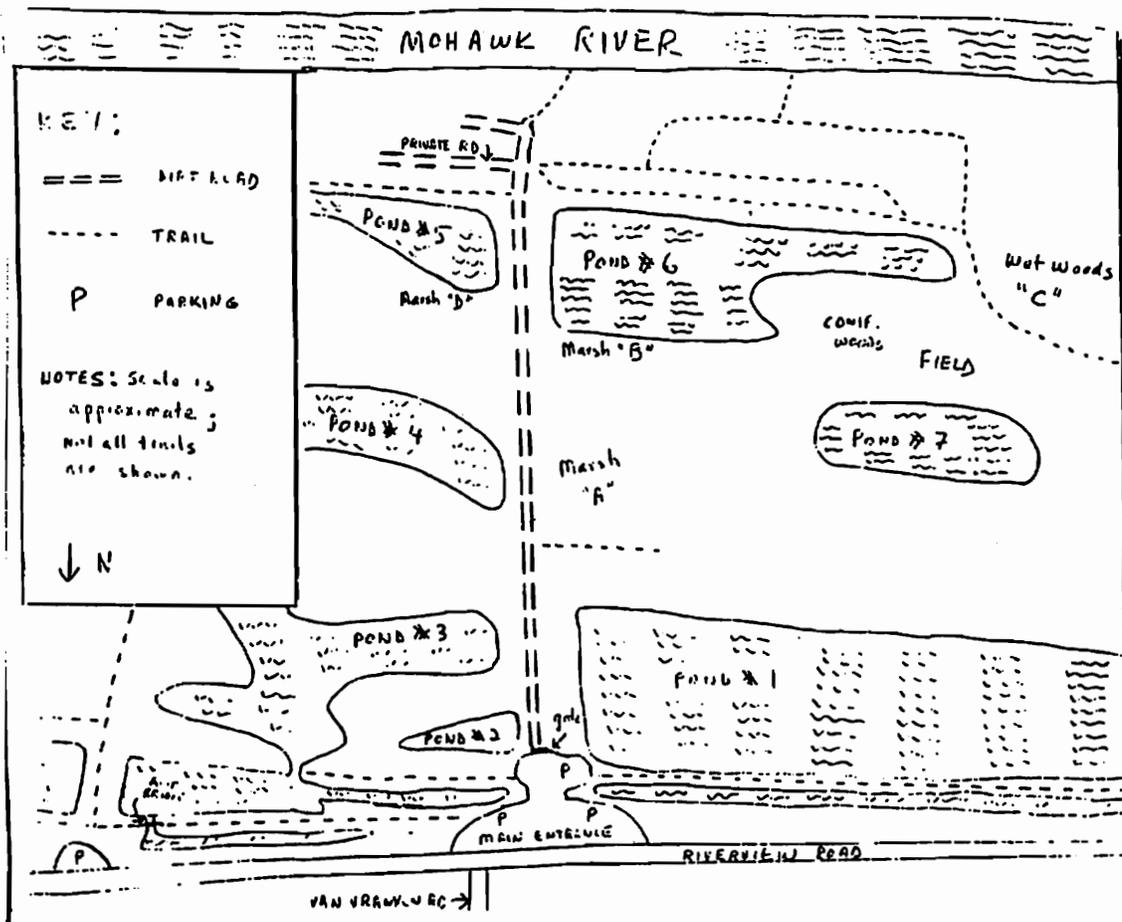


Figure 2. Sketch map of area covered by this guide



Breeding Bird Surveys of The Nature Conservancy Preserves

by Kevin McGrath

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club volunteers surveyed breeding bird populations found on Capital District properties of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) during the summer of 1992. The results are presented here for the benefit of our club members. A copy of this report and the original data have been presented to TNC Eastern Office for their records. We hope that a sense of cooperative spirit and commonality of purpose can be generated between organizations that appreciate the natural beauty around us.

Between 6/12/92 and 7/21/92 the volunteers surveyed several TNC properties and recorded their sightings and any breeding activity of the birds present. Using the breeding evidence code established for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas project (see below), they reported their findings to the project compiler.

Of the 28 TNC properties in the Eastern NY Chapter, 20 were covered. Of those, 18 substantive reports were generated. A brief description of each and the compiled results are presented.

My hope was that this project would scout out new areas within our local territory for possible future field trips, while providing a useful service to a fellow conservation organization. I believe that we largely accomplished these goals. To all the participants I express my thanks and appreciation, especially to the compilers. There were a few notable serendipitous findings and some surprises for myself, but for the most part the birds were rather common.

SITE REPORTS:

The Albany Pine Bush (109 Acres): Laura Sommers & Tim Colborn. Due to the size of the area it was divided into two zones and each was covered once in June only. Most bird species were identified by ear. A total of 36 species were reported; 10 confirmed breeders and 15 probable breeders.

Bear Swamp (310 Acres): Kevin McGrath (and a small army of Mosquitoes). The size of the preserve demanded it be done in three parts. Each

section was given an entire field day in June and a quick 'fly through' in July. A total of 63 species were identified; 27 confirmed, 28 probable. The area of the source pond was exceptional for morning activity. Big Bear was extremely wet and difficult. I was delighted to find **MAGNOLIA WARBLER** nesting here and **RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH**. Not surprisingly, it's a great place.

Hannacroix Ravine (323 Acres): Alan Mapes & Laura Sommers. A total of 51 species reported; 5 confirmed, 33 probable. Surveyed over three days, this very steep ravine holds a number of interesting nesters including **BLACK-THROATED BLUE** and **BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS** and **WINTER WREN**.

Kenrose Sanctuary (360 Acres): Dr. Kenneth Able. The large section of land east of Bradt Hill Rd. produced a total of 56 species, with 11 confirmed and 23 probable.

Limestone Rise (62 Acres): Beverly Waite and Thomas Cowieson covered this somewhat treacherous cliffside sanctuary on the flank of Thacher Park. The report included a finely done hand sketch of the areas of interest which TNC may be able to use to upgrade their own maps of the area. Bev reported a total of 39 species; 6 confirmed, 12 probable.

Waite Cliffs (73 Acres): Beverly Waite & Tim Colborn. Bev compiled this area from the lounge chair on her back porch, except for the day Tim came over. Even so her auditory records and feeder reports are precise, with 46 species reported, 8 confirmed, 33 probables. This is an outstanding number for such a relatively small area.

Whitbeck Grove (26 Acres): Walt Sabin covered this small bit of woodland. Of the 27 species reported, 2 confirmed and 14 were reported as probables.

Freund Sanctuary (57 Acres): Paul Connor did a very thorough job of covering and compiling the Sanctuary. His detailed trail maps and records are being passed on to TNC. He made comment in his report that the natural beauty of the area is



seriously degraded by noise from the NY State Thruway (Berkshire Extension). 44 species of birds were identified; 16 confirmed, 19 probables.

Lordsland Conservancy (72 Acres): Thanks to Tom Palmer for exploring this new area. **MOURNING WARBLER** highlights his report. Tom reported a total of 44 species; 16 confirmed, 19 probable.

Summit Lake (6 Acres): In the outer reaches of Otsego County is a newly acquired and as yet unexplored tract of TNC property. Tom Palmer reported an impressive 39 species from this small tract, with 4 confirmed and 4 probables.

Stewart Preserve (123 Acres): Alice Ross covered this large and sparsely populated wood lot in central Rensselaer county. A total of 20 species were reported; 2 confirmed, 12 probable.

Greenfield Center Wild Area (27 Acres): Betsy Franz, Chris Ulrich, Mary Ellen Cyr, Nancy Slack, Gil Banner. A large group for such a small area certainly resulted in excellent coverage of the site (anything that wasn't scared right out of the

county is a probable breeder). The site yielded 22 species; 3 confirmed, 15 probable.

Amy Le Maire Woods (15.7 Acres): Nancy Slack compiled this small preserve for us. She was assisted in the field by Ruth Schottman and Glen Slack. Nancy comments that the woods have overgrown and lost their Pine Bush habitat. Eighteen species were reported; 1 confirmed, 8 probable.

Christman Sanctuary (97 Acres): Phil Johnson and Debbie Ellinger. The results at Christman were sufficient to earn it a place on next year's club field trip schedule - 52 species reported; 7 confirmed, 28 probables. Only report of **CERULEAN WARBLER** from the area. Extra fine detail in maps and data presentation make this report the star of the survey.

Lisha Kill Nature Area (109 Acres): Bill Lee covered this rather large area - 38 species were reported as being present.

...more on next page

- 1 Albany Pine Bush
- 2 Bear Swamp
- 3 Hannacroix Ravine
- 4 Kenrose Sanctuary
- 5 Limestone Rise
- 6 Waitecliff
- 7 Whitbeck Memorial Grove
- 8 Freund Sanctuary
- 9 Mill Creek Marsh
- 10 Emmons Pond Bog
- 11 West Branch Preserve
- 12 Lordsland Conservancy
- 13 Summit Lake
- 14 Barberville Falls
- 15 Stewart Preserve
- 16 Greenfield Center Wild Area
- 17 Wellborn Woods Conservancy
- 18 Amy LeMaire Woods
- 19 Christman Sanctuary
- 20 Lisha Kill Nature Area
- 21 Moccasin Kill Sanctuary
- 22 Old Maid Woods
- 23 Scotia Island Conservancy
- 24 V.V.Smiley Preserve
- 25 Dome Island Memorial Sanctuary
- 26 Loines Preserve
- 27 Butternut Brook Wetlands
- 28 Denton Wildlife Sanctuary

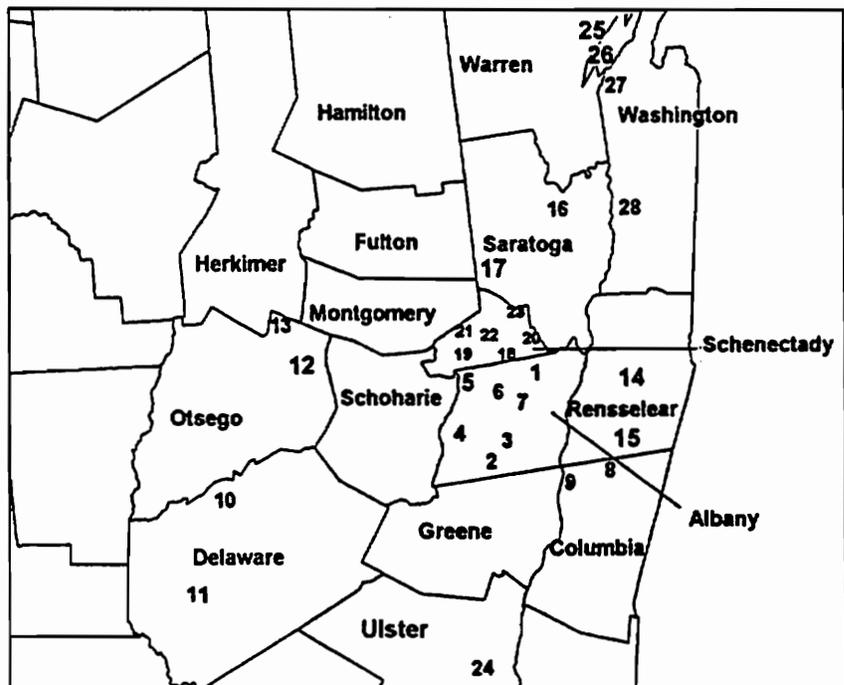


Figure 1: Directory of Protected Natural Areas (the Nature Conservancy)



Moccasin Kill Sanctuary (81 Acres): Bob McCullough. The sparsity of wildlife in these woods induced Bob to suggest that this would be a wonderful place for a new Grand Union Supermarket. Zero (0) species reported! Don't you just HATE days like that?

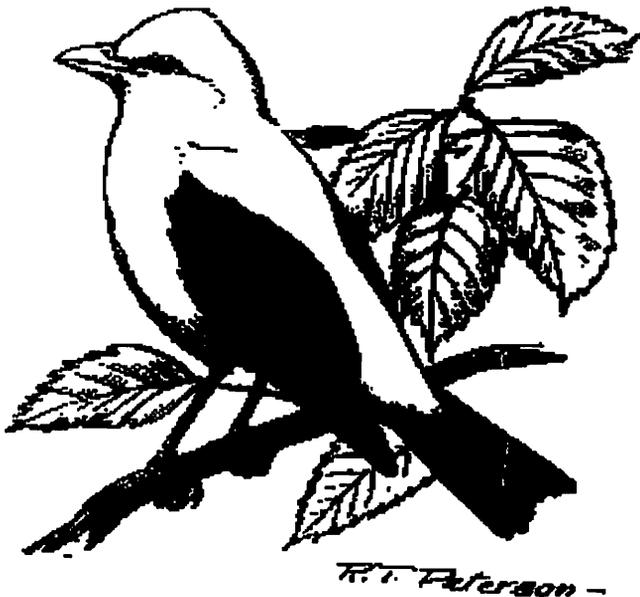
Scotia Island Conservancy (1/2 Acre): Dr. Carl George at Union college compiled this remarkable little 1/2 acre island in the middle of the Mohawk's channel. 16 species were reported; 2 confirmed, 10 probable.

Butternut Brook Wetlands (3 Acres): This small but significant bit of wetland abutting Lake George was compiled by Bill Graham. He reported 20 species; 4 confirmed, 13 probable.

Denton Wildlife Sanctuary (70 Acres): Bob Budliger, J. Graves. This site is another new and interesting locale for HMBCers (suth'ners that is). Bob reported a total of 43 species; 6 confirmed, 26 probable. He also reports that most of area is undeveloped and without trails making access difficult.

COMPILED RESULTS:

Table #1 lists the compilation results for all the



sites for which reports were available. The row headings coincide with the numerical designation of each sanctuary on the map in Figure 1. TNC has pamphlets that describe the primary habitats and give directions to each of their preserves. The symbols used in the columns pertain to the quality of the sighting information relative to breeding:

An X indicates that the bird was positively identified as present in an area that could be considered suitable habitat for breeding. It is possible the bird will breed or has breed in the area.

P indicates the probability that the species is breeding in the area. The bird has exhibited signs indicative of an intent to breed, such as singing on territory, territorial defence, or courtship ritual display.

C indicates positive confirmation of breeding. Usually confirmed by sighting of fledglings, feeding young (critters don't CARRY food for long unless there are hungry mouths to feed), active nest site.

The number of properties at which each species was observed is given in the "T" column at the far right of the table. Total species observed at each site are given along the bottom.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that the winner in terms of total number of both species seen and breeders (confirmed and probables) is the Bear Swamp preserve in Westerlo. This is what I expected when I assigned it to myself for compiling. Being an unemployed new graduate at the time and thus able to spend entire days wandering in the woods didn't hurt my survey results a bit.

AMERICAN ROBIN WAS the most commonly seen species. I was also pleased to find RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH being reported from 8 locations. I think of them as a winter "feeder" bird, but it is obviously a healthy permanent resident. The COMMON YELLOWTHROAT WAS the most common of the Warblers. Nineteen species of warblers were reported. WILD TURKEY did very well for a species that was extirpated from New York many years ago.



There are some notable absences on the composite list. No one reported sighting **AMERICAN KESTREL**, **EASTERN BLUEBIRD**, or **BROWN THRASHER**. Considering how common these birds appear to be, I assume it's a peculiarity of the types of habitat preferred for preservation by TNC. **AMERICAN KESTREL** and **EASTERN BLUEBIRD** are common field birds along with **BOBOLINK** (1 sighting) and **EASTERN MEADOWLARK** (1 sighting). The real **SHOCK** was no report of **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD**.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the participants and hope that they had an enjoyable experience. I eagerly anticipate hearing the results from next year's Christman and Mill Creek bird-walks.



ERRATUM

The Troy Christmas Count article for 12/29/90 (entitled "Three New Species Sighted on Troy Christmas Count" and published in Vol. 52, No. 4) inadvertently reversed the data for groups D and E. Also, the number of Black Scoters was 20 rather

KWIK INDEXES TO FIELD GUIDES

by Clifford Lamere

I have prepared a series of "Kwik Indexes" for various field guides that many of us use. Originally prepared for my own personal use, other birders were soon asking me for copies. Many of us know how frustrating it can be to have a bird in sight (that we suspect to be of a certain type) only to have it fly away while we fumble through the many pages of hard-to-read print in the index provided by the field guide publisher. If we had found a picture sooner, a positive identification might have been made.

The indexes consist of only two sheets that can be inserted on facing pages inside the front or back cover of the field guide. They list the number of the first page on which one can find the general groups of birds such as ducks, hawks, woodpeckers, or warblers. And they also list the only page on which can be found specific birds within those groups such as **CANVASBACK**, **GOSHAWK**, **FLICKER OF CHAT**. In use, a person will usually locate the bird diagram 5-10 seconds sooner than by using the book's own index. These can be valuable seconds if they allow a person to get another look at the bird before it flies. Five Rivers Environmental Education Center has been using the index to Peterson's Eastern Birds for several years in its beginning bird course.

The following indexes are presently available. Each one of them is \$2 plus two first class stamps.

Adhesive-backed

Peterson's Eastern Birds - 4th ed.

To be glued into field guide

Peterson's Western Birds - 3rd ed. (1990)

National Geographic - 2nd ed. (1987)

Birds of Costa Rica - Stiles & Skutch (1989)

To obtain a Kwik Index, contact:

Clifford Lamere
15 Saradale Ave.
Loudonville, NY 12211



KIDS--Build A Nestbox

If you are 8, 9 or 10 years old, HMBC invites you to join us and build a bird nestbox to take home. We will be building nestboxes that several species can use and we'll learn a little about each kind of bird. At the end of the day, take the nestbox home, attach it to a post or tree and watch a bird family grow. HMBC will supply the nestbox materials. All you must bring is a hammer.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 24, 1993 at 10AM at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar. Participants should bring a lunch. HMBC will provide beverages and snacks.

To reserve your place in the class, or for more information, call Lisa Peterson at 426-4151.

Note to parents, if you would like to help out, we would welcome your participation as well.

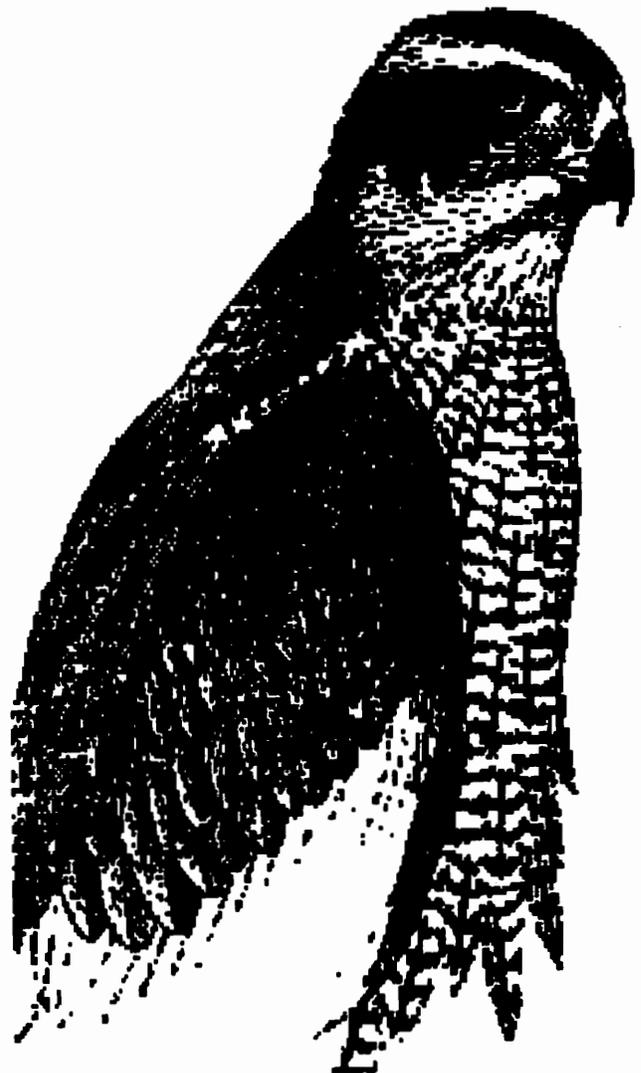
Book Review: *The Traveling Birder* Clive Goodman

This book, subtitled *20 Five-Star Birding Vacations*, certainly lives up to its name by describing some of the most popular, intense birding trips. Most of the trips are in the US, but a few venture abroad to such intriguing destinations as Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Churchill, Manitoba. Each "vacation" mixes a narrative with helpful hints for lodging and other travel arrangements.

The descriptions are perhaps a little more interesting reading than some bird guides which are intended for describing the location and birds in great detail. Instead Goodman tries to whet your appetite for each location. Unfortunately, the problem with this book is it makes it difficult to choose how to spend your next long birding vacation because there are so many interesting spots.

Luckily for us, many of the trips are not too far from here, including Point Pelee, Ontario, Maine, Cape May, New Jersey, and Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania.

I urge anyone without a copy to invest soon.
GOOD BIRDING AND TRAVELING!





1992 Christmas Bird Counts

by Clifford Lamere

The Schenectady Christmas Count began in 1929 even though the Schenectady Bird Club did not form until 1939. This year there were 22 participants in 9 parties plus feeder watchers. In all, 57 species and 17,292 individual birds were observed. Bill Lee was compiler for this count held on December 19. GADWALL was seen for the first time on the count, and DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT was seen for only the second time, having been seen first in 1991. Birds recorded for the second time were GLAUCOUS GULL (first seen in 1989) and LONG-EARED OWL (previously seen in 1937). Record high numbers were recorded for MALLARD (769), HERRING GULL (2069), GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (525), FISH CROW (12), CAROLINA WREN (8, tied with 1959 and 1991), EASTERN BLUEBIRD (47), AMERICAN ROBIN (1160), WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (169) and DARK-EYED JUNCO (320).

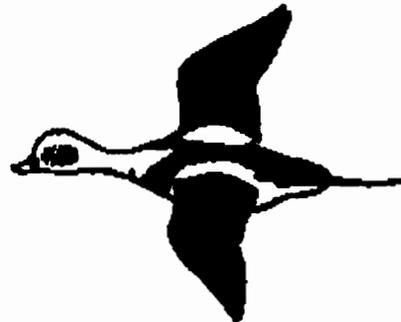
Comparing the three HMBC Christmas Counts, birds reported only on the Schenectady count were DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, GADWALL, OLDSQUAW, LONG-EARED OWL, NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL, SWAMP SPARROW and RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.

The Troy Christmas Count had its first year in 1947 making this the 45th occurrence (the 1948 count had to be cancelled due to weather). Held on January 2, 1993, there was a total of twenty observers in six parties plus three feeder watchers at two homes who reported a total of 63 species and 23,297 individual birds. Peter A. Berle,



President of National Audubon Society, and his daughter were present with a film crew that followed Sam Madison's group for almost the entire day. Cliff Lamere was the compiler.

COMMON RAVEN and RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER made their first appearance on the Troy count. Both were seen in the vicinity of Tomhannock Reservoir, the latter at a feeder. The feeder watcher was able to confirm a few days later that her home was being visited by both male and female. They were feeding on sunflower hearts. Bill Gorman and Monte Gruett had an overflight of a MERLIN, seen for only the second time on this count; MUTE SWAN



and LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL were seen for the third time. All-time high totals of individuals on the Troy count were reported for EUROPEAN STARLING (8006), HOUSE FINCH (763), EASTERN BLUEBIRD (33) and FISH CROW (2). Tied for all-time high were GREAT BLUE HERON

(9) and BELTED KINGFISHER (8). For the three HMBC COUNTS, COMMON LOON, MUTE SWAN, SNOW GOOSE, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, LESSER SCAUP, COMMON GOLDENEYE, BUFFLEHEAD, BALD EAGLE (5, including 4 adults), MERLIN, AMERICAN COOT, LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL and COMMON RAVEN were all observed on this count only.

The Southern Rensselaer County Christmas Count, in continuous operation since 1966, was held on December 26. There were 9 participants in 5 parties (no feeder watchers) who reported 51 species and 14,224 individual birds. Betsy Franz deserves a great deal of credit for her effort as compiler. When no other volunteer could be found to accept the position, she agreed to do the job even though she knew that she would be moving at the time of the count. PIED-BILLED GREBE and GREAT CORMORANT appeared for the first time in the count's 27 years. There was a record high number for RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (2, this species



Feathers

was seen for only the third time); the GREAT BLUE HERON tied its all-time high (2) which was recorded in 1991. The second highest number of birds ever was observed for CANADA GOOSE, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, WILD TURKEY, CAROLINA WREN and CEDAR WAXWING. The lowest total ever was recorded for DOWNY WOODPECKER, HAIRY WOODPECKER, BLUE JAY, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE and WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH. The small number of participants may account for the low number of reported for these species. For the three HMBC counts, PIED-BILLED GREBE, GREAT CORMORANT, WILD TURKEY, HORNED LARK and SNOW BUNTING were seen on only this one.

