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BLUEBIRD PLATES ARRIVE IN NYS

DEC COMMISSIONER RECOGNIZES HMBC AT UNVEILING OF BLUEBIRD LICENSE PLATE

On Dec. 6, 1995, the HMBC was very privileged to have been invited to the state's official unveiling of the Bluebird License Plates. The distinctive plate features the Eastern Bluebird, New York's official bird, lovingly designed by Roger Tory Peterson, the internationally famous birder, naturalist, artist and native New Yorker. At the December 6 event with Parks, Motor Vehicle and DEC Commissioners, Mr. Zagata acknowledged HMBC president, Frank Murphy, and past president, Scott Stoner.

New York State's Legislature authorized the conservation license plate in the 1993 Environmental Protection Act which also established a state Environmental Protection Fund. Twenty-five dollars from the sale of every bluebird plate goes directly into the Fund to be used exclusively for the vital projects listed in the state Open Space Conservation Plan.

Expenditures from the Fund already have helped conserve such important and beautiful areas

... more on next page

To order your bluebird plate, call 1-800-364-PLATES from 8 AM to 8 PM seven days a week or visit a local DMV office. The exquisite new license plates will arrive quickly in the mail. The plates can be ordered at any time without affecting the registrant's renewal date. The initial cost of a standard bluebird plate is \$39.50 which includes the \$25. annual fee dedicated to open space conservation and the one-time processing fees. Personalized plates of up to six characters also are available for an initial cost of \$68. Personalized plates carry a \$50. annual renewal fee, \$25. of which is dedicated to open space conservation.

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as undeveloped portions of shorelines on Lake George and Lake Champlain which contain significant ecosystems and exquisite panoramas; the Albany Pine Bush which contains rare and endangered ecosystems, and the Long Island Pine Barrens which protect Long Island ground water supplies.

Proceeds from the sale of the bluebird plate will benefit other projects listed in New York's Open Space Plan, including key lands protecting the quality of our public water supplies; magnificent Adirondack and Catskill forests; essential habitat for endangered species; additional parks in densely populated urban areas and increased access to state lands and shorelines for hiking, bird watching, hunting and fishing.

For more information about the bluebird plate, call 1-800-364-PLATES. For more information about the Open Space Plan and Environmental Projection Fund write to: Open Space Plan, NYS DEC, 50 Wolf Road, Room 611, Albany, NY 12233-1040.

Patches????

The Club is trying to determine the number of patches still available. If you have a supply of patches, please contact Ann B'Rells at 355-5615.



Editor's Note: Due to technical difficulties we are unable to use the picture of Frank and Scott with a sample plate. Our apologies!

Birdline

There have been a few changes to Birdline. The goal in the past year was to change voices every three months. Many thanks to our current voice, Bill Lee, and to those who preceded him: Jeff Marx, Rich Guthrie, and Frank Murphy. Starting March 1 we are looking forward to having Dick Beeler reporting. There is also a new Birdline Committee consisting of Lou Esch, Chairman, and Jackie Bogardus, Jane Graves, Barb Putnam, and Gregg Recer. The main objective of the committee will be to improve and upgrade the service of Birdline. Eventually we hope to get the service Online for all the computer nerds out there. If anyone ever has any comments or suggestions regarding Birdline please contact one of the above or the Club president. Or you could always leave a message after the beep!



AWARDS AVAILABLE TO MEMBER CLUBS

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs provides funds for two awards and the Eaton Birding Society provides funds for a third award. These are: **The Lillian Stoner Award** for an outstanding college student of high school senior; **The Elon Howard Eaton Memorial Award** for contribution to New York Ornithology; and **The Member Club Grant** for support of small projects. We hope you will announce these awards to your club members and submit nominations.

If you know of someone who qualifies for one of these awards, please contact an HMBC board member or officer, so an application for the award can be made with the Federation.

The Lillian Stoner Award

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs sponsors a scholarship to our annual meeting. This helps pay the expenses for a high school senior or college student whose nomination is submitted by a member club. This is a wonderful way to introduce a young person to the activities of the Federation. This fund was initiated by a bequest from Lillian Stoner, and has been enhanced by several subsequent donations from individuals and member clubs. The fund can now provide at least \$100. to the winning student.

Member clubs must submit a letter describing the credentials for each nominee. Also, it is very helpful if the nominated student submits a biographical letter. In some years several deserving students are nominated. Unfortunately funds do not always permit support for all nominees and the personal letter can be decisive.

This year's meeting will be Sept. 6-8 in Albany and is sponsored by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club.

Nominations of students, even if the Federation cannot fund all of them, reward young people for their interest in birds, and provide incentive for them to become involved in club and Federation activities.

Deadline: Nominations must be received by July 15. Later nominations may not be reviewed, since after July 17, I will be accessible only by canoe in northern Canada.

Please send nominations to:

Lillian Stoner Scholarship
c/o Dr. John L. Confer
Biology Department
Ithaca College
Ithaca, NY 14850

The Member Club Grant

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs is committed to facilitating the work of its member clubs as much as possible. To that end, the Federation's Executive Committee has adopted a policy of offering modest grants (usually less than \$100.) to help defray costs associated with research projects sponsored by clubs. In the past, grants have been awarded for purchases of equipment related to club projects (e.g., mist nets). Support also can be provided for printing of local or regional New York checklists of birds. Other kinds of projects may qualify for assistance, as well, though assistance is not provided for purchase of land or maintenance of buildings.



Applications for support should include a brief description of the project, products to be produced by the project (e.g., printed checklists), and a statement of how much funding is needed and for what purpose the funds will be used relative to the overall project budget. Three printed pages (or less) should cover these items adequately. Awards will be made at the Annual Meeting of the Federation. Send applications, post-marked no later than 1 September 1996 to:

Charles R. Smith
Department of Natural Resources
Fenow Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853-3001

Elon Howard Eaton Memorial Award

This award is sponsored by the Eaton Birding Society of Geneva. Elon Howard Eaton was one of the giants of early ornithology and made major contributions especially to New York Ornithology and is the namesake for both the club and this award. Initiated last year, the award has been the project of the Eaton Birding Society and is presented in conjunction with the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs at its annual meeting.

For further information, please contact:
Eaton Birding Society
PO Box 928
Geneva, NY 14456

ECOS CROSS-COUNTRY Ski OUTINGS

ECOS will be sponsoring their popular Cross Country Ski Trip. There will be thirteen outings, Tuesday mornings from Jan 2 through Mar 26. Call the ECOS office at 370-4125 for more information or to request a schedule with directions to the areas.

Feb 6 - Thacher State Park
Feb 13 - Saratoga Battlefield
Feb 20 - Featherstonhaugh State Forest
Feb 27 - Schenectady Municipal Golf Course
Mar 5 - Pharaoh Lake (ALL DAY TRIP)
Mar 12 - Grafton Lakes State Park
Mar 19 - Moreau State Park
Mar 26 - Leaders' Choice

Welcome Recent New Members

Cecila Cerra
Justin D'Allessandro
Patrick & Alison Molumby
John L. & John F. Polnak
Jeffrey Scherer
Timothy Caulfield
David Hudda
Sue Kaczok & John Wuthrich
Shirley Brady
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Erickson
Anne Fortune & William Reid
Jeff Kimble
Dan Leonard
Joan McKiever
Jody Rose
Judy Schultz
Laura Schatzel & Robert Mainusch
Mary Stokes
Gloria Wiener
Donna Zimmerman



FEDERATION OF NYS BIRD CLUB ANNOUNCES BOOK OFFER AND MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs is New York's ornithological society--its State bird club. It is comprised of individual members as well as more than 40 bird clubs and Audubon chapters throughout the State.

We're conducting this campaign to alert active New York birders such as yourself of our activities, and to invite you to join us.

As an individual member at any level, you will receive *The Kingbird*, which is New York State's ornithological journal. Published quarterly, *The Kingbird* contains field observations from the 10 regions across the State, reports of rarities, and articles on birds and birding locations.

You will also receive our quarterly newsletter, *New York Birders*, with news of current interest about birds and New York's birders.

As a special incentive to new members, individuals who join the Federation by March 15, 1996 can purchase one or more fine books from Cornell University Press at a very substantial discount. Offerings include *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*, and *A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*. A combined book order/membership application form is provided with this article.

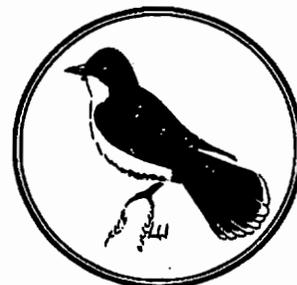
Every year, the Federation's Annual Meeting is hosted by one or more of its member clubs. Participants at these meetings enjoy identification workshops, field trips, a papers session, and a banquet with a prominent speaker. Recent meetings have featured Pete Dunne, Julio de la Torre and Roger Tory Peterson.

The next annual meeting will be held in Albany and hosted by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club on September 6-8, 1996. The theme of the meeting is Migration. Our Saturday banquet speaker will be Jack Connor, author of *The Complete Birder* and *A Season at the Point*. Friday evening will feature renowned author and identification expert, Claudia Wilds. Further details of this meeting will be published in a Spring issue of *New York Birders*.

A major Federation project is a new edition of the State bird book, John Bull's *Birds of New York State*. This definitive document will provide the first update in 25 years of the status, range, history and migration patterns of over 440 species in the State.

The Federation also maintains the official State Checklist through the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC). Recently, we conducted the six-year study of the State's birds that resulted in publication of "The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State." Annually, in January, we conduct the Federation Waterfowl Count, and occasionally sponsor other field trips and forays.

So, if we've piqued your interest, please join us! Just tear out and mail in the form on the next page.



Feathers



Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. Special price book offer to all members with dues paid for 1996 (shipping additional, see order form)

THE ATLAS OF BREEDING BIRDS IN NEW YORK STATE, edited by R. Andrie and J. Carroll. 1988. 576 pp., cloth. (list \$39.95) \$24. Detailed range maps, species accounts and illustrations of the more than 240 species breeding in the state. Based on the Federation's six-year atlasing field project.

MAP OVERLAYS for the NYS Atlas, above (list \$16.95) \$10. Eight acetate overlays, for use with the range maps in the Atlas, showing counties, ecozones, elevation, forest type and more.

A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF COSTA RICA, by F. G. Stiles and A. F. Skutch. 1989. 480 pp., paper. (list \$35.) \$21. Lavishly illustrated field guide to all the species - more than 830 - of this bird-rich and accessible country.

A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 2nd edition, by R. French. 1991. 426 pp., paper. (list \$35.) \$21. Detailed treatment of more than 400 species found on these popular islands; color plates illustrate more than 300 of them.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MIGRATION: A GUIDE TO HAWK MOUNTAIN, by J. J. Brett. 1991. paper. (list \$14.95) \$9. Covers identification of hawks in flight and includes information on the natural history of the northern Appalachians.

Membership and Orders

Mail to: FNYSBC, Inc., PO Box 296, Somers, NY 10589

Number		Amount
	Individual Membership @ \$18	_____
	Family Membership @ \$20	_____
	Supporting Membership @ \$25	_____
	Contributing Membership @ \$50	_____
	The Kingbird Club @ \$100	_____
_____	Atlas of Breeding Birds in NYS @ 24	_____
_____	Map Overlays @ 10	_____
_____	Guide to Birds of Costa Rica @ 21	_____
_____	Guide to Birds of Trinidad and Tobago @ 21	_____
_____	The Mountain & the Migration @ 9	_____
	Shipping for items ordered:	
	\$3 for first item	_____
	\$.50 for each additional item to same address	_____
	Total Enclosed (make checks payable to FNYSBC)	_____

Name(s) _____
 Full Mailing Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____



Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club 1996 Winter Programs

All programs will be held at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center on Game Farm Road in Delmar, are free and open to the public and will include refreshments. For directions, call Five Rivers at 475-0291.

Monday, February 5, 1996 - 7:30 PM "Habitat - Where Birding's At" with Frank Knight

Sure, we know to go to the shores for ducks and waders, fields for bobolinks and meadowlarks, and forests for tanagers and vireos. Once there, though, we concentrate on birds and miss much of the rest. Frank Knight is a New York Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental educator and State Coordinator for Project Wild. He will take a closer look at habitats and all the exciting plants, animals and ecology they can provide to enrich our birding experience.

Monday, March 4, 1996 - 7:30 PM "Migrant Songbirds" with Rich Guthrie

A colorful slide preview of the return of the migrating songbirds presented by Rich Guthrie. Rich, a frequent voice of Birdline and WAMC's outdoor reporter, is also a leader of trips to such locales as Alaska and Africa. He will speak to the perils of migration, describing the incredibly long journeys of tiny songbirds.

Thursday, March 21, 1996 - 7:30 PM "Birding Jamaica Bay" with David Taft

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is an oasis for birds and birders near New York City. This urban refuge adjoining Kennedy Airport is a hotspot for shorebirds and large waders in the summer and waterfowl in the winter. It is a prime destination of the Club in 1996. David Taft, a Supervisory Park Ranger at Jamaica Bay, will take us on a slide-illustrated tour of the Refuge, describing its bird life, and the delicate balance between protecting the resource and enhancing the visitors' experience.

Wednesday, April 17 - HMBC Annual Meeting and Dinner "Birding Across Australia", Dr. Paul Buckley

HMBC will conduct its Annual Meeting and elections on Wednesday, April 17 at Oceans Eleven, 1811 Western Ave, Guilderland, following its Third Annual Meeting Banquet at 6PM. The business meeting should begin at 7:30 PM and the Dr. Buckley's talk will start at 8:30 PM. More details and reservations will arrive in the mail during March.

The talk will show a six-week trip made in 1988 in which Paul and his colleague and wife, Francine, recorded over 500 species. Parrots, honey eaters, saltwater crocodiles, kangaroos, koalas are some of the items promised.



Program Reports

At the Club's 1995 Christmas Party, about 50 people enjoyed a variety of desserts and the slide program on Alaska, given by Andrea Bergstrom and Carol Cotrofeld, both of DEC. They took us on a tour of Denali National Park, highlighting the vastness of the terrain and the omnipresence of Mt. McKinley. For instance, in one photo taken more than one hundred miles from the Park, the mountain dominated the landscape. They say it makes its own weather, and that it's only visible 20% of the time. Fortunately, they were able to see a lot of it, including by air. However, on a subsequent trip, Carol was not as lucky, as it rained every single day she was in Alaska!

Wildlife was abundant in interior Alaska as well; they had excellent close shots of moose, caribou, grizzly bear, and ptarmigan. Dall sheep were common as well, but seemed to stay higher up on the mountainside.

They described the remoteness and solitude in the places they visited. At Denali, there were some tourists, but they seemed few and far between in the million of acres of open land. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park was even more remote, where Carol drove many miles of near-deserted road, then pulled herself across a cable bridge before proceeding more miles on foot to reach at tiny town.

Finally, coastal Alaska was highlighted by puffins, calving glaciers, and Steller's sea lions, and one of its biggest attractions, the number of Bald and even a Golden Eagle.

- Scott Stoner & Denise Hilton

Owls and Bill Gorman's movies again pro-

vided to be popular topics as over 50 people turned out on January 3 due to snow. Starting with Eastern Screech Owl, Bill took us through his remarkable films of all the common and uncommon owls of the northeastern US and nearby Canada. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but seeing the owls in action was worth a hundred pictures!

Interspersed between times to marvel at the film were Bill's informative comments on the behavior and ecology of owls. For instance, the trailing edge of the flight feathers are very soft, enabling them to fly virtually in silence. Ears are constructed and positioned so that owls can locate prey by sound.

Owls are best found on moonlit nights, but best photographed during the day, when finding them can be difficult. One can only guess at the countless hours Bill put in searching the woods and fields to get the two reels of film he showed us.

The Eastern Screech Owl is the most common local owl. Usually found in woodlots and near streams, they nest in old woodpecker holes. Phases include gray and red. When startled, this owl assumes a stiff posture, unlike its normal puffy, rounded appearance.

The Great Horned Owl is a large and ferocious hunter. Its prey include foxes, skunks, dogs, cats and other owls. It prefers to nest in large trees with broken off stumps. The ear tufts of the Great Horned Owl serve to provide camouflage, breaking up the round owl's profile, and have nothing to do with hearing.



The Barred Owl is a dweller of the deeper woods. He differs in appearance from some other owls because of his brown eye color, his rounded head, and his lack of ear tufts.

Short-eared Owls are frequently found in open fields. Locally, Bill has had success locating these owls just before dark in Coxsackie. Coxsackie is an Indian name meaning "Valley of the Owls," and may have been named for this species. In recent years, Fort Edward has also been a productive area for Short-eared Owls, but few have been seen this year, presumably due to the deep snow cover we have had.

The Long-eared Owl is similar in appearance to the Great Horned, but is somewhat taller and less wide. The species is most commonly found in woodland areas.

The Barn Owl, also known as the Monkey-faced Owl, likes old buildings and barns. Its ghostly appearance is complemented by its horrifying shriek.

Burrowing Owl is found in Florida. This long-legged, ground dwelling species lives in old holes and catches insects.

Snowy Owl is an irruptive species that sometimes winters in the Capital District. It can be seen on buildings, on the ground or on other perches. This arctic breeder likes open areas and can often be found in good numbers at Boston's Logan International Airport. Birds range from near-white to quite spotted, with the latter being the characteristic of young females. The Saw-Whet Owl is the smallest local owl at 6-7 inches. Its call has been likened to the whetting of a saw. It can be

found in winter and spring in Cherry Plains in Rensselaer Co. This "earless" owl is often found near the trunks of cedar trees; locating one entails careful searching of suitable habitat. This owl is easily approached and photographed, but one should not touch the tree in which it is roosting. Bill showed a number of examples of how difficult this species can be to spot, so keep trying!

Northern Hawk-Owl is a far less common winter visitor; one did spend several months in the Ft. Edward area several years ago. Worth noting are its falcon-like flight, longish tail and close barring on the breast.

Great Gray Owl is the tallest owl at 30", but not as heavy as apparently smaller species. It's one of the least common owls in this area, but has been reported this year in Washington and Rensselaer Counties. It's a yellow-eyed owl with a white moustache line.

Boreal Owl, also rarely seen in New York, can be confused with Saw-Whet, but has a yellowish bill and white spots on its forehead. It tends to hide in heavily branched protected places. Thus, it can be difficult to photograph, but Bill's perseverance with server individuals ultimately yielded a clear view of this most uncommon visitor.

- Denise Hilton & Scott Stoner



Gull Workshop

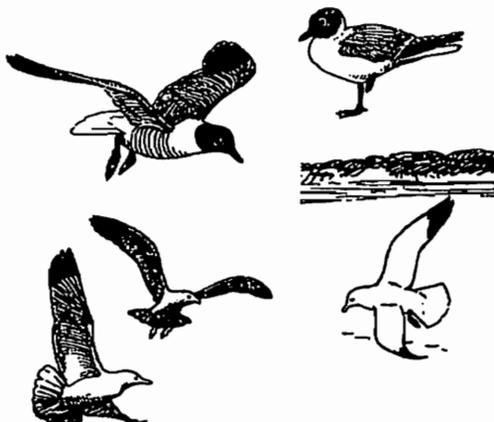
On November 27, Dr. Ken Able presented a detailed and engaging program on gull identification. The challenge of distinguishing gull species was noted at the outset, and at the audience's request, Ken concentrated his talk on the area's three most common species, Herring, Ring-billed and Great Black-backed Gulls. He also covered Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous and Iceland, three species that are less common but not rare.

Part of the difficulty in identifying gull species lies in the fact that they take from two to four years to mature. The mottled brown first year Herring with its black tail band can be quite easily confused with the mottle brow first year Ring-billed with its black tail band. The young Great Black-backed with its dark mottle plumage adds to the confusing mix, making it necessary for the birder to key in on details such as wing and bill size, bill color and the overall stature of the individual bird to determine species.

The key to picking out a less common gull from the hundreds that populate the Mohawk River is to know the three common species in all of their plumages.

The group had a chance to practice what they learned on the field portion of the workshop the following Saturday. Starting at the Colonie landfill, we observed the three common species plus an airborne Iceland Gull. Along the lower Mohawk, we studied Glaucous and more Iceland Gulls, along with an adult and a probably immature Lesser Black-backed. A brief flyby Northern Shrike did divert attention for a moment, but the only other distraction from the myriad of gulls was the bitter, cold arctic wind that toppled a few scopes and drove more than one hardy birder back to their car.

- Scott Stoner and Denise Hilton



Attention: Listers!!!

For those listers out there, we will be starting a new "feature" - list counts for each HMBC county, for the entire HMBC region and yearly counts for each of those regions as well. So those of you who want a little competition - get out and find your birds!!! Since little reporting has been done on a county basis, we haven't set any minimum thresholds for reporting - you could be the top if no one else sends in a report! Deadline for reporting 1995 results is: March 1, 1996. - Send to *Feathers* (directions on page 15).



BIRDING THE HMBC REGION: LOWER MOHAWK RIVER - COHOES *by Frank Murphy*

The area described here follows the south shore of the Mohawk River from Route 9 in Latham downriver to Cohoes, where the Mohawk runs into the Hudson River. This trip might easily be combined with a walk around Peebles Island State Park at Cohoes, or the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve just upriver from Crescent in Saratoga County. Plan your trip according to the sunlight; that is, if you are going early in the morning you would be better to start in Cohoes and work your way west up the river; or if you get a late start on a cold winter day it's best to start near the Colonie Landfill in Latham and work your way downriver. Water levels below the dams are controlled so birding conditions are not always predictable; however, the water is usually low enough in the late summer/early fall to attract a good variety of shorebirds. This area that be easily viewed while hardly leaving your car, and there are many good pull-offs, making this especially helpful on a cold blustery winter day when you want to do some good birding but don't really care to freeze your nuthatches off.

Directions: From Albany take Interstate 787 north to Cohoes; or Route 9 north to Latham. From Troy take the 112th Street bridge to Cohoes or get on I-787 to Cohoes. From the Northway (I-87) take Exit 8 to Crescent and then Route 9 south across the Mohawk River.

Winter

If you like the challenge of identifying the various gull species, this is the place to be.

Glaucous and Iceland Gulls are found here every winter, and sometimes in good numbers. Also check for Lesser Black-backed Gull. You will see Herring, Ring-billed, and Greater Black-backed Gulls in their many different adult and juvenile plumages. There is no better place to study gulls if you have the time and patience. The Mohawk River opposite the Colonie Landfill is usually the best place to see them. This is also perhaps the best time of the year and one of the best places to see Bald Eagles particularly near Cohoes Falls and the Crescent Dam. In late winter when the ice is melting check below the falls for Scoters, and upriver for the diving ducks such as Common Goldeneye and occasionally Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Scaup, and all three merganser species.

Spring

This is a good place to view the northward migration of waterfowl and gulls when the ice is melting in the very early spring. After the ducks have gone north the area gets to be the doldrums, and time is better spent elsewhere.

Summer

Early summer is pretty quiet here and time is probably better spent at one of the other sites. However, the fall migration starts in mid-July and this area can be a great place to see shorebirds and waders. Peregrine Falcons are seen every year in the Cohoes area particularly during mid-August through



September. Scan the New Street and Simmons Island area carefully for a good variety of shorebirds. Spotted Sandpipers probably nest here. Look for Ruddy Turnstones migrating through during August. A Willet was there in August 1995. Other shorebirds common here in August through September include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Least, Solitary, Pectoral, and Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Semipalmated Plover. You can also expect Great Egret, Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night Herons and many Double-crested Cormorants.

Fall

The Simmons Island Cohoes area is a good place for migrating shorebirds. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs are common as are Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. In early October you should find Pectoral Sandpipers and Dunlin and perhaps a White-rumped Sandpiper. In addition, all three Falcon species - Peregrine, Merlin, and Kestrel - can be seen here during late summer through early fall. Large flocks of Chimney Swifts can be seen in late September during the late evening prior to funnelling into nearby chimneys.

Best Way to Bird the Area:

Since the area extends west to east, you should always factor the position of the sun in your trip to take advantage of best light. In winter it's good to start in Latham and work your way downriver; in summer or fall try the opposite. For ease of traffic it's best to start in Cohoes and work your way upriver always keeping the river to your right. Starting at Simmons Island, which is 0.2 mi east of 787 on Ontario St. (Rte 470), take Clark Ave op-

posite the Golden Krust bakery, and at the end of Clark Ave behind the U-Haul building there is a small parking area that provides good access to the area below the dam; you are actually on Simmons Island at this point though few maps will show it. Scan the area for shorebirds, waterfowl, and look for falcons as described earlier. Leave Clark Ave and go right on Ontario Street for only 0.2 mile and take another right onto New Street, which takes you to a small unique pocket park with a terrific view overlooking the dam. This is a great spot to scan for shorebirds in the summer/fall when the water levels are low.

Leaving New Street go right onto Ontario Street and keep right at the traffic light at 787 and Route 470. Set your odometer at 0.0 here. Go straight through the next traffic light onto Cohoes Crescent Road. At 0.3 miles from 787 turn into the Cohoes Commons parking area on the right and scan the falls and river here for scoters or eagles in winter. Continue right up the road and park in the spaces on the left across from the old factory building at 0.9 mile. Walk across the road to a wonderful little park that sits high above the Cohoes Falls. Here is the best spot to observe the scenic beauty of our little "Niagara Falls" and with a little luck you may even see a Bald Eagle in the winter here. Continue along Cohoes Crescent Road and check the crescent dam hydroelectric installation area at 2.7 mile on your right for wintering Bald Eagles. Continue on and there is a good pull-off on the right at 3.2 mile and another one at 3.5 mile just before you get to Route 9. Scan the river here for the thousands of gulls and waterfowl.



Upcoming Field Trips

Fort Edward (Washington Co.)

Feb 11 (Sun). Coord: Dick Beeler, 399-8557
Search for open field passerines and wintering raptors.

Massachusetts to Maine

Feb 17-19 (Sat-Mon). Coord: Bill Lee (374-3426) Reservations: Feb 2.

This popular winter trip to MA has been extended to include part of the southern ME coast. Search for white-winged gulls, alcids, sea ducks and winter raptors and passerines.

Waterfowl of the Hudson River (Greene Co.)

Mar 17 (Sun). Coord: Bill Cook (851-2678)
As the spring thaw begins on the river, look for the start of migrating waterfowl between Coxsackie and Catskill.

Waterfowl of the Hudson River North of Troy

Mar 23 (Sat). Coord: Paul Grattan (237-8355)

This day trip will look for early spring migrating waterfowl along the Hudson River between Troy and Hudson Falls.

Instructional Waterfowl Trip to Vischer Ferry

Apr 6 (Sat). Coord: Scott Stoner (464-0492)
Reservations: Mar 31

Spend a leisurely spring morning examining the waterfowl that frequent this preserve during migration.

Waterfowl and Marsh Birds of Vischer Ferry

Apr 13 (Sat). Coord: Scott Stoner (464-0492)
Reservations: Apr 9

As spring waterfowl migration approaches its peak, take advantage of this convenient preserve to study them as well as other marsh birds and early migrants.

Field Trip Report

New Year's Day Bird Count at Five Rivers

With the last strains of "Auld Lang Syne" still ringing in their ears, a record crowd of 60 hearty birders turned out for Five Rivers' annual New Year's Day Bird Count, co-sponsored by HMBC. Meeting at the Interpretive Building at 9:30 AM, the group was greeted by Craig Thompson, director at the Center, who organized us into three field parties, led by Craig, Al Mapes, and the third party was co-led by Scott Stoner and Gregg Recer. Unlike the Christmas Bird Counts so familiar in the past few weeks, the point of this Five

Rivers count was not to tally individual birds, but to get the Center's 1996 Checklist started with as many species as possible.

The morning was gray, but not too cold, and the parties were able to enjoy scouring their portions of the property, impeded at times only by deep snow. Species found on the grounds included, RED-TAILED HAWK, WILD TURKEY, RING-BILLED GULL, EASTERN SCREECH and GREAT HORNED OWLS, and four species of woodpeckers, DOWNY, HAIRY,

... continued on page 14



... continued from page 13

NORTHERN FLICKER and **PILEATED**. Compiling the list over welcome cups of coffee and hot chocolate, the group was happy to add three new species to the Center's Checklist for New Year's Day itself: **RUFFED GROUSE**, a resident of Five Rivers who has up until now remained elusive on New Year's Day, **BARRED OWL**, a completely new Center species and **EASTERN PHOEBE**, who was found picking insects out of a tiny bit of open water, and has never been seen at Five Rivers so late into the winter before.

In total, the group found 31 species of birds at Five Rivers on the first day of 1996. The Checklist is hanging in the birder's area, awaiting the addition of new species. Here's hoping that the new year brings rich and happy birding to our friends at the Center, and to all of us.

- Denise Hilton

T-Shirt Order Deadline Approaching

The deadline for ordering an HMBC T-Shirt is approaching rapidly. Please call Cathy Graichen or Gregg Recer at 899-2678 if you do not have an order form. The total number of shirts ordered will be determined by the number of advanced orders placed, so don't count on T-Shirts being available after the order. We hope to have delivery in time for the Annual Meeting.



DEC Camperships Available

Nominations are still being accepted for DEC Summer Environmental Education Camperships. Prospective campers must be ages 12 - 14. Campers can choose between three camps: Camp Colby (near Saranac Lake), Camp DeBruce (near Livingston Manor) or Camp Rushford (near Rushford Lake in western NY).

Applicants must be 12 - 14 years old when they attend camp. Both boys and girls attend the camps for one week in July or August. This camp experience heightens environmental awareness and develops understanding of the interrelationship between humans and their surroundings.

Campers should be sincerely interested in an outdoor learning experience and physically able to participate in strenuous activities such as backpacking and canoeing. Preference will be given to club members' children. If you know a student meeting these requirements, please contact Gary Goodness at as early as possible. Decisions will be made by March 1.



HMBC BOARD FOR 1995 - 1996

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BIRDLINE of E. NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080

1996 Dues Renewals

Don't forget to send in your 1996 dues renewal. Any questions about your renewal status, call Gregg Recer or Cathy Graichen at 899-2678.

Members who don't renew are removed from the mailing list, so send in your dues soon!

Send articles, clip-art
photos, artwork to:

Feathers
c/o Cathy Graichen
23 Scotch Mist Way
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

The Nominating Committee will be preparing a slate of nominations for the upcoming annual meeting. If you are interested in serving on the Board or as an officer, please contact one of them. The Nominating Committee members are: Al Mapes (439-4086), Scott Stoner (464-0492), and Cathy Graichen (899-2678).

Feathers



President's Corner: As bad as the Winter of 1996 has been so far, there are a few items of good news. The days are getting longer, we had a most welcome January thaw, and the birdlife has been very different from past winters. Very few House Finches are around, and hardly any Robins wintered over, and the Fort Edward area has been all snow but no birds. On the other hand there have been many reports of Northern Shrikes, and a few widely scattered reports of Great Gray Owls. I suspect February will prove to be an interesting month. Looking ahead, the Club is hosting the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs annual meeting in September at the Holiday Turf Inn in Colonie, so tell all your friends and we'll hope to see you there. And don't forget to send in your renewal if you haven't already, and place your orders for the new Club T-Shirts! Meanwhile I trust we are all anxiously awaiting those early signs of Spring - the Red-winged Blackbirds in early March and the waterfowl migration. I can hardly wait. Hope to see you on one of the field trips or upcoming programs. Incidentally, I moved. I am now part of the Nordic-way commute. My name should be listed in the new phone book as Wood Thrush; all you have to remember is that the last name is Wood! Please feel free to call me anytime.

Frank Murphy

FEATHERS

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WHEW!

by
David Martin

Sandy, my wife, and I were surveying a quiet midday scene at Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve. A flock of mallards and green-winged teal were snoozing peacefully as they floated in the middle of a pond while a dozen lesser yellowlegs poked quietly along the shallow edges. I was trying to count nearly invisible snipe on a distant muddy patch when Sandy grabbed my arm and said "Look over there!" I turned and saw a cloud of flapping ducks surrounding a large bird that veered and lunged as it sped among them. A falcon! A PEREGRINE!

All the ducks escaped and settled quickly back on the water. The falcon rose in the air and made a second diving pass. A few ducks leaped up and just as quickly dropped back

down. The falcon made seven more passes, but the ducks resisted the urge to flee. Finally, the falcon spooked a yellowlegs which took off and flew close by us, the falcon right behind. After a few hundred feet the falcon made a grab for the yellowlegs, but the sandpiper dodged and rose higher in the air. A few seconds later the falcon tried again, but once more the sandpiper escaped. The sandpiper seemed to be trying to stay above the falcon, and soon it was a speck high above the Mohawk River. Eventually we

... more on next page



**Federation '96
Announcement**

Reist Sanctuary Update

Neck-banded Snow Goose

Birding with CB Radios

Program & Field Trips

Feathers



could see only the peregrine in our binoculars as it continued to rise in the sky and then turned and flew north over the Preserve. We thought for a minute that the yellowlegs had escaped, but then the falcon started its stoop. As the peregrine dropped the yellowlegs came into view immediately ahead of the diving falcon. Just as they approached the collision point both birds passed below the tree tops, and we could see no more. What an anticlimax! We don't know if the yellowlegs escaped.

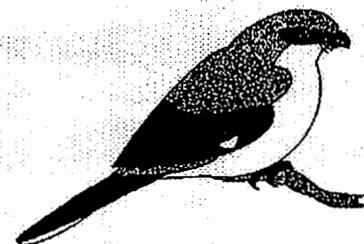
When the excitement was over and we began to discuss what we had seen, we realized how the event had tested our observational powers. We did not see the initial attack, but there was nothing stealthy about the later passes; it was bold, open aggression, and the falcon's strategy was to scare its prey into the air. Despite this flagrancy, the whole episode seemed strangely silent. The birds' activity got Sandy's attention, not noise, and neither of us recalls a lot of quacking or warning calls. Certainly, the fleeing yellowlegs said nothing, although yellowlegs seem to call almost every time they take flight. I suppose that we could have ignored any calls as we focused on the action, but I don't think so. Now, I wish we had some way to verify our recollections.

The ducks' behavior was striking. They tended to stay on the water while under aerial assault and, if flushed, dropped right back to the surface. Because the attack occurred in September, many of the ducks were probably born that summer, but even these inexperienced youngsters stayed put. On reflection, we decided the ducks' behavior was probably instinctive, perhaps related to the birds' tendency to stay with the flock. It seems to be a simple kind of survival of the fittest -- ducks that sit tight survive to breed and produce more ducks like themselves.

Sandy and I had seen peregrines before, both in the wild and at a falconry demonstration, so the size and speed of the falcon were not completely surprising. Even so, it was exciting to watch such a large bird fly at high speed down a path through the woods, as it did after one attack. Peregrines are reputed to be among the fastest birds in the world, mainly because of the high speed of the stoop. This peregrine was faster than the yellowlegs, because it caught up to the sandpiper from behind as they climbed into the sky, but the difference in speed was not remarkable. The yellowlegs was more nimble in the air and successfully dodged the first two attacks. I wish we knew if it dodged the last.

Grassland Surveyors

The Saratoga National Historic Park (Battlefield) is seeking volunteers to help them survey for grassland species this season. If interested, or for more information, please call Gina Johnson at the Park at 664-9821.





Field Trip Reports

Saratoga Lake Field Trip

November 19, 1995 was a fairly mild (40 degree-ish) day with a heavy cloud cover and no wind. There was snow on the ground, but the roads were clear. A moderate amount of fog affected the visibility and some colors were hard to see without the sunlight. Overall, conditions were pleasant.

Fifteen birders drove around the lake pausing at spots chosen for a combination of safe stopping and birding potential. Birds spotted on the lake included: RED-THROATED & COMMON LOON, HORNED & RED-NECKED GREBE, DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, CANADA GOOSE, MALLARD, GREATER & LESSER SCAUP, OLDSQUAW, COMMON GOLDENEYE, BUFFLEHEAD, all three mergansers (HOODED, COMMON, & RED-BREASTED), AMERICAN COOT, RING-BILLED GULL, HERRING GULL, and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL. Land birds that made an appearance included: COOPER'S HAWK, RED-TAILED HAWK, WILD TURKEY, ROCK DOVE, MOURNING DOVE, BELTED KINGFISHER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, AMERICAN ROBIN, EUROPEAN STARLING, AMERICAN TREE SPARROW, DARK-EYED JUNCO, HOUSE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH and HOUSE SPARROW.

At the end of the trip, half of us decided to travel up to Glens Falls to look for the reported BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS. As we approached Irongate Center we felt lucky to

see over 100 of these beautiful birds.

Overall, we found 40 species and had a very enjoyable time.

- Barb Putnam

Five Rivers Snowshoe/Birdwalk

The morning of January 27, 1996 dawned with the certainty that the scheduled snowshoe/birdwalk program at Five Rivers would both be drowned out and blown away by torrential rain and high wind. The small group of 5 participants chose to remain dry as they sipped hot chocolate while observing 12 familiar wintering bird species at the feeders, as well as one very soggy gray squirrel. The bird species observed included MOURNING DOVE, NORTHERN CARDINAL, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, BLUE JAY, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, AMERICAN TREE SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, DARK-EYED JUNCO, HOUSE FINCH and HOUSE SPARROW.

- Ray Perry

Rhode Island Coast

A coastal snowstorm on Feb. 2 caused the trip leaders and participants to cancel our initial plans. An alternative date of March 16-17 was selected. However, by that time, the original list of participants were no longer available. As a result, Gregg, Cathy and Bryce set off to explore the coast by themselves. Saturday morning was spent

Feathers



walking the loop at Sachuest NWR. Approximately a dozen HARLEQUIN DUCKS were visible near the point and at Island Rocks. HORNED GREBE, COMMON GOLDENEYE and AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS, along with the common gulls were also easily viewed. A few SURF SCOTERS were found near Flint Point. With the wind, we noticed almost no land bird activity. Although a shrike had been reported, we did not find it walking the trail. However, as we were driving out, Gregg noticed the NORTHERN SHRIKE surveying the fields and we stopped the car to quickly view the bird.

A stop at Gardiner Pond provided the first of many MUTE SWANS and a large flock of RUDDY DUCKS. After a period of relaxation and refreshment at the motel, we visited the other side of the bay near Little Compton. CANADA GEESE, RED-BREADED MERGANSERS, BUFFLEHEAD were some of the waterfowl, but nothing really unusual. The next stop was Watchmocket Cove in East Providence. The desired quarry, BLACK-HEADED GULLS, were still present, a couple even showing off their hoods for the breeding season. Surprisingly, no Bonaparte's were

seen with them. Few other waterfowl were in the area, except for the ubiquitous MUTE SWAN! A quick visit to nearby Turner Reservoir provided additional RUDDY DUCKS, AMERICAN COOTS, MALLARDS, BLACK DUCKS and various forms of domestic geese. The most entertaining (although somewhat distressing) aspect was watching the geese saunter across the busy street, one even chose to lay down. The coots at least had the decency to run!

Sunday morning we headed across the Newport Bridge with a quick stop at Beavertail State Park in Jamestown. A large flock of Common Eider were in the bay, but little else of interest. We continued to Point Judith. Surveying the area produced a COMMON LOON and HORNED GREBE. Our final destination of the day was Trustom Pond NWR. At the beach access, little bird activity was seen. We opted to take the 1 mile hike into the observation deck on the pond. There we were greeted with excellent lighting and a varied mix of waterfowl, including HOODED MERGANSERS, RUDDY DUCKS, SCAUP, COMMON GOLDENEYE and one CANVASBACK.

Listing Results

We only had a few submissions this year. I hope you are out there working for your 1996 lists!

<u>County</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Lister</u>
Rensselaer	161		Paul Connor
Schenectady	169	175	Ray Perry
Saratoga	152	191	Gregg Recer

Ray estimates the cumulative Schenectady list at 270.



The Reist Wildlife Sanctuary by Frank Murphy

A lot is going on at the Reist Wildlife Sanctuary in Niskayuna lately. For those who are new to the Club, this sanctuary is owned and managed by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. It is primarily deciduous woods but there are stands of Red Pine and White Pine and swampy areas that are attractive to birds.

An ambitious project is in the works at the sanctuary. Four local Boy Scouts, under the direction of Scoutmaster Jim McKinney, are each undertaking projects to identify and mark the sanctuary boundary lines; develop a trail marking system; develop a new map using overlays and aerial photos; and to renovate and mark entrances to the sanctuary. The projects involve a lot of field work, research, and computer expertise, and it's truly amazing to see the knowledge enthusiasm and of the Scouts.

Meanwhile, Joe Coticchio, a local resident and business leader, has graciously offered to initiate a fundraising campaign throughout the Niskayuna area to help defray Club expenses for maintaining this wonderful sanctuary. Joe and his family frequent the sanctuary and are astounded by the wealth and diversity of wildlife there - including many Pileated Woodpeckers, Spotted Salamanders, and Coyotes - to name only a few.

Another local resident, David Green, is keeping active at the other end of the sanctuary where a small mall with a Shop n' Save is planned to be constructed on land adjoining the sanctuary. This could open up a new entrance and has various possibilities - both good and bad - that we need to keep on top of. We are considering approaching Shop n' Save to assist with any trash cleanup efforts and possibly improving the entrance there.

Then there are new members and other residents who expressed an interest in helping out with the management. So, there is certainly a lot of activity there and we need to keep in mind that foremost is the concern for the wildlife - after all it is a wildlife sanctuary.

Lastly we are extremely grateful to Bette Moon who as chairperson of the sanctuary committee for the Club has put all this together, arranged meetings, and researched records available through the Town of Niskayuna. She has done a superb job.

International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 11, 1996 is the annual, hallmark event of Partners in Flight, the international coalition whose mission is to stem declines of migratory birds. Many migrants are at risk due to loss of habitat throughout the Western Hemisphere. Packets to organize IMBD events, t-shirts, pins, and stickers are all available through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. For more details of items and materials available, contact Cathy Graichen at 899-2678.



Upcoming Field Trips

Instructional Waterfowl Trip to Vischer Ferry

Sat. Apr 6, Scott Stoner 464-0492
Reservations: Mar. 31
View early spring waterfowl and marsh birds.

Waterfowl and Marsh Birds at Vischer Ferry

New Leader
Sat. Apr 13, Frank Murphy 373-1933
Reservations: Apr 9
Meet at 7AM at the main parking lot for a morning walk around the preserve. Waterfowl migration should be reaching its peak and early marsh species should be arriving.

Derby Hill for Hawks

Sat. Apr 20, Walt Sabin, 439-7344
Reservations: Apr 15
Although subject to last minute cancellation depending on weather, this trip offers one of the best spring hawk migration venues in NYS.

Woodcock at Five Rivers

Tue. Apr 23, Ray Perry 475-0291 (work) 399-3962 (home)
This evening trip will track down the "sights and sounds" of the woodcock's annual courting "sky dance". Meet at 7PM.

Vischer Ferry

New Trip:
Sun. Apr 28, Scott Stoner, 464-0492
Meet at 8AM for a morning walk to continue monitoring the preserve for spring migrants, particularly marsh species.

Peebles Island State Park

Thu. May 2, Frank Murphy 373-1933
This evening trip will focus on spring

migrants, particularly warblers. Shadbush should be at peak bloom. Meet at 6PM.

Birds and Breakfast at Five Rivers

Sat. May 4, Denise Hilton 785-6760
Join an organized group or bird on your own. Groups will leave the Visitor's Center at 6, 7 and 8AM. Reconvene at 10:30AM for continental breakfast for a small donation and the list compilation.

Jamaica Bay/Forest Park, Queens

Sun. May 5, Scott Stoner 464-0492 and Barbara Romeo 718-892-6291
Reservations: May 1
A new spring trip addition will allow us to explore some of the unique birding areas around NYC during the spring migration. Meet at 9:30 AM at Jamaica Bay.

Ann Lee Pond

Thu. May 9, Frank Murphy 373-1933
This Colonie town park offers convenient and exciting birding during the migration season. Meet at 6PM.

Delmarva Peninsula

Fri-Sun. May 10-12. Bill Lee 374-3426
Reservations: May 1
This birding-packed weekend is an excellent opportunity to find southern breeders, migrant songbirds and migrating shorebirds in breeding plumage.

Schenectady County

Sat. May 11, Ray Perry 475-0291 (work) 399-3962 (home)
Spend the day exploring areas throughout the county. Meet at 7AM at Niskayuna RR station along the bike path.



Carter Pond by Canoe

Sat/Sun. May 11/12. Jim Sotis 677-5417

Reservations: May 6

Two opportunities are available to explore this lovely area by boat. Wood Ducks as well as other marsh species should be seen and heard.

Vischer Ferry Migrants

Sun. May 12 Gregg Recer 899-2678

This popular trip can produce a nice variety of spring migrant warblers and other breeding and migrant songbirds.

Indian Meadows

Wed. May 15 Dick Beeler 399-8557

This evening trip will visit this park in Glenville (Schenectady County). Migrant warblers and nesting Bobolinks should highlight the birds.

Century Run

Sat. May 18. Bob Yunick 377-0146

Explore the 11-county area or restrict yourself to a certain region or site. Bird in a group or by yourself. Regardless of the rules you set for yourself, send your sightings to Bob for the club's compilation for this years Century Run. Please submit lists by 5/29.

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Wed. May 22 Bob Budliger 439-0006

This evening walk will explore the center's lands for migrants and breeders.

George Landis Arboretum

Sat. May 25, Gloria Van Duyne, 875-6935

Look for late migrants and breeding songbirds. Directions: Take Rt 20 West. After crossing Schoharie Creek, take first right onto Charleston Street, proceed 1.3 mile then right on Lape Road to Arboretum. An additional trip

leader is needed, please contact Gloria if interested.

Utica Marsh

Sun. May 26, Doug Steele

Reservations: May 23 (on Birdline)

Meet in Albany area at 7AM to carpool to the marsh. Rails, herons, bitterns, marsh wrens and late migrants should highlight this trip. Expected return time is 4PM.

Vischer Ferry

Thu. May 30, Scott Stoner 464-0492

This evening walk will provide opportunities to view marsh species and breeding birds in this local freshwater wetland.

Northern Saratoga County

Sat. Jun 1 Barb Putnam 792-7542

Explore various habitats in this southern view of the Adirondacks. Car pooling will be necessary due to the narrowness of the road. Please contact Barb for details.

Bicknell's Thrush/Southern Green Mts.

Sun. Jun 2, Walter Ellison 456-6224 (home) 442-4320 (work)

The split of Bicknell's and Gray-cheeked Thrush gives added reason to visit these breeding grounds. The trip includes a 1700' climb along an old road. Meet at 6:30AM at executive parking lot near Stuyvesant Plaza or 7AM at Tomhannock Reservoir fishing access on Rt. 7.

Vischer Ferry

Sun. Jun 2, Lynn Huntington & Dan Welch 235-2607.

This morning excursion will add another day of club birding at this favored location. Meet at 7AM.



Hello, BirDER, Hello *by Richard Guthrie*

Picture this unfortunate scene: You are out searching for a Great Gray Owl, driving the back country roads for hours without luck; only to find out after you arrive home that a group from Saratoga found the bird on a dirt road only two miles from where you have been.

How about: You are alone on a trip to the south coast of Long Island and find a super rarity but have nobody around to help verify the identity. Unbeknownst to you, another Albany birder is about a mile away together with camera and full library of appropriate field guides that would help sort through all the possible similar species. The potential new species for the State and a real feather in your cap is lost forever for lack of another observer.

Each of these potential horror stories could have been avoided had the birder been able to communicate with other birders in the area. The answer lies in Citizen's Band Radio, known to all as CB. This is not a totally novel idea as it may seem, other areas have an established CB system in place and field birders monitor a channel just for the chance of sharing something good.

When my son Andrew and I were with a group of birders and found an Ancient Murrelet on the Massachusetts coast, a hoard of Boston area birders showed up within the hour after the word got out on CB radio.

Another time we used our radios was when we were in search of the Whiskered Tern down in Delaware. The bird was reported to frequent three widespread locations. With radios in hand, we were able to cover the

different spots, and when it turned up at one area, everyone around the radios was informed instantly. Those in the communication link were advised and rushed to see the bird. There were many birders who were not within sight or sound of the radios. Most of them missed the bird. Had they a radio, they would not have travelled hundreds of miles in vain.

The Bird Net of Eastern New York

I propose that the Capital District birders establish a CB radio system that travelling birders can monitor. The whole system can be operating in no time at all. For the record, I propose using "Channel 15". To get the attention of another birder, simply pick up the microphone and call, "Hello Birder, Channel Fifteen". You can then start your conversation. Other birders in the area can listen (as can anyone else with a CB tuned to that Channel - so be care what you say!). You really don't need one of those CB "handles", but if you like, adopt one and use it to identify yourself. You'll find me out there as "Puffin-Two".

Look at these other advantages

+ Birders arriving at a field trip meeting place can coordinate their arrival. This will be especially useful to those arriving a few minutes "behind schedule".

+ Car pooling field trips can inform each other of roadside sightings. "Bill, check that bird in the tree on the right. It might be a shrike."

+ A car in a group finds a sudden need to run to the gas station. The split off group can be



Feathers

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assured that they will be able to meet up with the main group and everyone else can continue to travel around without interruption.

+ A group of birders can span out to search nearby roads and the other side of the bay, adding another dimension of efficiency to locating an elusive rarity.

+ Christmas count groups can be in contact while covering adjacent areas to avoid double-counting certain birds, to share a rarity or to confirm an identification.

+ We all know how frustrating it can be for a car-pooling group on a field trip to be following the lead car as it slows, stops and looks intently at something, then moves on; leaving everyone behind wondering what they missed. A simple statement, let's say: "Just checking the hedgerow...nothing new there. Let's move on." would allay a lot of fears.

+ We all know that a car serves as an excellent bird blind. The wrong thing to do on sighting, let's say a hawk on a tree, is for a few birders to get out of their cars, doors slamming, and off goes the Rough-leg! A strategy for approaching such a bird can be established by simple car-to-car communication on a CB radio, and everyone can enjoy the bird without disturbing it.

+ Birders stuck at home can monitor the day's activity through a "base station". They can also relay information to other birders out of radio range of the field birders.

The system

CB (Citizen Band) radios can be the answer.

They are easy to operate. No license is required, and they are inexpensive. New ones can be purchased for under \$50. Better yet, used ones can be found at garage saales for around \$5-\$10. If you decide that CB is for you, you might want to get one with 40 channels. All the new CBs for sale are required to have the full complement of 40 channels. Older models only go to 23 channels. A 23 channel CB will work here in the Capital District and on club field trips. But, if you go to Eastern Massachusetts, you won't be able to communicate with one of their birders who will be using Channel 25. The added ability may be worth the extra money. Making the Capital District working channel as Channel 15 makes it possible for the economy minded birders to take advantage of the many used CB sets for sale at really low prices.

CBs require an antenna to transmit. Detachable magnetic roof mounting antennae are recommended and are available for about \$20. new, much less used. The antenna can be placed on the car roof or trunk lid, and fed to the radio by a wire through a side window. Careful placement will assure no damage to the car's paint. The antenna can be removed at the end of the trip with no difficulty. The radio can be placed on the dash and plugged into the cigarette lighter socket for instant service. A CB radio can be tucked away in a car's trunk until needed. Simply by strapping the antenna onto the roof and plugging in the radio, the birder is "on-the-air"! No more missed rarities.

There are other communication alternatives. My real favorite is "Ham Radio". The advantages are that ham radios have far

Feathers



greater range than CBs. Plus, you can place telephone calls via phone patches set up by various radio clubs. Open patches are free for local calls. The Capital District has an open patch in Schenectady, therefore, through a local call one can reach an active Capital District birder who can pass information to the rare bird net. Information about the Wood Stork and the Say's Phoebe was passed by using a ham radio phone patch while watching the birds in the field. Think of how many rare birds disappeared while the finder was off looking for a pay phone.

Ham operators are friendly and helpful bunch. Although Tomhannock is out of range for the Schenectady phone patch system, information about the Gray Kingbird at the Tomhannock Reservoir was relayed to the rare bird net by a local ham. Ham radio requires a Federal Communications Commission license. There was a time that one was required to know Morse Code in order to get a license. Not any more. However, one is required to pass a written exam to get the necessary license. Several local clubs administer these exams on a regular basis, and the test isn't all that hard. Just some rules and regulations, radio propagation theory, and minimal electronics

is all that it takes. New ham radio equipment is fairly expensive. However, there are many used ones available for around \$50 - \$100. Most of these rigs are so compact that they easily fit into a hip pack. One can reach Boston or NYC from a hilltop with such a hand-held radio!

Cellular phones are useful, but expensive. And, they are not effective for car-to-car communication. They are useful when afield with a rare bird in sight. A cel-phone can put a birder in touch with another birder either at home or in their vehicle, if you know their cel-phone number. Cel-phones are very popular around Long Island and Westchester County. Andy and I used a pay phone at the Coast Guard Station on Jones Beach to contact Tony Lauro in Montauk, on his cel-phone, to discuss details of a possible immature Masked Booby that we had in our scopes at the moment. Tony was driving around the Montauk Point area at the time and was able to list some useful identification tips to confirm the sighting. He also contacted other birders (by cel-phone) who hurried to the area, all without success, alas. We found out later that there were many other birders on the Jones Beach strip that Sunday morning. If only they had a CB radio...!



**REGISTER NOW!
FOR THE 49TH ANNUAL FEDERATION MEETING
IN ALBANY ON SEPTEMBER 6-8, 1996
Hosted by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club**

Migration is the theme of the 49th Federation Annual Meeting, which will feature eminent birders as speakers following dinner on both conference evenings. The Saturday evening banquet speaker will be Ken Able, a leading researcher on avian navigation (note the change in speaker). On Friday, Claudia Wilds will lead a workshop on identifying shorebirds during southbound migration.

REGISTER NOW!

You'll want to come to this meeting to hear these two great speakers, sharpen your skills, catch the leading edge of birding technology, swap stories, bird the Capital District hotspots, go on a Mohawk River cruise, browse the vendors, and learn what other clubs and birders are into! And you can do all this in the comfort of a first class hotel and with the convenience of our central location.

Register early to insure access to limited space on the boat trip.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Saturday night's featured speaker Ken Able will speak on "Finding the Way: Some Pieces of the Bird Navigation Puzzle." Ken is a leader in bird migration studies. His migration research using a captive bird experimental approach as well as radar and visual techniques, was recently featured in the New York Times. He is a professor in the Department of Biology, SUNY Albany. Ken started birding at age 11 and has continued in a distinguished birding career, serving on the Board of Directors of the ABA from 1986-1995, and serving as editor of ABA Monographs in Field Ornithology. He is in his second term on the NY State Avian Records Committee of the Federation. Ken will be chairing the papers session, as well.

*Friday night's speaker Claudia Wilds will present a workshop highlighting the "Southward Migration of Shorebirds." Claudia, the Associate Editor of Birding, will draw upon her thirteen years' experience conducting the weekly shorebird census at Chincoteague. She is a noted Washington, D.C. birder, the "Voice of the Naturalist" for the Audubon Naturalist Society since 1974, and author of *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area*, now in its second edition. She is currently working on an identification guide to terns and skimmers of the world. She is on the Board of Directors of the ABA. She is a research collaborator in the Department of Vertebrate Zoology at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, and has done considerable work on gulls, terns and shorebirds.*

Claudia will be available to sign copies of her book, and expects to join some of the field trips as her schedule permits.

BOAT CRUISE ON THE MOHAWK

On Sunday morning, there will be a two hour cruise along the lower portion of the Mohawk River. Crescent Cruise Lines will provide the boat, while Bob Budliger, Federation president and long-time environmental educator, will serve as leader and narrator. Our trip along the historic Mohawk will provide a wealth of scenic beauty, including the river-bordered edges of the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve, one of the Capital District's most outstanding birding sites (continued)



BOAT CRUISE ON THE MOHAWK continued

Along the river in late summer we can hope to see a variety of waterfowl and herons, as well as swallows, gulls, and migrating terns.

Boarding time will be from 8:30 AM until departure at 9:00 AM, with the boat due back at the dock at 11:00 AM. Light refreshments will be available. Tickets on the reservation form for this field trip are \$10, and are limited in number, so register early! The boat is not handicapped-accessible.

LOCATION

New York's Capital District is easily reached from all parts of the state. It is just a few hours up the Thruway from NY City and Long Island; an easy ride on the Thruway (with a Montezuma detour) from western locations; and a quick zip up I-88 from Binghamton and the Southern Tier. You may even choose to fly into the Albany County Airport less than two miles from the meeting, or take the train or bus.

NON-BIRDERS WELCOME

This is a great get-away weekend opportunity for non-birders. Leave the comfort of the Holiday Turf Inn's indoor pool and whirlpool to do some shopping or browse the monster bookstores. Enjoy Albany's New York State Museum, the Capitol, the Mall and the "Egg" theater, all from one free underground parking spot. You may also want to enjoy the dinners and speakers and Sunday morning's boat ride.

CAPITAL DISTRICT SITE GUIDE DEBUT

The Federation Meeting will showcase HMBC's anticipated publication of its major site guide to birding hotspots of the greater Capital District. This well illustrated, 200 page book features 40 sites, both annotated and bar-graph checklists, and is a team effort of over 40 people. More details will be available in the July edition of NY Birders.

FIELD TRIPS

The Capital District is strategically located for birds and for birding. Just to the north are the beautiful Adirondack Mountains, and to the south the Catskills. Two great rivers converge here – the Mohawk River and of course the mighty Hudson River pointing the way north and south to the migrating birds. Every typical birding habitat except for the ocean is represented within a short drive from Albany. From the mountains to the grassy farmlands of Saratoga and Five Rivers to the lakes and reservoirs, the Capital District has it all. Field trips at the Federation meeting will take you to some of the best birding areas within a half hour drive from the Holiday Turf Inn. The following are some of the places we will visit.