Although the next two Christmas Counts are not HMBC-sponsored, reporting their data adds significantly to our knowledge of local winter birdlife.

The Albany County Christmas Count, December 20, is a newcomer to the scene. It is in only its sixth year, having begun in 1987. On this count there were 16 participants in 6 groups (no feeder watchers) who reported 67 species (13

which were not present on any HMBC count) and 11,907 individuals. Al Mapes was compiler. YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, RING-NECKED PHEASANT and RED-SHOULDERED HAWK were present for the first time. Comparing the five counts in this report, RING-NECKED DUCK, HOODED MERGANSER, RED-BREADED MERGANSER, RED-SHOULDERED HAWK, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, FIELD SPARROW, WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL, and PINE SISKIN were seen only on the Albany count. It must have been a thrilling sight to see over 3300 AMERICAN ROBINS early in the morning at Five Rivers as they were leaving their overnight roost.

The Catskill-Coxsackie Christmas Count (often referred to as the Greene County count) has been in continuous operation since 1960. There were 22 observers in 10 parties plus 6 feeder watchers who together reported 81 species and 11,792 individual birds. Richard Guthrie was compiler. Held on December 17, the count was very successful even though it rained the whole day. Seen for the first time on this count were GREAT CORMORANT, BLACK SCOTER and AMERICAN WOODCOCK. Other

...more on next page

BIIRD NAME	SCHEN	TROY	S. REN	ALB	CAITS	BIIRD NAME	SCHEN	TROY	S. REN	ALB	CAITS	BIIRD NAME	SCHEN	TROY	S. REN	ALB	CAITS
Common Loon		1				Wild Turkey			30	1	46	Ruby-crowned Kinglet					4
Pied-billed Grebe			1			American Coot		1				Eastern Bluebird	47	33	7	109	125
Horned Grebe				1		Common Snipe				1		Hermil Thrush				2	4
Double-crested Cormorant	1					American Woodcock					1	American Robin	1160	144	33	3877	1119
Great Cormorant		CW	1	1		Ring-billed Gull	36	525	118	54	240	Gray Catbird					1
Great Blue Heron	5	2	2	1	5	Herring Gull	2069	2644	116	40	256	Northern Mockingbird	35	26	8	16	30
Mute Swan		1			123	Lesser Gull	1	2	1			Cedar Waxwing	242	76	86	195	123
Snow Goose		2			1	Iceland Gull		1				European Starling	5906	8006	9523	1673	1929
Canada Goose	75	4386	1033	937	997	Glaucous Gull	1	2				Orange-crowned Warbler					CW
Green-winged Teal		2			1	Great Black-backed Gull	525	1050	41	24	76	Yellow-rumped Warbler					14
American Black Duck	62	479	59	123	303	Gull sp	30					Common Yellowthroat					1
Mallard	769	768	231	286	250	Rock Dove	434	1130	766	328	170	Northern Cardinal	93	93	27	54	156
Northern Pintail	2	1		1	2	Mourning Dove	359	370	351	368	661	American Tree Sparrow	186	110	88	217	264
Northern Shoveler					3	Eastern Screech-Owl		1	3	4	3	Field Sparrow					2
Gadwall	2				2	Great Horned Owl	1	1	CW	3		Savannah Sparrow					1
American Wigeon					1	Long-eared Owl	1					Song Sparrow	30	33	17	43	85
Canvasback		CW				Northern Saw-whet Owl	1				1	Swamp Sparrow	1				3
Ring-necked Duck		CW		2		Belted Kingfisher	3	8	2	5	4	White-throated Sparrow	169	87	72	125	379
Lesser Scaup		3				Red-bellied Woodpecker		1	2	5	25	Dark-eyed Junco	320	204	103	419	652
Oldsquaw	2				2	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker					1	Snow Bunting					1
Black Scoter					3	Dowry Woodpecker	68	54	32	67	93	Red-winged Blackbird	1		CW		49
Common Goldeneye		86		15	29	Hairy Woodpecker	17	21	11	19	24	Common Grackle					2
Bufflehead		1			2	Northern Flicker	15	18	5	31	54	Brown-headed Cowbird	CW				1
Hooded Merganser				50		Pileated Woodpecker	5	6	2	5	8	Purple Finch	17	1	6	171	73
Common Merganser	125	184	17	47	109	Eastern Phoebe					1	House Finch	599	763	236	594	566
Red-breasted Merganser				2		Horned Lark			5		63	White-winged Crossbill					1
Bald Eagle		5		2	2	Blue Jay	178	136	82	200	267	Pine Siskin					2
Northern Harrier	2	CW		3	5	American Crow	2371	820	326	559	685	American Goldfinch	158	94	60	367	56
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	1	2	2	7	Fish Crow	12	2				House Sparrow	392	360	426	257	335
Cooper's Hawk	1	1		1	6	Common Raven		2				NUMBER OF SPECIES	57	63	51	67	81
Northern Goshawk		CW				Black-capped Chickadee	472	340	168	376	732	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	17292	23297	14224	11907	11792
Accipiter sp				1		Tufted Titmouse	114	53	35	37	193						
Red-shouldered Hawk				1		Red-breasted Nuthatch	25	13	11	19	19						
Red-tailed Hawk	59	62	27	37	38	White-breasted Nuthatch	60	57	27	58	88						
Rough-legged Hawk				1	1	Brown Creeper	5	5	4	12	16						
American Kestrel	5	5	2	5	6	Carolina Wren	8	2	2	18	18						
Merlin		1				Winter Wren		2	1	3	4						
Ring-necked Pheasant				1	5	Marsh Wren					1						
Ruffed Grouse	6	6	6	6	9	Golden-crowned Kinglet	6	3	9	20	41						

CW = seen in Count Week (from three days before count until three days after count day), but not on count day
* = species not seen on the count day of any count



birds seen that are unusual for this count were COMMON SNIBE, EASTERN PHOEBE, MARSH WREN, GRAY CATBIRD and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT. ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK is noteworthy because only 1 was reported. Ken Able saw an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER within the 15 mile diameter circle during count week (CW). 18 species were observed which were not seen on any HMBC count and 13 of them were absent from all of the other four counts listed in this report. Those 13 were HORNED GREBE, NORTHERN SHOVELER, AMERICAN WIGBON, BLACK SCOTER, COMMON SNIBE, AMERICAN WOODCOCK, EASTERN PHOEBE, MARSH WREN, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, GRAY CATBIRD, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, SAVANNAH SPARROW and COMMON GRACKLE.

In all, 102 species and 78,512 individual birds were reported for these five local Christmas Counts.

Audubon's Birds

Union College needs help in locating a copy of the seven volume octavo edition of Audubon's Birds. If you know of one, please call Professor Ellen Fladger, Union College archivist, at 370-6620 with details. This is an urgent matter because copies of this superb work are being broken apart by print dealers, whereupon they discard the text and plates of lesser value.

— Carl George

Contest

Help the club rename Dial-A-Bird.

Contest Rules:

- 1) Participants may suggest as many names as desired.
- 2) No profanity or other inappropriate text.
- 3) Suggestions should start with Bird or Birding (to make phone listing more useful).
- 4) Entries must be submitted by July 1.
- 5) Winner will be determined by Board of Directors (or appointed Committee) and announced in August issue of *Feathers*.





BIRDING THE HMBC REGION:

Ann Lee Pond

by Frank Murphy

DIRECTIONS:

Ann Lee Pond is directly south of the Albany County Airport, across from Heritage Park and the Ann Lee Home, at the intersection of Albany Shaker Road and Route 155 in the Town of Colonie. From the Northway (I-87) take Exit 4 and follow signs to the airport, bearing left as you approach the airport. Two adjacent parking areas are available at roadside; the one away from the shore is usually less crowded.

DESCRIPTION:

Ann Lee Pond is a county-owned park of 170 acres consisting of a shallow pond, wooded swamps, deciduous woodland and fields (see map on next page). The park itself is surrounded by private farm fields extending to The Desmond on one side to Sand Creek Road on the other. The park offers good birding at exceptional convenience. Trails are flat and well maintained, and though not well marked, are certainly well trodden. The neat wooden bridge crossing the south end of the pond is an excellent place to view birds. The area is surprisingly delightful for a suburban park. Flowers and ferns abound and it is not so unusual to see deer, coyote, or red fox. Birdlife is pleasantly surprising as well. The area can be birded well in just an hour, and is best covered by crossing the bridge and doing one of the loop trails, and exploring the field edges.

SEASON BY SEASON BIRDING GUIDE

Spring:

Start looking for the first signs of spring in late February through early March. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS and WOOD DUCKS, although common here, are always a welcome sight after a miserable winter. EASTERN BLUEBIRDS are a recent newcomer to the area and can be found in the fields to the south. The fascinating courtship display of the AMERICAN WOODCOCK can be witnessed at dusk near the fields in late March through April. In late

April look for PALM WARBLER, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, and other early migrants. During the first two weeks of May check for all wood warblers, vireos, thrushes, and basically any land bird that passes through the area. The last week in April through mid-May provide peak birding opportunities. Best birding is usually around the pond on either side of the bridge.

Summer:

WARBLING VIREO nests close to the parking lot. CANADA GEESE and young are quite tame and are common along the lawn next to the parking lot. Check the woods for our favorite GROSBEAK, SCARLET TANAGER, GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER, and WOOD PEWEE. YELLOW WARBLERS and TREE SWALLOWS are a common sight around the pond. Look for the uncommon COMMON NIGHTHAWKS over the bridge during the last week in August. Note that mosquitoes and deer flies can be bothersome in season.

Autumn:

It's usually best to check the field edges for sparrows; also look for confusing fall warblers and hawks. SAVANNAH SPARROWS are easy to find here. September through early October is a good time to get good close views of CEDAR WAXWINGS, EASTERN PHOEBES, and EASTERN KINGBIRDS perched right on the bridge railing.

Winter:

The woods are usually pretty quiet during winter except for the occasional WOODPECKERS, CHICKADEES, CROWS, JAYS, TITMICE, CARDINALS, etc. but a walk through the woods should turn up GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS and BROWN CREEPERS, and the fields usually have AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS and WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS. The private fields off South Family Road are often good for SNOW BUNTINGS and with luck a LAPLAND LONGSPUR can be mixed in with them. Please do not walk here without permission.



Field Trip Reports

Campfire and Owling at Five Rivers

The evening walk drew a large crowd of HMBC members hoping for a glimpse of or sounds of owls. The most likely candidates were EASTERN SCREECH OWL and GREAT HORNED OWL. Glad that the forecasted snow had held off, the group set out stopping several times for Al Mapes to try his luck with the EASTERN SCREECH OWL call. Without much luck, we resorted to playing the call on tapes. The group made its way to the back part of Five Rivers where two "elves", tended the campfire and prepared the refreshments. Al and his helpers reported that around 5p.m. when they were setting up the campfire a GREAT HORNED OWL had been calling repeatedly. Unfortunately, no calls were being made after the group had arrived. Luckily, the hot chocolate and cookies eased our disappointment, and our optimism for the *next* owling trip remains strong.

Partridge Run

Six hardy souls met on a bright, Saturday morning to explore the Partridge Run Wildlife Management area, thankful that the potential snowstorm had stayed to the south. Although previous scouting reports had not uncovered any unusual winter species, the group set out for a pleasant winter morning trek. Before leaving the meeting area, several birds were found including AMERICAN ROBIN, RED-TAILED HAWK, BLUE JAY, HOUSE FINCH and HOUSE SPARROW. The drive up to the area included scenic pastoral views of the hilltown farmlands and added EUROPEAN STARLING. The first stop was cut short by the nearby sounds of shotguns, so the group moved on finding a WILD TURKEY near the roadside. Tracks from various mammals were noted along the roadside and into the woods. The tracks included those of deer as well as smaller critters. The walk along the road and on snowmobile trails flushed three RUFFED GROUSE and included observations of BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, NORTHERN CARDINAL and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES.

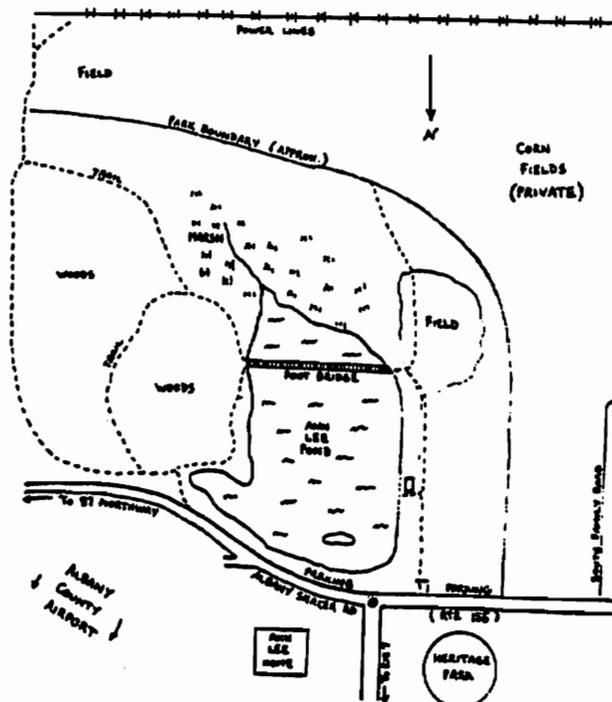


Figure 1: Sketch Map of Ann Lee Pond Area



Field Trip Reports (continued)

Sachuest Point and Rhode Island Coast

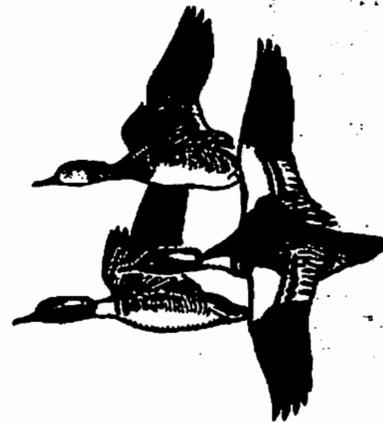
Bill Lee led 10 other birders around the Rhode Island coast on January 23 and 24. The weather was quite pleasant for mid-January, hovering in the mid-30's. Saturday morning we started out for Sachuest Point NWR and spent most of the morning walking around the point. Several waterfowl species were seen including COMMON LOON, HORNED GREBE and RED-NECKED GREBES, the three SCOTER species, GREATER SCAUP, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK and COMMON EIDER. Highlights included the featured HARLEQUIN DUCKS diving among the rocks among the rocks, excellent views of a male BARROW'S GOLDENEYE mixed in with several COMMONS, and PURPLE SANDPIPERS climbing the rocks. Land species were rare, but views and calls of YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, EASTERN MEADOWLARK(!), RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, CAROLINA WREN and RINGED-NECKED PHEASANT were recorded.

From Sachuest, the group proceeded to local Newport locations including Gardiners' Pond and Purgatory Chasm. We added COMMON and RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS, AMERICAN COOT, GREAT BLUE HERON, and RUDDY DUCK to our list. After quick surveys, we headed towards Providence and Watchamocket Cove where local reports claimed five COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULLS and two EURASIAN WIGEON had been found. Without getting lost, all five vehicles managed to arrive safely and find the sought-after specialties. The gulls were compared with the BONAPARTE'S GULLS at the cove and the differences in bill color were quickly identified. A large group of MUTE SWANS, MALLARDS, AMERICAN WIGEON, AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS, CANVASBACKS, and GREATER SCAUP were observed. A few were able to pick out a REDHEAD among the SCAUP. Before the daylight disappeared, the group hurried to Turner Reservoir (over the MA border) to check for any unusual sightings (especially BALD EAGLES). However, the reservoir did not offer anything new.

After a fine meal at a local restaurant and a good night's sleep, the group headed to Sakonnet Point east of Newport for the morning. Many of the

same species found at Sachuest were observed again. A large group of PURPLE SANDPIPERS were found sunning themselves on the off-shore rocks. Much discussion was focused on the identity of a GREAT CORMORANT. DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS were also recorded. A few GADWALL were observed in the marshy area near the road as well as fine views of RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS in the cove. The walk to the point discovered several land species for the trip including a PALM WARBLER, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, DARK-EYED JUNCO, SONG SPARROW, NORTHERN FLICKER and BLUE JAY.

After checking out of the motel, the group crossed the Newport Bridge and headed to Beavertail State Park. NORTHERN GANNETS were observed feeding in the waves. Again much discussion and indecision focused on the correct identity of a female KING(?) EIDER. After completing a quick perusal of the water, the group moved on to the Point Judith region. The Coast Guard station allows views of the water in many directions although the wind can make using the scope difficult. The beaches of the area added Dunlin and Sanderling to our list. Another nearby stop at the Galilee harbor included an unsuccessful search for white-winged or LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS. With the forecasted rain holding off, the final stop for the trip was in Warwick where MONK PARAKEETS were known to nest. The directions took us directly to them and though they may not count for an ABA list, they were an interesting sight (and sound) among these large stick nests.





Upcoming Field Trips (April-May, 1993)

Lower Hudson

April 4 (Sun), Coord: Walt Sabin, 439-7344

This trip will search for waterfowl, hawks, gulls and other migrants along the Hudson River between Rensselaer and Stockport.

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

April 10 (Sat), Coord: Scott Stoner, 464-0492

Timed for peak spring waterfowl migration, study the variety of waterfowl and check for early spring arrivals.

Utica Marsh

April 25 (Sun), Tim Colborn, 438-1874

Join the Naturalists Club of Broome County to search for waders, waterfowl and passerines. AMERICAN and LEAST BITTERN both breed in the marsh.

Woodcock at Five Rivers

April 29 (Thu), Coord: Alan Mapes, 439-4086

This popular evening event will look and listen for the AMERICAN WOODCOCK as they perform their courtship flights.

Delmarva Peninsula

May 1-2 (Sat-Sun), Coord: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen, 899-2678

This popular weekend trip focuses on southern woodland specialties and migrating passerines and shorebirds.

Birds and Breakfast

May 8 (Sat), Coord: Alan Mapes, 439-4086

Annual celebration of spring at Five Rivers. Practice your ear-birding or search for newly-hatched goslings. Bird at your own pace or join a group of other HMBC birders. A compiled list of observations will be created at 10AM.

Warbler Walk

May 9 (Sun), Coord: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen, 899-2678

Search for migrating warblers and other passerines before the trees are fully-leafed out.

Central Park, NYC

May 9 (Sun), Coord: Sam Madison, 439-4753, Leader: Julie Abramson, 438-3667

Look through one of the largest green spaces around NYC and discover spring warblers and other migrating passerines.

Ann Lee Pond

May 12 (Wed), Coord: Frank Murphy, 482-1942

Spend the evening at the Town of Colonie pond. Expect spring migrants and water birds.

Century Run

May 15 (Sat), Compiler: Bob Yunick, 377-0146

Plan your own Big Day. Cover the 11-county Hudson-Mohawk region or pick a smaller territory. Mail reports to compiler by May 29 - all reports are welcomed and encouraged!

Christman Sanctuary

May 16 (Sun), Coord: Phil Johnson & Debbie Ellinger, 895-2969

Explore this small Nature Conservancy property which contains a variety of habitats which should support a variety of spring arrivals.

Palmer's Ravine & Vicinity

May 22 (Sat), Coord: Tom Palmer, 843-1491

Spend the morning at the coordinator's own woodland preserve and explore nearby fields for grassland species.

...the list never ends



Upcoming Field Trips (continued)

Saratoga National Historic Park (Battlefield)
May 29 (Sat), Coord: George & Kay Hanson,
885-5467

Walk the area around the Visitor's Center listening and looking for woodland passerines. Drive the loop road, stopping to search the fields for grassland species.

Castleton Island

June 5 (Sat), Coord: Cliff Lamere & Jean Landry

Explore this undeveloped state park and find a variety of breeding birds, including CERULEAN WARBLER.

Pine Bush

June 6 (Sun), Coord: Laura Sommers, 475-0736

Enjoy the sand dunes and unusual habitat in this preserve. Emphasis will be on bird songs and many interesting breeding birds should be seen and heard.

An informal series of bird walks will be held throughout the spring and summer at Five Rivers and Vischer's Ferry. These weekly Thursday evening get-togethers are planned from 6:30p.m. until dusk and will be informal. Meet in the parking areas (or come early and take advantage of the picnic tables). No formal leaders will be on hand. Good Birding!

Five Rivers:

May 6, 20
June 3, 17
July 1, 15, 29
Aug 12, 26

Vischer Ferry:

May 13, 27
June 10, 24
July 8, 22
Aug 5, 19

The Spring is certainly an exciting time for birding in the area. Enjoy the extensive set of field trips or birding on your own - call in your reports of unusual sightings, breeding birds and other interesting observations to Dial-A-Bird.

Upcoming Programs

Monday, April 12:

HMBC Annual Meeting and program.

Following our annual business meeting Dr. Charles Smith of Cornell University will present a program entitled "Partners in Flight: A New Initiative for Bird Conservation".

Monday, May 3:

Birding Big Days - Planning and Strategies

Alan Mapes, veteran World Series birder, will coordinate a round-table of experienced Big Day birders. The program will include tales of past World Series and strategies for HMBC's own Century Run.

Monday, June 7:

Four Seasons, Five Rivers

Local photographer, Doug Morse, will show slides depicting the birds, wildlife, wildflowers and scenic beauty of Five Rivers through the seasons.





PROGRAM REPORTS

by Scott Storer

Colorado Slides at Christmas Party

Forty people who braved the weather on December 7, 1992 were rewarded by the good food and some great slides of Colorado at the Club's Christmas Party. Following a discussion of upcoming Christmas Counts, Alan Mapes showed a collection of slides from his two visits to this scenic and birdy destination. From the dry mesas of the southwest to majestic snow-capped Rockies, and the grassy plateau of the east, Colorado offers an incredible variety to the visiting birder. After Alan's slides, Bob Budliger described some of this State's many birding hotspots.

Raptors Discussed in January

Wintering raptors were the focus of the January meeting, where Richard Guthrie provided an informative and entertaining program on identifying the hawks and owls of this area. Nearly 60 people attended (a record for a monthly program meeting), attributable to both Rich's reputation as a speaker and people's general fascination with the birds of prey. Rich supplemented his slides with study skins to illustrate several key points of identification, such as differentiating between SHARP-SHINNED and COOPER'S HAWKS. He also described live-capture techniques used for banding. Following Rich's presentation, Barbara Putnam distributed and described a guide she had prepared for birding the Fort Edward (Washington County) area, made famous last winter for the NORTHERN HAWK OWL. This area is also well-known as a prime site to observe wintering raptors including SNOWY OWL, SHORT-EARED OWL, and ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK.

A field trip that was offered on Saturday, January 9 as a follow-up to this program did find ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, but adverse weather hindered the banding possibilities.

Florida Highlights Described in February

On a bitterly cold winter night, 50 people attended the HMBC Meeting to hear tales of birding in the subtropical warmth of Florida. Bob Budliger, a Florida native and self-described

"fourth-generation cracker" entertained and educated us with his slides and stories of birding one of North America's premier destinations.

Along with some history and geography, Bob described the wading birds, wintering songbirds, and springtime specialties of southern Florida. Winter visitors to the area can expect WOOD STORK, LIMPKIN, ROSEATE SPOONBILL, WHITE and GLOSSY IBIS, FULVOUS WHISTLING DUCK and all of the North American species of herons and egrets, including the white morph of the GREAT BLUE HERON. This bird, formerly called the GREAT WHITE HERON, is now considered conspecific with the GREAT BLUE. However, they may once again be split, so keep it in escrow!

Visitors to Florida in April and May can look for such specialties as GRAY KINGBIRD, BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO, and MANGROVE CUCKOO.

Bob put up several maps of the State, and described key places to bird from several different starting points. Good options for those on family visits to the "Kingdom of the Mouse" include Meritt Island National Wildlife Refuge on the coast east of Orlando, and a pine area north and west of Lake Okechobee. Meritt Is. NWR is good for waders, and the pines of Old Venus are productive for RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER, BACHMAN'S SPARROW and SCRUB JAY.