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve - *This freshwater marsh along the Mohawk River is one of the best in the area and last fall was host to the areas' first WOOD STORK and a very rare RUFF, among 12 other species of shorebirds. Least Bittern, Sora and Virginia Rail, are also found there every fall.*

Peebles Island State Park - *A relatively new and wonderful State Park, the island is situated at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. The rare CONNECTICUT WARBLER seems to show up here every fall in September just around the time of the Federation meeting. There are also many shorebirds and usually a Merlin or Peregrine Falcon.*

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center - *State-owned lands managed by the NYSDEC, this is a popular local hotspot for many songbirds. Eastern Bluebirds of course are guaranteed here. There are also many exciting yet easy trails throughout the preserve.*

Ann Lee Pond - *Only 5 minutes from the Holiday Turf Inn, this Albany County-owned pond hosts a surprisingly wide variety of warblers and other songbirds during the fall migration. A wooden foot bridge takes you across the pond and into the woods. During the evening you are bound to see the last of the Common Nighthawks flitting low overhead as they continue their journey south.*



WORKSHOPS AND PAPERS SESSION

Saturday afternoon there will be a variety of workshops and technical papers. Details will be available at the meeting.

AGENDA

presented by HMBC's meeting co-chairs Phillip Johnson and Scott Stoner

FRIDAY	AFTERNOON	FIELD TRIPS
	EVENING	COCKTAIL HOUR BUFFET DINNER CLAUDIA WILDS ON "Southward Migration of Shorebirds"
SATURDAY	MORNING	EARLY AM FIELDTRIPS FOR DELEGATES DELEGATES MEETING FIELD TRIPS FOR NON-DELEGATES
	AFTERNOON	WORKSHOPS/PAPER SESSION
	EVENING	COCKTAIL HOUR BANQUET KEN ABLE ON "Finding the Way: Some Pieces of the Bird Navigation Puzzle."
SUNDAY	MORNING	MOHAWK RIVER CRUISE FIELD TRIPS

HOW TO REGISTER

Registration per person costs \$20 before July 15 and \$25 thereafter, with a student registration of \$10. Registration will include admission to both evening speakers (but see below for dinner tickets), field trips, and workshop/papers sessions, as well as a handsome commemorative gift. The Mohawk River Cruise is an additional \$10 per person.

Breakfast and lunch are on your own and a list of suggested venues will be in the meeting materials. Tickets to the Friday buffet dinner and the Saturday banquet must be ordered in advance using the registration form. Guests of the meeting registrants are welcome to purchase dinner and boat cruise tickets on the registration form, also.

Registrants will receive a confirmation of meeting registration which will include directions to the meeting. Dinner and boat cruise tickets will be picked up upon arrival at the meeting.

You must make your own hotel reservations directly. Call the Holiday Turf Inn at 1-800-HOLIDAY to make your reservation. Remember to tell them that this is the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs Annual Conference, in order to get the conference room rate of \$79 plus tax per room, and have your room count towards the conference total.

Feathers



REGISTRATION FORM
 Federation of New York State Bird Clubs
 49th Annual Meeting
 September 6, 7, 8, 1996
 at the Holiday Inn Turf on Wolf Road, Albany, NY



Name(s): (as you want on your name tag)

Delegate
 Yes _____ No _____
 Yes _____ No _____

Address: _____

Club: _____
 Phone: _____

Room: Contact the Holiday Inn directly at 1-800-HOLIDAY for reservations. A limited number of rooms have been reserved at the conference center. Please reserve your room early. Be sure to mention the "Federation of NYS Bird Clubs Annual Conference" to ensure the conference rate of \$79 plus tax per room (either single or double) per night.

Registration: (incl. speakers, workshops, paper sessions and field trips other than boat ride)

_____ \$20.00 postmarked on/before July 15
 _____ \$25.00 postmarked after July 15
 _____ \$10.00 student

Registration: \$ _____

Meals:

Fri Evening:

Hot and Cold Buffet # _____ @ \$17.50 per person \$ _____

Sat Evening banquet

Roast Native Turkey # _____ @ \$15.25 per person \$ _____

Pasta Primavera w/ marinara sauce # _____ @ \$16.50 per person \$ _____

Prime Rib of Beef # _____ @ \$21.00 per person \$ _____

Meal Total: \$ _____

Cruise: Board Sunday morning 8:30am, return 11am - on the Mohawk River)

_____ @ \$10.00 per person

Cruise: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Make check payable to Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

Send this from and payment to:
 Barbara Putnam
 190 Palmer Ridge Road
 Gansevoort, NY 12831

For more information call: Barb Putnam (518) 792-7542



HMBC 1996 Annual Meeting

The 1996 Annual Meeting and Banquet will be held at Oceans Eleven in Guilderland on April 17. The banquet starts at 6PM. The business meeting will run from 7:30PM to 8:30PM. At 8:30PM the evening's guest speaker, Dr. Paul Buckley, will talk about "*Birding Across Australia*". Contact Denise Hilton at 785-6760 for more information.

Upcoming Programs

Meetings are at 7:30 PM at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar

Monday, May 6. "*Wildlife of the Barren Grounds*", Dr. John Davis.

Dr. Davis will present slides and tales from his adventures by canoe in the wilds of Canada's Northwest Territories. Dr. Davis is a semi-retired physician from Cooperstown, a lifelong naturalist, and a Director of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society.

Monday, June 3. "*Hummingbirds and Bluebirds*", Arnette Heidcamp

Arnette Heidcamp is an expert in the care and identification of hummingbirds. She has hosted Rufous and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in her home and has authored popular books including *A Hummingbird in My House*. She also has a forthcoming book on bluebirds. Arnette will show fabulous slides of hummingbirds and bluebirds as well as share some of her experiences with these lovely creatures. She will be available to sign books at this program.

No programs in July or August.

Fall Program Preview

Wednesday, September 4. Dale and Lillian Samuelson on South Africa

Monday, October 7. Gene Hocutt on Montezuma NWR

Monday, November 4. Steve Caparizzo of WTEN on weather

Monday, December 2. Christmas party with speaker TBA



Program Reports

Beyond the Binoculars

On the evening of February 5, about 30 people turned out to enjoy a fine presentation by DEC environmental educator, Frank Knight. Through slides and lecture, Frank encouraged the gathered birders to take a wider view while in the field, and thus to avail themselves of the many wondrous plants and other animals that make up bird habitats.

For example, while enjoying the spring migration of warblers, we watch the birds eating small caterpillars which supply them with the protein needed for their long flight. Frank described one type of caterpillar which has evolved the protective device of a "false face". When a bird approaches, this small caterpillar rears up, displaying a fearsome set of "eyes", frightening at least some of the birds, some of the time. Another type of caterpillar, the Buck Moth larvae in the Pine Bush, lives in colonies, and when approached by a hungry bird, the entire group rears up, a frightening sight indeed, even to some members of our audience!

While doing some woodland birding, many of us have noted a variety of mushrooms growing on the moist forest floor. Frank encouraged us to look around in the trees themselves, especially in forks or jagged edges, where a little Red Squirrel may have reserved a bit of mushroom, waiting for it to dry and become a meal later on.

With the excitement of birding during spring migration, we may unwittingly miss many other signs of this glorious season. Frank encouraged us to explore swampy woods and streams carefully for one of spring's earliest harbingers, the bright green shoots

of Skunk Cabbage. The energy generated by the budding of this plant will actually melt the snow around it. Other spring woodland flowers to look for are Jack in the Pulpit, Wild Oats, Dutchman's Britches, and May Apple. Many of these are white, a color that attracts pollinators in the treed darkness. Meadow flowers, on the other hand, tend to be brightly colored, more easily seen in the bright sunshine.

As summer comes, another enjoyable birding habitat is the bog. Frank showed some excellent examples of what we might find if we explore a northern bog carefully. In addition to Olive-sided Flycatcher, Northern Raven, Three-toed Woodpecker and Gray Jay, which with some luck can be seen at Ferd's Bog, Frank also pointed out the beautiful White-fringed Orchids and Rose Begonia, the "dumb clock face" of the Pitcher Plan, and the Sundews, which wisely grow their flowers on very long stems, thus protecting their pollinators from the insect-devouring leaves below.

The Albany Pine Bush offers in addition to its many avian highlights, the beautiful Blue Lupine. The Lupine serves as nursery and food for the Karner Blue Butterfly. Another interesting winged creature at the Pine Bush is the Buck Moth, a day-flying moth whose main defense when threatened is to lay limply on the ground in a very unmothlike posture.

Frank's program was both informative and enjoyable, and his tips should help us appreciate habitat, not only as a place for birds, but also as a place of beauty in itself.

- Denise Hilton



Rich Guthrie on Migrant Songbirds

A large crowd was "Richly" rewarded by Mr. Guthrie's fine program on Migrant Songbirds at the Club's March 4 event. Using both slide and recorded song, Rich discussed many of the well-known and popular spring songsters of the region.

He started with the American Robin, a bird whose song we should learn well, as it is the base for comparison with the song of a multitude of superficially similar sounding species. These include the Scarlet Tanager (song with a sore throat), Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Purple Finch, House Finch and Red-eyed, Yellow-throated and Solitary Vireos. Among the interesting facts about these species is that the House Finch population has exploded in the Northeast and may soon reach the edge of the western population of this species. However, the eastern population has been affected by conjunctivitis, which has caused not only blindness but a dramatic reduction in population.

Rich described habitat differences as well. The Red-eyed Vireo, for instance, is the most common bird of the northeastern deciduous woods, although it is heard far more than seen. It prefers a denser woods, whereas Solitary Vireos prefers a mixed deciduous/coniferous edge, and the Yellow-throated Vireo prefers streamside trees. Analogous to the Red-eyed, Solitary and Yellow-throated Vireos in habitat preference are the Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush and Veery.

Rich also talked about the kinds of data generated by banding. Not only does it provide biological measurements on certain individuals, but critical information on

migration routes and life expectancy as well. Interestingly, it has shown that songbirds exhibit a remarkable degree of "site fidelity," whereby parents (especially females) and their offspring return to the same location year after year.

Such an ability is particularly remarkable when one considers not only the distance involved in migration, but that when the exhausted birds arrive on their shrinking wintering habitat, they find it already occupied by well-rested resident species and must literally work to establish themselves on a wintering territory.

Banding as well as observational data can document the range expansion of a species. Among the growing list of species previously unknown this far north are the Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal and Turkey Vulture. A species anticipated for New York is the Carolina Chickadee, now found in New Jersey. Rich and his son, Andrew, have been looking for them on Staten Island. Their observations have been, however, that the resident Black-capped Chickadee is quick to respond aggressively to the call of the Carolina Chickadee, and will probably discourage any colonization by the Carolina.

Rich's talk also described sexual dimorphism and its role in songbird breeding. The Red-winged Blackbird males arrive on the breeding grounds before the females, and display their conspicuous red epaulets to defend a territory. The drab, brown and white striped female, on the other hand, is well-camouflaged for the marsh habitat she nests in.

- Scott Stoner & Denise Hilton



Neck-banded Snow Goose

On Saturday, November 25, 1995, two of us were birding Tomhannock Reservoir, Rensselaer County, in search of waterfowl, winter finches and lingering migrants. We met at about 10:00 AM at the DEC parking area off Route 7 on the south side of the reservoir and immediately headed across the road to check out the birds. We were confronted with a flock of about 2000 Snow Geese close to shore. The recent cold weather had left a thin layer of ice on the water, but the activity of the large flock kept the water open around the small island. While checking the flock for Ross' geese, we noticed about a dozen "blue" geese, which seemed to be keeping to themselves. Among the constantly shifting snows, we noticed one with a yellow neck collar with black lettering dabbling along the edge of the ice. I put my scope on it and read the neck collar - CP68. "Clifton Park - 68", I said out loud for Jeff and me to remember the number. Putting that aside for the moment, we continued to scan the flock. I noticed another collared goose, but it was among the bustling flock and too far away to read the lettering.

At about 11:15 AM, we tore ourselves away from the Snow Geese and birded the rest of the reservoir for most of the afternoon. When we returned in late afternoon, we decided to try to find the collared birds again or see what else we could find. As we scanned the flock again, I noticed a petite goose with a stubby bill - a Ross' Goose! Since I had seen the Ross' at Tomhannock a few years before and had also seen good numbers in California's Merced National Wildlife Refuge, I felt only a brief rush discovering the rare bird in our area. But I knew that it was a life bird for Jeff. After pointing out the bird for Jeff, I continued scanning for the yellow neck collars. As we admired the birds, they started getting excited, and began to take off in small groups. Then the main flock suddenly took off and circled the area, leaving the water to the Canada Geese who were on the far shore. We followed the flock with our scopes, trying to find the yellow collars, but it was futile. The flock flew off to feed on the hillside above the reservoir, and from a distance, they really did look like snow on the fields.

The following Monday, I faxed some notes on my Snow Goose observation to the NYS DEC's Game Bird Unit at Delmar, since they had given me information on some banded Canada Geese I seen in North Carolina. A few weeks later, I received a phone call informing me that "my" goose was an adult female, banded in August 1995 on an island near Baffin Island in Canada's Northwest Territories! Clifton Park - 68 was no slacker! She had already flown several thousand miles and had a ways to go before she reached her wintering grounds. If she survived that trip, it's likely that she will return again to the area near Baffin Island where she was banded and we might see her again next year.

You hear about birds' amazing migrations all the time, but I was really impressed by this information, which seems to put it all in perspective. Add to that the satisfaction of knowing that I provided a little piece of information for those Canadian biologists to better understand the migration patterns of Snow Geese and I'd say the experience was very rewarding.

- Larry Alden & Jeff Marx



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BIRDLINE of E. NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080

Fourth Annual National Trails Day Celebration

On Saturday, June 1, 1996, Grafton Lakes State Park will celebrate the annual National Trails Day. National Trails Day is a nationwide day of events to increase public awareness of trails, promote trail conservation, and celebrate the values and benefits America's treasured pathways provide. Tentative schedule:

- 10:00-10:30AM Gather at Mill Pond/Maintenance area for procession to Main area.
- 10:30-11:00AM Short procession (1 mile) from Mill Pond to Center area.
- 11:00-11:15AM Ribbon cutting to highlight National Trails Day.
- 11:15AM-2:00PM (varies depending on trail length) Hike, bike or horseback ride.
 - Horseback riders - Hicks & RPI Trail
 - Mountain bikers - Ward Hollow and Fire Trail
 - Hikers - Long Pond Trail
 - Nature walks - Shaver Pond Trail
 - Avid hikers - Dunham Trail to Dyken Pond

2:00-4:00PM - Casual music and light refreshments near Amphitheater. Information tables.

Planning is ongoing. If interested in participating in the planning process, please call the Park Manager at 518-279-1155.

Feathers



President's Corner: Spring is here at last! It's that time of the year when birds are coming back from the tropics and are easily identified in their colorful breeding plumage. Everywhere you go there will be birds and each day should bring a new bird to the area. And you never know what you might find - remember last year there was a King Eider on the Mohawk River in Scotia! My advice is to get out early and stay out late every day, and don't rest until you've seen 25 species of warblers! Try to learn and re-learn the songs. Think of all the people and music you can recognize by sound alone, and then consider that there are only a couple hundred more unique bird songs in our region to add to your memory bank. It's cake, right? And if you want to contribute to the migratory bird study,

May 11 is the North American Migration Count, where anyone can go out and note the birds observed per county. And I hope to see everybody at the Annual Meeting. Otherwise we'll see you at Vischer Ferry or Peebles Island, or somewhere along the Catskills or Adirondack trails. So get out and enjoy this special season and continue to do whatever you can to protect the wonderful birdlife we are so fortunate to have.

- Frank Murphy

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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY NEW YORK IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS PROGRAM

Protecting Birds and their Habitats

National Audubon Society's New York Field Office is in the process of launching an Important Bird Areas program that will identify critical bird breeding, migratory stop-over, and feeding areas in the state. The purpose of this process will be to develop conservation strategies to ensure the protection of these key bird habitats. Critical to this effort, we will strive to increase understanding of bird habitats in the state and increase public awareness of the importance of these sites. Data will be obtained from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Heritage Program, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the Cornell Department of Natural Resources, regional

editors of the New York Federation of Bird Club's *The Kingbird*, as well as from Susan Roney Drennan's book *The Top 500 Birding Sites in New York State*. Nominations for Important Bird Areas will be solicited from Audubon chapters, bird clubs, natural resource managers, and Partners In Flight cooperators to confirm current data and identify new sites. It will be the most extensive migratory bird habitat identification program since the completion of New York State's Breeding Bird Atlas.

... more on next page

Federation Meeting in September

HMBC will be hosting the Annual Meeting for the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs (see last issue for meeting details and registration form). The planning for the meeting is coming along well. Please register!!! Exciting keynote speakers, informative paper sessions and workshops, birding at nearby sites will all be part of the weekend activities.

To volunteer to help out with the planning or events during the meeting, contact Federation Chair Philip Johnson at 370-5921.

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Annual Meeting Summary

Upcoming Field Trips and Programs

Program and Field Trip Reports



Education and Outreach

As these Important Bird Areas are identified, Audubon will provide educational fact sheets on their importance to both migratory and resident birds. To increase public awareness and understanding Audubon through its chapter network will join in a partnership with other birding organizations and the State of New York to provide field trip opportunities to sites already on existing state-owned public lands. These trips will be designed for different age groups and will be locally based to conform to the habitat protection needs of each particular site.

Integration with the New York State Open Space Plan

Important Bird Areas will range from Great Lakes habitats and forests and wetland complexes in Western New York to grasslands in the Southern Tier, from the forests of the Adirondacks and Catskills to the coastal regions of the Hudson River, Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. Habitats identified in this program will be summarized in an easy-to-understand format that cross-references to the New York State's Open Space Plan. New York has one of the most extensive Open Space Plans in the country along with a dedicated fund for land protection projects. However, there has never been a process for prioritizing these sites based on bird habitat needs. Audubon would provide the voice by advocating for the protection of sites in the Open Space Plan identified as a priority for migratory and resident birds. As for IBA sites not currently included in the Open Space Plan, Audubon would push for their inclusion and protection.

Conservation Strategies

Conservation strategies to be utilized for protection of Important Areas in New York State will include:

- 1) Public acquisition of lands from willing sellers, as well as where private land trust funds exist, private acquisition;
- 2) Public conservation easements on lands identified; and
- 3) Private landowner education in addition to local partnerships which provide for the proper management of habitats in question.

Partnerships

Audubon is well-positioned to identify, educate the public on and protect Important Bird Areas in the state. The first year of the program will be devoted to statewide data collection, volunteer recruitment and involvement, and identification of several large habitats selected for national recognition. Memorandums of understanding and partnerships will be developed with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Cornell University with specific joint activities from GIS data collection to sharing facilities. Also, a preliminary list of state sites will be developed for conservation consideration during the 1997 State Legislative session. In addition, public educational efforts in partnership with local chapters will be designed for several sites already protected as open space in New York State.



Into the Future

The second year of the Important Bird Areas program will include development of more specific conservation strategies from the initial priority list and end with the completion of a total listing of sites to be identified. The Important Bird Areas publication to be produced in year three of the project by the National Audubon will be the guiding document for migratory bird conservation in the state. While the Important Bird Areas Coordinator will continue to keep the publication current, the program's main focus will turn to the conservation policies of the state and the protection and proper management of these Important Bird Areas.

What Can You Do?

We will begin soliciting site nominations by fall 1996, but in the meantime we encourage preliminary planning and gathering of site

data. Sites will be selected on the basis of criteria developed with input from a technical advisory committee made up of bird experts from throughout the state. Although these criteria have not been finalized, they will include sites with significant bird concentrations, sites with endangered/threatened species, and sites that represent unique habitats. We encourage Audubon chapters to begin gathering data that would support nominations of sites in your area. We also encourage chapters and bird clubs to form a committee to begin selecting sites that you may wish to nominate.

For further information contact Jeff Wells, New York State IBA Coordinator, National Audubon Society, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. Phone (607) 254-2441 (email: jw32@cornell.edu).

Registry of E-Mail Addresses

More and more people have access to computers and are getting E-Mail addresses. This mode of communication has the potential for new ways of providing information about such things as bird alerts, bird finding directions, meeting changes, and so on. We have decided to offer members the opportunity of registering their E-Mail addresses with the club. The list will be shared with all members. It seems that the easiest way to do this is to invite members to send an E-Mail message to one member, who will collect all the addresses for later distribution. Lou Esch has volunteered to be the collector. To participate, send an E-Mail message to Lou, whose address is:

1234.1756@compuserve.com



Morning Walks at Five Rivers

Thursday morning bird walks are held at Five Rivers each week. Coffee is available at 7 AM and the walk starts at 7:30. Beginning birders are particularly encouraged and welcomed.



Field Trip Reports

Vischer Ferry Instructional

On April 6 about 20 people enjoyed a morning exploration of Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve in search of arriving waterfowl. The total number of individual birds was not great, but we ended up with good looks at a nice variety of species. Highlights included GREEN-WINGED AND BLUE-WINGED TEAL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, and NORTHERN PINTAIL. After examining the species one-by-one, we encountered a nice collection of them at the west end of the large pond along the towpath, which provided a fun recap for the trip. Thanks to George Hanson, Frank Murphy, and Doug Steele for all their help.

- *Scott Stoner*

Waterfowl of the Hudson River Greene County

Cold arctic air and clear sunny skies welcomed ten club members and three students from Columbia-Green Community College to the Coxsackie boat launch at 8 AM on March 17. Thirteen species of water fowl were found between Coxsackie and Catskill. Highlights were three SNOW GEESE, two GREEN-WINGED TEAL, four NORTHERN PINTAIL, six AMERICAN WIGEON, a dozen RING-BILLED DUCKS, twenty COMMON GOLDENEYE, two drake BUFFLEHEAD, and four HOODED MERGANSERS. Two immature BALD EAGLES perched across the river from Athens and a RUFFED GROUSE that attempted to become roadkill in an encounter with the trip leader's car were the only other notable sightings on a trip that totaled 30 species.

- *Bill Cook*

Waterfowl of the Hudson River North of Troy

Seven of us took off on a cold Saturday morning, March 23rd. A constant north wind of 15 to 20 mph added to the chill. Besides numerous COMMON MERGANSERS, MALLARD, COMMON GOLDENEYE and two large flights of CANADA GEESE, we saw only a small number of BLACK DUCKS and only 2 HOODED MERGANSERS. Of more interest was a small number of NORTHERN PINTAIL in the Hudson about midway between Stillwater and Schuylerville. Also, an immature BALD EAGLE was enjoying a meal. He was situated on a small gravel covered island in the Hudson about two miles south of Champlain Canal Lock #2. Overall 25 species were observed.

- *Paul Grattan*

Birds and Breakfast

Despite the optimistic mid-week forecast, Saturday morning, May 4, brought fog, drizzle and rain to Five Rivers, but the gloomy weather did not deter our intrepid Birds and Breakfast group. The 6, 7, and 8 o'clock groups were led by Doug Steele, Ray Perry, Al Mapes, Barb Putnam, and Bill Lee, and the 22 birders involved were rewarded with 74 species sightings. Among the species noted were GREEN and GREAT BLUE HERONS, SOLITARY and SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, COMMON SNIPE, TREE, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED and BARN SWALLOWS, EASTERN BLUEBIRD, HERMIT and WOOD THRUSHES, BROWN THRASHER, SOLITARY and WARBLING VIREOS, BLUE-WINGED, YELLOW, YELLOW-RUMPED, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, PRAIRIE, PALM and



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BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS, ROSE-BREASTED and EVENING GROSBEAKS, RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, SAVANNAH and SWAMP SPARROWS, BOBOLINK, EASTERN MEADOWLARK and PURPLE FINCH.

We enjoyed hot coffee and a light breakfast while Al headed the list compilation and group members shared sighting information. In spite of the less than perfect weather it was a good morning's birding and an enjoyable gathering.

- Denise Hilton

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

April 13 Participants: Alison VanKeuren, Dick Beeler (N), Belinda Rowland, Terri Altenhofen, Donna Zimmerman, Shirley Brady, Gary Goodness, George and Kay Hanson, Stuart W. Lehman (N), Jean and Samuel Katz, Mark Brassaw (N), Frank Murphy, leader.

April 28 Participants: Carol Lorch, John Speck, Jane Graves, Doug Steele, Pauline Holmes (N), Liz Bowden, Alison VanKeuren, Jean and Samuel Katz, Joe Carey (N), Barbara and Dick Preisman, Heidi Klinowski (N), Carol Ennis, Sunny Gooding, Linda Parr, and three leaders: Gary Goodness, Dick Beeler, Frank Murphy.

Vischer Ferry is definitely one of the best places to be in the early spring. On the first trip we got to see 13 species of ducks, many of which were on their way farther north like the teal and pintail. We also were fortunate to hear the delicate full song of the **GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET**. And we got to see and hear the **RUSTY BLACKBIRDS**, also on their way north. Two weeks later our second trip produced only 8 duck species but other mi-

grants were just showing up - like the **GREEN HERON**, **YELLOW WARBLER**, and the **SANDPIPERS** and **COMMON SNIPE**. Then there was the quick glimpse of the **AMERICAN BITTERN** which was probably there for the breeding season as it was seen and heard doing its water pump call throughout May.

Birds Identified on both dates: **PIED-BILLED GREBE, GREAT BLUE HERON, CANADA GOOSE, WOOD DUCK, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, RING-NECKED DUCK, BUFFLEHEAD, HOODED MERGANSER, COMMON MERGANSER, KILLDEER, GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, BELTED KINGFISHER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, TREE SWALLOW, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, AMERICAN ROBIN, EUROPEAN STARLING, NORTHERN CARDINAL, SONG SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, RUSTY BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.**

Additional birds on April 13 (40 species total): **DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, AMERICAN BITTERN, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, NORTHERN PINTAIL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, GADWALL, AMERICAN WIGEON, MOURNING DOVE, EASTERN PHOEBE, BLUE JAY, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET.**

Additional species on April 28 (47 species total): **GREEN HERON, OSPREY, NORTHERN HARRIER, RED-TAILED HAWK, SOLITARY SANDPIPER, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, COMMON SNIPE, NORTHERN FLICKER, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, FISH CROW, BROWN CREEPER, HOUSE WREN, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, BLUE-GRAY GNAT-CATCHER, YELLOW WARBLER, YELLOW-**



**RUMPED WARBLER, SWAMP SPARROW,
HOUSE FINCH.**

- Frank Murphy

Peebles Island State Park

May 2, 1996 Participants: Gary Goodness, Lola Williams (N), Joan Armstrong, Dorothy and John Meyer, Jeff Marx, Dan Welch, Janice (N), Shirley Brady, John W. Speck, Carol Lorch, Philip and Linda Drew, Joann McCormick, Rich Guthrie, Joe Carey (N), Jack Woodall, Lila Ferrez, Alison VanKeuren, Donna Zimmerman, Jean and Samuel Katz, Frank Murphy, leader.

Peebles Island is just spectacular in late April/early May when the shadbush is in peak bloom. This short evening trip enabled us to see the shadbush, or Juneberry, just past its peak but still pretty enough. Warbler activity was just starting and we had fair views of **LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** and **YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER**. We also had an excellent close-up look at a **PIED-BILLED GREBE** - we could actually clearly see the pied bill! Otherwise the river was flowing swiftly after all the rain we had during April and not much could be found on the water.

Birds Identified (40 species total): **PIED-BILLED GREBE, DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, WOOD DUCK, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, OSPREY, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, SOLITARY SANDPIPER, GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, ROCK DOVE, MOURNING DOVE, CHIMNEY SWIFT, BELTED KINGFISHER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, HAIRY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, BANK SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, BROWN CREEPER, HOUSE WREN, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, AMERICAN ROBIN, GRAY CATBIRD,**

EUROPEAN STARLING, YELLOW WARBLER, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, PALM WARBLER, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, NORTHERN CARDINAL, FIELD SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, HOUSE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.

- Frank Murphy

Ann Lee Pond

May 9, 1996 Participants: Donna Zimmerman, Hope Oatman, Joan Cipriani, Kira Cipriani, Chris and Bernie Grossman, Gene Vermilyea, Curt Miller, Beth Wong-Miller, Shirley Brady, Alison VanKeuren, Frank Murphy, leader.

Silent Spring was the theme of this walk. Ordinarily this is the time of the peak migration but things were certainly dismal that evening. Not one Wood Thrush or Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Only two warblers. A measly 26 species - one could do as well on the North Pole. Little did we know that two days later everything was about to pour through the area at once. What a short strange trip it's been. The birds were very late this year by at least a week. Oh well, at least it gave us a preview of what things will be like if we continue our present pace.

Birds Identified (26 species total): **CANADA GOOSE, WOOD DUCK, MALLARD, MOURNING DOVE, DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, TREE SWALLOW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, BARN SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, AMERICAN**

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Upcoming Field Trips

Instructional Trip to Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Sat. Jun 8, Jeff Marx & Carole Flood 283-3360

Focus on breeding birds at Five Rivers. Look for nesting behavior and distinguish sex of common birds.

Saratoga National Historic Park (Battlefield)

Sun. Jun 9, Kay and George Hanson 885-5467

Visit this historic site. The trip will focus on the unique nesting sparrows and other field breeding species.

Five Rivers' Nesting Birds, An Instructional Trip

Thu. Jun 13, Al Mapes 439-4086

See and discuss nesting and territorial behavior of breeding birds at Five Rivers. Focus on songs. Easy 1-1 1/2 mile walk.

Fort Edward Area (Washington County)

Sat. Jun 15, Barb Putnam 792-7542

This morning trip will search for and observe grassland breeders.

Hebron Nature Preserve (Washington County)

Sat. Jun 22, Barb Putnam 792-7542

The varied habitats of this 125 acre sanctuary should provide a good morning. Bring a lunch and stay for a side trip to the Pember Museum to look at the large collection of bird skins and nests.

Willie Road Marsh (Fulton County)

Sun. Jun 23, Warren Greene 725-1582

Explore the boardwalk and trail through this man-made marsh. Look for ducks, herons, warblers, tanagers and Osprey.

Saratoga Spa State Park

Sat. Jun 29, Andi Simard 885-6368

Look for breeding species in the beautiful setting of this park in Saratoga Springs.

Bear Swamp

Sat. Jul 6, Ron Calkins and Jocelyn Cole-Calkins 768-2911

Spend the morning in southern Albany County searching for breeding warblers, thrushes and other summer residents. The rhododendrons should be near peak bloom.

Ferd's Bog and Moss Lake

Sun. Jul 14, Al Mapes 439-4086

Call about accommodations: Jun 1

The bog can produce several specialties of the boreal forest. Optional follow up at Moss Lake for Adirondack breeding birds.

Delaware Coast

Fri.-Mon. Jul 26-29, Barbara Putnam 792-7542, Scott Stoner 464-0492

Reservations: Jun 1

Spend two full days exploring Bombay Hook NWR and Little Creek NWR and other nearby areas. Shorebirds, large waders, gulls and terns should highlight the trip. We will look for any reported rarities in the area.



Program Reports

Jamaica Bay Program

On March 21, about 30 people enjoyed a fine presentation by David Taft, Supervisory Park Ranger at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Dave's intimate knowledge of and obvious love for the Refuge, combined with a fine slide presentation, made this one of our program season's highlights.

Jamaica Bay is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area, the third-most visited National Park Service area (after Yellowstone and Yosemite).

Dave walked us through the history of the Refuge, introducing us to its founders, Herbert Johnson and Robert Moses. These men were responsible for recreating a wild area in the midst of metropolitan New York City when in 1953 they decided to set up a variety of carefully managed habitats, including pond, marsh, island and woodland. In the ensuing years, this area has become a valuable stop-over for migrants along the Atlantic flyway, as well as home to many nesting species of birds, and to a variety of other animals.

The ponds of Jamaica Bay were constructed using earth excavated during subway construction. The salt water has gradually been displaced by fresh, and the resulting brackish water of the ponds and marshes contains a low enough salt content to allow the breeding of many birds. The East Pond is regularly drained during the summer months, allowing an open area for shore birds.

The beaches at Breezy Point, the tip of the Refuge, are noted nesting areas for Piping Plover. When the beaches are closed during

their nesting season, many other species also benefit, including Roseate, Common and Least Terns, and Black Skimmer. Other animal species seen near the shore at Breezy Point include harbor seals, sea turtles, dolphins and hump-back whales.

One of the keys to recreating a wilderness that has not existed for 3 or 4 hundred years has been habitat manipulation. The construction of Barn Owl boxes, wren and Tree Swallow boxes and Osprey platforms has helped simulate nesting areas similar to those of old forests and pond edges that might attract these species.

No refuge is without its management problems, and Jamaica Bay has its share. One such problem is the Mute Swan, which has at times risen in numbers to almost 200 on a pond. With the swan's territorial and aggressive tendencies, it is a real problem in such large numbers. The problem is being managed by destroying the unhatched young while leaving the eggs intact. This encourages the swans to continue to incubate these eggs, rather than beginning the nesting process over again. Another management problem at the Refuge comes in the form of the Laughing Gull. Their nesting sites are on a marsh which is very close to JFK Airport, causing great concern about flight safety. Since this is the gull's only nesting site in New York State, the Refuge has come to an agreement with the Port Authority to leave the site undisturbed, but to allow shooting if the gulls fly onto the airport.

Jamaica Bay's other issues include problems one might associate with its location in a major city, such as people driving motorized recreational vehicles through the Refuge, air



and water pollution, and the danger of unintentional fire. However, these issues come along as the dream of the Refuge's founders is realized in the creation of a wild place within the City. The sight of shore birds along the pond edge as the World Trade Center looms in the background speaks volumes about the value of this unique place, both to its animal residents and to the people who love them. Many thanks to David Taft, for giving us such an enlightening exploration of one of our State's great natural spots.

- Denise Hilton

Paul Buckley's Photo Tour of Australia

About 80 HMBC members were treated to an excellent program at the Club's annual meeting on April 17 when Paul Buckley presented his photo tour of Australia. His trip, which took place during the Austral spring months of October, November and the first week of December, began in Sydney, with a visit to Royal National Park. There the Buckleys enjoyed viewing many exotic temperate and tropical plants, as well as Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, which were as abundant as city pigeons and very easily seen.

Leaving the Pacific Ocean for the Indian, Dr. Buckley next visited Perth. There he encountered many unusual creatures, including the Blue-tongued Skink, a 4 foot monster of a lizard, who was all bluster, but a fearsome sight nevertheless. Among the bird life in Perth's Dryadra State Forest was Red-capped Parrot, Australian Magpie, and an Australian pelican called a Kerwong.

After visiting the "Red Center" area of Central Australia named for its red colored earth, the Buckleys traveled up to Darwin, a truly tropical area where the waters are filled with

potentially lethal stinging jellyfish and salt water crocodiles. Nearby Darwin they encountered numerous waterbirds, including Magpie Geese. Also observed were White-throated Whistler, Crimson Finch, many waders, including Royal Spoonbill, the 6 foot tall Black-necked Stork, and White-faced Heron.

At Catherine Gorge, among its cascading lakes and gorges, Dr. Buckley described viewing the Wedge-tailed Eagle, Magpie Lark, Blue-faced Honeyeater and many types of bower birds. The bower birds are known for their complex courtship ritual in which the male builds a bright, color-specific bower with which to attract a mate.

At Cairnes, located on the Atlantic side of the Cape Horn peninsula, the Buckleys encountered many shorebirds, including the Broad-billed Sandpiper and the Asiatic Dowitcher.

While in Brisbane, Dr. Buckley observed King Parrots, as well as the Crimson Rosella, a bird which although completely wild, is known to climb all over people, snatching things from their pockets! Also at Brisbane was the Satin Bower Bird, a very dark, satin-like bird who tends to build his bower using black or dark purple materials.

Our speaker described a pelagic trip that originated 100 miles south of Sydney in which he saw Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Black Shroud Albatross and the Wandering Albatross with its 12-16 foot wingspread. The rare Parkinson's Petrel seen at this time was described as the "best bird of the trip."

Finally, the Buckleys visited an area south of Melbourne where an amphitheater has been built to accommodate all of the people who



congregate to witness the small Fairy Penguins embark on land after feeding in the water all day.

Paul Buckley's program was wonderfully descriptive of his Australian experience, and a fine addition to our annual meeting and dinner.

- Denise Hilton

The Barren Grounds

On May 6, about 20 people attended an excellent presentation by Dr. John Davis entitled, "The Barren Grounds: A Glimpse of Subarctic Wildlife in Canada's Northwest Territories." Dr. Davis, a semi-retired physician from the Cooperstown area, made two canoeing trips to the Northwest Territories; one in 1985, and another the following year. Both his knowledge and his love of the area came through clearly in his program.

Canada's wilderness treasure, the Northwest Territories, consists of a land mass more than twice the size of Alaska whose human population numbers only 50,000. Of that number, 28,000 are Native People. The area remains one of the last truly untouched places on earth. The Territories consist of Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions, connoting not so much latitude in relation to the Arctic Circle, but relative location to the line separating the Tundra from the Boreal Forest. The Forest is referred to as Taiga, a Russian term meaning "dark, mysterious forest." It is dominated by Black Spruce, lined with rivers, dotted with lakes, and inhabited by Arctic Wolf, Black Bear, Raven, White Pelican, Common Yellow-billed and Red-throated Loons, Gray Jay, as well as nesting Tree Sparrows and Bald Eagles.

The title's "Barren Ground" refers to the Arctic Tundra, the vast, dry, treeless plain of the Northwest Territories. The region gets less than 20 inches of precipitation in a year, mostly in the form of snow. It consists of a several hundred foot thick layer of permafrost, a very thin crust of which softens each year, allowing for the growth of Muskeg, a thick tangle of moss, vines and berries. Some of the plants making up the carpet of Muskeg are Moss Champion, Arctic Azalea, and Arctic Lupine. The tundra floor, with its carpet of Muskeg, is a unique and highly sensitive habitat. If disturbed by foot or wheel, it takes up to 100 years to recover.

Most of Dr. Davis' travel was by canoe, with only minimal contact with the tundra. While on the land and waterways of the tundra, John encountered a variety of native wildlife, including Wolf, Musk Ox, nesting Arctic Tern, nesting Semi-palmated Plover, Short-eared Owl, Willow Ptarmigan, Sandhill Crane, Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers, Red-necked Phalarope, and "summering" Redpolls, Horned Larks, and Lapland Longspurs. He witnessed a dramatic encounter in which a young White-fronted Goose, who had wandered too far from the protection of its parents, was devoured by a Herring Gull. He and his party were part of another dramatic event, this time involving a stalking Grizzly Bear, whose presence forced the party to plunge neck-deep into an Arctic pond for 20 minutes until the bear apparently got bored and left. This last encounter ended Dr. Davis' photo tour, as in the panic of the moment, he forgot to remove his camera from around his neck!

This was an exciting, beautiful and informative program, and we thank Dr. Davis for sharing it with us.

- Denise Hilton



SARATOGA STATE PARK NEWS

by Dave Gibson, Capital District Audubon Conservation Chair

In mid-March, the Saratoga Springs Task Force chaired by William Dake recommended that a truck bypass be built through the most sensitive area in the Park in order to facilitate track access to the Northway from a city industrial park, and in an attempt to keep trucks out of the downtown area. At the final meeting of the Task Force, the NYS Office of Parks representative, Julia Stokes, reported that the Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro had decided not to permit this intrusion into state park land.

Stokes and member Barbara Glaser urged fellow Task Force members to consider the city's traffic congestion and trucks as a regional problem, requiring a regional planning solution, including one or more of eight other alternative routes for trucks. These and other wise heads counseled that the State Park route might not solve all the problems ascribed to it, and that picking such a route in absence of more information was unnecessarily divisive and legally questionable. Years of regulatory review and associated expense might stall action, which Dake and others claim is needed immediately. Aides of Governor Pataki stated that the Governor fully supports his Parks Commissioner in her decision not to permit the park route.

Despite all this, the Task Force Chairman proclaimed that he would go to great lengths to lobby the Governor and Commissioner Castro to change their minds.

Volunteers with Southern Adirondack Audubon Society have been of the utmost help in researching the environmental costs of running a road through this area. It is indeed part of an impressive marshland and riparian zone of hundreds of acres, supporting a heron rookery, and habitat for the threatened Red-shouldered Hawk, Osprey, Eastern Bluebird, and many migrant songbirds.

What can you do? Please write: Commissioner Bernadette Castro Office of Parks, Agency Building One Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12238

Capital District Audubon Announcements

Programs held at William K. Sanford Library, 629 Albany-Shaker Road, Loudonville, NY 12211
Thursdays 7:30-9:00 PM

June 13 - Professional photographers Thomas Knight and Chuck McKinney from the Schenectady Camera Club present Capturing Nature and Wildlife on Film.

Sept 12 - Peebles Island, a lecture and visual presentation of an environmental and historic site.

Field Trip

Saturday, Sept 14 - Audubon field trip to historic Peebles Island in Waterford.



BIRDS OF THE SAND BANK

by Jim Sotis

Excavation of the sand and gravel pit evidently had ceased. The spent embankment had drawn a flock of Bank Swallows, which were darting all about in seamless, aerial maneuvering, foraging for winged insects. Individual birds swooped down from their coursings to feed nestlings in the dim recesses of their burrows.

The face of the bank was about fifty feet long, rising steeply to a crest a couple of feet above the highest burrow. About three dozen breeding holes had been loosely arranged over a thirty foot stream, 12 to 15 feet above me.

The site is in Washington County, just south of the Carter Pond preserve, near the juncture of Ferguson Rd. and Rte. 338, which is about 1.5 miles north of Rte. 29.

While standing there absorbed with the activity before me, the dry rattle of a Belted Kingfisher caught my ear. I turned in time to see it glide up to a high branch at some distance behind me. A fingerling drooped from its beak. It seemed wary of my presence, so I backed away toward the entrance to the pit. The Kingfisher broke for the sand bank and alighted on the lip of a burrow to the left of the swallow colony. It disappeared into the hole immediately.

I had come upon the nursery of the Belted Kingfisher pair that I had seen scoring the air over Carter Pond. I was delighted.

When I returned with an elderly friend a few days later, she alerted me to the subtly varied pattern of the bank: sand layers of alternating

consistency--finely grained and gravel-laden. These appeared to be sedimentary deposits of glacial melt about 12,000 years ago.

Summer torrents of that period roared with a grinding mix of lithic debris, which settled upon the uniformly finer deposits of winter seepage. I remember smiling when I noticed the Kingfishers and swallows had the good sense to dig into gravel-free layers of the bank.

The Belted Kingfisher holds me in the greater thrall. Perched or hovering for the hunt, tension mounts until it bolts, plummeting to smash with wild abandon into a lake, river, sea. Hit or miss; it remains unruffled. Self-contained, among the most solitary of birds, it tenaciously defends its territory against its own kind, excepting only its transient breeding partner.

Only during nesting season does the Kingfisher consort with another. Once coupled, each remains faithful to the requirements of procreation. The pair share in burrow excavation, incubation, brooding and feeding their young. The dig is variously reported to be in the 3-6 foot range and longer. Its snug-fit diameters of 3.5 x 4 inches are enlarged at its end to form the nest chamber.

The eggs hatch in about 3.5 weeks, and the naked chicks mature to fully feathered flight trials in about four weeks. Both parents have attended their needs with regurgitant feeding and removal of spewed waste pellets.

Now in the light of day, having tested their



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wings, they are taught the ways of foraging. The parents escort them over local water, and drop morsels for them to practice retrieving. A skill usually mastered during the second week, bringing an end to parental care.

There remains one last responsibility: to undo the knot of filial dependency. The young are now forced out of the territory, leaving all that is familiar.

Eventually the siblings scatter, each to face trials unknown. For the survivors, their ultimate perfection awaits nuptial pairing and the bringing forth of their own kind. That they will know what to do and how to do it, remains both a marvel and the mystery.

Though there are more than 90 species comprising the Kingfisher Family (Alcedinidae) worldwide, the Belted Kingfisher ranges alone over the whole of North America above Mexico and small portions of Texas and Arizona.

Presence of the Bank Swallow colony suggested an avian counterpoint of sorts--an affecting, harmonious arrangement.

It is not unusual for a pair of Kingfishers to share a breeding bank with the swallows. Indeed, three years ago I saw a Kingfisher fly in and enter its burrow smack in the center of a swallow colony. The scene was played out in the sand pile by the Town of Jackson garage. Swallows have bred there for at least the last six years. In 1995, the earliest swallows began to scratch out nesting holes on April 22nd. The site is located on County Rd. 62, about a mile north of its juncture with Rte. 372, west of Cambridge.

Given their wispy aspect (4.75" x 5.5"--beak to tail) and their energy needs in sustained flight, their annual migrations between South America and our continent, as far north as Alaska and extending east all the way to blustery Labrador, is surely remarkable.

Colonies, sometimes housing hundreds of breeding pairs, are believed to offer protection from predators. Stalkers entering the area chance being mobbed by the colony, and often are driven off.

Also, the major events of the breeding season have evolved to occur simultaneously throughout most of the colony. Egg-laying, hatching, as well as fledging of the young, are largely synchronous. Toward that end, both parents share in incubating, brooding and feeding their progeny. Hatchlings are testing their wings in about three weeks. Once aloft, they continue to be fed by their parents until they are capable of independent foraging.

Coincident, of course, is the burgeoning flock's soaring protein need, which is largely satisfied by a timely arthropod explosion, including the late spring insect hatches over the area watershed.

Somehow, it all comes together. Such is the legacy of Nature's balance and rhythms which ultimately sustain us all.

Epilogue: The embankment no longer hosts burrow nesters. It has been sloped, topped and groomed out of existence as a breeding site.

Though there remains a Kingfisher presence over Carter Pond, Bank Swallows are seldom seen there.



HMBC Annual Meeting

The Annual meeting and dinner was a great success. Approximately 75 people attended. Dr. Paul Buckley spoke on his trip to Australia (see separate Program report). Special thanks to Ann B'Rells and Denise Hilton for organizing the banquet.

At the meeting Frank thanked was made to departing board directors: Laura Sommers and Phil Johnson. Bette Moon also left the board after many years as Secretary. In appreciation of her efforts on the Board and as Sanctuary Chair, she was given an HMBC Lifetime Achievement Award. Frank gave Scott Stoner an Outstanding Achievement Award for his pervasive efforts in many aspects of the Club activities, in particular as Past President, Program Chair, Book and Federation Committees.

Frank started a new set of awards: Rare Bird Finder Awards. They were given to the following: Dick Beeler - Wood Stork, Cliff Lamere - Sabine's Gull, George Hanson - Ruff, Ray Perry - King Eider, Gary Goodness - Great Gray Owl. A "Birding Par Excellence"

Award was presented to Walter Ellison.

Also, the various voices of Birdline, Richard Guthrie, Jeff Marx, Bill Lee and Dick Beeler, were recognized for their important contribution to the Club information network. Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen were noted for their continued effort to produce *Feathers*.

The various Committee chairs presented their reports, including news on the upcoming book of Capital District birding sites and the Federation '96 meeting plans.

The following slate of officers and board members were elected by acclamation:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| President | Frank Murphy |
| VP | Lou Esch |
| Secretary | Barb Putnam |
| Treasurer | Gregg Recer |
| Board Members | Jackie Bogardus (1 year) |
| | Ann B'Rells |
| | Linda Parr |

Congratulations to the new officers and board members.

Treasurer's Report Summary:

Funds were moved from the CD to Savings to improve liquidity with the upcoming expenses related to the book publication. We had good dues renewals and contributions towards the

Reist Sanctuary. The campership funds were not requested until after the fiscal year, so next year we will have a bigger campership expense.
- Gregg Recer

Total Income	8050.09
<u>Total Expense</u>	<u>6099.18</u>
Net Income	1950.91

Account Balances:	4/1/95	3/31/96
Cash	0.00	1591.00
CD	25456.13	23724.09
Checking	2874.65	1791.47
<u>Savings</u>	<u>5674.78</u>	<u>8849.91</u>
Total	34005.56	35956.47



HMBC BOARD FOR 1995 - 1996

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Frank Murphy
56 Westchester Dr.
Clifton Park, N.Y.
12065
373-1933

Vice-President:

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3 Woodcrest Dr.
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12302-4805
399-0313

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Jackie Bogardus 283-6603
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Records: Cliff Lamere 462-9827
Sanctuary: Bette Moon 372-8330
Social: Ann B'Rells 355-5615
Jr. Activities: Gary Goodness

BIRDLINE of E. NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080

Natural Areas of Albany County, Third Edition

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The Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady is happy to announce the release of the third edition of the *Natural Areas of Albany County*, which describes 60 public hiking areas.

Author Claire Schmitt has updated this version to include twelve new areas, many revised maps and a totally rewritten Pine Bush section.

Copies of the book, which retails for \$10.00 are available at many area book and hiking stores. It may also be purchased at the ECOS office, 2851 Aqueduct Road, Niskayuna, NY, writing ECOS at PO Box 113, Rexford, NY 12148 or by calling 370-4125.

ROBIN, EUROPEAN STARLING, WARBLING VIREO, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, NORTHERN CARDINAL, SONG SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, BALTIMORE ORIOLE, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, HOUSE SPARROW.

- Frank Murphy



Feathers



President's Corner: First I'd like to thank all of you for electing me to serve another term. This is truly an honor for which I am very proud. Most of all I'd like to thank everyone for just being a member of the Club. Everything is going surprisingly well thanks to the officers, committees, and members who are doing a terrific job. The field trips are well attended, the birdline - or nutline as I like to refer to it - has been running great, and the programs featuring top notch speakers and exciting places are top quality. If you haven't been to a program lately you don't know what you're missing. As for birds, well it's been a strange season. It seems we've gone from nothing to everything in just a matter of days. It's really difficult to figure out what's going on with the bird world. For now I figure we enjoy them while they're here and continue to do what you can to keep them here. Anyhow, I wish you a happy summer and I hope you get to the Catskills or Adirondacks to see and hear our tropical visitors in all their beauty. And don't forget to register for the Federation meeting. Hope to see you on the mountain trails.

- Frank Murphy

HMBC Programs - 7:30 PM, Five Rivers EEC, Delmar

Wednesday, September 4. Dale and Lillian Samuelson on South Africa before the Revolution

Monday, September 16. Jeff Wells. Audubon Important Bird Areas Program

Monday, October 7. Gene Hocutt on Montezuma NWR

Monday, November 4. Steve Caparizzo of WTEN on weather

Monday, December 2. Christmas party with John Green on the Everglades

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WATERFOWL FEATURED ON CENTURY RUN: NORTHERN SHOVELER, NEW SPECIES

Robert P. Yunick

As part of a cool, late, wet spring, it is barely a surprise that waterfowl would count prominently in the Club's 51st consecutive Guy Bartlett Century Run on May 18, 1996. Fourteen species were tallied, well exceeding the 11/year average of the past ten years. This number ties the count in 1989 and is second to the record 15 in 1986.

The first recording of Northern Shoveler found on Round Lake makes it species number 252, plus two hybrids, for the composite list. In 1952, Northern Shoveler was seen for the first time on a Century Run weekend, but never before on the day of the count.

Eight groups with a total of 25 observers were afield from 0230 to 2100, mostly in

unfavorable weather. It was a mostly overcast day with varying degrees of showers and heavy rain with thunder. Albany Airport recorded a temperature range of 53-62 degrees F, and 0.17 in of rain (7.3 in above average for the year). Tree leafing was delayed, the wind was mostly calm until near dusk. The humidity increased through the day and some observers complained of poor visibility, too much rain and poor owling at dusk due to thunderstorms.

... more on next page

Roger Tory Peterson

Just before *Feathers* went to print, we learned of the death of Roger Tory Peterson at age 87. During his 60-plus-year career, Peterson made major contributions to the conservation and artistic and scientific study of birds. He is widely regarded as the main force behind the recreation and sport of birding as we know it today. His revolutionary pocket-sized bird guide, first published in 1934, made, for the first time, field identification of birds a practical reality. Today's birders all owe him a huge debt of gratitude. -Ed.

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Feathers



There were 31 species recorded by all parties and 32 additional species recorded by all but one party. Eighteen species were found by only one party and those species are noted with the party listings. All but one party had at least one species not seen by another party. Lee Thomas commented on his embarrassing (his term) list of 36 weather-depressed species that was augmented by 11 more on the following day. Nevertheless, his group was redeemed with the count's only Peregrine, seen in flight over Voorheesville.

Seven species were seen for the tenth or less as follows:

Great Egret - 8th time at Saratoga Sod farm
Northern Shoveler - 1st time at Round Lake
Gadwall - 6th time at Round Lake Surf
Scoter - 4th time at Lock 7, Mohawk River
Peregrine Falcon - 7th time at Voorheesville
Red-bellied Woodpecker - 10th time at several locations
Common Raven - 10th time at several locations

Key to groups:

Group A - Jane Graves*. Saratoga Battlefield, Round Lake, Vischer Ferry and Tower Rd. in Hadley and other locations within Saratoga Co. 0500-1200 and 1530-1900. 97 species, Gadwall and Pine Siskin.

Group B - W. Gorman*, M. Gruett, M. Kuhrt and W. Lee. Black Creek, Helderbergs, Basic and Alcove Reservoirs, Rensselaer, Cohoes, Round Lake and Saratoga. 0400-2100. 140 species, Least Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Whip-poor-will, Swainson's Thrush and Worm-eating Warbler.

Group C - N. Slack, H. Stebbins, Cliff Tepper, J. Rose, Alex Rhodes, A. Joachim, G. Shaw, S. Carlisle, K. Geiskotlen and C. George*. Capital District. 0400-2000. 103 species.

Group D - Paul Rappleyea*. So. Cairo, Leeds, Hudson River from Hudson to Castleton, Olana, and Ram's Horn Sanctuary at Catskill. 0530-1830. 98 species, Mute Swan.

The Red-shouldered Hawk was conspicuous by its absence. Other diurnal raptors (eight species) and owls (three species) were about normal, as were five species of vireos and 25 warblers. Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes were each recorded by only one party.

The best group effort was 140 species by Bill Gorman, Monte Gruett, Mike Kuhrt, and Bill Lee. Their total ranks seventh behind the record 156 in 1986, which is a respectable showing considering the weather. Also contrary to the adverse weather was an equally respectable total count list of 168 species, which ties for eighth place with 1971 and 1984, behind a record 188 in 1986.

Finally, it is with sadness that I note the death of Bill Huntley, a month before the Century Run. He was an active and enthusiastic participant in recent years to the point of organizing such a large field group that it needed to rent a 15-passenger van to accommodate all its observers.



Feathers

Group E - Larry Alden, Jackie Bogardus, Steve Chorvas and Frank Murphy*. Vischer Ferry, Round and Saratoga Lakes, Schuylerville, Tower Rd. in Hadley and Sacandaga area, all within Saratoga Co. 0400-2000. 127 species, Northern Shoveler, Common Merganser and Red-breasted Merganser.

Group F - Ray Perry*. Collins Lake, Plotter Kill, Lisha Kill, Lock 7, Featherstonough State Forest, Wolf Hollow, Rotterdam, Vischer Ferry Rd., Reist Sanctuary, Museum Preserve, and Glenville, all within Schenectady Co. 0230-2045. 95 species, Surf Scoter, Common Nighthawk and Water Pipit.

Group G - W. G. Ellison* and N. L. Martin. Black Creek Marsh, Relyea Rd., Nott Rd. Park, adn Fairwood Apts. all near Guilderland, East Hunger Kill, Pine Bush, Thacher Park, Green Island, Colonie Landfill, Vischer Ferry, Saratoga Lake, Saratoga Battlefield and Saratoga Sod Farm. 0340-2020. 126 species, Great Egret, Bufflehead, Upland Sandpiper, Gray-cheeked Thrush and Philadelphia Vireo.

Group H - E. L.* and H. C. Thomas. Colonie, Guilderland, Bethlehem, Voorheesville, Thacher Park, and SUNY Albany. 0600-1800. 36 species, Peregrine Falcon.

* denotes the group compiler.