Another good base for a trip is Fort Myers on the Gulf coast, a convenient place from which to bird Sanibel Island and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Sanibel Is. contains the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, with a wildlife drive well-known for most of the Florida waders. Also check the beaches and along the causeway for pelicans, gulls, terns and shorebirds. Corkscrew Swamp, a National Audubon Society Sanctuary, is a cypress swamp near the town of Immokalee. A long boardwalk provides access into the swamp, which is noted for BARRED OWL, LIMPKIN, nesting WOOD STORKS, and water moccasins!

Palm Beach is Bob's choice over Miami for flying into south Florida. It is close to Loxahatchee



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NWR and convenient to the Old Venus area described above. It is also a good spot from which to drive on down to the Everglades National Park (ENP). Along the Tamiami Trail (US 41), near the forty mile bend, is the Miccosukee Indian Tribe. Their restaurant, across from the Shark Valley entrance to ENP, is a favorite location from which to see **SNAIL KITE**. For visiting the southern part of ENP, Bob recommends staying in Key Largo. Good birding sites within that part of the Park include the Anhinga Trail, the pinewoods (caution--snakes--stay on trail) and, near Flamingo, Eco Pond. Not far from Flamingo is the Snake Bight (not Bite) Trail. From Bob's description, though, it should be called the Mosquito Bite Trail! He went on to say, though, that what really forced him to turn back was the immense alligator that completely blocked his passage. I'm sure he was glad that he had not made it past this point on his way in and was instead blocked from leaving this mosquito-laden mangrove swamp!

Seventy miles beyond Key West lie the Dry Tortugas, a group of small islands that constitute a must-visit for North American listers. These islands host **MASKED BOOBY, BROWN BOOBY, BROWN NODDY,**

and **BLACK NODDY**, and the waters between them and Key West are good for both **BRIDLED TERN** and **AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER**. Garden Key contains historic Fort Jefferson, in which Dr. Mudd (who fixed the leg of John Wilkes Booth who had shot President Lincoln) was imprisoned. It is also noted for the fallout of exhausted northbound spring songbirds, a phenomenon not lost to the **CATTIE EGRETS** which feast upon them in the middle of the Fort. Imagine seeing **YOUR** life **CERULEAN WARBLER** being so consumed! One can visit the Tortugas by sea-plane or by boat, with the boat offering a more extended stay unless you fly in and camp.

Bob recommends the Lane series guide for those planning to bird southern Florida, and is available to give information as well. One story among the evening so stands out that it's worth closing with: In rural Hendry County in south central Florida, Bob was birding with binoculars and out-of-state plates when he was stopped by the Hendry County Sheriff. When asked what he was doing there, Bob naturally replied "birding" to which the Sheriff said "You mean people really do that"?!"



President's Corner: *The big news from the January Board Meeting is that HMBC is undertaking the publication of a comprehensive guide to birding this region. This ambitious project will provide both local and visiting birders with a detailed description of both well-known and lesser-known area hotspots, promote birding in general, and increase the visibility of our Club.*



Such a guide was prepared twice before in the history of the Club, first in 1952 and again in 1962, both while we were still called the Schenectady Bird Club (we became HMBC in 1969). The area has undergone tremendous change in the past 30 years and a new document is sorely needed! Members are urged to help with project. Individuals interested in preparing a site description for a birding site in the HMBC area should contact me or Gregg Recer for details. We are particularly interested in sites in more out-lying areas of the region, such as Warren, Fulton and Schoharie counties.

On January 12, HMBC held a workshop for its field trip leaders. Led by veteran birders and professional educators Bob Budliger and Alan Mapes, it covered everything from pre-trip planning to emergencies. Records chair, Cliff Lamere, then discussed post-trip record-keeping.

A major topic of the workshop was birding ethics, a subject taken most seriously by the Board as well. The Board will be adopting a formal Ethics Policy in the near future, which will be published in Feathers. In the meantime, Club members are advised that the Club does not in any way condone entry onto private property or closed areas of public lands. Membership in this Club does not confer any special rights to enter such lands and such action by any member reflects badly on both the HMBC and the birding community in general.

SEND THOSE ARTICLES, FIELD TRIP REPORTS
AND OTHER MATERIAL (INCLUDING CLIP ART)
TO:

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c/o Five Rivers EEC
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The Board approved a motion to purchase a hand-held scanner for publications, so we will be able to reproduce artwork sent in for publication. We look forward to some contributions from the Club's artists!

Don't forget the annual meeting to hear all the latest activities in the Club.
- Cathy Graichen, Layout Editor, Vol. 2

Publication Schedule

V55:
No. 3 Editor: Scott Stoner Deadline: Apr. 1
No. 4 Editor: Gregg Recer Deadline: June 1
No. 5 Editor: open Deadline: Aug. 1
No. 6 Editor: Ann B'Rells Deadline: Oct. 1

The publications committee meets every third Monday of odd-numbered months, 7:30 pm at Five Rivers EEC. All are welcome.

Dr. & Mrs. Robert P. Yunick
1527 Myron St.
Schenectady, NY 12309

FEATHERS

Vol. 55
No. 3

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June
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Kamikaze Birding Adventures in South Texas

by Kevin McGrath

On a recent business trip to lovely Lake Charles, Louisiana I found myself anticipating another weekend alone in my motel. For those geographically disadvantaged, Lake Charles is a city of 63,000 people in the SW corner of the state. It is 25 miles from the Sabine river (Texas border), 120 from Houston, and 40 from the Gulf of Mexico. My first weekend I spent two rainy days driving and birding in a semi circle about 100 miles wide. I got over to Anahuac NWR near Houston, up into the Pineywood, and down to the Sabine NWR. Although I saw two life birds (BLACK SHOULDER KITE & OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT) many southern, and a few western species, the weekend left me exhausted and unfulfilled. I had to work too hard and under poor conditions to truly enjoy what I got. Still, 98 species in the first weekend of early December isn't something I normally scoff at. I guess my expectations were too high. They were escalated by all the stories and slide shows of the great Texas birding trips that I've endured over the years.

Fortunately for me, I was given an opportunity to correct my misconceptions, adjust my expectations, and do something about them. The day before my assignment in Louisiana was to have finished I was given the option to stay on for ten more days which I accepted. I remembered that the brother of one of our club's past presidents is the voice of the Texas RBA and a very active birder. I dug his home phone number out of the ABA directory and called. I asked him this one simple question, "If you were an Northeasterner who had NEVER birded in Texas before, and you only had two days to bird, WHERE WOULD YOU GO?". He immediately replied, "The Valley. Either Brownsville to Falcon Dam or over to Big Bend." Then he faxed me a list of valley specialties, where to find them, and ranked by success probability.

Looking at the map of Texas and the list he had sent, I quickly settled on the Brownsville area as my target. Loading up my Auto-Mapper software and entering the data I was stunned when the mileage data appeared on the screen. From Lake Charles to Brownsville was 530 miles!!! I planned a route and tallied up the journey with computer. The Auto-mapper gave me a total of 1370 miles for the trip I was planning, oooooouuch. My spirits were a little



dashed by that figure as was my resolve.

Finally, however, LIFE BIRD FEVER, (that comes from the sure and certain knowledge that multiple lifer's are close at hand) overwhelmed reason and replaced doubt with anxious anticipation. I knew I was going.

I hit the west bound entrance ramp for Interstate-10 at 8:15pm Friday evening. At 5:05 am I lay down to sleep and to await the dawn on the front seat of my truck. I was in the parking lot at the Headquarters of the Laguna Atacosa National Wildlife Refuge. It's amazing how deeply resting a quick sleep can seem. This is especially true when

I'm awakened sharply by the loud raucous calls of birds I have never heard before. At 6:40am I climbed out into the gathering dawn and stood there stunned by the sounds around me. The familiar calls of the SCREECH OWL on my right and two GREAT HORNED OWLS in the distance were reassuring that I was still on my native planet. Most of the noises coming from the thickets around me were frustratingly alien and in the yet incomplete light I was to-

Inside this Issue ...

Survey Results

HMBC Response to Vischer Ferry Boat Launch Proposal

Annual Meeting Report

Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Feathers



tally befuddled.

With agonizing slowness the light gathered. The noise and activity around the headquarter building drew my attention. In that barely perceptible changeover point of near dawn, from a world of twilight predominated by darkness and shadow to that of mostly solid substance, I got my first Lifer for the trip. A **GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER** leapt up before me, scolding me for disturbing his resting place beneath the exterior rafters of the building. As I watched, I listened and mentally recorded that call for future reference. Finally, one of those eerie calls in the night had a registered owner.

As the dawning continued, it became apparent that I had underestimated the gloriousness of the day that was commencing. By 7 am the sun shone through the cloudless sky and temperatures, hovering at 55, began to climb. Shoving off from the HQ, I followed the trail map that lead off into the Mesquite. The birds came quickly now and I was amazed by their numbers. My second lifer was **LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER** (I missed him in Arizona), then came **OLIVE SPARROW**, **BLACK-CRESTED TITMOUSE** {soon to be a separate species again}, and **CASSIN'S SPARROW**, all before I had walked more than 100 yds. I continued along the 3/4 mile trail around the HQ and continued to see many repeats of the lifers I mentioned as well as some old familiar eastern and western species. Actually, I think it was one large mixed flock that was following me around.

Returning to the HQ shortly after its 8 am opening, I went over to the Park maintenance building to speak to the refuge worker working on an apiary. A sudden sharp call note and flash of golden yellow instantly riveted my attention and set my binoculars in motion. A quick glance brought instant recognition and a sense of indescribable joy that swept through me. Its intensity was enough to buckle my knees and nearly dump me on the grass. In awe, with mouth agape I stared at a pair of **GREAT KISKADEE** less than 60 feet away. For over twenty-five years I've waited to see that bird. I cannot count the times when as a child I spent time pouring over the picture of **KISKADEE** in field guides and wishing that I could see just one. This bird was worth the wait.

The ranger was rather amused by my reaction to these colorful (and noisy) flycatchers. We immediately got into a lively conversation about the different birds of Laguna Atacosa as we went inside. Going over the map of the area and a checklist he pointed out the good spots and stops with vantage points and told me what to expect. He also gave me a small cup full of seed which I spread on the walk before the building entrance. As he rang up my purchases (a duck stamp, Lane's guide to the Rio Grande Valley, and postcards of **KISKADEE** and **GREEN JAY**), I watched the **OLIVE SPARROWS** and then saw one of my postcards come to life. First one, then three, then 12 **GREEN JAYS** alit upon the walk. Another life bird and it's only 8:20am. I know now how common the **GREEN JAY** is in the valley but no one better ever call that a trash bird when I'm around. That is one magnificent plumage and always a welcome sight.

A dash around the pond quickly yielded **LEAST GREBE**, in large numbers. Also **PIED-BILLED** and **EARED** were present

here and at Laguna Madre. Nothing I have seen or imagined prepared me for the sight I beheld at Laguna Madre. At the end of the road there's a parking area and small knoll atop which stands one of those small stone shelters that commonly adorn federal beaches. As I reached the stop stair, and could see over the hill into the bay, my jaw literally dropped open. Stretched out upon the water in rafts that were 2 MILES long and 30-50 birds thick were **COOTS**, **GREBE**, **WIGBON**, **SCAUP**, **BLUE- and GREEN-WINGED TEAL**, **CANVASBACKS**, **REDHEAD**, **RING-NECKS**, **GADWALLS**, **PINTAILS** and both **PELICANS**. I conservatively estimate that there were 60,000-75,000 birds there that day. The sight of it brought a happy tear to my eye (okay, it was windy).

I spent way too long scoping the rafts, more for the joy of it than from any expectation of scoping a rarity or missing a species. At 10:15 I remembered where I was and what was still left to see. I took the bay-side loop at an accelerated pace stopping only for some real good looks at **LONG-BILLED CURLEW**, **BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE**, and a flock of 28,000 **RED-HEAD ducks** (the ranger told me that's how many there were). One amusing pairing that seemed to reoccur every 200yds or so along the beach was the patient **RINGED-BILL GULL** and the feeding **OSPREY**. I swear, I saw a dozen **OSPREY** along the beach and **EVERY ONE** had the obligatory **RINGED-BILL GULL** in attendance. I left LANWR at 11:30 and headed down to Brownsville hoping for a Southern Buteo along the way but never got one. I had to settle for **SWAINSON'S HAWK** and a **FERRUGINOUS HAWK**.

I had read in the guide that I had purchased that the **BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD** was a specialty at Audubon's Sable Palm Grove Sanctuary, so I headed there arriving just as one of the caretakers returned from lunch. As I approached the building a sudden ruckus from the feeder area and the scattering of large birds told me instantly that I had found another lifer, **CHACHALACA**, but before I could raise my glasses to get a close up I was suddenly assaulted by a very angry and very loud **BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD**. Zipping up quickly and quite unexpectedly to within 6 inches of my face, the bird released a rapid twittering and chirping at least a full octave above my pain threshold. I was startled enough by the hum of the wing beats at that range to miss a step. Combining the sounds and the motions with the speed and it literally drove me backwards with a stumble. Retreating to the safety of the refuge building, the recently returned worker just raised his thumb and said, "That's his spot. Swing wide around to get down the path."

Down along the trail through the palms the **CHACHALACA** and **OLIVE SPARROW** were plentiful. A **WHITE-EYED VIRBO** and a beautiful **BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER**, a male in breeding plumage, were hanging around with a group of **TITMICE** and **KINGLETS**. The sight of that **WARBLER**, though an old friend of summer, was such a welcome and pleasant find. I reflected inwardly how much that bird gave a sense of continuity to the trip. Later, when reporting my sightings at the refuge building, the same somewhat laconic caretaker nearly jumped out of his uniform when I told him what I saw. Apparently, no one had ever reported that particular species before at Sable Palm Grove. I thought it was ironic that I had to go all the way down there just to see that bird for them. When he was finally convinced that a New York



Feathers

birder could tell the difference between Black Throated Blue and Gray, he took off with his binoculars. I was smiling when I left.

I headed up to the dump area and was very disappointed at the amount of "doubling back" I did. Apparently I went right by the place on my way to Sable Palm and didn't realize it. As I entered the port area and headed out toward the dump, I saw a flock of "crow-like" birds flying down the ship channel toward the dump. Quickly pulling up in an old loading dock area I drove out to the channel just in time to see a flock of 30 MEXICAN CROWS fly by at 20 yds. As I looked at them I realized how glad I was to have three books and an area guide along. I'm also glad for the first people to stop and look at these guys long enough to make something out of them. They're really shiny FISH CROWS but who am I to scoff at lifers.

The coup de main for the trip occurred just as I turned to leave the crows. At the roadside end of the docking area stood a gantry tower. The sudden motion of a flock of pigeons drew my attention to a long-bodied, swept-back wing falconiform that swung around the tower and disappeared. The very shape of the bird in flight triggered an alarm bell in my brain that said, "OH OH OH Get a better look at THAT!!". Driving slowly around the tower to find an advantageous viewing point, I was able to get a clear view with my telescope.

The bird was sitting on an exposed railing near the top of the tower about 150 feet away. The solid white bib and white eye line under the black cap told me immediately what I was looking at. Looking quickly to my field guides, a notation in one of them about this bird being commonly misidentified sent me the signal to be thorough (something I would do for a life bird anyway). As I watched, the bird pivoted around to give me both the full frontal and back view. It leaned forward and fluttered its wings as if to leap into flight and then settled down again. I had five full minutes to absorb field marks and compare them to three different field guides (a rare luxury). Then suddenly, it dropped straight off the tower, banked hard right, and sped off out of view. Moments later, when I saw the pigeon flocks scrambling madly about I suddenly wondered, "What does an APLOMADO FALCON eat?"

Content with the two goodies I gathered at the dump I sped off for Santa Anna NWR. It was after 2 pm and I

hadn't had breakfast, lunch, or even coffee since late last night but I couldn't stop. It was 80 miles to Santa Anna and the days are mighty short in December. I pushed on. Arriving late (3:20), I was told that I had to be out by 5:00 pm and the loop road was closed. Heading off on foot I was determined to see as much as I could in the limited time available. Large groups of CHACHALACA walked about in the trees making a racket all about me. Since my ears were useless to me anyway, I focused on finding vantage points where I could see out over the ponds.



Goodly numbers of puddle ducks, MOORHEN, and LEAST GREBE were seen everywhere. A GREEN KINGFISHER gave me a bit of a show and I was glad to stand and watch it. Another of my patient-heart sought Rio Grande specialties goes on the list. A VERMILION FLYCATCHER and a flock of INCA DOVE were my final species as I raced back to the HQ parking area in the gathering darkness. Fortunately, they hadn't locked the gates on me. I would have wished for more time to explore this place, but that couldn't be. I was tired beyond reason and fading fast. Plans for McAllen area PARROT hunting and a night trip to Bentsen State Park for PARAQUE gave way to better judgment.

Thirteen life birds for the day had relieved the fever and my mind ached for sleep. A quick trip to the Hotel 6 in McAllen, a shower, and a nice Italian dinner put me out like a blown bulb by 7:30.

Up and out early, I enjoyed a large buffet breakfast as I worked over my notes of the previous day. Looking through my travel guide I was reading about Bentsen SP when a note about the PARAQUE being seen "near dawn" riveted my attention. In a flash I was off at 110 mph again. The waitress must have thought I was either nuts or on the lamb as I tore out the door, right after two Border Patrol cops and a Texas Ranger came in. It was 6:10 am and I had no idea how far the park was but I was eager to get there.

As I raced south toward the park I could see the dawn approaching from the east. The weather had been too good to me yesterday and I could see it was not going to repeat itself today. The roads were wet from a storm that had blown through at night and occasional droplets fell on the windshield. The cloud cover was going to delay the dawn



Upcoming Field Trips

Castleton Island

June 5 (Sat), Coord: Cliff Lamere and Jean Landry, 462-9827

Explore this undeveloped state park and find a variety of breeding birds, including **CERULEAN WARBLER**.

Pine Bush

June 6 (Sun), Coord: Laura Sommers, 475-0736

Enjoy the sand dunes and unusual habitat in this preserve. Emphasis will be on bird songs and many interesting breeding birds should be seen and heard.

Saratoga Spa State Park

June 12 (Sat), Coord: Sheryl Zink, 584-3371

Search for breeding flycatchers, vireos and warblers with the coordinator who is a naturalist at the Park. Park entrance fee will be waived if you indicate you are entering for this program.

Elk Lake

June 19 (Sat), Coord: Bill Graham, 798-8038 (9am-1pm)

Bird the east-central area of the Adirondack Park. Discover breeding hawks, woodpeckers, flycatchers, including some boreal species. Bring insect repellent for the black flies!

Birding by Ear: A Workshop

June 20 (Sun), Coord: Cliff Lamere, 462-9827
Leader: Rob Taylor

Start to master the techniques to identify birds by song at this morning workshop at Five Rivers. Beginners are especially encouraged. Participation limited to 25.

Thacher Park Breeding Birds

June 26 (Sat), Coord: Tim Colborn, 438-1874
Gerry Colborn, 452-3600

Search this higher elevation park for warblers and other nesting species. **WORM-EATING WARBLERS** are a possibility.

Bear Swamp, Huyck Preserve and Hannacroix Ravine

June 27 (Sun), Coord: Sam Madison, 439-4753

Explore these southern Albany County preserves when the rhododendrons are blooming and search for warblers and other summer residents.

Ferd's Bog

July 3 (Sat), Coord: Gerry Colborn, 456-3600
Jon Colborn, 489-4157

Search for boreal species during this popular trip in a classic bog. Plan for wet feet. Continue birding at Moss Lake or Moose River Plains looking for other local breeding specialties.

Summer Residents at Heldeberg Workshop

July 14 (Wed), Coord: Cliff Lamere and Jean Landry, 462-9827

Spend the late afternoon looking for breeding warblers with students from Rob Taylor's workshop. Participation limited to 15.

Five Rivers Breeders

July 17 (Sat), Coord: Scott Stoner, 464-0492

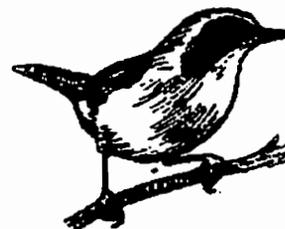
Search the grounds of Five Rivers and see how many of the 60 breeding species can be found.
Don't forget Thursday evening bird walks.

Five Rivers:

June 3, 17
July 1, 15, 29
Aug. 12, 26

Vischer Ferry:

June 10, 24
July 8, 22
Aug. 5, 19





Upcoming Programs

Monday, June 7

Four Seasons, Five Rivers

Local photographer, Doug Morse, will show slides depicting birds, wildlife, wildflowers and scenic beauty of Five Rivers through the seasons.

NO Program in July

Monday, August 2

Evolution of Birds

Professor Alexander from the College of St. Rose will describe the evolution of birds.

continued from page 39 ...

some and in that thought I found hope that I could still get this bird.

I reached the park by 6:35 and barely slowed as I passed the empty entrance shack and swung left to head out toward "the back roads" as where "Lane's" said they could be found. Less than 100 feet later, I cursed myself for a fool for not being more cautious. I slammed on the brakes just as two **PARAQUES** leapt up off the left side of the roadway, flew in front of me, and then away. I wanted to bang my head on the steering wheel for spooking them away. I caught the glow of their eyes from my lights a moment too late and lost the opportunity. As I struggled mentally with trying to decide whether that was truly a sighting that I would accept for my life list, and knowing it was not, a faint orange-ish glow further up the road caught my attention. I positioned the telescope in my saddle position and slowly rolled forward into a good position. With high beams ablaze I got a solid look at a **PARAQUE** with my telescope from 30 yds.

After adding a little more 'padding' to the trip list, I headed off for the "birder colony" along the Rio at the town of Salineño. Arriving shortly after 10 am, I was welcomed by an unusual sign on the gates of a fenced in mobile home park; it said "BIRDERS WELCOME- PLEASE COME IN". I was greeted by the hosts and engaged in cordial conversation with other birders as we sat in lawn chairs and watched **ALTIMIRA ORIOLE**, **GREEN JAY**, **LINCOLN SPARROW** and **BEWICK'S WREN** at the feeders (which are EVERYWHERE). One person had come from Port Arthur, Texas (only 40 miles from where I started) the day before and was heading back after lunch. Refreshing to find that lunacy is a common affliction amongst our hobby enthusiasts.

Everything scattered when the owners of this feasting station arrived. As big as any crow and both raucous and playful, 34 **BROWN JAYS** swooped into the bushes all about us. We watched and I listened to the thoroughly comical

stories about these supposedly 'shy' Rio Grande specialties. The **AUDUBON'S ORIOLE** made an audible appearance only, staying away from the feeder area and out of sight. "Hear that soft 'wispy-whistle' note?.....THERE!.....There again....., that's him".

Next, I headed over to Falcon Dam State Park where I spent the next hour gathering up **PYRRHULOXIA**, **ROAD RUNNER**, **CACTUS WREN**, **LONG-BILLED THRASHER**, and other padding. By 2 pm I was spent and I started the 80 mile trek to Laredo, I-35, and Louisiana. The sudden increase in **HARRIS HAWK** was clear, I even observed 7 of them "pack hunting", an amazing thing to watch. Stops at San Ygnacio and Zappata turned up a **CURVE-BILLED THRASHER** and a finch that got away. At 4pm, I fuelled up and began the long trek. 528 miles and 8 hours later I collapsed on my motel bed in Lake Charles.

When I figured it all out, I had traveled 1358 miles, saw 152 species of birds and had 18 lifers in only 52 hours. It's not a world series, big day, or even a personal record, but it's what Kamikaze birding is all about; take the shot and pray it all works out for the best. Needless to say, I wandered around the HAZWOP site with a big smile for the next four days.

Good birding.....you betchya!

Grafton Lake State Park Earth Day Celebration

An Earth Day Celebration will take place at Grafton Lake State Park on Saturday, June 12. Volunteers are needed to lead bird walks and for other activities. The festivities will be held at the Shaver Pond Interpretive Area on Agan Rd., 1/8 mi W of the Park entrance on Rt. 2. For more info call (518) 279-1155.



REPORT FROM ANNUAL MEETING

At the Club's Annual Meeting on April 12, 1993, the following slate of officers and directors was elected.