Bird Party Sightings

Common Loon	a b c d e g	Cooper's Hawk	a d g
Horned Grebe	a b e g	Broad-winged Hawk	b d
Red-necked Grebe	b c e	Red-tailed Hawk	b c d e f g h
Double-crested Cormorant	b c d	American Kestrel	a b c d e f g
American Bittern	a b c e g	Peregrine Falcon	h
Least Bittern	b	Ruffed Grouse	a c d e
Great Blue Heron	a b c d e f g	Wild Turkey	b c d e f g
Great Egret	b c e f g	Virginia Rail	b e f g
Green Heron	a b c e f g	Sora	b c f g
Black-crowned Night-Heron	b	Common Moorhen	b c g
Mute Swan	d	Killdeer	a b c d e f g
Canada Goose	a b c d e f g h	Greater Yellowlegs	b c e g
Wood Duck	b c d e f g	Lesser Yellowlegs	b c e g
Green-winged Teal	b	Solitary Sandpiper	a b c d e f g
American Black Duck	b c e f	Spotted Sandpiper	a b c d e f g
Mallard	a b c d e f g h	Upland Sandpiper	g
Blue-winged Teal	b c e g	Least Sandpiper	b c d g
Northern Shoveler	e	Pectoral Sandpiper	b c d e
Gadwall	a	Dunlin	b c d
Ring-necked Duck	b	Common Snipe	b g
Surf Scoter	f	American Woodcock	a b c e f g
Bufflehead	g	Bonaparte's Gull	a b e g
Common Merganser	e	Ring-billed Gull	a b c d e f g
Red-breasted Merganser	e	Herring Gull	a b c d e f g
Turkey Vulture	b c g h	Great Black-backed Gull	b c d e f g
Osprey	b d	Common Tern	a b c e g
Bald Eagle	d f	Black Tern	b c e g

Feathers



Rock Dove	a b c d e f g h	Prairie Warbler	a b d e f g
Mourning Dove	a b c d e f g h	Bay-breasted Warbler	b d e f g h
Eastern Screech-Owl	b e f	Blackpoll Warbler	a b c e
Great Horned Owl	b e	Black-and-white Warbler	b c d e f g
Barred Owl	a e	American Redstart	a b c d e f g
Common Nighthawk	f	Worm-eating Warbler	b
Whip-poor-will	b	Ovenbird	a b c d e f g
Chimney Swift	a b c d e f g	Northern Waterthrush	a c e f g
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	b c d e f g	Louisiana Waterthrush	b c e f g
Belted Kingfisher	a b c d e f g	Common Yellowthroat	a b c d e f g h
Red-bellied Woodpecker	b d e g	Wilson's Warbler	d e
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	a b c e f g	Canada Warbler	b e f g
Downy Woodpecker	a b c d e f g h	Scarlet Tanager	a b d e f g
Hairy Woodpecker	a b c d e f g	Northern Cardinal	a b c d e f g h
Northern Flicker	a b c d e f g	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	a b c d e f g
Pileated Woodpecker	a b c g	Indigo Bunting	b d e f
Eastern Wood-Pewee	b d f	Rufous-sided Towhee	a b c d e g
Alder Flycatcher	b d h	Chipping Sparrow	a b c d e f g
Willow Flycatcher	b g	Field Sparrow	a b c d e f g
Least Flycatcher	a b c d e f g	Vesper Sparrow	b e
Eastern Phoebe	a b c d e f g	Savannah Sparrow	a b d e f g
Great Crested Flycatcher	a b c d e f g	Grasshopper Sparrow	a b e g
Eastern Kingbird	a b c d e f g	Henslow's Sparrow	a b e
Horned Lark	e f	Song Sparrow	a b c d e f g h
Purple Martin	a b c e g	Swamp Sparrow	a b c d e g
Tree Swallow	a b c d e f g h	White-throated Sparrow	a b c e
No. Rough-winged Swallow	a b c e f g	White-crowned Sparrow	c f
Bank Swallow	a b c d e f g	Dark-eyed Junco	a b c e
Cliff Swallow	a b c e f g	Bobolink	a b c d e f g
Barn Swallow	a b c d e f g h	Red-winged Blackbird	a b c d e f g h
Blue Jay	a b c d e f g h	Eastern Meadowlark	a b e f g
American Crow	a b c d e f g h	Common Grackle	a b c d e f g h
Fish Crow	b d g	Brown-headed Cowbird	a b c d e f g h
Common Raven	a b e g	Northern Oriole	a b c d e f g h
Black-capped Chickadee	a b c d e f g h	Purple Finch	e g
Tufted Titmouse	a b c d e f g	House Finch	a b c d e f g
Red-breasted Nuthatch	a b c d e g h	Pine Siskin	a
White-breasted Nuthatch	a c d e f g	American Goldfinch	a b c d e f g h
Brown Creeper	a b e	Evening Grosbeak	c e
House Wren	a b c d e f g h	House Sparrow	a b c d
Winter Wren	b e g		
Marsh Wren	b c g		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	a b d		
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	b c d e g		
Eastern Bluebird	a b c d e f g h		
Veery	a b c d e f g		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	g		
Swainson's Thrush	b		
Hermit Thrush	a b d e f g		
Wood Thrush	a b c d e f g h		
American Robin	a b c d e f g h		
Gray Catbird	a b c d e f g h		
Northern Mockingbird	d e f g h		
Brown Thrasher	b d g		
Water Pipit	f		
Cedar Waxwing	b c e		
European Starling	a b c d e f g h		
Solitary Vireo	b e f g		
Yellow-throated Vireo	a b c d e f g		
Warbling Vireo	a b c d e f g		
Philadelphia Vireo	g		
Red-eyed Vireo	a b c d e f g h		
Blue-winged Warbler	a b d e f g		
Tennessee Warbler	b c g		
Nashville Warbler	e g		
Yellow Warbler	a b c d e f g h		
Chestnut-sided Warbler	a b c d e f g		
Magnolia Warbler	a b e f g		
Cape May Warbler	b d		
Black-throated Blue Warbler	a b d e f g		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	a b c d e f g h		
Black-throated Green Warbler	a b c d e f g		
Blackburnian Warbler	a b d e g		
Pine Warbler	a b d e g		



Hawk Migration Workshop

The Mohonk Preserve will present a Hawk Migration Workshop on Sunday, October 6th from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM. The workshop will include a slide presentation by falconer Heinz Meng and a field trip to the Preserve Hawk Watch. Leaders will include Al Brayton, Tom Sarro and Bob Larsen. Reservations are required. Registration begins Sept. 7th. Cost is \$13 for Preserve Members and \$18 Non-members (includes day-use fee). For information, call the Preserve at 914-255-0919.



ONE MAN'S MARSH - A Medley

by Jim Sotis

In wild things, in the land as it was, the old men took comfort.

-- Harry Middleton, *The Earth is Enough*

My first exploration of a marsh was back in the early 70's. It was a briny slough, pulsing to the tidal rhythms of the lower Hudson River. The marsh of Furnace Cove, edging the village of Cold Spring.

I knew nothing then of the heavy metal leachates draining from the battery plant just beyond the wooded rise above the marsh. Nothing, too, of the marsh as an ecological power house for the myriad life forms it supports. Nothing of the dire consequences of its vulnerability. Ignorance held fast as the turn of my life in 1978 drew me from that area where my interest in bird life had begun to take root. I could hardly have anticipated what awaited me in my move to Cambridge in 1985, following my retirement.

What follows are three clips drawn from the countless hours of engagement and pleasure in and about the marshes of Carter Pond.

3 March 96

Winged Harbingers and a Bantam of the Night Wood

Whittaker Brook, a Battenkill River tributary, enters Carter Pond's upper marsh under Mill Rd in Cossayuna. Its current has worn a channel through the marsh's extant ice cover. The meandering cut is interrupted by the thicker glaze over the pond, but it opens again to snake its way through the lower

marsh where it brims the dam. There Whittaker brook recovers its flow through the Battenkill watershed. I am alone here, leaning on the overlook railing near the entrance to the nature trail. Daylight has begun to wane. Lenses are in hand; a spotting scope is beside me. The scene reveals only a cluster of four Black Ducks in the distant, upper marsh channel and near them, clasped to a swaying shrub branch the silhouette of a black bird.

At a range of 400 yards, my 7 x 35 binoculars confirm the duck species, but not the other bird. The spotting scope, however, reveals it to be a Red-winged Blackbird-- first of the season! As if on cue, it fluffs its plumage, displaying splendid epaulettes. A truly commanding fellow; happily not a Grackle, though later they will arrive in numbers to breed here. (The Common Grackle is implicated with the American Crow and the Blue Jay as a nest predator, consuming songbird eggs and nestlings.)

I push the scope to 40x, relishing the Red-wing's heraldic flush of spring. Within seconds my interest in the bird is jarred. Walking into the optic's field of view is a Bobcat! I ease magnification higher, refining resolution, so taken am I with its compact grace.

I follow rufous felis as it approaches the channel. Watch it slip into the water, swim to



the far side, haul up, shake off and without missing a beat, pad through thickening shrub and slip beyond view into the darkening wood.

9 Sept 91

A Hunter and the Hunted

I am working my way through the upper marsh. Heretofore unseen, a Northern Harrier bursts from behind a stand of water willow immediately before me. I round the thicket; there on a tussock are the splayed remains of a Mallard. Blood oozes from its neck.

The Harrier remains foraging in the distant reaches of the area--or so it seems. While inspecting the carcass, I look up and notice the raptor's hunt is leading it back in my direction. A dozen or so Black Ducks nearby in open water, appear increasingly uneasy. They begin to draw together. Tension mounts as the hawk commits itself, setting a course for the ducks. The group clusters tightly. With the menacing approach of the hunter, they flap their wings wildly, flashing a riot of white wing linings, boldly set off against their contrasting dark plumage. The effect and energy are remarkably powerful, resonating even in me, so startling is the action.

The great hawk of the marsh sweeps in low, alters its course, rises and veers off to forage elsewhere.

23 Jun 95

A Strange Wallowing

The canoe grazes curly pondweed and coontail undulating in the slow current as I emerge from the dense stands of the upper marsh. The sun is about an hour above the eastern hills. I had pushed off in twilight at

5AM to listen for the more secretive and elusive birds here.

Common Moorhen and Virginia Rail calls are broadly distributed, but the whinny and melancholy pleas of the Sora are lamentably absent. There is pleasure, however, in simultaneously calls of two Least Bitterns. It has been a couple of years or so since I had heard that.

Suddenly, I am squinting to identify the cause of an odd surface disturbance about thirty yards before me. Screened by vegetative cover, it shows a large form splashing as it rolls over and over ever so slowly and helplessly. Puzzled, my mind conjures a wild stab--a goose in its death throes? I ease forward cautiously. Closer still--eerie! Suddenly it is clear. A soft roil of two Snapping Turtles tightly clasped; likely a territorial scrap between males. I scull to my left, brushing a Bur-reed stand, and work cautiously through a narrow passage within ten feet of the pair. Just as I breathe easier--wham! an explosive ruckus! The great Snappers burst apart and disappear in the murk of depth. I wait to see what will follow. Slowly, one of the turtles ascends to within a couple of feet of the surface--an image pale and spectral staring at me. I meet its gaze; briefly we regard each other. It remains still, resolute in its element. That reptilian glare is not new to me, but the context of the event is. I break off, easing the canoe on.

Time fails to seal the incident, so taken am I with that primordial glare. Was it anything more than elemental wariness linked to survival? Later as I beach the canoe, I wonder about it.

I wonder still.



Field Trip Reports

Haystack Mt., Vermont

The recent recognition that the local "subspecies" of Gray-cheeked Thrush that occurs on the higher mountains of the north-east is a subtly distinct species, the BICKNELL'S THRUSH, has caused birders to take notice of the subalpine boreal forests that cover our mountain ridges. In addition to the thrush these forests also harbor Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and other northern birds. Haystack Mountain in Wilmington, Vermont is the the southernmost mountain in New England that has a Bicknell's Thrush population, and it is the closest and most accessible thrush mountain to Albany.

Six adventurous birders and leaders Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin gathered at the Haystack Mountain trailhead at 8:30 AM after some difficulty in navigating the confusing welter of newly developed roads in the area. After a bit of organizing and a diaper change for the youngest trip participant, one-year-old Ian Ellison, we set off up the mountain. The morning was already warm and humid such that the songbird chorus was rather subdued. The first bird we met with was a handsome male BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER. A little further along we got very good looks at males of SCARLET TANAGER and BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER, breathtaking as always. We took our time on the steady, but moderate grade catching glimpses of migrant BLACKPOLL WARBLERS, RED-EYED VIREOS, BLACK-AND-WHITE, and BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS. Upon achieving the ridge at about 2800 feet elevation we started hearing DARK-EYED JUNCOS, MAGNOLIA, and BLACKPOLL WARBLERS, and PURPLE FINCH. Some members of our group got good looks

at CANADA WARBLER and OVENBIRD. Further along WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS made their appearance, punctuating our climb with their clear, plaintive songs. Our group had lunch on the 3400 foot summit as YELLOW-RUMPED and BLACKPOLL WARBLERS flitted atop the spruce and firs, and pairs of TURKEY VULTURE and COMMON RAVEN scaled on set wings below our perch. After lunch we surrendered to our target bird's silence with judicious use of Walter's playback tape (used in his research on Bicknell's Thrush). Just below the summit we were rewarded with a strong response from a one-year-old male (not Ian). Everyone got good looks at the Bicknell's as he called and flew about in the dense woods. A second thrush eventually arrived and chased the first away, we seemed to be at a territorial boundary. With our mission accomplished, we took our leave of Haystack with a brisk hike down the trail.

2 TURKEY VULTURES 2 MOURNING DOVES 2
HAIRY WOODPECKERS 1 YELLOW-BELLIED
FLYCATCHER 4 BLUE JAYS 4 AMERICAN
CROWS 3 COMMON RAVENS 2 BLACK-CAPPED
CHICKADEES 2 WINTER WRENS 1 VEERY 2
BICKNELL'S THRUSHES 1 HERMIT THRUSH 2
AMERICAN ROBINS 10 CEDAR WAXWINGS 15
RED-EYED VIREOS 1 CHESTNUT-SIDED WAR-
BLER 7 MAGNOLIA WARBLERS 6 BLACK-
THROATED BLUE WARBLERS 7 YELLOW-
RUMPED WARBLERS 4 BLACK-THROATED
GREEN WARBLERS 3 BLACKBURNIAN WAR-
BLERS 10 BLACKPOLL WARBLERS 3 BLACK-
AND-WHITE WARBLERS 4 AMERICAN RED-
STARTS 6 OVENBIRDS 3 CANADA WARBLERS 1
SCARLET TANAGER 3 ROSE-BREADED
GROSBEAKS 6 WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS
5 DARK-EYED JUNCOS 3 PURPLE FINCHES 3
AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES

-- Walter G. Ellison & Nancy Martin



Northern Saratoga County

On June 1, we visited Eddy Road and Tower Road, north of Hadley-Luzerne, near Hadley Mountain. Eight birders enjoyed warm, clear weather and most of us successfully fought off the black flies with the help of lime juice and various commercial repellants.

The "stars" of the morning would have to be the 16 species of warbler that were heard or seen (all presumably breeding): NASHVILLE, NORTHERN PARULA, YELLOW, CHESTNUT-SIDED, MAGNOLIA, BLACK-THROATED BLUE, YELLOW-RUMPED, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, BLACKBURNIAN, PRAIRIE, BLACK-AND-WHITE, AMERICAN REDSTART, OVENBIRD, MOURNING, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, and CANADA. Other highlights include AMERICAN BITTERN, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, and OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER.

This Southern Adirondack habitat yielded 65 species of birds.

- Barb Putnam

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Park

On June 2, 1996, seven HMBC members joined my wife, Lynn Huntington, and me for a beautiful morning of birding at one of our club's favorite sites, Vischer Ferry Park in Clifton Park. At 7AM we were greeted by a beautiful early summer morning, bright, sunny and just lightly cool...Over the next 3 1/2 hours the group identified 44 species. Highlights included a late season sighting of a pair of PINTAILS, this spring's first regional sighting of BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS, and SCARLET TANAGERS. We had long, lovely looks at nesting pairs of ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS and CEDAR WAXWINGS. Warblers were limited to YELLOW, AMERICAN REDSTART and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT.

We had hoped to see, or at least hear, the AMERICAN BITTERN in the thick reeds along the back ponds. Several of us had had that pleasure three days earlier in the evening but this morning we were not so lucky. Our consolation was the opportunity to enjoy several COMMON MOORHENS while we watched for the Bittern.

GREAT BLUE HERON, GREEN HERON, CANADA GOOSE, WOOD DUCK (FEMALE W/ YOUNG), MALLARDS, NORTHERN PINTAIL, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, COMMON MOORHEN, MOURNING DOVE, CHIMNEY SWIFT, DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, WILLOW FLYCATCHER (ID BY SOUND), GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, EASTERN KINGBIRD, TREE SWALLOW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, HOUSE WREN, MARSH WREN (BY SONG), BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, VEERY (BY SONG), AMERICAN ROBIN, GRAY CATBIRD, CEDAR WAXWING (ON NEST), EUROPEAN STARLING, WARBLING VIREO, YELLOW WARBLER, AMERICAN REDSTART, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, SCARLET Tanager, NORTHERN CARDINAL, SONG SPARROW, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (ON NEST), SWAMP SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, NORTHERN ORIOLE, HOUSE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

- Dan Welch

continued...

TIME IS GETTING SHORT !!

REGISTER NOW! FOR THE 49TH ANNUAL FEDERATION MEETING IN ALBANY ON SEPTEMBER 6-8, 1996 Hosted by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

Migration is the theme of the 49th Federation Annual Meeting, which will feature eminent birders as speakers following dinner on both conference evenings. The Saturday evening banquet speaker will be Ken Able, a leading researcher on avian navigation (note the change in speaker). On Friday, Claudia Wilds will lead a workshop on identifying shorebirds during southbound migration.

REGISTER NOW!

You'll want to come to this meeting to hear these two great speakers, sharpen your skills, catch the leading edge of birding technology, swap stories, bird the Capital District hotspots, go on a Mohawk River cruise, browse the vendors, and learn what other clubs and birders are into! And you can do all this in the comfort of a first class hotel and with the convenience of our central location.

Register early to insure access to limited space on the boat trip.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Saturday night's featured speaker Ken Able will speak on "Finding the Way: Some Pieces of the Bird Navigation Puzzle." Ken is a leader in bird migration studies. His migration research using a captive bird experimental approach as well as radar and visual techniques, was recently featured in the New York Times. He is a professor in the Department of Biology, SUNY Albany. Ken started birding at age 11 and has continued in a distinguished birding career, serving on the Board of Directors of the ABA from 1986-1995, and serving as editor of ABA Monographs in Field Ornithology. He is in his second term on the NY State Avian Records Committee of the Federation. Ken will be chairing the papers session, as well.

Friday night's originally-scheduled speaker, Claudia Wilds, unfortunately cannot attend because of health circumstances. In her place, Paul Kerlinger, environmental consultant, noted bird migration expert and former University at Albany doctoral student, will give a talk entitled "Birding, Economics and Conservation." Paul has been at the forefront of recent studies of the local economic impact of birding. His talk will combine slides and narration and will focus on the economic impacts of birding-related ecotourism, especially at major migration hotspots such as Cape May, Hawk Mountain and the Gulf Coast. He will also discuss ways the birding community can use its formidable economic clout to influence the decision-making process to enhance bird conservation efforts.

BOAT CRUISE ON THE MOHAWK

On Sunday morning, there will be a two hour cruise along the lower portion of the Mohawk River. Crescent Cruise Lines will provide the boat, while Bob Budliger, Federation president and long-time environmental educator, will serve as leader and narrator. Our trip along the historic Mohawk will provide a wealth of scenic beauty, including the river-bordered edges of the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve, one of the Capital District's most outstanding birding sites. Along the river in late summer we can hope to see a variety of waterfowl and herons, as well as swallows, gulls, and migrating terns.

Boarding time will be from 8:30 AM until departure at 9:00 AM, with the boat due back at the dock at 11:00 AM. Light refreshments will be available. Tickets on the reservation form for this field trip are \$10, and are limited in number, so register early! The boat is not handicapped-accessible.

NON-BIRDERS WELCOME

This is a great get-away weekend opportunity for non-birders. Leave the comfort of the Holiday Turf Inn's indoor pool and whirlpool to do some shopping or browse the monster bookstores. Enjoy Albany's New York State Museum, the Capitol, the Mall and the "Egg" theater, all from one free underground parking spot. You may also want to enjoy the dinners and speakers and Sunday morning's boat ride.

CAPITAL DISTRICT SITE GUIDE DEBUT

The Federation Meeting will showcase HMBC's anticipated publication of its major site guide to birding hotspots of the greater Capital District. This well illustrated, 200 page book features 40 sites, both annotated and bar-graph checklists, and is a team effort of over 40 people. More details will be available in the July edition of NY Birders.

FIELD TRIPS

The Capital District is strategically located for birds and for birding. Just to the north are the beautiful Adirondack Mountains, and to the south the Catskills. Two great rivers converge here – the Mohawk River and of course the mighty Hudson River pointing the way north and south to the migrating birds. Every typical birding habitat except for the ocean is represented within a short drive from Albany. From the mountains to the grassy farmlands of Saratoga and Five Rivers to the lakes and reservoirs, the Capital District has it all. Field trips at the Federation meeting will take you to some of the best birding areas within a half hour drive from the Holiday Turf Inn. The following are some of the places we will visit.

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve - *This freshwater marsh along the Mohawk River is one of the best in the area and last fall was host to the areas' first WOOD STORK and a very rare RUFF, among 12 other species of shorebirds. Least Bittern, Sora and Virginia Rail, are also found there every fall.*

Peebles Island State Park - *A relatively new and wonderful State Park, the island is situated at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. The rare CONNECTICUT WARBLER seems to show up here every fall in September just around the time of the Federation meeting. There are also many shorebirds and usually a Merlin or Peregrine Falcon.*

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center - *State-owned lands managed by the NYSDEC, this is a popular local hotspot for many songbirds. Eastern Bluebirds of course are guaranteed here. There are also many exciting yet easy trails throughout the preserve.*

Ann Lee Pond - *Only 5 minutes from the Holiday Turf Inn, this Albany County-owned pond hosts a surprisingly wide variety of warblers and other songbirds during the fall migration. A wooden foot bridge takes you across the pond and into the woods. During the evening you are bound to see the last of the Common Nighthawks flitting low overhead as they continue their journey south.*

WORKSHOPS AND PAPERS SESSION

Saturday afternoon there will be a variety of workshops and technical papers. Details will be available at the meeting.



AGENDA

presented by HMBC's meeting co-chairs Phillip Johnson and Scott Stoner

FRIDAY	AFTERNOON	FIELD TRIPS
	EVENING	COCKTAIL HOUR BUFFET DINNER PAUL KERLINGER ON " <i>Birding, Economics and Conservation</i> "
SATURDAY	MORNING	EARLY AM FIELDTRIPS FOR DELEGATES DELEGATES MEETING FIELD TRIPS FOR NON-DELEGATES
	AFTERNOON	WORKSHOPS/PAPER SESSION
	EVENING	COCKTAIL HOUR BANQUET KEN ABLE ON " <i>Finding the Way: Some Pieces of the Bird Navigation Puzzle.</i> "
SUNDAY	MORNING	MOHAWK RIVER CRUISE FIELD TRIPS

HOW TO REGISTER

Registration per person costs \$25 after July 15, with a student registration of \$10. Registration will include admission to both evening speakers (but see below for dinner tickets), field trips, and workshop/papers sessions, as well as a handsome commemorative gift. The Mohawk River Cruise is an additional \$10 per person.

Breakfast and lunch are on your own and a list of suggested venues will be in the meeting materials. Tickets to the Friday buffet dinner and the Saturday banquet must be ordered in advance using the registration form. Guests of the meeting registrants are welcome to purchase dinner and boat cruise tickets on the registration form, also.

Registrants will receive a confirmation of meeting registration which will include directions to the meeting. Dinner and boat cruise tickets will be picked up upon arrival at the meeting.

You must make your own hotel reservations directly. Call the Holiday Turf Inn at 1-800-HOLIDAY to make your reservation. Remember to tell them that this is the **Federation of New York State Bird Clubs Annual Conference**, in order to get the conference room rate of \$79 plus tax per room, and have your room count towards the conference total.



REGISTRATION FORM
 Federation of New York State Bird Clubs
 49th Annual Meeting
 September 6, 7, 8, 1996
 at the Holiday Inn Turf on Wolf Road, Albany, NY



Name(s): (as you want on your name tag)

Delegate
 Yes _____ No _____
 Yes _____ No _____

Address: _____

Club: _____
 Phone: _____

Room: Contact the Holiday Inn directly at 1-800-HOLIDAY for reservations. A limited number of rooms have been reserved at the conference center. Please reserve your room early. Be sure to mention the "Federation of NYS Bird Clubs Annual Conference" to ensure the conference rate of \$79 plus tax per room (either single or double) per night.

Registration: (incl. speakers, workshops, paper sessions and field trips other than boat ride)

_____ \$25.00 after July 15
 _____ \$10.00 student

Registration: \$ _____

Meals:

Fri Evening:

Hot and Cold Buffet # _____ @ \$17.50 per person \$ _____

Sat Evening banquet

Roast Native Turkey # _____ @ \$15.25 per person \$ _____

Pasta Primavera w/ marinara sauce # _____ @ \$16.50 per person \$ _____

Prime Rib of Beef # _____ @ \$21.00 per person \$ _____

Meal Total: \$ _____

Cruise: (Board Sunday morning 8:30am, return 11am - on the Mohawk River)

_____ @ \$10.00 per person

Cruise: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Make check payable to Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

Send this form and payment to:

Barbara Putnam
 190 Palmer Ridge Road
 Gansevoort, NY 12831

For more information call: Barb Putnam (518) 792-7542



Fort Edward area

This morning hunt for grassland species was warm and pleasant. We searched the fields from the rural roads looking for the birds that breed in hay fields and other areas associated with farming. The main object of our search was the UPLAND SANDPIPER. We heard several almost immediately. Some unsatisfying looks came early in the morning. After checking off other "field birds" we headed over to Cary Road and everyone had very nice views of "Uppies" on the ground, on a telephone pole, on a telephone wire, and in flight. We counted at least nine individuals.

Other birds seen included NORTHERN HARRIER, AMERICAN KESTREL, EASTERN KINGBIRD, SAVANNAH SPARROW, BOBOLINK, and EASTERN MEADOWLARK. An even 50 species were checked off before the "official end" of the trip. Participants then split into several groups: a few went home, a few went over to see look for the Mourning Warbler at nearby Spier Falls Road, and a few continued to bird the Fort Edward area before going over to check out the Mourning Warbler.

My group birded a short while longer in the same vicinity picking up a few other species and a surprise HORNED LARK (we were the surprised). We ended with a successful jaunt over to see the MOURNING WARBLER and I noticed something extremely unusual: the male Mourning Warbler was feeding a female YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER!

-- Barb Putnam

Hebron Preserve and the Pember Museum
The Hebron Nature Preserve lies in Washington County between Salem and Granville.

Unfortunately, the bridge over the creek to the observation deck had washed out over the winter and the North Marsh Trail was in disrepair. We therefore stayed in the southern portion of the preserve.

Ten birders explored the Preserve even though the weather was threatening. It was mild with a nice breeze and the drizzle did not dampen our spirits. We had a nice view of a VEERY after hearing them both call and sing. This was a life sighting for at least one group member. The YELLOW WARBLER wins the prize for "most abundant and cooperative species". We had a total of 36 species.

Half of the group continued on to the Pember Museum which is located on the top floor of the library in Granville. We all thoroughly enjoyed the many birds and eggs on display. It is truly astonishing that such a large collection resides in this "out of the way" spot.

-- Barb Putnam

FEDERATION '96 REMINDER

If you haven't registered for the 1996 Federation of New York State Bird Clubs Annual Meeting in Albany, there's still time!!!! Look for the special colored tear-out insert in this issue of *Feathers* for details and a registration form. Hope to see you there!!!!



UPCOMING PROGRAMS

All program held at 7:30 PM at the Five Rivers
Environmental Education Center, Delmar

South Africa Before the Revolution *Wed., Sept. 4.*

Slides of birds, flowers and mammals will be interspersed with scenes of Johannesburg including Soweto, Kruger National Park, Durban, Capetown, the Cape of Good Hope, the Wine Country surrounding Stellenbosch and Pretoria. Dale and Lillian Samuelson will present the program based on a trip in October 1992.

Ft. Edwards. Vischer Ferry. Saratoga National Historic Park: What the heck is an IBA and who should care? *Mon., Sept. 16*

The "don't fix it 'till it's broke" approach has been economically and politically costly to both the conservation movement and to local communities. Fortunately, we are in the midst of a new era, the era of proactive conservation. National Audubon's New York Important Bird Areas program is an example of this approach. Jeff Wells, coordinator for National Audubon's New York State Important Bird Areas program, will talk about the need for such a program in New York, some of the species most in need of help, and how the members of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club can nominate sites as Important Bird Areas. He will also discuss ideas for developing comprehensive plans with local groups to ensure the protection of these key reservoirs of bird diversity within New York once the inventory of these Important Bird Areas is completed.

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge *Mon., Oct. 7*

Grady E. Hocutt will explore selected resource management problems, issues and potential threats to Montezuma NWR, discuss remedies underway and those proposed for dealing with problems and issues, and a look into the future. Grady is a native East Tennessean. He holds a

B.S. in Psychology from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and two graduate degrees from the same school. The most recent was a M.S. in Zoology and Wildlife Management. Mr. Hocutt worked as the Supervisor of Conservation Education, and later as a Wildlife Biologist, for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Since 1970, he has managed National Wildlife Refuges in Wisconsin, South Dakota, Massachusetts, Washington state, and New York State.

Monday, Nov. 4: Steve Caparizzo of WTEN on Weather

Monday, Dec. 2: Christmas Party with John Green on the Everglades

Monday, Jan 6: Bryan Swift on Canada Geese

Special Notice: Speaker Change for the Federation '96 Annual Meeting

Unfortunately Claudia Wilds, originally scheduled as one of the keynote speakers at the Federation '96 meeting, is unable to attend due to health circumstances. In her place, Paul Kerlinger, a noted bird migration expert and former University at Albany doctoral student, will give a talk entitled "Birding, Economics and Conservation." Paul has been at the forefront of recent studies of the local economic impact of birding. His talk will combine slides and narration and will focus on the economic impacts of birding-related ecotourism, especially at major migration hotspots such as Cape May, Hawk Mountain and the Gulf Coast. He will also discuss ways the birding community can use its formidable economic clout to influence the decision-making process to enhance bird conservation efforts.



Upcoming Field Trips

Peebles Island

Sun. Aug 18. Gary Goodness 272-5830
This morning trip will cover the Island in search of landbird migrants and will also scope the Mohawk River for shorebirds.

Vischer Ferry Evening Walk

Thu. Aug 22. Frank Murphy 3731933
The after-dinner walk will be in search of migrant shorebirds and passerines. Post-breeding herons, egrets and rails are also anticipated.

Huyck Preserve

Sun Sep 1. Walter Ellison. 456-6224 (home); 442-4320 (work)
This will be a full-day trip searching mainly for fall migrant passerines and shorebirds.

Camp Pinnacle Hawk Watch

Sat or Sun, Sep 14 or 15 (depends on weather); Arthur Long ?????? 785-9283
This morning trip is timed to co-inside with the peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration. Several other hawk species should be present as well. The date will be chosen at the last minute, since hawk movements are very weather dependent.

Powell Sanctuary

Sun. Sep 22. Kate Dunham 766-5172
We will join the Alan Devoe Bird Club for a full day trip to search this Columbia County preserve for woodland migrants and possibly some migrating hawks.

Vischer Ferry

Sun. Sep 22. Bernie Grossman 399-9159
Migrant warblers, vireos, flycatchers and

other woodland birds should be the main feature of this morning trip. Shorebirds may also be present, depending on water levels.

Vischer Ferry

Sun. Oct 6. Barb Putnam 792-7542
This morning trip will feature late passerine migrants as migrant waterfowl.

Long Island

Sat - Mon. Oct 12-14. Barb Putnam 792-7542

Reservations by Sept. 1

This long-weekend trip will cover a number of spots on the south shore of Long Island including Fire Island, Jones Beach and Jamaica Bay. Possibilities include late passerine migrants and migrant hawks, shorebirds and waterfowl.

Registry of E-Mail Addresses

This is a reminder that all "connected" members are being given the opportunity to register their E-Mail addresses with the club. The list will be shared with other members, and may be used for such things as transmitting directions for finding birds. To get your E-Mail address on the list, simply send a message to Lou Esch, and he will add you to the registry. Lou's address is:

Lou.Esch@worldnet.att.net



Synopsis of the Sixth Supplement To The 1983 Edition Of The AOU Check-list Of North American Birds

Clifford Lamere

It had been anticipated that by now the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) would have published a new checklist (a book of about 800 pages) instead of its recent supplement in *The Auk* 112(3):819-830 July 1995. It had been rumored that the new checklist might even contain a major revision in the sequence of the families of birds and some changes as to which birds were together in the same family.

Burt Monroe, Jr. was the principal author of the 1983 checklist (most recent) and was chairman of the A.O.U. Committee on Classification and Nomenclature until his death in May 1994. When I met him at the 1990 AOU meeting in Los Angeles, he was serving as President of AOU as well. He told me that he was also serving on a committee of scientists attempting to standardize English bird names worldwide.

"Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World" by Charles G. Sibley and Burt L. Monroe, Jr. was due out that same year. The 1990 book, over 1100 pages in length, contains a new classification of birds based on the DNA-DNA hybridization studies of Charles Sibley, Jon Ahlquist and others. Some changes in the book include: 1) gulls, terns, skimmers, and auks (puffins, dovekie, razorbill, guillemots, etc.) end up in the same family together, 2) orioles are put in the same family as crows, jays, etc., 3) mockingbirds, thrashers and catbirds are put in the same family as starlings and mynas, 4) New World Vultures (Turkey, Black, etc.) are in with storks, 5) Creepers, Wrens, Verdin and Gnatcatchers are together in one family, 6)

Kinglets are alone in their own family.

As radical as some of the changes may seem to us, they are supported by good scientific evidence. Dr. Monroe told me that he thought the AOU committee would eventually accept the new sequence of birds. With him no longer there to promote the idea, that day has been postponed. It will be interesting to see if the next AOU checklist has the courage to do it. It would certainly upset the status quo and irk a great many birders; it would also require the revision of our standard field guides and local checklists.

The AOU area is quite a bit larger than that of the American Birding Association (ABA). The ABA region (used by all of us when we list our birds) includes the continental United States and Canada plus adjacent waters (and islands) to a distance of 200 miles, or half the distance to a neighboring country (The French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, very close to Newfoundland, are also included.). The AOU encompasses the ABA area plus Mexico, Central America, the West Indies, and Hawaii. Some of the changes listed below will only affect those of us who bird outside the ABA area.

Some of the name changes listed below were made in order to come into agreement with names used by the British Ornithologists' Union. This is a continuation of the attempt to standardize English bird names worldwide.

continued....



NAME CHANGES

NEW NAME	OLD NAME
European Storm-Petrel	British Storm-Petrel
Swallow-tailed Kite	American Swallow-tailed Kite
Eurasian Hobby	Northern Hobby
European Golden-Plover	Greater Golden-Plover
Red-necked Stint	Rufous-necked Stint
Black-headed Gull	Common Black-headed Gull
Sky Lark	Eurasian Skylark
Mexican Jay	Gray-breasted Jay
Tree Pipit	Brown Tree-Pipit
Olive-backed Pipit	Olive Tree-Pipit
Pallas' Bunting	Pallas' Reed-Bunting
Reed Bunting	Common Reed-Bunting

Sometimes a bird species has geographically distinct variations (the eastern and western forms may be easy to tell apart, for example). If they should interbreed very little in the areas where both forms live together, ornithologists might decide that they are actually two (sometimes three) separate species, especially if they have separate and distinct breeding songs. This separation would constitute a "split".

If studies indicate that two or more similar forms of birds interbreed a great deal where their ranges overlap, it may be decided that

they are actually the same species, even if they can be told apart visually. This would constitute a "lump".

In the past, the Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles were lumped to become the Northern Oriole. Further study has convinced ornithologists that the change was an error, so they have separated again to reform the original species (see below). This 1995 supplement to the checklist shows very clearly that the splitters are in control at the present time (16 splits, 0 lumps).

SPLITS

Original Name	New Names
Gray-fronted Dove	Gray-fronted + Grenada Dove (Grenada)
Tawny-collared Nightjar	Tawny-collared + Yucatan Nightjar
Common Potoo	Common + Northern Potoo
Gray Swiftlet	Gray + Guam Swiftlet (Hawaii)
Green-breasted Mango	Green-breasted + Veraguan Mango (Panama)
Fork-tailed Emerald	Golden-crowned, Cozumel, and Canivet's Emerald
Rufous-winged Woodpecker	Rufous-winged + Stripe-cheeked Woodp. (Panama)
Northern Flicker	Northern + Gilded Flicker
Greater Antillean Pewee	Cuban Pewee (Cuba, part of Bahama Islands) + Jamaican Pewee, and Hispaniolan Pewee
Scrub Jay	Florida, Island, and Western Scrub-Jay
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Gray-cheeked + Bicknell's Thrush
Streaked Saltator	Streaked + Lesser Antillean Saltator
Rufous-sided Towhee	Eastern + Spotted Towhee
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow + Nelson's STS
Northern Oriole	Baltimore, Bullock's, and Black-backed Oriole
Common Amakihi	Hawaii, Oahu, and Kauai Amakihi



For each case of a split you should try to determine which form or forms you have previously encountered. You may be able to put an additional bird on your life list. On your list(s), you may want to update the name of the bird that you saw if 1) the form that you saw is the member of the split that has the new name, or if 2) the original name was discarded in favor of all new bird names. In assigning names, AOU tries to do so in such a way that there is the least confusion when researchers try to compare data in articles written in the past with those to be written in the future.

Some birders may, unfortunately, lose a species from their list as a result of a split. An example is the confusion that could result from not knowing whether you really saw the Gray-cheeked or Bicknell's Thrush in the past. Although their breeding ranges don't overlap, their migration routes do so greatly. If you saw yours south of New York State in one of the East Coast states, it was migrating and it is very unlikely that you will be able to tell which one you saw. The AOU giveth and the AOU taketh away.

The Supplement describes the ranges for each species of a split. You should refer to those range descriptions when in doubt as to which one(s) you saw. If you keep separate state, province, and country lists, the task should be fairly easy for most of the splits. If you do not have easy access to *The Auk*, phone me and I will read the ranges to you.

The AOU has also now accepted the following records of species not previously observed within the AOU area.

Birds New to the AOU area

Cattle Tyrant	(Panama)
Citrine Wagtail	(Mississippi)
Pine Bunting	(Alaska)
Eurasian Siskin	(several US locations)

Cowbirds Kill Chicks in SOME NESTS

(excerpted from *The New York Times*, 11/14/95)

Clifford Lamere

Canadian researchers studied Brown-headed Cowbirds which parasitized Song Sparrows (the hosts). "Cowbirds, like other nest parasites, must find nests into which eggs are being freshly laid. In nests with older eggs or eggs of unknown age, the host's young may hatch first, ending incubation and leading to the death of the parasite's egg." To avoid such problems, the cowbirds "may kill young as a way of getting hosts to start another nest, where the parasites can leave their eggs at the perfect time."





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BIRDLINE of E. NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080

Club Notices

New Multi-Option Birdline System

If you are a regular caller to the Birdline, you already know that the answering system has been upgraded to one with four separate message areas. This allows the reporter to put the instructions in one message area and the bird sighting report in another, and still leaves two more areas to be used for sighting updates and other information. This will make it much easier for the reporter to make timely updates as sighting opportunities come up, without redoing the lengthy weekly report. The downside is that a caller with only a rotary phone can access only the primary message area. If you have that problem, please call Lou Esch at 399-0313.

Field Trip Committee Chair Needed

After several years of dedicated effort, Cliff Lamere has decided to step down as Field Trip Committee Chair. The Club is therefore looking for a person to take up this important responsibility. Anyone who's interested should call Frank Murphy at 373-1933 or murphyf@crisny.org.

Feathers Deadline Schedule Altered

Due to increased time constraints, Feathers will now be scheduled for delivery at approximately the 15th of each even-numbered month, beginning with this issue. The submission deadline remains the 15th of the preceding month, giving us an additional two weeks for formatting and printing.

Feathers



President's Corner: My favorite bird is the Wood Thrush. I'm even listed in the phone book as Wood Thrush but after a few marketing calls for Mr. Wood I changed it more appropriately to Thrush. Wood. And so it was that I was glad to hear Wood Thrushes singing at our new home this spring. Until one morning I woke up to find a dead one that had just crashed into my back door. Not that I'm superstitious, but I tend to take these things personally. Then on a lark I got a letter from Peter Clements from England who was writing a book on The Thrushes of the World, part of the Clem series. I ended up taking him and his wife, Angela, and the artist, Ren Hathway to the birding hotspots in our area in search of thrushes and warblers. They got great looks at a Wood

Thrush and many warblers along Tower Road, Hermit Thrush at Grafton Lake, and Veery at Vischer Ferry, but we didn't fare as well with the Bicknells and Swainson's in Vermont. We sure had a lot of fun though. Then my close friend and traveling companion, Vaughn Morrison, came up from Florida for a few days, and we were happy to hear two Wood Thrushes singing loud all morning before his return home. Then came the horrible horrible experience of having to say goodbye to my very best friend, Metsha, who many of you knew. I buried him surreptitiously at my favorite place near the water's edge surrounded by mountains. I carried all 70 pounds of him down this mile long dark trail at 4 a.m. all the while yelling ahead to warn any huge black bear of our approach. For the first time in a long time I felt scared and defenseless. But we made it, and I gave him a proper burial, and on my way back along the trail I was pleasantly greeted with a morning chorus of birds including Wood Pewee, Scarlet Tanager, and yes, a Wood Thrush. One might say it ended on a good note. See you all at the Federation meeting.

Frank Murphy

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FEDERATION OF NYS BIRD CLUBS ANNUAL MEETING, A SMASHING SUCCESS

A special thanks is due to all those who participated in the 49th Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs held in Albany on September 6-8, 1996. First thanks to all the HMBC members who made it possible; to Philip Johnson, Committee Chair who pulled it all together from the start and ensured its success; to Scott Stoner, Co-chair of the Committee; Barb Putnam for the tremendous amount of work with the registration forms and mailing and internet and overall organization; Dale and Lillian Samuelson for fund raising, exhibits, and advertisers; Gregg Recer for handling the finances, and program design; Linda Parr on the raffle and registration; Janet Betlejeski for equipment and registration; Jane Graves on workshops; Frank Murphy for arranging the field trips; Cathy Graichen for registration and design; Denise Hilton for the meals and for suggesting and arranging the cruise - and what a great idea that was!; Ann B'Rells, publicity and design; to our speakers Ken Able and Paul Kerlinger; to the exhibitors and

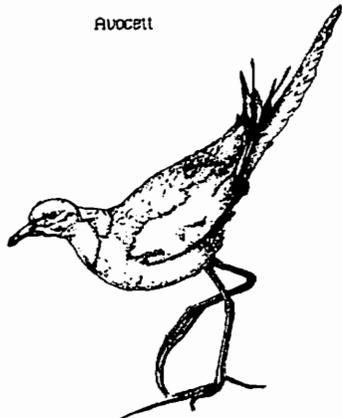
advertisers; the field trip leaders - Rich Guthrie, Tom Palmer, Dick Beeler, Bernie Grossman, Walter Ellison, Frank Murphy, Gary Goodness, Hope Oatman, and Ann B'Rells; and to the workshop leaders Walter Ellison, Rich Guthrie, Jeff Wells, Gregg Recer and Jane Graves; Ken Able chair of the papers session; to our delegates Jane Graves, Alison VanKeuren, and Rich Guthrie; Bob Budliger, President of the Federation; , and to Stephanie Alcorn and the staff at the Holiday Inn Turf. Finally, thanks to all of those I have neglected to mention by name -- your efforts are definitely appreciated.

Congratulations to all on a job well done!

Highlights of the meeting are inside.

- Frank Murphy

Avocett



In This Issue...

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Field Trip Reports

Fall Program Schedule

Birding Internet Site List



FEDERATION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS 49TH ANNUAL MEETING
ALBANY, NY
SEPTEMBER 6-8, 1996

Dr. Paul Kerlinger Explains Economic Value of Birding and Migration

Friday evening's guest speaker was Dr. Paul Kerlinger, who gave a presentation on "*Birding, Migration, Economics and Conservation*". Dr. Kerlinger lives and works in New York City as a writer, speaker and consultant. He received his Ph.D. at SUNY Albany, served as Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory for eight years, and has recently studied the economics of birding and ecotourism in the United States and Latin America. He is also author of the book *How Birds Migrate*.

Showing a slide of a bird, Paul asked "How much is that bird worth and how much is it worth to you? How can you put an economic value on the first Saw Whet Owl you identified by yourself?" He explained why it is so important to determine the economic value of birding, and described some of the many studies he has conducted to do just that. What Paul tells us is basically pretty simple: where there are birds, especially rare birds or great numbers of birds, there are birders, and birders spend money, lots of money. (But, he jokingly warned, don't tell your spouse that!) The money spent by birders, or "non-consumptive wildlife recreationists", a new label for birders according to Paul, helps to boost the economy of the areas which attract especially large numbers of birders, including such birding hot spots as Cape May in New Jersey, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Florida. Local economies in these and

other birding areas have grown; bird-related businesses have increased, jobs were created and the economies were further improved when business owners in turn put the money they made from serving the needs of birders back into the economy.

In addition, Paul believes that if we can put a value on a bird, we can put a value on its habitat and, therefore, we will be more inclined to preserve that habitat. When businesses recognize that birders are willing to spend money, those businesses become friendlier to the environment and are more willing to support preservation projects, helping to ensure that future generations will have an opportunity to determine for themselves the value of the very first Saw Whet Owl they identify.

- Jackie Bogardus

Dr. Ken Able Discusses Migration in Saturday Keynote Talk

Saturday night we were treated to a presentation by our own Dr. Kenneth Able of University of Albany on "*Finding the Way: Some Pieces of the Bird Navigation Puzzle*." Ken is a world-renowned expert on bird migration and he and his wife, Mary, were featured in the *New York Times* about 2 years ago. Highlights of his presentation included the Blackpoll Warbler that migrates through our region in the fall to the mid-Atlantic coast, and from there it's non-stop to South America - a four-day journey with no place to land! Most of the songbirds migrate at night, and many of them are young birds



that travel alone as far as we know to a place they've never been. So how do they do it? Experimental evidence suggests genetic coding, an internal compass, a keen sense of odors, magnetic compass, a star map, and the sun all play important roles -- but we still can't fully explain this truly phenomenal mystery of navigation.

- Frank Murphy

Hudson River Cruise

September 8, 1996 - 9 to 11 a.m.

Before boarding the mighty cruise ship, the Dutch Apple, someone had their scope set up on a Peregrine Falcon that had just captured a pigeon and was dining atop one of the abutments under the Dunn Memorial Bridge. A second Peregrine also flew by the area. So we were off to a great start! We then headed south to Castleton as our narrator, Rich Guthrie, pointed out the birds and local history along the way. Many Double-crested Cormorants, and then a sub-adult Bald Eagle perched atop a tree along the west shore. Then an immature Bald Eagle and sure enough another one - this time a full adult - white head and tail - first perched close-by, then flew low over the boat nearly brushing Bill Lee's head! Quite a sight. Then of course there were a few Ospreys, Great Blue Herons, and Belted Kingfishers. It really was a wonderful cruise featuring good close views of some of our rarest raptors. Perhaps those on the Mohawk River cruise saw a greater variety of birds but those on the Hudson certainly had no regrets nor egrets.

- Frank Murphy

Boat Cruise on the Mohawk

With 71 passengers, our boat, "The Crescent", was nearly full. After a weekend of

interesting and informative speakers, workshops, papers and field trips, we were ready for a relaxing ride on the Mohawk as a final event. The predominant yellows of late summer worked in unison to make up for the mostly absent sun as we drifted past banks heavy with goldenrod and wild sunflower.

As we enjoyed coffee and donuts, our narrator, Bob Budliger, commented on the natural history of the area, while pointing out the many beautiful birds weaving paths on and above the river. We enjoyed the company of Double-crested Cormorant, Green and Great Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks, Spotted Sandpiper, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and many other flying, wading and swimming birds.

As our two hour trip ended, and our boat returned to its dock, we parted company with our friends from the Club and Federation, happy with the memories of our successful weekend.

- Denise Hilton

Bird Highlights / Field Trips

All total, an even 100 species were observed during the weekend. Field trips were held at Vischer Ferry, Peebles Island, Ann Lee Pond, Five Rivers, and the Albany Pine Bush. Much to our surprise, the best birding was at the runway of the Albany County Airport where up to 13 shorebird species were observed including 2 Golden Plovers, 2 Ruddy Turnstones, a Baird's Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and several Common Snipe and Pectoral Sandpipers; and someone even reported a Sharp-tailed Sparrow there! At the Albany Pine Bush on



the 7th, 15 warbler species were observed in less than an hour, including an early Palm Warbler, Prairie Warbler still singing, Blackpoll, Northern Parula, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Wilson's, Black-throated Blue, and Tennessee, but no Pine Warblers; also an Olive-sided Flycatcher, and a Merlin and Sharp-shinned Hawk flying side by side right over our heads! Ann Lee Pond was quiet but at least there was a Pine Warbler, and there was a flock of birds flying in a perfect V formation - and sure enough they were Double-crested Cormorants! Vischer Ferry didn't have the usual numbers of egrets and shorebirds

because of the high water, but there were good flocks of warblers on the 7th, including Blackburnian, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided and Cape May Warblers, a singing Warbling Vireo, Scarlet Tanagers, Common Moorhens, Blue-winged Teal, Great Egret. At Peebles Island State Park, a young Peregrine Falcon provided quite a show and at Five Rivers there was a nice array of migrant songbirds. Again, special thanks to the field trip leaders for doing such a great job and showing birders across the State that we do in fact have a respectable birding area here.

- Frank Murphy

Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady 1996 Fall Programs

Call ECOS at 370-4125 for more information.

Fall Foliage and Wildflower Walks

Tuesday Mornings - September 17 to October 22.

No registration required.

Tuesday Oct 8 Indian Meadows Park, Glenville

Meet at 9:30 AM at K-Mart on Rte 50 at Glenridge Rd.

Meet at 9:45 AM at the Park.

Tuesday Oct 15 Saratoga Spa State Park

Meet at 9:30 AM at K-Mart on Rte 50 at Glenridge Rd.

Meet at 10:00 AM at the Park.

Tuesday Oct 22 Schenectady County Forest

Meet at 9:30 AM at Rotterdam Square Mall - section 2F

Meet at 9:45 AM at the Forest.



Nature Walks for Preschoolers (and Parents)

Three Friday mornings in October. Contact ECOS for more info.

Traveling Environmental Programs for Children.

Water Ecology or Outdoor Nature Study. Classes are 1 hour in length and accommodates up to 30 children (K-5). Available Sept. to Nov. \$50/class or \$65/class with live animals. Call ECOS to set up a class.



Getting State Dollars to Protect Birds (and Other Species) -- The Teaming with Wildlife Initiative

by Linda Parr

As a birder, you're probably aware that natural resource agencies lack funding to protect and conserve over 2000 different types of birds, turtles, fish, butterflies, mammals and other species -- if they're not hunted, fished or on the endangered/threatened species lists, the dollars aren't there. At its September meeting, the HMBC Board of Directors joined a national effort to do something to put dollars for wildlife programs into state coffers.

We signed on as an endorser of the Teaming with Wildlife Initiative. A coalition of over 100 conservation and recreation groups is behind this effort that would generate an estimated \$350 million in state-dedicated funds for fish and wildlife conservation, recreation and protection.

The proposed legislation will be introduced in Congress early next year. Modeled on the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts, it would require users of a wide range of outdoor-related products to pay a user fee on that equipment. The proposed fee ranges from 1/2 to 5 percent of the manufacturer's cost of the product, not the retail cost and would be imposed at the manufacturer's level. Under this bill, you would pay about 30 cents more for a \$10 field guide or about \$2.50 more for \$100 pair of binoculars.

We're in good company in getting behind this effort. The American Birding Association is actively supporting this bill. Recently, the board coordinated an endorsement letter from 25 of the stars of birding publishing, among them Pete Dunne, Don and Lillian Stokes and the now-deceased Roger Tory Peterson.

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is coordinating this campaign. A project coordinator, Molly Williams, advises that the most useful actions at the point are gaining more endorsements, particularly from retailers and from hiking and paddling clubs. These segments of the outdoor "industry" are on record in opposition to this bill, presumably because it would increase the cost of products to the customer. Later, when the bill is introduced, letters and calls to legislators will be very helpful.

In many states, the fish and wildlife agency is coordinating efforts on the state level to gain passage of this bill. It seems unlikely that NYS DEC will sign on. Fred LeBrun's Albany Times Union columnist (Sep. 25, 1996) quotes a DEC spokesperson as saying "the DEC is not for or against it." However, that same columnist also quotes a governor's spokesperson commenting "we're against it. The governor sees this charge as a tax, and people don't need more taxes."

To learn more, and to get more involved, contact the NYS coordinator, Stewart Free, Box 358, RD 2 Altamont, 12009, (voice) 518/861-5357. To contact the national level, write or call Naomi Edelson or Molly Williams, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 444 North Capitol Street, Suite 544, Washington, DC, 20001, (voice) 202/624-7890.



Upcoming HMBC Programs
*All program held at 7:30 PM at the Five Rivers
Environmental Education Center, Delmar*

Mon. Nov 4, 1996 Steve Caporizzo - *Weather*

Weather and weather forecast today and in the future...along with a discussion on some of the strange and at times unpredictable weather in upstate New York. Steve will also give his best estimate as to the weather for the upcoming winter.

Steve Caporizzo was named WTEN's Chief Meteorologist in December of 1989. His career has taken him from chief meteorologist with WABI in Bangor, ME, to the chief meteorologist with WWLP in Springfield, MA prior to joining WTEN.

Steve has always been interested in weather. He started weather as a hobby when he was in the third grade. It's a dream come true forecasting the weather and talking about the weather. It's a paid hobby.

Caporizzo holds Seals of Approval for Television Broadcasting from the American Meteorological Society and from the National Weather Association.

Mon. Dec 2, 1996 (HMBC Christmas party) John Green - *The Everglades*

Picture a flat, expansive region of sawgrass, intermittently dotted with islands of trees.

The islands usually occur on slightly higher ground and may hold a myriad of subtropical and temperate tree species. The air is alive with birds and insects, and almost every pond has its resident alligators and other water-loving denizens. This is the Everglades!

The lifeblood of the Everglades is water. The major source, a shallow slow-moving sheet, flows southward from the Lake Okeechobee region, through sawgrass, around tree islands and into Florida Bay. Its passage through extensive areas of sawgrass gave rise to the name "river of grass".

The water level fluctuates from a high, during the wet season (March through October), to a low in the dry season (November through February).

The organisms inhabiting the Everglades have adapted to survive the changing environmental conditions, including the fires that occur during the dry season. However, the continued diversion of the water flow via canals and dikes and the continued stress on native plants, caused by competition from introduced species, may create conditions to which the Everglades and its tenants may not easily adapt in the future.

John Green is a free-lance Interpretive Naturalist from Amherst, MA. He has offered programs from Maine to Florida and observed and photographed natural history subjects in a variety of



areas in the US and Canada. Through Naturethics, John and his partner, Tom Tynning, lead natural history tours from Newfoundland to Florida and to southeastern Arizona. John teaches photography workshops for the Appalachian Mountain Club and many other organizations and is on the board of directors of the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Mon. Jan 6, 1997 Bryan Swift - *Canada Geese in New York State*

Canada Goose populations in New York have undergone dramatic changes over the last 20 years. Migratory populations have declined while resident flocks have increased. Mr. Swift, a Waterfowl Specialist for DEC, will discuss some of the reasons for these changes as well as management implications.

Send articles, clip-art,
photos, artwork to:

Feathers
c/o Cathy Graichen
23 Scotch Mist Way
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

or via e-mail to:

recerg@crisny.org

Barn Owl



HMBC Birding Guide Book Nears Completion

There is light at the end of the tunnel. A great deal of work has been completed on our Club's effort to produce a quality birding guide to the area that we live and bird in.

- The site descriptions have been written, edited and formatted.
- Maps to accompany the sites are progressing.
- A cover picture has been selected.
- A bar graph abundance chart is nearly complete.
- The price has been set and orders are starting to arrive.

The current target is to pull together the final formatted version and deliver it to the publisher in late October or early November. Our December mailing will include an order form for HMBC members.



Program Reports

Arnette Heidcamp on Hummingbirds

A crowd of 80 Hummingbird enthusiasts gathered on the evening of June 3 to enjoy a lively program by Arnette Heidcamp, author of several popular books, including *A Hummingbird in My House*. Over the years, Ms. Heidcamp has offered her sunroom as sanctuary to a number of these small wonders, whose nests are the size of fifty-cent pieces and ten of whose feathers take up less than a dime.

Her first feathered guest was call Squeak, an immature Ruby-throated Hummingbird, who was discovered in late October, after a hard freeze. Ms. Heidcamp enticed the fellow into the sunroom with a trail of plants rich in nectar. Once safely indoors, Squeak quickly adapted to his temporary home, and Ms. Heidcamp was able to gather plenty of anecdotal data on her lodger. She noted that the bird was partial to Tallancia, a flowering air plant, geraniums, apple blossoms and quince.

He preferred to rest on the same branch of the same tree each night, and liked bathing in the freshly watered cala-lily.

With her next guest, Rosie, a female Rufous Hummingbird, Ms. Heidcamp was able to observe some pre-nesting activity as Rosie gathered dryer lint, blanket fibers and spider webs and began winding these materials around her favorite branch.

Ms. Heidcamp has also enjoyed providing shelter to two Bluebird nestlings whose nest had been destroyed unknowingly by a town

work crew. The HMBC crowd enjoyed Ms. Heidcamp's story of raising these two very close siblings. She told of learning about their endearing habits, such as their penchant for perching atop the ceiling fan blades, and the male bird's way of affectionately offering his worms to eat.

This was a light-hearted, fun program and a fine way to close our program season and to welcome in the summer.

- Denise Hilton

Birding South Africa

About 35 people attended our 1996-97 season's first program on Sep. 4, presented by Club members Dale and Lillian Samuelson. The Samuelsons reported on their 1992 trip to South Africa where they visited Johannesburg, Kruger National Park, Durban, Cape Town and Pretoria.

Kruger National Park was a rich portion of the tour, with one 15 minute rest stop yielding 9 Life Birds! The wide array of animal life at Kruger included weaver birds, Black-eyed Bulbul, giraffes, impala, steenbok, zebras, Vewet Monkeys, wildebeests, Yellow-billed Hornbill, Long-tailed Shrike and the charming Chaemma Baboon, among many others.

The seaside resort area of Durban has the Zulu Cultural Park, which retains and displays some of the area's native dance, costume and ritual. One of the main birding attractions at Durban is the final stage of the local sewage works, which is a very nicely grassed pond area loaded with water birds!



At the Cape of Good Hope, the Samuelsons were struck by the many beautiful blooming shrubs and wild geraniums. At the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens in Capetown, over 4000 species of indigenous plants great visitors.

Some of the birds at Cape Town were the Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Turtle-Dove, Ranewn Pigeon and Spotted Dikkop.

In Pretoria, Dale and Lillian visited the Kimbaly Diamond Mine, where the workers' shoes are carefully washed at the end of each shift to remove any diamond. Also, a museum tracing the early Dutch history of the area is located in Pretoria, and includes beautiful needlework scenes of this time.

The program presented by the Samuelsons in South Africa was both entertaining and informative, and we thank them for opening our 1996-1997 program season in such great style!

- Denise Hilton

Important Bird Areas Program

An interested crowd of 30 people gathered at Five Rivers on Monday evening, September 16, to hear Dr. Jeff Wells explain New York State's participation in National Audubon's Important Bird Areas (IBA) program.

IBA was inspired by Birdlife International, a group of European ornithologists who responded to the impact of declining habitat on bird populations by designating sites throughout Europe, Africa, the Mid-East, and South America. In the US, National Audubon is handling the state by state running of the program, which officially began in New York on March 18 with the hiring of our speaker.

Habitat loss has long been recognized as a major threat to birds, and has affected populations of many species throughout our State. One of the main causes of this loss of space has been due to forest fragmentation brought about by development. Along with disruption of habitat, development also brings about an increase of domesticated predators, especially house cats, and of edge dwelling nest predators such as skunks and raccoons.

In the past a response to species decline has often been delayed to the point of the imminent extinction of a species, resulting in action that has been both monetarily and politically expensive, as in the cases of the California Condor and the Spotted Owl.

The goal of IBA is to take a proactive approach to the problem of habitat loss, intervening before populations decline to dangerously low levels.