Officers, for terms expiring in April, 1994:

President: Scott Stoner
Vice President: Tim Colborn
Treasurer: Cathy Graichen

Directors, for terms expiring in April of

1994: Paul Connor
1994: Barbara Putnam
1995: Gregg Recer
1995: Bill Lee

There was no nomination for the office of Secretary, in which Bette Moon will continue to serve until such time as the By-Laws are changed to remove the term limitation, allowing her to be renominated.

President Stoner thanked outgoing Treasurer Bernie Grossman and Director Sam Madison for their many years of fine service to the Club. Stoner also gave special recognition to two committee chairs for their outstanding contributions over the past year, Cliff Lamere and Gregg Recer. Cliff Lamere has chaired the Records and Field Trip Committees, and is largely responsible for the extensive schedule of trips for 1993. He also compiled the Troy Christmas Count and did a fine job with that on very short notice. Gregg Recer took over the Chair of the Publications Committee from Kevin McGrath, and deserves tremendous credit for the continued success of Feathers.

Following the business portion of the meeting, we were treated to a presentation by Dr. Charles (Charlie) Smith of Cornell University on "Partners in Flight-- A New Initiative for Bird Conservation." Charlie described the Partners in Flight - Aves de las Americas program, a cooperative, comprehensive effort to conserve

Treasurer's Summary

The HMBC Treasury remains in solid condition. Currently, all funds are in either the checking account, or a savings account. As CD's have matured, they have been placed in the savings account (due to the low interest rates currently available). Below is a brief summary of the past fiscal year (4/1/92-3/31/93) income and expenses.

Checking Balance, April 1, 1992 4088.87

Income

Dues	4644.00
Reist Donations	596.00
Patch Sales	63.30
Interest	420.75
Corporate matches	34.00
Xmas Count Fees	25.00
	<u>5783.00</u>

9871.92

Expenses

Bank Charges	71.60
Printing	1147.27
Telephone	304.76
Donations	460.00
Federation Dues	100.00
Mailing	488.55
Postage	148.12
Dial-A-Bird	300.37
Insurance	304.00
Legal Fees	25.00
Fed. Meeting	119.00
Water District Tax	633.40
Program	282.60
Publications	25.00
Xmas Count Fees	110.00
	<u>4519.67</u>

5352.25

Norstar Investment Account

Balance, March 31, 1992	19,836.14
Interest earned	924.84
CD Interest deposited	228.06
Deposit of Matured CD's	10,500.00
Withdrawals	0.00
	<u>31,489.04</u>



PROGRAM REPORTS

March, 1993

Walter Ellison, a post-doctoral researcher at SUNY Albany and renowned Vermont birder, treated us to a detailed slide program on the often-difficult subject of sparrow identification. Starting with the easy ones, Walter took us through the field marks of about 20 species. Walter is the author of a bird-finding guide for Vermont, and we look forward to having him back next year for a program on birding this neighboring state.

Natural History Lecture

Dr. Ken Able described Australia's habitats and wildlife from a naturalist's perspective for a large crowd in SUNY's Lecture Center on a snowy evening just after the "Storm of the Century". The talk started with a brief overview of the plate tectonics which resulted in the creation of Australia from Antarctica (along with South America and India). After the quick geology lesson, we moved on to a multi-media presentation complete with authentic music and sound effects.

Ken recalled the numerous honey eaters and sunbirds, along with numerous other bird species and directed our attention to their calls in the audio tape as they were played. The Kookaburra and parrots were some of the most impressive birds. Pictures of larger animals included the popular kangaroos (several species), koalas and wombats. Not to be left out, a few reptiles, primarily lizards, filled out the animal highlights.

In addition to the wildlife photos, we were treated to several scenic vistas, including that of Ayer's Rock, "the largest monolith in the world". Ken covered several habitats including woodlands, islands and beaches, and the inner, dry desert areas. Some photos of the Aborigines rock paintings provided an anthropological view of the continent as well.

Ken certainly provided wonderful incentive for visiting Australia, but observed that short visits are not practical, since you will be just recovering from jet lag when you have to leave.

SURVEY RESULTS

Many thanks to all who returned their Membership Services Questionnaire of this past winter. Approximately 40 were received, which is a great response! Results have been tabulated and are already being implemented. Below is a summary of your responses along with some comments about their disposition.

Programs: You indicated an interest in attending a variety of programs, with bird identification workshops leading the way with 40. Strong interest was also expressed in programs on bird biology (31), birds/natural history of North America (29) and elsewhere (22), and bird conservation (20). Competitive birding interested 12 persons. Future programs will include an ID workshop, a biology program and presentations on birding both North and South America.

As for summer programs, 17 said yes and 24 no. As of right now, we are planning one program this summer and monthly ones again beginning in September.

Interest was also expressed in bird video nights, with a strong preference (26 to 11) that they be part of a regular program rather than on a separate night. Look for a video program next winter.

Twenty-seven people were interested in an intermediate level course on bird identification, whereas only 8 expressed interest in a more basic course. We will try to offer an intermediate course either in the fall of 1993 or the spring of 1994. For those interested in a beginning course, we highly recommend the one offered by Five Rivers every spring.

Thank you to all who offered specific suggestions for speakers. At least one of these is tentatively on the fall schedule, and others may be invited in the future.

Field Trips: The majority of respondents (28) had no preference between Saturday and Sunday trips. Saturday was preferred by 10 and Sunday by only 3. Expect to see trips on both days, with a somewhat heavier emphasis on Saturdays. The new Handy-Guide to field trips is proving quite popular, with 39 people finding it either greatly or

continued on page 45...



VISCHER FERRY THREAT ADDRESSED BY HMBC BOARD

At its March, 1993 Meeting, the HMBC Board of Directors addressed a potential threat to the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve by sending the following letter to the Clifton Park Town Supervisor and Town Board Members:

Mr. Marvin LeRoy
Supervisor Town of Clifton Park
1 Town Hall Plaza
Clifton Park, NY 12065

Dear Mr. LeRoy:

The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club (HMBC) is deeply concerned over the potential development of a boat launch at the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve.

The HMBC is an active birding organization based in the Capital Region with almost 400 members from throughout the region, including Clifton Park.

The Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve is one of the finest birding areas in the Capital Region. It is being highlighted in the April, 1993 issue of "Feathers," the Club newsletter, in an on-going series of articles on local birding sites (pre-publication copy enclosed). The Preserve will also be featured in the forthcoming HMBC book on birding the Capital Region. It has already been included in the book Finding Birds in New York State, by Susan Roney Drennan, Syracuse University Press, 1981. A scene showing the herons and egrets that congregate there in the late summer recently graced the cover of a local telephone directory.

The Vischer Ferry Preserve is used extensively by the HMBC and its members for the recreational activity of birding. It has been the site of Club field trips for over 30 years. Of the 66 trips on the Club's 1993 Field Trip Schedule, 11 are to this Preserve. In addition, the Preserve is visited frequently by Club members who go there to bird on their own. One of the best areas of the Preserve to bird is along the dirt road that leads south from the main entrance to the Mohawk River. This road is the best location from which to view several shallow ponds, a mudflat, and the marshes that border the road on both sides.

The brochure on the Preserve (4/87), prepared by several organizations including the Clifton Park Town Board, gives it high praise, using such terms as "bird haven" and "excellent birding location." The bird list in this brochure, although incomplete, includes more than 120 species. Among these are the endangered Bald Eagle and the threatened Osprey. The preserve harbors an extensive area of cattail marsh, which is a diminishing form of wetland habitat in the Capital area. Several bird species found in the Preserve, including Virginia and Sora rails, Common Moorhen, American Bittern, Marsh Wren and Swamp Sparrow, are highly dependent on this habitat type.

The HMBC does not oppose boat access to the Mohawk River; in fact, many of our members are active boaters as well as birders. What we do oppose is any development that would adversely affect the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve as either a haven for birds or as a site for the recreational activity of birding.

While we realize that any development of a boat launch at the Vischer Ferry Preserve is still in the early planning stage, we understand that one possibility would be to use the dirt road that leads from the main entrance south to the River. The Club believes that any widening of or increased vehicular traffic along that road would fundamentally alter the character of the Preserve and substantially impair its use as a birding site. We believe that it would be unwise to spend taxpayers' money to study the feasibility of this concept or to prepare a lengthy environmental impact review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act. We urge the Town to abandon any consideration of using this road or any other passage through the Preserve.

The Town residents, and indeed all residents of this region, are very fortunate to have natural areas like the Vischer Ferry Preserve available for their enjoyment of birds and other wildlife. The HMBC urges you to recognize its value and preserve it for this purpose.

Sincerely yours,

Scott J. Stoner, President

enc.
cc: Clifton Park Town Board members



Feathers

V55N3
Page 45

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In a response dated May 10, Town Supervisor LeRoy agreed with the premise that Vischer Ferry is a "resource that cannot be compromised in any way". Mr. LeRoy stated that consideration of a boat launch is at a very preliminary stage and that all eleven miles of Mohawk River Frontage in the Town were being considered, not just Vischer Ferry. Nevertheless, this process warrants close watching and the Club will remain involved as it progresses. Individual Club members are encouraged to contact the Town as well

continued from page 42

both neotropical migratory landbirds and their habitats in breeding and nonbreeding areas. He discussed how New York State is actually becoming reforested, and that many woodland species in the State are doing well. However, birds that live in scrubby, brushland habitat are not. Charlie showed the kind of analysis between habitat and species that is facilitated by satellite technology, and that gaps can be shown between areas with the greatest threat to species and the areas that are protected, using Hawaii as an example.

continued from page 43....

somewhat useful.

The question on favorite destinations produced about 30 different answers, indicating that we should continue to offer the great variety we do! Locations mentioned by five or more people include Tomhannock Reservoir, Delmarva, Ferd's Bog and Palmer's Ravine. Many good suggestions were made for new destinations. These will be considered by the Field Trip Committee as it plans the 1994 schedule. Anyone interested in leading a trip in 1994 is urged to contact Field Trip Chair Cliff Lamere at 462-9827. You do not need to be an expert birder to lead a trip, but should be familiar with the destination and most of its common birds.

Education:

Little interest was expressed in educational programs for children (i.e. the next generation of birders). However, there was a good turnout for the recent Club event of bluebird nest box building for kids. So, the interest is there is someone will organize the events. Lisa Peterson is leaving the area, and we need a new education chair!!

Publicity:

Most members are learning of Club events through Feathers, the field trip schedule, program fliers and Dial-A-Bird. Few respondents had noticed our press releases about HMBC activities, but hopefully they're reaching non-members.

Dial-A-Bird:

Many people call Dial-A-Bird to obtain sighting reports,

and also find it useful to learn of upcoming Club events. However, very few people are calling in their sighting reports with any frequency. All sighting reports are appreciated and considered for the seasonal report for the 11-county local area for the state journal, Kingbird, even if they are not included in the outgoing Dial-A-Bird message.

One message that came through loud and clear from the survey is for Dial-A-Bird to be updated on a regular, predictable basis. This is now being implemented to the extent practicable (please remember we are all volunteers). Strong sentiment was also expressed for the tape to be updated with any rare bird sightings. This, and other specific suggestions are being passed on to the Dial-A-Bird Committee. Club members should be aware too of the rare bird alert phone tree, where rare bird sightings are immediately passed on from one person to the next. Contact Bill Lee (374-3426) to be added to this network. Persons wishing to be one of the voices of Dial-A-Bird can leave a message on the tape or contact Committee Chair Ray Perry at 877-8915.

Rename Dial-A Bird Contest Continues

We're still looking for a new name for Dial-A-Bird and welcome suggestions from Club members. Names should begin with the letter "B" for phone-directory listing. Send suggestions to Ray Perry (number above) or to Cathy Graichen at 899-2678.



Field Trip Reports

Lower Hudson

The day started off with a few snow flurries. The overcast skies and the fact that it was the first day of daylight savings time resulting in only one participant appearing at the appointed hour.

All in all the trip was very disappointing due to the lack of numbers of most species. Only two or three stops had enough birds to warrant setting up the scope. In all there were only 42 species seen. Highlights of the trip included WOOD DUCKS, COMMON GOLDENEYE, all three MERGANSERS and NORTHERN HARRIER.

The lone participant was very pleased with the sightings nevertheless, plus a chance to note some new birding locations. '

Some misses were more dabbling ducks, such as Teal, Pintail, and Wigeon; Snow Geese and Canvasback. Perhaps it was a little early for Osprey? Sixty species were surely possible. Where were they?

— *Walt Sabin*

Derby Hill to Rochester

The focus of any late March trip to Derby Hill and the Rochester lakeshore is of course raptors. You pray for just the right weather to give you great hawk flights -- knowing that just the right weather is highly unlikely, and that you'll spend your time scoping waterfowl and searching through muddy farm fields and wishing you had better weather.

Well, we predictably did not have just the right weather for the Club trip this year, and did not have great hawk flights. Yet it qualified as a great trip for raptors anyway ... thanks to two great birds.

Saturday: Bird 1

Saturday dawned mild and pleasant. The wind was out of the northwest (NOT right), but fairly light, so we counted on the hawks to be just as eager to get on with the business of spring as we were and we proceeded to Derby Hill.

What we had not counted on was the fog. The Hill was lost in a dense bank of fog which covered the lake and extended about a quarter mile inland. We joined Gerry Smith, the "official" hawkwatcher, at the south field location, just at the edge of the fog bank.

In a couple of hours we had lots of RED-TAILS; a few RED-SHOULDERS; one ROUGH-LEG; one HARRIER; and a marvelous GOSHAWK, low down in power flight, streaking into the fog.

Then there was a dark speck high up in the sky and far out to the west. Gerry saw it first (the hawkwatcher always does) and said excitedly, "Get on that bird." It took a little while for all of us to find the speck, and by then it was actually starting to look as if it might be a bird, far off, heading straight at us, on flat wings. And then it flapped and we saw (or did we?) a white patch at the wing tips, and Gerry started screaming in excitement. The BLACK VULTURE flapped and glided and flapped some more, around and around, not wanting to move into the fog bank, and put on a wonderful performance for us for quite a long time. Black Vulture is a species that appears, on average, only once every several years at Derby Hill; it was a State bird for several of our group -- and Gerry probably regained his voice by Wednesday.

Sunday, Bird 2

We started Sunday morning by scoping waterfowl along the Lake Ontario shore west of Rochester and then driving the farm roads looking for shorebirds and field birds. At a stop along Chase Road, to inspect a flock of PIPITS in a field, someone noticed a hawk perched in a treetop far off to the south. It was far off and in branches, hard to get a decent look at. Gregg Recer had caught a brief glimpse of a pointed wing on the bird, and it looked more like a falcon than anything else, but it didn't show Peregrine head markings, and Walt Sabin said it looked too big to be a Peregrine anyway, so if it's a falcon, it's a Gyr.

We spent lots of time moving up and down the road trying to get different angles on the bird and slowly worked our way through to, "Yes ... it must be a Gyr." Then it flew a short distance to another tree; a huge falcon -- a gray-morph GYRFALCON. We spent a while longer looking the bird over on its new perch, with a somewhat better view, shared the excitement of having found what was a life bird for five out of the nine of us, and finally started to leave.

And then The Bird came streaking across the field, crossed the road in front of us, dropped out of sight into a gully (from which popped a Harrier in vertical flight), tore around a wide circuit, sparred with a crow, and perched again in the same tree. This bird's wingbeat is deep and powerful and appears rather slow, but its flight speed is absolutely amazing. We were treated to a display of gyrfalconry which some birders go a lifetime without seeing.

The rest is anticlimax. We had a little while a Braddock Bay to see the same three buteos, several SHARPIES and COOPER'S HAWKS, a few TURKEY VULTURES, another harrier, a kestrel, and a BALD EAGLE before it started to rain and we headed home. Overall, it would have been a good trip anyway, with 65 species found, including an even dozen species of raptors. But in fact it was a great trip ... thanks to two great birds.

— *Bob Boehm & Kate Beale*



Field Trip Reports (cont'd)

Instructional Trips

On Saturday, February 6, five hardy birders convened at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center for an instructional trip on identifying resident winter species. Given the bitterly cold temperature and far-subzero wind chill, we were content to spend most of our time indoors observing at the feeders. Participants did get good looks at most of the common wintering sparrows and other passerines. We then braved the cold for a very short walk, which produced a RED-TAILED HAWK and the first CAROLINA WREN of the year for Five Rivers.

On Saturday, April 10, about 15 birders met at Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve in Clifton Park for an instructional trip primarily for waterfowl. It had been raining hard that morning, but there was an hour and a half letup, enabling us to get out and see a total of 37 species, including BLUE-WINGED and GREEN-WINGED TEAL, BUFFLEHEAD, AMERICAN WIGEON, GADWALL, COMMON MERGANSER, and COMMON GOLDENEYE. Unfortunately, the Eurasian Wigeon reported the previous Saturday was not found. Other species seen on this trip were BELTED KINGFISHER, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH and KILLDEER. Many thanks to co-leader Tom Palmer for all of his help.

— Scott Stoner

Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve

A group of eleven birders began the morning with hopes of some decent weather and some interesting migrants at this "Old Faithful" of local birding marshes. The trip was scheduled as a replacement for the Utica Marsh trip. That trip was cancelled due to flooded conditions at the marsh and the access road.

We seemed to be square in the middle between the waterfowl migration moving past us and the passerine migration not quite at full throttle. Nine species of waterfowl were identified. Most interesting of those were a pair of AMERICAN WIGEON, a pair of GADWALL, and a lone female HOODED MERGANSER who kept company with a small group of RING-NECKED DUCKS.

As we worked our way west along the tow path, we were joined by a hungry OSPREY above. It circled and changed heights but didn't make a catch in our view. The fish-eating raptor was observable throughout the morning, never moving out of our sight for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time. Other raptors seen included the common RED-TAILED HAWK and a TURKEY VULTURE just in from down south somewhere.

We walked the tow path east as far as the water would allow us and came upon a busy group of swallows. In the

mini-"mass" were TREE, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED, and BARN SWALLOWS all buzzing around insistent upon eating their fill of insects before taking a break on the overhanging birches.

Water had also challenged us to cross the main road on the way to the two larger impoundments in the back. However, cooperation and some accurate placement of large stepping stones put us on our way. We weren't rewarded for our efforts; nary a heron, a shorebird or duck was seen on either of the back ponds. Along the road in, however, a SWAMP SPARROW perched proudly for us as it sang its staccato trill. We had heard many of these birds all morning along the tow paths and this one made sure we could note it on our sight list.

After calling it a day (morning), we started our trek back to the parking area. We were happy about the forty species we were able to identify and the damp, cloudy weather that had turned to warm sunshine. As we talked casually about other birding trips, past and present, a pretty BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER flew to a branch above. It seemed to be telling us that there would be plenty more to see here throughout the spring, summer, and fall.

— Tim Colborn

Vischer Ferry Warbler Walk

A large group (27) greeted Mother's Day and the Warbler Walk at Vischer Ferry on May 9 at 7AM. The weather was clear and the temperature slightly cool, but the forecast promised warmer weather later in the day. The group headed down the main access road searching through the light mist from the marsh for birds. A singing ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK indicated that the summer breeders had arrived. VIRGINIA RAIL was viewed briefly by several members of the group and heard by all. A WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW dashed by at the same time. COMMON MOORHEN flew over the back pools and were seen later at the edge of the reeds. YELLOW WARBLERS flitted and sang all around.

In the woods, one "odd-sounding" yellow warbler became a WILSON'S after closer examination. Many added it to their life lists. On the way back, two NORTHERN WATERTHRUSHES were heard. Fighting off mosquitos, we studied the woods. Just as one of the birds was found, a plane took off, the bird moved further back, and the group moved on. SCARLET TANAGERS, WARBLING VIREOS, MAGNOLIA WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE, a COMMON LOON on the river, and YELLOW-THROATED VIREO near the parking lot were just a few highlights of the other 67 species found that morning.

— Cathy Gratchen & Gregg Recor



Field Trip Reports (continued)

Delmarva Peninsula

This traditional spring trip started April 30 at noon in New Jersey's Edward B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Brigantine). After a quick lunch, members of the group strolled around the wooded area in search of migrant warblers and were treated with PINE and BLACK-AND-WHITE. Someone quickly observed that the CHICKADEES didn't sound quite right - were we now in CAROLINA territory? Of course, a BLACK-CAPPED would actually be a rarity. As everyone completed lunch, the caravan of five cars set off around the loop road. A lengthy stop at the first tower provided views of FORSTER'S TERNS, LAUGHING GULLS, LITTLE BLUE HERON, SAVANNAH SPARROW, and after much study a STILT SANDPIPER. Searching for more birds around the loop road, we found several types of shorebirds, including WILLETS, WHIMBREL, DUNLIN and BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER. BRANT and CANADA GEESE were plentiful with a handful of ducks. A few SNOW GEESE crossed the road in front of us, some with broken wings, perhaps explaining their presence so late in the migration season. SNOWY and GREAT EGRETS were common with a lone CATTLE EGRET on our way out. After completing the loop road, we headed to Cape May to catch a quick dinner and ride the ferry to Lewes, MD viewing NORTHERN GANNETS and few SCOTERS on the way which completed the day list.

The next morning, we started at 5:30 AM and headed for Pocomoke Swamp. The day started quietly, but some birds were singing, including KENTUCKY and HOODED WARBLERS. We searched and found SCARLET TANAGER. Views of PROTHONOTARY WARBLER helped build the excitement of the group. WORM-EATING WARBLER and OVENBIRD were later seen. Over the farm fields, a pair of adult BALD EAGLES were found perched in a tree. As we started back, a LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH sang and although we tried to turn it into a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, a good look at the WATERTHRUSH was just (almost?) as good. On the way out to the main road, some close looks at PALM WARBLER and WHITE-EYED VIREO were greeted with much enthusiasm as was the warmer temperatures and sunshine. Moving down to the bridge which was closed to traffic, we hoped the detour had encouraged more bird activity. We were treated to songs and sights of BLUE-WINGED WARBLER, NORTHERN PARULA, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, GREAT-CRESTED and ACADIAN FLYCATCHERS and another bold PROTHONOTARY. On the way back to the motel, the group caught a glimpse of a COMMON SNIPE in the fields and tried in vain to hear and see BLUE GROSBEAK. After a noontime rest, the group headed to Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Stopping at the Oystercatcher spot, the group found a wonderful view of CLAPPER RAIL. The bird cooperated and everyone had a chance to view it before leaving. In Chincoteague, we drove the loop road, but did not find many waterfowl. Although a PAINTED BUNTING had been reported earlier in the day, we were not lucky enough to come across it. However, we did find BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH new the area it bred last year. A few CANADA GEESE, MUTE SWANS, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, and

MALLARDS were visible with SNOWY and GREAT EGRETS and a very cooperative TRI-COLORED HERON. Later near the Lighthouse trail, we found NORTHERN BOBWHITE walking across the trail (with even an occasional call). We headed to the beach, to check the water and found a few BLACK SCOTERS. Turning behind us, we discovered a lone BONAPARTE'S GULL. "Could it be a BLACK-HEADED?", so we moved over for a closer look - BONAPARTE'S as expected. We also found a few shorebirds in other nearby pools, including SANDERLING, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, and LEAST SANDPIPER. After dinner on a tip about CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW, we headed back in the NWR. We listened intently, but nothing was singing that evening except for a few geese in the distance.

The next morning we arose an hour later and headed to Trapp Pond State Park, over the Delaware border. We found SUMMER and SCARLET TANAGERS and headed towards the pond. Warblers in the park included, NASHVILLE, NORTHERN PARULA, YELLOW-RUMPED, YELLOW, PINE, PRAIRIE, BLACK-AND-WHITE, OVENBIRD, LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, and YELLOW-THROATED. Four vireos were also found, WHITE-EYED, SOLITARY, YELLOW-THROATED, and RED-EYED. As we walked the nature trail, a thrush was seen. Everyone moved to different locations trying to get a view of the bird which blended in to be almost invisible even when you knew exactly where the bird was! After several minutes, someone identified the bird as a GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH. On the walk back, a WOOD THRUSH provided a much easier identification and view.

As the group started to disperse into several parties for continued travel plans, the "main" party headed up the coast, planning a few stops along the way. Reaching Bombay Hook later than hoped, we still had some time to study the shorebirds. A female breeding plumaged WILSON'S PHALAROPE was the treat here. After studying the birds, including BLACK-NECKED STILTS as well, we decided to move on. A quick tally of the trip list showed 149 species - we decided to try for one more to reach and 150! On the rest of the loop, we stopped to scan another group of shorebirds - surely there must be one that we didn't have on our list? After a few minutes, we came up with a RUDDY TURNSTONE. Back in the car, and definitely heading home, the recount again showed on 149 species, but the day was late, we were done. At home the final trip list was reexamined - yes there really were 150 species including 20 warblers!!!

— *Gregg Reesor & Cathy Gratchen*

ERRATUM

Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen on the Rhode Island Coast trip, not Yellow-throated (we wish!).

Winter Wren should be included in the Lisha Kill Nature Conservancy breeding bird survey.



HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB PUBLICITY COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT AND POLICY

Mission Statement:

- 1) To encourage and assist members and non-members of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club (Club) to attend and participate in Club events (field trips, programs, education classes and special events) and
- 2) to build and maintain Club membership through the process of communicating Club-related information to the radio, newspaper, television press; to local libraries; and to all other helpful sources.

Policy Objectives: Outline the methods to be used to communicate Club events, the events to be communicated, the standards to be used for publicity releases, and standards for communicating with media.

WHAT will be publicized:

- 1) any Club day field trip unless instructed otherwise by the coordinator or leader;
- 2) any Club meeting/program with the assistance of the Program Committee;
- 3) any Club education class(es) with the assistance of the Education Committee;
- 4) any special Club event by instruction of the Club's Board of Directors.

WHEN will it be publicized:

Field Trips: information to be sent to the media no later than three weeks prior to the trip, unless

otherwise instructed by the coordinator or leader.

Club Meetings or Programs: information to be sent to the media upon receipt of printed information or as instructed by the Program Committee.

Education Classes: information to be sent to the media upon receipt of printed information or as instructed by the Education Committee.

Special Events: information to be communicated as per the instructions of the Club Board.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Any inquiries seeking an official statement, response, or any other information from the Club should be made through, by the direction of, or with the permission of the Publicity Committee, the Board of Directors or the President. This will ensure accuracy of fact and consistency in representation. Club members speaking to the press in any capacity other than previously described do so without necessarily representing the Club's views or opinion.

It will be the policy of the Publicity Committee to treat all media with the same courtesy that would be afforded a Club member. Any Club member who will be communicating with the Media on a periodic basis should contact the Publicity Committee for assistance in providing information to a media reporter prior to the communication.





HMBC Annual Audit of Treasurer and Financial Records

Performed by: Cathy Graichen and Tim Colborn

Date: April 3, 1993

The audit took place at the home of the current Treasurer, Bernard Grossman, with his full cooperation and assistance. Because Bernard had notified the Board of Directors with his intention to relinquish this post at the end of the Club's fiscal year (April 1993), attention to matters of succession was paid.

Major audit objectives included: the balancing of the current accounts (both revenues and expenses affecting the checking account balance); verification of savings account balances, historical review of expenses for propriety and proper approvals; review of the dues collection and accounting process; review of the accounting software used for maintenance and reporting; and the transition of records and accounts to the succeeding Treasurer.

Club checking account balance as of our audit date was misstated by an amount of less than \$5.00. That difference appeared to be a register or database recording error rather than an actual difference in accountable funds. Due to the relatively small dollar amount and time constraints, only minimal follow-up was performed. Both auditors were satisfied with propriety of balances. Account statement balance as of 3/31/93 was \$4772.00.

The Club's savings account balance was properly stated as of the audit date. Total account balance as of 3/31/93 was \$31,489.04.

Total Club funds on account as of 3/31/93 were \$36,261.04.

Expense invoices and vouchers for the three years prior to the audit date were reviewed. Approval of expenses and notification of reimbursements to Club's Board of Directors and the use of funds from the savings account for purchase of capital goods were discussed with the Treasurer. Expenses appeared to have been properly requested and reimbursed.

We discussed the dues collection and accounting process with the Treasurer to determine how membership dues were obtained and the processes used to record current collection and follow-up on delinquent members.

Finally, we discussed the software being used to record and maintain Club accounting records. PFS First Choice and Dbase software packages are currently being used. Quicken may be incorporated in the future to provide more detailed computer-based record keeping. The ease of learning and using these packages appeared acceptable with only minor changes to format of current templates deemed necessary.

Because auditor Graichen was a nominee for the position of Treasurer at the elections to be held later in the month, logistics of the transfer of accounts and records as well as the transfer of authority to sign checks and withdrawals was discussed. Both the current Treasurer and auditors felt that the transfer could be made in a smooth and timely fashion after the elections.

Specific recommendations to the Board of Directors are as follows:

- 1) Provide Treasurer's report by fiscal year to Board to better analyze the cash flow.
- 2) Convert Treasury records to computerized system to reduce duplicate entries. Integrate these updates with membership list if feasible.
- 3) Develop and maintain budget records for committees and other operating expenses on a fiscal year basis.
- 4) Develop guidelines for identifying capital investments (which should be withdrawn from savings) from normal expenses (which should be drawn from checking).



Feathers

HMBC BOARD FOR 1993 - 1994

Officers

Directors:

President:
 Scott Stoner
 32-10 Woodlake Rd.
 Albany, N.Y. 12203
 464-0492

Vice-President:
 Tim Colborn
 18 Norwood Avenue
 Albany, N.Y. 12208
 356-5768

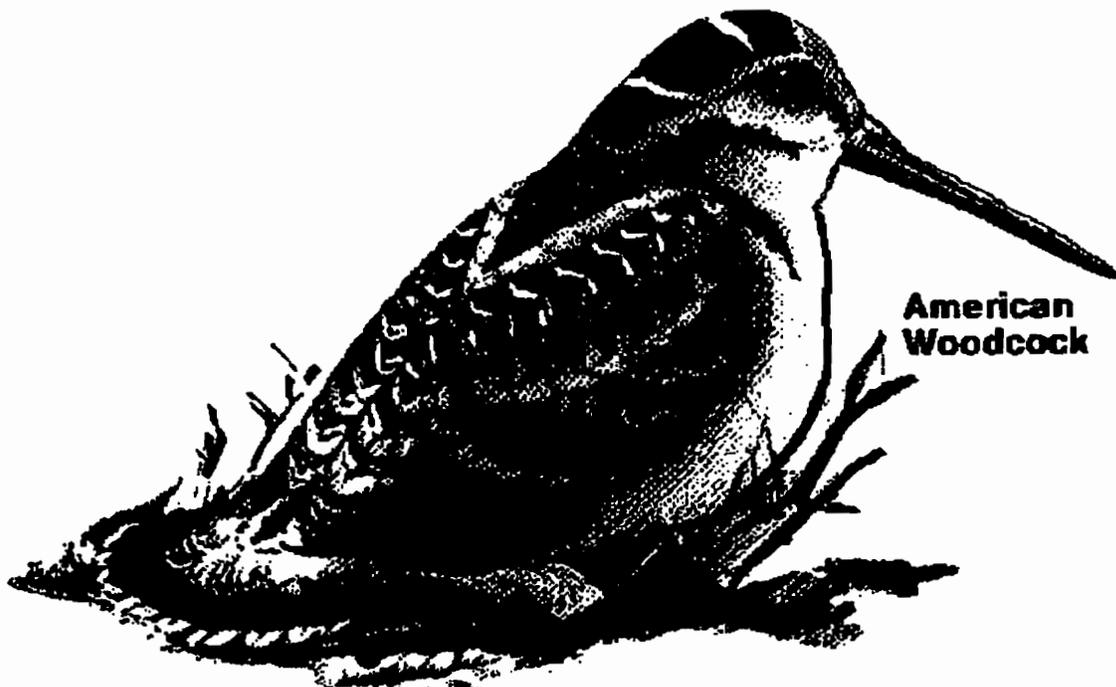
William Lee 374-3426
 Gregg Recer 899-2678
 Ray Perry 877-8915
 Barb Putnam 792-7542
 Paul Connor 477-5824

Committee Chairpersons

Secretary:
 Bette Moon
 907 St. David's Ln.
 Schenectady, N.Y. 12309
 372-8330

Treasurer:
 Cathy Graichen
 23 Scotch Mist Way
 Ballston Spa, N.Y. 12020
 899-2678

Conservation: Walt Sabin 439-7344
 Dial-A-Bird: Ray Perry 877-8915
 Programs: Scott Stoner 464-0492
 Field Trips: Cliff Lamere 462-9827
 Membership: Daniel Ruge 449-1087
 PR: Tim Colborn 356-5768
 Publications: Gregg Recer 899-2678
 Records: Cliff Lamere 462-9827
 Sanctuary: Bette Moon 372-8330
 Hospitality: Laura Sommers 475-0736
 Education: Lisa Peterson 426-4151



**American
Woodcock**

Feathers



President's Corner: Thank you for electing me to a full term as Club President. Over the next 12 months, I will work to continue the Club's recently expanded services in the areas of programs, education and Feathers, as well as to preserve Club traditions such as a strong field trip schedule and the compilation and preservation of ornithological records. Completion of the Club's guide to birding the capital area in 1994 remains a major goal of mine. Bird-related service projects are an important way in which the HMBC can contribute to the community, and I will encourage Club involvement with such projects as the breeding bird census on Nature Conservancy preserves and provision of data on grassland species to the Saratoga National Historical Park (Battlefield). Increased publicity for the Club along with increased membership are also objectives that I will work toward.



Congratulations to all newly- and/or re-elected officers and directors (see separate article), and welcome to our three new directors, Paul Connor, Barbara Putnam and Gregg Recer. Many thanks to outgoing Treasurer Bernie Grossman and Director Sam Madison for their years of fine service. At its March meeting, the HMBC Board responded to a potential threat to the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve in Clifton Park with a strong letter to Town officials (see separate article). Individual Club members are encouraged to contact the Town as well.

The other big news from the March Board meeting is that HMBC has offered to host the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, last hosted by our Club in 1986. Also at its March meeting, the Board voted to expand Feathers to six issues per year, and to purchase a hand-held scanner to increase the capabilities of our Publications Committee.

The HMBC Board also held a special meeting in late February to address issues pertaining to the Club's bird records. Following a convincing presentation by Bob Yunick, the Board adopted several resolutions aimed at both preserving and publishing Club records. Look for special supplements to Feathers that contain previously unpublished Christmas count results, as well as recent Century Run, Christmas Count and field trip results.

Thank you to all who sent in your Membership Services Questionnaire. Final results will be published in Feathers, and several suggestions are already being implemented, including updating Dial-A-Bird on a regular, predictable basis, and scheduling at least one summer program. Many people expressed interest in an intermediate-level bird identification course, which we will try to offer either this fall or next spring.

SEND THOSE ARTICLES, FIELD TRIP REPORTS
AND OTHER MATERIAL (INCLUDING CLIP ART)

FEATHERS
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.
Delmar, N.Y. 12054

FEATHERS
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.
Delmar, N.Y. 12054

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PERMIT 195
SCHDY NY 12305

Publication Committee Notes

The Club has purchased a hand-held scanner which can import drawings, clip-art, photographs and text into our computer system. We look forward to some contributions from the Club's artists!

My thanks to Cathy Graichen for her hard work co-editing numbers 2 & 3. I have to apologize for the tardiness of this issue -- a computer glitch temporarily derailed our publication schedule -- but we're back up and running fine now.

For the immediate future, Cathy and I will be co-editing each issue. Delivery targets are the first of each even-numbered month. Each issue's deadline for submissions is the first of the preceding month.

Thanks for your continuing support and keep the material flowing!!!

-- Gregg Recer, Publication Chair

Dr. & Mrs. Robert P. Yunick
1527 Myron St.
Schenectady, NY 12309



BIRDING THE HMBC REGION: Albany Pine Bush

by Laura Sommers

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve is a large natural area close to the heart of New York's Capital Region. Consisting of just over 2000 acres, the Pine Bush contains a variety of habitats, but is most known for its pitch pine-scrub oak "barrens" which cover ancient sand dunes. Birders often come to the Pine Bush to look for species that prefer dry open areas and shrublands, including PRAIRIE WARBLER, BROWN THRASHER, RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE and INDIGO BUNTING. However these specialties are not all the Pine Bush offers. An astonishing 156 species of birds have been cited as occurring in the Pine Bush (Schmitt and Brennan, see below).

The current Preserve is a mosaic of parcels located north of Western Avenue (Route 20), west of the Adirondack Northway (I- 87), south of the Conrail Railroad tracks and east of the Hunger Kill (Figure 1). Portions of the Preserve lie in the city of Albany and in the towns of Guilderland and Colonie. Landowners include New York State, The Nature Conservancy, the city of Albany and Albany County.

This article will describe the Blueberry Hill area, only one of many parts of the Pine Bush. I will be compiling more information this year and next on bird sightings in all areas of the Pine Bush and would be delighted to hear from birders who have visited the Preserve.

DIRECTIONS (To Blueberry Hill)

From the intersection with Route 155 (New Karner Road), go east on Washington Avenue Extension. Take the first right to get onto Frontage Road. Go east on Frontage Road to the stop sign and turn right onto Pitch Pine Drive. Follow Pitch Pine Drive through the "Dunes" housing development to its end at the

yellow gate. Park on the circle, being careful not to block the unobtrusive fire hydrant to the right of the gate.

DESCRIPTION

Although not as large as other Pine Bush parcels, the Blueberry Hill area is one of my favorites. It is surrounded by a buffer of residential neighborhoods, greatly reducing traffic noise from the major highways that surround and cross through the Pine Bush. New York State owns this parcel, which is located in the city of Albany. It has about 190 acres, a portion of which is the characteristic pitch pine-scrub oak community. The remaining areas are deciduous woods that provide habitat for additional bird species.

The only trail maps for the Pine Bush I've seen

...more on next page

Inside this Issue ...

Christman Preserve

Wildlife Enhancement at GE

Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Feathers



which are available to the public are in the book *Natural Areas of Albany County* (2nd ed., Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady, 1992 by Claire K. Schmitt and Mary S. Brennan). The authors correctly point out that due to the creation of fire breaks as part of current Pine Bush management, it is difficult to keep track of trails. They present a simplified map of the main sand roads through the Blueberry Hill area. These main trails should produce most, if not all, the bird species to be found in the area. Schmitt and Brennan also describe other access points from behind the nearby Corporate Plaza.

gate, go along the wide sand road. You should immediately begin hearing PRAIRIE WARBLERS and RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEES. Turn left toward Blueberry Hill (the largest dune) to begin the loop. Participants of HMBC's June 1993 Pine Bush trip also found BROWN THRASHER, CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER, AND SONG, CHIPPING, and FIELD SPARROWS along this stretch. At the top of Blueberry Hill, turn right and continue along a narrower trail that goes through more scrub oak thickets. Cross straight through another trail intersection to pass along the edge of a residential neighborhood where you can add such "yard birds" as HOUSE WREN, MOURNING DOVE, and CEDAR WAXWING. Continuing

When birding the area, I generally make a loop along the main trails. Starting at the yellow

continued on page 58...



Figure 1. Albany Pine Bush Preserve
Map courtesy of The Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady



BIRDING THE HMBC REGION: Christman Sanctuary

by Phillip Johnson and Deborah Ellinger

Christman Sanctuary is a compact Nature Conservancy property located near Duanesburg in Schenectady County. Birding habitats including old fields, mixed forest and pine plantation along the waters of Bozenkill make it a good spot for finding a variety of passerines and woodland birds including OVENBIRD, WILD TURKEY and PILEATED WOODPECKER. In addition to birds, the site hosts many spring wildflowers and the waterfalls of the Bozenkill are exhilarating whenever the water is high.

DIRECTIONS

The entrance to Christman Sanctuary is located off the Schoharie Turnpike near the border between Albany and Schenectady Counties.

To reach Christman's, head west from Schenectady to Duanesburg, then follow Route 7 west out of the village. Continue on Route 7 till the first left (Weaver Road). Turn left onto Weaver Road and follow it to the end, then turn left again onto Schoharie Turnpike for less than a mile.

The parking area for Christman Sanctuary is to your right. It is small and not visible from a distance.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Christman Sanctuary is owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy. It consists of property formerly part of the Christman farm. W. W. Christman, farmer, poet and lover of nature reforested much of the preserve with black locust, red pine, larch and spruce, when he retired from farming. The rest of the land was allowed to mature into second growth forest. One of the primary reasons for the property's preservation by the Nature Conservancy is its geological value. Limestone formations part of the "Schenectady Beds" can be seen at several points along the trails.

Two loop trails wander through a mix of habitats including old fields in different stages of succession, old orchards, red pine plantations and hardwoods forest.

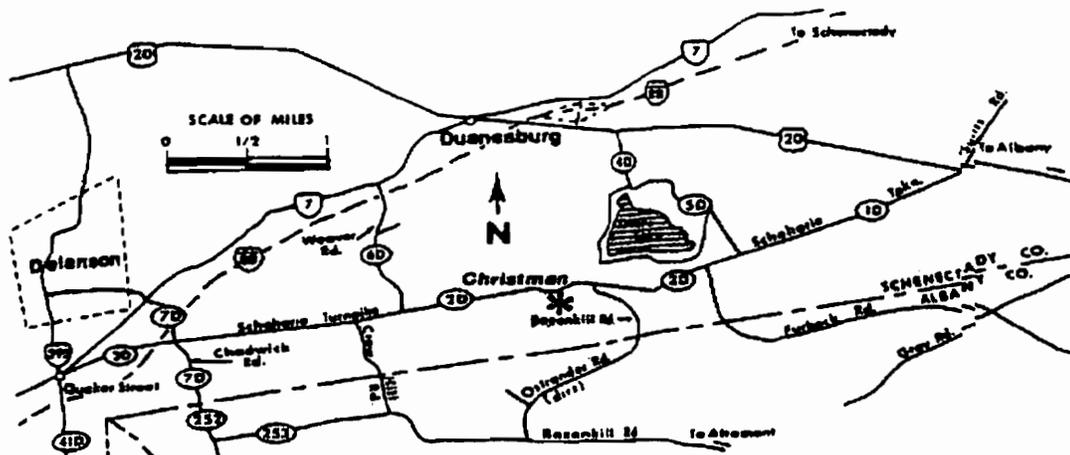


Figure 1. Christman Sanctuary location
(map reproduced from Natural Areas of Schenectady County,
courtesy of Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady)

Feathers



Beginning at the parking area, the first trail passes through a small segment of old field and into a former hedgerow. Marked with blue tags, it continues through secondary growth parallel to the Bozenkill and returns through older hardwoods and the red pine plantation to the parking area. At low water, it is possible to cross the Bozenkill to the other loop (marked with orange). It winds through very overgrown pasture and orchards into a mixed plantation of hardwoods and evergreens, along a ravine that overlooks the Bozenkill, then back to the ford.

Birding at Christman's

The variety of distinct habitats in a relatively small area (about 97 acres) makes it easy to mark the different species associated with each. The Blue trail can be walked in about one hour.

The Orange trail may take another one and one-half to two hours. High waters in early spring and ice in winter make the waterfalls of the Bozenkill more impressive but also prohibit crossing the stream to the orange trail. Therefore, birding in these seasons is limited to the first loop or Blue trail.

(Note: The following represents a preliminary report on the sanctuary. The authors' birding experience at Christman's has generally been limited to the late spring and summer, and while we are expanding our coverage, we would appreciate hearing from other birders about different seasons at Christman's.)

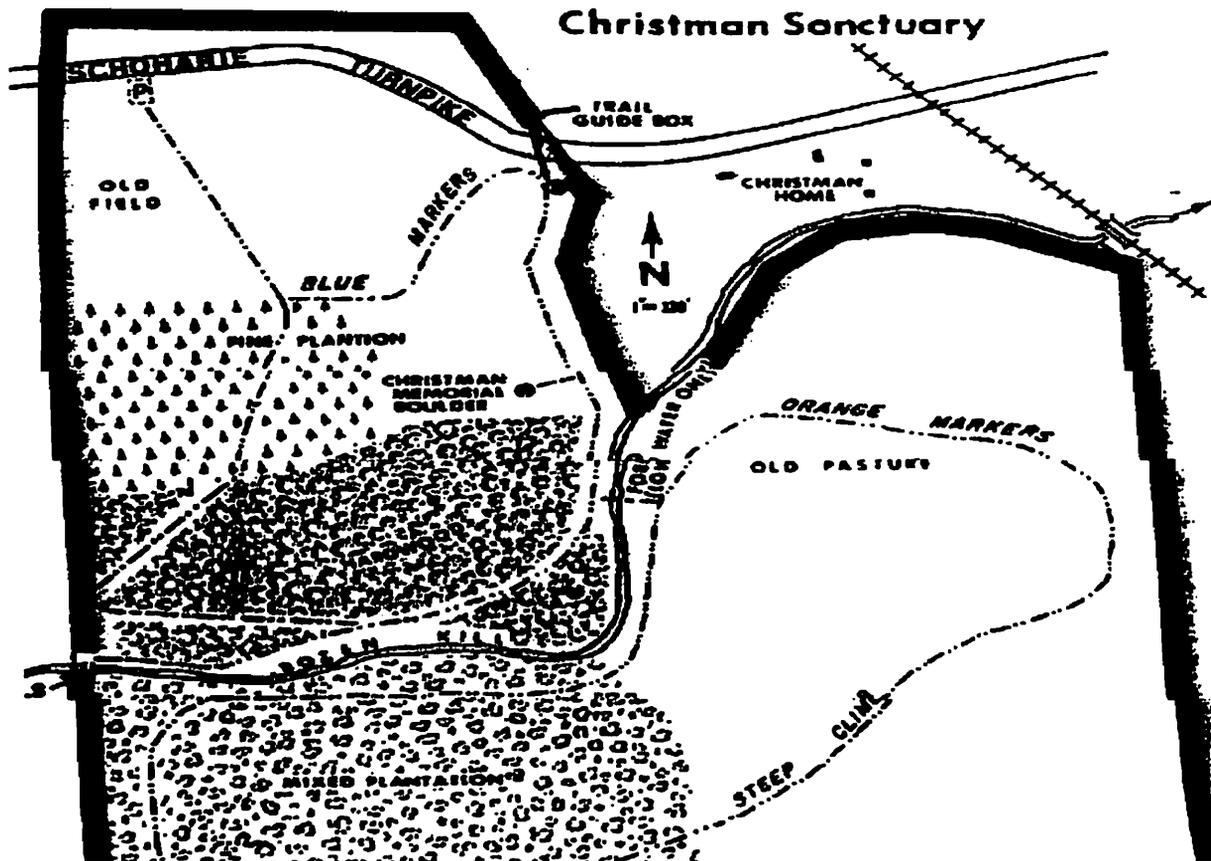


Figure 2. Map of Christman Sanctuary
(map reproduced from Natural Areas of Schenectady County,
courtesy of Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady)



Crossing the old field from the parking area to enter the woods will yield a number of open field and edge dwellers including **FIELD SPARROW, PRAIRIE WARBLER, AND AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.**

At the edge of the woods is the Nature Conservancy Trail Box. Entering the pines and descending along a narrow path through part of an old orchard often produces the sights and songs of wood warblers. As the path nears the road and then turns into the woods, **WARBLING VIREOS, CHESTNUT-SIDED and BLUE-WINGED WARBLERS** may be noticed. Strolling back along the Bozenkill, **OVENBIRD** and other woodland birds are more apparent.

If the flow of the water is low, it is possible to ford the Bozenkill and follow the Orange trail. Upon crossing the stream, dense secondary growth provides a good location for such summer residents as **VERRY and WOOD THRUSH. WILD TURKEY and RUFFED GROUSE** are also often heard from this section of the trail. As you ascend back through the mixed plantation you will pass along the edge of a large cultivated field and have the advantage of seeing and hearing those residents that nest along the edge including **INDIGO BUNTING and ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK.**

Returning through the hardwoods and pine plantation may offer a chance to see other woodland birds such as **RED-BREADED NUTHATCH, YELLOW-BELLIED SAP-SUCKER or PILEATED WOODPECKER.** Numerous Pileated holes can be seen along both trails. **BLACK-THROATED BLUE and BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS** are often heard calling along this section of the trail.

Crossing back to the Blue path soon brings you to a small clearing, where a branch trail continues down along the Bozenkill past rhododendrons to the most impressive waterfalls and a large pool. Last summer, a **RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** built its nest on a branch extending out over the pool.

Where this branch trail connects with the Blue trail is a small dell that consistently offers good birds in any season. In fall and winter, mixed feeding flocks of **BROWN CREEPER, BLACK-CAPPED**

Five Rivers Bird Seed Sale

It's never too early to think about stocking up on bird seed - and Five Rivers Limited (a non-profit organization which helps support Five Rivers Environmental Education Center) has the answer. They will be taking bird seed orders in the early fall. Contact Five Rivers for specific information about prices and how to order. - And enjoy the birds at home as well as in the field.