Generally speaking, an Important Bird Area can be any geographically distinct site, public or private, large or small, protected or not, which is determined through the use of scientific criteria to be essential habitat for one or more species of birds. The goal of the IBA project is to promote long-term avian biodiversity.

Our Club has taken an active role in the project, and is in the process of nominating IBA sites. Our IBA Committee Chair is Scott Stoner and all Club members are encourage to call Scott with any questions or comments about the nomination process. The deadline for site nominations to the IBA program is December 15, 1996.

- Denise Hilton



Field Trip Reports

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve May 30, 1996

On this late spring evening, about 15 birders met for an enjoyable exploration of the central portion of this freshwater wetland. Migration was past, but we did see large numbers of **YELLOW WARBLER**, plus a **YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** and **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK**. Thanks to George Hanson for his assistance on this trip.

- *Scott Stoner*

Instructional Trip to Five Rivers June 8, 1996

The June 8th instructional trip to the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center was intended to aid people with the location and identification of nests and to distinguish the sexes (when possible) of some of our more common bird friends. The leaders were all set for a moderate turn-out, but unfortunately the threat of rain seemed to keep birders away and only two people showed up. So, with a 1:1 leader to participant ratio we set off.

Our walk began with a quick jaunt on the Woodlot trail to see a **MALLARD**'s nest which was in use earlier this year. While walking through the parking lot to begin the main part of the outing we were privileged to hear the song of a **BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO**. Birding around the grounds of Five Rivers is always a treat and this morning was no exception. The group enjoyed listening to the songs of the typical breeding birds of the area including; **WILLOW FLYCATCHER**, **BOBOLINK**, **CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER**, **YELLOW WARBLER**, **PRAIRIE WARBLER**, and **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT**. We managed to show the

participants a number of nests (which we had staked-out in the weeks before the walk) including **HOUSE WREN**, **COMMON GRACKLE**, **AMERICAN ROBIN**, **WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH**, and the ever elusive nest of **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**.

The other aspect of our trip was to try to distinguish the sexes of some of our more common birds. We managed to pick out representatives of both sexes for the following common birds: **AMERICAN ROBIN**, **EASTERN BLUEBIRD**, **AMERICAN GOLDFINCH**, **HOUSE FINCH** and **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** to name a few. We also spotted a female **AMERICAN KESTREL** prowling from her usual perch on the utility wires near the field where the **BOBOLINKS** nest.

Highlights of the trip included: a great view of a singing **SAVANNAH SPARROW** and the appearance of a **LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** along the Vlomankill. The **LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** had completely eluded the two of us on many previous trips to that spot and as we were explaining this to the group, as fate would have it, one jumped up into full view!

The walk concluded with a stop in the Education Center to check out the feeders and compile a trip-list. While compiling, one participant saw a male **RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** sipping some sugar-water from a feeder. Our total list for that morning reached 44 species.

Other birds seen but not included above were **CANADA GOOSE**, **WOOD DUCK**, **MALLARD**, **MOURNING DOVE**, **DOWNY WOODPECKER**, **NORTHERN FLICKER**, **EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE**,



EASTERN KINGBIRD, TREE SWALLOW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, HOUSE WREN, WOOD THRUSH, GRAY CATBIRD, CEDAR WAXWING, RED-EYED VIREO, AMERICAN REDSTART, NORTHERN CARDINAL, CHIPPING SPARROW, FIELD SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, NORTHERN ORIOLE.

- Carole Flood and Jeff Marx

Peebles Island State Park 18 August 1996

This early morning trip featured perfect weather and 52 bird species including OSPREY, a GREAT EGRET, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER, GREATER and LESSER YELLOWLEGS, LEAST, SEMIPALMATED, SOLITARY and SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, EASTERN WOOD PEWEE, LEAST FLYCATCHER, EASTERN KINGBIRD, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, WARBLING and RED-EYED VIREO, CHESTNUT-SIDED, BLACK-AND-WHITE, and PINE WARBLERS, AMERICAN REDSTART, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK, and BALTIMORE ORIOLE. We then rounded off a perfect morning with coffee and a good breakfast at a local establishment - further proof that birders are good for the local economy, especially near good birding areas.

- Frank Murphy

Delaware Bayshore July 26-29, 1996

Lured by the prospect of studying a variety of southward-bound shorebirds at leisure, as well as the possibility of rarities, 14 birders embarked on a four-day venture to the coast of Delaware. Based in Dover, we explored a

number of sites, chief among them Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, and Little Creek and Ted Harvey State Wildlife Areas, some of them several times.

Although some of us had a chance to do some preliminary birding on our own Friday afternoon, the trip officially got underway Saturday morning at Bombay Hook, where expert Delaware birder Todd McGrath (no relation to Kevin) met us for a full-day tour of the hotspots of the region. Highlights included a RUFF (with still some of its ruff evident) there at Bombay Hook, DICKCISSELS near Milford, AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER at Mispillion Light and GULL-BILLED TERNS at Logan Tract. There, Todd also spotted the second state record WHITE-FACED IBIS.

Continuing on our own Sunday and part of Monday, led by Barb Putnam, the group enjoyed close and repeated opportunities to view common and less common shorebirds, along with FRANKLIN'S and LITTLE GULLS (both on Port Mahon Road). Other species seen on the trip included LITTLE BLUE HERON, YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, ORCHARD ORIOLE, INDIGO BUNTING, BLUE GROSBEAK, BLACK VULTURE, SUMMER Tanager, NORTHERN PHALAROPE and STILT SANDPIPER. One particularly memorable scene was one evening at Little Creek watching a lone young FORSTER'S TERN on a rock waiting and screaming to be fed, only to resume its urgent cries immediately after its parent brought in a mouthful! Overall, the trip was a great success, with lots of birds (122 species), not overly hot weather, but enough bugs that we wished for a sudden expansion of the flycatcher population!

- Scott Stoner



Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve August 22, 1996 - 6-8 PM

Our hopes were dashed for an encore appearance of a Wood Stork. There was just too much water at Vischer Ferry this summer and not attractive for herons, egrets, and shorebirds as in normal years. We did manage to get a good look at a LEAST BITTERN, GREEN HERON, 2 GREAT EGRETS, 6 COMMON MOORHENS, 2 COMMON NIGHTHAWKS, MARSH WREN, WOOD DUCK, BALTIMORE ORIOLE, EASTERN KINGBIRD, YELLOW WARBLER, AND ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK. 30 species total.

- Frank Murphy

E. N. Huyck Preserve September 2, 1996

This year's HMBC Labor Day trip to the Huyck Preserve took place on a summery day with muggy weather that became progressively more overcast under the influence of Hurricane Edouard off the coast of Massachusetts. Seventeen participants convened at Myosotis Lake at 8:00 AM. The pond was calm with barely a ripple, and had little exposed shoreline due to the wet spring and early summer. Producing the few ripples in the pond were a lone DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT fishing the far shore, and a beaver resolutely bisecting the pond with his wake. GREAT BLUE HERONS also stood sentinel along the shore and roosted in hemlocks on the opposite hillside.

We set off to circumnavigate the pond on the preserve's trail system. At the start of the trail an obliging BLUE-WINGED WARBLER joined the more ubiquitous flycatching CEDAR WAXWINGS in the dead top of a red maple. Among the waxwings were several blurrily streaked juveniles, some of them exhibiting

orange-tipped tails. This variant is a truly temporary color "phase" (as opposed to a lifelong morph) caused by pigments in the diet they were fed as nestlings. Soon we were surrounded by the usual GRAY CATBIRDS and COMMON YELLOWTHROATS that live along the brushy path along the northeast shore. With these common birds were BLACK-THROATED BLUE, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, and YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, an immature YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER and ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS among others. As we continued around the pond into the impressive mature maple-beech-hemlock woods of the west shore, birds became quiet and less numerous. Nonetheless we found a number of the northern specialties of the Helderbergs including RED-BREADED NUTHATCH, WINTER WREN still giving snatches of song, DARK-EYED JUNCO and WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. We completed our walk with lunch at the parking area on the east shore under an elm that hosted two more sapsuckers assiduously tending their wells. Our total at the preserve was 42 species.

Most of the group agreed to go on to Basic Creek Reservoir in Westerlo to increase our waterbird take for the day. This 'annex' trip proved productive. In spite of the unsuitability of the dry reservoir in 1995, PIED-BILLED GREBES returned to breed this summer, there were at least three juvenile grebes there, two still being fed by their parent. There were also many DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS, one peering skyward tipped one of our group off to the presence of a first year BALD EAGLE cruising high over the reservoir. There was also a good selection of waterfowl including early migrants such as RING-NECKED DUCK, AMERICAN WIGEON and GADWALL. We added an additional nine species at Basic Creek Reservoir.



Huyck Preserve Species: 1 DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, 4 GREAT BLUE HERONS, 6 WOOD DUCKS, 1 MALLARD, 3 KILLDEER, 3 SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, 1 MOURNING DOVE, 2 BELTED KINGFISHERS, 3 YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS, 4 DOWNY WOODPECKERS, 3 HAIRY WOODPECKERS, 2 NORTHERN FLICKERS, 2 EASTERN WOOD-PEWEES, 2 EASTERN PHOEBES, 1 EASTERN KINGBIRD, 20 BARN SWALLOWS, 4 BLUE JAYS, 3 AMERICAN CROWS, 10 BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, 1 TUFTED TITMOUSE, 1 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, 2 WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES, 2 BROWN CREEPERS, 1 WINTER WREN, 5 AMERICAN ROBINS, 14

GRAY CATBIRDS, 31 CEDAR WAXWINGS, 5 RED-EYED VIREOS, 1 BLUE-WINGED WARBLER, 1 MAGNOLIA WARBLER, 1 BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, 3 YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, 2 BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS, 8 COMMON YELLOWTHROATS, 2 ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS, 6 SONG SPARROWS, 1 WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, 4 DARK-EYED JUNCOS, 1 BOBOLINK, 1 COMMON GRACKLE, 1 PURPLE FINCH, 12 AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES.

Basic Creek Reservoir (annex): 6 PIED-BILLED GREBES, 13 DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS, 2 GREAT BLUE HERONS, 1 CANADA GOOSE, 4 WOOD DUCKS, 1 AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, 15 MALLARDS, 15 BLUE-WINGED TEAL, 2 GADWALL, 4 AMERICAN WIGEON, 6 RING-NECKED DUCKS, 1 BALD EAGLE, 1 RING-BILLED GULL.

- Walter Ellison

Jamaica Bay
August 11, 1996

On August 11, 1996, eleven HMBC birders ventured to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens in search of waterbirds. As always, Jamaica Bay provided a treasure trove of birding pleasures with a high diversity and abundance of birds. Sometimes getting there can be a challenge. A prodigious traffic snarl on the Belt Parkway prevented seven of our group (including the leaders) from arriving at the destination on schedule. The tide conditions were not propitious on the East Pond, even for those who arrived at 9:00 AM, this due to the

Editor's Note: Here is a field trip report with its own unique style. Thanks Andi!

Saratoga Spa State Park
June 28, 1996

Wood Thrush, Catbird and House Wren were there
Flickers, Downys and Pileated in the air.
Swallows: Bank, Barn and Tree
Chickadee, Titmouse and also Veery
Crows, Northern Cardinal and Ruby-throated "Hummer"
Rose-breasted Grosbeak all dressed up for summer.
Goldfinch, House Finch and Blue Jays too
Chestnut-sided Warbler chirped "Pleased to meet you."
Yellow Warblers and Cedar Waxwing
Common Yellowthroats sure did sing.
Red-eyed, Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireo
Red-breasted Robin sang "Cheer up, Cheerio."
Song Sparrows, Bluebirds and also Pewee
Great-crested Flycatcher called from distant tree.
And when our walk was over and done
The species counted was forty-one!

- Andi Simard

Feathers



7:17 AM high tide and high water on the impoundment. Nonetheless the four early arrivals recorded **WESTERN SANDPIPER** at the north and the later arriving crew saw a **STILT SANDPIPER** join the **YELLOWLEGS** left over from the high tide roost at "The Raunt". The West Pond and bay shore provided many of the day's best birds. We had several excellent looks at both **NIGHT-HERONS** including the similar, but distinguishable immatures. Among the other West Pond highlights were **PIED-BILLED GREBE**, and adult **CATTLE EGRET**, **NORTHERN SHOVELERS**, **LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS**, **LEAST** and **FORSTER'S TERNS**, and **BLACK SKIMMERS**. Our best bird there was an adult **HUDSONIAN GODWIT** molting into winter (or basic) plumage, this bird was very cooperative giving us excellent looks. On the bay shore we found some of the shorebirds that had deserted the East Pond including **SEMI-PALMATED** and **BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS**. The numbers of **AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS** were impressive with 45 on the flats among the gulls, terns and other shorebirds. As we swung away from the shore, many of us were treated to the sight of a female **PEREGRINE FALCON** soaring with two **OSPREY** occasionally taking half-hearted dives at its larger companions. Before we hit the road, we took a detour back to the parking lot through the South Gardens to seek landbirds. We encountered several new birds including good views of **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER**, and brown-eyed immature **WHITE-EYED VIREO** in molt from juvenal plumage. We also had a save on a local specialty as a female **BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE** flew overhead giving her distinctive musical clucking flight calls. We departed for home at 3:30 PM managing to avoid any serious difficulties with city traffic. Our final tally was

75 species with several participants adding new species to their state and life lists.

PIED-BILLED GREBE, DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, GREAT BLUE HERON, GREAT EGRET, SNOWY EGRET, TRICOLORED HERON, CATTLE EGRET, GREEN HERON, BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, GLOSSY IBIS, MUTE SWAN, CANADA GOOSE, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, NORTHERN PINTAIL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, GADWALL, AMERICAN WIGEON, RUDDY DUCK, OSPREY, PEREGRINE FALCON, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, SEMIPALMATED PLOVER, AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER, GREATER YELLOWLEGS, LESSER YELLOWLEGS, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, HUDSONIAN GODWIT, SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER, WESTERN SANDPIPER, LEAST SANDPIPER, STILT SANDPIPER, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER, LAUGHING GULL, RING-BILLED GULL, HERRING GULL, GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, COMMON TERN, FORSTER'S TERN, LEAST TERN, BLACK SKIMMER, ROCK DOVE, MOURNING DOVE, NORTHERN FLICKER, EASTERN KINGBIRD, TREE SWALLOW, BANK SWALLOW, BARN SWALLOW, AMERICAN CROW, FISH CROW, HOUSE WREN, MARSH WREN, AMERICAN ROBIN, GRAY CATBIRD, NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD, BROWN THRASHER, CEDAR WAXWING, EUROPEAN STARLING, WHITE-EYED VIREO, YELLOW WARBLER, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, NORTHERN CARDINAL, RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, SONG SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, HOUSE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, HOUSE SPARROW.



Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

Tomhannock Reservoir

Sun. Nov 3. Bill Gorman 477-4921
Spend a morning checking out waterbirds including loons, grebes, possible sea ducks and large number of geese.

Franklin Mountain

Sat or Sun Nov 9 or 10. Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen 899-2678
Visit this hawk watch near Oneonta which had over 100 Golden Eagles in 1994. Day of trip (dependent on weather conditions) will be decided by Friday Nov 8 and announced on Birdline or by contacting the coordinators.

Waterfowl of Saratoga Lake

Sun Nov 17. Barbara Putnam 792-7542
Spend the middle of the day visiting the shores of Saratoga Lake and examining the migrating waterfowl.

Niagara River

Sat-Sun Nov 30 - Dec 1. Bill Lee 374-3426
Reservations by Nov 25.
Thousands of gulls will be in and around Niagara Falls and the River. With luck and patience, some less common gulls should be identified.

Mechanicville to Fort Edward

Goldeneyes to Harriers
Sat. Dec. 7. Gary Goodness 272-5830
The Hudson River produces good numbers and variety of waterfowl at this time of year.

1996 Christmas Counts

Mark your calendars for the 1996 Christmas count season. More details in next issue of *Feathers*.

Sat. Dec 21 - Schenectady
Sat. Dec 28 - Southern Rensselaer
Sat. Jan 4 - Troy

Informal Thursday Morning Bird Club

Have a little extra free time on Thursday mornings? Don't know what to do? Join an informal group of birders for breakfast and a morning bird outing. Contact Bill Lee at 374-3426 to find out the specific details for upcoming Thursdays!

1997 Field Trip Schedule In Progress

The 1997 Field Trip schedule is currently being put together. If you would like to volunteer to lead a trip or have any suggestions for trips you would like to see included, contact the Acting Field Trip Chair, Scott Stoner, 464-0492.



CLUB MEMBERS VISIT MAINE COAST

by Scott Stoner

On the first weekend in March 1996, Gregg Recer, Cathy Graichen, Bryce Recer, Scott Stoner and Denise Hilton took a birding trip to the coast of Maine in search of wintering alcid, sea ducks and gulls.

The place we stayed in Wells was right on the coast, with an ocean view from the second story window. After breakfast on Saturday, we began our coastal birding across from the motel picking up Common Eider, Surf Scoters, and Oldsquaw. Gregg found Common Loons and Horned Grebes early, but they had moved off when the rest of us were looking after breakfast. Unfortunately the predicted late morning snowstorm arrived early! As it was coming up the coast, we decided to head north, hoping that would minimize its impact on our birding.

We checked Biddeford Pool and East Point, and Two Lights State Park on Cape Elizabeth. We found more Common Eider, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Common Goldeneye and more Oldsquaw. As the snowstorm intensity increased, visibility offshore decreased dramatically. Unfortunately, hopes that the storm might bring in something unusual did not pay off on this trip. We returned to Wells Beach where Gregg picked out a Glaucous Gull from a large group of roosting gulls.

The weather on Sunday was better, although the spells of clear viewing were interspersed with snow showers, and later, heavier squalls. At Perkins Cove in Ogunquit we got great, close looks at Red-breasted Merganser, a Great Cormorant and Common Loon. A little farther down the coast, we had our best viewing of the trip, at the Cliff House in Ogunquit. Here were approximately a dozen Harlequin Ducks, along with another, this time adult, Great Cormorant, more Oldsquaw, Horned Grebe and Common Eider.

After a further stop south along the Maine coast, the snow turned heavy and we got on the turnpike to head for Massachusetts. Despite the return of some minor car trouble, we made it to a very snowy Salisbury Beach State Park. In snow and icy wind, we did see Horned Larks and Gregg spotted a single Snow Bunting. Driving on around to the other side of the Merrimack River, we met Scott's sister at the entrance to Parker River NWR on Plum Island. Unfortunately, the heavy snow worsened to a blizzard-like squall with near white-out conditions (at least we were parked!), making birding impossible. We left Plum Island, took a brief look over the river at a new Mass. Audubon site, and then headed south to Rowley, site of a much-publicized Great Gray Owl. There were several areas recommended to check for it, and our search was aided by coming across the large group of birders with scopes who already had it staked out! After an excellent look at this bird, we headed back to Albany.

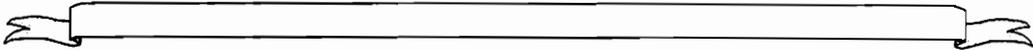


Welcome new HMBC Members!!

Douglas Steele
Ruth Wright
Doug and Mary Knapp
Joseph & Maryjane Coticchio
Maeve Maurer
Walter Messier
Liz Bowder
Diane & Gary Broughton
Robin Elliott
and William Hauprich
Ann Ladd
William & Joan Mack
Robin Wilcox
Jerry Broman
Martin & Barbara Carovano
Lola Williams
Cynthia Winter
Diane Cornell

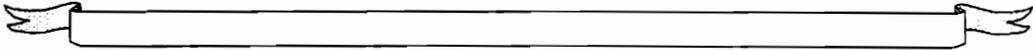
Joe Carey
Jeffrey Barnes
Dr. & Mrs. John Edwards
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Shattuck
M.L. MacCarn
George & Sally Kirouac
Rose Marie Nehrig
Lyn Hill
Maimuna Mwamba
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Isobel & Stuart Connell
Kathleen Miller
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Earl & Joy Mayo
Joyce Miller
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Marilyn & William Boyd

Matthew & Gena Gallinger
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J.K. Post
Grace White
Janet Marvin
Charles Goddard
Barbara Armstrong
Steve Chorvas
Susan Brownell
Ed Neiles
Judy Larkin
Debra Larkin
Susan Seymour
Vincent, Lynn
and Jacob Caterina



Two Join Life Members

A special recognition to *Frank Oberkoetter* and *Dick Beeler*, the two newest Life Members in HMBC.



Discount on Winter Gear at Eastern Mountain Sports Company

Linda Parr

Here's an opportunity to fill in any gaps in your winter outdoor gear collection at a 20% discount. You can find this bargain rate at Eastern Mountain Sports, Crossgates Mall, on Tuesday, October 20. All you need to do to obtain the discount is show that you're a member of the HMBC (or other outdoor club). Because we don't issue membership cards, the store says they will accept an issue of *Feathers* that has your name on the mailing label.

This sale is part of the store's upcoming Club Day. This event is the store's way of recognizing the fact that members of outdoor organizations commit to preserve public lands and waterways.

HMBC will also take advantage of Eastern Mountain Sport's Outdoor Organization Night on October 22. The store offers tables for membership recruitment and club promotion to any outdoor organization. Ann B'Rells and I will be there from 7-9 PM. Stop by and say hello.



SELECTED INTERNET SITES FOR BIRDERS

Birding Listserv Email Discussion Groups:

General Birding Discussion Groups:

World-wide (Primarily North America): birdchat@listserv.arizona.edu
New York State Birding: nysbirds-l@cornell.edu
Cayuga Basin Birding: cayugabirds-l@cornell.edu

Automated RBA transcripts (not intended for discussion):

Bird East: birdeast@listserv.arizona.edu
Bird Center: birdcntr@listserv.arizona.edu
Bird West: birdwest@listserv.arizona.edu

Birding World Wide Web Sites:

Audubon Societies in New York State:

Audubon in New York: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/nyaud.html>
Langdon Audubon: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/langdon>
New York City Audubon: <http://www.interboro.com/nyaudubon>
Onondaga Audubon: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/onondaga>
Scarsdale Audubon: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/scrsdale.html>
Saw Mill River Audubon: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/smras.html>
Yonkers Audubon: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/yonkers>

New York State Birding Guides & Checklists:

NYS Birding Site Guide: <http://www.omith.cornell.edu/Birding/ny/main.html>
Westchester County Guide: <http://www.cyburban.com/~anneswaim>
Cayuga Basin Checklist: <http://www.englilb.cornell.edu/aep110/stk/>

Bird Survey Sites:

North American Breeding Bird Survey: <http://www/im.gov/bbs/>
NTT World Bird Count: <http://www.wnn.or.jp/wnn-n/w-bird/>
International Shorebird Survey: <http://www/im.gov.iss/iss.html>

Environmental Organizations:

Environmental Web Directory: <http://www.webdirectory.com>
National Audubon Society: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon>
The Nature Conservancy: <http://www.tnc.org>

Professional Associations:

Am. Ornithologists Union: <http://www/nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/AOU>
Assn. Field Ornithologists: <http://www/nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/AFO>
Birdnet (Ornith. Information): <http://www/nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET>

Shorebird Information:

General Information on Shorebirds
(includes current migration maps): <http://www.utm.edu/~phertzel/shbird.html>
International Shorebird Survey: <http://www/im.gov.iss/iss.html>
Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network: <http://www/wetlands/ca/wi-a/wasm/wasmdex.html>



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BIRDLINE of E. NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080

Miscellaneous Birding Information:

The Virtual Birder: <http://xavier.cybersmith.com/vbirder/>
Roger Tory Peterson Page: <http://www.petersononline.com/>
Optics for Birding Page: <http://www.gorp.com/gorp/activity/birdofaq.htm>
The Birding Page: <http://fly.hiway.net/~cwbol/bird.html>

Weather:

The Weather Channel: <http://www.weather.com>
Nat. Weather Service: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>
Weather Information Superhighway: <http://thunder.met.fsu.edu/~nws/wxhwy.html>

General Search Engines & Subject Indices:

Alta Vista: <http://www.altavista.digital.com>
Excite: <http://excite.com>
Lycos: <http://www.lycos.com>
OpenText: <http://index.opentext.net>
Yahoo: <http://www.yahoo.com>
All-in-one: <http://www.albany.net/allinone>



President's Corner: First I'd like to thank all HMBC members for their support as we hosted the Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs. The meeting was a great success in every aspect. Even the birds cooperated. Special thanks to Philip Johnson and Scott Stoner for their expert leadership on the Federation Committee and to all the committee members who worked so hard to ensure the success.

Now we can get back to what we're all about - Birding! Camp Pinnacle hawk watch had a record day on September 14 - surpassing even the famous Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania! If I didn't know better I'd say that birding is getting better around here. Which reminds me, there's a very inspiring article in the June issue of Birder's World featuring an interview with Phoebe Snetsinger, who has a life list of 8,000 !!! bird species in the world - more than anyone else. And it all started back in 1981 when her doctor told her she had only three months to live! So she took a trip to Alaska and came back feeling fine. Then she decided on Australia and again came back feeling fine. All the while she continued her fight to survive. She concluded her interview saying that "for a world birder, this is probably the best of all possible times. It is a unique 'golden age' in birding, a narrow window in time that has never before held the same realistic potential, and never will again at the rate we are destroying our world." See it before they saw it.

On that happy note I wish you all a happy fall season and thank you again for your support and most importantly for your kindness and friendship.

Frank Murphy

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No. 6

December
1996

Published Bi-monthly by The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

COLLINS LAKE

Carl George

Habitat: Small lake, often open in winter
Specialties: Waterfowl
Best Seasons: Year round

DIRECTIONS

Residents of the City of Schenectady will find easy access to Collins Lake by means of State Street (SR 5) and the Western Gateway Bridge. Head west on SR 5 and cross the Mohawk River to enter the Village of Scotia. At the north end of the Bridge, turn right on Schonowee Avenue and proceed to Kiwanis Lane, which provides vehicular access to the southern shore of the Lake. A second viewing site, Quinlan Park, at the eastern end of the Lake is reached by continuing past the Kiwanis entrance to Washington Ave. for a left turn and a drive northwards of 0.3 miles to the Park on the left.

Visitors from more distant and southerly areas may reach Collins Park by means of the NYS Thruway (I-90). Take Exit 25 (Schenectady); proceed west on I-890 to Exit 4. Then go west on SR 5 crossing the Mohawk River via the Western Gateway Bridge to Scotia. Take Schonowee Ave. as described above. Visitors from the north should enter the Village of Scotia on SR 50 to connect with Schonowee Ave. at the north end the Western Gateway Bridge.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Collins Lake is part of Collins Park, administered by the Village of Scotia. The lake

Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region Completed!

Completion of the HMBC guide, *Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region*, book took longer than expected, but the text is completed, edited and formatted. Great artwork by club members is included and accurate maps of the sites and surrounding areas are completed. Enclosed with this mailing is an order form for Club members. Note that contributors will receive a complimentary copy of the book. Club members are offered a special discount, but must use the order form and must be current in their payment of dues. Note that annual dues is due at the beginning of 1997! A chapter excerpt (left) of the book appears in the newsletter.

In This Issue...

Christmas Bird Counts

A Florida Trip

Program Reports

Field Trip Reports

Moose in NYS



is believed to be of kettle-hole origin and enhanced as a meander of the Mohawk River and through human impoundment. It is 55 acres and spring fed, the warmer spring waters resulting in "opens" for much of the winter along the north shore. Late freezing (mid December) and early thawing (mid March), relative to most other regional water bodies, indicate the influence of these springs and make the Lake a good site for waterbirds during the early spring and late fall. Collins Lake has easy public access and vehicles can reach comfortable viewing stations near the water; the site is especially suitable for the elderly and physically impaired. Picnic tables, grill standards for outdoor cooking, shelters for sun and rain, playing fields, restrooms and other park amenities also make the area attractive for the birding family. Collins Park, with its 150 acres of improved flood plain and open water, is located on the north side of the Mohawk River. Most of the southern half of the Lake is publicly owned. The northern half supports a number of private residences overlooking the Lake from high sandy bluff, once the meander wall of an early, northern branch of the Mohawk River. The elongate Scotia Island, the smallest land holding of The Nature Conservancy in the United States, occupies the middle of the Lake. Canoes and rowboats are best launched from the south shore access point. Power craft are not permitted. During the early spring the eastern half of the Lake is dominated by curly-

leafed pondweed which provides rich forage for waterfowl. In late June, the pondweed gives way to white water lily, purple loosestrife and cattail. Collins Lake is infamous as one of the first American water bodies where the highly aggressive water chestnut escaped to become a nuisance waterweed.

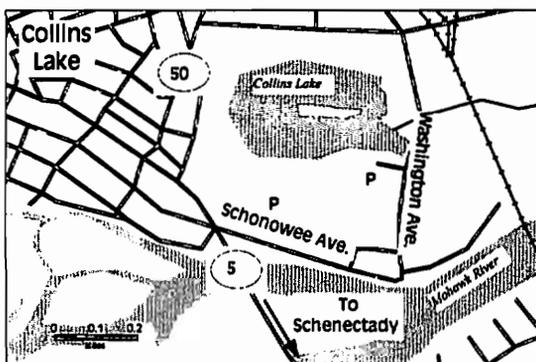
BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

Birding at Collins Lake is most interesting during ice-off in early spring and during ice-on in late fall, when many species of waterbirds visit briefly, and provide exceptional close-up observational and photographic opportunities. Another unusual opportunity is crepuscular and night-time observation of waterfowl from Quinlan Park and the south shore. Songbirds can be found in the adjacent woodlands.

Spring

The Canada Goose nests regularly on Scotia Island. At the end of the rearing period, molting adults are seen on the lawns and along the shore. Wood Duck is a successful nester in the large trees of the shore and, perhaps, the island. Mallard and American Black Duck attempt nesting but rarely succeed in avoiding land predators and snapping turtles. Ring-necked Duck forage on the young pondweed, often remaining for three or four weeks. American Wigeon often accompany them, stealing scraps of foliage. In the absence of the "Ring-necks" they will make shallow dives to harvest the succulent green foliage themselves. The Common Merganser resides for several weeks during ice-out, using the lake for over-nighting and foraging but often ranging widely over the waters of the Mohawk River during the day. The mergansers may have a major impact on the fish fauna.

Visits following storms and heavy winds are especially rewarding. Grebes, Snow Goose, Scoter, Oldsquaw, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Canvas-





Feathers

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back, Bufflehead, Bonaparte's Gull and others are often seen. Gulls frequent the Lake during the day from the time of early ice-out until departure for nesting in April. The birds routinely arrive on their way to regional landfills in the early morning from the east and depart to the east before sundown, often flying to the Tomhannock Reservoir some 20 miles away. The Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull are common. Glaucous, Iceland, Bonaparte's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are seen, but rarely.

Killdeer are usually available on the shores and lawns from early April until the first frost. Red-winged Blackbird males return during the first week of March; the females arrive about one month later. Tree Swallows also appear in late March and early April.

Summer

Green Herons replace the Great Blue Herons which have by now moved on to distant heronries. The young of the Canada Goose and Wood Duck are readily observed. Double-crested Cormorant is becoming a frequent warm-weather visitor. Belted Kingfisher is common, probably nesting in the dirt banks of the nearby river. Black-crowned Night Herons are becoming more frequent and a careful scan of the trees along the shore is often productive.

Fall

The fall is especially interesting because of the gathering of hundreds of Common Mergansers, Mallards and American Black Ducks for over-nighting. Hooded Mergansers often mix in. The mergansers remain in the offshore waters, slowly swimming, without diving, for the entire night. The Mallards and American Black Ducks arrive later, well after sunset, to move into the marshy shallows along the southeast shore to shelter overnight. Their

noisy arrival from all directions during a 15-to-20-minute "window" is an especially exciting experience. Observation from the lawns along the south side of the lake is especially productive. The arrival of Great Blue Heron is also heard and seen at such times. Over-nighting of the waterfowl continues until freeze-up in mid December.



Wood Ducks
Nancy L. Martin

A feature of the Collins Lake area is the evening flights of thousands of crows. They return to their urban night roosts from their western foraging, their long, straggling column often passing over the Park. Another delightful fall experience is the gathering, just before sunset, of Red-winged Blackbirds, Rusty Blackbirds and European Starlings in the reed marsh along the eastern edge of Washington Avenue, at the eastern edge of the Lake. Thousands of birds arrive in a 10-to-15-minute period, vanishing instantly among the reeds. The spectacle of seeing a flock of a thousand birds arriving and disappearing in three or four seconds is memorable. In their arrival, some birds usually perch in the now skeletal crowns of the surrounding cottonwoods.

As in the spring, the fall is another good time for gull watching.



Winter

In early winter, gulls form flocks on the ice well away from shore but still close enough to make detailed observations on plumage differences for the several age groups. Open water remains for most of the winter along the north shore (and along Collins Creek, the out-flow) attracting over-wintering Great Blue Heron. The Lake and its outlet, Collins Creek, are thus two of the more northerly over-wintering sites in the inland northeast for this species. The herons use the warmer spring waters, often with the most ventral plumage submerged, to survive nights with temperatures plunging to -2 degrees Fahrenheit. The first sunlight often finds them crouched and slivered with rime ice. Close inspection of

these birds frequently reveals the absence of the ends of their toes - apparently frozen off. Belted Kingfisher is a common visitor to Collins Creek during the colder days when fishing is limited elsewhere. You may also find Mallard and Black Duck catching and eating young glizzard shad here.

Deep winter, with its extensive cover of snow, can attract small flocks of Snow Buntings and Horned Larks that forage over lawn areas and the wind-swept parking lot along the south shore. The worse the weather the better the chance of finding these tolerant forms in residence. Winter Wren is found in many years along the north shore of the Lake.

Time to Renew HMBC Membership

Don't forget it is time to renew your membership. A membership renewal form is included in this mailing. Please return it promptly with any updated address information. Don't risk missing an issue of the newsletter by letting your membership lapse!

Attention Listers!!

Here is your chance to get official bragging rights within HMBC. Send in your life list counts and 1996 counts (after Dec 31 of course!) for the entire HMBC 11-county region or just for particular counties. We'll publish each person and their counts. I know there are lots of you out there because I saw numbers reported to the Federation, so send them to HMBC too!



MOOSE RETURNING TO NEW YORK

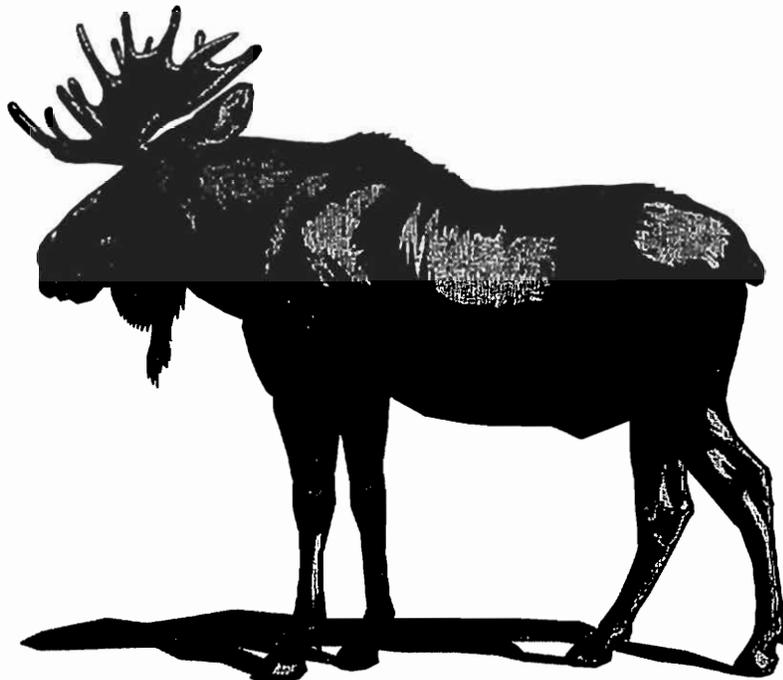
by
Scott Stoner

Moose are returning to NYS on their own, but the DEC will not enhance this process by a program of reintroduction. Alan Hicks, New York's "Moose Man" gave a humorous and enlightening talk to the Audubon Society of the Capital Region in mid-November. Extirpated from the State in the 1800's, moose have been entering from Canada and Vermont. Sightings in NYS have occurred each year since 1980. There are now at least 50 of these magnificent animals in NYS. Still a long way from Maine that has a population of 25,000.

Moose calves weigh 30 lbs. at birth; a bull can weigh 1400 lbs. Antlers are shed each year, grow larger each year until the moose is about 6 years old. A single antler weighing 30 lbs. has been recorded. Some interesting comparisons can be made with the white-tailed deer more frequently seen in the area. Moose here are at the southern end of their range; deer are at the northern edge of theirs. A major factor for deer is cover; for moose it's food. Snow has a much greater effect on deer, in depths of 13-15 inches deer have problems moving while movement of adult moose is not affected until depths reach nearly 3 feet.

Moose eat aquatic vegetation in the summer; browse in the fall. They will break a branch with their teeth to get the higher leaves, then chew bark, or even push a small tree down with their feet to obtain food.

The DEC is monitoring moose in the state; five have radio collars. Please report any moose sightings to the DEC Regional Wildlife Office.





UPCOMING HMBC PROGRAMS
*All program held at 7:30 PM at the Five Rivers
Environmental Education Center, Delmar*

Mon. Jan 6, 1997 Bryan Swift - *Canada Geese in New York State*

Canada Goose populations in New York have undergone dramatic changes over the last 20 years. Migratory populations have declined while resident flocks have increased. Mr. Swift, a Waterfowl Specialist for DEC, will discuss some of the reasons for these changes as well as management implications.

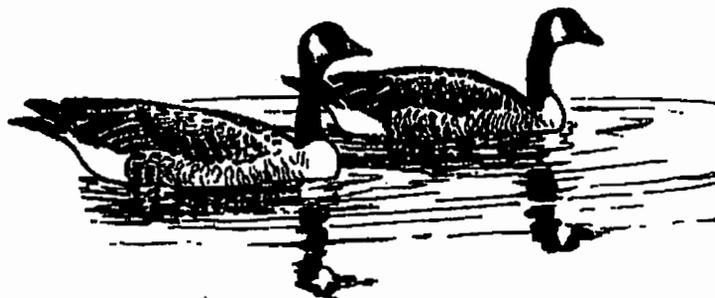
Mon. Feb 3, 1997 Chris Keefer - *The Birds of New York*

Chris Keefer will narrate a presentation of slides depicting a variety of common and not-so-common birds of our State. The slides of 50 species, taken by her husband Dave Keefer, include dramatic, frame-filling and habitat shots, and cover songbirds, waterfowl, game birds and birds of prey. The program demonstrates the diversity of New York's birds, ranging from common backyard residents to irruptive winter finches and Snowy, Long-eared and Northern Hawk Owls. Chris teaches birding and writes a weekly column for the Daily Gazette on "Birding Trips and Trivia."

Mon. Mar 3, 1997 Greg Budny - *How and Why Birds Sing*

Greg Budny of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology will present a program on bird song. More details in Feb. *Feathers*.

Wed. Apr 9, 1997 Annual Meeting and program on *Snowy Owls* with Dr. Paul Kerlinger at Oceans Eleven. More details in Feb. *Feathers*.





Program Reports

Montezuma Manager Urges Birders to Protect Habitat

On October 7, HMBC members were treated to a fine presentation by Grady "Gene" Hocutt, twenty-year manager of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Hocutt happily described how on October 5, the Refuge had been designated as the first Important Bird Area in New York State, and related another bit of good news, that in a joint effort of State and Federal governments dubbed the Northern Montezuma Expansion Project, additional lands in the greater Montezuma area are slated for protection. This is an on-going project, and will take many years to complete. In the general economic flow, our National Wildlife Refuges are much less well funded than are our National Parks on a per-acre basis, which led to Gene's allusion to a familiar 1992 Clinton campaign saying, with his incantation of "It's the habitat, stupid!" In this vein, Gene suggested in the strongest terms that the only two gifts we can truly give to wildlife are our economic and political support for habitat protection.

Among Montezuma's management problems, Mr. Hocutt listed the encroachment of purple loosestrife (1,250 acres in 3,000 acres of managed land,) control of the carp population in the ponds, and a recent outbreak of viral enteritis among the population of waterfowl.

In response to a question, Mr. Hocutt defended his policy of limiting pedestrian traffic of the 155,000 yearly visitors of the Refuge. He stressed the need to protect the birds from disturbances in their resting and feeding activities, especially given the limited amount of space they have there.

The evening's program was both informative and enjoyable. It also acted as a reminder to all present about our responsibility to protect birds and their habitats both through economic support and political action.

- Denise Hilton

Weather Forecasting: Advances and Limitations

On November 4, about 30 people were treated to a most informative evening on a subject of great interest to birders: The Weather. Our guest was Steve Caporizzo, Chief Meteorologist of WTEN. Speaking without notes, Steve entertained us with the ability of an on-air personality, but we were most impressed by his knowledge of meteorology and environmental science. He is a first-rate scientist who gave significant insight into the advances and limitations of modern forecasting.

When Steve was in college in the early '80's, many of the computations were time consuming, but required greater understanding of the process of forecasting. For instance, a determination of atmospheric instability, key to predicting severe thunderstorms and tornado development takes the computer a few seconds instead of a quarter hour by hand. This kind of advancement saves time, but the sophisticated models of the atmosphere still rely on data from weather balloons, released twice a day across the country. There are more predictive models now than 10 years ago, but they still are less than ideal for predicting exact events several days in the



future. Making a good forecast involves knowing the strengths and limitations of each model to decide which one to believe about a particular storm, and to interpret the computer prediction based on experience and knowledge of local meteorology.

Data from the weather balloons, released at 7 AM and 7 PM each day, provide a three-dimensional picture of the upper atmosphere. Critical to predicting our weather is the direction of the wind at the altitude of the clouds. The jet stream of significance meteorologically is not necessarily at 35,000 feet where the jets fly, but at 10,000 - 18,000 feet.

Steve stressed the difficulty of forecasting in the Northeast. While all meteorologists may claim that the weather in their area is tough to predict, there are three areas that truly are most challenging. Besides here, these are the Great Lakes (with their lake-effect snow events) and the Pacific Northwest. Predicting changes in the weather are what's hardest; here this occurs about every three days (120 changes a year) as opposed to a fifth of that number in southern Arizona. Some of the factors that make forecasting difficult here include the wide range of elevations, and the influence of the Atlantic. Although he's right 75-80% of the time, the forecasts people (including Steve) remember are the times he isn't! Spring and fall are the toughest times to forecast, with the rain/snow line always a factor. We should remember that an "error" of only 100 miles in a storm track is not bad for an event 1500 miles away, but one that can have a significant impact on the outcome. Last winter, for instance, just the distance of a single county made the difference between flurries and a couple feet of snow!

One often wonders about the role of the TV meteorologist in forecasting. Data are generated by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Weather Service, a part of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. The data are public, and paid for by our tax dollars, but the manipulations of the data for the private sector are done with the computers of commercial vendors. Local TV stations obtain 'crunched' raw data from a vendor; which Steve interprets when making his forecast.

Among the toughest predictions is the "Five Day Forecast," expected by viewers and still not that reliable. In fact, the science is just not that dependable beyond 48 hours. Steve's advice to someone planning an outdoor event 5 days hence is to prepare for rain. In fact, where there's significant uncertainty about precipitation down the road, he would rather err on the side of caution and note the possibility, than to leave people expecting a nice weekend and be disappointed.

Steve has held a lifelong fascination with the weather and describes his job as a paid hobby. This enthusiasm was clearly evident from his talk, as he willingly stayed to answer our very many questions. After discussing weather folklore, El Nino and the hole in the ozone over the South Pole, Steve gave his prediction for the upcoming winter: Based on the current pattern of events, he expects it to be similar to last winter, with the first part of the season severe. Sounds like a good time to stock up the feeders and stay home! Many thanks to Steve for an entertaining and most informative evening!

- *Scott Stoner*



Field Trip Reports

Franklin Mountain

After reviewing the weather forecast via the Web and the Weather Channel, we decided to try to the hawk watching trip on Saturday, November 9. In Albany, the day started relatively warm and pretty cloudy.

A few of the group met in Albany and we picked up the rest of the crowd near Cobleskill. As we continued the drive to Oneonta, we encountered a few showers, but scattered areas of sunshine. Unfortunately, as we approached Oneonta and the hawk watch the weather became more cloudy with light showers. The temperature had also dropped. Hopeful that the weather would clear up soon we drove up to the hawk watch. We met a few other local birders, but unfortunately we had rain and very poor visibility. Even worse, the winds at the hawk watch remained southwest, not the hoped for west or northwest that bring the migrating birds close by.

As the morning wore on we experienced breaks in the rain and clouds, but unfortunately the clouds came back in as did the rain. Not auspicious for hawks!

As we waited for hawks that never came, we pondered whether Sunday would have been a better choice.

The only hawks (Red-tailed) seen were along the drive to and from the hawk watch. For the trip leaders the only consolation is that Sunday had only a handful of birds, so would not really have been that much of a better choice. We'll just have to try again next year!

- Cathy Graichen

Saratoga Lake Field Trip

We had a lovely day on November 17 for a late fall field trip. The temperature was in the mid-forties; the sun was warm; there was no wind. Over thirty club members and several guest showed up. At one point we had a ten-car caravan!

Waterfowl spotted included: **COMMON LOON, HORNED GREBE, RED-NECKED GREBE, CANADA GOOSE, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, CANVASBACK, GREATER and LESSER SCAUP, WHITE-WINGED SCOTER, COMMON GOLDENEYE, BUFFLEHEAD, HOODED MERGANSER, COMMON MERGANSER, and RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.** The highlight of the trip came at the end of route (at Riley Cove) when Dick Beeler drew our attention to the drake **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE.**

Other species seen or heard were: **RING-BILLED GULL, HERRING GULL, GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, ROCK and MOURNING DOVE, BELTED KINGFISHER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, BROWN CREEPER, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET, EUROPEAN STARLING, SONG SPARROW, DARK-EYED JUNCO, HOUSE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, and HOUSE SPARROW.**

- Barb Putnam



Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

Schenectady Christmas Bird Count

Sat. Dec. 21. Compiler: Bill Lee 374-3426

Southern Rensselaer Christmas Bird Count

Sat. Dec 28.

Compiler: Jackie Bogardus 283-6603

New Year's Day Bird Count at Five Rivers

Wed. Jan. 1. Coord: Al Mapes 439-4086

Join Five Rivers in starting its 1997 list a 16-year tradition.

Troy Christmas Bird Count

Sat. Jan 4.

Interim Compiler: Larry Alden 877-7148

Campfire and Owling at Five Rivers

Sat. Jan 11. Reservations by Jan 5

Coord: Al Mapes, Denise Hilton 785-6760

Listen for owls during the evening and enjoy a campfire, hot dogs and hot cocoa. Register via Birdline - 439-8080.

Annual State Waterfowl Count

Sun. Jan. 12. Coord: Paul Grattan 237-0661

Join the local segment of this statewide event counting waterfowl along the Hudson River between Troy and Hudson Falls.

Amherst Island & Cape Vincent Owl Trip

Jan or Feb. Reservations: Jan 17.

Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

If birds arrive in this sometimes productive location, a two-day trip will be planned. To join the trip, contact Bill before the deadline.

Winter Rare Bird Trip

Jan or Feb. Reservations: Jan 17.

Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

If any rare birds are reported in our general area, Bill will coordinate a trip to look for them. Contact him before the deadline to be added to his list of interested persons.

Lower Mohawk River

Sun. Jan 26.

Coord: Gary Goodness 272-5830

Study gulls and wintering waterfowl during this morning trip.

Fort Edward

Sat. Feb 8. Coord: Barb Putnam 792-7542

A popular spot for wintering raptors and field birds as well as birders studying them. Join Barb and Federation of NYS Bird Club members on this trip.

Birds and Snowshoes at Five Rivers

Sun. Feb 9. Reservations: Feb 5

Coord: Ray Perry 475-0291(work)

Starting with feeder birds and moving out over the fields of snow with snowshoes we'll explore the grounds of Five Rivers. If not enough snow, we will have to walk! Snowshoes will be available for those who need them.

Cape Ann & Plum Island

Sat.-Mon. Feb 15-17. Reservations: Feb. 1

Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

A popular winter trip to the MA coast and up the NH coastline. The 3-day weekend should provide plenty of opportunity to explore the coastline.



1996 Christmas Counts

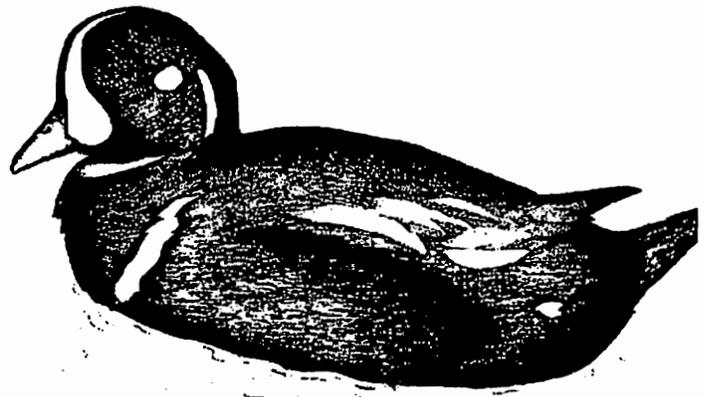
Christmas Bird Counts were established as an alternative to Christmas Bird Hunts. Today the Audubon Society continues the tradition by coordinating Christmas Bird Counts throughout the country over a 3 week period. The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club sponsors (and coordinates) three local counts. All fees for participants are paid by the Club. Join in the fun of counting and compiling by participating in one or more counts. Contact the compiler for specific details.

Sat. Dec 21	Schenectady	Bill Lee	374-3426
Sat. Dec 28	Southern Rensselaer	Jackie Bogardus	283-6603
Sat. Jan 4	Troy	Larry Alden	877-7148

1997 Field Trip Schedule Completed

With this newsletter you should receive a copy of the 1997 Field Trip Schedule. The Upcoming Field Trips section of *Feathers* highlights trips scheduled in the next couple of months or ones requiring reservations, but does not include all the details due to space limitations. For complete details of any trip, consult the schedule and/or contact the coordinator.

Cancellations or added trips are included in *Feathers*, so please check for changes when the newsletter arrives.



Informal Thursday Morning Bird Club

Have a little extra free time on Thursday mornings? Don't know what to do? Join an informal group of birders for breakfast and a morning bird outing. Contact Bill Lee at 374-3426 to find out the specific details for upcoming Thursdays!

QUESTAR SCOPE AVAILABLE FOR USE

A reminder that the Club owns a Questar telescope. The scope provides high-quality magnification up to 40X. Trip leaders are encouraged to take the scope on appropriate field trips. Club members may also use the scope for personal trips (when the timing does not conflict with a Club trip needing the scope). The only requirement to borrow the scope is training on the proper use of the equipment.



A South Florida Trip by Denise Hilton and Scott Stoner

Editors Note: This article was submitted for publication quite some time ago. At the time space did not permit immediate inclusion. Unfortunately, the article was then mixed in with the Bird Guide information and only recently uncovered. Hopefully, with the approaching winter season many of you heading to Florida or considering a warm weather winter trip will find this interesting now. My apologies to the authors for the considerable delay in publication.

After weeks of uncertainty over park closures (*editor's note:* due to the government shut-downs) and the massive storm that curtailed air travel over much of the east coast, we felt lucky to actually get to south Florida for our long-awaited quest for warm weather and wading birds. Our first stop was a clothing store, as our Long Island friend's luggage had not made it past Charlotte. Once fully attired, we arrived at Everglades National Park on January 11. Our first stop was the Anhinga Trail. With water levels still fairly high, the birds were not as concentrated at Anhinga as

they have been in previous years. However, the trail did offer many of its namesake birds, as well as many turtles, fish, and alligators.

We then went on to Flamingo, our home for the next two nights. While at Flamingo, we visited Eco Pond, where we enjoyed viewing a large number of water birds including White and Glossy Ibis, Tri-colored and Little Blue Heron, Common Moorhen, Egrets and a fly-over Roseate Spoonbill. The passerine highlight was a female Painted Bunting.

We also took two half-day boat trips. One took us through the interior, including Coot and Whitewater Bays, and close to the Gulf of Mexico. Despite the heavy rain gear we wore, the combination of the speed of the boat and the brisk wind made for a chilly ride on this cloudy afternoon. But we shouldn't complain too much, because at that very time another major winter storm was advancing upon up-state New York! Besides, we did see two American Crocodiles just north of the marina. The second boat trip was also windy, but at least the sun was out as we went out from Flamingo marina to Cape Sable. A number of Osprey were nesting along the routes of both trips, and many waders congregated near the marina, including both Yellow- and Black-crowned Night-Herons.





Feathers

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A brief visit to Mahogany Hammock produced little in the way of avian life, but gave us the opportunity to experience the beautiful hardwoods, ferns and vines that make up this unusually habitat.

After a walk around the trail in the "high" elevation of the drier pinelands, we made a second stop at Anhinga Trail on our way out of the Park. This enjoyable late afternoon visit did produce a fairly close encounter with a goatsucker along the paved trail, most likely a Whip-Poor-Will. We encountered several more along the drive back to the main road.

After dinner in Florida City and a brief stop at the Ft. Lauderdale Airport to pick up Dean's luggage, we cross the State on Alligator Alley, arriving in Bonita Springs late in the evening.

Sunday was the first of three days spent exploring southwest Florida. Our first stop was the wildlife drive at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Highlights here included Reddish Egret, about 45 Roseate Spoonbills, and a large and noisy group of egrets in the mangroves. An American Crocodile along the side of the road, cordoned off by Refuge staff,

offered a good photo stop and attracted a lot of interest. Later, we visited the Bailey Tract of the Refuge, a pond and trail area near Tarpon Beach where we found Common Ground Dove. A visit to the beach at sunset provided a great ending to an enjoyable day of birding.

The following day we headed north to Myakka River State Park, a site recommended by Ray Perry. We rented a canoe and headed down the River in search of Limpkin and other waders. We hadn't gone too far when we spotted one Limpkin, and then several. Not only did we see them, but we heard them uttering their eerie call and saw them feeding on snails. We ended up seeing or hearing nearly a dozen of these fascinating birds, which are one of the author's favorite birds! Unfortunately, the outcome of the photographs is in doubt, as the canoe tipped over and both photographer and equipment ended up in the water. Fortunately, the water was shallow, everyone was ok, and the equipment was insured, but we did miss even better Limpkin photos on the way back. Anyway, this is the best spot we know of for this species, and recommend it for any south Florida birding trip. Back on land, we got warmed up and



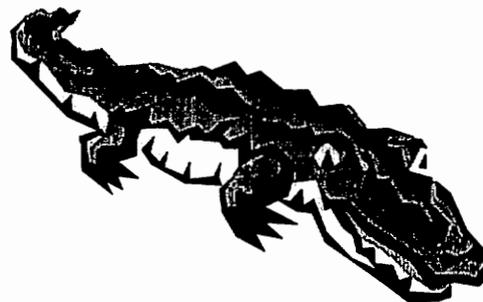


visited the birdwalk, a short boardwalk along the edge of Myakka Lake. The flats alongside yielded a fine concentration of long- and short-legged waders, including Common Snipe.

On our last day we visited Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, an Audubon property near Immokalee. The new boardwalk through this cypress swamp is nearly completed, and offers ample opportunity for viewing the denizens of this critical habitat. Wood Storks were nesting, with 277 active nests at last count. This is hopeful, as they have not bred successfully there since 1992, when about 2000 young were fledged. Sometimes, however they will abandon their nests if conditions are not right, but maybe this year will be different. Land birds were in good numbers

here as well, with four Pileated Woodpeckers at one spot, and a variety of passerines as well.

A short stop at the beach on the way to Southwest Florida International airport produced a few shorebirds as well as the realization that we would be soon back in the cold and snow, while the birds would continue to enjoy the months of sun and warmth!



**Membership Directory
Delayed**

Since HMBC renews its members (and gets their updated addresses and phone numbers) at the beginning of the calendar year AND elects new officers in April, the membership directory publication is being moved until June. This way it will be most up-to-date when published.

Please include address changes with your dues renewal! This will also insure your Club notices and newsletters are mailed to the correct location!



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Ballston Spa, NY 12020

or via e-mail to:

recerg@crisny.org

More Federation Meeting Thank Yous

A belated thanks to the others who helped out with the Federation meeting this year, including Joan Cipriani, Darlene Duggan, Sunny Gooding, and Linda Sour. You did a great job and we all thank you for your help.

- Frank Murphy

Feathers



President's Corner: BIRDING, UNENCUMBERED BY THE THOUGHT PROCESS. Birders are a tough crowd. No matter how many good identification calls one makes, it's that one mistake that will be remembered in perpetuity. And so it was that we were partaking in an annual tradition of birding at the Tomhannock Reservoir on Veterans Day, when I said to my purported friends, "go ahead and check off Tree Sparrow - we're bound to see them again." Then, a voice from the back seat said, "Frank - birding, unencumbered by the thought process." Definitely one of the more pleasantly eloquent insults I've ever received, so I decided to use it. So, for all those mistaken identifications - like the Woodcock that was really a Nighthawk, the Red-shouldered Hawk that was a Sapsucker,

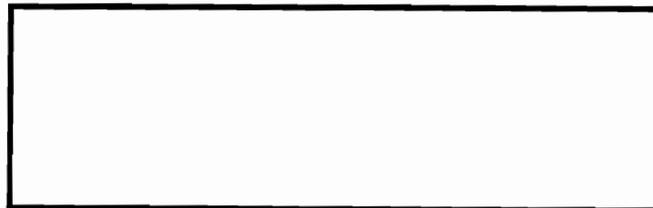
the Killdeer on a wire, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that became a Mockingbird, and yes, the Gyrfalcon that was a Red-tailed Hawk - proceed with caution and be encumbered. Birders have good memories. Anyhow, we had a great day. We saw 50 species on 11/11/96, the same as on 11/11/94, adding 10 new ones and missing 10 old ones. Not bad for November in the north country. Well, I'll hope to see a lot of people involved in the Club's Christmas Bird Counts this year. Then I'm off to Venezuela in search of tanagers, warblers, woodcreepers, toucans, trogons, etc. - in general living it up and having a great time birding, unencumbered by the thought process! Happy Holidays.

Frank Murphy

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