Field Trip Committee:

Contact Cliff Lamere if you have ideas for 1994 field trips or wish to be a field trip leader.

continued on page 64...

Feathers



Upcoming Field Trips

Search the grounds of Five Rivers and see how many of the 60 breeding species can be found. **Don't forget Thursday evening bird walks.**

Five Rivers:
Aug. 12, 26

Vischer Ferry:
Aug. 5, 19

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

Aug 8 (Sun), Coord: George and Kay Hanson, 885-5467

Observe migrating shorebirds, herons, egrets with the NYC skyline for background.

Shorebirds of Monomoy Island and MA Coast

Aug 21-22 or Aug 28-29, Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

Spend the weekend on Cape Cod including a 1/2 day trip to Monomoy Island searching for migrating shorebirds.

Camp Pinnacle Hawk Watch #1

Sep 11 or 12 (Sat or Sun), Coord: Tim Colborn 438-1874 and Arthur Long

Scheduled to observe peak numbers of Broad-winged Hawks and other early migrants with the Alan Devoe Bird Club. Weather conditions will determine which day is better.

Fall Migrants at Five Rivers

Sep 18 (Sat), Coord: Ray Perry 877-8915

Explore Five Rivers looking for lingering summer residents and migrating species. Meet at 8AM for this morning walk.

Ann Lee Pond

Sep 19 (Sun), Coord: Frank Murphy 482-1942

Spend the late afternoon looking for migrants around this Town of Colonie pond.

Waterfowl of Albany County #1

Oct 2 (Sat), Coord: Walt Sabin 439-7344

All members are welcome on this morning trip planned with beginning birders in mind. Tour Basic Creek Reservoir, Alcove Reservoir and Stanton Pond. Meet at 7:30AM at intersection of Routes 32 and 143 near Alcove Reservoir.

...continued from page 54

along this trail, you will enter an area of denser trees; possible birds are EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE, WOOD THRUSH and HERMIT THRUSH. Stands of pitch pines attract RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES. Around another corner to the right, the trail enters a more open area that still has some tall trees where you can find NORTHERN ORIOLE, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK and INDIGO BUNTING. Keep going around the bend to the right and you will eventually intersect the trail where you started the loop. The Club's trip in June took a leisurely 1 1/2 hours to do this loop.

Other areas in this parcel are generally more wooded (taking a left at the top of the hill is one way to get there) and support species such as RED-EYED VIREO, OVENBIRD, SCARLET Tanager and RUFFED GROUSE. However, I have not been through the

whole parcel this year; semiannual controlled burns may have changed its character since I last looked. Any updated information on this or any other area of the Preserve would be most welcome.

SEASON BY SEASON

My experience in the Pine Bush has thus far been limited to late spring and summer. Breeding birds are generally well known, though I believe actual data are limited. I will need information from birders to complete sections of this article, particularly for spring and fall migrations and wintering birds.



Upcoming Programs

Monday, August 2

Evolution of Birds

Professor Alexander from the College of St. Rose will describe the evolution of birds.

Wednesday, September 8

Birding the Neotropics

Learn why the neotropics are so popular as club member, Frank Murphy, shares slides and stories of Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago.

Monday, October 4

Migration, Orientation and Navigation

SUNYA Professor, Ken Able will present a "state of the science" update describing bird migration.

Five Rivers Fall Festival

Reach out and share some birding information with the public. HMBC is planning to host a table at the festival to share insights on bird identification (by sight and sound) and bird feeding. Volunteers are needed to help staff the table between 12noon and 4PM. Contact Scott Stoner to volunteer with preparations or staffing the table.

Dial-A-Bird Renamed

Thanks to those who sent in suggestions for a new name for our bird information phone line. The Board voted to adopt the name ***Bird Line of Eastern New York*** effective immediately.

Federation of NY State Bird Clubs Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Federation of NY state Bird Clubs will be held from Friday, Sep. 10 through Sunday, Sep. 12. The banquet speaker on Saturday evening is Pete Dunne, author and birder (of course). Contact Scott Stoner or Gregg Recer for more information about attending the meeting.

PROGRAM REPORTS

Spring Programs continued with a presentation on May 3 on strategy and planning for local Century Runs. Big Day veterans Ken Able, Bob Budliger and Alan Mapes gave a number of hints on general philosophy and specific locations that were useful to those planning on a run to see how many species could be found in one 24-hour period in May. This year's official HMBC Century Run was May 16; look to a Feather's Supplement for the results.

On June 7, local nature photographer Doug Morse treated us to a wonderful pictorial of Five Rivers Center through the four seasons. His eye and lens captured some of the seldom-seen beauty of this local sanctuary, from dew on the flowers in the early morning to the fox that streaked across by the pond where he was waiting to photograph shorebirds. While Doug uses expensive equipment, it was obvious from his show that it is the eye and patience of the photographer that makes the real difference.

HMBC CONSIDERS FLORIDA TRIP

The Club is exploring the possibility of offering a field trip to southern Florida in 1994. Two options under consideration are a winter (Jan/Feb) trip of approx. one week to mainland southern Florida (Everglades, Sanibel, Corkscrew, and perhaps elsewhere including Keys), and a late April/early May trip to the Dry Tortugas and Keys (5-6 days). WE ARE IN THE VERY EARLY STAGE OF DISCUSSION AND PLANNING. IF YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED (NO COMMITMENT AT THIS TIME) PLEASE CALL CLIFF LAMERE (462-9827) BY SEPTEMBER 15. If we offer a trip, there may be an opportunity to sign up later than this, but we need to know soon if there is sufficient interest to warrant the effort to continue to plan it.



Wildlife Enhancement at the GE Research and Development Center *by Ora Ducheneaux*

Background

In 1707 Hendrick was one of the Indians who transferred ownership of the Knolls in Niskayuna, New York to the Swits family. Hendrick's Indian name, Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row, translated to "Keeper of the Western Door" or "The Western Door is Open."

The Swits, along with the Zenners and later the Hansons, all worked to improve and enhance this land to meet the needs of their families, the community, and the nation.

On Earth Day 1990, the GE Research and Development Center announced plans to give some of this land back to nature. A volunteer group of employees under the Whitney Club Wildlife Enhancement Advisory Council set about to investigate ways that could be accomplished.

Today, GE R&D Center employees and families volunteer to build and monitor nestboxes, establish hiking trails, and plant wildflower meadows. Nature walks, lectures, and videos provide information on how to maintain and restore habitat for wildlife. One group coordinates the annual commuting alternatives week in May and also addresses the issue of carpool commuting.

Our Program

Scientists often rely on research already done in a given field and build on it. It seemed only logical for us to turn to the expertise of NY's Department of Environmental Conservation, the Conservation Council of NY and local environmental groups (including Schoharie County's chapter of the North American Bluebird Society) for guidance and support in developing our program. We didn't reinvent wildlife enhancement from the ground up, rather we took advantage of information and expertise that was already available and built on it.

Environmental education plays a vital role in all of our programs. Whether it's a walk with a scout troop to learn about the cavity nesting birds on our campus, a noon hour program where employees bring their lunch and watch a video, or a family night program with parents and children interactively learning about nature together, they all impart environmental knowledge. Our programs are designed for further interaction with nature and appreciation of it in a flexible program to meet the time constraints of employees and families of the '90's.

Many of our winter noon hour videos are borrowed from NY's DEC Video Loan Library. Our spring speakers range from a local beekeeper to a non-chemical lawn service owner to recognized leaders in the fields of Bald Eagle and Eastern Bluebird restoration. Family night "hands-on" programs have been conducted by teachers from the Scotia-Glenville Children's Museum on birds nests, butterflies, spiders and insects. A Saturday workshop, Project WILD, gave employees and their spouses involved with scouting and youth groups, an opportunity to learn how to teach children about wildlife. A day hike to Merck Forest in Vermont and a cross-country ski trip to Bog Meadow in the Adirondacks of New York rounded out recent Saturday activities.

Our nestbox trail has been particularly successful in involving employees and their families. A nestbox trail with 100 boxes was established after Earth Day 1990. It has been continually monitored by employees, their families and scout troops. The nestbox trail serves several functions: it attracts cavity nesting birds to the GE R&D Center campus; it interests employees in learning more about birds; and, it involves employees in meeting avian habitat needs in today's industrialized environment.

Not only do employees monitor boxes, but they are provided with banding information in the form of a personalized banding certificate. As banded birds return to nest in subsequent years,



(or, in the case of an Eastern Bluebird that nested in a different box for its second brood) employees are kept informed with recapture certificates and an annual report. This reinforces involvement and validates their efforts.

Computers are an important link in the nestbox trail. Employees are able to quickly and easily coordinate hatching and banding data electronically as well as stay informed of any problems that develop. A paper wasp infestation in several boxes was quickly communicated to nestbox "owners" via electronic mail and alerted them to check their boxes carefully before their children did!

Community

Our nestbox trail also acts as a visible reminder of our commitment to enhancing habitat for wildlife. In 1991, while attending the North American Bluebird Society's annual meeting, we were presented with a Bermudian cedar nestbox from the Biological Station for Research in Bermuda. Placed in our Rose Garden, it acts as a focal point of global and local commitment reminding employees and international visitors of our commitment to nature. Recently, we received two Wood Duck boxes from the Pioneer Fish & Game Club and the Rensselaer County Conservation Alliance. They will be placed at our KW Pond and further reinforce this commitment as we look forward to adding Wood Ducks to our bird list this nesting season and for many years to come.

Our community has been very receptive to our program. In fact, the only problems we've really encountered were enthusiastic gardeners who thought the wildflower meadows were really wild and came with shovels to transplant them to their own yards! A sign explaining they were planted for all to enjoy, was erected and the problem corrected itself.

Working with the Niskayuna Town Historian and descendants of the Zenner families, we are tracing the environmental history of the land. While the Thursday Naturalists have identified many of the wildflowers and trees for our wildlife inventory, the H. Gilbert Harlow Gar-

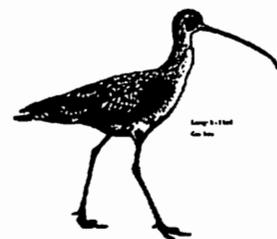
den Club has volunteered to help place markers at their locations on the hiking trails frequented by noon walkers. A girl scout troop did it's community service project here last year and regularly monitors several nestboxes. We also coordinated a month long exhibit at the Schenectady County Library in March 1992 that included samples of the three different types of nestboxes we use as well as information on banding birds.

Summary

The success of our program can be measured by the number of requests we get from employees for more wildlife information and their participation in activities. It is particularly rewarding to get stopped in the hall by a co-worker telling us their children want to know when the next family night program will be held. Nestbox plans are available and employees have subsequently started their own nestbox trails at their homes and camps and have reported their successes and disappointments. Noon hour programs have been well received by employees and we have established a small video loan library. Family night programs have all been full to a comfortable capacity set by the teachers for ease in teaching and interacting with the children and parents.

But we also have another measure of success of our wildlife enhancement program at the GE R&D Center -- birds returning to nest annually. Judging from the number of calls we get for more information and the birds that have come back to nest, we think it's a success!

GE R&D Center employees in Niskayuna, New York in 1993 are truly proud to follow in the 1707 footsteps of Hendrick, "Keeper of the Western Door".





Field Trip Reports

Christman Sanctuary

Eight of us met on May 16th for an early morning walk through Christman Sanctuary, a Nature Conservancy property near Duanesburg in Schenectady County. The preserve includes old fields, mature woodlands and pine plantations. It was a cool and cloudy day, and the birds were somewhat quiet.

Very cooperative PRAIRIE WARBLERS and a YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER allowed everyone extended close-up views. Additional wood warblers in evidence were the BLUE-WINGED, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, YELLOW-RUMPED, YELLOW, BLACK-AND-WHITE, OVENBIRD and LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH.

Other woodland birds identified included RED-EYED VIREO, WOOD THRUSH, VEERY and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH. BOBOLINKS called from adjacent fields. In all, thirty-four species were recorded.

This was the first club field trip to this site, and results were quite promising for future visits.

Philip Johnson & Debbie Ellinger

Hannacroix Ravine and Bear Swamp

Four birders went to Hannacroix Ravine and Bear Swamp on Sunday June 27th. The schedule called for visiting the Huyck Preserve in Rensselaerville also, but from the test run it was obvious that the schedule was too ambitious. We decided to cover the first two areas well and quit at 4:30, returning via Basic Reservoir.

The Ravine and the Swamp are very attractive nature areas with fairly well-marked trails. Hannacroix produced 10 VEERY!, HERMIT and 6 WOOD THRUSH. SCARLET TANAGER and ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK were within earshot most of the time, as were RED-EYED VIREO. Five OVENBIRDS were heard and several seen. MAGNOLIA, YELLOW-RUMPED, BLACK-THROATED GREEN and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT completed the warbler list.

VEERY were common at Bear Swamp (8), as were

WOOD THRUSH (6). A WINTER WREN and 3 HERMIT THRUSH were listed. Four warblers were seen; CHESTNUT-SIDED, OVENBIRD, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT and CANADA. A male CANADA was seen close to a juvenile.

Thirty-four species were seen at Hannacroix and fifteen at Bear Swamp.

Samuel R. Madison

Palmer's Ravine & Vicinity

On May 22, 1993, 14 birders gathered at 07:00 at Palmer's Ravine in Montgomery County. The weather was cool (42°F) with partly cloudy skies. There was a total of 69 species recorded. Some highlights included: PILEATED WOODPECKER, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, EASTERN BLUEBIRD, RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, SCARLET TANAGER, EASTERN MEADOWLARK, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, WILD TURKEY, NORTHERN HARRIER, INDIGO BUNTING, GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, WOOD THRUSH, CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER, AMERICAN REDSTART, LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK, SAVANNAH SPARROW, WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, NORTHERN ORIOLE AND NORTHERN CARDINAL.

During a trip extension to nearby areas, we saw the RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, VESPER SPARROW, HORNED LARK, TURKEY VULTURE, and a nesting area of GREAT BLUE HERONS. Although we searched for it, the UPLAND SANDPIPER was not found this year, although it had been seen earlier the same day by a farmer who invited us onto his property.

One of the trip highlights for some participants was a close-up view of a male RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD doing his pendulum courting display, rapidly swooping back and forth a horizontal distance of about 25-30 ft. A good time was had by all.

Tom Palmer

Castleton Island

There were several complaints among the 11 participants about "warbler neck" as a result of long looks at one or more male CERULEAN WARBLERS which repeatedly visited the same tall cottonwood. No such complaints were heard from Lilian and Dale Samuelson, however, since they were both able to add the bird to their life lists. Our trip to Castleton Island on



Feathers

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6-5-93 was indeed successful.

This very overcast morning resulted in observations of 49 species in all. These included DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, CHIMNEY SWIFT, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, WILLOW FLYCATCHER, LEAST FLYCATCHER, GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, FISH CROW, VERRY, WOOD THRUSH, CHAD WAXWING, YELLOW-THROATED VIREO, WARBLING VIREO, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, AMERICAN REDSTART, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBILL and NORTHERN ORIOLE. As our good luck would have it, the occasional sprinkles turned to steady rain about five minutes after the trip ended.

Cliff Lamere & Jean Landry

Central Park, New York City

Central Park in New York City is a magnet for spring migrants. Birds were everywhere on May 9 (Mothers' Day). The best bird of the day was a female SUMMER Tanager which caused a great deal of debate until it finally perched in the sun. Walt Sabin and I saw the bird for the first time in New York State. Leader Julie

Abramson was very familiar with the birding spots in the park; with her guidance the group was able to find 55 species, 15 of which were warblers (BLUE-WINGED WARBLER, NORTHERN PARULA, YELLOW WARBLER, MAGNOLIA WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, BLACKPOIL WARBLER, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, AMERICAN REDSTART, OVENBIRD, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT and WILSON'S WARBLER). Other noteworthy birds were BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, VERRY, SWAINSON'S THRUSH, WOOD THRUSH, WHITE-EYED VIREO, RED-HEADED VIREO, SCARLET Tanager and SWAMP SPARROW. It was a very enjoyable and worthwhile trip.

Cliff Lamere



Feathers



President's Corner: *The Club's By-Laws were last revised in 1981, and are in need of modification. Recently, a committee met to propose changes that will be presented to the membership. Some of the changes being proposed at this time are removal of the term limitation for both Secretary and Treasurer, extending Student membership to full-time students over 18, adding Publicity and Birdline Committees and removing the separate financial function of the Program Committee. The final proposed changes will be presented to the membership at a program meeting this fall, and be voted on at the following month's meeting. Watch for a notice about this.*



Other action taken by the Board was the adoption of written guidelines for the Birdline of Eastern New York. Congratulations to Frank Murphy, the newest voice of the Birdline, for his super job and frequent updates!

Work on the book is continuing, with an anticipated publication date in early 1995 (not 1994 as was previously stated). Contributors are still needed...contact Gregg Recer if you can help.

The Club is currently providing a second year of breeding bird surveys on a number of Nature Conservancy Preserves in Eastern New York...thank you to all who have volunteered their time on this project.

--Scott Stoner

...continued from page 57

CHICKADEE, RED- and WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCHES, and AMERICAN TREE SPARROW CAN be encountered. Spring finds a HERMIT THRUSH pausing in migration. Summer residents have included the LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH and BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER.

Returning to the Blue trail then takes you through a red pine plantation, where SCARLET Tanager is regularly heard, and back to the small field that leads you to the parking area.

Christman Sanctuary offers a good variety of birds in a relatively compact setting. The sheltered trails often require considerable birding-by-ear, but turns in the trail also allow for sometimes quite personal encounters with shy residents such as OVENBIRD OR WILD TURKEY.

SEND THOSE ARTICLES, FIELD TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER MATERIAL (INCLUDING CLIP ART) TO:

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Publication Committee Notes

The Club has purchased a hand-held scanner which can import drawings, clip-art, photographs and text into our computer system. We look forward to some contributions from the Club's artists!

For the immediate future, Cathy and I will be co-editing each issue. Delivery targets are the first of each even-numbered month. Each issue's deadline for submissions is the first of the preceding month.

Thanks for your continuing support and keep the material flowing!!!

-- Gregg Recer, Publication Chair





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Two Gull Species are Best Finds on 1993 Century Run

by
Robert P. Yantick

The Club's 48th annual Guy Bartlett Century Run on May 15, 1993 produced a solid showing of species and participants, but not much in the way of new records. Twenty-four observers in eight field parties amassed a list of 164 species, tying ninth place behind the record of 188 in 1986. The best individual party tally was 128 species, tying eleventh place behind 156 in 1986. No new species was added, leaving the composite list at 250 species and two hybrids.

A high count of 52 species was recorded by every party; another 22 species by all but one party; and 20 species by only one party (seven the most by one group). The diurnal raptor count of 9 species was slightly above average; while the three owl species was about average, but in each case reported by only one group. Eleven waterfowl species were reported vs. 13 in 1992. The **NORTHERN PINTAIL** was the first since 1984, its 15th appearance. The six species of gulls is a record, while 11 shorebird species is average. The 25 species of warblers is slightly more than last year's low of 23. The **WORM-EATING WARBLER** was missed for the third consecutive year after 37 prior occurrences. **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** was missed despite 39 prior appearances in 48 years.

The best birds were two gull species: **LAUGHING GULL** at Cohoes Falls for only the second time (first in 1991); and **ICELAND GULL** at the confluence of the Mohawk and the Hudson River for only the third time (previously in 1978 and 1987). This bird was in white plumage, beyond that of a first-year bird, and was compared in size and color to many gulls in the immediate area. There were five other species recorded for only the tenth or less time:

HIGHLIGHTS

MUTE SWAN - 9th time, 5th consecutive year, 1st in 1966

WILD TURKEY - 10th time, 1st in 1959

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER - 7th time, 3rd consecutive year, 1st in 1982

ALDER FLYCATCHER - 10th time, 1st in 1975 after AOU name change

COMMON RAVEN - 7th time, 1st in 1986 and missed only in 1990

The weather of the day was not helpful, and wind hindered some observers' attempts at identifying singing warblers. The early morning air temperature was 48 degrees Fahrenheit and

...more on next page

Inside this Issue ...

Federation Meeting Report

Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Five Rivers Fall Festival

Feathers



rose into the 70's with high humidity. The wind started from the east with overcast sky that yielded to mixed sun and thunderstorms associated with a passing cold front and heavier westerly wind as the day progressed.

Observers did will despite unfavorable weather, and while the final list may have lacked some of the excitement that is sought on the Century Run, the day's results contribute further to a nearly 50-year database that helps to track certain changes in local bird populations. My thanks to all contributors.

Key to participating parties: species listed are those found by only that group.

Group A: Barb Putnam and Bill Graham, 0530-2130. Northern and Central Saratoga Co., and Washington Co. 119 species, **MOURNING WARBLER** and **GRASSHOPPER SPARROW**.

Group B: Tom Palmer, 0400-1200 and 1500-1800. Town of Florida, Montgomery Co. 81 species, **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER**.

Group C: W.Gorman, M.Gruett, M.Kuhr, and A.Ross, 0345-2030. Black Creek, Cherry Plain, Round and Saratoga Lakes. 127 species, **ICELAND GULL**, **BLACK TERN**, **EASTERN SCREECH-OWL**, **GREAT HORNED OWL**, and **YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER**.

Common Loon.....	a c elgh
Pied-billed Grebe.....	c e f h
Double-crested Cormorant.....	c delgh
American Bittern.....	a cde
Least Bittern.....	a cd
Great Blue Heron.....	abcde f h
Green-backed Heron.....	abcde f h
Mule Swan.....	el
Canada Goose.....	a cde f h
Wood Duck.....	abcde f h
American Black Duck.....	a c e g h
Mallard.....	abcde f h
Northern Pintail.....	l
Blue-winged Teal.....	cd g
White-winged Scoter.....	f
Hooded Merganser.....	a e f
Common Merganser.....	a e f h
Turkey Vulture.....	a cde f h
Osprey.....	c e f
Bald Eagle.....	l
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	a c e f h
Cooper's Hawk.....	e h
Red-shouldered Hawk.....	c e h
Red-tailed Hawk.....	abcde f g
American Kestrel.....	abcde f h
Ring-necked Pheasant.....	c e
Ruffed Grouse.....	ab e
Wild Turkey.....	bcd
Virginia Rail.....	a cde f h
Sora.....	c e h
Common Moorhen.....	cde f
Semipalmated Plover.....	gh
Killdeer.....	abcde f h
Greater Yellowlegs.....	a d
Lesser Yellowlegs.....	d
Saltatory Sandpiper.....	a cde f h
Spotted Sandpiper.....	abcde f h
Upland Sandpiper.....	ab
Least Sandpiper.....	a d f h
Dunlin.....	h
Common Snipe.....	c g h
American Woodcock.....	a c f h
Laughing Gull.....	g
Bonaparte's Gull.....	f
Ring-billed Gull.....	a cde f h
Herring Gull.....	a cde f h
Iceland Gull.....	c
Great Black-backed Gull.....	a cde f h
Black Tern.....	c
Rock Dove.....	abcde f h
Mourning Dove.....	abcde f h
Black-billed Cuckoo.....	b e f
Eastern Screech-Owl.....	c
Great Horned Owl.....	c
Barred Owl.....	f
Common Nighthawk.....	e h

Whip-poor-will.....	a c
Chimney Swift.....	a cde f h
Ruby-throated Hummingbird.....	abcd fgh
Belted Kingfisher.....	a cde f h
Red-bellied Woodpecker.....	b
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.....	abcd fgh
Downy Woodpecker.....	abc e f h
Hairy Woodpecker.....	ab e f h
Northern Flicker.....	abcde f h
Pileated Woodpecker.....	ab de f h
Eastern Wood-Pewee.....	a cde f h
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.....	c
Alder Flycatcher.....	a c
Willow Flycatcher.....	c e f h
Least Flycatcher.....	abcde f h
Eastern Phoebe.....	abcde f h
Great Crested Flycatcher.....	abcde f h
Eastern Kingbird.....	abcde f h
Horned Lark.....	b d h
Purple Martin.....	a cde f h
Tree Swallow.....	abcde f h
Northern Rough-winged Swallow.....	abcde f h
Bank Swallow.....	a c e f
Cliff Swallow.....	a c e g h
Barn Swallow.....	abcde f h
Blue Jay.....	abcde f h
American Crow.....	abcde f h
Common Raven.....	a e l
Black-capped Chickadee.....	abcde f h
Tufted Titmouse.....	abcde f h
Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	a cd fgh
White-breasted Nuthatch.....	ab de f h
Brown Creeper.....	a c f h
Carolina Wren.....	cde f
House Wren.....	abcde f h
Winter Wren.....	a cde f h
Marsh Wren.....	a c e f h
Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	c f
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.....	abc e f h
Eastern Bluebird.....	abcde f h
Veery.....	abcde f h
Swainson's Thrush.....	e
Hermil Thrush.....	a cde f h
Wood Thrush.....	abcde f h
American Robin.....	abcde f h
Gray Catbird.....	abcde f h
Northern Mockingbird.....	abcde f h
Brown Thrasher.....	abc e f h
Cedar Waxwing.....	abc fgh
European Starling.....	abcde f h
Solitary Vireo.....	a cde f h
Yellow-throated Vireo.....	b cde f h
Warbling Vireo.....	abcde f h
Red-eyed Vireo.....	abcde f h
Blue-winged Warbler.....	abcde f h
Golden-winged Warbler.....	l

Tennessee Warbler.....	c e
Nashville Warbler.....	c e f h
Northern Parula.....	f
Yellow Warbler.....	abcde f h
Chestnut-sided Warbler.....	abcde f h
Magnolia Warbler.....	abcd f h
Cape May Warbler.....	bc f
Black-throated Blue Warbler.....	a cde f h
Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	abcde f h
Black-throated Green Warbler.....	a cd fgh
Blackburnian Warbler.....	a cd f h
Pine Warbler.....	a c e f
Prairie Warbler.....	abcde f h
Bay-breasted Warbler.....	fg
Blackpoll Warbler.....	c e f h
Black-and-white Warbler.....	abcde f h
American Redstart.....	abcde f h
Ovenbird.....	abcde f h
Northern Waterthrush.....	a cde f
Louisiana Waterthrush.....	abcde f h
Mourning Warbler.....	a
Common Yellowthroat.....	abcde f h
Canada Warbler.....	a c e f h
Scarlet Tanager.....	abcde f h
Northern Cardinal.....	abcde f h
Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	abcde f h
Indigo Bunting.....	ab e f h
Rufous-sided Towhee.....	abcde f h
Chipping Sparrow.....	abcde f h
Field Sparrow.....	abcde f h
Vesper Sparrow.....	bc
Savannah Sparrow.....	ab de f h
Grasshopper Sparrow.....	a
Henslow's Sparrow.....	a d
Song Sparrow.....	abcde f h
Swamp Sparrow.....	abcde f h
White-throated Sparrow.....	a cde f h
White-crowned Sparrow.....	ab fgh
Dark-eyed Junco.....	a cde f h
Bobolink.....	abcde f h
Red-winged Blackbird.....	abcde f h
Eastern Meadowlark.....	abcde f h
Common Grackle.....	abcde f h
Brown-headed Cowbird.....	abcde f h
Northern Oriole.....	abcde f h
Purple Finch.....	a cde f h
House Finch.....	abcde f h
American Goldfinch.....	abcde f h
Evening Grosbeak.....	a d
House Sparrow.....	abcde f h



Group D: Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen, 0445-2100. Saratoga Co. 102 species, LESSER YELL. LOWLEGS.

Group E: Bill Lee, 0400-2100. Black Creek and Tygert marshes, Thacher Park, Bear Swamp, Basic and Alcove reservoirs, Hudson River from Coeymans to Troy, Round and Saratoga lakes, Luther's Forest and Stoney Creek Reservoir. 116 species, SWAINSON'S THRUSH.

Group F: W.G.Ellison and N.L.Martin, 0320-2130. Black Creek, Meadowdale, Thacher Park, Cole Hill, Bear Swamp, Basic Creek and Alcove reservoirs, New Baltimore, Coxsackie, Four-Mile Pt., Hamburg, Vischer Ferry, and Saratoga Lake. 128 species, NORTHERN PINTAIL, WHITE-WINGED SCOTER, BALD EAGLE, BONAPARTE'S GULL, BARRED OWL, GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER AND NORTHERN PARULA.

Group G: Ronald Calkins, Chris Cameron and Jocelyn Cole-Calkins, 0400-1700. Black Creek, Thacher Park, Five Rivers, Basic Creek and Alcove Reservoirs, Cohoes Falls and Berne. 87 species, LAUGHING GULL.

Group H: Denis Blais, Sheryl Bonica, Carl George, C.W.Huntley, Carl Parker, George Shaw, Henry Stebbins, Jody Stollmack and David Wachtel, 0400-2100. Albany, Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties. 116 species, DUNLIN.

Local Merchants Offer Discounts

Backyard Birds will be offering HMBC members a 10% discount on non-sale merchandise. Birdseed is NOT included. Indicate membership by showing an HMBC mailing (*Feathers*).

EMS will host "Club Day" for local outdoor organizations on Thursday, Oct. 28. HMBC members who bring a copy of *Feathers*, to show membership will receive a 20% discount. Organizations will have information tables as well.

Federation Meeting Report

by
Cathy Graichen & Gregg Recer

September 10-12, the North Country Bird Club centered in Watertown hosted the 46th Annual Federation of New York State Bird Clubs. The meeting consisted of a Council of Delegates Meeting, Field Trips, Workshops, Paper presentations, and the dedication of a new observatory at Perch River Wildlife Management area (where the WHITE-WINGED TERN was seen breeding last summer). Undoubtedly, the highlight of the meeting was the story told by the banquet speaker, Pete Dunne, which kept the audience's attention riveted for over 3/4 hour.

The business meeting covered many topics, the decline in membership and new membership promotion ideas, overviews of many DEC projects related to wildlife and birds. The new officers elected are: President - Bill Lee, VP - Bob Budliger, Corresponding Secretary - Valerie Freer, Recording Secretary - Bill Reeves and Treasurer - Berna Lincoln. A by-laws amendment was passed which clarified many topics and allowed the Executive Committee to set the dues for Life, Benefactor and Patron members and created a separate Research Committee.

The Federation, in conjunction with the New York State Museum, is planning to update Bull's Birds of New York State. The effort is still quite preliminary, but several species have been added to New York's list of birds since the book was published in the mid-70's. Several new initiatives are being pursued. The Kingbird club (\$100. level or support) has had a few members. A patch is available for anyone who has 200 NYS birds. Recipients are asked to help defray the cost of the patches by sending \$2 Fed. members/\$3. non-members along with their list of 200 or more birds to Don Windsor, P.O.Box 604, Norwich, NY 13815. A County Listing initiative is underway as well with approximately 50 entries during the 1st year.

...continued on next page

Feathers



Upcoming Field Trips

Waterfowl of Albany County #1

Oct 2 (Sat), Coord: Walt Sabin 439-7344

All members are welcome on this morning trip planned with beginning birders in mind. Tour Basic Creek Reservoir, Alcove Reservoir and Stanton Pond. Meet at 7:30AM at intersection of Routes 32 and 143 near Alcove Reservoir.

Camp Pinnacle Hawk Watch #2

Oct 9 or 10 (Sat or Sun), Coord: Tim Colborn 438-1874

Enjoy the foliage and the variety of hawks during this local morning trip. The date of this trip will be determined at the last minute based on the weather.

Long Island Hawk Watching

Oct 10 (Sun), Coord: Richard Guthrie 756-9094

This trip, originally scheduled for the south shore of Long Island will take place, but will visit a different location.

Waterfowl of Hudson River and Saratoga Lake

NEW DATE: Nov 14 (Sun), Coord: Barb Putnam 792-7542

Visit two popular waterfowl spots during this mid-day trip.

Tomhannock Reservoir

Nov 7 (Sun), Coord: Bill Gorman 477-4921

This morning trip should yield a good variety of ducks (both dabblers and divers), loons and grebes.

Waterfowl of Albany County #2
CANCELLED - Nov 13 (Sat)

Rhode Island Coast

Nov 20-21 (Sat-Sun), Coord: Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen

Visit the RI National Wildlife Refuges to find wintering waterfowl including Harlequin Ducks. Migrating alcid and seabirds are also a possibility.

Five Rivers Walk

Dec 4 (Sat), Coord: Scott Stoner 464-0492

Look for early winter arrivals and scout for upcoming Christmas Counts .

...continued from previous page

Finally, the next few meetings were announced. In 1994, the meeting will be in Frost Valley, hosted by the Sullivan County Audubon Society with an owl theme and Julio de la Torre as the banquet speaker. In 1995, Lake Erie Bird Club will host the meeting and in 1996, HMBC will be the host.

The Genesee Club was given the member club award for the Braddock Bay Passerine Banding Project. Retired Parks and Recreation Chairman, Orin Leahman was commended for efforts to encourage birdlife within New York State and provided an honorary lifetime membership in the Federation.





PROGRAM REPORTS

On Aug 2, Harvey Alexander, Professor of Biology at the College of St. Rose provided an informative and interesting program on the theories of bird evolution. The lecture started with a quick overview of how evolution scientists decide when species are related and "who is descended from whom" and when the dinosaurs were flourishing.

The main focus of the discussion related to dinosaurs and birds and which dinosaurs birds are descended from. The fossils of the Archeopteryx, although fairly few in number, continue to provide scientists with new theories of relationships between dinosaurs and modern-day birds. Archeopteryx is considered to be the ancestor (or closely related to the ancestor) of modern-day birds.

One of the continuing debates in the study of Archeopteryx is whether the bird flew from tree tops or from the ground. It is generally believed that the animal flew, but not very well. Some of the studies included analyzing the angle of the claws of from today's birds that are strictly ground dwellers (average the smallest angle), tree dwellers (middle range) and the "nuthatch-like" birds which crawl down the tree trunks (largest angle). Archeopteryx appears to match the tree dwellers, but scientists on the other side of the issue also have good theories of how this animal could have flown from the ground in short "hop-like" flights.

Professor Alexander cleared up one other confusing issue - while there are both "bird-hipped" and "lizard-hipped" dinosaurs, Archeopteryx (and so birds) are actually descended from the "lizard-hipped" family, although eventually, they also developed "bird hips". The adaptation in the skeletal structure probably was driven for different reasons - in the dinosaurs, the change was most likely driven by the need for more space in the abdominal cavity for a more complex digestive system, since these animals were primarily vegetarians. With birds and the development of flight (much later in time), the structural adaptation improved their flight capabili-

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Monday, October 4

Migration, Orientation and Navigation
SUNYA Professor, Ken Able will present a "state of the science" update describing bird migration.

Monday, November 1

Birding Wyoming and the Dakotas
Gregg Recer will highlight the birding from the Plains, Yellowstone and Grand Tetons interspersed with scenic views of the western vistas.

Monday, December 6

***Christmas Party and Program:
Our Raptors - The Canaries of the Future***
Wildlife artist Wayne Trimm and his wife, Melodee James, will present an evening of painting and a discussion of raptor ecology. Several live raptors will be present to "add" to the discussion.

Bring a friend to a Program Meeting and share some good birding information and experiences!

Five Rivers Fall Festival

Stop by on Oct. 2 at Five Rivers to see the Fall Festival. HMBC will be staffing a table as well as other conservation and outdoor organizations.

ties.

While evolution and paleontology are areas where little can be rigorously proved, those present were shown a little of the techniques of how scientists develop and try to justify their proposals. It certainly was an interesting and informative presentation and Professor Alexander had many more topics which time did not permit him to cover.

Feathers



Field Trip Reports

Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve Sunday, April 25, 1993 (7:30am - 10:30am)

A group of eleven birders began the morning with hopes of some decent weather and some interesting migrants at this "Old Faithful" of local birding marshes. The trip was scheduled as a replacement for the Utica Marsh trip. That trip was cancelled due to flooded conditions at the marsh and the access road.

We seemed to be square in the middle between the waterfowl migration moving past us and the passerine migration not quite at full throttle. Nine species of waterfowl were identified. Most interesting of these were a pair of AMERICAN WIGEON, a pair of GADWALL and a lone female HOODED MERGANSER who kept company with a small group of RING-NECKED DUCKS.

As we worked our way west along the tow path, we were joined by a hungry OSPREY above. It circled and changed heights but didn't make a catch in our view. The fish-eating raptor was observable throughout the morning, never moving out of our sight for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time. Other raptors seen included the common RED-TAILED HAWK and TURKEY VULTURE just in from down south somewhere.

We walked the tow path east as far as the water would allow us and came upon a busy group of swallows. In the mini-"mass" were TREE, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED, and BARN SWALLOWS all buzzing around and insistent upon eating their fill of insects before taking a break on the overhanging birches.

Water had also challenged us to cross the main road on the way to the two larger impoundments in the back. However, cooperation and some accurate placement of large stepping stones put us on our way. We weren't rewarded for our efforts; nary a heron, a shorebird or duck was seen on either of the back ponds. Along the road in, however, a SWAMP SPARROW perched proudly for us as it sang its staccato trill. We had heard many of these birds all morning along the tow paths and this one made sure we could note it on our sight list.

After calling it a day (morning), we started our trek back to the parking area. We were happy about the forty species we were able to identify and the damp, cloudy weather had turned to warm sunshine. As we talked casually about other birding trips, past and present, a pretty BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER flew to a brand above. It seemed to be telling us that there would be plenty more to see here throughout the spring, summer and fall.

— *Tim Colborn*

Saratoga Battlefield May 29, 1993

On May 29, 1993, a morning trip to Saratoga Battlefield was attended by fifteen birders. We began with a walk at the beginning of the tour road up to the area where the HENSLOW'S SPARROW is nesting - and were rewarded with excellent sightings of this bird who also cooperated by singing.

A quick look at a BREWSTER'S WARBLER was reported by one birder.

We had returned to the cars for the rest of the trip to drive the eight mile tour road, making frequent stops to look and listen, producing a total of 58 species - A good trip!!

— *George and Kay Hanson*

Jamaica Bay August 8, 1993

Fourteen birders met at the parking lot at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. At approximately 9:45, we began the walk around the East Pond. It was a warm, sunny day with a nice breeze.

We were unable to find the RUFF that had been reported earlier in the week, but managed to come up with a total of 77 species, including WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, HUDSONIAN GODWIT and WHIMBREL.

Some pleasant moments watching LEAST THIRNS



Feathers

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feeding young on the beach along the Terrapin Trail were enjoyed by the group.

An excellent place to bird - worth the trip through city traffic!

- George and Kay Hanson

Five Rivers July 17, 1993

Eight people enjoyed a beautiful summer morning searching the grounds for some of the 60 species that breed on the Center grounds. While we saw very little nesting activity, we did identify some 45 species, 39 of which are on the Five Rivers breeding bird list. A highlight was the 4 GREEN-BACKED HERONS in the pond west of Goose Pond.

- Scott Stoner

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve August 14, 1993

Seven birders spent a pleasant morning at this Clifton Park site in search of waders and other species. Highlights among the 41 species identified included an adult COMMON MOORHEN and FIVE young, eight GREAT EGRETS, eight GREAT BLUE HERONS, a COOPER'S HAWK that remained on a branch long enough for a detailed scope study, an immature BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON and GREEN-BACKED HERON. Many thanks to Tim Colborn for his help with this trip.

It is worth noting that Vischer Ferry has been extremely productive for waterbirds in mid/late August this year, with reports of LEAST and SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER, GREATER and LESSER YELLOWLEGS, SOLITARY SANDPIPER, VIRGINIA RAIL, SORA and large numbers of GREAT BLUE HERONS and GREAT EGRETS.

- Scott Stoner

Feathers



President's Corner: *The coast of Delaware was the place to be this summer, as birders flocked from near and far in search of the first North American sighting of a Whiskered Tern. This bird tended to range over a fairly extensive area, and luck as well as perseverance played a major role as to whether one's journey there was rewarded with good views of this bird; others (including this author) had barely a fleeting glimpse! Fortunately, the area offered other seldom-seen species as White-winged Tern, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Reddish Egret and White Ibis, so the trip was worthwhile even without seeing the tern. Speaking of the difficulty of seeing this bird, stories of note include a man who did not see it until his 4th trip from Arizona and a woman who made 5 drives from Long Island!*



Speaking of field birding, your Field Trip Chair is hard at work organizing the Club's schedule for next year. While the details are not yet available, early indications are that 1994 will include many favorite sites from this year as well as a few exciting additions. Watch for the schedule with your December issue of Feathers. And...if you want to lead a trip in '94, it may still not be too late.. so give Cliff a call as soon as possible.

Preliminary work has begun for hosting the 1996 meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, but we'll need lots of help, with everything from planning, registration, field trips, greeting attendees, etc. etc. 1996 seems like a long way off, but for an event of this magnitude, it's not too soon to get started. Please contact me if you can help.

Club member and field trip leader Kay Hanson recently came up with the great idea of having HMBC decals that we can put on our cars. In response, Publicity Chair and VP Tim Colborn has begun looking into this and should have something to the Board soon.

Finally, I'd like to welcome BACK our Past-President, Kevin McGrath, who has recently re-relocated to the Albany area!



SEND THOSE ARTICLES, FIELD TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER MATERIAL (INCLUDING CLIP ART) TO:

**FEATHERS
Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.**

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Publication Committee Notes

Thanks to everyone who sent in changes for the club directory, this will be a big help in trying to get the information as up-to-date as possible at publication time.

Don't forget to send articles, short notes, pictures, cartoons, artwork or any other item of interest for publication.

-- Gregg Recer, Publication Chair

**Dr. & Mrs. Robert P. Yunick
1527 Myron St.
Schenectady, NY
12309**



BIRDING THE HMBC REGION: Fort Edward Area: Wintering Birds

by
Barb Putnam

The western edge of Washinton County provides some of the best winter birding in the Hudson-Mohawk area. Most of the best birding lies in the town of Fort Edward, a largely agricultural district. This locality has been a congregating spot for **SHORT-EARED OWLS**, **SNOWY OWLS**, **NORTHERN HARRIERS** and **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS**.

Rare Bird in our Area

by *Barb Putnam*

A club member was driving to work on Friday the 24th of September when he noticed a "different" bird standing very upright on a dirt pile about 30 feet off Blackhouse Road in the town of Fort Edward, Washington County. After returning to the spot, Bill Graham could not believe his eyes: a **NORTHERN WHEATEAR**? It was evidently an immature bird: very brown, blackish eye mark, white rump, white and black tail. There was no doubt! He made several phone calls and the word was out.

The **NORTHERN WHEATEAR** is listed as a casual vagrant in the 48 states (it nests well north of our area). The eastern birds usually migrate over the North Atlantic to winter in Africa. Our **WHEATEAR** spent much of its time on a wood pile eating crickets. The Everidge family, on whose property the bird was discovered, was very congenial. Frank Murphy diligently updated the phone tape. During the next few days, about 130 people came to see the bird. The **WHEATEAR** was a life bird for many of those people. Visitors came from the Hudson-Mohawk area as well as Rochester, Montpelier, and Pittsfield. Bill was not only the first person to see this bird, but possibly the last one. The **NORTHERN WHEATEAR** ON Blackhouse Road was last seen on Wednesday, September 29th.

DIRECTIONS

Take the Northway (I-87) to exit 17N (South Glens Falls exit). Go up Route 9 north for a little over one mile, turn right onto Route 197. Continue for about 4 1/2 miles to the village of Fort Edward. Follow the Route 197 road signs through Ft. Edward (right at the light by Stewart's, left onto Argyle Road, right over the canal). It sounds more complicated than it is. From Stewart's to Plum Rd. is a little less than 2 miles. (See Figure 1.) You may wish to refer to Delorme's New York State Atlas and Gazetteer, pg. 81.

SITE DESCRIPTION

This birding locale is a farming community that is spread over sections of the towns of

...more on next page

Inside this Issue ...

Upcoming Christmas Counts

A Recent Florida Visit

*Program & Field Trip
Announcements and Reports*



Fort Edward, Argyle, and Kingsbury. Birding should be done along roadsides with extreme care. Some of the roads carry a low volume of traffic and are seemingly quite safe. However, others can be very busy. Be especially cautious on Routes 197, 42, and 196. Stop only where you can get completely off the roadway. Don't forget that there are lots of non-birders out there!

SPECIES TO EXPECT

This area hosts a variety of wintering birds. Sometimes the number of hawks and owls is staggering. Three out of the last four years held **SNOWY OWLS**; one year there were at least seven individuals! Every year there are from "several to many" **RED-TAILED HAWKS**, **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS** (both light and dark forms), **NORTHERN HARRIERS**, **SHORT-EARED OWLS** and **AMERICAN KESTRELS**. In the winter of '91-'92, a **NORTHERN HAWK OWL** was an especially nice surprise. Other interesting birds commonly seen in the area from the road during the winter include: **SNOW BUNTINGS**, **HORNED LARKS**, **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW**, **WILD TURKEYS**, and **RUFFED GROUSE**. More infrequently, **NORTHERN SHRIKES**, **LAPLAND LONGSPURS**, and **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS** have been spotted. This area has had its share of overwintering

migrants: **NORTHERN FLICKERS**, **EASTERN BLUEBIRDS**, **EASTERN MEADOWLARKS**, **SAVANNAH SPARROWS**, **SONG SPARROWS**, and **VESPER SPARROWS**.

TACTICS

Winter birding has its own special techniques and strategies. Be prepared for extremely cold and windy conditions. Getting an early start and being an energetic hiker will give you no advantage. "Car birding" can be most enjoyable, but beware of the other cars. On the busy roads, it takes two people to be really safe: one tending only to driving and looking for safe places to pull over while the other does the scanning. A spotting scope will prevent some frustration. Snowies, Red-tails, Rough-leggeds, and Kestrels tend to find a "high point" and sit still. Check out the tops of hay mounds and all utility poles (an especially favorite place of the **SNOWY OWLS**). Also look along fences, in large trees, and on the ground. Short-eareds and Harriers seem to prefer these places.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS, **SNOW BUNTINGS** and **HORNED LARKS** can be seen on the edges of the road and in fields that have been recently spread with manure. Scan flocks of buntings and larks for **LAPLAND LONGSPURS**. Look in large fields near woods for **WILD TURKEYS**, in sumacs for **RUFFED GROUSE**, in hedgerows for sparrows and woodpeckers, and in the tops of small trees or shrubs for **NORTHERN SHRIKES**.

TIMING

AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS, **NORTHERN HARRIERS**, and **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS** begin showing up in mid-November and stay around through mid-March. **SHORT-EARED OWLS**, **HORNED LARKS**, and **SNOW BUNTINGS** generally become noticeable in mid-December and can still be seen in the beginning of March. Although **SNOWY OWLS** may show up earlier, it is generally better to wait until January, when they will have staked out winter territories. Snowies usually leave around the first week in March. Most of the species mentioned in this article can be spotted anytime between 10am and 3:30pm. The exceptions are **NORTHERN HARRIERS** and **SHORT-EARED OWLS** which are usually seen near dusk. You may run across an individual at

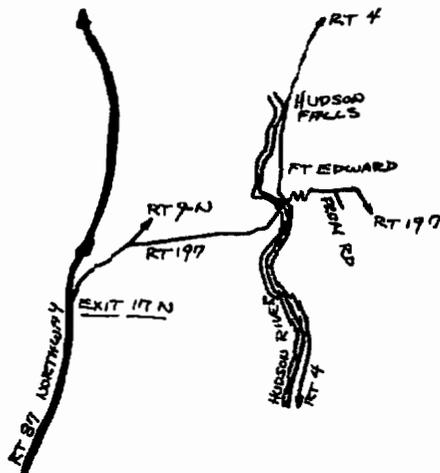


Figure 1: Directions to Fort Edward



anytime, especially on dark, stormy days. Generally, the Harriers gather together about one half hour before sunset for a last feeding frenzy before settling down for the night. At times accompanying them, but more often spotted a little later (right at dusk) are the **SHORT-EARED OWLS**.

THE BEST SPOTS

One **SNOWY OWL** has been visible three out of the last four years at the corner of Route 197 and Plum Rd. Park on Plum and scan in all directions. Rough-leggeds, Red-tails, Short-eareds, and Kestrels have been spotted here. The same birds can also be seen further down Plum Rd. near its junction with Swamp Rd.

The single best spot (for two years running) for both **NORTHERN HARRIERS** and **SHORT-EARED OWLS** has been on an unmarked dead-end road off of Blackhouse Rd. Parking on the road near the last house affords a pretty good view. (See Figure 2.)

Townline Road became famous as the place where a **NORTHERN HAWK OWL** wintered in '91-'92. It is also the first place many of saw **SHORT-EARED OWLS**; it can be a good spot for Harriers, too.

Drive along all of the following roads with an eye out for whatever is around: Route 197, Plum Road, Durkeetown Road, Blackhouse Road, Swamp Road, Route 42, Mahaffy Road, Hinds Road, Townline Road and if you still have time left, Towpath Road (one Northern Shrike in '92). (See Figure 2.)

OTHER NOTES

Services (restrooms, food, gas) can be found at Stewart's on Route 197 in Fort Edward and Cumberland Farms on Route 196 in Hudson Falls. You may be interested in a short cut: East Road runs from Mahaffy/Route 42 directly into Fort Edward.

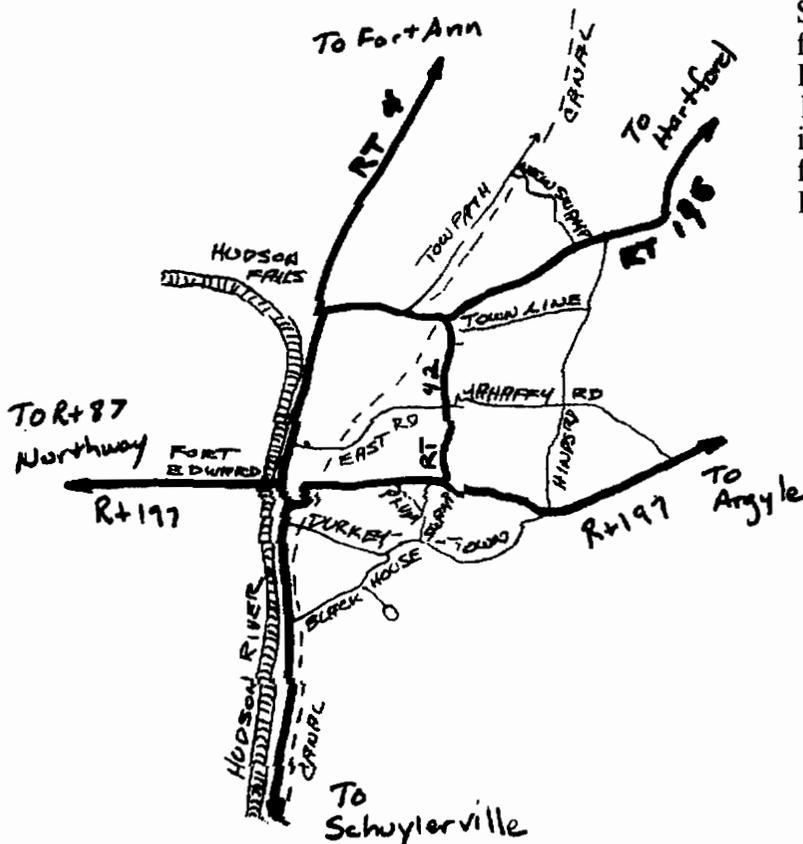


Figure 2: Fort Edward Area



Upcoming Field Trips

Five Rivers Walk

Dec 4 (Sat), Coord: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen, 899-2678

Look for early winter arrivals and scout for upcoming Christmas Counts .

Annual State Duck Count

Jan 16 (Sun), Coord: Paul Grattan, 237-0661 (office) 237-8355 (home)

Look for waterfowl and other wintering birds along the Hudson River on this local segment of a statewide event.

Campfire and Owling at Five Rivers

Jan 29 (Sat), Coord: Al Mapes 439-4086 and Scott Stoner 464-0492

Take an evening walk hoping for owls. Helpful "elves" will tend a campfire and provide refreshments (with or without owls).

Snowshoes and Winter Birds at Five Rivers

Jan or Feb, Coord: Ray Perry 475-0291 (work), 877-8915 (home)

Search for wintering birds on snowshoes in late Jan or early Feb. The exact date will depend on snow conditions (obviously!) Five Rivers EEC will provide snowshoes. Call by Jan 8.

Raptors of Saratoga and Washington Counties

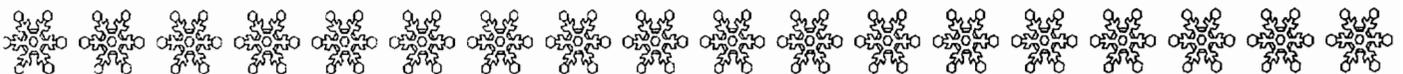
Feb 6 (Sun), Coord: Bill Graham 798-8038 (9am-1pm)

Travel through the farmlands in these raptor productive counties from 11am through dusk. The trip can provide hawks as well as Snowy and Short-eared Owls.

Cape Ann and Plum Island, Massachusetts

Feb 19-21 (Sat-Mon), Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

Spend this holiday weekend on Massachusetts northern coastline looking for sea ducks, loons, gulls and other winter coastal visitors. Reserve by Feb. 7.



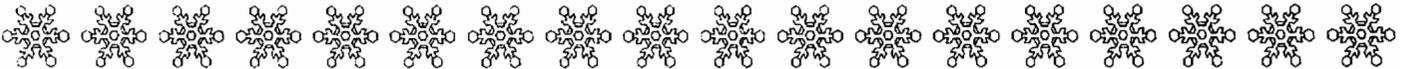
1993 Christmas Counts



Schenectady
Saturday
December 18
Bill Lee
374-3426

Southern Rensselaer County
Sunday
December 26
Frank Murphy
482-1942

Troy
Sunday
January 2
Cliff Lamere
462-9827





PROGRAM REPORTS

In October, Ken Able described the latest theories on many aspects of migration. The discussion included the relative effect of polarized light, the earth's magnetic field, and the nighttime sky in how birds determine the correct direction. Ken described experiments performed by his lab as well as those from around the world. In addition he discussed the prevailing theories on how birds decide they have reached their destination. This talk provided a real insight into the current research on this topic.

On November 1, despite light snowfall early in the day locally and forecasts of inclement weather, several club members came out for an evening of slides on the Dakotas and Wyoming. Gregg Recer described his "summer" vacation in the area with a mixture of scenic, mammal, flower and of course bird slides. Some highlights from the slides included with bison, prairie dogs and **BURROWING OWLS** from Teddy Roosevelt National Park, scenics from the Badlands National Park and the Black Hills with Wind Cave National Park and Jewel Cave National Monument. The slides then took us to Yellowstone National Park with geysers (including *Old Faithful*), elk, and **AMERICAN DIPPERS**. The last stop was Grand Teton National Park where moose and **BLUE GROUSE** posed for pictures.



UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Monday, December 6

Christmas Party and Program:

Our Raptors - The Canaries of the Future

Wildlife artist Wayne Trimm and his wife, Melodee James, will present an evening of painting and a discussion of raptor ecology. Several live raptors will be present to "add" to the discussion.

Special Member Meeting:

Wednesday, January 5

Proposed By-laws revisions will be announced and discussed at 7:30 PM followed by a regular program at 8PM.

Owls of Eastern New York

Al Mapes, Director of Five Rivers EEC, will discuss owls, their biology, where and how to find them.

Special Member Meeting:

Monday, February 7

Vote on changes to by-laws announced in January at 7:30PM. Please contact a board member before this meeting if you have any questions regarding the proposed by-laws revisions. A regular program will follow this special meeting at 8PM.

Bird Finding in Vermont

Walter Ellison, previous resident of Vermont, will describe what birds to expect and where to find birds in our neighboring state.

Missed a Program???

Most recent programs have been recorded on VHS video tape and can be borrowed by club members. Contact Scott Stoner to arrange to borrow the tape for the program you wanted to see, but missed.



Field Trip Reports

Monhegan Island Trip

Eight members and one guest participated in the club's weekend trip of Sept. 24-27th to Monhegan Island, Maine. Most of the 52 species of birds were sighted during a hike of the rocky headlands along the coast, and in the virgin forest of spruce and first known as Cathedral Woods. A northeast storm on Sunday prevented a thorough search of the meadow and wetland areas.

A WORM-EATING WARBLER WAS identified after much discussion by the group as to what they had actually seen. Many other warblers were sighted including, PALM, NASHVILLE, CAPE MAY, YELLOW-RUMPED, PINE, BLACKBURNIAN, BAY-BREASTED, WILSON'S, and BLACKPOLL. The CONNECTICUT WARBLER, which would have been a life bird for the trip leader, Bill Lee, was no where to be found. Waterfowl seen were: DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS, COMMON EIDER, COMMON LOON, CANADA GOOSE, and WOOD DUCK. Seven species of raptors included the endangered species, PEREGRINE FALCON. Several PEREGRINES of this year's young harassed each other over the cliffs while we enjoyed lunch on the rocky ledges by the sea.

The highlight of the trip for Walt Sabin, Darlene Duggan, and our guest was to see a song bird fly in front of them while they sat on the porch; and before they could identify it, a MERLIN plucked it from the air.



Other species of note during the weekend trip included: BLACK GUILLEMOT, LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, COMMON RAVEN, and both species of KINGLETS.

A good time was had by all.

— Lorraine Connor

Waterfowl of Albany County #1 October 2, 1993

This trip was timed to coincide with the earlier migration of dabbling ducks vs. the later migration of diving ducks. The only diving duck species seen were RING-NECKED DUCKS - about 160 on Basic Creek Reservoir. Aside from diving for food, most of their habits include nesting in marshes and ponds where they have, like dabbling ducks, developed a jump take-off vs the taxiing take-off of other diving ducks.

Four club members plus the coordinator met at the redesigned meeting place on a pleasant morning. Finding very little at the north end of Alcove Reservoir where Routes 32 and 143 cross, we proceeded to Basic Creek Reservoir. There were many CANADA GEBSE, AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS, MALLARDS and the RING-NECKED DUCKS. Also present were seven PIED-BILLED GREBS, four GREAT BLUE HERONS, about forty GREEN-WINGED TEAL, one male WOOD DUCK and some AMERICAN WIGEONS. We were joined here by two more club members after we had birded along the dead-end road leading to the Basic Creek Reservoir dam. There were some WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS, GRAY CATBIRDS, TREE SWALLOWS, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, EASTER PHOEBE, ONE SOLITARY VIREO, and one OSPREY. Also at Basic Creek Reservoir were KILLDEER, some "peeps" and one PECTORAL SANDPIPER.

We then moved on to Alcove Reservoir. Here there were more CANADA GEBSE, AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS and MALLARDS. Undoubtedly, the highlight of the trip was here along the northeast shore when two adult BALD EAGLES were sighted, one of which was seen standing



Field Trip Reports (continued)

on the shore. Later a **COMMON LOON** was sighted from the Alcove Reservoir dam.

After proceeding through traffic tie-ups because of road paving, we arrived at Stanton Pond. Here we saw 1500 (or so) **CANADA GEESE** plus seven **SNOW GEESE** (2 adult, 5 immature), which could have been a family group. Also present were many **MALLARDS**, **AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS**, **GREEN-WINGED TEAL**, **AMERICAN WIGEON**, **GADWALL**, and **KILLDEER**. We did not find the **EURASIAN WIGEON** this year.

Even though we logged only 41 species, it was a great day afield.

— *Walt Sabie*

Pelagic Trip

The weekend of Halloween, a group of eleven club members headed to the Massachusetts south shore and for birding and a pelagic trip from Plymouth Harbor. The Saturday forecast called for cloudiness and showers later. As we drove along the Mass. Pike, the weather remained cloudy with only light sprinkles. **RED-TAILED HAWKS** were seen several times along the way as well as a **COMMON RAVEN** near the highest point along the Pike. Unfortunately, one car was separated from the rest during the drive. Luckily, both groups found good birding after reaching the coast.

The single vehicle birded from Nantasket to Scituate and found all three **SCOTER** species, **OLDSQUAW** and **COMMON EIDER**. **RED-THROATED** and **COMMON LOONS** were both easily found along with **HORNED** and **RED-NECKED GREBES**. The other group started near Scituate and worked their way down through Plymouth. They found many of the same birds, including **SANDERLING**, **DUNLIN**, and **BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER**. A special treat included a late **LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER** at Duxbury Beach. At the overlap location in Scituate, both groups found **HARLEQUIN DUCKS**, **GREAT** and **DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** and **PURPLE SANDPIPER**.

As the weather turned rainier, both groups arrived at the motel and watched the weather forecast anxiously. The next morning we

proceeded to Plymouth Harbor, but the pelagic trip was cancelled due to 10 foot seas. The group expressed disappointment at the cancellation, but were also thankful that we wouldn't travel on the rough seas caused by the warm "nor'easter". However, the coast can still produce pelagic birds during such a storm, so the group proceeded to Manomet Point to see if the storm would "blow" anything in.

From the point, the group found **COMMON LOONS** flying past. **SURF** and **WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS** were daring the pounding surf. We studied the birds in the wind and misty weather for a half hour and then continued to Sandy Neck Beach on Cape Cod reported to be one of the best locations during a nor'easter for pelagic reports.

At Sandy Neck, we were treated to large groups of **OLDSQUAW**, **SCOTERS** and **LOONS** flying past. Sharp eyes spotted an immature **ICELAND GULL** flying along the shore. We found immature and adult **NORTHERN GANNETS**. Other birders found **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE**, but none of our party could conclusively identify one. **HORNED GREBES** and human surfers enjoyed the waves provided by the weather. Other birders came in from Manomet and announced that a **GREATER SHEARWATER** had been sighted there - we had left too soon!

Unluckily, no pelagic species ventured into our view. The winds died down and we left in search of other local birds to help our trip list. Before turning for the Capital District, the group had tallied 71 species, although none were the pelagic birds we had set out after. The only consolations - the boat trip offered no better guarantees and no one got seasick on this trip!





A Recent Florida Visit

by Peter Smith

I have read with interest in the August 1993 Edition of *Feathers*, the possibility of a field trip to Southern Florida. I have just returned from a six-week stay with my good friends in Latham and during that period I spent seven days on Sanibel Island. Out of these seven days, I spent two days in the Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge, one day safari in the Everglades and a day on the water viewing the Island.

It was a marvellous seven days with several highlights. Whilst awaiting the boat trip to Useppa Island I watched a Manatee for 15 minutes surfacing to take in air and then subsiding without a single ripple of a wave. This took place beside the harbour wall not more than two feet away. One was a rare sight, but I had the good fortune to see another nine, with one cub.

Every day I watched OSPREYS catching fish and during my trip around the Islands I saw more OSPREYS in one day than there are in the whole of the British Isles.

One of my birdie jobs in England was the protection of nesting LITTLE TERNS and I became a

little homesick when I discovered on my first visit to the beach a LEAST TERN nesting colony - roped off and with a guard to keep the beachcombers at bay. I am surprised that these little birds manage to raise young at all having the same interference problems the world over. I

continued on page 82



Bird Sightings from Florida Trip

BROWN PELICAN
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT
ANHINGA
MAGNIFICENT FRIGATE BIRD
LEAST BITTERN
GREAT BLUE HERON
GREAT EGRET
SNOWY EGRET
LITTLE BLUE HERON
TRICOLOURED HERON
REDDISH EGRET
CATTLE EGRET
GREEN-BACKED HERON
YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT
HERON
WHITE IBIS
ROSEATE SPOONBILL
MOTTLED DUCK
BLACK VULTURE

TURKEY VULTURE
OSPREY
SWALLOW-TAILED KITE
(EVERGLADES)
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK
COMMON MOORHEN
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER
SNOWY PLOVER
PIPING PLOVER
KILLDEER
LESSER YELLOWLEGS
WILLET
RUDDY TURNSTONE
SANDERLING
LAUGHING GULL
ROYAL TERN
SANDWICH TERN
COMMON TERN
LEAST TERN

BLACK SKIMMER
MOURNING DOVE
COMMON GROUND DOVE
MANGROVE CUCKOO
SMOOTH-BILLED ANI
NORTHERN FLICKER
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER
PILEATED WOODPECKER
GRAY KINGBIRD
BLUE JAY
FISH CROW
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD
BROWN THRASHER
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT
NORTHERN CARDINAL
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD
COMMON GRACKLE
HOUSE SPARROW



HMBC SPONSORS THREE LOCAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

by Scott Stoner

The HMBC is again sponsoring three local Christmas Bird Counts. Christmas counts were begun about 100 years ago to counter the traditional shooting of birds around the holiday season. All individuals of all species are censused within a specified 15-mile diameter circle on a particular day around the holidays, and results compiled and published in the National Audubon Society's American Birds.

Our Club has been involved in such counts locally since its inception. We now sponsor the Schenectady, Troy and Southern Rensselaer Counts. Data from Christmas Counts can be used to monitor changes in population and range of wintering birds. The counts have also become a social event and holiday tradition for many participants, with a post-count compilation gathering a nice ending to a cold day in the field.

The Schenectady Count is the oldest count the club sponsors. It began in 1929 even though the Schenectady Bird Club did not form until 1939. Highlights from last year included the first occurrence of Gadwall and only the second occurrence of Double-crested Cormorant, Glaucous Gull and Long-eared Owl.

The Troy Christmas Count began in 1947. It covers portions of Rensselaer and Albany counties. Highlights from last year included the first appearance of Common Raven and Red-bellied Woodpecker seen near Tommahannock Reservoir. Last year a Merlin was recorded for the second time.

The Southern Rensselaer County Christmas Count has been in continuous operation since 1966. Given the close date to Christmas, this count in particular needs many new volunteers! Last year Pied-billed Grebe and Great Cormorant made their first appearance.

WE NEED MORE PEOPLE TO HELP COVER THE AREAS OF THESE THREE COUNTS. IF YOU CAN HELP, PLEASE CONTACT THE COMPILER FOR ONE OR MORE OF THE COUNTS LISTED BELOW. THE CLUB WILL PAY YOUR \$5.00 PARTICIPANT FEE. If you are a less experienced birder, your help is still welcome, as you can be matched with someone with greater familiarity with the birds of a particular area.

<u>COUNT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>COMPILER</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
Schenectady	Sat, Dec 18	Bill Lee	374-3426
Southern Rensselaer	Sun, Dec 26	Frank Murphy	482-1942
Troy	Sun, Jan 2	Cliff Lamere	462-9827

In addition to field parties, interested people who live within the count circle can report their sightings from any bird feeders. These reports do not require the \$5 fee. Contact the compiler if you live (or think you might live) within the count circle for more details.

Also, unusual sightings during the week of the count can also be given to the compiler and will be recorded as Count Week sightings if the species is not found on the scheduled day.



1996 Federation Meeting Planning Committee Notes

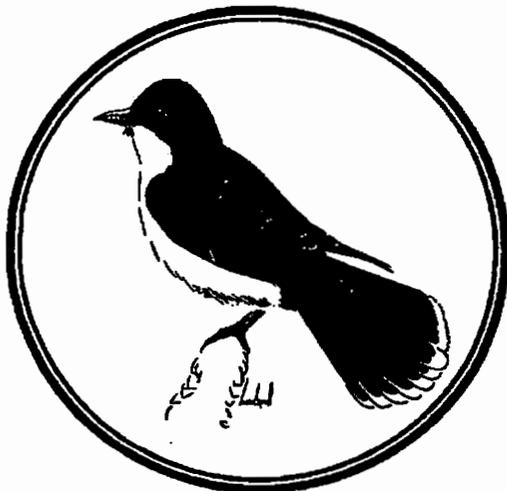
A committee has been formed to plan the 1996 Federation meeting which Hudson-Mohawk will host. The committee chair is Phil Johnson. Other members of the committee are Scott Stoner, Debbie Ellinger, Janet Betlewjeski, Jane Graves, Barb Putnam, Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen.

The initial planning has focused on the type of meeting we wish to host, the possible locations, and the possible banquet speakers and the desired dates. Preliminary cost estimates are being researched from local hotel and conference facilities in Saratoga and Albany counties.

Many suggestions have been made for possible field trip sites around Saratoga and Albany counties. The majority of Saturday trips will be scheduled within 1/2 hour driving distance from the selected hotel site.

In addition to field trips, other potential activities include a papers session, a poster session and/or workshops. A theme has not been selected, so currently all topics are acceptable.

Anyone with specific suggestions for any aspect of the Federation meeting can call a committee member with their ideas or to volunteer the efforts. In addition to planning, many additional people will be required during the meeting to lead field trips, provide "hospitality" and to prepare registration packets.



Look for the 1994 Field Trip Schedule and updated Club Member directory with this issue of *Feathers*!

Is your address information incorrect? Please let us know so you continue to receive Club mailings!

Dues notices are also going out now! Send in your dues promptly!

...continued from page 80

am pleased to report that this colony had 15 flying young and 3 young **SNOWY PLOVERS**.

Other notable memories - an **ANHINGA** that sat on a post within three feet of me; **WILLETS** and **SNOWY EGRETS** that allowed me to share their beach; the long one-sided conversation I had with a **GREAT BLUE HERON** that insisted in sharing my evening watching the sunset. He landed within five feet of me and stayed until I left. It must have been my accent that intrigued it! I would swear that at one stage it managed a smile; the lop-sided dance of the **REDDISH EGRET** and the three birds of the holiday - **MANGROVE CUCKOO**, **SMOOTH-BILLED ANI** and **LESSER YELLOWLEGS**.

Sanibel Island is certainly a lovely place for birdwatchers. For those that are interested I enclose a list of birds I saw on Sanibel and in the neighbourhood.

- excerpted from letter dated, Aug. 20, 1993



Feathers

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Records: Cliff Lamere 462-9827
Sanctuary: Bette Moon 372-8330
Hospitality: Laura Sommers ~~475-0736~~
Jr. Activities: Vacant

489-2712



Florida Trip Reservations

It is **NOT** too late to sign up for the Florida Trip. Current plans call for three day charter to the Dry Tortugas during May. Other plans will depend on the desires and schedules of the participants. Please call Scott Stoner by Dec. 22 to add your name to the list of participants and receive further details.



Want to Hear the Latest Bird Sightings?

Found an Interesting Bird in Your Yard or Out at a Favorite Site?

Saw the First Arrival of a Migrant Species?

Call Birdline of Eastern New York to hear the latest reports or to leave one of your own!

439-8080

Feathers



President's Corner: *With the approach of the holiday season, thoughts turn to family, friends, winter birding and Christmas Counts! The Town of Fort Edward in Washington County has been a wintering bird hotspot in recent years, becoming well-known for the Northern Hawk Owl two years ago, as well as a reliable location for Snowy and Short-eared Owls and Rough-legged Hawk. This area is highlighted in the site guide in this issue by local expert Barbara Putnam. Fort Edward again gained notoriety this past September when HMBC member Bill Graham discovered a Northern Wheatear, which remained in the area for six days. Word quickly spread, and birders from as far as western New York were able to come and see this unusual visitor. Many thanks to Bill for finding it, to him and Barb Putnam for keeping track of it and showing it to visiting birders, and the Everidge family for so graciously allowing access to their property for better viewing.*

Owls and owling are a highlight of Club activities this winter, with a program by Alan Mapes at our January 5 meeting, and field trips this winter to both Five Rivers and Fort Edward.

The 1994 Field Trip Schedule is enclosed with this issue. Hats off once again to Cliff Lamere for his tremendous effort in putting this schedule together. Included in the schedule is the Ethics Policy adopted by your Board in September. Let's all work to achieve good relations with property owners and avoid the kind of incidents that can lead to bad publicity for the Club and the closure of prime birding areas.

HMBC will again sponsor three Christmas Counts this year (see separate article), and your participation is needed for their continued success. Please check the schedule and call one or more of the compilers if you can help. The board also approved paying the \$5 participation fee for each attendee at the three sponsored counts. You need not be an expert birder, but should be able to spend the entire day in the field. Feeder-watchers are also needed. Please join us to continue this important and enjoyable tradition!

With reports of Evening Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins already coming in, this is looking to be a good winter. I would like to wish all of you very happy holidays and the very best for 1994.

- Scott Stoner

SEND THOSE ARTICLES, FIELD TRIP REPORTS AND OTHER MATERIAL (INCLUDING CLIP ART) TO:

FEATHERS
Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.

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Publication Committee Notes

The new directory has been printed. We apologize for any errors in the directory. Please continue to let us know if any information is incorrect and we will update it. Addresses are particularly important or you will not receive mailings of *Feathers* or other club announcements.

Don't forget to send articles, short notes, pictures, cartoons, artwork or any other item of interest for publication.

-- Gregg Recer, Publication Chair

